THE CREATION OF MODERN FASHIONS THROUGH THE MERGING OF EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURE:

SPRING MESSAGE

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I have always believed the design of clothes should not try to conceal the naked body but should act as a catalyst that reveals the existence and strength of the individual. *Spring Message* includes three phases, *Spring Message, Mystification*, and *My Paradise* to reflect my three life experiences.

*Spring Message* is an attempt to express my thoughts and ideas though designs in fashion, which were derived from the ancient beliefs, traditions, and western influence I have experienced. Through my individual pieces and creations I hope the viewer will be able to see who I am, where I came from, and understand the happiness and changes in my life.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As I began to think about my studio project I reflected on personal experiences during my childhood in China. Chinese tradition and folk art played a large role in my artistic development, which began during high school, thus developing my awareness of fashion evolving into an artistic pursuit. As I began to understand how fashion and art reflected social changes, my curiosity was peaked. The Cultural Revolution in China, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, greatly influenced the work of a young Chinese artist named Hung Liu. Many of Liu’s ideas came from her unique experiences during that period and convey her feelings about life, impressions of what she experienced, and how her generation struggled for freedom and happiness amid chaos and turmoil. Her work inspired me to incorporate some of my own experiences into my designs.

A Japanese designer, Eiko Ishioka, often creates images that are provocative, emotional, sometimes shocking, and always beautiful. But instead of limiting herself to one media, as is the case of many designers, Eiko’s art can be found in a wide range of applications. For Eiko, the beauty of the design, and the medium through which it is presented are the same. Her work made me realize that a truly good design is often the result of a combination of ideas, causing me to think about how my eastern heritage had been recently influenced by my move to the west.

My arrival in America was shocking at first, but it has colored my life, influenced
my work, and given me a new perspective and outlook of fashion design. While folk art and traditional dress were an integral part of the shape and design of my garments in China, after moving to the United States I began to incorporate western ideas with traditional eastern designs. I soon realized that my traditional life with an American husband and a small child was rapidly changing and wondered if I would eventually forget what it meant to be Chinese. As the ties between my native China and my adopted homeland blended together, my designs began to reflect not only my childhood experiences but also the influence of western culture. My designs, therefore, became a reflection of who I am, where I came from, and the happiness I have found in my new life.

Several of my garments contain images achieved by using silk painting and batik techniques and designs consisting of multiple layers of fabrics, images, and colors, beginning with the traditional Chinese dress. These garments, while more colorful than the folk art that inspired their creation, contain both eastern and western techniques and ideas. While a few of my garments attempt to convey childhood memories, others reflect the continuation of western influence on traditional Chinese society. My collection is a reflection of the changes in my life from growing up in China, moving to America, and uniting our two cultures.

Statement of the Problem

After deciding to interpret personal experiences into designs and adapting those designs to garments, I chose to concentrate on three distinct periods in my life: youth, cultural displacement, and marriage. In choosing the fabrics, color, and garment silhouettes that best express these periods, I attempted to answer the following questions:
1. How can emotion be conveyed through surface design, fabric quality, and silhouette?

2. How can cross-cultural conceptions be used in modern fashion designs?

3. How can painting and sculpture be absorbed and blended into designs in order to achieve both aesthetic and practical functions?

Methodology

To answer these questions I experimented with various designs in order to incorporate personal and emotional feelings into fabrics. I then experimented with various design and draping techniques and used the different fabrics to create at least nine garments for my exhibition, in lieu of a thesis.
CHAPTER 2

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Body is to spirit
As cloth is to body
Grown to its own size
Room in the air
Air in the Weave
Weavers in the breeze
The earth spins and
Things come to an end
So day and night
A body blooms
At its own hour
Stretch the pause
Through the sky
Or float-muted banner
Signs, no designs

Signs, no designs
or float-muted banner
through the sky
Stretch the pause
At its own hour
a body blooms
so day and night
Things come to an end
the earth spins and
Weaves in the breeze
Air in the weave
Room in the air
Grown to its own size
As cloth is to the body
Body is to spirit

Laurence Wieder

A scholar uses language and mathematics as his medium of expression, whereas a musician uses music, and a painter artwork. As a graduate student majoring in fashion design, it is through my collection of garments, inspired and influenced by ancient beliefs, traditions, and western influences, that has enabled me to create and present my medium of expression.

