

CEREMONY  
PRATT 2020 FASHION  
CAFÉ FORGOT

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**FORWARD**  
**LUCY WEISNER and VITA HAAS**

We, (Vita Haas and Lucy Weisner,) founded Café Forgot in 2017 to provide a platform for the work of many of our New York City friends who were designing clothing and accessories. We had our first shop at a friend's storefront studio on the Lower East Side. Since then, we have had eight temporary shops in New York City and one in Portland, Oregon. In the process, we have expanded our network of collaborators beyond NYC. Currently, we are in the midst of a year-long lease at an East Village store front.

Since our beginning, we have confronted modes of production and consumption that are part and parcel of the fashion industry. For instance, the industry generally promotes a model of hasty production, frequent seasonal collections, and the conspicuous consumption of luxury brand names. This creates a huge amount of excess and waste. Instead, we work with designers who primarily make garments by hand often with up-cycled materials. We privilege non-production based practices, which creates flexibility for the designer who does not have to consistently produce entire collections and incur tremendous overhead costs, while also enabling us to work with designers on a personal level and not be burdened with excessive inventory. We structure Café Forgot like a gallery by hosting ephemeral shops and primarily selling one-of-a-kind garments. In addition we host programming in our spaces with the

aim of creating a sense of community for our designers, customers, friends, and collaborators. We seek to create a relational atmosphere with these events and use our platform to explore media and mediums in fashion and beyond.

This past spring, Gina Gregoria, the textile professor at Pratt institute, asked us to host a virtual trunk show in collaboration with the Pratt fashion graduates from the class of 2020. We have always had a close connection with the school, and the very first designers with whom we worked were the Pratt alumni Marland Backus, Claire Mckinney and Sophie Andes Gascon. Over time, these three introduced us to other designers from Pratt such as Francesca Longo, Carolyn Kilcoyne Voyta, Liv Ryan, and Kristin Mallison. At this point, our network has grown to more than fifty collaborators, but we continue to work with those designers who have been with us from the start, and we are delighted that Pratt faculty have invited us to collaborate in a more formal way for this project.

This project is particularly important in 2020 because COVID-19 has rendered face-to-face collaborations impossible and required that we restructure the way we work. Typically, Pratt hosts an in-person trunk show where students launch their collections, but this year's event was canceled. For us, the closures meant temporarily shutting down our East Village shop and launching

e-commerce. Our online shop has led us to explore digital programming and experiment with virtually engaging our community.

This virtual trunk show, entitled "Ceremony," is presented as a digitally published book. We feel that the book format provides a container for long-form writing and a deeper personal engagement with the work of recent Pratt graduates while being accessible online.

For "Ceremony" we have selected ten graduates whose thesis collections explore a range of concepts and vary in materials, textiles, and silhouettes: Blake Walsh, Cornelia (Corie) Borgerhoff, Victoria Rodriguez, Georgia Baltay, Fiona Jungman, Jasmine Thomas, Hannah Thomas, Noelani Ramos, Emma McLelland, and Xinzi Cui. Images from the graduates' final thesis portfolios are paired with either a written reflection or an interview conducted by Café Forgot designers: Kristin Mallison, Hanan Sharifa, Marland Backus, Henrietta O'Connor (No Wallflower Project), Claire Mckinney, Liam Lee, Liv Ryan, Merritt Meacham, Carolyn Kilcoyne Volta, and Francesca Longo. We also asked the Café Forgot designer and Pratt alum, Maggie Lee to write a preface to accompany the interviews. The Café Forgot designers we selected have a range of backgrounds and practices, and we saw connections between their work and the Pratt students we chose for this project.

The interviews were conducted over Zoom in late June and early July. The only guidelines we provided were that the interviews be approximately fifteen minutes long. These texts provide an account of the students' experiences, practices, and ideas—particularly those impacted by the school closure and quarantine. Additionally, the interviews unpack the intricacies of garment construction, the potential of fashion design in a new form, and presents a mode of discourse that critically engages with the fashion industry in this unprecedented time.

—LUCY WEISNER and VITA HAAS

**PREFACE**  
**MAGGIE LEE**

DIY.

To be part of a school of thought.

Don't you think it's cosmic how people meet, there's a reason and time for everything.

Vita and I met when we were shopgirls at a high-end fashion-designer boutique in Soho (Issey Miyake Pleats Please). Through this, I met Lucy too and they make up Café Forgot.

Café F is your girlfriend you can trust and talk to. They showcase my dangly artworks, invite me to play music at opening parties in Tribeca, LES, and the East Village and it makes me feel chic and super sweet. The store itself and the events, I always look forward to because it's kind of a classic timeless New York thing. For me, it reminds me of discovering the I <3 store on Mott Street in 2005. Down the stairs in a basement, it was stocked with the best clothes made by independent designers. They would also throw parties with a DJ at 88 Palace called No Ordinary Monkey, or maybe I found a flyer to the event at the store but it was hard to find out about these things and they meant the world to me. It was about being around the right people and coming from a mutual place of understanding. So something inside me feels that all is right in the world because CF is like the younger generation, and I'm the older generation, but I look fondly on the times of being the youngest person at the oldest people's parties.

Ok, fast forward to now, it's 2020. What do you do in the times of a pandemic/ BLM? To be an artist designer allows one to have freedom to express, create a world, and problem solve. College students are now forced into a new consciousness and style of persevering. Institutions have closed their doors and it is the time to reflect and go back to the basics, to go deeper into a place called your parent's house.

To reinvent, self-made modes of operation.

The Yin and Yang is a symbol of lightness in the dark and vice versa. It's a flat circle form without any straight lines with two dots. From the interviews conducted with CF designers and Pratt students, there is a duality of finding the balance in contradictions, mixing ideas of what they know and what they are trying to understand.

I'm so happy and lucky to go to art school! I went to Pratt too. Art starzzz.

Great things can come from a state of uncertainty, here are the crisis fashion student interviews.

-MAGGIE LEE



Maggie Lee  
“One Earring,” 2016  
Cardboard, acrylic paint, chain  
31 x 8 1/2 in (78.74 x 21.59 cm)

**BLAKE WALSH and KRISTIN MALLISON**

KRISTIN MALLISON (CAFÉ FORGOT) CREATES CORSETS FROM ROCOCO AND 18TH CENTURY TAPESTRIES, DEPICTING PASTORAL FOLLY AND FEMININITY —SHE WRITES A REFLECTION ON THE WORK OF BLAKE WALSH (PRATT) WHOSE THESIS COLLECTION EXPLORES FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN HORROR FILMS.

I can imagine the person wearing Blake Walsh's work to have black mascara running down their cheeks. She seems to have really perfected the art of haphazard clothing, and something about her style of draping reminds me of strokes of oil paint. Walsh references female protagonists from '70s and '80s slasher films using historical femme silhouettes and detailing with an undergarments theme as a skewed take on feminine sexuality. It reads like a fragmented or shattered Renaissance painting with a contemporary-punk-ethos, which I love. She's managed to capture romance, without neglecting angry feminist rage. The girl Blake has created: like I'm kinda scared of her but I also desire her. Looking at her collection has left me feeling nothing short of moved, and made me really proud to be a Pratt alumna.

—KRISTIN MALLISON







**CORIE BORGERHOFF and HANAN SHARIFA**

CORIE BORGERHOFF'S (PRATT) THESIS PORTFOLIO ADDRESSES "SOUNDING WHITE" AND GROWING UP IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE ENVIRONMENT AS A PERSON OF COLOR. HER GARMENTS MIX STREETWEAR WITH TRADITIONALLY PREPPY MOTIFS. HANAN SHARIFA'S (CAFÉ FORGOT) WORK EXPLORES MUSLIM IDENTITY AND CULTURE THROUGH HER PLACEMENT OF THE ARABIC SPELLING OF HER NAME ON REVEALING MESH GARMENTS.

HANAN SHARIFA

I want to start off by asking what your pronouns are and what you like to go by?

CORIE BORGERHOFF

I go by she/ her.

HS Do you like to go by Cornelia or Corie?

CB Cornelia is my official name, but I like to go by Corie.

HS Great! I did some research on your work, and you say that you grew up in a predominantly white area of Philadelphia? In your collection, you emphasize this idea of "sounding white." How do you conceptualize the idea of sound through your clothing and what does "sounding white" mean to you?

CB I interpret sounding white as having an education. This is how I landed on many of the silhouettes in my collection. Also, I am very heavily inspired by music and hip hop, which informed much of my silhouette construction. In this sense, "sound" has been a big motivator for many of the exaggerated shapes I use in my collection.

HS This was the first time I encountered sound, like "sounding white," playing a role in the creation of clothing. I think you incorporate the idea of "sounding white" in a very interesting and successful way by playing with preppy aesthetics and layering of garments. You incorporate elements such as oversized sweaters and repurposed khakis and sweatpants, translating this preppy Ivy League, white-boy fashion into a language of your own.

CB Right. That's exactly it!

HS I find it to be incredibly intriguing to reference institutions like Harvard or Yale that have been historically linked to whiteness and prestige. How do you think about your garments as defying these institutional systems?

CB I started thinking about black men, specifically my older brother, who's had to deal with a lot of racial bias—also growing up in a predominantly white environment. But, basically, my collection showcases what it is like to have an education and also like rap music or play basketball—essentially all these stereotypical black things. This idea of showing you can be into all of these things but shouldn't

necessarily have to be judged for not being black enough or not being white enough to fit in with all these different groups.

HS Right. I also grew up in a predominantly white place, and it's very weird, the feeling of alienation I experienced growing up.

CB Yeah, totally. It also felt more pronounced for me because my family is also white.

HS I haven't realized how traumatizing this experience of alienation has been until I got a bit older.

CB Yes. I'm 22, and it still sticks with me.

HS Yeah, I'm 28, and I still think about it. I think it's a lifelong learning process or unlearning maybe. So, on another note, who are your garments for?

CB Originally, I thought I wanted them to be for my brother or people who are like my brother. Young men who are struggling to make it within the white job force and don't necessarily know what they are doing but know they want to do something and want to be seen and heard. But, then, as the collection developed, and I personally began to wear all of my garments, I realized that my collection can be very fluid. Also, I think all people of color have some sort of experience with what I'm describing, and I want my collection to be for them.

HS Do you think that gender fluidity also plays a role?

CB Yeah, so I definitely pulled and referenced traditional men's garments. But, I believe the silhouettes are really meant for everyone.

HS Yeah, I think the silhouettes are also very fashionable at the moment, like really big-baggy and oversized garments. Okay, so who is your dream wearer? Who do you want to see wearing your clothes?

CB Probably Kendrick Lamar—he is so effortlessly cool. I hate the word "woke," but he is so low key, in-tune with everything. And, then another person would be, maybe, Alan Iverson. I was obsessed with basketball and still am. I used to want to be Alan Iverson's mom. I used to say that as a kid that I wanted to grow up to be Alan Iverson's mom, which is just funny, like, I want to be the most important person in his life.

HS Love that. So can you tell me a bit about your process?

CB So, I deal with pretty bad ADHD, and I am very easily distracted. I usually start by looking at color and identifying the colors I want to work with and then how those colors play into the overall story I'm trying to convey. Like, for instance, green always makes me think of tennis courts. And, then, that thought moved towards asking myself how I feel when I am at a country club? So, the

colors really translate to feeling, and I think that's what pushes me the most and keeps me excited about the collection. Especially, just coming out of school and being in classes where the process you have to go through in order to fulfill assignments is predetermined. So, working on my thesis collection—it was challenging to break away from that, and there was no guidance in regards to process whatsoever. So, I found working on my thesis collection was really driven by color and feeling.

HS So, another question that relates to that—did you feel confined in school? Are you excited to have graduated and explore other things now?

CB I think I initially did feel confined, only because I wasn't exactly sure at first what I wanted to say with any of my work. I felt I was doing things solely because I was being asked to do them. It wasn't until my third year at Pratt, where I began to think about my work less in terms of creating wearable or saleable garments for other people and more as being an art form in itself. This gave me more freedom with my work. I want to tell stories with my work.

HS Yeah, of course. In my own work, I make garments for myself—for me to wear. I know that's not how everyone works, but I think it's very important to think about.

CB Yeah, I completely agree. That is

a big part of it. For a long time, I wasn't seeing myself in any of the clothes I was creating, but then my mindset changed.

HS For sure. I didn't go to school for fashion, but even studying painting at art school, I found it challenging to pursue things I was interested in while simultaneously following the assignment and trying to get a good grade.

CB Yeah, it sometimes feels like a waste because constructing garments can be very expensive and time consuming.

