

PROJECT/ THESIS PORTFOLIO
MODULE: DE7003

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The Brand Experiment

Through using the feedback from my Questionnaire, I want to put into practice my hypothesis: women wanting to understand brand practices more post lockdown.

Brand: OH!

Ethos: Designed with you for you.

Manifesto: To design garments in collaboration with customers to create garments that are made to be lived in for life. Made in sustainably conscious fabrics and presenting to customers who makes their clothes.

Inspiration: Throughout my BA I investigated drape through moulage which I felt a connection to as a process. Through looking into the Bias, which I cut on frequently due to my moulage, the next step in my understanding of this skill was to understand Madeleine Vionnet the pioneer of the Bias cut. Her patterns were geometric and created some of most iconic looks of the 1930's. Upon comparing my BA patterns to Vionnet's I found similarities in pattern shape and construction that were uncanny. This has made me feel a connection to Vionnet's work. Through further research her ethos of longevity in design and how she wanted women to feel again coincide with my belief's making her a perfect role model for my Brand Experiment.

How?

Step 1: Investigate 2 of Madeleine Vionnet's garments. By understanding the patterns from the book Madeleine Vionnet by Betty Kirke I hoped to be able to create 2 garments. As the patterns were not to scale, I have to first figure out scale before construction. Through working the scale on the mini mannequin before scaling up to full scale it allowed me to understand Vionnet's process of working in half scale with her belief it allowed her to view the overall garment without having to step away. I did not find working in half scale as fulfilling as full because I enjoy the idea that someone could slip it on and try it.

Step 2: Once I improved my understanding of Vionnet's garments, I went back to my moulage and tried to work in squares as I did in my BA. This allowed me again to progress my understanding of this process.

Step 3: I created a basic pattern for my design through moulage and lied it down on pattern paper and plotted the points to create the pattern.

Step 4: Once the pattern was made, I created the toile for my garment. Finished with a French seem on the shoulder and marrow edging the garment to finish.

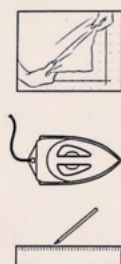
Step 5: I then fixed areas such as the neckline and filling in the armhole to correct issues from the toile.

Step 6: Make another toile with the alterations.

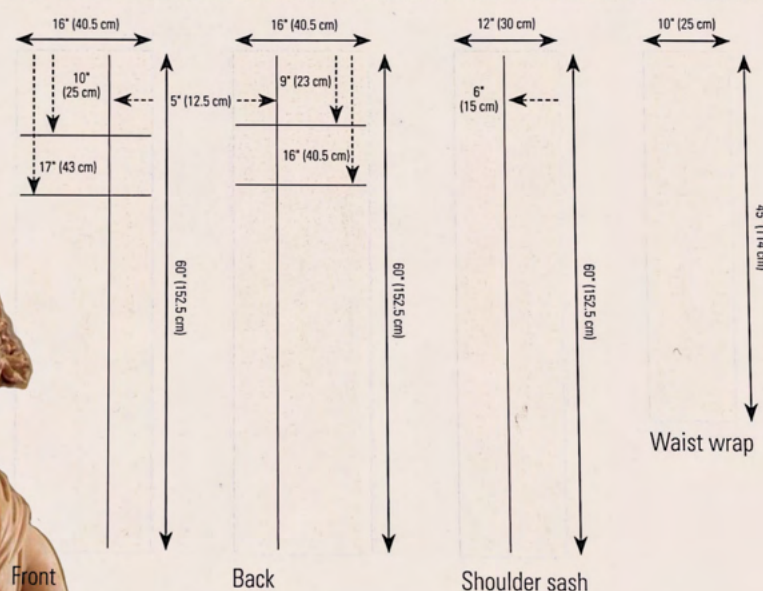
Step 7: To make 5 toiles with basic finishes. These will be sent to a test group to draw and give their opinions on what they would want this dress to be. They will document their process and send them back to me with draw and cut observations for me to review what the ladies would want.

Step 8: Review the garments.

OH!

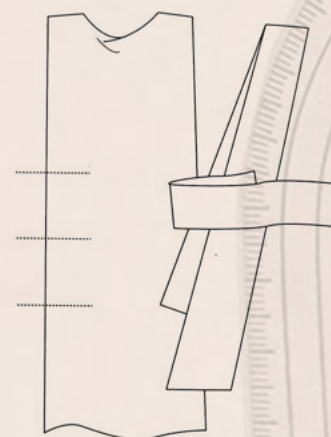


Muslin preparation for the Diana of Versailles's garment



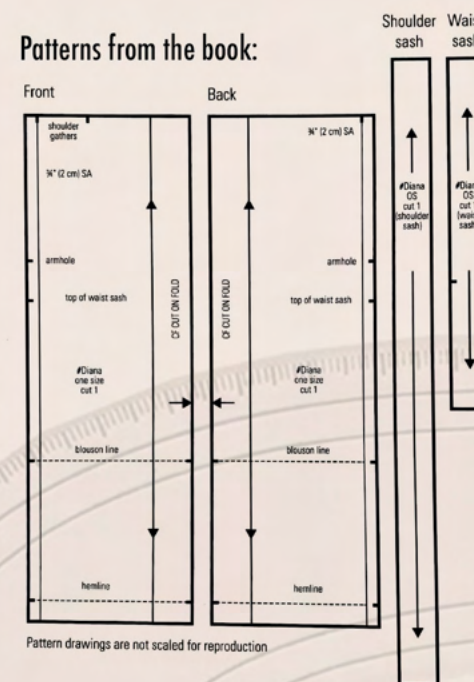
DIANA OF VERSAILLES

The process of exploring this garment has been taken from the book *Draping: The Complete Course* (Kiisel, 2020).



The process of making this garment was to practise exploring drape again, this was excuted on a make shift half scale mannequin.

Patterns from the book:



The full scale recreation from the book.

Evaluation of Process:

As I explored drape during my undergraduate degree I wanted to practise my understanding of drape from a historic origin to be able to build a contemporary garment. The motion in the statue of this garment made me want to explore this further. This was undertaken in half scale which was difficult as it was too neat to the mannequin so only allowed me to understand construction not the actual movement of the garment. The exercise was useful solidifying my own process in full scale to complement my development work, as the half scale was too small.

