



The First Underwater Fashion Show in the Middle East, Atlantis Dubai

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ABSTRACT

This study is going to look into the process of creating the underwater Fashion show that took place on December 8, 2011 in the Aquarium of the Atlantis, Dubai. This study will analyze the source of inspiration behind the clothing, process of the making, materials used, and most importantly the problems that faced the designer while working with the divers, and working with problem solving, to be able to produce a successful under water Fashion Show, keeping in mind all the limitations, difficulties, and challenges. Professional divers wore the dresses over the wet suits, masks, and fins were worn as the divers went deep into the tank, and the banners of the university logo and the slogan of the university "Nothing is Impossible" were held in the end of the show as a reminder to the great achievement that this idea represented.

Keywords : Design problem, water creatures, one of a kind, Aquarium, Atlantis,, sharks, underwater Fashion show, divers, stingray , Design solution, ribbons, floating

Introduction:

On February 16, 2009, the recently-launched luxury Atlantis hotel rises towards the sky from the man-made island of Palm Jumeirah (Fig 1). The ocean-and-aquatic themed resort is impressive, and not surprisingly everything about it is big - from the development price of US \$1.5 billion to its size that is spread over 46 hectares of reclaimed land, and its 1, 539 rooms. The Atlantis also features a massive 17 hectares of water park activities and an 11 million liter marine habitat that is home to more than 65,000 marine animals. The tank in the Atlantis is a unique place and has also certain criteria that will be analyzed and studied, along with water chemicals, and water creatures. Professional divers who feed the fish in the tank daily wore the dresses, and the show was timed right after the feeding time of the sharks and fish, while insuring to keep the environment clean and safe. The fabrics were tested for dye bleeding in the water to avoid hurting the creatures. The silhouettes, texture, design concept, and trimmings were all studies to produce a dramatic effect in the water. Certain colors were avoided because of the reflection of the water. This project was a successful Fashion Marketing project for The American University in the Emirates.



Figure 1

The Aquarium (The Lost Chamber Story):

During the construction of the resort, a complex series of passages were uncovered, thought to have been buried thousands of years ago by the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Upon further investigation, an ancient street system was discovered and the theory came into being that these were in fact remains from the Lost City of Atlantis. Such an exciting discovery has raised many questions about Atlantean civilization and culture, some of which will never be answered. However, it

seems that this network of streets has revealed artifacts from a very civilized people who possessed an incredible level of technology. The Lost Chambers gives a valuable insight into the Atlantean history and functions attached to each room, as well as information about the marine life now living there

Marine life and aquatic fun:

Atlantis boasts its own bottlenose dolphin population at the tropical Dolphin Bay. Set in over four and a half hectares Dolphin Bay is the first marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation center in Dubai. Guests and visitors can take part in a 90-minute interaction program that includes an education session from a resident marine mammal specialist and then 30 minutes in one of the shallow water lagoons petting, playing with and feeding the dolphins. A full time team of over 165 marine specialists manage the resort's eco-system including vets, biologists, divers, laboratory managers, food technicians, mechanics and curators. There is also a huge Water park, the centerpiece of which is the Ziggurat. Its summit is the launching point for a selection of jaw-dropping, heart-stopping (and body drenching) slides and rides including "The Leap of Faith", where riders experience a 27.5 meter near-vertical drop down the face of the Ziggurat before being propelled along a clear acrylic tunnel through a shark-filled lagoon. There's more opportunity to view the marine life in "The Lost Chambers", a maze of underwater halls and tunnels under one of the lagoons. More than two hundred and fifty species can be seen in the open-air marine habitat including sharks, eels, rays, piranhas and numerous species of exotic fish. Suites feature bedrooms and bathrooms with floor-to-ceiling views of the underwater world

Species in the Aquarium and their Problems:

The Aquarium in the Atlantis (Fig 2) like any other Aquarium needs maintenance. The creatures can have their own problems as well. Maintaining the health and wellbeing of the sharks, and the Stingrays is a great challenge. There were researches conducted on the disease that was caused by the parasites that lived in the gills of the stingrays in the Atlantis Aquarium, which caused the death of several of them even after the treatment. The research that was done on the case of the stingrays that were captivated in the Aquarium discusses

the cases of the three *Dendromonocotyle* species (*Monogenea*: *Monocotylidae*) reported from captive rays, including *D. lotteri* sp. n. from *Himantura gerrardi* (*Elasmobranchii*: *Dasyatidae*) in the public aquarium at the Atlantis resort, Dubai. Members of *Dendromonocotyle* Hargis, 1955 (*Monogenea*: *Monocotylidae*) have been reported on the dorsal surface of stingrays from the *Dasyatidae*, *Myliobatidae* and *Urolophidae*. There are currently 16 known species of *Dendromonocotyle*, of which 7 are reported from stingrays in captivity. It has become clear that *Dendromonocotyle* infections can cause health problems in stingrays kept in public aquarium. *Monogeneans* are generally considered to be host specific but increasing data indicate that some *Dendromonocotyle* species can infect more than one host stingray species. This has caused major concern in public aquariums where multi-species elasmobranch displays are common. Four *Himantura gerrardi* were collected in the Arabian Gulf and kept on display at the public aquarium at the Atlantis resort, Dubai. The stingrays exhibited signs of monogenean infections and were removed to the quarantine facility for closer inspection. Numerous monogeneans were noted on the dorsal skin surface. The rays were given a freshwater bath for 1.5 min to give them immediate relief from the infection. All monogeneans collected after the freshwater bath were transferred directly to 70% ethanol, then they were re-hydrated in freshwater, stained in Alum Carmine, dehydrated in a graded ethanol series, cleared in cedarwood oil and mounted permanently in Canada balsam on glass microscope slides. Hamuli and marginal hooklets of some specimens were examined after total digestion of surrounding soft tissue using the modified proteolytic digestion technique of Harris et al. (As used by Vaughan et al. (2009))



Figure - 2

Details of the Underwater Fashion Show:

AUE "Under water Fashion Show", took place in one of the newest International public Aquarium of the Atlantis Hotel, Dubai. The Atlantis, Dubai is a luxury Hotel, located on the man-made island of Palm Jumeirah. It is a unique resort, which opened its doors to the public in September 2008. Professional divers wore the dresses that were designed and made by the Director of Fashion Design program: Sana Abbasi with participation of the Fashion Design students in the Program, which is considered the first Fashion Design accredited bachelor degree program in the Middle East. Sana Abbasi has visited with the divers before the show (Fig 3), and measured them (Fig 4), studied what type of equipments they were wearing, and the oxygen masks, that they had to carry on their backs, with the masks on their faces (Fig 5), and designed the dresses with all these problems in mind. Sana created the dresses with elastic closure on the bottom of the dresses to prevent them from floating in the water, and the masks were utilized as a decorative element as well as functional one (Fig 6). The show was timed at 4:30 pm, right after the feeding time of the sharks at 4:00 pm. The divers wore the dresses that covered their Oxygen masks (Fig 7), and dived in the Aquarium moving along and between sharks, sting rays, and other marvelous fish in the Aquarium, exercising exciting movements with the excessive ribbons that were stitched on the dresses (Fig 8), floating between the fish. The divers were carrying UAE flags, and were holding hands creating a team work authority, expressing the power and determination of AUE. Slogans of save the Earth were worn by divers to stress on the importance of saving the environment that is now one of the most important campaigns in UAE. The

Finale was the AUE bride, who was holding the AUE bouquet with the graduation AUE cap, to stress on the importance of education, and that graduating from AUE will lead to success, and prosperity. AUE logo was printed on the legging of the divers to market the university and personalize the clothing, while insuring to keep the environment clean and safe. The fabrics were tested for dye bleeding in the water to avoid hurting the creatures. The silhouettes, texture, design concept, and trimmings were all studies to produce a dramatic effect in the water. Certain colors were avoided because of the reflection of the water.



Figure - 3



Figure - 4



Figure - 5



Figure - 6



Figure - 7



Figure - 8

The Problems:

In normal runway Fashion shows, designers seek perfection and try to search the world for the perfect models to represent their collection. In this particular situation, the models were the professional divers who dive daily to feed the fish. They were not the perfect size, nor have the model measurements. The second problem was the masks covering the face. The divers have to wear them, so that created another problem to work with. The Third problem was the long and huge fins that they wear in their feet. They will get tangled with the ribbons, and the fabric. The fourth problem that aroused was that when the divers go in the water and start diving around, the dresses will float and ways to keep the dresses down were analyzed and discussed. The fifth problem was the huge fish tank that was held on the back of every diver supported by a thick vest to stabilize it in place. Hiding the Oxygen tank was the most crucial problem to work with. The sixth problem was the colors. Since there is a thickness in the glass of the aquarium, colors may appear differently, and the brightness of the fabric will be reduced tremendously. The seventh problem was the chemicals in the water as they dissolve the glue and prevent the use of embellishments on the surface of the fabrics.

