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CONVERSATIONAL SKINS

heirloom ‘pelts’ that emerge and evolve

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ABSTRACT

Fabric garments augment and transform the body as a second skin. This project is a poetic, heuristic inquiry that investigates taking this ‘second skin’ through multiple forms, transitioning between flat fabric, garment form, flat fabric, garment form etc. In this cyclical long-term relationship, the surface of the textile-skin is inscribed and augmented as cuts are made, and ‘healed’ through various textile processes. The scars write a story on the surface. There is a ceremonial sensation to removing and the ‘flattening’ the skin, which evokes the collection of a pelt. Using a phenomenological methodology the ‘flat’ and ‘form’ iterations are performed and photographed, growing a catalogue of the fabric’s evolution.

Returning a garment to ‘flat’ offers erasure of form; it can become a level plane for a new construction. This action is achieved by utilising the method of ‘zero waste’ design, in which no fabric is removed in the construction of a garment. This enables the form to be unpicked, reassembled and sewn back to a flat-fabric state. The flat/form/flat/form cycle is played out as a conversation with the cloth, responding to the flow and tendencies of each textile.

The central proposition is that the flat-form-flat cycle provides a channel to engage in the transformative performance of dress, while enacting a use practice that diverges from problematic consumption models. In doing this, a unique surface pattern is inscribed on the cloth. The process asks: ‘what might be allowed to develop?’ The outcome demonstrates a collection of nine textile ‘pelts’ with documented progression; liminal pieces that are detailed artefacts in themselves, yet invite further interaction.

Key Words: 
Conversational Skins: heirloom ‘pelts’ that emerge and evolve.
CONTENTS

Introduction 12
Zero Waste 18
Shapeshifting 20
Skin 24
New Materialism 28

The Pelt 35
Pelt 1 rug tufted 34
Pelt 2 padded linen 36
Pelt 3 cream handspun/woven 38
Pelt 4 grey wool 40
Pelt 5 immortal jellyfish 42
Pelt 6 black linen gauze 44
Pelt 7 merino 46
Pelt 8 black handspun/woven 48
Pelt 9 silk georgette 50

Conclusion 52

Image Credits 54
Reference List 54
Bibliography 58
Appendix 66