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Ringleader Memoirs

Michelle Therese Graff
California State University, Long Beach

MyungHee Sohn
California State University, Long Beach, myunghee.sohn@csulb.edu

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Ringleader Memoirs

Michelle Therese Graff

California State University Long Beach, USA

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The purpose of this design was to utilize advanced flat patterning techniques while utilizing the designer's unique design aesthetic. Inspiration was derived from family background in the Barnum and Bailey Circus back in the early 1900s. When looking back into the circus, the ringleader is the most influential member of the show. Tasked with captivating the audience, the Ringleader Memoirs aims to captivate with bold colors and textures that tie into family as colors symbolize the diversity of personalities and harmony. Research consisted of looking at silhouettes from the 1940s and viewing vintage circus photographs. 'Circus Life' photography series of Big-Top Babes by August Bradley was used for inspiration. Research of Couture fashion with the circus theme was found in Ana Sui's Spring 2010 collection and Manish Arora's circus/carousel dress, whom the famed Katie Perry wore during her 'Circus of the Stars' tour. 100% Silk fabrics were chosen for their versatility, smooth drape, and high sheen that ties back into the idea of family strength and fluidity.

The design process began with many rough sketches and a narrowing of favored design details, which resulted in a narrowed selection of 5 designs. After finalizing the design, concepts sketches were turned into technical flats in illustrator, construction details and sewing instructions developed, and fashion sketches were in Photoshop. Flat patterning techniques such as slashing and spreading as well as the pivot method were used to develop the first pattern. The first sample was adjusted for fit and those changes were translated to the initial pattern. Once the pattern was finalized the fabric was sourced.

Initial color inspiration was derived from photographs of carousels. Cohesiveness of color and design was very important in all design choices. The silk jacquard used on the jacket and bodice was the source of the color building for the remainder of the garments. Silk was chosen due to its high sheen, exceptional drape, versatile texture, and dyeability. The 100% Silk double Jacquard weave used for the jacket was also used only in the reverse for the dress bodice. The Silk Charmuese was chosen for its buttery drape for the skirt bottom.

The final cutting of the garment was performed with a rotary cutter and weighting the fabric to prevent movement during cutting. Construction of the final garment used traditional tailoring techniques such as pad stitching, basting, whip stitching etc. The dress uses a hand rolled hem, princess seams, and blind hemming, and bias taping. The brass buttons were hand sewn in place. Each piece was handled and sewn with care to prevent fraying or stretching. Resulting final garment flowed together seamlessly like my own family and provided a memoir of times long gone, but forever held in time.

