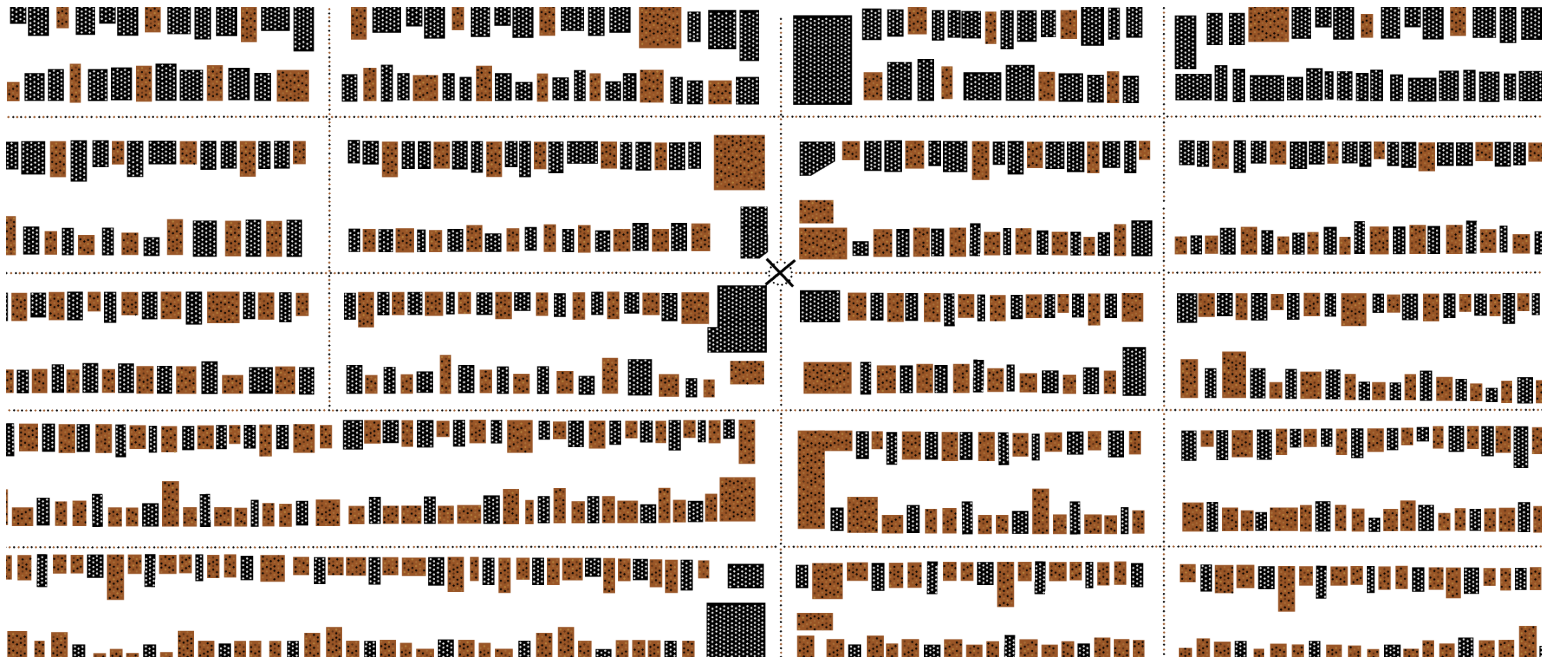


GP x DET

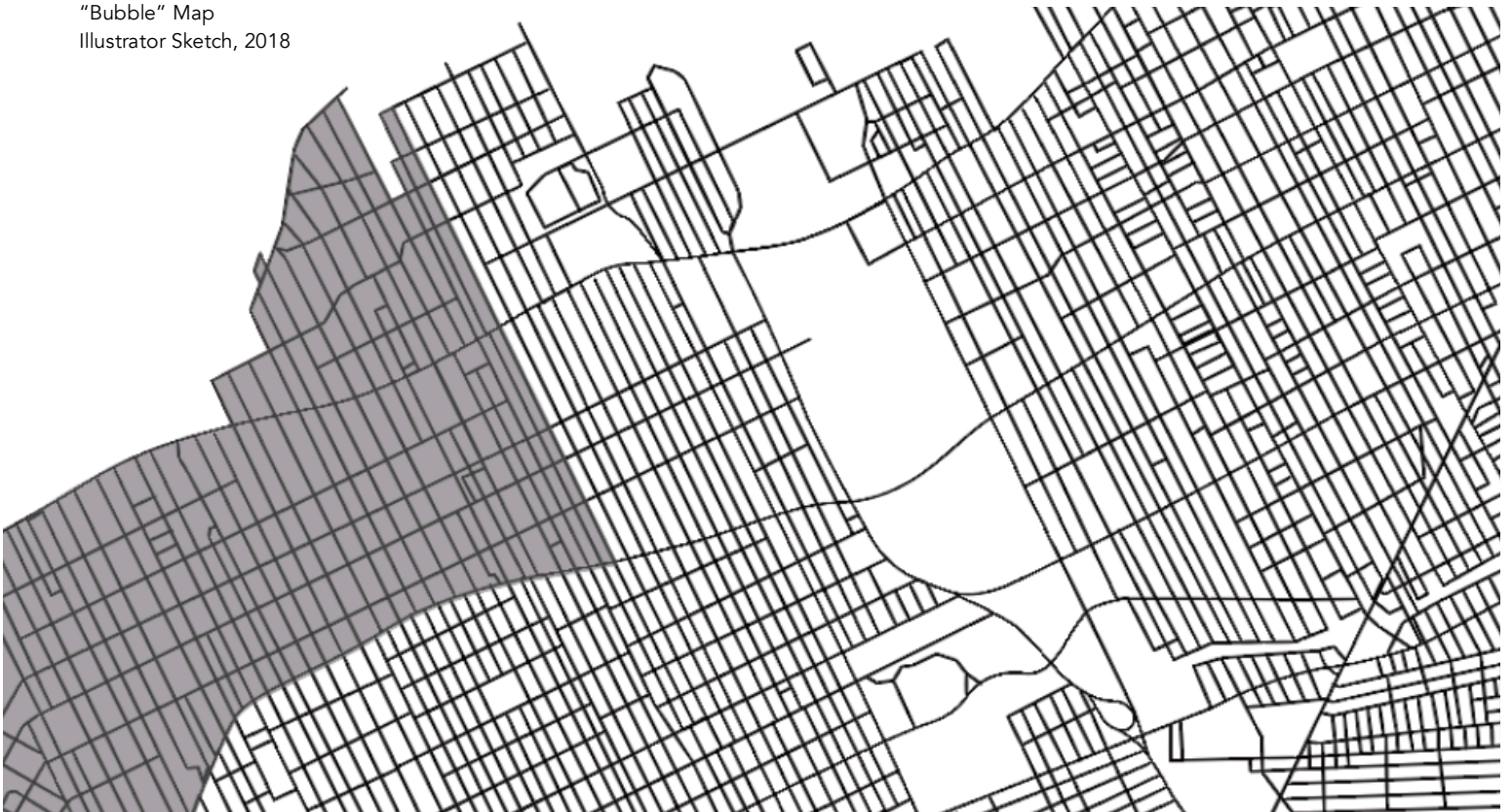
**COURTNEY GEIST
INTEGRATIVE PROJECT WRITTEN THESIS
APRIL 2019**



INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I was always comfortable. I had new technology, new clothing, family trips, and lived a life with more “wants” than “needs.” However, only twelve blocks from my Grosse Pointe home was a world completely different than the one I knew. As a child, I didn’t ride my bike past this point. On my high school cross country team, the runners were herded in the opposite direction. Running on my own, I was told to run in the daylight, stay on the busy streets, and never go past the streets Mack or Alter. Never leave the bubble.

Below: Fig. 1
“Bubble” Map
Illustrator Sketch, 2018



Borders that reiterate racial, socioeconomic, and religious differences are constantly present in our society, especially now that a border at the edge of our country is being threatened. As people walk through these places of tension, they can't help but have a fear of the unknown, no matter which side they come from. To confront, to inform, and to initiate change, I created a collection of running clothes that depicts the border I know best: The Grosse Pointe x Detroit. The collection is comprised of four outfits: the Grosse Pointe (GP), the Detroit (DET), The Divide, and The Future. The first three outfits represent the border site and opposing populations in their current state, and the final is a proposal for a more cohesive future.

With a background in textile design, I used my knowledge of color and material to inform my pattern, dye, and fabric decisions to heighten the functionality, meaning, and aesthetic of the garments. Each garment is laser cut in strategic locations where a runner sweats the most with patterns derived from aerial views of the border site. The fabric chosen for the collection was realized after a series of material tests analyzing countless fabric samples' reactions to laser cutting, sewing, and sustainably dyeing with rust items found in abandoned Detroit lots. Once the fabric was selected, further investigations were used to examine the most viable patterns to laser cut, and ultimately how to apply said pattern to garments. All together, the clothing provides the breathability where a runner needs it most, flexibility that extends beyond the composition of the fabric, and a subtle yet powerful message engrained in the construction of the garments.

CONTEXTUAL DISCUSSION



My contextual discussion consists of three components: analyzing the city of Detroit, the border itself, and brands that could inspire my creative practice.

Above: Figure 2
Google Maps image of
Kercheval border

DETROIT HISTORY

I first began with researching the structure of the city, and why population bubbles such as Grosse Pointe emerged. The very first roads in Detroit were paved extending from the center of the city, Campus Martius. Mack Avenue, for example, is one that begins at the central point, expands through the downtown bubble, through the outskirts of the city, and into suburbs like mine. In the bubble of downtown Detroit and in the bubble of the suburbs, the abundance of tax dollars is clearly visible as newly paved roads, perfectly manicured greenery, and lack of litter contrasts with the pothole ridden streets, overgrown plants, and sprinkles of trash in the neighborhoods that lie in between.

The difference in upkeep emerged as a result of countless people leaving the Detroit area in the 60's and 70's. The decline of the city began when automotive companies reinstated their production facilities outside of the city center, and into places like Dearborn and Hamtramck. This flood of people relocating for manufacturing jobs was reinforced by two race riots in 1943 and 1967, resulting in a second and third wave of people relocating simply to seek safe locations for their families.¹ However, unethical redlining prevented people of color to move into neighborhoods like Grosse Pointe, permanently segregating the area.

To dive deeper into the city's decline thereafter, I thoroughly read through a series of case studies on the population's community satisfaction over time. In one specific case study conducted in 1983, a team of researchers dissected why civilians were dissatisfied, and leaving the Metro-Detroit area at the time. They examined variables including income, education, job, age, and family status to determine the candidate's life cycle state, then contextualized how these factors influenced the candidate's willingness to move out of Detroit. ¹

¹ Puckett, Sherman Crewell. *Community Satisfaction and Prospective Intra-Urban Mobility: Detroit, Michigan*, 1983. Accessed Jan. 2018

This information in conjunction with readings on public school system satisfaction and success rates allowed me to further understand the status of the

formerly desirable neighborhoods of Detroit in comparison to today. One evaluation of the Detroit Public School System from its worst performance year, 2008, evaluates what factors made the predominantly African American education success rate so low with a student population of 52,000 and graduation rate of 64.5%. **2** This information can be contrasted with a case study from the public school system's height of 1967 that evaluates the 295,000 students and graduation rate of 78%. **3**

DIVIDE HISTORY

With this information on the city as a whole, I then narrowed my scope to the Detroit x Grosse Pointe region in the very recent past. Specifically, the formation of the border at the edge of my hometown, and the disparities that have began to form due to its existence. In the winter of 2014 the first border, a mound of snow in the middle of the street, was instated and prohibited anyone from leaving or entering Grosse Pointe. By June of 2014 the snow was melted and a physical blockade was instated in its place. Finally, the blockade was lifted

2 Robinson, Jeffery *The African Centered School Movement and the Detroit Public School System* 2009. Accessed 2018

3 National Commission of Professional Rights and Responsibilities of the National Education System of the United States, *Detroit, MI, 1967*. Accessed 2018.

