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*Muse Book | Angels of History | Arjahn Cox*





*Muse Book for Arjahn Cox's Senior Thesis Project  
Parsons School of Design  
Lucia Cuba and Carolina Obregon  
Systems and Society  
2022-2023*



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# INTRODUCTION

For their thesis project, Arjahn Cox is questioning the representation of the fashion industry and the normalized exclusionary practices. Why should every model be thin, white, and cisgender? Why should clothing be made without the input of the wearer? And why do only the rich elite get to have clothing that is custom made for them?

Turning their questions into practice for their thesis project, Arjahn Cox has created a four look collection based on the wants and needs of four different muses. Muses were found via general survey, chosen based on their response, interviewed, measured and designed for, leading to final garments and outcomes. This book highlights the work for and the experience of one muse:

**Kambaba**







# INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

This section contains edited quotes from an interview  
between Kambaba and Arjahn that took place on November  
20, 2022

The full interview is available on [arjahn.com](http://arjahn.com)

!K!M!B!B!

*she/they*

23





*kambaba*  
*she/they*

*arjahn*  
*they/them*

# BACKGROUND



# IKAMIBABA!

IS A 23 YEAR OLD BLACK , NON-BINARY TRANS WOMAN.  
SHE IS A MUSICIAN AND ARTIST. THEIR WORLDVIEW IS  
SHAPED BY THE DYNAMICS OF THEIR IDENTITY.

I guess now I have a wider view of myself and the dynamics of my identity. I'm able to reflect on a lot of the aspects and dynamics of marginalization that shaped my experience and how it made me relate to my gender autonomy and brings me to the point where I [am] able to realize a lot of those things [are] trans misogynoir. I feel connected to the label of trans femme. It just makes sense, acknowledging the kind of already inherent gender nonconformity of blackness. So that combined with my eyes being open to the dynamics of everything, makes the most sense for me and my experience.



SHE RARELY FEELS INVALID IN HER IDENTITIES.

Dysphoria be “dysphoria-ing” but, never enough to invalidate myself but enough to make the existence tumultuous. Picture a firmly rooted tree being thrashed by wind, like trying to be uprooted — the rooting being my perception itself, knowing what I know about the world and about how I’m able to and not able to navigate my own gender autonomy and sovereignty in terms of expression and perception. That’s enough to validate me because the world kind of treats you at least in my experience, and with a lot of trans misogyny affected people [as if they want to] invalidate you, but they still treat you exactly how you see yourself in terms of how they marginalize you. It is very specific. They’ll try to invalidate you as something but marginalize you in such a specific way that only that identity would receive. So that’s not affirming, but [it’s] the disjointedness of all that helped me land upon my understanding [being] confirmed.



THEY WENT ON TO EXPLAIN GENDER AUTONOMY.

Being marginalized in certain ways, your autonomy is removed [because] you don't really have control over how people perceive you even if you have your own perception of self. Even if you have a deeper understanding with a community, when it comes to how you're able to navigate [the fact] that your autonomy can be removed in an outward sense based on how deeply you're marginalized. So it shows up in the ways in which someone might be policed in their gender expression, or even how [there] might be a removal of [their] gender autonomy. [An example] would be someone perceiving me and engaging with me in a way that doesn't line up with who I am inherently. That's a removal of gender autonomy. Although I might have that perception of self, someone outside of me can perceive outside of that, and that is important to notify especially if those people are in high positionality and in a position to oppress you. So, yeah, it's not the end all be all but it's something that I'm aware of and existing in spite of.



# FASHION AND IDENTITY



SHE VALUES COMFORT IN HER FASHION CHOICES.

...clothes and stuff, [are] definitely one of the more surface level affirming things in terms of gender autonomy, like dysphoria is a thing. So it's a way to comfort oneself. And I don't know, I like drip. I like looking good. I usually feel good. My sensory experience is very important for me within my nervous system to have that be vibey. [That] is another struggle when it comes to affirming myself because certain clothes that I might want to wear to feel more affirmed might not vibe with my sensory needs for any particular day. So I try to have a mix of flowy things. Those always feel affirming, and accessories.

WHEN THEY GET DRESSED THEY ARE FOCUSED ON COLOR,  
COMFORT, AND TEXTURE.

