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### Study of costume design| Costume designs for Ordinary People by Judith Guest

Catherine A. Crawford  
*The University of Montana*

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The Study of Costume Design

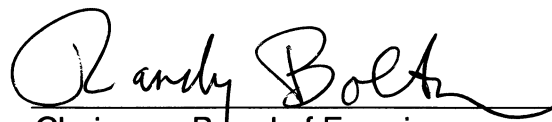
Costume Designs  
for  
*Ordinary People*  
by  
Judith Guest

by  
Catherine A. Crawford  
B.A., California State University of Northridge

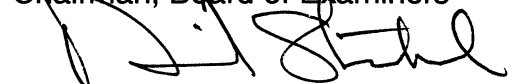
Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,  
in Fine Arts,  
Integrated Arts and Education

University of Montana  
2001

Approved by



Chairman, Board of Examiners



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Crawford, Catherine A. MA August, 2001

Integrated Arts and Education

Costume Designs for *Ordinary People* by Judith Guest (Total Pages 36)

Committee Chair: Randy Bolton 

The project was to create four to five costume designs for the major characters of a short story. The costume design interprets, with symbolism, the culture, nature of the characters personality and development throughout the story. These designs would be fashion into an artistic installation of the actual costume.

This project involved extensive character analysis with an explanation of how each character's costume was designed and developed with existing or created symbolic systems. The character's symbolism used or created was developed to reflect how the character communicates, contrasts or interacts with the symbolic systems and the audience.

The story chosen was *Ordinary People* by Judith Guest. The main characters were the Jarrett family, Beth the mother, Calvin the father, Jordan the eldest son and Conrad the youngest son. Also, included was the character Dr. Berger, Conrad's psychiatrist. The time period was determined as modern 1970 through 1990's.

Three goals were pursued. The first was an extensive analysis of each character chosen. The second was to design each character's costume and the third was to incorporate symbolic systems to reflect the personalities, feelings, interactions, contrasts and perceptions of each character during the major the events of the story.

A person's character can be expressed through the clothing chosen, however, it is not the only non-verbal communication device that can be used to judge an individual. Clothing should only be used as a possible insight into one's character.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE INTRODUCTION

The story I chose was *Ordinary People* by Judith Guest. This story had a significant impact on me because I had to learn the meaning of grief and the process of grieving. I have extensive experience with the process of grief and could identify with each of the characters. The project took on a life of its own and grew into an installation. The intent of the installation, presentation and elaboration was to introduce the audience to the story and the main characters. The elaboration and discussion was to explain how the characters personalities, thoughts, feelings and events are reflected in the type of clothing worn and the symbolic system I chose to use in the costume designs.

This story takes us on a journey with the Jarrett family and how this family reacts to the sudden loss of a loved one, Jordan the eldest son. Shortly after the death of Jordan, this family suffers another tremendous blow when Conrad, the younger son, after three months of not being able to sleep or eat, tries to commit suicide. Saved within the last minutes of life, his father, Calvin, intervened and placed Conrad in a hospital. Conrad remained in the hospital for a year.

During the year Conrad was hospitalized, the parents, Beth and Calvin continued as if life goes on as usual. Calvin visits Conrad in the hospital as much as possible. This is Conrad's only real contact with the outside world. Conrad's best friend contacts him once in a letter stating how he didn't understand why everything happened the way it did, but with school and sports

he wouldn't be able to visit or write. Conrad does the best he can to recuperate and develops a close relationship with a young girl, Karen.

Beth convinces Calvin they need to get away to rest and they take an extended trip overseas while Conrad recuperates in the hospital.

The story opens on the first day of school for Conrad, after his return home. He returns to high school a year behind his classmates. The story is written through this next year from many different perspectives of the event as perceived and experienced by members of the Jarrett family.

In my project I selected some of the major events during this year and through the use of imagery, symbols, and costume design I created my impression of Conrad's perceptions regarding the major characters and their development.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRESENTATION

*Ordinary People*, written by Judith Guest. As far as ordinary people, no, these are not ordinary people and there is no ordinary way to process grief. There are basic steps of going through the process of grief, but everybody grieves differently. I would like to introduce you to the Jarrett family.



Figure 1 The Jarrett Family and Dr. Berger





Figure 2 Beth

This is Beth Jarrett. Beth is a very beautiful, influential wife and mother of two. She has exquisite taste in clothing. She is very concerned about detail. Every little detail. Beth is married to Calvin.

Calvin is a tax attorney.

