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COSTUMING THE CALIFORNIAN APOCALYPSE: SARTORIAL SPECULATIONS OF
LOS ANGELES'S FUTURE

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Environmental Analysis Sustainability and the Built Environment
and Studio Art

In partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Scripps College

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December 2023

Gratitude

I am deeply grateful for the immense support I have received during this process and throughout my college career. First and foremost, thank you to my incredibly supportive parents, Vivian and Stan, whose unwavering love has given me the confidence to explore my passions to the fullest extent. Thank you for bringing art into my life and encouraging me to follow it at every step. Thank you to my amazing network of friends from my home in New York City to Scripps to my time at Glasgow School of Art who all bring me immeasurable joy. Creating and laughing with you is all I need in this world. Thank you to the generations of fellow comrades in Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voices for Peace, who have given me the gift of a caring and curious community here in Claremont. Thank you for nurturing me into the organizer I am today.

Thank you to Professor Marc Los Huertos for his contagious excitement about my project throughout this semester. Thank you to Professor Kasper Kovitz and Professor Aly Ogasian for pushing my conceptualization to be stronger and teaching me so much about sustaining a research-based artistic practice. Thank you to my EA and Art thesis cohorts for the much-needed camaraderie. Thank you to Professor Aimee Bahng whose class Gender, Race, and the Environment, which I took in tandem with my thesis, profoundly broadened my horizons of environmental justice and deepened the stakes of my work. Thank you to Professor Monica French who graciously spent many of her office hours helping me with pattern cutting and problem solving the garments with me. Lastly, thank you to the Lori Bettison-Varga Fund for generously financing my project.

“The best place to view Los Angeles of the next millennium is from the ruins of its alternative future.” – Mike Davis

There is a hegemonic default of rhetorics of futurity and apocalypse in dominant discourse, one which envisions a singular endpoint that favors those already in power of the world order. With this project, I use fashion design as a medium to visually speculate a range of futures that exist in relation to different temporal apocalypses and dystopian world endings under the current capitalist structure. Three questions guided my thinking and creation of this project: What will people be wearing in 100 years in Los Angeles if we continue down our current path of late capitalism-induced climate change? How will this look differently for people who exist alongside different axes of oppression and who are affected by environmental racisms that manifest in the built environment of Los Angeles? How do dystopian futures rooted in contemporary conditions expose dystopias of past and present? To lay the groundwork for my artistic intervention, I connect a myriad of environmental inequalities in Los Angeles together to draw attention to the slow violence maintained in the city and characterize it as a site of dystopia and impending apocalypses. I then analyze the power of dystopic narratives in literature, film, art, and fashion to set up the stakes for my artistic intervention.

I am locating my imagined apocalypse in Los Angeles for a myriad of reasons. For one, I have spent four years thinking and learning in Southern California, experiencing the contradictory unease of discussing dense theory on environmental justice while the smell of smoke hangs in the air from the latest wildfire. I have physically felt the human construction of “The City of Trees and PhDs” when I walk along Foothill Boulevard under the beating sun and then am instantly cooled on campus from the non-native flora. I have felt the “Big One” loom as I have learned about how fracking for oil and the over-extraction of the Central Valley aquifer

make already unsteady ground all the more vulnerable (Sanders, 2022). Wildfires have quickly become commonplace on the United States West Coast, as have hurricanes on the East. This past summer, these natural phenomena traversed their respective normalized boundaries when Hurricane Hillary touched down in California and orange skies blazed in New York from wildfires in Canada; a warning cry from Earth to take what has become the status quo seriously. Even the ravens' shrill calls which interrupt Southern California's sunny mass of blue sky remind me that this is no utopia, at least not for everyone.

Los Angeles is a city of extreme racial and economic disparity and thus rampant environmental injustice with fatal ramifications. The middle class and uber-rich can escape the heat in exclusionary gated communities in the Hollywood hills that float above the photochemical smog from snaking six-lane freeways. Meanwhile, Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and poor people tend to live in built environments that exacerbate the consequences of climate change and purposefully push them closer to sites of industrial and environmental hazard (Pulido, 2000). Uneven distribution of heat in Los Angeles is a particularly pressing issue as global temperatures soar. Heat islands occur in urban areas that are significantly warmer due to a lack of tree canopy cover and green space, oversaturation of concrete and other heat-absorbing materials, and proximity to mass energy consumption (Yin et al., 2023). Extreme heat is deadly, as it increases the risk of stroke, heart attacks, respiratory episodes, dehydration, and worsens pre-existing chronic conditions (Anderson and Bell, 2011). As the temperature continues to rise, so does the rate of heat-induced mortality. In fact, Ostro et al. (2011) estimated impacts on mortality resulting from average temperature increases under a high emission scenario to be 6,700 to 11,300 additional annual deaths in 2050 in California. This mortality rate will at least double by the end of the century.