I usually want the different textures of the clothes to complement each other. I want it to be comfortable and I [want to] layer and not feel too weighed down. I like having options and I think layering gives me cool options throughout the day.

SHE VALUES AESTHETICS IN HER CLOTHING CHOICE.

I like big pants. I call them big ass swag pants. [I] like all materials, especially if they're flowy. I like long skirts. I frequent long denim skirts. You know, I think a lot of shit looks cool. If someone really put that shit on, I'm like, Whoa. I have a really wide scope of what I think looks cool. I like to see [and] I think it is really cool to see people execute what they're trying to do, or express themselves whether or not they're trying to achieve a form of expression that is supplementing a form that they might not provide, verbally, or within their personality.

THEIR IDEAL OUTFIT WOULD CONSIST OF:

My ideal outfit isn't restrictive... It has room within the fabric or room because of [a] lack thereof...

I think it'll be subtle but bold and detailed. I like monochromatic colorful looks because you're like oh, these all kind of blend together. But oh, this piece has that texture and oh, this is a far shade of that color from the one up here but they all go together when you look at the whole thing. It would make me feel a lil cunt. It'll make me feel physically comfortable and mobile in whatever capacity.

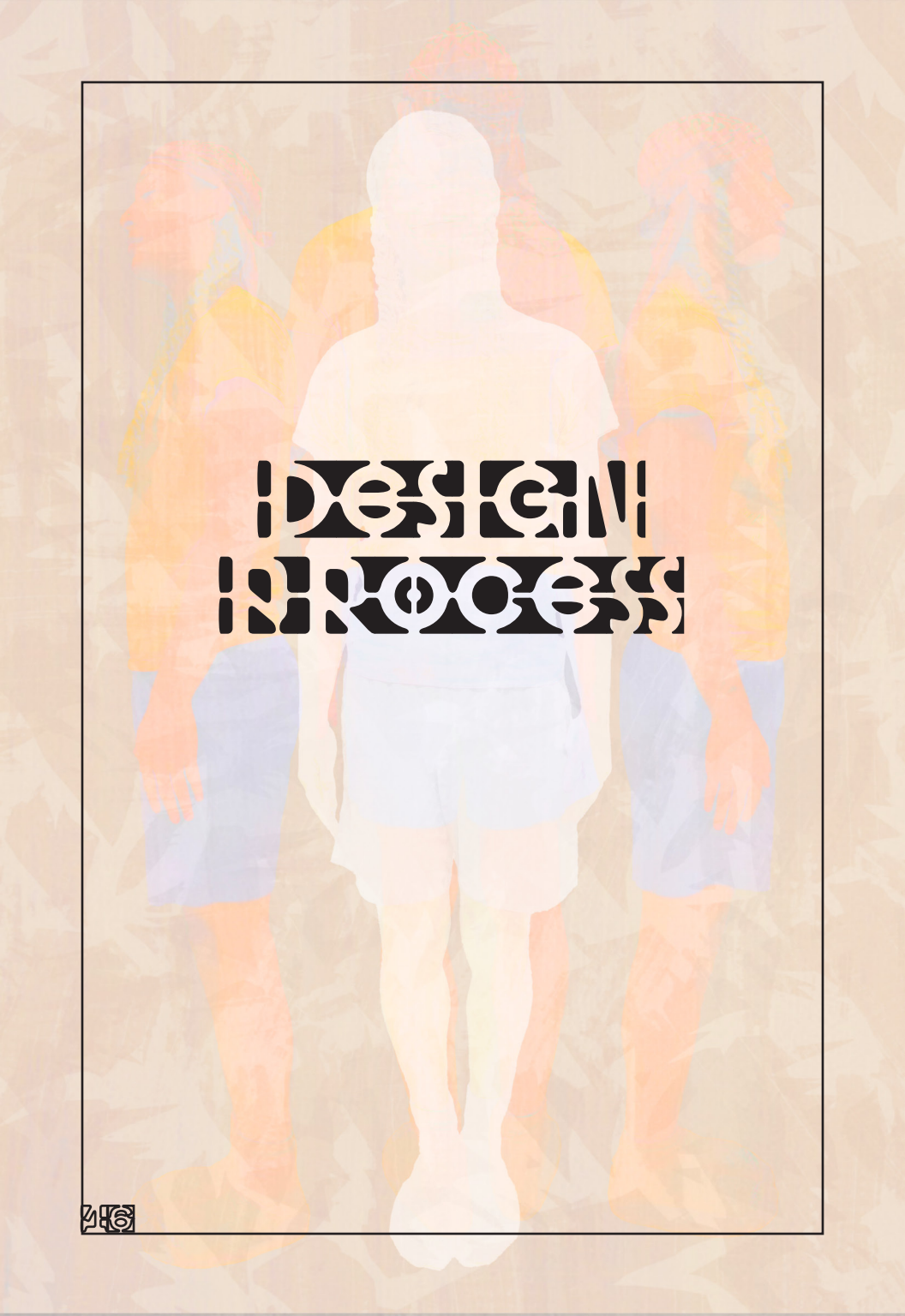
## THE BANK

☼ flowy

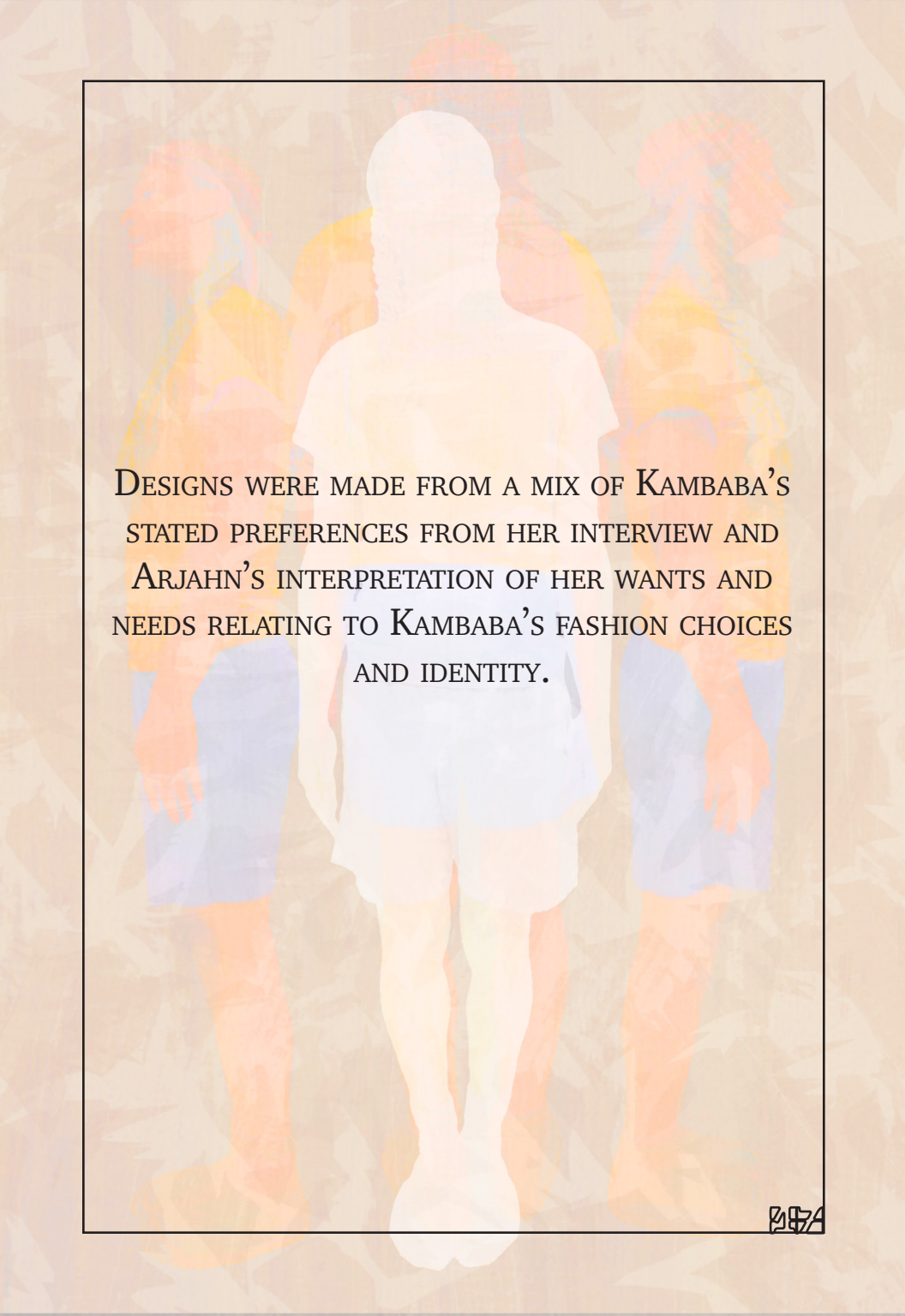
☼ monochromatic

☼ textured

☼ room in and outside of the garment



# DESIGN IN PROCESS



DESIGNS WERE MADE FROM A MIX OF KAMBABA'S  
STATED PREFERENCES FROM HER INTERVIEW AND  
ARJAHN'S INTERPRETATION OF HER WANTS AND  
NEEDS RELATING TO KAMBABA'S FASHION CHOICES  
AND IDENTITY.

# PAGE OF LIKES AND COLOR PALATE REFERENCED WHEN DESIGNING

**KANVA:BA:BA**  
*she/they*

*Likes:*



Comfort  
Flow skirts  
Movable Fabrics/ Non restrictive Outfit  
Complementary Textures  
Layering  
Earth Tones and Hot warm colors  
Lots of details  
Room in and out of the outfit  
Midriff exposed  
Head scarfs

**"Intentional  
Curation and  
Unhingedness"**

*Color  
Palette:*

brown, orange, hot  
colors, red tones,  
pink, lavender  
**monochromatic  
complimentary**



