

# NICOLA CROOKS

## //GRADUATE PORTFOLIO//2025

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# MAINLINE COLLECTION

NICOLA CROOKS

WOMENSWEAR//AUTUMN/WINTER 25

"Power Resides Where Men Believe it Resides.  
It's a Trick.

**A Shadow on the Wall.**

And a Very Small Man Can Cast a Very Large Shadow."

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



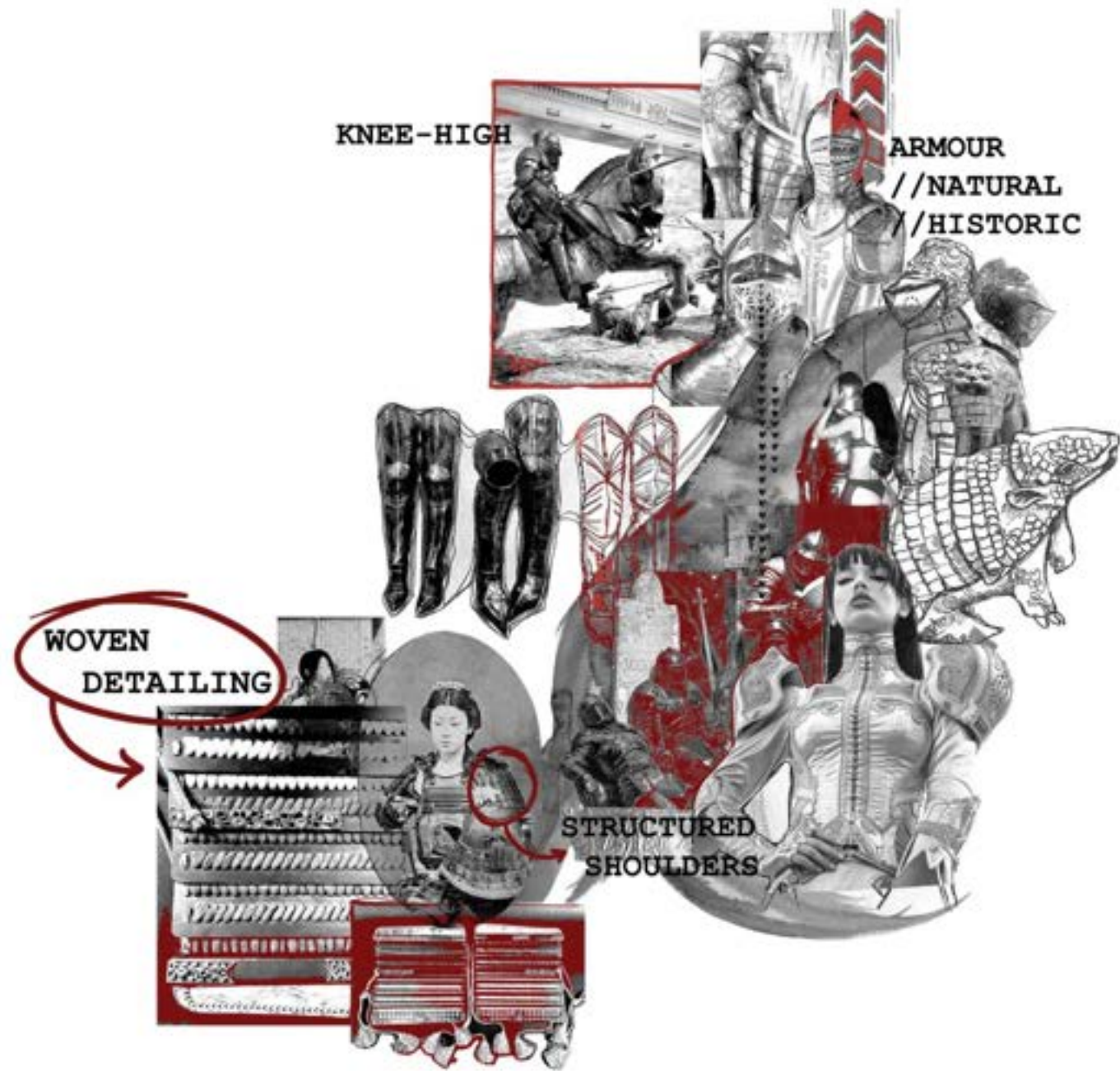


# THE SHIELDS ARE UP!



INITIAL CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH

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



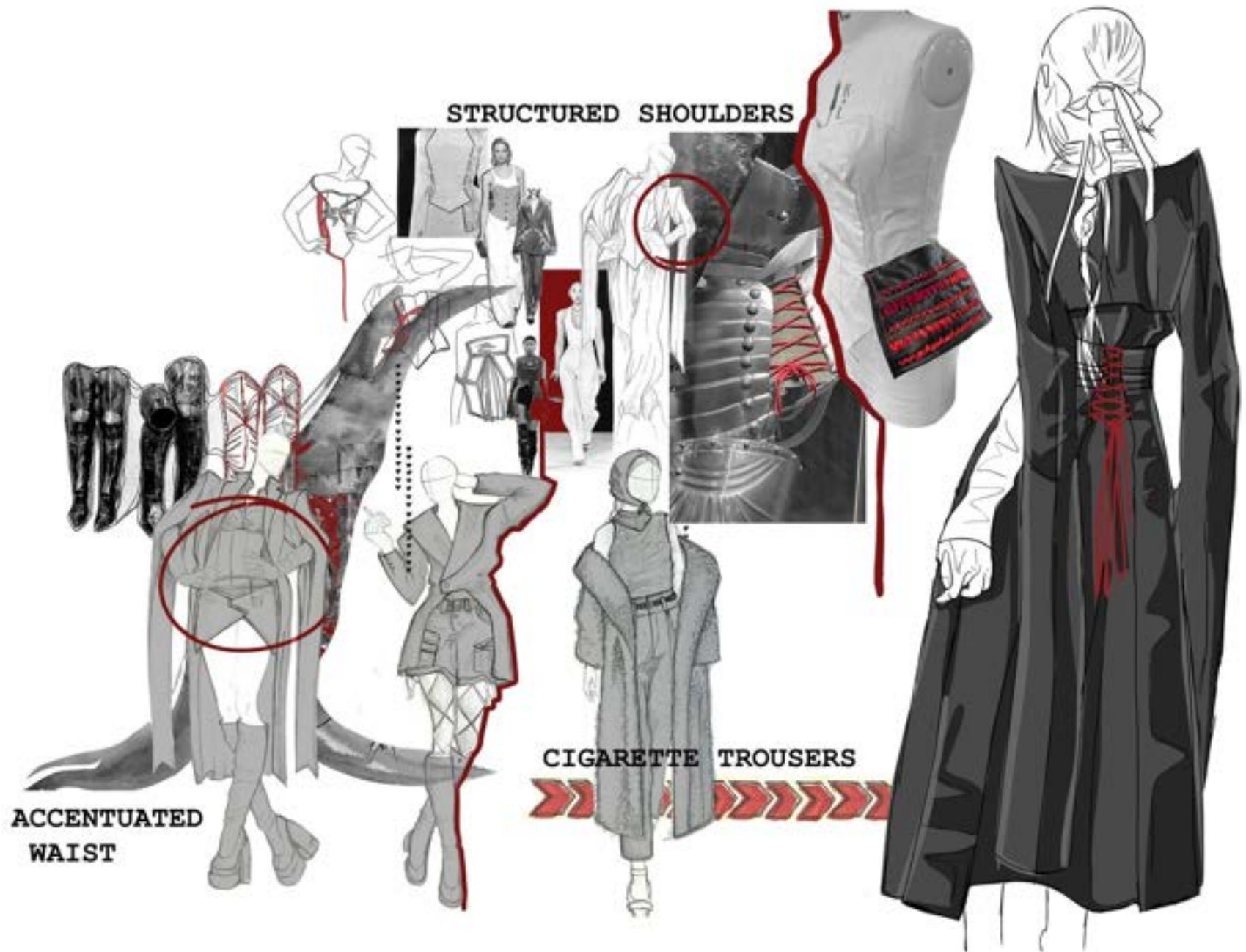
EXPLORING HISTORICAL IDEOLOGIES OF POWER  
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



