

# 2008/09 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Honorable Mention



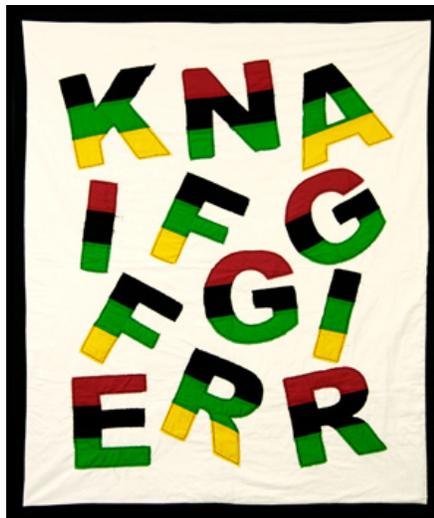
## PRECIOUS LOVELL

Surface/Textile design  
Graduate student  
North Carolina State University



**Recently in Cape Coast, Ghana,** I observed the fishing boats returning with the catch-of-the-day. Their patchwork sails full of wind, displaying graphic colors and unique patterns, remind me of the quilts I slept under while growing up in North Carolina. Both the sails and the quilts speak of tradition and a process that have influenced my life. I intend to explore this language of tradition through the Fibers and Surface Design concentration in the Master of Art and Design program at North Carolina State University.

I was a children's clothing designer in New York City for twenty years before I decided that teaching was my true calling. My career as a fashion designer sent me throughout Europe and Asia in search of emerging trends. I quickly fell victim to wanderlust and have traveled to over 40 countries where I have witnessed heaven and hell on earth. Wherever I traveled, traditional textiles intrigued me. These textiles were often combined with contemporary ideas, such as social and political messages and images on kangas in Tanzania and wax prints in Ghana, to name a few. Whether in motifs or techniques, these elements merge to create a new language—one that fuses traditional and contemporary life. I find this duality exciting.



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This new language is often apparent in my personal work, which not only reflects my experience as a woman of African descent, it raises questions and expresses opinions on issues such as race, gender and identity. For a solo exhibition in South Africa, I designed several non-traditional quilts using a variety of hand-worked textile techniques. “Miss Ogeny” was a tie-dyed headless, armless, legless human form with a patched and quilted dress worn over it. The patches were images and statistics addressing violence against women globally.

Textiles heavily influence even my paintings. After attending a conference on clothing in southern Africa, I created a series of acrylic portraits called the “Black Proud Mamas.” Each “Mama” is depicted in the often-embellished fabrics, beadings and layering of elements they use to express and define themselves and their culture.

I have been teaching full-time since 2001—first at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar and now at the VCU campus in Richmond, Virginia. I intend to return to teaching full-time upon completion of my graduate studies. My teaching philosophy is driven by a quote by Claude Bernard: “Man can learn nothing except by going from the known to the unknown.” This “unknown” is what I will embrace in graduate school and continue to explore as a practitioner, therefore, teaching by example.



I also strongly believe in service learning and commitment to community, women and children, in particular. Over the 2007 holiday break, I spent three weeks in Ghana volunteering with the nonprofit organization Women in Progress. I conducted workshops in garment design and construction, pattern-making and print design. These women arrived with babies on their backs, performed the tasks I required, took my criticism and asked me to extend my stay so they could learn more. I believe that knowledge and skill are the keys to economic self-sufficiency and self-empowerment. I want to encourage my students to become agents of social change by developing a service-learning course of this nature.

My path to NCSU is as much a patchwork as the sails on the fishing boats. I see the Master of Art and Design in Fibers and Surface Design particularly suited to my personal goals. I believe this program and degree will focus my vision, enhance my skills and elevate my potential as a designer, artist and educator.