Although, most of the time he is doing accounting. He prefers to do accounting. Things balance out. If they don't balance out, maybe there's a little mistake here; it can be fixed. Somehow, everything falls into place; everything falls into a form. He is extremely,

compassionate, affectionate, articulate, and has incredible intra and interpersonal skills. However, he has a great deal of difficulty communicating with his son, Conrad.



Figure 3 Calvin

Calvin and Beth have two sons; Jordan, the eldest, and Conrad, the youngest. Jordan, who is known as "Buck" in the book, has an accident and dies while teaching Conrad to sail on Lake Michigan. The Great Lakes are known for their instantaneous storms; taking lives at the snap of a finger.

The Jarrett family has suffered a tragic loss. Jordan dies when teaching Conrad how to sail. Conrad's first lesson. Beth's first child, her favorite, now



gone. She believes that Conrad will get through this loss. Just as she and Calvin have to get through it.

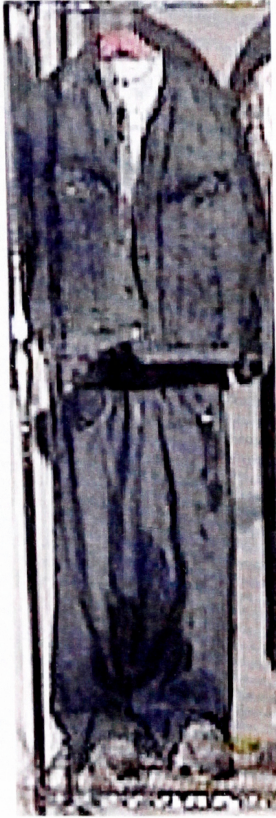


Figure 4 Conrad

Grief is not a process in America that you learn as you're growing up. Grief, or the process of grieving, is restricted as are many emotions in American society. In other countries, this loss is grieved throughout the community. The community grieves as a whole. In America, only the family grieves. They grieve in silence, by themselves, alone.

Three months after the death of Buck, Conrad, continues to have a lot of problems dealing with the loss of his brother. Not sleeping, night terrors, unable to eat, totally angry

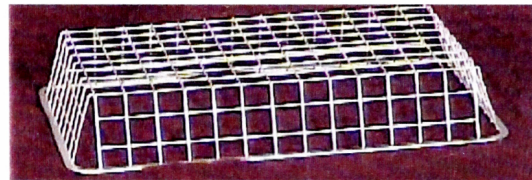


Figure 5 Jordan (Buck)

with himself, he takes it upon himself to get some sleep the only way he knows how, platinum plus. Conrad butchers his arms and his legs. His father breaks down the door and saves him in the last seconds of his life. Conrad is placed in the hospital for a year.

The story begins on Conrad's first day of school after his release from the hospital. He has been home only a short period of time. This is what Conrad wears to school. Conrad is dressed in a gray tee shirt with blue jeans, denim

jacket and gray tennis shoes. This is how Conrad perceives the rest of the world sees him, his confusion, his anger, and his sadness. This reflects Conrad's emotional state of mind. Blue, or the blue disease, is extreme anxiety, gray is depression. Conrad worries about everything and every little detail. Gray, the color of his tee shirt, stained with his anger and his blood, symbolizes his failure.



Figure 6 Conrad's Tee Shirt



Figure 8 Inside Conrad's Jacket

Not his failure to commit suicide, but his failure as a human being because he tried to commit suicide and he doesn't even understand why. After a year in the hospital, he still doesn't understand why.

The doctors put him on anti-depressants and send him back out into the world.

This is where we meet Dr.

Berger. Another

compassionate, humorous

and affectionate man. I call

him the wise man. Dr. Berger

is dressed in a casual fashion,

browns and neutrals, non-

threatening colors. Not blue

or gray, no. He is something

special. Conrad is to report to Dr. Berger twice a week.



Figure 7 Dr. Berger



Conrad believes his problem is control, or a lack of control. We don't know where this comes from. The hell we don't!



Figure 9 Inside Beth's Jacket

Beth, the envy of society, the envy of every man and woman in her community, is a total control freak. She has a few issues of her own. Still not talking to Conrad after nine months, any information, comments or criticism that she has for Conrad goes through, and comes from, Calvin. Calvin is the communicator, Beth's messenger. She has also concluded that Calvin is obsessed with Conrad. The young, seventeen-year-old boy, who has no idea of what

is going on in life, is struggling through high school. Trying to get straight A's, as he did before, trying to do his athletics so his parents will be proud, and possibly regain the love of his mother. He can't do these things anymore. He's worn out and damaged. Conrad is also extremely worried about his father, who is dressed in blue. Conrad believes he is



Figure 10 Inside Calvin's Jacket

infecting his father with the gray and definitely the blue disease. The “gray disease,” (Guest, p. 15) is Conrad’s perception and symbol of depression.

