

NICOLA CROOKS

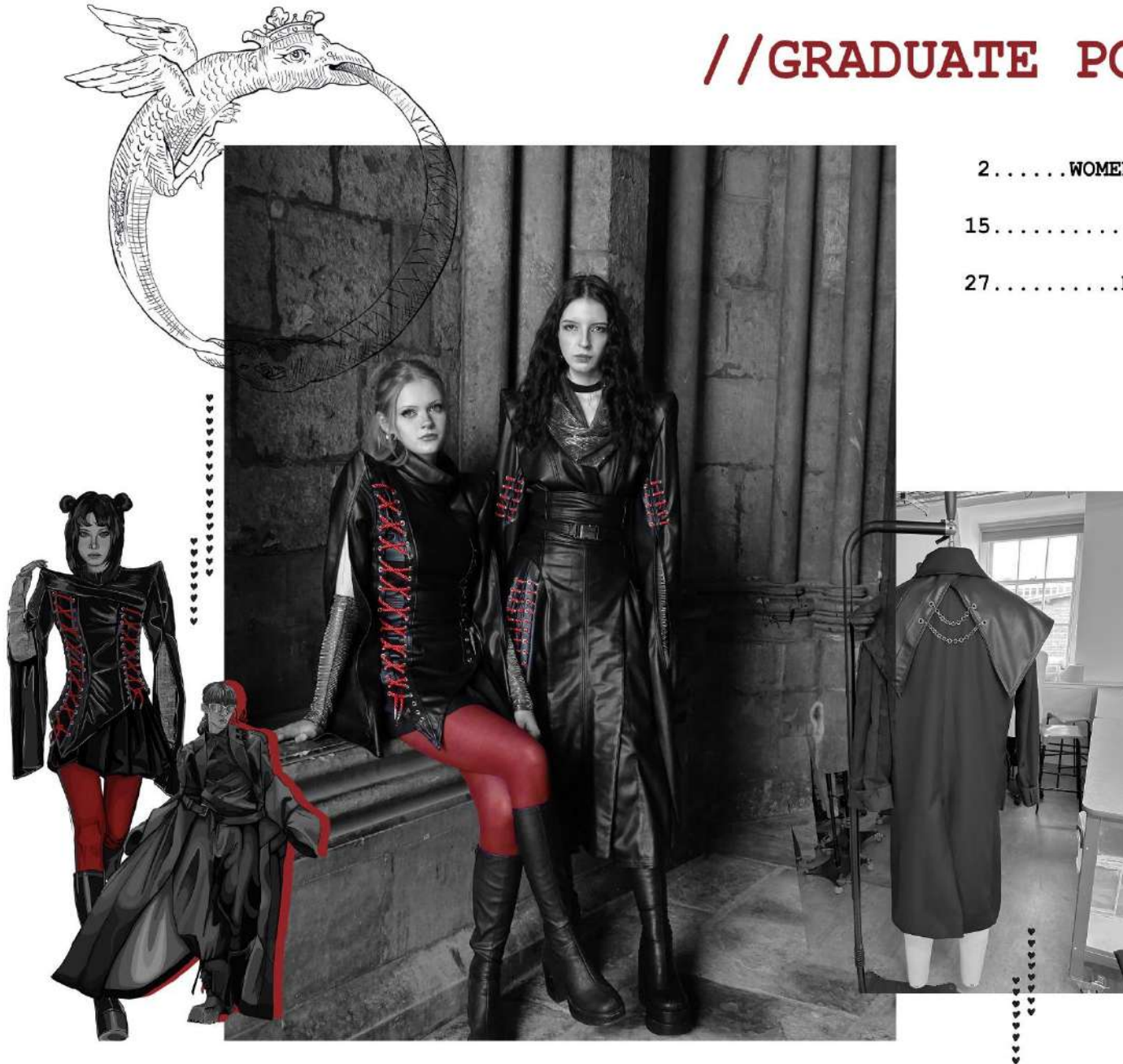
//GRADUATE PORTFOLIO//2025

//CONTENTS

2.....WOMENSWEAR MAINLINE GRADUATE COLLECTION

15.....MENSWEAR DIFFUSION COLLECTION

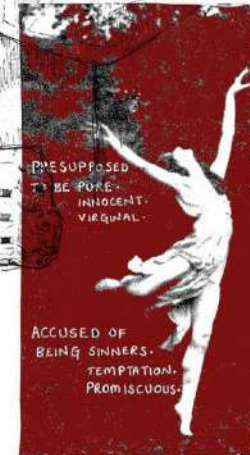
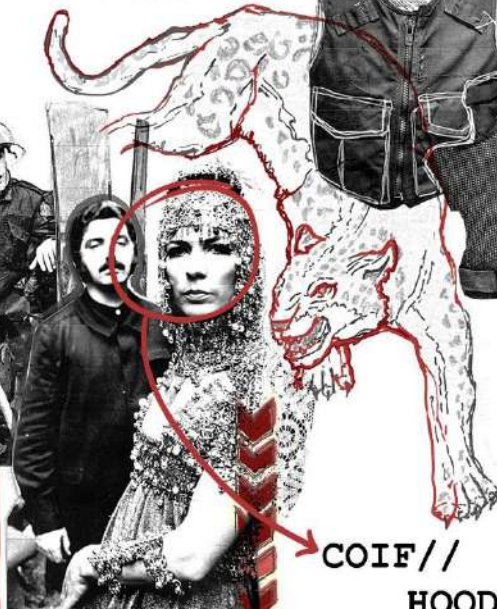
27.....MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME



⋮ A Shadow on the Wall.

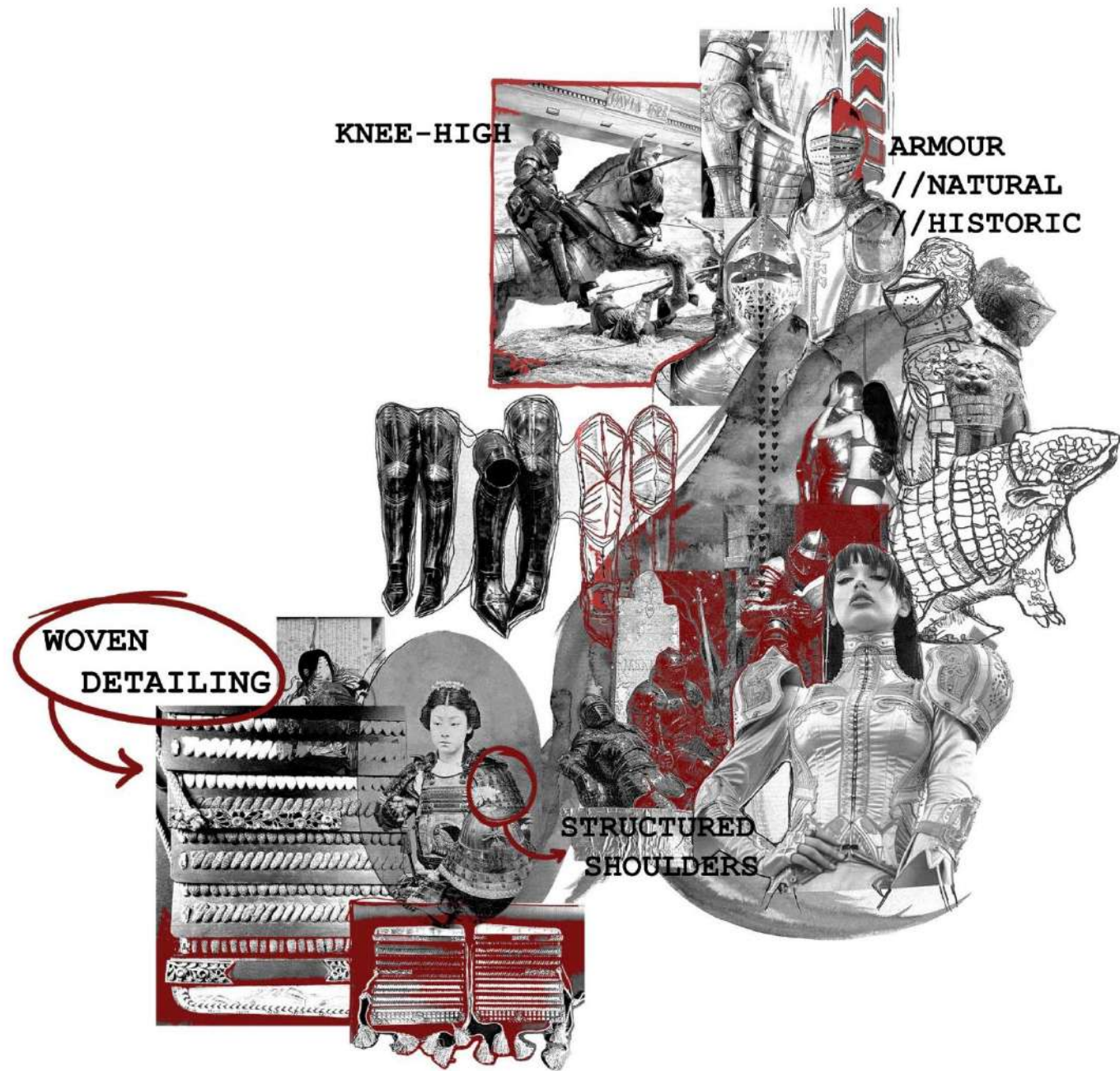
-Varys, Game of Thrones, Season 2 Episode 3.





