RESEARCH JOURNAL

PROJECT REALISATION ESFT7021

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Title

Anatomy of Silent Romance: An Exploration of Modernising Dark Gothic Archetypes according to GenZ Fashion

I am leaning into symbolic character archetypes that resonate with goth subculture, psychological symbolism and emotional storytelling which conveys in **Anatomy of Silent Romance**. These archetypes can be modernised and digitised to suit Gen Z's emotional preferences in games while reinforcing my conceptual direction. It is also about how the digital space through games will be reacting and interacting with the GenZ.

Research Questions:

- *How can digital fashion reimagine Gothic archetypes to express Gen Z's emotional states and subcultural identities in screen-based environments?*
- *How does the reinterpretation of Gothic archetypes through digital garments offer Gen Z new ways to construct, protect or perform their digital identities?*
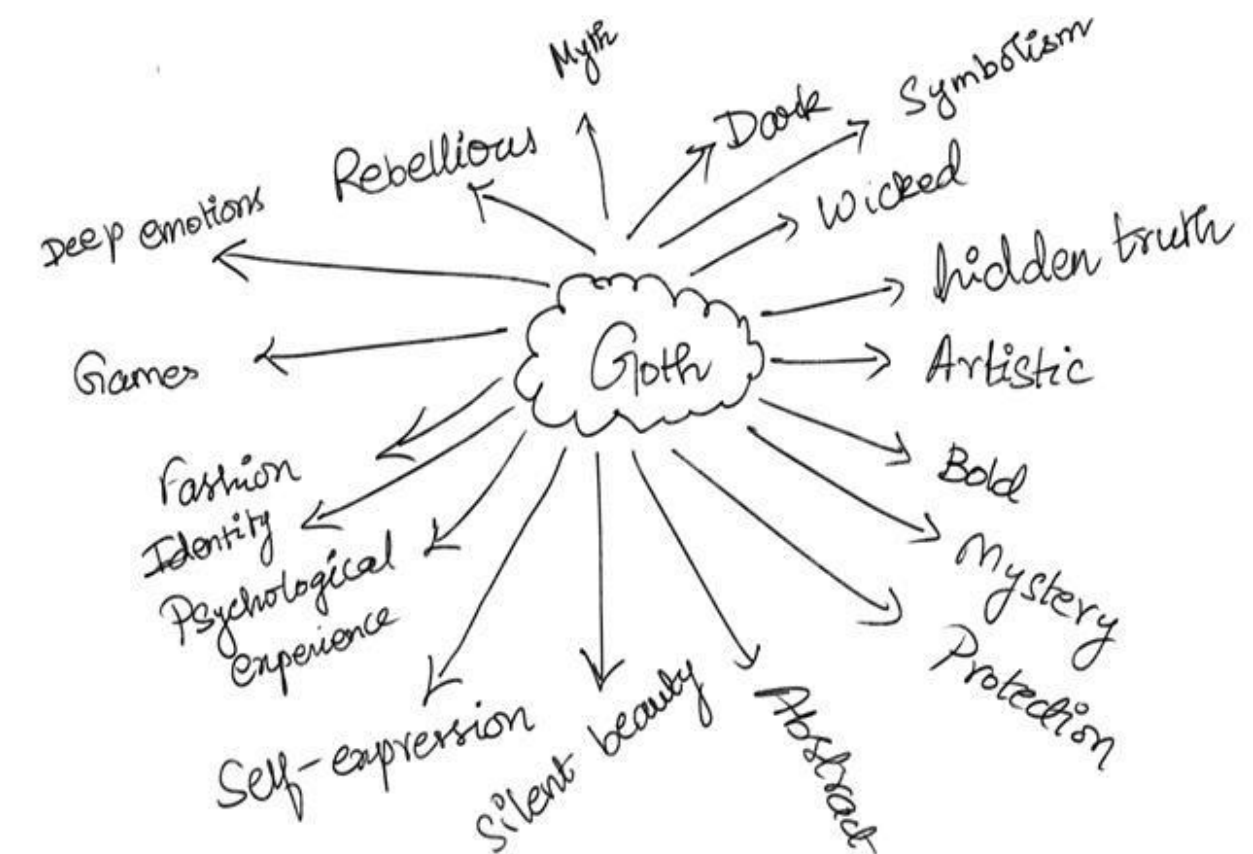

Fig 1: Chart by the author

What Am I Trying to Say by the Research Question?

Through these research questions, I'm exploring how fashion can be more than clothing, it can be an emotional language. I'm asking myself, how dark Gothic archetypes can be reinterpreted through digital fashion to express the complex inner lives of Gen Z, a generation shaped by screens, subcultures and constant emotional navigation.

I'm not simply restyling these archetypes; I'm using them as metaphors for real psychological states—grief, resistance, erasure, protection and translating those into digital garments that respond to and reflect mood, identity and symbolic emotion.

The question challenges traditional fashion to evolve emotionally and conceptually, using technology as a tool for storytelling, resistance and self-preservation.

Why?

Because Gen Z increasingly uses fashion not just to look good, but to communicate feelings, protect their inner lives and resist, especially in digital space where identity is fluid and constantly performed. By turning Gothic archetypes into symbolic digital garments, this gives shape to emotions that are often hard to express directly—like grief, invisibility or emotional Burnout. If we design not just for style, but for what Gen Z feels, fears and wants to protect.

I want to say that the digital world is not just a space for aesthetics, trend or filtered perfection—it's also a place where people, especially Gen Z, carry unspoken emotions, fragmented identities and invisible struggles. Beneath curated profiles, there's a deep need for emotional protection, expression and recognition.

Through this project, I'm showing that the digital world has become our emotional landscape, where we preserve memories. They are the metaphors for how we feel online: watched, edited, unread or unseen.

I want to reframe the digital world where fashion, mood and identity can become interactive tools for storytelling, survival and emotional release. Through symbolic garments, I'm saying that the digital world should allow us not just to be seen, but to be felt, protected and understood.

This generation is not only emotionally aware, but also digitally fluent, visually expressive and subculturally fragmented, requiring fashion to go beyond trends and speak to identity, resistance and presence. Rather than follow dominant trends, Gen Z often forms identity through aesthetic communities from goth and glitchcore to dark academia and witchtok. As Titton (2015) notes, fashion becomes a tool for aligning with values, moods and narratives that reflect personal or collective resistance. This generation was raised in digital environments. They don't just consume, they interact and customise. My project's use of VR, reactive garments and immersive worlds makes fashion feel alive, responsive and empowering—bridging art, fashion, gaming and identity design.

I am doing this project because it allows me to explore how fashion functions as a tool for emotional expression, identity construction and cultural rebellion, especially for a generation shaped by digital life, fragmented realities and alternative aesthetics. Gen Z isn't just wearing clothes, they're using fashion to communicate mood, values and subcultural belonging. Designing these garments has allowed me to externalise internal states, translating complex emotions into digital forms that speak for me when I can't.

By reinterpreting dark Gothic archetypes in a digital context, I'm not only honouring a historically rich subculture, but reshaping it for a new era, one defined by screen-based identities, hyper-awareness of self-image and a desire for emotional authenticity. Gothic fashion has always symbolised beauty in darkness, defiance of norms and depth over perfection, values that deeply resonate with Gen Z and with me personally.

In a realm between reality and the digital space, where memory flickers and identity fragments, six archetypes will be presented behind each doors, born with digital traces. These are not just avatars, they are emotional echoes, mood-based gaurdians and silent rebels. Each garment is a spell, a skin and a wound. Each character is not only seen, but felt.

This project also reflects my own design identity. I'm drawn to work that is conceptual and emotionally layered. It allows me to combine my skills in digital fashion with my interest in narrative, mood and alternative visual language, helping me grow as a designer who challenges surface aesthetics and explores what fashion can really say in digital space. **I specifically chose goth subculture** because it embraces emotional depth and beauty in darkness, which aligns perfectly with the themes I want to explore in this project. Gothic style allows for vulnerability and power to exist side by side. That makes it an ideal visual and conceptual language for translating complex Gen Z emotions like grief, rebellion or silence into digital fashion.

What am I trying to achieve?

Through Anatomy of Silent Romance, I am trying to achieve a new way of communicating emotion, identity and subculture through digital fashion. I want to show that garments can do more than decorate a virtual body—they can embody psychological states, tell symbolic stories, and offer emotional connection in screen-based spaces.

I'm aiming to move digital fashion beyond, by designing interactive, narrative-rich garments that reflect Gen Z's lived experiences, such as grief, resistance, digital exhaustion and self-curation. Each character archetype becomes a wearable symbol of those inner states, allowing users not just to view fashion, but to feel it, interact with it and see themselves in it.

Ultimately, I'm trying to create a visually immersive, emotionally resonant experience that combines fashion, gaming and subcultural storytelling, offering Gen Z a new language to explore who they are in the digital world.

What Makes this DIFFERENT?
 It is its use of digital fashion as an emotional and symbolic language, rather than a purely visual or commercial product. While much of digital fashion focuses on aesthetics or trend replication, this project engages with psychological depth, subcultural identity and immersive storytelling. Each garment is not just a look, it's an embodiment of a Gen Z emotional state, reinterpreted through archetypes and designed to express invisible experiences such as grief, resistance, digital erasure or mood-based identity.

The project also distinguishes itself through its cross-disciplinary approach: it merges fashion, mythology, gaming, digital culture and immersive media (e.g.VR), creating a narrative universe where garments are interactive, symbolic and affective. This breaks away from conventional fashion formats by treating garments as experiential artefacts—designed not just to be seen, but to be felt, explored and emotionally engaged with.

In doing so, the project addresses a gap in current digital fashion discourse by offering a framework for post-physical, mood-driven self-expression, grounded in both conceptual design and Gen Z's lived experience in digital space.

Why is this important? Why should anyone care?
This project is important because it explores how fashion can evolve as a language of emotional depth, individuality and cultural resistance, especially in a time when identity is increasingly digital, performative and fragmented. By reimagining dark Gothic archetypes for Gen Z, this project brings attention to how a historically represented subculture is being reclaimed and redefined by a new generation, not just as a costume, but as a form of self-expression, softness in darkness and beauty in otherness.

It matters because it challenges fashion's obsession with perfection and consumer trends. It highlights Gen Z's turn toward mood-driven style and subcultural authenticity, using digital tools and digital garments. What does darkness mean in a screen-saturated world? In a world flooded with curated perfection, darkness becomes a form of truth-telling. For many in Gen Z, embracing Gothic or grunge, is about authenticity, depth and resistance.

This project speaks to a generation that's overexposed but emotionally underrepresented. In a digital world where people are constantly performing curated versions of themselves, this offers something rare: a visual and symbolic language for emotions that are usually hidden, suppressed or unspoken.

Anyone who has ever felt unseen, ghosted, emotionally exhausted or misread in digital space will recognise parts of themselves in these archetypes. The garments aren't just fashion—they are emotional mirrors, reflecting how we navigate silence, rebellion, grief and protection in a hyper-connected world.

For designers, creatives and digital natives, this project pushes fashion forward—not as a trend machine, but as a tool for emotional storytelling, subcultural expression and immersive identity building. It also expands what digital fashion can do: not just decorate the avatar, but let the avatar feel.

In a culture saturated with fast images, Anatomy of Silent Romance invites people to slow down, connect and recognise their own digital shadows which really matters.

Games inspiration

This project is necessary because it fills a gap in the current digital fashion world, where garments are often designed for aesthetics. Anatomy of Silent Romance offers a more meaningful, mood-driven approach by reimagining Gothic archetypes as representations of Gen Z's inner emotional worlds and experiences in digital space.

Gen Z increasingly uses fashion as a language of mood, identity and subcultural affiliation, especially in online contexts where presence is curated and fragmented. By combining digital fashion design with emotional symbolism, this project gives form to themes like silence, protection, visibility and memory, which are deeply relevant to how young people express themselves today.

Through immersive technologies (VR) and symbolic design, this project also contributes to the expanding field of virtual fashion as a narrative tool, not just a product. It reflects my own creative identity and experience as a designer who wants to move beyond surface-level aesthetics and use fashion to explore psychological depth and digital intimacy.

By drawing inspiration from the games like Resident Evil and Dark Souls, I'm introducing a narrative-driven, emotionally immersive layer to digital fashion—something rarely explored in fashion. These games are not just dark for aesthetic reasons; they create atmospheres of tension, isolation, survival and emotional ambiguity. I'm borrowing that tone to build garments that are not experienced through mood, interaction and psychological symbolism.

What's new is the integration of emotional world-building from games into fashion, like,

- in Dark Souls, carries silent lore, textures of decay, memory and endurance.
- in Resident Evil, the design reflects protection, danger and haunting presence, turning fashion into a survival language in digital space.

This brings a game-like narrative immersion into digital fashion—where each archetype becomes part of a larger psychological universe, not just a look. It transforms garments into storytelling devices, tied to space, sound and user interaction by bridging digital fashion with interactive horror, emotional symbolism and Gen Z psychological landscapes.

Chosen Methods:

Visual and Contextual Analysis:
- Analysing visual references from key designers (Alexander McQueen, Gareth Pugh, Mowalola Ogunlesi) to extract narrative techniques, silhouettes, colour and aesthetics.
- Researching historical representations of archetypes and their evolution in fashion and subcultures.

Design Practice as Research
- Developing six digital garments using CLO3D and Blender, treating design as a method of inquiry.
- Testing form, materiality and symbolism through iterative prototyping.
- Translating emotional and psychological states into digital textures (e.g. glitch, transparency, fragmentation).

Digital Experimentation and AR/VR Integration
- Exploring how garments can be viewed in 360 VR via Unreal Engine and Oculus.
- Investigating immersive storytelling methods to enhance mood and narrative.

Reflective Documentation
- Keeping a research journal throughout the project to record design decisions, theoretical reflections and technical processes.
- Conducting critical self-evaluation to assess how well each archetype visually and emotionally communicates its intended concept.

Theoretical Framework:
- Applying semiotics (Barthes, 1983) to decode symbolic meaning in garment features.
- Using subcultural theory (Hebdige, 1979) to justify the use of mood-based styling and Gen Z identity politics.
- Referencing digital fashion theory (Ponzini, 2022) to frame garments as post-physical expressions of self.

Evolution of gothic fashion

Gothic fashion originated from Victorian mourning customs, where black clothing symbolised grief and emotional restraint. It later evolved into a subculture in the late 1970s, with influences from post-punk and alternative music, expressing themes of isolation, beauty in darkness and rebellion. In the 1990s–2000s, it entered mainstream high fashion, with designers like Alexander McQueen transforming grief into theatrical artistry. Today, Gothic aesthetics live on digitally—through games, avatars and virtual garments—especially embraced by Gen Z, who use dark fashion to express mood, mental health and identity in immersive, symbolic ways.

Era	Key Features	Cultural Influence	Fashion Elements
Victorian Era (1830s–1900s)	Mourning dress, black lace, veils	Death, mourning, romanticism	Corsets, floor-length gowns, jet jewellery
Gothic Subculture (1970s–1980s)	Punk rebellion meets melancholia	Post-punk music, alienation, subcultural identity	Fishnets, leather, heavy eyeliner, crucifixes
Gothic High Fashion (1990s–2000s)	Dark romantic couture, theatrical silhouettes	Designers like Alexander McQueen & Ann Demeulemeester	Sheer fabrics, feathers, Victorian revival
Digital Gothic (2015–Present)	Cyber-goth, techwear, symbolic expression online	TikTok, games, avatar styling, Gen Z mental health	Avatar skins, glitch textures, digital veils

Gothic fashion began as symbolic mourning attire in Victorian society, expressing themes of loss and romantic melancholy (Steele, 2008). In the 1980s, it was redefined by subcultures who used fashion as a tool for emotional and social resistance (Hodkinson, 2002). Later, designers like Alexander McQueen brought Gothic into haute couture, using drama and death imagery as artistic critique (Bolton, 2011). Today, Gothic aesthetics are being reimagined digitally, with Gen Z adopting them in games, digital fashion and avatar styling to express identity, mental states and symbolic storytelling in virtual spaces.

Fig 1.1: Gothic Fashion from different eras

Aims and Objectives

Aim:

The primary aim of this project is to explore and reinterpret dark gothic archetypes through digital fashion by designing emotionally symbolic garments that reflect Gen Z's identity, subcultural aesthetics and relationship with digital self-expression.

As a digital fashion designer, this concept allows me to fuse storytelling, technology and emotion, not just to make clothes, but to create meaningful visual language that resonates with Gen Z culture and with my own lived experiences.

Objectives:

1. Explore how Gothic archetypes (Mummy, Grim Reaper, Witch, Vampire, Plague Doctor, Banshee) can be reinterpreted through digital fashion for Gen Z.
2. Draw inspiration from the design approaches of Alexander McQueen, Gareth Pugh and Mowalola Ogunlesi to gather silhouette, symbolism and mood.
3. Incorporate immersive elements such as VR to enhance emotional storytelling and user interaction.
4. Reflect critically on how digital fashion communicates identity, emotion and alternative aesthetics in digital spaces.

Fig 1.2: From Alexander McQueen's collection

Contextual Research

This project sits at the intersection of Gothic fashion, digital identity, subcultural theory and immersive technology. By reinterpreting archetypes such as the Mummy, Grim Reaper and Witch through symbolic, digital garments, the work draws on both historical and contemporary discourses in fashion studies, digital culture and visual semiotics.

Gothic fashion has long been associated with melancholy, death, emotional expression and romantic decay. Mew (2019) traces the evolution of Gothic dress from Victorian mourning to postmodern subcultural rebellion. Alexander McQueen's collections, particularly Dante (1996) and Widows of Culloden (2006) embody this aesthetic, using historical silhouettes, veiling and symbolic layering to express grief, memory and theatrical femininity (Bolton, 2011).

McQueen's fashion acts as "theatre for emotional trauma" and questions beauty itself (Evans, 2003).

Dick Hebdige's (1979) theory of subculture provides a foundation for understanding fashion as visual rebellion. Gen Z's revival of goth and grunge aesthetics aligns with Hebdige's concept of "style as resistance," where clothes communicate opposition to mainstream norms. This supports your use of Gothic archetypes as mood-based identities and digital symbols of inner rebellion.

As fashion becomes digitised, it shifts from being purely functional to narrative and symbolic. Ponzini (2022) discusses how Gen Z uses digital fashion as a way to express mood, multiplicity and non-linear identity in virtual contexts. Similarly, The Fabricant's "Deep" (2020) and Auroboros's "Biomimicry" (2021) demonstrate how digital garments can convey storytelling, spirituality and transformation without ever existing physically.

Roland Barthes (1983) viewed fashion as a system of signs, where garments carry meaning beyond their material. In your project, archetypal garments serve as semiotic structures that represent emotions like grief (Banshee), erasure (Grim Reaper) or power (Vampire). The use of texture, silhouette and layering becomes a visual vocabulary of emotion, identity and digital expression.

Contextualising Emotion in Gen Z Culture

Gen Z's emotional experience is deeply intertwined with visual, digital and symbolic self-expression. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z communicates emotion not only through language, but through aesthetic codes, curated images subcultural references and digital artefacts (Abidin, 2021). Emotion is performed across platforms, styled through clothing and embedded in identity performances—especially within online spaces like TikTok, Instagram, Discord and gaming avatars.

According to Ponzini (2022), digital fashion for Gen Z serves as an "affective extension of the self," enabling individuals to visualise moods and psychological states that may otherwise remain invisible or unspoken. In this sense, garments are no longer just stylistic choices; they are emotional statements that signify grief, rebellion, desire or silence. This concept is central to my project, where characters are designed not as costumes, but as emotional archetypes reinterpreted as wearable digital experiences.

Moreover, Barthes (1983) argues that clothing is a language of signs—a semiotic system that conveys meaning through form, texture and gesture. Gen Z leverages this semiotic system to communicate complex feelings without speaking directly, especially through mood-based aesthetics like gothcore, glitchcore and witchtok. As Hodkinson (2002) observed in goth subcultures, style becomes a "cohesive emotional code," through which users signal belonging, resistance and vulnerability.

Digital culture scholar Titton (2015) expands this by arguing that fashion blogs and social platforms offer young users a way to create "emotional narratives" through visuals—curated identities that reflect sadness, confidence, ambiguity or isolation. These visuals, which are often performed through dark aesthetics or mythological references, support their decision to use archetypes as symbols of filtered perfection or emotional resistance.

In addition, Gen Z's emotional expression is often shaped by screen-mediated fragmentation—what Haraway (2013) would call a cyborgian identity, composed of digital traces, edits and curated avatars. This reinforces the symbolic power of garments in your project as tools of protection, preservation or aestheticised grief, helping users navigate the tension between being emotionally seen and emotionally safe.

Fig 2: From Alexander McQueen's horn of plenty collection

Archetypes & Emotional Mapping (Gen Z Context)

Archetype	Emotions	Gen Z Connection	Garment Expression
Mummy	Preservation	Feeling emotionally scattered, archiving past versions of self, nostalgia for "who I was online"	Layered, wrapped textures, glitch effects, translucent wrapping like memory archives
Grim Reaper	Ghosting/Emotional Erasure	Ghosting, burnout, the urge to vanish from digital visibility, choosing silence	Fading fabric, black smoke shaders, reactive hoods, visual fading from presence
Witch	Resistance	Aesthetic control, resisting visibility, reclaiming power through rituals or fashion	Sigils, reactive materials, veils, mystical layering, "coded" identity styling
Vampire	Eternal	Desire for attention + emotional detachment, endless perfection while feeling empty	Glossy leathers, sharp silhouettes, reflective chrome, blood-red accents
Plague Doctor	Protection/Anxiety / Emotional Shielding	Post-pandemic fear, emotional burnout, protection from overstimulation or exposure	Techwear, sealed masks, utility fabric, cybernetic layering, shield-like digital armor
Banshee	Release/Grief/Unheard Emotion	Suppressed sadness, digital mourning, not being heard in a noisy, performative world	Flowing organza, audio-reactive shimmer, distortion effects, crying textures

Each archetype isn't just a costume—it's a coded emotional tool Gen Z can relate to. In a world where they often feel:

- Exhausted by constant performance (Grim Reaper)
- Disconnected from their past selves (Mummy)
- Misunderstood or silenced (Banshee)
- Drawn to curated perfection (Vampire)
- Eager to reclaim identity on their terms (Witch)
- Overwhelmed and guarded (Plague Doctor)

Mental Health & Well-Being in Gaming: Gen Z Context

For Gen Z, gaming is not only a form of entertainment but a key space for emotional regulation, social interaction and identity exploration. As digital natives, this generation increasingly turns to games to cope with anxiety, express emotion and escape from daily stressors, especially in post-pandemic contexts where digital immersion became essential.

According to the Royal Society for Public Health (2020), over 70% of young people aged 14–24 reported that online gaming helped them manage feelings of stress, loneliness or depression. For many, game environments provide psychological safe spaces where they can express themselves more freely than in real-world settings (Granic et al., 2014).

Gaming also offers a sense of emotional agency. Research by Kaye, Kowert and Quinn (2017) found that players often use character customisation and narrative interaction as a form of mood management and identity experimentation. This is especially relevant for Gen Z, who curate their digital avatars to reflect inner emotional states or explore subcultural aesthetics (Ponzini, 2022).

However, the same immersive qualities of games can also pose mental health challenges. Prolonged screen time, toxic online communities and algorithmic reward systems have been linked to emotional burnout, anxiety and social fatigue (Orben & Przybylski, 2019). These dual realities make emotional design in gaming essential—especially the need for non-violent, emotionally resonant spaces where players can process grief, trauma or anxiety symbolically.

Anatomy of Silent Romance directly address this need by integrating emotionally symbolic garments and archetypes into virtual worlds. Instead of using fashion purely as cosmetic content, my project positions it as a psychological interface—allowing users to visualise grief, resist visibility or process anxiety in a safe, immersive way.

This reflects a broader trend toward empathetic game design and well-being-centered digital spaces, where identity, emotion and mental health are not background concerns, but central to design intent.

Fig 3: From Gareth Pugh's collection

Mental Health & Well-Being in Gaming: Gen Z Context

Gen Z (those born between 1997–2012) is the most digitally immersed generation, having grown up with gaming, social media and virtual spaces as core parts of their identity formation. Games are no longer just "play"—they're spaces for emotional coping, social bonding, narrative immersion and identity experimentation.

Research shows that Gen Z turns to gaming for:
- **Emotional regulation:** coping with stress, anxiety and depression through play and distraction (Granic et al., 2014).
- **Self-soothing and escapism:** immersive games offer relief from emotional overstimulation or real-world pressure.
- **Expressing moods:** selecting avatars, fashion and environments that reflect internal states (Kaye et al., 2017).
- **Finding community:** multiplayer and roleplaying games foster social belonging and emotional validation (Colder Carras et al., 2017).
- **Narrative catharsis:** engaging with emotionally charged stories allows players to explore grief, fear, loss or revenge symbolically.

Gaming as an Emotional Ecosystem for Gen Z:

Gen Z—raised during the rise of social media, pandemic isolation, climate anxiety and constant digital connectivity—are described as the most psychologically burdened yet emotionally aware generation (Twenge, 2017). With increasing rates of anxiety, depression and emotional burnout, they turn to digital environments for self-soothing, self-expression and emotional escapism. GenZ finds emotional articulation through avatars, customizing looks that reflect internal states (Shanahan, 2021).

