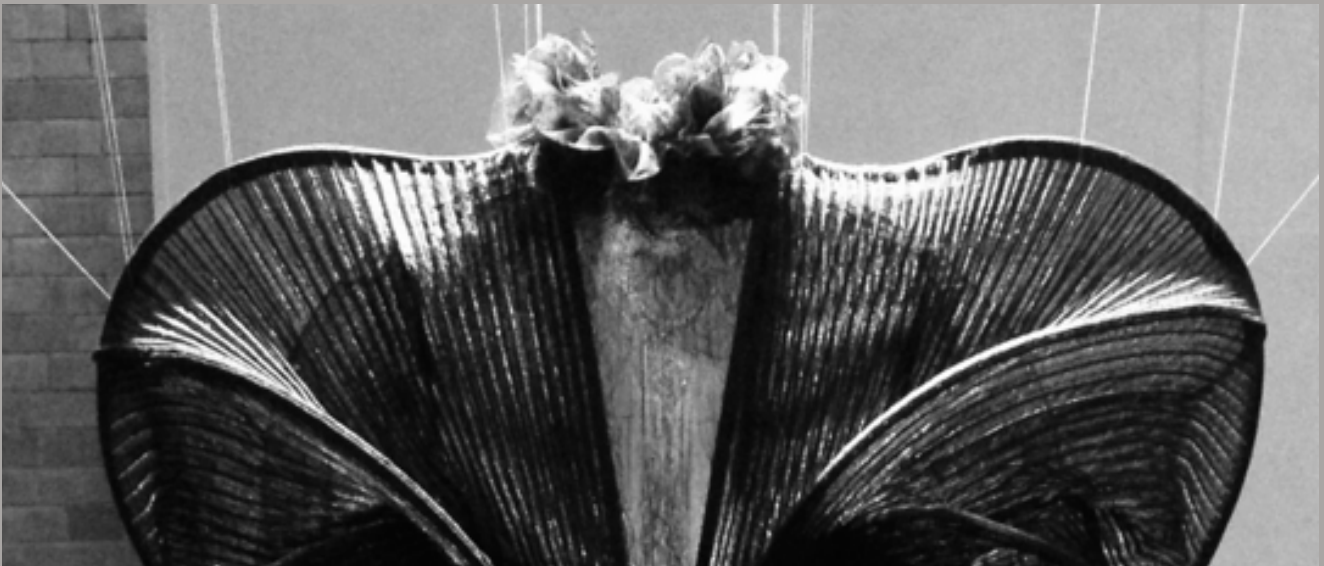




THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Claire Ferguson

OUTPUT TITLE

Double Exposure

OUTPUT TYPE

Artefact

DATE

November 2014

FIG. 1
Double Exposure, 7ft x 4ft,
 exhibited at 'Beauty by Design',
 The Scottish National Portrait
 Gallery, November 2014.
 Photo Claire Ferguson.



01 / STATEMENT

The output is a garment, designed and made by Claire Ferguson. The research used fashion design to explore how fashion silhouettes signify accepted notions of female beauty within the Renaissance and contemporary eras. It was initiated in response to current issues relating to body image in fashion and contemporary culture. Ferguson's aim was to raise awareness of these issues and explore historic trends and fashions and ideal body types.

The garment is composed of two dresses layered over one another. The under dress is made from fine lace in a minimal, modern form. The outer is a knitted dress combining innovative knit structures and contemporary yarn, to create an accentuated Renaissance silhouette. In contrasting the theatrical dress of the Renaissance period with the simplicity of contemporary design, the garment invites us to reflect on the changing meaning of beauty.

Double Exposure was created for 'Beauty By Design', an exhibition of contemporary fashion design and Renaissance painting at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 14 November 2014 – 3 May 2015. A collaboration with the fashion designer Malcolm Burkinshaw and the art historian Jill Burke, 'Beauty By Design' explored relations between contemporary fashion design and historic portraiture to interrogate changing ideals of body shapes and beauty from the Renaissance to the present day.

Visitor numbers for the exhibition were in excess of 146,000. A range of associated events were attended by audiences of 1,166 in total.

FIG. 2

Close up of *Double Exposure*
in 'Beauty by Design'. Photo
Claire Ferguson.



02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The research centred around the relations between contemporary fashion design and historic portraiture.