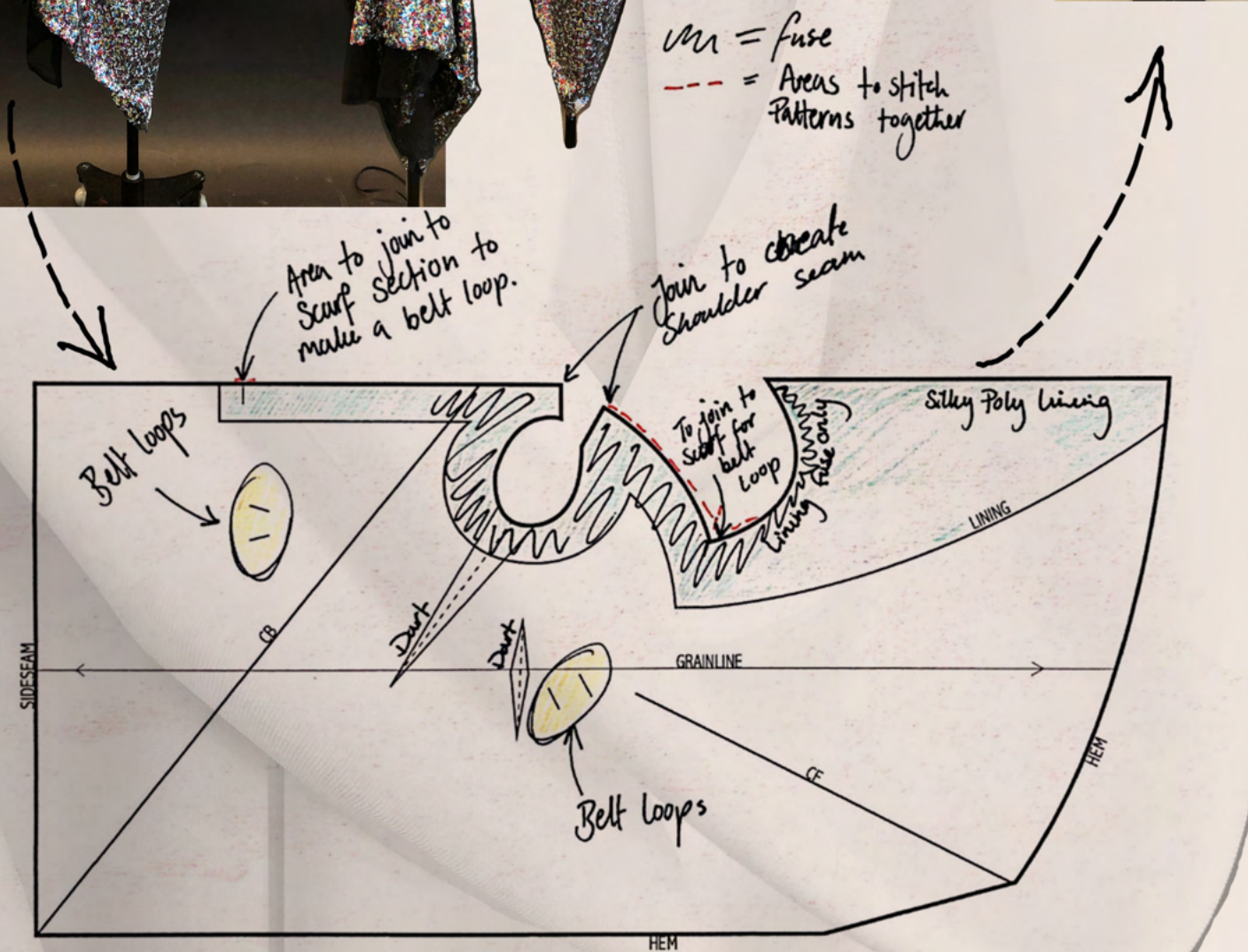


All the stages of the half scale exploration of this garment.

Revisiting my BA Drape



The initial moulage for my BA Final Collection.



The digitised pattern for the dress. The recut pattern does not include the belt loops.

Once the pattern was formed, it was then made in crepe to understand the drape. This was undertaken in the early stages of my undergraduate exploration.



Recutting the Pattern:

This pattern was developed for my undergraduate Final Collection but I felt this design warranted further exploration.



Familiarising myself with the pattern.

The fabric used was a 4-way stretch bamboo jersey which was used to understand the garment in a less formal style.



Revisiting my BA Drape: MA Development

Drape 1



Drape 3



Drape 2



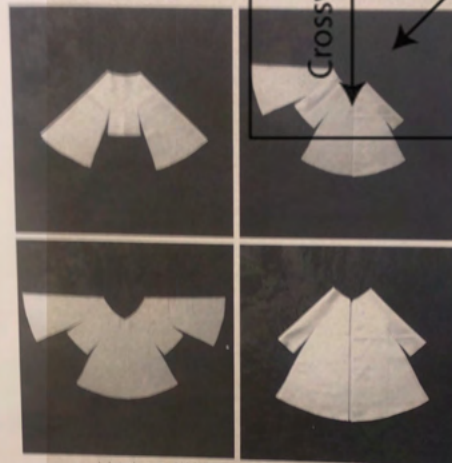
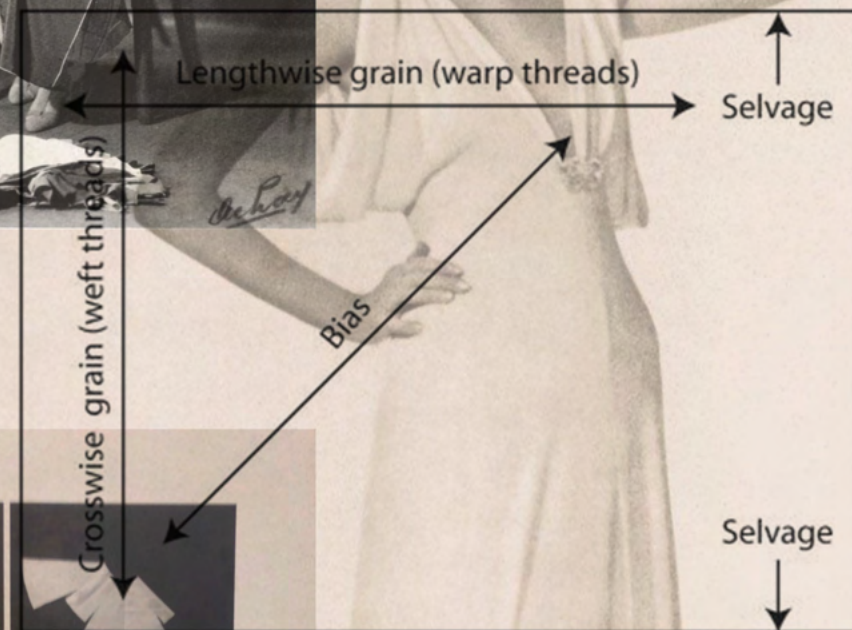
Evaluation of Process:

From the difficulty of understanding half scale I felt it was useful to understand one of my undergraduate patterns in a more accessible fabric than the sequin originally used, to provide a strong base for a possible multi way dress.

