Clothing Darwinism

Absent Bodies
An investigation into sculptured garments

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Abstract

Garments are everywhere in today’s society and often presented on the body, although the absence of the body in design can have an integral impact on how they are perceived by an audience. An experimental material coating, aided garments to become sculptural by portraying the essence of the body. This essay argues that garments are challenged through their perception and purpose by the absence of the body, allowing the sculptures to develop a language in their own right. Through means of forming methods, absence of the body and materiality, garments are able to evolve to communicate an idea challenging one’s preconceived garment notions and broadening the spectrum of situational presentational methods.

Key words

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2. Introduction to the Field

2.1 Background

Garments and materials are evolutionary. The evolution of garments is achieved by mutation through the processes of new material investigation and construction methods. It is necessary that designers formulate inventive construction strategies to be able to develop their design processes. Moving away from traditional cut and sew or draping methods, garments are able to illustrate contemporary ideas. Avoiding these methods allow a designer’s voice to be unique and original within an over-saturated fashion industry.

Viewing fashion as an object, is a perspective designers can utilize to evolve garments. Through the merging of the art and fashion fields, clothing has been able to evolve it’s own language, a bodiless language. In the book, Fashion and Imagination: About Clothes and Art, Marchetti and Quinz (2009, pg. 117) state “As soon as the body disappears in forced immobility, anonymous, silent and indifferent, it’s the clothes that start talking, expressing, becoming visible and legible signs.” Through placing fashion in an artistic context, designers place power on the individual language of garments.

Fashion has a strong connection with the body, although by presenting garments through different methods allows another form of garment language. Graw (2009, pg.55) also states that “Fashion is a typical ‘identity good’; it helps us preserve our personal identity. It enables the individual human being to become a social reality.” By presenting garments with the body, the garment speaks for its owner’s identity and not necessarily the environment it’s presented within. For example, Viktor & Rolfs L’hiver de L’amour installation, (See Figure 1) in which white dresses were presented within a white room, highlights the relationship garments can have with a space and how, as objects, they are still able to have a form of communication with an audience. By removing the body, they are able to take on their own expressions through the style of presentation.

Figure 1 – L’hiver de l’amour, 1994. Viktor & Rolf.
2.1.1 Social Relationships

Absence of the body aided with materials can express social relationships within fashion and art. Bodily form expressed through the materiality allows a garment to develop language around social relationships. Previous social experience allows an audience to gauge the feelings and emotions expressed within an artwork illustrating the idea of social relationships to them. For example, Sue Law's work *The Life and Death of a Relationship*, (See Figure 2) which presents her idea of a relationship through body language created with bed linen and plaster. By extracting the body and communicating the material gives the artwork a stronger effect to focus the audience's gaze of representation of two people. Focusing on elements such as shape, body language and position, the work creates a strong conversation. Social relationships can become extremely prevalent when expressing the form of the body in different works.

Social relationships are prevalent in many performative aspects of art. Vanessa Beecroft’s work is an important example through her large use of models in a performative situation (See Figure 3). Having people situated next to each other starts to communicate a social relationship. Through these performances the audience views the different reactions the models have to one another’s actions. "During each performance Beecroft watches out for the moment the first model changes position, thereby ‘breaking’ the formation, since she is interested in how the other models and audience react to this." As stated by Teunissen (2009, pg.142). Through their performance they form relationships by their body language that is interpreted by the audience. When the bodies are presented within art and fashion they are interpreted and create a communication through the audience’s perception of body language.

Figure 2 – *The Life and Death of a Relationship*, 2007. Sue Law.

Figure 3 – VB55, 2005. Vanessa Beecroft.
2.1.2 Materials

Materials are important when it comes to designing. They can define the design and form of a garment. Furthermore they have the ability to strengthen and allow them to become expressive in their design language. In the book, *Fashion and Textiles an Overview*, Gale and Kaur (2004, pg. 5) state "... the designers relationship with fabric lies at the core of their creative process.". For example, Louise Bourgeois sculpture *Couple 1*, 1996, (See Figure 4) explores garment relationships and emotions. By giving an essence of the body through her material choice and stuffing to achieve bodily form. The garments were able to communicate human emotions through bodily language, giving her work power from a unique form of garment communication that had been aided through material choice.

There are multiple materials that garments can be made from. Loosely termed, a garment can be any item that interacts with a 'body', which broadens the material scope to unlimited possibilities. Opening up designs to unconventional materials creates a world of possibilities for new and exciting garments.

Unconventional materials can have a big impact on defining garments. For example, Claes Oldenburg’s *Lingerie Counter*, 1962, (See Figure 5) which was created with muslin strips dipped in plaster, moulded into lingerie and then covered with paint. Creating a tension between garment and object, which had been done through his stiff material choice, Marchetti and Quinz (2009, pg. 119) argue “Clothes do not represent either visual or physical comfort: at times they prevent movement, altering and sculpting it…” Clothing can be viewed in many different contexts and through materiality, designers can change their purpose.

Figure 4 – *Couple*, 1996. Louise Bourgeois

Figure 5 – *Lingerie Counter*, 1962. Claes Oldenburg
In her thesis, *Body of Movement*, Bågander (2017, pg. 21) explains that “...dress both gives impression to the body and allows the body to be expressed through the materiality”. Collaborations open up design possibilities and allow evolution through the use of new knowledge and experience from two or more contributors. Human experience is inherently unique and thus using two sets of unique experiences creates new perspective and different design outcomes.

The fashion industry is saturated with many ideas, for designers to be original they might investigate altering their methods, materials and perceptions of ideas within garments. Developing a field between art and fashion, merging of different elements that evolve garments to cross-disciplinary ideas.

Unconventional approaches through collaborating with people from different fields allows other points of view. For instance, Alexander Mcqueen collaborated with jewelry designer Shaun Leane for his Spring Summer 2001 collection. They collaborated to create a wired bodice that was moulded to the body (See Figure 6). Metal is a very strong and hard material that creates such a contrast on the body, blurring the boundary between fashion and jewelry design. This design was influenced by both fields and allowed the body and garment to be expressed in a new light.

![Figure 6 – Spring Summer 2001. McQueen and Leane.](image-url)
2.2 State of The Art

Many artists and designers have explored unusual materials to create new garment languages. There is no one single material or method that can be used to create a garment. Garments can be created without stitching or sewing as stated by Teunissen (2009, pg. 18), “Fashion is a visual art that uses the individual, physical self as its medium...”. There are no rules and regulations about what a garment can be and how it is constructed.

Not all garments have to be a permanent structure and there can be beauty in the transience. Through material exploration, garment construction is able to open up new possibilities for design, enriching the process of garment construction and enabling designs to have a free expression. Materials considered being temporary or having an expiration date such as sugar have been explored in the form of cotton candy by Martijntje Cornelia (See Figure 7). Her pieces highlight the potential in transient materials and can help designers alter their design approach to creating a garment.

New garment forming methods can enhance interesting shapes and forms on the body. Wendy Andreu, a French born fashion designer, explored a new method in garment construction. In her project Regen created in 2016, Andreu created garments and accessories with ropes and latex (See Figure 8). Lubberding (2016) stated that Andreu’s “... fabric is double-sided with water-repellent latex on one side, and cotton rope on the other. Regen products are made by coiling the rope around a laser cut steel mould and covering it in latex.” By using this method Andreu was able to create garments without stitching or sewing to create a provocative language that questions traditional garment construction. Through this new construction method, she was able to obtain unique shapes and structures in her garments, with her material choices aiding the garment through their support of the shapes. Her pieces are innovative and have a unique language, which was only possible through her chosen construction method.
Garments do not always have to be made out of permanent materials. Working with new, fragile and interesting materials can create beautiful garments that only last a finite amount of time. For example Bart Hess, *Digital Artifacts*, where a garment was made from paraffin wax (See Figure 9). The model would have to break through the paraffin wax to get out of the garment therefore destroying the garment given the use of such a fragile material. There is a great expression in this garment and the material giving it a unique design language, which questions perceptions of garments. The wax enhanced the exaggerated draping lines and through the use of this unusual material; we are able to see the uniqueness of this material. In her lecture, Mossé explained that there are many materials that can be used in a new context to create new forms of creative thinking. Material can become the creative element in designing and form a shape of its own.

Both Andreu and Hess have explored creating form in an interesting way and have explored unusual material in garment construction. They both let their material and method define the shape and the design of their garments, which is made possible by creating garments through a non-traditional method. These creations have a unique design language that question already preconceived ideas about garment creation and perception. Materials that create a voice of their own give a sophisticated perspective to a garment allowing the material to create the form and give a unique garment expression.

