

Rosie Higgins

Costume and Puppetry

ABOUT ME

My name is Rosie Higgins and I am a multidisciplinary artist and recent graduate from Costume for Performance at the London College of Fashion.

During the course of my degree I have found my calling lies with working at the intersection of puppetry and costume, with a focus on bodies and objects as an instrument of expression and connection. I want my work to look beyond the binary lines of the costume garment construction, with my practice exploring identity, embodiment, and the blurred boundary between human and object, often through collaborative, movement-based storytelling.

I'm especially interested in creating life size puppets and creatures that work with the human body in a way that feels both intimate and expansive to the audience. What I love most about this industry is its ability to create a unique space to escape where reality can pause for a couple of hours.

My practice is grounded in sustainability, ethics and fine detail and finding my niche and place in this industry has been an exciting journey.

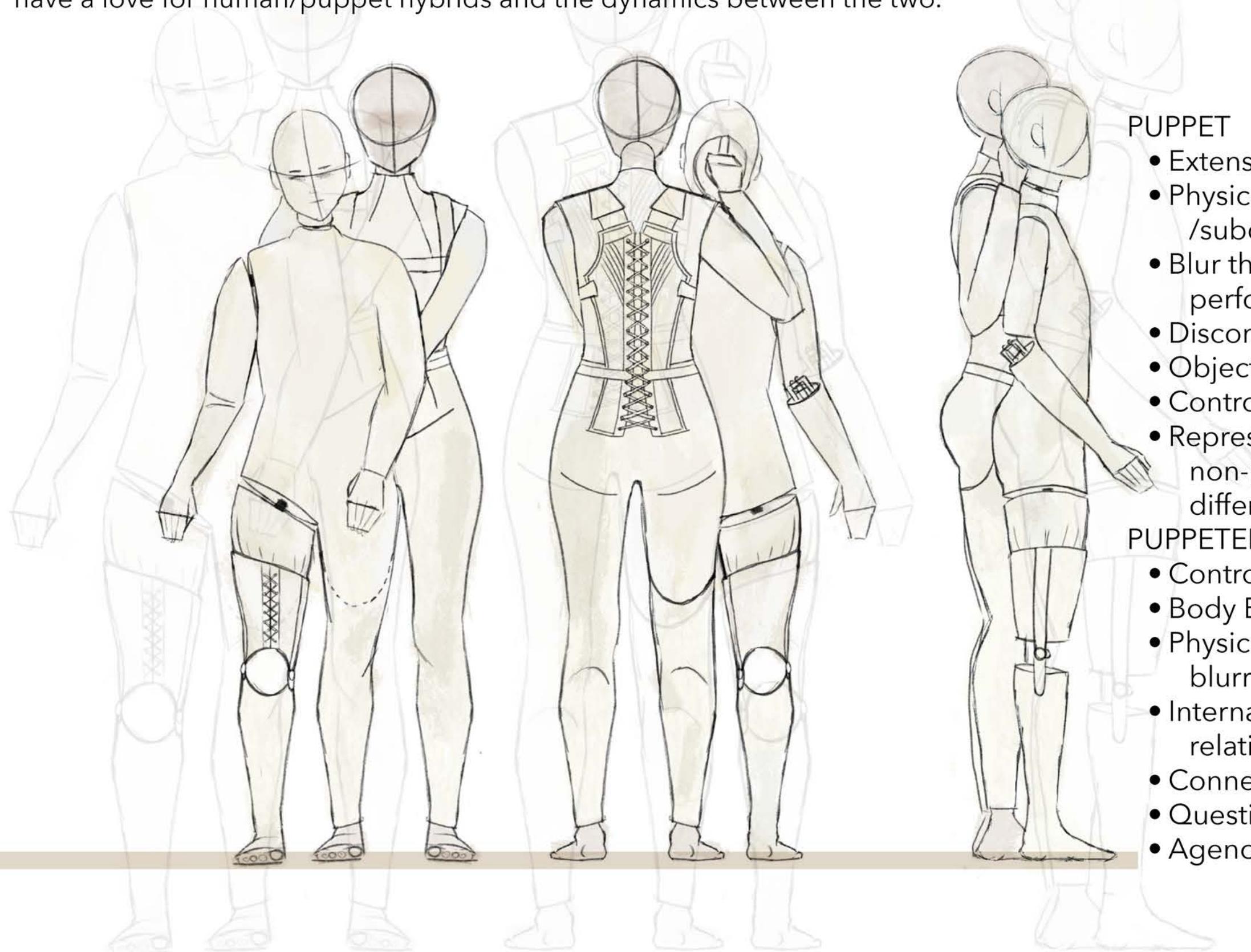


An Extension of Self - Puppetry Project

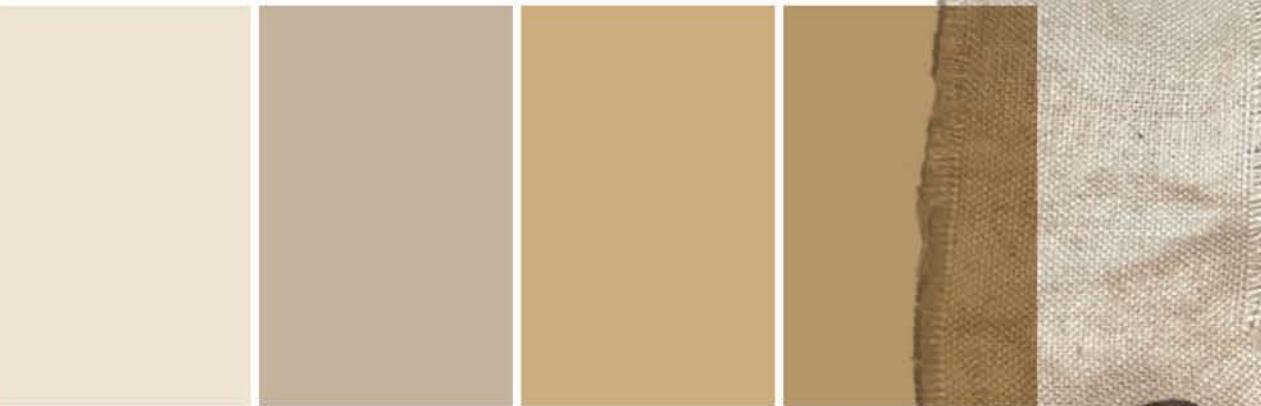
Rosie Higgins



For my third year project I chose to focus on puppetry, exploring the relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer. I created a lifesize puppet, complete with mechanical elements. This project has been hugely influential in wanting to enter the puppetry industry, finding I have a love for human/puppet hybrids and the dynamics between the two.



Colour Palette



PUPPET

- Extension of the puppeteer's body
- Physical projection of their inner world /subconscious
- Blur the boundary between object and performer
- Discomfort, Unease, Fascination
- Object Autonomy - Passive vs Active
- Control vs Controlled
- Representation of bodies that are non-normative, non- gendered and differently-abled body

PUPPETEER

- Control and manipulation
- Body Extension
- Physically merge with the puppet blurring the distinction between self and other.
- Internal conflict or fragmentation through the external relationship with the puppet.
- Connection
- Questioning where the body ends
- Agency, Embodiment, Limits of the Self

Key Themes

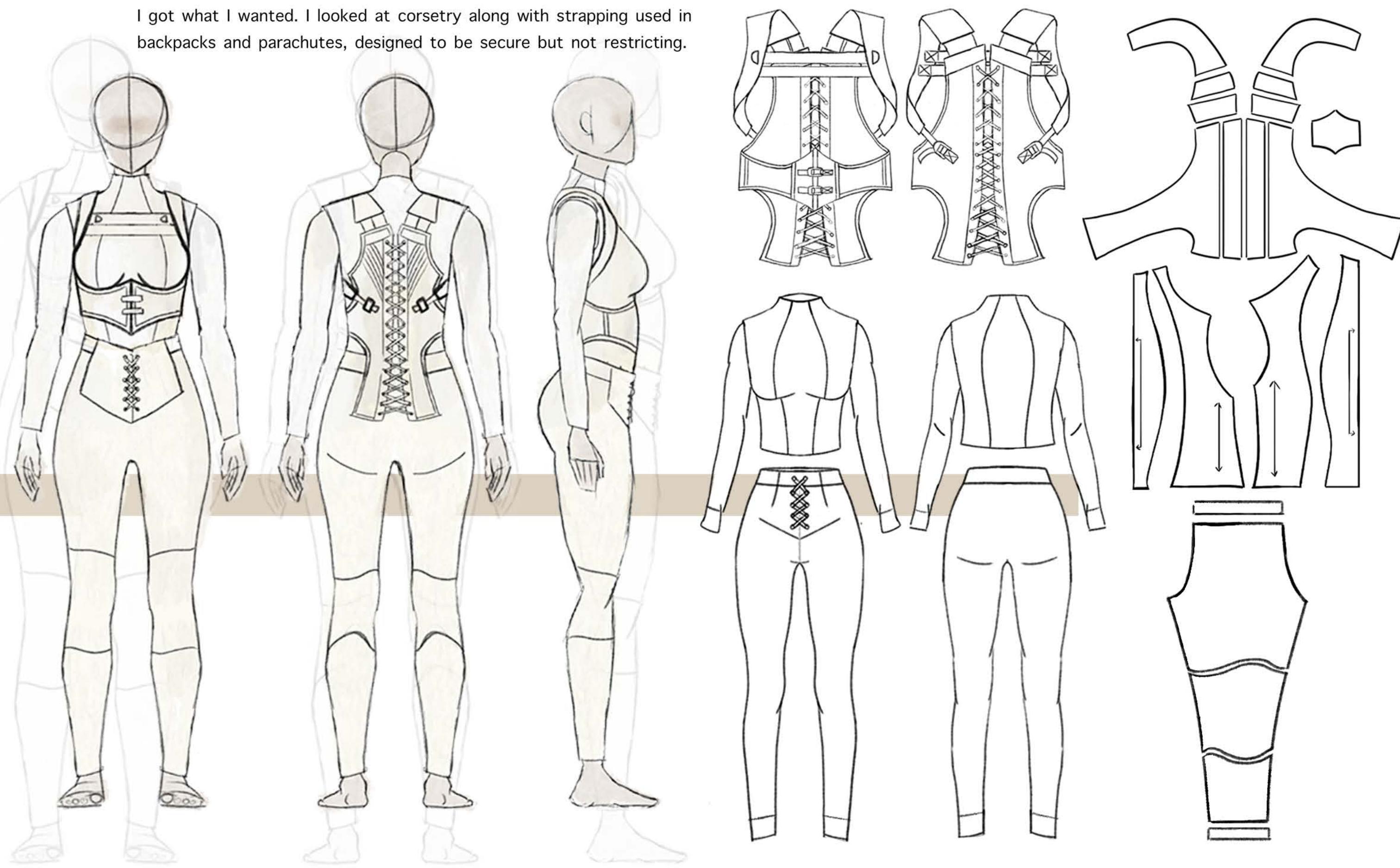
- Puppet and puppeteer relationship
- Self representation
- Unnatural movement
- Perception of human form
- Extension of body
- Movement



