(un)dressing Utopia:
Connecting to a Local Exploration of Fashion Consumption

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Abstract

Contemporary society's hyper-consumerist mindset has led to ethical and environmental concerns in the fashion industry. (un)dressing Utopia seeks to explore and contribute to the conversation around the over-consumption of fashion by developing garments that offer an alternative form of engagement for both maker and consumer. Specifically, the research is guided by the question; How might utopian values challenge contemporary fashion consumption and inform the development of a garment crafted with materials from my family's lifestyle block and surrounding area?

Philosopher Sir Thomas More influences a utopian setting for this research based on three key values: locality, connection, and artisanal. Artisanal methods and locally sourced materials extend on a shift towards a more localised fashion industry, and highlight how traditional methods of making can contribute to this.

This practice-led research incorporates material-driven design and craft research. Material Driven Design places an emphasis on material qualities and attributes and allows the designer to create a more meaningful connection between textile and form. Utilising materials from the locality around my family home, two jackets are produced using traditional craft textile practices such as hand spinning and natural dyeing. These garments have been contextualised alongside traditional Western workwear. Like workwear that transcends fashion trends and social class, the jackets are crafted, designed and made to last the wearer's lifetime.

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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.

Signed:

Callum Forbes-Day

6th May 2024

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Figure 1. Walking through the paddocks with Maukatere (Mt Grey) in the background
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Introduction

Consumerism and the Fashion Industry

It is crucial to understand and consider how fashion is consumed in our society. It is estimated that we are exposed to between 5,000 and 10,000 pieces of branding or advertising daily—subconsciously increasing our desire to consume more.[1] Regarding fashion and textiles, statistics from the United Nations show that we purchase 60 percent more clothes than we did in the year 2000, and they estimate this will be three times more in the year 2050.[2] Clothes are a necessity; however, through marketing and by relying on the consumerist mindset, clothing brands can increase profits with little regard for environmental or ethical costs.

Although scholars and historians debate when consumerism emerged, it is commonly agreed that the end of World War II and its austerity[3] measures were significant factors in developing consumerism as we know it today.[4] A consumerist ideology promotes and emphasises the importance of buying and consuming material goods to achieve happiness, fulfilment, and status.[5] Australian scholar Dr Kerryn Higgs argues that consumption is now frequently seen as our principal role in this world.[6] Within the fashion industry "fast fashion"[7] has become the dominant model, with the expectation of a new "collection" of clothing to be delivered in-store on a weekly or monthly basis to keep up with trends.[8] While fast fashion generally operates at a lower price point, this model is now prominent within all market sectors, including high-end global luxury brands.[9] [10]

Consumerism thrives on the fast-paced production of material goods, conducted primarily using facilities referred to as "sweatshops", where thousands of underpaid workers, both adults and children, often in a third-world country, are crammed into unsafe factories.[11] The ethics of these practices are incredibly concerning, with basic human rights being violated daily.[12]

1 Elizabeth Beard, Nicole M, Henniger, and Vinod Venkatraman, "Making Ads Stick: Role of Metaphors in Improving Advertising Memory," accessed March 25, 2024, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/00913367.2022.2089302?needAccess=true.

2 "Putting the Brakes on Fast Fashion," UNEP, December 11, 2018, http://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/putting-brakes-fast-fashion.

3 In fashion, austerity measures restricted the amount of cloth and trims that could be used in a particular garment. The removal of these measures allowed designers to experiment with more fashionable designs.

4 Kerryn Higgs, "A Brief History of Consumer Culture," The MIT Press Reader (blog), January 11, 2021, https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/a-brief-history-of-consumer-culture/.

5 Higgs, "A Brief History," ...

6 Higgs, "A Brief History," ...

7 Fast fashion is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as inexpensive clothing which are produced rapidly by mass market retailers in response to the latest trends.

8 Patrizia Gazzola et al., "Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach," Sustainability 12, no. 7 (January 2020): 2809, https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072809.

9 Liroy Choufan, "Op-Ed | How Luxury Became Fast Fashion," The Business of Fashion, October 5, 2020, https://www.businessoffashion.com/opinions/luxury/op-ed-luxury-fast-fashion-collaboration-karl-lagerfeld-hm/.

10 Brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci now implement a 'fast fashion' ideology with new collections arriving on a monthly basis.

11 "Definitions : Fashion Revolution," accessed February 16, 2024, https://www.fashionrevolution.org/definitions/#.

12 "Why Do We Need a Fashion Revolution? : Fashion Revolution," accessed April 7, 2024, https://www.fashionrevolution.org/why-do-we-

The Fashion Revolution movement was founded in 2013 as a response to the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, where 1134 garment workers lost their lives.[13] Fashion Revolution aims to advocate for human, animal, and environmental rights. The tragedy at Rana Plaza exemplifies the ethical consequences of the fashion industry. Agencies like Fashion Revolution aim to share the truth about garment manufacturing and fast fashion. However, while the negative impacts of fast fashion are becoming more visible, it is not necessarily on consumer's minds when purchasing garments. A lack of visible or physical connection to the making of these garments means the impacts can be overlooked.

The environmental impact of the fashion industry is another consequence of consumerism. As new supply chains[14] continue to open, we rely less on local resources, instead opting to purchase overseas goods at a cheaper cost.[15] These new supply chains have a hidden cost, as the fashion industry is now responsible for 10 percent of global carbon emissions.[16] Environmental impacts extend beyond carbon footprint to many other areas like water, land usage and pesticides.[17] Currently, there are calls for more circular fashion systems. Circular fashion advocates for importance in all stages of a garment's life cycle—from soil to end of life, aiming to produce less waste by designing textiles and garments with intentionality. Designers are responding to this call in a variety of ways such as; choosing to use local materials and manufacturing or through textile recycling initiatives.

This research works to offer an alternative way of consuming, one that negates the negative environmental and ethical impacts of the dominant globalised fashion industry. This research asks the question: How might utopian values challenge contemporary fashion consumption and inform the development of a garment crafted with materials from my family's lifestyle block and surrounding area?

need-a-fashion-revolution/.

13 "Why Do We Need," ...

14 Supply chains are the interconnected journey that raw materials, components, and goods take before their assembly and sale to customers."What Is Supply Chain and How Does It Function? | McKinsey," McKinsey & Company, accessed April 12, 2024, https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-supply-chain.

15 Willy C. Shih, "Global Supply Chains in a Post-Pandemic World," Harvard Business Review, accessed April 7, 2024, https://hbr.org/2020/09/global-supply-chains-in-a-post-pandemic-world.

16 UNECE, "Fashion and the SDGs: What Role for the UN?," March 1, 2018, https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM-Website/RFSD-2018-Side-event-sustainable-fashion.pdf.

17 "Environmental Sustainability in the Fashion Industry," Geneva Enviroment Network, accessed March 25, 2024, https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/sustainable-fashion/.

Figure 2. Upcycled water trough made from an old bath
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Positioning Statement

Growing up in rural North Canterbury in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand in the early 2010s, I was exposed to a simple way of life. Reflecting on this period brings back many positive memories. We lived semi-isolated from the city and only visited it every week or two. We never bought anything new to fix a problem; always working with what we had instead. My parents hardly indulged in consumerism; they prioritised mending and repairing—buying something new was a last resort. We lived a semi-self-sufficient life, relying on our surroundings to feed us; meat came from our livestock, milk and cheese from our house cows, fresh produce from our gardens, and fruit from our small orchard was preserved to be eaten all year round. Knowing we had spent time working on or caring for these things meant we were thoughtful in how we consumed them. No curbside recycling or rubbish collection meant we were conscious of the waste we were producing, prompting us to find innovative ways to give a second life to "rubbish" around the farm (fig. 2). Rural living gave me a sense of freedom and privacy, and although isolated, there was never a feeling of being on my own due to an established local community.

I developed a love for clothing and fashion during my teens, influenced by social media, TV, and international fashion magazines like *Vogue*. These influences glamorised and set expectations of how I thought my life should be, all promoting a highly consumeristic lifestyle. I wanted to escape rural life and experience fashion in a big city. I eventually moved to Auckland, New Zealand's most populated city, where I was able to experience and consume high-end international fashion brands. However, as time passed, I began to dream of leaving consumerism behind and to start connecting to the materials and making I associated with my early experiences of life in the country.

Through studying fashion design, I gained an understanding of the negative impacts of fast fashion and realised I did not want to play a role in that. I began saving my money to invest in more sustainable garments. Working within a high-end retail space at the time, I was constantly exposed to customers who became the personification of consumerism through their consumption. I soon found myself responding to the experience by not wanting to buy any garments. The project aims to explore and contribute to the conversation around the consumption of fashion by highlighting raw materials from a locality and employing artisanal methods of making.

This thesis begins with a Contextual Review, which examines the notions of utopia and dystopia. These notions are supported by two texts, *Utopia* and *Brave New World*, that inform my own utopian setting to situate the work. I then discuss the methods and methodologies employed in this research. Craft research and material-driven design are used alongside a practice-led methodology. Analysis of Practice is split into three sections. Becoming Utopian discusses my attachment to Thomas More's book and how it was interpreted into three utopian values. Material Making follows along the journey of wool from farm to textile. Clothing Form follows on from the work by utilising Material Driven Design to develop the textile into clothing forms. Finally, this thesis ends with discussing my findings and future research possibilities.

Research Question

How might utopian values challenge contemporary fashion consumption and inform the development of a garment crafted with materials from my family's lifestyle block and surrounding area?

Figure 3. View over paddocks
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Contextual Review

Utopia and Dystopia

Two opposing words, "utopia" and "dystopia", inform this work. The word utopia was first coined in British social philosopher Sir Thomas More's literary work, *Utopia*, orginally published in 1516.[18] The true meaning of this word is still debated by scholars today.[19] It comes from the ancient Greek language, which means either good place (*eu-topos*) or no place (*ou-topos*).[20] I apply the definition of no place to the term utopia throughout my work, as I understand the idea of utopia to be unachievable in today's society.

