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THE THIRD SKIN

By

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Statement

This volume is presented as a record of the work undertaken for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments iii
List of Illustrations v
Abstract vi
Introduction 1
Chapter One. The First Skin. 7
Chapter Two. The Second Skin. 22
Chapter Three. The Third Skin. 31
Conclusion 37
Illustrations 40
Appendix 48
References 49
List of Illustrations

Figure 1. The Samurai figure motif often features in Japanese all over Body Tattoos
Figure 2. The Samurai figure motif often features in Japanese all over Body Tattoos
Figure 3. Yakuza JAOBT placement variations
Figure 4. Flora and fauna motifs sit on top of graphic ‘wind bar’ components
Figure 5. Old school, ‘flash’ based tattoo style in America pre 1950
Figure 6. Neo primitive tattoo styling
Figure 7. Rico modelling for Mugler - demonstrating all over body tattooing
Figure 8. Jean Paul Gautier ‘couture Coke’ bottles
Figure 9. Ralph Lauren ‘Orientalist’ dress with a dragon tattoo motif on the back
Figure 10. Alexander McQueen as an exemplar of sculptural (art) forms in fashion
Abstract

The Third Skin project consists of two parts: a research paper that critically examines the convergence of theories of dress and the Japanese all over Body Tattoo (JAOBT) as practices and markers of identity or embodied subjectivity; and a creative body of work consisting of an installation comprised of four garments that feature motifs of carnivorous plants as tattoo prints to reference the femme fatale and women’s sexuality in the popular imagination. By drawing on contemporary popular imagination and nineteenth century Darwinian parallels between insectivorous plants and the suppressed yet purportedly voracious sexual appetite of Victorian women, the studio work visually comments on the control of women’s sexuality in the West. The depictions of carnivorous plants serve as feminist motifs because of their association with a voracious sexuality that cannot be contained. Coupled with discordant colour ways, the motifs suggest perversity and transgression that are allied to queer subjectivity. The prints are stylistic adaptations from the art of the Edo period of Japan arranged on the body and digitally printed on t-shirts in the same saddle shoulder shape as the JAOBT; they feature a replicated graphic background or ‘wind bars’. Examining the body as the key component and by situating the JAOBT in a historical and contemporary context, the research paper investigates how dress and tattooing serves to inscribe the body with meaning, and how tattooing uses a literal method of inscription to achieve the same result. Keeping this in mind, The Third Skin examines and establishes the areas of overlap as they pertain to fashion, identity, art and the tattooed body.
Introduction

The MFA project, *The Third Skin*, starts with a simple premise of wanting to have a Japanese full arm pictorial tattoo. As a lesbian and thus as someone belonging to a subcultural, marginalised group in society, the desire for a tattoo of this kind has been both significant and long-lasting. When presented with the task of completing an art-design project of personal significance, the Japanese all over body tattoo (JAOBT) seemed to be a worthy choice. Extensive tattooing is a central part of the body modification practices that form the body politics of many lesbians who envision inscribing the body both as symbolic ownership and as an act of resistance to mainstream culture. Throughout my fifteen-year practice in the fashion industry, I have investigated the possibilities of using the body as canvas in many ways, trying different printing methods in an effort to replicate the JAOBT onto a garment. In the rendering of a genre of tattooing to the three dimensional garment, the body becomes a medium for the display of a mode of inscription inspired by the ‘floating world’ or *ukiyo-e* depicted in the wood block prints prevalent in the Edo Period of Japan. *The Third Skin* is thus intended to skirt the threshold between the fields of art and fashion. The project operates in four ways: first, by investigating the concept of ‘body as canvas’ for communicating identity, inscribed both literally and culturally; second, by referencing a genre of tattooing that takes its form from the art of the *ukiyo-e*; third, by using a mode of display that negates the body as central to fashion discourse, thereby transforming into installation art; and fourth, by taking its inspiration from the area of conceptual fashion, a genre of design that has its roots in conceptual
art. The MFA project is a significant milestone in my practice in taking me out of my comfort zone of conventional design. It is intended to open a new avenue in my practice toward areas more germane to art with which is less answerable to the orders of utility and more ambiguous and presentational.

The studio work consists of a series of four garments that feature tattoo prints—embodying the dual contexts of cultural and literal inscription. The tattoo prints are adapted versions of the JAOBT’s from the Edo period of Japan, arranged on the body and digitally printed on a t-shirt in the same ‘saddle shoulder’ shape as the original tattoos, and featuring a replicated graphic background, or ‘wind bars’ to tie the garments back to their point of origin. As a point of difference, the print portrays plants of prey or carnivorous plants such as the Venus fly trap as the central motif. This motif symbolises the sexualised woman in popular culture while the elegant violence of the imagery coupled with the discordant colours suggest perversity and transgression that can be allied to queer identity and queer style. Typically in Western culture the tattoo has always marked the transgressive body; it is commonly cited in fashion theory and cultural studies as is now known as tattoo theory in terms of the ‘criminal skin’ and generally classified as deviant.

The thesis examines the confluence of theories of dress and theories of tattooing and establishes that both practices are markers of identity or embodied subjectivities. Examining the body as the key component in both areas, The Third Skin examines how dress serves to inscribe the body with cultural meaning, and how tattooing uses a literal method of inscription with
the same result. In both areas the individual uses his/her body in the act of becoming or performing identity.

Tattooing is prominent in contemporary fashion contexts, and the intersection of these three points, as evidenced in this project, locates the work with significance in the here and now. The art and fashion nexus is defined by Hazel Clark (2012, p. 67) as art practices that are identified ‘by the primacy of ideas over appearance, self-reflection over resolution, innovation and experimentation, and statements that provided questions but rarely provided clear answers’. Conceptual fashion designers use the medium of the body to display works of art – straddling the cusp of art and fashion because functionality is negated and becomes secondary to the concept and the primacy of ideas, innovation and experimentation. Other designers such as Aitor Throup, Timo Rissanen and Shelly Fox negate the body altogether, displaying their works either on dummies suspended in action in the air or disembodied in a museum. The studio component of The Third Skin references the latter group of visual artists, primarily because the physical body is intentionally negated. The Third Skin however takes the mode of display a step further ignoring function altogether and locating the work in an artistic framework, as an installation within a gallery. This work operates as an aesthetic composite or unity, yet the garments nevertheless have the potential to be worn. As such, the work intentionally treads the line between fine art, gallery object and the kinds of displays germane to advertising and window display. The role of the body is key: as absent from the garments, yet as active as a viewing, interpreting agent.
Contemporary fashion itself is rife with tattoo references, a trajectory that can be traced back when fashion designer Jean Paul Gautier used flash based tattoos on body stocking tops in his 1980s collection *Tattoo*. The *tromp-l’oeil* effect gave the illusion of nudity and referenced Jean Genet’s *Querelle de Brest* (1947) in homage to the hyper masculine homoerotic sailor. In his Spring/Summer menswear collection of 2012, Gautier used heavily tattooed model Rico to wear his garments on the catwalk and in digital and print media formats. More recently, Gautier has collaborated with Coca-Cola to release a range of ‘Couture Coke’ bottles (see figure 8.) that feature his tattoo designs. Many of the more *avant garde* fashion designers, in menswear and womenswear, use tattooed models, as a marker of subversion – marking their aesthetic and its identity as separate from the dominant practice.