This experiment was executed using the 4-way stretch bamboo jersey, even though it had too much stretch it gave an effective drape and allowed for an exploration of one garment to be worn in multiple ways. However it gave too much choice and after consulting members of the public it was identified it would confuse the wearer. !!!Norman!!!

After the exploration it was observed that the garment had left very little fabric to waste.

MADELEINE VIONNET



1. A circular piece is folded into quarters and cut to the shape of a capital 'M'.
2. The material is opened out. 3. The material is folded. 4. The material is shown on a collar.



Side view of the same dress.

1876: Born

1897: Moved to London to become a dress fitter for couturier Kate Reilly.

1900: Moved back to Paris and worked for Callot Soeurs and Doucet.

1912: Opened 'Vionnet'.

Closed during the First World War.

1918: Moved to 50 Avenue Matignon.

1920's: Known for garments cut on the bias.

1925: British Vogue 'perhaps the greatest geometrician among all French Couturier'.

1930's: Explored more classic drape with ancient Greek influences.

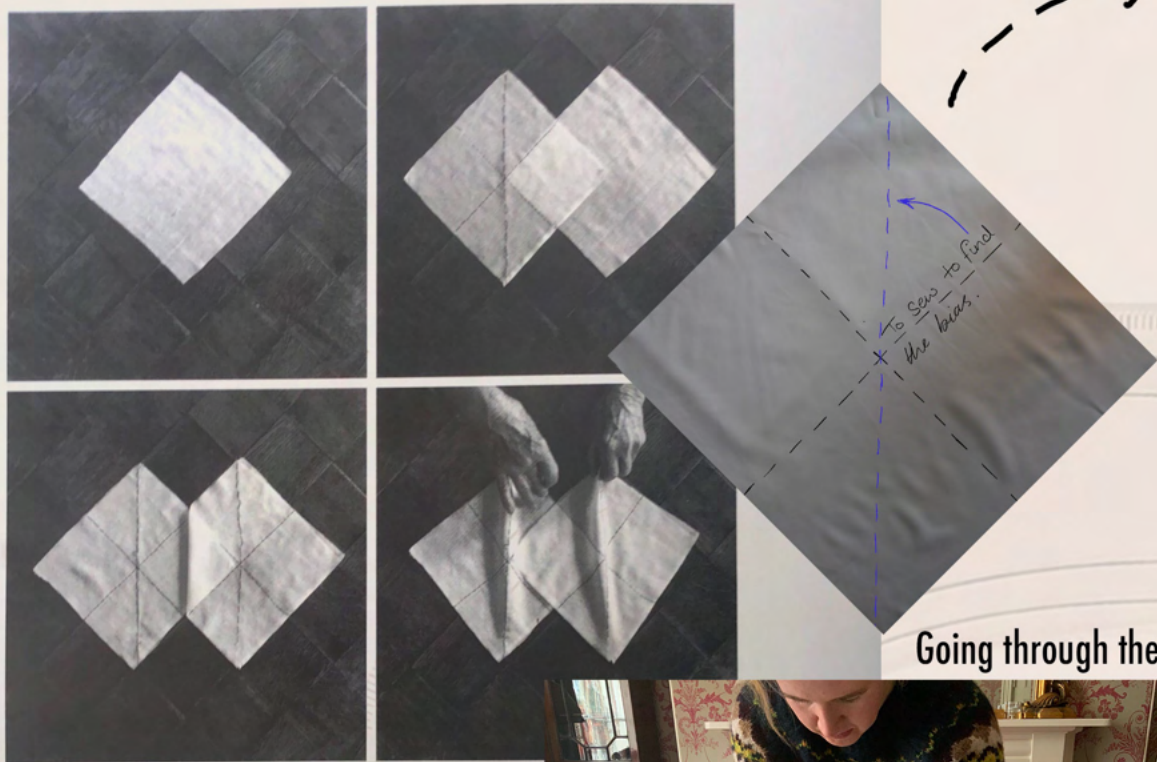
Second World War she closed 'Vionnet'.

1940: Retired.

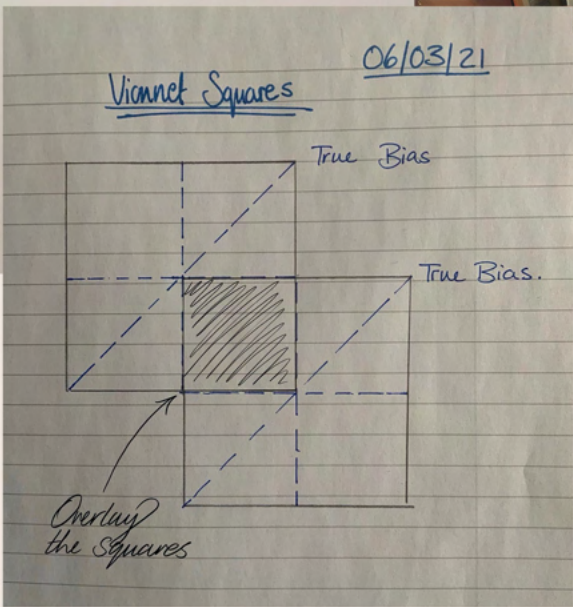
1975: Died at the age of 98.

