

Daniel Gold
Integrative Project Thesis
Professors Rodemer/Cressman
April 24, 2013

Au Attire

Introduction

Alchemy is an ancient practice of part science, part philosophy. A centerpiece of alchemy is the mythological philosopher's stone, a material so powerful it can turn ordinary, non-precious metals into gold or silver. It is also considered the elixir of life, with powers to heal human beings and even grant eternal existence. Many alchemists tried to create the philosopher's stone, believing it conceivable within the perimeters of man's earthly surroundings. Alchemy gave birth to what we consider to be the modern scientific method that is used today.

My fascination with science, nature, art, technology, and magic has led me to look towards alchemy as the common thread that runs through my entire project. I find this practice so fascinating because it simultaneously relies on both experience and observation in the real world, as well as a bit of fiction, or, at best, exaggerated reality—conceived to fit the alchemist's narrative. This suits my project accordingly because I am exploring the combination of two schools of thought, function and fashion, contrived to fit my project's own objectives and idealized outcomes.

Creative Work

My philosopher's stone—the dream I am chasing—is the perfect design methodology to transform outerwear rather than metals. This intangible design philosophy is capable of turning functional garments that act in one's wardrobe

metaphorically as steel, lead, etc., into more precious articles of clothing, without sacrificing performance. My project is a clothing collection of outerwear pieces that blurs the lines between bespoke attire and technically functional apparel through garments that take visual cues from both the human form, and classic menswear silhouettes. I have cross pollinated these two typically distinct categories of the clothing world by applying hand-made, manually constructed and tailored techniques towards assembling modern, technological textiles into garments. My final project includes four jackets, each with unique characteristics, but cohesive enough to be in a fluid collection.

In accordance with the theme of alchemy, the four garments in my project play off of the four classical elements from ancient times¹. Earth, water, fire, and air, serve as the pillars of influence for all the garments, and threads of each will be seen in all four iterations—much in the same way all objects on earth were considered in alchemy to be made up of the four elements. Earth represents the natural quality of each jacket through the materials. Water lends the influence for the fluidity and flowing quality each garment illustrates, both in the cut and the seam placement. Fire has a feel when one is in its presence, and the jackets will seamlessly complement the human machine, while containing heat and offering shelter from the cold. Air is considered in the design through the use of exclusively comfortable materials to the skin. These materials are not only soft, but also soothing and enjoyable to the touch. Consequently, the jackets are all about sight and feel, equally vital in enhancing the experience of the wearer.

To tie this theme together and give a sense of branding to each of the jackets, I have a black medallion (made from ABS plastic) that mimics the form of a wax seal². Much like a button, through tiny holes they are fastened to the sleeve of each jacket

with a symbol reading “Au” (an anatomic symbol for my last name Gold) that offers a sense of branding similar to the red, white, and blue ribbon that is sewn onto all Thom Browne clothing and products³. My approach, however, offers a personalized, heavy-duty touch to the jackets that a colored ribbon cannot quite capture.

The style of all the jackets look familiar, but reinterpreted. One is cardigan-esque, but in combination with the silhouette of an MA-1 flight jacket⁴. I was able to discover the key to melding these two distinct garments while I was browsing a store carrying Burberry’s latest collection and saw their interpretation featured in Burberry’s fall 2012 collection⁵. However, the details, materials, and construction make it uniquely my own. This jacket, in particular, has a collar design that offers sculptural depth, and a unique functional aesthetic. Another jacket in the collection was inspired by simply folding a piece of everyday printer paper at the corners and overlapping the two new flaps in such a way that they illustrate a human-like form. From there I used a sloper set (generic clothing patterns drafted to one’s specific body to use as a base for more complex detailing and distinct fitting) to represent the simple paper model into a wearable form⁶.

The materials I use are both of natural and synthetic fiber. Canvas nylon impregnated with wax is one of the featured materials. It is manufactured by a heritage brand called Martaxin and is highly durable, but develops a beautiful patina through extensive use, like that of fine leather. I have also selected a fleece to line the interior of the garments. This fleece has fibers three times the diameter of a silk fiber. The thinner the fiber, the softer and suppler they are to the touch. Paracord ties and custom

closures fasten two of the jackets. This gives them a sturdy military grade materiality with enough refinement to stick to the project's narrative.

Contextual Discussion

Many of the inspiration for this project comes from my own tastes and preferences. I have always been a fan of the work of companies like Nike and Under Armour that push the boundaries of material, and performance that garments can offer with everything from Foamposite unibody sneakers⁷, to textiles that keep you warm and wick away sweat in any climate. As I have grown older though, my taste has matured all the way to the other end of the spectrum where I have learned to appreciate the skill that designers like Tom Ford and Carol Christian Poell⁸ exemplify by crafting suits, outerwear, and all other wearables from the finest natural materials the world knows. Seeing firsthand both labor workforces mass producing swimsuit bikini tops through their assembly line and the meticulous precision that Hermes specialists employ crafting bags from start to finish, painted a clear for me of what quality looks like in the making.

Given my interests, I have searched for designers and companies that play in the middle of hand-done construction, and technically forward thinking silhouettes. One designer in particular who stands out to me is Aitor Thourp⁹. He has a very unique approach to clothing design, given that he comes from a background of illustration and sketching. Thourp starts by making beautiful, and sometimes grotesque, sketches, and then uses wire-frame sculptural models in real space to adhere fabric to, before slicing them up to explore different forms. His work has been described as sculpting the interior space of a jacket, rather than designing the superficial external. Thourp's pace is very slow; he only likes to come out with new products when he feels they are

absolutely perfect, rather than follow the masses in fashion that come out with two, four, or sometimes eight different collections a year. He considers himself a product designer, electing to title his latest manifesto on his work “New Object Research”, reflective of the time, thought, and consideration that goes into designing his distinct “products.” It is a refreshing change from fast fashion corporations like Zara and H&M that will copy the style of high end designers and have their own bastardized version of the premier brand’s latest trend, offered at a price that represents just how easy it is to consume, and even easier it was to produce overseas in mere weeks, if not days through slave-like labor conditions.