Contrary to utopia, dystopia is a theoretical state in which society undergoes great suffering, injustices or radicalism.[21] Often, these dystopian states are set in a post-apocalyptic world.[22] This project rejects a highly possible dystopian future fueled by mass consumption, environmental issues, and the advancement of technology. These rejections are lensed through a romanticised ideal of self-sufficiency informed by two influential pieces of literature: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). My own utopia is influenced by my childhood in rural North Canterbury and my idealised worldview.

18 Terry Eagelton, "Utopias, Past and Present: Why Thomas More Remains Astonishingly Radical," The Guardian, October 16, 2015, sec. Books, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/16/utopias-past-present-thomas-more-terry-eagleton.
19 Lyman Tower Sargent, "Five Hundred Years of Thomas More's Utopia and Utopianism," Utopian Studies 27, no. 2 (2016): 184–92, https://doi.org/10.5325/utopianstudies.27.2.0184.
20 Sargent, "Five Hundred Years," ...
21 Saija Isomaa, Jyrik Korpua, and Jouni Teittinen, New Perspectives on Dystopian Fiction in Literature and Other Media (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020).
22 Isomaa et al., "New Perspectives," ...

More's *Utopia* references an island isolated from the world where all its inhabitants work together without the separation of social class (fig. 4).[23] More questions: what is the best way for humanity to live, and how might these ideals be realised?[24] More's description of clothing and life in *Utopia* is similar to my ideals of self-sufficiency. These ideals extend to living in a society and working together to produce everything needed to sustain life—all situated within a particular locality. Even though More's work was written over 500 years ago, with no knowledge of today's society, it reveals a unique lens that can be applied to today's problems. Although the clothing worn in *Utopia* is seldom mentioned in the text, there is a reference to Utopians learning skills to make cloth and garments by hand, removing the necessity for modern machinery.[25] More describes the clothing:

> For their garments, which throughout all the island be of one fashion (saving that there is a difference between the man's garment and the women's, between the married and unmarried), and this one continueth for evermore unchanged, seemly and comely to the eye, no let to the moving and wielding of the body, also fit for both winter and summer. As for these garments (I say), every family maketh their own ... which will last seven years; and these are all of one colour, and that is the natural colour of wool.[26](pg. 68)

23 Thomas More, Utopia, trans. Ralph Robinson (London: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997).
24 More, Utopia.
25 More, Utopia.
26 More, Utopia, page 68.

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Figure 4. Nicolas Gueudeville illustration of Utopia
Gueudeville, Nicolas. Idée d'une republique heureuse; ou L'Utopie de Thomas Morus. Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1730. Page 133. https://www.alexanderaugustus.com/blog/there-is-no-art-in-

Also informing this research is British writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley's seminal work *Brave New World*, disguised as a utopian fiction with its motto "Community, Identity, Stability". However, it is a dystopian text set in New London 632 years after Henry Ford invented the moving production line, which is glorified in the book.[27] In this dystopian future, the calendar becomes AF (After Ford), and words like "Our Fordship" (Our Lordship) reiterate the godly status given to Ford and his invention.[28] In the eyes of the *Brave New World* inhabitants (also true in our current society), happiness is obtained in the consumption of goods. (pg. 18)[29] The text shows that society's desire for happiness, fulfilment, and status has developed into human cloning. "The principle of mass production at last been applied to biology."[30] These clones are predestined to become menial workers.[31] Huxley's warning prompted me to think more about the possibility of a dystopian future caused by mass consumption and how living in a world like New London would feel.

Reading both More's and Huxley's work has encouraged me to reflect on the future of our society. It could be argued that we already live in a dystopian environment. Although we have not quite reached a dystopian state, a question could be asked: will our desire for happiness, fulfilment, and status fueled by consumerism and technological advancement lead to a dystopian state like New London? More's work inspired me to situate this project within my own utopia. I began envisioning, analysing, and responding to issues in my utopia. Three key values have been reoccurring themes throughout this exercise: locality, connection, and artisanal. These values were formed as a reaction to issues associated with habits of consumerism––throughout my journey I have consistently referred to them to reflect upon, and compare with, decisions made about the direction of my work.

27 Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Great Britain: Penguin Modern Classics, 1974).
28 Huxley, Brave ...
29 Huxley, Brave ...
30 Huxley, Brave, page 18.
31 Huxley, Brave ...

Locality

Throughout this body of work, locality represents a rejection of globalisation.[32] It is common practice for each stage of a textile and/or garment to be produced in many different countries from the item's origin; for example, sustainable New Zealand fashion brand Maggie Marilyn sources merino wool from farms throughout New Zealand; the wool is then sent to China to be scoured, spun and dyed before being returned and manufactured into a garment.[33] These steps all happen before the product reaches the consumer, creating an enormous carbon footprint. The need for wool to be shipped offshore to be spun is a consequence of the removal of trade import tariffs into New Zealand, pushing manufacturing offshore to obtain a lower price.[34] Due to this mass exodus, only a minimal amount of textiles and garments are manufactured onshore.[35]

Before globalisation, our ancestors would have had to use the resources naturally available in their locality. Locally sourced materials allowed for the development of materials that fit their purpose in their natural environment.[36] Consequently, regions developed individual aesthetics derived from the materials in their environment, reflected across design disciplines. Vernacular design[37] in architecture highlights the differences between cities and countries through colour, material, and how buildings are designed to suit their setting. Similarly, indigenous clothing has developed in a vernacular way throughout the centuries. Tradtionally Māori tribes throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, have used local materials and methods, creating a distinct, aesthetic based on the specific, local environment.[38]

32 Globalisation is the interdependence of the worlds' economies brought about by cross-border trade.
33 "Turtleneck Raglan Knit in Grey | Maggie Marilyn," accessed April 7, 2024, https://www.maggiemarilyn.com/turtleneck-raglan-knit-kn-045-sw-grey.
34 Debrin Foxcroft, "Kiwi Clothing Manufacturers Sound Alarm over Lack of Young Workers," Stuff, September 10, 2020, https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/122478330/there-are-just-no-young-people-new-zealand-clothing-manufacturers-sound-alarm.
35 Foxcroft, "Kiwi Clothing," ...
36 Thet Hnin, "Vernacular Architecture: From the Past to the Present for the Future," accessed January 7, 2024, https://www.novatr.com/blog/vernacular-architecture.
37 Vernacular design is unique to a locality, made with traditional methods and resources giving a unique aesthetic which reaffirms a locality's identity.
38 Te Rangi Hiroa and P. H. Buck, "THE EVOLUTION OF MAORI CLOTHING. (Continued)," The Journal of the Polynesian Society 35, no. 2(138) (1926): 111–49.

Like Thomas More's *Utopia*, this project employs locality to source and develop materials in a vernacular way, informing the outcomes. Working with materials gathered from within 15 kilometers of my family home, I was able to apply principles of vernacular design to this body of work (fig. 5). My family's 40-acre lifestyle block and its surrounding areas in the foothills of Maukatere, North Canterbury, New Zealand is the designated locality for the project. Wool, the primary material, has come from my family's flock of sheep and natural dyes from the surrounding plant life have been used to colour it (figs. 6). Alpaca fleece has been gifted to me by my neighbour (fig. 7). Wild clay has been sourced from the Makerikeri River, and limestone from the White Rock Quarry, both located just 5 minutes from my house.

