

THE NATURAL METROPOLIS

by Celia Birchall





## CONCEPT

This collection is inspired by gardens, spaces in which there is a fascinating tension between the wild and the cultivated. This project seeks to explore dynamics between structure and wilderness.

Beginning in my garden, I am inspired by the arts and crafts design and landscape architecture, the geometry in the flowerbeds and layout as well as the garden as a haven for organic nature. Gardens are a sort of natural metropolis, with sustained ecosystems, and a place for people to interact with the earth.

This dialogue of humans within the natural world is inspiring to me, and this project explores embodied practices such as gardening, bee-keeping, fruit picking and farming. I look to functionality and work wear for silhouette and construction inspiration, and complement this with luxury, organic fabrics and innovative knit and bamboo textiles, placing my collection within a high-end market.

The collection is for AW22, and contains an earthy colour palette: forest green, dark tan, oatmeal, with vibrant orange highlights in the knitwear and finishes.

## GARDENS

My research began with photographs of my garden in the 1930s when it was built, as well as in the 1950s.

I then explored famous garden spaces such as the Eden Project, Kew Gardens and the gardens at Versailles.

This led to looking at people within garden settings and how they interact with it, through practices such as bee-keeping and fruit picking. Looking to gardens for inspiration led me to investigate the tensions between humans and nature, and exploring CULTIVATION, garden design and glasshouse structures.





## TECHNICAL CONSTRUCTION

Looking to traditional work wear details for construction and finish inspiration. The double topstitching and denim seaming is particularly interesting, as well as looking at raincoat and sleeve cuff details.

## OUTERWEAR

Taking inspiration from contemporary designers such as Jil Sander. Thinking about function and femininity in an outerwear context. I like the idea of a big trench coat made from wax cotton.

