

Illuminating the Creative Mind

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To my real-life heroes:

Amber Brenner, Kira Jordan, Matthew Atmore, Steven Brenner, Sarah Bryan, Robyn Levy  
and all of the teachers who have touched my life.

Thank you for your continued support.

You are my true inspiration.

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## Introduction

Pablo Picasso once said, “Every child is an artist, the problem is staying an artist when you grow up.” (“Pablo Picasso Quote”) Always having lived in an artistic environment, creativity has defined who I am. Through making crafts with my grandparents and costumes with my mom, taking school art classes, fashion design, and finally theatre design, I always found joy in my creative endeavors. No matter how much new information I learn with each project, I still take the time to look back at my childhood for inspiration.

“No, no, no! The feathers need to go the same way to make it look fuller in the back! Come on Mom, how will anyone know I’m a parrot if there are no colorful feathers?” Welcome to my first childhood memory. My favorite time of the year, Halloween allowed me to be anyone or anything I wanted. That year, obsessed with birds, I believed parrots to be the prettiest and, therefore, the most appropriate costume. However, my unknowing mother purchased a plain bird suit without real feathers. So I gazed at my mom with my big sad eyes until she finally agreed to add the feathers to my costume. It took us a combined eight hours to attach them all. At the age of three I do not remember being much help, but I certainly remember winning the costume contest that year. From that year on my mother and I always worked on my costumes together, filling our photo albums with our prize winning creations. I do not know what exactly lit a spark in me from such a young age, but working with costumes, crafting, and designing consistently and continually inspires me.

My development as a costume designer includes the exploration of many different avenues in the world of fashion and theatre design. Upon entering undergraduate school I knew I wanted to be a costume designer; however, the school I attended offered a fashion design curriculum as opposed to costume design. While slightly disappointed, I soon became enamored

with fashion. I loved doing research on new trends, drawing the stylized figures and learning all of the skills I thought I would also need to be a costume designer. Fascinated with flat patterning and draping, I spent hours outside of the expected requirements to hone these skills. I found creating my own designs much more rewarding than using commercial patterns. Not long after I mastered my work with patterns, tailoring became my new obsession. All of the small details tailoring offered, added significantly to the overall appearance of my designs. Eventually, this love of tailoring and detail inspired my senior thesis clothing line. Targeting men in their twenties and early thirties, I created a coordinating collection of men's suits inspired by the original Nintendo gaming system controller (Figure I.1 -I.3). A huge success, I won multiple accolades and awards for the collection. At the end of my undergraduate years I graduated at the top of my class with honors.

As I started the process of interviewing for jobs, I quickly realized I would not be allowed to create my own designs. I would be helping to create someone else's designs, someone else's vision. Spending the rest of my life sitting behind a computer creating flat patterns and spec sheets of other designers' ideas did not appeal to me. Whereas, executing my own design ideas inspired me. I wished to see my own ideas come to life and see and experience an audience's reaction to my own work. Thus, I applied to graduate school to master what I have always wanted to do, costume design.

Over the past three years, I have been living and breathing costume design and costume technology simultaneously in the pursuit of my MFA in Costume Design and Technology. I have completed multiple in-class projects, mounted realized productions and assisted other designers observing their processes along the way. Coming into this program I had no idea how much I had yet to learn. While the skills I had attained in clothing construction translated well to costume

technology, I lacked the ability to think the way a theatre costume designer does. To do so commanded me to completely transform my thinking from that of a consumer market to analyzing fictional characters and making them into “real” people telling the playwright’s story to a live audience. No longer designing for a large target market I needed to instead, become the story teller of the playwright’s ideas through clothes. The need to develop my confidence, find my new voice as a costume designer and learn to communicate these newly complex ideas, challenged me to move forward on this new journey.

To clearly articulate that journey the following three chapters, conclusion, and accompanying appendix of select images from my body of work, will examine and discuss how I developed my personal creative process. Through the exploration of Getzels Model of creativity, and by using examples from both realized productions and class projects, I will demonstrate my mastery of costume design and technology, how I found my voice, and where I hope to go in the future.

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## Appendix: Introduction



Figure I.1 Picture of the original Nintendo game controller used as the inspiration for my undergraduate senior thesis menswear fashion line.



Figure I.2 Picture of my sketch for my undergraduate senior thesis menswear fashion line.



## Appendix: Introduction



Figure I.3 Photograph of my undergraduate senior thesis menswear fashion line on the catwalk at the school's annual fashion show: Portfolio in Motion.

## Chapter 1: Designing from Within

Clothing sits close to my heart. An extension of personality and character, clothing serves as an expression of who I am, as both an artist and a person. The transformative quality clothing creates, inspires my work and my life. Starting in fashion design, I learned a great deal about clothing, design and artistry. As a fashion student I often pulled inspiration from the general zeitgeist reflected in fashions appearing in current magazines, or being worn on the street. Inspirational sources included tear sheets from fashion magazines, famous works of art, video games and even pictures of food (Figure 1.1-1.2). Trained to create clothing, I considered fashion and costume design interchangeable. As I started graduate school, I soon found out just how vastly different these two disciplines are.

Quite different from costume design, fashion design need not be collaborative. Though forecast well in advance, certain trends may or may not be followed by a given designer. A certain type of unity may present itself in each fashion line or show, but the thoughts and judgments of others do not drive the creative decisions. While studying fashion in an academic setting I looked to my professors for a response based solely on the finished garment, not on my creative process, its relationship to the wearer or the consumer market. Even the type of drawing and painting style separates these two design worlds. Elegant, sleek, characterless, overly long and pencil thin fashion plates serve to sell the idea of a design principally to a buyer and at times directly to the consumer. A costume sketch, however, strives to articulate life, reality, character, personality and the overall essence of a production.

Costume design requires the unique ability to tell the transformative story of people while supporting the playwright's idea. At the heart and core of any production lies the story of specific characters that inspire and motivate the audience. Characters tell the story, drive the

action and establish the creative process for us as designers. No matter what the setting, we, the designers ask the audience to believe these actors are “real” people. Intertwined in the process of forming the perception of character, costumes play a crucial role as the clothing reveals the character even before the character speaks. A costume can reveal the sex, age, occupation, social status and geographical location of a character, while also providing information about the season, time of day and the historical period of the play at a glance. For people off and on stage alike, clothing fuses personal stories and choices. An integral part of human existence, clothing, and therefore costumes, become a reflection of life. Only through my journey here in graduate school have I learned to evaluate how to effectively convey the life of these characters to an audience through the design and execution of costumes.

Costume design stands as both an art form and a practical technique. This duality makes the costume field challenging to master and equally tricky to explain. I have found that most people today have little understanding of what a costume designer or technician does. Whether due to the lack of people sewing in today’s society or the ability to get mass produced clothes at the click of a mouse, most people assume that we just pull costumes off a rack and give them to the actor. However, producing a costume design sketch and the resulting costume requires quite an undertaking with multiple steps.

Whether creating designs for realized productions or class projects my design process stays mostly the same. Building upon the traditional steps of the design process, script analysis, research, discussion and collaboration with the director and design team, I forge my designs. To better articulate my design process requires a look at the Getzels Model. In the early 1960s Jacob Getzels built upon previous ideas about the creative process by adding a new first step, referred to as First Insight. His model discusses five stages which occupy varying lengths of time for a

specific creative project. He describes these stages as First Insight, Saturation, Incubation, The Ah-Ha! and Verification (Edwards, 3-4).

Getzels' First Insight stage encompasses an idea or problem which ignites the creative process. Getzels believed that creative people often actively searched out problems and the way in which to solve them. Therefore, this stage, "...encompasses both problem solving (of existing problems) and problem finding (asking new and searching questions)." (Edwards, 4) Questions constantly inspire more questions, and therefore, Getzels' stages constitute more of a loop rather than a continuum (Figure 1.3). Thus, a single design project generally consists of multiple First Insights, each followed by full models. Activated by recognition of a challenging question, First Insight sets me on a path to seek answers, identify options and final solutions to the design problem at hand.

The beginning of any design project excites me. A new challenge brings a new world to explore and develop. My original First Insight always lies with the script. My first reading determines the emotional impact the play has on me. Initially, I recognize the playwright's prominent ideas, often discovering the aesthetic needs and overall mood of the piece. These insights bring to mind colors, textures, fabrics, silhouettes and details which I research intensely as I proceed. When I finally understand the world of the play, I begin to comprehend what kind of people I must design and create.

Once I have formulated my initial ideas about the script, I then re-read the play, this time analyzing the text more fully using the abbreviated Hodge analysis formula created by Professor Francis Hodge (Figure 1.4) The resulting analysis brings more insight to the story, its world and the characters living in it, helping me evaluate specific aspects of the play. The analysis begins with the "given circumstances" or stated facts of the play. The "given circumstances" create an

overall glimpse into the “special world” of the play, its time period, rules, standards and society. Previous action allows for insight into who these characters were before we meet them, which can influence certain details of their costume given the fact that our clothing reveals our life’s journey. An in depth look at “polar attitudes” helps identify which character’s attitude changes toward the “special world” and which character forces that change. This determines to whom the play belongs, which can influence the line and color created for that character. The analysis also expects a certain understanding of dialogue. Often, I find when first reading a script I do not pay too much attention to how the characters articulate their words. I focus on what they actually say. Therefore, the dialogue section of the analysis pinpoints specific characteristics I can utilize in my designs such as, repetitive or incorrect words suggesting a lack of intelligence and education and length of monologues signifying the degree of power a character believes he or she possesses.

The analysis also affords the opportunity to take apart the idea of the play by dissecting the meaning of the title. The title often depicts or summarizes the playwright’s ideas and themes which guide my global thinking. Writing down illuminating quotes or “philosophical statements” from the text also helps clarify the playwright’s ideas. Figuring out the tempo and mood of the play allows me to recognize the pace of the play and what new and exciting ways the story can be told. These creative images allow my mind to think more abstractly about the play.

The extensive breakdown of each character and the dramatic action, however, encompass the most useful parts of the analysis. Dramatic action harkens back to the polar attitudes of the characters; however, instead of dealing with the character’s thoughts it focuses on their physical actions towards the world and other characters. Through dramatic action I am able to delve deeper past the surface plot action and story line into the subtext and inner workings of the

characters. Dramatic action, therefore, influences my overall analysis of the character. Looking at each character's desire, strength, will, moral stance, decorum, descriptive adjectives and their nervousity or physical reaction to "fight or flight" sets the tone for deep character analysis.

Evaluating the character inside and out allows me the opportunity to paint the image of what these characters want, the tactics they use to achieve their desires and the strength they have to put them in motion. This analysis lays the groundwork for all of my creative processes that follow.