Clothing can, of course, conceal the naked body, but well designed clothes can act as a catalyst to reveal a person’s strength, enhance their well-being, and reflect their personality. The concept of well-designed clothing became the foundation of my work and was soon influenced by my Chinese heritage in color, pattern, and fabric selection.
As I continued to develop design ideas I chose to combine certain aspects of traditional Eastern art with Western practicality. I used many textile and surface designs in order to enhance meaning and give the garments character, which resulted in a multi-cultural finished product with a marketable design.

Spring Message

I chose the title *Spring Message* for my project, which included three very separate and distinct phases of my life:

1) *Spring Message*, my lovely experience as a child and young adult in China, surrounded by the beauty of an ancient culture inspired by Chinese folk arts, paper cutting, and traditional poems.

2) *Mystification* describes my feelings and struggles as I moved to America and tried to adapt to a modern western culture.

3) *My Paradise* came from the lush plants, tropical flowers, and ocean breezes of Hawaii, which were refreshing and filled me with a sense of calm and harmony following the birth of my first child.

Each of these phases represents a different concept in terms of colors, silhouettes, texture, and fabric design. I began with plain silk, which was used in most garments because it gave me the freedom to create my own designs to develop shapes and silhouettes as needed. For the fabric design, I chose themes from traditional Chinese folk art and Chinese characters from ancient poems. A variety of light to medium weight silk and organdy were used, as well as variations in dies and pigments. For variety, I used loosely draped styles and fitted silhouettes. I tried to treat each garment as though it were
a piece of fine art, whose beauty was reflected through the fabric arrangement, texture, and silhouette, while keeping it functional.

*My Kite:* When old memories slowly fade away and childhood dreams turn into reality, a peaceful everlasting picture remains: …of several young girls flying kites on the mountainside in the warm, fresh, spring breeze. They write their wishes onto small pieces of paper, put them into little silk pockets, tie them to the beautiful kites and let them fly as high as they can. As the girls lay on the grass their kites carry their thoughts and dreams higher, and higher, and higher… That was typical of my carefree childhood in China, along with innocent ideals, secrets, and fantasies.

The design of *My Kite* began with a silk painting technique, which was intended to show scenes of life flourishing in springtime. I chose butterflies as the main images and surrounded them with peach flowers, clouds, and Chinese lanterns. Butterflies are associated with female beauty, symbolize lovers in the springtime, and have appeared in Chinese paper cutting since the Tang Dynasty. After the legend of the “Butterfly Lover” emerged during the Ming Dynasty, the butterfly symbolized love, good intentions, and a happy life.

I began designing the fabric for this piece by placing the colors to be used onto the same space. Traditional Chinese folk art uses a lot of bright colors including turquoise, fuchsia, dark blues, oranges, and bright reds. In order to keep details in the print bright and in harmony, I knew the many different color tones had to be carefully balanced. To solve this problem I did research on the design of Japanese Kimonos. I used curved lines to divide backgrounds into different areas and in some cases left the
background color white so as to soften the contrast and balance the scene. In some cases, depending on the area, the images, shapes, and colors helped to determine the background color.

After the design of the fabric was complete, I focused my attention on designing the silhouette. I chose a shape inspired by a costume from the Ching Dynasty. The “T” shape is very similar to the shape of kites, and the limited number of seams used in construction means the images on the fabric is not compromised.

To avoid the appearance of a flat surface, I tried to give the butterfly images a 3D feeling by using the quilting technique of outlining the shapes of the butterflies. I used crystal for the eyes of the butterfly and colorful beading work to capture the beauty of the shining peach flowers. The little embroidered pockets, in which a young girl would send her secret thoughts skyward with her kite, were hidden inside the jacket.

A lot of beading work went into this piece, which was intended, to emphasize the beautiful feelings from my childhood. These details allowed each viewer to interpret their thoughts differently, and as more of the intricate details are appreciated, their thoughts are changed. I chose to display this work by suspending it with nearly invisible fishing line from the ceiling in order to create the impression that My Kite was flying effortlessly in the sky.

