

## Bangladeshi Rickshaw craft: Digital ideation in authentic recontextualisation of Rickshaw craft for contemporary fashion

This project investigates the origin of the Bangladeshi rickshaw. A highly ornamental vehicle covered in regional folk art. This distinct art is handcrafted using only local technology and materials. The research aims to identify the unique elements that make this craft authentic and suggests ways to recontextualise and reimagine the craft through contemporary fashion. Predominantly practiced by male artists the longevity and preservation of this craft are dependent on developing new iterations of it. This research does not conclude one specific result for the recontextualisation but rather emphasises the potential this craft has for recontextualisation through digitally generated ideas.

This research employs a mixture of research methods and theoretical ideas identified by scholarly academics whose work is centered around Practice-led research, Reflection-in-action, and Phenomenology. As well as an analysis of Rickshaw artists and their practice. It focuses on a range of disciplines including cultural studies, material culture, and digital fashion communication. The catalyst of this thesis is Rickshaw hood, which has been the subject of sensory ethnography and observational analysis of this research.

50's



Dhaka, Bangladesh (1956)  
Photo Courtesy- Jefferson

60's



Street scene of Old Dhaka, Dhaka (1968)  
Photographer- Hiroji Kubota

70's

4 Number Route Bus, Dhaka, Bangladesh. November (1974)  
Photographer- Michele L...



Street scene of Chittagong, Bangladesh (1960s)  
Photographer- Harisson Forman



Nawabpur road, Dhaka, Bangladesh (1972)  
Photographer- Rick Durrance II



Street scene of Dhaka. (1981)  
Photographer- John Isaac

2010-



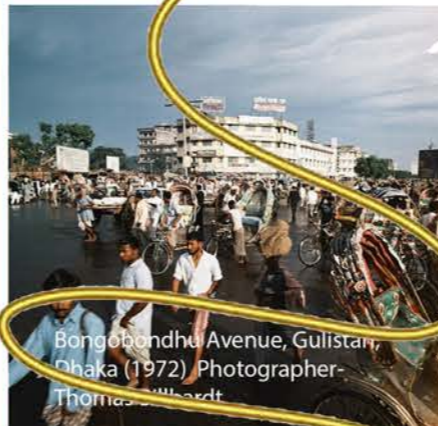
courtesy: ABC



courtesy: CNN



Street scene of Chittagong, Bangladesh (1960s)  
Photographer- Harisson Forman



Bongobandhu Avenue, Gullistan, Dhaka (1972)  
Photographer- Thomas Willhardt



Pope John Paul II rides in a three-wheeled bicycle rickshaw at the Vatican Mission in Dhaka, Bangladesh. 1986  
Photographer: Arturo Mari

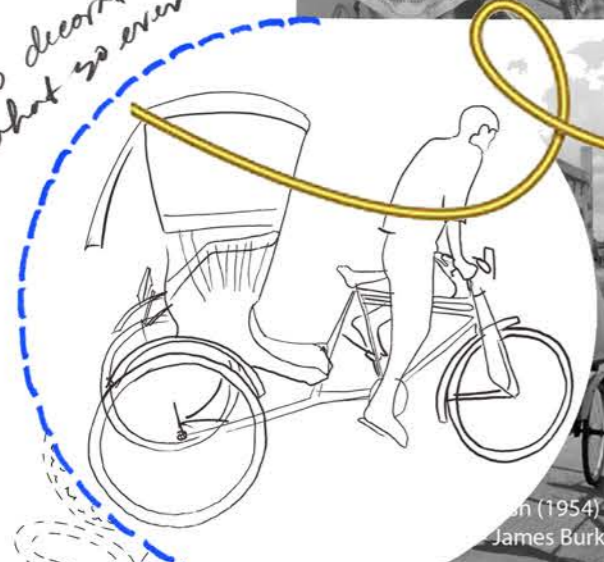


Street scene of Bangabandhu Avenue, Dhaka, Bangladesh (1967)  
Photographer- Albert Moldva



Dhaka, Bangladesh (1954)  
Photographer- James Burke.

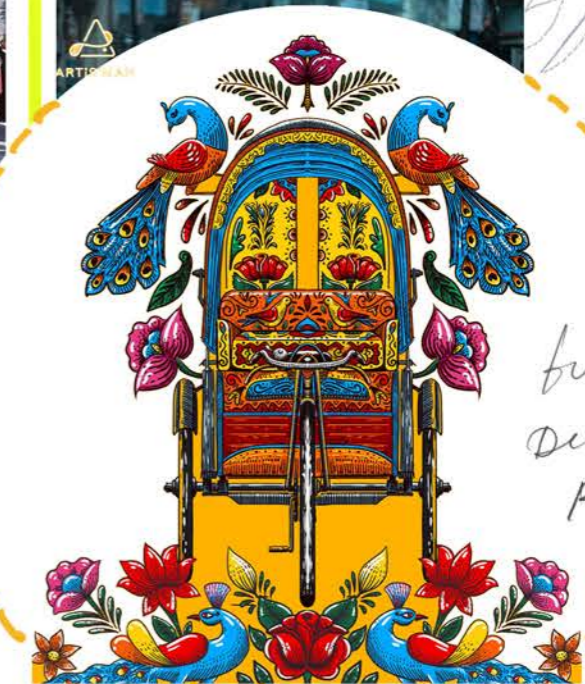
no decoration what so ever



several patterns & colours & adding introduced in bigger scale



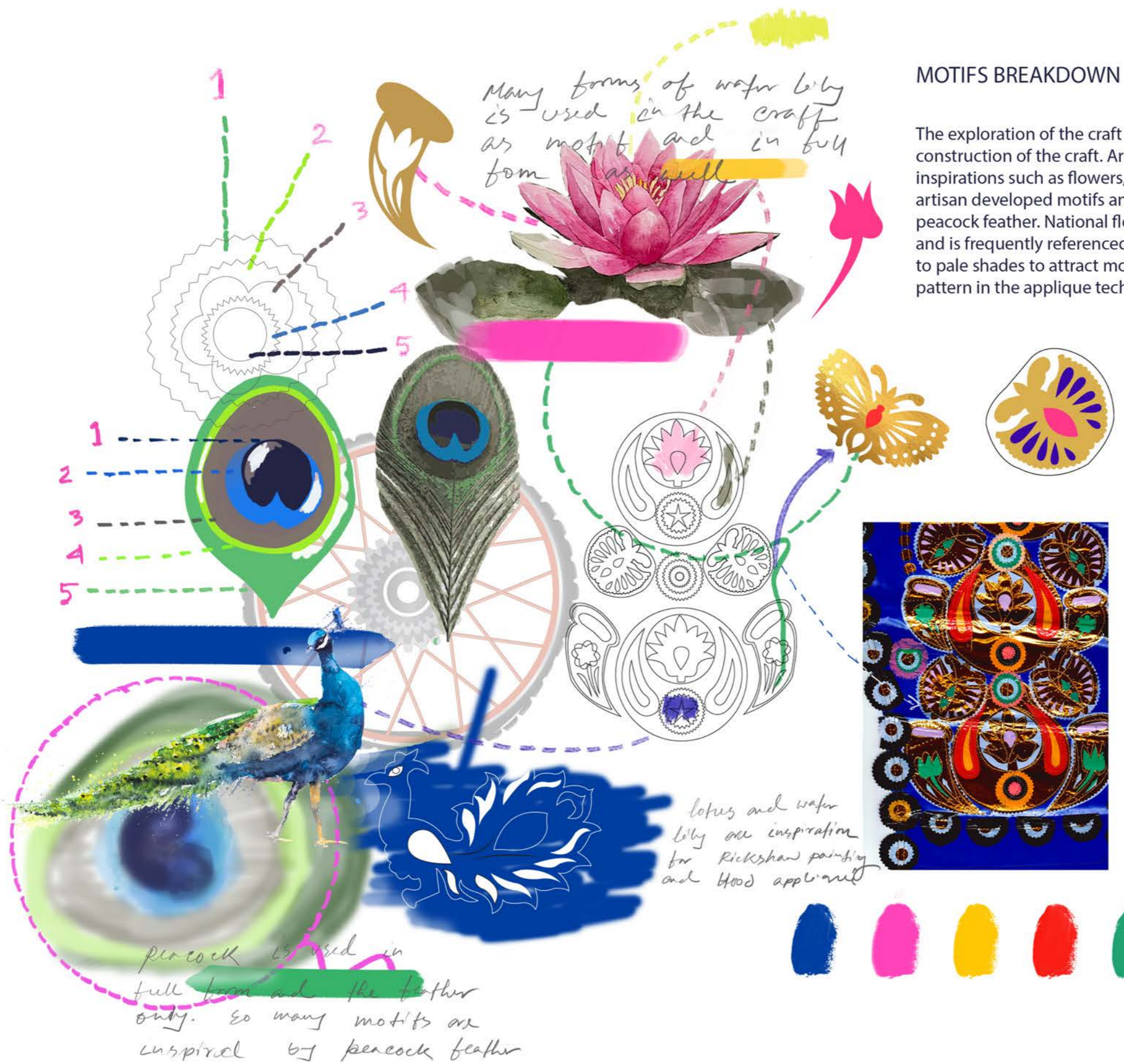
colour's and patterns started to take off 80's