Calvin goes to see Dr. Berger, after the approval of his son. He finds that he really wants to see this doctor because he can’t understand why he keeps replaying these old movies of his family in his head. Smells, times, dates, such as Buck’s birthday can trigger these images. He’s also discovering, as he talks with Dr. Berger, that Beth has controlled his every movement in his adult life. Beth has controlled his occupation. Beth has controlled how successful he has become. She takes care of every little detail. She is the perfect wife. She puts on the perfect show. She plays her role well.

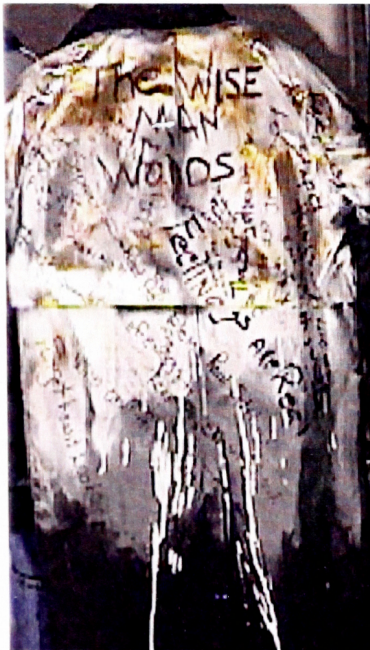


Figure 11 Inside  
Dr. Berger’s Coat

The community sees her as perfect wife, perfect mother, except Conrad has put a little black mark there.

She’s dressed for lunch, neutral colors, not her usual bright red, or orange (which happens to be the opposite of blue). Calvin and Beth meet for lunch. And what does she want to do? Her son’s been home from the hospital for three months, she wants to take a trip to England. Conrad is fine, she claims. He’s doing well. Dr. Berger will take care of any

problems. Calvin says no way in hell. We are not going to leave. No, We are not going to leave this boy alone. It's too soon. Maybe later, when Conrad is comfortable.

Tensions develop. Calvin is beginning to learn who he is. He's angry with Beth for her lack of compassion toward Conrad. Calvin has been drinking too much. He's the caretaker of the family. Now he's starting to take control of his life.

The pain of the loss of Buck is now beginning to recede. As the family heals, Calvin and Beth are beginning to become social again. Conrad is still struggling somewhat. Conrad continues having problems keeping his grades up, studying constantly. Upon the advice of our wise man, Dr. Berger, Conrad drops out of sports. He can't take it. It's too much,

After nine months of therapy, things begin to change. Dr. Berger releases Conrad from therapy. Calvin has learned his true identity. Beth no longer has control over Calvin and Conrad. Beth leaves Calvin and Conrad to return home to her parents. The Cinderella marriage and family falls apart.

In time, we begin to see a change in Conrad and Calvin. We no longer see the diseased Conrad. We see a new Conrad, nicely dressed, beautiful greens, feeling healthy and good. He is showing his feelings, learning to talk. The communication with his father, which has been stumbling for months, is now flowing. They are growing closer and closer together.



Calvin and Conrad move to a new home, closer to Calvin's work and a new school for Conrad. Conrad would no longer be competing with his older brother's accomplishments.

The story ends with Conrad and his father in their new apartment. Calvin doing well, business is prosperous. Conrad has met the love of his life, Jeanine. He has his music and his new found happiness.



Figure 12 Calvin's Dress Shirt (Left) and Conrad's New Tee Shirt

The irony of this story is that it was the death of Buck that almost caused the death of Conrad. But, it was the death of Karen, Conrad's girlfriend in the hospital that helped heal him.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PROJECT AND THE PROCESS

The project, *Costume Designs of Ordinary People* by Judith Guest, started with an extensive analysis of each character chosen. I chose the Jarrett family and the psychiatrist, Dr. Berger, the main characters. Realizing the story was about grief and the process of grieving, I began identifying each character and the roles being played.

The initial costume designs developed through a process of studying clothing catalogs, talking with sales representatives at exclusive department stores and looking for books, articles and magazines with any reference to modern American clothing.

At the library, looking through *McCall's* and *Vogue* magazines, I was inspired to begin looking at department store catalogs. Viewing Spiegel and J.C. Penney's catalogs, the ideas began to flow. I cut up the catalogs until I had enough pictures to play around with. I selected some of my favorites and pasted them down on manila folders, one folder for each character. I had my idea of what to look for and what questions needed to be asked and answered.

