# Major Project Report

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# INTRODUCTION

In this report. I will show my design philosophy, thinking, methodology and how I can showcase new ways of approaching footwear design. This report will showcase myself introducing new ideas to what footwear can be. This includes how footwear can be designed, what changes can be implemented to draw change and disruption within footwear. These changes and disruption will come within the materials used, how the footwear is created and the stylistic aspects of footwear.

My aim for this project is to put ideas into the mind of footwear and apparel designers and brands. By introducing materials that would typically not be used in the creation of footwear, as well as implementing those materials into a piece of footwear design that will captivate not just footwear and fashion enthusiasts but also everyone else who comes across them. The purpose will be to make people think about what footwear design could be, where it could be in the future and most importantly to open people's minds to disrupt and challenge what we already perceive to create something new and push the boundary of footwear design further than done before.

This report will delve into the deeper meaning, thinking and ideas behind my work that would not be clear when observing the product in an exhibition setting. It is important that in this report that the ideas, meaning and my thinking as to why I am going ahead with this project are clear and understandable and not clouded in fog. The main purpose is not to be within a 'grey area' when approaching this project and to go full steam ahead into the unknown of what could be created with my ideas.

# ABOUT ME

Before heading into the deep depths of the meaning of my project. I would like to give a little background on myself and how this project isn't just myself choosing footwear design for the sake of choosing a design subject that appealed to me, but in fact footwear as always been apart of my life since a very early age. From an early age I was exposed to footwear by my father. My father would dress in the style of the ***'Football Casual'*** when going to the football matches and as a young child observing this, I would take in what he was wearing subconsciously, and it would ingrain the love of footwear and fashion within my mind. My father would often take me to football matches whenever he could and with this I would as well see other dressing how he was in similar brands and styles. Following football since a young age and watching my club Liverpool F.C. play and seeing the players play in Adidas kits in the mid to late 2000's. Seeing the design ques of Adidas subconsciously gave me a bias towards the three stripes aesthetic.

This early exposure to fashion and footwear through my father and the sport of football, made me fall in love with footwear, not just as things you wear but the history and stories footwear can hold. The first footwear model that sparked the passion for footwear design was the ***Adidas ZX Flux***, and it was the 'Prism' colourway ***(Img.1)*** that really captivated my imagination. After seeing that model on the internet and person it brought to life for me what footwear can be and how different models have different stories to tell and how much impact they have on culture by being associated with moments of our lives and history, a prime example of this is the ***Air Jordan*** line of footwear. The ***Air Jordan*** line of sneakers made sneakers more of a casual item to be worn daily and not just worn for sports such as tennis and basketball, but also a fashion icon and woven into many subcultures of life and one of those being ***Sneakerheads***. Dictionary.com defines a '***Sneakerhead'*** as '***a person who collects and trades sneakers as a hobby, and who typically is knowledgeable about the history of sneakers' (Dictionary.com).*** It was only natural that I became a sneakerhead after being exposed to the fashion and footwear culture from a young age and discovering footwear pieces that interested me and how they were made and the history behind the design of the piece. Most sneakerheads are only interested in what gets them attention from others online or their friends and having the most 'Hype' footwear on the market at the time. But for me footwear is more than that, it's about creating a piece that lasts and can showcase who the

wearer is and their personality and individualism. The future of footwear design for me is about the materials that go into the pieces, how can materials make a new dawn of footwear? And the actual design and styling of the pieces naturally follows that as well, can a recycled piece of footwear not look recycled like the '***Nike Space Hippie 04' (Img 2)*** does but have the piece of footwear look like any other? The recycled materials is not the main selling point of footwear now and has become less and less the marketing ploy like it was in recent years and that is how I approach footwear design and push it into a new era of innovation, by using materials that are alien to footwear and having the footwear also look stylish, that is what appeals to me and is what my philosophy is as a designer.

# INFLUENCES

The designers who have inspired me as a young designer in the field of footwear design. With each one possessing a unique aspect towards how to approach footwear design, but all connected with one aspect and that being an interest in materials used in footwear. The first designer that has had an impact on my thinking and approach is ***Steven Smith (Img.2)***. Smith worked for major footwear companies such ***New Balance***, ***Nike***, ***Adidas*** and ***YEEZY***. Smith has impacted me with his works at this company with such models as the ***New Balance 550 (Img.3***) and ***YEEZY 700 (Img.4)*** and ***YEEZY 350v2 (Img.5).*** These models bring a retro feel to them but also pushing the boundaries of what footwear design a styling can be but as well keeping comfort a priority by utilizing Adidas's boost technology in the midsole. The next designer who has influenced me with her work is ***Nicole McLaughlin (Img.6)***. Her work has inspired me because she creates garments out of materials or what old scrap she has around her apartment and creates new pieces that are often very functional, non-functional but as well very stylish aesthetically. Such as using orange juice cartons to create a ***bikini top (Img.7)*** or an old volleyball to create a ***slipper (Img.8)***, the piece that drew me to McLaughlin was her repurposed Carhartt work trousers and turned them into ***UGG boots (Img.9)*** with pockets and compartments for items to be kept in. The third designer that has impacted my way of thinking is the legendary footwear designer ***Tinker Hatfield (Img.10)***, responsible for iconic Nike models such as the ***Air Max 1 (Img.11), Air Huarache (Img.12) and Air Max 90 (Img.13)***. Hatfield is also responsible for footwear's greatest ever designs within the ***Air Jordan*** line of footwear designing every model from the ***Air Jordan 3 (Img.14)*** to the ***Air Jordan 15 (Img.20)*** as well as the ***Air Jordan 20 (Img.19)***. Most notable and revolutionary designs being the ***Air Jordan 3, 4, 11, 12 and 13***. Hatfield has inspired me with his designs on these footwear models as they revolutionised how footwear can be with the materials used on certain models such as the ***Air Jordan 3 (Img.14)*** with its elephant print leather to give it a premium look on the basketball court when worn by Michael Jordan and the ***Air Jordan 11 (Img.16)*** with its carbon fibre shank in-between the midsole and outsole to reduce the weight whilst adding strength to the sneaker as well the upper having been constructed out of military grade ballistic mesh which adds durability but also is extremely breathable. These three designers have all influenced me within my work as well as my philosophy as a designer.

# THEORETICAL TO PRACTICAL SOLUTION

Driven by my own goal with footwear design, my postgraduate studies became an explorative environment to explore the future of what footwear design can possibly be. For this project the goal was to create one artifact of footwear that represents the theories that I have brought up to hopefully solidify that the theories that I have come up with are more than just theories but can also lead into that my vision is for the future of footwear design can be and how it can bring big innovation and disrupt a stagnant industry. The first theory I brought to light is that ***"The future of footwear is within the materials used, bringing in recycled materials that are completely alien to the footwear industry, but also not having that being the leading selling point of the footwear" (O'Leary, R. 2023)***. This theory stems from a conversation I had with ex adidas footwear designer Gareth Rees, we met during my undergraduate degree and I picked his brains about the industry and the one comment he said that stayed with me and sparked this theory is this ***"Industry heads are not chasing people for their designing ability in footwear anymore, but someone who can bring a new idea or generate new ideas on a whim, such as what materials can a shoe be made from? That are not already being used?' Rees, G (Zoom meeting, 2022).*** This response to my question ***'what do industry leads look for in a young designer seeking to break into the footwear design industry?'*** is what sparked my first theory and how I can bring at least five materials that already can be recycled but are not used within the footwear industry. The five materials I have chosen are, aluminium, cardboard, carpet underlay, straw/hay and old rubber car tyres, in the next section my report I will go into greater detail about each individual material and their properties.

The second theory I brought up goes in hand with the first theory. And that theory is that ***"the styling of the footwear is not the main aim of the project but to go hand in hand with the first theory as style is subjective and not everyone will take to the design' (O'Leary, R. 2023).***

This theory comes from researching some of the most popular footwear from some of the biggest footwear brands such as Adidas and Nike and how footwear styling has not changed drastically for nearly 60-70 years. This research helped me realise that styles and trends comeback round eventually and most footwear styles stick around for decades despite trends rising and falling. Footwear models such as the ***Adidas Superstar (Img.22)*** was first released in 1969 but are still on sale today with multiple generations wearing the footwear model. The

***Adidas Gazelle (Img.23)*** was first released in 1966, the gazelle is very popular within football fashion culture and is the footwear of choice for football fans across the United Kingdom and therefore is still worn by older fans and the younger fans just started to attend games on a weekend. Nike have two models which have stayed within many people wardrobes for nearly 40 years, first model is the ***Nike Air Jordan 1 (Img.24)*** and the ***Nike Dunk Low (Img.25)*** both releasing in 1985. Looking at these models made me realise that the styling isn't the most important aspect of this project but something that goes along with the main purpose of bringing a new idea of how new materials can be utilized within footwear design and push the industry forward whilst also allowing my mind to be show cased to the industry what I can bring to the table regarding the footwear industry.