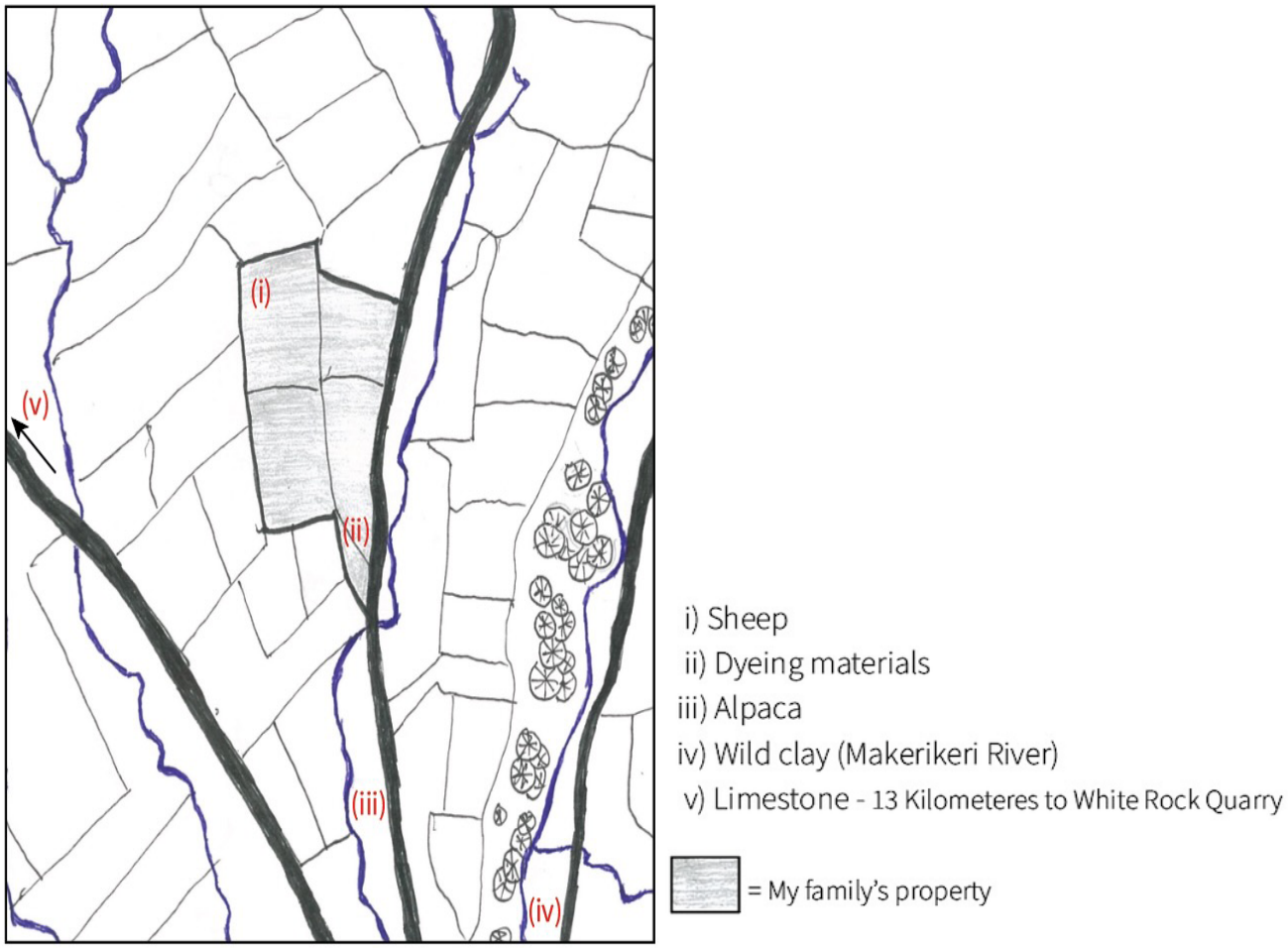

Figure 5. Map of locality
Callum Forbes-Day, map, 2024

Figure 6. The sheep who provided wool for this project
Callum Forbes-Day, map, 2024

Figure 7. The alpaca who provided fiber for this project
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Connection

With the ever-increasing accessibility of fast fashion, we have become victims to a new era of disposable culture. Clothes can be disposed of freely at our convenience, without consideration of the environmental impact or understanding of the actual cost of manufacture and production. We are removed from the making process and cannot comprehend the many labour-intensive steps taken for the raw material to become a wearable garment.

In my childhood, I experienced caring for and working with animals and plants during their lifecycle, forming a connection between myself and the resource(s); a way of living similarly described in Thomas More's *Utopia*.[39] This connection made our family appreciate what we had and how we consumed it. Stemming from this experience, and throughout my journey in this research, the strenuous effort I have put into producing my garments has allowed me to bond with the work; this knowledge makes me want to take care of the garments—repair and reuse them.

39 More, Utopia.

Orsola de Castro, a cofounder of the fashion revolution movement, brings to light the importance of mending and repairing clothes, through the word "maintenance", in her book *Loved Clothes Last.*[40] Maintenance is not a concept we associate with fashion; avoiding such an oversight would help us counteract disposable consumerism.[41] To remove ourselves from the disposable culture we must first learn to care for and maintain what we already have like we did until the mid-20th century.[42]

Our desire to keep up with the latest fashion trends has helped form a hyper-consumerist mindset. Before this stage was reached, people would use their time and effort to repair or repurpose garments as it was more cost-effective than buying new. As fast fashion has become so dominant within contemporary culture, I propose that Western society returns to this way of living, not because it is more cost-effective, but because we cannot afford to continue contributing to disposable culture. Castro calls for us to add words such as maintaining and caring to our everyday vocabulary regarding everything we do.[43] Lengthening the lifespan of our garments through mending and repairing also has an undeniable positive impact on the environment.[44] Maintaining garments rather than disposing of them forms a connection, and visible mending also holds memories within our clothes.

40 Orsola de Castro, Loved Clothes Last: How the Joy of Rewearing and Repairing Your Clothes Can Be a Revolutionary Act (Penguin UK, 2021).
41 Castro, Loved Clothes ...
42 Fiona Hackney, "'Use Your Hands for Happiness': Home Craft and Make-Do-and-Mend in British Women's Magazines in the 1920s and 1930s: Journal of Design History," Journal of Design History 19, no. 1 (March 2006): 23–38, https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epk003.
43 Castro, Loved Clothes ...
44 Castro, Loved Clothes ...

Figure 8. Spinning alpaca fiber
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Artisanal

The Oxford Dictionary defines an artisan as "a worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making things by hand" or "made in a traditional or non-mechanised way, using high-quality ingredients [or materials]."[45] The need for artisan to become a key value is in response to the increase in mass production and the introduction of automated technology throughout all stages of the manufacturing process in a bid to decrease costs and increase profits. Repetitive garment sewing can now be carried out by automated sewing machines, removing humans from the process.[46] Consequently, there is a loss of artisanal skills, and significantly, these are not being passed down, meaning we are at risk of losing them.[47] Mass-produced garments remove the chance of connection between garment and wearer, as consumers often do not know how to maintain or adequately care for the garment. Thus, artisanal products challenge the mass production of fast fashion through labour-intensive methods, done by hand and made to last.

Canadian-born designer Paul Harnden focuses on "radically artisanal" methods of making[48] working from a studio in Brighton, England.[49] His eponymous brand, Paul Harnden, highlights pre- and early post-industrial revolution methods, working closely with fabric mills in England that still operate 19th-century machinery.[50] Using these old-world techniques, Harnden's work has an authenticity that cannot be replicated through modern machinery. In a rare interview, Harnden says of his artisanal process, "It is part of our heritage. These things take generations to develop, and they are gone in a second, aren't they?"[51] His work is helping to preserve a rich heritage and centuries of innovation, allowing future generations to appreciate true craft.

45 "Artisan, n. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary," Oxford English Dictionary, accessed December 3, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/artisann.
46 "Automation in Garment Making," Fibre2Fashion, accessed December 9, 2023, http://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/9744/automation-in-garment-making.
47 Maliha Shoaib, "Garment Factories Are Ramping up Automation. What Will It Do to Jobs?," Vogue Business, August 21, 2023, https://www.voguebusiness.com/sustainability/garment-factories-are-ramping-up-automation-what-will-it-do-to-jobs.
48 Lou Stoppard, "Searching for Paul Harnden, Fashion's Most Reclusive Designer | GQ," GQ, April 5, 2022, https://www.gq.com/story/searching-for-paul-harnden.
49 Stoppard, "Searching for Paul Harnden," ...
50 Samantha Conti, "The Mysterious Paul Harnden," WWD (blog), December 10, 2010, https://wwd.com/fashion-news/designer-luxury/the-mysterious-paul-harnden-3401042/.
51 Derek Thomson, "PAUL HARNDEN," SOME/THINGS, accessed August 8, 2023, https://www.someslashthings.com/paul-harnden-article.

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Figure 9. Photograph of lady wearing Paul Harnden garments

Klaus Langer, Paul Harnden Shoemaker, September 24, 2006, photo, September 24, 2006, https://www.flickr.com/

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Figure 10. Paul Harnden grey coat

"Wool Coat Paul Harnden Shoemakers Grey Size S International in Wool - 39333193," Vestiaire Collective,

Throughout this project, all aspects of the textiles and garments have been undertaken in artisanal ways. The wool and alpaca fleece have been hand-spun on a spinning wheel, reflected in the unique imperfections within the yarn. Yarn is then hand-loomed in a time-consuming process before being made by hand into a textile. Finally, the garment is hand-stitched. This dedication to slow, handmade artisanal processes is essential to understanding the actual value of a garment.

Conclusion

The notions of utopia and dystopia, explored alongside the work of More and Huxley, have provided insight into our contemporary society and offer a credible alternative future. Through the lens of personal reflection, this project rejects a dystopian future fuelled by mass consumption, environmental decline, and technological advancement. It offers an alternative. This project embraces a romanticised idea of self-sufficiency, influenced by personal memories and literature. Locality, connection, and artisanal values have emerged and now guide this project to form my version of utopia. This project emphasises the importance of locality, connection, and artisanal with the materials and processes that shape our lives, encouraging us to imagine utopia not as unattainable, but an achievable goal.

Methodology and Methods

This research takes the position that engaging with alternative models of making in a fashion context can be a powerful tool for driving conversation and action around over-consumption. The model of making adopted here highlights the use of raw materials from a locality that I am personally connected to, and my hands develop garments through artisanal design and construction methods. This model has emerged from the Māori proverb, ka mua, ka muri meaning to walk backwards into the future. Māori designer Kristy Bedi reflects on its implications: "Our vision fixed on history, learning from those who have gone before us as we forge new paths."[52]

A practice-led approach has been used throughout this research alongside craft and material-driven design methodologies. Practice-led research is a multifaceted approach that incorporates the roles of designer, practitioner, and researcher.[53] The role of practice-led methodology is to discover new knowledge through design practice, actively engaging with creation, experimentation and creative practice.[54] Reflection plays an essential role in shaping the design process. The process starts with an idea, which is then developed; garments or materials are tested on fit models or against select criteria to allow the designer to reflect on the work and make changes; this iterative cycle is repeated until the designer is happy with the outcome.[55] These reflections have allowed me to push my research in new directions, which may have remained undiscovered without engaging in a practice-led methodology. Learning artisanal methods is a time-consuming process. As I spent time developing my skills in spinning and weaving, I constantly reflected on possible outcomes and the time it took to produce my garment by hand. Initially, I intended to create a collection of garments influenced by everyday utopian dress. Instead, the research practice has resulted in two jackets which embody my utopian manifesto. Documentation of practice is a critical stage that informs reflections. Photographs have been used alongside collages to uncover the hidden possibilities of this work.

