

# STATEMENT

This art project is a culmination of 235 hours of work in 3 months, including extensive research on the topic of the conflict between human activities and the ocean. The theme of this artwork explores the delicate relationship between humans and the ocean, highlighting the impact that human activities have on the fragile ecosystem of the sea.

Inspired by the late Rococo era, this piece features a stunning female garment adorned with intricate textile designs. The use of multiple textiles and fabrics creates a sense of depth and complexity, drawing the viewer into the artwork and conveying the intricacy of the relationship between humans and the ocean.

The color palette of red and blue reflects the opposing forces at play in this relationship. Red represents the destructive impact of human activities on the ocean, while blue symbolizes the beauty and mystery of the sea. Together, these colors create a powerful visual contrast that draws attention to the central theme of the artwork.

Ultimately, this artwork aims to spark a conversation about the complex relationship between humans and the ocean. Through its use of intricate design and powerful symbolism, this piece invites viewers to reflect on the impact of human activities on the natural world and consider ways to preserve and protect our fragile ecosystems for future generations.

# The Red Ocean

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2023

**Sheridan College**  
Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design

Final Year Project (FYP) submitted to the School of Animation, Arts and Design,  
Sheridan College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Craft and Design in Textiles.

Academic Year Date (2022/2023)





Binyon Laurence, Catalogue of drawings by British artists, and artists of foreign origin working in Great Britain, 1898-1907, Museum number 1874,1212.169.



The English Farmer's Wife converted to a fine Lady during his Absence in London. The British Museum, 1760s. Museum number Y,4.567

## Study from History

### Human activities and the Rococo fashion

By comparing the timeline, I found that the period of the Industrial Revolution in human history is connected back and forth with the Rococo period in art history. When the Rococo period was coming to an end, steam and smoke drifted up from the skies over the United Kingdom. The advent of mechanization brought about an important shift in human production from hand to machine. The textile industry was almost one of the first to be affected. With mechanized production increasing the productivity of textiles, textiles and fashion's costs became more affordable to the general public.

However, the prosperity brought about by the industrial revolution came at a huge environmental cost, with the textile and fashion industry alone accounting for 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions in the world today, according to statistics. (Rachael & Jackie, 2022) These gases eventually rise into the atmosphere or are incorporated into oceans, directly contributing to ocean warming and acidification.

Despite this, many people are still unaware of the environmental impact of human activity. This indifference reminds me of the French royal family during the Rococo period. They brought into their lives values of frivolity and pleasure, which eventually became one of the causes of the French Revolution. (Nicole, 2021) With these observations in mind, I began the design process by drawing inspiration from the satirical prints of the Rococo period, referencing the characteristics of the costumes in these prints. Combining the themes of the Industrial Revolution with the fashions of the late Rococo period, I aimed to draw an analogy between the aristocracy vs. the common people in the Rococo period and the human activities vs. nature, to emphasize the importance of balancing human activity facilitation with environmental responsibility as a reminder of the potentially significant negative impacts of environmental degradation in the future.



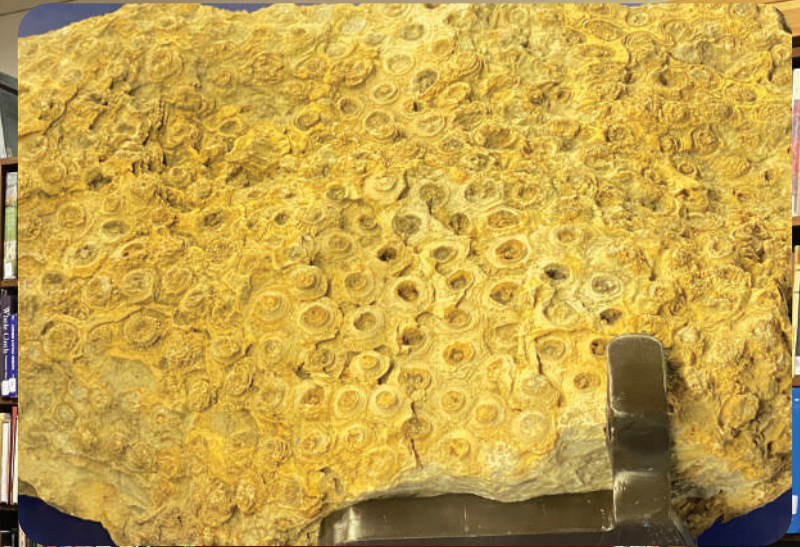
### Environmental and human impacts of ocean warming

The most visual impact of ocean warming is coral bleaching. As one of the largest ecosystems in the ocean, corals assume an extremely important part of the marine ecosystem chain. However, the algae with which they exist in a symbiotic relationship cannot withstand the warming waters, so much so that they leave the reefs, leaving them vulnerable to disease and even death. (Nathan, 2022) This indirectly destroys the survival of several marine populations centered on coral reefs and threatens multi-biodiversity. The fusion of large amounts of greenhouse gases with water makes seawater more acidic, which corrodes species with calcium carbonate shells and has a huge impact on them.