With the Hodge analysis I am able to appreciate the script more fully than in the first reading, and my ideas regarding the play surface more quickly. With my general ideas set, I then create actor scene charts and dressing lists. Actor scene charts list each character in each scene. The chart gives me a visual reference for which characters appear together, have quick changes and which are hardly on the stage at all. This information proves vital in creating my designs as characters appearing together cannot wear similar garments or colors, quick changes can easily be made by simplifying the design, and background characters can be designed to move out of or blend into the background. The actor scene chart information combined with my analysis of the script and characters allow me to create preliminary dressing lists. These indicate each character and each costume piece he or she might wear. Dressing lists prove particularly helpful in organizing my initial thoughts about how many costume pieces I might need and what they might look like. These preliminary ideas establish a starting point for communication with the director and design team even though the design continues to evolve.

Once I complete all of my preliminary work with the script I can discuss specifics about the play and its "special world" with the director and design team to establish a clear understanding of what is to come. This initial design meeting affords the opportunity to voice my

ideas about the play and the people it in and provides me with the ideas of the collaborative team and the director. Once the design team reaches a unified vision and I have established my approach to the script, thorough research lends substance and authenticity to my ideas. First, I gather information from books, magazines, online search engines, and anything else relevant to the design. I then break down all the research into sections including the world, actual clothing of the period rooted in the play and each character as I see them. Getzels refers to this period of research as the Saturation stage.

As I saturate my thoughts with anything and everything that connects back to the play, I start to pull together images that I feel best describe the play. I first print out all the research done through computer search engines. I then make copies of all the visual evidence I have tagged in books or sources other than from the computer. With all of the information in front of me, I separate out which images support my idea of the “special world”, individual characters, and general period research that establishes secondary or background characters and groups. I then start cutting out each set of images. As I am cutting, I will often cull the images I feel work best from those which do not give me enough information. Those images that do not make the “cut,” I save and add to my production files for future reference. The images that work best I collage onto poster boards which serve as a tool of communication between me and the director, design team and other collaborators.

World boards, a product of the process mentioned above, establish a base on which to build the “special world” in which these characters live. The “special world” consists of the physical, emotional and psychological characteristics present in the world and characters of the play. By creating these world boards I explore the play more in depth as I experience where these characters might live and what their surroundings might entail. The world boards not only

inspire my own work but can also inspire many ideas within design meetings. When designing *You Can't Take it With You* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, an image of electricity (Figure 1.5) on my world board inspired the whole design team. I initially pulled the image because I felt it matched the electric personalities of the family that I had fallen in love with the moment I read the script. The different colored sparks in the picture worked toward the single purpose of electricity, much like I envisioned this family. Though definite individuals, they worked together to create their own safe haven. This idea inspired my whole creative process for the play. As I kept in mind the idea of the individual versus the whole family, my color choices seemed to fall into place. Giving each character a unique line and color palette established their individual personalities. However, by creating harmony within the individual colors, I established the family as a solid group against the darker colors of the outside world.

Even as that one special world picture inspired my own designs, once presented to the director and design team the picture triggered others design ideas as well. A discussion of the period's electricity and how it might inspire different lighting techniques occupied multiple meetings. Eventually, each character had a space within the set and a personalized type of lighting. Just as my designs and colors brought the family unit together, every light had its own power, and when they came together its brilliancy brought the outsiders into their world. A real eye-opening experience, this process showed me how every idea the design team entertains can be valuable to the whole production.

Once I complete my world boards I start to compile and collage more comprehensive period research and character specific boards. Usually comprised of primary sources, this research includes paintings and photographs from the period, clothing catalogues, actual garments and even personal journals. A chance to evaluate the overall style, silhouette, texture



and color of a period makes this type of research particularly important to my overall concept development. Working towards creating a sense of depth within my characters, this type of research provides an accurate portrayal of real people.

I found period research especially helpful in my classroom design for *The Great White Hope*, by Howard Sackler. Inspired by the life of the first African American heavy weight boxing champion, Jack Johnson, the play follows Jack and Ellie, an interracial couple, up against a racist and war torn world. Their inability to overcome the tensions of this world rips them apart. Eventually, the vulnerability of their own pride and jealousy allows the world to consume them both.

In designing the line for Jack and Ellie, I captured both the essence of the neo-empire period and the period-specific elements to highlight each character's personality. With Ellie's costumes, I not only created the line and silhouette within the boundaries of the actual biographical period's research but added selected specific colors and extravagant details inspired by what the real life Ellie wore (Figure 1.6). Though Ellie only has a few lines throughout the play, the impact of her loss of self and love made a huge impact on how I approached her character. The first time Ellie appears in the play she barely says a word. However, through my analysis of previous action and dramatic action, I discovered her true nature, a sophisticated, well-dressed, socialite desperately seeking love. To create Ellie's arc from an elegant socialite and world traveler to her destruction, I played with the line of the garments to physically show the dragged-down effect, the toll the world had taken on her (Figure 1.7).

Ellie's first costume creates a boisterous effect as she exemplifies a well-dressed socialite. The wide-collar line, bow around her waist, three-quarter length sleeves and a big hat create an inviting and open character as the eye moves up to her face highlighting her youth and

innocence. In the party scene, at the height of their success, again the focus remains on her face with the big plume headband, jewelry and decoration at her neckline. However, the weight at the bottom of the dress mimics the secret burdens she carries with her as the public starts to turn against her and Jack. As the world starts to take its toll on her, the silhouette of her garments follows her descent. By the time she reaches Europe and alludes to having an abortion, her emotional state reflects heavily in the murky, bloody orange color and sagging silhouette of the dress. Appearing more disheveled with each scene, Ellie's final costume mirrors her overwhelming sense of loss and fall from grace. In the last moments Ellie appears on stage, all of the fear, loss, anger and sadness she suppressed over the course of the play tumble out in her final conversation with Jack. The vivid imagery that the playwright and Ellie's words provide seemed to play out like a movie in my mind. In the closing scene I chose to depict Ellie in more private clothes rather than her usual armor of sophisticated public clothing. This switch created a much more intimate moment between her and Jack and illustrated her inability to care anymore about what everyone else thought. I could see how this final costume's weight and color could physically drag her down into the muck as Jack carries in her dead body, limp and wet after throwing herself down the well. Only by manipulating ideas from images of the real Ellie and elite Caucasian women of the period, could I create Ellie's specific character arc while still providing elements that rang true to the real Ellie.

Jack's costumes on the other hand needed to tell the story of how he tries so desperately to hold on to greatness and freedom that he loses everything else that truly matters (Figure 1.8). For Jack's first costume I started with a sleek black boxing outfit similar to what the real Jack Johnson wore. By showing off his muscles and prime physical condition I established a look that captures the boxing giant the moment he steps on stage. As Jack enters the party scene I selected

a top hat and tails modeled after only what the most elite Caucasians would have worn during the period. This outfit represents not only the height of Jack's success but also his inner thoughts about the Caucasians uncontrollably jealous of his well-earned title. Jack's clothes reflected his sense of superiority and belief that he could win all fights. As the play progresses and his fame and popularity falls, the line and detail of his clothing became simpler and less put together. At the end of the play, Jack still clings to what he once had despite how far removed from success he has become. Therefore, I redesigned the boxing outfit, which he wore so stylishly at the beginning, into a shredded and soiled version, leaving him with only the remnants of the life he once had.

With Jack and Ellie designed, my next task became designing the barrage of supporting characters around them. The play itself changes venues multiple times as Jack and Ellie travel the world. Within each setting all of the supporting characters reflect that particular world with multiple costume changes. As costumes move across the stage, they constantly create a shifting pattern of colors, textures and shapes, so a group can have a large visual impact on the look of a design. Designing multitudes of costumes could not have been possible without extensive period research. In my investigations, I found silhouettes unique to the different races and sets of people which helped me form an overall feeling of the period. Utilizing photographs of both African Americans and Caucasians of the period, I easily distinguished the subtle differences in their clothing styles. Knowing these subtle differences enabled me to highlight the main characters against a solid backdrop of supporting characters.

The more complex a character in a play, the more complex the design process and resulting designs become. While Saturation in period research helped establish my designs for *The Great White Hope*, these characters paled in comparison to the complexity of those in Anton

Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. This piece follows the family's desires for something better and their inability to act upon those desires which keeps them unhappy and stagnant. Experiencing a profound empathy for these women's plight, I wanted to deepen my connection to each of them as individuals. Where as in previous class projects I started designing with only period appropriate research, this play and its characters inspired me to explore more. I started researching Russian history and what these women might have seen in their lives. I pulled images of what they might look like in today's society, an eye-opening process that not only bridged my past fashion design experience with costume design, but also supplied a new way to bring out a character's unique personality.

With newly formed connections to the characters my empathy for them evolved. The unyielding fear of never finding love and the loneliness that Olga faces became much more apparent as I saw pieces of my own sister's life through Olga's words. The idea of Masha mourning for her life struck a chord with me as I, too, sometimes feel trapped by decisions I made long ago. The ability to connect more fully to these fictional characters allowed them to become "real" in my mind. Not merely characters in a play, they became representations of real life situations.

Previously, I designed characters with my own preconceived notion of what they might look like. Drawing from my past fashion experience, I applied the clothing on top of the character. However, with this breakthrough, I started to design the character from within. Instead of imposing my own ideas onto the characters, I allowed the characters to live in me and thus nearly design themselves. I created the clothes from a much more personal standpoint, designing as if I were that character. It became a game of how much does this character reveal or conceal about herself to the play's world and other characters? What factors impact the way this

character dresses and how do these change throughout the play? This fundamental idea of designing real people transformed the way I have designed ever since.

While the characters of plays have inspired me to design differently so have the design teams I worked with. The Saturation stage, though dominated by research and the work accomplished alone also includes contributions by anything or anyone who might inspire an idea. Working within a design team supports my Saturation process, for bouncing ideas off of each other inspires new things to research and observe. Surrounded by all of the possible resources I need, I then move into the Incubation stage.

The Incubation stage allows me as a designer to absorb all of the information I obtained throughout the Saturation stage. A time for quality thinking, this stage helps evaluate what to do next and devise a plan of action. Spending a lot of time in the Incubation stage allows my work to prosper, for it enables me to fill in the blanks. I find that if I move too quickly through this stage my designs lack careful articulation and must be reworked multiple times.

The Incubation time serves as the moment to stop doing and just ruminate on everything gathered. Sometimes a frustrating period as I try to figure out what everything means, Incubation provides the chance for my brain to sift through all of the information obtained and to make the best possible choices to address my design challenges. If I do not have enough time to strategically plan my approach things can go awry as they did as I designed for *You Can't Take it With You*. Once I finished my research, I felt I had a good understanding of the period and of the world, so I cut short the Incubation stage and started right in creating the designs. However, as I began my sketches, I realized I lacked the research that some of the characters required. Having missed the opportunity to ruminate on my ideas, the clothing did not capture my true feelings about the characters. When the research could not back up certain ideas, I attempted to expand

my research until finally I became thoroughly confused about the information in front of me. Only when I refocused my efforts on quality thinking about the characters did the designs come to fruition. Through quality thinking and a retrospective look at my script analysis, I reestablished what I wanted to accomplish with the characters, to create real people not just characters that the script can evoke. These realizations then lead me to the best research visuals to create the designs.

