Title
Finding Urban Commonalities Through Clothing and Spirituality: Costume Research
Reflection on In The Red and Brown Water

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Author
Rochon, Mary Patricia

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Finding Urban Commonalities Through Clothing and Spirituality:
Costume Research Reflection on *In The Red and Brown Water*

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in
Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

Mary Rochon

Committee in charge:
Professor Judith Dolan, Chair
Professor Andrei Both
Professor Victoria Petrovich
Professor Ernest Ronald Silva

2013
The thesis of Mary Rochon is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013
DEDICATION

Mom and Dad.
Thank you for nurturing the creative twinkle in my eye and teaching me endurance, drive and passion.

Michael.
For keeping me in check, always believing in me and for being a role model of how to survive and what to do when things get tough.

Nathan.
Your patience, acceptance and kindness are inspiring. Thank you for your love and unbelievable support.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel oftentimes the career of a theater artist stems from a mix of luck and talent - but mostly from people taking a chance on you. The first person ever to do that, to take a chance on me, was Sarah Jane Hardy. Brave and tenacious, a master of story telling with an uncanny ability to fix what’s broken and make mayhem into magic. Her trust and nurturing are what set the wheels into motion and are a big part of the designer I have become. The gratitude I feel towards her is insurmountable.

Judy Dolan did the same when offering me a seat at her table at UCSD. I find her intelligence, her humor and her humble power absolutely encouraging. She’s one of those women who really make you feel like you can do it all, and better yourself in the process. She is unstoppable and kind. A true role model and advocate for the power of a soulful designer. Thank you, Judy, for taking a chance on me.

The friendships, the laughter, the frustrations, the anguish and the successes of graduate school have all been shared with a phenomenal group of individuals. All my love to you, 2013.

And finally, to the Faculty and Staff in the Theatre and Dance Department, a group of people who are true advocates for the arts and who work as hard as they possibly can for the students. They are the magic makers.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Finding Urban Commonalities Through Clothing and Spirituality:
Costume Research Reflection on *In The Red and Brown Water*

by

Mary Rochon
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Design)
University of California, San Diego, 2013
Professor Judith Dolan, Chair

*Dreams, grillz, water metaphors.*

*Keeping it simple in the ‘hood.*

*Am I allowed to say that?*

*White girl from the D.*

*Near the D.*

*Specific, identifiable clothing.*
Profile of a gang leader.

Similar to priest, chief, sergeant. Hut!

*Red masquerade clothe with intricate patterns.*

*Like graffiti. Like chaos.*

*Like those buildings you saw as a little girl.*

*Driving away from the D.*

*Esu. Obatala. Yemonja.*

*Mary. Susie. Grandma.*

*Embody the reality of opportunity.*

*Identifying that which is around you.*

*Not some passive mother figure.*

*Tell that story.*

*Ghetto mindset.*

*Am I allowed to say that?*

*Don’t be afraid to talk to me about my hair.*

*Think you know something ‘bout it?*

*White girl from the D.*

*Near the D.*
Before the design, comes the research. Before the research, comes an understanding. Removing your pretense, your assumptions and whatever it is you thought you knew so that you can open your eyes and see how the clothing tells the story.

In preparing for the costume design of *In the Red and Brown Water*, I needed an overwhelming sense of the characters to successfully clothe them in a contemporary, urban setting of the Louisiana projects.

Finding commonalities in dress, why people wear what they do, how they wear it, the colors, shapes and fit of the clothing chosen all became avenues to understanding the character and ultimately clothing them. Choice, and even spirituality in the ritual of dress is something we can all relate to, a common thread to understanding one another.