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THREE DIMENSIONAL FABRIC AND IT'S RELATION TO FASHION

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4TH YEAR FASHION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Is it the fabric or the design?
Is it the cut or is it the form?
Is it the inspiration or the technique?

Attempting to isolate the success formula in fashion is an impossible exercise and pointless as well. Fashion is about flair, imagination, about the unexpected. There is no single element that one can pinpoint as the magical essence. How, for example, can one weigh the merits of the unconventional designs of Issey Miyake, against the cool, classical styles of our own Ib Jorgenson? The excitement and magic of fashion are it's breadth, it's range, it's variety, it's spontaneity.

Adding an extra element to this catholicity of styles and tastes is three dimensional fabrics, the topic being discussed in this thesis. Three dimensional fabric, as the name implies, is a fabric that provides surface depth and decoration in contrast to the flow and flatness of ordinary material. In this thesis I will discuss many forms of three dimensional fabric, ranging from polyvinyl chloride tubing, to the soft, plush pile of intricate crochet,

Japan's Issey Miyake, Britain's Nigel Atkinson, and Italy's Romeo Gigli are just some of

the designers who have made three dimensional fabric an important part of the development of fashion. And although it may be seen as a modern idea, I will attempt to show that the source of inspiration has been around for centuries.

We can trace the origins for this form of fabric back to primitive tribes, like the Wodaabe in Central Africa, who wore clothing of polished seeds and grasses, through to the New Guinea Highlanders. They still clothe themselves in bustles of wild sprigs from forest plants and feathers of birds of paradise and parrots.

It may seem a large step from such primitive societies to the glitter, glamour and sophistication of contemporary fashion salons. And yet it is possible to find a common bond linking the two. Three dimensional fabric made it's first real impact in the 1960s, when Americans Janet Lipkin and Japlow used feathers and portrayed primitive images on their garments. In the 1980s three dimensional fabric was taken a step further. Instead of flowers and feathers designers like Frank Shipman used unconventional man made materials like plastic and rubber. The design momentum has continued in the present decade, with the process developed even further. Now designers like Miyake, Romeo Gigli and John Galliano all have their own fabric technicians developing special new materials.

In discussing these developments part of the fascination lies in analysing the different approaches of the designers using three dimensional fabric to their work, their sources of inspiration and how they themselves regard the process.

Ana Lisa Hedstrom, the American textile designer, Dina Knapp also American and Japan's Issey Miyake provide an interesting contrast in this regard. While all three find their inspiration in natural sources- shells, woodlands, birds etc, there are distinct differences in how they plan and execute their designs. With both Miyake and Knapp favouring a spontaneous approach, while Hedstrom opts for precision planning. And significantly too Miyake sees his work as utensils of every day life, while the other two describe theirs as an art form. But whatever about that particular argument which will be discussed in detail in this thesis, there is no doubt that the twin foundations of fashion can be summed up in three words. Flair and Fabric.

CHAPTER ONE

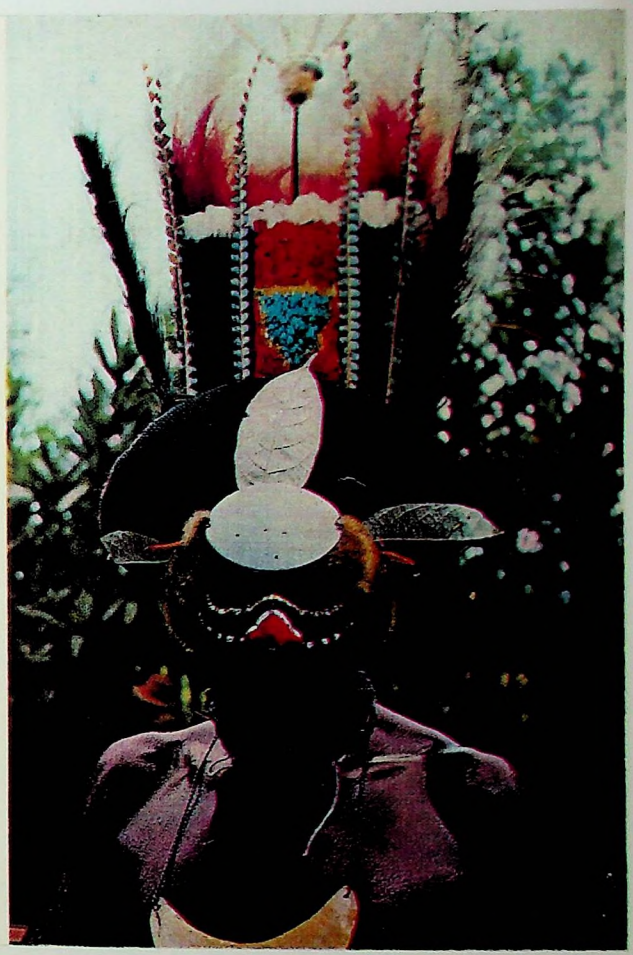


FIG 1

CHAPTER ONE.

THREE DIMENSIONAL FABRICS THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

Ever since cavemen wrapped themselves in animal skins and wore leaves as decoration, fabric in every shape and form has played a vital part in living - not only as a means of keeping warm, but also as a form of communication. Primitive man believed in the magical properties and power of fabrics: The Woddabe Nomads, for instance, wore grasses of the bush to ward off evil spirits. (Fig. 1) Other primitive societies used seeds and stones to denote a nursing mother. And in New Guinea, polished banana leaves and crinkled red cardylines were worn as a means of attracting the opposite sex.(Fig. 2)

This way of life, of clothing oneself in three dimensional fabric forms, still continues in primitive societies. Here in the so called civilised West, we no longer believe that wearing grasses from the bush will ward off evil. But in an ironic turn of events, many of our modern designers draw inspiration and ideas from these tribes in creating looks and styles that make the most of natures bounty.

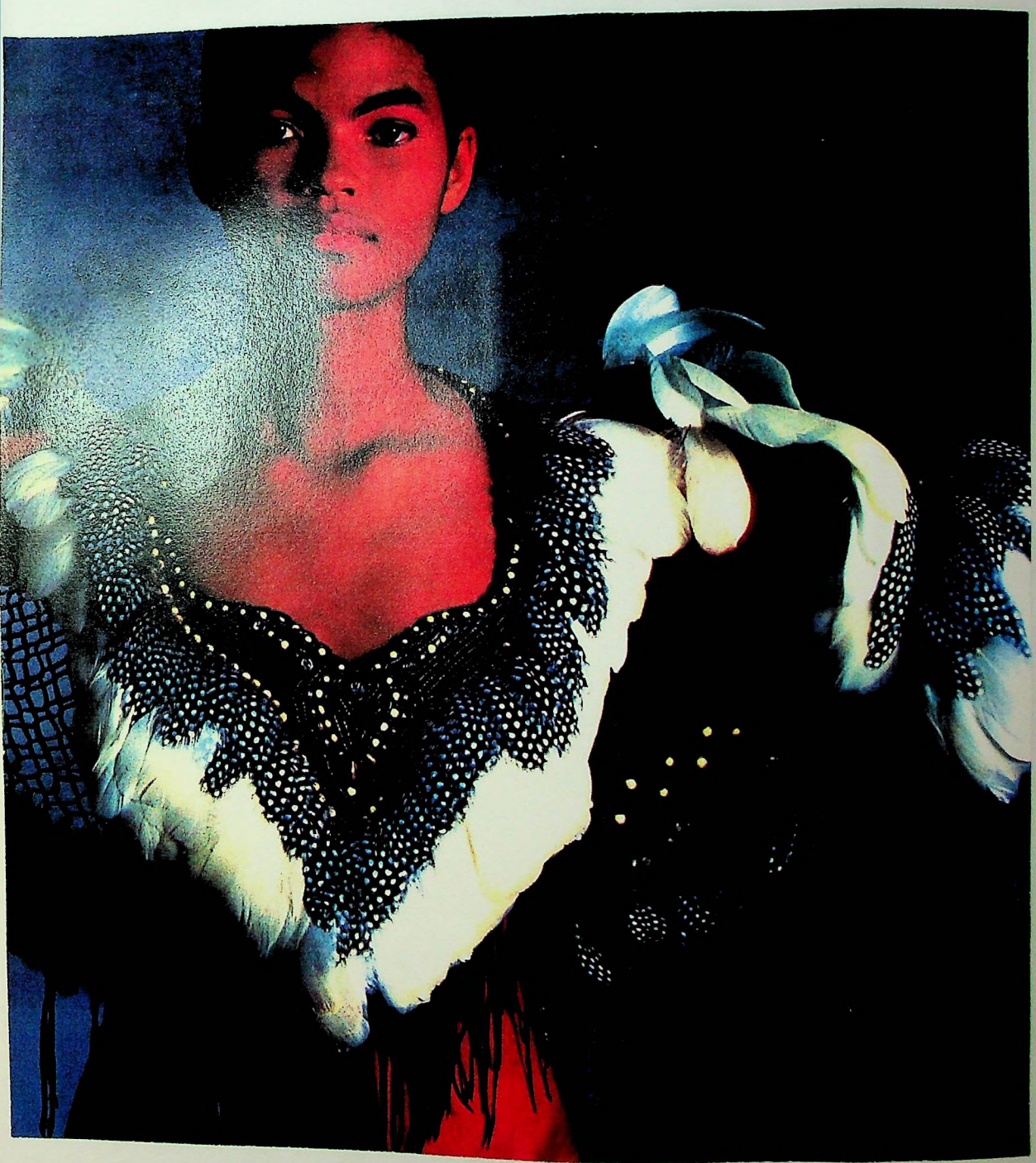
This idea of using natural three dimensional fabric for fashion flourished in the