# MOODBOARD

FOCUSING ON FLOWY GARMENTS, LAYERING,  
WARM COLORS, AND EARTH TONE COLORS

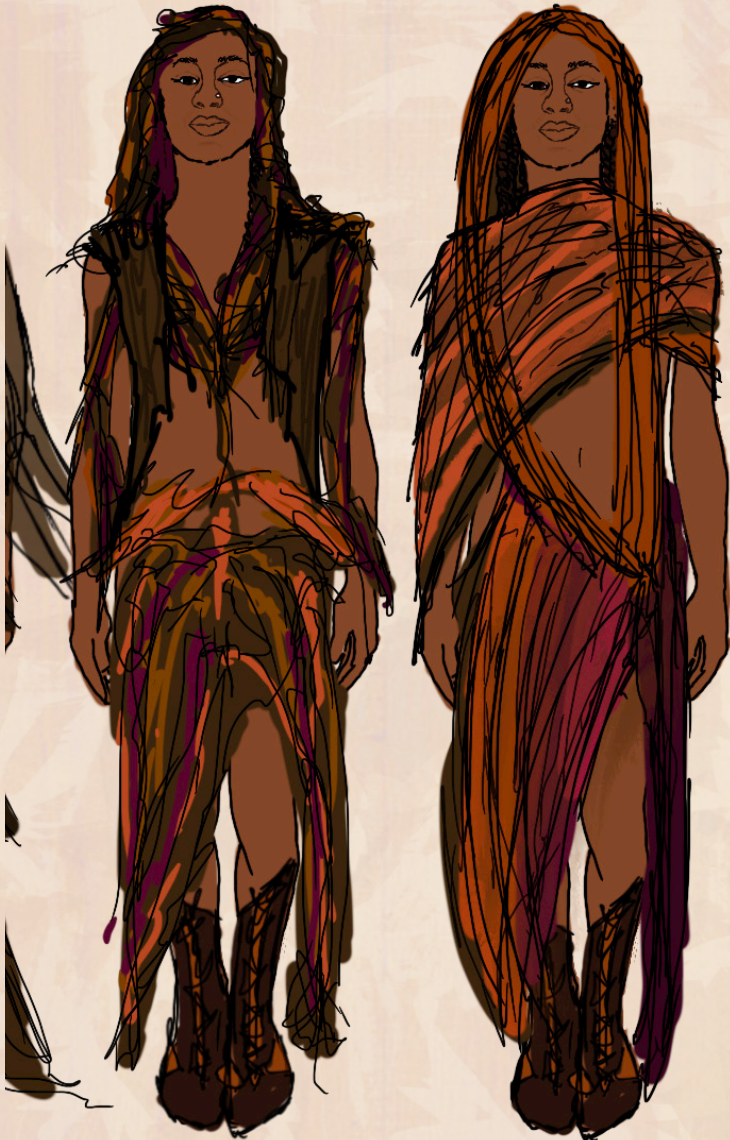


# DESIGN ITERATIONS





# DESIGN ITERATIONS



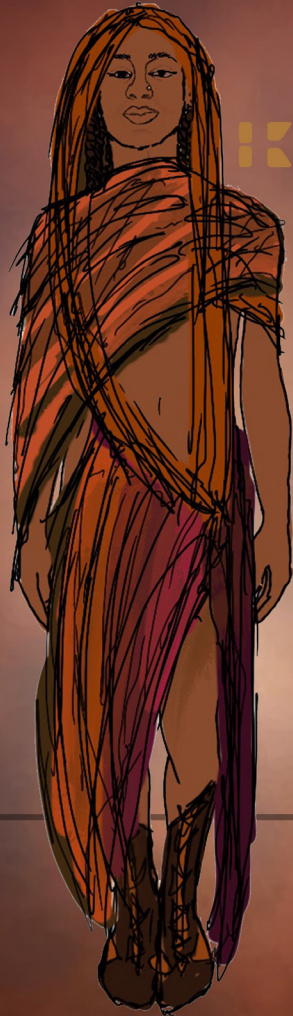
# DESIGN ITERATIONS



# DESIGN ITERATIONS



## FINAL LOOK AND EXPLANATION



KAM:BA:BA:  
*she/they*

- \* *asymetric shawl shirt*
- \* *hooded skirt*

# FINAL LINE UP

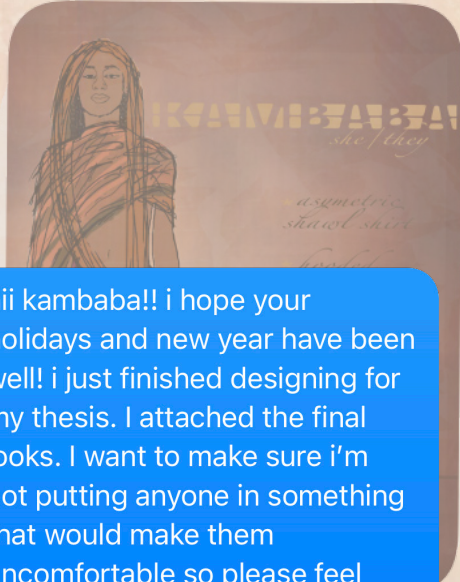


## DESIGN APPROVAL

IN KEEPING WITH THE INTENT OF  
PRIORITIZING THE WEARER'S EXPERIENCE,  
MUSES WERE ASKED TO APPROVE DESIGNS  
AND TO MAKE SURE THEY WOULD BE  
COMFORTABLE WEARING WHAT WAS  
DESIGNED FOR THEM.

i love  
this! these looks look really cool  
and i think the one for me is  
something i'd feel good in and  
look cool n cute in as well :)))

## DESIGN APPROVAL



hii kambaba!! i hope your holidays and new year have been well! i just finished designing for my thesis. I attached the final looks. I want to make sure i'm not putting anyone in something that would make them uncomfortable so please feel free to let me know if there's any fit or style things that you feel you wouldn't feel comfortable wearing!



