

BRANDON MORRIS: ACTRESS

The character Sadako from the Japanese horror film *Ring* walks rigidly, with her back hunched... an image that stuck with Brandon Morris during the making of his installation *Actress*. Walking into a room of whirling dresses that have been stiffened into stillness, like a coven of dervishes frozen in a forest, one wonders what might have just transpired.

Peering into the neck holes of the frilly gowns, we see no body, no trace of limbs, nor flesh nor blood. Was there once a persona that filled these silhouettes? Or do these hardened fabrics connote spirits searching for a body, or a host. Plastered in green resin, the supernatural hues cast from the translucent statures instill a sense of unease.

San Diego-born, New York-based Parsons graduate Brandon Morris has studied and practiced the craft of dressmaking. In *Actress*, Morris applies this skill to garments that are not meant to be worn. Morris borrowed and edited vintage Victorian children's gowns: in his versions, the shoulders are shrunken, waistlines accentuated and slim. The patterns were sewn together with an industrial sewing machine, durable enough to handle the thick weave of fiberglass and able to translate the heavy material into fluid pleats and trims. Morris leaned, slumped, and braced the garments with a temporary internal mannequin while stiffening the cloth with resin. These remnant shells are a poetic rumination on space—the anxieties it can hold, and the fears it can convey.

Morris' attention to detail offers clues into his proposed enigmas. The heavy industrial zippers and the crooked contortions express discomfort. The dress constructions—large elaborate bows and pleated trims—are reminiscent of the statues of antiquity in their ability to convey movement and emotion through mere pleats, folds and drapery. One might consider a contemporary take on the marble hellenistic statue *Nike of Samothrace*, a headless goddess in flight. Accumulated fabric is a surrogate for a face and body.

In *Actress*, two wall pieces flank Morris' ghost dresses. A hollow 'painting' formed entirely of hardened leather strips abolishes the canvas or its frame. Like the fiberglass apparitions, this wall work gains its potency from its physical emptiness. Each thread wraps around, the back forming the support for the front, or vice versa, needing no additional support other than itself. The suspended leather shell takes on the palette of flesh, and when stitched together furthers the tragic element of the milieu. Again, we find murmurs of flesh without a body.

Portrait of Isabella transmutes the artist's partner into an icon of devotion. Constructed as a Renaissance altar—its wooden structure sheathed in leather—this relief panel brings the fetishization of femininity into fray. Isabella's stylized visage, modeled from a cameo portrait and molded into the frame by leather, admits the imperfection of memory. Despite her solemn downward gaze, the countenance of Isabella is the only hint of vitality in the room.

Brandon Morris' dresses evoke not life but its residues, whispering on the verge of both recollection and oblivion. Once a lifeforce is removed, tragedy will always ensue. Our own mortality haunts and teases us.

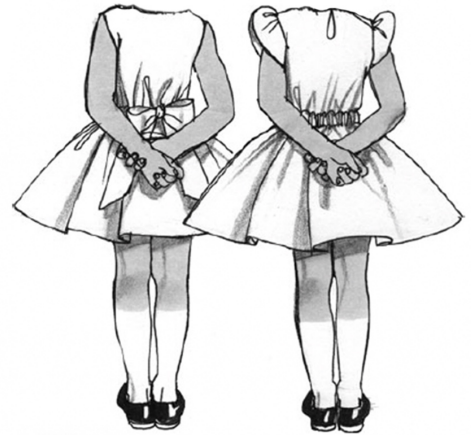
Brandon Morris (b. 2000, San Diego, CA) is a multi-disciplinary artist who recently completed a degree at Parsons School of Design. With technical skills developed studying fashion, Morris' meticulously crafted pieces that appear to be torn through the passage of time. Morris' recent solo exhibitions include: *Cathedral Junkie* at Pangée (Montreal) in 2024 and *Cats Live in Loneliness then Die like Falling Rain* at Gern En Regalia (New York) in 2022. He also exhibited at the Dr. M. T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery at St John's University, Queens, NY; Storage Art Gallery (New York) and the NADA Exhibition Space (New York). Morris has also exhibited work at both international and domestic art fairs such as the Material Fair in Mexico City, and NADA New York, for which he received a mention in the New York Times. Morris is also a recent recipient of the Mid Atlantic Arts Grant.

Ghostwear Challenges

Creating ghostwear offers some new challenges to the designer and patternmaker. Fluidity, which reflects movement, versatility, and impermanence is nowhere more important than in the creation of ghostwear. While traditional fashion is bound by the restrictions of the body, ghostwear is not. The business of this type of clothing is in the weight of the garment. To successfully accomplish the many activities of a ghost, they require lightweight and, at the same time, durable fabrics.

Color and Material

One of the most stimulating aspects of ghostwear is the distinctive green hue that remains the favorite of ghosts every season. Fabric, too, must be durable, and ghosts frequently demand material that requires only limited maintenance. It is not recommended to use natural, woven fabrics such as cotton or linen, fabrics which are much too brittle for ghosts to wear. Industrial composite materials should be used instead. The universally beloved fiberglass fabric is a popular choice amongst ghosts. Praised for its durability and transparent properties, this material will last the wearer's eternal existence.



Shifting Sizes

Ghosts, being seemingly bodiless, have the luxury of shifting between sizes. Sizing for ghostwear are set to a universal one size fits all system, with grouping ranging from child, teen, and adult. Clothing can be tailored if a more personalized fit is wanted.

Observable Differences

Observable differences between ghostwear and fashion for the living lie in the design principles, construction, and intent. Ghostwear derives from historical patterns, which are altered to match current trends in ghostwear design. Designers of today now raise the waistline higher than tradition, shoulders are taken in drastically, and forms are narrowed down. Some speculate this phenomena stems from ghosts' desire to fit into forms that previously weren't achievable in their living body. Without ghostwear, ghosts would remain invisible to the living world. The intent of ghostwear is to provide ghosts with an identity of their own.