1960s. Although this era is remembered as a time of plastic and popart, in which designers such as Americans, Joan Steiner and Norma Rosen produced, for instance, vests made from rayon and plastic clay, it was also a decade of meditation, yoga, healthy eating, natural fibres and natural dyes. These were ideals not at all dissimilar from the views primitive societies were perceived to hold on beauty and the natural world, on which their fate depends. As the book ART FOR WEAR, puts it

> In the 60s the sensuality and the aesthetic go hand in hand with the concern for preservation of the environment- a reverence for nature as the source of life.
>
> (Ref.1 Chapter 1)

Establishing links between the fabrics and fashions of the '60s and the practices of tribes such as the Wodaabe and other primitive African primitives, is not that difficult. You only have to look back to the Artisans Gallery in America in the late '60s, (a gallery opened by an author called Julie Dale as a showcase for contemporary American art to be worn) to see masks with motifs of magical animals, knitted capes featuring jungle beasts, feathered headdresses and all sorts of fur trimmed articles.

Textile and fashion designers such as England's Zandra Rhodes, and American designers



Eliot Smith and Bill Cunnigham, made numerous feather garments and masks in the late 60s and early 70s. While Paul Johnson and Raoul Spriegel, also American textile/fashion designers, continued the trend with feathered clothes like, Ready for the Black and White Ball (1982) (Fig 3)
As Janet Lipton writes:

> We were at the prime time from '68 through to '70 when everything was exploding..... so anything that was unusual was supported.
>
> (Ref 2 Chapter 1)

Many designers at that time looked back to tribal times and customs, because they did not divide art from craft, or artistic expression from every day life. Others such as Spriegel whose work was most popular in the 1970s were just fascinated at how simple elements such as feathers could be used to create a strong three dimensional look.

One artist, influenced by three dimensional fabric was Janet Lipkin an American textural designer, whose work became prominent during the late '60s. I chose her primarily because as author Julie Dale says

> She was one of the first to set in motion much of the early crochet movement her work is linked so strongly to tribal origins. (Ref 3 Chapter1)

Being highly motivated by her observations of primitive dress, she wanted people to create textural clothing pieces that" physically envelope oneself in an art work, that would join art and life symbolically and literally" (Ref4 Chapter1) which is precisely what primitive societies achieve if less deliberately.

One such piece was African Mask (1970) (Fig 4), which is now in a private collection, made from wood, yarn and leather, in deep forest shades, croched and hand dyed. All natural processes. The wood and leather materials remind me of fabrics used by tribes such as the New Guinea highlanders for their tribal dances. (Fig 5) While patterns on the garment look like the weave patterns on the tunics worn by the Tahitans. On closer inspection, the faces of the jungle beasts imbedded in the dark crochet catch the eye, reminiscent of primitave art and stone age mans first impressions scratched on the wall of his cave.

In the book Primitive Art, the author simply known as Adam, remarked that in New Guinea self decoration was more than a matter of fashion, the tribal people had decorated themselves to such perfection that they had to become an art form. This is exactly what Lipkin has done, she has transformed the figure into a primitive sculptural form by the use of textural fabric. The whole body, from hands to head, is covered in a lumpy, three dimensional mud like knit.

The way Lipkin has had the garment photographed and styled also ties in with primitive suggestions. The pose used in the photo here is both unnatural and rigid, with the stance and blank, mummylike expression suggesting a statue of worship.

Even the line of pockets down the front Lipkin says," symbolises magic herbal pouches" (Ref 5 Chapter 1) rather like the pouches of weave and grasses used by Shamans to ward of evil. Her Bone Bag (74) (Fig 6), in wool, metallic cotton, mohair, ceramic, reminds me of the type of headgear worn by African tribes, with its simplistic, primitive shape.

Lipkin was not alone in her fascination with the primitive. Many artists and designers at that time were using this theme. Joan Ann Japlow, an American textile designer of the 60s was one of the many who became intrigued by the art of feather decoration.

I use Japlow as my example though, because unlike other designers such as Zandra Rhodes, who simply used feathers for trimmings and decoration, Japlow used them to clothe the whole body. The feathers became the fabric, making a much stronger three dimensional statement, and, I think visually more exiciting garments.

Her approach to work was more controlled and less spontaneous than Lipkin, so that

everything was planned before hand. Like the preparation that precede ritual dances, she collected feathers of all colours and type. She realised that by using the marking on the feathers she could create unusual surface patterns.

Japlow, however claims to be a nature lover, but one can't help but feel dubious about how she collected all thes feathers , and whether the birds to which they belonged survived their loss (Fig7) She claims the inspiration for the feathered cloaks came from feathers such as Red Badger Hackle, White Hackle, White Maradou, and natural Black Cog, which took her several years to collect. She maintains that in the 60s there were actually people in the business of selling these feathers and that, " this is the way birds would have wanted it" (Ref6 Chapter1) She believes the birds were not killed, but there was little information on how the sellers collected the feathers, maybe it was just that Japlow didn't really want to know!

However,...the amount of work involved in her cloaks was remarkable. Each feather was glued by hand to a knitted silk polyester cape. Again if Japlow was so interested in natural fabrics and natural living why polyester? Japlow said that a polyester cloak would hold its shape and the large quantity of feathers far better than a cloak in any other fabric. An answer for everything!

The end result, though is indeed impressive, voluptuous and reminiscent of ceremonial robes. If this cloak were seen in the midst of a New Guinea ritual dance, when tribes adorn themselves with turbans made of ostrich feathers and when groups try to out do each other in the flamboyance of their self-decoration it would probably mix in quite naturally. And that is the best compliment of all!

It is both interesting and reassuring to note that despite the many other sources of inspiration over the years, when designers have raided history books, dipped back into the Victorian age or even revisited the Renaissance era in search of new ideas, the traditional bond between the designer and nature has never been broken, reappearing again and again in new and original forms. But of course there are huge differences between what Japlow and other textural designers have attempted, and what ancient tribes have been doing for centuries. And I'm not just talking of the commercial aspect of the trade.

For tribes such as The Wodaabes and other African primitives, natural dress is not just a fashion shoot or a new look, it is their life. It will not change to a micro-mini look next season, but will remain locked forever into their lifestyles.

Each feather, each polished stone and seed has a meaning for them, warding off evil, stating to which tribe they belong, and what status they

possess. It is an unspoken language, not a fad. Their clothes are made to be worn as a matter of pride and power and also to attract the opposite sex, not made like some designers, to be displayed in various craft museums.

Although, the work of Japlow and Lipkin seem personal, and comes from within, you cannot help but feel that they owe some credit to those tribes which have created such artforms, albeit unconciously for centuries.

In the early Eighties, however textures slowly changed, as designers tried out new fabrics, new fibres and technologies. The 80s brought us the use of synthetic rather than natural fabric, probably due to the fact that this was a time in Europe and America when T.V. dinners, MacDonalds and everything fast, cheap and disposable became the vogue.

Fabrics such as Goretex a wind proof fabric, and lycra were being prominently used. Although lycra has been available since 1959 as a substitute for girdles, it wasn't until the 80s that designers realised its full potential,incorporating it into velvet,chiffon,satin and even leather to give super stretch.

Gortex was also invented in the 60s, for use by arctic explorers and American spacemen(it kept them warm without trapping body moisture) but again designers such as Body Map and England's Georgina Godley only realised its full potiential in

the 80s, and applied it to everything from satin to denim.

