

University for the Creative Arts
Research Project Portfolios

Locus of the Dress

By Shelly Goldsmith



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Shelly Goldsmith
Name of Output:	<i>Locus of the Dress</i>
Collaborators:	Dr Herminia Hernaiz-Sanders, clinical psychologist, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLAM)
UCARO link/s:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/5209/
Output Type:	M – Exhibition; series of group and solo exhibitions
Key Words:	Art textiles, dye-sublimation, psychogeography, place, psychology, future, autonomy, heteronomy
Funding:	Arts Council England - £4800
Year and mode of dissemination:	<p>GROUP EXHIBITIONS</p> <p>2014 <i>Metamorphosis</i>, TIO3 Textiles Innovation Centre, Ronse, Belgium</p> <p>2015 <i>Crafting Anatomies: Material. Performance. Identity</i>, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University</p> <p><i>Four Threads</i>, Worshipful Company of Haberdashers for Open London Festival, London</p> <p><i>Re-Fashioned: Garments as Art</i>, Gallery at the Old Fire Station, Oxford</p>

Project Details

Year and mode
of dissemination (cont.):

2017

Afternoon Tea Salon, Chiara Williams Contemporary Art, Margate

Haptic Tacit (in-conjunction with the Crafts Council), Leydon Gallery, London and the Old Fire Station Gallery, Oxford (with catalogue)

2019

Loss & Lucidity, Appleton Gallery and Fabrica Braco de Prata, Lisbon, Portugal; SantoraSpace205, Santa Ana, California, US

Inaugural *Vlieseline Fine Art Textile Award*, Birmingham; Alexandra Palace, Dublin (with catalogue)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016

Drawn to Ohio, Rochester Gallery, Rochester

2019

Dresses for Giants, Addington St. Gallery, Ramsgate

ASSOCIATED PUBLICATION

Locus of the Dress (2021), UCA (ISBN 978-0-9930502-2-0)

A digitally printed scarf which can be viewed as a traditional written text and/or worn and read on the body. Introduction by Dr Herminia Hernaiz-Sanders and Shelly Goldsmith. First version released through Goldsmith's website in 2016 and second version published in 2021.

Synopsis

Locus of the Dress is a research output by Shelly Goldsmith comprising textiles artworks exhibited in ten exhibitions and an associated publication. The research is concerned with exploring the fine veneer of cloth that stands between us and the world, locating our sense of self using the dress-form as a canvas for an exploration of the psychological theory 'Locus of Control'.

This practice-based investigation engages with theory alongside experimental textile processes. It uses innovative contemporary textiles to examine and visualise psychologist J.B. Rotter's hypothesis that we all exist on a spectrum between an External or Internal 'Locus of Control', with our position on that spectrum a strong signifier of our sense of self, influencing how we forecast our future. Those with an External Locus perceive themselves to be powerless against life's events, feeling that things are being done to them. We all strive for a strong Internal Locus, enabling command, responsibility and autonomy.

Within *Locus of the Dress*, the external and internal cloth landscapes of the dress are perceived as zones of psychogeography, places we inhabit as 'home' physically and psychologically. Goldsmith creatively worked these landscapes using pencil drawings laden with graphite, digital photography and whole garment dye-sublimation prints. The work uses geographical imagery which depicts two autoethnographic locations (Cincinnati and the Thanetian Coast in Kent) chosen because they embody the qualities of the two poles of Rotter's theory. The result is two groups of works, the Internal and External, with a further sub-group named Dresses for Giants. Different collections of pieces have been shown in different exhibitions.

This portfolio presents the research, including the aims, context and processes which led to new insights, images of the creation and exhibition of Goldsmith's work and a PDF of the associated publication. Contextual information documents dissemination and recognition of the work.



'Dislocated Dress' (2020), graphite and digital dye sublimation printing on reclaimed and deconstructed dresses, Giclée print photograph onto Hahnemuhle photo paper on steel clothes hanger (270 × 125 × 1.5 cm). A short text to accompany the title gives a link to J. Rotter's Locus of Control questionnaire. The public is invited to partake and pinpoint where they are on the Locus of Control spectrum between external or internal. This small piece of self-awareness is personally transformative.