I have since learned from that lesson and my transition from research into design for *A Flea in Her Ear* went a bit smoother. Due to the ultimate success of my process and resulting designs for *You Can't Take It With You* I started to believe in my own voice and ideas. As I completed my script analysis and research for *A Flea In Her Ear*, I knew these characters as real people with real emotions and problems living within a real world. Therefore, I felt a period appropriate design would best support the characters. However, within our first few design meetings I realized that the director did not share the same understanding of the reality of these characters as I. The director did not seem to want to focus on the very real marital problems these characters were experiencing. Instead, she wanted to focus on the spectacle of the second act. Therefore, she envisioned a more abstract “steam punk” or period-less kind of design to create a surreal world.

In design meetings the director’s vision alternated between an abstract or surrealist world to a period specific world, and I became trapped in a Saturation and Verification loop as I continued to acquire and show research in hopes of capturing her vision and moving my designs forward. Stuck in the midst of the Incubation stage, the whole design team tried to formulate ideas and test choices regarding the overarching idea the director wanted to achieve to get to the Verification stage. Finally, the breakthrough or what Getzels refers to as the Ah-ha! stage came.

In one particular design meeting the sound designer played a few of the songs he considered using. This mix of traditional and abstract sounds finally appealed the director. Encouraged by this, I found I could design the costumes by mixing the traditional and abstract inspired research images already collected. The resulting designs became a hybrid of the bustle period research I previously collected and the more abstract idea of “steam punk” the director originally envisioned.

This combination of abstract and period specific designs could not have been reached without that struggle and eventual “Ah-ha!” moment. The “Ah-ha!” stage, marks when all of my thinking accomplished during the Incubation stage leads to the sudden spark of an idea. Suddenly, I know how to solve a specific problem within the design or how to accomplish something that I had no idea how to do before. Here I create bright ideas. When the sparks of intuition or realization happen, it can start a frenzy of exploration in trial and error. The shortest stage, the flash of inspiration comes, and I take off in a new direction.

Within any given design project I experience multiple Ah-ha! moments. Just as I had an Ah ha! moment later in the design process with *A Flea In Her Ear*, I also experienced this upon receiving the script for *Romeo and Juliet*. As a Shakespeare piece, I assumed the play would be a period piece. Due to the fact that I had focused on fashion up until that point, finally getting to do a period piece seemed to be a dream come true. When the realization came that the director did not want a period show but a hybrid of multiple periods instead, I first became discouraged. However, with quality incubation time to reflect on what was being asked of me, I reached an Ah-ha! moment. No need to be disappointed. I had been given a chance to create my own unique period, an opportunity to explore multiple periods and challenge everything I thought I

knew about costume design. Ah-ha! moments allow me to approach design problems in a new light.

Once I solidify ideas, complete preliminary sketches and make color decisions, sparks of inspiration illuminate my mind. I then create my final designs. The decisions help convey, support and delineate the characters. Often a daunting task, creating my final designs requires the ultimate commitment. While judgment, or what Getzels calls Verification, happens throughout my whole design process to propel me forward, the final designs convey my ideas to everyone involved in the production. Therefore, my final designs undergo the most scrutiny and ultimate form of verification in my design process. These sketches convey my ideas to the director and the actor in our mutual creation of character and inevitably provide a way for me to communicate with myself as I clarify my vision of the global scope of the show.

The final designs can only be created as a result of going through the whole design process. Each design hinges upon all of the information and ideas I obtain throughout my process. My first step in drawing characters usually starts with a quick sketch. This sketch depicts a rough idea of how I perceive the character as a person. I try to capture the way in which the character might stand or a facial expression that communicates their internal emotions. Fast and freeing, these sketches serve as a jumping off point for my own thinking process. Remaining unattached to the result of the spontaneous sketches makes them a perfect first step as my hand simply draws the ideas in my head without the fear of the director or design team judging them. If an idea does not work for me then I simply throw it out and start again.

I initiate my quick sketches by envisioning the physical and emotional facets of the character including what body type the character might have, how the character presents them self to the world or even if the character seems introverted or extroverted. All of these details



impact the costume a character might wear. By putting pencil to paper I explore mass, silhouette and movement of the character as my pencil glides across the page. Only when I fully explore research and the awareness of the character provided by the script analysis and quick sketches, can I begin to understand the costume that will best express each character.

Take, for example, the first project I completed in the costume design graphics class. Tasked with creating a more three-dimensional and life-like sketch of previous undergraduate work, I started with one of my favorite designs: Cinderella from *Into the Woods* by Steven Sondheim (Figure 1.9). My original sketch displayed a stiff and unyielding character not compatible with the sweet, kind and charming essence Cinderella embodies. However, as the new sketches of her figure evolved her head started to look up instead of down, her stance became much more relaxed and graceful, her arms opened out and the dress seemed to float and move (Figure 1.10). The new flowing dress lifted the weight off of the character and implied freedom of movement. The dress also provided an excellent emotional base for Cinderella as it became a symbol of her lighthearted, whimsical existence. With just those few simple changes the aura and depiction of the character now rang true (Figure 1.11).

While simple changes in the line effected my Cinderella drawing so did the medium I chose to use. For all of my final sketches I now rely on the fluidity of opaque watercolor paints on watercolor paper while in fashion design I used marker, a more immediate yet unforgiving color medium. Watercolors, however, allow for a much more flexible way of working as I can mix the colors on the paper as I paint. Watercolors also inspire the director and other design team members to experience the character as I do. The paints provide a light and airy quality as my Cinderella drawing reflects, or with even less water they can evoke rich and deep colors like

those of markers. One of the powerful components of costume design, color makes the strongest impact on an audience.

Controlling the mood and emotional response of the audience, color still remains one of the most challenging design elements for me. Color ideas come from my response to the script, research images, ideas from the director and interactions with the lighting and set designers. Take for example my process when choosing the color palette of my realized production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Knowing that I wanted to establish a slightly different color palette for each of the two families I contemplated just what those colors should be. Through working with the set and lighting designers, I established a blue and brown hue for Romeo's side. This color pairing not only allowed for the sullenness that Romeo embodies at the beginning of the play to bleed into the rest of his world, but also complimented the set and lighting designer's ideas (Figure 1.12).

However, for Juliet and her family, I remained unsure of the color story for quite some time. I could not discern the essence of Juliet as I had with Romeo. Playing with my original idea of pinks and reds did not mesh well with the darker blues and browns of Romeo's family. Then I realized that all of the period research I had compiled had girls in soft white cottons. The idea of white representing softness as well as purity proved perfect for Juliet. By mixing the white palette with pale yellows and tans, Juliet's world communicated her character arc from an innocent child dressed up like a doll into an empowered woman, and the color worked well against the darker tones of blues and browns of Romeo's world (Figure 1.13). This color decision also allowed me to bring their two worlds together. As the couple grew closer Romeo's color palette lightened to match the value of Juliet's (Figure 1.14). In turn, the value and hues of

the families grew darker to show the couple as the shining beacon of hope within this world of fighting and misery (Figure 1.15).

While my color choices sometimes change throughout my design process, these carefully articulated final drawings bring my imagination to life. Putting the final designs down on paper forces me to examine my ideas and make specific decisions which affect all of the work that follows. They organize my thoughts and feelings about these characters in a private collaboration with myself before I move into the design meetings for final verification and onward into the shop for execution. With the many and often simultaneous demands placed on me as the designer, my final designs preserve my sanity as they provide the road map to all of my subsequent innovations as we move the clothes to the stage performance.

The constant cycle of my design process keeps me creatively inspired. Exploring script ideas, sketching, and developing my ideas into final designs brings great joy to my work. Creating connections to the characters through research and personal experiences offers a new way of approaching my work. With an open mind and an open heart my designs have flourished. Moreover, this effective, thorough design process serves me well as it inspires all which transpires in bringing the costume, the character and my ideas to life.

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Figure 1.1 Display board from undergraduate school with sketches for a woman's sportswear line inspired by a famous work of by Wayne Thiebaud entitled: *Shoe Rows*.

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Figure 1.2 Inspirational food image torn from a magazine and resulting undergraduate sketch, garment, and catwalk picture.

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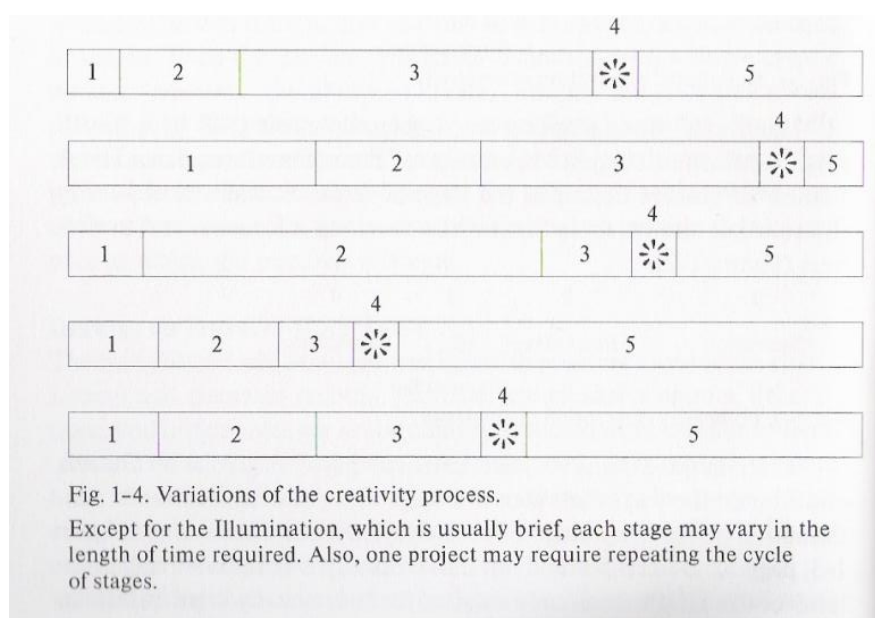
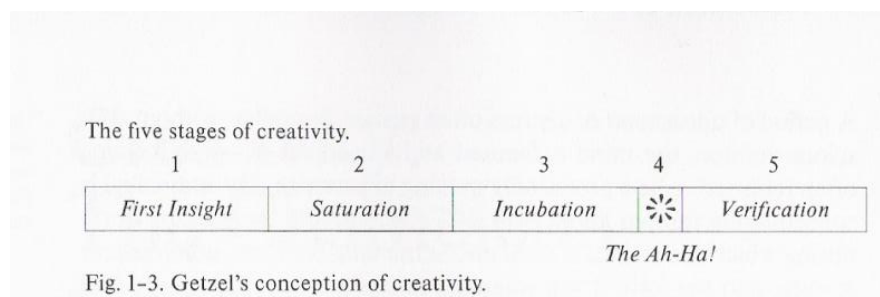


Figure 1.3 Copy of Getzels Model as pictured in Betty Edward's *Drawing on the Artist Within*.

