

THE COSTUMER'S MANIFESTO

A GUIDE FOR
ARTISTS
WHO MAKE
CLOTHES FOR
IMAGINARY
PEOPLE



TARA
MAGINNIS

THE COSTUMER'S MANIFESTO:

I. WHEN I COSTUME, I AM NOT A FASHION DESIGNER NOR A CLOTHING MANUFACTURER, BUT A BUILDER OF CHARACTER, CONCEPT, AND PHYSICAL MOVEMENT.

II. ABOVE ALL, I WORK WITH ACTORS: I HELP THEM BUILD THEIR CHARACTER FROM WITHOUT, EVEN AS THEY BUILD IT FROM WITHIN. I DO NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT THE SHAPE OF THEIR BODIES. I CREATE THE SHAPE WE NEED, AND/OR BUILD A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTER THAT SUITS THE EXISTING BODY. I AM AWARE OF THEIR MOVEMENT NEEDS AND I FACILITATE THEM.

III. I WORK UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF DIRECTORS: I HELP THEM VISUALLY REPRESENT THEIR CONCEPTUAL IDEAS IN PHYSICAL FORM. I CREATE CLOTHES FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD THEY ENVISION.

IV. I AM INSPIRED BY THE WORDS OF PLAYWRIGHTS AND SCRIPTWRITERS: I TRY TO BRING ALIVE THE SCRIPT BY TRANSFORMING THE WORDS OF THE TEXT INTO VISUAL METAPHORS. WORDS, ESPECIALLY POETRY IN THE TEXT, NEED A VISUAL EQUIVALENT THAT SUPPORTS THE MOOD OF THE SCRIPT WITHOUT DISTRACTING FROM IT.

V. I COLLABORATE WITH THE OTHER DESIGNERS, SEEKING TO BRING OUR COLLECTIVE VISION TOGETHER SO IT WORKS IN HARMONY. COSTUMES DO NOT EXIST IN A VACUUM, BUT ON A SET, AMONG PROPERTIES AND FURNITURE, SOUND, AND LIGHT, AS PART OF A CONSISTENT VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF AN INVENTED WORLD.

VI. WHETHER I AM IN THE POSITION OF STITCHER, CUTTER, DYER, CRAFTS WORKER OR DESIGNER, I REMEMBER THAT WHAT I AM DOING IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE GREATER WHOLE OF THE PRODUCTION, AND MUST BE DONE WITH AN AESTHETIC SENSE IN KEEPING WITH THE PERFORMANCE, NOT MERELY MY OWN WHIMS. DESIGNERS, THEREFORE, NEED TO COMMUNICATE THE SHOWS DESIGN TO ALL THE OTHER COSTUMERS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS AS CLEARLY AS