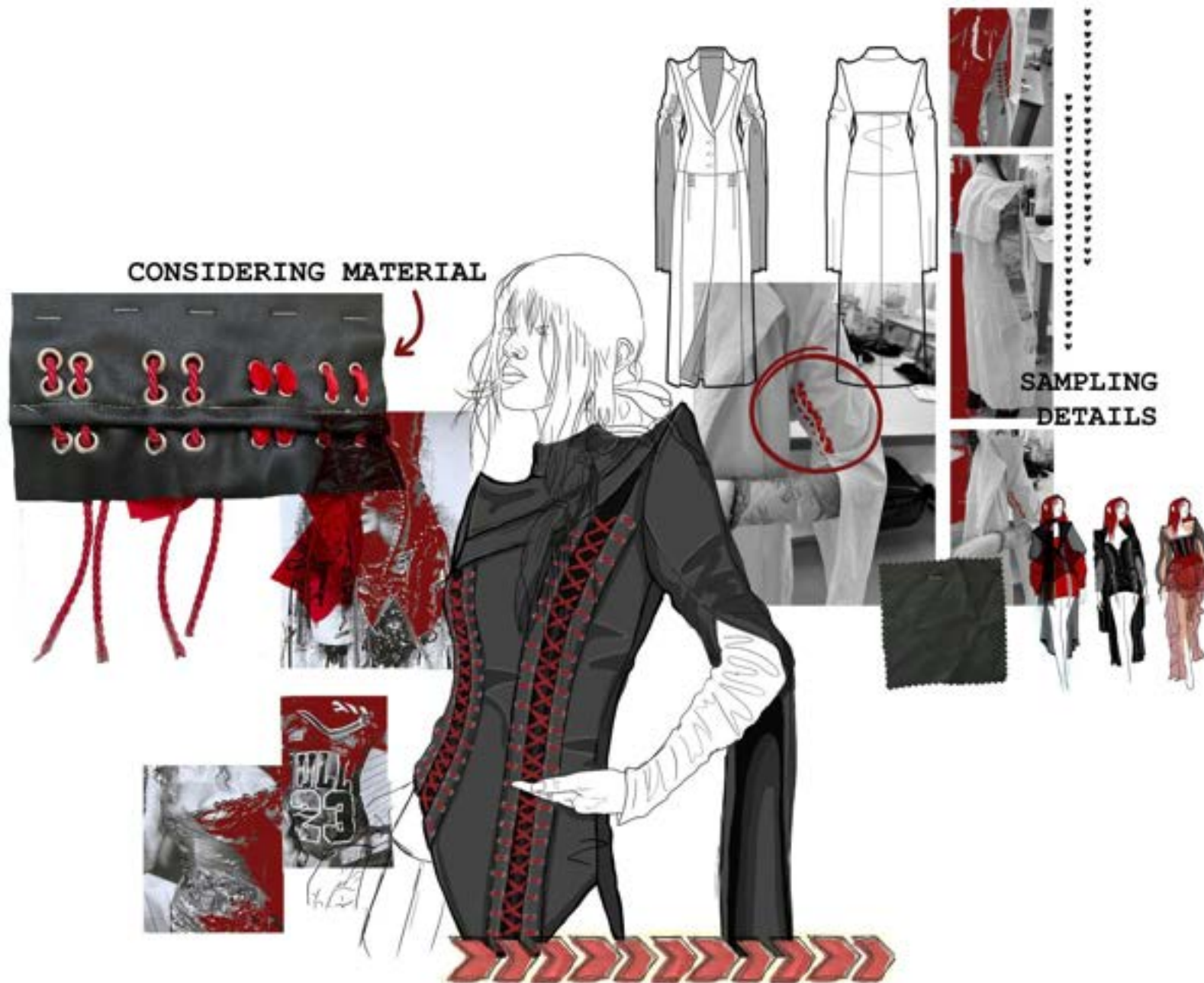




CONSIDERING POLITICAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS  
 A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

