

Signs beyond the Stars

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As a fashion designer, I was commissioned by South Korean actor Byung-Hun Lee to design him an extravagant outfit for the upcoming MET Gala, based on the astrological theme "Signs Beyond the Stars". The outfit initially possessed a plethora of fashion and cultural influences. It procured inspiration of silhouettes from the Lolita subculture, which centres on a cuteness aesthetic, and the designs of fashion designer Christian Siriano that utilises scale and variation to create an elegant simplicity. Based on his home country's culture, another key influence was the hanbok traditional dress where I focused on researching each separate component of the outfit. To add to the focus of Eastern Asian dresses, I also refer to the Chinese hanfu, as the silhouette contrasts with the hanfu. Hubble Telescope images of galaxies, sci-fi and historical astrological artefacts were my central influences for fulfilling the brief's astrology and space theme.

When designing the dress, my primary focus was to convey my client's astrological sign Leo into the outfit, as well as portraying celestial imagery to make the dress more visually extravagant. Initially, the dress focused on softer tones, and large scale shapes for both the sleeves and skirt which was directly inspired by the hanbok and lolita fashion. To portray the imagery of Leo, fur was commonly used as a variation of texture and to portray the lion's mane. However, the dress lacked a conceptual story as its foundation, thus I refer to my client's various roles as a dark and edgy, hypermasculine or mysterious character. He usually plays a silent hero or villain. Inspired by his acting roles, I altered the direction of my dress to focus on a mature depiction of space. Inspired by solar eclipses, sunsets and the darker colours of galaxies, the colour scheme consists of darker tones with the range of red, yellow and purple. The solar eclipse created symbols and shapes that have been used as the dress's patterns. The dress's silhouette is smaller, however I still included nods to the previous direction's inspiration of lolita fashion and the hanbok within the dress's varied layers. Fur was still included to maintain the texture variation.

This dress successfully meets the brief's central theme with its parallels to space such as solar eclipses – shown through the dark tones and variation of patterns – such as the belt piece inspired by Saturn's rings, and the sun ray shapes of both skirt layers. One of the layers is a suit jacket with a Hanbok's Jeogori collar, preserving the nod to my client's culture and his usual preference for dressing in suits in modelling or publicity. Additionally, to portray the astrological sign Leo, the cape features the large fur mane and the Leo symbol as the clasps. The cape itself is suits the over-the-top and extravagant MET Gala outfits. The largest challenge was the outfit's high demand of supplies and materials due to its high concept and scale. In order to overcome this challenge, patterns of the outfit were scaled down, and everything was measured accurately as to avoid error and a waste of materials.

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