fully develop decorative rickshaw by the end of 1980

### TIMELINE OF RICKSHAW CRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Rickshaw was introduced to the region by 1938, Initially, it was used for personal and business purposes. By 1950 it was available in the street of Dhaka as a commercial vehicle. the earliest reference found for Rickshaw in the 1950s in Dhaka does not have any embellishment. Supposedly the Hood was only a green or khaki plastic cover for the shed. Due to the human labour stigma and to attract more customers, the Puller started to ornate the vehicle in colour. Initially applique on a bigger scale was introduced, by 60's Decorative hoods were visible but they were very much experimental and each looked different from than others. By the 1970's both Rickshaw painting and multicoloured applique hoods were common in decoration but painting was more subjected to advertisement. In the 1980s ornamentation of the Rickshaw flourished fully, heavily embellished hood, tassel, tinsels, and painting was very common in almost all Rickshaw, and a similar pattern was maintained, A true identity developed.



### MOTIFS BREAKDOWN

The exploration of the craft was led by identifying and breaking down the motifs, colours, and construction of the craft. Artisans created the shapes patterns, and motifs from locally found inspirations such as flowers, birds, and animals. By adopting the ideas from inspiration, the artisan developed motifs and patterns, for example, layered patterns are inspired by the peacock feather. National flower water lily is a primary source of inspiration along with lotus and is frequently referenced in their artworks. The vibrant primary colours are used as opposed to pale shades to attract more. Butterflies and segments of butterflies are directly used as a pattern in the applique technique.



source:wikipedia

## DEBUNKING ENCRUSTATION

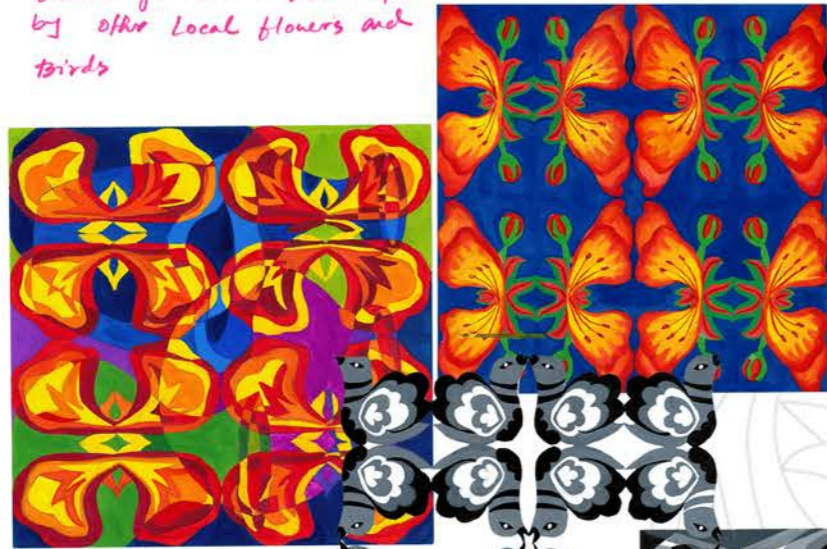
The initial investigation based on the Rickshaw hood was to identify the making process and characteristics of this craft. The hood consists of a multi-layered construction. Underneath the decorative plastic cover, there's a segmented bamboo frame attached with a latch that enables the frame to fold and erect when necessary. The plastic cover is also layered in a couple of stages. The base layer is first crafted in small flower patterns and stitched in layers. When the pattern is complete a reinforcement layer is added underneath to hide the understitch and make the cover more sturdy. The freestyle continuous stitching is followed throughout the making. Layered patterns are also put on, in a natural way, in most cases, they don't maintain symmetry. The flower patterns are cut in from thinner plastic sheets compared to the base layer



## SENSORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Understanding craft making through practice. After a preliminary study of motifs, an attempt has been made to introduce new motifs inspired by other local flowers and birds. A monochrome black-and-white scheme has been attempted to identify the similarity and distinctiveness of the original craft. The craft practice began with sticky notes followed by vinyl cutouts and then outerwear fabric finally plastic bags were used as material to achieve a similar outcome and experience the same process as craftsmen. All the patterns have been cut out by hand like the artisans do traditionally. Around this time digital iteration was introduced in Adobe Illustrator.

Introducing new motifs inspired by other local flowers and birds



hand-cut sticky notes in new motifs

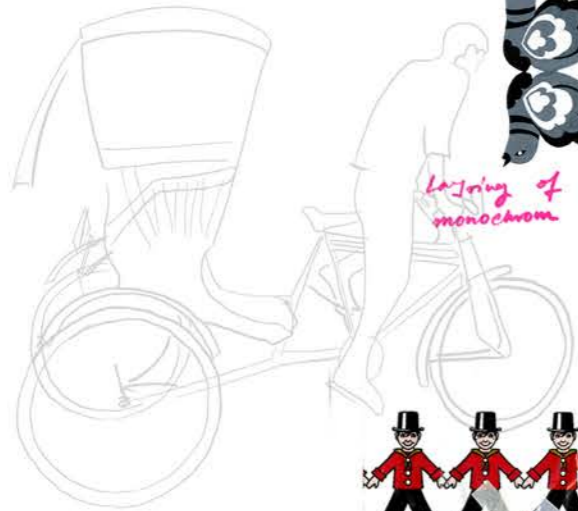


hand-cut sticky notes in traditional motifs

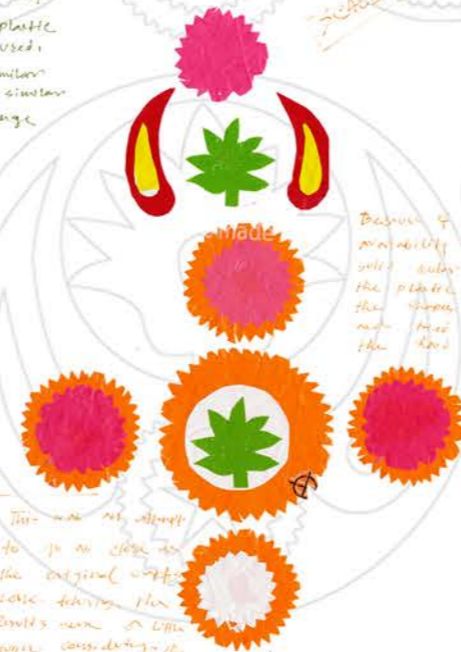


Motifs in developed in Illustrator

Layering of motifs in monochrome



The plastic bags were not as crisp as the plastic sheet originally used, but have the similar texture and color range.



outerwear fabric laser cut and glued



Recreating the hood pattern in vinyl cut

Because of the ease availability of the color paper, I used the paper to make the design. But the color range is not as wide as the original design.

This was not allowed to be as close as the original work. While doing the color, I was a little bit confused. The paper was not as crisp as the original. The color range was not as wide as the original. But the overall result is not as good as the original.

