Splendour

Splendour

Staging splendid bodies in early modern Scotland and England, is a creative exploration of adornment and fashion, as tools for the expression of love, power and politics. It has been created with The Glasgow School of Art commissioned by the Royal Museums Greenwich, London with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of the Armada Portrait Project.
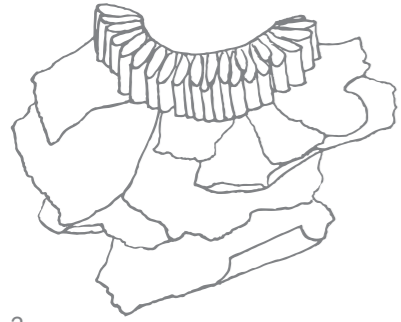
#armadaportrait #heybigsplendour #glasgowschoolart

■ *fashion*
■ *textiles*
■ *silversmithing & jewellery*

1

2

3

1 *xiaoshan huang*
lace fabric, thread, dried flowers

2 *sophie allardyce*
paper, paint, ribbon

3 *asia przytarska*
bonded paper nylon coat, white cotton smocked dress

asia przytarska
bonded paper nylon coat, white
cotton smocked dress
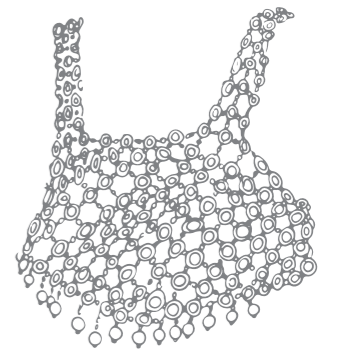
1 *nicole norman*
bonded satin/cotton tunic

2 *celeste chambers-hill*
gold plated wire, crystals, brass
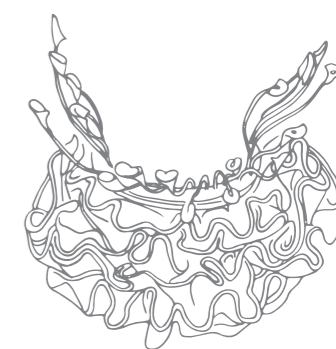
cara smith
red felt, wool, steel

1

2

3
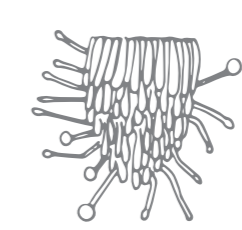
1 kirsten webber
pleated cotton shirt dress
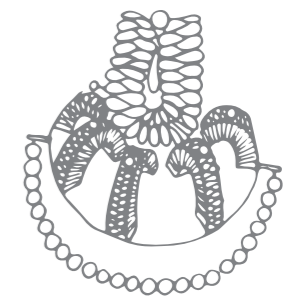
2 iona turner
brass, beads

3 yang miao
silver, paper, pearls

1 *jiayang xie*
copper, silver, enamel

2 *minjae kim*
white wadded shirt dress

3 *kristina merchant*
wire, hair

4 *nicole norman*
bonded satin/cotton tunic
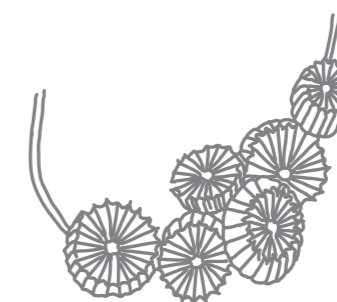
1 *sarah murdoch*
brass, wallpaper

2 *emma mcgauchie*
white cotton shirt/shorts jumpsuit

3 *adele mccully*
wire, yarn

4 *nicole norman*
bonded satin/cotton tunic

5 *liz willoughby*
brass, paper

1 *asia przytarska*
bonded paper nylon coat, white cotton smocked dress

2 *michelle currie*
silver, 3d printed nylon, copper, enamel, ink, synthetic ruby

