



Plume

Olivia Fierro, University of Delaware

Keywords: textile innovation, couture techniques, sustainability

Measurements: Bust 33", Waist 25", Hips 33"

Mentor Statement

This entry is from one of my most talented students, and this particular design is part of her senior collection. She has been in my patternmaking classes since her sophomore year and each of the designs she created during school have complex construction and surface design explorations. She is continuously reaching out for suggestions and critique, not afraid to take risks and extremely skillful with crafts. I had a very hard time deciding which piece of her senior collection I should sponsor, as each is different in its own way and yet, all together make a wonderful statement for the creative process, works of art that do not look like class projects.

Concept

We can learn a lot from looking outside of ourselves and observing how other organisms inhabit their worlds, relating through commonalities and finding inspiration in differences. The octopus, born with amazing color and texture altering abilities, is content in its role. It spends its whole life reveling in its being, forging and protecting as necessary as it indulges in its curiosities. While the colors and textures of this collection were inspired by its physical skin, the essence is inspired by the octopus's way of living. The hope is for the wearer to flourish within their own skin, relax into their being, and rekindle their curiosity of life.

Process and techniques

Keeping a slow self-reflective creative mindset, each garment features subtle gradations in color, much like the strokes of an artist's brush. I employed color blocking and hand felting to create these differences. With these techniques, I was able to create my own patterns and textures, which also eliminated the need for extra fabric trimmings, piece work, and dyeing. Inspired by the octopus' curious nature, I treated my interest in the organism as a jumping off point. The essence of the octopus, an organism that is utterly content to flourish within its being, can be seen elsewhere in the natural world. I searched for the existence of the octopus' essence in other organisms and incorporated what I found into my collection. This is the first look that I created for my senior collection. The first look had to clearly state my theme, so I decided to start with the most familiar image of flourishing, a flower blooming from its bud. To create fluidity and volume within the look the top was composed of silk organza and features smooth stomach darts, similar to the lines of a corset, that released into a full bust. The pants, fitted at the waistline, are a solid color with a sweetheart cut to mimic the shape and starkness of a bud against its tissue petals. In addition, hand applied ruffles of navy, plum, and red silk organza were attached to the fullness of the top. Then, hand felting and silk iridescent chiffon were used to create depth between layers. The fabric choice allows for a delicate wavering on the wearer as

they walk, and the hand placed process controls leading lines, moving the viewer's eye into the depths of their swirls.

Design innovation

In order to mimic the octopus' essence, I utilized the design process of biomimicry in order to create innovative and sustainable designs. I was inspired by nature's slow cycles, deciding to explore the slow fashion movement rather than looking for different ways to keep up with overconsumption. What I found was an organic process similar to that of an artist painting a masterpiece and, to me, a more satisfying process for both designer and consumer.