Right: Figure 3
"Snow Mound", 2014.



after a series of construction projects to reveal a one-way roundabout and series of Farmer’s Market sheds. **4** Every weekend, vendors would set up their shops in an effort to include everyone in the immediate area, but the only crowd that attended was Grosse Pointe residents. Informal studies found that “one in four Grosse Pointe Park residents was in favor of the sheds, one was indifferent, and the rest – roughly half – wanted the sheds taken down”. **4**

The latest installation has kept the roundabout, the sheds, and now includes a dozen three-foot-tall flowerpots, and even taller trees emerging from them that create a wall of greenery. In the center of the roundabout, a statue of two sails is



placed to represent the two neighborhoods coming together in harmony. Yet, no form of art can cover up how starkly different the populations are from each other in socioeconomic status, racial demographics, and even safety. “In Grosse Pointe Park, the population of about 11,000 people is 85% white whereas the Detroit population of 688,000 is 82% black”. **5** Similarly, a stark contrasts exists in police response time. “In 2012, Police reaction time was 3.4 minutes in Grosse Pointe and 30 minutes in Detroit”. **5** This unequal distribution of wealth, race, and safety are furthered by the existence of a border physically separating these two populations.

4 Hackman, Rose. *Detroiters Stay Out: Racial Blockade Divides City and Its Suburbs*, 2015. Accessed 2018

5 Semuels, Alana. *At Detroit’s Border a Barrier Separates the Haves from the Have-Nots*, 2014

Right: Figure 4 Image “The Flower Pots” from article **5**

DETROIT BRANDS

Knowing the full breadth of the city and border would allow me to move forward into the creation of my project. After understanding the physical area, I researched which small brands were calling attention to existing problems in the Detroit area, and making a profitable business in light of the problems. I looked to Detroit specific companies like the Empowerment plan, and the ideation of a startup called Detroit Sole.

First, I analyzed The Empowerment Plan, a company that creates coat-sleeping bag hybrids to be donated to homeless in Detroit and across the world. Starting in Detroit, the company began with the short term goal of helping the homeless in the metropolitan area by giving them a garment that would last throughout tough Michigan winters. Their future goal is to mitigate and eradicate homelessness by employing formerly homeless single parents from the Detroit neighborhoods. Through their business plan I discovered the power of a stable nonprofit, and the impact a plan such as this could have on the community.



Right: Figure 5
Empowerment Plan
Product Image

Next, I looked to a startup concept called Detroit Sole, known for its innovation in material use by a former Nike shoe designer. The shoe concept utilizes recycled tire parts found around Detroit, grinds them down, and uses them as a sole for the high end sneaker. With this shoe in mind, I was able to realize the importance of material use, and the opportunity to utilize items from the city that would otherwise be discarded. Researching this product encouraged reflection on a time where I dyed with rust that was sourced from an abandoned Detroit property lot. At this point in the year, I began to ideate how I could use rusty items from Detroit lots for sustainably dyeing my project.

INTERNATIONAL BRANDS

Once I was familiar with Detroit brands specifically, I looked to national and international brands that could inform how I create my clothing. One brand that is known the importance of patterns, for example, is Marimekko. The brand created a phenomenon in women's clothing in the post WWII era, when most clothing was monotone, structured, and uncomfortable. They strove to make prints that empowered women when they entered the workforce, and applied these vibrant patterns to comfortable, professional attire. This notion that pattern could have a function larger than just being aesthetically pleasing was something I considered heavily when ideating my products. In the same way that Marimekko strove to make their patterns represent something greater than the brand itself, I wanted to ensure the patterns used on my products were justified. However, I wanted the patterns I use to have a third component beyond what Marimekko accomplished, and increase the functionality of the garment through the use of pattern.



Right: Figure 6 *Marimekko*
Product Image

METHODOLOGY

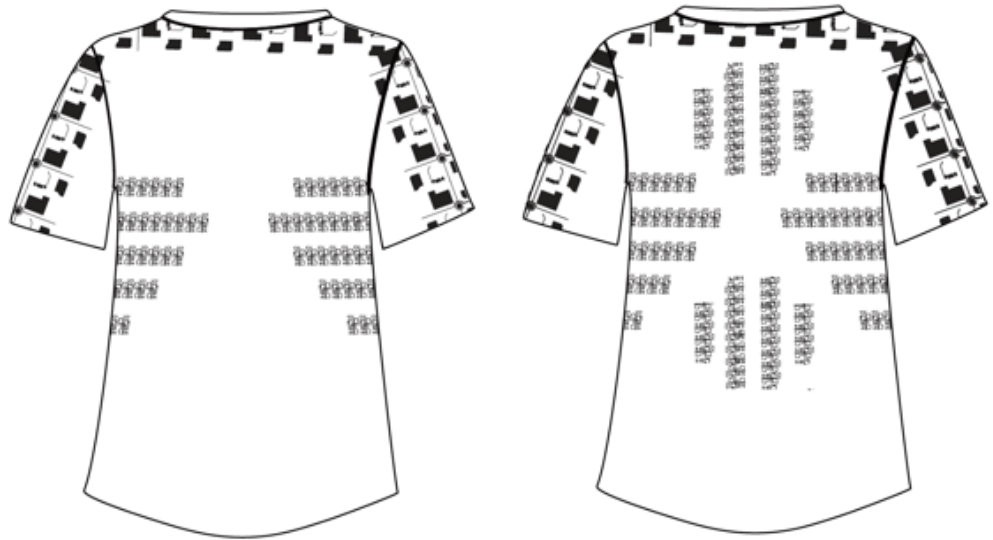


Above: Figure 7
GP x DET *The Divide Pants*
Close Up

My methodology consisted of a series of experiments that constantly built upon each other. The goal of all ideation was to achieve a justified pattern, functional pattern use, viable fabric, sustainable dye process, and number of garments that fit the context of the current and future border site.

