

Jenna Wengler 2306090

Module name: Independent Project

ADDA6006

Protection

Word count: 2700

Table of contents

List of illustrations	page 3
Introduction	page 4
Fashion and Armour	page 5
Fashion and Identity	page 9
Fashion and Gender	page 12
Intentions	page 15
Bibliography	page 17

List of illustrations

Figure 1 - Shelly's Blog. (2010). *Alice in Wonderland – Vintage costume heaven*. [online]

Available at: <https://scrappedprincess.wordpress.com/2010/05/03/alice-in-wonderland-vintage-costume-heaven/>.

Figure 2 - Alice (2025). *Alice's wardrobe*. [online] Alice in Wonderland Wiki. Available at:

https://aliceinwonderland.fandom.com/wiki/Alice%27s_wardrobe.

Figure 3 - [FILMGRAB]. (2016). *Alice in Wonderland*. [online] Available at: [https://film-](https://film-grab.com/2016/06/21/alice-in-wonderland/#bwg405/24687)

[grab.com/2016/06/21/alice-in-wonderland/#bwg405/24687](https://film-grab.com/2016/06/21/alice-in-wonderland/#bwg405/24687) [Accessed 17 Dec. 2025].

Figure 4 - Forsyth, L. (2022). *Fashion History Around the World: Punk*. [online] The Pace

Press. Available at: <https://thepacepress.org/11353/columns/fashion-columns/fashion-history-around-the-world-punk/>.

Figure 5 - Corridor8. (n.d.). *Making Himself Claire: Grayson Perry at Walker Art Gallery*.

[online] Available at: <https://corridor8.co.uk/article/making-claire-grayson-perry-walker-art-gallery/>.

Introduction

Throughout this body of work, I will explore the connections between identity and gender, and how fashion is used as a form of armour. I intend to examine the aspects of physically wearing armour as a form of self-protection and how, as a society, we have adapted and translated this into fashion and other forms of self-expression and protection. Fashion and clothing are a physical means of self-protection on a psychological level, but also as a form of identity and a sense of community.

I am exploring these themes because I am inspired by fantasy medieval themes, costume design, fashion and identity. Fantasy medieval fashion is a specific interest of mine, as it is rarely seen in today's media. However, when utilised correctly, it has a large fan base and showcases intricate and detailed designs, helping to reveal the character's personality and their narrative. I think this is important for the immersion and relatability of the viewer, but it also mirrors the real world and how people can dress to showcase themselves, their personal interests, and their political views. This can be used to not only stand out but also blend in, fitting in with the crowd. Clothing and fashion can reflect both people and world issues.

Fashion and Armour



Figure 1

In order to delve deeper into the correlation between fashion and armour, I will be looking at the character Alice, from Tim Burton's 2010 film *Alice in Wonderland*, who exemplifies both fashion as a form of self-expression and protection.

At the start of the film, a man is discussing trading routes with a group of gentlemen in different countries. We then see a child version of Alice appear, and the man, her father, puts her back to bed whilst she explains her dream to him. This will be relevant later on. After an unspecified amount of time passes, Alice is seen in a carriage with her mother, heading to a manor, dressed in a blue, Victorian-style gown with long sleeves, as shown in Figure 1. Alice's mother is fussing over her and what she is wearing, and upon discovering that she is not "dressed properly" (*Alice in Wonderland*, 2010) in a corset and stockings, chides Alice over it. Alice replies that she is against it, and comments, "Who's

to say what is proper?" (Alice in Wonderland, 2010). Equating wearing a corset to wearing a codfish on your head. Once at the manor, it is mentioned that Alice's father had passed and that his trading company had been sold by her mother.

Events continue to unfold, with Alice being proposed to at her own engagement party. The scene is a sea of pale coloured garments and lace; Alice's outfit blends in with the crowd. Alice hesitates and is unsure of the prospects of marriage and how to act upon it, instead choosing to 'run away' to follow the rabbit she had seen earlier on. This leads her to fall into Wonderland.

Blue is seen as a colour that represents integrity, competence and predictability. It is unclear whether her mother chose her gown for her, but these qualities are reflected unconsciously and consciously through her attire. This might have been chosen on purpose to show that Alice is all these things as a 'front' to who she really is.

This is perhaps also why her mother was fussing over her so much and why she was upset about Alice's lack of 'proper' attire, as she was attending such a large public event with people of perceived prestige.



Figure 2

Throughout the rest of the film, Alice goes through several different gown styles, and they reflect both the situation she is in and her narrative and perspective in them. One of the most notable is her red, white and black gown made for her by the Queen of Hearts when Alice is discovered in her garden, and the Queen takes a liking to her for her unusually large height and size. This reflects how Alice is trying to fit in and not attract attention from the Queen, wearing the clothing as protection against detection.

This is also indicative of the Queen of Hearts, and how, because she has an abnormally large head, she surrounds herself with people who also have unusual features, so as not to stand out and seem normal among her subjects. This speaks to her insecurity about her looks and how, even in her own kingdom, she does not wish to be judged and thus rules with an iron fist.



Figure 3

Towards the end of the film, when Alice faces the Red Queen and the Jabberwocky on the chessboard battlefield, she wears full body armour along with a sword. This physically symbolises her development, from her hesitance and unassertiveness about marriage and her life in general, to her confidence and conviction about her choices and of herself as her own person, not blending in with the crowd like before. After defeating the Jabberwocky and saying her goodbyes to her friends, Alice leaves Wonderland. She returns to her engagement party, rejects it and takes her own life into her hands, no longer afraid to do what she wants. Alice decides on a business venture and continues her late father's work, travelling to trade on a ship with her mother's support.

Fashion and Identity

Fashion and identity are inextricably linked; fashion has long been used as a form of political image, class, expression and protest. Fashion is used as a tool to stand out or fit in to today's society. "Fashion is a reflection of the social context in each era. It is evidence of the historical moment and time in which we are living." (Google Arts & Culture, n.d.)

With the modernisation and commercialisation of clothing and fashion, the lines of wealth and class can be strategically blurred. With aesthetics like 'old money' and 'academia', people can imitate and influence their identity and perception. Whereas fashion was once something that greatly separated the classes, not only in terms of cost, but also in quality and design. Fashion has historically been an indicator of wealth, class, and royalty. For example, Tyrian purple, a dye made from hundreds of crushed snails from three species collected in the Eastern Mediterranean, Morocco, and North Africa, was once three times as valuable and expensive as gold.



Figure 4

Fashion is not just entirely about class and wealth; it is also a form of expression and protest. Punk, for example, is a subcultural movement that originated in the late 1970s and still remains relevant today. It is a political, style and music movement that drew a line “ in the cultural sand to reboot and rejuvenate youth culture as a site of provocative fun, protest and imagination”(Worley, 2019).

The UK punk scene can be traced back to the Sex Pistols, a punk rock band, and SEX, a shop in London founded by Vivienne Westwood. SEX mirrored the worldly problems of that time; the clothing and fashion produced were meant to both provoke and confuse, serving as symbols of politics and protest for the youth and anyone from all genders and ethnicities. Punk held key values of anti-capitalism and anti-establishment, by participating in punk, you show your support of these values. Punk infected the music, art, writing, and discussion of that time, with it later developing into further subcultures of taste and opinion.

Gyaru is another example of expression and rebellion through clothing and action, originating in Tokyo, Japan in the 1990's and shaped by its beauty standards and culture. The environment of that time played a significant role in the emergence of the subculture, with the prevailing societal beauty standard for women being one that favoured natural, pale-skinned, subservient, and demure individuals. The gyaru subculture was and still is a form of protest against these beauty standards, with skin-tight clothing, dyed hair, and heavy makeup being the signs of rebellion. The most recognisable look from that time consisted of tanned skin, blonde hair, revealing tight clothes in loud colours and patterns, and heavy, noticeable makeup with fake lashes and long, decorated nails. Gyaru also influenced the way people acted and spoke, with more outspoken and confident women

sharing their voices and their own language within the subculture. This subcultural movement influenced the media of that time, with movies, anime and manga having characters inspired by the subculture.

In today's society, how we present ourselves is important, individual style and professional style being what people see first before they meet us as individuals. Some go as far as not employing people who do not fit their 'company image' if their individual style does not suit their taste and bias. Whereas others will change their style to conform to one that is more professional, whilst still maintaining individualistic style choices.

Self-expression and identity are also shown through the way people decorate themselves and their bodies. Hair dyes, piercings, and tattoos are more popular than ever in our history, driven by commercialisation and growing popularity on social media among younger people. Although tattoos have a long and rich spiritual/cultural history, they have become increasingly widespread and commonplace to see than in previous times.

These things allow for self-expression on a deeper, more semi-permanent to permanent level. Tattoos are often chosen or designed with intention and meaning. Whether that be just a simple fondness of a character or a visual aesthetic of a motif or pattern. To deep emotional ties with complex meanings and symbolism behind the chosen imagery.

Fashion and Gender

Fashion has always been a large part of reflecting gender and has been used to express and 'confine' gender roles. Gender has influenced clothing and fashion, from the shapes and materials to the trends and stylistic choices of each century. Historically, feminine clothing has had a lot more restrictions than its male counterpart. With corsets, bustles and many heavy, layered skirts from the Victorian era, for example. The events of that time period were reflected in the clothing and fashion.

Dress also reflects social differences between the sexes, such as women's more restricted public lives, the need for men to project authority, and the emphasis on physical attractiveness as the measure of a woman's value. (Ablillethun and Welters, 201, Page 202)

The more restrictive a woman's clothing was in that time, showed how high her societal status was as the clothes restricted her movements and stopped her involvement in activities. This was important as a form of identity, as the people of that time valued showing their wealth over their comfort. It was also very important, as it served as a distinction between gender roles, which were particularly rigid at the time. Women, especially those of higher social standing, were viewed as mothers whose primary role was to manage the household, care for their children, and support their husbands, while also interacting with society as needed.

Menswear, while less restrictive than womenswear, can be seen as less expressive and detail-oriented in comparison; however, they were also held a higher position in gender roles in society. The clothing could not be as restrictive as women's because they were the ones in work all day, even those of higher social standing, as the freedom of

movement was afforded to them. The lower class still abided by these gender roles, but the women often could not be as restricted as high society women, as the need for basic necessities and food outweighed being in impoverished situations and needing to work as well.

If we go further back than the Victorian era, to when people actually wore armour in combat to protect themselves from physical attacks, a similar sentiment is mirrored. Armour was made for men, and their protection, ready for war, whereas women were rarely seen in combat and armour, again, as they were often the ones to stay home and care for the children. There are only a few rare examples of women who wore armour and actually fought; one notable example is Joan of Arc. Who was a French peasant girl who led an army to stop the English from conquering France, and was later burned alive as a heretic.

In modern times, physical armour is seen less, as well as many of the rigid gender norms of the past, and is replaced with clothing and fashion that anyone can participate in. The rare glimpses into the past we see of armour and associated items are either viewed as high-fashion pieces on red carpets and at major events, or as pieces in historical and fantasy medieval films and TV series.

Although there are negative comments and actions towards people wearing different gendered clothing and looking unusual, people find communities based on their fashion choices and interests. Many also take gendered fashion as a form of armour, for example, some trans people use gendered clothing to blend in and look like their true gender, not being perceived as anything but, and just wanting to conform to those image ideals.

This also overlaps with fashion and identity, as people choose to express both their gender and identity simultaneously through their fashion choices. Celebrated ceramicist Grayson Perry is a clear example of this expression. He has been cross-dressing since childhood and uses women's clothing to express himself, as well as to provoke reactions in others.

He describes himself as a transvestite and for him cross-dressing has an exciting, sexual aspect but he has no desire to become a female, nor to dress as a woman full-time. (National Museums Liverpool, n.d.)

He created a persona, an alter ego, Claire, who appears in his art in various forms and public settings. Perry designed most of his outfits for Claire, using it as a creative outlet with bold colours, patterns, shapes and silhouettes. He also works with fashion students from Central St. Martin's every year in a competition to make dresses for Claire.



Figure 5

Intentions

The outcome of this project proposal will be a series of gender-neutral, feminine-leaning collection of fashion prints and textiles.

Research for this project will be drawn from physical media and writing, such as fantasy medieval series – House of the Dragon, Game of Thrones, as well as Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland and Dracula Untold. I will be looking at medieval texts that include illuminated text and illustrated stories as a reference for writing.

I am creating this collection of fashion prints and textiles to showcase the complexity of the human experience and how we use fashion as armour to both express and protect ourselves. I will explore these themes using a variety of techniques and processes to experiment with different results, as I do not want to limit myself or my potential outcomes. I want to specifically explore how to make fashion that imitates the physical form, shape and pattern of armour, potentially using laser cutting and engraving on leather and suede to achieve this. I also intend to experiment with textures and mark-making to replicate a wood engraving style to imitate medieval-style artwork and tapestries. Embroidery will be used to experiment with creating details and similarly styled medieval textiles.

I will explore both imagery as a whole and fantasy medieval imagery that has an allegorical meaning behind it, and apply this as a non-physical, drawing, expressed media, manifestation of protection and expression. I am going to draw from research and both physical world subjects, such as living animals and depictions of mythical creatures, for example, horses, unicorns, dragons, wyrms and Medusa, to create these

images. This will present itself in the form of motifs and detailed, repeating patterns, with a possible hint of visual storytelling and communication through colour.

I intend to explore a darker and richer colour palette, incorporating some colour psychology to add allegorical meaning. Possible colour palette includes rich dark reds, blacks and deep lustrous blue hues. The fabrics I choose will be heavy in substance, with colour, embellishments and meaningful details. This proposed collection could be appropriate for film, theatre, as well as individual styling. It will be a bespoke collection which holds meaning to the individual and appeals to their own individual sense of style, connecting to the imagery behind the pieces.

Bibliography

Alice in Wonderland. (2010).

Amine Lahhab (2025). *Dressed to belong: How fashion shapes identity and perception - Neuro & Psycho*. [online] neuroetpsycho. Available at:
<https://www.neuroetpsycho.com/en/fashion-identity-social-perception/>.

Digby, A. (1992). Victorian Values and Women in Public and Private. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, [online] 78(78), pp.195–215. Available at:
<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/4031/78p195.pdf>.

Fashion Unfiltered. (2019). *Grayson Perry, Britain's Dress-up Doll*. [online] Available at:
<https://fashionunfiltered.com/culture/2019/grayson-perry-britains-dress-up-doll/>.

Google Arts & Culture. (2016). *Fashion and Identity - Google Arts & Culture*. [online] Available at: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/fashion-and-identity-museo-del-objeto-del-objeto/DQVR24yDVI1Elg?hl=en>. [Accessed 17 Dec. 2025].

Heaton, J. (2024). *Incredibly Rare Tyrian Purple Discovered at Carlisle Archaeology Dig*. [online] Wardell Armstrong. Available at: <https://www.wardell-armstrong.com/tyrian-purple-discovered-at-archaeology-dig/> [Accessed 17 Dec. 2025].

Hughes, K. (2017). *Gender roles in the 19th century*. [online] British Library. Available at: <https://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century/>.

Lanhers, Y. and Vale, M. (2023). Saint Joan of Arc. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [online] Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Joan-of-Arc>.

London Image Institute (2020). *Color psychology: How Do Colors Affect Mood & emotions?* [online] London Image Institute. Available at:
<https://londonimageinstitute.com/how-to-empower-yourself-with-color-psychology/>.

Nally, C. (2019). *Goth - Museum of Youth Culture*. [online]
www.museumofyouthculture.com. Available at:
<https://www.museumofyouthculture.com/goth/>.

National Museums Liverpool. (2025). *Making Himself Claire: Grayson Perry's Dresses*.
[online] Available at: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/whatson/walker-art-gallery/exhibition/making-himself-claire-grayson-perrys-dresses#section--the-exhibition>. [Accessed 17 Dec. 2025].

Niko (n.d.). *NihongoShark*. [online] www.nihongoshark.com. Available at:
<https://www.nihongoshark.com/post/gyaru>.

Parker, S. (2020). *Gender roles in the victorian era*. [online] Back in the Day of. Available at: <https://backinthedayof.co.uk/gender-roles-in-the-victorian-era>.

Rivera, A. (2025). *More Than Fabric: Fashion as Identity*. [online] The Science Survey. Available at: <https://thesciencesurvey.com/features/2025/04/24/more-than-fabric-fashion-as-identity/>.

The (2024). *Strike Magazines*. [online] Strike Magazines. Available at:
<https://www.strikemagazines.com/blog-2-1/the-women-yearn-for-armor>.

Tuzio, A. (2020). *Vivienne Westwood and punk culture | Collateral.al*. [online] Collateral. Available at: <https://www.collateral.al/en/vivienne-westwood-punk-culture-style/>.

UnderGround (2021). *The Story Of Subculture: GOTH*. [online] Underground. Available at: <https://underground-england.com/the-story-of-subculture-goth/>.

van Braam, H. (2024). *Blue Color: Psychology, Meaning and Symbolism*. [online] Color Psychology. Available at: <https://www.colorpsychology.org/blue/>.

wearablehistory.org. (n.d.). *Wearable History - Restrictiveness*. [online] Available at: <https://wearablehistory.org/restrictiveness>.

Wilson, D. (2018). *Born to the Purple*. [online] Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Available at: <https://carnegiemnh.org/born-to-the-purple/>.

Worley, M. (2019). *Punk - Museum of Youth Culture*. [online] Museum of Youth Culture. Available at: <https://www.museumofyouthculture.com/punk/>.

Zaria Gorvett (2023). *Tyrian purple: The lost ancient pigment that was more valuable than gold*. [online] Bbc.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/future/article/20231122-tyrian-purple-the-lost-ancient-pigment-that-was-more-valuable-than-gold>.