Outcome of the Problem and Design Solutions:

Working with non standard Diver's sizes:

Working with the problems that faced the designer has manifested many solutions, and the outcome was a very successful show, that went smoothly with no mistakes. The designer Sana Abbasi worked closely with the divers and took their measurements, to custom be able to make the dresses, and created a one size fits all type of clothing. Using the face masks as a decorative item: The Oxygen masks are black color and they cover most of the face and they look so unattractive, and there is no way the divers can dive without them. The best solution to this problem was to use them as a decorative device. Mask covers were created to cover the masks with an elastic band from the back as they were attached on top of the mask with Velcro. The AUE logo was placed on the back of the mask cover to promote the logo and to ensure that these outfits are used for marketing the university. Long extended yards of fabric were sheered and sewn into the two layers of the mask cover to create a floating movement and to add interest in the back as the divers and to avoid restricting the diver's movements. Wearing brightly colored Fins: The divers had to wear the fins, so having them wear bright colors fins has added a touch of color, and fun to the show. To avoid having the dresses float in the water: Since the dresses are floating and loose to have to cover the huge oxygen masks, elastic was used to secure the bottom of the dresses. This solution has created volume around the bodice which narrows down around the hips with the tight elastic. The elastic created freedom for the divers to move around freely without worrying about the dresses floating around in the water. Leggings in different colors were worn by the divers over their black wet suits. The leggings were torn to show the black wet suit fabric through as if they were bitten by the sharks and fish. Hiding the Oxygen Masks: wearing the Oxygen tanks on the back of the divers was a huge problem which created a major predicament during the Underwater Fashion Show. The solution to this problem was to add extra fabric in the back of the

dresses, to create room and to cover the tanks. Colors & Fabrics that were avoided in the show: Certain colors were avoided such as red. It looked brownish and muddy in the tank. Fabrics were tested for color bleeding, and many fabrics were avoided such as the none breathable materials, since they will float in the water and restrict the diver's mobility. Using ribbons to create movements and floating effects: Ribbons were intensively used to decorate the surfaces of most of the dresses to create interesting movements and floating effect in the water. 600 meters of ribbons were stitched on the surface of the dresses. The ribbons were stitched 5 times back and forth to stabilize them so none will float in the water to cause pollution to the environment. The chemicals in the water: The water was tested, and it was able to dissolve the super glue that was used to glue some Gemstones on the cap that was held by the bride as a bouquet. The bouquet was all covered with tulle to hold all the stones inside in case the fall out to avoid having any stones fall in the Aquarium, therefore hurt the fish if they swallow them (Fig 9). The main idea behind the Design Concept was to portray the divers as water creatures, where they move freely in the water between the sharks and fish without disturbing them, and without causing any damage to the environment. Easy Movements and mobility in Design: The Dresses were designed to allow easy access in and out in case of an emergency under the water emerges. The sleeves were not fitted. An opening around the neck line was secured with a ribbon that can be easily untied and the dress can be loose and removed in seconds



Figure - 9

Fish Feeding & Show timing:

Hundreds of indigenous marine animals from the Arabian Gulf are being fed by professional divers on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 10:00am and 4:00pm. For that reason the show was timed to start at 4:30 pm, just after feeding time so the fish and the sharks specially are fed and happy

Other Underwater Fashion Shows in the world:

The first underwater Traditional Costume Fashion show in the world was done in Korea on August 22, 2010. The divers did not wear masks and they were professional dancers. On June 27th, 2011 the designer Nicole Boutiette had a Fashion photo shooting underwater. Bridal Fashion Underwater photography has taken place on August 2010. Erez Ovadia's Wedding Dresses underwater Fashion Shoot took place in July, 2011. Underwater Models - Post Production Trailer - Mango commercial took place on May, 2011. Underwater Fashion 2D, on February 2012. The first underwater flying Car was featured on February 2008. Underwater Fashion Epic Transformation Winter to spring took place on April, 2012. However, the uniqueness about the underwater Fashion Show, Atlantis in Dubai lies in the idea that it was an event utilized to market and brand the American University in the Emirates, and the uniqueness of the Atlantis, being one of two in the world, one in Dubai, and the other one in the Bahamas.

