

Pratitioner's Statement: *Bleached*

"There is a real connection between culture and climate change. We all have a part to play and if you engage with life, you will get a new set of values, get off the consumer treadmill, and start to think, and it is these great thinkers who will rescue the planet." – Vivienne Westwood

The crossover of territory between art and fashion is limitless. For years, artists and designers alike have challenged these borders; attempting to add definitions through terms such as 'sculptural fashion' and 'wearable art'. I aimed to challenge such labels within 'Bleached'. By infusing knowledge of artistic practice and rejecting traditional fashion design approaches. The piece essentially combines elements of performance, statement and sculpture to create a refined piece of art.

Ultimately inspired by the political context of Vivienne Westwood's Gold Label collection: 'Mirror the World', *Bleached* aims to draw attention to the ever growing topic of climate change; specifically focusing on the issue of coral bleaching. Coral bleaching is the result of heat stress from rising sea temperatures. In 2016, it was deemed that over 90% of Australia's treasured Great Barrier Reef has been affected by bleaching. Whilst researchers warn it is unlikely that the reef will ever recover, if immediate action is taken to lessen the impact of global warming, there is still hope that the reef can return to its prior glory.

Influenced by the sculptural nature of work by Rei Kawakubo and Junya Watanabe, I moved away from the idea that fashion should flatter the wearer. Instead I aimed to create a piece that made a statement within itself. By removing the practicality of the piece, it is no longer an item of fashion. It begs one to argue whether it is even wearable art without its ability to be worn. As with any sculpture, texture played a crucial role in conveying my desired message for the piece. In attempt to imitate the effect of coral, I experimented with various materials before it was decided that paper quills were most effective in forming the sought texture. Whilst the message of the piece aims to preach sustainability, it was important that the sculpture itself was created using ethical means. This was ensured through the use of recycled newspaper. Initially, the quills were to be dyed black. This was with the intent of representing death and disease, as relevant to the piece's context. Dissatisfied with the results however, it was ultimately decided that the quills would be left in their original form, in hindsight, the monochromatic scheme better mimics the appearance of bleached coral; more efficiently conveying its message.

When planning the composition of the piece, I aimed for the spikes to appear somewhat effortless; much like the effect of water snaking down an uneven surface. Whilst I wanted the 'flow' of the sculpture to appear natural, I was also required to consider both physical and aesthetical balance. To achieve this, the spikes vary in length. The height of the piece's 'collar' creates an immediate focal point; whilst the 'waterfall' affect forces the viewer to follow the sculpture as it makes its way to the floor; where the spikes increase in height again. This variance in length also made for discrepancy in tone.

Whilst challenging the constraints of art and fashion, *Bleached* draws much needed attention to the issue of coral bleaching through its confronting presence. Essentially combining elements of performance, statement and sculpture, *Bleached* successfully expresses my intentions for the piece.