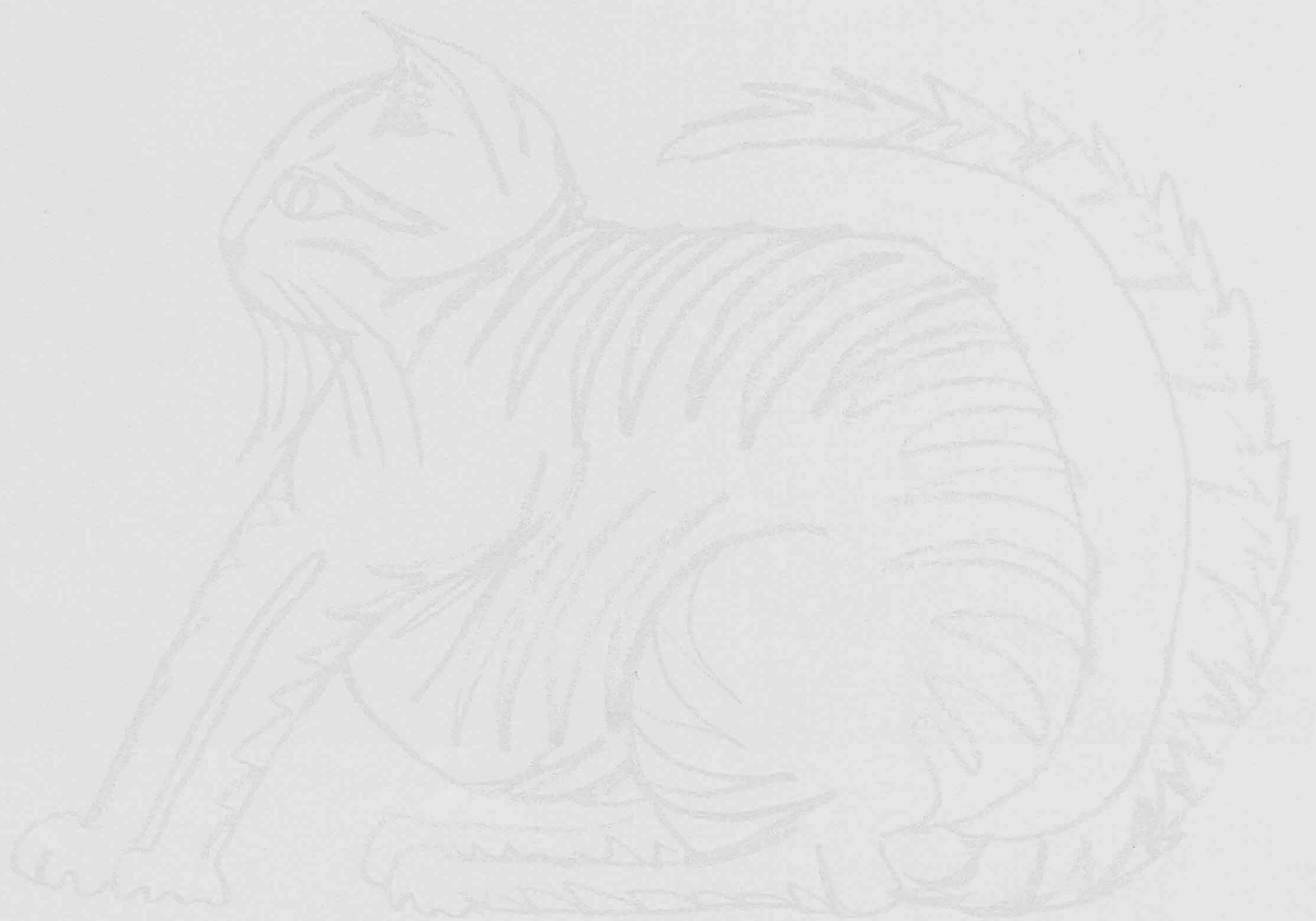
POSSIBLE, SO THAT WHEN DESIGN DECISIONS ARE MADE AT ANY LEVEL OF THE PROCESS, FROM BUTTONS TO BUTT PADDING, THEY REFLECT THE NEEDS OF THE SHOW OR FILM AS A WHOLE.

VII. I ASSIST THE AUDIENCE IN UNDERSTANDING THE STORY AND CHARACTERS. IN PERFORMANCES WHERE SPECTACLE IS REQUIRED, I MAKE THE COSTUMES ASTONISH AND ENTERTAIN, BUT WHEN THE AUDIENCE SHOULD BE MORE AWARE OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE PERFORMANCE, I WILL TRY TO MAKE THE COSTUMES REcede TO THE BACKGROUND, WITHOUT PERSONAL VANITY.

VIII. I STUDY THE HISTORY OF FASHION AND DRESS, NO MATTER WHAT MY POSITION IN A COSTUME STUDIO, SO THAT I CAN BETTER REPLICATE THE STYLES OF CLOTHING OF THE PAST WHEN NEEDED. HOWEVER, I WILL REMEMBER TO AVOID MINDLESSLY COPYING OLD FASHION PLATES, BUT INSTEAD KEEP IN MIND THE KEY ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER AND CONCEPT, AND SELECT OR ADAPT THOSE FASHIONS TO SUIT THE INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTION.