HS Right. Are you thinking about future collections? Do you want to continue developing your senior thesis work?

CB I would love to. I had so many ideas that I couldn't work into this collection. One idea is the tennis thing. I would love to create a collection of all tennis whites. Although, right now, I feel a bit burnt out from sewing and making clothes.

HS Right! When did you finish your thesis?

CB Officially, in May!

HS Take a break! I bet school was really difficult and the world is a really difficult place right now. You can definitely take a break.

CB For sure! But yes I definitely do

have a lot of ideas to branch off of from this collection.

HS Fun! Are you in New York right now?

CB Yes, I'm in Brooklyn.

HS Are you going to stay there?

CB I would love to stay here. I don't know if my brother would like it too much if I came home. He might miss his peace and quiet, ha-ha. Also, I just run into so many people I knew from childhood, when I am home in Philly.

HS Ha-ha, totally. It's been nice to wear a mask because, sometimes, people don't really recognize you. Anyways, where do you derive inspiration from? You mentioned your brother?

CB My brother for sure and my mom, as well. My mom is where many of my ideas and references for the Ivy League schools came from. My grandma taught at an Ivy League school, and my aunts and Mom attended Ivy League schools, so they have been immersed in that culture for a while. They taught me things like which fork to use when you are sitting down for a particular meal—all of this very outdated etiquette that rings in my head as very upper-class, white behavior. So, outside of music and pop culture, in general, my mom and my brother really inspire me. In addition, I am also really drawn to sports. I don't really like watching

sports, but I like the aesthetics of sports fandom. I like translating the fanatic nature of sports fandom into clothing. I think people in Philly, too, are known for being crazy sports fans so maybe that's where that came from.

HS What are you planning to do now? And what is your dream for the future beyond COVID?

CB I would love to open a space with my friends where people could show their work, very similar to Café Forgot, actually. I don't think I want to go down the line of the typical fashion calendar with collections and seasons, but I like the idea of having a showroom. I want to work on pieces for a longer period of time and then show them. I want people to come see my work because of the personal relationship they have with me or just a general interest in my work. I value that relationship much more than creating saleable wearable garments. But, right now, I'm writing and silk-screening t-shirts from home.

HS Are you trying to find a studio space?

CB I think eventually I would like to share one with friends to do this showroom idea! Although my best friend who I would like to work on this with is moving to San Francisco.



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**VICTORIA RODRIGUEZ and MARLAND BACKUS**

VICTORIA RODRIGUEZ'S (PRATT) THESIS COLLECTION LED HER THROUGH AN EXPLORATION OF GENETIC CODING AND DNA SEQUENCING. IN THE PROCESS, SHE DEVELOPED A SILICONE AND MESH TEXTILE THAT IS USED THROUGHOUT HER COLLECTION. MARLAND BACKUS (CAFÉ FORGOT), WHO INTERVIEWED VICTORIA, GRADUATED FROM PRATT IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN AND CREATES JEWELRY THAT REFERENCES BIOLOGY AND ANATOMY.

#### MARLAND BACKUS

To start off, I want to know about what first sparked your interest in DNA, Gattaca and CRISPR?

#### VICTORIA RODRIGUEZ

Initially, I had this concept in my freshman year for one of my final projects. It wasn't necessarily focused on CRISPR yet, but I had this idea of wanting to explore DNA and the genome. There's so much there that I decided to hold off and wait for my senior thesis. Coming into senior year, I started exploring the idea of DNA deeper, and at that time had developed an interest in the concept of designer babies, so that's where I started focusing on CRISPR gene editing. From there I also started focusing on ideas of nature vs. nurture, destiny vs. free will, and ideas of human personality in terms of archetypes built into DNA.

MB So how did you connect that to fashion, or was it just like you have a fashion brain and are always creating those connections?

VR I have always been very interested in science. It was a field I really wanted to go into, but, to me, it lacked a creative aspect. I liked to

work with my hands and not just be in a lab studying. I got into fashion when I went to a design high school, and since then, every time we had a project, I connected it to some aspect of science that I wanted to explore and comprehend. Breaking it down into things like silhouettes and prints and textiles made it so I had more of an understanding, and I hoped that other people could also comprehend aspects of certain scientific constructs through my garments.

MB I also want to ask about nature vs. nurture; does that specifically play into your designs?

VR Through my development of textiles and research, I initially started focusing on creating designs that had a duality to them. It would start with a similar kind of silhouette or breakdown of garments, but over time working on the collection, the textiles, prints and silhouettes evolved into their own unique pieces. So I kind of developed the concept in an abstract way.

MB You talked about how you used sequencing of your own genome. How did you do that? How did you get your genome tested? Did you get it for this

project or did you have it already?

VR I had it already! For my birthday a couple years ago, my parents got me a 23 and Me DNA kit. When you get it, you can download your raw data, and it's solely letters from your genome. It's an extremely long list, so when I did this print design, I initially went from the beginning, and I based the layout from real sequencing. I altered the colors in terms of what my color palette was for the collection and designed a color for a given letter.

MB Okay, that's the other thing I wanted to ask about: how did you come upon the color scheme, and was it inspired by something in science, or was it just your take on it? I ask because I noticed it was reminiscent of molecular diagrams and textbook drawings with primary colors, so I was wondering where the colors came from?

VR I had initial reference photos of the CRISPR process in genes, they were colorized and some had very bright colors. I was drawn to them and to a still from Gattaca that had a very specific green color, so those were the basis for it. I went to my professor and told him that I didn't want to follow the traditional yellow, red, blue, color palette. In talking with him, we thought about looking back to 80s and 90s sci-fi movies—so not just Gattaca—but Blade Runner too, and we pulled more colors from that to create a sci-fi feel that was from the past while also being futuristic.

MB I actually love that movie Gattaca. Still so relevant even though it's old now. You could say that about Blade Runner, too.

You used the invisible textile, but what is the invisible textile? What is it made out of because it really does look invisible?

VR It went through a crazy process. The initial prototype I remember showing to my professor, and he was like, "There's an idea there, but the execution needs a lot of work." So I kept working at it throughout the year, and towards the end I got something that looked clean and modern. It was made of laser cut pieces of mirrored acrylic.

MB I also want to ask about the silicone, the other textile you use, that is poured onto mesh? I worked with silicone a lot, especially when I was at Pratt. It was one of my favorite mediums, so I spent a lot of time experimenting with it and working with dyes.

VR I started off using silicone because I wanted textiles that felt reminiscent of skin. So I started using it to create a garment, but the issue was that it ripped really easily. Once you put it on the model, the slightest movement would tear it to pieces. So we started thinking of something that it could be poured over, and I thought of using a mesh that blends in and fully absorbs it. You can't even see it, but when you cut into pieces of silicone, it prevents it from ripping. So that's how it's used.

Also, it creates a structural property as well, so it stands up.

MB So the colors, what did you use as dye?

VR I used acrylic. I don't know if that's right or not but that's what I did.

MB No, I did that too.

VR I would just get tubes of acrylic paint and mix whatever color I wanted. It was interesting because there would always be specks that didn't fully integrate, I felt that they added a dimension to it.

MB Yeah, I really like the silicone pieces. The top that's beige at top; The draping at the back. Also, I love the silicone pants. I don't know if you even call them pants?

VR Thank you! It's a half skirt and half pants.

MB You did your final semester at home, correct?

VR Half of it, yeah.

MB Where did you live? You couldn't stay in the dorms, right?

VR I had an apartment in New York, and I wanted to stay as long as possible after the closing of our studios and school. Everyone I knew was leaving, and it was unnerving to be there all by myself, so I packed up everything I could and brought it

all—including my sewing machine—to Miami, where I was born and raised. It's been pretty difficult because we have a lot of specialized tools and technologies as resources at school, but I've been taking it as a challenge to adapt to the situation, and I've been trying to convert my entire thesis digitally by exploring augmented reality and virtual reality.

MB Yeah, I saw that in your portfolio! I didn't know that was possible. It sort of happened by accident; I was like, "Wait! Omg! I can click on all these things!" .

VR Yeah so I've been working on that! I started teaching myself this new 3D rendering program called CLO, so I can recreate all my looks in 3D through the program. I've been learning this throughout the time I've been here, but have now just started realizing it.

MB So, a lot of the collection is rendered digitally because you weren't able to physically make it. Cool! Crazy! Revolutionising fashion design so you don't even need the fabric. So, speaking of digital, is the 3D printed belt flexible because of the way it's printed, or is it printed onto a flexible rubber fabric?

VR It's printed onto a flexible plastic. When I started to explore that textile, the concepts of 3D printed fabric were all solid plastic that you would engineer loops to allow it to move around a form, but that was going

to be too difficult. I initially did a prototype in the flexible material, even though people in the 3D printing centers at Pratt tried to discourage me. But I tried it, and it came out really cool. The issue is that at Pratt, 3D printer use is very expensive, and also limited in terms of colors and experimenting with density of material. Even though it was flexible, it was still pretty hard. Because of that I explored getting my own 3D printer because now they are cheap.

MB Really?

VR They are the cheapest they have ever been! They are now \$200, where a few years ago, 3D printers cost over \$1000.

MB I remember we had the cheaper ones at Pratt like the Makerbot, and they were awful. You could barely get through the print without it breaking, so I thought, I could buy this at home, but why would I want this? I'm sure you guys have come a long way. Were you working in the industrial design studio then?

VR I actually ended up getting my own printer. I had it in my apartment, and I taught myself all the programs you would need to properly render it, so I could print out. Then, throughout the year, I explored different densities and colors and ways to print it out until it came to the final one that I essentially printed out as pieces of a pattern. Then I just glued them together, and I think it worked out pretty well.

MB We were so well matched! Science and design combined. I almost went to university for science instead of art, so we have had a similar path.

**BIOETHICS**

## THE ETHICS OF GENE EDITING: LULU, NANA, AND 'GATTACA'

In Intersections course, students debate the ethical issues surrounding the recent birth of genetically altered twins who were designed to be HIV-resistant.

### Gene Editing Is Creating a New World of Designer Babies. Are We Ready for It?

**What makes us? Nature or nurture? The DNA debate comes back to life**

An international newscummary about the latest genetic engineering breakthroughs has triggered a debate over the dominance of nature over nurture. But the answer and the future are clear.

**20 Years Later, How Close are We to GATTACA's Future?**

**Crispr Babies, IVF, and the Ethics of Genetic Class Warfare**

The Jankus was broadly condemned for killing the DNA of twins. But more widely used tools of gene editing, like CRISPR, perpetuate inequality by design.