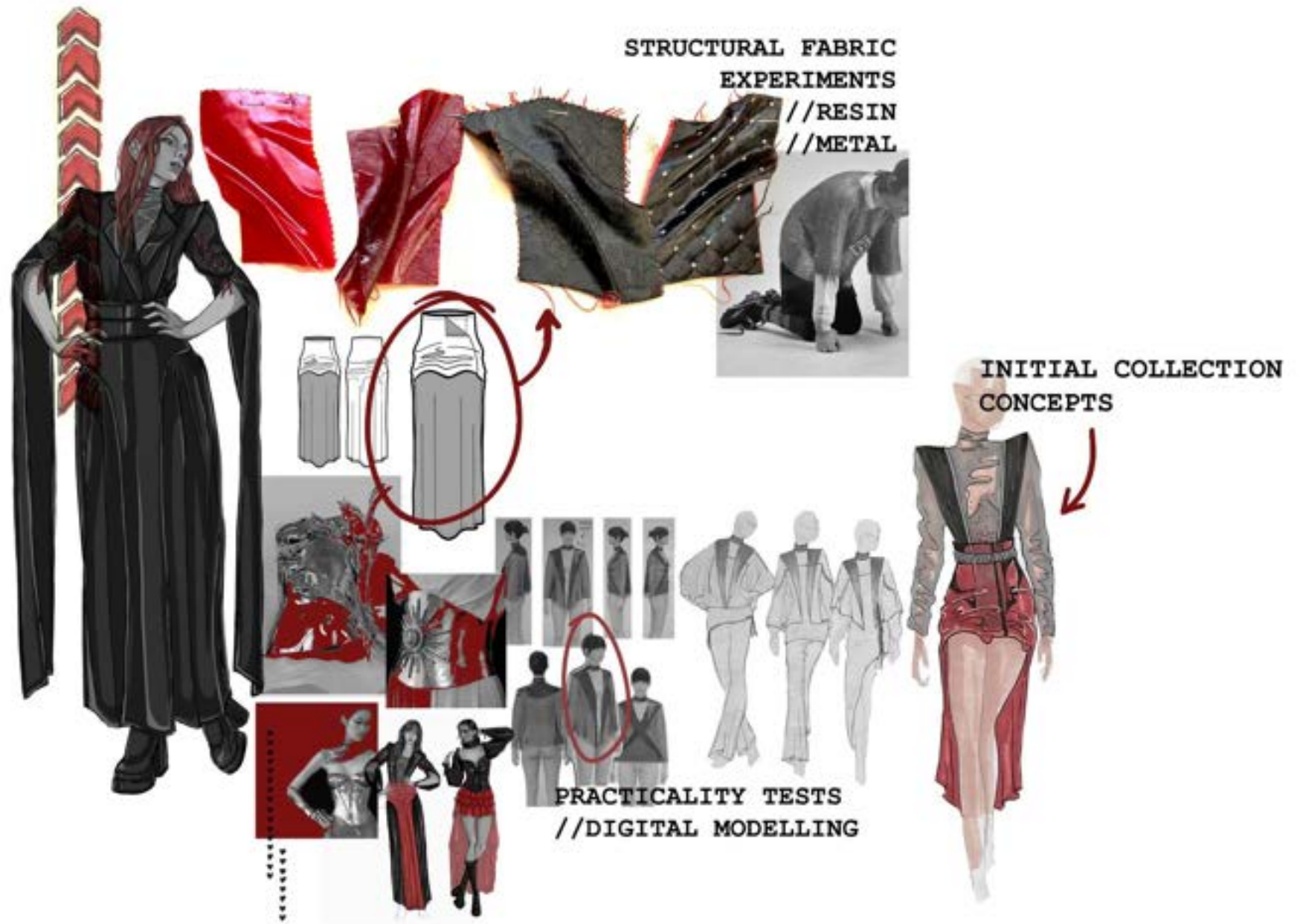


INITIAL DESIGN IDEAS AND HOW THEY DEVELOPED INTO THEMES AND FINAL PRODUCTS THROUGHOUT THE COLLECTION  
 A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



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





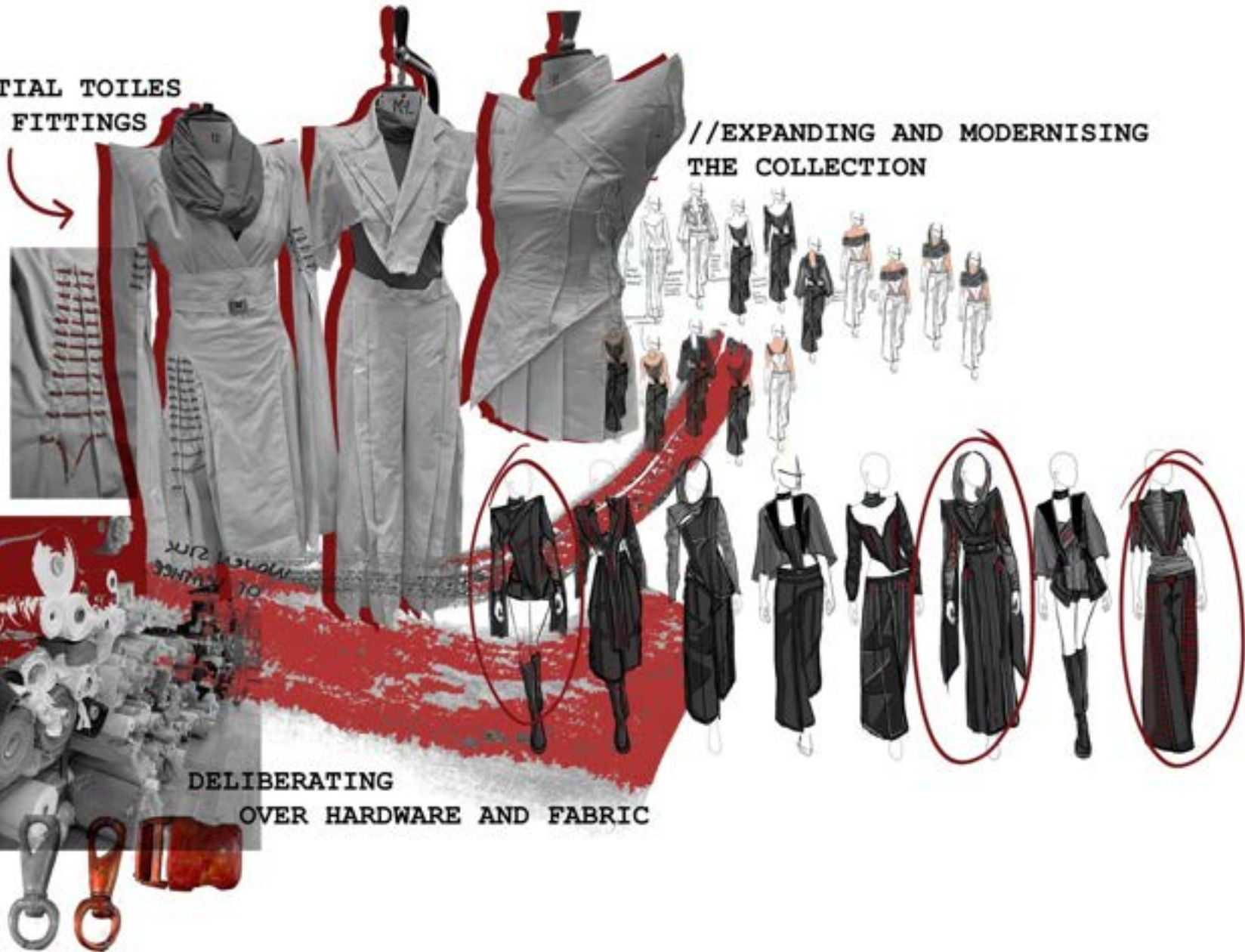
CURVE-BALL MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS AND DIGITAL MODELLING  
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS

INITIAL TOILES  
AND FITTINGS

//EXPANDING AND MODERNISING  
THE COLLECTION



DELIBERATING  
OVER HARDWARE AND FABRIC



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





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

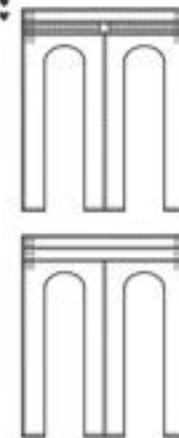
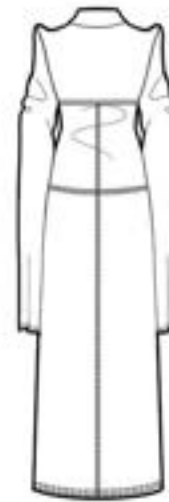
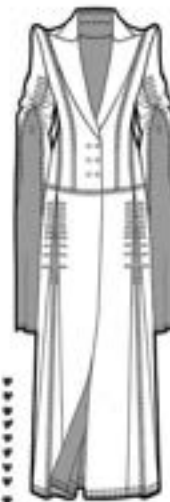




CAPSULE COLLECTION THAT WILL BE MANUFACTURED  
A SHADOW ON THE WALL//AUTUMN/WINTER 25//NICOLA CROOKS



LEATHER DUSTER COAT;  
MAXI BELT;  
HOODED COWL TOP.