# PURPOSE

In late 2023 Brooke Roberts-Islam reported that the company Vivobarefoot estimated that 22 billion pairs of shoes are thrown away each year with the United Kingdom contributing 149 million alone, ***"The shoe brand Vivobarefoot recently estimated that 22 billion pairs of shoes end up in landfill each year, with 149 million from the UK." (Roberts-Islam, R. 2023).*** In 2022 alone the footwear industry produced approximately 24 billion pairs of footwear according to Statista, ***"In 2022, approximately 24 billion pairs of footwear were produced around the world. This was a return to the consistent levels maintained before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, of roughly 23 to 24 billion pairs each year." (Smith, P. 2023)*** with China being the leading footwear producer in the world with 53.2% and Asia is responsible for 87% of the world's footwear production ***" Asia is responsible for the vast majority of this production, with a share of over 87 percent of global footwear production." (Smith, P. 2023)*** with the United States of America being the leading importer in world in regard of footwear which is roughly 2.2 billion pairs in 2022 alone as reported by Statista in 2023, ***"The United States, however, stands out as the largest importer by a significant margin, importing roughly 2.7 billion pairs of shoes in 2022." (Smith, P. 2023).*** With 22 billion pairs being discarded and 24 billion being produced every year that means 91.7% of footwear gets discarded into landfill every year. The sportswear company Adidas produced 379 million pairs in 2020 alone as reported by Peter Dennis from Circular, ***"Nike sells over 780 million pairs of shoes every year. In 2020, Adidas produced 379 million pairs." (Dennis, P. 2022).*** Adidas's competitor Nike on the other hand is expected to produce around 800 million pairs of footwear in 2023 alone according to Jens Jakob Andersen of RunRepeat ***"As of 2023, Nike is expected to produce about 800 million pairs of shoes annually." (Jakob Andersen, J. 2023).*** According to Kuru Footwear in a survey they conducted the average American will own in their lifetime 256 pairs of footwear and spend roughly $14,640 on footwear in their lifetime, ***"Americans will spend $14,640 and will own 256 pairs of shoes by the end of their life" (Kuru Footwear. 2023).*** With the average American owning 12 pairs at one given time and spending $240 a year on footwear and purchasing on average four new pairs a year according to Kuru Footwear, "***According to our survey, whether they buy shoes online or in person, each American currently owns 12 pairs of shoes. On average, Americans spend $240 each year on footwear and buy four pairs of shoes annually." (Kuru Footwear, 2023).*** The

average footwear piece has many materials that years to decompose such as vinyl, leather and plastics. This means the average piece of footwear takes around 25-40 years to decompose in landfill, "***Shoes are made from a combination of vinyl, leather, plastic and a host of other materials and take anywhere from 25-40 years to decompose in a landfill." (Waste Away Group, 2019).*** These statistics paired with Nike estimating that the average footwear piece being constructed with roughly 23 components "***Nike estimates there are 23 different parts in the anatomy of a single sneaker" (Dupere, K. 2022)*** and that paired with the amount of footwear that is being thrown away into landfill is a serious issue for decade to come.

# MATERIALS

Stated in the earlier part of this report within the Theoretical to Practical Solution section, it was mentioned that I had chosen five materials that were able to be recycled and repurposed but also are alien to the footwear design industry. Using these materials and this new idea of using these new footwear materials and present my mind and way of thinking to the established industry whilst also show casing what I can bring to the table.

The first material I had chosen is straw. Within the fashion industry today not many designers use this material enough, and for centuries we had used the material to create garments. As shown by the extensive photographic collection on TheStrawShop.com of garments from the 1800's and onwards. Within the collection are a handful of footwear pieces created using straw as a main material of the piece ***(Img.26)***. Straw is a material has is extremely durable when woven together tightly and therefore can be used to create the upper part of a footwear piece, whether that be the entire upper or a part of the upper such as the laces or eye stay. Straw fibres can also be woven with other materials to create laces that are much more durable than existing ones as stated by Helen Persson in her article ***"Straw — The Blond Goddess: The Adaptation of a Folk Tradition to Fashion"*** straw can be created into fine thread which can be introduced into laces. ***"Straw can be woven, embroidered, made into fine thread, worked as needle lace, used as veneer for marquetry, and plaited into baskets and hats" (Persson, H. 2018)***, straw is biodegradable and reusable at the end of its life cycle according to ScienceDirect, "***Straw-bale is biodegradable or reusable at the end of its useful life" (Ghaffar, S.H. 2017)***.

The second material I had chosen is rubber car tyres. According to Michelin tyres, 30 million tons of used car tyres are thrown away each year. Michelin also recycle 88% of used tyres, this is perfect as the rubber can be ground down and repurposed into smaller particles, and engineers have created concrete with ground up car tyres ***"One way to help reduce the cost of making concrete is to replace the aggregate with other materials, including used rubber tires that have been ground up into small particles. The idea kills two birds with one stone, as it's also a smart way to recycle the millions of worn down rubber tires removed from vehicles every year. But to date, engineers have only managed to create concrete that meets required strength standards using a combination of rocks and rubber" (Liszewski, A. 2022).*** Nike have been doing a similar process since the mid 1990's with their 'Nike Grind'

initiative, where they take the off cuts of the rubber outsoles and fabric and grind them down to create their material "Nike Grind" and use it on outsoles and as well in outdoor basketball courts in the United States of America, "***A basketball court surface at the Nike facility in Wilsonville, Oregon was the first test use of that recycled material. And with that, the Nike Grind program was born" (Nike, 2023).*** Using a similar process with the used car tyres, they can be ground up, repurposed and moulded into outsoles for future footwear pieces rather than using virgin rubber to create the outsoles.

The third material chosen is polyurethane carpet underlay. The reason for choosing polyurethane carpet underlay as a material for the footwear piece is because polyurethane underlay as stated in Carpetright's ***"Carpetright's underlay buying guide"*** they say that underlay ***"adds a cushioned depth of comfort underfoot" (Carpetright. 2023)*** as well Carpetright states that underlay ***"acts like a shock absorber" (Carpetright. 2023)***. Carpet underlay is widely recycled and can be recycled into many different purposes, ***"Carpet underlay, the material underneath a carpet, can also be recycled and is used for insulation and sports pitches.".*** Carpet underlay is already recycled out of polyurethane foam, therefore can be recycled endlessly with the off cuts that would be created from the footwear creation process. Carpet underlay with its cushioning and shock absorbing properties would make the material a perfect choice for the insole of the footwear piece as it would create comfort for the user's foot when wearing the footwear.

The fourth material that was chosen for the project was cardboard. Cardboard is widely recycled and can be recycled up to five times according to Inspire Waste ***"Yes, cardboard is recyclable. Whether it is being used in the home or at work, the packaging has been designed, so we can keep recycling at every opportunity. Indeed, cardboard packaging will often be recycled up to five times." (Inspire Waste. 2021).*** With this being the case cardboard is a perfect material to use within the footwear piece. Thicker cardboard is very sturdy, strong and durable, these properties make the material perfect to add structure support to footwear such as the heel counter and the toe box. These two areas need the most support as they create the most structure for the footwear piece. Using cardboard to create footwear has been proven many times such as the homemade models seen by **Autodesk Instructables *(Img.27).*** This like the straw footwear proves that the material can be used within footwear but has been underutilized within the field.

The fifth and final material chosen to be utilized within the footwear project is aluminium. Aluminium is a widely recycled material and can be recycled many times without losing its qualities as a material ***"Both steel and aluminium can be recycled time and time again without losing any quality" (Recycle.com. 2021)***. With these properties of aluminium does not lose its qualities when recycled many times, it makes it a great material to use within footwear design, but which area within footwear? Aluminium is naturally reflective and makes the perfect choice to be used as a reflective element. ***"Even in their natural state, aluminium alloys are naturally reflective, they make a perfect choice whenever it's desirable to have a material that reflects light." (Clinton Aluminum).*** With the design of my footwear piece having two sections that are reflective, using aluminium for these sections makes sense as it is reflective. The reason for the reflective parts is because it allows people to be seen at night when walking but also adds a futuristic element to the footwear piece.

With all five of these materials, it can be the dawn of a new age of footwear design. As these five materials are completely alien to the field.

