

2021

## Formation of theatrical sculptural costumes inspired by Arabic letters

Randa Ismail Taha Abdel Mageed Negm

*Associate Prof., Department of Decoration, Faculty of Fine Arts, Alexandria University, Egypt,*  
randa.taha@pua.edu.eg

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/faa-design>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Negm, Randa Ismail Taha Abdel Mageed (2021) "Formation of theatrical sculptural costumes inspired by Arabic letters," *International Design Journal*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 2 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/faa-design/vol11/iss2/24>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Arab Journals Platform. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Design Journal by an authorized editor. The journal is hosted on [Digital Commons](#), an Elsevier platform. For more information, please contact [rakan@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:rakan@aarj.edu.jo), [marah@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:marah@aarj.edu.jo), [u.murad@aarj.edu.jo](mailto:u.murad@aarj.edu.jo).

## Formation of theatrical sculptural costumes inspired by Arabic letters

**Randa Ismail Taha Abdel MageedNegm**

Associate Prof., Department of Decoration, Faculty of Fine Arts, Alexandria University, Egypt,  
randa.taha@pua.edu.eg

### Abstract:

The Arabic language has a great place in the world's languages. Because of its great advantages as a language for a large number of speakers, as it reaches 200 million people in more than 20 countries, in addition to the fact that the Arabic language is a Semitic language. This refers to a group of languages that belong to the Afro-Asiatic language family. There are many forms of writing each letter of Arabic writing, depending on its position in the beginning, middle, or end of the word. There are many scripts in Arabic Calligraphy, which are Naskh, Nasta'liq, Diwani, Thuluth, Reqa, and Kufic. The Kufic and Naskh scripts were the two main scripts developed for Arabic writing. Arabic letters are distinguished by their acceptance to be formed in any geometric shape compatible with any shape, and its essence is not subject to any change, and Arabic letters have a special aesthetic characteristic. The artist's awareness of and development of it, and given the ability of letters to form, designers used them in their designs. Clothing designers around the world are increasingly taking inspiration from Arabic calligraphy in their designs, such as Ezzedine Alia and Karl Lagerfeld from Chanel Couture, and recently, it is widely used in textiles, clothing, accessories, and even shoe designs, and there are many different studies on how to benefit from The Arabic letter, whether single or with Arabic motifs, is used in designing different fabrics and costumes. The researcher chose two types of Arabic calligraphy, one of them is geometric with sharp right angles, which is the Kufic type, and the other is the thuluth font, which is characterized by the abundance of curves and streamlined design. The purpose of choosing the two different types of fonts is to prove the validity of the hypothesis of benefiting from the aesthetics of Arabic letters in the design of sculptural costumes suitable for theatrical, lyrical, and cinematic performances, as well as for various celebrations and occasions because of their flexibility and flow. At the end of the research, the researcher concluded that it is possible to benefit from the aesthetics of Arabic letters in Creating and designing innovative costumes suitable for different theatrical productions, and final results and recommendations.

### Keywords:

Arabic Calligraphy,  
Fashion Designs,  
Aesthetic,  
Arabic Letters Types,  
Kufic Line,  
Thuluth Font

Paper received 25th of November 2020, accepted 20th of January 2020, Published 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2021

### Introduction:

Arabic is a Semitic language; this refers to a group of languages belonging to the Afro-Asian language family(6),(7).The Semitic group was originally the most Easterly -based group in the Afro-Asian family: the Levant, the Fertile Crescent, and the Arabian Peninsula. The languages of the Semitic subfamily include extinct members such as Phoenician, endangered languages such as Aramaic, and survivors such as Arabic. Arabic is the language most widely used today and serves as the native language of more than 200 million people in twenty different countries, as well as the liturgical language of more than a billion Muslims worldwide" (6). Speculations have been made about the presence of early Arabic in the inscriptions that have been found in Central Arabia and date back to the 6th century B.C. (7), but the earliest evidence of the existence of Arabic as a distinct language seems

to lie in an inscription dated back to the first-century ad (4).

The Nabateans, who penned what is known as Jordan today, created a cursive Aramaic set of letters derived from the Arabic letters. The Arabic language has the system "Abjad", this alphabet consists of 28 letters, written from right to left. All letters are consonants, as vowels in the Arabic language appear with diacritics or inscriptions, which can be added to the letters, either above or below. (8)

Each Arabic letter can be written in four specific shapes when creating a word:

- When independent or isolated.
- When it is near the beginning of the word.
- When it is in the center of a word.
- When approaching the end of the word (8).

### Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this research is the following:

This paper explores the possibilities of applying the aesthetics of Arabic letters in shaping fashion design.

Enriching theatrical costume design by applying the aesthetics of Arabic letters in costume design and opening new horizons for creating innovative designs inspired by Arabic calligraphy in costume design.

### Study aims

- It suggests great limitless potentials in fashion design, inspired by the direction of Arabic letters, shaping fashion design, inspired by the Arabic letter, in a contemporary Arabic vision, where the Arabic letter creates a modern visual effect.

### Research Queries:

- This study aims to address the following questions:
- How to design a costume Inspired by Arabic letters?
- Can the innovative aesthetic combinations and the Arabic alphabet be used in fashion design?
- How can inspiration from Arabic letters enhance the visual language of fashion design?

### Assumptions :

The researcher expects the following results to be obtained through this research:

- The ability of the Arabic lettering to produce creative three-dimensional designs in the visual image of the Costumes design.
- The possibility of using the Arabic letter "to enrich the visual vocabulary of Costumes design.

### Methodology of study:

The method used in this analysis is:

- Analytical and deductive approach by extrapolating and tracing the different models in which fashion designers took inspiration from Arabic letters.
- The experimental approach, by presenting multiple design proposals to the researcher to make use of Arabic letters in fashion design. in the end the most important results and recommendation of the study.

### search limits:

The article includes a study of several creative fashion designs that focus on drawing inspiration from Arabic letters. Then the researcher presented several designs inspired by the Arabic letter in three dimensions.

### Styles of calligraphy :

Calligraphy is a handwriting beauty. It is the major Islamic art that was thought to give

pleasure to the eye, a joy to the heart and fragrance to the soul "(according to Imam Ali, the fourth Caliph). Since the emergence of Islam and the Holy Quran in Makah Writers have endeavored to produce properly correct manuscripts that are favorable to the honorable words of God. As a result of their efforts, the masterpieces of Holy Quran manuscripts have survived in most of the museums in the world. (9)

The Kufic and Naskh scripts were the two main scripts developed for Arabic writing. (9)

Arabic calligraphy was used more prominently and in incredibly diverse and innovative ways, which made the written word a decorative form used in many establishments, furniture units, etc. For these reasons, calligraphy can be considered a unique and interesting element in Islamic crafts. The versatility of Islamic calligraphy lies in the infinite imagination and flexibility in its design. (10) There are many scripts in Arabic Calligraphy, Which are Naskh, Nasta'liq, Diwani, Thuluth, Reqa and Kufic.