3.1 *caitlin fraser*
black cotton wadded jacket

3.2 *giovanna cordez*
stainless steel washers and aluminium metal grid

1

2
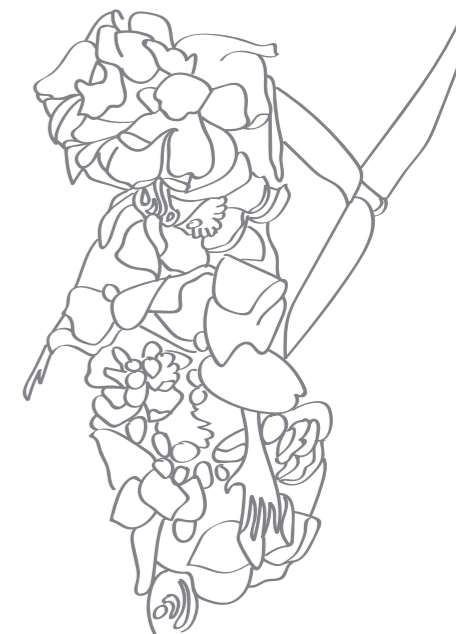
3.1   3.2

1 *emma macgauchie*
white cotton shirt/shorts jumpsuit

2 *brigita bivainyte*
leather, plastic, aluminium, brass

1

2

3

4
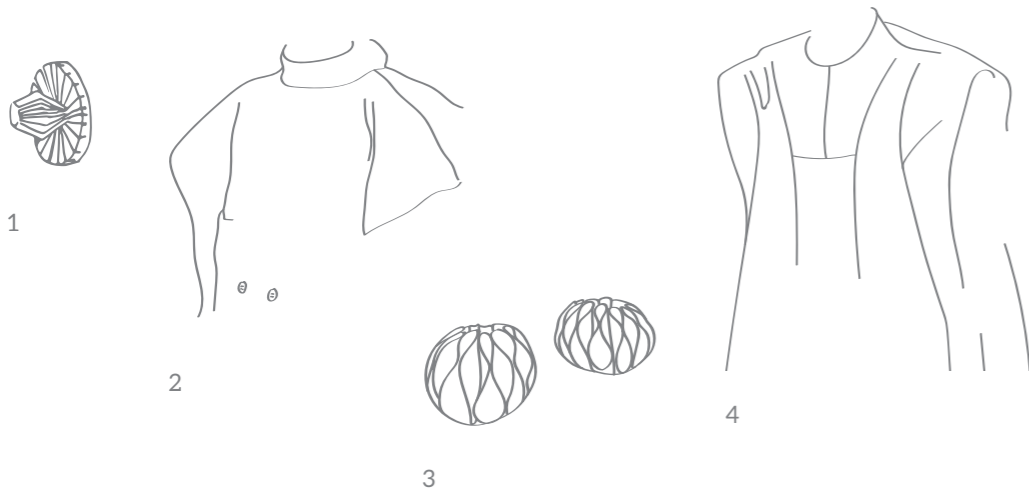
1 *cara lowe*
3d printed nylon, spray paint

2 *emma mcgauchie*
white cotton shirt/shorts jumpsuit

3 *gillian mcpate*
printed leather

4 *nicole norman*
bonded satin/cotton tunic

1

2
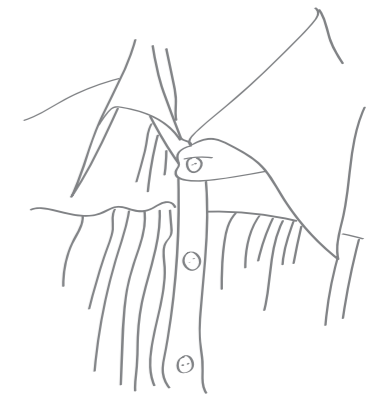
3
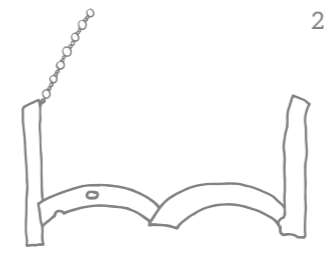
4

1 sam bennett
found objects, jute rope, wire

2 poppy brooks
white cotton shirt

3 kirsten webber
pleated cotton shirt dress

4 eilidh fraser
brass, beads, faux pearls

Armada Portrait Of Elizabeth I, painted around 1588
© National Maritime Museum, London

Matilda Pye

National Outreach Curator
Royal Museums Greenwich

The inspiration for this project is the Armada Portrait of the English Queen, Elizabeth I, (born at Greenwich Palace in 1533), staged in extraordinary Renaissance splendour, to commemorate a watershed moment in history following the British defeat of the Spanish Armada. The painting summarises the hopes and aspirations of the state as an imperial power but was also designed to be a spectacle of female power and majesty, calculated to inspire awe and wonder. The Queen is adorned in multiple strings of pearls, sumptuous velvets, silk ribbons, golden embossed designs in a painting packed with symbolic meaning. The Armada Portrait project, funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, includes exhibitions and public programmes created through working with, and learning from, a network of creative practitioners, educational and cultural partners. It was from this starting point, as the project curator, that I first invited Silvia Weidenbach to come and visit the portrait, in the Queen's Presence chamber, in the Queen's House, at Greenwich.