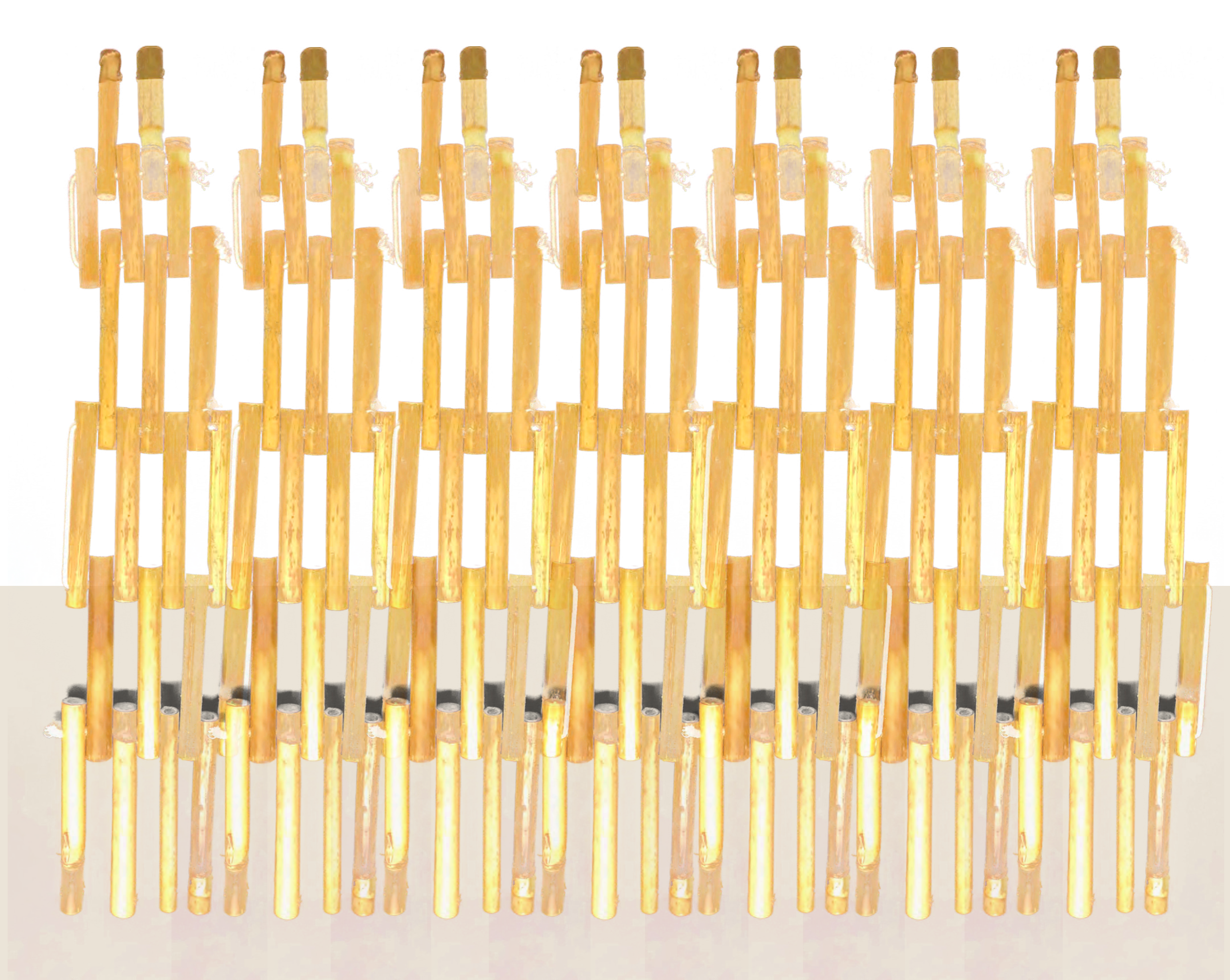


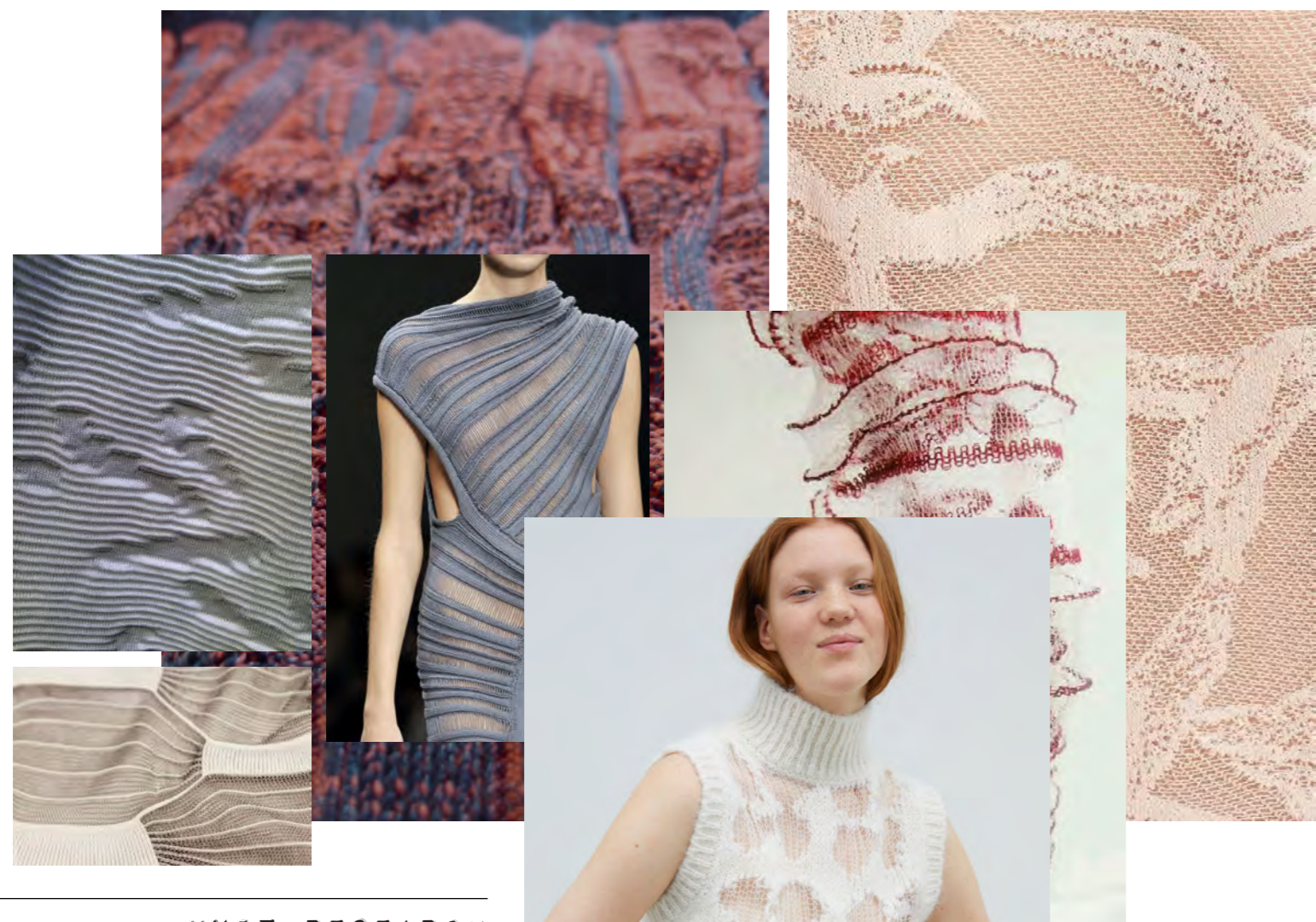


## BAMBOO SAMPLING

To create this bamboo material, I cut 5cm lengths of bamboo cane, drilled a hole in each end and then threaded elastic through the holes. This produced a versatile material which can be manipulated in many interesting ways. There is also much scope for exploring different configurations of threading the bamboo, to create materials with varying transparency and weight. The elastic gives the stiff bamboo enough movement that it could be stretched over the body without being too restrictive.