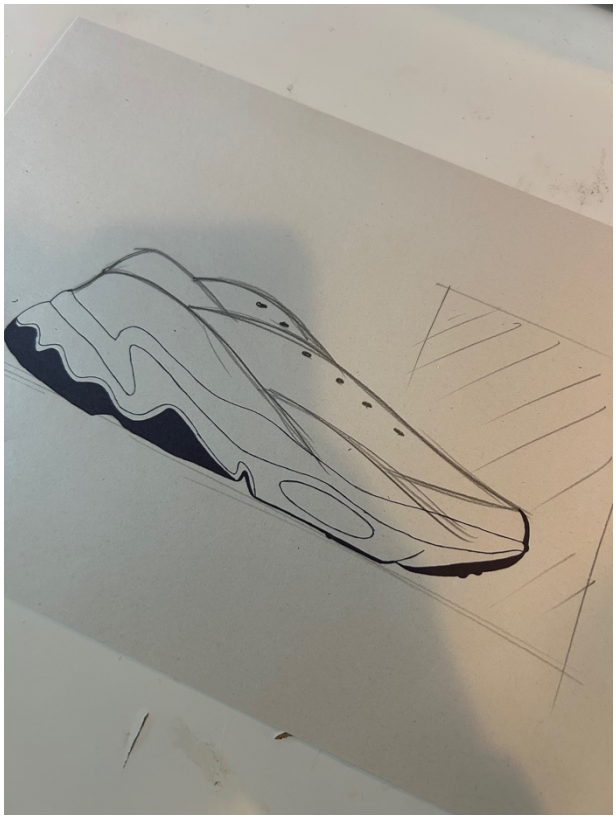
# FINAL OUTCOME

The outcome of my project came when all five of the materials were chosen and their properties were evaluated and whether they are suitable to be used within the footwear industry. With the materials that were chosen it was vital that the footwear piece regarding the design does not make the aesthetic and styling seem recycled, but rather it conforms to a regular looking footwear piece and allow the recycled materials that are being utilized to be hidden as well as being the factor that is pushing footwear ahead.

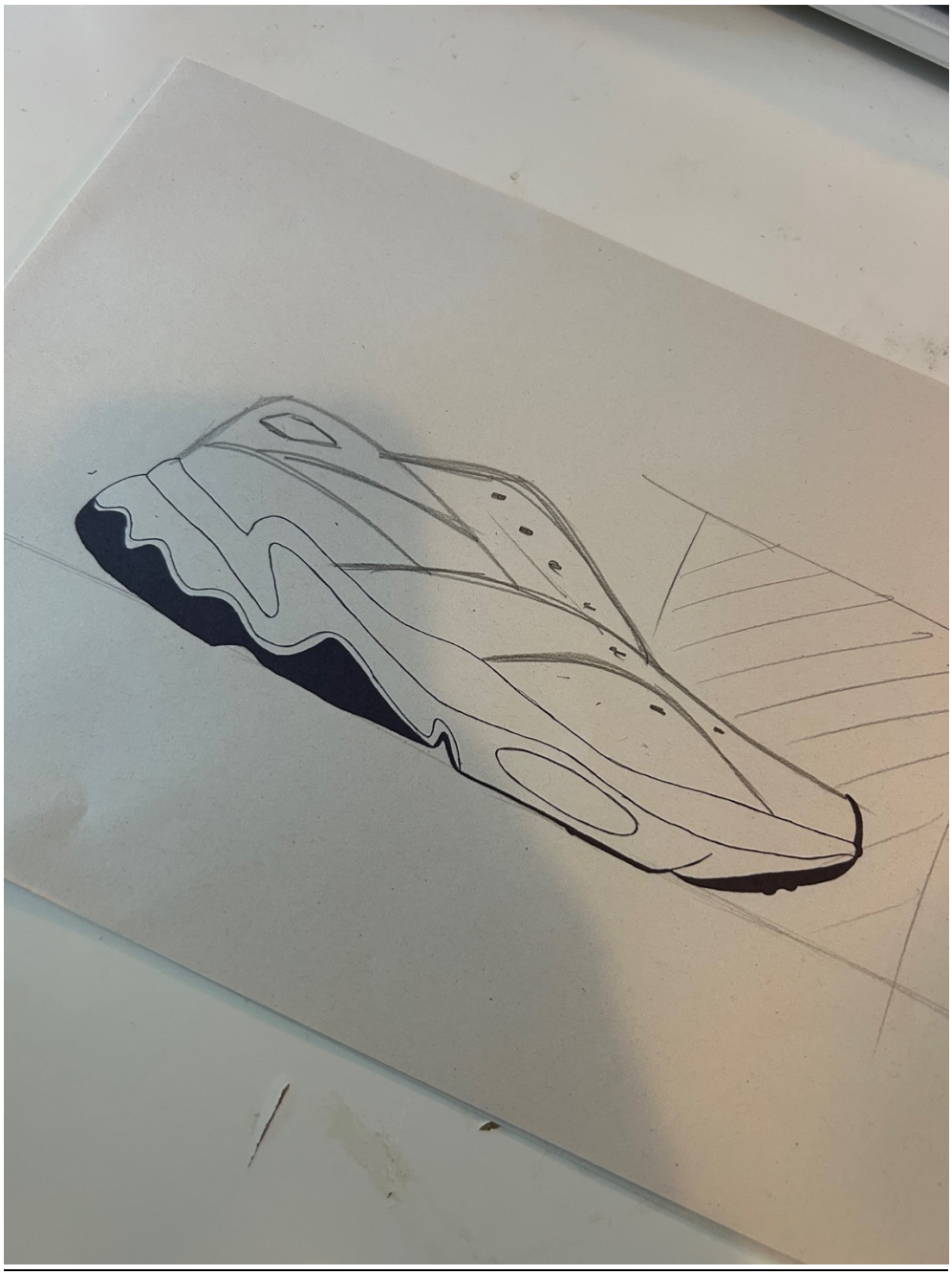
The first step within the design process was to just let my ideas flow on as many different silhouettes as possible and then after evaluating each one, narrow the best ones down and then take one forward or merge multiple together.

All designs below can be seen further in my research pack and notebook where there are different colourways being explored.

