DEVELOPING FASHION EMBELLISHMENT:

DECORATIVE ALTERNATIVES TO FUR AND EXOTIC ANIMAL MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

While the use of animal materials in contemporary fashion was fervently debated during the period of this research study, fur and exotic animal materials (such as feathers and reptile skins) remained appealing resources in the creation of fashion embellishment.[1–3] The researcher's prior experience working for fashion brands which incorporated fur and exotic animal materials was that existing imitations did not encompass the decorative qualities and appeals associated with high fashion. Embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials had not previously been documented through research.

Applying the researcher's skills and tacit knowledge as a fashion textile designer, the aim of this practice research was to develop non-animal textile embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. This was achieved by determining the design appeals of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment, and through the implementation of an unusual range of materials and experimental textile embellishment processes to create samples and artefacts. The researcher articulates embellishment as being hand manipulated textiles and additive elements with the broad aim of decoration.

An inductive, reflective practice technique was implemented in order to gain new knowledge through the successes and failures of alternative textile embellishment sampling. The practice was informed through historic archival research and engagement with industries associated with the contemporary use of fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, through discovering inspiring exotic animal species in the Amazon Rainforest which further informed practice developments, and by creating artefacts which were disseminated in exhibitions, including the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum (2018-2019). As part of research dissemination, a practical workshop with students from London College of Fashion was also created which inspired reflections on future embellishment in view of the appeals of fur and exotic animal materials.

This thesis contributes to knowledge through the development of two novel embellishment techniques developed and documented by the researcher: 'Adapted wig making with embroidery' and 'threading rubber.' In addition, this research maps values

relating to the designer appeals of fur and exotic animal materials, an area the researcher evidences as being under explored. This research therefore leads primarily to new understandings about approaches to textile embellishment practice, and aims to inspire fashion and textile design practitioners to consider the use of creative alternatives to animal materials. For academics and industry, the value lies in further developing fashion textile design research methods and the challenges of emergent issues in contemporary society. The final presentation is a written and illustrated thesis with embellishment samples, determining a range of alternative materials and textile embellishment processes.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREFACE

At the start of this research in 2015, the application of fur, feathers and exotic skins in fashion had become increasingly popular.[4–12] In particular, the researcher noted how those materials were applied to form decorative accents, rather than for insulative or other more technically functional properties.

During the course of this research project, a growing number of brands banned fur due to pressure from animal rights activists and the increasing awareness of the unnecessary harm associated with the use of animal materials. The 'boom and bust' of fur in fashion can be documented as recurrent. However, what marks this particular time as poignant is more than just fur falling out of fashion once again, but the parallel environmental concern of a decline in natural habitats and extinction rates of *animal* populations, questioning the human relationship to nature through fashion.

In 2016 a group of young fashion designers including Molly Goddard, Marta Jakubowski and Shrimps' Hannah Weiland wrote an open letter to Central Saint Martin's urging their fashion students not to use fur[13] which was subsequently banned at the college.

A year later one of the world's prominent luxury brands, Gucci, announced at London College of Fashion a total fur ban in their collections, subsequent to consultation with their own designers aged under 30. Gucci CEO Marco Bizzarri stated that this was due to fur being outdated, no longer modern, and that different creative directions could be taken by the company.[2] Furthermore, that this change was necessary in order to attract talented young designers from a Millennial generation who "demand more environmental and ethical responsibility from companies than older generations."[2] This reference to a generation of Millennials is evidenced in their attitude to sustainability, which is no longer considered a niche area but part of a holistic approach to fashion design that incorporates considerations for the environment.[14,15]

As well as Gucci, other brands who had banned the use of fur in their collections between 2016 - September 2019 include: Armani, Burberry, Chanel, Coach, Diane von Furstenberg, Donna Karen, DKNY, Erdem, Furla, Jimmy Choo, Maison Margiela, Michael Kors, Prada,

Versace and Victoria Beckham. Furthermore, Chanel, Tom Ford, Prada and Victoria Beckham banned exotic skins from their collections such as snake and reptile skins.

According to Mike Moser, CEO of the British Fur Trade, the fur debate will soon spill into other industries, impacting the use of other animal materials including feathers, wool, silk and leather.[16] Bottega Veneta CEO Claus-Dietrich Lahrs announced at the 2018 Condé Nast conference that the company was looking into leather alternatives in the belief that the entire luxury industry will be free of animal products by 2050.[1] A statement of intent further backed up by Futurist Sophie Hackford, who predicted that animal materials will be seen as no longer aligned with a more caring focus of luxury brands.[1,17] Furthermore, the 'Sustainability of the Fashion Industry' inquiry in 2018, one of whose hearings were held at the V&A, led to a recommendation from the Environmental Audit Committee that the Government should invest in material innovations to help companies move away from animal products.[18]

Fur has the ability to provide an element of luxury at a range of market levels through its sensory properties, and is not restricted to high fashion.[19,20] However, a wider variety of furs and more exotic animal materials, as well as advanced embellishment techniques that offer a rich layering of material formation is most often found within high fashion; where the designer has less limitations on resources and budgets. Luxury is no longer necessarily associated with high-end brands, but 'accessible luxury' is marketed at a range of consumer groups.[21,22] This thesis is therefore not framed around notions of luxury specifically, but looks at the actions of designers working in high fashion. The context of this research focuses on the motivations of such designers, and is not location specific but global. Designers and design houses are often not based in the same city as the catwalk show, which has also expanded beyond the major fashion capitals of Paris, New York, Milan and London, with designers themselves increasingly from varying locations, referencing a mix of cultures.[23]

The role of the consumer of fur and exotic animal materials is not the focus of this research. Rather, the researcher explores the perspective of the designer working with fur and exotic animal materials to achieve high-end embellishment. This is because of the focus on the motivations to use fur and exotic animal materials, and to reflect on

alternative materials and processes which could achieve similar appeals. If including the consumer as part of research into the broader appeal of garments featuring fur or exotic animal embellishment, one could encompass participant observation as a research method. This would be in order to understand why fur and exotic animal embellishments have greater appeal at point of purchase, as well as exploring consumers' motivation and occasion to wear fur and exotic animal material garments post-purchase.

Moving away from animal products can add a level of complexity to high-end businesses, particularly from a quality perspective,[3] with brands such as Fendi, Dior, Saint Laurent and Dolce & Gabbana still using heavily manipulated fur and other exotic animal materials in their collections at the time of writing. Such complexities were experienced by the researcher during employment prior to this research project for a fashion brand who, at the time, used fur and exotic animal materials to decorative effect. Whilst at the company, the researcher initiated cross-departmental meetings evaluating a range of vegan alternatives to leather that could be adopted by the brand. It was during this engagement and through observing the use and attitudes towards fur and exotic animal materials that the researcher saw an opportunity to explore alternatives to other animal products such as fur and exotic animal materials that was not the current mass-produced synthetic replica material. The attitude against synthetic alternatives held by this particular brand was that they lacked the values associated with high fashion. However, it was clearly an emotive and complex topic that required clearer definition.

In his review of 'Venus and Furs: The Cultural Politics of Fur' Harvey argues that deeper research into the associations of fur is required in order to "identify all that we touch, in touching fur."[24] In 2015 luxury consultant Robert Burke commented that fur was "really the one area where money and ethics converge in fashion" and therefore offered challenging ground for research, with many prominent designers, editors and bloggers declining requests to address the topic openly.[8] This mirrors attempts fifteen years earlier in the planning for the 'Stolen Skins? Fur in Fashion' exhibition at the Museum of London, where "it became rapidly clear that very few people working in fashion were willing to be involved."[25] The researcher therefore sought to facilitate open discourse on the positive creative values of fur and exotic animal materials[26] rather than promote an oppositional or emotive argument. The thesis therefore does not explore the humane treatment of

animals used in the fur and exotics industry, nor does it analyse the environmental effect of fur and exotic animal materials.

The aim of the research was to develop alternative samples and artefacts as prototypes that explored the aesthetic and tactile appeals of fur and exotic animal materials, positioned to make the fashion industry reflect on their existing practices. The practice prototypes presented in this thesis are therefore not yet at a scalable, commercial level. Incorporation of environmentally friendly materials and processes are suggested but not made to be the sole focus, since sustainability encompasses a large research area; such as consumer use, workers' rights and the supply chain to name a few. To embrace sustainability within this specific study, the researcher would first have to research whether fur is sustainable or not, in order to have a point of reference to position alternatives.

Inspired by data gathered through case studies, interviews and workshops, forms of non-animal embellishment; including fabric manipulation and additive components, is positioned as an alternative to the decorative appeal of fur and exotic animal materials throughout the practice research. Embellishment can be described as; "a decorative detail or feature added to something to make it more attractive".[27] As well as offering heightened visual effect and movement and drama to a fashion silhouette,[15] it has been applied throughout history to "symbolize and distinguish rank, region, religion and heraldry,"[28] adding sensory concepts and meaning to raw materials.

Embellishment offers a research opportunity in terms of both devising alternatives that embody deeper values of fur and exotic animal materials, and questions whether there is still the need to use fur and exotic animal materials when they are heavily manipulated, often beyond recognition. Materials and techniques adopted through the practice are selected based on: Fibre and textile properties and potential, the social and cultural context of those materials, and research into tooling techniques and what effects they can deliver.

The process of developing embellishment design through this study; trialling and testing a range of alternative materials and tooling techniques, is reflective in order to discover

what may offer viable alternatives. Therefore, making and material processes are the primary new knowledge achieved through the research process, the focus being on decorative textile development rather than finished garments or commercially ready textiles. The research was inductive and practitioner-based, with potential additional research areas mentioned in the final chapter to inspire further in-depth research.

1.2 RESEARCHER STATEMENT

The researcher's background is as a fashion textiles designer and non-academic researcher. This position has been achieved through development of a combination of skills through study and professional practice, upon which a rich range of tacit and prior knowledge has evolved.

The design style of the researcher is altogether a slower and more conceptual artefact-based approach to fashion design outside of the traditional fashion system. Developing garments with a cultural and environmental connection is also pertinent to the researcher, and ties in with the concept of slow fashion, using high quality materials and considering the impact of products.[29,30] The researcher is vegan, and therefore does not use animal hairs, skins or furs in her work and had previously worked with silk alternatives such as ahimsa silk, discovered after researching ethical, more humane alternatives to traditional silk production. Ahimsa silk is a process of producing silk whereby the silk moth can break out of the cocoon naturally rather than being gassed alive. In addition, materials sourced from pre-consumer waste streams are prioritized within the practice.

Previously graduating from BA Fashion Design Womenswear at Central Saint Martins in 2012, the researcher's collection was one that focused on decoration, proposing biodegradable crystals grown onto clothing as an alternative and more environmentally friendly fashion embellishment (figures 1-1 to 1-10). It proposed that there was untapped potential for embellishment components in a larger framework for environmentally-conscious fashion that could offer a heightened aesthetic and tactile experience. Aesthetically, the researcher's approach is layering with mixed textile media to achieve opulent and richly embellished artefacts. Idea generating through the material; toiling and 3D iterations, the researcher approaches garments as a canvas to display embellishment.

Subsequent to graduating, the researcher was employed to work on a research project for Gucci with the Design Against Crime Research Centre, Central Saint Martins and law firm Mishcon de Reya as project partners (2012-2014). The project involved applying the researcher's design knowledge and eye to detect fashion design details from a range of

brands and retailers that were infringing the intellectual property of Gucci. Furthermore, to re-invigorate Gucci's current counterfeit protection and detection methods. One of the outputs included a proposition to apply theft deterrent tagging within one of Gucci's signature print designs (figure 1-11) taking advantage of the intricate nature of the flora pattern, thus making it harder to replicate. Later employment at Burberry (2014) involved working on a research project involving the quality, supply chain and subsequent potential alternatives to three key fibre categories, presented to in-house teams for integration. Confidentiality agreements restrict detailed sharing of this project.

Both of these industry positions were desk-based research with focus on data gathering and conceptualizing speculative solutions. Running in parallel to these experiences, the researcher continued to work on self-initiated practice. This included a proposal to apply enzymes to aid mixed textiles recycling, shortlisted for the Bio Art & Design Award 2012, and a group start-up initiative developing a compostable material from corn waste (figure 1-12), funded by Climate KIC Business Greenhouse 2013-2015, part of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

It was during these overlapping engagements that the researcher saw an opportunity to combine a practice approach to achieve a greater grasp of creative research topics. For alternative textile embellishments to evolve required research and development outside of the existing fast-paced fashion industry framework and extending beyond visual and material research. It required greater academic rigor to achieve a fusion of informed design innovation via creative processes that were less linear, and more reflective, adaptive and experimental.[31] Practice research is therefore positioned as academic research and tested accordingly.[32] The result being that various versions of fabric manipulation and embroidery were trialled, with a focus on the discovery of new techniques through reflective practice development.

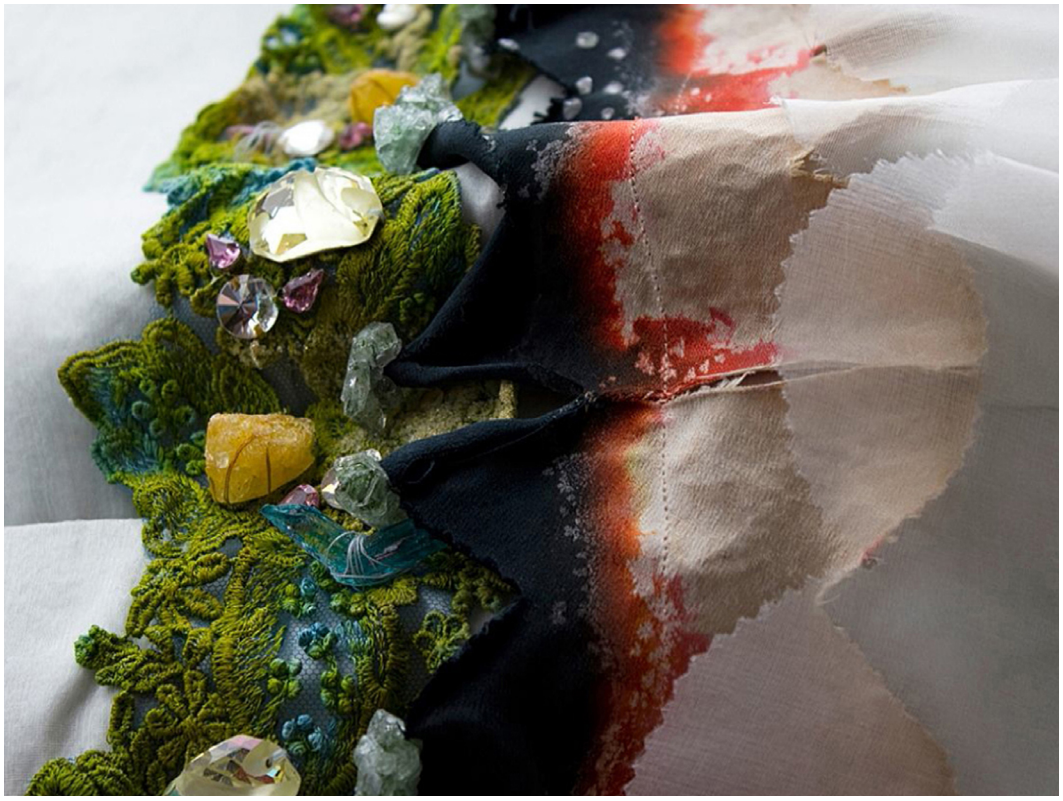


Figure 1-1 Grown embellishment detail on dress hem, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection, 2012, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 1-2 Grown embellishment detail on skirt waistband, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection, 2012, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 1-3 (left) Top and skirt and figure 1-4 (right) jacket and skirt with grown embellishments, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection 2012, photography: Geoff Brightling

Figure 1-5 (left) Dress and figure 1-6 (right) coat and dress with grown embellishments, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection 2012, photography: Geoff Brightling

Figure 1-7 (left) Jacket and dress and figure 1-8 (right) grown embellishment detail on dress neckline, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection 2012, photography: Geoff Brightling

Figure 1-9 Dress with grown embellishments, mixed media textiles, BA Graduate Collection 2012, photography: Geoff Brightling

Figure 1-10 Coat detail, mixed media textiles,
BA Graduate Collection 2012, photography: Geoff Brightling

Figure 1-11 Digital proposal for embedding theft deterrent tagging into Gucci signature print, Gucci, 2013

Figure 1-12 Compostable material developments from corn waste, Cornpostable, 2014, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

1.3 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

This research project is supported by a London College of Fashion / Victoria & Albert Museum Artscom PhD award. The award looked to support innovation in fashion related: Design, making, manufacturing and material futures by drawing upon the extensive archive of textiles and fashion held in storage at the V&A.

The appeal of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration are explored through the archive, by selecting a range of artefacts as case studies from the latter 19th and early 20th century (explored in chapter 3). These historic artefacts provided an understanding into the boom in fur and exotic animal materials used as decoration during the expansion of ready to wear fashion, underpinned by the industrial revolution (explored in chapter 2).

"Traditionally, textile designers using the archives look at pattern, graphic elements and motifs, craft practitioners look at making styles, and fashion designers tend to look at specific construction methods" (Edwina Ehrman,* 2017, appendix 1). The researcher's approach was to discover not only an insight into the materials and textile techniques used to create embellishment using fur and exotic animal materials, but also the *value* of the artefacts through understanding their social and historical context. This included who donated the item to the archive and where, as well as when and how it had been used, in order to help discover its value in terms of origin and technique. In addition, what the artefacts symbolised, such as concepts around trade and knowledge and how valuable that was in comparison to contemporary embellishment that uses fur and exotic animal materials. This process helped narrow and focus the research and add historical depth to the concepts that emerged.

The focus on garment and accessory artefacts made from, or including, fur and exotic animal materials also enabled access to less referenced collections, including the V&A's Fur and Feather Store. The researcher found that some of these rarefied artefacts held a great potential for transferable knowledge to a fashion textiles designer, hampered by being items that were not easy to exhibit, either due to being ethically or socially controversial or in compromised condition. The range of artefacts used in this research also included items from the Textiles and Fashion Collection, Animal Products Collection,

South & South East Asia Collection and the Prints & Drawings Study Room. These explorations led to further additional archival research at the Museum of London, London College of Fashion and the Economic Botany Collection at Kew (explored in chapter 2).

A fashion or textile designer referencing archival material for inspiration is however not an unknown working method. Referencing archival practice offers an opportunity to further explore old intentions, learn from history, and reference and incorporate elements which align with the contemporary. Alexander McQueen is one of the most notorious designers for referencing historical material held at the Victoria & Albert museum. As well as featuring in the 'Cabinet of Curiosities' in the 2015 publication on the designer,[33] artefacts from the museum are documented as inspiration points in web feature 'The Museum of Savage Beauty.'[34] This includes a pair of snakeskin slippers which were referenced by the researcher as a case study within this research (explored in chapter 3).

The increase in younger designers archiving their own collections for continual reference and re-use suggests that designers will archive their own material rather than donating it to museums, such as the case for Erdem Moralıoğlu who is re-acquiring his garments from past collections.[35] This use of past collections indicates a longer lifespan where products become artefacts with values which can be continuously drawn upon by designers. Inie further presented the concept of the 'artisan designer' as one who systematically archives their ideas for continued reference over extended time spans.[36] In parallel to this is the increase in designers providing items from their past and current collections for hire. This provides a longer lifespan through physical re-utilisation, as is the case for designers such as Patrick McDowell and Phoebe English who provide items from their collections through rental company Higher Studio.

Additionally, the V&A runs a residency programme which invites various practitioners into the museum to develop projects inspired by items housed in the museum. For the purpose of residents, the V&A Research Institute (VARI) invites residents to transform the museum into an active site of participation and discussion.[37] The researcher similarly implemented selected archival artefacts into the research design by inviting fashion industry members into the Clothworkers Centre (documented in chapter 3), and through

picture cards within a student workshop (documented in chapter 5). Visually, participants were able to get involved with the research topic through this use of physical objects.

Emerging concepts that informed the development of embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials were also shared with Edwina Ehrman, Senior Curator, Textiles and Fashion, Victoria & Albert Museum and advisor to this project (hereinafter referred to as Edwina Ehrman, (V&A)). This sharing was part of ongoing informal discussion, with advice given from Edwina Ehrman (V&A) about relevant historic areas of interest and additional anecdotal context to the items selected as particularly inspiring. The researcher interviewed her in order to formally gather insights into the museum's motivation for collecting fur and exotic animal materials used to decorative effect (see appendix 1). The initial contact grew to become an extremely informative relationship, partly due to shared research interests, namely, the research that the Museum was undertaking for the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition; 21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019. This exhibition explored the "complex relationship between fashion and nature from 1600 to the present day"[38] and explores the "challenge of reducing fashion's consumption of the earth's natural resources."[38] Furthermore, it offered the museum the opportunity to engage with new design work, informing about ways in which the collections could be shared with future audiences (Edwina Ehrman (V&A), 2017, appendix 1).

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the research was to develop embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. This was realised by first determining key motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment. Secondly, by discovering which materials and textile processes could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials.

Figure 1-13 visualises the continuous flow between the two objectives in order to reach the research aim. Objective 1 was achieved through the use of visual research, case studies, in-depth interviews and workshops. These research findings subsequently inspired objective 2: Practice developments where potential materials and textile processes were explored through three separate practice research projects, resulting in a range of textile embellishment samples. Reflection on this practice further informed the motivations for the application of fur and exotic animal materials, and hence the process of research was circular in order to reach the research aim.

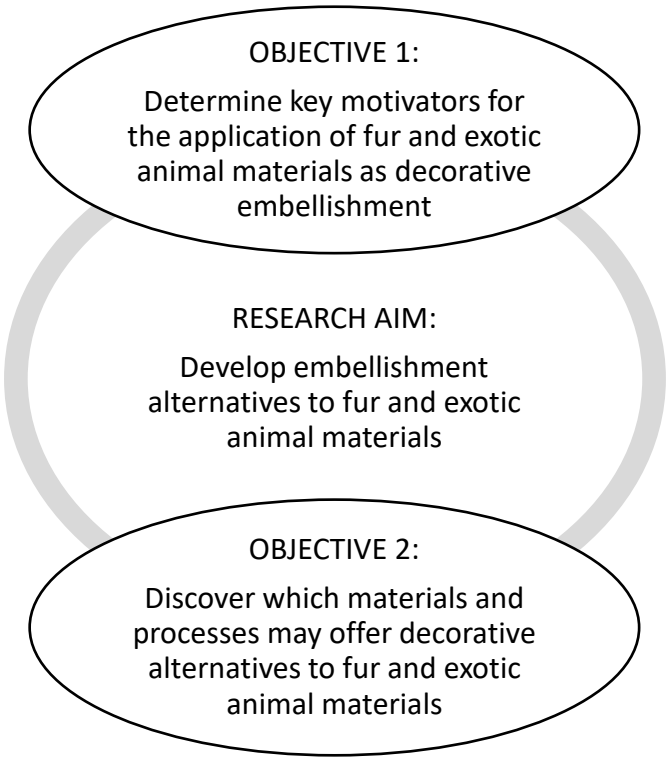


Figure 1-13 Mapping the research aim and objectives, graphics: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2019

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The method of research was PhD by practice, adopting qualitative, reflective practice methodologies within fashion textiles design as a discipline. The emphasis was placed on the tacit knowledge of materials and tooling techniques of the researcher which were further developed through the practice via archival research, discussions with participants and by mapping concepts and themes related to the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. Subsequently, reflective practice provided a link between practice-based research and action research, a methodology originally developed by Schön.[39] Scrivener since described reflective practice as a productive problem solving process where artefacts are developed as a response to issues, concerns or interests which reflect wider cultural and social preoccupations.[40]

The second research objective resulted in a series of textile embellishment sampling which explored different concepts related to the decorative appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. The practice of sampling was open-ended, experimental and discursive; since it was being used as a method to further comprehend research findings from the first objective. This included recording the procedure for making, testing and evaluating outcomes[41] resulting in a learning through practice to discover which materials and processes could potentially be used to develop alternative decorative approaches.

Reflexivity was important due to the methodology being deliberately open-ended, enabling recognition of patterns that shaped the ongoing research. Dieffenbacher (2013) introduced Fashion Thinking as a framework for exploring fashion design methodology.[42] It is distinct from other design methods, requiring the designer to incorporate their own sense of fashion and authentic process to the purely problem solving method from industrial and product design. Similarly, in a corresponding article on Fashion Thinking (2016), Nixon and Blakley credit Design Thinking as a source of inspiration but point out that Fashion Thinking differs in its focus on taste making and meaningfulness rather than focusing primarily on usability and functionality.[43] As well as taking into account the research objectives, the practice therefore also reflected the design style of the researcher (which is elaborated on as part of the researcher statement). Furthermore, a

Fashion Thinking approach which considers cultural values and aesthetic taste is mirrored in the research focus being decorative accents within design.

Due to the experimental nature of the textile sampling process, which included fewer common materials used for embellishment, a research methodology that could have been adopted was speculative design. Developed by Dunne and Raby, the goal of speculative design is to raise questions and encourage discourse, rather than provide answers or create solutions.[44] Speculative design provides a critique of traditional design by focusing on that of the future, which is arguably relevant to this research. However, although the approach of the practice naturally considered that of future embellishment proposals, it is also rooted in contemporary solutions for the fashion industry. Speculative design was rejected based on the aim of physically testing concepts through practice that used procurable materials and potentially adoptable processes.

It was important to break up the practice stages into three different research projects - which are spread through chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis - in order to fully explore the emerging concepts, test materials and textile techniques, and develop new forms of embellishment. In total, this resulted in three textile artefacts and one garment artefact with the view of public engagement, supported by a range of more exploratory textile embellishment samples. The individual research methods for each practice project as well as action and case study research are varied and documented throughout the thesis as part of research design.

As well as implementing case study research methods to analyse selected items from archives, the reflective practice approach of the research also involved participant groups who were encouraged to reflect upon their own design process. This encompassed three in depth interviews and one workshop with industry associated with the use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration in high fashion, and one workshop with students from the Fashion Futures MA programme at London College of Fashion. The researcher engaged with industry associated with the decorative use of fur and exotic animal materials in order to situate the practice developments as being comparable to fur and exotic animal material embellishment. In terms of the researcher's own position as a vegan, it was important to develop inter-subjective views about the appeal of animal

materials. As mirrored in the preface, the focus was on the positive values of decorative fur and exotic animal materials, which also provided an opportunity to discover common design appeals between participant and researcher. In terms of co-operative study, the engagements were more aligned with classic qualitative research *about* participants rather than actioning their involvement in decisions regarding the content and method of the specific research enquiry.[45] In light of this, the researchers approach to designing the two workshops was inspired by a focus group model, influenced by ethnographic methods to observe and capture participants perspectives in order to reach the research aim.[46,47]

1.6 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

The structure applied in order to reach the research aim was inspired by the Design Council's Double Diamond design process[48] whereby design goes through four stages of; discover, define, develop, deliver. The visualization of this research process aided the articulation of ideas which were developed, tested and refined through the thesis.

Mirroring the objectives set out, the research was ultimately a process of continuous learning, and looked to identify patterns, resemblances and regularities in order to reach conclusions.[39,46] Figure 1-14 was not intended to limit research in making it linear and strictly chronological, rather it provided a framework to communicate the overall research process. For example, the first objective did not reach a final destination by the end of chapter 3, rather it continued to be redefined through reflection in chapters 4 and 5. This amount of flexibility was necessary to adapt the data collection and analysis in response to the needs of the study. Furthermore, it is an approach which fits with the traditional fashion textile design method which is imaginative, unpredictable and spontaneous.[49]

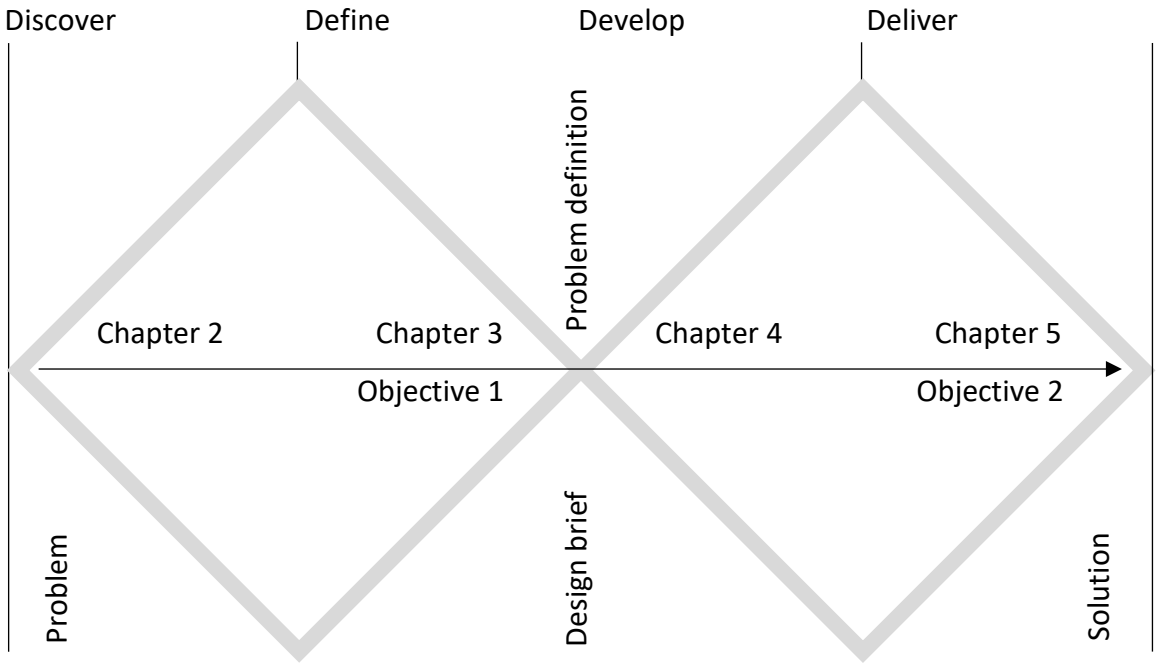


Figure 1-14 Mapping the overall research structure, graphics: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2019

Mirroring figure 1-14, the design of the research is broken down into four main sections that cover chapters two to five, with chapter 1 being the introduction and chapter 6 being the conclusion.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This first chapter covers the research problem including aims and objectives. It also discusses the methodological approach to the research which uses reflective practice, mapping the research and contribution to knowledge.

DISCOVER (INSIGHT INTO THE PROBLEM): CHAPTER 2 - CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

An overview of the research context, this chapter drew connections and situated the project, looking for patterns which led to concepts and themes to do with the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. It outlines the use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration both contemporarily and historically, and reviews the existing field of potential decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. This research is primarily exploratory secondary research through literature and visual analysis of catwalk, archival and designer imagery. Methods involved the collection of factual, physical and photographic material including visits to trade shows and discussions with curatorial staff.

DEFINE (THE AREA TO FOCUS ON): CHAPTER 3 - DEFINING THE RESEARCH

Chapter 3 defined the research focus by gathering primary research to provide inspiration points for practice; to develop decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. Practically and chronologically, this chapter ran in parallel to chapter 4, in order to reflect upon early research findings through practice. This chapter includes archival case study research and interview with Edwina Ehrman (V&A) as well as a series of three in-depth interviews and a workshop with members of the fashion industry associated with the use of fur and exotic animal materials to discover their decorative appeal. This resulted in a mapping of concepts relating to motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials, with reflection on findings from the previous chapter. These findings were collected through photographs, note-taking and audio recording.

DEVELOP (POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS): CHAPTER 4 - PRACTICE TESTING

This practice chapter presents the sourcing of materials for practice and the first project; testing a range of non-animal materials and embellishment techniques that, in combination, could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. The range of initial possibilities was reached through interpretation of research findings from the previous chapter, which were adapted creatively by the researcher. This included the exploration of five existing embellishment processes; tufting, weaving floats, hand embroidery, beadwork, and gathering and layering. Design methods included the creation of an organized matrix of results which were reflected through photography, design drawing and material experiments that encompassed machining, hand-weaving and hand-sewing.

DELIVER (SOLUTIONS THAT WORK): CHAPTER 5 - PRACTICE OUTPUTS

Subsequent to the discovery of potential practice possibilities, a selection of more focused textile embellishment developments was achieved through two projects. One explored a wig-making and embroidery technique and another explored a threading technique to implant fibres, both of which were developed by the researcher. These projects reflected practical challenges discovered within the previous chapter. Practice outputs were further developed in this chapter through the design and construction of physical artefacts, additionally influenced by a design residency with Labverde, an art immersion programme in the Amazon Rainforest.[50] This was to sensorially explore through practice some of the main motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials identified. Subsequently, practice artefacts were displayed at the Onca Gallery and at the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition at the V&A. Finally, a practical workshop with MA Fashion Future students from London College of Fashion was delivered in order for students to create (and subsequently reflect upon) future embellishment samples. This research was collected through photographs, note-taking and audio recording.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

The final chapter synthesized the results and conclusions of the research by identifying key research findings through a second analysis process, considering the work as a whole. Furthermore, it evaluated the successes of the research methods, discussing future significance and further potential areas for development.

1.7 ETHICS

The previous experience of the researcher in projects that deal with confidentiality provided some experience into appropriate behaviours. During project work for Gucci and Burberry individual research cases had to remain confidential, as well as details of internal strategies and research agendas. Furthermore, experience of working with Mishcon de Reya gave the researcher some grasp of intellectual property rights, which influenced the design of research engagement.

Since the research process involved a range of participants, the risks and potential benefits of participating in the research were outlined in advance. It was explained to the participants that the purpose of the research was to understand what motivates designers to use fur and exotic animal materials as decoration in fashion, in order to design alternative embellishments. They were described the type of engagement – whether it was an interview or workshop – including the duration, location, and the date and time which was as flexible as possible to the needs of the participant.

The participants were informed that they were free to discuss their thoughts and opinions within a discussion using open-ended questions, with no right or wrong answers. All participants were sent an information sheet and consent form to sign in advance of the interview or workshop which included the research title and agenda (see appendix 2). In the case of the interviews, an outline of questions was sent ahead of the meeting so that the participants could prepare answers, whilst also providing a sense of security regarding the purpose of the interview.

All data gathered during the engagements were audio recorded and manually transcribed. Furthermore, the workshops and one of the interviews used photography to capture engagement with materials and artefacts. The information that the participants supplied was separated from their identity through the use of pseudonyms and any information infringing a company or individual's confidential information was deleted from the notes. Participation in this project was voluntary, however participants were offered reasonable compensation for the costs of participating, such as travel expenses, although no one took advantage of this offer.

One of the potential benefits to the participants was the opportunity to inspire their own or others perception of fur and exotic animal materials through dialogue and engagement. Furthermore, in the two workshops, the participants were exposed to material from historic archives that is not currently on public display as well as contemporary items brought in from outside the archive (for the industry workshop) and a range of textiles (for the student workshop).

A reflective practice approach to research can result in findings that are personal but not necessarily transferable. The researcher purposely wanted to mitigate this by presenting outcomes that could potentially guide others; by sharing materials sourcing, specific embellishment techniques, and by visually recording successes and failures within embellishment sampling, as well as sharing full interview and workshop transcripts within this thesis, as a method of offering open-source data (see appendices 1, 3, 4 and 7).

Furthermore, the research potentially inspires those currently using fur and exotic animal materials to adopt alternative material approaches, which is why this research engaged with that market sector. The workshop with students from MA Fashion Futures who could take their own reflections into future industry also enabled a method of sharing research findings. It was stipulated that the students would own the intellectual property rights to the textile embellishment samples they created during the course of the workshop and were not limited by any confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements from the side of the researcher.

1.8 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

The main contribution to knowledge in this thesis is held within the creative practice; the discovery of materials and textile embellishment process combinations which achieve decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. In terms of outcomes of the practice, novel forms of embellishment were developed in the second and third practice projects (chapter 5), which had not been documented before. Specifically; implanting glass yarn through an adapted wig making and embroidery technique, and threading glass yarn through rubber as a fixative within embellishment. These outcomes were supported by a range of other exploratory textile embellishment practice.

Rather than simply replicating the aesthetic properties of fur and exotic animal materials in alternative materials, the research focused on applying the deeper motivating values of fur and exotic animal materials to create alternative textile embellishment. The themes relating to the motivating values were discovered through archival research and engagement with the fur and exotics industry (chapter 3). The five concluding themes and concepts are documented in the conclusion chapter of the research (chapter 6) and include: Connection to nature, lightweight volume, textural quality, versatile craftsmanship and rare and unique.

The topic of the research, and the timely manner in which industry looked to alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials (see preface), contributes to solving trending and emergent issues in contemporary society. For fashion designers who use fur and exotic animal materials to decorative effect, the value of this research aids reflection on the personal motivations and deeper values of fur and exotic animal materials. Other potential applications are in innovating strategies for those who are developing faux animal materials, and in dissemination and educational initiatives regarding the values and varying potential forms of embellishment both to designer, student and public.

Overall, this research contributes new knowledge within fashion textiles which goes beyond personal research. It suggests alternative forms of embellishment as well as presenting a range of design values, both of which could be adopted in varying instances adding to wider knowledge in fashion and textiles research and practice.

2 CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter framed the context of the research in order to illustrate the design problem and aim of the research. This included a historical overview of the use of fur and exotic animal materials as fashion decoration - including some examples of alternatives - from the latter half of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, an overview of the contemporary use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration presented between February 2014 - September 2018. The primary objective of this chapter was to apply this analysis to build initial concepts relating to motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment.

The first section of this chapter focused on the latter half of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century due to the "romance of furriery"[51] and boom in the use of exotic animal materials in embellishment. This took into account the social and cultural factors which determined the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. In addition, this section looked at some of the decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials which were available at that time. Examples were found in archives, newspapers and publications, online catalogues and reports, through museum visits, and by attending an in-house fur workshop at the Clothworkers' Centre, (V&A). A mixture of imagery from online databases and the researchers own photography was used to present embellishments that reflected varying appealing concepts and themes.

The second section of this chapter focused on the contemporary use of fur and exotic animal materials in high fashion. Furthermore, it provided a short overview of existing literature related to the consumer appeals of fur and exotic animal materials and potential sustainability of fur. The specific timeframe to explore contemporary fashion was between Autumn / Winter 2014 to Spring / Summer 2019. This therefore looked at the collections presented at fashion weeks between February 2014 - September 2018, specifically trims and decorative elements on womenswear fashion shown on the catwalk. Reviewing embellishments on garments helped distinguish their appeal. In addition, through animation of those clothes, achieved by focusing on catwalk photography, the researcher could infer the appeal of embellishments in movement. This iterative review was achieved by searching designer collections online, in magazines,

reviewing fur blogs and press reviews and by attending textile fairs and trade shows. Illustrated are varied visual examples based on; high levels of fur and exotic manipulation to create embellishment, a designer's regular use of fur and exotic animal materials to create embellishment, and where innovative materials and tooling techniques were applied.

The emerging motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials were subsequently mapped. This not only provided a base to further explore themes through primary research in the following chapter, but also provided a framework to compare existing designer examples of potential alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. Varied designer examples were presented based on an overview of contemporary forms of embellishment and a designer commitment to developing alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. The researcher also provided an overview of the small amount of relevant embellishment literature within the context of this research. This iterative review was explored by searching academic and industry work online, as well as designer work in magazines, through social media networks and by attending textile trade shows and conferences. Findings within each of the three sections were presented chronologically in order to map key developments over time.

2.2 FUR AND EXOTIC ANIMAL MATERIALS AS DECORATION

2.2.1 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Before the mid-nineteenth century furs were used primarily as linings, with occasional use in accessories and dress trimmings.[52] The researcher first sought to determine a transitional example within popular fashion of fur also being used as a decorative application on the outside of garments, in order to surmise its appeal. There are later time periods which mark the continued use of fur used decoratively in fashion, such as after the frugality of World War II, due to the opportunity fur presented to show off status and wealth. However, since the 1950's the cost of fur in fashion dramatically reduced and became less fashionable, since it became associated with a more dependant type of femininity.[51] Furthermore, the decorative use of fur in fashion in the 70's, 80's and 90's was partly to disguise it in order to not attract protestors, since fur had become a political and environmental issue, sparking animal rights' activism.[24] The latter 19th and early 20th Century was the beginning of the use of fur and exotic animal materials in decorative fashion, examples of which include wider varieties of animal materials not yet banned by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and of more handmade textile embellishment processes.

No longer a material saved for royalty, nobility and religious figures, during the latter nineteenth century fashionable society demanded a huge variety of furs for decorative effect, which were imported from all over the world.[53] The appeal of fur, especially to European women, was particularly supported by an aesthetic of adornment.[54] Sealskin was one of the first furs used in outerwear during this period, not only for warmth, but for its soft lustrous properties, achieved after removing the outer guard hairs which provide additional insulation.[38]

Other fur types included Russian wolf, used in a gentleman's coat made between 1850-1890 (V&A: T.55-1951). In this example (figure 2-1) the fur is used as a lining which extends to the lapel and cuff detailing. Now housed at the Clothworkers Centre (V&A), the use of wolf fur on the outside of the garment demonstrated a certain status symbol.[52] Applied primarily for its insulative properties, the use of thirty-two wolf skins spilling out onto the outer garment appears excessive. Fur becomes more than insulation, offering an

additional tactile and three-dimensional appearance to the coat. In addition, Faiers comments that furs appeal as both hidden lining and outwardly display is a play between the seen and the unseen, between both private and public experience.[55]

The researcher viewed the coat at an in-house 'Fur Day' workshop in 2016 held by Edwina Ehrman (V&A) in the Clothworkers Centre (V&A); inviting fur experts and researchers to identify furs in the archive (figure 2-2). Although the aesthetic of the fur appeared to be very natural, it was determined that in fact the fur had been dyed as the colour was the same throughout (which was in fact, unnatural). Furthermore, the fur was heavier and less malleable than would be the case in contemporary practice where lightness is more appropriate for an application that is solely embellishment.

The changes in fashion to that of increased decoration and material variety in the latter part of the nineteenth century were partly driven by the economic boom of the industrial revolution.[38,56,57] The increased size and wealth of the middle class fuelled the development of ready-to-wear fashion.[38,56,57] After the Age of Discovery (early 15th century to the early 17th century) and increase in colonialism and trade, many new and exotic animal materials came to the UK market, which would have been very appealing to dressmakers. The Great Exhibition in 1851 showcased the range of materials acquired through international trade which could be used in UK manufacture at the Crystal Palace in London. As well as material goods, the exhibition functioned to display imperial expansion.[58] Drawn by Joseph Nash, this lithograph (V&A: 19536:17) was published as one of Dickinson's 'Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition' (figure 2-3).[59] Further documented in a photograph,[60] figure 2-4 depicts Royal furriers J.A. Nicholay & Son, where one can make out the range of pelts and taxidermy of wild animals. It was recorded that spectators admired the fur collection's "beautiful softness", "fine colour and lustre", and density "like the richest velvet".[60,61] Additionally, the use of taxidermy wild animals associates the furs with the notion of wild, and of triumphant conquest over nature which could be displayed through fashion in the finest means.

Due to the industrial revolution there was an increase in people living in towns and cities who had less direct contact with the countryside and animals.[62] More so, there were limited ways to record animals as nature photography featuring real live animals (rather

than the use of taxidermy props in countryside settings) did not come about until the early 20th century.[62] However, what is also of note is the increased interest in flora and fauna and a boom in public collecting of natural history specimens.[38] Much of this was achieved through advancements in train travel in 1840s making it easier for townspeople to visit the British countryside.[38] The interaction with nature appeared to become therefore a tourist activity, recording and collecting souvenirs. As such, fashion decoration offered a way to display and interact with animals.

The increase in available tooling through technical advances enabled more manipulated variations on animal materials. The sewing machine had become proficient for sewing cloth by the 1850s, and a machine for sewing leather was in use in by 1856.[63] Reflective of this, an example of exotic skin manipulation was found in a pair of slippers from 1850-1870 in the V&A collections which appear to be embellished with individually cut and re-applied snake scales (V&A: AP.6&A-1868) (figure 3-1). Part of the Animal Products Collection - some of which came from the 1851 Great Exhibition – items such as these were classified within the categories of the 'three great kingdoms' of animal, vegetable or mineral.[64] This object is explored in greater depth as a case study in the following chapter.

The widespread interest in naturalia in the nineteenth century resulted in an extensive experimentation of both plant and animal products in fashion.[52] Figure 2-5 depicts a veil from the 1860's which re-creates an image of bees through embellishment made from stamped straw veneer and glass beads (V&A: T.772-1972).[65] Scattered in what appears an almost random (but very purposeful) manner, only four bee embellishments are included on the veil. The choice to include such a limited number of the bee embellishments appears to reflect how the insects would appear more commonly in nature, as well as making the embellishments feel more special due to the limited number.

A popular animal used to create decorative motifs in fashion during the latter part of the nineteenth century was the humming bird. Hummingbirds were hard to capture and hence appealing because of their exotic rarity and fleeting-ness. During the 1851 Great Exhibition, ornithologist John Gould presented stuffed hummingbirds, mounted in revolving glass cases which he referred to as living gems.[66] This term was earlier used by

Figure 2-1 Wolf fur coat detail, unknown maker, 1850-1890, © Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.55-1951, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-2 Wolf fur coat lining, unknown maker, 1850-1890, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.55-1951, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 2-3 Lithograph of furs in the Great Exhibition, Joseph Nash, 1852,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: 19536:17, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-4 Furs photographed in the Great Exhibition, Hugh Owen Nicholay, 1851,
Rijks Museum Collection, museum number: RP-F-F25213-AS, ref: www.rijksmuseum.nl/collection

entomologist William Henry Edwards' to describe hummingbirds as being comparable only to diamonds after exploration in the Amazon Rainforest.[66] Shimmering iridescence, found in certain bird species such as hummingbirds, beetles and shells, was highly prized in fashion for its unusual and eye-catching appeal.[38,67] Furthermore, since dyeing technology was susceptible to fading, raw materials with natural colour which faded more slowly could be particularly cherished.

Certain types of beetle wings illustrate the changing colour combinations achieved in iridescence, an example of which is applied within an embroidery design from around 1855-1879 (V&A: 6181(IS)) (figure 2-6). Overall, this shawl, when combined with gold thread, would have caught the light in an almost glittery manner. Especially as the beetle wings have been individually cut and applied in order to lie flat within a motif design. Made in India, the embroidery was likely exported to Europe, which was popular in the mid-19th Century where volumes consisting of 25,000 beetles were imported per consignment.[68,69] A further trend reported during this time was the application of live beetles attached to chains and brooches using glue.[68] Such looks may have invited conversation and offered an added element of exoticism.

A further example of iridescence found in embellishment is a flower spray which includes the breasts of seven hummingbirds as individual petals created between 1870-1890 (V&A: AP.1:2-1894) (figure 2-7). The breasts would have shimmered and caught the light, further highlighted through the application of whole jewel beetles placed in the centre of the 'flower.' The stem and leaves, created from green parrot feathers, silk and wire soften the design due to their organic shape, somehow regaining the feeling of nature and movement associated with tropical birds. Created in Brazil, the sacrifice of seven hummingbirds for one embellishment highlights the scale at which animal materials were being used.

Two recurrent fashion trends in the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration during the latter part of the 19th Century are the use of whole birds, as well as bird parts, and the enhancement of bird materials.[38] In the collection entry at the V&A for a hat from 1885 decorated with a manipulated starling, it is explained that even the most exotic species were manipulated and heightened[70] (V&A: T.715:3-1997) (figure 2-8). Dyed

and painted goose or swan feathers were added to the taxidermy starling, almost as if the aim was to create a new species or a more 'sophisticated' version of the natural world.[38] Starling feathers contain some natural iridescence, but this has been usurped by the instinct to impose a human aesthetic of beauty on nature through manipulation.[38] The resulting embellishment is therefore no longer iridescent, but retains a single base colour upon which a motif has been painted.

Another example from the 1880's which had limited connection to the animal from which it once derived was a swansdown cape (V&A: T.367-1982) (figure 3-4). An unusual example of feather use, this item is explored as a case study in the following chapter due to its interesting construction. This object, along with a velvet and feather dolman from 1885 (V&A: T.653-1996) (figure 3-7) were explored in The Clothworkers' Centre (V&A), after a guided tour of the Fur and Feather store at the museum by Edwina Ehrman (V&A). The dolman features raised woven peacock feather motifs as well as real feather use, and is also explored in more detail as a case study in the following chapter.

As well as being highly appealing, the use of birds in fashion was also controversial. Reflective of the contemporary site of this research was the backlash against the use of animal materials which came about in the late nineteenth century due to a concern for depletion of wildlife and cruelty associated with the collection of animal specimens. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 prohibited the hunting, killing, trading, and shipping of migratory birds and regulated America's commercial feather trade. This was the direct result of women petitioning against plumed hats, instigated due to feathers being used more as decorative elements than for any practical means.[71]

It was therefore interesting to the researcher to discover what types of alternatives had been developed historically as a response to the backlash against feathers. One example of a proposed alternative to feather embellishment that was positioned in the early twentieth century was spun glass hair adornments, often named 'glass aigrettes', of which an example is examined more closely as a case study in the following chapter (MOL: 90.261/18) (figure 3-10). In addition, materials were being developed as alternatives to expensive exotic animal materials. This included celluloid; a mixture of cellulose nitrate and camphor oil created in 1856. An early example of a 'bioplastic', it

Figure 2-5 Veil detail with straw bee embellishment, unknown maker, 1860s,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.772-1972, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-6 Beetle wing embroidery detail, unknown maker, 1855-1879,
Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: 6181(IS), photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 2-7 Hummingbird flower spray detail, unknown maker, 1870-1890,
Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: AP.1:2-1894, photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 2-8 Hat with combined starling and feather embellishment, Modes du Louvre, 1885, © Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.715:3-1997, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-9 faux ivory hairpiece, unknown maker, pre 1889, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.282-1989, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 2-10 Example of a reproduction Audubonnet produced for exhibition at 'Fashion: Feathers and the Fight for Wildlife' exhibition, New York Historical Society, 2018

was used to create a replica ivory hair clip as it was much cheaper than real ivory as well as satisfying a public concern for the protection of animals (V&A: T.282-1989) (figure 2-9). However, it seems as though this example provided an aesthetic imitation, rather than necessarily positioning itself as applying the deeper values of ivory. The material is no longer used in fashion due to it being highly flammable.

As well as the creation of engineered new materials, milliners found creative ways to produce ethical 'Audubonnets' which were decorated with ribbons, artificial flowers and twists of fabric as an alternative to feathers. Audubon (an American ornithologist, naturalist, and painter) commissioned leading milliners to design these hats.[71] Illustrated is a reproduction from the early 20th Century, made specifically for the 'Fashion: Feathers and the Fight for Wildlife' exhibition in New York in 2018 (figure 2-10). The corsage effect of the decoration on the hat is reminiscent of the hummingbird flower spray (V&A: AP.1:2-1894), also intended for millinery. The value in the Audubonnet decoration can be seen in its elaborate craftsmanship, which allows the maker greater control over the appearance of the finished article.

An example of imitation ermine is included here by the researcher - albeit made between 1800-1822 - as it specifically represents the decorative effect of ermine fur and offers a good comparison to an ermine stole later mentioned in the text. Ermine was, in its whitest form, an extremely expensive fur, and retained an aura of exclusivity in the 19th century.[38] Owned by Francis Coutts of the Coutts banking family, this example (V&A: CIRC.718:4-1912) (figure 2-11) applies hand sewn tufts of wool bound with silk twill to achieve the black accents reminiscent of ermine tails.[72] The black tufts are raised and tactile to emphasize the texture of ermine. Furthermore, the fastening details on the dressing gown emphasize the feeling of decoration. Those familiar with ermine would not mistake it for real fur, rather it could be positioned as an alternative to fur. The researcher also considered that perhaps the decorative fastening would not work to the same effect if it used ermine fur, and so a more malleable material alternative allows for this form of additional embellishment.

The trend for ermine fur was noted in the early twentieth century, an example of which was found in a fur catalogue from Charles Sugden & Co 1904-1905 in the London College

of Fashion archives (figure 2-12). Tails of ermines have been individually applied to the stole for further decorative effect through colour and three-dimensional textural contrast. It is also noted how, although the ermine pelt at first appears to be in its natural, unaltered state, the stole is without limbs or heads. Instead what is presented are continuous bodies with only tails, which still associates with the animal in a somewhat sanitized way. The name given to the ermine garments 'crusada' crusade and 'natura' Latin for nature associate the garment with history and indicate the appeal of campaign or battle with nature.

Within the same catalogue (Charles Sugden & Co) is an example of a seemingly 'whole' fox stole, with head and limbs intact (figure 2-13). It is similar to one found by the researcher in the V&A archives from the 1930's (figure 2-14) (V&A: T.218&A-1962). Somehow, the example of a whole pelt appears cruder and less appealing than the ermine example, potentially because the fox fur associates more with taxidermy which preserves the outer appearance of the animal. More exotic furs were being applied in fashion in the 1930's, reflective of the surge in game hunting safari tours which seemed to collect animal pelts as souvenirs or trophies.[73]

An evening cape (V&A: T.226-1967) made from colobus monkey fur also translates a feeling of souvenir or trade acquisition (figure 2-15). Monkey fur was a highly prized material due to its rarity, and is still coveted by vintage fur shoppers in contemporary times. The structure of the cape is reminiscent of hair, and has a smooth almost watery appearance and feel. The addition of the bow and neck ruffles further adds to the feeling of silkiness. In terms of souvenir artefacts, the researcher also discovered the use of milkweed in a doyley from Jamaica due to its aesthetic similarity to fur when browsing online catalogues. Stored at the Economic Botany Collection at Kew, it is estimated to have been bought around 1930 (ECBOT: 90405) (figure 2-16). Although not a fashion item, the handmade and decorative element of the doyley which includes the use of preserved leaves is arguably similar to a fashion textile sample. The softness of the milkweed trim was very reminiscent of fur when viewed and handled, additionally the fibres had a certain lustre which caught the light. Milkweed has continued to be experimented with for textile use, most recently as an alternative to down padding, albeit on a small scale. At the time of writing there was no industrial supplier providing

Figure 2-11 Fastening detail on imitation ermine nightgown, unknown maker, 1815-1822, © Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: CIRC.718:7-1912, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-12 Ermine stole named 'Crusada' and muff named 'Natura', fur designs, Charles A.Sugden & Co Catalogue, 1904-1905, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 2-13 Fox stole named 'Pyra', fur designs, Charles A.Sugden & Co Catalogue, 1904-1905, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 2-14 Fox fur stole detail, unknown maker, 1930's, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.218&A-1962, photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 2-15 Monkey fur evening cape, unknown maker, 1920-1930, © Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.226-1967, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 2-16 Doyley with milkweed trim, unknown maker, pre 1931, Kew Economic Botany Collection, collection number: 90405, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

milkweed material. However, it is an inspiring case for the potential of plant fibres which may offer an alternative to animal materials.

2.2.2 A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW

A select amount of literature has been published regarding both the consumer appeal of fur and exotic animal materials and the sustainability of fur, which the researcher will provide a brief overview. In 2006, Summers presented the desirable characteristics of alligator skin for consumers in high fashion contexts as being prestige and social status.[74] A later report in 2019 on young consumers purchasing intentions of fashion products made from fur, leather and wool similarly stated the appeal to be prestige and furthermore, a subjective norm incited by the promotion of animal materials by fashion companies.[75] Through exploration of broad literature on the topic of fur and exotic animal materials, it was found that many papers had been published since 2016 on the potential to create models that make the fur industry more sustainable, rather than creating non-animal alternatives. This response from the academic community to address the applications of fur echoes the contemporary debates around the use of fur and other animal materials raised in the preface to this thesis (chapter 1). This includes the writing of Skjold,[19] Wong,[76] Kleibert[7] as well as Ramchandani's research into consumers views on the sustainability of fur.[12]

Similarly, Emberley focused on the appeals of fur from the perspective of the consumer or spectator, rather than the designer in her publication 'Venus and Fur: The cultural politics of fur.'[54] As mentioned in the preface to this thesis, as a critique of 'Venus and Fur' Harvey argued that deeper research was required to truly understand the associations of fur. This research focuses on the creative and design related appeals of fur and exotic animal materials from the perspective of the designer applying it to create fashion embellishment. Therefore, examining a deeper study regarding the making and material related values of fur and exotic animal materials as embellishment. As mentioned in the research thus far, these findings inform development of embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials, and do not focus on increased sustainability in terms of maintaining applications of fur.

Despite sensitivities relating to the use of fur and exotic animal materials, fashion designers have continued to use these materials for decorative purposes, from Alexander McQueen's use of crocodile heads and gazelle horns in A/W 1997 (figures 2-17 and 2-18)

Figure 2-17 Embellishment including crocodile heads, Alexander McQueen, A/W 1997, ref: blog.metmuseum.org

Figure 2-18 Use of gazelle horn embellishment, Alexander McQueen, A/W 1997, ref: blog.metmuseum.org

Figure 2-19 Details of embellished reptile skins on trousers and bag, Roberto Cavalli, S/S 2014, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-20 Fendi winning mink and fox coat by student from London College of Fashion, 2016, ref: www.wearefur.com

to Roberto Cavalli's use of embellished reptile skins in S/S 2014 (figure 2-19). In 'Wild: Fashion Untamed' Bolton noted some of the varied decorative uses of fur and exotic animal materials, examining designers known for their use of animal materials at the turn of the 21st Century including Alexander McQueen and Roberto Cavalli, as well as Dolce and Gabbana, John Galliano and Jean Paul Gaultier.[77] Similarly, Godart considered how status and differentiation in the fashion industry potentially motivated fashion houses to use of fur in their collections between 2001-2010.[78]

However, from the outset of this research in 2015, fur and exotic animal materials were being used by a broader range of fashion designers. This increase was reflected in 70% of shows at New York Fashion Week and 60% of shows at London Fashion week featuring fur.[79] According to furrier Richard Swartz, the increase in younger designers using fur is a result of a number of them training within the Saga Furs Design Centre.[6] This includes Emily Burnett (the former Creative Director of Dennis Basso) and Brandon Sun (the former Design Director of furs at Oscar de la Renta). Julie Maria Iversen of Kopenhagen Fur stated that their aim was to encourage designers to learn about the uses of fur early in their careers to create a perception of fur as a textile rather than a skin.[4] The training of fashion designers by fur auction houses highlighted a focus on fur manipulation as a decorative fabric to impact the fashion market, moving away from specialist craft-based design and production.[7]

Furthermore, Saga Furs invited university students to learn the practical skills of working with fur through various competitions. This included the REMIX Asia Edition 2016; a youth design competition promoting the use of natural fur in design,[80] and a Fendi competition with students from London College of Fashion and Accademia Costume & Moda, 2016.[5] The influence of fur was subsequently found in the students' collections, specifically through various decorative applications. One such example was the winning coat from London College of Fashion, created from mink and fox where the skins have been decoratively cut, dyed and reassembled to create an abstract pattern (figure 2-20).

As part of the contextual review a range of textile trade shows used by fashion designers were visited, in order to note trends in decorative fur and exotic animal materials, and

those evocative of fur and exotic animal materials. The researcher found tactile and highly manipulated materials on display such as: Printed and painted feather and reptile embellishment, shaved furs, animal print on sequins and an apparent increase in fringing variations compared to the offerings prior to 2015. It appeared as if there was a surge in expressive material experimentation using mixed media to achieve highly tactile and eye-catching surfaces.

One such example of heightened material manipulation was hand-painted python skin from Reptilis, a company well known for high-quality manipulated reptile leathers such as snake, crocodile and ostrich which can be used to create garments and accessories. Figure 2-21 illustrates one of the samples presented at Premier Vision by Reptilis in February 2016, where the natural patterns of the python skin have been exaggerated for decorative effect through colour, using a hand-painted technique (figure 2-22). The appeal of manipulatable natural pattern was therefore noted as a potential motivator for selecting python skin for decorative effect. Furthermore, was the appeal of unnatural colouration which couldn't be attributed to a specific animal. A further prominent example of heightened material manipulation were samples of rabbit fur from Aqpel, a company who sell printed and laser cut furs. Some of their designs appear to be inspired by nature, specifically the appearance of crocodile or alligator skin (figure 2-23). The combination of fur tactility and a synthetic reptile skin aesthetic portray a rich dynamic between the natural and the man-made.

It was relevant to note the industry relationships between fashion designers and artisan textile ateliers when developing richly embellished fashion. For example, Chanel-owned embroiderers Lesage and feather and flower creators Lemarié who regularly use animal materials to create textile embellishment.[81,82] Ostrich feathers, whose barbules are removed from the centre shaft, are commonly used to highlight movement, volume and softness (figure 2-24). As well as ostrich, the contemporary feather range used by Lemarié includes goose, pheasant, turkey and duck. Their archive of once prohibited rare and exotic feathers is also extensive, and includes bird of paradise, heron and egret.[83] In lieu of this, are the exotic names given to the contemporary feather collection; 'marabou' is in fact turkey down and 'collet' are feathers from cockerel neck.[83] These feathers are

Figure 2- 21 Hand painted python skin, Reptilis, 2016, ref: www.reptilis.it

Figure 2-22 The process of hand painting python skin, Reptilis, ref: www.reptilis.it

Figure 2-23 Cut and printed rabbit fur, Aqpel, 2016/2017, ref: www.aqpel.com

Figure 2-24 Ostrich feather handwork, Lemarie, 2015, ref: www.stylebubble.co.uk

Figure 2-25 Making of the S/S 2016 Haute Couture Chanel collection, bee embellishment detail, ref: www.youtube.com

subsequently dyed, painted, cut to size and glued to create original textile embellishments whose relationship is far from the original raw material.

Lemarié created bee embellishments for the Chanel 2016 Couture show using mixed media, illustrated through a layering of different coloured feathers, utilising their soft edges to give a furry effect which was cut, glued and pressed into place by hand (figure 2-25). The construction of the collection was shared on YouTube by Chanel, heightening the story behind the design and the workmanship that went into creating the embellishment.[19,84] As well as feather use, was the application of hand cut wood paillettes by Chanel, which were coloured with pens to create soft feather-like effects. This intricate work implemented a range of materials for their individual decorative properties.

The number of artisan textile ateliers has reduced significantly since the late 19th Century.[83] Fashion textile designer and researcher Yeseung Lee argues the importance of the handmade in offering a heightened experience of contemplation and self-reflection for the maker.[85] As fur and exotic animal materials appear thus far to be associated with the handmade, these materials therefore appear to act as motivators for a space in which to explore greater remits of creativity and craftsmanship. Shiner discusses the attributes of craft amongst contemporary automated manufacture as offering an elevated intellectual and physical satisfaction in the handmade.[86] Technology is however valuable and relevant when creating that which would otherwise be unobtainable through handwork.

As part of exploration into the decorative use of fur and exotic animal materials at the start of the research period (February 2014 - September 2018), the researcher explored designer examples, one of which was the Erdem S/S 2015 collection. Feathers were pieced together to create a textile which had an organic effect, creating an almost painterly visual appeal of texture and movement, again due to the soft edges of feathers (figures 2-26 to 2-28). Embellishment created from feathers offers a wide range of potential as the material can manipulated through dyeing, sculpting and crimping,[81] for example figure 2-27 has a more 3D visual appeal due to the layering of various feather types and colours. In contrast to what could be achieved via printing fabric, is a certain

feeling of density and quality. Furthermore, the use of the colour blue in these three looks not so much emphasizes the natural colouration but in fact applies an unnatural look.

At the outset of the research, Chinese designer Yiqing Yin who uses fur extensively in her collections to high decorative effect, was named the most recent designer to have been granted Haute Couture appellation. The designer is recognized for the use of freehand techniques to create fabric manipulation and her website recurrently states that she works around the topics of; metamorphosis, evolution, second skin and shaman-like women. The effect of evolution is played out through the heightened manipulation of fur to the point of it being unrecognisable, therefore presenting a new form of second skin for the wearer. These themes are achieved visually through the use of flat and 3D embroidery techniques using fur and exotic animal materials, often with layered elements, which combine to achieve a heightened textural effect.

Collaborating with textile artisan Marion Chopineau who has a copyrighted fur shaving technique, Yiqing Yin presented hand-cut fur garments in Spring 2012 Couture. Marion Chopieneau's first collection entitled 'Her Dress = Hair Dress', was based on applying hairdressing techniques to artificial fur and was shown at the Hyeres Festival in 1998.[81] Yiqing Yin presented hand-cut fur garments again in her Spring 2016 Couture collection, this time in collaboration with textile designer Coen Carsten (figures 2-29 to 2-31). Fur was used as the main material in the garment, dyed and constructed in a way which is organic and tactile. The researcher notes that there is more visual connection with fur as a raw material on the lower half of the dress where larger sections of fur and individual uncut hairs can be seen, whereas the more manipulated upper section connects less with its origin (figure 2-29). The raised embellishment elements inspire touch; through the photograph one can imagine the softness of its appeal.

A further example of the use of fur to create decorative embellishment is through intarsia, a handmade technique aimed at assembling pieces of fur to create a mosaic effect.[87] The method of applying different panels of fur to achieve pattern was used by Gucci to create images of snakes, peacocks and flowers using dyed and natural mink (figures 2-32 to 2-34). Patterning in fur is usually achieved through printing if it's an

Figure 2-26 Mixed feather embellishment detail on dress in blue, white and black, Erdem, S/S 2015, ref: www.vogue.com

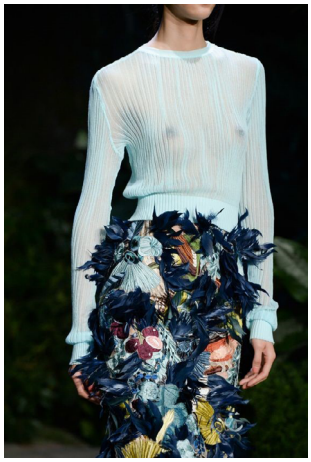


Figure 2-27 Mixed feather embellishment detail on skirt, Erdem, S/S 2015, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-28 Mixed feather embellishment on skirt in blue, green and black, Erdem, S/S 2015, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-29 Hand-cut fur details on dress, Yiqing Yin, S/S 2016 Couture, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-30 Hand-cut fur details on top half of jacket, Yiqing Yin, S/S 2016 Couture, ref: www.vogue.com

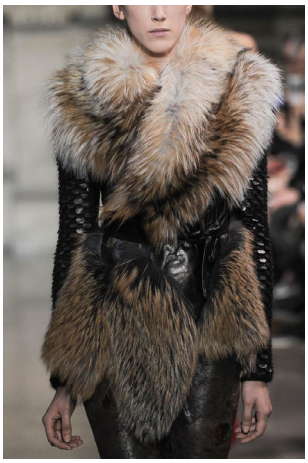


Figure 2-31 Hand-cut fur jacket detail on torso, Yiqing Yin, S/S 2016 Couture, ref: www.vogue.com

inexpensive item of clothing, whereas intarsia is being reserved for textiles associated with craftsmanship as it is a manual process drawing on specific craft knowledge. Reflective of earlier examples in this chapter which evoke nature, the motif of snakes intertwined is very evocative and organic in its representation. The illustrative style of the snake motif also presents the black and white stripes on the body of the snake as uneven, adding to its natural appearance and appeal of being 'imperfect.'

Feathers were noted to be a big trend in fashion in 2017, documented by the many press articles from Vogue over the course of one month.[9,10,88] Prada applied ostrich feathers to create decoration on headwear and hems in their A/W 2017 collection, in combination with a range of beaded embellishment techniques (figures 2-35 to 2-37). One show reviewer commented, "no look was left untouched by a little voluminous embellishment, whether it was a densely plumed skirt hem or the hundreds of pink beads."[89] The feeling of movement of the embellishments can be seen from the show photographs, where one can spot individual feathers mixed with beading swaying above the hem of the skirt (figure 2-35). Furthermore, the placing of ostrich feathers around the face was visually reminiscent of a fur-trimmed hood, albeit lighter in weight. It is almost as if the ostrich feather is an improved, more lustrous and eye-catching variation on fur trimming in this example. Shearling used in this collection, a much heavier and stiffer material, was found on coat panels and lapels, whereas feathers were placed where the body would create the most movement. Additionally, the dyed tips of the ostrich feather barbs in figure 2-35 further highlighted the feeling of the body's articulated extension.

Appearing to be reflective of the increased use of fur and exotic animal materials in fashion, Fendi renamed their Haute Couture collections to 'Haute Fourrure' in the years 2015 to 2017, in order to further position the company's focus on 'high fur'. The collections presented during these two years illustrated an elevated level of craftsmanship, applying fur as a textile that was intricately dyed and cut (figures 2-38 and 2-39). A show review by Vogue in 2017 noted the appeal of unnatural blue poppy embellishments made from mink and the 9,000 fur paillettes which took 1,250 hours to hand sew.[90] In a similar manner to the earlier example of Chanel bee embellishment, these craft techniques are further communicated in the 'behind the scenes' imagery from Fendi's website promoting artisan practices (figure 2-40).

In terms of material properties, exotic skins are not as strong or durable as cow hide leather. In these examples of python skin use by Salvatore Ferragamo, circles have been subtly stamped out of the skin, which appear to be a decorative accent, but could also function to create more flexibility in the material (figures 2-41 to 2-43). Reptile skins were noted as a trend for 2018 by Vogue,[11] however the use of python skin to create an entire garment is a bold statement. Evocative of the python skin from Reptilis earlier in this section, the python used to create the main body of the dress appears to have been painted to accentuate the natural markings of the snake. The placement of the colouration in figure 2-42 at the centre of the torso further creates a three-dimensional effect to accentuate the curves of the body.

Finally, is an example of feather embellishment by Dries Van Noten for their S/S 2019 collection. These embellishments combine beaded fringe in a similar contrast to that used by Prada, where the diverse components of feather and bead are most eye-catching due to their weight and movement (figures 2-44 to 2-46). The placement of what appears to be cockerel feathers on the shoulder of the garment also appears like a corsage worn for formal occasions (figures 2-44, 2-45).

The catwalk examples presented here – apart from Prada and Yiqing Yin A/W 2015 are from S/S collections. Even the two A/W examples present sleeveless silk dresses which could be appropriate in summer. This demonstrates that fur and exotic animal materials are not limited to winter clothing. Particularly for fur, that it's insulative nature is not the property that is being applied in these instances. Designers have created lighter versions of fur via combination with other textiles, yielding more garment from less fur and opening up greater opportunities for decorative applications.[4] The British Fur Trade Association stated that the appeal of fur was its ability to be cut, dyed and crafted in ways that synthetic fur cannot.[91] Thus, further indicating that fur and exotic animal materials possess a greater offering of material manipulation and are subsequently more adaptable to the design visions of designers in high fashion.

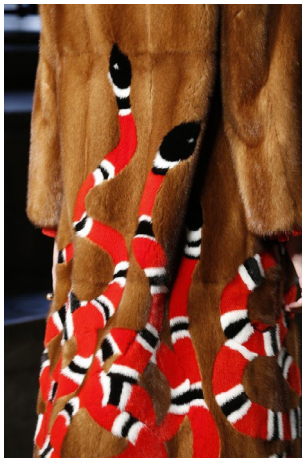


Figure 2-32 Snake motif detail using intarsia technique in mink fur coat, Gucci, Resort 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-33 Peacock motifs using intarsia technique in mink fur coat, Gucci, Resort 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-34 Flower motifs using intarsia technique in mink fur jacket, Gucci, Resort 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-35 Mixed feather embellishment on lower half of dress, Prada, A/W 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

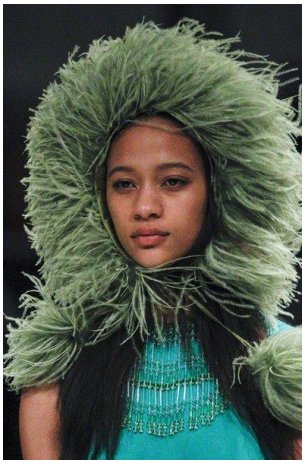


Figure 2-36 Ostrich feather hood in green, Prada, A/W 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

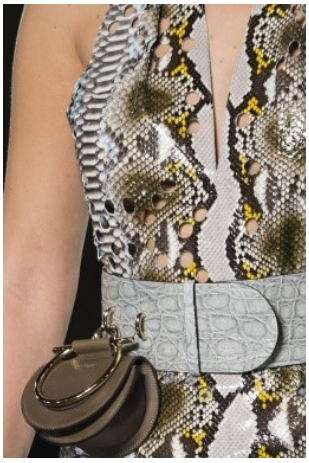
Figure 2-37 Feather embellishment on scarf trimming, Prada, A/W 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-38 Blue mink flower embellishment detail on coat sleeve, Fendi, A/W Couture 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-39 Fur and feather embellishment all over dress, Fendi, A/W Couture 2017, ref: www.vogue.com

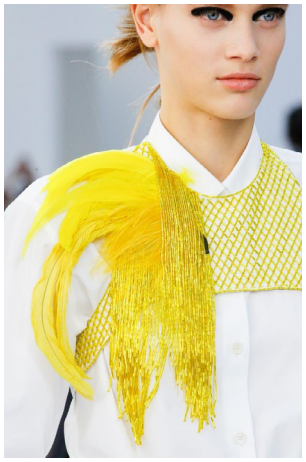
Figure 2-40 Fur and feather embellishment construction detail for Figure 2-39 dress, Fendi, A/W Couture 2017, ref: www.fendi.com

Figures 2-41 Painted and cut python skin detail all over skirt, Salvatore Ferragamo, S/S 2018, ref: www.vogue.com

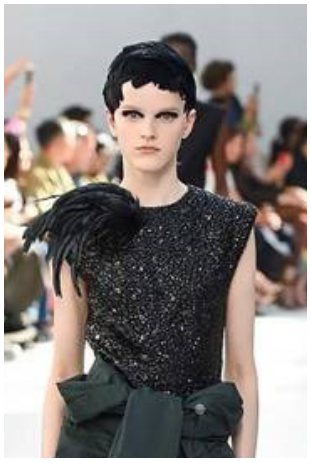


Figures 2-42 Painted and cut python skin detail on dress, Salvatore Ferragamo, S/S 2018, ref: www.vogue.com

Figures 2-43 Painted and cut python skin detail on skirt, Salvatore Ferragamo, S/S 2018, ref: www.vogue.com



Figures 2-44 Yellow cockerel feather and bead embellishment on shoulder, Dries Van Noten, S/S 2019, ref: www.vogue.com



Figures 2-45 Black cockerel feather and bead embellishment on shoulder, Dries Van Noten, S/S 2019, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-46 Mixed feather embellishment in orange, Dries Van Noten, S/S 2019, ref: www.vogue.com

2.3 MAPPING MOTIVATORS TO APPLY FUR AND EXOTIC ANIMAL MATERIALS

In summary, the creative motivators to use fur and exotic animal materials as embellishment which appeared in both the historical and contemporary sections were:

Aesthetic and haptic qualities:

- The smoothness, silky feel, softness and lustre of the material (fur and feathers).
- Lightweight yet voluminous properties which create movement and animation (fur and feathers).
- The three-dimensional texture and density inviting a haptic experience.
- The eye-catching appeal, often achieved through colour.