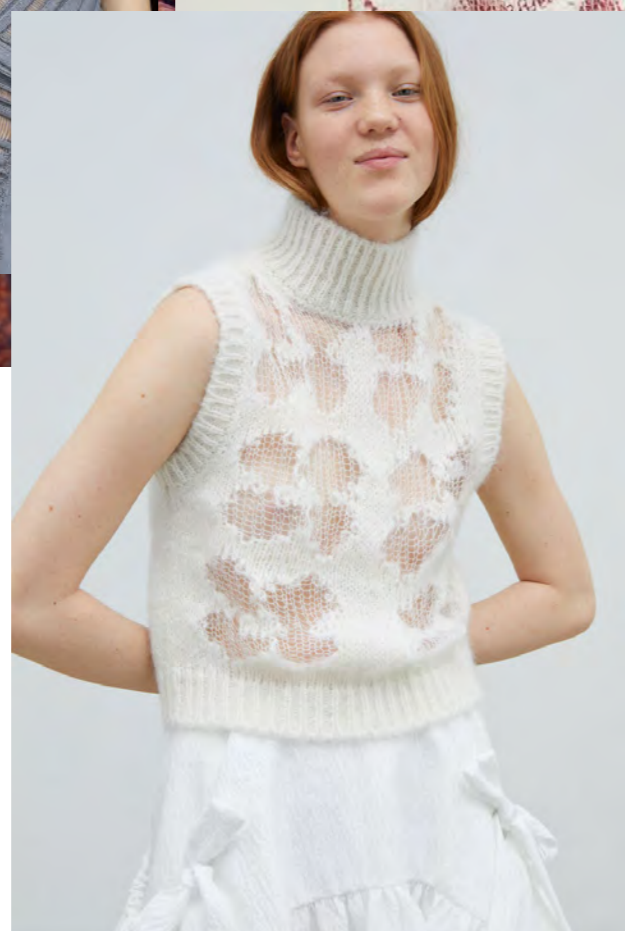
The bamboo caning was harvested in my garden and it there is a sense of craftsmanship which is appealing.





#### KNIT RESEARCH

Looking at using transparent yarns and dropstitching techniques to create contrast and transparency in knits. It would be interesting to use these techniques to create garden imagery on the surface of the knit. I am also interested in producing panels which are joined together with bamboo.