Detail from 'Dislocated Dress'
(2020)



*Detail from 'Dislocated Dress'
(2020)*

Context

Supported by a collaboration with clinical psychologist Dr Herminia Hernaiz-Sanders, Goldsmith identifies and examines the two surfaces of the dress form, inside and outside, as independent landscapes upon which to discuss and play out narratives of the external and internal hallmarks of J.B. Rotter's (1954; 1966) theory of the 'Locus of Control'. *Locus*, in Latin, is 'place' or 'location'.

'Locus of Control', a concept used in personality psychology, can be universally applied, in principle locating every individual at some point on the continuum. This position is not static. Life experience and personal growth can affect movement between the poles of the concept, and an individual's forecasting of their own future is key to this. Along with Rotter's work, Riel Miller's (2018) discussions around the principles of Futures Literacy and the Discipline of Anticipation augment the context built upon by Goldsmith in *Locus of the Dress*.

Goldsmith's approach to contemporary textiles is exemplified in this body of work. She continues her practice of partnerships with professionals outside the art world, in this case offering new entry points and understandings of medical science, so that her work is simultaneously visually stimulating and didactic. Goldsmith also continues her risk-taking in contemporary textile practice. She disrupts dye-sublimation printing, taking a process usually associated with cheap

mass production in the textile industry and applying to it fine art thinking and principles. Goldsmith also takes an autoethnographic approach, mining her own psychological journey and two personally-known geographical locations (Cincinnati and the Thanetian Coast).

The research outcomes are resolved as textile-based installations, wall pieces and wall assemblages, a genre Goldsmith is known for. The dresses she prints are no longer perceived as wearable garments, and thus this format contradictorily offers a deeper intimacy and scrutiny of the surface and the fibre of the clothes and the images fused to them. It offers an opportunity for self-reflection (access to psychological knowledge) and psychic growth as well as new cognizance of our relationship to our clothes.

REFERENCES

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80(1), 1–28.

Rotter, J. B. (1954). *Social learning and clinical psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Miller, R. (2018). *Transforming the future: anticipation in the 21st century*. London and New York: Routledge.

Research Questions and Aims

Research questions:

How can art textiles engender curiosity and provoke opportunities for learning and personal growth around contemporary understandings of psychology and the human condition?

How can dye-sublimation, an industrial fashion/textile manufacturing technique, be reconceptualised to create contemporary art?

How can the creative scope of dye-sublimation techniques be extended and maximised to reuse existing controversial materials such as polyesters to make contemporary art which positively influences sustainable production?

Research aims:

To use clothing, a universal object, as an entry point to explore and present complex ideas relating to human experience and as a vehicle to stimulate curiosity, understanding and growth in personality psychology

To extend and develop innovative uses of dye-sublimation printing processes, especially whole-garment printing, whilst building good practice around sustainability issues in textiles practice

To stimulate curiosity and understanding around textile and fashion consumption through the reinvention and reuse of existing (pre-worn and vintage) polyester garments as a way to create poetic and provocative outcomes



Creation process



Creation process



Creation process

Research Methods and Processes

In the first phase of the research, funded by the Arts Council, Goldsmith and Hernaiz-Sanders worked together to identify the core qualities of the theory and establish a range of conceptual markers to define the External and Internal Loci. Goldsmith developed these into a series of drawings and photographs that communicated the characteristics of each pole of the theory, and applied them to the dress form.

Goldsmith used visual research methods, exploring and testing different approaches to arrive at the means with which to communicate the emotional perspective and polarity of Rotter's theory. The resulting imagery moves from hand-rendered monochrome to digital full-colour, as it moves from the outer surface to the internal space of the dress form.

Goldsmith draws upon autoethnographic perspectives, focusing on the extreme meteorological conditions of her parents' home town, Cincinnati, Ohio, in the USA, and using this as a symbol for the External Locus. Cincinnati is located in 'Tornado Alley' and Goldsmith used it to conjure the psychological conditions associated with the External Locus. Research at Ohio's community libraries yielded documentary photographs of the infamous 1974 'Super Outbreak', the biggest tornado incident ever recorded. The volatile geographical and psychological landscape in which unpredictability and instability are omnipresent leads some Cincinnati residents to forecast unstable futures and to rely on lucky charms, superstitions and beliefs—and thus aligns fully with the psychological profiling of Rotter's External Locus.