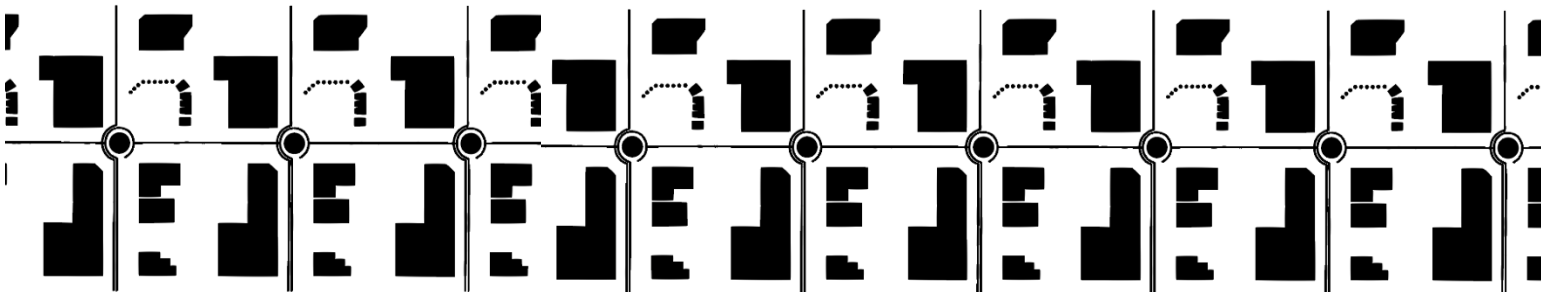
INVESTIGATION 1: AERATION

I instantly knew I would utilize laser cutting techniques to increase aeration in the garments, and strove to create a pattern that could serve this purpose. However, before I began pattern making, I first attempted to discover where a runner needs the most ventilation. I went on 8 runs: 4 long distance and 4 sprint workouts; and wore light grey cotton garments to observe where sweat was present after each workout. Then, focusing on the sweat areas that were present across all 8 runs, I began to sketch the simple shapes of how laser cutting could be applied to improve airflow. Next, I iterated a simple pattern derived from an aerial view of the border site, and applied it to a series of illustrator garment sketches in these key places to confirm scale of the pattern.



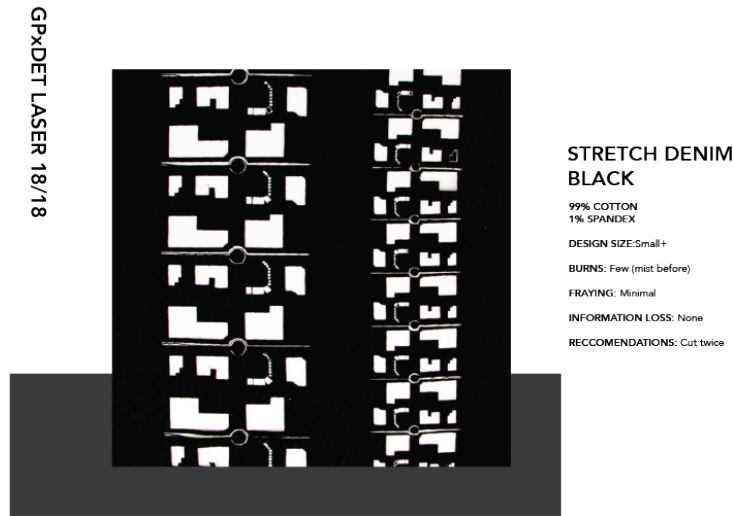
Right: Figure 8
GP x DET garment flat

Below: Figure 9
GP x DET initial pattern



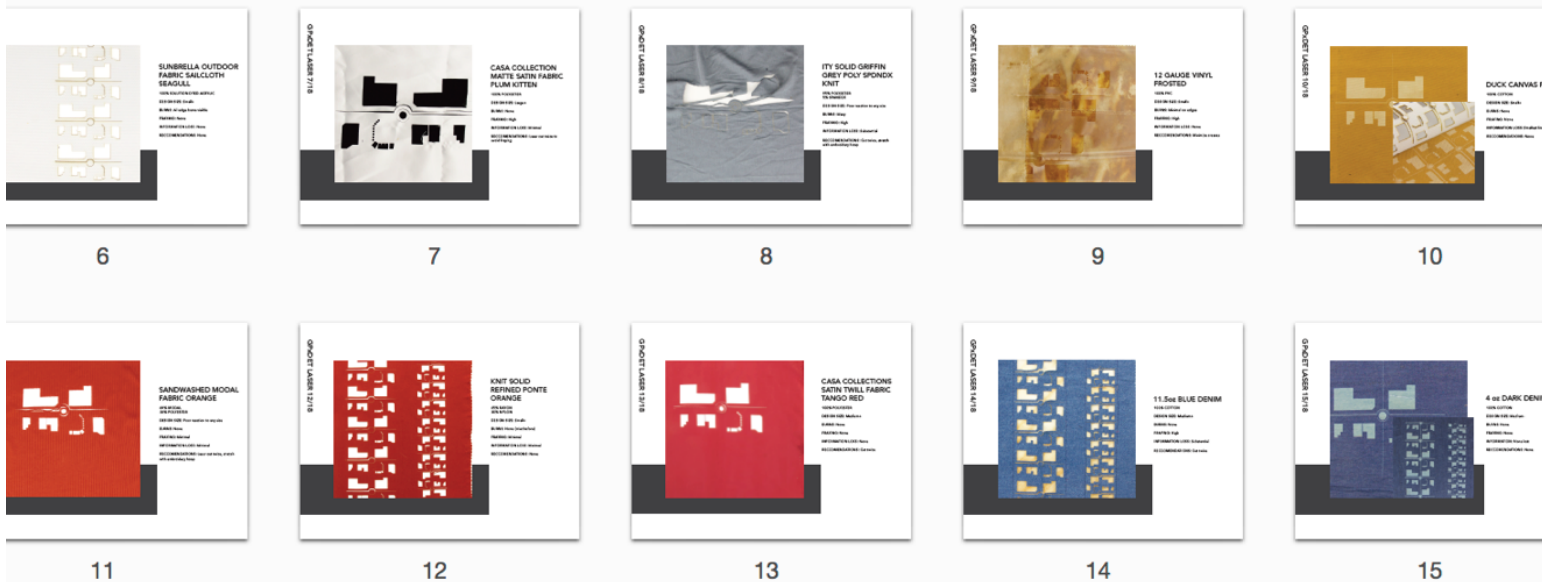
INVESTIGATION 2: LASER CUTTING

Next, I used this same pattern to iterate a series of samples discovering how 17 different fabrics reacted to laser cutting and laser engraving. Throughout, the I kept a log of each fabric and its reaction. The key factors I assessed were: the size of the design, if burn marks were visible, if there was any fraying present, if any information from the design was lost at the smallest design size possible, and finally any recommendations to ensure the cleanest results.



