AQUATIC MEED 2066

Cross disciplinary exploration



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Abstract

This project explores the combination of fashion and film media design tools and practices through multidisciplinary collaboration engagements between myself, a fashion designer, and professionals associated with the film industry. The research uses an exploratory approach to seek and create new ways to extend my design practice and range of creative outcomes. My research question was, "How can pre-production creative tools from the film industry be adapted to inspire and allow my creative practice to evolve?

The work includes the creation of 3 bag prototypes, developed for an envisaged future setting and inspired by the science fiction film genre and specifically a created dystopian world influenced by climate change and advancing technology.

I utilized non-traditional design methodologies such as adaptive thinking and scenario thinking to explore how global developments and imagined futures can influence my design aesthetic by embracing and designing for future concepts and technologies. I undertook collaborative engagements with multidisciplinary creatives from the film industry, resulting in a new dimension and novel complexity to my design practice that I had not achieved before.

The use of practices native to the film industry enabled me to gain a sense of self-discovery beyond that of a traditional fashion designer. The research output showcases how extending to other design disciplines can lead to innovative solutions and new aesthetics in a unique manner.

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Attestation of authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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Signature

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Introduction

As a fashion and apparel designer using a traditional design process, I wanted to explore a fresh approach and strategy to my craft and research practice. This project embraces a contemporary collaboration between the apparel and the film industry. It illustrates the transfer of knowledge and practice s howcased in a series of bag prototypes that emphasize narrative to engage with the audience.

This practice of transferring knowledge to prototypes and visual developments was used to explore cinematic storytelling as part of my design process a process and collaborative practice used within the film industry, I explored film making approaches and adopted research tools from the film industry to contribute to new knowledge, to support the development of a personal and authentic design vision and practice within an apparel design framework.

Adding narration and gaining depth in my design project has proven a powerful practice, allowing me to energize and motivate myself while discussing the future through a series of self-reflections as well as design reflections. This enabled me to reflect on my past and present views of our world and my own creative practice.

Science fiction "pulls from real life experiences, inequalities and movements building to create innovative ways of understanding the world around us, paints visions of new worlds that could be teach us new ways of interacting with one another" (Brown & Imarisha, 2015).

Science fiction films envision future worlds that could exist outside of our present realities highlighting plausible futures, after climate disasters; where the world has elapsed towards a dystopia, for example in Blade Runner 2049 (2017) by Denis Villeneuve. Through employing design fiction and world-building practices, I developed prototypes for an envisioned dystopian future world, highlighting current issues such as climate change and human adaptation to an uncertain future scenario. This allowed for critical discussions, reflecting on the future of the human species.

The first chapter, on methodology, introduces the importance of methodological development within a complex collaborative environment. The research question and aims chapter introduces the thesis research, which talks about why I used specific methods from the film industry to develop my design practice.

In the three main practical phases, I describe engaging in experimental practices such as collaborative film and photo shoots, that allowed me to reflect and then elaborate on how I have used the film tools I adopted, creating a collection of bags that represent each stage of the methodology practice and that are further investigated in the collaborative stage of the design project.

^{*}World-building is a creative process of a new world driven by fiction to utilize imagination and speculation.

The main practical stages of prototypes are developed in three phases. I was able to discuss the importance of collaboration within design and across disciplines and to allow non-native methods to be implemented or inspire my usual design practice. The research started by exploring film making approaches such as visual board development, **character interpretation**, world-building, scenarios, music, visual effects, actors' performance, pre-shoot development, and camera handling, which all contributed to a product design that exceeds any of my previous exploration and development.

Using these design tools within my practice also allowed for collaborative engagement in which creatives from different fields and disciplines came together to utilize my visions and aesthetics enabling the body of work to develop and take shape, bringing new dimensions to the design outcomes.

Research question

How can preproduction creative tools of the film industry be adapted to inspire and allow my creative practice to evolve? Through exploring this question, this thesis focuses on how specific tools and collaborative practices used within the film industry can be utilized to enhance a creative approach to developing a series of bags that are inspired by an envisaged dystopian future world scenario.

Context

Fashion and film are heavily inspired by each other. These fields continue to engage in media and technology, resulting in fictional wearable garments and products that express space and time.

"Throughout history, clothing has played a role in defining an era. Fashion is the mirror of our civilization." Deborah Nadoolman Landis (AMPAS, 2015).

As a fashion and apparel designer in my previous projects, I have focused on developing functional products that cater to everyday uses. My experience within the fashion industry has allowed me to understand aesthetics and functionality that allows for consumer interaction. However, I felt that I had not been able to fully explore an artistic approach within my design due to the restrictions that consumerism within the fashion industry imposes on my practice. To take an innovative approach on evolving and moving away from a commercial point of view, making use of film tools has allowed my design to navigate and adopt design practices that has open my research gathering to embrace innovative and artistic ways of expressing through the making of prototypes.

Fashion plays a vital role in developing costumes for characters for film. Through costume design, characters can be port rayed in evocative ways and costumes, props and sets support the actors and their character development and contribute to the narrative and performance.

An example where costume design has played a vital part in bringing forth a future dystopian world is the movie Dune (2021) by Denis Villeneuve, In it the costume design depicts a diverse world of planets that have their own social structures and hierarchies, and each kingdom has prominent costumes reflecting people's roles.

Products and costumes that are inspired by fictional environments seek to represent functionality and aesthetics in new ways, while drawing on existing environments. For example, designing for **extra-terrestrial** outer world aesthetics, costume designers might focus on developing zero gravity costumes and props exploring forms of unearthly, outer world movements and aesthetics such as fluidity and airy-like qualities which emphasise weightlessness.

My main influence for this project and exploring collaboration and film industry tools was the movie Bladerunner 2049. It brought into focus the importance of narrative, performance, music, visuals, lighting, and props all hugely contribute to the memorable and immersive storytelling in film. A good narrative that highlights a probable future world and psychologically compelling and realistic scenarios is important, in order to draw the audience in and evoke an emotional connection that leads to a memorable experience. Technology plays an important part in depicting future scenarios. The world of science fiction enabled the prototypes and ideologies to be developed. Blade Runner 2049's stunning visual development allowed me to easily immerse myself within its depicted world to emotionally connect with the atmosphere and the characters through the narrative and visuals. It enhanced my understanding of fictional effects of technology-development on humanity and deeply influenced my engagement in future world-building, looking at human adaptation to survive within an imaginative dystopian future.

^{*}Extra-terrestrial outside the earth.

Methodology and tools

Introduction

In previous projects, I have experimented with narratives to explore ideas and aesthetics, but not within a multidisciplinary collaboration setting inspired by film practices, in order to give the project a greater dimension.

The framework

The combination of critical design, speculative design and design fiction as a framework has supported reflection on the effect and outcomes of each of these adopted design approaches coming from film practices. Critical, speculative, and design fiction also assist in developing the ability to envision plausible future worlds while referring to the past and the present.

Foresight practice, experiential futures, diegetic prototypes, and scenario envisioning have allowed for a more distinctive design output within my design practice. In previous projects I have experimented with narratives to explore ideas and aesthetics, however not within a multidisciplinary collaboration using film industry tools and methods.

The main influence that has affected my working process is the collaborative engagement, which I envisaged would allow my work to develop and make it easier to adopt design methods outside of my usual design practice. I fully immersed myself and engaged in these goals to seek further progression of my work.

Critical Design

Critical design embraces the concept of lifting practice research to a critical theory-based level, allowing for challenging assumptions and conceptions about the roles of everyday objects or practices. Critical design thinking led to the crucial understanding of the interest and inspiration that led me to exploring a future dystopian world.

Looking at my practice from a critical viewpoint helped me understand why and how my research methodologies were to benefit the practice-led design process. This allowed new innovative ideas to be adopted and for my research to gain a sense of maturity. It has allowed me to gain knowledge that is relevant to today's world of immense technological developments and how this might affect an envisioned future world.

Technology is often described as a tool for gaining control over nature or the environment. Today's technological developments have allowed us to build intelligent machines that could lead to the surpassing of **human intelligence**. However, the development of technological enhancement catered towards upgrading a human mind or human physicality is viewed as a contribution to survival within an ever and fast changing environment where climate change and **intelligent machines** are prominent. The changes we are exposed to are accelerating at a speed we might not be able to keep up with, and therefore, in a fictional setting, technology could allow humans to gain control. (Kurzweil. 1999)

^{*}Human intelligence is the intellectual capability which include ability to learn from experiences adapt to new situation, self-awareness and high level of motivation.

^{*}Intelligent machines is referred to an artificial intelligence. A machine which is developed to be able to adopt and monitor environments based on experience.

Design Fiction

Design fiction is a practice that focuses on scientific facts as well as exploring imagination using science fiction. In my practical design process, design fiction helped the development of prototypes that provoked a sense of origin through narrative and visual experimentation. This has allowed the prototypes to be developed as artefacts, to act as diegetic prototypes and to be functional within the envisioned future world. Diegetic Prototypes are developed objects/ designs which contribute and functions to an overall fictional world.

The more design fiction is incorporated within my practice, the more ideas and exploration begin to take effect, such as ways of linking factual evidence, such as climate change, and speculation of technological developments within a future scenario.

"Design fiction does all the unique things that science-fiction can do as a reflective, written story telling practice. Like science fiction, design fiction creates imaginative conversations about probable future worlds. Some forms of science fiction speculate about a near future tomorrow, extrapolating from today." (Bleecker, 2099)

The combination of fact and fiction within a fashion and film setting has resulted in science fiction film costume, set and prop design. The science fiction genre is compelling to wider audiences due to the use of fact and fictional evidence, which makes it realistic in an imaginative way. Therefore, the Blade Runner 2049 film has been compelling due to the main elements it focuses on, such as climate change and technology.