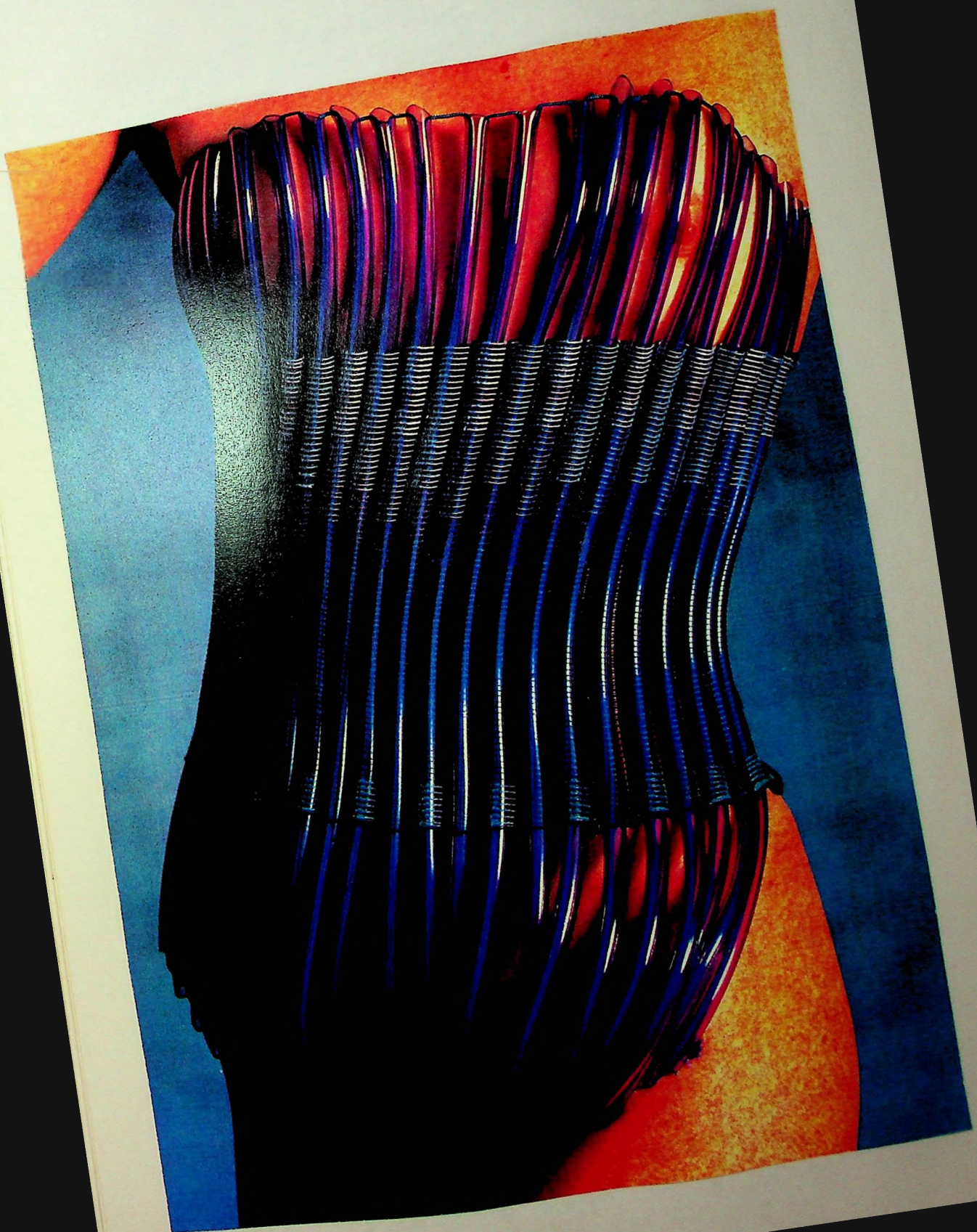
Although natural elements and fabrics continued to be used by designers such as Rhodes, the increased rise of the synthetic fabric was not the only change. The choice of colours and the shapes of garments generally became less organic looking. As author Julie Dale puts it:

> The organic sensuality of the late 60s changed to a more hard-edged graphic surface of the 80s. (Ref 7 Chapter 1)

Palettes among designers became brighter withpinks and neon blues, while imagery was refined, toned down to bare essentials. Even Japan's Miyake renowned for his organic sensuality, began to create tight, simplistic, structured body suits in primary colours. Body Map and Godley followed the trend.

American Frank Shipman was one designer who specialised in using synthetic and man- made objects in the 80s, though in a rather different way. I chose him as my example of an 80s designer manipulating three dimensional synthetics, simply because of his striking inventiveness and use of strange materials.

Shipman welcomed the use of man-made materials, claiming that they were assembled from our minds, and therefore more special in a world of



natural elements. He argued that what designers like Lipkin do taking their ideas from nature,is much easier than looking around and using man-made materials moulding them into a different sphere.

His own fascination is for polyvinyl chloride tubing, which he weaves in traditional methods, handlooming to create different styles and shapes of corset. A Corset of 1983, (Fig 8) is loom woven, laced, hand dyed and in poly vinyl chloride. (now in a private collection)

The look achieved here is entirely different from that of the 60s textural designers, Lipkin and Japlow. You can almost see the neon lights as you look at this modern minimalist piece. But Shipman believes this is the fabric of the future, as it is so flexible, transparent, reflectant, sensual and soft, but at the same time rigid, strong, unbreakable, an almost perfected, wearable version of glass.

He believes his pieces are 'contemporary man-made jewels' (Ref 8 Chapter 1) and unlike the work of three dimensional designers, he wants his pieces (interestingly enough) not in a gallery setting, but worn by humans in a natural setting. Because the poly vinyl tubing has such reflective qualities, wearing his creation by the sea on a sunny day can be a memorable experience, with all the colours and the movement of the sea reflecting in the corsets and giving them a live video quality.

GEORGINA GODLEY
Sinuous petrol blue stretchy moleskin sweater (£130) to order

Shipman uses unnatural fabrics but, ironically places them in natural settings. After Shipman and his polyvinyl tubing what next? The pickle finger of fashion, and the ideas of the designers move so quickly that forecasts become mere guess work.

Already some designers are starting to work with fabric developers, who invent specific fabrics rather than buy the nearest alternative. John Galliano, Helen Storey ang Geogina Godley (Fig 9) have developed acetate-based fabric working with technicians at Courtaulds the British multinational textile company.

Acetate, made from wood pulp was popular back in the 1930s when it was known as artificial silk and used for slinky dresses. Now in the 1990s Helen Storey has redefined it in pleated swimwear, while Galliano has translated it into a velvet-embossed dress,inspired by a turn of the century Poiret style.

In the 1990s when protecting the environment has become everyones concern, the disposable days where everything went into the washing machine or the bin, have gone for ever. The 70s saw a backlash against man-made fabrics that has now blown itself out.

Today the most important aspects of fashion and fabric, are quality and comfort. Criteria with which our friends back in Africa would feel very much at home. After all, you can't perform well at a tribal dance, or look attractive to the opposite sex in a drab outfit that pinches!

But as designers today exhaust the possibilities of cut and form will the wheel finally come full circle? Is Helen Storey pointing the way forward when she says:'My dream fabric would be spray on'. Will we, like the Wodaabes be painting or faces to match our clothes, when today's creative fantasies become tomorrows clothes, will we, behind the gloss and sophistication, be back where it started with primitive man all those thousands of years ago?

CHAPTER TWO

In this section I will consider the work of three creators of three dimensional fabric and design: An established Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake; Dina Knapp, an American sculptor who combines textural crochet with simple garment shapes, and Ana Lisa Hedstrom a textile designer, who has nuzzled her way into the field of fashion.

I have chosen these three because I find it striking that although they come from different artistic fields and their approaches to work seem to bear little similarity, they are all linked by their use of textural fabric. I specifically took Knapp and Hedstrom as examples because I thought it would be useful to study the work and methods of artists who are relatively unknown and to compare them to the well known Miyake.

Their inspirations will come under scrutiny. So too will their choice of colours and how they see their work. Do they for instance see the fabric as the penultimate statement? How do they approach their work, instinctively or methodically? And has their own artistic background affected the way they work? These are some of the issues I propose to discuss in detail.