**YERS OF
LVER**

INITIAL CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



KNEE-HIGH

ARMOUR
//NATURAL
//HISTORIC

WOVEN
DETAILING

STRUCTURED
SHOULDERS

EXPLORING HISTORICAL IDEOLOGIES OF POWER
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

ROLLED UP LONG SLEEVES

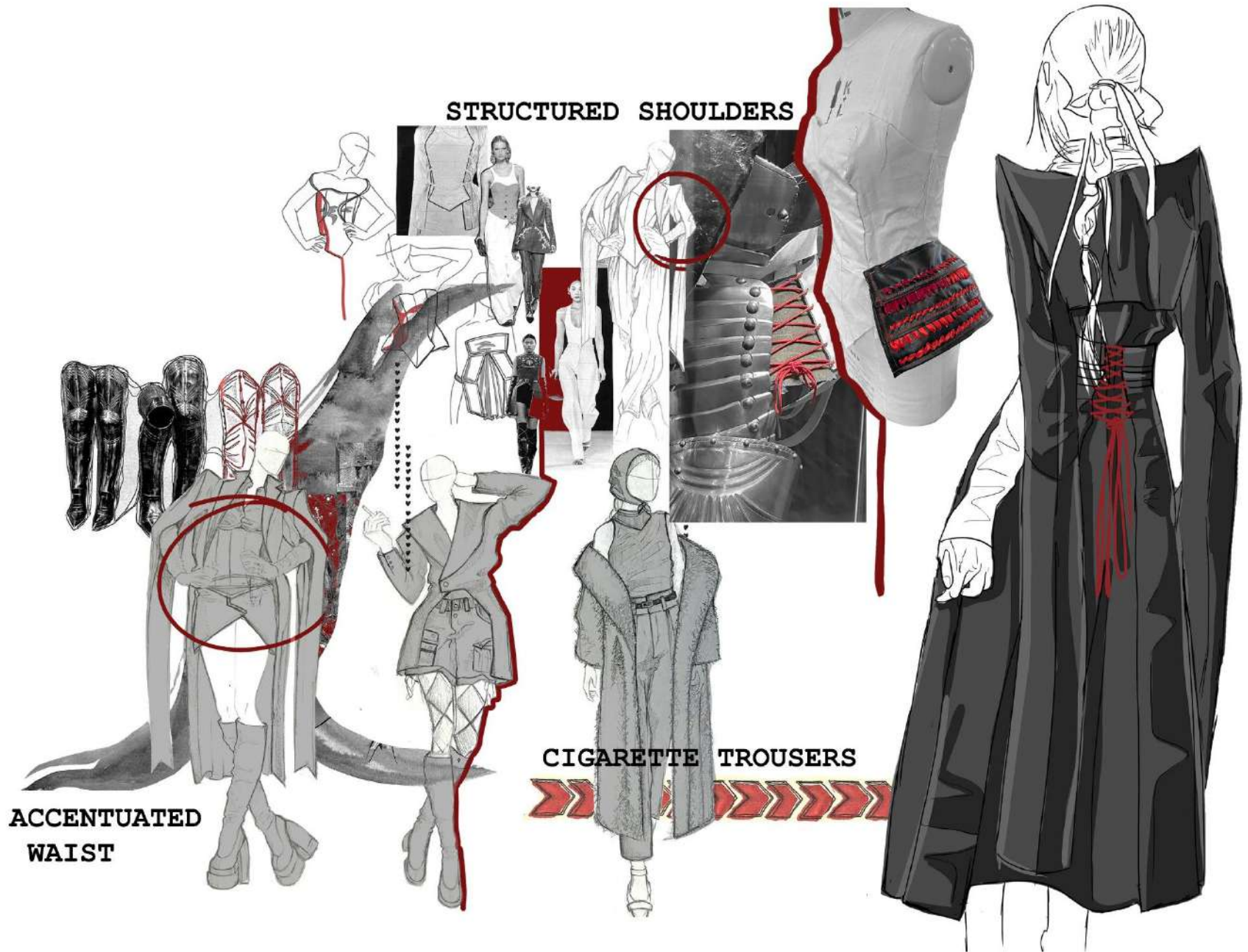
POINTED SHOULDERS

HISTORICAL

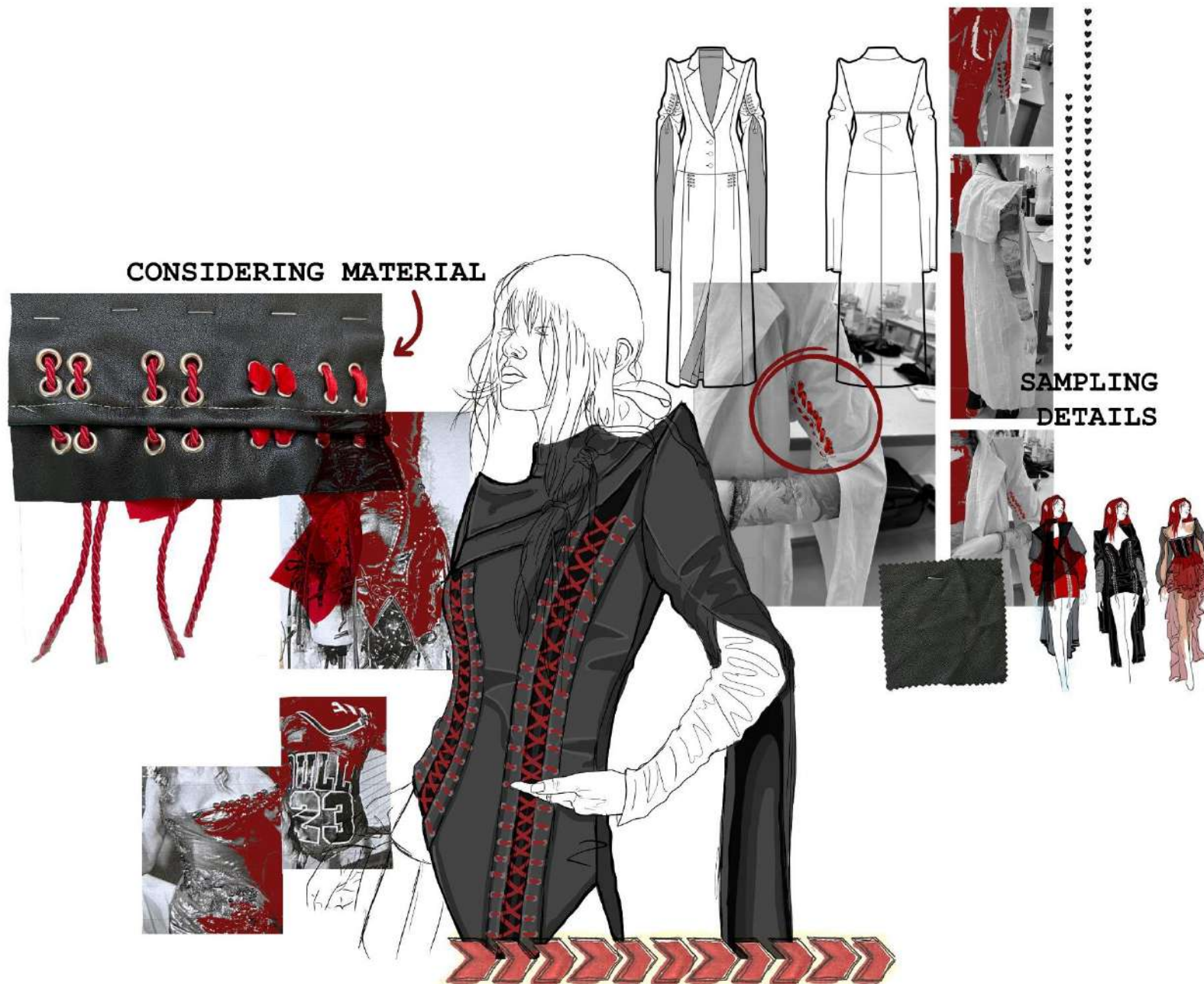
NOW

FEMININITY VS MASCULINITY

CONSIDERING POLITICAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



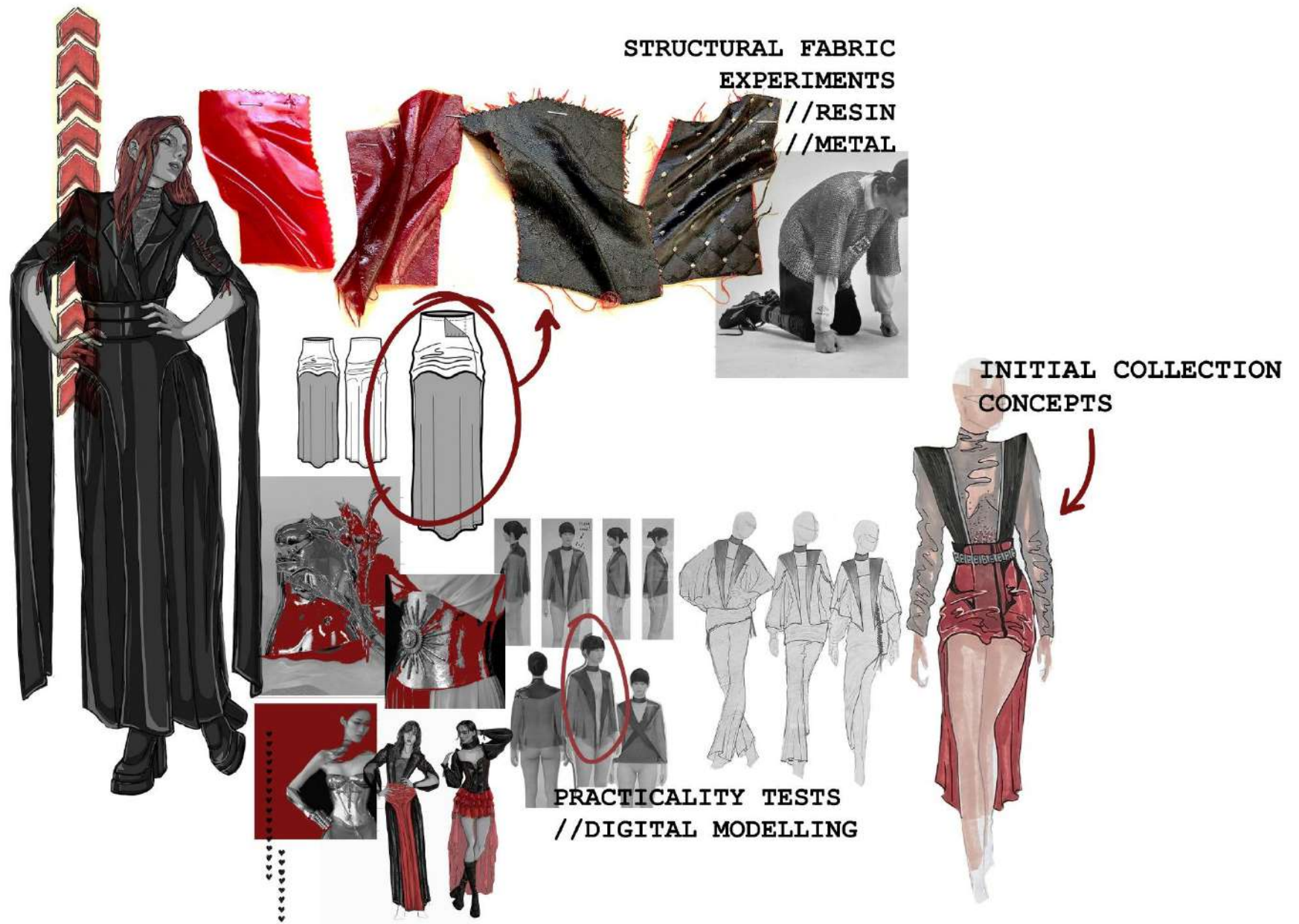
INITIAL DESIGN IDEAS AND HOW THEY DEVELOPED INTO THEMES AND FINAL PRODUCTS THROUGHOUT THE COLLECTION
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



CONSIDERING MATERIAL

SAMPLING
DETAILS

SAMPLING AND TOILES THAT INFORMED FINAL PRODUCTS
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



CURVE-BALL MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS AND DIGITAL MODELLING