Vionnet had a fascination with Art Deco and was inspired by modernism and cubism. She worked on half scale mannequins as she felt it was best to review the garment fully, rather than feeling the need to constantly step back and review the drape. She pushed for rights in copy right law and was a trail blazer for workers' rights such as paid holiday, on-site dentists and doctors and maternity leave. Her garments were made to stand the test of time and always with women's lifestyles in mind.

VIONNET'S SQUARES:



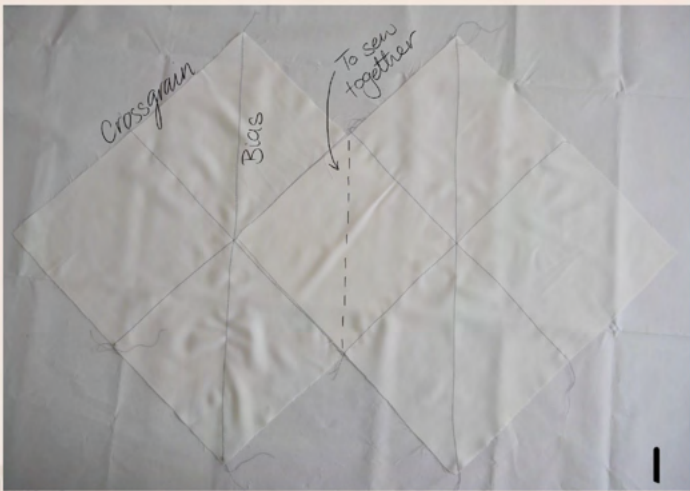
1. The dress is composed of four of these squares.
2. The cross-threads are run through the material.
3. The full bias will be found.
4. The squares are taken in pairs and fixed at one point to the shoulder.



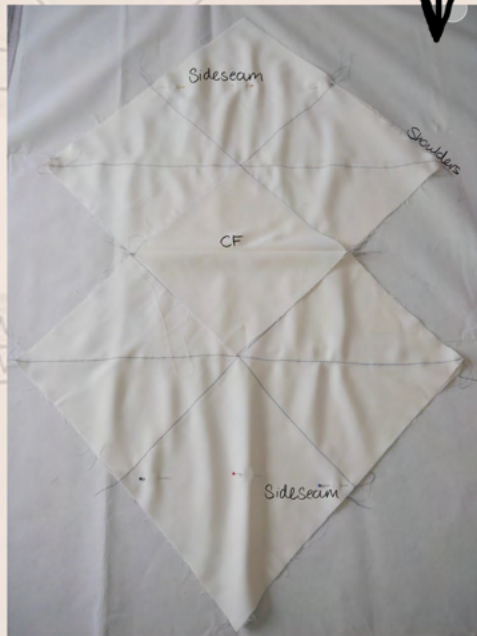
Working out sketch.



Going through the process.



Once aligned they were to be layed wrong sides together and sewn from the base of the neckline to the hem.



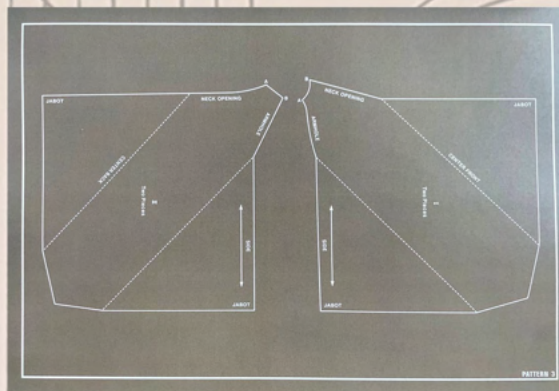
Once sewn together repeat 3 more times.



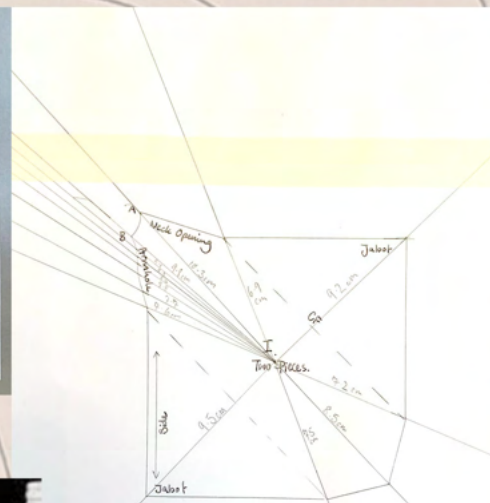
Evaluation of Process:

This exercise gave a greater understanding of the squares Vionnet worked with using half scale. This led to a limited understanding of the garment but was useful in developing my understanding of half scale and Vionnet's own process. The stitches down the centre gave a clear eyeline for the drape to understand its directions.

MADELEINE VIONNET: Dress 1



Pattern from Vionnet (Kirke 2012).



Scaling up the patterns this was done for both the front and back.



1.0cm SEAM ALLOW
0.5cm SEAM ALLOW



Cutting out the patterns.

Half scale version.



Front Loose.



Vionnet's Dress



Full Scale Toile

Once the half scaling was resolved it then was made to full scale.

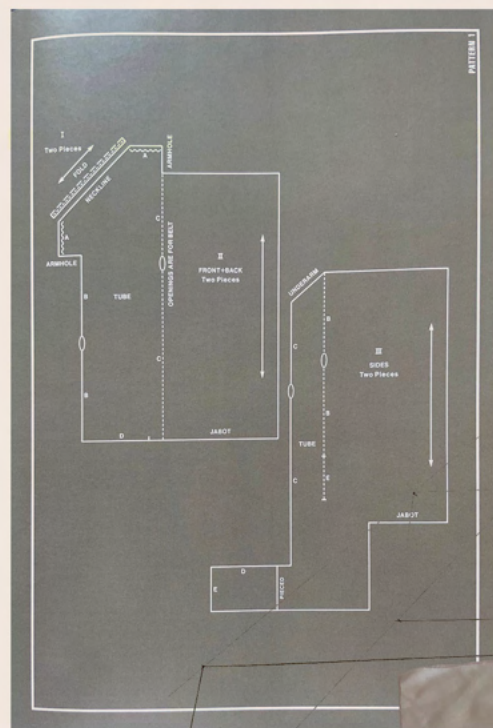
As you can see the patterns in the book were only scaled for the page therefore I could not apply the same scaling measurements to the front and the back, resulting in size differences leading to a resize of the back.