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1 Aurélie Mossé, Textile Designer, Researcher, PhD, Higher Seminars, open lecture, Swedish School of Textiles, 2018-09-18.
Garments can be used to capture a moment in time and the essence of the form. Nicole Dextras explores this as a textile designer where she captures and freezes her garments motion in time (See Figure 10). Dextras (2015) stated, “This outdoor installation of ice-covered dresses was created to resemble an alluring bouquet of fantastical plant life summoned from the underworld.” Through her use of the natural environment she was able to freeze dresses and textiles in a form to give the garment a lifelike expression. Using ice creates an interesting and unique shape and texture to the garments, as the ice also has an expression in itself. The ice can grow and develop to have a textural language of its own and is the most abundant material on Earth. This project interestingly displays the form of a body without relying on a body underneath. In her lecture, Berglin² stated that using products in different ways than what it is designed for becomes a skill in itself. Dextras has taken advantage of this by using a material as common as water.

![Figure 10– Bouquet, 2015. Nicole Dextras](image)

Exploring different design methods leads to the possibility of inventing a unique expression of work. Andreu, Hess, Dextras and this degree work all explore the potential of design through the choice of materials and methods. Whether it was rope and latex, ice, paraffin wax or sugar, they are all able to express their own unique language on and off the body. Through these explorations as designers, they are able to move away from traditional fashion construction methods and have their own individuality.

Andreu, Hess, Dextras and this degree work have all explored contemporary artistic practice in approaching design. Contemporary artistic practices have been successful in giving the designers their own unique individual design expression. For the fashion industry to progress and for expression to continue to evolve, designers need to explore more options in the methodology behind their designs.

² Lena Berglin, Docent, University Lecturer, Higher Seminars, open lecture, Swedish School of Textiles, 2018-10-02
2.3 Motivation

The primary motive of this work is to explore materiality in fashion and the potential within garment creation. Gale and Kaur (2004, pg. 5) also argue that “Experimentation is central to the design process and fabric can become the stimulus for the fashion designer, suggesting new shapes and design ideas.” There are multiple definitions of what is considered to be a garment and therefore is allowed to be interpreted in anyway a designer can perceive them to be. This work aims to question the traditional notions, methods and materials already within fashion design. This paper will try to encourage designers to really challenge notions and to expand in the most creative way possible. Aiding to give designers expressive freedom within their work and discover new potentials within design and art.

Expressing the bodies through different shaping materials can give garments a medium to communicate social relationships. The body can express ideas about social relationships and provoke the audience to interpret design in different ways. Bodies can be represented through different forms such as garments. In Claudia Casarino’s work Uniforme she communicates about bodies through different garments in the same colours grouped as a collective (See Figure 11) creating a conversation around a social relationship within the group.

![Uniforme, 2008. Claudia Casarino](Image)

It greatly improves designer’s work when presented as a collective performance. This strengthens the work, as you are able to fully visualize all ideas and gaze at the social relationships that were visualized during the performance. For example Vanessa Beecroft’s SHOW exhibition and performance (See Figure 12) had many women, except five, in garments designed by Tom Ford for Gucci. Having the women stand together as a collective made this performance really powerful, due to the cohesiveness within the multiple. The reactions to one another were developed through social connections. In addition repeating one idea can help the audience understand the common challenging ideas within a project. By inventing creative collective performances, a designer can enhance the audiences’ reception of their projects.
Designers need to challenge traditional garment conventions to pursue different potentials further than the form of clothing. Creating tensions between object and fashion, garments can be presented without the purpose of being worn, to simply become an object. Teunissen (2009, pg. 17) states that “In recent decades we have seen the appearance of another category of fashion designers who see the garment as pure form and texture while regarding its practical wearability as unimportant.” Hussein Chalayan explored this concept with the tension between garment and object with his *Airmail Dress* (See Figure 13). Through design and material this project created tension between the values of both the dress as a garment and as an object. Challenging traditional conventions in the perception of garments.
2.3.1 Materials Designing Form

Materials can design the form simultaneous to being created themselves. Depending on their behaviour and properties, materials have multiple potentials within creating form. Landahl (2013, pg. 31) states, “In knitting ... form and material are created simultaneously.” The traditional thinking that materials and form are separate ideologies debilitates the design process. Nonetheless many materials can create form on the body and control more of the design process through their behaviour. Materials have more power when used directly on the body. For example, in her book, The Emergence of Form, Blaisse (2013) explores design by using various materials on the body (See Figure 14) allowing the materials to control the form and become expressive through the movement of the body. New materials can bring new properties and potential for designing, therefore creating more innovative and expressive designs.

Figure 14 - Bamboo Mesh, 2013. Maria Blaisse.

2.3.2 Materials Defining Design

Materials themselves can have an expression of their own, allowing them to design and therefore give designers less control allowing expressive freedom. Sourcing unusual and different materials from other industries is where the future for new potential lies. Alice Potts explored this in her graduate work Perspire, which have salt crystals grown through perspiration on accessories and garments (See Figure 15). Through the use of this unusual material, these garments and accessories have been given another expression. Materials can also change our perception of products through their materiality. For example, Tatiane Freitas created a chair using wood and resin (See Figure 16). Through contrasting both new and old elements in materials, she has created a new original design with recognizable elements to understand the product. By exploring different materials, designers are able to be more expressive through these materials.

Figure 15 – Perspire, 2018. Alice Potts.
In conclusion this Master degree work will investigate different materials, methods and concepts around a garment. This will be investigated through the use of unusual material providing new expressions on and off the body and exploring the potential of what a garment could be and what context it could be placed in.

3. Aim

The aim of this work is to challenge garment perception through the absence of the body and the use of experimental material treatments. This work allows garments to develop a language in their own right.

4. Design Program

Exploring garment creation through the use of unusual materials is essential to expand the field of art and design. Jiang (2013) explains, “Fashion designers rely on the material to achieve their own ideas, as the sculptor needs raw materials.” Nonetheless investigation is necessary to create original ideas when an industry is over saturated with them. A series of projects were carried out for this Masters degree program and the aim of these projects was to explore the different potentials and possibilities of what is possible with and without the body.
4.1 Perception

Exploring new methods of design, therefore changing the way one perceives design, enables artists to explore alternatives in construction. Jiang (2013) states “… material is not only to show texture, colour, pattern, and to convey the human perception of life and thinking about life”. For example, *Upturned House* created by Phyllida Barlow, (2012) takes on a new construction of a house (See Figure 17). Her method challenges the way that we perceive designs and shows the potential of different design possibilities. Through her use of different materials, she was able to explore her own version of a ‘house’ therefore challenging the traditional idea of a house. In her thesis, *On Form Thinking in Knitwear Design*, Karin Landahl (2013, pg. 5) argues, “…the notion of form was explored from the perspective of the way in which we make [designs].” Original ideas can be created by simply changing perspective. This was the exploration for these three-foundation projects that aided this degree work.

4.1.1 Project 1 Artistic Development

The basis of this project was to use a different method in order to create an interesting idea. In this project there was a focus on the use of PVA yarn incorporated with linen and the use of spray tan as print application. This shifted the traditional way of thinking in terms of construction which led to exploring and discovering what could be developed without conventional construction methods.

The focus of this project was to be able to construct an outcome without the normal ‘cut and sew’ method, pushing one to explore possibilities out of their comfort zone and expanding skillsets as designers. By creating limitations, we are able to open up to other methods of problem solving to come to either the same or new solutions. Sometimes, the only way to learn new methods is to limit what one is comfortable with and to be placed into an uncomfortable position, where one is forced to evolve and develop through the process. The method of designing comes through the process itself.

This creation of work is an exploration into different construction methods. Many designers have explored this method through their own individual practices to further develop their design process and expand on it. This project was explored using rectangular pieces which were collaged on a pre-existing garment (See Figure 18). The garment was moulded and stuck together to create and form the garment. In addition to this, spray tan was also explored as a print development in garment contouring (See Figure 18). This was later performed on a live body, showcasing the simplicity of this idea as another garment construction (See Figure 19). This new process shows how the designs can be created and developed. Fashion and textile designers continue to push boundaries and widen the context of design in fashion. This body of work attempts to develop audiences’ views towards garment construction in a minimalist way.
4.2 Time

Time can be an essential element when developing designs. Both creation and destruction can be carried out slowly over time. Nonetheless, time is the key element that is often forgotten within the fashion design field. This is due to the market being extremely driven towards fast fashion. In their journal article, *Fast Fashion: Response to changes in the fashion industry*, Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010, pg. 166) states that “Today's fashion market is highly competitive and [there is a] constant need to ‘refresh’ product ranges...”. Due to designs being produced and marketed on such a quick basis, designs aren’t considered in length and are not given the opportunity to develop and change on their own. Maison Margiela used time in his bacteria collection (See Figure 20) and over time, these garments would change and develop within their environments. This collection turned out to be really unique and it was due to the time involved in making the garments. Designers often under value this element and underestimate how valuable it can be in adding to the field of design.