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

INITIAL TOILES
AND FITTINGS

//EXPANDING AND MODERNISING
THE COLLECTION



DELIBERATING
OVER HARDWARE AND FABRIC

REFINING COLLECTION IDEAS AND PRODUCING ESTABLISHED TOILES
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



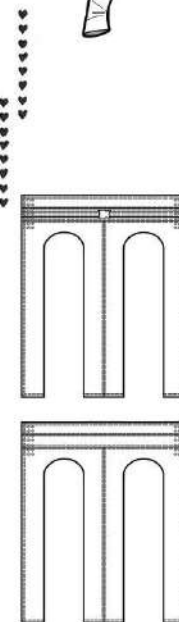
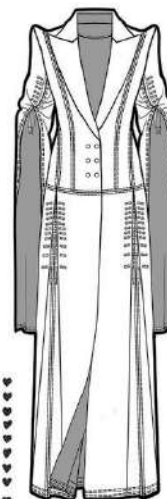
EXTENDED COLLECTION
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



CAPSULE COLLECTION THAT WILL BE MANUFACTURED
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

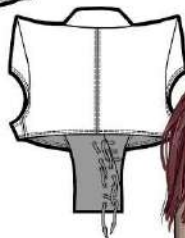
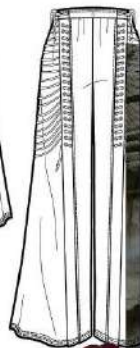
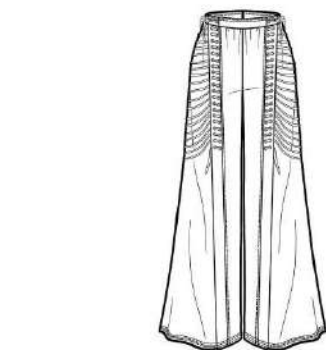


LEATHER DUSTER COAT;
MAXI BELT;
HOODED COWL TOP.



LOOK ONE TECHNICAL BREAKDOWN

A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



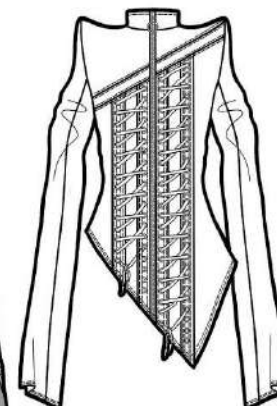
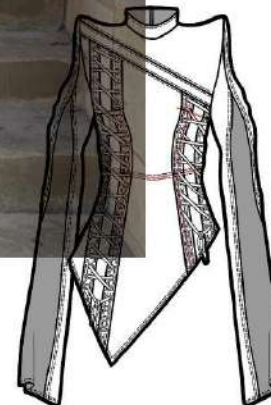
LOOK 2

CROPPED BLAZER;
FLARED TROUSERS;
HIGH-NECK
STRETCH TOP



LEATHER TUNIC;
PLEATED SKIRT.