## Reflection in Action Laser-Cut-Denim

Laser-cutting denim made the process easier for the material because hand-cutting denim is slower, laborious, and impossible to make each piece similar. Grading different shades of denim was successful in achieving results similar to the craft. Because of the twill characteristics, the edges would not be finished which recreated the unapologetic characteristics of the original craft.

laser cut denim  
layered with  
fabric glue

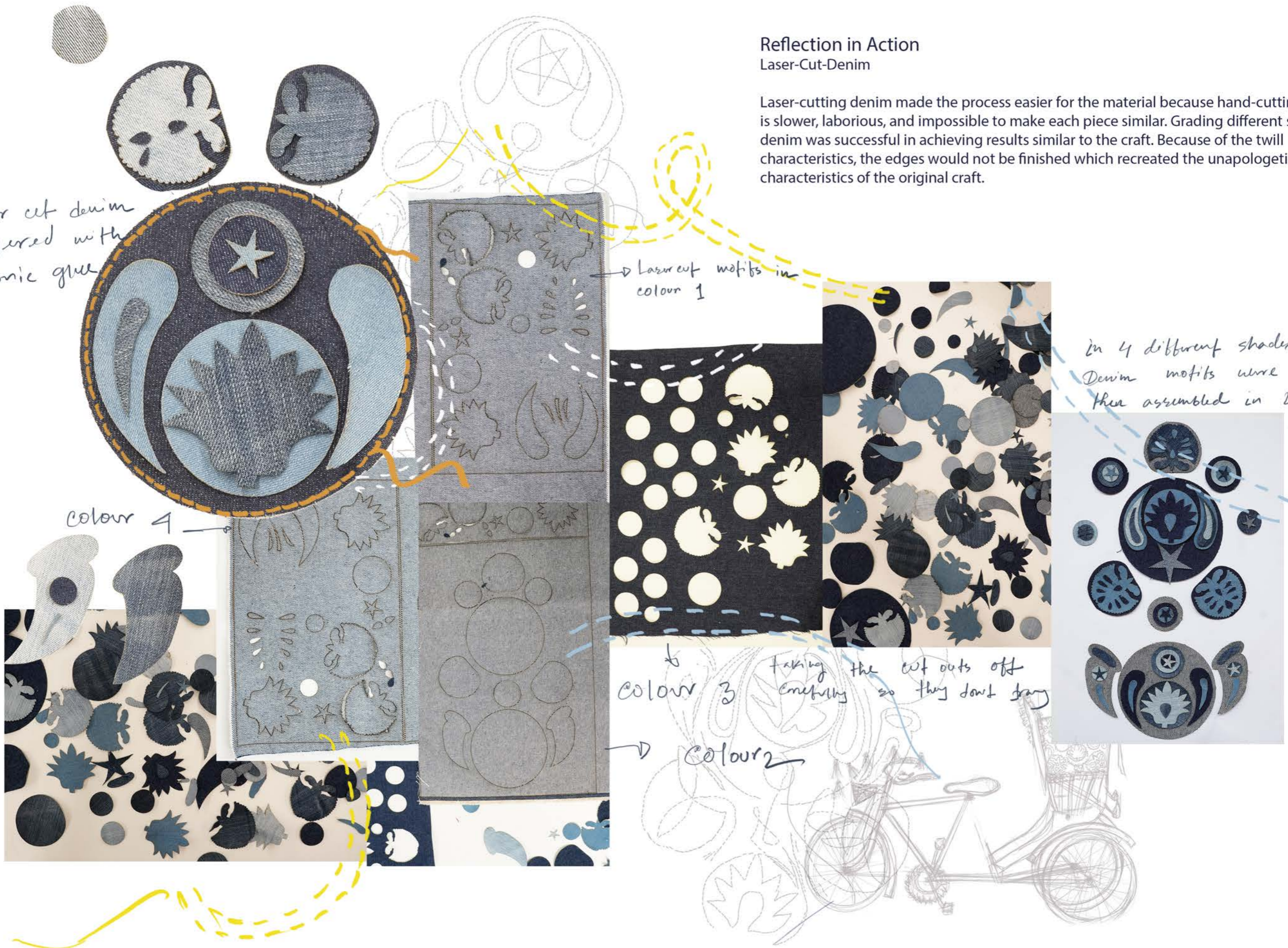
→ Laser cut motifs in  
colour 1

colour 4

→ colour 3 taking the cut outs off  
carefully so they don't fray

→ colour 2

in 4 different shades of  
denim motifs were laser cut  
then assembled in layers  
recreating  
the pattern

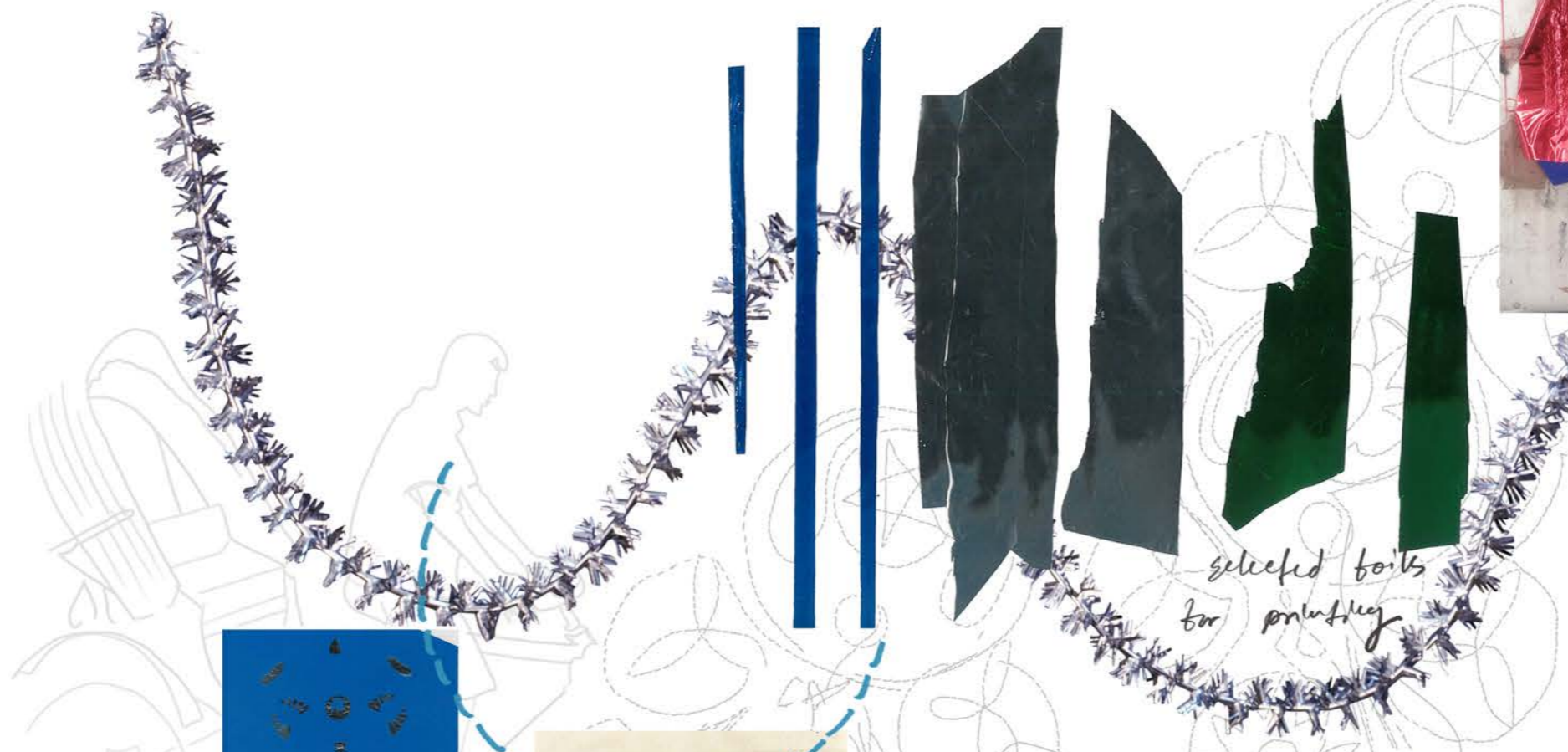


Reflection in Action  
Foil print

The appearance of foil is as lustrous as thin plastic but using them in printing is not as feasible and the longevity is very short-lived. Because of the heat pressing technique involved layering on foil is not possible. therefore creating multicolored patterns is automatically anecdotic. Single colour outcome however is interesting and similar to old fraying Rickshaw craft.