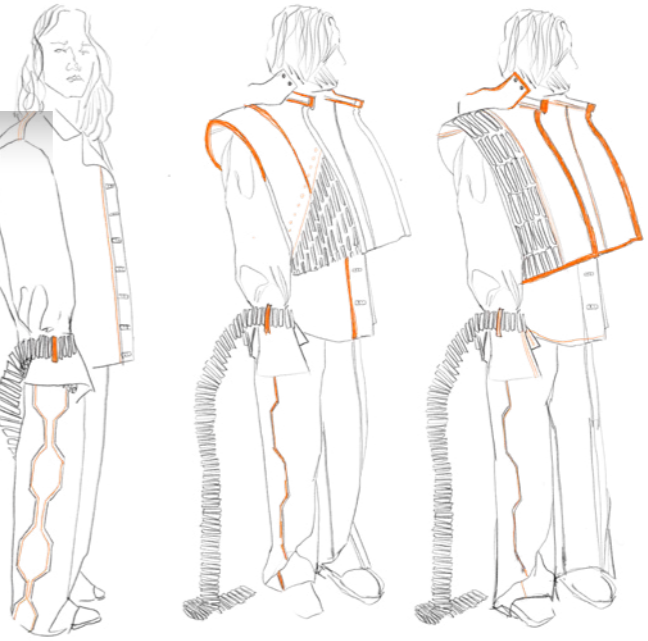
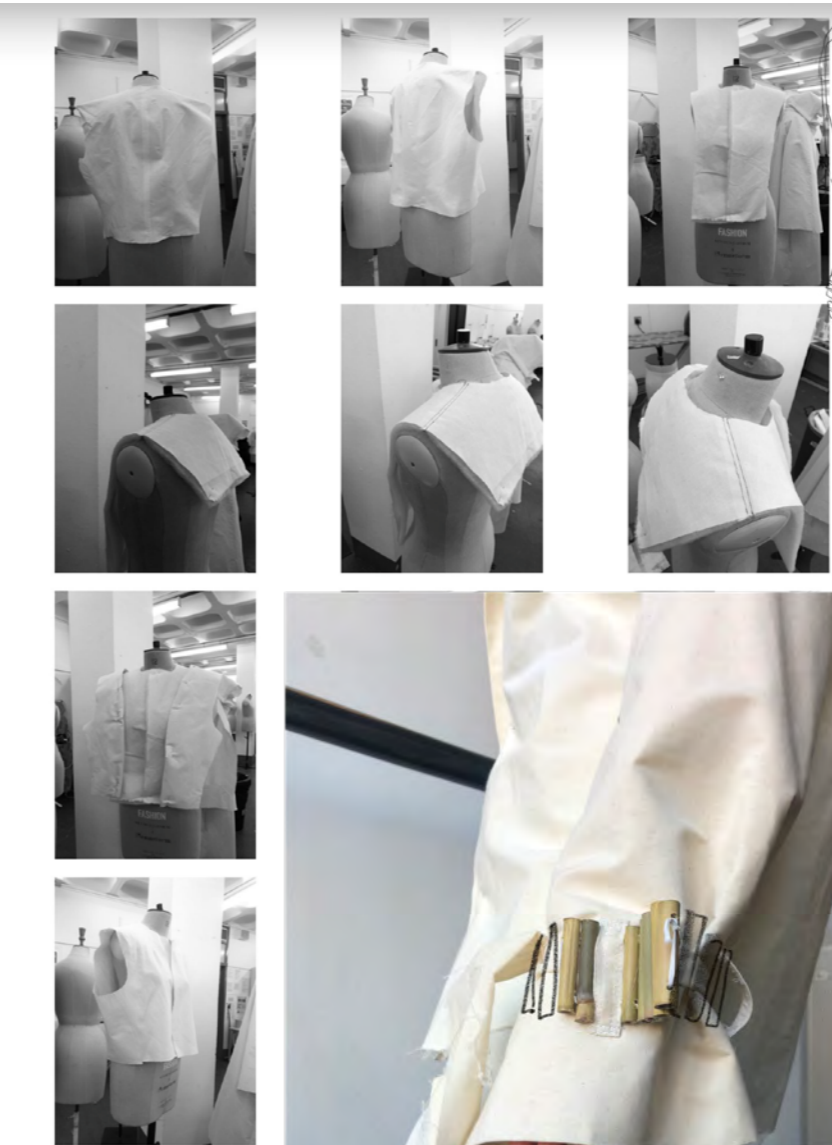
#### DROPSTITCH TECHNIQUE

Experimenting on the 7 and 12 gauge industrial knit machines to create a botanical pattern on the knit.

I am working with dropstitching to create areas of transparency and contrast to the rest of the knit, forming this organic leaf shape.