Figure 18 - PVA and linen jacket.

Figure 19 - Presentation and live garment creation.

Figure 20 – Bacteria garments. Maison Margiela.
4.2.1 Project 2 Material Exploration

The second project was focused around a material exploration, with the potential of a transient garment over time. Exploring new and unusual materials led to the discovery of different states of sugar, both caramelized and wax form. Other materials that were explored were alginate, cookie dough, clay, sugar and PVA glue (See Figure 21). The final result was sugar used in combination with textiles anchored onto the body in unusual places (See Figure 22). This was left over time creating a series of three time-lapse videos that show how the body-garment relation evolves and changes through the melting of the sugar. The expression of the garments changing on the body became unique and gave a transient element through the melting affect. The garment easily expressed that it was not made through conventional construction. However, this conceptual design would not be possible with traditional construction methods as it would be not have the possibility of evolving of itself. This project motivated the future degree work in searching for other materials to create garments which explore the use of time in fashion.

4.3 Materials

Material exploration is vital in giving a unique expression to designs. As Hardingham (2016, pg. 99) states “… [C]reating sculptural garments incorporating shape and volume does not always have to be a complex process.” Through a simple change in materiality, designs can evolve in a huge sense. For example, artist Khalil Chishtee explores sculptures through the use of old plastic bags (See Figure 23). This is an excellent example of using different materials because there are no limits when designing. Materials don’t always have to be new and repurposing previous materials can have an even stronger communication.
4.3.1 Project 3 Material Exploration Continuation

The third project involved expanding on an already extensive material library (See Figure 24) and exploring this in conjunction with the body (See Figure 25). This project involved a vast exploration of a variety of materials, resulting in resin and PVA yarn being the most successful (See Figure 26). When completing the project, it was discovered that the most valuable qualities within a material is their mouldability and stiffening abilities. These qualities are essential in this degree project as they anchor and mould around the body therefore limiting the amount of materials that were deemed successful. All materials have the potential for strong expression through form-holding properties and through pushing design possibilities further than just textiles.
In conclusion there are three elements that can expand and improve garments, which are material, time and perception. These three elements are tools to question and change perceptions of traditional conventions in relation to garments. All three projects formed the basis of this degree paper and aided in the research development, through these different elements.
5. Methods

5.1.1 Designing Through Fields

There is no single method when it comes to designing, though being able to create new ideas within a saturated field is a wicked problem many designers have to face. One method designers adopt, is to merge design processes from different fields. Bringing in knowledge from two different areas of design can open up more ideas and a different perspective to solve problems. In the modern design world there is a convergence of art and design fields, not only through inspiration and commercialism but also in the methodology (Koskinen et al., 2011). By placing oneself in another field, knowledge can be gained from this new source of materials and perspectives.

In his book, *Artistic Development in [Fashion] Design*, Thornquist (2010) supports design methodology by suggesting some methods that can persuade a designer to assume another perspective from a different design field when considering material choices. It's safe to assume that developing design would then suggest that there is a need to develop design methodology. The artistic design process is similar to processes within other fields. (Schwab et al., 2013). Merging different design fields is less complicated than designers think and is just one way designs can evolve their design processes.

This degree work takes on fashion from the perspective of an artist. Due to the material exploration undertaken and the decision of the importance towards stiff qualities within the design, this automatically led the garments to becoming sculptural rather than ready to wear fashion. Through utilizing this quality, as a designer, the garments can be sculpted to visualize the essence of a body. Undertaking the artist perception questions the value of garments and whether there is a need for a body to be present. Through this questioning a discovery was made about garment language and the expression of a garment’s individuality when there is no body present.

5.1.2 The Practical Researcher

The practical researcher is one who expands through the process of making or doing. In his book, *Experimental Systems Future Knowledge in Artistic Research*, (Schwab et al., 2013) states that “[t]he means and objects of experimentation are colours, forms, conventions, techniques and technologies. This is not merely a matter of material examination.” Through practical research, designers are able to develop their knowledge while gaining experience from their investigations.

Assuming the position of the practical researcher empowers design as it places the design practice at the core of the research (Koskinen et al, 2011). Designers can design by specially carrying out tests to develop and inspire their ideas simultaneously. Sometimes the only way to find a new idea to test and trial (Thornquist, 2010). Experimentation is not always predictable and the future results can be very uncertain, knowledge is gained from experimentation systems (Schwab et al., 2013).
Throughout this project, it has been a continual cycle of practical research. First, in regards to testing and trialing materials, which is a very practical process. Secondly to producing larger scale testing to see if qualities change within the up-scaling process and the potential when trialed on the body. Thirdly to producing the garments, as in this project the garments were produced first before a decision about placement, composition, styling etc... was confirmed. This process has heavily relied on practical research and knowledge gained through experimentation in challenging the boundaries of garment perception.

5.1.3 The Reflective Practitioner

The reflective practitioner is a designer who needs to halt their creative process and reflect on what has been discovered and the potential for these uses. In the journal article, Developing The Reflective Practitioner: What, So What, What Now. Brown et al. (2015, pg. 705) states that “… the acquisition of knowledge is an internal change process that reflects back and builds on the learner’s life experience.” Reflective practice is an essential part of the process and helps determine the different values within the decision making process. Reflective practice helps develop skill sets, allowing one to achieve higher levels of awareness within their processes (Brown et al., 2015).

Reflection was extremely critical for this project to understand the value of the discoveries and challenging conventions. Again like the practical research, this role was continuously in motion throughout the project. It was an essential tool, to evaluate whether the project was meeting the requirements for the aim. It helped in understanding what qualities in the material testing was necessary for the project and what direction this investigation would then lead. Reflections helped present the idea whether the body is necessary for garments and maybe without the body, garments develop their own language.

5.1.4 The Critical Practitioner

The act of reflecting aids a change of perspective and to critique not only one’s own work but make comparisons to others (Thorququist, 2010). Critiquing is an integral part to reflection to remove oneself from the current design situation and reflect on all elements. In his book, Design Methods, Jones (1992, pg. 57) states “Critical decisions include the initial assumptions, the objectives, the choice of models, the choice of strategy and the procedure for changing strategy.” He also argues that critical decisions are important within the design process as they aid and develop the process in which one designs, through their decisions (Jones, 1992). Reflective and practical research based methods were necessary within this paper, essential processes to discover and evaluate the qualities and potential within different materials when designing.
When reflecting, the designer needed to weigh all the potentials and possibilities within the discovery of the material, to question the value of this material within the project and within fashion design. This was essential to check the pathway progress and to evaluate the findings and the associated connotations with garments. This project heavily criticized the value of the garment within fashion design and on the body, as the aim was to establish a new idea within fashion. Through critical reflection, the project was able to evolve and develop to meet the aim requirements for this project.
5.2 Design of Experiments

5.2.1 Part One

5.2.1.1 Material Testing - Leading to Decision for Decided Material

This project started with an initial material decision which was to work with a refined material choice from previous experimentations. While considering the knowledge gained from previous project material libraries as stated in the design program, a calculated decision was made to develop some materials further that had previously shown design potential. Materials then underwent a series of tests to expand on their different qualities such as mouldability, stiffness, uniqueness, texture or aesthetic. Once the tests were completed, an evaluation and reflection was necessary to determine the materials value within the project - weighing up and considering the different qualities and potential. Once it was determined that a material would be used, it was then tested on a larger scale with the body. Gauging what happens to the material once created in larger scale, different tests were again performed with the material.

5.2.1.2 Movement Test (Body)

The next part of the experiments was to test the movement within the material and the affect it had with the body. This was conducted through practical research exploring photography and video to record body movements with the material. Through recording this performance, the designer was able to later analyze the potential within these movements. A decision was required to be made as to whether there was further potential from this series of experiments.