My patterns from my own Undergraduate look 2 dress. These patterns were made before I new about Vionnet's work which gave me an interesting mind set when understanding her patterns as my are so similar to hers.

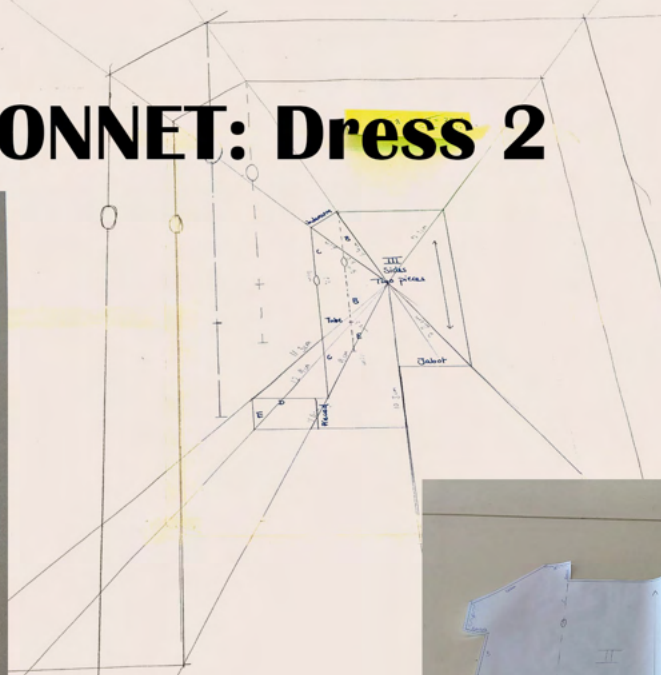
Evaluation of Process:

The dress was interesting to make as to understand how to rescale the patterns took the majority of the time resulting in 2 mini mannequin toiles and 1 full scale toile. The main issue was sorting the length and figuring out which was correct on the mannequins. The main issue was the twisting on the shoulder that Vionnet would do to fit the garment to the bust, this was tricky to understand how she executed this. I enjoyed trying it on and felt very elegant.

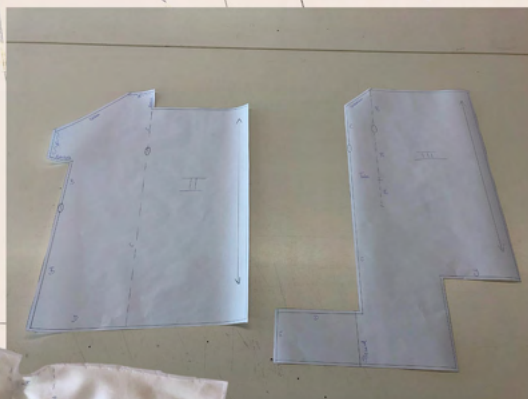
MADELEINE VIONNET: Dress 2



Pattern from Vionnet (Kirke, 2012).



Half Scale patterns



The fabric sections, once how to sew them was resolved.



The patterns scaled up.



On the Half Scale mannequin, it unfortunately came up tight so this was rescaled again before scaling up to full scale.

The half scale toile with the belt thought the indicated sections on the pattern.



Vionnet's Dress

Full Scale Toile



Evaluation of Process:

Vionnet garment 2 was the hardest due to the scale in the book requiring being rescaled 4 times in total. It was also not clear how it was to be made or where the belt went through at certain points. This was experimented with through trial and error. The full-length garment, even though longer than the original, It draped elegantly and when I tried it on it felt very comfortable and flattering. the main issue is the size of the neck being a bit too low and open on my but that is personal opinion. This could be resolve by making it a smaller size.

DEVELOPING MY OWN DRESS:



The considered moulage explorations.

Chosen design.



Recreating the garment in in a easier more mark showing fabric.

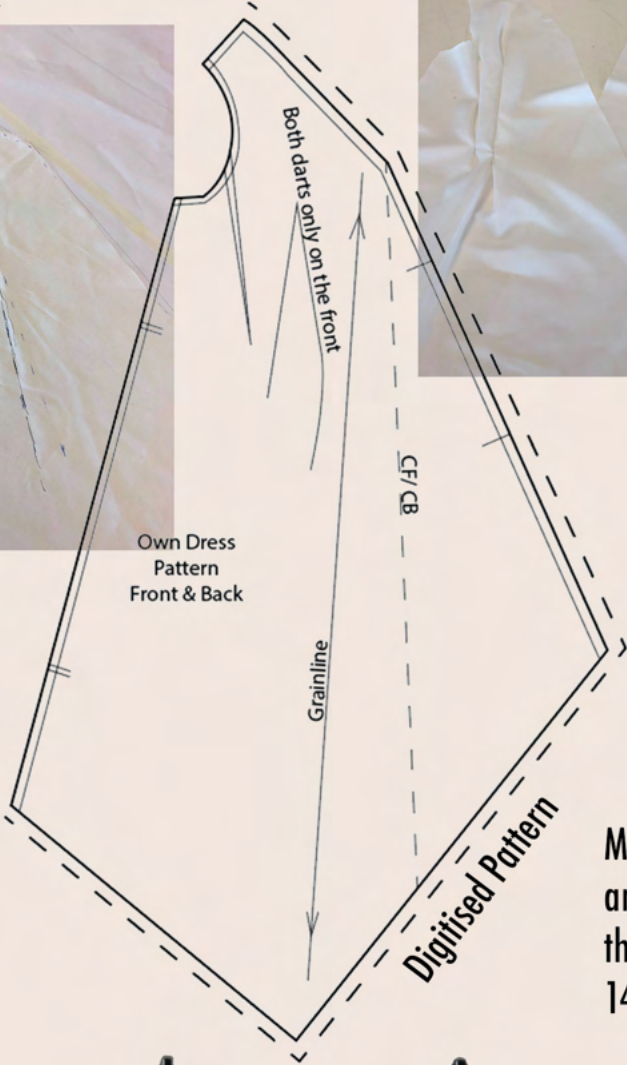


Once a pattern was created out of the fabric I used it on a more professional mannequin to get the sizing.



Base of the garment toiled.

Once marked I laid it flat to create a pattern.