### Fashion design with Arabic letters:

Clothing designers all over the world have used Arabic calligraphy greatly in their designs. In recent times it has become increasingly widely used in textiles, clothing, accessories, and even shoe designs. One of the first designers to do this on a global scale was Azzedine Alia who lives in Paris, France. His 1990 Winter / Fall Collection was devoted to the Arabic calligraphy "Kufi" with geometric lines, creating various styles in his designs, and Naomi Campbell wore one of his designs on the runway. In 1993 Karl Lagerfeld of Chanel Couture created two Arabic calligraphy dresses that Claudia Schiffer wore on the runway. (11)

There are many different studies on how to make use of the Arabic letter, whether it is individually or with Arabic motifs. Faten Al-Omari's study entitled "The Arab Character and the Drafting in the Designs of Fashion Fabrics" deals with the study of the Arabic letter and its different creative cases and its use in designing women's fashion fabrics. (2)

Hanadi Salem Muhammad also addressed in a study entitled "The Aesthetic Use of Ornamental Units and Arabic Crafts in Designing Women's Fashion", which dealt with the idea of combining Arabic calligraphy with decorative units in designing women's fabrics. (5)

Jordanian designer Dennis Younes came up with a great idea to use Arabic calligraphy on shoes. Anas created his brand name "Dennis Eunis" in 2009. Dennis studied architecture in Jordan, moved to Italy, where he learned

designing leather products, then to New York and studied industrial design for 15 years. Yunus' shoe collection was inspired by Arabic calligraphy in general, but he used Certain types of Arabic calligraphy such as “Al-Diwani and Al-Farsi” famous for their curved lines that can help the

designer focus on the beauty of the line and make it suitable for the product without distortions. Dennis also chose to use Arabic calligraphy in shoe design because he believes that the Arabic language is a rich language that should be known to Other cultures (11) Figure (1-3).



Figure (1) Designing women's fashion based on Arabic letters in Faten Al-Amari's study. Hanadi Muhammed (2019)



Figure (2) for the middle and right bottom in Marwa's study, designing women's fabrics by mixing Islamic motifs and Arabic letters. Marwa Al-Sayed's (2016)



Figure (3) left bottom: The Jordanian designer designed shoes using Arabic letters, AyaSaleh (2018)

**Formation of theatrical sculptural costumes inspired by Arabic letters:**

The Arabic letter shape has transformed from a writing style into a state of artistic creativity to design costumes in multiple formats with different formations and systems of artistic formations. The researcher chose two types of Arabic calligraphy,

one of them is geometric with sharp right angles, Kofi, and the other is the third line, which is characterized by the abundance of curves and streamlined design.

The purpose of choosing the two different types of calligraphy is to prove the validity of the hypothesis of benefiting from and drawing

inspiration from Arabic calligraphy in designing sculptural costumes suitable for theatrical, lyrical, and cinematic performances, as well as for various celebrations and occasions because of their flexibility and fluidity in the different types of Arabic calligraphy.

First, the researcher used documented references to Arabic letter shapes for the two types of Kufic and the thuluth, and at the beginning, she used the CAD program to draw the letters in Arabic proportions and the correct engineering rules for each letter separately. Then the researcher used three-dimensional computer programs to design the letters in a three-dimensional form, and in the next step, the researcher began using computer programs to create sculptural design costumes from each of the characters through manipulation, modification, tilt, deletion, addition, and rhythmic repetition in the end to obtain different and innovative fashion designs.

The researcher proposes to use the technology of three-dimensional printing in the implementation of different costumes because of the accuracy of this technique in the implementation, by converting the three-dimensional design file into an extension of the printing program, and the printer prints the design in the form of layers on top of each other with an accuracy of several millimeters and can be pasted. The layers are together with a special adhesive, and plastic materials can be used in the implementation of the outfits.

• **Inspiration from the thuluth letter "Haa" in designing sculptural theatrical costumes**



**The form (4) to the right of the letter Haa in thuluth script, to the left, the researcher designed the letter Haa in Thuluth script in computer programs Raghda Ibrahim (2016)**

- The researcher designed a 3D sculptural costume. In the first design, it was inspired by the letter Haa in Thuluth script, by manipulating the Arabic letter by repeating the letter in multiple rhythms and different inclination angles. Figure (5)
- In the second design, the researcher was inspired by the letter "ha" with repetition, harmony, and a variety of different sizes, and

The script of Thuluth is a type of Arabic script. Thuluth script is a type of Arabic script, and it is one of the most famous types of scripts that are inspired by the Naskh script. (12)

Thuluth Script was first formulated in the 7th century AD during the Umayyad caliphate, but did not fully develop until the late 9th century AD. The name means 'a third' because of the proportion of straight lines to curves, though rarely used to write the Holy Qur'an, Thuluth enjoyed enormous popularity as an ornamental script for calligraphic inscriptions, titles, etc. (13) Thuluth is one of the most difficult Arabic fonts, both in terms of grammar and parallels, and it is characterized by flexibility, durability, and ingenuity of composition. (12)

This calligraphy was used a lot in decorating and writing on the walls of mosques, as well as for architectural decoration and even writing, such as Qur'ans, copper engraving, and other uses. (12)

The researcher was inspired by the different fashion designs from the distraction letter in thuluth script, and through the capabilities of computer programs, various flowing designs have been developed that are suitable for fantasy shows, science fiction, celebrations, festivals. The researcher transformed the Arabic letter "distraction" into an abstract form while preserving the outward shape of the letter and designed various sculptural abstract costumes and by changing the angles of light and shadows resulting from it, the shape of the sculptural uniform changes. Figure (4)

- the elongation of the letters with an aesthetic flow. Figure (6)
- The third design: The researcher was inspired by the letter "ha" and made the bending and folding work in different sizes. Figure (7)
- In the fourth design, the researcher developed the design of the sculptural costume by repeating, overlapping, and adding to several different combinations of the letter Haa in

Thuluth script (Figure 8)

- In the fifth design, the designer creates an overlap of many different designs for the letter haa, which have been modified by different digital programs. Figure (9)
- In the sixth design, the designer creates a merging and interlacing of many different designs of the letter haa, which have been

transformed and modified by different computer programs Figure (10 ).

In all the previous designs designed by the researcher, were inspired by the Arabic letter from Thuluth calligraphy in an advanced way that is compatible with the twenty-first century with its various designs and artistic trends.



Figure .( 5 ) The researcher designed a three-dimensional sculptural costume , inspired by the letter Haa in Thuluth calligraphy, by manipulating the Arabic letter through repetition of the letter with different rhythms and angles of inclination.