Right: Figure 10
 GP x DET Laser Investigation
 1, 18/18

Below: Figure 11
 GP x DET Laser Investigation
 1, Brief Excerpt



INVESTIGATION 3: SEWN SAMPLES

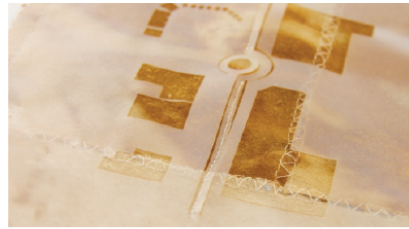
After creating a series of laser cut samples, I chose to generate sewn samples to analyze how the fabrics reacted to different sewing techniques. The documentation observed the stitches used, different fabrics compiled into one sample, and key features that may not have been present across other samples.

GPxDET SEWN 8/12

LASER CUT 12 GAUGE VINYL
FROSTED x RUST DYED RAW
COTTON

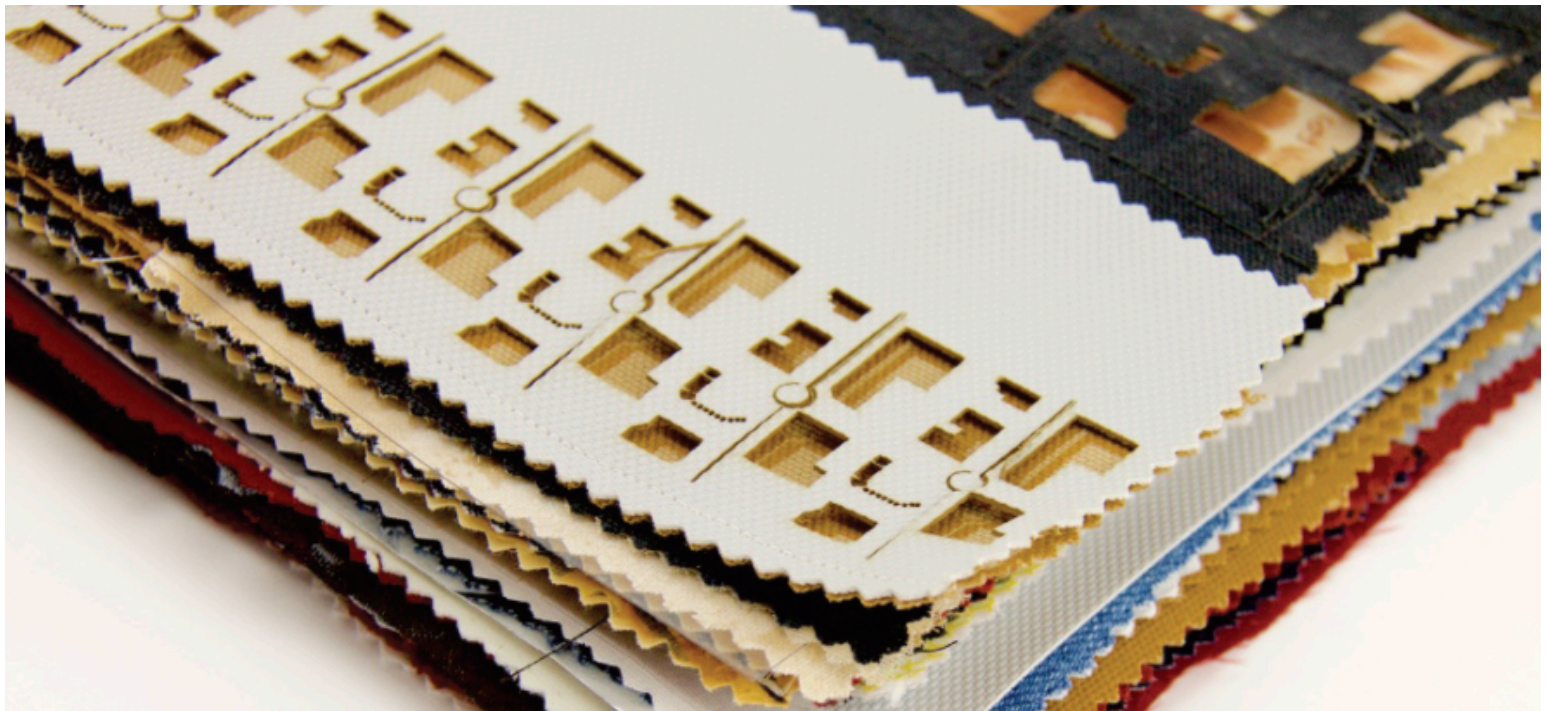
KEY FEATURES: Flush stitch along each cotton edge, simple securing
stitch on laser cut vinyl

STITCH: 00 2.0 2.0
00 2.0 2.0



Right: Figure 12
GP x DET Sewn
Investigation, 8/12

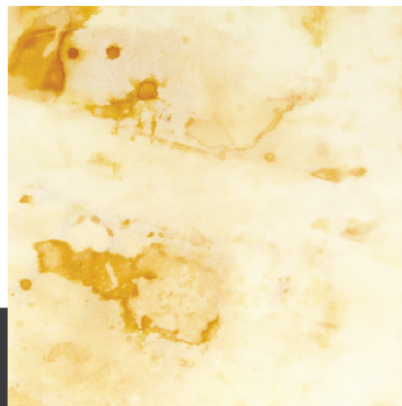
Below: Figure 13
GP x DET Sewn
Investigation, Cover Page



