

When I 'm in it...
THE WRITTEN COMPONENT:
A Sculptural Exploration of the Creative Process

by

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Abstract

This project was in the Dorothy Somerset Studios on the University of British Columbia Campus during the week of April 14th till the 20th, 2008. I was advised by Professor Alison Green and Professor Richard Prince. The project's title was *When I'm in it...*. It consisted of three groupings of sculptures set within the black box theatre space (see Illus. 1A, B and C). The *Pattern Bubbles* sculpture consisted of hollow tissue balls suspended from the ceiling, each containing a small and suspended object. These bubbles were suspended in a line, at different heights, and they were lit from within (see Illus. 2A and B). The entire theatre space was also lit using the lights on the grid in the theatre. A *Silhouetted Cast* consisted of Styrofoam cutouts shaped like dress forms covered with muslin and padding (see Illus. 3A, B and C). These cutouts were about 4ft X 2ft X 3inches. On one side I had a mixed media collage of imagery pinned to the muslin covering and on the other side were phrases stenciled right onto the muslin. These forms stood on the floor atop actual iron dress form stands. There were eight of these silhouettes, each one representing a character from a theatre production for which I had designed the costumes and the information on each one came from that experience. *Costume Aprons*, the final sculpture in the space, was also suspended from the ceiling. It had eight aprons made from cottons, silks and burlap hanging from a laundry carousel. The aprons were hung from the lines with silver bulldog stationary clips. I had hand-embroidered words on the aprons using embroidery threads of many different colors. In the pocket of each of the aprons was the title page from a script on blue paper (see Illus. 4A, B, C, and D). The black curtains were drawn around the square perimeter of the

theatre stage, and you could still see the audience seating and the theatre booth. There was a soundtrack playing constantly within the space.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Illustrations	v
Introduction	1
Project Research and Influences	3
Other Artists Influences	4
The Costume Designer, the Costume Design and its Context	5
The Space	8
Pattern Bubbles	11
Costume Aprons	15
Silhouetted Cast	19
Conclusion	22
Illustrations	24
Footnotes	42
Bibliography	43
Appendix 1	44

List of Illustrations

1A – shows <i>Costume Aprons</i> , portion of <i>Silhouetted Cast</i> , and Floor Cutouts	24
1B – shows <i>Silhouetted Cast</i> , <i>Pattern Bubbles</i> and Floor Cutouts	25
1C – above view of <i>Silhouetted Cast</i> and <i>Costume Aprons</i>	25
2A – shows detail of <i>Pattern Bubbles</i>	26
2B – shows detail of <i>Pattern Bubble</i>	26
3A – shows detail of <i>Silhouetted Cast</i>	27
3B – shows detail of <i>Silhouetted Cast</i>	28
3C – shows <i>Silhouetted Cast</i> floor placement	28
4A – shows detail of <i>Costume Aprons</i> , interior pocket.....	29
4B – shows detail of <i>Costume Aprons</i> , embroidery	30
4C – shows <i>Costume Aprons</i>	30
4D – shows <i>Costume Aprons</i> , <i>Pattern Bubbles</i> and <i>Silhouetted Cast</i>	31
5A – shows above view.....	31
5B – shows above view	32
5C – shows view from audience seats.....	32
6A – detail of Floor Cutouts in process.....	33
6B – detail of Floor Cutouts with writing	33
6C – Floor Cutouts at base of silhouette stand	34
7A – reference Photo for Patterns sculpture.....	35
7B – picture of mold for original <i>Pattern Bubbles</i> sculpture.....	35
8A – detail of <i>Pattern Bubbles</i>	36
8B – detail of <i>Pattern Bubbles</i> hanging.....	36
8C – detail of <u>The Rover</u> sketch in bubble.....	37
9A – detail of <i>Costume Aprons</i>	37
9B – <i>Costume Aprons</i> in the space.....	38
9C – detail of <i>Costume Aprons</i>	39
10A – the original dress forms.....	39
10B – detail of one of the ‘cast’ in <i>Silhouetted Cast</i>	40
10C – detail of <i>Silhouetted Cast</i>	41

Introduction

“When I sit alone in a theatre and gaze into the dark space of its empty stage, I’m frequently seized by fear that this time I won’t manage to penetrate it, and I always hope fear will never desert me. Without an unending search for the key to the secret of creativity, there is no creation. It’s necessary always to begin again. And that is beautiful.”-Joseph Svoboda (1)

I understand very much what Josef Svoboda is expressing in this quote. The desire to feel the fear that he talks about is exactly what drove me to pursue *When I’m in it...* for my MFA thesis project. I wanted to discover my own “key to the secret of creativity” and reignite my process by facing the terrifying challenge of working on a project alone after many years of collaborative theatre design work. Since finishing my BFA at Alberta College of Art and Design I have always maintained a connection to the fine arts and specifically to those artists who produce artwork that has some similar elements to theatre. Artists like Louise Bourgeois, Jac Scott, Eva Hesse and Penny Burnfield, have a bravery and power that has grabbed me in different ways. They all have a voice and a focus to affect a space fully with their ideas. I felt that by introducing that kind of situation to my existing body of work I might gain a revitalized and regenerated focus on my professional work as a costume designer. I believe that the creative process is such a challenging state in which to make one’s living that the celebration and investigation of it is necessary and is also an individual’s responsibility. This installation comes from a deep interest I have in the creative process itself, when we are vulnerable and creating and naked and gathering the things close to build something outside of ourselves. For the last seventeen years I have been involved with theatre and those are the observations that I have catalogued in my memories, those are the journeys I witnessed and I feel merit celebration, discussion and highlight.

The objective was to understand the relationship between an object and a narrative, how it relates to the narrative in theatre and how the object inflects the narrative in theatre; specifically how the narrative in theatre is shifted and informed by the object's presence. What the audience sub-consciously concludes because of an object's own history is informed by their experiences. The sculptures I created for *When I'm in it...* become objects possessing a narrative for my audience.

The title *When I'm in it...*, was meant to speak about the process of creating prior to any end results or completion, the space within which creation is happening, growing and becoming. "IT" refers to that process, that space, that short lifetime - a place that I inhabit, that I am *in* when I am working through a creative process. I find this part of any creative process the hardest, the most interesting, terrifying, and important. It is the foundation and groundwork that a design stands upon and that foundation is ultimately communicated in the end result. While producing this project, it was the time prior to completion, the creative gestation of ideas, sampling, and planning that I remember the most. It is that period of vulnerability and energy that has the most power and affects me the greatest in retrospect. Simultaneously I was designing the theatre shows that these sculptures were based on, researching, sketching, meeting, building, fitting, discovering and finishing tangible evidence of the very process I wanted to investigate.

Project Research and Influences

During the first months of my studies at UBC I began to really understand that I wanted to produce these sculptures and show them in an installation art format. I felt that I needed some broader opinions on the importance and presence of costumes in the theatre than just my own if I was going to successfully base my sculptures on the process of designing and creating costumes for theatre. I created a list of questions and tailored them slightly to engage each group of key contributors that participate in the creative process of producing a play. I created a questionnaire for the actors, directors, designers, audience and crew (see Surveys/ Questionnaires). I distributed them to friends and colleges and asked for them to be returned voluntarily and I planned on keeping the participants anonymous. It was not meant to be a scientific experiment, just a gathering of inspiring ideas and thoughts pertaining to costumes and the overall subject of creativity and creating.

These are some of the answers and ideas from the questionnaires that really struck me in regards to the purpose and presence of a costume in a production.