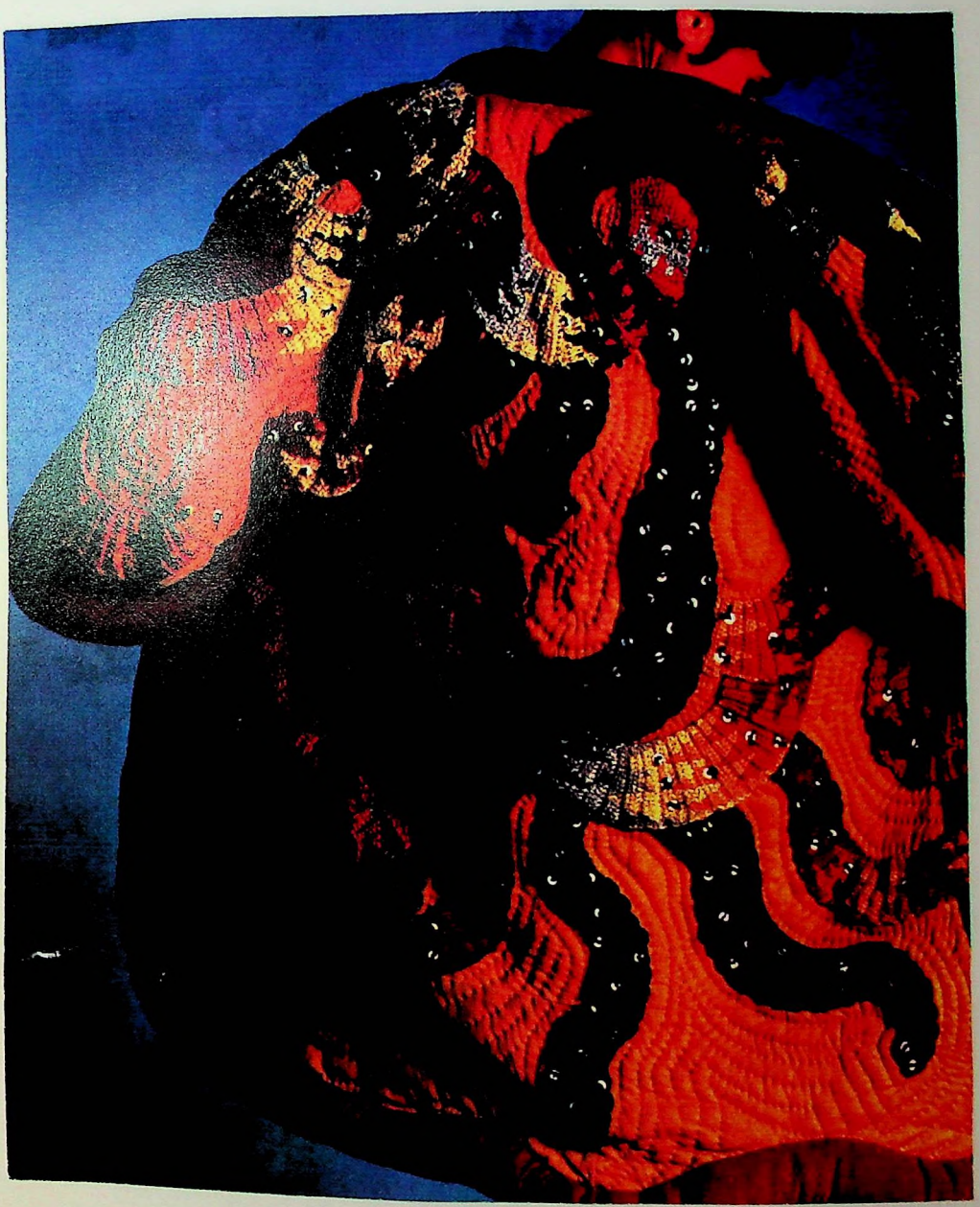
INSPIRATION FOR CREATIONS

> You know what I love, really love, warm water, and snorkel diving. Thats a dream awake, lying in the water and watching the fish flash by. (Chapter 2 Ref2)

Life for Issey Miyake begins with nature, from early morning swimming to sketch book work, to his fashion inspirations which mostly spring directly from nature and sometimes from National Geographic. Miyake loves to observe and uses his holidays to go in search of inspiration. "I like to travel, I like to wander but without itinerary"(Chapter 2 ref 2)

And while Miyake is busy by the sea, searching for inspiration, Ana Lisa Hedstrom also uses it as her primary source of research, in particular the surface decoration line colours and shapes of various shells. Arashi Shibori, a Japanese pleating process which she uses in her garments relates well to the patterns of shells and other "natural growths and formation" (Chapter 2 ref3)

Crocheter Dina Knapp is also a keen watcher, equally fascinated by nature. She spends her spare time, equipped with sketchbook, exploring the woods, especially the undergrowth and tree bark, being particularly attracted to its



three dimensional quality, which lends itself to her personal form of crochet.

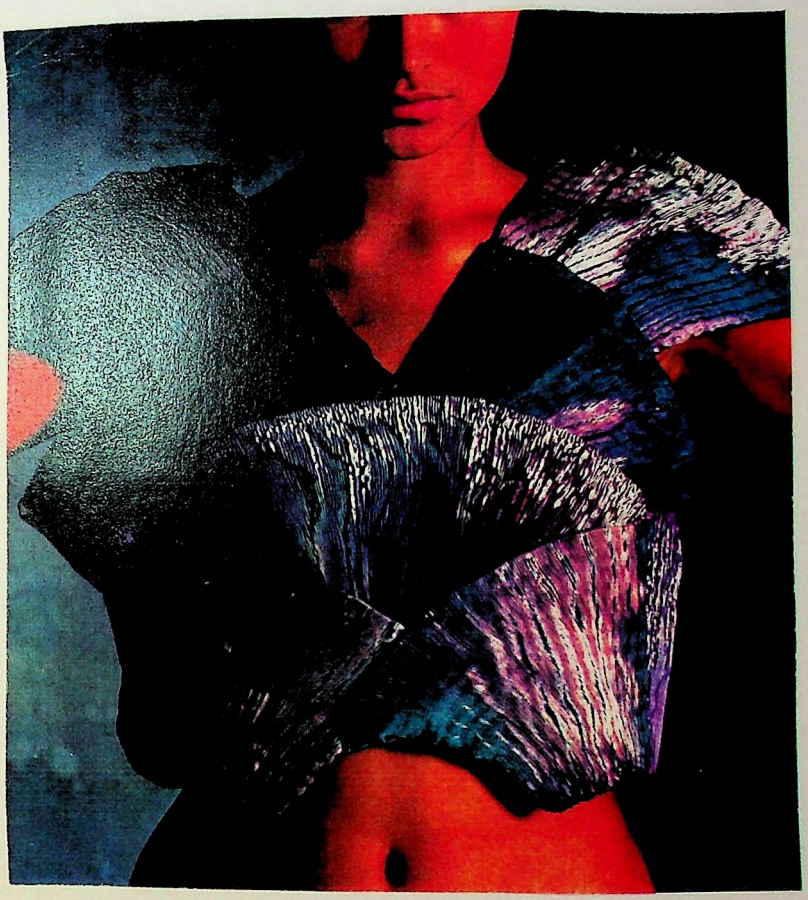
It is unusual to note that all three are inspired by nature and have even overlapped by using the same themes, but each has approached it in a personal way, and applied different textural techniques to their garments.

Shells are a common theme among them all, Dina Knapp's Mother Of Pearl Kimono (1975)(crochet pearl buttons appliqued) Fig 1

Issey Miyake's Sea shell Coat (1985)(knitted with cotton wrapped fishing line) Fig 2

Ana Lisa Hedstrom's Shell Vest (1983)(resist dyed shirred) Fig 3

But each has their own interpretation. Miyake's interpretation of a seashell was literal. He uses words like "cocoon" and second skin to describe his clothes, and indeed this is what he has done, in the case of his Sea Shell coat. He has covered the entire body in a delicate, round living form. In fact, it almost looks like the body is cocooned inside a massive shell shape. The colours, pale grey and pink, and the three dimensional ridges on the garment are also reminiscent of a shell. This interpretation is sculptural, because of its strength, simplicity and purity of shape.



However, Ana Lisa Hedstrom's version of the shell is softer, and more delicate, due to the intricate detail and subtle colourings. Hedstrom realised she could represent shell shapes by retaining pleats and stitches in a three dimensional surface and then subtly hand dying. Certain dyes would then penetrate the fabric and settle between the folds, others would sit on the surface, giving the impression of the various shades of shells. Her silky fabric, in total contrast to Miyake's cotton fishing yarn, reminds me of the glossiness of shells under water. Her attention to surface detail (fine pleating) emphasises the delicacy of the shell in a way not apparent in Miyake's treatment.

Dina Knapp's Mother Of Pearl Kimono (1975) which she still now posesses, is the least literal in it's translation of theme. Her idea was to have abstract surface motifs, but to achieve sensuality and fluidity. She attempted this by the use of long padded snake -like shapes, which she stitched in swirl-like patterns. Extensive hand quilting was used to denote a shell-like quality, and mother of pearl buttons gave an authentic touch. The colours were bright yellows and burgandys. Unlike Miyake and Hedstrom, her aim was not to imitate shell shapes, and, and to achieve a direct translation, but to give an idea of the mood of the sea.

Both Miyake and Knapp have also shaped a common inspiration, theme woodlands.