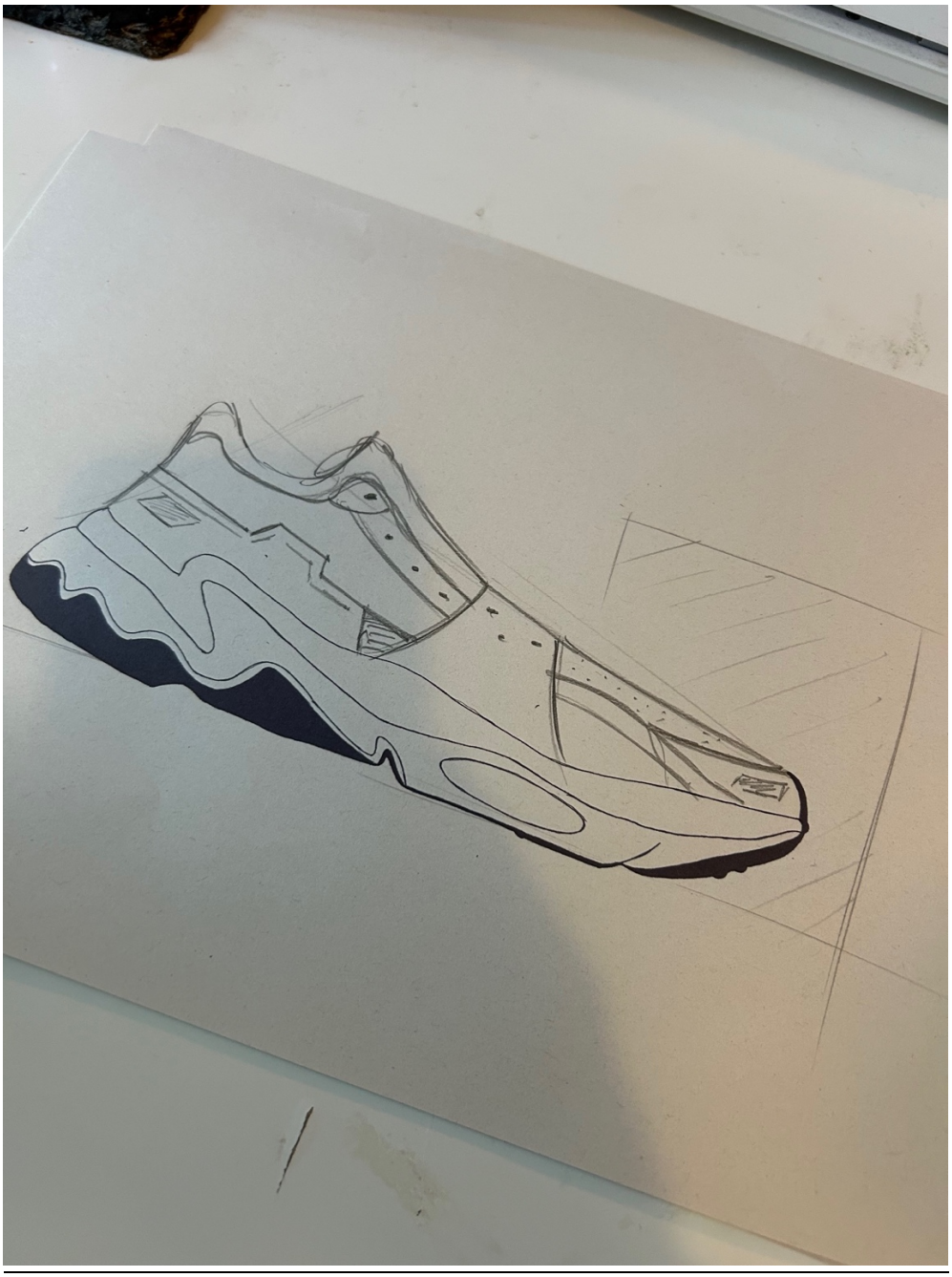
## INITIAL DESIGN 1



## INITIAL DESIGN 2



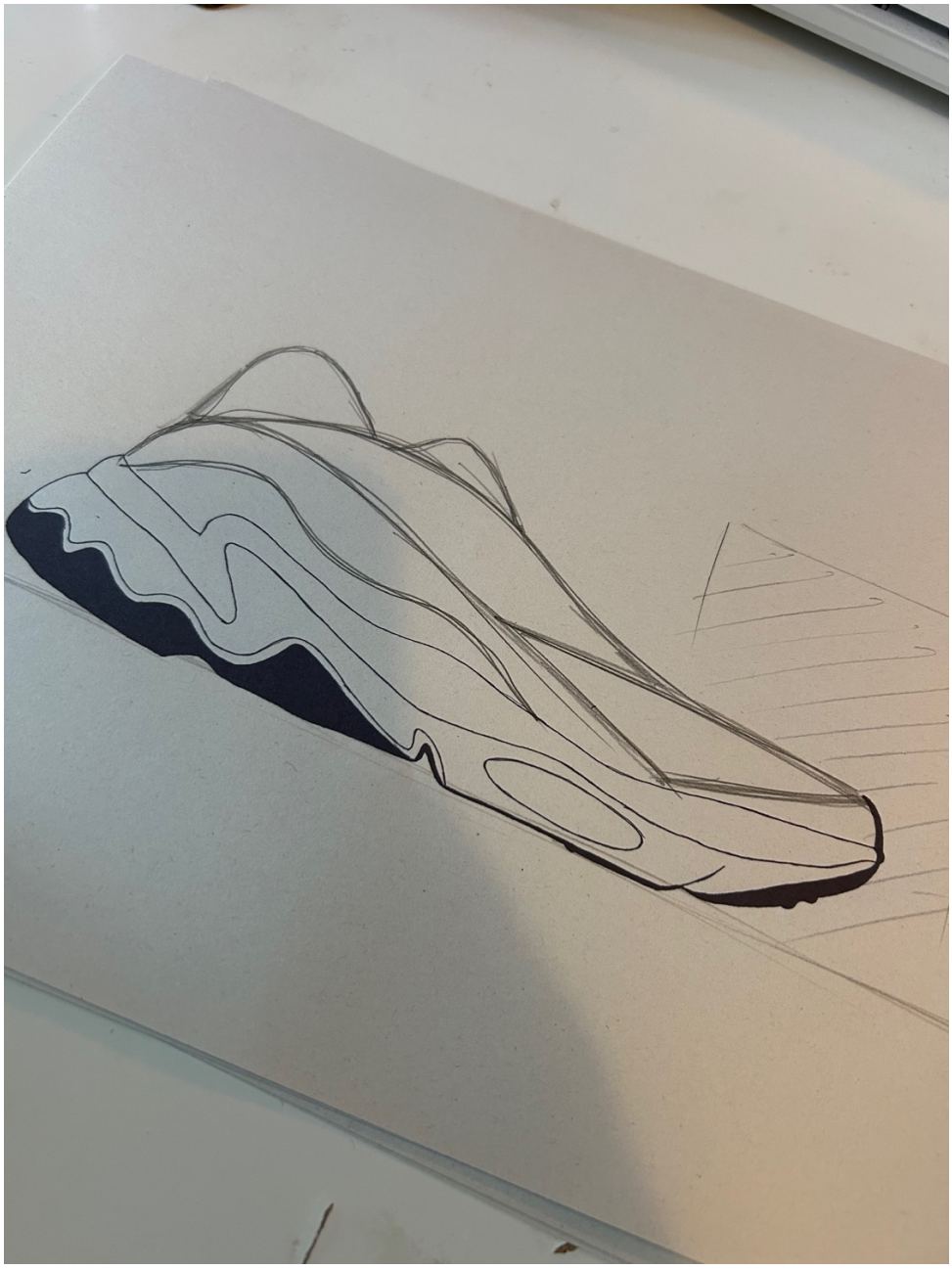
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## INITIAL DESIGN 4