The written component of *The Third Skin* is divided into three parts. Chapter one, ‘The First Skin’, traces the historical lineage of the JAOBT from Edo Japan (1603 – 1868) and looks at how this transformed the nature of American tattooing after World War II. In *Tattoo Renaissance* (1988) Arnold Rubin investigates how theories of style, subculture and body modification overlap and support the resurgence in a contemporary context of all over body tattooing in the West. The significance of this research in a contemporary context is discussed towards the end of this chapter where examples of all over body tattooing and its foray into popular culture and onto the catwalks of Paris is examined. As the nominal epicentre of international fashion, Paris Fashion Week acts as a platform for *avant garde* designers’
collections—marking the space between the fringe and the ultimate in cool, through the transgressive body.

Chapter Two, or ‘The Second Skin’, engages with relevant theories of fashion and dress, utilising Joanne Entwistle’s theory of embodied practice, where she combines elements of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal phenomenology with Foucault’s work on discourse. Entwistle discusses how these elements operate on our bodies, expanding upon existing theories and locating them within the context of contemporary fashion. It would seem just as necessary that this chapter investigate the art-fashion nexus that the studio projects no doubt penetrates. This has been covered in recent literature, notably in *Fashion and Art* (Geczy and Karaminas eds., 2012). The chapter’s focus on embodiment—and therefore disembodiment—is important not only with respect to queer identity but also in the way in which *The Third Skin* project dynamically and actively destabilises the barrier between skin and clothing starting with the simple but mildly perverse conceit of inscribing something normally destined for skin onto a garment. Furthermore, the emphasis on embodiment in relation to fashion also has as its subtext the subtle but highly significant relationship that subcultures such as queers (and lesbians) seek accoutrements, inscriptions, clothing, dress and fashion in order to signal their inner identity, thus creating a reciprocal relation between immanence and appearance.

Finally, Chapter Three, or ‘The Third Skin’ looks at the work itself, that of the displayed tattooed garment. Keeping this in mind, the theoretical component
of this work examines and establishes the areas of overlap as they pertain to fashion, identity, art and the tattooed body.
Chapter One
The First Skin

During the period that defined pre-modern Japan, the samurai warrior class formed part of the social elite, a role that shifted during the controlled stability of the Edo period (1603-1868). Toward the end of this period, the need for the samurai’s skills as fighters dwindled due to the absence of any great war or intra-national conflict. As such, the samurai became quasi-courtiers to the Shogun. The samurai had always been more educated than the peasants and villagers, a division that increased during the Edo period. According to code and tradition, the samurai were required to educate themselves not only in the martial arts but also in literature, philosophy and the fine arts. However the warrior concept held firm in people’s imagination and defined a code of ethics so strongly that it still exists in Japan to this day. This samurai code is called *Bushido*, a word that combines *bu* (military), *shi* (man) and *do* (way). There was no single clear samurai honour code, however it is said to be defined by seven virtues - rectitude, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honour and loyalty - with an emphasis on filial piety and wisdom.

One needs only glance at Japanese tattoos to see the repeated image of the samurai in many different poses and guises (see figure 1 and 2). The specific iconographical meaning of different samurai figures and heroes is discussed later. Takahiro Kitamura and Katie M. Kitamura (1989) make much of the
legacy of the samurai upon this form of art and dedicated an entire literary work entitled *Bushido – Legacies of the Japanese Tattoo* (1989) to this topic. The samurai were a primary source of inspiration for the *ukiyo-e* wood block prints of the Edo period, an inspiration that spilled into tattoo design. Kitamura and Kitamura claim that these similarities run deeper, creating moral and ethical parallels between the nature of tattoo art and the martial artistry perfected by the samurai – both highly technical schools concerned with training both the mind and the spirit. Another similarity they cite is the ‘years of commitment and severe discipline’ (Kitamura & Kitamura 1989, p. 7) required to perfect these arts, both defined by perseverance and tests of will and pain, finally linking this back to the similarities between the dominant master and subordinate relationship inherent in both the samurai ethic and the application of the tattoo arts.

During the austere Edo period the numbers of samurai approached half a million. The shogunate banished them from cities and restricted where they could reside, and prohibited them from serving new masters. These fallen samurai organised themselves into groups and became the *Otokodate*; hiring themselves out as mercenaries, racketeering, gambling and protecting villagers from other ronin and samurai. They became the new heroes of the common man because they protected the merchants and their neighbourhoods from the ‘injustices of the powerful’ (Kitamura and Kitamura 1989, p. 7). Kitamura and Kitamura make connections between the popularity of the *musha-e* (warrior prints), the imagery of *Suikoden*, and the emergence of the *Otokodate*, stating that the popularity of the former was bolstered by
the emergence of the latter, especially amongst the popular culture of the time. The *Otokodate* were also popular figures in the Kabuki plays of the time.

Tattooing became one of the hallmarks of the *Yakuza* (see figure 3.) who, like the palanquin bearers, porters, fire-fighters, stable hands, masons and carpenters, typically had large parts of their bodies exposed. Traditional tattooing methods were excruciatingly painful: the tattooist used a carved tool that was tipped with a cluster of little needles that were dipped in ink and then pushed into the skin in quick succession of painful jabs (David E. Kaplan and Alec Dubro 2012). This process of obtaining a JAOBT took around 100 hours. The rigors that one was made to get a tattoo became a marker of strength, courage and masculinity: it was a “mark of great respect within the underworld to have endured the torture of the traditional method” (Kaplan & Dubro 2012, p. 15).

Many different reasons for the rise in popularity of this form of all over body tattooing have been mooted—that they were class based or investment skins’—however it is generally agreed that a popular novel, translated from Chinese to Suikoden in Japanese, was responsible for tattooing becoming so popular. As Ronald Richie and Ian Burma state in *The Japanese Tattoo* ‘the initial impetus is usually ascribed to the appearance of a novel, one that eventually took Japan, or at least its capitol Edo by storm’(1989, p. 20). The novel centered on a band of 108 tattooed men united against a corrupt authority ‘outlaws and brigands, they were nonetheless men of honour and probity…. all bound together by a single theme of revolt against the corrupt
bureaucracy" (Richie & Burma 1989, p. 20). Richie and Burma write that 'the Japanese translation was a steady seller between 1751 and the end of the century and the suddenly became a craze in the early 1800s – one of the many in Japan’s long history of instant enthusiasms' (1989, p. 21). The illustrations from Suikoden became the inspiration for the JAOBT, in particular those by Kuniyoshi Utagawa, became immensely popular, and it is these that formed both the style and iconography of the Japanese pictorial tattoo.