Knapp's Fungus Jacket (1974) (Fig 4) (Wools, tweeds, yarn fiberfill stuffing crocheted) now in a private collection

Miyake's Tube Weave Seersucker Wool dress (1983) (Fig 5)

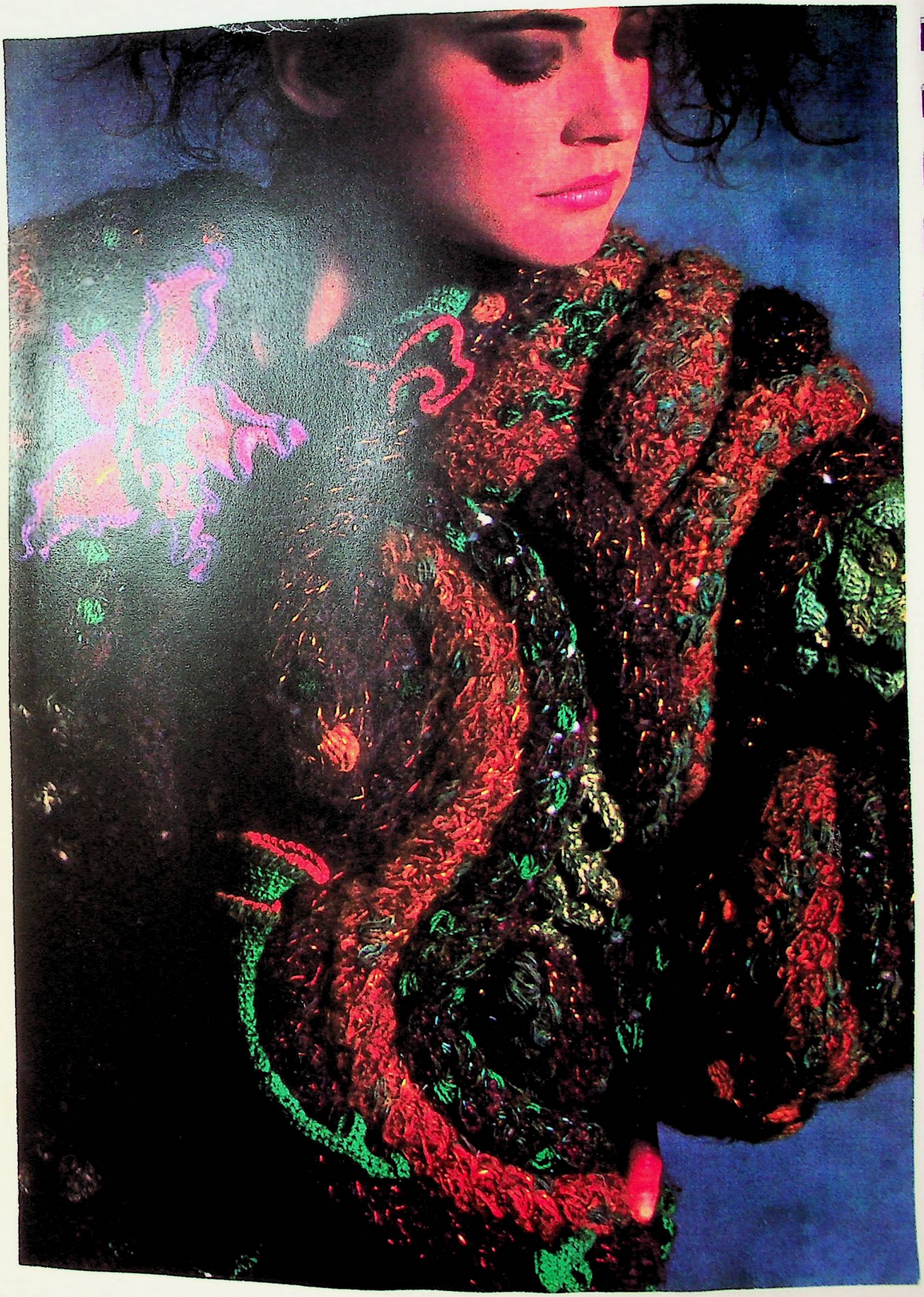
Miyake's dress was inspired by a tree in Africa, one from which the bark can be completely removed.

> It's round just like a tube of jersey, I wanted to make something woven that was warped like African bark.

he states, (Ref 4)

Knapp's Fungus Jacket, on the other hand was inspired solely by the rich colour and dense texture of forest undergrowth. Both have very three dimensional qualities and strong silhouettes. In fact, Knapp underlines the point by calling her jacket, " A sculpture in wool", (Ref 5)

Miyake's approach to the theme is very specific (as with his sea shell coat) The garment almost looks like a tree covering the whole body with subtle browns and blacks, with an unusual runched and ringed treatment. The only criticism that could be made is that the rings and runching are too flat , too regular,and that an uneven texture would have induced a much more organic mood.



Knapp's Fungus Jacket, however is so dense and rich in colour, mossy greens, rich orange, dark browns, it evokes more successfully the feeling of forest undergrowth. Her three dimensional quality was constructed from multiple crocheted and stuffed tubes entwined around the body. With it's curved shape, muted colours and numerous textures, it seems more precise than the rather flat, simplistic approach of Miyake.

Knapp, Miyake and Hedstrom have all had recurring themes from natural forms. This can be seen from the following list: Cocoon Coat (1984) Miyake, Aerial Roots (1980) Knapp: Frog Jacket (1982) Knapp, Sea shell Coat (1985) Miyake, Wakame Seaweed Tunic (1982) Miyake, Orchid Jacket (1973) Knapp.

But for what reasons do Knapp, Hedstrom, Miyake and other designers constantly turn to their natural environment for inspiration?

Arnell W. Pattermore, in his book Art and the Environment, says that" the environment is people", (Ref6), so to use the environment as a source in fashion is as natural as life itself.

Sociologist Gyorgy Kope in his book, Education of Vision (1965) believes natural elements are used as source material because all designers are trying to get back to their roots and look afresh at their environment. They want simply to do this, he suggests, because our air, water and

earth are so polluted at the moment that we feel we must try to look again to our environment. as well as, if we use natural forms as a source, he says, we are more likely to appreciate the things we have drawn and become interested in preserving our world.

Laura Chapman, in Approaches To Art, believes (Ref 6)

> The creation and interpretation of nature through fashion could also be a valuable process of individual expression, because in this studying of nature one discloses ones own individuality.

This view is supported by sociologist Mirko Basaldela. In his book Visual Considerations, he says that man has felt the need to understand his natural environment as a means through which he can express his own individuality.

So a study of nature through fashion should succeed in helping to produce a better citizen. And in addition, the individual identification of nature and its natural processes results not only in finding out more about the natural environment, but about ones self. This should result in a more fulfilled, knowledgable and original thinking human.

APPROACH TO WORK

The approach to one's work is personal and individualistic. Visual artists, painters and sculptors have has for the and individualistic. Visual artists have for the most part, the freedom to express and explore without restriction.

However textural artists and designers working with clothing have one limitation - the body. It seems hard to create something fresh, vibrant and energetic if one has to work arround such a structure. But do textural artists want their work to appear fresh and exciting? Do they try to approach their work spontaneously, thus making it lively? Or do they ask beforehand and view the end result simply as a garment to be worn.

Both Dina Knapp and Issey Miyake work intuitively, believing once you have got to a certain point in your work 'It starts telling you what it want to be' (Ref 14). Knapp states that energy breeds energy, and the ideas keep flowing more that way. Miyake also believes in working this way, claiming that he intuitively knows when to drape the fabric. But both agree at the beginning it is not known what form the fabric will take, and that by not planning in advance the end result is more spontaneous.

Miyake's starting point oddly enough is to close his eyes!

> 'The weight, the body, the fall of the fabric all determine what it will eventually be made into' (Ref 15).

He talks about the clothes being born out of the movement of his hands and body. He lets the fabric guide him. One only has to look at some of his pieces such as his pleated, airbrush dyed cotton apron (1985) or his cocoon coat (1984) to understand what he means.

The work process of Dina Knapp begins by laying her pieces on the ground, and as the pieces grow, eventually draping then over the body. Inventively she always works on two pieces at a time, thus eliminating any possibility of boredom and keeping her adrenaline and imagination in full blow. So spontaneous is she that in one day she created over twenty crochet textural hats. She simply could not stop! Her jackets 'See it like a native', (FIG 9) and Frog Jacket (1975) (Both of which she still posesses) were initially meant to be rugs but they kept growing and growing, and she says eventually they told her what they want to be. Although Knapp and Miyake believe in working intuitively, Hedstrom, Textile Designer opts for the planned approach when it comes to garment

construction and texture. She makes the point that it would be hard for her to work spontaneously considering that the process of shibori is long and tedious. The cloth has to be wrapped around a pole, secured with string, compressed unto tiny folds and then hand dyed. Only in the dying could spontaneity be attempted and even then she prepares to use dyes and processes that she has previously explored because she knows which specific effects they will produce.

Hedstrom believes there are major benefits from planning designs and textures in advance. She claims that fewer mistakes are likely. Indeed Crocheter Knapp has admitted that sometimes, she has worked instinctively, her crochet clothes 'never looked right' (REF 16).

But Knapps spontaneous approach to her crochet, and Hedstroms painstaking pleating share a common factor in that they both do samples before the finished pieces. Knapp does them as exploration pieces, to reach a certain level of freeness in her work, and says:

> 'You have to go through experiments first nothing can be planned, it will just happen' (REF 17).

Hedstrom in contrast them uses almost as a library, selecting her favourites and using their techniques in a larger scale .

6.

USE OF FABRIC

Fabric technology and the future of fashion link hand in hand.

> 'As fashions forms simplify into pared-down lines and basic shapes, the emphasis has shifted from inventive cut to inventive cloth' (REF 8).