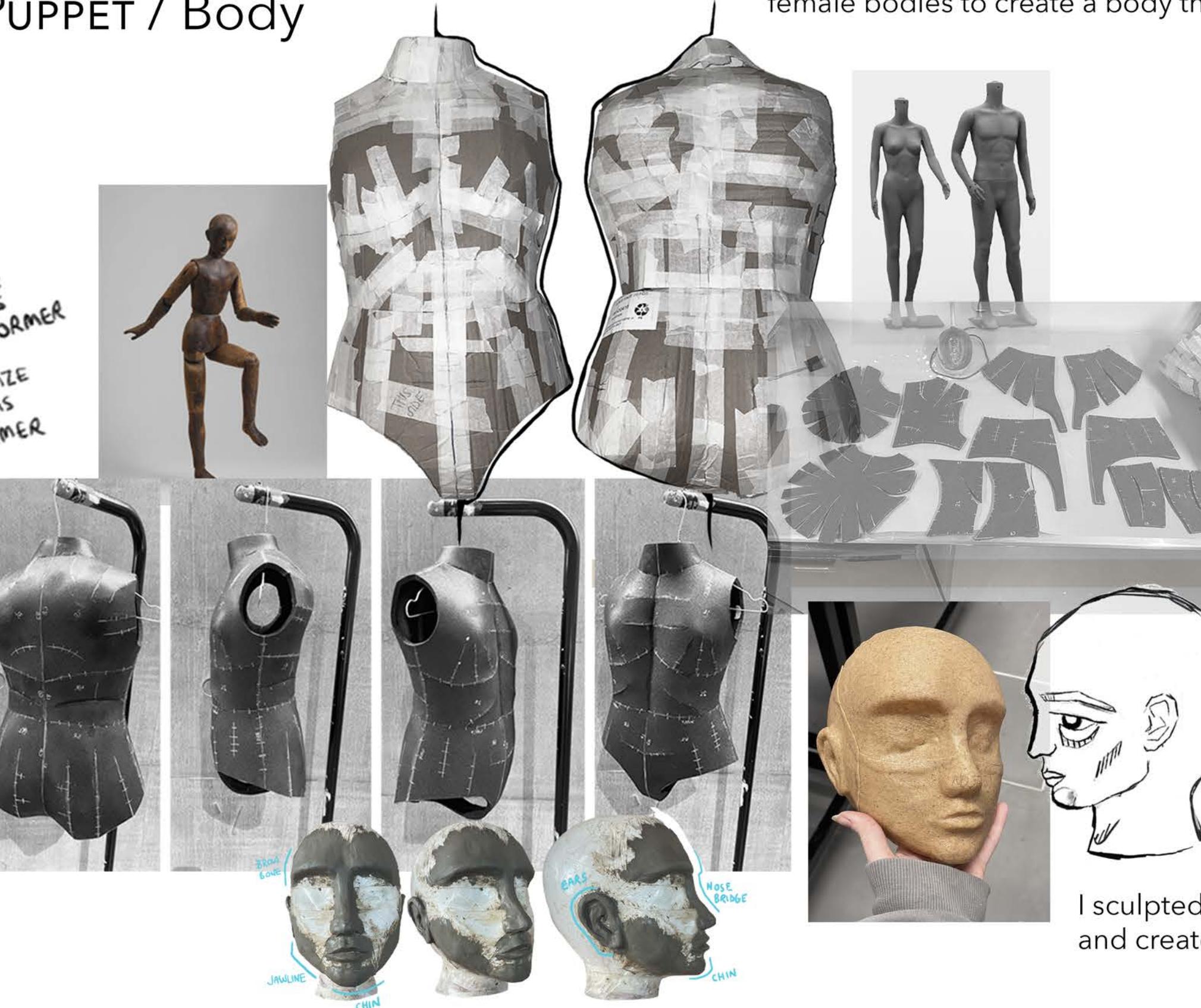
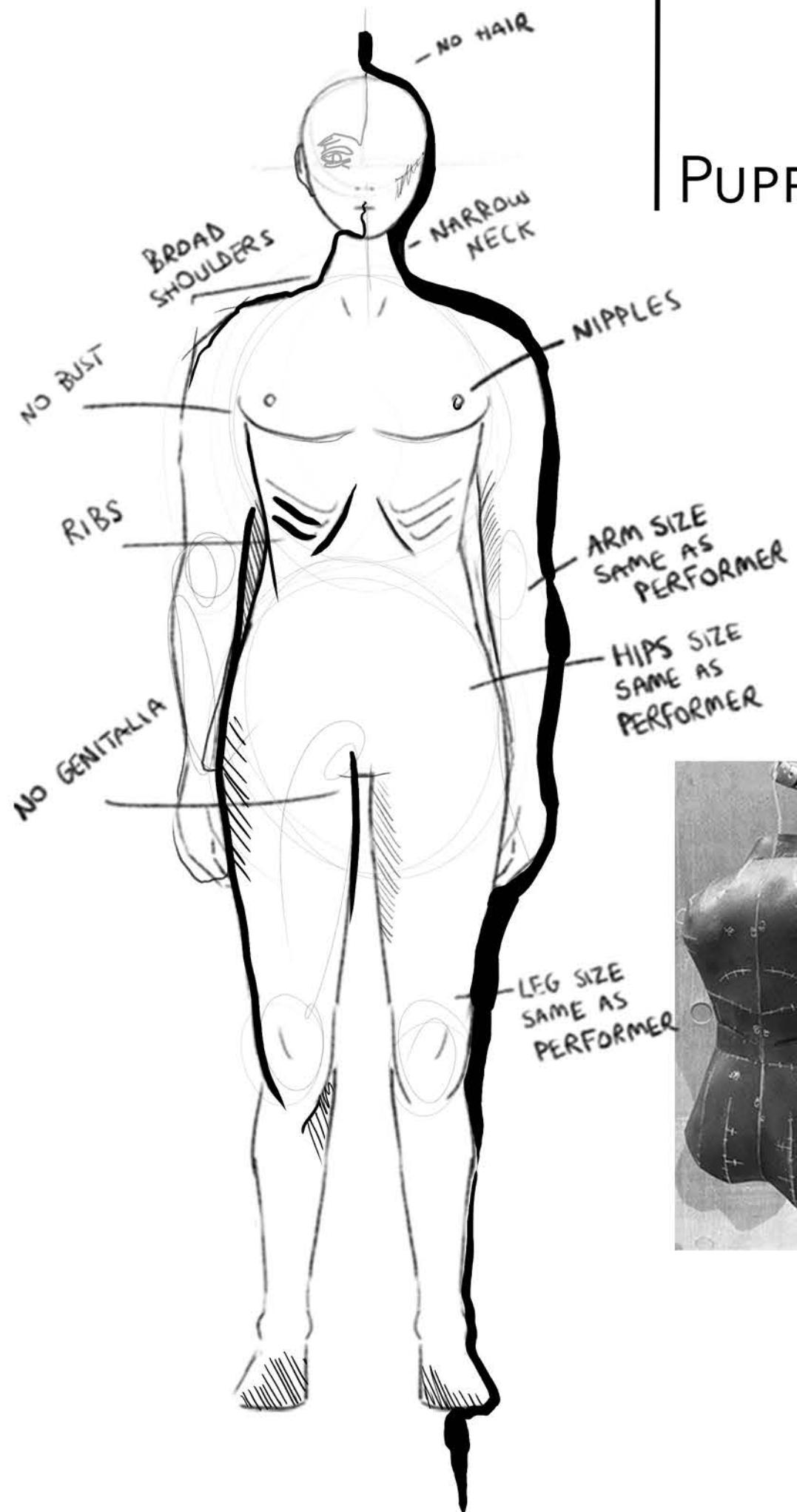
PUPPETEER / Costume



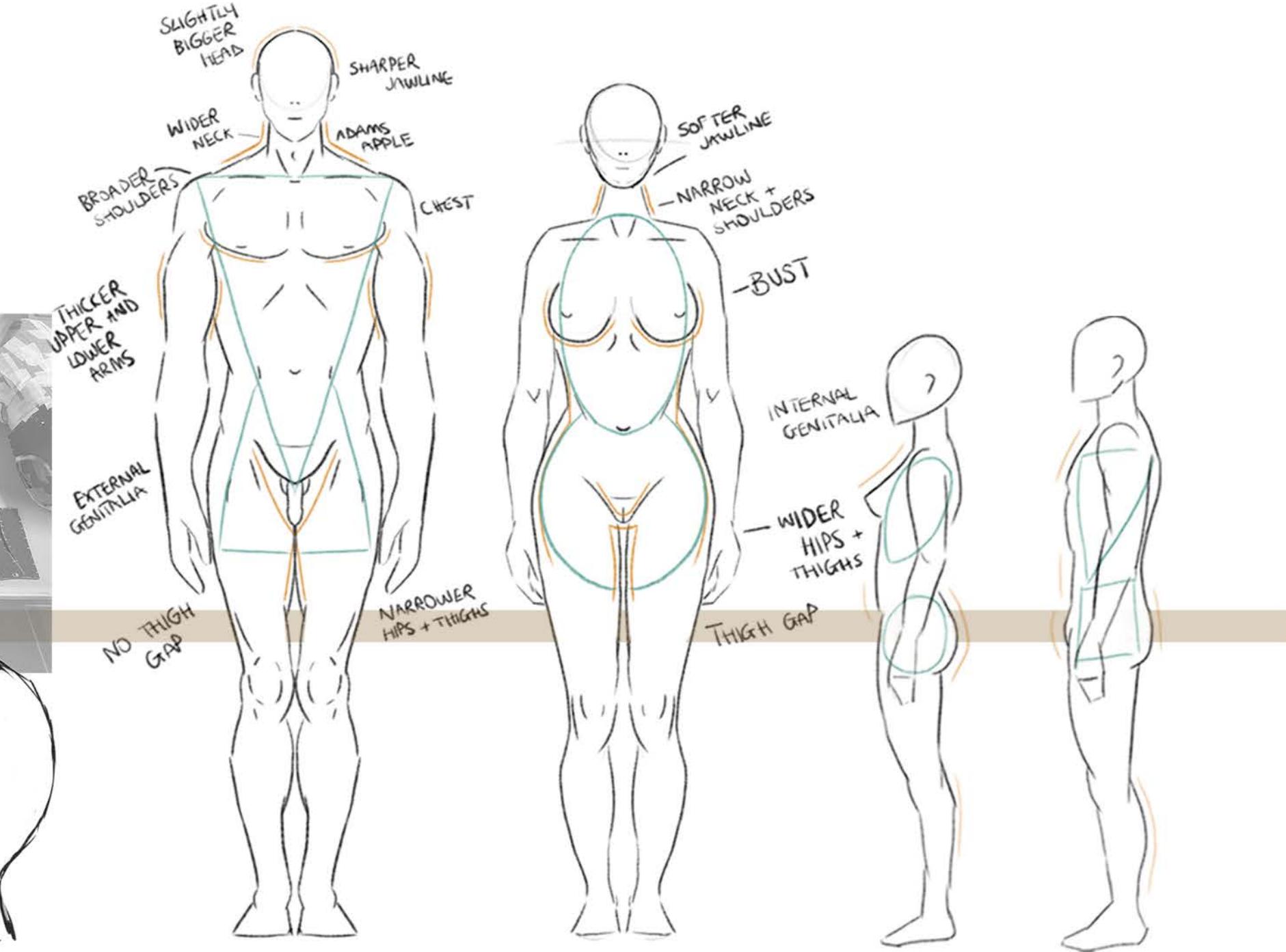
The puppeteers costume was made out of stretch fabric to allow for ease of movement. The harness, designed to hold the puppets weight, Needed redesigning a few times until I got what I wanted. I looked at corsetry along with strapping used in backpacks and parachutes, designed to be secure but not restricting.



