THE META-SUIT:
DE-RE-CONSTRUCTING THE ULTIMATE MASCULINE ATTIRE
Originally from Greece, takis is an international performance designer based in London. His innovative and diverse body of work encompasses the award-winning West End and leading UK theatres and major international musical, opera, ballet, circus, fashion, and commercial productions.

Takis’ work has been exhibited at the Design Museums in London and Helsinki, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Bucharest Modern Art Museum. Commercially, he Art Directed/Designed the world’s first immersive drive-through car launch for the Toyota C-HR starring Milla Jovovich, as well as Centrepoint’s 50th Anniversary Gala at the Round House with Duran Duran & Rita Ora.

His Olivier winning and nominated West End credits include: In The Heights, Five Guys Named Moe, The Toxic Avenger, and Phaedra at the Royal Opera House; Iolanta, Il Segretto di Susanna and Isabeau for the International Opera Awards; and multiple nominations for What’s on Stage, Off West End, and Broadway World awards.

Takis studied Costume and Set Design at the Romanian National University of Arts in Bucharest and continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art on the Theatre Technical Arts Course. He undertook practice-based research at the London College of Fashion before transferring and completing his doctoral studies at Aalto University.

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ABSTRACT Fashion seems an ever-changing phenomenon, defining the particular social and sexual mores of various epochs. However, a closer look reveals the male suit as an enduring form, implicated in performances of power and masculinity since its inception. Nevertheless, how a suit is designed and worn can also challenge, resist and reconfigure male identity.

Judith Butler asserts that we perform our gender through iteration, yet she refers to clothing in Bodies that Matter as follows:

'The misapprehension about gender performativity is that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a 'one' who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today. (Butler, 1993: 21–22)

Gender performativity is therefore literally enacted through the wardrobe with the male suit as a persistent visual and emblematic form of self-expression and embodiment of masculinity. This is not prior to the gendering but is a means of constructing gender, which is then performed in a variety of ways through additions and subtractions. Building on Butler's logic, masculinity itself can be understood as a type of performance, with multiple masculinities existing along a continuum from the conventional to the progressive. Susan Pitt and Christopher Fox's (2013) concept of 'performative masculinity' contends that men strategically shift between varying masculinities depending on their needs and context, thereby reshaping what it means to be 'masculine'. Researching the male suit as an enduring symbol of male fashion, this practice-based study explores the potential for the suit to act as a meta-form, one that is capable of adapting to the needs of its wearer in day-to-day life.

While the ubiquitous suit is already performing masculinity — some would say white male hetero supremacy — how it is decorated, altered and worn allows the wearer to question, reinforce or resist gender performativity. This also relates to how the garment constructs not just identity but the daily expression of 'situated spatial practices'.

Adopting the iterative method of Design Action Research, this interdisciplinary doctoral study analyses the suit — specifically the late 19th-century lounge suit with matching jacket and trousers — as a persistent Euro-Western globalised archetype of masculine dress and further challenges the enduring form of the ubiquitous male suit through the design gestures of addition and subtraction. This involves extending interdisciplinary discourse on the suit as it evolved over three and a half centuries by situating it within a spectrum of historical, sociological, and design theories. These are then applied to concepts and practices of embodiment and performativity through my own practice-based research as a performance designer, played out in a series of workshops, collections, and installations. The creative investigations result in a proposition of the 'meta-suit' as a hybrid and mutable form of self-expression in the ever-changing performances of masculinity, carving a potential future for the archetypal suit into the 21st century.

This meta-suit design represents both a concept and a physical artefact. Through the iterative stages of its physical development, combined with the interactive and co-productive nature of the collections and 'performance' installations, the meta-suit stands as both an embodiment and manifestation of the fluidity and multiplicity of masculinities. In this way, its development process and final design stand as this project's main contribution to the evolution and sharing of knowledge about how masculinity is, and can be, expressed.
Dedicated to the anchors in my life, my mother Eleni, my wife Grace and my daughters Ariadne Eleni and Isidora Elpida.
Acknowledgements

Without the support of the people below, all of whom played a significant role across the duration of my research studies and particularly in the creation of the practice work, I could not have completed this PhD.

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The hosts of the interactive installations: the London Design Museum, particularly Michael Czerwinski and Mark Castraghii; and the Helsinki Design Museum, especially Sravi Saloniemi.

The Creative Collaborators for the London Installation

Choreographers Angela Towler and Martin Joyce from Rambert Dance Company; Gareth Fry (Sound Designer) and Lu Kemp (Associate Sound Designer); Dick Straker (Video Projection Designer) from Mesmer; Jonathan Samuels (Lighting Designer); Mandeep Ahira (Documentary Artist); and photographers Pablo Marks and David Mainone.

The Technical Team for the London Installation

David Luff and Danae Prasida (Management), Marze Bergeland (Production Manager), Naomi Brooks and Emma Hick (Stage Managers), Nick Hardwick (Construction Manager), Caroline Morley (Front of House Manager), Syreeta Woolston and Ruth Cava (Wardrobe Supervisors), and Zeynep Kepkeli (Production Electrician).

Additional collaborators for the Helsinki installation

Karina Korggaard Jensen and Regi Frits (Interaction Design) from Aalto Media Lab; Jonatan Sundstrom (Documentarist) from BLO cinematography; Sanni Siira and Grace Vance Percy (Photographers); Marta Garcia Rodes (Exhibition Assistant); Jyrj Lahema (Construction Supervisor); Pasi Pakula (Technical support); Johanna Ilmarinen (Costume Workshop Supervisor); and Linda Winquist and Laasi Anttonen at My Pose.

My immense gratitude to The Research Group for their focus and commitment to this research project for over three months: Joshua Antwi, Clifton Brown, Jacob Claris, Fred Perge, Cordell James, Arnold Kamara, Paolo Larieri, Robert Luxumba, Jad Marzonik, Bhavit Mehta, Francisco Javier Orojales-Mourente, Saurin Patel, Kurtis Patterson, Leonidas Plavko, Luke Joseph Putres, Adam Seigel, Saurin Shah, Waqar Hyder Soomro, and Alexander Theodossiades.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a massive thank you to my family and best friends for your unconditional love and support over the lifespan of this PhD.
Timeline of Key Events

2005 October
Enrolment at London College of Fashion — University of the Arts.

2006 January
Workshop 1: Historic Garments
at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

2006 April
Workshop 2: Peacock Collages
at the International Youth and Culture Centre Kiribite
in Duisburg, Germany.

2007 May
Workshop 3: Jackets Reformed
at the University of the Arts Bucharest, Romania.

2007 November
Workshop 4: Transforming Trausers into Skirts
at the University of the Arts Bucharest, Romania.

2008 January-September
Creation of the Plus and Minus suit collections.

2008 September
Forgotten Peacock
Installation at London Design Museum.

2008 October-December
Forgotten Peacock
Installation at the Brunswick Centre in London.

2011 December
Withdrawal from London College of Fashion — University of the Arts.

2013 August
Enrolment at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture.

2014 May
Plus or Minus Suit Yourself
installation at the Helsinki Design Museum.

Preface:

25 to 41: Life in Continuum

This thesis marks the culmination of a 15-year journey that spanned from the UK to Finland, complete with ups and downs, tears and laughter, but foremost passion and determination to complete this research project.

The research was developed in cooperation with two universities: London College of Fashion — University of the Arts (2005-2011) and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (2013-2021). The practical work was presented at the UK and Finnish Design Museums.

On a personal level, I began this research project as a postgraduate youngster and finished this thesis as a married man with two daughters. From the freedom of youth to the love, engagement, and marriage to my wife Grace. From the birth of our first child Ariadne Eleni, to my mother Eleni’s battle with cancer and the loss of her much too soon, my mother-in-law Lady Linda’s health battle and, once again, another loss too soon, through to the birth of our second daughter Isidora Elpida — it has been a journey I never could have anticipated.

On a professional level, the early stages of my research found me working in fringe theatre as a performer/designer. Yet, without even realising the passage of time, the end finds me working internationally across different performance genres. This breadth of experience across the past fifteen years has brought insights and perspectives that the 25-year-old me had no concept of.

In juggling my personal life and professional career while trying to complete my studies, time has not been on my side. Then, Covid-19 arrived — and everything stopped. Time was suddenly with me again. So, driven to make something positive from the difficulties of the pandemic, my focus shifted to the completion of this study.

This expanded timeline has impacted the empirical research of this project in a variety of ways. Academia and the world more broadly have moved forward over the years since the practical element of this thesis was undertaken. In retrospect, these fifteen years have allowed me to trace the dramatic changes in the male suit and fashion, experience shifts in masculinity (both internally and externally) and gender studies, and observe the collapse of pigeonholed studies and the genesis of interdisciplinarity and more fluid approaches to reading the world. Above all, this timeframe has granted me time to reflect upon the practice with a more mature and experienced perspective.

This in-depth understanding and professional way of reading/analysing subsequent societal and academic shifts have enabled me to situate the outcomes of this thesis — the meta-suit — within our modern society, which is ever progressing and evolving.

Hopefully, these experiences come across in this manuscript as an outcome of this journey.
First Stage — The Workshops

Tool 1: De-Re-Constructing the Suit

Tool 2: Reveal–Conceal

Contribution to Knowledge

Artistic Approach

Masculinity and Fashion

Aims and Objectives

Metrosexual – The Growth of Informality

The Emergence of the Lounge Suit

2.4 Historical Context: The 20th Century to the New Man

The 19th Century

The Significance of the Dandies

The Three-Piece Suit

The Great Masculine Renunciation

From Flamboyancy to Uniformity: The History of the Suit

1 Defining the Suit

2 Performativity, Masculinity, and the Suit

3 Communication

Body, Embodiment, and the Suit

Conclusions

Workshop Conclusions

Workshop 1: Historic Garments

Workshop 2: Peacock Collages

Workshop 4: Transforming Trousers into Skirts

Workshop 5: De-De-Re-Constructing the Suit

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Timeline of Key Events

Acknowledgments

Abstract

Introduction & Design Action Methodology

Method Through Praxis

Defining the Suit

Performativity, Masculinity, and the Suit

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Conclusions
Introduction

& Design Action Methodology
I.1 Introduction

In *How to Read a Suit*, fashion historian Lydia Edwards (2020) argues that, as an ever-changing phenomenon, ‘fashion’ is a complex term, which can be misunderstood and easily trivialised (p. 20). It refers to the clothing that covers our bodies and, crucially, to how we can consume and embody that clothing and make it part of our own identity (Edwards, 2020, p. 8). Theatre theorist Patrice Pavis (1996) writes, ‘abody is “worn” and “carried” by a costume as much as the costume is worn and carried by the body’ (p. 175). Drawing on my own professional costume design practice, this inter-disciplinary study focuses on how, for the past four hundred years, men in Western countries have used the three- or two-piece suit — jacket and trousers, with or without a waistcoat — as a universal symbol of masculinity to express their identity.

The male suit in the form we know it today (Janne, 51, 2011, Figure 1.1) is a collection of design-driven suits, and installation design as practice-led research, my own skills as scenographer and costume designer by engaging in a ‘performance practice’-based investigation. More specifically, the thesis focuses on, and experiments with, the single-breasted suit and its connotations of traditional masculinity. These are evident in its exaggeration of the archetypal masculine triangular shape by widening the shoulders, narrowing the buttocks, and outlining the connection between the larynx and genitals.

My investigation into the male suit resulted in the design of two collections, *Plus and Minus*, which performatively experiment with additions and subtractions. Presented in the form of an interactive performance installation in the UK Design Museum (London, September 2008), the Brunswick Centre (London, October–November 2008), and the Helsinki Design Museum (May 2014), these exhibitions as events drew on the interactions of the visiting public, embodying their preferable suit design from the research-driven suits. Utilising costume and installation design as practice-led research, my collection of design-driven suits (*Plus and Minus*) are discussed through three key perspectives — my own research — costume designer, established
and emerging designers (fashion designers), and suit-wearers in everyday life through the lenses of fashion/photography/blogs (self-designers).

Aims and Objectives

While the aims and objectives of this project evolved in strength throughout the theoretical and practical knowledge around the archetypal male suit through cross-disciplinary approaches, thereby creating and sustaining an overview of the embodied male suit. Of particular interest here was supporting Hollander's (1994) argument that we cannot research a garment without exploring its relationship with the body.

2. To create an experimental wardrobe that empowers men of all ages and sizes to express their individuality and various masculinities.

3. To contribute to the debate on masculinity and its expression through both contemporary and in practice through the design of the meta-suit as both a concept and physical artefact.

4. To contribute to research projects such as costume design, fashion design, sociology or anthropology.

The second objective of designing an experimental wardrobe also involves several sub-aims and objectives:

- To create a collection that was primarily designed-driven rather than commercially driven
- To design and develop men's suits through experimental combination, including: materiality, transparency, ornamentation, incorporation of historical and traditional garments, and incorporation of feminine design elements considered non-traditional by orthodox understandings of masculinity.
- To communicate and trace through the experimental collection by giving the wearer the flexibility to express themselves with a fluid and changeable ensemble.

Exploring the sociocultural and structural aspects of dressing (Clothing on the jacker and trewes), I engaged in experimental creative practice to propose the meta-suit. This concept acknowledges that, despite its history and social construction, men's suits through formal and functional lenses, and the archetypal suit has always had the potential to act as a vehicle for a multiplicity of expressions. The meta-suit concept demonstrates how these expressions allow the wearer to operate across and challenge the boundaries between seemingly oppositional concepts such as masculinity and femininity. The thesis is focused on the suit as an extension of the male body. Through performativity (what we wear, how we move, express, and conform) and performance (embodied research using movement, light, and selected ensemble options), it develops the physical meta-suit as a sex- and gender-fluid assemblage. Conceptually, the meta-suit is developed as a heuristic device for a cross-disciplinary reading of how the suit, as well as the way it is worn, continues to evolve. This dissertation explores how the meta-suit can be conceptualised as a pre-existing form in itself as a design, as how it is worn in practice, and the social and historical shifts that have defined both its shape and what it is expected of men in appearance and behaviour. The heuristic meta-suit as a conceptual model could then be applied to a range of disciplines that explore how the clothed body can be used to retell, re-read, and rewrite the boundaries between seemingly oppositional concepts such as costume design, fashion design, sociology or psychology.

Masculinity and Fashion

As Edwards (2020, p. 8), long before the birth of the three-piece suit, notions of masculinity were considered non-traditional by orthodox understandings of masculinity. The second objective of designing an experimental wardrobe also involves several sub-aims and objectives:

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It is also important to note here that while the meta-suit was not a commercially-driven design, the focus on individual expression (particularly the interactions with the public through the Plus and Minus Collective) places emphasis on what men want from their clothing and their preferences when it comes to fashion. Therefore, the suit's development as a 'product' remains an inescapable element of fashion design, even when pursuing a design-led process such as this.

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of this thesis — the meta-suit — can also be applied to women or to non-gender-conforming individuals who choose to perform masculinity.

The research also explores new roles for the male suit and proposes the meta-suit concept for the future. This investigation aims to situate the male suit within this growing interest in male fashion. It will explore whether its power as a garment has been diminished and, if perhaps, signs of change are beginning to show. The project also explores how popular the suit is in contemporary society. A revolution in casual wear has had a huge impact on work attire. Some offices no longer insist that their employees wear a suit. What’s more, the number of jobs that require a suit to be worn has vastly reduced. ‘Dress-down Fridays’ are a product of this casualisation movement. Bankers no longer wear suits on Fridays, but rather jeans or chinos with trainers and jumpers or hoodies. This increasingly casual approach to work attire has already been impacted by the rise of the tech sector and may only be exacerbated by the current trend of people working from home. This investigation gives insight into gender, consumption and cultural theories. Using the sources outlined above, it will arrive at an empirical analysis of the meta-suit with the concept for the future development of the suit.

The thesis, therefore, undertakes a thorough review and critique of masculinity and fashion and establishes an in-depth reading of it, extending the ways of seeing its contemporary application via the lenses of designers, academics, and contemporary practitioners (via blogs), and particularly through my practice as costume designer (see Figure 1.7). This combination of experiences and perspectives allows me to explore more fully the intersection of disciplines at stake. The intersection of disciplines. These analyses, together with a visual exploration of blogs, catwalks, and magazine articles, have informed the scope and direction of this research, which then informed a series of embodied workshops. The outcomes of these workshops informed the design suggestions for the male suit and how they were tested. This process gave rise to the concept of the meta-suit as a post-masculinist phenomenon.

The study of men’s fashion has been marginal in comparison to that of female fashion, as the focus on male fashion has been predominantly from a historical perspective. In Menwear Revolution (2018), cultural historian Jay McCarney Bowstead argues that such accounts “not only marginalised men’s fashion but claimed it hardly existed at all: women wore fashion, while men simply wore clothes” (p. 28). Men’s fashion has been seen as something of a contradiction in terms: ‘women are fashionable, men are not’ (Craig, 2003, p. 170). Until recently, haute couture was the prerogative of female fashion. However, since the phenomenon of the New Man in the 1980s (Edwards, 1997, 2006, 2011; Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996), interest in male fashion among academics, the fashion industry, the media, and male consumers has grown significantly. Most leading fashion houses and high-street stores now have male dress lines. As Bowstead highlights, ‘menswear has opened up to become a field in which men are able to express and express identity, to fashion and refashion themselves’ (2018, p. 173).

Tertiary courses specialising in male fashion design have been founded at leading fashion universities across the world with recent graduates such as Ischi Suzuki (London College of Fashion 2006) and Astrid Andersen (Royal College of Art 2010) showcasing their work on the catwalks of London, New York, and Milan. Magazines dedicated to male fashion have increased in number to equal those aimed at female fashion, and appears on the internet. Thebarrel, however, remain an important and influential visual material for analysis in this study.

The research also explores new roles for the suit in contemporary society. Suits still seem to be powerful in music and nightclub scenes, yet retain their masculinity and presence in social settings where blending in is considered acceptable or necessary, such as funerals or weddings (Bluteau, 2021). Post-lockdown, men continue to play with the traditions of the suit, such as pop singer Justin Timberlake wearing his with trainers. Their influence, together with the homosocial and internet gaze that comes from social media and blogs, means that men are increasingly likely to seek a sense of individuality. It appears that the formal rules surrounding suits have weakened or changed. As such, the “suit” has evolved to the suit as it now select and add elements to their suits as they see fit. They remove ties and shirts and replace them with t-shirts and hoodies while keep their suits. This casual approach to work attire is supported by Scardi (2010), who maintains that we need to continue to evolve to follow the fluid nature of reality. Dress is no longer defined by gender or sexuality; it is an embodied communication tool that expresses and performs all the roles required in our everyday life.

Men’s fashion roles throughout the day. In contemporary society, the performance of gender has also never been more in focus, and modern men perform in a variety of ever-evolving social contexts. This project will consider how these changes will provide a greater scope for self-expression and comfort.

The meta-suit is both a practical and theoretical outcome of this investigation. This project concludes that this form of suit is an enduring and ideal canvas for its 21st-century reimagining. It will be flexible enough to facilitate men’s need to express individuality. It will also embrace recent developments in gender and sexuality and provide multifaceted retention tools that allow the suit to adapt to everyday life. The critique of the Great Masculine Renunciation of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the research that seeks to understand the reasons behind the renunciation of male fashion design, by drawing parallels and contrasts with this study, is a small step towards understanding the relationship of decoration with the male suit and how it has shifted and evolved into the three and a half centuries. Theoretically, this investigation draws on and integrates academic and practical knowledge in the form of monographs by dress historians Anne Hollander (Sex and Suits, 1994) and Christopher Breward (The Englishman’s Suit, 1996), as well as the English designer Hardy Amies (The Englishman’s Suit, 1996) are enriched by views on the male suit from dress historians Diana DeMarly (1985) and James Laver (1968). The work of sociologists Tim Edwards (1997, 2006, 2011), Sean Nixon (1996), and DeMarly (1985) and James Laver (1968) explore whether its power as a garment has been diminished and, if perhaps, signs of change are beginning to show. The project also explores how popular the suit is in contemporary society. A revolution in casual wear has had a huge impact on work attire. Some offices no longer insist that their employees wear a suit. What’s more, the number of jobs that require a suit to be worn has vastly reduced. ‘Dress-down Fridays’ are a product of this casualisation movement. Bankers no longer wear suits on Fridays, but rather jeans or chinos with trainers and jumpers or hoodies. This increasingly casual approach to work attire has already been impacted by the rise of the tech sector and may only be exacerbated by the current trend of people working from home. This investigation gives insight into gender, consumption and cultural theories. Using the sources outlined above, it will arrive at an empirical analysis of the meta-suit with the concept for the future development of the suit.

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illustrate collections of suits applauding designers or tailors (Blackman, 2009; Davies, 2008; Jones, 2017; Minguez, 2011; Musgrave, 2009; Sherwood, 2002, 2003).

In each of the readings of the suit mentioned above, however, the investigation lacks a cross-disciplinary overview. Coffee table books showcase designers' work, often without an analytical review, and tend to exclude historical and sociological perspectives. The sociological approach is theoretically led rather than design-driven; it discusses the relationship between the suit and masculinity but generally avoids its design and form. Conversely, historical works examine the design but often leave the suit disconnected from the male body and the interaction of the two forms (body and suit). The suit has been discussed as a fashion prototype or as a historical garment avoiding its in-between every-day use and influence. Such oversights have led to investigations on how performance design, specifically costume, allows a new reading of this fashion item as a performer of identity. Wearing a suit is also a form of performance practice in daily life. My understanding of performativity gained through my skills and experiences as a performance designer provides a unique perspective from which to explore this fashion item and create new knowledge at the intersection of disciplines.


Furthermore, L’Homme Paré illustrated Brenna S. Scardi’s critique on the causes of the Great Masculine Renunciation, emphasizing the organic evolution of dress through the centuries influenced by the socio-political developments of each society. The dress changes are not abrupt, unjustified, or disconnected from the socio-political status of society. Dress, as discussed in the thesis, is not only a form of consumption but also reflects, communicates, and mirrors the status quo. This thesis demonstrates how deceptive the visual exploration of the suit, such as the double-breasted jacket, occurred up to the 21st century and how since then, designers have looked back to history to find ways to recycle shapes, themes, materials, compositions and so on.

As with the published theoretical and visual exploration of the suit, L’Homme Paré distanced the garments from the male body. Suits were explored as objects and not as a continuation of the male body and form — thus they are absent from the garments. Furthermore, this exhibition, as with all previous exhibitions, lacked any opportunity for physical interaction. It would have been more challenging and dialectical if male visitors had been able to touch and wear selected or reproduced garments to engage their senses and critically understand their transformative power. After exploring and analysing this exhibition, it was very clear to me that the aim of my practice was to make the potential of the suit design interactive and accessible to men of all ages and sites.

Artistic Approach

Table 1.1 illustrates the increased interest in male dress by major European galleries and museums. Prior to 2001, fewer than ten exhibitions focused entirely on male dress: from 2000 to 2010, 15 exhibitions, and since 2011, 12 exhibitions. The starting point of the exhibition was the 17th century, and among the exhibitions from this period were hundreds of garments, accessories, albums, and manuscripts, both from the museum’s own collection and from private collections worldwide. The exhibition was curated through twenty-three sections exhibiting full garments to smaller items and details such as buttonholes, waistcoats, and ties.

The curatorial decision to place exhibits from all three centuries in conversation illustrates how contemporary fashion designers draw inspiration from the history of dress. The exhibition was an illustrated example of how fashion reinvents itself from history by using forms, materials, techniques, and details from the past. This dialectical display crystallises the use we make of history in the present (Brenna S. Scardi, 2010, pp. 13-14). Furthermore, the curators demonstrated the cyclical notion of fashion, a point that this investigation emphasises and utilises to further analyse my visual materials and conceive of different ways of connecting them visually and theoretically to create new looks and different ‘styles’ of masculinity. As the American anthropologist Ted Polhemus argues...
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ration via the methods of addition and subtraction. In examining these blogs, the focus is not on the bloggers per se (fashion photographers, influencers, journalists) but instead offers a view into the world of men that hybridise the suit themselves through self-expression. This interplay between designers and bloggers allows for an interdisciplinary view and understanding of the male suit that fuels the practical experiments and the proposal of the meta-suit.

Contribution to Knowledge

The primary contribution of this dissertation is the development of the meta-suit as both a concept and physical artefact. The enduring form of the male suit has been analysed across disciplines — history, fashion design, sociology, and psychology — and combined with my own approaches and experiences as a costume designer. Concepts of performativity and embodied action drawn from costume design allowed for a novel approach to understanding the interplay between the body, the suit, and their expression of masculinity across an increasingly broad spectrum.

Building on this groundwork, the process of developing the meta-suit through iterative design and the collaborative, "co-productive" element of public installation and performance allowed for an overall understanding of masculinity as a fluid and evolving concept. On the physical level, the meta-suit's design is built around this fluidity. The garment fuses both orthodox masculine and traditionally "effeminate" aspects of fashion design into a single gender- and sex-fluid artefact. The flexibility of its design allows the wearer to experiment with appearance and identity, exploring the increasingly recognised (and accepted) plurality of masculinity in a way that suits his individual self-expression.

On a conceptual level, the meta-suit is a heuristic tool: a concept for investigating how the male suit is designed and worn in both current societies and into the future. It draws together questions about the suit itself as a design, how it is worn in practice, and the social and historical shifts that have defined both its shape and what is expected of men in appearance and behaviour. Just as masculinities can be a performance, the way that a suit interacts with the wearer and the context in which it is worn gives it meaning through situated performativity. It is essentially, to quote Hollander (1994), a "crouser-jacketing, shirt-and-tie costume." The male suit has remained abidingly performative despite changes throughout history, always symbolising and expressing masculinity — historically, orthodox masculine traits such as strength and stoicism. But just as our understanding of masculinity has evolved to incorporate more hybrid forms and challenge the traditional notions of what it is to be male, so too can the suit.

As a costume designer researching fashion, I've observed performativity in the attempt to inform both costume design and fashion design. Approaching fashion from the perspective of a costume designer is rarely addressed in the available literature, despite the fact that, as Nancy Troy suggests in Couture Cultures (2002), the theatre and the catwalk have become intrinsically connected; both require an audience, a discourse, a profile in the public sphere (p. 81). This marriage of perspectives — those of costume and fashion design — offers a chance to gain new insights into performance, performativity, and embodiment. This project brings together the work of sociologists, historians, and fashion theorists and applies this combined perspective to the male suit. By fusing this theoretical understanding with the practical elements of performance and design, my final proposal of the meta-suit concept applies a unique notion of hybridity that is otherwise severely underrepresented in the existing body of knowledge.

Methodological Approach

This study utilises interdisciplinary literature research (cultural, historical and socio-political) to establish an extended understanding of the Euro-Western model of the male suit, particularly by inflecting existing studies with a performance perspective rooted in costume design. This is then applied to the design of two publicly exhibited collections (Plus and Minus) that invite visitors to engage directly with the garments and thereby perform a range of identities beyond prescribed masculinity. This confirms the performative and hybridised nature of the male suit as a meta-suit, which is further supported through readings of contemporary online everyday performances through fashion blogs.

The practical element of this investigation is rooted in a practice-led framework I have named 'Design Action Research,' based on Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's (1988) cyclical action research methodology. An iterative and looping practice of reading, workshop, designing, exhibiting/performing, and re-analysing, Design Action Research allows some elements of Kemmis & McTaggart's model to better allow me to experiment with the limits and linkages of the enduring male suit design.

Beginning by surveying the interdisciplinary aspects of the male suit both textually and visually, the findings are then applied to the design and performative embodiment of the Plus and Minus collection. The results of these practical exhibitions are then applied to a re-reading of the suit through contemporary blogs, culminating in the conception of the meta-suit. This process of situating the theoretical review, performing (design and exhibition of collections), and re-reading (conceptualisation of the meta-suit) forms the foundation of this methodological approach. This methodology allows for an interdisciplinary reading of the male suit, questioning its "unchangeable" form, and creating a new conceptual framework for the future of the iconic masculine attire: the metasuit. It intentionally challenges the form, meaning, and identity of the male suit today, demonstrating how practice and theory are not in opposition but rather inform each other as pracis: an enaction, embodiment and realization of theoretical ideas.
The practical aspect of this project was first developed through two- and three-dimensional garment samples creating for a one-week workshops between 2006 and 2007, where the deconstruction of the suit and testing of ideas played a key role. This led to the creation of two experimen-
tal suit collections (Plus and Minus collections, 2008) by utilising and developing the concepts of addition and subtraction that emerged from the workshops. Third, a Participant Group, comprising of male volunteers selected without regard to their profession, origin, or cultural background, helped with the development of the suit through their practical involvement in the experimental wardrobe, which led to the formulation of the meta-suit. Through the interactive element of performance, men had the opportunity to actively participate in the exhibition by wearing their favourite suit from the experimental wardrobe, becoming a peacock themselves. Women also engaged with the exhibition as audience/visitors, but due to the scope of the current research project, this study will only discuss men’s experiences of the exhibition. This embodied approach was supplemented by a series of short questionnaires to capture the data in the Location. The Interactive Performance Installations and documented selfies captured as part of the Helsinki interactive performance exhibition were of particular interest to this study. My experience as a costume designer both in the design and production of the exhibition, as well as the design and development of the experimental wardrobe, provided a key role. This led to the creation of two distinctive series of suits: Plus or Minus, Suit Yourself (2010) by utilising and developing the concepts of addition and subtraction as a continuum hybrid dialogue empowering the understanding of the embodied suit.

Chapter 4
The Workshops: De-Re-Constructing the Suit

Chapter 5
Plus or Minus, Suit Yourself

Chapter 6
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Scardi (2010) similarly recognises this recurring temporal link, arguing that ‘both art and fashion design look backwards as much as forwards, acting as the channel between past and present, heading towards movements that are still in an embryonic stage, waiting to happen in the near future’ (pp. 84-85). I present how the outcomes of the workshops influenced the concept and design of the research-driven suits. I also discuss the concept and design of the Plus Suits and how they were utilised in the Interactive Performance Installations. In the third section, I discuss how addition has been utilised by fashion designers (haute couture) and self-designers (through blogs). In the final section, I reflect on addition as a technique and the outcomes of the Plus Suits.

Chapter 6
The Meta-Suit

Through investigation, it is evident that the male suit has performative power on both the wearer and viewer. This allows the wearer to perform different roles of masculinity when embodying the suit. The masculinities are positioned and exist on a continuum, performed according to the demands of the social situation. This concept is particularly evident in the 21st-century phenomenon of post-masculinity, a movement that traverses a greater range of personal expression than the late 20th-century masculine.

Via a series of Interactive Performance Installations, the proposed concept of the meta-suit is fuelled by observations on the Plus and Minus suits and informed by practice-led experimental investi-
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As a whole, this project essentially seeks to develop and inform cross-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge to create a holistic overview of the embodied male suit. This doctoral study seeks to question and challenge the abiding form of the embodied male suit as an established form of male dress. The performance practice-led nature of the project and the length of the research investigation required ongoing evaluation, reformation, and redefinition of the research aim, objective, and methods. The methods are interlinked and applied along a continuum until the outcome has been produced, reflective of the process of investigation.

1.2 Design Action Methodology

Methods Through Praxis

This section presents the Design Action Research methodology applied as part of my practice-based research. An adaptation of Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's (1988) cyclical action research, the philosophy of this methodology is to create a holistic, responsive, and emergent mechanism where theory and practice inform each other through the methods of reading, testing, observing, and self-reflecting. Rather than applying this methodology mathematically from start to finish, the methods are interlinked and applied along a continuum until the outcome has been produced, reflective of the process of investigation.

1.2.1 Methodological Approach

This doctoral study seeks to question and challenge the abiding form of the embodied male suit as an established form of male dress. The performance practice-led nature of the project and the length of the research investigation required ongoing evaluation, reformation, and redefinition of the research aim, objective, and methods. The methods are interlinked and applied along a continuum until the outcome has been produced, reflective of the process of investigation.

My methodology is built upon the qualitative module of action research used in the social sciences, which experiments with form and encourages continued participation and reflection by the designer/researcher. More specifically, my action research process is based on Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's (1988) cyclical action research (Hopkins, 1986, Figure 1.12), where each cycle has four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This type of practical design methodology was less common at the time of this project's practice than it is now, and the thesis format for a practice-based design finds its value in its accessibility for people outside the design field, thus representing 'a vital channel for the credibility and external validation of design as a discipline'. (Swann, 2001, p. 52)

I have utilised Kemmis and McTaggart's cyclical action research and incorporated it into this design-led project in a 'Design Action Research' approach (Hopkins, 1986, Figure 1.12), in which theory and practice continually inform each other. Because of the fluid nature of theory informing practice and vice-versa, this methodology is not applied chronologically from start to finish. On the contrary, the strength of Kemmis & McTaggart's model lies in the fact that the methods are interlinked and applied...
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First, the four stages are integral to both the action research and the design process: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. They are not linear and may occur more than once or in any order, depending on the research objectives and the completion of the research aims.

Second, it is a holistic process, each time providing an empirical methodology to guide the research. Action research is tailored to each specific project allowing for the incorporation of different research tools.

Third, it is responsive. It can respond to the emerging needs of the ‘situation’ by providing a flexible module. This is a quality that is not provided by most other traditional or static research methods.

Fourth, it is emergent. Because the research process takes place gradually, its cyclical nature improves its responsiveness. The early cycles are used to help inform how to conduct the later cycles, whilst the later cycles can test, challenge, and refine the interpretations developed in the earlier cycles.

Fifth, it is participative. The researcher participates in the investigation and negotiating the information gathered in doing so. The interactive nature of this three practical stages is to be used as tools to enable the investigation.

Finally, each cycle consists of critical reflection. In reflecting and critiquing the information gathered in doing so, the research can then be utilised to inform and design the later stages.

Following this logic, chapters 2 (The Design of an Archetype: The Suit) and 3 (Beneath the Suit: Theoretical Basis of this Project respectively, setting the groundwork for the application of the Design Action Research methodology throughout the practical stages in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 2 traces the historical evolution of the suit from its origins to its modern-day rendition as an archetype of male fashion. The chapter provides a critical commentary on key concepts that form the basis of the Plus and Minus Collection and the meta-suit, identifying key moments in the history of the male suit.