52 Kristy Bedi, "Toi IhoKa Mua, Ka Muri," Ngai Tahu, accessed September 23, 2024, https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/opportunities-and-resources/publications/te-karaka/toi-ihokamua-kamuri/.
53 Laurene Vaughan, Practice-Based Design Research (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).
54 Clive Cazeaux, "Inherently Interdisciplinary: Four Perspectives on Practice-Based Research," Journal of Visual Art Practice 7, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 107–32, https://doi.org/10.1386/jvap.7.2.1071.
55 Amanda Guerricabeitia, "The Parallel Processes of Fashion & UX," Chameleon Chronicles (blog), January 9, 2018, https://medium.com/amanda-ux-portfolio/the-parallel-processes-of-fashion-ux-143d61276f91.

The nature of this project and exploration of artisanal methods of making has led to a high degree of engagement with craft research. Craft research challenges the notions of traditional craft by recognising and highlighting the importance of the processes.[56] Craft is unique as it cannot be mechanically manufactured; it is a slow, handmade way of producing artefacts. Niedderer and Townsend argue that a holistic view is essential for successful craft research.[57] Craft research relies on tacit knowledge, where skills and knowledge are gained through experience. As this research project sits between a textile design and fashion design process, it was essential to highlight craft research using artisanal methods such as hand spinning, weaving, and sewing.

The outcomes of this project have been developed using a Material Driven Design methodology. Material Driven Design aims to guide designers in designing meaningful material experiences.[58] Material Driven Design encourages the designer to use material as the starting point, rather than traditional processes where materials are selected for a predetermined process. Allowing the material to become the starting point enables the designer to understand the material and its characteristics, providing a relationship between themself and their material.[59] In this project, wool was the key element, wool yarn was finished by knitting, weaving, and felting. Each of these finishes has transformed the properties of the wool, with each finish informing what it may become, based on qualities such as its structure. During this research, I specifically wanted to remove preconceived ideas of the outcomes, instead allowing them to be informed by the material as it developed. There were many moments when my contextual work influenced an idea; however, in practice, the material proved unsuitable for the (intended) use, with unsuccessful results. The Material Driven Design approach has allowed me to experiment with ideas and allow them to influence the outcome of my work. These approaches are contextualised alongside my utopian values, locality, connection, and the artisanal.

56 Kristina Niedderer and Katherine Townsend, "Designing Craft Research: Joining Emotion and Knowledge," The Design Journal 17, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 624–47, https://doi.org/10.2752/175630614X14056185480221.
57 Niedderer and Townsend, " Designing Craft Research." ...
58 Elvin Karana et al., "Material Driven Design (MDD): A Method to Design for Material Experiences: International Journal of Design," International Journal of Design 9, no. 2 (August 2015): 35–54.
59 Karana et al., "MDD." ...

Figure 11. Table loom
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Analysis of Practice

This chapter documents the methods, developments, reflections, and learnings of my practice. The events of this chapter are intertwined but, for this thesis, have been grouped into overarching themes. However, this does not necessarily reflect the order in which they occurred.

Becoming Utopian

This journey did not begin as a research project. Instead, it started as a journey of self-exploration. The past years have been full of reflection as I find myself getting frustrated with social media and the world we live in. I felt disconnected from the world. I am constantly amazed by how so much of life is interconnected. The social media I was consuming, and the intense marketing by brands made me hate fashion since I was always felt forced to consume it. I knew this was it for me and that I had had enough. I stopped purchasing new clothes, instead opting to make them myself, but I wanted to take the next step and craft the material for a garment. I needed to create something with my hands from raw materials directly from the source.

I have always loved the proverb ka mua, ka muri and have frequently pondered it, so when I stumbled across *Utopia*, it stood out, and this proverb may have influenced me. Utopia 500 years ago; what would it be like? I could not picture everyday life of the early modern period, so I could only imagine what an utopia would be like during this period. I admit the politics of the first half of the book had me lost, but the latter half was wonderful. More's descriptions of *Utopia* fed my mind with incredible pictures. The Utopians' dis-attachment to valuable objects like gold and gems, items we worship so much, are contrasted with a great sense of community and connection to the land. These pictures have stayed in my mind throughout this journey and are in alignment with my formative years growing up in a rural community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I decided to situate my work on the island of Utopia (fig. 12). How would this change in the universe influence my practice? I started thinking too big, exploring the notion of a contemporary utopia, but that did not make sense. The times we live in now are not utopian. So, I decided to bring it down to a small scale. I imagined the area surrounding my family property as my utopia. I aimed to have 100 percent traceability of my garments, using only raw materials I could source myself. I wanted to learn and use traditional methods, such as spinning, knitting, weaving, natural dyeing, and felting. I also wanted to feel a connection to my clothes. My own utopia emerged from my reflections and I found within it three key values: locality, connection, and artisanal. These key values became the heart of this research. They inform all my practice; I continually ask, How does this embody my utopian values?

This content has been removed by
the author due to copyright issues.

Figure 12. Map of Utopia (1516)

More, Utopia.
https://www.alexanderaugustus.com/blog/there-are-no-landlords-in-utopia

Material Making

Until recently, craft was not thought of as contemporary design by myself or my peers. Instead, it has been considered as the outmoded practice of older generations. Consequently, I had no experience with craft. Researching the craft methods I wanted to learn was carried out through books, online tutorials, and learning directly from skilled artisans. The learning phase is the hardest part of any skill, as the body has not yet developed a network of tacit knowledge.[60]

My starting point was spinning; I needed yarn to knit and weave.

Our lifestyle block is home to 15 merino Romney cross-breed sheep who are shorn by our neighbour. Due to the small amount of wool produced, it cannot be sold but instead is either stored, given away or used as fertiliser. To prepare the wool for spinning it needs to be scoured and carded. Scouring is the process of removing dirt and lanolin. Raw wool (fig. 13) is added to tubs with hot water and washing crystals then left to soak. This process is repeated until the water runs clear. The wool is then soaked in water and vinegar to neutralise the soap. The scoured wool is then hung on a clothes horse to dry for over 48 hours (fig. 14).

To prepare the clean wool for spinning, it must be carded. This is done using a small drum carder (fig. 15). Wool is carded to align all the fibres, making for a smoother and stronger yarn. Working with raw fibres has made me feel connected to the materials I am creating because I have used my hands to transform them into functioning yarn. These steps, which I initially placed little value on, provided an authentic connection to the utopian values I was seeking to embody in this work.

60 Kylie Budge, "Teaching Art and Design: Communicating Creative Practice through Embodied and Tacit Knowledge," Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 15, no. 3–4 (July 1, 2016): 432–45, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215592247.

Figure 13. Raw wool
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 14. Scoured wool drying
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 15. Drum carder
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

After scouring and carding the wool, it is ready for spinning (fig. 16). I was too intimidated to try the spinning wheel straight away. Many books and online sources suggest using a drop spindle first. A drop spindle, shown in figure 17 is a long, skinny piece of wood with a hook on the top and a spinning top base; these tools date back to Neolithic times.[61] A guide piece of yarn is attached to the spindle for the new yarn to latch on. Wool is gently drafted out, and the spindle is twisted in the air. The fibres are tightly intertwined as the wool spins, producing yarn. Yarn can then be wound around the spindle, and the process is repeated. Utilising a spindle allowed me to see the wool transition to yarn at a slow pace and allowed me to gain a fundamental understanding of how spinning works. This technique also taught me the method of drafting, gently pulling on the wool roving to control the thickness of the yarn. There were many failures at the start; with each failure, I could feel my body inadvertently understanding what had gone wrong. The building of this tacit knowledge is apparent when comparing the first yarn I spun to those spun for my final collection. As shown in figure 19, I produced 32 grams of wool with the drop spindle in four hours. Considering my goal to create a collection of garments, I needed to increase my speed. Crucially, the spindle provided a familiarity with drafting and spinning techniques before moving on to the spinning wheel.

Transitioning to a spinning wheel was a necessary step as it allowed me to spin yarn at a much faster pace. The first balls of yarn (fig. 19) were extremely uneven and could not be used due to these qualities. Through practice and by following online tutorials, I was able to refine my spinning style and produce more consistent yarn. Spun yarn is wound into a skein. Admiring the first skein of wool I made, I felt incredibly proud. I had created a useable yarn from a pet sheep. The yarn was fairly uniform but had nubs[62] throughout, appearing to hold memories of the processes that had occurred to reach this point and highlighting its unique nature.

61 H. Lemon, "Some Aspects of the Early History of Spinning, with Special Reference to Wool," Journal of the Textile Institute Proceedings 42, no. 8 (August 1, 1951): P479–501, https://doi.org/10.1080/19447015108663855.
62 Nubs are small imperfections of wool throughout the yarn, often caused by the short hairs left in the wool after carding.

