



**JACQUELYN RICE**  
**Uosis Juodvalkis**  
**A MARGIN OF UNCERTAINTY**

Leslie Clark

*Opposite:* JACQUELYN RICE AND UOSIS JUODVALKIS in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, Winter 2008. *Right:* DETAIL OF BOLERO of boiled wool; needle felted, trimmed with gathered ribbon that holds up the ruffled collar, 2008. *Below:* THREE GIRLS wearing garments of silk and taffeta; printed and pleated, with images of a hydrangea growing in the garden, adorned with polymer/sterling brooches and neckpieces, 2008. *Models from left:* Marissa, Kathryn, Tiffany. *Photographs by Uosis Juodvalkis, except where noted.*



For kaleidoscopic colors that re-engineer your imagination, an Arizona-based design duo is creating beautiful, functional clothing and accessories at a unique intersection of art, fashion and computer technology. Take a silk georgette swing jacket, with scaled-out pink-orange floral images adrift on rivulets of saffron yellow and chocolate red. Its colors quicken the senses, but are tempered and structured in a classic style for real life. Jacquelyn Rice and Uosis (pronounced “Wasis”) Juodvalkis, the wife-and-husband moving forces behind Gild the Lily, understand color, its quirks, nuances and temperament. “I see color as subject matter; it means something,” Rice explains. “Color combinations tell stories that have an implicit effect.”

Since their cooperative effort was launched in 1999 in Providence, Rhode Island, its creators seem to have found more freedom of expression following a move west in 2004. Rice and Juodvalkis have forged ahead spurning the social and cultural dictates of ‘good’ taste about the colors we wear. “Emerald green is a big taboo,” Rice says. “It’s not a fashion color and there’s a class issue too. Or take pink. It’s looked upon as kitschy and crazy. I’m very drawn to it and have been

for ages.” Put two colors side by side, and other connotations crop up. “For example, orange and blue,” Rice points out. “If it’s a turquoise blue and orange then you immediately think of Howard Johnson’s, and you don’t want to use it because who wants to think of Howard Johnson’s?” Adds a deadpan Juodvalkis, “The corporations have stolen our colors.”

“We’re both very curious people,” Rice comments, meaning part of their vision is pushing the boundaries of color. But no matter how brazen or weird Rice and Juodvalkis’s forays seem, the results rally together. Their ideas are influenced by Bauhaus color theorist Johannes Itten, who talked about color harmony as creating an inherent visual restraint: “Harmony implies balance, symmetry of forces.” He did not mean “complementary” colors, like in decorating schemes. Itten’s idea, roughly, is that colors placed together according to their subjective properties resolve, in the mind’s eye, in an internal equilibrium.

Rice and Juodvalkis have spent years ransacking the language of colors. Rice, a former head of ceramics and dean of fine arts at the Rhode Island School of Design, is a three-time National Endowment for the Arts recipient and





international lecturer; and as an acclaimed ceramics artist has had her work exhibited in places like New York City's American Craft Museum (now the Museum of Arts and Design). After a divorce, a mutual friend introduced her to Juodvankis, who owned and ran an advertising/photography business and color lab. A well-known digital photography expert, Juodvankis's color expertise drew artists like Dale Chihuly as clients. The couple, married in 1995, shares a sardonic sense of humor that zigzags through every conversation.

Juodvankis introduced his bride to Adobe Photoshop, and Rice claims she became addicted: "I felt like it was wired to my brain. Uosis would spend six or seven hours a day teaching me." At work developing a design on her thirty-inch Macintosh screen, she ruffles through a galaxy of colors, adjusting tones, discarding and blending. Thanks to her Spockian mind-meld with Photoshop's capabilities, one of their hallmarks is a *trompe l'oeil* surface three-dimensionality: on a fawn-colored wool crêpe jacket, blue water drops stream down and mysteriously sink into far-away depths. Juodvankis demonstrates how Adobe Photoshop works in stacks of layers, like celluloid animation, to control the design. "The background is separate from the image, and the effects on the image are separate from the image itself. Particularly when we're refining a design, we can lighten or darken areas, we can change out the background, we can create shadows. There's a lot of subtlety that goes on."