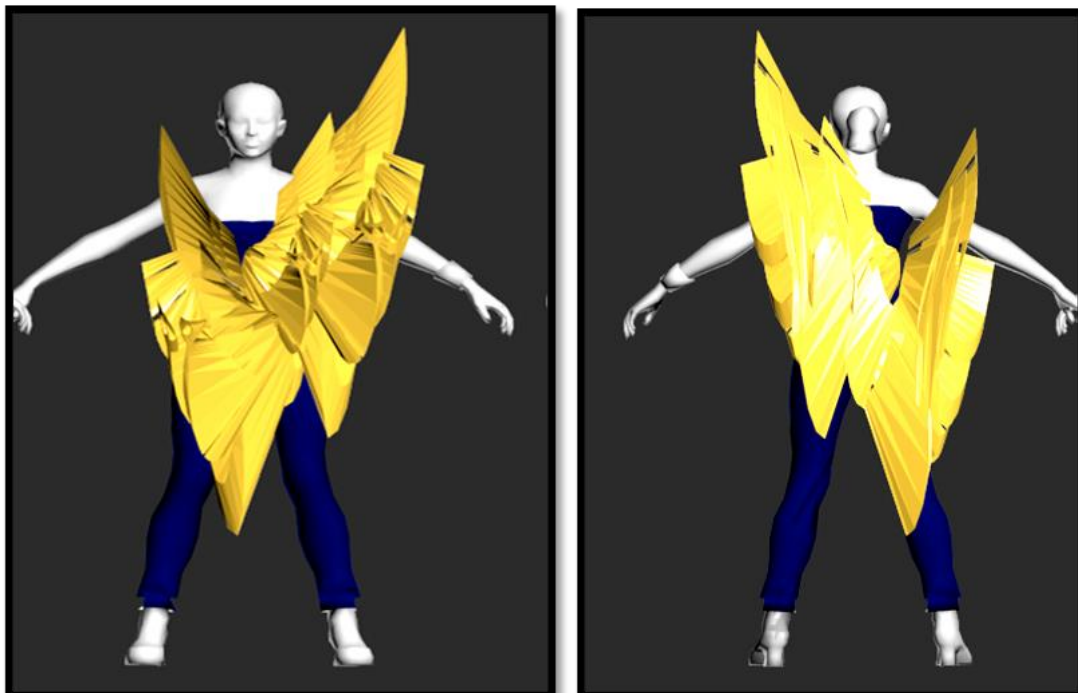




Figure.( 5b) the first design inspired by letter "ha"



Figure (6) In the second design, the researcher is inspired by the letter "ha" in a repetitive pattern, with different sizes and shapes, and the letters are elongated aesthetically.

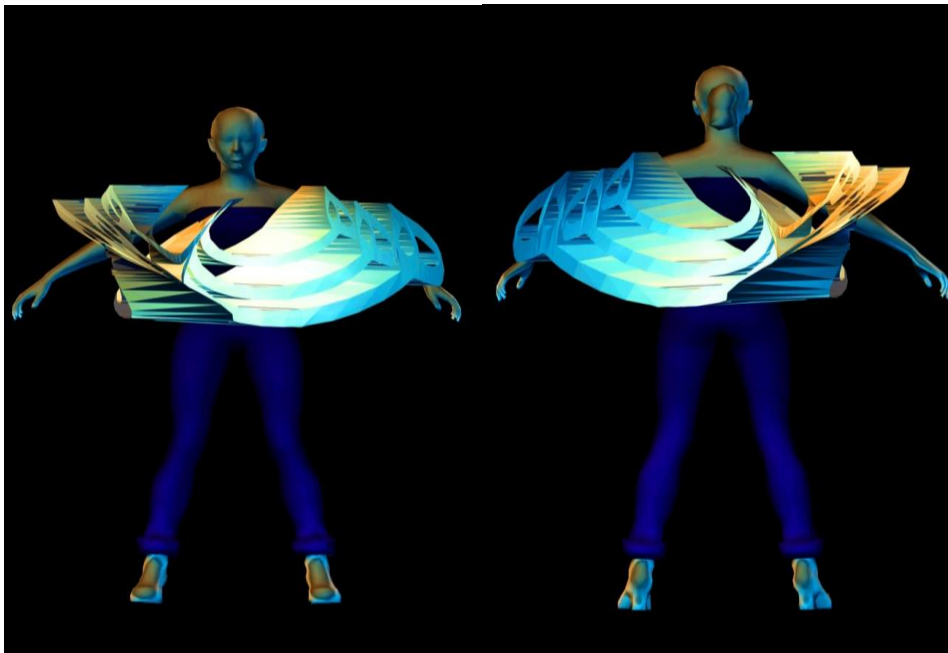


Figure (6b) the second design inspired by letter "ha".



Figure (7) The researcher was inspired by the letter Haa in the thuluth script in the third design by manipulating and making bending and folding of different sizes.



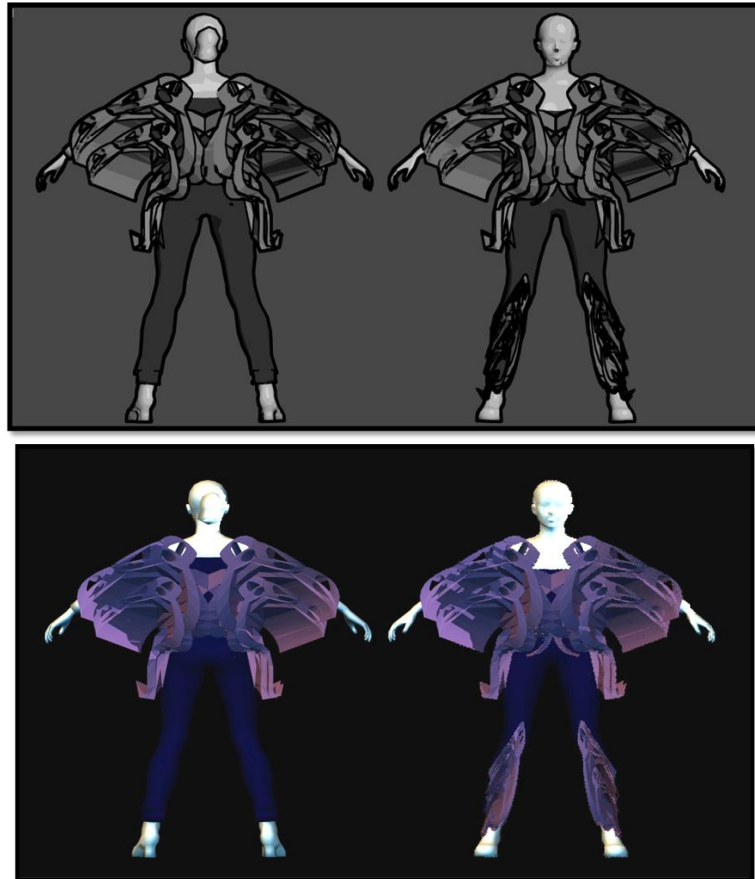


Figure. (8) In the fourth design, the researcher developed the design of the sculptural costume by repeating, overlapping, and adding to several different combinations of the letter Haa in Thuluth script.