LOOK ONE TECHNICAL BREAKDOWN

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



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



# DIFFUSION COLLECTION

NICOLA CROOKS

MENSWEAR//AUTUMN/WINTER 24



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

**imprinture of the  
human condition."**

-Baz Luhrmann



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





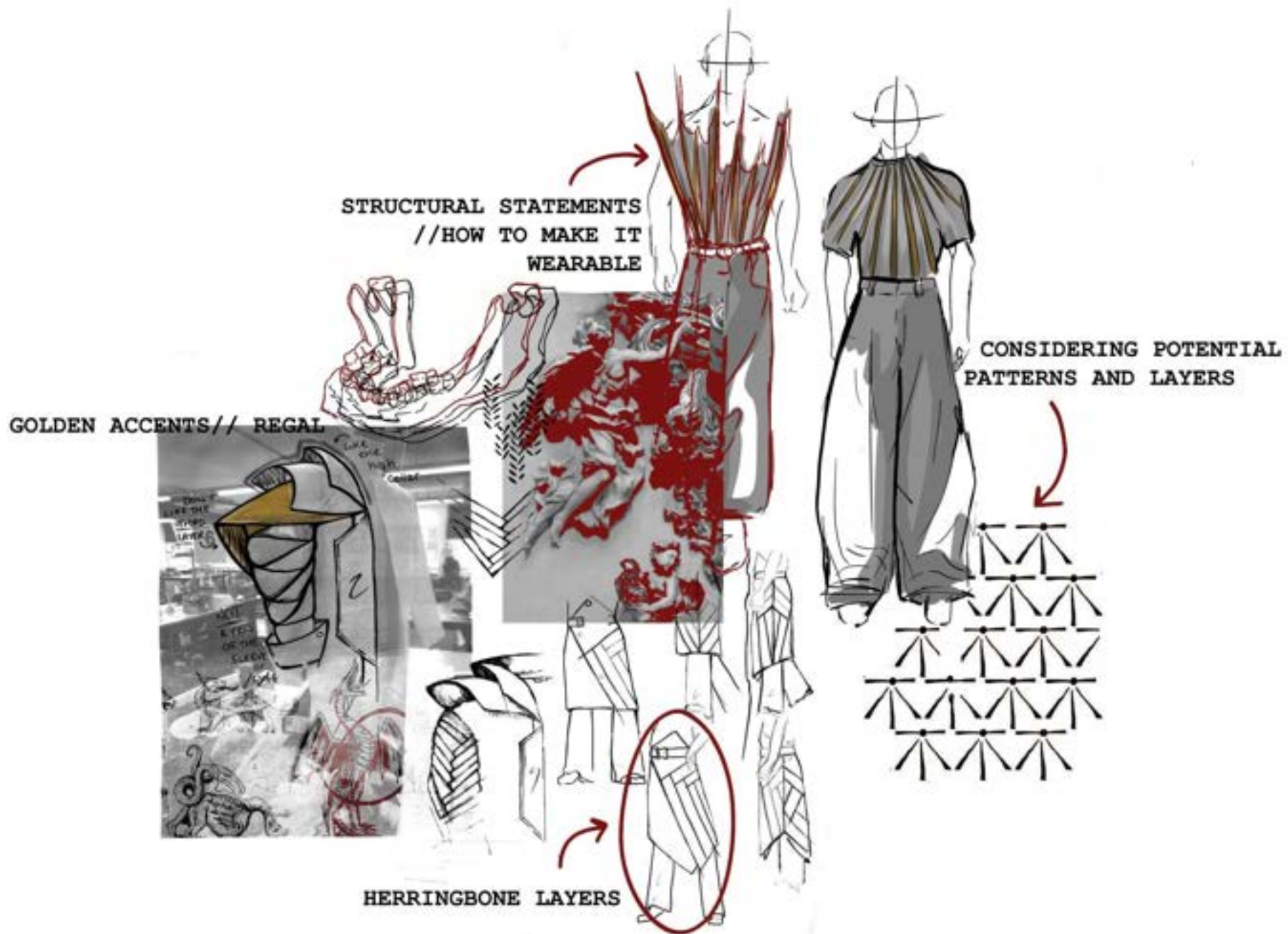
CONSIDERING CONSUMERS AND MODERN CONTEXTS  
 IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS





EXISTING PRODUCT RESEARCH

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



DELIBERATING OVER DESIGN DIRECTION

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

UNCONVENTIONAL MASCULINE ITEMS

//PONCHO  
//SCARFS



//UTILITY  
//BUCKLES, STRAPS, GATHERING



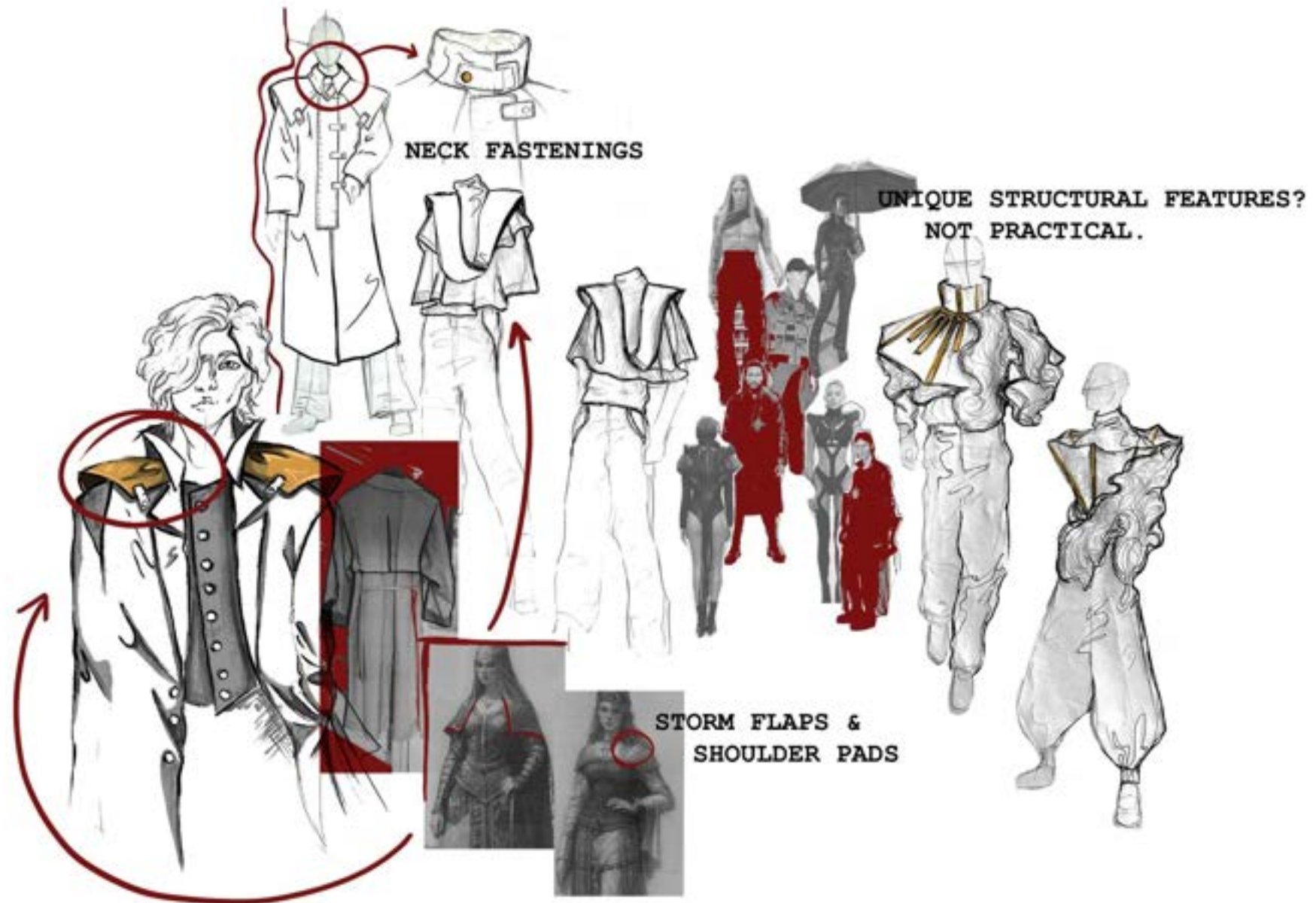
LARGER SILHOUETTES WITH  
INTRICATE TOPSTITCHING