^{*}Prop designs in film is an object designed to support and be part of a set design. Props can also be an object the character interacts.

Speculative Design

"Speculative design gives designers an opportunity to stretch their imaginations and develop new and boundary-pushing systems and prototypes for the future" (Ho Tran.T, 2013)

Speculative design allows design-centered practices to explore "experimental simulation," allowing visualization through imagination to pre-adapt to unfamiliar scenarios. Speculative design aids the development of immersive experiences, allowing prototypes that evoke and present envisioned future scenarios to be experienced through touching, hearing, and seeing. The use of a speculative design supported exploration of gaining an authentic viewpoint on a future that I may or may not desire, while allowing reflection to be considered. Speculative design allowed for my imagination to be enhanced through constant deliberation.

Speculative thinking as part of the practical design process allowed for a deeper understanding of the effects of each design stage and allowed the prototypes to be developed in a strategic foresight practice.

Foresight practice is used to develop ways of understanding environmental trends, which supports envisioning plausible fut ures, while avoiding undesired futures.

Pre-Visualization – Exploration

Previsualization within the film industry is an integrated part of the pre-production stages of film making, used to reduce time for shooting in locations that need planning ahead, while enabling directors to previsualize and prepare for specific scenes before shooting them.

Previsualization was beneficial in this project to understand the techniques required, such as experimentation with various illustrations, with the support of cameras, lighting, costumes, and character movements, which are all essential to previsualize, in order to grasp the end visual.

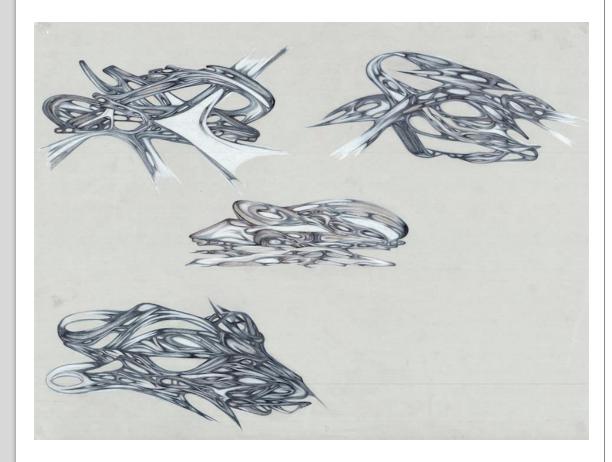
Previsualization allowed me to further explore **visual rendering software**. I was fortunate to engage in collaboration with Betty Blood, who is currently completing her undergraduate degree in Media Design at AUT. The first interaction we had was during the process of building ideas and aesthetics towards the envisioned future world. The collaboration phases of communication and sharing inspiration were effortless and we immediately gained an understanding of how similar our aesthetics are in terms of the development of a future dystopian world. This included values, ethics, social and environmental views contributing towards developing experiential futures and envisioned scenarios.

Using visual effects, we were able to design concept art and buildings which supported an authenticity towards the developed bags which evoked a sense of origin. To me, these developments have highlighted the importance of collaboration within design practice. The architecture that I have developed for the envisioned world is looked at through Diegetic prototype models, as they are treated and seen as real buildings with purpose within the envisioned future world.

Diegetic Prototypes are consistent from the moment that they appear on screen in that they are naturally situated within the whole "**Diegetic world**", in that world they become part of "everyday life" and in that world they are "real" (2010). Reference needed

This idea of considering the prototypes to be viewed and discussed within a real setting was important to develop meaning and value within each phase of the practice development.

^{*}Diegetic world in cinema is referred to a developed fictional world and the elements which makes up the internal structures of the fictional world.



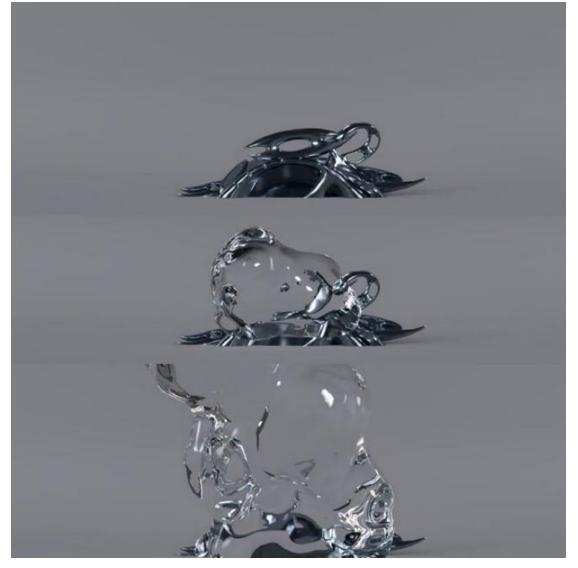
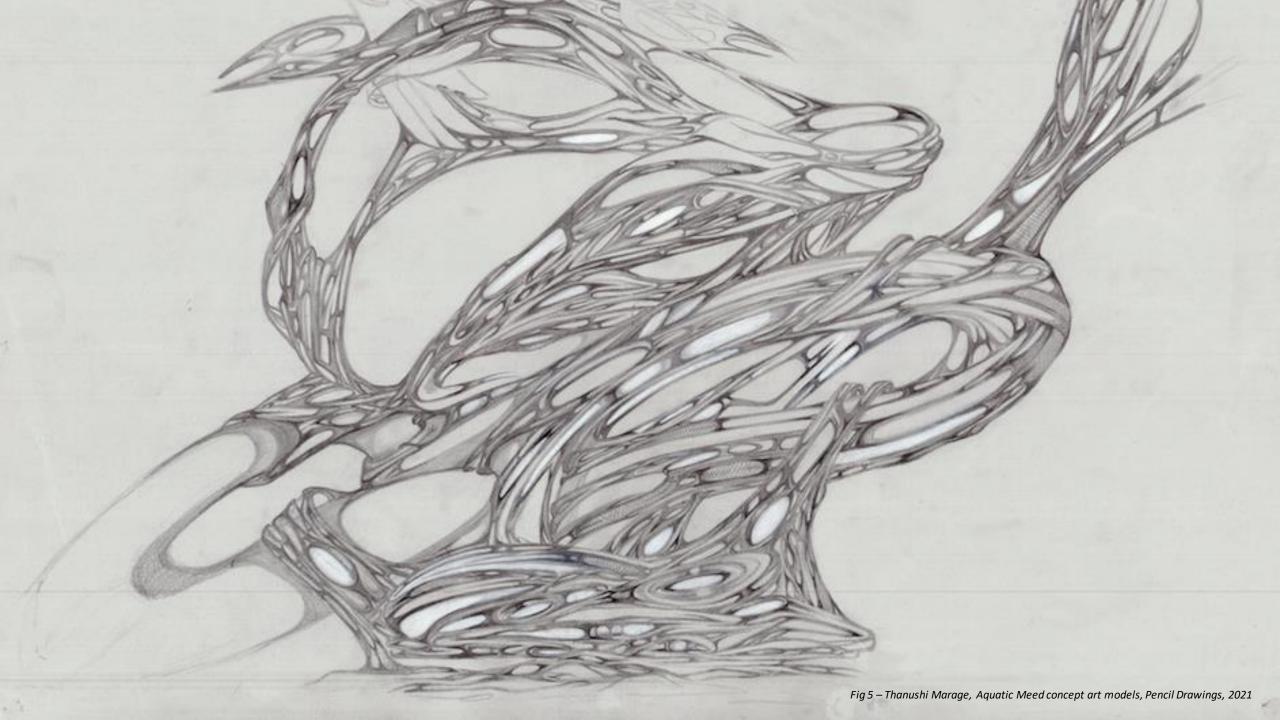
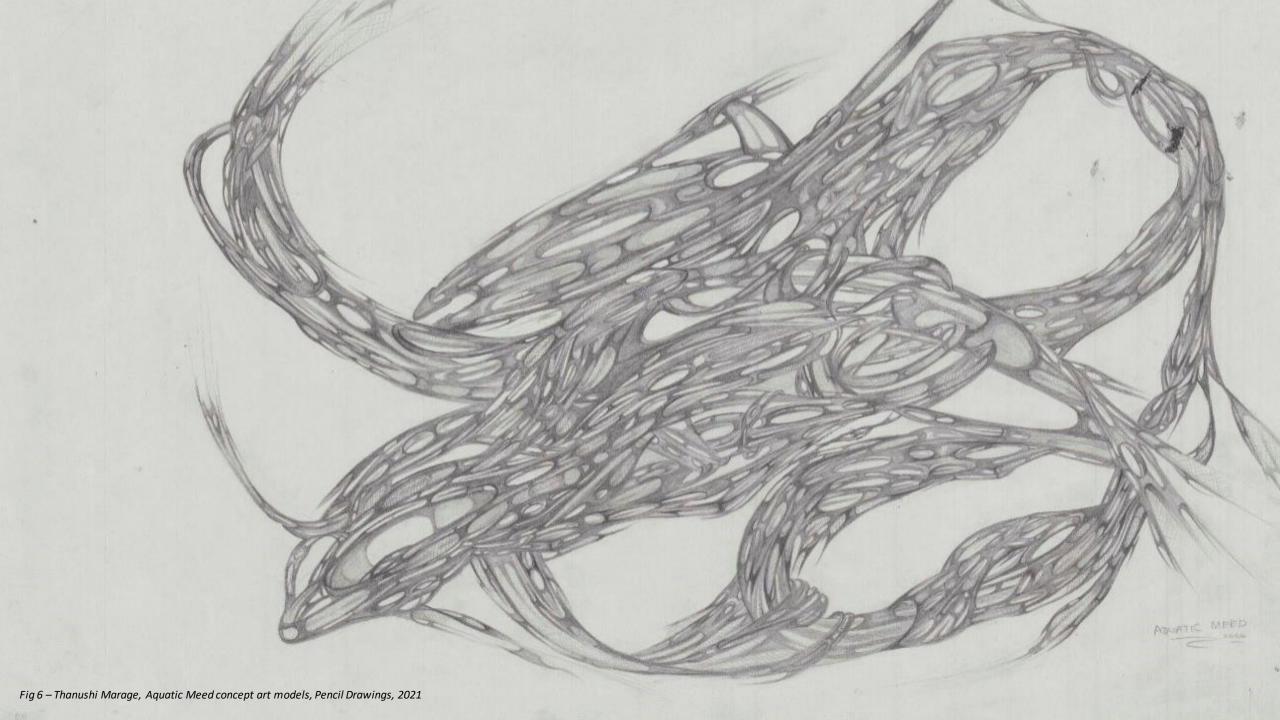


