



To respect an animal, the man  
must acknowledge its life as  
equal to his.

With its skin in their hands,  
man must make the leather  
and shape it with humility.

Unlike modern leather, one  
should accept all marks of  
former life as unique  
attributes rather than flaws.

At last, they shall step away  
from the path of the animal,  
and realize themselves but a  
small part of their journey.



# INTRODUCTION

When my interest of leather started to bloom, I had no idea how deep the rabbit hole went. At a similar time of discovering vegetable tanning, I learned that the modern leather barely represents the animal sacrificed.

The goal of this project is to show respect to the animals through the handling of their skin. Thus it is important that the making of the leather is done naturally and the leather keeps its integral shape.



# CHAPTER 1

## VEGETANNING





A special thanks to:

Lene Zachariassen - For being my mentor in leather tanning, as well as donating two goat skins for the project.

Þóru Sif Kópsdóttir - For accompanying and supporting me during the project, allowing me access to a workshop and donating ten sheep skin for the project.

Teitur Björgvinsson - For letting my dreams become reality by donating abundance of dried spruce bark.

Litten Nystrøm - For the endless patience when I made the textile workshop my home.

Bergur Orri Magnússon - For making a wooden shaft for my scraping knife.

Kári and Arnar - For extra muscle when I needed it the most.







There are many ways of vegtanning. The most common way is to use bark. For two skins is required around 5kg of dried bark. The objective was to tan twelve skins which would equate to around 30kg of bark.

Coincidentally, the forestry of Heiðmörk had recently scraped a few spruce trees. Teitur from the forestry was ready to donate 40kg of bark in exchange for my labour at the christmas market.

The tannins are extracted from the bark by boiling it. It boils for an hour, then rests for an hour before heating it up back to boiling point where it is then sieved into a container.

Afterwards, more water is added to the bark and the extraction is repeated three more times to get in total four different potencies of tannin. The first extraction is the strongest and looks like coffee.









For the preperation of the skin, it must lay in a lime solution from 1-2 weeks.

The hairs will loosen, easening the scaping process.

The hairs protect the skin from water and tannins, leading to worse results for the leather. For a future project I will use the wool, where I will wash the lime off and put it to good use.







The other side has to be scraped of, where the hypodermis and fat protect the skin. The traditional way in Greenland is to use a ulu knife or horsebone. A more modern approach is to use a pressure washer. Both methods were used affectively.

When the skin is clean of hair, hypodermis and fat, the remain lime has to be cleaned. The leather lies in running water until it reaches back to neutral acidity (ph-7).



After the scraping and deliming, the leather starts in the weakest tanning solution. The fourth extraction is mixed with 1:1 ration of water and 20g of salt for each liter of the mixture.

Reason for the weaker liquor is to let the tannins spread equally into it, allowing deeper and more effective tanning. The salt eliminates all germs in that can form in the weaker tanning liquor. With time, the stronger liquor is added which will handle the bacterias.





Same leather 1 hour in the liquor vs 12 hours. The skin absorbs color quickly in the weakest liquor.



When the skin has entered the drum, the two month process of maintenance starts. To ensure constant tanning, the liquor must be observed daily of any changes. If the liquor becomes too clear or too foggy, then the liquor is weak.

In most cases, a third of the liquor is replaced with a fresh one. It is also recommended to heat the liquor up to around 35°C, and in my case, I found it helpful to sieve regularly of any residue.

The liquor must be freshened almost daily until it reaches the strongest liquor, when the tanning begins to slow down.







CH USE TO AVOID FIRE.  
MAKING WET AND STAINING  
ITEMS SHOULD NOT GO INTO  
THE MACHINE.  
PLEASE FOLD AND PUT AWAY  
DRY TABLE RUNNER AND PUT  
DRY RAGS IN STORAGE BOX  
WHEN EMPTYING THE MA





Another factor for equal tanning is movement, as the leather has to be stirred frequently throughout the day. Most tanning facilities have automatic drums that speed up the process. However, there are no accessible drums where I live, and the point of the project is not about speed.

In order for the skin to soak up more tannins, it was required to scrape the inner side with either an ulu or a horse bone.







When the skin has become leather, it is time to dry. The leather is stretched onto a frame. When it is slightly damp, it is ready for softening by agitation. If its completely dry, the leather can be sprayed to dampen.

The methods of agitating the leather are endless. It can be roled or ran through a splitted twig that has carved patterns.

Agitation can be skipped if one wishes for stiff leather for shoes, or it can be agitated for a long time for a softer leather fitted for gloves.