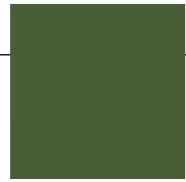
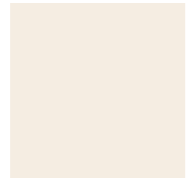
LOOK TWO



CONSTRUCTION

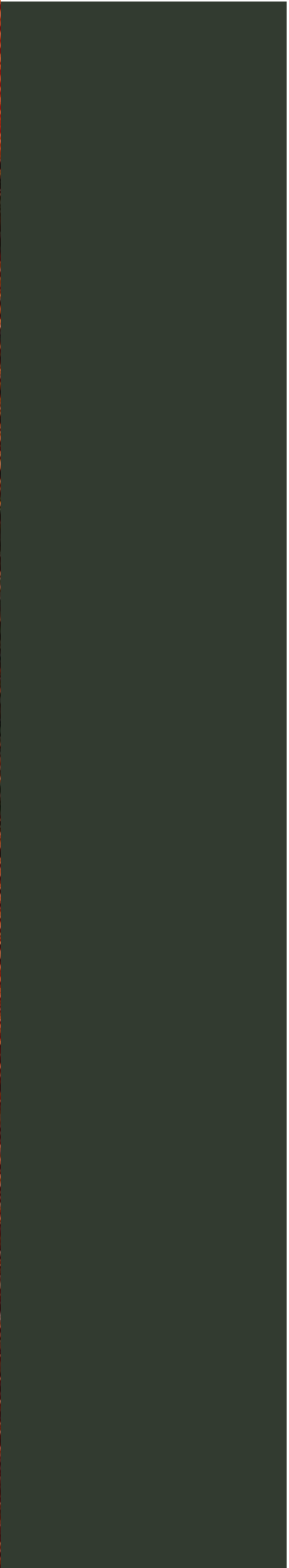
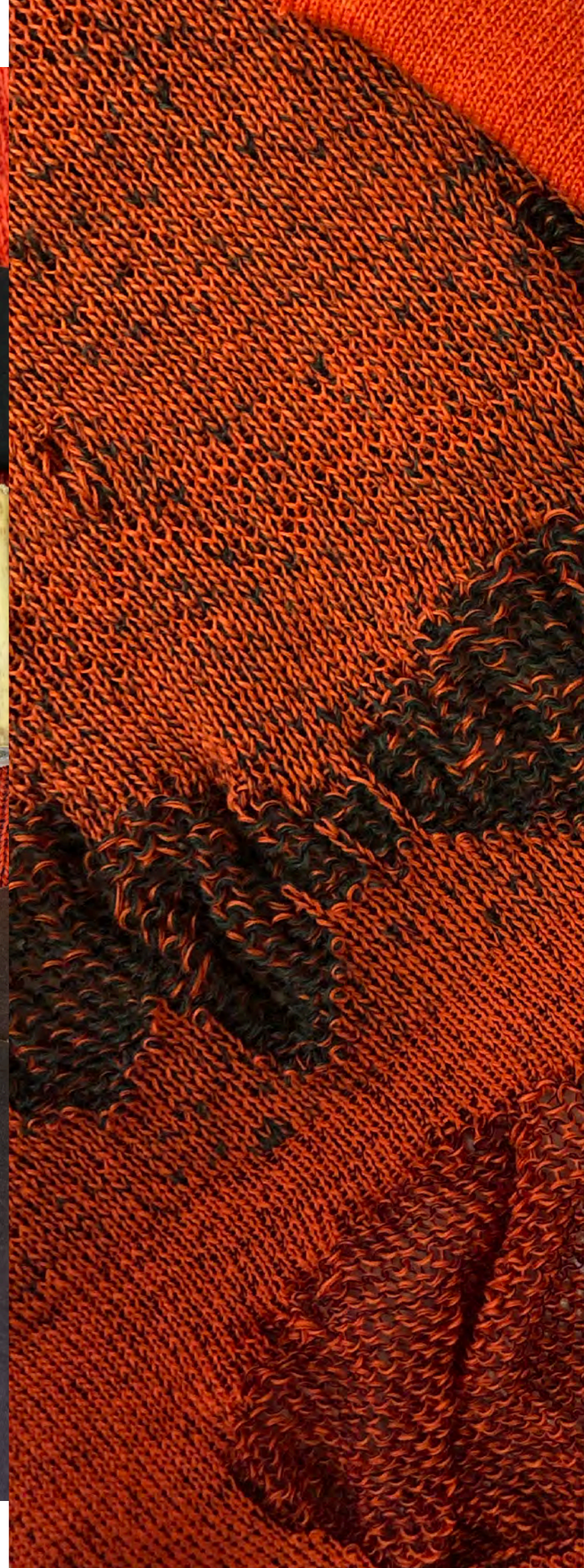
These work wear garments are inspired by my research into women in horticulture. Tailored shirt and trousers layered below a padded jacket, with bamboo detailing at the cuff. This outfit will be made from a combination of wax cotton and off white organic denim, with bamboo straps and orange topstitching and eyelet details.