LOOK 3



LOOK TWO AND THREE TECHNICAL BREAKDOWNS
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

DIFFUSION COLLECTION

NICOLA CROOKS

MENSWEAR//AUTUMN/WINTER 24



"In terms of the mechanics of story,
myth is an intriguing one
because we didn't make myth up;
myth is an

**imprinture of the
human condition."**

-Baz Luhrmann



INITIAL CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS

HIGH NECK
//LARGE SILHOUETTE

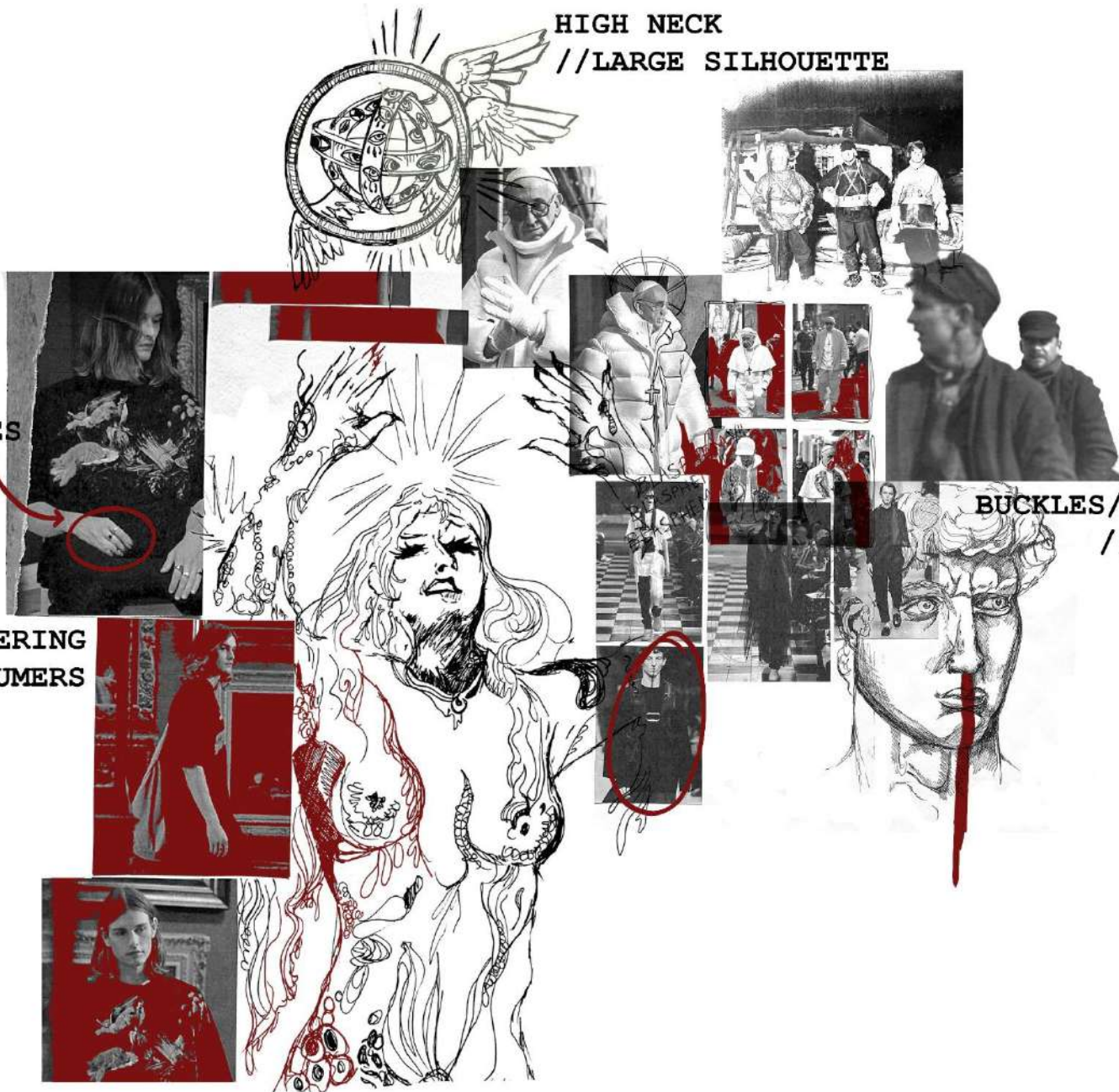
ACCESSORIES

BUCKLES//STRAPS
//HARDWARE

CONSIDERING
CONSUMERS

CONSIDERING CONSUMERS AND MODERN CONTEXTS

IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS





STONE WASHED PRINT

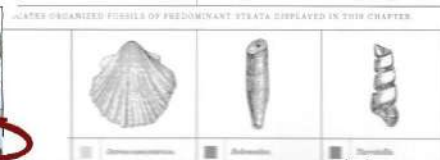


LARGE POCKETS

//STRAPS

4. SAND & LIGHT LOAM.

UTILITY
//FUNCTION
//PURPOSE

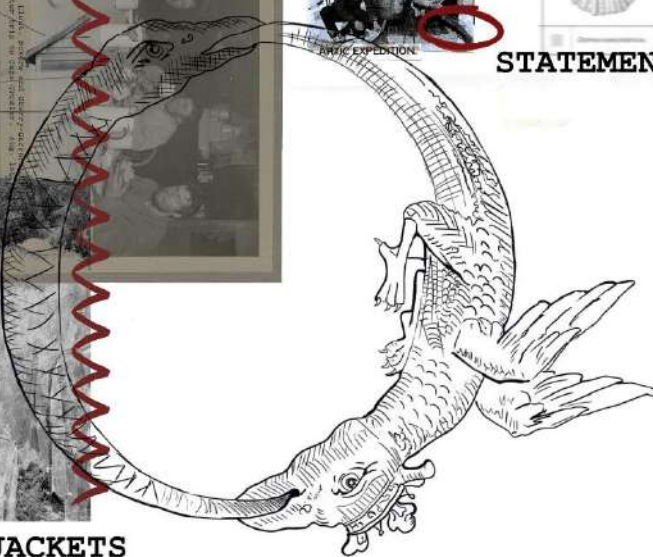


STATEMENT BOOTS//HAT//GLASSES



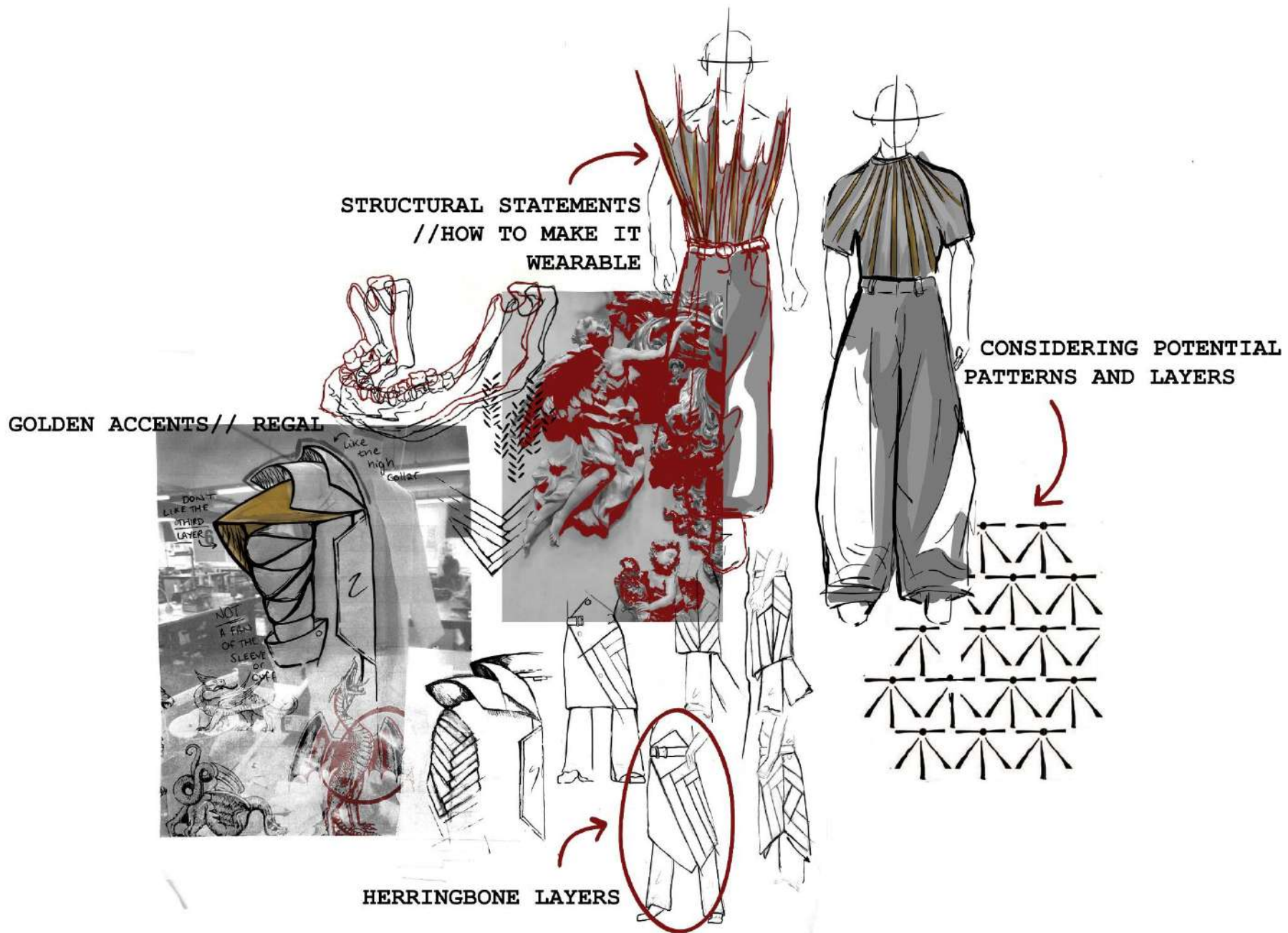
FORMAL JACKETS

//TRENCH COATS



EXISTING PRODUCT RESEARCH

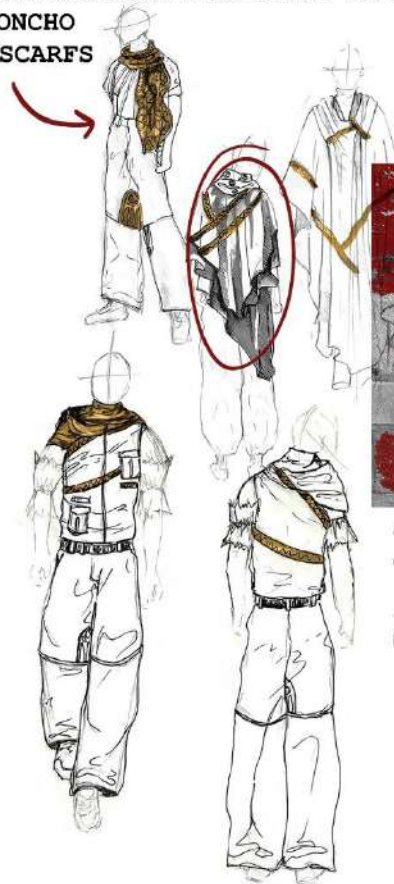