DETAILING AND SILHOUETTES

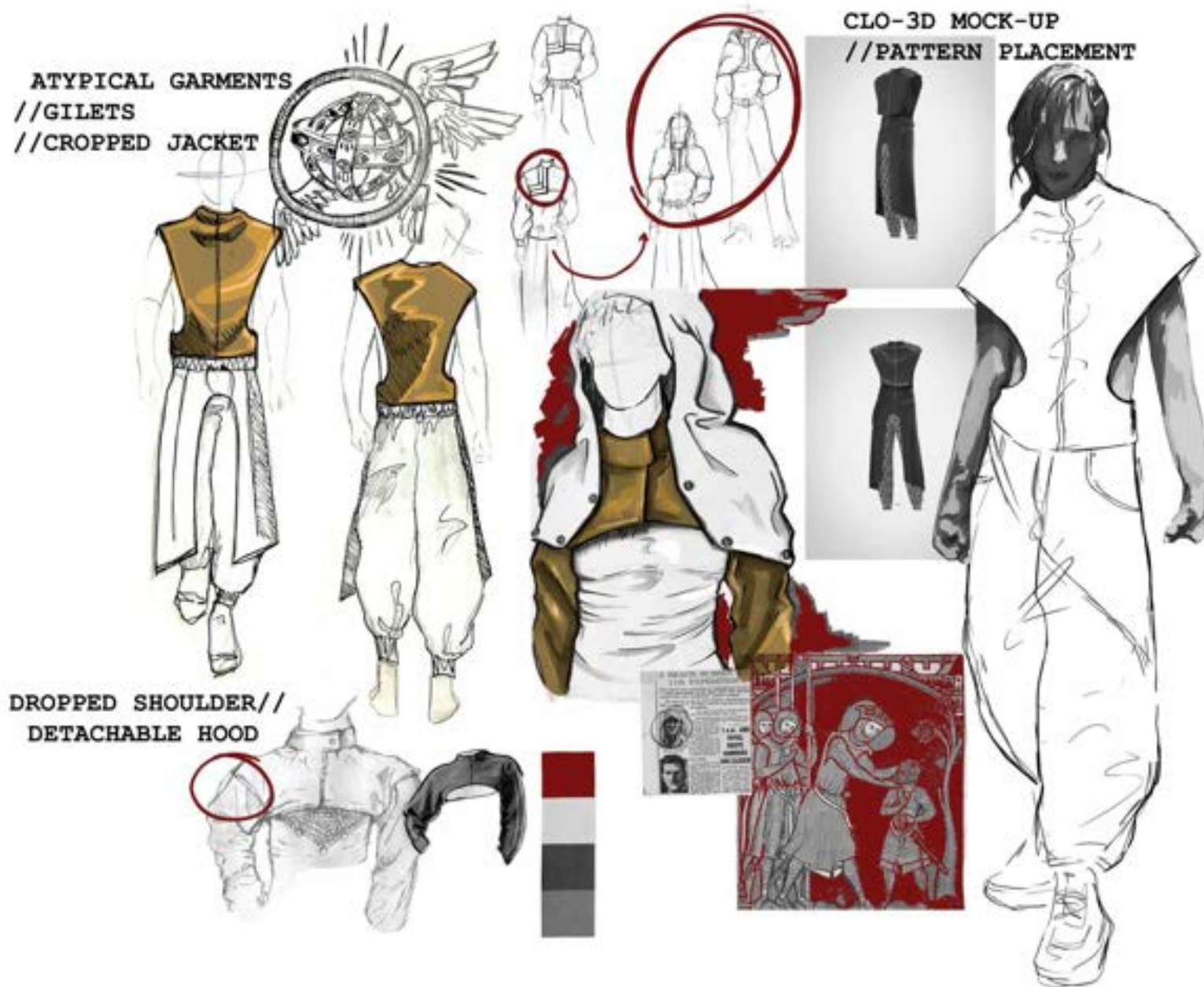
IMPRINTURE OF THE HUMAN CONDITION//AUTUMN WINTER 23/24//NICOLA CROOKS





TRANSLATING DESIGN IDEAS INTO PRACTICAL FEATURES

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









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



FINAL COLLECTION

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



FINAL COLLECTION

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



# //COMPETITION BRIEF

MCM LONDON INTERNATIONAL 'COSPLAY' LEAGUE 2025

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

THE FINALS WILL TAKE PLACE IN MADRID.