To establish the opposite pole on Rotter's spectrum, the Internal Locus, Goldsmith walked the Thanet coastline where she now lives, photographing the tidal pools (especially the Walpole Bay tidal pool, Margate), as a clear indicator of the predictability of the tides and a core symbol of the Internal

Locus. A move to the coast with its health and wellbeing-promoting benefits (negative ions, cold water bathing, etc.), reinforces an internal viewpoint. In this element of the project the photographs flood the internal cloth surface of the dress whilst still making evident its construction process.

The visual qualities of the Internal locus shift to full colour. Fusing the image of the dress with the coastal image as an imprint of experience and place has been an important element of the work. Goldsmith worked experimentally with dye-sublimation processes where she pressed the worn dress onto the still-wet digitally-printed dyed surface to remove/ subtract dye. This process left a negative image of the inside of the dress, so detailed that it is almost akin to a photograph. What is left behind is an imprint, like the shedding of a skin.

Whole-dress digital dye-sublimation printing became a potent vehicle for problem solving conceptual and material issues. Goldsmith moved to flooding pre-worn dresses with imagery; collars, pockets, overlapped seams and loose threads impacted on and influenced the print, disrupting the image. Each stage of the research used complex and experimental printing processes using dispersal dye in 3 states (liquid, solid, vapour).

The last phase of the Internal Locus, 'Dresses for Giants' is a reinvention and 'retelling' of voluminous 1970s polyester wedding dresses purchased by Goldsmith in Cincinnati. Large in scale, they allude to the personalities of the women who may have worn these dresses, not their physical size. These dresses express the ultimate stage of Rotter's theory as they move location from Ohio to Kent and the internal space transforms. The manual process whereby dyed whole dresses are used as objects to print with creates analogue prints that appear photographic.

Research Insights and Contribution

Goldsmith's detailed and multifaceted process of investigation met its research aims in using textile practice as a way to investigate and embody Rotter's theory of the Locus of Control. The flow of the work, from outside to inside, and from black and white to colour, facilitated an understanding of the theory's changing nature and the poles of control. Goldsmith introduced her audiences to an opportunity to take Rotter's standardised online test to locate their own 'Locus of Control', as well as communicating the concept through her own, auto-ethnographic, subject matter. Presenting clothing as research outcomes made the work engaging for wide audiences of all ages.

The investigation, and particularly its final stage ('Dresses for Giants'), also fulfilled its aim to stimulate curiosity and understanding around textile and fashion consumption through the re-invention and re-use of existing 1970s polyester wedding dresses as a way to create poetic and provocative outcomes. Across the whole body of work, Goldsmith diverted manmade fabric destined for landfill, reusing, adapting and re-appropriating polyesters for a cleaner and

more sustainable approach to the production of her artwork. She also took steps to reuse dye-sublimation substrates and rethink intrinsic elements of the dye-sublimation process. She introduced this approach to her students at UCA as a way of adapting practice within the textiles specialism she teaches.

The research in *Locus of the Dress* has been recognised by the judges of the Vlieseline Fine Art Textiles Award, an international, juried prize open to artists using textiles as their medium to make works that 'transcend the craft or making process, standing alone as visual art'. Goldsmith was shortlisted for the award in 2019, and was the outright winner in 2020 for works from *Locus of the Dress*. The judges described the work as:

'thoughtful and thought-provoking, a visually arresting and intelligent artwork rooted in textile history and practice. Its excellence derives from an artistic and considered investigation of 'the landscape of a dress' and how this relates to ideas of perception, personal identity and control.'

Drawn to Ohio



*'Ohio Repeat', Drawn to Ohio
Solo Exhibition, Rochester Gallery,
Rochester (2016), dye-sublimation
and drawing on pre-constructed
blouses (95 x 75 cm)*



*Drawn to Ohio Solo Exhibition,
Rochester Gallery, Rochester (2016)*

Research Dissemination and Recognition

Dissemination:

AWARDS

2017

Honourable Mention at London International Creative Competition

2019

Highly commended in the inaugural Vlieseline Fine Art Textile Award; the associated exhibition toured to 3 locations, was seen by 70,819 visitors and was accompanied by a publication. Goldsmith's piece 'Listening carefully for the internal bell' was highly commended by the panel

