Dull life, you
don't have to
that way.

Where
did Fiona
Apple go?

DULL LIFE,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY...

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Abstract

Dull life, you don't have to be that way is an exploration of the global phenomenon the Online Fashion Realm has recently become, and of the way in which geographic fashion *'outsiders'* can inhabit this domain, whilst being removed from the physical epicenters of fashion.

The Fashion Blogosphere, as a now integral part of this Online Fashion Realm, has enabled a seemingly global democratization of the fashion system that previously existed as a realm of controlled access. This blogosphere has granted 'access' to fundamentally change the tradition-etched fashion system from a monologue to a 'conversation' - a conversation in which everyone has a supposed equal opportunity to participate (Scherpe, 2010).

This project is a journey of gathering and gleaning within the virtual online world, and within the *'real'* offline world, as an *'outsider'* fashion designer situated in New Zealand. I am a muser exploring the potential ways that I can infiltrate this new digital space with my own designed and made garments and images, to form my designer identity by what I disseminate, but equally by how. I am testing how much of this fashion conversation I can become a part of by the inception of my own blog www.dulllifeyoudonthavetobethisway. tumblr.com and by the dissemination of my finished works on its successor, an independent website www.dulllifeyoudonthavetobethatway.com.

I've preceded to build a 'genuine-façade', and an 'elusive reveal' of my 'brand'. I've constructed a visual presence through the realisation of mood within designed garments and images to exist online and thus attempt to generate a multimedia conversation. This writing is a 'ficto-critical' reflection of my processes as a continuation of my design practice. The entirety of this project functions as a test for myself to see if I think I have what it takes to remain optimistic as an unknown fashion designer striving to have my designs embraced, initially only as images. This project is a reconnaissance mission, in which I have gathered and gleaned possibilities, and certified the criteria for, and essense of my 'brand', and it is still to be seen, what this may grow and flourish into.

Acknowledgements

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The images throughout this thesis are my own unless otherwise stated. Adapted works by way of myself taking photographic stills - stills of films, and of print images in environments - have been credited in acknowledgement of their original source.

Foreword

This essay functions as a 'ficto-critical', or a 'creative nonfiction', reveal in which the visual and textual components holistically tell the story of my project, and of my identity as a designer through the development of the 'genuine-facade' of my 'brand'. Aligned with 1990's magazines *I-D*, *Dazed & Confused*, and *The Face* this essay is a purveyor of fact, but more so of a distinct mood and attitude, as a glimpse, or sign of the spirit of the time, as an era of the second democratization of fashion, through my lens, and through my virtual experiences as a designer.

My work, and the communication of it as an 'elusive reveal' is aligned with Elizabeth Wilson's version of Glamour (2007) as a dependence upon "what is withheld, on secrecy, hints, and the hidden" (p. 100). The way in which I've communicated my project is as 'designed', considered, and deliberate as the facets of the project itself, as an unrelenting commitment to design as communication, and to my designer identity as a maker of mood through designed garments, image, and narrative.

Within this piece of writing I have developed themed chapters that strive to convey the ways in which the processes of my project have occurred. I've attempted to enable new connections and relationships to form from the interstitial spaces between my online activity, and offline design practice. Defined by mood, the chapters guide the reader through the conceptual and practical facets of my project. Inextricable from one another, the design development, blogging, observing, engaging, and critical thinking all occurred simultaneously to enable me to both strategically leave behind, and continue on from these facets to forge the online and offline identity of my 'brand'. This thesis attempts to integrate all of these components, and to show the points they converged to; it captures a moment in time that like the project is fleeting and transient.

This project is subjective. I recognize I am young, naïve, and inexperienced. But as naïve, culturally construed, and messy as my ambition is, I do not know, what I do not know. I am trying to pry my eyes wide open. I have learnt I must emerge from my containment, either digitally, or physically. The world awaits me. But you must take me as I am, now.

Introduction

At the beginning of this project I set out to understand how and why fashion items became cult objects within The Online Fashion Realm. I proceeded to identify what cult objects have in common, with the intention of discovering an underlying formula. I proposed to find the constituents of this formula and design in accordance with it, to produce garments that would enter this realm as images - images that would be manipulated through channels with the ultimate goal of becoming 'popular'. At the outset I did not understand what popular really meant in the context of this online realm. In a sense it meant that I was proposing to prescribe to formulaic ideals, as 'fast fashion' does, as adopters and copiers, rather than innovators of ideas. Essentially, this method meant I was planning to prescribe to existing moods, and visions of others - to be safely 'liked' by a majority opinion, rather than attempting to create my own as a re-mixer and an innovator. It didn't take long to realise that I did not wish to work in this way. To work in this way would have compromised my design output, and what I stand for as a designer. By designing to the proposed formula I would have pursued designs that would have essentially been meaningless to me. And thus, I chose to be defiant...

I thought a potential existed for me as a designer, as a global outsider, and as an outsider of the *'Inner Sanctum'* of fashion, to become an independent, free, online entity, not reliant on my physical community. I wanted to become a part of the global Online Fashion Realm by firstly observing, then engaging, with my own blog *Dull life, you don't have to be this way*, to explore its potential as a direct link to a global niche that would have a genuine interest in what I design and communicate.

This project has been a succession of breaking and reforming opinions as I've viewed, observed, engaged with, and reflected upon The Online Fashion Realm. This project has been an ongoing process of responding to what is disseminated within this new online space, through my design practice, writing, blog posts, and online engagements within this realm. My conflicted opinions have enabled me to come to understand what I think this Online Fashion Realm is, and how I, as a designer of garments and image, can choose to exist within it. My final works are my response to this - they exemplify how I've chosen to exist within this space.

This journey has been a spinning two-sided coin of optimism and cynicism, and a test for myself as a designer. Firstly, through this project I ask: Can I be the type of designer I aspire to be? Will my designs 'belong to me', or will they be aesthetically indistinguishable from the work of others - some far more powerful and endorsed than I am. Secondly, will my design be relevant? Will others embrace what I design and disseminate within The Online Fashion Realm? Perhaps viewers will essentially reject and filter out my designs because I have no distinguishable online audience, my timing was off, or because I fail to be endorsed by others.

From my computer I can collapse my physical separation from this world: the Internet is a virtual world that can be viewed, pierced into, extruded from and reshaped by audiences who navigate between the real and online worlds. While engaging within this online realm, I've tried to deviate from the popular by innovating, as opposed to prescribing by adopting and copying, yet I am still influenced and imbued by what I'm viewing in this space. I'm trying to be my 'own', by creating a design output that belongs to 'me' as opposed to looking too much like others work (Style. com, 2010), but I am part of a pack. I'm prescribing to *'The Inner Sanctum'* of The Online Fashion Realm, I'm associating myself with it and with its desire for 'new', but I'm striving to be at its head, or neck, as an innovator, rather than at its shoulders, waist, or tail end, as the local, and New Zealand as the 'edge of the world' have traditionally determined, pre-Internet.

The creation of a branded fashion presence, both online and off, will require a campaign of successive design outputs. The purpose of this project is to create the first output, and thereby lay the foundation on which successive outputs can potentially be based and build from, if I so choose. If I decide that I think it is necessary to pursue the international *'Inner Sanctum'* of fashion offline, then this journey, and its additions, will serve as a portfolio, even as a model for others' explorations of this nature. I'm building the essence of my 'brand' online, just as Viktor and Rolf did with their miniature fashion house (Evans & Frankel, 2008), but I'm not physically building the 'brand' itself.

PART ONE

1.1 TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE DISSATISFIED 1. 2 NEW SPACE AND 1.3 FROM THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

1.1 TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE DISSATISFIED

I inhabit a geographic space that is removed from the epicenters of fashion: New York, Paris, Milan, and London. I am in my own contained space as a kind of 'bubble-girl', with the Internet as my only portal to the most influential part of fashion - *'The Inner Sanctum'*.[1] This project explores whether I can generate public interest and uptake through the creation of a genuine façade, a kind of electronic brand shop-front via the Internet. I'm using *'genuine-façade'* as an expression of the 'brand' I've created as existing as only one dimension of its potential, at this point in time, as Viktor & Rolf's miniature fashion house did as "…their hopes for the future in miniature. Having no money for a catwalk show, they created a microcosm of a fashion launch, with all the paraphernalia required to set up a fashion house but without the investment…" (Evans & Frankel, 2008, p. 12) The 'brand' front I am creating is not intended to be deceptive or dishonest as façade implies. This paradox, *'genuine-façade'*, is in recognition of the project's premise as only part of what it dare dreams of being, as ultimately, a façade, is all it may ever be.

Figure 1. Adapted from The Doom Generation[Motion Picture]. By Araki, G. (Director). (1995). The Doom Generation [Motion Picture]. United States: Trimark Pictures.

I am an outsider looking in, but I am also an insider by what I reveal and disseminate as a designer. In this project I have become both a *'real'*, and virtual, designer and maker exploring the business and design possibilities of infiltrating this communication channel. I'm exploring the possibility of infiltrating The Online Fashion Realm, of which the *'Inner Sanctum'* is a part of, from the outside, via technology, just as Viktor & Rolf infiltrated the *'Inner Sanctum'* as outsiders, by moving to Paris to inhabit the physical epicenter of fashion. Viktor & Rolf had to physically move to the domain of the *'Inner Sanctum'* to eventually become a part of it, whereas I'm 'moving' to the domain of the *'Inner Sanctum'* digitally, through association and aspiration, by what I disseminate as the finale of this Masters project. The Internet "has allowed any young designer or indie brand to get an instant audience, if used with wit and invention" (Style.com, 2010).

The designer who has an audience and a conversation surrounding their work can inhabit *'Inner Sanctum'* territory through association. In this context association is used to describe an advantageous viewer association whereby a designer, through conceptual or stylistic mirroring and resonance with a higher status design, designer, trend or ideal, is able to increase their perceived value in the eyes of a viewer by controlled reveals; by what is disseminated, and equally by what is withheld. I'm seeking to create *'Inner Sanctum'* capital from the outside, through the creation of a kind of perceived power, by disseminating a *'genuine-façade'* of my 'brand', as Viktor & Rolf did: "…Like an audacious bluff, through the very act of anticipating and staging their entry on to the fashion scene, Viktor & Rolf effected it for real" (Evans & Frankel, 2008, p. 13).

I'm exploring whether I, as a designer, can create a façade of 'my brand', but as an honest attempt to link to the inside through association, whilst physically existing on the outside. During the course of this project I will not reach my final destination, but my investigations will enable me to decide how I choose to continue; to choose what path I intend to pursue, in my response to my creative output, and the types of responses I receive from others.