The collections of images that make up the Japanese tattoo are steeped in mythology and symbolism. Ideas of tradition, heritage, respect and honour are important in Japan, and the JAOBT can be dissected as a visual map of these notions. Kitamura and Kitamura state ‘the Japanese tattoo is cryptic, based on an elaborate, tradition based code of significance, so that meaning is linked to maintaining legacies and respecting tradition’, effectively drawing a line between the ‘tattoo, the samurai ethic, and mainstream Japanese culture as a whole’ (1989, p. 7). A further example of the respect tradition that is bound with the Samaria warrior ethic is that the decision making process regarding the choice of symbols and motifs of the JAOBT is one that is guided by the tattoo master.

In what may have started as having distinct iconographical meaning has evolved over time to a more vague kind of symbolism, and this applies greatly to the use of flora and fauna in the JAOBT. The base of the tattoo designs are called ‘wind bars’ and are literally formed by repeated, sweeping graphic ‘bars’. Floral motifs have become the decorative element that sit on top of
these wind bars behind the more solid images of dragon, samurai and fish that sit in the foreground (see figure 4.). Originally in Japanese culture, the cherry blossom and the maple leaf of poetry, prose and graphic arts stand for transience and evanescence—philosophical symbols of the samurai representing the short and passing nature of their existence and a beautiful death. The peony, on the other hand, is Chinese in origin and represents wealth and good fortune; the chrysanthemum is a long-lasting medicinal flower representing determination and steadfastness. Richie and Burma state that ‘these associations are of the same order as those attributed to, for example, the red rose in Western tattooing. There the message is undying love, eternal fidelity, and a degree of transcendence over mundane life’ (1989, p. 41). The most popular images of fauna include the carp, as representative of stoicism and bravery; and the dragon, an animal of wisdom, objectivity, benevolence, bravery and power.

There were key differences between West coast artists who perpetuated the JAOBT tattoo design and tattooists from previous decades. The main reason was that they were trained artists who had, for different reasons, practiced tattooing methods and had become adept at it. The second is that they drew their clients from the middle class who began collecting and exhibiting tattoos on their flesh as works of art (Enid Schildkrout 2004) instead of its previous, devotees such as sailors, motor bikers and prisoners—thereby diversifying the client pool (Schildkrout 2004). This ‘Tattoo Renaissance’, a term coined by Arnold Rubin in 1988, also brought about the centralization of information and, most importantly to this discourse, introduced customized full-body
Japanese ‘fine line’ tattoos that replaced the repetitive pre-made, stencil designs known as ‘flash’ tattoos.

The Tattoo Renaissance was, according to Rubin (1988), inspired by a set of five men who began travelling widely at the time, studying with the master tattooists from Japan; namely North American tattoo artists Phil Sparrow, Sailor Jerry (Norman Keith) Collins, Cliff Raven, and Don Ed Hardy. These tattooists revolutionized tattooing by spreading Japanese design throughout Oceania, Europe and the Philippines (Schildkrout 2004). In Rubin’s words it was ‘Japanese design (that) triggered the first wave of expansion and it continues to inspire experimentation and elaboration’ (1988, p. 235). The commercial and media success of these five men, and the way in which they utilised the contours of the human body (rather than flash based tattoo applications), applying imagery from Japanese culture, with new application techniques of colour and line, made overnight success.

Jerry Collins or ‘Sailor Jerry Collins’ who was exposed to the art and imagery of Southeast Asia on his travels as a member of the US Navy, became a pioneer of the JAOBT and did much for the tattoo industry. He located safe pigment dyes in four colours, where previously there were only three, he created tattoo machines and needles that traumatized the skin less, and most importantly, he pioneered the introduction of single use needles and products and hospital-grade sterilization in tattoo parlours. Phil Sparrow was the official tattooist of the Hells Angels motorbike gang in the 1960s, his real passion was for the JAOBT and he worked extensively with other artists such as Cliff
Raven and Ed Hardy. Raven developed his own style, which were appropriations of the JAOBT large-scale, freehand and customized tattoos. However, he used much brighter colours than the original JAOBTs, eventually turning towards a tribal style that featured monochromatic black and white. Ed Hardy became Phil Sparrow’s protégé and a pioneer of the JAOBT. Hardy also had a great influence on the introduction of sanitization and quality of artistry and in 1974 he moved to San Francisco and opened a studio called the Realistic Tattoo Studio – the first tattoo operation to introduce the ‘by appointment’ method.

The Tattoo Renaissance continued into the nineties and is known as the Neo Primitives, Urban Tribal movement or Modern Primitives. The semantics of what this subset of society should be called holds much theoretical interest, and discourse on the subject is extensive. Some of the questions raised are regarding whether or not the styles and fashions of this, and other subcultures should be counted as such; indeed whether subcultures even exist in a postmodern world; the relationship between body art and deviance; authenticity and appropriation; capitalism and consumerism. The Neo Primitives challenge the dominance of modern commercial culture referencing primitive times ‘by inventing a mythical new age and neo tribal history, by moving from stigma to status, tattooing has become not only a means to symbolically undo the conquest of the primitive world, but also a way of denying authenticity to those who can actually claim authorship of tattooing in the West’ (De Mello cited in Shildkrout 2004, p. 338). The Modern Primitives adopt various traits of pre-modern, tribal primitivism. Extensive tattooing,
piercings, implants, scarification, branding, tongue splitting & other forms of ‘body play’ including hanging, constriction & public displays of such define the group. The tattooing often covers whole sections or all of the body (see figure 6.), derivative of the JAOBT in coverage and contouring. The Modern Primitive is about adherence to primitive codes and modes of behaviour, reaching altered states through pain, creating the identity of the group through body modification, and claiming ownership of the body in the utilization of agency to transform its natural or pre-modified state. As stated by Torgorvik ‘much of this meaning-making involves notions about the primitive, about idealized non-Western cultures, and about alternative lifestyles inspired by these notions’ (cited by Shildkrout 2004, p. 337). Theresa Winge (2012) explains that a prime example of this is the use of primitive tools and techniques for the application of their tattoos – as part of the Neo Primitive project to redefine the limits of pain, the body and its flesh.