Summer Lotus: During my childhood air conditioners were uncommon, and during the long hot summers I spent most of my time outside playing with my friends. The shore of the lotus pond, under the branches of a huge willow tree, provided shelter from the sun and was a fun place to enjoy the summer afternoon breeze and catch
dragonflies with my friends. I enjoyed watching the older girls paddle their little boat onto the lake and collect lotus seeds, which can be used with dessert or a special snack known as “moon cakes.” The young girls were delicate and pretty just like the pink lotus blossoms, which made the boys whistle at them, to try to get their attention.

The beautiful Lotus flower has long been admired by the Chinese people, and for centuries its character, beauty, and purity has been admired in poetry and song. With this image in mind, I decided to design a garment to reflect the beauty of this soft, fragrant, natural wonder. To express and duplicate this theme in cloth meant the design had to be simple and elegant, with the fabric appearing to float as naturally on the body as the green algae does on a pond.

To design the garment to look as smooth as water I chose bright chartreuse green satin, because it reminded me of the tender green algae that floated upon the water. To represent the lotus flower I chose a large bright pink bow with a long tail and allowed it to drape alongside the body. I used a western silhouette to create the feeling of summer lotus with a slim, gentle look, and trimmed the costume with traditional Chinese elements to give the garment a finishing touch.

In ancient time Chinese clothes often had very delicate cording to accent and decorate the garment. Decorating elements were very important and reflected a woman's status, wealth, and personality. For Summer Lotus, I chose a pink satin cord, which matched the color of the bow, to decorate the sleeve and neckline. The neckline design was inspired by a traditional collar decoration used during the Ching Dynasty, and reflects my Chinese heritage and culture.
Double Happiness: According to the ancient Chinese calendar, the end of winter and the beginning of the New Year occur in February. The Chinese people celebrate both the New Year and the arrival of spring at the same time, and it is always one of the busiest times of the year. It is time to leave the past and celebrate New Year’s coming, so the father traditionally repaints the rooms of the house while the mother buys beautiful paper cuttings and food from the farmer’s market. The children, wearing new clothes, explode fireworks in the snow to welcome and usher in the New Year.

Paper was invented nearly a thousand years ago in China, during the Han Dynasty. Over the years paper cutting developed into a very popular folk art. After many centuries, different areas of China developed their own styles and characters, but most patterns are closely related to Chinese tradition, legends, and religion. They are often cut in the shape of animals, fish, birds, and flowers and symbolize good luck, good wishes, and a good future.

To the Chinese people the color red symbolizes celebration, passion, and luck. During the Spring Festival there are red lanterns, red ornaments, red fire crackers, red dresses, and red paper cuttings. My memories of the Spring Festival are of the red paper cuttings placed on the exterior windows and doors of most houses. Double Happiness, was inspired by the Chinese windows decorated for the holidays.

As with my first piece, I began the fabric design by using a silk painting technique for the background. I tried to create a holiday atmosphere by using pink and red together with traditional Chinese symbols of luck. I chose to use the pattern of a fish because it represents good wishes and the expectation of a happy next year. I used a draping
technique to design the garment and carefully chose the areas to display the paper cutting images.

The design of the jacket was based on a traditional Chinese vest with hand dyed Chinese buttons and matching cording along the edges of the garment. Since this is a winter piece the jacket was quilted with decorative beading to emphasize the holiday feeling. To create a more elegant look I used darts to taper the jacket emphasizing the waistline, in place of the traditional Chinese box style. For the bottom piece I used a simple white satin skirt with a separate apron.

In China, the apron is as common as it is in western society, but for Chinese women the apron is usually decorated with beautiful embroidered patterns associated with love, peace and good luck. I took this simple idea and decided to transform it into a garment. The result is a triangular shaped apron, having the image of a marching fish on top and for personality and interest, a large woven Chinese lucky charm in the middle.

The design of Spring Message came from childhood memories where the bright colors inspired my dreams and fantasies. This silhouette design, though based on simple and balanced Chinese traditions, was created with the intention of introducing a very comfortable clothing style into modern fashion.

Mystification

As I moved to America and tried to adapt to a new culture and environment with a different language and life style, I was both excited and confused. Like a small boat floating on the big ocean I felt isolated, and wondered where my journey would take me. Would my venture prove to be a good decision or result in failure; was my future going
to be in America, China, or both countries?

The first difficulty I experienced was with communication. The English language became my biggest challenge. To express the thoughts and feelings resulting from my move from east to west into a garment design, I chose Chinese and English characters to symbolize the two cultures. The result was a design that expressed the mystification I felt as I tried to adapt and adjust to my new environment.