I'm designing and making garments but I don't intend to sell garments at this point in time. I am building the genuine façade of a strategically positioned and long-term 'brand' as Viktor & Rolf did, because I don't think a 'brand' can upgrade once positioned. I am attempting to begin a 'conversation' by what I disseminate. A 'conversation' that people can 'be a part of', by 'sharing ' my designs in their final image form, as online exchange, to see if I can generate a desire for my 'brand'. I'm exploring whether I can design garments with an enigmatic life - a presence that is reciprocated by desire, to ascertain whether I should pursue being a fashion designer.

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[1] *'The Inner Sanctum'* was coined to illustrate my personal perception of the dominant powers in global fashion through online viewing. As my own invention this percieved hierarchy has formed from my virtual, online experiences. In a sense *'The Inner Sanctum'* may be deemed purely fictional, but simultaneously highly relevant as this realm is entirely dependant on the perception held by collectives of 'bubble-people' just like me.

1. 2 NEW SPACE

We are isolated, yet more connected than ever (Penenberg, 2009), living through, and connecting through, our portal to what the world is becoming – a virtual global village. We inhabit a dynamic digital age, where nothing remains static; where conversations don't expire, but instead, continue to be added to.

"The world changed, when fashion, instead of becoming a monologue, became a conversation. Instead of it being something, which was received, there's now a repertoire – people can make comments on shows instantly, they can exchange views with other people... Everything now is integrated, and there's a backwards and forwards – and that's never going to stop now, now that that's started, that's it forever."

Suzy Menkes
Head fashion Editor of the International Herald Tribune.

Video Interview (Scherpe, 2010).

Figure 2. Adapted from Barbarella [Motion Picture]. By Vadim, R. (Director). (1960). France: Paramount Pictures.

This notion of 'conversation', as described by Menkes, creates a kind of access that never existed before now. It enabled me to consider the potential of an unknown designer creating a global 'conversation' around their work, as an alternative to a show, to gauge responses to a seemingly real brand. What Menkes also draws attention to, in this same video, is that unlike traditional media, online conversation participants can and will say 'Louis Vuitton's show was rubbish' (Scherpe, 2010). This kind of conversation can potentially encourage industry meritocracy, and I, as an unknown designer, wish to know how my work is received, to enable me to figure out if I have what it takes to pursue *'Inner Sanctum'* territory.

Within the Internet, and The Online Fashion Realm, these types of conversations can be observed and engaged with; they're potentially exponential, depending on who is watching and engaging. Time does not function in this realm as it does in *'real'* life. Online conversations can remain active and open

indefinitely, in full view. They are conversations captured and shared, rather than conversations experienced in fleeting moments then lost; conversations in which the past is immediately preserved. These conversations are sharing beyond words; they are dynamic actions of *commenting* and *'passing on'* by *'copying'*, *'pasting'*, *'linking'*, *'twittering'*, reframing and re-contextualising image, video, and audio.

Within this Online Fashion Realm, the line between fashion industry *'insider'* and fashion consuming *'outsider'* has become blurred as the multimedia conversations taking place have effected 'a Democratization of Fashion'. *The Fashion Blogosphere*, the collective of fashion-oriented weblogs, is created largely by fashion consuming *'outsiders'*. The outsider, from behind their computer screen, can now virtually infiltrate other domains, and consequently affect real domains through these conversations (Scherpe, 2010). *Tweets*, *Blog posts*, and *comments* critiquing fashion shows, collections, and advertorial campaigns only need to be seen to potentially affect a collective viewer perception. By a kind of virtual existence *'real'* fashion entities are made vulnerable through virtual conversations that can affect the dynamics of the previously impenetrable *'Inner Sanctum'* of the fashion system. It appears that the inside realm has surrendered territory to the outside, as *'outsiders'* have become *'insiders'*.[2]

Bloggers, as the creators of *weblogs* are known, act as an authority of their own published content. In contrast to traditional media, the motivations of *bloggers*, and of those who follow their publication, are individually defined, and are centered on different and individual needs and aspirations. *Bloggers'* content is not controlled by a governing body, or corporation, as authorized media are. This *'Democratization of Fashion'*, as an inclusive 'conversation', allows anyone to participate. *The Fashion Blogosphere* has no gatekeeper; permission is not required.

The varying ways in which 'fashion' is prioritised and projected within *The Fashion Blogosphere* is what determines fashion blog genres. The content of this sphere is a combination of original content, and '*re-blogged*', that is *copied* and *shared*, content. There as those behind, such as Scott Schuman of http://www.thesartorialist. blogspot.com or Tommy Ton of http://jakandjil. com who communicate from behind the lens as street style photographers, or from behind commentaries, as the prodigal celebrity blogger Tavi Gevinson of http://www.thestylerookie. com/ fame, does. And there are those in front, as a new form of celebrity, who model what they wear to exhibit themselves as their content, such as Rumi Neely of http://www.fashiontoast. com/. Some blogs take on a conventional media role and report on fashion, or publicize it visually such as http://fashiongonerogue.com.

Blogs are capable of generating self-sustaining online communities, communities that converse by commenting on, or sharing of content that is disseminated. These genres overlap into each

other's domains, to function individually, but also collectively. *The Fashion Blogosphere* relies on original content disseminated by both the autocratic *'Inner Sanctum'*, and the somewhat more democratic *Fashion Blogosphere*.

The Online Fashion Realm is an ever-changing and interconnected constellation of fashion-oriented data. In this constellation the most influential online entities - those whose material is most seen, discussed, referenced, and republished - are held at the centre by this vast array of connections and interactions. As we move across the constellation to the periphery we find the most discrete and marginal fashion entities, those whose material exists largely unseen and unknown by others. This constellation is composed of entities created by insiders as professionals, by *outsiders* as non-professionals, and by *outsiders* who have become *insiders* through their *weblog* or online publication.

Space does not function in this realm as it does in real life; the local is irrelevant and geographically distanced people come together. This development substantiates Maffesoli's notion of 'the time of the tribes' (1996), of those who share interests and similarities, to a never before experienced phenomenon of global online groupings, existing in a virtual realm. This is the time we are inhabiting - *'the time of the tribes'*, online.

[2] Bloggers such as Scott Schuman of http://www.thesartorialist.blogspot.com, Tommy Ton of http://jakandjil.com, Tavi Gevinson of http://www.the-stylerookie.com, and Rumi Neely of http://www.fashiontoast.com have established blogs independent from *'The Inner Sanctum',* to subsequently be invited to fashion shows - the domain of *'The Inner Sanctum'* - as 'fashion experts' as the direct result of their online influence.

Figure 3. Adapted from Barbarella [Motion Picture]. By Vadim, R. (Director). (1960). France: Paramount Pictures.

The *'Inner Sanctum'* online is composed of officially sanctioned websites that promote and connect fashion brands, fashion shows, and the accompanying publicity of these, such as *'the runway object become image'* by media sites such as Style.com. These entities have maintained an autocracy offline, and on, and *The Fashion Blogosphere* is largely a response to what this hierarchy produces in the forms of fashion garments and accessories as objects, images, and video.

I've been seduced by how I engage with *'The Inner Sanctum'*; my observations of it are only my online experiences of image, video and publicized text. This is how I've come to *'feel I know it'*, when in truth I may know nothing of its reality. But this illusion, this façade, embodied by the power of the image, is the way in which we can engage with geographically inaccessible realms, and how I wish others to partake in what I disseminate.

It is the *fashion bloggers* who have come to be invited to the fashion shows, or to the behind the scenes as an authority, such as Tommy Ton, or Scott Schuman, to photograph, or Rumi Neely as muse, who have become insiders. It is these *'outsiders'* who have become *'insiders'*, that represent the power of The Online Fashion Realm, and *Fashion Blogosphere* - by its ability to affect the previously impenetrable *'Inner Sanctum'* (Scherpe, 2010). By surrendering territory to *outsiders*, what territory has been retained by the *'Inner Sanctum'*? I use the term territory to describe a kind of domain of electronic influence. I perceive the shifts in power between different electronic entities, be they organs of the *'Inner sanctum'* or independent *'outsider blogs'* as battles to secure territory. The designer's process and thoughts, as their 'behind the scenes' practice, The Fashion Show which is only accessible in real form to a select minority (Evans & Frankel, 2008), and those, such as Suzy Menkes for The Herald Tribune, Vogue and Style.com and their editors as authorities who have access to 'inside information', are what retain capital and authority.

A designer's blog http://luxirare.com/ crosses over into *'Inner Sanctum territory'* by revealing design process and thoughts, as 'behind the scenes' practice:

> *Rarely do you come across blogs where things are being made, and that's why yours is so riveting. Missing from most blogs is a design perspective, the work that goes into what we wear. That's what I keep coming back here for and why a lot of us are more than willing to be patient to see what you come up with next (Luxirare, 2010).*

So by revealing a designer's 'behind the scenes', designers can potentially create *'Inner Sanctum'* capital of his or her own.

1.3 FROM THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

From the very beginning the whisper intercepts, and weaves in and around the people, it feeds off their anticipation, and grows and grows. Its tail gets longer and longer, until one day it is so big that everyone knows its name. The people of the (global) village don't know how the whisper began, or where it came from, but they know its face, and they know its name, and they know what everyone else is saying about it. It is the zeitgeist, the spirit of the time...

Figure 4. Adapted from Barbarella [Motion Picture]. By Vadim, R. (Director). (1960). France: Paramount Pictures.

Now, with the Internet, new spaces exist – spaces other than my local space. If local space is no longer as important as it previously was, can location potentially become irrelevant? "The Internet technically allows any possible medium. This also means you can design anywhere. It is an interesting idea, no matter where and how. "Equality" could come with a random Web address, although sadly some www. addresses are more equal than others" (Style.com, 2010) - Hedi Slimane, *The Future Of Fashion Part Three*.

Chris Anderson's 'The long Tail' theory (2006), as the 'niche-fication of culture', is validating my exploration of existing as an independent online 'brand'. This theory of Internet culture identifies the demand for less of more as the long tail of distribution, and the ways in which markets are no longer reliant on local geographic distribution. The Internet has deemed physical location to some extent, irrelevant. The Long Tail focuses primarily on online sales of music and books, and how there appears to be a market, however niche, for the infinite number of items being made available. Anderson suggests 'hits' – as blockbuster sales – are a thing of the past, necessitated by the restrictions imposed by the distribution, and selling of goods within real stores. Now, a global demand of niche products, ideas, and brands has created markets that the reliance on 'local' did not, and could not reveal; in local proximities they were irrelevant, but now, globally, they are substantial enough to pursue. This notion of the long tail, of expanding niche and fragmented global markets (Penenburg, 2009), suggests that a niche may exist for what I disseminate as a designer. This suggests that I can 'do my own thing' regardless, that I should not have to reshape myself as a designer to have an audience and to forge a conversation.

I will call out to my tribe, but will they hear me? And will they find me? What if I don't have one? But I must, surely...