Connection to nature:

- The appeal of balance between nature and the man-made.
- To enhance, intervene or represent the triumphant conquest over nature.
- To record and collect nature as souvenirs.
- The opportunity to exaggerate natural markings, patterns and colours.

Manipulability and craftsmanship:

- The embellishment opportunities to manipulate materials due to tooling innovations.
- The layering of techniques, especially when done by hand add to the story and individuality of the textile.
- The handmade and patient time spent invites contemplation and heightened creativity.
- For dressmakers and designers who have not used the materials before, the appeal of learning new techniques.

By categorising and grouping these findings into three themes it was possible to start to form a clear route for alternative textile embellishment and to help focus the proposal and research questions. In addition, these exploratory concepts helped formulate a later design brief for initial textile sampling.

2.4 DECORATIVE ALTERNATIVES TO FUR AND EXOTIC ANIMAL MATERIALS

2.4.1 OVERVIEW

Most of the work covered in the previous two sections is reliant on skilled embroiderers and crafts people whose knowledge is specific to material type (for example furriers and feather workers). At the start of this research, fashion decoration was in high demand as a form of artwork that enhanced quality of life through its richly visual and haptic appeal.[81] Furthermore, Sykas stated that meaning was created through the construction of material offerings in fashion, although those values and meanings were potentially unstable based upon the personal and objective relationships with material objects.[92] A range of different material approaches have been adopted by fashion designers dependent upon taste and overall visual concept.

The increase in the use of embellishment can be noted on the catwalk (largely documented in the previous section). Since Alessandro Michele's first collection for Gucci (A/W 2015) the brand has become synonymous with decorative textile work. Within this collection, traditional embroidery techniques were used to depict natural forms such as birds, flowers and insects through beadwork and mixed media (figure 2-47). Gucci ArtLab was later launched in 2018 as a hub of industrial craftsmanship, a particular reflection of the boom in accessory sales. As well as focusing on leather goods, Gucci ArtLab has a Research & Development department that also prototypes metallic accessories and new fabrics.[93] Thus implying a strive for balance between innovation, unique craftsmanship and consumer demand.

Originally focused on hand embroidery when first opening in 1904, Swiss textile company Jakob Schlaepfer embraced technological developments in laser cutting, digital printing and industrial embroidery machines, which facilitate the production of more than 1200 new fabrics every year.[94] Many of the fabrics created are limited edition, and high-end brands that Jakob Schlaepfer supplies or collaborates with – such as Chanel, Dior and Margiela - require that textiles must be exclusive to them.[95] The company successfully applies industrial machine methods in combination with the handmade to produce both large yet niche collections and exclusive one-off textiles. Figure 2-48 illustrates a contemporary textile created by the Jakob Schlaepfer for Louis Vuitton, applying layers of

feather-like paillettes – which appear to the researcher to be laser cut - to create a feeling of movement and texture. Different sizes of paillettes have been created as if imitating the different sizes of feathers found on birds. Furthermore, the fabric has then been carefully fashioned to highlight the surface and texture of the embellishment across curves of the body.

Textile ateliers and fashion brands mix animal and non-animal derived materials to create new forms of embellishment. Determining what could be considered an alternative to fur and exotic animal materials was in part influenced by the categorization of non-animal textiles at fairs, retailers, fashion shows and exhibitions. It was found that some decorative textiles and fashion artefacts made from non-animal materials were categorized as fur or exotic animal materials.

Two such examples of the mistaken categorisation of materials was found when exploring the feather section at Barnett Lawson, a London haberdashery. Decorative sprays made from sinamay (fibres of the abaca tree) were found, mistakenly labelled as feather trim due to their appearance and feel. It was only through further enquiry with the retailer - by looking through their archived catalogues - that the material was correctly identified by the merchandiser. Sinamay was subsequently used in practice development due to its seemingly feather-like qualities (explored within chapter 4). Another example of unusual categorisation was found in the latex and semi-precious stone embellishment samples presented by textile company Isisi at Premier Vision in 2016 (figure 2-49). The researcher was somewhat surprised to find them exhibiting in the leather hall, their stand drew a noticeably continuous crowd, seemingly from those who had first intended to procure leather hides. The stones, which retained their natural markings were designed in an appealingly unique scattered effect.

The textiles presented by Isisi reminded the researcher of an earlier example by Tzuri Gueta for Jean Paul Gaultier S/S 2008 Haute Couture which applied silicone to mimic beadwork, lace and mother or pearl motifs (figure 2-50). In this example, Tzuri Gueta applied a fluid polymer to an open work textile, a patented technique called ‘silicone-fed lace’ which produces textiles which are deceivingly lightweight.[81] The material is

Figure 2-47 Bird, Flower and Insect embroidery detail on jumper, Gucci, A/W 2015, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-48 Nude feathered embellishment on blouse, Jakob Schlaepfer for Louis Vuitton, Resort 2019, ref: www.jakob-schlaepfer.ch

Figure 2-49 Textile card from Isisi, latex and semi-precious stone embellishment in different colour-ways, 2016

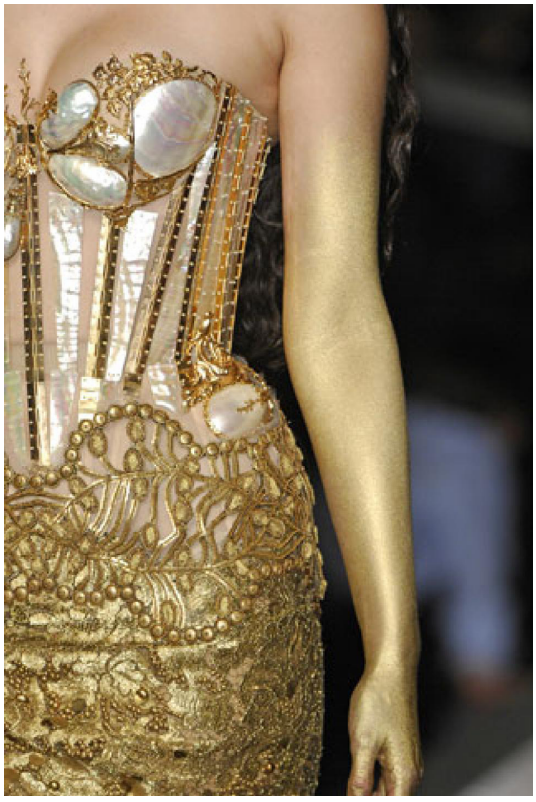


Figure 2-50 Silicone mimicking beadwork embellishment, Tzuri Gueta for Jean Paul Gaultier S/S 2008 Haute Couture, ref: tzurigueta.com

subsequently hand painted, and in this example, further motifs applied which appear as shells and metalwork.

As well as non-animal materials being categorized as animal materials, the opposite can occasionally be found. In 2017 Humane Society International (HSI) reported that many high street retailers selling apparel with faux-fur trims and accents was in fact real fur, without public knowledge.[96] To reach a wider market and to not to attract anti-fur protestors, Olsen describes how designers using fur in their collections in 1994 disguised it through fabric manipulation.[26] One method of disguising real fur was by shearing it and dyeing it in artificial colours to appear more akin to a deep-pile plush fabric.[26] This indicates how cheap and readily available certain animal fur was and still is in contemporary fashion applications.

Researchers at Oxford University presented technology and methods to create fur in a lab using stem cells, positioned as a solution that could reduce the slaughter of fur-bearing animals by providing it to designers that currently use fur.[97] In a separate approach, Wolf recommends brushed embroidery as an alternative to fur in order to make it appear more 3D and soft, as part of an article published in a trade magazine for textile practitioners to 'Create Fur and Feather Effects with Embroidery.'[98] In terms of further specific academic research relating to embellishment – which can encompass various additive and manipulated elements in fashion - the researcher found limited existing research. Consequent to a final search in September 2018 (which was the end of the research period) using the keywords 'fashion embellishment,' ResearchGate presented four texts related to the subject of fashion embellishment. The keywords 'textile embellishment' provided one article, and Google Scholar presented only articles related to technical textiles. Of the resulting texts, one related to fashion trends in the 19th Century, which has been earlier referenced by the researcher in the historical overview. Further texts related to CAD engraving onto polyester fabrics, colouration of knitted fabric and memory.

2.4.2 CONTEMPORARY DESIGNER EXAMPLES

The following section provided an overview of particularly novel contemporary design practice which applied potentially decorative alternatives to fur or exotic animal materials. These decorative textiles appeared to align either aesthetically or conceptually with some of the decorative appeals of fur and exotic animal materials which the researcher thus far mapped. It is worth mentioning, however, that part of the intrigue of the contemporary practice in this section was also the ambiguity and subjectivity of the work. Designer examples are listed chronologically, mirroring the historical and contemporary overview sections.

IRIS VAN HERPEN

An example of fashion embellishment with some visual reference to fur and exotic animal materials is found in the work of fashion designer Iris Van Herpen. The work undertaken by the fashion designer was not positioned as an alternative to animal materials specifically, but retained some of the similar values such as being eye-catching and intricate. This is due to the digital tooling techniques applied, often achieved through collaboration**.** For example, the visually stimulating work in collaboration with artist Bart Hess in 2012, described as "translucent snakeskin" (figure 2-51). Heavily reliant on synthetic and digitally rendered materials, Iris Van Herpen stated that she is inspired by nature but does not like using materials from nature because it is not her own language**.**[99] Furthermore, that her focus is on developing novel techniques to apply to materials, since other fashion houses don't create time to do this.[100] A silicone representation of feathers, crafted into a dress, was exhibited in the 'Plumasserie' section of 'Manus x Machina: Fashion in an age of technology' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2016. The choice of section to display the work would appear to be due to the aesthetic similarity of feathers, and the contemporary take the company has on the craftsmanship of feather work (figure 2-52).

BOUDICCA 'WWF WONDER WORLD FUR'

Designers Boudicca presented 'WWF Wonder World Fur' faux furs from imaginary animals in 2013, including the 'dolyphan' and 'bamboseal' made from natural fibres such as mohair, flax and ahimsa silk (figure 2-53). This project was considered relevant by the

Figure 2-51 'Translucent snakeskin' embellishment detail on dress, Iris Van Herpen, Couture S/S 2012, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-52 Silicone bird embellishment detail on dress, Iris Van Herpen, Haute Couture S/S 2013, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-53 Bamboseal fur gilet, WWF Wonder World Fur, Boudicca, 2013, ref: www.shoko.fr

Figure 2-54 Shredded denim detail on jacket, Faustine Steinmetz, S/S 2015, ref: www.i-d.vice.com

Figure 2-55 Bio-grown proposition for bracelet and brooch, S/S 2082 'Extinct Collection', Amy Congdon, 2015, ref: www.amycongdon.com

researcher in terms of concept, and insight into the associated appeals of fur and exotic animal materials. The insight gained here being the themes of rarity and exoticism of animal materials, furthered through a concept that imagines furs from mythical animals. The use of natural fibres appears to have achieved softness and density, however researcher deemed there not to be an aesthetic connection to the raw material nor had the textile been heavily manipulated in terms of embellishment.

FAUSTINE STEINMETZ SHREDDED DENIM

Fashion designer Faustine Steinmetz has shunned fur, exotic skins and leather, for reasons of becoming more informed about animal welfare, signing the letter to Central Saint Martins to ban fur (referred to in the preface) and winning a PETA award as 'Designer to Watch' in 2017.[101] The designer shreds and sculpts denim by hand to create a heightened tactile aesthetic (figure 2-54), potentially reminiscent of fur due to the trailing unwoven threads. The patient time spent constructing garments - where yarns are additionally created by hand - is promoted by the designer as a slow fashion approach. Each textile layer is slightly different from the last, and subsequently each garment is unique. The shredded effect is impactful as a whole garment with multiple layers, but potentially may not have the similar feeling of fur if used as a trimming or smaller accent. The intact base material (denim) aids in adding volume similar to fur or feather work, although the researcher also reflected on whether it may add unnecessary weight when viewed within the context of this research which values the lightweight.

AMY CONGDON S/S 2082 'EXTINCT COLLECTION'

Designer Amy Congdon's speculative S/S 2082 'Extinct Collection' focused on intricate future artefacts that could potentially form jewellery or trimming effects. Bespoke biological textiles would be grown, such as an ivory bracelet and 'cross species' fur jacket (see figure 2-55).[102] The project is positioned to question whether the influence of biotechnology could re-contextualise textile skills such as hand embroidery, with grown materials offering the ultimate level of control and manipulatable surface as well as connecting the designer to a nature-inspired process. Since the focus of this research is not on speculative design, the researcher evaluates the aesthetic and haptic potential in terms of how the artefacts catch the eye and how the brooch could be imagined if applied to a textile backing. The researcher inferred that the artefacts would need to be

experimented within garment form in order to combine the qualities of movement and volume.

MODERN MEADOW 'ZOA'

Similar to the positioning of biologically grown materials by Amy Congdon, materials company Modern Meadow unveiled their collagen-based lab-grown leather, 'Zoa' in 2017 at 'Items: Is Fashion Modern?' exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (see figure 2-56). Although the development of Zoa is considered by the researcher to be more of a materials engineering initiative, it was applied to decorative effect for the exhibition so has therefore been explored within this section of the research. The choice for this type of application communicates that the motif design, reminiscent of large and irregular cells, aids the appeal of the material which may otherwise be too rigid for a garment application. This is particularly due to the focus of the material as an alternative to leather which is more associated with accessories rather than decorative exotic skins.

STELLA MCCARTNEY FAUX FURS

Fashion designer Stella McCartney uses alternatives to animal materials such as faux fur in her collections. It was not until 2015 that the brand began showing creations involving synthetic fur, in parallel with the overall increase of fur on the catwalk.[7] Figure 2-57 applied two different varieties of faux fur in a patchwork effect, adding visual interest. The choice to adopt a material that imitates fur was led by the designers love of nature and apparent focus on replicating fur to be as realistic as possible.[103] However, at the time of writing, issues with non-biodegradable synthetic materials and microplastics release meant that the company was researching plant-based fur alternatives.[104] Although current fur imitations are soft and tactile, it does not explore the deeper connections to nature beyond physical material properties.

MICHELLE LOWE HOLDER

Using materials and techniques which animate the body is the effect of the accessories created by designer Michelle Lowe Holder who creates unique and artisanal pieces which evolve from one collection to the next.[105] Utilising both modern and heritage techniques, this particular neck-piece (see figure 2-58) is created from cut and dyed pieces of wood to create embellishment that when aligned in a certain way, imitate the appearance of

Figure 2-56 T-shirt with 'Zoa' leather pattern in black, Modern Meadow, 2017, ref: www.modernmeadow.com

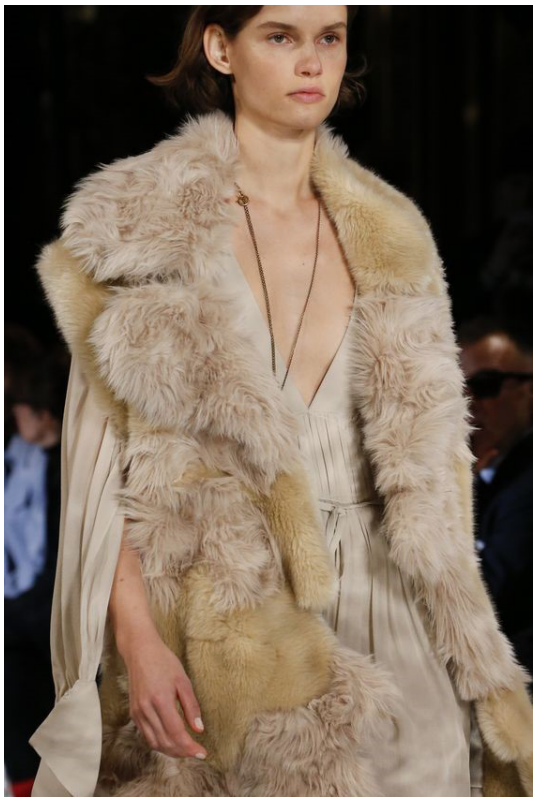


Figure 2-57 Faux fur patchwork details on coat, Stella McCartney, A/W 2018, ref: www.vogue.com

Figure 2-58 Embellished neckpiece in scale pattern, Michelle Lowe Holder, 2018, ref: www.lowe-holder.com

Figure 2-59 Strips of 'Vegea' leather embellishment all over dress, Tiziano Guardini, 2018, ref: www.lifegate.it

reptile scales. There are many versions of laser cut components that mimic animal scales in textiles and fashion. This example is selected as one of the best representations of this technique and repeat pattern, furthered by the application of hand painted colour which fades from one hue to the next.

TIZIANO GUARDINI X VEGEA

As well as Faustine Steinmetz, another designer who won a PETA vegan fashion award in 2017, the 'Couture Award', was Italian designer Tiziano Guardini. Described as a pioneer in the use of natural and recycled materials,[101] many of his creations focus on decorative detailing. In 2017 he collaborated with materials company Vegea to present dresses using a leather alterative made from waste from the wine industry. A dress was created from cut strips of Vegea leather to enhance a feeling of fluidity and movement from what would otherwise be a rigid sheet material (figure 2-59). The 3D aspect which would continuously move with the wearer is appealing, and offers the feeling of volume and tactility associated with fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, the layering of the strips adds the effect of multiple different shades of colour.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed both historical and contemporary examples of how fur and exotic animal materials were used to achieve decoration, and subsequently mapped some of the key emerging themes regarding their appeals. What appeared within both the historical and contextual review was how dressmakers and designers manipulated animal materials in order to make them appear more exotic and rarer, or conversely to appear more controlled, inorganic and geometric. The researcher reflected upon the wide variety of animal materials which were available for use in the latter 19th and early 20th century, newly discovered to a European market. This was in contrast to contemporary fashion embellishment which appeared to apply mainly to mink, ostrich feathers, fowl feathers and python skin in even greater varieties of manipulation for visual effect. This appeared to be partly due to the banning of many highly exotic animal species in between these two eras: The researcher therefore questioned whether contemporary embellishment was more manipulated because of fewer varieties of exotic animals to apply.

As well as a connection to nature and the manipulability and craftsmanship associated with fur and exotic animal materials, additional themes which emerged from the review included the appeal of their aesthetic and haptic qualities. A variety of textile embellishment techniques had been applied in order to highlight these themes, including; cutting motifs, shaving, dyeing, beadwork combinations, and cutting away material to create lighter effects. The potential motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials were mapped in order to provide a greater focus to reflect upon the successes of existing alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials in the context of this research study.

Contemporary design practice which applied potentially decorative alternatives to fur or exotic animal materials consisted of some viable attributes which chimed with the key motivators mapped by the researcher. These included; embellishments incorporating technological and material advancements from couture, digital fabrication and bio-inspired design to offer aspects of craftsmanship, novelty and a conceptual reference to animal materials. However, through visual assessment, it appeared that the values of fur and exotic animal material decoration were not easy to emulate by other means.

Furthermore, many material alternatives focused on an engineered replica, such as faux furs, Zoa and Vegea. No studies were found which specifically documented an aim to create embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials.

Experimentation with potential materials and textile embellishment techniques was required to discover what types of alternatives could be viable. In order for this to take place, the researcher planned to engage with fashion industry associated with the decorative use of fur and exotic animal materials in order to draw out deeper themes and concepts. Furthermore, to examine specific archival artefacts which potentially had values, textile embellishment techniques or materials that could be applied in contemporary fashion. The researcher questioned whether it was possible to create embellishment using non-animal materials that evoke similar appeals to fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, if there were textile embellishment techniques which could be used that could imbue themes from the 'Mapping Motivators' section of this chapter.

3 DEFINING THE DECORATIVE APPEAL OF FUR AND EXOTIC ANIMAL MATERIALS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explored the emerging concepts, themes and questions from the previous chapter, and proceeded to identify the key motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment.

Led by the historical overview from the previous chapter, embellishment artefacts from museum archives were selected as case studies to further consider the values and appeals associated with fur and exotic animal materials. These items were selected due to the materials and the embellishment techniques used as well as the story behind the item, which the researcher felt held values relevant to contemporary fashion. The case studies were further enriched by interviewing Edwina Ehrman (V&A) about the V&A's motivation to collect fashion artefacts containing fur and exotic animal materials and the concepts behind the upcoming 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition (21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019) (appendix 1).

Highlighted in the previous chapter was the importance of speaking to industry associated with the contemporary use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration, in order to discover their appeal. Therefore, included in this chapter are three in-depth interviews and a workshop with members of the fashion industry who use fur or exotic animal materials to discuss their decorative appeal. A range of fashion items containing fur or exotic animal materials including case study items, additional museum items and contemporary fashion products were used in the workshop. This was in order to initiate discussion about the design appeal of fur and exotic animal materials, which included tactile qualities. Furthermore, in one of the industry interviews, samples of manipulated animal materials were also used in order to initiate discussion about their appeals from a design perspective.

The aim of this chapter was to develop inspiration points to inform a design brief for practice developments. This was achieved by drawing out concepts and themes regarding the reasons why designers apply fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment, using archive research and participant engagement. The practice developments that this informed are documented in the following two chapters.

3.2 ARCHIVE RESEARCH

3.2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of archive research was to discover in further depth some of the motivators for using fur and exotic animal materials to create decoration in the latter 19th Century and early 20th Century. As well as the V&A, a number of other museum and institutional archives were identified as relevant to the research and were subsequently visited, including: Museum of London, London College of Fashion and the Economic Botany Collection at Kew, as mentioned in chapter 1.

As well as being examples of fur and exotic animal material decoration within a specific time period, artefacts were visually selected for their application of unusually crafted embellishment techniques. For example, aspects such as; embroidery, paillettes, trims, sprays and fabric manipulation were explored. Furthermore, not all of the examples of embellishment contained only animal materials, in some cases mixed textile media was applied or those which imitated fur or exotic animal materials. All of the items viewed within archives were clothing, accessories or textile samples, the only exception being the doyley mentioned in chapter 2 (figure 2-16). On occasion other types of material included; raw textile fibres, textile tools, books, catalogues, photographs and audio recordings in order to give further context to the artefacts. After noting a selection of archival artefacts created from a diverse range fur and exotic animal materials and embellishment techniques, the research focused on those made from non-indigenous communities, of which there were fewer examples. This choice was due to the context of the research focusing on the motivations of designers and dressmakers associated with the decorative use of fur and exotic animal materials. This further focused the research on the V&A due to the expansive collection of material created by dressmakers, craftspeople and designers. In terms of case study selection, artefacts included those housed at the V&A and the Museum of London, due to its focus on social and urban history.

Many artefacts - including those selected as case studies - were first discovered in a live setting. This was through visiting gallery displays, booking appointments in the archive by selecting items via online databases, and by physically searching museum archives

together with museum staff. For example, searching the less referenced Fur and Feather Store collection at the V&A together with Edwina Ehrman (V&A). This was partly initiated due to not all archival material being available via online catalogues. Furthermore, it was pertinent to view in a live setting all potential case study artefacts in order to research their overall evocation and tactile qualities. Most archives restricted touching artefacts and on some occasions, gloves needed to be worn. This limited some deeper understanding of the item's material qualities; however, research was assimilated not only through the use of photography, but by drawing and trying to replicate some of the design elements through practice.

Four artefacts selected as case studies were chosen from a short list for further examination, as they were found to be particularly eye-catching and appealing in their use of raw material and embellishment technique. Furthermore, they represented varying cultural and social values. When researching these artefacts, and in order to discover motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials, the following questions were considered and presented as research findings:

- What types of fur and exotic animal materials were used?
- What embellishment techniques were applied to those raw materials?
- What properties of the fur or exotic animal material does this exaggerate/celebrate?
- What values did those materials or techniques have, also in terms of social and cultural factors?

Following initial archival research an interview with Edwina Ehrman (V&A) was conducted broadly focusing on items acquired from the latter 19th and early 20th century. Questions posed to Edwina included what the focus of the archive was when collecting fur and exotic animal materials and what types of animal materials were collected. In addition, the interview discussed the focus for the upcoming 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, in particular from the perspective of portraying fur and exotic animal material decoration. This included the decisions for how topics would be represented if archival artefacts were not available or in exhibition-worthy condition.

This interview enabled a deeper understanding of the specific appeal of items collected by the museum, with the view that these artefacts in turn inspired designers visiting the archive or the galleries. The interview was collected in the form of audio recording and note-taking, and took place in the participants office in the research department of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

3.2.2 CASE STUDIES OF ARTEFACTS

SNAKESKIN SLIPPERS

Snakeskin slippers dated from 1850-1870 (V&A: AP.6&A-1868) with a decorative leather trimming and quilted silk lining were on display (at the time of writing) to the public in the British Galleries at the V&A, where they represent the expanding fashionable wardrobe in the Victorian era (figure 3-1). This is the only item amongst the four case studies not viewed within an archive setting, as the item was part of the Museum's current gallery display.

- What types of fur and exotic animal materials were used?

The focus of this artefact was the particular use of snakeskin. It was revealed through further research that the snakeskin used in the slippers originates from the golden or olive sea snake (aipysurus laevis) native to Western Australia and the coasts of Indonesia (figure 3-2).[52] The Latin name 'laevis,' meaning 'smooth', refers to the texture of its skin. The scales of the golden or olive sea snake have a naturally brown or purple hue while its underside is white.[106] Considered a highly dangerous snake due to its venomous bite, it was first described in 1804 by French naturalist Bernard Germain de Lacépède.[106] The selection of this snakeskin for the maker - as well as its workability - may be in the appealing attributes of wild, dangerous and exotic, such is the origin of the snake.

- What embellishment techniques were applied to those raw materials?

What was particularly striking is that the scales of the snake did not resemble those which had been applied to the snakeskin slippers (see figure 3-2). The former is roughly hexagonal whilst the snake scales on the slippers resemble a teardrop shape. Furthermore, the texture of the scales has been enhanced in the slippers, rather than the smoothness of the snake. After a conversation with Edwina Ehrman (V&A), it was discovered that the scales of the snakeskin had been individually cut out and sewn back onto a base material, in order to demonstrate the shoemaker's skill. They were created by Edinburgh manufacturer W.Muir shortly after the first leather sewing machine had

Figure 3-1 Slippers with individually applied snake scales, Muir, W, 1850-1870,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: AP.6&A-1868, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 3-2 Golden sea snake (aipysurus laevis), ref: wikipedia.org

Figure 3-3 Cut out and digitally rendered pieces of cork in the shape of snake scales, 2016, Naomi Bailey-Cooper

come into use. A sewing machine has likely been used to assemble the slippers whilst the upper snakeskin embellishment detailing is handsewn. Unusually, the research focus of the embellishment detail was not the leather trim (while it does have an appealing curved shape), rather it was the detailing that covers the main area of the slippers. The researcher considered the decoration to be effective partly due to its application on a small sized product whose shape mimics the width and curve of a snake.

- What properties of the fur or exotic animal material does this exaggerate/celebrate?

The texture of the individually cut scales was exaggerated, with each scale being slightly raised at the tip of the teardrop shape. Furthermore, each scale had been applied to have an unnatural distance between the next, as well as the design of the quilted lining roughly mimicking the scales, both of which potentially exaggerate the shape further. The similarity of colour between the snakeskin slippers and the olive sea snake implied that they have not been dyed. Due to the heavy manipulation of the shape and spacing of the snake scales, it appeared that maintaining natural colouration gave the overall material some aesthetic design balance and did not remove it too much from its natural origin. At the same time, it also appeared that the scales were cut in this shape so that they looked more recognisable as snake skin: Many snakes' scales naturally have a more diamond or teardrop shape, such as the adder which could be found in the UK countryside at the time.

- What values did those materials or techniques have, also in terms of social and cultural factors?

Within the current gallery display, the item label stated that slippers such as these were worn in order to add flair to an otherwise formal appearance. Reptile skins were used to create a small amount of accessories in the 19th Century, but it wasn't until 1928 that the first London based broker for reptile skins was registered.[38] Therefore, the researcher considered that the unfamiliarity of exotic skins potentially posed an opportunity for another material to be unknowingly used in its place. Similar examples have been seen in the previous chapter, for instance the use of a starling as the basis to create an

aesthetically more exotic bird (referred to in the historical review in chapter 2). In the following chapter, cork material was cut into the teardrop shape of the snake scales seen in this example, placing it in a similar manner as a way of understanding the appeals of this embellishment process (figure 3-3). The practice created by the researcher also questioned how important the use of snakeskin was in terms of overall value, and if an alternative embellishment could be created using other materials readily available in contemporary fashion.

SWANSDOWN CAPE

A swansdown cape lined with cream silk from Russia dated around the 1880's was discovered in the Fur and Feather Store in the Clothworkers Centre (V&A), and later included in the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition at the V&A (V&A: T.367-1982) (figure 3-4).

- What types of fur and exotic animal materials were used?

The use of swansdown is articulated in the trim, tassels, and to form the quilt-type material which forms the body of the cape (figure 3-4). There are a few other items which include the use of swansdown as a trimming within the archives at the V&A, manipulated to form a dense boa which appears similar to fur. However, this example was in particularly good condition and included swansdown used as the main material to decorative effect. It is not apparent which type of swan has been used in this example, or if that could be relevant to the context of its appeal. Moreover, the material provenance was not immediately recognisable in the piece, which suggested that its value was mainly in the workmanship.

Figure 3-4 Swansdown cape, Vinogradova, 1880's, © Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.367-1982, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 3-5 Swansdown cape trimming detail, Vinogradova, 1880's, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.367-1982, photography: Sylvia Shu, 2016

Figure 3-6 Swansdown cape worn by Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna of Russia, photographed by K. E. von Gan, 1902

- What embellishment techniques were applied to those raw materials?

The manipulation of stranded down into discs to create a three-dimensional decorative textile[107] was particularly interesting. However, it was not immediately apparent exactly how the swansdown had been manipulated into these decorative discs, leading the researcher to inspect the tassels which applied the same technique (figure 3-5). It appeared that the stranded down was held together using a process similar to braiding. The cape was created by Anna Mikhailova Vinogradova, a respected and experienced craftswoman based in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. There is a heightened demonstration of control over the material particularly due to the repetitive pattern. Nizhny Novgorod was a well-known area in Russia for this particular embellishment technique using down feathers manipulated on weaving looms, described as a luxury.[108] The cape has a unique appeal in that it moves in an articulated manner, akin to chain mail or quilting. Furthermore, it inspired alternative ways in which to implant fibres via wig-making techniques and matrix structures, explored by the researcher throughout practice in chapter 5.

- What properties of the fur or exotic animal material does this exaggerate/celebrate?

Described as weightless,[107] the item was additionally incredibly delicate, soft and ethereal in nature partly due to its apparent undyed and therefore pure white state. Historically, swans were said to hold the characteristics of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, making their feathers an appropriately feminine ornament.[71]

- What values did those materials or techniques have, also in terms of social and cultural factors?

On reflection, the use of swan is important to the appeal of the piece, however the crafted technique of manipulating the down feathers alters the material into something less familiar. The researcher surmises therefore that the cape could have been highly prized socially as a rare and unique item, employing specific artisan techniques. Upon

further research, it was discovered that the Russian Royal family were known to have worn garments made using this technique of manipulating down feathers. Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna, daughter of Tsar Nicholas II was photographed wearing a very similar cape (figure 3-6), presenting it as a highly prized item. There are further swansdown garments preserved in other museum archives using the same recognisable technique, the best example being a jacket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.[109]

VELVET AND FEATHER MANTLE

An example of inspiring design was found in The Clothworkers Centre (V&A) which was retailed by the London dressmakers Redmayne & Co, dated 1885, and selected as an alternative motif to fur and exotic animal decoration (figure 3-7). The mantle (V&A: T.653-1996) incorporates both real marabou feathers and a woven fabric with a peacock feather design.

- What types of fur and exotic animal materials were used?

Marabou feathers were traditionally down feathers obtained from the marabou stork native to southern Africa, used to form the boa-like trim on the mantle. Marabou trimming became particularly fashionable in the second half of the 19th century (Edwina Ehrman, 2017, appendix). In addition, individual chicken feathers have been placed on the surface of the trim in a scattered effect. Although the use of feathers is not the sole focus in this example, the combination of mixed animal and non-animal materials delivers the appealing effect.

- What embellishment techniques were applied to those raw materials?

The feather motif when viewed closely was created using multiple coloured yarns to represent the iridescence of a peacock (figure 3-8). A coloured drawing was created by the researcher as a method of documenting and analysing the application of these multiple coloured yarns (see figure 3-9). The weaving technique which achieved the

Figure 3-7 Mantle made from velvet and feather, Redmayne and Co, 1885,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.653-1996, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure 3-8 Woven detail of peacock feather motif on mantle, Redmayne and Co, 1885,
Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.653-1996, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 3-9 Illustration of peacock feather motif on mantle, Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

feather effect inspired later development of weaving and tufting samples to create a tactile surface reminiscent of an animal material. In particular, this was to understand the process and effect of the raised floats, since there was not documentation in the V&A record about how this specific mechanised technique was achieved. The marabou trim is dyed to a similar brown hue to that of the main jacket. The chicken feathers have also been dyed and likely cut to appear more even and to stand out against the backdrop of the marabou boa. In total, many varying types of embellishment techniques were used within this mantle in a layered effect.

- What properties of the fur or exotic animal material does this exaggerate/celebrate?

The repeat woven motif covers the full garment, whereas the marabou and chicken feathers are based around the neckline, lapel and hemline, reminiscent of a fur trim. This results in softer lines and a softer edge to the garment which felt more organic in nature. Notes taken by the researcher whilst viewing the artefact in the archive highlighted the feeling of movement and three-dimensional aspect created through multiple embellishment techniques and materials. Furthermore, in chapter 4 this inspired later technique and material choice in order to create a feeling of movement within embellishment samples.

- What values did those materials or techniques have, also in terms of social and cultural factors?

London dressmakers Redmayne & Co were fashionable dressmakers with premises in New Bond Street and Conduit Street. A shopping guide from the Victorian era stated that some garments from Redmayne & Co were imported from Paris, offering the wearer the opportunity to stand out and not have others people wearing the same design.[110] Their products were aimed at upper and upper middle class customers seeking the most up to date fashion. Peacock feathers were a popular design motif between the 1860s to 1880s and were an iconic emblem of the Aesthetic Movement which celebrated natural beauty, essentially forming a counterculture against industrialisation.[111,112] The cut of the mantle

is not typical of the movement, and it is likely that the motif may have been a nod to surrounding trends. In particular, the individual layering of techniques (some of which are done by hand) and unusual design drawn from nature feels akin with the movement.

GLASS HAIR ADORNMENT

It was recommended through engagement with Edwina Ehrman (V&A), to view a 'glass aigrette' (aigrette meaning a headdress usually consisting of a white egret's feather) estimated to be from the 1920's and housed at the Museum of London. The aigrette was worn as a hair adornment, clipped into place by the wearer, and could potentially offer an alternative to the decorative notion of fur and exotic animal materials (figures 3-10 and 3-11) (MOL: 90.261/18).

- What types of fur and exotic animal materials were used?

Similarly, to the previous mantle, this artefact is comprised of a range of animal and non-animal materials. Dyed horn and spun glass in a brilliant white are hinged to a decorative steel mount set with 6 diamante stones. Spun glass was initially considered an ethical alternative to feathers in 1898, and had been originally developed as an alternative to raw silk.[38] The glass itself is fairly homogenous and in this example is heightened by the metalwork and diamante, which have a similar lustre.

- What embellishment techniques were applied to those raw materials?

The researchers focus of this artefact was the spun glass since this material offers an alternative to feather decoration. A number of glass strands are held into place, forming a spray effect due to the length of the filaments. The unfamiliarity of glass when spun into long strands which are flexible in nature conjures an interest without needing to add colouration or additional decoration to the filament itself. As mentioned, it is complemented and highlighted by the metal mount and diamante. Furthermore, as it is a hair adornment, the wearer would have had some flexibility about where and how it is

Figure 3-10 Hair adornment made from spun glass, unknown maker, early 20th Century, Museum of London Museum Number: 90.261/18, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 3-11 Reverse of hair adornment made from spun glass, unknown maker, early 20th Century, Museum of London Museum Number: 90.261/18, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 3-12 Skein of spun glass, unknown maker, 1847, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.11-1951, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

worn. The glass strands appear to be reminiscent of hair as much as being reminiscent of feathers, and would have offered varying effects of subtlety depending on the hair colour or clothing of the wearer as a backdrop.

- What properties of the fur or exotic animal material does this exaggerate/celebrate?

The spun glass retains the properties of lightness and subtle flexibility associated with feather decoration. This was illustrated more clearly in an example of spun glass material in the V&A archive (V&A: T.11-1951) (figure 3-12) which appears as a lock of blue hair. The curving of the filament communicates its flexibility, which was comparable to a feather barb when interacted with. Furthermore, the researcher found that the ability of the spun glass used in the hair adornment to sway from side to side in a pleasing manner when moved was reminiscent of feather-work. The material is very unfamiliar within a contemporary fashion textiles context and was likely uncommon at the time it was made which adds to its intriguing nature.

- What values did those materials or techniques have, also in terms of social and cultural factors?

The precise technique of spinning glass by hand added to the interest of the artefact. The process was later mass produced in 1930's by engineers who adjusted the material properties for more industrial uses.[113] For the maker of the hair adornment, working with an unusual material such as this opens up for experimentation and new design possibilities. Furthermore, due to the filament itself being not highly manipulated could indicate that it was seen as novel its own right and did not require additional detailing. There are limited details regarding the context of both the spun glass aigrette in the archive of the Museum of London and the skein of glass in the V&A archive. However, this resulted in the material appearing even more intriguing from the perspective of practice research. Subsequently, glass yarn was obtained and trialled within practice to further understand it's appeals in the following two chapters.

3.2.3 CURATOR INTERVIEW

The previous case study artefacts referenced were only available to research because museums considered the items worth preserving. The artefacts available in archives are also dependent upon the tastes of the individuals who originally owned and donated the artefacts. What was available to research was therefore a select view rather than a comprehensive or even study of history. The interview with Edwina Ehrman (V&A) sought to uncover some of the V&A's motivations to acquire certain items containing fur and exotic animal materials both contemporarily and historically. Furthermore, the museum's upcoming 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition (21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019) was discussed in terms of the planning to represent topics relating to fashion's connection to nature using artefacts, imagery and textural descriptions.

The documentation of materials and techniques was repeated several times throughout the interview as being the main focus of the archive: "The museum collected fashion because of the material from which they were made, and the ways in which those materials were utilised" (Edwina Ehrman, 2017). Very few fur items that were obtained were identified by the name of the animal until the museum later brought in furriers in to examine them. This would indicate that the visual and tactile appeal of the material must have been more compelling than a requirement to know the origins when first acquired.

The V&A actively started to collect clothing to represent fashion in the early 1970's when the Cecil Beaton Collection was compiled to catalogue 20th century fashionable dress.[114] Prior to that, the museum was heavily reliant on individual donations which documented the textile industry. Edwina explained how the museum also inherited items made from animal materials from the 1851 Great Exhibition which was divided into items made from mammals, birds, fish, insects and reptiles, showcased to the public at the Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum (later renamed the V&A Museum of Childhood) in 1872.[115] The Animal Products Collection - of which the snakeskin slippers (figure 3-1) and the hummingbird flower spray from the previous chapter (figure 2-7) are part - was positioned as a comprehensive guide for designers and manufacturers about how to use raw animal materials. During the interview the collections purpose as an educational tool was discussed, and the researcher learnt that it was very much about the utility of

animals, with the items accompanied by drawings showing their transformation from raw material to finished product. Most of the collection including these drawings was destroyed in the 1920's, with a selection of artefacts that didn't degrade still held in the V&A archive. Furthermore, Edwina explained that much of the remaining collection wasn't deemed to have artistic merit otherwise more of it would have been preserved.

Acquiring an object contemporarily requires information about the time in which it was designed, made, used and worn. Through the course of the research, the museum re-examined selected archival artefacts, for example in the 'Fur Day' workshop (mentioned in chapter 2). In addition, was the extensive research that took place to trace the origins of the swansdown cape (V&A: T.367-1982) for its inclusion into the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, resulting in the discovery that it was likely owned by the Russian Royal Family. Edwina explained how there had been "a real shift towards understanding materials and techniques but also collecting with a real understanding of social, historic and economic context." The lifecycle of the object is now more relevant to the museum than ever.

As an example of this shift, Edwina explained how the archive doesn't contain many good examples of spotted furs. The museum is regularly offered them, however because the fashion and textile collections are so large, anything acquired must last so that future generations can study it. It was explained to the researcher that a spotted fur would have to be in a very good condition, with as clear a history as possible from the donor. This is partly due to CITES regulations to protect endangered animals which entered into force in 1975.[116] Thus, indicating that quality and usability of archival artefacts is more important that variety. This was somewhat reflected in the search for items to be included in the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, since the priority was compelling visual specimens whose function would enable discussion about fashion and textile design and manufacture.

In terms of representing topics surrounding fashion's connection with the natural world within the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, Edwina explained that, as an example, the Victorian cases were going to be designed to appear "cluttered" to portray the purchasing decisions of a Victorian middle class. The love of clutter was reflected in the emerging

popularity of textile manipulation and embellishment, in order to identify yourself through material goods, thus associating oneself with a certain status. Comparatively, contemporary fashion faces a strain on resources and natural habitats due to rising demands and a growing middle class, which would be echoed in the use of video and other imagery. Therefore, from the researcher's perspective the overall aim appeared to be a message of scale and disconnection, enabled through continuous industrialisation and growth.

3.2.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In summary, the concepts and themes that emerged from archive research were:

Versatile
The embellishment opportunities to manipulate materials due to tooling innovations.
The layering of techniques, including applying mixed media.

Handmade
The value of handmade workmanship, often applying intricate techniques.
For dressmakers and designers who have not used the materials before, the appeal of learning new techniques.

Texture and colour
Heightened visual and tactile appeal.

Status
Embellishment using animal materials associated with status.

Rare and unique
A sense of exclusivity and rarity**.**

Connection to nature
An association with wild animals and an evocation of nature.
Comparatively, an element of manipulation to ‘improve’ nature.
The appeal of balance between nature and the man-made.

Natural Material
Animal and natural non-animal materials combined.

Movement and lightness
Particularly with fur and feathers or techniques reminiscent of those materials

Softness
Soft touch (particularly with fur and feathers or techniques reminiscent of those materials)

Table 3-1 Archive research findings

Reflecting upon the research findings, there appeared to be an important balance between nature and the manmade. For example, in the manipulation of fur and exotic animal materials to appear not too organic and irregular, through applying additive, woven or embroidery repeats in the case of the snakeskin slippers (V&A: AP.6&A-1868) (figure 3-1), swansdown cape (V&A: T.367-1982) (figure 3-4) and velvet and feather mantle (V&A: T.653-1996) (figure 3-7).

3.3 FUR AND EXOTICS INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

3.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In comparison to archive research, the aim of engaging with fashion industry research participants was to reveal the contemporary motivations to use fur and exotic animal materials to achieve decorative effects. Furthermore, it provided research findings from the position of those familiar with working with fur and exotic animal materials.

Initially, three interviews were designed for participants working with fur or exotic animal materials in the fashion industry. The interviews were qualitative, in-depth and semi-structured, in some instances adopting the same questions from participant to participant in order to later compare research findings.[117] However, the content of interviews was also altered in response to the individual interviewee's background and area of expertise. The design of the interview questions was based on opinion, feelings and experiences associated with fur and exotic animal materials, and included hypothetical and ideal scenarios.[117] Hypothetical scenarios were used in order to propose the use of a faux animal material which looked and felt exactly the same as fur or an exotic animal material, if one existed. This was in order to understand if the appeal in fur and exotic animal materials lay solely in the haptic and aesthetic interaction, or if there were other values attributed to the material.

In order to initiate discourse about the appeals of fur and exotic animal materials, the questions were designed to encourage the participants to reflect on their own work. This included posing questions such as what types of textiles fur and exotic animal materials would be paired with in order to create embellishment and which other designers they admired for their use of fur and exotic animal materials and why. The former was designed to encourage the participant to think about their attitudes towards materials, and potentially offer a comparison to other textiles which could be equally alluring. The latter was posed to initiate positive appeals of fur and exotic animal materials and the reasons behind those choices.

The final of the three interviews included the use of physical samples of manipulated fur and reptile skins produced by the company that the participant worked for, brought to

the interview by the participant. This was in order to further understand the types of manipulation of fur and exotic animal materials and to record the tactile responses of the participant to those samples, as well as those of the researcher. This approach (the inclusion of samples) influenced future research engagement and formulation of workshops with physical items, including using some of the case study artefacts within a workshop setting. In these instances, textiles and garments were used as elicitation tools, drawing out tacit knowledge, latent memories and emotions.[117]

For the next engagement, a workshop centred around artefacts was designed for the fashion industry working with fur and exotic animal materials to decorative effect, held in the Clothworkers Centre, V&A. This workshop, based on a focus group model, involved a separate group of participants from the interviews in order to gather more varied responses regarding the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. The researcher used two items from the V&A archive which had been case study objects - the swansdown cape (V&A: T.367-1982) (figure 3-4) and the velvet and feather dolman (V&A: T.653-1996) (figure 3-7) - as artefacts within the workshop. The other two items – the snakeskin slippers (V&A: AP.6&A-1868) (figure 3-1) and the spun glass hair adornment (MOL: 90.261/18) (figure 3-10) – were not included since they were not held within the V&A archive. In addition, for the benefit of variety of material composition, technique and differing cultural and historical factors four other artefacts were included. These were items from the historical context of the research (chapter 2): The textile embellishment using beetle wing cases (V&A: 6181(IS)) (figure 2-6), the flower spray made from hummingbirds and beetles (V&A: AP.1:2-1894) (figure 2-7), the fox stole (figure 2-14) (V&A: T.218&A-1962) and the monkey evening cape (V&A: T.226-1967) (figure 2-15).

In addition, some of the workshop participants brought their own design work into the Clothworkers Centre, V&A, to be used in the workshop. This enabled an opportunity to examine contemporary fashion featuring decorative fur or exotic animal materials more closely, and to gauge responses regarding their appeals. The garments included a dress made from silk, feathers and laser cut leather to look like scales (figure 3-18), a coat made from fish skin (figure 3-19) and a mink and beaver coat featuring intarsia and stencilling (figure 3-20). It also included two dresses made with synthetic hair decoration, considered by the participant to be an alternative to fur and exotic animal materials

(figures 3-21 and 3-22). Their inclusion in the workshop had to be arranged in advance with the museum so that the clothes could be quarantined before entering the study area.

The workshop format itself was arranged so that the participants were met at the Clothworkers Centre, Victoria & Albert Museum. The participants were asked to look at the six items from the V&A archive for 10 minutes, which were already laid out on a large table. The participants were purposively not informed about the composition, dates or any other details about the items so that they could make their own interpretations. Questions were then posed to the group in an informal setting about the design related appeal of those archive items (see Appendix 4 for full write up). Afterwards Edwina Ehrman (V&A) presented the six items to the group, explaining the date they were made, composition, and other culturally relevant facts such as who they were owned by and the historical relevance of the material or textiles technique. Further questions were asked to the group to discover if that additional information changed their opinion about any of the appeals. After a short break, participants returned to the room at the Clothworkers Centre (V&A) to examine the garments previously brought in by a few of the workshop participants from their own collections. Again, questions were posed in order to understand the appeal and motivation behind the piece.

The interviews and workshop were conducted in close succession over the course of three months, and were assessed collectively to seek out general themes, those that linked to existing research from the contextual review and case studies, as well as topics that were surprising and those that answered the aims of the engagements. In terms of the workshop, consideration was also given to participant dynamic and how this affected the results. Furthermore, the workshop was analysed collectively rather than creating individual profiles. All engagements were audio recorded and manually transcribed and assessed using comparison analysis to decipher concepts and themes.[118] Detailed notes were not taken during the interviews and workshop so as not to break the flow of communication. Rather, the researcher reflected immediately after each engagement by taking notes of the initial responses. A narrowing of results was based on topics that were consistently repeated and if any element was expressed highly. Consideration was also given to how the researcher could interpret findings through practice.

3.3.2 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

In order to select the most productive sample to provide an insight into the concepts and themes that motivate designers to use fur and exotic animal materials as decoration, the method of purposive sampling of research participants was applied. This resulted in targeting specific participants using fur or exotic animal materials to create high-end fashion decoration. The choice of participants was informed by 'A Contemporary Overview' section from chapter 2. However, since the information that the participants supplied was separated from their identity through the use of pseudonyms, the research does not identify which of those participants have already been named in the previous chapter. Furthermore, only detailed shots (rather than full length photographs) of the contemporary design work that those participants brought to the workshop is included in this thesis, to preserve a level of anonymity. In some cases, independent designers who showcased their work in the workshop are purposively not included in the previous chapter for the sake of their privacy. The researcher also chose to anonymise participants in this way due the fashion industry previously declining to address this topic openly, as mentioned in the preface to this thesis.

Industry participants were approached based both on the researcher's network of contacts associated with the contemporary overview, and by approaching companies and independent designers previously unknown to the researcher. Furthermore, choices were made based on varying industry experience in terms of the use of fur, feathers or exotic skins to give balance to the research findings. Three participants were approached to be interviewed, of which all accepted. In total, 37 individuals were approached for participation in the workshop; 20 out of 37 participants responded with two individual designers stating the workshop was not relevant to them. Nine participants attended the workshop. The other nine potential participants could not make the date of the workshop, which due to the Clothworkers Centre opening times, was daytime on a weekday.

The three industry professionals selected for interview were from different companies, based in different locations and with varied experiences, albeit within the high-end fashion sector. Due to these varying locations, two of the interviews took place by Skype,

and the interview with Anna, which also included textile samples, was held in person in a private room at the London College of Fashion, John Princes Street. The participants are described using the following job titles and experience with fur and exotic animal materials:

Pseudonym	**Job title**	**Experience**
Holly	Fashion Designer and Fur Consultant	Fur applications, working with a range of fashion designers.
Matthew	Head of the Studio	Working with a range of types of furs and through collaboration with different designers.
Anna	Fashion and Accessories Designer	Exotic skin applications, working for a range of fashion houses in London, Paris and Florence.

Table 3-2 Industry interview participants

As mentioned, the nine industry professionals selected for the workshop were identified through their use of fur and exotic animal materials, particularly in an embellishment context. However, one participant was developing alternatives to fur and exotic animal material decoration, and they were included in the workshop in order to understand the appeal in referencing animal materials. All of the workshop participants were UK based due to the location of the workshop being in London. The workshop participants are described using the following job titles and experience with fur and exotic animal materials, listed in order of which they spoke:

Pseudonym	Job title	Experience
James	Fashion Designer	Working with exotic skins, specifically fish skin in a range of techniques and applications.
Vicky	Fashion Designer and Consultant	"As Head of the Studio at fashion houses in Paris and for my own label, I designed and followed production of several garments over the years created with fox, mink, orylag (rabbit), kangaroo, salmon skin, ostrich feathers and marabou" (Vicky, 2016).
Michelle	Communications Coordinator at an embroidery house	"I have encountered exotic skins mostly as a consumer. I own a few items with fur and exotic skins including fox fur, snakeskin and feathers. I have also had experience working with animal skins from my degree in Buying Management. In regards to fur and feathers I also have experience from a more practical side as my family has a background of being hunters" (Michelle, 2016).
Bethan	Design Assistant at an embroidery house	"Within my current role I have worked with dyed ostrich feathers. Furs such as mink and fox are also used in our collections. We have also tested on crocodile leather" (Bethan, 2016).
Joanne	Creative Director at a (vegetarian) high fashion brand	Developing alternatives to fur using synthetic materials and bold prints.

Pseudonym	Job title	Experience
Nick	Fashion Designer / Fashion Manufacturer and Company Director of a fashion sampling service working for international fashion houses.	"During my time as a designer at fashion houses based in London, I've worked with a range of exotic materials including fur, feathers; in particular ostrich feathers for evening wear, as well as varying skins, some of which are treated to resemble more exotic variations. We have also worked with python and crocodile leather (at the fashion sampling service)" (Nick, 2016).
John	Chairman of a leading fur design house	Working with a range of types of furs and through collaboration with different designers for almost 50 years.
Kate	Fashion Designer and Company Director of a leading furrier	"We are a furrier atelier based in London, we work with all furs, doing bespoke, alterations, transformations and repairs. We do everything to do with fur, from coats to blankets, furniture and accessories" (Kate, 2016).
Liz	Designer at an embroidery house	"As an embroidery designer my experience of using fur, exotic skins and feathers is quite vast. As embroidery is a luxury, fur, feathers and exotic skins are very appealing" (Liz, 2016).

Table 3-3 Industry workshop participants

3.3.3 INTERVIEWS

The activities that the three industry interviewees identified as being prevalent when developing decoration using fur and exotic animal materials were varied, but mostly centred around the appeal of material manipulation through a range of textile techniques. Fur in particular was associated with quality, since its manipulation is associated with the use of handwork at the highest level. Within the context of animal furs, mink was identified as the most popular fur by the participants particularly because it is seen as versatile and highly available. Fox, a longer and coarser fur, was mainly being used for collars, stoles and trimmings.

A designer view of fur was spoken about having changed from being a skin to a fabric due to the manipulation involved and the mixing of fur with other textiles. Matthew explained that creating their own textile made from fur was his company's current focus, and that they had a library of 1500 different techniques and treatments for fur, not including dyeing and printing. His belief was that fur could offer heightened opportunities for material manipulation: "The future of fur will be competing on a design level not just on price point…the appeal (of fur) is in what can be done with it."

Participant Anna explained the motivation to take direct inspiration from nature whilst working at an Italian fashion house that used many different animal materials to achieve decoration: "It was about love of animals, love of nature, being inspired by nature…pictures of jaguars, pictures of snakes. It's looking at nature for patterns and not always necessarily even the real skin." The appeal of pattern and colour associated with fur and exotic animal materials was repeated several times during all three interviews. Anna went further to explain that fur and exotic animal materials were continuously made to look more exotic than they actually were, through embellishment and added colouration. In terms of exotic reptile skins, printing and laminating the skins were common practices undertaken: "That's why (designers) like python so much, because you can do so many things with it, because of the pattern and texture…there's amazing, amazing factories in Italy where they paint on extra patterns." Furthermore, painting python skin by hand adds a unique and rare feeling to the material. In addition, she explained that the UK fashion house that she was currently working for regularly applied

embroidery onto exotic animal skins to add value, often by accentuating the natural markings.

Anna brought in a variety of material samples to the interview which consisted of a range of manipulated python, water snake and crocodile skins, as well as a few faux fur and exotic animal materials (figure 3-13). Reptile skins were often used to create a motif decoration, for example within accessories and on the cuffs of clothing. Alligator and python were the most popular reptile skins because designers can do a lot with them and they are considered the most recognisable. Anna named water snake as an especially appealing material, again because of the markings and "amazing natural patterns…there is ready-made colour and pattern". Within sourcing requirements, younger reptile skins are more popular, due to larger scales looking like "fingernails" which was not appealing to the designer, suggesting that an anthropomorphic connection was unappealing. Speaking further about exotic reptile skins, the participant felt that people disengaged with the ethical implications: "The word 'python' doesn't necessarily mean snake (skin) anymore, it can just mean a print". She further commented that snakeskin is heavily treated to the extent that designers aren't always aware of its origin.

Comparatively, Holly admired outerwear company Canada Goose specifically because of their support of aboriginal trappers and their "unapologetic" use of coyote fur and goose down feathers which she felt offered a deeper connection to the natural origin of a material. All three participants separately referenced Fendi as being a designer whom they admired for their use of animal materials, in particular fur. This was due to the ways in which Fendi use fur, which is associated with couture practices (which has been explored in chapter 2). Furthermore, the company was admired for their use of the whole skin and zero waste attitude to creating fur decoration. In terms of pairing animal materials with another textile, all three participants agreed that fur or exotic animal materials should be paired with natural materials. Silk was named as one such material which could be seen as equivalent to fur or exotic animal materials. Holly further named cashmere, angora and pashmina as equivalent to fur due to their softness: "Those fine materials that when you touch them it's magical the softness and the beauty of them." The tactile interaction of furs, feathers and reptile skins was identified as being important. The responses indicated that fur in particular was seen as a fine material and associated

with prestige. All participants separately referred to synthetic textiles as “cheap” and not able to offer the same associations as fur or exotic animal materials. Furthermore, there was concern expressed over issues around biodegradability and environmental harm that synthetic materials posed.

The initial response to a hypothetical textile that was identical to fur or exotic animal materials was that it would have to be made from a natural material and be long lasting, as this is how they saw animal materials as being. On further reflection, Matthew described the notion of faux furs as being of a lesser quality than real furs and did not like the idea of imitation, explaining: “Make fake fur that looks like no animal…so it can be itself, its own product and not a simulation of something that they cannot match anyhow.” This response came in parallel to Anna, who explained “if you are going to do something faux, you could do anything, why replicate (something that already exists)?” Overall, it appeared that a non-animal material which was identical to fur and exotic animal materials was not the solution since designers were already manipulating fur and exotic animal materials to appear more like a textile.

All three research participants stated that rarity and intrigue made fur and exotic animal materials appealing. Furthermore, that fur was associated with luxury since it is rare and expensive and not everyone has it. The researcher felt that this response did not necessarily tally with the wider boom in the use of fur in other market areas (see preface) but concluded that the level of manipulation of fur in high-end fashion was still uncommon. Matthew supposed that he saw a tendency for a small amount of mink used in the middle market, which he described as “luxury for the middle class…since you don’t throw away that item with fur on.” Anna explained that there was a long-held tradition of python skin being luxury due to it being expensive, rare and having a hand-worked quality. Both Anna and Matthew described the “key” to the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials as being “uniqueness.”

In all three interviews participants were open to discussing alternative forms of embellishment to fur and exotic anima materials. It was particularly interesting to hear from Anna that as well as using fur and exotic skins, the fashion house she currently worked for was also experimenting with alternative materials. This included; pony skin

stamped to look like astrakhan (the tightly curled fleece of the foetal or new-born karakul lamb) (figure 3-14), and suede and leather samples stamped to look like crocodile skin. The former was being adopted due to the cheaper cost and because the company had deemed astrakhan to not be very ethical. She thought that the faux astrakhan had a good effect because it was hairy and tactile. The latter was appealing because it has some connotation with crocodile skin but overall, it appeared unnatural and unrealistic, and therefore felt new and more exciting to work with from a designer's perspective.

In addition, she described how the fashion house she worked for recently had to develop alternative design accents to fur and exotic animal materials for an event in Los Angeles, USA, describing the ban of fur and exotics there as a "big problem." She went on to describe some of the most common methods and materials used when creating alternatives to fur and exotic decoration. This included painting or metallic printing on leather, beadwork, and incorporating Swarovski crystals or satin detailing. The company did not incorporate many engineered faux animal materials because in her opinion they were generally too uniform and did not have the same overall appeals. In particular, this was due to the materials not containing irregularities such as growth marks which appear naturally on reptile skins. Anna's opinion of an imitation crocodile skin created from leather that she brought to the interview to compare to a real crocodile skin was that it was cheap looking (figure 3-15), whereas the unrealistic version of crocodile skin aforementioned was far more interesting.

Figure 3-13 Various manipulated reptile skins used in embellishment brought by participant Anna, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

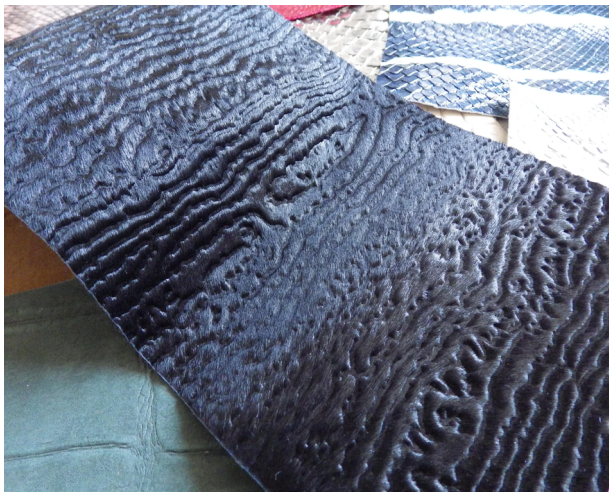


Figure 3-14 Pony skin stamped to look like astrakhan lamb brought by participant Anna, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure 3-15 Faux alligator skin (top) and real alligator skin (bottom) brought by participant Anna, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

3.3.4 INDUSTRY WORKSHOP

The decorative appeals of fur and exotic animal materials that emerged during the course of the workshop were similar to those from the three interviews; the main appeal being the opportunities of material manipulation through a range of textile techniques. Nick compared the workmanship associated with fur to diamonds: “It works the same way with diamonds. It’s not only the actual stone but the way you cut the stone – it’s the same with fur.” The participants agreed that there had been a recent boom in the use of fur and association with fur as an “added luxury.” Liz explained that her company had focused on embellishment containing fur in recent years: “Our old archival samples have nothing (fur) – we didn’t use fur, there are some bits with feathers. But yes, the new samples are all fur…and they are the ones that do appeal…to a very, very high-end customer base.” John further explained that fur had become synonymous with manipulated details and accessories in contemporary fashion: “Boots, gloves, hats, keychains to attach to your handbag, more and more this is happening…fur is being consumed in various new products.” This initial conversation was initiated subsequent to the participants viewing and interacting with the six archival artefacts (figure 3-16).

The conversation moved on to discuss how similar embellishment results could be achieved using non-animal materials. The participants discussed how this would result in applying other material techniques relevant to other types of yarns and textiles, with the aim that something just as beautiful could be designed, applying just as much workmanship. The velvet and feather mantle was focused on in particular as having a high level of workmanship, with all participants agreeing that the item was, in their eyes, a status symbol due to the level of embellishment rather than because of what material had been used (figure 3-7) (V&A: T.653-1996).

It was agreed amongst the participants that the fox fur stole was the least appealing item (figure 2-14) (V&A: T.218&A-1962), because it had been manipulated the least. In addition, Michelle stated that she was less attracted to the monkey evening cape (figure 2-15) (V&A: T.226-1967), as it appeared like human hair and was therefore the most familiar material. She explained that other more unfamiliar textures and aesthetics were far more interesting. The overall lesser interest in the monkey fur somewhat surprised

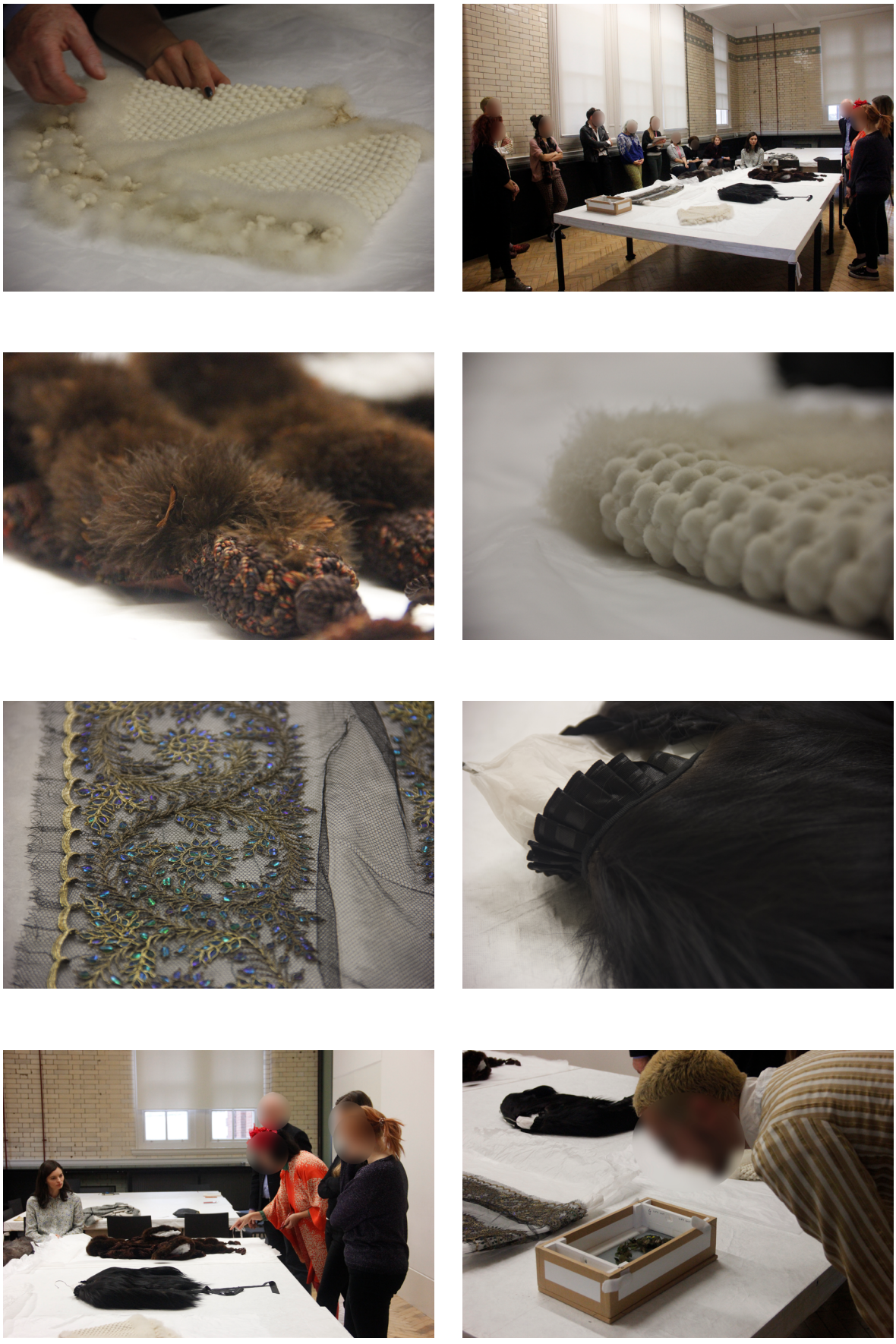


Figure 3-16 Photographs from the industry workshop, including participants interacting with the artefacts, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

the researcher since its use in contemporary fashion is restricted, and it is therefore a rare item. As the participants spoke further about their own design practices, it was revealed that colourful dyed fur was increasingly appealing, due to it feeling "modern" and giving a garment personality. The hummingbird brooch (figure 2-7) (V&A: AP.1:2-1894) was similarly deemed appealing due to its colour palette and unusually intricate design.

When provenance - including social and cultural details - were revealed about the archive artefacts by Edwina Ehrman (V&A) the participants agreed that it made the artefacts even more appealing. Most participants were surprised about the use of swansdown, with Vicky commenting on how it made the cape even more exquisite due to the perceived rarity of the material (figures 3-4 to 3-6) (V&A: T.3671982). Kate also discussed the attraction of the origin of fur and exotic animal materials from a client perspective who recognise the difference between fur types. Some of the associations with fur that came up during the course of the workshop was its performative nature and the feeling of movement that it evokes. The researcher considered these findings at least partly due to the inclusion of physical garments in the workshop, which enabled the participants to think about how they would be worn. The touch and feel of fur against skin was also expressed to be an appeal, with Bethan explaining: "Everyone can't resist touching it (fur). Even at trade fairs, everyone does come up and you have to tell people not to touch." This was backed up by Vicky who referred to mink coats from her childhood: "Something about being a kid and to feel yourself against all these mink fur coats was fantastic."

James spoke about fur and exotic animal materials connecting people back to their own animal origins. He went on to explain however that the connection to nature through fur was somehow "paradoxical…we've lost respect for the animal and the meaning of nature." He reflected upon the hummingbird flower spray being particularly appealing due to the sense of man interacting with nature through the balance of using a natural material together with heavily manipulated textile techniques. The connection the participants had with nature through their work was complex and often appeared conflicted. For example, John considered the disconnection of designers with material provenance: "We're so disconnected, the reality is the way we (the participants) interact

with animals is totally different to people who have animals." In addition, Nick explained that since he had bought a pet dog, it had made him want to stop wearing fur because he connected fur too much to the animal. Michelle also felt that the fox stole – comprised of two intact taxidermy fox bodies - reminded her of a pet and that there was something "shameless or witchy" about using the material.

The beetle wing embroidery caused differing opinions between the participants. Liz and Bethan, who are embroidery designers, stated their dislike of the use of beetle wings, and thought that the material choice was "unnecessary" and that another material could be substituted in a contemporary version in order to fulfil the same appeal. The dislike for beetle wings was also understood to be not only because it is a material not commonly used in contemporary fashion, but also because it cannot be considered a bi-product or a waste material. However, the majority of participants agreed, regardless of personal views on the use of animal products it was not possible to negate the beauty of the objects featuring fur and exotic animal materials used in the workshop.

In the latter part of the workshop the participants presented their own work that they had brought into the Clothworkers Centre (figure 3-17). A dress brought in by Nick featured painted feathers and leather that had been embossed and laser cut to look like snake scales which he presented as a modern take on embroidery (figure 3-18). The item was highly textural and the heavy manipulation made it not obvious that the material choice was leather. Furthermore, the way that the scale-like embellishment had been applied moved with the body in an articulated manner when worn. The metallic appearance of the embellishment heightened the embossed effect which was akin to reptile scales. The other participants reacted positively to the dress, appreciating the work and detail that had gone into making it.

Similarly, a coat brought in by James made from fish skin was described to have been treated with olive oil, egg yolk and soap, a lengthy process that took around 250 skins to make three looks (figure 3-19). Explaining the technique in such a way made the other participants even more interested and appreciative of the coat, with Vicky commenting; "the passion for it, five months to treat all these skins, the love that has been put into that, to me that's the ultimate passion for beauty altogether." All the participants agreed

Figure 3-17 Industry workshop participants discussing their own and others work, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 3-18 Laser cut leather embellishment detail on dress by industry workshop participant Nick, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 3-19 Fish skin details on coat by industry participant James, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 3-20 Fur intarsia details on coat by industry workshop participant Kate, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

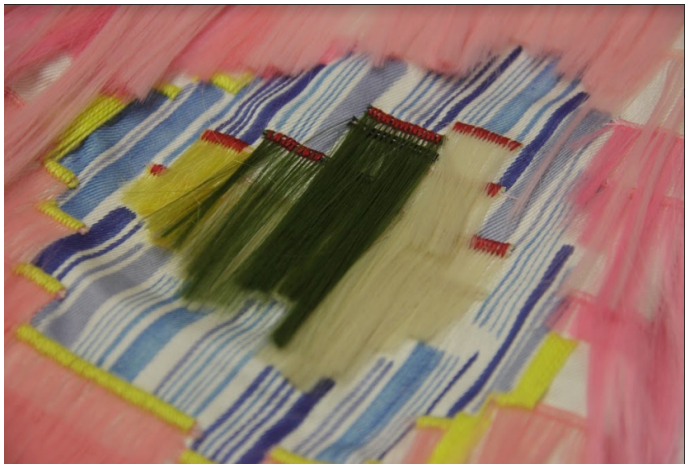


Figure 3-21 Synthetic hair embellishment detail on dress by industry workshop participant Joanne, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure 3-22 Synthetic embellishment detail on dress by industry workshop participant Joanne, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

that the choice of fish skin was intriguing due to the natural and recognisable markings and therefore clear communication of origin. The translucency and apparent delicacy of the material also invited touch in order to fully understand whether the item would feel like the skin of a fish. In that sense, whether the aesthetic appearance of the material matched the haptic experience. The researcher was surprised by the slight rigidity of the material, since the association with fish skin is that of a certain slipperiness and flexibility.

More than any of the other contemporary items, was the tactile appeal of the coat from Kate made from mink and beaver fur which featured the use of intarsia decoration. The participants immediately stroked the fur when it was presented to the group and agreed that the softness was very appealing (figure 3-20). Michelle said that she felt conflicted about the use of fur because she loved its properties but was feeling more and more concerned about the ethical treatment of fur bearing animals. Due to this she stated that she both loved and hated the coat. John responded to her comment by saying that this was a “wake-up call’ for their industry to be more accountable.

