

COUTURE REIMAGINED: A POST-HUMAN EXPLORATION OF LUXURY FASHION CRAFTSMANSHIP THROUGH 3D ANIMATION AND TOILE FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES

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DESCRIPTION

This research investigates the intersection of post-humanism and fashion design, with a specific focus on the transformative role played by 3D modelling and animation within the context of the 'Unpicking Couture' exhibition at the Manchester Art Gallery. Luxury fashion, renowned for its craftsmanship, is undergoing a digital transformation, prompting an exploration into the origins of differentiation and innovation in fashion design. Motivated by the 'Exploding Fashion' project and the 'Charles James: Beyond Fashion' exhibition, our study focuses on the reverse construction of iconic couture garments—a Balenciaga Evening Coat and a Madame Grés Cocktail Dress—utilising a blend of traditional and computer-based methodologies.

Through an ethnographic enquiry complemented by digital techniques, qualitative interviews, and observations, our research captures the intricate interplay between tradition and technology. The chosen garments serve as focal points, symbolising a commitment to bridging the historical and avant-garde within the 'Unpicking Couture' exhibition. The 3D animations showcased in this exhibition are dynamic agents portraying the evolution of couture craftsmanship, aligning with post-humanist principles that recognise technology's integral role in shaping fashion narratives. Through a meticulous exploration of the chosen garments, including the Balenciaga Evening Coat and the Madame Grés Cocktail Dress, our research engages with the intricacies of both traditional and digital approaches to garment recreation. By showcasing the symbiotic collaboration between human ingenuity and cutting-edge tools, this project challenges the traditional anthropocentric view of fashion innovation, contributing significantly to the theoretical discourse on fashion and post-humanism.

The half-scale recreation of the Madame Grés dress involves an intimate exploration of the original designer's creative process, tracing style lines onto a mannequin, draping fabric onto a stand, and meticulously emulating finishes and stitches during construction. This detailed methodology exemplifies the hands-on craftsmanship involved in traditional garment recreation. Simultaneously, the use of 3D animation and modelling in the exhibition, particularly in the digitisation of patterns and the creation of intricate animations using tools like CLO3D and Houdini, represents the cutting-edge technological aspects of the project. The research thereby positions itself at the crossroads of tradition and technology, acknowledging the transformative potential of both in the context of luxury fashion.

In conclusion, this research project significantly contributes to the theoretical discussion on fashion and post-humanism by showcasing the transformative role of 3D animation and modelling in luxury fashion craftsmanship. By challenging anthropocentric views and emphasising the symbiotic relationship between humans and technology, this research redefines the essence of fashion innovation. The 'Unpicking Couture' exhibition serves as a tangible manifestation of post-human principles, illustrating how technology becomes an active participant in the creative and communicative processes of fashion design. Through this lens, the project enriches the theoretical discourse on the evolving nature of fashion in a post-human world and responds to the question of "where does differentiation and innovation in fashion design come from" in the near future.

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