I was already familiar with Silvia's innovative work as a maker at the intersection of digital and traditional jewellery. I suspected the dazzle and performance of craftsmanship in the painting, would appeal to her knowledge about how bodies can be performed and fashioned through adornment. After visiting The Glasgow School of Art, I was immediately impressed by the dynamic workshops, tools and skills being taught and shared at the school. Silvia and I worked together to create an interdisciplinary brief for The Glasgow School of Art students, to use the painting and the visual and material culture of the period to unpack female histories and to explore and debate their contemporary relevancies in their own work as students of textiles, fashion, silversmithing and jewelry. Our ambition for the students was to harness their strong making skills but to expand their experience of how their work could be displayed and fashioned on the body.

Obviously, we wanted the project to be rooted in Scotland's rich history hence interweaving research on portraits of Elizabeth's cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, born 1542 and mother of James VI, alongside Anne of

Denmark born 1574 and her daughter, (Mary's grand daughter and Elizabeth I's god daughter), Elizabeth Stuart, born 1596. Students explored the layers of construction and propaganda in historic portraits, interrogated and translated the symbolism, stories and humanity of these women, and made thoughtful provocations on the uncomfortable truths inherent in the shimmer of grand displays of wealth, through their work.

We wanted a multi-faceted project, which would encourage students to engage with heritage and histories through live interventions. We are extremely grateful to Stirling Castle for allowing the students to create a stunning photo shoot, (images of which make up this catalogue). Working with the castle allowed the students to use relevant architecture and interiors to animate their work and provided a rich professional learning experience for students and recent graduates who made up the team, providing amazing hair, make up and photography. The project includes writings, talks, and exhibitions and will culminate in a symposium and performative intervention with students' work at the Queen's House in Greenwich.

The project was a wonderful opportunity to experience a live brief connected to the wider industry. I loved the collaborative aspects.
GSA, Silversmithing & Jewellery Student

Working with and learning from Glasgow students and colleagues has been a rewarding experience. The students wove interconnecting histories and heritage together using, tools, skills and imagination to express their passion, power and politics. We look forward to bringing the work to Greenwich and continuing such an excellent partnership with the school.

Dr Helen McCormack

Reader in Art & Design History
The Glasgow School of Art

Dr Thea Stevens

Academic Coordinator: Interdisciplinarity
The Glasgow School of Art

Greenwich to Stirling to Greenwich: Splendorous Impulses and Composed Ornaments

In her book, *Women and Power: A Manifesto* (2017), Mary Beard describes how the public voice of women has been silenced over millennia by patriarchal structures that have extinguished female voices and actions. She chooses Elizabeth I as just one example. A powerful and long-reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth I ought to signify a shift in understanding women's roles, historically, in public life. For Beard, however, Elizabeth remains significant in the public imagination *because* of her identification with male characteristics; particularly in her claim to have the 'harte and stomack of a king', in her famous address to troops at Tilbury in 1588. Beard's point is that Elizabeth's history has been written and spoken largely by men. The queen's voice, body, manners, habits and language have been determined by male writers and have, subsequently, been altered, tailored to the attitudes and circumstances of male power over the centuries. In this project, which takes the *Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I* as its starting point, students have investigated the 'materials' of female monarchy in ways which prioritise elements of agency through intimate knowledge of their clothing and jewellery; questioning accepted historical precepts of gender and power and challenging the conventions of historicised language. What is a 'Virgin Queen' but a social construct, after all?

Elizabeth I's ambitious plans were continued by her successor, Queen Anne of Denmark, Queen Consort to James VI of Scotland and I of England, who brought the splendour of Scandinavian and German courts to Scotland, and then to England in 1603. However, Anne's patronage of Inigo Jones also contributed to a new Palladian austerity in Britain, particularly in the design of the Queen's House, formerly the site of the Tudor Greenwich Palace. While creating elaborate costumes and sets for Anne's complex *masques*, Jones was also inventing an Anglo-Italianate architectural form, exemplified by 'composed ornaments', that would be forever identified with the unfortunate Stuarts. Along with the Queen's House, Anne commissioned Jones to create a classical portico to the vineyards at Oatlands, in Surrey, visible in her portrait by Paul van Somer of 1617. Anne of Denmark's desire for jewellery was renowned but her aspirations in this regard were connected to her understanding of the power of jewellery to represent the power of a nation. During this period, when Britain pursued an expansive trade in precious commodities, and in enslaved people, the expression of supremacy was often through allusion to jewels. For example, in one of Anne's most controversial of staged performances, *Masque of Blacknesse*, the performer remarks:

For were the world with all his wealth a ring,
Britannia, whose new name makes all tongues sing,
Might be a diamond worthy to encase it …

The exhibition of work in *Splendour* surveys the Renaissance and Stuart courts of Scotland and England through its most powerful female icons, renowned for their exuberance, luxury and excess. Situated within the royal estates of Stirling and Greenwich, two 'elevated landscapes' with strong cultural, artistic and literary meanings, the students' work reflects, perhaps, the tensions and unease of this period that ushered in a union of the crowns, between Scotland and England in the form of James VI of Scotland and I of England, but that also anticipated a period of deep discontent, resulting in the eventual act of regicide, with the death of James's son, Charles I in 1649.