Joanne, who was developing alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials was exploring how to use more decorative techniques, describing her design approach as artistic (figures 3-21 and 3-22). Her aim was not to replicate fur, rather her work was about developing a “different material, different feel, different touch.” She appreciated the beauty in the craftsmanship of the items in the workshop but did not endorse fur and exotic animal materials due to the cruelty associated with their production. She referenced the monkey evening cape as the item which was most inspiring to her designs due to the unusual length of the hair (figure 2-15) (V&A: T226-1967).

Upon reflection, the group of participants had a good dynamic with varied interests and knowledge regarding fur and exotic animal material use. This was partly due to there being a range of ages, backgrounds and sexes. The researcher was surprised to discover during the course of the workshop that two of the participants - Liz and Bethan - were vegan. This stance resulted in a less enthusiastic response to some of the artefacts, even though the embroidery house that they worked for used fur and exotic animal materials in their designs. Overall, some of the participants working at higher positions in industry

spoke more during the workshop than others. However, all participants contributed with ease even though the topic of animal materials was potentially emotive and controversial.

3.3.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The concepts and themes that emerged as motivators to apply both fur and exotic materials in embellishment centred around a few main areas. As part of comparison analysis, the appeals which emerged from the interviews and workshop (as part of fur and exotics industry engagement) are as follows:

Interviews	**Workshop**
Versatile	Versatile
Handmade	Handmade
Texture and colour	Texture and colour
Status	Status
Rare and unique	Rare and unique
Connection to nature	Connection to nature
Natural Material	Natural Material
Longevity	
	Movement and lightness
	Softness

Table 3-4 Interview and workshop findings comparison

Each of the concepts and themes have been organised into the following table:

Versatile
Python and mink particularly versatile
Design opportunities that arise due to fur and exotic animal materials being manipulatable
The layering of techniques, including applying mixed media
The possibilities to apply the materials on a range of smaller accents

Handmade
Association with high levels of workmanship
The appeal of the patient time spent creating a piece which implies a certain dedication

Texture and colour
Adding colour to appear more unusual
Highlighting natural markings and exaggerating texture

Status
Embellishment using animal materials associated with status and connotations of luxury

Rare and unique
A sense of exclusivity and rarity
Unusual or unfamiliar materials
Heightening of materials to make them more unique
The appeal of something which can’t be replicated

Connection to nature
The appeal of balance between nature and the man-made
Connecting to nature and natural origins – but not too much
Anthropomorphic associations less appealing

Natural material
Animal and natural non-animal materials combined
Silk and other soft natural materials could be equally alluring
Synthetics seen as cheap and unappealing

Longevity
Something that is kept and cherished

Movement and lightness
An almost performative movement

Softness
The soft feel of fur

Table 3-5 Industry engagement research findings

The balance between nature and manmade emerged as an important relationship when using fur and exotic animal materials in decorative applications. Several times, industry participants discussed heightening fur and exotic animal materials to make them appear more unique. The three interviewees also discussed the appeal of natural markings as a base for adding embellishment to appear more unique.

It was worth noting that the findings from fur and exotic industry engagement was only reflective of those who wished to participate in the research – meaning that these participants may have been more open to the idea of alternatives than other industry members. The researcher was slightly surprised that not every participant working with fur and exotic animal materials was comfortable with the ethical implications of these materials – this was found with Anna, Michelle, Bethan, Liz. These participants were some of the youngest, and although the research does not compare differences in age ranges or generations, it was noted that this chimed with a millennial attitude from the previous chapter.

3.4 SUMMARY

Archival research provided a sense of tactility due to viewing items containing fur and exotic animal material decoration in a live setting which was deemed imperative to practice research. The value of viewing physical artefacts as case studies influenced the overall research strategy, resulting in the addition of material samples in one of the interviews and the creation of an artefact-based workshop in order to further draw out themes. The findings from both archival research and industry engagement were mapped in order to start to form insights into the motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration (figure 3-23). By using materials and physical items as elicitation tools, the additional themes related to tactility such as movement, lightness and softness came up through both archive research and the workshop.

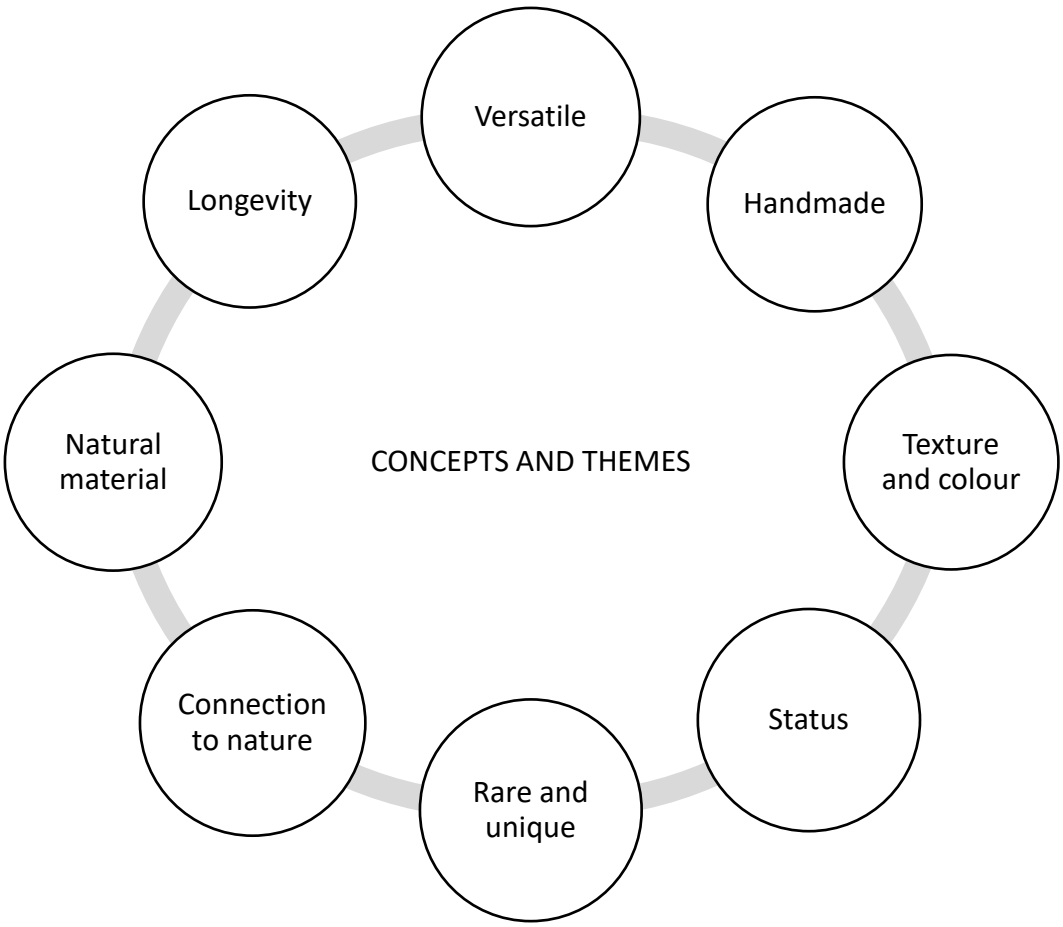


Figure 3-23 Mapping the concepts and themes associated with the decorative appeal of fur and exotic animal materials, graphics: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2019

When mapping and comparing the research findings, it appeared that what was required was a balance between the manmade and natural, between recognisable materials and processes and unrecognisable materials and processes, and between tradition and innovation. Emerging themes and concepts which appeared by the researcher to also be connected was the relationship between texture and colour, softness and movement and lightness. On reflection of the data combined was also the appeal of quality, which the researcher felt underlined many of the themes including status, longevity, handmade and texture and colour. Questions arose such which themes could be combined in order to inform practice development, and how this would inform material and textile embellishment method selection.

4 TEXTILE TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP EMBELLISHMENT ALTERNATIVES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the first practice project; testing potential materials and developing textile embellishment techniques which may offer an alternative to fur and exotic animal material decoration. In order to guide the practice, a design brief was created based on the research findings from the previous two chapters. This design brief also informed the materials that were sourced to use in practice samples.

The first section of this chapter is the design brief which consolidated the concepts and themes from the previous two chapters. These themes guided the choice of materials and textile embellishment techniques selected. The second section of this chapter documents the materials sourced for practice iterations. Many different material options were evaluated using the themes from the design brief to determine whether they could offer the same appeals when used within an embellishment context.

Subsequently, in the third section of this chapter initial practice developments sample a range of different sourced materials and embellishment techniques. These embellishment techniques were split into five sections which included; tufting, weaving floats, hand embroidery, beadwork and gathering and layering. These techniques were selected due to their potential ability to provide surface manipulation results which could fulfil the design brief and ultimately act as decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials.

Reflection-in-action, including self-reflection and reflection informed by insights from the previous chapters guided the project. In this sense the practice process was improvisational and relied on feeling, response and adjustment.[39] This initial practice was further guided by physical trial and error, taking into account material, tooling and technique-related constraints and opportunities. To be inspired by the appeals of fur and exotic animal decoration was a new way of working for the researcher. The aim was to produce samples which had not previously been seen, due to the context, material combination, or overall design style. Practice outputs were evaluated based on their tactile and aesthetic appeal, as well as how well it associated with the concept that had inspired the sample.

4.2 DESIGN BRIEF

The outcomes from the research findings so far were mapped in order to discover the most common motivators in order to focus the practice experiments. The following diagram visualises the main themes taken forward (figure 4-1).

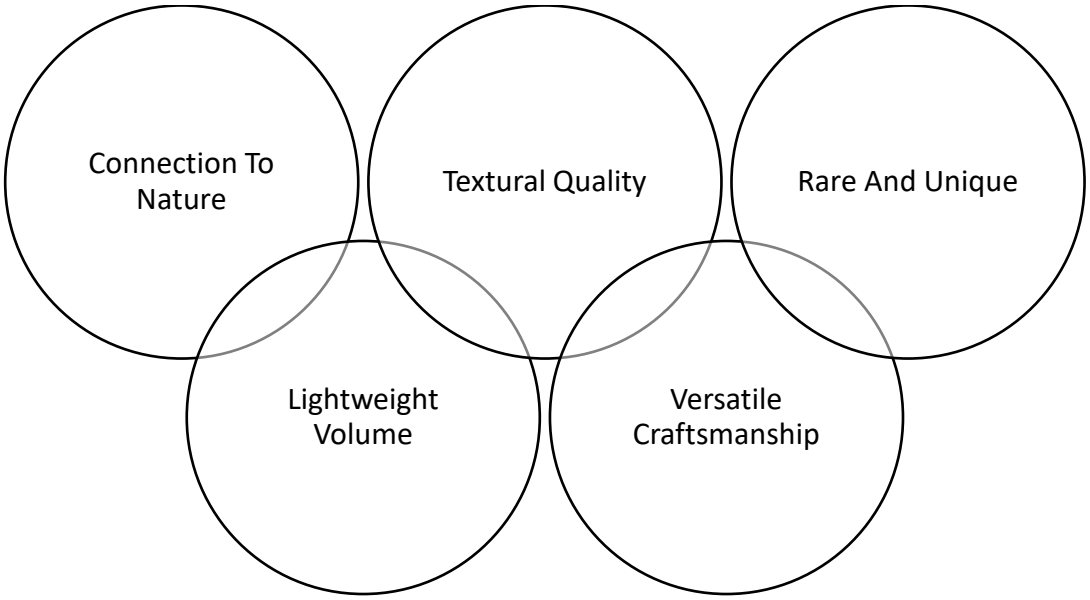


Figure 4-1 Mapping the concepts taken forward as a design brief,

Graphics: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2019

The five themes are further described in the following ways:

CONNECTION TO NATURE

Encompassed the themes of natural material, to record and collect nature as souvenirs, and to create a balance between nature and the man-made.

LIGHTWEIGHT VOLUME

Encompassed the themes of movement, an effect of which could almost be performative, this also often linked to softness.

TEXTURAL QUALITY

Encompassed the themes of texture and colour, longevity associated with quality, 3d texture, density and softness.

VERSATILE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Encompassed the themes of handmade, a layering of techniques and the opportunity for new techniques to be developed.

RARE AND UNIQUE

Encompassed the themes of status, an eye-catching appeal, an element of exclusivity and unfamiliarity.

4.3 SOURCING MATERIALS

Taking into account the design brief, the requirements for sourcing materials for textile embellishment sampling were based on a range of design values.

CONNECTION TO NATURE

To source materials which would help enable a connection to nature and contribute an additional potential quality of story-telling. This translated into discovering natural materials which had an obvious aesthetic provenance such as natural markings, which was particularly inspired by the feedback about reptile skins. Furthermore, the researcher considered how a connection to nature for a designer could also include something which would feel 'animal' when interacted with, linking to a performative quality which came up in the workshops.

LIGHTWEIGHT VOLUME

To discover materials which could offer a lightweight feeling of volume, inspired by applications of fur and feather decoration. The image of lightweight volume in feather decoration in particular also evoked images of an ethereal intricacy, delicacy and movement.

TEXTURAL QUALITY

Fur was identified as being soft, dense and lustrous, so materials were sought out that could have similar qualities to this. The researcher also identified that base fabrics played an important part in having soft and skin-like qualities. Silk in particular was explored due to feedback into it being the fabric equivalent to fur and exotic animal materials from industry feedback in the previous chapter. Furthermore, materials which could offer contrasting textures and colours when combined.

VERSATILE CRAFTSMANSHIP

To consider materials which were manipulatable, those which could offer a canvas to create a range of embellishment techniques. This became more of an abstract value related to ranges of techniques rather than material sourcing.

RARE AND UNIQUE

To source materials which are considered rare, unusual and lesser known materials, as well as materials that may have unusual colouration. This also encompassed materials which were irregular and inimitable which often linked back to the value of connection to nature.

Materials were occasionally sourced from physical retailers but more often from online retailers due to availability, which meant that the researcher discovered the tactile qualities of the material post purchase. Hence, this was one of the reasons that some materials were sourced but not applied in practice (see appendix 5 which documents additional textiles).

The researcher wanted to buy small quantities of textiles, yarns and individual components since the focus was sampling. However, this was not always possible due to large minimum order requirements from manufacturers. On one occasion when trying to buy Tencel, this problem was mitigated through buying a garment made from Tencel and repurposing the fabric. Tencel was an appealing fabric not only because of its soft handle, but because it could potentially offer a more ethical alternative to silk which had been referenced as being particularly appealing. Tencel branded lyocell fibres are produced in an environmentally responsible closed loop production process from sustainable wood sources. Another way of obtaining smaller lots was by obtaining materials from waste streams including pre-consumer waste (hereinafter referred to as PCW) from designers and manufacturers who had discarded materials pre-application. Furthermore, there were some relevant novel material inventions which were still in the development stage and not yet ready for textile sampling that the researcher wanted to use but was not able to obtain at the time. This included biodegradable sequins from the Sustainable Sequin Company and Vegea leather alternative made from waste from the wine industry which were both still in development stage. As an alternative to biodegradable sequins, the Sustainable Sequin Company supplied the researcher with recycled sequins which were in current production and were aesthetically similar to their biodegradable sequins.

In addition to whether the touch and aesthetic of the material could fulfil values, sourcing also considered the composition and provenance of the material. For example, cream

ahimsa silk organza and lotus silk (documented in appendix 5) were sourced from co-operatives, positioned as being additionally valuable in terms of their traceable supply chain and support of local communities. Ahimsa silk is positioned as an ethical version of silk, whereby silk moths emerge naturally from their cocoons rather than being killed at pupa stage. This is a material which has been used by the researcher in prior practice (see chapter 1). Organic cotton was another material that the researcher had used previously, due to it requiring less water and harmful pesticides, insecticides and herbicides compared to non-organic cotton.

Furthermore, some materials sourced were not commonly used in the applications in which the researcher had in mind. For example, Tencel, manila hemp and glass yarns in the applications of pile fabrics. Therefore, the researcher surmised that they could potentially be seen as rare and unique. At the time of writing, glass yarn was a material not commonly used in fashion textiles. Inspired by the spun glass used in the hair adornment (figure 3-10) (MOL: 90.261/18), glass yarn produced contemporarily is fully recyclable and manufactured from a zero-waste continuous filament process. Rather than being spun, it is extruded. The manila hemp yarn selected, also known as abaca, was a very thin yarn which had a slightly rigid property which the researcher found to be unusual. It was also favoured due to the fibres use within intercropping to encourage biodiversity.[119]

Sinamay was procured after the researcher discovered it within the feather section of a haberdashery, as mentioned in chapter 2. Bayong (wood) beads and snakeskin agate were discovered after searching for beads which were not polymer based (as synthetic materials were deemed unappealing from the research) and had natural markings on them. The bayong wood beads had small growth marks within each bead and the snake agate stones are named ‘snake’ after their similarity to snakeskin. Both of the selections of wood and stone beads were not selections that the researcher would have previously made based individual taste of their overall aesthetic and tactile appeal, however this made designing embellishments using the beads even more challenging and exciting. Their selection was guided much more firmly by the design brief concepts, in particular connection to nature and rare and unique due to each bead being ununiform.

The following textiles were sourced for sampling purposes because they had the potential to fulfil certain values:

Textile / Vendor or supplier	Potential values
Silks and organic cotton textiles / PCW streams	Lightweight volume Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship
Cream ahimsa silk organza / Co-operative via Offset Warehouse Ltd	Lightweight volume Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique
Tencel / repurposed garment	Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship

Table 4-1 Textiles sourced for practice

The following yarns, filaments and fibres were sourced for practice:

Yarns, filaments, fibres / Vendor or supplier	Potential values
Organic cotton yarn / **Handweavers Studio & Gallery**	Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship
Ahimsa silk yarn / **Fabric Plus Pvt Ltd**	Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship
Manila hemp yarn / **Handweavers Studio & Gallery**	Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique
Tencel yarn / **Handweavers Studio & Gallery**	Textural quality Rare and unique
Glass yarn / **PPG Industries**	Lightweight volume Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique
Sinamay / **Barnett Lawson Ltd**	Connection to nature Lightweight volume Textural quality Rare and unique

Table 4-2 Yarns, filaments and fibres sourced for practice

The following beads and sequins were sourced for practice:

Beads, sequins / Vendor or supplier	Potential values
Bayong beads / **Creative Beadcraft Ltd**	Connection to nature Rare and unique
Recycled sequins / **The Sustainable Sequin Company**	Versatile craftsmanship
Other beads / **PCW streams**	Versatile craftsmanship
Snakeskin agate beads / **Sherry's Designs**	Connection to nature Rare and unique

Table 4-3 Beads and sequins sourced for practice

4.4 PRACTICE: SAMPLING MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

4.4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This project developed as a way of testing materials sourced with existing textile embellishment techniques. The researcher explored ways in which the concepts from the design brief could be applied as values in textile embellishment, specifically which potential embellishment techniques could imbue and represent aspects of those themes. The overall results of this project were then used to inform developments in the next two projects which are documented in the following chapter.

The research focused on handmade and hand-mechanised textile embellishment techniques rather than automated production. This was especially since the research had focused on physical interactions with materials and artefacts in order to determine embellishment appeals. Furthermore, the research sought to discover successes and failures of materials and techniques through the process of sampling, rather than finished products.[120]

Decisions regarding which textile embellishment techniques to trial were spontaneous, with the successes and failures of one determining the next. The selection of techniques was also partly influenced by the researcher's prior practice: Hand embroidery, beadwork and fabric manipulation through gathering and layering textiles were all embellishment techniques which had been previously explored in different combinations. The researcher felt that these techniques were applicable to representing some of the concepts from the design brief, in particular their ability to offer varied textures.

However, the first techniques that were trialled were tufting and weaving floats, which the researcher had not used in prior practice and therefore required inductions to relevant textile machinery at London College of Fashion, Lime Grove site as well as working with Rand Gylden, a weaving mill and studio based in Bulgaria. These techniques were first explored due to their potential ability to implant fibres into a base material, offering a tactility reminiscent of fur. In total, the range of experiments with different textile embellishment techniques resulted in 19 samples being produced.

The following techniques were applied in sampling because they had the potential to fulfil certain values:

Technique	Potential values
Tufting	Connection to nature Lightweight volume Textural quality
Weaving floats	Connection to nature Lightweight volume Textural quality
Hand embroidery	Connection to nature Textural quality Rare and unique
Beadwork	Connection to nature Textural quality Rare and unique
Gathering and layering	Connection to nature Lightweight volume Textural quality

Table 4-4 Textile embellishment techniques applied in practice project 1

The five textile embellishment technique decisions are further described in the following ways:

TUFTING

Particularly inspired by the raised woven design on the velvet and feather mantle (figure 3-7 and 3-8) (V&A: T.653-1996), tufting was determined as a technique which could potentially implant fibres to create a fur-like effect of softness and heightened tactility. It was hoped that the effect of tufted fibres could create a feeling of density and volume that was also lightweight, as well as potentially having the ability to design freehand motifs using a table top tufting machine that represented natural patterns.

WEAVING FLOATS

Weaving floats and subsequently hand cutting them to achieve the effect of ranges of long piles of yarn was partly inspired by the examples of cut fur in chapter 2 (figures 2-23, 2-29, 2-30). It was hoped that this would achieve textural quality and aesthetic interest, and that different shapes could be cut reminiscent of natural patterns and motifs. Similarly, to tufting, it was hoped that weaving floats could additionally offer a lightweight and articulated volume to textiles decoration.

HAND EMBROIDERY

Partly inspired by the swan cape (figure 3-4) (V&A: T.367-1982) the researcher aimed to create patterns through mechanisation, further manipulating and heightening the pattern using hand embroidery. This was also a method of implanting feather type embellishment, exploring connection to nature, textural quality and adding elements of uniqueness through hand stitch.

BEADWORK

There have been many examples of inspiring beadwork from the previous two chapters, including the scattered effect of the bee embellishment (figure 2-5) (V&A: T.772-1972), the lightness of the feather and beadwork combination from Prada (figures 2-35 and 2-36), and natural markings in the stone beadwork samples by Isisi (figure 2-49). The researcher felt that beadwork could offer a connection to nature through applying beads that had natural markings which could feel unique and also provide a textural quality, especially in combination with softer textiles. The choice to pursue beadwork was also particularly inspired by the individually applied snake scales in the snakeskin slippers (figure 3-1) (V&A: AP:6&A-1868). The researcher drew upon an initial practice response in the previous chapter which visualised individually cut cork scales (figure 3-3).

GATHERING AND LAYERING

In order to create lightweight volume, gathering and layering fabrics were explored. This was partly inspired by the lightness seen in ostrich feather decoration, layered light embellishment applied in the example by Jakob Schlaepfer (figure 2-48), and the layering

effect of Vegea strips by Tiziano Guardini (figure 2-59) in order to create a greater textural quality.

4.4.2 TUFTING

The researcher initially approached Gierlings Velpor, a supplier who develop pile fabrics - and in particular organic cotton velvet - to develop a longer haired pile fabric using velvet manufacturing technology. However, the outcome was that the machinery could not be altered as it was set at a cutting level. The supplier currently produces longer haired faux furs from polymers, using a different knitted manufacturing process to velvet production since the polymer filaments are extruded. Therefore, this manufacturing process wasn't designed to use natural materials. At time of writing, current technological restraints resulted in either a short pile fabric made from a natural material (organic cotton) or a long pile fabric made from a synthetic material.

Subsequent to this, was exploration into other mechanised textile techniques that could create a long pile fabric made from a natural material, with the view to using the material as an embellishment component in practice. This was largely led by the researchers hunch into what may offer a similar tactile appeal to fur, backed up by findings from the previous chapter about appeal of natural materials. The use of tufting to create pile-like structures in textiles is well established. Tufting machines use pneumatic force to press a U-shaped piece of yarn through a backing fabric. Usually, the technique uses woollen yarns to create rugs or carpets, occasionally applied on the inside of garments to provide insulation. The loops formed may be left intact or can be cut which normally requires a bonding agent and secondary backing fabric in order for the yarns to stay in place.

Various hand-sewn tufting experiments using a range of yarn types were created at Lime Grove, London College of Fashion. These various yarn types included; Tencel, organic cotton, manila hemp and ahimsa silk yarn. PCW silk, PCW organic cotton and ahimsa silk organza base materials were used in samples which tested sewing vertical lines of loops as well as curved motifs (figure 4-2). The initial samples created short pile lengths once the loops were cut which did not seem to offer the textural quality and versatility that a longer pile might. However, the settings did not allow for longer lengths of tufting.

In total, five tests were initiated to evaluate the potential of tufting as a textile embellishment technique. The first three samples used PCW organic cotton fabric, as it was advised that a rigid base fabric was required on the tufting machine (figures 4-3 to 4-

5). Three different yarn combinations were then sampled; a mixture of Tencel and organic cotton yarn (figure 4-3), manila hemp yarn (figure 4-4) and ahimsa silk yarn (figure 4-5). The Tencel and organic cotton yarn combination also tested the mixture of two different colours, although the texture of the yarns was similar. The textural quality achieved in the ahimsa silk yarn was deemed to be more appealing than the manila hemp yarn, which had more of a 'spiky' texture. The mix of Tencel and organic cotton was the densest as the yarn was thickest, and although it was soft it reminded the researcher of carpet and did not have the fine quality needed, nor did the Tencel add to any feeling of rarity.

The researcher then tested the potential of creating motif shapes using the tufting machine, by using ahimsa silk yarn and two different base fabrics which were finer than organic cotton previously trialled. These were ahimsa silk organza (figure 4-6) and waste silk chiffon (figure 4-7). The silk chiffon was too soft and did not go through the machine very well, and as such, the translucency and lightness of the organza was deemed to be a more successful outcome due to its more rigid structure. The researcher further reflected upon the potential to aesthetically layer different techniques using a translucent material such as the ahimsa silk organza, which also had a voluminous quality.

Figure 4-2 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with tufting using ahimsa silk, waste silk, organic cotton, Tencel and manila hemp, conducted at the embroidery department, London College of Fashion Lime Grove, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

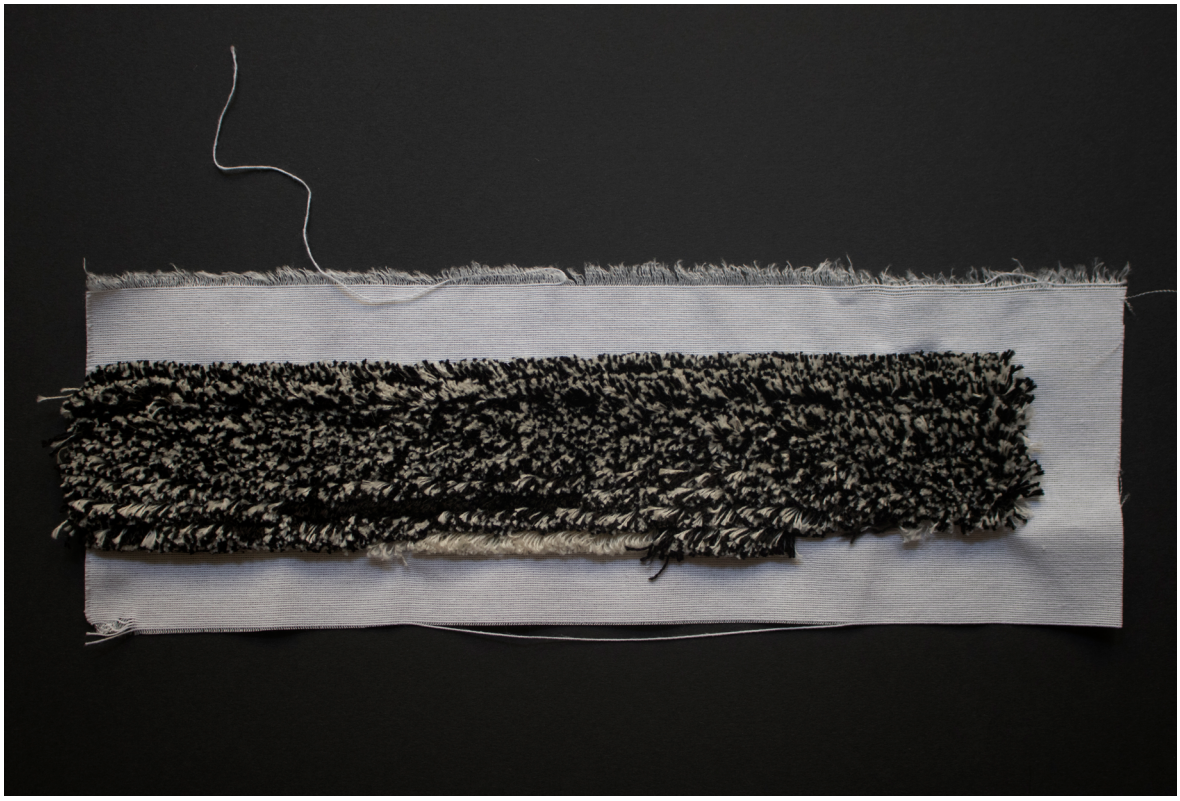


Figure 4-3 Tufting sample using Tencel and organic cotton yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

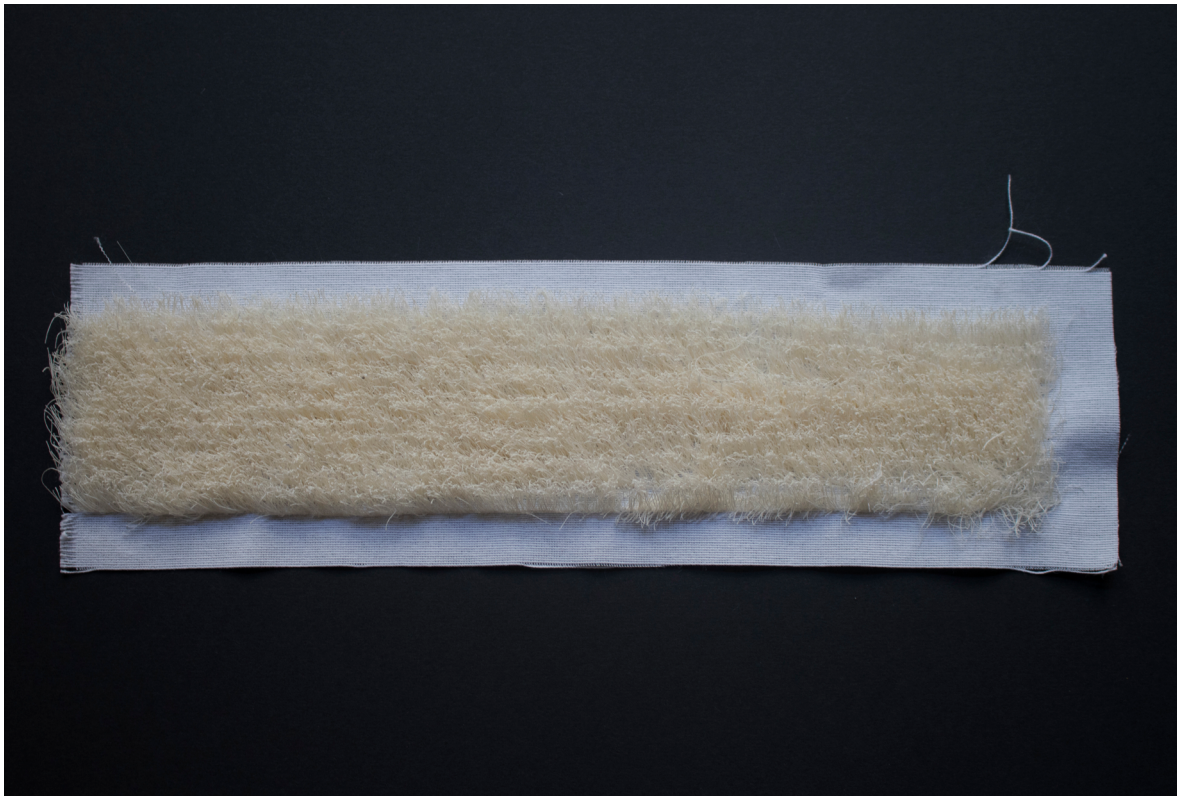


Figure 4-4 Tufting sample using manila hemp yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

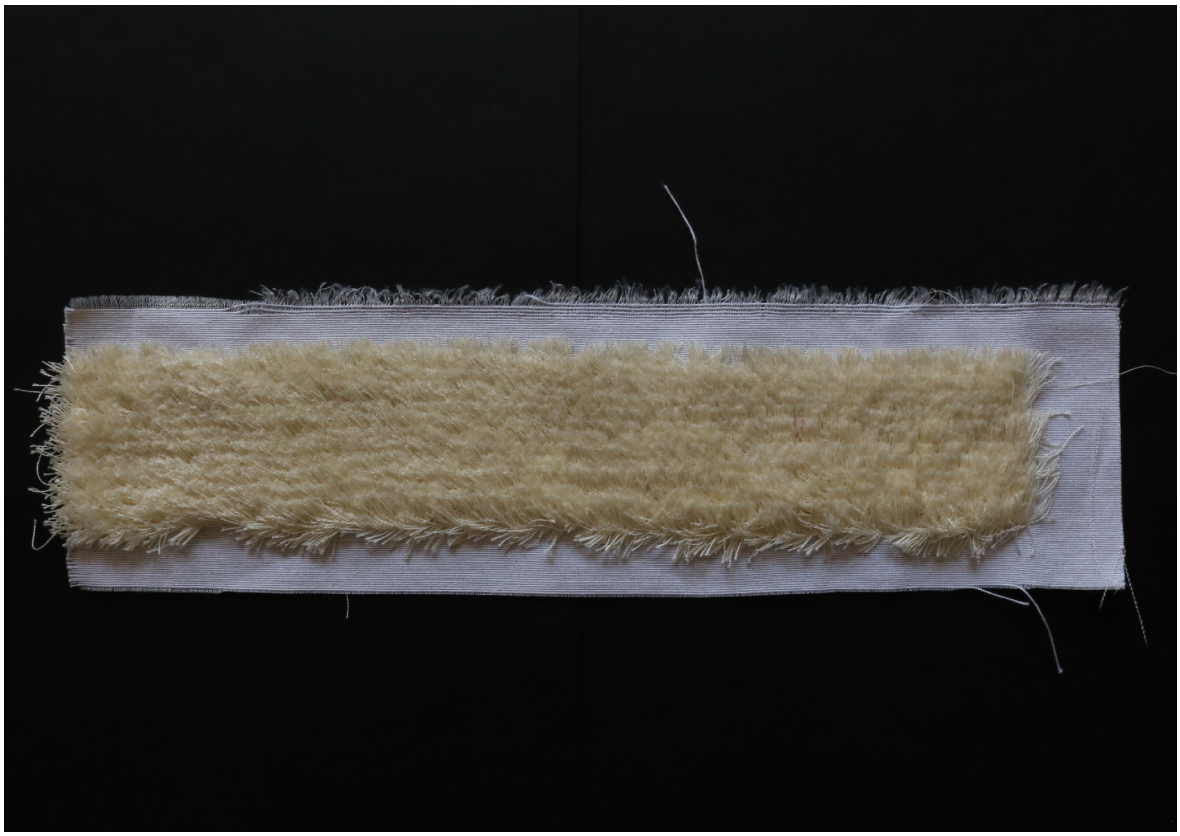


Figure 4-5 Tufting sample using ahimsa silk yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-6 Patterned tufting sample using ahimsa silk yarn and base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-7 Patterned tufting sample using ahimsa silk yarn and waste silk base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

The following successes and failures of the different tufting samples was compiled:

Technique	Material	Results
Tufting (Figure 4-3)	Tencel yarn Organic cotton yarn PCW organic cotton base	Both yarns are soft but not necessarily a fine material within this technique, potentially due to the yarns being too thick.
Tufting (Figure 4-4)	Manila hemp yarn PCW organic cotton base	Manila hemp yarn does not have textural quality when tufted. However, it is highly unusual in texture and appearance and therefore may be considered within the concept of rare and unique.
Tufting (figure 4-5)	Ahimsa silk yarn PCW organic cotton base	The ahimsa silk yarn offers the values of textural quality however the waste organic cotton as a base material is too rigid and coarse.
Tufting (Figure 4-6)	Ahimsa silk yarn Ahimsa silk organza base	The ahimsa silk yarn when combined with an ahimsa silk base has the potential of offering a lighter weight and volume.
Tufting (Figure 4-7)	Ahimsa silk yarn PCW silk base	The light silk base could potentially offer lightweight volume; however, it was deemed to not be a successful base material for tufting which requires something more rigid.

Table 4-5 Tufting sample results

4.4.3 WEAVING FLOATS

The next iteration of the practice project was to create samples of woven floats via weaving mill and studio Rand Gylden, whose focus was artisan and experimental practice mostly achieved through using hand looms. This was in order to develop pile fabrics which would have longer fibres than the tufting samples. Rather than intersecting with the warp thread, during the process of hand-weaving weft threads were skipped in order to create a loose thread which was then cut to create a longer pile-like effect. In a similar manner to tufting, weaving floats in this way creates u-shaped yarns which are attached to a base fabric. However, hand-weaving offered the ability to modify lengths of yarn. The researcher travelled out to the weaving mill based in Bulgaria in order to work together with the company trialling different effects.

For each sample, a constant base material of organic cotton used. This was partly due to the patient time spent winding yarn onto the warp which took a total of 48 hours to complete. Two different coloured yarns were used, a natural undyed organic cotton and a dyed light brown cotton. In addition, undyed ahimsa silk and glass yarns were trialled in samples, as well as a dyed black Tencel yarn. The Tencel and ahimsa silk yarn were the same materials as had been earlier trialled in tufting. The researcher has seen some potential in ahimsa silk, and wanted to determine if Tencel could achieve successful effects if the piles of yarn were longer. Glass yarn had not previously been trialled in practice since as it could not be wound onto the tufting machine due to its delicacy. The overall neutral colour choice resulted in a range of textile samples which focused on the technique of weaving floats, where further colouration could be applied if initially successful. The range of initial trials on the weaving loom are articulated in figure 4-8.

Not with the view that these initial samples alone would offer an embellishment alternative to fur and exotic animal materials, they instead served as first attempts to find a suitable resource that could be used to create embellishment. Different lengths of floats and different distances between each float were trialled, for example floats that appear close together made from Tencel (figure 4-9) and woven floats which were spaced a further distance apart, also using the same material (figure 4-10). The sample was not deemed to have additional qualities when the woven float was longer, in comparison to the earlier tufted trial. The ahimsa silk floats were designed to have longer length yarns

than the tufted sample using the same material, however the yarns were not able to lie as closely together resulting in a sample which had less density to the touch (figure 4-11).

The researcher finally trialled glass yarn woven floats, creating samples which had two different lengths of yarn. The shorter floats (figure 4-12) felt too 'spiky' due to the rigidity of the material, similarly to the earlier tufted sample using manila hemp. However, the longer glass floats produced the most successful trial overall in terms of handle and appearance due to the softness and hang of the material (figure 4-13). The sample appeared very unusual due to the lustre of the glass filaments. It also offered a textural quality akin to hair.

The researcher reflected upon the repetitive nature of the woven designs, and how they appeared unappealing in terms of the design brief. The balance between uniformity and irregularity required either a more aesthetically unusual material or a technique which was more irregular. Furthermore, the researcher wished to discover a technique of implanting fibres or yarns that did not require additional adhesives to hold them in place. Since both the tufting and weaving trials created u-shaped yarns, another method of construction was required.

The following successes and failures of the different samples weaving floats was compiled:

Technique	Material	Results
Weaving floats (close) (Figure 4-9)	Tencel yarn Organic cotton base	Soft, but not lightweight or fine due to the thickness of the yarn.
Weaving floats (distance) (Figure 4-10)	Tencel yarn Organic cotton base	Spacing the floats out more enabled it to feel more lightweight.
Weaving floats (Figure 4-11)	Ahimsa silk yarn Organic cotton base	The ahimsa silk yarn offers some values of textural quality, however the floats not able to be woven closely enough to feel dense since it is a thinner yarn.
Weaving floats (short) (Figure 4-12)	Glass yarn Organic cotton base	Short floats were too hard and rigid to the touch.
Weaving floats (long) (Figure 4-13)	Glass yarn Organic cotton base	Success with longer floats of glass due to the hang of the yarn and the softness. As the material is unusual and unrecognisable, it appears more appealing to show a longer length of it.

Table 4-6 Weaving floats samples results

Figure 4-8 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with weaving floats using ahimsa silk, organic cotton, Tencel and glass yarn, conducted with Rand Gylden, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-9 Weaving close floats sample using Tencel yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

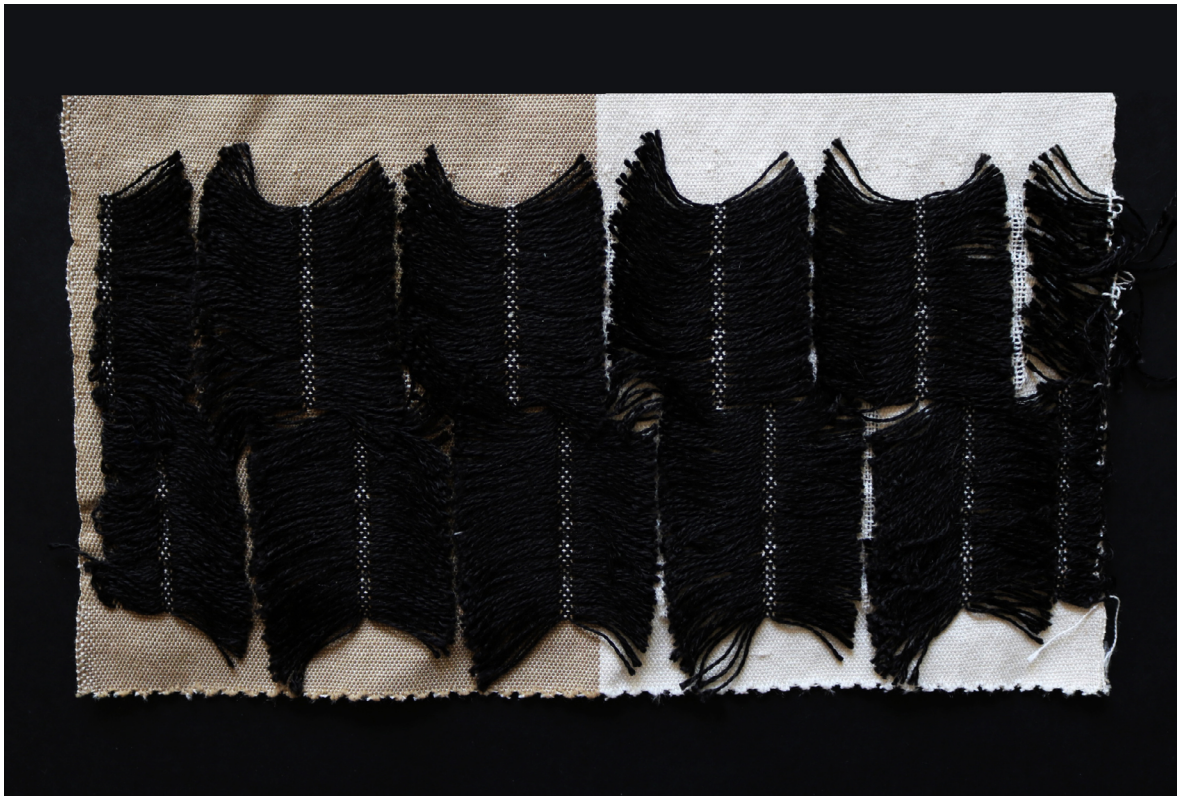


Figure 4-10 Weaving distance floats sample using Tencel yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

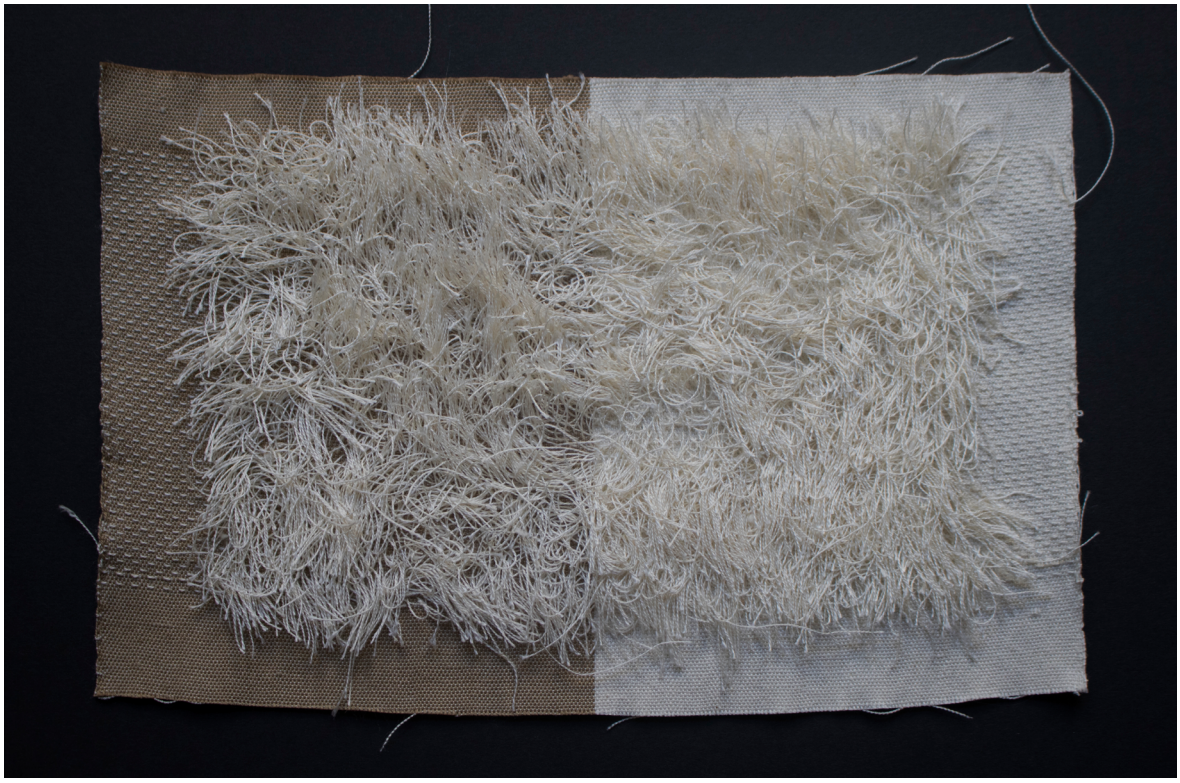


Figure 4-11 Weaving floats sample using ahimsa silk yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

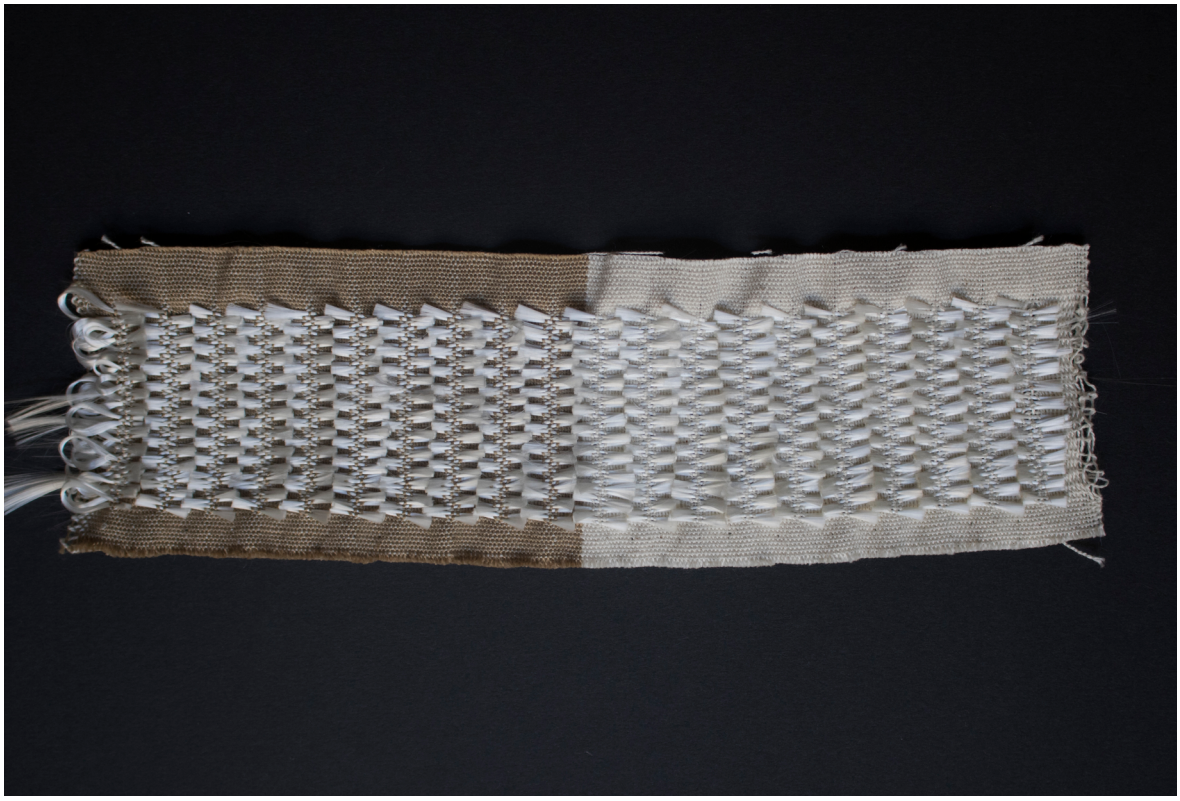


Figure 4-12 Weaving short floats sample using glass yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

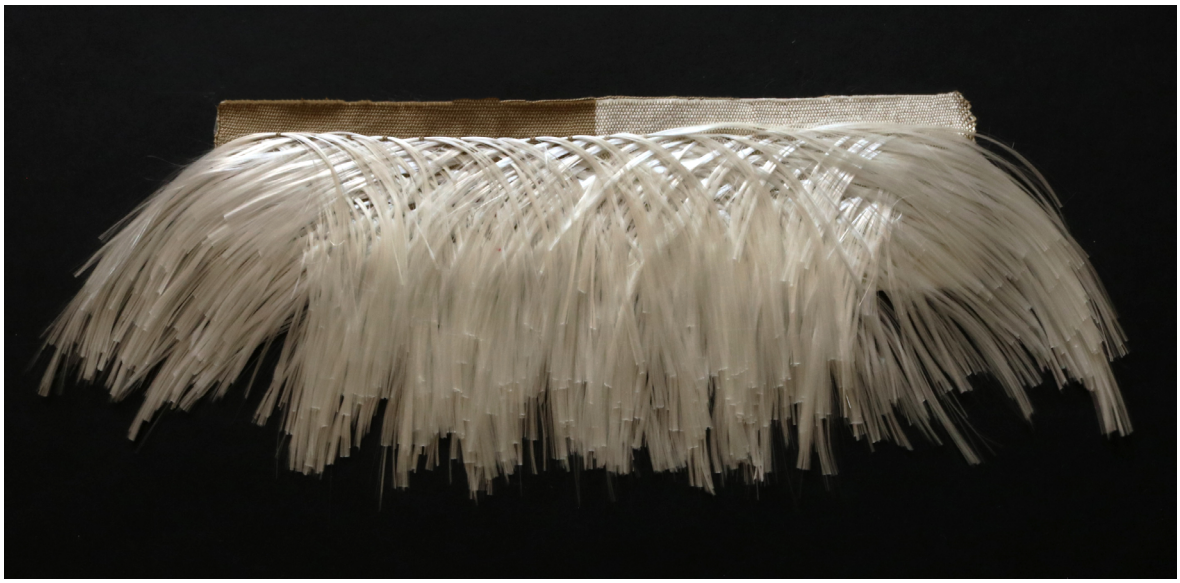


Figure 4-13 Weaving long floats sample using glass yarn, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

4.4.4 HAND EMBROIDERY

Whilst developing woven floats, two flat woven samples were also trialled with weaving mill and studio Rand Gylden which had a pattern inspired by the scales of reptile skins, using glass yarn and ahimsa silk yarn. Initially, the samples were deemed to be too uniform due to the repeat design and the pattern did not appear to stand out very much. As part of hand embroidery experiments, the research explored whether added hand embroidery could make some of the samples feel more unique and less repetitive, furthermore it to see if it could offer heightened tactility (figure 4-14).

Hand embroidery allows the maker to be responsive whilst creating the stitch. The technique is versatile, offering additional texture particularly to delicate fabrics which may otherwise be hard to machine. The sample created using glass yarn added a split stitch to create a sold outline to the woven pattern using Tencel yarn (figure 4-15). The Tencel yarn was chosen due to it having a similar thickness to the glass yarn. In comparison to the glass yarn, Tencel offered a contrasting colour and a matt appearance which brought a heightened tactility to the sample. Furthermore, the thickness of the Tencel yarn created a more raised effect than would have been achieved if using a thinner yarn type. The effect of the added embroidery was a heightening of the woven pattern.

Another woven sample which had the same reptile scale inspired pattern - this time created using manila hemp yarn - was also heightened through hand embroidery. The researcher applied a layer of translucent ahimsa silk organza on top of the weaving and hand sewed a split stitch using manila hemp in order to highlight the woven pattern underneath (see figure 4-16). The layer of ahimsa silk organza and embroidery stitch was applied in order for it to feel softer and more delicate in nature, and to also add an extra dimension of interest to the woven design. The textural quality of a layering of techniques and materials within this sample was further explored through ‘Gathering and Layering’ later in this section.

In response to the hand manipulated embroidery trials, the researcher created a hand-embroidered sample using glass yarn, with the aim of creating a pattern which was not repetitive (figure 4-17). The sample was mainly a thought process for what could be achieved in comparison to hand weaving. The sample felt similar to the original woven

samples in this section which had been manipulated using hand embroidery. It appeared that accents of hand embroidery, rather than an all-over dense pattern achieved a greater feeling of lightness. However, it was felt by the researcher that a mix of embellishment processes and techniques was also appealing and felt more organic in nature.

The last iteration was a sample of ahimsa silk floats which was manipulated by hand and sewn into embellishment motifs reminiscent of feathers. In addition, beadwork was added to determine if it brought a greater appeal of the sample (figure 4-18). Since attaching fibres to a base material had been an ongoing design problem, hand embroidery in this instance was used as a way of attaching u-shaped yarns. The researcher felt that further hand embroidery could potentially be applied in future samples, without building upon woven designs as a base material. This was due to the weightiness of a layering of woven fabric and hand weaving.

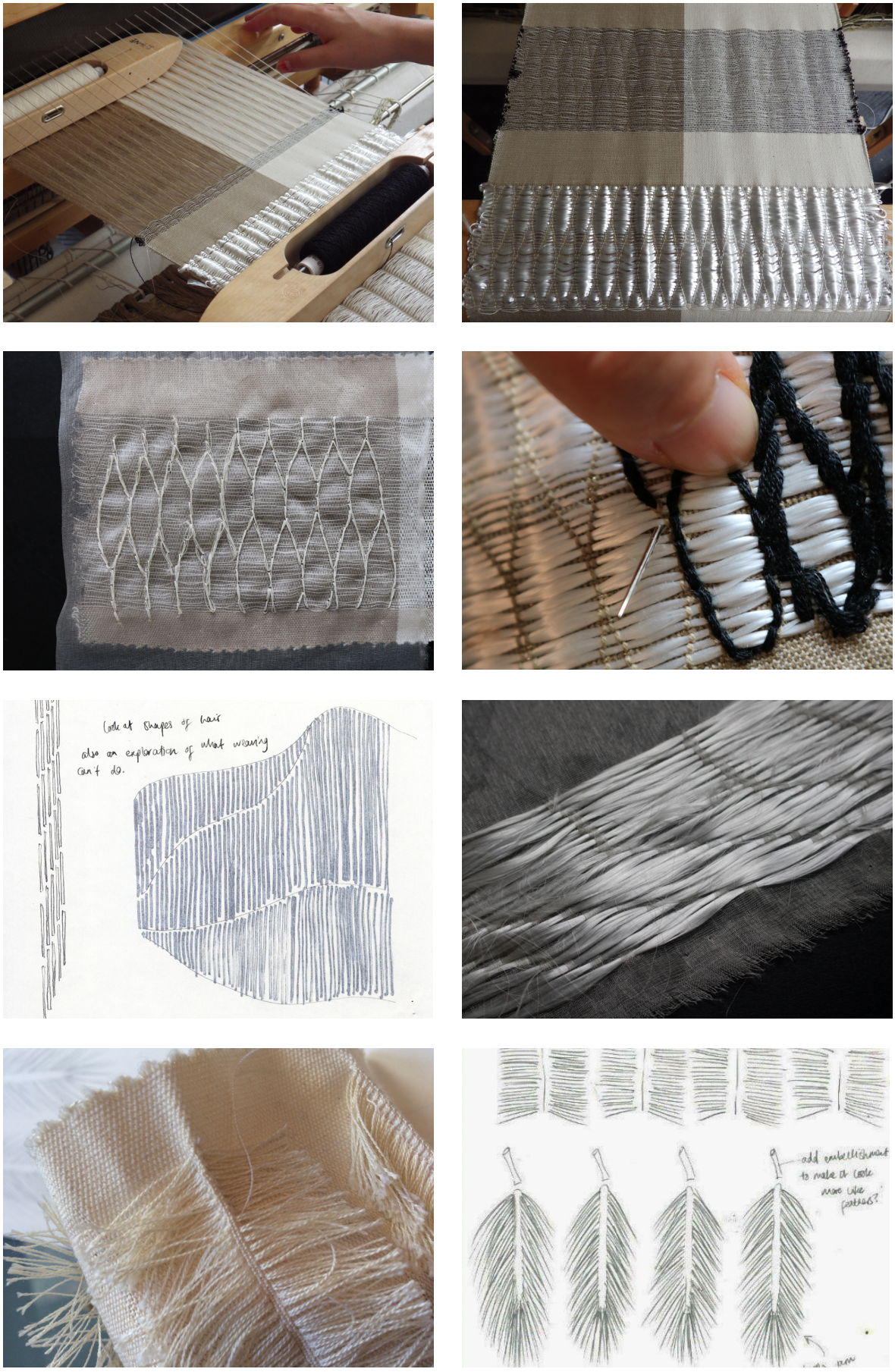


Figure 4-14 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with hand embroidery and weaving using organic cotton, ahimsa silk, Tencel, manila hemp and glass yarn, partly conducted with Rand Gylden, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-15 Embroidery test sample on glass yarn weaving, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

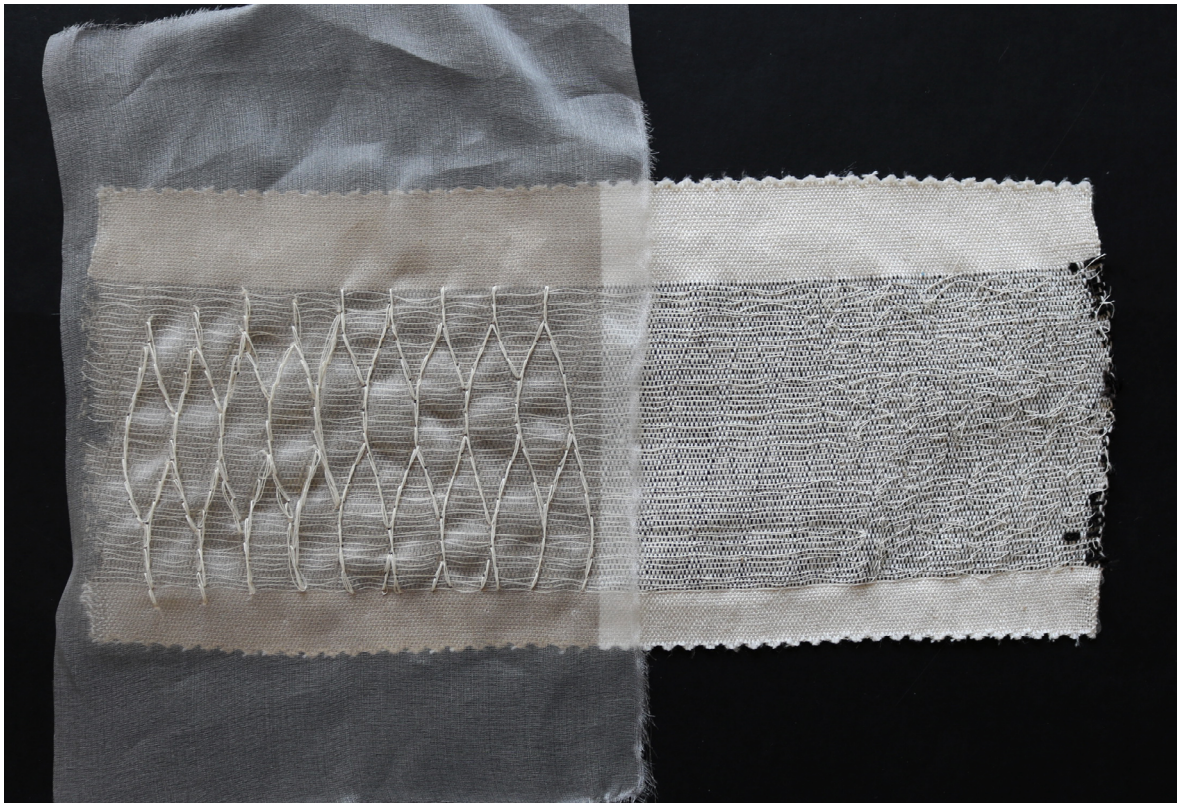


Figure 4-16 Manila hemp embroidery test sample on ahimsa silk and manila hemp weaving, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

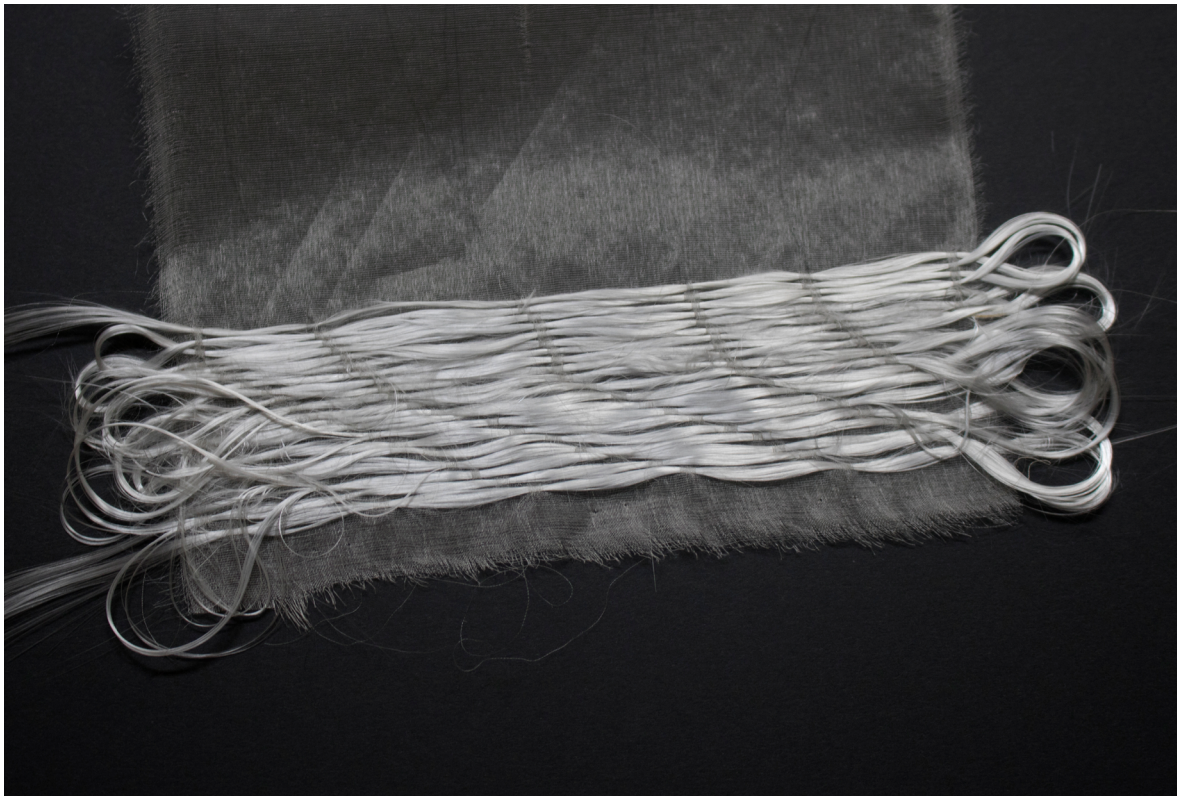


Figure 4-17 Glass yarn hand embroidery sample, ahimsa silk base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-18 Cut and hand embroidered ahimsa silk floats sample with beading, organic cotton base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

The following successes and failures of the different hand embroidery samples was compiled:

Technique	Material	Results
Hand embroidery (Figure 4-15)	Glass yarn Tencel yarn	The additional embroidery added an extra dimension to the woven pattern, in a similar manner to how the painting of snakeskin in chapter two highlighted natural markings. However, it felt heavy and not very flexible.
Hand embroidery (Figure 4-16)	Manila hemp yarn PCW silk	The layering of lighter materials created a softer and more voluminous effect. This potentially could be heightened by the base material also being silk organza. Due to the translucent layer of material, a highlighting of embellishment effects was also achieved.
Hand embroidery (Figure 4-17)	Glass yarn Ahimsa silk	The overall technique using glass yarn was not effective as the glass became tangled and did not maintain the fluid nature which made it so appealing.
Embroidery (Figure 4-18)	Ahimsa silk yarn PCW beads	The embroidery effect had textural quality and would have the potential of lightweight volume if a lighter base fabric was used. The addition of the beads did not add to the design.

Table 4-7 Hand embroidery samples results

4.4.5 BEADWORK

A small range of beads were trialled in embellishment samples in order to offer a different type of tactility and weight to previous samples. This was partly initiated from the repeating woven designs of the previous samples, which explored the aesthetic of reptile skins. In a similar manner to that of the natural repeats in reptile scales, samples were first developed that followed a repeat pattern using natural materials, to a more irregular pattern using synthetic recycled sequins (figure 4-19).

The first sample was comprised of bayong beads on PCW duchess satin (figure 4-20). The placement of the beads with slight spaces in between each one was inspired by the earlier cork collage (figure 3-3) as a response to the snakeskin slippers (figure 3-1). Cork was not used as a material due to bayong beads also offering a similar appeal of natural markings and also offering a greater 3D aspect and smooth surface. Furthermore, the natural colour of the bayong beads was richer and more appealing than that of the cork. Each bead, which was purchased as being hand carved from bayong wood, was slightly different from the last which highlighted a feeling of connection to nature and the handmade.

Natural markings were further explored through applying snake agate beads in combination with bayong beads to a PCW silk base (figure 4-21). Snake agate beads were not used solely due to their heavy weight, which would have required a thicker base material. The researcher wanted to retain a feeling of lightness and softness, so therefore mixed bayong beads within the design which were lighter in weight. In order to achieve an aesthetic balance between nature and man-made, the beadwork was designed to appear as if it was growing on the sample. The effect was one of being organic, yet still retaining an element of repeat design due to the repeat placement of the bayong and snake agate beads. Furthermore, the researcher applied an ahimsa silk layer to the embellishment since layering had appeared successful in an earlier embroidery trial (figure 4-16).

The design of a less symmetrical embellishment pattern which had no aesthetic repeat was explored in the final sample using recycled sequins, glass beads and PCW beads (figure 4-22). Recycled sequins and PCW glass beads were more homogenous in nature

than the bayong and snake agate beads which inspired the researcher to heighten their appeal through a more irregular and organic design. The PCW cylinder beads were able to move in an articulated manner especially when sewn onto a flexible backing fabric since their long and narrow cylinder shape was reminiscent of implanted fibres. There were some initial issues with them standing up in an articulated manner and not collapsing, which required them to be sewn closely together. However, this resulted in a much heavier embellishment. The design placement of the beadwork is therefore reflective of this since the cylinder beads were too heavy to create an entire textile. Recycled sequins were placed in a scattered manner at the end of some of the cylinder beads in order to catch the light due to their reflective manner. The choice to use blue and silver colours was to associate the embellishment ever so slightly with feathers and to reflect the colours in the glass beads which were also placed in a scattered manner at the tips of the cylinder beads.

The following successes and failures of the different beadwork samples was compiled:

Technique	Material	Results
Beadwork (Figure 4-20)	Bayong beads PCW silk	Softness achieved through the use of duchess satin and bayong beads, however it could be heightened to appear more unusual.
Beadwork (Figure 4-21)	Snake agate stones Bayong beads PCW silk Ahimsa silk	There is a feeling of connection to nature through the use of materials and the design of the embellishment.
Beadwork (Figure 4-22)	Recycled sequins Glass beads PCW beads PCW silk	The irregular design works well with the choice of beads however it was felt that it didn't link to closely to fur and exotic decoration, potentially because it wasn't soft and because the embellishment components were manufactured to be exactly the same as each other.

Table 4-8 Beadwork samples results

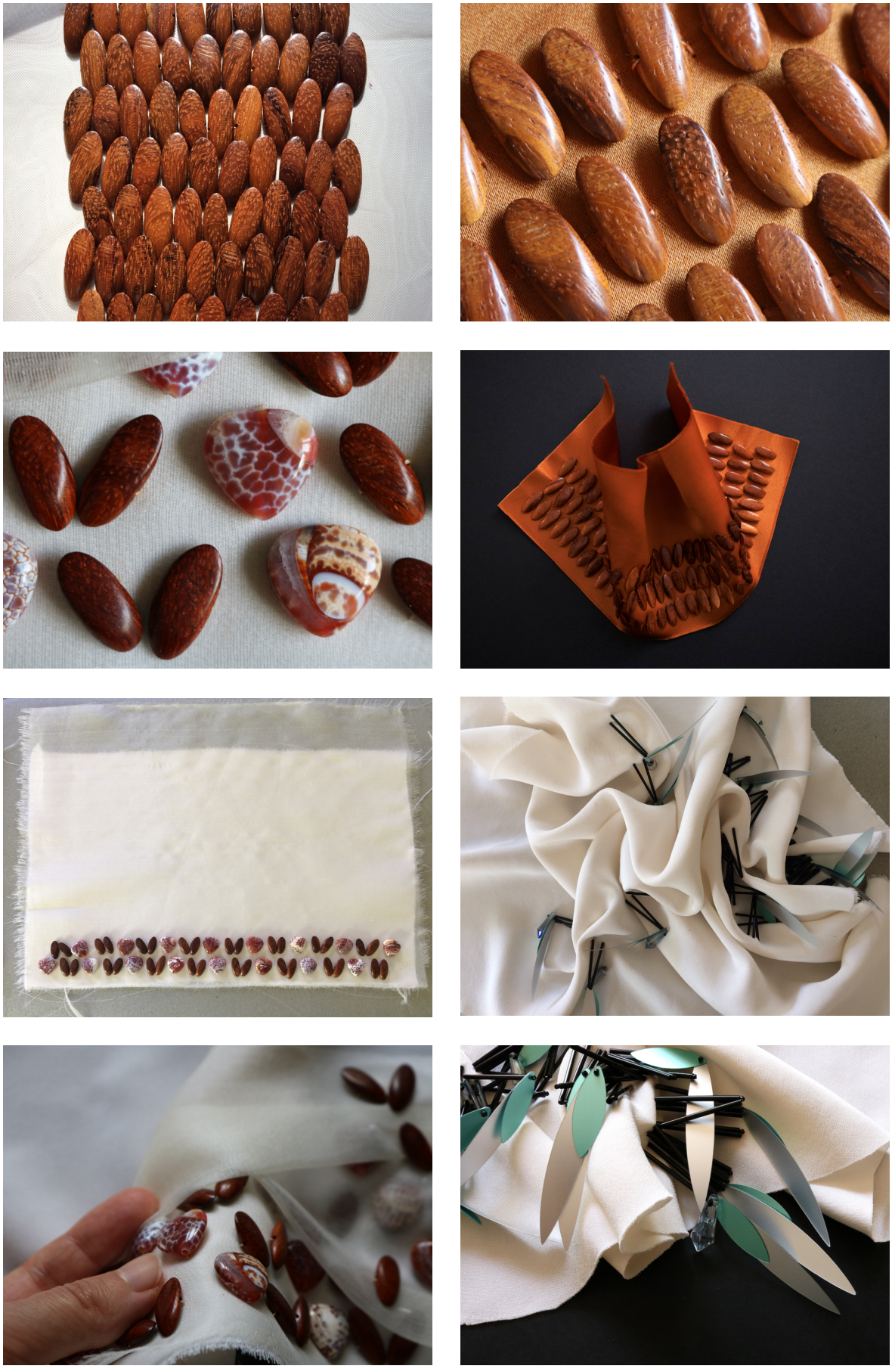


Figure 4-19 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with beading using bayong beads, snake agate, recycled sequins, waste beads, waste silk and ahimsa silk, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-20 Bayong bead sample with waste silk base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-21 Bayong bead and snake agate bead sample with ahimsa silk and waste silk base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-22 Recycled sequins and waste bead sample, waste silk base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

4.4.6 GATHERING AND LAYERING

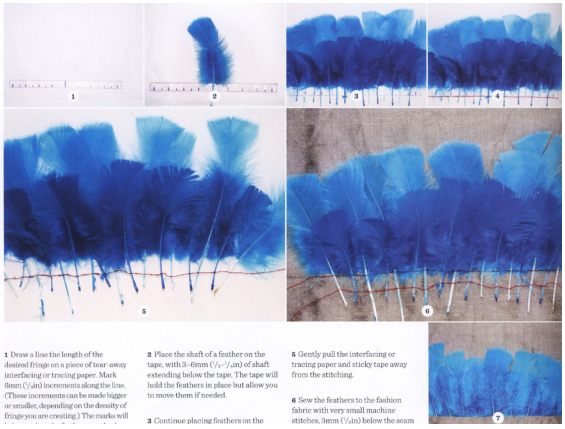
As a way of exploring other ways of implanting or attaching yarn to a base material, the researcher started to stich yarns onto fabric using a sewing machine. This was partly inspired by the method of attaching individual feathers to fabric to create feather fringe embellishment, as Miller documents in 'Creating Couture Embellishment' which applies a running straight stitch to the base of the feather shaft.[121] In order to create a lift and feeling of lightness to the yarns, the base fabric was also gathered in a range of experiments (figure 4-23).

