

STAGE 2 VISUAL ART- ART
Practitioners Statement 1
***‘The manufactures effort
and consumer’s choice?’***

Laura Telford-Sharp

Over the years, the fashion industry has evolved into an integral part of our society that allows designers to express their creativity and conceptual ideas in wearable form. It enables us to project an aesthetic through our garments and what we wear. But due to the newly evolved fast fashion (fast production and turn-over of trends) aspect of the industry it has become another product in stores that thrives on our materialistic ideals.¹ Slave labour takes an invisible form in our closets as consumers have been made oblivious to the unethical sourcing, effort and struggle that have gone into the production of their clothes. This became my main source of inspiration as looking at the details or overlooked aspects of these labour made garments reveals the whole truth and story behind them.

The protagonist of this interest came through witnessing a documentary called “The Cost of Fashion”, that dove into the environment and lives of the people that work in sweat shops. After being overwhelmed with visually alarming images of children constructing a shirt I own, my perspective on shopping was changed.

After much thought and investigation, I did this by conveying the concept in a metaphoric and underlying way. During my investigation, I learnt that the array of numbers at the bottom of every clothing tag is the number of the worker who inspected that individual garment. This inspired the idea that when a tag is irritating someone it could be seen as the issue of slave labour being present at all times or a nagging thought at the back of the wearers minds. It puts the issue in a relatable and common situation referring to whether a person chooses to ignore the itching or do something about it.

The influence of artists Lui Bolin and Henrietta Harris directed my investigation in regards to the conceptual aspect of my topic. With the use of disparate mediums and techniques both artist’s work devoid their subjects of their full presence, distorting, blending or concealing their physical form with their surroundings and background. This takes form in my work through the metaphoric betrayal of slavery in the fashion industry as I interpret and would describe its societal hold in a similar way. Examining other more literal representation of this topic also influenced my work as Artists Zabou and Victoria Villasana’s art convey similar themes through large, visually impactful murals and embroidery work. I took influence from the scale and use of embroidery in their works as the thread and physical labour of embroidery emulates that of the workers. Whilst the scale emphasises the enormity of the issue.

My realistic artwork came with its complications including struggles with mimicking fabric textures, specifically denim. Through trial and error and referencing tutorials this was overcome. I believe and hope the overall visual aesthetic and conceptual meaning of my piece translates to those viewing it and evokes a change in the way they see the fashion industry and in turn how they choose their clothes.

¹ <https://truecostmovie.com/learn-more/human-rights/>