Fig 3 – Thanushi Marage, Aquatic Meed concept art models, Pencil drawings, 2021

Fig 4 – Thanushi Marage, Aquatic Meed concept art models, modelling by Betty Blood, 2021





Research practice - content overview

- **Practical research** Exploration of mood boards and team collaboration
- Inspirational discussion
- Connectivity through narrative
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- Character development Character relationships
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- Stage 0.1 bag prototype development
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- Stage 0.3 bag prototype development
- Post film development
- Aquatic Meed final film

Practical research - Exploration of mood boards and team collaboration

My research practice started by investigating and discussing the vital part mood boards play in the developing process and to help problem-solve and evaluate inspiration, as well as aid with research structure. Mood boards allow me to visually express and communicate data used towards developing aesthetics, enabling me to recognize the phases in which the aesthetic and initial experimentation can be further developed. While developing mood boards in stages, I decided to invite creatives from the film industry to have input. This led to encouraging perspectives and reviews of aesthetics and research. These experimental stages enabled me to reflect on the direction and critical viewpoints I needed for my practice. For example, a local film director based in Auckland, Dylan Pharazyn, emphasized the importance of actors to be present and exposed throughout the developing process of prototypes and mood boards, allowing their connectivity with the envisioned world to grow naturally. He also made me aware that the Previsualization stages such as music, locations and weather are to be explored and tested.

A vital part of the research process was to connect with a team creatively to engage in collaboration allowing my research practice to evolve. I utilized qualitative research methods involving collaboration with smaller groups of creatives who are like-minded and knowledgeable in similar research practices.

The combination of both quantitative and qualitative practice falls into a method referred to as triangulation research practice, according to (Patton, 1999), "Where the use of multiple methods or data sources allows researchers to explore and address a research question, leaving enough space to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena". The use of triangulation while collecting data has allowed me to strengthen my practice through adopting different ways of gathering data, while also allowing the influences of personal value systems and experiences to be taken into account.

The team

When considering to develop a film I was aware that I had to start building a team rapidly, allowing for sufficient time to experiment and connect with creatives in an authentic way. Doing so gave me time to create visual imagery that represented the envisioned world clearly, with a distinct aesthetic, and to develop prototypes inspired by an experimental design process. The team was aware that the aim of the experimental phase of the colla boration was to test or develop research methods and a visual series of prototypes depicting an envisioned plausible future world.

Building the team and collaborating with a range of creatives who have experience working in the film industry, such as directors, editors, model designers, photographers, actors, and musicians enabled me to recognize the great deal of knowledge and design practices that could be a dopted. This in turn allowed the envisioned future world to validate and embody the complexity collaboration as a practice requires.

I collaborated with:

Film student – East Abernathy

Model designer – Betty Blood

Visual Artist – Sean Fe'oa

Music producers - Dylan b, Jackie

Stylists and Fashion designers – Dylan James Richards (Yeezy / Entire studios).

Photography – Synthia B, Doddy, Jenna, Jacob H



Inspirational Discussion

My aim was to develop a series of bags that embody an envisioned dystopian future world. Most often dystopia is referred to as a world that has been impacted by climate change, which lead to an environment that is harsh to survive in. It often includes a technologically advanced society, where empathy towards humanity has been forgotten about due to mass production and a totalitarian governed regime. Focusing on the elements of developed dystopian fictional worlds and real -world issues that may have the potential to lead into a plausible dystopia, enabled me to envisage natural, social, and political issues that evoked the urgency of human adaptation.

I asked myself questions such as 'How will global warming affect the future world and our ways of living?' and 'How will earth change in total volume of seawater? In science fiction there have been many adaptations of the future world that reflect these very questions, considering ways for humans to adapt to challenging situations posed through these future scenarios. This method of reflection has had a major impact on my research practice, developing my own theories and visions towards devising a fictional dystopian world.



While researching climate predictions, my thesis supervisor Anke Nienhuis referred to a pertinent Netflix documentary called "Seaspiracy" directed by Ali Tabrizi, a British filmmaker. The documentary explores the impact of overfishing, relating it to global warming and changes to the sea's nature and discusses the devastating consequences. The film highlights the self-centered and monetary gain focused human mentality. Even though we are aware of how climate change affects water supplies, agriculture, and transportation systems, all relating to our health and safety, we are still unable to let the imposing issues stand between ego and mass consumption. Considering these elements while creating my fictional future world, I envisage a plausible scenario where humans adapt towards an underwater habitat due to the result of melting ice caps and thermal expansion of sea water due to climate change.

"We are now living in a time of extremes, and the unsustainable patterns and emerging issues are inviting us to adapt to a new reality. Ready or not, change is coming! "(Dupont, Aftershock, 2021. Pg 476)

Approximately 71% of the earth's surface is ocean, and this number will grow if climate change takes its course. Underwater habitats will begin to populate within my future scenario. While visualizing and designing an underwater habitat, my focus was on considering ways of surviving in this underwater world.



Living on water is not an unknown occurrence, and humans have been living on water for centuries. This is evident in southern Thailand for example, where fishermen choose to live in floating villages, as a way of being closer to a working environment, another reason for floating houses and cities highlight one of the impacts of an overpopulation that we are facing today. The idea of building a structure in or on the water has been re-established in recent years, used in city concepts in which larger habitats with advanced levels of facilities and utilities have been developed and are more than just a place of accommodation. This is certainly inspiring and exciting as an experience but living underwater may not be seen as an ideal place of comfort. Imagine the dark depth of the ocean with only artificial lighting. Residents will have none of the joys of the natural world above. Lack of sunlight, which could lead to severe depression, is similar to conditions experienced by astronauts who spend a substantial number of years in preparation, to achieve mental and physical strength to cope in pressurized environments.

As a reflection, a series of questions spring to mind. How will humans change to survive underwater? Would we have artificial enhancement of the human body? To survive the high-pressure environment of the deep seas, would we need to be prepared and trained to live in an underwater habitat?

These types of questions highlight the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of these envisioned worlds and for them to be explored, building prototypes that require adaptations for human survival in this unfamiliar environment. As future-driven technology develops, how can we utilize this to our advantage, within this underwater fictional future scenario?

The concept of living off planet earth seems more desirable and has been imagined prolifically by entrepreneurs, scientists, and technologists. However, my view on living away from earth is seen as a dangerous development. Earth is, in fact the only planet we can survive and thrive on. Instead of investing billions of dollars on sending a small amount of highly trained and privileged people to planets such as Mars, we should engage in protecting and regenerating our own planet.

Connectivity Through Narrative

Narrative allowed me to analyze and identify essential elements to enhance the envisioned future world and its characters in which the prototypes were to take center stage.

Developing a narrative enabled me to find ways of imagining the past and the present through reflecting on a personal narrative, and to form new imaginative possibilities inspired by real experiences. This allowed me to shape the research, using narrative structure, which is accessible to the reader or the audience.

For example, the character "Luv" from Blade Runner 2049 is designed to be the villain and to be obedient to her master. Luv is a prisoner to her programming. I see Luv's journey within the film as a cry for freedom and free will and what it means to be alive in a changing world with systematic views, with highly advanced technology that often controls the way humans live. Concluding Luv's persona and her place within the Blade Runner 2049 dystopia, in some ways, I relate to her, being brought up in a society that discourages women to have their own voice and make their own decisions.

Human intentions are mostly good but can often be trapped under a system of class, race, nature, nurture, programming, and consciousness, which leads to powerless perspectives within a restricted environment, unable to evolve. As a child, I was pressured into embracing a certain education system as well as social systems which disabled me and affected the way I looked at the future. This is now beginning to surface and becoming clearer, also in the context of this project. Being unaware that my nature of curiosity was restricted, reflecting on my childhood has highlighted the significance of self-expression that is needed within this thesis development. I realized the importance of exploring curiosity and emotions and allowing myself to gain and establish new perspectives through my research practice.



Development of a Future dystopian world

In 1516 Thomas More invented the term "utopia", when he discussed an imaginary world built upon a utopian ideology in the book Utopia. Utopia was designed and envisioned for a humane world of peace and harmony unconstrained by realistic considerations of human psychology and social plausibility. The vision of utopia is defined to keep idealism alive. Both utopian and dystopian world views are borrowing from and intertwined in political systems such as feudalism, weaving a narrative around hyper commodified humane relations and interactions.

Thomas More's book "Utopia" discusses three stages of utopia to be considered: literary utopia, utopian practice and utopian social theory which allows blending of the boundaries of art, practice, and social theory.

Reasonings to why dystopian concepts of future worlds are so relevant are that they reflect existing developments and conflicts within socio—political systems. Dystopia was formed from the Greek "Dis topos" or "bad place". Dystopian worlds such as the one in George Orwell's Nineteen eighty-four (1949), written as a novel, have inspired numerous science fiction movies, enabling them to pose questions of real—world origin, such as machination of authoritarianism through narrative.