**TEXILE NIDS**

- SPLICING
- FIBRING INGE
- SCREENING ON RECLINE?
- 3D PRINTING
- DNA HIDES

**FAMILY PHOTO HALFTONE ENCODED**

- BORN TO NANO
- PIA SILICONEY / PRINT RECLINE

**SECOND SKIN TEXTILE???**

- LOOK TO SILICONES, PLASTICS

**MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SPIRAL?**

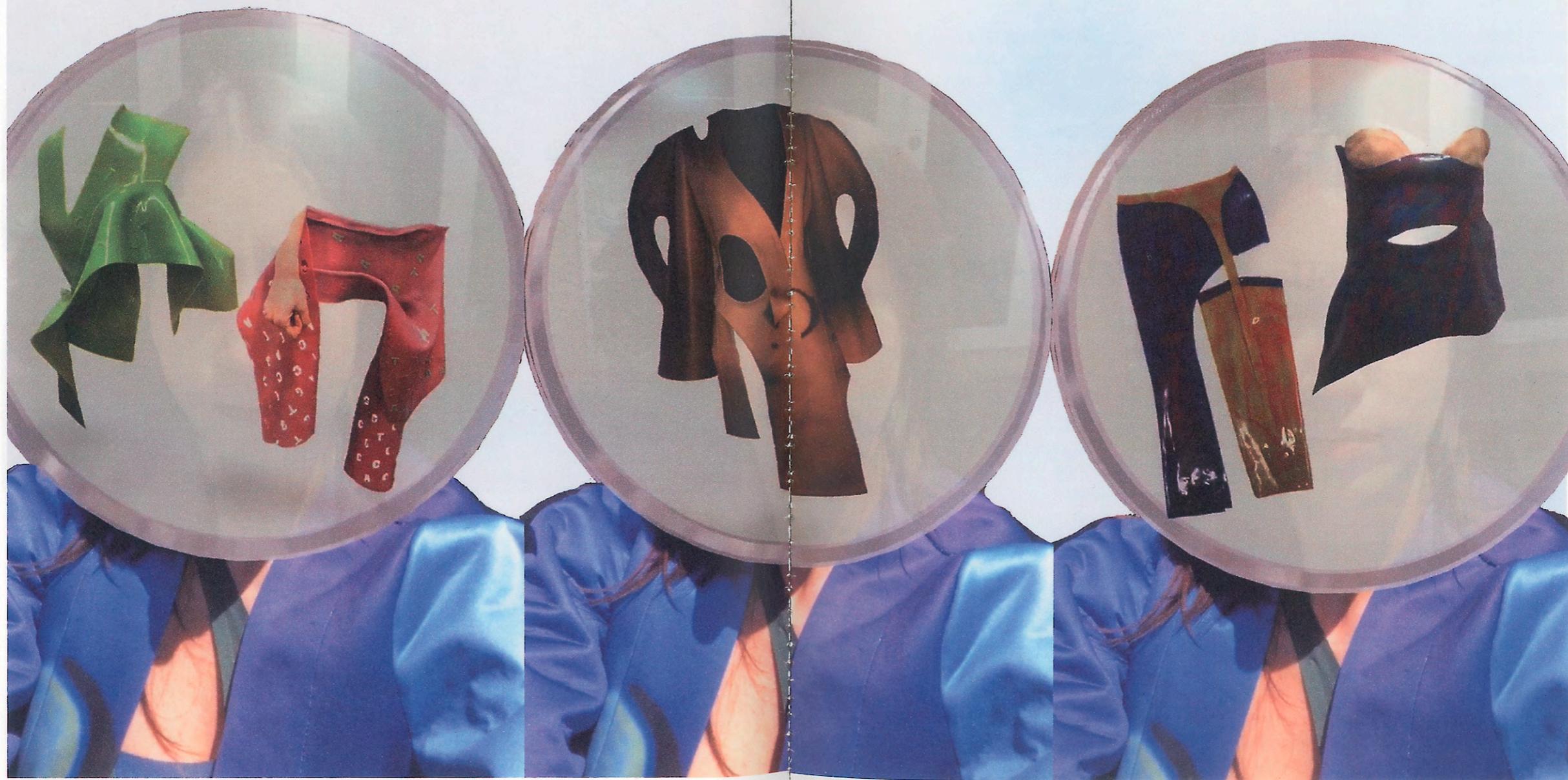
- 3D DEVELOPMENT THIS ONTO DOUBLE HELIX

**UNZIPPING "CUTTING"**

**TEXILE TIES**  
NO MARRYING OF INVADING PANELS?

The image is a collage of photographs and diagrams illustrating the development and final products of a 3D DNA helix model. At the top left, a diagram titled "DEVELOPMENT OF 3D DNA HELIX MODEL" shows a vertical sequence of four stages: a traditional DNA double helix, a 3D helix composed of vertical rods, a 3D helix composed of horizontal rods, and a final 3D helix composed of both vertical and horizontal rods. An arrow points from the final rendering to a photograph of a "TEST PRINT" of the DNA fabric. Another arrow points from the test print to a hand holding a physical model of the "DNA 'HEELIX' DESIGN". To the right of the test print, there are three photographs of a "3D PRINT MAGNETIC CLOSURE": two red plastic components being held by hands, and a close-up of a stack of similar components. Below these, a photograph shows a large quantity of the white plastic components. At the bottom, there are four photographs of different colored 3D-printed DNA helix models: blue, green, red, and another blue one.





**GEORGIA BALTAY and HENRIETTA O'CONNOR**

**GEORGIA BALTAY'S (PRATT) THESIS COLLECTION EXPLORES INTERIORS, ARCHITECTURE AND THE INTERACTION BETWEEN NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY, WHILE THE DESIGNER, HENRIETTA O'CONNOR, OF NO WALLFLOWER PROJECT (CAFÉ FORGOT) CREATES GARMENTS THAT REFERENCE RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE AND HISTORIC INTERIORS.**

**HENRIETTA O'CONNOR**  
Have you graduated now?

**GEORGIA BALTAY**  
Yes we had a virtual graduation.  
No cap and gown but there was an  
instagram filter.

**HO** That's funny! You should have just made your own since you're in fashion. Firstly, I was wondering, under these unusual circumstances, it seems to me that what you've been creating lends itself well to the digital world. Do you think these circumstances have influenced your graduate collection?

**GB** Definitely. I had made a whole collection that was intended to be shown in 3D, and, then, it was like, "how do I show this?" But, also, it is important to embrace digital aspects of how we are living now, and it was actually really fun—how to use both the handmade elements and digital elements. I made a lot of collages; scanning things in; hand drawing on top of that. I ended up actually making a game: I used screenshots from Google Earth that were from my hometown. I thought it was fitting given how we are experiencing everything, so I wanted to combine handmade with digital, but I totally came up with something different than

what I originally had planned.

**HO** Is the game you're referring to, the Googe Art website?

**GB** Yes. So, Googe is actually my nickname, but it's also short Google.

**HO** Had you done anything like that before?

**GB** Not really. It came about when I was making collages and Googe seemed like a natural way to incorporate them. I was making hand-drawings on the side all year. And then, at the end, when I had more time to sit with everything—Googe was a cool way to bring it all together. Just sitting with the clothes off the body; it felt important to let people make a collage or try on if they wanted to upload a photo. The clothes became objects, and I didn't really feel like they needed to be on the form anymore.

**HO** So, in a way you moved away from fashion and more towards art?

**GB** Yeah. I think so. I was trying to.

**HO** I was wondering what the inspiration behind your prints on fabric and drawings was?

**GB** A lot of my early research was looking at spatial theory and how we divide and inhabit spaces—looking at interior design and architecture 101 books. I liked the symbols and graphics. I was looking at them from a pretty elementary viewpoint. I'm not an architect. For me, it was interesting to look at a floor plan and use it as a reference. In terms of prints, I'm interested in a homey feel. I did a lot of knitting and that came about from playing with the knitting machine.

**HO** I see a lot of nature visuals in your final collection. Is sustainability a part of your collection and what do you see as your role as a designer in terms of sustainability?

**GB** I minored in sustainability, so it's definitely something I'm thinking about. It mostly came through in the knitwear, and that is why I loved it. Because knitwear can be knit to shape you can avoid making waste from it. It also fits a lot of different bodies. But with this collection, I would be hesitant to say that I was making it super sustainably. I think it's something I'd think about in the future. Making it myself, it naturally came about. Nature is always an influence because of the way I grew up. At the end, I just loved the contrast between nature and technology.

**HO** It seems to work well with people who are in lockdown. Now that you graduated, what is your hope for the future is in these uncertain times?

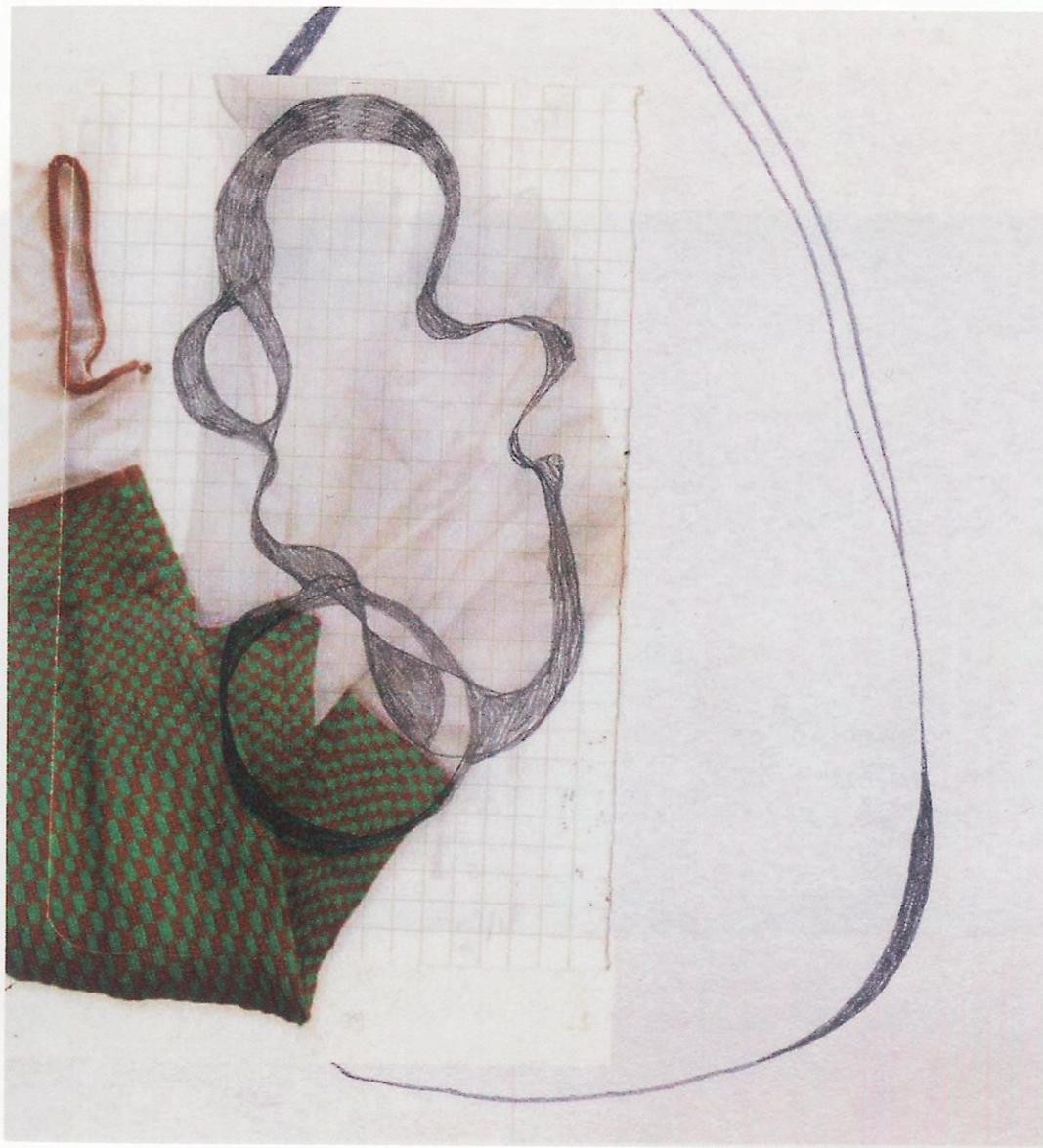
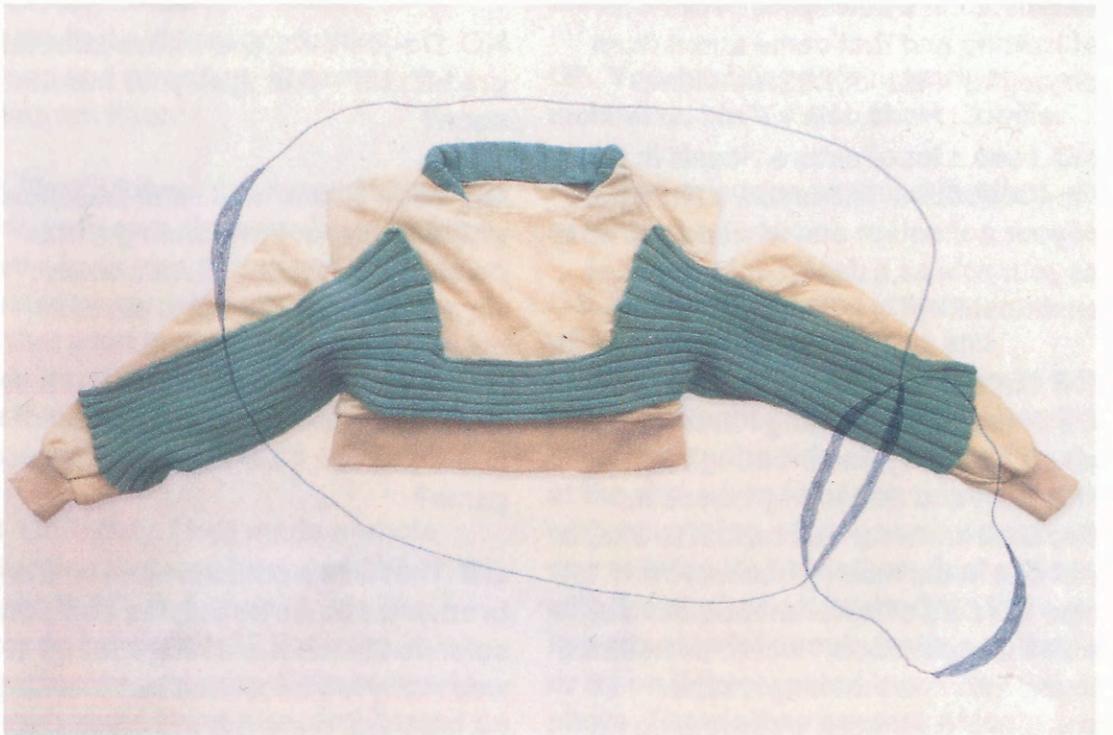
**GB** It's hard—I'm trying to get a job. For the immediate future, I just want to keep making things. Right now, I have a little time, so that's nice. I want to keep being free with it. Keep track of everything I'm looking at: cartoons, food, pictures from a walk, podcasts—not just fashion. Really trying to combine it all and connect it with a thread.