Unlike earlier generations who viewed games as escapist, Gen Z sees them as emotional ecosystems where they:
- Process mood in a controlled world
- Feel in control of something when the real world feels chaotic
- Test identities safely, especially for neurodivergent, queer or emotionally introverted individuals
- Curate avatars and garments to reflect shifting emotional or psychological states

"Games help me feel the way I want to feel, not the way the world makes me feel."
 Gen Z player, RSPH Gaming & Mental Health Survey (2020)

World and Mood Integration:
- Mirror mechanic: representing fragmented selfhood and emotional reflection.
- Environment design: Each level becomes a psychological space.
- Garments as narrative tools: Clothes "speak" the unspoken emotions of the player.

Fig 4: Image from inside out movie to show different emotions

Gaming as a therapy

Expressive Arts Therapy:
This game acts as a digital extension of expressive arts therapy, which encourages emotional healing through creative practice.
- Fashion as therapy: Customizing avatars and garments allows players to externalize inner feelings like grief, fear or resistance — without verbal confrontation.
- Narrative therapy: Players move through symbolic "chapters" (archetypes), reconstructing their fragmented self via metaphor (the mirror) — a technique used to reframe trauma.

Symbolic Interaction & Jungian Archetypes:
My character choices (witch, mummy, banshee, etc.) align with Jungian archetypes — universal symbols that represent subconscious emotional patterns.
- Clinical psychology often uses archetypes to help clients project emotions and understand inner conflicts.
- My garments embody these archetypes, allowing players to interact with them in digital form, aiding emotional awareness and individuation. Jung (1968) emphasized archetypes as key to understanding psychological identity and transformation.

Somatic & Trauma-Informed Design:
Many Gen Z users experience anxiety, trauma and emotional dysregulation. My use of:
- Textures (glitching, layering, soft/floating fabrics)
- Environments (fog, caves, mazes)
- Audio triggers (echo balls in banshee level)
Mimic the sensory processing techniques used in trauma-informed therapy — particularly grounding, visualization and narrative containment. Van der Kolk (2014) notes that trauma healing often begins with body-based and symbolic experiences, especially for those who struggle to verbalize pain.

Therapeutic Game Design & Mental Health:
Studies in clinical game design show that emotionally immersive environments can:
- Lower emotional inhibition
- Improve self-awareness
- Support identity experimentation
- Increase resilience through narrative problem-solving
Granic et al. (2014) support the idea that emotionally engaging games may provide therapeutic benefit by improving emotional intelligence and decision-making under stress.

What I want to achieve in this project?

Create an immersive emotional experience through digital fashion:
I want to show that garments—especially symbolic ones—can be more than visual assets; they can communicate emotion, memory and mood, particularly within game environments.

Bridge digital fashion with interactive narrative:
I aim to prove that fashion in games can be used not just for aesthetics or customisation, but as emotional storytelling tools—helping Gen Z reflect on inner states like grief, rebellion, or stillness through what they "wear."

Reimagine Gothic archetypes for Gen Z identity:
I'm using well-known dark figures (like the Witch, Vampire, Plague Doctor) not just as spooky characters, but as symbols of emotional states and Gen Z struggles—updated through avatar design, digital fashion, and environmental storytelling.

Provide a new model of gaming-as-emotion:
Instead of focusing on violence or winning, I want this game to encourage emotional exploration, identity construction, and psychological immersion—values increasingly important to Gen Z.

Position myself as a creative voice in digital fashion and game design:
This project is also a professional portfolio piece—showing how I can bring together worldbuilding, avatar styling, interactive design, and psychological symbolism to rethink the future of digital fashion and gaming.

A small gist about how inside out movie is related?

1. Both explore inner emotional landscapes:
- Inside Out visualises emotions like Joy, Sadness, Fear inside a young girl's mind.
- In my project, it externalises complex Gen Z emotions—like anxiety, grief, detachment—through symbolic fashion archetypes.

Relation: Both treat emotions as characters, creating embodied metaphors so users/viewers can reflect on their inner world from the outside.

2. Emotion as a narrative structure:
- In Inside Out, the story progresses as emotions struggle to balance and return to "headquarters."
- In this project, the player collects six emotion-linked garments, each representing a part of their digital identity.

Relation: Both use emotions as checkpoints in the journey toward self-understanding and reintegration.

3. Healing comes from emotional acceptance
- In Inside Out, Joy learns that Sadness is necessary and healing begins when emotions work together.
- In this project, the players must embrace difficult feelings (ghosting, anxiety, vulnerability) by interacting with each realm—not avoiding them.

Relation: Both promote the message that emotions—especially negative ones—must be acknowledged, not hidden.

4. Symbolic worldbuilding based on the psyche:
- Inside Out creates "Islands of Personality," Memory Orbs and a Train of Thought—all metaphors for mental function.
- This project features surreal digital environments where environment = emotion.

Relation: Both use symbolic spaces to represent psychological states.

5. Aesthetic language for emotional storytelling:
- Inside Out uses color-coded characters and glowing memory orbs.
- This project uses fashion, texture and material—e.g., sheer garments, glitching fabric, etc.

Relation: Both use visual language to express emotion without words—but this project does it through fashion and environment design.

Fig 5: Image from inside out 2 movie to show different emotions

Why Games Become Emotional Outlets?

1. Emotion Regulation:
Games act as emotional regulators for Gen Z, functioning similarly to journaling, meditation or even therapy.
- Why this matters: Gen Z often experiences high levels of stress and emotional fragmentation due to academic pressure, climate anxiety and the overwhelming pace of digital life (Twenge, 2017).
- How games help: Calm or immersive games like Stardew Valley, Animal Crossing or Gris provide controlled, non-threatening environments where players can de-stress, focus on small achievable tasks and regulate their mood without external judgment.
- Emotional benefit: Reduction in anxiety, increased sense of stability, and a feeling of emotional "holding space." In this project, garments like the Plague Doctor act like wearable emotional regulators—protective shells that represent boundaries and emotional defense.

2. Mood Expression Through Choice:
In many games, players choose outfits, avatars, dialogue options and actions—which become external expressions of their internal states.
- Why this matters: Gen Z often prefers non-verbal forms of emotional communication (e.g. memes, aesthetics, fashion, filters).
- How games help: Games like The Sims, Roblox, Skyrim or Cyberpunk 2077 allow full customization of avatar identity, enabling players to dress and act based on how they feel.
- Emotional benefit: Builds emotional literacy, identity experimentation and aesthetic mood expression in safe, curated spaces. In this project, the Vampire and Witch garments reflect this ability to perform identity and mood—showing filtered perfection or emotional resistance through symbolism and design.

3. Social Connection & Shared Emotions:
Gaming platforms provide emotional communities, especially for those who feel isolated or emotionally misunderstood offline.
- Why this matters: Many Gen Z players report feeling more emotionally supported in gaming spaces than in school or at home (Colder Carras et al., 2017).
- How games help: Multiplayer titles like Roblox, Fortnite or Genshin Impact let users interact emotionally without direct vulnerability—through fashion, co-op play or ambient conversation.
- Emotional benefit: Offers peer validation, soft emotional bonding and shared emotional language without pressure. In this project, garments like the Banshee allow for non-verbal emotional broadcasting—grief and sadness expressed not through speech, but through visual, sonic or reactive materials.

4. Escape vs. Agency:
Games balance two emotional needs: the desire to escape reality and the need to take back control in a chaotic world.
- Why this matters: Gen Z lives in a time of hyper-curated media, digital overexposure and social instability. They often want both to disappear and to be seen—on their own terms.
- How games help: In narrative games (e.g. Dark Souls, Life Is Strange, Hollow Knight), players inhabit new identities and gain control over outcomes, offering empowerment where real life often lacks it.
- Emotional benefit: A sense of personal agency, autonomy and safe experimentation with themes like loss, trauma or choice. In this project, the Grim Reaper embodies escape and erasure, while the Witch and Mummy represent controlled agency—power through silence or layering identity.

Why Games Become Emotional Outlets?

These digital garments can be a powerful and innovative medium for well-being, particularly in the following ways:

1. Emotional Expression Through Non-Verbal Design:
This game allows players to express grief, anxiety and identity struggles without needing to verbalize them. Using fashion, avatars and symbolic storytelling gives players a safe outlet for their inner states — which can support emotional awareness and self-reflection. "Digital fashion becomes a visual vocabulary for mood and self-image." (Ponzini, 2022)

2. Psychological Safety in a Digital Space:
The game world offers a non-judgmental space — unlike real-world social interactions — where users can explore uncomfortable emotions like loss or resistance without fear of misunderstanding. This type of symbolic roleplay helps Gen Z cope with emotional overwhelm in a low-pressure environment. "Games allow people to explore sensitive experiences in safe, symbolic ways." (Slater et al., 2020)

3. Connection to Subculture and Identity:
By drawing from gothic and mythic archetypes, the game gives players the chance to connect their identities to existing cultural stories, which builds a sense of belonging — important for mental well-being. "Subcultures provide a framework for interpreting emotions, especially for youth seeking identity." (Hodkinson, 2002)

4. Customization = Control:
The ability to choose garments based on emotion gives players a sense of agency and control over how they're seen — this is empowering for Gen Z, especially when dealing with feelings of anxiety or social alienation.

5. Interactive Reflection = Digital Mindfulness:
The narrative structure, especially the mirror and portal system, encourages self-reflection and mindfulness. It slows the pace and invites players to consider how they feel — making the experience not just playful, but introspective.

Evidence-Based Support:
A growing body of research shows that emotionally intelligent games and avatar-based experiences can support:
- Improved emotional regulation
- Greater empathy and introspection
- Reduced loneliness
- Increased confidence in self-presentation

"Avatars offer users a way to test identities and express emotions more freely than real-world environments allow." (Yee & Bailenson, 2007)
"Aesthetic gameplay with emotional feedback can positively impact well-being." (Granic, Lobel & Engels, 2014)

Final Thought:
By blending emotional symbolism, interactive storytelling and digital fashion, my project offers an alternative form of therapeutic play — not in the clinical sense, but in the creative, personal growth sense. It's especially suited for emotionally literate, digitally native Gen Z users who are actively seeking such outlets.

Industry Response & Emerging Trends

The gaming and virtual fashion industries are beginning to acknowledge this shift toward emotionally intelligent design:

- Indie games like Gris, Celeste and Kind Words have gained popularity for directly addressing mental health, emotion and grief through symbolic interaction and visual metaphors.
- Platforms like Roblox and The Sims allow Gen Z players to experiment with mood-driven fashion, room design and avatar curation as a daily act of emotional self-regulation.
- Digital fashion spaces like DRESSX or The Fabricant offer Gen Z users the ability to dress their avatars based on how they feel, not how they look.

As Ponzini (2022) states, "digital fashion enables a post-physical form of emotional expression... where garments function not to cover, but to communicate internal affect." Hollis et al. (2020) argue that games can provide cognitive regulation and emotional resilience, especially when they're narrative-based or open-world. Colder Carras et al. (2017) discuss how online roleplaying games create "emotionally validating communities" where users can feel seen without revealing too much. Turkle (2011) points out that virtual identities (avatars) become mirrors for psychological exploration in young users, allowing them to "perform emotional truth" in mediated ways.

Fig 6: Celeste game poster

Why these Six Characters Mitigate Gen Z's Emotions?

1. The Mummy – Emotional Preservation & Fragmentation:
- Why Gen Z needs it: They often feel fragmented between online and offline selves, constantly shifting between platforms and personas.
- Emotional relevance: Symbolises memory hoarding, emotional suppression and the struggle to preserve identity amid overstimulation.
- How it helps: The wrapped, layered form becomes a metaphor for holding it together, visually expressing emotional overwhelm without needing words. It offers a space for Gen Z to acknowledge disconnection and nostalgia without fear of judgement.

2. The Grim Reaper – Emotional Disappearance & Digital Silence:
- Why Gen Z needs it: Many Gen Z experience emotional withdrawal, ghosting or the urge to vanish from visibility in a hyper-connected world.
- Emotional relevance: Represents disengagement, emotional burnout and the desire to stop performing.
- How it helps: Through fading textures and glitching materials, it visualises that feeling of needing space—normalising emotional absence. Gen Z finds comfort in garments that allow them to symbolise retreat without explanation.

3. The Witch – Rebellion & Aesthetic Control:
- Why Gen Z needs it: In a world of surveillance and curated perfection, Gen Z seeks aesthetic agency and digital resistance.
- Emotional relevance: Symbol of emotional self-curation, rebellion against algorithmic expectations and coded mysticism.
- How it helps: Sigils, reactive textures and asymmetry allow the wearer to express power through subtle disruption and ritualised fashion. The Witch becomes a way to express identity on one's own terms—especially for marginalised or neurodivergent users.

4. The Vampire – Eternal Detachment & Hyper-Perfection:
- Why Gen Z needs it: Constant pressure to be flawless and desirable on social media can lead to emotional disconnection.
- Emotional relevance: Symbolises curated glamour, emotional numbness, filtered beauty and unspoken longing.
- How it helps: The glossy look mirrors how Gen Z aestheticises their own emotional distance—acknowledging the paradox. The Vampire allows users to perform detachment while emotionally processing isolation or desire.

5. The Plague Doctor – Protection & Emotional Shielding:
- Why Gen Z needs it: Post-pandemic, many carry health anxiety, emotional fatigue and fear of exposure (digitally or physically).
- Emotional relevance: Embodies psychological defense, dissociation and a desire for emotional shielding.
- How it helps: Utilitarian design, techwear and masking functions help visualise the need to guard vulnerability. The garment becomes a digital armour— perfect for Gen Z users who feel too "seen" or emotionally raw.

6. The Banshee – Grief & Suppressed Sorrow:
- Why Gen Z needs it: Many experience unresolved grief (personal or collective— climate change, war, loss), yet feel pressure to stay productive or silent.
- Emotional relevance: Symbol of unheard pain, mourning and the cultural denial of emotional heaviness.
- How it helps: Through sonic responsiveness, ghostly transparency and distortion, the Banshee gives visual voice to silent emotions. The Banshee becomes a grieving companion, validating quiet emotional suffering that Gen Z often hides behind irony or aesthetics.

Fig 7: Gameplay of Kind words game

Cultural Origin:

The Mummy
Origins:
- First featured in British and French romantic fiction during the 19th century, mixing colonial fascination with Orientalism and the exotic ("romantic mummy").
- Reimagined as a horror icon by the 1932 film The Mummy starring Boris Karloff, embedding the mummy in Gothic monster lore .

Cultural resonance:
- Symbolizes nostalgia, buried memory and identity wrapped over time—qualities that resonate with Gen Z's emotional fragmentation and digital archiving.

Fig 9: Historical mummy

The Witch
Origins:
- Rooted in ancient pagan traditions, fear of feminine agency and iconography of medieval witch trials (e.g., in Witchcraft texts).
- The modern witch has been reclaimed in feminist, spiritual and subcultural movements (e.g. witchcore, cottagecore).

Cultural resonance:
- Embodies aesthetic sovereignty, coded resistance and ritual empowerment—mirroring Gen Z's desire for self-curation and autonomy against algorithmic norms.

Fig 11: Image of the medival witches

The Grim Reaper
Origins:
- Emerged in 14th-century Europe during the Black Death as a skeletal figure wielding a scythe—an allegory of death harvesting lives .
- The scythe, dark robe and skeletal visage were solidified in medieval art and the Danse Macabre tradition .

Cultural resonance:
- Represents inevitable endings, emotional absence and silent withdrawal—manifestations deeply felt by Gen Z in the context of burnout and ghosting.

Fig 10: Personified look of the grim reaper

The Vampire
Origins:
- Evolved from Eastern European folklore into 19th-century Gothic literature (e.g., Dracula, Varney the Vampire).
- Became fashion symbols of romanticized mortality, aristocratic power and beauty.

Cultural resonance:
- Symbolizes filtered identity, emotional performativity and immortal detachment—reflective of Gen Z's beauty ideals and identity editing in digital spaces.

Fig 12: Image of Vampire lore in the history

The Banshee
Origins:
- Derived from Irish folklore; a female spirit whose wail foretells death.
- Initially described as a mournful, often frightening, figure of sorrow and transition, evolving over time into both beautiful and terrifying forms.

Cultural resonance:
- Encapsulates silent grief, unseen sorrow and emotional resonance beneath silence—relevant to Gen Z's emotional suppression and digital mourning.

Fig 13: Image of Plague Doctor (1636 –37)

Dress worn at the Plague of Nimeguen 1636-37

The Plague Doctor
Origins:
- Originated in 17th-century Europe during plague outbreaks; doctors wore beaked masks filled with aromatic herbs to ward off disease.
- Became a macabre image in Gothic culture and post-pandemic reflections on protection.

Cultural resonance:
Represents emotional shielding, anxiety, detached observation—mirroring Gen Z's pandemic-era protective habits and guarded digital presence.

Fig 14: Image of mythical Banshee

Literature Review

The intersection of fashion, digital identity and subcultural aesthetics has become increasingly significant in understanding Gen Z's approach to both physical and virtual self-expression. Fashion has long been recognised as a medium of psychological, social and symbolic communication. As Barthes (1983) established, garments function as systems of signs, capable of articulating identity, emotion and cultural belonging. This project builds upon that foundation, exploring how digital garments—freed from material constraints—can act as symbolic and emotional tools within immersive digital environments.

A key conceptual influence for this project is the symbolic depth of Gothic fashion, which has historically served as a visual language of mourning, resistance and introspection. The Goth fashion has consisted of individuals creating their own version of aesthetics. Designers such as Alexander McQueen are widely cited for their use of Gothic aesthetics to engage with themes of grief, beauty and existential tension. Bolton and Sundsbo (2011) describe McQueen's work as a form of *romantic existentialism*, where fashion stages internal chaos and cultural memory. This is exemplified in collections such as *Widows of Culloden* (2006), where Victorian silhouettes, sheer veils and ghostly styling evoke spiritual anxiety and symbolic mourning.

Similarly, Gareth Pugh's sculptural black forms and theatrical silhouettes have been interpreted as architectural expressions of ritual, transformation and emotional shielding. According to Blanks (2015), Pugh's Fall/Winter 2015 collection, with its blood-red motifs and ceremonial hoods, presents fashion as a site of symbolic resistance and visual narrative. His work, like McQueen's, engages the body not just as a canvas, but as a vehicle for psychological storytelling—a sensibility that aligns closely with the emotional archetypes developed in this project.

Mowalola Ogunlesi offers a contemporary, Gen Z–driven interpretation of dark fashion, merging streetwear aesthetics with emotional rawness and symbolic violence. Her Silent Madness (2018) collection features bullet-hole motifs and blood-red leather, challenging dominant narratives of masculinity and identity. Mowalola's focus on emotional authenticity, chaos and unfiltered identity performance reflects Gen Z's rejection of aesthetic perfection in favour of fluid, performative and subculturally informed expression.

The reinterpretation of Gothic archetypes in modern media is also addressed by Aldana Reyes (2018), who describes how contemporary Gothic culture recycles and recontextualises mythic figures. These figures actively repurposed to explore psychological and cultural anxieties in the digital age—a practice mirrored in this project's reframing of these character archetype as emotionally coded digital avatars.
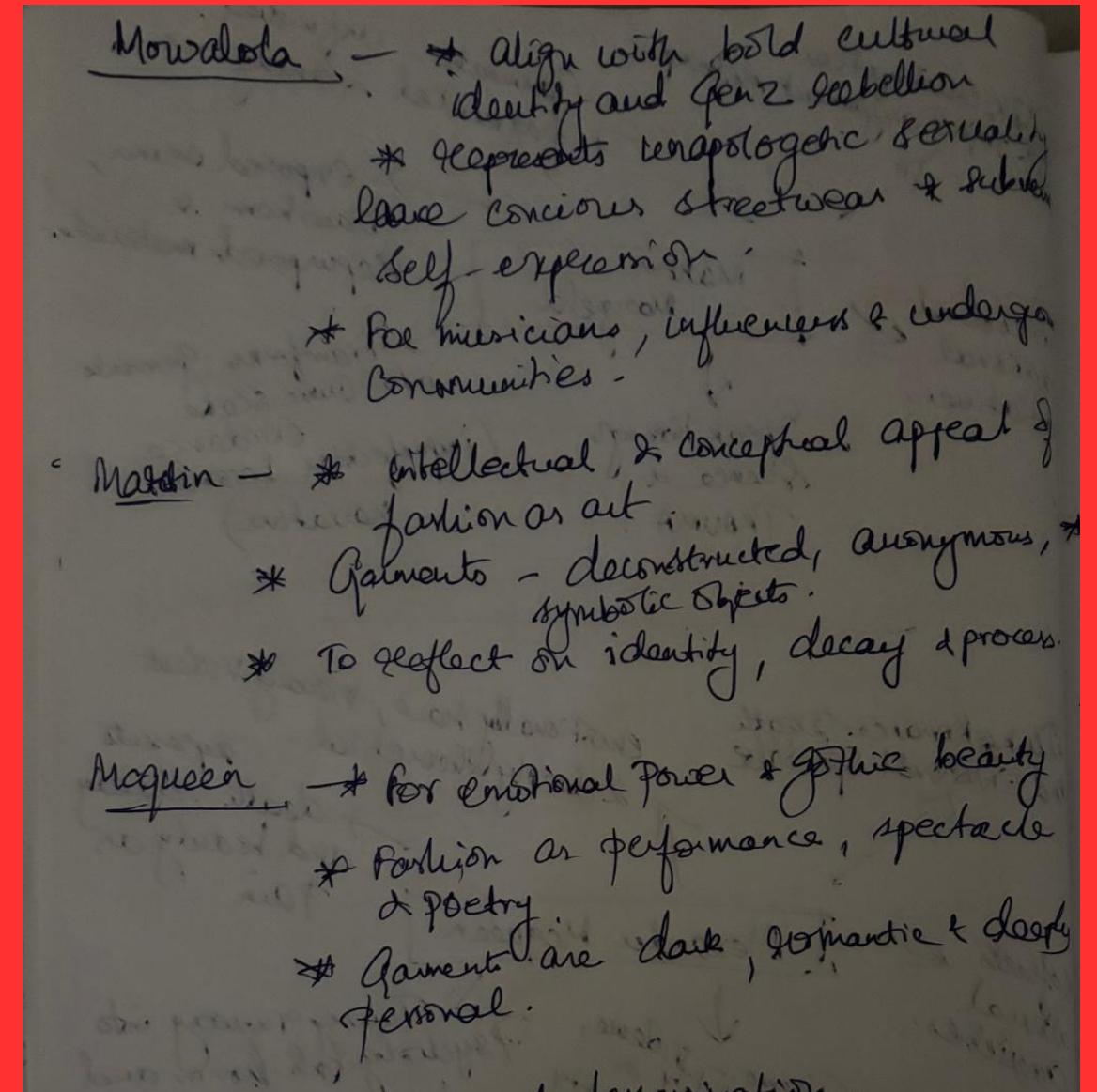

Fig 15: Thoughts of the author in written

Literature Review

Discussions around digital identity are further supported by posthuman theory, particularly Haraway's (1991) notion of the cyborg—a hybridised figure that blurs the boundaries between human, machine and representation. In this framework, digital fashion becomes a tool for non-linear identity construction, allowing users—especially Gen Z—to curate fragmented selves across multiple platforms. Fashion thus becomes a mode of both emotional communication and protective layering, echoing the symbolic depth found in the Gothic tradition.

The immersive qualities of video game environments also inform this project. Games like Dark Souls and Resident Evil are recognised for their atmospheric storytelling, narrative ambiguity annd emotional immersion (Keogh, 2018). These elements are incorporated into the digital experience of Anatomy of Silent Romance, which uses game-inspired worldbuilding to turn fashion into an interactive emotional landscape—blurring the line between avatar, costume and symbolic interface.

Building on this, Hodkinson's (2002) analysis of the goth subculture is especially relevant. He argues that goth identity is marked by aesthetic consistency, emotional intensity and visual resistance to mainstream norms. The goth community's use of fashion, music and shared symbolism creates a cohesive subcultural identity, where style is used as a language of melancholy, depth, and defiance. This is echoed in Gen Z's digital practices, where platforms like TikTok, Discord and avatar-based applications continue the goth legacy of non-verbal, visually mediated identity expression.