It took inspiration from the collection of Renaissance portraits in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, including portraits of Mary Queen of Scots, Lady Arabella Stuart, and Esther Inglis.

Visual analysis, the handling and documentation of historic Renaissance garments, and material processes of fashion design and production were brought together to explore the ways in which these portraits both constructed and responded to historically specific conceptions of feminine beauty, and invited a contemporary response.



FIG. 3
Installation view with visitors,
showing the floating installation
of *Double Exposure* within the
'Beauty by Design' exhibition.
Photo Claire Ferguson.

03 / ORIGINALITY

Ferguson's design contrasts and bridges historical and contemporary notions of beauty within fashion, offering an innovative means of enabling reflection on changing ideas of beauty.

The originality of Ferguson's work lies in garment construction independent of the mannequin. Freed from a specific human body, and the criteria of wearability and contemporary commercial restrictions, Ferguson could experiment with the scale and size of the garment. The resulting dress does not conform to set clothing sizing and is oversized, at approximately 7ft tall by 4ft wide. Through this overbearing, exaggerated form, the work compels the viewer to question their own notions of body shape and size. Designed to be viewed from multiple perspectives and exhibited so that visitors could move around it, the garment was exhibited as a 'floating' object, transfiguring the 2D garments depicted in the original paintings that provided Ferguson with her source material into spectral, 3D form.

Double Exposure was also innovative in the way it integrated past and present, both in its design and its process of making. To give physical expression to this fusion, Ferguson decided to fuse two dresses into one garment: the lace dress represents a contemporary shape and the knotted outer dress fuses a historically-inspired silhouette with a fine cotton ribbed-like structure. The latter constructs a theatrical Renaissance silhouette through its elaborate structure of hand-operated machine-knit textile and wire-frame. The look and feel of the knitted fabric outer layer is sculptural, supported by a steel frame. This frame imparts a sculptural quality to the garment. This contrasts with the simplicity of the contemporary under-layer made of delicate, transparent lace.

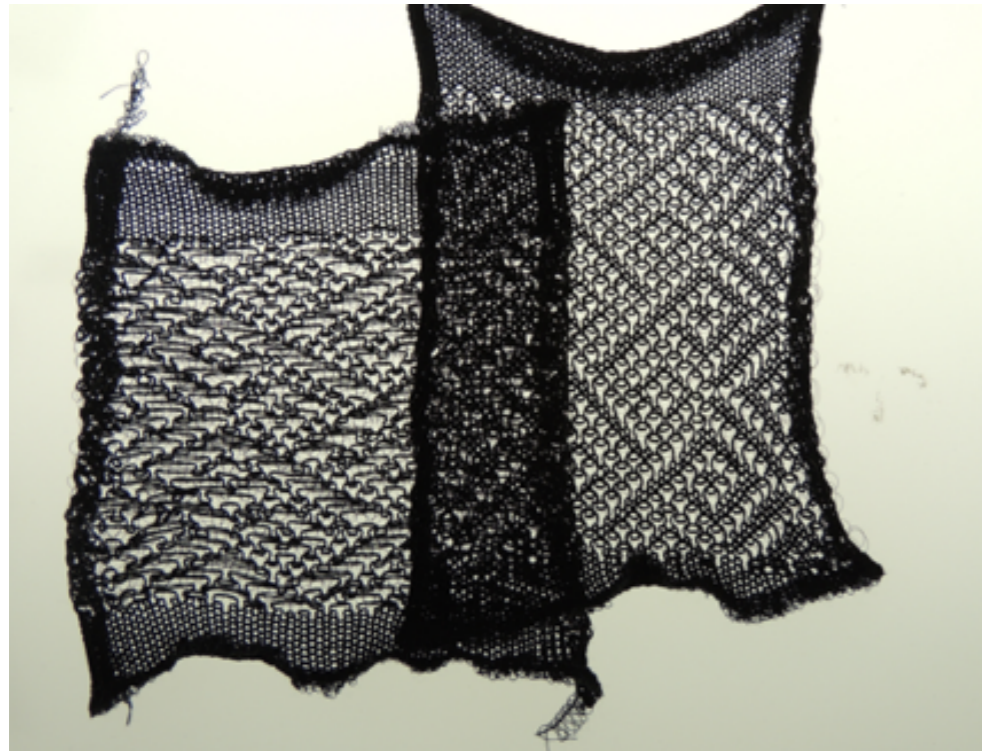
The lace, signifier of elitism and wealth during the Renaissance, is here transformed into a modern-day, democratic silhouette in its fusion with the architectural form and commanding silhouette of the outer knitted dress. The two silhouettes of the garment interact through outline, scale, texture and space.