Figure 16. Carded wool reay for spinning
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 17. Drop Spindle
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 18. Spinning wheel
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

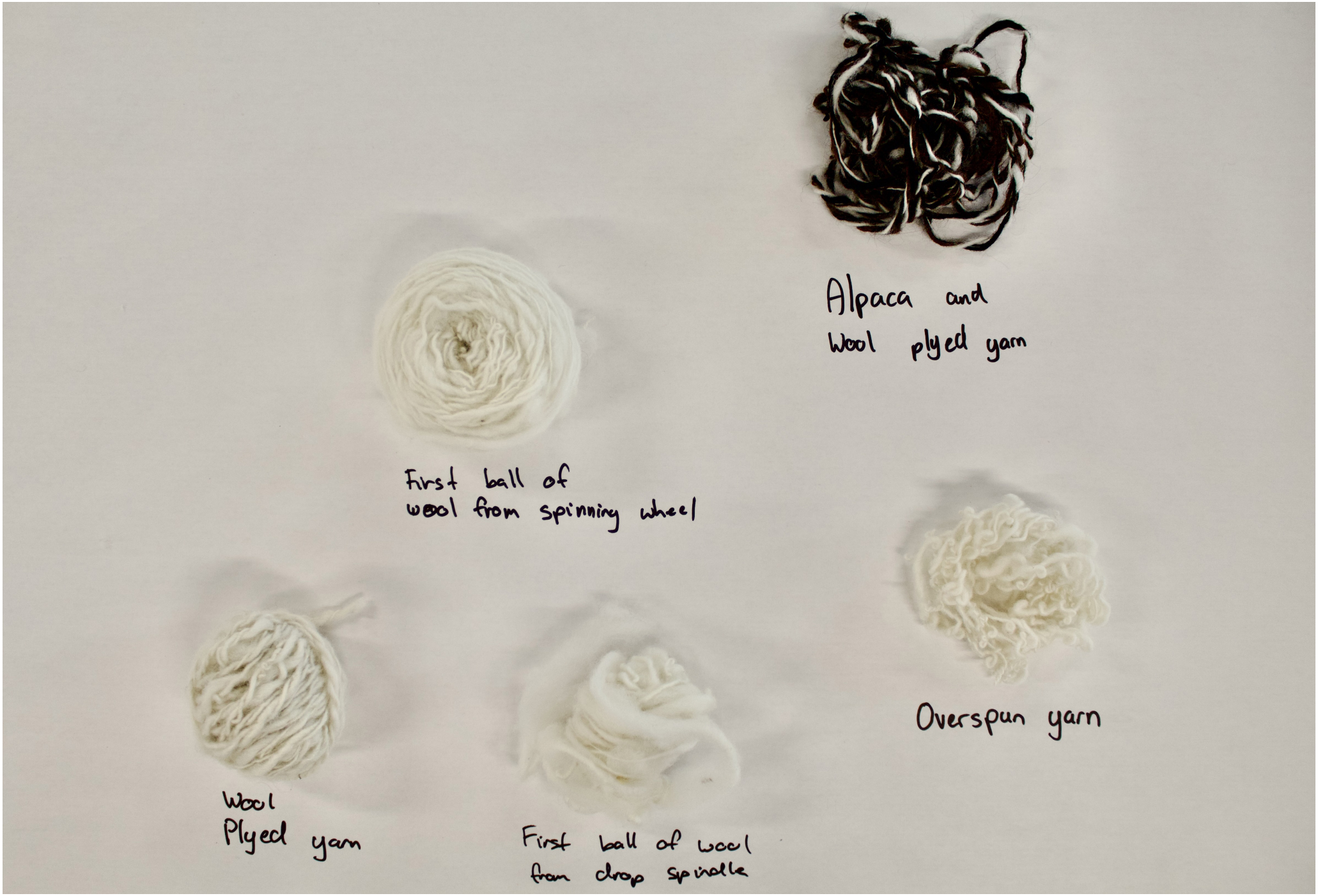

Figure 19. Yarn explorations
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

During this time, I also experimented with felting. Felting originated over 8000 years ago and is achieved by compressing and matting fibres to produce a nonwoven textile.[63] Felting can be achieved by hand through wet felting, needle felting, or a machine with an automated felter. These different methods prompted new thoughts about how wool materials might be used. Hobbyists often use needle felting to create objects, such as toy animals, for personal or decorative use. I wanted to use felting to challenge these traditional notions of form by applying them in a contemporary fashion context. Trials with hand needle felting were unsuccessful. Time constraints were the primary factor for not engaging with this technique. Further, the felt had delicate characteristics, not suitable for contemporary garments intended to last a lifetime.

A digital felting machine, such as FeltLOOM, compresses carded batts while rolling them through a series of needles that agitate the fibres and produce felted materials. This saves significant amounts of time compared to the other forms of felting. Using layers of carded wool, I created a very structured uniform felt. Digital felting creates a fairly even material, leaving visible puncture marks throughout (fig. 20). These uniform characteristics looked like a mass-manufactured textile and took away from the natural variations of the fibre and a handmade textile, reinforcing my quest for the handmade.

Wet felting is a hand method combining a fluctuation in water temperature and agitation of fibres to produce felt sheets. This produced a much softer but less structurally sound felt (see figure 20), and though in appearance was more natural than the FeltLOOM sample, would not be suitable for constructing a jacket.

63 "History of Felting," The Felting Source, accessed April 17, 2024, https://www.thefeltingsource.com/History-of-Felting/.

Figure 20. Felt explorations
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

I was so excited about the yarn I was producing at the time. The processes of felting and spinning provided me with very different feelings. Using the FeltLOOM, I felt disconnected from the wool; I was just pushing it into a machine. Spinning provided more connection to the material, so I moved away from felt.

Once I had the yarn, I experimented with two techniques to transform it into fabric. Knitting was the only area of craft I had a small amount of exposure to. I had grown up with hand-knitted jerseys and blankets so I was familiar with the process. I needed to start with the basics. Endless combinations of the two main knitting stitches, knit and purl, can provide a wide array of textures and patterns. I often sampled using the garter stitch technique, which produced a ridged textile (fig. 21). The combination of the garter stitch with my hand-spun yarn amazed me; in particular, how the unique imperfections throughout the yarn contrast the uniformity of the garter stitch. This was the feeling I was after, that felting did not provide. Experimentation began by contrasting needle size and yarn thickness. Thin, delicate yarn woven on sticks produced spider web-like structures that could be imagined drifting effortlessly through the sky (fig. 21). The thicker yarn was also woven on thin needles, creating a much denser and more structured fabric (fig. 21).

Figure 21. Knit explorations
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

I trialled with two different weave structures as seen in figure. 22. The first being plain weave where the weft (the yarn running horizontally) passes under every other warp (the yarn running vertically under tension) to create a checkered pattern. The seconding being a twill weave where the weft passes under every fourth warp alternating on every row to create a pattern of diagonal lines. Plain weaving tends to produce a more structured textile which can hold its self-better when cut compared to twill weaving. A twill weave produces a more pliable textile that is stronger than a plain weave.

Learning to weave felt like the most ambitious method of them all. Creating sheets of fabric seemed to be the game changer. As a fashion designer, I cut garments out of fabric. It is the space I work within. Unlike knitting, I was familiar with using fabric to create a garment. The first woven samples held the same aesthetic qualities as the knitting, and the contrast of uniform against nonuniform provided beauty (fig. 23). The uniformity pays homage to skills developed over centuries. At the same time, the primitiveness of the hand-spun yarn reminded me of how connected I am to the origins of this textile which cannot be mass-produced due to the labour-intensive steps needed to produce it.

Clothing in More's Utopia, appears as one colour; the natural colour of the raw material.[64] I spent a long time thinking about this passage in the text. I wanted the materials in my project to stay as close to their raw colour as possible. However, in positioning this work for a contemporary audience, I decided that some colour would be needed. I wandered around the garden of my family home, looking for materials useful for natural dyeing. Trialling natural dyeing with eucalyptus, pine needles, lichen, and quince leaves provided various results (fig. 24). This plant life was placed into individual pots of boiling water to extract the natural pigment over eight hours. Pre-soaking the yarn in a mix of alum and water allowed the wool to absorb more of the pigment, producing a more saturated colour. Adding 'modifiers' such as iron mordant or baking soda into the dye vat changes the P.H. level of the dye, producing a varied amount of colouration.

64 More, Utopia.

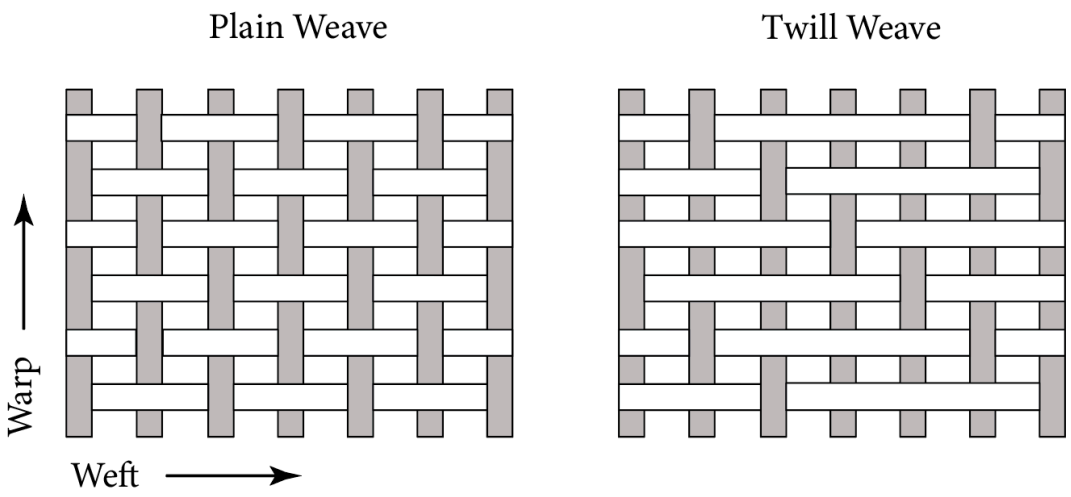

Figure 22. Diagram of different weaving structures
Callum Forbes-Day, diagram, 2024