The computer sits in one of several workrooms spread out through the couple's split-level hillside home overlooking a vista of pine trees and blue skies in Prescott, Arizona. Two hours north of Phoenix, Prescott sits uneasily between past and present, suburban sprawl gaining fast around a late-Victorian downtown built during the glory days of cattle





ranching and mining. Rice and Juodvalkis have added a separate downstairs studio, where they design jewelry and do glasswork, polymer lampmaking, fabric dyeing, and have a wood and metal shop. Eclectic collections are everywhere, displayed on walls and bookshelves and counter tops: Chinese teapots, seashells under a glass cake dome, ethnic textiles and masks, folk art, and contemporary ceramics.

It all constitutes part of their visual archives. The Art Deco arches on a salt cellar may inspire a motif, or the waffle weaves on a basket. Juodvalkis goes everywhere with a Nikon digital camera, stockpiling thousands of images. Rice adapts them, manipulating scale and palette in the computer. "What seems really interesting to me is to have maybe ten percent of the design recognizable and in close to real-life size, and the other ninety percent is greatly blown up, greatly abstracted," she explains. "There's a new silk-linen and georgette jacket that has hydrangeas on it, but they don't really look like it because they're so huge you don't look at the jacket and instantly say, there's a hydrangea on that! I don't want people to have that simple-minded response."



*Above opposite:* JACQUELYN RICE applying Horny Toad appliqué to suede jacket. Appliqué is rimmed with Swarovski gems, 2008. *SUEDE LEATHER JACKET* with appliquéd Horny Toad (living in the Prescott, Arizona, garden) and Swarovski gems, 2008. The inside is printed with raindrops Juodvalkis saw on a freshly-waxed black Lexus. *Lower opposite:* CROP JACKET of cashmere blend; printed and needle felted, reversible, with printed image of day lilies from the garden, 2008. Brooch is of polymer, sterling, gems, 2008.

*Above:* REVERSIBLE WOOL CRÊPE JACKET printed with image of Viburnum leaves; needle felted, trimmed with gold leather, 2008. Brooch is of polymer, silver, stones, beads, 2008. *Center:* DETAIL of jacket with brooch of polymer, silver, gems, 2008. *Right:* WHITE WOOL BOUCLÉ JACKET of white wool bouclé; needle felted with black merino wool, "poor man's ermine," with raw silk pleated scarf, 2008. Shown with a brooch of polymer, sterling, crystal, 2008.





cutting room they also keep stashes of unusual fabrics they cannot resist, which sooner or later get used.

Juodvaskis keeps steady watch operating their second-hand Encad 850, a 600-dpi inkjet printer, which explains why Gild the Lily needs two people full time. Maybe the image will start drifting from some internal glitch, or he wants to adjust the ink channels for dye intensity. “I’m always working with the obsolete machines that I can mechanic,” Juodvaskis says. “The newer the technology the more automated it is, which means that you have to do it their way. And because those machines aren’t made for textiles, they don’t do it the textile way.” All fabrics are first mounted on plastic-coated paper to feed through the roller. “That has a very beneficial effect on sheer fabrics because the paper traps the dye and bounces it back into the material, so it maintains the color brightness,” he continues. Since the fabric is never totally weft-straight after it is bonded to the paper, they oversize design images by an inch or two.

Gild the Lily debuted with scarves at fashion shows. “At first the printer would slop out ink and we had a lot of damage,” Juodvaskis remembers. “So Jacquie took several damaged pieces and made a silk jacket that we used as a prop in our booth. People got very upset that we weren’t selling it, and it was stolen. We realized that Jacquie had backed into becoming the fashion designer she had wanted to be in high school.” Rice started sewing in childhood, feeding a life-long passion for textiles. “At the end of the school year at the Rhode Island School of Design I would sew for about six weeks before I started working in my ceramics studio. It just

Though flowers and botanicals predominate, imagery could as easily have come from isometric drawings or a set of fused glass rods. They have mostly resisted the Southwestern landscape. “It’ll take a while to filter in,” Rice says. “Our physical surroundings are basically rocks and sky, and Uosis takes a lot of cloud pictures from our deck. But seeing a peony resonates more than what’s in the desert.” A frequent background pattern that looks like stippled water is based on an original ink drawing of Rice’s. They use it in multiple permutations on everything from scarves to sterling silver.

