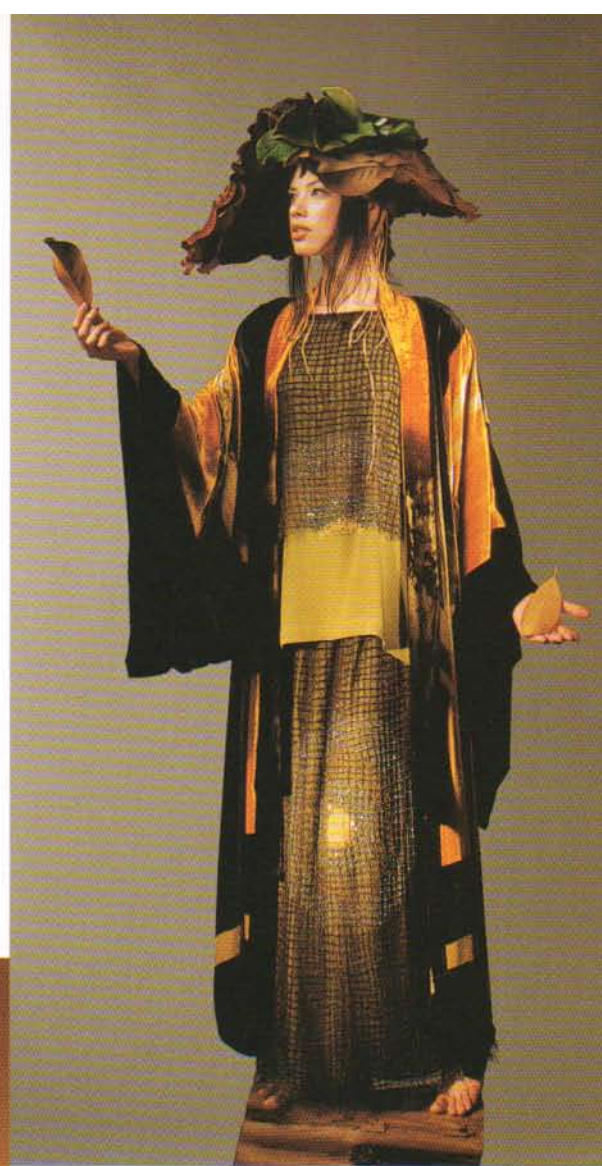




CATHERINE BACON

NOVATO, CALIFORNIA

"I CREATE FASHION WITH A COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS....I STRIVE TO PRODUCE CLOTHING THAT IS UNIQUE BUT WEARABLE. AND THAT INCORPORATES QUALITY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION ON MANY LEVELS AND FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES....MY PROCESS, THEN, IS A COLLABORATIVE ONE. AN ARTISTIC MARRIAGE OF HARMONIOUS ELEMENTS....EACH SOURCE HAS A COLLABORATIVE PART TO PLAY IN THE EVOLUTION OF A COLLECTION....THUS, I SEE MYSELF AS A COLLAGE ARTIST. ASSEMBLING ELEMENTS AND MEDIA THAT I HAVE MODIFIED TO IMPROVE THE MARRIAGE."



Opposite page:

Catherine Bacon, *Nomads Collection*, 1995; rayon chenille coat and hat, hand loomed by Eliza Urszula. Brocade vest, flannel shirt, and accessory clothing of imported fabrics.

Photo: Susan Schelling. Makeup: Victor Hutchings
Hair: Dawn Sutti. Jewelry: Susan Green

Far left:

Catherine Bacon, *Water from The Elements Collection*, 2000; silk chiffon, silk georgette (short kimono); tassel top and narrow bias skirt. Textile printing by Denise Elke.

Photo: Susan Schelling

Left:

Catherine Bacon, *Asian Splendor Collection*, 2001; silk chiffon coat with textile design by Susan Avila. Chiffon shawl. French beaded shell fabric with custom dyed lining. Wide leg pants of Indian mirrored fabric.

Photo: Susan Schelling

Above:

Catherine Bacon, *Earth from The Elements Collection*, 2000; Italian velvet; silk screened (kimono); hand-beaded French fabric (shell and skirt).

Photo: Susan Schelling



Catherine Bacon is the first to admit that she doesn't fit into the "one-of-a-kind" handmade wearable category. She is a designer who collaborates with others who make the fabrics and accessories that she assembles into singular and striking ensembles.

She layers fabrics, unusual color, and narrative references to create a rich but unified whole. The material for her pieces comes from many sources—for instance, she may work closely with a mill in Italy to produce a fabric and with another in France to acquire hand-beaded fabric. She works with an array of talented textile designers, fabric painters, knitters, and others who contribute the components that she brings together.

Bacon's themed collections conjure up a lot of words, but never ones that connote ordinary. Her fall 2001 collection centered on ancient Egypt, described in inviting, poetic language by Bacon's announcement of it as "a collection that explores the colors and symbols of mortal adornment on the pathway to the Divine." She describes the orchestration of her collections:

My collections are driven by themes, rather than by one or two individual components, such as surface texture and color. While those are important parts of the whole for me, I attempt to create collections that work within a larger context. I research themes and symbols, studying their history and past cultural importance, to reach a greater understanding of their source's application and power.

Her work has been called ethereal and, for her, is infused with spiritual elements and sacred symbols. She believes that she is making a contribution to the world by connecting with the inherent beauty of the wearer. Her ability to do this has won her the attention of the famous, such as Ellen Burstyn, who commissioned her to create the handbeaded white gown that she wore to an Academy Awards ceremony.

This designer of sublime couture lives in an ordinary neighborhood in Novato, California—a suburb of San

Francisco—in a home with a converted studio garage. On a warm summer day, she interrupts a moment of thoughtful conversation about her work to speak affectionately to her newest associate, a standard poodle named Grace.

For her, it appears, the universal is found in everything from poodles to ancient symbols. This lively collaborator takes her work seriously, but not without maintaining the balance of seeing herself as a creative contributor to the whole.

Opposite page:

Catherine Bacon, *Asian Splendor Collection*, 2001; organza; handprinted by Valeri Clarke.

Photo: Susan Schelling

Right:

Catherine Bacon, *Mount Everest Coat from the Snow Leopard Collection*, 1999; silk and rayon velvet; fabric hand printed by Ed Krayner. Skirt and bell top of Italian fabric.

Photo: Susan Schelling. Makeup: Victor Hutchings.

Hair: Dawn Sutti. Jewelry: Susan Green

Below:

Catherine Bacon, *Tree of Life*, 2001; (motif inspired by Mariano Fortuny); devoré velvet mantle silkscreened by Valeri Clark. Narrow pant of Indian brocade. Beaded shell of fabric handbeaded in France. French custom color lining.

Photo: Susan Schelling.