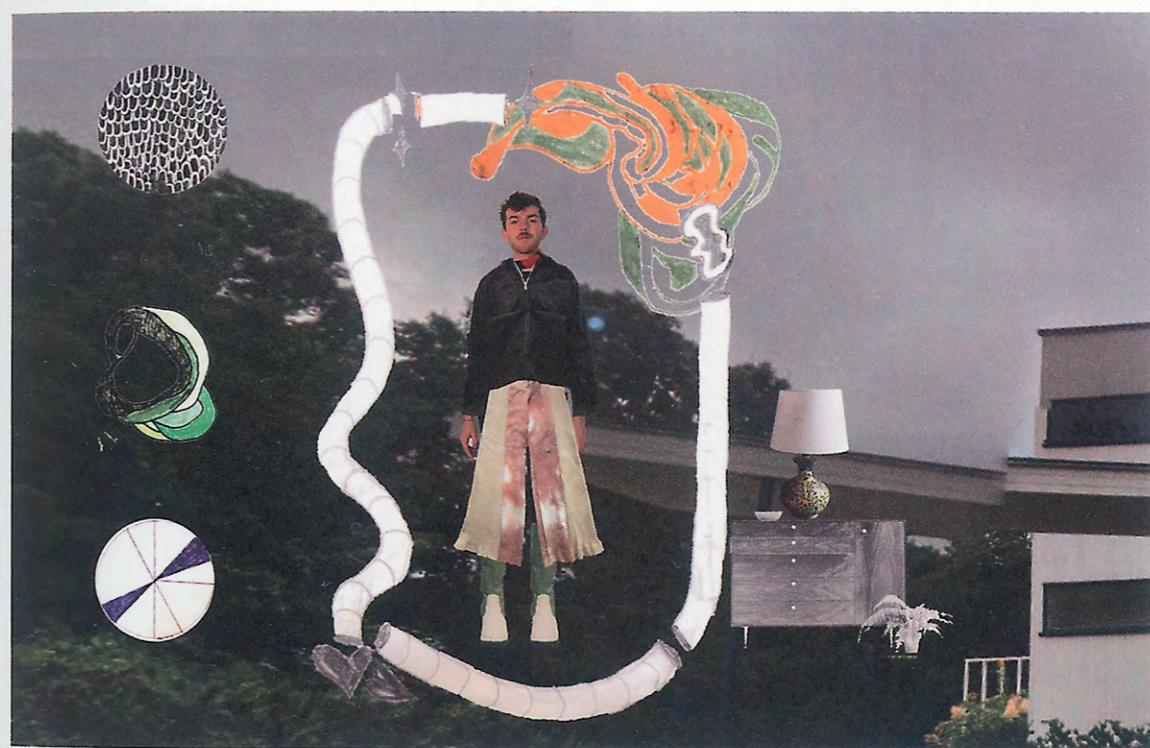
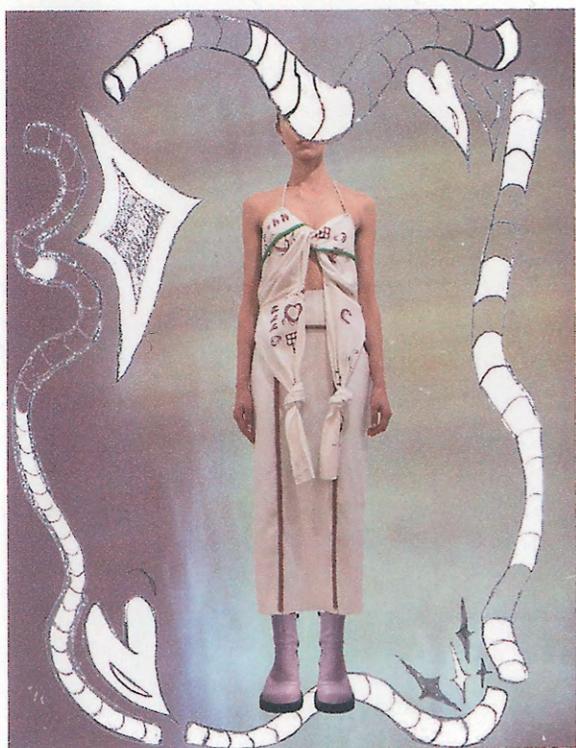
**HO** Do you think you'll have another graduation—seeing all your friends soon?

**GB** I don't think we'll have an official graduation, but I'm planning a little celebration with my friends when we are back in New York. We will celebrate in our own way.

**HO** The best way! Before we go, could you talk a bit more about the game?

**GB** That was a collaboration with my brother because he studies computer science and knows about coding. It was really fun because I was learning a bit here and there but mostly focusing on the design. I wanted it to be a quarantine-themed video game, but with time and skill constraints, it ended up being more of a "drag and drop." I've been super interested to see what people make of it when interacting with the clothes. They immediately think it needs to go on a body, but I'm way more interested when people play with the scale, make collages, add stickers, and see what happens.







**FIONA JUNGMAN and CLAIRE MCKINNEY**

FIONA JUNGMAN (PRATT) IS INTERVIEWED BY CLAIRE MCKINNEY (CAFÉ FORGOT). BOTH DESIGNERS WORK WITH INDUSTRIAL FABRICS AND EVERYDAY GARMENTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PRACTICES.

CLAIRE MCKINNEY

Thanks, Fiona, for sharing your work with me. It was really cool to see the way it all came to be at the end, especially after being able to see you working on the collection earlier in the year when I sat as a guest on your midterm review. My first question is a big one. What is a discovery you've made about yourself as a designer over the course of the year as you have worked for yourself and on one collection?

FIONA JUNGMAN

I learned that there were certain things I like to do more than others. Since it was my thesis, I was trying to do everything, and I learned that I could have focused more on knitwear or vintage fabrics instead of trying to do everything, all at once. I think moving forward I'll try to find my niche. It's not as if I have to make every type of garment.

CM I kind of remember that: coming into the final year with so many ideas and then really having to draw the focus on the ideas I could develop further. It's always good to come into a project with a huge scope and then narrow it down. You also never know; sometimes things take you in directions you were never expecting.

FJ That's absolutely true. In fact, I thought I hated knitting so much

when I first started doing knitwear sophomore year. I didn't want to do it by hand, and I didn't want to do it by machine. And now I have my own knitting machine! So you just have to try!

CM Totally. What kind of fabrics are you drawn to and why?

FJ One thing I've been working a lot with is—for the one-off pieces, such as for my thesis collection—vintage fabrics. For example, I have this jacket made out of duffel bags, and it's been really fun for me to fit patterns and designs around something that's already been constructed and deconstructed.

CM Yeah, because you also get to work with details that already exist. Did you make those details, replicate them or just use them right off the duffel bags?

FJ In this case, they are just right off the bags. I replicate them in different places in my collection. Different types of hooks and things that came from the original bags.

CM I've always been drawn to that, too—even the industrial stitching and thread used on utility bags and garments. It's hard to replicate, but it's nice when you find a material that already has that story interwoven into

it. What was a textile technique that you developed in the collection? It seems that most of the fabrics you used were hand-painted.

FJ Oh, yeah, you were there for that one. I ditched a lot of that, but I started silk-screening with a bleach combination, so I had all these letters and things that were more like part of the fabric threaded in. I did that and a couple of different motifs, but they are in New York right now. I haven't seen them in months. I also experimented with quilting.

CM Talk to me more about quilting. I'm interested in hearing about the process behind that.

FJ I've always really liked quilting because I'm interested in how stiff things can get, while also being soft. I used a feed-sack bag for my junior thesis, and I really liked that: working with pre-quilted pieces, so I used that in this collection. I had some different pattern pieces that I draped on the form and used in the process.

CM Do you think any aspects of your personal style are incorporated into the collection?

FJ Yes I do. It is kind of funny, cause I don't go around wearing my thesis. It is also a winter collection. There are definitely aspects of how I dress that are very feminine and then aspects that are utilitarian and masculine, and I think that comes across in my thesis, in particular.

CM Yes, some of the silhouettes read as feminine, or, maybe, even naive, in a way, and pieces that have slightly babydoll-like silhouettes. But, then, the materials have a heavy, rich, resilient weight which is unusual. On another note, I am curious about the process behind your lookbook imagery at the end of your portfolio; photos in the dark?

FJ I was really inspired by the artist Sally Mann. I saw her work at the Peabody Essex Museum a few years ago. She takes silver plate photos of her children. It was an ethereal, moody show of photographs. In my case, I was limited because I didn't have a camera, so I just shot on my phone; I thought that a high-contrast, moody shoot would go with my concept.

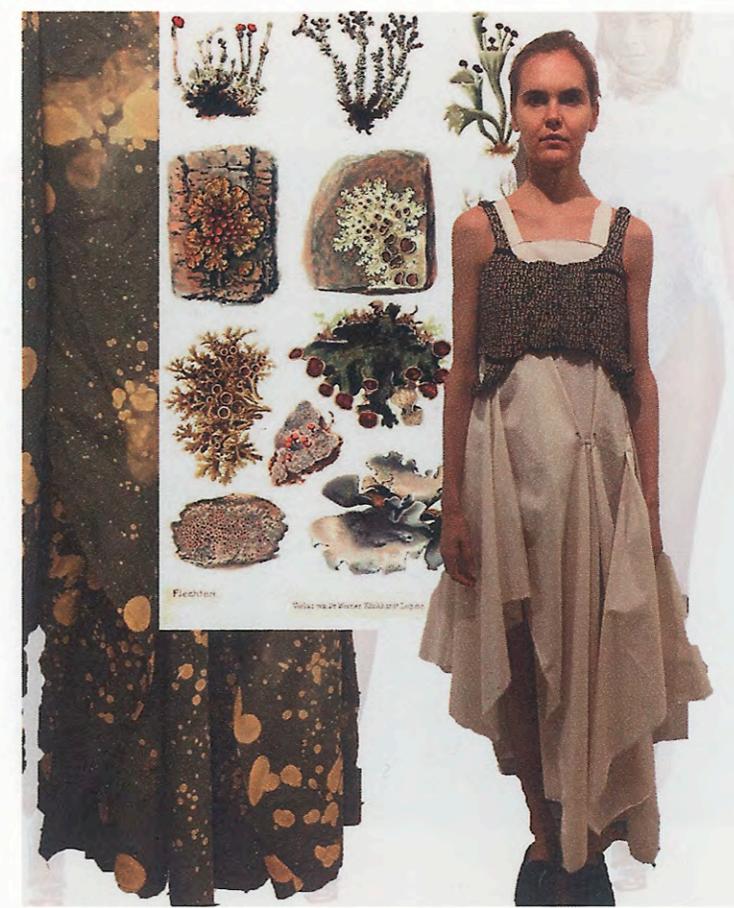
CM I really like the high flash on the trees and taking something so delicate and making it really graphic. I think that really aligns with the techniques and silhouettes you're exploring in your collection. What are your next steps in the next six months?

FJ I'm moving back to New York, and I have a job, which is really lucky. I'm moving in with friends from Pratt, and we want to try to keep producing clothing and setting up pop-up shops. We never got to have our senior trunk show, so we want to keep the ball rolling.

CM If you find some time, try making some things with your friends because I found that to be a really fun; an

exciting exploration, passing things to your friends and chipping away at different projects in a communal way can be... I think this is the next direction for a lot of fashion, just to keep designers sustainable. This industry is so insanely competitive, and if we can start to form groups of designers... it's hard because you have your own individual voice, but it's important to work together.

FJ Something we talk about in my Pratt fashion friend group is that a lot of our aesthetics align really well. We also have different strengths: whereas I like doing silhouettes, I have a friend I'm moving in with who likes doing textiles. I struggled with textiles this year, so we are trying to help each other.