INVESTIGATION 4: RUST DYE

Next, I considered how to depict two different populations among the garments. Knowing from volunteer experience that there are pockets of waste among abandoned Detroit properties, I chose to move forward with sourcing recycled rusty materials from these lots to dye the garments that would represent Detroit. The chosen items to sustainably dye with were two saws, one shovel, one dumbbell, one grill grate, and countless pieces of scrap metal; all overcome with rust. To generate samples assessing the success of different fabrics when rust dyed, I began an experiment with 11 fabric types. To dye the fabric, I generated guidelines for consistency, and kept a log of the reactions. In the documentation, the intake and concentration of the dye are evaluated.

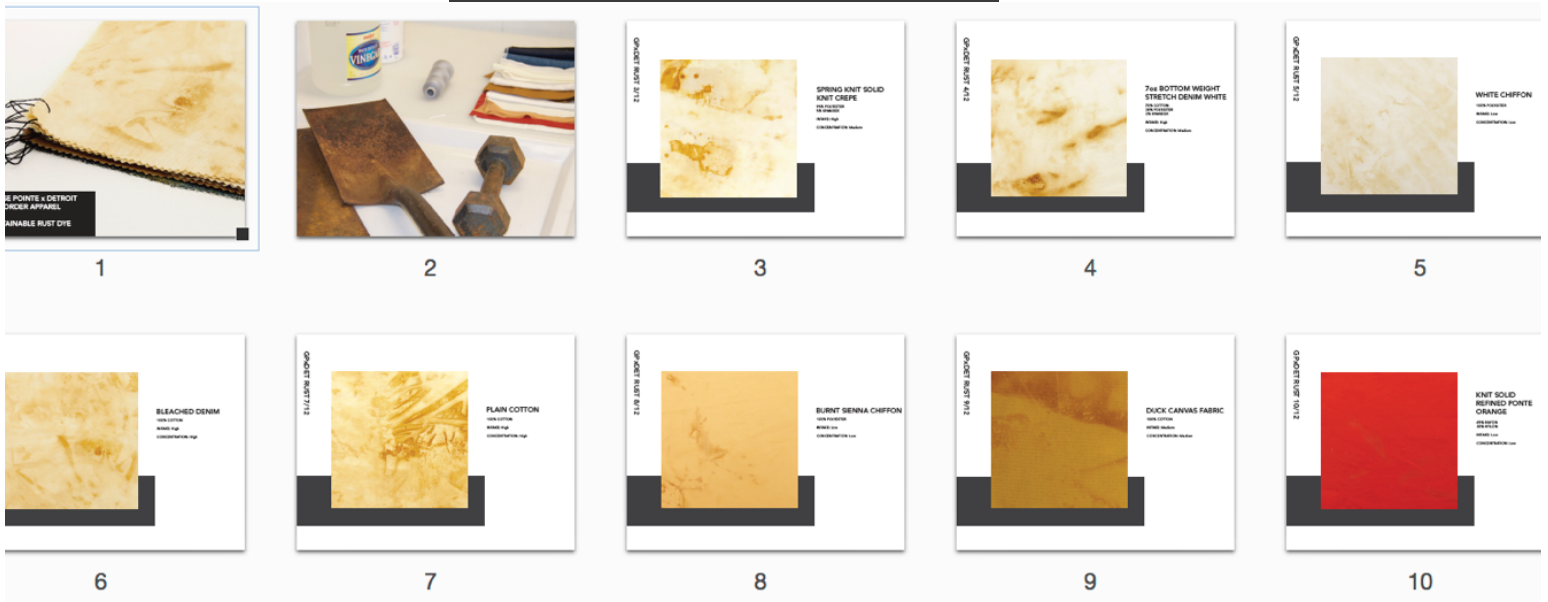
GP x DET RUST 3/12



SPRING KNIT SOLID KNIT CREPE
 95% POLYESTER
 5% SPANDEX
 INTAKE: High
 CONCENTRATION: Medium

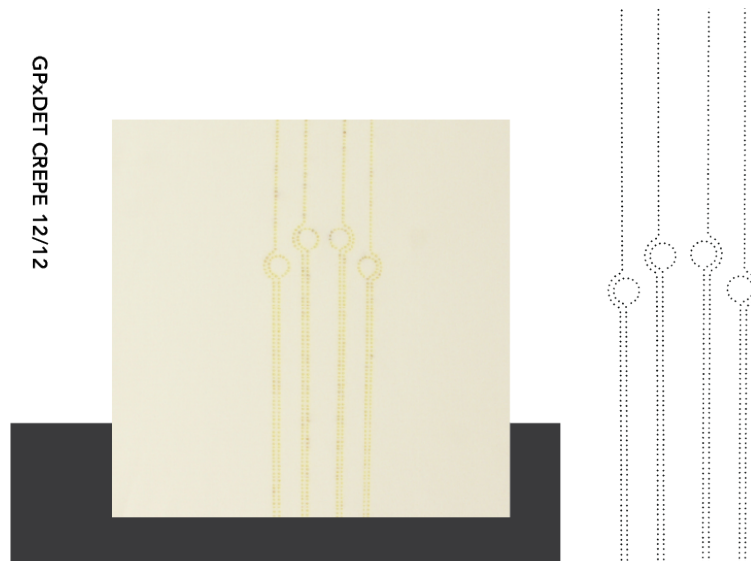
Right: Figure 14
 GP x DET Rust Dye
 Investigation, 3/12