PART TWO

2.1 NEW SPACE, NEW SYSTEM
2.2 DULL LIFE,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
THIS WAY...
2.3 THE ELUSIVE REVEAL

2.1 NEW SPACE, NEW SYSTEM

The ongoing process of discovery, which has informed and driven my design practice, stems from my observations of The *Fashion Blogosphere*, and *'The Inner Sanctum'* online. I've adopted the mode of *silent viewer* and *active participant*, as I have entered this realm as a *'fashion blogger'*, and as a *follower,* a *'liker'*, or *'fan'*. I belong to facebook fanpages, and have become a commenter of other entities within this realm, from New Zealand, but as part of a global community. These modes have enabled me to become a part of others' conversations, as an active endorser, as others have proceeded to become a part of mine – by observing, or engaging in, the conversational space I've created as a *blogger*.

I've collectively spent a substantial part of a year observing the dynamics of this realm. I've observed the way in which comments are made and responded to, and the ways comments are used to link to other sites. I've actively linked to my own *blog* and witnessed via *Google Analytics* what has come of these links. I've observed the way that 'fashion' has developed into different genres by the inception and growth of fashion blogs, and how these genres separately, and collectively function. And I've observed how *Facebook*, by hosting *'fan pages'*, and blog host http://www.bloglovin.com/ have been used to centralize these entities, and feed and remind followers of their existence.

I initially thought the 'conversations' of The Online Fashion Realm were democratic. I originally thought people were saying what they really thought, and in a lot of cases they are, but in a lot of cases comments are safe and unconsidered, 'as a signifier of appearance', and to provide a vehicle to endorse the commenter's own fashion blog. Depending on what genre of fashion blog or publication these comments are made in, these conversations can be honest, but equally they can be dishonest. My observations and engagements have created conflicted opinions that have enabled me to come to understand what I think The Online Fashion Realm is, and how I, as a designer, can choose to exist within it from the edge of the world.

Figure 5. Adapted from The Doom Generation[Motion Picture]. By Araki, G. (Director). (1995). The Doom Generation [Motion Picture]. United States: Tri... Pictures.

Image is the language of *The Fashion Blogosphere*. The ease of electronically replicating imagery has enabled the meteoric rise of '*the fashion blog*', and the proliferation of them. Typically, fashion blogs have limited written content, allowing for reading via image. This reliance on images as primary content makes blogs the successor to the fashion magazine in which "…the overwhelming emphasis on images, indicating that the magazines are primarily 'to-be-looked-at', somehow relegates the role of text to accessory, to banal commentary, to a poetics of mood, to simple information, caption, headline, 'statement'…" (McRobbie, 1998, p.153). Image, supported by minimal words suits those who publish original content, and who 'tell stories' through their photography, for example of http://www.thesartorialist.blogspot.com, http://jakandjil.com, and http://www.terrysdiary.com/. The Sartorialist includes commentaries to accompany his image stories. Terry's diary 'speaks' with humour inherent in the images, and jakandjil distinctly, and even severely, frames images to tell a specific story, and the titles used confirm this 'story'. Those who mainly copy and paste visual content from other sources, without reframing this content, are acting as endorsers but without really contributing, or adding to it as a form of 'conversation'. Endorsers are able to fan the flame, spread the fire and keep it burning. But they do not start it.

In the Online Fashion Realm current Fashion Show runway collections are communicated predominantly by frontal orientation photography. Although video is becoming more dominant a frontal perspective is generally adopted. It is a select few who view fashion shows in real form and the majority of global viewers experience runway shows via image, from the likes of style.com. Just as Alexander McQueen's Kate Moss Hologram, and Viktor & Rolf's 'Long live the immaterial (bluescreen)' projects have depicted the conflict between 2D & 3D, by reminding us of our 3-dimensionality in an increasingly 2-dimensional world (Evans & Frankel, 2008, p. 32), I too am exploring this conflict.

Additionally, I'm exploring by using fashion images as 'objects' on our blogs, desktops, printed out and added to our walls, and as our Facebook profile pictures, are we to some extent filling our need and desire to consume fashion as objects? We have access to 'fashion image as object' from anywhere via the Internet, and collecting fashion in this way is a free, unlimited, and 'democratized' pastime.

CONSUMING IMAGE

Fashion blogging, and linking to fashion entities via *Facebook* or email displays images the blogger or user has actively chosen to represent themselves, as a new form of consumption, or form of *'belongings'*. *Bloggers* are *'owning'* and sharing fashion via image. They may also buy the contents of images, as fashion objects in real form. I'm musing, that in this realm, there exist new forms of consumption that can exist alone, or that can be used to encourage the purchase of fashion objects.

I *'share'* fashion images by sending links of them to particular friends via *Facebook* or email. Often I will copy and paste images onto my desktop to enable me to re-look at them as I please, to load them onto my blog, or to print them out in colour in order to make them a somewhat permanent fixture in my physical environment. They function by extending the pleasure of looking at them, or to remind me of something important they represent. If these images are composed of objects I seek to physically own then I will *'own'* the images as a reminder to myself of how much I desire the object in real form, to then enter a process of

to what extent do I 'have to have it', and can I access it physically, and, or financially.

I do not intend to sell the garments I've created, but instead wish to encourage the consumption of them as image – to be *'owned'* as images at this point in time. It is more important to encourage a desire for the members of *my tribe* to belong to my 'brand', to be 'marked by it' (Maffesoli, 1996); to thus see if there is a desire for my tribe to wish to physically own the garments, from which I may, or may not, begin to produce a limited run to sell.

The collecting, sharing, and re-blogging of images, is a way to be 'marked by' what they represent. This *'owning'* and *'consuming'* of images is the notion of aligning oneself through the embrace of images in ways facilitated by computers, and by the Internet, to ultimately grow the brand or entity within the image, by the *sharing*, and *'passing-on'* of it.

2.2 DULL LIFE,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY...

www.dulllifeyoudonthavetobethisway.tumblr.com

The choice of a long and potentially problematic blog name was no accident. I was being willfully obstinate and defiant. By choosing to use the more 'underground' and rebellious *tumblr* blog host rather than the fashion friendly *blogspot*, or *blogger* as it is also known, I was emanating a resentment for what the profileration of *blogspot fashion blogs* have decided 'a fashion blog should look like, and be'. The visual format I chose, I later realized, was aligned with the minimalist blogs of fashion photographers Terry Richardson www.terrysdiary.com and Tommy Ton www.jakandjil.com, both of whom tell elusive narratives through their photography as constructs of mood.

For me, as a designer, hoping to possess an inkling of '*Inner Sanctum*' capital, all I have of worth to secure it are my ideas and 'behind the scenes' documentation as a designer. As a blogger I exist on the periphery. The sharing of my design process via blogging, both visually and textually, is my point of difference as a blogger. I've needed to attempt blogging in order to understand what I am, by what I am not, and how I can operate within this realm in a way I'm comfortable with, because if I'm not publicized I won't exist (Evans & Frankel, 2008).

My blog has functioned as a growing reveal of 'my brand', of what has fed and shaped it, and of my critical thinking and design practice, but it is still self-conscious of its mode as a 'blog'. I'm not comfortable with revealing until I believe in, and reach resolve of what I'm withholding and nurturing. I make no apologies for this - it is how I must function as a designer. My blog does not, and cannot encompass my project - It does not reveal it. I need the majority of my process in real form, in my physical environment, as a collective.

My blog has increasingly assumed second place to my designing of garments and images, that has occurred in my real environment, in recognition of my changing priorities – the actual work - rather than documentation of the work as a final product. Unfortunately, I now think the documentation of my process has to be of final publication quality to be noticed and assigned value. The captured and displayed processes on my blog, comparative to the impeccable and staged processes on designer blog *Luxirare*, are largely rejected. I have been able to witness these rejections by the incorporation of the *Google Analytics* monitoring system. Neither my camera, nor my blog showcase my work whereas *Luxirare's* revealations are consumed and embraced. But am I a designer and disseminator, or a documenter or photographer and disseminator? I am a designer, and I disseminate what I create to share, and to exist. But in order for the process, that generated my creations, to be assigned value I must showcase it and I must clearly, rather than elusively reveal it.

I wish to be a creator of designed garments that are captured in designed environments, as images, to exist forever online as images. As one person I cannot do this and be a creator of documenting this process as final products – this disrupts my priority and prerogative. Documenting my processes as final

products is another project entirely. A blog does not work for me. In my case, it cannot value the content in the way that is deserved. I wish to disseminate less rather than more. My blog has been a test. It's not what I want to take ownership of as a designer - it's a working document, not a finished piece. A website will succeed the blog, as a finished consumable, but a website I will design that will also feature the documentation of my design processes as products but in a 'behind the scenes' form that is added to, to form a body of work as opposed to being renewed, replaced, and relegated daily to being 'old' and somewhat cold, as blogs function. Time, in my website, will stand still; and the content, I hope, will in some way be eternally relevant.

I want the website to function as my designer identity online, so that as a designer 'I exist', and for it to be an honest reveal of my independent vision as a fashion designer, as opposed the vision of a corporation that I've designed for. The alternative is that the work only exists in my real environment but it is not seen by an online audience, so therefore it does not exist.

EMBRACING
MY OWN COMMUNITY
ONLINE

A snapshot of the successive development of weblog *Dull life, you don't have to be this way*, will be reiterated in chronological order, in semblance with its own unfolding life:

Dulllifeyoudonthavetobethisway.tumblr.com was created on June 2, 2010. Google Analytics was incorporated on July 14 2010, following the notification of friends, and friends of friends having looked at it, for example: I shared the weblog link to Friend (a) not long after its inception, to acquire feedback. Friend (a) later informed me that she checked it regularly out of interest of *'what's Kate thinking today?'* During the same time Friend (b) who had, unbeknownst to me, already inserted a fixed link to the weblog on her personal Facebook page, informed me that her friend had visited the weblog from her own online navigation. These developments were unexpected, as it appeared, apart from the few random and unknown Tumblr account followers, that the space it occupied was desolate. On June 18 2010, Disqus comment provider Disqus. com, was integrated into the blog. Prior to this development, Tumblr only allowed content to be formulated by the account holder. The comment option allows any Internet user to

post a comment. A *'hit counter'* easycounter. com, was inserted on the same day as *Google Analytics but prior*. The *Disqus*, *'Hit Counter'*, and *Bloglovin* functions were all found by my personal viewing of other blogs that already incorporated them. I sent a *Facebook* message to Friend (c) regarding 'hit counter', however the message was intercepted by Friend (d) who advised me that *Google Analytics* was far superior, to which I responded by integrating *Google Analytics*.