IX. I AM AWARE THAT MY WORK CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF ADAPTING AND REINVENTING PRE-EXISTING STYLES TO DO A FUNCTIONAL PURPOSE: COVER A BODY. I KNOW THEN THAT WHAT I BUILD IS NOT LEGALLY SUBJECT TO COPYRIGHT LAW, AND I WILL NOT WINGE AND WHINE IF ANOTHER DESIGNER IS, IN TURN, INSPIRED TO REUSE ELEMENTS, EVEN A MAJORITY OF THOSE ELEMENTS, FROM ONE OF MY DESIGNS IN THEIR WORK. I WILL ACCEPT THIS AS FLATTERY IF ANYONE DOES SO.

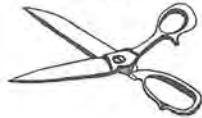
X. COSTUMING IS A FUN PROFESSION, AND I ENDEAVOR AT ALL TIMES TO KEEP IT THAT WAY BY REMEMBERING THE FEELINGS OF ALL MY COLLABORATORS. AT NO TIME SHOULD ACTORS FEEL THEIR BODIES ARE BEING CRITICIZED IN A FITTING, NOR SHOULD A STUDENT, WORKER OR VOLUNTEER BE TREATED AS SLAVE LABOR, NOR SHOULD A DIRECTOR OR ANOTHER DESIGNER BE BULLIED INTO AN UNWANTED DESIGN DECISION. A DESIRE FOR EXCELLENCE IS GOOD, BUT THE DESIRE SHOULD NEVER BE PURSUED TO ANY DEGREE THAT IGNORES LABOR LAW, COMMON COURTESY OR CIVILIZED COLLABORATION. *f*