Of course, the dispersion of heat and subsequent health risks are not felt equally. Low-income people and migrant workers who work jobs that require them to be outside all day such as construction or agriculture, and houseless people who live the majority of their lives outside are at much higher risk of sunstroke, dehydration, other heat-related complications, and death. These people do not have access to air conditioning, or even if they have air conditioning units may not be able to afford the massive energy bill that comes along with using it. Guirguis et al. (2018) found that Southern California neighborhoods with AC undersaturation had a 14.6% increase in heat-related hospital visits during heat waves. This data doesn't take into account uninsured, houseless, or undocumented people who can not safely get medical care from a hospital. When it comes to surviving record heat in Southern California, being able to access and afford indoor space with air conditioning is a matter of life or death. Another major agent of heat dispersion discrepancy is the presence of green space and tree shade, or lack thereof. 70-90% of solar energy is absorbed through the tree's leaves for photosynthesis or reflected back into the atmosphere, thus reducing the surface air and ground temperature in streets and buildings (Shishegar, 2014). In addition to mass cooling, green space recycles excess carbon emitted from cars and industry and provides recreational space that lends itself to overall mental and physical well-being and life expectancy (Callaghan et al., 2020).

There is an abundance of scholarship on the ecological, social, and personal benefits of parks and green spaces. However, access to the plethora of life-sustaining benefits afforded by green space and tree canopy is not equitable in Los Angeles. Studies across dense urban areas in the United States have shown that neighborhoods that were historically redlined have continued to be less environmentally invested in than their non-redlined counterparts. Hoffman et al. (2020) found that this discrepancy, along with an oversaturation of impervious surfaces that absorb heat

like cement, leads to an average temperature difference of 36°F- 44°F between historically redlined and non-redlined neighborhoods, with cities on the West Coast like Los Angeles being on the higher end of that spectrum. As the temperature continues to rise, this temperature gap will widen and become more lethal. This legacy of racist housing policies has codified inequitable access to built environments such as green spaces which mediate the precarity of rapidly changing climate characteristic of the Anthropocene.

Redlining is only one piece of Los Angeles's racialized spatial inequality puzzle that maps uneven environmental burdens onto the majority of non-white residents. Suburbanization and state-financed white flight out of the central city is an "artifact" that is cemented in the contemporary spatial segregation of Los Angeles. Critical geographer Laura Pulido emphasizes that "landscapes are artifacts of past and present racisms, they embody generations of sociospatial relations" (Pulido, 2000) to build her argument that patterns of racism are naturalized through the seemingly inconspicuous built environment.

Suburbanization is constitutive of discrete forms of racism that have flourished white exclusionary desires to live apart from non-whites and away from densely polluted zones. Indicative of racial hierarchy, white land was seen as "more valuable by virtue of its whiteness (Oliver and Shapiro 1995:147–61), and thus it is not as economically feasible for the polluter" (Pulido, 2000). This impetus for segregated suburbanization constructed the Los Angeles we see today, one with an obsession with privatization and disregard for public space. The siting of freeways, neighborhoods, schools, and industries appears to the uncritical eye as disparate decisions from an obscured mass of individual policymakers or city planners. However, these are intentional choices that constellate into what David Pellow calls the "environmental inequality formation."

The discursive power of calling attention to the structural processes of instituting and maintaining environmental inequities widens the scope and stretches the temporal and spatial scale of historical and ongoing violence (Pellow, 2000). As Max Liboiron calls for: “we can move from a question of harm that asks ‘how much’ (a question based on threshold theories) to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about violence” (Liboiron, 2021). In the case of Los Angeles, this relational shift means thinking about instances of harm as previously mentioned in the studies by Hoffman et al. (2020) and Guirguis et al. (2018), as well as white flight and redlining, as an overarching structure of environmental violence that is inflicted onto those who the colonial state deems disposable.

Los Angeles is a microcosm of the dominant capitalist organizing logic, where profit is prioritized over people to the extent that mass death and displacement are not only an option but a viable means toward securing settler futures and hoarding resources. In this way, colonialism, capitalism, and the unrelenting war and greed that sustains it work through manufacturing world-endings of the human and nonhuman livelihoods that do not align with colonial goals. As noted in the introduction of *Imagining The Apocalypse: Art And The End Times*, “the Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopian future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence.” (Coomasaru and Deichert, 2022). With this flexible definition, the meaning of apocalypse stretches far beyond the epic supernatural ending foretold in the bible to include the millions of apocalypses simultaneously happening in our material world.

Los Angeles has been a dystopic site of man-made apocalypses, from the Spanish colonization of Tongva, to the extinction of the California Grizzly Bear, to the militarized prison industrial complex. In each of these instances, mass containment and killing are pursued by the

US colonial power to fortify a white and capitalist future, predicated on the erasure of indigenous humans and nonhumans. We will only see more of these apocalypses in the coming century if we continue along this path of capitalism-induced climate destruction. Neshnabé (Potawatomi) scholar and activist Kyle Powys Whyte articulates the unfixed temporal essence of dystopias from the standpoint of his ancestors, “in the Anthropocene... some indigenous peoples already inhabit what our ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future. So we consider the future from what we believe is already a dystopia” (Whyte, 2017). Moments of world ending have and will come at different times depending on intersecting mechanisms of oppression and marginalization that facilitate them.

