

Nov 11th, 9:00 AM

## Abyss

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Prather, Maggie and Parsons, Jean, "Abyss" (2016). *International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 98.

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## Abyss

Maggie Prather and Jean Parsons, University of Missouri

Keywords: Non-Apparel 2-D, Accessory, Ready-to-Wear

Measurements: Flat: 40 inches (W) x 36 inches (H) Bust: 34 Waist 26-27

### Mentor Statement

*Abyss* was created as the first design experiment in a creative problem-solving course for undergraduates. A course goal is to foster student creativity by developing innovative designs for gallery exhibition rather than for a target market. When freed from the need to identify a specific customer (other than one who purchases artwear), it allows creative expression that opens students up to finding inventive solutions to assigned design problems. As a design research based course, the goal is to understand and implement creative investigations to identify a design direction, develop written and visual project proposals, and creatively merge surface design and garment form (Wong & Siu, 2012). The first project, titled Art (Wear) Off the Wall, starts with a problem statement to create an art piece for the wall that can also be worn in one or more ways. My role is instructor and mentor for all enrolled students. For this particular project, the student chose to create a surface design engineered through digital printing. Because of her creative objectives, she spent significant time in image experimentation. I insist they use their own photography, something that presented challenges to acquire for her theme (icebergs). She chose to create her own painting and melt ice over it, taking photographs periodically in the process. I elected to enter this design because both her 2D and 3D process demonstrate a complex level of problem solving to successfully develop and integrate surface design and apparel shape.

### Design Statement

The purpose of the design process for *Abyss* was to create a wearable art piece that can be hung flat on the wall. A critical part of my creative experimentation was also to develop a design that could be worn more than one way. The focus was to integrate the surface design into the garment in a manner that would be compelling and draw the viewer into the details as both a 2-D wall hanging and a 3-D wearable piece. For both a surface and shape perspective I was particularly inspired by icebergs, their colors, and their evolving forms. The surface design ideas are what drove both the flat and 3-D shapes.

The form of the wall hanging began as a simple oval shape, and evolved through experimentation with where to place cuts to allow it to drape over the body, have some irregular edges to represent the idea of the icebergs, and have a more dynamic silhouette. As the draping continued, the oval was flattened out on the lower edge and folds were created to provide some shape on the body while still flat on the wall. The lower edge has V-shapes for more movement. The course requirements were that we use either original photography or art if using digital textile printing. Because I would not be able to get original iceberg photographs, the challenge was to find a technique for creating my own art piece that would have the desired effect. To create the effect of ice, water and the visual appearance of a melting and shifting

surface, I began by creating an original painting with colors that went from pale blue to dark blue and that also had texture on the surface due to the layering of paint. I next placed ice cubes on top of the painting and began to melt them using a hair dryer, taking photographs at intervals during the process. Three of these images were chosen, along with the original painting and were combined and rendered in Photoshop to create the final print. The final printed image moves from light to dark, or from the perspective of ice through to the deep blue of the ocean at the lower edge. Swirling motion creates a combination of a watery effect as well as the appearance of marbled paper, also done with water.

In placing the print on the pattern shape it was engineered so that the lightest color will be at the top when hung and also frame the face when worn. It was printed twice onto cotton sateen. The two were sewn together and turned, so that it is completely reversible as both sides are partially visible when worn. Ties were added to the side edges at the pleats as the single attachment point on the body. When exhibited with student work from the class it was shown flat on a black felt panel, thus requiring only two pins to secure it (Figure 4). While it can be worn several ways, my preference is with the high curve of the lighter color at the top edge framing the head (Figure 1), or sideways and asymmetrically across the body (Figure 3). Overall, the sense of movement that was created by the melted ice in the image allows for visual interest and balance as wall art. At the same time *Abyss* is wearable as a vest in several ways, thus fulfilling the project assignment of Art (Wear) Off the Wall.

Wong, Y.L. and Siu, K. W. M. (2012). A model of creative design processes for fostering creativity of students in design education. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 22, 437-450.



Figure 1. Front



Figure 2. Back



Figure 3. Alternate view



Figure 4. View as wall hanging