"I need something to take me away from own pedestrian self. There is no doubt that it serves as a new skin – even mask at times. The dialogue I have with the costume designer is very important to my process and the expectations that I have."

It can serve as a confirmation for my expectations or a negation. I try not to care what other cast members think – if it's right for what I'm doing – so be it.

Absolutely, I feel the audience. I firmly believe that's who we do it for. Take them away and I might as well be sitting in my basement muttering a few indistinguishable words. Their presence is essential and I count on being able to feel them to sometimes calibrate how I'm going to approach that evening's performance. That is not to say that I will wander astray from what has been set but my relationship toward what I'm doing and the intensity I bring to it will be affected.

Other Artists' Influences

In the introduction I referred to other fine artists that have influenced me in my costume design work and as an artist. Over time as I have studied them I became inspired to create a group of sculptures to install into an art space. Artists like Louise Bourgeois, Penny Burnfield and Eva Hesse have each created a massive and diverse body of work. Most of the time it is not one type of medium (wood, metal, stone, clay, etc.) that they work in, but it is the concept that they wish to communicate that informs the ingredients that they will use to create the piece. I relate to this Conceptualist viewpoint very strongly, because in costume design it is the attributes of each of the characters in a dramatic work that inform me of the fabrics and silhouettes that I will use in creating his costume. This is how I came to the sculptures for *When I'm in it...*, I first decided on the idea I wanted to communicate and then decided on the format that would best represent it. It is another kind of investigation, or research, formulating the sculptural elements from a collection of concepts and experiences. My undergrad degree is a BFA in textile design from Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD). When I attended ACAD the program was very influenced by conceptual, performance, and installation art practices. It was then that I developed such strong connections to these movements within the art world and adopted artists like Bourgeois and Hesse as my personal mentors.

The Costume Designer, The Costume Design, and Its Context

The narratives on which the three sculptures are based are the plays *August* by Jean Marc Dalpe, *That Elusive Spark* by Janet Munsil and *The Rover* by Aphra Behn. For all three of these plays I have researched, conceptualized and designed and sketched a complete set of costumes for production. Two of the shows were actually built and performed and one (*The Rover*) was an exercise for my work within the UBC Theatre Department. It was very important for these sculptures to each have a developed design as the foundation for their birth. It is the process of creating costumes and designing costumes within a collaborative medium like theatre, that intrigues me. That process is what I wanted to discuss, isolate, and celebrate with this project, and in doing so, to investigate what a costume's significance is in a space, and what its significance is to the overall narrative of a play. In examining my own process of designing costumes, I began to highlight the decisions I made to support the narrative of the shows, and then in endowing the sculptures with a narrative about the original production as well as my own insights and interests in the process of creation.

Theatre, in its very nature, is an entirely collaborative art that requires a diverse and extensive team of practitioners who bring their skills and inspirations together and then agree to work together towards one common goal. The goal is to get the best possible production of that play onto the stage or into the performance space in time for the arrival of an audience. The team of professionals is generally made up of actors, a director, designers (for lighting, sound, setting, and costumes), production crews for each department and a producer. The designers and directors meet over many months prior to

the start of rehearsal. During these meetings many ideas and concepts are discussed, reviewed, embraced and abandoned in an effort to create the overall concept before the arrival of the actors. Designers do their own research into the script, the historical context surrounding the events within the script, and all the concepts and motifs that they would like to communicate to the audience in the final product. On the first day of rehearsal, all sit and listen to the acting company read the play aloud and then each designer presents his work and final renderings, sketches and research to the entire group. At this point the building and construction of all these ideas begins. As rehearsals progress, every department is creating an aspect of the show and all departments are in constant communication with each other to ensure that the final product is cohesive and strong. It is an unusual and challenging time, as designers must remain faithful to their own convictions and original ideas while still maintaining a malleable and collaborative attitude. We must leave the door open to new ideas and better solutions without losing the original intentions of our concept. We must not lose the narrative of the play, in fact we must visually represent this narrative in some of the elements that we contribute to the space that our production takes place in.

When I am thinking of the narrative contained within an object, within a costume, I begin to think of the symbolism of that costume. It is a clothing language that I am trying to use to talk to the audience, the actor and the character in the play. This use of semiotics is a constant presence within a costume designer's process. It is my job to relay clues and insights visually through the use of clothing that inform and highlight some of the subtleties of the characters motives, values, issues and personality.

The initial inspiration for these sculptures I have created for *When I'm in it...* was very much drawn from this exploratory part of the design process, the research, discovery and decisions. It is this interpretation of our interior feelings and emotions, these choices we make to communicate inner ideas and characteristics that I wanted to highlight and celebrate in my MFA project. In isolating the costume design process from all the other aspects of production, I felt strongly that showing these sculptures in a theatre space like the Dorothy Somerset Studio would be the strongest choice. To then transform that theatre space into a gallery space for an art installation was the best way to successfully express my investigations of objects, narrative, collaborative work, my design work and the characteristics of each costume.

The Space

I viewed this process as installation art, the installing of a piece of art in a space; that concept or idea has made the *space* in which it is installed an element of the whole piece. When I was beginning this project and discussing it with my advisors the question of space was one that we all felt must be answered early on. Initially I felt compelled to pursue an art gallery, which is a traditional venue exemplified by those artists I so admire. The installation works of Louise Bourgeois, Petah Coyne and Eva Hesse have always attracted me and so their examples came to the forefront. Finding a suitable space that I could access became a time-consuming struggle with not many victories. In the end, it was a theatre space that became the most available to me, and it was a theatre space that fit my instinct the best. A theatre is the house of my experience as a designer and creator and it really felt correct to discuss emotional variables of creating theatre in its original home.

The Dorothy Somerset Studio Theatre is a theatre space, but also a black gallery space, a place of performance, a place of presentation, a place of process where divisions between audience and performer can be reconfigured to support the intentions and needs of each unique situation. It is often used as a rehearsal, and a teaching space and for that I am attracted to the presence that process has within this location. All three of these sculptures are about process, singular and fully grouped. I want to highlight and crystallize moments of interaction contained within this collaborative creation of a theatre production. It is present on every level, at every stage and each twist and turn contributes

to the final outcome of opening night or the completion of the costume, or of an actors' performance.

The Dorothy Somerset Studio's stage floor is painted black, and the portion that I used was defined by the perimeter of black curtains that outline three sides of the box. I had these curtains drawn around with two intentional gaps, one at the southeast corner and the other at the northwest corner. These openings form the two entrance doors for the space. On the north wall are three levels of black chairs, lined up in front of the theatre's sound and lighting booth. I kept these chairs in the space as well because I enjoyed the theatre space reference and I was interested to see if the majority of my audience would sit there or walk through the space. I also utilized the lighting grid and the sound system. As I mentioned in the abstract, I had a soundtrack that played continually during the show and lights were directed and focused specifically on all the sculptures to further create a whole environment (see Illus. 5A, B and C). The lighting design was executed by Lauchlin Johnston, he is a peer and a graduate of UBC's theatre department. Considering all aspects of the space as part of the whole piece is something that I have admired in Louise Bourgeois's body of work. Her pieces always have a very considered and contained presentation. In theatre productions too, all these elements are carefully attended to. I felt that the strength of the sculptures would be properly enhanced by lighting and sound. In the planning of the space it became necessary to consider the floor. A bi-product of building the Styrofoam silhouettes for *Silhouetted Cast* was two wood cutouts for each shape. We clamped these cutouts onto the Styrofoam to achieve an accurate line while cutting out the silhouette (see Illus. 6A, B and C). I was very

attracted to these wood cutouts after we were done with them and their color reminded me of the tissue paper patterns that I used to build *Pattern Bubbles*. I placed them on the floor around the base of each silhouetted cast member, like a shadow of ideas. I wrote on each one in black pen using soft word play, repeating one word over and over to fill the whole surface. One time on each cutout I would write a different word, but the overall effect looked like a fabric pattern. It was important to me that that single word existed and I enjoyed its presence for some and its non-existence for others.