# CHAPTER 2

## MOULDING



A special thanks to:

Leevi, Mio, Janosch, Andri, Sverrir  
and Muni - My models, who gave  
their precious time to lay in the  
leather as it took shape.

Oddur Wilhelm Guðmundsson- To  
teach me extraordinary things with  
wood.

Viktor, Agla og Unnur - My great  
assistance at the sewing machine.

Robert Mercier - For being a good  
teacher and my biggest inspiration  
for the design.





Now that the skin is leather, it is time to design. I found it much simpler to figure out a respectful way to make the leather. There are many approaches for the design. My first hypothesis was:

To use the leather in its integral shape keeps the animals identity, therefore adding respect to the design.

This became my first design principle, but many ideas sprouted during the journey.

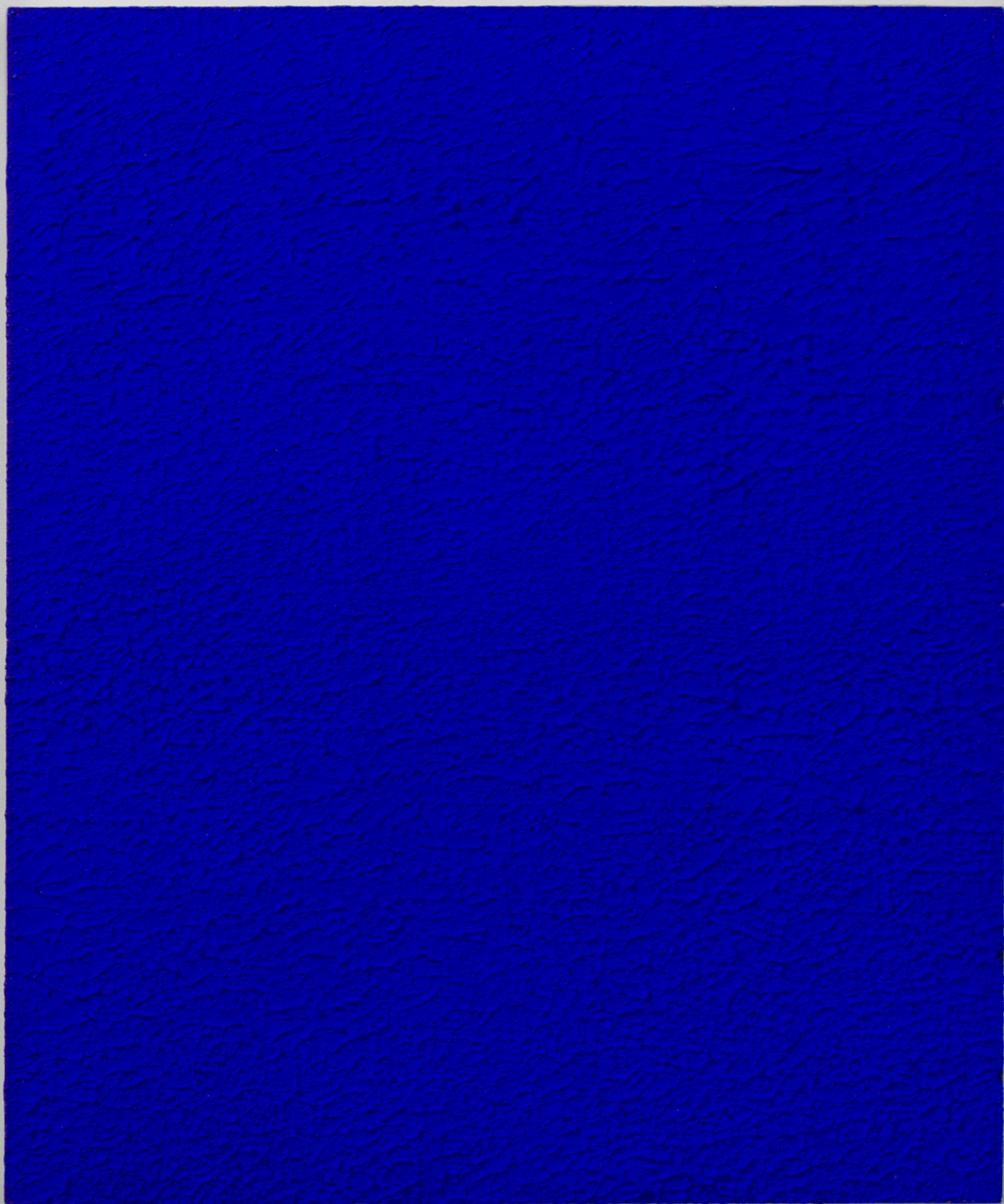


My three main inspirations for  
the design were:

Yves Klein - Who showed me  
minimalism to the extremety.