At another juncture, Juodvaskis was asked to test a line of liquid acid dyes for an inkjet printer, which led to experiments on fabric. When he discovered the dyes did not penetrate completely through, he decided to print a completely different design on the back; everything has been reverse printed ever since. Juodvaskis uses the four-color process—cyan, magenta, yellow, and black in the printer’s magazine cartridges—and remixes his dyes “to get better penetration and the kinds of effects we want. We’re diluting them so we get smoother tonalities and clearer, more defined colors.” They usually print on plain white silk georgette and wool crêpe. But in the



calmed me down.” Now they have a system in which their longtime seamstress sews part of every garment and Rice finishes each one.

Sewing is where she comes up with new garment ideas. She never draws sketches, ignores trends and does not have a surface design in mind at the time. “We both get involved in figuring out a silhouette,” Juodvankis says. “Jacquie’s more creatively involved, and I’m more remedially involved.” Rice chimes in, “I’ll come out of the sewing room wearing a prototype and Uosis analyzes it, looking for instance at the underarm fit of the sleeve.” They may have to remake the prototypes to decide the weight and drape they want, and Juodvankis cuts all the patterns. “Next we go into the real fabric with the print on it, and even then might have to make it again,” Rice continues. “There’s a lot of hidden work that no one ever knows about.”

What Juodvankis calls a “margin of uncertainty” can still cause fireworks at a later stage. The printed fabric goes through a pressure steamer to set the dyes, and many times comes out looking dramatically different from what they had in mind. Juodvankis welcomes the unpredictability: “We’re working directly with the process, accepting the accidents.” Rice treats it as feedback. “With printing there are no big surprises, so the pleasure is in how to capture what happens when the steamer ruins something and it’s a beautiful ruin. You see it and think: I want the whole piece to look like this.”

Although they go annually to the American Craft Council shows in Baltimore, Atlanta and San Francisco and attend other craft shows, Rice and Juodvankis are slowly changing from production-oriented clothing to one-of-a-kind pieces that have more visual character and cannot be replicated. “The wholesale market is drying up, for us and other people in our category,” Rice says. “It’s almost as if it’s a gift because it gives us more time to do these highly experimental, time-consuming pieces that ultimately are of more interest.” Going in that direction will also let her unleash more of what she describes as her “pagan rites,” stitching shiny metallic threads into a seam, or stacking layers of gleaming Lurex and feathers around the neckline of a leather bolero. “I love gratuitous bright colors and tinfoily things and mirrors,” she says with pleasure. Pleating, creating textures with a new needlepunch machine, hand-dyeing and sewing with ribbons are some of the latest techniques they have incorporated. No matter how the gilding is achieved, though, Rice and Juodvankis are still making, in the words of their logo, a useful beauty. 

#### SUGGESTED READING

- Clark, Leslie. “Gild the Lily: Color at the Edge,” *Surface Design Journal*, Volume 31, No. 4 (Summer 2007): 12-17.  
Sonnenberg, Rhonda. “A Mating of Nature and Technology,” *FiberArts Magazine*, Volume 29, No. 1 (Summer 2002): 31-35.



*Opposite, above:* WOOL JACKET, printed and needle felted, 2008. PLEATED TAFFETA DRESS with printed image of ginkgo leaves and detail of a polymer design, 2008. *Opposite, below:* UOSIS JUODVANKIS unrolling wool crêpe after steam-setting the printed image. This design is called Baroque and is reversible. In 2000, this design was the first to be printed on both sides of the wool.

*Above:* WOOL CRÊPE REVERSIBLE JACKET, pleated, printed on both sides with two different images, 2008. One image was from an experiment using water to alter the printed design, the other was from a ceiling painting in a Mexican hotel.