## INITIAL DESIGN 5



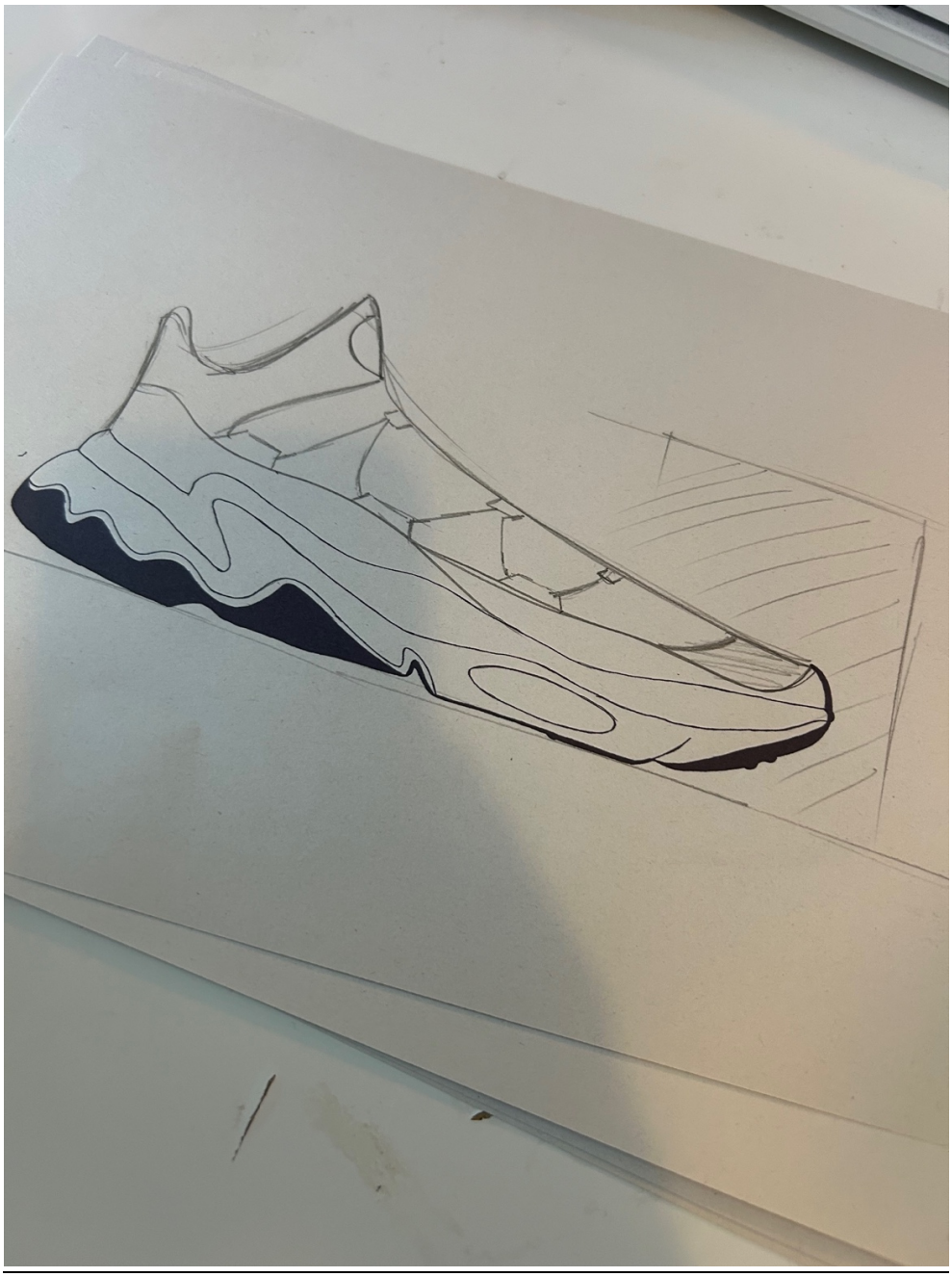
## INITIAL DESIGN 6



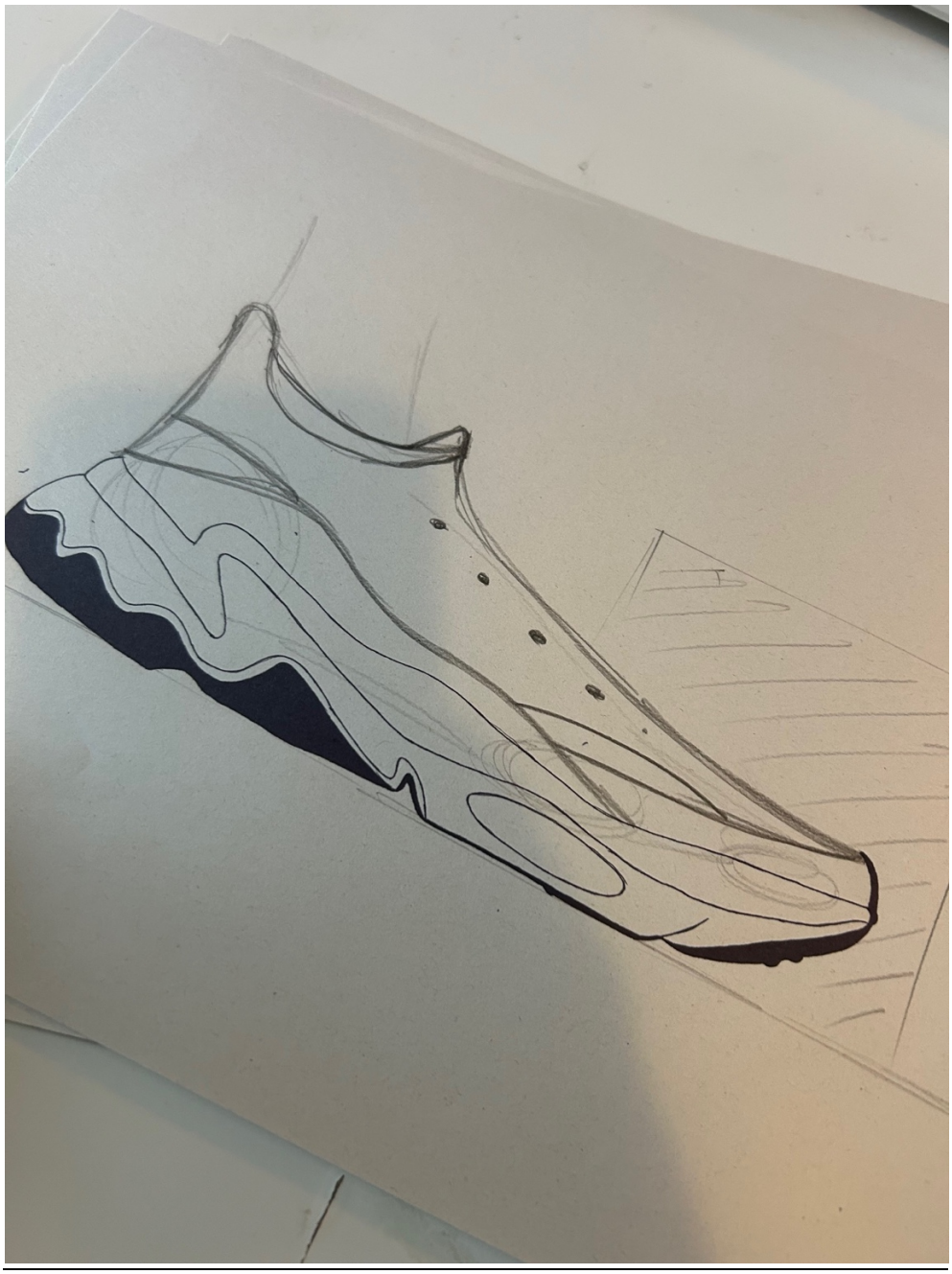
## INITIAL DESIGN 7



## INITIAL DESIGN 8



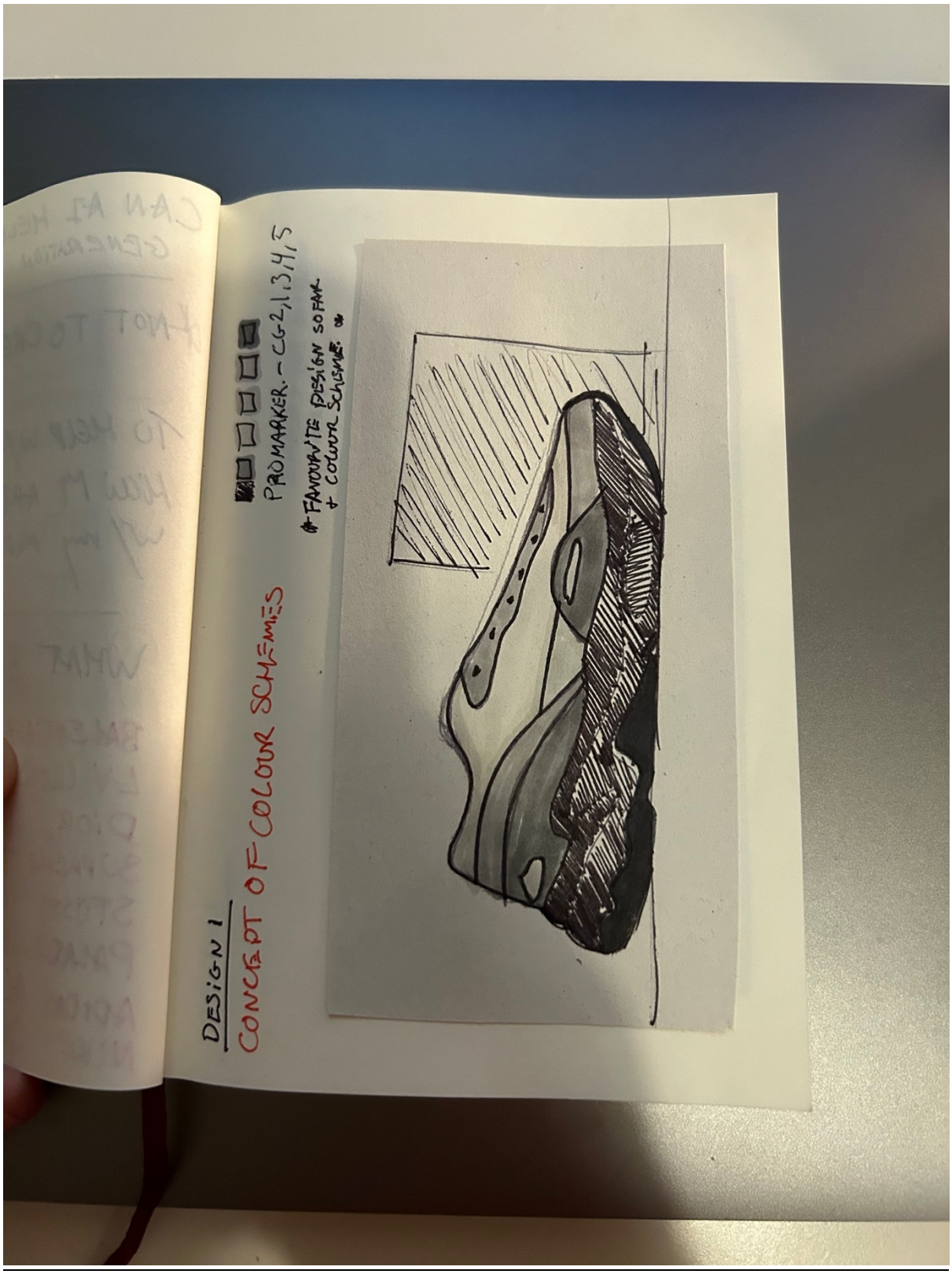
## INITIAL DESIGN 9



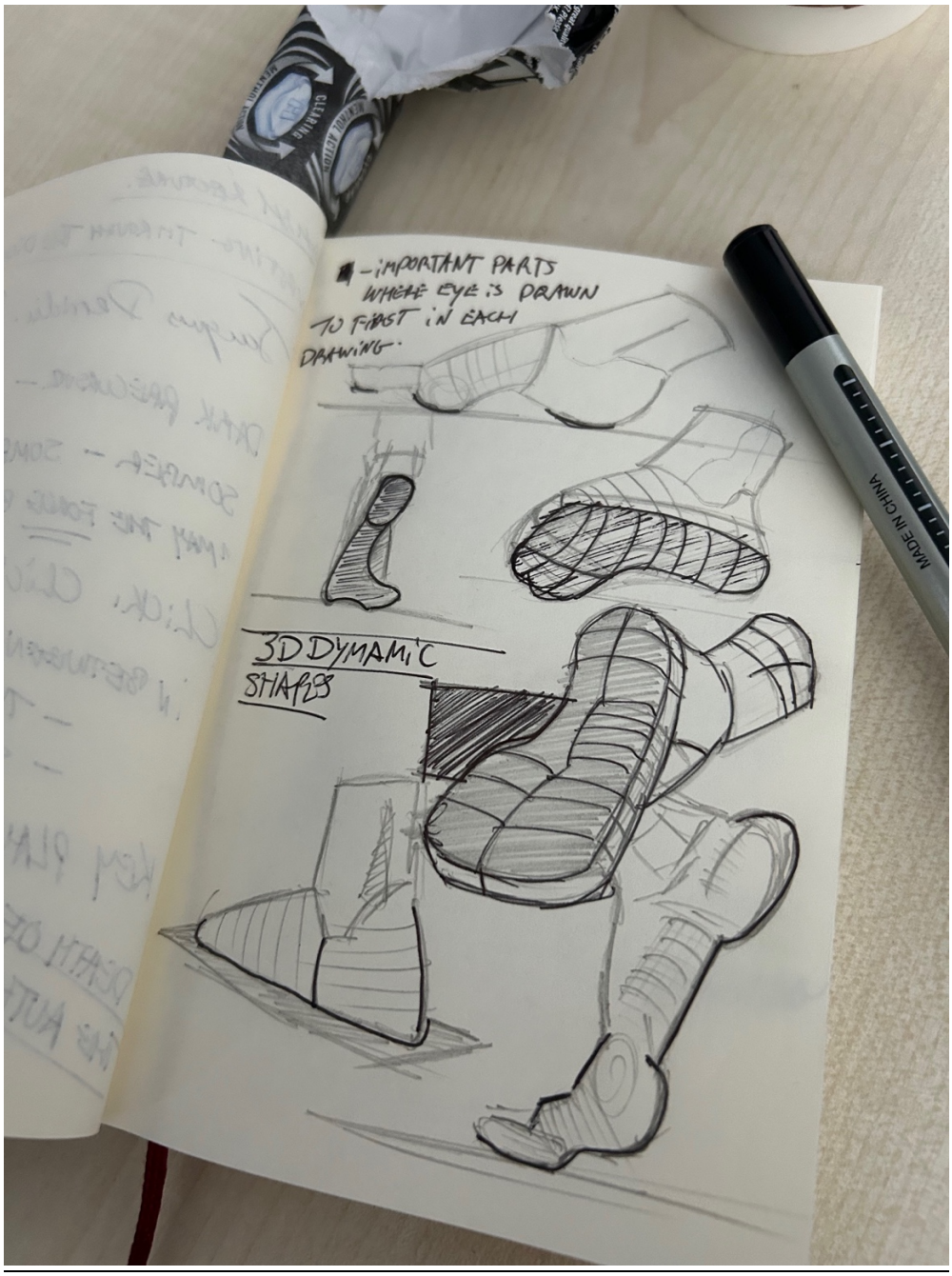
## INITIAL DESIGN 10



# COLOUR PALETTE TESTING



# DYNAMIC FOOT SKETCHES



## FINAL DESIGN “OKUSHA”

After careful consideration and looking over each initial design carefully, design number four turned out to be the one I would take forward. Although designs two and three were considered after all three were experimented with different colourways within my research pack. Design four worked better as it was a simpler design and would be perfect as the launch design for the materials to be utilized.










promarker
promarker
Winsor & Newton London W11 4AJ, UK winsornewton.com
Alcohol-based
A base d'alcool
A base de alcohol
Made in China
Winsor & Newton London W11 4AJ, UK winsornewton.com
Alcohol-based
A base d'alcool
A base de alcohol
Made in China

MOST SUCCESSFULL DRAWING