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When obtaining tattoos or choosing clothes, style becomes another way of finding new identities and subjectivities—a fluid state of expressing the project of becoming oneself. In the same way as applying ink to one’s flesh fixes one’s identity against the breakdown of society’s groups, Joanne Finkelstein (1996) interprets Herbert Blumer’s work and suggests that the choosing of clothes and the expression of style ‘helps to reduce social anxiety by embodying change and offering a sense or order’ (cited by Kaiser 2001, p. 84).
Patrizia Calefato succinctly points out that a look has a two-fold facility in the world, functioning one the one hand as an external image, and on the other as an expression of the internal self. Calefato argues that one’s appearance or look articulates ‘a way of being in the world and of creating a social universe’ Calefato (1997, p. 86). The body features strongly in this theory of ‘minding appearances’ as the point of connect between the material (the flesh) and the symbolic; as Ferguson states, the body is the ‘threshold of subjectivity’ or a ‘mobile subjectivity’ (cited by Kaiser 2001, p. 93). As an epistemology of ambiguity, Kaiser claims that her concept helps to blur the boundaries between the binaries that define us ‘mind and body, inner and outer, linear and nonlinear, the visual and the verbal, concrete and abstract, political and aesthetic, critical and creative, personal and social, local and global’ (2001, p. 97).

Two main areas of discourse cover the area of bodily inscriptions. The first deals with the anthropological or literal inscription of the human flesh, the second with the post-structural sociological or metaphorical inscription of the body. The first is corporeal, the second is cultural (Schildkrout 2004). There has been discussion of bodily inscriptions from a sociological perspective in this dissertation, however in the following few paragraphs an anthropological perspective prevails, with special reference to the material nature of the flesh. Schildkrout (2004, p. 320) finds that much of this discourse about inscriptions has led to many discussions of corporeal inscription and differing definitions and interpretations of what "inscription" and "body" actually mean", that is, the metaphorical versus literal inscription, and the social body versus the skin. The result of this discourse is to reject the disembodiment of the poststructuralist body and to concentrate on what Fleming
calls “border skirmishing”—rituals of pain where individuals redefine their relationship with society through their flesh (cited in Schildkrout 2004).

There is some crossover in between the anthropological and sociological sciences regarding tattooing and their significance: both fields naming them as markers of identity. According to Schildkrout (2004) anthropologists have, over time, concentrated on how the inscribed body acts as a marker of identity for gender, age and socio-political status. Sigmund Freud has also referred to the skin as ‘mystic writing pad’, a place where individuals can carve their identity (cited by Schildkrout p. 321). Alfred Gell refers to the tattooed flesh as a ‘double skin folded over itself’ simultaneously a reflection of the exterior and the interior (cited by Schildkrout 2004, p.321). In *Body as Permanent Text*, John Follet refers to tattoo consumption as a ‘site of embodied expression that is bounded by physicality, and permanence’ (2009, p. 2). Similarly, Schildkrout (2004, p. 319) describes skin as a ‘canvas upon which human differences can be written and read’. In summary, sociological research considers the body as a site onto which culture is projected; whereas anthropological studies find that the tattooed flesh is a site for the literal inscription of the same, defining and inserting the individual into the landscape. Key to these arguments is is that fashion by definition is a set of ever-changing trends, while tattoos are permanent, or intended to be. As Paul Sweetman avers, ‘as corporeal artefacts, however, tattoos and piercings will arguably continue to refer to the manner of their production, and in this sense to resist full incorporation into Baudrillard’s ‘carnival of signs’, however popular related imagery becomes’ (2007, p. 308).
Much has been written on the popularization of tattooing due to the Neo Primitive movement. Many social and political movements such as second wave feminism, gay and lesbian subcultures, punk, skin heads and Goths, from the sixties onward have used their body as a means of identification; modifying it with piercings and tattoos as a means of statement making against the heterogeneity of the masses; claiming their flesh as their own. The Neo-Tribal movement has been attributed with having the greatest influence upon mainstream culture, with their use of all over body tattooing and piercings. This movement gave name, face and new meaning to images of the primitive. As a result, body modification spread into the middle class and was adopted by celebrities becoming part of popular culture and fashion, and becoming a ‘fashion statement’, disassociating it from its degenerate roots and rendering it exotic. Sweetman agrees with Schildkrout in stating that the years from 1995 until 2007 saw the mainstream enculturation of both tattooing and piercing; ‘Numerous celebrities now sport tattoo and piercings, and related imagery is frequently featured in advertising copy, as well as in the work of designers like Jean-Paul Gautier’ and especially on the catwalk (2007, p. 292).

In recent years, tattoo symbols have proliferated in art, popular culture and fashion. One striking example is when Nicola Formichetti employed Rick Genest (Rico) to model for Thierry Mugler (see figure 7.), both on runway and in several print campaigns. Genest has eighty per cent of his body, including his face, covered by tattoos. He appeared in Lady Gaga’s film clip Born This Way performing with Gaga in male drag. More recently, in collaboration with Coca Cola, Jean Paul Gautier had designed ‘couture Coke’ bottles called Tattoo based on his body-art inspired collections and perfume bottles.
The tattoo has become a marker of the fringe of fashion and provides an interesting topic for analysis. Jean-Paul Gautier's printed tattoo tops of the nineties are a pre-eminent example of the crystallization of the growing tattoo trend in fashion, popular culture and queer culture. In the collection *Tattoo*, Jean-Paul Gautier used images from gay culture, especially the sailor who stands as a symbol of masculine virility and homoeroticism. Further, the fashion industry regularly appropriates the visual tropes and symbols of Orientalist representation for inspiration, both in collections and the way in which fashion is represented on the catwalk and in the media. Designers Karl Lagerfeld, Alexander McQueen, Christian Dior, John Galliano, and Australia’s Easton Pearson have adopted representations of the Orients past and present to distinguish their brand. In 2012 Yves Saint-Laurent used the motif of the Chinese dragon embroidered black onto the sheer mesh of an evening gown whose design was based on a traditional Chinese cheongsam. In this instance, the dragon becomes an ambivalent symbol for the mysterious and exotic East.

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*The Third Skin* replicates the style of the JAOBT including the layout, configurations rendering and graphic component but draws its symbolic content from elsewhere. Discussions regarding its place of inspiration are relevant, but even more so are issues of appropriation. Issues of cultural appropriation are important in addressing the adaptation of the JAOBT in *The Third Skin* and in other contemporary contexts, and illustrate the current problem facing many in the design field regarding the authenticity of design. Once a symbol or a style is
removed from its historical, social and political settings the meanings change – especially when they are reapplied in another context. Therefore the symbolic meanings of the JAOBTs become obsolete, for example the chrysanthemum no longer means determination and steadfastness, but rather serves to represent the 'exotic' East. It can be said that appropriation is part of a set of devices that include the enculturation of signs and symbols belonging to the other into one's own culture, 'exoticizing' these symbols and thereby reinforcing them. On the other hand, it can also be said that appropriation should not be considered in this way, for to choose designs on their face value denies their intention and context. Both sides of this argument disclose broader issues regarding colonialism and imperialism, the symbolic ambiguity of art and design, and the right of designers to consume and fetishize these cultural motifs.