**JASMINE THOMAS and LIAM LEE**

JASMINE THOMAS'S (PRATT) THESIS COLLECTION EXAMINES CLOTHING AS A FORM OF SCAFFOLDING AND A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR THE BODY. LIAM LEE (CAFÉ FORGOT) CREATES HAND-FELTED MOHAIR BLANKETS, WOOD FURNITURE, AND OTHER DESIGN OBJECTS FOR INTERIOR SPACES.

LIAM LEE

I have your thesis open, and it's really great. I wonder if you could tell me a bit of background?

JASMINE THOMAS

My thesis is based on my own experience of insecurity and my dad's profession in construction. It's about being a work in progress—something I've struggled with for years because I worry I'm not perfect enough for anything. It's a thesis for me in this college: I'm not perfect, and I'm not the best I can be at this moment, but I'm better than I was before, and I should be okay with being a work in progress. It's okay to be incomplete, exposed, transparent, and unfinished as long there's an end goal in mind. I wanted to channel that idea into clothing.

LL I love your idea of clothing as scaffolding—as something that's a hard, external, temporary structure that simultaneously conceals and reveals parts of the body. The cutouts in your pieces illustrate this well, as does your choice to show off the construction of each garment. Even from looking at your collection on my computer, I like how each look pieces together, which is echoed in your use of collage in your presentation. I was wondering if you could talk more about

the construction of each garment and your choice of materials. It's difficult to do this virtually, and I think more detail shots would provide a better sense of your work.

JT I've decided to work with traditional fabrics worn on the job, which I've found in my dad's damaged clothes, thrift stores, and Fab scrap. I wanted to reimagine the denim, cotton and canvas fabrics in my aesthetic of cutouts and structural silhouettes while incorporating elements from utilitarian clothing that I liked, without it being so much about functional workwear and more on the emotional aspect of my concept. With the orange mesh netting, I wanted to make it into basic garments like a shirt and pants since it's a non-traditional fabric already. Other than that, I've used exclusively white thread for topstitching and regular stitching because it reminded me of the "planning" process in blueprints and such.

LL The inspiration from construction workers' clothing and reference to materials from construction sites is really cool—for example, how the jeans in the first look have this utility belt/harness. Also, your use of orange safety netting speaks to this. I really love the sweater-vest in the last look.

Is the orange material actual safety netting or does it just look like that?

JT For the knitted sweater, it just looks like that. I used a knitting machine to mimic the orange netting, and I feel successful in that. It was made out of silk yarn.

LL Are all the pieces with orange netting made of yarn?

JT The sweater vest is the only garment not made out of the netting. The other orange garments are made out of the safety netting I scavenged all semester from Dad's yard.

LL Is the material comfortable to wear?

JT I think it's comfortable. Sadly, I didn't have detail shots at the time because the items were at school for the majority of quarantine. But if I had taken detailed shots, you would see I machine-knitted I-cord with orange yarn and hand-sewn it around edges of seams to make it comfortable and soft. I wanted to make sure it would be comfortable to wear.

LL Amazing! Can you talk about how you chose to layer and pair certain pieces? In your notes, I noticed that you were thinking of each garment as a building block to be stacked and rearranged, so do you see each look as separate in itself, or are the garments interchangeable?

JT I like making separates as opposed

to making looks, so a lot of the pieces I made separately, and I'm like, "cool idea; let's make it," and I'm mixing and matching as I go. I think people should have freedom in mixing the pieces how they want. Once they buy the piece it's theirs anyway. I paired them for the final lineup, But that can be rearranged, and I prefer people doing that themselves with their own unique style. I even had, in my process book, a little doll, and I had cutouts of each garment and had people play with them.

LL I imagine you finished these in quarantine during the past three months. What was that like?

JT I couldn't finish in the past three months. All my work was in the studio, and we were under the impression that maybe studios would reopen and class would resume. Then, everything shut down and I couldn't get all of my pieces. I had some, but not all. It was a challenge to work with what I did have. It was a matter of brainstorming and thinking about what I will do when I have access again. It gave me a lot of freedom to figure out what works best together; how can I translate this design online virtually with what I have on hand? I couldn't do it during quarantine, especially with my old home sewing machine in a cramped space.

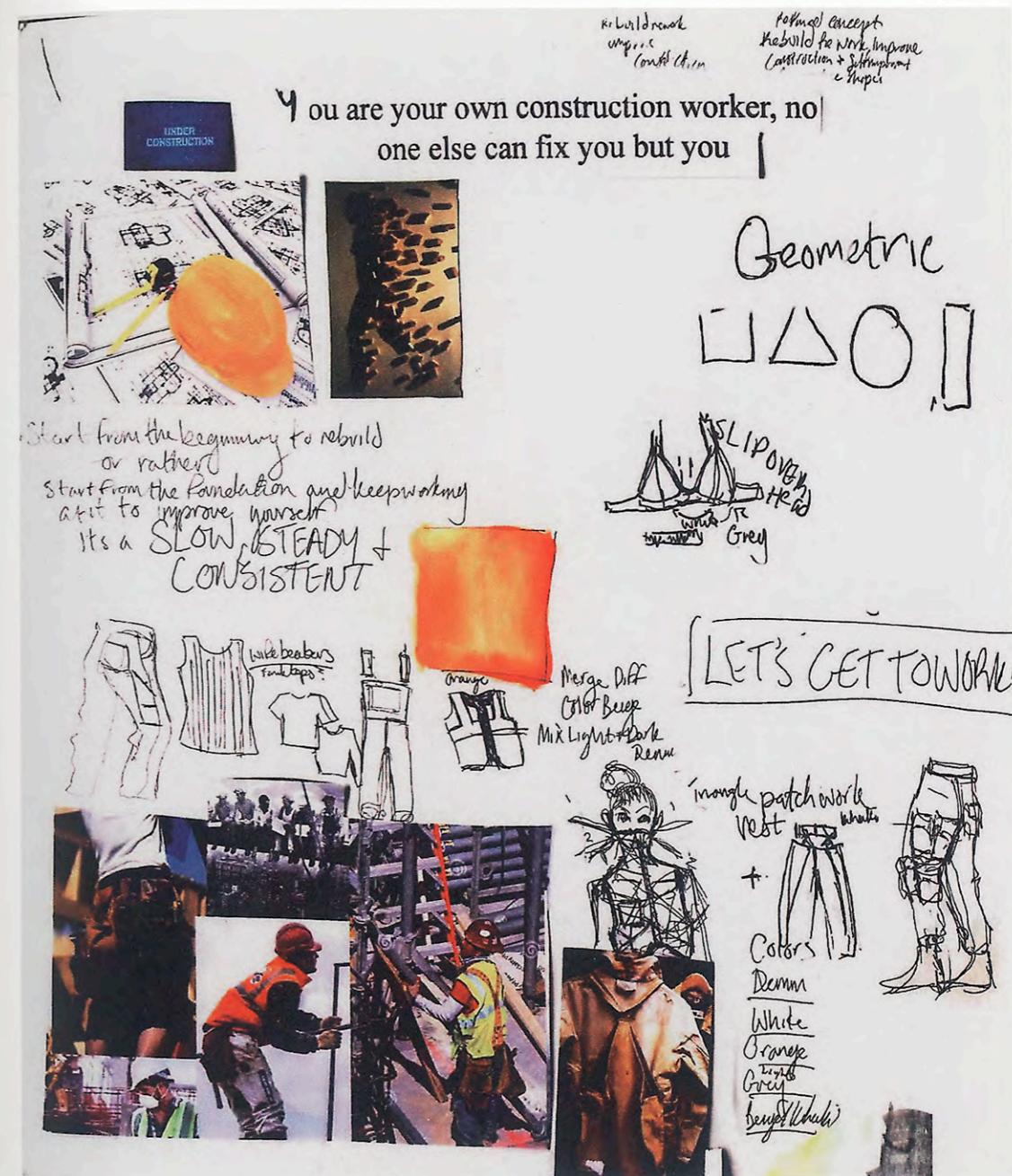
LL Well, it's really impressive that you made a beautiful thesis project with such limitations. You couldn't even go to your studio to grab something?

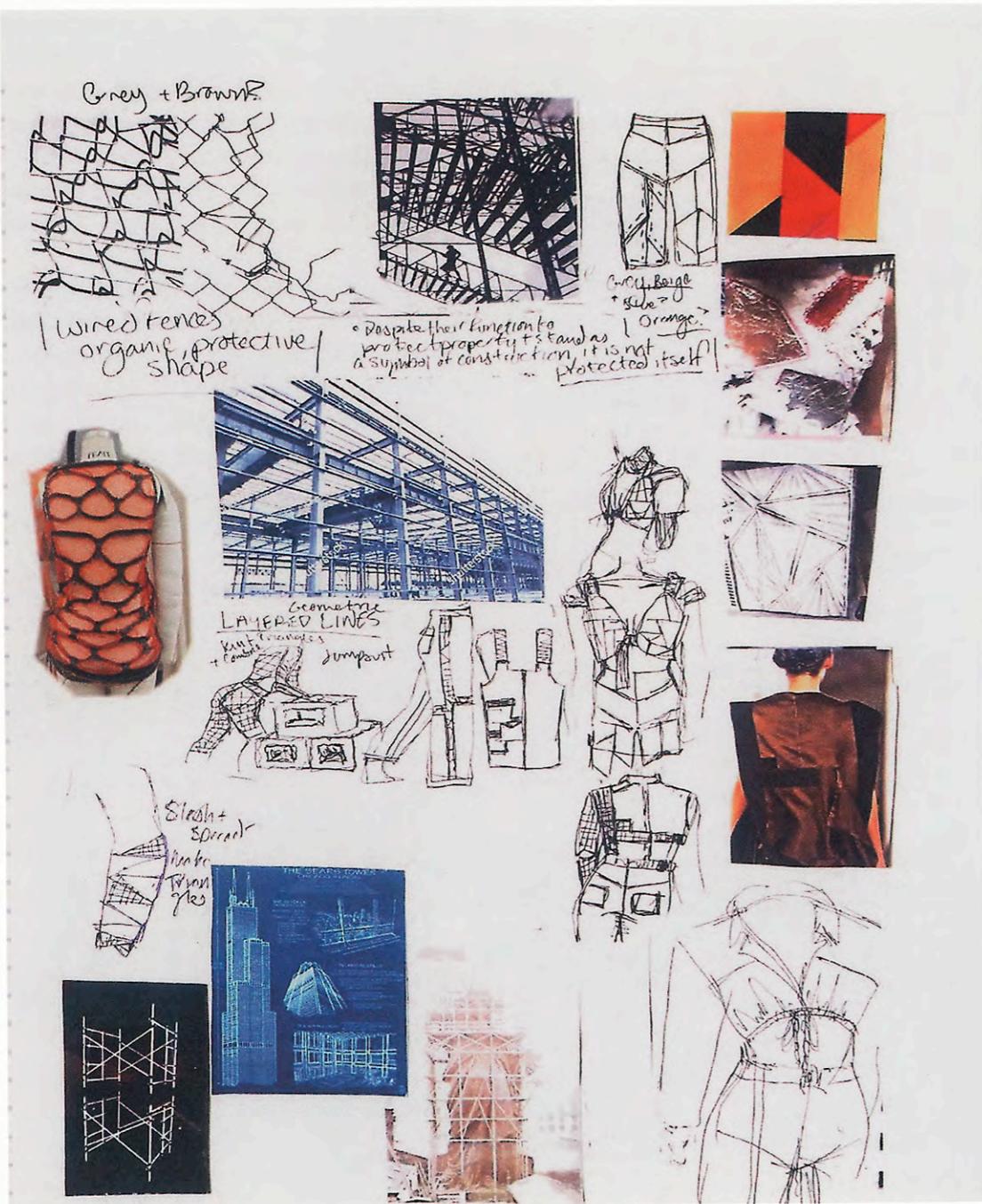
JT Not until recently.