We are edging towards an unprecedented environmental collapse predicated on the racial capitalism, destructive colonialisms, and explosive globalization characteristic of Western modernity’s unrelenting obsession with progress. These hegemonic structures and their deathly consequences have become naturalized, obfuscating webs of responsibility into obscurity and rendering environmental collapse inevitable. Rob Nixon coined the term ‘slow violence’ to describe the delayed destruction of attritional violence that occurs gradually, dispersed across time and space. He calls for an aesthetic of slow violence “To confront slow violence requires, then, that we plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time. The representational challenges are acute, requiring creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency.” (Nixon, 2011). Dystopian and apocalyptic future world-building rooted in a critique of the perils of the present through art such as installation work and fashion design are a means of

answering this call. As Patricia McManus stated in her book, *Critical Theory and Dystopia*, “dystopias are fictions which grapple with the problem of how to render the shock of something which habit has deprived of its shock, of how to render the horror of habit.” (McManus, 2022). Capitalism is this habit, the horrors of which have become widely thought of as fixed and inescapable despite the centuries of life that flourished without it.

There is a rich history of dystopian narratives that choose Los Angeles as the epicenter of the dark and deathly symptoms of modernity. These dystopian imaginaries offer striking critiques of oppressive societal and political norms, as well as speculate alternative possibilities to serve as an inspiration for building resilient futures. Mike Davis characterizes Los Angeles as “a stand-in for capitalism in general. The ultimate world-historical significance – and oddity – of Los Angeles is that it has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism.” (Davis, 2014). Dystopias hyperbolize past and present realities to challenge capitalist power and the extreme class and racial disparities that follow. There is a unique cognitive dissonance to Los Angeles; a city where a select few enjoy the fruits of California being the fifth largest economy in the world, while the the longest sustained population of houseless people in Skid Row suffer and die from a socially constructed but always neglected systemic poverty epidemic (Fuller, 2018).

Informed by these material conditions, Octavia Butler set her novel *Parable of the Sower* in the outskirts of a fictionalized Los Angeles in the year 2024. Butler builds an apocalyptic world where water is a scarce luxury and there is an omnipresent threat of violence and murder on every street. The protagonist lives in a walled community reflective of the gated communities that are ubiquitous in Los Angeles (Butler, 1993). As Mike Davis explains in *City of Quartz*, the privatization of space created by gated communities is a “new class war... on the level of the

built environment” that restricts movement and promotes a militarized surveillance that enforces divisions between racial and class groups (Davis, 2014). Octavia Butler’s world conjures the aftermath of the failure of this unsustainable socio-spatial structure, while imagining resilient futures rooted in the natural world.

The 1982 film *Blade Runner* is another classic intervention in the cultural construction of Los Angeles as an idyllic utopia. Set in Los Angeles’s post-apocalyptic future, the film caricatures the militarized surveillance, corporate rule, and spatial segregation that undergird the city’s development. Dystopias like *Blade Runner* create space for acute critiques of these static ideals and open up avenues for imagining alternative world orders. Both of these LA-based narratives magnify contemporary issues to unmask the violence and injustice necessary for the function of this metropolis, and further situate Los Angeles as a site of dystopia.

Dystopic installation art goes a step beyond film and books by physically inviting the audience to inhabit a space that problematizes societal norms and activates the viewer into visualizing a plausible future with clear throughlines to the present. Josh Kline’s recent retrospective, *Project for a New American Century*, does just that. The collection of over 100 works spanning from video to sculpture to costumes spotlights the most pressing concerns of the twenty-first century and imagines how they will evolve and shape the next one hundred years of society.

Kline pushes late-stage capitalism to its visual extreme, commodifying humans through flesh-colored silicone molds of discarded cans, packing peanuts in the shape of a human head, and life-sized replicas of people unfairly fired in recycling bags among others. These visceral sculptures expose the ways in which contemporary capitalism views humans as disposable workers whose only value lies in their potential labor production. In analysis of apocalyptic

narratives conceptual proximity to modernity, legendary literary critic Frank Kermode states that “apocalypse is a part of the modern Absurd... the set of our fear and desire... a permanent feature of a permanent literature of crisis.” (Kermode, 2000). Josh Kline uses the absurd to accentuate the dehumanizing processes of unbridled capitalism and multiply it to an apocalyptic degree. In my art, I use fashion as a vessel for a similar critique of capitalism by visualizing a future artifact from a projected point in the exponentially dystopian trajectory capitalism moves along.



Fig. 1. *No Sick Days (FedEx Worker's Head with FedEx Cap)*, Josh Kline, 2014, Whitney Museum of Art, image by author



Fig. 2. *Aspirational Foreclosure (Matthew/Mortgage Loan Officer)*, Josh Kline 2016, Whitney Museum of Art, image by author

Similarly to installation art, fashion invites people to be immersed into a fantastical world that offers up alternative ontologies. Fashion as an industry and art medium is always looking toward the future to predict emerging visual, political, and philosophical trends, whether that be showing the next season's spring/summer clothes in September, or designing galactic garb during

the space race of the sixties. Prospective in nature, fashion is a framework of imaginative what-ifs that have the powerful potential of visualizing futures. It can diffuse rigid Eurocentric ideals of linear time and capitalistic progress with its capacity for fantasy and muddling past, present, and future.

Take for example, Alexander McQueen's 2006 Autumn/Winter *The Widows of Culloden*, a collection full of tartan and Victorian silhouettes that subverts the dominant historical narrative of battle by centering the widows of fallen men instead of the soldiers themselves whilst critiquing the violence of England's conquest of Scotland and the subsequent erasure of traditional Scottish heritage (Mower, 2006). However, this potential is not always realized in commercial fashion's pursuit of capital gain through rapid trend cycling and fast fashion.

I am interested in designing and discussing what fashion scholars Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas call "critical fashion," that is a practice which "self consciously occupies both 'inside' and 'outside'. It is a method and attitude to design that enlists vital questions with respect to being-in-the-world, of history, and of desire". In other words, critical fashion deviates from dominant fashion, which functions to reflect and reproduce normative fashion codes and sensibilities that align with hegemonic ideals of gender, race, and class. Instead, it seeks to recalculate and reimagine them as a mode of investigating and problematizing the complexities of modernity.

Vivienne Westwood and her repertoire is one manifestation of this critical attitude towards fashion design. Her long-time collaborator Malcom McLaren studied Situationism, a form of Marxist revolt through art and action (Geczy and Karaminas, 2017). Associated with the birth of punk fashion, Westwood's dissentful oeuvre threads back to Situationism's contempt for the capitalistic status quo through her sustained visual practice of provoking rebellion against

normative power structures. From its origins, the punk aesthetic incorporated dystopian aesthetics of death and decay to visually articulate the bubbling angst of insatiable imperialist war projects, economic instability, and latent fears of apocalyptic futures (Worley, 2017). Westwood's earliest T-shirt slogans including "Anarchy in the U.K." and "God Save the Queen" (accompanied by an image of Queen Elizabeth with a safety pin through her nose) brazenly critiqued British imperialism while defining the personal politics of punk. Four decades later, Vivienne Westwood's designs and fashion interventions are still inextricably linked to a critique of modernity and its consequences. An example of this is her 2010 Spring Summer show entitled *Mother Gaia*, named after James Lovelock's Gaia Theory which conceptualizes Earth as a highly complex self regulating system. (Stanley, 2022). Slogans such as "Keep Gaia Cool," "Loyalty to Gaia," and "Act Fast, Slow Down, Stop Climate Change" were either printed on fabric or on posters that were stuck onto shredded fabrics and disparate silhouettes which all converged in succinct message: DIY (Do It Yourself) as resistance to rapid capitalist production and climate change.

Along with protest signs incorporated into the runway looks, there are odes to street graffiti in fabric prints, both of which highlight the visual potency of community protest and serve as an accessible call to action for the masses. Westwood reappropriates the aesthetics of luxury that characterized 18th-century Rococo frills and ornamentation by turning it on its head and problematizing the material consequences of that very aristocratic obsession with excess that has led us to the climate crisis of today. In the words of Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, this collection is "the rummaging from the rich after the apocalypse" (Geczy and Karaminas, 2017). The model's faces are messily painted white with the occasional off-center flush of red on the cheeks and lips, and teased hair piled high in haphazard updos—another distorted reference to

decadent baroque style. The show presents an apocalyptic aftermath, defined both by the layers of imperial history that have constituted it and the path forward for healing it. *Mother Gaia* is a testament to fashion's ability to advocate for an alternative societal orientation by artistically intervening in linear hegemonic history, and mapping the past onto the future.



Fig. 3, 4, 5. *Mother Gaia*, Vivienne Westwood, Spring 2010, images by Marcio Maderira published on Vogue Runway

Similar to Westwood, I too, aim to visualize a call to action and incite a feeling of urgency about the climate crisis. While the aesthetics of punk are not in vogue in 2023, I suspect that it will rear its pierced head soon because, similar to the economic decline in Britain of the 1970s and 80s, current disillusionment with the capitalist regime incites fears about the absence of the future. Thus, I am using the DIY ethos of punk in the construction of my clothes by reworking used garments in order to circumvent the environmental costs of new fabric. In the process of slow fashion, beginning with one garment and painstakingly seam-ripping it to attain the bones of something new to be, I push against the industry standard of mass production by

creating with care and intention. The scars of past stitches remain and are highlighted on the reconstructed clothes, bringing beauty to rebirth.

Critical fashion design evokes critical fabulation, an inventive mode of thinking coined by feminist scholar and cultural historian Saidiya Hartman who approaches the archives of dominant history creatively and speculatively to “imagine what cannot be verified” (Hartman, 2008) in order to narrate counter-histories. In relation to design, fabulation, as described by Daniela Rosner, is a method of storytelling which “open[s] up different understandings of the past that reconfigure the present, creating new opportunities for a just future” (Rosner, 2018). In effect, critical fashion fabulation works through and beyond static temporalities, repurposing the past and inventing plausible futures to articulate concerns of the present.

In Hussein Chalayan’s Autumn/Winter 2000 show *Afterwords*, the designer reopens the archives of his experience of exile from the Greek and Turkish war over Cyprus, and reconstructs the all too familiar story of displacement through clothing. In particular, the show responds to Chalayan’s mother’s plan of action for a spontaneous raid: taking old photographs, a blanket, and favorite clothes (Vogue, 2020). While this deeply personal show was autobiographical to Chalayan’s family history, it is also a universal story that can happen to anyone from any culture at any time. In fact, *Afterwords* was presented at a time when the news cycles were saturated with reports of over half a million people fleeing the atrocities of the Kosovo War (i-D, 2014). The ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, while not directly related to the conflict in Cyprus that displaced Chalayan and his family, is linked to it through a global history of injustice and violence in the name of nation-building. These instances of mass destruction of homes and livelihoods are world-endings, therefore the language of apocalypse is appropriate in describing the events and the art created in their aftermath.