Discussion and interpretation of issues within the envisioned dystopian world are vital to producing prototypes that embo dy these considerations. Science fiction served as inspiration to develop imagination that later contributed to "what if?" scenarios and questions and discussions towards a future world.

Brave new world by Aldous Huxley (1932) highlights a change in quality of life and "what it means to be human?" in a dyst opian setting, with a technologically advanced society as a solution. My intent is to highlight the need for plausible human adaptation towards an underwater dystopia, explored through the use of transhumanism and character development. Transhumanism evokes the very idea of how advancement of technology allows humans to evolve to survive within a dystopian world and how technology can play a vital part in human survival within a future setting.



Character development

Character development enabled greater exploration of prototypes and artefacts. The character development of a fictional protagonist living in my imagined dystopian setting enabled an emotional connection, placing myself in the envisioned world. This enhanced my understanding of survival, raising questions such as "What would I need for survival?, What would a survival pack look like and what types of functionalities would it need to offer?, How can the bag reflect its environment and have the appropriate functionality?" Investigating answers to these types of questions steered me towards wanting to develop and prototype a collection of bags, enabling the protagonist to survive in the imagined harsh environment.

The character development enabled me to reflect on personal experiences, having lived through a war and in an oppressed so ciety in Sri Lanka. As a child I was exposed to several military regimes, apparent in everyday life and in the education system, where a need for mental toughness, was embedded thro ughout. The influence of mental toughness as an experience has shaped the way I live my life, having been exposed to these military regimes from a very young age. The mental ity to thrive and survive within a harsh restricted environment is deeply embedded in my personality. While reflecting on my experiences, I came to the realization that the theme of building a way of survival within an uncertain future was derived from my personal life and goals. Through my research practice I enabled myself to communicate this visually through the act of design.

While developing the essence of this through prototypes for the devised dystopian future world, it was important to also consider and develop ideas and aesthetics towards plausible architecture, characters and ideologies for this world. The making of physical prototypes and models allowed my practice led research- to embody a sensory design experience, fully immersing myselfinto the design process. The prototypes helped to embrace this alternative future, but evoked the need to build a sensory design environment and included map making, music and lighting. I worked surrounded by images and prototypes, which allowed me to constantly reflect on my work and take notes. Making a series of drawings of plausible future worlds led to influencing the aesthetics of the bags. Creating this sensory atmospheric environment allowed me to fully immerse myself in my research and practice.

Character relationships

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent that survive, it is the one that is the most adaptable to change" - Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

Deepening the character: Creating a unique persona for the dystopian future scenario

The character is developed to embrace and thrive within a dystopian technological society with oppressive and strictly controlled regimes and in an alienated setting. Essential are elements of emotional engagement, such as allowing readers and audiences to gain interest and to evoke empathy towards the character. The character development led to an immersive investigation inducing adaptive thinking for the future of human existence.

Below I have built a hierarchy for the Aquatic Meed world drawing inspiration and references from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, exploring character "exilist" motives and ideologies.

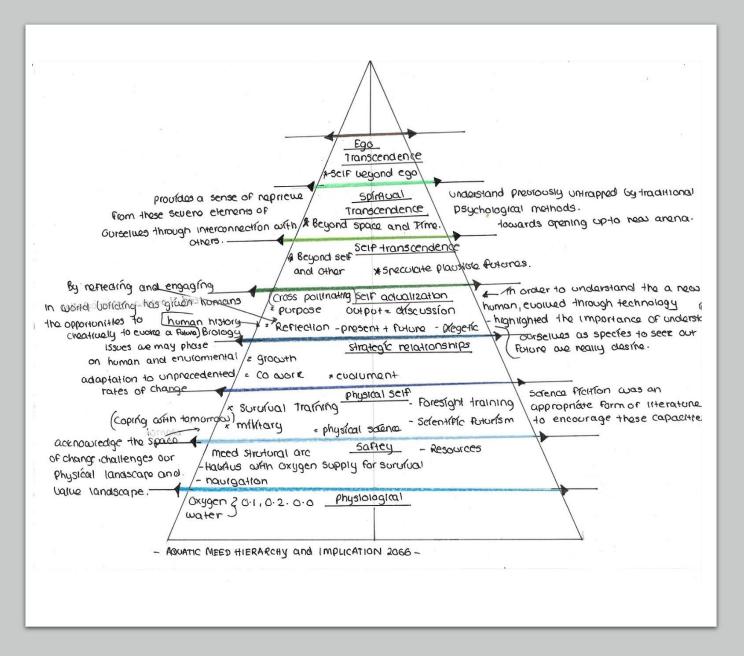


Fig 12 – Aquatic Meed hierarchy needs. Thanushi Marage drawing, 2021

Introduction to the dystopian underwater future world – Aquatic Meed 2066

Aquatic: Essential for human survival

Meed: Honour, Reward, Adaptation

2066: Prediction

The more sea water rises due to climate change, the more the demand for underwater adaptation becomes prominent as a way of survival on earth. The vision of a future set underwater influenced me to explore the utilization of technology and design for such an uncertain environment. The earlier we start exploring vital concepts leading towards an adaptable mindset, the better we will understand plausible scenarios in order to endure.

I was able to draw on a personal experience in Sri Lanka during the 2004 tsunami that led towards an adaptive mentality. Even though the tsunami had devastating consequences, the importance of understanding the ocean's behavior and giving it the respect, it deserves was highlighted due to nature's catastrophic events. The 2004 tsunami emphasized that the world we live in is endlessly uncertain.

The exploration of living under the sea allowed me to discuss howhumans might begin to change, in terms of our biology. Technological developments could be most prominent, in terms of developing the ability to breathe underwater through artificial gills in order to survive. A bag providing oxygen, food supplements, navigation guidance and protection could be imagined, and I engaged in developing a series of prototypes that investigated survival in an underwater future scenario.

Prototype development 0.1:

The first prototype led to gaining more experiential knowledge and I started to develop additional prototypes engaging in collaboration, while reflecting on gathered data to be utilized and expressed through each prototype development phase.

Stage 0.1 - Bag Prototype 0.1 This prototype aims to enhance and explore survival aesthetics through the envisioned dystopian world. Blade Runner 2049 was utilized as inspiration to reflect on the effects of a society affected by climate change and technological developments. The prototype 0.1 bag has a simple basic structure which allows for the development of the wrapped layers to be the prominent aesthetic. These layers represent the elements of loss of freedom, leading to a rapid growth of power and control over the people.

The wrapped layers of the bag emphasize adaptability through growing a protective layer. The protective layer is designed to hold filtered oxygen and penetrate directly into the lungs of the carrier, emphasizing the vital role the bag plays in survival, which highlights the essential elements of survival as oxygen becomes a central focus in the Aquatic Meed dystopian world. This led to considering the 0.1 prototype to be light and waterproof. As the prototype was developed for a plausible future world, it is not fully functional and is treated as an artefact, or prop.

The color black – highlights darkness and the camouflaging effect it could have in the dystopian environment. The color black evokes emotions of aggression, alienation, a sense of authority and cynicism, all linked to a dystopian society.-

In the development phase of prototype 0.1, I started my practice by exploring ways of expressing myself in an emotional state of mind while reflecting on dystopian side effects such as isolation. This is the way I usually start my design projects., where I let my thoughts and skills guide me. Due to the pandemic restrictions, I was able to closely relate to the emotion of isolation, which enhanced the design development.

The development of 0.1 allowed me to reach out to creatives for further research within a collaborative setting such as organizing photoshoots. Through these visual developments with the 0.1 prototype, I started to devise more functional and complex designs that allowed photoshoots to be more interactive.



Stage 0.2 - Bag Prototype

The aim of the 0.2 prototype was designed to be more interactive during collaborations, to be able to change and manipulate the design for different shots, while highlighting the functionality within different environments.

The 0.2 prototype was aesthetically different from 0.1 in terms of its colorway and its functionality. The aesthetic of the bag refers to a shell or coral shapes or could be seen as bones connecting to each other to create a life form. The protection layer of the 0.2 prototype development is designed to be able to separate or detach from the bag, allowing the user to manipulate it to create a different structure by adding or removing pieces of the protection layers. The more layers you add the more oxygen the character carries. The design of the 0.2 bag was developed to have more layers to make the wrapped layering effect more prominent and more functional.

I was able to manipulate the design to change the wrapped layers in many ways to suit certain visual shots. This phase led to shooting the 0.2 bag within a film setting to display its functionality within a broader collaborative environment.

The color white was utilized to evoke a sense of purity. Traditionally, the color white is presented at Buddhist's funerals to symbolize death as well as birth. Using white in the new dystopian world of Aquatic Meed was considered because of this meaning, while also reflecting on how we perceive this color. The white bag represents the birth of a civilization and a new form of an advanced human species "The Exilists."

The 0.2 prototype supported connecting with multiple creatives such as Entire Studios and local photographers, Jacob and East, who were able to assist and contribute to producing visual developments as a poetic tool to evoke the senses and for the aesthetic of the prototypes to be presented in an experimental film.

Examining various collaborations such as photography, music, model building, actor performance, camera handling, styling prototypes in shoots and holding photoshoots allowed incorporating 0.1 and 0.2 prototypes in other projects of plausible dystopian worlds which enriched the research process.

The involvement of these diverse creatives was rewarding, and this was reflected during further development phases. The perspectives which evolved through collaboration were crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of the prototypes and a plausible future world.

