



# Costume in Action

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# Concept statement



For this project I have chosen **Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals: life below water**. This goal is about the destruction of the seas and oceans on our planet due to pollution and global warming.



For this project I want to focus on three different elements: **coral bleaching, decrease in fish population and water pollution**.

The way I want to represent these issues through costume is by having three costumes represent the before, as in how life below the water used to be, vibrant and full of life, and then the other three will be opposites, representing the now, grey and void of life. The costumes will be based a vibrant fish, bright coral, and clear water which will be mirrored by a dead fish, bleached coral, and polluted water.



The dance style I want to go is **Raqs Masri (Egyptian dance)** which is a kind of belly dancing. The reason I chose this, is because growing up in Egypt, next to the red sea, I have seen first-hand why this sustainability goal is so important, so I wanted to have the dance also come from my upbringing.



I was thinking that the location I want the performance to be held is 'Deep Sea World', which is an aquarium, as it is a lot easier to get people to engage with an issue if they can see the real life equivalent (the fish in the aquarium) right in front of them. This will also mean that the audience will be a wide range of ages, but a good majority will be children, which is good because they are the future and if we can get them to start caring about the oceans and sea life at a young age then they can grow up making a difference.

For the materials I want to use, I like the concept of using bioplastics as I feel it's a unique and fun material that has this translucent gelatinous feel that carries the aesthetic of fish and water. I also feel it will move in an interesting manner with the dance style.

# Story

The story I want to tell is the **pollution, destruction and devastation of our oceans**.

To begin with one-by-one the **Fish, Coral and Water** characters (together they form the ocean) will appear dancing lively demonstrating the beauty of the oceans, then they will approach a giant frame representing a mirror (this will already be on stage) where in which they will see their negative counterparts the **Oil Spill, Rubbish and Bleached Coral** which will mimic their movements. This shows the past ocean being confronted with its dire future. Then one by one the negative reflections stepping out of the mirror, representing how this future has become our reality. The negative character will still be mirroring the positive characters movements, with the positive characters becoming slower with small movements, as the negative characters begin to move more aggressively. This all cultivates with the positive characters collapsing on the floor, overwhelmed by the negative.

The performance ends with the positive characters meekly walk off stage and negative characters keep dancing forming and representing the current state of our oceans.

I didn't want the story to have a positive ending, with the pollution being defeated as I feel it sends the wrong message, that our oceans are getting better, which they are not. This ending conveys the message that this is the current state of our oceans, and it is only going to get worse if we don't do something about it.

# Research

## Aquarium trip – Deep sea world

I want to present my dance at an aquarium, so I went and visited the Aquarium in Edinburgh, Deep Sea World. This trip doubled as getting inspiration for my designs as well as finding a suitable setting for the performance.

I originally knew that the aquarium had a tunnel where you walk through a tank, I was wanting to have the performance there, but it was much smaller than I expected so instead the performance will be held in the main entrance/room where there is lots of space to dance.



# Life below water: before



# Life below water: now



# Dance style: Raqqs Sharqi/ Raqqs Masri

**Raqqs Sharqi** translates to eastern dance (Raqqs Masri translates to Egyptian dance) but is more commonly known as belly dancing.

This dance began to come about in the 1920's, in the nightclubs of Cairo based of typical baladi movements.

Despite common belief and the more common westernised name, the traditional costumes the dancers would wear did not have their stomachs out. This was and still is due to social, cultural and religious expectations on woman covering up. The portrayal of belly dancers with their stomachs out comes from a commercialised version often preformed in resorts in Egypt for tourists.

The traditional costume is a loose decorative one-piece dress with a beaded hip belt/scarf that accentuated the hip movement. They also sometimes have a sheer panel around the stomach.



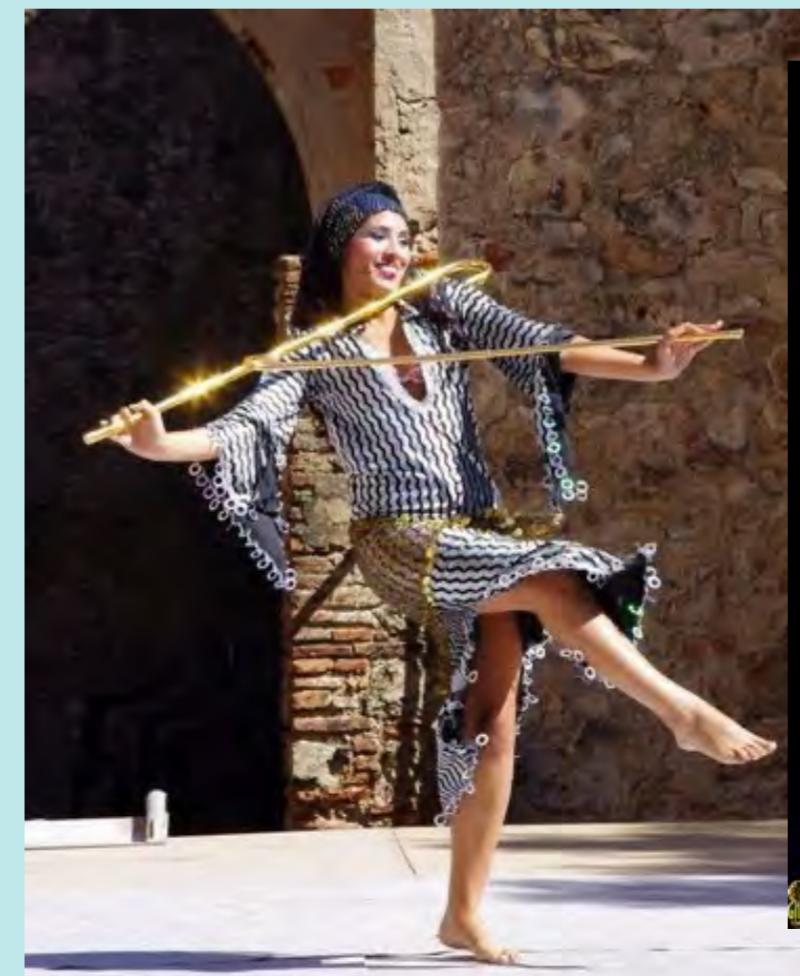
# Dance style: Raqqs Saidi

**Raqqs Saidi** refers to upper dance from Upper Egypt, (which is the south of Egypt). Upper and lower Egypt have different customs and traditions including their own version of belly dancing.

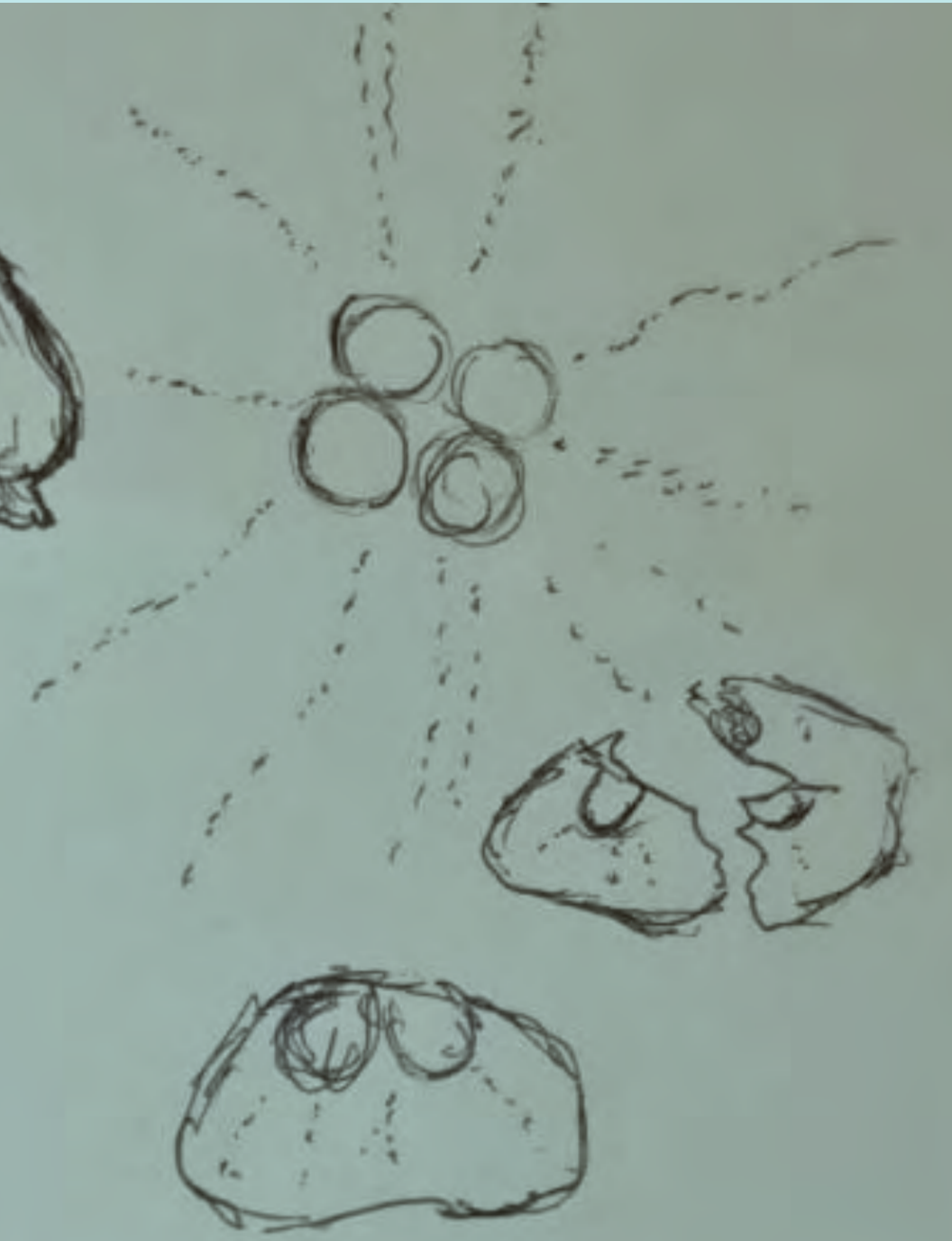
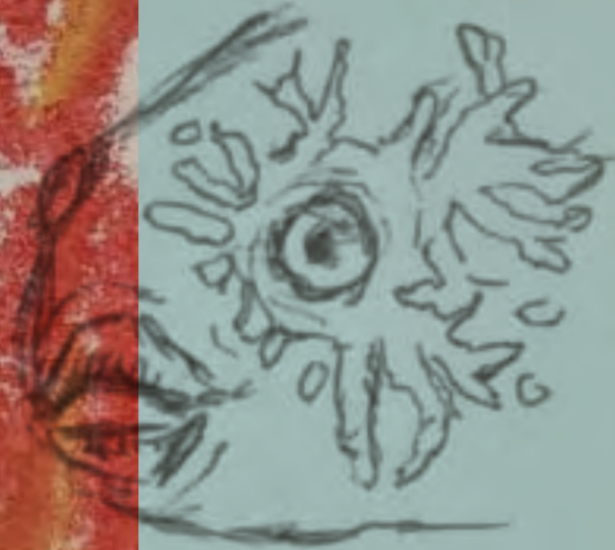
What is interesting about Raqqs Saidi is that it is also based on a type of martial arts, **Tahtib**, making it like battle dance.

This martial arts was traditionally done by men, but women adopted element into their dance, mainly by introducing a cane as their 'weapon' to dance with.

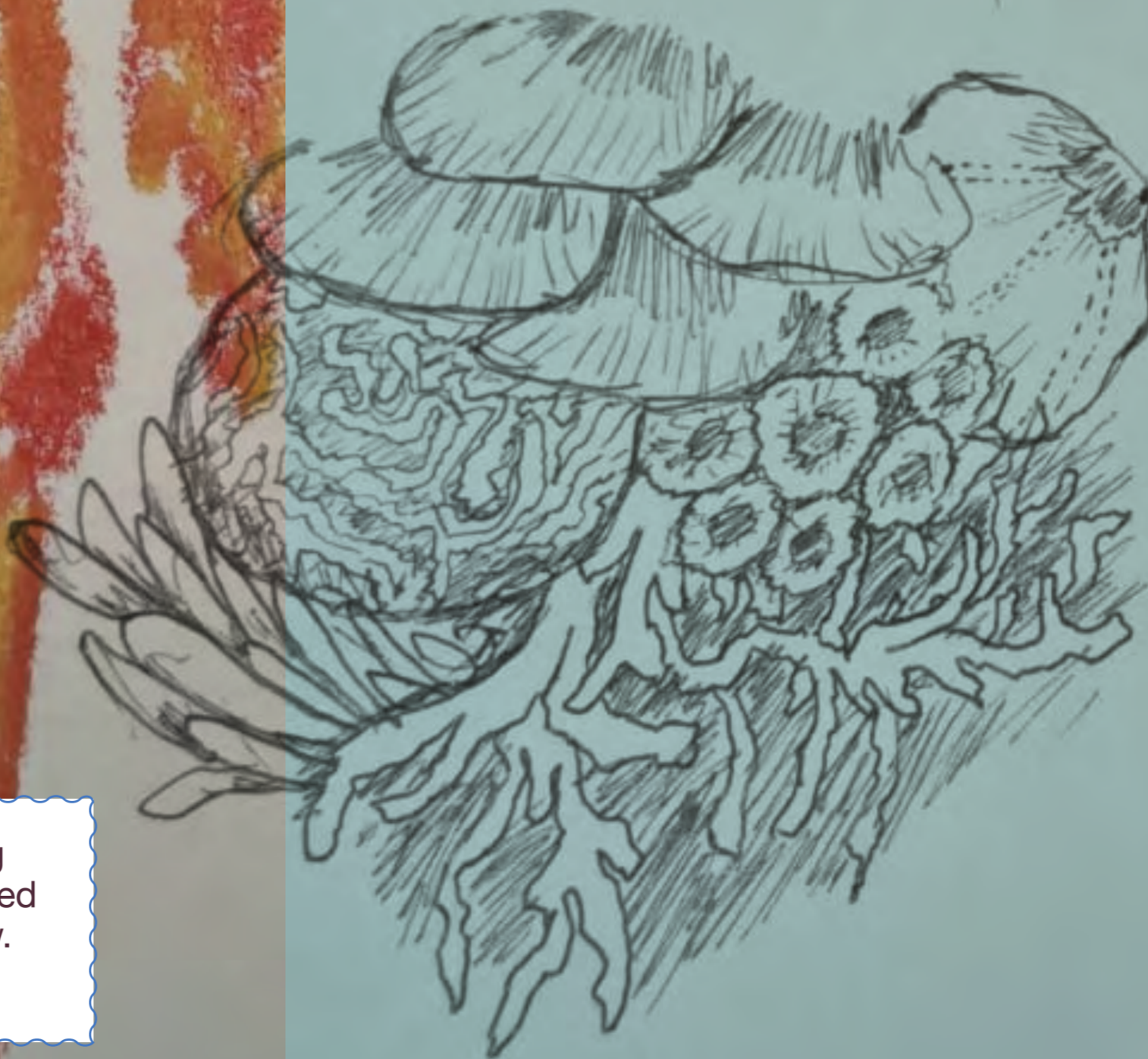
Another difference between Raqqs Saidi and Raqqs Sharqi is the music. Although both are very upbeat and lively Raqqs Saidi typically incorporates more drums creating a more aggressive feel.



# Rough Sketches



I watched childhood videos of myself scuba diving and swimming when I was living in Egypt by the Red Sea and sketched some of the coral and fish I saw.



# Natural dyes



Turmeric



Red onion skins



Red cabbage

# Using Agar-Agar



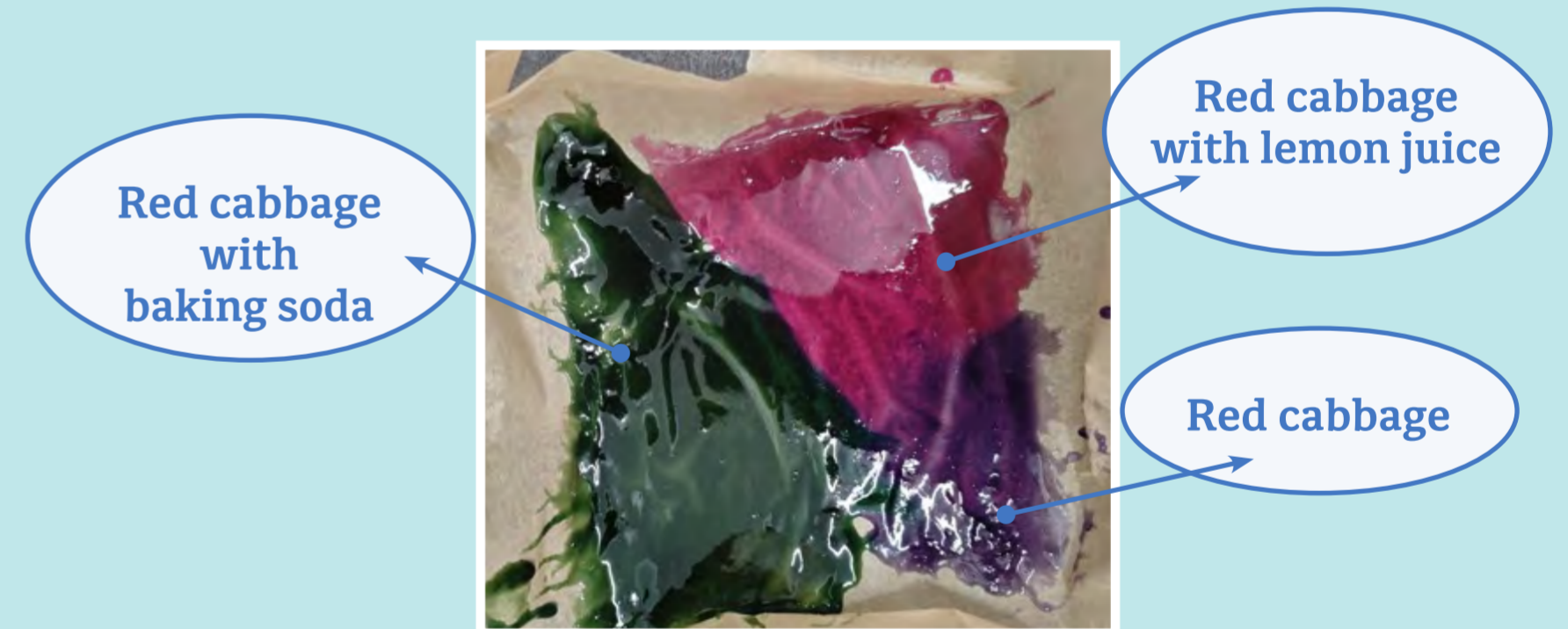
Turmeric



Red onion skins



Red cabbage with baking soda

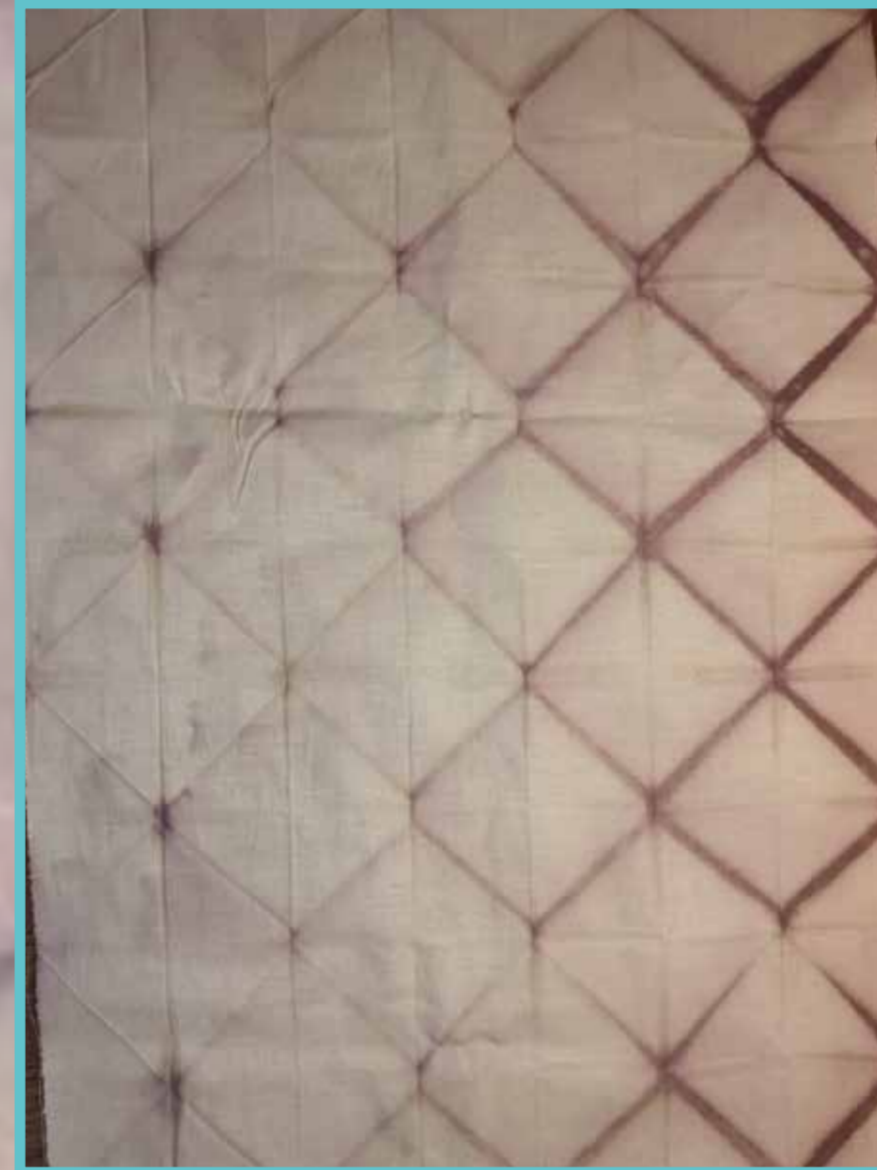


# Shibori experiments

Red cabbage with lemon juice



Red onion skins



Red onion skins



# Storyboard

1



Fish, Coral and Water come out dancing, with Folk Saidi music playing.

2



Bleached Coral, Oil Spill and Rubbish wheel on 'mirror'. Lights dim and music switches to Saidi music. Fish, Coral and Water approach mirror and all dancers mirror their counterpart.

3



Rubbish steps out of the 'mirror' and goes off dancing with Fish, they mirror each others movements.

4



Oil Spill steps out of the 'mirror' and goes off dancing with Water, they mirror each others movements.

5



Bleached Coral steps out of the 'mirror' and goes off dancing with Coral, they mirror each others movements. Fish, Water and Coral's movements begin to slow.

6



Coral, Water and Fish collapse as Bleached Coral, Rubbish and Oil Spill dance more aggressively.

7



Coral, Water and Fish take 'mirror' away, leaving Bleached Coral, Rubbish and Oil Spill to dance.

# FISH

I wanted to mainly look at fish from the Red Sea, to keep to my Egyptian theme.



LIONFISH



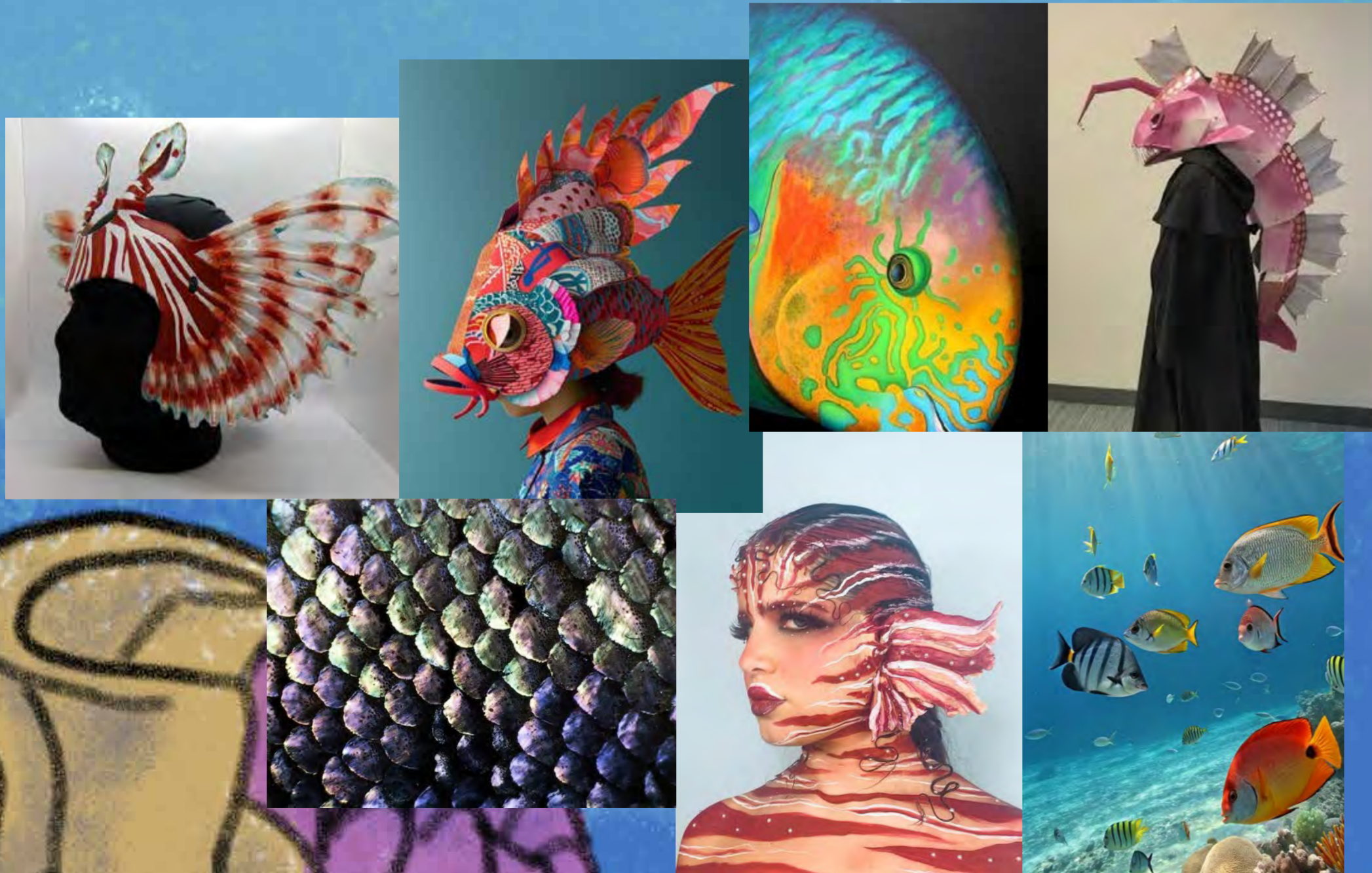
PARROT FISH



PEACOCK GROUPE



BLUE SPECKLED RAY



# Fish

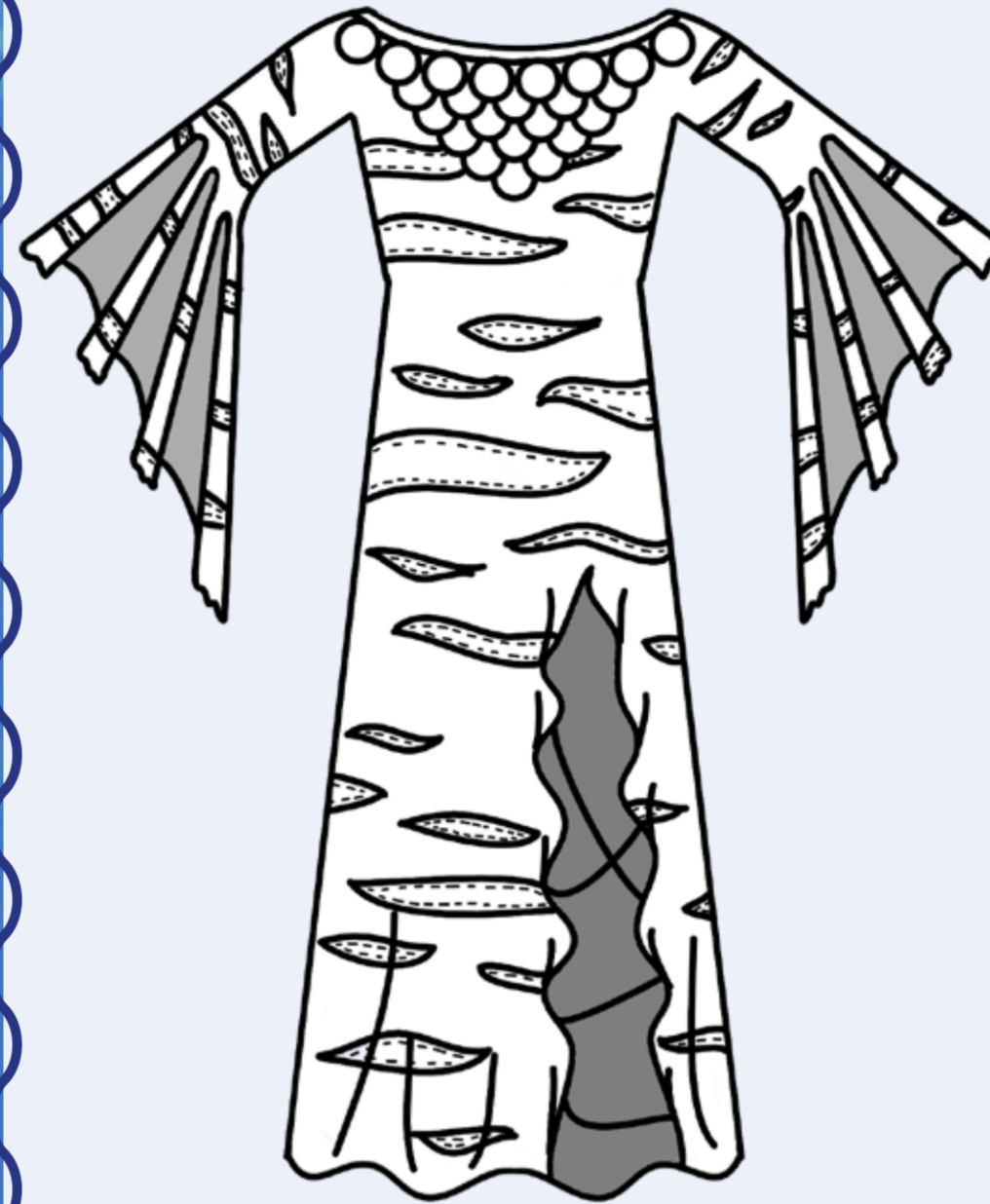
technical drawings



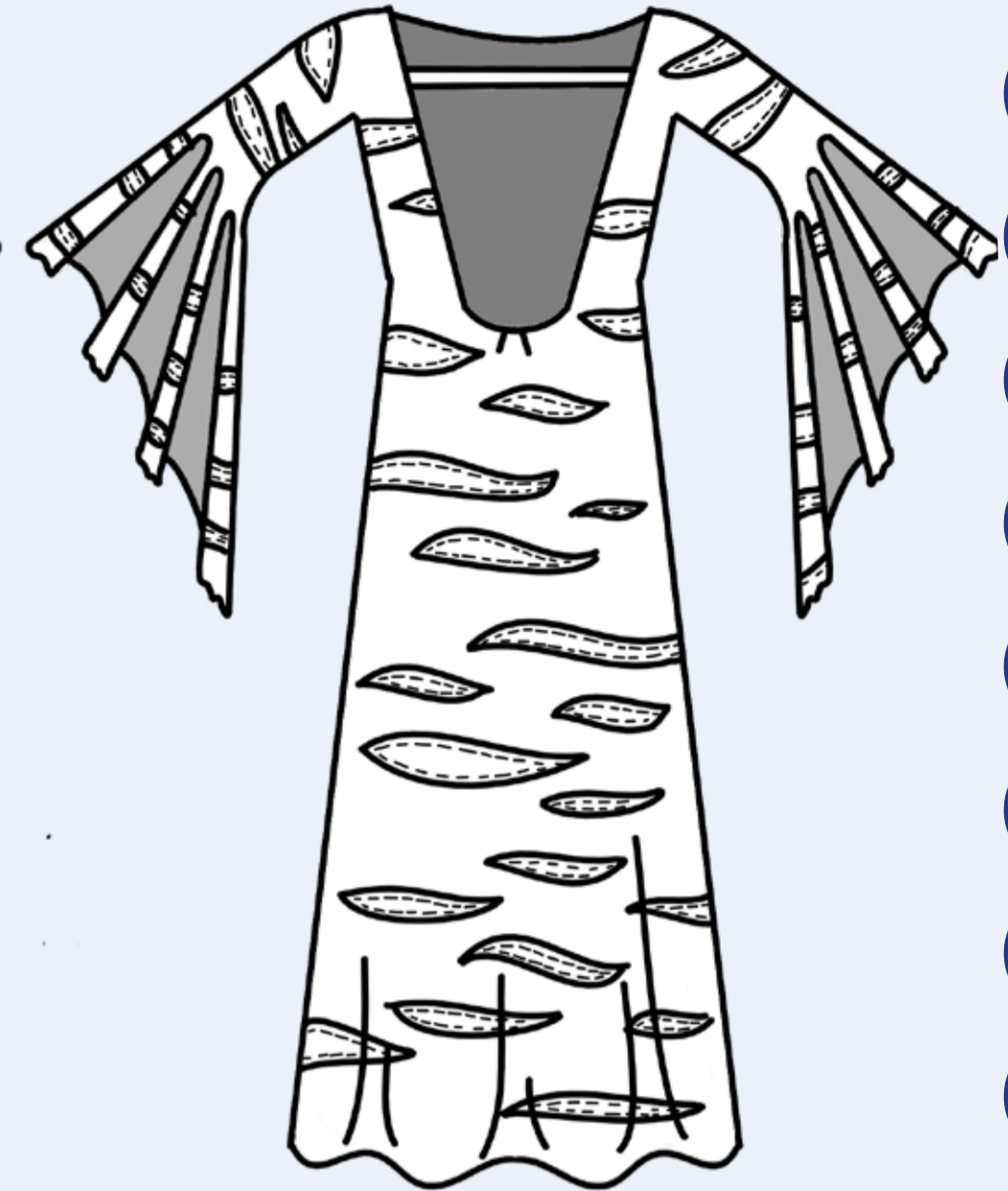
Fabric samples



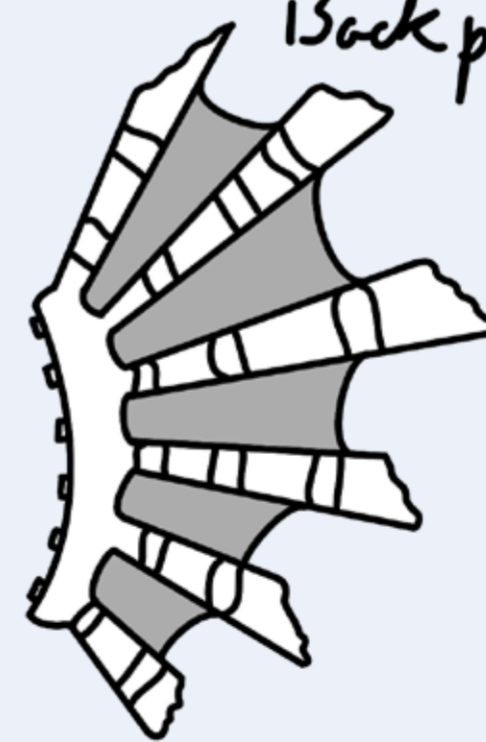
Front of dress



Back of dress



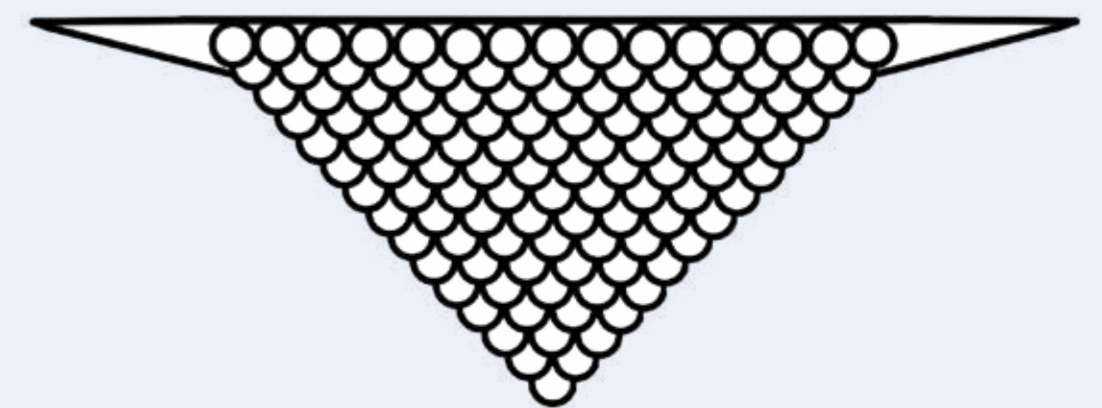
Back piece



Headpiece



Tie belt



# Fish

final design



# Water



# Water

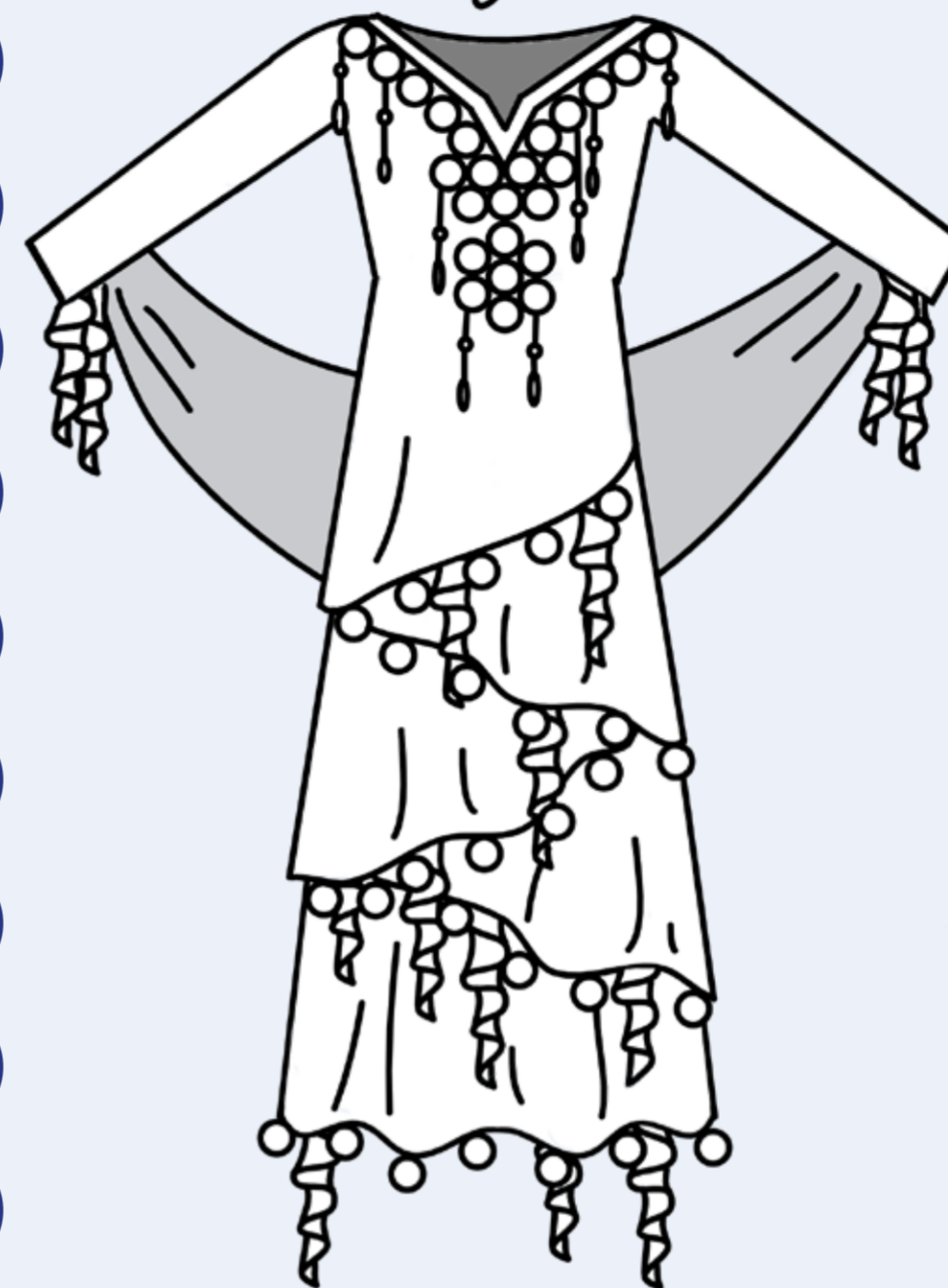
technical drawings



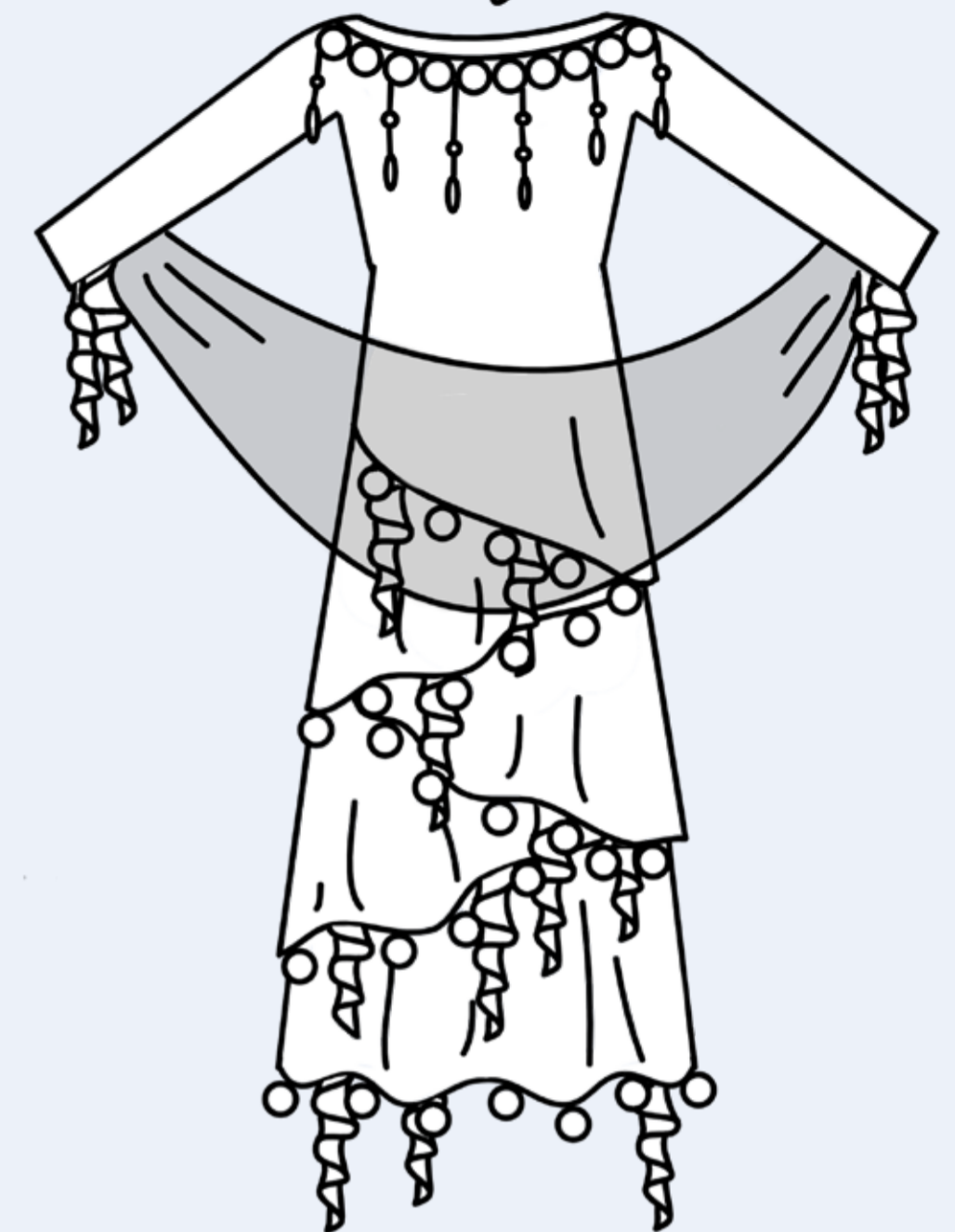
Fabric samples



Front of dress



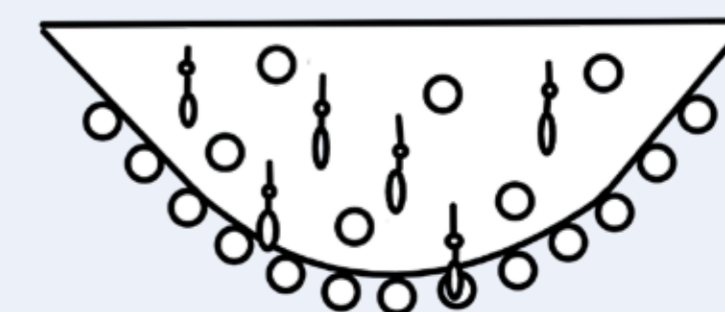
Back of dress



Head cover



Tie dress



# Water

final design



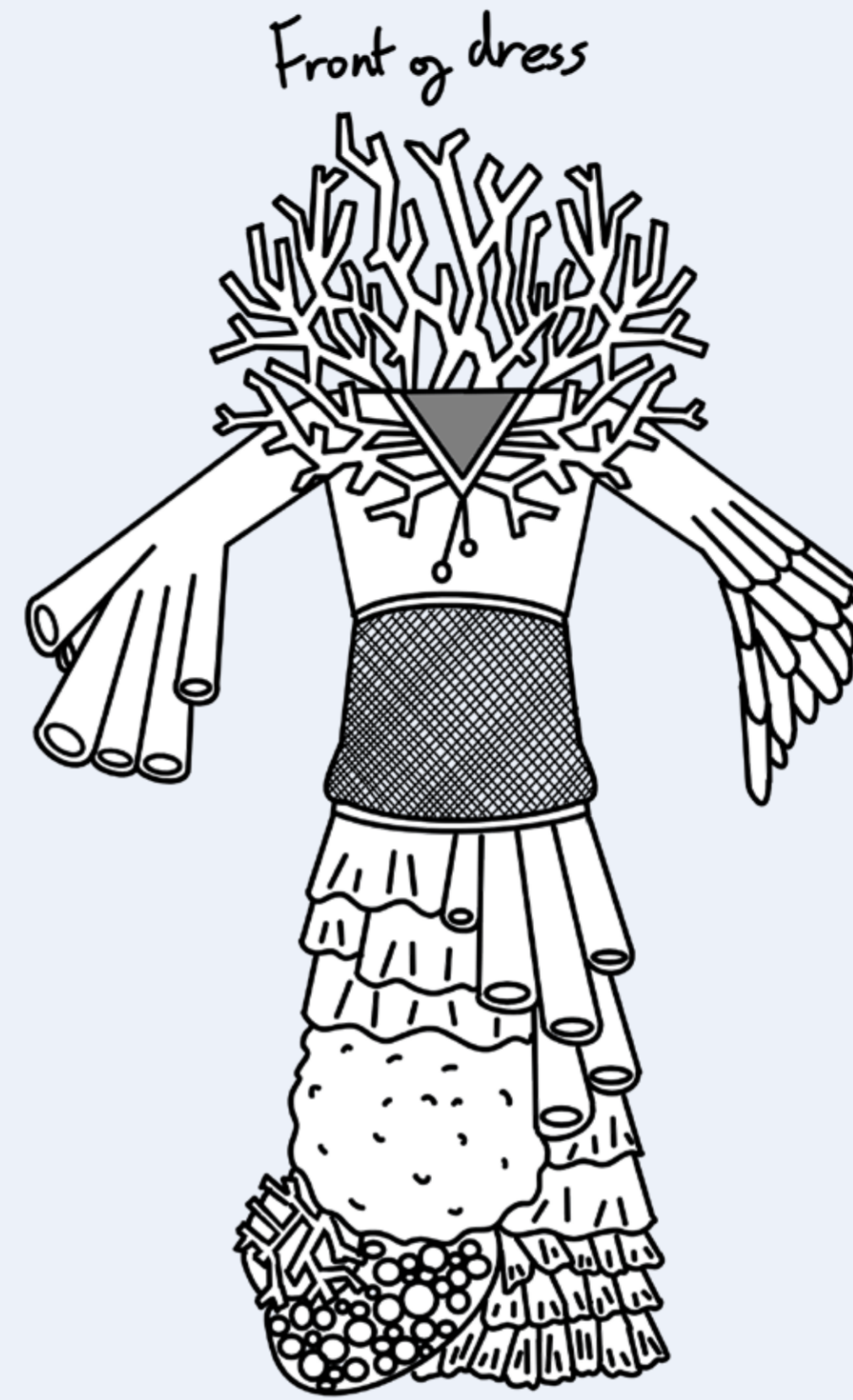
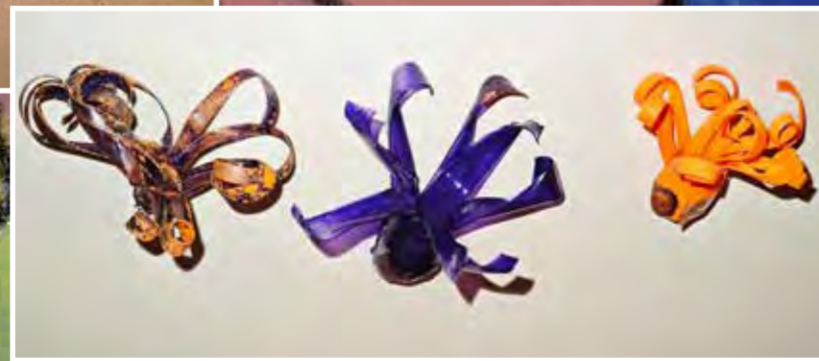
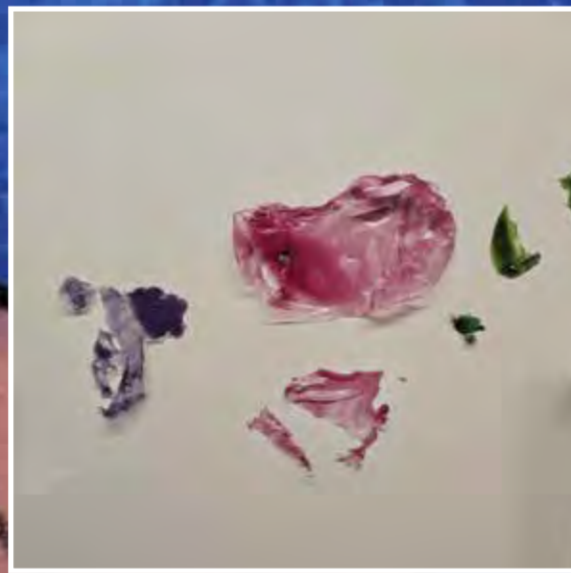
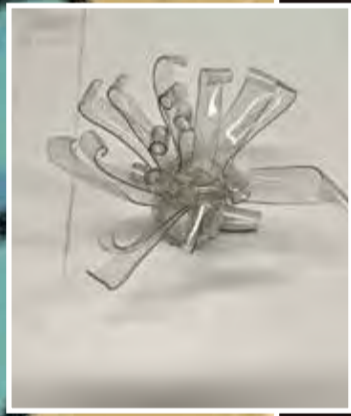
# Coral



# Coral

technical drawings

Fabric samples



# Coral final design



# Bleached Coral



Coral bleaching is caused when the algae, zooxanthellae (which gives the coral its colour) is expelled from the coral's tissue, the main cause of this is, drastic changes in temperature due to global warming. When coral bleaching occurs, it doesn't necessarily mean that the coral is dead, but if the coral cannot recover, it becomes unable to absorb the nutrients it needs to survive, essentially starving to death.

We are currently in our 4<sup>th</sup> global coral bleaching event (the last one occurring between 2014-2017). It is reported that between January 2023-September 2025, bleaching-level heat stress has affected 84.4% of the world's coral reef area, with mass coral bleaching being documented in at least 83 countries.

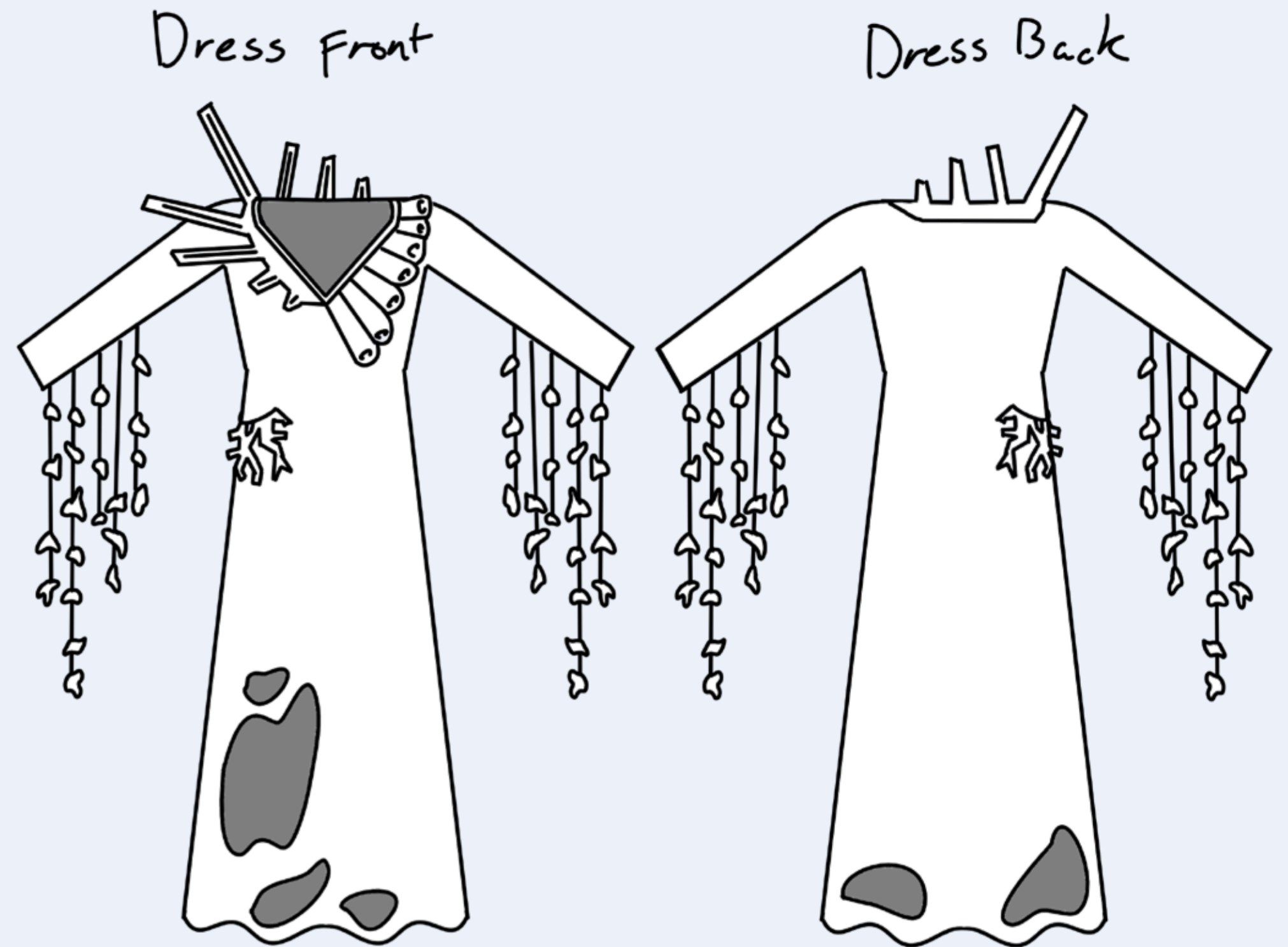
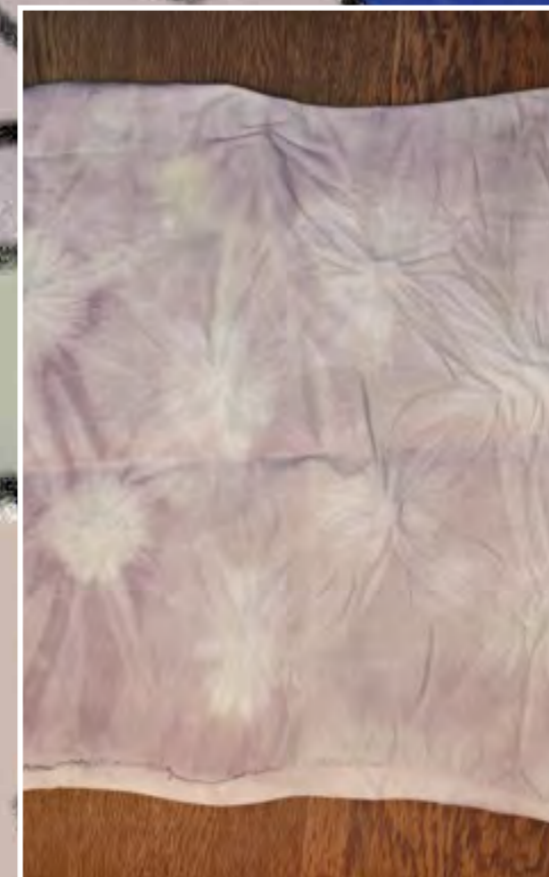


# Bleached Coral

technical drawings



Fabric samples

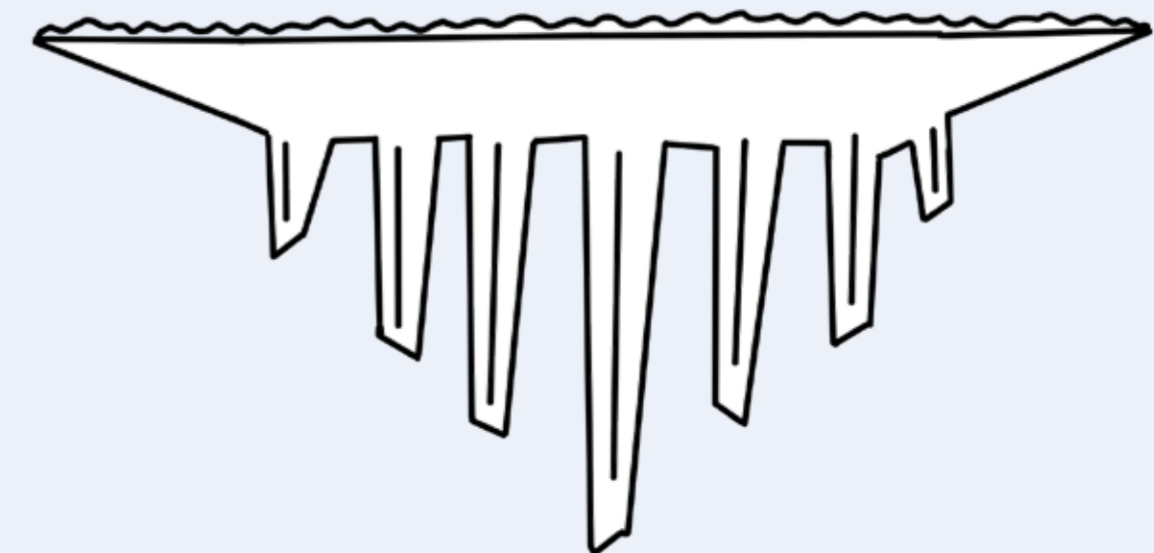


Mask Front

Mask Back



tie belt x2



# Bleached Coral

final design



# Rubbish

As the years go on, water pollution keeps increasing. This is mostly due to improper disposal of waste, most notably non-biodegradable plastic.

Ocean Scientist, Marcus Eriksen calculated an estimate of 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic floating on the sea surface, weighing about 269,000 tons. The sheer number of plastics and rubbish floating in our oceans can be seen with trash vortices around the world, the biggest one being the Great Pacific garbage patch. This patch spans between the West Coast of North America to Japan and consists of Roughly 79,000 metric tons of rubbish, and has been described as giant floating island of rubbish.

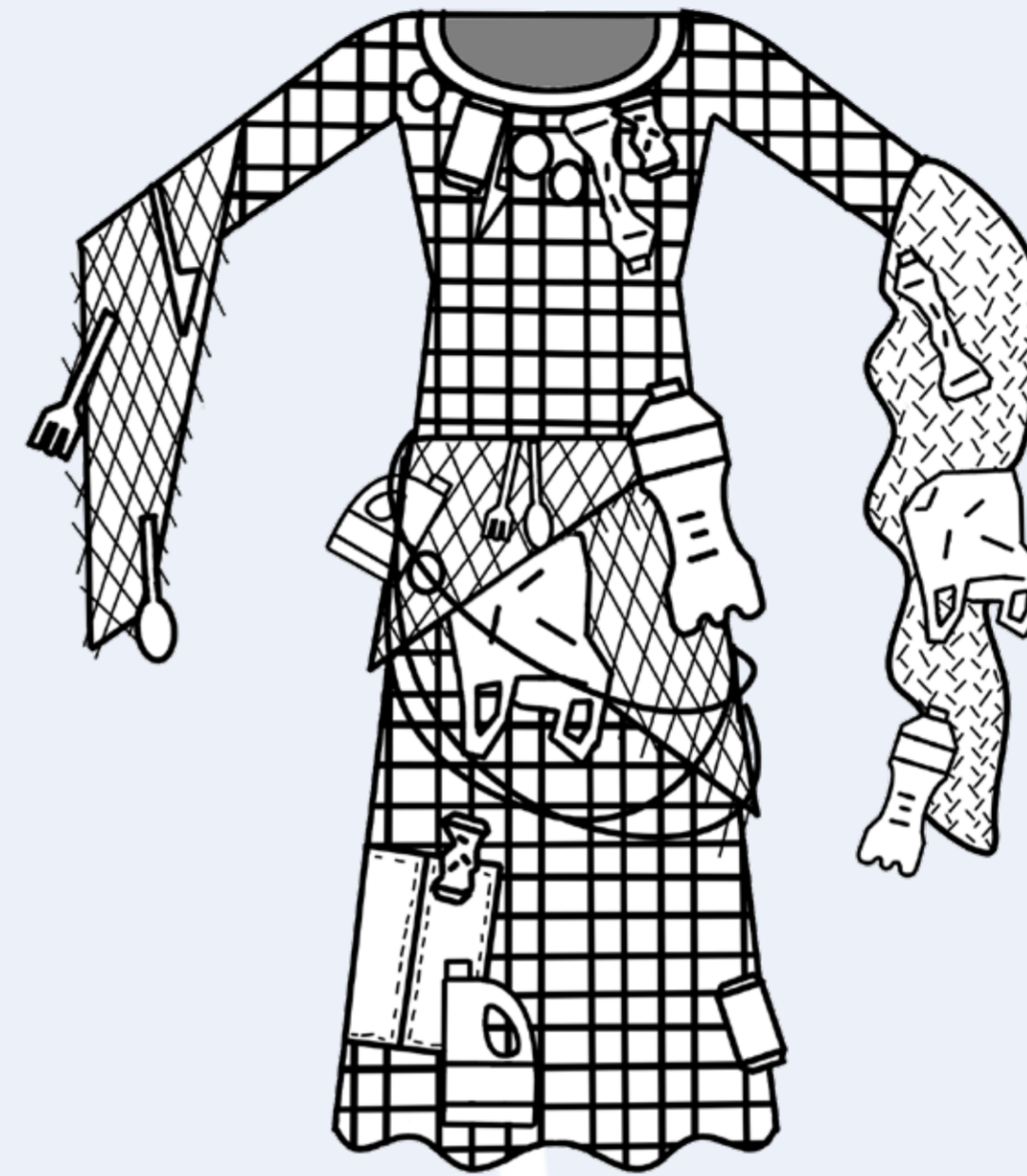


# Rubbish technical drawings

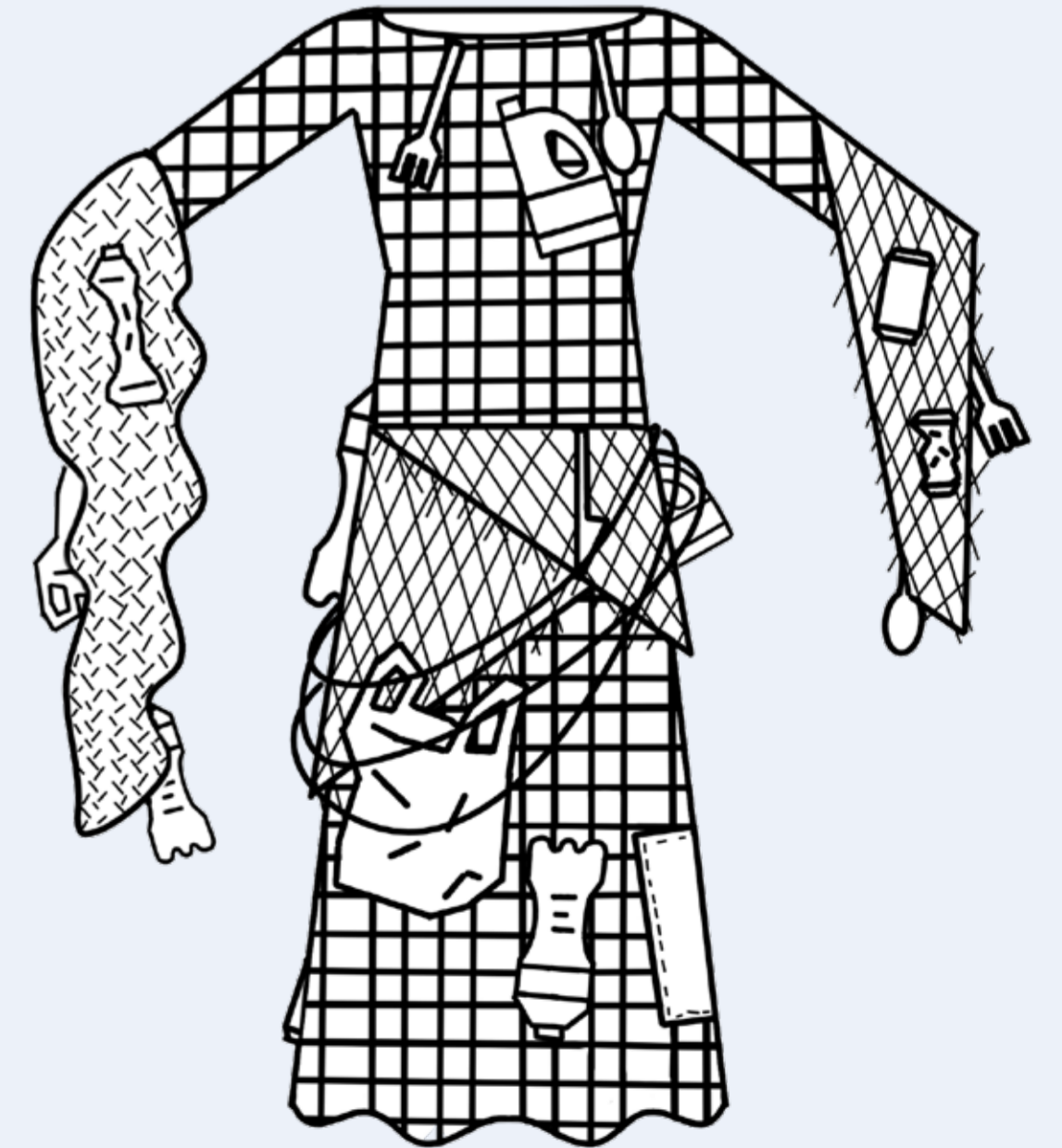
Fabric  
samples



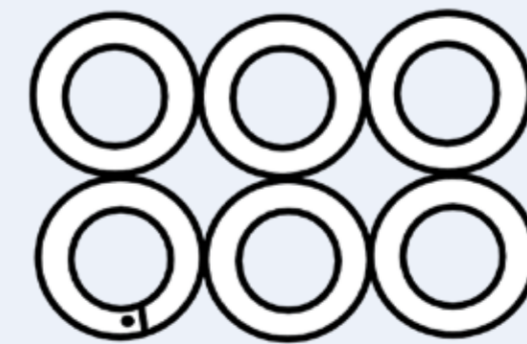
Front of dress



Back of dress



Neck piece

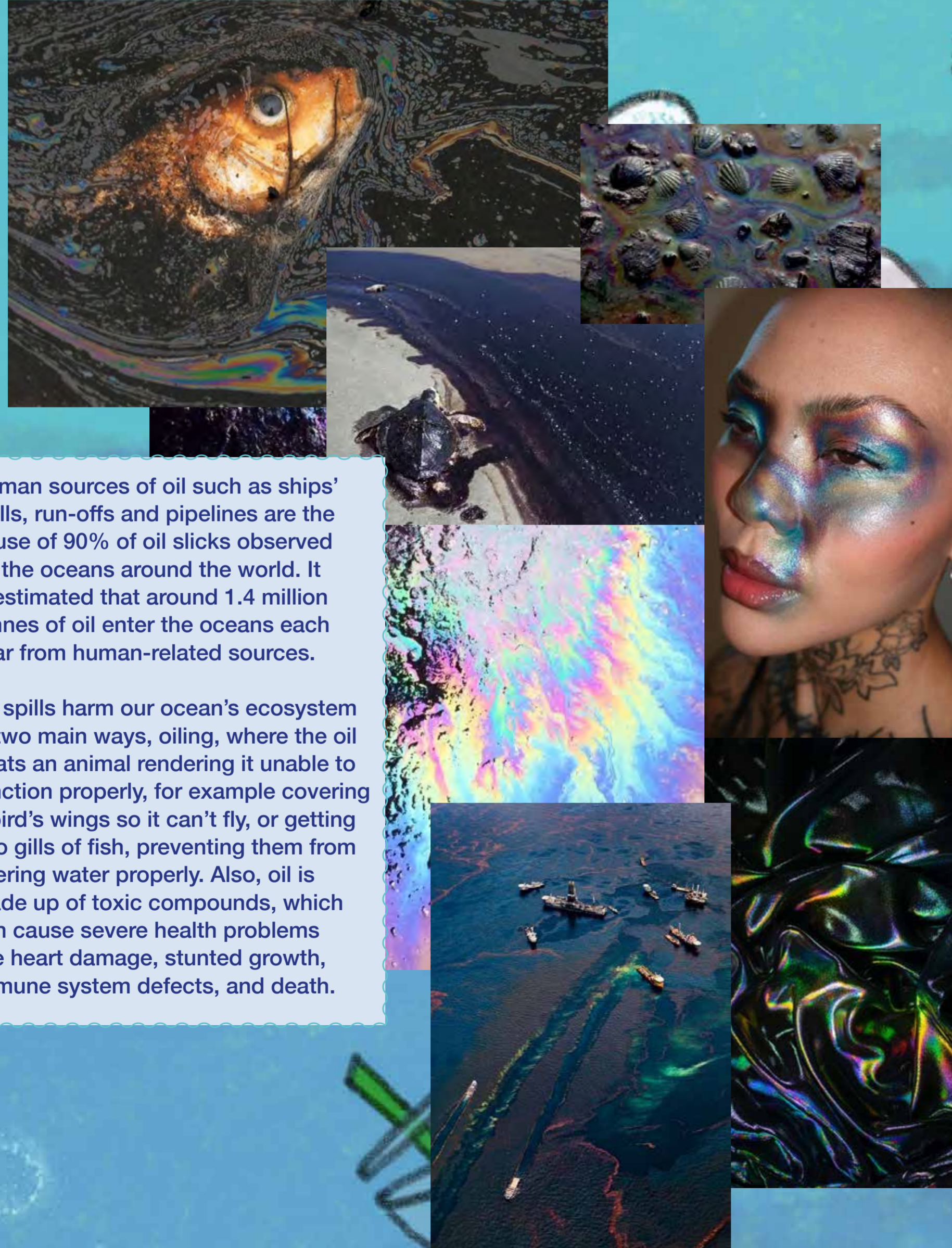


# Rubbish

final design



# Oil Spill



Human sources of oil such as ships' spills, run-offs and pipelines are the cause of 90% of oil slicks observed on the oceans around the world. It is estimated that around 1.4 million tonnes of oil enter the oceans each year from human-related sources.

Oil spills harm our ocean's ecosystem in two main ways, oiling, where the oil coats an animal rendering it unable to function properly, for example covering a bird's wings so it can't fly, or getting into gills of fish, preventing them from filtering water properly. Also, oil is made up of toxic compounds, which can cause severe health problems like heart damage, stunted growth, immune system defects, and death.

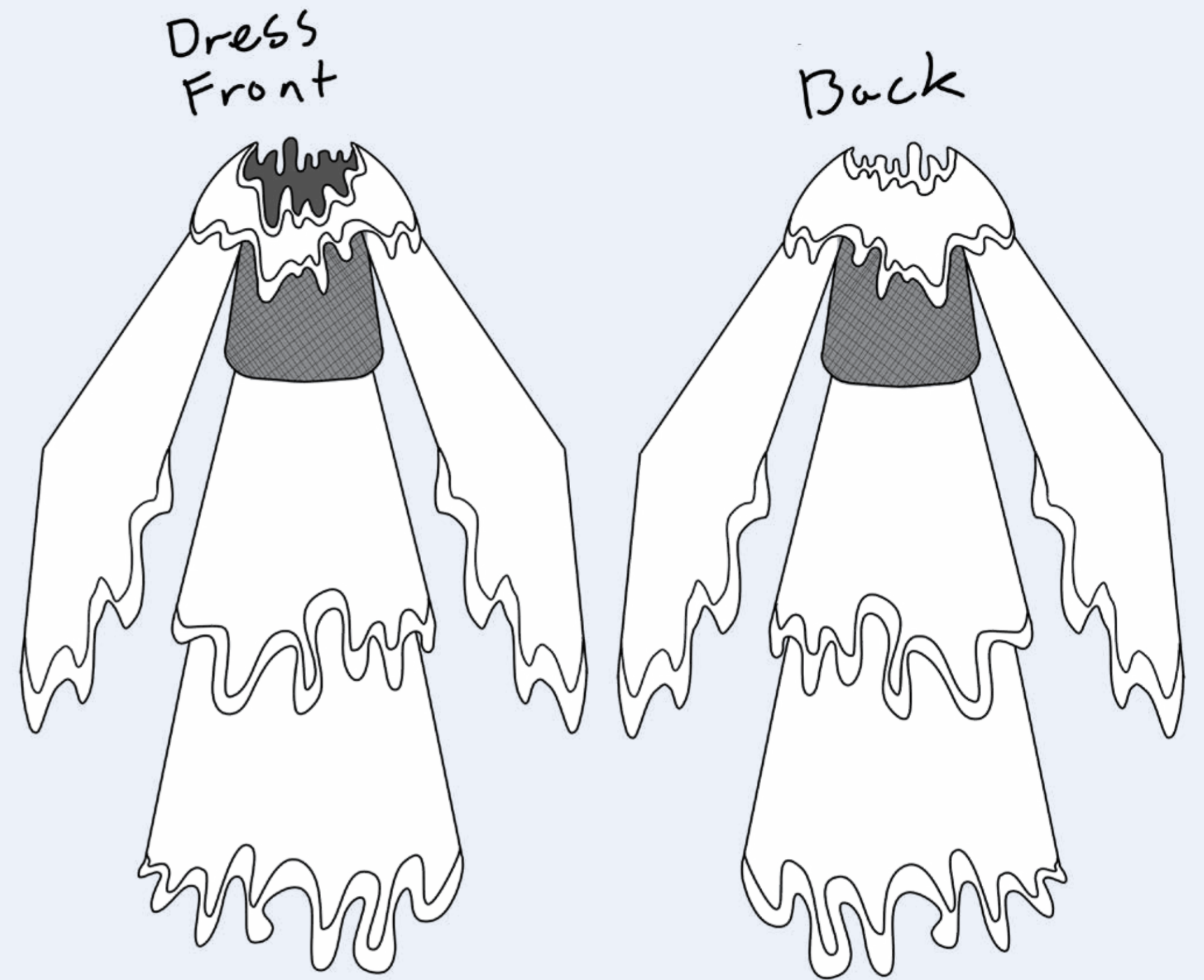


# Oil Spill

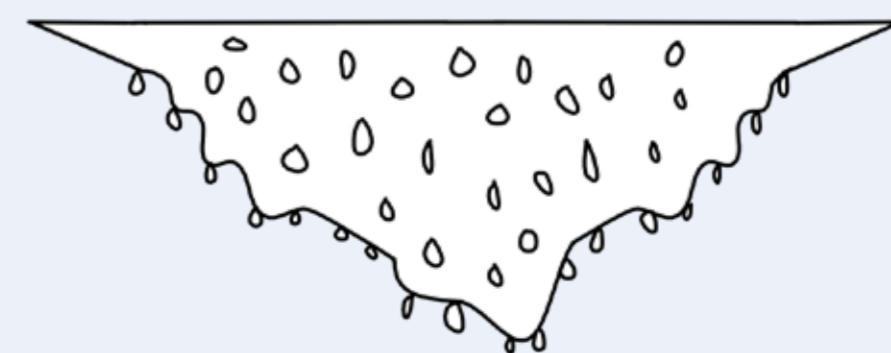
technical drawings



Fabric samples



tie belt



# Oil Spill

final design



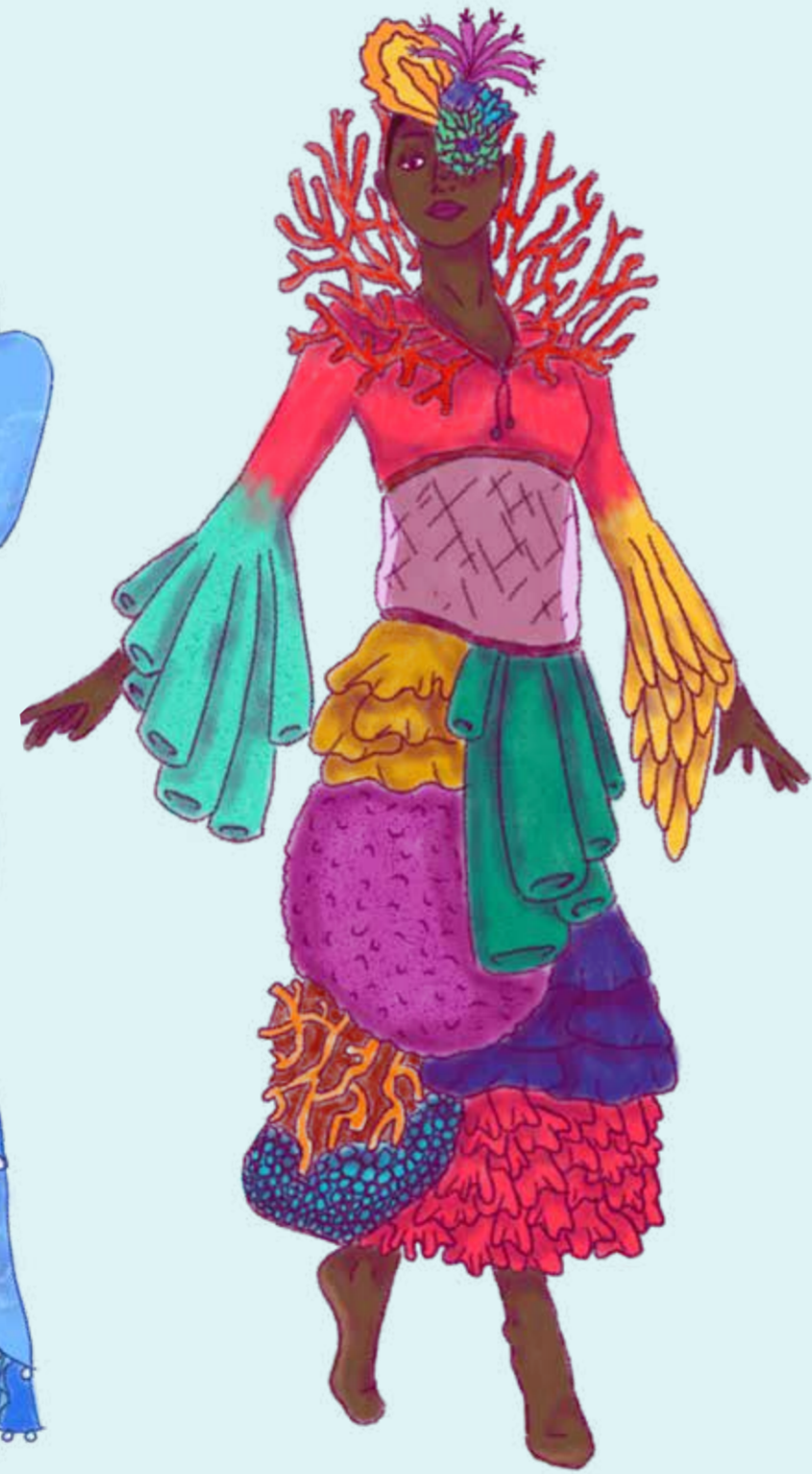
# FINAL SIX CHARACTERS



Fish



Water



Coral



Dead Coral

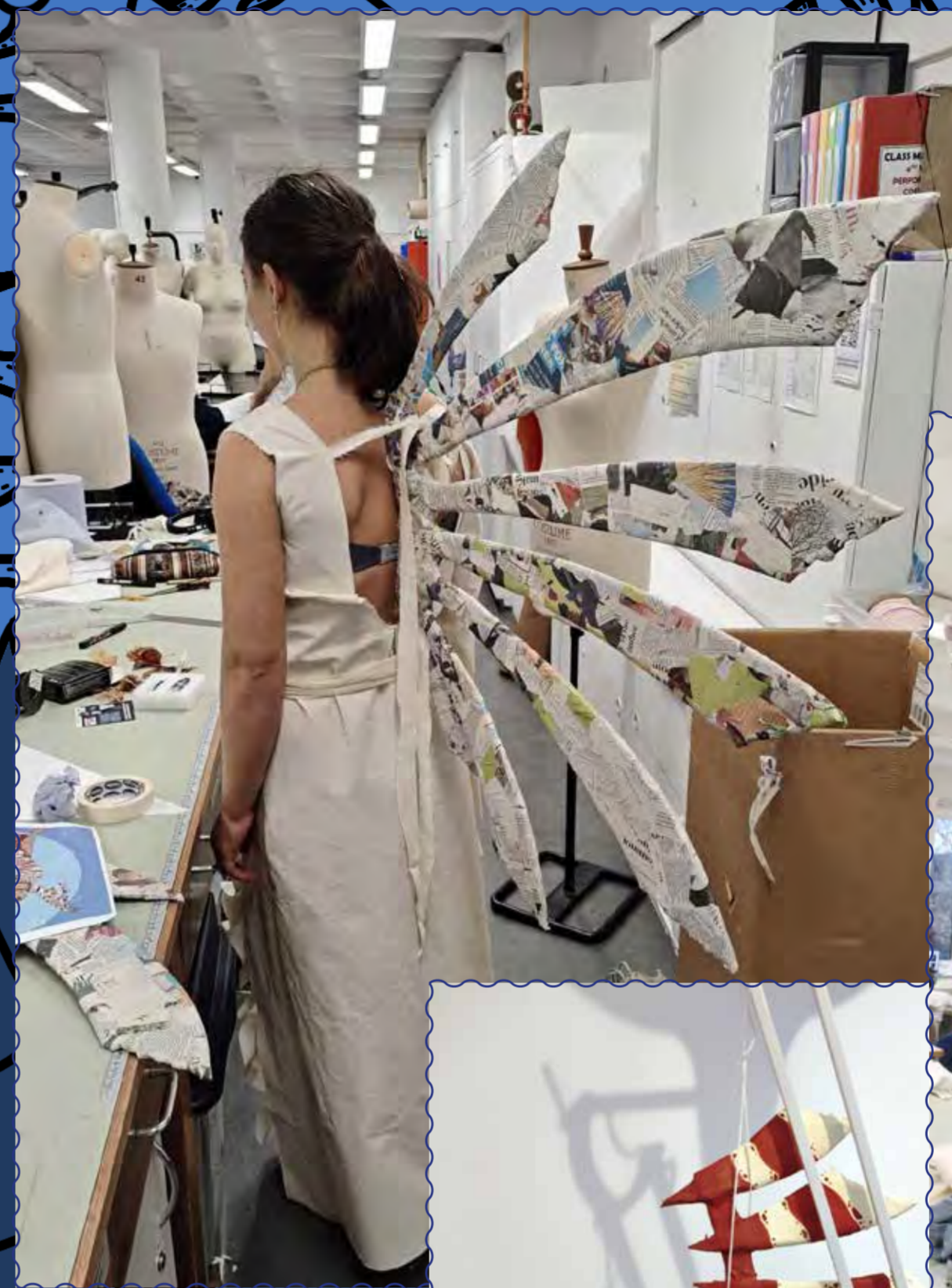


Rubbish



Oil Spill

# Development photographs



# Final photographs





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