Below: Figure 15
 GP x DET Rust Dye
 Investigation, Brief Excerpt



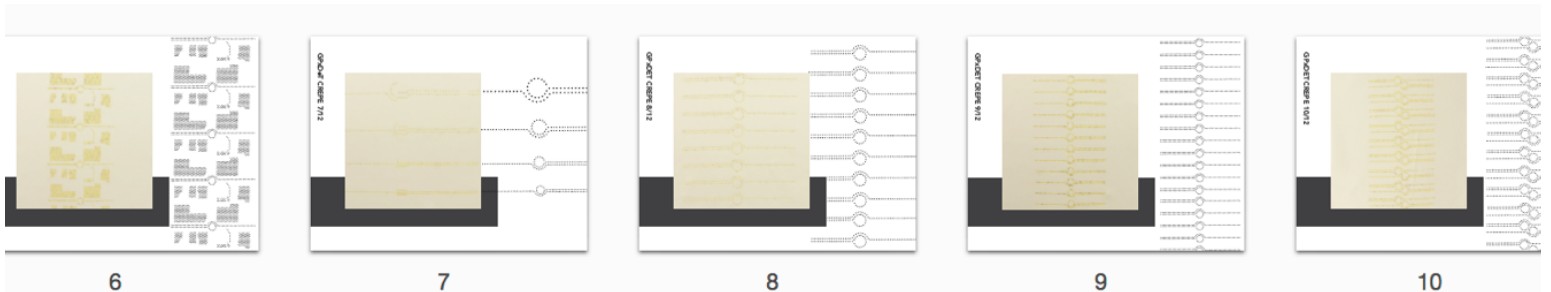
INVESTIGATION 5: KNIT CREPE

By cross examining evidence from Investigations 2-4, I concluded the fabric best suited for laser cut, sewn, and rust dyed processes was "Knit Crepe". With the fabric chosen, I more strategically assessed the pattern that would be used. As an ode to the circular roundabout, I chose to create my patterns using large formations of small circles. Across the investigation, I created patterns that were as simple as an aerial view of the border site, to as complex as how one operates in conjunction with the roundabout depending on the direction they are coming from. Throughout the experiment, I explored how the fabric was affected by the patterns, circle size, and concentration of the circles. The three concluded results for use are depictions of the border site from an aerial view, a depiction of how you operate around the roundabout when approaching it from the Detroit side (fig. 17), and finally a depiction of how operate around the roundabout when approaching from the Grosse Pointe side.



Right: Figure 16
GP x DET *Knit Crepe*
Investigation, Detroit
Directionality

Below: Figure 17
GP x DET *Knit Crepe*
Investigation, Brief Excerpt



6

7

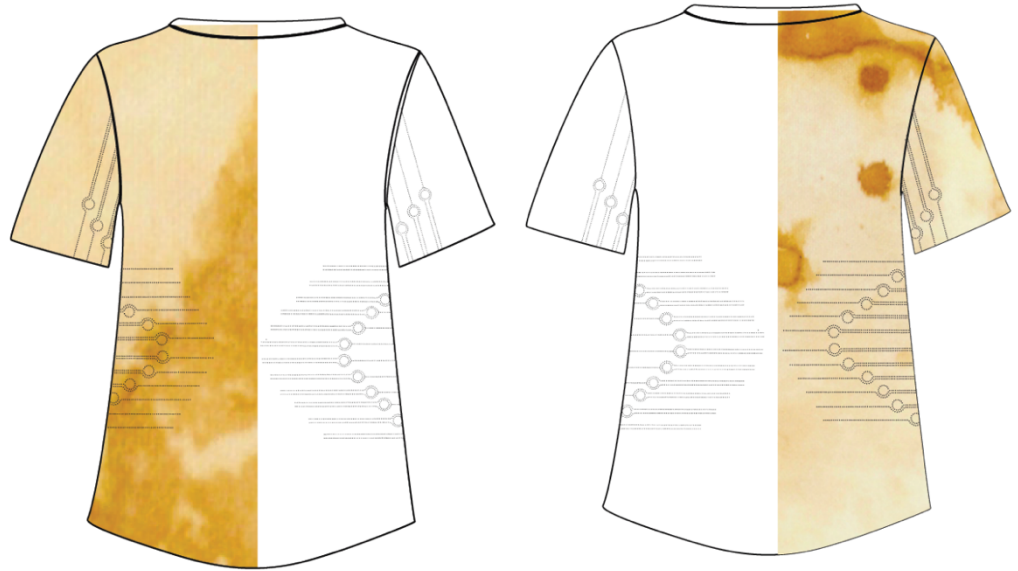
8

9

10

INVESTIGATION 6: PRODUCT FLATS

With the patterns for laser cutting decided, I then revisited Investigation 1 and finalized how the patterns and dye would be applied to the garments across the four outfits.



Above: Figure 18
GP x DET *Final Flat*
Investigation 3/9

Right: Figure 19
GP x DET *Final Flat*
Investigation 9/9

GARMENT CONSTRUCTION

After conducting the investigations to achieve a fully viable color, material, and product design plan, I finally began the generation of the garments. As an example, I will be walking through the creation of The Future pieces.

I began by manually cutting the Knit Crepe material to the correct measurements that would later be sewn together. Like The Divide garments, The Future garments are split down the middle. However, they feature a series of circles that fade in size from the center, revealing the opposing color underneath. This use of color represents the two opposing populations, and the proposal that they seamlessly fade into one another in the future. In order to achieve this layering effect, I cut 8/16 components of the patterns twice, and rust dyed half of all pieces per the guidelines of Investigation 4. After rust dyeing, I laser cut the specific aeration locations on the pieces as decided by Investigation 6. On pieces that represent the Detroit population, a depiction of how you operate around the roundabout when entering from Detroit is present.

Below: Figure 20
GP x DET *The Divide and
The Future*



Similarly, on the Grosse Pointe pieces, a depiction of how you are forced to go around the roundabout and back into the suburb when approaching from the Grosse Pointe side is depicted. Further, a representation of the aerial view of the site is present at the side of each pant leg to tie the look together. These conclusions were decided through Investigation 5.