Figure. (9) In the fifth design, the designer created an overlap and an entanglement of many different designs for the haa, modified by different programs.

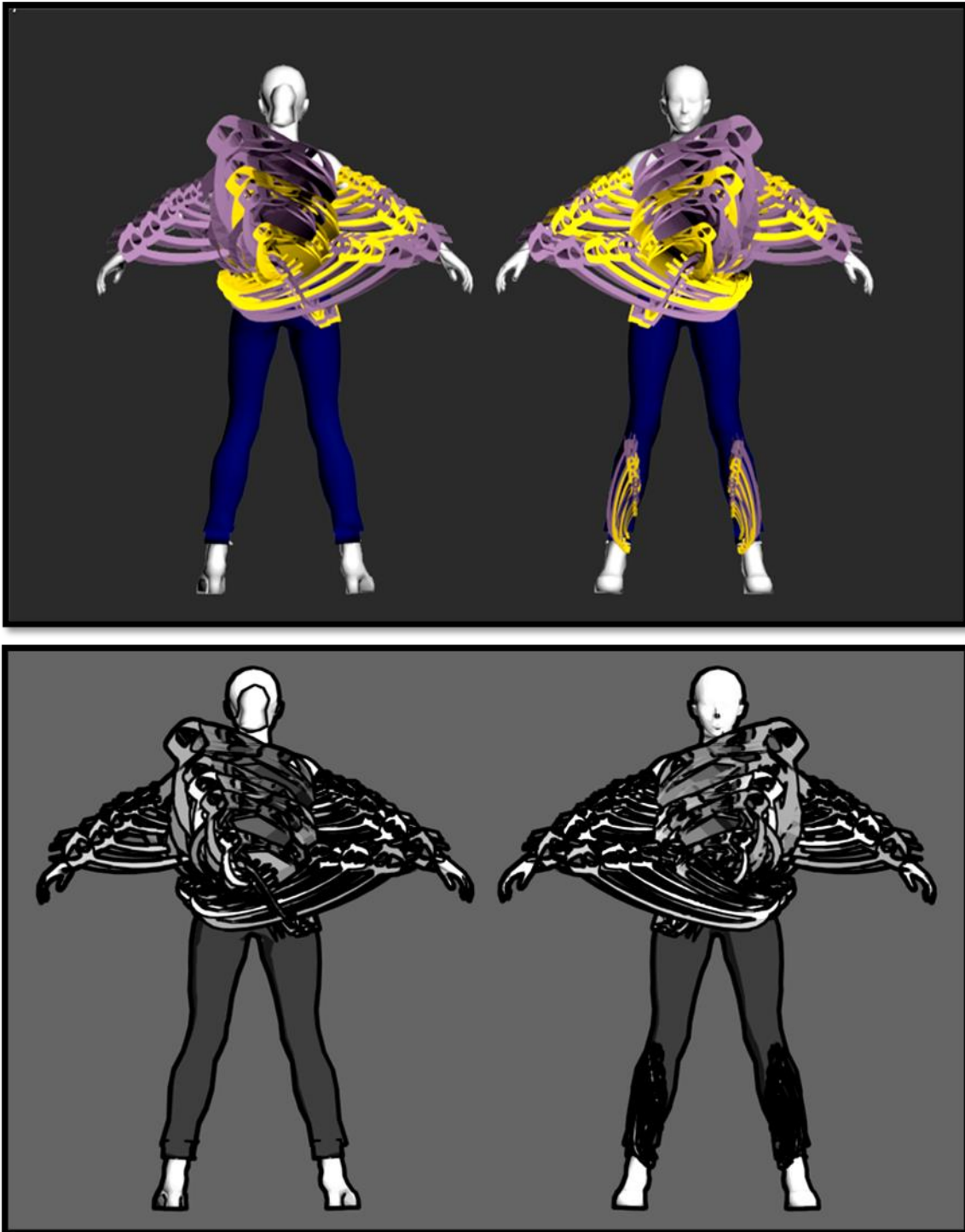


figure. (10) In the sixth design, the designer created a combination and an overlap of several different HA designs, which were transformed and modified by different computer programs.

- **Inspiration from the Kufic letter lam in designing sculptural theatrical costumes:**

The Kufic script is the first script used by Arab calligraphers to write Holy Quran manuscripts on parchment rolls, and it consists of a modified version of the ancient Nabataean letters that originated in the late seventh century AD in the early emergence of Islam in the city of Kufa in Iraq, and was used in writing, and writing the Qur'an in

particular. It was also used in engraving on the walls of mosques, palaces, and other Islamic architecture.

Its types varied: italic, flowering, complex, leafy, and others. It began spontaneously, then entered into workmanship and embellishment, then developed into a soft, concave, flat, or medium between them. The modern types of modern Kufic script do not have a fixed base like the Kufic on which the Qur'an's are written. The illusion of the calligrapher is to achieve

coordination, symmetry, and fill in the spaces. And in it, there is a geometric and vegetal, and the decoration is mixed with calligraphy.

The researcher was inspired by the Kufic lam letter by designing the letter in a reference geometrical form, then designing the letter in a three-dimensional form, and the next step the researcher developed various designs for sculptural costumes in an abstract way, adding, deleting, rhythmic repetition, inclination and other modifications in the formation by taking advantage of the various computer capabilities. The researcher designed different costume designs, all inspired by the letter lam Kufic .