Finally, while contemporary digital fashion brands like DRESSX, The Fabricant and Auroboros experiment with identity, sustainability and speculative aesthetics, they often prioritise futurism and visual novelty over emotional and symbolic resonance. Anatomy of Silent Romance seeks to fill this gap by presenting digital garments as emotional artefacts and symbolic extensions of inner experience, offering a more introspective, narrative-driven approach to fashion in virtual space.
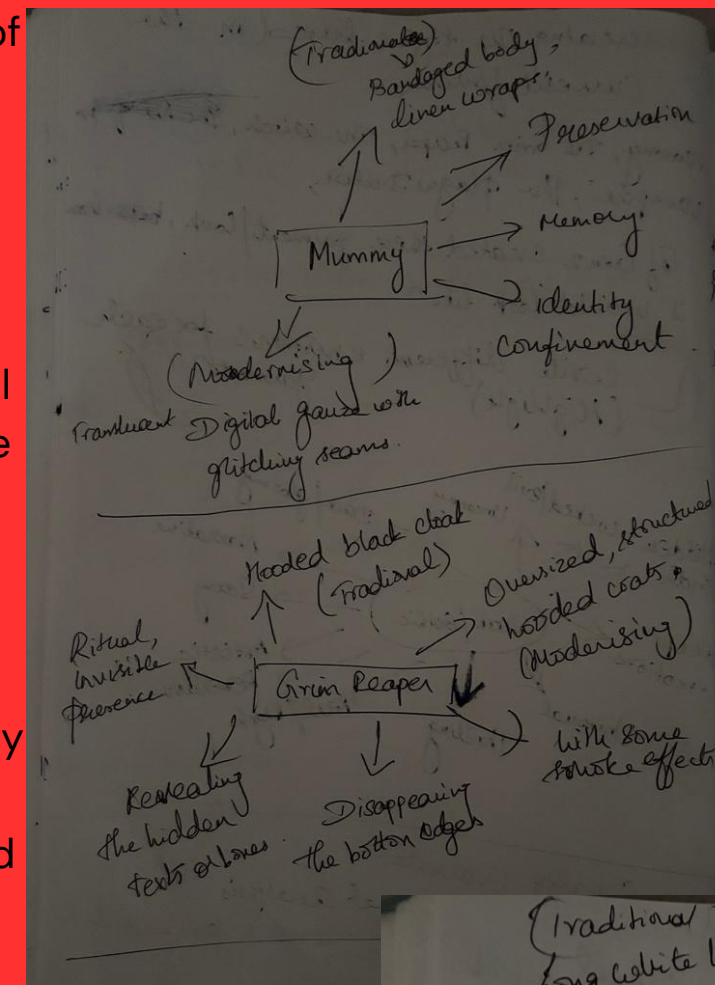
Fig 16: Thoughts of the author in written
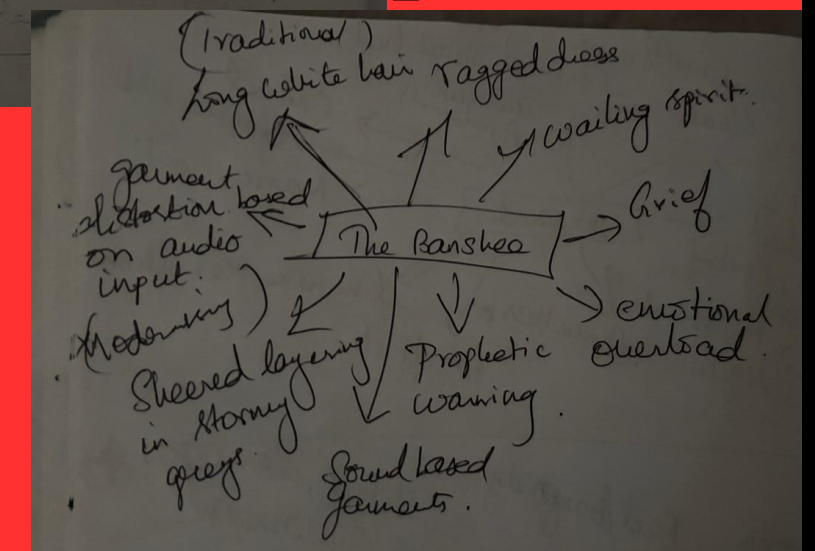
Literature Review

The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images (Taschen, 2010) provides a foundational source for interpreting the characters used in this project not merely as aesthetic figures, but as universal symbols rooted in the collective unconscious. Each archetype carries psychological and emotional weight that transcends its surface narrative. These symbols are not fixed but evolve across cultures and eras, making them ideal for reimagining within digital, screen-based identities.

Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park (2008) expands on how Gothic fashion uses darkness, decay, beauty and transgression to communicate deeper psychological and emotional themes. Gothic fashion is often misunderstood as purely theatrical, yet Steele and Park argue it is a serious aesthetic philosophy—one that merges melancholy with rebellion, romanticism with critique. This aligns with Anatomy of Silent Romance, which treats fashion as an emotional and narrative tool, not just a visual style.

Similarly, Roberts, Livingstone & Baxter-Wright (2009, 2012) highlight how Gothic identity has evolved from historical mourning codes to postmodern subcultural expressions. These texts document how symbols such as the veil, cloak or cross are repurposed across fashion, art and music to express alienation, power, eroticism and resistance. The project borrows from this lineage to explore how digital garments can serve the same function for Gen Z users—particularly those embedded in goth-adjacent online spaces like TikTok, Discord and gaming culture.

Taschen (2023) provides historical and visual insight into the feminine power, fear and transformation embedded in the archetype of the Witch. It explores how the Witch has shifted from a symbol of evil to one of spiritual empowerment, feminist rebellion and cultural reclamation—a narrative that aligns with how Gen Z reclaims mystical aesthetics for emotional and political expression. In this project, the Witch is reinterpreted not as a villain, but as an aesthetic of self-curation and digital resistance.

Theoretical framework
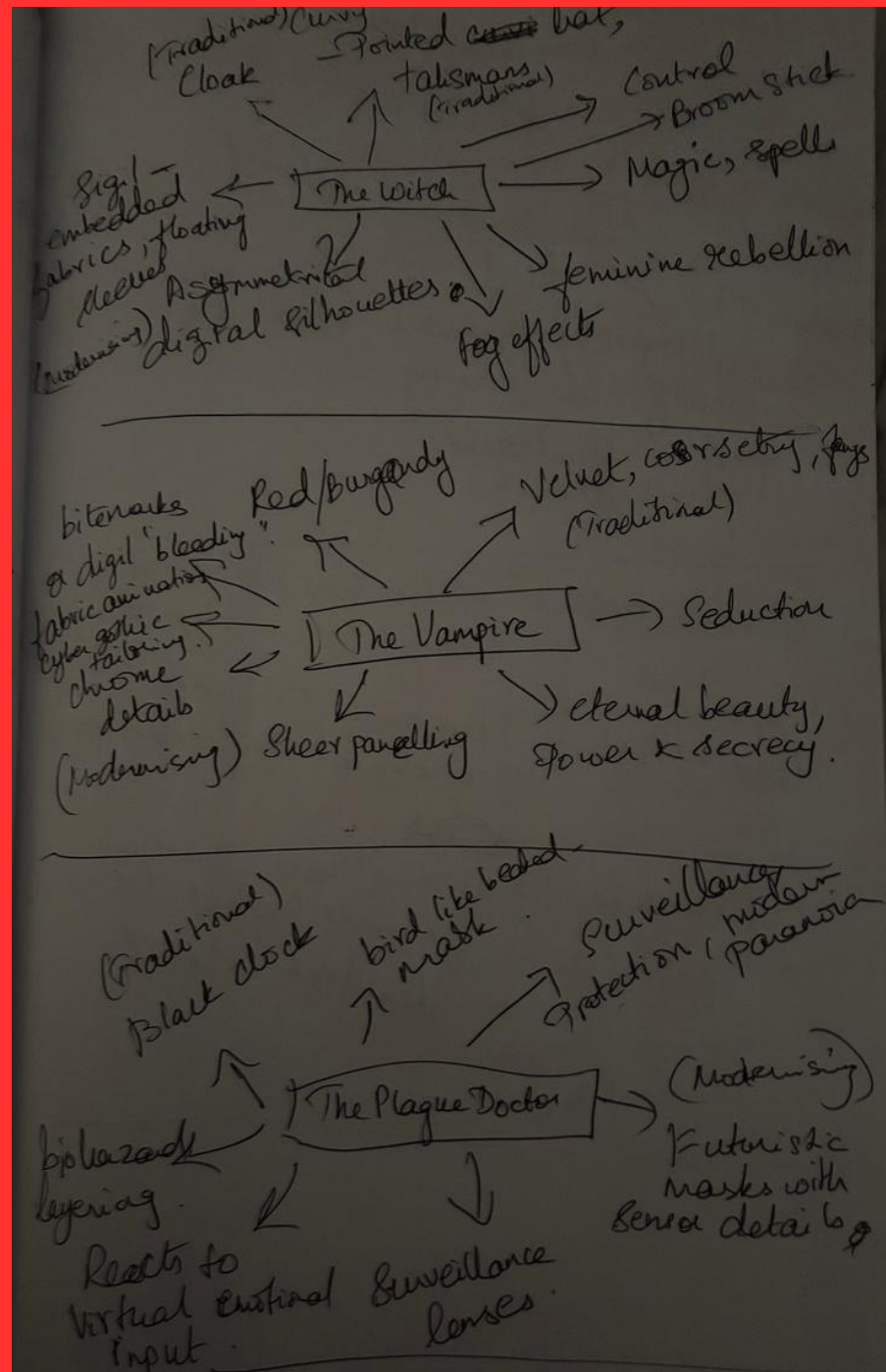
Fig 17: Thoughts of the author in written

This project is underpinned by interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives from semiotics, subcultural theory, digital fashion studies and Gothic fashion theory, which collectively support the conceptual development of Anatomy of Silent Romance.

At its core, the project draws on Roland Barthes' (1983) theory of fashion as a system of signs. Barthes argues that garments function as a language, communicating meaning through visual codes. In this project, each archetype—such as the Banshee, Plague Doctor or Witch—is treated as a semiotic unit, with materials, silhouettes, textures and digital effects acting as visual signifiers for internal states such as grief, resistance or protection. Digital fashion is thus used not as decoration, but as a symbolic language that expresses psychological and emotional realities in screen-based environments.

To further support the symbolic depth of the project, Dick Hebdige's (1979) subcultural theory is employed to frame Gothic style as a form of visual resistance against dominant cultural norms. In Anatomy of Silent Romance, Gothic archetypes are not treated as costumes, but as subcultural signifiers of emotional defiance and fluid identity. By aligning the collection with Gen Z's engagement with goth and grunge subcultures, the project explores how dark aesthetics are used to reframe marginalised feelings such as grief, silence and mood instability as sources of symbolic power.

Expanding on Hebdige's foundational work, Paul Hodkinson (2002) argues that goth identity is cohesive, emotionally charged and sustained by both individual self-expression and collective meaning. This supports the project's reinterpretation of Gothic archetypes—not as fixed historical characters, but as emotionally loaded, recontextualised symbols within a digital subcultural framework. These characters serve as emotionally resonant avatars for Gen Z users navigating fragmented identities and heightened emotional awareness in the digital world.

The project is further informed by digital fashion theory, particularly the work of Ponzini (2022), who asserts that virtual garments are liberated from material constraints, enabling designers to express mood, fluidity and identity with fewer limitations. Gen Z, according to Ponzini, approaches fashion not purely as style, but as an extension of psychological state and affective expression—particularly in digital environments where identity is curated through avatars and self-styled narratives. This framework supports the project's decision to design garments as digitally sculpted emotional artefacts, intended to externalise invisible inner states.

The project is grounded in Gothic fashion theory, especially Mew's (2019) exploration of dark romanticism, ritualistic form and melancholic symbolism in visual culture. Gothic fashion historically draws upon themes of mourning, liminality, sublimity and emotional tension, all of which inform the visual tone and narrative structure of this collection. Designers such as Alexander McQueen, Gareth Pugh and Mowalola Ogunlesi have each utilised Gothic codes to evoke psychological disruption, spiritual tension and narrative embodiment. Their work, referenced in this project, demonstrates how fashion can act as a catalyst for emotional storytelling, rather than simply aesthetic construction.

Together, these frameworks provide a critical lens for understanding how digital fashion can serve as a psychological interface, subcultural expression and narrative tool—especially for a generation negotiating identity, emotion and rebellion in virtual space.
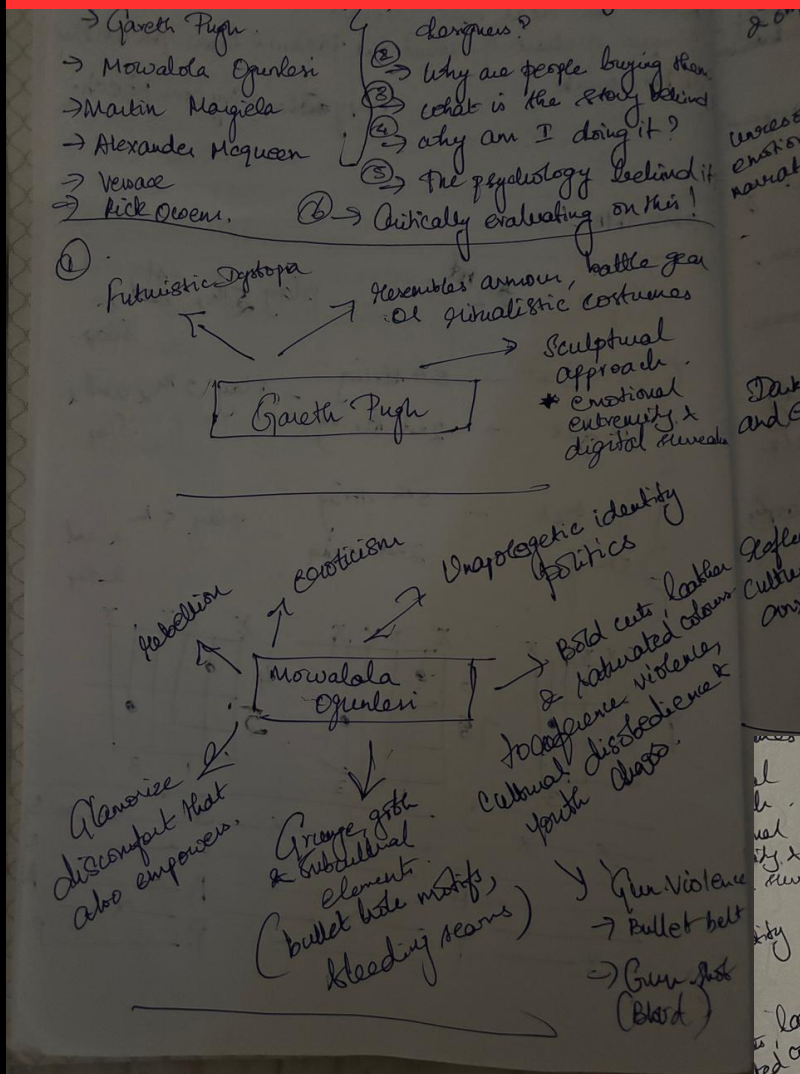
Theoretical framework

**Fig 18: Thoughts of the author in written**

From a symbolic and archetypal perspective, Taschen (2010) frames archetypes as deeply rooted psychological patterns that express universal experiences—such as fear, grief, transformation or desire. These archetypes are used in the project not literally, but as emotionally resonant figures that embody Gen Z's digital realities, where identity is fluid, mood-driven and constantly mediated through visuals.

Drawing on Gothic theory, particularly from Steele & Park (2008) and Roberts et al. (2009; 2012), the project treats Gothic fashion as a visual language of emotional intensity, one that resists mainstream beauty standards and embraces the aesthetic of darkness as a form of empowerment, introspection and social critique. The garments in Anatomy of Silent Romance borrow from this Gothic grammar—using black, distortion and symbolism—to externalise internal states and to create a space for psychological storytelling.

Subcultural theory is also key to this framework. Roberts et al. (2012) and Steele (2008) describe how Goth, like other youth subcultures, offers members a visually coded system for expressing identity, emotion and rebellion. These visual codes are not static—they evolve and adapt to new platforms. In this project, the digital realm becomes the new subcultural space, where avatars, filters and garments act as tools for emotional visibility and symbolic protection.

Digital fashion in games is increasingly being explored as a tool for mental wellbeing, especially for Gen Z. Through customizable avatars and symbolic garments, players externalize emotions like anxiety or rebellion without verbal confrontation (Nieborg & Poell, 2020).

Finally, the concept of ritual and mysticism, particularly through Taschen (2023), informs the garments' use of symbolic textures, reactive behaviours and mythic references. Each garment is treated as a ritual object or coded spell, carrying meaning beyond its form. This contributes to the project's goal of transforming digital fashion into a language of psychological presence
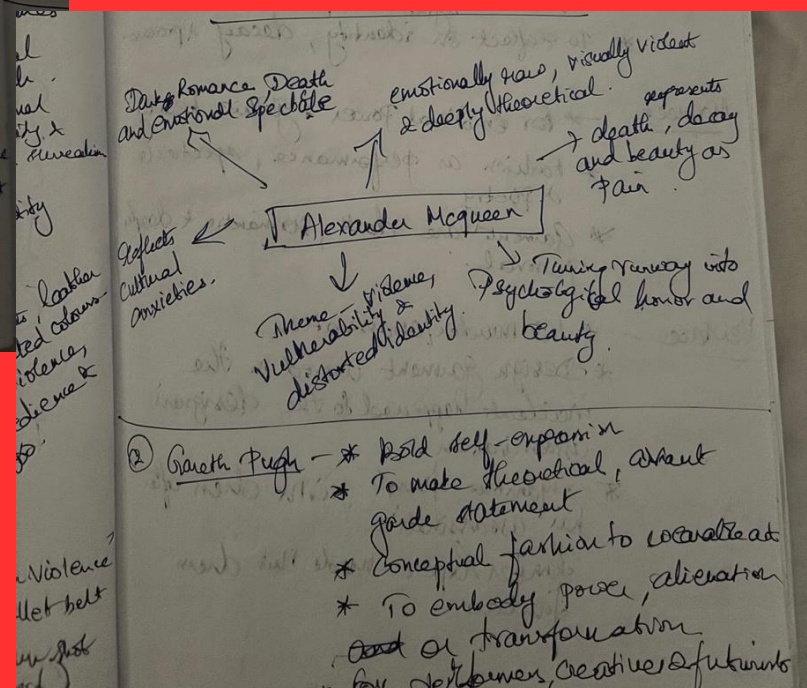
Primary Research
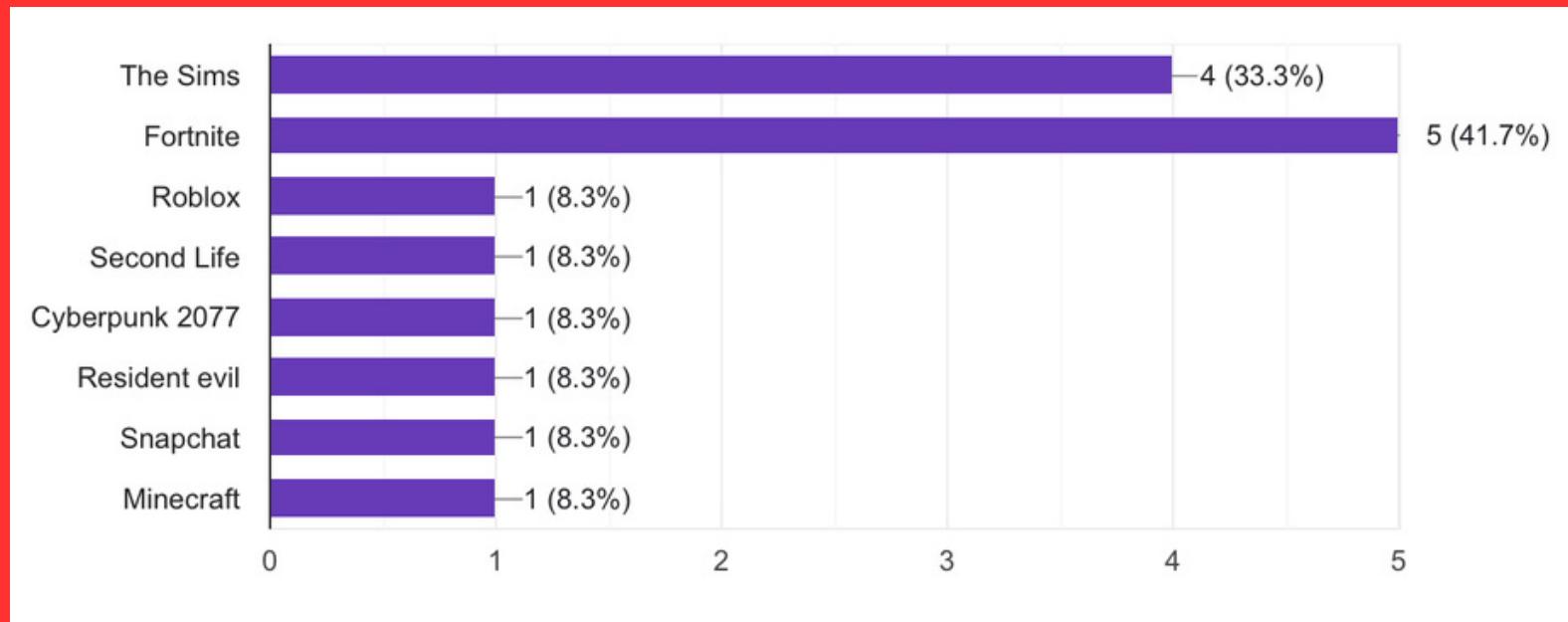
Fig 18.1: Primary research by analyzing data through survey by the author

What kind of emotions do you feel are missing in digital fashion or avatar styling?
The survey reveals that emotions like loneliness, loss and mental fatigue are rarely represented in current digital fashion or avatar systems. Most platforms focus on aesthetic appeal or surface-level moods, leaving out deeper, more complex emotional states. This highlights a clear gap—and opportunity—for fashion experiences that validate and visualise these often-silenced feelings. Anatomy of Silent Romance directly responds to this need by using Gothic archetypes and digital garments to give form to these internal states, offering Gen Z a more honest and reflective way to express emotion in virtual environments.

The survey responses reveal that Gen Z uses online fashion as a powerful emotional outlet and identity tool. Participants expressed that their clothing choices in digital spaces reflect their mood—whether through muted tones and oversized shapes during low moments, or surreal, glowing designs when feeling bold or playful. Some use fashion to boost confidence, while others view it as a form of status or creative expression. These insights affirm that digital fashion is not just aesthetic—it's a form of non-verbal emotional storytelling, directly supporting the aims of Anatomy of Silent Romance.

Which digital platforms or games do you use where you can customize avatars or clothing?
Survey results indicated that Fortnite is the most commonly used platform for digital self-expression via avatar customization. This confirms Gen Z's preference for interactive fashion ecosystems where style, emotion and identity blend—reinforcing the need for emotionally driven, symbolic digital fashion experiences like the ones this project offers.

How do you use fashion (online) to express your mood or emotions?
Some of the answers through the survey:
- I use fashion online as a kind of mood translator. When I feel anxious or low, I'll dress in neutral or dark tones, layered and oversized. When I feel more expressive, I'll experiment with surreal textures, glowing effects, or exaggerated silhouettes. It's a quiet way to signal how I'm feeling in digital spaces where words feel too heavy.
- Dramatically
- A shoe of status / experience.
- Customising the game characters clothes to either look cool or choose stupid clothings for the character to express playfulness and craziness
- To improve my confidence
- I prefer muted colors, oversized shapes, or even glitchy, fragmented clothing. It helps me communicate how I feel without speaking.
- I use online fashion to express my mood by choosing styles, colors, and outfits that reflect how I feel.
- Based on colour or design
- Create a custom costume based on my mood
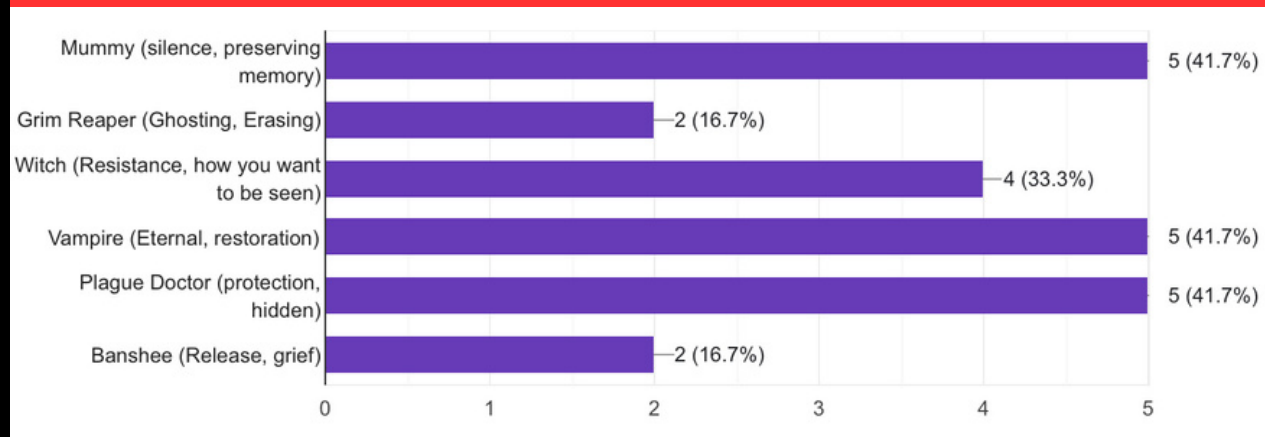
Primary Research

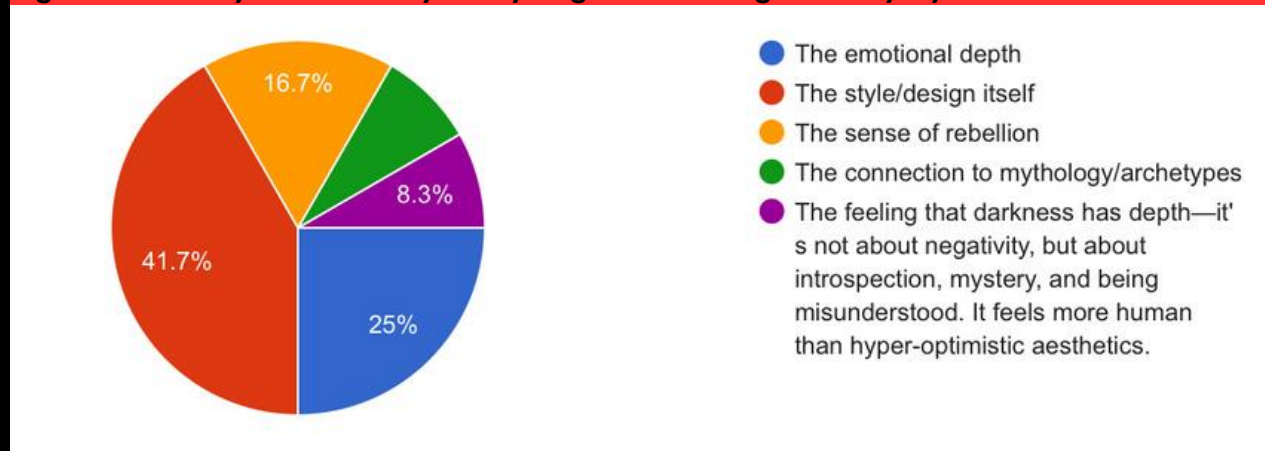Fig 18.2: Primary research by analyzing data through survey by the author

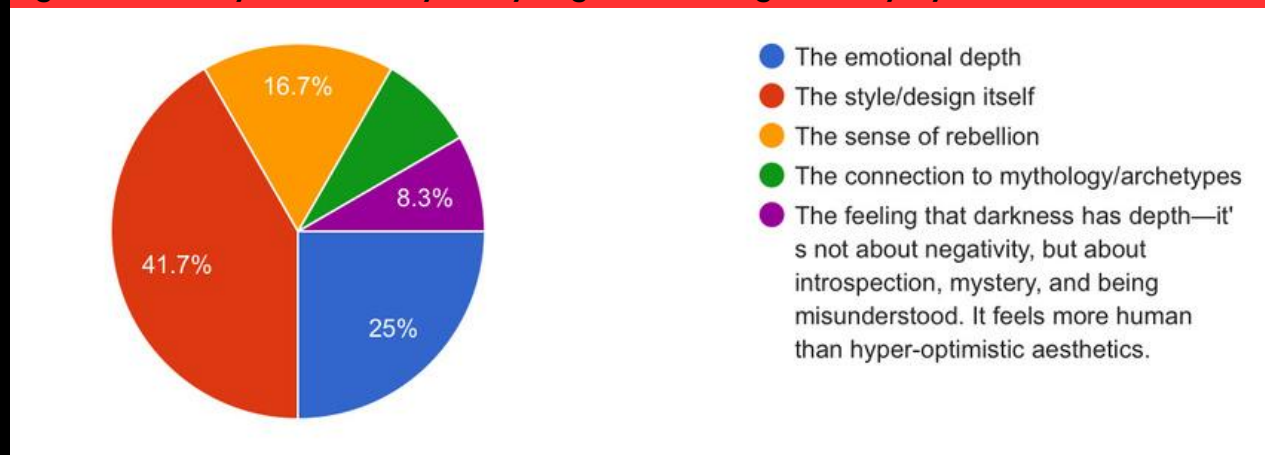Fig 18.3: Primary research by analyzing data through survey by the author

Fig 18.4: Primary research by analyzing data through survey by the author

Which of the following symbolic characters do you emotionally relate to?
Through the survey that I have sent to the Genz, especially who play games, the respondents most emotionally connected with the Mummy, Plague Doctor and Vampire, suggesting a deep resonance with themes of emotional preservation, protection and hidden desire. These characters embody states of isolation, guarded identity and immortal intensity, which mirror Gen Z's experience of navigating emotion in digital spaces. Their symbolic relevance reinforces the emotional core of the project, positioning each garment as a digital avatar of psychological state and self-expression.