The material culture of decorative objects, entangled within the lives of monarchs, reveal such knowledge and sentiment. In *Splendour*, materials are gathered together in ways that parallel these wider associations, while simultaneously offering a critique of display and performance of royal privilege. Gold leaf, mother of pearl, delicate iron lacework, and semi-precious stones, are presented in the exhibition in architectonic constructions that imitate and replicate the kinds of animated pleasures that Queen Henrietta Maria, Queen Consort to Charles I, expressed when she exclaimed the Queen's House, Greenwich, to be a 'House of Delight', as it was bestowed upon her in 1629.

It is these associations that are foregrounded in this project, *Splendour*, provoking questions and meanings surrounding power and agency; who owns it and who might speak it.

As an educator, I'm extremely interested in the type of pedagogical space that the *Splendour* project exemplifies. In it, the students were given significant freedom and agency, with the payoff being the creative space to construct a powerful individual and collective experience. This is no small ask, and the teaching staff involved have been extremely artful in communicating the value of working within one's own discipline, but sharing a learning journey with students from other disciplines who are exposed to the same set of themes and inspirations. As such, the sparkle of *Splendour* has emerged from an alliance of intent and curiosity, with Textiles students viewing what Silversmithing & Jewellery makers have done with intrigue and pleasure, and vice versa. The photographic outputs from Stirling Castle show that these ways of working *alongside* pack a powerful punch, with the textiles, accessories and adornment finding a sensational foil in the garments made by students in Fashion Design. By bringing these outputs together, we see how image is a process of construction – and after all, the students' historical inspirations deeply understood the importance of what they wore, and how they wore it. Elizabeth I would have been nothing without her material trappings of power; and in choosing a deep red underdress for the event of her death, Mary Queen of Scots forcefully embraced the symbolism of colour and luxury. Centuries later, I like to think that these icons have stepped into the students' world, and they find it brave and new, and familiar.

Within the *Splendour* project, my role has been that of observer and cultural heritage cheerleader, and seeing how it has made the students tick has been beyond rubies. In fact, the whole construction of the project has afforded an alchemical process. Sitting in the lecture theatre during Matilda Pye's initial provocation – a rich lecture on how adornment and garments could and still construct identity – it occurred to me that these historical figures may not be immediately familiar to many of the students. But as they've explored their stories, they've found their own way to show that Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, and Anne of Denmark are names to conjure with. After all, these icons were all too human: along with power games and politics came sexual politics, intrigue and bloodshed. The students engaged with these *(her)stories* in a way that didn't just speak to them, but shouted.

The exhibition of their work, and indeed the photo shoot at Stirling Castle, showed exactly how powerfully the students have achieved this. They have wrested the new from the historical by forging their own creative connections, and their visions are more powerful precisely because they are utterly authentic to them. They've taken what they've gleaned from historical research, and injected energy: from the superbly abject qualities of a choker evoking the moment of Mary's decapitation (and let's face it, we're always fascinated by the darker side), to textiles samples that make smallpox pustules entrancing. What is more contemporary than being aware of change, of continuity, of transformation?
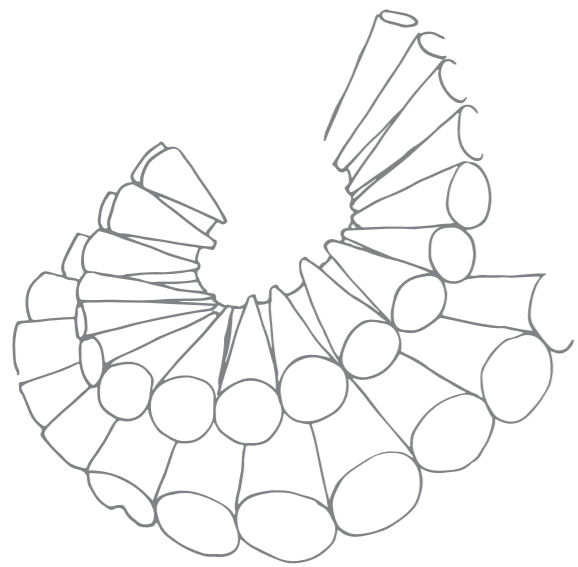
abbey campbell
paint, card

Thanks

Megan Allan
Sophie Allardyce
Honor Anderson
Niamh Arthur
Paige Baitey
James Ballingall
Caius Bearder
Sam Bennett
Brigita Bivainyté
Poppy Brooks
Flora Bruce-Gardyne
Sophie Campbell
Abbey Campbell
Isobel Castle
Celeste Chambers-Hill
Nina Charley Candido
Lili Chen
Phoebe Chen YuFei
Cyan ChengXi Li
Amy Chu
Katy Clark
Tipsudar Cochrane
Tipsukon Cochrane
Giovanna Cordez
Isla Cruickshank
Holly Cunningham
Michelle Currie
Sophie Downes
Hannah Dunn
Kirstin Dunn
Rosanna Dyke
Hermione Fenton
Jade Fernon
Monica Findlay
Amy Findlay
Andrew Fleming
Ella Fletcher
Eilidh Fraser
Caitlin Fraser
Alice Fry
Shiqi Fu
Sam Galloway
Ruby Gardner
Alaitz Gavilan Martinez-Maranon

Isla Gracie
Joanna Graham
Kathryn Halliday
Rachel Hardie
Jessica Hay
Caitlin Hegney
Rachel Hetherington
Carissa Huang XiaoShan
Ahsun Hwang
Niamh Ireland
Astrid Jaroslawsky
Kathryn Johnston
Milly Keir
Minjae Kim
Thomas Kinghorn
Laura Knowles
Ellen Kynoch
Laura Lao JiaMin
Nina Letts
YiLin Li
Dormancy LiXiner Cui
Rui Liu
Jaione Lopez Ruiz
Cara Lowe
Mi Marinescu-Duca
Phoebe Marsden
Adele McCully
Ruby-Rose McGann
Emma McGauchie
Andrew McNab
Finley McNamara
Melissa McNeil
Gillian Mcpate
Kristina Merchant
Christine Milroy
Alexis Mitchell-Taylor
Ailsa Morrant
Athena Munro
Eilidh Munro
Giulia Mura
Sarah Murdoch
Caitlin Murphy
Megan Murray
Isabelle Murray

Bronagh Murray
Nicole Norman
Deborah O'Leary
Andy Panchen Yu
Adrienn Pesti
Lucy Pitts
Hannah Pocock
Elise Prentice
Asia Przytarska
Sarah Rhodes
Clare Robb
Gosia Rog
Harriet Rous
Katrina Rowell
Tracy Scott
Sally Shepherd
Rosie Shrimpton
Kelly Sloan
Scott Smith
Holly Smith
Cara Smith
Selena So-Ha Park
Michelle Stewart
Jack Taylor
Kialy Tihngang
Catherine Tinney
Laura To
Rowan Tothill
Jessica Turnbull
Iona Turner
Freya Walsh
Kirsten Webber
Liz Willoughby
Xiaoyin Wu
Jane Xie
Miao Yang
Harvey Youngs
Runtian Zhang
Yitong Zhang

Madeleine Virginia Brown
Ben Hall
Sam Harrison
Aimée Lawson

Rhiannon Grove McColl
Leeka Ndure
Harriet Rous

Christie Alexander
Marianne Anderson
Leigh Bagley
Chantal Balmer
Jo Barker
Sean Black
Elaine Bremner
Helena Britt
Tony Brotheridge
Lynsey Calder
Cherylann Connor
Colin Faulks
Dan Fradgley
Fiona Glen
Anna Gordon
Shona Guthrie
Chloe Highmore
Stephen Keane
Andrew Lamb
Helen Marriott
Helen McCormack
Kim McNeil
Ashleigh Miller
Sarah Mower
Nigel Munro
Michael Pell
Celia Phillips
Annabel Sharp
Heather Shields
Aaron Smyth
Jimmy Stephen-Cran
Thea Stevens
Susan Telford
Harald Turek
Silvia Weidenbach

Barbara Marie Ridley
Irene McAra-McWilliam

Beatriz Chadour-Sampson
Lucy Dale
Allison Goudie
Chris Green
Kit Heyman
Natasha Lohan
Sue Prichard
Matilda Pye

Photography by Jens Masimov

The Glasgow School of Art
Royal Museums Greenwich
Heritage Lottery Fund
Stirling Castle

THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL:ºⁿ ARt

ROYAL
MUSEUMS
GREENWICH

STIRLING
CASTLE

HERITAGE
FUND