This symbolic creation of the Orientalist Other is especially relevant to discussions of the JAOBT in contemporary contexts, including *The Third Skin*. Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1978) argues that as part of the modernist colonial project, the Orient exists primarily for the West's satisfaction and exploitation. More imaginative than actual, the Orient is a malleable site for Western desire, a site subdivided by prejudices, simplifications and fabrications. John McKenzie (1995) argues that simply to see the Orient as the effect of Western conception and visualization is a negative approach when much of the appropriation is based on admiration rather than subjugation. As a response to the contrasting positions of both Said (1978) and McKenzie (2010) Geczy (2013) coins the term 'transorientalism' to define the space where the symbolically ambiguous oriental sign can reside in a locale all of its own. Geczy defines transorientalism as the
‘self-conscious use of the orient as a geographically uncircumscribed zone, whose cultural specifics are secondary to the imaginative uses to which it can be put’ (2013, p. 6).

The sense of imagination that has been harnessed in this MFA project is one that views the Orient as a site of productive invention and re-materialization. Since the establishment of the contemporary fashion system in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century, designers have been appropriating various cultural and social signifiers and combining them to create complex garments in term of construction and design. Transorientalism allows for the imagery of China to be captured in the symbolic reinterpretation of the Chinese dragon on the back of an evening gown (see figure 9.) to exist unproblematically in the form of a traditional cheongsam. According to Geczy, the ‘oriental sign as it is trafficked in fashion and dress is fluid and dodges…. like transgender, [it] is a space that has not renounced the base realities but at the same time commands another, independent space’ (Geczy 2012, p. 10). Fashion and clothing provide a particularly loaded cultural site where pattern construction, motifs and ambiguities are played out. Orientalism notes Geczy, is the ‘ethical frontier of race and identity which has a long history and is so tightly bound to the evolution of fashion, clothes and dress that within Western Couture its critical dimension is lost’ (2013, p. 159).

In *The Third Skin* project, the Japanese motifs on the disembodied garments are not directly lifted from Japanese designs, however they are deeply imbued with a ‘Japaneseness’ or Japanese flavour, especially in terms of JAABT styling—akin to a transorientalist approach. The intention here is to open new meanings about
gender, aesthetics and power. As an adaptation, using exoticism to express the liminal discourse of queer, *The Third Skin* fits neither in the Western world nor in the Eastern, instead it hovers in a space all of its own. As a representational system, the *Third Skin* has the potential to bring together Orientalist discourses in art and fashion and interrogate them within the frame of identity politics.
Chapter Two

The Second Skin

The notion of ‘embodied subjectivity’, a term coined by Joanne Entwistle, is key to understanding contemporary fashion studies. In her essay Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice (2000), Entwistle uses both sociological and philosophical poststructuralist frameworks to explain her concept, combining theories of dress and theories of the body with work on corporeal phenomenology. Entwistle takes key components of each theory and refines her theory of ‘situated bodily practice’. Entwistle states ‘I sketch out a theoretical framework that takes as its starting-point the idea that dress is an embodied practice, a situated bodily practice that is embedded within the social world and fundamental to microsocial order’ (2000, p. 325). In this regard, Entwistle finds that dress is not merely for protection, but that it augments the body adding a plethora of readings that would not exist otherwise, making it far from being ‘merely an instrument or object in the world, instead giving us our expression in the world’ (2008, p. 325).

Entwistle uses Foucault in combination with some of the work on phenomenology by Maurice Merleau-Ponty to expound her theory of ‘embodied practice’, stating primarily that ‘human bodies are dressed bodies’ (Entwistle 2008, p. 323), illuminating the primacy of the connection between fashion and the body. If, as stated by Ted Polhemus (1988, p. 32), ‘all cultures ‘dress’ the body in some way, be it through clothing, tattooing, cosmetics, or other forms of body painting’, then the analysis of one’s dress should be exceptionally useful in pointing out gender,
race, religion, class and social status. For Entwistle, dress and the body operate dialectically: ‘dress works on the body, imbuing it with social meaning, while the body is a dynamic field that gives life and fullness to dress’ (Entwistle and Wilson 1998, p. 327). Using a constructivist analysis, Entwistle (2008, p.77) states that dress is not merely a protective device against the elements used to maintain our modesty and identity; instead, clothing cannot exist without the body - and to support this she cites the example of the disembodied garments hanging in a museum.

Entwistle states that Foucault’s insights into ways in which bodies are subject to power and discursively constituted can be utilized to show how ‘institutional and discursive practices of dress act upon the body, marking it and rendering it meaningful and productive’ (2008, p. 329). Foucault’s analysis looks at space occupied by the body in relation to social order and, ultimately, power. Entwistle uses Foucault’s work to establish links between the hegemony of the Western fashion system and current ideas of gender, arguing that whilst originally fashion defined class, in recent times it is an imperative in the demarcation of sexual differences. However, Entwistle finds shortcomings in his work when it comes to the recognition of individual agency or the acknowledgement of the fleshy body and its experiential dimensions; she finds that Foucault falls short in his recognition & consideration of gender.

Inhabiting a space between the theory of Foucault and the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Entwistle argues for ‘embodied subjectivity’ by emphasizing the individual utilization of agency. Simply put, we employ choice
when we get dressed, and in this very simple act we transcend strict structuralist mores and are no longer living in bodies docile. We perform our identity daily through these choices, creating who we are or who we want to project that we are, and thus dress is a fundamental in the examination of individual (and group) identity. As Entwistle states, ‘not only does dress form the missing link between individual identity and the body, providing the means or “raw material” for performing identity; dress is fundamentally an inter-subjective and social phenomena, it is an important link between individual identity and social belonging’ (2008, p. 337).

Entwistle uses phenomenology to suggest ways in which dress can be further understood as an embodied practice. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) argues that our experience of the world comes to us via the place of our body in time and space though what he called ‘corporeal or postural schema’; ‘in other words we grasp external space, relationships between objects and our relationship between them through our position in and our movement through the world’ (cited by Entwistle 2008, p. 333). She draws on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, describing the body as the envelope of our existence in the world; the location from whence springs our own experience of our selfhood. Claiming his work to be neither ‘essential nor transcendental’, Entwistle (2008, p. 334) re-joins that Merleau-Ponty’s idea of subjectivity is simple; the body is the vehicle of the self. She finds that looking at dress from a phenomenological viewpoint means we can recognise the way in which dress operates on the fleshy body and accordingly mediates the experience of identity and selfhood. Dani Cavallaro has come to similar conclusions and states ‘the vital part played by the body in the learning
curve confirms the proposition that knowledge is inevitably embodied. Our material reality is inescapable’ (2001, p. 101). The dressed body is not, as Foucault would have it, an inert object existing in space, but instead it haunts space, acting as a site for the articulation of selfhood, actively produced through ‘particular, routine and mundane practices’ (Entwistle 2008, p. 335). Merleau-Ponty’s work enables us to understand that the body is not only a ‘textual entity produced by discursive practices but is the active and perceptive vehicle of being’ (Entwistle 2008, p. 335).