The first sample consisted of two layers of hand gathered ahimsa silk organza together with one layer of machine sewn glass yarn and a final layer of gathered ahimsa silk organza (figure 4-24). The translucency of the silk enabled the glass to be seen through the layers, yet allowed for a feeling of volume and a certain ethereality since the glass caught the light through the silk. In addition, it had a textural quality of density and softness, further achieved by leaving the edges of the ahimsa silk organza layers raw and frayed. The choice to attach layers of ahimsa silk organza on either side of the glass yarn was also designed to add some structure to the embellishment, since the silk also held the glass yarn in a particular elevated position. The sample seemed a little heavy to the researcher due to the number of layers, in particular at the point where they were sewn together. The layers were assembled and first tacked together by hand, then sewn together using a sewing machine.

Figure 4-25 depicts a second sample using the same technique created from Tencel and PCW translucent silk (which was slightly finer than the ahimsa silk) with sinamay in the place of glass yarn. The sinamay was purchased as sprays, which the researcher took apart on order to apply individual fibres which enabled a much lighter embellishment effect (see figure 4-23 for intact sprays). In comparison to the sample using glass yarn and ahimsa silk organza, the sample was softer and had a greater ability to move and adapt its shape. In this example, sinamay fibres were sewn on top of and in between the translucent layers of silk in order to add more visual and tactile interest, and to add depth to the sample. Furthermore, it made the sample appear more natural and organic in the way the sinamay fibres were scattered throughout in a manner which was not symmetrical or evenly measured, but rather intuitively applied. The researcher felt that

the tapered end of the sinamay fibres also added a softer and more natural quality akin to fur.

The colour choice of the Tencel (figure 4-25) was based on a skin tone, this was in order to fully focus the visual element on the black sinamay fibres. In a similar way to a feather rachis (the central shaft of a feather) the sinamay had a certain rigidity which enabled it to sway from side to side in a pleasing manner when moved. This also reminded the researcher of the spun glass used in the hair adornment (figure 3-11) (MOL: 90.261/18). No further samples using machine stitching were developed at this stage as the researcher wished to find a more secure solution to attaching fibres and yarns. The researcher felt that the glass filaments and sinamay fibres were not held very securely by the stitch and could be pulled out easily.



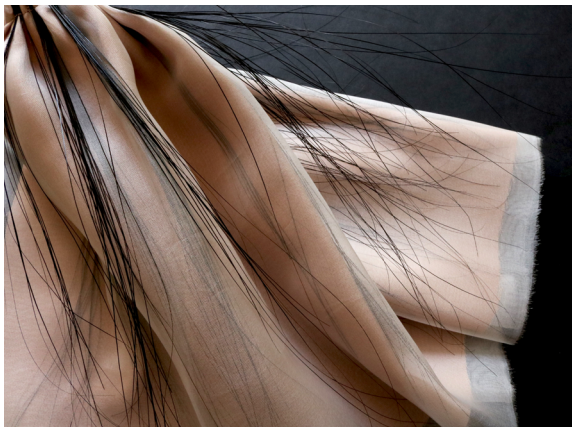


Figure 4-23 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with hand gathering using ahimsa silk, glass yarn, sinamay, Tencel and waste silk, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-24 Hand gathered ahimsa silk organza with glass yarn sample, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

Figure 4-25 Hand gathered Tencel and waste silk with sinamay, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016

The following successes and failures of the different gathering and layering samples were compiled:

Technique	Material	Results
Gathering and Layering (Figure 4-24)	Glass yarn Ahimsa silk organza	It had textural quality but was slightly heavy due to the layering of materials, especially at the stitch line. This resulted in the sample not moving quite so freely. The researcher felt that the glass was not a recognisable material which added to a certain intrigue.
Gathering and Layering (Figure 4-25)	Sinamay Tencel PCW silk	The sample had textural quality and a feeling of movement. It appeared to connect to nature due to the natural fibre type and organic construction of the sample. Furthermore, the researcher felt that it was not a recognisable material which added to a certain intrigue.

Table 4-9 Gathering and layering samples results

4.4.7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The materials and processes which could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials centred around a few combinations and design methods. Direct visual observation and the tactile feel of each sample were the main means of analysis by the researcher in order to evaluate how well they encapsulated concepts from the design brief. The successes which emerged from the first practice project are as follows:

Weaving floats (long) with glass yarn (Figure 4-13)
Long floats of glass have a softness, feeling of movement, density, an eye-catching appeal and unfamiliarity.

Hand embroidery onto translucent PCW silk (Figure 4-16)
The layering of handmade techniques, visible through applying a translucent layer of fabric had a heightened texture, density and 3D appearance.

Beadwork with bayong beads and PCW silk (Figure 4-20)
The similarity in colour between the silk and beads made the entire sample feel more organic and natural. This was further juxtaposed with the contrasting texture of each material. In addition, were the values of quality through the material choice, 3D texture and softness.

Beadwork with snake agate stones and bayong beads combined with ahimsa silk (Figure 4-21)
The combination of materials encompassed the themes of natural material and to create a balance between nature and the man-made through the slight irregularity of the repeat embellishment design. In addition, was the feeling of 3D texture and colour, and quality through material choice and overall weightiness of the sample.

Ruching and Layering with sinamay, Tencel and PCW silk (Figure 4-25)
The combination of materials had textural quality, softness, and a feeling of movement and volume. It appeared to connect to nature due to the natural material and organic construction of the sample which encompassed a layering of materials and techniques.

Table 4-10 Practice project 1 research findings

Further samples developed during this project mainly faced issues with fibre implantation, and of not being lightweight and voluminous enough.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focused the findings from the previous chapter into a design brief which was then applied as inspiration points to a range of practice samples. From the design brief five concepts emerged which were: Connection to nature, lightweight volume, textural quality, versatile craftsmanship and rare and unique. The researcher subsequently started to evaluate the range of samples created in the practice project using the design brief as a guide.

Five types of different embellishment techniques were trialled, in which each collection of samples trialling a different technique helped to inspire the next technique. This was based not only on guiding factors from the design brief but also technical constraints and practical successes and failures of the textile embellishment samples. Overall, the textile embellishment samples were therefore more informed as time went on, with the final beadwork and gathering and layering collection of samples being the most complete. Throughout the practice project the researcher found that silk or silk-like base materials added to a feeling of material quality due to their soft and subtle properties and further enabled additive embellishments to have greater movement.

By trying to create a long pile fabric using a natural material, the researcher discovered issues with implanting fibres that were manipulatable enough and so that they would stay in place without the need for adhesives. To fulfil aesthetic and haptic needs, as well as creating volume, questions arose regarding whether new embellishment techniques could be developed. In particular through the potential combination of textile embellishment techniques which had proved to offer some success, as documented in the previous section. For example, could longer lengths of glass be combined with lighter layers than the gathering and layering sample which was deemed too heavy? Could hand embroidery be applied as a fixative to secure implanted yarns? The knowledge and insights gained through the reflective practice process were valuable additions to the research findings thus far.

The researcher evaluated that there had been potential success with embellishment components that have natural markings and the concept of naturally grown fibres, in

terms of the bayong and snake agate beads and the sinamay fibres. It was felt that the theme of connection to nature could be furthered beyond material choice and embellishment placement. One of the concepts which had not really been addressed included fashion embellishment as souvenir documentation and recording of nature, which had been an appealing value in the historical context of the research. The researcher therefore pondered whether this could be genuinely achieved in contemporary fashion in order to retain an element of rarity and uniqueness. This partly linked back to the summary from chapter 2 which inferred that fewer unknown animal materials were applied in contemporary embellishment compared to the latter 19h and early 20th century.

5 ALTERNATIVE EMBELLISHMENT DEVELOPMENT AND OUTPUTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main research objective focused on in this chapter was to continue to discover which materials and processes may offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials and to share the research through exhibitions and a workshop. Informed by the materials and sampling techniques from chapter 4, the researcher set out two projects with the aim of developing textile embellishments that explored alternative ways of implanting yarns and that connected more deeply to nature. Furthermore, samples were developed with the view that they could be exhibited as artefacts as a means of knowledge sharing, which required a higher level of finishing than the previous project.

The first section of this chapter is the second practice project. This project documents the development of an embroidered wig making technique as a response to the issue of implanting fibres securely onto a base fabric. In addition, a residency with art immersion programme Labverde in the Amazon Rainforest provided an inspirational opportunity and direct access to an exotic part of the natural world and its increasingly rare flora and fauna. It offered a chance to heighten existing practice though deeper connection to nature, one of the key concepts taken from the design brief. The project culminated in the creation of three textile artefacts which were publicly exhibited as part of 'The Presence of Boundless Potentiality' exhibition at the Onca Gallery, Brighton; 8 – 10 March 2018.

The second section of this chapter is the third practice project. This project was about developing a technique which the researcher coined 'threading rubber', which was about finding a simpler way of attaching complex or delicate fibres such as glass yarn to a base fabric. After sampling different types of textile embellishment formations, an embellished garment artefact was developed and exhibited as part of the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum; 21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019.

In a similar manner to the first practice project, the development of textile embellishment samples was guided by and evaluated against the five concepts from the design brief (chapter 4). Furthermore, the researcher continued to use materials sourced in the previous chapter, with the addition of a small range of materials which are documented

at the beginning of this chapter. This practice developed over the second and third projects was less about trialling specific textile embellishment techniques in combination with different materials, rather it was more about the experimental discovery of novel embellishment that required specific combinations of techniques and materials. The results of each project are summarised conceptually at the end of each project.

The final part of the chapter illustrates a workshop with MA Fashion Futures students from London College of Fashion where the researcher was the creator and facilitator of a workshop entitled 'Future Embellishment'. A range of picture cards depicting fashion items containing fur or exotic animal materials including case study items, additional museum objects and contemporary fashion products were used in the workshop. This was in order to initiate discussion about the design appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, the students were asked to develop future embellishments within the workshop informed by their reactions to the picture cards.

5.2 ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SOURCING

Additional materials sourced for applications in the latter two practice projects included wild rubber and thick basket weave banana fabric which were sourced from co-operatives, positioned as being additionally valuable in terms of their provenance and story. Wild rubber particularly encompasses elements of connection and care for nature through its origin being rubber trees growing wild in the Amazon Rainforest which are tapped by local communities. Its handle offered similar properties to leather, whilst also being very springy and malleable. It was discovered after searching for sustainable rubber material, after the researcher first trialled rubber bands in textile embellishment. The thick banana weave fabric offered an alternative to wool tweed, from which the researcher unpicked the yarns and applied them individually within embellishment. In addition, the researcher procured organic cotton velvet from Gierlings Velpor, a material and company mentioned in the previous chapter when trying to develop a longer pile fabric. The velvet was initially intended to be used as a base fabric for embellishment since it had a very soft handle.

The following textiles were therefore sourced for sampling purposes because they had the potential to fulfil certain values from the design brief:

Textile / Vendor or supplier	Potential values
Wild rubber / **Wild Rubber (Co-operative), Flavia Amadeu**	Connection to nature Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique
Organic cotton velvet / **Gierlings Velpor SA**	Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship
Thick basket weave banana / **Co-operative via Offset Warehouse Ltd**	Textural quality Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique

Table 5-1 Additional textiles sourced for practice

Additional materials used spontaneously and sparingly in the second practice project also included; wax, magnets, latex and acrylic paint.

5.3 PRACTICE: DEVELOPING TEXTILE ARTEFACTS

5.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The second practice project was informed by prior results of the earlier practice project; sampling materials and techniques. The main aim was to discover ways of implanting yarns, since the techniques of tufting and weaving floats had been limited in their ability to create a textile that had long and tactile stands of yarn akin to fur or feather work. As a starting point, the project applied the initial appeal of the previous sample that encompassed weaving long glass yarn floats (figure 4-13) and experimented with ways in which glass yarn could be attached more securely to a base fabric.

The project of developing textile artefacts is in two parts – it firstly explored adapted wig making with embroidery, a technique developed by the researcher through trial and error of embellishment sampling, and secondly developed further embellishment techniques using a similar process, heightened by a residency experience in the Amazon Rainforest. The researcher found that handmade textile embellishment techniques helped inform spontaneous responses to material manipulation and tactile qualities of textile embellishment.

The researcher had found appeal in the initial beadwork samples which had an organic feel through applying beads that had natural markings, and were handmade and therefore slightly irregular (figures 4-20 and 4-21). This was particularly felt in figure 4-21 due to the layer of gathered ahimsa silk with snake agate beads placed behind and on top of the silk, and in figure 4-22 where gathers and pleats animated the mix of both PCW and recycled beads. The feeling of intrigue through depth and layering had also been explored in the hand gathered sample using sinamay (figure 4-25).

The residency with Labverde (an art immersion programme) in the Amazon Rainforest was enabled through an Art for the Environment award, awarded to the researcher in 2017. The residency offered the opportunity to approach inspiring exotic life in the Amazon Rainforest first-hand and respond through the lens of embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. The residency lasted 10 days and was used as a research gathering process to inform forthcoming textile embellishment samples. The

samples created from the residency were designed with the intention of interaction. This was not only in order to record the qualities of movement and the tactile effect of exotic animal species, but was also used as a method of engaging the public with the work. Textile artefacts, which each represented a different insect from the Amazon Rainforest through embellishment, were displayed openly at the Onca Gallery in Brighton, as part of an exhibition which showcased other works inspired by the Amazon Rainforest. The researcher planned to us this exhibition opportunity to infer public interest in the work, specifically how people engaged with each of the textile embellishment samples, and through interaction, initiate connection to exotic natural life in the forest.

Concepts from the design brief were continuously referred to throughout the development of practice samples, with the aim being to make improvements on the initial sampling from the first project. In total, six samples were created altogether, three of which were more finished artefacts.

5.3.2 ADAPTED WIG MAKING WITH EMBROIDERY TECHNIQUE

The researcher adopted a wig making technique to implant yarn into base fabric, an idea which came to the researcher after brainstorming different types of material implantation. The process specifically focused on glass yarn, since it had proven to offer the most alluring potential thus far. Furthermore, focusing on glass yarn - a lesser used material within contemporary textiles - opened up to discovering a greater range of new textiles embellishment techniques. It was found that bending and applying pressure to the yarn (i.e. knotting it) resulted in breakage (figure 5-1). Therefore, wig making techniques, which attached strands using a series of loops, allowed the yarn to be used to its best advantage.

The exact technique of the wig making process when applied to a textile base is documented in four stages (figure 5-2): It first consisted of hand sewing yarn into the right side of the fabric (1) and drawing the needle back through the wrong side of the fabric at a space roughly 3mm apart diagonally top right (2). The next stage was looping the needle and yarn back underneath the originally implanted yarn and reinserting it into the right side of the fabric around 6mm symmetrically away from where it had just emerged (3). Then, inserting it back through the wrong side of the fabric roughly 3mm diagonally bottom right (4). Two long yarns were then left on the right side of the fabric which were be pulled to make the join tighter. This adaptation of a wig making technique created by the researcher (which usually uses net as base fabric), had not been documented before in textile embellishment. The process follows the numbering on the images (figure 5-2) for full clarity.

Implanting individual skeins of glass yarn using a handmade process such as wig making which is akin to hand embroidery resulted in embellishment in specific areas of a base fabric, rather than creating an entire textile. Furthermore, directly implanting fibres into a base fabric mitigated any additional weight that would have been formed if attaching sections of pile fabric as additive embellishment. In addition, this technique offered more control over the length of yarn. Thereby, offering more control to the designer and maker to determine location, length of fibre and density of embellishment. The researcher experimented with applying the glass in curved rows to form a feather-like motif (figure

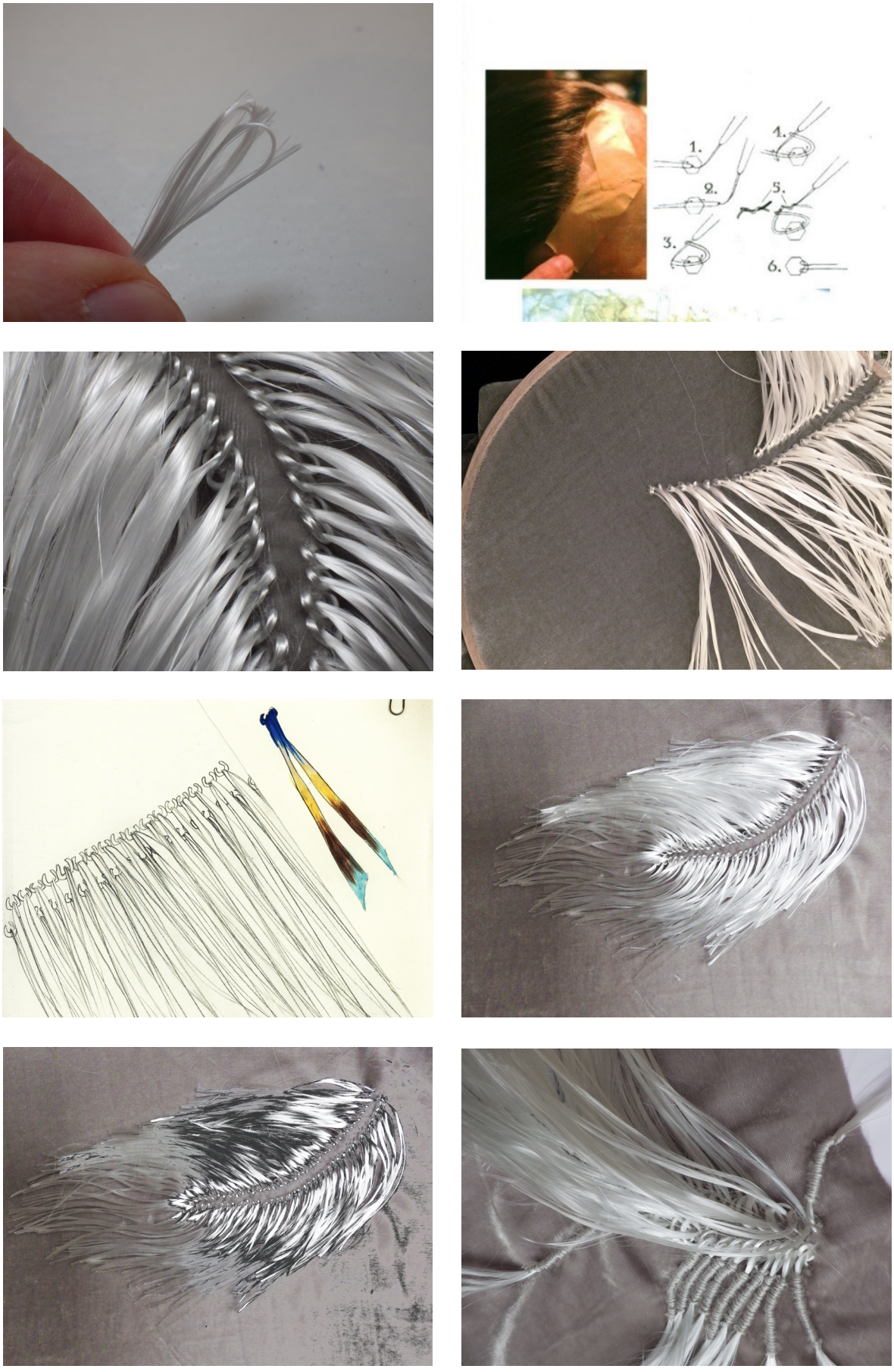


Figure 5-1 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with wig making and embroidery using glass yarn, waste silk velvet and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-2 Step by step process of technique inspired by wig making using glass yarn, waste silk velvet and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-3 Hand sewn wig making and embroidery technique, sample using glass yarn, waste silk velvet and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

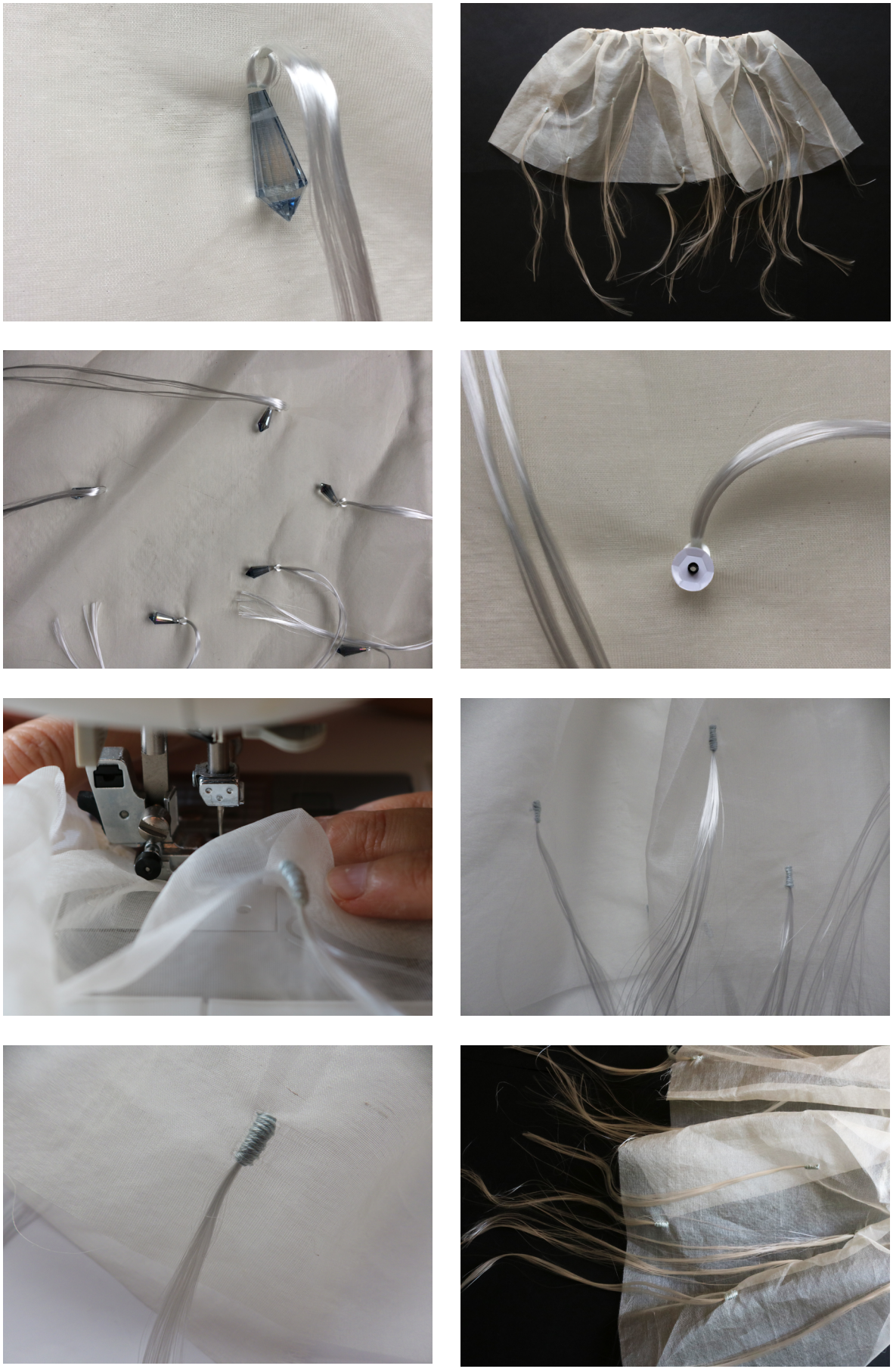


Figure 5-4 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with isolated wig making and embroidery using glass yarn, waste materials, ahimsa silk and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-5 Gathered, hand sewn wig making and isolated embroidery technique, sample using glass fibre, ahimsa silk and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-6 Process of hand sewn wig making and isolated embroidery technique using glass fibre, ahimsa silk and cotton embroidery thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

5-3), hand sewn using an embroidery hoop onto PCW silk velvet – which had been selected for its softness and light handle. The developing sample was photographed and digitally rendered with black accents to add contrast (bottom left of figure 5-1).

However, there were issues with the motif feather shape only staying in place when the textile was flat. This was because, unlike the spun glass used in the hair adornment (figure 3-10) (MOL: 90.261/18), glass yarn filaments are thinner and did not stand up, resulting in the motif of the feather being lost upon movement. The motif was initially further developed using embroidery to attach the glass to the silk velvet along the length of the yarn (figure 5-3). However, the researcher felt that this added too much weight to the design and stopped the glass from feeling lightweight. This was partly due to the density of the embroidery.

The next iteration applied a similar technique but this time in isolated accents, rather than with the aim of a motif. Glass yarn was attached to an ahimsa silk organza base using the same wig making technique, which the researcher then embroidered at the join in order to help secure it in place, rather than along the length of the filament as in the previous sample (figure 5-3). In addition, to achieve more volume and a feeling of being lightweight, the gathering and layering technique from the first project (chapter 4) was adopted in order to make the base material feel lighter and more voluminous (figure 5-4). The sample was further prospectively developed by placing beads - including PCW sequins and glass beads - to see if they could offer any additional appeal (figure 5-4). Furthermore, it was to determine whether beadwork could be used as a decorative technique to further secure implantation of yarn, in the place of hand embroidery. However, the researcher found that embroidery was better at securing the glass yarn. The researcher then applied the adapted wig making with embroidery technique into scattered accents on a gathered ahimsa silk sample (figure 5-5). The embroidery technique to further attach the glass yarn applied a satin stitch (figure 5-6) using cotton embroidery thread.

5.3.3 CONNECTING TO NATURE

The researcher focused on recording the activity of three different insect species found in the Amazon Rainforest. These included two types of leaf hopper nymphs, one which had white fronds emerging from it (figure 5-7) and one of which is believed to be the same species discovered in 2013 by Trond Larsen[122] (figure 5-8), as well as a juvenile puss caterpillar (figure 5-9). The waxy fronds of the leaf hopper nymphs exist both as camouflage and as a defence mechanism against predators, as they break off easily when attacked allowing the nymph to escape unharmed.[123] As well as being visually interesting due to how unusual it appeared, the movement of the nymph pictured in figure 5-7 also captured the researcher's imagination since the insects jump when touched. The second leaf hopper nymph (figure 5-8) had been especially hard to document, since it was seen at night and had a fleeting iridescent glow. Understood not to be a common sighting, the researcher wished to replicate the rarity of the nymph through a concept of a rare embellishment. Finally, the caterpillar moved in an appealingly articulated way, giving movement to the hairs that emerged from its back. This was hard to capture through photography, and better captured through 3D embellishment practice. The embellishment offerings therefore not only offered alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials, but also as a more poetic way of recording life in the forest.

Figures 5-10 to 5-12 were selected by the researcher to document the environment of the residency, which took place along the Rio Negro and in the Adolpho Ducke Reserve, Brazil. The researcher reflected upon this rare experience to work surrounded by unique nature, especially since many design practices are based in cities. The range of potential points of inspiration were vast, and although the intention was to record fur bearing animals, birds and reptiles, these types of animals were not commonly seen and instead the vast array of insects proved particularly inspiring for embellishment and less widely documented.

In order to record the insect species, the researcher experimented with applying the adapted wig making technique with embroidery. Through experimenting with different ways to accurately record the different insects, further versions of the wig making with embroidery technique were thus inspired.

Figure 5-7 Leaf hopper nymph insect, Amazon Rainforest, Ecuador, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-8 (left) Leaf hopper nymph insect, Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017, (right) Leaf hopper nymph insect, Suriname, photography: Trond Larsen, 2012

Figure 5-9 Puss caterpillar, Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-10 Adolpho Ducke Reserve, Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-11 Researcher in Adolpho Ducke Reserve, Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, photography: Gui Gomes, 2017

Figure 5-12 Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-13 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with wig making and embroidery implanted with magnets using banana fibre, ahimsa silk and Tencel, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-14 Leaf hopper nymph 1 embellishment artefact, wig making and embroidery implanted with magnets using banana fibre, Tencel and waste material, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-15 Leaf hopper nymph 1 embellishment artefact in motion, wig making and embroidery implanted with magnets using banana fibre, Tencel and waste material, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

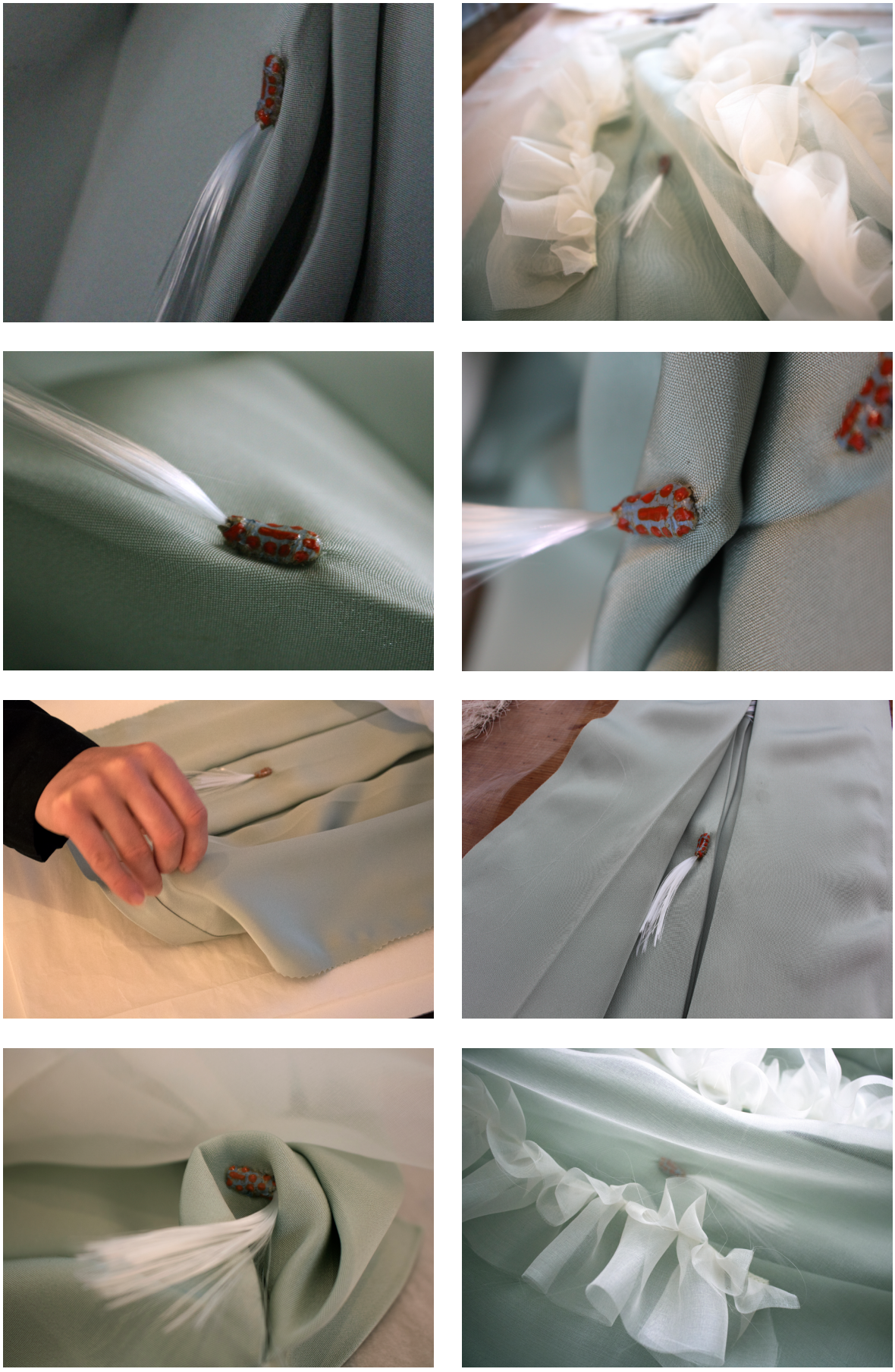


Figure 5-16 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with isolated wig making and embroidery using glass yarn, waste silk, latex, hand painting, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

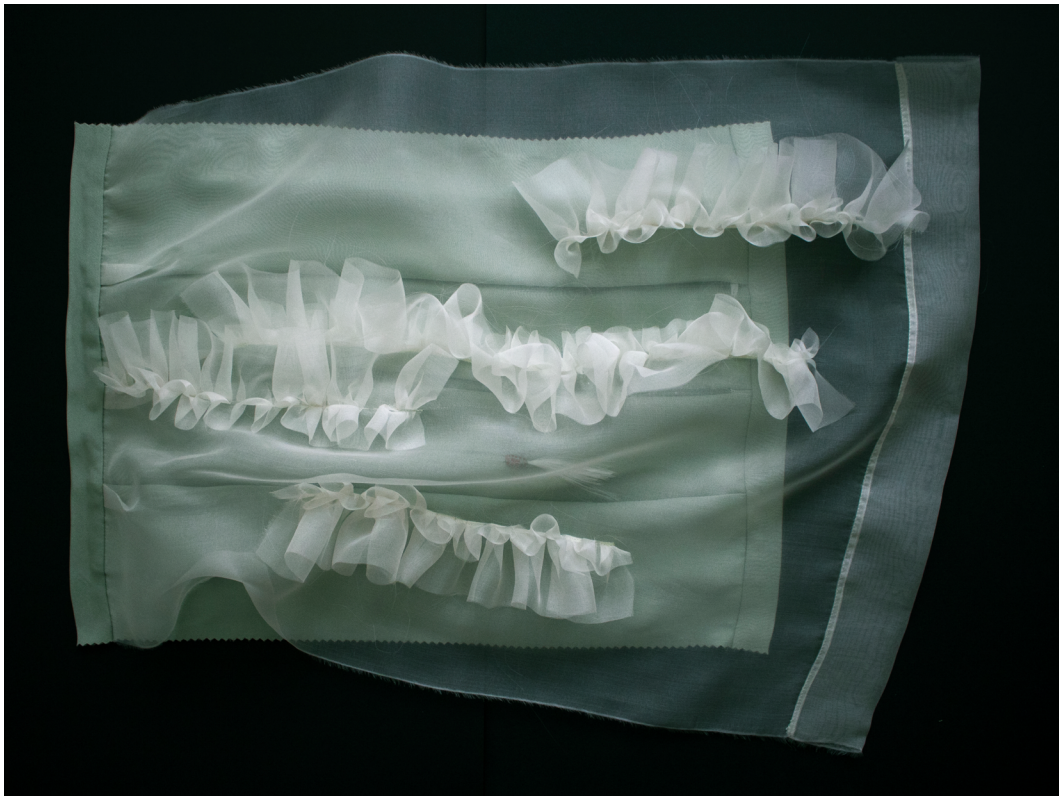


Figure 5-17 Leaf hopper nymph 2 embellishment artefact, isolated wig making and embroidery using glass yarn, waste silk, latex, hand painting, gathered fabric, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-18 Leaf hopper nymph 2 embellishment artefact in motion, isolated wig making and embroidery using glass yarn, waste silk, latex, hand painting, gathered fabric, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-19 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with pulling warp threads and rolled fabric embellishments using manila hemp, organic cotton and waste beads, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-20 Puss caterpillar embellishment artefact, pulling warp threads and rolled fabric embellishments using manila hemp, organic cotton and waste materials, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-21 Puss caterpillar embellishment artefact in motion, pulling warp threads and rolled fabric embellishments using manila hemp, organic cotton and waste materials, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

The first sample explored methods of representing the jumping movement of the first leaf hopper nymph (figure 5-7), which inspired the use of magnets embedded within embellishments. The inclusion of magnets resulted in embellishments which would appear to 'jump' to and away from each other when the textile sample was handled. The sampling depicted in figure 5-13 evolved from the initial inspiration of a leaf hopper nymph by using a combination of mixed materials; ahimsa silk, banana fibre and magnets. The textural embellishments were created by applying the unpicked yarns from the tweed-like banana fabric (referred to in Additional Material Sourcing) and first applying the yarn to a base fabric in loops of satin stitch hand embroidery. The researcher had hand sewn magnets in a layer on the base fabric, of which the hand embroidery was sewn around (illustrated in the top right-hand image in figure 5-13). Strands of banana yarn were then attached to the individual satin stitches using the earlier wig making technique (figure 5-2). Due to the banana yarn being coarser than the glass yarn and having the ability to bend without breakage, no additional hand embroidery to secure the wig making attachment was required.

For the final sample, which applied Tencel as a base rather than ahimsa silk organza due to it being more supple and thus allowing greater movement, the placement of the magnets was arranged in a scattered manner further informed by the distance that the magnets would still be attracted to each other (figure 5-14). This resulted in a sample that could effectively 'move' when handled due to the disruption of the fabric, illustrated in figure 5-15. In garment form, the researcher envisaged that the embellishments would be caused to move when the body moved, creating non-permanent folds in the fabric (early experiments with fabric folds using magnets is also illustrated in figure 5-13). The researcher finally dipped the embellishment created from banana fibre into wax to create a surface and appearance that had heightened similarity to the original nymph.

By examining existing practice which had been developed thus far, the researcher considered that the previous sample using wig making with embroidery in accents (figure 5-5 and 5-6) could potentially offer a technique whereby the second leaf hopper nymph (figure 5-8) could be represented. The glass yarn reminded the researcher of the appealingly iridescent waxy fronds that emerged from the back of the nymph. In order to represent the markings on the body of the nymph, an embellishment was created using

the same technique, adding a hand painted silicone layer to the embroidered part in order to hand paint markings inspired by the insect (figure 5-16). In total the materials used within the embellishment included; acrylic paint, silicone, spun glass and cotton embroidery thread. For the final sample, these embellishments were attached to a base of hand pleated PCW silk, to give the effect that the embellishments were hidden in pleats. A further addition to add a more 3D textural quality and effect of camouflage to the embellishments was a layer of translucent PCW silk embellished with hand gathered and machine sewn ruffles (figures 5-17 and 5-18). A limited number of small insect inspired embellishments (only three in the final artefact – figures 5-17 and 5-18) were included in the textile due to the concept of rarity, only to be discovered through movement and interaction.

The third sample inspired by time in the rainforest was created from a manila hemp yarn and organic cotton fabric blend, organic cotton velvet, PCW beads and PCW silk in order to represent the puss caterpillar (figure 5-9). The manila hemp and organic cotton material were leftover fabric which had been created during the earlier weaving experiments with Rand Gylden from the first project. The researcher pulled away organic cotton warp threads, inspired by the technique of drawn thread embroidery, in order to create a highly textural hair-like material, developments of which are illustrated in figure 5-19. Furthermore, the inspirational pattern of tree bark from the Amazon Rainforest additionally inspired the textural effect (picture top left-hand image of figure 5-19). The textile was created with the view of its use as a base material.

Caterpillar-like embellishments were applied to a layer of translucent PCW silk, on top of the manila hemp and organic cotton material, the layers of which were fixed only by machine stitching a single straight stitch along one of the sides of the fabric. This therefore created a feeling of movement and density within the sample (figures 5-20 and 5-21). Cut and rolled strips of organic cotton and waste from the manila hemp and organic cotton material were applied in order create an embellishment that imitated the ligaments of the caterpillar. The researcher at first tried to fix these embellishments using hand stitching but found that it effected the soft cylindrical shape of the embellishment. Eventually, an adhesive was used to join the embellishment rolls to the layer of silk. A

suggestion to the puss caterpillar inspiration, individual PCW beads were applied at the 'head' of each embellishment.

5.3.4 FINAL OUTCOMES AND EXHIBITION

The three final textile artefacts that were produced explored different aspects of movement or behaviour of different insects, which also served as a record for further development by designers. The researcher was approached to participate in a group show 'The Presence of Boundless Potentiality' exhibition at the Onca Gallery, Brighton; 8 – 10 March 2018 to display the textile embellishments inspired by time in the Amazon Rainforest. The researcher used this opportunity to present the textile embellishment artefacts in archive trays, inspired by natural history specimens of animals collected from the Amazon Rainforest. Furthermore, was the concept of 'opening up an archive' and allowing the public to touch and interact with work which would usually be only available to view. The interaction was necessary in order to explore the concepts related to movement and rarity, essentially communicating characteristics of each insect.

The exhibition provided a feedback tool to discover which materials and processes were found to be the most intriguing by visitors, and if the artefacts fulfilled a purpose in relating design concepts (figure 5-22). It was noted by the researcher that the artefact inspired by a juvenile puss caterpillar sparked the most interest, due to it being the most tactile and visually engaging. However, due to the curiosity instilled, was a wariness for visitors to touch the artefact due to its appeared delicacy. Other notes of observation made by the researcher was how visitors enjoyed exploring the leaf hopper nymph inspired sample in order to discover the embellishments (figure 5-18) and the feeling of play that ensued when interacting with the other leaf hopper nymph embellishment in order to create movement with the magnets (figure 5-15).

Figure 5-22 Textile artefacts in 'The Presence of Boundless Potentiality' exhibition, Onca Gallery, Brighton, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2018

5.3.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The textile embellishment samples and artefacts which could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials centred around a few combinations and design methods. Direct visual observation and the tactile feel of each sample were the main means of analysis by the researcher in order to evaluate how well they encapsulated concepts from the design brief. The successes which emerged from the second practice project are as follows:

Wig making and isolated embroidery technique (Figure 5-5)
The technique offered qualities of movement, lightweight volume and a 3D look and feel when applied in a scattered effect. Furthermore, since glass yarn was an unfamiliar material it offered the opportunity to formulate new embellishment techniques.

Leaf hopper nymph 1 embellishment artefact (Figure 5-14)
The adjusted wig making with embroidery technique worked with banana and didn't require added embroidery to stay in place. The artefact had a heightened texture, density and 3D appearance. Furthermore, the concept behind the embellishment was to record nature similarly to a souvenir. There was the feeling of movement, softness rarity and unfamiliarity.

Leaf hopper nymph 2 embellishment artefact (Figure 5-17)
Layers and colouration seemed to heighten the leaf hopper nymph embellishment which applied the same technique as figure 5-5. Furthermore, the concept behind the embellishment was to record nature similarly to a souvenir. There was a feeling of movement, softness, lightweight volume, textural quality and rarity in the materials and embellishment techniques combined.

Puss caterpillar embellishment artefact (Figure 5-20)
The sample had a feeling of depth and layering of mixed media, as well as the concept behind the embellishment recording rare nature similarly to a souvenir. Movement, softness, lightweight volume, textural quality, and a 3D layering of techniques were reflected upon as values.

Table 5-1 Practice project 2 research findings

5.4 PRACTICE: DEVELOPING GARMENT ARTEFACT

5.4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The third practice project aimed to discover additional ways of implanting yarns, inspired by the potential from the previous project embellishment techniques. In particular, the researcher wished to return to the glass yarn to determine if there were other ways of securing it to a base fabric that didn't require additional embroidery. The previous sample of the leaf hopper nymph embellishment using banana yarn (figure 5-14) had been well suited to an adapted wig making and embroidery technique, particularly since the technique favoured the yarns properties. In addition, the research looked to develop a garment artefact applying novel textile embellishment. The researcher felt that a garment could be utilised as a testing ground for how well embellishment worked within a 3D form around the body in terms of weight and movement.

In a similar manner to the previous practice project, the third project first started with the researcher brainstorming other methods of fibre implantation. It was after looking at the construction of a cushion hairbrush that the researcher considered the potential of implanting yarns into an elastic base material which could hold the yarns in place. This eventually led to a technique the researcher coined 'threading rubber.' A range of samples were developed through trial and error of embellishment sampling. Once again, handmade textile embellishment techniques helped inform spontaneous responses to material manipulation and tactile qualities of textile embellishment.

The next part of the practice project involved scaling up the embellishment in order to develop an appropriate garment form. This involved preparing garment toiles and experimenting with different garment silhouettes. Essentially, the aim was for the dress to be exhibited as part of 'Fashioned from Nature' at the Victoria & Albert Museum; 21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019. Edwina Ehrman (V&A), who curated the exhibition, wished to include contemporary fashion that not only explored a relationship with nature but had an arresting aesthetic.

During this practice development, the researcher maintained reference to the concepts from the design brief in order to help guide the practice. In total, six samples were created altogether, one of which was a more finished garment artefact.

5.4.2 THREADING RUBBER TECHNIQUE

The researcher considered using a rubber base to affix glass yarn due to its stetch and subsequent ability to grasp filaments. Through exploration of possible embellishment elements, rubber bands were cut to provide strips and the yarn was hand sewn through the centre of it to create a design which would hold multiple strands of glass yarn (figure 5-23). Furthermore, the researcher was inspired by the method of sewing on single feathers as embellishment, as Miller documents in 'Creating Couture Embellishment' where a hand sewn stitch is applied through the centre of a feather shaft in order to fix it into place.[121] The rubber strip was reminiscent of the feather barb, with glass yarn as the barbules. This embellishment form also enabled movement and volume to be created due to the flexibility of the rubber.

The sample applied cut and threaded skeins of glass yarn through a strip of rubber (figure 5-24), a textile embellishment technique created by the researcher which had not been documented before. The specific details for creating the embellishment involved first inserting a thin hand sewing needle through rubber in order to make a puncture, and subsequently threading glass yarn onto a larger embroidery needle, which is inserted into the small puncture. Pulling the glass through the rubber halfway leaves two ends of glass yarn to fall either side of the rubber. This can be repeated to form many rows of 'threaded rubber' (figures 5-23 to 5-28).

A range of adjustments were made to the initial sample, including cutting the glass to a shorter length, as well as cutting the rubber to a shorter length (figure 5-23). It was found that shorter lengths of glass yarn echoed earlier trials weaving shorter glass floats in the previous chapter (figure 4-12) since it had a slightly 'spiky' feel. When cut at a certain length, the glass has flexibility and bends in a pleasing manner, but cut shorter it is straight which is not so pleasing in terms of the aesthetic or haptic interaction. Informed by earlier trials where sinamay fibre had a pleasing tapered tip (figure 4-25), the ends of the glass were cut diagonally which made them feel much softer and more organic.

Another trial was created with added black colouration in the centre of glass yarn and over the rubber, in order to give the embellishment an added depth and interest (figure 5-25). This was partly inspired by an earlier computer rendered version of a feather motif

made from glass yarn, in which colouration appeared to add another dimension (the bottom left hand image in figure 5-1). The researcher also applied this particular technique of threading yarn through rubber using ahimsa silk yarn. However, this much softer and more flexible yarn was deemed too soft due to its lack of rigidity and was therefore unsuccessful in terms of providing a pleasing shape and sense of volume (see the bottom left hand image in figure 5-23).

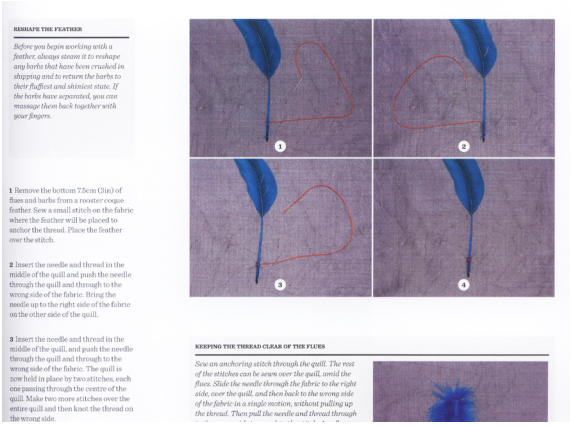
With the view of scaling up the initial embellishment samples, wild rubber was sourced as an alternative to using rubber bands. This was partly because the rubber from the bands became dry and less elastic, but also the researcher wished to source material with a known provenance. Wild rubber, which is sourced from the Amazon Rainforest is discussed in the earlier section 'Additional Material Sourcing.'

Strips of rubber were cut and attached in a net or matrix-style design (figure 5-26). In addition, a sheet of wild rubber material was hand cut in a webbed, matrix design in order for it to act as a base layer for attaching a larger amount of glass, which consequently also provided a fur-like effect. There were some issues with the glass becoming knotted when individual embellishments were in close contact with one another, prompting the researcher to consider the placement of the embellishment within a garment context. The process of cutting the wild rubber to make it lighter and encourage movement was inspired by the Airgallon[87] technique used to make fur more lightweight through cutting into the skin (a diagram of which is featured as part of sketchbook imagery in figure 5-26).

The next iteration was a larger textile embellishment sample using glass yarn threaded onto each strip of a cut wild rubber panel (figure 5-27 and 5-28). This sample was subsequently backed into Tencel, attached using hand embroidery. The researcher found that in order to create a certain type of lightness within a garment, individual decorations rather than those embedded in a matrix was more appealing. This echoed findings from the previous practice project where isolated wig making with embroidery embellishments worked to better effect than a motif design due to the weight. However, the sample had an effective level of density, intrigue and tactile appeal.

Consequently, the researcher developed a garment through the toiling process in order to create an appropriate canvas for individual embellishments (figure 5-29). The garment design was based upon a silhouette that would enable the embellishments to move through the skirt whilst walking, showing them off to the best visual effect. The dress was created from layers of ahimsa silk organza, in which the translucency added an effect of layering and heightened lightness and movement to show off the embellishment. The entire dress was designed and constructed by the researcher, using a combination of hand-machining and hand sewing.

The researcher applied the embellishment after the garment was constructed, given that they were delicate in nature. This involved placing cut wild rubber strips on the wrong side of the base fabric, pulling the glass through to the right side and fixing it through hand stitch (bottom right hand image of figure 5-29). This gave the central piece of the embellishment - which was the hand cut strip of wild rubber - a subtler affect against the base fabric and gave the illusion that the embellishment had grown from the garment form. In total the dress featured 40 glass feather elements, each hand attached and hand dyed, taking around 100 hours to complete the embellishment element alone from start to finish (figures 5-30 to 5-32).



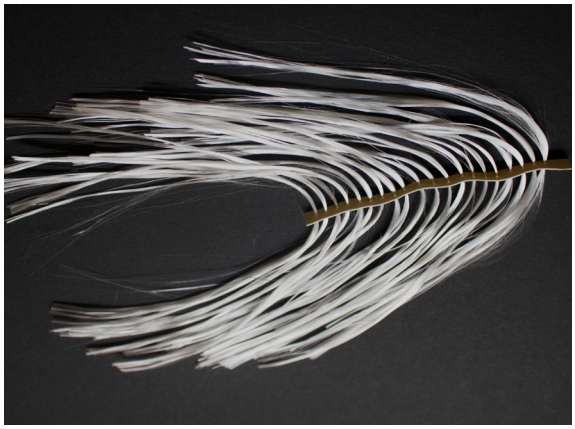
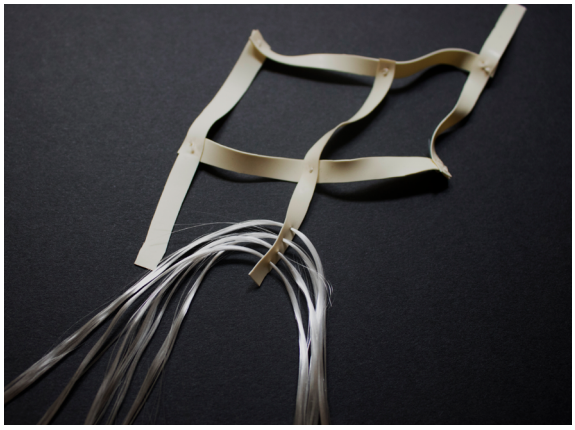
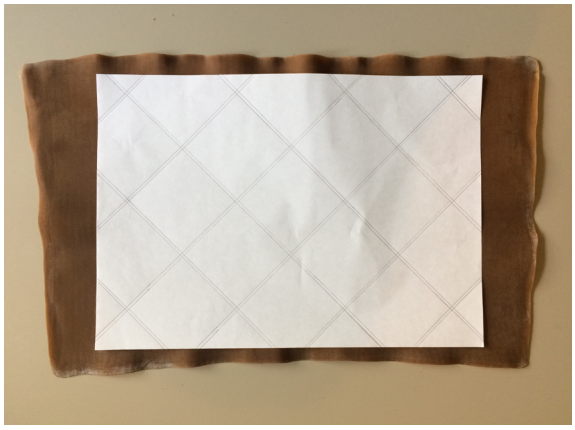


Figure 5-23 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with threading rubber using glass yarn, wild rubber and ahimsa silk thread, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-24 Hand threading rubber using glass yarn and hand cut wild rubber sample, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-25 Hand coloured and threading rubber using glass yarn and hand cut wild rubber sample, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

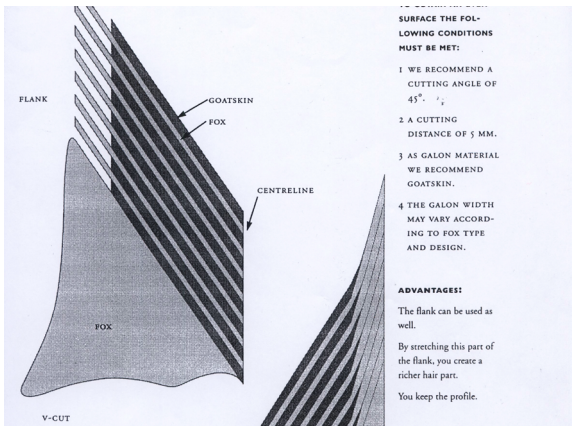


Figure 5-26 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments with cutting and threading rubber using glass yarn, latex and wild rubber, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-27 Detail of cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn sample, Tencel base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-28 Cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn sample, Tencel base, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

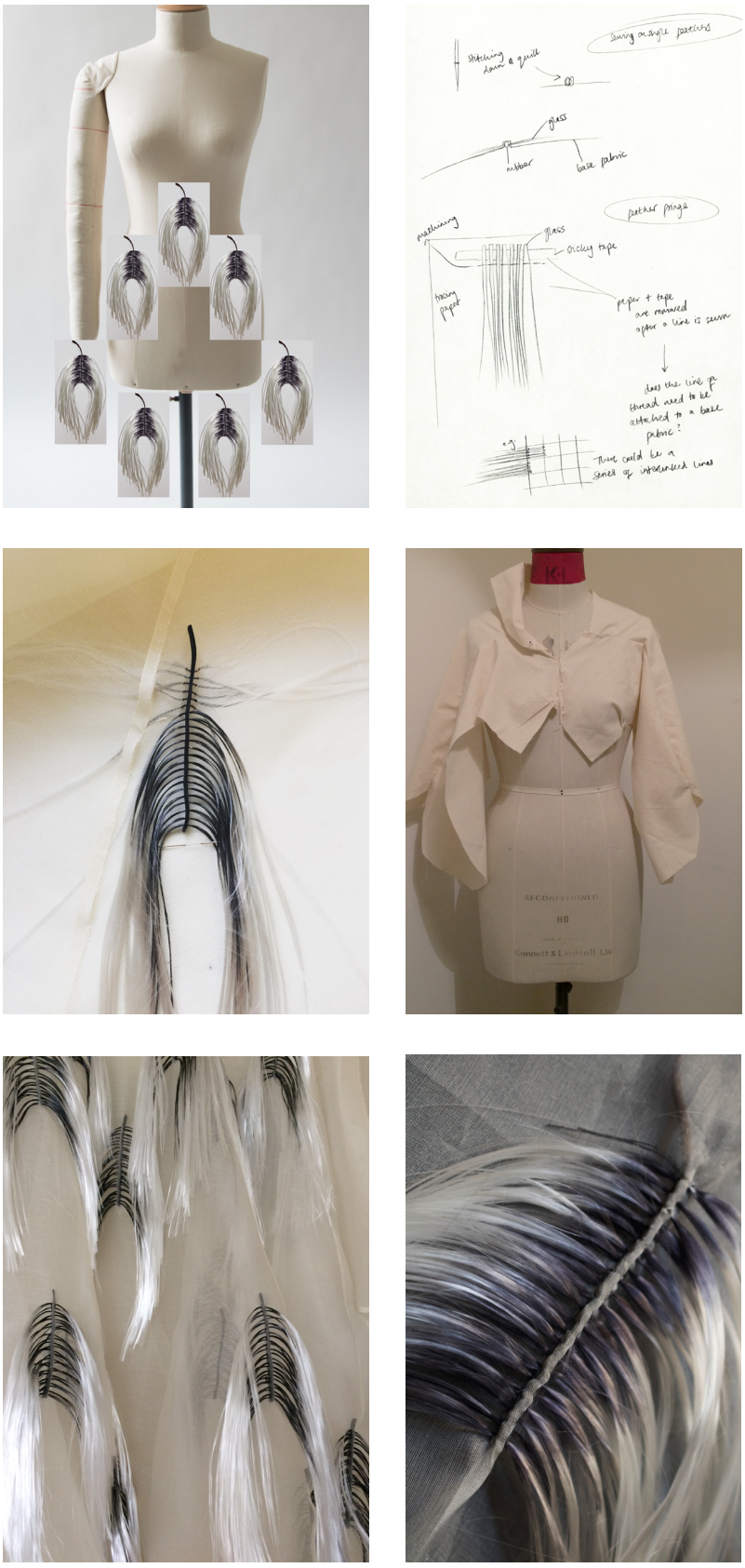


Figure 5-29 Images from sketchbook and design development: Experiments developing a dress embellished with cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn and ahimsa silk, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2018

Figure 5-30 Front of dress artefact embellished with cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn, ahimsa silk base, photography: Oliver Levers, 2018

Figure 5-31 Back of dress artefact embellished with cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn, ahimsa silk base, photography: Oliver Levers, 2018

Figure 5-32 Detail of front of dress artefact embellished with cut and threaded wild rubber using glass yarn, ahimsa silk base, photography: Oliver Levers, 2018

5.4.3 FINAL OUTCOME AND EXHIBITION

The researcher was invited to display the garment artefact in the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum; 21 April 2018 – 27 January 2019 (figures 5-33 and 5-34). The success of the exhibition, displayed at the Natural History Museum of Denmark (figure 5-35) as part of a world tour at time of writing, is the way in which it engages both designers and the public, and takes an unbiased approach to the issues surrounding the use of fur and exotic animal materials.

Selected for the aesthetic quality of the work, and innovation in using unusual materials and embellishment techniques, the dress was exhibited in the 21st Century Designers section of the exhibition. The intention of the dress was to be a one-off piece, essentially an artefact that had cultural interest due to the exploratory and conceptual context in which it had been developed. Given the scale of the exhibition, the researcher used the opportunity to collect feedback on the garment. Observation from listening to members of the public observing the researcher's dress was the frequent first impression that it was decorated with real feathers until looking closely; in particular it was compared to gannet feathers. In addition, were queries about how the embellishments were made and attached, in particular as the hand-sewing used to attach the rubber to the ahimsa silk was not obviously seen.

The dress as artefact in the exhibition space was deemed successful in terms of a platform for interaction between researcher and public, albeit it on a non-personal level. This method of engagement, where the people did not know the identity of the researcher, enabled the researcher to be anonymously present as another member of the public while discussions were being made. The feedback was therefore deemed more honest and organic in its nature. It enabled an interaction that could potentially inform the next iteration of embellishment.

Figure 5-33 Garment artefact in 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, photography: Oliver Levers, 2018

Figure 5-34 Garment artefact in 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, image courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 2018

Figure 5-35 Garment artefact in 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition, Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, photography: Nanna Marie Lund, 2018

5.4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The textile embellishment samples and artefact which could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials applied specific material combinations and design methods. Visual observation and the tactile appeal were the main means of analysis by the researcher in order to evaluate how well textile embellishment encapsulated concepts from the design brief. The successes which emerged from the third practice project are as follows:

Threading wild rubber technique using glass yarn and a Tencel base (Figure 5-28)
The technique offered qualities of movement and a 3D texture and feel, especially as the material choices of rubber and glass had such contrasting properties. Furthermore, since glass yarn was an unfamiliar material it had offered the opportunity to formulate new embellishment techniques.
Dress artefact embellished with threaded wild rubber and glass yarn (Figure 5-30)
The adjusted threaded rubber technique to create individual embellishments within a dress offered a feeling of movement, lightness and softness. Overall, was the heightened craftsmanship considering the commitment to developing a novel method of embellishment and creating the artefact by hand. It had an eye-catching appeal, furthered by the accents of black against the otherwise white ensemble.

Table 5-2 Practice project 3 research findings

The technique of threading rubber was effective with glass yarn due to its material qualities. Other methods of glass yarn implantation did not apply the slight rigidity of the yarn to its greatest effect. Ahimsa silk yarn applied in the threading technique was not as effective due to its subtleness, therefore other similar textile yarn types were not trialled. The researcher considered applying sinamay within this technique but the fibres are not uniform filaments and would have resulted in each side of the embellishment being uneven which the researcher deemed unappealing in this specific iteration.

5.5 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

5.5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of engaging with student participants through a workshop was to encourage students to reflect, through practice, the notion of future embellishment and to spark conversation about the appeals of animal material decoration. In addition, the exercise proved useful in uncovering some of the appeals of animal material decoration to compare to existing research findings. The practical workshop format which involved using the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials as inspiration points to develop alternative embellishment was inspired by the objectives applied in this research. Applying a fashion thinking approach as developed by Dieffenbacher, the decision making process of student designers was documented from concept to design.[42] In comparison to sharing research outputs through exhibitions, the workshop provided an opportunity to reflect upon the themes and concepts of the research in a more in depth and hands-on manner through discourse. The full workshop brief created by the researcher and delivered to the students is contained in appendix 6.

The 13 student participants were from MA Fashion Futures, London College of Fashion. In a similar manner to the previous industry workshop, each student was given a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. In consultation with the Course Director Alex McIntosh, an appropriate workshop format was designed by the researcher that would fulfil the research objectives, as well as satisfy existing focus within the MA course structure. This course was selected due to its association with progressive and experimental fashion practices. Although the participants had varied opinions on the use of fur and exotic animal materials - and not all of the participants had a design background - the focus of the course was future fashion concepts. The researcher also took into consideration the shift of approach from younger generations feelings towards fur, as referenced in both chapter 1 and chapter 3, and was interested to discover their attitudes towards future forms of embellishment.

The first stage of the workshop was the formation of 4 groups consisting of 3 or 4 students due to the skill set of the group being so diverse. This was achieved by first providing each student a picture card of an artefact which was either used in the industry

workshop or from the V&A archive. The picture cards were made by the researcher especially for the workshop, and consisted of: The hummingbird flower spray (figure 2-7) (V&A: AP.1:2-1894), faux ivory hairpiece (figure 2-9) (V&A: T.282-1989), snakeskin slippers (figure 3-1) (V&A:AP.6&A-1868), the swansdown cape (figure 3-4 and figure 3-5) (V&A: T.367-1982) and the mantle made from velvet and feather (figure 3-7) (V&A:T.653-1996). Additional imagery was also included, which is documented in appendix 6: The hummingbird flower spray (figure A-1) (V&A: AP.1:2-1894), snakeskin slippers (figure A-2) (V&A:AP.6&A-1868), swansdown cape (figure A-3) (V&A: T.367-1982), the mantle made from velvet and feather (figure A-4 and figure A-5) (V&A:T.653-1996) and a fur coat by industry workshop participant Kate (figure A-6).

The researcher was able to include the snakeskin slippers on display in the galleries, which were referenced as a case study object in chapter 3 since the objects would be given out as picture cards. Other items included a faux ivory hair piece from (figure 2-9) (V&A: T.282-1989), as a 'red herring' to see how the students would react to the item, and if they read it as being animal derived or not.

The students were then asked to pick words to describe the image and find and stay with others using the same descriptive words - consequently the creation of small groups was formed. Once in groups, the students were able to share their image and discuss the common thread between the images. The groups then applied these descriptive words they had in common as a self-generated design brief. They were then asked to visualize or physically create a sample of a new embellishment in their groups for 1 hour, which could be inspired by the archive items but not be a copy (figure 5-36). The students could select from a range of materials, which the researcher provided to them. The focus of the workshop was practical, with the main output being textile embellishment samples designed and created by the students.

The researcher spent some time prior to the workshop collecting a broad range of materials, some of which were materials that had been sourced for the researchers own practice. Most of the materials were obtained through donations from fashion companies; some of which were participants in the previous interviews and workshop. The range of materials are listed in appendix 6. The researcher was interested to discover

which materials and techniques the participants applied to create embellishment, such as whether they chose animal materials or non-animal materials, and if they chose to manipulate their chosen material or not, and if so, how. As a reflection of the industry workshop, the researcher purposely did not reveal the composition of the materials initially, as the wish was for students to select based on aesthetic appeal and touch.

After presenting their project outcomes, the student groups discussed how they had visualized their themes and why it was embodied through certain materials and techniques to create textile embellishment samples. The researcher subsequently revealed details regarding the archive images; including composition, date, context, use and other historical facts known about the items, using information provided by Edwina Ehrman (V&A). The researcher additionally revealed the composition of the range of materials provided. The workshop ended in a group discussion about how this new information had changed their perceptions of the embellishments they had created, including the appeals of fur and exotic animal materials and the future of fur and exotic animal material embellishment.

5.5.2 STUDENT WORKSHOP

The researcher noted how none of the participants used any of the sewing machines available, but instead created embellishments purely by hand. This could have been because the students enjoyed having the opportunity to work with their hands, there was a limited amount of time to set up machines, or because the subject matter was so tactile. It was also noted how there was a dislike for fur as a raw material when one can tell it comes from an animal (for example if it was undyed or still had limbs attached). However, once a product is created and the animal material has been manipulated to have less recognisable origins it has greater appeal, a point that linked back to the earlier concept of controlled connection to nature, which became part of the design brief. Furthermore, it was found that sympathy for fur-bearing animals was much greater than that for reptiles or birds, potentially due to it having more contemporary press coverage or because feathers and reptile skins (which are often consciously or subconsciously associated with leather) are seen as a bi-product.

Whilst discussing the appeal of fur and exotic animal material use within the group, Alice explained how she had previously made a coat for herself, deciding to add a faux fur hood, adding “there wasn’t anything that special about it (the coat) but then it became dramatic (when adding faux fur).” She explained that this was due to the texture and the lustrousness of the material, which was compared to real fur. Mia explained that in her opinion real fur was conspicuous consumption, associating its use with status, “the dramatic appearance, that idea that you can really show your status by something expensive.” The group further discussed the appeal fur being associated with a garment which had been passed down through generations, which implied a certain nostalgia as well as quality. Although the group held broad and diverse opinions about the use of fur and exotic animal materials, it was agreed that fur in particular was particularly appealing due to its softness. A full write up of the workshop is documented in appendix 7.

Once the composition and techniques of the archive items and materials supplied were revealed by the researcher, a student who at first didn’t like the hair piece because she believed it to be ivory, still did not find the piece appealing even when she found out that it was made of a synthetic material, as she associated it too much with an animal material.

There was a general consensus of surprise when the researcher explained that a fur trim presented for use was in fact rabbit fur, as it was difficult to determine the material composition when presented in trim form. The students had otherwise looked at the backs of fabrics to see if they were knitted (as is the case for faux fur), which determined whether they were therefore an animal material or not. One of the student groups used python skin thinking it was a faux material. This was because they could not tell it was an animal material since it had undergone such a level of chemical treatment and manipulation. It was therefore asserted that the python skins had been selected specifically due to their aesthetic appeal.

Once the students formed themselves into groups based on their similar ways of describing archive objects, their three main descriptive words were recorded by the researcher, as documented in table 5-3.

Group	Object	Descriptive words for objects
Group 1	Swansdown cape (Figures 3-4 and 3-5) (V&A: T.367-1982) Velvet and feather mantle (Figure 3-7) (V&A: T.653-1996)	Fluffy Ugly Soft
Group 2	Swansdown cape (Figure A-3) (V&A: T.367-1982) Snakeskin slippers (Figures 3-1 and A-2) (V&A: AP.6&A-1868)	3D Texture Repeat
Group 3	Hummingbird flower spray (Figures 2-7 and A-1) (V&A: AP.1:2-1894) Faux ivory hairpiece (Figure 2-9) (V&A: T.282-1989)	Delicate Intricate craft Fetishizing nature
Group 4	Intarsia fur coat (Figure A-6) Velvet and feather mantle (Figures A-4 and A-5) (V&A: T.653-1996) Faux ivory hairpiece (Figure 2-9) (V&A: T.282-1989)	Lively Luxury (desirable) Intriguing

Table 5-3 Image grouping in the student workshop

It was discussed that during the making element of the workshop there was little guilt involved in choosing materials based on their aesthetic and tactile qualities due to them being scrap materials. Bright colours were favoured over natural undyed animal materials which were not picked by any participant. The students also related the contemporary coat to current fashion as it had dyed blue detailing, and that to them was associated with modernity. Furthermore, only one group picked a material marketed as sustainable based on its appearance and feel (black organic cotton with elastic).

Figure 5-36 Photographs from the student workshop, including participants creating embellishment samples, London College of Fashion Mare Street, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

5.5.3 STUDENT PROJECT OUTPUTS

The following future embellishment project outputs were presented by each of the four groups:

Group 1 **(Figure 5-37)**

Project brief	Fluffy, ugly, soft
Embellishment created	Decorative pocket
Materials used	Acrylic and polyester blend fur Python print on nylon Plastic crystal beads Plastic iridescent sequins
Techniques used	Hand-sewing Gluing Toiling on the body

Table 5-4 Group 1 project output

Group 1 decided to make something which was both ugly and attractive, by selecting garish colour combinations and materials. This was inspired by their reaction to the imagery that they were given of the swansdown cape and velvet and feather mantle (see table 5-3), which they found both to be ugly and soft due to the apparent use of fur and the heightened way in which the materials had been manipulated. Their output was a sample for an embellished pocket which they imagined would be part of a garment design. They therefore experimented with toiling directly onto the body and pinning the pocket into place (an image of which is at the top right-hand corner of figure 5-36).

Described as being an extra design element, they explained that they wanted their embellishment to not be made from real animal products, largely since one of the members of the group was vegan. Furthermore, they found a printed faux fur and other synthetic materials which were brightly coloured which they felt suited their brief as those materials had similarly undergone heavy treatments which removed them from

their material origins. In addition, the faux fur was selected due to it also being fluffy and soft, and the students heightened it through applying beads, sequins and a strip of snakeskin printed fabric some of which they glued directly onto the fur for speed. Overall, their aim was to create something glamorous as this is how they described their archive imagery when presenting it to the group. Originally a plain coloured ribbon was selected to embellish the faux fur but was discarded as being not glamorous enough. The researcher later reflected on the decision to create a pocket as being a design feature particularly associated with tactility, touch and interaction from the wearer, which appeared appropriate considering the aims were a soft and fluffy texture.

Group 2 **(Figure 5-38)**

Project brief	3D, texture, repeat
Embellishment created	A range of textile embellishment samples
Materials used	Stamped leather alligator Acrylic and polyester blend fur Glass white beads Black organic cotton with elastic
Techniques used	Hand cutting shapes Gluing Hand sewing

Table 5-5 Group 2 project output

The second student group created two textile embellishment samples inspired by their images of the snakeskin slippers and the swansdown cape (see table 5-3). The group had formed itself since they found the repeat pattern of both the swansdown cape design and the snakeskin slippers to be similar. They selected faux fur and beads, influenced by their reaction to the swansdown cape which they felt had a feeling of 3D texture and depth. These themes were explored by applying the beads at the base of the faux fur fabric, therefore having them partly hidden, explaining that one would therefore have to touch the sample in order to fully understand it. In addition, they were inspired by desire to

touch and interact with the archive items pictured, which they were not able to do. Their selection of faux fur over real fur was due to their feelings that faux fur would be easier to work with and because it was just as good as the real fur in terms of its softness.

The second sample was made from stamped leather alligator, cutting out the shapes of the leather scales in order to apply them individually as embellishment. It was interesting for the researcher to note the selection of faux alligator skin over the real alligator skin which was also available to use. These materials were the same ones which participant Anna brought to the interview in chapter 3 (figure 3-15). The students explained that it was their original aim to attach the hand-cut scales onto a plain leather base, but settled for an organic cotton base material as the closest alternative since the researcher hadn't provided any plain leather.

