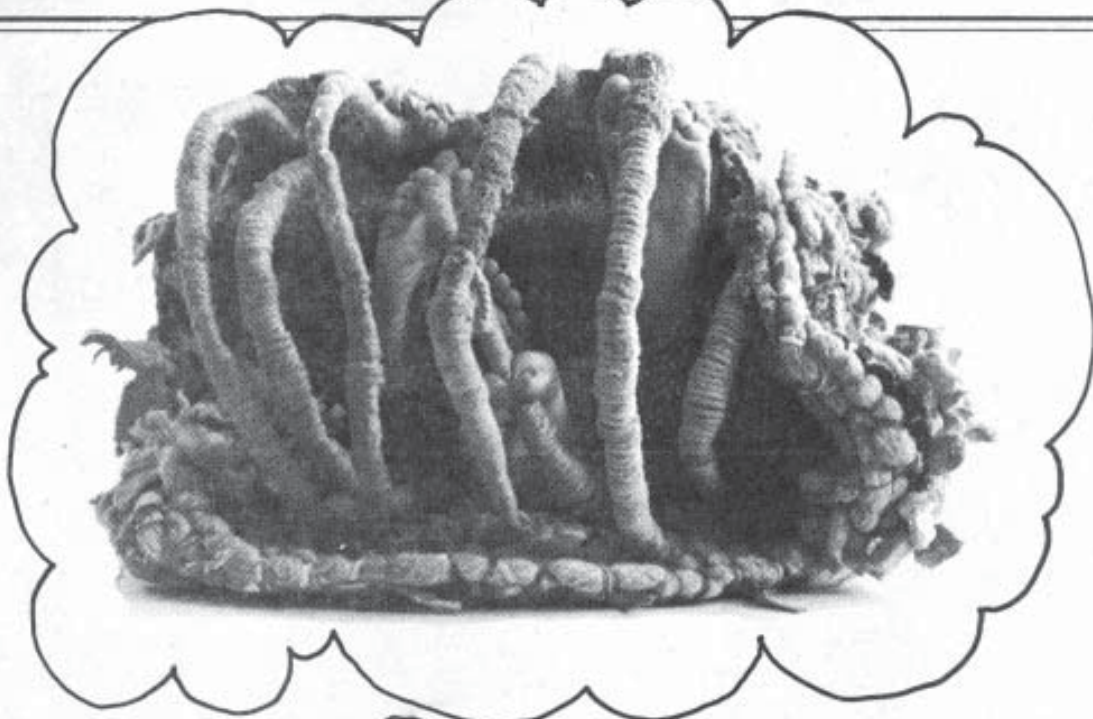


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Did she have a vision...

When you see people in clothes like these, it does make you wonder where these clothes came from. These come from Debra Papoport, who did them for her master's thesis in textiles for the Design Department at the University of California, at Berkeley. She calls them "fibrous raiments." The one with the feet is called Foot Enclosure, an amorphic, ribbed, warm thing to stick your feet inside. Beneath the feet: the Rubber Labyrinth, a loose weave of sticky rubber tubing, head to toe. Looks like seaweed, smells like plastic.



photos by Demetre Lagios

text by Jesse Zacharia

...or was it a thesis?

The prime ingredients (above) are bright turquoise-green, yellow and indigo blue toucan feathers, wrapped up in plastic baggies. Debra wanted to contrast the naturalness of the feathers against some more sophisticated material, like plastic, and, because the feathers came off a bird that had been dead too long and were therefore overly funky, Debra decided to encase most of them inside the bags, with just a few sticking out for accent and brilliance. Gagged Bagged Feathers is



Debra, knotting

what she calls this bizarre bib. The backing is knotless netting, and hanging from the waist are elements bound in cotton thread. The neck is macrame'd in the same colors as the feathers.

It grew from the initial impulse (feathers/bags) into a small woven section of this natural/plastic textile. Debra studied it for a few days, finally determined that it made the most esthetic sense as a vestment. It related best to the body that way. "The title of my thesis was Constructed Textiles Related to the Body," Debra explains, "and they really have to be worn by people to make any sense. Just hanging on a wall they're static. They're nothing."



Eugenia Butler, who operates the Los Angeles gallery of the same name, gave Debra's fibrous raiments a showing last month, a live showing at Miss Butler's home, held in her back yard. The models were four nude members of the San Francisco Dance Theater. The center photo (above) is from that show: a Triangular Positive and Negative Cape, woven on a triangular loom, piece by piece, assembled to cloak the body. It's made from magenta and

natural linen, with silk, rayon and wool mixed in. Top left: Debra wanted to do something "more direct" than the *constructed* pieces. The result was this open-back, body-accentuating Bag—from panels of nubby magenta Haitian cotton. Top right: Brainstorm in Green, built of plastic berry baskets, plastic straw, a green inflatable pillow, macrame'd together. Below: the Knitted Environment, a great flopping thing of almost any shape, depending on who's in it.



Feel-d-trip is the name Debra gave this little number. It consists of four woven strips, each of which varies in texture every few inches, incorporating rubber bands, cotton, wool, film spools, steel wool and other flotsam. The *feel* part of the trip results from the way the wearer wraps herself/himself in it—which textures against which parts of the body. Of all her designs, Debra says: "They still don't have a function. But to me they function as an art form. They're not practical as clothing, but when you wear them they take you through a whole



experience. That's the idea." Debra, 25, has been weaving and working with textiles for five years and now teaches courses on the subject in the Bay Area. She also does a fair amount of weaving on commission—heavily favoring gigs where she can do it *her* way. Her gallery prices for the works in these photos are, as Debra puts it, "pretty outrageous" (\$500-\$1000), though that's only outrageous prices for *clothing*. Think of Debra's raiments rather as one-of-a-kind art for the body. She continues the quest for new materials—"I really turn on finding new materials"—among which the most promising new one is videotape. "It's so stiff and unyielding!" And the most exciting time is after she's done a new textile, "and I can throw it on my body and see how it feels. See, a lot of this goes back to when my sister and I were little girls, eight, nine and ten years old. For some reason, my parents had lots of fabrics and we used to wrap up in them and prance around this huge room we had. I guess that's what I'm still doing in a way." 🐾