Chapter 3 delves into the theoretical and analytical discussions around the archetypal shape of the suit. A practical method of research was intended to build upon the interactive, reflective nature of the Design Action methodology, reflective of both Dawson’s conceptualisation of design as a collaborative process and Swann’s (2002) arguments that the ‘users of design should be genuine collaborators’ and not merely co-opted for token consultation. The early cycles are used as tools to enable the investigation.

The tools I used in this study include keeping a reflective diary, documenting artefacts and situations that contain a great deal of uncertainty. The researcher views their studies and interprets what they see, hear, and understand through the use of ‘theoretical lenses’, developing a complex picture of the researched field. Design research is particularly suited to a more ‘interpretative’ form of qualitative research, particularly as it is the end usage of a designed product that belongs in the social science world. Design deals in human interactions with artefacts and situations that contain a great deal of uncertainty. (Swann, 2002, p. 37)

Figure 1.12

By contrast, Chapter 3 delves into the theoretical and analytical discussions around the archetypal shape of the suit. A practical method of research was intended to build upon the interactive, reflective nature of the Design Action methodology, reflective of both Dawson’s conceptualisation of design as a collaborative process and Swann’s (2002) arguments that the ‘users of design should be genuine collaborators’ and not merely co-opted for token consultation. The early cycles are used as tools to enable the investigation.

The principal element of the research utilises three main tools: workshops, the Plus and Minus collections, and the Interactive Performance Installations. The interactive nature of these three practical stages was intended to be used as tools to enable the interactive, reflective nature of the Design Action methodology, reflective of both Dawson’s conceptualisation of design as a collaborative process and Swann’s (2002) arguments that the ‘users of design should be genuine collaborators’ and not merely co-opted for token consultation. The early cycles are used as tools to enable the investigation.

Engaging with the public throughout the practical stages of this project — and particularly during the Plus and Minus exhibitions — was an essential cornerstone of the final meta-suit design, allowing for greater reflection on the garments and their physical interaction with the wearer, as well as suggestions and feedback from participants that could be incorporated into the final designs.

As this investigation is a performance practice-led project, my (un)conscious reflections play a larger role than in other types of research. My profession (designer of performance) and gender (male) could be considered conscious reflections, whereas my cultural background (Greek), as well as age, class, and understanding of fashion or design, can be considered unconscious factors. However, I consciously challenged the male sartorial approach through an attempt to incorporate the Greek Pustainella (traditional Greek male dress; a symbol of heroism, heritage, and masculinity) as part of the design conjuncture. (Plus Collection, designs 7 and 9).

The characteristics of qualitative research presented are in accordance with the nature and overall aims of this project. Creswell (2009) argues that the qualitative researcher is the key instrument, collecting various types of data from himself and other participants, but is used to assist in the investigation.
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The term deconstruction (the process of decomposition and recomposing outside the established norms) was first used in the 1960s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. According to Hodge (2006), fashion photographer Bill Cunningham first applied the term in the March 1990 issue of DETAILS, followed by American fashion commentator Amy Spindler’s 1995 New York Times article ‘Coming Apart’, thereby cementing it in the fashion lexicon through her discussion of the lineage and influence of Japanese designers Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, Belgian (the first generation of ‘Antwerp Six’ including Walter van Beirendonck, Dries van Noten, Dirk Bikkembergs, Ann Demeulemeester, and Marina Yee, followed by the second-generation including Martin Margiela, A.F. Vandervost, Veronique Branquinho, Harari Ackermann, and Rine Roche) and Dutch designers (first-generation Viktor & Rolf, Saskia van Driemfel, Lucas Ossendriever, Pascale Garzen, and Marcel Verheijen and Alexander van Sloobe, and second-generation Klavers van Engelen as well as Spijkers & Spijkers). (Ee et al. 1989).

Gill (1998) further explores Richard Martin and Harold Koda’s (1999) examination of deconstructionist tendencies in 1980s couture and ready-to-wear fashion, i.e., the tendency that was associated as ‘trendy’ in the early 1990s. Mary McLeod (1994, p. 92) has suggested that the label ‘deconstruction’ was coined by fashion writers following the de constructivist architectural exhibition in 1988 at the MOMA. (Gill 1998, p. 26) suggests that this might imply that the MOMA exhibition helped to raise the profile of deconstruction, enabling and legitimating its dissemination into other fields, and more specifically, that fashion itself was enabled and even encouraged by the experimental architectural designs. Spindler (1999, p. 1) proclaimed ‘deconstructionism’ as a rebellion against the 1980s, the undoing of fashion as we have known it, or the ‘coming apart’ of fashion’s heritage as it moved into the last decade of the 20th century. The characteristics of this movement are referred to by the French as the style ‘Le Destruis’ (‘La Mode Destruire’ 1992; O’Shea 1991, p. 234), in which the forms appearing on Paris runways can be read as a literal dismantling of clothes. This concept of dismantling embodies a type of ‘aestheticized nihilism’ (i.e., absence of belief) (Gill, 1998, p. 26). Nevertheless, at the other level, deconstruction in fashion is something like an auto-critique of the fashion system. It displays an almost X-ray capability to reveal the enabling conditions of fashion’s bewitching charms (i.e., charms conveyed in the concepts of ornament, glamour, spectacle, illusion, fantasy, creativity, innovation, exclusivity, luxury repeatedly associated with fashion) and the principles of its practice (i.e., form, material, construction, fabrication, pattern, stitching, finishing). What is marked about the practices of these designers and represents a ‘new thinking’ in fashion is their explicit commitment to the ‘structure’ (i.e., the ‘success’ of the garment). According to Gill, ‘structuring ontology’ means that it is easier to see if the word ‘deconstruction’ (which came to me it seemed quite spontaneously) was good French. I found it in the Littérat. The grammatical, linguistic, or rhetorical senses were found (bound up with a sense of portée ‘machinique’). This association appeared very fortunate and fortunately adapted to what I wanted to at least suggest (Derrida, 1982, as cited in Gill, 1998, p. 26).

Deconstruction as a term has been self-consciously embraced by literature specialists and philosophers as a form of criticism. In this form, deconstruction represents a mode of ‘uncovering’ the instabilities of meaning in texts. The concept has also been embraced as a theoretical practice by architects, graphic designers, filmmakers, multimedia designers, and media theorists (Braun and Zelizer, 1988; Byrne and Witte, 1990; Wigley and Johnson, 1988; Wigley, 1999).

According to Gill, the enabling (p. 18) suggests that at one level, the word deconstruction suggests a simple reversal of construction and, therefore, at this common-sense level, a reading of clothes that look unfinished, undone, or destroyed as ‘deconstructed’ fits. Nevertheless, at the other level, deconstruction in fashion is something like an auto-critique of the fashion system. It displays an almost X-ray capability to reveal the enabling conditions of fashion’s bewitching charms (i.e., charms conveyed in the concepts of ornament, glamour, spectacle, illusion, fantasy, creativity, innovation, exclusivity, luxury repeatedly associated with fashion) and the principles of its practice (i.e., form, material, construction, fabrication, pattern, stitching, finishing). What is marked about the practices of these designers and represents a ‘new thinking’in fashion is their explicit commitment to the ‘structure’ (i.e., the ‘success’ of the garment). According to Gill, ‘structuring ontology’ means that it is easier to see if the word ‘deconstruction’ (which came to me it seemed quite spontaneously) was good French. I found it in the Littérat. The grammatical, linguistic, or rhetorical senses were found (bound up with a sense of portée ‘machinique’). This association appeared very fortunate and fortunately adapted to what I wanted to at least suggest (Derrida, 1982, as cited in Gill, 1998, p. 26).

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As Bhabha (1982) notes, the body is a constructed as a second skin, void. The Meta-Suit is a de/reconstructed suit that embraces the male form and becomes embodied as part of the body, revealing and concealing secrets, part of the body, revealing and concealing secrets, immanent form of desire. The dress shows and hides, provoking, and only partially satisfy a powerful sense that fashion can be a dangerous game, though it in the shadowy depths of society's wardrobe because the accusation of sexual exhibitionism informs a good deal of the practice of the non-strip tease has not been more commonly revealed than women is deeply ingrained in Western culture' (Harvey, 2007, p. 82).

Asymmetrical Reveal

Designers in both men's couture and popular fashion use asymmetry to play more dramatically with the body reveal. For example, an asymmetrical top may reveal only one arm or one shoulder or a section of the waist. As Harvey (2007) notes, asymmetrical dress can be worn to roughly vulgar extremes or may be refined with an element of sophistication. This is an age-long clothing game and can be seen from ancient Greek sculptures where a frieze of dancing maidens — in Nike of Samothrace, for example — was wearing clothing that seems to leave a chest, till one sees at the moment that this breast is transparent. The fact that menswear in the 20th century has often remained as true as well today as in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, reflected in tight jeans that prioritize the form of the leg or leather jackets that highlight the strength of the arm and shoulder. The most extreme version of this exaggregation seem to leave us with the Landsknechte (the mercenary foot-soldiers of the Middle Ages) as the Scottish kilt does today. The most extreme version of this exaggregation seem to leave us with the Landsknechte (the mercenary foot-soldiers of the Middle Ages) as the Scottish kilt does today. The most extreme version of this exaggregation seem to leave us with the Landsknechte (the mercenary foot-soldiers of the Middle Ages) as the Scottish kilt does today. It is clear, as Scardi (2010, p. 18) argues, that theory incites links between my own practice and theory. It connects the male suit and identity with the meaning of clothing (in my case, the suit). It allows for further analysis of the use of transparency and the way in which it may be used to create the new. It represents, in essence, the connection between the past, the present, and the future. The male suit does not adjust to the male posture and silhouette of the body have an element of metaphorical substitution. Transparency has not only been used to reveal parts of the body but also to decorate it. Mesh, voile, mousseline, and other textiles have been utilised, predominately in female fashion, to veil and reveal the body's grace and decorative meshes not only reveal the skin's sensuality but they also decorate it. What would this mean for a suit? Illusion Reveal

Second-material skins also come into the game. Designers use nude colour transparencies to reveal, and in the same way, cover the body creating a naked illusion. Concealed Reveal

While men have shied away from uncovering their bodies in many periods throughout history, Harvey (2007) acknowledges they have nonetheless been willing to show the body through its covering. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, broad-shouldered and tight-waisted doublets exaggerate the modelled male body, while tight-fitting hose revealed the form of their legs clearly, though without the use of transparent materials. While men do not commonly reveal their legs throughout history, in some times and places, men have freely displayed bare legs such as warriors during the classical period or as the Scottish kilt does today. While men may show their thorough covering, men do so directly, avoiding see-through materials...

Dichotomy Reveal

Harvey (2007) describes how a suit can dichotomise a dress or a jacket to reveal the flesh. We have all seen a long dress with a long slit down one side, revealing an unexpected streak of the leg while the other leg remains concealed. This characteristic may also have been of practical origin, in allowing the person to walk more freely, but fashionable upper practicality, playing the drama of a teasing glimpse against the drama of a teasing hiddenness. The “vents”, as slits generally referred to, are an example of that practicality and reveal. The vents allow for a better fit, ventilation and movement, but they also allow for the disclosure of the body form such as bustrocks.

Exposed clothing can be emotive, elusive, provocative, and only partially satisfy a powerful sense of desire. The dress shows and hides, provoking interest into desire. This is evidenced in the advertisements for Levis jeans and Calvin Klein underwear in the 1980s, which sought to invest their merchandise with a danger that men will be more covered than women is deeply ingrained in Western culture (Harvey, 2007, p. 82).

Past vs. Future, Fashion vs. Anti-Fashion

Throughout history, clothing has been used to emphasise a dramatic effect in both women and men. Men's dress has tended to highlight the strength of the arm and shoulder, and the male posture and silhouette of the body. The practice of the non-strip tease has not been systemic in women's dress as it has been among men. Harvey (2007) argues, reveals other layers of cloth beneath the first. In general, men's dress has tended to be full of double entendres, playing on ideas from outside and inside and the body. Men's dress is extraordinary, and it may have had. Nothing is shiny and new; everything has a history [...]. The design is a wish

The wearing of clothing often involves a certain repetition that makes it both familiar and habitual, reflection of the metaphor of clothing as a second skin. As Scardi (2010, p. 67) argues, a man from being naked'. (p. 67). Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, broad-shouldered and tight-waisted doublets exaggerate the modelled male body, while tight-fitting hose revealed the form of their legs clearly, though without the use of transparent materials. While men do not commonly reveal their legs throughout history, in some times and places, men have freely displayed bare legs such as warriors during the classical period or as the Scottish kilt does today. While men may show their thorough covering, men do so directly, avoiding see-through materials. 


does not rely only on its impeccable design, and meanings and allowing the wearer to perform as a vehicle of everyday life, communicating signs, connotations and meanings. It provokes eroticism and fetishism.

Tool 1

Infinite Genealogies

Past vs. Future, Fashion vs. Anti-Fashion

Exposed clothing can be emotive, elusive, provocative, and only partially satisfy a powerful sense of desire. The dress shows and hides, provoking interest into desire. This is evidenced in the advertisements for Levis jeans and Calvin Klein underwear in the 1980s, which sought to invest their merchandise with a danger that men will be more covered than women is deeply ingrained in Western culture (Harvey, 2007, p. 82).

Fashion action is extraordinarily rare to see societies embracing full nudity. Harvey (2007) refers to Sturma by saying, 'In Tahiti, where clothes are hardly needed, a tattoo saves a man from being naked’. (p. 67).

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The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Introduction & Design Action Methodology

- Collection of experimental suits.

... juxtaposition illuminates the way that the past can... periods without coming to rest exclusively in one... like fashion is able to leap between different historical... culture. Instead, she has drawn on Walter Benjamin's... into the future' (p. 9). Evans discards a linear histori... and contemporary that will continue to resonate... remixing fragments of the past into something new...

... fashion designer's work at the Edge (2003), discusses the connection between past and... and presents arguments about the disjunctions... discourse of both conceptual and historical references'... The trace is not just referencing historical periods, nor simply a nostalgia for the past; rather, it is a sign of affiliation or connection, a memory brought forward to make something new.

Judith Clark, curator of the exhibition 

... carves the garment and its wearer... or a curse that casts the garment and its wearer...

The doubling of voices is not a distraction but a double game that can generate ideas and the genesis of new concepts. Scardi (2010) argues that art and fashion look backwards as much as forwards, acting as the channel between past and present, heading towards a paradigmatic examining the fragmented parts of the past into something new and contemporary that will continue to resonate into the future' (p. 9). Evans discards a linear historical analysis plotting a chronological or didactic view but rather situates the pieces within a wider cultural context by listening to the traces the garments bear (Loscialpo, 2012). As Clark states, genealogies are infinite; each section is just one possible route, a way through to a different future, and links can be arbitrary or intended. (2004, pp. 110-111).

... the visual link between the comparisons uncovers interesting facts about the present that have echoes in the past. For Evans, when designers harken back to such periods, they are simply providing interesting instances that crystallise the uses we make of history in the present (Evans, 2003, p. 10). The tiger's leap and the 'dialectical image' are used by Evans as tools to map the modern, rather than to chart the past.

Clark extends Evans' work on the continuous dialogue of the present with the past. She also discards a linear historical analysis plotting a precise and structural genealogy of the connections between present and past. In 

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The Workshops

- Cutting out and arranging fashion magazine images
- Framing the project's development. The outcomes from each of the four workshops provided the information and aspiration necessary for the creation of the 
Pini and Minus' collection of experimental suits. The first workshop explored a range of male garments from the 16th to 20th centuries (inclusive) in detail; their cut, pattern, seams, materials, extent, decoration, colour, weight, and perhaps most importantly — how they felt and interacted with the body. The main focus of this first investigation was familiarising myself with the evolution of male dress and the notion of the peacock by discovering the peak moments of male dress decoration and developing a better understanding of when and why the male dress became more sober and uniform.

... the creation of the experimental suit collections. The outcomes of the four workshops fed into the creation of the research-driven suits by experimenting with the form, questioning and deconstructing the notion of decoration, and using concepts and methods representative of deconstruction in fashion.

... a visual and theoretical study of male dress was necessary to outline a broader frame of the research. Rather than basing my visual research only on sourcebooks, thereby examining male garments in a two-dimensional form, the study of real garments felt more appropriate for the aims and objectives of this project. One of the main objectives of this research was to support the notion, as Hollander (1994) argued, that we cannot research a garment without exploring its relationship to the body. The garments themselves enabled me to gauge an in-depth series of information that played a key role in framing the project's development. The outcomes from each of the four workshops provided the information and aspiration necessary for the creation of the Pini and Minus' collection of experimental suits. The first workshop explored a range of male garments from the 16th to 20th centuries (inclusive) in detail; their cut, pattern, seams, materials, extent, decoration, colour, weight, and perhaps most importantly — how they felt and interacted with the body. The main focus of this first investigation was familiarising myself with the evolution of male dress and the notion of the peacock by discovering the peak moments of male dress decoration and developing a better understanding of when and why the male dress became more sober and uniform.

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The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Introduction & Design Action Methodology

According to Amies (1994) and Hollander (1994), the design of the male suit as the ultimate masculine attire has incorporated only subtle changes for the last three and a half centuries. By retaining its basic form without any extreme alterations, the suit has maintained a general sense of sobriety and subtilty, which has only increased its power (Hollander 1994, p. 112). Reinforcing Hollander's argument, Amies (1994) notes that the suit equals tradition and any radical innovation seems impossible. The suit is hierarchical and a 'very sensitive thing' to change: 'if you remove the curved fronts of a single-breasted coat, you wipe out its pedigree, thus weakening its power, and it sinks into being casual wear' (Amies, 1994, p. 44).

Throughout the investigation, the creation of the research-driven suits, and the conception of the meta-suit as both an outcome and proposal, I argue that the suit has evolved and can change further. As discussed in the literature review, a major 20th-century change began with the phenomenon of the New Man in the 1980s, a precursor to the 1990s metrosexuals, and has accelerated since 2000 with the post-metamorphs seeking individuality.

The starting point for both collections is the single-breasted male suit, and the two-collective series were created through its manipulation. Both series of suits are designed according to the archetypal and historical masculine shape of broad shoulders and a narrow waist, and the single-breasted one-button suit (see Figure 1.17) was selected as it exaggerates this masculine triangular shape (see Figure 1.18). The Minus collective suits are based on the subtraction of parts of the suit and the Plus are based on the addition of extra elements.

The two suit collections have acted as a designed form of experimentation with a two-fold aim:

- For the suits to be artistic and research-driven rather than commercial. The embodied suit form was to be explored and experimented on through its form, colour, and materiality. While the analysis of men's fashion preferences and interests means that commerciality cannot be fully removed from the design process, the design remains primarily driven by art and research.

- To create a collective series of suits to be worn by any man rather than professional fashion models. The Plus suits are made in sizes small to extra-large allowing accessibility to all. The trousers are available from size 28" (71 cm) up to 48" (122 cm). The jackets are designed according to the standard measurements of size — small, medium, and large. The jacket sleeves and the trouser lengths are adjustable to accommodate any arm and leg length.

Third Stage

The Interactive Performance Installations

A series of Interactive Performance Installations act as a method of testing, and, as the title implies, the events are embodied, collaborative and engaged: men can touch the garments and choose to wear the suit of their preference. They are performative: through interaction and self-presentation, men perform and explore how the suits themselves perform on them. And each is a spatial installation: the settings are site-responsive and create accessible environments in which men participate without the constraints of 'fashion' or 'stage' performances while visitors also interact.

The Interactive Performance Installations are set within the wider context of dress installations. Exhibitions such as Men in Skirts (Victoria and Albert Museum 2002 and the Metropolitan Museum 2004), 21st Century Dandy (world tour 2003-2005), and L'Homme Paré/Paris Museum of Fashion and Textiles 2006) form an important context for these installations. These precedents exhibitions were very...
On Friday, the 19th of September 2008, 'Forgotten Peacock' was launched as part of the London Design Museum's regular late-night opening 'Design Overtime' event. Forgotten Peacock was the core event that evening as part of the London Design Festival and London Fashion Week. This event acted as a pilot where a series of designs and ideas were tested and explored. It tested the idea of audience participation and the ways of integrating the pre-choreographed movement sequences with the audience-involved movement sequences. The event, together with the feedback, allowed me to uncover potential problems and make necessary adjustments before the main run at the Brunswick Centre.

For a successful outcome that manages to capture the attention and interest of a wider group of men, the Interactive Performance Installations had to be accessible to a broad target group and not only to the fashion or art gallery-attending audience. Forgotten Peacock was therefore also presented at the Brunswick Centre, a modern shopping complex in central London and, throughout its entire run of six days a week for six weeks, was attended by an audience of around 1,500 people. It also gave over 250 men of different ages, origins, and sizes the opportunity to take part and experiment with their looks.

The Brunswick Centre space was ideal for this research project as it was a semi-public space with its entrance on the ground floor of a shopping centre. It looked like a shop with a glass façade and was surrounded by other retail shops. Internally, the décor was minimal, allowing me the opportunity to transform it in the way I wanted. Providing a combination of a non-conventional space within a commercial complex, the Brunswick Centre was the ideal site to present the practice work. The shopping centre visitors were a very broad target group in terms of age, social and cultural background, which was valuable for meeting my initial aim of accessibility.

"Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self" was the third interactive installation of this project and took place at the Helsinki Design Museum in May of 2014 (Figure 1.21). It was documented in two forms: first with the use of a time-lapse camera recording throughout the assembling and dissembling of the installation; and, secondly, through the use of a touch screen, where a self-photographing camera allowed the male participants to photograph themselves in their preferred pose. The second feature will gauge material for further review, not only in the design of the male suit but also in the performative aspects discussed above.

The time-lapse camera allowed me to record how many men visited the installation, how many interacted with the suits, which suits they chose to wear, the number of suits they chose to wear, whether they interacted with the add-on feature, and if they were alone or accompanied. For the purposes of this research into the meta-suit, the Interactive Performance Installations provided the best environment for testing ideas and observing men as they interacted with the collective series of suits.

Throughout the research and practical stages of this research project, all ethical consent forms and procedures have been followed according to the protocol(s) of both the London College of Fashion University of the Arts and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. Public participants at each installation were informed of their ethical rights and consent through a series of signs at the entrance that detailed the purposes of the study, its publication, and their right to withdraw. The Helsinki Design Museum installation was the only variation, where public participants expressed their consent by participating with the MyPose 'selfie' machines and entering the exhibition. All parties (Research Group, workshop participants, installation participants) were given an exhausting briefing throughout the process that detailed their participation, the timing and actions required of them, their rights to withdraw at any time, and the eventual publication of a PhD dissertation on the process. These procedures were monitored by the relevant departments to ensure good practice as well as the protection and well-being of both the Research Group and the public participants.

These three practical stages (workshops, collections, and interactive performance exhibitions) were key to the application of Design Action Research as a methodology and provided ample room for review and reflection throughout the process. The final conceptualisation of the meta-suit thus emerged from these three embodied research events. However, their development also relied on the theoretical and historical investigation of the male suit discussed in the following chapters.
2 The Design of an Archetype: The Suit

'The trousers-jacket-shirt-and-tie costume' (Hollander, 1994, p. 3)

This chapter is intended to break down the basic, archetypal construction of the suit, including its form, function, materiality, and the history of its design (see Etro F14, 2014, Figure 2.1). In tracing the evolution of the suit from the 16th to the 21st century, this section is underpinned by Flügel's theory of the Great Masculine Renunciation and the shift from flamboyant peacockery toward the sombre, uniform design of the modern suit. Building a critical commentary of the suit's history is integral for the design of the Plus and Minus collection of suits discussed in Chapter 5 and informs the eventual conceptualisation of the meta-suit.
2.1 Defining the Suit

Although male heads of state wear suits at summit meetings, male job applicants wear them to interviews, and men accused of rape and murder wear them in court to help their chances of acquittal, the trousers-jacket-shirt-and-tie costume, formal or informal, is often called boring or worse. (Hollander, 1994, p. 3)

The 'suit' traditionally refers to an assemblage of garments made of the same cloth and colour, worn together: jacket, trousers, and, eventually, a waistcoat. It is a formalised garment, normally worn with a collared shirt and a tie. The jacket can be single-breasted, usually with three buttons or double-breasted with two columns of four to six buttons. Each cuff has three to four buttons. The back can be unvented, single vented, or double vented. Lapels come notched, peaked, or in a style called shawl, usually reserved for the dinner jacket. The trousers — flared, bell-bottomed, wide-legged or slim — can, since Edward VII, be turned up at the bottom. They eventually have a break and usually two pleats.

Suits are constructions whose complexity is hidden beneath the surface (The Compass, 2013, Table 2.1). The different types of constructions mainly refer to the variations in the suit jacket (Table 2.2). The most lavish type is the full canvassed jacket. The jacket comprises layers of canvassing material (comprising wool and horsehair) between the inner lining and outer suit fabric. The canvass gives a suit a wool shell of the suit. While fusing gives the suit a lining and outer suit fabric. The canvas gives a suit a fully canvassed. Fused jackets have front panels and lapels with fusible interlinings that are glued to the wool shell of the suit. While fusing gives the suit shape, it lacks the natural drape of canvassed jackets. Suit manufacturers began using this construction to increase production capacity while minimising costs. Off-the-peg suits generally feature this type of construction. A half-canvassed jacket features a partial canvassing of the jacket, from the shoulder down through the chest. Beneath the canvas is a thin layer of fusing that extends around the jacket. It merges the cost reduction benefits of fused jackets with the natural drape of full canvassed jackets where it is most needed.

Variations also arise in the way suits are made and procured, albeit for different reasons. First, we have bespoke suits designed specifically for an individual. The high art of bespoke tailoring features tailors and patrons who both understand that the suit is all about the cut. It is a serious and almost ritualistic affair where tailors have been described as 'interpreters of one's desires' (Amies, 1994, p. 3). Its acid test is the wrinkle-free outcome. Savile Row has become shorthand for this unwrinkled perfection of the trade, where the body has to be smoothly followed in its movements. During the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, Giorgio Armani and other Italian tailors became known for unconstricted, slim-fitting jackets with shorter, slim-legged trousers. As with most bespoke tailors, they engaged in the innovation of the suit. Another type of suit is the made-to-measure variant. While found in some bespoke tailoring establishments, they are not made from existing designs and adjusted to fit the wearer's measurements. Lastly, we have prefabricated suits. Also termed as off-the-peg suits, they are originally an American phenomenon. These mass-prodced suits gained popularity among lower-class men, particularly in the early 20th century, and were an instant hit. Due to industrialisation and technological advances, machines and synthetic materials were used to create high-quality suits that were difficult to distinguish from bespoke ones.

Parallels and connections have been drawn between the suit and architecture. As Hodge (2006) states, the suit envelopes the body like a modern architectural building — reflected in the overlapping panels incorporated into Plus Design +5 seen in Figure 2.2. Gehry takes the idea of wrapping the body further. He encased the complex steel skeleton of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles within a skin of stainless-steel panels to create expressive curved forms reminiscent of a ship's sail. His 1995 Dancing Hour in Prague — also referred to as Fred and Ginger — alludes to two enwined and clothed forms.

Brooke Hodge, curator of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA), in her essay for the catalogue of the exhibition 'Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture', hosted at MOCA (November 2006 — 3 March 2007), followed by The National Art Centre in Tokyo (6 June — 13 August 2007) and Somerset House in London (18 March — 12 June 2008), analyses the similarities between fashion and architecture, finding similarities between the two disciplines (Hodge, 2006): first, for both practices, the point of origin is the body; second, they both protect and shelter, while providing a means to express identity; and third, they share a similar creative process, creating form from a flat two-dimensional medium (Hodge, 2006, p. 11). Polhemus (2011) reinforces these equivalencies between the embodied suit and architecture. Hollander (1994) expands on the connection between modern architecture:

In architecture, a new respect for the intrinsic beauty of Naked steel, glass and concrete helped to revive a taste for formal value uncluttered by busy adornment [...] All this helped to keep the new versions of the modern masculine suit, now celebrating formal abstraction in the new ways, on the same path toward a muted colour that they had originally taken during their first Neo-classic appearance (p. 96).

The word 'suit' derives from the French suit, meaning 'following', itself derived from the Latin verb sequor, 'to follow'. Men's suits may be loosely defined as garments that you can choose to wear (in the Finnish language), as the Finnish language does not have gender, the word puku does not refer to a male dress specifically. In Italian, the male suit is "abito da uomo", dress for a man, or " completo da uomo", complete for a man referring to the combination of trousers/jacket or trousers waistcoat/jacket if it is a three-piece suit. In analysing the male suit in this thesis, both meanings can be justified as qualities of the male suit. It is a suit of clothes (trousers, jacket), it is a form of dress as every other in the male wardrobe, yet it is also a costume which allows a male wearer to assume different roles in his everyday life.
Suit is both noun and verb (artifact and action) and is therefore performative (like design), highlighting the suit as an active practice and activating object. It is a complete set of elements that make up an ensemble, generally defining leadership and authority. It is also not only what is acceptable, convenient, and matching (conventional) but also what one desires (personal and individual). British menswear designer Hardy Amies analyses the meaning of the word in his book 'The Englishman’s Suit' (1994). The word 'suit' is in itself interesting. The dear old Oxford English Dictionary helps. It is Middle English and Old French: it comes from the French 'suivre', to follow. You follow suit in cards; you have a bathroom 'en suite' if you live in Hampstead; you have a lawsuit if you get divorced; you are sometimes dressed suitably.

We are talking about a suit of clothes. This has been through the ages mostly in three pieces: coat, vest, and trousers. This is the correct naming. (pp. ix-x)

The male suit is linked to many professions — bankers, solicitors, politicians — as a uniform that expresses power. It is a 'confidence giving' garment, and as Smith (2009) states: 'people will treat you differently, they will ask your opinion, they will expect you to take care of trouble' (p. 45). Hollander (1994) places the suit as the uniform of official power, which does not manifest force or physical labour but implies diplomacy, civility, and physical self-control. The male suit, according to both Hollander and Amies, expresses the power of superiority and is 'hierarchical', like the robes of the high court judge or the Lord Chancellor.

**An Unchangeable Design?**

'If you alter it too drastically, you destroy its power and thus its value' (Amies, 1994, p. 44).

The design of the male suit, the ultimate masculine attire, has, for the last three and a half centuries, gradually increased its power by remaining the same, only incorporating subtle changes. For Amies (1994), 'the male suit continues to be respected because of its long history; it is the basic attire of many men — the most comfortable costume in which a man can "conduct" his life' (p. 108). According to Amies (1994), men are very reluctant to accept any real changes to it. 'All men are aware, mostly unconscious, of its design; they will reject any variation of what they think is the norm. They want the norm' (p. 44). Table 2.3 from LACMA and Tables 2.4 and 2.5 from the V&A collection provide a visual chronology of the suit’s evolution since 1680, highlighting both the retention of many core aspects of the suit’s design, as well as providing a visual aid as to how the suit has shifted over the past 340 years.

While the general shape and concept of the suit has remained the same, new-age dandyism has seen much experimentation with the traditional ensemble. Men in contemporary society are mixing and matching various aspects of the suit with other garments and accessories, creating some form of 'hybrid' peacocks. Recognising this shift, the research-driven Plus and Minus suits challenge not only the suit but also the tradition:

They explicitly and consciously [take up] many of the themes discussed here and explore new possibilities, just as in the neo-classical period, when innovations succeeded in changing the male three-piece suit — or even at the beginning of the 20th century when the lounge suit was widely adopted. (Takis, 2014, p. 70)

With this in mind, it is time now to question the design and composition of the male suit. While Amies (1994) and Hollander (1994) both discuss the impossibility of fundamentally changing the male suit, the need for individuality today might force change on the archetypal suit — not only how it is constructed but also how it is presented and perceived.

Throughout this process, I often found it difficult to challenge the so-called 'wholly uncouchable' garment, as I was confronted not only by contradictions and oppositions but also by a series of complex meanings, characteristics, and powers. To challenge the idea that its form is unchangeable, we need to analyse not only the suit’s design, history, meanings, and status quo but all of these aspects together in a form of dialogue that coexists and informs each of these considerations. When I tried to talk about any of these as separate units, I realised that it became a mono-dimensional reading disconnected from the rest. Just as the physical suit brings together layers of material that are intertwined with accuracy to create a successful garment, it is important to read the suit in relation to all the disciplines. More importantly, the suit is 'active' and therefore performative when embodied. We cannot understand the complexity and excellence of its design or the meaning of the male suit without discussing it in relation to the embodied wearer. The embodied active suit dynamically intervenes between the body and space, and the performative suit activates multiple binary oppositions. These oppositions do not act against each other but function in hybrid dialogue. Their dynamics and powers shift continuously depending on the wearer, place, time, and social situation in which the suit is worn. All of these factors, alongside the application of theories on masculinity and performativity, underpinned and shaped the practice work analysed across chapters 4, 5, and 6.
The Design of an Archetype: The Suit

Table 2.3

Visual Chronology: 1720–1880, LACMA

Note. For caption details see Expanded Captions: Table. 2.3 — Visual Chronology: 1720–1880, LACMA

Table 2.4

Visual Chronology: 1680–1968, V&A

Note. For caption details see Expanded Captions: Table. 2.4 — Visual Chronology: 1680–1968, V&A

Table 2.5

Visual Chronology: 1969–2015, V&A

Note. For caption details see Expanded Captions: Table. 2.5 — Visual Chronology: 1969–2015, V&A
2.2 From Flamboyancy to Uniformity:
The History of the Suit

Elaborating on concepts in Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1976), theorist J.C. Flügel (1930, p. 86) describes a primal condition for infants where there are two forms of pleasure, the narcissistic and the auto-erotic. Most relevant to the focus of this essay is narcissistic pleasure, which is described as a tendency to admire one’s own body and display it to others so that they can share in the admiration.