Endorsement of *Dull life, you don't have to be this way*, generated unprecedented views when Friend (a), an influencer with a large reciprocating personal online and offline community, endorsed the weblog within her Facebook community with *"super cool blog from cool Kate"* supplemented by a link to the site. It has been the 'silent viewers' as my own personal, and extended personal community who have, out of their own free will, proceeded to endorse *Dull life, you don't have to be this way* within their *Facebook* community. This signifies that my personal community has shown interest in what I'm doing because it is me doing it.

The incorporation of *Google Analytics*, to monitor the weblog, provided insight to viewers' activity. The 'Average Time on Site' function, as of August 20 2010 was 3 minutes 28 sec. It is this data that signified interest at this point in time, in conjunction with friends

commenting to me personally. The notion of embrace, or rejection is determined in seconds as opposed to minutes (Penenberg, 2009); therefore it suggests that collectively *Dull life, you don't have to be this way*, was, at this point in time, being embraced rather than rejected by the community that was finding it. This community was largely my extended personal community. However, ultimately the *'embrace'* of *weblogs* means returning to the site, to repeatedly view.

Since I ceased actively marketing my blog by commenting and including a link on *fashiongonerogue*, *jakandjil*, and *knockyouforsix*, I have witnessed, and allowed my blog to slowly die. To put yourself out there, to attempt to connect in a genuine way, is difficult. So the revealing of my process, and of the inner workings of my mind as a designer, has not yet reached enough of the 'right' people within the online fashion realm. It may not be all that interesting — or perhaps my reveals have been too elusive.

In the beginnings of this project I spent a lot of time perusing The Online Fashion Realm, and *The Fashion Blogosphere* to begin to investigate the possible ways in which I could exist digitally. But now, towards the end of this project, ironically, *The Fashion Blogosphere*, in its predominant genre that functions as described by this excerpt, bores me: "I think I can speak for most people here when I say I love your blog precisely because it's

TO BE FOUND,
OR NOT TO BE FOUND

not focused on what you wear every day…" (Luxirare, 2010).

Innovator, friend (a), has since removed herself from Facebook, and as well as having a sense that fashion blogs are a trend that will potentially sour and maintain relevance only for a select few, I wonder what will become of this online world, of which Facebook is the epicenter in a way. Will some tribes begin to reject it entirely in search for something to replace it - potentially 'real life' - or has it really become a part of ourselves we cannot do without? I still wish to exist online, but as a representation of my world as a designer, my own space, as a wonderful way of being able to exist, share, and reach out to my global tribe, rather than being grouped as a proponent of *The Fashion Blogosphere*; a realm in which I feel as though I'm required to be slotted into a genre. So I propose my own independent website, on which I will attempt to exist as elusive - incapable of being easily defined.

Online communities are formed by the interactions and connections taking place. Blogs become alive, capable of generating a dynamic dialogue, when exchanges occur. Exchanges are 'conversations' created by *active commenting*, *silent viewing*, or by being a *'follower'*, a *'fan'*, a *'liker'*, and an endorser who shares by passing things on to their own personal community, either on social networking sites like *Facebook*, via email, or in *'real'* life. The online realm has simply provided

avenues for the creation of new communities by enabling the choice to embrace or reject what is seen. Interactions are the life force of online communities. If the spaces in between have no connections, or rejected connections that were never reciprocated, a community will fail to form and the online entity will float in isolation.

I can control the work I disseminate and how I disseminate it. I can actively encourage the finding of it, but I cannot make it successful on my own, or in a vacuum. Ultimately, to be successful an online fashion entity requires the embrace of other users by their willingness to pass it on within their extended community. Whilst this represents a risk and loss of control it is also the beauty of this realm. Participants advance the brand by their interaction with it; it is they who instil it with perceived power. In this way a static brand can become dynamic to forge a future of its own.

My blog suggests that my aesthetic will produce a discrete and marginal fashion entity, existing on the peripheral of the constellation that is The Online Fashion Realm. I like the mystery of being an outsider and retaining this exclusivity for those who have a genuine interest in what I disseminate. I have no interest in appealing to those who do not care for the work I produce – they're not *my tribe*. I'm choosing to pursue specific methods of dissemination within this realm, and choosing to reject others as a way of attempting to control the perception of my brand. There is

potential danger as over, or wrong exposure, of foregoing control and allowing third parties to further my cause could undo the mood I'm communicating but this is the nature of this realm. It cannot be had both ways.

2.3 THE ELUSIVE REVEAL

This journey of developing my mode as a designer, I've realised, has not been so much about finding my 'voice', as my mode of seeing, framing, and creating, but confirming and revealing the voice I wish to project. The name of my weblog *'dull life, you don't have to be this way'* is an ironic over-dramatization. The title is simultaneously deadpan and throwaway humor, but is also an entirely honest, somewhat melancholic revelation of how I see the world, and how this 'seeing' informs how I project myself through design. Unleashing this contradictory tone was, and still is, an exposition of private self that is exposing, revealing, and thus uncomfortable. It is my two sides of cynicism and optimism. It is my true private voice, and I cannot lie. The tone is ambiguous and elusive, and reliant upon understanding. I hope it will be interpreted as a revealing humour, as opposed to a solely humourless pity statement.

This process of revealing my private self, my 'private voice', as my mode of expression as a designer, encompasses the intentions of 'my brand' as an elusive, but honest reveal – a *'genuine-façade'*. The contained space of the Internet enables me to remain *'behind'* as a designer, and simultaneously be seen, and revealed.

Can an *outsider* forge a way 'in' yet maintain the mystery of being an *outsider*? The appeal of an elusive reveal, a reveal as determined as much by what is withheld, as by what is revealed, is the allure of the mysterious, made possible by distance and ambiguity as emblematic of fashion theorist Elizabeth Wilson's interpretation of what Glamour once was (2007). I have no desire to be a celebrity blogger or celebrity designer. I wish to remain behind and encourage the successive outputs of the 'brand' I produce to represent me. I wish to meaningfully advance the brand, not myself, to focus on the design 'work', and the way in which the building of an enigma, and of an elusive reveal can enchant the 'work', to potentially create "an aura, a magic realm" (Evans & Frankel, 2008, p. 36).

PART THREE

3.1 MOOD AS FASHION
3.2 THE SURREAL
IN THE REAL
3.3 THE ELUSIVE NONCHALANCE
STYLING THROUGH DESIGN

Figure 6. Adapted from The Doom Generation[Motion Picture]. By Araki, G. (Director). (1995), The Doom Generation [Motion Picture]. United States: Trimark Pictures.

3.1 MOOD AS FASHION

Figure 7. Adapted from The Doom Generation[Motion Picture]. By Araki, G. (Director). (1995). The Doom Generation [Motion Picture]. United States: Trimark Pictures.

I am a communicator of mood through design. I am communicating the creation of a distinct mood through designed garments and the wearing of them by model as muse, as the fusion of wearer and dress to extend the aura of both the wearer and the garment, by how the garment is worn - moved in, lived in. This mood is additionally formed by the constructed environments I am choosing to depict the garments in, and by the ways the resulting images are captured, edited, and shared. I am attempting to create moods of the elusive nonchalance as the appearance of effortlessness,[3] and of the surreal[4] in the real.

My design practice has been focused on the visual construction of moods through garment design, the wearing by model as muse, and of the constructed environments as an extension of the union of garment and wearer (Wilson, 2007). I've been particularly interested in the constructed worlds of film and image by those who renegotiated reveal and distance, and exposed the friction of the real and the surreal, or imagined. I've been informed by the 90s British photographers who spawned heroin chic, photographer Nan Goldin, artist Dash Snow, the videos and lyrics of musician Fiona Apple, and the films Performance, The Doom Generation, and Barbarella. The capturing of film and music videos, via stills, became increasingly relevant as I began to frame, and reorder these stills to tell my own stories. By generating stills as sequences I was able to depict time in static images, whilst capturing mood in a way that can be kept; in a way that was no longer fleeting as it was in film. I became more attached to these films as stills, stills that I printed to exist in my real environment as objects, than to the films themselves. In the online fashion realm, the mood I'm creating will exist and be communicated through imagery, so producing successful images of the mood of the garments is as crucial as the garments themselves.

Through fashion imagery we can live some kind of vicarious existence, to live through the imagined, or through something external of oneself (Liberman, 1979). Fashion photography has been described as possessing "the ability to change our vision momentarily and move us into a more attractive realm of existence" (Liberman, 1979, p.7). Fashion image constructs worlds of representation; it constructs auras of mood, and auras of time and space. Partaking in this kind of rejection of the real world, and also in the construction of vicarious worlds and times, it is the intercepting of realms, between the unreal, the imagined or designed, and the real, that through the seduction of image, we can create imagined worlds.

[3] 'The appearance of effortlessness' as my interpretation of the most defining element of glamour from Elizabeth Wilson's *A Note on Glamour (2007)*.

[4] 'Surreal' used in response to, and in association with Elizabeth Wilson's *Magic Fashion (2004)*.

TEST 1

Test 1 was paying homage to the early 90s British-based group of photographers and stylists who constructed images within their own *'real'* environments.

My team and I spent the day trying to capture the elusive nonchalance as the appearance of effortlessness, of *'not trying too hard'* by attempting to capture the model as muse in seemingly natural, unselfconscious 'lounging poses', and states of motion as a rejection of purposefully staged, or dehumanized fashion photography. The test was about seeing if we could capture this mood, in which my own designed garments could later reside. So it was not about the garments at this point, but as I came to learn, it's still about the garments - it's about every component. The clothes were a combination of garments I'd previously made, garments others had made, and what I called 'fillers'; garments I made swiftly, and without the necessary resolution required. I came to call these 'fillers', and the images they were a part of, 'a sham'. I learnt, in the context of my own work, for an image to have integrity, every component must also.

As a designer, garments are my primary focal point and where my design integrity lies. Whereas for the likes of photographers Corinne Day and Jeurgen Teller the clothes were a secondary component of their work. Their work operated more like portrait photography to reveal parts of the character of the model and their environments, and this is why their work was *'new'* when placed in a fashion context (Cotton, 2000). I'm trying to do this also, with Frith as model-muse, and with the *'real'* environments Frith and I both inhabit in our lives; but I'm using my designed garments to enable us to figuratively escape these environments, and some of my final images are conveying this escape literally.

SURREAL IN THE REAL

I practice 'armchair nostalgia' (Hutcheon, 1998), as nostalgia for visual references I have not lived through but am familiar with and nostalgic for, through being exposed to them, and through experiencing them as image. The Internet - primarily Google image search - is my portal to glimpses of vicarious worlds, to build my internal image library as a re-mixer, to create from. I manipulate my mode of seeing and creating, by simply choosing to reject the constraints of my environment. I choose and edit some of what I see, and thus I can in some part become it. Dull life, you don't have to be this way…

THE SURREAL
IN THE REAL
ARMCHAIR NOSTALGIA

3.3 THE ELUSIVE NONCHALANCE STYLING THROUGH DESIGN

The following discussion is specifically about the 'styling' of garments as ensembles, not the styling of images or environments. Street style blogs such as Tommy Ton's jak&jil, and Scott Schuman's The Sartorialist have pictorially expressed the divide between what the inhabitants of 'The Inner Sanctum' congratulate as innovation and what they actually wear. I wanted to design garments that would be desired to be worn, and desired to be looked at being worn in 'real' environments, as opposed to being looked at as sculpture (Evans & Frankel, 2008) in isolated, blank, 'from zero' environments, but garments that are as innovative as they are wearable.