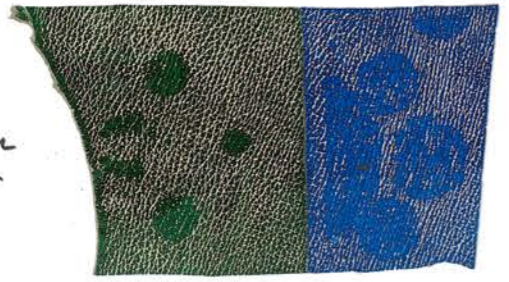
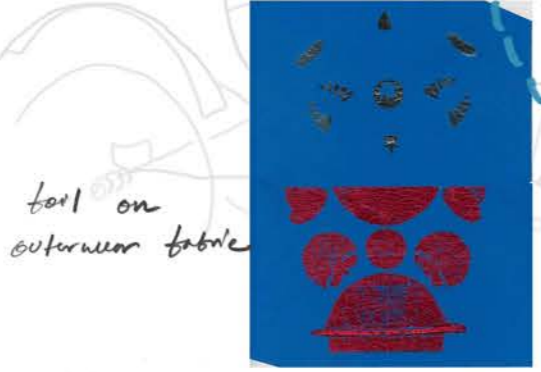
heat sealed foil on fabric



selected foils for printing



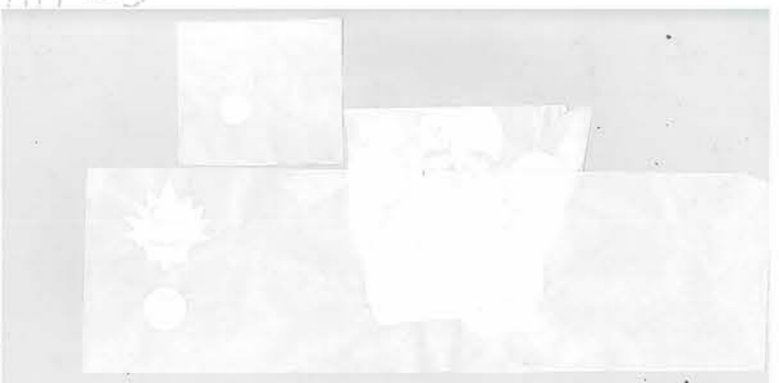
Removed foils after pressing done



foil on leather

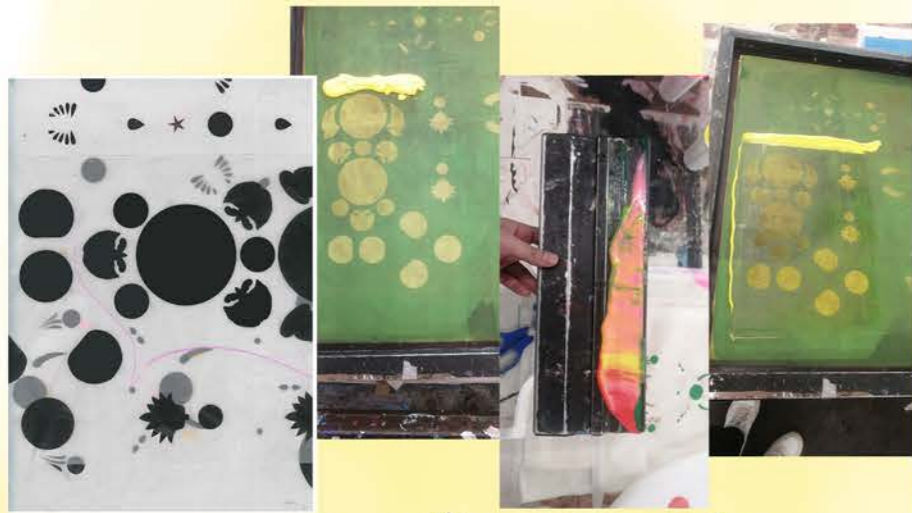


foil on calico



printed patterns in glue before heat pressing





*screen printing process from developing screen to colour and squeezy*

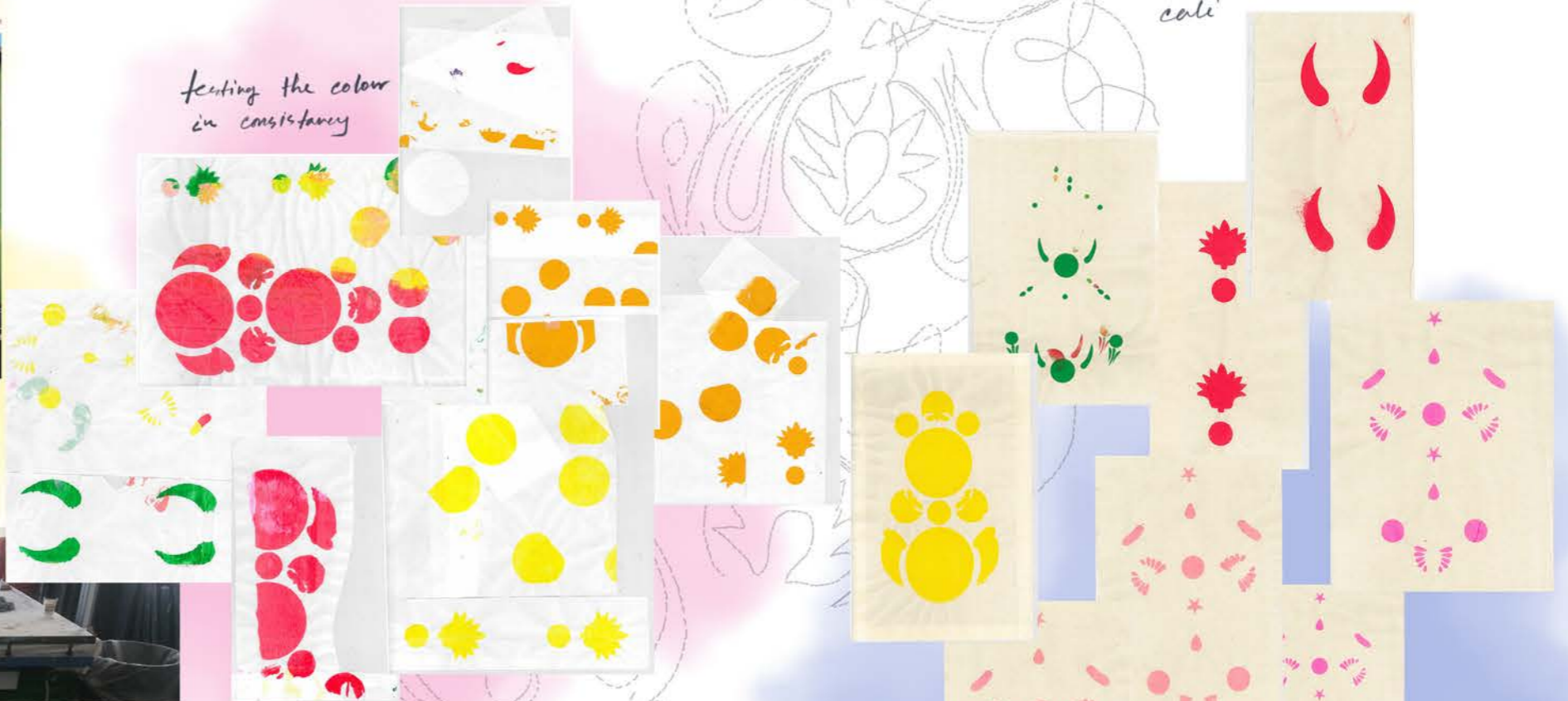


## Sensory Acknowledgement

### Print making

Throughout the practice process, one of the key aims was to achieve results that represent the craft's authenticity and identify characteristics. Printmaking was the closest experience in terms of labour and smell compared to the original craft making. For each color new screen was required which can be connected with the layering of the craft. The smell of the chemical is quite similar to the rickshaw hood material. placing the screen and squeezing the squeezy was more laborious than operating a manual sewing machine. The colourful result was quite similar to the original craft even though the distinctive stitch lines were missing.