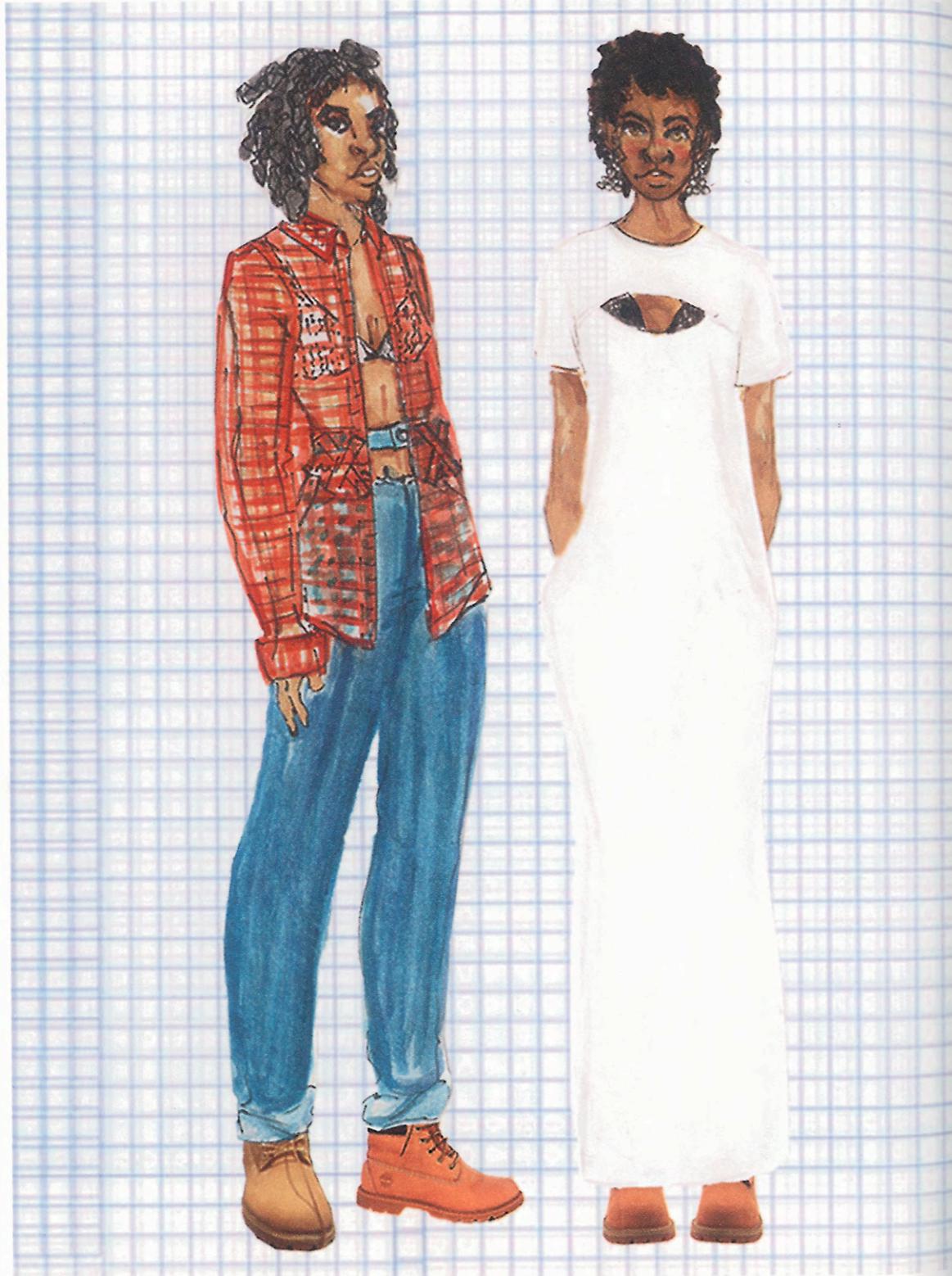
LL But in a funny way, it works with your theme of scaffolding and clothing as a work in progress. Or maybe because of these limitations, you had to build something completely different from what you would have landed on otherwise. I really love your work!

JT I'm so appreciative that my theme translates well. I tried a new approach of just doing what feels right as opposed to over-planning, which I tend to do. This time, I really tried to go with the flow and just do what works. The fact that it was understood by you makes me feel accomplished.

LL It's so well done and it's clear what you're trying to do. I think you should be very happy with it, and I'm excited to see what you do next.







**HANNAH THOMAS and LIV RYAN**

HANNAH THOMAS (PRATT) EXPERIMENTS WITH TAILORING AND CRAFT ORIENTED PRACTICES SUCH AS KNITTING AND EMBROIDERY. LIV RYAN (CAFÉ FORGOT), WHO INTERVIEWS THOMAS, CREATES GARMENTS WITH UTILITARIAN SILHOUETTES OFTEN WITH HAND-SEWN DETAILS. BOTH RYAN AND THOMAS APPROACH FASHION FROM COSTUME DESIGN BACKGROUNDS.

LIV RYAN

Before talking about your collection and everything, I want to talk to you about yourself as a young designer: Who you are and your influences. So, tell me where you are from, how old you are and what year at Pratt?

HANNAH THOMAS

I'm Hannah Thomas. I'm originally from the northern Virginia area; most of my family is from rural Pennsylvania. I just graduated from Pratt in May, and I think my overall essence as a designer is that I love making clothes that can be worn and moved in. I'm a unisex designer; I don't consider gender when I design. Another aspect of my work is that I love wardrobe and love working for theatrical design. Before the pandemic hit, I was working with the wardrobe team at "Sleep No More" an immersive theater, so working with clothing that gets used a lot, and seeing how the repair can work into the design, is fascinating to me.

LR I had an opposite approach. In high school, my major at LaGuardia was costuming, and I couldn't do it. You had to run the show and do all the things, so that led me to fashion. So that's awesome that it worked the other way for you! I know it's weird at

Pratt. They did not like the costume approach, at least when I was there, but I don't know what your experience was.

HT It was hit or miss. Some professors loved that I worked costumes into my collection; I didn't bring it up a lot because it can be frowned upon. It's not that commercial, and it thinks about the body in a different way than we are taught to think at Pratt, but I got a lot of great crossover from doing that work while doing my collection.

LR Has your upbringing had a role in how you design and what you make? I know being from New York had a huge effect on me.

HT I wouldn't say I was surrounded by most fashionable people. Most people in my life had bought clothes at Walmart and Kohls, so it was fascinating being exposed to something so different—finding beauty as well as the utility of clothing. Fashion has a use, and everyone needs to have clothing. When it comes to knitwear, my neighbor got me into it, and no one else in my family knit or crocheted.

LR I was going to ask because I see

so much knitwear in your collection. Was that an important part of your time at Pratt? The BF+DA is no longer a thing?

HT They closed right before we were eligible to use them.

LR Such a shame, but, yeah, were you working with Olivia Eaton?

HT I was lucky enough to have Olivia for hand-knitting. At Pratt we are required to take hand knitting, and I know it's hit or miss for some students, but I loved it and dove into that class; she's the one who pushed me to explore more in the lens of fashion because I did it more as crafting rather than high fashion. With her guidance, we got to use the Shima SSR machines at Pratt and only a couple of us were able to work with them. I was able to learn a lot about programming, but the campus shut down before I could use the machine to knit a full garment. At the moment, all my garments are hand-knitted or crocheted, but I was working to develop my patterns into programs so they could be produced more quickly.

LR That's such an important skill. It's so rare to actually know people who know the programming. The programs feel so outdated.

Do you prefer hand-knitting over the flatbed hand-knitting machine?

HT Yeah, I don't like domestic machines. I know some people at Pratt are really talented at getting the

most interesting garments from those machines, but I found it was just not for me. I just couldn't get the depth of texture I aim for when I do knitwear, so I work with mohair and yarn looping, and I use this technique where I pull yarn through to get an interesting texture, and I can't get that on the machines.

LR Also, it's so annoying to use because you can just do the slightest thing, and everything falls off. I used to do only fine knits when I was there, and I drove myself crazy. But hand knitting is such an awesome skill, and you can do it anywhere, and it's becoming a much bigger thing in the fashion industry. What was your first introduction to the fashion industry, and what made you want to go to Pratt and study?

HT I was lucky enough that my public school system in Fairfax, Virginia, had this academy program where they did specific highlighted classes for different industries. So, they ended up adding a fashion design class. Junior and senior year, I worked with Jin-A Chang who was a grad from Parsons. She taught us a bunch of skills like flat-patterning, rough-draping and how to draw fashion croquis. She saw that I loved diving into that, so she pushed me to do fashion. Also, a lot of costuming moms who worked with me at my high-school, encouraged me to go into it. Between that and my parents being very supportive, I decided to go into it.

LR Let's talk about your collection a little bit. In terms of your design process, how do you go about designing?

HT My process is quite fluid. I like to start with research. I built a strong visual narrative over the summer before I started with the design process, and then, right after that, I first like to dive into my knits. So, I start with a bunch of swatches and get a handle on the type of textures I want to work into because texture and comfort are very important to me. And, then, after that, I start adding in the grounding pieces. With this collection, the entire first semester I worked on the fit. I worked with Jennifer Minniti and Floriana Betti on getting my ideal perfect suit which was chest-high tailored pants and a cropped jacket, and that was a driving influence for the collection.

LR Did you have a specific concept you were building your collection around? What were your influences for the collection?

HT It was loose when we started because, when working with those two professors in particular, they really want the clothes to speak for themselves. I worked with a rough idea of a fairy tale, an ivy-covered cottage, and then moved to looking at ivy and moss as nature's way of reclaiming the world, how the natural world is dying right now, and how that's the reclamation we need of nature coming back to life. This concept built on my

junior year collection, which looked at natural disaster and extreme weather as a response to the decay of the natural world.

LR You can totally see that in the work—so much texture—it makes so much sense that you say nature, because that's what I thought immediately.

HT That's great!

LR For my collection, I know it's kind of funny—I remember going into it with such a clear idea of what I wanted it to be, but I never made it in reality, so I was thinking: what was the first piece you designed that didn't make the cut or just wasn't what you thought it would be?

HT The first piece I ever designed was my very long tail-coat, which ended up making it to the final, but in a different way. Originally, that was going to be pieced ivy leaves made out of leather. I ended up making it, but it had completely the wrong feel. I'm not someone who enjoys working with leather. It just kind of weirds me out, but I love Adrienne Jones, and I was in her class and working on that with her. We decided to just drop it and I went with the mauve corduroy.

LR How did you go about choosing your fabric? Did you decide before you designed, or did you figure it out after you figured out silhouettes? You knew you wanted knitwear, but some people do full knitwear collections.

Why did you introduce the wovens into the collection?

HT I went back and forth about if I wanted to introduce knitwear to the collection, but I have a deep love of well-tailored clothing and find that tailored clothes elevate a collection to new levels. I fell in love with corduroy and ended up using it in three colors for the collection. I used the mauve, the apple-green that's almost cream, and then my dark brown. From that texture, I was like, I want another textured suiting material, but I couldn't put my finger on it until second semester when I ordered upholstery fabric and worked with that. So, that's the floral fabric I went with and beaded on top of.

LR The corset with the face on it, is that a print?

HT That's hand-embroidered. I started with a picture of a sculpture covered in moss. I took that and made a watercolor, and from the water color, I made a cross-stitch pattern, which is what ended up on top.

LR Is embroidery something you're familiar with, or was it just senior year when it developed?

HT I was working with embroidery prior to this, but free-form and never cross-stitching. These pieces, I started working on after quarantine with a lot of time on my hands.

LR You were still finishing the

collection, right?

HT Yeah, that piece wasn't even sketched when the quarantine started because I didn't think I had enough time for one piece, but it was great because my great aunt and my mom both do cross stitching, so it felt like I wasn't bringing that into it.

LR How was finishing the collection at home? Were classes online? Do you have a sewing machine at home?

HT It was strange. I was lucky enough to have my sewing machine here. I finished my collection in my New York apartment, so not a lot of space, not having fit models, and not having an actual shoot for my collection.

LR The panels were a huge part of the programs.

HT It was interesting coming to terms with the fact that we weren't going to have our industry panels and no fashion show, just because that's one of the main selling points of going to a huge institution in the middle of New York and paying a bunch of money—having this end of program exposure, but all professors have been doing their best to get our names out there. I feel very lucky that I have Floriana and Jennifer as my professors along with countless others. They really pushed us to put ourselves out there, even if it is just digitally at the moment.

LR How has it been after you finished your collection? I know some people

get really freaked out and fall into a hole. Have you been staying productive during quarantine or how has it been post-collection in quarantine?

HT It's been a bit of a rollercoaster. Luckily, I fell in love with the face concept and got great feedback from the panel that they put together digitally, so I have been doing other watercolors of other broken busts and sculptures that I've found on the internet. I have done three other faces now, and, so now, I'm doing a collaboration with one of my classmates, Sofia Penn, who does really amazing knitwear on the knitting machine. So, she's making me clothes and I'm making her a corset from one of the faces—been trying to keep busy.

LR That's the way to do it. It's best to just keep pushing through and keep being creative.

I was also going to ask if you ever felt you wanted to branch out to other mediums because design isn't exclusive to one medium, like it's not just fashion design, it's all carried over.