Pattern Bubbles

As a theme for this sculpture, I used a class project, a design for *The Rover*, a Restoration drama by Aphra Behn. The image for the sculpture *Pattern Bubbles* was about the beginning of an idea, the start, the chain, the birth, the string of thoughts that are linked together in the creation of something visual like a costume. I then wanted to isolate these moments, slow the process down and see them each unto themselves. I wanted to make the parts of the 'whole' special and precious, and allow each fragment to be housed, special and organic. The tissue pattern pods originally were to have the shape of a flower bud like the one I photographed in the spring of 2007 (see illus. 7A and B).

I wanted to invite the audience inside a space, an intimate private corner of an idea to view one precious part of that idea. Special tiny aspects of the whole, like the color concepts, a bit of trim, the initial rough sketches, bits of that characters dialogue, research and collage work that I gathered specific to that character's journey in the play were highlighted in the bubbles. I wanted to pay tribute to the pieces of the whole in order to really express the dual nature of production. Natural opposites like strength and fragility, understanding and confusion, planning and instinct, focus and distraction, micro and macro, beauty and decay, inspiration and requirements were to confront each other. I loved this shape of birth, the flower bud, created out of tissue pattern pieces because of its delicacy and its intrinsic link to building garments. And then inside would be a fragment of something that could clearly or ambiguously represent a piece of a whole idea. At one point in the planning I felt that the tissue bubbles should be placed and piled into a

mound on the ground, but as the shape evolved more and more into a bubble, it became very obvious that they should be suspended. I wanted the audience to view them as floating, and flowing around them as a stream of consciousness or a universal well of ideas that we dip into when we are floating ourselves, as when we are surrendering to the instincts of creating, when we allow ideas to come, and have faith that they are ours to execute.

“I didn’t have the security of any kind of religion, so in the end, that is how I became an artist – to find a mode of survival” – Louise Bourgeois, 1979 (2)

“If a person is an artist, it is a guarantee of sanity. He is able to take his torment.” – Louise Bourgeois, (3)

During the process of discussing these sculptures and logistically trying to build them I faced and embraced many evolutions to the original sketch. The biggest confrontation I had with the process was the building of the pods themselves. This struggle doggedly followed me all the way into the last months of production. I had many issues with the papier mache process; trying to achieve the delicacy I wanted while still retaining enough strength to support the size of my original mold. I had carved the mold out of Styrofoam a year prior, but had found it difficult to create the soft nuances of the flower bud with my limited experience carving large blocks of Styrofoam.

After finding that the structural integrity of this size and shape was not working, I had to revise the original model and shape. I abandoned the Styrofoam mold and moved onto large balloons. This process was brilliant in its simplicity and possibilities. I was able to create the amount (nine) that I wanted, all approximately the same size, using the tissue paper and tissue pattern pieces. They did not need to be seamed together after, and they were a better size than the original mold (from 2ftX4ft to 2ftX2ft). The shape was different from the pod; it was rounder, more like a bubble. I had purchased extra large

balloons but had them blown up to a point where they just retained a roundness, as opposed to the egg-like shape that a balloon has normally. This was an instinctual decision, as I felt more connected to bubbles floating around my head than to eggs. To me eggs seemed to need to be on the ground, where bubbles are natural floaters and still strongly connected to nature, creation and the organic quality - the preciousness.

For the ***Pattern Bubbles*** I chose one singular costume from a show I had designed and conceptualized for my Costume 508 class with Alison Green. The show was ***The Rover*** by Aphra Behn and because of the particular period (17th century) I felt there were many elements to isolate for each costume. Looking at the entire “cast” of costumes in a show like ***The Rover*** an audience member probably would understand each costume as an idea, but inside and under the skirts of each character are many layers. Each bubble had its designated fragment to communicate research, color, fabric, script, concept, character, texture, setting and finally the sketch of the resulting costume (see illus. 8A, B and C). I included this final result of all the little ideas in one of the bubbles to indicate the continuity as that costume becomes a fragment within a larger context of the cast of costumes, and then again with the other elements of the production (set, lights, actors, props, etc) and then again within a whole growing body of work of one artist. This is a long string of ideas and ***Pattern Bubbles*** is mean to highlight an isolated fragment.

The research surrounding ***The Rover*** was about script analysis, conceptualizing and sources. I became interested in combining a specific fabric design with the 17th century costume period, one that is foreign and separated by centuries of design. Pucci

fabrics from the 1960s contained the abstract expression, the boldness, the crazy-ness that this restoration comedy becomes when produced for a 21st century audience. This is a zany story with multiple plots, set amidst a Carnival in Naples with feminist undertones and revolutionary views of women, men and sex. It seemed that the bubbling 1960's and 1970's aesthetic could serve this dramatic comedy well. I searched for images of Pucci fabric, masks, and 17th century silhouettes.

The final stage of installing these sculptures challenged all planning and preparation. It was much like a theatre production, in the sense that it is the physical tangible nature of the space that comes to determine some choices. I had many ideas of how I might like to present these bubbles, to give the audience easy, interesting, yet specific access and introduction to the inside and the outside. I think the evolution of the bubbles themselves had started to really make me think of them as a string, a line, something continuous. It just seemed natural to hang them in a floating irregular line. I also knew I wanted to light them from within to further invite one to look inside, because as in theatre, light creates focus and answers.

"Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties." – Erich Fromm (4)

Costume Aprons

Costume Aprons was based on a costume design for *August* by Jean Marc Dalpe, translated by Maureen Labonte. Each apron represents a character in the production and is labeled with their needs, struggles, interior battles, interests, motives and colors. These are not the actual costumes from the theatre production. They are sculptural pieces that I created for my show. The writing on them comes directly from my own notes and scribbles to myself during the process of understanding each of the characters' identities. Characteristics, personal information, values, views and clues about who we are on the inside can be communicated through the clothes we wear on the outside. In her book "*The Psychology of Clothing*" Susan B. Kaiser refers to this as symbolic interaction. The "process of symbolic interaction involves *shared meanings*, which result in *significant symbols*" being communicated to the audience correctly based on intention (5). Designing costumes can be like making a list of those *meanings* and *symbols* and writing them on the character metaphorically through the selection of clothes chosen for the production. It is a semiotic language for clothing, a contribution to the further understanding of the audience and actor.