The term peacock was and still is used metaphorically as a term for a well-dressed man, though looking back through history, we can observe that the meaning of the term peacock has shifted and morphed many times. In the 16th, 17th, and early 18th centuries, the term peacock referred to an adorned man in extravagant and elaborate clothing—highlighted in the entrance to the *L’homme paré* exhibit (*L’homme paré*, 2009, Figure 2.3). From the late 18th century onwards, through to the simplification of male dress, peacock refers to a well-dressed man who takes great care of his looks and pays attention to detail. Today, Bowstead argues, “the term “dandy” retains its currency, continuing to be employed to describe a certain stylish, insouciant way of being in the world.” (2004, p. 140). The specifics of decoration also changed as attitudes to male dress modernised. For instance, in the 16th, 17th, and early 18th centuries, decoration on male clothing was often luxurious. Elaborate fabrics, lace, pearls, feathers, precious and semi-precious stones, or embroidery were all used to decorate clothing. In later centuries, instead of lace and feathers, we see a subtler approach to male display. This could take the form of an ornate button, hat, tie pin, cravat, or tie.

Looking at two prime but antithetical examples of “peacockery”, the contemporaneous dandies and macaronis, we can easily observe two very different approaches to male display. Figure 2.4 ([19th-Century Dandy Portrait](https://collections.lacma.org/node/174972)) and 2.5 (Paston, 1905), Figure 2.6 ([Pantheon Macaroni, Philip Dawe (printmaker) 1773](https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/exhibitions/18thc/walls/)) are adorned with immaculate detail, avoiding excess garments or superfluous decoration. On the contrary, the macaronis in Figures 2.5 (Paston, 1905) and 2.7 ([19th-Century Macaroni, Gordon William Russell](https://collections.lacma.org/node/174972)) display excess to a point that appears ridiculous to our contemporary eye. We can reasonably refer to either of these adorned men as a peacock. As part of the natural evolution and modernisation of male dress, and in conjunction with the fashion trends of each period, the meaning of the term peacock has changed and morphed accordingly. Here we can see that masculine display techniques are fluid and therefore subject to change.

Within the context of this project, the term peacock refers to a well-dressed man who pays flamboyant attention to detail. In this research, the use of the word peacock is explored across the centuries, 16th to 21st (inclusive), and does not refer exclusively to the Peacock Revolution of the 1960s. Throughout the centuries, these peacocks, magnificent and assertively confident, have always taken extreme care of their appearance. They lived in style, were well-dressed and were over-groomed at all times. Echoes of this can still be seen today, particularly on social media, at galas and fashion events.

Flügel reveals the multi-faceted nature of masculinity in order to situate them in the context of this question. Looking at the last four centuries, it is evident that male dress and display have undergone a great change. There has been a transition from the flamboyant, extravagant, and colourful to the sober and uniformed. As previously discussed in the introduction, Flügel’s theory of *The Great Masculine Renunciation* (Flügel, 1930) provides the means of exploring the causes of this change and linking the disappearance of peacocks to the emergence of the sober three-piece suit. In this chapter, I will analyse the different factors that contributed to *The Great Masculine Renunciation* and attempt to situate them in relation to the shifting notions of masculinity, decoration, and “peacockery”.

While Flügel claims that the most radical change from the flamboyant to the uniform began during the late 18th century, the precise timing of this shift is debated in the literature (see Edwards, 1976).
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

The Design of an Archetype: The Suit -

draws on psychoanalytical traditions, explores the universal presence in human life. This modesty-mise-formation' balancing between an early need to draw parallels with trends present today and betrays a set to become a 'superior example' of English masculinity. According to Kuchta, Burgh claims that this struggle never reached a compromise as it was based on 'an unfixed and unstable definition of masculinity' (1996, p. 72).

Elaborating on this argument, Kuchta writes: "Jazz as middle-class men had appropriated an original aristocratic critique of luxury and effeminacy in order to help define middle-class masculinity. The three-piece suit worn by the three-piece suit was celebrated as a 'superior example' of English masculinity. Britain, according to Kuchta, is famous for its distinctive system of inconspicuous consumption that has been, with the exception of the later Restoration, never in question for any social group. Women, for instance, have been seen as part of this system of inconspicuous consumption, even if they were not play a role until much later in the 20th century. These two social groups were struggling to become a 'superior example' of English masculinity, and... their dress has ever since been something of a focal point of class society' appeared during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but his focus is not exclusive to the middle classes. He also believes that they can be attributed to a more general modernisation and renegotiation of clothing forms in political and economic culture in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but his focus is not disputed whether a great change in male fashion occurred, nor is it the purpose of this project to examine these arguments in great detail. Within the context of this exploration, it is more important to point out that male dress rapidly lost its derivative power, and male peacocks shifted towards a more minimal appearance.

This research project, inspired by the theory of the Great Masculine Renunciation, explores the nature of these shifts in male fashion. The aim is to draw parallels with trends present today and betrays a set to become a 'superior example' of English masculinity. Britain, according to Kuchta, is famous for its distinctive system of inconspicuous consumption that has been, with the exception of the later Restoration, never in question for any social group. Women, for instance, have been seen as part of this system of inconspicuous consumption, even if they were not play a role until much later in the 20th century. These two social groups were struggling to become a 'superior example' of English masculinity, and... their dress has ever since been something of a focal point of class society' appeared during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but his focus is not disputed whether a great change in male fashion occurred, nor is it the purpose of this project to examine these arguments in great detail. Within the context of this exploration, it is more important to point out that male dress rapidly lost its derivative power, and male peacocks shifted towards a more minimal appearance.

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experiencing with form as well as colour and materiality (Browne, 2006–2020, Table 2.7). His overly theatrical gestures break many norms. He is pushing the boundaries but telling stories with each collection, utilising references from history, cultures, sport, tradition, and the military, and constantly proposes new approaches towards the suit.

Even with these simple examples, it is clear that the peacock remains a part of masculine fashion in contemporary society despite the lasting influence of Flügel’s Great Masculine Renunciation. Experimentation with non-traditional materials and cuts is visible in modern design, offering the wearer a vast array of opportunities when it comes to self-expression. As norms have shifted and class has come to have a far weaker influence on the choice of outfit, the suit as a symbol of uniformity and utilitarianism is no longer a particularly accurate conceptualisation. This shift from uniformity to self-expression is fundamental to how suits are worn in contemporary society and raises interesting possibilities for experimenting with material, colour, decoration, texture, and patterns in the practical design of the meta-suit.

| Table 2.6 | Tom Ford suit design 2013–2021 |
| Note. For caption details see Expanded Captions: Table. 2.6 - Tom Ford suit design 2013–2021 |

| Table 2.7 | Thom Browne suit design 2006–2020 |
| Note. For caption details see Expanded Captions: Table. 2.6 – Tom Ford suit design 2013–2021 |
2.3 Historical Context: Pre-20th Century

The Three-Piece Suit

Male attire that emerged from *The Great Masculine Renunciation* can be considered as an early form of the male suit. As stated in the introduction, Anne Hollander (1994, p. 62), David Kuchta (2009, pp. 47-48), and Amies (1994, p. 14) argue that the three-piece suit first appeared on King Charles II in 1666 in the House of Lords, as noted by the **MP Samuel Pepys (1685, p. 324)**.

There appear to be political reasons behind this shift. Kuchta (2009) argues that in 1666, six years after his restoration, Charles II of England attempted ‘to become a pattern to his own people’ to restore the moral authority of the English Crown (p. 45). After the previous era of political upheaval, it was imperative to the monarchy that they reclaimed their reputation as a moral authority. From this initiative, the modern three-piece suit emerged. According to Kuchta (2009), the Crown sought to restore its image as an ‘arbiter of taste’; virtues such as modesty and economic prowess were associated with the monarchy and the nobility they stood for (p. 45).

To Kuchta (2009, p. 45), the three-piece suit was a means to represent the monarchy in a new masculine image. The iconoclasm of Cromwell’s era was appropriated and used to redefine the culture of the court. In this way, the monarchy was able to restore both its authority and political legitimacy. As introduced at the outset of this thesis, according to Kuchta (2009), the three-piece suit was Charles II’s permanent fashion statement. It was an attempt to ‘teach the nobility thrift’ and halt the frequent and excessive display of wealth and power that characterized the Stuart era. Kuchta (2009) notes that in 1666, the three-piece suit was ‘a new mode of sartorial sovereignty’ (p. 49). This move was a means to represent the monarchy in a new form, where it was able to impose its will on society.

There appears to have been a degree of role reversal in terms of dress between the upper and the lower classes during this period. The writer Edward Chamberlayne noted, in his 1669 edition of *Anglia Notitia*, that there had never been a time where the nobility dressed more modestly. He remarked that ‘only the citizens, and foreign people, and the servants, appear clothed for the most part above and beyond their qualities’ (Chamberlayne, 1669, p. 58-59). This remark suggests that while the noblemen of the time seemed keen to appear modest and plain, the common men in society were still interested in some degree of elegance. Chamberlayne (1669, pp. 58-59) also notes that while male fashion appears to have broken from the ‘French mode’, women continued to follow its movements. This situates a form of display in English attire that is uniquely masculine. As Kuchta (2009) notes, the three-piece suit allowed the restored court of Charles II to define and re-legitimatise the aristocracy and the monarchy. Modesty had become a fashion statement of the powerful. With the three-piece suit, ‘a counterculture became court culture’ (Kuchta, 2009, p. 49).

The emergence of the suit was central to *The Great Masculine Renunciation*. Sociologist Tim Edwards (2011) described the suit as ‘the nadir of indecorous duffel dressed with restraint and modesty. It is this classic, three-piece ensemble that would go on to define male fashion for centuries to come and forms the basis of my ambition to redefine how it is understood and worn today.

These changes in male attire were not confined to the English political landscape. Kuchta (2009, p. 45) also underlines the importance of the three-piece suit as a feature of the economic and political rivalry between England and France and as a sign that older French styles of fashion were losing prevalence. Lord Halfax (1663-1669) described the change as a means to distinguish the English as an independent nation that refused to be under the servility of imitation (Halfax, 1668, p. 12).

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The Dandy

The development of the 18th-century English dandy is highly relevant to the focus of this research. For many historians (McDowell, 1977; Laver, 1968; Breward, 2000), this movement is the precursor to the classic English Gentleman and the dandies’ style of dress is the archetype of English male attire (see McIse, n.d., Figure 2.3). For this reason, the movement offers fertile ground for an exploration into the role of masculinity in fashion. As Entwisle (2000, p. 121) argues, elements of the dandy style can be seen throughout the development of male fashion since the 18th century. For example, the dandy craze can be considered as the forerunner to the modern male tie. The arguments below will establish that these dandies were neither innovators nor ‘fashionable’ in the sense of leading or promoting new fashions. The Australian sociologist Joanne Finkelstein (1991) also underlines the importance of dandies in Regency London continue the development of modern fashions for men. She explains that their appearance marks a distinctive break with the masculine style of the ancient regime.

Dandies and their appearance in England in the second half of the 18th century. For a small group of them, dress and appearance became a total obsession. It is worth noting that at this juncture that this was not an exuberant obsession comparable to that of the macaroni movement in the second half of the 17th century. Instead, this obsession concerned itself entirely with notions of taste. For dandies, extravagance was vulgar, while sobriety was elegant and tasteful. The perfection of their turn-out was based not on making a show but rather on projecting confidence and social superiority. For the dandies, then, notions of display in clothing had become concerned with restraint and sobriety.

Moral virtues of practicality and utility were displayed through the masculine attire of the age. Echoes of this can still be seen in the male clothing of today and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. In support of this argument, Breward (2001) notes in his introduction to the catalogue for the 21st-century Dandy’s exhibition: "The tenets laid down by the original generation of dandies in Regency London continue to provide a relevant and flexible system of clothing for the 21st-century man about town. No other sartorial philosophy has come close to wielding such influence on either the day-to-day processes of dressing or the more refined consideration of dress as idea (p. 2)."

Finally, it is worth looking at the origin of the dandies’ dress. English art historian James Laver (1968) argues that it lies in the costume of the French courtier in the 18th century. He suggests that the front skirt, lace ruffles, and lace neckcloth of the French courtier were both appropriated and gradually minimalised by the English dandy (Laver, 1968, p. 12). In general, plain, more practical materials were used, in part to facilitate horse-riding and similar activities. Laver notes that while small modifications were made, the outfit was strikingly similar to that of the French aristocracy.

Beau Brumwell

The name George Bryan Brumwell (1778-1840) has entered history as the creator of the dandy style, which, even today, is seen by many to be the archetype of English male dress (McDowell, 1977; Laver, 1968). Known as Beau Brumwell, he was the paradigmatic dandy, ‘a man who has decided to radicalize the distinction in men’s clothing by subjecting it to..."
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The significance of the dandy

While Brummell is widely considered to be the archetypal ‘first-wave’ dandy, it is important to note that from 1799 to 1810, fashionable hostesses competed for his presence, and no party was complete without his presence. In support of this argument, the South African poet Roy Campbell (1993) notes that the dandy’s style affected both their visual look, as well as their social and emotional behaviour. The goal was to dress in a way that was ‘perfect but understated’ (see Johnston, 2018, Figure 2.10). The displays of the dandy also relied on gestures, expressions, and a wit that could command a conversation. The refined behaviour and reputation of the dandy became synonymous with his attire. Combined with other social behaviours, this allowed them to ‘display a superiority of self’ (Campbell, 1993, p. 61).

In contrast to the Tea-party’s focus on utility had far-reaching effects: this emphasis on utility had far-reaching effects: from such prosaic requirements grew not only a form of dressing but also an attitude of mind and was the ultimate city daywear for men. Its full coat was a more elegant version of the country frock — and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success — and their appearance. Though dandies were often described as a ‘mask of masculinity’ and a ‘fetishism: the very high degree of narcissism characteristic of the dandy is usually correlated with some degree of sexual abnormality’. He also notes that these behaviours would perhaps be universally accepted in women. This observation adds an interesting dimension to the image of the dandy and its relevance in renegotiating 21st-century fashion.

This implication of effeminacy notwithstanding, Bowstead argues that ‘the very high degree of narcissism characteristic of the dandy is usually correlated with some degree of sexual abnormality’. He also notes that these behaviours would perhaps be universally accepted in women. This observation adds an interesting dimension to the image of the dandy and its relevance in renegotiating 21st-century fashion.

The 19th Century

According to McDowell (1997), the modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and the clad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owes much of its legacy to two things: the image of the perfect English gentleman and theclad and utility inextricably linked to the dandy — as well as their French contemporaries — who dressed with equal success. The modern three-piece suit owe
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2.4 Historical Context: The 20th Century to the New Man

The Emergence of the Lounge Suit

Even in the Victorian era, where dress included many opportunities for fashionable discomfort and conspicuous consumption, male attire was comparatively simpler than in earlier periods. According to Hollander (1994), male fashion was ‘visibly straightforward’ and designed to depict an image of a gentleman thoroughly up to date on the matters of the age (p. 148). These included the sciences, commerce, and the advance of rational thought in general.

Ready-to-Wear: The American Influence

The ready-to-wear three-piece suit first appeared in the 19th century, with mass-produced suits that were initially made for the lower classes. However, their manufacturing followed the same high standards of design and finish as the bespoke tailored three-piece suits of the period. The ready-made suits were originally an American phenomenon and saw great success as early as the 1830s. While bespoke tailoring maintained its prestige in England and France for the majority of the century, mass-produced suits were associated with a lack of ubiquity of this form of attire. As Hollander notes:

Observers in the New World, however, remarked that the nattiest and most always quickly adopted elegant fashion, were already becoming very hard to distinguish from American farmers, shop-keepers and artisans who were appearing in the park or at church in well-cut, well-fitting ready-made town clothes. (Hollander, 1994, p. 106)

From 1910 to 1930, the age of mass production made affordable, ready-made attire more universally accessible. The three-piece suit became the accepted form of male fashion. For Hollander (1994), this period reduced the ‘multiplicity of male elegance’ (p. 149) and brought about an era with formal wear for ‘every sort of gentleman Man’ (p. 108). This project considers the ready-to-wear suit a great revolution in male dress. It helped to push the male suit more firmly into mainstream accessibility. For the first time, common people were able to wear elegant three-piece suits that, until recently, had only been associated with the upper classes.

It is worth mentioning, however, that there were pitfalls for the inexperienced buyer. The nature of ready-made suits meant that a good fit was more difficult to come by for those without a custom tailor. According to Hollander (1994), the ‘discriminating eye’ of the suit’s buyer would largely determine its final appearance (p. 107). Unlike a tailor’s client who

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Hollander (1994), the inner tension this caused had a strong erotic charge in itself (p. 99). It appears that this modern male suit has a powerful historical connection with human sexuality, display, and power. While jackets encompass the most immediately obvious evolution in suits, the lower half of the male form also experienced fashion changes throughout the 18th and 19 centuries. According to Hollander (1994), male tailoring shifted towards comfort and abstraction.

By 1815, trousers had largely replaced the sleek, demanding pantaloons, and men’s arms and legs became similarly clad in smooth cylinders of yielding fabric. The modern ‘suit’ was now in existence, meaning the unified abstraction of shape that is its defining characteristic; but it still did not have to be made of the same fabric for trousers and coat, except in evening dress. Waistcoats could also still be separate (p. 100).

These changes paved the way for a modern male suit and are profoundly relevant to the new designs proposed by this project.

It can be argued that the neo-classical suit introduced a radical new wave of fashion, especially for male sartorial matters. On the one hand, it marked an age where men would actually add to the flashy garments of the past. On the other, it engendered an environment where the differentiation between male and female dress became meaningful, regardless of the classification of the wearer. At the Neo-classical moment, it was men, not women, who enterprisingly made a radical modern leap in fashion (Hollander, 1994, p. 7).

From its creation through to the end of the 19th century, the evolution of the suit is marked by distinct shifts in its symbolism and meaning. From its original form as a three-piece ensemble representing modesty and the monarchy to the ultimate coat, waistcoat, and trousers, and different pieces were worn with varied shades and fabrics. For instance, the frock coat was often worn with lighter-coloured trousers. One further example with parallels to today is the dark morning coat that could be worn with striped trousers (Hollander, 1994, pp. 107–8). There was also the so-called gentleman’s lounge suit, all parts of which were made of a single fabric. This garment had an explicitly intended for leisurely country life or private life in the city. It was only worn at home for informal settings among close friends. Hollander describes how it looked and the impression it conveyed:

It was made of a soft, tweedy or checked material with a rather short and easy coat, and waistcoat to match. In a highly refined society, it was essentially a combination of comfortable light colour, and especially its one-piece fabric suggested a sort of tame-animal costume, representing modesty and the monarchy to the image of a gentleman thoroughly up to date on the matters of the age (p. 148). These included the sciences, commerce, and the advance of rational thought in general.
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Shirts produced without a collar attached began to be worn as a matter of course, and the soft shirt had arrived. Soft collars and cuffs now came to be worn as a matter of course, and tops were not originally worn by the upper classes. Today, instead of being worn far more universally, irrespective of class or profession, Amies summarises this as follows:

The modern man's suits were growing less restricted towards an increased expression of individuality, a factor that will be vitally important for a contemporary reimagining of the three-piece suit.

According to Amies (1994), the precursor to the lounge suit was the morning coat, which had to be worn during the day. By the 1920s, they disappeared toward the end of the 19th century, leaving only a slit part way up the back. The number of buttons was reduced from four to three to two, and sometimes the sleeves were even shorter. The single-breasted lounge suit was not originally worn by the upper classes. Today, they are worn far more universally, irrespective of class or profession. Amies summarises this as follows:

The yet triumphant lounge suit carefully preserves many of its pedigree. It is recreating either of a double-breasted riding coat, originally fastening at the neck. It sometimes displays buttons that are not used but indicate those which were. It does this without the frills of the buckled button. Its revers are designed to visually communicate men's power and fashion consumerism has become prevalent in recent years, male fashion trends are 'constructed as objects of consumer desire' (Edwards, 2011, p. 48).

The sociologist Rowena Chapman (1988) describes the rise of the New Man and his narcissistic masculinity as a defensive reaction against women. To Chapman, the 'low fashion world' is a silent revolution that disrupts men's anti-feminine role played in shaping the display of masculinity in fashion. According to Chapman, the display of masculinity in fashion is a form of resistance against women. The development of various entrepreneurial initiatives in the 1980s, and the reintroduction of the term 'dandy' in Soho, London, to describe a sauntering, well-dressed man (Mort, 1996). As mentioned above, Sean Nixon's comparable analysis focused more on developments in visual culture. To Nixon, the New Man is a figure of social and cultural projection, with little or nothing to do with advertising itself. Nixon also believes this construction takes place in retailing, marketing, and across the media more broadly. Relevant to the topic of this research is how both Mort and Nixon discuss the New Man's role in shaping the display of masculinity in fashion. On 'shape, line, and surface texture' (Hollander, 1994, p. 96). This trend towards a sort of uniformity. Paradoxically, towards an increased expression of individuality, a factor that will be vitally important for a contemporary reimagining of the three-piece suit.

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image
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appears to have completed the complex influences that have shaped our fragmented experience of modernity. What these articles [of clothing] offer are snapshots, through the medium of fashion, of the ways in which previous generations of men continually found their aspirations and self-knowledge challenged by new developments in the role of taste and shifting social or political responsibilities. The 'New Man' it turns out is not so 'New' at all, his physical trappings and sartorial anxieties echo to be 'masculine', this movement was supported by a rise of consumer interest in men's fashion, breaking the long-standing taboo that fashion was a realm reserved for women. Despite the proliferation of masculinities that has followed this period, challenges to traditional masculinity still cause outcry and, in print, the significant [Edwards, 2017, p. 41].

This significance is further emphasised by Joanne Entwistle, who acknowledges the impact of the New Man phenomenon (Entwistle, 2009, p. 197). Men born in the late 1970s and early 1980s have grown up surrounded by images of men selling all kinds of commodities, as well as celebrities, such as British soccer player David Beckham and the pop star Robbie Williams, who both display a quite feminine interest in fashion, the body, and their appearance. It would seem, then, that the taboo that men should not be interested in fashion or looking good has been eroded to some extent, at least for a younger generation of men (Entwistle, 2009, p. 197).

However, as Bowstead (2018) argues, these developments mark a fertile ground for the meta-suit to challenge and experiment with traditional conceptions of 'timeless' suit design and 'unchanging' masculinity. The proliferation of masculinities and rise of consumer interest in male fashion provides designers with fertile ground for new styles and appearance is of major significance to an exploration of the suit in the 21st-century. This new tolerance for alleged effeminacy and self-awareness provides designers with fertile ground for new styles and innovations. The role of celebrities in shaping male attitudes towards fashion is also noteworthy. In fact, the self-grooming performed by celebrities such as British soccer player David Beckham and the pop star Robbie Williams, who both display a quite feminine interest in fashion, the body, and their appearance. It would seem, then, that the taboo that men should not be interested in fashion or looking good has been eroded to some extent, at least for a younger generation of men (Entwistle, 2009, p. 197).

In developing Bowstead's discussion of male fashion as fluid and subject to change, Edwards (2010) presents a reconfiguration of men's fashion, that of the playboy and that of the puritan. Edwards argues that fashion swings between these tendencies throughout history, from dandyism to conservatism and back again. Furthermore, Edwards (2017) underlines that shifts in fashion and appearance are mostly inextricable from developments in consumer culture, sexual politics and wider concerns relating to masculinity past and present (p. 52).

With the pendulum of dandyism vs conservativism swinging back toward the former, The Great Masculine Renunciation appears to have completed a full circle. The New Man marks the dawn of a movement where men reconstruct their image and the roles of masculinity in their everyday lives. Edwards remarks that from the 1980s, 'men'swear' transitioned into 'men's fashion'. For the first time, male clothing was displayed in designer catwalk collections and promoted across the media. He notes this development is 'not without precedent, yet remains significant' (Edwards, 2017, p. 41). This erosion of the male taboos surrounding fashion and appearance is of major significance to an exploration of the suit in the 21st-century. This new tolerance for alleged effeminacy and self-awareness provides designers with fertile ground for new styles and innovations. The role of celebrities in shaping male attitudes towards fashion is also noteworthy. In fact, the self-grooming performed by celebrities such as David Beckham has become a 'near-permanent feature of media interest' (Cashmore, 2002).

The 20th century marked an incredible period of change and development for the archetypal male. The advent of mass-produced, 'off-the-shelf' designs brought the suit into mainstream wear, further breaking down the class boundaries that had once defined men's fashion. Simultaneously, the bound suit represented a revolution in the physical structure of suit design, with its 'informal' shape forming the precursor to the rise of modern suits as—somewhat ironically—the dominant form of formal wear. While simplicity defined male fashion at the beginning of the century, the New Man of the 1960s also experimented with decoration, colours, patterns, and elements that would have been considered far too 'effeminate' only decades before. Challenging traditional notions of what it is to be 'masculine', this movement was supported by a rise of consumer interest in men's fashion, breaking the long-standing taboo that fashion was a realm reserved for women. Despite the proliferation of masculinities that has followed this period, challenges to traditional masculinity still cause outcry and, in print, the significant [Edwards, 2017, p. 41].

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Since the emergence of the dandy-like New Man, Adam Geczy & Vicki Karaminas mark 'a new generation of men (Entwistle, 2009, p. 197).

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The 1970s and 80s. Such resistance was grounded in 'profound suspicion of non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity' (Bowstead, 2018, p. 14) as well as a widely accepted norm of masculinity as fixed and unchanging concept, harkening back to Victorian values of 'confident, unashowy, patriarchal masculinity' (Bowstead, 2018, p. 14). These prejudices became even stronger in the 1980s and 90s as a result of media interest' (Cashmore, 2002).

...are not entirely new: the regency dandy. While the millennial hipster owes his stylings to (see Philbey, n.d., Figure 2.13). Here, sartorial dis...
2.5 Historical Context: 21st Century

Metrosexual - Post-Metrosexual

As discussed earlier in this research, the 18th-century dandy was a dual figure, both celebrated for his taste and criticised for his vanity. This project identifies a strong parallel between the figure of the dandy and the 21st-century metrosexual. The term 'metrosexual' was introduced by British columnist Mark Simpson in the national newspaper The Independent in 1994. In the article Here Come the Mirror Men, Simpson identified and named a 'new, narcissistic, media-saturated, self-conscious kind of masculinity' (2002). He noted that stereotypically, a concern with one's appearance had been reserved for women and homosexual men. With the dawn of the metrosexual man, this was changing: 'Metrosexual man might prefer women, he might prefer men, but when all's said and done nothing comes between him and his reflection!' (Simpson, 1996, p. 227).

Joe American is headed (as cited in Warren St. John, 2009). Here, the metrosexual can be seen as at the forefront of societal and fashion trends. This individuality and fashion-forward aspect of metro-sexuality is the primary concern of this research. David Beckham, the most famous British football superstar, was first identified in the early 1990s as the official prototype of the modern metrosexual, though he was not alone (Simpson, 2002). Indeed, anthropologist Yılmaz Nuhut (2020) emphasises how, in the years since David Beckham's rise to fashion icon, the very design of football jerseys has become tighter, emphasising the muscular, 'fit' physique of the idealised footballer. This emphasis on the body beneath the garment carries both an aesthetic and normative message that the wearer is 'fit' - an adjective, which inheres both a statement about lifestyle choices and value judgments attached to those choices' (Nuhut, 2020, p. 683). But Beckham was not alone in embracing the metrosexual movement: Brad Pitt, Adrien Brody, Lenny Kravitz, Patrick Rafter, Sean Combs, Ewan McGregor, Guy Ritchie, Sting, Antonio Banderas, Jason Sehorn, and Justin Timberlake - of whom, notably, the vast majority are Anglo-speaking white men - all followed the new metrosexual regime.

In Queer Style (2011), Geczy and Karaminas identify similar links between classical dandyism and the metrosexual movement. Specifically, Geczy and Karaminas note that while the two movements stem from different social dynamics - dandyism from the aristocratic elite and metrosexuality as a 'mainstream, mass-consumer phenomenon' - both movements embrace the excess and aestheticism of their respective time periods. More importantly for this research, however, both 'promote and blur the gender binaries of homo/hetero and masculine/feminine, opting for a more hybrid or queer identity' (2011, p. 93). A parallel between the figure of the dandy and the 21st-century metrosexual man was simultaneously criticised and celebrated for his vanity (Karaminas note that while the two movements stem from different social dynamics - dandyism from the aristocratic elite and metrosexuality as a 'mainstream, mass-consumer phenomenon' - both movements embrace the excess and aestheticism of their respective time periods. More importantly for this research, however, both 'promote and blur the gender binaries of homo/hetero and masculine/feminine, opting for a more hybrid or queer identity' (2011, p. 93). A parallel between the figure of the dandy and the 21st-century metrosexual man was simultaneously criticised and celebrated for his vanity (2018, p. 48). Yet, as Bowstead highlights, the overwhelmingly negative discussion of the movement in popular culture obscured its more positive and progressive aspects, particularly 'truth to materials, an emphasis upon making, and the idea that work should be a meaningful activity' (2018 p. 157). But it is the hipster's acceptance of non-heteronormativity and rejection of orthodox masculine expression that is of particular value for this research, as, despite the vocal backlash, it highlights increasing experimentation with different forms of masculinity that has continued to this day.

As fashion and society have continued to evolve, the metrosexual movement and the hipster that followed have further developed into a climate that can be described as 'post-metrosexual'. Curiously, however, the phenomenon of post-metrosexuality is so far generally underexplored in academic literature. Discussion of the concept is relegated most commonly to dismissive discussions in magazines and blogs (Simpson, 2014; Kumar, 2016) and a clear, accurate definition is difficult to find. Simpson (2014) describes the post-metrosexual movement descriptively as 'pumped-up offspring of those Ronaldo and Beckham lunch-box ads, where sport got into bed with porn while Mr Armani took pictures'. He argues that men involved in 'second-generation metrosexuality', or 'porno-metrosexuals', are less concerned with clothing and more about self-identification of the body: 'they have eschewed tailored suits for wearing nothing at all!' (2014). Simpson's decision for the movement is clear and fails to engage with or even recognise the depth and complexity of post-metrosexuality in both fashion and society.
Rather than an oversimplification that post-metrosexual men seek self-objectification, peacockery and fashion in the 21st century are defined by a quest for individuality. Davies (2008) describes how the landscape has begun to move away from the climate of Simpson:

Post-metrosexuality, contemporary menswear tackles issues of masculinity, femininity and everything in between. As sexuality becomes less of an issue in society, menswear celebrates and supports this diversity. Men are definitely more aware of the way they look but less concerned with gender (p. 9).

Edwards agrees with Davies that modern fashion and society are trending away from the metrosexual of the early 2000s. He argues that men are increasingly permitted to indulge in 'what have previously been conceived as feminizing fashion' (Davies, 2008, p. 133). This is also reflected in the diversification of interests in modern society, where men's tastes are 'kaleidoscopic, with a culture-jamming approach to fashion and aesthetics' (Charlot, 2021). Bowstead (2018) argues that younger generations of men, particularly 'millennials, have increasingly rejected orthodox gender values in favour of more inclusive forms of masculinity from across a broader spectrum of expression. Even the simple act of dress can raise the jacket buttons to hide the chest or ease the taper on the pants to 'downplay the hips' (Leland, 2013). Such developments in tailoring are still uncommon, but they are a strong example of the flexibility and performance power of the suit in a more gender-fluid society.

The post-metrosexual movement, while still underexplored and underdefined, is thus clearly far more complex and nuanced than Simpson's (2004) conceptualization of the 'spornosexual'. Rather than simply being self-obsessed, contemporary men are often less concerned with their gender and sexuality, and this research argues that they are more concerned with finding ways to express their individuality rather than adhering to gendered societal pressures. The 21st-century peacock, therefore, presents a far more individualistic form of display, complete with a more hybridized understanding of what it means to be masculine. This desire for individualistic self-expression must inform contemporary approaches to the male suit; to be seen and recognized for their individuality is what post-metrosexuals are after. The meta-suit theory developed throughout this research, therefore, seeks to deepen our academic understanding of post-metrosexuality in both society and fashion by defining post-metrosexual identity and fashion as a 21st-century phenomenon where gender is allowed to be performed on an expanded continuum. But combining this quest for individuality with the largely unchanged design of the suit over the past three hundred years is a challenging task and requires an in-depth reading of the theory and complexity surrounding the archetypal suit design.
This chapter aims to provide a critical commentary of the literature discussing the suit and its design and establish the concept of the embodied suit through a range of historical, sociological, and psychological perspectives (see Table 3.1). Having discussed Display in the previous chapter, this section reviews theories of the suit through five additional themes — gaze, performativity, communication, body, and sexuality — in order to build the theoretical basis behind the meta-suit concept and the suit's role as a vehicle for social performativity.
3.1 The Performing Gaze

This part of the research will investigate different aspects of The Gaze and its developments in recent history. Traditionally, the male gaze has been explored in the literature as a masculine phenomenon that primarily benefits heterosexual men and centres around their view of women. While this aspect of The Gaze is of immense significance to progressive attitudes in the late 20th and early 21st century, there are more dimensions to the way viewers and the viewed interact. These dimensions are of interest to the project at hand. The Gaze is often discussed as a threat to women (Mulvey, 1989). It may, however, be that heterosexual men fear it more than women do. Harvey (2007) discusses how western culture has a double expectation of men:

It wants them to be at ease and unbuttoned, not rigid and frigid like tight-wrapped Puritans. It expects their bodies to wear at least two layers of covering. If a man attends a formal event in a garment exposing his skin in the way that a woman's skin is exposed, we would all be disoriented, even shocked (p. 79).

This dual expectation of men, and by extension male fashion, to be at once sexually free and conservatively covered, provides an interesting layer of detail to an investigation of the male suit.

Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey first introduced the concept of The Gaze to film theory in her now-famous 1975 essay, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. Advances in the study of psycho-analysis, Mulvey (1975) maintains that traditional Hollywood films respond to a deep-seated drive known as scopophilia, the sexual pleasure derived from looking. She argues that most popular movies are filmed in ways that satisfy masculine scopophilia. Although sometimes described as the ‘male gaze’, Mulvey’s concept is much more described as a heterosexual, masculine gaze. This male gaze invokes the sexual politics of feminism and suggests a sexualised way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. In the male gaze, women are visually positioned as objects of heterosexual male desire. Their feelings, thoughts, and sexual drives are less important than being framed by male desire.

While of immense importance to the progression of feminist films, scopophilia as a specific form of gaze is not the primary focus of this project. More relevant to this research is a form of The Gaze that is interactive and performative. Blau (2013) describes the performativity of The Gaze as not only the phenomenon of men gazing at women but also as an interactive gaze between men, women, and what he calls the homospectatorial gaze. Since the dawn of the New Man, he says, men have needed the approval of their male peers more than their female partners or friends. According to this argument, men are more concerned with how they look and how they will be perceived by other men, regardless of their sexuality.

In 2021, the performative gaze can be seen throughout everyday life, particular public transport, the supermarket, and in practically any other social context. Internet fashion blogs, which have been radically developed over the last decade, can be considered a form of ‘networked gaze’. Online social networks and other forms of internet media are moulding the sartorial habits of men. These habits allow for more sensorial and sartorial performativity within fashion.

Further contributing to this discussion is sociologist Sean Nixon. He stresses that through the phenomenon of the New Man and its patterns of consumption, the male gaze shifted from women to other men, mostly through heightening and men’s style magazines (Nixon, 1996). It appears that The Gaze is more concerned with other men than first meets the eye. As discussed earlier in this review, Edwards saw men’s magazines as a response to the second wave of feminism and a contemporary vehicle for understanding masculinities. As the status and social role of men began to shift, so too did men’s attitudes towards how they presented themselves to others. As Sedgwick (1985) states, men became ‘homosocial’, they were looking at other men and competing with other men. Edwards also cites the rise of gay culture as a key contributor to this shifting of The Gaze. He references an increasingly visual culture (Edwards, 2011; Nixon, 1996; Mort, 1996) in the 1970s where ‘gay men rejected the effeminacy in favour of the hyper-masculine, sexually driven world of clone culture’ (Edwards, 2011, p. 79). This paved the way for a world where personal grooming was no longer exclusively associated with homosexuality. Feminist movements throughout this period also created an environment where men had to renegotiate their masculinity and what masculine identity looked like. Thus, it can be argued, The Gaze shifted into a more homosocial territory.

Edwards, in agreement with Connell’s theory, criticises early studies on the performance of masculinity and suggests that they do not provide a full picture of male identity. It is claimed that these studies focussed on predominately white, Western, heterosexual, and, on occasion, middle-class masculinities. They claim that the performative aspects of other forms of masculinity, whether black, gay, or working-class, were often left unexplored. It is also discussed that these early studies on masculinity were very limited when it came to performativity concerning masculinity and tended to rely on conventional understandings of the concept (Edwards, 2021, p. 105). These studies, according to Edwards, all sought to demonstrate the significance of the changes occurring throughout masculine identities. He notes that the studies seem to reveal that masculinity is perceived to be increasingly predicated on matters of how men look rather than what men do (Edwards, 2011, p. 111). He continues to discuss how many aspects of fashion can be viewed as performative, arguing that well-dressed, flamboyant male figures, seen both on and off the catwalk, continue to challenge and confuse traditional attitudes towards masculinity (Edwards, 2011, p. 113), but their performative nature confuses this challenge. For Edwards (2011), the problem is that these sartorial performances of masculinity could be seen as reinforcing a rift ‘between the real and unreal’ or, more specifically, between acting or doing masculine and being masculine (p. 114).

It appears that today the boundaries of gender are no longer as strong as they used to be. In some contexts, The Gaze has shifted from a heterosexual focus on women to be more homosocial. Men perform a broad range of modern masculinities that change throughout the day depending on their social context. It is this aspect of masculinity that will be analysed further in the development of the final practice for this project. As male suit-wearers are likely to perform a variety of roles throughout a single day, it stands to reason that they would value a suit design that can change with them. The goal will be to empower men to further express their individuality and continue masculinity’s legacy as a dynamic, ever-changing phenomenon rather than a fixed, ‘immutable’ concept.
3.2 Performativity, Masculinity, and the Suit

This section will explore the idea that inherent to fashion is a foundation of performativity and transformation. The idea of performativity was first presented by the philosopher John Langshaw Austin at Harvard University in 1955 during a series of lectures on linguistics. The term 'performativity' was suggested by Austin (1955) as an abbreviation for 'a performatave sentence or a performatative utterance' (p. 6), suggesting that, under certain conditions, to say something is to do something. For instance, when the bride and groom announce 'I do' during their wedding ceremony, they do more than simply speak. Through performative ritual, they are formalising a life-long bond recognised by the community at large. Their words and actions are transformative. Before the wedding ceremony, they were an engaged couple. After the performative ritual, they transform into newlyweds.

This enactment is what Austin means by performativity.

Building on Austin's initial theories, performance design theorist Dorita Hannah (2018) argues that speech acts do not exist in isolation, requiring 'certain environments, actions, objects and witnesses to accompany them' (p. 12). Using Austin's enacting example, Austin demonstrates that even though the heteronormative traditions of a white dress and wedding ring are no longer strictly essential, these ritualised performances require multiple witnesses, the signing of a contract — these are additional elements to convey a deeper meaning to these ritualised performances requiring 'certain environments, actions, objects and witnesses to accompany them' (Butler, 1990, p. 191). To Butler, this repetition of acts is what constructs gender identity in modern society. A person who behaves, speaks, and dresses in a gendered manner is perceived as such. These behaviours become so entrenched that they are second nature, but they are more than just mimetic indicators. Rather, they can be understood as authentic elements, replete with performative erformativity.

It is here then important to highlight the functional difference between performativity and performance, two interrelated but separate concepts. Where performance represents the conscious action or behaviour of an individual, performativity involves the inherent action of bodies, spaces and things themselves, including clothes; in essence, they act on the body, activating the body, constructing how it is received and interpreted by others. This concept of garments acting on the body and the resulting interplay between wearer and clothing is a core foundational concept of the meta-suit. Inversely, looking at the design and development process from the research workshops through to the final creation. Inherent in this argument is the conceptualisation that performative erformativity as a social construct: the suit has been historically and socially constructed to represent power and authority, reflecting the heterosexual dominance of men in a patriarchal society.

This enactment is what Austin means by performativity.
draws on the traditional traits and behaviours of masculinity in a conscious attempt to remake or reform the notion of what Pascale Pitt and Fox (2011, p. 42), where orthodox masculinity is based on tradition, heterodox masculinity is considered a process: one of conscious, reflexive performance, intended to reshap e the original concepts, that is more flexible and uses the ‘common sense’ understandings of gender often acknowledge the performativity, the play-acting, the smoke and mirrors of femininity and masculinity is assumed to be real, authentic, and intrinsic (Bowstead, 2018, pp. 17–18).

With this in mind, the performative element of masculinity — as well as its fluid nature and the presence of a continuum of diverse expressions — is of fundamental importance in the design of the meta-suit. Just as interactions and performance can shape masculinity, American sociologist Erving Goffman (1971) examined the fundamental role the body plays in interaction. In particular, he explores how the body is the site of performative work and serves as the vehicle for the self in modern society. The body must be managed during daily interactions, and failure to do so appropriately can result in embarrassment or strikes.

Also of interest in Goffman’s work and relevant to the goals of this research is his thoughts on the concept of ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ behaviour. To Goffman, however, contemporary high-end fashion, including designers such as Alessandro Michele for Gucci and Jeremy Scott for Moschino, has begun to reject cacodox masculinity without overtly moving into heterodox masculinity, and men are capable of adapting and shifting between these as each situation requires. When a man’s gender performance crosses the gendered border, however, it enters cacodoxy and is often punished by others. Described as ‘the wrong opinion or doctrine’, cacodoxy in this context refers to feminin behaviours and is described as a ‘no man’s’ and ‘no woman’s’ land — neither masculine nor feminine (Pitt & Fox, 2011, p. 42). At its most extreme, in fashion, this is best highlighted in the example of dressing in women’s clothing. Consider the difference in external responses to a man wearing women’s clothing to a party compared to dressing in women’s clothing for sexual gratification: one is considered acceptable in orthodox terms, while the latter is not.

In defining multiple masculinities along the continuum of the masculine habitus, Pitt and Fox (2011) developed a performance-focused framework that can be used to explore the performative nature of clothing and gendered behaviour across cultures. This approach shifts the focus away from gender as inherently linked to sex and defines spaces that are consciously and unconsciously constructed by interactions and the pressures of societal norms. Such debates over spaces are explore by Entwistle (1992), who suggests that ‘men’s fashion has often offered a set of discursive practices — ways of dressing, ways of framing the body and identity — that allow men to express alternative and inclusive masculinity, and to reject the narrow confines of orthodox masculinity’ (2018, p. 143). The conceptualisation of a meta-suit for the 21st-century acknowledges the multiplicity of masculinities that men may draw upon in day to day life rather than simply upholding the traditional and rigid definition.

It is important to note, however, as Bowstead (2018) argues, that the concept of multiple and fluid masculinity has only been the subject of popular discussions on masculinity identity. Indeed, despite the well-established nature of these theories and their considerable acceptance within the academy, in much popular discussion masculinity continues to be viewed as a unitary, coherent, and relatively immutable identity. Both adherents of traditional masculinity and critics of New Manhood lean heavily on notions of an unchanging, essential masculinity in their prescriptive ‘acceptable’ masculine dress and confidence. While ‘common sense’ understanding of gender often acknowledge the performativity, the play-acting, the smoke and mirrors of femininity and masculinity is assumed to be real, authentic, and intrinsic (Bowstead, 2018, pp. 17–18).

Thus, because dress is read according to the context and environment it is worn, it can therefore be understood to be a ‘situated’ practice. Entwistle (2001) further argues that as Butler’s concept of performative masculinity is a reflexive and self-reflexive part of everyday life, meaning making not just how the body is represented within systems of fashion but what the clothing signifies. The way the body is experienced and lived in. For Entwistle, the dress is about understanding not only what fashion (form) means but what has been said about the body — what it enacts (performative) (Entwistle, 1997, pp. 117–118). It is this transformative interplay that provides rich material for the project at hand. Can a more gender-neutral, fashion-conscious understanding of masculinity facilitate the impact this might have on the wearer?

Of interest to this project are Blau’s thoughts on performative and sociocultural implications. Herbert Blau maintains that, through history, theories of fashion have been ‘inseparable from the cultural positioning of the individual and society’ and that ‘during certain periods, fashion, women, and theatre were austere and formal’ (pp. 129). It appears that historically, the performative nature of gender and sexuality has often been embedded in fashion, in the form of a feminine affair, or in other words, trivialised as feminisation. Of interest to this project is Blau’s thoughts on performative and sociocultural implications. Herbert Blau maintains that, through history, theories of fashion have been ‘inseparable from the cultural positioning of the individual and society’ and that ‘during certain periods, fashion, women, and theatre were austere and formal’ (pp. 129). It appears that historically, the performative nature of gender and sexuality has often been embedded in fashion, in the form of a feminine affair, or in other words, trivialised as feminisation. Of interest to this project is Blau’s thoughts on performative and sociocultural implications. Herbert Blau maintains that, through history, theories of fashion have been ‘inseparable from the cultural positioning of the individual and society’ and that ‘during certain periods, fashion, women, and theatre were austere and formal’ (pp. 129). It appears that historically, the performative nature of gender and sexuality has often been embedded in fashion, in the form of a feminine affair, or in other words, trivialised as feminisation.

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3 Beneath the Suit: Theory and Complexity

The performance that occurs when it is put on and worn is the multilayered nature of the symbolic enacted of both private and public performance that stems from the wearing of the suit. This is supported by Bluteau (2021), who suggests that garments retain a fluid and adaptable nature, shaped yet not defined by who is wearing it and which social space they occupy. The body and its forms are fundamental to communication device. The body enters a space and confronts others with how it should be viewed (Bugg, 2006, p. 25).

The male suit, then, can be a powerful tool for the wearer to tell the world how they would like to be seen.

3.3 Communication

For this project, the male suit represents an expressive communication device. It can engage with the human body and mind to tell powerful stories about the wearer. Regarding the theories of Goffman and Entwistle explored above, this suit could provide the wearer with tools to negotiate different social spaces at different times of the day. According to fashion theorist Jessica Bugg, clothing is a fundamental aspect of how human beings alter the perceptions of others: the clothes you wear and the environments you wear them in play a key role in how you are perceived. They can be seen as an interventionist form of communication. The body enters a space and confronts others with how it should be viewed (Bugg, 2006, p. 25).

Alison Laurie’s text, ‘The Language of Clothes’ (1993), offers a more nuanced view of the arguments for the ‘evental’ nature of the male suit. She establishes that clothing can be seen as an unspoken language, therefore, in relation to speech acts/utterances, clothing is performative fashioning acts of identity. In effect, our projected image and behaviour form narratives that are read by others. A question that arises is how to best understand and demonstrate the full continuum of masculinity, from the traditional to the unorthodox.

Within the context of this project, the performative of fashion, space, and masculinity inform the practice and the development of the meta-suit, which is contingent and situated. Itself contextual, the meta-suit is a vehicle for the wearer to embody multiple roles within society: it is capable of communicating a modern masculinity that is fluid and adaptable. This is reminiscent of the notion of queering fashion — as in making strange or troubling — where stereotypical ‘male’ and ‘female’ fashions are subverted, and gender is understood to be a performative social construction. The meta-suit uses this notion to wear and demonstrate the full continuum of masculinity, from the traditional to the unorthodox.

In the same way, clothing can accentuate, diminish, and transform much of this experience, socialized learning, and contextual placement. Arguably, clothing is not the same as language, as context plays a much larger role. Hannah (2014) argues that how people adorn and clothe themselves within a given space can alter both the social setting and the space itself. The ‘evental’ nature of clothing means that garments contain hidden implications that dynamically charge the space and social setting. This is linked to Schechner’s (2004a) conceptualisation of a ‘broad-spectrum approach’, which recognises that although not everything an individual does could be considered a conscious performance, everything can nonetheless be studied as a performance (Hannah, 2014: 17). Just as tone of voice, volume, or word choice allow us to recognise and critique the multiple performances of everyday life, so too does one’s choice of garments. Clothing in this sense is thus a part of the performative utterance: a form of ‘situated performativity’.

It has already been established that the exact same clothing can be perceived differently depending on the context in which it is viewed. For example,
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...clothing that can lead to an incorrect perception of
...combine to produce a kind of communication in
...performance that emerges from the clothes men
...culinity can be viewed as a performance that forms
...he deems fit.
...is, in this sense, a blank canvas that allows men to
...tapestry of social relationships to be mitigated, and
...a 'symbiotic composite of wearer and cloth, person
...not seek to draw attention, such as at funerals or
...the suit also comes with certain advantages:
...design meet and sometimes deny certain contextual
...iterations and meanings are required to produce
...situated in an appropriate context. A nexus of other
...it becomes much more aspirational and appropriate.

London's corporate offices and high
...bright pink suit at a funeral communicates something
...This research has already explored how mas
...temporary, as with cross-dressing and drag, or more
...effect, clothing can assist human bodies and minds
...forms of performance have been realised through
...communicating messages. The practice of dressing
...as it is practised in everyday life' (p. 3). Clothing can
...assist human bodies and minds in telling stories and
...creating myriad different meanings and messages.
...is evident that the body and its boundaries
...made less visible by clothing. However, the
...two are inextricably interconnected in society.

Structuralist thinking, predominantly propounded by semiotists such as Barthes, Lacan, and Hebdige, has argued that there is a clear system of signs when reading images. In The Fashion System (1967), Barthes posits a method for reading fashion, which he does not make allowances for a reading of the clothed body in a variety of contexts. This research paper brings forward the idea that designers have to understand how the suited body is read by both wearers and viewers in a range of contexts. It will also grapple with the notion that the clothing is produced in a world where men perform different masculinities throughout the day. Mixed messages occur as fashion and bodies become more culturally
...and socially ecletic. For example, a particular body shape no longer clearly denotes social status or cultural
...positioning. Clothing, however, has the ability to change and redefine the boundaries of the human form and to confound different associations in the mind of the viewer. Structuralist viewpoints from the likes of Lurie and Blake are important to take into consideration for the flexibility and variety of these associations. To Entwistle and Wilson (2001, p. 3), communication in fashion is far from 'straightforward'.

Entwistle and Wilson (2001) also suggest that the structuralist positions of Lurie and Barthes do not
...to the notion of performance and the use of the body as a stage for this type of communication. In The Body: Style, Power and Cultural Display, Katie Paterson and Donald Maclellan's (1991) write of a type of 'personality handbook' and advertising that existed in the 1920s (p. 189). This research suggests the importance of consumer and social relationships. They reference the term 'stadium' from French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and relate it to the notion that identity is an ongoing, daily performance (Entwistle, 2001, p. 4). As with the above example, clothing can create an 'imaginary anatomy' that serves as an anchor for how an individual is perceived by others. 'There is a metaphor between the body and clothing: as the suit is for being in the world' (1998, p. 2). To Warwick and Cavallaro, identity is communicated constantly in an 'imaginary anatomy' that serves as an anchor for how an individual is perceived by others. 'There is a metaphor between the body and clothing: as the suit is for being in the world' (1998, p. 2). To Warwick and Cavallaro, identity is communicated constantly in an

To Entwistle and Wilson (2001) also suggest that the structuralist positions of Lurie and Barthes do not
...the face of the body and its boundaries itself' (Entwistle and Wilson, 2001, p. 3). Clothing can assist human bodies and minds in telling stories and communicating messages. The practice of dressing the body is fundumental to the real and the real-time performance. Throughout history, forms of performance have been realised through clothing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing. Dressing, dressing...
Two decades later, jackets are even worn inside strong colours and patterned linings in the 1990s. Smith was one of the first designers to play with uniform stylings of the past. British designer Paul (p. 11). Many innovators now choose to build their 'restrained by monochrome (2008) also points out the use of colour in modern 'to communicate the essence of [their] personal communicative potential can be seen as central to the relationship between the male suit and the body brings to dress. From the 1970s to the end of the human body can be trained to perform tasks such as dancing or athletics, for example. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1979) discusses the concept of the Habitus, describing it as 'habit formed from learned experience' (p. 101). In other words, the things we experience affect the way we behave. It can be argued that the way human beings learn behaviour is influenced by their gender, experience, and education. Bodies can be decorated, painted, tattooed, scarred, dressed, and accessorised; the specific way an individual does these things can be read as a result of their lived experience. An exploration of the body's communicative potential can be seen as central to the human condition. Through the method of subtraction, The Minus suits discussed in the next chapter reveal the body as a platform for decoration and expression.

3.4 Body, Embodiment, and the Suit

The above discussion of individuality can be furthered by arguments presented by Bugg (2006), who explores the idea that bodies are personal to each individual; no two are the same. Bodies show the signs of the lives we have lived. We carry our scars, wrinkles, stretch marks, birthmarks, the food we have eaten, and the global contexts we come from. Bugg discusses how the contexts through which a body has travelled can influence its appearance and the way it is read by others. Physically, we explore the potential of what the body can do from birth; the human body can be trained to perform tasks such as dancing or athletics, for example. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1979) discusses the concept of the Habitus, describing it as 'habit formed from learned experience' (p. 101). In other words, the things we experience affect the way we behave. It can be argued that the way human beings learn behaviour is influenced by their gender, experience, and education. Bodies can be decorated, painted, tattooed, scarred, dressed, and accessorised; the specific way an individual does these things can be read as a result of their lived experience. An exploration of the body's communicative potential can be seen as central to the human condition. Through the method of subtraction, The Minus suits discussed in the next chapter reveal the body as a platform for decoration and expression.

The male body is not absent from this research investigation; rather, it is considered an integral part of the communicative facets of fashion. The suit is built upon and for the male body. It fully functions as layered attire and gendered symbol from the moment that it interacts with the male body. To communicate through clothing is also to communicate with the body. Clothing can either accentuate or conceal aspects of the human form; it can exaggerate or transform certain facets of identity. Thoughts from English sculptor Eric Gill can further this discussion. He writes: 'give a naked man a coat, and he will be more a man than before and therefore a gentleman' (Gill, 1931, p. 35). Here, the coat has taken the vulnerability of the naked form and transformed it into the figure of a man. The male suit has the potential to offer this same transformation: to give men 'a way of looking superior', with all its connotations of patriarchy and male dominance in society (Hollander, 1994, p. 113).

Joanne Entwistle (2000) remarks that the field of fashion sociology once tended to neglect the body, the things that bodies do, and the meaning the body brings to dress. From the 1970s to the end of the 20th century, however, issues related to the body and embodiment attracted increasing academic attention. This growing interest was so pronounced that the sociologist Chris Shilling classified its rise as the 'body project' (Shilling, as cited in Thomas, 2003, p. 21). He also commented that attitudes towards the body had begun to shift dramatically from a 'marginal topic' to a 'veritable industry in the 1990s' (Thomas, 2003, p. 11).

Hollander (1994) and Entwistle (2000) support this argument by suggesting that we cannot fully understand a garment without discussing it in relation to the body. Indeed, 'the male suit cannot be examined, analysed, or redesigned without taking into consideration, throughout the research process, the relationship between the male suit and the
male body (i.e., the wearer)? (Takis, 2014, p. 70). This notion of embodiment has been integral throughout the project, particularly in identifying the opportunity to wear and reflect on the garments throughout the research process.

An increased academic interest in the body and the conceptualisation of performance of fashion became areas of intellectual and creative enquiry in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It can be argued that the development of extra-curricularly linked and that the relationship between clothing and the body has become central to this shift in academic thought. Relevant to this research process.

First, the idea that the design of a garment must facilitate the diverse bodies that are likely to wear it.

This fundamental link between body image and dressing design is examined in Nuhrat’s (2020) examination of the football jersey, the design of which has tightened considerably over the years to emphasise the ‘fit’ physique of the wearer. Yet, this fascination with an idealised physique raises a curious juxtaposition given the availability of ‘replica kits’ for fans to purchase. These replicas do not fit this ideal form, such as larger bellies or narrow shoulders. This implies that players and fans emerge as having different body types, with differing bodies through the ways in which their garments identify them (Nuhrat, 2020, p. 680).

This concept that interaction between clothing and the body-conveyed particular normative messages is of vital importance when attempting to design a meta-suit that is accessible to a wide range of physiques. Nuhrat (2020) highlights how the tight cut of a jersey on a wearers body communicates not only physical fitness but comes attached with a host of statements about lifestyle choices and consequent value judgements. Where the idealised form of a slim body is in proportion, giving the maximum amount of confidence but not conservative (2005, p. 48). After seeing themselves in a well-fitted suit, Smith writes that these men were able to ‘realise that a new part of themselves has been discovered — it is an expressive, blank surface that is capable of communicating as the clothes that cover it: it is an integral part of the communicative facets of fashion. Suits are therefore capable of expressing a whole host of conflicting and compatible themes, ranging from the traditional to the progressive. As a garment, it is an expressive, blank surface that is capable of simultaneously fusing sobriety and control with sexual heroism, vulnerability, and individuality. Its performative powers are many and of different kinds and affect not only the wearer but also how he is perceived.

Hollanders (1994) argument that ‘we cannot fully understand a garment without discussing it in relation to the body’ sites at the core of this project’s objectives. The body itself is clearly just as capable of communicating as the clothes that cover it; it is an integral part of the communicative facets of fashion. It is within the interplay between the body and the garment where communication truly happens, with clothing accentuating or hiding the body beneath.

The concept that this interaction conveys particular normative messaging is vitally important if the practical element of this dissertation seeks to design a collection that is accessible to men of all shapes, sizes, and body types. Over the centuries, the suit is now laden with historical and socially constructed significance. Just as it can emphasise more traditionally masculine traits such as a slim waist and broad shoulders, so too can it subvert orthodox understandings of masculinity by intentionally challenging the expected stereotypes of suit design. The Forgotten Peacock collections thus seek to challenge not only the concept of the suit but also the tradition of dress itself. They explicitly and consciously take up many of the themes discussed here and explore new possibilities. Just as in the neo-classical period, when innovations succeeded in changing the male three-piece suit, or even at the beginning of the 20th century when the lounge suit was widely adopted, it is time to question the design and composition of the male suit in detail.
3.5 Eroticism

This section will explore the male suit as an icon of sexuality and eroticism in order to arrive at a new role for the suit in the 21st century. For Hollander, the sexuality of clothing in modern fashion is 'its first quality': clothes first address the personal self and then the world. (Hollander, 1994, p. 113). In her book, Sex and Suits, she draws attention to the undeniable erotic power of the male suit. In a sense, the suit's erotic appeal can be compared to other phallic signifiers such as cars, planes, and skyscrapers: its eroticism is powerful yet understated. The iconic image of Donald and Melania Trump taken by American photographer Annie Leibovitz for Vogue (2006, Figure 3.2) presents these successfully together with the bikini-clad and pregnant wife of the besuited magnate, herself rendered a phallic signifier of success.

It is their consistency, predictability, and timeless classicism that allow suits to remain respectable, despite their eroticism (Hollander, 1994, p. 113). According to Hollander (1994), the enduring look of 'sharpness' that accompanies the suit is what makes it so captivating as an icon:

'The sexuality of clothing in modern fashion is 'its first quality': clothes first address the personal self and then the world. Hollander described above: the phallic connotations of the suit that draw the eye to traditional bodily symbols of masculinity, namely the Adam's apple and the penis. This more traditional form of eroticism also entails the triangular shape created by broad shoulders and a narrow waist and is performed through connotations of power, strength, and self-reliance. Think James Bond and the classic sexuality of his display, as seen in Figures 3.3 (Sony, 2006; 2012; 2015). Daniel Craig's athletic body is accentuated not only by the very fitted suits but also by the wide lapels in conjunction with the exaggeration of the masculine form (broad shoulders, emphasised small waist). James Bond, adorned with these suits, becomes a sex symbol through the wide lapels pointing towards his crotch, signifying a masculine archetype and a contemporary image of a Greek hero. If we compare these fitted suits with the 'nude suits' of the neo-classic male dress seen in Figure 3.4 (Lavar, 1968), we will see that both are inspired by the male nude, heroic sculptures. The designers/tailors of both suits had the 'basic challenge to construct a complete three-dimensional casing for the male body, set out to re-create the antique nude hero entirely in terms of existing men's clothes' (Hollander, 1994, p. 86).

This notion of defiant endurance is supported by Edwards. He discusses the suit as an icon that has changed many times throughout the years without ever losing its eroticism or glamour (Edwards, 2011, p. 58). The everyday suit, then, can be considered an icon of elegance and eroticism, where its sexual appeal brims just beneath the surface. There is, however, an important distinction between two different types of eroticism and sexuality in contemporary male fashion. One is that which Edwards described above: the phallic connotations of the suit that draw the eye to traditional bodily symbols of masculinity, namely the Adam's apple and the penis. This more traditional form of eroticism also entails the triangular shape created by broad shoulders and a narrow waist and is performed through connotations of power, strength, and self-reliance. Think James Bond and the classic sexuality of his display, as seen in Figures 3.3 (Sony, 2006; 2012; 2015). Daniel Craig's athletic body is accentuated not only by the very fitted suits but also by the wide lapels in conjunction with the exaggeration of the masculine form (broad shoulders, emphasised small waist). James Bond, adorned with these suits, becomes a sex symbol through the wide lapels pointing towards his crotch, signifying a masculine archetype and a contemporary image of a Greek hero. If we compare these fitted suits with the 'nude suits' of the neo-classic male dress seen in Figure 3.4 (Lavar, 1968), we will see that both are inspired by the male nude, heroic sculptures. The designers/tailors of both suits had the 'basic challenge to construct a complete three-dimensional casing for the male body, set out to re-create the antique nude hero entirely in terms of existing men's clothes' (Hollander, 1994, p. 86).

The other form of eroticism is more fluid, befitting the heterodox conceptualisation from Pitt and Fox (2015). This form takes elements of the traditional and subverts them, creating a more fluid, open, and ambiguous form of eroticism. This is reflected in a greater acceptance of various textures, colours, and materials: think Harry Styles and the concept of 21st-century Dandyism. One area where the male suit's eroticism goes beyond the realm of subtlety can be found in its use as a uniform in fetish wear. A quick search online reveals that there are a surprising number of blogs and sites concerned with the suit fetish. Australian professor of fashion Jennifer Craik provides helpful insight into how uniforms, including suits, are often appropriated for use in subversive contexts. To Craik (2005), there is 'a constant play between the intended symbolism of uniforms ... and the informal codes of wearing and denoting uniforms' (p. 125). In the context of the male suit, its subtle, enduring eroticism is brought centre stage for all to see. Suit fetishism could be seen as an overt spectacle.
3.6 Conclusions

This section will summarise the concepts discussed thus far and suggest new directions for the future. As discussed above, Craik analyses clothing through a lens of hidden elements and denials. When discussing stereotypical gender roles in fashion, she states that as ‘women are fashionable but men are not’ (1993, p. 176), men’s fashion has typically focussed on denying a masculine interest in fashion and appearance. The focus has often been on utility and comfort rather than the appearance of the garments in question.

If women are fashionable, but men are not, then men’s fashion can be read as a contradiction in terms. According to Edwards (2011), this assertion relies on two interrelated factors: the separation and gendering of production and consumption, as out of the rise of industrial capitalism; and the impact of Flügel’s notion of The Great Masculine Remuneration and his argument that men and masculinity stood apart from issues of fashion and decoration during the 19th century (Craik, 1993; Flügel, 1979; Wilson, 1986; Edwards, 2006, 2011).

As discussed earlier, recent literature has changed this assumption. More specifically, Chris Breward has produced a far more detailed and nuanced history of men’s fashion. This history demonstrates that it is as multifaceted and complex as the formations and constructions of masculinities to which it clearly relates (Breward, 1999; Cole, 2000). This argument is also demonstrated in Edwards’ work (1997, 2006, 2011).

There has often been a tendency to look at the suit from a single perspective. This literature review has demonstrated that such an approach is problematic if a clear, robust picture is to be found. This literature review demonstrates both the value of a multidisciplinary analysis of the male suit and the inherent challenges that emerge when linearly analysing the suit from the perspective of conventional orthodoxy. The embodied suit is complex, and a multidisciplinary approach is vital if it is to be understood more clearly.

Looking at the suit through these different perspectives, we start to gain a historical view of the suit, one that often leaves out its sociological analysis and the body itself. Studies of men’s dress, as with most fashion studies, are situated within the confines of design and art history. These have been communicated by lavishly illustrated histories on men’s dress, such as Farid Chenoune’s A History of Men’s Fashion.

It is worth mentioning that some sources used for this project were written as coffee table books. While often useful as a source for other elements of fashion, they are design-focused and do not always engage robustly with history and sociology. Yet, within coffee table books, we see this clothing archetype being played out in a multitude of categories. These include books that focus on tailoring and pattern cutting, such as James Sherwood’s Lavish series; books that focus on the suit and its influence, such as Eric Musgrave’s Sharp Suit (2009); Dylan Jones London Sartorial, Men’s Style from Street to Bespoke (2017); and Rose Callahan and Nathaniel Adams’ I Am a Dandy, The Return of Elegant Gentlemen (2013). Other examples include books that focus on male dress and its current evolution, such as Hywel Davies’ Modern Menswear (2008), Cally Blackman’s One Hundred Years of Menswear (2009), and Joseph Maria Minguez’s Menswear Fashion Forward Designers (2012). Among books that refer to self-styling are Alan Flusser’s Dressing The Man (2002) and Russell Smith’s Men’s Style, The Thinking Man’s Guide to Dress (2005). Finally, of great significance are curatorial book catalogues accompanying successful gallery and museum exhibitions. These contain academic essays such as Andrew Bolton’s Men in Skirts (2005) and Anglomania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion (2006). Alice Cicolini’s The New English Dandy (2005) and Tim Blank’s and Peter McNeill’s Reigning Men, Fashion in Menswear (2016), which are of significance in providing more informed readings.

While the coffee table books, fashion magazines, and media sites above prove useful for the general consumer, designers, and the fashion industry in general, they lack a robust social, economic, or political focus. As Edwards (2011) argues, they have left the study of dress in an often free-floating state devoid of theory or explanation for its significance (p. 43). However, when read as a visual ethnography, they can nonetheless provide excellent sources and references for academics, representing cultural constructions that are both conventional and experimental. Sociological discussions focus on fashion as a phenomenon in society rather than as a form of dress. Conversely, analysis of fashion per se remains within the domain of the arts and design.
Sociological literature on men's fashion, and therefore the suit, aims to understand its significance as a phenomenon rather than a matter of dress. In this design-led investigation, bridging existing historical and sociological literature, I aim to understand and analyse the embodied suit. Combining this literature with existing design work in coffee table books, haute couture collections, blogs, and Design Action Research, this project seeks to rethink the form and future use of the suit, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters on my own practice-led research.

The power of the suit, which has come to stand for status, power, and authority within capitalist patriarchy, does not rely only on its design, which stands strong after three hundred years, but is dependent on shifting socio-cultural constructions of masculinity, situated performativity and gestures that resist orthodoxy. It also embraces the male form, heteronormative masculinity and becomes embodied as a robust second skin, an armoured vehicle of everyday life. However, where men once performed a particular role in society and represented a stereotypical ideal, the 21st-century man is called on to perform multiple roles, tasks, and masculinities in everyday life, aided by a calling out of toxic masculinity and tendency towards gender fluidity. His suit must therefore communicate its signs and meanings while allowing the wearer to shift between different roles depending on the time, place, and social surroundings in which they are situated. This re-conceptualisation of what a suit is and what it does lies at the heart of the meta-suit's design process.
This chapter describes the research workshops and demonstrates how their outcomes fed into the creation of the research-driven suit collections. The experimental garments created from each workshop consist of materials in 2D and 3D form that were used to understand, analyse and explore a specific concept towards the final outcome. The workshops were the first stage of the Design Action Research methodology and acted as a method to enable the investigation of ideas in practice and theory. Design ideas were tested on the recycled/upcycled suits by experimenting with the form, colour and materiality whilst theories such as the notion of embodiment (Entwistle, 2000), performative power (Goffman, 1971) and performing masculinities (Pitt & Fox, 2013) were tested through live performance practice.