HT Yeah, I've pretty much tried my hand at every fiber art. Like, most recently, I've been making tapestries. So, just a little bit of everything at the moment.

LR That's the way to do it. I feel especially so, right now. This is a time to experiment.







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**NOELANI RAMOS and MERRITT MEACHAM**

NOELANI RAMOS'S (PRATT) THESIS EXPLORES HER CAPE VERDEAN HERITAGE AND IDENTITY. HER DRAPED FORMS ARE ARCHITECTURAL IN SHAPE AND CONSTRUCTION. MERRITT MEACHAM (CAFÉ FORGOT), WHO CAME TO FASHION DESIGN FROM A BACKGROUND IN ARCHITECTURE, INTERVIEWS RAMOS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOW ONE'S ENVIRONMENT CAN SHAPE ONE'S IDENTITY.

**MERRITT MEACHAM**

I studied architecture in school, so when Lucy and Vita shared your portfolio with me, I began looking at it through an architectural lens. I was immediately drawn to your use of cityscape renderings and symbolic forms. One such form is the jar that reads: "Sabores De Cabo Verde." I googled, "Sabores de Cabo Verde" and found images of banana-cakes as well as a Portuguese color. Could you describe what this symbol references?

**NOELANI RAMOS**

"Sabores de Cabo Verde" means "Flavors of Cape Verde." Cape Verde refers to 10 islands off the West Coast of Africa. It is where my family is from. My work revolves around the culture of Cape Verde.

MM Great! That sets a stage for understanding your collection.

NR For my collection, I explored what it means to be African in my own lens. In addition to exploring Cape Verdean culture, I studied various artists of West/Central African descent who successfully define and redefine cultural identity in their work. I referenced artists, Yinka Shonibare and El Anatsui, heavily throughout my process. A lot of my drapery

stems from the fluid architectural movements of their work. My use of textiles was handled in a similar manner. Shonibare is notable for his commentary on colonialism, and as I worked through my ideas, some of my silhouettes began to take on a more "westernized" look. The use of Ankara prints on Victorian dress is jarring and challenges my process.

MM One of the most energizing and jarring garments is the brown pleather cloak. It reminded me in some ways of an '80s horror movie. The cloak appears to be almost wet. I found this garment to contrast with the draped brown dress with a sash. Could you talk about these pieces a bit?

NR I like to incorporate opposing silhouettes in my work. Some garments are very drapey or flowy while others feel hardy or edgier. I like the way these contrasts tend to complement each other. I try to work with a range of materials in my collections to allow for more depth; challenging myself to create cohesive collections using "contrasting" fabrics makes for a more intricate body of work. I tend to work with all of these elements bouncing around in my head, and with the added social commentary, I was able to create a

collection that radiates confidence and comfort—a true testament to how I feel being of Cape Verdean descent.

MM Your portfolio seemed to emphasize repetitive practices and the labor involved in creating garments. Your garments feel very sculptural and architectural. Some of your draped forms like your backless silhouette and the vinyl skirt mirror each other in form even though, materially, they differ vastly. What's your approach like? Do you think moving forward you will continue approaching your work in this way?

NR I am very open to exploring new ideas. But, I think the way I work will remain the same—meaning looking at Cape Verdean culture and what it means to be African is going to be my lens. It will always be how I view the world and my work. But, with that said, I am really open to venturing off into other realms.

MM How do you anticipate moving forward with your process and working in the context of 2020 and all that is occurring during this time? Your work appears to be very studio-driven, and I wonder if you need access to those tools and resources?

NR I have been working on different pieces recently and have noticed that I needed to simplify a few of them just so they are feasible to create without all of the studio resources at my disposal. We all had to adjust when class moved online, which was

mind blowing to all of us to have our studio classes at home without any resources. So, for this reason, I found myself simplifying looks or creating pieces that I could do faster or that didn't require as much intensive labor.

MM Right. And maybe creating pieces that are simpler might allow you to approach the more conceptual part of your practice with a clearer head. Personally, for me, I was initially overwhelmed when I thought I had to make a shirt and grade it in different sizes and essentially function as a production house. But, since lockdown and not being in the studio, I now feel more able to play, which I find is really helpful for my creative process. As a student, it seems so key to have access to studio resources, and it seems so challenging to design a collection without that.

NR Yes for sure!

MM What are your plans?

NR Recently, I have just been working on custom pieces. People have been reaching out to me to make garments for them. Also, I am looking for a job. I am currently living in Boston. There aren't many places hiring for design jobs, unfortunately. In addition, I am working on a website for myself. I am really hoping to go back to New York soon, too. But, in the meantime, I am focusing on personal projects so that I can continue to build my own portfolio for the future.

MM Cool! So are you from Boston?

NR Yes.

MM Are there particular things you are inspired by from growing up in Boston? I know you talked about being inspired by where your family is from in Cape Verde, but does Boston play a role inspiring your work too? In viewing your portfolio, it seemed like there was an emphasis on maps, skylines, cities, architecture: a day-to-day, physical environment.

NR So there is a large population of Cape Verdeans here in Boston. And, I think it really comes down to this mix of American culture with Cape Verdean culture and trying to understand that through my personal experiences. Growing up, I would go to my grandmother's house often. And, that environment has profoundly influenced my work so far. I wouldn't say Boston, in itself, but it's more the idea that my family emigrated here and what that has meant for me growing up.

MM Great. So, this is just a side note—I have been making clothes for five years and didn't go to school for fashion design—so, I am curious about what aspect of making clothes you are drawn to? Patterning? Draping? Construction? Design? What technical elements do you like the most? Do you find the monotony of constructing garments to be therapeutic?

NR I'm really drawn to draping. Usually, when I drape, I have an idea in mind from a sketch. It's always nice to see that the idea I start with transforms and the sketch is different from the finished product. I always find that I am working in between sketching, draping, and also pattern-making. I'll make a pattern, put it on a dress form, and then redrape it and the garment will turn into something else. I really enjoy when it all comes together in that way.

MM Right! Well, congratulations on graduating! Are there any last details you want to add about your work and portfolio?

NR Yes. So, this whole collection started with me looking at what it means to be African and how the continent is very generalized, yet there are so many different cultures there. Being born in the US, and seeing how people tend to generalize Africa and African culture as a monolithic whole, has always been strange and striking to me. I wanted this collection to be very personal to my experience and my family's culture. But, with that said, these garments are for anyone to wear. I wanted to make clothing that makes those who wear them feel empowered. I took textures and techniques from West Africa, specifically Cape Verde, and that has been an important part of my process, overall.







**EMMA MCCLELLAND and CAROLYN KILCOYNE VOYTA**

FOR THE RECENT GRADUATE, EMMA MCCLELLAND (PRATT), THE PROCESS OF CREATING CLOTHING IS A FORM OF CATHARSIS. MCLELLAND ENVISIONS HER GARMENTS TO BE WORN IN A PLAYFUL, PERFORMATIVE, AND COLLABORATIVE WAY. CAROLYN KILCOYNE VOYTA (CAFÉ FORGOT), WHO INTERVIEWS MCLELLAND, CREATES SILHOUETTES AND GARMENTS OFTEN REFERENCING CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AND THE PLAYFUL ENVIRONMENT OF SUMMER CAMP.

CAROLYN KILCOYNE VOYTA  
Emma, your work is super textile-based. How did you decide you wanted to make clothes?

EMMA MCCLELLAND  
Actually, I almost went into painting. Before I went to Pratt, I only did fashion illustration. I never actually made garments. At first, it was a huge learning curve to design wearable things, but, ultimately, I'm happy I went through the design program because functionality is important to me, and I want what I make to be useful to someone and expressive of joy on the body. I think I would lose something in my practice if it wasn't able to be worn ultimately and be an expression of identity in that way.

CKV So, is that one of your biggest barriers, learning to sew and making it work on the human form?

EM Yeah, I still struggle with it. I've only recently started accepting myself as more of an organic clothing maker, instead of someone who goes over my slopers again and again. I've recently started cutting patterns free-hand in a more artistic way, and it's been so liberating. But the first couple of years at Pratt, I was really being whipped

into shape. Fashion boot camp!

CKV When you make your textiles, do you typically make a whole yardage of your print and then decide the shape to make the clothing into?

EM Yeah, and I've been trying to evolve that into cutting pattern-pieces and printing those individually so that the print can be more engineered and so that I can understand the shape of the garment before I do it. But, usually, I get inspired by the fabric and start drawing on it or printing or doing something with it and then assembling it into a garment once it's done.

CKV So what's your process like before you start painting? How do you decide what to make?

EM I usually try to let my subconscious decide. I feel like my most successful things, I don't think about beforehand. It's usually like I was feeling emotional and had to get it out physically. My process is cathartic. Usually, when I start out with a plan and try to stick with it, either I go in an entirely different direction, or I get frustrated trying to micromanage myself, and it doesn't come out as I had hoped.

CKV Yeah, I'm sure once you have it formed into your garment, as well, you want to add more to it. Do you find yourself doing that?

EM Absolutely, it's a back and forth, which is what's been great about having my design education because once it turns into a garment, then I'm like, "Okay. Do I need more surface treatment?" I like beading and, lately, I've been into making my own beads. More and more, I'm a maximalist.

CKV So where are you now? Where did you shoot your lookbook?

EM That's in Otis, Massachusetts—currently in western Massachusetts. The lookbook was shot at Big Pond which is 25 minutes away from where I am now. I'm at my parents house—in nature. This is where I've been spending the lockdown, and I feel lucky to have this open space to explore and get back in touch with my roots since I grew up here.

CKV How much of your thesis had you finished before you had to leave school?

EM I had everything just ready to be finished, but I pretty much only had one look entirely finished. I had the idea for what every look would turn into, but all the finishing closures, everything still remained to be done because that's the harder part for me. I'm good at putting down an idea and coming up with the next thing, but it's more difficult for me to do the detail

work, and so I found that bringing my pieces home and having time and space to do the little, hand-work, was a good way to finish the garments.

CKV I know, at school there are so many opinions thrown at you all the time; friends, peers, teachers, and all the people they brought to critique you. Did you find it easier leaving all that behind and making your own decision without all the outside influence?

EM Everyone in my family is an artist, so I have a lot of feedback. My mom is a metal worker. My dad is a jewelry designer, and my sister is a painter. I was fitting my clothes on Mom and sister at home, and I was getting a lot of feedback. It was bringing me back to childhood, but I miss the feedback at Pratt. I was looking forward to the critique held at Canoe Studios—that's the crit which decides who is in the end of year fashion show. They bring in professionals from the industry and it's great to get their feedback. But, at the same time, having my family perspective and bringing everything back to my childhood home, kept the garments in the fine art place they had been. Maybe the collection would have been read more as fashion design if I had received feedback from fashion designers, but, yeah, I do miss the feedback so much.

CKV For me, it was like I wanna do what I want to do. There are so many opinions. Tell me more about some new fabric techniques you studied for

the first time doing this thesis.

EM I was really blessed to take a textile class with Freya Tamayo—with all the textile processes that we went over. I knew I was always into textiles, but she covered the basics of felting, wedding, natural dying and bundle dying. I took that first semester, and, then I had that foundation and explored these techniques more. There is one look that's felt—all wet felting, and there's one that's nuno felting: when you wet felt onto fabric that is like gauze, the wool fibers bond together. I'd been doing silk screen for ages. I went away as a junior to Central St. Martin's to their textile program: specifically a fashion print program, and I was lucky as a junior to have access to those studios and that textile-based education. So, when I came back, I realised that textiles were very much at the forefront of my work, and it was mostly felting and weaving that I got into. My roommate, Emi Stearn, is also a textile design grad, and she made a huge loom, so I was weaving on her giant loom in bed. I just think that constantly working with my hands was so important. Sometimes, not even knowing what I was making, and just moving...was how they came together.

CKV One of my favorite looks from the semester is the pants and wrap top with the square print all over it: purple, dark green, and blue. How did you make that fabric, and how did you decide those colors? They look so nice together and I love that one leg is

slightly different than the other.

EM That was the one look done before I left. It was a textile process that I had just started a couple weeks before the lockdown. I found this stencil in the recourse room at Pratt, there are laser-cut stencils, and a square had been cut out of plastic. I took spray bottles full of pigment, sprayed it over them and outlined the inside with markers and just watched it bleed. What inspires me about fabric instead of working on paper is the interaction between fabric and pigment. You can't predict what it will do. Different colors and texture of pigment do entirely different things, so I was experimenting with that. That was the only look where I cut the pattern pieces before I printed the fabric, so it's more engineered. Stenciling is something I've really gotten into since the lockdown.