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS



DELIBERATING OVER DESIGN DIRECTION
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION // AUTUMN WINTER 23/24 // NICOLA CROOKS

UNCONVENTIONAL MASCULINE ITEMS

//PONCHO
//SCARFS



//UTILITY
//BUCKLES, STRAPS, GATHERING



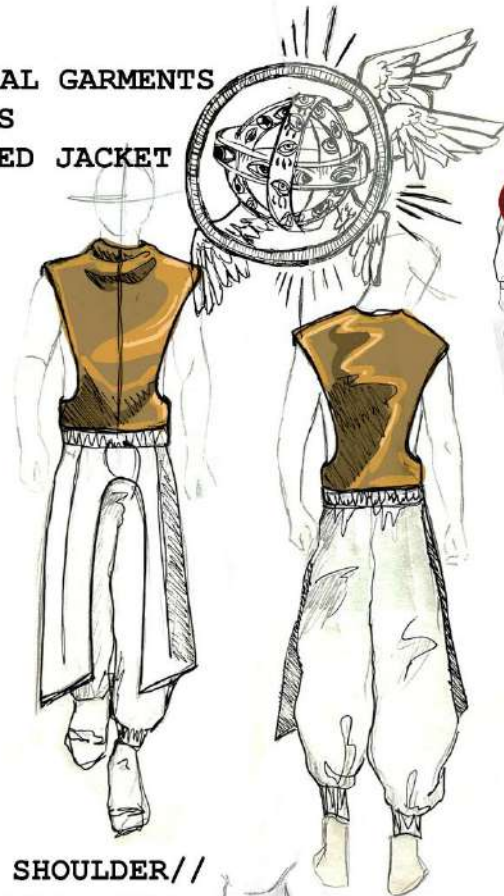
LARGER SILHOUETTES WITH
INTRICATE TOPSTITCHING



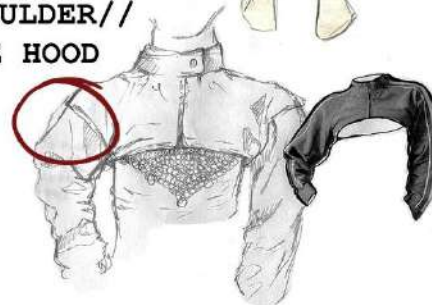
DETAILING AND SILHOUETTES

IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS

ATYPICAL GARMENTS
//GILETS
//CROPPED JACKET



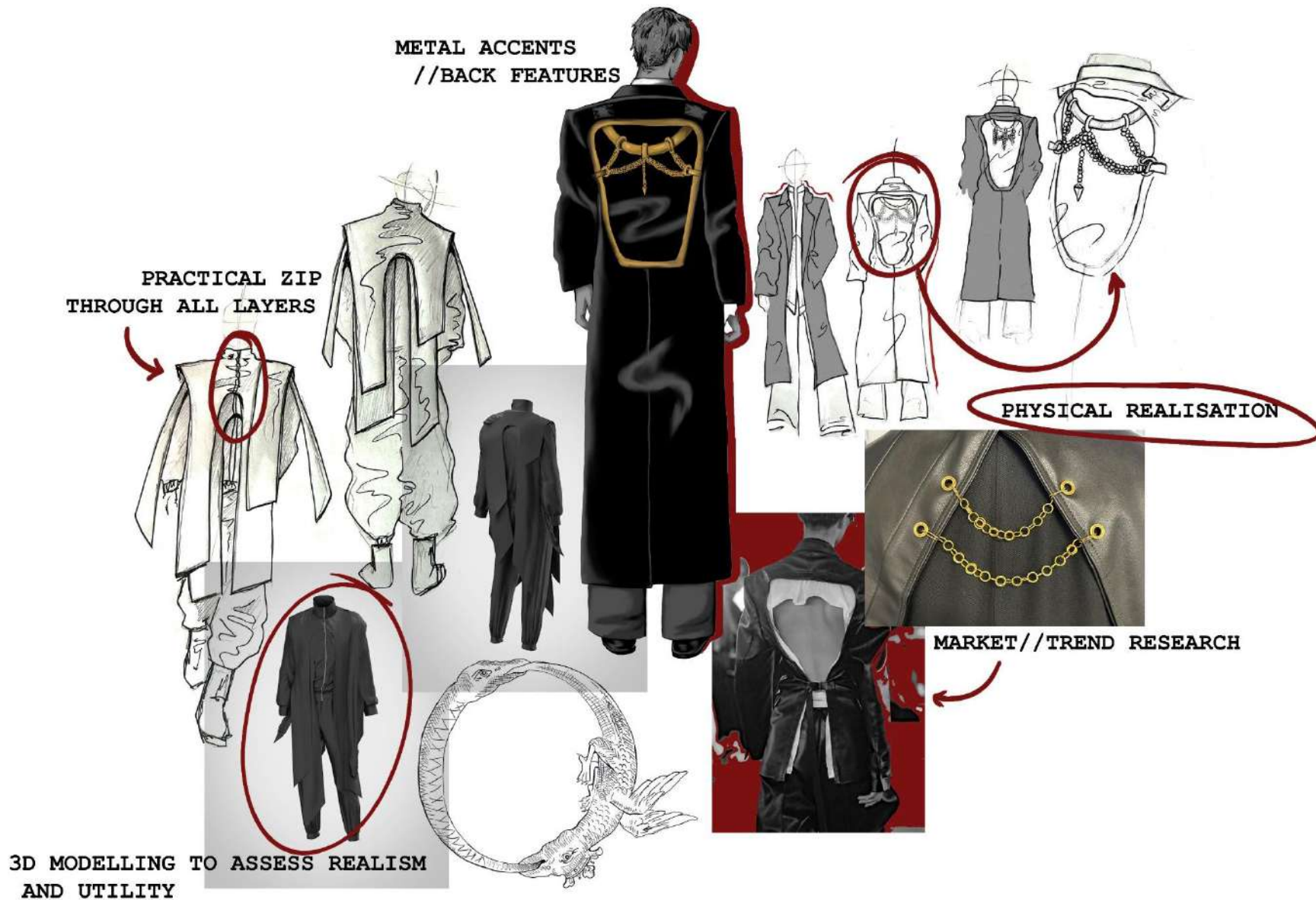
DROPPED SHOULDER//
DETACHABLE HOOD



CLO-3D MOCK-UP
//PATTERN PLACEMENT



REFINING DESIGN IDEAS UTILISING DIGITAL MODELS
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS



FINALISING COLLECTION
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS



RANGE PLAN FOR LOOK TWO AND THREE TO ACCESS COLOUR AND PATTERN PLACEMENT
 IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS



FINAL COLLECTION
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS



FINAL COLLECTION
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS

//COMPETITION BRIEF

MCM LONDON INTERNATIONAL 'COSPLAY' LEAGUE 2025

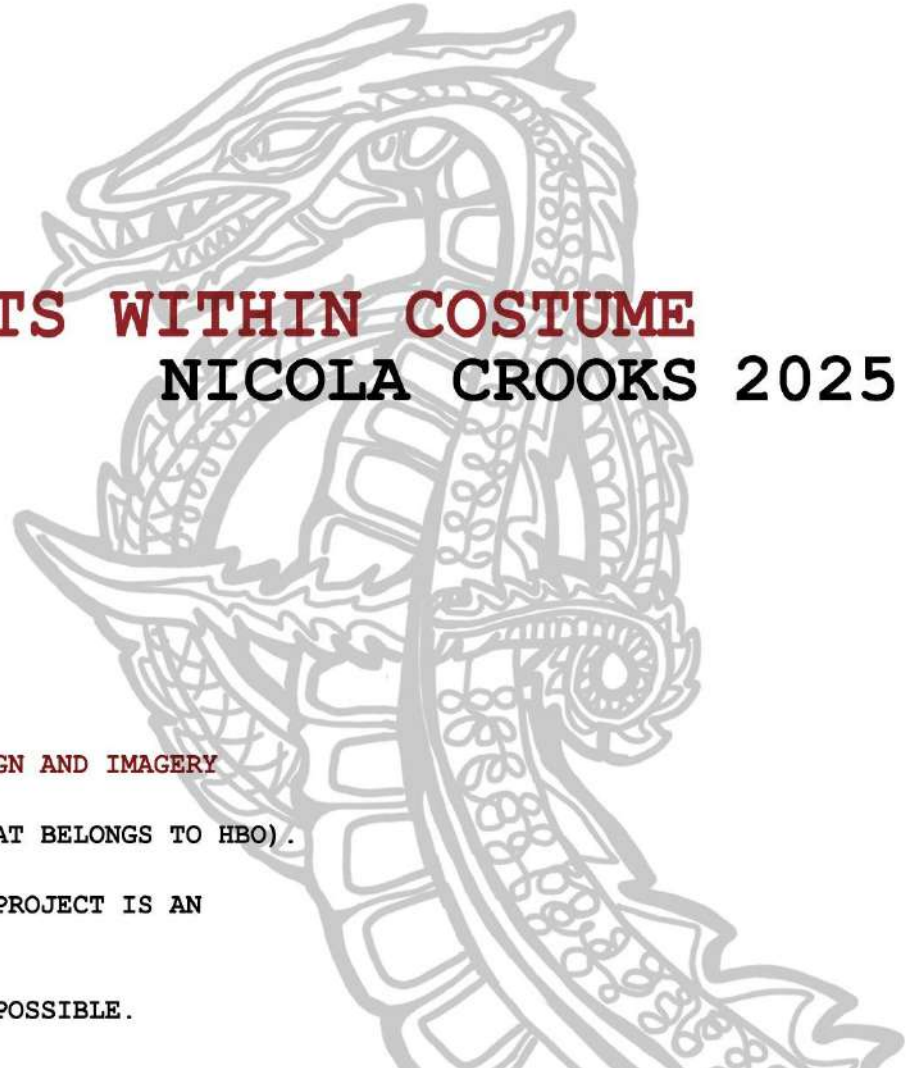
I WILL BE ENTERING THE SOLO CATEGORY, WHICH IS JUDGED EXCLUSIVELY ON CRAFTSMANSHIP.
THE FIRST ROUND TAKES PLACE SATURDAY 24TH MAY.

THE FINALS WILL TAKE PLACE IN MADRID.

THE JUDGEMENT CRITERIA INCLUDES: 'RESEMBLANCE TO REFERENCE; PRECISION;
QUALITY AND TECHNIQUES USED IN CONSTRUCTION.'
(ACCORDING TO THE MCM LONDON RULE BOOK)



MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME NICOLA CROOKS 2025



//THE PLAN

I WILL BE USING REFERENCES FROM 'HOUSE OF THE DRAGON'
OF THE CHARACTER 'DAEMON TARGARYEN'. ALL COPYRIGHT OF INITIAL DESIGN AND IMAGERY
BELONGS TO HBO.

FOR THIS COSTUME CREATION, I SHALL NOT BE FOCUSING ON DESIGN (AS THAT BELONGS TO HBO).

I WILL BE EDITING THE COSTUME TO SUIT A FEMININE WEARER, BUT THIS PROJECT IS AN
EXPLORATION OF MATERIALS, INCLUDING THERMOPLASTICS AND EVA FOAM.

I WILL BE DISCOVERING HOW TO PREP, PRIME AND PAINT SUCH MATERIALS,
TRYING TO MAKE A REALISTIC COSTUME WHILST KEEPING COSTS AS LOW AS POSSIBLE.



“YOU CANNOT LIVE YOUR
LIFE IN FEAR, OR YOU
WILL FORSAKE THE BEST
PARTS OF IT.”