2020

Winner of the Vlieseline Fine Art Textile Award

LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

2014

Invited by Tate Modern and Whitechapel Art Gallery to present *Locus of the Dress* in a 2-day seminar 'Material Language'

Led dye-sublimation workshops in conjunction with the Tate Modern's Richard Tuttle Turbine Hall piece 'I Don't Know: The Weave of Textile Language'

2015

Research Lecture at the Royal College of Art, School of Materials

Research Dissemination and Recognition

2016

'My Cloth', Turner Contemporary, Margate, (Dye-sublimation Workshops) in-conjunction with the Yinka Shonibare installation, British Library at the Turner Contemporary

2020

Invited to present 'Locus of the Dress' at Contextil Portugal 2020 for the series 'Textile Talks'

Influence of research:

CITATIONS

Jenna Rossi-Camus, Margaret Buck, Denise Harmer and Serena Williams (2014) *Digital X Historical in Digital Encounters*. Farnham: UCA publication.

Jo Hall (2015) 'Drawn to Ohio Review' In: *Embroidery Magazine* (Nov/Dec) p.7.

Jill Journaux (2015) 'Exhibition Review: Crafting Anatomies' In: *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice* 3 (1-2) pp.117-124.

Lesley Millar (2015) 'The Re(a)d Thread' In: Penny Macbeth and Claire Barber (eds.) *Outside: Activating Cloth to Enhance the Way We Live*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. pp.33-44.

Creative Textiles Research Group (2015) *Crafting Anatomies, Performative Anatomies* Exhibition publication. Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University.

Katherine Townsend, Rhian Solomon and Amanda Briggs-Good (2020) *Crafting Anatomies: Archives, Dialogues, Fabrications*. London: Bloomsbury.

Locus of the dress

ISBN: 978-0-9950502-2-0

Where is my sense of control located? We have all met someone with a strong internal Locus of Control; their behaviour is guided by their personal decisions and efforts. We have probably also come across someone with a strong external Locus of Control, believing that their behaviour is guided by fate, luck, and external circumstances. However, nobody is located totally externally or internally; we all live within a continuum of the two.

The Locus of Control predicts an individual's future based on their past experiences of the world. A school of thought from 1950's America, the Locus of Control is a psychology concept theory originally developed by Julian Rotter. It is used in personality psychology to signify a person's 'locus', (Latin for 'place' or 'location') as either internal or external.

Who we praise and where we apportion blame is consistent with the two modes of being. Those who are internal take credit and responsibility for their actions and those who are external see others as strongly influencing their successes, or at fault when things do not work out well. This external position is associated with depression, helplessness, hopelessness and stress, following predictably poor life choices. Those with a strong internal perspective are more likely to be psychologically healthy and stable.

The Locus of Control is strongly connected to the construction of the 'sense of self' and 'self-evaluation' as one fundamental dimension for the appraisal of oneself, allowing us to observe our own attribution of power and how it affects our own outlook of life. A child enters the world with a natural Locus of Control but this can be influenced and modified by their upbringing, the people around them and their cultural and geographical situation. By the time an individual reaches around 30 years of age the influence of internal factors now have a stronger impact.

In the same way, a geographical location may dictate our locus tendencies. A location with a high frequency of extreme meteorological incidents presents unpredictability and instability; the high incident of tornados of Ohio, USA is one example. Contrastingly the ebb and flow of the tides of Kent's 'Thanetian' coast with its negative hydrogen ions, present predictability and well-being.

The clothes we inhabit represent a dual location, as we at once inhabit both internal and external zones of the garment; a complex expression of self. Our Locus of Control undoubtedly affects the choice of how we dress.

It is illuminating to observe our own attribution of power and how this affects our own outlook on life.