5.2.1.3 Reflections/Decisions/Evaluate (Context, Approach, etc)

Reflections and analyzing comes after the movement and images have been taken into account. A series of decisions must be made in order to determine what the next course in the project will be. These decisions are vital to assess whether the project requirements are being met which then dictates the pathway the project takes. For example, whether there is a requirement for narrowing the experimental materials or a narrowing of tests that push for further expressions within garments. Once the designer has made all the decisions and tests to fulfill the requirements for the material, then they can go into a production mode.
5.2.2 Part two

5.2.2.1 Styling/Investigation

A series of styling photos are then created without judgment. An assortment of various clothing items and accessories are sourced to be able to style and create a feeling to the different elements within the project. This was undertaken as a type of fitting, which was able to enhance the produced garments. After numerous images are taken, they are then printed and evaluated.

5.2.2.2 Evaluation

The styling photos are analyzed and separated into key ideas. These ideas are discussed and decided upon before another series of photos are taken, where the adjustments are made and other elements explored. This is analyzed again and the key elements are identified. This process is repeated until the designer is happy with the final result.
6. Development

6.1 Materials

The development of this degree project started with a continuation of a refined material investigation. It was decided that there would be a continuation with two specific material categories. One category focused on sugar and the other on a combination of metal and PVA yarns in knits.

6.2 PVA and Metal Yarn

These yarns were chosen due to their unusual nature within knitwear and to further investigate their potential within garments. Exploring construction methods through these yarns to create a new potential for shape within garment construction.

A series of different combinations were created in order to test different yarn thread inputs and metal qualities. Colour combination investigations were incorporated through the different metal combinations and output a result of theses combinations. Working with plain knit can be limiting due to limitations from the metal knitting machine, although variations of stripes were taken into consideration within the knit developments. Creation of a thin stripe knit created an effect similar to jewelry when the PVA yarn dissolved after contact with water. The knits underwent different spraying and dipping methods to gauge whether the disintegration could be controlled (See Figure 27). These tests were not deemed to be successful due to the uncontrollable element of sprawl when the PVA absorbed water.

Quick forming experiments were performed on a body where water was targeted to certain areas to construct a garment (See Figure 28). These experiments became very messy and therefore no purpose came through these experiments, which deemed them unsuccessful.

A final continuation incorporating the metal yarn was executed, forming one garment, which was presented and discussed in the first seminar. This garment was created first with a textile design, which was then placed on the body and formed together. A sugarcoated bodice was then used in combination with the knit design to add another element through colour (See Figure 29). This was the extent of the metal and PVA yarn experimentation as a decision was carried out to restrict materials choices and continue with sugar.
6.3 Decided Material

6.3.1 Sugar

The beginnings of these experiments were based on two previously sampled states of sugar (sugar wax and caramelized). Sugar is a metamorphic material that is able to evolve into a variety of states such as: spun, wax, caramelized, crystalized and as a form of coating. Crystalized sugar was chosen as an element to create textures and develop garments or accessories. This process for sugar crystallization is time consuming. Roughly crystals could form between seven to fourteen days of being saturated within the solution. Therefore while the previous yarn exploration was undergone, the sugar crystals were set to grow. The time element was a large limitation within the project and this was taken into consideration through the different explorations.
6.4 Sugar Coating (Testing)

Discovery of sugar having the ability to act as a coating was an enormous turning point within this degree work. This was discovered by accident when a batch of the sugar crystal samples fell into the solution and were immediately removed to dry. The coating gave unique qualities to the different fabrics, which included: stiffness, cracking texture and the ability to dissolve when placed in water. Focus of the project shifted to the stiff quality this treatment presented (See Figure 30). As stated in previous projects, this was a vital quality that became an aim to explore within this degree project.

![Figure 30 – Sugar coating formed from sugar crystals.](image)

6.5 Form Experimentation

Progression with sugar experimentation continued into garment forming experimentation leading to the creation of a ‘dress’ without the aid of sewing. Exploring this method of ‘construction’ through the forming ability and potential when created on a body (See Figure 31). Once the dress dried and was removed from the mould, it was discovered to be extremely lightweight and shape holding (See Figure 32). The fabric cracked when any movement was forced on the fabric enhancing the ability for the texture to create textural elements, creating another unique quality of embellishment to this coating.

![Figure 31 – Two piece silk coated dress in sugar, formed on a mannequin with monofilament and dried.](image)

![Figure 32 – Sugar coated dress dried in a ‘dress’ shape on a body.](image)
A series of movements was performed with the dress. Movements performed were walking, sitting, lying down and rolling (See Figure 33). They were performed until the dress fell off the model, leading to a ‘sculptural’ expression (See Figure 34), displaying another element that became a consideration within this degree project. These garments could have the ability, through the coating, to create shapes and forms on the body.

A transient element was discovered through movement in the form of the fabric changing. Bending and moving within the fabrics, aided the fabric to create a greater cracking effect. Creating a transient textile property, where the pattern on the garment would be affected through movement. Presenting possibilities to change the garments appearance through a performance that could be incorporated within the final exhibition.

6.6 Evaluation

Evaluations of these experiments were implemented to decide whether the project was moving down a desired pathway and whether there was a need for wider explorations to be undertaken. Decisions were made to a particular colour palette and further experimentation was implemented (See Figure 35).
6.7 Continuation Testing

Sugar coating experimentation continued to evaluate which materials reacted with the coating (See Figure 36). The best materials consisted of natural fibres due to the excellent absorbency of the coating. Natural fibres absorbed more than materials created with synthetic fibres. A noticeable quality was many of the fabrics would remain lightweight after the drying process was complete and held shape extremely well.

Figure 36 - Fabric test swatches and sugar coating sampling.

Two different methods of coating application were trialed (dipping and painting). The dipping method was quickly deemed most successful due to the time fabric can absorb the solution. The painting application was deemed unsuccessful due to the complete collapse of a garment when removed from the mould (See Figure 37).

6.8 Decisions

6.8.1 Archetype: Little Black Dress

A series of decisions were implemented to gain further direction within the project. Five archetypical dresses where first chosen to be explored. Shortly after this decision another decision narrowed that choice down to one – The Little Black Dress. An investigation would be carried out as a material evolution within this archetype. To begin the evolution an original or starting point was created (See Figure 38) becoming the basis for the material evolution to begin.
6.9 Dresses Production

A copy of the original was created and then coated and moulded (See Figure 39). The evolution would then progress with slight transitions, first with sheer black tulle and a traditional houndstooth. The tulle dress was first to be coated and moulded to a mannequin, when removed the coating was destroyed (See Figure 40). Due to the fabric’s inability to absorb the solution, the garment would become extremely fragile. Presenting limitations with the tulle and its inability to hold shape, creating a softer element to be considered within the final exhibition. Destroying the coating created an interesting textural effect with the sugar.

The houndstooth dress was the second dress to be produced and moulded in a sitting position (See Figure 41) leading to an idea of different bodily compositions to form garments. Collapsible moulds were created as an alternative to forming on a mannequin, creating a better solution for removal once the sculpture had dried. The drying process took two weeks to dry one dress, which would be major time consideration within the project. Once dry the sculpture held shape and form extremely well and opened up new ideas in terms of presentation styles in the form of exhibitions.
Figure 41 - Creation of the black houndstooth dress.

To determine the other body forming positions a series of compositional drawings were quickly sketched. Five different positions were chosen based on position and height (See Figure 42). Collapsable moulds were then created based on these sketches (See Figure 43).

6.10 Refined Movement Tests

A refined movement test was completed. A partially sewn black dress was coated and formed in a sitting position (See Figure 44). The aim of this experiment was to control the breakage that would occur through the movement. The shapes created through this film were very interesting and had potential for further development (See Figure 45). The element of control was not guaranteed; the dress could break in many different ways. Partial sewing could give limited control through this method (See Figure 46).

Figure 44 – Sitting black sugar coated dress drying.

Figure 42 & 43 – A series of drawings with proposed mould body positions and an example of collapsable mould (made from glad wrap and tape).

Figure 45 – Dress before and after the performance.
6.11 Production

Dress production continued with material development from the fabric colour wheel (See Figure 47). The aim currently in the project was to produce as many different dresses as possible (See Figure 48) exploring different materials, colours and positions.

Figure 47 - Different materials from the colour wheel for dress production.

Figure 48 - Production of dress sculptures, from sugar coating and drying to accumulated sculptures.
6.12 First Photo Shoot

A styling session was devised to trial different styling possibilities with the different sculptures (See Figure 49). Garments were trialed with and without the body and all the images would be evaluated later. The aim of the shoot was to quickly try compositions, placements, materials, garments and colour combinations. Styling accessories and garments were sourced from friends or second hand stores. The accessories were altered through colours and sugar crystallization.