What attracts you most to dark, gothic or symbolic aesthetics?
When asked what attracts them most to dark, gothic or symbolic aesthetics, respondents highlighted themes of mystery, emotional depth, individuality and visual storytelling. Many are drawn to the ability of these styles to express complex feelings like grief, rebellion or inner power—emotions that are often overlooked in mainstream fashion. The symbolism and drama of gothic aesthetics allow Gen Z to explore identity beyond surface-level trends, making them feel seen in a world that can feel emotionally disconnected.

How would you feel wearing an avatar garment that reflected grief, anxiety or rebellion?

Respondents shared that wearing an avatar garment reflecting grief, anxiety or rebellion would feel deeply validating, liberating and even empowering. Rather than hiding difficult emotions, such garments offer a safe, symbolic way to externalise inner struggles—especially in virtual spaces where users often feel pressure to appear perfect or curated. For many, it would feel like a form of digital catharsis or soft resistance, giving them permission to be emotionally honest and reclaim control over their identity expression.

Primary Research

Do you believe fashion in games can help people explore or express emotions in ways real life can't?
- Yes, it's a unique space
- Definitely. In digital spaces, you're not limited by physical form, judgement, or social norms. You can embody emotions visually without having to explain them, which makes self-expression feel freer.
- Yes
- Yeah, i find when people are online they have that added layer of distanc which can help them express themselves more freely.
- Yes a little
- Yes, digitally you can do whatever and however you want to
- Yes
- Yes sure
- Yes. I strongly agree

The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that digital fashion in games provides a freer, less judgmental space to explore and express emotions. Participants noted that in virtual environments, they're not restricted by physical form or societal expectations, allowing for more honest, creative and emotional self-expression. This digital distance creates a safe layer of abstraction, encouraging users to visually represent grief, anxiety or rebellion without needing to explain or justify it—something often difficult to do in real life.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe - Why?
- Yes. That sounds like a powerful way to combine fashion with narrative and identity. I think more games should explore that.

75%

16.7%

8.3%
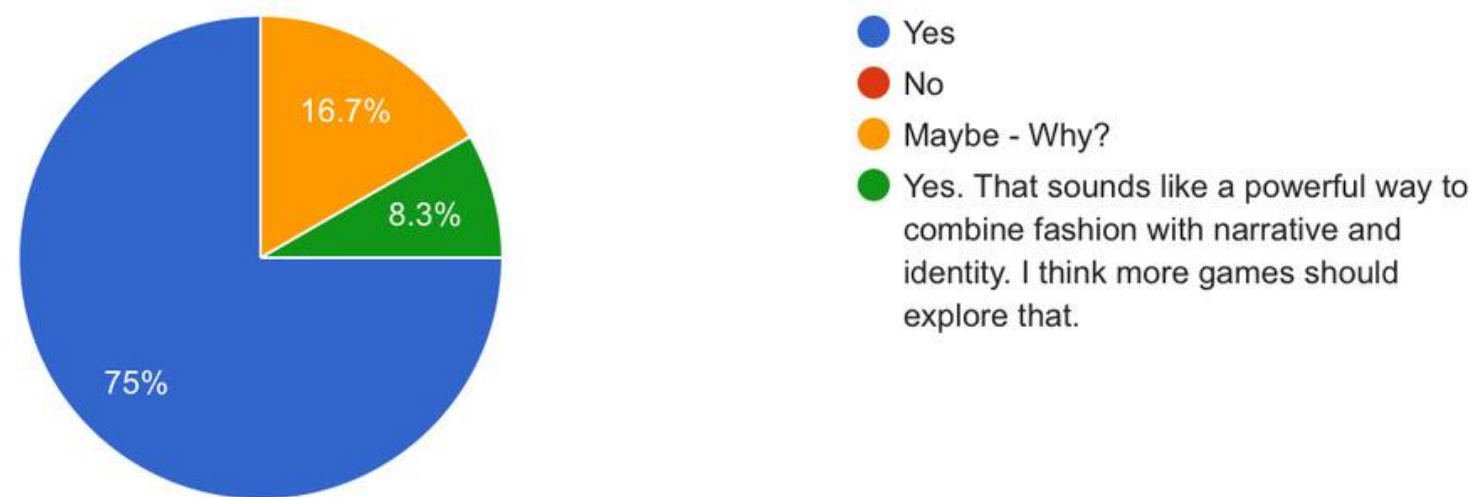
Fig 18.5: Primary research by analyzing data through survey by the author

Would you like to play a game where digital fashion unlocks emotional stories or hidden parts of a character's personality?

When asked if they would like to play a game where digital fashion which unlocks emotional stories or hidden aspects of a character's personality, the vast majority responded "Yes." This highlights a strong desire among Gen Z players for interactive narratives where clothing becomes more than aesthetic—it becomes a storytelling device. The idea of garments acting as keys to emotional depth resonates with players who crave more meaningful, immersive and personalised gaming experiences.

Why Does This Matter? What Gaps are Emerging? What Has This Research Made Me Question or Rethink?

Gen Z is a generation deeply embedded in digital life, yet much of digital fashion remains disconnected from their inner experiences, often prioritising aesthetics over emotional depth, trend over subcultural meaning. As Anatomy of Silent Romance develops, the project may evolve into a more interactive, immersive experience, expanding beyond digital garment design into narrative world-building using AR/VR, sound design and motion-reactive environments. This shift would allow each archetype to exist not just as a look, but as an emotive digital presence, enabling users to engage with the garment's symbolism in a deeper, sensory way.

A key gap this research addresses is the lack of psychological and symbolic function in digital fashion. Few collections explore how digital garments can communicate internal states, rituals of self-protection or resistance to visibility—despite the fact that Gen Z actively uses fashion to signal mood, identity and disconnection in virtual spaces. This gap reveals a tension between the emotive potential of digital garments and the surface-level applications dominant in industry and media.

The tension emerging is between visibility and vulnerability: Gen Z wants to be seen, but on their own terms. They often resist full emotional exposure in favour of symbolic self-curation and subculture. This project responds to that by creating fashion experiences that visualise what is usually invisible: silence, memory and resistance. Through symbolic archetypes and immersive design (inspired by games and subcultures), fashion can become a form of digital worldbuilding and emotional storytelling

The research has made me rethink digital fashion as a narrative medium—capable of creating experiences, not just appearances. It has also pushed me to explore how archetypal storytelling and immersive technology can be used not for fantasy alone, but for psychological realism, emotional self-expression and cultural critique. Ultimately, this project invites fashion to move beyond surface, beyond trend and toward emotional literacy, symbolic depth and speculative identity—especially for users who feel more comfortable expressing themselves through visuals than through words.

What change will the gaming industry face?

My project proposes a new emotional and symbolic approach to digital fashion, which could influence how the gaming industry thinks about character design, avatar personalisation and narrative immersion.

Currently, fashion in games is often treated as customisation—players choose outfits to express style, status or alignment. However, this project demonstrates how garments can also function as emotional tools—telling personal stories, symbolising psychological states and responding to the user's input or mood.

This could lead to the gaming industry embracing:

• Narrative fashion — where clothing tells part of a character's backstory or emotional aspects.
• Mood-reactive garments — where player emotions or decisions influence the form, colour or behaviour of digital garments.
• Subcultural and symbolic fashion — pulling from goth, glitch or witch aesthetics to deepen emotional context, especially in dark fantasy or psychological games.
• Greater collaboration between digital fashion designers and game developers — not just for "skins," but for emotive, story-driven costume design.

This shift aligns with a growing trend toward emotionally immersive game design. As per Keogh (2018), modern games are moving away from pure action and moving toward affective depth, atmospheric storytelling and symbolic environment building. This project reinforces this shift by showing that even fashion assets can participate in emotional narrative design. Gen Z is navigating emotional overwhelm, identity fragmentation and burnout in an increasingly digital, aesthetic-driven world—but lacks spaces where they can visually express complex emotions in ways that feel safe, symbolic and interactive. Many games offer character customisation, but not meaningful emotional storytelling through garments or mood-based interaction.

Commercial Opportunities for Anatomy of Silent Romance

1. Digital Fashion Drops & Wearables:
Platform Potential: DRESSX, The Fabricant, Tribute Brand, Roblox, Zepeto
• Limited-edition digital fashion releases for avatars or AR-based styling
• Emotion-reactive wearables that change based on user inputs (sound, voice, mood selection)
• NFT collections or asset bundles tied to storytelling archetypes. It offers symbolic garments Gen Z can "wear" to reflect their mood, not just style

2. Gaming Skins & Narrative Costume Design:
Industry Potential: Epic Games (Fortnite), Capcom (Resident Evil), FromSoftware (Dark Souls), indie narrative studios
• Collaborations with dark narrative games to offer story-based fashion skins
• Expand into mood-based gameplay mechanics (garments shift in colour/effect based on character arc)
• Modding assets for platforms like The Sims, Skyrim or Unreal Engine. It turns garments into expressive character-building tools in immersive gaming environments

3. Mental Health x Aesthetic Tools:
Platform Potential: VR meditation apps, gamified wellness platforms, Discord therapy bots
• Develop "emotion-based fashion avatars" for VR therapy, mental health campaigns or meditative play
• Partner with digital well-being platforms to provide visual mood tools (e.g., Banshee for grief, Plague Doctor for shielding) and use fashion not as trend, but as symbolic emotional support

4. Collaborations & Brand Licensing:
• Collaborate with dark/luxury fashion brands (e.g. Rick Owens, Gareth Pugh) or avant-garde houses exploring digital
• Partner with mental health initiatives for Gen Z (e.g. Calm, Headspace, Sad Girls Club) to visualise emotional support
• Pitch to digital wellbeing orgs or gaming charities (e.g. Safe In Our World) for storytelling collaborations

Fig 8: Image from Gris game

Market Research

Target Audience:

The primary audience for Anatomy of Silent Romance is Gen Z (aged 16–26)—a generation that is emotionally aware, digitally fluent and deeply involved in online subcultures such as goth and grunge especially in gaming. This audience engages with fashion not simply as a trend, but as a tool for self-expression, developing identity and rebellion. They are drawn to dark, symbolic visuals and immersive experiences that reflect their psychological realities in screen-saturated environments. Gen Z consumers value individuality, emotional authenticity and interactive storytelling—making them naturally responsive to garments that offer symbolic meaning, responsive behaviour and immersive environments.

The secondary audience includes digital fashion creators and curators on platforms like DRESSX, The Fabricant, VR users, concept artists and indie game fans who appreciate fashion's narrative and symbolic potential. These individuals are interested in how digital garments can function as interactive interfaces, tools for emotional engagement and world-building elements within virtual spaces. This audience values cross-disciplinary work that merges fashion, gaming, mythology and digital storytelling, aligning with the aesthetic and conceptual depth offered by my reinterpretation of Gothic archetypes.

This project specifically targets culturally engaged, emotionally expressive Gen Z individuals—those aged 16 to 28 who are active within online subcultures, creative communities and immersive digital spaces. They are not mainstream trend-followers but instead align with alternative aesthetics such as goth, grunge or soft horror. These are Gen Z users who use fashion and online personas as tools to communicate mood, identity and resistance—often through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Discord and emerging metaverse spaces. They are gamers, digital artists and avatar stylists who seek symbolic meaning in what they wear and how they express themselves across platforms. This audience is attracted to dark aesthetics, emotional symbolism and immersive storytelling. They are comfortable exploring themes like mental health, alienation, digital identity and self-curation.

Growing Interest in Subcultural Digital Fashion:
Platforms like DRESSX and Auroboros have shown that there's a strong Gen Z audience for non-mainstream, symbolic and mood-driven digital fashion, especially in AR, avatar styling and metaverse fashion weeks. According to Statista (2023), over 60% of Gen Z consumers say they use fashion to express their mental state or individuality.

Rise of "Mood Fashion" and Digital Identity Curation:
Gen Z prefers fashion that aligns with emotions and subculture rather than trends. They curate their identity across platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Discord using aesthetic codes like goth, grunge and surrealism. As Titton (2015) explains, fashion becomes a narrative tool for Gen Z—"a story worn to signal value, emotion and community."

Why Gen Z Prefers Gothic Archetypes?
- Symbolic emotional depth - Archetypes express grief, rebellion and mystery.
- Anti-perfection and identity control - Gothic archetype resist the need to look happy, perfect or overly polished.
- Feeling seen in darkness - These characters reflect GenZ's reality: screen-saturated, anxious and expressive.
- Familiarity through gaming - Games like Dark Souls, Resident Evil and Witcher have aesthetic overlap with fashion preferences.
- Self-curation and resistance - Gothic archetypes allow for emotional layering, masking and silent rebellion.

Market Research

Target Audience: Gen Z & Digital Identity:
- 65% of Gen Z say they use fashion to express their mental state or mood, especially through online platforms (Statista, 2023).
- 80% of Gen Z consider digital identity just as important as physical identity (Vice Media Group, 2022).
- 62% of Gen Z are drawn to alternative or subcultural fashion aesthetics, including goth, grunge and dark romanticism (YPulse, 2022).
- 61% of Gen Z prefer "aesthetic-driven storytelling" over plot-based content in digital experiences—including games and fashion presentations (Snapchat x Gen Z Vision Report, 2022).

Gaming and Digital Fashion Crossover:
- 47% of Gen Z gamers use customisable avatars to express their mood, personality or subcultural style in games (Newzoo, 2022).
- The global digital fashion market is projected to grow at over 25% annually, with Gen Z as the fastest-adopting demographic (Allied Market Research, 2023).
- 70% of Gen Z gamers say they want more fashion choices in games that reflect "non-mainstream or fantasy aesthetics", such as gothic or myth-inspired design (Deloitte Digital Media Trends, 2023).

MARKET RESEARCH

65% Use fashion to express mental state or mood

47% Gen Z gamers use avatars to express mood, personality, or style

62% Drawn to alternative or subcultural fashion aesthetics

70% Want non-mainstream or fantasy aesthetics in games

Statista (2023), Newzoo (2022), YPulse (2022), Deloitte Digital Media Trends (2023)
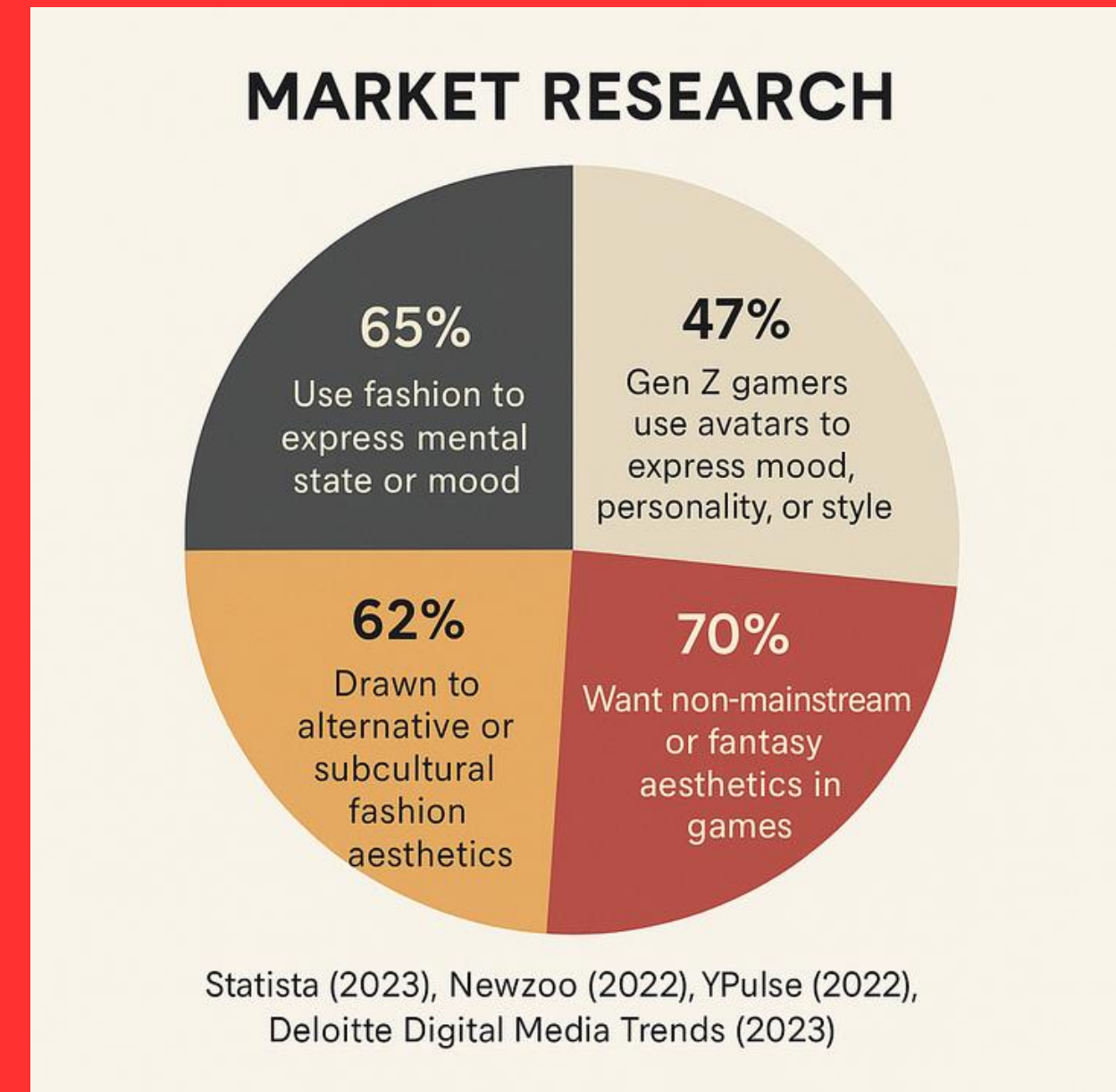
Fig 19: Market research by analyzing data

Marketing

Problems

Gen Z is emotionally saturated and digitally fragmented - traditional fashion marketing feels inauthentic or performative.

Difficulty in engaging Gen Z with static campaigns or conventional influencer marketing.

Gen Z prefers self-curated, non-linear narratives over commercial fashion storytelling.

Gen Z is navigating emotional overwhelm, identity fragmentation, and burnout in an increasingly digital, aesthetic-driven world—but lacks spaces where they can visually express complex emotions in ways that feel safe, symbolic, and interactive. Many games offer character customisation, but not meaningful emotional storytelling through garments or mood-based interaction.

Solutions given by my project

My garments are emotion-driven and symbolically rich, offering authentic emotional storytelling Gen Z can relate to.

Gamified, interactive experiences with avatar personalization and digital emotion provide immersive and sharable engagement.

The game lets players unlock their own story through archetypes and portals - a self-led journey of identity.

Industry

Problems

Many digital fashion experiences are aesthetic-first, lacking emotional or symbolic depth.

Lack of emotional storytelling in avatar fashion systems.

Over-reliance on microtransactions and superficial customisation.

Fashion in games is often detached from psychological depth.

Solutions given by my project

My project introduces narrative garments tied to mental states, bridging fashion, therapy and identity.

My system introduces emotionally reactive design - garments that symbolise different emotions.

I propose a story-driven unlock system, where customization is earned through emotional progression (solving levels = unlocking reflection).

I reframe garments as psychological containers - each piece represents a fragmented identity to be restored.

Design Statement: Inspirations Behind My Garments

"Reimagining Dark Archetypes in Digital Fashion"

In this project, I explore how iconic dark archetypes—the Mummy, the Grim Reaper, the Witch, the Vampire, the Plague Doctor and the Banshee—can be reinterpreted for a Gen Z digital context. Each look in my collection draws conceptual and aesthetic inspiration from the work of Alexander McQueen, Gareth Pugh and Mowalola Ogunlesi, whose designs channel the themes like emotion and rebellion with goth subculture.

Together, these designers helped me build a digital fashion language that redefines Gothic archetypes through Gen Z's lens of emotion, subculture and digital identity and self expression.

Through six archetypal characters—the Mummy, Reaper, Witch, Vampire, Plague Doctor and Banshee—each representing a hidden or distorted Gen Z emotion, the project transforms clothing into interactive emotional vessels. These garments are not simply styled objects, but metaphoric interfaces.

Set within a stylised digital environment built in Unreal Engine, the player journeys through symbolic realms, completing mood-based interactions and unlocking pieces of their identity. The final form is a composite digital garment: a visual representation of emotional reassembly, worn as a silent rebellion against over-curated digital norms.

This project challenges traditional fashion by shifting focus from aesthetic surface to emotional symbolism, using interactive design and game mechanics to create a space where fashion becomes therapeutic, protective and deeply personal. It reflects Gen Z's need to be seen—not for perfection, but for emotional truth.

Gareth Pugh

Fig 20: Gareth Pugh's fall/winter collection

My interpretations of the Grim Reaper, Plague Doctor and Mummy draw from Gareth Pugh's sculptural silhouettes and emotionally charged minimalism. His FW15 collection, with its ritualistic hoods, black PVC and face-concealing elements, inspired my use of exaggerated, immersive digital forms that suggest psychological tension, anonymity and protection. Vogue's coverage highlights the fall/winter collection's "bleak, dramatic, ritualistic nature," describing black capes and funnel-necked silhouettes as symbolic emotional armour. (Blanks, T., 2015).

He interprets darkness not just as colour or mood, but as psychological presence. "I like to create work that offers an escape from reality... to be expressive, dark, powerful." – Pugh.

Alexander McQueen

Fig 21: From Alexander McQueen's horn of plenty collection

McQueen's theatrical storytelling and romantic darkness deeply influenced my designs for the Witch, the Banshee and the Vampire. His collections often explored themes of femininity, mourning and spiritual transformation, which I translated into digital garments with flowing opacity, corsetry, historical silhouettes and symbolic layering. Alexander McQueen's work is foundational in translating Gothic aesthetics into emotionally charged, theatrical fashion. His collections such as "Dante" (1996) and "Widows of Culloden" (2006) embraced themes of goth, melancholy and historical darkness. McQueen modernised Gothic fashion by combining romantic silhouettes with haunting narratives, making his work an ideal historical reference point for how darkness can be made beautiful and subversive. "Like McQueen, I treat fashion as a space for narrative and emotional expression" (Bolton, 2011).