The next step was to get expert opinions. My sources were Nordstroms and the Bon Marché. I began looking for the outfits that fit my profiles. With the help of the department store sales staff (who were all willing to help), I knew just the type of clothing I needed to create a costume for each character.

Beginning with the premise that these costumes may be worn, I decided on a size and budget constraint. I selected an average size for each character and set a limit of \$500.00 for four to five costumes.

With this budget, I set off to the discount stores. I found and worked out every detail. With a visual image to work from, the clothes seemed to jump off the racks. This surprised me considering the hundred of racks of clothing I went through. In the stores, I met others who were designing costumes for high school and community plays. I knew I was proceeding in the right direction.

After purchasing the clothing, I realized I had no way to display the costumes. I also realized that the clothing I chose needed to reflect the progressive development of each character.

I started searching places to find ways to remedy the display problem, but nothing seemed to look or fit the flow correctly. I wandered through hardware, department and furniture stores when I came upon a store named Storables. The closet organizers seemed to fit perfectly, both structurally and symbolically. I call these organizers the structure. I assembled the structures and began to assemble the costumes. The creative process of designing the costumes had already been completed through my research.

After I assembled two of the costumes, I stood back to see how they looked. I was surprised to have such an enormous feeling overwhelm me. I had earlier in my life created Cloaked Figures (reference Appendix A, p. 34 and 35). The costumes were an extension of my Cloaked Figures in three-dimensional



form. The Cloak Figure Series are paintings that have been showing up in my artwork for ten years. These figures represent my perception of people and the inability to read others. The Cloak Figures are impressions of individuals hidden in or under robes. I was overwhelmed emotionally from just clothes hanging from a rod. The feeling was so powerful, I had to walk away leaving the clothing hanging in a closed room, not knowing, even afraid of, what to do next. The costumes stayed in the closed room for a few months before I could even think, what next? The costumes had come alive and dared me to deal with them. The costumes still elicit this feeling.

While browsing through books for hours I came across a book called the *Clothesline*, an unusual book of poetry and imagery. This book set my imagination in motion. I came up with the idea of using jackets as a communication device to show the development of the characters.

Since the development of the characters is not completed until the book is finished, the figures in the Cloak Figure Series become significant in its concealment of the individuals, providing only the identity suggested by how the cloak is worn.

I decided the costumes were not going to be serviceable, and I would conceal the development of the characters from the initial viewing of the costumes. The initial impression must be ordinary, not so special, and not distinctive.

Since these costumes, like my Cloak Figures, elicit an emotional response from me, I decided to use the same approach in designing the costumes. The costumes then became pieces of art to be used in an installation. I used the same mediums to create the character's internal symbolism and imagery that I used for the Cloak Figures.

Knowing some individuals may not understand pieces of obscure symbolism; I tried to keep the imagery and use of materials to a minimum. This is a professional preference. I prefer people understand and see what is happening in a piece of artwork.

Since the costumes were not going to be worn, I had as much freedom to express each individual character as I wished. This freedom did not come without its problems. Some fabrics were too thin or the weave too loose to just paint on the fabric. All fabrics had to be sealed. Sometimes, the sealant even soaked through the fabric. Another important aspect was that I wanted to recycle some of my art supplies. Some old and some new materials were used to obtain the feeling I wanted to achieve. Beth's costume needed to express her internal barrier, her defense from pain or any emotion. I had to purchase the wire netting and spray the netting with a stone texture to reflect the impenetrable barrier she has developed.

The mediums used were fabric paints, acrylic paints, stains, pigments, dyes, drawing utensils (charcoal, markers, oil pastels and colored pencils) and my favorite spray paints and textures. The process of layering mediums along

with the layering of clothing was used to create the symbols for each character. Two of the characters were given collages for the symbolic imagery. This process symbolizes the layering of feelings, thoughts and events that people develop over the years. The presentation of removing the layers to see the development of a character is a fundamental process known as the peeling of the onion. Each layer exposing a new truth.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PRODUCT

The costuming is traditional and classic for the time period, modern affluent Midwestern America. The story takes place near Chicago, in a suburban wealthy neighborhood. The time of year is early fall, and unusually cold during this particular year.

The costumes were all designed to portray simplicity while at the same time provide insight into the personalities. Accessories were kept to a minimum, if any.

#### Beth Jarrett

Beth is dressed for lunch with her husband, after a frigid morning with her group of friends who run the committees for charity. Beth chairs all the charity committees in her area. This particular year she has been chosen to chair the committee for a national golf tournament. This project has kept her very busy. There is no time for family or the family problems. She has placed her family on hold.