*Mystification I:* Gauze was my fabric of choice for this garment to give the design a feeling of roughness. I painted the gauze with copper brown, orange, and olive greens. By adding different amounts of chemical water, I was able to add more color value to the fabric. The design of the garment focused on a sleeveless blouse with a turtleneck and a matching skirt. A combination of drape and flat pattern techniques were used in the formation of the design. Material for the blouse was draped over a dress form while a basic skirt block was used to form the skirt. To create the feeling of complexity I used stitched fabric and connected the pieces together giving the appearance of honeycomb. Machine stitches were also used on some parts of the garment, but of different color and weight, which represented the unclear and disjointed thoughts that I experienced.

To express my emotions of confusion and misunderstanding, I decided to concentrate on the surface design of the garment. I used the photo silkscreen technique to create ancient Chinese poems and paintings on the organza. Carefully selected images were cut into irregular shapes with burned edges and placed on the surface of the garment or partially concealed between the surface and the lining. The partially concealed images were no longer bright and clear, which indicated that my Chinese heritage was disturbed.
and blurred by western influence. The end result was the garment I call *Mystification I*.

*Mystification II:* The biggest challenge for an artist is to transform his or her thoughts and ideas into a creative work of art. The finished product represents not only the artist’s creative side, but also his or her skill as a fine craftsman. For *Mystification II* I wanted to combine my thoughts of cultural displacement and the feeling of movement into the fabric design of the garment.

As usual, I began with the fabric design and wanted to create the image of a Chinese poem, “floating on the water under the moonlight.” Smooth and shiny silk was used to represent the water while cold wax was used to create the Chinese characters. I mixed dyes with chemical water and brushed the background with brown and light green tones using a watercolor technique. The finished fabric looks very similar to a traditional Chinese painting symbolizing my Chinese heritage.

Through the design of the garment, I wanted to express how Chinese traditions have been twisted and changed by western influence. To do this I used countless knots to represent the Chinese culture, as I wrestled and tried to unravel my thoughts and emotions. The technique I chose to use on the fabric was “Shibori”, which was originally invented in China and later absorbed into Japanese culture around the 15th century. The technique uses tying, folding, clamping and stitching to create unique three-dimensional patterns on the fabric. As I worked my way through the process, I was surprised to see what a great effect clamping, knotting, and stitching had on a flat smooth fabric. Different colors and textures appeared, giving one-dimensional fabric a new sculptured look. The color, texture, and sculpture were exactly what I had hoped for and represented
the emotional twists and wrinkles felt by the Chinese culture resulting from western influence. For the top, I used a 17th century silhouette from western design, which included a corset and undergarment, creating an “X” shape in fitted bodies. I chose a simple design for the skirt with light yellow and green colors to blend with the top ensuring that the focus remained on the bodies.

*Mystification III:* As I grew up in China, I began to realize the difference and distance between dreams and reality. When I think back in time, my childhood dreams seem to have faded like a flower in the cool autumn breeze; when I try to peek into the future it is similar to looking through a dense fog.

For my third garment, I continued to use my thoughts and movements as guidelines for the design of the fabric. To create the feeling of an ancient culture, I once again chose muted brown and rose tones as the theme color and used the cold wax technique to brush Chinese poems and stories onto the fabric. I next applied layers of hot wax using batik technique, and then after the wax dried I crushed and twisted the fabric to create rifts and cracks. The new color is then able to go through the cracks into the Chinese characters. Some of the characters changed color, while others were blurred; still, others were totally covered with color. Once again I designed a blouse with a matching skirt by combining the influence of two cultures, but decided to focus on the design of the skirt rather than the blouse. My design was inspired by an old Chinese wall hanging, which involved Chinese characters. Instead of cutting fabric and joining them together, I decided to use the remaining fabric for the skirt. I draped the fabric on the dress form and wrapped additional layers on the front side to create the feeling of a wall
hanging. To express the thoughts that I feel when I dream of my lost youth, I cut organza into the shapes of rose petals and placed them on the surface of the garment. The petals represent the passing of time as they grow older and wilt; much like childhood dreams fade away as children grow into adults.