Alexander Wang is the current quintessential cult-cool brand in *The Fashion Blogosphere* and The Online Fashion Realm. The brand exemplifies the friction created by what I've come to call 'up-styling', or 'stylish deception', as a prioritising of styling of completed garments over design of garments. Essentially this instils garments with a kind of worth, only recognisable once displayed and viewed as 'styled'. It is 'styling', as the essence of street style blogs that creates the appearance of effortlessness, of the elusive nonchalance, and it is this essence that has trickled up to reinform 'The Inner Sanctum'. The Alexander Wang Brand and its followers encompass the 'elusive nonchalance' I've continued to pursue.

> *"His T-shirt thing has been very cool. I mean God bless him for coming up with the T-shirt thing and doing it. Don't we have enough T-shirts? Well, no, [someone] can always do something that feels right, and the price is right…I remember his very first baby steps; they were not much, some jeans, T-shirts, a lot of styling effort and not a lot of design effort. I suppose what bothers me now is that it can look too much like other people's work."*

–Cathy Horyn, *The Future Of Fashion: Part two* (Style.com, 2010).

'Looking too much like other people's work' (Standen, 2010), is what I fear as a designer. The Alexander Wang Brand, and street style blogs – predominantly Tommy Ton's photographs of members of the inner sanctum in their daytime, functional, fashion-conscious ensembles - have taught me, that there appears to be a synergy between designs and the tactile, physical quality of what wearers actually want to wear. It appears to be fundamental that fashion products, to be worn, whether they are of innovative design, or generic design, can be incorporated into 'living'. Style can either be created as inherent in the design, to thus belong to the designer and the wearer, or by the styling of finished garments, to belong more so to wearer or stylist who 'styles' the garments as a composition.

My garments are already styled through design, as complete ensembles that claim the length of the body, ensuring that my design signature cannot be easily lost or overridden by styling. My signature is inherent in the garments, not in the styling or accessorizing of them. I was striving to progress my design signature to a point that would render it as my 'own', as my 'brand' as opposed to looking too much like others' work (Standen, 2010) to enable my styling within the design to function as a 'stamp' of my brand.

NOWHERE
FAST AND
SOMEPLACE
SLOW

I decided to explore colour blocking to reborder, lengthen, and graphically adorn the body; to capture the surreal, as the psychedelic, through colour. Of equal importance was to strive for a design resolution that embodied an 'appearance of effortlessness' (Wilson, 2007), of 'not trying too hard', through an ease of wear by fit, and through minimalism, balance, and restraint, as the elusive nonchalance.

Ease of wear, I decided, was the essence of the elusive nonchalance, with nonchalance as the illusion of effortlessness. I wanted to achieve 'effortless' resolution and ease of wear in my garments, as attributes of design that enable the wearer to move, and be animated in an unselfconscious way, as an 'unaware wearing'. The garments' soft, loose silhouettes do not restrict or disrupt movement and comfort, and therefore the wearer as model as muse, can continue to be model as muse in the wearing of the garments. I became intent on fluidity, motion, and revealing by concealing, and I wanted to create clean borders formed by juxtaposed colours. I only wanted to disrupt or streamline the body graphically by varying colours and illusion, I didn't want to disrupt the fluidity of garments, as ease of wear, by how these borders were created. Colour blocking, to create divisions, was a way to be innovative by progressing the linear explorations of my design signature, whilst being able to create wearable garments that

have both an inherent ease of wear, and restrained presence of 'not trying too hard', but not to the point of being innately boring. Through the use of colour, I was experimenting with trying to draw attention to parts of the body that western fashion, and image as fashion don't typically celebrate – predominantly the side and profile. In the essence of Nicolas Ghesquiere for Balenciaga, I choose to "let other designers focus on wardrobe basics" (Style.com, 2010).

Many of my garments are oversized, but they have a specific predetermined fit. If not adhered to, an unintended fit will disrupt the intended design and worn mood of the garment, as it removes the nonchalance and ease of wear that was fundamental to the design in the entirety of its development. So if a garment that is to fit loosely is worn to fit firmly the intended aesthetic will be undermined, and essentially disallow the vision to become. Thus the garments have been designed for the model as muse, to have the fit, as conveyed when on her.
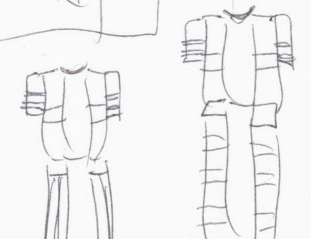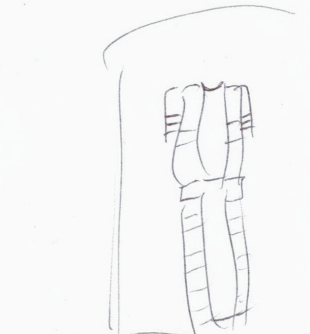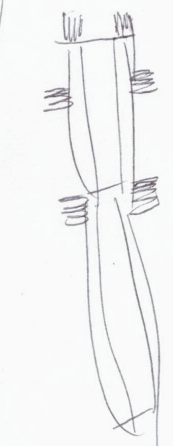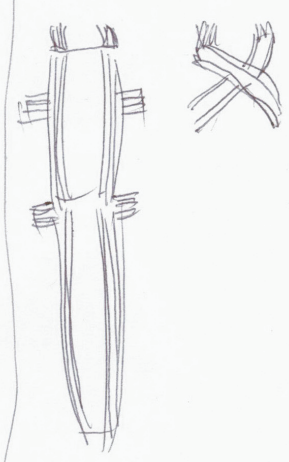
NOWHERE
FAST AND
SOMEPLACE
SLOW

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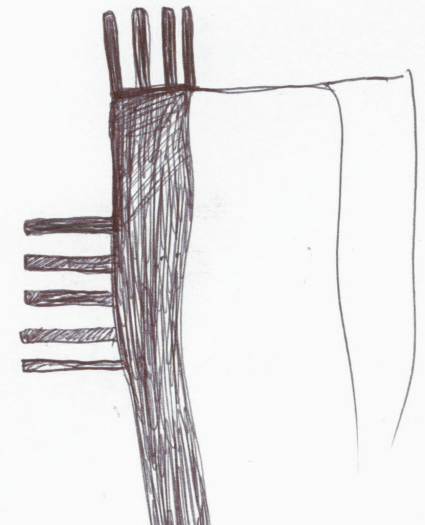under garments
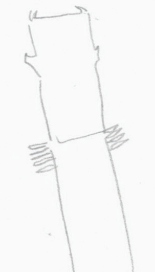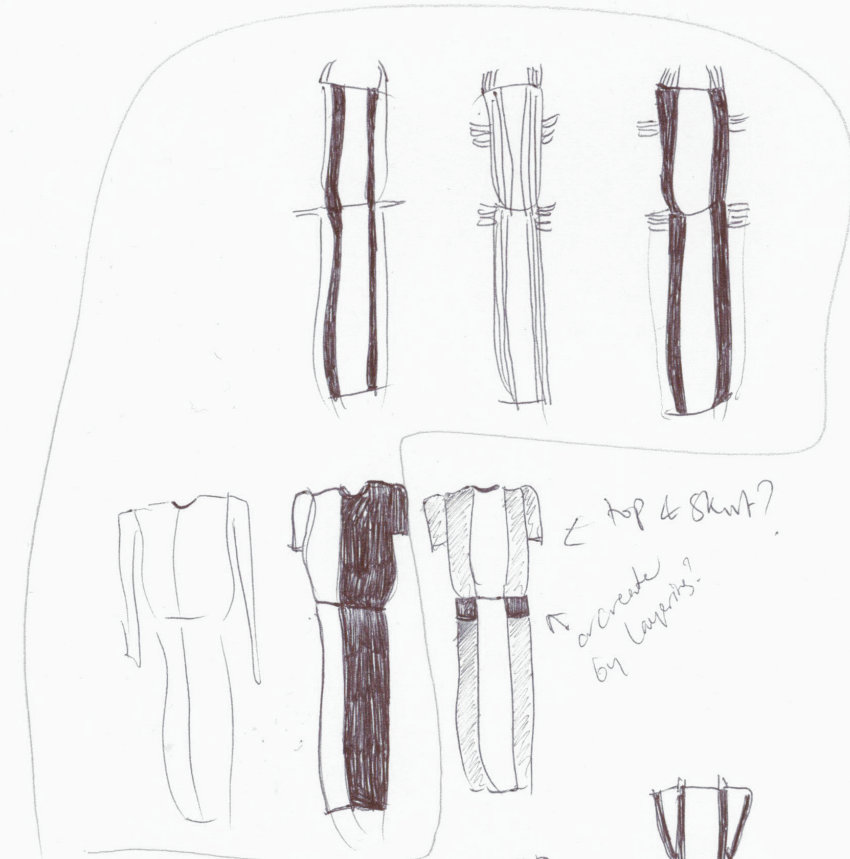or full on
undergarments.

<O goes @
over

but in real
life they
could be
worn over
skinny pants
etc.

or sculptural underlops
e.g. like Shipley
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firmer fabric with
piping - piping as one
or multi coloured

green &
yellow in
different directions.