Shelly Goldsmith & Dr. H. Hernaiz-Sanders, Clinical Psychologist

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*'Publication: Project Introduction Essay' by Shelly Goldsmith and Dr
Hermina Hernaiz-Sanders (first disseminated in 2016), digital textile
printing (100 x 100 cm)*



'Publication: Project Introduction Essay' by Shelly Goldsmith and Dr Hermina Hernaiz-Sanders (first disseminated in 2016), digital textile printing (100 × 100 cm)

External: Cincinatti





'Two and a half points of understanding' (wall installation) (2020), digital print and graphite drawing on reclaimed garment fragment/ digital print on paper a/dye-sublimation subtraction print on digital photograph on cloth



'Incoming Storm' (upper fragment) (2020), graphite drawing and digital dye-sublimation printing onto reclaimed dress fragment, lucky charms/jewelry, silk thread (115 x 110 cm)



'Incoming storm' (2020) detail



Girl's dress fragment with lucky charms, digital print and graphite drawing on reclaimed garment fragment, various metal and plastic charm objects

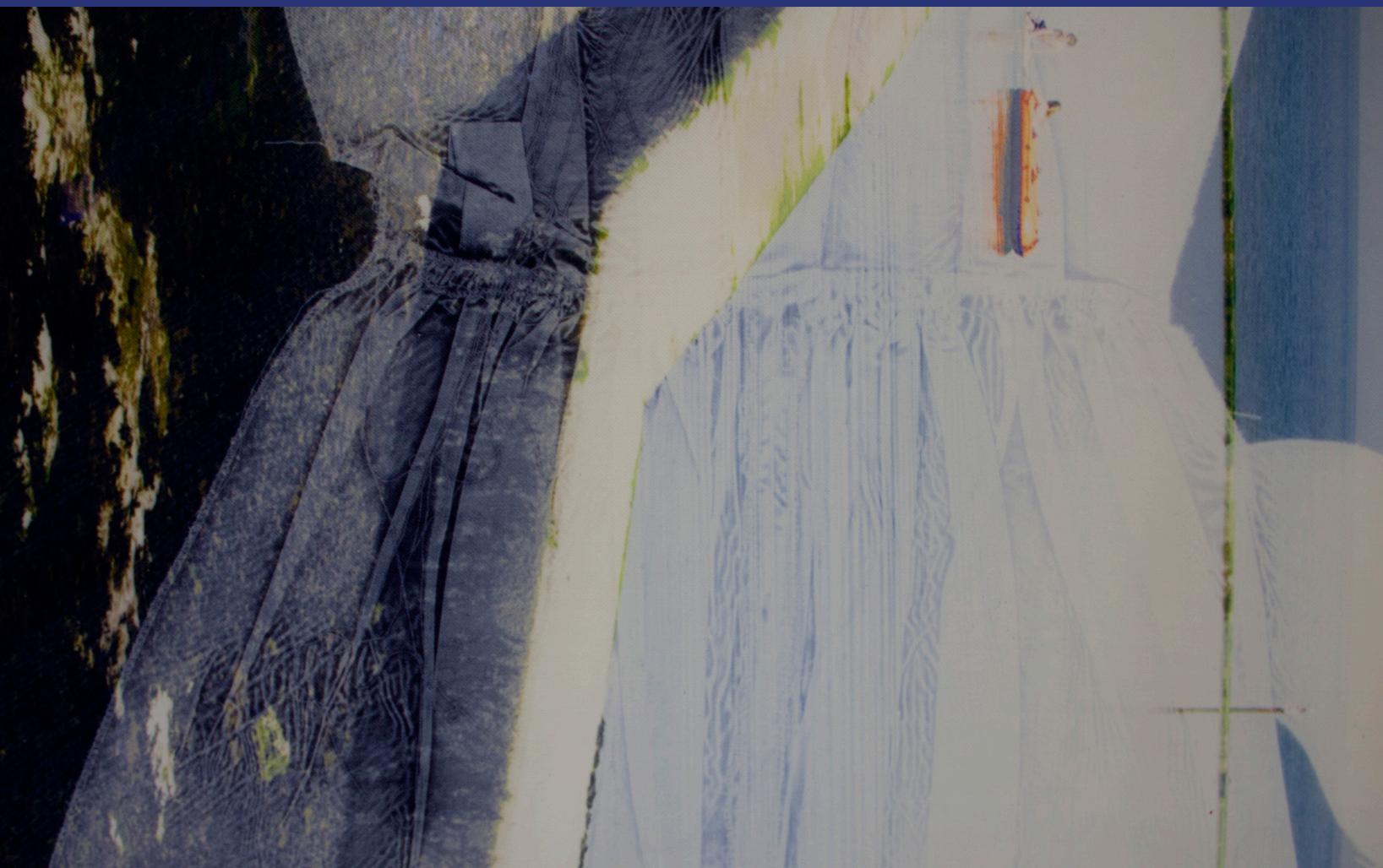


Girl's dress fragment detail, digital print and graphite drawing on reclaimed garment