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



## MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME

NICOLA CROOKS 2025

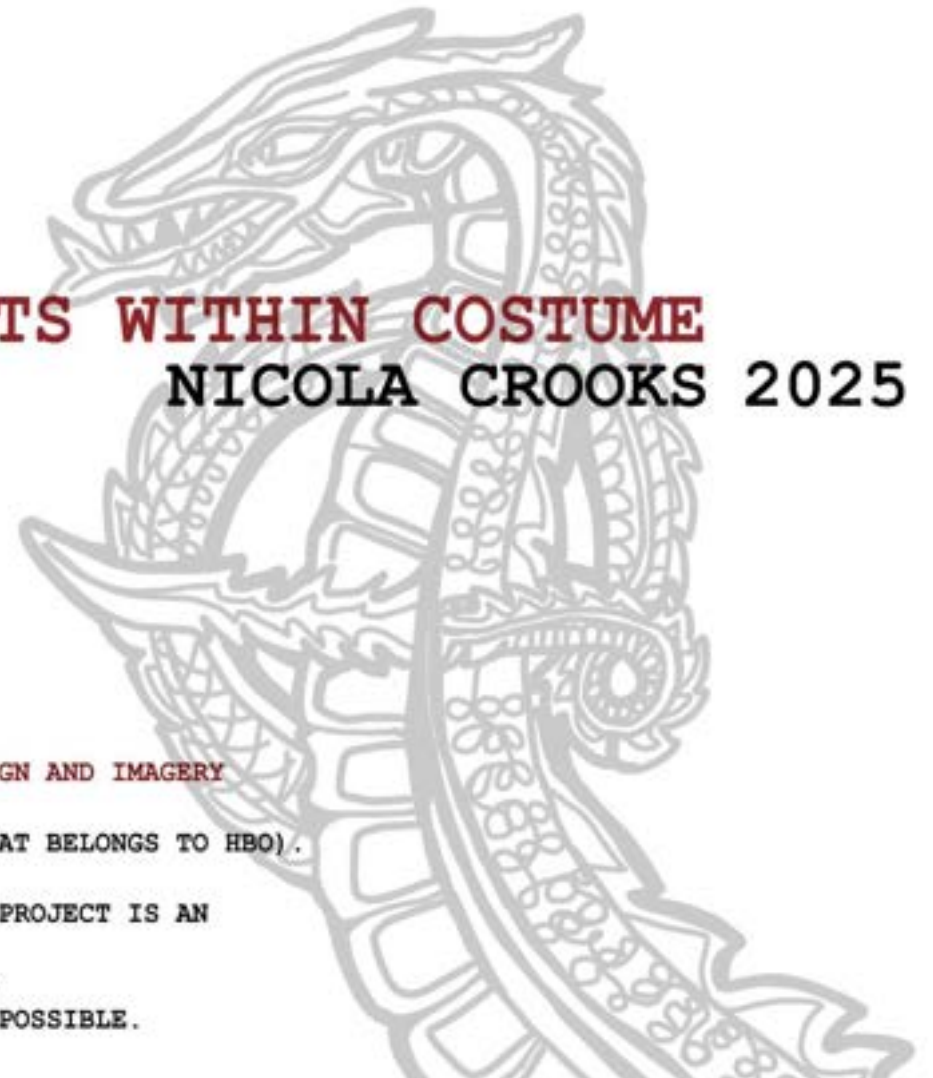
## //THE PLAN

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

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

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

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

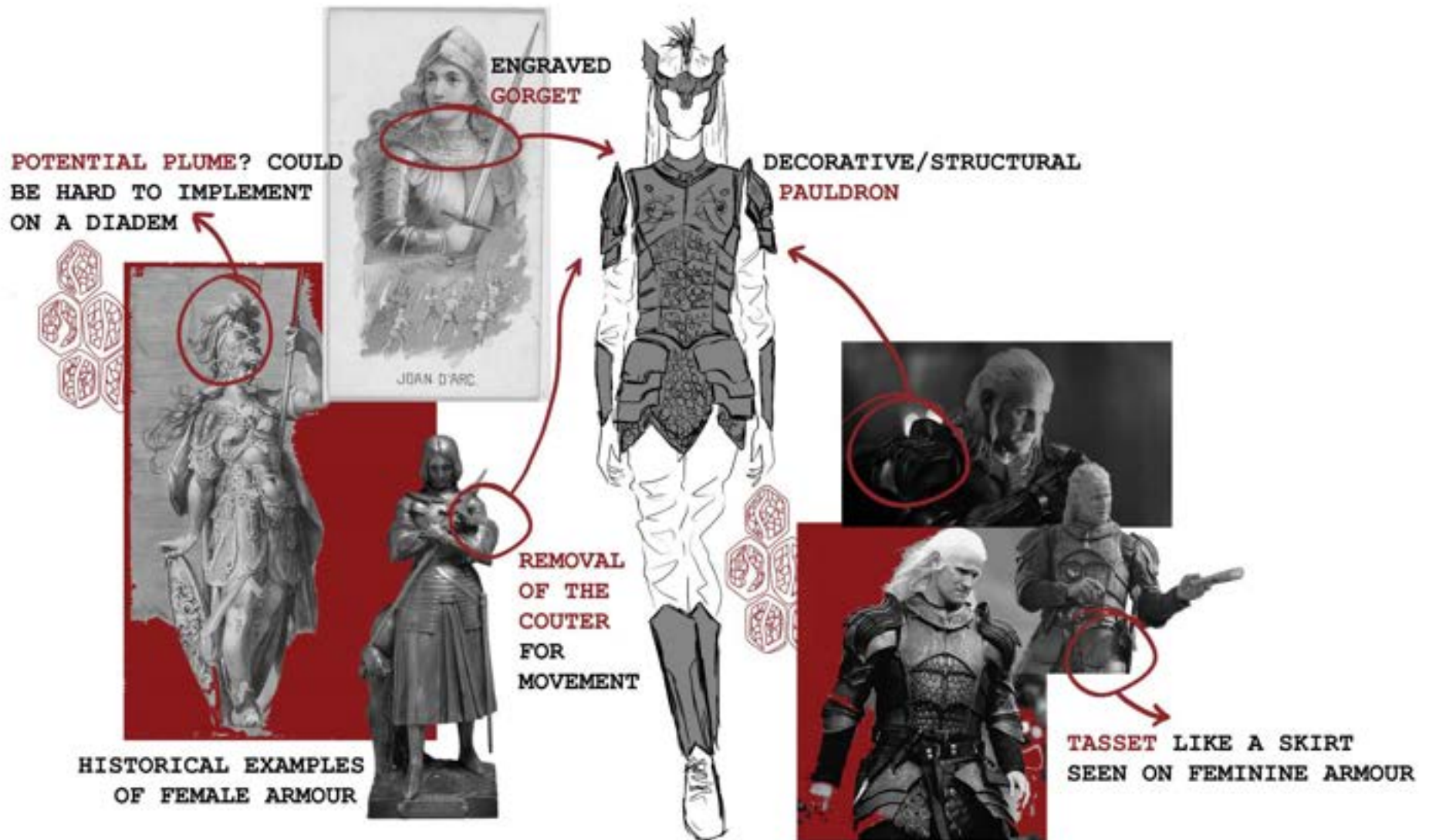




ASSESSING REFERENCES AND DESIGN CONTEXTS

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





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

# // MATERIAL VERSATILITY

WHAT MATERIALS ARE MOST SUITABLE?