## Appendix: Chapter 1

ABBREVIATED PLAY ANALYSIS ..... Created by Gweneth West using Francis Hodge. *Play Directing: Analysis, Style, & Communication*.

### I. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

#### A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographical location, including climate
2. Date: year, season, time of day
3. Economic environment
4. Political environment [public & personal]                      LAW
5. Social environment    ETIQUETTE
6. Religious environment    CHURCH

#### B. Previous Action Summarize the playwright's use of previous action.

#### C. Polar Attitudes of the Principal Characters

1. Attitudes toward the Special World of the play at the beginning and again at the end; in the form of an interview quotation.
2. Which character changes his/her attitude toward the special world? Whose play is it? Who changes most? Makes the most discoveries?

II. DIALOGUE Summarize the way that the playwright uses dialogue to create character, mood. Note any special emphasis you believe that the playwright places on any of these: A. Choice of words    B. Choice of phrases & sentence structures    C. Choice of images created by the words..... D. Choice of peculiar characteristics such as dialect etc.    E. Sound of the dialogue    F Structure of the lines and speeches on the page...

III. DRAMATIC ACTION Summarize the dramatic action of the piece. Which characters are forcing the action? Which character is receiving the

brunt of that force? Who changes? List 10 -20 action verbs that dominate for each of the principal characters throughout the play. CHARACTERS For each principal character complete the following by filling in the attached charts.

- A. Desire: What the character WANTS! State in a single, intangible word. [No two characters can have the same DESIRE!]
- B. Strength/Will: How much strength does the character have to achieve this?
- C. Moral Stance: To what lengths will the character go, break the laws of state, society, church?
- D. Decorum: What does this character look like, how does h/she dress, carry h/herself? Well groomed? Slob? Posture? All external signs or manifestations of conformity/non-conformity. 8-10 images.
- E. Adjectives: Describe anything that has not yet been said about the character. 8-10 adjectives.
- F. Nervosity: Describe the 'character-mood-intensity' in two states: the neutral personality state and then in the high adrenaline state of 'fight or flight'. Remember: NORMAL does not describe anything!  
1. Heartbeat 2. Perspiration 3. Stomach 4. Muscle 5. Breathing

### V. IDEA

- A. Meaning of the Title Why to you think the playwright selected this title? What do you think that it means to the play?
- B. Philosophical Statements: What are the messages the playwright is sending? These are those lines that seem to jump out at you, that seem to be in *italics*. Write at least 10 quotations directly from the script.
- C. Write the bottom line lesson of this play. Do not use quotations from the play or common phrases. This should be in your own words.

VI. TEMPOS Describe the overall tempo of this play and its climactic moment.

VII. MOODS Write the overall 5 senses & bottom line Mood Image for your play.

Figure 1.4 Copy of the abbreviated play analysis created by Professor Francis Hodge and adapted by Gweneth West.



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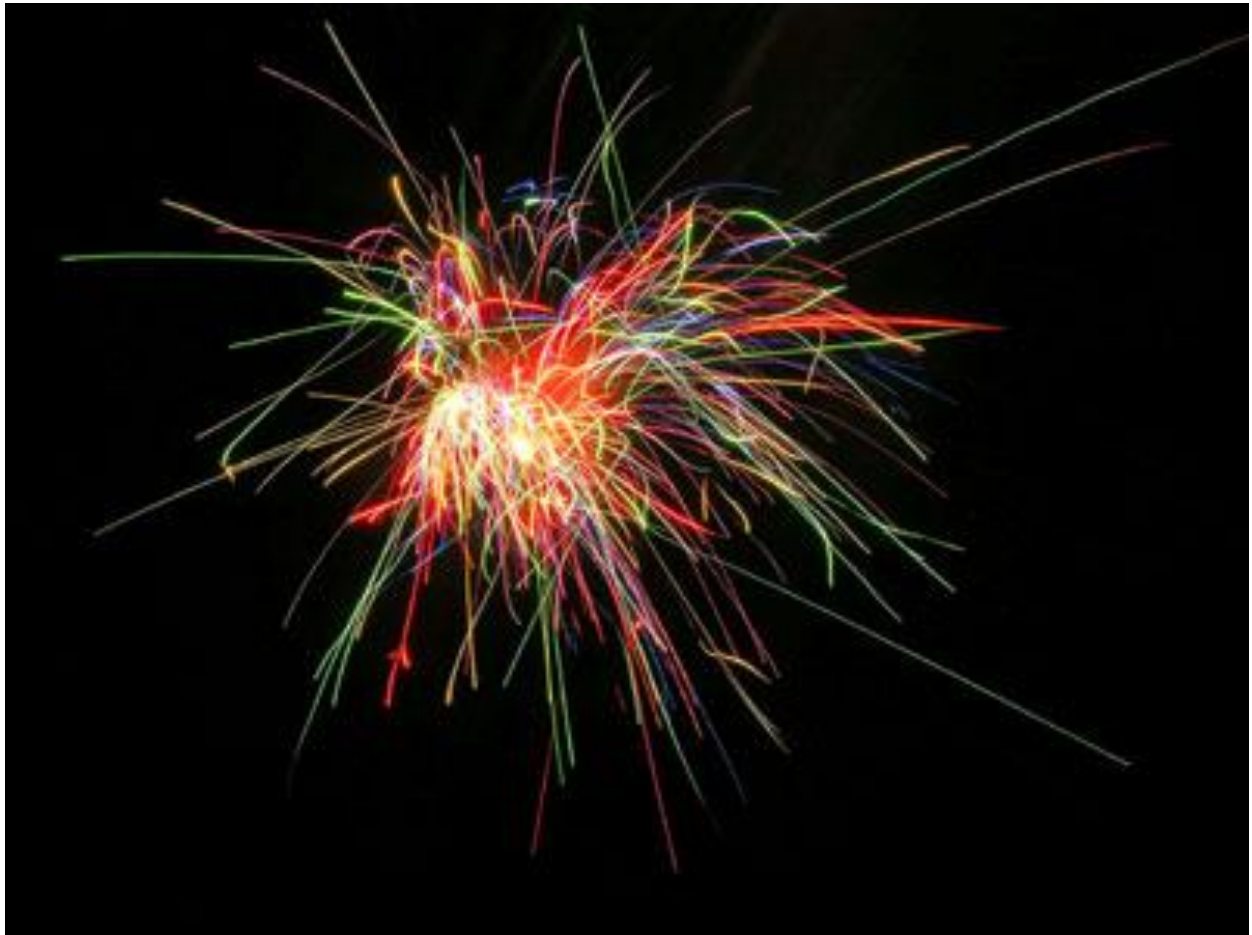


Figure 1.5 Electricity Image pulled for *You Can't Take It With You* world board.

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Figure 1.6 Research images of the actual Jack and Ellie which inspired my designs.

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Ellie Opening Scene: I,1



Ellie Party Scene: I,4



Ellie Europe/Abortion Scene:II,3



Ellie End Fincal Scene: III,3

Figure 1.7 Costume sketches of Ellie for *The Great White Hope*.

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Jack Opening Scene: I,1



Jack Party Scene: I,4



Jack Europe: II,3



Jack End: III,3

Figure 1.8 Costume sketches of Jack for *The Great White Hope*.



## Appendix: Chapter 1

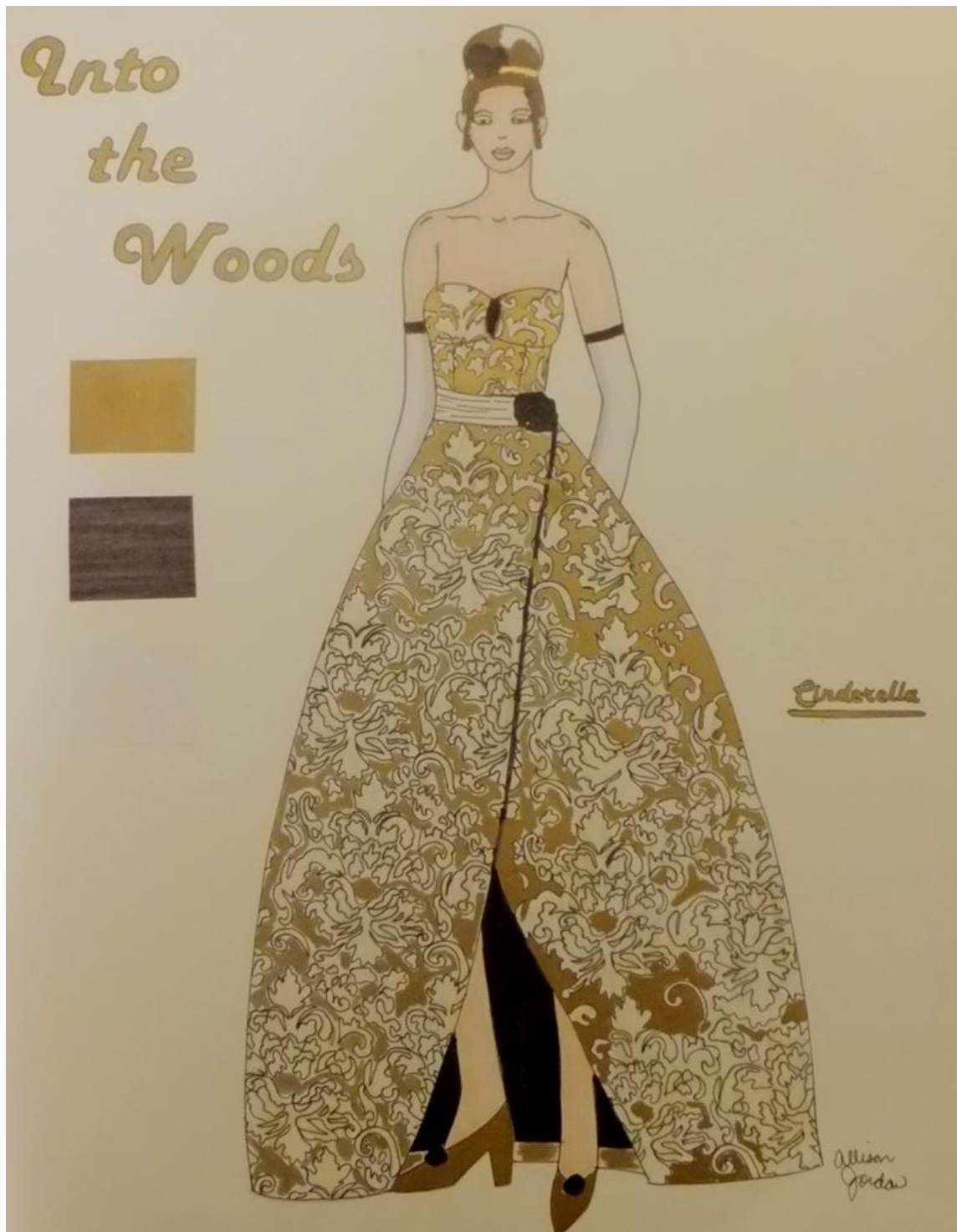


Figure 1.9 Undergraduate costume sketch of Cinderella from *Into the Woods*.