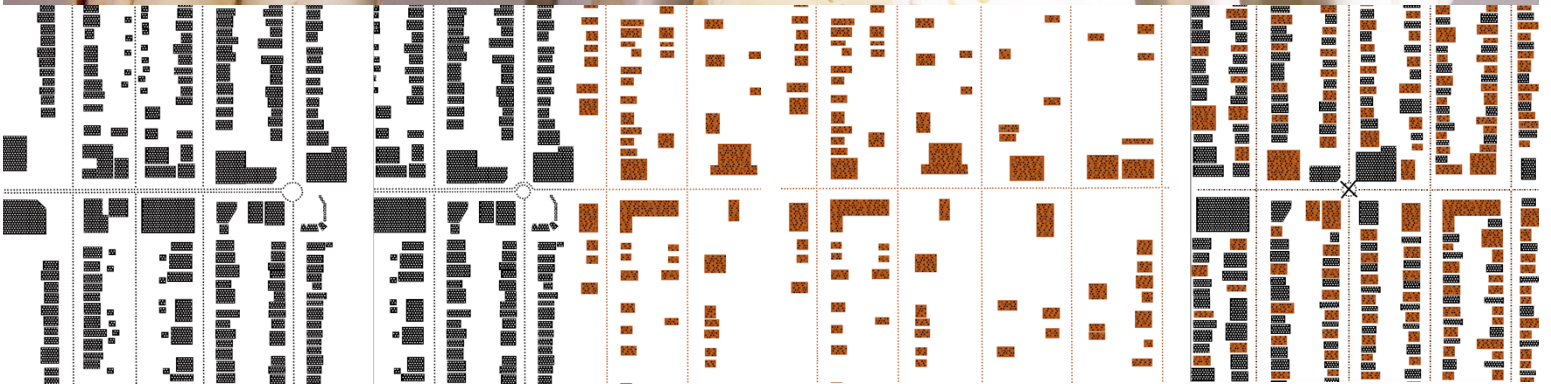
Once each piece was laser cut with the key aeration points, I then laser cut the top layer of the integrated population depictions. At this stage, I also chose to "x" out every roundabout representation across the entire garment, proposing that in this more cohesive future, the roundabout should not exist. This I achieved through hand embroidery.

Finally, I began the full sewing construction by attaching the double-layered pieces to each other, and then moving forward on the total garment creation. Across all garments, I incorporated piping for a sleeker look, elastic in the waistbands, and heavy duty magnetic snaps where they were necessary.

Below: Figure 21
GP x DET *The Divide*
Pants Close Up



CREATIVE WORK



Top: Figure 22
GP x DET *Final Four*

Above Left to Right:
Figure 23, 24, 25, 26: GP,
Divide, DET, Future Maps

In the final installation, all four outfits are worn by four separate mannequins. Each has the respective laser cut depictions of the roundabout representing how that population operates around it. However, in cases such as the GP outfit, alternating depictions of the roundabout exist representing that not everyone in this population has the same mentality about the site. Finally, all mannequins wearing the pieces are a grey tone as to not insinuate any specific race.

Behind the mannequins, there is a formation of posters creating a column, and each mannequin stands on one side of this column; facing and confronting the viewer. The installation posters are aerial map views of each respective population, or future of the population. The posters feature the same use of circles present on the laser cut garments to form the buildings, but the coloring of the poster depends on the intangible mentality of population. With the Grosse Pointe map, the buildings are black and white to represent the suburb's mentality when instating the border. With the Detroit map, the buildings feature

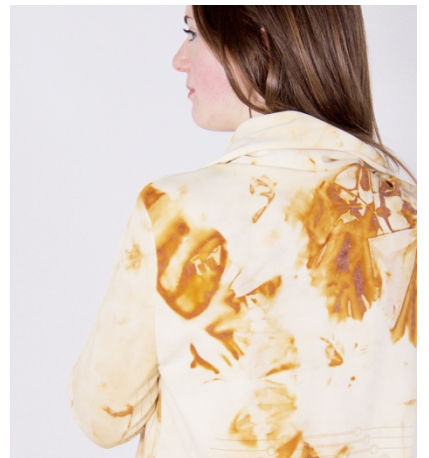
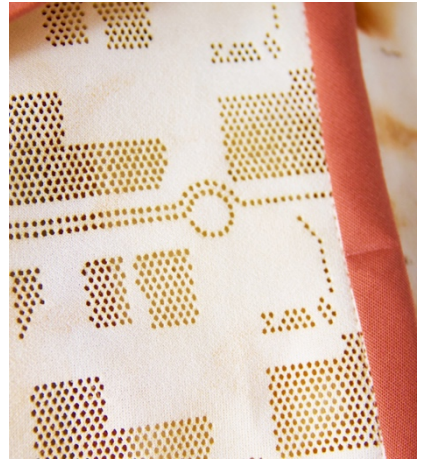
Below: Figure 27
GP x DET Final Installation at
The Penny Stamps Gallery



an unpredictable formation of skin tones, representing the reality of the world outside of Grosse Pointe. On the Future map, building colors alternate. At the foot of the installation, a circle of turf is placed to ode to the "bubble" of Grosse Pointe, and its notorious manicured greenery in comparison to its surrounding neighborhoods. This was installed to reiterate that Grosse Pointe is the source of this border's existence. Finally, each mannequin features shoes that reflect the same decisions of the posters. For example, THE DIVIDE outfit has one black and white shoe on the Grosse Pointe side, and one skin tone shoe on the Detroit side.

Beyond the gallery, I aimed to make this line a viable business. I created a package design scheme, brand guidelines, functioning website, and Instagram to assess its possible success or failure. Until this border is eradicated, the future of this line is limitless.

DET



GP



DIVIDE



FUTURE



CONCLUSION

GP x DET was the most uncomfortable project I have created to date.

To confront the town generations of my family have lived in took more strength than I anticipated. Traditionally, I find myself stuck in an artistic practice that revolves around what the customer wants, or what is the most “safe”. This wave of confrontation and questioning was necessary for growth in my artistic career, and I am sure my comfort with speaking up will expand exponentially due to this project. Being the first one to confront a longstanding issue is always the hardest, but I hope my experience with the border at the edge of my hometown inspires others to take down physical and ideological borders in their lives.

To banish stereotypes. To promote equality.

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