The Show and Cost of Dresses:

The Show consisted of 4 dresses and the bridal dress. A total

of Five dresses, and T-shirts that have the slogan: "Save the Earth" on them to remind the public that we are all for saving the environment. The Dresses cost 7,000 dhs and they were:

1. **The Mermaid Dress:** Solid Fuchsia Color with a tail like the mermaid. $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve length, a full length stretch jersey dress. Additional printed fabric was inserted in the back to cover the tank. It was sketched by the designer Sana Abbasi (Fig 10,11)



Figure - 10

Figure - 12



Figure - 11

2. **The Tiger Dress:** This Dress was made of a Tiger Print Satin material with Black fringes attached to it and gold mesh fabric with gold sequences, to create a mirror effect in the water. The tiger print was in fashion, and it was also meant to represent the tiger fish (Fig 12). A matching Tiger stretch tiger printed mesh Nylon fabric, was used to cover the mask and to match the dress. The sleeves were open and long on the sides resembling a Kimono sleeve
3. **The Yellow Fin dress:** This dress was named after the popular yellow Fin Fish that we always see in Aquariums (Fig 8). This Dress also has the wide sleeve opening for easy movement, and it is a yellow base with multi colored print. Additional beads and trims were added with ribbons to create a charming look and the excessive ribbons in the Emirate Flag colors, and also The American University in the Emirates Logo colors which are inspired from the Emirates Flag (Red, black, green) where added to create movement in the water (Fig 8)
4. **The Flamingo Dress:** This dress is so colorful and whimsical, that it was the star of the show. The legging are bright Turquoise Blue, and the Dress is Turquoise Blue with Fuchsia ribbons (Fig 10)
5. **The Bride:** The Bride was the Finale (Fig 13). She surprised the audience with its pure white color among all the colorful rest of the dresses and the creatures in the water. The bride looked amazing as the diver was all covered in white. The Dress was covered with a jacket that was enlarged in the back to contain the oxygen tank. The dress itself had elastic extension in the back to hold it around

the tank so it doesn't get loose as it is a strapless dress. The under skirt has wires to keep the dress puffy, and the multi layers in the dress have created volume, and kept the dress in shape even in the water. The head gear was also white. It resembled the bride tulle veil, but it was connected to the mask, unlike the real bride who walks in with her face covered with the veil, rather than the oxygen mask. The bouquet was made out of the graduation cap that was custom made for AUE, taking the shape of the diamond logo. Big shiny stones were glued on top of it to create shiny effect in the water. A tulle fabric covered the cap, and it was gathered and tied with elastic. After the show, the glue was dissolved and the shiny stones were loose inside the tulle fabric. Everyone loved the bride!



Figure - 13

6. **The T-Shirts:** the tank tops that say "Save the earth" had fringes extended from the bottom of them made out of water proof material stripes yellow & white, as well as stripes red & white. These are the ribbons used for traffic control, that are Florissant and they light up in the dark. They were very effective in creating a natural movement that resembled fish wings when floating in the water

Conclusion:

The Underwater Fashion Show, Atlantis Dubai which took place on December 8, 2011, was a great success, and an event that was used to market the American University in the Emirates. Six dresses were designed and made including the Bridal Dress, by the Fashion Design Program Director: Sana Abbasi. She and her students who participated created the dresses to help promote and market the first accredited program in the Middle East. The problem that the designer faced were many including, having to avoid different colors, hiding the oxygen tanks, and trying to create movement, by using an extensive amount of ribbons. A meeting took place with the divers prior to the show, where the divers were measured by the designer, and the concept and theme of the show were discussed and approved (Fig 14). A budget was approved by the University of the Amount of 7,000 Dhs to cover the material cost for the dresses only. The logo and the slogan of the university were held in the end of the show with "Nothing is Impossible" (Fig 10) as the crowd gathered around the huge Aquarium of the Atlantis, Dubai with astonishment as they witnessed the dresses and the bride diving along and moving among sharks, and stingrays across the Unique Aquarium in the Atlantis, Dubai



Figure - 14

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