"Well...I would explain to them that it often represents the first initial clue as to the kind of character and the personality of that given character. Before a syllable is uttered the audience often draws conclusions. Sometimes the costume choices can offer a ruse but that will be discovered later. The initial visual contact with an audience therefore becomes very important in placing the character's age, status, gender, class, etc." – an actors survey(6)

In this instance, I have literally written on the aprons to represent the design process and express the otherwise nonverbal result. The list becomes a replacement of the costume thereby providing an impression of the costume rather than the costume

itself (see illus. 9A, B and C). During the process of handwork on each apron I was struck by the transformation that costumes go through once they are worn, once they are put onto the stage and into practice. I wanted these aprons to suspend and live in space in order to speak of the actors' future presence, to remind us of the continued life that a costume has beyond the wardrobe. I also felt strongly that some essence of the wear and tear of life needed to be impressed visually on these objects, to slightly destroy their pristine cleanliness. I dyed a stain on each one, one color to leak further information about the character, the human stain. As with the color of thread for each of the embroidered words, this color had significance. I feel very strongly about color especially when it is used in regards to interior emotions and sub-conscience communications. Sometimes I am struck by an intuitive color connection, other times I use common color associations, but it is always significant.

The research for the production of *August* did not require the kind of historical reference that *The Rover* did as it is a contemporary piece and much of the information about the characters came from the script. The director and I wanted a very naturalistic feeling to the production, as if these are the real-life clothes of real-life people. Within that kind of simplicity are subtle nuances and decisions that I made based on creating the exact lists that I have expressed on each apron, to literally represent the symbolic interaction. The characters are a family and go through a variety of emotions while preparing for a picnic and celebration of an engagement. The interactions and relationships are deliberate and intense clues to their characters. The dialogue is laced with serious conflicts and emotions, and all the characters are tightly linked, just as the

apron ties are stretched and knotted to each other. The strings of the aprons are stretched and knotted to each other in a confusing and twisted way. Kaiser explains that the other part of symbolic interpretation and the roots of these shared meanings are “derived from social interactions with others” (7). For this strong reason, suspending all of them together on the hanging clothesline in their own world, in their own “backyard” was also meant to give the audience the impression of the immense connection and isolation of this piece and the story within it. I wanted the audience of my sculpture to experience some of the same effects that the audience of the production of *August* experienced because that was such a permeating part of the production. In this regard I feel like I achieved some success. From the verbal audience feedback that I received, this sculpture out of the three was the most accessible. I do not think that the entire narrative of the original production could possibly be understood but a narrative for the individual audience member of the sculpture itself did seem to be very present with *Costume Aprons*. Perhaps it is because the objects themselves were identifiable and relatable. We have aprons, we know aprons, and we have them in our own homes. Whereas the *Silhouetted Cast* and *Pattern Bubbles* contain foreign objects that I imagined and built to serve my purpose, my communication, and my narrative, *Costume Aprons* uses objects that are familiar and in that way made it easier for some audience members to create their own narrative.

“I need something to take me away from own pedestrian self. There is no doubt that it serves as a new skin – even a mask at times.”- An actor survey (6)

Aprons are traditionally worn for protection and covering, they are practical and have many shapes and styles. Aprons have been worn by men and women and have a

very strong presence and history within the working world and simultaneously within the domestic world. In the later part of the twentieth century, specifically the 1950's, aprons really became identified with the visual language of home life. It is the home life of "Home Sweet Home" that is neatly cross-stitched in a sampler and hung in the kitchen of our imagination, above the sink. I chose aprons because the narrative revolves around a multi-generational family and their navigation through the intricacies of adultery, illness, and expectation in their own home.

"Before a syllable is uttered the audience often draws conclusions. Sometimes the costume choices can offer a ruse but that will be discovered later. The initial visual contact with an audience therefore becomes very important in placing the character's age, status, gender, class, etc." – An Actors Survey (6)

Silhouetted Cast

In the beginning of the design for a production, sketches become a visual language and the primary communication between Director and Designer. They are representative of the cast, the concept, the script and the future process that will happen as the costumes are built and the production evolves. These sketches become a two-dimensional map for a three-dimensional reality, and each one follows a character or a character's journey through the lifetime of the script and the production.

In the wardrobe we often use dress forms to build the patterns and ultimately the wardrobe pictured in the characters sketch. I am always struck by the presence of these dress forms as they stand about in the wardrobe shop. Uniform in their presence, covered in muslin, with wood findings and on rolling legs they are half dressed, fully dressed or modeling pieces of clothing that are in debate until the actor arrives for a fitting. They are the "stand-ins" for the actor, the replacement, and the sculptural sketchbook (see illus. 10A, B and C). What we build on the dress form itself becomes a link from sketch to actor, a middle link in the metamorphosis from two-dimensional concepts to three-dimensional reality. The dress form is like a sketch in many ways. Fabrics are tried, structures are built and clothing is draped on them. We basically sketch ideas right onto them. They are the three-dimensional sketch board.

This is the place where the sketch is first pulled off the page and the bugs and problems can be more clearly seen and defined. There are many layers, many decisions

and negotiations that take place before the actor in his costume sees the stage. As we in the wardrobe roll them around, we create our own blocking (term used to describe the map of movement that directors give actors during the rehearsal process), directing them for our own needs. This is the only moment when a designer's design is his creation, unshared, and singular; this is the designers' cast. It is not my favorite part of the process, but it is a notable one, because it is this transformation from flat idea to breathing pieces that defines a costume designer's participation in a collaborative effort.

With *Silhouetted Cast* I wanted to play with this situation, to isolate this section of the timeline for another audience. I took the ghost-like dress forms and flattening them into an almost two-dimensional sketch, representing a cast of eight for a piece that I designed this winter called *That Elusive Spark* by Janet Munsil. Each dress form represents one of the characters and the transitions they go through, my conversations with the director, considerations of the actor playing the character, and the context of the piece. This is the cast of ideas, the rolling fragments of development and the representation of the process to bring the costume to the actor and ultimately to the stage. But before the stage, the costume's own sculptural qualities, my choices and the process path will be represented by this cast of silhouettes.

Building these forms was quite a process to develop, but the more I defined my necessary narrative, the closer we got to a process. I wanted them to be presented on original dress form stands, to strongly link them for the audience to the original object. I needed to be able to stick pins in them for the collage process, have them rotate on the

iron stand, remain light in weight and be covered in muslin. To get the outlines I used the original dress forms, shone a light on them against the wall and then traced the outline of the cast shadow. Once installed in the theatre, I wanted them to have a slightly perspective-affected outline to play with the audience's eye.

I wanted them to be in a theatre, preferably a black box stage, clustered together. I wanted the audience to spin them, walk around them, to view them as groups and as individuals. I wanted them to feel the size, the similar size to an average human body. I wanted them to initially appear to be possibly fully formed, but quickly the audience will realize that they are actually two-sided and in fact a silhouette created from one angle, and the silhouette becomes twisted as you approach and explore the space surrounding them. I wanted the audience to realize that they too are on a stage, in a space intended for production; hoping that they will feel the remnants and fragments and whispers of narratives of productions that have occurred in the past. It is as though we have all gathered to look at photos of a production, but are actually stepping inside the process, where only the photo shows us the end result.

Conclusion

I was in attendance at the Dorothy Somerset Studios for the duration of the show because it was really important to me to hear and receive any feedback that came up in response to *When I'm in it...*. I also provided a book at the front entrance in hopes that those audience members that were private about their responses might share them in writing. I did not receive much more than a signature or a glib “nice work” in the book; it was more my presence and the questions of audience members that gave me insights into how the piece was received. Overall, the response was positive and complimentary. I think that *Costume Aprons* was the most accessible piece for the majority of the audience because of its identifiable elements (the aprons and the laundry hanger). *Silhouetted Cast* inspired the most extreme responses, in that people either gravitated to it strongly or were repelled with equal strength. This sculpture was such a foreign object, such a new shape, and so full of imagery. I wonder if part of that reaction was influenced by personal taste. Also, when it came to other theatre practitioners, *Silhouetted Cast* was commented on the most. Those who worked in theatre found this sculpture to be the most unnerving and hard to approach without previous knowledge of the script. I believe that relates to the fact that it most represents a cast within a theatre space and theatre people are geared to having the script as their foundation of understanding, so this piece pulled the rug out from under their feet. I do not feel that is unsuccessful. I wanted to step outside of the parameters of theatre and engage in a space with the object for the sole purpose of addressing the process, not the script. I wanted to break those habits for myself, and look at my work and then the work of my colleagues with a new and

appreciative eye. The playfulness and whimsy that ***Pattern Bubbles*** became in that space made it light in its impression. Children really gravitated to ***Pattern Bubbles*** and adults seemed to either enjoy it with a child-like wonder or skim over it with adult impatience.