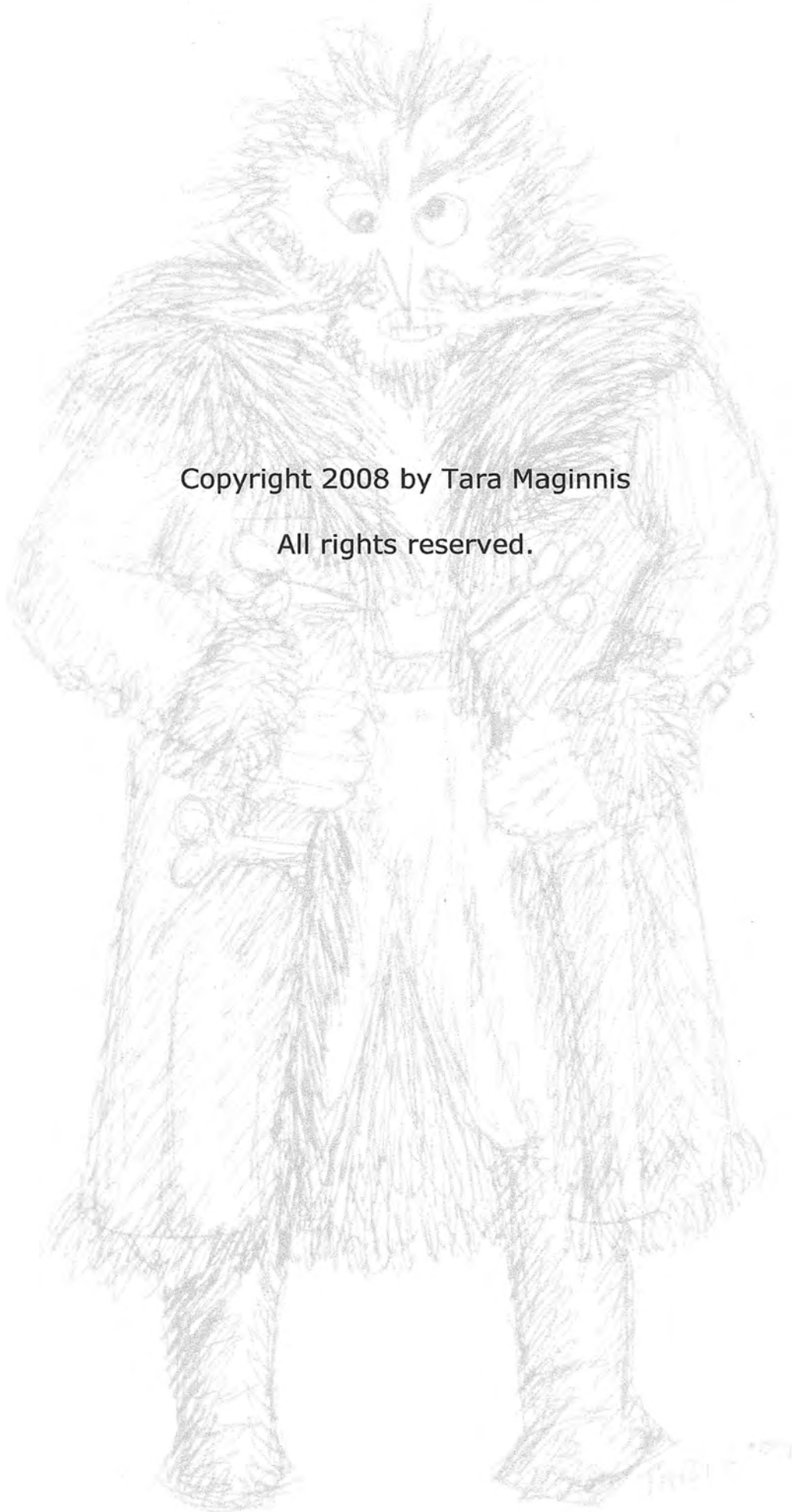


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A Guide for Artists Who Make Clothes for Imaginary People