*testing the colour in consistency*



*Colour test on cali*



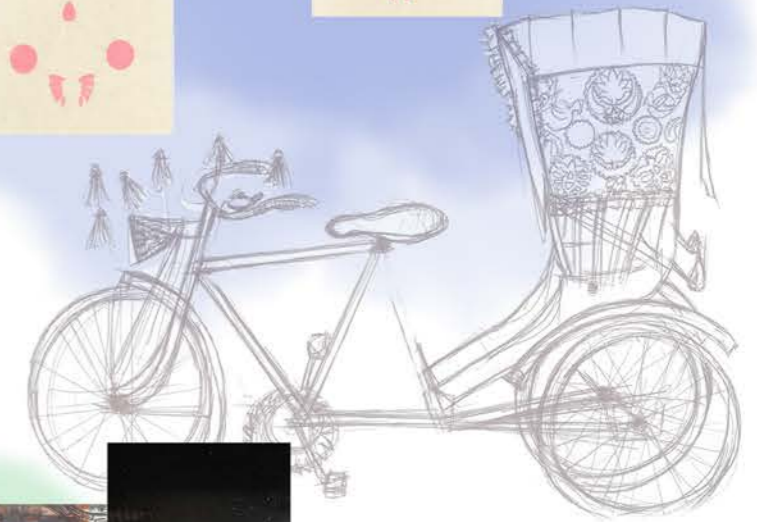
*gradual of the mix in colour*



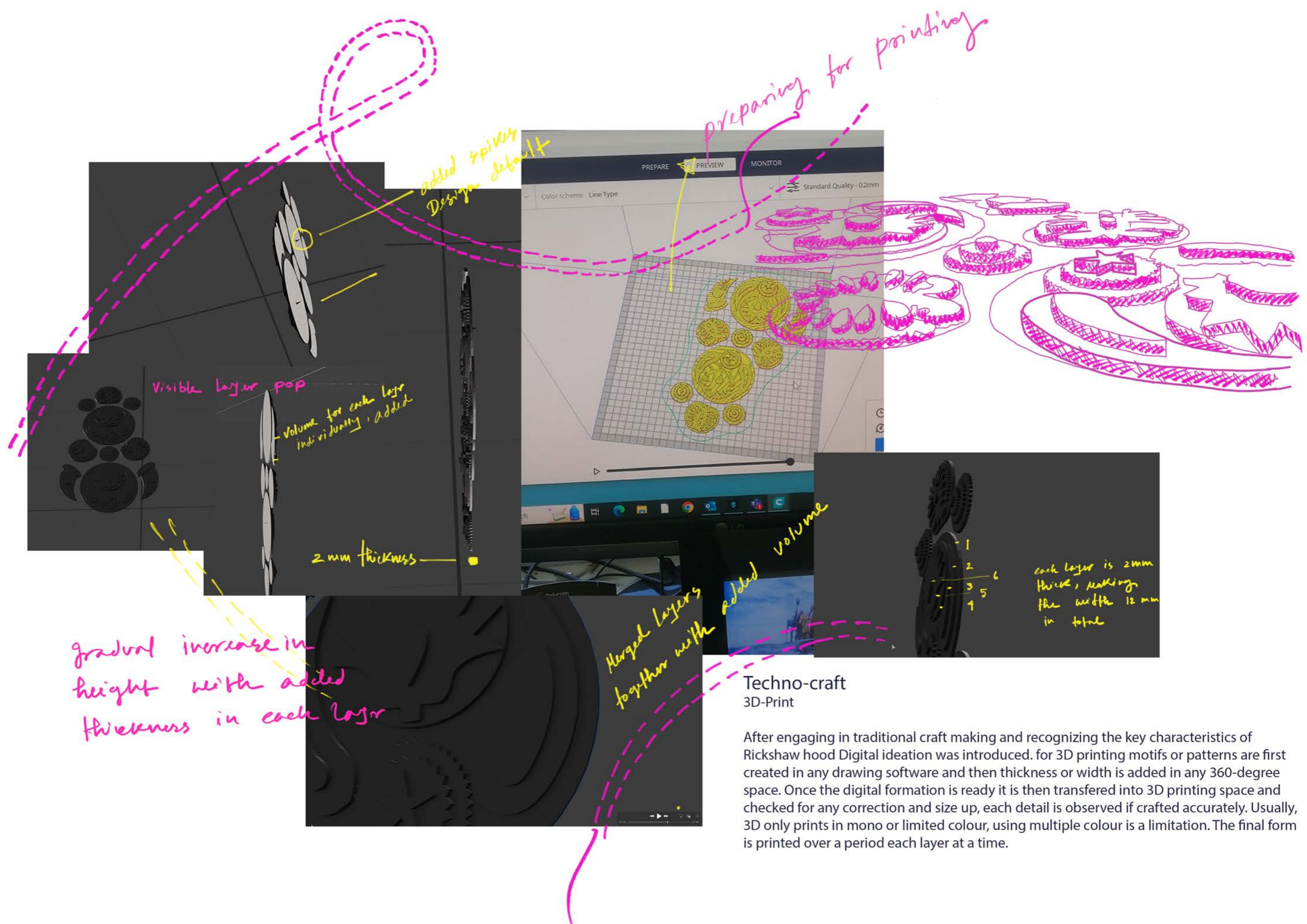
*mixing*

*preparing the ground and colour testing*

*taping off to layer the pattern*







added spikes  
Design default

preparing for printing

Visible layer pop

Volume for each layer  
individually added

2mm thickness

gradual increase in  
height with added  
thickness in each layer

Merged layers  
together with  
added volume

1  
2  
3  
5  
1  
each layer is 2mm  
thick, making  
the width 12mm  
in total

### Techno-craft 3D-Print

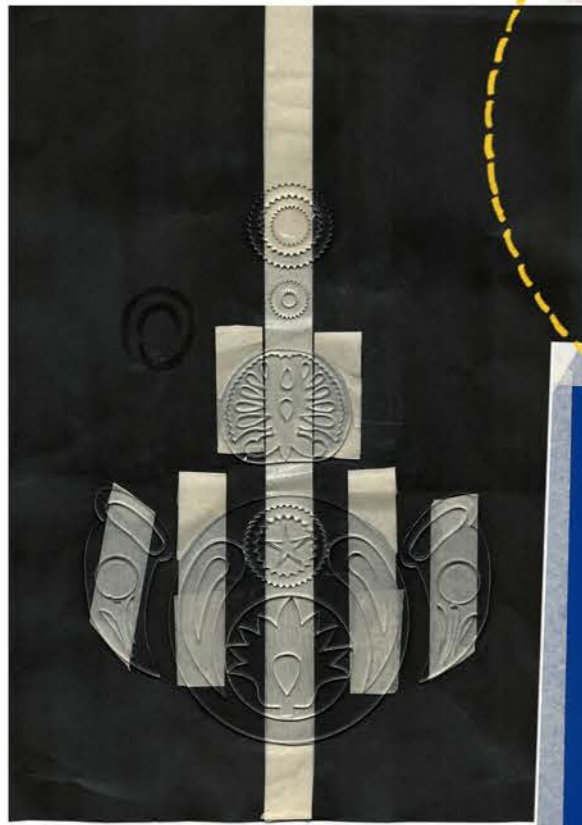
After engaging in traditional craft making and recognizing the key characteristics of Rickshaw hood Digital ideation was introduced. for 3D printing motifs or patterns are first created in any drawing software and then thickness or width is added in any 360-degree space. Once the digital formation is ready it is then transferred into 3D printing space and checked for any correction and size up, each detail is observed if crafted accurately. Usually, 3D only prints in mono or limited colour, using multiple colour is a limitation. The final form is printed over a period each layer at a time.