PUPPET / Body

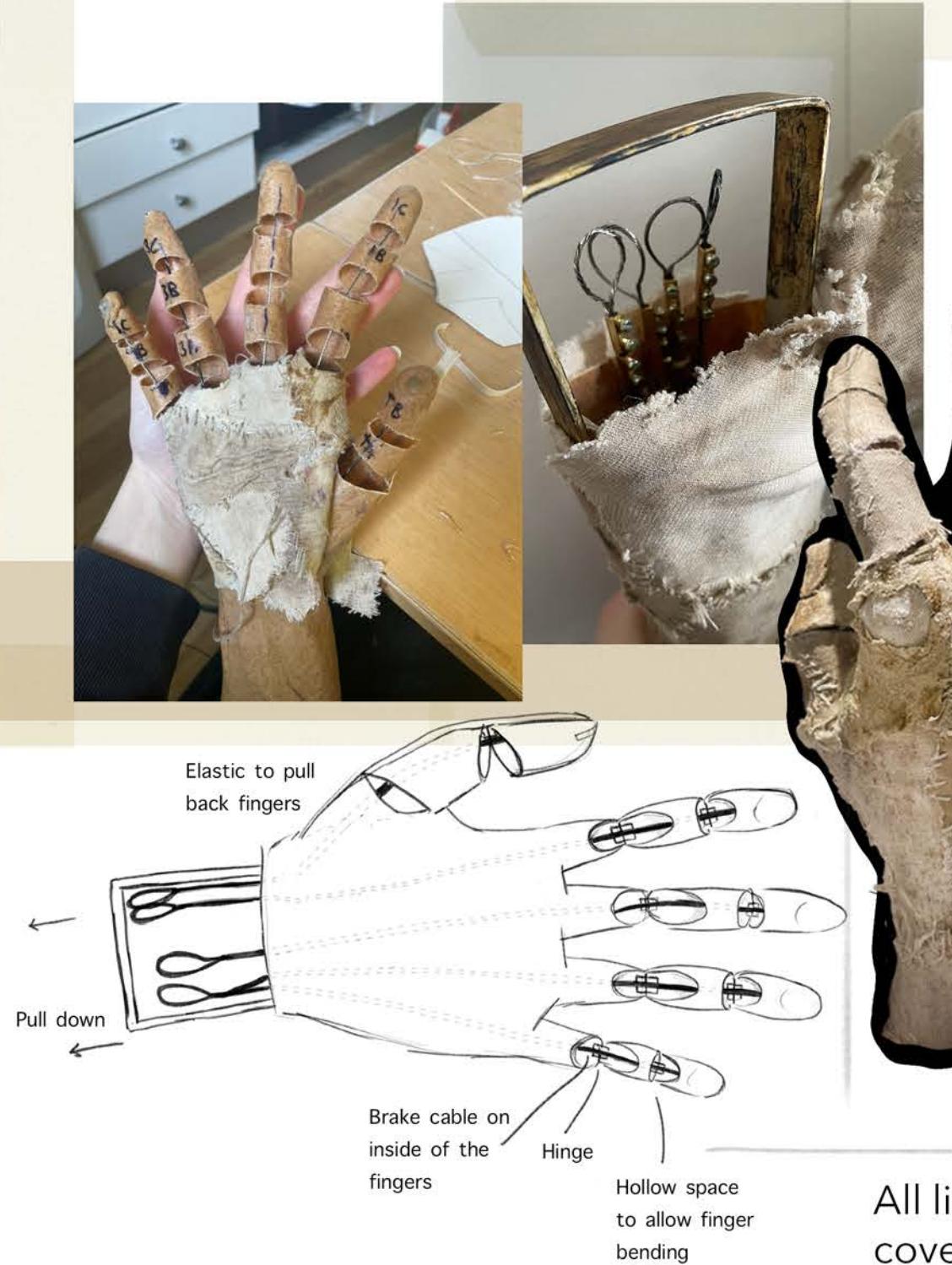


I designed the puppet body to be non-gendered as I wanted it to exist as an object outside of binary human norms. Taking inspiration from male and female mannequins, I designed a body that possessed characteristics from both typical male and female bodies to create a body that was human but not gendered.

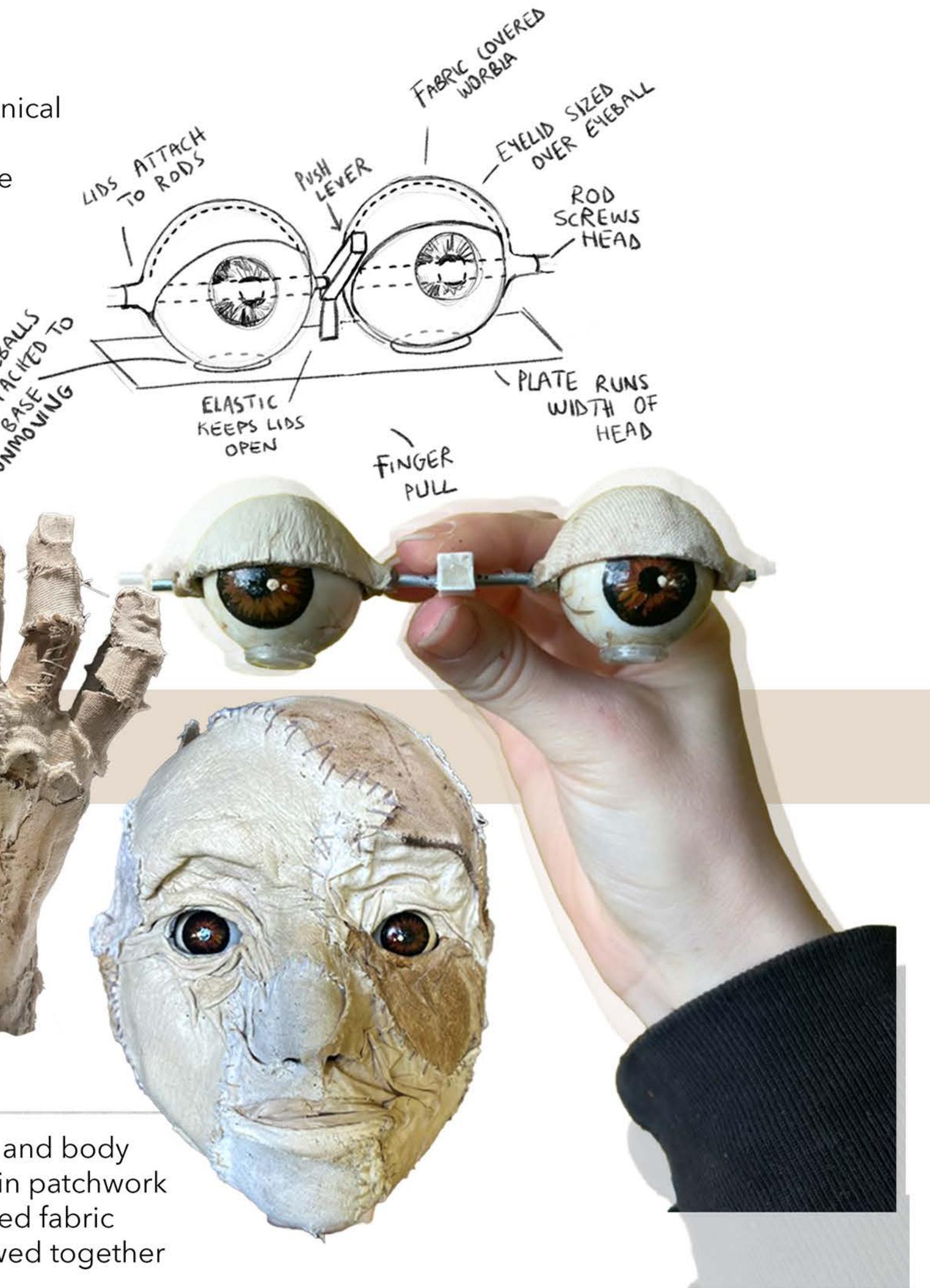


I sculpted the face to be gender neutral and created it out of worbla.

PUPPET / Mechanisms



For this puppet I wanted it to have a mechanical prosthetic leg, a mechanical hand and a blinking mechanism. Although tricky these really brought my puppet to life and made it able to interact with the world more.