Double Exposure challenges existing perceptions of knitwear in its original combination of yarns and stitch.

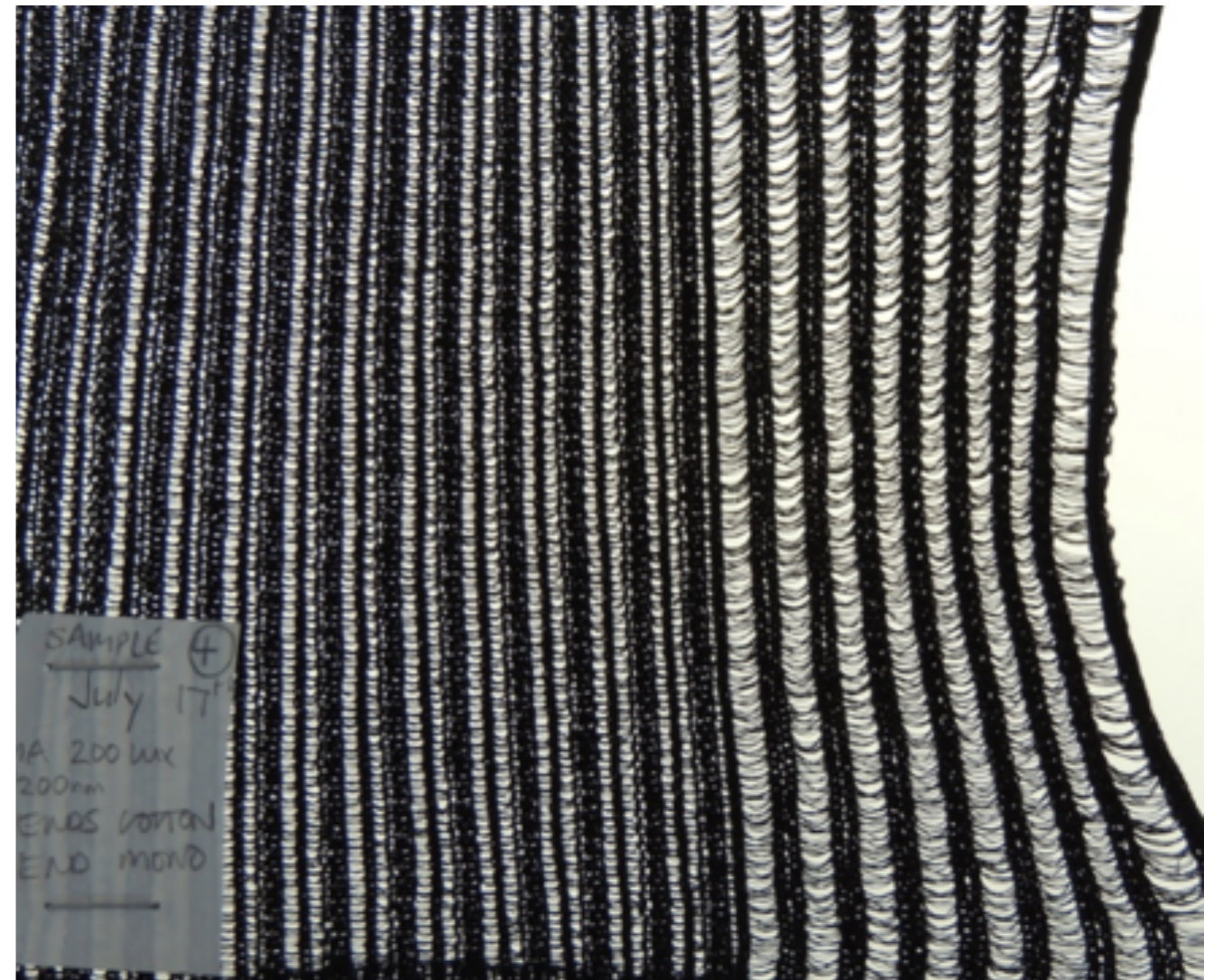
Ferguson has produced commercial knitwear designer since 2000, creating work for clients including Calvin Klein, Pringle of Scotland and small independent, London based designers such as Isa Arfen and Rejina Pyo. *Double Exposure* draws upon her commercial skills and experience using hand operated knitting machines; but it extends her practice by undertaking an experimental approach to design and production. Typical fashion development includes the creation of preparatory sketches, prototypes, and sampling of materials. For *Double Exposure*, Ferguson worked directly with fabrics and silhouettes, rather than drawing or market research.



