

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“Poetic Simplicity and Embracing the Unexpected”  
Exploring Character Body Costume Design In Two Theatrical Productions:  
*Burial at Thebes* and *Mr. Burns*

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

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Committee in charge:

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Professor Gabor Tompa

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The thesis of Janet O'Neill 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

2015

## DEDICATION

Mom.

You have always supported me and allowed me to become the individual I am today.  
Thank you for letting me remain curious.

My Sisters: Andrea and SaraBeth.

Thank you for helping me out as I continue to be the poor student in the family.

Sue Makkoo.

Your patience, acceptance and loving support have and will continue to inspire me to be the best version of myself. You are my mentor, friend, role model and aspiration.

The Women in Costume.

To all the women who work the long hours, stay up the extra nights, drive the longest miles to reach the goal of creating a world, a breath, a life on stage. Hats off to you ladies for creating art with poise and grace: Dominique Hill, Danae McQueen and Melissa Ng.

The Teachers, Loyal Friends and Production Staff who Make it Happen:

Marybeth Ward, Hedi Jafari, Michael Francis, Jim Carmody, Mark Maltby – thank you.

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## LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

- File 1. *Burial at Thebes* Family Portrait
- File 2. *Burial at Thebes* Creon's Speech
- File 3. *Burial at Thebes* Press Interview
- File 4. *Burial at Thebes* Ismene Detained
- File 5. *Burial at Thebes* The Press
- File 6. *Burial at Thebes* Death of Eurydice
- File 7. *Mr. Burns* Act 1 Around the Fire
- File 8. *Mr. Burns* Act 2 Pop Medley "Safe and Sound"
- File 9. *Mr. Burns* Act 2 Pop Medley "I'm so Fancy"
- File 10. *Mr. Burns* Act 2 The Simpson's
- File 11. *Mr. Burns* Act 3 The Towns People
- File 12. *Mr. Burns* Act 3 Bart and Mr. Burns

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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MR.BURNS:

*Act One, Present Day:* The introduction of these very different people meeting under extreme circumstances provided an opportunity to use the actors’ preexisting character traits. Costumes are not clothing, they represent character. Each item on each actor’s body exposes bits of who they are and how they have coped with the fall of society.



*Act Two, Seven Years Later:* Without power, but with years to reestablish livable conditions, these same characters created a system of survival. Scavenged assortments of random fashions show what was once luxury has been defaced for functionality.

*Act Three, Seventy-Seven Years Later:* With the establishment of culture over the preceding seven decades, items and colors have evolved to express greater spectacle and magnificence. Natural fibers and hand-made items create touches of this future “fashion.”

#### BURIAL AT THEBES:

Each character’s silhouette is built around the images we see so frequently on the news, in papers and in social media. Color is the distinguishing factor to visually delineate class and position within the dress of a contemporary world. Harking back to clothing shown in classical art, the royal-presidential family imitates colors of Greek “Red-Figure” pottery: red, black, and orange. These became the colors of Thebes. Those of lower status were muted in a gray wash, much like the white and gray of statues in classical art. The clean, contemporary style lines built to sculpt each body with a tightly controlled color palette, aim for poetic simplicity.