FINAL / Images



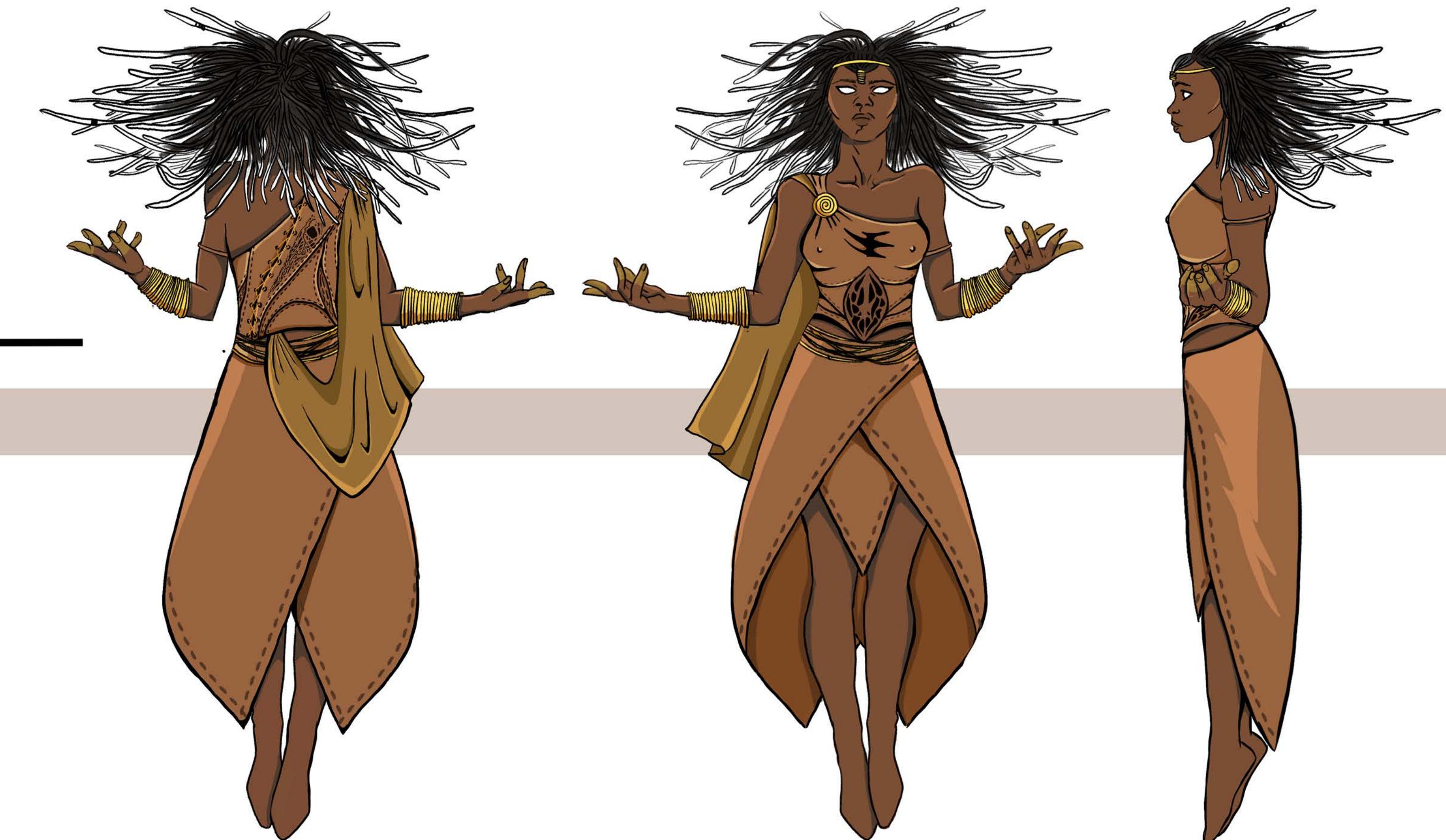
Performer: Zoë Karl
Photographer: Daniel Goldfelds



Superheroes - Collaboration Project

Rosie Higgins

In collaboration with Grace Gilmour



GROUP CONCEPT / Locations

STORM

STRENGTHS:

- Control over weather
- Especially lightning

WEAKNESSES:

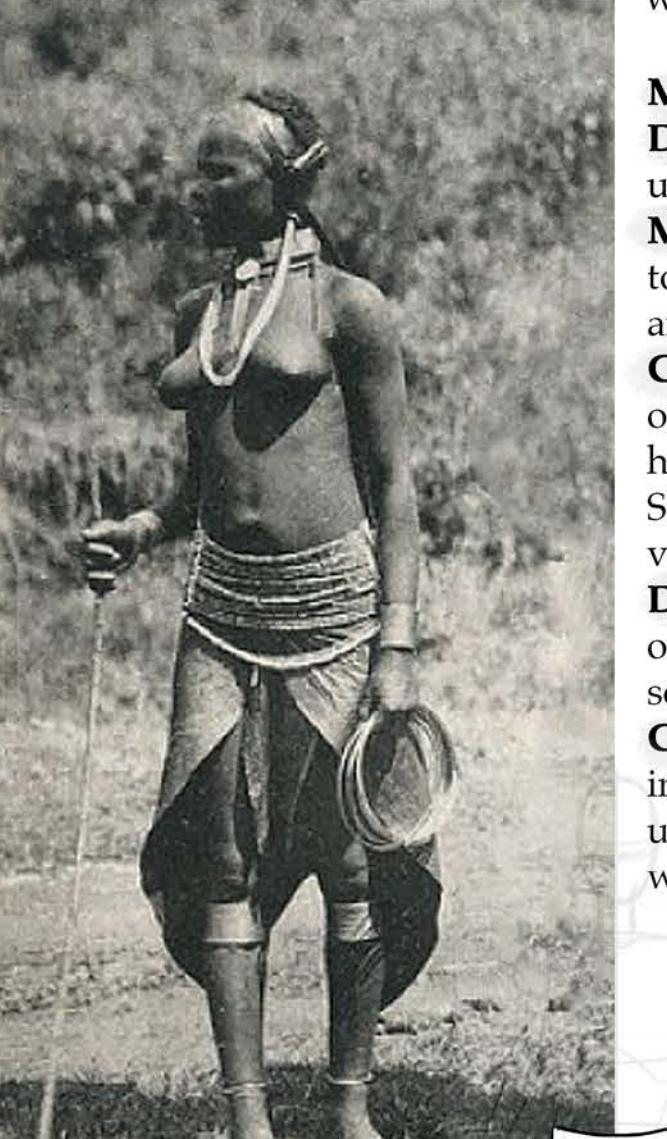
- Claustrophobia
- Anger/Emotions and maintaining control



Our second year collaboration project celebrated the costumes of iconic black superheroes, of which we chose the character of 'Storm' and her background roots in Kenyan culture. This project taught me a lot about collaborating with others, as well as working with leather to create traditional garments.

KIKUYU / Clothing

The traditional clothing of the Kikuyu tribe is deeply rooted in their culture and history, with these garments symbolising their cultural identity and also wider unified African symbolism.



MUTHURU SKIRT

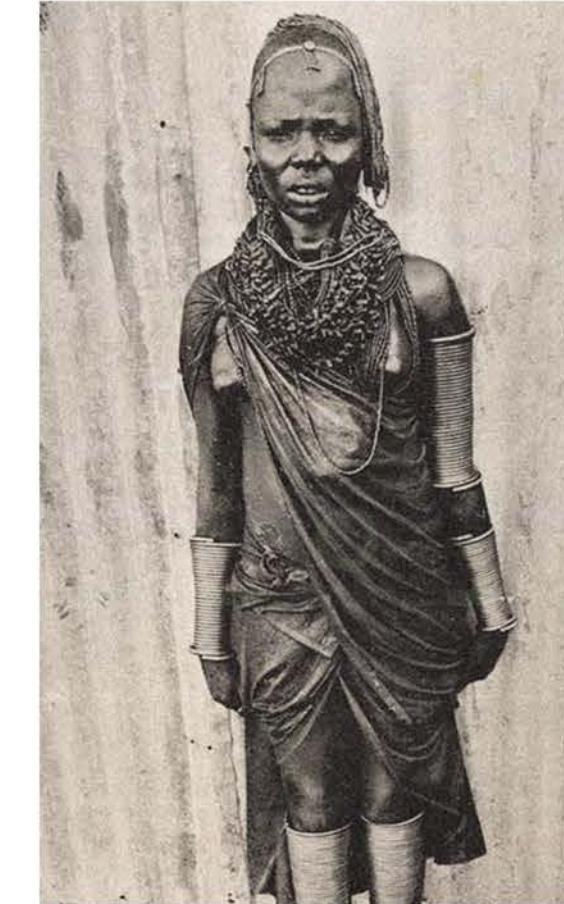
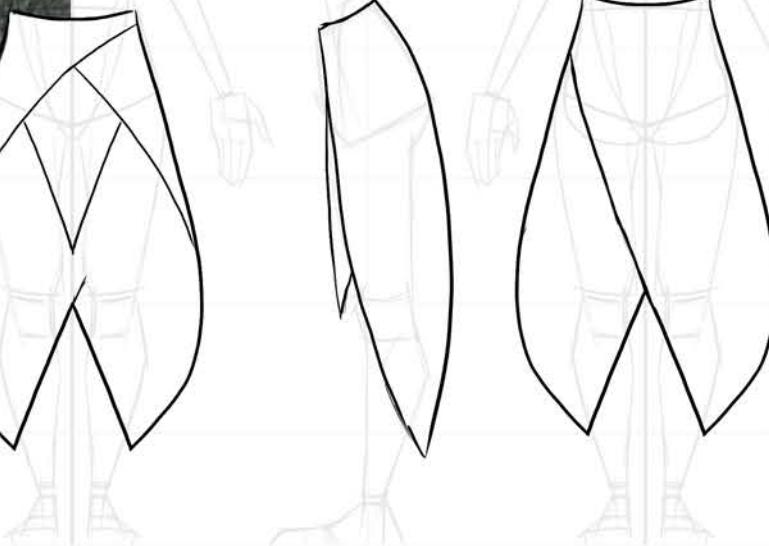
DESIGN: It is a leather wrap around skirt, with a soft leather public apron (mwengū) worn underneath at the front.

MATERIAL: Traditionally Muthuru skirts were made from softened goat skin, treated to make them soft and pliable. This skirt is crucial for giving the wearer's knees and legs lots of freedom during laborious work or dance.

COVERAGE: The skirt is designed to taper behind the legs to protect the wearer if she bent over. Similar to western culture the genitals and buttocks were seen as inappropriate to have on show in most contexts meaning garments were designed to ensure coverage. Strong leg calves and thighs however are not seen as nakedness, and instead are highly valued as symbols of motherhood.

DECORATION: Traditionally the skirts were often decorated with beads, shells or other ornaments. These decorations were not only aesthetic but also signified the wearer's social status, marital status or role in the community.

COMMUNITY: The process of making the Muthuru was often a communal activity, involving older women teaching young girls to make their own skirts. While the Muthuru used to be everyday attire, it's now become more ceremonial, worn at cultural festivals, weddings and other significant events.



NYATHIBA

DESIGN: The upper part of the body is protected by a loose cloak or shawl, nguo ya ngoro, or nyathiba, draped over the shoulder and chest to serve as protection or for warmth.

MATERIAL: Traditionally Nyathiba cloaks were made from three to four goat skins whose hair has been scraped with a knife and then treated with ochre and castor oil until it was soft.

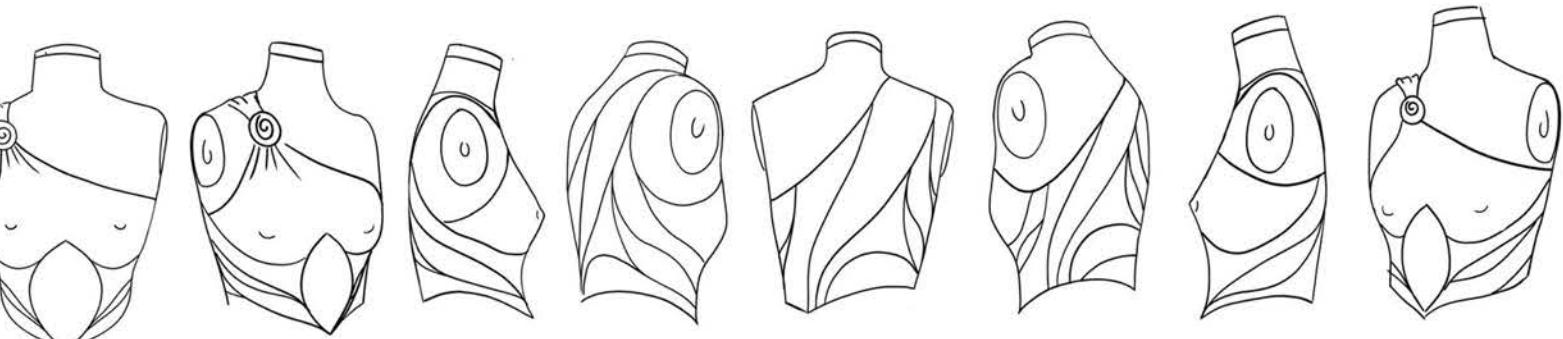
COVERAGE: The Nyathiba can vary in length to just below the waist or up to the ankles. Traditionally it was acceptable and normal for women to wear minimal clothing on their upper bodies, particularly during manual labour, so Nyathiba was worn either for warmth or during cultural celebrations.