With only two fitted darts at the back waist, the skirt not only expressed the old Chinese wall hanging, but “Mystification III” was also very functional, comfortable and easy to wear.

My Paradise

The Hawaiian Islands are one of the most beautiful places on earth and are a prime example of how Eastern and Western cultures have blended together and live in harmony. It was there that I married my husband, a typical American with so much confidence and passion. Once again my life was changed, but on this occasion it was filled with love and hope. I finally found my home, a paradise between China and America between the old and new, where my husband and I joined together to begin our beautiful future. The joy and happiness from this tropical setting was the inspiration for My Paradise.

Rain Forest: The tropical rains in Hawaii come and go quickly while giving life to the forests and mountains. Dust is washed away, the lush tropical plants spring to life, and a sweet fresh aroma fills the air. In Hawaii, the ancient island people used materials from coconut trees, seashells, and palm trees to create their unique fashion style. These garments not only typified the local lifestyle and spirit, but also blended harmoniously with the natural environment. The natural beauty and simplicity of these garments gave
me the inspiration for my next project. Instead of designing garments, which conformed to normal industry standards, I decided to create a design blended with the natural surroundings. I sought to transform the beauty of a tropical banana tree into the design of the garment with practical function. I began with drawings and sketches, and soon decided to use the human body form as the tree trunk wrapped with real life sized banana leaves. I chose gauze as the base material and painted it with light green, light brown and orange colors. I then used the draping technique to create a simple but functional silhouette. To instill a sense of tropical flourish into the design I painted banana leaves on silk organza, and wrapped the material alternately around the body form and attached it to the base of the garment. I also placed large green crystal beads on the banana leaves to imitate raindrops, which complemented the garment and gave it a more detailed appearance.

Although many design ideas were used before, a smooth and elegant look was finally achieved, I tried to keep the construction of this piece as simple as possible in order to give the appearance of a relaxed and romantic feeling for my Rain Forest.

*Blue Dream:* The first time I experienced the natural beauty of the ocean with the myriad of colorful tropical fish was while snorkeling in a blue lagoon on the north shore of the island of Maui. Under the warm tropical sunshine the ocean changes color from blue to green to turquoise, and everything within is continuously floating and moving. At that moment I felt like a little mermaid in an underwater world that previously existed only in my dreams. At night, as I lay on the beach and listened to waves as they gently touched the shore, I smelled the fresh ocean breeze and my heart was filled with calm and
sweet happiness. To duplicate this feeling of peace and calm, I wanted to replicate the image of a quiet ocean in a garment design. A draping technique was used to create the silhouette while a bias cut and princess lines were used to imitate the movement of the ocean floating. I also allowed the garment to flow on to the ground to imitate the appearance of a fishtail on a mermaid. Instead of hiding the seams on the inside of the garment, they were placed on the outside where they were shaped to look like the curves of an ocean wave. To prevent the edges of the seams from fraying I used a burning technique. These seams not only gave the garment an interesting three-dimensional look, but also provided a clean finish on the inside. For colors I chose sea foam green, royal blue and aqua blue to represent the changing colors of the Pacific Ocean and used various colors of organza in an attempt to replicate ripples in the water. I cut seashell patterns from the colored organza and attached the individual pieces to the garment. The variety of colors, when overlaid on each other created more color values, giving the garment a beautiful texture.

The beauty of the seashells and the ocean waves inspired the fine detail of the garment. I used a pigment painting and beading technique to create details in the decorative patterns allowing the surface to provide a soft finished touch. Many details and ideas were incorporated into the finished design in an attempt to replicate the feeling of peace and relaxation. I finally chose to wrap the garment and use lace to connect the front and back for my *Blue Dream*.

*Song of the Ocean:* The ocean seems to change its character quickly, sometimes softly like a gentle girl, sometimes powerful like an angry king. It uses the sound of water
as an international language to beckon people, like me, to its shores. In China there is a famous story describing two people promising to love each other forever while standing on a secluded beach, which made me believe the song of the ocean is the story of love.

To convey the emotion of love, I wanted to create the image and feeling of ocean waves. I chose a lightweight dark blue and white silk to give the visual appearance of waves, while enhancing the fabric with the Shibori technique using steam heat to permanently crease the fabric. I draped the material on a dress form and created a basic silhouette to establish the theme of the design. I then wrapped the fabric alternately along the form to create waves and interwove the fabric to create the feeling that the waves were floating. Sparkling beads were used to represent air bubbles rising to the surface of the waves, while gold pigment was used for curved lines with music symbols for my Song of the Ocean.