'Double Dark', digital print and graphite drawing on reclaimed garment fragments

Internal: Thanetian Coast





*'Locus of the Dress. Awarded the Vlieseline Fine Art Textiles Award' (2020),
dispersal dye on reclaimed polyester cloth (190 x 165 cm)*



'Locus of the Dress' (2020) details



*'Thanetian Mother and Child' (wall mounted) (2020), giclée print on Hahnemühle paper (50 × 43 cm)
A short text to accompany the title gives a link to J. Rotter's Locus of Control questionnaire. The audience is invited to partake and pinpoint where on the Locus of Control spectrum they are between external or internal. This small piece of self-awareness is personally transformative.*



'Walpole Dress' (internal view)
(2019), Giclée print on Hahnemühle
paper (120 × 82 cm)

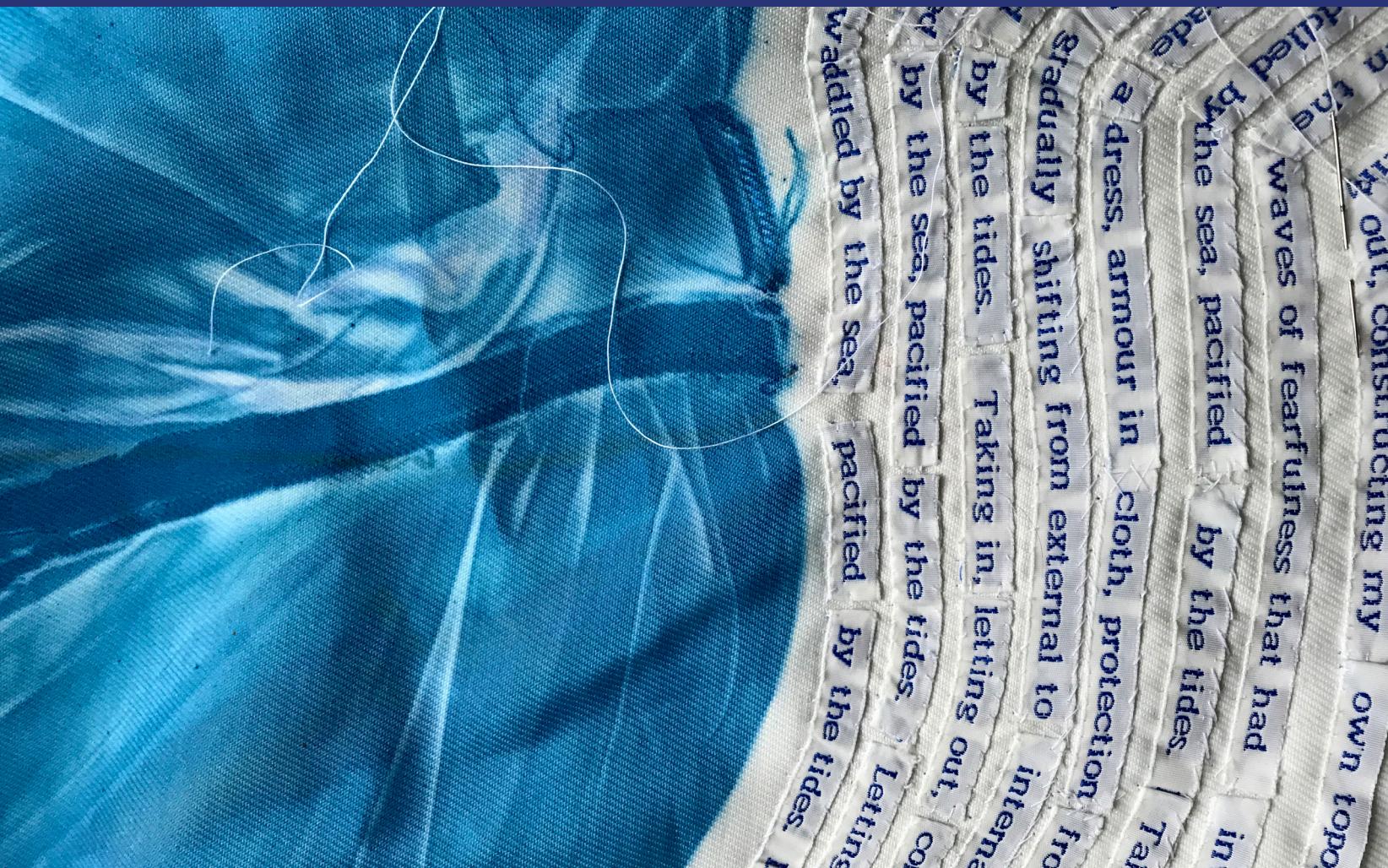


*'Sewing the sea around me' (2019),
dye-sublimation print on internal
side of polyester dress*



*'Sewing the sea around me' (2019)
details*

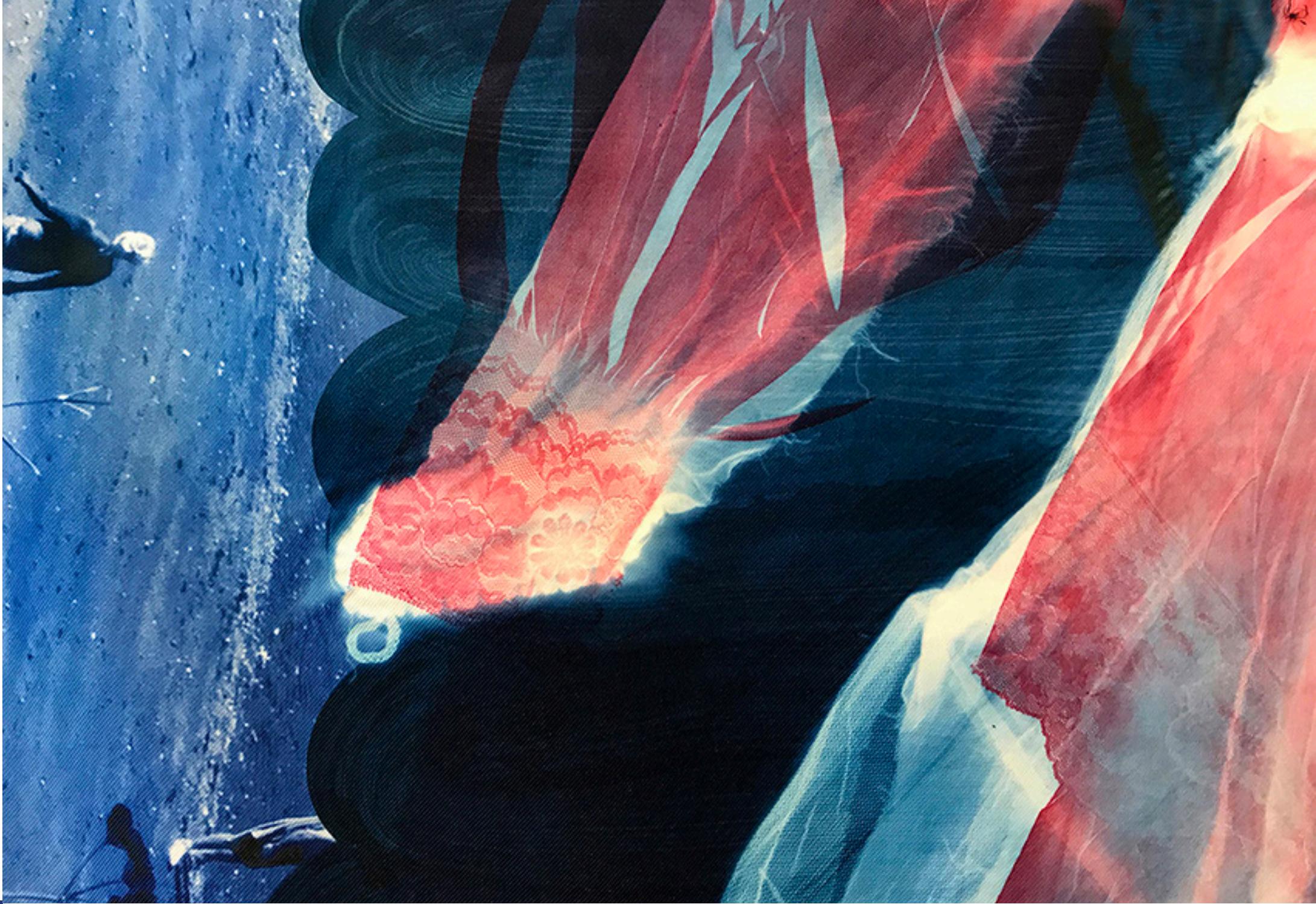
Dresses for Giants





'Ringing dress: an internal warning system' (2020), reclaimed polyester dispersal dye, digitally printed steel and coat hanger (200 × 220 × 1 cm)