← top & skirt?
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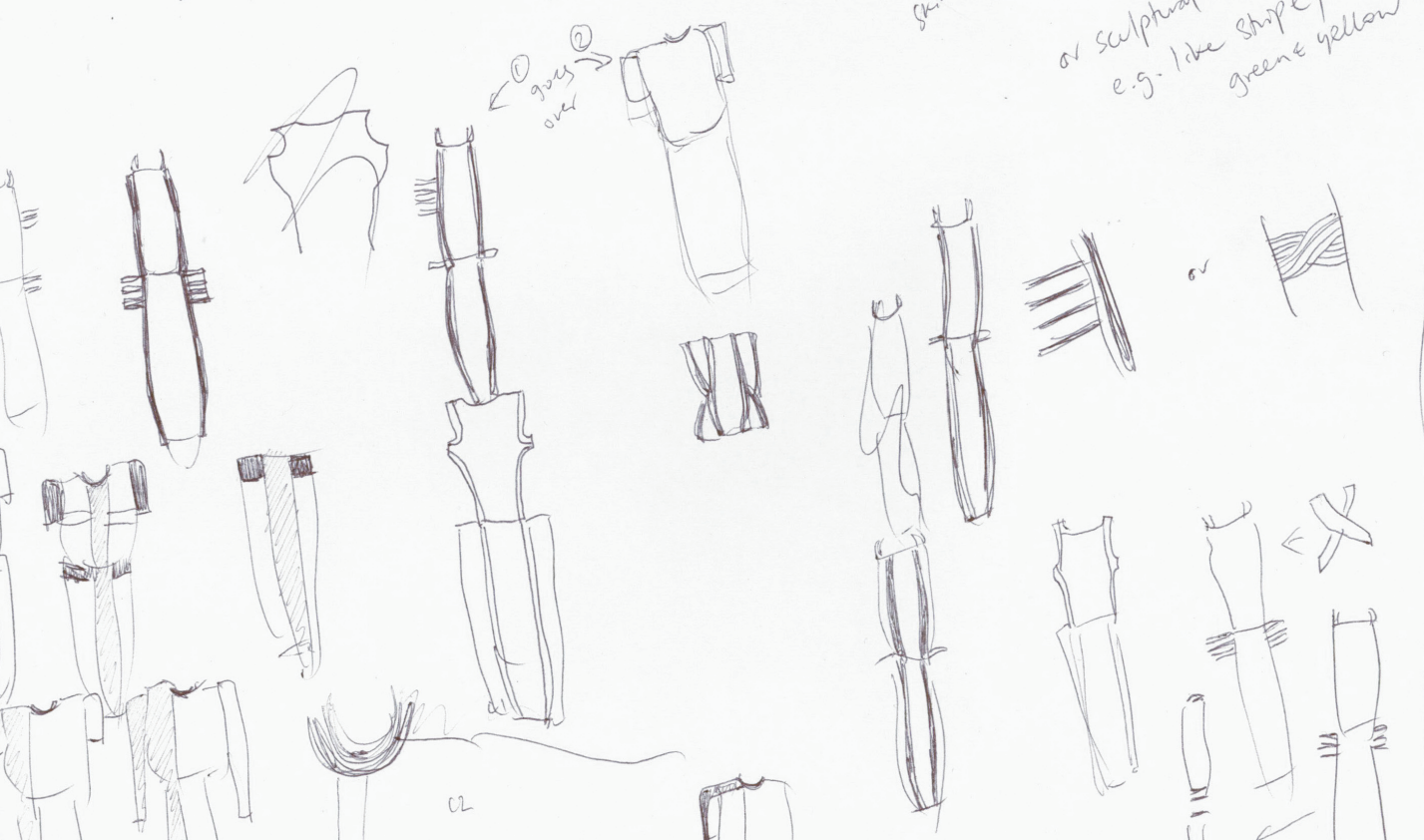
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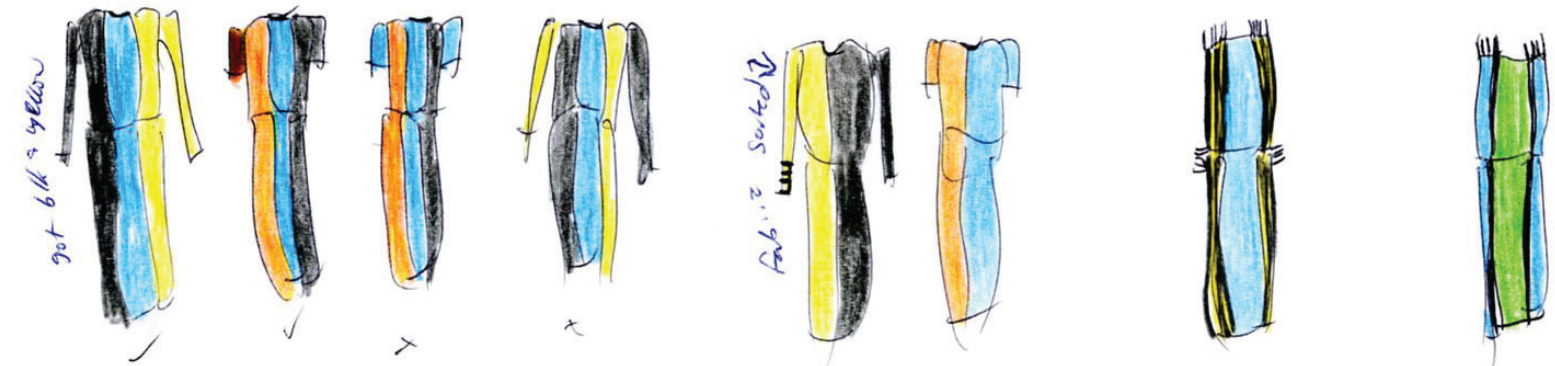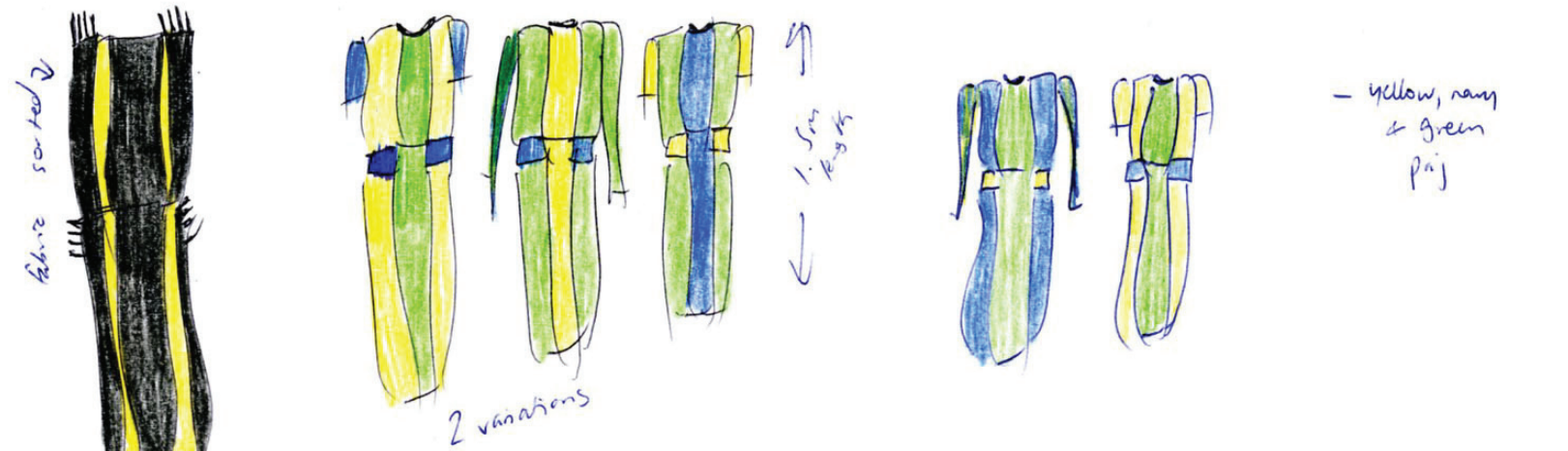
NOWHERE FAST AND SOMEPLACE SLOW

NOWHERE FAST *AND* *SOMEPLACE SLOW*

CION BY DYE for approx. 5m of silk

Orange: (Mango)

lemon yellow   8 4 mls
golden yellow   8 4 mls
scarlet   1 6 4 mls

Green: turquoise   4 5 0 mls
lemon yellow   1 3 4 mls
japanese black   8 7 mls

Navy: japanese black   6 0 5 mls
lemon yellow   6 7 mls

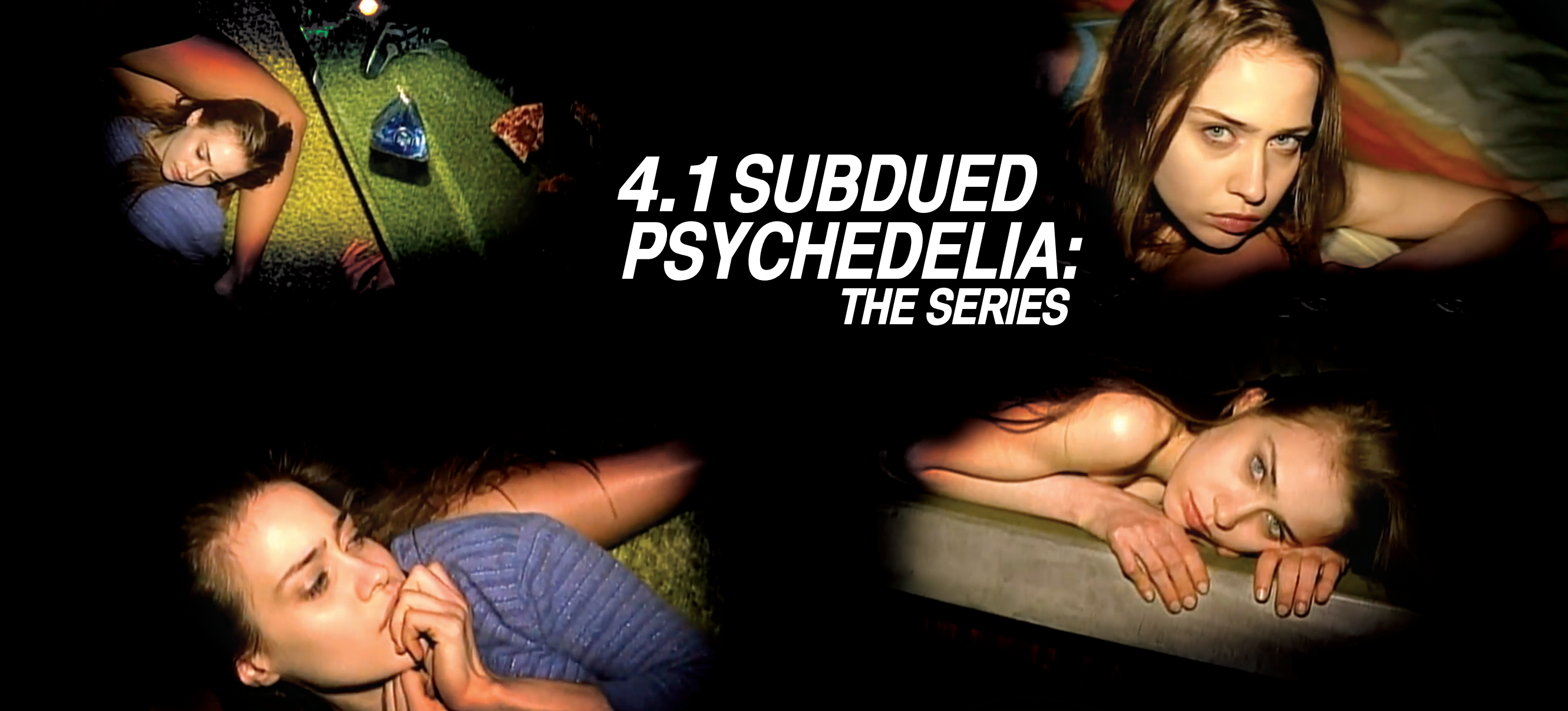AT THEIR SATANIC MAJESTIES REQUEST SHE PONDERED HOW TO PSYCHEDELIFY HER LIFE AND SO SHE DID...