My work is also inspired by Stone Island¹⁰, an Italian based company that spends more money every year researching and developing materials that no other brand conceives of. They have everything from mirrored fabrics that look like the invisibility cloak out of Harry Potter, to color changing fibers that react to the weather and your internal temperature, morphing in real time to accommodate the wearer. As gimmicky as some of their products seem, the creativity they show in testing and pushing forward what materials can and should exist, excited me a lot and makes me question what’s possible in the world of clothing, and in my own work.

Conclusion

The intent of my project is to yield beautiful functional products. I want to foster a methodology that further meets the goal of perfectly balancing form and function. My biggest concern was layering my project too thick with objectives, techniques, and materials, so that a unique and impeccable crossbred garment turns

into a convoluted mess. The simplest things are the hardest to design and get just right, so as I begin executing the final pieces, which is something I kept in mind the entire time. I believe is circumvented my fear of creating a convoluted result, with pieces that are straight forward and sensible, while still maintaining a level of cache and intricacy.

Image Appendix

1. Ceiling at the Palazzo Vecchio of a secret room called Studiolo di Francesco. Here, in his studio, he practiced alchemy, and the ceiling is painted with Prometheus in the middle receiving an unfinished diamond. This represents man's connection to nature, and how they are intertwined to create art. Around him, on the four sides, are the four classical elements and permutations of each are in the corners.



2. An image of the wax seals I created and added to every jacket's cuff



3. An example of Thom Browne's branding on the back of his jacket.



4. Classic MA-1 Flight Jacket.



5. Burberry's version



6. Sloper Set used to generate all patterns



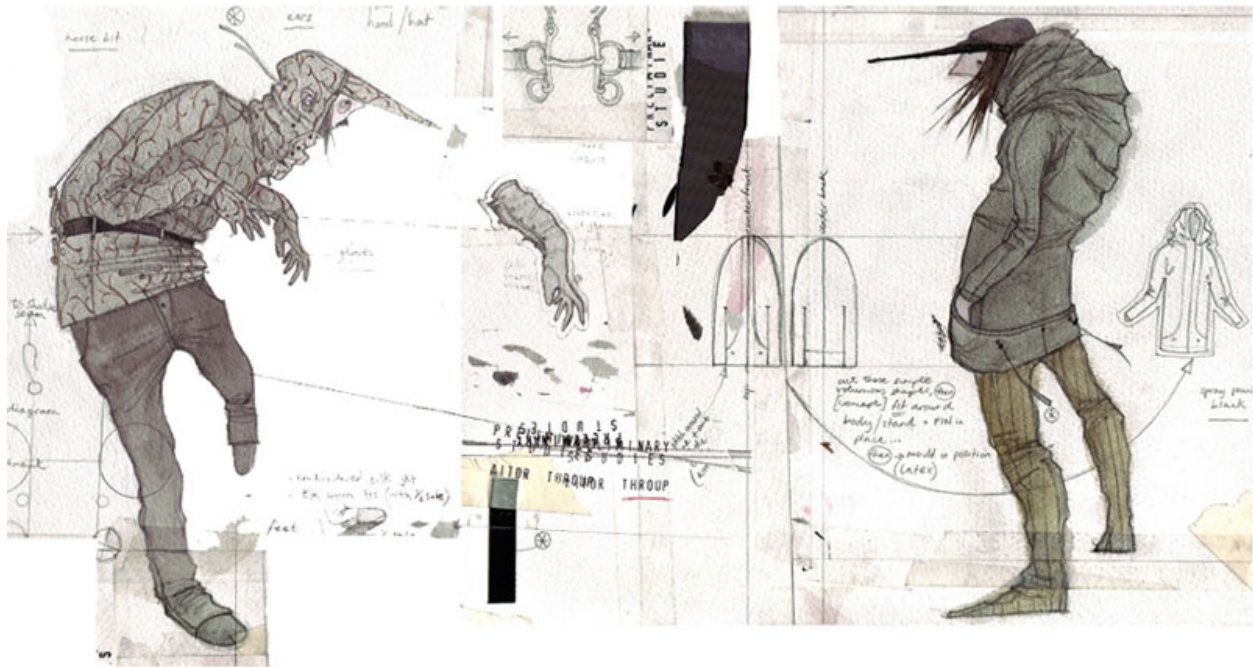
7. Foamposite Nike sneaker, in “Eggplant” color



8. The work of Carol Christian Poell



9. Aitor Thourp's sketches and products



10.Stone Island's reflective jacket.



Works Cited:

Drudi, E. and Paci, T., 2011, *Figure Drawing for Men's Fashion*.

International, Creative Publishing, 2011, *Tailoring: The Classic Guide to Sewing the Perfect Jacket*. Creative Pub International.

Knowles, Lori A., 2005, *The Practical Guide To Patternmaking For Fashion Designers*. Fairchild Books & Visuals.

Thourp, Aitor. "Posts by Aitor Throup | THE BREAKS." *THE BREAKS*. N.p., 15 May 2012. Web. 2013.

嶋崎隆一郎, 2008, 男のコートの本.

<http://www.pnp-firenze.com/wordpress/wp/>