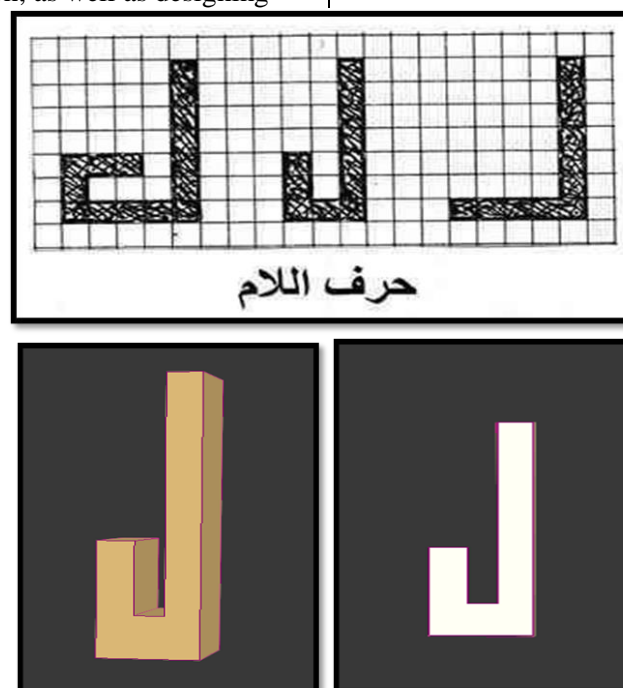
The researcher was inspired by the design of different costumes inspired by the traditional form of the Arabic Kufic letter, and she took it out of the usual, familiar, traditional context. The levels of complexity of the designs were changed, and the researcher used different methods such as repetition of the single letter, overlap, coherence, the dominance of one letter in fashion design, superposition, convergence, and shorthand. Clarity, simplicity, straightness, and all previous styles have given the designs an abstract modern look in line with the design trends of the 21st century. Figure (11)

- In the seventh design, the researcher designed costumes based on the inspiration of the lam character in Kufic script by overlapping and adding to the letter in different sizes and angles in an intertwining geometric abstraction, as well as designing

the dress costume in a design that tends to have a cube shape. Figure (12).

- In the eight design, the designer was inspired by the Kufic letter the lam through modification and rotation including manipulating the lam rhythmically and progressively, linking the different shapes of the Kufic letter. Figure (13)
- In the ninth design, the researcher designed a costume inspired by the letter lam in elongation closer to the geometric triangle, and the researcher designed a fashion accessory unit. Figure (14).
- The designer manipulated the letter with more complex combinations and geometrically, into the tenth design based on intertwining addition and intersection.(15)
- In the eleven design, the researcher designed the costume and its accessories using repeated, rhythmic manipulations of different sizes of the Kufic letter in a balanced and harmonious manner Fig. (16).
- In the twelve design, the researcher designed the costume and its accessories using repetitive, rhythmic manipulations of different sizes of the Kufic letter in a balanced and integrated way Fig. (17)

In all of the previous designs, the designer was inspired by the Arabic Kufic letters in a modern abstract geometric sculpture of the 21st century.



**Figure (11 )** above is the Lam Kufi letter, To the left and to the right the researcher designed the letter in two and three dimensions with computer software. Turk Rahman(2015)