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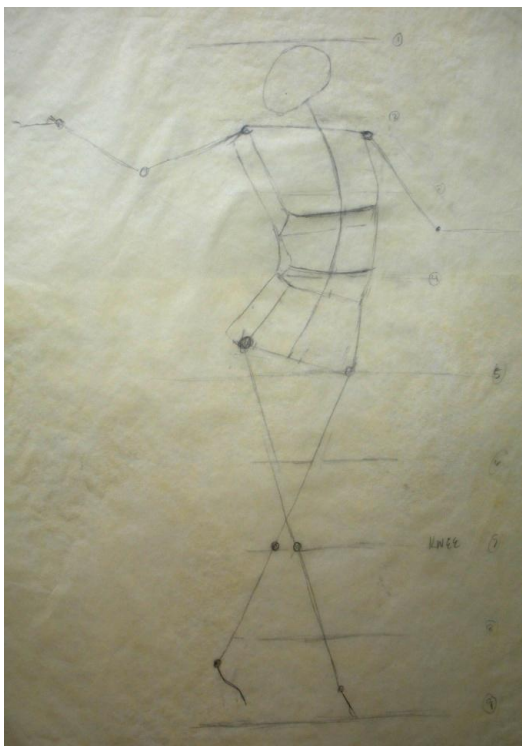


Figure 1.10 Quick sketches of body poses for new graduate sketch of Cinderella from *Into the Woods*.



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Figure 1.11 Graduate costume sketch for Cinderella from *Into the Woods*.



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Figure 1.12 Production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* depicting the blues of Romeo's world. Featuring Benvolio, Lord Montague, Lady Montague, the Prince, and Ensemble members. Photograph taken by Michael Bailey.



Figure 1.13 Production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* depicting the whites, yellows and gold of Juliet's world. Featuring Lady Capulet, Juliet and the Nurse. Photograph taken by Michael Bailey.



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Figure 1.14 Production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* depicting the pull of Romeo into Juliet's color theory. Photo by Michael Bailey.



Figure 1.15 Production photograph from the death scene in *Romeo and Juliet* depicting Romeo and Juliet as the light and hope among the darkness of their world.

## Chapter 2: Translation, Transformation and Technology

There lies a great difference between understanding the mastery of a design sketch and the hands-on mastery of transforming the designs to the stage through costume technology. Costume technology transforms my sketch into a living, breathing garment. The costumes lead the audience's eye to the main characters and encompass the overarching themes of the play. Therefore, every choice made during the technology process must enhance the overall design not just each character. Translating my designs from a two-dimensional sketch to a three-dimensional form requires careful thought, efficient organization and time management as I am constantly moving back and forth between all of the stages of the Getzels Model simultaneously. Therefore, my process in the creation of the costumes becomes quite complicated.

My approach to producing the costumes for a production begins with my evaluation of my design sketches. As a designer my question to solve begins with the script, with technology the question to solve begins with the design sketch itself. A close analysis of each sketch provides the information necessary to make all of the important technical decisions which follow. A blue print of sorts, my sketches serve to ground me in the mutually agreed discussions finalized in design meetings and serve as reminders of the specific sensitivities and qualities we hope to capture within each costume. The execution process brings challenges for flexibility rules as I translate my designs to the actor's characterization and production in performance in real time.

As I review my sketches, I start to create dressing lists. In doing so, I get an overall view of the total requirements of the play by listing all necessary items for each costume for all of the characters. In creating these lists I catalogue the articles of clothing and accessories in each sketch layer by layer clearly describing what the actor will wear from the skin outward.

Accounting for all clothing items needed, these lists serve me well as they not only articulate what each actor needs, but also which pieces I need to pull, buy, rent or build. This gives me an idea of labor and material budget challenges for the amount of work that may be required (Figure 2.1). However, no amount of organization could have prepared me for the challenges of my first realized show.

With no previous experience as the costume designer to build upon, I did not have an easy time getting my first realized show, *Romeo and Juliet*, to come to life. The director's hybrid, contemporary concept became a hurdle hindering me from making important decisions in a timely manner regarding silhouette, fabric, texture and color. With no "real" period to start from, the concept proved difficult and unclear to design. This feeling of unease and uncertainty transferred into the shop as my confidence remained low. Pushing forward, I held tight to what I knew and believed in regarding the play- the transformation of Juliet.

At the center and the heart of Shakespeare's story lies Juliet. Having not quite reached her fourteenth birthday, she stands on the border between immaturity and maturity. At the beginning of the play she stands obedient, sheltered and naïve, but by the end she makes a full transition into womanhood. Juliet's transformation from a wide-eyed girl into a self-assured, loyal and capable woman creates the pivotal transition around which all of the other characters revolve. Knowing exactly how I wished Juliet's transformation to take place, I began my discussions about her with the shop.

As previously mentioned in chapter one, color for Juliet proved challenging in my design process. However, as Juliet's costumes started to become reality, I found her colors exciting and inspirational to the rest of my designs. Our first scene with Juliet found her in a fluffy pale

yellow dress. Here she evoked the essence of a porcelain doll which her parents could manipulate into doing exactly what they wanted (Figure 2.2). Knowing that the image for the second scene, the party, needed to evoke Juliet's naïve nature but also pull her out from the crowd so Romeo could find her and fall in love with her, I chose to repeat the first silhouette which created a sense of volume. This time, however, while demure and child-like in front with the multiple layers of lace on the bottom, the back of the dress remained open, with her back and womanly shape exposed. This foreshadowed her coming transformation into womanhood. With each additional garment Juliet's silhouette slimed, revealing even more of her womanly figure and newly acquired strength (Figure 2.4). As the play descends into night, Romeo's colors mimicked Juliet's and the light color of their combined clothing allowed them rise above as the rest of the world sinks into darkness. As the play ended, Juliet and her Romeo, though deceased, shone bright among the sea of darkness, a beacon of hope for a new resolve between the two families.

My passion regarding Juliet's transformation became such an integral part of how I wanted to tell this story that the shop built four of her eight costumes. This served to specifically articulate my vision whereas pulling or renting those garments would not suffice. Once I articulated how I felt about each costume and Juliet's transitions, I felt everyone understood the sensitivities I hoped to capture in her costumes. Their training, as both technicians and designers, enhanced our mutual understanding of what needed to be accomplished. After one-on-one conversations with each of the cutter/drapers about specifics of garment cut, fabrics, trims, closures and any special requirements from the director and actor, they began to drape and flat pattern the garments. With the first iteration complete, we then evaluated the progress while looking at the half drape (or half of a garment in muslin) on the mannequin to make sure

everything matched what we previously discussed. In a professional setting the cutter/drafter usually does not build the garment, but rather they drape it and move onto the next project. However, in our shop, while they might have help along the way, the cutter/drapers usually drape and construct the garments, therefore, making good communication between us even more important.

Once complete, their drapes become the pattern from which a mockup can be produced. Much like the quick sketch serves me as the designer; mockups give me a glance into what the final product will be. Almost simultaneously while the mockup initiates production so does my selection of the right fabrics for the garments. While I may have swatched fabrics as I drew my sketches sometimes fabric options change based on availability, color changes or challenges that arise while working with the lighting and set designers. The importance of selecting the right fabric cannot be underestimated. Unless a fabric possesses the right qualities it will not create the best possible line and movement for my design. Having the appropriate weight, texture, hand and color become vital to the costume's creation. With the diminished number of home sewers, few fabric stores remain. Fabric selection proves complicated and at times frustrating. In the case of Juliet I knew I needed all different kinds of white fabrics and laces for her party dress. Wanting to evoke a sense of playfulness and femininity, I chose a mix of light weight white and gold-toned fabrics and laces to fully realize the design. For Juliet's gowns worn later in the play, I chose more flowing and drapable, sheer white fabrics which not only allowed for softness but gave her the weight she needed to stand up as the strong mature woman.

Though I found exactly what I wanted for Juliet's garments, sometimes when fabric shopping I cannot find the exact fabric I yearn for. Therefore, I try not to limit myself to one specific color. I find that if I can get the right hand or drapability of the fabric and the right

texture and weight then color can sometimes be renegotiated or manipulated through dyeing. I also try not to limit myself to fabrics usually used for dressmaking as I would have done in fashion design. Most, if not all, of the fabrics I typically use for productions come from the drapery or upholstery section of the fabric stores. Fabric shopping can be quite difficult, but if I keep in mind the character and my sketch I am sure to make the right decisions.

With the fabric in hand and mockups completed everything evolved nicely. After fitting the mockups for all four garments on the actor, making corrections, completing the garments and seeing my designs come to life, I felt proud and accomplished. Each costume successfully and clearly articulated the character and her relationship to the world. With Juliet established and working well I then turned my focus to the fittings of the many characters surrounding her.

With this hybrid period concept, creating Shakespeare's characters in a more contemporary style of clothing presented a challenge in the number of changes for each character. Shakespearean actors wore but one or maybe two costumes while contemporary culture expects multiple changes for every occasion. Due to the contemporary twist on this production I could not design only one costume for each supporting character like I might have if it were set in the original Elizabethan period. The further back in history the clothing resides the easier the audience accepts a single costume for each character. With modern clothing, however, the audience expects multiple costume changes just as they change their clothing multiple times every day. Therefore, with a cast of twenty-five people needing to change at least twice, the total costumes soared. My dressing lists proved vital in obtaining and organizing all of the clothing that I designed and the audience expected.

Although clues about the characters can be found within the script, the interpretation by the actor, director, and costume designer breathes life and personality into each character. Therefore, once the production moves into the execution and rehearsal phase, having one-on-one time with each actor becomes critical to the evolution of my designs. Due to time restrictions and availability this one-on-one time usually happens during the first fitting. Fittings create a challenge, as within the time span of one hour I need to effectively and efficiently have a discussion with the actor, fit the appropriate clothing to match my design, and create an alteration list all while instilling a sense of positivity and clarity in everyone involved in the fitting.

To better prepare for and ensure that fittings of costumes run smoothly, I start by utilizing my dressing lists to pull pieces from stock that match or can be re-imagined into my designs. At this time I also purchase pieces that I will need, which can include anything from pantyhose to a new suit. Before an actor gets called in for a fitting I pull as many different elements as possible so that I can spend more time with the actor instead of running back and forth to and from the costume stock. I also feel that with all of my options laid out in full view, it takes some of the pressure off of me as I do not second guess that there might be something better. Pulling many clothing and accessory options also ensures the best possible fit of the garments for having choices in different sizes makes certain something will fit or can be altered to fit. With my sketch in my hand for a reference and everything pulled, the actor and I can explore together the evolution of my design and their character.