Figure 49 - Some pictures taken from the first photo shoot.

6.13 Evaluation

After the first photo shoot, key images were selected out for important elements that were considered to be of value to the final degree work (See Figure 50). Elements such as: compositions, material and colour combinations and other elements of value. The sculptures, when dressed, were able to communicate an idea and personality through the presence and absence of a body, leading to decision to continue with photo shooting quick ideas.

Figure 50 - Key element pictures taken from the first photo shoot.
6.14 Second Photo Shoot

Another photo shoot was completed to photograph more dresses, testing new and different compositions aided through the addition of more sculptures, garments and accessories (See Figure 51). Sculptures were placed in different positions, compositions and either dressed or arranged.

Figure 51 - Images from the second photo shoot.

6.15 Evaluation

A second photo shoot evaluation was completed and key elements selected from the styled images. At the completion of this evaluation six final compositions had been decided upon (See Figure 52) including a potential for another two sculptural compositions to be tweaked within the next shooting session.

Figure 52 - Key images from the second shoot.
6.16 Third Photo Shoot

A final photo shoot was taken finalizing final sculptural compositions (See Figure 53) including adjusting lighting to match across all the images. This process was implemented in the exact manner as the previous two shoots.

Figure 53 - Images from the third photo shoot.

6.17 Evaluation

The final evaluation was executed and final images were selected (See Figure 54) guiding the projects process to evaluated presentation methods and context. It was discovered that the sculptures were able to communicate the idea of social relationships. They are able to achieve this through their ability to portray personality through garment language, being presented as a collective though regarded in their separate identities. Three sculpture series were developed and added to the collection. They were developed through similar smaller informal styling sessions.

Figure 54 - Key images from the third photo shoot.

6.18 Final Compositional Evaluations

In regards to arrangements of the different pieces, a small series of positional tests were formed in a ‘line-up’ format. This was to arrange sculptures based on formations and colours. During this line up one sculpture was removed, now considered to be a non-result due to the static sense within the bodily shape. The brightness in the colour and fabric created disconnect within the sculpture series and therefore necessitated its removal. Ten sculptures series were chosen and would be presented in the final degree work. Another evaluation came within the aim to name the sculptures, to enhance the audiences feeling and connection with the sculptures. Titles were developed for each sculpture relating to social relationships which encompassed the idea of the sculptures.
6.19 Accessories

The accessory component of this project continued while the dress sculptures were being produced. Creation of the accessories was through a slower process, as the crystal needed time to develop and grow. Alternatively other accessories were altered in other forms through colour (spray paint or fabric). Sample tests were trialed on a variety of materials to determine the possibilities for crystallization. Three varieties of sugar: raw, muscovado and white were trialed for crystallization qualities. Testing these different varieties allowed possibilities for coloured crystallization (See Figure 55). After an evaluation, white sugar was determined to have the most potential within this project. Accessories to be trialed included watches, sunglasses, shoes, stocking, hats, belts and underwear which would be purchased from second hand stores and altered in one form or another (See Figure 56). The purpose of these accessories would be to style with the sculptures and aid their personalities through colours and textures.

Figure 55 - Crystalization tests with different sugars and different materials.

Figure 56 - Accessories covered in material and crystalized or painted to change colour.
7. Design Process - Finals

7.1 Scene 1 ‘The Love Scene’

Scenario one involved the black and white houndstooth sculpted dress. The first composition felt very conventional and as a literal ‘dressing’ of the sculpture (See Figure 57). The first decision made was to change the state of thinking to a less conventional sense because it felt common and conventional. The sculpture was then placed in a different position to lie on the floor adding different elements to assess what could enhance the feeling of this dress (See Figure 58). A pop of colour was added through a red puffer jacket, this felt very successful because it added vibrancy to the image (See Figure 59). The composition of the dress and jacket felt under developed and needed to be changed. There was potential when the jacket emulated another sense of a body creating the idea of having a ‘soft sculpture’ in this frame. The decision was then made to bring the dress back to its designed sitting position and then the jacket was placed with the dress (See Figure 60).

Figure 57 - Houndstooth dressed conventionally.

Figure 58 & 59 - Lying houndstooth adding other elements, lying houndstooth with pop of red.

Figure 60 - Sitting houndstooth and then adding the pop of red.
The colour red worked really well within this scene although another colour was necessary to balance the frame. One yellow heel was added into the scene dressed with a nude stocking to tone down the colour intensity (See Figure 61). Through the addition of this small element, the scene felt more balanced and the red was not too overpowering. Another decision was made to fill the jacket because it was needed to convincingly emulate another body (See Figure 62). After stuffing the jacket, this scene now felt complete, although some extra photos were taken with the shoe being removed (See Figure 63). Once the images were printed and easy to compare together, it was then confirmed that the scene felt completed. The interaction of the two sculptures and powerful colour of red lead to the decision of its title ‘The Love Scene’ (See Figure 62).
7.2 Scene 2 ‘The Argument’

This scene involved the black sculpted dress, where the back had been cut to be able to be placed on a body. The original idea for this dress was to be placed on the body; therefore that is where the starting point began (See Figure 64). Adding one layer underneath the top to distort one arm (See Figure 65), this was done to make the dressing seem less conventional and to place a long sleeve top under the dress. This was interesting but something was still lacking. Gloves were added, although now this scene became very dark because of the variety of blacks in the scene (See Figure 66).

The model performed movements and this created an interesting aspect to the work (See Figure 67). Tension was created between the stiffness of the dress holding one shape and the shape of the movement from the body. This created unexpected positions by the dress moving in the opposite direction to the body, forming an interesting conversation around the sculpted dress. A purple party dress was added to the scene adding vibrancy (See Figure 68). The dresses were then performed in combination with the body (See Figure 69). The purple dress was placed underneath the sculpture but this caused an imbalance of colours (See Figure 70). A striped skirt was placed on top, which added colour vibrancy to the scene but the positioning of the skirt felt too placed (See Figure 71). Testing different positions of the purple dress was trialed and movements performed (See Figure 72). This felt it was moving too far away from original idea of the dress. A half sewn pink version of the dress was placed on the body, to test if this added a new element (See Figure 73). The colour was a nice addition, though there was something that was not complete with this material combination.
Another sculpted dress was added into the scene (See Figure 74), this was tried in a different holding position with the model but an element of colour still was needed. The tartan-sculpted dress wore the purple party dress (See Figure 75) while continuing to be placed in different positions with the body. A good element in these photos was the fullness in the skirt from the purple dress, although there was an imbalance in the scene, as the purple was a very strong colour. A series of tests were taken by removing the body and replacing it with the patterned skirt (See Figure 76), placing the skirt in a different position than it originally was placed. The colours within the scene were very overpowering and the tartan sculpture was removed (See Figure 77). The colours and stripes were very effective in combination with the sculptured dress but the dress did not feel complete. An evaluation was undertaken with the printed images and it was decided that there needed to be a further development with this sculpture.
Another photo shoot session was commenced and the first images involved the black dress and a chair (See Figure 78), placing the dress in slightly different positions and then incorporating with the body (See Figure 79). The body took too much focus within the pictures and was removed. Leading to adding accessories to see if this improved the images (See Figure 80). After printing these images and evaluating, it was decided that the first image of the simple chair and dress was the most effective image. Creating the result of an argumentation between the dress and chair and therefore being titled ‘The Argument’ (See Figure 81).
7.3 Scene 3 ‘The Balancing Act’

Scenario three went through a long and vigorous process of development than the other scenes. This scene incorporated multiple dresses, of which each were individually developed and then positioned together. The first dress that was developed was the green tartan sculpted dress being positioned in combination with the purple dress and placed in different positions (See Figure 82). The purple was very intense and overpowering within the images. The sculpted dress was then positioned in various positions and used in combination with a trench coat (See Figure 83). Once these images were printed and evaluated, this lead to the decision of a continuation in styling.