Overall I am very pleased with this project. I have felt a strong desire to produce a show like this for more than a decade. There are many elements that I may change in retrospect for future shows in different spaces, but there is nothing that I would change about the first show. It is this first show that has informed so much for the future of this work in my career and it is a future that I plan to pursue.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration 1A – shows *Costume Aprons*, portion of *Silhouetted Cast*, and floor cutouts.

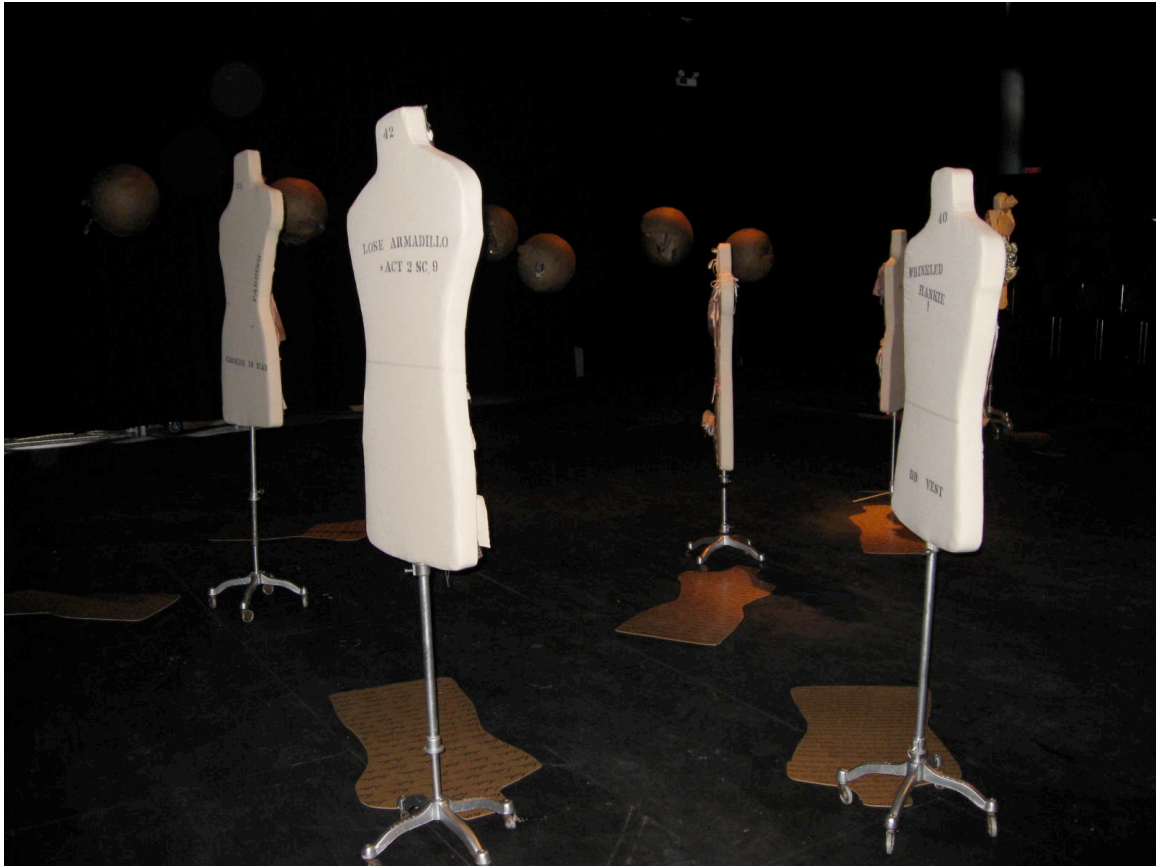


Illustration 1B – shows *Silhouetted Cast*, *Pattern Bubbles* and Floor Cutouts.

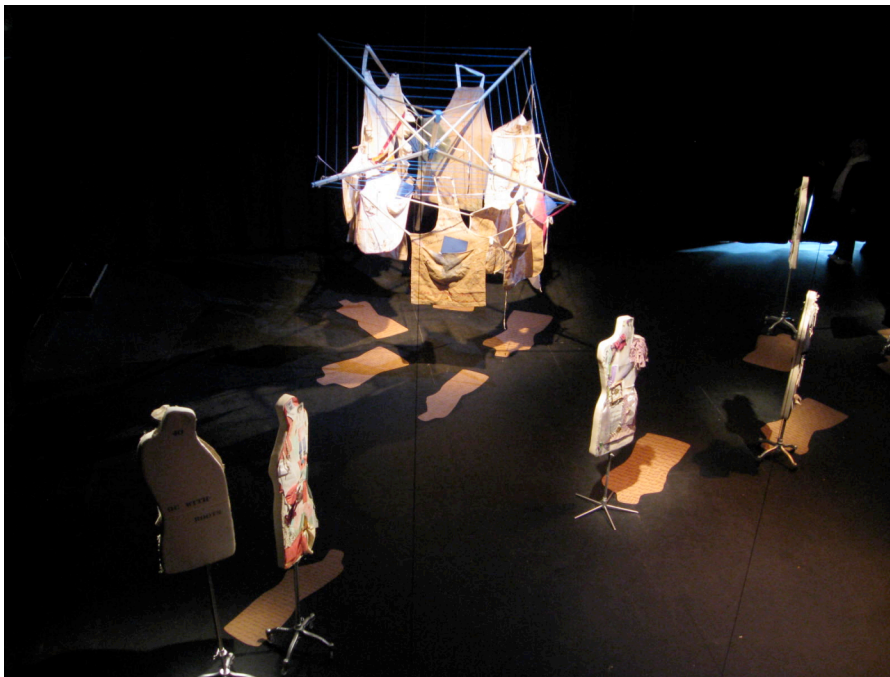


Illustration 1C – above view, *Silhouetted Cast*, and *Costume Aprons*



Illustration 2A – shows detail of *Pattern Bubbles*.