The dystopian vision of Chalayan's fashion show crescendos in the finale, when the models unwrapped the gray seat coverings of the set design and began to fashion the fabric onto their bodies through a meticulously planned system of zips, buttons, velcro, and other fasteners. Within minutes, the inconspicuous seat covers transformed into elegant dresses with timeless silhouettes. As the audience erupted into applause, assistants came on stage to quickly construct the wooden frames of the chairs into four suitcases which were then placed by the feet of the four models. The magic continued when another model walked over to the coffee table remaining from the deconstructed living room set and stepped into it, turning it into a geometric and telescopic skirt.



Fig. 6, 7. *Afterwords*, Hussein Chalayan, Fall 2000, images by JB Villareal published on Vogue Runway

This moment nods to Susan Sontag's reflection on Walter Benjamin's philosophies on the modern constructs of time, writing that "the nihilistic energies of the modern era make everything a ruin or fragment...a world whose past has become, by definition, obsolete, and whose present, churns our instant antiques." (Sontag, 1985). The idea of modernity's constant circulation of ruins is especially potent in today's extreme consumer society and fervent trend cycles which produce waste on an enormous scale. Chalayan historicizes the present in an instant, as the mundane furniture of an ordinary home becomes a memory, or antique, within a dress. The dress becomes an artifact of a world that was and a signifier of a world to come. This outfit is an artifact of the elite of Los Angeles in 100 years if we continue down our current path of capitalistic-induced climate collapse.

My wearable art piece, *Four Horseman Suit*, is the culmination of critical fashion methodologies and the site specificity of Los Angeles. It incorporates flame retardant fabric and built-in fans as a way to mediate the wildfires and heat waves that are predicted to become more and more frequent in the coming century, while the signifiers of corporate wear remain devoted to business as usual. "Business as usual" signifies both Western societies' commitment to capitalism above all else, as well as what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's climate model refers to as the worst-case scenario for predicted fossil fuel emissions and global temperature increases in the coming century (Hausfather, 2019). The motif of a tie appears on the front of the jacket, the waistband of the pants, and the straps for the mini briefcase attached to the jacket. Yet unlike a typical tie, they are not an optional accessory but instead are structurally integral to the suit's construction. By foregrounding the familiar silhouette of a tie in impractical yet integral ways, I historicize the stand-alone tie as a ghost of a capitalist past and offer a

dystopian future where the forces of capitalism are even more inextricable from the social and political fabric of the Los Angeles elite than they are now.

My work follows the lead of artists like Josh Kline, Vivienne Westwood, and Hussein Chalayan who artistically imagine dystopian futures in order to cope with fears of the present and explore the cultural ghosts of the past. My goal through this form is to activate people by conjuring a visual warning of the catastrophic direction we are heading for, and pointing out the absurdity of prioritizing profit over people in a moment of world ending. I am excited by fashion designs' deep well of speculative power for creating worlds and inviting people into them. Similar to Vivienne Westwood and Hussein Chalayan, I experiment in the archives of fashion history to emphasize the apocalyptic trajectory of capitalism-fueled climate collapse.

To connect my fashion designs and the future it exists within to the broader history of Western allegiance to capitalist and technological progress, I looked to metallic hues and structured shapes of '60s space-age fashion codes for inspiration. These fashion trends arose in tandem with the pursuit of space exploration as a means of affirming U.S. modernity on the international stage during the Cold War when the threat of nuclear annihilation loomed (Chang, 2022). The U.S. response, rooted in a techno-utopian optimism, revered technological advancement as a pathway to preserving capitalist settler futures. A similar attitude is held by the most wealthy people who can evade the consequences of their extractive land relations to colonize space. The silver boxiness of the *Four Horseman Suit* plays with the aesthetic archives to draw parallels between the past and imagined future in order to critique capitalism of the present.

My project intends to satirize the way that capitalism has been naturalized as a fixed world order, even when its deathly consequences are omnipresent in the environment. With the

Four Horseman Suit, I present a dystopian future to uncover the dystopian throughlines in our collective past and present. I envisioned a suit made out of aluminized fire retardant fabric that flaunts signifiers of office wear, playing with corporate monikers like “suit and tie.” However, as I began my exploration into world-building through clothes, I soon realized that I would first have to imagine the world and the wealth of people in it before I designed the artifacts for it. In the words of Mike Davis, I needed to envision the “alternative future” in order to construct its subsequent “ruins.”

To begin this process, I absorbed a multitude of science fiction media in addition to the previously mentioned *Parable of the Sower* and *Bladerunner*. I watched *The Fifth Element*, and was inspired by the way that contemporary New York City and its industries were superimposed into a recognizable but speculative apocalyptic future. I also took note of how Jean Paul Gaultier’s fashion designs brought life and depth into the characters and the roles they play in this fictional society. I was also inspired by Los Angeles-based fashion designer Eli Russell Linnetz’s artistic process which is based in his filmmaking background in order to build a larger narrative for his clothes to exist within. His brand ERL’s most recent Spring/Summer 24 collection tells the story of California surfers riding the waves to Italy in the year 2176 with the sea levels rising. Through this multimedia research as well as scientific studies on climate conditions in Los Angeles and how they are predicted to worsen, I began to flush out the narrative for my clothes and their wearers. I imagine them as Hollywood and tech tycoons who are planning to abandon the Earth in pursuit of space colonization, under the guise of shooting the first movie on Mars.

My research on the inequalities built into the city of Los Angeles further affirmed to me that this collection would need to span multiple positionalities that exist in relation to power.

Kyle Powys White's writing was instrumental in my understanding of dystopia and apocalypse as a moment of world-ending that has been happening to indigenous ancestors since the initial colonization of Turtle Island. This research shaped my thinking that apocalypses are unfixed, numerous, and temporal. For instance, the aluminized suit is made for an uber-rich tech executive for whom the apocalypse has not arrived yet; they are armed with the societal and material capital necessary for evading the compounding climate catastrophe. However, in 100 years some people will be occupying a post-apocalyptic space.

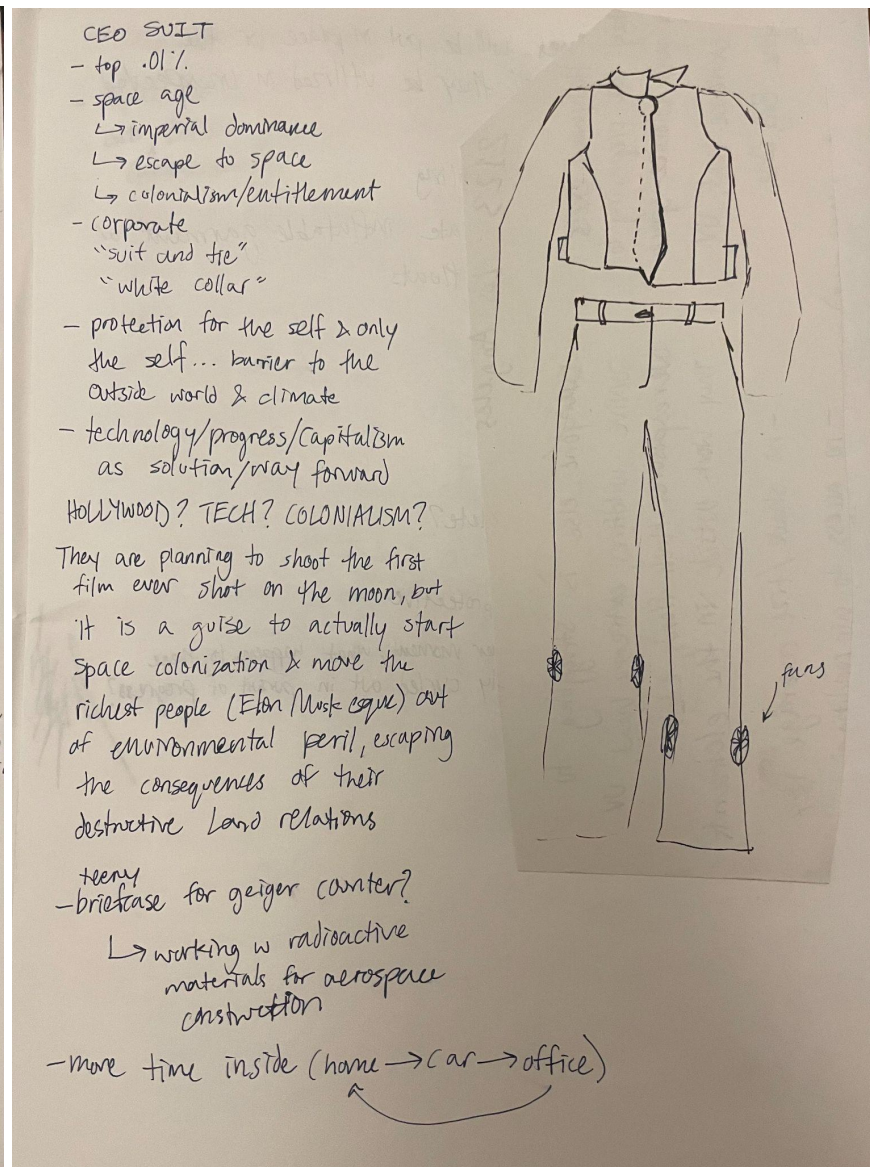
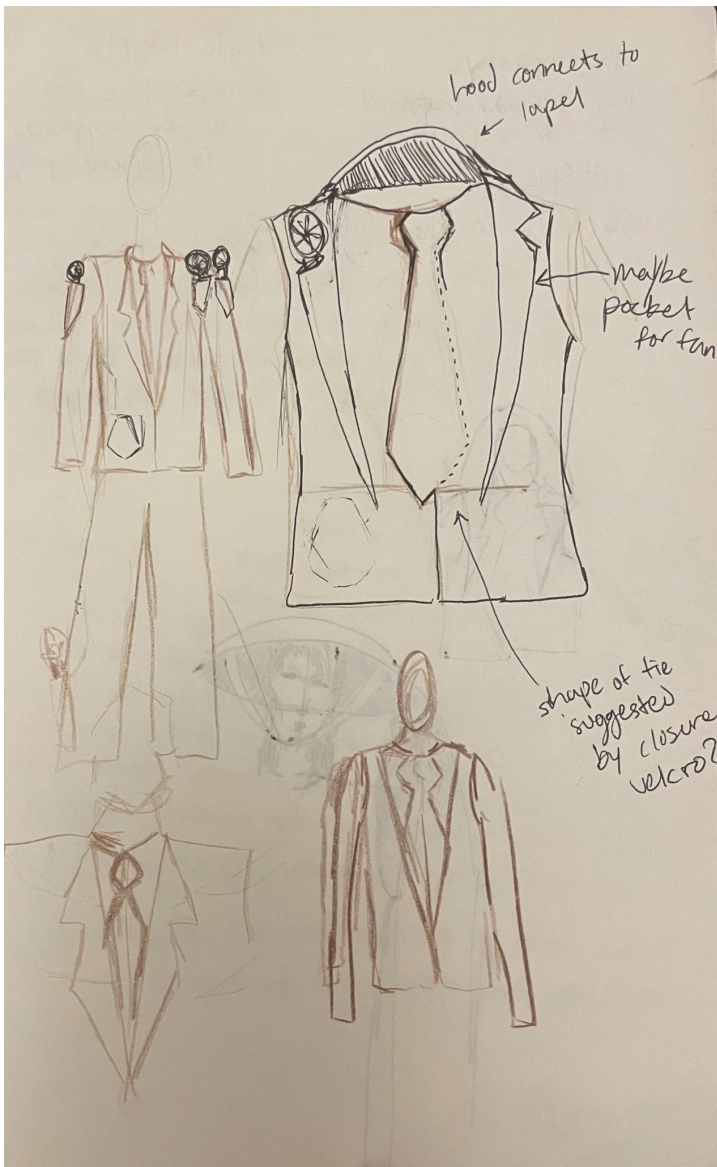
Next semester I will create another look made from recycled billboard vinyl tarps of outdated advertisements, a material that is cheap and mass-produced in our consumer society. I envision the structure of this outfit to substitute what is routinely left out from predominantly BIPOC neighborhoods: green space and shade. The burdens of heatwaves fall dramatically and unevenly onto marginalized people in Los Angeles because of white suburbanization, redlining, and the overall historical lack of investment into those neighborhoods. This outfit will be self-shading and inspired by nature to honor Indigenous frameworks that look towards the metaphysical knowledge of the natural world for resilient futures, instead of the capitalistic instinct that everything can be solved through technological advancement.

While I have had the immense privilege of theorizing about apocalyptic futures in Los Angeles, Israel and the United States are currently enacting a concrete apocalyptic genocide against Palestinians for simply existing on their indigenous land. The Israeli colonial state has martyred 21,000 and counting Palestinians in the past two months alone. Israel's murderous regime functions through the same imperial white supremacist logics that legitimize the continued erasure of Tongva people indigenous to Los Angeles, views the natural world as resources to be extracted and sold, and instates California's expansive militarized prison

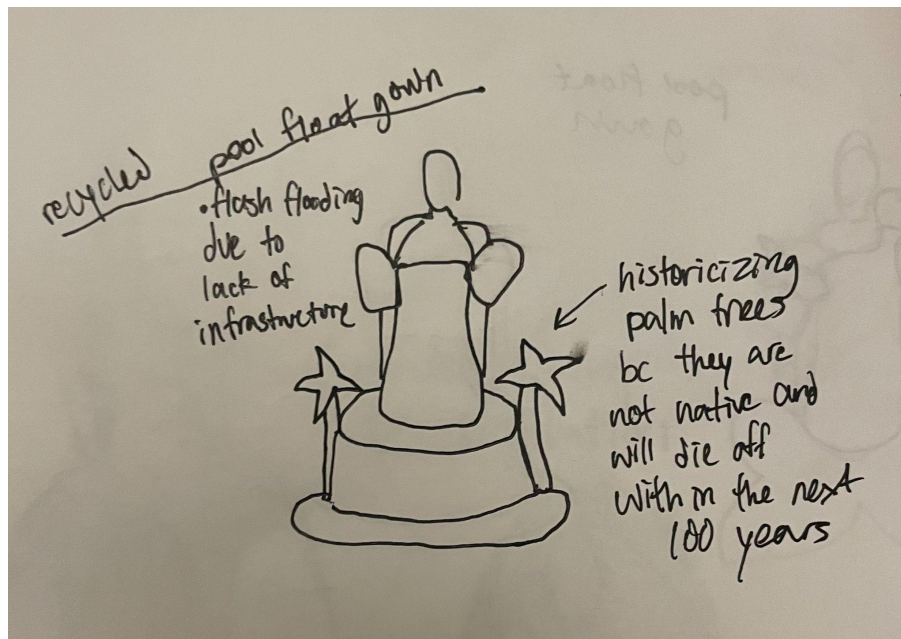