# OKUSHA

The footwear piece is named “Okusha”. Okusha is Zulu for “Dawn” and this name is perfect for this project as this is a new dawn for footwear design, therefore the name “Okusha” fits in within the narrative of this project. The name for myself personally had to fit in with my previous footwear project’s name “Eleazar” and this name does exactly that.

# CREATION

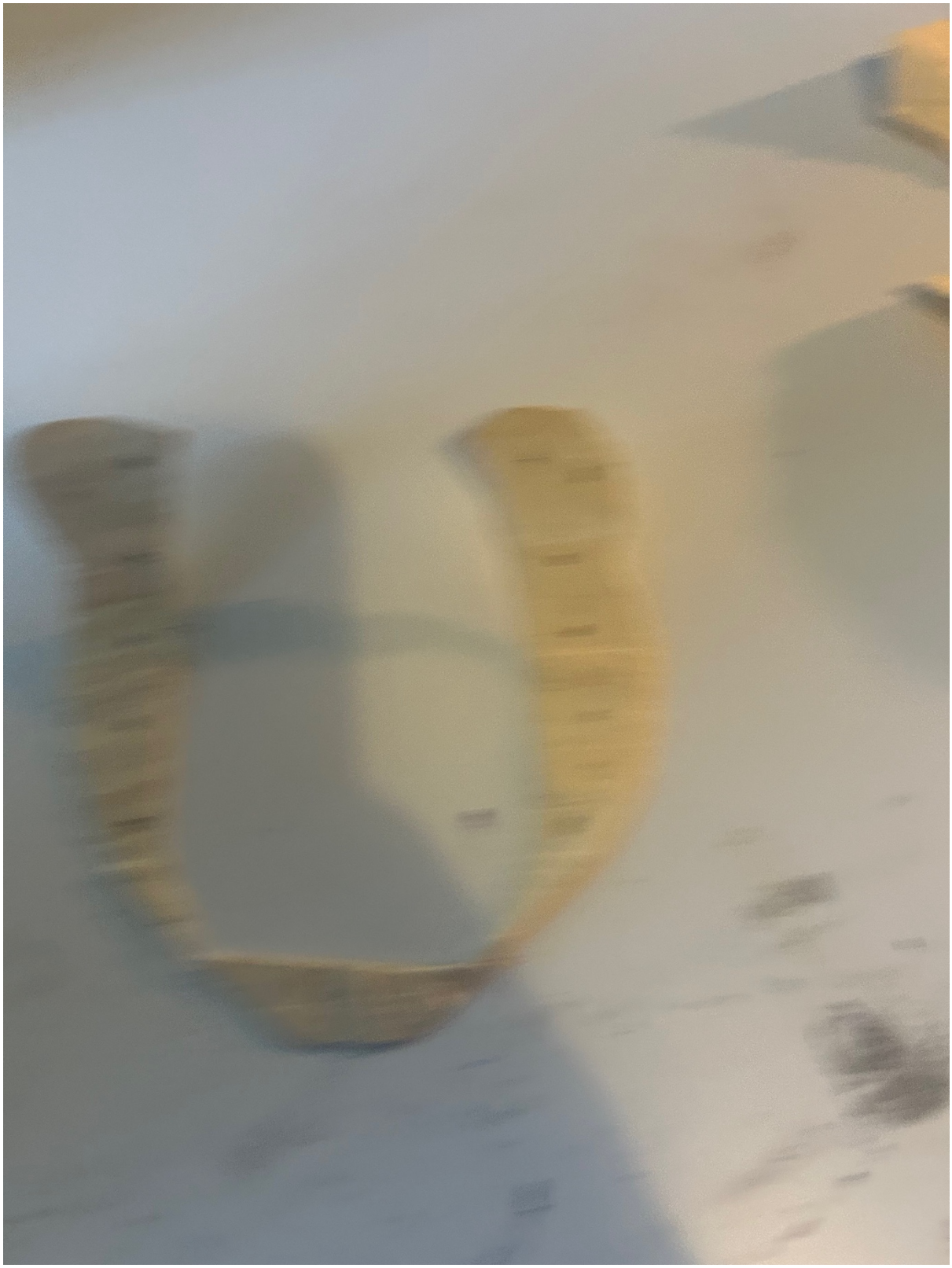
The images in this section of this report show case the creation of “Okusha”. Starting off with masking off the shoe last, once this is done it is time to sketch the design of ‘Okusha’ on to the masking tape. Once the design is completely sketched on, the next stage is to take a scalpel and carefully slice along the lines of the design removing each part carefully. Once all sections have been removed carefully, the next stage is to place them onto paper and use a pencil to draw around the shape, this is what will be then our cutting patterns to create the final piece. Once this has been done and the cutting patterns are done, the last but one stage is to stitch all the pieces together using a sewing machine and fabric glue. Using fabric glue to bind the materials together before stitching allows the fabric to stay together better and have more support.