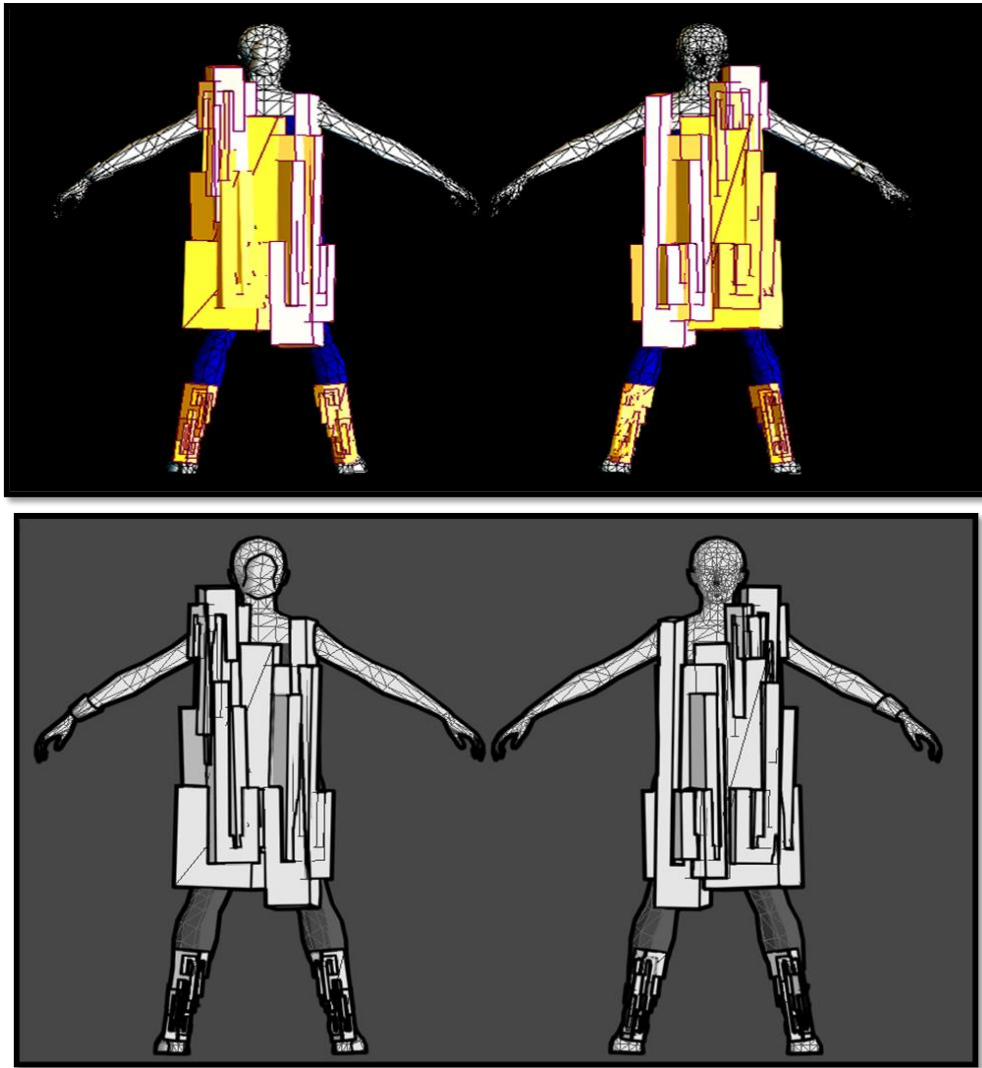
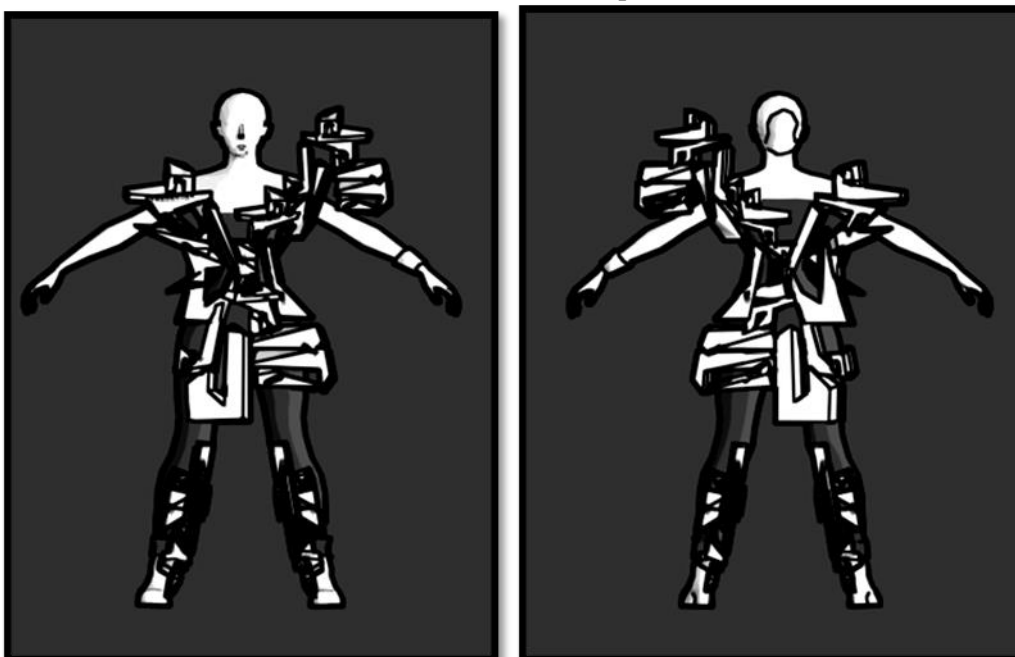
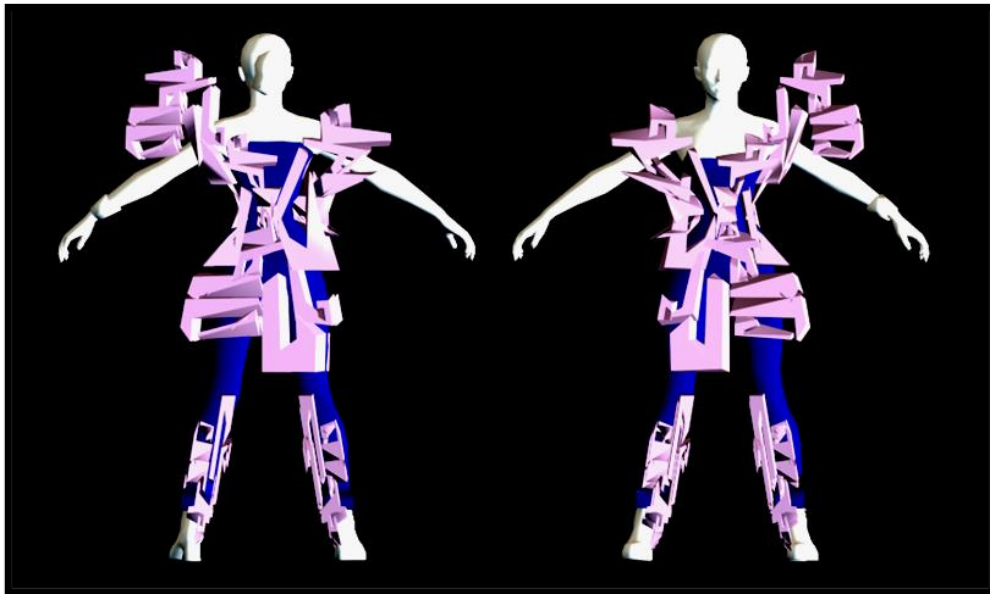
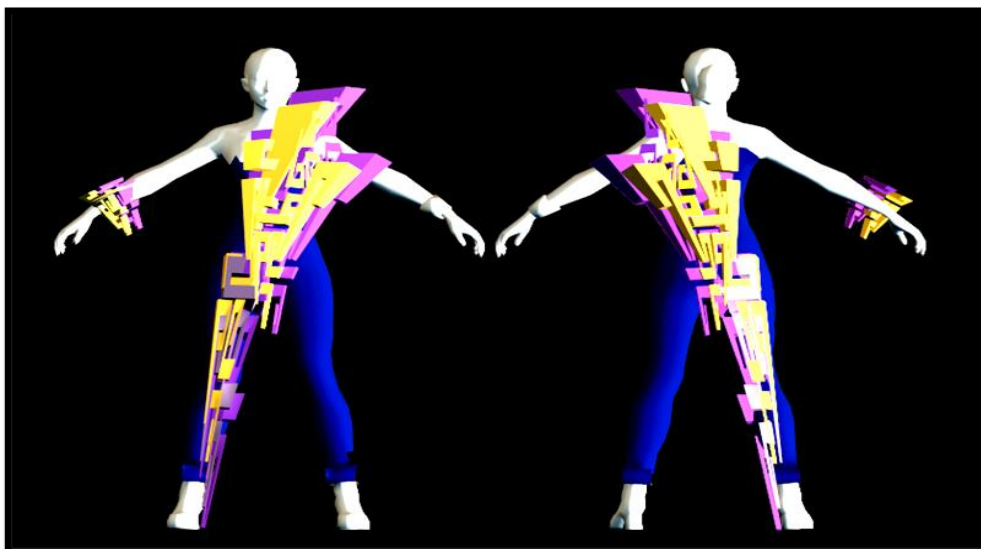
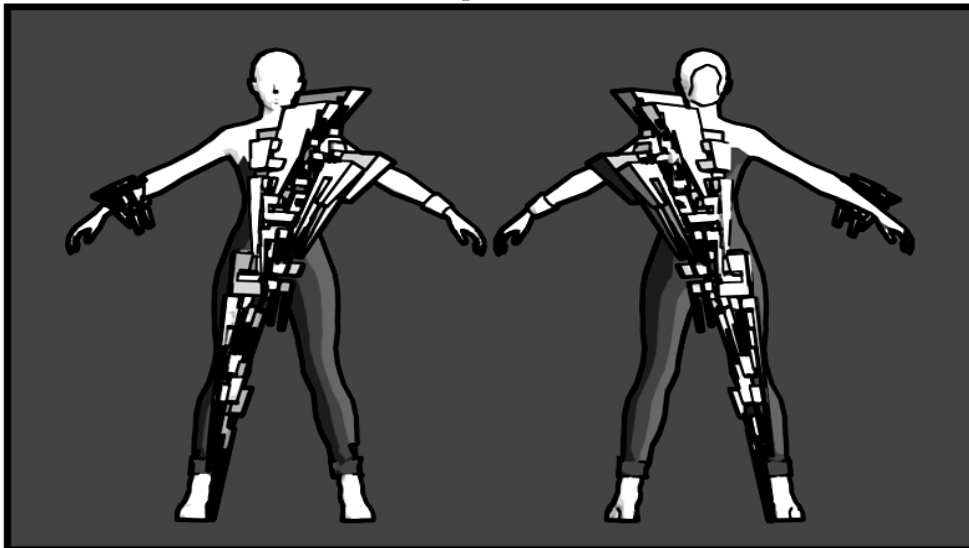


Figure (12) In the seventh design, the researcher designed costumes based on the inspiration of the lam character in Kufic script by overlapping and adding to the letter in different sizes and angles in an intertwining geometric abstraction, as well as designing the dress costume in a design that tends to have a cube shape.