Mowalola represents a Gen Z-centric reinterpretation of dark aesthetics. Mowalola's raw subcultural energy and bold confrontation of identity inspired elements of the Mummy, the Plague Doctor and the Vampire looks. Her Silent Madness collection's use of leather, blood tones and fragmented silhouettes informed my digital designs, which express rebellion, exposure and youth resistance (Seward, M., 2019).

"I want my clothes to evoke emotion... I'm not trying to make them sexy, I want them to feel powerful." – Ogunlesi.

Mowalola Ogunlesi

Fig 22: From Mowalola's Silent Madness collection

Timeline

PROJECT SCHEDULE FOR DIGITAL FASHION PROJECT PROPOSAL

TASK	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12	WEEK 13
Research for the context of my study	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
Research which support my prediction		■	■	■	■								
Visual Inspiration			■	■	■								
Inspired costume designers		■	■	■									
Development of moodboard				■		■							
Concept board				■									
My sketches				■									
The making of the costumes					■	■							
Textures and material designs						■	■						
Downloading/creating the character and asset				■		■		■					
Environment design						■	■						
Lighting the scene							■				■	■	
Rendering										■	■	■	
Solving the technical errors and the tutorials for it									■		■		
Structuring the final research journal and presentation											■	■	■
Testing VR/AR											■	■	
Journaling the work	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Handing the presentation													■

Fig 23: The work schedule of the author throughout this project

Name of my Collection

'*Anatomy of Silent Romance*' – It explores the emotional and symbolic layers of unspoken identity through digital Gothic fashion, where silence becomes a visual language and each garment reflects Gen Z's hidden narratives.

" The collection is based on the ancient or historical goth styles, which could be modernised according to the current trend. It is to show, how it looks like when GenZ creates theses garments to see the digital expression."
        - by Keerthana

Anatomy ———→ Deconstructing identity and emotions

Silent ———→ Unspoken emotions. Symbolically connects virtually.

Romance ———→ Relationship with the darkness. Gothic Romanticism

The name of this series of collection would be "GothZ" or "*GZ*" series.

Fig 24: Gareth Pugh's fall winter 2015 backdrop in the runway

Why I Chose These 6 Characters Specifically (and Not Other Gothic Figures)

I selected the Mummy, Grim Reaper, Witch, Vampire, Plague Doctor and Banshee because each archetype represents a specific emotional state or psychological experience that resonates with how Gen Z navigates identity, silence and self-expression in digital space. These figures are not just Gothic, they're symbolic avatars that embody themes of emotional preservation (Mummy), erasure or ghosting (Grim Reaper), resistance (Witch), eternal (Vampire), guardedness or protection (Plague Doctor) and suppressed grief through voice (Banshee). **These archetypes are easily recognisable as their stories are reinterpreted through books, digital media and other forms of storytelling, so that the current and the future generations will not forget. Digital space provides the space where these archetypes can live on it. This arouses the mystery that each archetype has and the curiosity of the people.**

Their symbolism translates naturally into digital fashion because they are emotionally charged but visually flexible. Each can be reconstructed in a non-literal, abstract or tech-infused way, allowing me to turn garments into mood-responsive, immersive emotional interfaces.

I intentionally avoided other Gothic characters like werewolves, demons or monsters because they often rely on external transformation or horror rooted in physical grotesqueness. In contrast, my six chosen figures are more inward-facing. They reflect psychological tension, emotional control and symbolic silence, which are more in tune with Gen Z's screen-based, emotionally layered and mood-driven culture.

Rather than creating dramatic horror-inspired costumes, I wanted to explore how fashion can express internalised emotion and digital identity through symbolism and immersive design. These six archetypes give me the narrative and emotional range I need to tell that story.

What I Want to Do With Each Character?

This project is necessary because it fills a gap in the current digital fashion world and the game industry. Anatomy of Silent Romance offers a more meaningful, mood-driven approach by reimagining Gothic archetypes as representations of Gen Z's inner emotional worlds and experiences in digital space.

Gen Z increasingly uses fashion as a language of mood, identity and subcultural affiliation, especially in online contexts where presence is curated and fragmented. By combining digital fashion design with emotional symbolism, this project gives form to themes like silence, protection, visibility and memory, which are deeply relevant to how young people express themselves today.

Through immersive technologies (VR) and symbolic design, this project also contributes to the expanding field of virtual fashion as a narrative tool, not just a product. It reflects my own creative identity and experience as a designer who wants to move beyond surface-level aesthetics and use fashion to explore psychological depth and digital intimacy.

Each archetype is reimagined not as a literal figure from mythology, but as a symbol of a psychological or emotional state relevant to Gen Z's experience in digital culture. Rather than recreating the characters traditionally, I reinterpret them through digital garments, textures, silhouettes and interactions, allowing them to embody moods, protections and desires.

Mummy   Grim Reaper   Witch   Vampire   Plague Doctor   Banshee

Fig 25: AI generated characters in relation to GenZ

This collection is by Mowalola from 'silent madness' collection 2019.

Fig 27: Mowalola Ogunlesi's silent madness collection

This collection is by Gareth Pugh from the 'Fall/Winter 2015 collection.

Fig 26: Gareth Pugh's fall winter 2015 collection

This collection is by Alexander McQueen from 'The Horn of Plenty' collection.

The Inspiration to goth couture

Fig 28: Alexander McQueen's the horn of plenty collection

This look reimagines the ancient Mummy as a digitally preserved body of memory and rebellion, wrapped in layers of glitch-textured mesh, translucent synthetics and chromatic digital bandages. The silhouette is tight yet fractured—suggesting both containment and unraveling—exposing a pixelated second skin beneath.

The common prompt was "Create mummy costume based on the genz: Body wrapping, tension, glitch, cultural layering. Generate images in goth style."

This is a visual idea on the textures and the wrapping style of the garment. Also considering the Egypt language and symbols as glitch patterns. I am bringing in this glitch style from my term 2, 'The Face' project.

The material of the cloth is inspired by Alexander McQueen's Irere collection (chiffon). This digital garment is creating the sense of a waking memory or unresolved emotional loop.

This is the mood board for my first garment from the collection. The mummy wrappings were from the real photographs taken by the author in the British museum. This traditional wrapping costume will be modernised according to the GenZ by taking the silhouettes from the designer Mowalola.

TRADITIONAL

MODERNISED

Fig 29: The mummification images are from the British museum by the author and the references from McQueen's and Mowalola's Collection

Fig 30: AI generated visual idea

TRADITIONAL

MODERNISED

This is the mood board for the second garment with hooded ritual, faceless fear and silhouette as shadow.

The garments and silhouettes are inspired by Gareth Pugh's and Alexander McQueen's 'dialogue between fashion and death collection'. Taking this into consideration, this will be modernised according to genZ.

A modernised Grim Reaper garment is designed for Gen Z, features an oversized glitch-textured cloak that flickers at the edges, symbolising digital erasing and emotional silence. Layered mesh and fragmented fabrics suggest memory decay. The faceless hood reflects back the viewer, turning the Reaper into a mirror of the unseen self.
This is not death—it's disconnection, deletion and the ghosting of digital identity.

This reference from AI is to see the visual on how the holographic smoke effect works with the garment. The common prompt was 'Make a digital version of this with textures like hologram, smoke like trails flowing from the sleeves. The figure stands in a post digital environment, blending gothic futurism and street wear aesthetics. The garment has a translucent, shifting surface and virtual elements rendered as glowing code or neon wires.'

Fig 31: Some references from the web and from Gareth's and McQueen's collection

Fig 32: AI generated visuals for Grim Reaper

TRADITIONAL

This is the mood board for the third garment mentioning the witch as a digital spellcaster, this garment channels feminine resistance and mystic rebellion through asymmetrical layering, glowing sigil-prints and sheer with smoke effects. The silhouette blends ancient ritual with future-tech: a digital corset.

The Witch symbolizes resistance, spellcasting and aesthetic control. In virtual space, this manifests as symbol-activated garments or materials. The digital witch reclaims power by mastering self-curation and mysticism.

The sigil will be created to show the symbol of power. The Witch sigil is a mark of coded resistance—a protective, mystical interface between the wearer and the digital world. It symbolises Gen Z's power to conceal, reshape and reclaim their emotional selfhood on their own terms.

. I LET MY CREATIVITY FLOW .

. I LOVE MYSELF .

. I RADIATE BEAUTY AND GRACE .

MODERNISED

The prompts are "Full-body concept design of a gothic witch standing in a mysterious forest. The outfit features a long, black, distressed cloak made of torn, matte fabric with frayed edges. Beneath it, the character wears a tight-fitting bodice or chest wrap constructed of interlaced leather or fiber cords crisscrossed across bare skin, with glowing red beads or LED-like stones threaded vertically along the center, creating a spine-like ritual pattern."

"Full-body concept design of a gothic witch standing in a mysterious forest. The outfit features a long, black, distressed cloak made of torn, matte fabric with frayed edges. Beneath it, the character wears a tight-fitting bodice or chest wrap constructed of interlaced leather or fiber cords crisscrossed across bare skin, with glowing red beads or LED-like stones threaded vertically along the center, creating a spine-like ritual pattern."

Intersecting lines or web-like structures — referencing both spellcasting networks and digital connectivity. The sigil visually mimics the aesthetic of a web or code—mirroring how Gen Z weaves identity through platforms and digital filters.

Fig 33: References from the web, from the wicked movie and Mcqueen's design

Fig 34: AI generated visual images

This is the mood board for the fourth garment, a creature of curated mystery, seduction and glamour. The silhouette is sharp: a high-collared cloak overlays a translucent bodysuit threaded with reactive red lines that pulse like blood under the skin. The garment is both revealing and guarded—a digital performance of desire and control.

The garment glows faintly at the edges, as if responding to attention—feeding on the gaze. The textures are high-gloss and glitch-smooth, evoking a kind of pixelated immortality.

The Gen Z vampire no longer hides in shadows but thrives in filtered light—edited to perfection and always watching.

The prompts are "A futuristic, gender-neutral vampire figure posed beneath a blood-red neon sign shaped like ancient glyphs. Clad in a long, double-layered techno-coat — sheer on the outside with glowing veins, dense inside with bulletproof texture — the silhouette is sleek yet ghostly. The chestpiece beneath is a liquid-metal corset with translucent tubing pulsing synthetic blood-like fluid. Pants are high-waisted and slim-fit, with digital thread embroidery of alchemical symbols. Footwear: elevated split-toe boots with retractable heel spikes. No face is visible, only a holographic visor flashing cryptic emojis. Background: urban rooftop altar drenched in synth moonlight. Fashion-forward cyber-vampire concept art, cinematic tone, high contrast lighting and dystopian atmosphere."

"Gender-neutral vampire in a high fashion cyber-goth outfit: cropped vampiric blazer with spider-silk mesh panels, glowing circuit embroidery across shoulders. Pants are asymmetrical, one leg sheer mesh, the other glossy armor plate with side zipper and stylized blood rune symbols. Long flowing coat made of anti-light fabric — absorbs reflections, only the edges glow in red pixels. They wear claw-tipped gloves and an LED-studded collar that mimics a heartbeat monitor. Face covered in a sleek chrome mask with scrolling text: "404 Love Not Found." Setting: underground rave temple carved inside a data vault, lit by red strobes and glowing relics. Gen Z vampire as a digital priest of nightlife. Dark, surreal, and iconic."

Fig 35: References from the web along with Gareth's and Mcqueen's design

Fig 36: References from the web along with Gareth's and Mcqueen's design
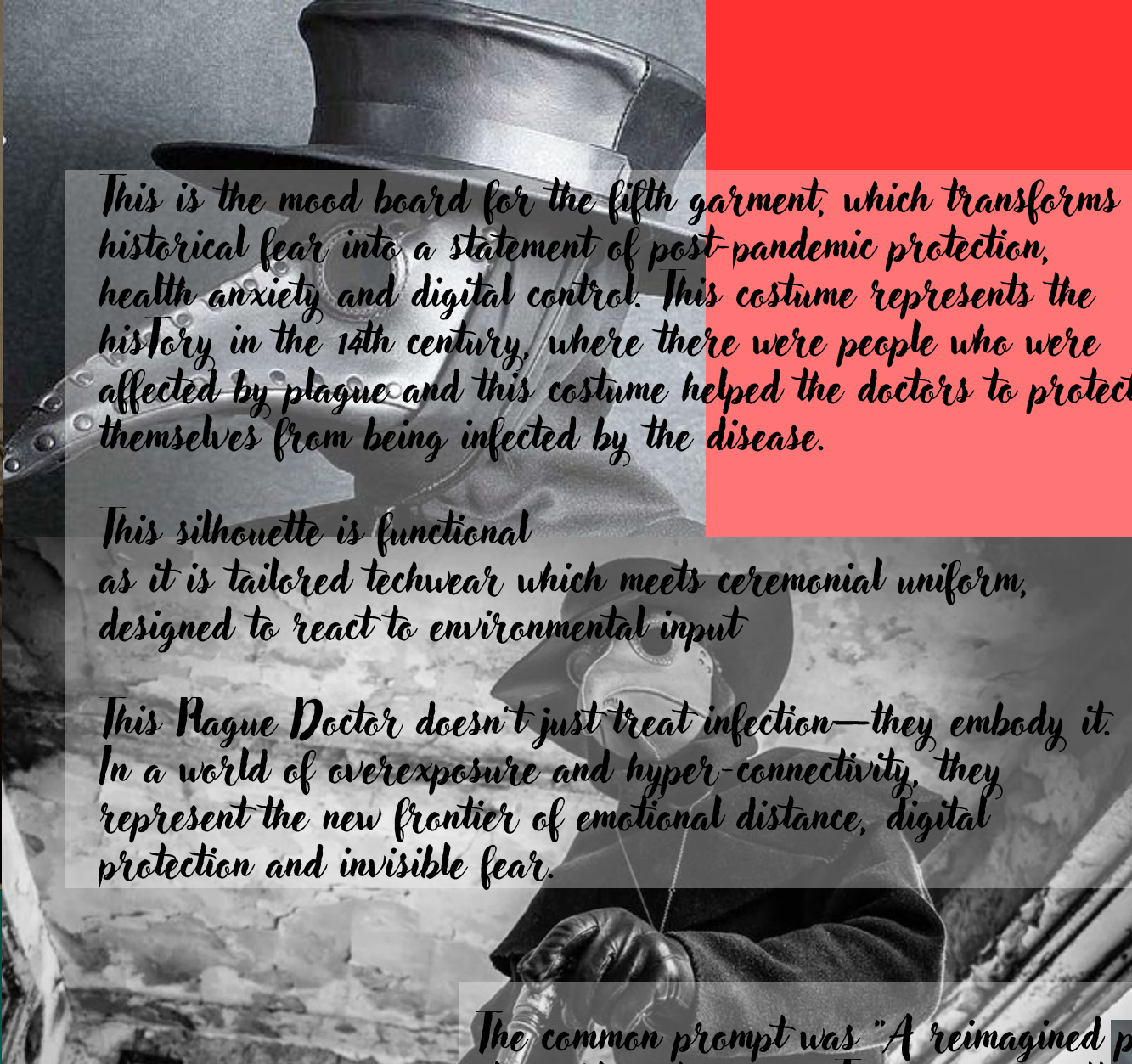
This is the mood board for the fifth garment, which transforms historical fear into a statement of post-pandemic protection, health anxiety, and digital control. This costume represents the history in the 14th century, where there were people who were affected by plague and this costume helped the doctors to protect themselves from being infected by the disease.

This silhouette is functional as it is tailored techwear which meets ceremonial uniform, designed to react to environmental input

This Plague Doctor doesn't just treat infection—they embody it. In a world of overexposure and hyper-connectivity, they represent the new frontier of emotional distance, digital protection and invisible fear.
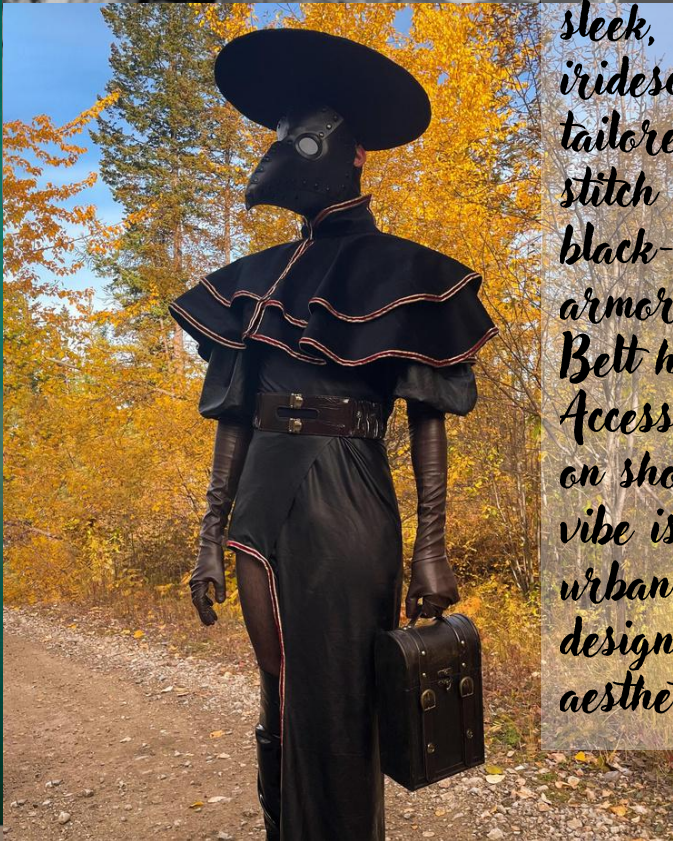
The common prompt was "A reimagined plague doctor character in sleek, black techwear. The mask is matte carbon fiber with iridescent lenses and subtle LED breathing tubes. Wearing a long, tailored trench coat made of weatherproof material, with neon stitch seams and multiple modular pockets. Underneath, a layered black-on-black outfit: cargo pants, mesh shirt, UV-reactive under armor with biotech texture. Gloved hands with silver claw rings. Belt has vials glowing faintly — symbolic of cure or poison. Accessories include a crossbody utility harness, drone companion on shoulder, and high-top combat sneakers with metal plating. The vibe is cyberpunk goth with surgical precision. Set in a rainy urban alley with biohazard graffiti. Ultra-modern gothic fashion design, detailed fashion mockup, dystopian Gen Z plague doctor aesthetic."

TRADITIONAL

MODERNISED
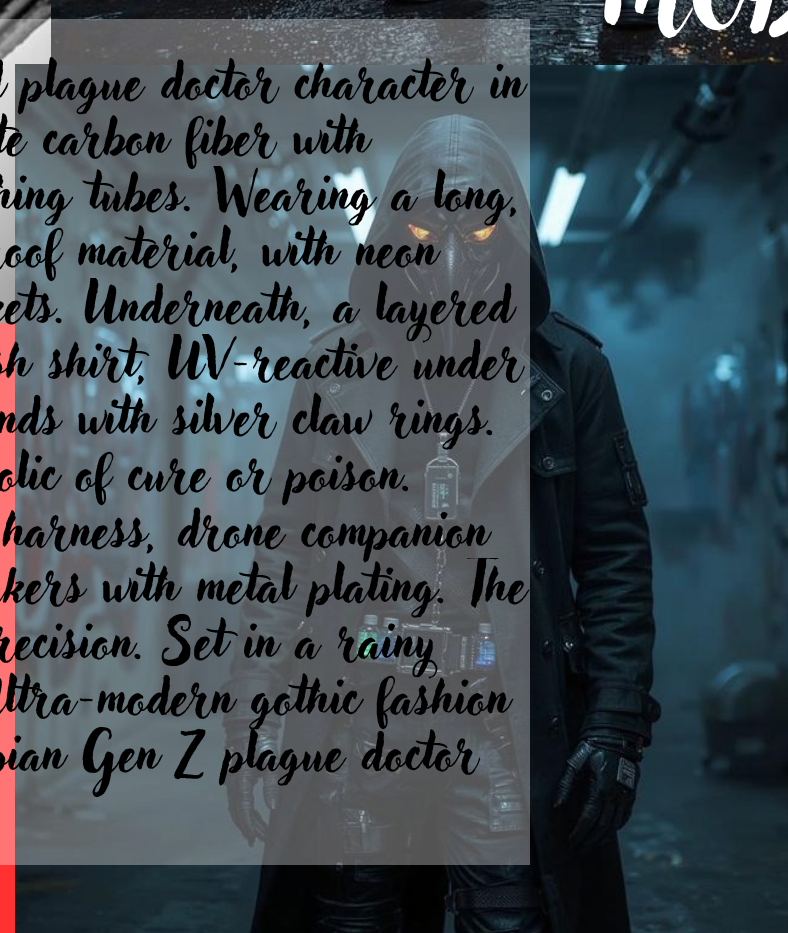
Fig 37: References from a book 'Mothmeister' and from the web

Fig 38: AI generated visual images for the plague doctor

MODERNISED

TRADITIONAL

This is the mood board for the final garment, which I found interesting about the Banshee is someone who can predict the death which acts as a warning sign. She is the contrast in how she's portrayed, either as a glamorous young woman luring men or a dishevelled old crone, reflecting the typical mythic binary of women as either dangerously beautiful or monstrously evil. She's also described wearing a cloak with red eyes, though it's unclear if the redness comes from malice or just from constant weeping.

She also reacts to the sound, voice or silence. The digital reaction to GenZ is the emotional release and sonic monitoring.

This is again relevant to my Term 1 music interactive garment. Similarly here, she reacts to the sound.

The common prompt was "A high-fashion modern banshee character, dressed in a translucent, flowing mesh dress layered over holographic silver bodysuit, infused with Celtic knot embroidery glowing softly in white. Her outfit blends gothic elements like torn veils, fingerless lace gloves, and a choker with a glowing rune pendant. Hair is silver or icy blue, styled in space buns or sleek braids. She wears thigh-high boots with razor-edge soles, and her long sleeves turn into mist at the ends. Makeup is ethereal with glitter tears and black lipstick. Floating in a dim forest fog with glitchy neon mist, her scream distorts the environment. Designed in a Gen Z street-goth-meets-high-couture style."

Fig 39: References from the web and the SS25 runway by McQueen

Fig 40: AI generated visuals for banshee

PIPELINE

If there will be any issue with the UV, it goes back and forth between blender and substance painter.

The garment will be constructed using clo3d and will be simulated after importing the character animation.

Blender will be used to adjust the alembics from clo3d to unreal. It will also be used for animation and modelling assets.

Substance painter is for creating the textures for the garment and other assets.

Unreal engine will be used majorly as I will be creating the environment, material assigning, animations, effects, importing the garment, blueprints, VR/AR and rendering.

After rendering the output in 360 view or a game film, Media Encoder will be used to stitch them together

If there will be any issue with the animation of the character, it goes back and forth between blender and substance painter.
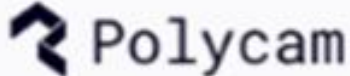
Metahuman creator and polycam could be used to adjust the existing character or create a character by scanning the real-life humans.

The mixamo is used for downloading the animations which are complicated, will be downloaded and blender will be helpful in creating easy animations.

If I want to adjust the textures of the metahuman character by adding bloodstains or adjust any kind of makeup on the UV textures, I will be using photoshop for that.

The mixamo animations can be imported as fbx in unreal and retargeted to the metahuman character.

Combining everything together, 360 view will be rendered and will be tested using meta occulus to test the VR render.

Fig 41: Pipeline by the author

The Elements and the Power of the garments

① The Mummy

Elements in Garment:
- Glitch-textured wraps
- Fragmented layering

Power:
Preservation
- Holds memory
- Emotional history
- Digital identity fragments

Fig 42: Reference from the web

The digital self is wrapped layer by layer: old usernames, deleted posts, private folders, glitched profiles. Nothing is truly gone—just buried beneath aesthetic curation or forgotten data. In a culture where the physical self fades, the preserved digital self becomes a symbol of emotional residue and silent memory.

Context: Gen Z documents, archives and edits themselves constantly across multiple platforms. What we "wrap up" in our private folders, alt accounts or aesthetic posts becomes a digital version of emotional preservation. The Mummy represents the desire to hold onto versions of ourselves, even when we feel emotionally distant or disassembled.

The Mummy:

The eyes will be covered with red glowing glasses

excess shoulder bandage, which will have the GenZ's hieroglyphs

Beneath the bandage, the character's skin will have the glitch effect. On top of that, the bandage will be covered with translucent material

Fig 43: Art by the author

- Layered bandage textures (wrinkled silk).
- Fraying edges, digital tearing or glitch sheens.
- Transparent mesh overlays with glitch sheens underneath and the silk bandage on top of it.
- On the floating bandage, hieroglyphic symbols are used as topstitch.