4.1 SUBDUED PSYCHEDELIA:
THE SERIES

I was strongly influenced by singer-songwriter Fiona Apple's music videos *Criminal*, and *Limp*, which present a mood of *Subdued Psychedelia*, created by the corruption of bright colours by the use of a surrounding film of darkness. The visual textures of these videos reflect my ethos…. *'Dull life, you don't have to be this/that way'*, as optimism, tinged by the darkness of reality. I'm creating my parallel universe through the construction of mood, and exploration of the friction of the real and imaginary. It is not about neglecting the real, but using it as a foundation to step up from, and out of, into the surreal as escapism, through designed garments. I see design as both presenting possibilities of transporting wearers and viewers into the surreal while also connecting them to the physical reality of the moment as *Dull life, you don't have to be that way…*

The garments progress in the series from subdued to psychedelic. Garments 1 and 2 are black and yellow representing the optimism and cynicism, of the 'dreary real', with the yellow and graphic styling being a hint of what is to follow. The collection is a progression of garments, as opposed to an extreme contrast of groups of garments, and there are aspects of *real*, and surreal in each garment and image. My focus on the

side of the body, and my desire for wearing and motion to bring the garments to life, creates the challenge of capturing these essences in a form that will exist online as two-dimensional.

I am conflicted by creating fashion images as moody, elusive, fleeting, dark and obscured, yet I still want to honour the garments as the central focus from which the image is constructed. I am striving to capture the mood of the union of wearer and dress, as opposed to the most literal representation of the object as up close and well lit, but I don't want to misrepresent the garments. I wanted to create an honest, yet elusive reveal, even if diluted in the final representation of the garments. I want to suggest what they are; I don't wish to deceptively 'style' them into something they're not by cinching the back with clips or taping up the hems. The images depict the garments being worn, in the way that they existed in real life. I want the garments to be seen online, as they would be seen being worn in *'real life'* – devoid of the clips and tape that have the ability to manipulate, and 'style' garments into something they're not.

Figure 8. Adapted from Criminal [Video]. Apple, F. (1996). Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Btb5gOC2xYk

4.1 *SUBDUED PSYCHEDELIA*: THE SERIES
The colour palette of my project, *Subdued Psychedelia*, is created by the distortion and overlapping of bright colours; firstly in the garments, and secondly, through the images as coloured gels are projected, to be subdued by the sheen of darkness created by nigh-time environments. Psychedelic colours are the embodiment of the surreal, but they are subdued and tainted by real environments and constraints.

Figure 9. Adapted from Limp [Video]. Apple, F. (1999). Retrieved from
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Btb5gOC2xYk

4.2 TELLING STORIES

My designed images are an elusive reveal that speak both with, and without words. I've created images to convey mood that use ambiguous slogans to paradoxically remove the ambiguity of the image and solidify the intended mood and attitude. I was influenced by the text laden images of 90's film *The Doom Generation*, and by the Polaroid photographs of the late artist Dash Snow. I began to experiment by adding text to image to tell different, ambiguous, meaningful, and meaningless stories. I then proceeded to create my own slogans and stories in relation to my project, to be used to define the mood of my series of images.

Each image will be an episode of the series, titled just as episodes of a television series are. Each will be capable of existing on their own, but to make full sense you must experience them all, and in the order they were designed to occur. Each title will be integrated in the image, as part of the environment, so this meaning cannot be removed when others copy and paste in The Online Fashion Realm, once the series is disseminated. I think image can convey

a distinct mood, but with irony, words can additionally communicate this mood to the extent that the message may be elusive, but the intended mood cannot be renegotiated or misconstrued. The attitude is the overarching message communicated through the image as a whole – as the stamp of me as a designer - and this stamp cannot be removed, reframed, or re-contextualised; it is inherent in the total image, and in the components that construct it. These images are designed to be *taken* and *reblogged*, *reordered*, and *added to*, but the inherent mood and attitude cannot be lost. The signs and slogans I've constructed needed to appear integrated; as though they already existed as part of the environment they're placed in. They need to be assumed to belong, and only upon reading be recognized as 'the surreal' - as words framing the real environment but belonging to my mode of seeing.

Creating text that appeared effortless, as not contrived, and as though it belonged to the environment was difficult. Designing

the mood required exploration of lighting, projecting, compositions and scale. Ultimately I was trying to resolve the 'appearance of effortlessness', as Elizabeth Wilson's glamour, in the garments, the signs, the scenes, individually and collectively, and the ways these were captured and edited to create the final image series, and secondary sequences.

The chosen texts were seemingly ambiguous, but also had meanings, and they were arranged in a distinct order to tell a distinct story. I assigned them to scenes, however, the scenes, as a journey, needed to make sense as a collective so the original text order had to be compromised. The garments were also assigned to scenes, as were methods of lighting, camera angles, and views of the model as from the side, front, or back, depending on the 'story' of the scene.

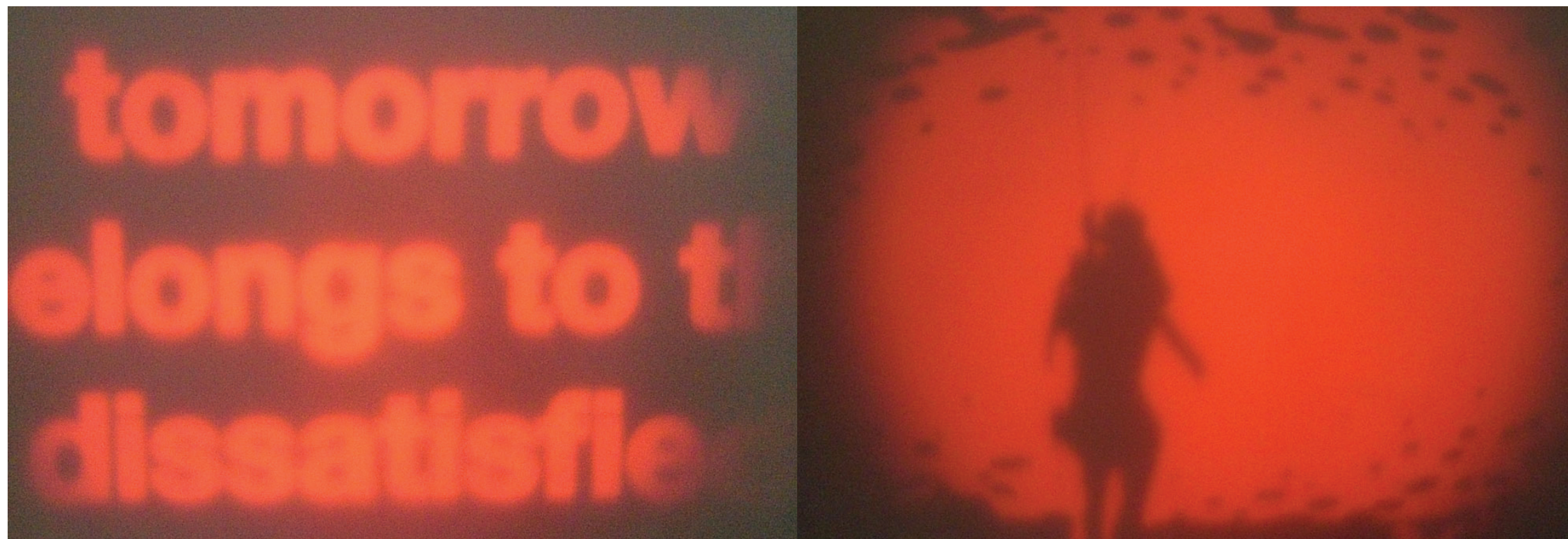**The Doom Generation p1: Words. Word.**

SUBDUED PSYCHEDELIA: THE SERIES THE SURREAL (Raw Images)

1. Dull life, you don't have to be that way… Where did Fiona Apple go?

Scene 1 is a lounge scene. It is the end of a party in which model and protagonist Frith is the only person still awake, pondering her existence. The scene reinterprets Fiona Apple's *Criminal* video, as a *'real'* party scene shot from above, and of the puzzle featuring text in her *Limp Video*. The lighting is influenced by *Criminal* and of *The Doom Generation*. Shooting from above meant that I wanted to use a graphic garment, that was more somber but not requiring motion.

2. Tomorrow belongs to the dissatisfied
This scene began to explore the surreal with overhead projections, with the slogan literally being projected, as the mindscape the protagonist inhabits. The garment, featuring the remixed racing stripe, represented the 2-sided coin of optimism and cynicism. The lighting was dark, somewhat dangerous and increasingly psychedelic with the use of cellophane, gels, and overhead transparencies of psychedelic scenes from the 1960s film *Barbarella*.

3. Enter Universe!
This scene used the alleyway and gate first used in Test 1. The gate featured plastic leaves and I wanted the scene to be like entering a psychedelic urban jungle, in which Frith would be apprehensive but curious and reinvigorated. I recreated paper bunting from Barbarella stills to feature the text, to link to the previous party scene, and to form a kind of jungle canopy. The garment in this scene felt most suited for a jungle as it was green, yellow, and blue. I wanted to use one of the most colourful

ensembles. The scene was dark and lit with pink and blue gels. Creating this scene in real life was a complex undertaking and I don't think the resulting images show the potential that was evident in the scene. I think we just needed to spend more time photographing it and making adjustments, and we required fresh eyes for it to reach its potential.

4. I don't exist in the real world
5. I will if you want me to
Scene 4 & 5 were at a garage location I have photographed throughout the project. I was drawn by its gaudy and vulgar colour blocked appearance, which was reminiscent of the shop exteriors I had seen in *The Doom Generation*. In Scenes 4 and 5 I incorporated vinyl text slogans. 'I don't exist in the real world' was chosen to be ironic, as clearly the garage was in the real world. But as a garment you can't buy, the dress does not exist in the real world. Scene 4 was a profile motion scene, and was to showcase a specific garment in motion. I was weary of having too many walking scenes so scene 5 involved the use of *'like'* money as a prop. *'I will (exist in the real world) if you want me too'* features the protagonist Frith, being showered with fake money featuring the Facebook 'like' function.

6. You will never find me
In the last scene Frith is wearing the most psychedelic coloured dress, in the most obviously real environment. Frith is supposed to appear to be running away up seemingly never-ending stairs, yet taunting the camera with *'I dare you to try and find me'*. Written on the stairs in chalk is *'you will never find me'*.