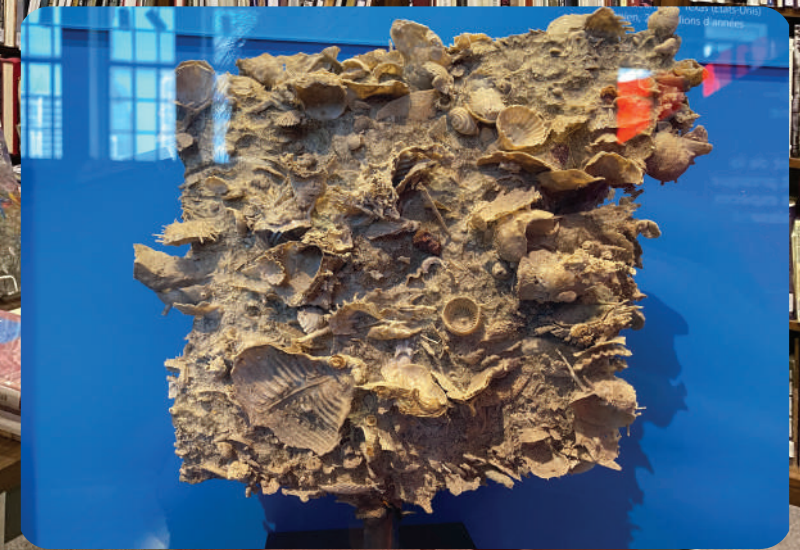
At the same time, melting polar ice and rising sea levels caused by warming oceans increase the risk of flooding in coastal areas. Weather extremes such as hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones, which are being fueled, are having a devastating impact on coastal communities and infrastructure. As you can see, the impacts of ocean warming are complex and interconnected, and they have significant implications for the health and well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants. We must therefore take action to reduce our carbon footprint and address the underlying causes of climate change in order to protect our oceans, ourselves and the future of the planet.

### Museum Trip

To find further inspiration, I embarked on a journey to the Royal Ontario Museum and the Toronto Textile Museum's library. I aim to direct this project towards the often-neglected topics of ocean acidification and warming, which are not as visible as the prevalent issue of plastic waste. While exploring these institutions, my focus was to discover biological fossils of corals and shellfish (as detailed on page 9) and hunt for suitable textile materials to depict them.

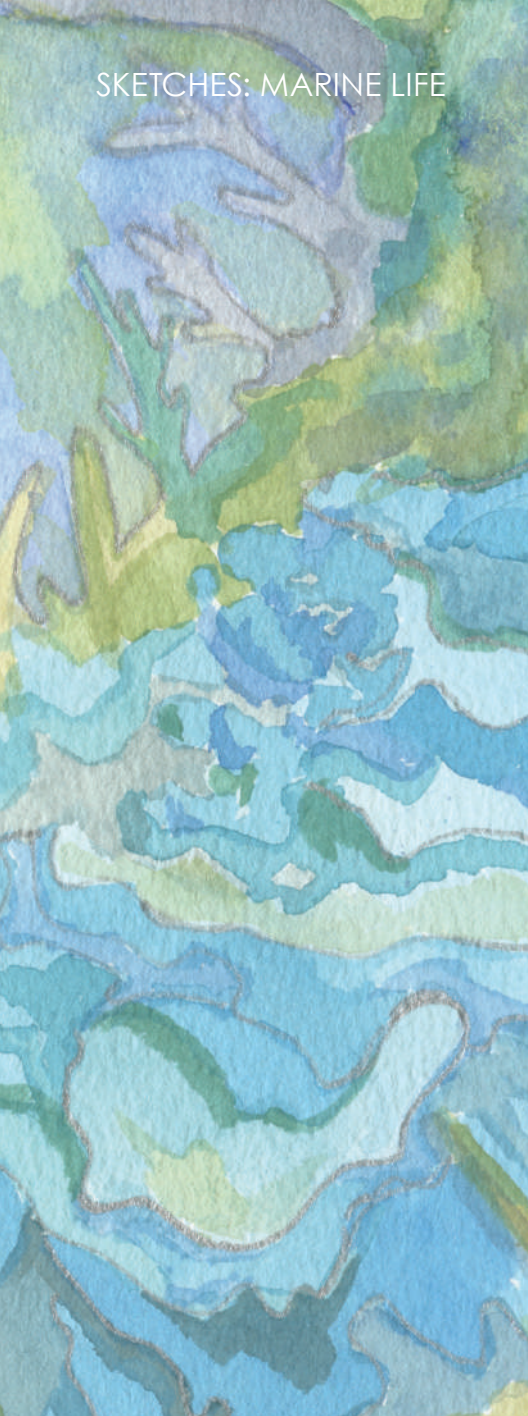


January 3, 2023  
Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)  
Eridophyllum Archiaci (ROMIP25555)  
Photo by Jinduo Cui



January 3, 2023  
Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)  
Permian Reef  
Photo by Jinduo Cui





Marine Life Study I  
Jinduo Cui  
8in x 4.5in  
January 8, 2023



Marine Life Study II  
Jinduo Cui  
8in x 4.5in  
January 8, 2023



Coral Study III  
Jinduo Cui  
8in x 4.5in  
January 8, 2023



Coral Study IV  
Jinduo Cui  
8in x 4.5in  
January 8, 2023



## Development

Initially, my sketches were influenced by the traditional shapes of Rococo clothing, but as I progressed, my focus shifted towards the distinct characteristics of the Rococo style. This resulted in the creation of asymmetrical wave-shaped skirts and separate tops, which I incorporated to avoid a dull appearance due to the corset. My color palette remained consistent with my initial concept, utilizing red tones to convey warmth and blue shades to represent the ocean. As I continue to refine the design, I have decided to incorporate the shape of lungs and a face mask in the bodice, as they will represent “human activity” at the center of the design. The remaining elements in the design will be natural, conveying the notion that “human activity” influences the “natural elements” surrounding it.

## Draft Materials & Techniques Guide

At this stage of the project, I hadn't yet finalized the design for the chest area. However, I decided to first focus on selecting materials and techniques for the rest of the piece. Given the project's theme of the conflict between human activity and nature (specifically the ocean), I chose to combine both natural and artificial materials such as wool and polyester fabric. These materials are pliable and easy to shape, allowing me to create a 3D effect that will enhance the visual impact of the piece, which is always a priority for me in my work.