Beth's costume is simple, elegant, and perfect for the occasion, lunch with Calvin. As usual, Beth's natural beauty and elegance is noticed by all. Beth is a perfectionist by nature and has well developed this skill. Beth's mother is highly critical of Beth and always has been. For survival purposes, and to maintain her mother's love and respect, Beth becomes a perfectionist. She is aware of every detail. Beth's appearance, image and the perceptions of others' are extremely

important to her. Beth is so concerned about this; she regulates her family appearance, and their image. Impressions are a high priority to Beth.

Beth strives to create and live up to her mother's expectations, the perfect charity organizer, the perfect wife, and the perfect mother. Beth plays her roles well, until Conrad commits the unmentionable sin of trying to commit suicide.

Beth is dressed with a simple "A" frame high-wasted, mid-length dress. Matching three-quarter length wool blended coat with shoes, purse and a scarf. This ensemble is deliberate, she wants to look pleasing, elegant, and non-threatening, as she plans to convince Calvin to take a trip overseas. This trip is to take place within the next month. She wants Calvin calm, distracted, but not threatened so she chooses neutrals, off white colors, variation of values, tones and textures with a touch of accenting color in the scarf.

Beth looks beautiful not only to Calvin but to others who acknowledge her beauty by turning their heads when she walks in to greet Calvin. Calvin's partner even comments on how radiant Beth looks. A perfectionist - everything must be just right (according to her standards) and she has a natural beauty and figure to look great in anything.

The significance of this event is major. At lunch, Beth wants to take a trip to England. Calvin protests, it's too early to leave Conrad. Beth becomes enraged. To Beth, the mere mention of Conrad's name conveys that Calvin is overly obsessed with him. At this point, you begin to realize that Beth doesn't understand the gravity of her son's condition, or she has become so emotionally

detached from Conrad that she doesn't care and believes he needs to be left alone.

### Calvin Jarrett

Calvin is dressed for work. A successful tax attorney, he is dressed conservatively for his clientele. A tailored, pin stripe suit, a conservative white shirt with a dark tie and shoes. The business side of a suburban lawyer, as his son classifies and passes judgement on him.

The color and fabric are significant. Blue is very significant. Besides an American standard, it's Conrad's perception and symbol for anxiety. Blue is Conrad's symbol for extreme anxiety. Blue is a perfect color for Calvin, he is extremely anxious. The fabric, a wool blend, is easy to wear and comfortable for the time of year. Any suit fabric other than wool is considered by American standards to be less conservative or casual. The shoes are well made, expensive, black wing tips, also established by American standards.

Calvin's costume is designed as his typical outfit, he wears a similar one daily and for many hours. Calvin is wearing his business attire during the major events that I have chosen to depict in this story.

### Dr. Berger

Dr. Berger's costume is also designed for work. An upper class psychiatrist who deals with teens. Dr. Berger needs to appear casual, conservative, and easy to converse with. His costume is designed with neutrals and brown colors, signifying warmth and comfortability. Browns and neutrals

reflect no threat. He works with troubled teens that need to see and feel comfortable around him. A striped short sleeve shirt, brown slacks and suede shoes completes his ensemble. He has a simple raincoat that he carries with him during the fall, winter and sometimes the spring season.

He maintains a disorganized, yet comfortable office; he's easy to talk with and expressive. Dr. Berger's office is relaxing and reflects a safe environment for his patients. Dr. Berger's costume is the normal attire worn during sessions with Conrad.

#### Conrad Jarrett

Conrad's costume is designed to reflect the typical teenager. Denim pants and jacket with a tee shirt and tennis shoes. Conrad's costume reflects what he wore for his first few months of school. Lack of self respect, clutter, chaos and confusion are reflected in this costume. These articles of clothing have been worn a lot. Denims pants and jacket (blue) with tee shirt (gray) are Conrad's only preferences. He dresses in only blues and grays. This symbolizes his extreme anxiety and failure--loser. Blues and grays are the colors of the "Gray Disease" (Guest, p. 15) that inflicts him and also has infected his father--Depression.