In each workshop, participants were given the task of creating a series of male garments by questioning and reinterpreting the notion of masculinity and by using concepts and methods representative of deconstruction. This process was largely shaped based on my own history and experience working in the realm of costume design, which allowed me to structure each task around a practical application of the theories and concepts I sought to develop. My role throughout was essential to keep participants on track, offer feedback and direction, act as a sounding board for ideas, collaborate with participants, and generally lead the participants toward the final outcome.

The suit is investigated as an extension of the male body as opposed to the suit on a hanger. Therefore, the work of Joanne Entwistle (2000) and Wilson (2001) on embodiment has been explored in the workshops.

This chapter presents each workshop, the explored ideas, analyses the findings, and illustrates how they informed the second stage (Plus and Minus suits creation) through a critical reflection process.
4.1 Workshop 1: Historic Garments

The first workshop took place in January 2006 at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. The participant was an actor who had recently graduated from RADA, and I acted as the designer. The male dress assemblages were created by using garments from the costume store, which were photographed and then digitally manipulated. The workshop took place from Monday to Friday, between 10am–6pm.

For a better understanding of the male dress evolution, I was given access to the costume store at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Here I was able to conduct the first experiment that, through embodied practice, allowed me to explore and understand the different forms of male garments through different periods. The experiment involved photographing a male actor wearing real or replicated male garments from the 16th to the 21st century. The collection of photos resulted in a game-like exercise, where jackets from various periods could be matched to any trouser from these centuries. I put together different forms of clothing from varying periods that were never seen together before in the history of men’s dress.

The photographs taken from the workshop allowed me to experiment in two-dimensional form, exploring a variety of different forms of jackets and trousers and matching them in different ways, thus creating new combinations and forms. I also had the opportunity to become familiar with the colours and patterns of each period, as well as the materials, which supported my decisions on colour and materiality in the subsequent research-driven suits (Plus and Minus). The mix and match exercise was an exploratory process that helped me to understand the anachronistic interaction of forms, liberate my design process and support the formulation of the concept of designing through addition and subtraction.

The choice of this collection was based on several factors. First, the collection was comprised of a wide range of male wear from the 16th to 20th centuries; second, I had the opportunity to question and discuss aspects of the garments with the head of wardrobe; third, I was able to personally wear and experience the garments and; fourth, I was already familiar with the collection as a recent RADA graduate.

Table 4.1 displays a selection of suits photographed as an assemblage, followed by a selection of jackets and trousers from different periods worn individually. By picking two assemblages (Renaissance and Baroque), Table 4.2 shows how many possibilities emerge by changing the upper or second half. Table 4.3 highlights a series of possible mix and match ideas, allowing me to explore how shapes from the history of dress can coincide by a harmonious composition or by a composition through juxtaposition. This first workshop was integral to shaping my ideas for the following workshops, and an effective starting point for the creation of both the Plus and Minus series and the final meta-suit concept.
4.2 Workshop 2: Peacock Collages

After exploring the range of historical garments in Workshop 1, the next stage involved brainstorming and experimenting with 2D designs rather than jumping straight into designing physical garments. The second workshop took place in April 2006 at the International Youth and Culture Centre KIEBITZ in Duisburg, Germany. The participants were twelve children, predominately girls, aged between 12 and 14 years old. The extravagant male dresses were created using images from fashion magazines, cut out and arranged by the children into collages. The workshop took place from Monday to Friday, 9am–1pm.

This workshop experimented with two-dimensional garments rather than the three-dimensional focus of the other workshops. Because of the young age of the participants, they were able to perceive the workshop as a creative game where they could let their imaginations run free and create the most elaborate and playful male dress assemblages. To clearly explain the task to the children, I presented them with the visual investigation and outcomes of the first workshop. At the end of each day, we hung the created collages on the surrounding walls, discussed the creative outcomes and what other routes we could explore the following day.

Notably, some of the boys present expressed prejudices about men's dress and couldn't understand why it should be more elaborate or why they should mix male and female garments in their collages. Others, however, viewed the task as a game or as an experiment. It was very interesting for them to see a PowerPoint presentation of the period garments used in the first workshop, photographed and manipulated. The presentation had been created in the previous phase of the research using the visual materials that had been collected up to that point. Once the young participants had explored the visual references, they became more confident and were keen to start creating their collages. During the second and third days, they were more relaxed and treated the workshop as a game; then, on the last two days, after posting their creative work around the room, they started to compete with each other about who was going to create the most elaborate male garment and find the most outrageous ideas. Throughout the process, I leaned on my own experience in costume design, demonstrating different ways that colours, shapes, and materials could be combined and generally guiding the participants through the process step by step. The results were very inspiring, depicting the richness of these children's imaginations. Some of the collages illustrate minimal design ideas, whereas others illustrate more complex design aesthetics. These pictures of the created garments were both theatrical and eccentric.
Workshop 3: Jackets Reformed

This research project took place in May of 2007 at the University of the Arts Bucharest, Romania. The participants were ten second-year fashion design students, 19 to 20 years old, predominantly female, and set the task of transforming a suit jacket of their choice into an extravagant garment that could be worn by a peacock. The workshop took place from Monday to Saturday, 10 am–6 pm.

The choice of working with the University of the Arts Bucharest's Fashion Department for the third and fourth workshop was deliberate as they approach Fashion through Fine Art and, as a graduate from the same university, I was familiar with the facilities and processes.

This and the following workshops concentrated on the transformation of the male suit by applying the post-modernist technique of deconstruction to fashion to break up its sober form and create a more elaborate one. This workshop focused on the top half of the male suit (the jacket) and the following (fourth) workshop on the bottom half (the trousers). For both of these workshops (the third and fourth), the fashion student participants chose were those who had the skills necessary to create real garments and collaborate on a presentation at the end of the workshop. It was crucial to the project that the participants were experienced in garment construction, as this allowed for more technical questions to be asked for the testing of new techniques and enabled critical observation of the process of garment construction. My role throughout these workshops was to lend my expertise as a costume designer where required, challenge the participants with different theories on masculinity and gendered fashion, and, similar to the second workshop, guide the participants toward a final design that would reflect the aims and goals of this research project.

At both workshops, ordinary men in their twenties, invited by the students, acted as 'models' at the workshops and at the final presentations. The garments explored different ideas which were developed and formulated in relation to the body.

The collection created during this workshop was presented in a choreographed sequence in the gardens of the War Museum in Bucharest on Saturday, 19 May 2007. It was a night when the city's museums were celebrated, and all the major museums had festivities, allowing people to visit them for free and participate in the events. The War Museum was a deliberate choice for the presentation of such extravagant garments. The audience sat in the gardens surrounded by tanks and aeroplanes, and the models paraded through the exhibited machinery in time to a military marching tune. The concept behind this setting was for the elaborate suits to replace the military uniforms, thus creating a rather surreal image. The audience's reactions were varied. The younger people in the audience followed the concept from the very first moment and enjoyed the collection and the presentation. On the other hand, the older members of the audience took more time to accept the rather shocking male garments and the concept of the presentation. The soundscape used military rhythms, which was in stark contrast to the clothes worn, and instead of soldiers in uniform parading past the military hardware, young men were wearing radically altered suits that showed parts of the upper body. Rather than a military march, the men moved in a more relaxed way, yet keeping the rhythm of their steps in time with that of a traditional army parade.

TheMeta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire
4.4 Workshop 4: Transforming Trousers into Skirts

The third group workshop took place six months after the second one, in November 2007, again at the University of the Arts Bucharest, Romania. The 10 participants were first-year fashion design students, 18 to 19 years old, and were a mixture of males and females. As in the previous workshop, a male suit was given to each student, and they were set the task of transforming the trousers into skirts. The workshop took place from Monday to Saturday, 10am—6pm.

The inspiration for this workshop came from a little-known event in Britain during the Second World War, where, due to the rationing of clothing and with the purpose of economy, women transformed their husband's trousers into skirts. The scenario put to the workshop participants was as follows: what if woke up one day and decided to change their trousers for freedom. All the participants deconstructed the garments given to them by taking apart the trouser panels and reconstructing them in different ways, thus creating a new garment. Similar to the third workshop, my role throughout was to lead the participants in the design of each skirt, ensuring that the final outcome would fit both their ideas and the needs of the overall project. As with the other workshops, I guided the students through the process, offering the support and critique required to ensure they could achieve the task I had designed and set.

During both the second and third workshops, I had the opportunity to talk with the wearers of the experimental garments and discuss their first reactions to wearing them: how they felt moving around in them and if they would feel comfortable enough to wear such suits in everyday life. None of the male wearers were professional models, but rather were ordinary men who the students invited to model the clothes during the workshop week. Surprisingly, most of them felt very comfortable wearing elaborate jackets and skirts. All the male wearers in both workshops were in their twenties, and during our discussions, all of them mentioned that even though they would like to wear more elaborate and colourful garments, they were sceptical about their image in society. Their expressed desire to dress more liberally and elaborately was restricted by the fear of what people would think of their sexuality. The same anxiety arose again among the same age group later in the project, as will be discussed in the following chapters.
Reflections on the Workshop Process

The workshops were of great benefit to my research, allowing me to better understand the shape, form, components, structure, dynamics and characteristics of the suit and male dress, particularly through the work of children and young designers who weren't burdened by an in-depth understanding of the suit, bestowing freedom and openness on the experimentation. The outcome of the workshops formulated the development of the aims and objectives for the creation of the experimental suits — one utilising the method of subtraction (Minus Suits) and the other the method of addition (Plus Suits). The first series focused on removing/de-re-construction, and the second on adding/building/construction.

Developing the experimental garment prototypes formed the first stage of the practical work and the Design Action Research methodology. The experimental garment prototypes allowed for the testing of certain ideas and therapies were a source of inspiration for the creation of the experimental wardrobe of male suits as part of the Interactive Performance Installation. What follows is a general summary of the workshop process. This is then followed by a more detailed discussion of each of the three workshops.

From my previous experience of working with children, the second workshop seemed a very fruitful starting point for the practical reimagining of the male suit. Children are not yet socialised into culturally gendered norms, have a natural ability to break boundaries and create using instinct and imagination. The first workshop, in which I had juxtaposed fashion eras, materials and shapes, also gave me the ability to free up my own imagination and guide the children, not only in directions that I had worked out beforehand but also in new directions by responding to the observations made during the process. This is then followed by a more detailed discussion of each of the three workshops.

4.5.1 Workshops Formulating the Development of the Aims and Objectives

One observation that was very useful both for my thinking and for the development of the final designs was the importance of a pre-existing and coherent concept as a guideline for the collection, as well as for each individual garment. When developing their sketches and experiments, some of the students tried to make their proposed garments too complicated, often creating an unclear and muddled design, with the result that they lost clarity of concept. This trial-and-error process made me realise that it is better to keep to one design idea per garment rather than try to develop several ideas at the same time. A design with a clear idea will stand on its own and communicate to the viewer the message or mood that the designer wishes to express.

The observations and experiments made during the three workshops not only gave me the opportunity to try out ideas such as the technique of de-re-construction, but also an opportunity to discover new forms and concepts of the male suit but also clarified how I wanted to push my ideas further, by creating the research-driven Plus and Minus suits. More specific outcomes of the workshops were as follows.

From the beginning of the research investigation, I was fascinated by the male suit and its possibilities for experimentation. Its cut could vary in both length and form, sometimes radically changing the whole appearance of the outfit. The workshops made it clear that the male suit as it exists today could be used, and one could 'play' with the idea of adding or removing panels from its structure. The use of post-modernist techniques, such as deconstruc-
4.6 Workshop Conclusions

The visual investigation and embodied exploration of men's dress through different centuries, as well as the durational workshops with children and young designers, introduced the ideas of juxtaposition and collage, as well as adding and subtracting elements of the standard suit, inspiring the creation, concept, and design of the Plus and Minus collections — influencing the creative and technical processes through to the final design, including concept, shape, colour and materiality.

From the outset, the eventual creation of an experimental wardrobe was a clear ambition for this project. However, before settling on a final concept and the decision to create two different collections, many early ideas were changed, and the aims were modified. These ideas and aims were tested, developed and modified through the stages of each cycle — in this case, each workshop — of the Design Action Research: plan, action, observation, reflection. In order to achieve, express and communicate my intentions, the following objectives were formulated after the workshops through the proposed experimental collection:

- To experiment with re-inventing the male suit through experimental combination and to focus on the materiality of the research-driven suits, introducing textiles that are rarely, if ever, used in male suits of today.
- To incorporate the skirt, as well historical and traditional garments, into the proposed suit collections.
- To explore the idea of uncovering the male body by using transparent fabric, which has rarely been utilized in the history of male dress.
- To experiment with re-inventing the male suit in the future by using LED technology: investigating, for example, how the ensemble can change colour and pattern according to the mood of the wearer or the environment. These new technologies could be manipulated by the wearer. Experiments of that type have been made by designers such as Hussein Chalayan, who experimented with lasers in the female collection of 2008.
- Disappointed by the design and curation of male fashion exhibitions and fashion displays in museums (for example, at the V&A), I was keen to present the wardrobe on the male body itself rather than on a mannequin or a hanger. I was determined to present an experimental suit collection that could be worn by men of any size and age and not only by professional models.
- To experiment with ornamentation used on historical male garments such as lace, embroidery, and semi-precious jewellery. This involves investigating forms, materials, and accessories used in the history of male dress in order to re-invent them. Examples include the ruff of the late 16th century and investigations with post-structuralist techniques used in fashion by Rei Kawakubo, Yamamoto, Viktor & Rolf (predominately in female fashion). These investigations would then be applied to the male suit.
- To experiment with different types of garments and how they can be worn, taking into consideration the varied proportions of the male body.
- To explore the male military uniform and find its similarities with and differences to the ubiquitous male suit. To apply cut patterns and ornamental details to the male suit, experimenting with possibilities of colour and decorative motifs, as well as eliminating the use of shirts and ties in the overall ensemble as a means of liberation, allowing a fresh approach.
- To communicate stories via the proposed experimental collection.

Taking into consideration the 'wish list' mentioned above, I began the fourth phase in early 2008. I spent over two months developing the concept and the theoretical underpinning while designing and redesigning, adapting and developing sketches until I created a series of drawings and mood boards that incorporated most of my aforementioned objectives — where each design could both stand on its own and as part of a collection. During the design process and final decision making, I considered not only the suits but also their public presentation and interaction with the wearers. Over two months, I explored fabrics and colours. I 'ignored' textiles that are usually used on male suits (cashmere, flannel, herringbone, linen, tweed, wool), instead investigating experimental materials (vinyl, recycled and metallic fabrics) and other materials that were used in the history of dress and are now reinvented, such as lace printed on fabrics, or velvets with sculptural and 3D structures.
This chapter discusses the creation of the two research-driven collections, how they were developed as two different concepts, how they performed in the interactive performance installations, and how their analysis informed the idea of the meta-suit.

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, the tools that were applied for this cycle of the Design Action methodology for the creation of the two distinct collections were de-re-construction, concealing/revealing, and the infinite genealogies. Their use will be demonstrated in the different sections of this chapter.

In the previous chapter, I discussed and demonstrated how the workshops helped me to develop and test my ideas as well as formulate the aim and concept of the two collections. Through the cycle of each workshop — plan, action, observation, reflection — it was more and more evident to me that in every cycle, I was either removing or adding components to what we conceive as a classic contemporary suit. But how much could I remove or add to the suit without losing its identity? This question became the creative force for the practice work, and the decision to create two distinct collections became evident. As this thesis examines and experiments with the embodied suit, I developed two wearer groups which will be discussed and articulated in detail later in this chapter.
5.1 Collection Aims

The three goals for the creation of the *Plus and Minus* collections were:

- For the suits to be experimental and artistic rather than commercial. When creating the two collections, I regarded the male suit as an art object and explored and experimented with its form, colour, and materiality;

- To create a collection to be worn by ordinary men rather than professional fashion models. One of the major goals was for the project to refer to — and be accessible to — all men, not only particularly fashionable men. The participants were to be men of diverse ages and ethnicity, as well as cultural and professional backgrounds;

- The suits were to be made in a range of sizes from small to extra-large so that anyone could try them on. It was important that the Collections were suitable for men of diverse sizes, especially those in the collection worn by the Installation Male Participants, which started from trouser size 28” (71cm) and went up to 48” (122cm) size. The jackets were designed according to standardized sizing of small, medium, and large. The jackets’ sleeves and the trousers’ lengths were also adjustable to accommodate variable body measurements.
5.2 Collection Concepts

The starting point for both collections is the contemporaneous male suit, a simple single-breasted 2-piece ensemble of trousers and jacket reminiscent of the revolutionary lounge suit that first broke down the suit's rigid, formal connotations and became the essential archetype of the 20th-century suit that persists today. Though the inclusion of a vest has long been a key part of the classic three-piece suit, the fundamental shape and form of modern suits rest on the interplay between jacket and trousers, with vests now acting as an optional addition. Thus, through the manipulation of this simple starting point, two distinct yet conceptually interrelated collections emerged: the Minus Collection, based on the removal of parts of the suit, worn by the research participants who acted as the Ushers/Performers for the Interactive Performance Installation; and the Plus Collection, based on adding design elements to the suit, worn by the Interactive Performance Installation Participants — audience participants, made up of nine male members of the general public attending the Interactive Performance Installation. By having men participate and perform throughout the installation, I was able to not only develop the presentation of the collections but come to understand how the suit interacted with the body through performance: its performativity embodied this method of performance research.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept of Designing the Extravagant Male Suits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, F. Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Materiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Materials which absorb the light Ex. velvet, fur, corduroys, wool, fleece, felt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Materials which reflect the light Ex. silk, vinyl, lycra, satin, chiffon, lace, net, muslin, organza, tulle, voile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Materials which go through light Ex. chiffon, lace, net, muslin, organza, tulle, voile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Experimental materials with different structures Ex. ‘intelligent’ materials with light, temperature, perfume, anti-stress (airbag), anti-stress, anti-stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Apply Post-Modernistic Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Deconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Supra-dimensioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Decoupage - Appliqué</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.4

Male Body Muscle Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muscle Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trapezius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectus Abdominis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biceps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectus Femoris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deltoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gluteus Maximus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadriceps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamstrings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrocnemius</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As discussed in the introduction and the Methodology chapter, the collections were created and viewed as artistic research, focusing primarily on shape and secondarily on colour and materiality.

Shaping the Collection
Both collections were designed using the historical and archaically masculine shape through a broad-shouldered outfit reduced to a triangular form, which is the most common characteristic in the overwhelming majority of men’s suits and other clothing.

The Minus (+) Collection: Defining Subtraction
The Minus Collection comprises nine different designs, each replacing the compact fabric with a transparent one, rarely used in male attire. The transparencies of sheer voile are placed in different areas (muscle groups) of the male body. Even though the shape of the Minus Collection is that of the ubiquitously single-breasted two-button jacket, its diaphanous materiality gives a different view of the male body, especially when it is embodied (Takis, 2014, pp. 70-77). This enhances the performative power of the suit by setting the sheer textile skin against the living body and musculature it reveals. This intentionally plays with Harvey’s (2007) notion that men and male fashion are traditionally faced with dual expectations of being both sexually free and conservatively covered. In so doing, it also reflects Pitt and Fox’s (2015) concept of heterodox masculinity: taking the traditional and using it to redefine what constitutes masculine or male.

The areas that were replaced with transparent material were the chest/pectoral muscles (Design -1), the waist/abdominal muscles (Design -2), the shoulders (Design -3), and an oval shape section on the upper back (Design -4). The transparent fabric in Design -5 revealed the whole of the front of the body (the jacket and trousers, but not the sleeves, were all transparent). In Design -6, the whole of the back of the suit (jacket and trousers, but not the sleeves) was see-through. Designs -7 and -8 revealed the upper body (the muscles on the arms) and the lower body (the muscles on the legs). Finally, Design -9 was a completely see-through suit, except for the lapels, pocket flaps, and waistband.

The designs aimed to showcase all the different muscle groups and give the wearer the option to choose which part of their body they would like to expose. The muscle groups create visible lines around the body. As a composition of lines, they work as a tool for how the designer or tailor design/ cut the garments, so the subtraction is in harmony with the anatomy of the body. The following illustrations show in detail all nine designs. The body is divided into five sections from a design perspective: 1) the head, 2) upper-upper body, 3) lower-upper body, 4) upper-lower body, and 5) lower-lower body.

The Research Participants (Appendix 1) wore the Minus suits and were an integral part of the development of the collections. Each person chose which suit they would like to wear based on how they felt and which part of their body they felt confident to expose. They were a core part of the development of the prototypes and fittings.

First, it is conceived of as being in the shape of a human-sized triangle, where the accent is on the shoulders, which are supra-dimensioned. We meet this silhouette shape in the male dress of the 15th and early 16th century with a waist-length doublet and tights, and in the 19th century with a dress coat/pantaloons.

Second, it is reshaped in the form of two triangles being placed one above the other in the same position. The shoulders are supra-dimensioned, the waist is thin, and the hips are exaggerated. This silhouette shape can be seen in the male dress of the 16th century, particularly in doubles and slops (full breeches).

Third, it is reshaped by two triangles positioned to mirror each other with their points face to face. The shoulders and the ankle line are exaggerated. This silhouette shape is visible in the Egyptian kalasiris and male tunics between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Or with a shorter bottom half in the male dress of the 17th and early 18th centuries, such as a coat with a full skirt.
The first category is purely masculine from the shape point of view, whereas the second and third have ‘feminine’ influences. By keeping the super-dimensional shoulders and slim waist, the general effect was to emphasise what has been accepted as fashionable masculinity.

In each category, the pure shapes were created by repeating and/or enlarging elements of the male suit: lapels, cuffs, sleeves, legs of the trousers. The Installation Male Participants were thereby able to appreciate common elements of the male suit, which appeared in unexpected places and at different scales. For the creation of the nine designs, I deconstructed the suit panels and reconstructed them by placing them in a non-conventional way (e.g. upside-down, repeating them in different parts, manipulating their size and placement).

The development of both the Minus and Plus suits came to redefine my understanding of the addition-subtraction binary that underpinned both collections. Indeed, far from being a simple, binary relationship, removing or minimising sections of the suit revealed the body underneath, which acted as a form of addition: the body itself is an integral part of the overall display. Though the Minus suits subtracted elements and the Plus suits added them, it became clear throughout this process that the relationship between the two was far more complex than this simple binary. Indeed, arguably, this binary cannot truly exist, and this realisation was another means of collecting information about the male suit. The projected material contained lace, net, muslin, organza, tulle, and voile; experimental materials with different structures: e.g. ‘intelligent’ responsive fabrics using light, temperature, or perfume; as well as ‘anti-shock’ (using airbags) or ‘anti-stress’ materials.

After exploring a variety of materials from all four categories and playing with samples, as well as going through the Visual Materials collected during the second phase, I decided on silk. Although silk is found in the history of male dress, nowadays it is associated more with women’s fashion, and we have only recently started seeing silk and satin suits for men — in the words of Viennese architect Adolf Loos from 1904: ‘Woe to the painter expressing his individuality with a satin frock, for the artist in him has resigned in despair’ (in Breward, 2016, p. 8). I wanted the Installation Male Participant to feel the silk, sense the shine of it and be aware of himself in a suit made out of a different material from the ones already hanging in his wardrobe. Last but not least, the use of silk, which is a vibrant organic textile that takes light well, allowed me to play with a larger range of colours for the purposes of colour research.

The main material of the Plus and Minus collections is Duchess satin, while the transparent sections were made of silk in both collections. The Plus collection, silver grey duchess silk was used for the main suits and crepe satin silk for the lining and decorations. Because of its weight, duchess silk could form clean shapes and complex forms, embracing the concept of the collections most successfully. Also, silk takes light well and its shine, together with the crystal decorations, gave an extra glamour to the Collections. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Duchess silk was a material often used by the aristocracy, showcasing wealth and luxury. Duchess silk was also one of the materials that disappeared as part of the Great Masculine Renunciation and the shift away from the decorative style of the peacock.

Materials which light penetrates: e.g. chiffon, lace, net, muslin, organza, tulle, and voile;

Experimental materials with different structures: e.g. ‘intelligent’ responsive fabrics using light, temperature, or perfume; as well as ‘anti-shock’ (using airbags) or ‘anti-stress’ materials.

The Colours

Both Collections used the same monochromatic base colour of the main material in order to bring each individual design into focus and to unify the total Collection at the same time. However, both experiment with colour in different ways. For the Plus Collection, I used a light grey/silver fabric as the main material and explored colour through the linings of the suits. I worked with warm, cold, and mixed coloured linings, giving the Installation Male Participants the option to choose a suit not only by its shape but also by its colour. This was another means of collecting information about their colour preferences, analysed in the next chapter. The colour began inside with the lining and extended to the exterior of the suit at different places, creating a varying colour rhythm in each design.

In the Minus Collection, I used the monochromatic colouring of white textiles so that the suits would act as blank canvases. This enabled me to experiment with decoration by digitally projecting two-dimensional colours and patterns onto the three-dimensional form of the besuited body. I aimed to demonstrate how playful and colourful male suits can be. Both Collections used the same colour for the main material, both to bring each individual design into focus and to unify the total Collection at the same time.

The outfits and their revealed bodies constantly changed colours, with shifting patterns demonstrating to the audience how experimental we can be with the male suit. The projected material contained lace and fabric patterns from different centuries, as well as colour theories in practice.

The projection sequence was ten minutes long and divided into four sections:

1. Colour Patterns (4.10min, Figure 5.10). This section explored colour using primary and secondary colours and their combinations. It was based on Johannes Itten’s (1974a) devised
methodologies for coordinating colours through the hue’s contrasting properties (contrast of saturation, light and dark, extension, complements, simultaneous, hue, warm and cool).

2. Geometrical Patterns. This section explored the use of geometrical shapes in suits, from stripes to polka dots and the use of optical effects such as moiré.

3. Organic Patterns. In this section, the use of organic patterns, such as flowers and laces, were projected onto the suit. This included laces from different centuries and styles, as well as embroidered fabrics and floral wallpapers.

4. Digital Patterns. This animated section showed how male suits could be in the future by using LED technology on the fabrics. This could allow for movies and animations to be streamed and for the suit to change pattern and colour.

The video mapping was applied on both sides of the suits while not covering the exposed parts (head, neck, hands) of the male performers’ bodies. This technique worked as an illusion, giving the impression that the suits changed colours and patterns from the inside. Through digital projection, it embellished the stark suits with data-induced lighting effects that demonstrated the possibilities for ornamentation and future embedded smart technologies.

**Colour on the Carwash**

**Infinite Genealogies**

Over the last twenty years, designers have been increasingly experimental with colour on the catwalk. The following genealogy table (Table 5.2) illustrates some examples placed thematically.

Designers have experimented with multiple ways of expressing colour on the traditional suit, from block colours (b. 1 & b. 12) to fragmentation (f. 2 & f. 8), halving (h. 3 & h. 9), or incorporating patterns and stripes (p. 7 & p. 11). Some of these techniques use colour in its extreme (f. 4 & f. 15), while some are subtler in their exaggeration (h. 13 & h. 1). Of particular note is the wide variety of colour palettes that designers have come to experiment with, ranging from traditional dark schemes (greys, navy, black) toward pastel colours that have long been considered more ‘feminine’. As technology develops, there will be room for further merging of colour and design in men's suits, as explored in the minus suit projections above.

The next two sections explore the two distinctive series of suits, their creation, and how themes and theories underpinned the design process. It will also touch on how established and emerging designers have responded to similar themes with their work on suits.
5.3 The Minus Collection

This section focuses on the Minus Collection. It presents the theoretical underpinnings for the creation of these research-driven suits, analyses the different designs, discusses their input in the interactive performance installations, and finally discusses the findings as well as how the method of subtraction on suits has been utilised in everyday life by self-designers in blogs and by fashion designers in Haute Couture through their catwalk shows (2000–2021).

Theoretical Underpinnings

The inspiration of the Minus suits comes from the nude costume, discussed in Chapter 3 and outlined by Hollander (1994) in relation to 18th-century male dress, which was informed by the ideal of the Greek hero. This suit form, therefore, exaggerates the masculine shape — broad shoulders with narrow waist — drawing attention to the line from the larynx to crotch. It draws on Finkelstein's (1999) description of the suit as an easy-fitting sheath that conceals the body's musculature. But what happens if that sheath becomes partially or fully transparent, revealing the body beneath?

What are the outcomes when the skin plays a peek-a-boo game with the second skin suit? 21st-century post-metrosexuals exercise a lot, eat healthily, and are proud of their physiques. Drawing on the relationship between architecture and fashion, the Minus collection responds to the minimalism of Austrian architect Adolf Loos, who advocated freedom from ornament as a sign of spiritual strength, tracing back to the ideal of the ancient Greek hero. This also plays into the performativity of Blau's homospectatorial gaze (2003), which discovers something unexpected, something hidden, and something revealed.
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Design -1

The first design focuses on the pectoral muscles. The borders of the subtraction move from the front shoulder seams to the front sleeve seams, under the pectoral lines and round to the lapel seams. This design retains the fundamental structure of the original suit, using transparent panels to further accentuate the chest and shoulders.

Design -2

The second design focuses on the abdominal and lower back muscles. The under-pectorals line and the waistline become the two cutting points, leaving a transparent, belt-like section across the waist that further highlights the body’s physique and musculature.

Figure 5.15

Minus Suit Design –1

Figure 5.16

Minus Suit Design –2
The third design focuses on the shoulders as a classic symbol of masculinity. The wide-cut shoulders outline the masculine shape, and this design aims to accentuate and reveal them. The rest of the suit is left untouched, with the lapel also drawing the viewer’s eye to the chest and upper body.

Design -4

The fourth design reveals the back and lateral muscles in a cut that is commonly seen in women’s fashion but rarely in men’s. During the second and fourth workshops, the back proved to be a strong canvas for subtraction.
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

5 Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

Design –5

The fifth design reveals the entire front of the body, leaving the lapel, sleeves, back, and pockets visible. While this design leaves the back generally untouched, the transparent front opens up a range of possibilities that utilise the body beneath as a fundamental part of the design.

Figure 5.19 minus suit design –5

Design –6

The reverse of Design –5, Design –6 reveals the entire back of the body, leaving the lapel, sleeves, and front portion of the suit untouched. Similar to Design –5, this design focuses on the male form as a key aspect of the design whilst retaining the broad shoulders and slim waist of the original suit cut.

Figure 5.20 minus suit design –6
Design -7

Design -7 focuses on the upper muscle groups on both arms and legs, leaving the rest of the panels intact. The transparent sections emphasise the traditionally masculine region of the biceps and shoulders, while the lower body gives an illusion of wearing high boots in a departure from common men's fashion.

Design -8

Design -8 is a reversal of Design -7, replacing the lower sections of the upper and lower body with transparent panels, creating an illusion of short sleeves and pants. This design reflects the casual feeling of summer wear while revealing sections where tattoos and other body art are commonly displayed.
Design –9

Design –9 is the method of subtraction taken to its extreme, replacing the majority of the suit with transparent panels leaving only the lapel, pockets, and buttons in place. This design, while the most ‘daring’ in terms of revealing the male body, also provides a type of blank canvas that underpinned the eventual creation of the meta-suit concept.
The Minus Suits in the Interactive Performance Installations

The Minus Suits were worn by a group of Research Participants made up of nineteen male volunteers — aged between 18 and 58 — of varying professions, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. In undertaking a commitment to a three-month journey, they helped in the final development, creation, understanding, and analysis of the overall project. The Research Group is presented fully as Dramatis Personae in Appendix 1.

The Research Group played a key role in the support on the development of the physical suits and were the key players of the interactive performance installation. They performed, guided and, interacted with male participants from the audience throughout the show.

As illustrated in Appendix 1, ten members of the Research Group were in their twenties, five in their thirties, three in their forties, and one in their fifties. It is also worth mentioning that seven of the men were of Afro-Caribbean origin, four India/Pakistan, four Mediterranean, three British, and one Eastern European. The Afro-Caribbean as well the Indian/Pakistan men, as we will see later on, paid a lot of importance to their hairstyle and grooming. The Afro-Caribbean men also demonstrated throughout the project how naturally comfortable with their image and body they were, and they enjoyed showing their bodies off. Another important observation is that ten of the nineteen members of the Research Group are living temporarily in the UK. Forgotten Peacock assisted their integration within a group where they made new friends, exchanged experiences and backgrounds with the rest of the team, and found a way of expressing themselves.

As Jad said, ‘Forgotten Peacock has added some new concepts and experiences to me, whether on the professional level or on a personal one by getting to know different people from different places’.

The common reason for participation in the project for all of the nineteen men was their passion and interest in fashion: some wanted to experience and be part of a fashion project like Jacob and Paolo (‘I took part because I am a fashion-addict’ — Paolo); others participated because they wanted to learn more about male style and fashion such as Saurin P and Adam (‘This project for me was a way to learn more about male fashion and why not, change my look and style’ — Adam); for others, the project was an opportunity to perform, like Alexander, Francisco, and Clifton (‘What has helped me as a person to grow and to go with the flow, if anyone! anything goes wrong. And saying this I want to perform more in the world of fashion, in front of behind the scenes’ — Clifton); or some simply wanted to live a different experience like Jad and Bhavit (‘The project brought a new experience to me’ — Bhavit).

5.4 Reflections on the Minus Collection

Nude Costume

Itself inspired by nude male heroic sculptures, the neo-classical male suit was a key influence in the creation of the Minus collective series of suits. The challenge for neo-classical tailors was to create a suit that would reflect desirable modern values but to do so without revealing the male body in its naked form (Takis, 2014, p. 68). In an interesting conflict, Hollander (1994) points out that the Greek hero ‘wore nothing but his perfect nudity’, or sometimes just a short cape that fell behind his shoulders (p. 86).