The more collaborations I engage in, the closer relationships become, creating a safe space for the sharing of ideas and experiences. Building a safe space for creatives to engage in was vital. Often collaboration experiences can be confusing or difficult, due to loss of interest, unaligned ethics, bad communication, personal issues etc. Overall, the nature of collaboration is challenging but challenges can be unexpectedly rewarding due to the connections and relationships that are built. Keeping in mind the challenges that I faced within the process of this research enabled me, as a practitioner, to gain confidence in the collaborative setting as a positive experience.



Fig 15 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 development at home studio, 2021



Fig 16 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 development on models and at AUT studio, 2021

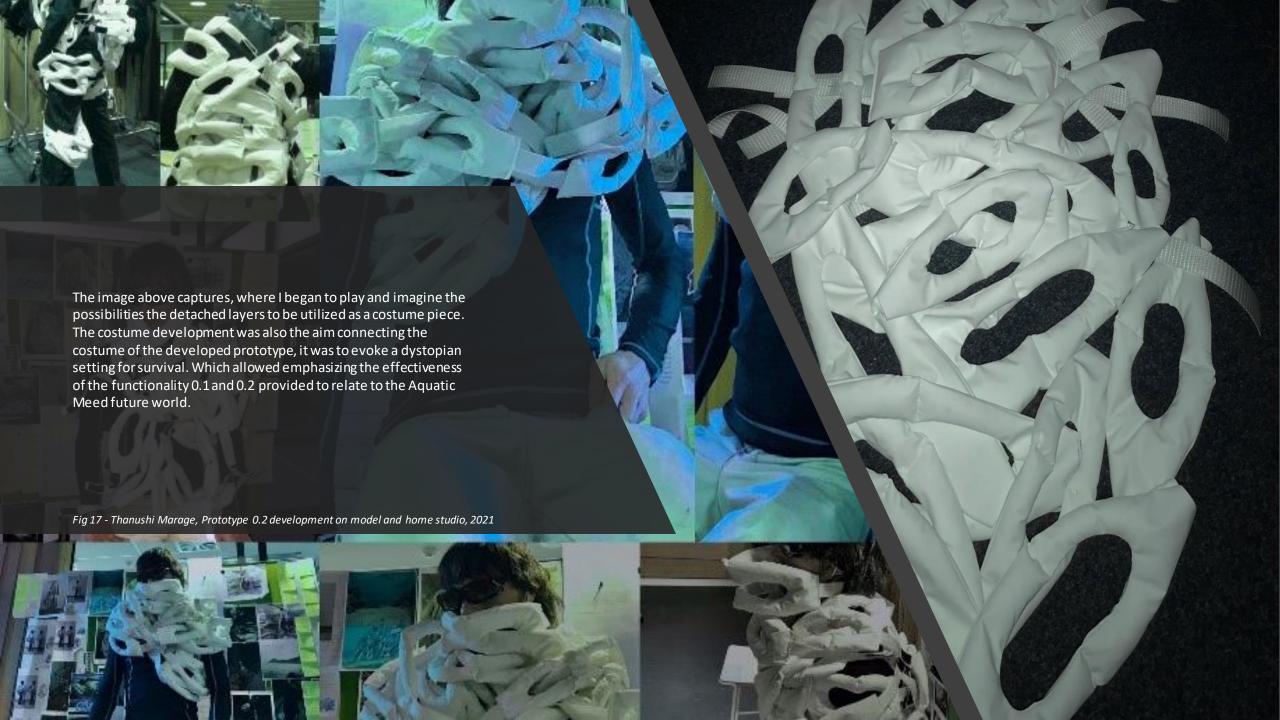
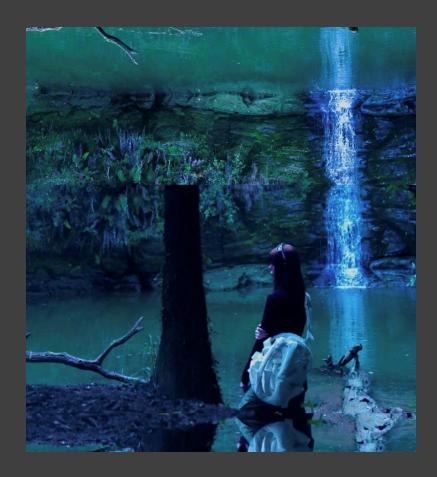




Fig 18 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 development on models at AUT studio, 2021





0.2 Prototype was shot on betty blood due to her contrasting aesthetics within the setting we placed her. The setting was Karekare, where we managed to find a smaller waterfall nearby. The photography was taken by doddy a local photographer. The lightning was much darker and more concealed. Through editing I was able to render the color scheme to an electric tonal visual.



Experimentation of 0.1/0.2 Visual Development through collaboration

The potential ways of expanding my design praxis using future driven speculative thinking and world—building have been highlighted through the developing phases of 0.1 and 0.2 prototypes. Narrative exploration helped to develop a film to potentially aim for a deeper understanding of the character "Exilist" and the envisaged world of Aquatic Meed aimed at a wider audience. Aspects such as the use of music, world-building, actor performance and locations for filming to enrich the sensory development of my work were enhanced through creative collaboration in stage 2.

The development of a more compelling sensory development for Aquatic Meed involved collaborating with a recent Massey Film Studies graduate, East Abernathy. After numerous phone conversations and detailed emails discussing film scenarios and the overall ambiance of the world of "Aquatic Meed," East Abernathy decided to become part of the team. It was validating to have his involvement, and to know that his decision had been based on the positive impact of the narrative and a shared research practice interest.

Focused discussions of how to test the prototypes within the future world of Aquatic Meed, included considerations for filming locations, lighting, camera handling, auditions for potential actors, music elements, and points of references for scenes. Music was prominent, also using it as a way of immersing ourselves in certain phases during the development of the film, an example during the making of 0.1: unintendedly I was listening to dark dystopian music, and this resulted in having an influence in prototype 0.1.

During the auditions I decided to ask the actors to bring headphones, to listen to the same soundtrack that I had used as inspiration while conceptualizing and prototyping "Aquatic Meed". The intention being that the actors could combine both auditory and visual stimulus while referencing the visual developments upon a mood board. The actors were also emailed the brief of the project and the context narrative of Aquatic Meed before the auditions were conducted, which ensured they were aware of the mood we were after.

Mood boards embody early references of concept drawings, tonal, previous work, while the concept arts evoke world-building of the Aquatic Meed.



Entire Studio's shoot

Visual experimentation such as photoshoots was conducted as a previsualization tool as part of the process of film development. Collaborative photoshoots enabled me to capture aesthetics and functionality of the prototypes, allowing for further reflection on and development of the narrative and character development.

The 0.2 prototype photographed surprisingly well on a white studio background in the Entire Studio and was shot in collaboration with Dylan Richard James, a former stylist who has worked with Kanye West while developing the Yeezy brand in Los Angles. Dylan was a well-rounded creative who had a minimalist approach in terms of styling, and we wanted to focus on strength and an unnatural look to both the models, treating them as if they were virtual avatars. For the first two photoshoots I decided to take the photographs myself and directed the models alongside Dylan.

We wanted to shoot both 0.1 and 0.2 together, which led to physically connecting the prototypes together. The intertwined aesthetic was achievable due to the Velcro straps each layer had. In the shots I was able to set the two prototypes in one narrative successfully.



Fig 22 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 and 0.1. Photoshoot 2. Entire Studios. 2021



Fig 23 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 and 0.1. Photoshoot 2. Entire Studios. 2021



Fig 24 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 and 0.1. Photoshoot 2. Entire Studios. 2021



Postproduction of 0.1 and 0.2 prototypes allow the research practice of the plausible future world to explore facets of the relationship between the prototype and the character development. During visual developments such as photoshoots, I was able to purposefully observe how the prototype connected within a collaborative setting and how each creative had unique perspectives, ideas, and suggestions of the 0.1 and 0.2 prototypes.

Entire studio's shoot was planned first as the bags needed to look exceptional, considering the location been a white studio with unforgiving lighting.

(Sensory development) The second phase of the visual experimentation was planned to shoot in the water, where I was aware the prototypes will be deformed due to the water absorption.





0.1 /0.2 Prototypes – Sensory development - Shoot

This phase is about experimentation to test the 0.2 prototype in water. Jacob Hamilton, a local photographer, reached out to contribute towards developing visuals of the prototypes 0.1 and 0.2 in a series of photographs. The collaboration started with scouting locations such as remote waterfalls, as we both desired dark and hidden nature and water elements, which could evoke the Aquatic Meed future world. We were trying to find ways of displaying the prototypes in a setting which embodies and represents the point of views of the personas within a plausible future scenario.

The location we decided to test the prototype in was Lone Kauri waterfall, Karekare. The camera we used was a Canon 700D that is waterproof. The model we decided to use was Sean Fe'oa who I have worked with in several previous projects, and he was aware of the research context of the Aquatic Meed world. Sean and Jacob both contributed to how the character should be placed in the water and the emotions we should focus on. When experimenting in a collaborative setting, it is important to make it possible for the team to make further contributions, which could enable the development of new methods and perspectives.

Most often in future driven films the **character persona** is developed to evoke inadaptability to embrace nature due to a culture shock of technological development.