**Yin and Yang:** Hawaii is the home for thousands of bright, beautiful butterflies that bring life to the islands and beauty to this world. I was surprised to learn that butterflies are always together, as are two swans on a lake, which reminded me of an old Chinese love story called “Butterfly Lovers.”

Zhu was a beautiful girl, the only daughter of a rich and powerful family of long ago. In her time it was considered dignified and customary for single women to remain at home and not venture outside unescorted. Zhu, however, longed for the freedom that Chinese society bestowed on men. Without her family knowledge, Zhu dressed as a man, entered a men’s school, and began her studies. She soon fell in love with a classmate named “Liang,” a young man from a different social class.
Zhu’s family, wanting the best for their daughter, arranged her marriage to a young man from another powerful family. When Liang learned of this arrangement, he succumbed to the pressure and sadness of losing Zhu and died the day before her wedding. When Zhu passed by Liang’s tomb her emotions overcame her and she jumped into the tomb wanting to be with Liang. According to legend, her actions so moved God that he closed the tomb and allowed the two lovers to be together for eternity. The next morning, as people passed by the grave they noticed a pair of butterflies ascending toward heaven. The red butterfly was Liang and the green butterfly was Zhu. For me this story was not only beautiful, but helped me understand the true meaning of life and the basic principles behind the Chinese philosophy of “Yin and Yang,” representing opposing forces in the universe. The forces of Yang are thought to be dominant and include masculine traits exemplified by the sun, creation, heat, light, Heaven, living and man. The forces of Yin are opposite, exemplified by feminine traits inherited by the moon, darkness, cold, death, and women. Each of these opposing forces is constantly occurring in cyclical manner. Not surprisingly, I decided to use this concept in the design of a garment and created two illustrations to introduce the Chinese story of “Zhu and Liang,” the perfect union of Yin and Yang.

I chose the medium of pencil drawing to present this love story and tried to replicate the feeling and emotion of an audience watching an old black and white film, while showing their sense of mourning. The contrasts of black, white and the shades of gray defined the positive, negative, and neutral values within the drawing. They defined space and helped to visualize “life and death,” the “past and future,” and “inner and
Drawing (1): A light breeze carries the scent of flowers though the air and draws people outside to enjoy the springtime. The young and beautiful Zhu opens the heavy Chinese door, looks at the silk butterfly kite as it floats in the sky, and is reminded of carefree days she enjoyed as a child. Her fond memories are interrupted when her hand touches the cold metal on the mouth of a lion figurine on the large, heavy door. The intimidating icon is a reminder that she is expected to remain inside the family home until marriage. Zhu quietly retreats and follows the ancient lonely custom that has been endured by many generations of Chinese women.

Drawing (2): After years of living within the confines of her family home, and then being matched with a groom she neither knew nor cared about, Zhu’s thoughts and heart were still with Liang. Wanting to be with him she dove into his tomb and into his arms while the goddess of death looked on. They held each other tightly as their forms changed to a pair of beautiful butterflies, silently emerging from the tomb, flying together, toward heaven.

In China, stories and poems about the life and experiences of the deceased were often carved into their tombstone. These caricatures were seen as a way to give meaning to a person’s life and forever capture romantic feelings and memories. I was inspired by these poems and images and decided to use them in the design of the garment. I wanted to try telling a different story, giving new meaning to the beauty of Death.

From pencil sketches to the final design of the garment, I was glad to have the chance to experience different media and explore different cultural influences. In modern
society people traditionally wear white for weddings and black for funerals. I chose to use both black and white in my drawing to duplicate the theme in a garment dealing with both positive and negative spaces. I chose sheer fabric because it can be used to create different effects under different lighting conditions and angles. The shape of the garment was inspired by a beautiful butterfly, which is often used in Chinese folk art, kites, and paper cutting. In order to create a visual feeling, I tried to transform the flat one-dimensional pieces into three-dimensional by attaching the butterflies to each other. As the wearer of the garment moves and the butterflies drop, twist, and turn, they appear to be flying and draw attention to the beautiful garment.