These bodies we exist in, these receptacles of experience and perspective are never natural but are socially produced. Jennifer Craik aptly sums up the constructed nature of selfhood in relation to dress in her statement ‘however the body – although composed of natural parts – is never natural but is always produced by how it is clothed’(2009, p. 136). Fashion is a code and is accordingly steeped in social significance – communicating meaning in relation to gender, sexuality and identity. As Craik (2009) finds dress becomes a key semiotic factor in an analysis of the body – a discourse of dress. As explained by Vicki Karaminas, ‘dress frames the body. It expresses who we are and who we are not as a means of expressing identity and a way of interacting and belonging to a particular culture….. What makes the study of fashion so important in popular culture is the role of clothing in constructing material identity and its shaping of personal and social space’ (2012, p. 1). Lisa Blackman agrees stating, ‘thus, if we want to understand what it means to be human, we need to understand how the body is constructed through symbols, codes, signs, signifying activity and discursive practices’ (2008, p. 67). Marcel Maus described this social production of our bodies
as central to our world of experience prestigious imitation. In this, he is referring to how we employ agency to fit into society’s social groups (1973).

The discourse of dieting is a useful tool to illuminate societal strategies operating on our bodies, a tool utilized to construct our bodies and identities in a very literal sense. It is also a good example of an individual’s agency over their own body – a body technique, inscribing the body with meaning so that it is no longer docile but active, i.e. the active body takes on meaning other than that which it assigned. As stated by Susan Bordo, “the individual body is a microcosm reproducing the anxieties and vulnerabilities of the macrocosm, namely the social body. Contemporary politics of corporeality mirror the contradictions of capitalism and consumer culture: their simultaneous glorification of autonomous selfhood and relentless commodification of human beings” (cited by Cavallaro 2001, p. 104).

In this, we can see that the physical body is not merely flesh and bones, but it is also a cultural concept; a device for the imprinting or encoding of a society’s value system through its dimensions and embellishments.

There is much in the literature questioning the boundary of the body – is it the skin, or the clothing, and does this liminality belong to the individual or to the social? Exactly where does the demarcation apply? Does it mark the beginning of the outside or the end of the inside? The concept of ‘belonging’ here is intrinsically
linked to ideas of power. Does the body belong to us, or does it belong to the social groups within which we exist? Cavallaro succinctly summarises these musings:

“Framing the body is a vital means of establishing structures of power, knowledge, meaning and desire. Yet, the body has the knack of breaking the frame. Its boundaries often turn out to be unstable, for how can we confidently establish where the body ‘begins’ and where it ‘ends’” (cited by Entwistle 2008, p. 334).

She finds that the real body, uncontrolled or contained by society is ‘fluid and sprawling’ Cavallaro (2001, p. 106), existing by experience for us in pieces or as body parts – and never as a complete whole. She claims that as a result of technology, the fleshy body has disappeared, becoming all the more significant as a result. Entwistle is more certain about the limits and place of demarcation of the body. She finds that dress marks the liminal space between the interior and the exterior, self and the other, forming an image of the real and projected self, personal & social; or as Fred Davis aptly puts it ‘serving as a kind of visual metaphor for identity ….registering the culturally anchored ambivalences that resonate within and among identities’ (cited by Entwistle 2008, p. 327 & p. 337). More specifically, Entwistle concludes that dress becomes an extension of our fleshy selves, acting like a second skin.

The notion of ‘performivity’ is central to these discussions about the body and belonging, as the descriptor for the enactment of roles or body techniques (learnt behaviour) necessary to play out or to adhere to societal group dictates. As stated by Craik, ‘body techniques are the ways in which the body performs in terms of
rules that both construct and constrain its behaviour...... the body, then, is a technical device that is the outcome of how it has learned to perform. In sum, it is the repository of a constellation of body techniques’ (2009, p. 136). Further, Craik (2009) borrows from Foucault to argue that these body techniques are the product of specific discourses acting on our bodies from various areas such as aesthetic, psychological, social and political fields of knowledge. For example, if we are female we perform femininity – a set of rituals are learnt behaviours that differ from society to society and from place to place that are extremely structured and depend entirely on their context. Clothing is fundamental as markers of identity in the communication of these meanings – or, as stated by Craik (2009, p. 39), ‘codes of dress are technical devices that articulate the relationship between a particular body and it’s lived milieu’.

Gender is a primary concern in the consideration of dress in relation to identity making. Entwistle confirms this relationship with the statement,

“fashion (defined here as a system of continually changing styles), and especially the Fashion System in the West, is linked to Foucault's operations of power, initially marking out class divisions, but more recently playing a crucial role in policing the boundaries of sexual difference” (2000, p. 329).

We are born sexed as either male or female and society imposes upon our bodies a myriad of meanings to create identities of gender; for example we are female and therefore we are feminine – ‘docility, passivity, calculated body performances as spectacle, subservience and nurturing’, a set of parameters that the body must
perform in order to fit in to society. Craik further argues that ‘gender is a body technique par excellence: both femininity and masculinity are highly contrived and arbitrary cultural constructs’ (2009, p. 142). Foucault is crucial in the understanding of theories of social constructivism; i.e. that society’s institutions and power structures act on our bodies constructing identities by the mere necessity of having to belong to groups; however, he overlooks issues of gender that feminists have since criticized Foucault. Entwistle, whose key message is in relation to dress and individual is agency, also finds fault with Foucault in relation to gender, stating that ‘while social collectivities, class and gender for example, and social situations structure the codes of dress, these are relatively open to interpretation and are only realized through the embodied practice of dress itself. Thus dress is the result of a complex negotiation between the individual and the social’ (2008, p. 341).

What we wear is key in defining our identity, in fact our bodies are walking advertisements – stating who we are, what gender we are, where we come from and what we believe; in short – our identity. As stated by Craik (2009, p. 137) we construct out identities “through a triple viewpoint, namely the conjunction – or simultaneous fusing – of three modalities of training: physiological (physical performance), psychological (internalized norms and habits), and sociological (making sense of roles consensually)”. Dress serves to fulfil the function of the everyday manifestation of this identity, acting as a visual metaphor, because society puts pressure on us to fit in by wearing what is acceptable in defined situations in order to avoid social censure. We enter into the realm of feelings ‘prudential, ethical and aesthetic, and the workings of what one might call sartorial conscience’ (Bell, cited by Entwistle 2000, p. 326). In this, we mark ourselves out
as belonging to our chosen groups – our bodies act as vehicles in the demarcation of the boundaries of the flesh. We perform our identities routinely and specifically; our clothing playing an essential role in this. As Craik argues, ‘our body image forms the basis of our idea of self and identity as an individual, shaped by both our bodily performance and by how others perceive us. Bodies are “worn” through technologies of movement, restraint, precise gesturing, and continual adjustments according to the dynamics of the immediate space occupied by the body’ (2009, p. 137).