FIG. 4
Installation view showing
the floating installation of
Double Exposure within 'Beauty
by Design'. Photo Claire Ferguson.



FIGS. 5-8
Knitted fabric sampling
process, exploring pattern,
stitch structure and shaping.
Photo Claire Ferguson.





FIGS. 9-11
The sampling process exploring silhouette and construction and experiments in folding and draping the knit. Photos Claire Ferguson.



FIG. 12

Artist unknown, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, c. 1610–1615. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.



FIG. 13

Artist unknown, *Esther Inglis*, 1595. Oil on panel. Image courtesy of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.



FIG. 14

Robert Peake, *Lady Arabella Stuart*, 1605. Oil on panel. Image courtesy of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.



04 / RIGOUR

Double Exposure was initiated at the invitation of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and New Media Scotland.

Ferguson put forward the concept for the garment through a design presentation, which was reviewed and selected by the organisers, responding to their stipulations that the artefact would have impact, be original and take direct inspiration from portraits in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's collection.

Research began with a period of study of the collection within the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, to select, identify, document and analyse a group of portraits using photography and art historical research. Ferguson was particularly drawn to the silhouette of Renaissance dress and the way the portraits accentuated and stylised its distinctive lines. Research continued with museum-based archival work, in important collections of lace – notably, the Clothworkers' Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion at the V&A. This involved special access to, handling and documentation of samples of clothing, such as ruff collars and lace from the Renaissance.

A key challenge in the production process was to bring transparency and lightness to the knitted dress, creating a fabric with both structure and flexibility, that could be worked into definite shapes, allowing accentuation of the shoulders and the waist.

The knitted fabric was created on a hand-operated Stoll V-bed flat knitting machine. The stitch construction took inspiration from Renaissance ruffs. Lace during the Renaissance was customarily used for collars and details. By infusing lace throughout her garment, Ferguson brings the past to the present. In turn, the lace motifs can be appreciated at a larger scale and in novel ways, for instance it appears blurred in areas due to the gossamer effect of the superimposed knit. Ferguson used lace made by Sophie Hallette studio, one of the world's leading manufacturers of lace for global fashion houses. Sophie Hallette also sponsored the *Double Exposure* project.

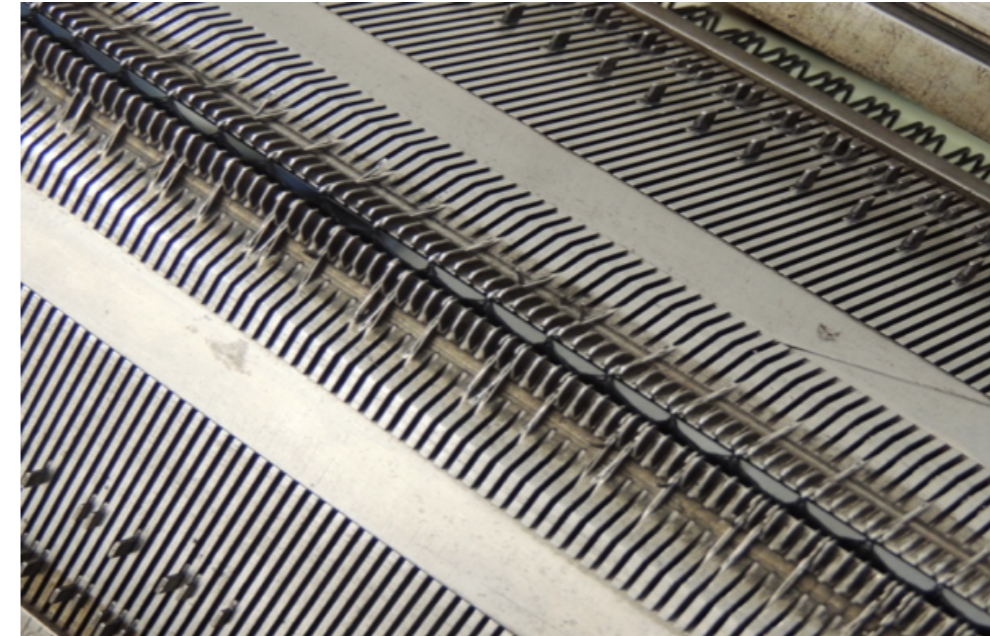
Practice-based sampling research was undertaken within Ferguson's studio to create numerous, highly specialised, knitted structures.