CKV That's great that you're making your own pattern. Could you also talk about that umbrella? How did you decide to make that? It's like sculpture, but it goes well with your collection.

EM Thank you. I had a plan, and still have plans, to make a tent, a big circus tent for a textile project I was doing in which people could play dress-up in my garments and have a safe space to explore identity, perform and celebrate, so my plan before I left Pratt was to buy a huge umbrella, cut off the fabric, and make my own fabric around the umbrella form. I then planned to

have a performance installation at Pratt. When I came home, I left the city with one suitcase of work. In it I brought all my silk cuts and leftovers from cutting. I wanted to find a way to repurpose all those scraps. So that umbrella was a mini-version of the gathering tent I had planned to make. And it was also appropriate for the time because we were in isolation... so like a personal isolation bubble instead of a community thing. I had used the technique of piecing the fabric together and making collages in the past, but I wanted to use all the leftover silk cuttings. It's much bigger than the frame it's on, but I think that gives it some flow, and so, when you twirl it, it fans out. I want to keep making those. It was fun.

CKV Are there any other techniques you developed throughout this collection that you would like to explore more?

EM I think the community concept I got out of this year is at the forefront of my work. At the end of last semester, I set up an installation in the closet where the models usually do fittings, and I invited all my friends to come and play dress-up in my garments. They would take selfies, and I had a camera on a self-timer so they could pose and play. It was really exciting to see how other people interacted with the clothing, almost like a collaborative performance with my work. The tent was going to be a final version of that type of gathering. I think collaboration, community worship, community

gathering are all so important to me.

CKV Is there anything else you want people to know or see when they look at the collection?

EM I hope that when people put my clothing on, they feel liberated to express themselves; I hope my clothing brings a free feeling to people who wear it because it gives me a free feeling to make it.





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XINZI CUI and FRANCESCA LONGO

XINZI CUI'S (PRATT) THESIS COLLECTION COMES FROM HER GRANDFATHER WHO SUFFERED FROM ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. HER GARMENTS RECONTEXTUALIZE EVERYDAY OBJECTS IN SURREAL AND PLAYFUL FORMS. XINZI IS INTERVIEWED BY FRANCESCA LONGO (CAFÉ FORGOT), A DESIGNER WHOSE ILLUSTRATED GARMENTS INVOKE A SIMILAR SENSE OF WHIMSY.

FRANCESCA LONGO

Would you like to introduce yourself a little bit?

XINZI CUI

Hi I'm Xinzi Cui and I'm from Beijing, China, and right now I'm living in Brooklyn, New York, in the neighborhood of Pratt Institute.

FL Do you have roommates? Are they people you went to school with?

XC Yes, but they are from different majors. One studies illustration, and the other studies industrial design.

FL I loved your work, and I thought it was beautiful. I was speaking with some of my friends from the fashion department at Pratt, and we were saying we actually thought it was really cool that you had to finish your body of work in a digital way because when I graduated from Pratt in 2016, there was much less emphasis on having a digital portfolio, and when I was applying for jobs, I really wished I had that. So, I think it's really great that you have a beautiful body of work to take out into the world. That's a silver lining to these times. But do you want to talk about how you identify as a designer? I saw a lot of print and knitwear development in your work, so

I'm wondering what you want to do in the world of fashion?

XC I consider myself a unisex designer. I'm interested in both women's wear and men's wear, and I have a broad interest in the fashion industry because I want my design elements to break the boundaries of sexuality.

FL I think it's really good that people are becoming open-minded to that; I think there are definitely places where you think about it in terms of a career and it's exciting that bigger brands are starting to recognize the need to dissolve the binaries in terms of gender. It's really cool you're going out proudly with that. Now, thinking about the body of work you presented: you wrote in your bio about your grandfather and that he described the taste of a banana after having an apple; I thought that was really beautiful. I'm curious as to what you learned about your grandfather after studying his diaries? Things that maybe you didn't know before?

XC I actually didn't get a lot of information from his diaries because his words and sentences did not make sense at all—he just repeated the same words and numbers. But from

the whole body of his diary, I could tell how strong he was and how hard he tried to communicate with us. Even though he lived in such a different world, he was strong and optimistic. My grandfather was always smiling even if we knew he must be suffering. He cried with a smile. That's one of the biggest reasons I chose to develop my collection in a happy colorful style. I wanted to show people how strong he could be.

FL I think that's beautiful, and it's very particular to the disease he suffered from. There are a lot of problems that come with old age that are not happy, so I think it's really nice to be able to portray it in this joyful way—that is rare, and it's a beautiful celebration of life. I'm curious if your grandfather knew you were reading his diaries? I would hate it if someone was like, "I'm going to read your diaries posthumously!"

XC He doesn't have to worry about that because he doesn't share any useful information. He wanted to describe his huge family that came to visit him, but he ends up writing words like, "Woman. Woman. Woman."

FL Have you shown your family this body of work?

XC Yes. At first, I didn't know how to share this because my grandpa had passed, and it was a heavy topic. It took a lot of courage to talk with my family. But, when I asked them they supported me and are really proud

of me for doing it. They think I'm very brave for choosing such a heavy topic and they shared a lot of photos and videos, and even his diary, all of which were a huge inspiration.

FL I think that people who are not creative themselves, or maybe don't understand that fashion can be affiliated with such depth, don't always understand how involved the design process can be. Do you want to talk about your favorite piece in the collection? Is there something you were really excited about how it came out?

XC I think I love them all, but my most favorite idea I had was the lapel coat and the sock tie. I think I interpreted that in a really interesting way and also showed how people with alzheimer's disease cannot distinguish the function of garments. I was able to show the concept in a playful way.

FL I agree; I think they were very well-integrated into the clothing. I like the way things that are very literal found such a nice home in clothing. I know Pratt in particular is one of the only schools in New York that keeps their studios open 24 hours a day, which cultivates an insane environment where you are pretty much living in your studio. I definitely experienced that when I was there, and I think most people who went to Pratt experienced that, so I'm really curious in a personally nosy way as to what it was like to have to move out of your studio and what were the worst and

best things that came out of it?

XC When I realized that I had to move everything from school to home, I was shocked because I lived in my studio. Every senior has a trunk and, sometimes, I would literally sleep on the floor or on the trunk. I have more things there than in my home. At first, I was like, it's gonna be a huge job, and I was shocked, and I cried. I think most people cried. We thought that if we left the studio, it would be really hard to finish our senior thesis. But we gathered together and encouraged each other and told ourselves that senior thesis is not going to be the last project we do, and if we really want to finish it, we can find a way.

FL Yeah, I think it's really cool that it can be a body of work you continue to work on in the summer or while you get your portfolio together. Did you guys pool together resources or were you in isolation?

XC For me, I have a knitting machine. Sometimes, I invited my friends to use my machine. We worked together and encouraged each other.

FL For sure! What are you working on now? Are you still sort of working on closure with this body of work: continuing to make things or continuing to work on the portfolio or putting it all together? What is your next step?

XC For the first month, I just did some finishes to my senior thesis because

I got my dress form, sewing machine, and knitting machine. Now, looking for a job is really important, but before that I had to gather all of my work from the past four years and see where could be improved. Right now, I finally feel ready to look for a job.

FL I think it's really scary to be in fashion right now, whether you're a recent graduate or like some of my friends who've been laid off, but I think there's something that's really cool about being a recent grad and knowing there's not much one can do. It's like "I'm not going to get a full time job right now, so knowing I have that time." I know that when you first graduate, there's a lot of pressure, and you shut off from school mode and your immediate idea is to find a job. I definitely encourage you to just find peace and joy in the transition, and know the work will come later. I wonder if there is a piece from one of your peers in your graduating class that made you jealous—like "that is so genius, I wish I had made it"?

XC All my peers are so talented. We have different styles, but we are always inspired by each others ideas. A lot of my friends are doing knitwear and I'm also a knitter. I didn't put a lot of knitwear in this collection, which is a pity, but, still, I think that looking at their work gives me inspiration to do more knitwear.

FL Definitely. I hope you keep working on it. Is the top you're wearing your own?

XC Yes. This is a print I made.

FL Definitely keep making stuff. Vita and Lucy will sell it soon, I'm sure! It's beautiful. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

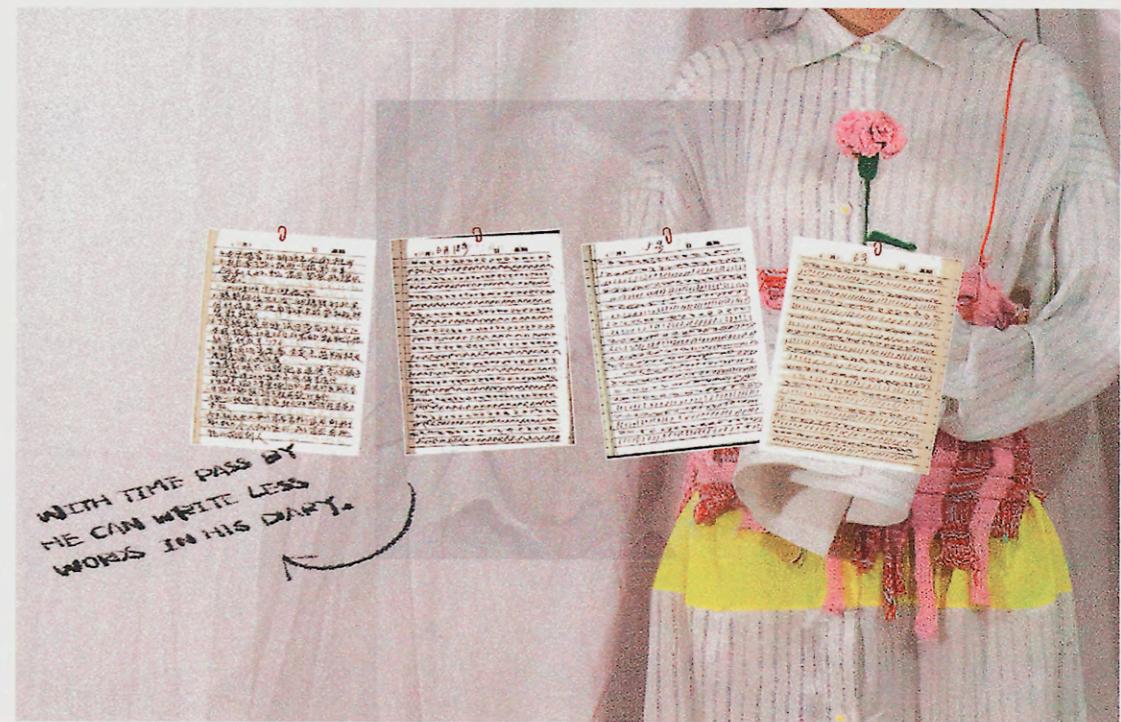
XC Yeah. Sustainability in fashion—we had a specific course on that; it was really useful; we also learned what fashion marketing looks like right now; we learned how to proceed with sustainability, and I think as a designer sustainability is an important topic for us. We are not only creating beautiful things, we also have the duty to keep the earth beautiful—keep the beauty of the environment.

FL I think that's very exciting that they are integrating that into the program. It's so wide-reaching in terms of how small designers can incorporate it. The woman I work for—we are always working to use deadstock. And then looking at how bigger companies have a bigger responsibility to fund all the technology that can turn the industry around. Anyway, I think we are out of time. Thank you so much for chatting. I love your work and I hope you can continue working on it more this summer.





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PRATT FASHION CLASS OF 2020

Ry Arne	Ziyi Li
Kathryn Bailey	Fangyi Liu
Kyra Baider	Anna Rose Lowenthal
Georgia Baltay	Stefan Maier
Nyesha Lee Barrow	Emma McClelland
Cornelia Borgerhoff	KT Mitts
Charlene Charriez	Eleanor Morris-Swank
Chloe Brand	Christine Park
Yifan Cai	Sofia Penn
Xinzi Cui	Allison Piccininni
Maeve Foley	Mary Pulizzotto
Andie Genthe	Noelani Ramos
Juliana Gogol	Nicole Rensing
Sophia Gomez	Victoria Rodriguez Varela
Yuning Gong	Hailey Silliman
Emily Hampton	Jacqueline Sokel
Olivia Harris	Emi Stearn
Alexa Hornbaker	Finn Swede-Taillon
Tingyu Hu	Haydy Then
I Fan Huang	Hannah Thomas
Kathryn Hunter	Jasmine Thomas
Dominique Iannettoni	Amanda Twu
Fiona Jungmann	Blake Walsh
Idalia Kaplan	Zhien Zhang
Meitong Li	Xiaowu Zheng

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