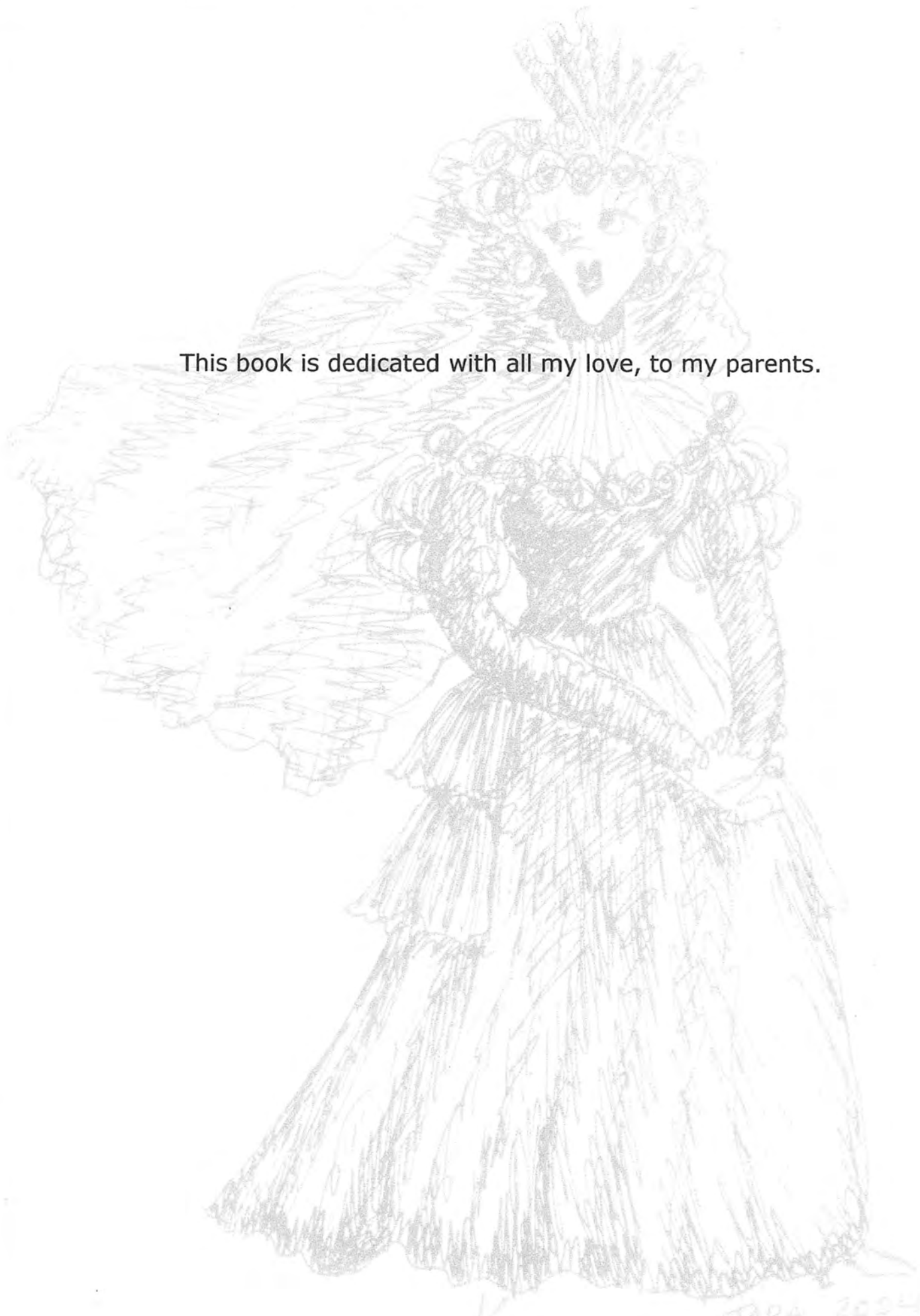
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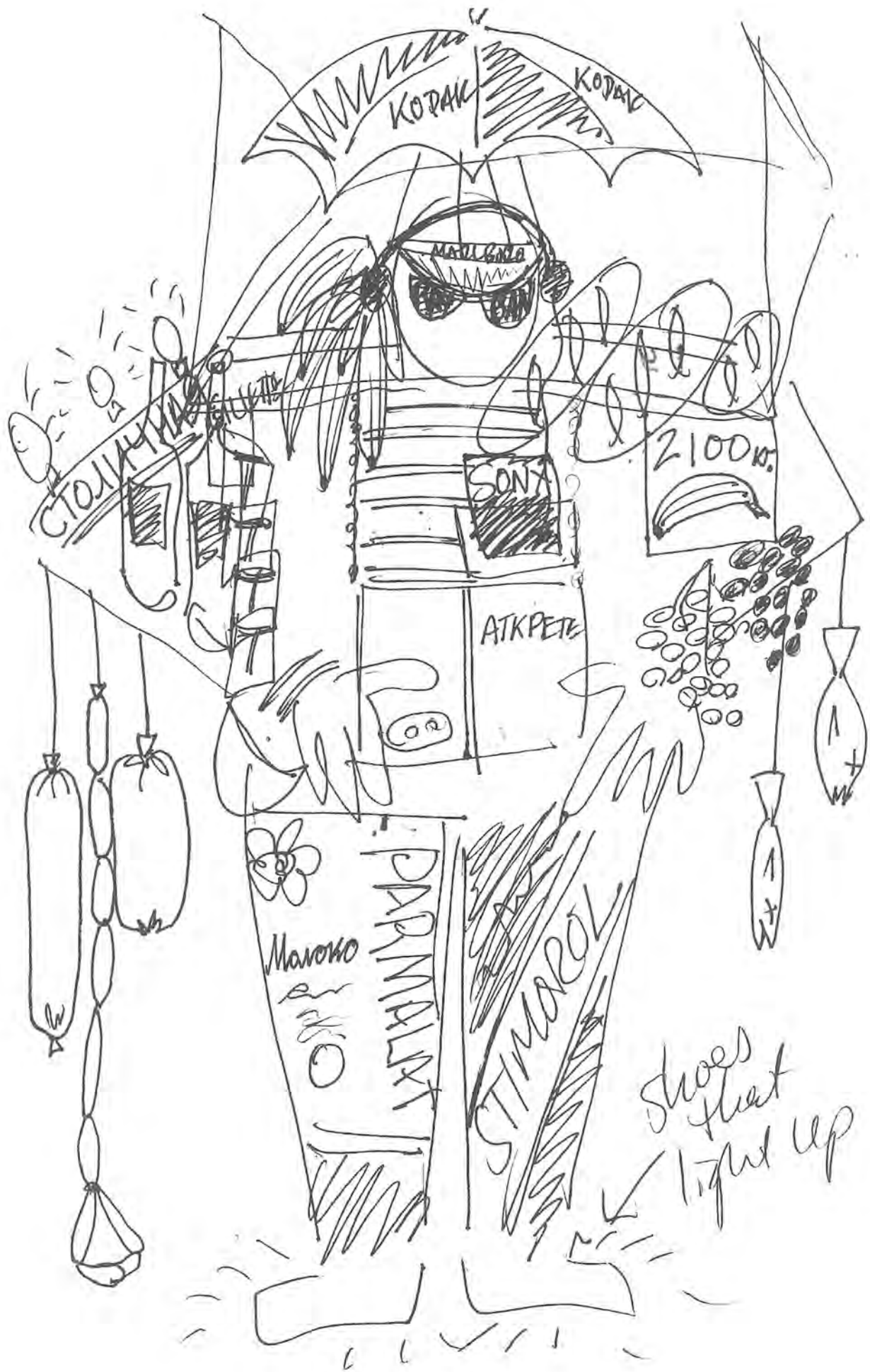
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This book is dedicated with all my love, to my parents.