Tattooing is another example of a body technique which exemplifies an individual’s agency in the inscribing of their own flesh with discourses of meaning. In this instance, the body becomes a canvas,

“not only the site where culture is inscribed but also a place where the individual is defined and inserted into the cultural landscape. Tattoos, scars, brands, and piercings, when voluntarily assumed, are ways of writing one’s autobiography on the surface of the body. These practices express belonging and exclusion” (Shildkrout 2004, p. 338).

Skin delineates the boundary of the body in the same way as dress, so the act of applying ink to one’s skin is a form of agency. This process of performing identity through the purposeful marking of the skin, is dubbed a body project, a social skin or a flesh journey’ to describe this phenomenon of embodied subjectivity.
Chapter Three

The Third Skin

*The Third Skin* arises from three areas; gay subculture, fashion and art, and references these in turn, touching on the first through the tattoo designs as markers of identity (as explained in Chapter 1) and the second through the construction and fabrication of the garments. The chosen material is a sheer, lightweight modal jersey, a very current fabric in contemporary fashion. The garments feature side seams that swivel forward, referencing an area of fashion described by the term ‘architectural fashion’, a construction technique that uses form as a basis for design. These seams are rendered external to the garment (i.e. are inside out), referencing an area of fashion known as ‘deconstruction’, pioneered in the late eighties by the ‘big three’ Japanese designers Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and Rei Kuwakabo (of Comme Des Garçons). Both of these elements, construction and fabrication, locate *The Third Skin* in the present as time is an essential component in discourses of fashion.

*The Third Skin* is concerned with the intersection between fashion and art. Because the garments are not displayed on the vertical body but are displayed on horizontal poles, they cease to be fashion and become disembodied artefacts. The four garments that make up the body of work play on ideas at the cusp of these two sister sciences pioneered by fashion designers like Victor and Rolf, who suggest that the functional component of fashion design can be transcended and rendered applied art, using the body as a platform from which to construct
conceptual ideas. The Third Skin serves as a vehicle to communicate concepts that transcend the commercial and practical purposes of fashion. The Third Skin is a hybridized version of art and fashion, otherwise known as ‘conceptual fashion’. The application of the term ‘conceptual’ to fashion is scaffolded by a rich history of conceptual art that, as Hazel Clarke finds, has created the framework upon which conceptual fashion has been built. If conceptual art practices are identified ‘by the primacy of ideas over appearance, self-reflection over resolution, innovation and experimentation, and statements that provided questions but rarely provided clear answers’ (Clarke, 2012, p. 67) then conceptual fashion is defined by the same. Such questions continue to be rather dormant within contemporary art discourse. This remains a mystery, first given the profusion and increase of exhibits of fashion in major art museums, from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York to the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) in Brisbane. Moreover, designers with a highly experimental bent with sensitivity to sculptural form and a talent for all-over form such as Martin Margiela and Alexander McQueen (see figure 10) continue to exert a growing influence over the new generation of artists and designers. It is indeed through them that the term ‘sculptural fashion’ has been coined. This is to refer to something neighbouring, but beyond, the kinds of extreme haute couture that only appear aesthetically plausible on the runway (Christian Lacroix is perhaps a good example of this). Sculptural fashion places a premium on the fashion object and/or the body as a sculptural, plastic (in the sculptural sense of physical and tactile) whole. Designers place their objects at the centre of an intricate web of mythologies and references from folklore to pop culture.
In its multivalent relationship to the body, *The Third Skin* blends the practices of installation art that grew out of the late sixties together with minimalism and alternative practices such as performance art and land art that sought to take the art object outside of its status as a commodifiable whole by rupturing the spaces of viewing and the modalities of display. While made of the individual pieces, *The Third Skin* is intended to be seen as a sum of its parts. The suspension of the garments on coloured rods variously askew on the wall is intended to create a sculptural aggregate within which the viewer is able to perambulate. Consonant with installation art, fashion can be seen as a unity from the outside or experienced from within. The disembodiment of the objects plays a central role to the work’s concept inasmuch as it is intended to make the viewer imaginatively insert him or herself into the work, if only for the simple reason that clothing is not conventionally meant to be displayed. This sense in the viewer is, it is hoped, compounded by the fact that these objects are art objects as much as fashion objects designed for display only, as opposed to garments on exhibit that have been worn or intended to be so.

This oscillation between hypothetical embodiment and disembodiment plays an important conceptual role in *The Third Skin*. The project is named for the way in which these fashion/art objects or artefacts, as I prefer to call them, are, by virtue of being and alluding to clothing, a boundary around the body. Conventionally clothing is the second skin, yet this clothing bears the elaborate marks of tattoos, hence ‘third skin’. In the exhibition, the viewer is invited into a space marked by four poles, enabling them to walk around the artefacts, inviting touch and ability to engage with the installation in a textural tactile way; the format allows, in Ingrid
Loschek’s words, ‘one to discern the form, construction method and material of originals in exhibitions; here they can be communicated as applied art’ (Loschek 2009, p. 202). The poles permit distance and perspective enabling the viewer to look at the artefacts, a luxury not permitted with commercial fashion. In fact time, an essential element in any discussion of fashion, in this instance is rendered obsolete, for the artefacts replicate the absence of the temporal imperative similar to art.

The framed artefacts are coloured using discords—blue with orange, red with green and yellow with purple—chosen to emphasize an unnatural order, a perversity. Specifically, the colour theory utilised is a series of complementary discords that feature tertiary versions of the three primary colours and their complementary partners (Finley, 2003, p245). The original version is coloured as per the dictates of nature, ironically also featuring complimentary colours. Treated in Photoshop, the layering of the ‘wind bar’ design over a digital pattern locates the body of work in the present because of the use of technological techniques.

*The Third Skin* is a work of adaptation that replicates the JAOBT stylistically, referencing the layout, configuration, rendering style, shading and graphic components of this tattoo genre. It also replicates the patterning and positioning of the tattoo on the body, which is also very specific to the JAOBT. However, *The Third Skin* draws its semiotic content from elsewhere: instead of referencing Japanese mythology and history, it uses carnivorous plants to reference gender identity and female sexuality. Drawing on nineteen-century Darwinian parallels between insectivorous plants and the suppressed yet purportedly voracious sexual
urges of Victorian Englishwomen, *The Third Skin* speaks to the boundaries bridged between science and literary imagination of these times by locating these ideas in the most current of contexts. The carnivorous plants that were chosen—poison ivy, the Venus fly trap, the pitcher plant and the black dahlia— are ironic symbolic representations of women’s assertive sexuality in popular culture in the West.

Finally, the word skin is used in a way that is purposefully loaded. Skin is the sensory surface and the symbolic and real border between inside and outside the body. In *The Libidinal Economy*, Jean-François Lyotard devotes the first chapter to what he calls ‘the large ephemeral pellicle’ (or membrane). Lyotard draws from a broader tradition of both aesthetics, psychoanalysis and phenomenology that identifies perception and touch as fundamentally libidinal—understood most simply and graphically in the closeness of the words sensual (pertaining to lust) and sensuous (pertaining to the senses). For Lyotard this membrane is the site of pure sensation and appetite. In the words of Peter Dews (2012, p. 51) the ‘large ephemeral membrane’ is,

“constituted by the deployed surfaces of the body, which are swept away by an incessantly mobile libidinal cathexis generating points of pure sensation or ‘intensity’. This description of the libidinal band is perhaps best considered a philosophical experiment, a paradoxical attempt to explore what experience would be like before the emergence of a self-conscious subject of experience.”

For the purpose of this paper, this pre-consciousness of sensation and knowledge, so valued to poststructuralist thought, has the relevance of being the body before it
is racially and sexually circumscribed, valued, judged and de-valued. This surface is the place of free desire, before it is reduced to sexual stereotypes according to law, family, gender and religion. In short, the first level at which *The Third Skin* operates (the ‘first skin’ if you like) is the ‘pure’ site of sensation that knows no boundary between libido and tactility. It is also the site that is pre-eminently queer, since it knows no boundaries. This is the site in which lesbians and everyone else inhabit before they are recognized ‘as such’.

But of course the site with no boundaries is also the site of no representation. *The Third Skin* is a disciplined and stylized work. Its claims to sensation, to counter-culture, perversion and transgression are purposely understated. The work is not meant to challenge in this way nor to offend. Rather, in manner true to commercial fashion, it intends to seduce with elegance and beauty. In doing so, the work reclaims such spaces for lesbians who have conventionally been treated as possessing the shadow of heteronormative models of female beauty. This is also another reason why the body is absent—it does not engage with body types or stereotypes. Rather the work seeks to instate itself both as both a blanket assertion what is also an expression of a desire for expanding the spaces of viewing and of understanding. In this regard to stretch fashion into art is, for me, a potent metaphor for the desire to stretch perceptions of gender and being.
Conclusion

In a laboratory somewhere in Los Angeles, a science experiment goes horrible wrong and botanist Pamela Isley is transformed into a human-plant hybrid. Chlorophyll begins to flow through her veins instead of blood and her lips release a lethal toxin that kills with a kiss. Created in 1966 by Robert Kanigher and Sheldon Moldoff for DC Comics, Poison Ivy is depicted as a temptress and super villain, the enemy and love interest of Batman whose iron will protects him from her seductive powers. Named after the noxious plant, Poison Ivy first appeared in a one-piece strapless green bathing suit covered with leaves that formed bracelets, a necklace and crown. She wears green stiletto heels and yellow-green nylon stockings painted with vine leaves. Later, in the 1986 Batman comics, she appears naked except for a few vine leaves that covered her breasts.

Whether they are villains or superheroes, DC comics are filled with tales of men being taken in and dominated by sexually aggressive women. Some of the most potent images of female power and agency in mainstream media depict women as sexually aggressive and manipulative. The femme fatale holds a vexed but significant position in the popular imagination, as well as in wider discourses about evil and femininity. Such figures are difficult to define, and occupy a complex position in relation to the representation of women in popular culture. The femme fatale also speaks to the various cultural anxieties about femininity, sexual agency and power. Yet the femme fatale, who is motivated by a desire for wealth and the power it brings, is often depicted as a woman who has been wronged by men and
seeks their downfall as her revenge. Often associated with being a man hater, this archetype figure is depicted as predatory and is often depicted alone or in the company of other women who are hinted at being lesbians, as was the case with Elizabeth Short, coined The Black Dahlia by the media. When Short’s body was discovered in a vacant lot in the Leimert Park district of Los Angeles in 1947 she was wearing a tailored black suit consisting of tight skirt and sheer blouse.

_The Third Skin_ draws on representations of carnivorous plants such as the poison ivy; the pitcher plant, the Venus flytrap and the black dahlia to reference the femme fatale and women’s sexuality in the popular imagination. From early biblical references of Eve women have been associated with cultural myths and metaphors of seduction and temptation. By drawing on eighteenth century Darwinian parallels between insectivorous plants and the suppressed yet purportedly voracious sexual appetite of Victorian women, this project visually comments on the control of women’s sexuality in the West. The depictions of carnivorous plants serve as feminist motifs because of their association with a voracious sexuality that cannot be contained. Coupled with discordant colour ways, the motifs suggest perversity and transgression, which is allied to queer identity.

By drawing on the stylistic components of the JAOBT and by examining the convergence of theories of dress and tattooing, this project has established that both practices are markers of identity, or embodied subjectivity. It has done so in the following ways; by investigating the body as a canvas for communicating identity, literally and culturally and by displaying the work as an installation which negates the body, which is central to fashion discourse, and places this work in the
hybrid field of art/fashion.

As a practicing fashion designer, this body of work has given me the opportunity to explore new directions in creative practice. The intensive theoretical and practical training has formed an understanding of the relationship between fashion design and art. *The Third Skin* allowed me to expand on the boundaries between the two disciplinary fields through rigorous experimentation with print formats and content and by critically evaluating my practice by producing a space that allowed me to rethink the context, material form, and conceptual approach to my creative work.
Illustrations

Figure 1. Samurai figure motif often features in Japanese all over Body Tattoos. [http://www.tattoostime.com/colorful-samurai-japanese-tattoo-on-back/](http://www.tattoostime.com/colorful-samurai-japanese-tattoo-on-back/) date accessed 07/05/13
Figure 2. Samurai figure motif often features in Japanese all over Body Tattoos. http://slodive.com/inspiration/yakuza-tattoo/ date accessed 07/05/13
Figure 3. Yakuza JAOBT placement variations.

http://amazingstuff.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/yakuza_tattoos.jpg date accessed 07/05/13
Figure 4. Flora and fauna motifs sit on top of graphic ‘wind bar’ component

http://slodive.com.inspiration/yakuza-tattoo/ date accessed 07/05/13

Figure 5. Old school, ‘flash’ based tattoo style in America pre-1950

http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/old%20school%20tattoos date accessed 07/05/13
Figure 6. Neo primitive tattoo styling

http://www.chrisconnollyonline.com/2008_08_01_archive.html date
accessed 07/05/13
Figure 7. Rico modelling for Mugler - demonstrating all over body tattooing. http://myfashionhub.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/from-vivienne-westwood-to-thierry-mugler-has-ugly-become-the-new-beautiful/ugly-thierry-mugler/ date accessed 07/05/13
Figure 8. Jean Paul Gautier ‘couture Coke’ bottles.


Figure 9. Ralph Lauren ‘Orientalist’ dress with dragon tattoo motif on back.
http://notyourchinagirl.com/post/Ralph_Lauren_Fall_2011_Collection_Shows_Asian_Inspiration date accessed 07/05/13

Figure 10. Alexander McQueen as exemplar of sculptural (art) forms in fashion. http://2threads.com/page/8?s=lady+gaga date accessed 07/05/13
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