"A universe: Man perfects, through science, his science, a new, better, artificial" (Ray Kurzweil – How to create a mind)



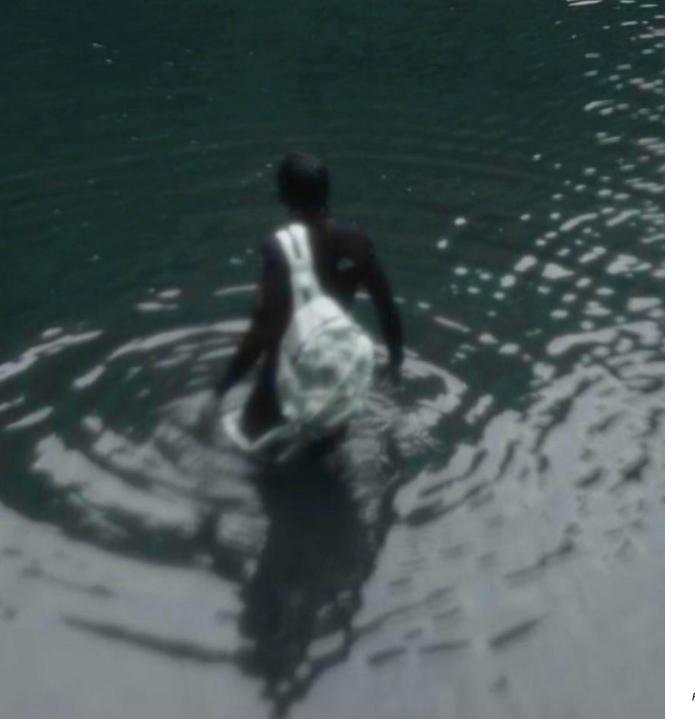


Fig 29 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 in water. Photoshoot 3, Jacob Hamilton. 2021



Aquatic Meed 2066 - Fable development - Film

Link to watch the Film - https://youtu.be/NOxu3iKnIrQ

The development of the film validated the collaboration practices I had adopted. It enabled us to further explore world-building and narratives. Bringing the team, I have worked throughout the thesis to collaborate in a single frame of work was seen as acknowledgment of the contributions each creative had implemented in bringing Aquatic Meed to life.

Developing a narrative that represents the essence of the research allows us to analyze context in a reflective practice, through the support of visuals. Each visual development and prototype played a vital part in understanding the characters and the world I have envisioned. It is fair to say that the prototypes I have developed exceeded what was expected of them, the prototypes have extended and redefined limitations of new ways of seeing and thinking. Designed prototypes supported the survival of my craftsmanship while allowing to attract interest and engage in collaboration.

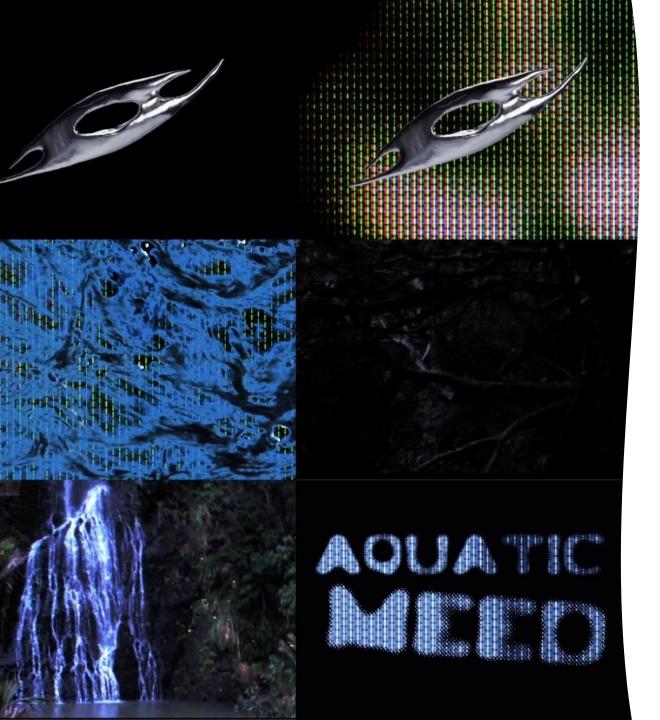
Fig 30 - Thanushi Marage, Prototype 0.2 and 0.1. Film set. East Abernathy . 2021



Final shooting Day – The first location we decided to shoot the film bought us back to Kerekere. Its serenity and the hidden elements attracted a spiritual connection within myself to decided Kerekere to be the main shooting location for the film. East Abernathy was given the main camera handling where he was able to use multiple different cameras as we experimented on color, quality, and the handling. The photography role was designated by Jenna Adey who is a local photographer based in Auckland. Jenna was able to capture the process of styling and camera handling. Betty Blood, who is one of the creatives I have previously worked to develop the world building elements, was chosen as the main female model and Sean as the main male model.

During the first couple of hours into shooting we were fortunate enough to have the perfect lighting and calm weather, which was vital as we were shooting near the water. As we predicted the weather immediately changed within couple of hours to flurry, blazing rain, where we rapidly post shooting and had to hurry back to shelter, where we were able to reflect on the shots, we were able to capture within the 3-hour period. Once the weather cleared, we continued shooting at night.

The shots were taken back to Wellington by East Abernathy to be edited and reworked. The difficulty during the editing process was prominent due to long distance collaboration between East and I, however we planned on phone calls and emails to keep each other posted on the process of the editing of the film. In the time being I had to fully trust East in his creative process and my guidance.



Aquatic Meed Edit -1 of 2

The final edit of Aquatic Meed was completed within 3 months of shooting. The music elements were one of the most difficult elements we had to reflect on repeatedly, as we had a clear idea of the music to be ambient yet engaging and intense with elements of subtle ocean waves. However, the idea of implementing ocean waves or water sounds was obvious as the main scene has been shot near a waterfall, which led us to experiment with more technical/ electronic sounds, where it enabled to highlight a contrast between the location and the music.

The Edit Review - Aquatic Meed Film 1

The edit was completed beautifully. It validated all our cross communications and adopted film practices, which East transferred complexity from his film studies, East's skills on editing, color toning, overlapping techniques bring the setting to a futuristic lighter dystopian aesthetic, creating a unique future world. We both agreed that the edit had potential to reach higher levels with more time and further collaboration which verified the need to discover new ways to surface developed practice for the film.

Fig 32 - Thanushi Marage, Film editing. East Abernathy . 2021

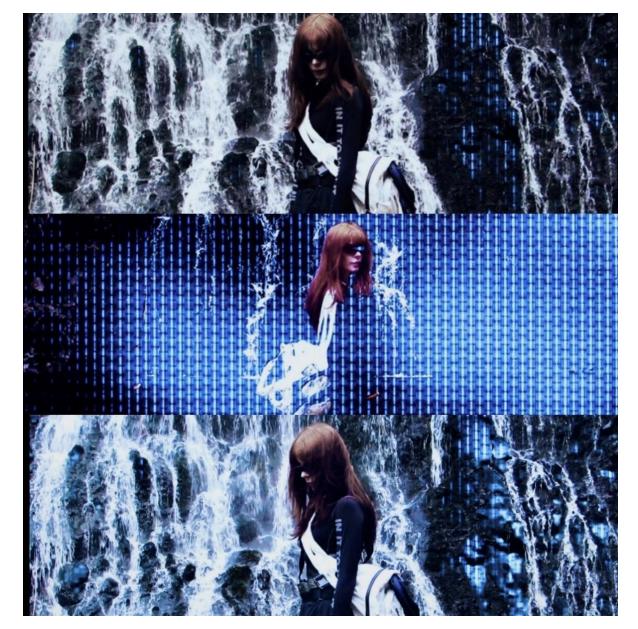




Fig 33 - Thanushi Marage, Film editing. East Abernathy . 2021

Fig 34 - Thanushi Marage, Film editing. East Abernathy . 2021



Final Prototype 0.3 development

The final prototype was designed through reviewing the prototypes featured in the film. The main issue we came across was the tonal contrast both bags displayed. Contrasting aesthetics of the white bag 0.2 concealed the definition and the layers, lacking to highlight the complexity of the prototype. The black bag 0.1 had a similarissue, during the shoot I decided to take some of the layers of the white prototype 0.2 and connect and layers on the black 0.1 prototype, which contributed towards the next stage of the experimentation of 0.0 final prototype. Mixing both Black and white materials to create a prototype very much visible through a camera lens.

Fig 35 - Thanushi Marage, Film editing. East Abernathy . 2021





The construction of 0.3 prototype layers were built with the idea of effective reflection, one side black, one side white where the layers can be flipped to black or white, still displaying a subtle highlighted contrast.

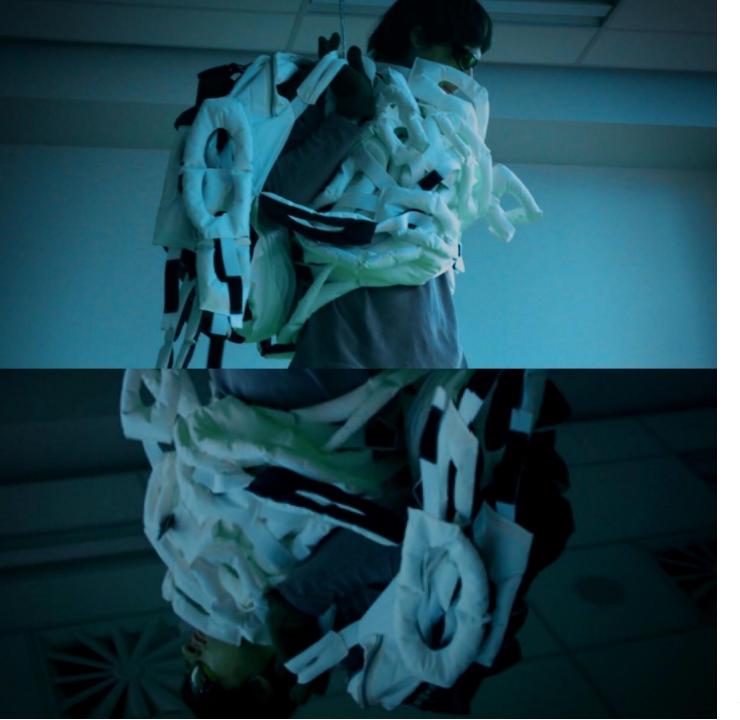


Fig 37 - Thanushi Marage, 0.3 Prototype development on Sean Fe'oa at AUT studio. 2021