An ultra-fine mercerised pima cotton and 180 Denier monofilament yarn were used to create a knitted rib-like fabric, using an industrial Hand Flat knitting machine.

To achieve a sculptural 3D form, aluminium and steel metal wiring was inserted using specially designed, hidden channels, and whip stitching the skirt to a steel metal ring.



FIG. 15
Research into lace at the V&A.
Photos Claire Ferguson.



FIGS. 16-17
Fabric being made on the knitting machine. Photo Claire Ferguson.

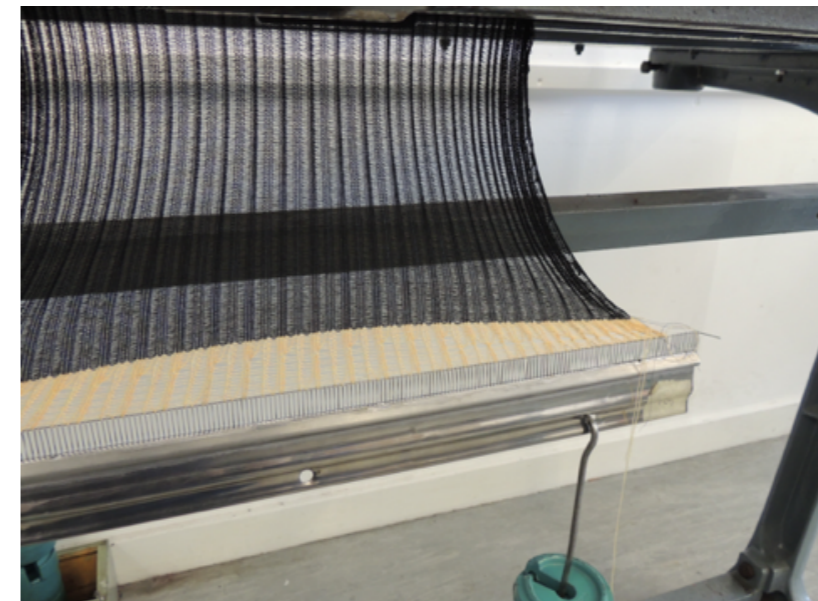


FIG. 18
Pima cotton and monofilament
yarns. Photo Claire Ferguson.



FIG. 19
The two dresses before the
insertion of their steel supports.
Photo Claire Ferguson.



FIGS. 20-23
Images showing garment
wire construction. Photos
Claire Ferguson.





FIG. 24 Pages from the 'Beauty by Design' exhibition booklet published by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Courtesy designer and copyright holder, Nicky Regan.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

Ferguson was invited by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery to create *Double Exposure* for the 'Beauty by Design' exhibition. The exhibition was curated by Mark Daniels, Director of New Media Scotland and Patricia Allerston, Head of Education, National Galleries of Scotland.

'Beauty by Design' was the first specifically fashion-themed, non-portrait exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and included the work of seven designers and artists including Ferguson, Malcolm Burkinshaw, Sally-Ann Provan, Philip Clarke, Sharon Lloyd, Anne Chaisty and Paul Hodgson.

Visitor numbers for the exhibition were in excess of 152,000. A range of associated events included a panel discussion with All Walks Beyond the Catwalk fashion initiative, a 'Latelab' at the Edinburgh International Science Festival, and a handing creative workshop for people with a range of visual impairments at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. These events were attended by 1,166 members of the public.

Double Exposure was also included in an interactive digital resource, created by the National Galleries of Scotland education team for secondary schools, which explained the design and manufacture process of the piece. A free exhibition booklet accompanied the exhibition, published by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

"Beauty by Design' actually manages to make visitors stop and think about art and modern fashion and allows them to grasp the main concept behind this event – learning to look and make comparisons, building relationships and connections. In our times in which, to attract large number of visitors, museums often end up bombarding them with quantity rather than quality, this is definitely something to praise.'

Anonymous visitor feedback from the exhibition.



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