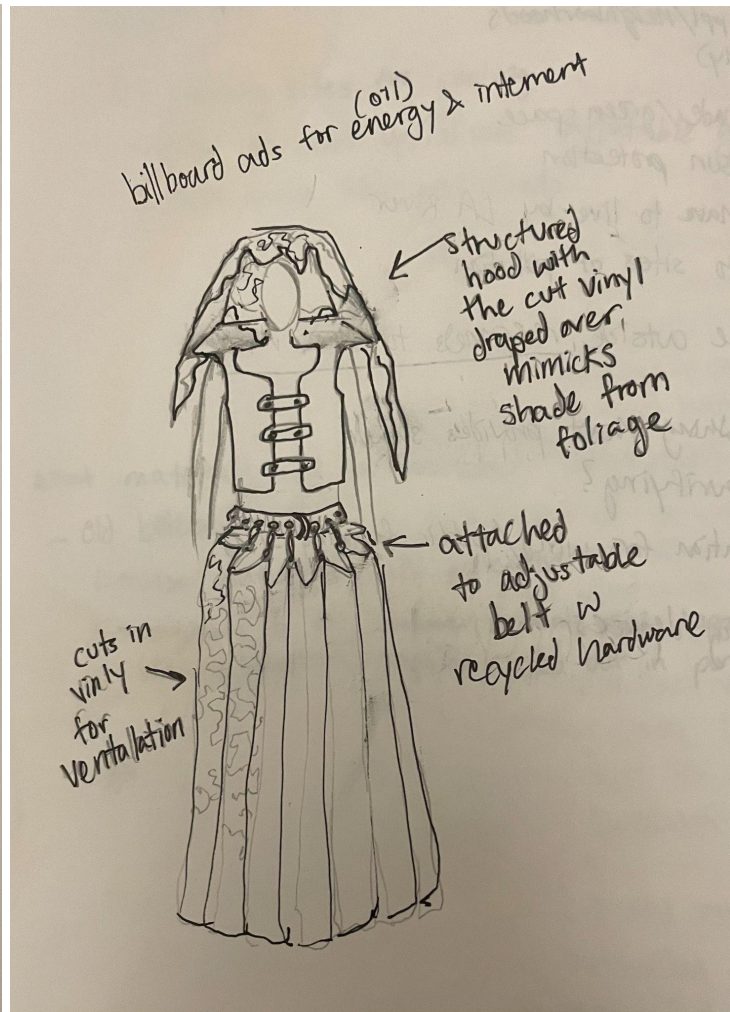
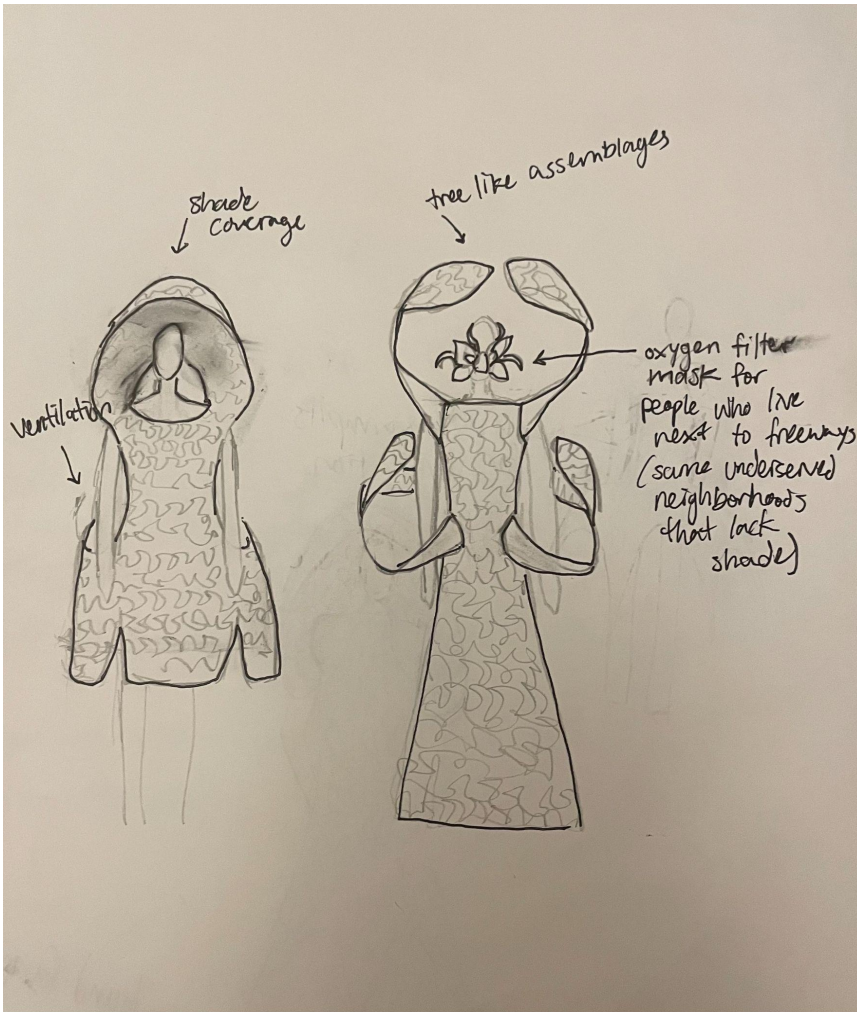
industrial complex. These mechanisms of power are constantly being remade and reified through one another to maintain settler colonial orthodoxy in an attempt to keep up with a world in flux. When hegemonic structures are understood as unfixed and malleable, transformative possibilities for undoing and redoing the world open up and provide a pathway for rebirth after apocalypse.



Four Horseman Suit, 2023, aluminized canvas and handheld fans, AI generated poster



Initial sketches and world-building



Ideas for further explorations next semester

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