Final result  
iterations

- 1-Laser cut Acrylic sheet
- 2 Laser cut acrylic motifs weaved in copper wire
- 3-Screen prin on voiel
- 4-Screen print on Denim

- 5-Laser-cut denim on denim
- 6-3D print on mash fabric
- 7-plastic bac hand cut motifs on leather

1



2



3



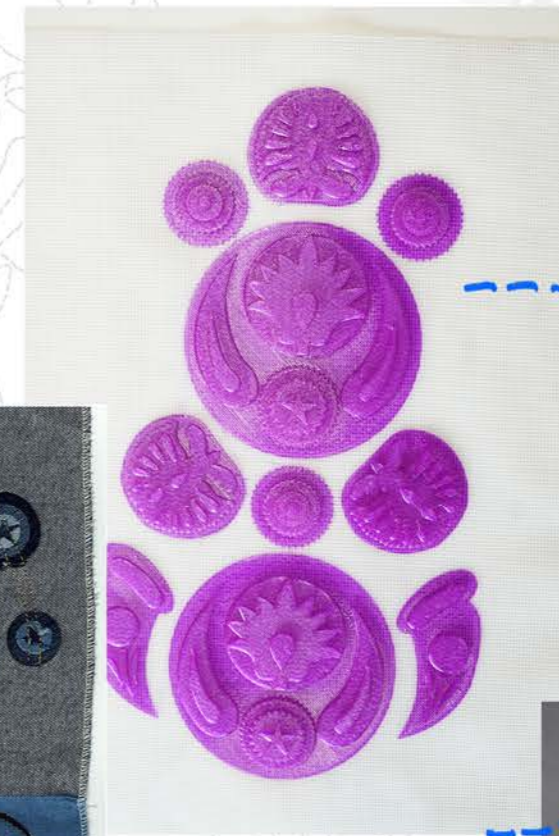
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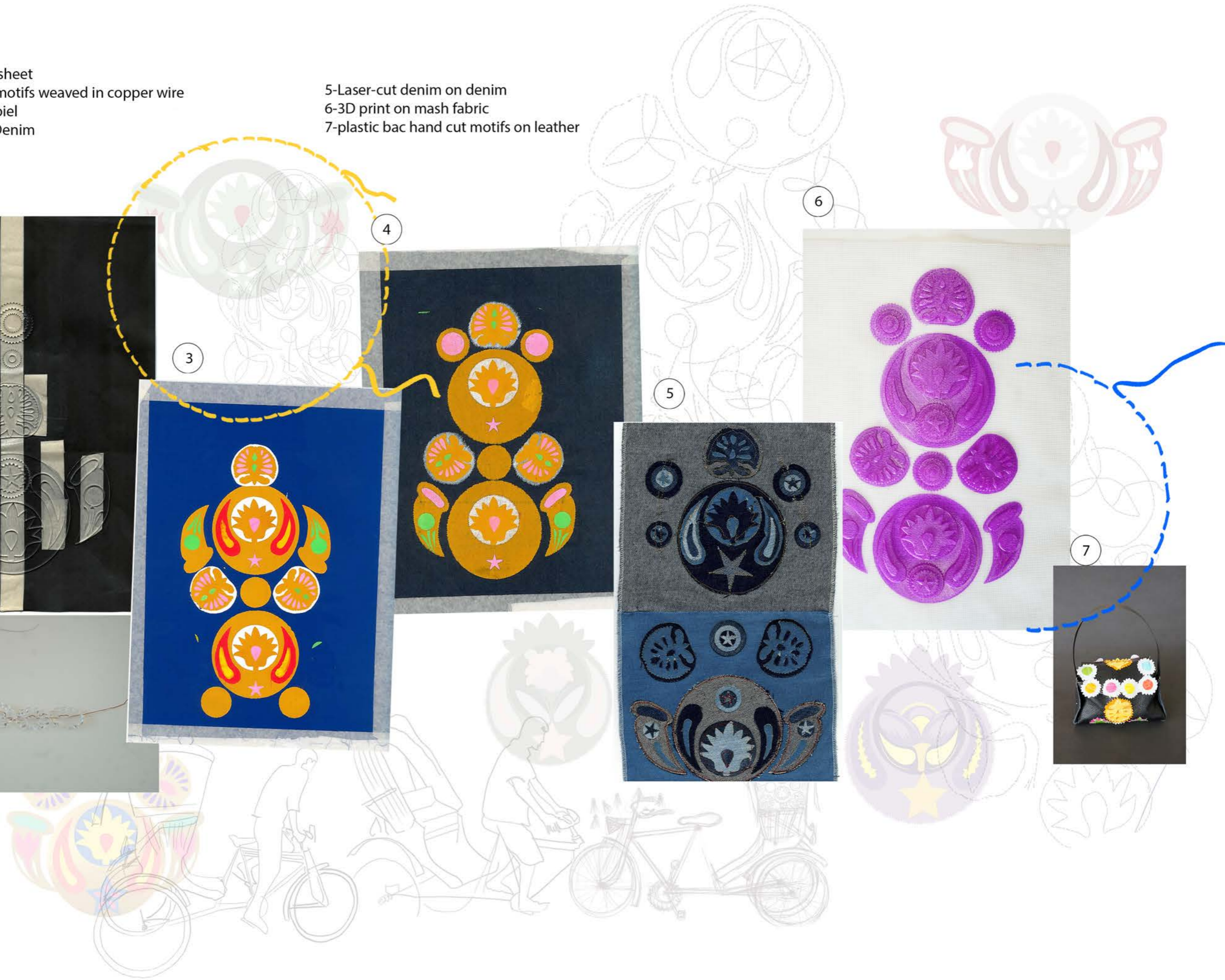
5



6



7



## Motif Study

Before creating a full pattern individual motifs were developed in various colour combinations different than the original to test the viability and acceptance.



## Patterns Development

Distinct characteristics of the hood decoration decoration were identified by observation analysis and interviews with artisans informed about the extent of modification that should not stimulate cultural appropriation. In an attempt to improvise motifs for ideating digital development a range of motifs were developed into patterns in Illustartor.



1A



1B



## Digital Ideation

### Photo manipulation

For quick idea generation, photo manipulation techniques were employed. This technique initiated efficient results to start the interview process and for the researcher to determine the extent to which the craft might be extended. Because the researcher is a Fashion designer he picked fashion outfits as a first ground for expanding the craft practice.

1A is an ALEXANDER MCQUEEN Black Leather Peplum Jacket that have been manipulated into 1B in Photoshop adding hood patterns. Similarly, 2A is an Alice + Olivia Dunn Vegan Leather Loose Blazer that has been transformed into 2B adding patterns created in Illustrator. 3A is a CLO-created plastic ruffle dress that has been altered adding ruffles of Rickshaw hood.