## COLOUR AND TEXTURE

Earthy tones taken from garden research and the colours in bamboo make up my colour palette for this collection. Soft mint and beige yarns are contrasted with brown and dark green waxed cotton, which blend with the sage and tan tones of the bamboo to create an organic, natural aesthetic.









LOOK 2



Look 3

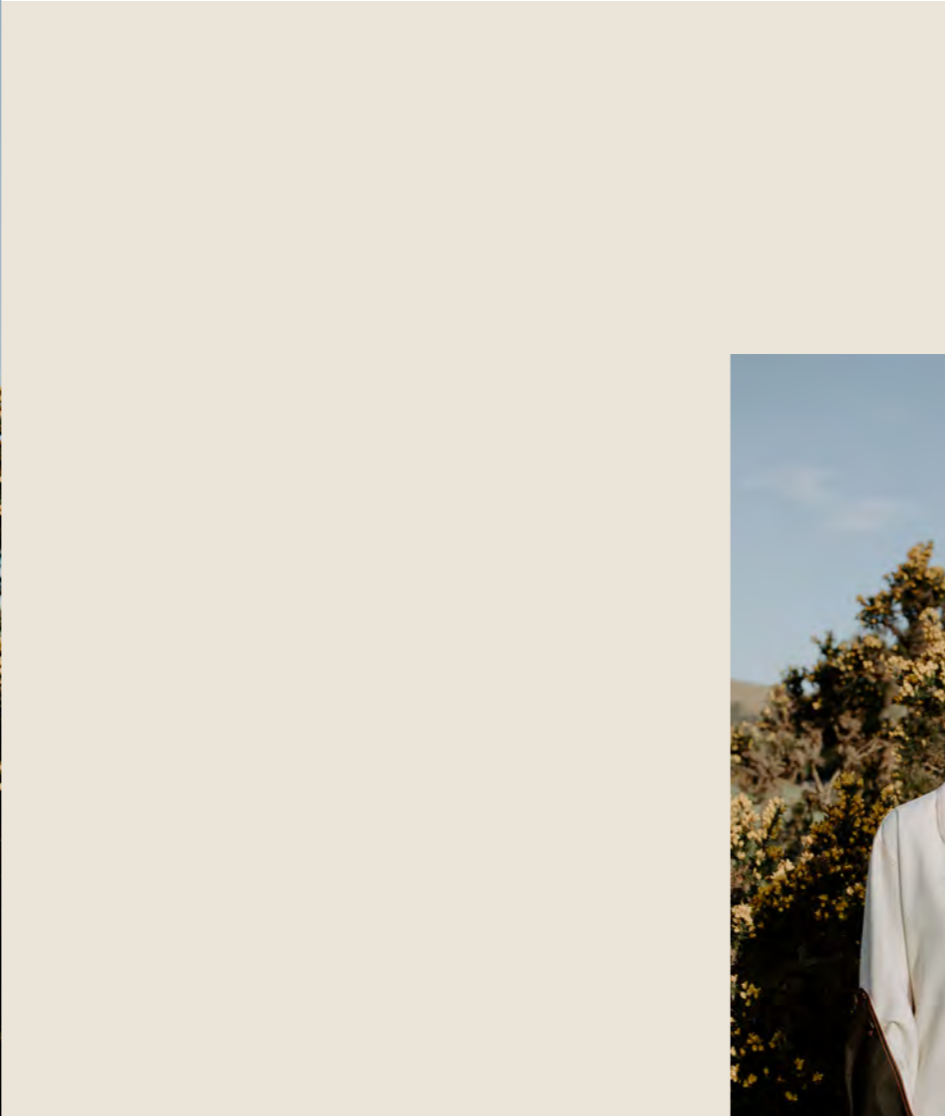


LOOK 4





LOOK 5





*Rhododendron atrivium* (Argent) Argent



*Rhododendron stenophyllum* Hook. & C. ex *Staph. iso-anacardifolium*.