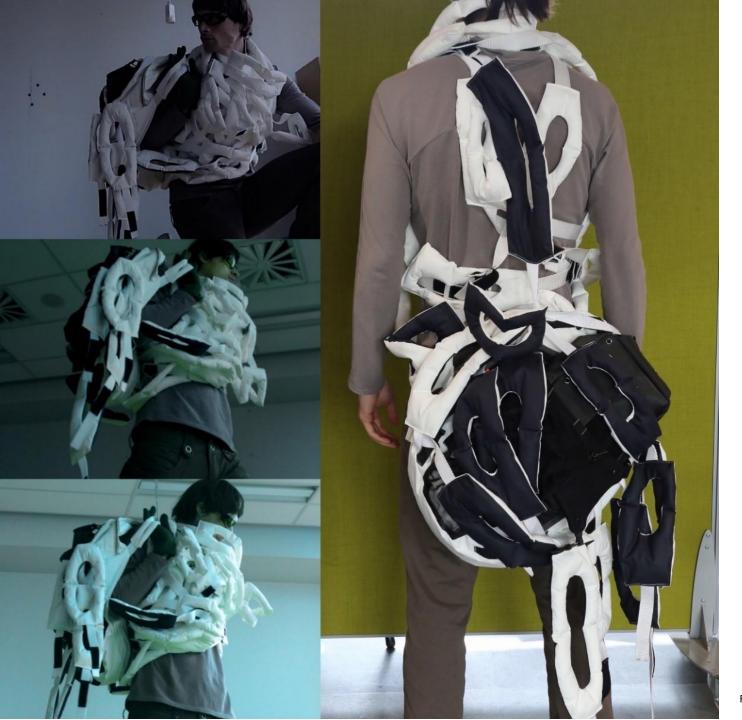


Fig 38 - Tha nushi Marage, 0.3 Prototype development on Sean Fe'oa at AUT studio. 2021



Fig 39 - Thanushi Marage, 0.3 Prototype development on Sean Fe'oa at AUT studio. 2021

Post film development Reflection on the developed film - Lockdown

While reflecting on the developed film it was apparent that narrative was a missing element, to support the essence of Aquatic Meed. During this time, we went into lockdown due to an outbreak of the virus Delta. I was fortunate to stay connected with East Abernathy and Betty Blood to continue our collaboration to develop ways of evoking narrative of Aquatic Meed.

During the lockdown, I was not able to regularly visit AUT studios, let alone see the prototypes 0.1, 0.2 and 0.0. While developing ways to immerse myself within the envisioned world, I decided to utilize my drawing skills to develop concept drawings.

The idea of using concept art to utilize a narrative has inspired me to continue developing structural art which highlighted the world of Aquatic Meed. It has also Led me to continue my collaboration with East Abernathy and Betty Blood on model rendering and further editing.

The structural art that I have developed highlighted the aesthetics of fluidity, growth, and sea creatures like architecture. While reflecting on the prototypes, I was able to enhance and further develop the aesthetics into the film as a narrative form.

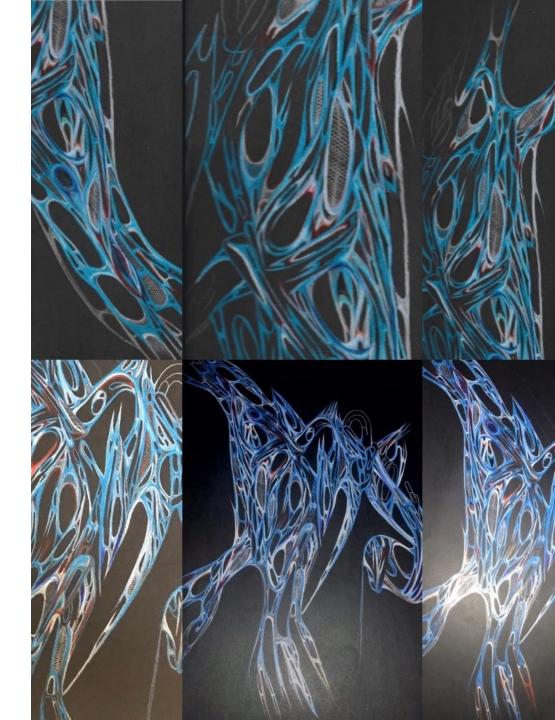




Fig 41- Thanushi Marage. Betty Blood render for Aquatic Meed logo introduction. 2021



Fig 42 - Thanushi Marage, color pencil drawing. Aquatic Meed conceptual art. 2021

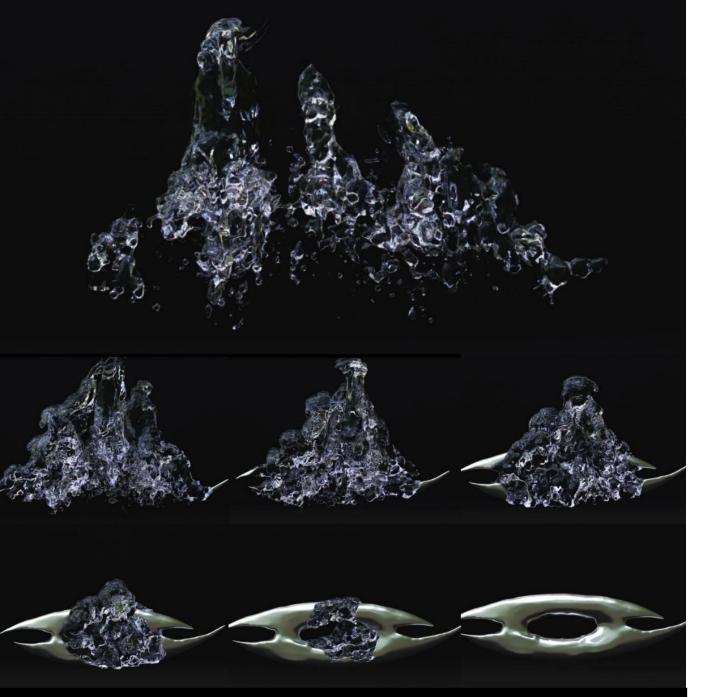
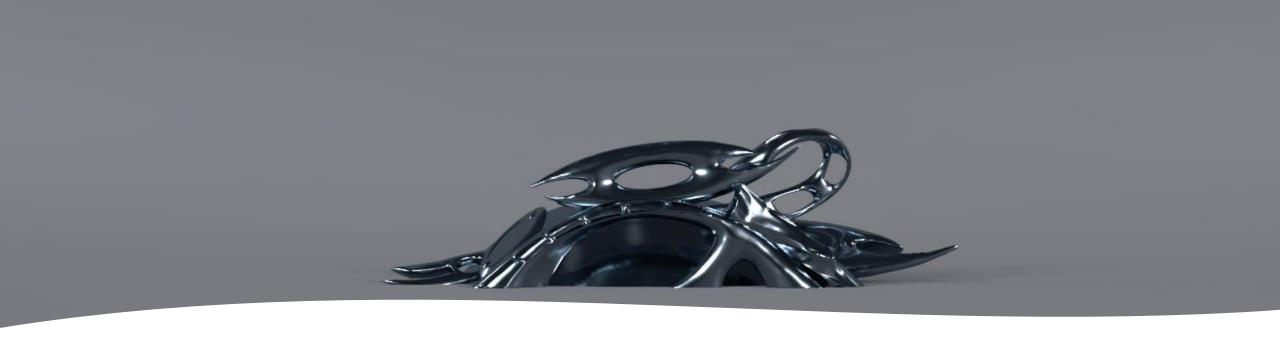


Fig 43 - Thanushi Marage. Betty Blood render for Aquatic Meed logo introduction. 2021

The logo I drew was sent to east where he was able to collaborate the design with Max a graphic designer based in wellington. Betty blood was given permission to be able to render and model the logo as a moving visual. The logo was designed to show case effects of water evaporating while building the logo.

This led to highlighting the futuristic shape of a sharp-edged metal structure to be immersed by fluidity of water. Displaying the emergence of organic and non-organic intertwined visual.



Aquatic Meed edit 2 – Final film

The final edit of the Aquatic Meed 2066 (AQM2066) fable has been developed through editing and integrating renders and pencil drawings to evoke further complexity to the world of AQM2066. The introduction has been clipped and blended while the logo stays flashing against the moving water layer, both east and I considered that this development would lead to a better transition.

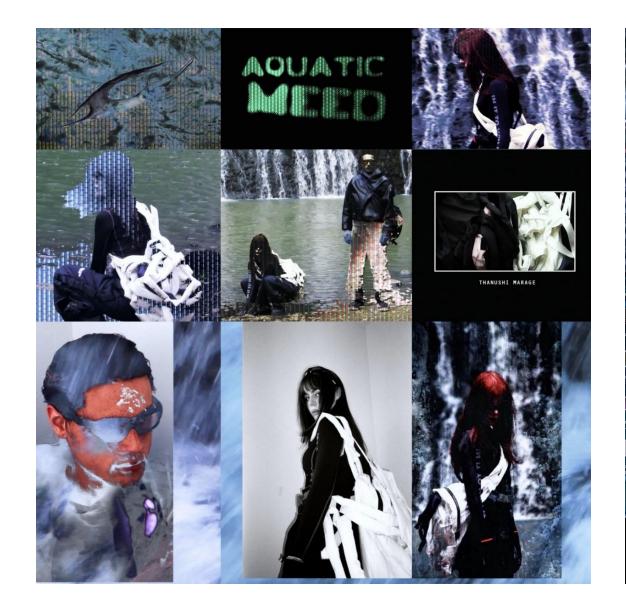
Initially I had drawn six concept sketches which emphasized the world building elements of AQM2066, however the quality and the color strength did not meet the integration of the edit. East was only able to use the first drawing that I had done which included the four structural elements which supported to develop of the larger structures of the envisioned world.

