

## **From 2D to 3D: The creation and portrayal of the Akujiki Musume Conchita**

“Cosplay” is a term coined from the words “costume play,” most commonly used currently to refer to the hobby of dressing up as characters from Japanese manga, anime, or games. The idea of dressing up as a fictional character started at American science fiction conventions, traveled overseas, and has now returned to the States. In the United States, is featured primarily at anime conventions as many cosplayers do not necessarily consider the act of dressing up as American comic characters the same as cosplay.

There are many differences between Western cosplayers and Asian cosplayers—just as there are many differences between the actual conventions themselves. Without going into extreme detail on either one, a notable difference is the attitude in which the cosplayers of the respective cultures approach the idea of creating one’s own costume. Many Asian cosplayers commission their costumes, and the concept of a good cosplayer comes from being one who can pull off the look and feel of a character. On the other hand, many Western cosplayers tend to look down upon those who did not make their own costumes and props.

The project in question is both blog a cosplayer kept while making a costume for Sakuracon, an annual convention held in Seattle, Washington, and the completion of the costume itself. The cosplayer is accustomed to attending conventions in Taiwan. As such, she has many of the same ideals regarding the cosplay that most Asian cosplayers have—the costume must be well

made, ideally looking professional in technique; the wig must be styled carefully and worn without any real hair visible; the makeup must be applied in a way to help the cosplayer look like the character she is portraying; the outfit must be as complete as possible, with artistic liberty acceptable only in ways to make the cosplay more aesthetically appealing.

The costume blog is an interesting journey to follow, her thoughts and frustrations through each step visible. Her entries started initially relatively long and thought out, peppered with supporting images and lengthy explanations of what she was doing and what she was thinking. However, as time passed, her entries became less formal and a lot more stream-of-consciousness. Her language slipped into a much more colloquial tone, and included emoticons—an indication of her usual method of writing online, perhaps. Nearer to the end, her entries often encompassed multiple days instead of her creating an entry each day she had worked on the costume as it seems like she had originally planned to.

The blog is interesting and informative, however, walking the reader through a method of creating a cosplay costume from scratch. It is interesting to wonder how similar the process used for the costume the blog was about is to other costumes the cosplayer may have made or worked on. The cosplayer also seems to assume the reader knows certain things about her, as shown by her references to “shows” and “the shop”—both obvious if the reader is familiar with the cosplayer, but likely confusing for those that aren’t. The cosplayer has a passing familiarity with creating clothing, it seems, but doesn’t seem to have experience in a costume of this complexity in this sort of time-frame. This is made visible through the problems she

had with fit and hemming the skirt, as well as the time management issues she ran into—not enough done early and trying to do too much at the end.

Seeing the costume come together through the progress photos was an interesting experience, however. Usually in cosplay, the public only sees the final result so to read this cosplayer's blog as she put together her costume was a new experience. It shows how much thought and time goes into creating each aspect of a costume; things that may seem simple and quick are actually the result of hours of work and various failed attempts. The costume itself has both good and bad points.

It is obvious that the cosplayer knows various cosplay tricks that would not be used in creating normal clothing. These include ideas such as attaching the corset to the bodice to prevent it from slipping or twisting or gluing down trim in an effort to save time. There are many aspects of the costume done well. The gown is a lovely shape, with a good amount of body from the petticoat. The layered effect of the fabric looked lovely and mildly iridescent in photographs and prevented the gown from being too flat, which is often the issue when it comes to large expanses of fabric in a solid color. The cosplayer also chose to do the corset in a different way: the layer of lace of vinyl creates texture and adds to the complexity of the costume that works with the rest of the dress and isn't as plain as a matte or vinyl corset piece would have been. A lot of thought had clearly gone into making the costume more elaborate and detailed than the original drawing had been.

However, due to time constraints and lack of experience, there are also problems with the costume. When photographed from the side or back, the bodice-corset piece clearly isn't fit properly. There is excess material in the back, when it

should be form fitting to the cosplayer's back. The drape around the cosplayer's hips that creates the bustle doesn't have the body it should, and there are a few raw edges visible. The drape and the sleeves were made from a different fabric from the rest of the gown, which was a good decision as (like the cosplayer herself noted in the blog) the taffeta would have been too stiff to drape well. However, while the sleeves' fabric was tied into the gown with the drape, the cosplayer primarily chose photos where the drape wasn't visible thus negating the method of bringing the costume together she had originally chosen. The trim at the bottom of the gown was not as visible as it should have been; perhaps if it had been added atop the red organza layer, it would have been a better choice. Similarly, the hems of the three layers of skirt were not finished properly, which ruins the effect somewhat.

Despite the problems though, the cosplayer clearly got some nice photographs; those she chose to upload mostly hid the problems with the costume that she seems very aware of. It was very fun to follow the blog in order to see how she arrived at the end result of creating a gown and persona in the photos from what had originally been nothing but a 3minute 30second video.

<http://akujikimusume.blogspot.com>