Costumes often provide the means for actors to channel each new character. In fact, I have worked with a few actors who discovered their character in the fitting room. This often happens when working with actors who play minor supporting roles. With either a few lines or

no lines these actors discover that the costume can help them fill in some of the unknowns of their character. Often these smaller roles need the most experienced actors portraying them because the actor must “create” his/her own character. When the actor does not have enough experience in these types of roles, which often becomes the case in an educational setting, the character often becomes written by me and my clothes.

Take for instance my work with one of the background characters “Montague Servant” in *Romeo and Juliet*. Upon entering the fitting room I like to have a conversation with each of the actors about how they feel about their character. In this particular case, I could tell from the moment the actor walked into the fitting he felt fearful about discussing his character and thus, only wanted to talk about the techniques he learned in using his prop guns and knives. Suddenly realizing a whole character needed to be developed, I pulled a dark sleek suit and vibrant blue shirt (Figure 2.5). As a part of the supporting ensemble the color of the suit could place him in Romeo’s color world, work well for the overall picture of the play and also create a visual connotation of evoking a sense of power and authority for the actor. As he looked at himself in the mirror he stood taller and more confident, prompting a powerful transformation into the character of “Montague Servant” and not just another guy holding a gun.

During fittings the transformation of each actor required the same kind of specific character details. As each character became fully realized another piece of the puzzle came together to create the whole picture of the play. The work of the scenic and lighting designer translated the same sensitivities and aesthetic qualities of the play into their designs blending our three disciplines together seamlessly. The visual picture created a unified view of the world of the play providing the perfect backdrop to tell our story.



Learning from all of my successes and challenges with *Romeo and Juliet*, better prepared me for my process with *You Can't Take It With You*. When I first read the script I knew it would be a fun show to be a part of. A hilarious 1930s comedy full of joy, love and family, this play touched my heart and made me eager to start designing. Knowing my strengths and weaknesses as well as having designed before improved my confidence and supported me in finding my voice. As my confidence grew so did my ability to design, communicate with the director and the design team and most importantly, communicate my ideas more clearly with the costume shop personnel.

The electric energy and positive excitement that I felt for the play through my collaboration and preparation for the design meetings and throughout my entire design process transferred to the execution process and into the entire shop. With those working around me starting to love the play as much as I did, we started working together as a team creating a fun and upbeat atmosphere. As I started to bring all of the colorful characters to life there were three actors who made the biggest transformations: Alice, Penny, and Duchess Olga Katrina.

The transformation of the actor playing Alice, the leading lady, became one of my major accomplishments for this production. In the script, Alice defines femininity. Typical of the 1930s female romantic lead, Alice appears to be feminine and graceful in every possible way. However, the actor cast in the part embodied a tall, modern strapping woman who only wore pants and exercise clothing in her real life. Therefore, my challenge became blending both the actor and character in each silhouette to create an overall charming yet realistic woman. In the creation of Alice's first dress I wanted to capture the flirtatious, feminine side of this woman who loves being in love (Figure 2.6). Therefore, I chose a summery yellow sheer patterned fabric with a yellow opaque fabric underlay to exemplify her sunny disposition and hopeful outlook.

With a skirt that slightly flared out at the bottom, she seemed to float on air as she greeted her family members upon entering the house. In fittings it took a while for the actor to become accustomed to wearing something so feminine and outside of her comfort zone. By suggesting she watch Ginger Rodgers and Fred Astaire movies as well as the modern Disney movie *Enchanted*, the actor soon developed more graceful movements that matched well with the costume and the period character as written.

Not only the romantic female lead, Alice remains the only character from this family of non-conformists who interacts with the outside world of conformity. She melds the bridge between the wacky family and the work-a-day outside world. Therefore, each subsequent costume she wore evoked both a sense of being part of the colorful family and of a stark, bleak colorless outside world. By the end of the play, dejected and sullen from the loss of her love, the navy blue color associated with the outside world crept over her letting only a tiny bit of pattern show in the details of the dress (Figure 2.7).

Penny proved to be another type of transformation all together as the actor portraying this kooky mother had played Juliet in my production the previous year. Figuring out how to make this young ingénue into the mother of an actor the same age proved a more challenging task. One of the craziest and kookiest characters in the whole play, I decided to have Penny wear the most pattern and color of anyone in the production. However, I knew that the bright colors might create a more youthful look, so I chose to keep Penny's silhouette slimmer than Alice and more in line with the 1920s and 1930s in contrast to Alice's dresses in the silhouettes of the 1940s. Inspired by research images found in the Sears catalogue from the 1930s, the addition of collars I designed provided not only visual interest to the dresses but in some cases a more modest, mature look to the dresses as well (Figure 2.8). With a more modest hairstyle and makeup

design, Penny's character came to fruition and the transformation from young ingénue to mother was complete (Figure 2.9).

For another actor who played two vastly different roles, emphasizing the body shape and attributes of clothing played an important role in the creation of the two different character personalities. The first character I needed to create followed closely to the silhouette I had created once before for the same actor when she played Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*. Mrs. Kirby, the wife of Alice's boss and mother of her fiancé, holds the same elegance and presence as Lady Capulet which conceals her sassy sense of humor. Wanting to keep the humor a surprise and keep her in tune with the bleak outside world of the play, I decided to work with a dark purple color in a slim sophisticated silhouette allowing the humor to come from within the actor playing against her public image. Not finding the exact silhouette I wanted in stock I obtained permission to use one of the garments from The Collection of Historic Dress, the department's vintage collection. A lithe 1930s figure hugging purple bias cut dress with purple lace overlay created the perfect silhouette and shape necessary for creating this sophisticated, fashion minded character (Figure 2.10).

As she moved into the second act, and her second character Duchess Olga Katrina, she needed to undergo quite a transformation to appear as an old Russian woman claiming to be of Russian royalty now working as a waitress. This sweet, kind "grandmother" simultaneously evokes the sense of a bag lady carrying her whole life with her. To create the jolly grandmother feeling and the sense of a whole new character required much more than simply the outer garments. I needed to transform her body with padding which would also transform her posture. Creating the padding took a few tries to look right with the actor's body frame. Constantly adding or shaving off layers created just the right silhouette under the clothing. With the addition

of large, low hanging breasts, padded out hips and stomach pooch, the padding completely transformed not only the shape of the actor's body but also the stance she held while wearing it. Therefore, the padding helped provide not only the body type I envisioned for the character but also inspiration for the actor to develop a much more realistic age-appropriate character. To add to the rotund new figure I employed a wrap dress that hugged the newly formed body emphasizing all of the newly created curves. Reducing the actor's height from Mrs. Kirby's evening heels to functional comfortable flat shoes fully articulated the grandmother essence (Figure 2.11). The transformation, however, would not have been complete without the 1890s dilapidated jacket from the Historical Collection (Figure 2.12). Adding character, age, and the bag lady feel the jacket became the perfect accessory along with the dilapidated fur and oversized hat in articulating the character.

With the transformations of my characters complete, the whole world of the play appeared. While the scenic and lighting designer translated the themes and ideas of family, love, and warmth into their design, my designs provided the color and pop of each of the character's electric personalities. The blending of our three fields captured the complete picture of this family's world. The scenic designer created the home that felt lived in and comfortable with subtle warm amber lighting by the lighting designer creating a cozy and intimate atmosphere. Sitting at the edge of this family's living room I became a part of their exciting adventures. With the transformation complete and a manageable list of polishing notes I sat through dress rehearsals laughing and having fun enjoying the fruits of my labor and I looked forward to sharing this production with our audiences.

Translating my designs from two-dimensional sketches to three-dimensional forms requires effective communication with the director, design team, actors, and above all the

costume shop. With every choice made during the technology process enhancing the overall picture, creating the right silhouettes and choosing the correct fabrics, trims and accessories allow my designs to lift off of the page and create a new reality. Challenging yet fun, transforming actors over and over again renews my sense of creativity and pushes me to achieve greater results.

When any production finally opens I breathe a sigh of relief. The excitement of rehearsals and all of the preparation culminates with the opening night performance. The best feeling in the world comes from seeing all of the hard work pay off and getting to see my designs up on the stage with the audience reacting to them. While I might always feel something could change or be better, I know that with each opportunity my designs get better and anything I do not achieve in one production I will strive to resolve with the next one.

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Lucienne
----------

Pantyhose  
 Bustle  
 Corset  
 Blouse  
 Underskirt  
 Overskirt  
 Jacket  
 Victorian boots  
 Hat  
 Jewelry  
 Parasol

Lucienne
----------

Red Pantyhose  
 Bustle  
 Corset  
 Red and white striped shirt  
 Red and white striped skirt  
 Brown leather bustle skirt  
 Brown leather jacket with chain trim  
 Gold Ankle Boots  
 Red Hat with trim  
 Red and white striped parasol

Figure 2.1 Preliminary and Finalized Dressing Lists for Lucienne from *A Flea In Her Ear*.

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Figure 2.2 Production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* depicting Juliet's first yellow dress and also featuring the Nurse and Lady Capulet. Photo by Michael Bailey.



Figure 2.3 Costume design sketch and production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* depicting Juliet's party dress.



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Figure 2.4 Production photographs from *Romeo and Juliet* of Juliet's white dresses she wears after her wedding and in the final death scene depicting her evolution into womanhood.

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Figure 2.5 Production photograph from *Romeo and Juliet* of the Montague Servant's sleek suit and vibrant blue shirt. Shown here in the center surrounded by two other Montague ensemble members.

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Figure 2.6 Production photograph from *You Can't Take It With You* depicting Alice's opening yellow dress when she is in love with love.



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Figure 2.7 Production photograph from *You Can't Take It With You* depicting Alice's act three dress. Dejected and sullen from the loss of her love, the navy blue color associated with the outside world crept over her letting only a tiny bit of pattern show in the details of the dress.

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Figure 2.8 Production photograph from *You Can't Take It With You* depicting Penny's opening dress with created collar inspired by an early 1930s Sears Catalogue.



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Figure 2.9 Research image and production photograph from *You Can't Take It With You* depicting Penny's 1930s style makeup, hair and silhouette. Pictured here with Essie.

## Appendix: Chapter 2



Figure 2.10 Production photograph from *You Can't Take it With You* depicting Mrs.Kirby's purple dress from The Collection of Historic Dress.

## Appendix: Chapter 2



Figure 2.11 Production photograph from *You Can't Take it With You* depicting Duchess Olga Katrina with the created padding and black dress from The Collection of Historic Dress.



## Appendix: Chapter 2



Figure 2.12 Production photograph from *You Can't Take it With You* depicting the 1890s coat for Duchess Olga Katrina from The Collection of Historic Dress along with of Kolenkhov.

### Chapter 3: Communication and Inspiration

Finding new ways to communicate and translate my ideas provides for eye opening experiences. With each new project I discover and master new ideas and skills influenced by more than just my field of study. Reaching out and communicating with others enhances my work and enriches my connections. These connections forged through experiences with fellow designers, specialty exploration and elective classes have shaped how I see and interact with the work of my chosen career path in costume design and technology. Figure drawing, wig and makeup design and computer technology have all positively impacted the way I approach my costume work and have made me a better artist.