1970s polyester wedding dresses in whole garment printing on a 4-layer dye-sublimation print; a manual process which appears photographic, embossing the cloth surface (is not cyanotype). The piece responsibly uses reclaimed polyester and dispersal dye in 3 states (digitally printed dye, hand painted & vaporised dye) to create the images on the cloth.



'Ringing dress' (2020) detail

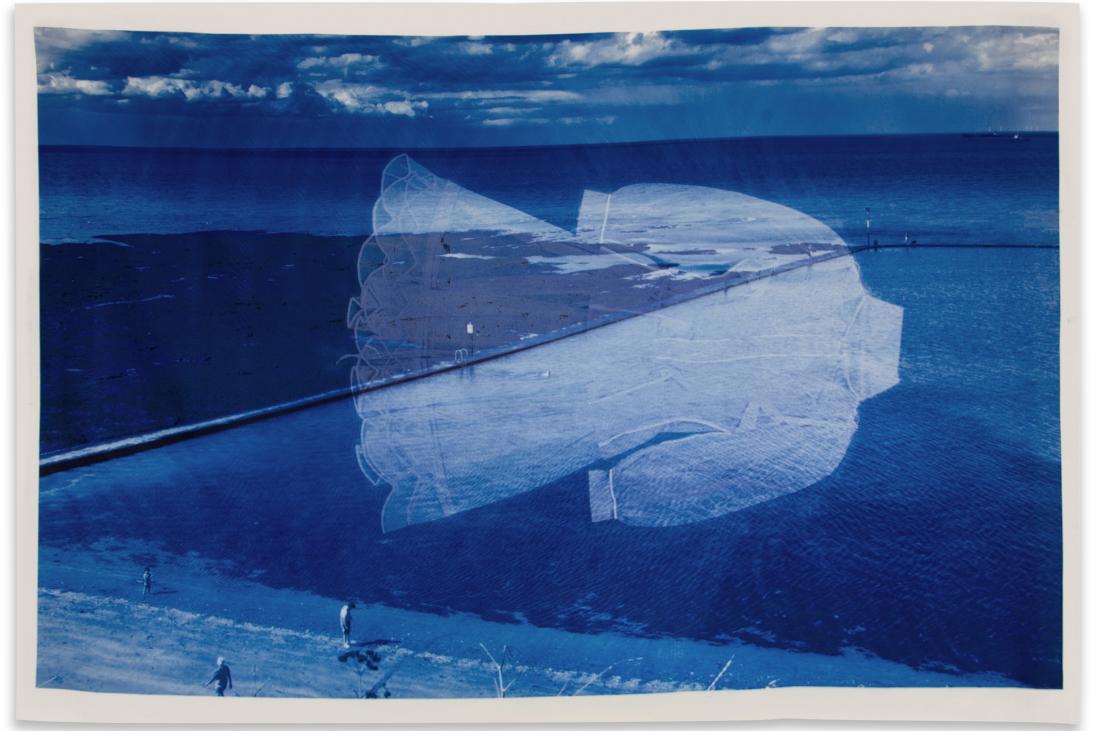


*LEFT TWO DRESSES
'Listening carefully for the internal
bell' (2019), dye-sublimation print
on reclaimed cloth*

*RIGHT TWO DRESSES
'Swaddled by the sea, pacified by
the tides' (2019), dye-sublimation
print on reclaimed cloth, digitally
woven text tape*



'Listening carefully for the internal bell' (2019) details



'Swaddled by the sea, pacified by the tides' (2019), dye-sublimation print on reclaimed cloth, digitally woven text tape



'Swaddled by the sea, pacified by the tides' (2019) details



'Swaddled by the sea, pacified by the tides' (2019) details



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FRONT AND BACK COVERS
'Dresses for giants' (2019) details

