

## *Venus Unrestricted*

### **Jazlyn Brooks**

My work titled 'Venus Unrestricted' is a wearable art piece derivative of an Elizabethan outfit with modern features. I have always been interested in the history of fashion but particularly Elizabethan era fashion. This is due to the very restrictive nature of this time and the heavily structural wear that was beautiful yet impractical. My general interest in fashion developed further as I researched historical Elizabethan fashion.

During the course of researching the history of this fashion period I became interested in contemporary interpretations, such as the work of the modern designer Vivienne Westwood. Her corset designs that depict Renaissance artworks are of interest given their elaborate and flamboyant use of religious imagery and decadent embellishments. Given her interest in the Renaissance and Baroque movements, I became interested in the Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli (Italy 1445 - 1510). His work is recognisable and heavily reflective of the ideas of this time. I wanted to create an Elizabethan style 'stays,' or bodice that reflected this influence. Creating a piece that incorporates imagery and motifs from this time.

I made the bodice structure by creating a stencil and sewing pieces of material together with a sewing machine. In order to create a textural surface reminiscent of exotic and extravagant materials and embroidery of the time, I used found scraps and materials such as beads, matchsticks, and glue to create a diamond pattern which I subsequently spray painted gold. I wanted the surface to have a textural, multilayered appearance. For the side panels I used canvas and acrylic paint to replicate Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" with a focus on capturing the main features of the artwork, intentionally leaving out details such as the faces, as the used images create a holistic impression of the work and the subjects of Botticelli's work are unknown to us.

I have used gold to replicate the aesthetic of the decadent Elizabethan era as well as contrast the use of vibrant, deep blues and reds in the painting. I decided to paint "The Birth of Venus" as it derives material from biblical mythology that I find aesthetically important to the Renaissance and Elizabethan era. I followed this with the multilayered effect of the chequered match sticks which is further accentuated by the pearl beads. The diamond shaped matchsticks with pearls on top are heavily inspired by an unknown Elizabethan design that resonated with me due to its beauty.

I am overly satisfied with the outcome of my artwork as I was able to create a historically accurate bodice whilst sourcing modern designers to add a contemporary element. I also applauded my use of sourced/reused materials. I believe this is significant when creating 'wearable art'.

My artwork titled "Crinoline Skirt" is a wearable art piece inspired by the skirts worn by women in the Elizabethan era but created through a modern lens given its short length. Throughout the researching phase, I developed an interest in the multilayers of Elizabethan skirts. I was able to further develop the ideas of Westwood while also considering new inspiration from designer Ryunosuke Okazaki whose use of texture, colour, shape, and scale was significant.

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I used a pre-existing petticoat as a foundation structure, creating a front panel and two side panels out of canvas. I altered the length of the skirt by removing two layers to create a modern feel, women of the time would never have shown their ankles and legs. On the front panel I replicated the surface achieved in my bodice work by building up a criss-cross pattern with adhesive using found objects such as paddle pop sticks. Gold was applied to create cohesion and to reflect the period. On the side panels I painted two sections of artworks by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (Italy 1483 - 1520) consisting of "The Triumph of Galatea" and "Disputation of the Holy Sacrament" similarly to the bodice which creates unity between the pieces. I used can tabs to create a chainmail pattern that I spray-painted gold and layered over fabric on the rear of the skirt.

I am pleased with the outcome of my skirt as it takes inspiration from similar source material as the bodice while extending further upon this with the introduction of complex material inspired by Okazaki.