To create a richer, multi-layered effect, I will be using a variety of textile techniques that align with my identity as a textile designer. I've created a labeled schematic to guide me in the material and technical testing that will follow.

The schematic includes a headpiece inspired by the high wigs of the Rococo period made from wool felt sheet with metallic threads, a free-motion embroidery face mask, a wool felt rolled coral shoulder ornament, a chest piece (unidentified, maybe wool), jellyfish-like round wool sculptures, a sea wave digital print skirt with layered organza edges, and a large wool sheet with holes on the inside of the skirt with metallic thread embroidery.





The other basic forming method, as I have stated, involves shaping a piece of flat felt over a mold. Laura Bassania makes bowl shapes, for example, by putting felt over a mold and alternately steaming it with an iron and shaping it with her hands, stretching it continually over the mold form. Her method is, of course, very similar to that of the traditional hatmaker. Even today, women's hats are professionally shaped in a similar manner. Felt is formed into basic hatlike forms at a commercial hat factory and shipped to people who specialize in turning them into fashionable shapes. They work with steam irons, molding the felt while it is moist and wet. Both Basco began experimenting with this kind of forming by shaping felt over a Styrofoam head (the kind used to display hats and wigs). She cut also stretched the felt for rounded eyes and mouth, and carefully steamed, pinched, and stretched the area around the nose. The result is reminiscent of Japanese Noh masks, with subtle shapes and rather flattened features (Steps 1-3). In order to get more finely chiseled features, the mold would have to have been much more exaggerated.

Traditionally, Swedish mittens were worked the same way: the felt was first semi-hardened as a flat piece and then folded directly on the hand. This tradition has given me the idea of molding felt over other body parts—the feet for shoes, and hands for hats. If the felting was done directly over a person's head, the mold would certainly be an ideal shape; a light-fitting bathing cap could be worn to keep human hair out of the wool. Another alternative would be to make a mold with fast-setting, plaster-impregnated bandages—the kind used by sculptor George Segal in his castings of life-size figures. The molding would be done over the mold rather than the head in this case, eliminating the need for the model to stand still during hardening. Some kind of foam or stuffing material would probably also have to be placed inside the cast-bandage mold for resistance or something to push against; without this, the bandages might distort or even give way. I have not actually tried to do any molding on the human body, but the idea intrigues me and should be workable.

**FORMING WITH SUPPORTING STRUCTURES, SEWING, AND GLEUING**

For some projects, it will be impractical or too difficult to achieve the desired effect by forming directly with the felt. This may be the time to call on other supports or armatures, or to utilize a variety of sewing and gluing techniques. These can be used either instead of or in addition to the molding techniques. Nancy Algrim is a feltmaker who has done a good deal of work with armatures made of cord and wire (p. 87). She attaches pieces of dyed felt carefully around the wire and subsequently bends and twists them into fluid, organic shapes. Each piece is made of a number of armatures—single armatures form the individual petals of a flower, for example (86). Algrim's armatures are usually used at the edges of the felt, but consider working with them in other places as well. In all cases, the armatures remain in the finished piece. Moby Fowler, a Connecticut weaver, has also made a number of figures with wire armatures. Her bird (88) is reminiscent of the Scythian swan illustrated in Chapter Two. Both are sewn together and stuffed.

Supporting structures can also be directly trapped in the felt.



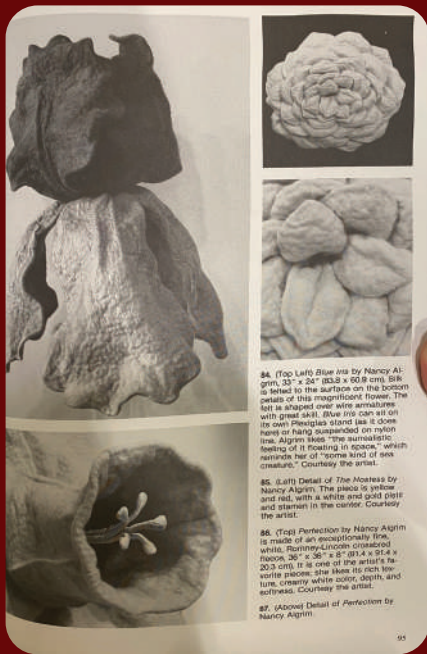
Step 1. Use a relatively flat, circular mold, then stretch the felt across and stretch it around the mold. Photo Larry Basco.



Step 2. Hold the arched structure flat over the mold. If possible, pin it to the most protruding parts could be stretched right into the Styrofoam base, for example. Continually pin and work the felt around the mold, using the steam iron to help with the shaping. Push the tip of the iron directly into the concave spaces—cut negative shapes like the eyes and mouth. Photo Larry Basco.



Step 3. Keep shaping and stretching the desired form is achieved. Use the iron to help dry the piece if it has been formed in steam. Note how the flattened shape only softens the felt, not the mold. Photo Larry Basco.



Step 4. Top Left: Blue iris by Nancy Algrim, 33" x 24" (80.3 x 60.8 cm). Silk is held to the surface on the bottom petals of this magnificent flower. The felt is shaped over wire armatures with great skill. Blue iris can sit on its own. Principles about how it does here or hang suspended on nylon line. Algrim uses "the surrealist" feeling of it floating in space" which nurtures her of "some kind of sea creature." Courtesy the artist.

Step 5. Detail of The Mothra by Nancy Algrim. The piece is yellow and red, with a white and gold pliff and stamen in the center. Courtesy the artist.