The nude costume was the one most suggestive of perfect male strength, perfect virtue and perfect honesty, with overtones of independence and rationality. The hero’s harmonious nude beauty was the visible expression of his uncorrupted moral and mental qualities. (Hollander, 1994, p. 86)
that men hybridise the suit themselves through self-expression. This reflects a certain interplay between designers and bloggers and strengthens the interdisciplinary approach of this project by fueling the practical experiments and the proposal of the meta-suit.

In the first chapter, I demonstrated by looking at suits sourced mainly from blogs how adding and subtracting has become part of an integrated process on ways of wearing the suit. The absence of a tie, waistcoat, socks, shirt are subtractions, among others. Figure 5.26 (Imbimbo, 2014) shows a New Yorker who wears an unbuttoned shirt with a t-shirt on top, has pulled the sleeves up, wears trainer brogues, and his short, tailored trousers reveal cycling shorts underneath. He has subtracted the formality of the suit and has introduced a unique relaxed, sporty attitude.

The following photographs from the Finnish blog Hel-Looks showcase how subtraction on the suit has become an integral part of everyday life. Anto (Jokinen, 2006, Figure 5.27), in Helsinki, has replaced the formality of the shirt and tie with a striped t-shirt and sports shoes. Jarkko (Jokinen, 2012, Figure 5.28), Juko (Jokinen, 2010, Figure 5.30) & Jukka (Jokinen, 2009, Figure 5.30) experiment with the trouser length, their tailored trousers become ¾ length or breaches. Vesa (Jokinen, 2006, Figure 5.31) is wearing a cropped blazer that shortens the length of the body and sleeves, while Wilson (Jokinen, 2012, Figure 5.32) has subtracted the trousers completely and replaced them with a kilt.

Table 5.3 utilises Clark’s (2004) Infinite Genealogies and blog representations to illustrate how men use subtraction in their everyday life. As Clark argues, each item is just one possible route in an infinite number of combinations, and looking at everyday life, men (especially fashion-conscious bloggers) choose their own individual route, connection, and removals or minimizations when they wear their suit.

**Subtraction in Everyday Life**

Alongside the multidisciplinary research of designers, sociologists and others, this research project was also influenced by online blogs such as *The Sartorialist*, *FaceHaunter*, and *Hel-Looks*, and used these to read the self-fashioned ensembles of men on the streets. This revealed much about how contemporary men have utilised addition and subtraction in relation to the male suit. The focus was thus not on the bloggers specifically but rather on the way
Subtraction on the Catwalk

Table 5.4 illustrates how emerging and established designers have tested the idea of subtraction as a method of re-thinking the design of the suit. The photos below chronologically illustrate how men concealed and revealed parts of their bodies. Transparency as materiality has been used in different textile densities as well through varying prints or colours (solid or ombre). Most of the designers have incorporated transparency into their spring-summer collections.

This use of transparency again links back to the concept of the neo-classical suit or nude suit, amongst others. Or they replace parent materials, usually utilised in women’s fashion rather than men’s, is a way to re-think the design of the untouchable male suit and allow men to focus on self-expression rather than an overarching societal understanding of performing masculinity.

Transparency appears more commonly on the catwalk or in designer fashion than it does on streetwear, and designers have experimented with transparency in multiple aspects of suit design, as depicted in Table 5.5. This ranges from certain sections, such as the sleeves (1. Andrew Groves) or shorts (10. Dirk Bikkembergs), all the way up to the entire ensemble (6. Vektor). What is notable here is the way that transparent fabrics have been used to incorporate the body beneath as part of the overall suit design (6. Vektor & 13. Ludovic de Saint Sernin) or layered to reveal brighter colours beneath (14. Jooyoung Kim). The use of transparent fabrics subverts traditional notions of gendered clothing or even gendered materials and opens up a wider range of self-expression for contemporary men.

much as it has in the Minus Collection of suits, the removal of certain panels serves to emphasise the broad shoulders and narrow waist of traditional suit design but also redefines elements to represent a new understanding of masculinity, similar to the way that performing heterodox masculinity strategically alters orthodox traits to redefine what is masculine.

Designers, including Raf Simons, Pierre Cardin, Gaspard Yurkievich, and Walter Van Beirendonck, have played with sleeve subtraction as shown in s.3, s.9 & s.11. Designers such as Sarah Burton for McQueen and Ana Locking have subtracted sections from the back of the suit in s.20 and s.5, while Raun Larose has removed the lapels in s.8. Balmain has exposed the shoulders in s.15 & s.17, while Thom Browne has experimented with minimisation in multiple places (s.7).

The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

The Design Tools section of the Methodology discussed how throughout the history of dress, men concealed and revealed parts of their bodies. The photos below chronologically illustrate how emerging and established designers have tested the idea of transparency as a method of re-thinking the design of the suit. The transparency as materiality for the suit has been tested many times on the catwalk. Designers use transparency as the only material for their suits, such as Fendi, Calvin Klein, Dior, Parsons MFA, amongst others. Or they replace sections of the suit with transparency, such as Dirk Bikkembergs. Transparency has been used to express masculinity. The transparency as materiality has been used in different textile densities as well through varying prints or colours (solid or ombre). Most of the designers have incorporated transparency into their spring-summer collections.

This use of transparency again links back to the concept of the neo-classical suit or nude suit, amongst others. Or they replace parent materials, usually utilised in women’s fashion rather than men’s, is a way to re-think the design of the untouchable male suit and allow men to focus on self-expression rather than an overarching societal understanding of performing masculinity.

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explore and present specific masculinities (Pitt & Fox, 2013), ranging from the orthodox to the heterodox and occasionally casodly. The inclusion of transparent materials, usually utilised in women’s fashion rather than men’s, is a way to re-think the design of the untouchable male suit and allow men to focus on self-expression rather than an overarching societal understanding of performing masculinity.

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Revealing on the Catwalk

In the Design Tool section, I discussed how the game of concealing and revealing has been an integral part of the evolution of fashion, consciously or unconsciously. Exploring the history of dress, I formulated the different possible options for application. The table below shows how designers have responded to these themes: Fragmented Reveal, Asymmetrical Reveal, Dichotomy Reveal, Transparent Reveal, Illusion Reveal, Concealed Reveal, and Layered Reveal.

Notable in the variety of designs in Table 5.6 is the variation in how different designers focus on the eroticism inherent in revealing sections of the body beneath. In most cases of asymmetrical (A. 5 & A. 2), fragmented (T. 1 & T. 2), and layered reveal (L. 2 & L. 1), the body forms a part of the design without particularly emphasising sexual or erotic connotations. Others use concealed (C. 3 & C. 5), or illusion reveal (T. 4 & L. 1) to take this concept further and play with the erotic ideal by highlighting the musculature of the body beneath. Nonetheless, contemporary designers are clearly willing to experiment with revealing in male dress as our modern conceptualisation of what defines masculine evolves over time.
5.5 The Minus Collection: Conclusions

Over the 15 years of my research, the fashion scene has changed dramatically. The use of subtraction on the traditional suit has been incorporated into everyday life. Established and emerging designers have experimented with varying themes using subtractive tactics, in which the male body has been revealed partially or entirely.

The Minus Collection breaks this concept of subtraction down to its fundamental elements, exploring how the form of both the suit and the wearer change depending on which aspect of the suit is removed or altered. By linking each design with core muscle groups, some designs accentuate traditional masculine elements such as the shoulders or chest, while others are more dramatic and present a different message or idea to both viewer and wearer. At its extreme (visible in Design –9), removing the majority of panels shifts the focus of the viewer from the suit to the wearer, revealing almost the entirety of the male form and demonstrating that the male body and the second skin of the suit cannot truly be understood as separate elements: they work in tandem to define the type of masculinity a man chooses to perform.
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

-4  -5  -6

-7  -8  -9
5.6 The Plus Collection
Re-Constructing the Suit

The intention of this section is to discuss the Plus Collection of the research-driven suits. The aim is to present the theoretical underpinnings for the creation of these suits, analyse the different designs, discuss their input in the interactive performance installations, and finally present the findings and demonstrate how the method of addition has been utilised in everyday life by self-designers in online blogs and runway Haute Couture by fashion designers (2000-2021).

Theoretical Underpinnings

The outcome of the garment prototypes through the first, second, third, and fourth workshops, together with the following historical and theoretical underpinnings, fuelled the creation of the Plus (+) Suits. Scardi (2010) states that art and fashion design look backwards as much as forwards, acting as the channel between past and present, heading towards movements that are still in an embryonic stage, waiting to happen in the near future. Scardi’s concept of channelling the past and present was a provocation for my practice and led me to ask, what happens if we try to rethink the contemporary suit, utilising ideas and patterns from male dress history to develop a new future? For Evans (2003), when designers look back at the history of dress to conceive their current collection, they are providing captivating instances that crystallise the use we make of history in the present. Hodge’s (2006) work on similarities between fashion and architecture and the notion of ‘enveloping’ the body also inspired my creative process, raising the question: What happens if we acknowledge the suit as an extension of the body, as its second skin and try to construct upon it?

Throughout history, men’s dress has been characterised by open layers of clothing, revealing layer upon layer, but no more skin than the face and hands. This layering effect is filled with double entendre, playing with ideas of outer and inner, open and closed, revealing the inside of clothes but rarely the body beneath. This concept of enveloping layers and their reflection of male fashion in society are of particular interest to me. Furthermore, the Plus Collection not only draws parallels to the historical form of male dress but also references traditional garments. For example, the Greek fustanella has been proposed as an additional layer, a row of trouser panels is folded like a ceremonial kimon-style belt, and military details and patterns are introduced within the cut of the suit itself. Through this manipulation of the past, new forms and pattern compositions create entirely new outfits. As Scardi (2010) underlines: “The vehicle of identity par excellence, clothing makes it possible later in this chapter, in the analysis of the individual designs, I tried to combine ideas, develop or ‘twist’ them to create new forms for the male suit. The draft designs were critically evaluated, and those that were excluded were those that were overly feminine, had an artificial look (reminiscent of ‘Star Trek’), or didn’t fit into any of the three categories of shape. Out of all the developed sketches, only three designs for each section were kept, as the concept of the collections demanded this. Finally, the most appropriate designs were selected — those that would work/look better with the materials, underlining the design concept, and visually be part of the same collection.

The final step before the execution of the designs was the creation of another set of prototypes to make all the final changes and corrections necessary to finalize the designs. The prototypes were created by a technician/maker over two weeks at the workshop of the Fashion department at the University of the Arts in Bucharest. For the prototypes, I used second-hand suit jackets that were adjusted for each design. Creating the prototypes meant facing the difficulties involved in each design, developing and refining them, and then creating the nine final designs of the Plus Collection, which are discussed in detail below.
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

The Creation Process
The Plus Collection was made at the London College of Fashion workshops. For the Plus designs, a pattern cutter/maker and a team of six seamstresses created all twenty-seven garments (nine designs in three sizes each).

After discussion of the prototypes with the pattern maker, he worked alone at first, at the London College of Fashion workshops, creating all the patterns and producing the first version of all nine designs in a material similar to the one to be used in the final designs. This allowed me to give feedback and finalize all the patterns and details of each garment. During this stage, we also decided on the three different sizes to accommodate as many participants as we could. This process lasted for over a month (June-July 2008).

The next step was to create the actual Collection with the proper materials and details. The twenty-seven suits of the Plus Collection were made in six weeks (August-September 2008).

Designs and Influences of the Plus Collection
The designs, with their various historical, traditional, and military influences, offered participants nine different and unique options to try on and play with their image. Some of the designs were more elaborate and some more colourful than others; thus giving further options for the participants to choose from according to their taste in form and colour.

An overview of each design is presented below. Each one includes the thinking and the various inspirations (mood boards) behind the design and the responses to it — not only those of the Research Group and the Installation Male Participants but also a fashion journalist's review. It also includes the various stages of each design — from the drawing and prototype to the final garment. Each overview ends with the designer's feedback on what worked, what didn't, how different it is from the original drawing, and why.

The responses to the Plus collection varied throughout the run of the show, but some of the designs were generally more popular than others; Installation Male Participants frequently competed to wear the same garment. A full description of each of the nine designs in the Plus Collection is given below.

The Plus (+) Designs

Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

The responses to the Plus collection varied throughout the run of the show, but some of the designs were generally more popular than others; Installation Male Participants frequently competed to wear the same garment. A full description of each of the nine designs in the Plus Collection is given below.
Design +1 — Shape 1

Design +1 repeats and enlarges the cuffs on both sleeves. The basic garment is a single-breasted one-button jacket. For the lining and the insides of the cuffs, sapphire-blue crepe satin silk (a cold colour) was used, and the jacket had three crystal buttons, one at the waist fastening and one on each lapel.

The repeated supra-dimensioned cuffs created a peacock fan, which formed different shapes while the wearer was moving their arms. A homage to the male peacock throughout history, but taken to its extreme, Design +1 retained the concept of expanding the broad shoulders of traditional masculine dress, but in a flamboyant, decorative style.

Design +2 — Shape 1

Design +2 was created by removing the original lapels from a single-breasted one-button jacket and adding a number of lapels placed asymmetrically on the lapel area. The colour of the lining and one side of the lapels was ruby-red (a warm colour). In this design, only one crystal button on the waist fastening was used.

The use of a single button on the waist had the effect of both slimming and revealing the waistline, retaining the erotic connotation of traditional suits. This draws the eye toward two of the classic symbols of masculinity — the Adam’s apple and the penis — while also broadening the shoulders, but the revelation of the body beneath is a direct challenge to the generally concealing nature of male fashion.
Design +3 — Shape 1

Design +3 used multiple trouser legs, starting from four different places on the suit, with each part containing four trouser legs forming a row. Two pieces of four, starting from the bottom of the front of a single-breasted one-button jacket, cut short to waist level, created four different-sized cylindrical folds. The other two pieces started from the bottom of the back of the jacket, pleated symmetrically on both lateral sides (left-right), creating a supra-dimensioned oriental design and exaggerating the shoulder line. The influence of the oriental design came from the traditional Japanese kimono and especially from its sash (called obi) and the way that it is tied. The kimono is a straight-lined robe with a broad sash fastening around the waist, worn by men, women, and children. The kimono was introduced in Europe in the late 19th century and has been a source of inspiration for many fashion designers over the last few years. For this design, a warm and a cold colour — violet and dark forest green — were used for the lining and one side of the trouser legs.

The cylindrical folds on this design are reminiscent of armour plates, drawing from the past and the role that men played in society throughout history. This design focuses less on revealing but retains the broad shoulders of the other designs to emphasise this traditional element of masculinity.

The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Design +4 — Shape 2

The inspiration for this design was the sleeve of the male suit, which was applied in a supra-dimensioned form to both sides of the trousers. The jacket was a single-breasted one-button type. The actual sleeves were left open at the top, exaggerating the line of the shoulders. A crystal was used for its fastening, and it was cut short around the bottom, following the top line of the two sleeves placed at the sides of the trousers. One sleeve reached to the full length of the trouser, whereas the other stopped at knee height. Both were open at the top, creating a pocket. The colour of the jacket lining and the inside of the sleeves was a cold spinach green.

The exaggerated shoulders on this design experimented with other ways of highlighting the breadth and strength of the wearer's torso. The trousers also expand and widen the legs in a departure from the skinny and tight trousers that are found more commonly in contemporary suit design, and the overall effect breaks up the classic silhouette of the suit while retaining the narrow waistline.
Design +5 — Shape 2

This was the simplest design of the whole Collection. For the first time in the Collection, a Spencer jacket was used, with six crystal buttons across the front. The origin of the Spencer jacket is 18th-century England, and it is a short, waist-length jacket. The actual design had two supra-dimensioned lapels placed around the trousers’ waist and ending at the front middle trouser seam, positioned especially for it. Aubergine-coloured lining (a warm colour) was used. This design highlights the use of two triangle shapes stacked on top of one another, slimming the waistline by broadening the legs and hips. At the same time, the short cut of the jacket and deep neckline draw attention to the chest, abdominals, and waist, as well as creating the illusion of a third triangle that reveals the body beneath.

Design +6 — Shape 2

The third design of the second shape was created by upside-down panels placed at the front and back of a single-breasted suit jacket, creating an original jacket with exposed shoulders. The jacket was fastened with hooks and eyes, leaving a very clean, straight line in the centre front. The second design influence was taken from the suit jacket sleeves, and five of them were placed upside down at the back, across the waistline to form a ‘peacocks tail’. This jacket had twelve crystal buttons — five across the front and seven equidistant at the back, where the sleeves connected with the jacket. This design combined a warm and a cold colour — fuschia and teal blue/green — creating a vibrant contrast. From the front, the panels at the back of the jacket are reminiscent of the longer tailcoats of the 19th century but are given a more futuristic, modern feel by the material. The sharp cut of the shoulders both reveals and broadens the muscles beneath, and the peacock tail again breaks the classic inverted triangle silhouette, instead giving the impression of two triangles with their points meeting at the waistline.
The unique element of this design was the use of the fustanella part of the traditional Greek male costume. The fustanella is a knee-length pleated skirt created by long strips of white cotton sewn together at the top. The original Greek fustanella has four hundred pleats, corresponding to the number of years that Greece was under Turkish occupation. For the Forgotten Peacock Collection, the fustanella had two hundred pleats and was worn on top of the trousers. The fustanella was left open on both sides to allow for extra movement as the wearer walked. On top, a Spencer jacket was used with a sash around the waist created by two suit jacket sleeves facing in opposite directions. There were two more at the back, this time supra-dimensioned sleeves extending from the top of the sash in the middle of the jacket and ending at knee height. The jacket had eight crystal buttons at the front—two more than the original Spencer (late 18th century) which normally has four or six buttons; the lining was lime green (a cool colour).

Combining both modern and historical concepts of masculinity, this design focuses on the lower half of the body. The deep neckline and revealed torso draw the eye down to the fustanella below, prompting the viewer to focus on the addition of what would often be considered a feminine skirt in modern society. The use of a fustanella, drawn from traditional Greek male costume, thereby subverts expectations and demonstrates the inherent flaws of a gendered understanding of fashion.

Design +7 — Shape 3

Design +8 — Shape 3

Design +8 was a long jacket with a Spencer cut, finishing at mid-calf level. The twist on this design was the use of six slightly oversized single lapels placed vertically around the bottom of the jacket. The lapels were placed with the wide part at the top and gave a playful movement to the garment as the participants walked. Two crystal buttons were used at the waist fastening, and the colour of the lining and one side of the lapels was a striking fuchsia.

The length of the jacket in this design gives the impression of an overcoat or outer garment, which serves to further emphasise the erotic connotations of the chest and abdominals revealed in the deep neckline. The jacket also breaks the classic triangular silhouette, slimming the waist through its hourglass shape.
The final design combined military and traditional elements. The upper front part was an upside-down single-breasted jacket, whereas the bottom part was the same jacket exaggerated in length. The whole front side was seamless. The upper back was identical to the upper front, leaving the shoulders completely uncovered. The lower part at the back was formed by inserting a half fustanella with one hundred pleats. The jacket was fastened at the front with hooks and eyes, leaving a clean line at the centre front. As with formal military coats, eight crystal buttons were placed across the front and two in the middle of the back at waist level. The lining was formed of alternating panels of cold and warm colours (petrol and orange), creating a colourful visual effect.

The revealing of the shoulders and the deep neckline of this design creates perhaps the most feminine shape of all the plus designs and challenges notions of the feminine/masculine binary in fashion. The clear military influence further reinforces this clash, resulting in a garment that is at once strikingly feminine and undeniably masculine in shape.
The Plus Suits Personified

The Plus suit designs are here illustrated as worn by dancer and choreographer Kirill Burlov, highlighting the flexibility and dramatic potential of the collection. This photo series was an opportunity to bring performance and performativity together, as the performer’s movements are motivated by the suits’ excesses in form, structure, materiality, and mobility. There is a reciprocal action between body and garment: the dancer is activated by the suit, which in turn performs its own dynamic features. This active embodiment further emphasizes certain elements of the designs, such as the extensions in Design +1, the lining in Design +9, and the drapes of Design +7.

Figures 5.48–5.56

Burlov in Designs +1 to +9
Photos by G. Vane Percy, (2014)
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

5 Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

and his reviews

Every night of the 'run' or performance, all nine Group), and d) with the audience.

(Plus Collection), b) with the other participants,

decoration came out from the above process and are

clear statements and perceptions towards male

suit that they had chosen to wear and how they felt

to ask Installation Participants questions about the

reactions and opinions of the Research Group

once again to be critical, as I was able to observe

Male Participants were guided throughout the

during and at the end of the show. The Installation

the extravagant suits; try on their favourite one in

become a peacock for the night had the opportunity

men who chose to experiment with their look and

Participants was simple and straightforward. The

visitor was free to choose whether to participate or

Any male member of the audience, regardless of

show. Up to nine men per show changed into their

Installation Male Participants refers to the men who

Installation Male Participants refers to the men who

The involvement of the Installation Male

The involvement of the Installation Male

The involvement of the Installation Male

The Plus Suits in the Interactive Performance Installations

The inherent performativity of the Plus suits was

made about what type of men wore which design. More conservative men mainly selected Design +5, as it was very similar to their own suits, except this one was made of shiny silk material and had sparkly crystal buttons. Men in their forties and upwards often chose Design +8, as they felt more comfortable in it because of its simple design, with the twist of the lapels applied to the bottom of the jacket. Design +6 was selected mostly by slim or short men because the jacket had a very fitted cut, exaggerating the triangle between the broad shoulder and the slim waist, giving the illusion of extra height in combination with the slim-fit trousers. Designs +3 and +4 drew the attention of more elegantly dressed men. They found them fashionable and extravagant without being over the top for their taste. Design +3 was selected mainly by slim men, as its upper part was so voluminous.

An interesting observation on the Installation Male Participants was the change of their body attitude and posture during the performance. The nine men looked notably insecure when they first stepped on stage to participate and change their appearance, evident in both their body posture and attitude. However, during their second appearance on stage, they exhibited a different posture while wearing the Forgotten Peacock collection — but still, they were not yet feeling brave enough. Even though the suits changed their attitude, some men were quite shy or even embarrassed. By the time of the catwalk, however, most had changed their attitude and body posture completely, showing off themselves in a more relaxed way, some walking to the rhythm, and others dancing or showing off their suit in their own particular way. It was very interesting that at the end of the show they stayed on stage to meet members of the audience, chat with the performers and take pictures of themselves as peacocks. They were happy posing for the project photographers or members of the audience.

The Installation Male Participants built their confidence, relaxed and changed their attitude during the reactions and opinions of the Research Group daily as well as interact with the Installation Male Participants and the audience. I had the opportunity to ask Installation Participants questions about the suit that they had chosen to wear and how they felt when wearing it, as well as holding further informal conversations at the end of each show. Some very clear statements and perceptions towards male decoration came out from the above process and are discussed toward the end of this chapter.

The involvement of the Installation Male Participants made the project unique by their interaction with a) the experimental new suit collection (Plus Collection), b) with the other participants, c) the nine performers (members of the Research Group), and d) with the audience.

Responses to the Plus Collection

Every night of the 'run' or performance, all nine designs were worn by the male participants. Throughout the six-week run, observations were and getting familiar with their new look. The next step for the Installation Male Participant was to meet the other eight participants in their elaborate suits, step in the centre of the stage together, and participate in the mirror sequence seeing themselves but also the co-participants through mirrors. This was the first time that the audience could see all the nine peacocks on stage. The fourth step was to interact with the MC, stating how they felt wearing the specific outfit and replying to some more personalized questions. After replying to all the questions, together, the nine peacocks would go backstage where the performers (Research Participants) explained to them what they had to do next and spend some time together. Their fifth task was to catwalk alone on stage to a high-bit soundtrack and pose for the photographers. As MC, I was on the side of the stage with the microphone, guiding them where necessary. At the finale of the catwalk sequence, each Installation Male Participant bowed with the performer that took care of them during the evening. After the show, the Installation Male Participant had the opportunity to spend more time with the performers, the other participants, and the audience, chatting and taking photos.

Alongside the fact that the Plus Collection was for all sizes, one important element that helped the male members of the audience participate in the installation and later relax and have more fun was that all the performers (Research Participants) were like them: ordinary men, looking and behaving like ones. They were not next to professional models where they could feel frightened or embarrassed about the way they looked. When given the question 'How easy was it for you to step on stage and participate in the show, becoming a peacock', some of the Installation Male Participants said, 'in the beginning, I was very stressed but Arnold (member of the Research Group) made me feel very comfortable throughout the show' (George, Installation Male Participant, 2008).

The show was also attended by Kenny Wang, a reviewer for Vauxhall Fashion Scout, and his reviews for each of the Plus suits are included below.
5.7 Plus Suits in Action

**Design +1 in Action**

The overall size and the strong sapphire-blue of the lining, which was revealed continuously in both supra-dimensioned sleeves, caught the attention of the male participants, making it one of the three most popular suits. As the second-heaviest suit in the collection, more than any other suit, it encouraged the participant to keep his posture upright and walk with more grace. The participants felt very powerful wearing it, and while they were on the catwalk, they often tried to play and show the audience its exaggerated sleeves. It is worth mentioning that, from the interviews, it emerged that blue is the colour most men prefer for their clothing.

Kenny Wang on Design +1:
Conveying 1400's French silhouette to today's look, this deconstructed suit speaks about artistry and history. Layers of kimono sleeve and unique lapels emphasise the non-commercial design, which will be suitable for those who love to explore their style and dare to stand out from the crowd. Essences of the 14th century's aristocracy can also be seen throughout the details, as well as the true indulgence of French sophistication that comes from Galliano and Vibskov's aesthetics.

*(Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)*

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**Design +2 in Action**

‘If I had to pick a suit from the Plus Collection, it would be the one with the lapels on the shoulders. It is very classy, elegant and at the same time, it has a glimmer of new couture and extravagance' (Jad, Research Group, 2007).

Kenny Wang on Design +2:

From 'Skin+Bones' architectural design to Sleek magazine artwork, this tendon jacket celebrates whimsical structures of mesmerizing masterpieces. Layers of satin lapels alongside asymmetrical cuts in this suit instigate the notion of beauty in ambiguity that Viktor & Rolf and McQueen constantly exude. The incorporation of French romanticism and the Kenyan Samburu woman are the main focus in building this conceptual but accessible garment. This piece interprets the charming personas of Louis XIV yet still involves aspects of beauty in the modern world. *(Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)*
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

Design +3 in Action

This design wrapped the body — via the deconstructed panel of trousers — which create dynamic curves inspired by Frank Gehry’s architecture and Japanism in Fashion.

Kenny Wang on Design +3:

This futuristic piece of Takis again takes the series of pleats and layers into account. Mainly galvanised by London’s ‘Future System Project’ and Elena Kalis’ ‘Under The Sea’ photographs, the suits’ details portray the splendour of seashells, as well as the alluring features of ‘Future Project’. Looking to the Dandies’ silhouette from the era of the 1800s, Takis combined the craftsmanship of virtuosos such as Vibskov and Vanderbeck with the gracefulness of Grasset de Saint Sauveir without neglecting the designer’s own ideas. (Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)

Table 5.10
Helsinki Design Museum participants wearing Design +3

Note. All photos taken as selfies via touchscreen during the exhibition [Photograph].

Figure 5.59
London Design Museum participant wearing Design +3


Design +4 in Action

Kenny Wang on Design +4:

This exposed shoulder suit is proof of Takis’s unique vision for menswear. Influenced by the likes of Raf Simons and Vivienne Westwood, the suit is distinctive and notable in its own way. Biennale Venezia and Ilaria Nistri White Fair video performance’s artistic ambience are the two elements that mainly inspired the piece, apart from men’s historical patterns from the era [of the] 1400s. As non-commercial as it may seem, this piece is undoubtedly exquisite in terms of detailing. (Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)

Table 5.11
Helsinki Design Museum participants wearing Design +4

Note. All photos taken as selfies via touchscreen during the exhibition [Photograph].

Figure 5.60
Brunswick Centre participant wearing Design +4

The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

5 Plus or Minus, Suit Your Self

Design +5 in Action

Kenny Wang on Design +5:
Focusing on the French Dandy, this ensemble depicts the feminine-male silhouette, with a slim waist accentuated with masculinity. Lapels become the main features of this particular piece which integrates the 16th century and 19th century atmosphere as well as the portrayal of Margiela's prescience. Looking more casual than other pieces, this suit is definitely a timeless creation. (Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)

Table 5.12
Helsinki Design Museum participants wearing Design +5
Note. All photos taken as selfies via touchscreen during the exhibition.

Figure 5.61
Brunswick Centre participant wearing Design +5

Design +6 in Action

Kenny Wang on Design +6:
Playful yet wearable, this tailcoat highlights the experimental aura of this collection. From Tricia Guild's interior design to Oscar Reutersvard's 'Small Pieces Fitting with Large Pieces', this design offers a different take on the traditional neckline and the compelling details of colourful satin appliqué that characterise the design of medieval men's clothing, as well as a 16th-century silhouette. Aside from those fascinating details, London's prominent Spittalfields market also inspired the structure of this garment, which makes it even more enticing to the buyer. (Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)

Table 5.13
Helsinki Design Museum participants wearing Design +6
Note. All photos taken as selfies via touchscreen during the exhibition.
Design +7 in Action

Design +7 was the most popular suit from the Plus collection. The traditional Greek skirt, the fustanella, caught the attention both of the participants and the audience. There were two reasons that the men liked this design: a) because they were curious to try on a skirt and see themselves in it; and b) because the fustanella reminded them of the Scottish kilt. Some of the participants wore the skirted suit without the trousers, and when they were asked why they hadn’t put on the trousers during the interviews between the MC and the participants, they answered that they wanted to feel the freedom of wearing a skirt. On the catwalk, the participants played with the idea of wearing a skirt, spinning around rhythmically, showing the strong colour of the lining and revealing their legs.

Kenny Wang on Design +7:

Through the excitement of La Roux’s 2009 concert and Karrel Vallery’s ‘Ruid Form’, Takis’s combination of a suit with asymmetrical pockets and pleated skirt with a green satin hemline successfully embodies the historical pattern of menswear from the 1500’s and today’s fashionable revolutionary vibe. This so-called modern garment fuses the silhouette of the Greek Fustanella and Arabic man L’Homme Paré respectively, hand in hand with the clarity of plastic crystal. Femininity of man is still incorporated in this piece which can be seen from the inclusion of the voluminous skirt. (Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)
Design +9 in Action

Design +9 was the second most popular garment. Its success lay in its cut, as it fit most of the participants very well, correcting their posture and exaggerating the waistline, making the exposed shoulders look wider. It was the heaviest garment of the whole collection and also the most colourful; strong contrasts of alternating cold and warm colours in the lining (petrol and orange) created a visual game. Asked how they felt wearing it, the participants responded: very powerful and strong. Male participants felt very comfortable showing their shoulders off, perhaps because the rest of the body was fully covered. The long jacket covered the entire body except for the shoulders. It is fascinating that when I asked the participants who wore this suit if they felt comfortable revealing their shoulders, none of them felt uncomfortable about it. Another reason that I think the men didn’t mind exposing their shoulders is that this part of the body is very flattering. Usually, men like showing broad shoulders, and this jacket exaggerated that specific body part, creating a very masculine image.

As with Design +7, Design +9 was beautifully executed from the original. The only unsatisfactory detail was the silicon straps on the shoulders, which, as with Design +6, were necessary for technical reasons, even though they muddled the outline of the upper part of the jacket.

‘In the Plus Collection, I liked the long garment that you can open and make like a peacock rotation with these green and orange stripes inside the garment. I think it was the real Peacock suit’ (Paolo, Research Group, 2007).

‘I like the multicoloured one, but would prefer it without the shoulder straps’ (Bhavit, Research Group, 2007).

Kenny Wang on Design +9:
The final piece of this collection offers a new variety of neckline in menswear that is stimulating and exquisite. Influenced by Hussein Chalayan and Viviane Sasen’s standpoint of art, Takis utilised different colours of satin for the coat’s lining without neglecting the natural strength of a man through slim and slender silhouettes. Although considered the most feminine piece, this enchanting garment is surprisingly versatile and reflects all sorts of male characteristics.

(Review for Vauxhall Fashion Scout)
5.8 Reflections on the Plus Collection

The interactive performance installation *Forgotten Peacock* succeeded in demonstrating how the performative aspects of the male suit can be explored and discovered — via supplementary design gestures such as add-ons, extensions, exaggerations, and embellishments — by professional and non-professional performers through physical embodiment. Not only did it provoke and inspire the Male Installation Participants and the audience to think differently about male dress and decoration and perhaps change their perceptions of it, but also it changed attitudes, styles, and in some cases, the careers of the Research Group members. Through the three months of their involvement in the project, the nineteen members proved that the experimental installation was a valuable method for stimulating and provoking new attitudes. It was also unexpected to see members of the Research Group change their entire life and gain new careers in the fashion and performance fields. I remain in contact with members of the team, sharing news and fashion habits, as well as reminiscing about the Forgotten Peacock project.

Addition in Everyday Life

As discussed earlier, subtraction has become a part of an integrated process on ways of wearing the suit for bloggers and other fashion-conscious men in society. In the same vein, suit wearers have also been playing with the idea of addition. For example, men are wearing sports caps as an addition to their look or adding big scarfs, jumpers, or hoodies (see Figure 5.68).
Jokinen, 2018, Figure 5.68). They play with layers and accessories, building upon the traditional structure of the suit and using it to shape their own sense of identity. The photos sourced from blogs below and the genealogy table illustrate some examples of how men use addition as a conscious fashion choice to hybridise their suits, reflective of a post-metrosexual movement that seeks individuality rather than self-objectification.

Addition in many of these day-to-day designs involves the inclusion of extra layers or accessories rather than alterations to the suit itself (see Table 5.17). Notable examples include scarfs (AS.4 & AS.6), cardigans/jumpers (AC.6 & AC.2), or coats (ACO.1 & ACO.5). Though this is also a pattern seen across the history of the suit, the inclusion of brighter colours (AC.3 or ACO.4) and patterns (AS.2 or ACO.3) demonstrates an increased focus on and interest in individuality amongst contemporary men.