TARA 2024



KODAK

KODAK

MARLBORO

SONY

2100K

СТОЛІЧНА

ATKPETE

Марсико

PAPMAYST

STIMAROL

Shoes that light up



Acknowledgements:

This book would never have been possible without the help of many people, including a plethora of costume design teachers I have had who originally inspired it, my fellow faculty at Theatre UAF who supported it, my students who kept asking questions for which I had to find answers, and my various costume shop managers over the years, including my longtime sidekick and friend, Lorraine Pettit.

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GUYS
AND
DOGS



SOCIETY MAX

THROUGHOUT

MIKE EMERSON

TACA 1995

Dear Beginning Costume Design Students,

What you have here in your hands is a nearly completed draft of a book based on my web site *The Costumer's Manifesto*. I am hoping to get information from you; the first costume class to get to test-drive it. I'd appreciate it if throughout the semester when you have a good or bad experience with the book that you note it down, and eventually give or send me your notes. As students in a combined costume design and construction class, I am wondering if this book poses any problems for you, or if it appeals for you as a textbook for beginning costume classes. Let me know if there are sections of the book that especially would make you recommend it to others, or conversely, sections that bore you to death. I'm looking at the possibility of making corrections, deletions or even some additions at this point and would be delighted to get feedback.

I am especially interested in knowing what bits strike you as boring so they can go away, and what bits excite you so they either stay or get saved for a second book of this type (if trimming is needed for length). Also, obviously, any information you feel I should add either to this or to the second book.

If you want to give feedback after the end of the semester please send it to my email: tara@costumes.org or my home: Tara Maginnis, 749 Beechnut Ct. San Rafael, CA 94903 or you can phone me at (415) 479-3157

Your Fearless Leader,



Tara Maginnis