The denim pants and jacket are significant. Conrad was allowed to wear these particular clothes in the hospital and was going to continue to wear them in spite of his mother's protest (delivered by Calvin). Conrad has a great deal of expensive designer clothes to wear, but he was going to wear what he wanted. Calvin explained to Beth that all the kids are wearing baggy Levi's and jackets

and “Con” should be allowed to do the same. It would help him feel more comfortable. But, this isn’t the reason Conrad insists on wearing clothes that make him look like a “common bum.” Blue is his color for extreme anxiety and gray is for failure. This is how Conrad is feeling and the costume expresses his troubled feelings. This is how Conrad perceives the world sees him. This is significant because Conrad lost his personal identity when his brother died. The pants and jacket have been over worn. This signifies low self-esteem, shame, self-doubt, confusion, and extreme emotional distress. Calvin also dressed in blue has doubts about his personal identity.

During the year, Conrad tries very hard to work with Dr. Berger, and eventually grows into a stable and happy young man. After all, Conrad is a very bright young man and does not want to die. The “Gray Disease” (Guest, p. 15) being defeated has released both Conrad and his father. I created costumes for Conrad and Calvin to celebrate this occasion.

Conrad, as the stylish looking young man he once was, is back in full force and color. No longer locked into wearing blues and grays, Conrad is dressed in beautiful greens signifying healing, with his internal characteristics fully exposed on the back of his tee shirt.

He is dressed in green classic pants (tailored to fit), casual, with a green tee shirt and a colorful green over-shirt to pull the ensemble together. Although happy and well adjusted he still wears his gray tennis shoes to remind himself that one can fall into the “Gray Disease” at anytime and anywhere. As Dr. Berger



said repeatedly “Keep in touch with the body, the body doesn’t lie” (Guest, p. 121).

Calvin is also growing emotionally. More confident, more in touch with his feelings, able to communicate with Conrad and in control of his emotional well being, he is also exhibiting healing. To illustrate the growth, and his newly developed self-image, symbols have been incorporated onto his dress shirt.

The coats and jackets contain the deep internal personalities and character development. The *Clothesline* by Stan Tymorek inspired this approach. This book illustrated the Omaha Indians (Tymorek, pp. 42 and 43), and how the tribes’ men wore their blankets to communicate to others. The blankets were worn differently to express emotions, stature, rank, and personalities. This study was done by Robert Kapoun and documented in a book titled *Language of the Robe*. This book includes all the American Indians and what is known as the trading blankets as a communication device among the tribe men.

This book inspired me to use jackets and coats to express the intra-personal communication that flows throughout oneself within a given period of time. The emotional thoughts, ideas, desires, concerns or failures are not always visible. These are the elements and aspects that I wanted the costumes to express.

This book reminded me again of my Cloak Series (see Appendix A, Figures 1-4, pp. 34 and 35), an on going process of paintings that have been showing up in my artwork for over a decade.

I used the same mediums to create the character's internal symbolism and imagery as I used for the Cloak Figures. The Cloak Figures Series represents that people, in general, do not expose their inner selves. Physical, emotional, psychological, and social characteristics are not exposed. To hide from sight all thoughts, feelings and ideas are cultural norms within many societies.

This book, *Language of the Robe*, helped me explain some of the meanings of the Cloaked Figure pieces. This book also inspired me to create robe-like clothing for my characters. This process also provides for the examination of the character's development throughout the story.

Since my costumes were traditional clothing, instead of robes, I used coats and jackets. Not only did I decide to decorate the jackets to give an inside look of who each character is, but also how the characters develop in the story line.

Since the character's development is a subtle process of events, others' perceptions, and self-perceptions, I felt an outward appearance of these aspects would be too obvious. After all, one doesn't normally see some of the real identities of the characters or why the characters developed in such a way until the end of the story. I chose to express these aspects and characteristics inside the jackets and coats of each character.

The structure was an afterthought. I needed a way to display my costumes. A traditional clothesline or garment frame just didn't satisfy me and allow a structure that supported the relationship between characters. The structure displays the relationship between the characters and pulled the garments together to create an environment and installation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE SYMBOLISM**

The symbolic systems used in this project vary and are numerous. The first symbolic system I will discuss is the structures. The structures are modern closet organizers. I use only the frames to maintain the structural integrity.

The structures symbolize the style in which the story was told, organization and control of one's life. The structures are to express the thoughts, ideas, and feelings both externally and internally are expressed as if the characters were inside a physical structure looking outward and inward, drawing conclusions, and taking in what was needed and discarding the rest.

Each structure expresses the internal space, or personal space one finds oneself in from time to time. In Conrad's case his character or (costume) has support; emotional support his psychiatrist. Dr. Berger is sharing Conrad's personal space.

The color and texture of the structure also is significant. The chrome and black structure creates an affluent, sleek, and pleasing look. The cast shadow created by the addition of light creates a shadow that can be interpreted as an invisible prison. The structure is an expression of the views, perspectives, values and judgements that people have or develop to create their own personal space.