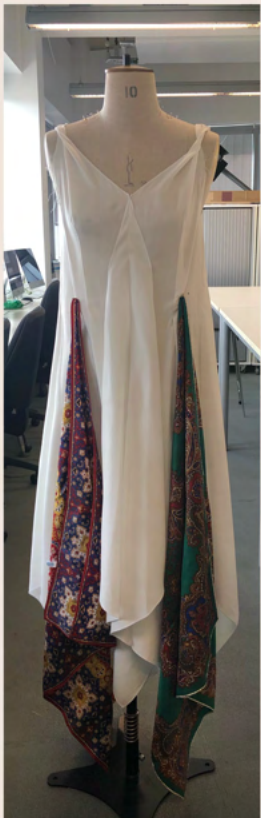
Darts pinned.



Close up of the front detail.



Marrow edged and sewn down the edges by 14cm.



Plotting the scarf sections.



Button holer used to create a belt loop under the drape.

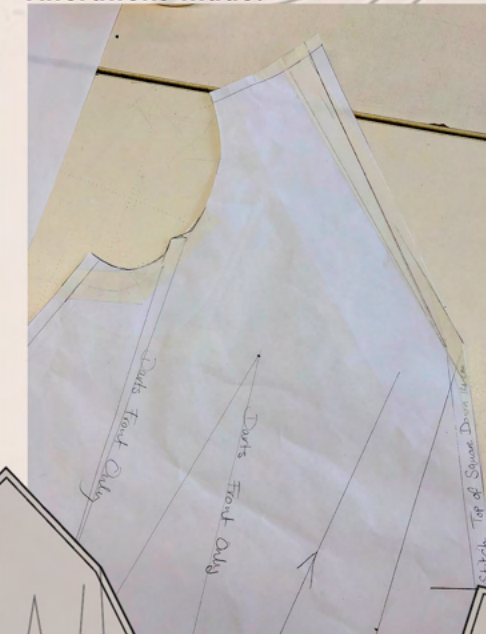
With the scarf sections attached loose.



Styling options



Alterations made.



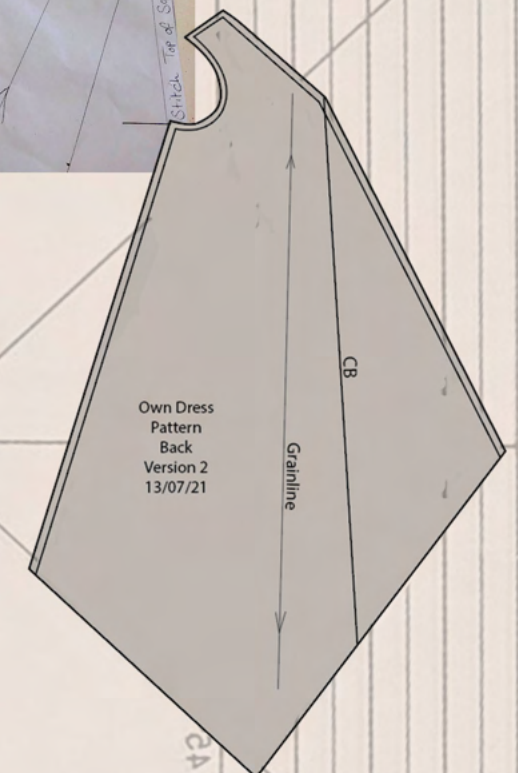
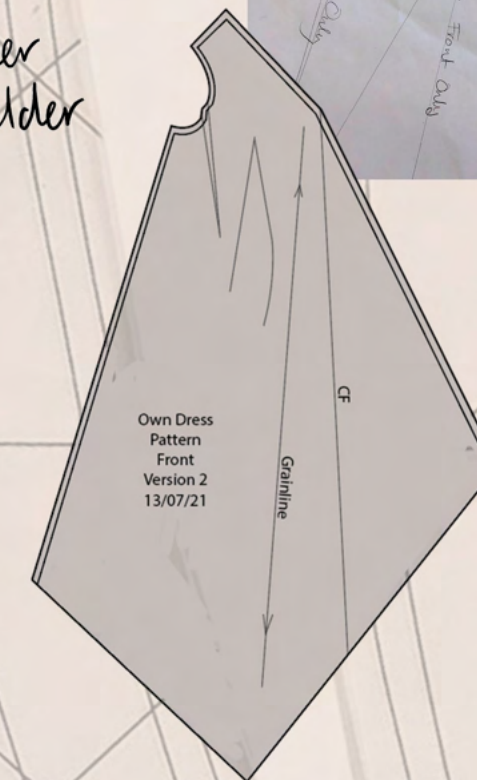
Alterations that need to be made.



Sketch of styled garment.

Filled in armhole

Wider Shoulder

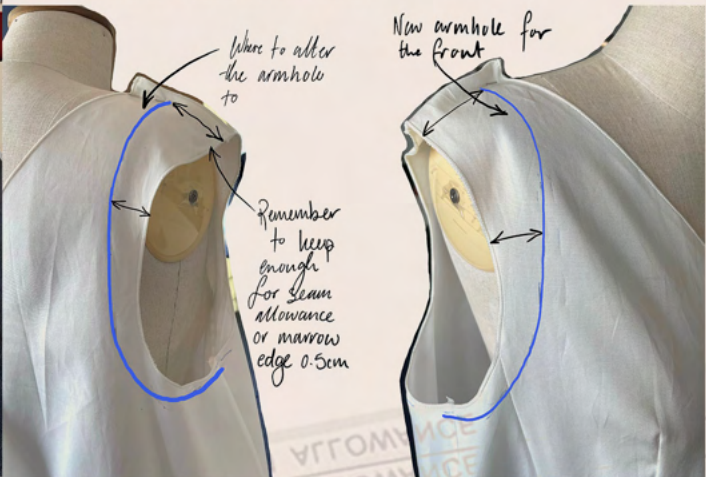


The new pattern created for the front and back due to the shapes required for the arm holes and the back draped better without the darts.

The decision to remove the scarves was to make the dress more useful for everyday.



Alterations from this toile.