During the edit, the four drawings was designed to flash and loop to match the soundtrack designed by Jackie who is a music producer based in wellington.

The timing of the final edit was slightly changed, leading to editing back the shots which we considered as not serving any purpose. The final edit has amuch better phase, while having enough screen time for introducing the characters and the setting.

Finally, Betty's render for AQM2066 was integrated on top of Sean's (Male Exilist) face, emphasizing aqua culture and the emergence of new species of Exilist.

AQM2066 Film has allowed me along with east to examine and explore potential future elements which are reflected on the present crisis, while speculating freely on an envisioned future scenario through editing and developing a visual, building complexity through emphasizing on dystopian elements such as disconnection to nature and utopian elements such as an emergence of new.



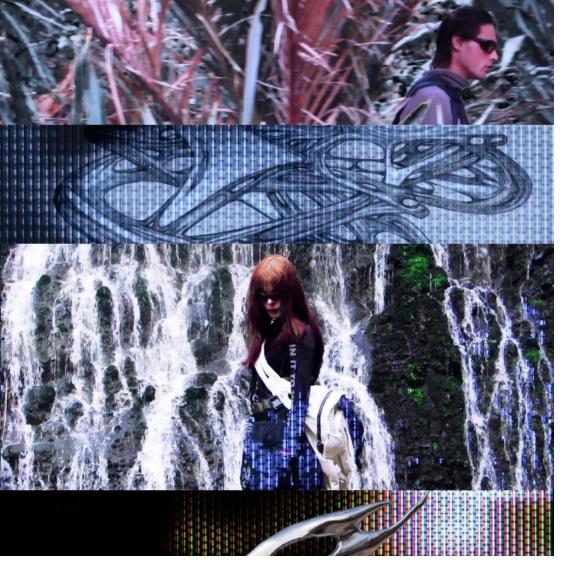


Fig 45 - Thanushi Marage. East Abernathy. Aquatic Meed Final film stills. 2021

Fig 46 - Thanushi Marage. East Abernathy. Aquatic Meed Final film stills. 2021

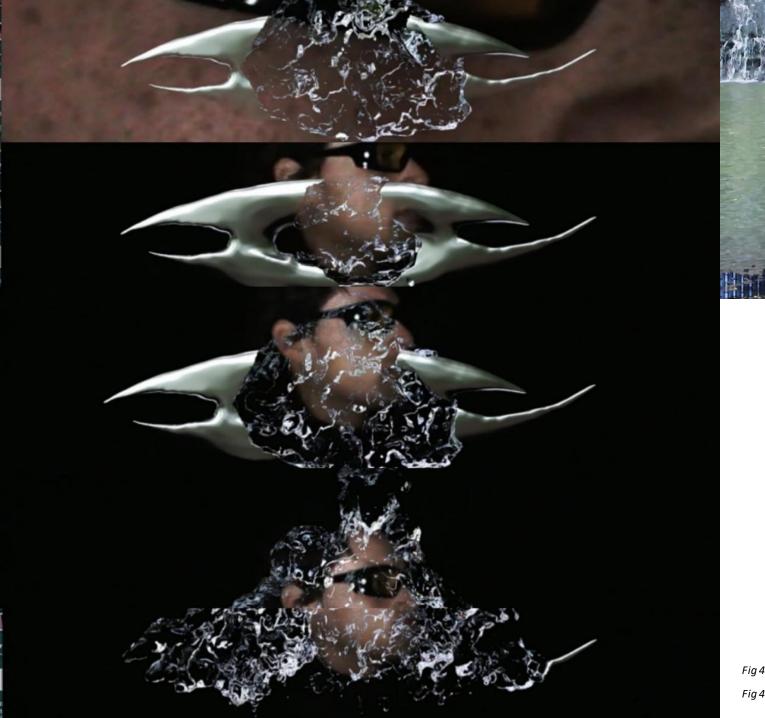




Fig 47- Thanushi Marage. East Abernathy. Aquatic Meed Final film stills. 2021 Fig 48 - Thanushi Marage. East Abernathy. Aquatic Meed Final film stills. 2021



Discussion

The project output highlights a range of multi-disciplinary design processes used as a response to the research question "How can preproduction creative tools of the film industry be adapted to inspire and allow my creative practice to evolve?

The key focus of my Master's was to adopt design practices from the film industry. This allowed me to engage in visual collaboration as a form of reflective experimentation. Doing so shifted my work away from commercially—centered fashion design practice towards a much more experimental artistic approach. This included employing methodological approaches such as design fiction, film development, character interpretation, narrative development, and world-building. This enabled me to acknowledge a new inspirational framework attempting to evoke a sense of origin, for props to be considered as "Diegetic Prototypes" and to be perceived as real in a fictional future world setting.

Early-stage experiments adopting the design fiction approach proved pivotal for the development of my research practice, as it allowed me to critically reflect on the relationship between future fiction and factual evidence in science and developing technologies. This influenced my practice to evolve through an imaginative act, and led to envisioning future scenarios and using conceptual art, personas, world building and prototypes to communicate and develop future inspired designs.

Collaboration with other creatives was hugely important in the overall development of the project. Firstly, this **cross-disciplinary** engagement heightened the experimental approach of the work. Secondly, including external expertise and viewpoints helped to give depth to the project, as well as considerations for further development. Collaboration engagements included speculative and reflective conversations, while evolving explorative ideas to form visual developments. While results were enriching, 2021 presented some major challenges due to long-distance communication and unprecedented lockdowns. Flexibility was pivotal when working with the team through these limiting circumstances. But this resulted in forming professional relationships built on trust and respect. This project has expanded my creative horizons and made me embrace innovative methods for utilizing digital technologies such as visual design communication.

While visual development has a significant emergence within today's fashion industry due to the Covid 19 pandemic, in this project visual development has been utilized as a way of expressing new and upcoming collections and may lead to a more dynamic digital transformation in the future. As a result of this study, I now want to explore career development in film/prop design for further opportunities. As I continue to introduce my work to local film productions, I am stimulated to extend and explore my design practice further, within the film development design space.

^{*}Cross disciplinary is referring to the representation of more than one creative field/industries

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Appendix 1

Sean Fe'oa reflection on collaborating on the developed character Exilist for Aquatic Meed 2066 -

Working within the inspired world of Aquatic Meed has been a rewarding experience. Through my previous work – as both featured and extratalent – within the modelling and film industries, I was able to approach this role with an element of understanding and professionalism. I worked with Thanushi to develop a nuanced/human character that is artificial intelligence/ enhanced, the upgraded/adapted to a future world. This process involved various forms of discussions with Thanushi such as via emails, phone calls and meetings at AUT postgraduate studio. Where I was provided with several descriptions and visual/sonic references points from Thanushi that supported to strengthen my understanding of character. Subsequently, I gathered that the protagonist should display both high physical competencies/ athleticism within his (Exilist) environment, as well as human emotions and expressions, with the latter functioning as a necessary element of relatability, allowing an immersive experience within the envisioned future world of Aquatic Meed. I am excited by the idea of returning and / or continuing to work within the creative enterprise that director Thanushi has set in motion.

Sean Fe'oa - Via Email



Appendix 2

East Abernathy editor/ Co Director's reflection on the developed film for Aquatic Meed 2066-

Aquatic Meed has been an incredible project to be a part of this year. As a recent film school graduate, finding freelance projects to work on without a portfolio was initially exceedingly difficult, but I was lucky enough to be contacted by Thanushi to help with her project.

I am based in Tè Whanganui-a-Tara, so for the first few months of the project, our communication was done through phone calls and emails. During this time, we solely focused on gathering inspiration to find previous writings, screenplays, and aesthetics that would help contribute to building the world that is Aquatic Meed. Once we had established character-types, the elements that make up the world itself, and the key aesthetics needed for post editing, we planned our shoot in June. This included location scouting, sourcing models, and compiling a list of materials and equipment needed for the shoot.

Filming the project had its challenges but was overall a very enjoyable and educational experience. We shot the footage next to the Waitakere ranges at the Karekare falls. I had yet to direct a shot outside of my time spent at university, and it was extremely rewarding to practice my passion in an unfamiliar environment with the help of other creatives. The biggest challenge of the day was the usual pothole when shooting a film, the weather. It was cold and began to take a toll on the crew. I made the call to wrap a few hours early when I realized the cold temperature was collectively affecting our team's performance. The shoot took 3-4 hours, and we left feeling proud of our mahi, and excited to review footage before editing.

Editing the project was challenging, mainly because communication had to be done online, and I often find it much easier when collaborating to have those that I am working with be able to review and refine alongside me. I sourced a graphic designer to render a logo for the project and developed a roll of film photography with clear images of the bags. By combining analog noise from a CRT television, with the footage from Karekare, the world of Aquatic Meed came together. I had to visually create a future dystopian setting, one that was 'technologically advanced', and by integrating analog patterns into clips of waterfalls and native bush, a beautiful flashy world was born. Clipping segments with a green screen tool was done in an unconventional manor, as I wanted to stress the uncontrollable and ever-changing dystopian environment. A heavy hard hitting rhythmic soundtrack backed the piece, holding the viewers' attention and interests high.

Aquatic Meed has taught me new ways of working, and I have learnt the challenges of online collaboration, as well as its rewards. Collaborating on a project amidst a global pandemic has not been the easiest journey, but incredibly educational and rewarding, nevertheless. I look forward to seeing Thanushi's work continue to grow and defy the conventional ways in which we engage with fashion and materials.

