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Intertwined Happiness

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Intertwined Happiness

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Keywords: Sustainability, New technologies, Couture techniques

Measurements: Bust 34", Waist 26", Hips 37"

White wedding gowns have been commonly adopted by many brides today; however, in contrast, red is the most prominently used color in traditional Chinese wedding dresses. Red is an auspicious color considered to bring good luck in Chinese society (Thornton, 2005). In modern day, many brides have been adopting a white wedding dress in addition to the red traditional dress, as a mixture of the Eastern style and Western style (Liang, Liu, & Pan, 2007). Therefore, two wedding dresses were needed. The purpose of this exploration was to create a reversible design that can meet both traditional Chinese style and western romance by using a combination of knitting technology and handcraft skills in overstock cotton yarns. The multiple-wear design would be ideal for a series of wedding events for women who desire distinct aesthetics and sustainable concepts. In addition, the two pieces in the ensemble can be worn separately with different styles or items for other occasions which would satisfy a woman's need for comfort, identity, and versatility.

Chinese motifs were deliberately selected to reveal a particular meaning or significance. For example, the lotus flower shown prominently on the design symbolizes purity because of the way it rose unblemished from the mud in which it grew (Vollmer, 1980). Moreover, the word lotus in Chinese is *Hehua*, which shares the same pronunciation as the word harmony. Other symbols that are used in the design are the Chinese character of happiness and a pair of mandarin ducks. These are all Chinese traditional designs that are frequently used as a symbol and decoration of marriage. The symbols were designed as a combined pattern in Adobe Illustrator following the outline of the vest. The pattern was then input and engineered into a jacquard knitting pattern in a Stoll M1 plus program and was used on each side of the vest. A corresponding embroidery pattern was hand stitched at the back flare of the hem of the under dress.

As the design evolved a multitude of samples were created. The two collaborators came together aiming to combine their scholarly interests of knitwear and culture with a clear intent on challenging the knit development techniques through shape and surface. The sampling process and the opportunity to work through the high end technology of a Stoll industrial knitting machine had great benefits and challenges. Through the design process, many ideas were tested and sampled before the finalized design evolved. While striving to combine the customized feel and the handcrafted embroidery the design took shape. The vest, which has a curved hem, was knitted sideways for two reasons. First, in order to create a design with a shaped hem that did not need to be cut to shape. Second, it was a way to be able to use short row knitting in the tubular jacquard to create a waist shaping at the side without using a side seam. This can be seen in the detail image of the vest. The hem, neckline and shoulder shapes were fully fashioned on the machine to save production material and create a nice clean garment. A trim was applied around the edges to give stability and a nice transition between the two sides of the design. The dress design used plating as the main surface technique and hand embroidery on the back of the skirt. By plating, i.e. knitting two yarns together across the fabric we could have a lightweight jersey fabric that would be reversible with a

red face and white revers side. The top of the dress incorporates techniques like rib and cable in which the plating naturally mixes the yarns. This creates a versatile dress which carries interest and design when worn without the vest as well.

Knitting technology is ever evolving. From the first invention of the knitting frame at the cusp of the industrial revolution to the current machines of the industry today, there is a lot to learn. For us as educators it is important to stay up to date and evolve with, and through, the technology that is readily available. This is a constant challenge as the culture of knitwear in American education is often a missing piece. The challenge of the technology and the learning curve that the process involves creates opportunities for development and understanding of knitwear design at a different level from what we are used to today. Through this exploratory collaboration, two educators were able to come together to learn, explore, and challenge the equipment, their knowledge, and the designs in knitwear and fashion available today. Through the cultural differences of the designers, the design perspective and process created a design neither of the designers could have created on their own. This approach to design gives an opportunity to discuss and further both techniques and design process in a natural way. Aesthetically, this design creates a significant contribution through the idea of a customized untraditional wedding ensemble. It is a historically inspired design pushed forward through top of the line technology. The ensemble satisfies a woman's desire of both a traditional gown and changeable apparel utilizing Chinese cultural concepts of feminine beauty but with modern practical, new technology, and sustainable methods infused. Indeed, with the multiple-wear principle, she is able to express herself and be recognized for her unique identity.

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