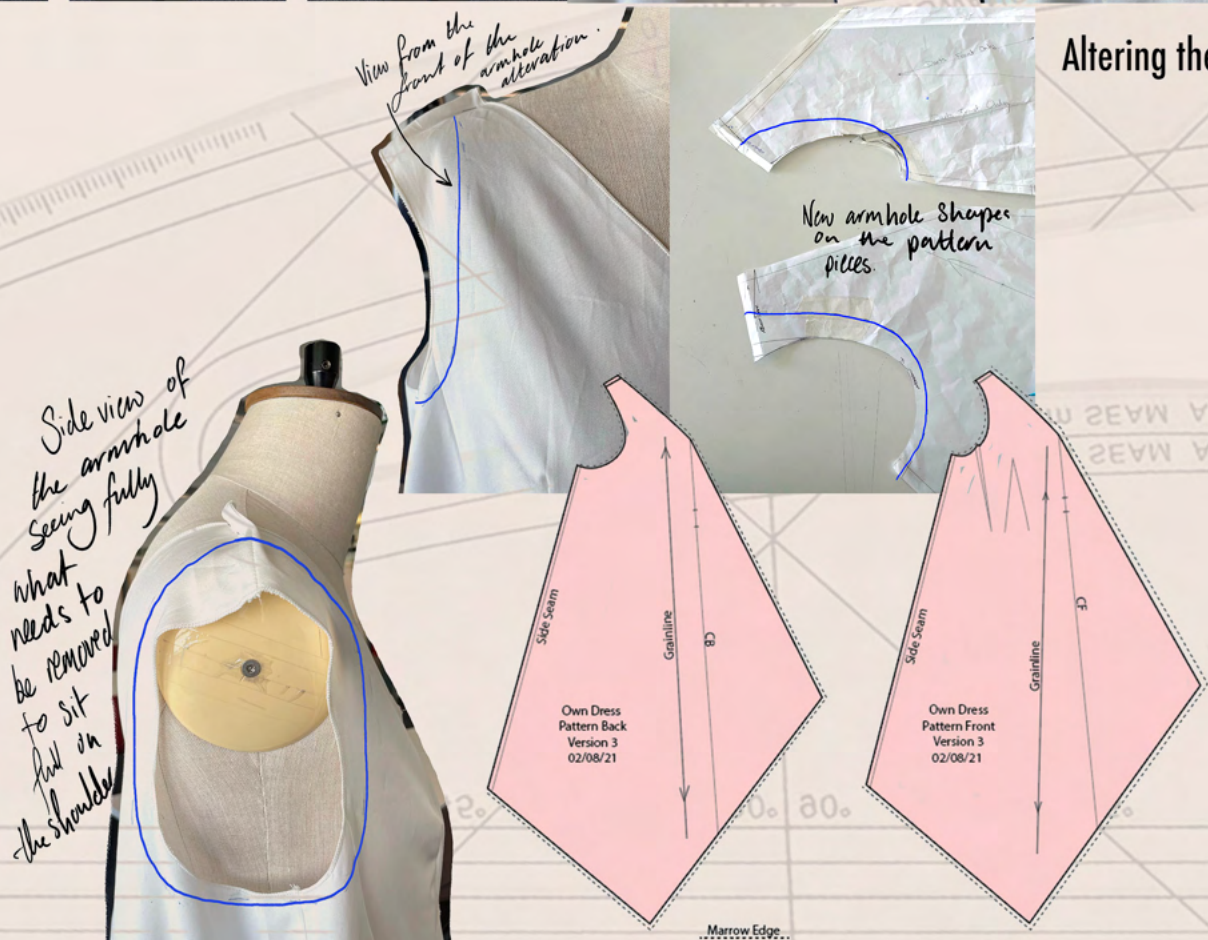
Trying the garment on the body.



Evaluation of Process:

The final stages mainly revolved around sorting the neckline and the shoulder width. I felt using a mannequin, allowed me to alter the shoulders but this then give me a false sense that they were right, therefore I tried it myself. This allowed me to actually understand the issue for a customer with the neckline being too wide. This was resolved with a half toile to make sure it sat at the correct width. Even though made in linen making it stiffer than the other toiles it allowed me to see it move in a different fabric. I think this process was effective in understanding the dress, I wanted to make and allow myself to see the process due to extensive documentation.

Altering the pattern.



New digitised Pattern



Final half toile.

OH!

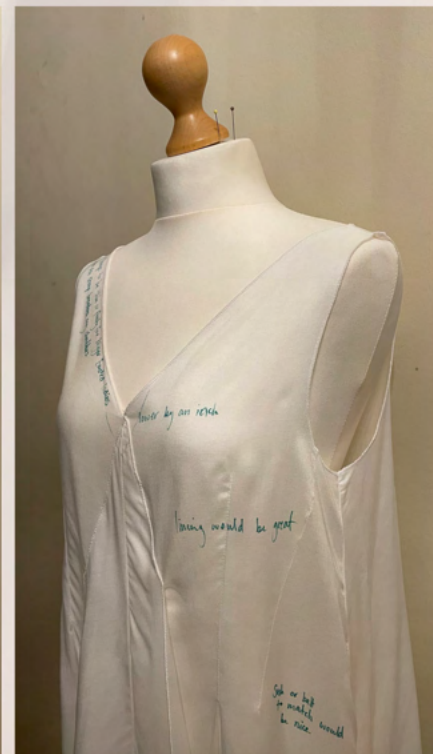
A Brand Experiment

On the next two pages you will find the images of how the dresses were returned and with the notes the participants made on the dresses. Each participant has marked differently. Some have expressed the requirements through writing, drawing or cutting the dress, and giving clear direction to me, about their desires for the dress.



PARTICIPANT 1

Shorter in length.



PARTICIPANT 2

'Straps could be either thin or floaty for us bigger busted ladies. I think the middle sized strap just broadens my shoulders.'

'likewise, for the hourglass shape it would be nice for the dress to nip in at the waist to accentuate sharper curves.'