Joseph Beuys - Who gave me a  
new perception of sculpture.

Rober Mericer - Who taught me  
the beauty of leather moulding.



*Photo 1: Monochrome bleu (IKB 242 A), Klein (1959).*





Photo 2: Coyote, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, Beuys (1974)



Photo 3: Robert Mercier, Balmainn kjóll fyrir Zendaya á Venice Film Festival (2021)



For protoyping, no draping seemed to suffice, and I yearned to try wet moulding. During the tanning process, no fabric seemed to be able to immitade leather except plaster.

I was inspired after the first prototype, leading to most of my best prototypes being made of gypsona, a plaster-covered gauze.





There was something  
mystical about the flow  
and the synergy between  
the garment and the  
body. A connection was  
made that I wanted to  
see between the animal  
and the human.

The continuing  
prototypes from gypsona  
were thinner, and did not  
get the same formation.  
I did inspire ideas of  
attachment functions.













When the first leathers were ready, I was finally able to see the possibilities of the material.

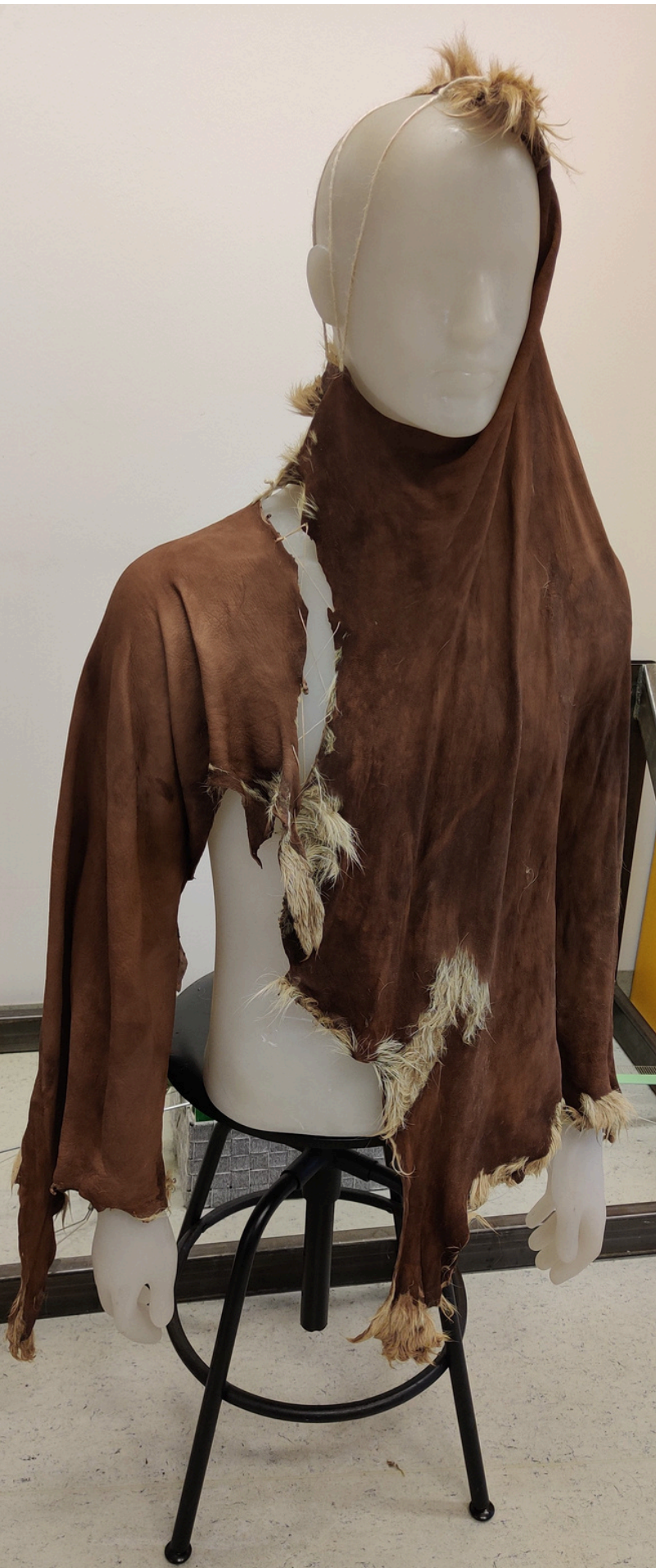
The next for pieces are not just protoypes, but a testament of the wonders of the leather, its strength, versatility and independence.





















Next was to decide how I wanted to shape the leathers, as well as what to accommodate it with. These sketches are what became the blueprint of how the leathers are shaped and positioned and what fills in the blanks of the body.



$\in \text{HöND}$

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/PILS?



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& MENA

BRAND  
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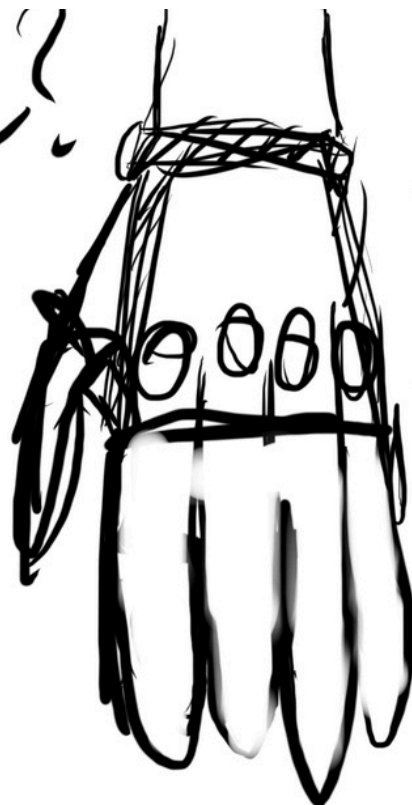


## Look 2



small?

WOOD  
WAIST





LOOK 3



HJÁLNUK?



WRIST  
& LEG  
LIFTS

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HREYFING

LOOK 4



VIÐAR HRINGUR



TROÐA  
Í ÞEGAR  
BLAUTT



STÆRRI  
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LOOK 5



VIÐAR KRAGI

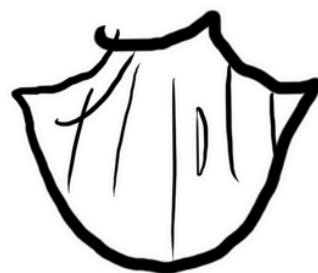
LEATHER

UNDIRPILS/USÓL?

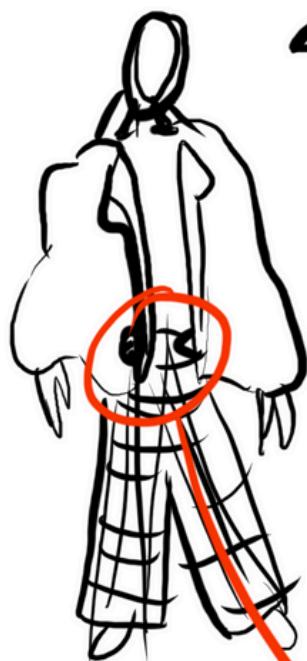
SNÓÐ?



EDA



LOOK 6



SPINE?  
X GRINA!

UNARÞUR?



I decided to make wooden anchors, shaped to the body, as a meta idea of the drying frame. They would be put on the models and the leather attached to the anchor, drying into the shape tailored to the body.

The model's bodyparts were casted and strengthened. Then layers of veneer were vacuum sealed onto the casts until the glue had fixed. The heads had a more complex shape and had to be layered in strips.



WE TOOK LEAVE THE WORKSHOP  
AND TOOLS LEAVE THE WORKSHOP

Handwritten notes on a yellow sticky note.

Handwritten notes on a blue sticky note.

Ganglð  
vel um verkstæðið











I created wood stain from the same spruce bark used for tanning. The bark is drenched in alchohol for two weeks until the colour has been extracted. It can be applied in layers for darker shades.







The best mannequins for a tailored leather garment were the models themselves. The leather was formed over them and dried to shape. With a hair dryer, it took three hours. The image is cropped for the sake of the model's privacy.





For the skirts and pants I used jute. I was looking to keep my collection monochrome (in the likes of Yves Klein) and all natural. The jute gives off a strong earthy smell like the leather. It could also be wrinkled into a desired shape, similarly how the leather and the wood is shaped.







# CHAPTER 3

## RESULTS





The objective of the project was to make leather and desing from it with respect to the animals. That is why I tried not to ask what the leather can do for us; rather what we can do for the leather.

The garments create a synergy between the animal and the man. The leather dances around the body and the body supports the leather. The wood works as an anchor and the foundation for the leather. But the wood still flows, and so does the jute without taking too much space.

The leather and wood are stiff. These are not necessarily comfortable clothes. But these are perhaps not to be perceived as clothes in general, but rather as art, sculpture and foremost and experience between the animals and the people.



OUTFIT 1 EMBRACE



The lamb hangs over one shoulder  
and reaches under the chest of the  
man. Image the lamb embracing him.  
He has one free hand, allowing him to  
embrace it back. The leather has the  
appearance of a roman cape.

The mask is iery but still friendly. It  
connects to a spine that holds tightly  
onto the leather.











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These are the only two goats used in the project. Therefore they were tanned and used together. On the body, they are reunited in their new form. One of the goats gives the man a mohawk, possibly a friendly jest.

Thin ropes connect the leather to a spine that is flows into a wooden hip line.











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Two lambs glide around the man. The one above has its legs tied in a knot around the neck. The one below has his legs tied to the back legs of the upper lamb. This binding can only be found here to immitade the way how lambs are sacrificed. Here we thank them for their sacrifice.

This garment is the only instance where there is now wood. The leather is therefore the complete picture, giving a beautiful showcase of its limitless power. Only two strings help with adjusting the leather.











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Like people, we allow the animals to show their sensitive side. One lamb lies exhausted in the hands of the man, who also carries the weight of the other lamb on his shoulder. This is the only instance where the animals completely rely on the man for support.

The wood is formed around the shoulders, chest and upper back. The leather is connected to the wood with strings, and moves around the body like a half skirt.











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The broken connection between man and animal is mended. The lambs connect from the back with a spine. The chest hair bridge between them in the front. The face is hidden with a mask of a neutral expression, leveling the man on equal ground to the animals.

The leathes lay over the shoulders and exhibit beautiful pleats. The pants are big and crumpled, giving a large silhouette.









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The final outfit represents a strong and independent lamb. It supports itself on the shoulder and sweeps backwards. The man is shielded by the animal and the hidden with a mask. But the eyes are different now, a softer expression; the innocence of the lamb.

This mask covers the back of the head completely. It is the only whole head in the collection. The leather holds completely on itself, with only one hidden string assisting the structure. The two black circles came from a reaction to the metals of weightsm a reminder of the beauty of flaws that create a story.









The collection withholds minimalistic integrity. The outfits share the same fabrics and colours. This would allow the viewers to look for something deeper within the pieces. They might give attention to the shapes of the leather and what they represent. They might notice the small details of life, like the hairs that stayed on, the scars, the different tones. With that I hope they will understand my vision, respect the craft, respect the animals.

Through the pieces, the animals access new life after death. After the fashion show, they were reshaped into a sculpture for an exhibition. Now they have returned to their original form, awaiting for their next journey. This is another form of respect that I offer them.







**Ötzi the Iceman**  
The mummy of a man who lived about 3,300 years ago. He was found in the Ötztal Alps in 1991. The mummy is made of a brown, leathery material. The head is covered in a light-colored material. The mummy is standing on a wooden platform.

There are three main conclusions of bringing respect to the animals.

One is to work it naturally and change it as little as possible.

Secondly is to allow it to live through multiple experiences.

Thirdly is to project this respect onto the public with the power of art.

I want to believe that I have succeeded filling these criterias.

In the future I want to utilize more than just the skin of the animal. I also want to develop my methods further. That will open up for more diverse garments, while maintaining my ethos. I plan on taking MA in fashion, where I will continue on this path.



# PHOTOS

Photo 1: Yves Klein. Monochrome Bleu. Dry pigment over polyvinyl acetate on a canvas on plywood. found 11. May at

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80103>

Photo 2: Caroline Tisdall. Joseph Beuys Coyote (2011). Photograph. Found 11. May at

<https://largeglass.co.uk/Joseph-Beuys-Coyote-Photographs-by-Caroline-Tisdall>

Photo 3: Julie Limont. Robert Mercier. Balmain dress for Zendaya on Venice Film Festival (2021). Found 11. May at

[https://www.connaissancedesarts.com/metiers\\_art/artisan-art/robert-mercier-le-cuir-dans-la-peau-11179868/](https://www.connaissancedesarts.com/metiers_art/artisan-art/robert-mercier-le-cuir-dans-la-peau-11179868/)

Other photos: Courtesy of the author

Thank you for reading