This space can be a prison or wall, whether right or wrong, established by the events that flow through one's life. The personal space, if a prison, has to be penetrated in order to change one's thoughts, feelings, views and ideas. The

structure needed to be just a suggestion of a personal space therefore only the structural framework was used.

The structure offers another symbolic system, the placement and form used to represent the relationship of the characters. Form is a major symbolic system used with the structures. The structure offers support along with unity or segregation of the characters as created by the development of each character.

Calvin's, the father figure, costume and structure is placed at the pivotal point of the structures between Beth and Conrad. Calvin is trying to hold his family together and keep them alive, happy and well.

Beth's costume and structure is placed in the forefront. This represents the strong leadership she forces on the family. Everything is under control, no loose ends, and no indiscreet detail to take care of. Beth is in total control of everything she encounters, except Conrad. Beth has deeper issues with Conrad. Conrad is a detail to be ignored and tolerated. Since Beth has no control over Conrad, she disregards him.

Next, and in the same structure as Conrad is his Doctor. Dr. Berger is a relaxed caring professional that is Conrad's greatest weapon against Conrad's mental disease, "*Severe Depressive Episodes; High Risk of Suicide*" (Guest, p. 33), the official diagnosis. Dr. Berger's support, relaxed manner, wisdom and sense of humor provides a lifesaver for Conrad.

To the right of Conrad his father (Calvin) representing security within reach of his support team. The positioning expresses the love and fumbling

support that Conrad and Calvin have for each other. Calvin is trying to keep the lines of communication open and positive between them. Calvin and Conrad, not knowing how to communicate, struggle as the relationship grows. Helping with this, although not knowing it, Beth is not talking to Conrad and all communication from Beth forces Calvin to play the role of messenger to Conrad. Calvin is very gentle when delivering Beth's messages. Calvin is highly developed in interpersonal, verbal communication skills.

The costumes are another symbolic system; this system is guided by American modern business attire as established by American businesses. Beth's, Calvin's and Dr. Berger's costumes are guided by this symbolic system and are dependent on their professional status or position. Conrad's costume is guided by the standards of the American fashion industry for teenagers. Many teenagers become victims to these standards and symbolic systems to feel comfortable among their peers.

The coats and jacket of each costume are used to express the personalities of the characters as the characters develop in the story. Another series of symbolic systems are used to express and reflect the true natures of each character. As stated earlier these personalities are not usually seen initially, and the same holds true in the story. The series of symbolic systems are hidden on the inside of the character's coats and jackets.

### Beth Jarrett

Inside Beth's coat is her true self. The symbolic systems used were visual and textural. Inside her coat resides a wire mesh guard sprayed with a stone texture. This symbolizes the guard she has developed against any emotional feelings. The guard she wears is placed over her vital organs, like a warrior going into battle.

Intertwined are the imagery, objects and colors. The imagery is used to represent her self-image. A picture of her face as she sees herself, and sheets from her daily planner, illustrating her excessive compulsion to work, an avoidance of the family. Included are objects, the orchids representing her delicate state of mind, a branch of leaves signifying a possibility of growth if wanted, a rolling pin and cutting board expressing her ability to cook although Conrad feeds on TV dinners.

Color is another system used, especially the colors of red and black. Red signifying blood, Conrad's blood which is found on all the family's coats. Black representing death, denial and defiance. The words "No I can't" are sprayed in large letters on her coat. This is related to the red rose.

The final object chosen was the red rose. This expresses the love that Conrad realizes he has for his mother, as he develops. She is doing the best she can for now. Fear has engulfed her. This rose penetrates Beth's guard. Conrad's touches his mother for the first time, a kiss goodnight, in over two years. This slight gesture causes Beth to flee the flight or fight syndrome.

### Calvin Jarrett

The symbolic systems used in Calvin's coat are colors, shapes and the English language. The colors used are blue, gray, red, green and orange. Black and white are used to accent shapes. Blue and gray have already been discussed. The reds, greens, and oranges are used to blend, mix, and isolate created symbols. Red being Conrad's blood, also represent anger and passion that Calvin feels. Words were placed on the jacket in random sequence to signify confusion of feelings, self doubt, failure as a father, loss of identity, responsibilities and control.

### Conrad Jarrett

The red paint on the exterior denim pants and jacket signifies blood, large areas of red paint on his gray tee shirt signify saturated blood stains, the blue signifies anxiety. This is how Conrad perceives the world sees him. The whole community knows what he did.