DECORATION: Sometimes they were decorated with beads, shells or other ornaments, but this was if they were being worn for a celebration.

COMMUNITY: While Nyathiba used to be everyday attire, it's now become more ceremonial, worn at cultural festivals, weddings and other significant events.



STORM / Design



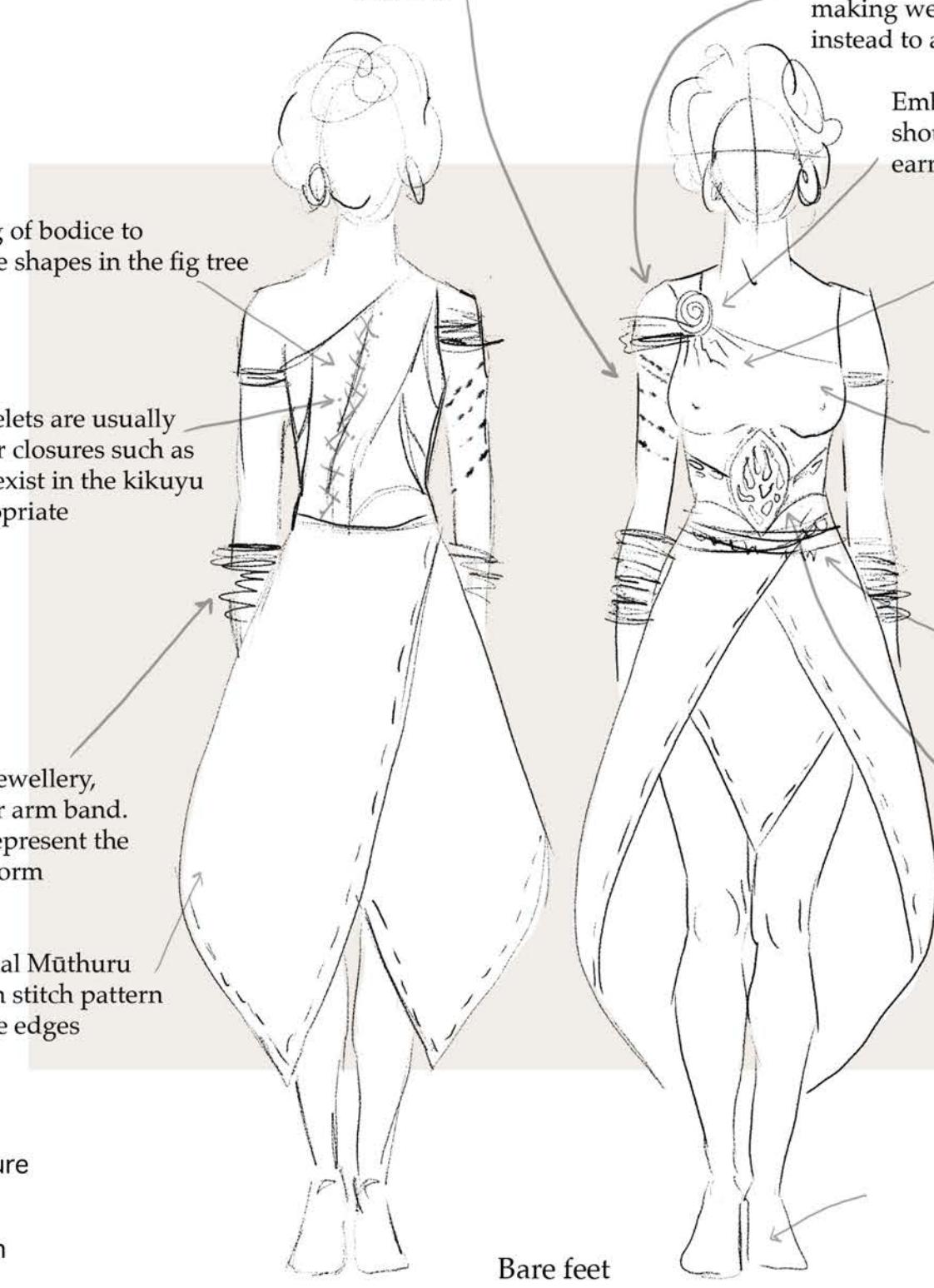
Our HMUP teammate is going to apply prosthetics to the arm to look like lightning is travelling under her skin

In our finalised design we were going to have a shoulder piece that was similar to western armour, but in the process of making we decided to change this instead to a cape

Emblem on the front of the shoulder is similar to the kikuyu earrings that sit in the same place

The folds in the bodice going into the emblem to reflect the drape in the Nyathiba

Hardened leather breastplate. We both wanted to include nipples to bring femininity from the piece and reject the fact that spear heroines are often given masculine features. We also wanted to nod to the fact that breasts are not seen as nakedness in the Kikuyu tribe. The armour shape is a nod to western ideals of warriors. One shouldered like the Nyathiba



Bare feet

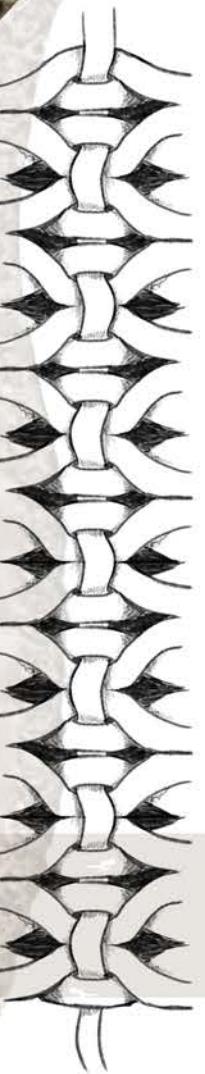
COSTUME / Construction



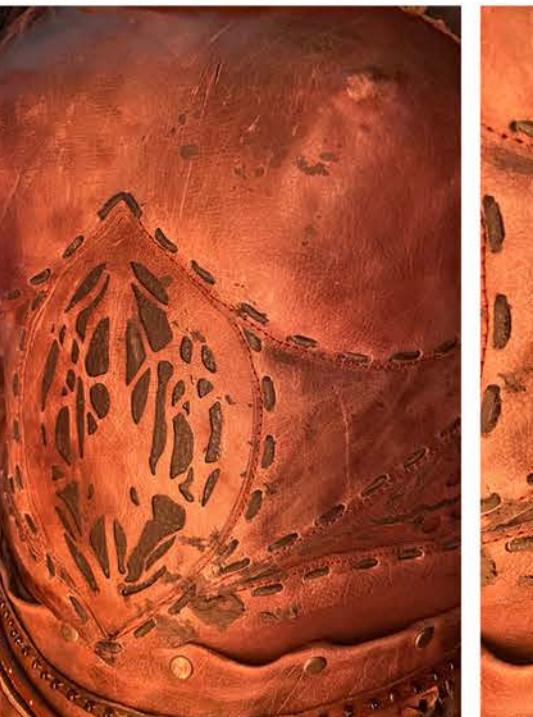
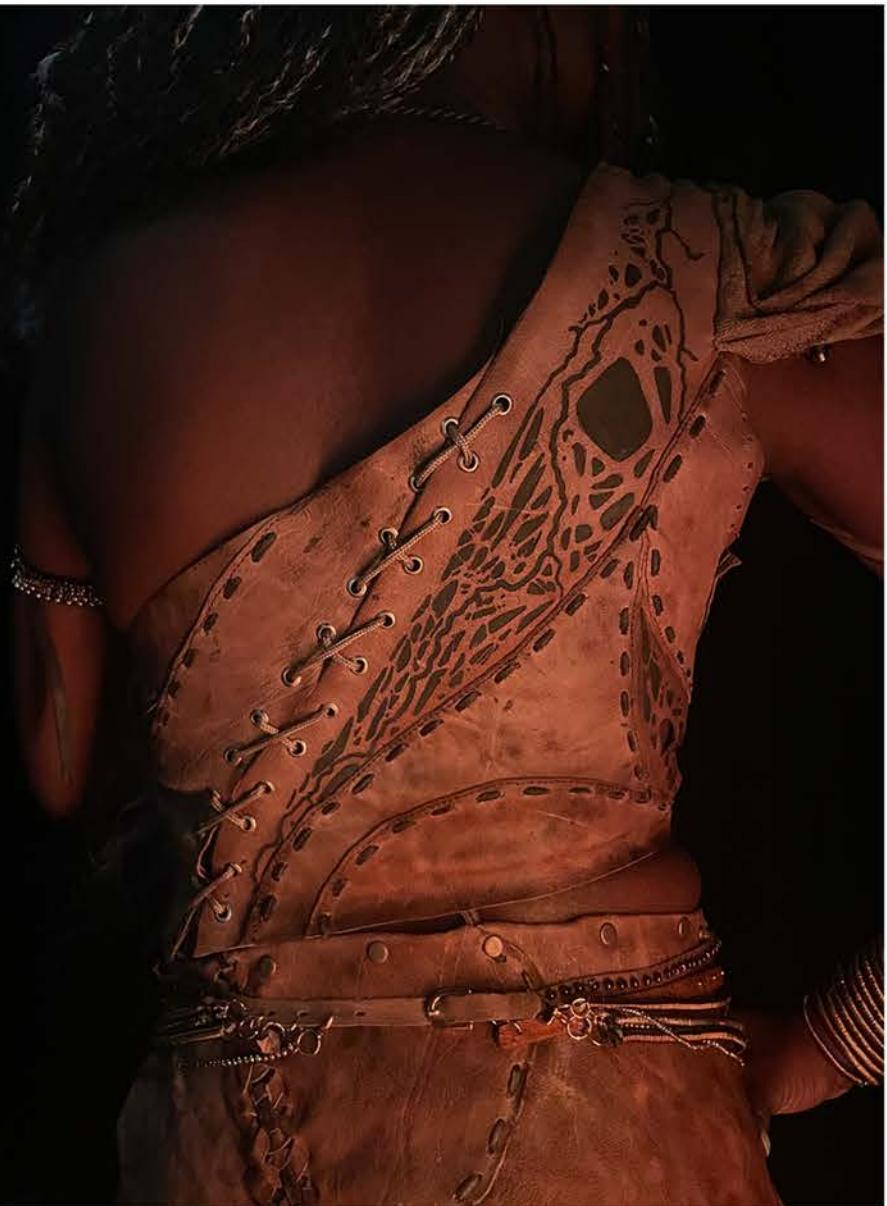
To give the creases and shapes the leather was stretched and wet molded into the shape we wanted..