2A



2B

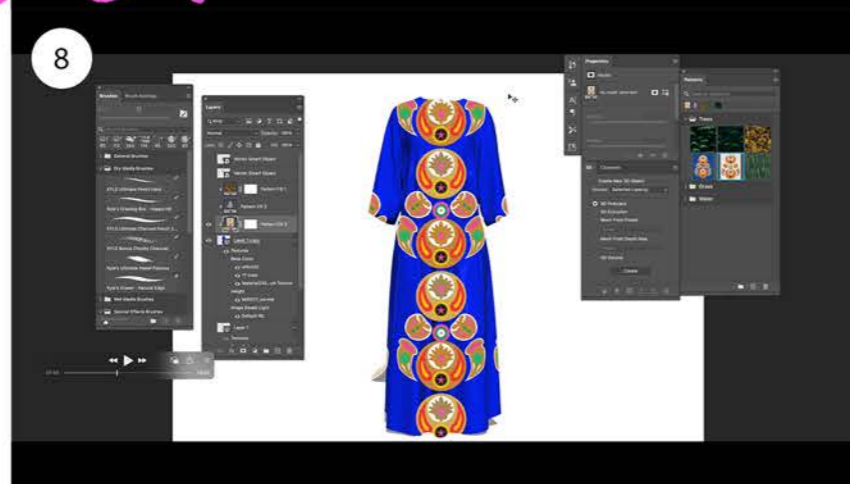
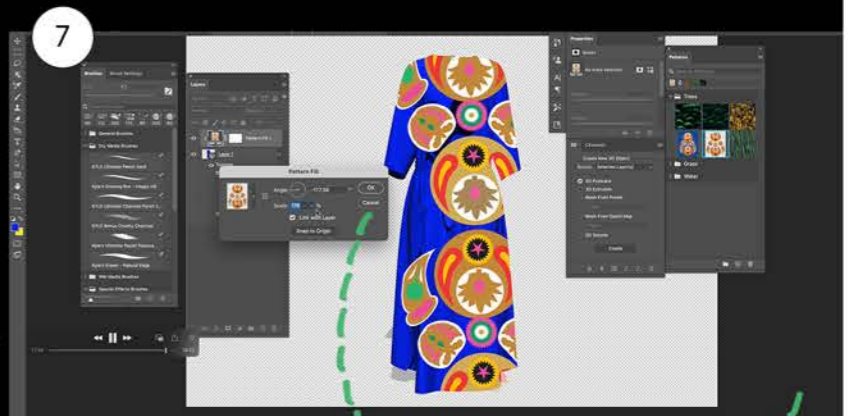
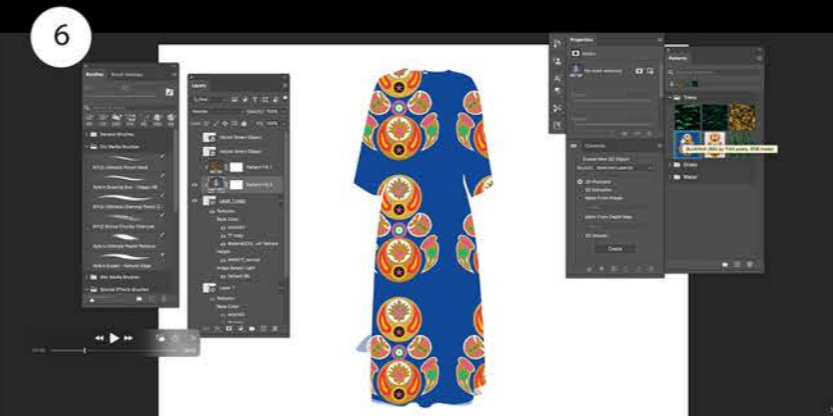
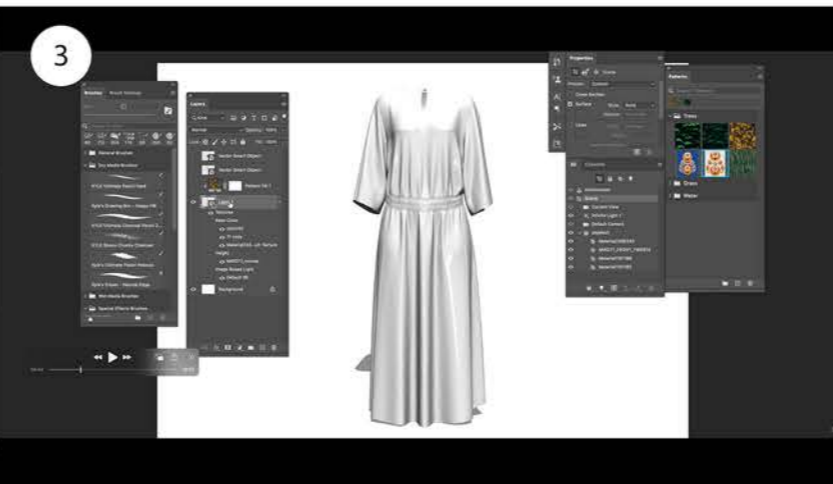
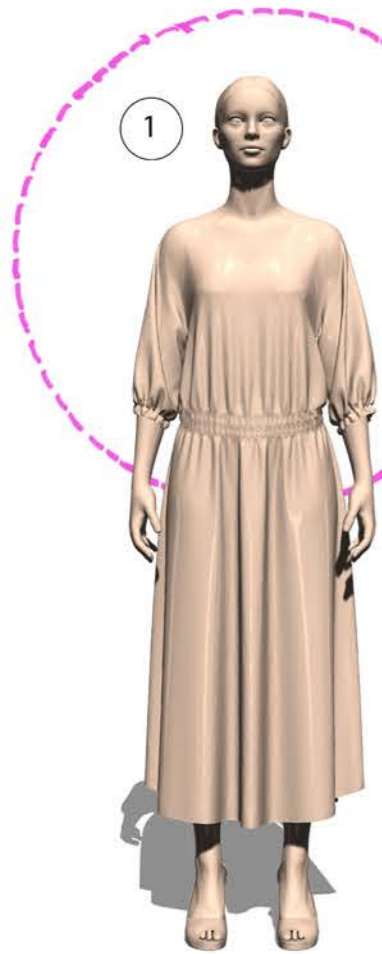


3A



3B





1. CLO developed mono coloured dummy.
2. Replicating Rickshaw hood patterns in Illustrator
3. Plain dress developed in CLO
4. Adding colour and patterns on the dummy
5. Scaling and adding details
6. Adjusting patterns
7. Scaling down with dress details
8. Completed garments with pattern
9. Garments with rickshaw pattern on dummy
10. Colour variation

## Reflection in Action

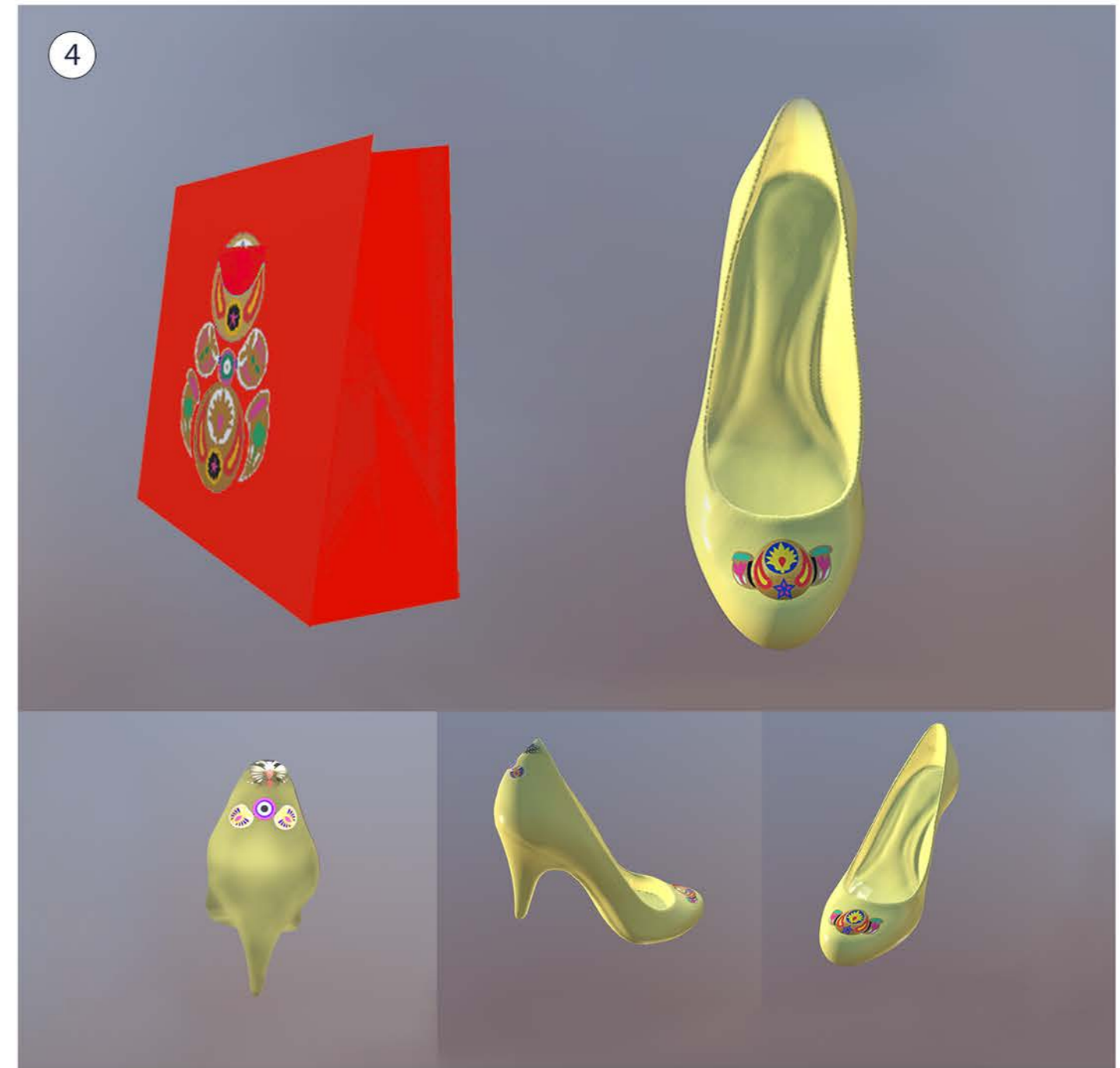
### Digital Development & Manipulation

Experience from sensory ethnography has informed about craft development. Reflecting upon the experience, digital manipulation was created. This project is a mixture of digital development and manipulation. The dummy and dress were developed in CLO 3D, The pattern was developed in Adobe Illustrator. The dress was then saved in PNG format and added to the dummy in Photoshop instead of importing the patterns on CLO and then applying them to the dummy. Because this is one of the very initial developments due to limitations in expertise, it was manipulated in Photoshop, unlike the other 3D developments such as the handbags, trainers, pumps, and the car.