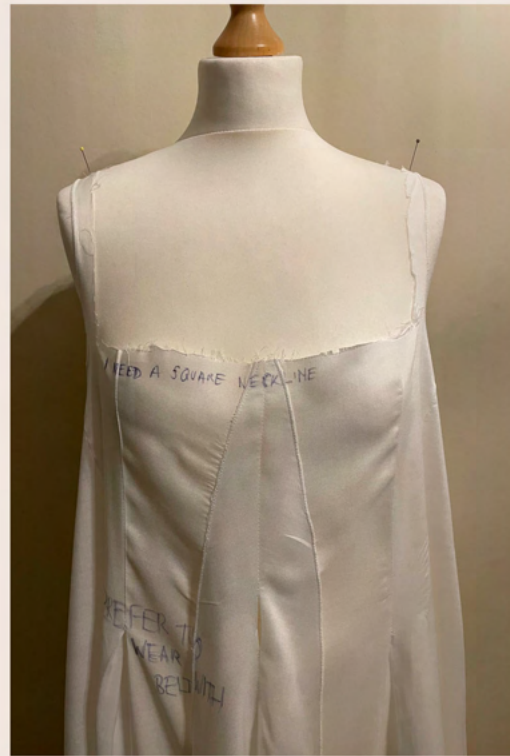
'Could be cool to have a sash or a belt to go on top of the dress.'

'The neckline should be an inch or so lower as it cuts in at an odd place on me personally.'

'I liked the floaty style but if I was wearing everyday then would want a straight hem.'

'Zip would be good (at the back)'

'Inner lining to hide bra.'



PARTICIPANT 3

'I need a square neckline.'

'I prefer to wear a belt with it.'

Concealed zip down the left side.



PARTICIPANT 4

Lowering and widening of the neckline.

Concealed zip down the left side.

OH!

A Brand Experiment

Findings:

Which fabric do you prefer?

Most preferred the Bamboo Silk but on preferred the Linen.

What occasions would you wear this garment to?

Participants evenly agreed about it being useful for everyday and evening.

How would you style this garment? (This is to compliment the images you have sent)

All participants agree that a belt would be preferable. They also agree due to its flexibility for different events that it could also be worn with heels, jumpers, boots and trainers.

How much would you pay for a dress like this?

The participants have given different ranges for different fabrics in the £100 mark for Bamboo Silk and the Linen between £80-£100, the Jersey between £20-£80 but this depends on the quality of the making.

Have you enjoyed being a part of the design process?

All participants enjoyed the process and found the process interesting and over all a positive experience.

Would you like the brands you shop with to have a more personal relationship to you? (Not as personal as the experiment but to show that they understand your wants.)

Most participants would enjoy a Brands opinion to be open to listen to their customers and by a Brand listening to customers would promote a customer's confidence, but one participant felt they have their own style and that a Brand listening to much may be unbeneficial for them as they are set in their ways.



SUMMARY

To execute the Brand Experiment, it has been very important to understand efficient design. One particular author used to gain this understanding is Donald Norman, *The Psychology of Everyday Things* (1988). Norman explains designing for customers as giving 'natural signals' to give the customer obvious signs on how to use or assemble the product. He refers to objects such as kettles, and door systems for example, further explaining 'why customers will put up with difficult objects' (Norman, 1988, p2). The main influence on how I designed my dress was, 'Well designed objects are easy to interpret and understand. They contain visible clues to their operation. Poorly designed objects can be difficult and frustrating to use' (Norman, 1988, p2). This quote when applying it to Madeleine Vionnet's garments feels insulting to her creativity, as the construction of dress 2 does not have 'natural signals' (Norman, 1988) from a design perspective. However, for the customer the dress has signals of a neck hole and arm holes, where this gets confusing for the wearer is where the belt loops through as this main styling feature is personal customer preference for how they would want to wear the belt. This garment when applied to Norman's theory does fulfil customers' purposes as it 'displays how the customer interacts with the device before they use it' (Norman, 1988, p8) which do indicate how to wear them despite the intricacies of the garments. With these issues in mind when designing my own garment I wanted it to have the 'natural signals' (Norman, 1988) but also have the ability for customers to understand the flexibility with the garment and to be able to see where it would naturally fit in their wardrobe. Therefore, I decided to make the garment purely out of toiling fabric this then allows for the participant to write, draw or cut the garment to their specifications to indicate their interaction with the garment.

The participants have all marked the garments to different detail specifications. For some participants it has been more about how many different ways you could wear the dress and for others it was the alterations it required for the dress to be right for them. It was interesting to see how differently these women interacted with the garment and in total all participants created 21 different styling looks all together. The versatility of the garment was commented on by all, expressing how useful a garment like this could be and the number of ways the garment was styled indicated the 'natural signals' (Norman, 1988) to the wearer as to how they could style it. To some this again was more obvious than others one particular participant enjoyed experimenting with her wardrobe in a way she had not done in a while, giving her a new love for things she had not worn in a while and new ideas for outfit combinations. Another participant who cut into the garment to give a specific neckline tackled styling by making sure the dress went with her key pieces in her wardrobe to make sure it would be useful for her. It has gone as far as the participant asking me to make the dress for her with the altered neckline.

The attitude of Hill House Home founder Nellie Diamond who started her luxury homeware brand in 2016 and in 2018 she released her trademarked dress the Nap Dress which came from Diamond's need "I wanted to design something that allowed me to feel like myself during a 3:00 am feeding, when I'm so bone-tired and have four thousand emails and I'm thinking about taxes and my laundry and my to-do list and the Nap Dress™ came to be as a solution to a problem inherent in my own life" (Diamond Instagram 2020). Which in turn is her customers need as she has found it is a plight shared by many of her customers. Diamond connects with her customers through social media and makes each new Nap Dress drop an experience providing virtual waiting rooms online for customer waiting to buy where she discusses the new collection. The dresses have been such a success that Hill House Home did a Pop Up in New York November 2021. The Nap Dress is a clear example of effective design and has fit into the lives of its customers. This example has been a particular inspiration for listening to your customers. Norman's 'natural signals' (Norman, 1988) do apply to the Nap Dress as it has clear signals of wear but then holds clear signals if we take Norman's theory further into a 'natural signals' (Norman, 1988) to fit the dress into customers lives which is what I have tried to understand and design for this experiment.

In conclusion, I feel participants interacted well to the experiment. There was meant to be five participants in total but due to commitments of one therefore, returning the dress and another participants accidentally binning the dress therefore left me with only four participants. I feel this has definitely shown how a Brand could relate to their customer but when starting to broaden this to bigger brands it becomes impractical therefore further development of this prototype is necessary. The experiment has proved its uses by bonding more with a customer but has shown the difficulties of using this for bigger companies and also developing amore refined questionnaire to ask participants.

Bibliography

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