

“And garments of green girt the fellow about...”

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I have long been fascinated with the texture, pattern, and colors of textiles. Once I began discovering the creative possibilities of all sorts of textiles, I worked to find the best way for me to use them in wearable art creations. I also have a great interest in historic costume design. After some experimentation, these two passions melded into a “look” for my body of work.



This garment was inspired by the legend of the Green Man, an otherworldly figure who inhabited the lands and forests of medieval Europe (Raglan, 1939). Green Man appears in art, often as a foliate head carved into churches and other structures. He also appears in literature and folk tales; some even say that Robin Hood has his origins in the Green Man myth. Regardless of how he is manifested, Green Man is always a personification of the natural world, a creature of light, a figure representing the death and rebirth of both nature and humankind.

While he is primarily depicted as a face entwined with leaves and vines, I have chosen to imagine what his garments might be like. Therefore, the title comes from the anonymous 14th Century English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, one of the many literary works in which the Green Man appears—in this case, as a fashionably dressed knight, green from head to toe, who emerges from the forest to challenge King Arthur’s knights to a battle of bravery and wits.

The concept for this piece brings together medieval and modern aesthetics and techniques. I began with a cotehardie—a 14th Century garment worn by the knightly class. To this historic construct I added fabric motifs applied as raw-edged applique, a modern technique I have explored in previous creations (Kimmons, 2008; Kimmons, 2014). The motifs were first placed on linen, mostly overlapping but also placed to allow the light or dark linen to show, emphasizing the concept of light and dark facets of Green



Man. Once the design created the desired effect, all motifs were first pinned in place, then sewn down in order to keep them stable. Then the edges of each motif were sewn to the linen cote, creating the raw-edged appliqué technique. The entire garment was machine washed and dried to soften and feather the edges of the motifs. The applique-collage technique was further expanded to include hand-crafted embellishments to the design. These embellishments include embroidery using medieval stitches as well as edgings and laces crocheted or tatted by hand. As an added enhancement, pleated beads made from fabric, ribbon, and natural stone nuggets were fashioned and attached throughout the garment. A shaped edge formed by leaf and flower motifs at center front opening and along the hem enhances the feeling of vegetative growth. All of the elements were selected to reflect the Green Man's earthy, natural and woody spirit.

The Green Man lives half in the shadowy interiors of the forest and half the sunny fields surrounding it. This aspect is represented in the color gradation and density of motifs on the garment, which transition from light background and motifs to the darker hues—an effect that echoes the medieval practice of parti-coloring. To introduce a more novel aspect to the design and further explore the raw-edged applique technique, I added the unique element of three-dimensional illusion through a shadowing technique. Not only is the overall design enhanced, but the visual impression of a multi-level forest floor is intensified.

The final design illustrates how the dress, aesthetics, and culture of the past can inspire the art and fashion of today in a uniquely modern way.

Raglan, L. (1939). The Green Man in church architecture. *Folklore*, 50, 45–57.

Kimmons, J. (2008) Who loves a garden her Eden keeps. {Original quilted vest design.} Design Educators National Exhibition, On-line Exhibition, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, Sponsor.

Kimmons, J. (2014). Adorent...Rosamund. [Original wearable art design]. Mounted Exhibition, International Textiles and Apparel Association, Charlotte, N.C.