DRAGON MOTIF;
// SCALES
// WINGS



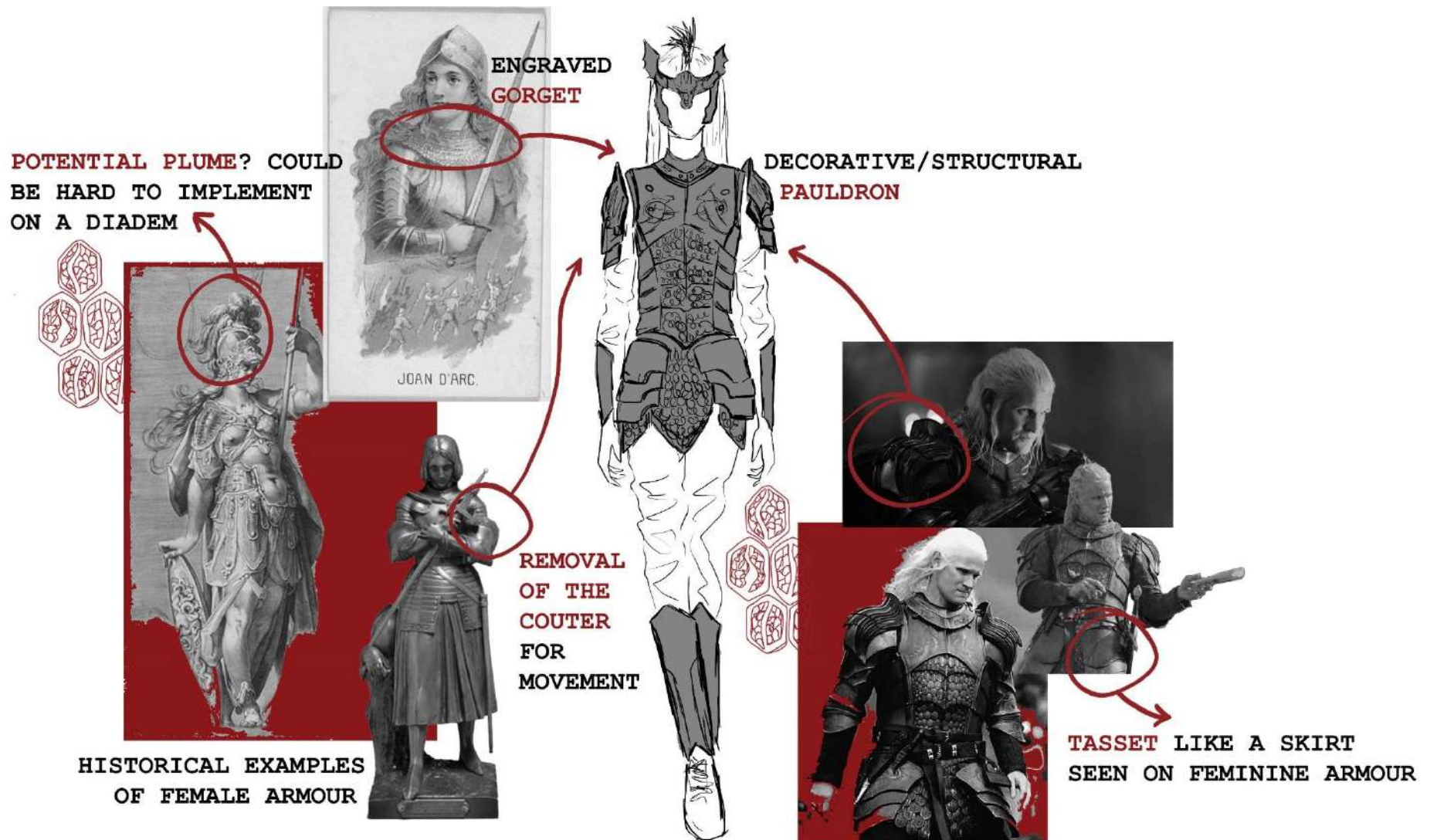
ENGRAVINGS



MANEUVERABILITY

ASSESSING REFERENCES AND DESIGN CONTEXTS

MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS



CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE GENDER DESIGN BASED ON REFERENCE IMAGES AND HISTORICAL FEMININE ARMOUR
 MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

// MATERIAL VERSATILITY

WHAT MATERIALS ARE MOST SUITABLE?

// THERMOPLASTIC

EASILY MANEUVERABLE
HEAT ACTIVATED

SCULPTABLE CHEAP
ENGRAVABLE EASILY ACCESSIBLE
REWORKABLE VARYING DENSITY
EXPENSIVE LIGHTWEIGHT

// METAL

COSTUME ACCURATE
ENGRAVABLE
HEAVY
HARD TO CRAFT
EXPENSIVE

// EVA FOAM

// THERMOPLASTIC

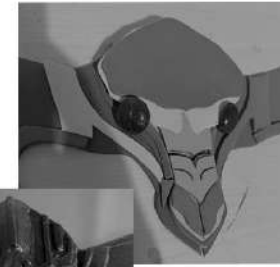
CAN BE USED TO CREATE
INTICATE DETAILING AND A SMOOTH FINISH



CONSIDERING MATERIALS

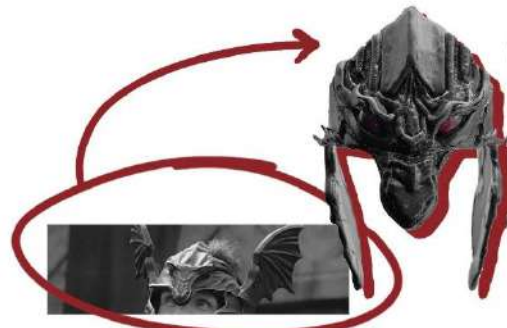
MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

BUILDING LAYERS
 ADDING DETAIL WITH SCRAPS, INITIALLY WITH FOAM
 THEN WITH THE WORBLA, LIKE YOU WOULD WITH CLAY
 IT COOLS AND HARDENS INTO SHAPE, BUT CAN
 BE REACTIVATED WITH HEAT



//HELMET

ALTERED DESIGN TO BE MORE FEMININE
 //NO LONGER FULLY ENCLOSED
 //NARROWED FACEPLATES



//PROCESS

LAYERED EVA FOAM
 (6MM FOR MAIN BODY, 2MM FOR DETAILING)

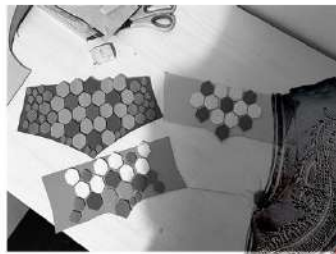
THERMOPLASTIC (WORBLA)
 NEEDS HEAT TO BECOME PLIABLE.
 TOOL: HEAT GUN.



EXPERIMENTAL SCULPTING WITH MATERIAL CHOICES
 MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS



SOMETIMES WORKING WITH WORBLA CAN BE DIFFICULT ON A SMALLER SCALE. ENGRAVING DETAILS ONTO A SMALLER DESIGN CAN RESULT IN RIPS AND THE SHAPES LOOKING MESSIER.



//WORKING WITH THERMOPLASTIC (WORBLA)

WORKING WITH WORBLA IS SURPRISINGLY EASY.

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED IS A HEATGUN, AND SOME BASIC TOOLS. I'M USING CLAY TOOLS, AS THEY ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

WORBLA IS COMPLETELY NON-TOXIC, SO IT CAN BE USED WITHOUT VENTILATION.

WHEN HEATED, IT CAN BE MOULDED AND ETCHED INTO, AND IT WILL HARDEN WHEN IT COOLS, INTO PLASTIC.

//CONSIDERING HAIR

FINDING A REALISTIC WIG IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT

LOTS OF RESEARCH RESULTED IN AS SIMILAR COLOUR AS POSSIBLE, WHILST STILL LOOKING NATURAL. STYLING WIGS IS

ALSO SOMETHING I HAVE NEVER DONE BEFORE. IT WAS DEFINITELY A LEARNING CURVE.

BUT I AM HAPPY WITH THE RESULT. I

NEED TO WORK OUT HOW TO HIDE THE ELASTIC.



ENGRAVING AND CRAFTING WITH THERMOPLASTICS//CONSIDERING THE REST OF THE COSTUME
MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

INSTEAD OF CREATING THE WHOLE SWORD, I CREATED
A SHEATH TO SIT OVER THE BASE WITH SCRAP FABRIC.

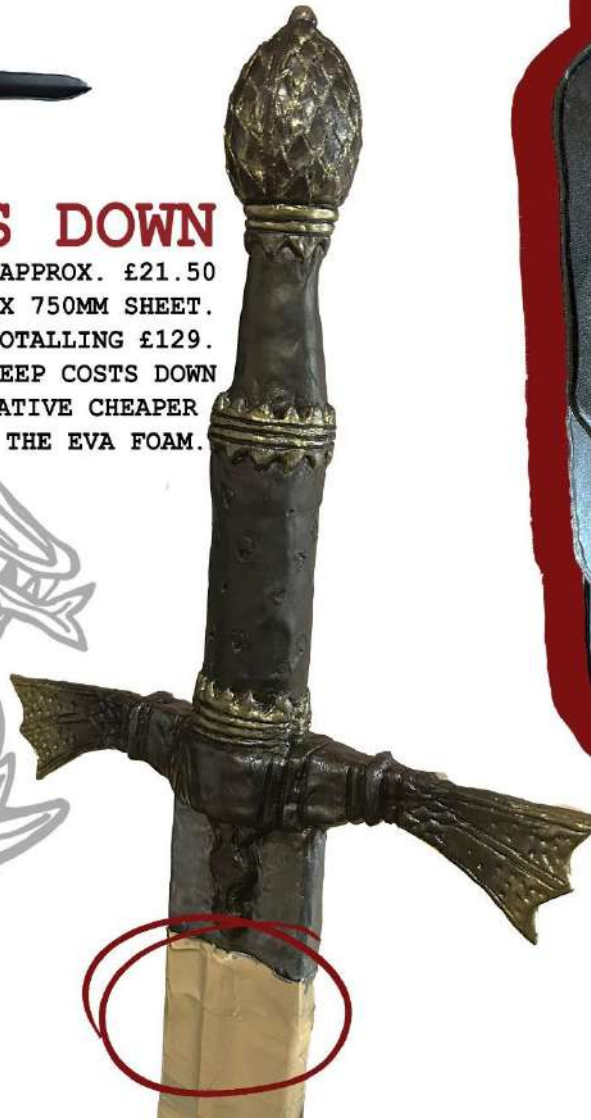


//KEEPING COSTS DOWN

WORBLA IS EXPENSIVE. APPROX. £21.50
PER 500MM X 750MM SHEET.