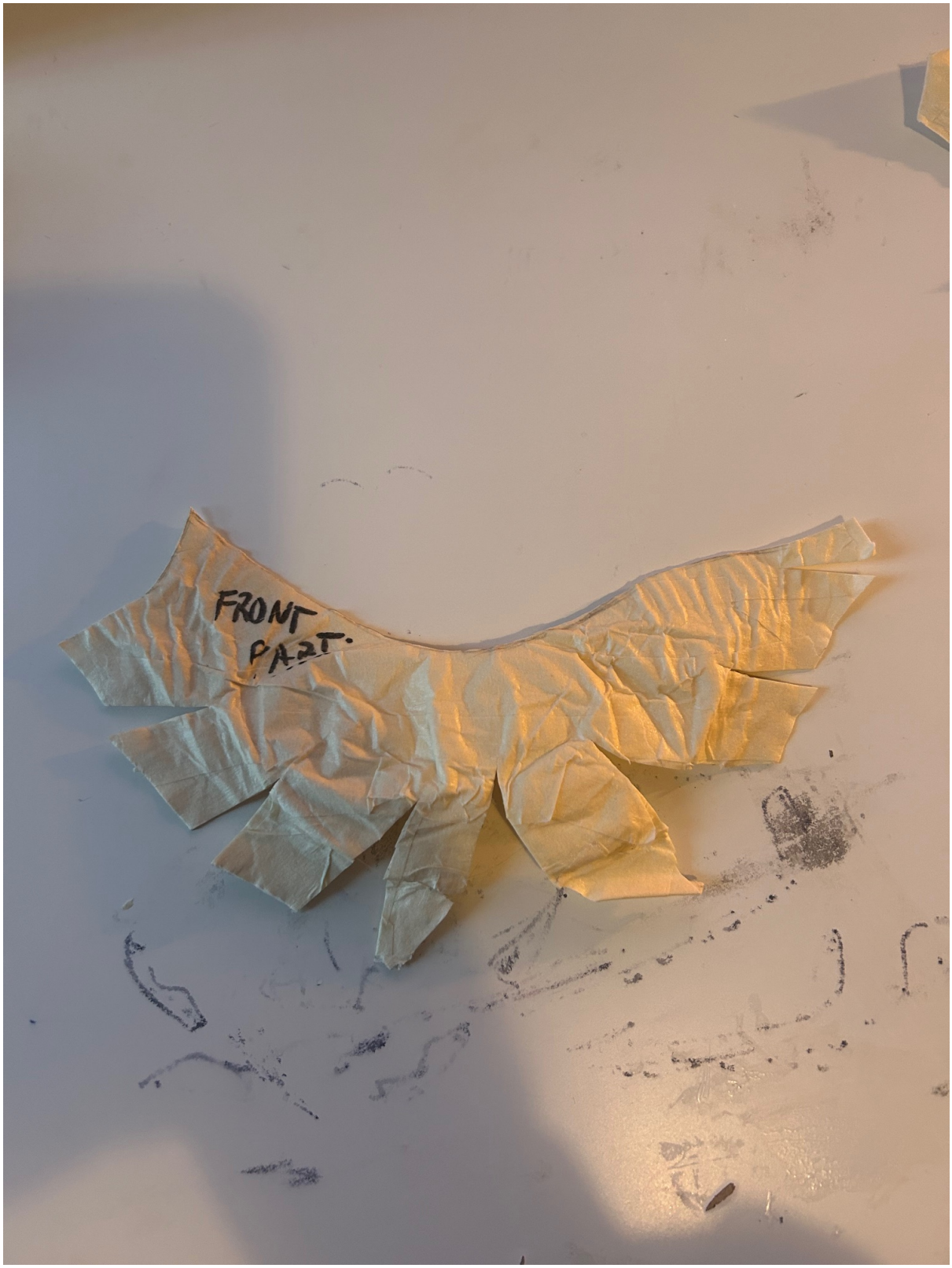

TONGUE

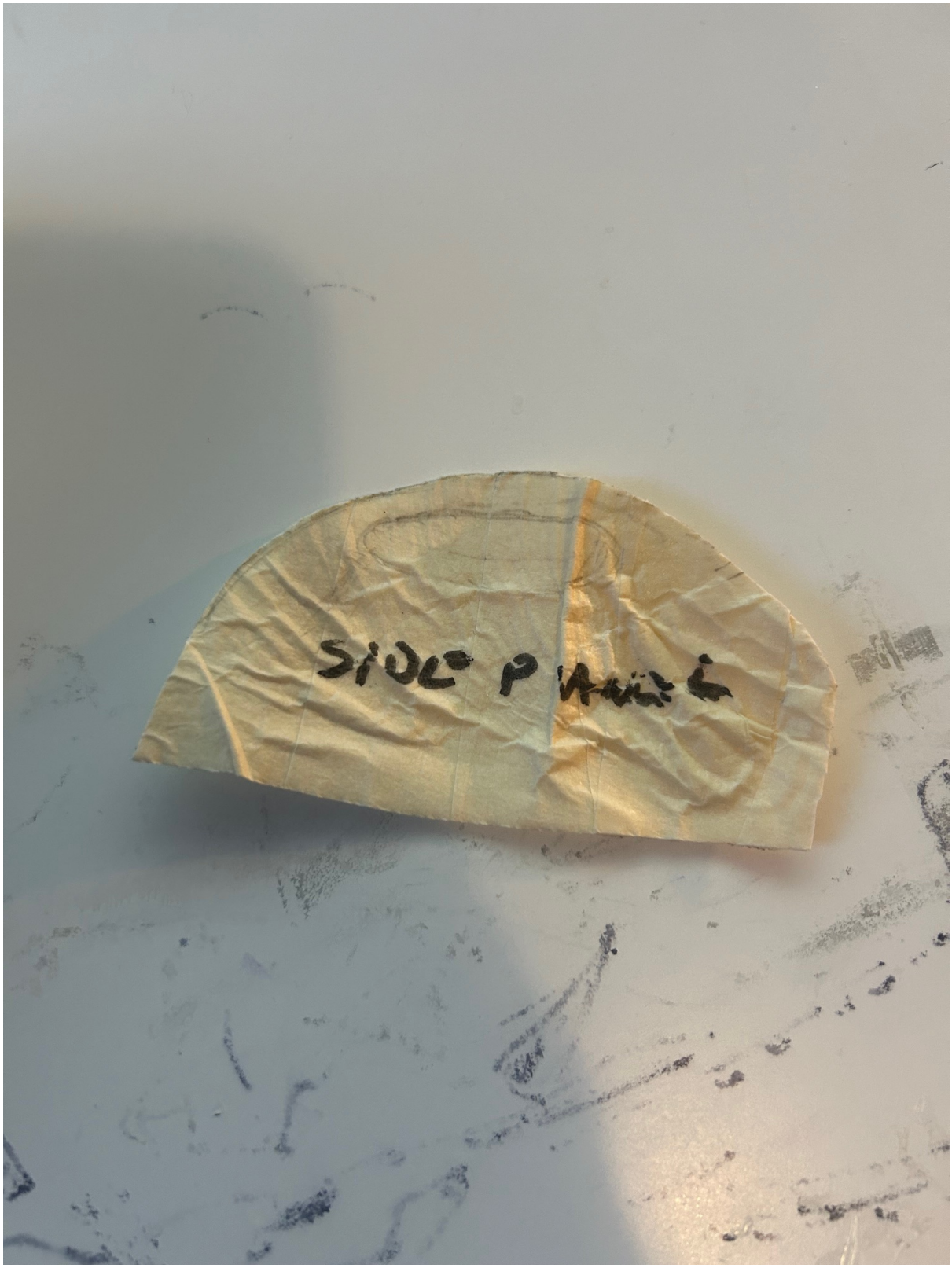

INSIDE
PANEL.



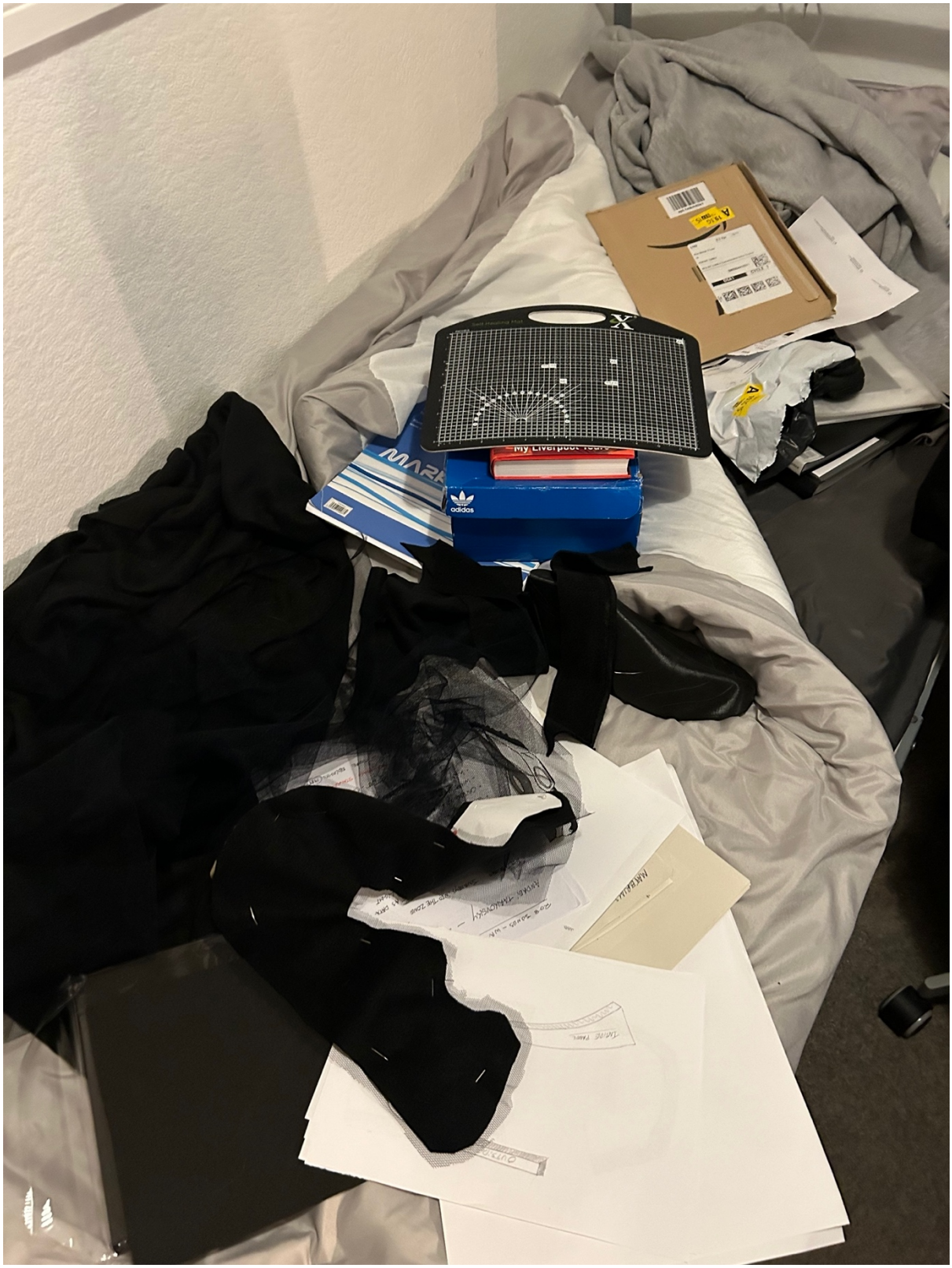





FRONT
PART.






adidas

# REPRESENTATIVE MODEL

In this section I will be showcasing the model that was created to for the exhibition show “Arrival”. The purpose of the model was to show to the world how a footwear piece can look using the materials that were intended on being used to create and the footwear piece does not aesthetically look recycled to the consumer. The representative model is constructed from black suede and black fleece material which is lining the inside section of the model. The midsole is made from EVA moulded foam and the outsole is made from moulded rubber. The materials used on this model are only used on this model. If the footwear piece is to be made into production the materials would be in shades of grey which is the launch colour way of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a side on profile shot of the lateral side of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a side on profile shot of the internal side of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a back profile shot of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a front profile shot of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a above  profile shot of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above is a ¾ profile shot of the representative model of ‘Okusha’.



Above are pictures of the materials in glass cubes on display in the exhibition.

# FINAL OUTCOME

As mentioned before this project was to introduce materials that are alien to the footwear design industry. An example of a footwear piece was created to represent how a piece of footwear using these materials would look like with my philosophy of the footwear piece not looking recycled like the materials that were used. The piece that was created was a representative model. Below are images showing how the model as well as the materials were displayed during the exhibition “Arrival” in December 2023. It was important to create a representative model for this project to convey the message to the audience, this model was supported with four glass cubes containing the raw materials as well as a 800mm x 800mm Foamex board with a blown up sketch of “Okusha”. The reason to have all three elements on display was to allow the audience observing the piece of work there would be a clear correlation as to what the work is about.

Being inspired by designers such as Steven Smith, Tinker Hatfield and Nicole McLaughlin. The project is pushing forward what footwear design can be by being inspired by these great designers and pushing my name into the industry and what I can bring to it. Being highly inspired by Smiths work with Adidas the design ques take from that. As well-being inspired by the three stripes from a early age as explained previously.

The only major problem that occurred during the whole creation process of the piece was that there was meant to be a fifth glass cube on display during the exhibition but the glass technician forgot to make the fifth cube for the aluminium to be displayed. But this mistake helped as the displayed flowed better with only four materials showcasing rather than five.


OKUSHA
OKUSHA

# CONCLUSION

To conclude my work, I must consider if I delivered the objectives I set out for the praxis. I believe I achieved in what I set out at the start of this praxis was met and that I have successfully introduced materials that are not considered for footwear and are alien to the industry.

**Objective One** was to bring four to five materials that are alien to footwear and implement them into a piece of footwear where the materials are not the focal point as compared to others on the market. I believe this was met as the materials chosen can be introduced without much alteration to the industry's production methods as the materials used are being introduced are replacing elements that are already within the footwear piece, therefore starting the iteration process of the new age of footwear design.

**Objective Two** was to design a piece of footwear that did not look like it was made from the recycled materials that are being utilized and have the design be more traditional and look like a regular piece of footwear you would find in a store. And with this I believe I achieved this objective I set out when starting this project with the design of "Okusha" and the representative model that was created.

Overall, I believe I achieved the original objectives set out at the start of the praxis. Whilst also creating an interesting design for a footwear piece and introducing a new idea to the footwear industry. The product is a simple idea and can spark a new wave of ideas in footwear design.

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# IMAGERY



*Img.1, Adidas ZX Flux 'Prism'*



*Img.2, Steven Smith*



*Img.3, New Balance 550*



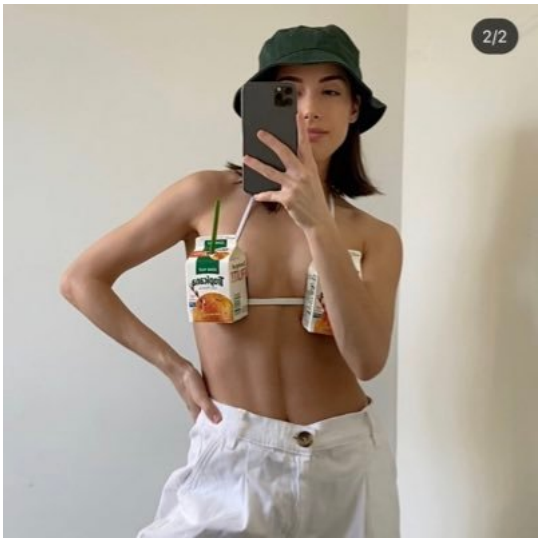
*Img.4, YEEZY 700 ' Wave Runner'*




*Img.5, YEEZY 350v2 'Beluga'*




*Img.6, Nicole McLaughlin*




*Img.7, Orange Juice Carton Bikini Top*



*Img.8, Volleyball Slipper*



*Img.9, Reworked Carhartt UGG Boot*



*Img.10, Tinker Hatfield*




*Img.11, Nike Air Max 1*




*Img.12, Nike Air Huarache*




*Img.13, Nike Air Max 90*




*Img.14, Air Jordan 3*



*Img.15, Air Jordan 4*



*Img.16, Air Jordan 11*



*Img.17, Air Jordan 12*



*Img.18, Air Jordan 13*



*Img.19,  Air Jordan 20*



*Img.20,  Air Jordan 15*



*Img.21, Nike Space Hippie 04*




*Img.22, Adidas Superstar*




*Img.23, Adidas Gazelle*



*Img.24, Nike Air Jordan 1*



*Img.25, Nike Dunk Low*



*Img.26,* ***Straw shoes 1850_1879***



*Img.27, Cardboard shoes.*