In other cases, the suit itself has been altered using addition, particularly in length (AL.1 & AL.9) or in volume (AV.1 & AV.4). Again, colours and patterns emphasise the individuality of the modern man, notably in using traditionally feminine colours (AL.5) or embracing alternative materials and exaggerating the additions (AL.6).
Addition on the Catwalk

Addition brings new life to the traditional shape and structure of the suit, allowing for the incorporation of flamboyant elements reminiscent of designs prior to the Great Masculine Renunciation. The inclusion of other aspects of gendered garments such as skirts reflects the wider variety of individual expressions available to the contemporary man as he shifts between performing different types of masculinity in day-to-day life. By bringing back the decorative and the flamboyant, the use of addition in men’s suit fashion supports a broader societal understanding of masculinity and what constitutes ‘masculine’ in the modern-day.

Supplementary design gestures such as altering the classic suit’s form by extending, exaggeration, embellishing, ornamenting, and layering demonstrate how addition provides a creative tool for many fashion designers. The photos and tables in Table 5.18 demonstrate how they have experimented with addition on the suit design. Designers such as Thom Browne and Walter van Beirendonck have used addition to play within the male silhouette in outfits such as AC.1, AC.13 and AC.14. Others show the influence of historical male dress (Thom Browne, AC.11) or have added extra elements for display and pageantry (Ervin Latimer, AC.4).

Table 5.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addition on the catwalk: 2000-2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Note. For caption details see List of Expanded Captions: Table 5.18 — Addition on the catwalk: 2000-2020</td>
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AC.1 THOM BROWNE SS 08
AC.2 ERVIN LATIMER AW18
AC.3 RAF SIMONS AW09
AC.4 ACTOR TIGHTS 2011
AC.5 THOM BROWNE AW11
AC.6 SIX LEE AW13
AC.7 WALTER VAN BIERENDONCK AW13
AC.8 SIX LEE SS13
AC.9 ANDREA CAMMAROSANO AW14
AC.10 THOM BROWNE SS15
AC.11 WALTER VAN BIERENDONCK PAIS
AC.12 WALTER VAN BIERENDONCK 15
AC.13 CHARLIE BETTER LIVERPOOL SS15
AC.14 MAISON MIHARA
AC.15 GUCCI SS19
AC.16 MOSCHINO AW19
AC.17 BALMAIN PRE-FALL 20
AC.18 BALMAIN SS20
AC.19 ALEXANDER MCQUEEN PREF-FALL 21
Addition on the Catwalk

— Infinite Genealogies

Over the last twenty years of this century, designers have experimented with addition in different ways. The following genealogy table (Table 5.19) illustrates some examples placed thematically.

Designers have experimented with multiple elements of the traditional suit, from its silhouette (SH.3 & SH.4), sleeves (A.3 & A.4), or overall decoration (SU.6 & SU.7). These are sometimes taken to the extreme (SU.5 & SH.8), rather than simply focusing on adding extra layers or garments. While this is likely reflective of the time and skill required to reshape a suit in this way, it poses interesting questions about how street fashion may evolve in the coming years as designers experiment further with the structure of the traditional suit.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Additions by Fashion Designers — Infinite Genealogies</th>
<th>Addition on the Catwalk</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Table 5.19</strong> Addition by Fashion Designers — Infinite Genealogies</td>
<td>Addition on the Catwalk</td>
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<td>Note. For caption details see List of Expanded Captions: Table 5.19 — Addition by Fashion Designers — Infinite Genealogies</td>
<td>Addition on the Catwalk</td>
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The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

5.9 The Plus Collection Conclusions

This research has discussed the longevity of the suit many times. While it has certainly mutated and shifted over the years, its status as an icon of masculine power prevails. As Amics (1994) and Hollander (1994) both discuss, the contemporary desire for individuality might be the force needed to radically change the face of the male suit once more. It is the position of this project that the ability to express individuality should be at the core of any contemporary suit design.

This research adopts the role of experimenta-
tion and provocation. Through performativity (what suits actively describe, express, and reinforce) and performance (embodied action using movement, light, and selected ensemble options), it seeks to tweak, celebrate, and challenge the icon of the embodied suit. In a way, this same approach was taken with the Forgotten Peacock suits of the past. It can be argued that these suits were adjusted and changed to better communicate different aspects of male identity, drawing on various historical eras. Examples include the incorporation of the Greek fustanella as an additional layer, the manipulation of a row of trouser panels that were folded like a ceremonial kimono-style belt, and the introduction of military details and patterns within the cut of the suit itself. The genesis of the experimental suit came through the de/reconstruction of older suits that used blazers and trousers. Through this manipulation of the past, new forms and pattern compositions created entirely new outfits. As Scardi (2010) underlines: ‘The vehicle of identity par excellence, clothing makes it possible for artists to narrate the present, and also to explain a past that still speaks to them’ (p. 18). This dialogue between the past and present is of particular interest for the development of the meta-suit concept in the following chapter.

By designing, performing, and analysing the research-driven Plus and Minus suit collections, alongside the design work of established, emerging, and self-designers, I have illustrated how, over the last 20 years, the suit and its corresponding decorations have experienced a cyclical return to the peacock phenomenon that disappeared through the Great Masculine Renunciation. It is important to note, however, that the power of the suit and all its connotations of masculinity is at its strongest when situated in an appropriate context: alone, the suit lacks a certain strength — it is a second skin and only reaches its potential when considered in tandem with the situation and the body that wears it. A nexus of other iterations, meanings, contexts, and settings are required if a suit is to produce its desired effect, and this combination of factors sits at the heart of situated performativity. This observation presents exciting potential for chasing the overall goals of this project, asking how suit design can meet and sometimes deny certain contextual expectations.
In Conclusion: The Meta-Suit

To be dandy is still to negotiate a risk and requires a counterattack against camp defences — the flashy suit gets discarded, undermined or even ripped just to prove it doesn’t really matter — and in the twenty-first century, men’s dress and men’s fashion have come a long way but still have a long way to go. (Edwards, 2006, p. 64)

The two previous chapters have analysed the practice work and demonstrated how practice performed the theory. This concluding chapter intends to reflect on the findings of this inter-disciplinary practice-based research and propose a theoretical and practical concept of the suit as a hybridising form, capable of ever-changing modalities without losing its ‘suitness’.

I have argued that the male suit cannot be fully understood by approaching it through only one discipline (dress history, sociology, or design), nor by trying to analyse its separate qualities or powers one by one. A more holistic approach is required. The following section draws on the supposed binary oppositions around the study of the embodied suit discussed in this thesis, including addition/subtraction, minimalism/maximism, and masculine/feminine. Through the theoretical and practical design process, it became clear that these binary conceptualisations are often insufficient for explaining the complexity of the suit’s connotations and the messages it conveys. In reality, these ‘forces’ interact not as binary opposites but as a continuous, hybrid dialogue. In modern society, the traditional border between masculine and feminine is becoming less defined (see Jokinen, 2020, Figure 6.1), while the use of subtraction in suit design also performs addition by bringing the body beneath into the overall design. Recognising this reality allows me to understand the male suit in-depth and, therefore, to be able to deconstruct, reconstruct and re-think it as a mutable archetype. These oppositions are outlined below and examined in light of their value for the final concept of the meta-suit.
6.1 Rethinking Binary Oppositions

Addition Through Subtraction

This interdisciplinary practice-based research project questioned the seemingly unchangeable form of the male suit over the last three and a half centuries. Through a series of experimental garments, it deconstructed and reconstructed new forms and concepts of the male suit with the aim of re-thinking this iconic attire. In so doing, I created two series of suits: one focusing on subtraction (Minus) and the other addition (Plus). Each series contained nine experimental suits exploring different theories and characteristics of the suit.

By looking at fashion-conscious everyday suit wearers such as in Figures 6.4 (Jokinen, 2020) and 6.5 (Schuman, 2012), we can see how addition and subtraction have become part of the integrated process of ways of wearing the suit in everyday life. For example, the absence of socks appears now to define contemporary suit-wearing fashionistas, as does the subtraction of the tie or shirt and the addition of a hoody under the suit jacket, amongst many other sartorial strategies.

However, in corporate settings and government business, the suit is still required to be worn tacitly, if not explicitly. Discussing the male suit, Davies (2008) highlights the individuality of modern male dress, noting that men wear suits because they want to, and if they decide to wear a pair of trainers with their suit, then this is also acceptable. This is an example of addition and subtraction that happens in the varying ways that modern men choose to wear a suit.

In so doing, it 'added' to the overall design and look of the suit, incorporating the body beneath as a key element of the display. This addition also occurred with the projections of colour, light, and patterns, transforming the white suits of the Minus collection into fluid, shifting designs.

The zero-sum binary of addition vs subtraction is therefore a fallacy that simplifies and diminishes the potential complexity of a well-designed suit.

Maximism Through Minimalism

As discussed throughout the Historical Context section, prior to the rise of the three-piece suit, the peacocks of the 16th and 17th centuries were dressed in elaborate, flamboyant attire with a maximum of decoration. Kuchta highlights the influence of Charles 11 of England, whose promotion of minimalism in the form of the three-piece suit was laden with political connotations. He sought to link simplicity to royalty: the three-piece suit, which embodied the republican virtue of simplicity, thus marks a royalist appropriation of republican opposition to hierarchical fashion (see Vanier & Salmon, 2009, Figure 6.7). With a virile and comely monarchy, subservience to the effeminate tyranny of fashion could be eliminated without eliminating loyalty to the Crown. Modesty just might be compatible with the monarchy. (Kuchta, 2009, p. 43)

As male dress evolved under the political influence of the British Crown, the maximalism favoured by the peacock fell out of fashion, substituted for minimlist preferences in design and decoration (see Heim, n.d., Figure 6.8). The peacock was 'forgotten', and uniformity came to dominate suit design and male fashion.
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expressed his opinion on ornamentation as some-thing that 'must be overcome' and goes on to say that 'the lower cultural level, the greater the degree of ornamentation'. Equating modernity with minimalism, Loos further argues that the ornament is a phenomenon either of 'backwardness or degeneration'; representing 'wasted labour and hence wasted health' as well as a financial frivolity and maintained that 'freedom from ornament is a sign of spiritual strength' (1908).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'decoration' as 'the process or art of decorating something' and 'ornamentation' (OED Online, 2021). Yet this definition is an oversimplification of the concept, especially when examined in relation to fashion and design. Decoration does not only refer to ornamentation as a form of embellishment (i.e., embroidery, over stitching) but rather entails a wide range of core elements of garment design, as can be seen in the socio-political background of each period, it is clear that decoration did not disappear: it altered in form. This change in form ultimately challenges the definition of decoration entirely, where minimalism does not equate with simplicity. The contemporary peacock does not lie in a place of flamboyant, baroque excess but rather sits with a more nuanced understanding of how minimalism can itself be considered a form of maximalism.

Concealing and Revealing

In the Minus Series of suits, I experimented with the notion of concealing (see Sony Pictures, 2015, Figure 6.10) and revealing (see West, 2019, Figure 6.41) and how the body becomes a form of decoration; how a man can choose which part of his body he wants to reveal. Once considered only acceptable in women's fashion, the notion of revealing the skin of the wearer has also evolved in contemporary society. The Minus suits played with this concept, offering the wearer a choice to reveal the body beneath the suit based on the different types of masculinity he performs in everyday life or out of simple aesthetic preferences and choices of dress. Nowadays, where tattoos are a fashion statement, the idea of revealing could be appealing for more men.

Returning to Hollander (2011), by either concealing or revealing the male body, the suit acts as a mechanism that allows all these performative roles and aspects to play out through the vehicle of fashion.
as gender is increasingly accepted as a fluid concept, so too is masculinity. Once designed to emphasize an orthodox understanding of masculinity, the suit is capable of evolving alongside the rejection of the masculine/feminine binary.

As argued in Chapter 3, masculinity is a type of performance, and men draw from different masculine roles in day to day life. The male body is the mechanism that allows all these performative roles and aspects to play out through the vehicle of fashion. Thus, a man can transform the same suit from masculine to feminine according to the role he chooses to perform in a specific place and social situation.

The phenomena of the New Man and New Lad of the 1980s and the Metrosexual of the mid-1990s embraced femininity and narcissistic self-image in a direct challenge to the prevailing conceptualization of masculine behaviour and fashion. As The Gaze turned homosocial — where men look at and compete with other men — individuality became the priority. Now, in the 21st century, the radicalism of the New Man and his blurring of boundaries has become normalized. As a vehicle of self-expression, the suit is capable of evolving to match its wearer, and should focus on expressing individuality and a more complex, fluid understanding of masculinity and gender.

Uniformity Through Individuality
With the continuous rise of male fashion and the freedom from concerns about gender and sexuality, we have seen that the suit can express not only uniformity but also individuality. According to Davies (2008), a shift in attitude has developed since 2000 in dressing up or even dressing down: "the supermarket of style" as Polhemus refers to it — men have a choice of styles and can change not only their look but also their identity: what role of masculinity they will perform and therefore what they will signify.

Furthermore, Entwistle states (2009) that the call to 'be an individual' and to 'express yourself' are among the founding principles of modernity (p. 26). From one item of clothing, we can tell their gender, class, and even religious or ethnic affiliation. The choice of clothing options through which to convey their personal vision. Menswear is driven by the personality of the consumer who tends to combine elements from different designers in order to create his own personal style (p. 8).

One can also argue this from the perspective of the suit. Men can bold with their choice of a suit — it could be a solid vibrant colour, laser-printed, or made out of new technological materials (compare Schuman, 2007, Figure 6.16; with Schuman, 2012, Figure 6.15). However, as Edwards (2006) states, this is a privilege mainly of younger Western men living in the metropolis.

For Scardi (2000), the subject of identity is dealt with on a different level today. The challenge to both male and female artists is to 'decode the splintered, complex reality in which we live and to find a way of making a personal statement about today's needs — which have their own weight of knowledge, history, perspective tools and codes of expression' (p. 17).

Central themes today are multiculturalism, geopolitics, habit and community, exclusion, authority and control, and social and environmental sustainability. Nowadays, on the high street and in the world of online shopping — the supermarket of style as Polhemus refers to it — men have a choice of styles and can change not only their look but also their identity: what role of masculinity they will perform and therefore what they will signify.
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

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(1992), clothing can be seen as an unspoken

tions and context of the viewer (see Rodic, 2015,

tions and context of the viewer (see Rodic, 2015,

but these are themselves dependant on the percep

body in a particular way also fashions the subject's

fashion further explains that how individuals choose

in fashion, rather than adhering to the uniformity

of what is considered acceptable or fashionable, any

reimagining of the archetypal suit design must be

able to reflect this shift.

The Viewer and the Wearer

Underlying this project has been a fundamental recog-
nition of the performativity of the suit and fashion

more generally. Clothing inherently acts upon the

body that wears it, constructing how both the outfit

and the wearer are received and interpreted by

others. It also affects how the wearer perceives them-

selves, and the perceptions of the wearer and viewer

can merge together. Scardi discusses the effect of

how one is perceived by others on the self, calling it

a 'dangerous game' that clothing plays: ‘Too often we

perceive in the way we are considered, rather than

who we really are. The judgement of others plants an

question arises as to the language through which the

understanding both more closely reasserts the need to

language. Lurie describes how our image and behav

our image and behavior: they are pictorial

other hand, are ‘naturally’ (that is, non-arbitrarily)

the same concept (the signified). Symbols, on the

related to that which they signify: they are pictorial

representations, icons (Polhemus, 2011, p. 50).

One aspect of this polysemic concept returns us to

The Gaze as discussed in Chapter 3: the gaze of the

viewer to the wearer and the wearer to the viewer. The

Gaze has shifted from heterosexual — focusing on

women — to homosocial — looking at and

competing with other men. The relationship between

viewer and wearer is thus a form of performativity

everyday life, where one’s choice of fashion sends a

message to viewers whilst simultaneously shaping

how the wearer performs day-to-day. Nowadays,

men need the approval of their male peers more

than their female partners or friends. No matter

what their sexuality, men are now more concerned

with how they look and how they will be perceived

by other men. Furthermore, Edwards (2006) argues

that men perform their masculinity through success

at sports, in their careers, or through their sexual

conquests.

In Theatre and Everyday Life, theatre theorist

Alan Read (2005) explains that

The reason for placing theatre and everyday life

in a single title lies here. While the two might

appear to suggest a binary opposition, exam-

ining both more closely reasserts the need to

think not of an inside or outside of theatre but

the way theatre is in dialectical relation to the

quodern (p. 2).

As argued by Pitt and Fox (2015) in their concep-
tualisation of performative masculinity, men are

able of adopting various types of masculinity

in their day to day lives, dependant on the setting,

context, and personal preferences. Drawing on West

and Zimmerman's 'doing gender,' their notion of

orthodox and heterodox masculinity as existing along

a continuum allows men to strategically shift between

orthodox and heterodoxy and occasionally move into

cacodoxy. Just as masculinity is becoming less fixed

and more flexible in modern society, blurring the

lines between what is considered masculine or fem-

ine behaviour or appearances, too can the suit

be adapted to fit the multiple roles performed by men

in different contexts. The male suit thus has a per-

formative power over the wearer and the viewer and

consequently allows the wearer (or actor) to adopt
different rules of masculinity when he embodies it. But

what about the self-gaze with the phenom-
enon of 'selfies,' a scenario in which the viewer

and wearer are the same person? I explored the self-gaze

in my final interactive performative installation at

the Helsinki Design Museum, where men were able

to choose their favourite suit from the Plus series,

giving them individuality by manipulating it further

through addition, and then pose/gaze at themselves.

Signifier and Receiver

In the previous chapters, I discussed the male suit as

a signifier but also as a receiver at the same time. The

same suit changes according to the social situation

and the signs that the wearer would like to signify.

Returning to Lurie’s text, The Language of

Clothes (1992), clothing can be seen as an unspoken

language. Lurie describes how our image and behav-

ior form narratives that can be read by others. As an

individual subconsciously adjusts their behaviours

to fit different social settings, so does the narrative.

The question arises as to the language through which

the communication occurs.

As visual and sensory transmission, fashion is

unthethered from the restrictions of written language.

As Bugg (2006) maintains, it is a form of commu-

nication, and in that sense, it is a language. Bugg (p.

27). Vision and viewing are personal to each individ-

ual; we see differently depending on our personal

experience and contextual placement. Hannah

(2014) similarly argues that garments express their

own implications and performances that respond

to and change the dynamics of a particular setting.

Given that vision and viewing are subjective and that

clothing can be seen to carry particular connotations

depending on design and setting, designing a suit

is therefore not purely mimetic: it can be asserted

as simultaneously active and activating (Hannah,

2014, p. 18).

Polhemus (2011) emphasises that fashion is an

arbitrary language system where things are rarely

what they appear to be and that signs are arbitrarily

related to the ideas and concepts which they com-

municate. In arbitrary language systems, different

words (signifiers) can be arbitrarily substituted for

the same concept (the signified). Symbols, on the

other hand, are 'naturally' (that is, non-arbitrarily)

related to that which they signify: they are pictorial

representations, icons (Polhemus, 2011, p. 50).

As with all symbols, meanings can be inferred

even before the perceived is understood. Blau under-

lines that the senses occur before the signals and

as signs themselves, though it can be hard to see

what they are signalling. He describes the primary

language of fashion as a sensational one, stating that

'What is primary in fashion is its tactility, wearing

or seeing it, the effects upon senses, its visceral

content, the affectivity of the thing, the tact, what

compliments the look or its retraction whether you like it

or not' (Blau, 2013, p. 23).

In the seminar 'Vêtement et Sociétés' (Clothing

and Society) at the former Museum of Mankind in

Paris, Ethnologist Yves Delaporte compared cloth-

ing to language, which we can analyse in two ways:

either it is a pure metaphor, serving as an expression,

or it is an affirmation, which aspires to a deeper

scientific analysis. In the latter, we are encouraged

to question and reflect on the scientific proof of this

hypothesis (Delaporte, 1984). 'The originality of

language is that it is communicative, structured,

and full of signs and meaning, so comparatively cloth-

ing (or rather fashion) also contains a combination of

all of these.' (Orta, 2010, p. 39)
The Past and the Future

The evolution of dress, and in this case, male dress, is a natural phenomenon. Polhemus (2017) states, as is often observed, that ‘fashion, if looked at over a period of centuries, is cyclical, with themes and looks being repeated every few decades’ (p. 14).

Scardilo (2010) further notes: "Art, like fashion design, is simultaneously a reflection and a presentation, a camouflage but also a mode of existence. Both represent a perspective within heterogeneity, discipline within freedom. Neither is passive — on the contrary, both interpret reality as they have created it [...]. Both art and fashion design look backward as much as forwards, acting as the channel between past and present, heading towards movements that are still in an embryonic stage, waiting to happen in the near future. (pp. 13–14)."

As an example of this argument, we can refer to two exhibitions, both of which brilliantly demonstrate this relationship between the past and future.

L’Homme Paré
(Poriu Museum of Fashion and Textiles, 20 October 2005 to 30 April 2006)

This exhibition (Savage Beauty, 2015, Figure 6.19) is possibly one of the most important on male dress from the 15th century up until today. The exhibition beautifully highlights not only the extraordinary detail of each century but also how they influenced the future, giving examples of how the evolution of dress looks back on its history, reinventing patterns, materials, silhouettes, and ideas. A male peacock, proudly looking you in the eye is the first artefact in the exhibition; a metaphor for the well-dressed male.

At presenting the past and the future, this exhibition offers a window to the present and the future, giving examples of how the evolution of dress looks back on its history, reinventing patterns, materials, silhouettes, and ideas. A male peacock, proudly looking you in the eye is the first artefact in the exhibition; a metaphor for the well-dressed male.

As an example of this argument, we can refer to two exhibitions, both of which brilliantly demonstrate this relationship between the past and future.

6.2 The Meta-Suit

Building on Butler's theories of gender performativity and Pitt and Fox's concept of performative masculinity, it is evident that the male suit has a certain performative power on both the wearer and the viewer. This consequently allows the wearer to perform different roles of masculinity when he embodies the suit. Thus, masculinities are positioned and exist on a continuum, from orthodoxy through heterodoxy and into cacodoxy, with men strategically performing different masculinities according to the demands of the social situation. This concept of performative masculinity has been applied to the design concept for the re-proposal of the male suit. The suit itself becomes a hybrid structure that changes form based on the wearer's chosen performative role and social context.

Underpinned by the recognition that simple binary opposition cannot grasp the complexity of both fashion in general and the suit specifically, the concept of the meta-suit seeks to capture this fluid understanding, expressed through an increasing reference to gender fluidity. Though the design of the archetypal suit has changed over the past three hundred years, society and the men that wear suits have changed dramatically. The excess of the peacocks led to the counterculture of the Great Malese Renunciation, where uniformity ruled, and the suit came to connote orthodox masculinity and all its associated signals of power and authority. The revolution of male fashion that came with the rise of the New Man, New Lad, and Mymosexual phenomena revitalised male interest in self-expression and blurred the traditional, binary boundaries, which in the 21st century have become normalised with the post-mymosexual focus on individuality and hybridity.

Sociologically, men and the concept of masculinity have embraced a certain 'meta-suit-ness' in contemporary society. The post-mymosexual man is less restricted by the boundaries of gender in his self-expression and shaped by diverse interests that explore the combining of cultures and aesthetics. Post-mymosexuality as a societal movement is therefore far more complex than simple self-objectification and narcissism and can be understood as a 21st-century phenomenon where gender is allowed to be performed on an expanded continuum.

The fashion of the 21st-century man is similarly reflective of this fusion of interests, cultures, tastes, and aesthetics. It cannot be understood or reduced to simple binary oppositions of either/or and must instead acknowledge the potential of both. 21st-century male fashion is thus better defined by its relation to hybridity: the fusion, sampling, recycling, and mixing of traditional fashions into something that reflects the individuality of the wearer. Contemporary peacockery thus embraces the blurring of boundaries between gendered performances, allowing men to express themselves by performing a range of masculinities both in action and dress.

Combining these two understandings — post-mymosexuality in society and 21st-century fashion — highlights the strong potential of the suit to act as a vehicle of self-expression. In this sense, the suit itself is a kind of 'meta-suit', composed of various design elements that can be altered to fit different wearer's contexts, and the messages they seek to convey. Given the right tools and designed in the right way, a single suit has the potential to take multiple forms, offering the wearer a vast array of options for individual expression depending on their needs throughout the day. The peacock that dissipated with the Great Malese Renunciation has returned with the post-mymosexual movement of the 21st century, and the meta-suit can be this vehicle for self-expression. The section below represents a practical exploration of this meta-suit concept, demonstrating that the suit itself has always had potential as a meta-form and acts as a vehicle for a multitude of expressions that can cross and challenge the traditional boundaries established by this binary way of thinking.
6.3 Meta-Suit Applications

+/– Suits

The first experiment showcases what happens if we try to amalgamate both concepts of Plus and Minus suits. As a base for this experiment, I took the –9 Design of the Minus Collection (Figure 6.20), which is fully transparent except for the lapels and the pocket flaps and tried to incorporate all the additions that I experimented with for the Plus Collection.

The –9 suit was the most logical starting point for this experiment as the focus is on the form of the suit, there is no colour or any further decoration on the further experiments. The materiality and colour can be developed further in multiple directions. All the ideas of the Plus Suits can be incorporated on top of the transparent suit. From left to right, the below image (Table 6.1) illustrates all the Plus designs from +1 to +9.
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The second experiment also took the -9 Design of the Minus Suits and showcases how adjustable it could be according to what role the wearer needs to perform. The design incorporates invisible zips on key places to give multiple options to the wearer.

The first zip has been placed around the lapel giving multiple options to the wearer. As Table 6.2 illustrates, the wearer can decide if he would like to wear the jacket with the lapel, without, with a hoody, or a more extravagant collar. For example, he can wear the hooded option during the day, the collared one for meetings, the collarless in the afternoon, and the over-dressed one for clubbing.

As Table 6.3 illustrates, the wearer can decide if he would like to wear the jacket with the lapel, without, with a hoody, or a more extravagant collar. For example, he can wear the hooded option during the day, the collared one for meetings, the collarless in the afternoon, and the over-dressed one for clubbing.
The third invisible zip has been placed around the armholes giving versatile options to
the wearer. The blazer can be worn with/out sleeves, or the wearer can choose a different
style of sleeves according to the situation. Table 6.4 illustrates the use of Elizabethan sleeves,
highlighting how the history of dress can be used as inspiration to bring elements from the
past into contact with the principal structure of the tailored suit.

The fourth zip example illustrates a starting point for how many changes the wearer can
achieve by changing the panels at the back (Table 6.5). From a backless design to the addition
of different layers, forms, and design ideas.
This brings the possibilities in Table 6.6 to the wearer. He can choose and pick what changes he would like to make to his suit based on the role of masculinity he needs or desires to perform.

These suits, for example, can take any of the shapes in Table 6.7.
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Across the course of the iterative design process, the aims and objectives of this research came to centre around three key goals: to develop and inform theoretical and practical knowledge around the archetypal male suit through cross-disciplinary approaches, thereby creating and sustaining a holistic overview of the embodied male suit; to create an experimental wardrobe that empowers men of all ages and sizes to express their individuality and various masculinities, and to contribute to the debate on masculinity and its expression both conceptually and in practice through the design of the meta-suit as both a concept and physical artefact. The conception of the meta-suit was fuelled by a desire to create a framework for the archetypal male suit, one that takes into account its history, survivability, ‘untouchability’, and masculinity, drawing these elements together to fit with our contemporary understandings of male dress and fashion. Moreover, it was driven by a desire to better understand and define the post-metrosexual movement and its impact on men’s fashion, both contemporary and future. Masculinity in the 21st-century has expanded beyond traditional binary understandings: gender is increasingly accepted as existing along an expanded continuum, one where the borders between genders are blurred, and men are able to perform various masculinities depending on their needs. As Bowstead has argued, ‘the achievement of men’s fashion since the turn of the millennium form an integral part of a process of contestation: new modes of representation and practice that have acted, and continue to act, to repudiate essentialist dogmas of gender’ (2018, p. 172). It is no longer simply about whether one ‘is’ or ‘is not’ masculine in appearance or behaviour; masculinity is a fluid concept in which multiple expressions and traits coexist and interact. Just as our conceptualisation of masculinity has evolved over the life span of this project, so must the suit — with all its connotations of power, strength, and formality — evolve to match. Fifteen years of reading and analysing the world of fashion and academia on this subject have allowed me to watch it grow and expand from traditional understandings to incorporating more fluid approaches to gender and the performance of masculinity as a form of self-expression. Just as it was when first designed in 2004, the meta-suit today is, therefore, a tool for men to express their individuality, one that will perform different roles throughout the day in the same way that men strategically shift between performing different forms of masculinity depending on a given context and social situation. A suit is a second skin and retains inherent performativity in the way that it acts upon the wearer. Complete with its own messaging, symbolism, and connotations, a suit is also capable of creating different signals depending on the context in which it is worn. In this sense, it represents a unique form of situated performance: the strength of its message is tied up in a wide range of elements, from its form, fit, colour, and material, to the body that wears it, the context in which it is worn, and the mentality or behaviour it encourages. From the workshops through to the interactive performance element of the Plus design installations, the meta-suit was developed through an iterative design process that provided key insights into how men can explore and express the fluidity and multiplicity of masculinity when given the opportunity. As a costume designer, I have brought my own experiences and understanding of performance and performativity to fashion and applied them to an understanding of the suit as a historical phenomenon. In theatre, the suit is a means of expressing character, sexuality, and status. It retains its own performative connotations that come to life when embodied by the wearer. Costume designers already tend to approach the suit as a meta-form, hybridising multiple design elements to visually communicate characters, scenarios, and personalities. Throughout this research, I have sought to bring this understanding of the suit into fashion discourse, which then has the potential to inform and further costume design as a discipline. On a conceptual level, the meta-suit is best understood not as my invention but as my theoretical conclusion after engaging in an in-depth, multi-disciplinary engagement with, and deconstruction of, the archetypal male suit. It fuses an analysis of the suit itself as a design, how it is worn in practice, and the social and historical shifts that have defined both its shape and what is expected of men in appearance and behaviour. Paradoxically, my application of binaries to the study and design of the suit over the years has revealed its inherent
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complexity and resistance to 'either/or' in favour of 'and'. Rather, these binaries exist on a continuum with 'grey areas' between the two extremes, and it is in these grey areas that we find the hybridity and fusion that best represents where men and masculinity sit in modern society. Though the practical design of the meta-suits above focused particularly on the interrelation of addition and subtraction, they also incorporate other, more fluid understandings of traditional binaries, blurring the line between masculine and feminine, revealing through concealing, blending the past with the future, and finding individuality within uniformity. The meta-suit concept thus works as a heuristic device that melds the rich and complex history of the suit with a cross-disciplinary reading of its impact, which can then be applied in a wide variety of designs. In its dual form as both a concept and an artefact, it thus represents the fulfilment of the three primary objectives of this research project.

Model of Findings

This study's essential contribution to knowledge is the development of the meta-suit as both a physical artefact and a heuristic concept. Its creation was embedded in an interdisciplinary reading of the suit as a historical expression of masculinity and applied to the creation and analysis of a collective series through empirical Design Action Research methodology. The result was the formulation of the physical meta-suit as an ever-changing hybrid form capable of being individualised despite its apparent uniformity and the conceptual meta-suit as a heuristic device for a cross-disciplinary reading of how the suit has evolved and continues to do so. The heuristic meta-suit as a conceptual model could then be applied to a range of disciplines such as costume design, fashion design, sociology or psychology. From different perspectives and theoretical bases, these disciplines explore how the clothed body can be used to communicate concepts to audiences, making the cross-disciplinary meta-suit a valuable contribution to existing literature.

The male suit incorporates an inestimable combination of social, cultural, sexual, and performative factors. Like fashion more generally, it is polysemic; chosen by the wearer to display certain socio-economic and cultural ideals, yet its message is equally dependant on the perceptions of the viewer. As the male gaze has shifted from heterosexual to homosexual over the past decades, so too has the design and connotation of the untouchable suit evolved to better express individuality and personal conceptions of masculinity. For some, performing traditional, orthodox masculinity remains a priority, and thus the suit must retain a certain element of classic masculinity, such as retaining broad shoulders or a narrow waist, dark colours and traditional materials, or focusing on concealing rather than revealing.

For others, fashion can be a tool to challenge the prevailing societal norms about what constitutes masculinity or being male. Reflecting a more heterodox form of masculinity (which selectively draws from orthodox conceptions and reinvents them), many men in contemporary society are exploring alternative forms of self-expression. The gendered line is blurring, and the influence of the feminine on the masculine is no longer the taboo it has been since the Great Masculine Renunciation. Using various combinations of addition and subtraction, concealing and revealing, minimalism or maximalism, the classic suit can be reimagined to better fit this evolving conceptualisation of masculinity and individuality, carving a new path for the suit into the future.

All of these elements underpin the conceptual and practical design of the meta-suit. Just as men shift between performing different masculinities in day-to-day life, so too can a suit adapt to match the context, setting, and needs of the wearer. Embedded in the meta-suit is this concept of situated performativity, which acknowledges that a suit cannot express its full power or message alone. It requires the interplay and interaction with the body beneath it, as well as the influence of context, setting, and audience, to truly communicate its message. The meta-suit, therefore, positions the suit elements of jacket and trousers as a flexible, fluid ensemble that can fit the needs of its wearer in any given circumstance: shaped by the interplay of all the elements outlined in the model of factors above.