yay glad you like urs!! i'll hit u up in a bit for fittings

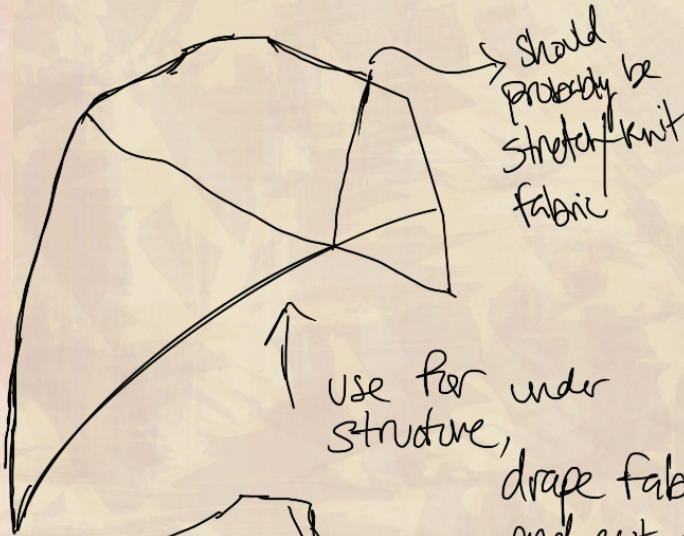


## MAKING PROCESS

DUE TO MUSES' BODY TYPES BEING EXCLUDED FROM THE SAMPLE SIZE AND BINARY GENDER MODEL OF FASHION DESIGN, ALL PATTERNS WERE MADE WITHOUT THE USE OF SLOPERS AND MADE USING THE MEASUREMENTS OF THE MUSE.



# SHIRT PATTERN PLANNING



2ND LAYER

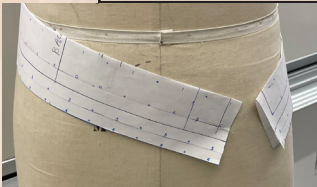
front &  
back  
patterns  
the same

1ST LAYER

# SKIRT PATTERN PLANNING



SKIRT WAISTBAND



SKIRT PATTERN ON  
MANNEQUIN

## ASYMETRIC SKIRT

SKIRT IS INTENDED TO BE ON AN ANGLE SO IT WAS PATTERNED SIDWAYS IN REFERENCE TO THE BODY AND STRAIGHT GRAIN.



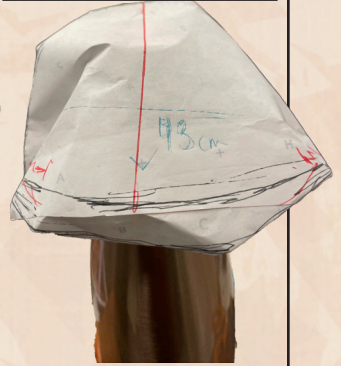
# HOOD PATTERN PLANNING



MINI HOOD DRAPING



MINI HOOD PATTERNING



HOOD PATTERNING



DRAPED MUSLIN AGAINST CURVE OF A WATER BOTTLE TO SEE HOW THE DESIRED HOOD SHAPE COULD BE ACHIEVED. THEN TRANSFERRED MINITURE DRAPE ONTO PATTERN PAPER AND CALCULATED ACTUAL MEASUREMENTS.

# FITING



THE MAIN CHANGES FROM THE FITTING INCLUDED MAKING THE SHIRT LOOSER AND LONGER ,

## FITTING



AND RESIZING THE BAND FROM THE HOOD TO THE WAIST. SMALLER CHANGES WERE MADE IN HOOD SHAPE AND SKIRT WIDTH



# MATERIALITY STAINING

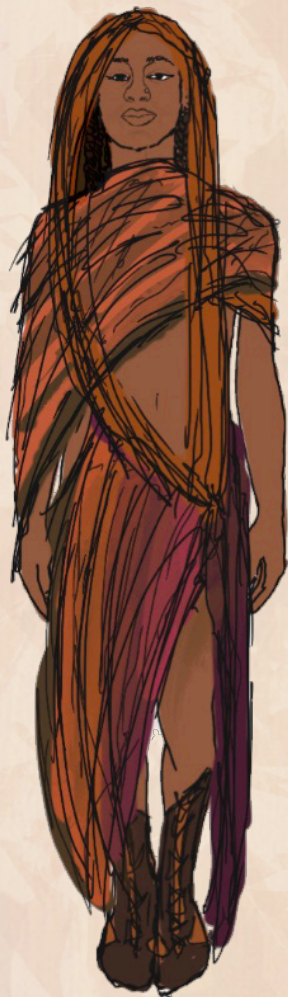
Kambaba

(loose),  
□ pleats  
□

pleats & layers



dry  
marking



INITIAL PLANNING FOR  
MATERIAL MANIPULATIONS.  
PLEATING AND DYEING WERE  
THE MAIN MANIPULATIONS USED

# MATERIAL DYING AND COLOR PLANNING



FRONT



BACK

CUTTING OUT PLEATED FABRIC



FABRIC WASHED AND READY TO BE DYED



FABRIC WAS FIRST  
CUT INTO 3YRD  
SQUARES AND  
PLEATED WITH  
PLEATS BEING  
SEWN SECURE.