Once hand sewn together, the leather was bleached to give it an aged look and then broken down using scratching, oil paints and fake mud.



STORM / Final Photos



Model: Iliane Rodrigues
Costume: Rosie Higgins, Grace Gilmour
HMUP: Nicolás Moore Gonzalez
Photographer: Jess Badds

Jester Project

Rosie Higgins



RESEARCH / Concept

The jester project was a personal project I worked on over COVID as I have always held a particular interest in jesters and clowns and wanted to explore that within my free time.

The jester costume is interesting in the fact that it spans centuries of history and yet the garment of the fool has remained universally recognised by its common identifiable elements. The triangular skirts, neck pieces and pointy hats, all adorned with bells and paired with tights make this costume almost timeless.



Franz Isaac Brun



B. IX, 464, 8

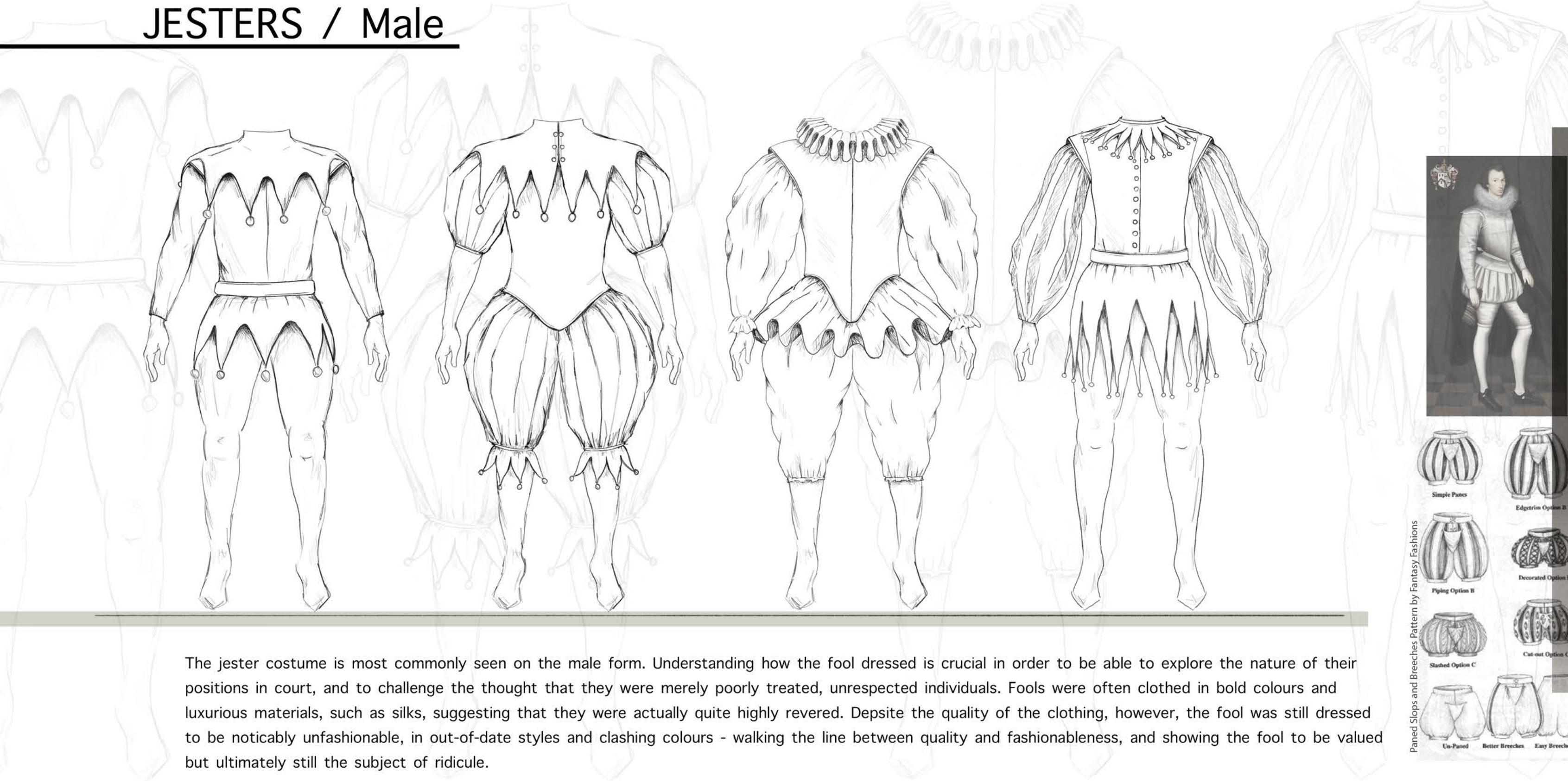


Actor from 1887 - Gravure Etching Gebbi



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JESTERS / Male



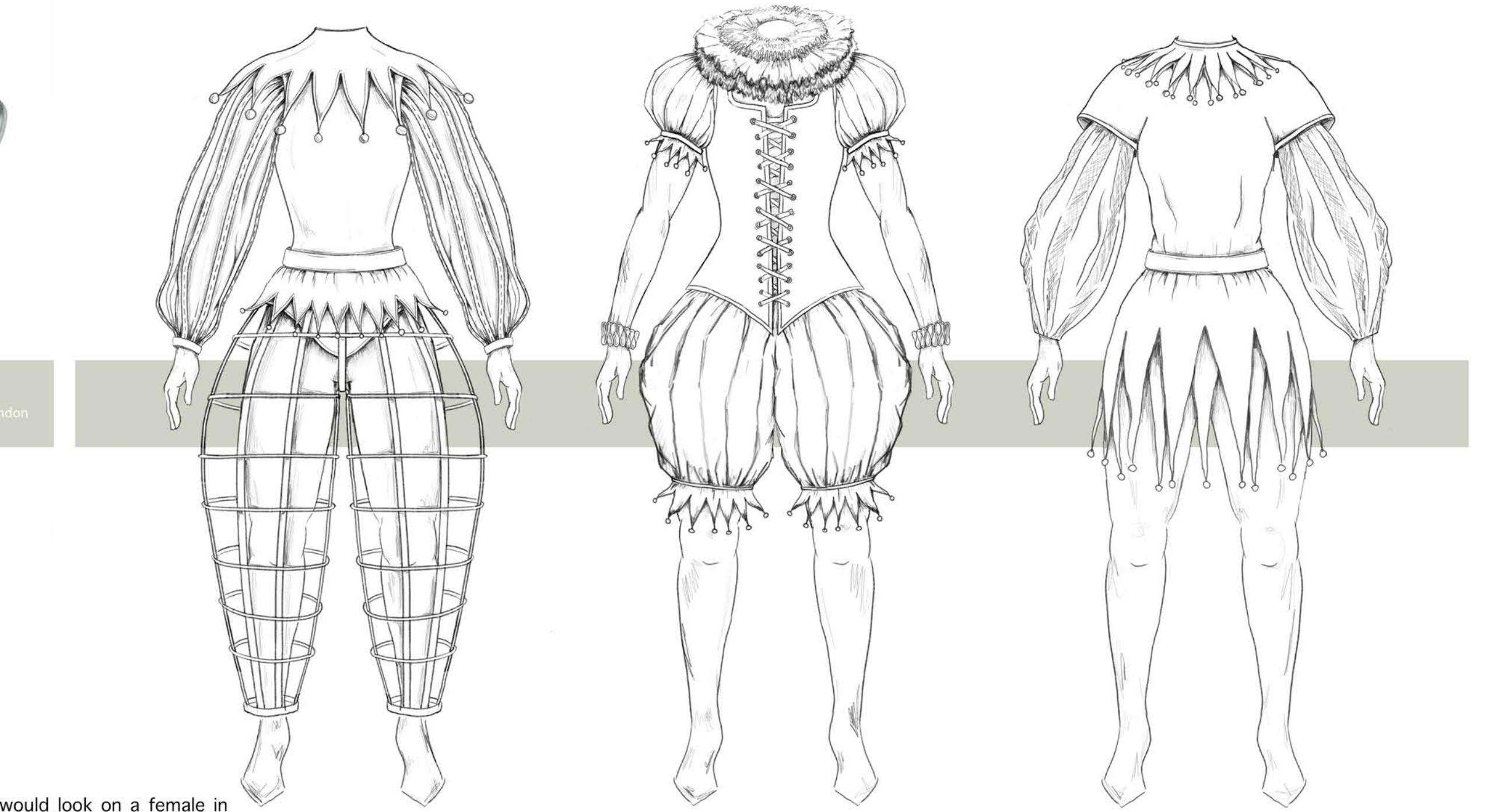
The jester costume is most commonly seen on the male form. Understanding how the fool dressed is crucial in order to be able to explore the nature of their positions in court, and to challenge the thought that they were merely poorly treated, unrespected individuals. Fools were often clothed in bold colours and luxurious materials, such as silks, suggesting that they were actually quite highly revered. Despite the quality of the clothing, however, the fool was still dressed to be noticeably unfashionable, in out-of-date styles and clashing colours - walking the line between quality and fashionableness, and showing the fool to be valued but ultimately still the subject of ridicule.