The second shoot began with the other two sculpted dresses (green chiffon and green houndstooth dresses). A decision was made that this scene would be monochromatic through the colour green. Two dresses were first trialed by positioning them differently (See Figure 84). A pink tulle soft dress was trialed but quickly removed (See Figure 85), as the colours were not agreeable. Green glass bottles were incorporated to increase the combination of colour (See Figure 86). Otto (A dog) was able to walk freely in and out of the scenes (See Figure 87). The trials continued by placing the dresses in different positions and pairing them with different accessories (See Figure 88). A blue sculpted dress was positioned in the scene in various positions on a body, adding another element (See Figure 89), though deemed as not successful compositions. Following was to incorporate movement through the body’s interaction (See Figure 90 & 91), the body was positioned differently within the scene and accessories were added (See Figure 92). Attempting to aid or change the perspective of colouration within the scene. After an evaluation was undergone with printed images, the decision was made that there were many elements and further development narrowing these elements was required.

Figure 82. 83 & 84 - Green tartan sculpture with purple dress, incorporating a trench coat within the scene, positioning the green sculpted dresses.

Figure 85 & 86 - Two dresses with tulle dress, removing tulle dress and adding bottles.
Figure 87 & 88 - Allowing Otto to walk in the scene, adding green shoes in the scene.

Figure 89. 90. 91 & 92 - Placing a blue dress on body within the scene, changing the body's position, body interacting with the sculptures, body positioned differently with added accessories.

A third photo shoot proceeded for the final development, focusing on the green houndstooth dress and Otto, allowing Otto to interact with the dress (See Figure 93) while slowly adding accessories. Continuing with the monochromatic theme, another sculpted dress was incorporated within the composition, placed differently and including accessories (See Figure 94 & 95). Otto would continue to walk in and out of the scenes naturally. The green chiffon sculpted dress was replaced with the tartan-sculpted dress.
Another series of shots were taken altering the accessories and positions of the dresses. The green chiffon dress was incorporated back into the scene (See Figure 96) presenting interesting elements although the composition needed further development. Firstly positioned lying on the floor in various positions (See Figure 97), the dresses positions were altered into ‘sculptural’ positions, with some being placed more angled (See Figure 98). This portrayed a further stage of development, though continuation was necessary to consider alternative options. The pink tulle dress was placed back within the scene to trial the idea of four dresses within a scene. Attempting to twist the tulle dress position variously to balance on each other, creating an interconnecting relationship between the dresses. Following printing images and evaluating, a final sculptural composition was decided. Due to the literal balancing, a thought provoked discussion about balancing social relationships and therefore this sculpture was titled ‘The Balancing Act’ (See Figure 97).

Figure 97 & 98 - Three dresses placed in ‘sculptural position’, three dresses balancing against one another.
7.4 Scene 4 ‘Support Network’

Scene four incorporated a light pink cotton sculpture dress. It was firstly placed lying on the floor and Otto was allowed to walk and interact with the dress (See Figure 99). A ‘soft sculpture’ black long sleeve top was then incorporated on top of the dress with a variety of shoes and accessories in different positions. The ‘soft sculpture’ was positioned in a variety of placements (See Figure 100). Shortly after, a decision was made that these elements provided little value to the scene and therefore were removed. Different garments and accessories were incorporated to create alternative colour combinations and textures (See Figure 101). A change in the sculpture’s position was required and the dress was placed in an upside down position with heels and a jacket included (See Figure 102). The jacket was then placed in various positions with matching pants (See Figure 103). The black colour became overpowering within this scene and therefore the jacket, pants and heels were removed.

The dress changed to a standing upright position and a white dress was dressed onto the sculpture (See Figure 104). Requirements for another colour in this scene and green heels were included and placed in different positions. Meanwhile, Otto was interacting with the scene at his will (See Figure 105). The red puffer jacket was dressed on the sculpture and placed on another small red puffer jacket with a black high heel (See Figure 106). The warmth of the colours felt overpowering once again and needed to be minimized. The black top was incorporated back within the scene and dressed underneath the puffer jackets, while shoes were added (See Figure 107). The positioning with the sculpture continued and was placed lying down with the green houndstooth sculpture in a different position. Pink tulle fabric was incorporated with different accessories being placed in various positions (See Figure 108).
The dresses then changed position again, adding in the pink tulle and a Thermos in slightly different positions (See Figure 109). After incorporating a trench coat and sunglasses (See Figure 110), focus then shifted solely to the pink sculpted dress being incorporated with the trench coat. Thereafter different accessories were styled and tested to gauge for possible material matching. A stocking covered heel was added with another green heel (See Figure 111). The pattern and colour combination forced a shift in focus and therefore the heels were covered in the stocking completely (See Figure 112). A pop of colour was incorporated with a pink fabric, first positioned on the ‘head’; thereafter it was moved to the pocket (See Figure 113). This felt like a completed composition. The jacket was removed just to take photos with a different element (See Figure 114). The dress was placed in a different position on a stool but this felt it was moving away too far from the previous finished image (See Figure 115).

Figure 109. 110 & 111 - Dresses changed position with different elements added, incorporating a trench coat, position changed and stocking with green heel added.
Another styling process commenced with the pink dress, trench coat and a leather ‘soft sculpture’ dress (See Figure 116). A fur coat was arranged on the pink dress and quickly removed. The trench coat was replaced on the pink dress and the ‘soft sculpture’ dress adjusted (See Figure 117). The green fur coat was incorporated with heels on the ‘soft sculpture’ dress. The colours became overwhelming and were removed from the scene (See Figure 118). ‘Soft sculptured’ feet were arranged in the scene in different positions (See Figure 119). This scene remained chaotic and a pull back needed to be executed. Evaluations led to the decision to choose an image from the previous photo shooting session. During a line up evaluation, this sculpture was placed next to another titled ‘The Fall Out’. Therefore this sculpture earned the title ‘Support Network’ due to its seemingly supporting position beside its companion (See Figure 114).
7.5 Scene 5 ‘The Affair’

Scenario five involved the purple sculpted dress, firstly positioned lying on the floor (See Figure 120). Following this, a black wrap dress was dressed on the sculpture but did not add any value (See Figure 121). An orange dress, green shoes, handbag and hat were positioned to the scene (See Figure 122). The dress covered most of the sculpture and needed to be altered. Placed standing upright, the heels and hat were removed (See Figure 123). Purple shoes were replaced within the scene (See Figure 124) and created an interesting colour combination.

More refinement was necessary to further develop the scene. The bag was placed in various positions on the sculpture, while accessories were incorporated (See Figure 125). Crystalized blue sunglasses created an interesting colour and texture combination. The hat was removed and a tartan shawl added (See Figure 126), but later the hat returned into the frame (See Figure 127). The shawl hid the sleeves of the orange dress and that created a strange shape of the body, the tartan shawl then fell to the floor (See Figure 128). After an evaluation, it was decided to remove the shawl completely as it overloaded the frame with patterns and colours.
During the second styling session the orange dress was altered on the sculpture and incorporated with a fur coat (See Figure 129). A change in scene was required and all items removed. A pink dress was dressed on the sculpture and later incorporated with the orange dress (See Figure 130), becoming overpowering and the orange dress removed as a result. The pink dress was placed in different positions on the sculpture and paired with different accessories (See Figure 131). A decision to change the garment was necessary therefore the pink dress was replaced with alternative tops and accessories (See Figure 132).

Another ‘soft sculpture’ element was incorporated and the sculpture styled with the orange dress and accessories (See Figure 133). Focus shifted to arrange different compositional elements. After an evaluation, a necessary pullback was required to simplify the frame due to the orange dress’s pattern being very busy, smaller elements became the focus while styling. It was ascertained that the green was a necessary element in contrast to the orange dress which aimed to create colour balance within the scene (See Figure 134). This combination was found to be extremely effective being incorporated with purple sculpture. These elements were trialed in different positions until coming to a conclusion on the final composition (See Figure 135). After an analysis of this sculptures personality portrayal, she was identified as a harlot. The positioning of the orange dress in a scandalous manner led to the title ‘The Affair’.
7.6 Scene 6 ‘Isolated’