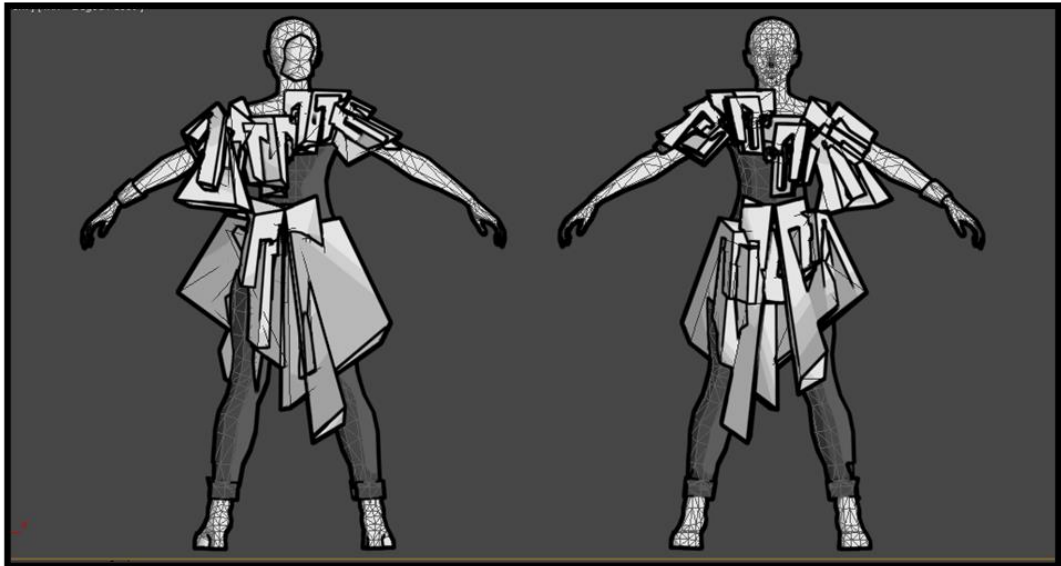




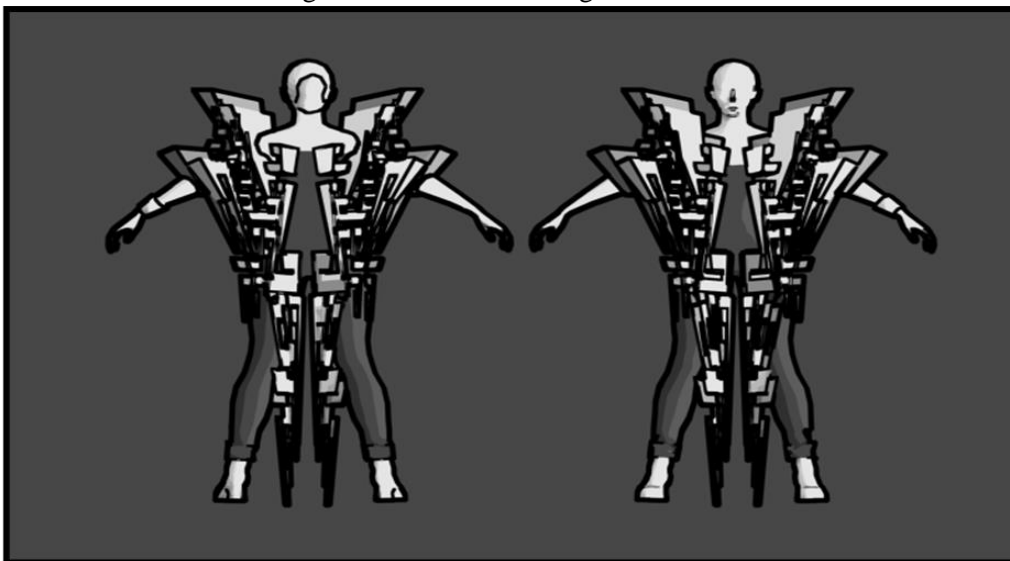
**Figure. (13)** In the eighth design, the designer was inspired by the Kufic letter the lam through modification and rotation including manipulating the lam rhythmically and progressively, linking the different shapes of the Kufic letter.



**Figure.(14)** In the ninth design, the researcher designed a costume inspired by the letter lam in elongation closer to the geometric triangle, and the researcher designed a fashion accessory unit.



Figure(15) The designer manipulated the letter with more complex combinations and geometrically, into the tenth design based on intertwining addition and intersection.



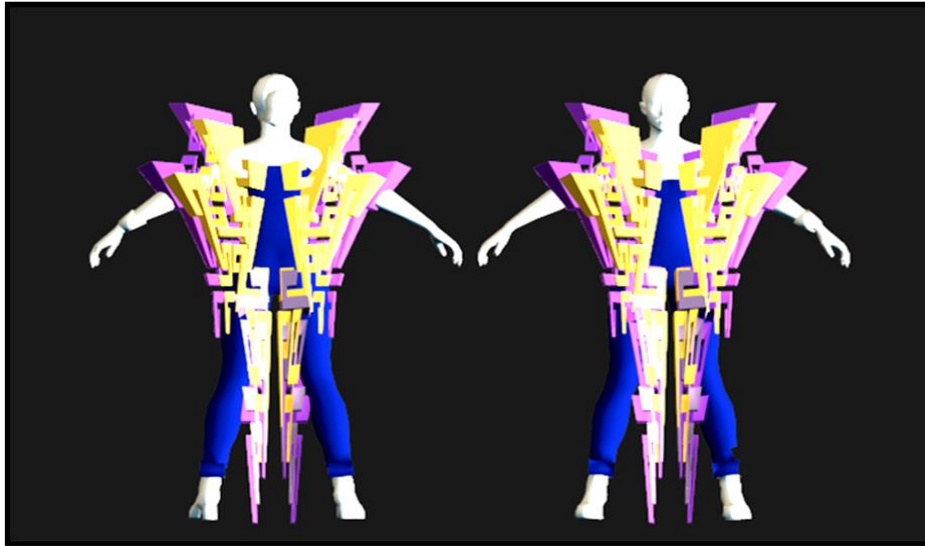


Figure. (16) In the eleven design, the researcher designed the costume and its accessories using repeated, rhythmic manipulations of different sizes of the Kufic letter in a balanced and harmonious manner .