Step 6. Frog Perfection by Nancy Algrim is made of an exceptionally fine, white Romney Lincoln crossbred, fleeced, 36" x 36" x 8" (91.4 x 91.4 x 20.3 cm). It is one of the artist's favorite pieces; she likes its rich, low-wrinkle texture. Courtesy the artist.

Step 7. Detail of Frog Perfection by Nancy Algrim.

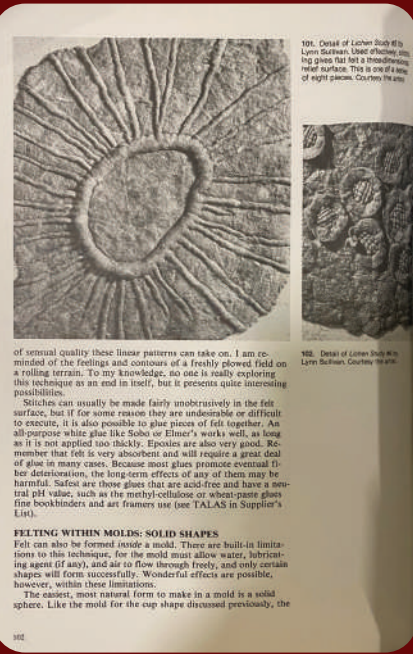
**Technique - Felting**

**Feltmaking - Traditions, Techniques, and Contemporary Explorations**

The book I came across is a comprehensive guide on crafting 3D objects using wool, which showcases a variety of techniques such as stretching wool over molds, adding wire and other fabrics for additional strength during felting, and create surface sculptures with hidden stitches on felt.

The detailed instructions and accompanying pictures in the book have sparked new ideas for me in terms of technical aspects. For instance, I plan to utilize molds to stretch the wool, particularly when working with foam balls. The book has truly opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me when it comes to creating unique and intricate woolen objects.

Gordon Beverly. (1980). *Feltmaking-Traditions, Techniques, and Contemporary Explorations*. Watson-Guptill Publications.



100. Detail of Lichen Study With Lynn Sullivan. Use of heavy, strong wool gives felt a three-dimensional surface. This is one of a line of eight pieces. Courtesy the artist.



102. Detail of Lichen Study With Lynn Sullivan. Courtesy the artist.

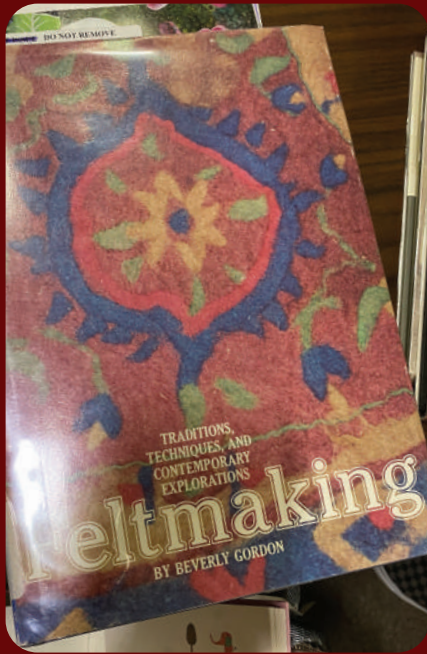
of unusual quality these linear patterns can take on. I am reminded of the feelings and contours of a freshly plowed field on a rolling terrain. To my knowledge, no one is really exploring this technique as an end in itself, but it presents quite interesting possibilities.

Stitches can usually be made fairly unobtrusively in the felt surface, but if for some reason they are undesirable or difficult to execute, it is also possible to glue pieces of felt together. An all-purpose white glue like Sobo or Elmer's works well, as long as it is not applied too thickly. Epoxies are also very good. Remember that felt is very absorbent and will require a great deal of glue in many cases. Because most glues promote eventual fiber deterioration, the long-term effects of any of them may be harmful. Safest are those glues that are acid-free and have a neutral pH value, such as the methyl-cellulose or wheat-paste glues fine bookbinders and art framers use (see TALAS in Suppiter's List).

**FELTING WITHIN MOLDS: SOLID SHAPES**

Felt can also be formed inside a mold. There are built-in limitations to this technique; for the mold must allow water, lubricating agent (if any), and air to flow through freely, and only certain shapes will form successfully. Wonderful effects are possible, however, within these limitations.

The easiest, most natural form to make in a mold is a solid sphere. Like the mold for the cup shape discussed previously, the



Feltmaking - Traditions, Techniques, and Contemporary Explorations. P94, 95, 102

by Beverly Gordon, 1980



## PRODUCTION PROCESSES: GARMENT MOCK-UP

January 16, 2023

Production time: 7h

Materials: Muslin

Technique: Sewing & Pattern Marking

Upon examining the pictures, it's clear that at this stage in the process, I had intended to incorporate a turtleneck design. Additionally, the shape of the top was still not a bodysuit, as I had yet to fully consider the weight of the fabric.

After completing the mock-up top, I realized that the weight of the fabric posed some challenges. In order to address this, I made the decision to create another mock-up top that would better suit the requirements of the project.

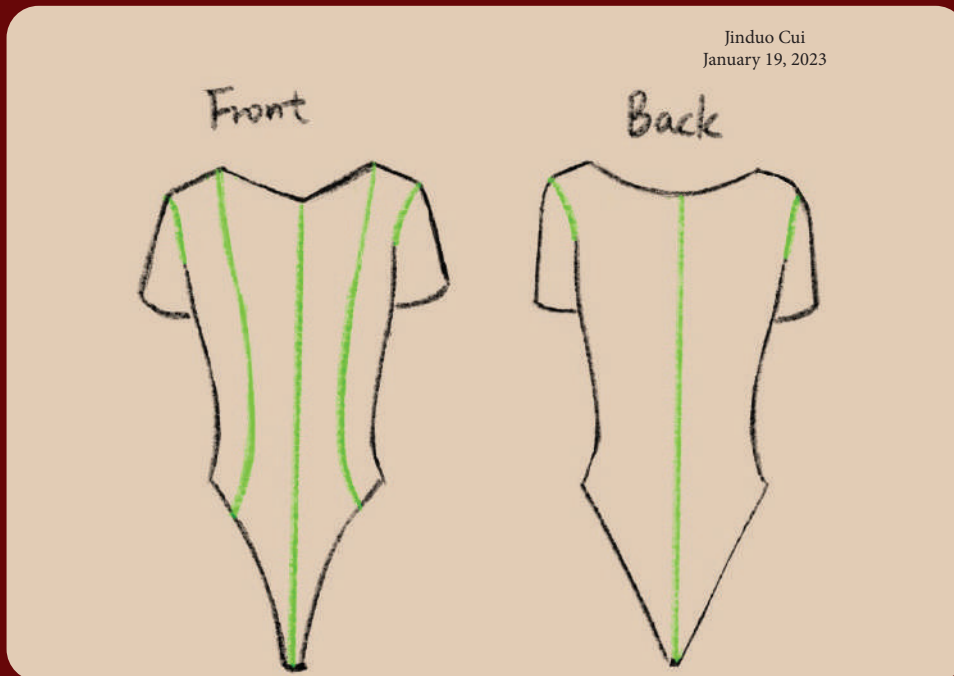




January 21, 2023  
 Production time: 8h  
 Materials: Muslin

Technique: Sewing & Pattern Marking

I changed the pattern of the top to a bodysuit, and because the mesh I used as the finished fabric was not stretchy, I split the bodysuit into six pieces at this stage (and added another seam at the bust). The photo shows it already worn in the skirt, you can see the very flat line at the waist, as well as the new stitching.





## PRODUCTION PROCESSES: GARMENT MOCK-UP



January 21, 2023 ~ January 24, 2023  
Time using: 17h(including cutting patterns)  
Materials: Kraft paper/Muslin  
Skirt Hemline Size: 28", 32", 35", 40" radius

The process of cutting the patterns for the dress took a significant amount of time, but I found the sewing aspect to be quite straightforward. To hold the four layers of fabric together at the waistband, I used a zipper. However, upon further consideration, I realized that a zipper might not be the best solution for the final fabric, which is likely to be thicker than the muslin used in the mock-up.

As a result, I'm currently exploring the possibility of incorporating ties on both sides of the finished dress. This would not only make it easier to adjust the size, but it would also ensure a better fit for the thicker fabric.



Shooting Date: February 28, 2023  
Photo by Zihhan Jiang

### Final Mock-up

Here is the completed mock-up of the dress, featuring a bodysuit and skirt combination. While reviewing the mock-up, I encountered another issue - I found that the skirt hoop I had used did not fully support the fabric, resulting in a lack of volume in the hip area.

To address this, I have decided to explore alternative hoop options that will provide a better fit and enhance the overall appearance of the dress.

I'm pleased to report that the edge of the skirt has a beautiful, wave-like curve that perfectly captures the aesthetic I was aiming for. I'm confident that this design element will make a striking statement in the final piece. Additionally, I'm very proud of the finish on the top of the dress.





February 5, 2023

Production time: 4h

Materials: Wool; Ice Dub

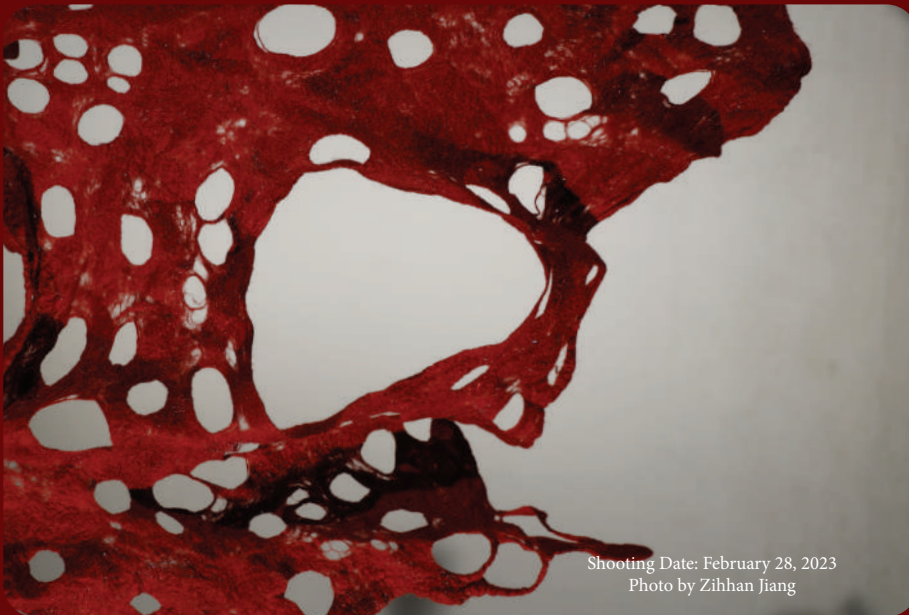
Technique: Wet felting

Size: 56" x 56"

This section of the skirt showcases a unique design created using two colors of wool that I dyed myself. I used the same pattern as the first layer of the skirt, but I wanted to add more texture to it. To achieve this, I incorporated a material called 'ice dub' onto the surface of the wool piece. I discovered ice dub while searching for 'Angilina Fiber' and was drawn to it because of its sparkling quality.

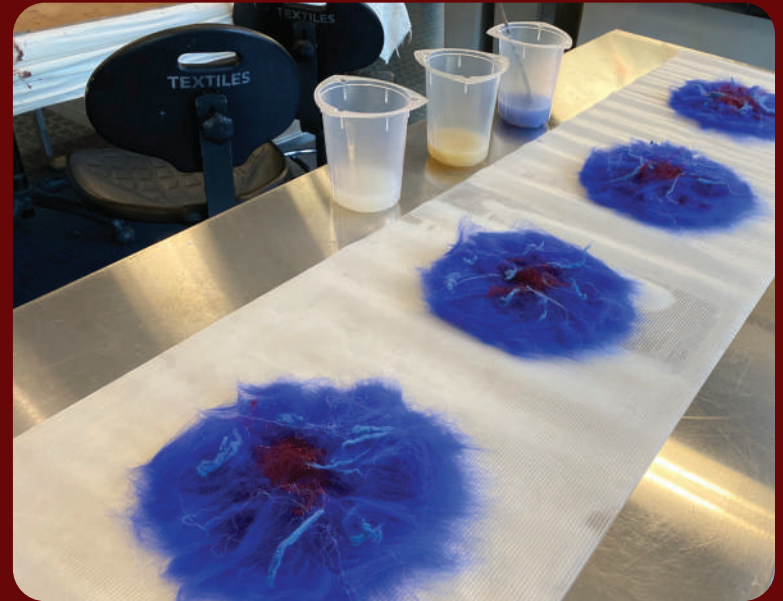
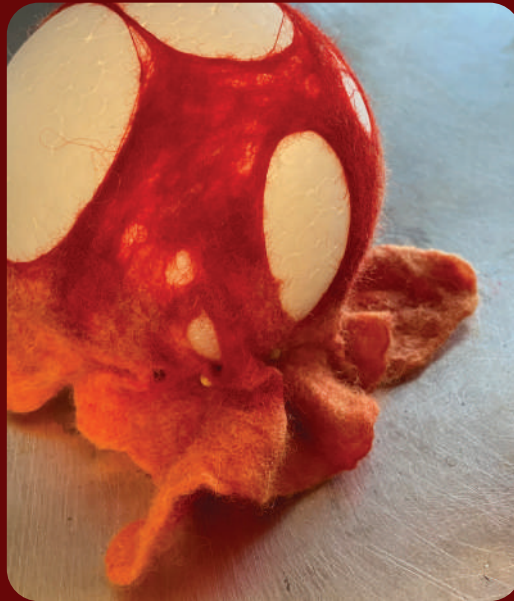
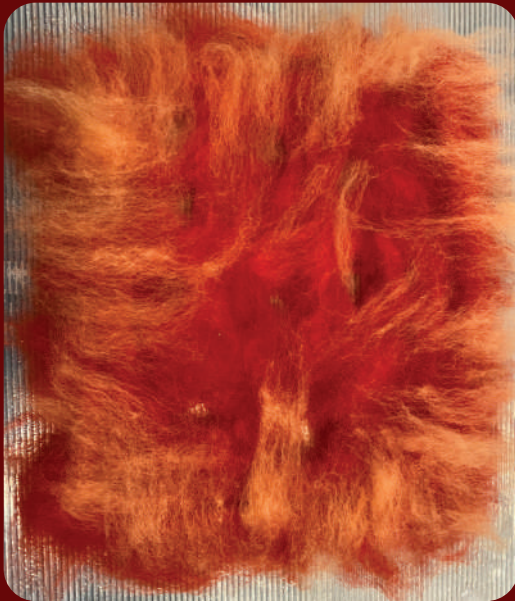
Interestingly, ice dub is primarily used in fishing bait, but I found that it perfectly aligned with my ocean-themed project. By incorporating this material into my design, I was able to add a beautiful shimmer and texture that complements the overall aesthetic of the skirt.

Those holes come from the irregular placement of wool when felting, which is how it looks like a coral reef.



Shooting Date: February 28, 2023  
Photo by Zihhan Jiang





February 8, 2023 ~ February 14, 2023

Production time: 20min for each

Materials: Wool; Raw Wool; Ice Dub; Viscose Fiber; Foam ball

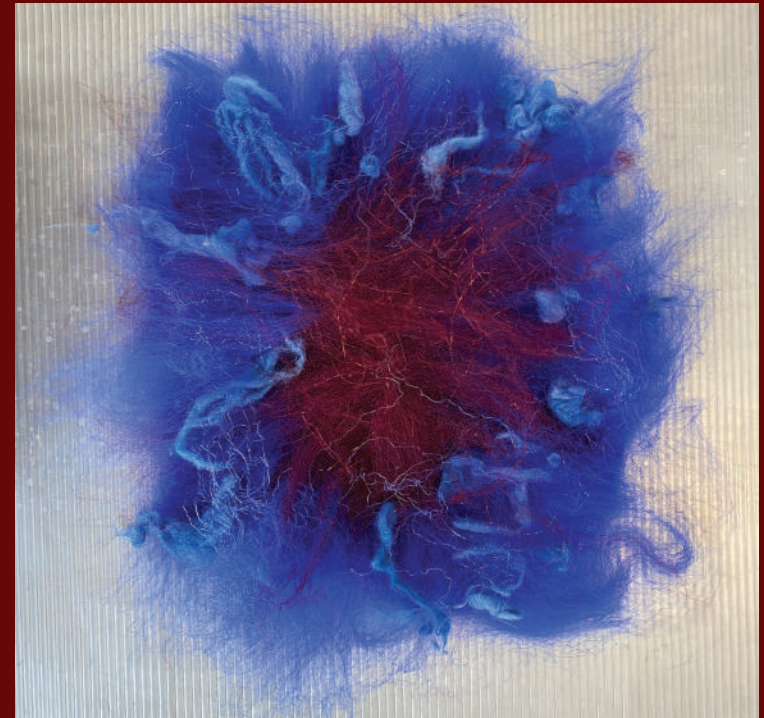
Size: 2" x 3" x 4"

After some consideration, I decided that the original red and orange felt sculptures did not quite capture the essence of the ocean in the way that I had hoped. As a result, I decided to experiment with blue. I recreated a batch of felt sculptures using blue wool and the color match for the ocean theme much more better. Also this time I add more materials when felting.



During the process of creating the blue felt sculptures, I accidentally poked one of them and ended up with a completely unexpected and intriguing new shape. This experience served as a reminder that it's important to remain open-minded and willing to experiment with different shapes and combinations. Often, even slight variations in placement can yield strikingly different results.

This happy accident taught me that it's important to keep an open mind and not be too rigid in my design process. By being willing to experiment and explore new ideas, I may discover new possibilities and create even more interesting and dynamic pieces.







## Rendering Update

Following my decision to use the blue felt sculptures, I updated the renderings for my project. In these updated renderings, I finalized the design for the chest area, which will feature a hand-embroidered pattern resembling veins and arteries of the lungs. I'm considering adding some beads at the end of the veins to create the appearance of tumors.

I also made adjustments to the design of the sleeves and mask, with the goal of highlighting the vascular pattern in the center. To achieve this effect, I removed any shading from around the pattern.

Regarding the skirt, I decided against using digital prints as I felt they would look too flat. Instead, I'm planning to incorporate velvet devore. By creating a contrast between the sheer part that has been eroded away and the thicker velvet material that remains, I believe I can achieve a more textured and dynamic effect. Overall, I'm very excited to see how these design elements come together in the final product.





March 11, 2023 ~ March 21, 2023

Production time: 46h in total

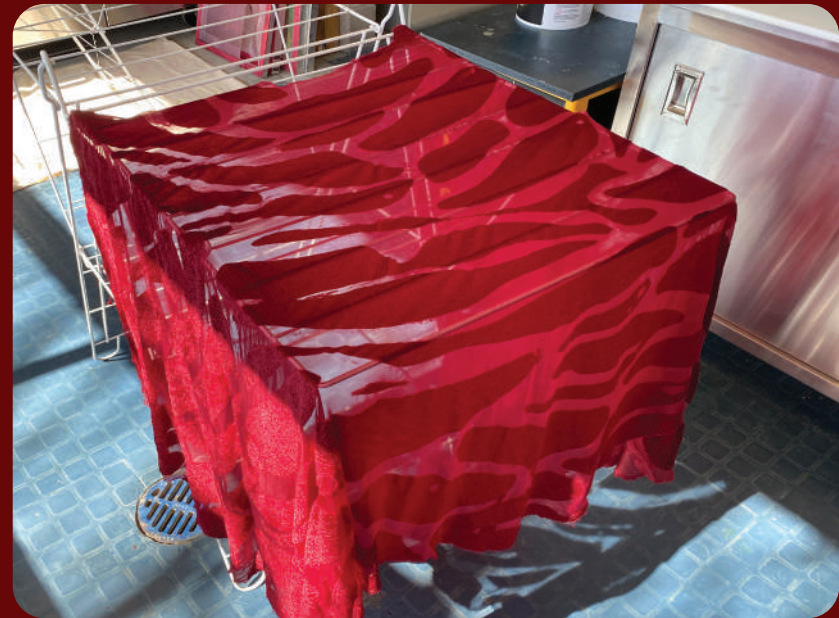
Materials: Silk Velvet

Technique: Devore

Size: 28", 32", 35", 40" radius

Initially, I had considered using screen printing to quickly create the patterns for the velvet rosettes on the skirt. However, after careful consideration, I decided that I wanted the patterns to follow the curves of the skirt and appear as if they were attached to the top of the fabric. To achieve this effect, I decided to hand paint the devore parts of the fabric.

By hand painting the patterns, I can ensure that they align perfectly with the curves and bends of the skirt, creating a seamless and flowing design. While this approach may take more time and effort, I believe that the end result will be well worth it





## PRODUCTION PROCESSES: SKIRT MAKING



March 17, 2023 ~ March 27, 2023  
Production time: 24h in total  
Materials: Polyester Decorative strips

To finish the edges of the skirt, I used trim strips made of polyester vinyl. To ensure that these trim strips were properly supported, I used reverse directional stitching. Additionally, I added a layer of white silk blend fabric underneath the first and third layers of the skirt. This helps prevent the velvet from looking too overwhelmingly red and visually adds to the lightness of the project.

When it came time to attach the skirt to the old skirt hoop, I found that it appeared more cramped than I had anticipated. To address this issue, I decided to replace the pannier and create a hip pad for the back of the skirt. This allowed the skirt to have more room to bulge outwards and created a more visually striking effect



Shooting Date: April 10, 2023  
Photo by Zihhan Jiang





March 27, 2023

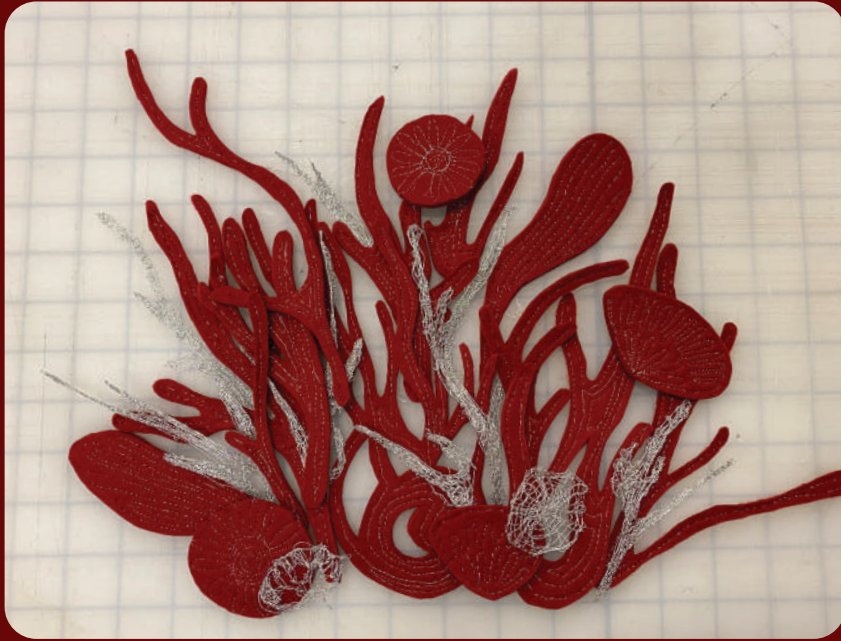
The side of the skirt has been replaced with a size adjustable lanyard, and the skirt can now accommodate size 2 to size 8 figures.



Shooting Date: April 10, 2023  
Photo by Zihhan Jiang

Plus the first layer of hem and hip felt trim





February 4, 2023 ~ February 10, 2023

Production time: 17h in total

Materials: 3mm thick wool felt sheet; Metallic Thread

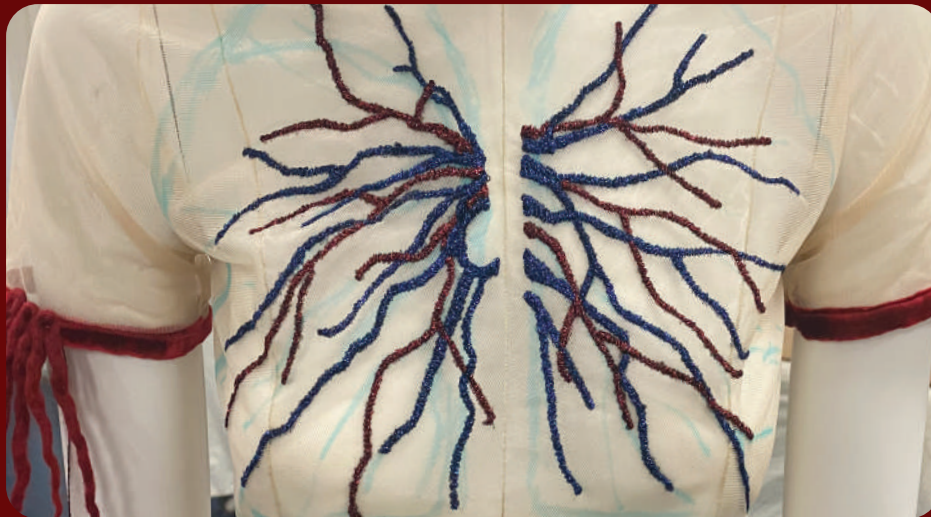
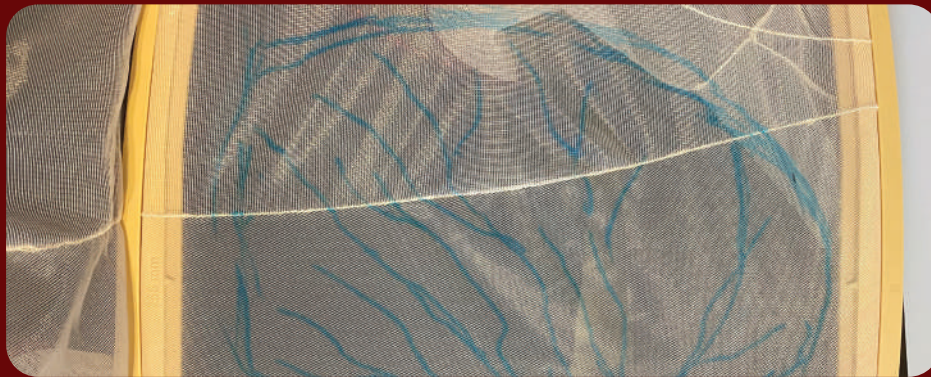
Size: 9" x 12"



For the headpiece, I utilized a combination of techniques to create a coral-inspired design. I first created coral-like patterns using metallic thread on water-soluble fabric, which I then stitched together with coral patterns cut from felt sheets. By combining these two materials, I was able to create a unique and visually striking texture for the headpiece.

Drawing inspiration from the wigs of the Rococo period, I made sure to arrange each piece of the headpiece in a way that would allow it to stand up and create height when pieced together.





March 26, 2023

Production time: 13h in total

Materials: Metallic Thread

Technique: Hand Embroidery; Plastic Beads

Size: 9" x 13"

To create the embroidery on the chest area, I utilized a combination of red and blue metallic threads to add depth and texture to the design. I also incorporated beads into the embroidery to create the appearance of tumors. To draw focus to this area of the dress, I intentionally left a large white space on the chest. This helps to direct the viewer's attention towards the intricate embroidery and beadwork, which serves as a striking contrast against the white background.





March 31, 2023  
Production time: 3h  
Materials: Wool  
Technique: Wet Felting  
Size: 5" x 10"

To add a new element to the design and keep the top part of the bodice from appearing too busy, I decided to change the shape of the sleeves to resemble anemones. To achieve this effect, I utilized a combination of red and blue gradient felt strips, which I hand-sewed onto the sleeves.





Shooting Date: April 14, 2023  
Photo by Jinduo Cui





Shooting Date: April 14, 2023  
Photo by Jinduo Cui



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