The constructed scenes were photographed by Sarah Burton. My crew also consisted of lighting designer Rowan Pierce. Whilst the scenes were designed and directed by me - in terms of lighting and shots - the relationship and expertise of the crew in the environments pushed these elements further.
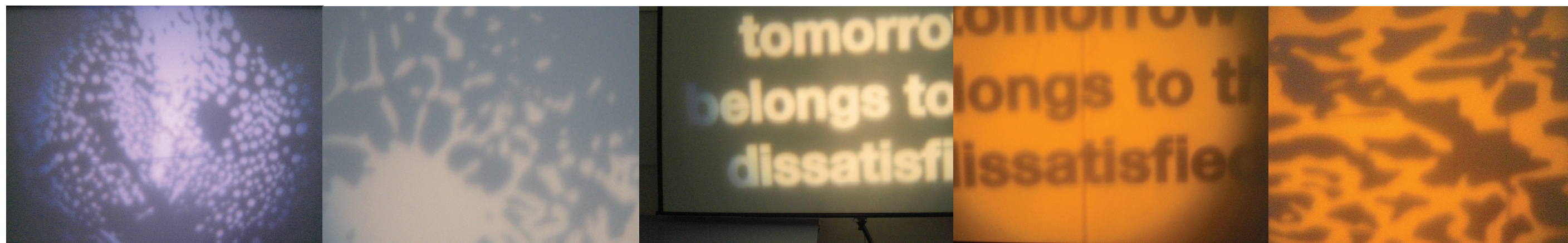
4.3 THE DISSEMINATION

I want to encourage the images I disseminate to be *'stolen'*; to be *copied*, *pasted*, *linked* to, printed out, reordered, and reframed to build a 'conversation'. To generate a presence, an enigma, and a response to the garments as potential objects, but to still, in someway, maintain ownership of them through the mood they convey, and the text stories they tell.

To be a *blogger*, with an audience, you really need to post everyday, not only does this require new content that may not have the required time necessary for proper consideration, but this also celebrates the new and relegates the old to being old. It also requires a backward reading to 'read' the disseminated narrative. I wish for greater control over how the content is emphasised and 'read', and I wish to focus on quality over quantity. I do not wish to 'run' at the speed of bloggers. To try and keep up could produce work that in fact damages the façade, as the online dimension of the 'brand' I'm creating.

My blog *dull life, you don't have to be this way* will be left to flounder, and I've designed an independent website to take its place. The website is titled *dull life, you don't have to be that way*. My series of images will feature on it as a project titled *Subdued Psychedelia*, and behind the 'scenes' and secondary sequences will also be featured. I will share the series within my own facebook community, to thus potentially be intercepted by my extended facebook community, as friends of friends. I intend to submit the series to Fashiongonerogue, as a site that reports fashion image publications, and they may or may not publish it. I also intend to submit it to *alwayssometimesanytime.com*, a New Zealand-based website that features 'under the radar' projects like mine. I am currently unsure if I will create a *Facebook* fan page. A *Facebook* fan page would remind fans of the existence of my online entity, and enable me to inform them when new content is added. Additionally the series will exist in *'real space'* as posters exhibited on the streets of Wellington city. These posters will feature a link to the website, and if anyone really wants to go to the website they will go to the trouble of writing it down, putting it into their phone, or photographing it – as I would, if I was curious enough. Enabling those who would have a genuine interest in what I disseminate to be able to find, or be led to it, is the most important thing to me. I'm unsure if I'll need *'hits'* to enable those with a genuine interest to find my dissemination, but regardless, I think *'finding'* will take time.

CONCLUSION

Dull life, you don't have to be this way has graduated to *Dull life, you don't have to be that way* as a signifier of my renewed optimism, by choosing to defy, and to seek beauty. But for all the potential this new space holds, it is both infinite space and no space at all. Any designer can exist online but to be found, to be relevant, and to *'exist'* in the minds of a collective perception is an overwhelming task that requires time and endorsement. You have to strive to be differentiated from your counterparts by doing 'good' work - Alber Elbaz (Style.com, 2010) and by maintaining relevance, and even then what you do may be rejected. Most of all, I think you have to have unrelenting self-belief; belief that you have what it takes, and a willingness to work until 3 in the morning as Alber Elbaz and Azzedine Alaia do (Style.com, 2010). This is what this project was always about. To decide if I think I should continue to pursue being a fashion designer; to see if I think I have what it takes, and if so, to decide if I'm willing to do what it takes.

I have gathered and gleaned possibility. I am now equipped with the knowledge I was seeking. I am now less optimistic about fashion entities being able to gain a loyal audience solely online, but I have a renewed enthusiasm and optimism for what I am able to 'say' as a designer. I wish to continue to design and create escapist garments that capture beauty, and that strive to meet the challenge of evoking a desire to be worn in real life. I don't see this as a constraint, but rather an embrace of the beauty of the union of wearer and dress, in unselfconscious modes of wearing, as the elusive nonchalance.

I am literally an *outsider* on the edge of the world. But figuratively I am not from the edge of the world at all. I defy time and space. I practice armchair nostalgia, and this is what the Internet has enabled me to do.

In the making of the images, the most exciting part of the process was witnessing Frith bring the garments to life. It was through her excitement as wearer, and through the excitement of my team, and myself, that the pleasure of viewing these garments transported us all. We were seduced by the designed surreal, placed in the real environment. The final images reveal essences of this seduction, but the optimal way to experience these garments is in *'real life'*. If Frith were to walk down the street she could transport both herself, and those who view her. So perhaps my garments need to be worn, and viewed being worn in *'real'* life to reach their inherent potential, and to be desired. For online entities to be found, perhaps the key is to celebrate and utilize the 'real' world as the facilitator of finding in the online world; to infiltrate potential viewers lives in their real environments, by bringing the surreal into the real as an experience, as street art does. My work does not reside completely or confidently in the online world, or in the 'real' world because a friction and conflict exists and the realisation of this conflict is what I've discovered through the course of this project.

Glamour, as defined by Elizabeth Wilson in *A Note on Glamour*, is the appearance of effortlessness as "the result of work and effort-artfully concealed" (Wilson, 2007, p. 100). Although not obviously stated and referred to throughout the body of this text, this article was the beginning of, and the catalyst for the work that followed. Now, at the end of this project, this version of Glamour still remains at the core of my design practice. This essence of glamour is what I've been striving to achieve within each aspect of my work. Design is a process; it can be a long dance of two steps forward and one step back, and eventually you either reach, or get very close to your destination. I wish to continue to refine and resolve aspects of my garments, and I wish to re-explore and reshoot some of the constructed scenes. I'm not ready to have my own *'real'* brand and the financial risk it entails. However, if I continue to pursue and develop my 'brand', and refuse to wane to a halt, then the genuine, but controlled façade will grow online as I add to it. To slowly, but potentially grow a virtual presence that may have a perceived alliance with the *Inner Sanctum*, to become real in the minds of those who see it: because "Glamour depends on what is withheld, on secrecy, hints, and the hidden" (Wilson, 2007, p. 100), and dull life, you don't have to be that way...
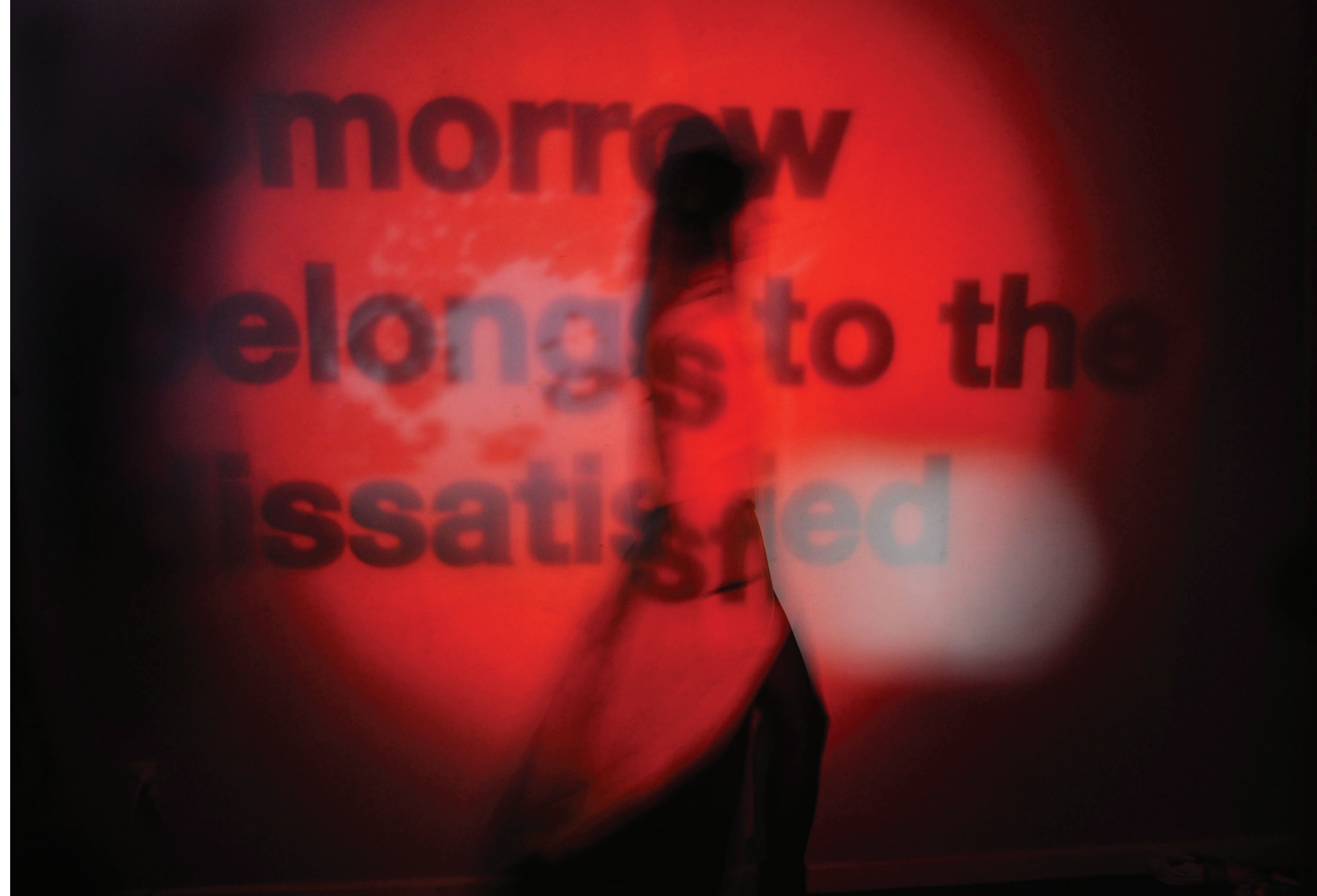
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(American Psychological Association) citation style 6th edition

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This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsibe for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz