

La Vie en roses: together and apart, an (un)braided model approach

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Introduction/Concept/Context. *La Vie en roses* represents Phase 2 of a multi-phase creative research project (Ridgeway, et.al, 2023) to develop and demonstrate a collaborative design model. The design presented here is the initial outcome created by three designers to demonstrate an approach to the braided design model. In a field where process models often assume one solitary designer, this model is significant as it is inherently collaborative, it can accommodate a multiplicity of design styles, and it values lived experience as well as diverse expertise and skill sets. As well, the model can accommodate collaboration that is locationally variable (i.e. the collaboration occurred in 3 different locations.) *La Vie en roses* represents an initial design solution, demonstrating the synthesis of three design minds mediating diverse creative approaches. The research builds upon previously established bodies of work from each of the designers. This research team assembled with a goal to evaluate and test the Braided Model put forth by Tortorice, Davelaar, and Cobb (2016). Method braiding was designed to help researchers to integrate or ‘braid’ their methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation both simultaneously and sequentially (Watson, 2020). A barrier has always been that designers rely on tacit and localized knowledge, challenging the conversion of that knowledge to something transferable and explicit. Suib, et.al (2020) argue that to sustain and conserve knowledge it must be transferable. This certainly applies when sharing insights among collaborators. According to Niedderer (2007, p.5), “the inclusion of tacit knowledge seems essential for success,” and is associated with the expertise of the researchers. Tacit knowledge played a critical role in both process and in communication. Each designer, with their own personal thesaurus and shared approaches through images and discussion with the team. Each also contributed their unique area of expertise, including patterning making, textile print design, and material studies. The team then pulled from this to form the outcome. The beauty of collaboration is the moments when designers learn from and then feed off of each other. Serendipity in design occurred in virtual studio meetings when a designer’s tacit knowledge came out in verbal communication through questions from the other designers. A forced explanation from a designer who acted on something that “just felt right to them” allowed better communication of that knowledge. **Methods/Process/Aesthetics.** Initial design development for *La Vie en Roses* began with team agreement that the garment would have 2D and 3D surface design elements with the inclusion of digital textile printing, and fiber art

versions of the digital print to form 3D components. After establishment of a visual library contributed to by the whole team, a clear focus on and interest in floral imagery emerged. These images formed the beginning point for discussion and direction. In addition, the team unanimously decided to connect the evolving design to music using psychomimicry. Given that many of the images were roses in various forms, and in a panorama of shades of pink and peach, the song *La Vie en Rose* (1945) was selected. Garment form centered on development of a single piece pattern garment to allow a continuous flow of a print engineered into the shape. The final pattern was inspired by a Madame Grès suit jacket (1947) from one collaborator's previous experimentations. Print placement evolved to incorporate the striped elements as background, with additional circular motifs to balance the large floral images (Figure 1). These abstract additions bring in additional darker shades of the color palette to ground the exuberant roses. This creates movement across the body and guides the viewer's eye to different areas of the garment. One designer explored the use of floral elements to expand spatially, dimensionally, and texturally through the development of 3D roses, created through dyeless shaped resist with raw edges and dimensional beading (Figure 2). 3D floral elements were placed on the jacket body for a flow that moves the eye diagonally. Some 3D floral elements extend beyond the edges of the garment for more movement and extension of the silhouette. The initial pattern was digitized and edited in CLO 3D. CLO was used to digitally drape the garment, leading to adjustments in size and fit. CLO was also used to assess print placement on the body. The final floral print contains both photographic and vector versions of the roses. Using a previously established technique (Ridgeway), the team created a striped textile print design using psychomimicry, the emulation of a neurological phenomenon. This reflects the experience of color hearing for the song. Each musical note was allocated one color and each beat a stripe length, such that all "a" notes were colored pink and all quarter notes received a quarter inch stripe (Figure 3).

Execution. Cotton sateen was selected for the outer part of the jacket, and a high thread count cotton shirting for the lining. Silk organza was used for an overlay/peplum and the 3D elements. These were hand tacked and/or beaded with embroidery thread to the exterior of the jacket as well as both sides of the organza overlay. It was discovered that if the jacket sleeve seam is not stitched it will drop down to form either a skirt or peplum. A faggoting stitch connects both pieces at the hem and a satin finish stitch is used to hem the organza. It can thus be worn two ways, either over the jacket in alignment or flipped down to create the peplum style lower piece. **Cohesion and contribution.** Cohesion in collaboration can be difficult, as each designer has their own aesthetic preferences. However, in this scenario, the designers came to agreement after each design decision. Designers elicited and considered feedback, did not make decisions in isolation, and generated opportunities for in-progress critiques, mostly through Zoom. While it was expected that tacit knowledge would be difficult to communicate, in fact some challenges occurred in final studio development, when designers felt that face to face interaction with the physical garment would have been beneficial. Future research will continue development of the collaborative braided design process model, as this project demonstrated its effectiveness. Phase 3 will build on phase 2, resulting in an additional design artifact to further evolve prior to publication. The researchers hope to demonstrate the braided model through workshopping with other collaborative teams to share

and build knowledge collectively.



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