Concept proposal-Campaign shoot

3.3D Charcoal black- matte leather pumps

4.3D Lemon yellow shiny leather pumps



## Concept proposal-Campaign shoot

1.3D white trainer

Rickshaw motifs reimagined in other colours and applied on trainers

2.3D developed white leather handbag in Reimagined Rickshaw motifs



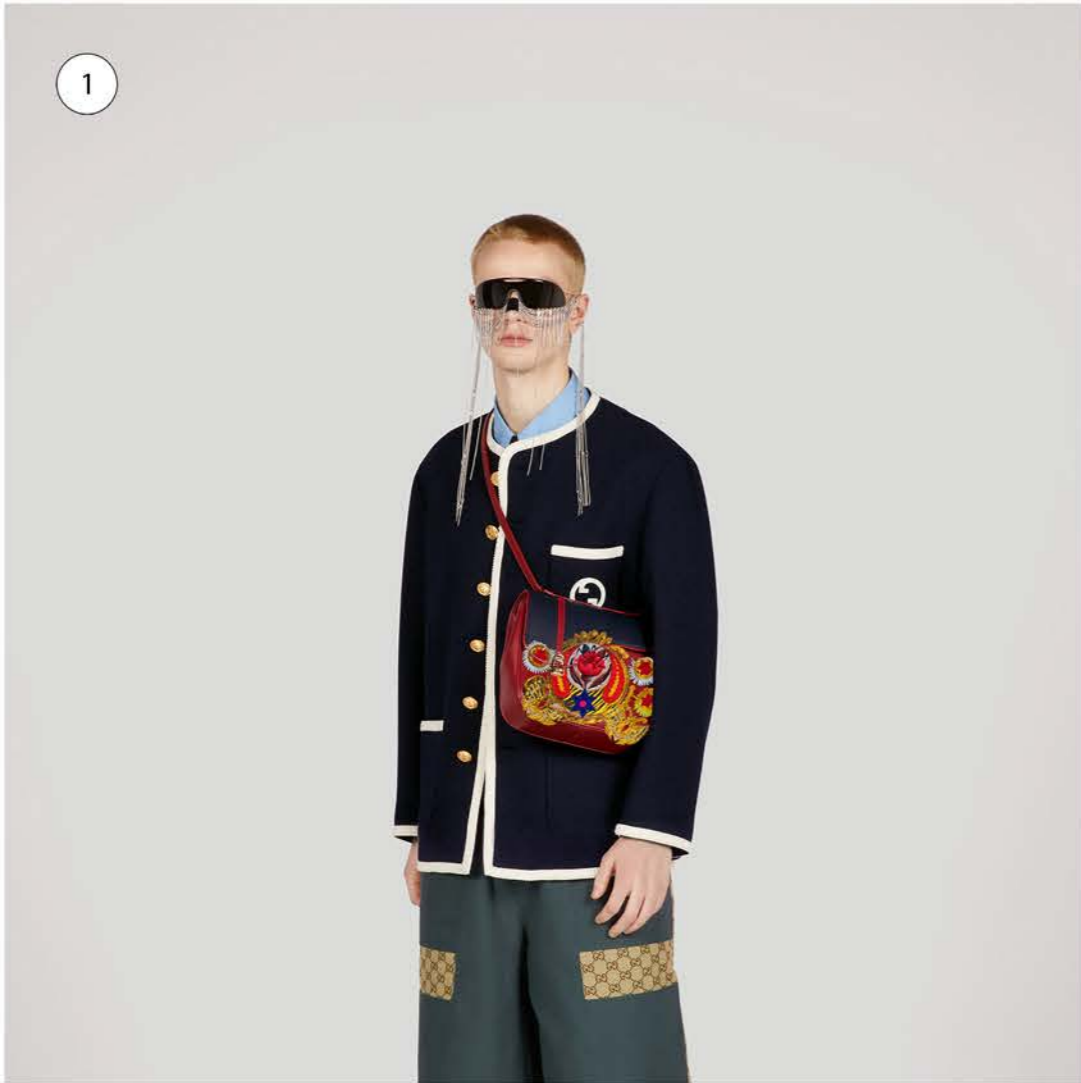


## Concept proposal

The idea of recontextualisation of the craft has been extended and reimagined in the 3D model of luxury car BRABUS GV 12 and the hood decoration has been improvised for the vehicle and applied to the seats and spare tire cover, The gold butterfly has been added on the wing mirror. The motifs colours and patterns were updated in consideration of the suitability of the vehicle. In the hope that more popular vehicle cars can adopt the craft culture and continue the significance of the craft even if the popularity of Rickshaw declines as a vehicle in the future.



BRABUS GV 12



VOGUE SHOPS

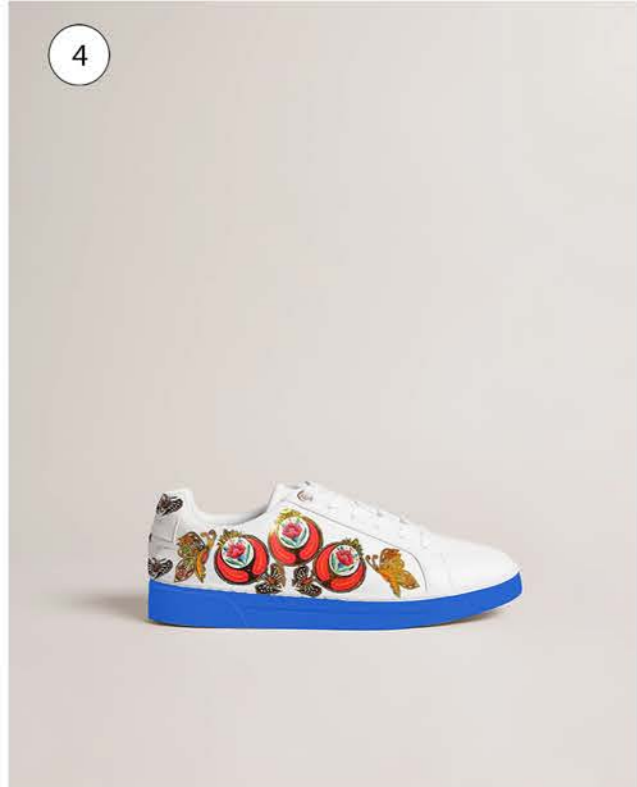
Shop The Best Handbags, Shoes From The Collaboration of Rickshaw artisans with Top notch brands Gucci , Ted Baker , Jimmy Choo  
 BY LILAH RAMZI  
 22 August 2023VOGUE SHOPS

Begining of a new era of Collaboration

The visual language of the best Gucci handbags – and of the label as a whole – is mainly shaped by what goes unsaid. That is, there’s a less-is-more approach, and you won’t find a brand logo on a single item. Instead, you’ll see an identifiable signature, the intrecciato woven leather treatment, which, since we’re on the subject of languages.. Furthermore, Gucci shop, which brings us right to the beginning of a new era of collaboration between handicraft artsan and this luxury brand.

The brand has just launched their collaborative collection with Rickshaw artisans from Bangladesh.

Two other major brands Jimmy Choo and Ted Baker has also launced their recent collaborative shoe collections with Bangladeshi Rickshaw artisans.



- 1. Gucci campaign shoot
- 2. Shoulder bag Gucci
- 3.EQUESTRIAN INSPIRED SHOULDER BAG
- 4.Ted Baker coloured-cupsole trainer
- 5.Ted Baker cupsole Trainer
- 6.Ankel Boots jimmy Choo

Hypothetical concept article published in Vogue. Manipulating brands original collection images in photoshop, adding decorative hood art works