Inside the jacket many symbolic systems were used--colors, shape, texture, pictorial images, verbal and musical. This massive display of confusion expresses the emotions, failures, depression and anxieties that Conrad is feeling.

The colors are primary and include a small amount of the secondary color system. The colors blue, gray, red, orange, green and violet used on Conrad's jacket. This design was created in the same fashion as Beth's and Calvin's.

A collage effect was created using imagery from pictures, textured papers, and layers of pigments, paints and dyes. The layering of these mediums along



with words create the confused and cluttered effect, involving past, and present thoughts and ideas that Conrad did not outwardly express.

### Dr. Berger

Dr. Berger is the wise one. The character that brings balance and order to Calvin's and Conrad's life. There are only three symbolic systems used here. Color shape, and the arrangement of words. The colors are white, gold, gray and black. The white and gold colors and shapes are fighting the gray shape back to a small corner. The words of wisdom that Dr. Berger uses to fight the Gray Disease—Depression, complement the white and gold colors to drive the gray disease away and keep it away.

The last symbolic system involved Jordan. Jordan's body was never found, and no one knows what happened to him the night of the accident. The only thing left is Jordan's hopes, dreams and desires that are contained within a personal space. Included are his family's and the community's memories. The space used is a metal silver basket, matching his family's personal spaces. Thoughts, feelings, pain of loss and love of Jordan, are placed in Jordan's space, to be recovered at will, since the container is open for all.

In celebration of Conrad's well being, I created a beautiful green costume for Conrad. This costume's symbolic system is devoted to the color green. Green signifies healing. This is a fully illustrated collage, incorporating the loves of Conrad's life. Jeannine, his new girlfriend, playing his guitar, singing and golfing are all exposed on the back of his tee shirt. A silhouette of his father is

included to match the silhouette on the back of his father's dress shirt. Both are exposing their emotional bond to each other through the color symbolism of green (healing).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PERSONAL ASSESSMENTS**

As previously mentioned, this project took on a life of it's own, which is not unusual for me. Many pieces of art have had this type of evolution, but this project has had an enormous impact. It has taken my art to a new level, one I have never thought of pursuing, installations. This project grew into an installation, not just designing costumes. Although, designing the costumes may have been enough to satisfy the goal, it wasn't enough for me. My costumes became people, and not just ordinary people. I find myself thinking, dreaming and talking about the costumes as if the clothing were real people with real problems.

This has proven to be powerful art for others and myself as demonstrated by the presentation. This "art" has transported others and myself into another world of reality that can be applicable to real life. The emotional impact is enormous and overwhelming. I still ask, "How can hanging clothes have so much power? Is this something only inside oneself? Can the vision of hanging clothes create such an overwhelming emotional response? What do we see and how does this relate to our own personal thoughts, ideas, and emotions"? This can only be answered by one's own experiences.

This produced an unexpected achievement, with results that will become significant in my future artwork. A new plateau has been reached, opening new and creative ideas that I will incorporate with my ever changing view of art and

design. With more soul searching and research, I will find out why clothing displayed has such an impact. Or, like this project, I will transcend my limits again and another truth will expose itself.

Another interesting fact that I have noticed is that I have become a costume or fashion designer's worst nightmare. I nit pick movies, plays, and commercials where costumes do not convey the personality, concept, or mood intended. The character may as well be wrapped in a sheet; at least that would convey some insight. My newly acquired insight doesn't stop with performances; I view bosses, co-workers, people I just met, and strangers with the same analysis. Analyzing every article of clothing worn-- what is that person trying to say? My observation in clothing as a communication device is developing. I will enjoy developing this skill along with other non-verbal communication skills.

This project has not only help developed my non-verbal communication skills, but allowed me to view the principles involved in the grieving process, instead of experiencing the process of grieving with each character. Viewing these characters from an outside perspective has triggered experiences I have had and places these experiences in a more realistic perspective. A feeling of grief can be triggered by memories and recreate the feelings of pain. A sudden loss can make people do unrealistic things, things that are not normal for their personalities. The impact of loss can create such a sudden shock, it can take an enormous amount of time to recover.

I will again attempt to have this installation exhibited. I have talked with a few gallery owners that have given me references on who might be interested in displaying installations. One group of artists who have shown interest is the Eastside Fine Art Association.

I also had a video taken of the presentation that is being edited, transcribed and written for reenactment. A new video edited, or created will be given to some of the social workers who facilitate support groups on grief, the sudden loss of a loved one, and breast cancer support groups. The social workers I have contacted are very interested to see this video.

## APPENDIX A

### Examples of Cloak Figure Series



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

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