Every term for the last three years I have had the opportunity to hone my drawing skills in figure drawing class. I had been repeatedly told I could not draw by previous teachers prior to this program, which left me overwhelmed and worried coming into this class. When the time came to start drawing I tentatively placed my pencil on the paper and looked at the subject for that day, my shoes (Figure 3.1). Obsessed with looking at the drawings being created by surrounding students, I became acutely aware of my insecurities and envious of their abilities. Becoming more and more obsessed about the other's perceptions of my work I erased almost every line I drew. When the time came to hang up all of our drawings for the day I feared what others might say about my work. Paralyzed I stood waiting for harsh critical words, but they never came. That day a major Ah-ha! breakthrough happened when I realized that I judge my art more harshly than anyone else. With each new project I learned to let the fear go, and I opened up to each new process.

Much like my design process, the creation of a drawing also follows the Getzels Model. With each project, new questions get asked, First Insights spark and the creative process ensues.

My original First Insight in creating an art piece always starts with the subject. With my self-portrait project, the problem to solve started with the question of how to portray myself (Figure 3.2). What did I want to say about myself? Who did I want the world to see? In the saturation stage I took as many pictures of myself in high-contrast light as I could to clearly see and capture my essence and personality with the image. In the incubation period I sat and contemplated which picture captured me the best, what materials I might use, and what my final composition might look like.

Once I selected the picture that best captured my essence, I started to draw. As my pencil started to articulate the contours of my face, I found that I took more time and care with each line. I also found that with each line I drew I looked at the photograph more than I looked at my drawing. A major Ah-ha! moment, I realized that looking more at the subject than at my paper created a much more realistic and accurate drawing reinforcing my success and silencing my fear of drawing. Looking at the subject also provided a sense of freedom and release that I had not experienced before with any of my drawings. Able to trust my hand, I learned to just keep drawing, to never lay my pencil down because the more active my hand the more I focused on what I drew and less on how the piece looked. While praise from my classmates made me feel accepted and excited about the work, the greatest satisfaction came from within me. I felt a sense of joy and accomplishment when I looked at this piece. This one piece captured my intentions, an accurate representation of myself as the subject, and more importantly the acceptance of myself as an artist.

To explore the human figure beyond drawing we also worked with collage. Utilizing various magazine cutouts I created a figure within a defined space (Figure 3.3). Exploring different colors, media, and shapes this project completely transformed the way I perceive my

process. With no composition or figure laid out in front of me, this project presented a unique opportunity to develop my own artistic concept. With the ability to imagine the project in my own way without concentrating on drawing proportions of the figure, the fear that had crept into so many of my drawings vanished. I concentrated simply on the process of being in the moment and doing.

After I envisioned my figure using various magazine cutouts, I started to develop the compositional background details. Working outside, in the open air, I found my surroundings inspiring and started to incorporate the trees and stairs into my composition. The true lesson or Ah-ha! moment came when I realized that the angle I created for the railing on the stairs needed adjustment. I simply ripped up the glued pieces, cut them differently and pasted them back over top. Though inherent in the collage process this cutting and pasting allowed me the freedom to completely change my piece and not worry if it looked right, because if it did not then I could easily change it again. Before this project, I painstakingly drew each line on the paper. To erase a large part of something I had spent valuable time drawing seemed ridiculous forcing me to negatively judge my ability to draw accurately in the first place. This project showed me the impact of every artistic decision I make and that sometimes getting rid of something allows for something even better. From that moment on I have not worried about perfection in my art. Instead, I focus on being true to the subject and my creative imagination no matter how many steps it takes to get there. The idea remains most important not the work done to produce it.

Much as in costume design and technology, drawing requires the ability to see the whole picture. When designing costumes I must also take into consideration the set and lighting design as each impact the way in which the audience observes my costumes. In figure drawing, the same premise holds true. Each arrangement of objects impacts the composition and the figure

being articulated. In one drawing the task involved drawing a figure standing in the midst of a ladder and other objects (Figure 3.4). As I started to render the figure I realized it would be an impossible task if I did not draw the objects surrounding the figure. Therefore, I actually started to weave my way back and forth between the subject and the field. No longer simply trying to articulate the figure, I focused instead on the shapes created by the interaction of the subject and its surroundings. This drawing shifted my thinking about accuracy and freedom in rendering the subject. I no longer focused on the exact object but instead focused on the abstract shapes.

Drawing and art truly embody a sense of freedom and expression. The ability to turn something ordinary into something extraordinary requires openness to new ideas and possibilities. Throughout the past three years I have used innovative and unusual materials to expand my creative thought process as to what makes art. Capitalizing on the use of materials unique to my experience such as stamp pads, ink applied with sticks off the ground, tracing paper, sewing to create images onto the paper, as well as a variety of traditional art materials like pastels, acrylic paints, charcoal and pencils each project unlocked my hidden potential. With each new observation about my own work, my ability to trust, my eye-hand coordination grew. I developed more confidence in my work which transferred into the way I created my costume sketches. With each new play I design I allow the new found freedom of expression I developed in figure drawing to inhabit my rendering quality.

With this new found freedom, I am able to release everything else that I am thinking about and just focus on being an artist in that moment. Each piece I create now captures both the essence of the figure and a piece of me. I used to believe that I could never be a great traditional artist and stood in awe of those few individuals who possessed this amazing ability. I have since

discovered that the skill of drawing can be learned by everyone. Learning to draw relies upon learning to “see” which means a great deal more than merely looking with my eyes.

Much like my work in figure drawing informs my work in costume design, so does my work in hair and makeup design. Though I created concepts that worked well for the makeup and hair in my first two realized productions, I had no experience in applying the makeup or teaching the actors to do so. For past shows I simply allowed each actor to do their own makeup as they saw fit trusting that it would look like the inspirational picture I had supplied. However, I always felt that a part of the character might be missing. Therefore, in an effort to teach myself and the actors how to better create a character through makeup, I started learning hair and makeup design in order to support my character designs for *A Flea In Her Ear*.

After reviewing the book *Stage Makeup* by Richard Corson, I knew I wanted to explore the world of hair and makeup more deeply. With a clearly articulated step-by-step approach to the application of various types of makeup, facial hair, and wigs this book allowed me to feel confident in establishing an independent study where I could work at my own pace. With multiple photographs and written explanations articulating the makeup process for corrective, middle age, and old age makeup I effectively applied the makeup to my own face with a bit of guidance from my advising professor.

In each initial sketch of the characters for any play I design the overall appearance from the top of the head to the tip of the toe. The hairstyle, therefore, becomes part of the overall design of the character. The psychological connotation of both the color and style strongly effect audience perception. For example, red hair denotes a fiery persona while stark black has evil intentions, and long curly blonde hair assumes feminine innocence. Thus, the character design

includes hair design. The hair of the actor cast greatly effects the actual character who appears opening night. Cuts and coloring transform the actor to the character. Once cast I begin to evaluate each actor's own hair in regards to the character I have created. Discussion and negotiation with the director and the actor determine how I proceed. Most of the time the actor's real hair can be cut, colored and styled in such a way to approximate if not match my design. However, sometimes the actor's hair bears no resemblance to the character and wigs must be employed.

Wigs transform the way an actor looks; therefore, when designing wigs I find that the more natural they look the better. Nothing pulls an audience out of the moment faster than a bad wig. Considerable care and expense need to be considered. Figuring out which hairstyle will work best for the character requires considerable research. For *A Flea In Her Ear* I looked at various fashion plates, drawings, and photographs of women during Victorian period finding that looser curls captured the elegance I wished to evoke from these hair styles. Once I found the appropriate character-specific research I then discussed my ideas with the director. With a collaborative agreement made I then selected the appropriate wig based on color, cut, and fit.

Once selected, the wig can then be styled. Styling wigs requires a lot of trial and error. With the wig being styled on a wig block instead of the actor's head the wig once styled will ultimately need to be adjusted to the actor's head and face. For my work with the wig for Raymonde in *A Flea In Her Ear*, I chose an image from the Edwardian period that I felt best captured the youthful elegance of her character (Figure 3.5). The loose curls provided a softness and volume which worked nicely with the bustle period costume silhouette. As the styling of the wig progressed the character started to come to life. With the wig completely styled I then tried it on the actor. While the volume of the curls looked appropriate on the wig block, the scale

overpowered the actor's facial structure. To reveal the actor's facial structure, I repined each curl a little bit tighter reducing the volume and creating a more flattering and natural fit. This allowed for a perfect paring with the overall silhouette of the costume and character (Figure 3.6).

Hair and wig design wrap seamlessly into the costume design process. Makeup design, however, becomes a much more intimate process as it intends to alter the identity of the actor. Just as the process for my costume design starts with an evaluation of the character as written in the script so does my makeup design process. Understanding the character from within creates a clearer image of their facial appearance. Once I understand the character fully I begin to pull images of real people that capture the same qualities I see in each of the characters. The creation of a makeup morgue, a collection of facial images, proves just as valuable as the research images used when designing costumes. With inspirational images for each character in hand I create a makeup sketch of what I think that character might look like. How has life etched their stress into wrinkles or frown lines? How does health or wealth show in their skin texture or coloring? How much street makeup do they wear to attract suitors? Innocent or seductive? All of these questions support analysis and the selection of likenesses from my morgue as I consider each character.

In preparation for working with the actors cast in *A Flea In Her Ear*, I experimented with makeup on my own face (Figure 3.7). Following the step-by-step guide provided in the Corson text, I worked through corrective, middle age, and old age makeup knowing that all three of these applications would be used in my final realized production, *A Flea In Her Ear*. Learning to find and manipulate the contours of my own face proved invaluable when working with the actors as I could teach them application techniques I developed through my experimentation. Learning to apply the makeup to my own face also gave me the confidence I needed in order to work with actors who had never used stage makeup before. Utilizing the knowledge I obtain



through applying the makeup to my own face and having the inspirational images and drawings for the characters in front of me as I work with each actor proved invaluable. However, only through the trial and error of application to transform each actor's face would I be certain to capture each character.

In the design of *A Flea In Her Ear*, age makeup proved necessary as most of the characters, played by youthful undergraduates, needed to appear middle-aged. Through multiple discussions with the director, we decided that the character Eugenie needed to be quite old. In working with the actress I kept in mind all of the techniques that proved helpful on my own face and applied them to her particular bone structure (Figure 3.9). Creating general sagging, bushier eyebrows, thinner lips, lots of wrinkles, and age spots to texture her skin, the makeup transformed the way the actress looked at herself. Looking in the mirror and no longer seeing a twenty-two year old, she embraced her character more fully. Even in the makeup room, the way in which she sat and stood differently made me realize the truly transformational power of makeup.