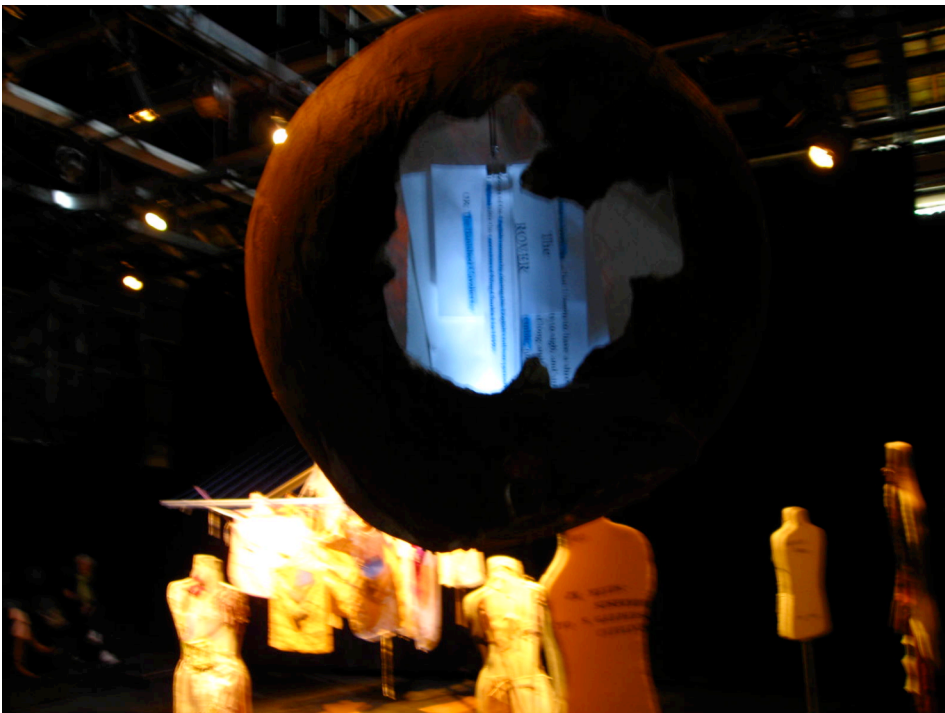


Illustration 2B – shows detail of *Pattern Bubbles*.



Illustration 3A – shows detail of *Silhouetted Cast*.



Illustration 3B – Shows detail of *Silhouetted Cast*.

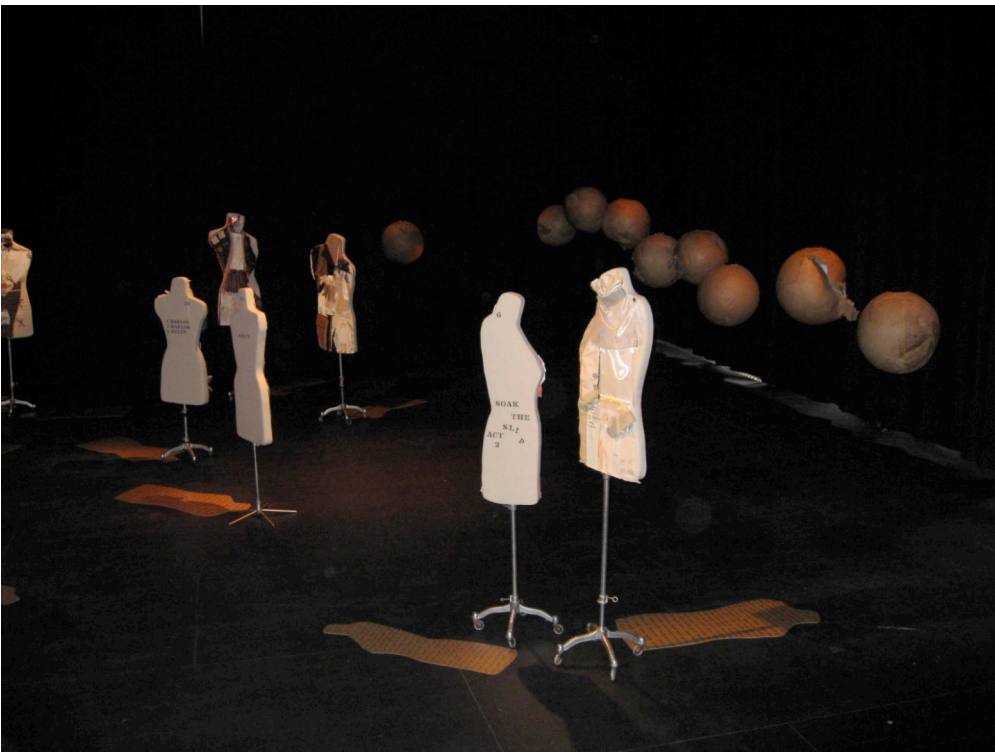


Illustration 3C – shows *Silhouetted Cast* floor placement.



Illustration 4A – shows detail of *Costume Aprons*, interior pocket.



Illustration 4B – shows detail of *Costume Aprons*, embroidery.



Illustration 4C – shows *Costume Aprons*.



Illustration 4D – shows *Costume Aprons*, *Pattern Bubbles* and *Silhouetted Cast*.



Illustration 5A – shows above view.

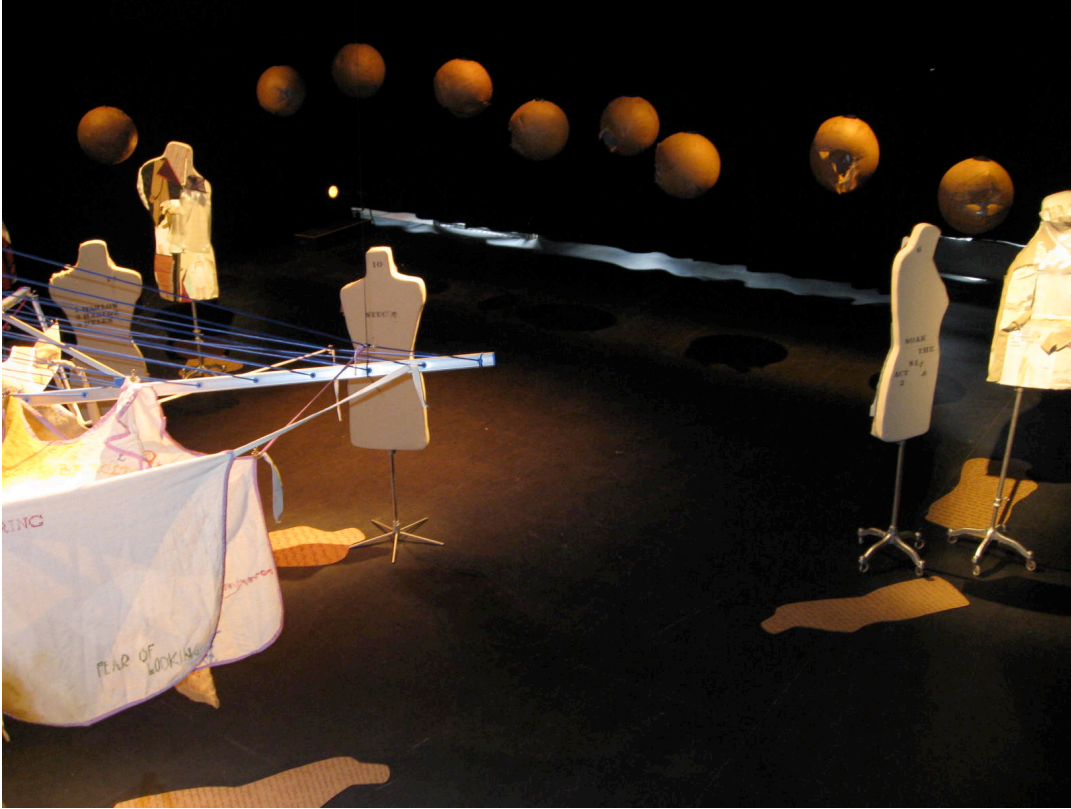


Illustration 5B – shows above view.



Illustration 5C – shows view from audience seats.



Illustration 6A – detail of Floor Cutouts in process.