The Elements and the Power of the garments

The Grim Reaper

Elements in
Garment:
• The digital codes animating on the garment
• Vanished edges
• Smoke effects

Power:
Erasing
• Disconnection
• Commanding silence
• The unseen

Fig 44: Reference from the web
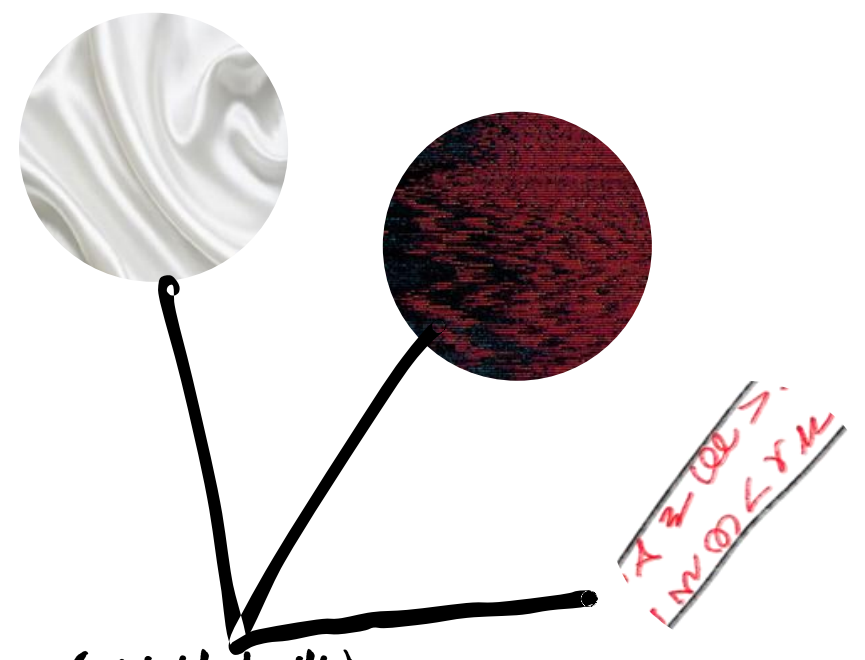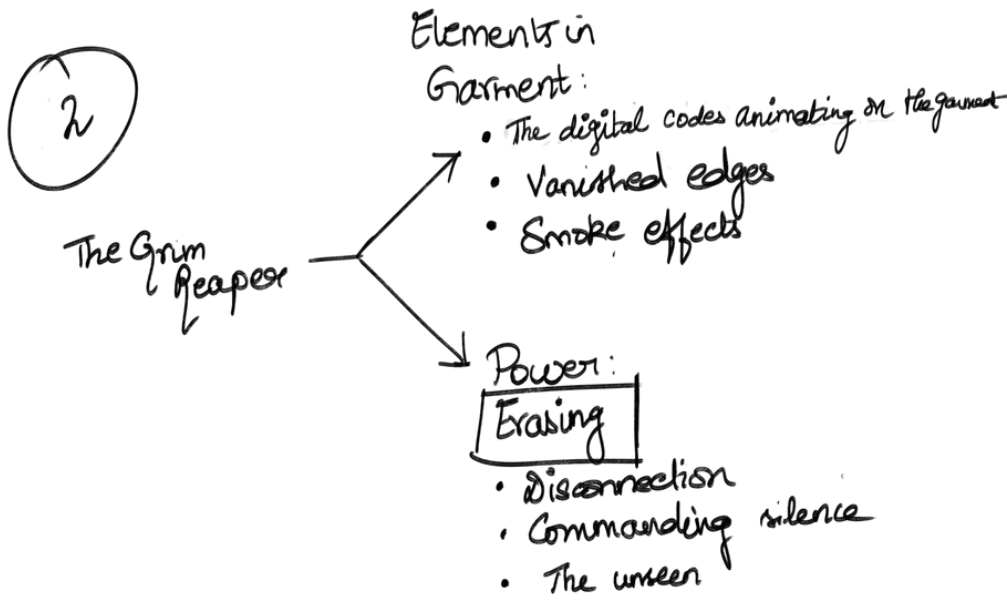
Context: In a world of constant visibility, disappearing becomes powerful. Ghosting, blocking, muting and vanishing from platforms are common coping mechanisms. The Grim Reaper represents the emotional tension of being unseen by choice or by others and the quiet rebellion of absence.

In the digital realm, deleting isn't erasure, it's haunting. Content may disappear from view, but remain in caches, screenshots, memories and metadata. For Gen Z, deletion often signifies emotional withdrawal, avoidance or control and not forgetting, but choosing to become unseen. It's not just absence it's the performance of vanishing/ghosting.

Garment Sketches and Material

Fig 45: Art by the author

The Grim Reaper

→ A long trail in the front

→ These coding glitches will disappear on this face

A belt with a red flag shaped cloth
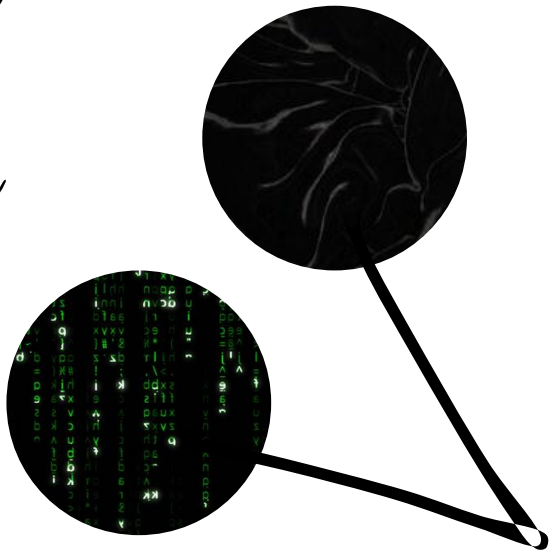
Smoke

• Smoke-like effects with digital glitch shaders.
• Dark violet-velvety, shadowy textures.
• Negative space cuts at the end (garment parts fading or vanishing).

The Elements and the Power of the garments

The Witch

Elements in Garment:
- Sigil patterns / top stitches / seamline
- Glowing patterns
- Pointed hat

The Witch

Power:
Resistance
- Control
- Digital mysticism

Fig 46: Reference from the web

The Witch

Fig 47: Art by the author

Witch long hat with Cat ears
Glowing lights
Transparent trail
Glowing lights
The Nets interconnected
Embossed glowing Sigil

Context: The Witch represents algorithmic resistance and spiritual rebellion. In Gen Z subcultures and mysticism are tools of empowerment. Through self-curation, Gen Z uses symbols to control how they're seen and claim space outside the mainstream.

This represents how Gen Z quietly pushes back against being constantly watched or judged online. The garment's reactive materials and symbols are like digital spells—they respond to the environment by a way of protecting yourself and controlling how you're seen.

Instead of shouting to be heard, Gen Z often resists by being hard to define—through anonymous profiles or glitchy edits. My garment shows this kind of subtle power: it's a way to say "I exist, but you can't fully read me (Keerthana.K. 2025)." It turns the digital space into a place of emotional safety, personal control and quiet rebellion.

- Digitally-Shaded Chiffon – Lightweight and flowing, ideal for the transparent trail; can fade in and out in digital space, enhancing the mysterious and mystical presence of the character.
- Silk satin - Luxurious woven fabric with a glossy surface and dull back. Shoes or accent pieces like the hat brim.

The Elements and the Power of the garments

:4

The Vampire

Elements in Garment:
- High - collared cloak
- Red veins
- A second layer on top of the base red veins

Power:
Eternal
- Controls desire
- Controls visibility & guarding immortal digital glamour
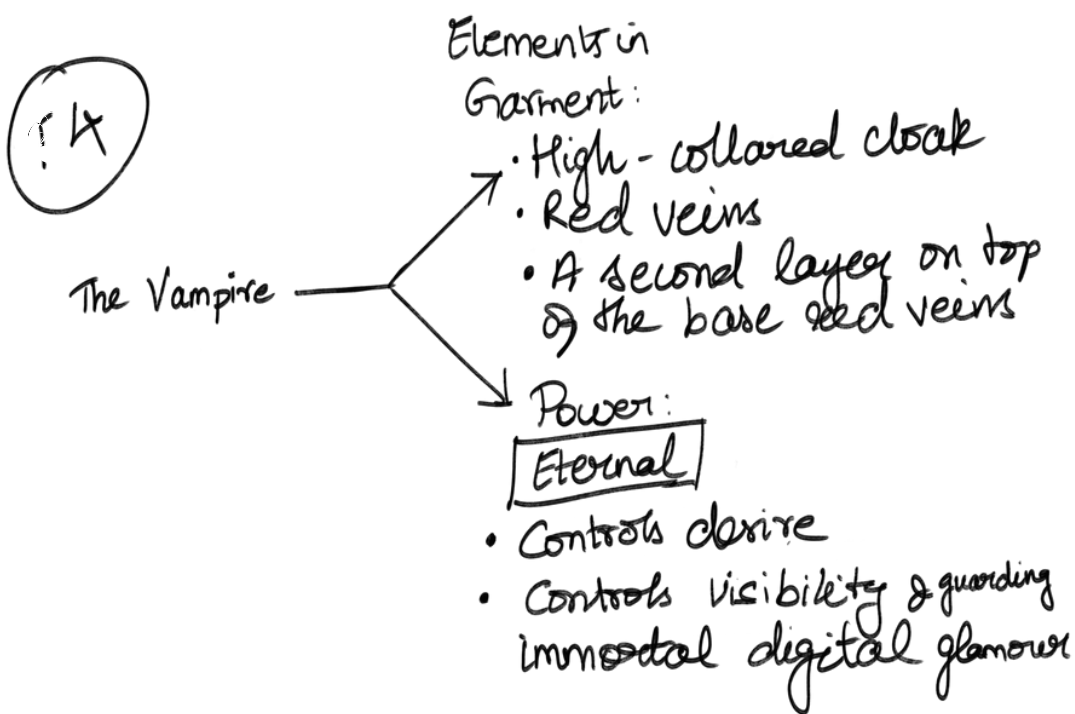
Fig 48: Reference from the web

In the digital world, nothing truly disappears—posts, photos, conversations and even versions of ourselves are often archived, screenshotted or remembered by algorithms or the digital world. For Gen Z, this creates a strange sense of eternity: everything they share online can be saved, replayed or resurfaced, even after they've moved on. On the other, it puts pressure to be perfect, edited and unforgettable, knowing that every moment might live on forever.

This garment embodies timeless digital beauty, with glowing textures and reflective surfaces that feed on attention and perform perfection. But beneath that, it also reveals how Gen Z navigates the need to be seen, admired and preserved while secretly fearing the emotional cost of being eternally visible.

<u>Context:</u> The Vampire reflects the performance of desirability and curated allure on social media. Gen Z often navigates the pressure to look flawless, mysterious and untouchable. The Vampire is a metaphor for feeding on attention, projecting confidence, but feeling emotionally distant beneath it all.

The Vampire:

The veins will be visible on the face

Endless sign which glows

A waist cloak skirt

Red sheen cloth
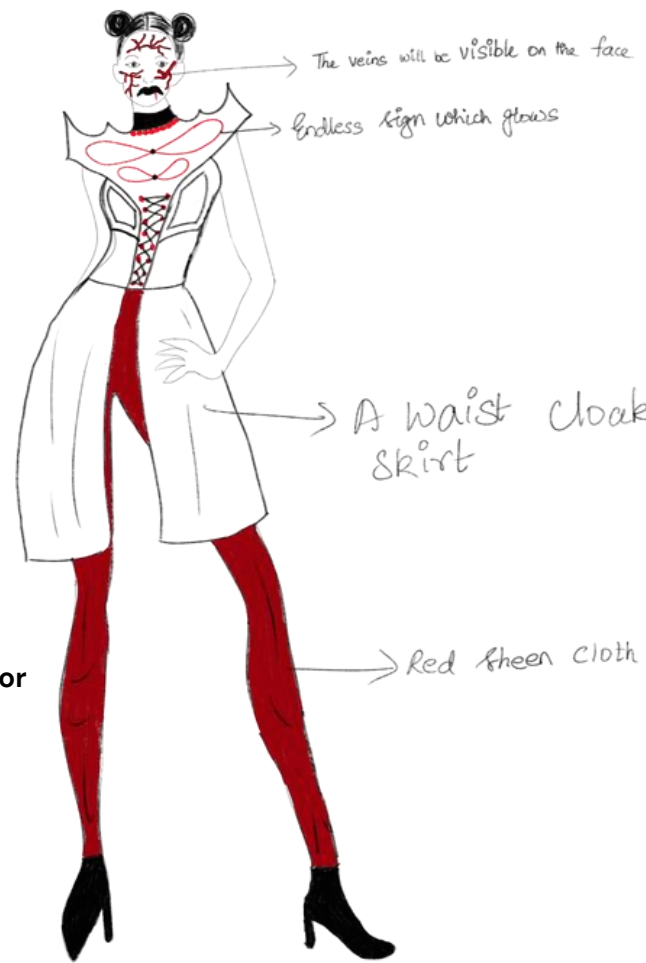
Fig 49: Art by the author

- Leather lambskin - Supple and smooth, yet slightly resilient to the touch. GenZ often associates leather with confidence.
- Stiff cotton - Crisp, matte and sculptural. For sharp collars, structured sleeves, or exaggerated silhouettes.
- Glossy cotton - Coated cotton with a subtle sheen. Smooth, polished surface, softer than satin for trousers.

The Elements and the Power of the garments

The Plague Doctor

Elements in Garment:
→ • Protective beak mask.
• Cloak coat with glowing
• Portioned belt.

→ Power:
[Protection]
• Shields the body
• Filters emotion
• Invisible fear

Fig 50: Reference from the web

The face mask
Outer holographic layer for the protection
The base layer
The Protection Sigil (Glows)
The doctor's potion

Garment Sketches and Material

Fig 51: Art by the author

Context: Post-pandemic life and algorithmic tracking have made protection, both physical and emotional. The Plague Doctor represents how Gen Z masks vulnerability, limits emotional exposure and protects identity in a world that watches and collects everything.

In digital space, protection isn't physical—it's emotional, personal and often invisible. With constant surveillance, tracking and public exposure, being online can feel like being constantly watched.

Gen Z uses digital tools as shields in the form of filters, private accounts and encrypted chats. They turn fashion and identity into forms of digital armour, protecting their inner selves while still participating in digital world.

This garment is designed not just to look powerful, but to symbolise protection through covered silhouettes, coded masks and guarded textures. It shows how Gen Z defends their emotional space in a world that demands constant openness.

• Cotton and recycled leather balance vulnerability and strength, ritual and rebellion, turning the Plague Doctor into a protector—not just from digital overstimulation, but from being emotionally "read" or exposed.
• Metallic mask
• Hologram protection

The Elements and the Power of the garments

16

The Banshee

Elements in Garment:
- Flowing ghost layer
- Reactive sound textures
- Digital tears

Power:
Release
- Voice to grief
- Unexpressed emotion
- Digital haunting

<u>Context:</u> The Banshee symbolises the urge to scream but not be heard. Gen Z often communicates mental health struggles indirectly through sounds and music, meme or venting. The Banshee channels that emotional noise trapped in silence, where grief and sadness float under the surface.

Fig 52: Reference from the web

For Gen Z, sound in digital spaces is often a form of emotional release through music, voice notes or ambient sound. In the digital world driven by text and visuals, sound offers a raw, intimate way to express feelings that can't always be typed or filtered.

Platforms like TikTok, voice chats and even ASMR content provide emotional relief or comfort. Screams, whispers, music loops and distorted audio become tools of emotional visibility—a way to say that a person is feeling something.

This garment channels this by responding to sound by glitching or reacting when the user speaks emotionally. It visualises the emotional weight of being heard or unheard, turning digital sound into a form of release, mourning and healing in a hyper-connected world.

Garment Sketches and Material

The Banshee:

Blood veins & red eyes

Glowing embossed mesh

skin tight dress with the holographic trail with smoke, where it fades at the end

Interacts according to her voice

Glowing bottom with attached heels

Fig 53: Art by the author

- Glowing embossed mesh - Integrates well with digital shaders. Visualises inner emotions.
- Voice-reactive shader fabric - Can flicker, pulse or ripple in response to sound input; emotional outburst.
- Red and black reflective latex - Hyper-visual and glossy. Symbolises rage, fear, and emotional exposure.

Concept Board

Fig 54: Concept reference board by the author

The architecture

The details

Additional details

Details of the Textures

Environment Board

Fig 55: Inspiration from the games: Resident Evil, Dark souls and Witcher

Concept art

Fig 56–61: Art by the author
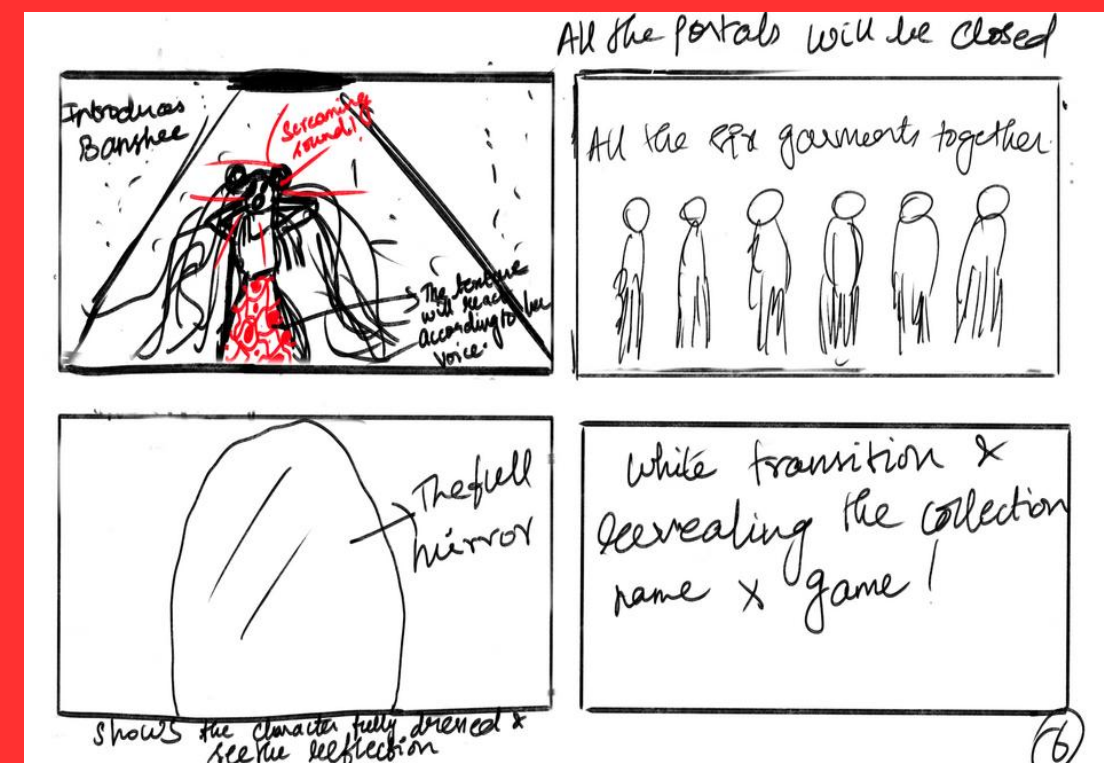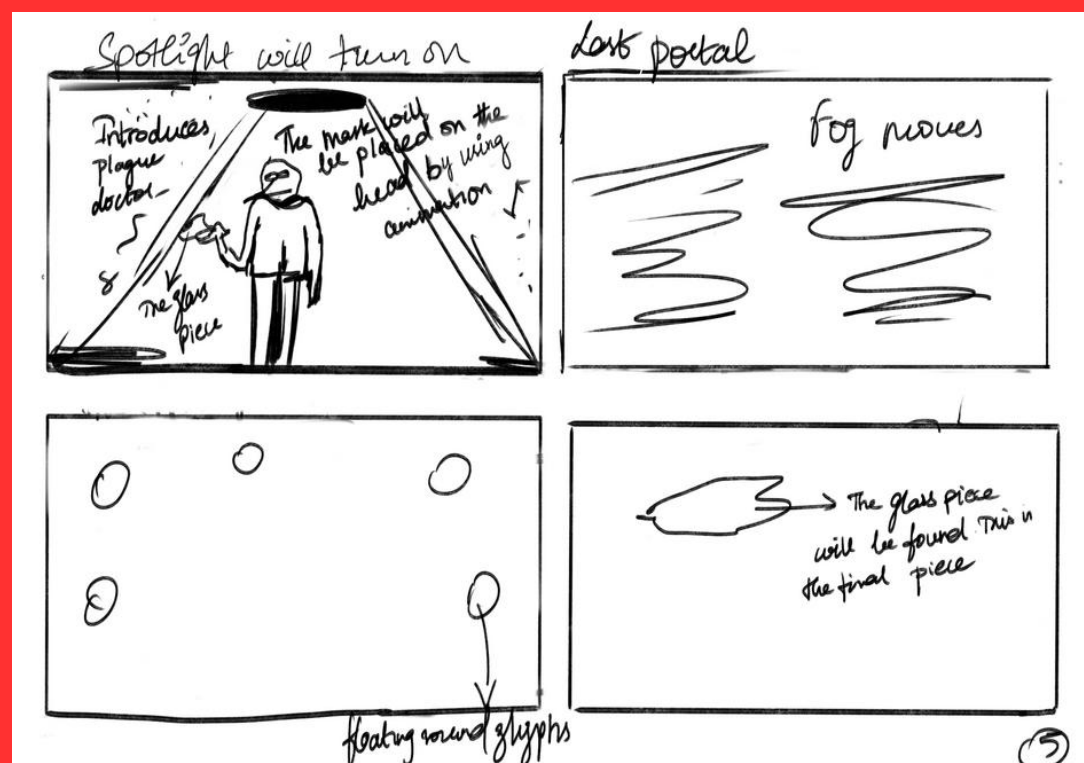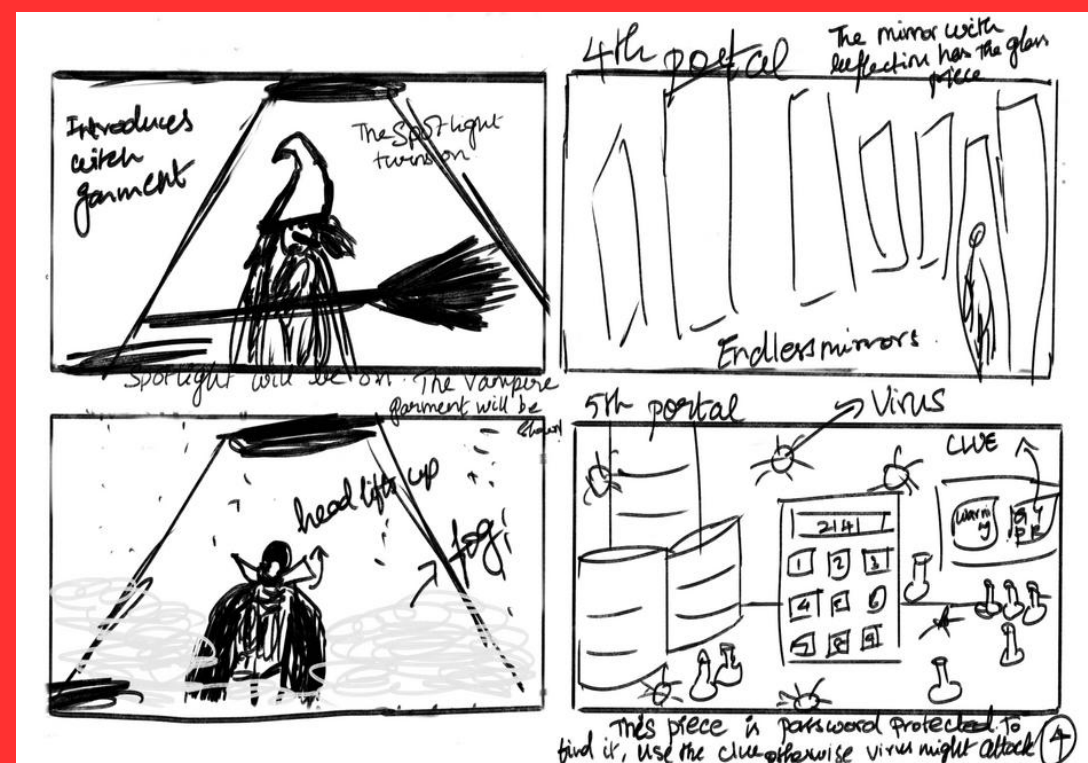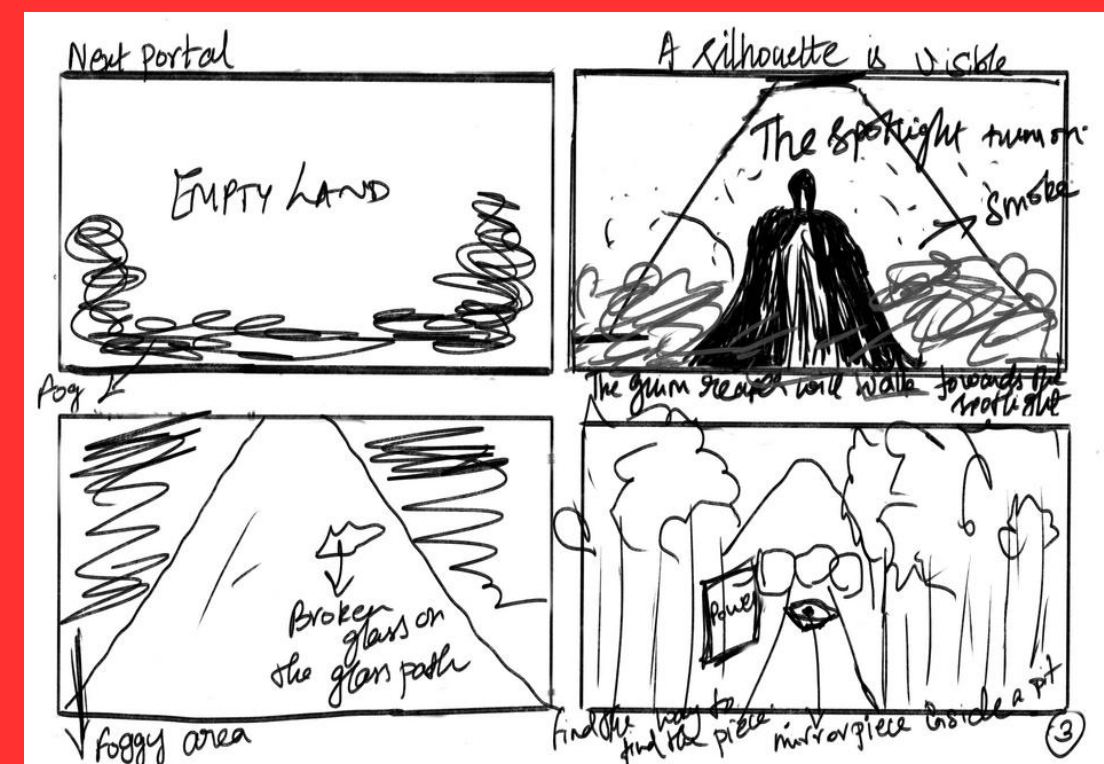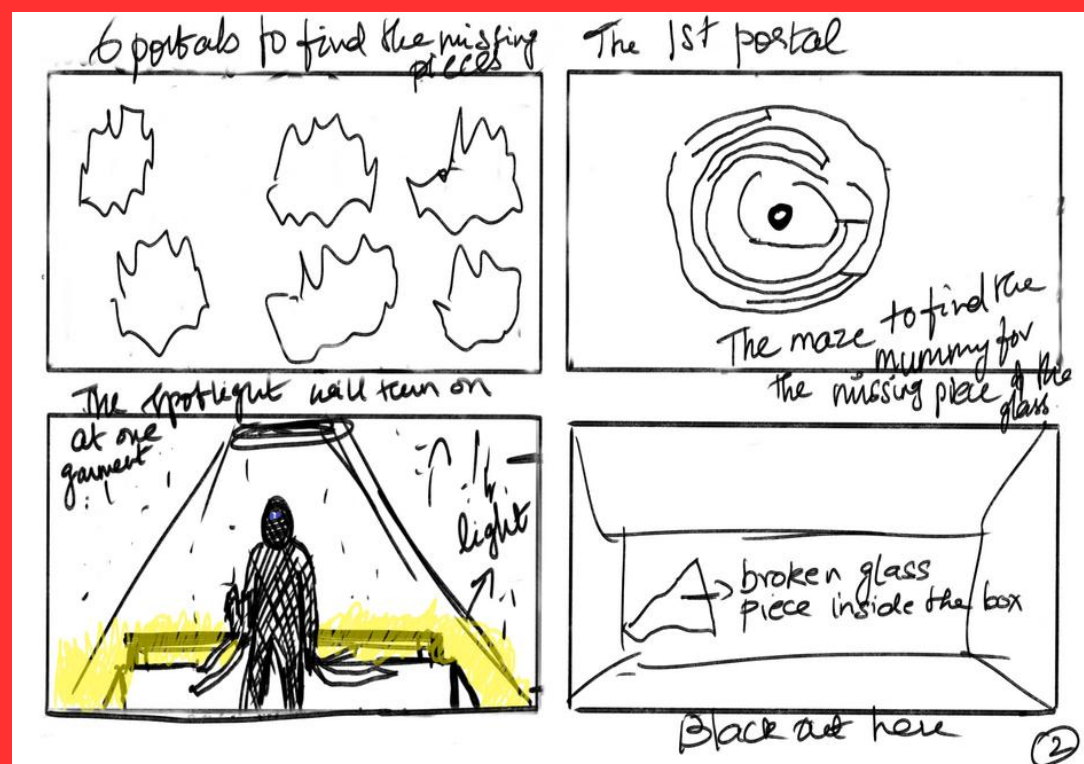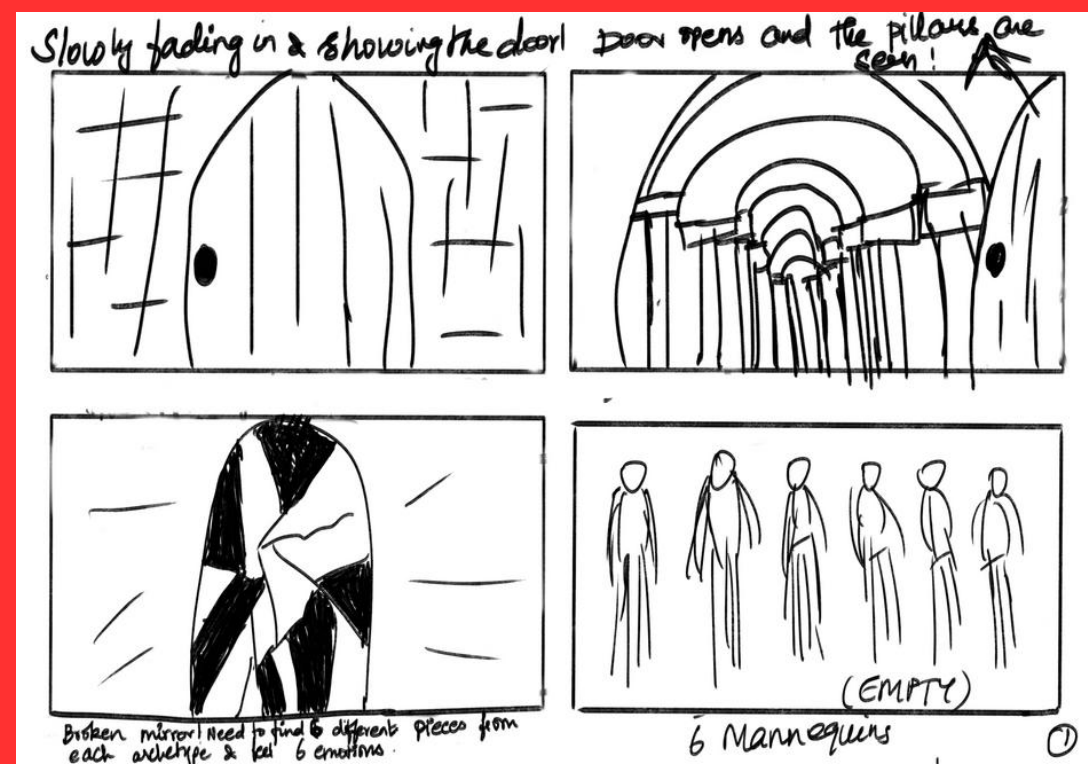
Gamplay Structure

MAIN HUB: The Mirror Mansion
The play starts with the mansion which has a broken mirror where the six pieces will be missing. The player has to go through the 6 levels and have an interactive narration.
This mirror holds the player's reflection and the identity—but it's been shattered by emotional fragmentation. The player's goal is to collect the six missing mirror pieces hidden across emotional realms, each guarded by a symbolic archetype in the different levels through different portals.

LEVEL DESIGN:
Each portal leads to a unique level designed around a specific character, emotion and visual theme. As the player explore, solve puzzles or interact with symbolic fashion relics, the player will retrieve one mirror piece from each level.

MIRROR MECHANIC:

- Each realm holds a fashion-based emotional challenge.
- When solved, a mirror piece which was missing, is awarded.
- Upon returning to the mansion, the player place the piece into the broken mirror.
- As each piece is returned, the corresponding portal closes, and the archetype character appears in their place—silent, present, symbolic.

FINAL SCENE: Self-Revelation:
After placing all six pieces, the mirror becomes whole again.
But what it shows isn't the player's old self.
It shows the player, reassembled—wearing a garment drawn from one of the archetypes, symbolising the player's internal journey.
The game doesn't force a choice. The garment that appears reflects how the player played, what realms the player is lingered in, what emotions the player carried the longest.
The screen fades to black.

Digital Progress

At first, the top garment was made with full sleeves attached and then the trousers were designed which was later stitched to the top garment to make the garment as one single piece. The hood was made separately to cover the whole face.

THE MUMMY
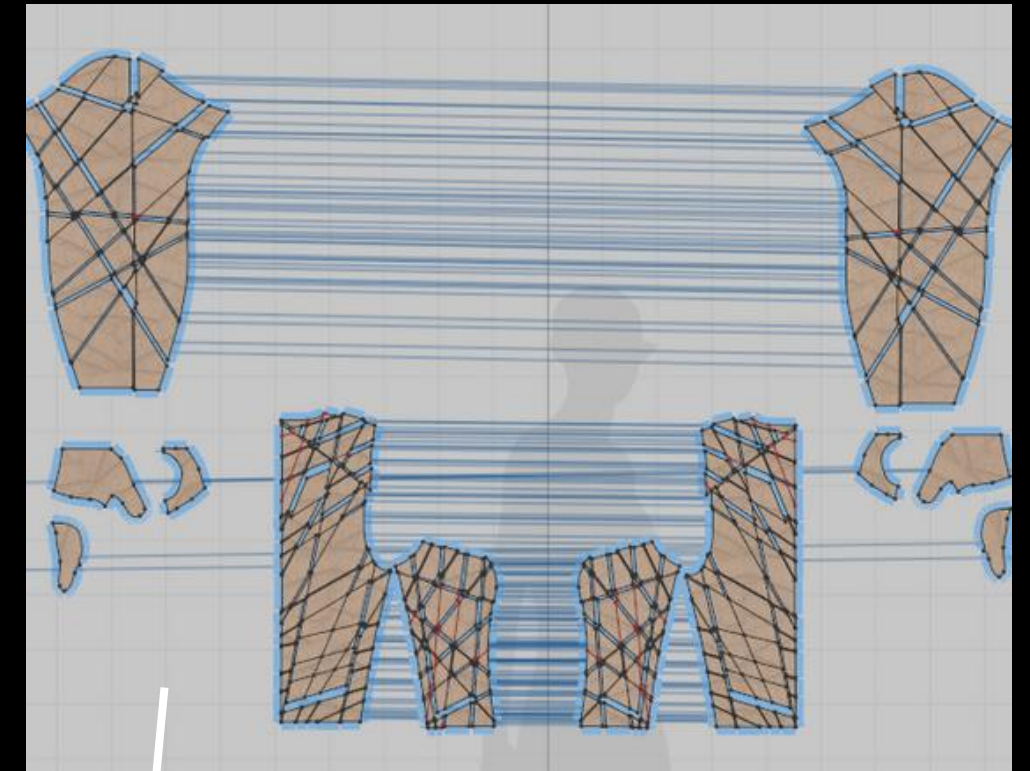
Fig 63: Garment pattern making and designing in clo3d by the author

The garment was fully created and then made them into pieces of fragments by adding internal lines and cutting them. These fragments were later sewed together.

Fig 64: Garment pattern making and designing in clo3d by the author

The garment for the mummy was fully made and added glasses to cover the eyes. It will be glowing by adding emission to it. There are few extra bandages left out tied at one end of the wrist and on the leg.

Digital Progress
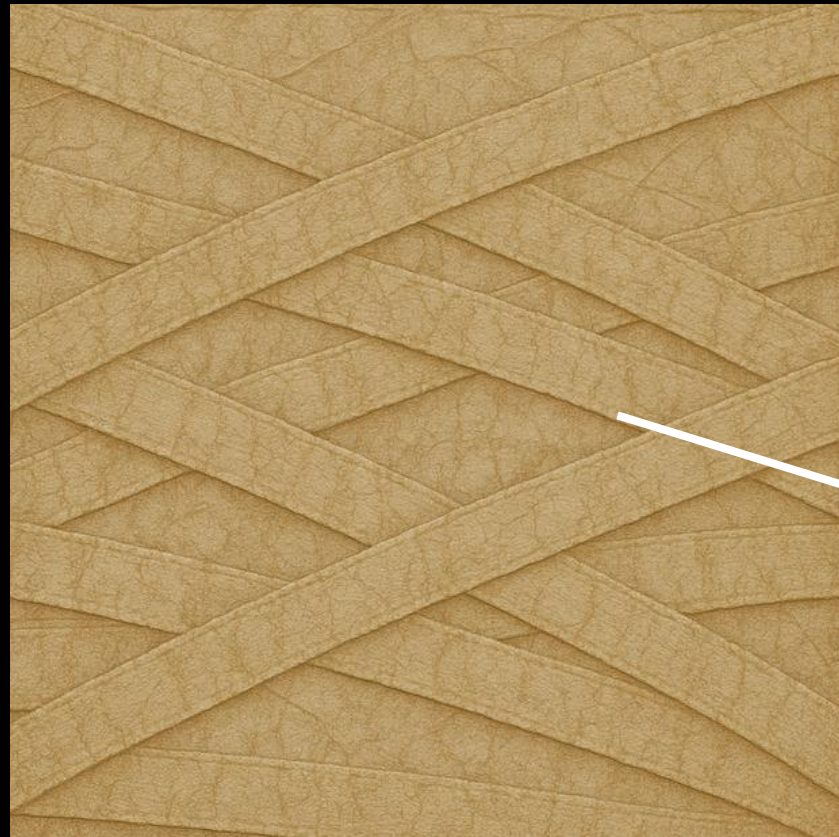
I have imported the garment in blender. I have created the 360 camera view and rendered it in blender.

The texture to the mummy garment was generated by prompting Chat Gpt AI. And later on, generated the normal map using this diffuse texture.
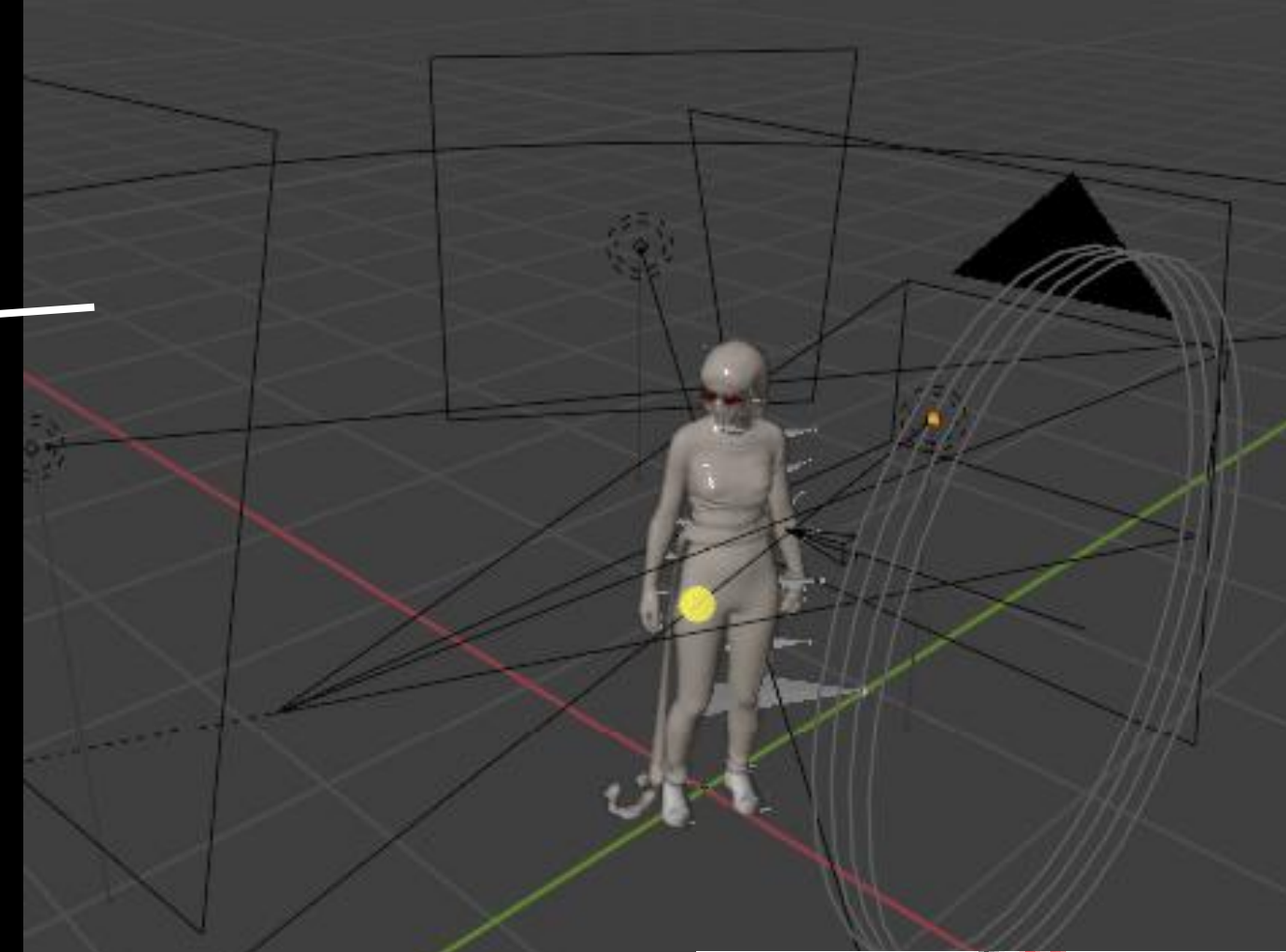
Fig 65: Garment 1 imported in blender

Fig 66: Texture created using AI
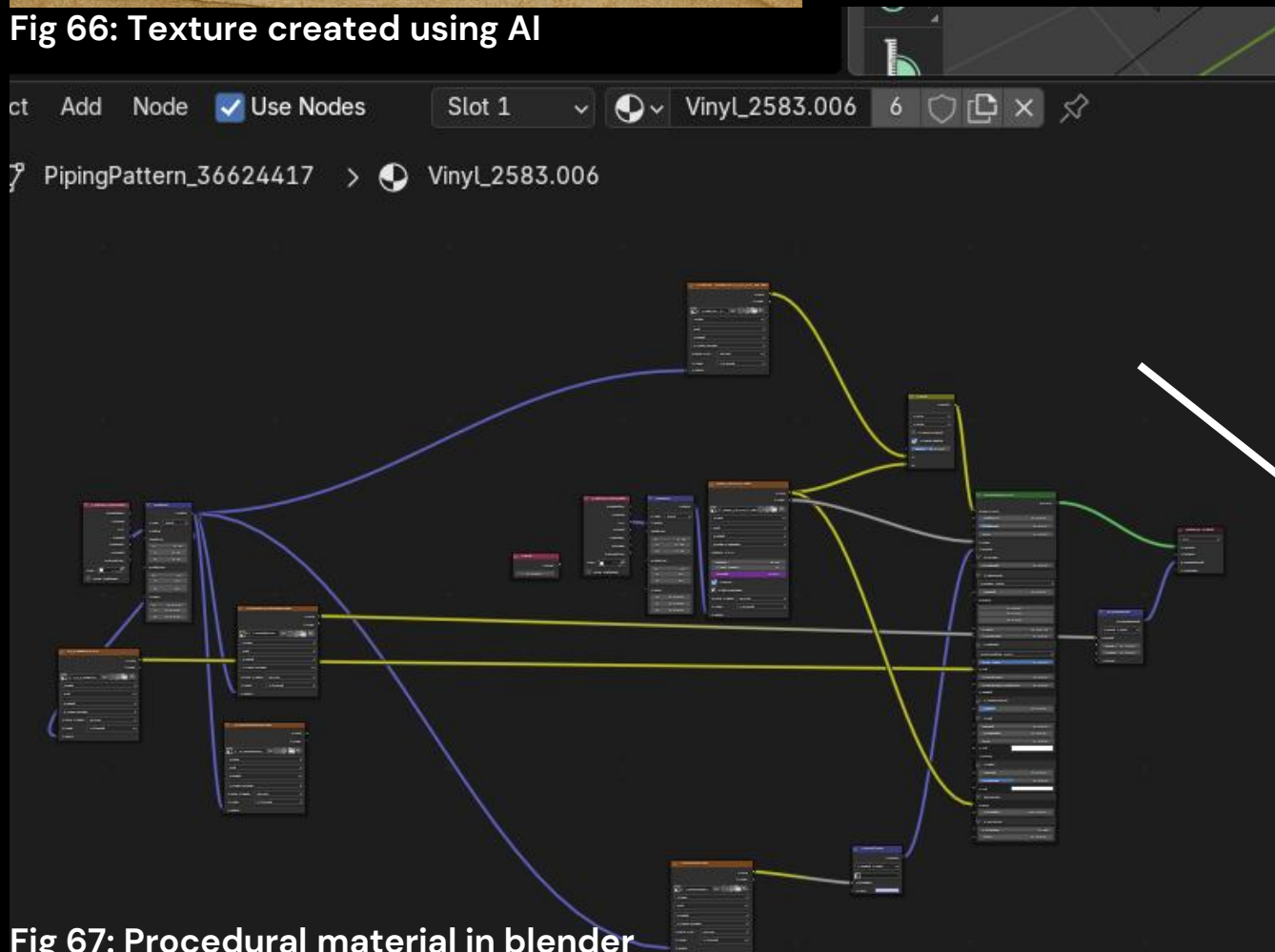
This is the modernized version of the hieroglyph language which got inspired from the traditional language of the mummies.
After creating this texture in photoshop. I have later improvized this texture using AI which needs to be applied on the excess bandage.

This is the procedural material that I have created for the gament along with the pixel animation as image sequence which was imported from after effects.

Fig 67: Procedural material in blender
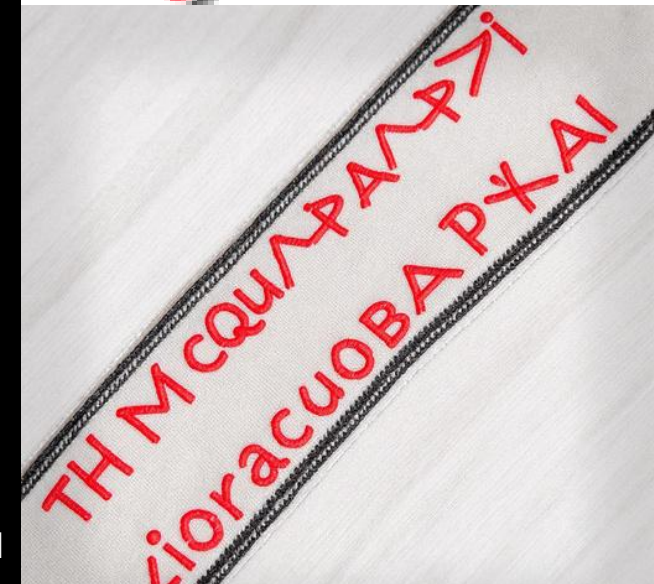
Fig 68: Hieroglyph texture created using AI

Digital Progress
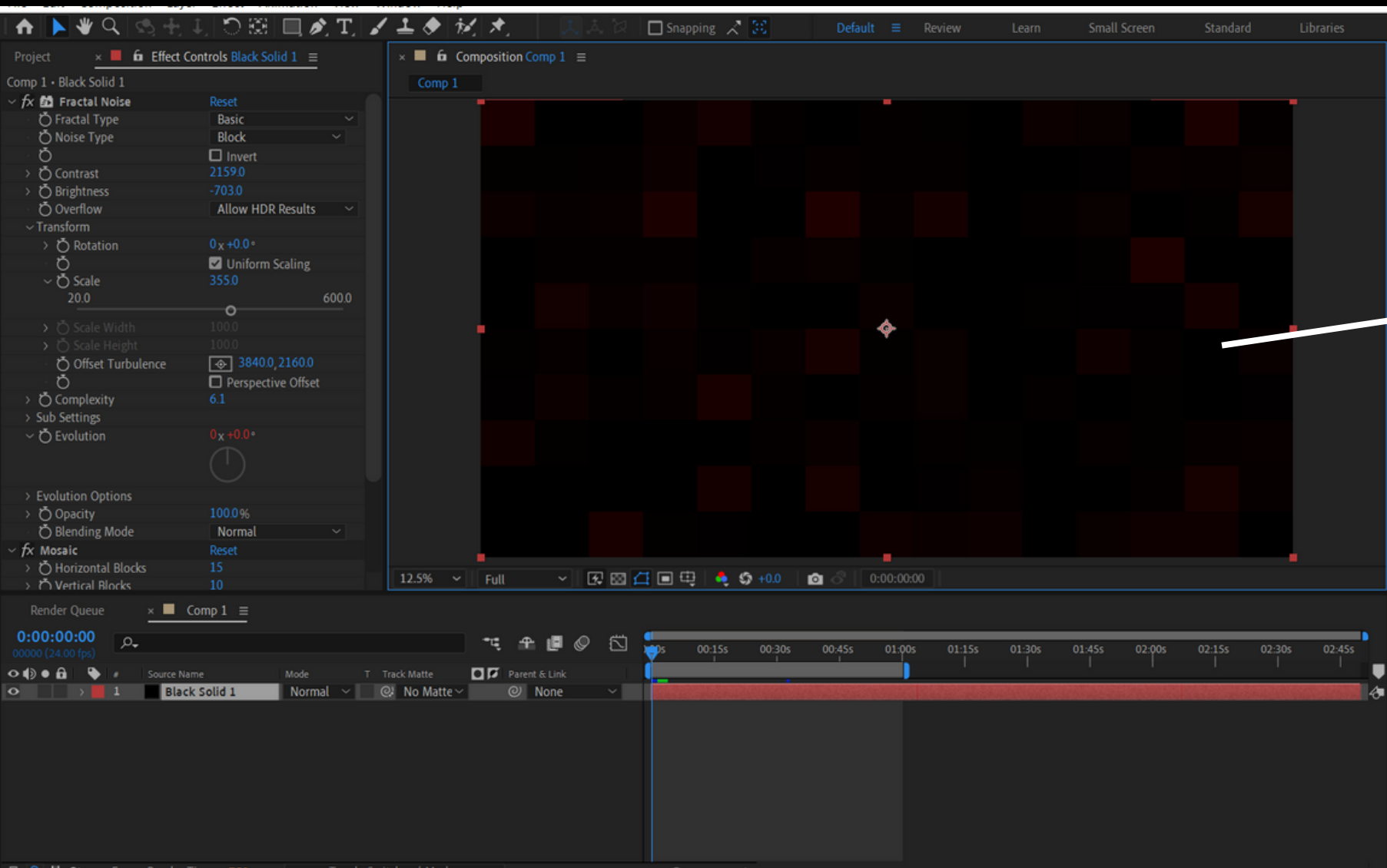
This is the pixelated texture animation which was created using adobe after effects. After creating this texture, this was later rendered as image sequence so that it will be imported in blender as image sequence which will be applied to the garment. This will be overlayed on top of the bandage texture which represents the prevention power in the digital spaces.