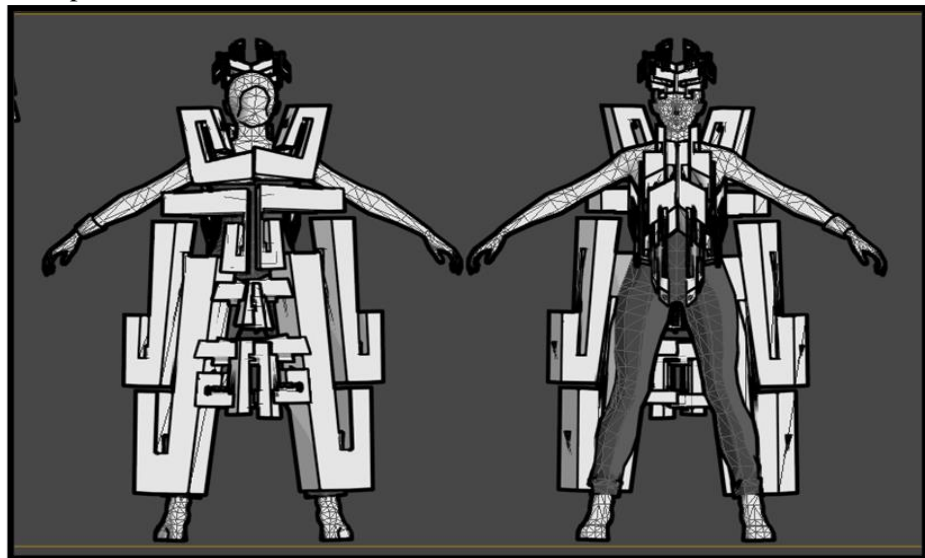


Figure. (17) In the twelve design, the researcher designed the costume and its accessories using repetitive, rhythmic manipulations of different sizes of the Kufic letter in a balanced and integrated way .

## Results:

Originally, Arabic calligraphy was a medium of communication, but over time, it began to be used in architecture, decoration, and coin design. Because of its functional properties. The different types of Arabic calligraphy were distinguished by their creative design and meticulous execution, which allowed artists to use it in their various designs. Thus, Arabic calligraphy appeared in the history of Islamic art, and it became a prominent and unique personality. Fashion designers also used it to draw inspiration from their fashions, shoes, and accessories. The study aims to design creative sculptural costumes inspired by the aesthetic values of Arabic letters through modern artistic trends in a three-dimensional form suitable for fictional, fictional, festive, lyrical, and other theatrical performances, in addition to discovering ways to achieve aesthetic values of Arabic letters and using computers to produce creative fashion designs. At the end of the research, the researcher concluded that the aesthetics of Arabic letters can be used in creating and designing innovative costumes suitable for various theatrical performances, and finally the results and recommendations.

## Recommendations:

The researcher recommends expanding the study of Arabic letters and different fonts and making use of them in devising various creative designs for different theatrical and cinematic costumes.

## References:

1. Aboelezz Mariam (2016) A History of the Arabic Language and the origin of non-dominant varieties of Arabic, *Pluricentric Languages and Non-Dominant Varieties Worldwide: Pluricentric languages across continents*. p175-187, retrieved Jan 10, 2021 from [https://www.academia.edu/36443589/A\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_Arabic\\_language\\_and\\_the\\_origin\\_of\\_non\\_dominant\\_varieties\\_of\\_Arabic](https://www.academia.edu/36443589/A_history_of_the_Arabic_language_and_the_origin_of_non_dominant_varieties_of_Arabic).
2. Al-Ameri Faten (2019) Arabic character and Formulation in fashions Fabric Designs, *Journal of the college of basic education* 25.p(104):290-312, retrieved Jan 2, 2021 from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337885410\\_alhrf\\_alrby\\_wsyaghat\\_altshkul\\_fy\\_ts\\_amym\\_aqmsht\\_alazya](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337885410_alhrf_alrby_wsyaghat_altshkul_fy_ts_amym_aqmsht_alazya).
3. Al-Sayed's Marwa (2016) Arabic calligraphy as an aesthetic element in the design of printed women fabrics through global fashion trends, *International Design Journal*, Volume 6, Issue3, retrieved Jan 3, 2021 from

[https://journals.ekb.eg/article\\_91108\\_9b3e3fd3b23155c38ab24391e8cf2918.pdf](https://journals.ekb.eg/article_91108_9b3e3fd3b23155c38ab24391e8cf2918.pdf).

4. Holes, Clive (2004), *Modern Arabic: structures, functions and varieties*. Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press. USA.
5. Muhammed, Hanadi Salim (2019), Aesthetic of Employing the Ornamental Units and the Arabic Letter in the Design of the Women's Fashion Clothes, Wasit University, *The Journal of the College of Education*, The thirty-seventh issue, retrieved Jan 5, 2021, Part 1, November, from <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/download/5797f3b0a1edbf9d>.
6. Ryding, Karin C., (2005), A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. UK. retrieved Jan 3, 2021 from [https://www.academia.edu/28448255/Karin\\_C\\_Ryding\\_A\\_Reference\\_Grammar\\_of\\_Modern\\_Standard\\_Arabic\\_Reference\\_Grammars\\_2005\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/28448255/Karin_C_Ryding_A_Reference_Grammar_of_Modern_Standard_Arabic_Reference_Grammars_2005_pdf).
7. Versteegh, Kees, (2001), *The Arabic Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. UK.

## Internet sites:

8. Learningarabicwithangela.com " Introduction to Arabic Language; All You Need to Know About Arabic, [https://www.learningarabicwithangela.com/post/introduction-to-arabic-language-all-you-need-to-know-about-arabic\(20NOV,2020\)](https://www.learningarabicwithangela.com/post/introduction-to-arabic-language-all-you-need-to-know-about-arabic(20NOV,2020)).
9. Arabic-calligraphy.com " Calligraphy Styles, " <https://www.arabic-calligraphy.com/arabic-calligraphy-styles/>
10. [https://abutair.net/arabic-script-types/\(24NOV,2020\)](https://abutair.net/arabic-script-types/(24NOV,2020)).
11. Femnastic.com " Arabic calligraphy in fashion from shoes to jewelers ", <https://femnastic.com/arabic-calligraphy-in-fashion-from-shoes-to-jewelers/>
12. Ar.wikipedia.org " Tholoth Font, [https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AE%D8%B7\\_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%AB/\(20NOV,2020\)](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AE%D8%B7_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%84%D8%AB/(20NOV,2020)).
13. Web.archive.org, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070312014918/http://trboard.org/modules/makale/makale.php?id=73> (18 NOV, 2020).
14. Nassmatad.com All you want to know " [https://www.nassmatad.com/2019/08/blog-post\\_14.html/\(18NOV,2020\)](https://www.nassmatad.com/2019/08/blog-post_14.html/(18NOV,2020)).