## // THERMOPLASTIC

EASILY MANOEUVRABLE  
HEAT ACTIVATED

SCULPTABLE	CHEAP
ENGRAVABLE	EASILY ACCESSIBLE
REWORKABLE	VARYING DENSITY
EXPENSIVE	LIGHTWEIGHT

## // METAL

COSTUME ACCURATE  
ENGRAVABLE  
HEAVY  
HARD TO CRAFT  
EXPENSIVE

NON-CARVABLE  
TEXTURED  
NOT A PROFESSIONAL  
FINISH

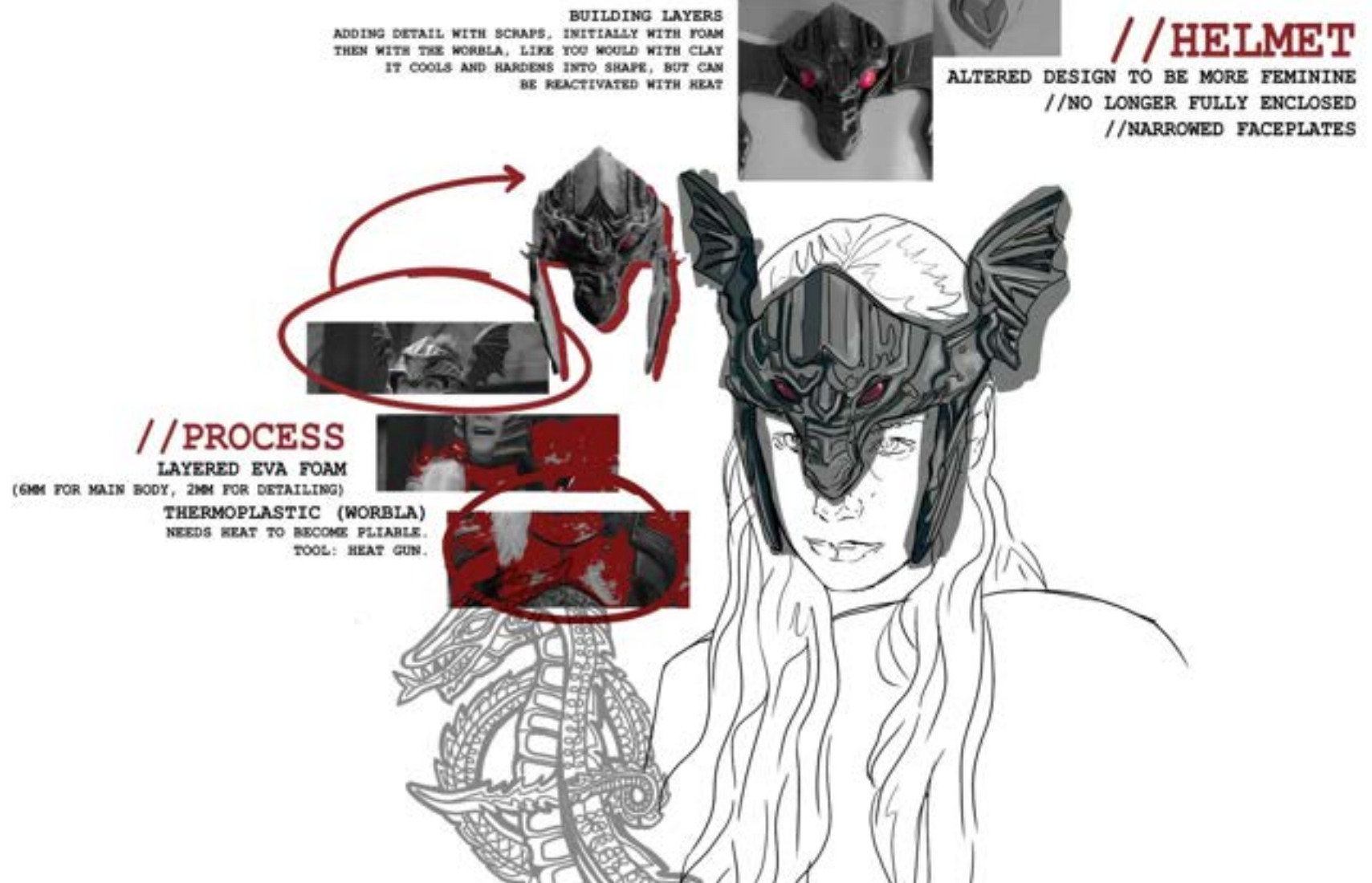
## // EVA FOAM

## // THERMOPLASTIC

CAN BE USED TO CREATE  
INTICATE DETAILING AND A SMOOTH FINISH







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



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



## //WORKING WITH THERMOPLASTIC (WORBLA)

WORKING WITH WORBLA IS SURPRISINGLY EASY. ALL THAT IS REQUIRED IS A HEATGUN, AND SOME BASIC TOOLS. I'M USING CLAY TOOLS, AS THEY ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE. WORBLA IS COMPLETELY NON-TOXIC, SO IT CAN BE USED WITHOUT VENTILATION. WHEN HEATED, IT CAN BE MOULDED AND ETCHED INTO, AND IT WILL HARDEN WHEN IT COOLS, INTO PLASTIC.

## //CONSIDERING HAIR



FINDING A REALISTIC WIG IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. LOTS OF RESEARCH RESULTED IN AS SIMILAR COLOUR AS POSSIBLE, WHILST STILL LOOKING NATURAL. STYLING WIGS IS ALSO SOMETHING I HAVE NEVER DONE BEFORE. IT WAS DEFINITELY A LEARNING CURVE. BUT I AM HAPPY WITH THE RESULT. I NEED TO WORK OUT HOW TO HIDE THE ELASTIC.