The story of Zhu and Liang will be remembered for eternity, because it has been past down from generation to generation by the Chinese people. Their story is not only a beautiful love story, but also an enlightenment of life and death, of temporary and eternal, of positive and negative, of Yin and Yang.
CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

In order to use the design of a garment as a medium to express my personal experiences and emotions, I researched Chinese folk art, traditional garments, and their historical context. Ancient Chinese garments in the Texas Fashion Collection gave me ideas on how to use the fabric design and silhouettes to reflect spiritual and emotional beliefs. The theme of my work was influenced by both eastern and western cultural experiences, and was reflected in the textile design, silhouette, and the surface designs of the garment.

I chose silk as the main material for my collection, in part because it was invented in my homeland thousands of years ago and also because it was the silk trade that began communications between China and western countries. In ancient times silk represented refinement, wealth and power, while in modern times silk continues to drape the body beautifully with bright vibrant colors. Personal designs, hand silk paintings, photo prints, and a myriad of color choices helped to contribute meaning and expression to my fashion designs.

The styles of clothing in my collection are a reflection of my childhood experiences and a combination of traditional eastern and western cultures. Tapered sleeves and boxy designs, which reflect my Chinese heritage, were merged with “X” shaped silhouettes, princess lines, and various surface designs to show the interaction of
the two cultures.

To answer the question of how to convey emotion through surface design, fabric quality and silhouette, I used Chinese characters and English text. The symbols were applied to fabric using cold wax and were layered with different colored dyes. To achieve a deeper meaning and express feelings of confusion and frustration, I designed this group of garments asymmetrically, with multiple layers of fabric. I also used various design techniques for the surface including Shibori, Batik, and stitching, to enhance the movement of the fabric.

My Kite and Double Happiness portrayed my lovely experience as a child and young adult in China. Chinese folk arts and paper cutting served as my inspiration, while soft delicate silk was used to represent the ease and comfort I felt in my childhood. The traditional silhouettes were beaded to emphasize the happiness and fantasy found in a young girl’s dreams.

Blue Dream and Rain of the Forest were created to express a sense of calmness and growth that I experienced during a trip to the Hawaiian Islands. Silk painting was applied to transparent fabric in order to achieve the refreshing effect of lush tropical foliage and relaxation of the ocean waves found in this island paradise.

For thousands of years, traditional Chinese garments maintained a boxy style, as women were forbidden to wear clothes showing their figures in public. When social reform came to China early in the 20th century, Chinese women began to accept western ideas and became more and more independent as new opportunities for practical and imaginative expression emerged. To bring a feminine look to the traditional boxy
Chinese costume, and answer the question of how to convey emotion through surface design, fabric quality and silhouette; I used darts and princess lines. The result was a traditional costume with a tailored look and western fit appropriately named, “Double Happiness” showing how the cultural conceptions of east and west can be joined in modern fashion design.

_Yin and Yang_ is another example of a design that was based on a combination of eastern and western ideas, which were blended together in order to create a new way to look at modern silhouettes. Inspired by traditional Chinese philosophy and an ancient love story, I used different shaped butterflies as the symbols of _Yin and Yang_. I attached the butterflies to each other, and to the garment, to express spiritual values and the opposing positive and negative forces, which occur continually in the universe. By combining the ancient eastern influences with modern silhouette designs from the west, I was able to establish a formal link between the two cultures through fashion. The resulting proportions and draping impart traditional and modern feelings to both the wearer and viewer, and nourish modern design.

In answering the final question, “how can painting and sculpture be absorbed and blended into designs in order to achieve both aesthetic and practical functions,” I designed and created _Mystification III_. Inspired by an ancient Chinese wall hanging, I created a three-dimensional fabric through the use of silk painting, Shibori, Batik. By using a single three yard piece of fabric wrapping and folding it to fit the dress form, I created a skirt that was sculptural looking, aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Painting and sculpture were also absorbed and blended into “Yin and Yang” and
*Song of the Ocean*, designs, which achieved both aesthetic and practical functions.

Sculptural butterflies were attached to the surface of *Yin and Yang* in order to achieve the visual effect of butterflies flying, while the Shibori technique was used in *Song of the Ocean* to create the impression of ocean waves as the wearer of the garment moved.

Painting and sculpture not only inspired these designs, but also enhanced the character of each individual garment.
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