Group 3 **(Figure 5-39)**

Project brief	Delicate, intricate craft, fetishizing nature
Embellishment created	Brooch
Materials used	Purple ostrich feather trims (Mixed blend) lace Dyed python Synthetic faux fur Synthetic nude net
Techniques used	Hand sewing using an embroidery hoop Hand cutting motifs

Table 5-6 Group 3 project output

Group 3 were particular interested in the intricate design of both the hummingbird flower spray and the faux ivory hairpiece (see table 3-5). In addition, was how the hummingbird flower spray appeared to apply one natural resource (feathers) to in order to mimic another (a flower) – hence they chose the concept of fetishizing nature as part of their design brief. They initially selected a nude coloured net as a canvas for textile

embellishment, and further selected python skin, ostrich feathers, faux fur and lace because they felt that those materials had an organic feel. The three materials were cut and hand sewn into a motif on the net using an embroidery hoop. This later developed into a brooch design. They described the output as glamorizing nature, and that the work was appealingly labour intensive, intricate and delicate. In a similar manner to the other two student groups thus far, was their aversion to selecting real fur due to the perceived cruelty in how it was obtained. Furthermore, they expressed that they had not chosen any other animal materials for similar reasons, believing the ostrich feathers and python skin to be fake due to the materials being unrecognisable. On reflection whilst presenting the work they considered that the python skin could have been made from a cow hide leather. During their presentation there was some disagreement amongst the group in about whether the ostrich feathers were real or not. Lena commented that it was similar to the material used to create feather boas which couldn't be made from real feathers since those products were so cheap to buy. Feather applications were associated much more with high fashion.

Figure 5-37 Group 1 participant project output, textile sample, mixed synthetic media, student workshop, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

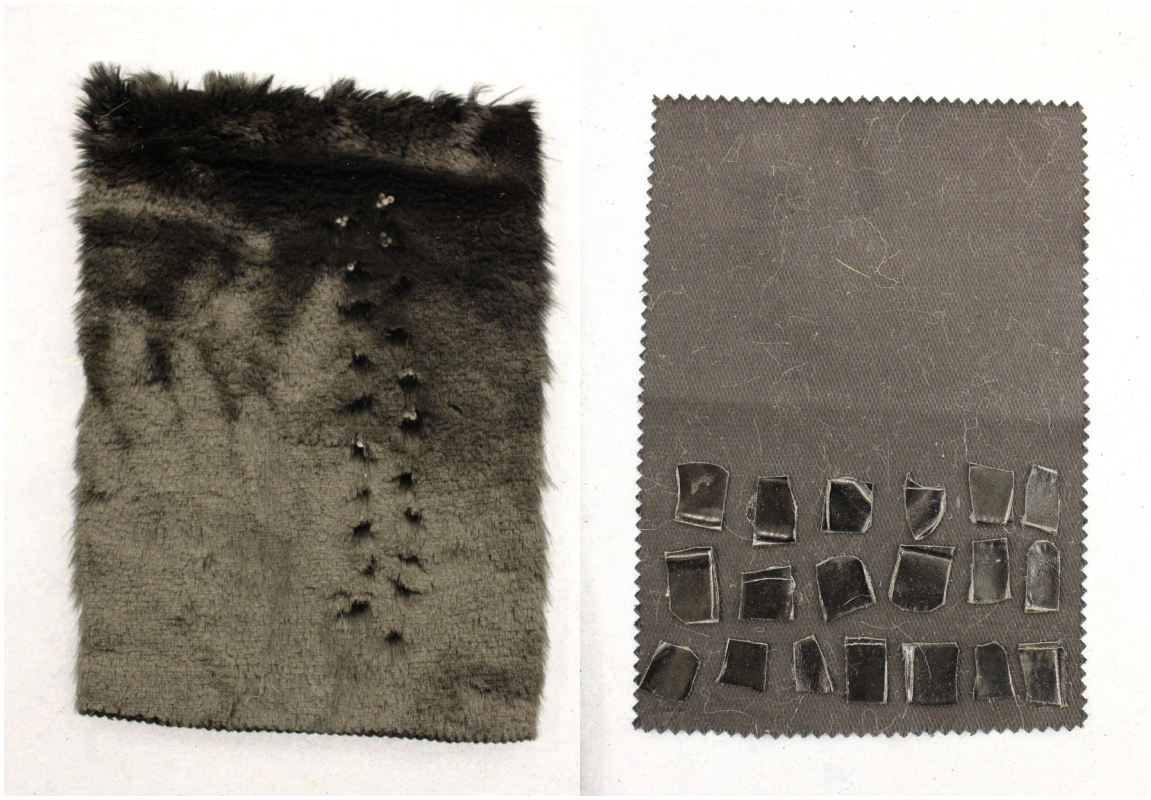


Figure 5-38 Group 2 participant project output, textile samples, (left) mixed synthetic media, (right) organic cotton and faux crocodile skin, student workshop, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-39 Group 3 participant project output, brooch, mixed synthetic media, ostrich feathers and snakeskin, student workshop, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Figure 5-40 Group 4 participant project output, earrings and a necklace, mink and goat fur, snakeskin, metal chain and semi-precious stone beads, student workshop, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2017

Group 4 **(Figure 5-40)**

Project brief	Lively, luxury (desirable), intriguing
Embellishment created	Jewellery collection
Materials used	Dyed mink pieces Goat fur Dyed python Blue dyed stone beads Metal Chain Jewellery components bought from the college shop
Techniques used	Hand cutting motifs Gluing components

Table 5-7 Group 4 project output

The fourth and final student group presented outputs which they described as being aimed at luxury, referencing Fendi in order to explain the type of work that they wished to draw comparison with. They were particularly inspired by the lively colours and intriguing details found in the images of the intarsia fur coat, velvet and feather mantle and faux ivory hairpiece, associating luxury with something which was highly desirable. When presenting a jewellery collection they had created, which encompassed four pairs of earrings and a necklace, they explained their choice to create small products which could utilise scrap materials. They had found their choice of mink and goat fur hard to hand sew, which resulted in the application of adhesive to fix the jewellery components together. They felt that their choice of furs had an extra character and uniqueness compared to some of the other fur options, which included synthetic faux fur. In addition, python skin and stone beads were also used within the embellishment design due to their contrasting material properties, which further highlighted each material. The decision to create mismatching earrings was purposeful due to it adding a certain intrigue and individuality. They described the jewellery as ‘small imaginary creatures’ which they had created, but explained that they had selected all the materials based on aesthetic and tactile qualities alone and weren’t sure what the composition of each material could be.

5.5.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The workshop explored not only the associations with animal materials and possibility for future forms of embellishment, but also broadly uncovered a range of material associations and appeals when the composition of a material is unknown. The researcher found that two out of the four participant groups chose fur or exotic animal materials (not counting leather) for their aesthetic and haptic qualities alone. In particular, since those materials felt more unique than other synthetic or plant-based materials. It was interesting to reflect upon the various themes for future embellishment, and how a mixture of both material choice and textile embellishment technique appeared equally important. The researcher was also aware that the project outputs were also partly influenced by the students having only one hour to design and construct textile embellishment samples.

In addition, the concepts and themes that emerged as motivators to apply both fur and exotic materials in embellishment through project outputs as well as discussion centred around a few main areas. Each of the concepts and themes have been organised into the following table:

Handmade
The appeal of the patient time spent creating hand work.
Associating intricacy and delicacy with craft.

Texture and colour
The texture and touch described as appealing factors with fur.
The choice to use colourful synthetic materials over natural undyed animal materials.

Status
Fur adds a dramatic appearance.
Fur and exotic animal materials show your status.
Glamour and mystique associated with fur.

Rare and unique
Fur is seen as unique, especially when compared to faux fur.
Uniqueness and intrigue associated with animal materials.

Connection to nature
Belief that the disconnect with animal origins is why fur has become so popular in contemporary fashion.
Fur reminiscent of interaction with fur-bearing pets.

Softness
The appeal of fur is its soft touch.

Table 5-8 Student workshop research findings

5.6 SUMMARY

This chapter explored two practice projects and a workshop with student participants. Within the two practice projects, the researcher concluded that there had been potential success with further textile embellishment sampling that trialled glass yarn. This was due to the specific technique for implanting glass yarn into a base fabric, which involved an adapted wig making technique with embroidery, and a technique of threading rubber. Both of these techniques formed textile embellishment iterations which had a heightened textural quality which allowed for movement and lightness. Furthermore, due to the practical problem-solving nature of implanting yarns into a base material, the value of the handmade was also highlighted.

The second section of the second project, which documented textile embellishment developments inspired by time in the Amazon Rainforest, was a method of connecting more deeply to nature. The three textile artefacts outputs, since they were documenting life in the forest, resulted in movement being a key theme. The element of movement highlighted an important aspect within embellishment of both interaction with hands and in a 3-dimensional aspect when worn on the body. The method of pulling out warp threads out of a textile woven from organic cotton and manila hemp resulted in a textile which not only had a fur-like appearance, but also had heightened flexibility and movement due to the fabric being made lighter. On reflection, this material addition complimented the caterpillar inspired embellishment (figure 5-20) to the point of which it was also a key component in the overall appeal.

The layering of material types and textile embellishment techniques appeared to be particularly engaging, which mirrored attempts by designers to mix fur and exotic animal materials with other materials in order to create a novel textile (as mentioned in chapter 2 and 3). Furthermore, the choice of recording insects within embellishment - which are no longer used a resource within contemporary fashion – had an added value in not being an attempt at imitating a material already existing. Therefore, the embellishments were intriguing because of their original and lesser known reference point.

The dress artefact with embellishments that applied the threading rubber technique was a way of testing embellishment samples (figure 5-25) on a larger scale, considering overall weight and movement of a garment. Exhibition spaces proved to be initial testing grounds for a range of more finished artefacts; including the dress and also three other textiles, since it offered an opportunity to gauge public interest in the work. In particular, since the textile artefacts were able to be handled, this offered a more tactile interaction and understanding of the embellishments.

Through a workshop that included the use of items from the V&A archive, and one contemporary item as inspiration points, student participants were able to develop their own versions of future embellishment, some of which applied fur and exotic animal materials and some which did not. It was particularly interesting for the researcher that some of the words used to describe the items were similar to the concepts which had emerged through the research design brief. This included the student's selection of the words; intricacy, softness, handmade and texture (in reference to the design brief first described at the beginning of chapter 4). Questions started to emerge regarding the future potential and methods of engaging with the research topic of embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials which are explored in the following chapter.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the relationship between the reflective practice and the research activities that informed the design brief. This includes archive research, interviews and the industry workshop. Furthermore, it takes an overview of the potential materials and processes which formed embellishment alternatives from the three practice projects in order to frame the results. Specifically, this was in order to reach the two research objectives and ultimately the research aim as first set out in chapter 1.

The first part of this chapter compares the different research stages to subsequently evaluate which methods proved successful in delivering new knowledge. Through practice, various methods of applying design values through embellishment in order to develop alternatives to animal materials were trialled. In particular, novel forms of embellishment were developed in the second and third practice projects documented in chapter 5. Specifically; implanting glass yarn through a combination of wig making and embroidery, and threading glass yarn through rubber as a fixative within embellishment. This was the first time these techniques were documented. These outcomes were created by the researcher through experimentation, trial and error, and through initially testing existing embellishment processes with a range of different materials in the first project in chapter 4. As part of compiling the results, the researcher also reflects on the key motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment which inspired the practice developments.

The final sections of this chapter review the further development and future significance of this work, which include specific textile embellishment which could be trialled and tested in a range of methods. It also positions the research method as being one which could be further applied to a range of future embellishment proposals. It reviews a small range of related work which has emerged since the research was completed, and provides an overview of additional project work which the researcher has participated in.

6.2 COMPARING RESEARCH STAGES

When compiling and comparing results, the researcher identified themes, patterns and relationships between the data gathered. In particular, looking for word and phrase repetitions, primary and secondary data comparisons, metaphors and analogues. Within this comparison across research stages, the data gathered underwent a second analysis to determine the overall framework.

Within the contextual framework set out in chapter 2, it was made apparent the importance of viewing embellishment on garments in order to understand their context, appeal and use, especially through 3-dimensionality and movement. It not only outlined the use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration in contemporary fashion between February 2014 - September 2018, but looked to the latter 19th century and early 20th century to review and compare the use of fur and exotic animal materials as decoration. Furthermore, from this historical review, a selection of potential alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials were also evaluated in order to gauge their value and if any of these materials or techniques could be applied by the researcher. In the last section of the chapter decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials were reviewed in order to determine if any held similar value and appeal to decorative fur and exotic animal materials.

The contextual framework revealed that some fur and exotic animal materials used in contemporary fashion were no longer recognizable, as they were heavily mixed with other non-animal materials, or had been heavily manipulated through textile embellishment effects. Therefore, the researcher inferred that other types of materials could potentially be used to create similar effects. Visual research implied that some of the appeals relating to designers and dressmaker's application of fur and exotic animal materials were their light and voluminous appeal which enable them to create feelings of movement and a 3D effect. Furthermore, that their smooth and soft surfaces were highly engaging. The qualities of animal materials offered an opportunity to explore a range of textile manipulation techniques to connect to nature on varying levels.

Chapter 3 offered an opportunity to further explore themes through primary research, and defined the research focus by gathering primary research to provide inspiration points for practice; to develop decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. The researcher deducted that the most appropriate methods to do this was by case study research, interviews and a workshop with members of the fashion industry associated with the decorative applications of fur and exotic animal materials. Much of this research applied archival objects both as elicitation tools and to inspire themes and concepts relating to the appeal of fur and exotic animal materials. What was gained from archival research was a sense of tactility due to the proximity when viewing the objects, which offered additional depth to previous visual research.

Engaging with industry associated with the use of fur and exotic animal materials resulted in the values of fur and exotic animal materials being informed from the perspective of participants rather than solely from the perspective of the researcher. Other research methods, for example visual research from the contextual framework, case studies, and reflective practice were comparatively from the perspective of the researcher. These engagements therefore became new findings for the researcher to reflect upon within practice, especially since the researcher is vegan. Furthermore, the researcher found value in engaging with an industry sector that is challenged and can be polarised in terms it's applications of fur and exotic animal materials.

Practically and chronologically, this chapter ran in parallel to the fourth chapter, in order to reflect upon early practice developments. This resulted in a mapping of concepts relating to the key motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials, with reflection on the initial findings from chapter 2. The researcher concluded that a connection to nature, as well as the versatility and handmade appeal of embellishment were key themes which chimed with earlier findings. In addition, what archival research offered was a tactility and depth which resulted in the themes of status, rarity and uniqueness through the handle and aesthetic of the embellishment. Furthermore, since this research referenced historical examples, the researcher reviewed these additional themes as being appealing motivators that could also be applied to contemporary fashion. Subsequent research findings from fur and exotics industry engagement additionally drew out the appealing notion of embellishment which had longevity, and a

performative quality through movement. The latter emerged especially since the industry workshop contained physical items that the participants could engage with and imagine articulated.

The researcher found within the fourth chapter that there had been potential success with glass yarn trials, as it was an unfamiliar and unique material that hung in a particularly pleasing manner in the weaving long floats trial (figure 4-13). This was part of the first project which tested a range of existing non-animal materials and embellishment techniques that, in combination, could offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. This included the exploration of five embellishment processes; tufting, weaving floats, hand embroidery, beadwork, and gathering and layering fabric. These trials led to the creation of analysis tables which reviewed the successes and failures of different textile embellishment samples. Further potential success was found through the application of sinamay in a gathered sample which offered a textural quality and feeling of movement (figure 4-25) and the application of bayong and snake agate beadwork together with a ruched layer of ahimsa silk (figure 4-21). Both sinamay, bayong beads and snake agate are natural materials which retain their connection to nature through inimitable markings, and in the case of sinamay had a tapered fibre tip reminiscent of fur.

Reflective practice, which was inspired by the themes and concepts discovered through the two previous chapters, offered an even closer interaction to the materiality of the research subject. It was found that through applying handmade processes, the researcher was able to gauge whether non-animal material embellishment samples could potentially offer an alternative. The patient time spent creating each sample, as well as considering each material sourced and technique used, offered in depth reflection. Subsequently, samples were developed and inspired in an organic process which drew upon the successes of an earlier sample.

Much of the focus of the first practice project was to develop a long pile fabric which could evoke the tactile feeling of soft and textural fur or feather work. However, tufting and weaving floats had not offered the feel or aesthetic which the researcher was striving towards, mainly due to issues securing yarns to a base material, because it appeared to be too weighty and lastly because the researcher had a hunch that other methods could

offer more control and spontaneity of embellishment application. Glass yarn was used as a material to test alternative implantation techniques. Issues with securing glass yarn to a base layer were solved via two textile embellishment techniques developed by the researcher in the following practice projects. These were an adapted wig-making with embroidery technique developed in the second practice project, and a threading rubber technique developed in the third practice project. Both of these projects are documented in chapter 5 of the research.

Within the context of developing more finished textile artefacts and a garment artefact which could be shared publicly, the second and third practice projects were informed by the materials and sampling techniques from the first practice project. In comparison to the first practice project, samples were developed with the view that they could be exhibited as artefacts as a means of knowledge sharing, which required a higher level of finishing. Combinations of materials and techniques were applied in a much more instinctual manner than that of chapter 4 which tested specific embellishment techniques systematically.

The researcher found that the design of isolated embellishments rather than a motif or matrix appeared more successful within both the context of wig-making with embroidery and threading rubber. This was due to the lightness that was achieved, in combination with layers of translucent base fabric. In terms of the concept of connection to nature and rarity, textile embellishment samples were enhanced through a residency in the Amazon Rainforest to record exotic insects. This method of research was to sensorially explore through practice unusual animal species whose qualities of movement - as well as their aesthetic – could inspire novel textile embellishment. What was gathered was an additional intrigue in hidden embellishments, applying hand painting, colour and layering to heighten the adapted wig making with embroidery technique. In addition, an alternative method of applying this same textile embellishment technique was created using banana fibre.

The dress artefact which provided a base canvas to display embellishment encompassed an earlier development of the threading rubber technique. In comparison to textile samples, the dress acted as a testing ground to discover how embellishment moved

within a garment form, how it stood out within the folds of a garment's fabric, and furthermore the weight and hang when scaling up embellishment applications.

Furthermore, and more pertinently to this research, was how practice reflections and outputs could be shared to a wider community, firstly this was achieved through feedback from exhibitions. Finally, within chapter 5, a practical workshop with students was created and facilitated by the researcher. This was in order for students to physically create and reflect upon textile embellishment inspired by archival items (with the addition of one contemporary garment) that the researcher had selected as especially representative of the motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment. Many of the key themes and concepts that emerged from this research echoed the earlier themes and concepts from the archival research and industry engagement including the value of the handmade and connection to nature. However, the themes of movement or lightness weren't expressed, which was potentially reflective of the participants interests and experience not specifically being fur and exotic animal materials. Since this workshop was practical and enabled participants to create their own textile embellishments as a reaction to archival items, further reflection was enabled through making. The workshop encouraged the student participants to think more deeply about material associations and embellishment techniques and values.

6.3 COMPILING RESULTS

The results of the research are reviewed under each objective in order to reach the research aim:

- Objective 1: Determine key motivators for the application of fur and exotic animal materials as decorative embellishment.

The overriding key designer motivations for the decorative application of fur and exotic animal materials were articulated within five concepts:

CONNECTION TO NATURE

A connection to the natural world which can be achieved through natural materials that felt unique and irregular, or to apply embellishment as a process to record and collect nature as souvenirs, with an additional potential of story-telling and an animal-like performative quality. Overall, it was important to create a balance between nature and the man-made, occasionally through enhancing or exaggerating materials.

LIGHTWEIGHT VOLUME

The concepts of lightweight and voluminous worked hand in hand to create a feeling of embellishment that had qualities of movement and animation, which also often linked to material softness. In addition, these themes in combination can inspire an ethereal intricacy and delicacy.

TEXTURAL QUALITY

Textural quality that can be developed and enhanced through a range of embellishment. In particular, the appeal of 3D texture and density which invites a haptic experience. Softness and lustre are important, as it indicates a certain quality level which can be associated with longevity. Furthermore, materials which could offer contrasting textures and colours when combined.

VERSATILE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Versatile craftsmanship encompassed the handmade which invites reflective contemplation and heightened creativity. Furthermore, the opportunity for new textile embellishment techniques to be developed through manipulation and layering which add to the story and individuality of the textile. The opportunities to experiment with tooling innovations can also offer heightened various forms of intricacy and delicacy.

RARE AND UNIQUE

The appeal of rarity and uniqueness also related to the themes of status, an eye-catching appeal, an element of exclusivity and unfamiliarity. Through working to develop rare and unique embellishment, the additional concept of exclusive knowledge developed, which links to versatile craftsmanship. This also encompassed materials which were irregular and inimitable which often linked back to the value of connection to nature.

- Objective 2: Discover which materials and processes may offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials.

The overriding materials and processes which may offer decorative alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials are articulated within seven outputs, pictured in figure 6-1. Through practice reflection and referencing of successes and failures throughout the three practice projects, the researcher articulates how each sample inspired further iterations and improvements:

BAYONG BEAD AND SNAKE AGATE BEADWORK with AHIMSA AND PCW SILK (figure 4-21)

This combination explored the values of connection to nature, rare and unique from the design brief. It was considered that the sample could be lighter weight and incorporate movement which led onto developing the puss caterpillar inspired embellishment (figure 5-20).

GATHERING AND LAYERING TENCEL AND PCW SILK WITH SINAMAY FIBRES (figure 4-25)

This sample explored the values of connection to nature and uniqueness as the sinamay is not a recognisable material. This sample inspired further iterations using layers of fabric

which offered volume and softness, in particular layers of translucent silk. This, in combination with the beadwork sample applying snake agate aforementioned, inspired the embellishment process of the puss caterpillar inspired embellishment figure 5-20).

ADAPTED WIG MAKING WITH EMBROIDERY USING GLASS YARN AND AHIMSA SILK (figure 5-5) / LEAF HOPPER NYMPH 2 EMBELLISHMENT ARTEFACT (figure 5-17)

Applying glass yarn and ahimsa silk together with cotton embroidery thread, isolated embellishment accents created a lighter and voluminous sample. This was advanced by using the same technique to develop the artefact inspired by the second leaf hopper nymph seen in the Amazon Rainforest (figure 5-8) by applying latex and hand-painting markings onto the embroidery component.

LEAF HOPPER NYMPH 1 EMBELLISHMENT ARTEFACT USING BANANA FIBRES AND TENCEL (figure 5-14)

This sample particularly represents an essence of movement within textile embellishment which was suggested in earlier samples applying gathering and layered fabric. Banana fibre, in combination with Tencel and implanted magnets, connected textural quality and volume through embellishment which moved when handled. Furthermore, the technique of wig making and embroidery was inspired by earlier iterations using glass yarn (figure 5-5).

PUSS CATERPILLAR EMBELLISHMENT ARTEFACT USING MANILA HEMP FIBRES, ORGANIC COTTON VELVET, PCW BEADS AND SILK (figure 5-20)

As mentioned, in order to develop embellishment samples inspired by the puss caterpillar seen in the Amazon Rainforest (figure 5-9), the researcher drew upon previous textile embellishment techniques which had been trialled to create segmented embellishments using organic cotton velvet and manila hemp yarn. The technique of removing warp threads inspired by drawn thread embroidery was applied to one of the layers of this sample which further gained the feeling of movement and optical effect using manila hemp, organic cotton and waste beads.

TENCEL-BACKED THREADED WILD RUBBER USING GLASS YARN (figure 5-28)

Using wild rubber, glass fibre and Tencel, this sample was inspired by the previous artefact that applied caterpillar embellishments (figure 5-20). The dense effect of mixed media and layering created a matrix using rubber which was applied to hold many lengths of glass fibre to heightened textural effect.

AHIMSA SILK DRESS ARTEFACT EMBELLISHED WITH WILD RUBBER AND GLASS YARN (figure 5-30)

This artefact applied wild rubber and glass yarn embellishment onto ahimsa silk organza in a similar technique to the previous sample (figure 5-28). It was found that within a garment context, the matrix of many lengths of glass fibre was too dense and became tangled if used across the main body of the garment. Referring to earlier findings with wig-making with embroidery, it was found that isolate accents proved more successful and offered a lighter weight look.

Through this discovery of alternative materials and textile embellishment processes, propositions emerged whereby the researcher could suggest embellishment alternatives to fur and exotic animal materials. The combined methods of archival research and engagement with industry associated with the use of fur and exotic animal materials provided a basis on which to develop embellishments which encompassed some of the values of fur and exotic animal materials. Other methods which proved successful in informing the research outputs was the research of exotic animal species in the Amazon Rainforest and a final workshop with students to reflect upon future embellishment in light of the values associated with fur and exotic animal materials. The role of the researcher through this thesis has been multi-faceted; generating research material, observing the research context and through discussions to gain other perspectives.

Figure 6-1 Selected sample collection from the three practice projects which were deemed to be successful, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper, 2016-2018

6.4 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

There are many opportunities to build upon this research. The researcher would recommend that further methods of engagement with industry associated with the use of fur and exotic animal materials could be carried out, in particular through making-based workshops. This could adopt the workshop model used with students, where themes and appeals could be explored through various material ranges and archival inspirations, recording the materials and techniques selected by industry participants. This could potentially offer another data set of themes regarding the designer motivations for the application of fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, the researcher believed that these methods of engagement both with industry and student groups also enabled participants to deeply reflect on their choices to use animal materials, and encourage creative methods to develop alternatives.

Another avenue of research in order to further deduct the appeal of alternative embellishments would be through exploring other forms of exhibition space, such as through installations and public participatory experiences. This could thereby record the public appeal and associations of different embellishments. Other potential applications are in innovating strategies for those who are developing faux animal materials to reflect upon some of the deeper appeals of fur and exotic animal materials that could inspire their work. The alternative forms of embellishment and range of design values which have been presented in this thesis could broadly be adopted in varying instances adding to wider knowledge in fashion and textiles research and practice, beyond the subject of fur and exotic animal materials. In other words, to apply the values of fur and exotic animal materials to additional types of products in order to incite the same connection to nature, care and respect.

In terms of the practice, the researcher concluded that there had been potential success with glass yarn trials, although that for further iterations, textile testing at a facility to measure qualities such as abrasion and durability should be done (health & safety certifications for glass yarn have already been obtained). Other textile embellishment samples and artefacts had appeared to have potential success (seven of which are documented in the previous section) and would require further reflective development

and review before they could be applied in within garments that required more than one use. These initial trials instead to serve as inspiration for the possibilities of future embellishment.

The researcher has since continued to showcase work from the practice projects. At the time of writing, the garment artefact (figures 5-30 to 5-32) is currently on world tour as part of the 'Fashioned from Nature' exhibition until 2021, and the researcher will continue to gauge its interest online. Furthermore, since the exhibition opened the researcher met with an esteemed designer whose company showcased their work in the exhibition within the 20th Century designers' section, in order to discuss the possibilities of implementing decorative alternatives in the place of fur and exotic animal materials. Furthermore, the textile artefacts (figures 5-14, 5-17 and 5-20) have been presented at the 'Design Research for Change' showcase at the London Design Festival 2019, later to be shown at the 'Transfashional' exhibition at the Museo della Citta, Rimini at the end of 2019.

6.5 FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

In conclusion, what has been presented by the researcher are not rigid solutions but a contribution to knowledge that reflects trending and emergent issues in contemporary society. In the view of future scenarios, it is hoped that a more considered variety of materials will be applied in fashion. This would also encompass varieties that expand beyond current key materials relied on by fashion companies, with new materials and techniques being explored in depth in order for designers and manufacturers to understand their use and potential. Furthermore, is the consideration that the development of new materials for the fashion industry should be a conversation that includes the designer, who can feed back through a reflexive process about requirements based on design form.

The term embellishment will likely continue to expand to incorporate a range of material processes; material manipulation, additive and subtractive elements and further areas on the body for decoration. Since the completion of this research, developments in 2019 have so far included: Nova Kaeru's beLEAF alternative to exotic leather created from leaves from the Amazon rainforest and Carole Collet's speculative mycelium alternative to fur currently under development. Both of which could now be considered within the 'Decorative Alternatives to Fur and Exotic Animal Materials' section in chapter 2, especially since the focus is on the organic qualities of animal materials.

As part of the context of this thesis, the researcher also reviews the future developments for archival artefact-based research. Fashion and textiles developed within a slower model prior to (and during) the industrial revolution have the ability to hold deeper values that could be applied in practice today. This would require new systems in fashion which value longevity, some of which have been explored by designers through re-use and hire models, highlighted in 'Relationship with the Victoria & Albert Museum' in chapter 1.

A dominant theme in this research is the relationship between nature and man, which was visible through designer's manipulation of fur and exotic animal materials. Overall, it appeared through practice research that the rich dynamic required combinations of

either: A very organic material which had clear visual origins in combination with limited material manipulation or manipulation which was geometric to offer balance, or a manmade or visually homogenous material in combination with heightened, irregular and organic material manipulation. The context of the research is high fashion, and not necessarily the broader concept of luxury, as stated in the preface to this thesis (chapter 1). However, the researcher reflected on how this rich dynamic between the nature and manmade chimed with the four pillars of meta luxury, which are considered to be; craftsmanship (excellence not efficiency), focus, history and rarity.[124] The researcher considers luxury to continue to develop as a concept which is not necessarily limited to market level or price point.

As a final question, the researcher speculates on whether there still the need for fur and exotic animal materials in contemporary fashion? Especially in light of the unnecessary harm associated with the production of animal materials and extinction rates of animal populations. This research has proven that varying forms of textile embellishment have the ability to incorporate the positive values associated with decorative use of fur and exotic animal materials. Additional practice can be trialled, and is not restricted to the textile embellishment techniques documented in this research.

7 APPENDICES

7.1 EDWINA EHRMAN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative notion of fur and exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection: 16/02/17
Place of data collection: Participants office, Research Department, Victoria & Albert Museum
Participant: Edwina Ehrman
Researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Method of data collection: Interview
Duration of data collection: 1.hr 14. mins
Documentation type: Voice recorder

START

Researcher: What type of animal products does the clothworkers accept and why?

Edwina: The clothworkers we will as curators consider any animal product, but we would…we are required by the museum to do due diligence checks to try and establish what the provenance is so obviously we would need to find out its age, what type of animal it came from, the approximate age of the artefact and therefor when that animal might have been imported into Europe, or America or wherever. So, we really work very hard to try and establish provenance, and we also have to make CITES declarations now on the documents we prepare when we're acquiring things. So that means we will be looking to find out, for example, if we would have to declare it was an endangered species, and if it's an endangered species or indeed extinct we have it properly identified and for that we'd have to get in touch with colleagues across the road (at the Natural History Museum). So those are all things that we would absolutely have to do if we were pretty sure we wanted to acquire it. And whether or not we would even get to that stage would depend on whether we could honestly say that it fulfilled an important gap in the collection. So, we wouldn't take something which was very attractive if we had others like it. If it represented a particular fashion that we weren't able to represent in another way then we might consider it. So, for instance we don't have - as you know -many good examples of spotted furs. But were we to take a spotted fur – and we do get offered them quite regularly – it would have to be a very, very, good example and in very good condition, and we would need as clear a history as possible from the donor and we would do all the necessary checks. We were offered an elephant skin waistcoat from Rodisha (Congo) a few weeks ago and we decided that wasn't appropriate for our collection because waistcoats made of elephant skins could not be described as a popular fashion in any way, they're a curiosity rather than anything else, and curiosities broadly speaking don't come within our collecting policy and also there would certainly be ethical issues in displaying it, it would seem rather gratuitous I think to display an elephant skin waistcoat. So, we recommended that its owner got in touch with the natural history museum

because they might be interested to display it as an example of past practice which would no longer be acceptable today.

Researcher: *I see, OK.*

Edwina: So, I think we're open minded but things have to fulfil our collecting policy and they have to be able to play a real role in the collection. Does that answer that question?

Researcher: Yes, I understand.

Edwina: I think earlier in the century there were no formal requirements to due diligence on objects – I mean I'm sure the curators at that time had to be reassured that a person owned the object they were either selling or proposing to give to the museum - and of course there were no CITES regulations, and I think that they were perhaps more catholic in what they took. If something was unusual that might have been a reason for taking something but then they didn't have a collection the size we do and one of the reasons we were very, very, cautious was that we have to have really, really good reasons for acquiring things because our collection is so big that anything we acquire the aim is to keep it for generations so that future people can study it. So, I think to a degree that they didn't have the pressure of space and time that we have and perhaps if somebody offered a collection, they were more open to taking it than we are. I'm thinking of that collection of not terribly good furs that we've looked through that we would never dream of taking now. We would look at a collection like that and cherry pick if the owner allowed us to do that, and if the owner didn't, we would just say we weren't interested. So, I think there was much more kind of 'I've got a nice interesting collection of furs if you would like it' and they would say 'lovely thank you very much'. Having said that of course, the V&A didn't have a collecting policy for fashion really until the 1970s, so broadly speaking it collected fashion because of the material from which they were made, and the ways in which those materials were appropriated. Demonstrations of materials and techniques. So, if we were interested in acquiring fur, I think that we would justify it on the ground that it was a material that was used in fashion and that the particular fur showed an approach to making them. So, they were less concerned with the end user - the consumer - than we are today.

Researcher: Also, do you feel that things reflected current times, current fashions? So, things that were being donated did it reflect …

Edwina: It didn't reflect current fashion at all. They only started collecting for contemporary fashion in the very early 1970's…well that's not quite true, the real impetus for collecting contemporary fashion came when Cecil Beaton came to the director who was a man called Pope Hennessey at that time. That he said you know 'fashion reflects a spirit of the time in a way more than any other material has and you should collect it'. He put together the Beaton collection and that was what really launched fashion collecting at

the V&A, and I think the first fashion curator was Madeline Ginsberg and I think she joined in the late 50's - she was a crucial fashion curator - but fashion was always much lower in the hierarchy than textiles, so the best person to talk to about that is Claire (Wilcox) because actually she's just written an interesting essay which I read so I should know these things about the early history of the collection, and I think actually the 400 years of fashion book explains to a degree this separation between fashion and textiles.

Researcher: So, the book is called 400 years of fashion?

Edwina: It was written I think during the 1980's before we relaunched the fashion gallery. It no longer applies to any displays but it's got quite useful information and you're welcome to photocopy the introduction from my copy which is up there, I think.

Researcher: Ok, thank you.

Edwina: So I think Madeline was the curator and I think she arrived in the 50's. some of the letters when they are accepted were – so when somebody offered something in the past what would happen would be that it would go to a more junior member of staff and then they would write a little formal note to a more senior member of staff saying I think we should acquire this because of x and y, and often they used the term 'it is representative of the fashion of this period' so I think to a degree that representation in fashion could be useful because it showed how textiles had been used. But I think the main thrust was to document the textile industry.

Researcher: That's interesting.

Edwina: And also going back to the animal product collection, although a lot of that had been disposed of in the early 20th century I think there was still, the whole emphasis at the V&A was always on materials and techniques so the acquisition of raw materials and objects made abroad from raw materials like fur and feathers probably many people found could be justified under the materials and techniques umbrella I think. But of course, the AP collection was meant to be comprehensive, I think it was meant to be comprehensive, a comprehensive guide to designers and manufacturers about ways in which you could use an actual material for the benefit of trade. Because when you look through – and I've only skimmed through the registers for the animal product collection which was incredibly wide ranging – so I think that was meant to be a teaching collection, it was an educational tool, and the objects were accompanied by a drawing showing how various technologies worked so it was very much educational, and I think that was demonstrated by the fact it was at Bethnal Green and wasn't here. Bethnal Green was the main…it was the V&A's education wing as it were.

Researcher: Are most of the animal product collections still with us?

Edwina: No, they got destroyed, I can send you some information about it. I can try and do a little summary; so, most got destroyed, the things that were saved, quite a lot of textiles were saved. Amongst the animal products collection they had a really big collection of silk, illustrating different weaves and different dying technologies and things like that. So, they were collecting anything and everything, so we do have this very large collection of silk swatches that were acquired at the time which all have AP numbers on them. So what was kept I think was the textiles, materials which didn't degrade - like shells, there's quite a lot of horn, there's a few feather items, but they encompassed everything from leather – tens of dozens of specimens of leather tanned in different ways, in different parts of Europe so very, very comprehensive and the best way to get a handle on it is actually …there was a printed catalogue you could look at, the actual register we have in this building at the moment and it was an incredibly wide ranging approach to what could be used by a manufacturer and so what we have in this building is mainly textiles and then the core of the collection is still at Bethnal Green and Veronica and I looked through it and we actually found it quite disappointing really because it's quite tacky a lot of it. So there's lots of various boxes of shell jewellery and things like that which are really kind of on a souvenir level, so collected in the Philippines and collected in the Bahamas, but I think it was to show people you know, if we imported the shells in these countries maybe we could produce similar products, but the whole thrust of it was to improve industrial design and to create profit for the nation.

Researcher: So, the techniques and the drawings that come from these products, were they – let's say they were from Papua New Guinea or something – were they their techniques for how to use it or was it how a British person could then use it?

Edwina: No, it was what you might call the 'native' techniques. Because I think people were intelligent enough to know that although our techniques and our processes were very mechanised by that time, that perhaps in the ways in which other groups manipulated materials you might be able to learn something. I've never seen any of these drawings, but again they are all listed.

Researcher: It would be really interesting to see how they were adapted and how they were then taken forward, these techniques.

Edwina: I don't know whether they ever got any feedback from anybody. The gumboots in the basement of Bethnal Green were apparently very dark and dusty but there were quite popular. There are two articles, one about the AP collection, the other about the waste collection, and they were both published in the V&A online journal, so you can access those from the internet. And then I looked at some Royal Society of Arts reports on the way in which the early collection developed because initially the collection went from the Great Exhibition – the core collection – went from the Great Exhibition to the Royal Society of Arts and I think it was at that stage that they decided to actually employ someone to develop the collection and then it was transferred to the V&A who took it

down to Bethnal Green so there is a bit about it in the history of the V&A. I did a summary which I'll send you. The main points are; it was meant to be educational, directly towards manufacturers and to obviously improve public knowledge about manufacturers and show them the value of manufacturing and particularly design of course but it wasn't deemed of any artistic merit because otherwise it would have been here.

Researcher: Right I see, ok.

Edwina: And it's interesting in terms of the actual textiles, textile swatches, because you would have thought that they would have had a place in the main museum, given that we have collections of…I suppose by that time it was pre-William Morris, about the time of Pugin, because William Morris' production was of course considered works of artistic merit, whereas these fabrics were woven by mills in Lyon and then cotton would have come from places like Lancashire. So, I don't know if we've ever really analysed why the silks - which of course very much became the target for mainstream collecting – why those AP swatches didn't find a role here. But maybe they thought that within this teaching collection silk had to be there and that there were small samples, they weren't repeats. So, their role was as teaching aids rather than examples of artistic design. I think that would be the distinction.

Researcher: That sort of leads into the next question actually, which was – do you know if there's a certain requirement for items taken into the archive from the Great Exhibition? I guess you've kind of answered that question really in a sense.

Edwina: I think when you look at what was in the Great Exhibition it was absolutely the kitchen sink; I mean it was bizarre what they put in the Great Exhibition. Although everything had to be submitted and some things were turned down – god knows what they were – it was a huge exhibition and it was incredibly wide ranging what they took, and I don't know is the answer. I don't know whether it depended on what the exhibiting companies chose not to take home, I think there were quite a lot of the exhibiting countries saying we don't want it - find a use for it. I'm not sure there's loads of stuff written about the end of the Great Exhibition. These aren't questions that I've really thought very deeply about. One thing in the literature that I have looked at about the AP collection, is does make the point that the collection of minerals – which was derived from the great exhibition – was much more a whole collection – it was a collection already – and that went to the museum of geology which then was a former to the science museum. There was the animal product collection, the mineral collection, and the vegetable product collection – and the vegetable product collection is the core of the collection at Kew. That was also considered to be already a well-developed collection. It was the animal products they seemed to feel were sort of lacking and needed a member of staff employed to build it up into something worth having. Then I think that when our collection was broken up, I think they did give bits to the science museum etc, because the natural history museum has a collection which I wondered whether was part of the

AP collection but the trouble is no one's faintly interested. But that was a collection of trade material. So that made me think it probably was connected to the AP collection, or maybe their version of the AP collection, because they probably had one too. People took a very utilitarian approach to raw materials and I don't think there was any – nothing I read suggested there was any desire on the part of the curators to show the whole animal alongside the animal part which could be used for industry. So, what we don't seem to have but what maybe we did have…I don't know whether we had a whole turtle shell. We have whole shells so I suppose perhaps there was - I ought to find that out - whether we actually had the whole piece that they worked from. There was some taxidermy come to think of it, but frustratingly they aren't any pictures of it, and the whole collection was affected by moths and cotton beetles and things like that. So, a lot of things were destroyed because they were moth eaten. Sorry it isn't very helpful; I haven't properly been through the registers yet.

Researcher: I suppose I'm just really interested in knowing what the V&A's agenda was – if it had an agenda - in terms of what it wanted to take in and display to the public and what message it wanted to put across and what value it found in materials and things.

Edwina: I think the message it wanted to put across was we live in a world of fantastic natural resources and these are used in different ways in different countries and we can learn from the ways in which other people use them – we can potentially improve on them, and manufacturing is good for the nation, and therefore these specimens were a very good educational tool. I think their reasoning went something like that. We have quite a lot of material in the museum which is very educational in its tone and very good lithographs which I can try and show you which… it's the uses of the elephant which are for children really, but useful for adults too. Then they have nice pictures with the elephant in the middle – usually being hunted, have you not seen these?

Researcher: I don't think I have!

Edwina: Let me show you one (goes onto computer). So, this is the whale – so it's 'graphical illustration of animals and their uses to mankind' sort of thing. So, you've got the poor old whale spouting blood in the middle, and there were a lot of stories about the rowing boats entering the whale's mouths – there's one particular book about whaling which was about fishing, but they actually sailed into the whale's mouth.

Researcher: Sounds like 'Just So Stories.'

Edwina: Yes, I think it's not true. Anyway, so then you know, it was used for lighting so there's a lady with her book and her lamp.

Researcher: Oil is that?

Edwina: Yes. And then there's umbrella stretchers, lighting your lighthouse, corsetry, so all the useful things we got from whales. The whole point of this was that using whales was a very good thing for our nation and these were all the useful products that we get from whales and aren't our sailors' nice hardy men who dare to do this. So, it was very much about the utility of animals and that goes back a very long way because if you go back to Aristotle, when he writes his natural history it's all laid out – this is what it looks like, this is its habitat, these are its uses to man. And it's always medicinal to begin with and then he just works his way down the hierarchy of uses. One interpretation of the Bible is that God put these…you know, we are at the top of the pyramid and God created the world *for* us and he introduced these animals from plants because they all had a use and therefore maybe in working out *how* to use them you're fulfilling God's purpose.

Researcher: That's interesting because I feel like that is something that's stayed a constant for a really long time…

Edwina: Very, very, long time.

Researcher: …But that recently its changed.

Edwina: Yes. Well I think there is moral commentary that I've found deploring the way in which humans' sort of grandiose themselves through ransacking the planet, but it's more directed through the vanity and pride of the human being rather than against the dreadful thing that you're doing to nature in pursuit of it. There's certainly a sense that you're despoiling the earth, but it's *more* that the critique is about human vanity. And then I did find a nice quote from a clergyman saying that basically there is no use for it, it's completely useless as far as the clergyman's concerned because he obviously doesn't understand pollination or anything like that, and that these things are just designed to make nature beautiful and therefore it's perfectly ok to use them to make yourself beautiful. So, there's a lot do with 'how did our earth form?' 'what is the purpose of it?' and 'what is our role within this world that we live in?' Humans have always been very anthropocentric, so I think even for liberal minded people it's quite an eye opener now that we're beginning to learn that trees can communicate through their root systems and this is wonderful because it actually takes you back to the very traditional thought amongst very ancient communities like aboriginals who believe that all the world can communicate, and now we realise that actually trees can communicate, so when you have these stories about trees becoming human - what we think of as human - there is some grounds to that. It is quite alarming you know that for people in the past it could have been very alarming to have seen them…I mean nature was pretty frightening anyway. But the idea that nature was sentient would have been more threatening.

Researcher: Yeah, it's that need to control…

Edwina: It is that need to control it. Because after all our ancestors lived in far more hostile environments than we do.

Researcher: There are not many examples of exotic reptile skins in Clothworkers, why is that?

Edwina: So – exotic reptile skins – there are plenty! I went through all the handbag drawers and there are a lot of reptile skins and some very nice ones.

Researcher: Oh ok – I got that wrong.

Edwina: You haven't got it wrong, because they don't appear as reptile skins on the catalogue, so if you search for crocodile and lizard you get very, very few items, if you actually look through the objects there are many more. I just wondered whether it was because people didn't feel confident about identifying the skins and didn't want to just catalogue it as an 'exotic skin', but there are actually good representations certainly from the 1920's onwards, very nice 1930's ones, and we have a lovely ostrich skin handbag. So, there *are* actually but I think it was down to lack of knowledge really and not having the time or inclination to sit down and analyse the materials we have.

Researcher: Is that because they were quite unusual then? Does it reflect that they weren't very common, so therefor they didn't know what they were?

Edwina: I don't know why, but then very few of the furs were identified by the name of the animal until they started getting furriers in to look at them. I cracked the mystery of the hat with the tails, I think. Its 1890's, I'm sure it was 1890's. I got a letter from research and we think it was 1890's. And then French sable was, it was stone marten, so I think (Participant 7) was right probably with pine marten, anyway French sable was a term for stone marten. The book I was reading said it was a stone marten not a pine marten, so that went into that hat. So, I think it was 1890's made of either stone or pine marten, and quite likely made by Caroline Mabeau the milliner because we found a description of a very similar hat and I think it was made by her.

Researcher: That's interesting.

Edwina: So, you see that shows to a degree, it's only when you're…like when I'm doing an exhibition, and you really have to say 'OK am I going to include this one or not?' and if I do I really need to know what it is. It probably took her a day of going through magazines for us both to feel quite confident that me dating it was correct.

Researcher: It's really interesting because it's really like detective work.

Edwina: It is detective work, yes. Much easier now than in the past because the authority is online.

Researcher: Yeah that would have been really impossible.

Edwina: Well you'd have had to go to the library and you'd have had to go through fashion plates. So, although our life is much busier as curators, we do have many more resources than people had in the past. So, for whatever reason we have reptile skins that aren't identified as reptile skins, which is good.

Researcher: OK! Is the Clothworkers focused towards interesting and/or historically relevant materials, or evidence of processes used – which is more important if any?

Edwina: So, I think the answer is…so when I first joined the V&A, I remember being told the difference between the V&A and the Museum of London. I was told that the V&A focuses on materials and techniques and the Museum of London focuses primarily on place, and then because of social history, on the people who live in that place. So, I think since I've been here, and I've been here nearly 10 years now, there's been a real shift towards understanding materials and techniques but also collecting with a real understanding of social, historic and economic context. So, if you're writing a justification for acquiring an object you would have to say what this object tells us about the time in which it was designed, made, used, and indeed in the times perhaps it was preserved as a collector's item before we acquired it. You really need to understand that for the lifecycle of the object but you'd also be required to know what it was made of and how it was made. As individuals, we're better at some of those things than others, and I think with textiles – so in the textiles department people are either textiles people or fashion people. It's only very recently again that they are employed as textiles *and* fashion which I think is the correct way to look at it. But therefor I think that perhaps the fashion curators and myself included didn't really understand as much as we should do about technique. So that's one of the interesting things about doing the *Fashioned from Nature* exhibition because you wouldn't realise how little you actually know. You know broadly speaking how a loom works and things like that but when you start talking about the intricacies of different weaves then I would automatically go to the textile curator, but ideally you should of course understand both. But some of the textile people aren't interested in fashion, but it has to be looked at holistically, it's quite correct that it should be looked at holistically, and I think that's come about because of having the history of fashion design studied as an academic discipline, and so you need to take a holistic view and also we are required to take a more theoretical view, to measure what we acquire against contemporary theories about I don't know – attitudes to gender or whatever. And I think again that's pretty much a generational thing because methodology was never part of my education, even though I consider myself reasonably well educated and the theory I find quite difficult. I will say very stoutly I am a curator, that my role is to work with objects and obviously to understand them in the best way I can, and sometimes I find theory very

tiresome but the main problem from my point of view is that it requires time and thought and application and you need that to use it wisely and I think that's something that some people are much better at than others. I think if you have to retrain your brain which to a degree is what I have to do, it's very easy to say oh god I can't be bothered. Ideally you should be able to take all these approaches, I think. I think in terms of the justifications we have to write – I think the focus, having said that we need to understand an object holistically, I think the focus now is more on…and it's an awful expression but I think to a degree its focused-on filling in gaps and making wise choices about the contemporary. Because our collection is so big, space is finite and its time is finite so you have to acquire very carefully. So, if I'm to acquire a 19th century piece of fashion…so when I'm looking for things in the Clothworkers Centre for the exhibition and I go through the drawers, what I am usually looking for is a compelling visual specimen that's made of the materials I want and will enable me to discuss the design and the manufacture. So, I'm looking for things that work very broadly. I think gaps is what we're trying to fill because we do have hit lists of things that we need like corsetry. Our corsetry is really far too fragile now to really be displayed so we need more corsets. And the other problem is that people on the whole give less now and we have to buy more, and we have very small purchase funds. So, we have to do it very strategically, and our other huge problem is that because contemporary fashion is so vibrant and global now, what do you collect?

Researcher: Yeah, it could be never ending I suppose.

Edwina: Yes, so that is very tricky so we tend to put our money into the contemporary period because we have much less than other major international museums, far less than the American collections. So, if we want a Schiaparelli, we know we've got to spend our whole annual budget on one Schiaparelli, but the public want to see Schiaparelli. So to a degree we're also to a certain extend guided by what the public expect to see and so then the problem is that you come down to the kind of highlights, so unless you can make a very compelling display using what you might call average objects you do need the ones that sing out to people because they were worn by someone who's name is fairly familiar or they were designed by a well-known designer or whatever, because you need your way-finding points. So, it's a bit like art galleries, you know people say 'why are there so few female artists?' and I suppose one reason is that they're spending their money on the way-finding artists that the people expect to see, and it's bad because then the people who are less well known, however good they are will sink down the pile.

Researcher: How do you gauge what the public want to see then?

Edwina: Well to a degree we're guided by what the press write about because that's the other problem you see, we need to get our message across and so were less dependent on the press than we used to be of course because we have social media and so social media will tell us what the public pick up on, what their interested in, what they like and what they don't like. And really of course they like the things that – you know in

Underwear – they like the things that were kind of bright and bold and fun and they can instantly understand, because we live in such a visual world now. So, something that's really interesting to me is the riding corset made of – it's a woven corset which is quite unusual – to most people that's a white corset, you know, I just flit past it.

Researcher: Yeah, that's a good point.

Edwina: So, I think when we're acquiring, we need to think about – in fact we do sometimes divide things up into a research piece and a display piece. So, I acquired a maternity dress as a research piece because I thought it was highly unlikely that the V&A would ever display a maternity dress unless it had some really distinctive qualities to it, but this is a blue velvet maternity dress with a really good provenance, we knew exactly who'd worn it. It was homemade and I imagine it was made by her ladies' maid or something like that because she was quite grand. So, it was a very good study piece, a good piece to get out for people if they were interested in maternity or interested in home making, things like that. That's how I justified it. I knew I couldn't say this will have a place in gallery 40 when we do the rotations, I just knew it wouldn't.

Researcher: Because it is quite specific?

Edwina: Well I just knew it was quite bashed around and you know and its colour was not brilliant, and its big. And with fashion from nature we are going to have a bit more of an experiment, we are going to be bolder in displaying things – there's one thing in particular with a dreadful stain on it, and it'll be interesting to see how the public reacts to that. My hunch is they won't mention it at all.

Researcher: I suppose they may be interested in the story around the piece more.

Edwina: We were going to try and get it analysed to find out what he spilt down the front – it looks like tea to me! So, for me, everything we acquire has to work very hard because it all costs money. Even if they're free – and it's very difficult to get that across to people who are giving it as a gift – everything costs money.

Researcher: To maintain the piece?

Edwina: Well the staff time in doing the acquisition process, documenting it, in storing it, preserving it for the future, auditing it, and people don't really understand that I don't think.

Researcher: No, I don't think I would have thought about it unless you'd said to be honest.

Edwina: So, things that we're given have to work very hard, things we buy have to work extremely hard. But having said that…not surprisingly - you nor I nor another other curator would have this distinction between raw materials – I don't know whether we'd say now 'this is a wonderful example of a raw material' because I think we've drifted away from the materiality of things to a degree.

Researcher: So, it's more about…

Edwina: The aesthetics, its design and aesthetics, I think. I don't know. I just wonder how in touch with materiality people…well perhaps it's just me…but I don't think we are very in touch with the material. You know - this is a fantastic weave, if it was a very plain dress, if it was absolutely bog standard in its shape, not a particularly nice colour, and I said this is the most fantastic weave, I think most people would go 'hmm yup you're right but it's not very appealing, it's not very eye catching'.

Researcher: I think you're right with what you said before that visually things need to communicate very quickly now, people don't have time to stop and read things, it is that flicking through, and I think maybe people are interested in raw material and provenance if its immediately apparent and immediately communicated somehow through the visual, but I know what you mean about that alone, just the material provenance alone isn't enough.

Edwina: Yes.

Researcher: It's interesting actually, I met a supplier a couple of days ago who is making lotus silk.

Edwina: Oh right, is this the man in Yorkshire?

Researcher: No, it's in Cambodia they're developing it, he's French. So, they're developing – well it's still in the early stages although it's been going for a while – and actually the fibre itself is very fine but because it's so fine it's quite hard to weave and to spin, I think that's why the development process has been quite long. It's extremely expensive, it's something like £250 a metre and I was really excited to see it in real life but actually quite disappointed when I saw it because it just looks like a not very good quality cotton actually, or even a hemp or something. I couldn't justify…because this idea of material provenance as a value is one of the areas I'm interested in looking at but then I just thought well that's all this has and actually would anyone…if it was made into a dress…

Edwina: Well I think pineapple fibre is quite an interesting one, because the dress at the Bows Museum which we're thinking of exhibiting, if we're 100% sure it's pineapple fibre, so we think it's a mixture of pineapple fibre and silk. It's 1828, its very early and I can't

find any newspaper references to pineapple fibre before the 1850's. so pineapple fibre came into everyone's consciousness in the 1850's, because it was a time when people were really searching for alternatives to particularly silk because it had fluctuated in the supply and problems with disease and the fact that the population was growing quite fast particularly in urban areas and you needed more and more fabric so they were looking outside the staples – thinking 'where would we go from here?' and pineapple fibre was one that comes up over and over again which I thought was quite interesting.

Researcher: Because that's really topical now with Pinatex and the lady who's developing that.

Edwina: Yes, they make it out of the leaves, don't they?

Researcher: Yes, so this pineapple fibre that you're talking about is made out of something else?

Edwina: This is made out of the leaves too, but isn't Pinatex, isn't it *spun* from the leaves?

Researcher: I think so.

Edwina: Yes. Anyway, so they have two things, we have quite a lot in the collection from the Philippines, and I was going to look at it, but this, if I take a photograph through my magnifying glass, it's not bad. (shows photograph) So basically, it's got…

Researcher: oh, wow that's really nice.

Edwina: …it's got a pineapple fibre warp and silk and pineapple fibre weft and in the voided areas they've cut away silk, so you can see where they've cut it away. And I thought I'd taken a photograph of the back. The interesting things about it is its very stiff – you can see it better there – and the difference is rather nice because it contrasts rather well with…

Researcher: It is a gauze type of stiffness?

Edwina: Yes, it is a bit like a gauze. So that's the dress, it's a wedding dress.

Researcher: Oh, wow it's really lovely.

Edwina: And the family appear to have absolutely zero – because we don't know how they got it – we seemed to have very little contact. So here you can see – this is the bad photograph – I did it to get the selvedge, but you can see where the silk's been cut away on the voided fabric.

Researcher: *I see.*

Edwina: And they've got the most beautiful handkerchief…and nice hat (referring to the photograph). So, it's got ostrich feathers and little chenille kind of worms in it.

Researcher: Ok, the chenille's quite interesting how it's been used in that way.

Edwina: It's very flirty, it's got the ribbons down the back of the head.

Researcher: Is the chenille, is it standing up rigidly? Are they attached onto the feathers? (Edwina shows the picture) Wow they must be really light!

Edwina: Chenille was often used as a fur alternative. Let me just show you this hankie and then we'll get back to your questions. It actually has pineapples in it, if I can find one of my pineapple shots. Anyway, you'll have to take my word for it but there are pineapples. I can't justify borrowing that.

Researcher: I love all the little details, it's really sweet.

Edwina: Anyway, we need to get back to your questions – OK, so I think that what we're looking for to a degree is fashion moments, what contributes to a fashionable appearance at any one time. Were these key to style in the 1750's or whatever? But we are actually re-addressing the textile collection because we have this amazing textile collection. So, until very recently, I think about 75% was textiles in the collection and now fashion has been catching up because there's been such an emphasis and the public love fashion. So, we're now starting to look at the textile collection and think where we need to collect. So, we're going to develop a collection of contemporary and future fashion – what you might call more innovative fabrics, but we have this big gap now between really the 1970's when things started to fizzle out on the textile side, and the present – it's a good 30-year gap if not more. So, it's a generation.

Researcher: Where nothing new was being done?

Edwina: Not really. I mean in the past we collected a pattern in 6 or 8 different colour ways, we've got amazing collections, we've got the best collection of British textiles in the world. Right through from the mid-19th century, well early 19th century actually, right through to the 1960's. and then again, I'm sure there was some historical reason why – a key curator left or whatever, but there's lots of things I don't know about. The trouble is my work here at the V&A has always been focused on projects so I haven't really absorbed enough about the institution really, but Claire (Wilcox) is the minefield of information about how the V&A developed, so she'll be a good person to talk about that. (Pause)

Edwina: So, in fashioned from nature - so what we're doing is that we have three – because I feel that one of the roles of gallery 40 is to show visitors more of our archives, it's a good idea to look at a broader historical period. And also, because I think that – I hope to convince the public that its illuminating by learning about how our ancestors lived it might give people insights into how we live today, and indeed how we might approach the future. I believe that we can learn from the past, and so it starts from around 1600 but we have relatively few garments between 1600 and 1700. But the three periods are: 1600-1789. So, its starts in 1600 because really, I think you could justifiably say that the 17th century is a great period in the expansion of our scientific knowledge, our scientific knowledge of the world. And it's also a great incremental expansion in trade, particularly in trade to Asia with the foundation of all the east India companies. And 1789 is the French revolution which was really a great shock to Europe and changed people's way of…it made people readdress what they thought about politics and the state and the individual and things like that. So, it is a very critical time. It doesn't work very well for textiles I have to say, it works pretty well for fashion but not so well for textiles. So, I do blur it a bit. The next period goes from 1789-1914, so 1789 French revolution, to a degree it's a good point because it's about the time when the mechanisation of the textile industry is just beginning to really get going and that whole long period sees a huge population rise in cities across Europe, particularly in Britain, and of course in north America and you get industrialisation on a very, very, large scale which absolutely affects the way people live. 1914 of course is the devastation of world war 1 and again it was a time when people…I think the kind of shock of world war 1 – it was a real break between the old Edwardian age and a new world for which you needed different clothes, a different attitude, etc. and then we're actually doing 1914-1990 because I needed somehow to break up the 20th century and for me in terms of thinking about when I became aware of sustainability – I mean I was aware of environmental concerns when I was growing up – but I wasn't aware of any movement within fashion and textiles saying that we should be manufacturing in a more responsible way etc, etc. I mean obviously there were campaigns in the 60's and 70's against wearing fur but I don't really remember anything about environmental concerns apart from local ones saying 'our river's polluted by the textile industry what are we going to do about it' but it didn't really make an impact in fashion terms I don't think. Katherine Hamnett, when she did her clean up or die collection and started using organic cotton and started researching organic cotton I think that was a bit of a wakeup call for the fashion industry because I think she was one of those movers and shakers who you would listen to, like Westwood I think. And so, the clean up or die collection seemed like a good stopping point and it's also quite convenient in terms of our collections because we do have quite a good selection of posters urging people to be more responsible, to treat the planet more responsibly. We've got quite a lot from the 80's and 90's so we're going to have a case which is about campaigning. The combination of posters and t-shirts and outfits with slogans on them, and I want to try and get a bit of Vivienne in there as well as an individual and a campaigner because I think Westwood as a company has a brilliant record on sustainability. Westwood as an individual – and she's more or less retired from the

company – is also very passionate about it and she should be there somewhere. Then I wanted to bring that case up to date by seeing if Patagonia will give us one of their posters saying 'don't buy this jacket' and Levi had quite a good poster, I can't remember the slogan on it, but what I want to show people and also within the historical - start this section by showing a march against wearing feathers – our ancestors were concerned – and the protest march is not new. And then we do 1990-present and it seems to work quite nicely like that.

Researcher: Is the 1990-present being…

Edwina: Well it's sort of new approaches to processing. So, what we're doing upstairs and what I've learnt from Chelsea and LCF is – which I knew to a degree but I'd just accepted – that this division between synthetic and natural is very artificial, they are all fibres, they are all ultimately derived from that planet in which we live. They all have advantages and disadvantages and what we should be thinking about is how lucky we are to have this material diversity. But we have to use it advisedly, and that if one fibre is…I suppose if you think about viscose, wood pulp is sustainable but the processes we've used to make it in the past have been very detrimental, so we need to look at those processes and come up with better processes which are more responsible and more respectful to the planet. So what we're doing at the moment is we've really changed it all round, so we've got materials diversity part 1 which goes up from 1914-1990 and originally I was going to have man-made on one side of the case and natural on the other, so that's all gone and basically we're grouping them by periods and the object labels will say what's good and bad about all of them which will rather test my knowledge, so saying what's good and bad about cotton, everything, so they're all treated equally so we don't make distinctions between them. Then we'll have the campaigning case for raising awareness and then we have material diversity part 2 which has a similar – well it's got many of the same materials – but a wider range, but flagging up *new* processes, *new* ways of doing things and some of them might be proven and some of them might be very experimental. Then we've got a case called future fabrics which is much more about the really innovative things like creating dyes from algae's and yeasts and things like that, wine leather and all these bizarre and wonderful things that people are working on. That is quite tricky because we have to make sure we tick various boxes, we've got to get the biomimicry box in there, we want to get the bioengineering box, we know we need to have something about dyes, we know we need to have something about etc. so that's a tricky one.

Researcher: That's a lot.

Edwina: That's a lot, but you'll see when we look at the boards that its organised like that and the tricky thing about it is that what we're doing – which is difficult for the public to understand possibly – is that when I tried to decide what to cover in the exhibition, it's a big space but the cases are very awkward and they're more suitable for some types of objects than others depending on their shape and size. So, what I decided to do was to

look at – to say OK if I was going to talk to students about what the key fashions are in these periods – and I had an hour – what would I tell them? What would I say? If you aspire to a fashionable appearance, what would you want to wear? So, when you come in it's all about fashions that were used to project your status and your rank, your wealth; so, its silk for court dress, fur, and the fashionable accessories that were absolutely vital to finishing that appearance. So, its ivory tortoise shell, mother of pearl, so fans, walking sticks, fantastic buttons, and then lace so that's flax. Whether the public are going to get this I don't know. It needs lots of good signage so people understand what they're looking at but there will be specimens of these materials, so there was flax – you know I hope to have the type of dried flax with the flowers on – flax straw, scotch flax, so you actually you get the idea that this lace was made from a plant, or the plant looks like that, that's the point. The trouble is it all looks very dead. Anyway, so the only way to think of doing it to tie it in to fashion, fashion is what we do in the fashion gallery, so we look through fashion, we say what does that tell us, what are these things made from, where do they come from…so what are the key fashions, why were they the key fashions, why were they valued by people and chosen – why did they choose to wear them to display their fashion ability, what was it about them that made them so important, and to try to get back to what those materials offered and then to make the point that those materials were so valuable for this particular purpose that ships would go around the globe getting these materials, so that's what I'm trying to get across but it's not easy.

Researcher: And then essentially projecting what future values may be, and what materials satisfy those or reflect those as well?

Edwina: I think saying that the fashion industry – and I think it does broadly speaking – realises it's at a crunch point. Our populations are growing, the consuming classes are growing enormously because it's not just population but when we had population growth in the past but only a tiny portion of that population can actually afford to buy these luxuries although of course that changed with the introduction of ready-made and mechanisation and one of the challenges is to show – of course you have the cotton case, and it is one of the earliest periods about cotton and cotton has been worn for centuries but decorated it's quite exclusive, fine muslin is very expensive. We have cotton in the 19th century but now we have mechanisation and machines churning out yard and yards and yards of material to be chopped up to make cravats and we have small scale factory production. So, what I'm doing in the 19th case is showing multiples of things individually, I think we've got about 15 cravats in the 19th century case and we've got 3 blouses. The idea is to try and convey to people that with mechanisation you are able to produce in quantity and you are able to bring the cost down, which means you're able to expand the consumer classes and close the increasing numbers of people who are living in the cities who don't have the resources to make their own clothes. And of course, you have to look at the fashion industry who of course doesn't want them to make their own clothes.

Researcher: It's a lot to convey but it sounds like it will make complete sense.

Edwina: It's because it's the scale which is the problem, so using cotton's fine but instead of clothing 1million people we're clothing tens of millions of people, and that requires more land, more energy, more water, more pesticides, more insecticides, and then we have a food crisis. So, we have to be more inventive. Which is why of course all the synthetics, the viscose's are actually quite a good idea to a degree although we're running out of oil, but the most important thing is the recycling, the more we can recycle the less virgin materials we need, the less quantitative virgin materials we need.

Researcher: I think there's also an issue about things biodegrading as well, I think particularly with public perception.

Edwina: I think biodegradable can be difficult because one person can say it's good, that's the thing with cellulosic fibres is that they're good because they're biodegradable but they biodegrade and let off methane gas. There's a very simple solution to this, we just ban people from eating cattle.

Researcher: That's a massive issue.

Edwina: If nobody ate beef or dairy products, no more belching cattle, we'd solve the problem in one area with one problem we have for the planet overnight. But nobody's prepared to do that.

Researcher: It's getting better though, more people are becoming vegan and vegetarian now, there's been a massive surge of people.

Edwina: We have plenty of *stuff*. One thing I want to do in the exhibition is when you had the early period, people had much smaller wardrobes, and far fewer things, however rich they were, so I want to keep those cases quite spare. Then the Victorians they loved clutter because they could afford clutter, clutter was affordable and clutter showed you were rich so I want the cases to look more cluttered to try and get across this idea of things and stuff and identifying yourself through stuff.

Researcher: Identifying yourself through stuff – that makes a lot of sense! It's quite depressing.

Edwina: We all need to declutter.

Researcher: We've gone through lots of these questions – the items or themes, which ones did you decide to leave out and why could be interesting.

Edwina: When I first said I was going to look at fashion that sort of ruled out ceremonial clothing and traditional. I know that traditional dress is affected by fashion like every

other form of clothing but I had to draw the line somewhere and by leaving out ceremonial dress it meant that a lot of the amazing fibres that they use in Asia are not there and I think that's a real shame because they do have amazing qualities and I will try and bring a few of them in in my material diversity part 2 case like Pinatex but I've got room for *10* garments. That's all there's room for.

Researcher: In the entire exhibition?

Edwina: No, so each of those cases upstairs on the mezzanine level. So if I have two glass cases for material diversity part 2 I can probably get 10 garments in there and maybe 4 accessories, 4 pairs of shoes or whatever, 2 pairs of shoes, 2 hats, there's no room for anymore so it is deeply, deeply frustrating and I know I'm going to have to answer loads of complaints saying 'why didn't you include x, y and z?' because even if you say at the very beginning of the exhibition and to all the press 'this exhibition is not comprehensive, it's a taster' it's an exhibition out of which other exhibitions could fly, and due to the constraints of the space we've had to really narrow down the principles of selection. However, because we can't display these amazing Asian textiles, they're lovely elm bark fibres and things like that, Anna is going to organise a display in the Tashima galleries which will be up at the same time as fashion and nature. Connie is going to get together a group of AC's and they're going to organise a self-guided gallery tour to take you around the galleries to see things which we can't represent in the exhibition. So, there are ways in which we can make up the deficiency but then we have to communicate that to the public so that they realise that. I do think the most important thing at the beginning of the exhibition is to be absolutely open and honest because you don't have many words, I have maybe 100 words to say what the exhibition is about, what its aims are and how its organised. That's the reality of it. So it's like when you go around the cases downstairs – because originally I was going to have this huge court dress for silk and we've had all the dyes analysed so we can choose specimens for the dyes in the case and we can have a map behind showing where the dyes have come from and things like that, and I was going to have a wonderful display of lace and I thought actually lace is not going got be easy to display in the case that would be logical. Then I went to see that exhibition at the barbican where the lace looked so beautiful, so fantastic.

Researcher: Which one is that, the Vulgar?

Edwina: The Vulgar. The lace looked amazing, the best I've ever seen lace look and I thought that's dispiriting. I thought if I could make it look like that the public would just go 'wow' and you make that from a weed. But with the lighting in gallery 40 you've got this really awkward case, I thought it just looked grubby, tired. So that's why I decided to do the ivory, mother of pearl, pretty accessories in there, not very logical. Then to put lace in the wall case where you can get your nose up close to it. Again, if I had a different space, if I had a nice blank gallery and I could build cases within it, I would start out with the principle fibres which were used right through up until man made came in. so; silk,

flax, wool and cotton. That's the logical way to start, and then you have your accessories and your whale bone. But I can't do that in the space downstairs because of the constraints of the cases, so for cotton you need quite a big case because it's a really important one and there aren't any big cases until you're well into the exhibition area.

Researcher: I guess because it's so broad, maybe it's nice to have that as a constraint?

Edwina: I don't know, people don't understand the organisation. So, what I'm doing now is saying you come in and its luxury fashion, which people do understand, so that's how I'm justifying it. It's not logical, but my job is to work with the space I've got.

Researcher: I think it sounds great!

Edwina: I hope so, it better be!

END

7.2 INFORMATION SHEETS AND CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS

7.2.1 INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS

Information Sheet

Project title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?

You are invited to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

Purpose of the research:
To understand what motivates designers to use fur and exotic animal materials as decoration within clothing and accessories, in order to design alternative embellishments.

What will my participation involve?
If you choose to participate, we will meet for a one-on-one interview for approximately 1 hour. You will be asked informal open-ended questions, and you will also be given the opportunity to bring up other relevant topics if you feel it is beneficial. You will be sent a copy of the questions prior to the interview.

What are the potential risks in participating?
Any potential risks regarding participation will have been minimised in advance.

What are the potential benefits in participating?
By choosing to participate you have an opportunity to contribute towards a new line of research which may inspire your own or others perception of fur and exotic animal materials.

Who pays for the project?
The research project has funding awarded by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Participation in this project is voluntary, however you may be offered reasonable compensation for the costs of participating, such as travel expenses if you are traveling in from another city.

Will my participation be kept confidential?
The information that you supply during the course of the interview will be separated from your identity through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, any information infringing a company or individual's confidential information will be deleted from the notes.

What if something goes wrong?
If during participation you believe that the research is being conducted in an unprofessional manner, please contact the research office of the University of the Arts London at the telephone and/or email address listed below.

What happens after the project?

The information collected from this research project will be securely kept indefinitely for use in relevant research projects. The results of this research project will be used to further inspire and reflect upon the design of embellishment samples, and information supplied will be presented in a written and illustrated thesis. When the research is complete you will be made aware of its publication from the contact details you have provided and you will be able to access a copy of the thesis from the library at the London College of Fashion. The results may also be used for publication in academic journals.

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Consent form

Project title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?

You are invited to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the attached Information Sheet carefully before signing this document.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

I have read the attached Information Sheet and I understand fully what the project will involve. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the project. I have a copy of this Consent Form and Information Sheet. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time without disadvantage to myself.

I understand that any information that I supply during the course of the research may be recorded and used as data for this and/or any future research projects. My participation in this project is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports.

Declaration by participant:
I hereby consent to take part in this project.

Name of participant:

Signed:

Date:

Declaration by researcher:
I believe that the participant understands the project and has given informed consent to participate.

Name of researcher:

Signed:

Date:

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If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

Purpose of the research:
To understand what motivates people to use exotic animal materials as decoration in clothing and accessories, in order to design alternative embellishments.

What will my participation involve?
If you choose to participate, you will be part of a small informal focus group meeting lasting two to three hours which includes introductions and a break. The focus group will be held at the Clothworkers Study Centre at Blythe House, part of the Victoria & Albert Museum. You will be free to discuss your thoughts and opinions relating to various fashion items shown to you. Naomi Bailey-Cooper will lead the discussion by using open-ended questions and with support from curatorial staff at the museum. There are no right or wrong answers – I am simply interested in your opinions.

What are the potential risks in participating?
Any potential risks regarding participation will have been minimised in advance. You may be exposed to materials containing animal parts. If the material is considered sensitive or potentially upsetting, participants will be notified prior to the focus group.

What are the potential benefits in participating?
By choosing to participate you have an opportunity to contribute towards a new line of research which may inspire your own or others perception of exotic animal materials. You will be exposed to material from historic archives that are not currently on display as well as some contemporary items brought in from outside the archive. This may also be an opportunity to meet other participants working in a similar field to you.

Who pays for the project?
The research project has funding awarded by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Participation in this project is voluntary, however you may be offered reasonable compensation for the costs of participating, such as travel expenses if you are traveling in from outside London.

Will my participation be kept confidential?
The focus group will be audio recorded and transcribed. However, the information that you supply during the course of the interview will be separated from your identity through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, any information infringing a company or individual's confidential information will be deleted from the notes. In addition, we ask you to respect the confidentiality of the fellow participants and any issues discussed.

In the subsequent thesis, quotes from the focus group may be used to help illustrate points that are being made. Quotes that may reveal your identity will not be used.