All three designers, Hedstrom, Knapp and Miyake, rely heavily on their choice of fabrics for the final impact. Each believe in using as many Natural fabrics as they can, Crocheter Knapp, for instance buying only raw fleece and carding, dying her wool with solely natural dyes. Everything is handspun, while Headstrom, using the art of Shibori, buys only pure silk. Her natural vegetable dyes take best to the pureness of the fabric, she says is beyond compare.

The widest range of fabrics are used by Miyake, some of which are surprisingly traditional, silk and cotton for instance. I say surprisingly so, because Issey Miyake is renowned for his manipulation of unconventional and even recycled paper, which he used, for instance, in his 'Creased Kamico' of (1982) (FIG 6), which contains a beautiful fragile quality, but whether durability was taken into consideration is another thing.

As he puts it himself: 'Lets not be too logical'(REF 9). He has also created a range of 'oil soaked paper macs', while his 'hat on his jumpsuit' of (1983) is actually made from recycled egg cartons. (FIG 6B)

> 'There are no boundaries for what can be fabric, anything can be clothing,' he states (REF 10).

Deemed a 'fabric expert' (REF 11) by the late Diana Vreeland, 'he has a supreme talent for textiles'. He has worked with the textile designer Makiko Minigaua for the last twenty years. She stretches her imagination, by experimenting with all kinds of fabrics, including synthetic and laminated polyurethanes.

Although Miyake believes in using a substantial quantity of natural fabrics, he claims that the synthetic fabrics that he does use, are affected more prominantly by Minigaua's unusual heat processes, and that synthetic clothes last longer, are easier to care for, and easy to live in. Although ironically you could never call Miyake's clothes easy to live in.

His Wakeme seaweed tunic of 1982 is one garment where synthetic fabric is used. The fabric here was heat pleated, and the black shiny synthetic material used here gives the shiny fluid

quality of seaweed under water. Black chiffon is used also in contrast to the metallic yarn.

Other new techniques used by the duo include polyurethane coated bonded fabrics, which Issey translated into bodysuits for the 1990 collection. While different effects are produced by the working of strange scientific apparatus such as water, air, jet machines or in laboratories using acid.

This unusual surface of Miyake's 'Cocoon Coat' (1984) (FIG 7) in Jacquard knit was one garment which was acid treated to give a rough organic feeling.

Hedstrom may not be as creative in her manipulation of fabric but she has perfected her own special method and colours, through numerous experiments. As Jule Dale (Author) says: 'Above all she was concerned with Colour' (REF 12).

Hedstrom's own interest in Japanese pleating techniques was marred by the fact that solely traditional colours such as blue and white were always used in garments. She felt these colours left little room for choice or potential so began to use personal 'nutlike tones', turquoise, pale pinks and browns, which she mixed and hand applied.

After affecting her fabrics by various pleating processes (wrapping around poles, stitching the pleats together by hand), she found

that by intentionally overdying she created wonderful faded looks, which she found attractive because they looked like they'd been in an attic for years. A strange thing to find attractive!

Her 'Moire Vest' (1981) (FIG 8) silk resist dye and her 'Samurai Vest' (1980), silk hand pleated were both intentionally overdyed.

After years of experience she can now repeat the same colours and effects again, saying that different dyes react differently to the silk, some she brushes on, giving a clean, crisp look while others are sprayed on and sponged manually.

All three designers, Hedstrom, Miyake, Lipkin use very shaded muted colours. Knapp recurringly opts for greens, browns and maroons, which summon up the earths own colours, in garments, such as 'Frog Jacket' (1975) now in a private collection and 'Astra's Dress' (1974) (her daughters dress. She claims she uses these colours because they stem from the natural sources.

Miyake also goes for these muted colours in his 'Seasucker Wool' dress (1983) 'Cocoon Coat' (1984), 'Double Knit Hood' of nylon mesh (1985). All three are naturally inspired not only in their designs but also in their use of colour, and all three affect their fabrics in their own way.

As Ted Mueling accessory designer says about what these designers do:

'When you take something as ordinary as a piece of cloth, and affect it, by pleating, dying etc, until it is a remarkable and useful thing, it is a pretty big accomplishment' (REF 13).

THE BODY AS A SHOWCASE

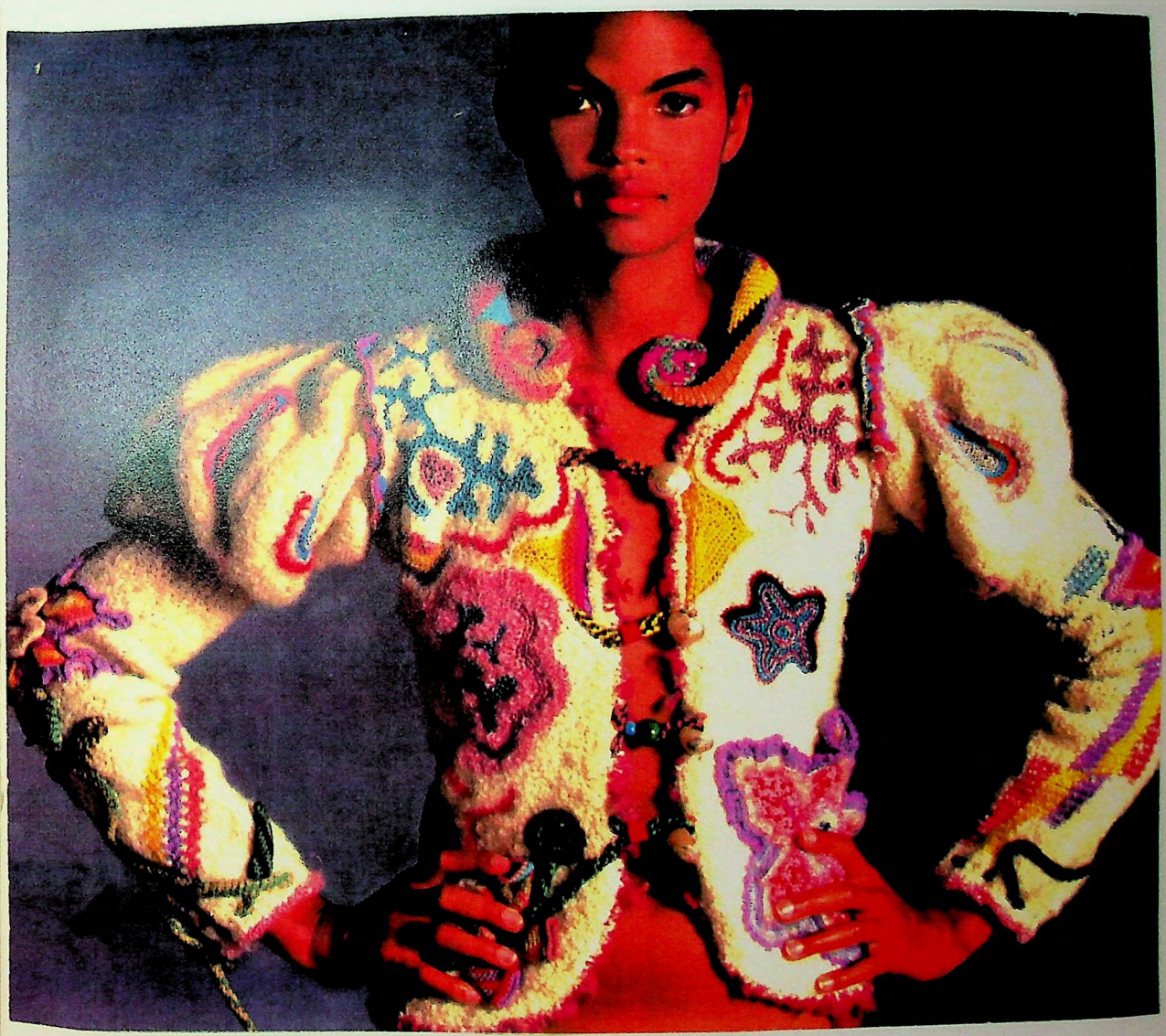
Crocheter Knapp, textile designer Hedstrom and designer Miyake, have used a variety of different canvases for their three-dimensional fabrics, ranging from wall hangings to sculpture, sample lengths to duvets. But eventually all three decided that the body was a final showcase for their fabrics. In this section I will find out how they came to that conclusion.