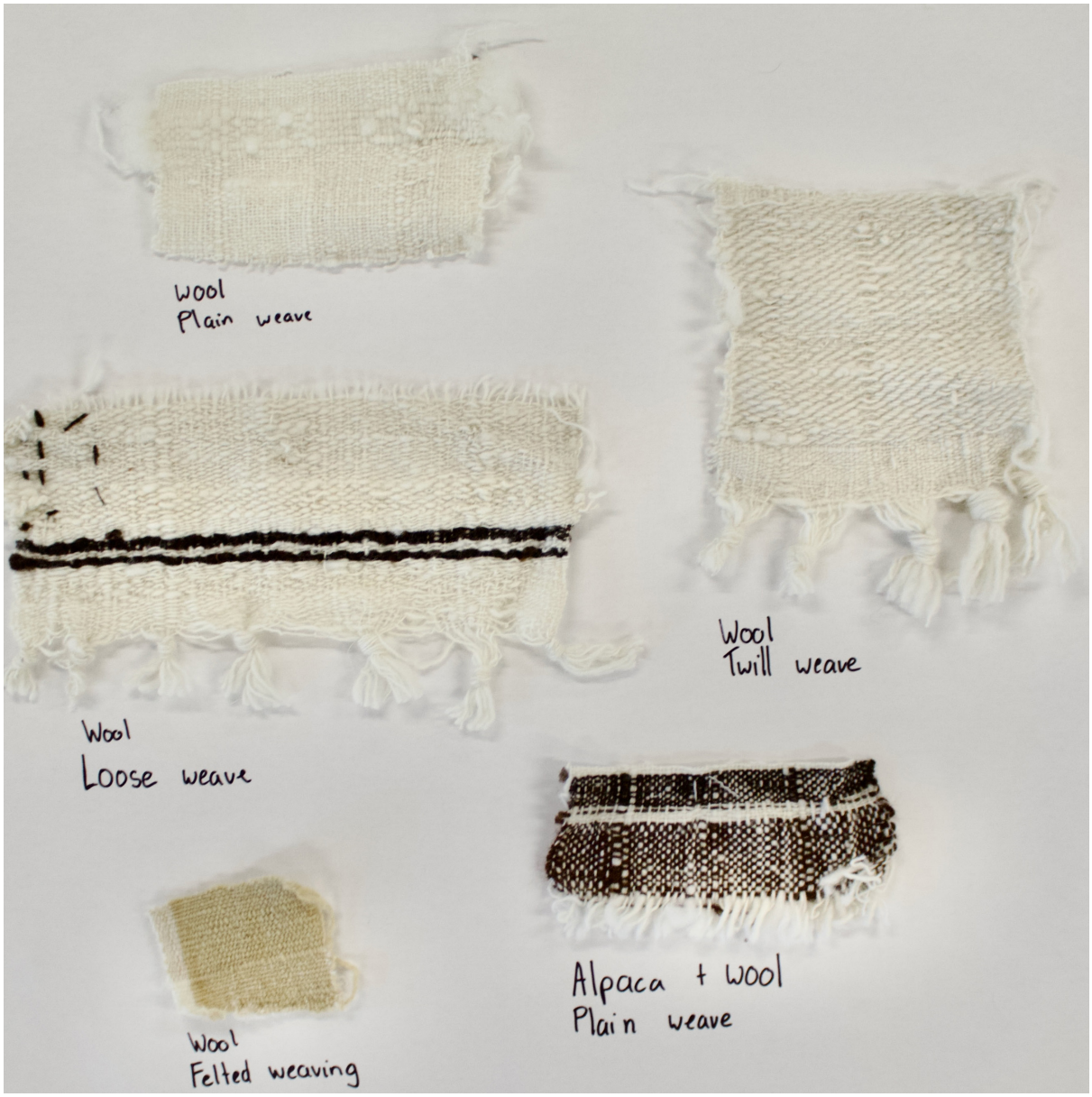

Figure 23. Weaving explorations
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

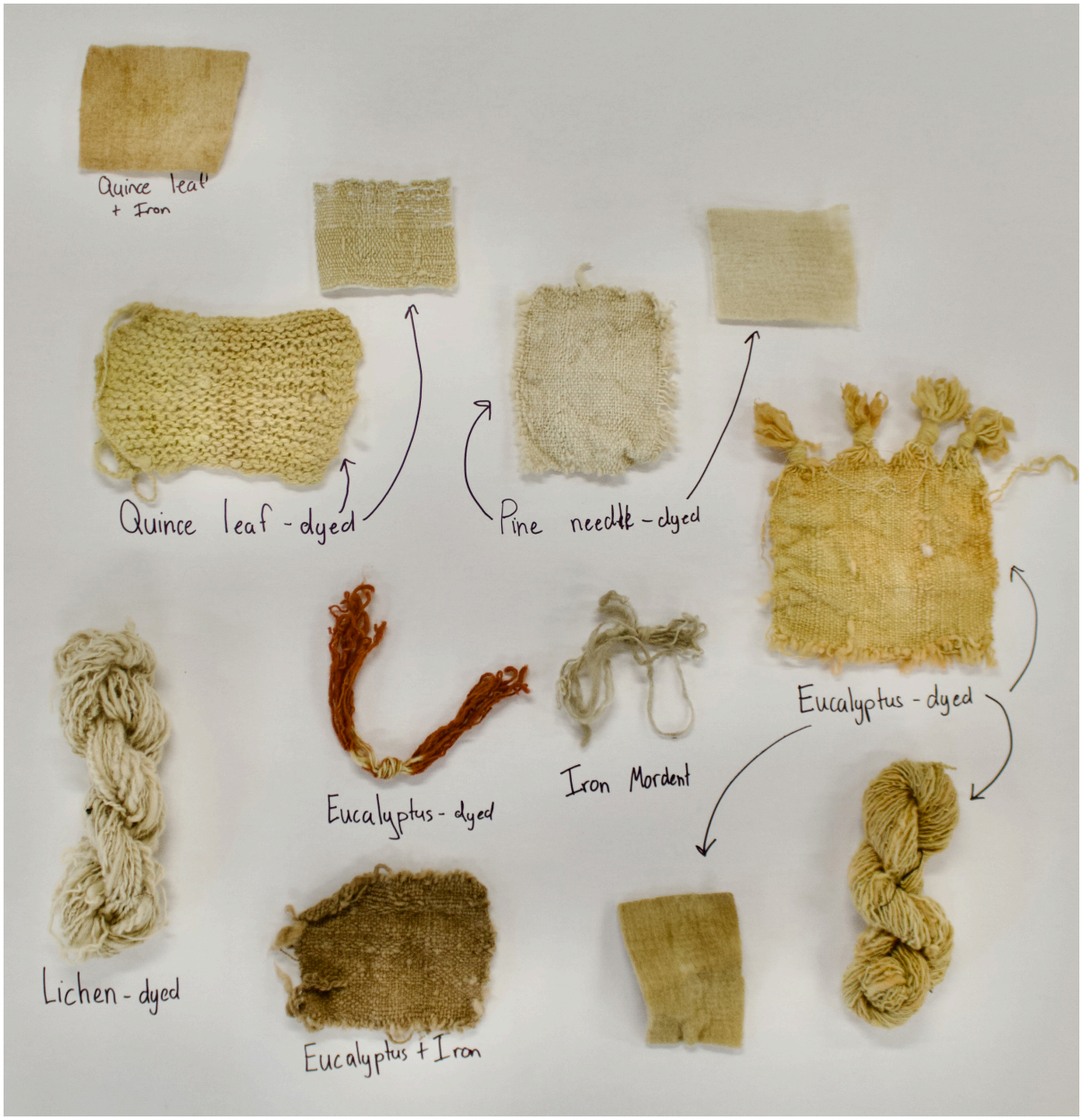

Figure 24. Natural dyeing explorations
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Once I had completed trials of felting, knitting, weaving and dyeing, I had to decide how to proceed. My first idea was to combine these methods to create different looks. However, I realised throughout this trial phase that time is the biggest constraint. As I was thinking about what to create, my utopian values began to emerge. This shift encouraged me to reflect on all the materials I had produced. I decided to discard using felt, as the methods which embodied my artisanal values were too delicate to be used in a fashion context without more development of the skill. I was constantly drawn back to weaving and the idea that I had created the fabric. This seemed like an enormous milestone. Fabric is the bones of the fashion industry, and all designers utilise it to make garments. In creating textiles myself, I felt as if I was finally disrupting the status quo. They embodied all of my utopian values. For this reason, I think knitting was also left behind, not because of what it was, but because I felt more strongly connected to the woven samples.

From this point, I decided to limit myself to producing garments from my hand weaving. This constraint allowed me to better contextualise my work, in that I knew the chosen materials and silhouettes needed to be positioned within contemporary fashion. If the garments felt too much like a costume, they would not be considered a viable option to replace contemporary fashion needs and challenge current fashion consumption trends. I needed to develop a textile and form that suited a modern setting. Additionally, decisions around colour were made based on personal preference. My favourite textile provides an almost warped chessboard effect, woven with lichen-dyed wool and woven alpaca as the weft. The warping effect again shows the beauty in artisanal products. I also loved the soft green colour that the quince-dyed yarn had produced. I wanted a monotone garment to sit alongside this, so I decided to dye the yarn for a second jacket with quince leaf. Interestingly, the natural colour of the quince leaves has changed from a soft green to a very saturated yellow––the leaves gathered and used contain less chlorophyll than in early summer.

Clothing Form

I started designing clothing by reflecting on and sketching my interpretation of Thomas More's Utopia. This approach did not prioritise the qualities of the materials but instead responded to the clothing style in the book. Toiling complete looks (fig. 26 and 27), I quickly realised that the combination of materials and silhouette resembled recreation of a costume, which was not my aim; I want to design garments for a contemporary fashion setting as my intention is to disrupt current fashion consumption trends.

This research aims to start a conversation about fashion consumption habits. With this in mind, I formed criteria to inform my decisions around garment design:

1. The garment must highlight the artisanal qualities of the methods used.
2. The time-consuming nature of craft, combined with the fragility of the textile, means I aim for as little textile waste as possible.

I referenced early European rural clothing for visual and historical aesthetics. I chose to use this as an influence because of the similarity between the setting of Utopia and my family farm. Early rural clothing is often very primitive in materials it uses and its design––the silhouettes are boxy in response to straight pieces of fabric the looms produce (fig. 25). Due to the scarcity of materials, garments were based on rectangular shapes, usually cinched at the waist to show the body's figure. I wanted to employ this method in my work; having dedicated a lot of time to creating the textiles and wanted to reduce waste.