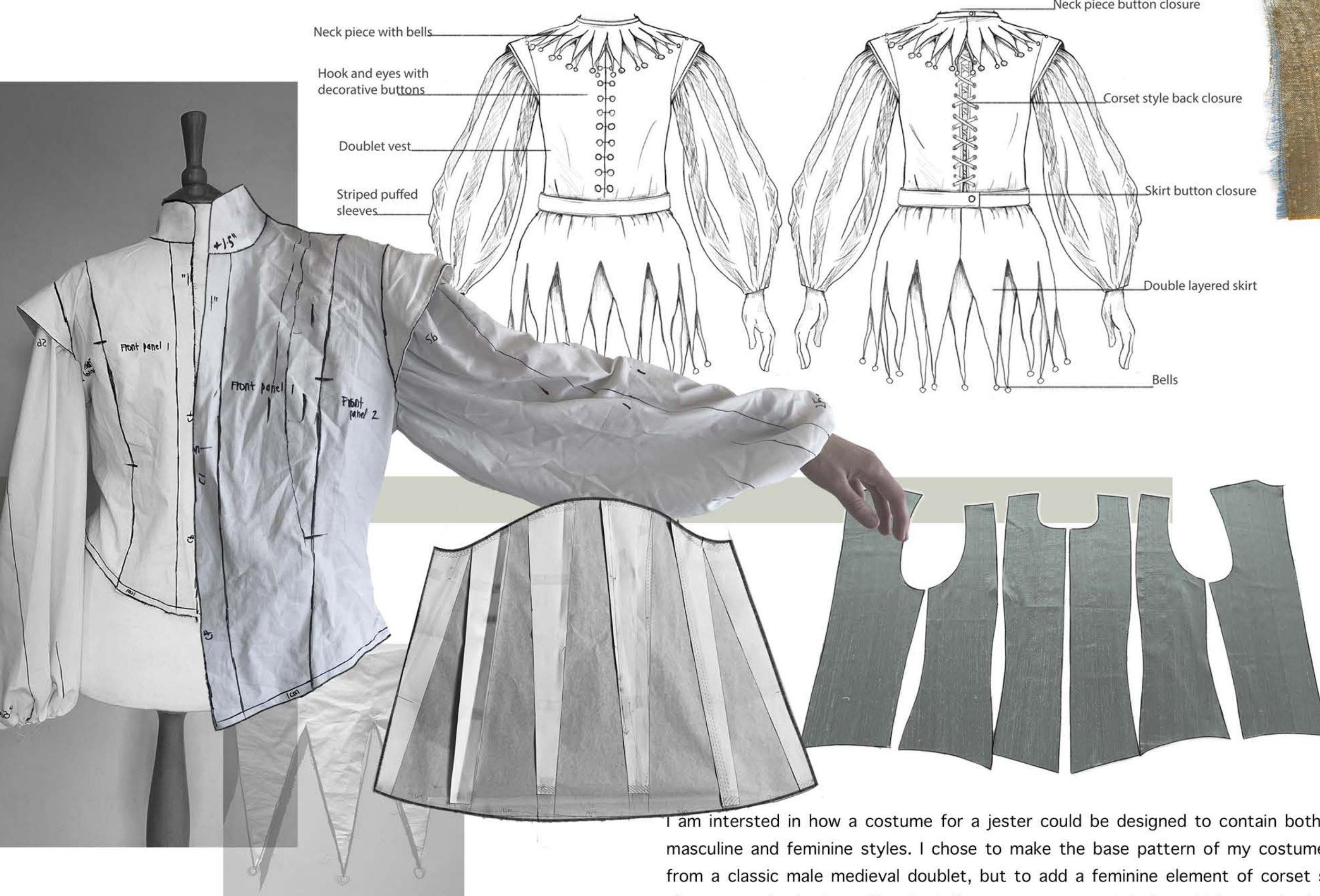
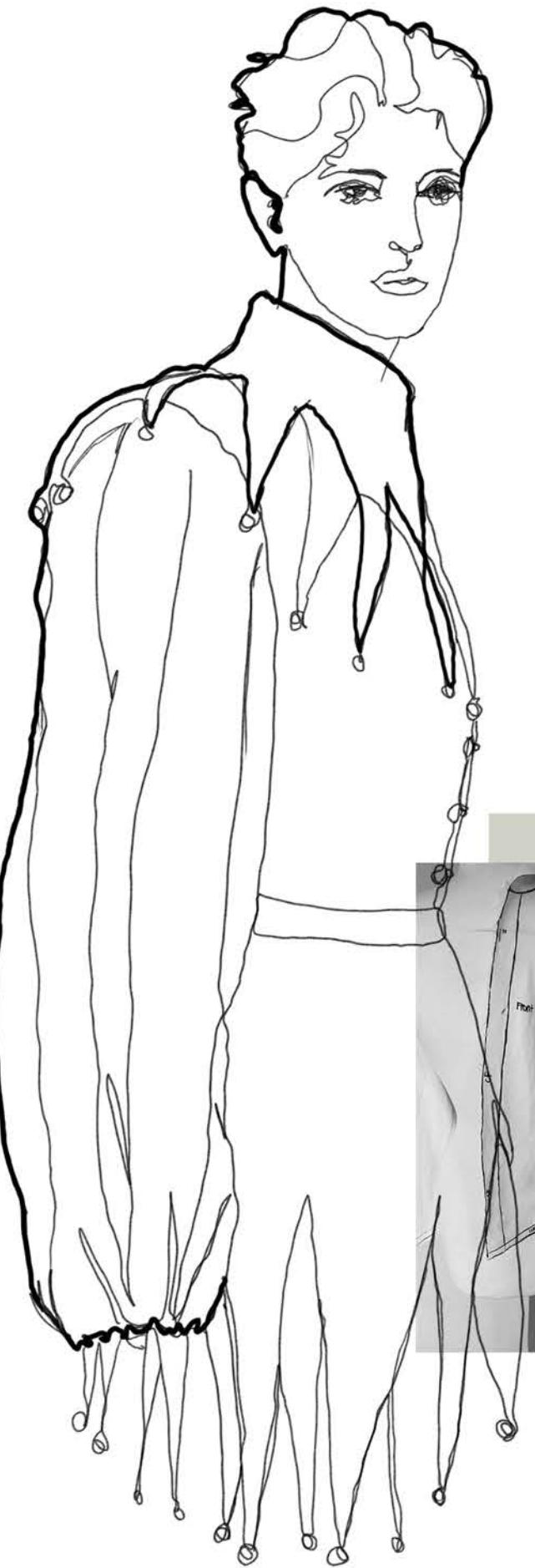


JESTERS / Female

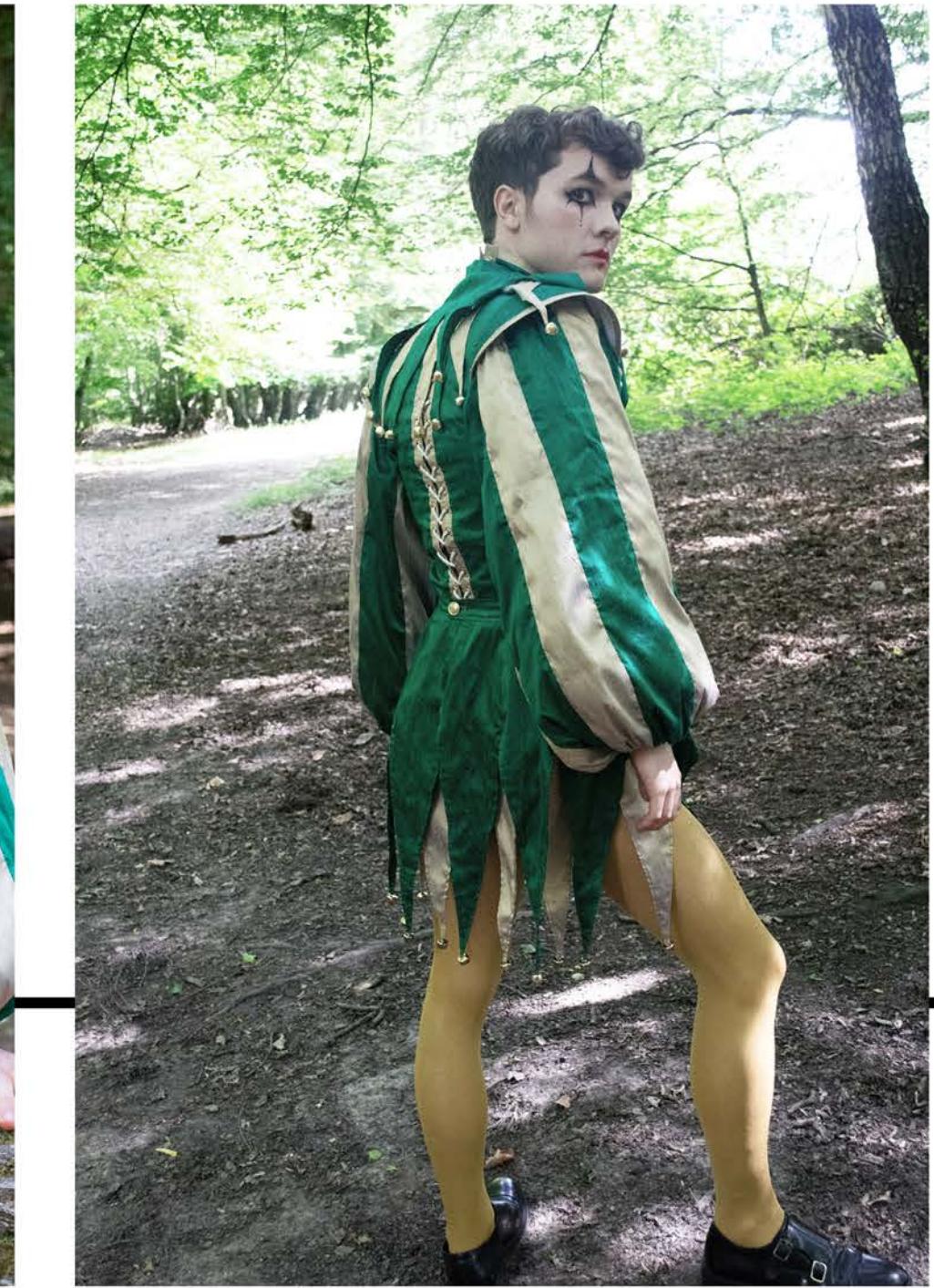


I was looking at how the jester costume would look on a female in today's society. What would a jester costume look like if it wasn't specifically designed for one gender? Taking historically female ideas, such as corsets and crinolines, and paring these with items that we commonly see on the male medieval jester, such as large trousers, belled skirts and puffed sleeves, could bring a new idea of the female jester into view.





I am interested in how a costume for a jester could be designed to contain both elements of masculine and feminine styles. I chose to make the base pattern of my costume from a classic male medieval doublet, but to add a feminine element of corset style closures at the back, making it similar to a corset vest. I chose bishop style sleeves and to adorn the skirt and neck piece with bells. Tights would be worn underneath.