What if something goes wrong?
You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If during participation you believe that the research is being conducted in an unprofessional manner, please contact the research office of the University of the Arts London at the telephone and/or email address listed below.

What happens after the project?
The information collected from this research project will be securely kept indefinitely for use in relevant research projects. The results of this research project will be used to inspire the design of embellishment samples, and information supplied will be presented in a written and illustrated thesis. When the research is complete you will be made aware of its publication from the contact details you have provided and you will be able to access a copy of the thesis from the library at the London College of Fashion. The results may also be used for publication in academic journals.

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Consent form

Project title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?

You are invited to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the attached Information Sheet carefully before signing this document.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

I have read the attached Information Sheet and I understand fully what the project will involve. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the project. I have a copy of this Consent Form and Information Sheet. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time without disadvantage to myself.

I understand that any information that I supply during the course of the research may be recorded and used as data for this and/or any future research projects. My participation in this project is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports. I also agree to respect the other participants by not sharing information outside the group.

Declaration by participant:
I hereby consent to take part in this project.

Name of participant:

Signed:

Date:

Declaration by researcher:
I believe that the participant understands the project and has given informed consent to participate.

Name of researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Signed:

Date:

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Consent form for photography

Project title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?

I hereby consent to photographs of myself taken on 14/11/2016
at The Clothworkers Centre, Blythe House
to be used in the research thesis if they were anonymised.

I understand that my participation in this project will remain confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the project. I have a copy of this Consent Form for Photography.

Declaration by participant:

Name of participant:

Signed:

Date:

Declaration by researcher:
I believe that the participant has given informed consent.

Name of researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Signed:

Date:

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Information Sheet

Project title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative notion of exotic animal materials?

You are invited to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

Purpose of the research:
To understand what motivates people to use exotic animal materials as decoration in clothing and accessories, in order to design alternative embellishments.

What will my participation involve?
You will be part of a creative 1 week project which will start with a workshop on the 9th November 2017 and end with an informal presentation on the 16th November 2017. Each day will last around three hours. The workshop will be held at Mare Street, London College of Fashion. Naomi Bailey-Cooper will lead the workshop by supplying an open-ended embellishment brief and a range of materials for initial iterations, with support from Alex McIntosh. Some of the project will be in groups, some of it individual work. There are no right or wrong responses to the brief, you are free to develop your project and thoughts dependent on your discipline.

What are the potential risks in participating?
Any potential risks regarding participation will have been minimised in advance.

What are the potential benefits in participating?
By choosing to participate you have an opportunity to contribute towards a new line of research which may inspire your own or others perception of exotic animal materials. You will be exposed to textiles donated from various design houses which may inspire your own fashion projects.

Who pays for the project?
The research project has funding awarded by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Will my participation be kept confidential?
The workshop will be audio recorded in stages and later transcribed, and the project outcomes will be photographed as documentation. Ownership of the work will be yours. The information that you supply during the course of the workshop will be separated from your identity through the use of pseudonyms. In addition, we ask you to respect the confidentiality of others on your course and any issues discussed.

What if something goes wrong?
You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If during participation you believe that the research is being conducted in an unprofessional manner, please contact Alex McIntosh or the research office of the University of the Arts London at the telephone and/or email address listed below.

What happens after the project?
The information collected from this research project will be securely kept indefinitely for use in relevant research projects. The opinions and thoughts gathered in this workshop will be used to test against current embellishment samples, and information supplied will be presented in a written and illustrated thesis. The project work developed by the students will not be used as design inspiration by the researcher. When the research is complete you will be made aware of its publication from the contact details you have provided and you will be able to access a copy of the thesis from the library at the London College of Fashion. The results may also be used for publication in academic journals.

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Consent form

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You are invited to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the attached Information Sheet carefully before signing this document.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ask.

I have read the attached Information Sheet and I understand fully what the project will involve. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the project. I have a copy of this Consent Form and Information Sheet. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time without disadvantage to myself.

I understand that any information that I supply during the course of the research may be recorded and used as data for this and/or any future research projects. This includes photo documentation of my project. My participation in this project is confidential and I agree to respect the other participants by not sharing information outside the group.

Declaration by participant:
I hereby consent to take part in this project.

Name of participant:

Signed:

Date:

Declaration by researcher:
I believe that the participant understands the project and has given informed consent to participate.

Name of researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Signed:

Date:

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7.3 FUR AND EXOTICS INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

7.3.1 HOLLY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection: 26/08/16
Place of data collection: Skype
Pseudonym of participant: Holly, Fashion Designer and Fur Consultant
Researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Method of data collection: Interview
Duration of data collection: 1.hr 10. mins
Documentation type: Voice recorder

START

Researcher: *As a designer, could you speak a bit about why exotic animal materials are appealing to you, what elements are not appealing if there are any, discuss aesthetic, touch, and what you think it offers a consumer as well.*

Holly: For exotic skins, I would say it comes down to the rarity. I think that's their appeal, their rarity. I think with fur it's different because there's a lot more qualities there, I mean, when I used to teach I used to tell my students 'what are the qualities you'd look for in a luxury fabric' and they would be: soft touch, easy to use, beautiful material, long lasting, nowadays things like sustainability are important and fur has all those things. I mean it's beautiful, it feels good, it's probably the best material in the world to keep warm, it looks good, you can do quite a lot with it now, I mean obviously you can't do as much as other materials, but we've evolved so much in fur production that you can do weaving, shearing, knitting and there's so much you can do with all the different dyeing processes and printing and stuff. So, there's a lot of versatility, but it's still a luxury material in that it's quite rare and expensive and that's what people look for in luxury goods too, they don't want everyone else to have it. And then the whole process, fur appeals to a lot of people too in that it's a sustainable resource with the Origin Assured Labels you have, these amazing farms and the whole process involved - it's a heritage process and it's quite wonderful. I think it's that combination of things with fur. Just moving forward in the discussion, exotic skins is not something that I'm super familiar with, so the focus would probably be more on fur. Although I love exotic skins they're really more on an aesthetic and a rarity thing whereas fur has got a lot more functional properties too.

Researcher: *So, you wouldn't consider fur under the label of 'exotic animal materials' necessarily?*

Holly: No because exotic skins more sit with leather, because you don't make coats out of exotic skins to keep you warm in minus 50, you use exotic skins in the same way that you use leather. You make bags and shoes and trims and you can make jackets but fur is for me very different because there is that functional value to it. I'm not saying leather is not functional - it is highly functional - but exotic skins are kind of the same as leather it's just that they represent the same kind of function and they don't have...if you're comparing fur to exotic skins I feel like fur has got way more qualities and there's more to it than the story I think, as a luxury material.

Researcher: *So, fur for you is more about function than decoration, would you say?*

Holly: For me it is. I would say yes, it is, what you see on the catwalks is decoration. You see keys chains and Fendi sweaters with fur eyelashes on it. But if you look at what the fur business is about, you know, a great deal of it is people buying coats for cold weather that look beautiful. Just because Kim Kardashian might be wearing a fur bikini or wearing a fur coat in the summer, most people who are buying fur are buying it for its practicality. From a Russian or Chinese person buying a mink coat to wear in the winter to a New Yorker or someone buying Canada Goose or a Mr & Mrs Italy fur parka. People aren't buying these things just for fashion; they're also buying it because it's functional. Just like you wouldn't just buy a cashmere sweater for fashion, you'd buy it because you also want something to be warm in the winter. So, I definitely think that even though fur…the animal rights activists make out it's just for fashion, well it's not, I mean I don't wear my furs in the summer, I only wear my furs when it's cold. For the majority of people, it is a functional material because it keeps you warm in the winter.

Researcher: *How would you describe or promote fur to a designer who's never used the material before? You may be repeating what you said previously, but if there's anything else you can add to that question that would be great.*

Holly: Well, I mean from a business perspective it's got high margins, so that as a designer that's a big thing. But, I mean, as a designer who's unskilled in the use of fur it's also not easy to work with so you need to make sure you have specialist people to help produce it. But I mean there's a reason why around 70% of catwalk designers have got it on their runways, it's because it sells and it's got high margins and there's a market for it. It also adds - if you're a luxury brand - a little bit plus to your collection, just like when you have those luxury materials. And of course, there are all of things that I mentioned before; the sustainable aspect, the feel and all the beautiful things you can do with fur now and that kind of thing.

Researcher: *Could you talk a bit more about the sustainable aspect?*

Holly: Well…It's a sustainable resource, so, animals are a sustainable resource. I know it's sounds very callous to just refer to them as that, but that's what farmed animals are and I

believe very, very strongly in animal welfare but I don't believe that animals deserve the same rights as humans, and most people feel that they would rather use animals in their lives than not. In a farm you've got…its sustainable, in fur farming, first of all the animals are fed remnants from the human food chain, so depending on where they're located - in Scandinavia they're usually near the ocean and they eat all the fish heads and fish tails and all the stuff that humans don't eat. In North America for example, the one that I visited near Vancouver was near a lot of chicken farms so they ate eggs that were not deemed good enough for human consumption, and bits of chicken. So they eat the stuff that humans don't want to eat, that would otherwise be composted, and then their carcasses are used for biofuels and in Denmark, the second biggest city in Denmark, their public bus systems run on mink oil and the carcasses can also be used for fertilisers so they go back into the earth. So that's one of the theories in fashion now is that you need to look at things full circle, so the animal eats something and when they die they go back in the ground and when the coat ends its life cycle it goes back into the ground and it's not bearing toxic plastics. As far as the wild fur goes, that's also an incredibly important sustainable resource. There are so many benefits to how wild fur benefits society. In the US and Canada primarily is where the wild fur markets are. Canada's fur market is the third for wild fur so it's very important, the benefits of trapping and fees licenses that people buy...trapping and hunting licensing basically sustain a lot of the national parks in the US and Canada and in the remote areas of northern Canada where people trap it's their only job. An orange can cost $10 in the grocery store because transport links are you know, non-existent to the far north, these people live off the land and all of these areas where people are hunting and trapping coyotes and beavers and everything, that land...if they weren't using it for something someone would probably try and come along and use it for something else, something that wasn't going to be in tune with nature. And again, they eat the animals or they use the carcasses for things and they sell the skins, it's the same with the seal hunt. The population of seals is completely, ridiculously, big over the past few years and what's the best thing to do – well if you want to keep being able to fish and have any fish left you kill the seals and make beautiful coats out of them. And again it's all sustainable, I mean animals are a sustainable resource – I know like I said, it sounds a bit callous and it doesn't mean that I don't think they need to be raised and euthanised with respect and with good levels of welfare but the thing is, it's not like oil. Oil is finite, it causes a lot of problems environmentally, socially, politically, animals are a resource that is there and can be there forever if we take good care of it. It doesn't have a huge environmental impact.

Researcher: *Ok, I think there's some other questions further down where we'll talk about this in a bit more detail. I was going to talk to you a bit more about the difference between function and decoration. You said a bit about how you see the catwalks full of much more decorative use of fur, but however people are purchasing fur much more for function. I wondered, exploring that a little bit more, why do you think that designers display fur in that way on the catwalk?*

Holly: Because they do that with everything, that's how designers are. I mean, when you look at what's on the catwalk you don't think 'Oh I could wear that on Tuesday'. Most of the time you think 'wow' and then you go into the store and you see what's really for sale and it's not that stuff. I mean I've worked in luxury brands and what we put on the catwalk was at best, 50% of it was stuff that was actually going to be selling more than five pieces in the store and that's what you do as a press story, you want to put on a show, its theatrics. What ends up being in the store is a completely different story. I think that people have issues with frivolous fur items like key chains and stuff, and I agree that if we're going to do an argument of sustainable animal use and using it for what we need, then we don't need fur keychains, but what's important to remember is that those fur key chains are not cut from the prime piece of a beautiful Danish mink, fur key chains, fur eyelashes on the Fendi sweater, all these little trinkets, they're made from the remnants of fur that would otherwise not be used for something else. You can buy inexpensive fur coats that are made from the paws; they have special texture, the paws of mink or something like that. So basically, when you have an expensive pelt, you're going to use every single bit of it, and that's where all those frivolous pieces are either press pieces that people don't really buy that much, or they're frivolous pieces that are made from remnants. So basically 'let's make these remnants and turn them into a fur key chain' to sell for $1500. So, I think there's as much fur, you know, just for fashion as there is with any other type of fashion. People don't…aside from the odd freak billionaire or celebrity, people don't buy big fancy fur coats to parade around in LA in the summer, they buy them because they live somewhere that has cold weather, if you look historically where fur markets are - in the US, Northern Europe, Russia, parts of China where they get cold, it's because people wear fur in winter.

Researcher: *So, the people who are wearing the keychains made of fur or for example you get the bobble hats with the fur pompom on top - do you think that's a completely different type of consumer to the ones that are buying fur coats for function?*

Holly: No not necessarily, I think there's a lot of crossover in the markets. I think there's a lot of different types of people that would buy fur, there are people who buy it as a status symbol to wear as a winter jacket, because if you really want it to be practical, for me the thing that I have my eye on is Mr & Mrs Italy fur parkas because I'm not wearing fur to show it off, I want the fur lining...even though I know that's a fashion brand. You have people who wear it as a status symbol who still appreciate its functionality. You have people who buy Canada Goose, I mean I know it's not entirely fur but have the coyote because if you've been in New York when it's minus twenty in the winter and you walk four blocks you are freezing. I never was cold in those situations when I had my Canada Goose on. Then you have all those people in between, but the only people who are buying them as these frivolous pieces are people that are buying tons of frivolous fashion. These will be the people who have couture dresses they've worn once and all this other frivolity. The more practical consumer - they will be the luxury consumer buying it for

functional reasons as well as it being a beautiful product and perhaps, they love the brand and they love the story of the product and brand.

Researcher: *I think it's what you're describing as the frivolous pieces is what my main focus is. This idea of it being used as a decoration, I'm quite fascinated by why people select those items and why they're drawn to fur as a material. As a designer, what other materials would you advise combining fur with - a natural or man-made material, perhaps other animal materials, beading, embroidery elements - what would you deem appropriate or what would you expect?*

Holly: You can use all of those materials, but I would say always try and keep fur natural, mix it with natural products unless you're making something highly functional. So, when you look at something like a Canada Goose jacket, you know, it has got a synthetic shell, the down filling and the coyote trim. But those jackets, as much as people want to say that they're for fashion, I don't think they're for fashion. Those are functional. If I wanted to look chic, I wouldn't be wearing that, I would be wearing something else. In the case of something that is technical and massively functional, sure combine it with synthetics but for a luxury material and also to go back to this idea of the life cycle of a product, you want it to biodegrade at the end. It just feels wrong to mix it with synthetics. I know that there're people who have begun to question synthetic materials - what are the long-term effects on our body of having them against our skin? I had my kids in a neighbourhood that was full of PP's, and people were like 'no polyester, no synthetics, nothing against the children's skin'. We don't really know the long term affects, especially with a lot of these new materials, you know, what the long-term effects are. What you do know is that if you are wearing fur, leather, cashmere, wool and cotton you don't have toxic chemicals in them that are going to seep into your skin, that are going to alter your, you know…any of those things so… I kind of have to turn my nose up at synthetics, I'm not a very big fan unless it's completely functional. But I think a lot of people feel that way. The natural fibres…its superior, unless you're looking for something highly technical for active wear or extreme weather or something like that.

Researcher: *Which designers, brands or retailers – whether you know them personally or you admire them from afar - do you think are getting it right with their use of exotic animal materials? Also, would you associate those brands with a certain quality?*

Holly: If you work with fur properly you're already at a certain quality level because the handwork involved in making fur...the letting out techniques, those kinds of things are not the kinds of things that you can just chuck together without experience, they take a lot of skill to get something right. Already if you've got a decent quality fur you've already got some level of prestige in your construction methods and stuff. I like Fendi because they are doing some amazing cutting-edge beautiful things with fur and the couture show has been amazing. I like what Mr & Mrs Italy and Yves Salomon the army line have done with taking an army parka and putting fur on the inside, because I like the effortlessness, I

like that it looks like a casual piece of clothing. They're not at a very high price point and it's something that is really, really beautiful and functional. Well I wouldn't say beautiful, they're functional and they're stylish. I love Canada Goose because they are unapologetic about what they do and they make the best extreme Arctic clothing. I love that they produce in Canada and they support aboriginal trappers, where they get their coyotes and they are unapologetic about using fur and its qualities and down and all those things. They've had great success with it because they make a functional product and I have a lot of respect for that.

Researcher: *You mentioned (Italian luxury fashion house 3), do you own any items of theirs, or do you know anyone who wears a lot of (Italian luxury fashion house 3), if you do own a piece of their clothing could you speak a bit about the quality or what it's like to wear it or see other people wearing it?*

Holly: No, I don't own any Fendi because I'm not a millionaire and their pieces are really, really expensive. If I were to make a fur investment – I'm an insider - I wouldn't be looking at brands I would be thinking 'do I want lynx' or 'do I want beaver' and I would find out who does the best stuff with lynx and then I would try and get something from them. Sometimes you feel fabulous because you're wearing a certain brand but when you're wearing fur...I own a Sonia Rykiel fox and I don't feel fabulous because it's Sonia Rykiel I feel fabulous because it's beautiful and it feels good and it's warm and it's lovely. The same with my chinchilla scarf and I've got a muskrat coat, they feel...it's the feeling that you have with some of those materials and I feel like that is similar with cashmere or angora or pashmina. Those fine materials that when you touch them it's magical the softness and the beauty of them, those are special luxury. Last time I was at Premiere Vision I went to the stand of Lanificio Luigi Colombo and just touching the pieces of their cashmere suiting, you can't not be amazed. Just touching it there's something about that. I'm not very good at putting it across…that softness and that beauty and these fine materials, to have that.

Researcher: *Would you say that the aesthetic would come secondly to that, or is it just as important?*

Holly: (Long pause) …I don't know, that's a good question. Probably just as important although when you see a fur coat hanging on a rail you might want it but it's when you put it on and you feel it then I think that's where the magic happens with fur.

Researcher: *You mention Lanificio Luigi Colombo, that's quite interesting. What descriptive words would you associate that company with – this might be a bit of a difficult question actually. I'm talking more about mood, colours, something else entirely, processes you associate them with, maybe it could be just something as simple as luxury or handmade.*

Holly: It's luxury and its prestige, rarity, exclusivity because who can afford to buy.... when I worked at (French high-end fashion company) we didn't buy fabrics from there it was too expensive. A friend of mine worked at (Italian couture house), they used to buy it sometimes for their suits but those are men's suits that sell for 5, ten, fifteen, twenty thousand dollars, it's extremely exclusive.

Researcher: *So, when you were at (French high-end fashion company), if you don't mind me asking, how did they use fur? Could you talk a little bit about that?*

Holly: Fox collars, stoles, trims on jackets, and we did marabou jackets. We weren't a proper furrier, we did more scarves and smaller pieces, so we didn't make coats.

Researcher: *And what was the driving force behind that, was it the feel and the touch or was its luxury connotation and wanting to position the clothing as a luxury item, do you think that played a part of it?*

Holly: Absolutely. The company was what it was when I got there and I didn't even question or think about those things but it's almost like these days it's part of what you do as a luxury brand, is you have some prestigious animal materials in your collection and the ones who are saying 'oh I'm not doing fur' they're still doing beautiful suedes and leathers, sheepskins and shearlings and stuff. I feel like it's part of being a luxury brand. I think there's an association with that but I don't think that's the driving force behind why people buy it, I think it's also because of its functionality and because…you know…it's an animal that died to make something warm and beautiful and there's a respect in that. Just like how hunters do a little prayer after they've killed their animal or the way aboriginal people might have certain traditions when they hunt or kill. If you're going to take a life, it better be something that's functional and beautiful and that you're going to treasure. Furs for the most part are that. I'm not referring to keychains and stuff. For coats and everything, those items, that's the only item of clothing you're going to pay someone to store in a special refrigerated – it's not a refrigerator but temperature controlled, moisture-controlled unit. You don't see very many non-animal products being handed down generation to generation. It's fur coats, its leather bags, its stuff like that, sometimes wool, but you're not seeing like 'my fake fur coat from the 70's, I'm giving it to my granddaughter'. So, there's a real story and a magic behind that. And with luxury too there's also a great importance in the story of the production, from how Chanel gets their roses to make the perfume…that story. Going and visiting a farm in Denmark and seeing how the animals are raised and what farmers do and that whole entire process adds to the kind of story of the product and gives it more value.

Researcher: *So, do you think that there's more value in sourcing from certain fur farms rather than others? Or fur farms that are based in certain countries are more valuable than others?*

Holly: I haven't been to any fur farms in Asia but one thing that we know which is undeniable and even the most staunch animal activists say that if you don't treat an animal…if the animal does not have a certain level of lifestyle – it's not the right word for animals – but if they are not fed properly or are living a stressful life the first thing that's going to go is their fur. You can put a chicken in a box its entire life and you can still sell the breast to Tesco, no problem. But you can't badly, badly, mistreat an animal and then expect to make any money off the pelt. Whatever the reasons, for the most part fur bearers and animals that are raised for their furs are usually fed properly and - we don't say happy - but the goal of the farmer is for them to live stress free lives. It's true that the welfare standards are not as high in some parts of the world and that Canadian, American and European welfare standards are higher than many other countries, however you don't make a huge amount of money off fur if you don't treat your animal properly, so that is very different from how you treat animals that are raised for food. I listened to an interview yesterday from that guy who wrote that piece about why fur's in fashion and one of the things that he said was do not try and ban fur farms because we're not getting rid of fur, and if we ban it in Europe they're only all going to be raised in places that don't have welfare standards instead. He said that what you should do is encourage people to buy from fur farms that have welfare standards. Try and encourage all other farmers, such as livestock farmers, to adopt the same welfare codes as fur farmers do because they have much higher welfare codes. I know in Sweden when I visited a farm there was a vet there and she said that they have much higher standards than how pigs and cows are treated in Sweden, and that is quite similar in a lot of areas. That's because it comes down to the bottom line, farming is not a hobby, it is a business and if you treat your animals well, you're going to get more for your pelts at auction.

Researcher: *Do you think it matters to a consumer who may not be able to tell the difference between two furs that have come from two different farms - yet one farm has a better welfare standard? Do you think a consumer would be interested in that, be bothered by that?*

Holly: Yes, I think consumers are, but I just think it depends on the consumer. I think that some people care and some people don't, and those who don't - they don't. I think that more people are starting to care - I don't know actually if people are starting to care - I lived in London for 10 years and I was kind of shocked at how people seem to care so much about how battery chickens were being treated and how fur farms were but then they would go to Primark and buy stuff that was made in factories that collapsed and crushed thousands of people. So, I feel like some people care more about animals than they do about people. Some people just don't care and other people care a great deal about where their goods come from. What they're finding now - and I haven't experienced this but I've heard from people - is that retailers and designers are trying to get more information out when they are buying pelts. So that when they do sell their products to a retailer, they can train the shop floor staff to say for example 'these pelts are American, they come from Wisconsin, it's a family farm and the animals are treated

very well', because that information is part of the selling point. But there's always going to be people that don't care, there's a lot of them out there that still don't care.

Researcher: *So, in terms of the story that goes with the product, comparing wild versus farmed animals, do you think there's more value in one story than the other?*

Holly: No, not necessarily. I think the concept of wild fur has got more of a history, Canada was founded on the wild fur trade but the stories behind fur farms – most of them are family owned and many of them were stories like 'my grandfathers started this 80 years ago'. They're not big, giant, operations like the way you see in dairy, livestock and chicken farming. I went to one of the largest farms in Denmark and even that was very small in scale. There is definitely a story there, it's almost always family run, they care about the animals. People should be able to visit farms more because I think it's important to understand where your food and your clothing has come from. There is certainly a story there. Especially with this movement too, there is more interest in people living off the land and wanting to know the story behind things, this kind of hipster trend with homesteading and stuff like that. Fur definitely fits in with that. Hunting has become something that's not just something old white republican men do, it's cool now to go out and shoot your own deer and eat it. So, the farming side definitely has a story there too.

Researcher: *What about farms in Asia maybe which are more modern and may have a reputation for worse practices than in Europe and America, do you think that it affects the story then and affects that sort of appeal?*

Holly: A great deal of fur in luxury brands doesn't come from Asia. A huge amount of fur *products* come from Asia, but they are largest buyers of fur in North America and European auctions, 20% of Denmark's exports are to China and are mink, basically. Don't quote me on that figure! So, if you're talking luxury brands the chances that those furs are coming from questionable sources - it's not likely. If you are looking at a little jacket with a fur collar and it's £50 or £80, I know that you have to raise an animal to get that piece of fur. The store is going to have a mark-up, you know just looking at that price tag that the ethics of that are probably not very sound. Just like you know when you go to Primark that a pair of shoes for £7 is not sound. So, the people who are buying that, I really don't think that they're thinking about ethics and they care. In the luxury world, a huge amount of the pelts in those furs are being sourced from ethical countries. Again, to get that, those high-quality luxury pelts, whether they're in Europe or Asia, the only way to achieve that quality is the welfare standards. They're developing more guidelines and standards now in Asia for fur farmers there. Partially for the reputation, but also if you look at the reason why Danish mink is amongst the best in the world it's because they all share their information and they all have the same super high welfare standards. It's a business thing, as much as it's been a situation with ethics.

Researcher: *Humane Society Internationals report* found that many high street retailers selling apparel with a faux fur trim is in fact real fur. In your opinion how does this affect furs image?*

Holly: I don't believe it (laughs). No one pretends something is fake fur, it's completely counterproductive. I don't trust the Humane Society one bit, they are cons. I don't deny that it's happened, but this is not a widespread thing where every time you go into Nordstrom and buy a fake fur it's actually real. Those are very isolated incidents which have been blown out of proportion by the animal rights activists, because of course it's to their benefit to scare people even into buying fake fur because PETA is even against fake fur because they don't even want to perpetuate the trend. So, this is not an issue, it is something that happened and the animal rights activists and their lobbyists have blown it out of proportion and now they've got a new law in New York that says you're going to get fined more if you mislabel something. Well let's look at this for five years and see how many people get fined, because the number of incidents is going to be so rare. This is not a normal occurrence. There are so many issues, first of all why would you do that, fur has more value than fake fur. Fake fur is way cheaper, even than the cheapest fur. It's easy to use, you can make it into rolls, you don't have uneven pelts to deal with. You've got massive risks trying to get goods into different countries using real fur, you've got completely different paperwork. With CITES agreements and laws. There are so many reasons why no one would do that, it is not a regular occurrence. It is something that must have happened a very small number of times and it's completely been blown out of proportion to make people think that everyone's doing it, and they're not.

Researcher: *Do you think just having the report out there, regardless of whether it's happened or not, do you think just having that report out there and in the press and stuff, do you think it's affected real furs image of being associated more with luxury?*

Holly: No, I don't think so. People who know real fur, who love it, are not going to be the ones who are buying the fake fur. So, they're not going to be the ones who are conned. I think it's more of a story that retailers need to be concerned about rather than the fur trade. There's a lot of issues that the fur trade faces and I would not count this as an issue that people are concerned about.

Researcher: *We've touched on this a bit but am I right in saying that Canadian fur that supports hunting and trapping is important to you? Is this also an important factor to you as a designer and do you think it's important to a consumer? I know we've touched on this a little bit but if you have anything else to add that would be great.*

Holly: I don't use fur in my designs so my involvement with fur is more working with organisations, just to make sure that's clear. I do really love wild fur and I love the way lynx looks and I think beaver is one of the most durable strong furs, it's the kind of fur that you could have your handbag on your shoulder and you're not going to lose a lot of

hairs or wreck it. So, there's definitely benefits to that. I don't own any… well I do own some seal skin slippers - my kids, but if I could the first thing I would be going out to buy would be more seal skin because the EU's ban on sealskin has been pretty much one of the biggest contributors to destroying Inuit culture in the north of Canada and so, if I was going to run out and buy something fur tomorrow it would probably be sealskin to support those people whose livelihoods have been ruined over a law based on moral outrage.

Researcher: *That's interesting, so from a consumer perspective that is really important to you - supporting a culture. Do you think that's the same for other contemporaries of yours or other people who are buying sealskin?*

Holly: Canadians who support the seal hunt or who are aware of it, would definitely share my views. But most people don't really care. I mean, luxury consumers, some will want to know the provenance of things, other people will just be like 'this is beautiful' and they might be like 'oh it's Danish mink' or 'its Finnish fox' or 'its wild fur from Canada' or whatever and that might be a selling point but I don't think that there are very many consumers out there that really go that deeply into their purchases.

Researcher: *So talking a bit about the feel and the appearance of fur then as really a selling point, do you think that there's any greater value in animal products that have been manipulated or cut into or shaved or further embellished or worked with, or do you think that there's actually greater value in the natural material that hasn't been played around with very much?*

Holly: I think that's a personal thing, I like beautiful skins in their natural state and I also think that from an environmental perspective I'd rather buy something that hasn't been bleached and dyed if I can if it's still beautiful. Furs one of the few materials where a huge number of the products made in that particular material are not dyed or bleached because I can't even think... Leather sometimes is not, but for the most part every single bit of a material that we use in fashion is almost always dyed, with the exception of unbleached cotton, that's nothing compared to the amount of fur that we use in the natural state. But some people want the colour and I mean I don't really see an issue with that. I think, when you see things like fur coats that have been...a fur coat is a fur coat, if it's got some beading on it, it doesn't mean it's no longer a practical functional piece of clothing. I just don't think that all this stuff that is so overly embellished or cut up so that it no longer has its function, I don't think there's that much of that, I don't think that accounts for a very large portion of the market. What you see in the catwalks does not reflect what people are buying out there. I mean, if you go to a fur trade show, on the stands people are just mostly selling fur coats in different types of fur and different colours and different lengths. The shows that I've been to in Canada and Milan, there's not a lot of frivolity there. That's reserved for the catwalks and the celebrities and those

kinds of things. The main business is people wanting to wear clothing and buying clothing that's practical and beautiful.

Researcher: *I was going to go back to a point you made...you touched on before that in your opinion you like furs that are in the natural state. So, in your opinion would you go so far as to say that fur can't really be improved upon? That actually it's beautiful as it is, it's got a really lovely feel and appearance and that it doesn't need to be manipulated and it's just been 'grown perfect' if you like, would you agree with that?*

Holly: No, I don't think that because I mean in terms of its colour, I like it in its natural state, but it's also nice dyed. That's some personal preference. But fur, when you look at how to make a proper fur coat you are essentially cutting up skin into tiny, tiny, tiny strips and sewing them all back together. So, it's far from being in its natural state when you take a mink and turn it into a coat. So, there's a lot of work involved in getting that pelt into a garment. So, no I don't. It's not a question of whether I think one is better than the other, I would argue though that if you're a true environmentalist and you want to have sustainability and production processes being eco-friendly is key to you then it certainly makes more sense to wear fur that's in its natural state. In terms of its dying but not in terms of the construction, that's more of a personal taste thing.

Researcher: *As a designer can you discuss your feelings towards imitation exotic animal materials, so mainly fur. What do they offer and what do they lack? If a faux fur existed that looked and felt exactly the same as real fur would this be appealing to you? And if not, why?*

Holly: The only way it would be remotely appealing to me would be if the production process was sustainable, it was eco-friendly, it was completely biodegradable. So not like 'oh a plastic bag biodegrades question mark', but there's still particles of plastic in the ground all over the place...and it was as long lasting as fur. I don't think that material exists, because all the issues that we have on our planet, for me the most pressing, the most terrifying issue is the environmental issue and when you look at clothing you're using unsustainable, non-renewable resources to make cheap horrible clothing under questionable labour practices and they're ending up in landfill. The polyesters, every time you wash them in a washing machine tiny particles of plastic go into our waterways, and they're finding them inside fish in the remote parts of the Arctic. That for me is a terrifying prospect because we don't even know...we have no idea what is going on there. Natural fibres biodegrade, they become part of the earth again. I could eat a carrot that grew in the ground that a fur coat or a cotton t-shirt biodegraded in 10, 20, 100 years later. But if it was a synthetic, unless it was a synthetic derived from natural materials like hemp or something or corn then what's the point.

Researcher: *So just putting sustainability and environmental issues aside just for a second, would you - in terms of the appearance - because you've spoken about the story that*

comes with real fur and there being some value in the provenance of a material, do you think that there would be any value in having...

Holly: I think I understand what you're saying. Last time I was at Premiere Vision I - out of curiosity - went onto a few fake fur stands and 99.9% of fake fur feels disgusting when you touch it. There are now a couple of companies that are making phenomenal fake fur but the luxury consumer doesn't care about the environment. They probably do care about one - keeping warm and two - if you're going to spend money on a luxury product you want it to last and fake furs don't do that. They don't keep you warm and they don't have those qualities that are both insulating but breathable. They don't look good five years later, I don't think you're going to see people wearing their Shrimps coat from ten years ago, in ten years. You're not going to see that, you're going to see people wearing their mink coat from ten years ago, twenty years ago or forty years ago if you'd taken good care of it, but you're not going to see that. Most luxury consumers are not only buying it for the look and the feel but things like longevity is key in luxury consumers. Particularly younger...or luxury consumers who are not the ultra-high net worth individuals, people who just make investments into good quality products because they want them to last. I mean will this synthetic material last? I doubt it, because no other one has. You would really need a huge scientific discovery and even if you did have that scientific discovery that was so amazing, is it sustainable, is the production process eco-friendly, there's just so many variables.

Researcher: *Is there anything else that you want to add at all to this whole discussion, any other points that you think are relevant?*

Holly: Well I do think that there's a lot of people out there that shun synthetics too. People want to know how things are made, what things are made of, and they check labels. There are a few luxury polyester materials that have made it into the market successfully. I think Prada was using something interesting, and there's microfibres and stuff. But for the most part, for example if you go to Premiere Vision, most of the stands and even the departments are; silks, linen, wools and tailoring, knits, yarns which are all wool and cotton and linen, then they'll have shirting which is cottons. Luxury fabrics are so much based around natural materials, and synthetics are seen as, for the most part, cheap. They don't have that image and to change that is a monumental task I think, to change those perceptions. We've all accepted that synthetics are great for gym clothing and Lycra is great mixed with cotton for underwear, but to buy a synthetic coat is...I think it's a hard sell on a luxury consumer. A sweater made out of synthetic, you know...a synthetic shoe? I mean...(laughs) you know.

Researcher: *I understand your point about how long lasting something is, I mean, I've got some shoes that are synthetic, some shoes that are leather, a whole range really of different things and yes the stuff that's synthetic lasts, I mean...I had a pair of shoes that*

broke after about six months and I was pretty annoyed about that. They were synthetic. That image doesn't help.

Holly: They don't breathe, and they don't stretch, and I mean...when I have an old wool sweater or an old cashmere sweater I'll patch it, I'll bring it to the country house and wear it when we're out in the forest, I don't throw that stuff away even when it does start to get old. Just recently someone gave me a fox coat and I cut the sleeves off and it's going to be a vest now. You do that with things that are beautiful materials that are long lasting, you don't do that with a synthetic anything.

Researcher: *That's a really interesting point. I think with animal products like fur and things as well, if it tears or it gets damaged in some way, I expect that consumer does take it back to where they bought it from and it's likely to be repaired.*

Holly: Absolutely and the other interesting thing too with fur is that you can re-purpose - I think that's the word we try and use – you can re-purpose fur. Using that letting out technique, I had a fox skin turn into a scarf that's three metres long, you can use skins and you can turn them into new things and if they are things that are too old to be turned into a new garment you can make them into cushions or blankets or apparently nowadays some furriers are selling old fur coats and repurposing them into lining so that you can wear them under your raincoat. It's a very practical thing, so you can just chuck on...something like that, I mean that's the reason why I have that appeal with the Mr & Mrs Italy and Yves Salomon...you put your old fur vest underneath your jacket and you're warm so I think that the reusability there is huge.

Researcher: *I think that's a really interesting point and I know that there's some people in my cohort that are doing research into mending and repair so actually I wonder if they've looked at this sort of side to it and the different types of materials. I expect they probably have.*

Holly: Yeah there's a lot of potential there with that kind of thing, and that ties in so well with the current zeitgeist of fashion at the moment which is like 'we're screwed because we're just making so much crap and it's ending up in landfill'.

END

7.3.2 MATTHEW INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection: 01/10/16
Place of data collection: Skype
Pseudonym of participant: Matthew, Head of the Studio
Researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Method of data collection: Interview
Duration of data collection: 54. mins
Documentation type: Voice recorder

START

Researcher: Have you seen the types of designers who work with fur change since you've been at (European Fur Company)? Including new markets working with fur?

Matthew: I have been in (European Fur Company) for 12 years now, and I've been in the fur business for thirty-something years. What I have seen is that the designer's view of fur has changed from being a skin to a 'fabric that I can use', so 'I can use the skin to create a fabric and from that I can make my designs and achieve my goals'. So, the awareness of not only using skin on skin but actually create gorgeous fabrics out of the skin. That is clearly an awareness of the designers, as I see it from the beginning. In the beginning it was skin on skin and now they change, they make different materials with fur and combine different types of fur, no animal looks like the fabric that comes out of it. You could say they take the animal approach and create fabric instead, and then they make their items – accessories, full fur, trims or whatever they want to do. So, the awareness that they can manipulate the material to their design, that's the awareness of the designer as I see it progressing at least 12 years - and that they do.

Researcher: Do you think that's because it's become more of an accessible material do you think? That's why they've been playing around with it in different ways?

Matthew: Yeah, I think its natural involvement actually. In the beginning they would just stamp wool right, and now you make beautiful fabrics out of the wool so it's a development. At the same time, it's very costly to do experiments so in the beginning you are very afraid of doing anything, you are afraid to ruin the beautiful skin that you look at. Lack of respect is in this case a good thing; because you have to use the whole skin you cannot use just part of the skin. You have to use every square centimetre of skin in order to create your fabric, otherwise it's too costly.

Researcher: Is it still used a lot for garments or is it more accessories, do you think that's more common now?

Matthew: Yeah it is, what I do is that normally when I work with the designers we do a show eye-catcher, like a show piece, a real eye catcher right, crazy stuff, and then they tone down and run more commercially, maybe partly fur, partly fabric or just a trim or a little accessory. But we work within the whole area, so if they want to do three full garments for their collection and they think they have the customer in the end then we'll do that, but we advise them of course that if you want to produce this kind of style then the price will be, I don't know, £20,000 or something like that. So, then they say 'OK, I better go in another direction'. In order to get attention nowadays in the fashion field you have to create something extraordinary otherwise you just go mainstream right, so you have to do eye catchers in order to get people just to see the show for Christ's sake. In that matter we support them pretty well. So cost is not an option with us, it's an option for them. So, if they also want to do commercial stuff then they must lower their consumption of the amount of the skin they're using. We also have another field that we work in. I work in the upcoming layer mostly; students and new established designers who don't have their own brand yet but they're on their way. They get publicity and they have a talent; this is how I sneak them out, find out who to work with. So, either they approach me or I approach them and say 'now you want this woolmark price' or something like that, it could be like that, 'could you be interested in working with fur because we would be interesting in collaborating with you'. This is how we operate, but it could also be at the university when we are travelling around the world from Japan to Paris and London, if we spot a talent there. Then we can go further with her and not just doing this one style of fur – that class – but actually work more with this one if we find out an extraordinary talent for work of fur. So, this is how we operate.

Researcher: Where would you say most talents are, where in the world? Would you say it's a lot in London?

Matthew: It's all over. There are three in each class, that's what I experience. We've been around 14 universities and there's about three in each class that are talented and there's one that is very talented. It is amazing to see actually how it is, because many people think that they are talented themselves but we have a lot of reflections (comparisons) that we can do. We can reflect (compare) for instance between people from Denmark and people from Japan and so we have a much wider view. They reflect (compare) in them self in the class and in their gurus (tutors) right or whatever. So, the way we look at it is much, much wider but the thing is that there are three that are talented in each class. But it's not enough to be talented you've also have to know something about business if you want to work as a designer. Talent is not enough today.

Researcher: Would you say that the designers need to know something about the business of the fur industry as well?

Matthew: Yes, it takes a while to get into it. This is also why we do this because if we as (European Fur Company) did not do this, both the individual sponsorship and also the sponsorship with the university, they will not meet fur, they might meet rabbit but rabbit sheds right and you have hair all over. So, they get a negative impression of fur. We are using second best quality, very high-end skin that we give to them to play with because then they have the right experience. This is the material that is actually out there and we let them play with it and realise the styles. We realise one to three styles from each university each year. We take ownership of the styles but they have production and international rights with the design.

Researcher: Can you say which universities you've been working with or is that confidential?

Matthew: I can tell you the countries; I can't remember all of them. We're working with (Japanese University), we're working with one in Paris, (British University), we're working with three universities in China because China is a very big market for the mink skin and we're working with three or four universities in Denmark, and one in Korea. I can send you the list if you want. We do three programmes at each university with the possibility to extend the programme, but if they don't want to extend or if we don't want to continue, if it's too much hassle to work with…it's a mixture of a prestigious university and a university who lies in the fur production areas, because we need that mix. What we do is that we actually invite the fur business to attend at the universities to our introduction to projects, so in that way we link up the local network of manufacturers so they can have something done because that's what it's all about, getting something done when you want something right? It's always about connecting people and trust the one that you meet. Otherwise nothing's going to happen.

Researcher: Do you find that the students that you work with request or ask you for a certain type of fur or certain colour or are there common things… (that they ask for)?

Matthew: No, they have a free choice between the four main types that I offer: seal, mink, astrakhan and fox or chinchilla. Mostly they choose mink, also because we push mink, but it's also because you can do so many things with mink. It is very, very strong the leather and hair structure that they have, you can endlessly manipulate it.

Researcher: And then do you supply lots of different colours as well?

Matthew: Yeah, I do but it works like this: they send me their sketches, each school sends in five sketches. The classes are between 15-20 students from each university, then the university selects five of the sketches and they are sent to us. We pick one to three styles from each university and then we'll show out of these 25, 28 or 30 styles. From their sketches and their description, we do the dyeing of the skins and then we send the skin out to manufacturers. (Schools from our own country) we do our self, also some in

London of course, production in London is ridiculously expensive. This is so that we can actually invite the students here if we have the discussion or like you and I, Skype through the problems. They make complicated stuff and the furrier pulls their hair 'what's going on I can't do this!?' but this has ended actually because we want to push the market also towards the new design and what is actually possible with the design. And it helps.

Researcher: Would you say it is still luxury work in terms of the clothing or do you think they are trying to make something that is for a middle market?

Matthew: Skin price alone when you talk mink, that's a luxury. Of course, you can make something with a limited amount of mink then you can go towards the middle class as well, and that is the tendency that I see, just with a little bit of mink on. Maybe a jacket with a little mink trimming on the sleeves or collar or pockets or something like it. So that's something that becomes luxury for the middle class. You can also if you want to approach the luxury market you can go slow, so to speak. Just starting with a little bit of mink, and then a little bit more and then suddenly you have a new audience there. You can then raise your price level in general. Because if you have a jacket with a little bit of mink on, this is not the one you throw away first. You'll throw the other ones, the plain fabric, that's the one you leave first. The moment you take a little bit of care… that's (to not discard) then the tendency, that's very clear. So, a little bit of mink, combined with fabric, and then it goes a little bit more, a little bit more. That's one of our goals at (European Fur Company); also, to approach the fashion market. Because now the fur market is actually the fashion market, right?

Researcher: So, to try and get fur out there more is your aim?

Matthew: Yeah. The thing is you have to be so specialised in working with furs, so that's the problem. As it is now it's in different regions of the world, instead of 'you have everything in one factory' you have to ship around the world to get a garment done. So, the first one to wrap the ball and get the fur production line done with anything from scuba diving materials to fur or whatever could take the whole production line. These are the ones who are going to survive in the future, that's what I tell the Chinese. Because they're very special. They can do a few garments, a few techniques and if they stay in this way they can only compete with price and that's not enough they have to compete on design as well.

Researcher: What is it about fur that makes it an appealing material to use in fashion would you say? If you're able to could you discuss the different appeal maybe to designers and consumers?

Matthew: What appeals to them is what can be done with it. Of course, the touch and feel itself, that's emotional but what you can actually do with it when you realise you can do something with this piece of hair that's laying on your table then actually its endless

what you can do. You create your own fur textile right and that is actually what's appealing; that they can create their own design and not just take an animal and put it on the collar.

Researcher: Because it's such a three-dimensional material I suppose and very tactile?

Matthew: Yeah. It's very different to work with and it's much more time consuming also to work with, now I'm talking production-wise. What we do is that in (European Fur Company) we sell raw skins, so there's a long way with tanning, dyeing, all that, before you can actually get it. Seal and Chinchilla skin are sold as dress skin so they are available for the designer right away. Of course, I have lots of dress skin here so we can get started right, otherwise you have to wait for one or two months until you can actually start something. Also, I can be ready at the tannery, at the dyers, we can work fast.

Researcher: Would you say there are any limitations to using fur at all? Any colours that are hard to achieve?

Matthew: There's a limitation – that's the ethics. Don't use the endangered species right, then you'll get very unpopular right? But otherwise if it's out there in the market and if it's legit then it's endless. So of course, you have to accept that it eventually was an animal that you killed to get this fur. So that's the limit of it, otherwise it's actually endless. Another limitation is that you cannot always get what you want because it's limited. You cannot always get the exact colour or type at the time you need it. So, it's a special way, its auction-based right – its price on demand and if you want it you have to rush there and buy it otherwise someone else gets it and you lost. So, it's a difference, not like buying fabric and buying 10,000metres right, that's not going to happen. You might be able to buy 5000 skins that are similar and that's it right, the next will have a different other shade or maybe a different hair length so that's also the limitation of fur, that you cannot always get what you want. Then you must compromise. You must tell your customer this is how it is, you cannot always get the exact skin, and that's hard especially in fashion because they want this pantone. They have to realise that even though if you dye skin, they turn out different, so even if you have white, they turn out a different shade because they have less grease or less yellowish in the fur so unless you really power-dye it right? So, each skin is actually unique, like us human beings.

Researcher: I guess that's really appealing because it means that you're producing something that's one-off, that can't ever be the same as something else.

Matthew: And you can easily make uniqueness with fur, of course you can create your own fur textile and that makes the style unique. So, you can easily be a first timer when you do a fur style.

Researcher: The next thing I was going to ask you is about the most popular fur types, I know you said that mink is quite popular.

Matthew: Yes, mink is, you see, it's also the most available animal type right. Of course, there's also rabbit, but mink is the most produced animal, farmed animal, that are sold worldwide. What I experience is that the fox is popular for collars and trims and stuff like that but not as full fur coats. Another product that's popular is the swakara lamb - lambskin with the short hair and seal is not very popular because people think that they are bad, and they are not. Sealskin from Greenland you're allowed to trade. So, the Greenland hunter can actually survive and get a living, and there's lots of seals. So, seal is repressed in the market because of regulations in the EU, but they're still allowed to be sold, but people think that it's forbidden to wear seal. So, they're misinformed, very much, that's a pity.

Researcher: Do you find that there's a lot of that? That that is quite often a problem?

Matthew: Yeah, people don't really know the rules or what's going on, or 'how can I do it', and then you need some certification when you send the skin from one place to another, there's an implication, a mark on the shipment or something like that. It gets complicated and then they just back out, use something else, there's a little frustration. But it's a good thing that…there's also our other animals that we don't sell at (European Fur Company). Let's say lynx for instance, that you can keep a limited amount in a limited area so it's good with these restrictions because then we'll end up killing all animals, right? So, it's good with restrictions. But it must be informed in a more open way instead of saying now sealskin is bad, except Greenland seal. It should be 'you can buy Greenland seal, but you cannot buy seal from these areas.' That's a totally different approach. They start with saying seal is forbidden right? They are struggling in Greenland to actually sell the amount of skins that they have.

Researcher: Are the seals that come from there, they're all wild is that correct?

Matthew: They're wild, they're hunted, shot. They sell the skin; they eat some of the meat and the feed their dogs with the rest of it. The most sustainable fur of all, seal.

Researcher: Are there other skins that are wild as well or is it just seal skin?

Matthew: There's also racoon that are wild and muskrat, lynx, little bit of wolf but very, very few. So that's what's actually in the market now. Little bit of squirrel from Russia, wild sable is also there, the rest of it is farmed nowadays. Swakara is farmed but it's like wildlife. The swakara is a karakul lamb who lives in desert areas, huge, huge areas so they have vast areas to walk around in their flock, huge areas – sometimes you cannot find the animals. They water them and when the animal is giving birth they stay by the water and

then the farmer brings the animal home and they give birth and they kill the lamb, they milk the mother and put it out again. This is how that works.

Researcher: If you compare wild and farmed skins do, they offer different types of qualities or different values?

Matthew: Farmed skin is much better quality than wildlife. Wildlife they struggle to survive right? The farmed animal gets the right amount of proteins, vitamins in their feed. They're not damaged, whereas wildlife has been out fighting so they have damage on their skin. It's very tough to be a wild animal compared to being a farmed animal. They also have a shorter lifespan in the wild than if they are farmed.

Researcher: Do you get many requests from designers who want wild animals because they like the idea?

Matthew: Yeah but I just tell them 'why?' 'why do you want this?'…because they want to stand out. If you want to stand out create your own fur fabric and stand out with what's actually available. Long haired skins, very long-haired skins right, like gorilla or something like that right – you cannot use that, so forget about it right?

Researcher: Do people ask about that kind of thing?

Matthew: Asking about the structure, if they want very much volume on the chest or on the shoulders, because they want this kind of…but then you have to use goat skin or something else…you cannot use that (gorilla) right? But of course, they are inspired by the look of animals, but that's a no-go.

Researcher: There's some in archives I've looked at, I found some really old monkey or gorilla piece from the 1920's…

Matthew: In the old days you could use that, before the appendix on the skins. But that's not there anymore; it's very, very, very rare.

Researcher: The next question was really to ask about new innovations in fur, the motivation perhaps behind their development. So that may be something that you are doing in-house that is perhaps a new innovation – perhaps the treatment or something like this?

Matthew: That's what we do all year round. So, what we have is a big library of different techniques, different treatments, we have more than 1500 different things right, and when we are inviting designers to work with us, they are inspired by all these things, and the she wants to or he wants to do something. So, then we do *that* thing, and then we have *that* in our library so it's kind of builds all the time. So, it's like a research institute

for ‘what can I do with fur?’ actually. For our own card we do maybe between 60-80 new techniques on fur every year. Not including dyeing and printing and all that, just the manipulation. Then there’s the dyeing, there’s the back treatment of the leather and all different kinds of other things, that’s on top of it. So, we have this huge library of fur and what actually can be done with fur.

Researcher: That’s so much!

Matthew: It’s very much, and now we’re realising 6-8 styles and making a catalogue saying how we did it every year. We also use it as teaching material at the universities. But now we are trying to – we are at the beginning of this – we are trying to visualise in 3D what would this style look like if you use this technique. So, the plan for the future will be that we realise maybe 10 styles full-up as a style – these styles we’ll make as 3D avatars and then you yourself can put the technique that you want on these avatars. So, you can actually design your own. That’s in the future. It will come, because you don’t do prototypes, you do lean-type prototype, you have only one shot. So that’s the difference also from other design industries you maybe do 5 jackets and then you pick one and you say this is the one we put into production. You don’t do that you just do lean jackets and it has to be good because you waste too much money. And that’s also a new way I think, we had a long discussion with designers because there’s no way out of it when we start production. You cannot come back afterwards ‘oh it should be a little shorter here and there and this should be blue or blah blah’. So, you are stuck with what you have designed and cannot change – that’s the next collection, next year.

Researcher: It’s really a much slower process.

Matthew: Yeah and craftsmanship as hell! A lot of craftsmanship. That’s the hard part of it; if you want to develop a lot of things then craftsmanship is limited. Then it’s hard to have someone to do it for you. You might be this talented but if there’s no one out there who can actually do it for you then you’re just screwed.

Researcher: Has it increased or decreased - the amount of craftsmen?

Matthew: Decreased, decreased a lot. And this is why you see so many similar coats. All these similar coats are mass production in China, and certain factories do certain styles actually and then in different colours, right? I think they realised that they must have educated people in the fur business in the future and that’s what the Chinese part will do in the future, I think they will start to create an education and not just this step-by-step production where you learn one thing and then out comes a coat right, they have to see the whole picture. Maybe 15 of the two hundred cities make fur coats, 15 of them must know what they’re doing because you also see that they bring in designers to renew themselves because they realise, they cannot compete on price, it’s too hard, especially in China. It’s a mark-up of 20% they have in China and if you look at Louis Vuitton its 12-

15% or something. It's ridiculous so they just earn 20% of one coat and not mark up 12 or 6, 2. Here in Europe that's also a discussion we have with the designers when we start the project, cut down your mark up by a third otherwise you will not sell in the boutiques because it will explode in the boutiques. So normally they do a minimum mark up of 2-3%, that's more than enough, then you sell. They earn a lot of money on one style, instead of I don't know, 100 t-shirts or something like that.

Researcher: As well as students and young designers, do you work with other brands, bigger brands?

Matthew: My experience is that they're much more secretive, so they come to look, touch, feel and say 'we did all this before' and they go home and do something else. So, I'd like to work in this…but of course we help them. If they want a certain type of skin or something then we tell them 'this is available at this auction but you have to raise your hand'. But they want all skin at a certain price, and so this is not going to happen because if somebody bids higher than you then they've got the skin. But they're trying to make deals like that with us. But the farmers are very resistant and say 'listen, hammer price and then you get what you want' so…and that's why, fine with me…of course from a PR perspective it's interesting for (European Fur Company) to work with high-end brands but yeah… (French luxury goods company) just called us today, they want something with gold on the top and I said I have 20 set skins but they want pure gold and I put them in connection with someone who can actually do it and stuff like that. But it's not that level, they do not send their designer here to play so to speak, of course they can themselves. And also, what I see in the high-end fashion is that they already use fur so I don't need to push further in there. What I need is to create fur awareness to all designers so in their future work, when they are working for (French luxury goods company) someday, then they have fur in their head, they think 'we know something about fur, why don't we do this fur trimming or collar' and that's the main goal. That's the most important job that we do in the studio, is working with the students and students have no limits! They're not caved in with certain styles or certain look or certain fabric or whatever they have to use, they have free space and they can really express themselves, and that's what feeds us actually – the whole staff here. So, we're inspired by so many people, it's an amazing job really.

Researcher: It sounds rewarding. The other thing I was really interested in was whether you consider other animal materials like exotic reptile skins and feathers to be in the same league as fur?

Matthew: We have snakeskins hanging, we have a few alligators, fish skins but not many…the most normal thing is to use leather or wool or nowadays I also see this scuba-diving neoprene thing that also works very well with fur actually. The texture and stuff goes very well, but there's no limit for us, if you want to put it on organza, we'll put it on organza, there's no limits. We'll try anything.

Researcher: Would you have a particular recommendation for someone who came to you who really didn't know what fur should go with?

Matthew: Use a good quality fabric, don't use lousy fabric. You're spending so much money on the fur so then use fabric that lasts also; otherwise it's a waste of time and money actually.

Researcher: Would you say that natural materials are better than synthetics for that type of thing?

Matthew: From an environmental perspective of course it is, wool and cotton and stuff is better than the other one…but I don't decide for them. It's their decision; I just support their decision and help them to achieve what comes from the sketch right? So, I'm a technical advisor concerning the fur, and what they choose as other material…I advise them to use good quality but the choice is totally theirs. You cannot dictate anything nowadays; they know what they want. They know what they want. But of course, if we're talking exotic reptile, exotic animal, of course it appeals to some people and it makes things look different. So, if they want to use it then we'll use it if it's not an endangered species. If it's an endangered species I don't want to use it, I don't want to play with those guns.

Researcher: Do you think feathers have any of the same types of qualities as fur?

Matthew: Yeah, it has volume. I did this combination with (British high-end fashion company) a few years ago; a combination of fur and feather.

Researcher: Could you discuss your feelings towards faux fur? What does it offer and what does it lack?

Matthew: I can discuss this! I don't really get it, why use it when the other stuff is out there? Why create something synthetic that is never ever going to have the same touch and feel as fur. So, if you like the look of fur and the touch of fur, then use fur, don't use something synthetic because you never get it. There's also a thing with fur - it's self-cleaning, you can clean it with fresh snow and hang it out so it's actually…if I touched fake fur in my opinion its static electric. Of course, it has a nice touch but when I think of production, the production of it – I don't like that. I don't like the way it's produced, petrochemicals and stuff.

Researcher: Is that because of environmental concerns?

Matthew: Yeah, the environmental part and also the waste afterwards, you never get rid of it, you have to burn it and then its toxic when you burn it. The other thing if you work

with natural dyed skin it will just rot away with the animal, it's very low footprint on nature. Of course, dyed skin is a different matter, but they're working on now with dyeing a new method actually in the tanning process where you don't have to use chrome. So, a chrome-free, metal-free way of dyeing the skin. Both tanning and dyeing, and that's interesting but that we are going to see in the very near future. The metal-free methods of working. Right now, they're using alum for dressing skins – natural - and they use chrome when they have to dye it. Of course, they have to pull out all fat, they have to be heat-resistant, the skin has to be heat-resistant to be dyed. They are experimenting with it now and it will come in a very short time. It will also be more time-efficient. If you buy skins and maybe have it natural and then you want it dyed afterwards now, they have to chrome it before they dye it and that's time you can actually save by using this chrome-free then you can dye it directly. So, it's going to be a time-saver. I'm looking forward to it.

Researcher: Would you say there's more value in having a real fur because of its provenance, because it comes from an animal rather than a fake fur which maybe its provenance isn't so appealing?

Matthew: Its two different things, you know that, you've touched both things, haven't you? (**Researcher:** *Yes*) I have too right so it's totally different. Of course, fake fur's cheaper but it will never be the same. The day it comes, I'll invite it in! (laughs) But they can't match, there's no match.

Researcher: I was also thinking that the value in fur is that it comes from an animal I suppose, part of the value potentially is that it comes from an animal and fake fur comes from plastic it's not so…

Matthew: Yeah it comes from a computer, somewhere right? (laughs) I just don't understand it. If you want to make fake fur that looks like an animal… you should not do that. If you want to make fake fur then make fake fur that looks like no animal, you understand? So, it can be itself, its own product and not a simulation of something that they cannot match anyhow. So, make for instance very long hair or curly, whatever, dense things, but make it fake so it stands out as fake and not look-a-like.

Researcher: Not an imitation?

Matthew: Yeah. That's what I would do if I were in the fake fur business. But I'm not; I'm in the fur business.

Researcher: Which designers, brands or retailers do you admire for their use of fur? Who's getting it right and why?

Matthew: I have my absolute favourite that's Fendi. Fendi is my absolute favourite because they are the one who takes the fur one step further. They are still very, very high quality but at the same time they dare to challenge the skin and create fur fabric. They're not just using animal and sewing animals together and wearing them as a coat. So that's my absolute favourite. I also told them that, they've been here also. I just think they have a fresh approach to fur without over doing it. John Galliano, they just overdo it right? So, it's still respect for the skin and I can see, when I see a coat, I can actually see 'Ok they use the whole skin' and that's very important for me, to use the whole square centimetre of the coat, you don't have waste. So, it's important to use every square centimetre that you're working with, it's also how we try to educate the students. Don't make a small little sample, do a sample of the whole skin so you can see what comes out of it and that you can work with.

Researcher: I suppose it's a respect as well isn't it, for the animal?

Matthew: It's a respect for this animal who gave his life so I can be warm or fashionable, so you have to use all of me. That's very important for me.

Researcher: Great I think that's most things we've talked about…

Matthew: You've got something out of it now?

Researcher: I definitely have.

Matthew: What is this going to end up with, a PhD in something?

Researcher: I'm really interested in finding out what the appeals are of fur and also, I'm looking at exotics and feathers as well.

Matthew: Key word is unique. Each skin is unique. Even when I make a coat of 50 skins I have to manipulate and put them side by side to find out how does it work because they are not similar. All of them are unique. That's also what makes it so unique, it's not uniform. Not even one coat, for you it might look the same but I can see 50 skins hanging there, I can see the colour tone difference, maybe slightly a length difference, it's the uniqueness in each animal, so that's important for me.

Researcher: My research is exploring that, and then I'm looking a little bit at what fake furs lack as well and if there is the opportunity to have something else on the market.

Matthew: Vitality, touch, feel, smell – the smell is terrible! (laughs).

Researcher: I'm hoping to use this research to develop textiles, other materials.

Matthew: Good luck with it! If you have any more questions don't hesitate, also if you want to come and have a look around in the studio here then you can see the stuff, I talked to you about then you're welcome. As part of your research you can take pictures, whatever you want.

END

7.3.3 ANNA INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection: 06/10/16
Place of data collection: London College of Fashion, John Princes Street site
Pseudonym of participant: Anna, Fashion and Accessories Designer
Researcher: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Method of data collection: Interview
Duration of data collection: 52. mins
Documentation type: Voice recorder, photography

START

Researcher: Can you discuss the animal materials here and what products would be made from these?

Anna: We have a selection of real exotics and things which have been made to look more exotic than they are, when they're not. So; crocodile, ostrich, python, water snake and maybe some lizard somewhere. Then there's lots of different treatments; so, some of them are more natural like this (picks up sample – python with livrea shiny finish), that's a way of showing the natural markings. Some of them have got the natural markings but they've been printed over (picks up sample – python with livrea digital print), some of them have been totally laminated so you're left with very little texture (picks up sample – dyed python without livrea) – the material qualities of it rather than the pattern. Some of them have a film over them to make them more shiny, some of them are very matt like this which is a bit gross (picks up sample – matt finish python without livrea). With the crocodile usually it's kept more natural (picks up sample – real crocodile tail). So usually we'd just use a matt or a shiny or sort of semi-shiny finish. The fake ones are; pony stamped to look like astrakhan – is astrakhan an exotic or is it just a sort of, banned material?

Note: Livrea =Arrangement of colour in the coat of many animal species, variable according to the reproductive cycle or seasons.

Researcher: I guess it is an exotic, I am really looking at anything not leather but other animal products; heightened, more expensive or more tactile.

Anna: …pony stamped to look like astrakhan (picks up sample – astrakhan stamp on hair on calf), suede stamped to look like crocodile (picks up sample – crocodile stamp suede) and leather stamped to look like crocodile (picks up sample – crocodile stamp on leather). There's some ostrich here as well and some nylon with a Python print! (Laughs)

Researcher: So why would they use pony instead of astrakhan?

Anna: Because astrakhan's extremely expensive and I think the fact that it's not very ethical, it's quite well known. But it's still got quite an interesting look and I think pony because it's the hair on it, rather than any of the other exotic materials, it's the most similar and it's quite a good effect (handles sample – astrakhan stamp on hair on calf).

Researcher: Do you think a (British luxury fashion house) customer would know that this isn't real astrakhan as well - if it is a controversial material?

Anna: I don't know, I was thinking about that on the way as well. When someone's buying a python bag or a crocodile bag or whatever, are they linking that to the actual animal? Or does it just become a material to them and they totally disengage it from what it actually is? With this (picks up sample – astrakhan stamp on hair on calf) I think it would have to be in the description, on the bag, it would be on the tag that its fake astrakhan, it would say 'stamped pony' or something. But even pony sounds exotic. So, they would be more aware of that than for example, when they use things like this (picks up sample – crocodile stamp on leather) something stamped to look like crocodile – you can buy things like this in Topshop. But people in Topshop don't buy it because…or do they buy it because they see a crocodile and think 'that looks really luxurious' or do they like the texture?

Researcher: So, would Topshop have one like that but of a lesser quality or do you think they'd potentially be sourcing from the same supplier?

Anna: I think it would be a very different leather article, they'd use a much cheaper leather base to stamp but it could be the same stamp. Because some cheaper leathers when you stamp them, they go really crispy and hard. This one's not amazing that's why it's a little bit... (Moves sample around – crocodile stamp on leather).

Researcher: It's a bit rigid isn't it? (Handles sample - crocodile stamp on leather)

Anna: (Laughs and nods) It's a bit gross!

Researcher: The suede to look like crocodile – why suede and not regular leather?

Anna: Because it's quite an interesting effect, it's quite weird. And this stamp is a funny one because you'd never get a crocodile that big, it's an unrealistic animal (picks up sample – crocodile stamp suede). So, it's just more for a texture rather than directly linking.

Researcher: Would you say that the designers are inspired by nature then, would you have crocodiles or animals like that on a mood board, like textures of animals, animals in the wild or something like that?

Anna: (Italian luxury fashion house) would. At (Italian luxury fashion house) it would be that or that (picks up samples – python with livrea shiny finish and python with livrea) next to a picture of a snake. It was much more about love of animals, love of nature, being inspired by nature. Whereas at (British luxury fashion house) it's much more 'let's use crocodile because it's luxurious' rather than 'let's think about the crocodile'. But (Italian luxury fashion house) loved their animals. Because it's just pictures of jaguars, pictures of snakes, pictures of everything.

Researcher: Are there favourite animals which are looked at every season?

Anna: Yes. Jaguars, serpents and sometimes we would focus in on a particular one, so one time it was lizard, but usually their thing is just snake, all the different types of snakes as well. For all their different markings and everything because the company is so into print as well, I think it's looking at nature for patterns and not always necessarily even the real skin for them.

Researcher: Would you be told to look at particular unusual or exotic snakes from far distant lands, would that be a particular appeal?

Anna: Yes, they'd be very specific as well. They'd say 'look at this species of snake or look at a jaguar or a cheetah or this breed of…' because the patterns are slightly different and some of them are more interesting than others. Sometimes actually in the print department they'd go to the leather thing and they'd go round the tanneries and grab some of the skins just for the pattern and they'd hand them to us and we'd paint them (copies of) and then give them back. Which is kind of cool!

Researcher: Wow! So, what did you do about animal skins that you can't reference? Like leopards or other animals that don't have CITES? What would that be condensed into, would you be interpreting that into a print or as embellishment? How would that be done if you can't get the real thing?

Anna: At (Italian luxury fashion house) it would be always print on fabric, or painting on leather or printing on leather, or beading. Yes, it's used as a motif a lot. It's often used on pony because pony has the hairy texture, its non-exotic, and then printing on top of that you have a sort of hairy leopard effect. That's pretty good.

Researcher: And again, would that have to have the label in it to say what it really is, that it's not leopard its printed pony skin?

Anna: It would say printed pony skin, but I think people don't expect it to be made out of real leopard. I guess because it's not really around anymore is it, but it's an interesting point – why do people expect some things to be real and some things to not to be real?

Researcher: Was there any time when you were at either of the companies that they were trying to source something that was really unusual that they had issues with CITES about?

Anna: There's issues with general availability of certain things at certain times due to supply and demand and sometimes they'll have lots of…one problem we had was… we were using ostrich legs and there was a global shortage of ostrich legs. So that was a massive problem for the production team so they had to source them from different places. In the end it was ok, but there are big problems with things like that.

Researcher: Do you use ostrich feathers as well?

Anna: The legs and the skin. I've got a piece of the skin here actually (picks up sample – navy blue ostrich skin from Caravel). I don't really like ostrich skin, it's a bit weird. But the legs are…eurgh there's a feather in that it's disgusting (when handling the navy-blue ostrich skin from Caravel) …but the legs are more sort of crocodile-like I guess. They're long and thin like that (picks up sample – real crocodile tail) and really shiny. They've got quite an interesting marking; they take colour quite interestingly as well.

Researcher: So, is it also how much you can work with the skin? How much you can put on new colours or do things with it?

Anna: I think that's why people like python so much, because you can do so many things with it, because it's already got this pattern on it and this texture (picks up sample – python with livrea shiny finish) and you can add another layer of it yourself really easily – making it shiny, making it matt, dying it…there's amazing, amazing factories in Italy where they paint on extra patterns, so a lot of the ones you see in the shops – you know where they're crazy colours, (French luxury goods company) bags, stuff like that – they're done by hand, by ladies. Which I never knew, I thought they'd be printed on. But it's painted by hand. It's amazing! Super cool.

Researcher: You'd think it wouldn't be as appealing to use an alternative material – to print the base pattern? You would want to use the real skin and then work on top of that rather than getting another material and putting the print on, and then stamping a scale effect on and then you put the colour into it as well? Would there be less appeal because it's not real, or because you like the natural print being there with the design element as well?

Anna: I see what you mean. I think it's really appealing because it's so unique, and that each one is unique as well, and obviously it's very expensive, its very luxury, and then it's had this added hand done thing that you can't just print because each one is an individual.

Researcher: And its design by nature in a way isn't it I suppose too?

Anna: Yeah, and so if you created your own base that you then painted on top of you may as well make anything rather than try and make it like python. So, because you'd be trying to make something which is unique and not regular. Because otherwise it might become a bit uniform if we'd printed the pattern on.

Researcher: So, what kinds of products would all these things be made into then?

Anna: Bags, shoes, it would be backed onto something and it would be used as the outer layer. So, bags, shoes, coats, bits of ready-to-wear like cuffs, jewellery, all sorts of things! It would often not be all over, sometimes it would just be in parts. In bags sometimes it would be all over, I think it's also used a lot because it looks good with a leather trim as well. It sits really nicely with leather.

Researcher: But there are whole garments as well sometimes, whole coats and things like that? Are they very warm or practical or do you think it's mostly the aesthetic?

Anna: Mostly the aesthetic, they're very crunchy. They did a lot of python – whole python outfits – for one of the shows I worked on. It's just not ideal; I think it's better to use a fake for clothing because it's maybe a bit more hard wearing, a bit less crunchy. It's just astronomically expensive and horrible.

Researcher: Are the more expensive ones more appealing as a designer? Is it often the ones that have got the most interesting markings and the best qualities are more expensive?

Anna: Yeah, because it depends on the companies as well. Some companies do hire quality skins because they have better methods and a lot of the high-end companies get their exotics through Italy because that's where they source the best ones from. Otherwise it's from China and it's all a bit dodgy what kind of chemicals they use, the Chinese quality stuff is incomparable and you'd be able to tell straight away. But they're good for different things, so Italy's really good for python and stuff and China and other places are really good for water snake, because I think they're from around those areas.

Researcher: So, they're wild maybe, wild snakes which are caught do you think?

Anna: I think they farm them, but I know there are wild ones...gross, really horrible. Water snake is quite interesting because they have loads of different markings on them, python there's usually this sort of thing (handles sample - python with livrea shiny finish) but water snake you can get all sorts of ones that look more like python, ones with stripes, ones that have these amazing natural patterns. A lot of the big companies don't use them because of CITES and 'country of origin', because they're not allowed to use ones from certain countries, and some species they just say no because – I don't know whether they're endangered or whatever but I know other companies use them. Jimmy Choo uses a lot of water snake, all different really cool patterns...so cool! I'm not sure if people realise sometimes whether it's real or printed – maybe some people do just think it's a print. Maybe it's specialist people who are buying python bags. Its ladies in Dubai (laughs) who probably know what they're talking about.

Researcher: Is it more appealing to have an older snake or a younger one?

Anna: A younger one because when they get really big – I remember at (French luxury goods company) there was a python cupboard and there were all these pythons, whole skins of them all swirled up. You'd open it and they'd come out…eurgh…and be sliming all over the floor! When they get older, that one's quite an old one (handles sample – dyed python with livrea) the scales get really big and they get a bit gross, they get a bit sort of 'fingernail-y' and not so appealing. So, the best skins are with not such big scales.

Researcher: That maybe don't stick out as well? Those ones aren't really sticking out (handles sample – dyed python without livrea) but those ones are (handles sample – dyed python with livrea).

Anna: Eurgh! Gross! This one has a stronger film on it as well (handles sample – dyed python without livrea) this ones still got quite a lot of texture in general (handles sample – dyed python with livrea).

Researcher: Which is more appealing, which ones are sold more, ones with film or ones without?

Anna: In general people tend to go for the shiny a bit more. But then, Alexander Wang or someone would probably use a rubberised or matt one because it looks a bit more sporty (handles sample – matt finish python without livrea). The person you think of, a python handbag customer, she's probably quite glam, probably goes to Asprey, (French luxury goods company) and stuff, they're likely to use the shiny one a little bit more. It's a personal preference I guess, look they're going for and what's happening (trends).

Researcher: Why are these materials used and not others, for example would faux animal skins be an option, or other textiles - naturals or synthetics? I suppose what I'm saying is

what are the qualities of the skins that other materials don't have? I know we have covered this a bit already.

Anna: Ready-made colour and pattern, and it is tradition as well I think, it's a long-held tradition of 'python is luxury' because it's expensive, it's rare, it's often had a hand special quality to it. It's been a big thing lately, I know I was doing it as well but I think other companies are, of hand painting on bags to get that sort of uniqueness. Without it being a python, it still has that hand crafted special rare thing about it. We'd often use exotics for special projects like store openings or a bag for a celebrity. Because we usually make them in much smaller numbers, something like three or ten, so it's that exclusivity.

Researcher: So, with celebrities, why is that an output for (British luxury fashion house), is it used as promotion?

Anna: Yeah, if they're wearing a gown or something then we'll make a few different clutch bags to go with it.

Researcher: So, for the MET or a film premiere, something like that?

Anna: But when they're in America they can't be exotic at all, and in LA you're not allowed to use fur or exotics at all, there's a total ban on it.

Researcher: Really! For a specific event?

Anna: I think LA is completely fur and exotics free. Because I know it's a big problem for a couple of the events that we do stuff for there, because obviously everyone's like 'bung in crocodile' but actually we can't! So, we have to think of something different, we'll try and do a special print like a print with a metallic or put a new lock on it or some gems or beading - another way of making it a special version of the style that it would be normally without using exotic skins.