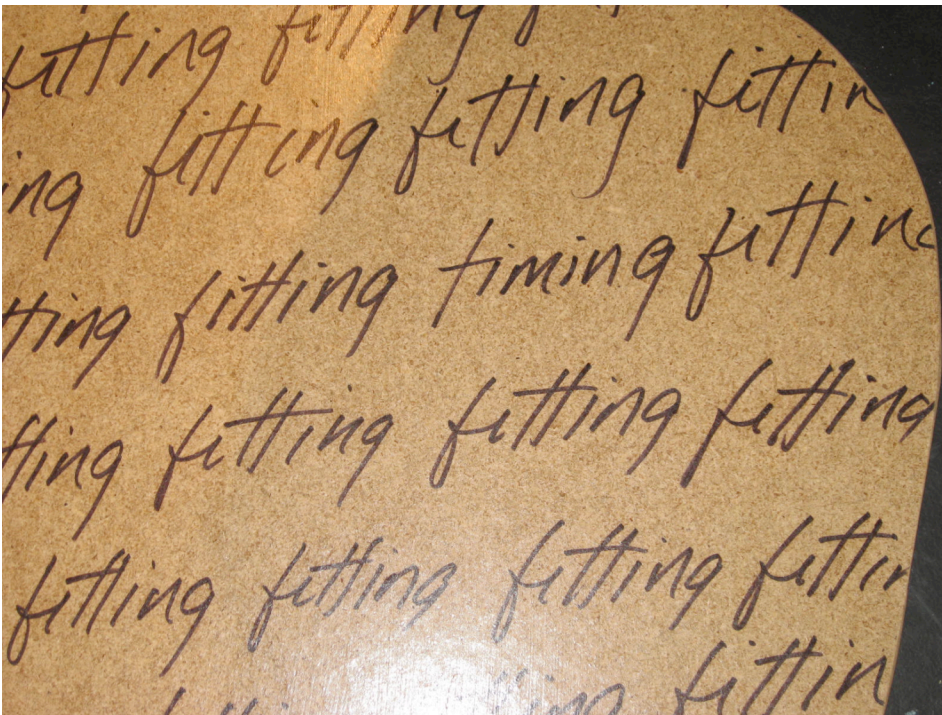


Illustration 6B – detail of Floor Cutouts with writing.

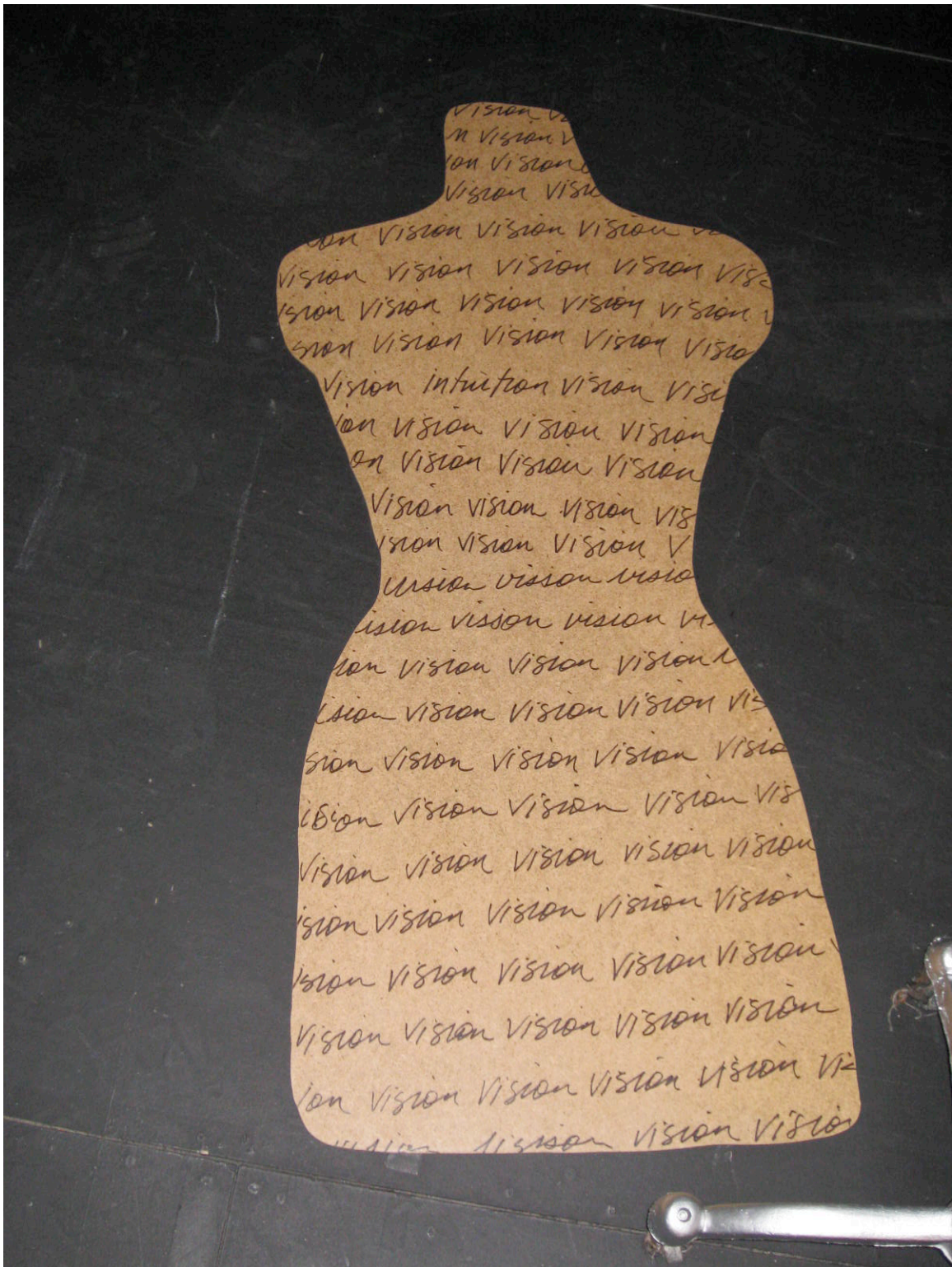


Illustration 6C – Floor Cutouts at base of silhouette stand.



Illustration 7A – reference Photo for Patterns sculpture.



Illustration 7B – picture of mold for original *Pattern Bubbles* sculpture.



Illustration 8A – detail of *Pattern Bubbles*.



Illustration 8B – detail of *Pattern Bubbles* hanging.



Illustration 8C – detail of **The Rover** sketch in bubble.