AFTER BEING  
PLEATED THE  
PATTERNS WERE  
CUT OUT OF THE  
FABRIC .

FABRIC WAS THEN  
HAND WASHED  
AND AIR DRIED  
TO PREPARE IT  
FOR DYEING





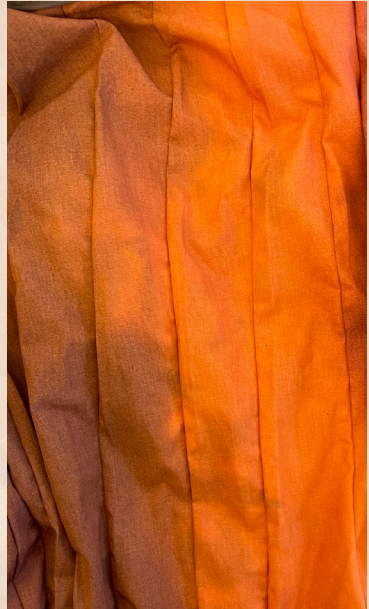
FABRIC DYING

THE FABRIC IS A POLY-COTTON BLEND AND NATURAL DYES DID NOT TAKE TO THE FABRIC, RIT “DYE MORE” AND ALL PURPOSE DYES WERE USED TO DYE THE FABRIC.

FABRIC WAS DYED IN AN OMBRE EFFECT WITH ONE SIDE BEING DYED IN THE BROWN COLOR AND THE OTHER IN THE WINE COLOR.

FOR EACH SIDE, DYE WAS ADDED TO HOT WATER AND FABRIC STIRRED IN THE DYE FOR 30 MINUTES.

## OMBRE DYEING RESULTS



AFTER DYEING, FABRIC WAS RINSED UNTIL WATER RAN CLEAN THEN HAND WASHED AND AIR DRIED.

FOR GARMENT CONSTRUCTION, PLEATED FABRIC WAS THEN ATTACHED TO BROWN FABRIC TO ACT AS A LINING AND GIVE THE GARMENT MORE STRUCTURE.

## HOOD DYEING



## HOOD DYEING RESULT



## ATTEMPTED SHIRT DYEING



THE HOOD WAS DYED BY SQUIRTING IT IN RANDOM PLACES WITH THE BROWN RIT DYE, LETTING THE DYE DRY, AND THEN HAND WASHING AND AIR DRYING IT.

THE SAME METHOD WAS APPLIED TO THE FABRIC FOR THE SHIRT BUT IT DID NOT TAKE SINCE THE MATERIAL WAS CHIFFON.



ISINAH  
PHOTOS

PHOTOS BY EUGENE MANNING

PHOTOS WERE TAKEN WITH THE MOTIVE  
OF MUSES BEING THEMSEVES AND FEELING  
COMFORTABLE AND CONFIDENT IN THEMSELVES.

PHOTOS WERE TAKEN AT A MANSION IN NEW  
YORK WITH THE INTENT OF SHOWING THE MUSES  
IN A GRANDIOUS PLACE AND TAKING UP SPACE IN  
A PLACE THAT IS HISTORICALLY EXCLUSIONARY.



















# CONCLUSION

Thank you so much to Kambaba for her willingness to be a part of this project and sharing her story with me! It has been a joy to get to know them over this past year.

While untraditional, it has been very rewarding to work with people on a deeper level in the design process and to work with real people as muses and models. I hope to continue to do similar work as my career progresses and to work with real people, making clothing that they want to wear and enjoy wearing.

- Arjahn





# *Angels of History*

*Kambaba Muse Book*

*Arjahn Cox*

*Parsons School of Design*

*Lucia Cuba and Carolina Obregon*

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