In this final semester of graduate school, I stepped away from the drama program and took an elective computer media technology class in the architecture building. I chose the course because it seemed interesting and completely unrelated to my everyday studies over the past five semesters. Covering topics such as videography, computer programming, green screen techniques, and various computer applications, the class provided something new and exciting. Surprisingly, with each new project came connections deeper than I could have imagined.

One of my first assignments in the computer media class asked me to create a video of any process I wished to explore. Knowing I would be painting my renderings for *A Flea In Her*

*Ear* that particular week, I decided to show the class a little piece of what I do as a costume designer. In setting up the camera I wanted the viewer to see the creation of the color sketch from my vantage point when drawing and painting the character. I filmed my actual process in real time and edited the video in iMovie speeding up the film from the actual 30 minute version to just under two minutes. With the video complete, I turned in the assignment as scheduled and did not think about it again until it played in front of the whole class the next week. As I watched the video it became an out of body experience. For the first time I watched myself creating art. I saw my creative process of drawing and painting laid out in front of me in less than two minutes. As I watched my creativity flow out of my hands and onto the paper I saw every skill and technique I have learned in the past three years present in that sketch. Having that objective distance allowed for an even greater appreciation, understanding, and realization of all I have learned. The fear of drawing seemed centuries away.

For our first computer programming project I created an interactive costume history timeline, complete with pictures of each time period and the names and dates associated with the clothing. Though simple in its design and execution, I started to image how something like this could be used as an interactive tool for teaching history of dress in a classroom or an exhibition in a museum. Having served as the graduate teaching assistant for the history of dress class my first semester, I felt that this project could be expanded and utilized to help students create connections like never before. Visualizing each historical period in a technological format might allow the students to interact with costume history on a more familiar level given the constant presence of computers in their everyday lives. Inspired by this ability to create change and interactive learning, this project ignited ideas which I intend to incorporate into my career plans as a university professor.

Having discovered how to create my work in three-dimensional form, I could manipulate and connect the ideas present in the video of my sketching and my interactive timeline. Figuring out how to animate a body that rotates in the center of the screen proved challenging enough. However, to make the program interactive I drew and then animated the clothing this Edwardian woman might wear including all layers from undergarments to accessories. When clicked by the mouse, each item of clothing would appear on the figure as she rotates in space giving a full three-dimensional view of each garment. Simultaneously, information about each garment would appear, providing yet another interactive learning opportunity.

The professor connected with my work and appreciated my innovation. At the same time he spoke of forging a new kind of inter-disciplinary interaction. He also teaches an architecture class where he and his students have been working to create buildings made from fabrics. In an effort to create sustainable housing in Maine they have been working on various designs regarding the structure and window coverings. Knowing of my experience with costume design and technology he approached me seeking advice. I immediately knew I truly wanted to help with this project. Sitting down and discussing the project and various techniques they could use to construct these houses proved exhilarating. Finding common ground between two different disciplines fascinated me and kept me engaged in everything being produced. Having my advice and skills solicited for the greater good inspired me. Consulting with this outside project utilizing skills I obtained through this program to create a much larger impact on the world gave me insight into many amazing things I could do in the future and hope for sustainability of purpose.

Learning requires making connections. Whether through figure drawing, hair and makeup design, or computer technology all of these projects added to my overall awareness, understanding and skills in my field of study. Costume ideas do not solely exist in my head but

arise as a result of communication and inspiration from everything around me. Through this interchange of ideas I have learned that only when I make bold choices, forge new connections and engage in new ideas can deeper understandings occur. These experiences reinforce my confidence to create possibilities for continued invention and innovation.

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Figure 3.1 Drawing of my shoes done with pencil.

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Figure 3.2 Original inspirational high-contrast photograph and Self-Portrait done using pencil, white color pencil and acrylic paints applied using a piece of Bristol board as a paint brush.



## Appendix: Chapter 3



Figure 3.3 Collage using magazine cutouts depicting a figure on the stairs.



## Appendix: Chapter 3

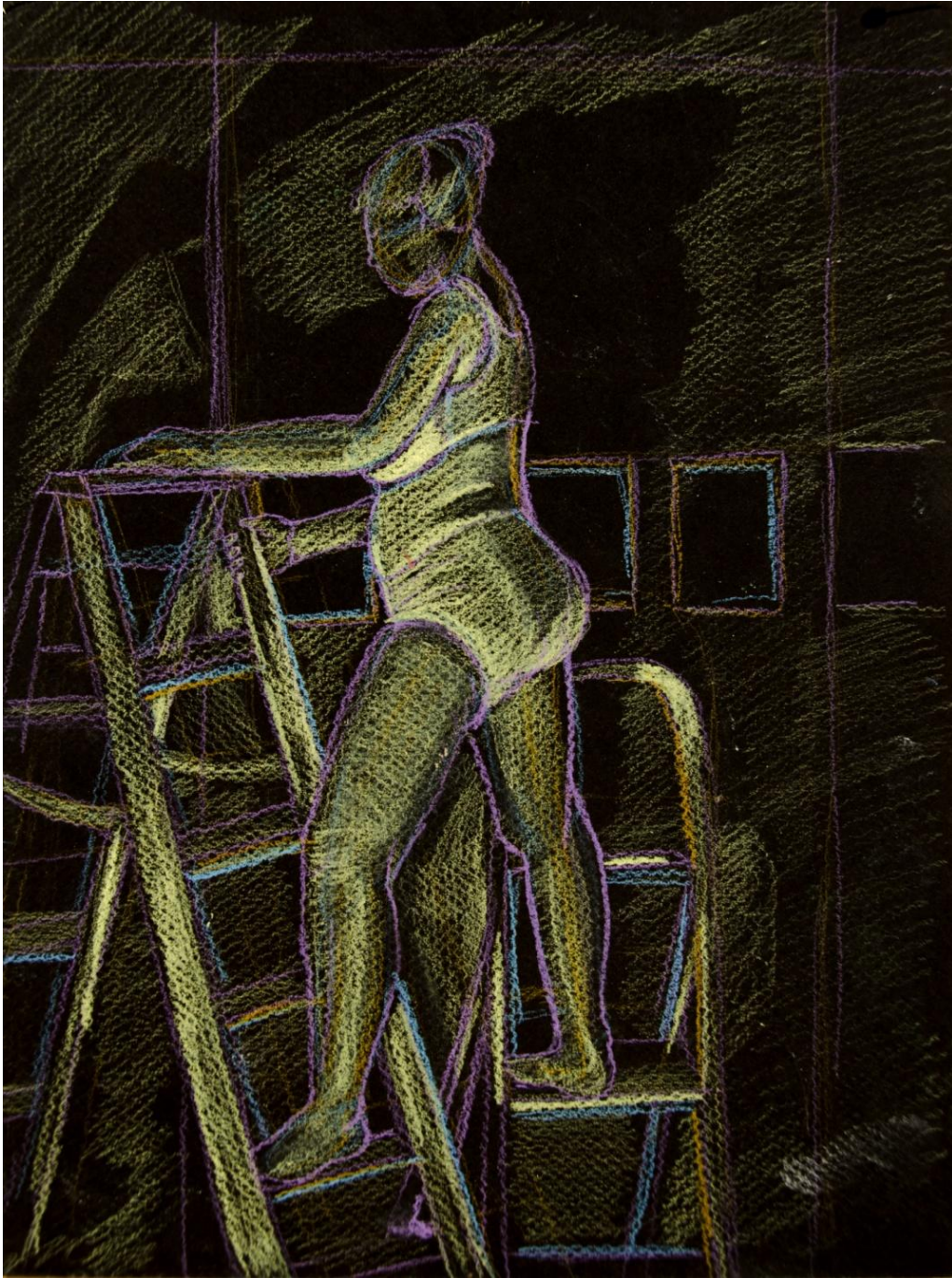


Figure 3.4 Figure drawing of model using multiple color pencils.

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Figure 3.5 Inspirational image of wig for Raymonde from *A Flea In Her Ear*.



Figure 3.6 Photograph of Raymonde's second act look from *A Flea In Her Ear*. Pictured here with her lover Tournel.



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Figure 3.7 Photographs of old age makeup I completed on my own face.  
Note: See Figure 3.2 for natural face without makeup.

## Appendix: Chapter 3

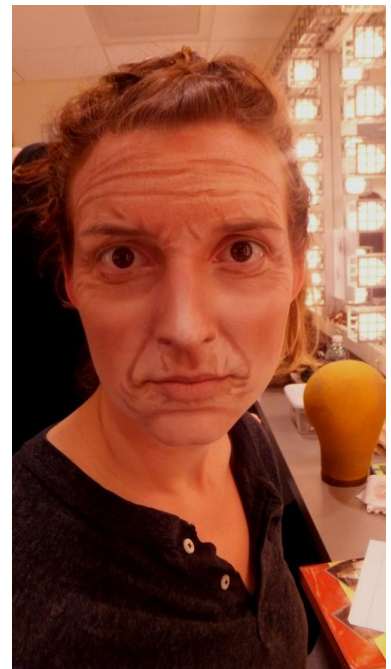


Figure 3.8 Inspirational photograph, and photographs of before and after old age makeup for the character Eugenie from *A Flea In Her Ear*.

## Conclusion

Clothing reveals our life's journey. We wear an amalgam of stories, each item telling its own unique tale. Each and every detail provides clues about individual style, mood, taste, personality, and social and economic aspirations. Gathering information and visual evidence of what each character might wear, read or see on a daily basis, informs a better understanding of their overall frame of mind as well as my own. For only when I fully understand the characters I am designing do I understand something greater about myself. As a costume designer and technologist my entire creative process relies on making connections and discovering possibilities I never realized before.

The MFA in Costume Design and Technology program here at the University of Virginia enabled me to see beyond what I thought about the costume field, to discover what I did not know I did not know. The program allowed me the opportunity not only to explore costume design and technology but also who I am as a designer, an artist and a person. Having the opportunity to learn from talented professionals, my fellow colleagues and my students enabled me to cultivate my own ideas in a setting that encouraged risk-taking and freedom of expression. I have learned to trust my instincts, to never be afraid of new ideas and most importantly to rise above even my own expectations in search of my voice, my place and my future.

After accomplishing all of my realized designs, I find that I am more confident in my design choices and knowledge of period silhouettes. With each new production I design and construct, I am constantly learning and perfecting my own creative process. I seize every opportunity available to me as each new project affords me the opportunity to grow and watch my imagination come to life. Though once plagued by fears when entering into new projects, I can now control the fear before it controls me. Facing no fear when approaching the unknown of creating computer programs, made me realize that my fear of drawing my first semester did not

spring from the actual drawing process but from my fear of perpetually being judged by others. Taking the power out of their hands and putting it back into my own has forever changed me and how I approach my work.

As I complete my graduate education, I now feel ready to embrace all of the possibilities this program has afforded me. As I begin my journey into the costume design profession, I know that each show I design will continue to propel me forward. I feel confident in my designs, my choices, my communication and above all my own voice. I look forward to honing and utilizing all of the skills I have learned in graduate school to create successful and purposeful life of art and design.

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