

Au Plein Air

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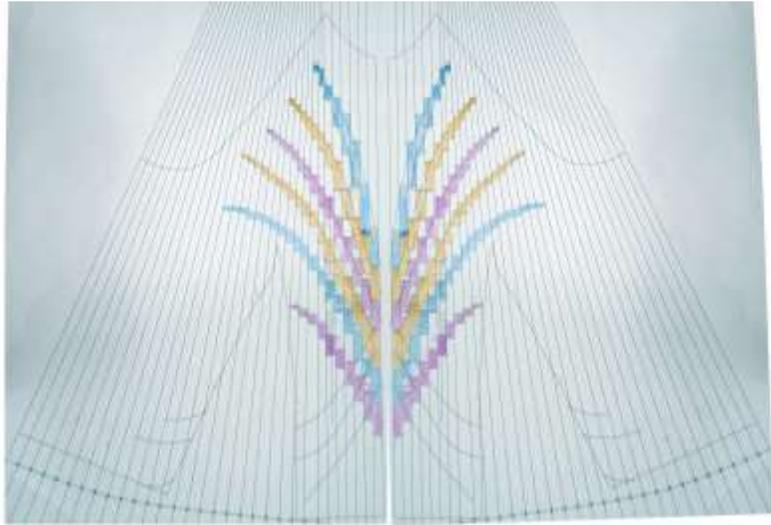
Artists have always painted outdoors, but in the mid 1800's this became particularly important as painters rebelled against the strong history of studio painting as the preferred situation. "Au Plein Air", French for "In the open air", became closely associated with painting outdoors and was embraced by the Impressionist artists who sought to capture nuances of nature and everyday life in their work. As a student of Impressionist art, the designer sought to capture the organic textures, earthy color palette, and engaging movement of Au Plein Air through innovative design and sewing techniques.

The work began with movement - a jacket with a highly textured, semi sheer, light weight boucle' knit capelet: innovatively designed as a raglan sleeve-capelet combination, flowing literally as the fabric follows every gesture of the model and leads the viewer's eye about the garment. Black wool trouser flare slacks anchor the ensemble, giving the itinerant eye a place to 'rest'.

To create front interest, leaf-like lines were hand drawn and colored. The drawing was transferred to



the jacket pattern and re-worked as geometric shapes which collectively 'read' as flowing lines. (See image.) This concept, borrowed from traditional bargello quilt piecing, required revision for use in a 3D garment instead of a 2D quilt. Bargello is formed by creating strips of the same repeated bits of fabric (strip sets) which are offset and sewn together to create a flat quilt design. Au Plein Air would be constructed the same way, except that very precise lines



of fit and shaping needed to be maintained – a daunting task. This bargello needed to fit a body, not a bed!

Using software, the designer created a technique to do this. The motif and pattern were 'exploded' to add seam allowances for application of strip sets. To maintain perfect strip set placement and garment fit, the paper pattern was used as a foundation to which the strip sets were aligned and sewn as pattern shape was maintained. Once in place, the strip sets were sewn together, again using the paper foundation as a guide. When complete, paper was removed. An exposed brass zipper complements the natural color palette as the eye travels over the flowing pieced lines, while a stand collar lends a sporty and modern appeal. The designer successfully captured the airiness and natural movement reminiscent of sunlight flickering across the surface of a mossy forest floor – a perfect setting for Impressionist art.