Researcher: That's really interesting, so in that circumstance what materials would you use and what techniques, you say beading, what materials would those beads be made of?

Anna: It would still be leather often, but in LA we've even got to be careful of the leather type we use because deer leather has CITES and we got caught out on that a couple of times. We'd usually use either the leather we are using in the collection, like a grainy or a smooth, or if it's a box clutch we could do it in a textile, so a really nice satin usually from Taroni Spa then adding on Swarovski usually the ones which are hand sewn on or in a frame that has in-set gems or something because then you can choose the gems that go in there or we could print the satin or embroider the satin and then put it in the clutch thing. We did one before which is animal fringes in beads, that was quite fun.

Researcher: How do you mean?

Anna: You know how flapper dresses that have the swinging beads down the front, it was this amazing embroidery done in India that was a leopard print - when you looked at it flat it was a leopard print but because it was made like that it moved, amazing! So cool.

Researcher: And that wouldn't be brought out in other collections for (British luxury fashion house), or do you think that was just limited to this event in LA and it was instigated because they couldn't use real animal skins?

Anna: It started off as something like that and it was really cool so it came on to the collection as a suede version, just normal suede fringes.

Researcher: It was printed with an animal print do you mean or just the suede?

Anna: It was different colours of suede sewn in; I think again it was done in India by hand so that when you looked at it, it had this amazing animal effect.

Researcher: That's quite interesting - the story of that and how it was inspired and everything. It sounds to me like for these sorts of events its more natural materials based; you say satins and things like that?

Anna: Something soft. Or something that you can cover a box with because we'd often use box clutches, so something that you can slot in so it fits, so it'll have embroidery on or be a special material or something cool.

Researcher: What materials would you advise designers combine with these skins to create a product? So, you say natural materials - are they seen to be the same class if you like as animal products because you said satin things, it's really soft? Maybe you could talk a bit more about that and whether you'd consider man-made materials or other animal products, whether fur or feathers ever comes in as well, beading or embroidery elements?

Anna: We've done a lot of embroidery on exotics because it's like when your hand painting the colour on the scales it's adding another dimension of mega luxury amazingness.

Researcher: Like a 3D dimension as well I suppose?

Anna: It's so cool. Sometimes doing a design over the top using it as you would a base or highlighting the markings. Then combining it with other things; it goes very well with leather, like normal leather of any kind or usually a silk if it's going to be a textile, we'd

use it with silk because that's like the fabric equivalent, it's like, the nicest and most glamorous. With a nice quite structured silk would be good. And then with any beads, embellishments, embroidery on the top. The beads would usually be man-made, either Swarovski or resin beads or metal beads. But in general, I'd say combine it with anything that looks cool.

Researcher: Does (British luxury fashion house) use many synthetic materials?

Anna: As in synthetic exotics?

Researcher: I was thinking more polyesters or nylon or any of those sorts of materials in their collections as well and if they do is it the high end - is it products which are at the same level as these (points to array of samples) like luxurious products or not so much? I'm just trying to understand a bit more about how different materials are seen and the 'ranking' of them if you like.

Anna: I don't know about the ready to wear side - I'm not sure whether they'd use polyester for a lining or something like that, but for bags we use nylon a lot for technical bags like backpacks and more sort of sporty styles will have nylon on the outside, and it'll often have a grosgrain nylon lining so it'll be grosgrain effect, so it'll look like a nice fabric but it'll actually be made out of synthetic material. When it's on a lining it's really...it's much better to be like that. Price wise and it's quite practical as well, but it has that texture so it looks like it's...and it is proper, lovely, weave because that's the luxury feeling. Other than that, inside a silk bag we would use a silk lining, always. It's traditional, it looks nice, and it's only a little tiny bit. We'd use alcantara for the inside of bags, which is fake leather. A lot of companies use suede bonded to the outside - it's when you...you know like Celine bags where it's all one layer around the outside rather than a bagged-out lining. You can either use suede to bond it directly or you can use alcantara which is the man made alternative. There's quite a lot of debate on...it's quite personal which one people prefer. Suedes the traditional one, it's a little bit heavier, it's a little bit more sort of suedey feeling, it's a bit more hairy and I personally think it feels a bit more luxurious just because of the texture and you can edge paint the top of it and it'll stay clean whereas the alcantara is a textile...I should have brought some actually. It's fake suede that is specifically made for lining stuff. You can bond it to the outside but it's much, much thinner, it's much lighter which is good but if you put edge paint on the edge of the leather it bleeds in really badly. It just doesn't have such a nice feeling as the real suede. I think they should bring out an updated version of it.

Note: Alcantara is composed of about 68% polyester and 32% polyurethane.

Researcher: Sounds like it has loads to do with tactility.

Anna: Yeah, I think so. I saw in Selfridges not long ago, Anya Hindmarch had used alcantara on the outside of a bag which is quite interesting because I expected them to use suede really. Because what's good about suede alcantara is you can heat bond stuff to it directly and you don't need to stitch it, so you can get really clean lines, it looks really modern and nice. So, they'd heat bonded loads of squares to the alcantara and then used that as the outside, it looked really cool. But I was quite surprised to see that it was alcantara! Also, because it's a fixed colour card as well I think it takes months to get your own colours and they always come out a bit dirty, a bit rank. So, it's mostly used as a lining, but it is a vegan alternative. I think it's vegan...unless it's used from scrap leather? I don't know.

Researcher: I haven't heard of it before, at least not that name for it. Have you seen an increase in the use of animal skins since you've been at (British luxury fashion house)? Have any new products been created because of the increase?

Anna: The last summer collection, the whole theme of the collection was python, shiny python. That was quite unusual I thought, to have the whole show centering around exotic. It's like 'wow that's unusual'!

Researcher: It's a statement for the company to make, quite a bold statement.

Anna: It is, and it happened quite late on. So, there were a lot of problems with availability because of course suddenly ready-to-wear wanted to use it, bags and shoes wanted to use it, in this particular colour and in this particular style.

Researcher: It's not like any other material that you can just weave more.

Anna: (Laughs) Sadly not! So, I'd say that was a massive increase, and it was strange to have all of the runway bags having exotic on in some part. Really unusual. Because before there would be some long leather version and then there would be an embroidered version, blah blah. But this one, every single one had exotics so I'd say it has increased. Maybe because it's popular in the Far East? I don't know. But I know that at least half of it was the look and the tactility of it. But then also, maybe it's a way of reinstating it as a luxury brand.

Researcher: So just talking about the markets where (British luxury fashion house) exotic animal products are popular; you said a bit about Dubai. So, locations around the world, age ranges and income of people...

Anna: I'd say cities, big cities where the culture is quite flashy. I'd say an older market because of the price point and because of maybe the knowledge. Special events, like for someone who wants something really special that no one else has. It's the equivalent of a

couture, bespoke client, someone who looks for an exotic bag and for that individuality really.

Researcher: I think the knowledge thing is quite an interesting point, because I guess with a couture client there is definitely that, they know what goes into making that couture dress, they will have been there in some of the fittings, in the lead-up and they understand that's what makes that piece appealing. So, it's quite interesting then comparing that to products made out of exotic materials where there's assumed there's that knowledge as well from the customers view point, although they haven't been there all the way through the process like a couture customer would have been. You say that there's this knowledge, is that something you have seen that in customers, I'm just wondering where that comes from.

Anna: I feel like people who buy exotic handbags are often collectors or they really love handbags, they have loads of them because they're the wife of someone very wealthy or whatever. So they will have that knowledge and they want something exclusive and they want to know why it's exclusive, because they're shelling out so much money for it they need to be sold (the customer) like 'this is amazing, this is an exclusive style, this is made out of the most amazing exotic python'. And I feel like they really understand that, and that's why they go for it, and that's why they'll often go to companies which specialise in exotics, like they'll go to Prada for fur and exotics, rather than...because I don't know if (British luxury fashion house) exotic bags sell that well to be honest in comparison to Prada or stuff like that that don't have that history in exotics. Or even (French luxury goods company), because it's a lot about namesake I suppose. Trusting the brand.

Researcher: So, you're saying that you think customers know what animal it is, what species in particular?

Anna: They want to know, yes. I'm not sure about the species, but maybe they do. They'll definitely ask about what the skin is because also if they travel a lot they'll have to know if they take their certificates with them and stuff.

Researcher: How does that work? The product comes with a certificate of origin, is that right? And then the customer is told at that point that they have to take this certificate around with them if they're going abroad?

Anna: That's how I understood it. I haven't had to do it myself, but I know that, say, if I got on the plane with that (handles sample – python with livrea shiny finish) without a certificate I would get stopped.

Researcher: And that's anywhere, or that's just specific countries that would stop you?

Anna: Anywhere. So, we have to be really careful, like when we're travelling backwards and forwards from the factory that they didn't shove that (handles sample – python with livrea shiny finish) in our suitcase by accident. It's quite bad. I don't know how strict they are on it - would people know it's real? What if you had a really good copy?

Researcher: That's one of the funny things with companies like Stella McCartney who are aiming to develop a fur that looks identical to real fur. It does raise loads of questions, I think. Particularly if it gets to the point where someone really can't tell the difference, then really why do they want the fur alternative and not the real thing? Is it just because they know in their mind that an animal hasn't died for it and that's the main selling point?

Anna: I feel like sadly people disengage that from snake, they just see it as this material.

Researcher: Because it's similar to leather and people are quite disengaged with leather, it is quite a commodity product and very accepted?

Anna: Yeah, I really do, sadly. The same with eating meat and stuff, people don't think about pigs every time they have a sausage or whatever. I think they just look at that and think wow that's really cool, rather than 'that's a snake'. Say, even the word python doesn't really mean python snake to a lot of people anymore.

Researcher: I also wonder whether it's something to do with the tactility, I guess exotic skins like these reptile skins, if you compare them to fur and feathers are the least tactile probably. So maybe there's that element as well that the greater the tactility and the greater there's that kind of...you know you can really feel it's animal-y and you really know that it's...I guess with fur as well people have pets - dogs and cats which are furry, and there's that association and there's that...you know you're more likely to touch a live animal that's furry rather than an animal that's scaly. Not many people have pets that are... so there's that disengagement maybe as well.

Anna: Yeah definitely, and because it's been treated so much, I guess fur is still quite fluffy and it still has its natural qualities. This is really quite separate, I mean, it's very separate from what it was, it's been changed so much it almost becomes just a texture. You can get really good fakes but they just don't have the same...the same feel. Even just those two (handles samples - real crocodile tail and crocodile stamp on leather) they're very similar but...

Researcher: Yeah, they are but its suppleness which is the main difference, I think.

Anna: The irregularity.

Researcher: Yeah because that's the problem I guess with something like that (handles sample - crocodile stamp on leather).

Anna: And all the signs of growth marks, because even though it's textured it's not textured in the same way like this (handles sample - real crocodile tail).

Researcher: It's not as soft actually, that's softer, even on this side. Also, it's the smell?

Anna: Yeah it stinks.

Researcher: Something I really notice with this stuff is that it's...I wonder if that's (the smell) part of the appeal.

Anna: It's the chemicals, I think.

Researcher: I feel like the smell is quite an animal-y smell though.

Anna: Yeah, it smells like leather.

Researcher: Whereas maybe this one (handles sample - crocodile stamp on leather) I'm guessing this one doesn't smell as strongly as this (handles sample - real crocodile tail) although it's leather.

Anna: It's a very sort of crappy leather as well. It might smell a little bit (handles sample - crocodile stamp on leather). Eurgh so gross!

Researcher: It's all-round sensory isn't it I suppose? Its touch and smell and appearance and even sound could almost come into it a little bit, like you say, the crackly thing.

Anna: Because it does have a very… it does feel very special. As much as I hate it, it's a very, very special material.

Researcher: Which are the most popular skin types and why are certain skins popular with the designers but others are more popular with the market? So, I'm just trying to say that there are some skins that designers really like using because they offer loads of really interesting qualities and you can do loads with them. But then is that the same for the consumer or does the consumer find other skins are more appealing?

Anna: The most popular skins are alligator and python because they're the most widely available, they're the most widely recognised, anyone on Oxford Street would probably recognise those two textures. I'd say alligator is really, really popular with consumers but it's not so easy to use, it's not easy to use at all. Most articles are a lot stiffer than this (handles sample - real crocodile tail) and it's hard to find a soft articles, lots of them are very, very stiff so you can only do structured shapes, so it's a bit limiting. You can't do as many amazing techniques on it as you can on python, python you can do anything,

especially with the painting, so many things you can do. Painting and making it metallic, making it matt, making it whatever. You've got to be a bit more restrictive and people tend to buy it because also it's (crocodile/alligator) so much more expensive than python. People tend to go for black, dark red, more of a classic look, maybe an all over colour. More of a traditional look whereas people, if they're getting a python bag, tend to go a bit more crazy.

Researcher: So those are more classics then than maybe the alligator?

Anna: Yeah, because it is so much more expensive and a bit more restrictive. Ostrich leg I used before, I think because people don't often recognise that's what it is the consumer maybe doesn't like it so much because they don't quite recognise it, they just see it as a texture, they're not going to think 'ooh that's an ostrich leg' because it looks more like that or something (handles sample – python with livrea shiny finish) it looks like a weird python or something. So yeah, I think it's important that consumers...for consumers it's probably important that they recognise what exotic skin it is, whereas for the designers maybe they're more interested in if it's really exciting, a new thing that maybe goes over the customers head. Ostrich sort of comes and goes in popularity, because it's a bit particular. It's not anywhere near as popular as those two (indicates python and crocodile samples). But it is still recognisable, it's very traditional, it's very 50's. It's quite vintage-y. But these days no one uses it. Eurgh that feather's really rank! (handles sample - navy blue ostrich skin from Caravel). Then water snakes I think people aren't so aware of, they do maybe see them as more of a pretty pattern than an exotic. I suppose it is a semi-exotic as well as a full-on exotic. Designers like to use them but there's a lot of restriction on which ones you can use so it's a bit tricky and a lot of them come from China as well which is not so good. So those are the main ones and then there are semi-exotics under that.

Researcher: So, do you use any wild skins at all, or are they all farmed?

Anna: Farmed. It's also for the quality of the skin.

Researcher: So, it's better quality if it's farmed than if it's wild?

Anna: Yeah because it'll have less scratches, holes, or where it's hurt itself or something. There's a lot more control under a controlled environment than when it's farmed so the skins likely to come out more even.

Researcher: That (British luxury fashion house) picks certain farms to work with over others, why would that be?

Anna: They tend to work through a tannery and they'll work with certain farms. Some French fashion houses have their own farms, so they have total control, which is much

better because one company that (British luxury fashion house) used to work with, another fashion house just bought the whole company. So, there's quite a lot of politics in the exotics trade. But they'll work with certain factories because it's the same with working with the different skins there are certain standards they have to attain and adhere to. They've got to be totally checked, everything for animal welfare and I think that's why they don't source a lot of things from China at all because they can't guarantee the welfare.

Researcher: Is there also an appeal in being able to say in the label this comes from Italy rather than this comes from China or this comes from...I don't know.

Anna: Definitely. Because a lot of the places in Italy, they'll source the things from around the world, there'll be crocodiles from wherever but then they'll tan them in Italy so they'll have that sort of quality, the Italian thing rather than tanning them in China or wherever.

Researcher: So, on the label it would say, even if the alligator was farmed in the US or something, it would say on the label from Italy or would it say the provenance is actually the US?

Anna: The bag would say made in Italy because that's where it's been composed but the materials, I'm not sure it would say apart from on the CITES certificate.

Researcher: Ok. That's part of the certificate that the customer has?

Anna: Yeah if it's for the crocodile thing. I'm not sure about ostrich, I think it's accepted, I've hardly ever used it. Yuck! (Laughs).

Researcher: Yeah because that's the last question really, about the provenance...do companies provide skins which have better qualities? You've kind of answered that.

Anna: It's like any, sort of, group of companies I guess there's ones which are better for one thing. Because often they do lots of different animals but somewhere more specialised in water snake or specialise in crocodile, like these guys, that's a piece of ostrich but they're actually better at crocodile. That’s the one that another fashion house just bought. So now it means that they'll get all their best stock. I went there actually, it was really nice, it’s amazing!

Researcher: It's not creepy with all the skins hanging up and everything?

Anna: Yeah, it's pretty creepy...but it's very sort of open and airy and fun...but yeah, they do have loads of skins hanging up, whole skins of things. And on the floor, they have a giant crocodile, the biggest one I've ever seen, Captain Hook style, massive.

Researcher: Is that just for show?

Anna: Yeah. Gross!

Researcher: Is there anything else you want to add or that you think is important to say?

Anna: I'll keep thinking (and let you know).

END

7.4 FUR AND EXOTICS INDUSTRY WORKSHOP TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection: 14/11/16
Place of data collection: The Clothworkers Centre, Victoria & Albert Museum
Participants: 9 Fashion industry professionals*
Researcher and workshop leader: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Others present: V&A affiliates**
Method of data collection: Workshop
Duration of data collection: 2.hrs 30. mins (not including a 30. minute break)
Documentation type: Voice recorder, photography.

* Pseudonyms of participants:
James: Fashion Designer
Vicky: Fashion Designer and Consultant
Michelle: Communications Coordinator at an embroidery house
Bethan: Design Assistant at an embroidery house
Joanne: Creative Director at a (vegetarian) high fashion brand
Nick: Fashion Designer / Fashion Manufacturer and Company Director of a fashion sampling service working for international fashion houses
John: Chairman of a leading fur design house
Kate: Fashion Designer and Company Director of a leading furrier
Liz: Designer at an embroidery house

**Names of others present:
Edwina Ehrman (Senior Curator, Fashioned from Nature)
Veronica Isaac (Exhibition Research Assistant, Fashioned from Nature)
April McNee (Exhibition Volunteer)
Elizabeth McFadden (Exhibition Volunteer)

START

(After looking at the archive pieces)

Researcher: Do you find any of these items appealing and why? Discuss appearance, feel, maybe other factors that influence your thoughts?

James: I think this piece is beautiful, I've never seen anything like it before. It's just so intricate and I think it's a really beautiful combination of man-made and man interacting with nature to make something beautiful (speaking about the hummingbird flower spray).

Vicky: Yeah, I agree it's absolutely gorgeous, really, really beautiful and exquisitely done as well, it's so delicate and the fact that it's been preserved until nowadays it's just amazing, Victorian is it?

Researcher: We'll reveal afterwards.

Michelle: Some of the work feels unnecessary. This lace over here (beetle wing sample) I think it's really unnecessary to incorporate animal into that because you can't even tell. I mean unless you really look at it closely, and maybe because we know it's from an exotic animal. I just think it's rather pointless. It's beautiful, but I don't see the purpose of incorporating that.

Vicky: Maybe nowadays, but at the time it would have been really beautiful, exotic.

Michelle: But it's now today.

Bethan: I think that's (beetle wing sample) the only one that does appeal to me, the others are just so obvious that its fur, eurgh, I can't touch them or anything. I really like that one obviously (beetle wing sample), its embroidery so I'm biased. We were trying to figure out what skin it was, I can't really tell what it is (beetle wing sample). But I'm repulsed by the others to be honest.

Michelle: It's definitely beautiful, I mean its understated (beetle wing sample) but at the same time I just don't see…I agree with (Bethan) though, with some of these while beautiful - like this is almost just too much this coat (velvet and feather dolman). I do recognise that back in the day it was a status symbol but I don't think innocent animals should die just because you have money, for status. Like John said, some of them are just obvious.

Researcher: Do other people agree with that or disagree?

Joanne: Yeah, I didn't want to touch any of them. I find the whole thing – they're all really interesting and beautiful - I think this one the one (fox fur stole) that's like (pulls a repulsed face) because it's so obvious that I don't even want to stand over there. Without that one (fox fur stole) I can see that maybe…but because I've seen too many videos or I've done loads of research about the fur industry and I can tell which animal they've used by just looking at the garment, I can just tell. So, to me, I don't even want to touch them and this piece I do admire (monkey evening cape), it's beautiful but we can replicate nature in my opinion, so however beautiful it is I just I don't know, I don't want to touch them.

Nick: I think the further back you go in time - yes of course fur and feathers it was a symbol of luxury and wealth - but it was a necessity as well to an extent. I think at the

beginning it was registered if you go way back, it was registered in peoples mind that it was something to keep you warm, it was another form of wool. Then of course it became a luxury product. For example the foxes here (fox fur stole) it is something that you've seen in fashion for a very, very long time and it goes all the way to modern days that people can buy second hand ones from Portobello market, but immediately I can imagine a Victorian woman wearing it and I can imagine somebody in glamorous Hollywood in the 30's, 40's, I can imagine Eva Peron wearing something like that. So, yes at some point it became a luxury, an object, but I don't think it started like this (being luxurious). The lace, I think it was replacing sequins that at the time probably they didn't exist. I would really like to know the purpose of the thing in the box (hummingbird flower spray). It looks beautiful but I don't imagine it worn on somebody's…

Vicky: Corsage.

Nick: Corsage you think? I'm not really sure even if it is a fashion object, for me it looks like - you know how you put a butterfly in a frame and you just hang it up on the wall. But it's beautiful.

Vicky: But in any case, I think something we can't negate is the beauty of the objects. Both these ones, the cape, (monkey evening cape and swan down mantle) regardless of people's feelings it is the embroidery. The French had all these beautiful peacock feathers, I mean even the combination of the two feathers (speaking about the hummingbird flower spray) all around it. Even the mink, the way it has been put together, the way it has been woven together (speaking about the swan down mantle) with the feathers it is just gorgeous, and the craftsmanship is absolutely amazing. Please let's leave the fur issue, I mean I think we are in front of some really interesting, amazing pieces of art. I worship beauty since I get up in the morning until I go to bed, and I'm in front of all this beauty, I'm sorry but…

Joanne: I agree they're beautiful. I can't say they're not, they're actually amazing.

John: It's difficult to apply 21st century political correctness to objects which were made hundreds of years ago. So, to apply your ethos of what is ethical today to these pieces that remain from different times, in different circumstances, it doesn't fit. As far as I'm concerned it doesn't fit. And also, we live in a world where you buy things packaged up in supermarkets and therefor the connections are tenuous mentally. But also, the alternatives – and I think this is one of the things we want to talk about for Naomi's PhD – the alternatives also reek plenty of destruction and remove wildlife and upset the environment and pollute, etc. So maybe the damage done by the alternatives is greater than the damage done by culling the animal in the first place.

Michelle: It's a good point but I also think that today, in today's world with our viewpoint towards fur and exotic skins is that we've lost respect for the animal. I think back then

there was a greater respect. When you look at pieces like this jacket here (velvet and feather dolman), I feel like it's kind of a difficult thing to explain because back then – like you were saying Bethan – some of it was necessity to keep warm. I have family that are Native American and I come from that mentality that when you kill an animal you use every bit of it. Not just for the splendour of having it but you respect the animal and what they have to offer, and I feel like today we don't do that, we lock up animals in a big cage and strip them of their feathers just because we want goose pillows or we kill a fox just because we want to wear it around our neck, just because we can. I just feel like we've lost sight of the meaning of nature in a way. I just feel like there was more respect for them back then which is why a lot more of the animal was used and it was done perhaps more humanely than we do it today. Today it's just one big farm.

Kate: I definitely disagree with that. I've done a lot of work within the fur trade and it's one of the most respectful industries in any production of any article. I think that we have a lot more respect for the animal these days and I'm sure that John will agree with me. There's been a lot of research into looking after them and their diet and also the way in which everything is used in farming. You have the fish from the fishing industries that all goes into biofuel, so there's a lot in the fur trade that's very respectful. Obviously, I can't speak for every element of it but I think that with the more research that is done I would say that it has become more respectful.

John: I also would say that from a financial point of view, when you apply commercial value to an animal, they tend to prosper. To go back historically, when the beavers were being trapped for beaver hats in the UK, and we found it in North America, particularly Canada, when the numbers (of wild animals) became low because they were over hunted and people were in danger of losing their livelihoods, trapping legislations were brought in, culling legislations were brought in. Consequentially the beaver population in the 21st century is probably its highest ever. Same goes for the bob-cat and the lynx cat, it stretches all the way down from New Mexico all the way up to Alaska. Which never used to happen 30 or 40 years ago, that's because the industry has put value in these skins. They're controlled under CITES so they're fully regulated and the numbers have prospered. We have more of these animals running around than there were before, and that always goes together with having a commercial value.

Researcher: If we were to move away from animal rights and animal ethics, just to really focus on the appeal in terms of the aesthetic - I mean it may be that the animal association does block anyone's ability to appreciate some of these items – but perhaps if there's someone who does feel that they really love one item in particular maybe they could speak a bit more about what it is; is it the technique that you see or the feel of it or the appearance?

Nick: I think it works the same way with diamonds. It's not only the actual stone but the way you cut the stone – it's the same with fur. I don't think something is appealing only

because it is expensive. What I am trying to say is that it doesn't become expensive only because of what it is, but it's the design element as well and the branding that makes it what it is. Probably here all of the pieces they are before the big fashion brands, it's a different story. But at some point, as well in the 60's people were buying fur as an investment, it used to cost the same as a small apartment. I think a big element of…it really depends if we're going to see fur as fur or fur as fashion. I think the design and for me, more interestingly is the embroidery that is on that coat (velvet and feather dolman) than the actual fur, the fur is fur. The embroidery is what makes it, and the tassels at the bottom is what makes it. The same with the lace (beetle wing sample), the same with the mink thing (swan down mantle).

Researcher: So, it's the workmanship?

Nick: Yes absolutely, because this one you just see that it's a skin (fox fur stole) I've worn something like this before. I was saying to Naomi that I bought a dog, (I've had it for) three years now. Before I used to wear a lot of fur, and I love fur as it was an easy way for a guy to stand out and express himself with materials that you're not - I was younger as well and probably a bit more vain - with materials that you're not used to seeing on guys. I didn't look like a pimp, I hope! (everyone laughs) I was like this but found that it was an animal and that some people were getting shocked that I was wearing it with the legs dangling and the nose and everything. But since I bought the dog, I stopped wanting to wear it. Sometimes I do because I have them, but it's kind of came naturally to me, I grew out of it in a way. I don't want to sound pretentious because of course I eat meat, I'm still going to wear fur and I pet my dog everyday…what was I trying to say I forgot?

Michelle: Craftsmanship.

Kate: I loved your point about the diamond thing definitely.

Nick: I think it makes a difference, it's not only a piece of fur.

Michelle: It's how we treat it, how we apply it.

James: In terms of necessity…

Michelle: It's not necessary

James: …I think in fashion there's just…a very fine line between necessary and unnecessary. And the majority of the clothes that we're wearing are probably made from cotton from Monsanto which is fucked up and everything. We indirectly are contributing to fashion pollution and obviously fur is more direct because we think of the animal. But there is a lot of that in fashion. I think it's easier to jump on the fur bandwagon because fur is more tangible because of the animal.

John: All this fashion is beautiful, it's of its time. Probably today fashion is totally different. There's a company called Canada Goose which is about to go public for 1.5billion dollars, now they use goose down to stuff the puffers with, they use coyote fur to trim it, so it's the aesthetics of today, its what people want to wear today. People wouldn't want to wear this today (referring to archive items). It doesn't mean that the industry or the materials aren't adapted for modern taste. That's why sometimes you may have difficulty relating to these pieces because they've got no relevance to our lifestyle today. But they are beautiful for their time, that's why it's hard to judge it. Artistically, today you think I wear it because I want to wear it whereas there are other issues as well because this was made hundreds of years ago, different skills for different tastes and different ethics.

Vicky: But if we think about contemporary art, I mean there is an exhibition going on in Florence right now, Jan Fabre, and it's full of beetles, huge pieces in a palazzo, it's just full of them and people are praising that so I mean…to think about the amount of beetles that must have been sacrificed recently for that exhibition is massive so I don't know if people take those things into account. I think the difference is quite major. But I insist on beauty so these pieces - apart from the fox stole which has nothing major about it, probably because we're very much used to it - I think the rest of the pieces are individually extremely beautiful. If you look at the lining of all of them, I mean the decorated cape and the feather on the jacket as well it is absolutely beautiful (referring to the velvet and feather dolman, swan down mantle, monkey evening cape) they are really amazing and every technique that has gone into it is…I think this craftsmanship is quite rare today. The fineness of the embroidery, the feathers (talking about velvet and feather dolman) it is very complicated, it is very rare to be created nowadays as well. I just think we have to admire what we've got in front of us.

Researcher: Is there a particular technique that you're inspired to adopt?

Vicky: I mean yeah, the tiny little French knot that you've got on there (all referring to the velvet and feather dolman), the peacock feather embroidery, the marabou mixed with the other feathers. Mixed together I think it's gorgeous. Even the way the mink has been woven like that I think it's absolutely stunning. Obviously, it could be done with other techniques, it could be done with other yarns, but the results are gorgeous.

Researcher: What about the other designers, do any of these pieces inspire you in regards to technique? Liz perhaps?

Liz: I struggle a little bit with these pieces, purely because the pieces that we design at (Luxury Embroidery House) it's not necessary for us to use feathers or fur or…you can design something just as beautiful with just as much craftsmanship without any of this. That's what's going through my head. I understand that you wouldn't have been able to

get sequins (referring to beetle wing sample) but this goldwork is beautiful, its lovely but you can create it just as well without (beetle wings).

John: What is it made from?

Researcher: Well that's what we can move on to.

Edwina Ehrman presents the items to the group

Edwina: This (beetle wing sample) is a late edition (to the focus group) so it's Asian and the borders worked in India and they worked with gold metal embroidery thread on net and they are embellished with the wing cases of the jewel beetle. Jewel beetles were used throughout Asia, South East Asia, South America by local people to embellish their garments, they have been used like that for centuries. The Europeans in general came across them either through colonialism; the British in India, the Spanish in South America, etc. And so, they became quite popular because of the effects that could be achieved with them. What people particularly liked about the beetle wings was their astonishing colours and their iridescence, so this is a period where we don't have light like this (indoor light bulbs) so when you are wearing garments trimmed with beetle wings it's probably an evening context, by candlelight - or if you're in a more sophisticated urban context it might be gas lights - they flicker and it's quite dark – you've got pools of darkness – and then you have light and so the whole point of them is that its performative. It's very key to fashion today – everyone wants to stand out which is exactly what these do for you – they twinkle and catch the light and people look at you. And they also have an Imperial connotation in that they talk about the territories that we were ruling or had a very close economic relationship with overseas. As far as I know they were first introduced into England around the 1830's when they were worn at court by a woman whose family were slave plantation owners in British Guyana and she wore a court dress embellished with them. Then they were worn by people with Asian collections, etc. But by 1851 they were in the Great Exhibition, they are being imported, and women were encouraged to make their own beetle wing accessories. So, you could buy a beetle wing kit, and you could make tea cosies or little bags or whatever you fancied. So, they moved then into the kind of domestic craft environment, so they're actually quite interesting. I think where their key is, is that; they're imported, they catch the light, and they have these amazing colours. So, they are interested in that way and I think these ones were produced in a mission (beetle wing sample) in India, a Christian mission. A girl got taught how to do it, and they earnt money through the mission.

This corsage ornament (hummingbird flower spray) is made of hummingbird feathers. It was made in Brazil and it dates to around the 1870's. Hummingbirds were very fashionable because of the same reason, again of the iridescence. This particular type of feather work was a skill which originated with the Aboriginal Indians, particularly in convents in Brazil, they had to earn money for the convent to keep it going and so they

made these feather flowers which they decorated convents with and sold. And then it became a bit of an industry in South America, particularly Rio De Janeiro where the leading firms were. It's made from a copper-headed emerald hummingbird. What I find quite macabre about it is that the leaves and the buds were made from the feathers but the actual petals are made from the breast of the hummingbird, so altogether there are seven hummingbirds which have gone into making this. That's when the scale of things really…I mean there's seven breasts of hummingbirds here and they were multiplied over and over and over again. It was really the trade in millinery feathers which excited protest in the 19th century, initially to protect seabirds, because birds weren't hunted just for their feathers, bird egg collecting was actually as bad. So, the eggs were stolen from the bird's nest and then sold on, people ate seabirds' eggs – they still do, gulls' eggs can appear on menus, they're very expensive – and so the first protests were about the declining seabird population in Britain. In 1869 there was the seabird preservation act, and then it was much harder to push through the act for protecting more exotic birds, and that happened in 1921. The main aim was to have what you might call a closed season on hunting birds so you were not allowed to hunt birds during the mating and breeding season, because otherwise the bird population would decline dramatically. But hummingbirds were enormously popular and there's some extraordinarily macabre jewellery made out of hummingbirds which we have in the jewellery gallery. But there's no denying it that if you saw that in the light – and it's got jewel beetles decorating it – it again would catch the light. I'm not defending it but I can see why it was valuable at the time. And it has all those exotic connotations. There's a wonderful book written in the mid-19th century called 'A Journey Down the Amazon' by William Henry Wallace and extracts from this book were published by all the regional newspapers in Britain; in St Ives, in Dundee, and one of the most popular snippets was about hummingbirds in the forest and about how light caught on the feathers and it's the most wonderfully evocative description. I'm sure that Victorian women when they saw these things they would think – from that little snippet in the newspaper – they would somehow transfer that into a stuffed bird on a hat to look like the real thing. It was like you were owning a part of that knowledge about a new part of the world, this wonderful world that God has given you, and they did think that you (humans) were superior beings and that you could use the products that God had given you to beautify your life.

So, this (swan down mantle) is actually made of swansdown, there's no fur in it at all. It was made in Russia in Nizhny Novgorod. So, its swansdown, its standard swansdown. So, it's a mother and a daughter called Anna Mikhailova Vinogradova who founded the firm in 1857 and her daughter took it over from her. This was probably worn by a child (swan down mantle) and they were luxury products. There were a number of firms making them, the Imperial Royal Family bought a huge range of these garments; jumpers, dresses, vests, hooded coats, hats and bonnets. So, if you've ever been to Russia in the winter you know how cold it is, it gets very, very cold indeed. So, this is like your – most luxurious as possible – thermal under and outer wear. Because it's like a cellular fabric because you've got the air trapped in the silk lining in this extraordinary woven bobble-

like arrangement which I don't totally understand but it would be very, very warm and very cosy. The fact that the Royal Family dressed their children in it and there's photographs of them wearing it, and it has still survived today, it would have had real luxury status. We don't know how it came to Britain, the only reference I have is bridesmaids wearing them. Again, if you imagine a bridesmaid going to a winter wedding and they're shivering and this would have felt like a real luxury thing to have put around them. They didn't have little angora wool shrugs or anything like that, and it was jolly cold, people didn't have central heating. There were just pools of heat that you could enjoy. Transport was unheated, you have to think back to a different time about when warming your body was important.

This is monkey fur (monkey evening cape) from the colobus monkey, and monkey fur I think people often have an adverse reaction to. It was popular in the late 19th century in particular in the 1910's, 20's and 30's and it was particularly popular with celebrities in the late 1920's. Celebrities of the silver screen, and I think that may be because it's got a sheen on it so it shows up well in black and white. You were very starved at the time because of the war, so people wanted to wear them. This piece (monkey evening cape) was worn by Emilie Grigsby who had a very wealthy benefactor who died – he was old and she was young – he died and left her with a very large sum of money. She then enjoyed herself living in between New York, Paris and London and spending vast amounts of money on wonderfully luxurious clothes, and so this comes from her wardrobe. It's beautifully made and I like the choice of the ribbons with these – the ribbons are almost like water; they have that 1930's kind of sheen to them. And its lovely at the back (holds piece up) it's very nicely made around the collar, it's very neat, it would have looked good from the back of the neck. And a journalist of the time commented on the fact that it's what the best quality monkey fur garments look like, like rivers of black water. And again, this is all to do with how the light shone on it, and I think it's quite interesting comparing it to a river and black water. It's not about touch, it's about appearance or at least that's what he seems to think, although it is incredibly soft to touch. I think the celebrity thing is really key, we are utterly in awe of celebrities today. Shagginess is definitely something that people valued in the past, particularly as a fashion statement. Even today, we have plenty of shaggy furs around and we have had throughout the decades.

This one is 1880's and it was made by a London Fashion House called Redmayne & Co, and it's not embroidered its actually woven fabric. It's incredibly well cut, it's a velvet which has been cut to create the brown ground and then the pattern of peacock feathers is left in the loop. So, it's very fine fabric, it's been made either in Paris or in Spitalfields in London and then its trimmed with marabou feathers around the collar and lapels and cuff. And marabou is one of the feathers that people protested about its use because it comes from the down of the wing of the bird, so the bird has to be killed. These little feathers that are literally just strung onto it are domestic poultry. I like it because I think of it in movement, and I think if you think of this person walking down the street in a kind of breeze and how the feathers would ruffle and then you think of these little brown

feathers and how they are like falling leaves. You have to think of these things – they look dead on the table – but you've got to think of them when they're moving around and why it might appeal to somebody. And then the passementerie, the tassels on the end are wooden core and they are quite like husks. It's very much a winter garment, it's very luxurious, and peacock feathers were fashionable at the time and they had various symbolism and evoked pride and I think what people really liked about them again was the iridescence and the beauty. I think with the weave which is amazing, I think they've tried to conjure up that iridescence with all the different colours in it. So, I should say that women were absolutely at the fore of the anti-feather campaign. Women were working with naturalists mainly, an awful lot of women, and they grouped together and eventually formed the society for the preservation of birds. There was an anti-fur campaign at the same time but it was never successful in the way the anti-feather campaign was, even though it played on the same emotional responses.

Then the final one is silver fox furs, and the interesting thing to me about them because I've lifted them up, is the weight of them. It is like picking up your cat, it is very animal-like when you pick it up. I've been trying to work out what the appeal of them is, these very animal-looking…it is a pair of foxes, and when you see illustrations of shop catalogues selling things like this the women were pictured in a way that made them look protected somehow. They're wearing this animal around them; it is as if they are protected. There is an interesting article called 'Portable Pets' and I think there is something about it, I don't know when you get whole animals like that...I was in Bath on Friday and I saw a tippet made out of 12 squirrels and that I find very alien somehow, but this I can see that it…it has a weight to it that somehow might appeal when you're wearing it on your body. And that would have been farmed (fox fur stole). The first farming in England was skunk farming which was in Northumberland, and then fur farming was all on Exmoor and places like that, such as fox farming. It was interesting as it was seen as an occupation for women, it was seen as the type of farming that women were very suited to doing at the time.

If anyone's got any questions I can try and answer them. When I think back, as I try and think about the 19th century, I think about the lighting conditions, what heating was like at the time and I think its what value these things had. They're all luxury items, the fox fur maybe is a little less (luxury) but certainly that's a luxury item (velvet and feather dolman) and hummingbirds were very expensive and the swan down would have been very pricey indeed (swan down mantle) and that one is very fashion (monkey fur cape) and I think fox was very fashion (fox fur stole).

Vicky: So, swan is only worn by the Royal Family?

Edwina: Well it's in Russia. They were made in Nizhny Novgorod. There were lots of these Russian furs and they were made a lot by women and Vinogradova employed around 50 people; 25 people working in her own workshop by the end of the 19th century. So, to a

degree it's a cottage industry, and one of the interesting arguments about a designer who shall remain nameless was telling me that everything he did was sustainable because he only produced such small quantities. And to me that's a really interesting argument because you could argue that even though they were using swansdown, they weren't producing that much and therefor is that OK? I think all these issues around sustainability or responsible fashion cycles, it's a such a nuanced argument, and it's very difficult to find your way – particularly someone like me who's not directly involved in it – between getting the right balance, I mean everything we're wearing here today; we've got petroleum-based products, we've got things that are plant based, I think maybe diversity is the key. That we just don't wear too much of anything. Putting the ethics aside, and what we might feel about fur and feathers and CITES legislations are pretty good these days and most of the stuff that gets impounded at customs and exiles is very little fashion stuff coming in now and it mostly is things being imported from Africa for African communities in London. The Natural History Museum has a collection of fashionable items impounded by customs and exiles which is quite interesting actually. Also - not feathers – but most furs have multiple uses, so beaver; it was castor oil used in medicine and for perfume and then beaver fur for beaver hats. So, in a way it's what you were saying (participant 5) Native Americans would use every last bit of the animals that they trapped and that was certainly – going way back to what the Europeans did - thrifty. But I think it's the consumer, I think the consumer needs to think a bit more about what they are consuming. Anyway, that's the end of that bit.

Researcher: Thank you. It would be very interesting to see, now that everyone knows a bit more about those items, does it change anyone's opinion on any of the pieces? Does it make you feel that one piece is now maybe more appealing, less appealing, now you know the material, the provenance?

Vicky: It makes it even more appealing.

Researcher: What element from what Edwina said?

Vicky: Well, the details. About the monkey cape, the back of the neck. Even the swan, even though it is hard to think about the swan, it is even more exquisite.

James: I think with the fox as well and how it's like a pet, it reminds me of something kind of shameless or witchy, its familiar.

Edwina: It's a very odd thing. We had a muff; we have several muffs in the collection and whenever I pick one up the first thing, I do is put my hands in it and that's absolutely not what I've been saying to do. You do not do that, you just don't. You know, you handle the thing very delicately but the minute I touch one I automatically slide my hands in because it's that feeling of warmth and comfort and protection and there's something terribly

reassuring about it. I don't particularly have a desire to own fur myself but I can see the appeal of it. It is something to do with being clothed and protected and warm.

Kate: There's something I notice if other people come to my studio and I've had vegan assistants before and there's something that I notice when I wear fur out and people can't help it, they have to touch it, it doesn't matter, they're just drawn to it and I don't know if it's anything to do with the animal or what it is, there's something else which seems to be like an attraction to it. Whether its soft or…I don't necessarily think it's because it belongs to an animal, I think it's more the intriguement of it.

Edwina: Some furs with very short hairs, when you stroke them it actually does feel like you're stroking the lovely short hair of a dog, it's exactly the same feeling and somehow, it's very comforting. As it is lying watching telly – those who do – and having a cat on you or whatever. It's very intriguing how that links in, to me it's intriguing, so then when I touch these I do get – with some of them not all of them – I do get that sense of sensation. It's a very familiar feeling.

Elizabeth: I think the whole performative aspect that you mentioned earlier is really important because usually when you wear fur its outside. When you think about fur with very long strands of hair and just the slightest breeze can cause that surface to ripple and move, and I think it's that sort of motion that you see that is so performative and is constantly changing and fluid, which might be appealing.

Edwina: Of course, that's why people like it, with your parka with the fur around the top, because it flutters in the wind and it frames your face.

Kate: Because that bit doesn't keep you any warmer.

Edwina: It doesn't keep you any warmer but it is…its framing, and it does flutter and I was going to say, with Emily Grigsby and the monkey fur cape – which is dyed to make it an even tone – she was really very fair skinned, almost transparent skin, and long hair. So, when you see someone like that it really would have framed and showcased her head. And when we go out, we do dress in a performative way, we do think about how we're projecting our bodies and how we're framing our heads and our necks particularly. I think you have to look at things like that. You have to think how people are using these garments, how they might use these garments…but I think you're right Elizabeth, it's that thing about…something like fox furs would move with you.

John: It's incredible. In the last 20 years there's been a very strong anti-fur movement which is pretty emotive, virulent and sometimes quite aggressive, if it supported by some celebrity, personality, it's all across social media, and you can hear some of those opinions here today… But the reality is, the allure of – and we can talk about fur used in fashion - the reality is that the consumption is greater than ever. And ok there is the rush

from China, I can assure you in London there's probably more fur being sold than in the last 30 years. I don't know, that's the interesting thing for your PhD (referring to Researcher).

Kate: I actually think it's to do with education. People have educated themselves; they know that they can get something which is high design and high value but also sustainable, from a good place, and if they can source something in that way then they're happy to wear it.

John: Its more than that, it is the appeal, the desire to wear it which is very, very strong.
Edwina: But surely it is also to do with technology, fur is now lighter in weight?

John: Yes, and it's more than the standard classical garment you associate it with, it's also accessories, its trimmings, handbags and so on. They use it on boots, gloves, they use it on hats, keychains to attach to your handbag, more and more this is happening and you can't qualify it. Fur is being consumed in various new products…obviously garments but it's more than that and the questions is why does this appeal despite this huge backlash, this sector of the community who say they don't like it, they are appalled by it, they hate it, they're disgusted by it, they use very strong language, they use the strong tactics to persuade people and yet more and more people are using it. Why is that?

Kate: It's because you can't replicate it.

Edwina: One thing that interested me is that campaigning against fur worked, it did work to a degree, I think. When milliners like Phillip Tracey, Stephen Jones, they buy vintage feathers so they're not working with CITES regulations in that way, and they're not going out in public in these hats. Campaigning against feathers worked, whereas campaigning against fur was never as successful. Also, in the 1920's and 30's the anti-fur protection league put really quite big, bold advertisements on fashion magazines like Vogue and Vogue actually was brave enough to respond, whereas I think now fashion magazines have lots of fur in them but they don't caption it as fur.

Kate: Frustratingly so.

Edwina: But I think that fur has never ever really come out of fashion, and I'm completely neutral here, my job is to be neutral. I just have to defend what people thought at the time. Yesterday at the Museum of London we discussed an exhibition on fur and it got universally criticised, for all kinds of reasons. We left a comments book and the comments book was very good because it allowed people who didn't like fur to express themselves. As well as those who were keen on fur, and there were a lot of people in London whose families had been involved in the fur trade for generations, and so were very pleased to hear it. I think it's something that people need to vent about, whether they're pro or anti it or whatever, we need to understand the circumstances in which it

was worn. And I was amazed because I never knew but the first image, I found of somebody wearing fur with a head and a tail in Holland in the 1650's. It's interesting, it describes it as a cruel fashion or something like that but it protected a woman from the cold. There's lots of comments like that, so it explains that it's been going on for a long time I expect.

Elizabeth: What's so interesting about that inscription is that yes, she's not doing this out of cruelty, she's making her skin softer and more sensual for her lover who's going to be with her that night and hold her body. So, fur is also deeply connected to the erotic as well.

Edwina: And muffs were very erotic.

Vicky: But I believe there is a big fetish about fur, also I think – I grew up in Spain at the beginning of the 70's - the women who could actually afford to have something fur, they would display it on Sundays, it was important to wear it to church…and I remember the fetish of putting my head against these women going across and it was like no other feeling, it was kind of incredible and I've talked about this subject with friends and they thought the same, I mean they still have that thing of squeezing themselves against their bodies. I mean, it might sound a bit weird now. There's something about being a kid and to feel yourself against all this mink fur coats so I don't know…It must be weird to other people…

Edwina: Another thing I really think about fur is that it changes the person who's worn it.

Vicky: Particularly scarves.
Edwina: Yes, but particularly furs, you think of the jewellery and perfume of the person who wore it which is actually rather interesting. I think if you don't regularly clean them, that would happen.

Nick: I think it's a symbol of luxury, it sexy, it considered sexy, I think that is the reason that the fur is booming in London right now because the society changed. New money came in London, if you go in Mayfair it's unbelievable, everybody is wearing a fur coat, like a huge fur coat. Everybody's starting to look as glamorous as they can, at the moment, and they're trying to look as sexy as they can at the same time. I think in general; it generates feelings of being sexy, of superiority. I think of distinguishing yourself from people, not everybody can afford the fur. The bigger it is the better it is, the more colourful it is now because we have more dyed fur, it makes more of an impact. I think that is the reason, because the middle class who would – not the middle class exactly – but people who are educated, who are more sensitive, they don't exist anymore as much. Even with movies, you have the blockbusters and the very cultural movies. The in between doesn't exist anymore. The same with the class system as well, the class system in between, it doesn't exist. The same with fashion; you have the very, very big

brands and you have the very high street stuff, starting with Primark all the way to Topshop and Zara. This in between doesn't exist exactly, the new money type of person who wants to show off would ever, ever buy fake fur no matter how real it looks. They would never, ever buy fake leather no matter how nice it looks…only if its Stella McCartney. But only because they don't buy the coat, they buy Stella McCartney. Fashion and money and sex appeal go hand in hand and for me that's the reason for the existence of fur where we are. I think it's as simple as this.

Edwina: In the past you had lots of books around dressing yourself on a budget and the sealskin was the thing which people really wanted in the 20th Century. It was the details in fact that you could find on fur. My middle-class Grandmother, she was absolutely so proud of that fur and what a luxury it is and she wore her crocodile shoes in the 1930's and in the 1960's as far as I know, but she got them in the 1930's. That was middle class aspiration of wanting to kind of have what wealthy women had and she enjoyed every bit of it. And I do think celebrity has a lot to do with it because there are amazing films of women in furs; Ginger Rogers and her fox furs, they were very influential, sexy and glamorous, what people aspired to be. But I think you're right, a lot of people living in London now are from all over the world. People have very different cultures.

Nick: How many times have we seen women like Sharon Stone naked in underwear wrapped in fur? How many times have you seen Demi Moore naked in underwear wrapped in fur and holding a gun? It is a symbol of sex appeal, I think it generates a madness somehow, something very primitive. I do think so, I really do. A naked woman wrapped in fur it's like wearing sexy underwear or a corset.

John: Helmut Newton's famous photography.

Nick: Yeah exactly, Helmut Newton.

John: The reality is also why is there so much fake fur? It's just copying. It's a huge amount. You can't buy a parka that hasn't got a trim in fake or real fur.

Researcher: I was actually going to ask Joanne; have you seen a boom in fur alternatives and do you think they're playing in the same market (as real fur)?

Joanne: There is from what I've seen, although I don't really use them. But…I don't know it's like others were saying, I remember my father bought a fur coat for my mum back in the day.

Nick: It's also a present as well, that's an important point. It was always a present from a man. Always. So, it was the same thing with jewellery, if you think of Elizabeth Taylor. You would get gifted a fur.

Joanne: I think its celebrities, it's also about trends, they go hand in hand, it's very important. I went to a talk, where an editor of Vogue – she actually had a really nice presentation and what she had on this presentation was an image from Vogue in the 90's back to one of the first issues, and then Vogue now, and what she says is that it's simple, nothing changes. You have a Princess wearing something and then that's the trend, that's how it goes, so it's really important who wears it. What a celebrity wears, people middle class or other follow…As a brand in order to survive we need to follow it, you want people to buy your product, you want someone to wear it, so you're not going to go far away from it (trends).

Researcher: Would you say in your work that you're trying to achieve similar appeals to… (exotic animal materials)?

Joanne: I don't know. I think because I'm watching videos, and to me I used to have – not really a fur coat, but I was using lots of leather and I was wearing different stuff, but to me those videos that I saw – and maybe because I'm a mum of two – but something changed and I felt like 'Oh now I see those animals, I really don't want it'. Then I looked to alternatives to actually create something that lasted longer and would also be trendy for longer, so I used hair as it changes, it's a transformant and you can make it new each time, that's what I'm trying to do and what I found out is that it's very hard because it hasn't been a trend. There hasn't been a big celebrity…actually there was a guy wearing a Charlie Le Mindu big hairy dress but that's a bit different, what I'm trying to do is a bit different. What I'm trying to do is not normal. I think with fur it's been present for so long, so why do you want to better it? When I was younger, I really wanted a cat or a dog, and I think it's the same appeal, you want to pet it. I use synthetic materials, what I do is that the firm I'm buying it from are using fair trade and I'm really cautious of how I use it so each collection we're trying to use less. My first collection was my graduate collection so I didn't have all those concerns in mind, so I was using a lot of hair. So, what I say is, in each collection we're trying to improve my use and to make it more appealing and useful for longer. So, I'm actually collecting every single waste I have and I work on different ways to make it wearable again and… accessible.

Researcher: The next point is maybe a bit linked so I was wondering whether – the question really was could any of these materials or processes be replaced with another and still have the same effect? So, I don't know whether that links on? Would you Joanne feel that you could replicate any of these things?

Joanne: When I think about the monkey fur definitely! (laughs)

Researcher: I did think there was some comparison to be honest.

Joanne: Yeah, so I wouldn't say that hair can replicate it, it can't. It's just a different material, different feel, different touch. So, no I wouldn't say so. What I would say though

is that visually when people see my garments, they think fur, and after they find out the whole story that we have. So, I think visually yes, you can play around.

Bethan: I just feel like if we find an alternative, why do we need to carry on killing animals? Obviously, that's a vegan's perspective but I just think it's not necessary any more. It's not ours to take from them, we don't own it, we don't own them, why should we take it from them?

Researcher: Your work at (Luxury Embroidery House); are you working on anything that you could draw comparison with the beetle piece, perhaps with a different type of material?

Bethan: We don't use beetles, do we?

Liz: No because the new material would be sequins.

Bethan: I personally don't use them, one of our embroiderers does. For our collections, I don't condone it and everyone knows that at work. But it's not up to me really, I can have a say in it but at the end of the day it's not my decision but I would prefer it if we didn't use it at all because we're all about experimenting and using new materials, finding new materials, and that's what I really like doing.

Liz: I think that's what (someone unknown at the company) does try to do…she does love fur, but she does try to incorporate new and contemporary materials, which does work. But people are still trying to do the fur.

Bethan: Everyone can't resist touching it. Even at trade fairs, everyone does come up and you have to tell people not to touch them.

John: Using contemporary materials, have you researched the impact it has on the planet in their production? We talked about cotton before and the impact on the Aran Sea which has disappeared virtually, it was an economic, environmental disaster. So, you talk about contemporary materials but you don't know exactly what impact it will have on the environment.

(Liz and Bethan nod in agreement)

Kate: Yeah is that plastic (directed to Joanne)?

Joanne: It's synthetic but the way I use it, it's different. I use eco-printing, and I try to be eco in all sorts of other ways so that the way I use it, it will last longer.

Kate: But the way its produced, and how they make it and the decomposing?

Joanne: It's in the synthetic world.

John: The moment you move from a cottage industry which is what you're talking about and we touched upon that, with production you know there's seven billion people on this planet so there has to be some impact, some consequence.

Liz: Yeah definitely.

John: You know the cost is far worse when producing a so-called ethical material, or contemporary material than by using traditional materials. Actually, probably even with deep research, we don't know what the impact is.

Liz: I don't think she uses them as ethical; she doesn't claim to be ethical but she does use them as an alternative.

John: Are you more comfortable with it?

Liz: (Pause)…Yes personally, but I don't have an opinion at work on things like that because…

John: That's assuming you don't?

Liz: Yeah…

John: But does the consumer know what's worse?

Liz: Probably not but the company that I work for and the things that we embroider its…nobody really knows where it comes from or what happens and it is all a luxury, everything we design is a luxury, it's not a necessity at all. It is very beautiful, it's a luxury.

Researcher: So, the appeal is often more in what you can do with the existing material rather than the appeal lying in where that fibre or material has come from, the supply chain and such, it's much more the values within your own methods?

Liz: Yes. Our old archival samples have nothing – we didn't use fur, there are some bits with feathers. But yes, the new samples are all fur. They're not my designs. And they are the ones that do appeal.

Researcher: Is that a different customer base?

Liz: Yes, a very, very high-end customer base.

Researcher: And there's others that are non-animal that are also appealing to a high end?

Liz: Yeah, well we specialise in gold work which is one of them, that's wire. It's just as beautiful.

Kate: With a lot of my clients, they wouldn't want to replicate it (fur) with something else, the whole attraction is in what it is and I mean that is what they want, so…I don't think they want to put something in its place, definitely not.

Michelle: Do you think the average consumer – playing devil's advocate – do you think the average consumer can know the difference? If you were to hand them something…

Kate: That type of consumer is definitely not shopping with me. My consumers – I certainly wouldn't call them consumers, they're my clients. It's on a high-end basis, it's minimal and yes, absolutely.

Michelle: Maybe not your clients specifically, but in general…

Kate: But this is a high-end product

Michelle: …people say everybody wants fur, but what if you created something with an alternative fabric? And you just said 'here is your fur coat'.

Kate: I think they can definitely.

John: The average consumer doesn't know the difference between that and a wool!

Kate: I think that the target market for fur is no different. A lot of my clients know the difference between Canadian and Russian sable, they know.

Michelle: But fur is also trickling down into the more normal sectors, something we were saying, the reason why there is such as boom in fur these days is that it is not just the appeal from this section perspective or a luxurious perspective but it's also more accessible now. We can easily obtain fur, we can easily get hold of the animals, we have procedures in place. We've got processes that easily skin the animals and it becoming a lot more accessible.

Edwina: Actually, I would say that fur has always been very accessible. Certainly mid-19th Century onwards. When people started wearing fur garments, not just the linings – originally it was a lining in coats in Europe and North America and then with the Great Exhibition period onwards there was a great fur quest, they were first coming in at all levels to the market. Catalogues have a lot, they do have it at the top of the list and then they go, down, down, down to very modest prices that a modest income family could

afford. But if you check in the markets, furs were accessible and desirable, I think. And once you got down to it, they were appealing, what we've talked about, but they also kept you warm. You know, transport wasn't heated and shops weren't heated and it was a different world really.

James: I think as well, fur and leather especially, which is a lot of what my collections are made out of, they are integrated into human existence. From tens of thousands of years ago. Even when the first humans were wearing animal skins and things like that and so it's a cultural thing as well, deeply engrained into our culture. And the skins that I used for my collection which were fish skins, I was inspired by the North Eastern Chinese minority community – they're fishing based communities – so they eat the fish and then they keep the skins and then process them with the materials that they use, for example they can do it through urine tanning or cow brains or I used olive oil and egg yolk (laughs) which is a little more easy. I think with leather and fur it connects us back to being animals but then also…it's just so engrained into our society that I think it would be hard for it to completely disappear.

Edwina: I agree, we're the only species on earth that has to cover our bodies. The only species on earth. Skins and felts were what we first used to keep ourselves alive.

Kate: There's something very beautiful about that.

Nick: I have another question, why do people tend to freak out so much on fur and don't freak out as much for leather? If you wear something that's a shaved cow people are going to freak out but there's no difference from the leather jacket that I am wearing.

Researcher: It's a good question.

Nick: So, the fact that something is coming to life, doomed to die; either to be worn or to be eaten, to become a fur coat or a leather jacket, it's the same thing at the end of the day. Even if you use the whole animal or if you use part of the animal, its dead, that's it. So yes, I understand there is a factor of sensibility and sensitivity as well but at the end of the day people tend to freak more about the idea of fur than the actual thing.

John: The Netherlands have a huge muskrat population and they have to kill them, because they destabilise ecosystems. So, millions of rats are killed every year, we know it happens. Because it's one of the most politically correct countries, they're not allowed to use the animal for any purpose whatsoever, what's the point of that? You're killing them anyway!

Kate: Yeah

Edwina: Well it's the same with possum and…

John: But you can use the fur from them and it's very successful. Have done historically.

Edwina: It's also interesting talking to people – I was talking to a New Zealander today - and she was saying that they are pests. Also, I have a Canadian colleague who you might expect to be anti-fur but she has a whole long list of fur bearing animals in Canada who she regards as a complete pest and that you know, they're getting killed anyway so if you're going to kill them, use the fur. And it's very cold in some places. It's quite interesting, you do talk to people from countries which have different cultures and it's the same in Russia too, it's extremely cold.

Vicky: Living in Europe I was shocked that you have a really warm puffer jacket or people wear furs…but it's so cold, I was really shocked at the temperatures.

John: It's interesting that you talk about hummingbird and beetle and cultures of different communities, ethnic groups around the world used animal products in their culture in what they wore and how they decorated themselves. As soon as you interfere with that then it becomes a problem. But we've interfered with the sealing industry in Canada and in North America for no perceivably good reason in my opinion. I mean it is quite nice, but they can't sustain their lifestyle because we are taking away a part of their livelihood and welfare and you can't integrate it into the mainstream. So, there are so many consequences for what we do, every ethnic group around the planet has used animal products, not just to eat but to decorate clothes and stuff. That's interesting of course too.

Edwina: It's the scale, the sheer scale…I mean when you look at the bird options it's astonishing how anybody could ever… well I know they traded in ostrich feathers but its deeply, deeply shocking, just the quantity of birds used to decorate hats. I mean really, really shocking. And I agree with you that you know, we have…human beings have completely upset the balance as well. Aboriginal communities, they have a deep respect for the landscape and animals living in their territories and they kept nature in balance. Whereas we're completely lost the ability to maintain the balance of nature at the moment, and that's with what we eat, what we clothe ourselves with.

Researcher: The function / decoration thing is really interesting and I think another point – although I think we're going to go for a break – the last point really was whether anyone considers any of the items on the table as being functional? Or would you say they're all decorative embellishment? Open it up to what is embellishment as well?

Kate: It depends what you class as function. What is functional? If you wanted to look attractive, then that's what its function was.

Nick: It depends what was the intention at the time as well? What was the alternative instead of having this fur trimmed jacket? What else could they have? Did they have more velvet there? I mean, obviously it's a very luxurious jacket, it's quite decadent. Even with the feathers in between the fur, but what was the alternative? How did the people back then feel about animals? How did they – you know what I'm trying to say – I'm trying to say were they sensitive about it? Yes, probably they were. But at the same time, I don't think people exactly realised that what they wear was alive and died in a way. It looks nice yes, but I don't think people actually do the connection.

Joanne: It would be interesting. If somebody was to buy a coat, if it had a note in it saying I was made from 120 minks for you to have me, would you buy it? I don't know, I've been in the fur trade quite a big amount, talking a bit about this kind of thing…

Kate: I'm very open with my clients.

Joanne: But it gets to a point, there is a customer who loves fur and will always love fur and there is another customer who would be put off by this. It's (fur) amazing to touch, I'm not saying it's not, but there would be some who would buy it and some who would not.

Vicky: I was wondering too because you mentioned that there was a member of the Royal Family who was making anti-fur fashionable (directed at Edwina).

Edwina: Oh right. A member of the royal family who?

Vicky: Who made anti-fur really fashionable. The fact that she was showing her affection for animals and it was really fashionable to love animals and she must have been just after the Victorian period.

Edwina: Well the Royal family were always very keen on all their dogs, I'm not sure.

Vicky: I'm struggling to find that and I can't remember now who it was that said that at that point everything exploded and went against fur. They loved animals, and of course it was very British in a way and it was very fashionable as well.

Edwina: With due respect, those who were Christian in the 19th Century, they believed that God created this world for the benefit of human species and that certain types of animals, most of them were there to provide a practical use, whether it was medicinal or material or for transport. Always really when you go right back the first thing they talk about is the medicinal use of an animal and then whether you could eat it or not, what you could do with the skins, the upper body parts, so it was always used and some things like birds were purely ornamental. So, therefore it was considered justifiable to use feathers to ornament hats or something like that. And then the whole thing got thrown

up in the air with Darwin and evolution, and that made people much more uncertain about their relationship to animals. Also, you got again many, many campaigners, women, campaigning for their protection in the 19th Century and also in the 18th Century campaigning against cruelty to domestic animals. So, we had more respect for some domestic animals and treated them in a much more humane way, but it took a long time to shrug off this idea that everything was therefore our use. That's what my colleague at the Natural History Museum is still saying, that there was a lot of debate in the 19th Century about whether they should be exploited or protected.

James: If you don't have a domestic animal then your most immediate interaction with an animal is on your plate, in a completely tertiary way. In an urban environment we're more and more disconnected with nature and that can be confusing. I think fur is a way to connect with nature in a somewhat paradoxical sense. When you're wearing loads of foxes you are kind of connected with nature in a bizarre way, although in terms of use does it actually keep you warm still do you think, with fur? Or do you wear a scarf because you like the fabric?

Edwina: It depends, I mean wool comes in such amazing qualities. It's a very complicated subject.

John: We're so disconnected, the reality is the way we interact with animals is totally different to people who have animals, to a farmer for example. Totally different.

James: Or the population 50 years ago for example, they would have had a much more immediate connection to nature. The urban environment was much smaller, farms were smaller.

John: It funny what you said about paradoxically being connected to nature through fur because there has to be, the essence of this discussion is to understand why there is a continuous interaction with the product. It (fur) is really strong and its imitated and the backlash is negative but the commercial side is positive, so why, what is it about it that we are attracted to? I can't tell you… it feels nice, it looks nice, but it goes much deeper than that and that's where you can discover new work.

Michelle: Just building on from what you said, what attracts us is that it's something that we don't have, we're not naturally born with fur so it's a fascination of something that we don't have. And yet we have hair on our heads but that's pretty much as far as it goes. I mean, I'm less attracted to the hair cape, maybe because I have hair of my own. Whereas the fur is far more intriguing and I think that also goes hand in hand with why people want to touch it. It's because they want to know what it feels like, because we don't get to feel that ourselves. We just want to see it and touch it. I think yes, it's the exploration of the unknown.

Bethan: But then does that make it right to take it from animals that do own that skin, who do own that fur. As I said before, it's not ours to take. I don't know if that makes it right or justifiable, just so we can see what it feels like.

Michelle: I'm not justifying it. I totally agree because sometimes I reverse it and say well how would we feel if someone came along and said 'hey let's skin you'. So, I totally agree with you that it doesn't necessarily give us the right but maybe that's why people are fascinated by it because it's something that we don't have. I mean, men are fascinated by certain features of women, and women are fascinated by certain features of men because we don't share those things so it's something that we're unfamiliar with.

Researcher: That's really interesting. Does anybody else have any points related to that otherwise we'll go for a break? No, OK.

BREAK

(Designers Nick, Joanne, James and John - on behalf of Kate - share their work)

Nick: You cannot really understand the structure of it because the wings actually stand out. It was inspired from religious baroque and it was my interpretation. It's been some time since I've done this, its leather embossed to look like snake, laser cut to make it look like lace and scales. So, everything is laser cut, it's designed on illustrator and then it had chiffon; silk chiffon at the top. It's actually quite dirty because the leather laser cut creates ashes and it makes everything dirty so it was kind of a one-night thing and yeah that's it.

Researcher: You can try to lift it if you like so people can see the shape? The back maybe, it's up to you.

Nick: (lifts it) The feathers that it has on I think – I don't remember what they are to be honest and I don't even remember where I bought them – but yeah, I thought this combined…

Edwina: So, the colour, when I look at it from this angle…

Nick: Its two different types of leather.

Edwina: Its two different types of leather yes.

Nick: Actually, it worked out quite nicely, but it was an accident.

Edwina: Oh well it's very nice.

Michelle: Happy accident!

Nick: I bought one leather, and then they didn't have the same leather. I ordered it, it came back wrong and the gold one it…but I think it…

Edwina: It works really well actually, and in a way, it makes it more skin-like, the way that the light hits it in different ways.

Nick: And yes, the idea was that with baroque in general that everything that sparkles, its iridescent, in general I used to be quite pluralistic in my design and I liked grand and glamour. So…I still like it, I'm kind of sick of looking at it to be honest!

Researcher: And Lady Gaga wore some of your pieces?

Nick: Yes, Lady Gaga wore one of these pieces from this collection actually. It was a longer dress that had the same kind of embellishment at the top and then it got sold at an auction in LA.

Edwina: Do you know where it went?

Nick: No, but I would be very curious to find out. Probably it's in a Hard Rock Café somewhere! (laughs)

Edwina: And when you were researching it did you study the animals as well?

Nick: Not as much at the animals because the whole idea was the ecstasy of Maria Theresa, that it's a stunning sculpture of Bernini and it's kind of started from there and developed, developed, developed and I did want it to give a luxurious vibe, quite theatrical as well. I think it's a costume, it's not an actual fashion garment to be honest. But fashion at the time as well was a bit more costume-y than it is now and I suppose that was the…but I was always attracted to…even now there is a very fine line, it's not as dramatic as this one.

Vicky: When was your graduate collection?

Nick: It was six years ago, or seven. Seven years ago.

Edwina: And you're still working with embossed leather?

Nick: Yes. It wasn't about the leather, I think I was going for the look or the…I was looking for a nice medium, embroidery wasn't an option then because it was too expensive to do it here with the company that we're working with and India – that I'm working with now because I'm working with – we do all the embellishments for Balmain, Givenchy, Prada,

Saab, so it wasn't an option back then. Back then the company was afraid with deadlines – because you know how it is with uni, you can miss the deadlines and stuff – I was trying to…and I think it worked nicely, I was trying to give a more modern take on embroidery because it's an easy way to interpret Baroque with embroidery. So, I think I was attracted to it, I think it worked for me.

Edwina: Great.

Nick: It's very difficult to explain a project that you've done a long time ago, because first of all you're sick of looking at it and secondly you go out of it. I mean, I still like it and sometimes I think like how on earth I came up with this and the whole concept because when you're actually in university things are much more conceptual, they always have a meaning. When you start working in the market and in the fashion industry your kind of loose that, as much as you want to keep it for yourself it becomes a bit of a money-making process to be honest. That's it!

Researcher: Ok shall we go on to the next, do you want to speak about your pieces?

Joanne: So, this one is something I'm exploring, to use the hair differently. It's more decorative so, as the fur people love it when they see hair, their first reaction is ooh is it real, when I say synthetic then they're a bit happier about it. This one is like…as I said in my first collection, I used a lot of hair and the whole garment is actually pretty much look like you used fur. So, with my use of hair I'm trying to use less and less and still kind of have like – what I'm trying with this one is to make hair more acceptable so I'm using it more as a decorative thing. And yeah it just looks like a normal…not normal, but it's more kind of acceptable for people to wear it this way it's like you can actually wear it more. For the other hairy pieces, it's like you actually need a strong person to wear it.

Vicky: It's beautiful, can you dry clean it?

Joanne: Yeah you can dry clean it and actually wash it because the hair I used is really high quality so it actually will last a really long time and you can style it. It actually…you can heat it up to 180 degrees.

Edwina: Will it curl at all?

Joanne: You can. It's another project I'm doing actually which is going to have a cool movie, I'm working with lots of cool stylists at the moment so we'll see what's going to happen. (Next dress) Yes, so this is how I use the hair less, and even this one, the next one, it's something different than my graduate collection. It was all the patterns I did, with this it's not just how I use the hair more was about kind of like more playing with the colours and different ways you can use them. So, on my original graduate collection I had similar patterns coming in but everything was engineered and always on the hair, so now

I was trying to bring the pattern without the hair, having the pattern and then without the hair to just bring it out.

Edwina: Can I touch it?

Joanne: Yeah!

Liz: Do you dye it yourself?

Joanne: No, I actually buy it like this, I've done my research.

Liz: Have you ever experimented with dying it?

Joanne: Ah, what I did is I was planning a collection and yeah you can actually dye it and you van transfer print on it.

Vicky: The quality is different from that one there. (the other dress)

Joanne: It's just shorter (the other dress). This ones been used already for photoshoots so it's kind of gets more real after a time.

Vicky: It's beautiful.

Joanne: But this one has less hair; you can actually see the fabric underneath. What I like about the hair it's kind of the thing you can change it. With this one…I need to bring some other garment too kind of explain it more but with my other garments its fully done with hair so let's say you have to engineer it. If you sew the hair it stitched up there then the actual picture becomes back low, so you can actually cut more and change the pattern each time you cut it and the hair is the same as your hair. After a certain time, it gets like run to bits, you really need to cut it, but the thing is you can transform it which makes it…

Vicky: Does it come with a pair of scissors as well?

Joanne: No but it comes with a brush.

Vicky: Oh, really that's fabulous!

Edwina: When you get the short pieces like this it's definitely a very different feel, it feels like a crew cut and then it's very silky down there (second dress) so its different sensations.

Joanne: Exactly. It's what I found with the hair is like it has a similar thing to the fur – people want to touch it, they want to stroke it, so in my pieces that have a lot of hair,

people are like 'I want to touch it' it's similar, it's just similar (to responses to fur). So, with me what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to find a luxurious alternative to fur.
Nick: Does it need hair conditioner?

Joanne: (Laughs) You can actually because it's a very high-quality hair, it's actually hair extensions so you can treat it the same way you treat your hair, you can wash it the same way you wash your clothes.

Edwina: Because they make wigs out of it don't, they?

Joanne: Yes. And it comes in all available colours you want. And you can actually make whatever you want, so to me it's more like an artistic approach as well

Edwina: And does it come already attached to the (base material)?

Joanne: Yeah and now they make it into four metres so it's long, it used to be only one metre.

Vicky: For you explicitly?

Joanne: Yeah.

Vicky: Really? Wow! Well done.

Edwina: Interesting.

James: When you said there are other pieces that use more hair…?

Joanne: Its less hair actually, what I'm trying to do is produce less…I'm also aware of how things have been used, the big problem is us the consumers, we want more and more and we want something new every two weeks and that's what is causing all the problems it's not that much the fur trade or anything because anything that's used in a normal state then its fine you're not harming anyone. It's the same with your body – eat McDonalds five times a day every day and your body will be harmed, but if you have it like once a week no problem.

Researcher: Ok great thank you. And then Participant 1 do you want to speak about your piece?

James: You can touch.

Joanne: Oh, you can touch.

James: It's just a fish skin parker that I made and then there are two different types of fish which are treated with olive oil, egg yolk and soap. It's a really long process where I go to Billingsgate fish market to buy it and take it to my flat. Then at my flat, I scrape off all the scales.

Joanne: Seriously?

James: For example, this one – if you feel it it's like – the scales haven't been taken off and they're really like, you can just feel it's almost like shark skin and with these ones I took the scales off them.

Bethan: What do you do with the scales?

James: Sometimes I kept them and froze them and was going to use them as embroidery, use them as sequins but then time just ran away because it's such a long, long process: So after I scrape off the scales, I would wash them and stretch them out, and then squeeze out all the excess water and then put them with the olive oil, egg yolk and soap, and have them in that for 15minutes. Then I would hang them up and then when you hand them up, they absorb the oil and the egg yolk and that would take three to four days. Then I have to wash off the oil and egg yolk and then clean them but not too much because you don't want to wash it all out and then stretch it out on boards so they're super-duper flush and then pin them every two centimetres round the edges. You can see here (shows participants). And then overnight they would just dry and then this would be what's left.