Figure 25. Drawing of German rural clothing, thirteenth century

Oakes, Alma and Margot Hamilton Hill. Rural Costume Its Origin and Development in Western Europe and the British Isles. London: B T Batsford, 1971.

Figure 26. Toile of utopian dress [I]
Callum Forbes-Day, Photograph, 2024

Figure 27. Toile of utopian dress [II]
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

I also wanted outcomes to echo the fundamental values of a Carhartt jacket. The Carhartt working jacket, shown in figure 28, has been around for over 100 years, originally worn as a workingman's jacket.[65] A Carhartt jacket transcends its intended use and in past years has become a wardrobe staple. Similarly, Levi's jeans arguably can be worn in most social settings due to their long history and the way they have transcended from workingman's clothing to high fashion. In recent years, Carhartt has collaborated with fashion designers who reinterpreted the original jacket to show its continuing relevance to contemporary fashion. I knew I wanted to create a jacket by responding to the materials and these influences. I would like this jacket to transcend style, be in my wardrobe for life, combined and worn with everything regardless of social setting.

Figure 28. Carhartt Jacket

Highsnobiety. "Carhartt WIP – Detroit Jacket Hamilton Brown/Tobacco." Accessed November 25, 2023. https://www.highsnobiety.com/en-nz/shop/product/carhartt-wip-detroit-jacket-hamilton-browntobacco/.

65 Dave More, "Discover the History of the Carhartt Chore Coat | Carhartt," Carhartt, accessed March 3, 2024, https://www.carhartt.com/gb/en-gb/content/discover-chore-coat.

Durability of a textile plays a key role in why fast fashion is thrown away at accelerating rates.[66] The thick cotton canvas of the traditional Carhartt jacket provides a base for the garment that can be repaired easily. In part, it is this durability that attracts consumers. The durability of the textiles developed in this research was also essential to me; due to the time and skill I had put into creating them, I wanted them to last. I am encouraged to maintain, repair and extend the life of these jackets if they become damaged because of the strong connection I have gained with them throughout the artisanal journey.

In developing this silhouette, I wanted to work within the constraints of the loom. The loom has a maximum width of 58 cm; however there is no limit to the length. I cut calico strips for toiling at 58 cm width to develop the garment's silhouette. I began to hang these pieces of calico on the wall to produce a silhouette. The first toile produced was made of the same fabric width, including the sleeves (fig. 29). However, I did not like the wide shape of the sleeves when toiled (fig. 30). In my research into early rural clothing, I encountered patterns where triangular gussets were added under the arm to increase movement. Playing around with these different gussets in relation to the silhouette allowed me to produce a slimmer sleeve (figs. 31 and 32). I did not want this garment to be constrained to one period of the wearer's life; the oversized width of the jacket highlights the width and artisanal process of hand weaving while preventing the garment from becoming costume.

66 Richard Vasquez Jr, "Overconsumption in the Fashion Industry : Fashion Revolution," Fashion Revolution, accessed August 25, 2023, https://www.fashionrevolution.org/overconsumption-in-the-fashion-industry/.

Figure 29. Silhouette exploration
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 30. First toile
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

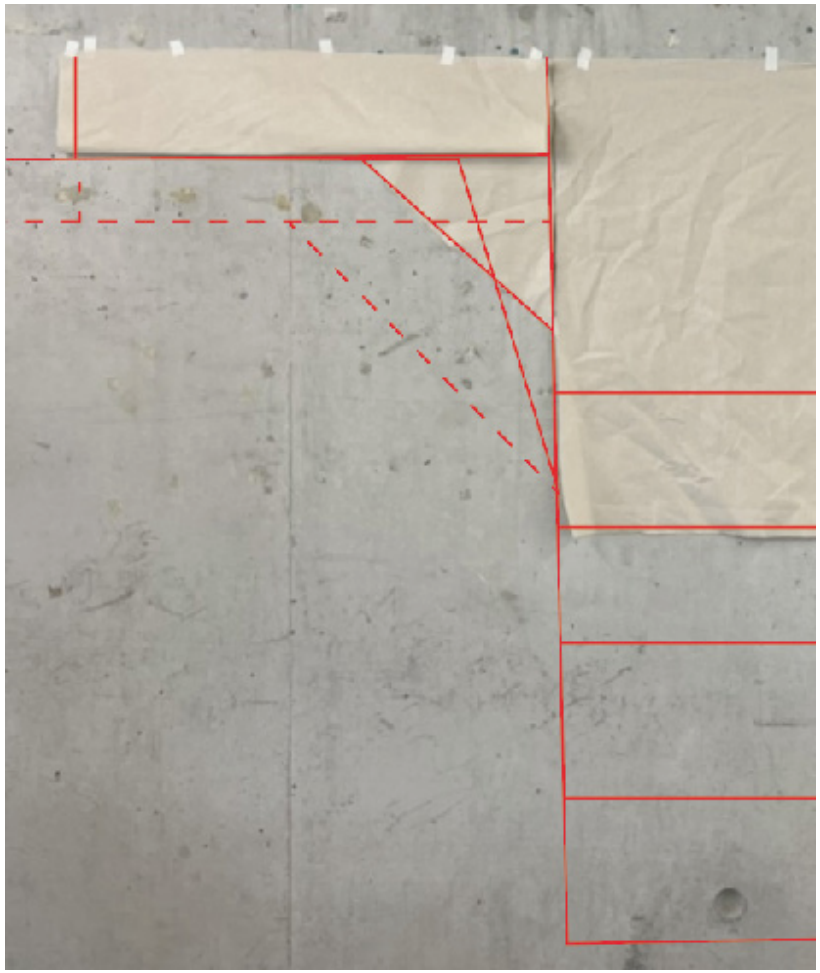

Figure 31. Silhouette exploration with gussets
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 32. Second toile
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Final Practice

Hitherto, I had worked separately on the development of material and form. A typical fashion design process includes toiling the garment form in a cheaper fabric, which has similar weight and drape qualities to the final fabric. In my case, I was not able to source anything that had similar textile qualities. This meant the work I had done so far regarding the development of the jacket would have to be adjusted when working with my final materials for the first time. Throughout my practice, I had only worked on a small scale; this was my first time making a significant length of fabric rather than small samples. I knew this would also bring its challenges.

I went into weaving my first textile, remarkably unaware of what would happen. I planned to make a 'loose weave' using every second reed constructed with a twill weave where the weft passes under every fourth warp thread; this alternates between rows and produces a twill pattern. I planned to weave this fabric in two widths—one width for the body and one for the sleeves and gusset. After completing the warping process for the wider width, I had a lot less yarn left than anticipated. As I began weaving, I knew the quince yarn would run out. Once it did, I decided to weave with the lichen-dyed yarn I had planned to use for the other textile. Even though there would be a change of colour, I knew I could not dye more wool within the project timeframe. Further, I had previously trialled two quince dye baths, which produced different colours, meaning that if I did a third, it could still turn out a different colour. The decision to weave in the lichen-dyed yarn also allowed a visible story to be embedded into the textile.

Figure 33. Weaving in progress
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

The weaving of this piece took considerably more time than I had allowed for. As I took the first piece of weaving off the loom, I knew this was all the material I had to use and that the timeframe did not allow for the planned thinner width of the textile for the sleeves and gussets. Throughout my sampling, I spun a large amount of yarn, and with each iteration there was a slight increase in the uniformity and thinness of the yarn. Because of this, the textile I had just woven was much looser and had more stretch than the previous samples.

After facing all these challenges, I decided to transform this textile into a utopian jacket while thinking about improving my next weave. Luckily, I had woven more in length than expected, so I thought I could still make the form I had toiled. I decided to make the length of the jacket slightly shorter to be able to cut all pieces of the jacket out of the one textile. However, during the setting process, the width of the fabric shrunk, which differed from the forms I had toiled. Consequently, the sleeves would not be as wide as planned. I decided to work with the textile and try to understand how it could be formed into a jacket. The form of this jacket was developed in a way where the textile only needs to be cut straight across the width of the fabric (where the fabric is most stable) to create a zero-waste garment. Although cutting straight across the material was the most stable, there were still plenty of loose ends that needed to be worked in a way that would prevent unravelling. I tried to protect the ends using an overcast stitch. However, the looseness of the weave meant the warp threads would pull together under tension from the overcast stitch. This made the edges less stable than when first cut. Another idea was to cover the raw edges with a felt 'binding' by needle felting some thin felt onto both sides of the seams so the textile could be felted with the stable felt. Unfortunately, the looseness of the fabric again made it impossible to felt all the seams without damaging them more. Because of these previous attempts, I decided to double-turn all the hems to protect the raw edges. This worked, but it added additional bulk to the hems. Initially I hand stitched pieces together using the same yarn as the weave to replace traditional thread; however, this made the seams bulky and stiff and did not have the desired refined aesthetic of the intended contemporary fashion garment.

The loss of width to the sleeves from the shrinking during setting and bulky hems and seams had much more of a consequence than I expected. Once sewn together, the sleeves on the jacket were too tight to be worn. On reflection, I realized that the combination of thinner yarn, looser weave and twill pattern meant the textile behaved more like a knitted fabric than a woven one. The garment produced was not functional as a jacket and would not be considered a viable proposal to disrupt current fashion consumption. Listening to the material, I could tell it was not meant to be a garment. Instead, it was a significant learning opportunity. At this stage, I felt defeated by this jacket. It had used much more yarn than I had expected, so I had to spin more to produce a second textile; I also needed to weave much more than in my first attempt. I decided to abandon the idea of turning this textile into a garment, instead taking the learnings onboard as I produced a second textile.