This research project began 15 years ago, yet this conceptual debate remains just as poignant now as it was then. Perhaps, as Bowstead (2018) argued, 'the alleged death of the suit has been announced prematurely' (p. 3). Even as I come to the end of this journey, the v.a. has announced an exhibition on 'Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear' opening in March of 2022, based on the forthcoming (2022) book of the same name by Rosalind McKeever, Claire Wulcés and Mauro Franceschini. Both the study and the exhibition promise to explore 'how designers, tailors and artists — and their clients and sitters — have constructed and performed masculinity, and unpicked it at the seams' (V&A, 2021). It is encouraging — and a little vindicating — to see that the intersection of fashion and masculinity as explored across the course of this research has entered the mainstream debate. From here, it can only continue to develop, evolve, and progress.
6.5 Conclusion

Amies' & Hollander's authoritative statement on the unchangeable nature of the suit doesn't foreclose on the complexity and changeability of its abiding form. Amies' and Hollander's studies are two of the most solid examinations of the male suit, approached from different perspectives: Amies' from a designer's perspective and Hollander's from a historian's point of view. It is the combination of these perspectives and disciplines that makes their arguments so persuasive, just as a combination of disciplines and approaches underpins the concept of the meta-suit as a hybrid vehicle for a multitude of expressions. Challenging the borders between fashion/costume, conceptual/commercial fashion, and art/fashion bridges the gap between varying disciplines and helps to explain and locate interdisciplinary practice. This study has highlighted how men in the 21st century experiment with the suit in everyday life: melding fashion and anti-fashion, blurring traditional gender lines, and exploring alternate conceptions of masculinity in their quest for individuality.

Just as the suit is evolving, so too is our conceptualisation of masculinity and what makes something masculine. Different forms of masculinity exist along a continuum, ranging from the traditional to the progressive, and men routinely shift between these performances, depending on the requirements of context and social setting. The proposed meta-suit builds upon this theory of performative masculinity and applies it to the final designs, remaking the suit in a fluid, hybrid form that offers greater freedom of self-expression to modern men less bound by traditional perceptions of what it means to be masculine.

Through iterative design stages and the co-productive aspect of the public installations, the meta-suit contributes to our collective understanding of how masculinity is and can be expressed by embodying the fluidity and multiplicity of masculinity.

At its conceptual core, the meta-suit is a heuristic tool: an original concept for investigating how the male suit is designed and worn in both current society and into the future. The male suit can itself be understood as a meta-suit, which, despite changes throughout history, remains an abiding performative form that has always symbolised masculinity. Its true strength, however, cannot be understood without recognising that it is the way that a suit interacts with the wearer and the context in which it is worn that gives it true meaning through situated performativity. As our understanding of masculinity evolves to incorporate more hybrid forms and challenge traditional notions of what it is to be male, so too can the suit.

In a practical sense, the meta-suit is designed around this concept of fluidity. Its ability to be altered depending on the context, social setting, and type of masculinity that the wearer seeks to perform makes it a more fitting garment for a contemporary early 21st-century society that is rethinking traditional gender roles and behaviours. The flexibility of its design allows the wearer to experiment with appearance and identity, exploring the increasingly understood (and accepted) plurality of masculinity in a way that suits their individual self-expression. The meta-suit is thus an embodied, hybrid vehicle in which the form of the suit adjusts according to the roles of masculinity performed by the male wearer in his everyday life, in a specific space and time.

Directions for Future Research

Although this research has sought to function outside of the commercial realm, there is a clear commercial application evident in the numerous mentions of men's fashion preferences, what they desire in a suit, and comments made during the workshops throughout this study. The iterative method can be applied as a critical way of research-
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| 1.18 LACMA, (2021), Man’s Court Coat and Vest, England, circa 1790. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/214480 |

**Table 2.4 Visual Chronology — 1860–1880, V&A**

| 2.2 LACMA, (2021), Man’s Suit (Coat and Trouser), England, 1825–1830. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/214506 |
| 2.3 LACMA, (2021), Man’s Court Coat and Trouser, England, 1825. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/214507 |
| 2.4 LACMA, (2021), Man’s Court Coat, England, 1825. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/214508 |
| 2.5 LACMA, (2021), Man’s Court Coat and Trouser, Northern Ireland, circa 1852. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232340 |
| 2.6 LACMA, (2021), Coat, Germany, 1853–1854. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232341 |
| 2.7 LACMA, (2021), Coat, Germany, 1853–1854. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232342 |
| 2.8 LACMA, (2021), Coat, Germany, 1853–1854. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232343 |
| 2.9 LACMA, (2021), Coat, Germany, 1853–1854. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232344 |
| 2.10 LACMA, (2021), Coat, Germany, 1853–1854. [Photograph]. https://collections.lacma.org/node/232345 |

For further information, please refer to the bibliography section for a comprehensive list of sources and references.
Table 5.4
Subtraction on the catwalk – Infinite Genealogy


Appendix 1. Research Group

Research Group Overview
The first section of the appendix introduces the Research Group. The Research Group included nineteen volunteers: men between 18 and late their late 50s, regardless of profession, origin and cultural background. In undertaking a commitment to a three-month journey, they helped in the final development, creation, understanding and analysis of the project.

The members of the Research Group were found through advertisements, placed in a variety of national newspapers and websites, published in August 2008 with the hope of attracting a wide range of applicants. The ad was published in the Metro, London Lite and Evening Standard on 19/08/08 under the notice board section, The Times on 20/08/08 and the Guardian on 21/08/08 under the sports section.

The members of the Research Group played a key role in the understanding and development of the project. They were also the leading characters in the creation of the practice work and in the analysis of the outcome. A successful ongoing relationship between the nineteen key participants of the Research Group and myself was required and was established; this provided richer feedback for the planning, generation and inspiration of the suits and interactive events.

All members of the Research Group were provided with an exhaustive briefing on their role in the project, as well as their rights to withdraw, express consent, and the eventual publication of a PhD dissertation that would include relevant details and photographs of the participants. This ethical process was monitored by the relevant departments of both the London College of Fashion University of the Arts and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture to ensure good practice was maintained.

The table shows their name, age, origin, profession and the suit they wore from the minus collection as part of their ‘role’ in the interactive performance installation, and the final column indicates which design they preferred from the plus collection. The second section includes two graphics illustrating an overview of their origin and age. The third section draws on observations of the Research Group, dramatic personae, throughout their involvement in the research project.
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

** Appendices

Early twenties. He became more fashionable and his ORIGIN, such as cat-walking for West Africa, PROFESSION an inspiring escape. Similar to Adam, Luke-

Table A1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>ORIGIN</th>
<th>DESIGN</th>
<th>PREFERENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Insurance broker</td>
<td>Design nine</td>
</tr>
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<td>Alexander</td>
<td>Mid-fifties</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Design four</td>
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<td>Arnold</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>Art student</td>
<td>Design two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavit</td>
<td>Mid-thirties</td>
<td>London, parents from East Africa, grandparents from India</td>
<td>Work for a publishing company</td>
<td>Design eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifton</td>
<td>Mid-twenty</td>
<td>From Africa but born and raised in England</td>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>Design seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordell</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>East London</td>
<td>Finance student</td>
<td>Design three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Mid-thirties</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Telecom engineer-student and barber</td>
<td>Design one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco</td>
<td>Mid-thirties</td>
<td>Coruna, North-West Spain</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>Design three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Late thirties</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Fitness trainer</td>
<td>Design nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Refused to study to get a job</td>
<td>Design six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jad</td>
<td>Mid-thirties</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>Performing Arts and Audio-visual graduate</td>
<td>Design six</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurtis</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>Saint Albano, Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Accountant student</td>
<td>Design five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonidas</td>
<td>Late forties</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>Design one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Mid-thirties</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paolo</td>
<td>Mid fortes</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Works in an office in Central London</td>
<td>Design seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
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<td>Paris</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Design two</td>
</tr>
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<td>Saurin P.</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Design two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saurin S.</td>
<td>Early twenties</td>
<td>Gujrat, India</td>
<td>Engineer in Information Technology</td>
<td>Design three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waqar</td>
<td>Mid-twenty</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Working in finance</td>
<td>Design eight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Group Observations

Attitude Changes

In the beginning, the nineteen male volunteers exhibited different styles of dress, from trendy to retro and from classic to avant garde and during their involvement over the three months, September — November 2009, the participants changed in many respects. Some of them changed their clothing style, and some changed their attitude. Some had the opportunity to do some more creative work through their participation in the Forgotten Peacock, such as cat-walking for fashion shows or participating in commercial ads. And some others even changed their career.

Over the six weeks of the run, the way the Research Group interacted before and after the show changed great deal. To begin with, most used the cubicles to get dressed into their outfits, whereas some of them dressed in front of the others in the green room. By the last two weeks of the run, all the performers were dressing in the green room together, making jokes about each other’s look and clothes. The Afro-Caribbean men were naturally comfortable with their image and their bodies from the start, in comparison to the rest of the team. They liked showing off their physique and looking at themselves in the mirror.

The participants’ involvement in the performance adapted too. They became more confident and further developed their part, adding details in the way they were catwalking, performing, and interacting with the other participants and audience. Because they were more relaxed and had been learning their steps, they had more fun themselves, and this was transmitted to the audience and the Installation Male Participants. All members of the Research Group grew in confidence and improved their performance skills through the run, and some members changed their attitude significantly in relation to the rest of the group.

The attitudes of three men, in particular, noticeably changed throughout the project as they became more comfortable with their bodies and image. Adam is in his late twenties and from London. He works in the city as an insurance broker and is one of two members of the team who wears a suit in everyday life. He owns three suits (a black, a navy blue with stripes and a dark grey). His suits were bought from a high-street shop (Ted Baker) and cost three to five hundred pounds each. Adam learned his part quickly and helped other members of the Research Group during the rehearsals. However, in the beginning, he felt very insecure about his body and always dressed alone in a cubicle. Throughout the run of the show, he became more confident; he started dressing together with the rest of the team, made jokes and had fun with them during and after the show. Adam adapted with the support of the rest of the guys, who made him gradually feel more comfortable with the team but also with his look and body. After his experience with Forgotten Peacock, Adam participated in acting workshops, and he has chosen a new career path, as we will see later on.

Another participant who changed his attitude through the project was Luke, who is in his mid-thirties from London and works in an office. He is very unsatisfied with his office work and found Forgotten Peacock an inspiring escape. Similar to Adam, Luke was one of the men who initially dressed alone in a cubicle but gradually integrated himself into the rest of the team, having fun with them and dressed in front of them without any confidence issues. At the beginning of the project, Luke asked me if he could wear a white suit without any transparency. However, later in the run, he tried on the rest of the jackets, looking at himself in the mirror, and in a few shows performed wearing design number two of the Minus Collection, which showed his back. Waqar is in his mid-twenties and originally from Pakistan. He studied finance at the University of Leeds and currently works in a central London firm. Waqar was the most timid member of the focus group and underwent the most striking transformation throughout his participation in Forgotten Peacock. He became more fashionable and his self-confidence grew. He worked day by day on his part in the show and the change was quite noticea-
ble. He interacted more with his co-performers, the Installation Male Participants and the audience. He asked me for feedback on his style and to help him develop his skills. As with Adam and Luke, initially, he was always dressed in a cubicle alone, too shy to show his body to the others, until the last two weeks. With the height of the project, he was happy to show off his body and felt no insecurities about it.

**Style Changes**

In order to help the participants relax and also to bring the team together, I led warm-up exercises and some group games before the first show. After the warm-up, each team member conducted a high-speed run through, and then all in the circle shared a personal secret, told a joke or asked a question of a different person. Early on, it was to give everyone an understanding of the end of the run, each day, one performer was the centre of interest, and the others complimented his personal style and look and gave him fashion tips and advice.

A few members of the Research Group were fashion-oriented and quickly became 'icons' to the rest of the group. They often gave fashion advice and tips to other less confident team members. For example, Arnold, an art student in his early twenties originating from West Africa, is a visual peacock in his everyday life. Each day he arrived at the performance site with a different look, continually changing his style, his haircut, playing with colour in his clothes, and wearing suspenders, silk socks — they communicate a certain confidence for him. He was real inspiration for the others — very open, confident, a good performer and a key member of the team.

Jacob, from Alexandria, is twenty-two years old and has a rebel style of living, reflected in his theatrical style of dress. He likes mixing and matching styles, combining clothes from high street shops with vintage and self-made ones. He loves accessorising with jewellery and hats and has nine body piercings, the first done when he was fifteen. Then, when he joined the team, he decided to take his style further. He always tried to look good, observing the more fashionable guys, taking advice from them and sometimes copying the looks of Adam and the others. Alexander participated in Forgotten Peacock to gain a different experience. Moreover, through Forgotten Peacock, Alexander found a way to communicate and develop more and more his own style and personal look as he has some fun in the creative industry, after a difficult period in his life.

Kurtis is in his mid-forties and was a dancer in his mother's dance school. He was not fashion conscious and would arrive in his boiler suit each day. He frequently admired his fashionable co-performers and asked them questions about trends and things that he should do to make himself look more interesting.

Alexander is in his mid-fifties. He is Greek, from Alexandria, Egypt, and moved to London when he was eight years old. Alexander initially trained as a hair stylist but then became an engineer in the fashion and beauty industry. He is a real hairdresser and was the only one of the team with professional experience. In his interview, he talked about his personal style and the difference between being on stage and off stage. Alexander's style is very well-groomed and took care of every single detail of his dressing style. Miliki Taylor from Essence, on the 'Body and Soul: the Black Male Look' by Duane Thomas, states: "Black men really care about their style and dress code." Every style is deliberate. From the head to the toes — the pinstriped pants, oxford shoes, suspenders and ties — they communicate a powerful aesthetic and message. (1998: 106)

I also agree with the opinion of Dawn Baskerville from In Style, who states, in the same book: "Black men create their own image style. They have got what fashion dictates or what Madison Avenue tells them." (1998: 72)

The four men from India and Pakistan, as mentioned above, had a less fashionable style. The trends do not change as fast as they do in other areas. We should also bear in mind that London is a metropolis and the men come from different cultures and places. The Indian/Pakistani men (Saurin P, Saurin S and Waqar) are the main examples of guys who have a dated style of dress. Although Arnon, the Mexican, and Robert, from Paris, consider themselves to be an artist, and because I am part of a great show, and I am glad to say that each night is so different, with a different guy; that has helped me as a person to grow and to go with the flow if anything goes wrong. And by saying this, I want to perform more with performance elements and start working as a model. When he was asked in the media what had he gained so far by participating in the project, he said: I am happier because I have got to work with so many great people, and I am glad to say that each night is so different, with a different guy; that has helped me as a person to grow and to go with the flow if anything goes wrong. And by saying this, I want to perform more with performance elements and start working as a model. When he was asked in the media what had he gained so far by participating in the project, he said: I am happier because I have got to work with so many great people, and I am glad to say that each night is so different, with a different guy; that has helped me as a person to grow and to go with the flow if anything goes wrong. And by saying this, I want to perform more with performance elements and start working as a model. When he was asked in the media what had he gained so far by participating in the project, he said: I am happier because I have got to work with so many great people, and I am glad to say that each night is so different, with a different guy; that has helped me as a person to grow and to go with the flow if anything goes wrong. And by saying this, I want to perform more with performance elements and start working as a model.
Francisco used *Forgotten Peacock* as an opportunity to perform. He was very loyal to the project and helped the rest of the team during the rehearsals. He was the leader of one of the two groups.

Some members of the Research Group gained some extra work in modelling through their participation in *Forgotten Peacock*. Joshua is in his mid-thirties and is very tall with a very defined body. He was extremely professional and committed and a leader of one of the two groups. He was also a very fast learner, grasping the choreography quickly and very photogenic. He created a portfolio with his photos from *Forgotten Peacock* and tried to break into the fashion industry, despite being a telecoms engineer.

Jacob is twenty-two years old, a few low-profile fashion shows and is participating in several graduation fashion shows and continues to do so. He is a student and working as a barber in order to earn money. Joshua managed to get work as a model in different fashion shows and continues to do so. He participated in several graduation fashion shows and a few low-profile fashion shows. Jacob is twenty-two, British, very tall and slim with a defined body. He is a peacock in his ordinary life, and via his participation in the project, he realised that he wanted to try to become a fashion model. He created a portfolio from the early photo shoots and contacted many fashion agencies in London. He did a lot of castings and is currently negotiating with a fashion agency.

When he started the project, he wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life, but through the project, he believed he had found his passion. Finally, Kurtis, who is in his early twenties and an accountancy student, managed to get his feet into the creative industry. Like Joshua and Jacob, he used his experience in *Forgotten Peacock* to participate in a TV show as a dancer and also as a crowd extra in the final Harry Potter film.

*Forgotten Peacock* radically influenced Adam, who is now considering changing his career. Adam is in his late twenties and lives and works in London as an insurance broker. His participation in *Forgotten Peacock* made him realise that he should follow his passion, which was to become an actor and perform on stage. He is participating in drama workshops and has applied to drama school in order to start studying acting next year. Adam not only changed his attitude, becoming more confident about himself and his look, but also realised that he wanted to do something different with his life. According to him, acting had always been his passion, but he wasn't brave enough to follow it.

Similarly, Alexander decided to change his career path following his experience in *Forgotten Peacock*. Alexander is in his mid-fifties, and following a career as a stylist in his own hair and beauty salon, he became a carer but recently gave this up in order to follow his dream in the creative industry. During *Forgotten Peacock*, he created a book of his photos and recently participated in a film produced by the BBC.

Finally, Leonidas, who is in his late forties, decided to experiment with his career and added a different dimension to his life by becoming a model. He created a book of his photos and recently participated in a TV commercial. Since then, he has participated in different TV shows and is trying to get involved in more commercials.

**Conclusions**

The Research Group has been an integral part of this investigation. Their three month involvement supported the development of the research-driven suits through their response during fittings (from prototypes to the actual suits) and the interactive performance installations (from rehearsals to the end of the shows). They became the heart of the mechanism for the interactive performance installation guiding and supporting the participants.

As the project evolved from September to November 2009, their change was noticeable, from their attitude changes to their ways of dressing and styling themselves. For some, this project became a motivation for a career change, for some a motivation for a wardrobe change and for others a catalyst towards changing their image and confidence.
## Appendix 2. Menswear Fashion Designers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giorgio Armani</td>
<td>1975-2022</td>
<td>Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design</td>
<td>Italy, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emanuel Ungaro</td>
<td>1968-2019</td>
<td>Italian Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artisti</td>
<td>Italy, Rome, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emanuele Bianchi</td>
<td>1989-2023</td>
<td>Düsseldorf Business School, Italy</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo Zizzi</td>
<td>2010-2023</td>
<td>University of Trento, Canada</td>
<td>Canada, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander McQueen</td>
<td>1996-2023</td>
<td>University of Westminster, London</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anselm designer</td>
<td>2002-2023</td>
<td>University of Westminster, London</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Richmond</td>
<td>1982-2022</td>
<td>London College of Fashion, UK</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Bartlett</td>
<td>1992-2022</td>
<td>Harvard University, USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>Jean Paul Gaultier</td>
<td>1984-2022</td>
<td>Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design</td>
<td>France, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junya Watanabe</td>
<td>2000-2022</td>
<td>Bunka Fashion College, Japan</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Kane</td>
<td>2004-2022</td>
<td>Indian Institute of Fashion Design, Delhi</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Raeburn</td>
<td>2008-2022</td>
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<td>UK</td>
</tr>
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<td>Amélie Monceau</td>
<td>2000-2022</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank Usher</td>
<td>2012-2022</td>
<td>University of Westminster, London</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobias Bezhania</td>
<td>2004-2022</td>
<td>Georgian University of Applied Arts, Tbilisi</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Idea</td>
<td>2004-2022</td>
<td>Hongik University, South Korea</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceberg</td>
<td>2010-2022</td>
<td>Fashion Institute of Technology, New York</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Galliano</td>
<td>2004-2022</td>
<td>Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>John Galliano</td>
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<td>Kim Jones</td>
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<td>Liang Zhi</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomoko Tsuchiya</td>
<td>1997-2022</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<td>Nobuyuki Tsuchiyama</td>
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<td>Yuki Yamamoto</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Appendices

LUKAS STEPIEN
POLISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF COSTUME AND FASHION DESIGN, WARSZAWA, POLAND

MAHARISHI
MAISON MARGIELA 1999-TODAY: MARTIN MARGIELA BELGIAN ROYAL ACADEMY OF ANTWERP, BELGIUM

MARGARETH HOWELL
MATTHEW MILLER 2006-TODAY: MICHAEL BASTIAN AMERICAN BABSON COLLEGE, USA

MARGHERITA VIOLETTA MENDEZ
MIHARA YASUHIRO MENSWEAR 1997-TODAY: ANTONIO MIRANDA ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
MOSCHINO MENSWEAR 1986-1994: FRANCO MOSCHINO ITALIAN MARANGONI INSTITUTE, MILAN, ITALY

MARC JOHN MADELEY
MOSCHINO MENSWEAR 1994-2013: ROSSELLA JARDINI ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
MOSCHINO MENSWEAR 2013-TODAY: JEREMY SCOTT AMERICAN FASHION DESIGN AT PRATT INSTITUTE, NY, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
NEIL BARRETT MENSWEAR 1999-TODAY: NEIL BARRETT ENGLISH CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, LONDON, UK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
NEIL BARRETT MENSWEAR 1999-TODAY: NEIL BARRETT ENGLISH CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, LONDON, UK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
NIGEL CABOURN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
OLIVER SPENCER

MARC JOHN MADELEY
PATRIK ERVELL 2008-TODAY: PATRIK ERVELL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, IOWA CITY, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
PRADA MENSWEAR 1993-TODAY: MIUCCIA PRADA ITALIAN FASHION DESIGN, UNIVERSITY OF MILAN, ITALY

MARC JOHN MADELEY
PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND MENSWEAR

MARC JOHN MADELEY
PRIVATE WHITE V.C

MARC JOHN MADELEY
RAF SIMONS MENSWEAR 2006-TODAY: RAF SIMONS BELGIAN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN AND FURNITURE DESIGN FROM LUCA SCHOOL OF ARTS IN GENK, BELGIUM

MARC JOHN MADELEY
RAG & BONE MENSWEAR 2004-TODAY: MARCUS WAINWRIGHT BRITISH

MARC JOHN MADELEY
RICK OWENS MENSWEAR 2006-TODAY: RICK OWENS AMERICAN OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, LOS ANGELES, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
ROBERT GELLER MENSWEAR 2007-TODAY: ROBERT GELLER GERMAN RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
ROBERTO CAVALLI MENSWEAR 1999-TODAY: ROBERTO CAVALLI ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SALVATORE FERRAGAMO MENSWEAR 1970-2015: PAUL ANDREW ENGLISH READING COLLEGE, BERKSHIRE, UK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SEAN SUEN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SERHAT ISIK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SIBLING

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SIMON SPURR 2010-TODAY: SIMON SPURR BRITISH MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY, LONDON, UK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SIX LEE 2012-TODAY: SIX LEE CHINESE ROYAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, ANTWERP, BELGIUM

MARC JOHN MADELEY
SMALTO MENSWEAR 1962-2015: SMALTO MENSWEAR ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
TIGER OF SWEDEN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
TIM HAMILTON MENSWEAR 2006-TODAY: TIM HAMILTON AMERICAN THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, IOWA CITY, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
THOM BROWNE 2004-TODAY: THOM BROWNE AMERICAN ECONOMICS AT NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, INDIANA, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
TOM FORD 2006-TODAY: TOM FORD AMERICAN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE NEW SCHOOL'S ART AND DESIGN COLLEGE,

MARC JOHN MADELEY
TRUSSARDI 1911 MENSWEAR 1983-2013: GAIA TRUSSARDI ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
VERSACE MENSWEAR 1978-1997: GIANNI VERSACE ITALIAN

MARC JOHN MADELEY
VICTOR GLEMAUD 2007-TODAY: VICTOR GLEMAUD HAITIAN/AMERICAN FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, NEW YORK, USA

MARC JOHN MADELEY
VIKTOR & ROLF MENSWEAR 2003-TODAY: VIKTOR HORSTING & ROLF SNOERE DUTCH ARTEZ UNIVERSITY OF ARTS, ARNHEM, NETHERLANDS

MARC JOHN MADELEY
VIVIENNE WESTWOOD MENSWEAR 1990-TODAY: VIVIENNE WESTWOOD BRITISH UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER, LONDON, UK

MARC JOHN MADELEY
XANDER ZHOU

MARC JOHN MADELEY
Y-3 MENSWEAR 2003-TODAY: YOHJI YAMAMOTO JAPANESE

MARC JOHN MADELEY
YUNG WONG

MARC JOHN MADELEY
YVES SAINT LAURENT MENSWEAR 1969-2016: ANTHONY VACCARELLO BELGIAN L'ÉCOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE DES ARTS VISUELS DE LA CAMBRE (ENSAV), BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

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Appendix 3.
The London Design Museum Installation

Interactive Performance Installation at the Design Museum

On Friday, 19 September 2008, Forgotten Peacock was launched as part of the Design Museum’s regular late-night opening ‘Design Overtime’ event. Forgotten Peacock was part of the London Design Festival and London Fashion Week. This event functioned as a pilot where a series of designs and ideas were tested/explored. It tested the idea of audience participation and the ways of integrating the pre-choreographed movement sequences with the audience-involved movement sequences.

On an ethical level, participants of the London Design Museum installation were informed of their rights and the expression of consent through a series of signs at the entrance to the exhibit. These signs detailed the purposes of the exhibition as part of a PhD study, its publication, the potential publication of relevant photographs, and the participants’ rights to withdraw. These measures were taken in line with the Code of Practice on Research Ethics of the London College of Fashion University of the Arts.

Figure A3.1
Installation Design — London

Appendix 4.
The Brunswick Centre Installation

This appendix includes the design of the Performative interactive installation, the journeys and the performance structure in the Brunswick Centre Interactive Performative Installation.

Figure A4.1
Installation Design — Brunswick
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

Appendices

between October 23rd and November 29th, the Meta-Suit journey commenced. Internally, it was a small, seemingly minimal space, yet it housed an entire world of fashion and design. The entrance was on the ground floor, just like the London Design Museum installation, which served as a retail shop in a shopping mall.

Between October 20th and November 29th, the entrance of the space was used as a retail window. The jackets were on display, and visitors were allowed to enter and look at them. This strategy helped the marketing of the project, as visitors often stop in to shop or admire the offerings.

The main set of the production was the cubicles, which were divided into four sections: male, female, and a combination of gender. Each section had its own color palette and design elements, such as flowers and lace, which were explored to create a flamboyant peacock. The initial ideas for the choreography were also played with the idea of how men change their form into a flamboyant peacock. The initial ideas for the choreography were also explored, from stripes to polka dots and the use of optical effects such as Moire.

The entrance of the space was used as a retail window, with a selection of jackets from the Research Sample Materials, created in phase two hanging from the ceiling. The jackets were on display, and visitors were allowed to enter and look at them. This strategy helped the marketing of the project, as visitors often stop in to shop or admire the offerings.

The structure of the cubicles was designed with PVC slides, which allowed for easy entrance and exit for the performers. During the rehearsal period, we had to create nine different routes and each performer only performed one route. The video image was projected on both sides of the space, and the sculptures were designed with metal structures. This technique worked as an animation, which was visible, especially during the mirror sequence before that.

For a better understanding and to make the choreography as accessible to the audience as possible, we divided it into four sections:

1. Colour Patterns (2.30min). In this section, the performers transformed the space into a flamboyant peacock. The initial ideas for the choreography were also explored, from stripes to polka dots and the use of optical effects such as Moire.

2. Geometrical Patterns (3.50min). In this section, the use of organic shapes in suits was explored, from stripes to polka dots and the use of optical effects such as Moire.

3. Organic Patterns (2.50min). In this section, the use of organic patterns on the male suit, such as flowers and lace, was explored.

4. Geometric Patterns (3.50min). This animated section showed how male suits could be as interpreted by using LED technology on the fabrics. Men will be able to watch movies on them, change their suit in any colour they want or even project animations.

The video image was projected on both sides of the suits, yet not covering the undersides of the material. So the research group (Research Group) was kept in a separate room, monitoring the sound and design elements.
The Meta-Suit; De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

**Appendices**

The largest part of the materials shown in the video projection sequence were parts of the Research Visual Materials collected in the first phase of the Research. The research materials were divided into the subcategories. For the creation of the total video, postmodernist methods were used, such as the multiply rephrased and morphed elements, the effect of supersizing, deconstruction, and decoupage.

**Lighting Design**

For the lighting, we used moving lights and fluorescent tubes to create images that were abstract to more poetic visual images. With the use of moving light technology, we created a space where we could observe the exact quality of the suit's lining and also to create moving rather than static lighting in some of the sequences. The lighting embodied my concept in each section, creating a magical world refining the Plus and Minus Collections and supporting the motion of the piece. Nine men to participate in the performance and the performance came after my experiments in phase two. The audience was made up of men and women, from the male suit. It also served to unify the audience to participate in the performance and become peacocks. Nine performers took part in the Installation Male Participants. The performers were the twenty members of the Research Group. The Research Group was recruited through an advertisement in a newspaper and selected after auditions. They played a key role in the function of the installation. All the performers were dressed up in a bespoke white suit from the Minus Collection, where I developed a style that suited their personality. After finding the types, the performers kept their walk and style throughout the run. I would give them feedback on the development of their walk, walk and style throughout the run. I would give them feedback on the development of their style of masculinity that was close to his own perceptions in fashion via voice recordings. Some of them looking at one raked auditorium and five on the other. With the use of two high-resolution video projectors, the audience could see patterns projecting onto the people. This was an opportunity to get to know the performers' faces. The audience had the opportunity to look at their faces, geometrically or organic, in different colors and patterns. Male suits could be in the future using LED technologies.

In complete darkness, the audience could hear a soundscape with all the members of the Research Group who were presenting themselves in a typical show of male companionship.

With the help of the moving lights, I wanted to present them as destroying themselves in a typical show of male companionship. By using this static and very masculine image, the members of the Research Group explored the audience a little more about the reason for their stage appearances and consequently their preferences and perceptions in fashion via video recordings. Some talked about what they would wear in the future, others about their preference for specific underwear, some telling the interesting parts of special suits for body shaping, and others about the importance of waging his body, another about his tattoos, another about his piercing, another about how important his hair is and what kind of hair products he used. It was interesting to notice how some of the performers often showed off in front of the mirror. Every time a performer heard his voice, he would walk on stage with the rest remaining in the two lines so that the audience could match the voice to a person. I felt that everybody has something special about the way they dress or beautiful style.

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In the first part of the sequence projection, the performances presented opportunities to put on costumes and to greet each other according to their age, attitude and style. Each performer walked around the line greeting all the members of the Research Group, the audience was able to see the video projection not only as a static image but in motion, too. Again, the inspiration for this movement came after my experiments in phase two of the
The Meta-Suit: De-Re-Constructing the Ultimate Masculine Attire

**Appendices**

explored news

were guided to their dressing room while the

or Design +7 because they were curious to try on

chose Design +2 because they liked the red colour

of something familiar to them. For example, they
decided which suit they would like to wear, the

opportunity to observe all the elaborate suits, here,

While in the previous section, the audience had the

opportunity to see the suits in a choreographed sequence showing the

unified image. In this part, the audience had the chance to see the suits

in a more realistic setting, where the performers were walking on
to the stage.

Second, the choice of the place of presenting

the projection section in relation to the entire

performance. Initially, the projection section took

place when the nine participants were guided to

the dressing room by the performers to change into

the extravagant suits of the Collection. After the

first week, the projection section was allocated just

after the appearance of the performers presenting

—the Collection for two reasons. First, this gave

the opportunity for the nine participants to see the

projection section, which was the most spectacular

moment of the show and secondly, there was better
cohesion with the concept, as the audience was able
to see how a white suit could become a more

flamboyant one.

Forgotten Peacock aimed to be an original

interactive performance installation combining

fashion, theatre and dance. The idea was to create

a radical creative experiment combining live per-

formance, photography and video documentation,

which explored contemporary attitudes towards

male fashion and masculinity. In contrast to other

exhibitions of men's clothing, it was intended as an

interactive experience that engaged audience

members and visitors and called upon them to interac-

t with the installation. In all of these aims, the instal-

dation was successful, as is presented by the photos

and videos contained on the DVD and analysed in

Chapter 3.

Although Forgotten Peacock might be seen as a

fashion performance, at the same time, it was an

anti-fashion event, going against the 'rules' of the
today's fashion industry. There were moments in

the performance which were meant ironically and which

e xaggerated the 'rules' of the fashion industry, trying to

call attention to the importance of fashion in our

lives. While the fashion world is inaccessible to

to many people, Forgotten Peacock was open and

accessible to anybody of any age, site, cultural and

social background.
Appendix 5.

The Helsinki Design Museum Installation Design

This appendix includes the design of the Performative Interactive Installation in the Helsinki Design Museum from May 20–25, 2014, as part of the Helsinki Fashion Week. The figures illustrate via drawings and photos the design of the installation.

Participants at the Helsinki Design Museum Installation were informed of their rights and expressed their consent for the publication of photographs as part of this PhD study by participating with the MyPose 'selfie' machines throughout the exhibit.
Appendix 6.
Plus And Minus Sketches
Fashion seems an ever-changing phenomenon, defining the particular social and sexual mores of various epochs. Despite this fluidity, the male suit has proved itself a persistent Euro-Western globalised archetype, implicated in performances of power and masculinity since 1666. This practice-based doctoral study analyses and challenges the enduring form of this ubiquitous ensemble — specifically the late 19th-century lounge suit with matching jacket and trousers — maintaining that how it is designed and worn can confront, resist and reconfigure male identity.

Through the use of de-re-construction and the design gestures of addition and subtraction, the exhibited research collections, Plus+ and Minus–, re-evaluate the connection between suit design and how masculinity is expressed. This involves extending interdisciplinary discourse on the suit as it evolved over three and a half centuries by situating it within a spectrum of historical, sociological, and design theories. These theories are then applied to concepts and practices of embodiment and performativity through my action research as a performance designer, played out in a series of workshops, collections and installations. The creative investigations result in the proposition of the ‘meta-suit’ — a hybrid and mutable form of self-expression in the ever-changing performances of masculinity. In truth, dress is no longer defined by gender or sexuality; it is an embodied communication tool that expresses and performs all the required roles in our everyday life.