Urban Outerwear Project

Rosie Higgins



Jill Sander - Saks Fifth



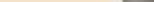
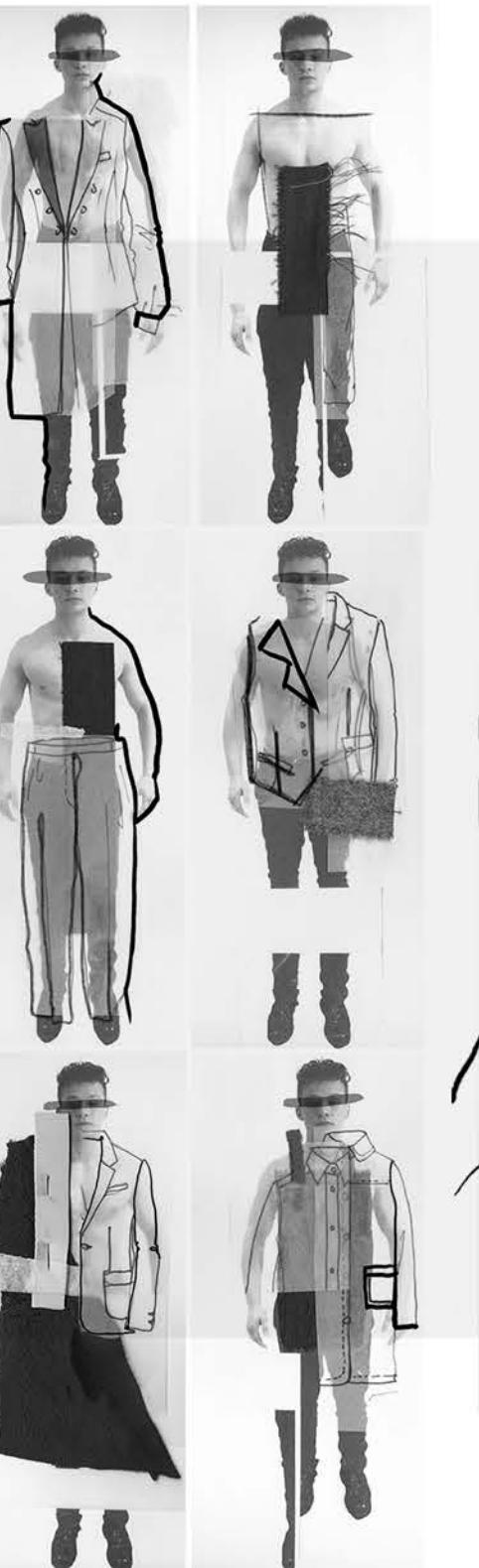
Caminhos de Santiago Hotel by Aires Mateus - João Morgado



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Collection - Ethan Hn





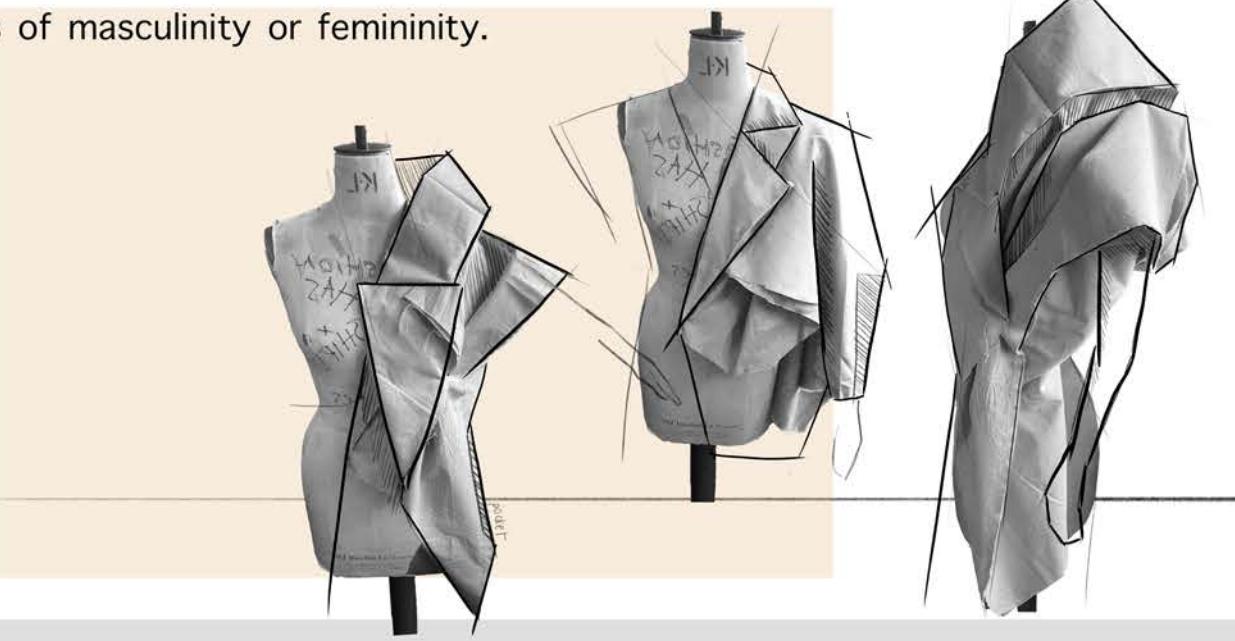
This project was created for a competition from FAD to design a garment that was adaptable and changable. I decided to focus on the relationship between urban landscapes and fashion, looking at outerwear and how the silhouette of modern geometric architecture could inspire shapes and lines within coats. I was one of 20 students to have my work chosen to show in London fashion week.



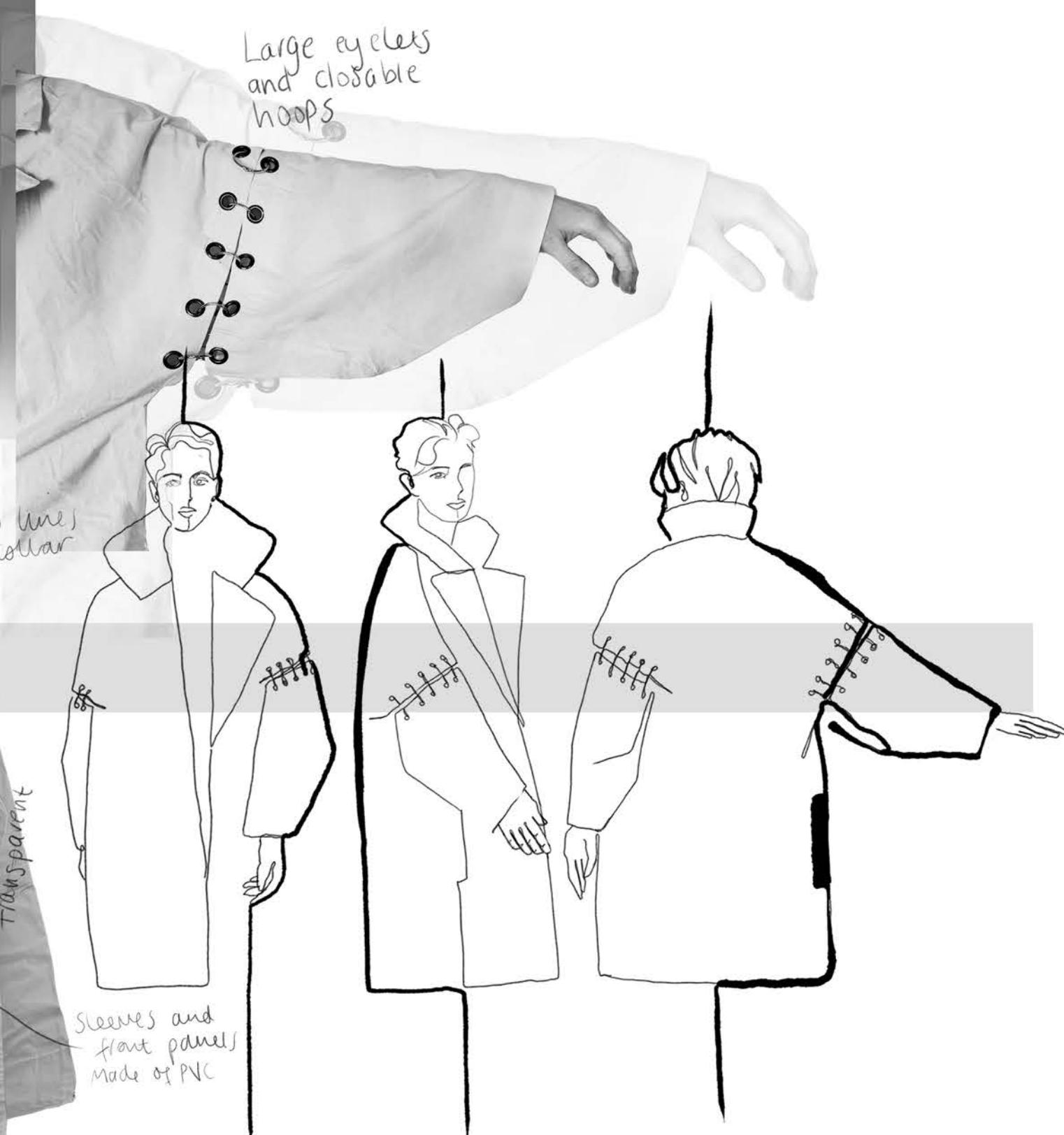
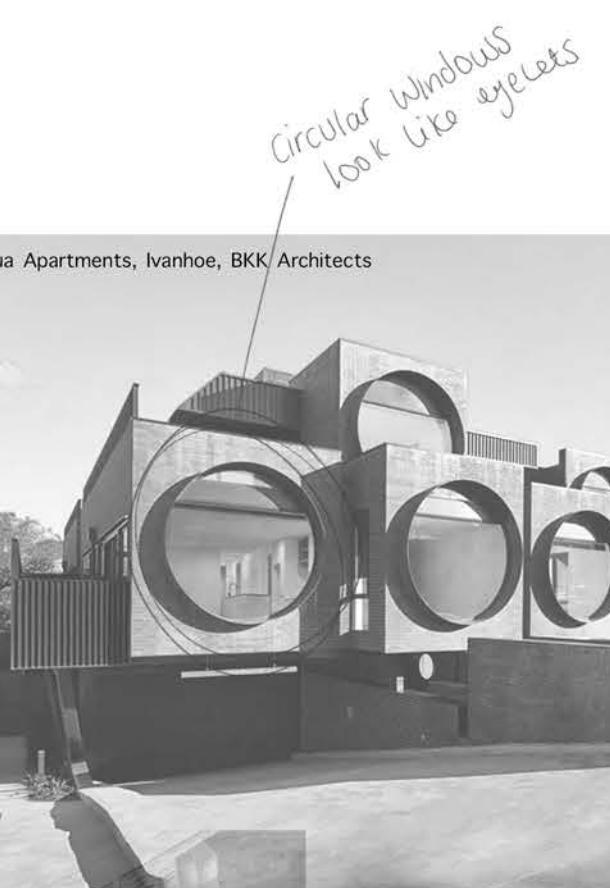
Experimentation with how the tones and textures we see in modern architecture, such as concrete, steel, and even scaffolding, could be mirrored in fabrics.

URBAN ARCHITECTURE / Toile

Within this coat I aimed to create a garment that is oversized, fluid and adaptable looking at genderless shape creates interesting ideas of how architecture silhouettes are not defined by stereotypes of masculinity or femininity.



I decided to show the idea of adaptability through attachable/detachable sleeves. Inspired by the circular windows of the Cirqua apartments, I wanted to include eyelets and hoops. This created a unique contrast against the sharp geometric lines of the rest of the garment.





Wool and PVC with eyelets and closable hoops



I chose to create the coat out of two highly contrasting fabrics, pairing the idea of grey, concrete block walls with that of bright, sunny windows, whilst also mirroring the ideas of the raincoat versus the winter coat. The yellow PVC creates a stark contrast to the muted grey wool, not only in colour, but in the texture and transparency.



FINAL OUTCOME / London fashion week



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ualshowcase.arts.ac.uk/project/658618/cover