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



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



## //KEEPING COSTS DOWN

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

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

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



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

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

ASSESSING BUDGET OPTIONS

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



## //PRIMING

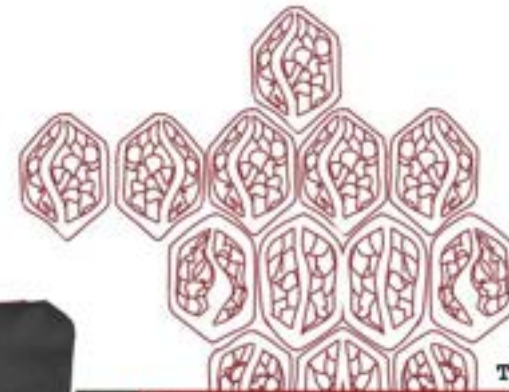
THERMOPLASTIC AND EVA FOAM IS NOT DIRECTLY PAINTABLE  
IT REQUIRES PRIMING

### PRIMING OPTIONS:

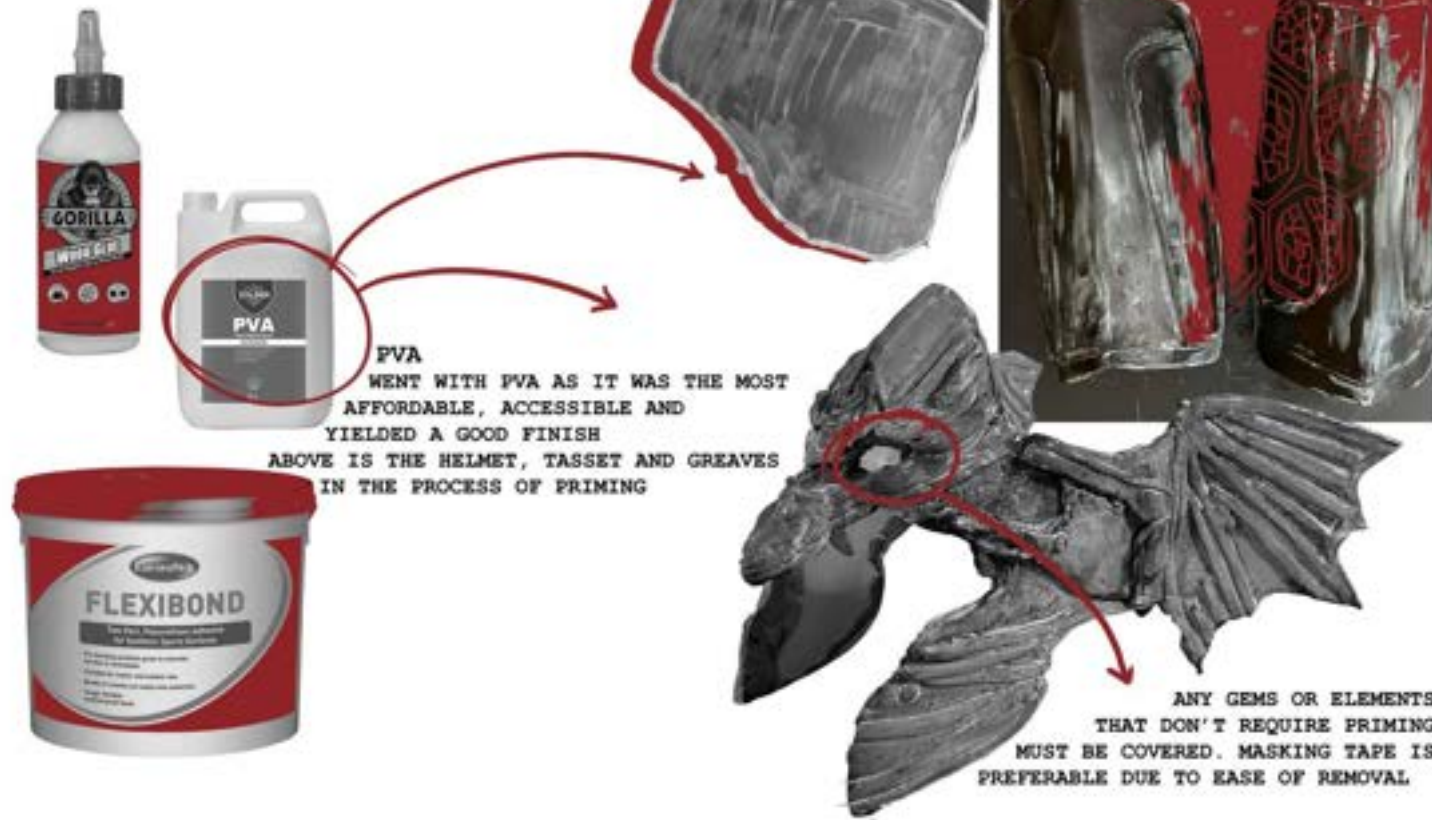
WOOD GLUE: SMOOTHER FINISH, MORE EXPENSIVE

FLEXIBOND: BEST OPTION, BUT HARD TO SOURCE IN UK

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



THE MIXTURE USED IS  
2:1 PVA TO WATER



PRIMING THERMOPLASTICS AND EVA FOAM

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

THE ARMOUR HAS A RED DECORATIVE TRIM,  
WHICH HIGHLIGHTS AND MAKES THE METALLIC ELEMENTS  
LOOK MORE REALISTIC.  
THE BELOW TASSETS ARE STILL DRYING IN THE PHOTO,  
SO IT LOOKS SLIGHTLY PATCHY.

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

TO SEAL THE PAINT, I WILL APPLY AN ADDITIONAL 2 LAYERS OF PVA.  
**//PAINTING AND AGING**  
HOW CAN I MAKE THE ARMOUR LOOK WORN AND METALLIC?

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



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



#### PAINTING AND FINISHING

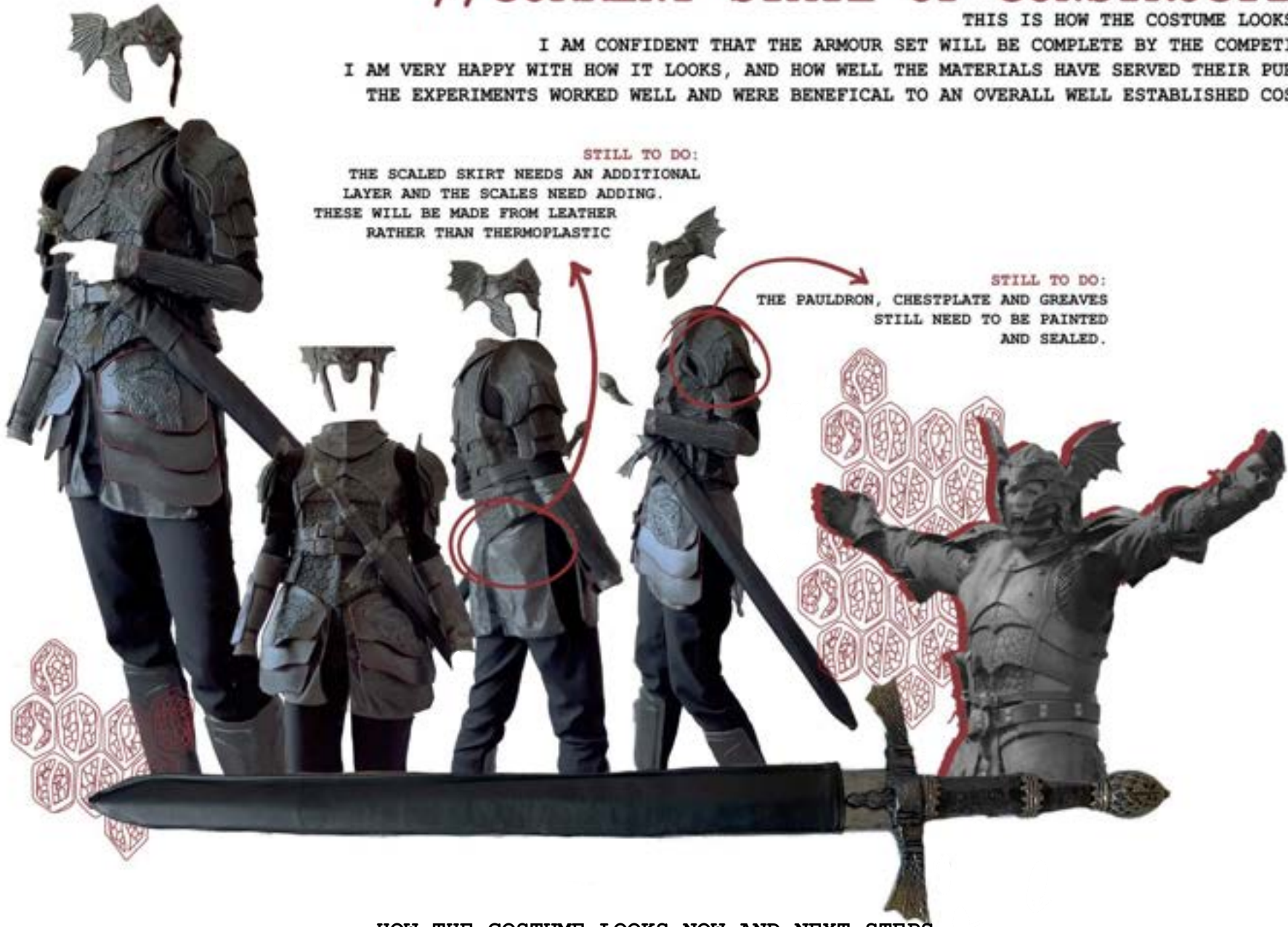
MATERIAL EXPERIMENTS WITHIN COSTUME//COMPETITION BRIEF//NICOLA CROOKS



# //CURRENT STATE OF CONSTRUCTION

THIS IS HOW THE COSTUME LOOKS NOW.

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



HOW THE COSTUME LOOKS NOW AND NEXT STEPS

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