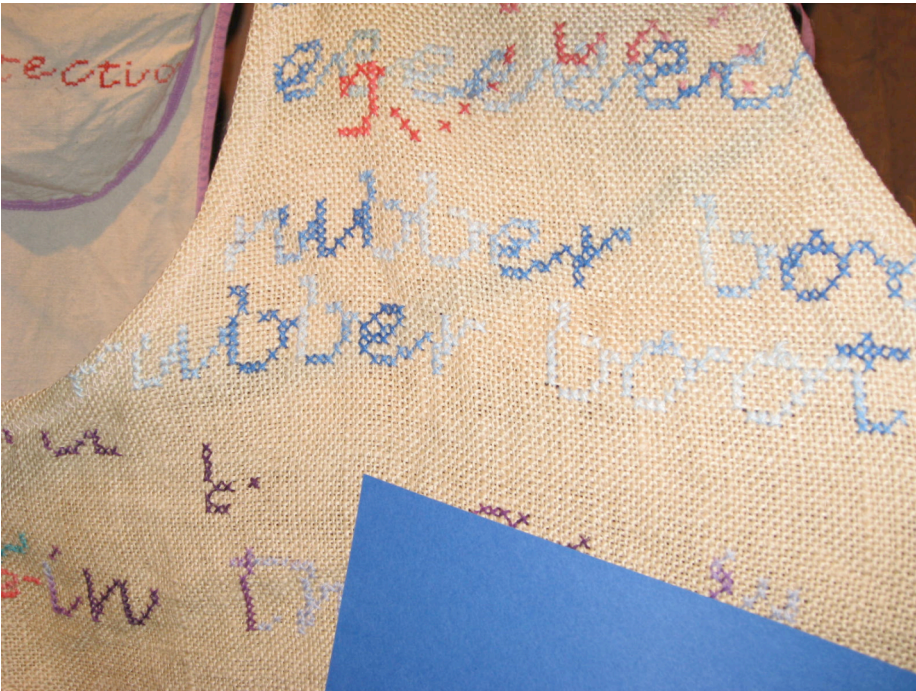


Illustration 9A – detail of *Costume Aprons*.

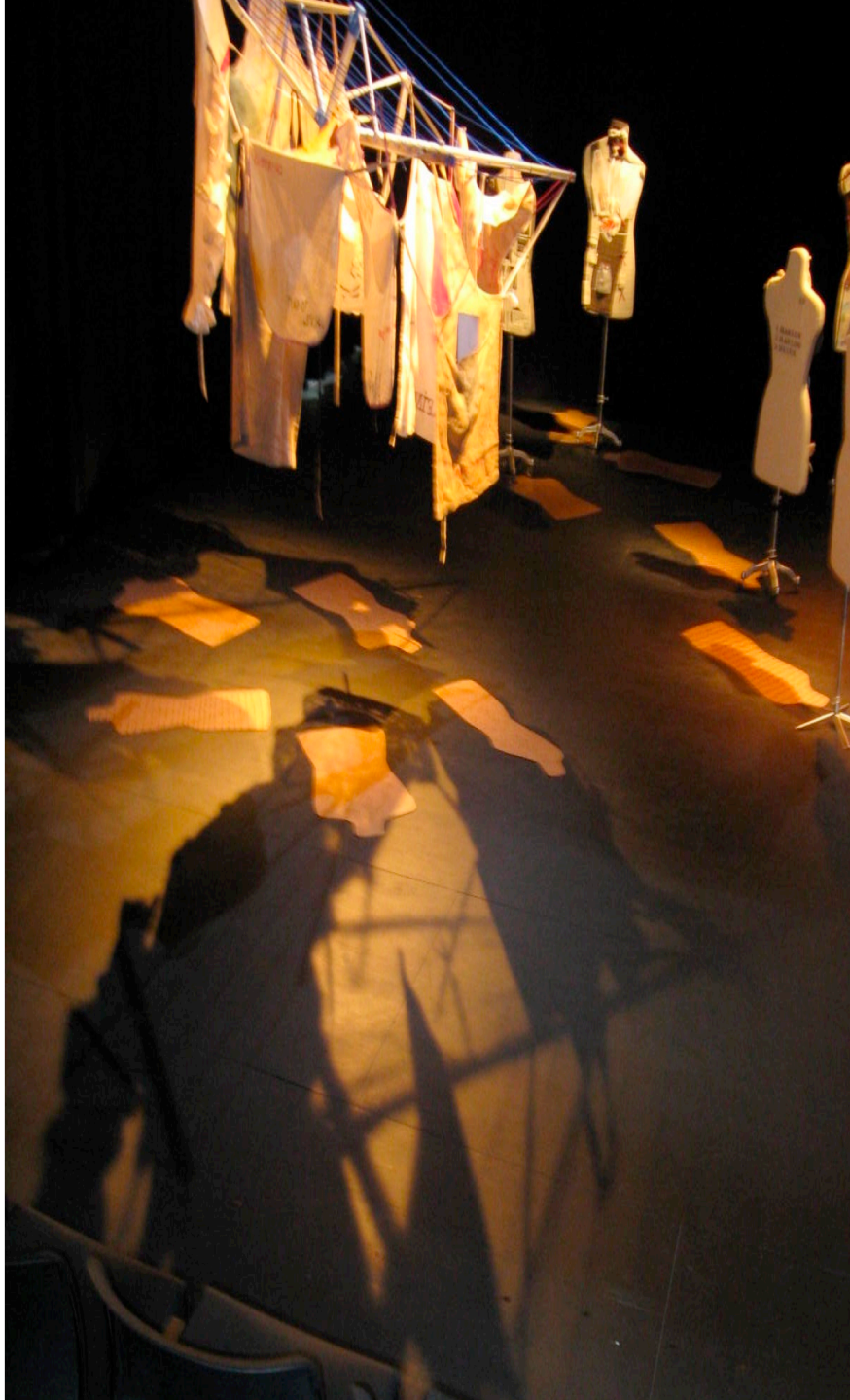


Illustration 9B – *Costume Aprons* in the space.



Illustration 9C – detail of *Costume Aprons*.



Illustration 10A – the original dress forms.



Illustration 10B – detail of one of the ‘cast’ in *Silhouetted Cast*.



Illustration 10C – detail of *Silhouetted Cast*.

Footnotes

1. Scenography – The Theatre Designers Website www.sceno.org/articles/josef-svoboda-the-scenographer/ ; Josef Svoboda – The Scenographer.
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3. Bourgeois, Louise; Louise Bourgeois – Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father; The MIT Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1998; Pg227.
4. Right Words Timeless Word Website www.rightwords.eu/quotes/theme/creation-241 ; Erich Fromm 1900-1980.
5. Kaiser, Susan B.; **The Psychology of Clothing**; Macmillian Publishing Company; New York; 1985;Pg 185.
6. Anonymous: Survey for Actors – by Jenifer Darbellay; included in Thesis.
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Appendix 1 : Surveys / Questionnaires

A Survey Regarding Costumes : Jenifer Darbellay's Thesis

Jenifer Darbellay Thesis Project – a series of art installation sculptures that involve and examine clothing and perception using the theatre experience of costumes on stage.

*any information derived from this survey is for research purposes and will only be used in an anonymous fashion. Please feel free to contact me at XXX XXX XXXX if you have any questions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME...xojenifer darbellay

1) Do you visualize your character prior to creating him or her in rehearsal or in performance?

2) How would you explain the effect of your costume to someone outside the theatre profession?

3) Do you need the costume? Why or why not?

4) How do you feel during a fitting? Do you have specific a scenario you can share, positive or negative? (no names please)

5) What is your role in the development of the costume?

6) What happens when you look in the mirror before you go onstage? How does costume affect your performance?

7) Do you refer to any stage directions regarding costume? Are they a part of your expectations?

- 8) What role does a costume designer play in your process? If any...
- 9) What was the best and/or worst costume experience you have had and why?
- 10) What is a character that you dream of playing? What play, and why this character?
- 11) What does color mean to you? General or specific.
- 12) How do you feel about your costume when the rest of the cast sees it? This can be a specific story or general statement.
- 13) Is there ever a feeling of competition within a cast you have been a part of regarding costumes?
- 14) What are your feelings with the arrival of costumes, props, lights, sound and sets?
- 15) Which of these has the most effect on your process?
- 16) Do you feel the audience? Explain. (General or Specific)