Figure 34. First utopian textile
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Initially, I planned on weaving the second textile with my lichen-dyed wool for the warp and black alpaca yarn as the weft. As the lichen-dyed yarn had been used in the previous textile, I used undyed wool as the weft. I decided to keep both yarns their natural colours. Reflecting on how the first textile had turned out, I chose to weave with a warp thread through every heddle and to use a plain weave where the weft passes underneath alternating warps to create a chessboard pattern. To ensure that there would be enough fabric and to account for shrinkage, I decided to weave much more than previously. The second textile came off the loom denser and more stable than the first. It also behaved like a woven fabric.

Figure 35. Loom during the warping process
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

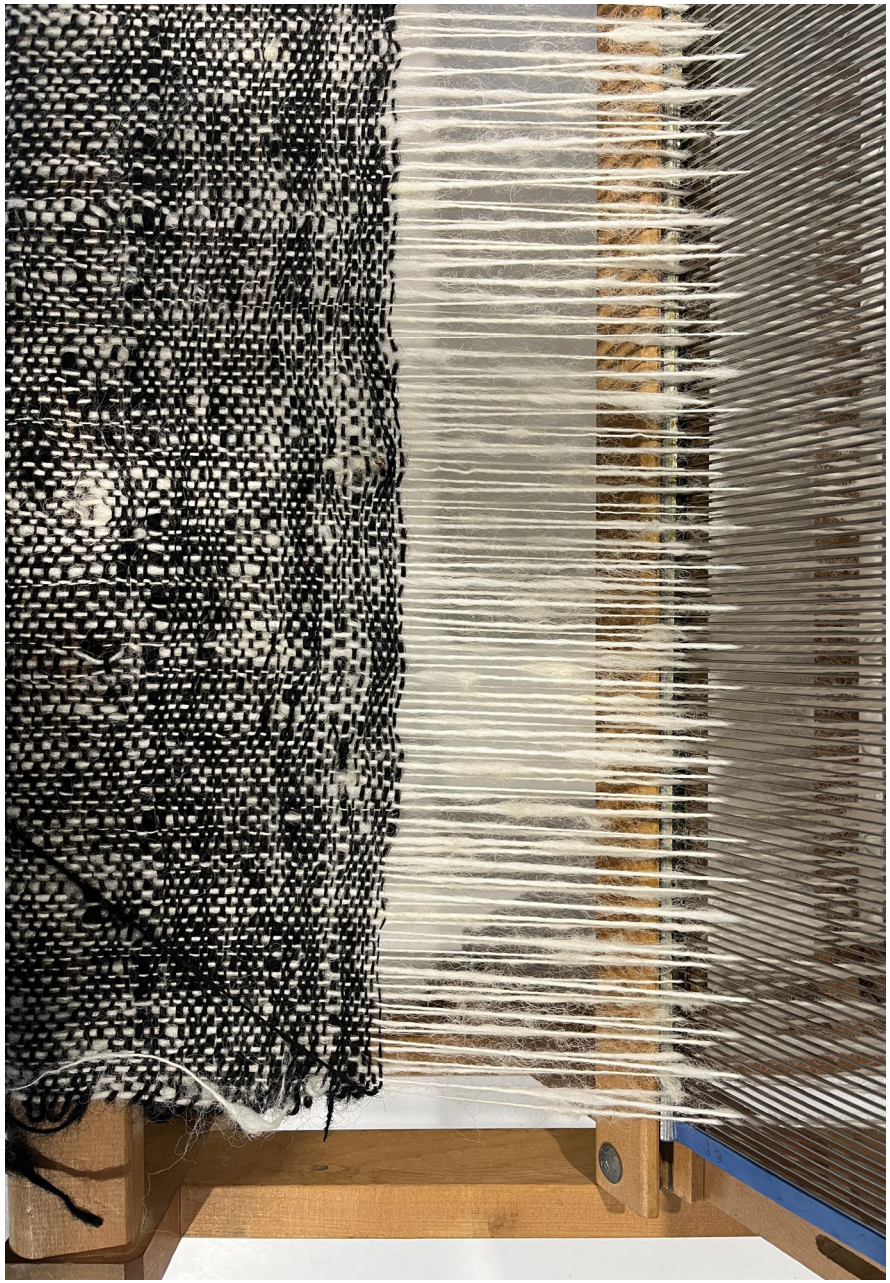

Figure 36. Second utopian textile during the weaving process
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

To construct the jacket, I cut the fabric pieces much closer to the measurements of the initial toiles, allowing the garment's silhouette to be more similar to the toile. Since I was using the full fabric width, the pattern pieces had a natural salvage edge where the textile did not need protection from coming undone. By laying the two salvage edges on each other I was able to create a lapped seam. The lapped seam holds memory from the warp tread wrapping around each row and allows the salvage edge's beauty to be shown off as a key part of the jacket. The lapped seam also allowed me to sew the garment together with my thinner alpaca yarn without creating bulk. The only cuts on the textile were located on the sleeve and body hem and the gussets. As the fabric was much thinner, I decided to use a double hem to seal the raw edges. Cut seams on the gussets were sewn to the garment using a flat felt seam, again allowing the raw edges to be sealed. The centre opening of the jacket consisted of just salvaged edges, making it much drapier than the rest of the garment. In my toiles, I planned to cut out a neck hole and add a collar to the garment, but responding to how the textile is cut, I did not want to cut a neck hole out of the textile. I looked at the construction of traditional Japanese kimonos. Without realising, I wanted to work the same way; like my jacket, kimonos are constructed from rectangles and do not have a cutout neckline. Instead, they sew a thin rectangular band around the centre front and neckline. This band sits flat across the body and often sits up, exposing the back of the neck. I was inspired by this approach and decided to bind my neckline in the same way to avoid cutting a neckline See Appendix for images of the final garment.

Exhibition

My connection to this body of work has emerged from a deep engagement with materials and their making. I wanted to highlight these materials and methods through an interactive exhibition, allowing the audience some insight into this connection. The loom I used to weave the textiles will be included in the exhibition, so the audience can visualise the weaving process. The exhibition will also encourage guests to pick up and experience the material samples, which have been categorised by natural dye or material, again providing an opportunity to connect with the garment. The jacket was hanging from a ceiling-mounted rack alongside the first textile, which was deconstructed into lengths of fabric, allowing the audience to walk around and view the garment from all angles. Since the garment was hanging, the exhibition included photographs of the jacket styled on a model so the form of the garment could be seen on the body. See Appendix for images of the final exhibition.

Figure 37. Final yarn selection
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Discussion

This journey embodies the exploration of self, craft and utopian ideals within the fashion industry. The project transitioned from a personal desire to be more connected to my clothes and to the world, into a process of material exploration, artisanal crafts and the manifestation of utopian values. As I developed skills associated with spinning, knitting and weaving, I found myself forging a deeper connection with the materials due to the time and energy I had put into them. Each step of the process embodied my utopian values––the journey was not to create yet another fashion collection but to create garments that resonated with those values. The notion of longevity and durability is crucial to this project, not just in the silhouette but throughout the material they are crafted from. At the end of this garment's life, it can be returned to the earth. The textile will bio-degrade, providing nutrients to the soil. In turn, allowing new garments to be produced from the land. Each textile visibly reflects the hundreds of hours of handcraft that have gone into them. Through the garments and exhibition, I hope conversations will emerge around the artisanal methods and its response to fashion consumption. The jackets created in this work highlight the transformative power of craft.

Being involved in the process of making raw materials into textiles has challenged my view of contemporary fashion consumption. From this research, my design practice has moved beyond a traditional design process towards one that highlights design, practice, and research. This research has developed a utopian framework involving three key values, locality, connection, and artisanal, to help answer the question: How might utopian values challenge contemporary fashion consumption and inform the development of a garment crafted with materials from my family's lifestyle block and surrounding area? Exploring this question became a journey of self-reflection alongside the development of artisanal garments and locally sourced materials. The research tested artisanal spinning, knitting, and weaving methods to develop both textile and garment, and through which the importance of craft, and its inherent connection with and understanding of original materials, was recognised.

Time was the most significant limitation of the work produced and resulted in fewer garments than I had initially hoped for. However, it was essential that these methods were carried out by hand. A combination of time spent with the material and the making process lies at the heart of building a strong connection and bringing awareness. Throughout the hundreds of hours I have spent spinning, I have developed tacit knowledge; I now feel at one with the spinning wheel and can feel, or intuit, if something is not right.

Further Research

I would like to research the development of other materials in more depth. I had initially planned to tan leather as part of this project, but due to time constraints, this was not feasible. In future research, I would include and combine other local materials as they would assist in developing whole looks that could not be achieved with just one material. Throughout this research, I constantly asked myself: How would someone else have a connection to one of my utopian garments? A considerable part of the connection I feel between myself and the garment comes from knowing I have carried out every step, and that I know where the raw materials have come from. Even if I tell someone this story, they will not necessarily react to it in the same way or have the connection to the garment that I do. Using this research to promote and teach these lost skills could be the next step for this research.

In this regard, this research suggests that adopting locality, connection, and artisanal values can increase the designer's genuine connection with a garment. The practice allows designers to interpret these utopian values to influence their work.

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Appendix

This work was exhibited at Ngutu Kaka Gallery, AUT University from the 19th June to the 22nd June 2024

Figure 38. Utopian jacket styled on model [I]
Sia Ngata, photograph, 2024

Figure 39. Utopian jacket styled on model [II]
Sia Ngata, photograph, 2024

Figure 40. Utopian jacket styled on model [III]
Sia Ngata, photograph, 2024

Figure 41. Utopian jacket hanging during the exhibition
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 42. Utopian jacket underarm detail
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 43. Exhibition overview
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024

Figure 44. Material developments displayed as part of the exhibition
Callum Forbes-Day, photograph, 2024