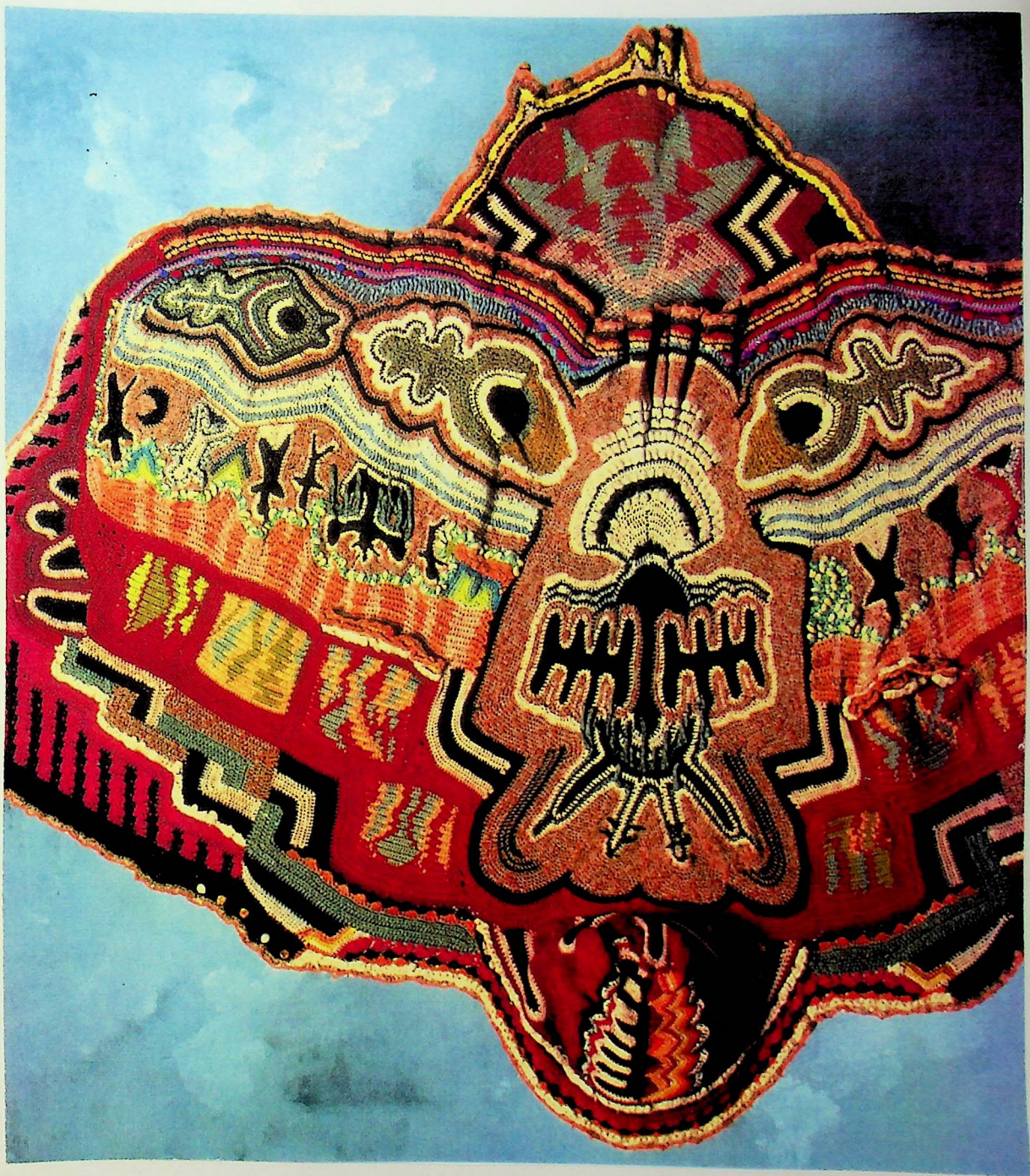
Knapp, primarily a potter (who took up crocheting when expecting her first child) because when pregnant crocheting was easier than pounding clay! Knapp initially made bedspreads and wall pieces out of her textural crochet but found this medium rather flat and lifeless.

> 'I wanted to have a very sculptural effect using textures and colour and forms' (REF 18).

She felt that the flat wall hanging she was doing did not satisfy her aims.

Realisation that the body was the form she was looking for, dawned, when in February 1971 she started working on a large crochet patchwork quilt, based on the earth and heaven. It began with a centerback panel, depicting an Inka-like bird in greens, browns, tweeds and





maroon. It also had images of such as simplistic fish and primitive human forms, suggesting the creation of the World.

Unhappy with the way it looked as a quilt, she draped it against the body as a cloak. She liked how the wools were draping, and it looked much better as a cloak. Dina Knapp had found her muse - the body. Now she could merge her fashion and art background into a single piece (her mother was a dress-maker).

After two years work she eventually finished the piece. A cloak entitled 'The Whole Earth Tapestry' (which was in June 1973 snapped up many collectors (FIG 10).

After 'The Whole Earth Tapestry' cloak, ideas kept spawning for more three dimensional garments. 'Orchid Jacket' (1973) now also in a private collection (in wool figering yarns) soon followed (FIG 11).

This garment was transformed into a walking sculpture when worn on the body. She could build up different depths of ornamentation by the application of three dimensional objects to the jacket. When the wearer turned around these different depths and surfaces were emphasised.

If her 'Orchid Jacket' was a walking sculpture, then her 'Frog Jacket' (1975) was a walking painting, [illegible]. Flatter in dimensions,

containing images of lillies and frogs on a pond, using shades of green and ochre. The piece offered the experience of 'walking into a painting and having it come to life around you' (REF 19).

Knapp was now locked on the body as a means of expressing herself. She believes that wearable pieces are a direct expression of the human being because because its clothes and people can relate to them. She says:

> 'It is important for her to speak about things that deeply touch her in a medium that has become her strongest form of expression' (REF 20).

Knapp believes that the most precious thing about her artworks, textural pieces when worn ,is that they take on a life of their own, changing their identity with every movement. This she could not achieve when she worked on the flat.

Shinichiro Karimoto (Economic Anthropologist) says the same thing about the Japanese designer, Issey Miyake's clothes,

> 'They are transformed by the movement of the models arm, sometimes becoming a butterfly, and other times a squirrel'.

and that this metamophosis is achieved from a toiling stage in which each piece of the garment is whirled around manually by Issey.

Miyake always uses the body form as a base for his sculptured designs. Yet sometimes it is not obvious that a body exists inside his garments, for instance in his 'Double Knit Hood' (1985) (FIG 13). This is achieved by forgetting the restrictions of the body form, and consciously covering it till no human shape is seen at all as Miyake explains: 'Here I wanted to make the body disappear' (REF 21).

Shiniciro Karimoto says "Issey's designs are not attempts to change form, but go beyond form' (REF 22). Miyake believes that the body is the only medium through which he can express his ideas. Because the clothes and the person are not separate pieces, his clothes can become part of some on physically.

As with his Wakame seaweed inspired tunic (1982) which also conseals natural bodyshape, but with one movement of the arm the garment can be transformed into swaying seaweed. Into a sculptural form he talks about his clothes being: 'born out of the movements of my hands and body', and says that his designs help the person escape from his first own layer of skin rather like that of a caterpillar. (FIG 13B)

Miyake never had any doubt that his pieces swould end up as clothing. He was always interested in painting and life drawings, but found himself constantly staring clothes in shop windows. It was then he realised that was what he wanted to do. 'That was my starting point' (REF 23).

Although Knapp and Miyake both use clothing as means of expression, they have one uncommon idea. Knapp considers what she does an artform, pieces to be viewed in Galleries and also worn while Miyake calls his clothes 'tools of living, to be relaxing, convenient, useful' (REF 24).

I find it highly ironic that Miyake does not believe what he does is an artform, considering he uses words like 'nucleus', 'cocoon', and 'second skin' to describe his garments, while prattling off phrases like 'lets not be too logical', when describing his highly unconventional clothes such as his 'Double Knit Hood', 'Cocoon Coat', 'Seaweed Dress'. Where is the convenience of these clothes?

Miyake goes on to contradict all the statements he has ever made when he says in bodyworks that

> 'Fashion design is not art, or I, an artist I am not making clothes to have then displayed in a Museum' (REF 25).

But if so why does he make clothes out of paper and egg cartons, and the highly unwearable Muschiro (straw matting), and then say that his designs are: 'to be seen on the outside and felt on the inside' (REF 26).

If Miyake considers what he does just simply clothes and not art please tell me why he creates garments such as his 'Balloon Raincoat' Spring Summer (1987) which is impossible to sit down in (FIG 14) and 'Silicone Bustier' (1985) made out of polyester, with inflatable pants (FIG 15) again impossible to do anything but stand in.

One also wonders why Miyake so emphatically denies that his sculptural clothes are an artform, considering that he commisioned contempory American photographer, Irving Penn, to phoeograph all his garments for the book 'Issey Miyake' New York (1988). Penn is renowned for his 'artistic' interpdretations of themes from still lifes to portraits to fashion. You only had to look at the February (1991) exhibition of fashion photography, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, to realise how artistic his interpretations were.

As Martin Harrison, organiser of the Exhibition says:

> 'Penn is a photographer who has remained on the edges of fashion, and has helped turn fashion photography into a creative artform'.

15A.

Knowing that Penn's interpretation of his garments would be sculptural and portray an artistic form, Miyake still specifically gave Penn free artistic licence. He could photograph the garments as the choose fit. Miyake didn't even moniter the proceedings.
In December 1987 while the designer stayed at home in Tokyo, Issey shipped Penn over hundreds of outfits, to put together himself and photograph in his distinctive style.

The end result of the photographic session was as premeditated. Numerous examples could be given as to how Penn's photography simply encouraged Miyake's clothes to become an artform. For instance Miyake's 'Silicone Bustler' Autumn/Winter (1985) 'Seashell Coat' Spring/ Summer (1983) 'Balloon Jumpsuit' Spring/Summer (1978) and his 'Double Knit Coat' Autumn/Winter (1985).

In the photograph of 'Turtle Jumpsuit'(FIG 15A) (1983) the only part of the body visible is .... the feet. The models stance is unnatural, the garment unnaturally large, and the end result unquestionably surreal and sculptural. The garment could possibly have commercial appeal, however, it is not visible , due to the use of creative photography.

Penn has used the same approach in Miyake's 'Double Knit Coat' (inspired by onions)(FIG 15B)

(1985). Again not a single limb of the body is visible, and the garment appears to be standing on its own and could just as easily be part of some sculptural exhibition.

However, if Penn had chosen to photograph the garments with head, hands and body showing, and if it had been projected like a normal fashion shoot, then part of this image of an artform would evaporate.

As Bruce Weber, fashion photographer says, if a designer wants their clothes to look like clothes and 'the balance tips in favour of selling you shots of carefully posed models', however, if the designer wants to portray his clothes as an artform, then free license is given to the photographer to do, almost what he wishes. This is exactly what Miyake has let Penn do, and this is exactly the image Miyake wanted to portray.

In the book "Issey Miyake' New York (1988) a jacket called 'Uneven Pleats', Autumn/Winter (1982) is seen in (FIG 16) worn by Miyake's favourite model and photograped by a Marius Leatherdale, and simply worn by an everyday person, singer, Japanese, Akiko Yano.

The difference in photographs and projection of image is remarkable. In Irving Penn's interpretation, the hands, once again remain invisible. The models face appears appears white and cold, incorporating images of a manniquin. The

arms are strangely bent and the expression is blank. The lighting in the picture reflects the garments transparency giving it depth. The end result once again is of an artform, truly sculptural.

Image dramatically changes when worn by Akiko Yano. The appearance here is more like a garment. Her hands are visible, the expression is full of life, and because of this, it makes it easier to relate it to a piece of clothing. However' it still looks sculptural and uncomfortable to wear. And the end result of this photograph makes the garment appear duller, less interesting and less sculptural.

It seems strange that Miyake proclaims that his garments are made to be worn, as certainly this garment 'Uneven Pleats', looks better in Penn's interpretation as a sculptural form, than in the version on Yano Akiko as clothing.

Miyake also says that his clothings are not made to be displayed in Museums, but ironically does his best to have his work projected as sculpture. He has even also displayed his work in numerous exhibitions!

In 1982 he was included in the exhibition The Hayden Gallery, (in Massachusetts Institute of Technology). The exhibition was called 'Intimate Architecture'!!

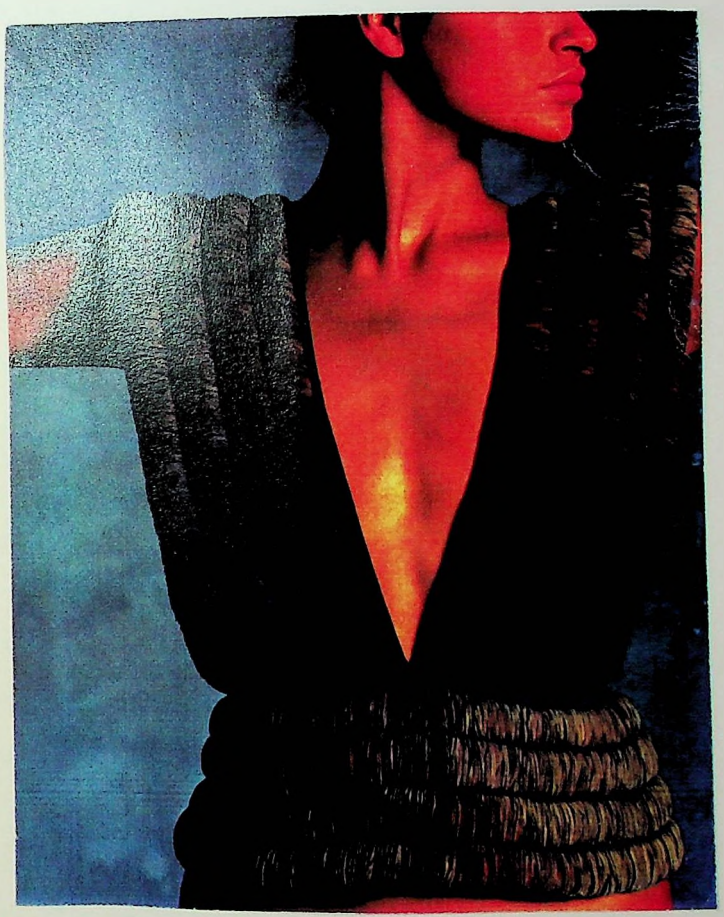
In 1983, Miyake had an exhibition at La Foret Likura Museum in Tokyo called Bodyworks, (which also toured the World) mannequins were suspended from the roof in bodices of moulded red and black plastic, above a desert with pools of black water. And this is not an art form? While in 1987 he also participated in an exhibition at The Fashion Insitute of Technology, New York, called 'Fashion and Surrealism'.

Even his shows take on surreal artforms. The most memorable probably being his half hour fashion show in Tokyo, where, (with no music) a model comes on stage in many layers, takes then all off and stands there naked. Performance art at its best. Meanwhile the sponsorship company beg him to stop!!

Even at the Fashion Aid in the Albert Hall, Issey hired acrobats to wear his clothes. 'They descended on ropes from the dome - and slid down fresh shutes of water'.

So if designer Issey Miyake expects us to believe that he doesn't view his clothes as an artform, surely he should not have photographed as such, displayed in galleries and such, and most importantly designed as such.

Pleater Hedstrom has no doubt that her pieces however are an artform. Like Knapp she began her artistic career as a potter. She realised at an early stage that it was the surface texture,



the glazing and the firing which appealed to her most of all. But she quickly became dismayed at the unreliable kiln and found it difficult to increase her pottery skills, but became intrigued in the Shibori pleating process. She quickly dropped pottery for pleating.

Initially Hedstrom did pleated pieces and commisioned wall pieces, in silk with muted tones and intricate spider web patterns. But like Knapp she to tired of the flat dimensions and became entranced with the way the pleated fabric looked when it was scrunched and wrapped around the body.

It was then that she decided to create her first garment shape. A Samurai Vest (1980) in silk, resist dyed, hand pleated in dark browns adn vivid blues (FIG 17).

Hedstrom believes that there is no comparison between her wall pieces and her pleated fabric vests, claiming the vests to be: 'much more challenging and satisfying, it is truly Sculptural' (REF 27).

But the main reason Hedstrom likes doing clothing is that when it leaves the studio, it has a life of its own. It is worn and treasured by someone. They complete the work, a view also held by Miyake who says the work is not complete until a body fills it. Hedstrom just loves the fact that it leaves and doesn't care where it ends up.

As an American Fashion Designer Oscar De La Renta says on that point

'If you create things and nobody buys them, you are not creating anything' (REF 28)

CONCLUSION

Where do we go from here?
Over the last thirty years with the three dimensional fabric, we have moved from feathers and shells, part and parcel of our natural world, to poly vinyl chloride tubing and recycled egg cartons which symbolise the modern world in which we live.

One thing is certain for the future, the development of fabric will play a key role. As designer Karl Largerfield says:

"Deep changes in fashion will come with new developments in technology" (ref 1)

New technology offers exciting and seemingly timeless scope for new fabric developements. Where will it lead us? We live in a world where the environment is now a primary concern, and which inevitably will have an impact on the materials used.

The plastic and synthetic designs I have mentioned from the 1980s are now seen as socially unacceptable. The furs and feathers that were a source of decoration in the 1960s are now also a target for the environmental lobby. Can the new technology, however advanced, fill the gap with acceptable and advanced alternatives? Can it

provide us with a durable fabric that will give the comfort and feel now seen as essential both by designers and those whose buying power ultimately determines the survival of the trade? And how can these developments be harnessed to the imagination, skill and ideas of a new generation of designers.

Issey Miyake has been a pace- setter on the current scene with his three dimensional fabric forms. Dina Knapp and Ana Lisa Hedstrom have provided an interesting contrast with their work, their use of natural colours and different approaches. Who will be the future pioneers in three dimensional, pushing the process to the next stage of development?
What will be the source of inspiration?
How original will be their ideas?

The uncertainty of future developments is part of the excitement. The fantasies of today may be the clothes of tomorrow.

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