Edwina: Amazing. Have you seen our fish skin coat?

James: I haven't seen that.

Edwina: That's one made by that kind of border of Russia and Japan, so what you're talking about. It's a ceremonial coat, it dates to I think 1880's, you must come to see it.

James: I'd love to, I was originally inspired by the Hezhe people in north east China, as I said before, they do this kind of…they do it in a way that was kind of…I was more interested in the way it looked because I wanted to create people who looked like fish, and so what they do is they try to make the fish as leathery as possible and a strong material so they'll use this kind of material crocodile teeth wooden structure to like push on the leather and work it as much as possible in order to stop turning it into a practical thing. So, this is dover sole and this is organically farmed but then the salmon skin which I only found halfway through is farmed salmon which…I don't know what I think about that.

Edwina: Well actually using the skins is a good thing

James: Yeah exactly otherwise it would just be thrown away.

Edwina: Were they given to you for free?

James: Yes, they were given to me for free.

Edwina: Really? Amazing.

James: The guys at billingsgate fish market as well were just hilarious (everyone laughs) they obviously…so didn't understand it.

Vicky: Did you show them pictures of your final collection?

James: Yeah, and I gave them champagne and the article in the Evening Standard and things like that.

Edwina: But what's rather lovely is the transparency of it.

James: Yeah so gorgeous, I had three different silks; orange, blue and pink that when worn underneath it kind of shone through.

Vicky: The layering of it is gorgeous.

James: Each fish has a different kind of material property, so the dover sole is super papery thin, whereas the salmon skins; they're so strong.

Edwina: Is the dover sole the white-y one?

James: Well both of them are dover sole. Actually, the white is the underneath and the brown is the top.

Edwina: Yes exactly, the spotty top.

James: And the salmon skin…some fish skin, after it's been treated is 10 times stronger than sheep skin, it can be super strong. It just obviously, it's just a very laborious procedure and it takes a lot more pelts because they are a lot smaller. My collection probably took about 250 skins to make three looks; trousers, jacket, dress and this coat, and (it took) five months or so.

Joanne: Wow!

John: What are the buttons?

James: The buttons are mother of pearl from that vintage market in Spitalfields.

Bethan: I just couldn't tell what it was.

James: The other side is traditionally used.

Bethan: It makes me nervous how you just touch it like that, does it perforate?

John: It's quite robust.

Bethan: Does it perforate?

James: Yes, it can. You can cut into it for sure quite easily.

Bethan: But would it crinkle, would it snap if I crushed it?

James: It would crease and sometimes it rips for example this button hole ripped so I had to crudely repair it.

Bethan: Oh.

James: But it would just like, every fish has a different property

Bethan: Really?

Edwina: It's just like fur isn't it? Skin is going to be different. And when did they stop smelling of fish?

James: Well it depends for example, with the salmon skin because its thicker sometimes if I keep it in the garment bags, after you take it out of the garment bag it will still smell but it depends on so many different things. The more you expose it to the elements, the more UV light especially because that helps, the more leathery it becomes and less fishy.

Edwina: How extraordinary.

Nick: I think it's very interesting that you didn't applique the skins onto something, so when you wear it you do have fish skin on your skin.

James: Yeah exactly.

Edwina: And have you continued to work with it?

James: It was so tiring, and I had a team of about four – three or four people who would come to my house every Friday and then we'd all delegate the different tools and procedures. It was cool because I was passing on this kind of old, old tradition in a modern environment using modern fish. If you can call them modern fish! (laughs)

John: Very interesting.

Edwina: Wonderful texture.

James: And they have really nice sounds as well. The salmon skins zoot suit trousers, which, if you don't know zoot suits, its copious amounts of fabric - it's meant to be. They were really big, kind of clownish trousers that were high waisted and held up by dungarees and then when you walked, they like (makes crunching sound with the coat).

Edwina: Something we haven't talked about is sound.

Researcher: Yes, actually that hasn't come up interestingly. So, we have one more item which is Kate's coat (who had to leave the workshop early), and I think John you were going to speak about it?

John: I could. It's mink and beaver skin, and this is all dyed with stencils (beaver), and this is a natural white with black intarsia (mink), it's quite nicely done. So, it's a duffel jacket with intarsia detailing.

Researcher: What is intarsia for people who don't know?

John: It's a type of embroidery. Its hand sewn, whereas this is just a stencil (gestures at the coat).

Edwina: It does show that you can completely use all the fur.

John: Kate is a young designer, she's been going five or six years, so it's quite amazing to go from ground zero. It's very good and I think actually it's quite modern with strong colours and personality. It looks well made; this is quite heavy. (lifts coat)

Edwina: How can you tell the white is natural?

John: It's a natural white colour. You can get pearl colours, brown colours, black colours, mahogany colours, all sorts. This is a very modern coat with the styling.
Edwina: I think this is very interesting, the way the beaver is dyed.

John: So, it's a totally different technique to this. (intarsia section)

Edwina: Yes exactly, it's got a lovely kind of watery feel to it.

Michelle: Where does she get her fur from?

John: From the local market in the UK here.

Michelle: Where would she have gotten beaver for example?

John: Well eventually it would have come from the North American fur auction which was previously the Hudson Bay Company.

Michelle: Yep.

John: And the mink, probably from either Saga Fur or Copenhagen Fur.

Researcher: Great. So, the first question really was whether anyone feels that any of these items draw comparison to the things we've seen from the archive and if so why? Is it something that's quite literal or something else maybe?

Vicky: The beauty of it, I go back to it again! (laughs) Absolutely. I think that we've seen that, particularly on the previous tables they're extremely beautiful and the craftmanship of it as well, the huge amount of work that has gone into them and new techniques. I mean the passion for it, 5 months to treat all these skins, the love that has been put into that, to me that's the ultimate passion for beauty altogether.

Edwina: It's the detail too. Because I think if you think back to the jacket with the woven peacock feather fabric and how well finished it is with all the passementerie and the tassels and things like that and then the choice of horn buttons is very nice and the way they're attached to the garment and the fact that you've got the kind of – the loops are very well thought out.

John: Also, in your piece with the laser Nick, the work that's gone in, the detail that's gone into that piece there is extraordinary and the effect you've got by accident as you said, it's a stunning piece.

Edwina: It is. And also, that would look so good in movement, because presumably as the body moves, light changes on the body… that would slightly change their colour and presumably because it would move with the body.

Nick: It gives it flapper…a Charleston kind of feeling…

John: Oh yes.

Nick: …As well, when you move.

Edwina: Yes.

Vicky: Of course, you can compare the monkey with your hair as well (Participant 5) it just kind of…you can see that immediately. The idea of the hair and the shininess I suppose and the cape.

Edwina: And the layering too, I think.

John: Today the fur industry doesn't produce hair, it doesn't produce monkey but we do use long haired goat.

Joanne: I know, that's how they compare very often, especially with the coats I make. They think it's fur, they just think it looks like…

Researcher: And when people find out it's not, what's the reaction?

Joanne: The first reaction when they see the hair, they think it's real. Because people were, back in time they didn't mind real hair, now it's like who's hair is it. But these days they just think this is part of an animal that we use, so it then becomes normal.

John: It's interesting, hair – people have a slight negative reaction to it whereas fur…

Joanne: We have a conversation back in time, it wasn't like this, now in time I think it's like… I don't know… it's part of what we take as normal. Now we see hair somewhere we think ooh who's that hair is, then before we probably would have made it just like this. We don't have the same association as they did back in time.
Nick: I think though, because your work is quite colourful and pop and it has some ethnic elements – the pop and the pinks I think it goes with the synthetic kind of hair and this type of vibe.

Researcher: Anyone else, any comments about anything that they see as a sort of similarity with something in the archive?

Edwina: I think with the fish skin one for me it's a bit…it's very intriguing because you can clearly see the origin of the skins you know, they're clearly fish skins and I think it's the transparency that surprises me about it and I think that it may lead you to kind of look at it more, and want to touch it more because you don't really associate…you know when you've eaten your sole and you've skinned and boned it it's not very transparent. So, it's a totally different way of accessing a fish and what a fish is about somehow. I don't know how to explain it really but there's a kind of mystery to it, the mystery of the craft and I think that attracts you to things and it makes it a bit more precious and more interesting.

John: I have a client in Iceland and he also sells salmon skin wallets and bags and they look terrific, absolutely terrific. They're dyed and they're done totally differently, you wouldn't even know that it was fish skin until someone tells you its salmon skin.

Edwina: When I went to the Copenhagen Sustainable Fashion Summit there were some people using fish skin there. The other thing that I could show you in the collection is we have quite a lot of things made from fish scales don't we Veronica?

Veronica: Hmm, fish scale headdresses.

Edwina: Fish scale headdresses and jewellery.
John: You see you've got the broadest canvas of all haven't you really (referring to the archive)?

Edwina: Well the Victorians were just very, very keen on the economic use of animal products, on the economic use of everything, including waste. The V&A originally had a waste product collection to show people how there is a commercial value in waste and it was really to try to prevent the problem of all these tips of rubbish all around London, all around the big cities which was clearly very unhygienic and so they were…lots of people were applying their minds to how they could actually use it. Which is just what we're trying to do today, solve our waste problems isn't it? So, it is quite cyclical. But this is a wonderful coat.

Nick: And I think designers generally are pushing themselves to use unconventional materials and it's quite interesting because I think when you're in university and you're studying it's a very good time to do so, because if you don't do it at that time it's very difficult to do it afterwards. So, I find it very, very interesting the fact that people are trying to use it. Even natural things that haven't been used for a while, every now and then you see in the media that somebody created something from something that it wasn't…you would never think about it, even if that's a waste or a tin can or I was just remembering now McQueen - he used a long time ago shells like mussels and layered them as well…

Edwina: Yes, it's an amazing dress.

Nick: …or different mediums. I think it's quite interesting when you get a chance to see garments made from different materials.

John: That's absolutely brilliant, brilliant.

Researcher: How important would everyone – if you had to say its material or process – which would you be more aligned with saying was important or holds value in products

now? And also, how does that relate to a consumer's expectations of a piece as well? Maybe you could relate it to some of the pieces that people have brought in.

Michelle: I think a lot of issues with – if we're going to go back to fur – I think a lot of people are conflicted. I'll be the first to admit I'm a conflicted person, part of me loves fur but then the other part of me hates it and I think what I love about it is for example this coat is stunning (Kate). I'm not going to lie about that, but what makes me hate this coat is wondering what happened to the animal to get this. For me I think what bothers me most about furs and exotic animals is the treatment of the animals, how we've obtained the material and I'm more likely maybe to invest in a fur coat if I know the animal maybe died of natural causes or it was roadkill in a way, and you could still use the fur. But there's so many videos that have surfaced where they show you inhumane ways of treating the animal and I think that's what, from my perspective, most people could be having an issue with.

John: The problem is that the media today – you could have a piece of video which could be a bad example, a really isolated example, it can be recreated, often it is staged and that goes viral and they think that's the norm and it's not the norm.

Michelle: Yeah.

John: I was saying about our industry – I was explaining to the vegans (during the break to other participants) – that it is a wakeup call for us. There has to be accountability for what we do and we work with lots of fashion brands for example Burberry and they want to know the whole process from where the animals are raised and if the farms are correct farms or not correct farms, through to the tanneries which have the right chemical use – to the dyes to the right chemical – to the factories where the furs are made – if there's good working conditions and if there's child labour or underpaid workers or appalling hours – so this whole process has to have traceability. Now the fur industry is making a big effort to provide a certification for all the fur farms that we use so that people like yourself who are ambivalent can be reassured right, and I think every industry has to do that whether it's the meat industry or the salmon farm industry where you salmon farm, whether it's the pet industry. Everything we do now has to be more accountable. So, if you go to a restaurant and you see oh our lamb came from such and such a farm, you feel better about it or this is a nice place, but you don't know what the conditions are on that farm at all, actually you have no idea! Just because it's come up from Aylesbury or somewhere you think oh it's a great place, it doesn't mean anything does it? It's just your perception. It's all about spin.

Edwina: But I think maybe in a way, I suppose when you're really at the luxury end of the fur trade you really can trace things whereas further down and you're making much more for a mass market it's virtually impossible to know what's happening.

John: Exactly, you don't know when you go to Primark, that cheap product, under what conditions it was produced. So, it's equally as bad. So yes, but our industry now has had this huge wakeup call and we want to be sustainable for the future, so therefore we have to show what we do is correct.

Michelle: I think consumers are asking more questions now which is why I think a lot more things are becoming more controversial or maybe not so because customers now want that traceability.

John: I think it's more the media than the consumer. I don't think the vast majority of the consumers really care whether it's an organic egg or a free-range chicken or not, if it costs £4 it's better than if it cost £5. But it's the media that can destroy you if they want to.

Edwina: I think the consumer – well what I want to try to do in the exhibition (Fashioned from Nature) is to try to tell a very even-handed story without having goodies - as I was saying – versus baddies or whatever. But to show past practice, current practice and show alternatives. And hopefully we'll work with London College of Fashion Centre for Sustainability, looking at affordable clothes that reflect a responsible fashion cycle. When I started working on it the thing that I was most astonished by – I talked to Naomi and Veronica – was just my role as a consumer and the amount of energy I use washing things the whole time. You know, the soap powder, if you put too much in…the vast amounts of water…your white wash and your coloured wash and your etcetera wash…and then things that go to the dry cleaners. And it's not just about, you know, what we're seeing on the table, it's about our practice as consumers when we've actually got the garment and what we do with it when we get rid of it and about whether we sneak it into the general waste because we can't be bothered to take it down to the charity shop and even if we do take it to the charity shop, charity shops have fewer and fewer places to send most garments to because the countries we used to send things to want to develop their own domestic textile industry so they don't want all our second or third hand clothing. So, we need to really persuade people to buy less and more advisedly, but then we need to find out what they would value. And stories are the other thing we haven't talked about because I think Participant 1's coat is a really good example of a story, and people always say if you've got a story around something you can say well the beaver came from x, y or z people will value that more regardless of cost and therefor want to keep it longer because it means more to them.

James: I think people have misconceptions as well that if something does have a story or is a product that is sustainable then it will have that high price tag and in some circumstances that can be applicable, but I think there is a misconception that just because its ethical means it's more expensive. You can have ethical things now that are affordable.

Edwina: So do you think for example – and this is probably a stupid question – that if you're in Zara and the label said on whatever, velvet dress, this was designed by – and you have nice photo of the young designer who designed it and it was made…you know – if it had more information, kind of personalised information, do you think that person buying that velvet dress would think oh that's really interesting, it's nice seeing who designed it. Would that then mean more to the person, might they then think I really like this dress and I can identify with that person so I'll wear it maybe next year as well? Is that a false scenario?

James: I think with companies like Zara where the design team is so huge…

Edwina: You couldn't do that.

James: …yes you couldn't do that because it's just…

Vicky: Well no not really actually. Every designer has an item and they design it from the beginning right until the end. So basically, they follow the whole production; fabric, buyers, so each item belongs to them and then with how much it sold, it comes back to them and they get a promotion. So, it could be done but I don't think the company would be…

Edwina: You don't think they would do it no.

Vicky: …I don't think they would be interested in doing that.

Michelle: It would be too much extra work for them.

Vicky: Not only that, but Zara is not interested in promoting any of their designers. In fact, every two years they get rid of them and get some new ones. So, it is that same way of disposing of their clothes, they dispose of their designers.
Edwina: So, its commerce over anything?

Vicky: Yeah

John: H&M do (work with high-end) designers and they queue around the block for this affordable fashion!

Edwina: H&M set their targets and when they don't meet their targets they get bashed over the head by the media, but at least they set their targets. At least they're honest about not necessarily meeting them which is a step in the right direction really.

Vicky: And with the labels as well, H&M, they tell you how things could be cared, it doesn't have to be dry cleaned all the time you can just – I mean they can be aired

instead. They do take this extra care, definitely a bit more involved than the Spanish version (Zara).

END

7.5 ADDITIONAL TEXTILES

The following additional textiles were sourced online but not used in practice due to the following reasons:

Textile / Vendor	Potential value	Reasons
Muskin mushroom leather / Life Materials	Connection to nature Rare and unique	Too thick and unmalleable, the surface is also reminiscent of bad quality faux suede which feels cheap.
Bark Cloth / Barktex	Connection to nature Rare and unique	Too rigid, thick and rough to the touch.
Hemp fur / Simplifi fabric	Textural quality Rare and unique	Not soft, but a matted and slightly static feel, reminiscent of cheap faux fur.
Bamboo velour / Hemp Fabric UK	Textural quality	Not soft, has a 'plasticy' feel reminiscent of a cheap material.
Hemp Fleece (Hemp & Organic cotton) / Hemp Fabric UK	Textural quality Rare and unique	Has a 'plasticy' feel reminiscent of a cheap material.
Lotus silk / Samatoa (Co-operative)	Versatile craftsmanship Rare and unique	Similar feel and appearance to a cotton linen, the appealing factor was the provenance which was not apparent through the aesthetic.

Table A-1 Textiles sourced but not applied in practice

7.6 STUDENT WORKSHOP BRIEF, MATERIALS SUPPLIED AND ADDITIONAL IMAGERY:

LCF Fashion Futures
Embellishment Workshop Brief:

This workshop is an opportunity to explore and critique a range of materials visually and through making, opening up a discussion about the future of fashion embellishment. The aim of the workshop is for it to be fun, there are no right or wrong outcomes.

We will start with an interactive activity to form the groups you will work in for the workshop. Through this process each group will create their own project brief to visualise an 'embellishment'.

A range of materials have been provided for you to use to visualise the embellishment; including exotic animal materials, natural and synthetic materials, trims and embellishment components. They are mostly remnants, off-cuts and end-of-line fabrics donated by fashion companies. You may pick one or a selection of different materials. As this is a quick activity, outputs can include but are not limited to; a drawing or collage indicating which materials would be used where, or a toile with materials tacked into place. Consider your theme and how this could be communicated through visual or haptic means on a garment, avoiding the use of text.
At the end of the activity each group will have 3 minutes to informally present their idea to the rest of the group. This will be followed by a larger group discussion led by the researcher where we will discover archive items from the Victoria & Albert Museum and find out more about the materials you have used to create your embellishment. The workshop will end with an open discussion to evaluate the materials and techniques explored during the workshop.

<u>List of Materials Supplied to Students:</u>

Fur and Exotic Animal Materials:

- Alligator tail
- Purple rabbit fur trim
- Brown rabbit fur trim x2
- Cream rabbit fur trim
- Purple ostrich feather trims
- Dyed mink pieces
- Undyed mink x2
- Dyed and trimmed beaver
- (suspected) racoon and fox blend intarsia x2
- (suspected) chinchilla

- Dyed python x9
- (suspected) goat fur

Faux Fur and Exotic Animal Materials:

- Hemp fur
- Stamped leather alligator
- Astrakhan stamp on calf
- Python print on nylon
- Crocodile stamped on leather
- Faux suede (suspected cotton/synthetic blend)
- Acrylic and polyester blend fur x6
- Viscose astrakhan

Non-animal Embellishment components:

- Plastic iridescent sequins
- (suspected) glass white beads
- Plastic crystal beads
- (suspected) blue dyed stone beads
- Metal chain
- Black plastic sequins
- Synthetic lace x3

Other Textiles:

- Cream silk crepe
- Cream cotton
- Cream synthetic stretch jersey
- Cream moiré silk (potentially a blend)
- White organic cotton drill
- Burgundy silk
- Synthetic black net
- Synthetic nude net
- Grey organic cotton (small sample)
- Black organic cotton with elastic (small sample)
- Orange furry wool
- Black cotton velvet
- Hemp/silk blend
- Organic cotton fleece
- Organic cotton jersey

Figure A-1 Hummingbird flower spray detail, unknown maker, 1870-1890,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: AP.1:2-1894, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

Figure A-2 Slippers detail with individually applied snake scales, Muir, W, 1850-1870,
© Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: AP.6&A-1868, ref: www.collections.vam.ac.uk

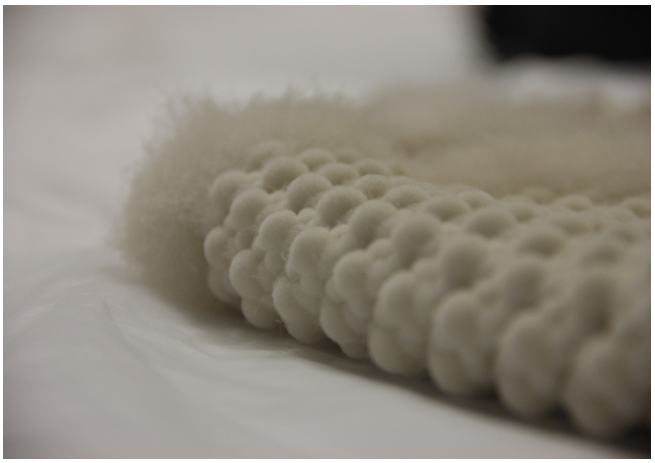

Figure A-3 Swansdown cape detail, Vinogradova, 1880's, Victoria and Albert Museum,
museum number: T.367-1982, photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure A-4 Woven detail of peacock feather motif on mantle, Redmayne and Co, 1885, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.653-1996, photography: Naomi Bailey-Cooper

Figure A-5 Detail of mantle made from velvet and feather, Redmayne and Co, 1885, Victoria and Albert Museum, museum number: T.653-1996, photography: Sylvia Shu

Figure A-6 Fur intarsia details on coat by industry workshop participant Kate, Clothworkers Centre (V&A), photography: Sylvia Shu

7.7 STUDENT WORKSHOP TRANSCRIPT

Research title: How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?
Date of data collection:
Place of data collection: London College of Fashion, Mare Street site
Participants: 13 Students from MA Fashion Futures, London College of Fashion (each given a pseudonym)
Researcher and workshop leader: Naomi Bailey-Cooper
Method of data collection: Workshop
Duration of data collection: 2.hrs 30. mins
Documentation type: Voice recorder, photography

START

STAGE 1
(After organising themselves into groups)

Group 1:
Erin: So, we all had ugly in common, that was our main one. Did we have soft?

Rachel: A lot of them had soft and fluffy, that was another common word, and warm came up.

Erin: Yeah. Old!

Rachel: Yep, we had old.

Researcher: Interesting, does anyone want to say a bit about why they used those words, what it was exactly about the photo?

Jenny: Mine looked like mould a little bit.

Researcher: Which one was your one?

Jenny: (shows the photograph) Like mould on shoes (laughs) so that's why I said ugly and zoomed in. It looks a little bit cloudy, old, still soft.

Researcher: Ok cool. Next group, do you want to say a little bit about your words?

Group 2:
Lena: So textural or textured. And these guys (Charlotte and Mia) actually do have the same object, so they've also got scales and woody and then you've (Mia) also got –

graphic, hexagon. And then I've used textural as well which I've already said, and contrasting. But then you said about using words about how they made us feel so I also said uncertain and intrigued. And I also said three dimensional because it looks really 3D.

Researcher: So, is that uncertain because you're not sure what it is or because you're not sure what you think about it?

Lena: I'm not sure what it was at all, so yes. What is it out of interest?

Researcher: All will be revealed later (some exclamations and laughs from students and comments 'that's intriguing'). So, does anyone want to say anything about why they picked that word or we can move on to the next group otherwise?

Charlotte: Just that I want to touch it and see how it feels.

Mia: To see how it feels, to investigate.

Lena: Yeah because it's hard just by the photo to see what it's made out of.

Researcher: Ok. How about you guys? (next group)

Group 3:
Ella: So, the word that we all had the same was delicate. And actually, me and Sarah had the same object, mine was just zoomed in. And then apart from that I don't think we had a…

Sofia: Well I think because you wrote natural…

Ella: Yeah, I wrote green but I also wrote fake. And Sarah put natural. I've got crafted. What else have you got (turns to Sarah) glittery, dark, fine, floral, leathery.

Sofia: Mine are all quite different because I had something else.

(muttering between themselves)

Researcher: So, what were the words that the three of you had in common?

Ella: Delicate.

Researcher: OK. So, is there something delicate that the photos have got in common, is it a same type of delicate?

Ella: I think it's different because yours is solid.

Sofia: I was talking about a very specific part of it, so that part, the wood carving (points at photo) is very breakable almost, whereas you guys have a softer item.

Sarah: Mine is like copper feathers and leaves.

Researcher: Thanks. And then you two?

Group 4:
Alice: So, we have different pictures, but I think it's interesting how we have a lot of similar words. The one we went with was warm. Then I have fuzzy, and everyone (else) said fluffy, she has fluffy…So I have comfort, luxury, warm, and then natural and unnatural – the fact that it looks like a natural fur but its blue.

Ivy: I also have lively, colourful and shiny.

Alice: So, we kind of had a similar vibe but they're a little bit different.

Researcher: Ok. Cool. You guys?

Group 5:
Marie: We have one word in common which is scary, but we have two completely different images and materials, it's quite interesting.

Researcher: So, what's scary about it for each of you?

Marie: Well this one when I just turned it over, I thought it was, I don't know how you call it in English… (people call out 'hairy' and 'caterpillar' and another student asks 'has it got loads of legs and its hairy?' Marie says yes) …so that's why I got scared at first.

Molly: And for me I think it was more like an afterthought because my initial reaction was; smooth, pure, beautiful on the surface and then I just remembered the elephant and the tusk and I thought ok that's scary so…all these thoughts.

Researcher: But you thought of that as a secondary?

Molly: Yeah.

Researcher: You thought it was beautiful at first?

Molly: Yeah.

Researcher: That's interesting, so it's no longer appealing to you now you're thinking about the elephant ivory?

Molly: I don't think that comes into it.

OPENS UP TO GROUP DISCUSSION

Researcher: Cool. Has anyone else got any comments about other people's objects? Something they think they've got in common with another group? Any other comments at all?

Rachel: It's interesting that we got the same parts of each other's but at different angles (referring to the photos), for example Ivy didn't think this was ugly!

Erin: When she came over to us, she was like oh why have you all got ugly? And then that kind of made us think maybe we've got different…either we see things as differently or actually we have different things. One is the detail (that's different).

Lena: See I don't describe that as being particularly beautiful.

Erin: That's what I mean.

Rachel: For me, I said ugly and soft and weird and you wrote beautiful and colourful!

Researcher: That's really interesting isn't it.

Marie: Ours was also the opposite as well. So, what else did you say? (asks Group 1 who has the same image). So, she's got a close up of mine.

Erin: I said soft, harmful, ugly and warm. (talking about combined Group 1 images)

Researcher: Harmful did you say?

Erin: Yep.

Rachel: She's a vegan. (group laughter)

Researcher: So harmful to the animal or what kind of thing?

Erin: Yes.

Researcher: You can say more about that if you want to. (to **Erin**)

Erin: Can I? Well I wanted to write harmful, unnecessary, things like that but then I didn't know if I was being too vegan about it, but yeah, I look at it and I just think, one; it's not attractive, and two; why would you harm something for the sake of wearing it and it doesn't even look good.

Researcher: *Interesting.*

Erin: Not that looking good justifies harming something, but I just don't understand what you're gaining from it.

Researcher: Yep ok. Do you see that harmful element in everything else here – the other pictures – or is there something that's more…

Erin: In all of these?

Researcher: The whole room.

Erin: I haven't got my glasses on so I can't quite see that far but the ones that I have seen I guess all of these fur trims – yes, I do, they kind of gross me out when I look at it.

Researcher: What about the shoes here do you think the same?

Erin: I can't work out what it is, it looks like there is some sort of nature thing but I'm not sure. I think because I don't know what it is.

Researcher: So, you're not sure?

Erin: Does it look like parts of a scale that have been separated and then re-attached separately? You don't instinctively know what it is, and because you don't instinctively know what it is you can't necessarily relate the harm to it.

Mia: I've got a tortoise and I went to customs and exiles and they showed me what they impound. Oh my god, what they can't make out of a bloody tortoise – guitars, you know all these exotics that they impound.

Charlotte: This fabric exhibition…its twice a year and you have all the new trends and stuff, and the first time I went to the fur thing and I touched one that was really small and was like 'that's so soft', and they're like 'it's the legs'. So, it's (the fur) everything (whole body) and I felt like 'it's the legs' oooh no it used to be alive!

Erin: I think from far away you can't tell - I do think it's intriguing but closer up when you can see certain details, maybe that's when you start to think what is it? I don't know whether it's a man-made thing or whether its…

Mia: I think its old.

Erin: Yeah.

Researcher: Ok anyone else got any comments about any of the photos or anything else?

Rachel: We were just saying that I find this ugly and kind of gross because I think that it's been used like this and it's a death of an animal and a skin we use in a really kind of frivolous way. And we were just talking about how, like eskimos or those in really harsh climates that are maybe wearing sheepskin or some kind of fur in a really functional way I don't find that upsetting in the same way that I find this upsetting because I think in those climates you need a certain kind of clothing and you need to be protected from the climate, it's not frivolous, its functional so I feel differently about it. I'm not quite sure…I don't know…but for me that's different. But this is not functional in any way, it's purely decorative. It's not necessary I guess is what I'm saying.

Researcher: It might sound like a silly question but what is it about that that makes you know that it's not been worn for function?

Rachel: Maybe just the fact that it's got everything going on, I feel like what's the function in the beads (referring to tassels) – unless people need to hear you coming – it's part of your role. (laughs)

Erin: If they can't access other clothes and they have to wear the skin of an animal they're not going to be able to access the kind of methods to create those patterns.

Rachel: It would be more plain, and it wouldn't have so much decorative…there's a decorative cut to the sleeve as well and that sleeve would let n a lot of cold air so to be functional, it wouldn't function very well to keep you warm. So, there's elements of the cut and style as well that indicate that's not functional.

Erin: It would probably be more natural as well because they wouldn't be able to process it in the same way that we do to sell it.

Ella: Then you do get - depending on what age it's from - you do get things that are made that are functional from the past but most people were more adept at crafts then who might have had someone who would have done this on their own thing. It might be very crude, but there might be some needlework or something decorative.

Sofia: Like moccasins and stuff.

Mia: Innuit type…

Rachel: Whereas this is like have you seen this, have you seen this. (laughs)

Alice: You look at it from a different angle. Maybe it is more beautiful if you don't see…I mean taking it out of context.

Rachel: Because this is more designed, and that's just part of the design.

Researcher: *OK.*

Ivy: The colours quite interesting, even the details like shiny materials. So, I really think it's quite beautiful.

Ella: Yeah, I really think it's like, this is beautiful but then having seen the zoomed out and the context…just for my own personal opinions on furs and leather. Then I might decide but actually no, and then this just for the craftsmanship.

Researcher: And do you think there could be another way of communicating your topics that you've got in a group; do you think that these images communicate that really well or do you think that there would be another image that could communicate delicate?

Ella: What do you mean?

Researcher: So, do you think that those images are really a representation of delicacy or do you think that you could pick other fashion objects that communicate delicacy?

Ella: I don't know I feel like if I just had the image, I'd just even have the words that I've written down, I don't think I'd imagine this but this is just the words that came.

Researcher: Yeah. What about anyone else? Do you think that the images represent your words really well or do you think another fashion product or textile maybe would represent those words better?

Alice: Mine I think is really a fashion image. It's pretty straightforward right, that's why I struggle to think of things, but it took me a moment. I've seen a lot of pictures like this, I've seen you know, it wasn't anything like this is an intriguing…

Erin: Because it wasn't a zoomed in material.

Alice: Yeah right it was just like, a girl looking at me in a coat, it's warm…

Sofia: I feel like also sometimes the fashion items; the materials become the feeling in and of themselves. The first thing I thought of was delicate, but it's not like this is the

universal representation of delicate and I think when you wear fur the biggest thing that I think about with fur is that it has this – whether you're for or against it – it just has this idea of its own. I'm thinking of that vegan thing the other night where there were all these like lobbyists for fur and stuff like that too but in spite of that its…even if you like fur then it's not like you love people looking at you and thinking fluffy, you like them looking at you and thinking fur in a very luxurious way (murmurs of agreement from rest of group).

Alice: I think for sure – this is a side thing – I made a coat last year and I put – its fake fur – and I put – it's a long coat and I put it in the facing and the hood and it ended up being this very much more dramatic coat than I imagined – I thought it was, you know – using that as an example of just adding that, in this sense faux fur element it made this coat this much more dramatic where it just could have just looked like this regular long coat. There wasn't anything that special about it but then it became this dramatic – I wanted this everyday coat but it's not that at all.

Mia: I think fur wearing is conspicuous.

Alice: Yeah definitely.

Mia: I used to travel in the far east, it was 100-degree air-conditioned hotels and people used to wear their fur coats in the air conditioning because they could wear them in a five-star hotel in Hong Kong. There was no reason, because you never needed them because the weather, so it was just about showing – it was the bizarre-est thing ever to see all these people walking past – that was the thing they wore in an air-conditioned hotel, because the air conditioning was turned down so low. Outside it was 100 degrees, and they wore fur coats!

Researcher: *Madness.*

Mia: So conspicuous consumption! The dramatic appearance, that idea that you can really show your status by something expensive.

Researcher: So how come you put the fur on the lapel (asks Alice)?

Alice: Well initially I thought I'd just use contrasting grey and a dark grey, just have some sort of contrast in the hood but then it was just like oh maybe I'll use something that's slightly different, and then oh a texture would be interesting and then it just kept coming and kind of like snowballed into this…I'll have it on the inside of the hood but then as the hood was connected it went down to be on the facing as well. But again, it just became this…it completely changed the object. It was no longer this day-to-day coat and I've only worn it once or twice because of that as its very much more this 'event'. It's very much a statement, it's not something to be worn every day.

Researcher: That's really interesting.

Alice: For me it just snowballed into this, wanting to add some texture or something more interesting.

Researcher: Were you going to say something as well (asks Charlotte who had gestured)?

Charlotte: It's just that fur has that – even if you're disgusted by it – you kind of want to feel it.

Lena: I look at something like that and I just have to touch it (picture) it reminds me of my hamster and I just love the feel. (some laughter)

Charlotte: Throughout my BA and my graduate project what interested me a lot in textiles is the feeling that we get out of it in the texture way, and the touch, and fur is a really huge part of it. It's very touchy and even when I just joke with my mum… I'm petting my cat and I'm like he's soft you should do a scarf out of it! I wouldn't do stuff out of my cat but it's just has this intriguing element to it which is maybe why people are still really interested in it, and the cultural. I think its two separate things but they both are reasons why fur is still so intriguing (touch and culture). I quite enjoyed when I was two and I could touch all the different fur, as long as it was not a reminder of the animal, as long as I was not touching the actual baby legs it was alright…

Alice: You could detach!

Charlotte:…I think it was actually detached in my head… that it was a material rather than a wellbeing thing and I think it's mainly this disconnect that is quite hard. I guess no one wants fur because its harming obviously, it's (harm) secondary, it's 'oh but its luxurious' or 'it's so interesting texture' that its ok enough, and I think that that's the level of how it's completely messed up in our head and in the industry in general.

Alice: I think it's also something with fur in that its handed down, more than anything its handed down, you always think of your grandmothers' furs or whoever, or people are proud when they're wearing fur even if they're our age they're wearing fur and like 'oh it's my grandmothers.'

Charlotte: I would love to own my grandmothers coat.

Alice: Exactly, there's that sort of glamour, mystique, I don't know…that I feel that only fur has. It's just the beginning of a thought.

Charlotte: I think also because the older generation is more…even if we had money we wouldn't necessarily go for a brand-new fur because all around is that expression of how bad it is and what's actually happening. It's like if you don't think too much you can think 'oh this bunny got ate by someone and that's fine', it's just leftover kind of thing (fur fashion). But if its vintage or something it kind of feels like its ok because it's done already. But actually, now it's kind of like the first step (to have to kill an animal for fur) and that's where it gets really messed up.

Erin: What I think is really weird is that – and I totally agree it's a massive disconnect – it's so weird that an animal dies so that you can have fur and I find it really weird that they can charge so much for it when actually they didn't even own it in the first place – how can you own – I don't know how I can communicate this better but technically it's not theirs to have, the company or whoever sells them for thousands. Who says that they can do that and then – where's that price coming from? How can you justify...?

Charlotte: It's like the first day (of the Masters course) when we had to speak about something, I had this video which was what would a vegan world look like? And at the end you had what would happen to the animals – there would be an ID card, actual rights, along the side of human's ones.

Erin: Even though they get killed and it doesn't want to die?

Charlotte: No because it was in the vegan world, it was like do they have nationalities and that are completely like…?

Erin: Its speculative about what would happen if…? But I don't think it's saying that animals should have their own ID, have a place in our society, it's not like that, I think it's just more like, who creates an arbitrary sum for killing someone who doesn't want to die? It's still a life and it's still…

Mia: It's the difference between farmed fur and rare beasts that I…

Erin: …I think both are, obviously I'm different because I feel equally are as bad.

Mia: There are some conservation programmes on crocodiles in Australia that actually environmentally re-placed them. They're farming them, and then they're making them into shoes and handbags. There's some intervention there.

Rachel: It's like hunting – I have a real problem with that.

Mia: Hunting is different.

Rachel: The idea that that's a farmed sport (hunting), I'm just going to go out and hunt down a terrified innocent creature, and then I'm going to shoot it and then I'm going to feel really good about that, I find that very weird.

Erin: I know, and then there's a huge prize for hunting.

Rachel: I just don't get how you can justify that that's a sport.

Erin: It's the same idea as the fur, they're hunting something, I know they pay to be able to hunt in the first place a lot of the time, but if you do hunt something and then get a prize for whatever you've hunted, it's still that really weird thing where you're gaining something but why should you be allowed to profit from the loss of a life? Something that's not yours?

Sofia: It's like any natural resource, like why do countries that sell bottled water get to take money for water? Its relevant to everything, which is really interesting!

Alice: Yeah because you were saying earlier like… everything comes from nature, even if you don't think it is. (from nature)

Charlotte: And like when they're dead, people will take it to use it. Would you think that it would be still…do you think that it could…?

Erin: Say like roadkill, do I have a problem with roadkill burgers?

Charlotte: What's that?

Erin: You know roadkill, when you kill something on the side of the road by accident, and then if someone was then to eat it. But I guess the problem is that for a coat for example you're never going to get that. If you are driving along and you accidentally kill something, it dies of natural purposes, it's still not going to be perfect, it's not going to be the way that we want to consume – whether it's for fashion or for eating. You're going to think that there's something wrong. Ethically I wouldn't want that to happen but also how realistic that is, I don't think that could be a thing because you want to have something that's perfect. I guess that's why we farm animals, they're made perfectly.

Mia: Well there's so many regulations and what you can and can't buy. The best story was the dressing table set used on the film Titanic; so, the original dressing table set used in the film was tortoiseshell and it got impounded by customs because they didn't have the correct documentation to bring it through.

Researcher: For the film?

Mia: After the film was made they couldn't bring it back into the country, they didn't have the correct documentation, because now you're not allowed to transport it or use it or – customs would stop you – so I suppose there's legislation against the wild exotic animals, and the others that are farmed it's just free for all, capitalist whatever.

Erin: Do whatever you want, yeah, charge however you want.

STAGE 2
(making)
(during this stage groups 4 and 5 merged)

Researcher: So maybe that leads on quite nicely to the next bit which is hands-on and thinking of new versions of embellishment, hopefully carrying on from this conversation we've had. So, in each of your groups, maybe pick the main words as a group that you think are really important; it can be one word, two or three words, maybe maximum three? Try not to pick too many. Using the same piece of paper, you can turn it over or something. But the words that were most important to you.

At this point we summed up the group words:
Group 1: Fluffy, ugly, soft
Group 2: 3D, texture, repeat
Group 3: Delicate, intricate (craft), fetishizing nature
Group 4: Lively, luxury (desirable), intriguing

STAGE 3

Researcher: So, you've got three minutes to talk about what you've made, and how it fulfils your brief and then everyone else can kind of chip in and ask questions and make comments.

Group 1:
Erin: Shall we start?

Researcher: Yeah go for it!

Jenny: So, our three words were; fluffy, ugly and soft. We chose ugly because normally fashion is not something that should really be ugly, and try to make it nice. We decided to make a very overload pocket for a very simple dress so if you just see the pocket, and if you just see the kind of furry bag you see ok this is maybe not really something I would really wear, but if you see it in context…

Erin: We know you would wear it! (Laughter)

Jenny: So, if you see a detail you don't like, maybe you think it's ugly, but if you see it as a dress its attractive to someone.

Erin: It's in the eye of the beholder.

Rachel: You would find someone who thinks it's beautiful.

Erin: This was just an extra design element (pocket) whereas it makes you remember to hydrate yourself. (students have put a water bottle in the pocket they made)

Researcher: *Useful!*

Erin: So, what else do we have to say…why does it fulfil the brief? Because we think they were all real fur…

Researcher: These were all real fur? (points to furry fabrics)

Erin: Yes, and so we wanted our alternative to not have real fur, so we're kind of hoping that this isn't…we're not sure but we think it wasn't.

Jenny: Also, those are very glamorous pictures so we wanted to do something in the same style.

Researcher: *Cool.*

Ella: Is that real snakeskin?

Erin: No, it's actually just a bit of fabric, it's not even textured, just printed.

Researcher: So, what was it like to work with those materials that you picked? Was it easy to work with those materials or quite tricky? Harder than you thought?

Erin: Hmmm…not particularly easy I would say, I would say the fur isn't. (easy to work with)

Jenny: That's true. It's not the best placement

Erin: No. I have a lot of glue still on my hands.

Jenny: But it was also ok, it was fine.

Researcher: So, did you do all gluing?

Erin: No, we did some sewing. This has got like a – is it woven? (the snake print fabric) – so that probably helped maybe.

Researcher: Yeah sure, ok cool, and did you stick with the same materials from the beginning or did you pick others as you went along or discard others?

Jenny: Yeah, I think we started actually with this one. (non-printed faux fur)

Researcher: *Yeah.*

Jenny: But then – and this ribbon (plain ribbon) – but then we thought it's not glamorous enough.

Erin: It's almost too tonal.

Jenny: Yes.

Erin: We need it to be a bit…we liked this jacket that was a bit lairy-er and this one, it's more than just a bit of fur, there's quite a lot going on. (Item T.653-1996)

Jenny: Yes, our topic was more is more.

Erin: Although interestingly neither of us used this and that's quite similar. (a similarly printed faux fur)

Jenny: And there's also this bit that's a bit similar. (another similarly printed faux fur)

Researcher: Cool, does anyone else have any opinions about what they see in it, or the brief words or anything? Any comments?

Alice: I do actually like the whole idea of the detail versus the whole thing.

Sofia: I think it's interesting because there's so much fashion out there that is ugly fashion but it's almost like you have to be a high-profile designer to get away with that, otherwise…if you buy something ugly people go that's ugly but if its Stella McCartney people are like ohhhh. (inclination of tone)

Erin: Genius!

Sofia: Yes! Its anti-fashion, she's (Stella McCartney) calling into this idea of what's pretty and what's ugly and it's so philosophical and I just think ok…

Researcher: Great, thank you. Who wants to go next? You guys?

Group 4:

Alice: Right so I guess starting with photos we actually kind of joined groups but the words we pulled out were lively, luxury, pure and intriguing. We kind of dropped off the 'pure' and we left that behind a little but went with some luxury, Fendi style accessories…

Researcher: Which you're all modelling!

Alice:…Everyone's got some on! So just enjoy. Ivy is the mastermind.

Researcher: That's a good idea, so you bought stuff from the shop. (bought earring parts)

Ivy: And also, we chose accessories so it would be less space and would cost less materials, and the leather is expensive and you can make more accessories than (compared) to just one garment.

Alice: Especially because we really only used these bits which were (shows small pieces) that was the biggest piece we used (scrap piece) it was very small.

Researcher: So, you're using scraps and stuff, that's good.

Alice: Yeah, and we could make a lot of product – a whole collection!

Researcher: So similarly, was there anything you didn't end up using that you picked out? Any materials you didn't use in the end?

Alice: I don't think so actually, I think we selected pretty good things.

Researcher: And what was it like to work with, I know you were saying that it was quite hard to sew, to get needle through?

Alice: Once we had the glue it was a dream, Ivy sewed this one actually, but then we got the glue and that changed our lives! So, it was a lot easier.

Researcher: So, you added some materials did you say?

Alice: Yeah, these ones (earring parts), all thanks to Ivy, what was your inspiration?

Ivy: I really liked this one (dyed mink) it was very beautiful and is shows characteristics.

Researcher: So, because they're (the mink and the snakeskin) quite different to each other it shows them off more?

Ivy: Yes.

Researcher: And remind me what your brief words were?

Alice: Lively, luxury, pure and intriguing. Pure kind of got abandoned, but we got three out of four.

Researcher: So, the intriguing part is because?

Marie: Because it looks like small creations.

Sofia: Wearing mismatching earrings is intriguing.

Alice: Yeah, so both of these are mismatched.

Researcher: Do you think they're intriguing in the same type of way your archive photos are? Or is it a different type of intriguing?

Alice: I think similar for the fact that you have to get up close to see them.

Researcher: Ok, comments from anyone else?

Sofia: I think they look great!

Alice: Question though, these we assumed were both leather based but maybe treated and coated in something is that accurate?

Researcher: I know it's annoying but I will say at the end. Would that make a difference to you?

Alice: Its mainly just my curiosity. I did think in the end that we had mainly ended up using…that all of the fur bits were real for sure. These I think are probably leather just coated in something. I think we prioritised visuals over content, we grabbed the brighter colours.

Marie: Whether its synthetic or not was not so important in the end.

Alice: That (visuals) was what immediately drew us in, I didn't think about that until just now.

Marie: We didn't think of fabric that is from the animal.

Researcher: That's interesting, so would you say they're shaped like animals (earring designs) but not necessarily linked to animals?

Marie: Yeah, it's a different animal but we were not…

Alice: These are little jelly fish (earrings)!

Ella: They look like cute creatures.

Researcher: So, would you guys wear these then?

Alice: These? Yes!

(Group 4/5 plays with the accessories they've made and try them on in different ways)

Researcher: Ok cool, next group are you ready to go?

Group 3:
Ella: So, we had these pictures – the same object - so I guess because of how intricate and delicate all of this kind of work is, and I think these because these are feathers but they're meant to look like leaves so it's like taking one natural material and mimicking another natural material that's been dyed. So, the words we came up with were fetishizing nature, delicate and intricate / craft so based on that we made this brooch. So, I guess we kind of picked – apart from this which is a nice nude kind of canvas – these are all shapes of nature; so, a flower, leaves, this green is another colour from nature but it's obviously not very natural because its metallic and its snakeskin. It's kind of like glamorising nature, but all of the work is very labour intensive and intricate and delicate so that's why.

Researcher: It looks nice on what you're wearing actually (Ella has pinned the brooch to herself)! It's nice on that colour (top). Similarly, again was there anything that you picked out but didn't end up using? What about these (rabbit) trims?

Ella: we were going to use these but that one we thought was real fur so we didn't want to use it.

Sofia: Originally, we thought we should use all synthetic because of fetishizing nature; we thought using fake things… mimicking nature but then actually I think the leaf is real…I don't think it's snakeskin.

Ella: I don't know what it is but I don't think it's real…

Sofia: Real leather made to look like snakeskin or something.

Ella: Yes, because the back looks real even though its super metallic.

Sofia: I think the feathers are fake, well I think they're fake.

Erin: Those feathers, I think they're real.

Ella: I don't think fake ones exist.

Sofia: Of course, they do! You know when you buy a Halloween feather boa, surely you can get one for about £3 and they can't be all real feathers?

Ella: But I think this might be real and dyed.

Erin: I think they're real and dyed!

Sofia: What animal are they from? In little strips like this?

(group chatting, someone says ostrich and another says no)

Erin: Because they're plucked…

Sofia: No but they're in little strips.

Erin: But is that not just how they've been put together so they're usable?

Lena: I thought feathers did come from…think about how many feathers you throw away if you pluck a chicken for your Sunday roast, I think they are all real feathers. Obviously, I don't pluck chickens for my Sunday roast. (laughter from group)

Erin: Also, what's making me think about the fact that it was dyed was that I was watching a video - John Akomfrah's Purple - and they reason he picked the colour purple was because it's a fake colour, its artificial, it's not a colour that comes from nature.

Ella: Ah interesting because after I saw that exhibition, I was meant to Google why it was called purple. That's really interesting because we were playing with colours, but then lavender? But then maybe if you can't get dyes, I know purple is really hard to achieve as a dye and that's why it used to be the most luxurious colour and used for royalty; you could only have that colour if you were super rich.

Sofia: There's a specific colour of purple that's tied to a certain type of poisoning from dye, in the Victorian period.

Lena: Is its deadly nitrate?

Ella: Is it mercury…no.

Lena: No deadly nitrate isn't a colour but its deadly and purple which made me think of it.

Researcher: Ok. So, are you guys ready to go (Group 2)?

Group 2:
Charlotte: So, we had those two pictures and we used 3D repeats and texture to work around it, so this is Mia's work (who had to leave early). So, its real leather but embossed and she cut out all the scales to get this type of thing (sample) so we thought that it could be scales that would then be glued on a basic leather or something to achieve this kind of thing. For this one I mainly wanted to work on the texture and the fact that with this texture you can only really understand it when you touch the thing. So, I really wanted to touch this because I don't know how it would actually feel, so the idea is that you can't really see it but you can definitely feel it.

Lena: And then I just made this little sample which is inspired by this one because it's quite bumpy so I just put these stones in between the fabric and then some in between the net because mostly we wanted it to be 3D, textured and repeat so that's why I did it.

Researcher: Lovely! So maybe you can talk a bit about materials and which ones you picked? If there were ones you didn't use in the end?

Lena: I just had this over here so I could stroke it as if I had a pet (faux fur piece). I picked the velvet because I knew that I would be hand sewing it and I wanted to be sure that the stitches wouldn't really show, if I used a flat fabric, I couldn't have hidden the stitches but I managed to hide them because of the velvet. The net I knew I'd be able to get texture with the net and also, I liked the fact that you could see some of the shine from the gems through it. The beads I just added on to get another layer of 3D-ness.

Charlotte: So, for this one I think it's the only one that we've got real leather on, and it's on a non-real leather fabric which I thought was interesting because to use leather more as an accessory or something rather than having the whole thing, so maybe that's like scrap or something it could be interesting. And for this one I used fake fur, the behind makes it easy to sew and its super, super soft so it gives the purpose.

Lena: So, we would in addition put some sequins on this, and I would do a big piece, but time…

Researcher: Yeah, that's good. So, are you saying that you used the fake fur because it's easy to sew? Is that the main reason, or because you didn't want to use real fur?

Charlotte: Hmm I'm not sure, I feel like…

Lena: We didn't really want to use real fur.

Charlotte:…I feel like it's not something that we actually need. This is quite enjoyable (faux fur) so we don't need real fur even though there were some that were extremely thin and really soft. But it's definitely something that we can achieve with fake fur but I think if we were to try to grow some, I would probably be interested in using this.

Researcher: Grow did you say?

Charlotte: Yeah.

Researcher: *Ok.*

Charlotte: Especially for leather or this kind of things I think being able to grow it would be…I don't know exactly how I feel about the ethics behind it but I feel like I would probably be more on the yes side of it…I don't know enough about it to have a strong opinion about it.

Researcher: Ok. Cool, thanks. Has anyone else got any comments at all about these pieces? No ok.

Researcher reveals details about the archive items

Researcher: Ok, so do you want to find out about these images from the archive, these mysterious images you were given? Ok so this piece here is actually made out of swansdown.

Charlotte: What's that?

Researcher: Swan feathers, the down part.

Ella: What's the down, is that where the feathers are more fluffy?

Researcher: Yes, it's underneath (gestures), and the belly feathers. It's from Russia, from the 1860's and it's got a really intriguing technique which no one is 100% sure how this was made, how they created this bobble effect. But they know it was somehow created with cotton roundels binding together the down and then you've got the trim which is all swansdown as well, and its lined with silk and it was shaped to cover the shoulders, it's a cape. It was probably worn by a child, they were luxury products, it was made by Anna Mikhailova Vinogradova if anyone is interested in that, she was a respected and experienced craftswoman, she specialised in items made from swan, eider and goose

down. The Imperial Royal Family bought some of these items, so that's just to show how high luxury they were. It's basically, almost, luxurious thermal under or outer-wear. The way it's designed is cellular, as you get the air trapped in between there (points at image). I've seen this piece in real life and it's really lightweight and incredible to feel, I'll share all these details with you so that if you want to look at any of these items in the V&A you can. So, as I said, the borders are trimmed in down and there are attached pendants here. I can run through the items now and we can speak after about them, or if anyone has anything to say now - like if this was what they thought the item was?

Alice: I never would have thought that's what it was because I never would have thought of swan down.

Ella: Yeah, I don't think of down as anything outer…I'd never thought about it before.

Alice: Exactly.

Ella: I'd always thought of it as being the stuffing for something.

Alice: Yeah it just wouldn't have come to mind.

Ella: Its fascinating, I never thought of it being external.

Charlotte: The fact that its feather, and you said its lightweight, it's so hairy and at the same time the air is trapped, it must be so warm.

Researcher: I think that's why it's so popular, because its lightweight and keeps you really warm and its really decorative as well. I consider it embellishment really, especially due to the trim but the material itself I think is really beautiful and as I said, they were high, high luxury pieces worn by the Royal Family and I think it's a bed jacket, or that's what the curators at the V&A think it may have been. So, if you're lying in bed, sitting up in bed and you've got cold shoulders – you can put on a lovely swan cape! It's worth saying that in the 1860's they didn't have central heating, it's a different world. Someone would wear that now definitely for the aesthetic, I think.

Researcher: So, we have three images of this (gestures at T.653-1996)

Alice: Oh! That's what we thought. We were never sure if this one – if this was the same.

Researcher: These three go together.

Alice: We weren't sure if it was and also just because it looked slightly different – because we had these two.

Researcher: Ah I see ok.

Alice: What made me think it wasn't was because of the white background.

Researcher: Ah yes that's it on a table. So yes, this is made in London, most of these things are late 19th century, this is 1885. It's actually a jacket made of velvet which has embroidered peacock feathers on.

Alice: Oh! (surprised tone) is that little loops?

Researcher: Yeah. It's kind of like a tufted – if you know that – it's like tufting. They were trying to recreate iridescence in the peacock feather which is why they're used a variety of different coloured threads.

Alice: They're definitely successful.

Researcher: And then they also used down, so feathers are used on the trim, so this is feather down (points at image) – it's used on the trim here and it's got little bits of feathers on as well.

Charlotte: So only that bit is animal?

Researcher: Yes, the main body of the jacket is velvet embroidery and it's just the trim that is animal materials. The little feathers stuck on its are domestic poultry, the other feather is marabou – from the marabou stork. Marabou is one of the feathers that people protested about at the time because it comes from the down of the wing of the marabou stork. The bird has to be killed for it to be used.

Lena: Is that the same for the swan down?

Researcher: Yes, that would be the same. Peacock feathers were really fashionable in the 19th century; they had various symbolism, they evoked pride. It was really about iridescence and beauty, they tried to conjure up the appearance of iridescence through that embroidery. And the tassels here – I remember someone was saying why they had these tassels and it was obviously not for function. Its pieces of wood which have been embroidered over and used to make that tassel, it's basically to keep the jacket flat against the body, because it weighs it down. In a sense it's a type of function but it's definitely decoration as well. And so, because one person wasn't here today there was actually another image which no one got which was a zoomed in image of this. (AP.1:2-1894)

Researcher: So, this is made in Brazil, the artist is unknown, its 1870's estimated and it made out of hummingbird feathers and bits of hummingbird breast.

Lena: That's really upsetting because hummingbirds are tiny!

Researcher: These things here are also beetles used as beads.

Lena: They use beetles to dye red food colouring as well don't they.

Researcher: So, hummingbirds are very fashionable because of the iridescence.

Erin: Does anyone want to look at this (detail image of flower part that no one got) it's quite amazing?

Researcher: Please hand it around. Fashionable ladies' hats were decorated with exotic birds from the late 19th to the early 20th century. This particular type of feather work was originally a skill which started in convents, they had to earn money to keep the convent going so they made these feather flowers which were sold, it was in Brazil.

Ella: That's quite interesting because I thought aesthetically it made me think straight away: Victorian Christmas!

Researcher: Yes, I know what you mean.

Ella: Maybe because the bit I got was no hat part, it just looked like some sort of Christmas foliage decoration.

Researcher: I think a lot of these things were brought back as souvenir items by travellers.

Alice: Its surprising to me that it's still so intact, it looks much newer.

Researcher: I know and that fact that the beetles have not degraded, its late 19th century, 1870's.

Alice: That's crazy.

Researcher: And the iridescence has stayed which is quite interesting. So yes, the leaves and the buds are made from feathers. The petals are made from the breast of the bird. So altogether there are seven hummingbirds which have gone into making it.

Lena: That's so sad.

Researcher: There was a lot of protest at the time, the Society for the Protection of Birds was formed in 1889 in protest for killing exotic birds and the first anti-plumage bill was passed in the 1920's – it did start the Society of the Protection of Birds.

This one was a bit of a red herring, it's not actually an archive item as you may have guessed. This is a contemporary item by a London designer but I thought it was quite nice to throw it in there so see if you accepted it as a historical archive item as well or if you could see that it was something contemporary.

Alice: It definitely looked contemporary to me.

Ella: It looks contemporary but I still questioned it as an archive item.

Sofia: But I didn't realise it had to be old to be in an archive. How old does it have to be to go into an archive? Can't you say this is from 2014, this item…

Researcher: That's true, in theory this could be put into the archive once it's out of current season.

Alice: Oh, its current season? Ooh!

Researcher: I think it's just interesting because everything else is from the 19th century but this is from today.

Erin: I think it's mostly the colours, the blue.

Alice: The colours, but also the fact that it's on a model. Who's it by?

Researcher: Well, it's from one of the research participants and I would like to keep their anonymity.

Alice: But for me it's the fact that it's on a model, if it was just displayed, I maybe would have felt differently – that could be an ad right now and I wouldn't question it.

Erin: Even so because it's a duffle coat and I don't associate a duffle coat with being an old thing.

Alice: Also, it very much reminds me of Fendi right now.

Researcher: It's made out of beaver and mink, so the blue bit is beaver and the white is mink. Its trimmed beaver, so its softer.

Erin: Trimmed beaver! (sarcastic tone)

Researcher: This bit here is a stencil design. I think they're dyed it blue and it's been stencilled in black and actually we have got a scrap of the real material there.

Alice: Oh, that is (the real material)?

Researcher: So, this is a scrap that this designer has contributed. And they've contributed some of the other materials as well. So, you can sort of feel what the coat would be like.

Erin: In the photo I thought that it looked kind of velvety.

Researcher: I know what you mean, it could be velvet from this photo.

Erin: I didn't expect it to be beaver fur.

Alice: Didn't expect it to be beaver and didn't expect to actually have it here.

Lena: That feels fake. (beaver fur)

Researcher: *Really?*

Lena: Yeah.

Researcher: That's really interesting! So, this part (of the coat) is intarsia which we've got an example of – so you can see all the seams at the back here. You cut the fur and sew it back together again in strips and sometimes it's done because it makes something more lightweight which is probably what's been done here to make something more even and uniform, or it can be done as a decorative thing which is what has been done here with the black and the white for a decorative look.

Lena: Oh, is that why you see lines on old fur coats and things?

Researcher: *That's it.*

Lena: I didn't think about this sort of thing.

Researcher: I thought that it was just worth saying as well that this is an example of a London designer but the number of designers using fur now it's meant to be 70% at New York fashion week and 60% at London fashion week.

Alice: Wait, 60% of designers?

Researcher: *Yes.*

Erin: Really?

Ella: That's really bad I didn't know that.

Erin: When was that stat from?

Researcher: *2015.*

Erin: I wonder how much has changed in the last couple of years.

Alice: I wonder how much they're actually selling because they're such expensive items, do they actually sell any? Is it just to have it as a staple? Or for the runway?

Ella: I just think it's an expensive designer thing – who buys this?

Alice: No totally but we were using the example of Prada… Miu Miu I believe is now no fur, but Prada's not. So, its ok if Miu Miu puts on eco-furs or whatever and maybe no one's buying them because everyone's still buying the Prada ones.

Researcher: Prada is more expensive; the price point is higher.

Alice: I know but they're still getting the money off it.

Ella: I think it's because Miu Miu is a younger brand, younger rich people might care a bit more about fur than older people? Kind of, I think.

Alice: Potentially, but I think there's a lot of people who don't care.

Ella: But I do think generally that the younger generation, if they had a choice between real fur and fake and it looked the same, I think they'd say on paper. (they'd choose faux)

Researcher: I was reading the Gucci thing that apparently; they have a board of younger people – I think its people under 30…

'Yeah' from students

Researcher: …did you read about that?

Ella: He (Marco Bizzari) mentioned it at the event (Kering Talk at LCF), that he went around basically asking all of their employees I think under 30 and asked for their feedback and opinion.

Erin: Yeah that's where he announced the fur thing but he said it very blasé. I don't think he realised that Livia was quite excited by it.

Ella: Its funny though because they still built up some hype, like, 'so we have two big announcements.'

Erin: But it was all Livia saying it as opposed to him.

Alice: He just said we did this, we did this, as if he just went to the store. (laughs)

Ella: And stopped buying fur!

Sofia: He was just like yeah; we have to do this now to change but I still think fur's great.

Erin: He's definitely profit driven as horrible as that is.

Alice: And he used to be head of leather at Gucci.

Researcher: So, I'll just say about the other two ones; this one is a red herring because it's not actually made out of exotic animal materials, this is imitation ivory from the late 19th century and it made from celluloid. A type of celluloid anyway, which is basically cellulose, chemicals and camphor. So, it's essentially a bioplastic but it's no longer widely used because its flammable, but it's a good example of a very early plastic from the late 19th century.

Ella: Was the alternative there from an ethics standpoint or price?

Researcher: I think it was because a lot of people liked the look of ivory but couldn't afford ivory so it was a price point thing. So, I don't know if that changes anyone's opinion, I know that you said that you liked it initially but then you thought about it being ivory and therefor thought I don't like it anymore (speaks to Molly)? Now that you know it's not ivory does that change your opinion back to liking it?

Molly: I don't know actually. I would value it as much again now knowing that it's not ivory.

Researcher: Ok. As I said earlier this piece was really to satisfy demand, what I think is interesting – and I think someone said this - is that a lot of fur is now making its way onto the high street – sneakily.

Erin: I think it was me that said it.

Ella: But I think that she was also saying that apparently ASOS got into trouble recently because they didn't realise…

Erin: And loads of brands, I think BooHoo has done a lot…

Lena: I think it's stupid anyway.

Erin: …and I think MissGuided.

Alice: That they were selling real fur?

Erin: Yeah. MissGuided or BooHoo have a strict no fur policy, and then someone looked at it and said actually you're selling cat or dog fur, or both.

Ella: They just didn't recognise it.

Erin: Yeah. It was controversial.

Researcher: It's interesting that fur is obviously as cheap as fake fur for it to even be on the high street. You see real fur on market stalls now and I think that's quite interesting, how it's obviously not…This (archive faux ivory) was made because the real thing was too expensive but now…

Lena: I've got this keyring and I've always assumed it was fake but after feeling some of that today I think maybe my keyring is real. But I just got it from some random little shop in Shepherds Bush that was selling it, just an off licence.

Charlotte: Burn it, just take…

Lena: But I can't it's got a face!

Erin: Just one strand and see if it melts or not.

Lena: Oh, I see, I thought you meant burn it because it's bad, don't have it! (laughter) I can't it's so cute.

Researcher: That's interesting, it could be, it's very hard to tell now, I think some of the furs…in particular this one you were using feels so soft. A few of you said that you can tell its fake because you can see the knitted back, I think it would have been interesting if I could have covered all the backs.

Ella: I think with pretty much all of them that's how we were trying to guess, by the back. Because if this was already sewn into a garment and had a lining, I think it would be so much harder to work out.

Researcher: So, the last one, these, are snakeskin which the scales have been individually cut out and re-applied.

Charlotte: Oh, so Mia's guess was perfect.

Researcher: It's really weird I think, it's also from the 19th century, I think they're a bit of a one-off thing but essentially these scales were re-applied because the creator thought the scales looked more perfect that way than how the snake looked naturally. It's from a golden olive sea snake which are from Australia I think if anyone's interested in that.

Charlotte: Well there's too many snakes there anyway right! (laughs)

Researcher: By the middle of the 19th century lots of products were mass-produced. These were made really because leather machinery started being used around the 1860's so people were actually able to make more interesting things with different leathers and you can see there's a real increase in the use of exotic leathers at that time as well. There's the machinery enabling that to take place which I think is quite interesting. I think this one is really funny myself because you can hardly tell that it's a snake scale, it could be cut out leather, or it could be another material?

Lena: We thought it was wood or bone or something.

Researcher: Yeah, so really why is it snake?

Lena: It doesn't need to be.

Erin: So, what were these?

Researcher: Feathers, its ostrich. The reason they're in tiny little pieces is because its recycled from an old vintage hat, so that's why they're in little pieces and that's why some of them have bits of glue still on.

Alice: And what about all the other covered things?

Researcher: I can go through everything. So, there are four categories: There's real exotic animal materials; there's a real alligator tail somewhere and that's real which you can tell because of the shape. These things here (gestures), the trims, they're rabbit.

(Some gasps of surprise)

Erin: All four are real?

Researcher: All four are real. I think these two are undyed, these two are dyed.

Lena: So, I know you said that designers have donated these but who?

Researcher: With a lot of these I can't really share that, that's the thing with research you have to be quite careful if people want to stay anonymous, and this subject matter is quite controversial.

Erin: Oh totally!

Researcher: So, the colourful bits that you guys used a lot (Group 4/5) are mink.

Alice: So, they are very Fendi and luxury then!

(Researcher continues to list materials)

Lena: This fake fur?

Researcher: Yes, that's fake. I have this here which I think is a blend of fox and racoon, in the intarsia. That's chinchilla. (continuing to list materials)

Lena: Ahhh. I thought it was soft! That grosses me out because I like chinchillas…

(someone asks) What did you think it was?

Lena:…I didn't know, I knew it was real, and it was really soft but I don't know I thought it was…but now I can relate to that somehow.

Researcher: Almost all of the snakeskin is real, this is python, this is python, this is python.

Alice: Is it?!

Ella: You know this one that we used, is that a real one?

Researcher: Yes, its python but it's been treated, I think it's had an acid treatment on it, and it's been foiled and dyed as well.

Ella: So, all of them?

Researcher: Most of them (snakeskins) are real ones.

Ella: But this could just be plastic!

Sofia: So why use the real thing why not…?

Lena: That really upsets me that's real chinchilla because I go to look at them at Pets at Home sometimes because I really like chinchillas.

Researcher: This is kind of what I wanted to discuss though, how you picked things because of the aesthetic and the feel – and then (when knowing more) does it change your opinion?

Alice: No, it does for sure. Because there's a freedom involved in you just handing us things, it's like they're just scraps, we can use them any-way, there's not the guilt involved in it. Whereas if I were to go and choose a fabric for myself, I would maybe choose something different.

Ella: We know they're offcuts, but also if you look at what we all used - we all picked things that had artificial colours. The things that looked like they could be actual fur no one went in…because I see this (undyed fur) and I think I wouldn't use that.

Researcher: I feel the same way you know, because that (brightly coloured fur) I am able to handle more than that (undyed fur) …I think it is just the colour.

Ella: It is just the colour! With an unnatural colour you think of its not natural.

Researcher: (Continuing to list materials) I'm not 100% sure but I think this is goat fur.

Alice: Oh wow, lovely goat fur earrings! (sarcastic tone)

Researcher: So, I think something like goat is quite interesting because the animal is eaten – so it could be a bi-product essentially, so I don't know if that makes it different and more acceptable to use rather than the mink?

Alice: Hmm…I'd have to work it out.

Charlotte: I don't know.

Researcher: So, we've got some things which are leather, this one is stamped leather. (Goes through other material categories) I just wanted to say that I also threw in a few sustainable textiles to see if they would be picked by anyone – which I thought would be quite interesting – whether you see them as sustainable but they're marketed as sustainable, for example these are organic cotton (gestures). I don't think anyone went for that. (Continuing to list other materials) This is synthetic lace, this is a synthetic net, that's real python, this is fake fur – almost all the fake fur is synthetic, this is organic cotton fleece…

Jenny: We could make a t-shirt out of it. (fleece)

Researcher: …This is a fur made out of hemp which I don't think anyone went for either. (continues to list other materials)

Alice: The blue beads are really nice.

Researcher: They're semi-precious stone, but I believe they're dyed to make them a bit brighter, (continues to list other materials), this is a synthetic jersey.

Alice: Oh really, it seemed really nice because its heavy. (jersey)

Researcher: So, I know you guys finish at 5pm so we've gone over a bit.

Lena: Thank you so much.

Researcher: Its ok! Basically, I think it was really interesting to see that if I'd told you what everything was at the beginning, I think it would have really altered what you'd done.

Alice: Definitely.

(Calls of 'Yes')

Researcher: So hopefully that's what you can get out of this, is that to promote something as a certain way is to adjust peoples view, and aesthetic and touch is really important. For me, the reason I am researching quite a lot with designers is that I want to make something that they actually want to use rather than 'use this you've got to, it's the alternative', you know (asking) what do designers want? From this feedback I think I've just understood what you have gone for therefor what it is you like and want which will feed into what I go away and develop. Sorry it's a bit rushed at the end.

Alice: It's all good!

Ella: It was nice to do something hands-on.

(Other yeahs of agreement)

END

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8.4 PROJECT OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION

The practice outputs and research have been disseminated throughout the course of the project (2015-2018) and continue to be shared in upcoming exhibitions and publications. Key exhibitions, events, workshops and publications are listed below.

Exhibitions

Textile Artefacts:

- October – December 2019 | *Transfashional,* Museo della Città, Rimini
- September 2019 | *Design Research for Change Showcase*, London Design Festival, Truman Brewery
- March 2018 | *The Presence of Boundless Potentiality in the Thought World and the Society of Nature*, Onca Gallery, Brighton

Garment Artefact:

- April 2019 – September 2019 | *Fashioned from Nature*, The Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen
- April 2018 – January 2019 | *Fashioned from Nature*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Invited Talks

- July 2019 | *Creative Speaker Series,* Puma HQ, Herzogenaurach, Germany
- March 2019 | *Art for the Environment: Creative Practice in the Amazon*, Research Fortnight, University of the Arts London
- May 2018 | *Better Lives: Past, Present and Future*, 10 Years of the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion
- July 2017 | *Labverde 2017 Artists Talk*, Lecture, Musa do Largo, Manaus, Brazil
- June 2016 | '*How can embellishment deliver an alternative to the decorative and seductive notion of exotic animal materials?*' Paper presentation at *Frills and Furbelows; Textile ornamentation and dress adornment in museums and historic houses*, CHORD Workshop, University of Wolverhampton

Workshops

- November 2017 |*Future Embellishment*, MA Fashion Futures, London College of Fashion
- October 2016 |*The appeal of fur and exotic animal materials*, workshop for fashion industry professionals, Clothworkers Centre, Victoria & Albert Museum

Press, Publications and Online Features

Garment Artefact:

- September 2020 | *Fur: A Sensitive History*, Jonathan Faiers, Yale University Press

- November 2018 | *Fashioned from Nature*, The Bare Minimum Magazine, Issue 3, November 2018
- July 2018 | *Fashioned From Nature Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London,* Inside Out Style Blog, available at: https://insideoutstyleblog.com/2018/07/fashioned-from-nature-exhibition-at-the-victoria-and-albert-museum-in-london.html
- May 2018 | *Fashioned from Nature*, J. Walter Thompson Intelligence, available at: https://www.jwtintelligence.com/2018/05/fashioned-from-nature/
- April 2018 | *10 Hot Stories: Fashioned from Nature*, Grazia Magazine UK, work featured on p28

Garment and Textile Artefacts:

- July 2019 | *Bayong beads, banana palm and glass yarn*, Catch Up Magazine, Puma's Employee Magazine, available at: https://www.puma-catchup.com/naomi-bailey-cooper-developed-sustainable-alternatives-to-exotic-animal-materials-in-textiles/

Textile Artefacts:

- September 2017 | *Labverde 2017 Catalogue*, work featured on p116-119, available at: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7ea7d9_409fa9e96b9844759f6cbec099e35c4d.pdf

Other:

- September 2017 | *Naomi Bailey-Cooper reports back on her AER Residency at LABVERDE in the Amazon Rain Forest, Brazil*, UAL Postgraduate Community Blog, available at: http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/pgcommunity/2017/09/11/naomi-bailey-cooper-reports-back-on-her-aer-residency-at-labverde-in-the-amazon-rain-forest-brazil/
- April 2017 | *V&A / LCF Research awardee Naomi Bailey-Cooper discusses snakeskin and sustainability*, UAL Postgraduate Community Blog, available at: http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/fashion/2017/04/25/va-naomi-bailey-cooper-sustainable/
- March 2017 | *Naomi Bailey Cooper is selected for AER 2017 Residency with LABVERDE in the Amazon Rainforest, Brazil*, UAL Postgraduate Community Blog, available at: http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/pgcommunity/2017/03/10/naomi-bailey-cooper-is-selected-for-aer-2017-residency-with-labverde-in-the-amazon-rainforest-brazil/