Scene six began with the pink cotton dress sculpture, which was styled with various garments beginning with being positioned in a scene with a red knitted sculpted dress (See Figure 136). It was identified that the tartan skirt paired cohesively with the pink sculpture. A tartan dog bed was incorporated to test the colour balance (See Figure 137), though the bed was very intense pattern and colour wise. A body in the tartan dress was combined into the scene and tulle was placed in the dog bed to attempt to balance the colours (See Figure 138). Otto was encouraged to walk through the scene, as the model changed positions (See Figure 139) eventually creating a chaotic scene. Quick tests were preformed incorporating a pink dress underneath the green tartan dress. This failed to add a positive element to the frame (See Figure 140). A decision was made to change and therefore the body was removed and replaced with a black ‘soft sculpture’ dress. In addition the pink sculpture was dressed in a reflective rain jacket (See Figure 141) leading to the black ‘soft sculpture’ being removed from the scene, while Otto walked around freely (See Figure 142).
Following this, a long sleeve black top and cap was added to the rain jacket (See Figure 143). The black cap was removed shortly after, while Otto was encouraged again to interact within the scene (See Figure 144). A decision was made to simplify the composition. Focus shifted to solely the pink sculpture dressed in the black top and positioned upside down with an Ikea bag (See Figure 145). Working around colours and positions of the sculpture, further development was necessary within the placement and led to returning the dress upright and restyling the tartan skirt (See Figure 146). The skirt was placed in various positions (See Figure 147). Accessories were added gauge value and potential within the scene (See Figure 148). Orange lace was placed underneath although it encouraged a false connotation similar to a lampshade (See Figure 149). Due to the patterns being very vibrant in the tartan skirt, it was necessary that the composition remain as simplified as possible. Quick trials were implemented adding in a yellow sculpted dress (See Figure 150), further complicating the frame. Additionally, adding different accessories gauging whether this would benefit the composition (See Figure 151). After another evaluation, a decision was made to have the sculpture with the skirt (See Figure 147). Analyzing the sculpture’s social connotations aided to the element of an isolated personality, therefore titled ‘Isolation’.
7.7 Scene 7 ‘The Fall Out’

Scene seven incorporated the red sculptured dress. Firstly it was placed in a sitting position (See Figure 152), dressed with a top and a hat and a pair of boots later being incorporated (See Figure 153). Following, replacement in the hat was executed with the incorporation of a belt (See Figure 154). An element of colour was necessary to brighten the scene and therefore shoes were replaced and socks were added (See Figure 155). Afterwards incorporating a large fur jacket and continuing with various shoes (See Figure 156).

An evaluation was executed and everything was removed. A pink dress was dressed on the red sculpture (See Figure 157) sampled with different shoes and various accessories (See Figure 158). The sculpture was changed and positioned upside down while wearing the pink dress with white heels (See Figure 159). This composition was simple yet sophisticated. Another sculptured dress was incorporated in the background and placed in various positions (See Figure 160). The second sculpture was dressed with another dress and various accessories (See Figure 161). Otto would interact with the sculptures (See Figure 162). This composition was moving further away from the aimed placement and a decision was implemented to select a previous image composition (See Figure 159). Due to this sculptures apparent fallen position, it was titled ‘The Fall Out’ to symbolize the aftermath of a break up.

Figure 152. 153 & 154 - Red sitting sculpture, adding top and accessories, changing accessories.

Figure 155 & 156 - Changing accessories and dressing, adding the fur coat while changing shoes.

Figure 157. 158. 159. 160. 161 & 162 - Red sculpture dressed in pink dress, adding different accessories, flipping sculpture upside down, adding another sculpted dress, dressing the second sculpted dress, Otto interacting with the sculptures
Scene eight incorporated the blue lace sculpture, which had the element of transparency due to the lace fabric. It was the most important element to highlight the depth with the sculpted movement of the dress. The initial test shots were the dress alone on an angled position (See Figure 163), incorporating a soft red dress within the lace dress to add a different colour within the dress. This style was evaluated as a non-result due to the colours not having enough contrast with red and navy blue (See Figure 164). Another change was implemented to arrange orange lace fabric within the dress in various ways (See Figure 165). The aim was to achieve balance between the navy and orange colours.

The colour contrast became extremely interesting and paired cohesively with the lace. These images were printed and evaluated and decided there was a requirement for an accessory component to be included. Shoes were tested to evaluate colour combinations in unsuccessful attempts (See Figure 166). Further development became necessary to complete this frame. Another garment was required to incorporate as a fabric communicated a separate idea to garments within the collective. The lace sculpture was developed and styled with various garments (See Figure 167). A 'soft sculpture' was positioned within the frame and incorporated with two other tulle-sculpted dresses (See Figure 168).

An evaluation displayed the complication within the composition and all extra elements were removed to work solely with the sculpture. The sculpture was initially positioned into a sitting position, after a lineup trial, was positioned on the floor and incorporated with a yellow heel (See Figure 169). This decision came after an evaluation of all the sculpture compositions which revealed that another dress positioned on the floor was required to achieve balance. This sculpture became ‘Unbalanced’ due to the position on the floor and mirrored the opposite of ‘The Balancing Act’.
7.9 Scene 9 ‘The Third Wheel’

This composition began by involving the two blue sculpted dresses (See Figure 170). A decision which came after the lineup assessment, due to the necessity of incorporating different tones of blue to balance the colouration. Various accessories began to be incorporated with the dresses (See Figure 171). This attempt was quickly deemed as unsuccessful. Following this, a black dress was incorporated without stuffing in various positions (See Figure 172). A ‘soft sculpture’ knitted jumper was placed and noted for it complementary colours within the frame (See Figure 173). Following this, the black dress was removed to simplify the composition (See Figure 174) which appeared to create a balance between the sculptures (See Figure 175). The final decided composition was selected from the evaluated images (See Figure 176). This composition was titled ‘The Third Wheel’ due to the scene incorporating three sculptures creating a unique social relationship between them.

Figure 170 & 171 - Two blue sculptures, two sculptures with accessory tests.

Figure 172 & 173 - Added black dress, adding of the ‘soft sculpture’.

Figure 174 & 175 - Removal of the black dress, jumper positional change

Figure 176 - Final scene composition ‘The Third Wheel’
Scene ten was the final sculptural piece created. This scene involved the two sculpted tulle dresses. These dresses presented as flat within the collection due to their fibres inability to absorb the solution. They were incorporated to highlight the textile texture created by the sugar coating. Positioned floating and facing each other, a decided stance to be the counterpart to ‘The Argument’ sculpture (See Figure 178). Another decision was concluded to aim for a simplified composition to highlight the textural element. Beginning with simple styling of the pink tulle sculpture with another dress and styled in various manners. The pink tulle dress was notably more fragile than the black leading to a decision leave the pink tulle dress. An idea of three dresses came into consideration through the incorporation of the original Little Black Dress (See Figure 179), possibly introducing the literal idea of the evolution. After an evaluation, it was concluded that this idea would be too literal and the third dress was subsequently removed. Focus shifted to the black tulle sculpture and similarly dressed with different dresses (See Figure 180), an evaluation was implemented with the printed images and decided one of the compositions (See Figure 181). This composition was titled ‘The Promise’ after the evaluation of the interaction between the two dresses and aimed to oppose ‘The Argument’.

Figure 178, 179, 180 & 181 - Placed facing each other, addition of the Little Black Dress, dressing the black tulle dress, final composition decided.
8. Design Rationale

8.1 Crucial Decisions

When it came to making crucial design decisions within this project, a comparative evaluation was carried out in accordance with the aim. It was extremely important that the project’s trajectory stayed on target to achieve the desired goals of challenging garment perceptions and creating a relationship between garment and object. This meant there was a constant reflection and evaluation process continuing in the background for the entire project. Key design decisions within the project included:

- Exclusively using sugar coating and crystals.
- Exploring a variety of fabrics for colour and material exploration.
- Exploring a dress archetype - Little Black Dress.
- Different sculptural bodily positions.
- Developing compositional scenarios.
- Removing the body, creating an object that lives independently.
- Repeating key elements such as: Soft sculptures, more than one dress and incorporating dressing through garments or accessories.

These decisions defined the project pathway throughout the design process allowing the dresses to evolve beyond garments and create a conversation within the fields of art and fashion. This in turn aided the project to meet the necessary requirements for a successful result.

8.2 Justification

These decisions were concluded in order to be able to refine the design process throughout the project. Enabling the method to end at a successful final result that would meet the requirements of the aim. Exploring one dress archetype allowed the dress to become recognizable to an audience and to push the material exploration with different chosen fabrics (See Figure 182). Choosing five body positions catered for different heights within the compositions (See Figure 183) and created diversity within the different scenarios. Photo styling became essential to aid the decisions of the different compositions within the scenes. Elements such as material, colour combinations and language enabled the sculpture to communicate within the scenarios (See Figure 184). Removing the body allowed sculptures to have an effective means of communication to an audience (See Figure 185), limiting their focus on solely the displays that are placed in front of them. This created a cohesive collection through the repetition of certain elements such as soft sculptures and using multiple dresses within a configuration (See Figure 186). These elements all contributed to creating a successful design result.

Figure 182 & 183 - Chosen fabrics, collapsable mould in sitting position.
8.3 Other Alternatives Considered

Alternatives were tested and evaluated throughout the process, using methods that included the body and exploring body movement within the sculptures (See Figure 187). These experiments opened up the projects for potential performative aspects. Alternatively being presented through either a series of films or a live performance. Another alternative considered was the definition of a model, whether a dog could fit within this standard. Otto was trialed as a potential model within the work, allowing him to interact with the sculptures (See Figure 188). He provided a natural appearance within the scenes, creating normalized situations. His fur was a nice element in texture, compared with the use of fabrics and accessories within the configurations. Through evaluating it was decided to move along another pathway when considering both of these alternatives.

Figure 184 & 185 - Photo styling sculptures, absence of the body.

Figure 186 - Key elements in a soft red puffer sculpture.

Figure 187 & 188 - Movement in sculpture, Otto with a sculpture.
8.4 Trade Offs Evaluated

Placing the body within the compositions could steal the focus away from challenging the perspective of the garments. A nice element was the shapes that were formed away from the body, due to the stiff elements within the sculptures. By the time the body was tested within the sculptures, decided compositions had been confirmed without the body. At the current time it was evaluated that placing a body within the sculptures communicated a different element about the body in relation to the sculpture, rather than seeing the dresses purely as an art object.

*Otto* was an enjoyable new element that created some balance within certain constructions, though there were other elements that proved to be stronger in their communication to the audience. By considering *Otto* to perform live and interact with the dresses, this lead the project again to possibly contain a performative aspect. It was decided that the best form of presentation for this project would be a static exhibition allowing the audience to focus solely on the key elements presented.

8.5 Argumentation

To challenge audience’s preconceive perceptions of garments one must change it’s purpose. Placing the garments within an art context and removing the body, successfully challenges a garment’s traditional purpose of being wearable. Emulating the body through sugar coated fabrics, aids audiences in relating to the garments and understanding preconceived notions. This comes with the understanding that almost any audience can relate to garments, they are worn daily and there is a general understanding through the experience of wearing.

Dressing the sculptures allows them to develop a personality or persona; they are able to communicate through the use of the sugar coating, which emulates body language. After evaluation the best presentation method for this project would be a static exhibition allowing audiences to walk around and view each of the different sculptures, through different perspectives whilst gazing at details and examining each sculpture to assess all the different elements within each scene.
9. Result

The final result of this thesis is a body of work that consists of ten sculptured scenarios. These scenarios are well balanced and have variety in height and compositions, highlighting individual pieces that are seen as a collective. By sharing key elements such as multiple dresses, soft sculptures, dressed and accessorized they represent the body without having a body present.

This work aims to question the perception of garments and challenges the relationship between garment and object. The work is able to highlight human social relationships and connotations within the garments, aided by titles that can portray these feelings to viewers. This collection rests within the realm of both art and fashion, sharing elements of both aspects. This work is not made for commercial purposes, rather to provoke ones thoughts around garments and their potential to develop a language in their own right.

Presented in a static exhibition style format, the sculptures live within a space and an audience is able to walk freely around each sculpture and view all details. There are other alternatives in which this work could have been presented. One could have been through an activated exhibition by filming the action of dressing. Another could have been a performative style of exhibition, where the body could have been incorporated within the sculptures or simply interacting. These ideas were all assessed as to the added value for presentational formats. As a result, the alternative ideas would not clearly communicate the intended discussion and therefore were disregarded.

A better idea was to save these ideas for potential future projects where the aim could be adjusted to question other aspects in the work and where these presentation styles would better suit. Therefore decisions concluded the most successful presentation style would be a static exhibition, to really highlight the potential and perceptions of the garments.

Images by Jan Berg
9.1 *The Love Scene*

A houndstooth sugar sculpted dress sitting, wearing a red puffer jacket soft sculpture and a yellow stocking heel.

Images by Jan Berg
9.2 The Argument

A black polycotton sugar sculpted dress standing with a chair.

Images by Jan Berg
9.3 *The Balancing Act*

A green houndstooth, tartan and chiffon sugar sculpted dresses balancing together.

Images by Jan Berg
A pink cotton sugar sculpted dress, sitting and wearing a trenchcoat with a pop of pink chiffon and floral stocking heels.

Images by Jan Berg
9.5 *The Affair*

A purple hemp sugar sculpted dress, leaning and wearing an orange wrap dress, green heels and a green sugar crystalized hat.

Images by Jan Berg
9.6 *Isolated*

A pink sugar sculpted dress stranding and wearing a coloured tartan pleated skirt.

Images by Jan Berg
9.7 The Fall Out

A red knitted sugar sculpted dress upside down wearing a pink dress on the floor with white heels, with a black and red sugar crystalized bracelets.
9.8 *Unbalanced*

A blue lace sugar sculpted dress lying on the floor with a yellow heel.
9.9  *The Third Wheel*

A blue chiffon sculpture standing with a navy sculpted dress lying on the floor next to a sitting grey ‘soft sculpture’ knitted jumper.

Images by Jan Berg
9.10 *The Promise*

A pink sugar coated tulle dress facing a grey polyester dress within a black sugar coated tulle dress.

Images by Jan Berg
10. Discussion

This project challenged garments in unique sculptural format through the absence of the body and portrayed symbolic personas, as supported by Hardingham (2016, pg. 102) “… fashion does not always have to follow the context of being wearable...”. In the journal article, Is Fashion Art?, Kim (2015, pg. 64) argues that “For instance, fashion’s most distinctive formal aesthetic aspect was found to be its sculptural qualities…. Fashion, as a visual art, has a sculptural aesthetic and, as such, is created much like art.”. Representing social relationships through sculptural body language, styling and titles. The sugar coating acted as a material that could define the design of the sculptures, where as the sugar crystals could define the form, through it’s development of the crystallization. Restricting the crystallization to the accessories allowed the material to place itself within an area for possible product design, particularly highlighting the design aspects rather than the functionality of the coating. There could have been many different pathways into developing this treatment to apply within product design. Sugar became a versatile material treatment to lead design into many possible design areas.

Time was the biggest challenge within this project. A sculpture could take up to two weeks to completely dry and for the crystals to grow on fabric. This meant that there were strict timelines that needed to be met. By designing the collapsible moulds, this aided the drying time depending on the fabric’s density. Ideally there would have been more sculptures within the project, though there was also an issue with limited space and storage. There were also limitations on the types of sugar that were allowed to be produced. Another interesting form to experiment would have been caramelized sugar though due to the high temperature and schools safety implementations, it was not possible to produce within the university.

The result from this work is comparable to the work of Nicole Dextras, both being able to capture the ‘frozen in time’ elements within the work. Including the element that the sculptures are transient with both the ice and sugar, having the potential to melt. The transient element agreed with other works from Bart Hess and Martijnie Cornelia.

This degree work could have enhanced the transient element, if for example; they were presented with the sculptures on models in showers and washing the sugar from the dresses. Transforming the shape of the dresses through a performative aspect and highlighting the transient qualities. However this work differs from the work of Wendy Andreu, as she explored a new construction method whereas this work explored a new coating and shaping method on a pre constructed garment. However, exploring experimental coatings is a similar link between these works. Andreu explored this through latex and this project through sugar.

Another potential was to explored a performative pathway throughout this degree work. This idea was trialed and reflected upon numerous stages in the process. Presenting the idea of collective revealed performative ideas similar to Vanessa Beecroft, performance representing a live performance similarly to a painting. Though trials involving the body presented promise, it unfortunately was not in alignment with the aim for this work. Alternatively Bart Hess’s performance format was another possibility to include performance through the creation of destruction of the work, to highlight the transient qualities. Again after reflection and evaluations, the idea communication would present another idea than that which was intended. Therefore, only a frozen element of performance through body language was included within the result.

This study provides a beginning research base into a sustainable material coating, which has the potential to be washed away. Therefore the sculptures could become regular garments again and theoretically be recoated and shaped in numerous ways.

There are many alternative pathways this project could develop into, either; through pushing the sculptures further into the field of art and leaving fashion or, creating commercialized versions of the work to present the ideas interpretation in a purely fashion context. Both are equally important pathways that could be explored as they both have potential value to contribute to art and fashion fields within design.
11. References

11.1 In Text References


Perspire. Available at: https://www.rca.ac.uk/students/alice-ottons/ [Accessed 18 September 2018].


11.2 Image References


Perspire. [online image] Available at: https://www.rca.ac.uk/students/alice-potts/ [Accessed 18 September 2018].


All Result and Final Result Images by Jan Berg.