FOR THE ARMOUR, I USED 6 SHEETS, TOTALLING £129.

TO KEEP COSTS DOWN
I BEGAN USING ALTERNATIVE CHEAPER
MATERIALS, LIKE THE EVA FOAM.



FOR THE
TASSET, I ONLY
USED WORBLA
ON THE
ENGRAVED TOP
LAYER. FOR
THE REST
I USED EVA
FOAM.

INSTEAD OF USING WORBLA
FOR ALL DETAILS, I.E
DECORATIVE TRIM, HOT
GLUE WAS USED INSTEAD.

ASSESSING BUDGET OPTIONS

MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

// PRIMING

THERMOPLASTIC AND EVA FOAM IS NOT DIRECTLY PAINTABLE
IT REQUIRES PRIMING

PRIMING OPTIONS:

WOOD GLUE: SMOOTHER FINISH, MORE EXPENSIVE

FLEXIBOND: BEST OPTION, BUT HARD TO SOURCE IN UK

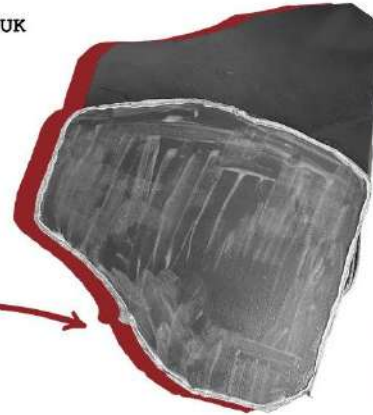
PVA: INEXPENSIVE,
AND CAN ACHIEVE SIMILAR RESULTS TO WOOD GLUE
JUST TAKES MORE COATS



PVA

WENT WITH PVA AS IT WAS THE MOST
AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND
YIELDED A GOOD FINISH

ABOVE IS THE HELMET, TASSET AND GREAVES
IN THE PROCESS OF PRIMING



THE MIXTURE USED IS
2:1 PVA TO WATER



ANY GEMS OR ELEMENTS
THAT DON'T REQUIRE PRIMING
MUST BE COVERED. MASKING TAPE IS
PREFERABLE DUE TO EASE OF REMOVAL

PRIMING THERMOPLASTICS AND EVA FOAM

MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

THE ARMOUR HAS A RED DECORATIVE TRIM,
WHICH HIGHLIGHTS AND MAKES THE METALLIC ELEMENTS
LOOK MORE REALISTIC.
THE BELOW TASSETS ARE STILL DRYING IN THE PHOTO,
SO IT LOOKS SLIGHTLY PATCHY.
TO SEAL THE PAINT, I WILL APPLY AN ADDITIONAL 2 LAYERS OF PVA.

I ADDED METALLIC FASTENINGS TO ATTACH ELEMENTS OF THE
ARMOUR TO THE MAIN BODY, SO IT WOULD BE
A SECURE CONNECTION

//PAINTING AND AGING
HOW CAN I MAKE THE ARMOUR LOOK WORN AND METALLIC?

USING METALLIC ACRYLIC PAINT
SILVER IMIT FOR HIGHLIGHTS, BLACK PEARL
AND REGULAR BLACK ACRYLIC FOR SHADOWS AND DIRT



ENGRAVINGS AND SCULPTURAL ELEMENTS
OF THE COSTUME WOULD REALISTICALLY GATHER DIRT
ESPECIALLY IN A BATTLE CONTEXT.
USING A DARKER PAINT/BLACK TO CREATE SHADOWS
AND IN THE ENGRAVINGS ADDS A LEVEL OF REALISM.



PAINTING AND FINISHING
MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS

//CURRENT STATE OF CONSTRUCTION

THIS IS HOW THE COSTUME LOOKS NOW.

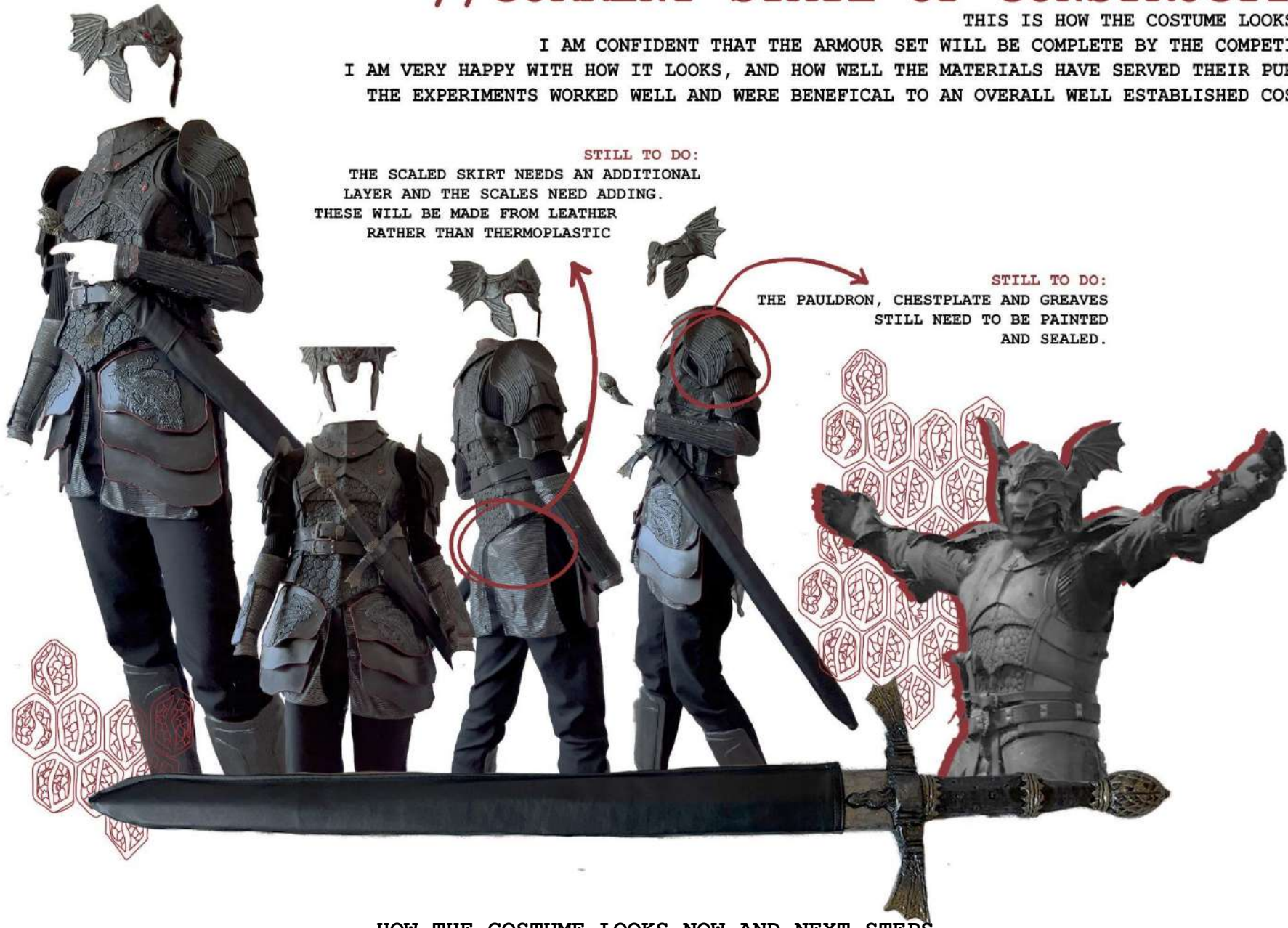
I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE ARMOUR SET WILL BE COMPLETE BY THE COMPETITION.
I AM VERY HAPPY WITH HOW IT LOOKS, AND HOW WELL THE MATERIALS HAVE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE.
THE EXPERIMENTS WORKED WELL AND WERE BENEFICIAL TO AN OVERALL WELL ESTABLISHED COSTUME.

STILL TO DO:

THE SCALED SKIRT NEEDS AN ADDITIONAL
LAYER AND THE SCALES NEED ADDING.
THESE WILL BE MADE FROM LEATHER
RATHER THAN THERMOPLASTIC

STILL TO DO:

THE PAULDRON, CHESTPLATE AND GREAVES
STILL NEED TO BE PAINTED
AND SEALED.



HOW THE COSTUME LOOKS NOW AND NEXT STEPS

MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS