

MIND & MUSCLE: DECONSTRUCTING THE UNIFORM OF MASCULINITY IN THE TIME OF AIDS

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of the boundaries of masculinity have often been questioned in menswear with the masculine ideal continually reimagined to create a balance between itself and its counterpart, femininity. During the 1980's AIDS crisis, this adopted *uniform of masculinity* was subverted within queer society leading to a new male identity that contested tacit knowledge of menswear design. The focus of this paper is to showcase this shift in male image, and to explore how gay semiotics (Fischer 1977) were associated with the development of the modern homosexual stance through clothing and social empowerment, opposing the negativity that surrounded the AIDS virus.

This research is personally motivated by the primary author, where he seeks to delve further into the under-researched area of queer masculinity utilising a practical, experimental methodology. Representation of what is seen as queer masculinity is often shown as biased within society, characterising the homosexual man. This project presents, through the practices of menswear design, how this characterisation has developed within the context of the male body. It aims to contest the boundaries of traditional men's tailoring, its formality and the masculine ideal that it represents, by juxtaposing it with the homoerotic art of the time and the craft of AIDS sufferers of the 1980's period.

Using object-study and practical methods of deconstruction and repair of case-study (bespoke and non-bespoke) men's tailored jackets, the research manifests in physical experimentation and aesthetic visualisation which is recorded in a creative process journal. The acts of physical deconstruction and the practice of repair are then analysed through the process of design development (drawing, sourcing and sampling).

The synthesised findings draw parallels with deconstructed tailoring found in vintage photographs of men at work, which are further triangulated with homoerotic photographic art of the 1980's, and the act of repair found in the stitch therapy of AIDS sufferers. These are embedded in the construction of the final artefact through the practice of garment design (drawing, pattern-cutting, toiling and making) and craftsmanship (stitching by-hand). The processes employed and final artefact produced, document and present how ideals of masculinity in the time of AIDS can be both physically and metaphorically deconstructed, then reconstructed as a garment-based outcome (men's tailored jacket) in practice-led research. The final artefact showcases delicacy in design through the act of stitching by-hand and the repair of the deconstructed robust exteriors found in tailoring and associated with the masculine ideal.

KEY WORDS: masculinity, homoeroticism, menswear design, gay semiotics

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history masculinity has been strongly connected to men's style. This is especially true of sartorial fashion, where the act of adopting sartorial dress codes (formal menswear) has defined what may be popularly perceived by society as *normal* masculine ideals, or the *uniform of masculinity*. This research investigates how this notion can be metaphorically deconstructed and re-presented through the practice of menswear design. Expanding upon theories presented by Fischer (1977) and Cole (2000) that link the appearance of semiotics in queer culture with changing perceptions of masculinity within society, this research explores how social, political, and cultural influences in the time of the AIDS crisis may be used as stimulus for the design and construction of men's clothing. This practice-based study utilizes both object-based research methods (where objects become partial stimulus of investigation) and design practices acquired from the author's fashion design background allowing them to be effectively blended. Whereas object-based research in fashion is often seen to investigate, preserve and duplicate historical artefacts, its application in this project is to generate new source material for research and design. In demonstration of this, the research is presented both in a textual and visual context as written text and in the creation of a conceptual menswear artefact that translates metaphorical and semiotic influences into crafted outcomes.

The object stimulus for the practice element of this research is focused on an item of bespoke men's tailoring and considers how this can be dissected as source research material, then reconstructed through design approaches as a single example that challenges the boundaries of traditional menswear. The selection of a bespoke tailored suit jacket as a case study arises from its association, as a masculine status symbol, with the application of hand-crafted techniques in its construction, hand-tailored by artisans using methods that have changed little in a hundred years (Musgrave 2009). Furthermore, tailoring and its engendered practice is historically dominated by men (Kaipainen 2015). Dating back to the Middle-Ages, the craft of tailoring was originally used to create linen undergarments, worn beneath armor to protect the wearers skin. Although the application of tailoring has changed over time, the historical acts of construction and handcraft are still acknowledged and used by Savile Row tailors today (Doyle 2005). The definition of *tailor* is derived from the French word to cut, or Latin for *Sartor* meaning to mend and patch, creating the English interpretation of tailoring as well as the relationship with *sartorial* men's style. These terms are heavily referenced throughout this research as the combination of traditional Savile Row cutting and the influence of mending and repairing found in the craft therapy art of AIDS sufferers, all of which were sources of inspiration for this research practice.

As this research aims to deconstruct the uniform of masculinity in the time of the AIDS crisis to contest the boundaries of traditional men's tailoring, comparisons are drawn between the identified prescriptive norms of masculinity and the subversion of it attributed to the work of seminal photographic artists of the time, Robert Mapplethorpe and Herb Ritts. In their work, both photographers captured strong, healthy, powerful bodies as they themselves struggled with the debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS. Set against a backdrop of diseased bodies, Mapplethorpe's 1984 semi-nude studies of the perfectly sculpted bodies of Arnold Schwarzenegger and the female bodybuilder Lisa Lyon (Pardo 2020: 104-106) in interchangeable poses, both blur and redefine the boundaries of masculinity. This study draws parallels here with the bespoke tailored jacket that endeavors to empower the wearer by perfection of external silhouette achieved by disguising their otherwise imperfect body through internal canvassing, padding and construction methods (Anderson 2009).

Ritts' 1984 photograph 'Fred with Tires' (Pardo 2020) depicts the half-naked body of a young muscular man, hands hooked into car tyres, wearing grease covered jeans and set against the backdrop of an empty garage. Whilst heavily influencing ideals of masculinity in popular culture of the time (Ritts image took the form of an iconic poster published the high street company ATHENA), it too promoted a perfect male physique. Its relevance to this research also lies in its further association with its depiction of subliminal homoerotic signs, and the deconstruction of the perception of formality of the man at work. Moreover, it makes further connection with period images belonging to the author (figure 1) and the incidental photographs of men at work (Hine 1932) and those found in photographic archives of Shorpy, of men working wearing semi-constructed (deconstructed) tailored jackets.

2. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

This review presents a collection of concepts and theories that portray how historical events, such as the illegalization of homosexuality and the AIDS crisis, resulted in a division in masculine ideals in the 1980's. The evidence for this is supported by the semiotic analysis of the homoerotic language embedded within a range of artefacts, such as film and photography, created by artists of the time, contrasted with the notion of the masculine ideal represented in men's tailoring. It discussed how these elements may be deconstructed both metaphorically through analysis and physically using object-research methods, to dissect the vision of the male identity.

2.1 The uniform of masculinity

Pardo (2020) depicts that the relationship between masculinity and men has been constructed from the existence of social and cultural norms. He presents ideas of how expressive phrases such as 'boys will be boys' or 'be a man' can create psychological development at an early age, which can then form a desire for males to mimic each other as if there were a metaphorical uniform perceived as male. Cole (2014) also addresses this idea in a theoretical approach to masculinity associated with queer men's fashion, through the adoption of the term 'hypermasculinity' used to define the exaggeration of stereotypical male behavior, with emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality. Within this research, hypermasculinity is approached from its relationship with traditional men's tailoring that had been culturally adopted to showcase power and authority, both in formal dress and in uniform attire, in a time of dismay and segregation in gay culture. The association with tailoring and ideas of power and masculinity can much earlier be recognized in the 19th century work of Beau Brummell, with his reinvention of men's style of the pre-existing period from the flamboyant to the proposal of more elegant and masculine lines. Brummell may be recognized as the original protagonist of change in the social standards of men's style of the era, challenging the well-known maximalist Georgian era with a clean-cut approach that was sustained throughout the Victorian era (Kelly 2006). This brought with it a constricted view of male expression and what would be deemed inappropriate by society; 'taboo sexualities and the choice of clothing adorned' (Parsons 2018: 1). Brummell's influence on men's tailoring is still evident today within the confines on Savile Row. By incorporating traditional men's tailoring as part of the stimulus, this research uses object-research methods to further explore the aesthetic of masculine lines as a reflection of masculinity.

Object research as proposed by Prown (1982), theorizes that artefacts can act as primary data for the study of material culture and can be used to illustrate and support further textual research methods. An example of this methodology applied to clothing artefacts can be found

in 'The Dress Detective' (Kim and Mida 2018), which adopts Prown's (1982) approach and describes how to observe and record garments as a method of historical research. Kim and Mida further demonstrate how the use of photography, sketching, and extensive note taking, can become research matter to reflect upon and interpret further. These non-intrusive research approaches (used to preserve the artefact) are applied in this study to visually deconstruct and extract research content from a case-study bespoke men's tailored jacket. They are also applied in the semiotic analysis of visual representations of masculinity found in film and photography. The idea of deconstructing media in order to draw-out meaning connects back to Cole (2000), as he addresses the documentation 'Gay Semiotics' made by the artist Fischer (1977), which illustrated how homosexual males would adapt within (what was seen as) normal heterosexual society. In this work, a collection of street fashion photographs were marked by Fischer to point out hidden signifiers and symbols used in queer men's fashion that acted as non-verbal devices to communicate within the gay community. For example, by wearing keys, neckerchief or earring on either left side of the body (aggressive) or right side (passive) indicated sexual preference. This highlights how the presence of masculinity may be identified through an analysis of photographs; an approach that can be extended to the analysis of film.

2.2 The appearance of homoeroticism within vintage workwear

Fischer's semiotic photographs further identify archetypes derived from gay erotic imagery that connected to American culture, and which the gay population strived to emulate: Western (cowboy), Leather (biker), and Urbane (suited gentleman) (Fischer n.d.). At a time where society's view and approval of the male lifestyle was to live as a normal heterosexual male, this emulation appeared as the emasculation of the gay community, whereas society acknowledged them as feminine or considered them to be, lesser men, than the heterosexual male (Pardo 2020). The new hypermasculine ideal or *machoism* created by the gay community, led to the contextualization of hypermasculinity as sexual admiration and appreciation of the male form, presented as hypermasculine figures and menswear styles that manifested as a form of eroticism (i.e. homoeroticism).

Figure 1: Unknown Artist, Family photograph Great grandfather WW2, Unknown. Photograph. 6.5cm x 4.73cm. England. Courtesy of Dean-Henry Younger

However, Ellenzweig (1992) suggests that the presence of hypermasculinity may have been an unnoticed detail in much earlier versions of incidental homoeroticism, indicating that this may have developed from anatomical studies of the male form such as DaVinci's Vitruvian man. Through the text 'The homoerotic photograph', Ellenzweig portrays the development of the desirable ideal of the perfect male form by enlisting examples from 1850's photographer Eugene Durieu. Durieu's work on capturing the nude male form, through early photography, follows in suit with this admiration of the perfect vision of man. The photographs represent a symmetrical and well-proportioned male, with strong muscular definition of the body. Ellenzweig mentions that this male model would have been purposely chosen by Durieu, rather than an average, commonly looking male of the time. As the chosen male physique wouldn't have represented a standard look of men at the time, Ellenzweig proposes that the model may have been from a labour-intensive background, i.e., the working man.

This admiration for perfection in the male form draws parallels with men's tailoring, particularly of that found in Savile Row, where bespoke suits are constructed and designed for individual clients. By using canvas and padding to create shape and structure, this method of construction effectively hides and corrects any natural body flaws of the client, such as a

narrow chest, postural defects, and irregularities in lengths of arms etc. Ellen Zweig's theory presented in this form of attire connects back to Pardo's (2020) suggestion that social context shapes men's desire to mimic and model themselves to be viewed as masculine, powerful and physically strong. This is comparable to the photographic work of American Sociologist Lewis W Hine. Within this work, Hine (1932) documented working environments around the 1910's to 1930's in an effort to demonstrate the brutality of working conditions of the time, creating a collection of photographs depicting men at work. Photographs, such as 'Powerhouse Mechanic' (Hine 1920) conveyed a metaphor for strength, depicting the male as the power behind the machine, and not the machinery itself. This further supports the theory that socially constructed ideals of masculinity can be seen to appear as metaphorical references or as personified objects.

Comparing man to machine also relates to the term hypermasculine, where machinery is seen as strong and powerful devices, especially when displayed in a factory setting. Another example depicting Cole's theory on hypermasculinity or machoism, can be found in the filmography by Kenneth Anger. Pardo (2020) discusses how Anger's short film 'Kustom Kar Kommandos' (1965), makes a direct connection between man and machine. In this, he suggests that the socially obvious and masculine interest of a man's deep connection with his motorcar, subtly feminizes hypermasculinity into *hyper femininity* through the man's love for his motorcar as a sensual derivative of burlesque. Pardo (2020: 43) proposes that Anger may have used this idea to redirect the perception of homosexuals from only being seen as *effeminate males*. The promotion of powerful masculinity that broke away from popular views of homosexuality, is prominent in visual media created during the AIDS crisis. Queer artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Herb Ritts used photography to counteract society's view of gay men effected by the virus as weak bodied, diseased and a threat to society, by promoting them as strong, healthy, and powerful (Pardo 2020).

Within this study, the object-study analysis of the photographs of Fischer and Mapplethorpe draws parallels between the archetype of Urbane (suited gentleman), the constructed tailored suit and the metaphor of masculinity, juxtaposing these against the parallels drawn between

2.3 The repair of robust exteriors with the act of stitch by hand

The display of power and strength showcased in homoeroticism during the AIDS crisis by Mapplethorpe and Ritts, can be interpreted as an effort to repair society's view of homosexuality. As victims of the virus themselves, this suggests that the use of promoting male power and health through their work supported self-healing and the battle against the stigma that the virus caused in the gay community. Another example that demonstrates the act of repairing of an individual's mind and emotions during the AIDS crisis can be found in the practice of craft as therapy for AIDS sufferers. The use of craft in this context draws parallels with the use of hand-craftsmanship found in Savile Row tailoring. It also acts to preserve the emotional appreciation or connection that stitching by hand, as Prown (1982) indicates, can be embedded within an artefact. In 'Queering the Subversive Stitch', McBrinn (2021) relates to us how crafting was used as a therapy device by victims and their loved ones during the AIDS crisis as means to distract the mind from the reality of the virus. He references the film 'In Love! Valour! Compassion!' (1998), where one of the scenes shows a male AIDS victim deteriorating from HIV, and as he progressively becomes more physically fragile, the movie shows an unexpected scene of him embroidering onto a wooden frame thus presenting a graphic representation of how the act of sewing may be associated with sickness therapy. McBrinn (2021) also suggests that as HIV was seen by the majority as a by-product of an aggressive gay male sexuality, the homely vision and familiarity to gentle crafts such as

patchwork and embroidery would in *essence* counteract the disease. Examples of this are still present today, such as the ongoing Aids Quilt where the act of craft is used to preserve and memorialize people who have tragically died from the AIDS virus. This has allowed communities to connect emotionally and provides physical representation of the memory of lost loved ones in dedicated quilted sections.

The use of craft to memorialize historical events is an asset to this project. It further highlights the connections between the methods of construction found in the historical tailoring approaches of Savile Row that have been dismissed in the modern-day mass-manufacture of menswear, with the physical and textual documentation of stitching as a method of metaphorical and physical construction and repair. This provides a construct for the methodology within this research investigation, connecting the theoretical approaches of Cole (2000, 2014), Fischer (1977) and Pardo (2020) alike, with object-research methods of practice-based research methods of the menswear practitioner (Prown, 1982; Mida and Kim, 2018).

3. METHODS AND PROCESSES

This practice-based investigation uses object-study and practical methods of deconstruction and repair that manifest in physical experimentation and aesthetic visualisation of craftsmanship, with outcomes showcasing delicacy in design through the act of stitching by-hand and the repair of robust exteriors. This process acts to both stimulate and develop design ideas and to display the research findings as a final artefact that aims to act as visual evidence of embedded research findings.

3.1 Object research

Primary object-based research methods, proposed by Kim and Mida (2018) systematic guide and outlined below, ensured effective extraction of knowledge from acquired case-study garments and photographic and film reference. This was combined with previous knowledge of research processes gained by the authors working in the field of menswear design, such as construction methods, fabric sourcing, garment design and making skills. Fashion archive books such as ‘The Vintage Showroom’ (Gunn, Lockett and Shonfield 2015) and archival workwear garments were drawn upon to provide further supportive research.

As stated earlier, this paper aims to document how ideals of masculinity can be metaphorically and physically deconstructed and displayed through the reconstruction of men’s tailoring. In practical terms, two men’s tailored jacket were used as case-study. The first, a bespoke Savile Row sartorial suit jacket chosen as a representation of the highest level of menswear craft and design, was visually deconstructed using non-intrusive object-research methods (to preserve this more precious artefact). The second, a hand-tailored (less precious) men’s suit jacket was physically taken apart to permit exploration of the hand-crafted construction methods used to enhance the male frame. The second deconstructed study was then repaired using hand-stitch methods that emulated practices employed in the craft therapy of AIDS sufferers. During these processes, findings were recorded in a process journal using photography, drawing and notation.

Figure 2: Dean-Henry Younger, Object study deconstructed Savile Row jacket, 2021. Photograph. 15cm x 20cm. England. Courtesy of Dean-Henry Younger

As proposed by Kim and Mida (2018), primary research can be separated into three chapters; observation, reflection, and interpretation. Observation was first conducted to analyse and record external and internal areas of the garment such as measurement, fabrication, construction, wear and even scent, that could be reflected upon later in the design process. This method was applied methodically throughout the deconstruction and repair of the case study garment, recording findings through notation, sketching photography and film. The findings were analysed, interpreted and then applied as a framework to generate new construction and decoration methods that could be used in garment design, manifesting as fabric and colour choice, resampling of areas of stitch, repair and new and original construction methods. Sampling was also conducted using stitch to communicate symbolism in a practical, non-verbal way, by following detailed demonstrations by Neumüller (2019), and Chanin (2017) of stitch techniques used to construct and repair fabric.

In presenting Gay Semiotics (Fischer 1977) as non-verbal communication in menswear, the same object-research processes were carried out to observe, reflect and interpret homoerotic film and photography. This was used to investigate and compare the incidental homoerotic imagery of Hine (1932) 'The Working Man' with homoerotic artists that showcased sexual desire of the male form and to further demonstrate how masculinity can be deconstructed metaphorically. These findings also interpreted as practical menswear design outcomes, useful to the aims of the project.

3.2. Development of processes

Through the exploration of object-based research and creation of samples to replicate areas of damage or construction found in the acquired historical garment, the research findings presented the idea that symbolism and signs, found in Gay Semiotics (Fischer 1977) could be incorporated within the garment development stages. By adopting the idea of metaphorically deconstructing masculinity and applying this to stitching for example, enabled it to be used in the garment design to represent a metaphorical language of its own. Similarly, the popularisation of craft and the desire to memorialise victims of AIDS during the 1980's through the art of quilting, further inspired the design notion of representing the AIDS pandemic within the final artefact, through stitch techniques.

Furthermore, deconstruction of the case-study Savile Row tailored jacket revealed hidden hand-crafted elements within the internal construction such as canvassing, wadding, fusible and pad stitching, that appeared to take on a recognisable gesture of the male form. The shaping of the internal canvas and jacket seaming employed to enhance the frame of the male wearer, was noted to almost mimic the natural muscle definition and contours of the male frame. This attribution to muscle tone, strength, and its underlying connections to masculinity, was adopted as design inspiration. The concept of portraying a racerback vest within the artefact enforced this idea, as seen majority of the time within homoeroticism as a symbolism of the working man, or to enhance the muscle structure of a male shoulders and arms. This also gave nod to the cross-culture development discussed by Cole (2000) on how hypermasculinity appeared as a movement in gay dressing, and as overtly sexualised traditional menswear of the time.

Figure 3: Dean-Henry Younger, Artefact development external, 2021. 15cm x 20cm. Newcastle Upon Tyne, England. Courtesy of Dean-Henry Younger

This symbolism connected with the idea of masculine lines and the disassociation of weakness found in homoerotic art of Ritts and Mapplethorpe (Hickson 2015), and incidental

versus posed homoeroticism by Hine. This element was explored through extensive pattern cutting, toile manufacture and fitting, and manipulation of construction approaches, creating a symbolic representation of the male form within the artefact design. Applied to the silhouette of the artefact, this translated as the decision to create an authoritative and strong shape through the shoulder using shoulder pads was tempered by softening by the use of heavy embroidered areas to create structure without the addition of bulking out the wearers frame, thus achieving a more natural masculine line.

The choice of cloth and materials employed in the artefact was inspired by those found in the workwear reference. An austere plain-weave cotton representative of period 1920s and 1930s workwear was chosen in stark contrast to the rich luxury wool cloth of the Savile Row piece. This was complimented by a selection of tailoring canvasses employed in the hand-canvassed tailored jacket, dyed to match the soft dirty pink colour of the cotton, a colour chosen to counteract the masculine, powerful black wool of the case-study, portraying delicacy and enhancing the connection with archival workwear and the working man.

By reworking the iconic pad-stitch used by the tailors to secure internal wadding as an external decorative cross-stitch (a semiotic interpretation of the HIV positive sign) representative of that employed in craft therapy, when applied to the sample fabric surface, resulted in the creation of additional structure to the cloth. This discovery was used within the design process to replace much of the padding and layers of fusible employed by the Savile Row tailors, exploring the use of fragile repair work (darning), to pronounce the muscle structure of the idealistic male body as surface decoration. Overall, the resulting deconstructed approach to garment design and manufacture employed in the artefact design and development, connected further with the more relaxed depiction of tailoring found in unstructured workwear of the men at work photographs of Hine (1932). In bringing these hidden elements to the surface promoted the notion of delicate design as robust exteriors, a further metaphor for how masculinity may be perceived during the AIDS crisis.

Figure 4: Dean-Henry Younger, Artefact development internal, 2021. 15cm x 20cm. Newcastle Upon Tyne, England. Courtesy of Dean-Henry Younger

The incorporation of Gay Semiotics (Fischer 1977) within the design process was applied to the consideration of placement of garment details in the artefact design, an interpretation of positioning to elicit new meaning. This followed the concept of the male figure being divided into an aggressive and passive side and refers to how the left side is considered the dominant, a historical derivative of military dressing; where it was easier to expose a weapon from under the left side of uniform if right-handed. In the garment artefact, this was interpreted by adorning the left side 'aggressive' with more delicate hand stitching to openly counteract potent aggression connected to masculine behaviour.

Through the observation and analysis conducted of both physical and photographic vintage workwear garment reference in this research, the appearance of repair work is seen as intent to preserve and reconstruct damaged areas of the garments. This acted as inspiration to further investigate and sample types of stitch repair and redirect these samples in garment design as a form of construction itself, as the repair work could be likened to the construction approaches found earlier inside the bespoke tailored jacket. In addition, although used as a method to mend, the repair work could be viewed as a unique surface decoration. In adopting the idea of deconstructing metaphors of masculinity through the act of stitching, the use of stitching could also be translated to signify a metaphorical language in garment design. Thus,

the effect that the AIDS crisis had during the 1980s in popularising craft and memorialising victims of the disease through the art of quilting, is synthesised within this research and incorporated as the application of decorative stitch in the design process.

Further research conducted on stitchwork techniques, revealed a historical method used to repair parachutes that was taught to military men in training. This technique reconnected with both the ideas of the fragile craft of stitching and the vision of powerful masculinity; groups of strong hypermasculine looking men adopting hand-sewing as a daily task whilst at war. The parachute rangers stitch, originally employed to repair tears in the fabric, was revealed during the research practice, to be very robust becoming almost part of the cloth itself and was utilised within the practical element of this research to seam together garment panels.

As a visual representation of repair work becoming surface-decoration, and when considering how this process could be communicated to an audience, the technique was implemented to showcase the internal construction in efforts to illustrate a deconstructed version of garment design that could physically emulate the metaphorical approach to deconstructing masculinity

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The tonality of the final artefact represents the delicacy in design found in the traditional craft of menswear tailoring and presents the notion of gay men being camouflaged in gender normal society. As this was not intended to be made as a wearable piece, but more a depiction of a garment-based outcome of practice-led research, the artefact was constructed so that it would be both internally and externally beautiful. This purposeful act to make sure all methods employed in construction, detail and finish were considered and acted out slowly and by hand, resulted in a new sense of emotional engagement with the artefact making. The revelation that when the artefact was completed, it could in fact be worn inside-out and admired from both internal and external viewing, providing further unexpected interest and engagement with the piece. Furthermore, the artefact sits in contrast to the discovery in the Savile Row tailored piece, where the craftsmanship and technical prowess employed was mostly hidden away under a more *robust* shell.

The experience of creating the artefact presented a better understanding of how craft can represent emotional engagement with processes and artefacts. Through the making process and employment of hand stitching, this act of repair and construction connected emotionally with the AIDS quilt movement (and the act of remembering lost loved ones from the virus). The large areas of hand-stitching also acted a tactile way to connect with the artefact. From a visual perspective, engagement with the artefact provided further connection with the artefact. This was found to be personally significant through presentation of the interpreted semiotic meanings and their representation of the homoeroticism and hypermasculinity adopted as an effort to divert the public eye from the outcast, queer culture of the AIDS crisis.

Figure 5: Dean-Henry Younger, Artefact showcase back, 2021. 25cm x 37.5cm. Newcastle Upon Tyne, England. Courtesy of Christopher Hodge

Figure 6: Dean-Henry Younger, Artefact showcase, 2021. 30cm x 37.2cm. Newcastle Upon Tyne, England. Courtesy of Christopher Hodge

The aims of this research paper were to portray an interpretation of theories surrounding the culture of masculinity during the AIDS crisis and to translate and demonstrate these through the practice of menswear design. In conclusion, the creation of an artefact highlights that the use of object-based research can be employed to extract useful content from textual, image and artefact sources that can be translated and developed into new approaches to menswear, for example as found in this exercise, the construction of a menswear garment.

The theory of deconstructing masculinity that is represented by researchers such as Cole (2000) and McBrinn (2021), within this work, acknowledges that this area of study is a large and developing field that is open to further investigation. The question of whether there is a permanent uniform of masculinity, is ongoing and requires further exploration of this social construct. As this research identifies, ideals of masculinity and associated aesthetics are indicators appears within culture as a consequence of society (Pardo 2020). Findings presented in this paper are the result of investigation into traditional men's fashion of a time when menswear was presented as plain and fit for purpose and this is a continually changing dynamic. It is also acknowledged that the presented body of work is just one possible iteration and from the personal viewpoint of the authors. There of course may be many.

The methods employed in this research hope to present opportunity and processes that warrant further investigation of the idea that masculinity can be metaphorically deconstructed and that those findings can be applied to artefacts. It further illustrates how object-research techniques traditionally employed in art and by dress-historians can be used to create new garment design proposals.

It is intended that future work will provide further opportunity to conduct research on the portrayal of masculinity and its interpretation through craft to gain better understanding of how menswear design may be influenced by cultural changes and historical events.

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