Initially, even after importing to unreal engine, I was facing the material issue. I applied the same animated texture. I tried to solve it.

Fig 69: Pixel animated texture in after effects

Digital Progress

This is the final look of the grim reaper garment in clo3d. This garment has a hood attached to the garment and this becomes a single piece garment. This also has a puffy fabric belt attached to the entire attire.

This is the pattern cutting for the entire garment with having proper UV so that the velvet material will be applied with an overlayed animated texture.

THE GRIM REAPER

Fig 71: Pattern cutting and garment designing in clo3d by the author
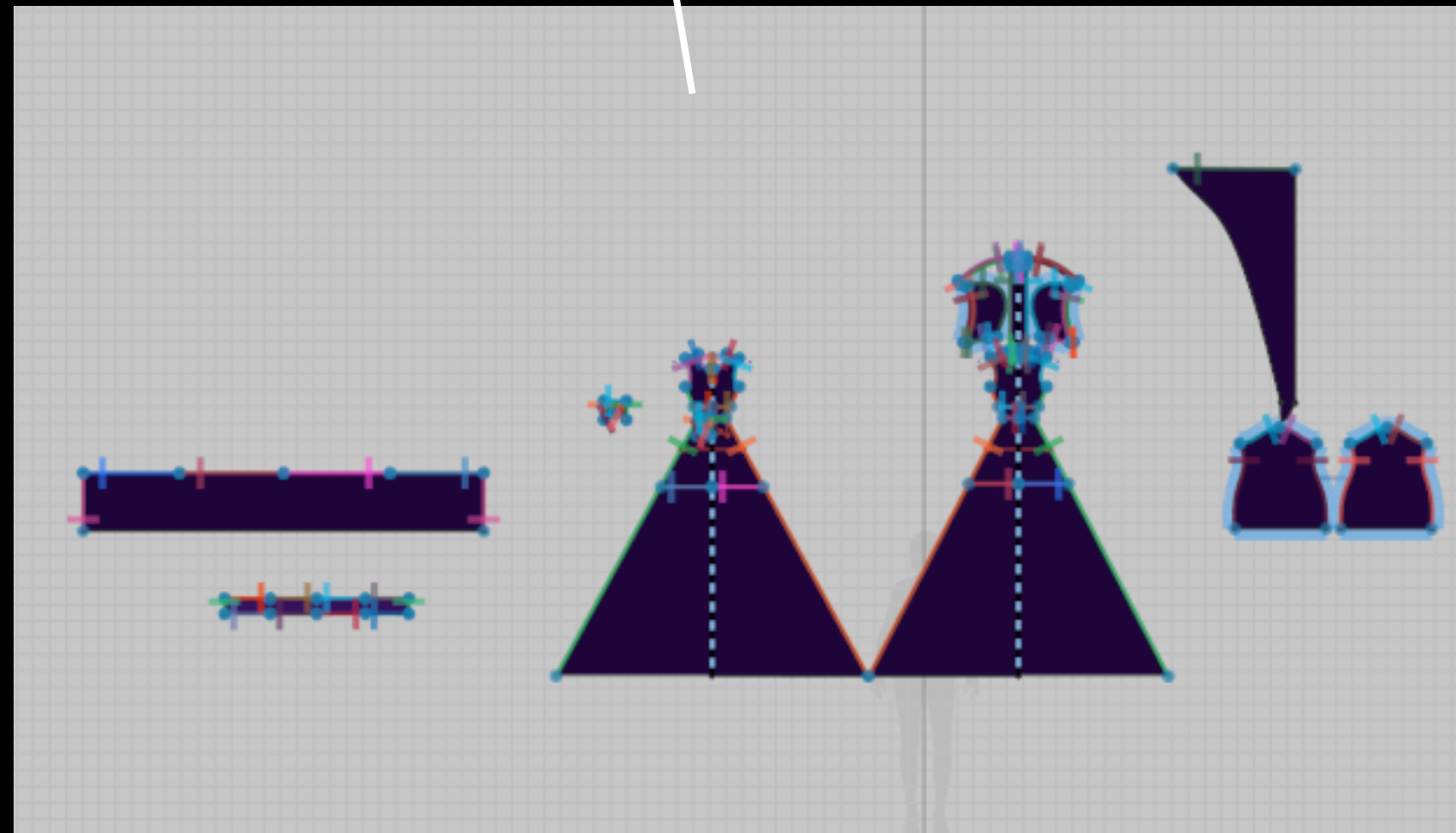
Digital Progress
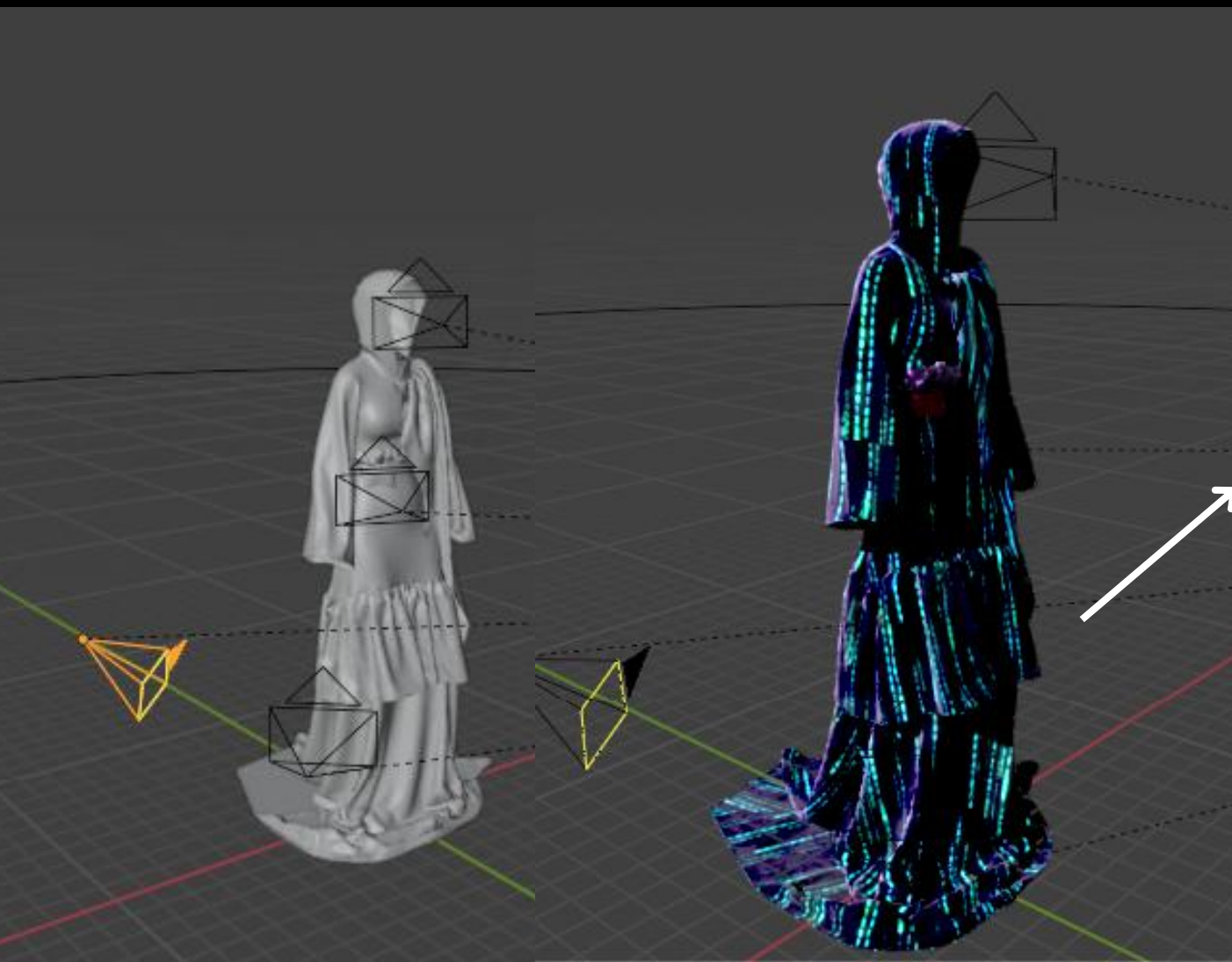
Fig 72: The garment imported in blender

This garment was later imported to blender to create a 360 look of it along with the camera animation.

Fig 73: The animated coding texture

This is the coding animation which will be overlayed on top of the velvet texture to represent the ghosting or erasure feel to the garment which was processing.

This is the procedural material created using blender to make the velvet texture. I have also used the animated coding image sequence texture to be overlayed on top of this velvet texture.
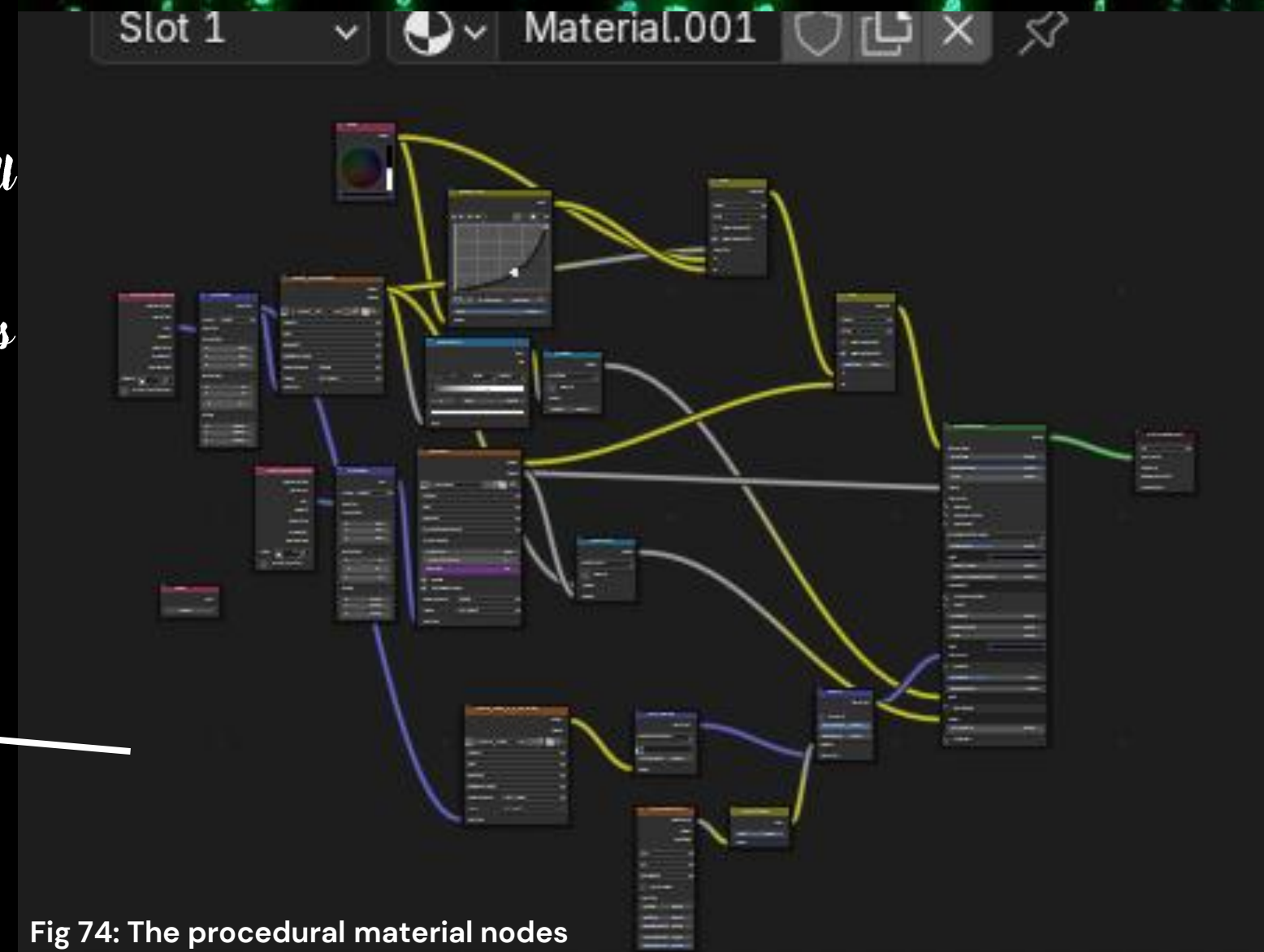
Fig 74: The procedural material nodes

Digital Progress

THE WITCH

This is the final look of the witch garment in clo3d. This garment has a a hat with two ears on it and a high neck sleeve-cloak. It is a structured bodice with a cut out top and high waist pant with detailing. This represents the resistance power which shows how you want to be seen in the digital space.

These are the patterns for the entire garment. This was slightly difficult to make as it is very challenging and the same time it has heavy mesh. This also has a modernized sigil inspired by the traditional sigil which was created using piping and topstitches which glows on the garment
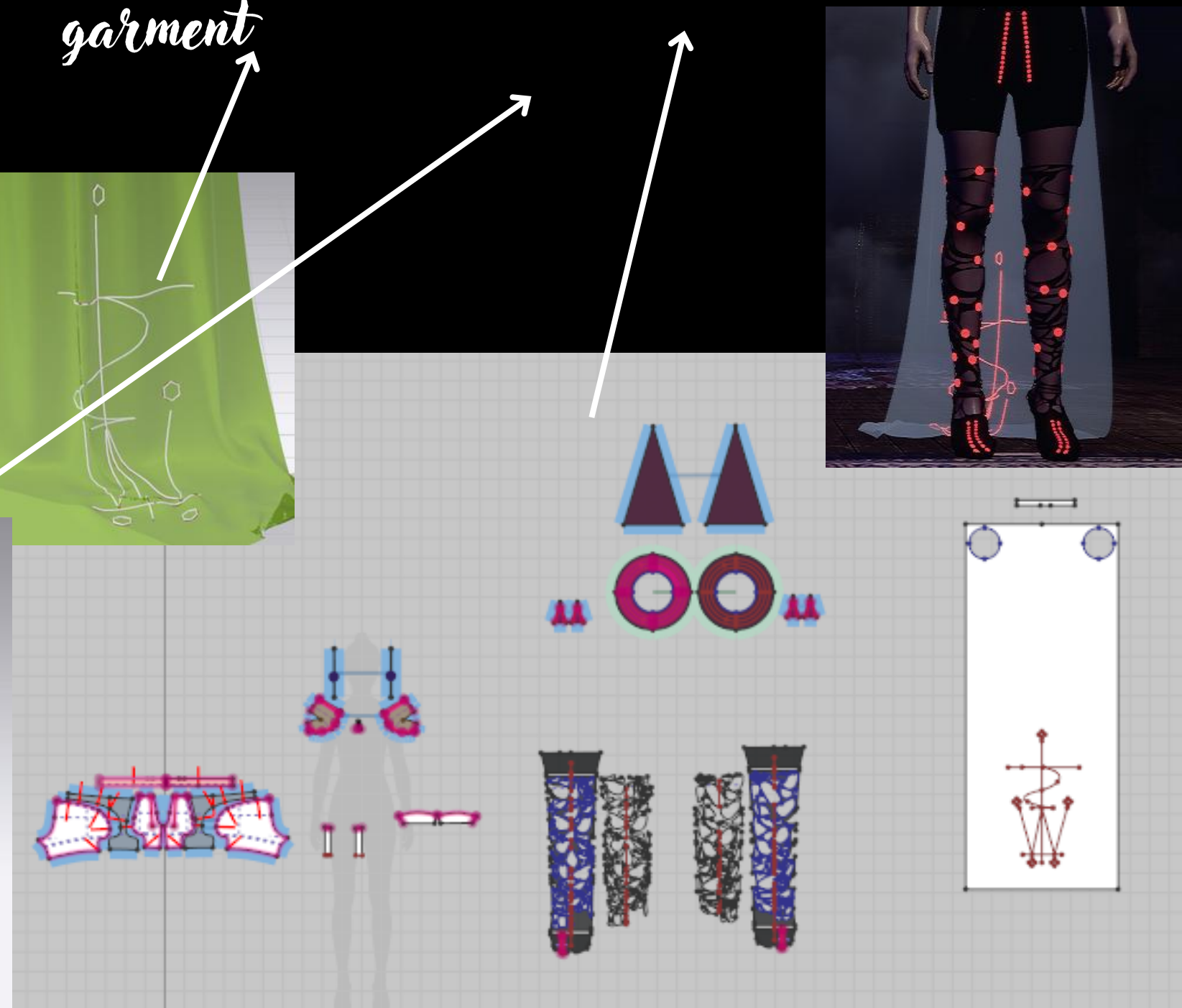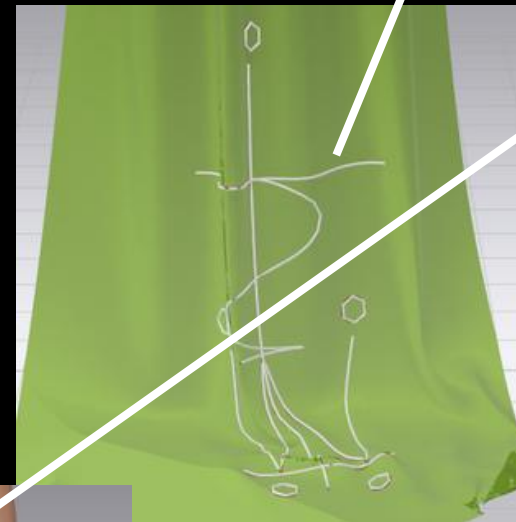
Fig 76: Pattern cutting and garment designing in clo3d by the author

Digital Progress

THE VAMPIRE

This is the final look of the vampire garment with structured shoulder armor top, split skirt over red latex pants and a corset with lace detailing. It has an infinite symbol on the top which glows and represents the eternal power.
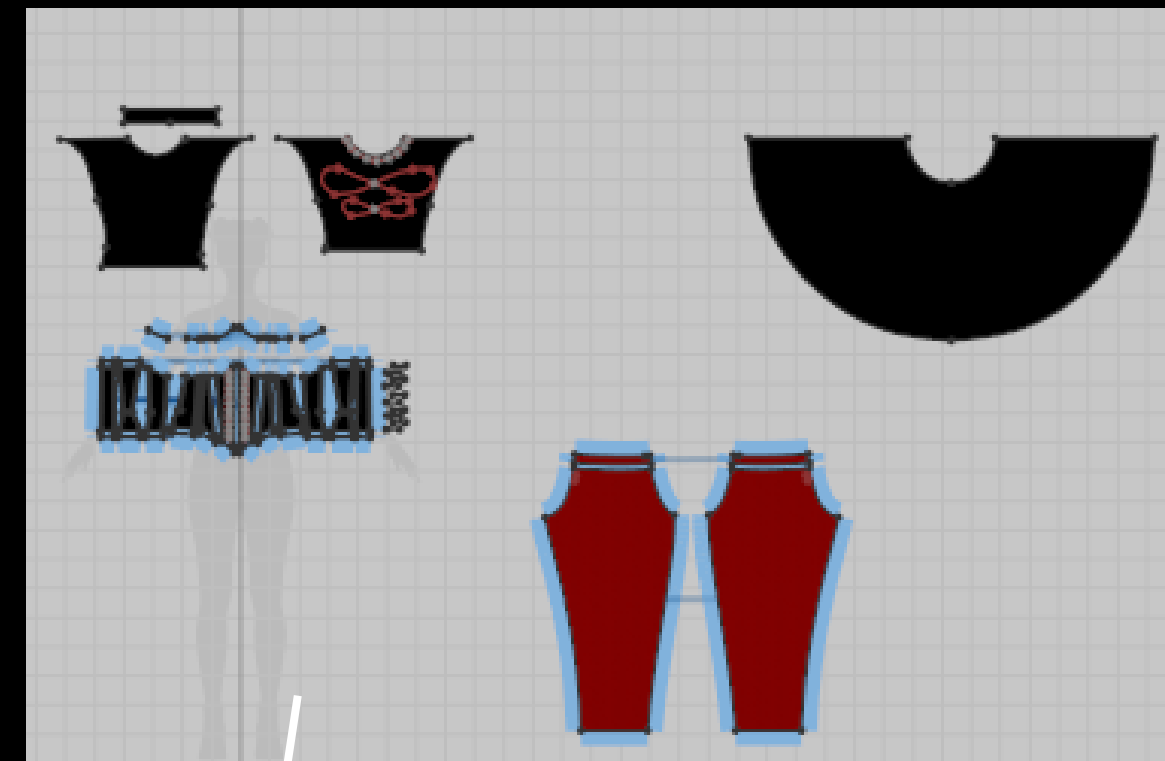
This is the detailing of the garment along with the pattern cutting and design. The infinite symbol has been created using the internal lines and did piping for the same.

Have done the face make up with veins as well. Imported the face texture map from the photoshop.

Fig 77: Pattern cutting and garment designing in clo3d by the author

Digital Progress

This is the final look of the plague doctor garment with a jacket on the outside and a t-shirt on the inside. This also has a cargos pants and has a mask on the face to protect his identity which was the power given to him.
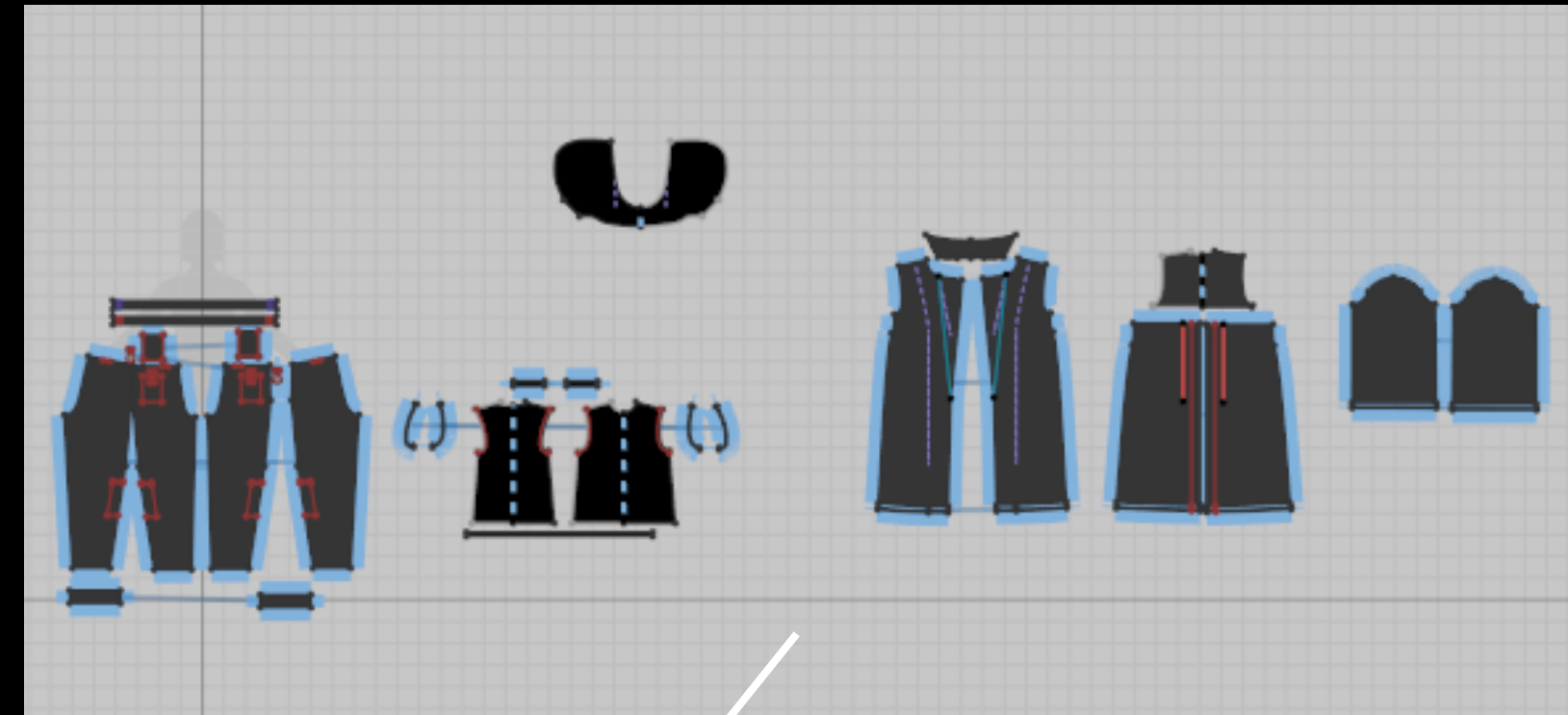
This is the detailing of the garment along with the pattern cutting and design. He also has a hood but is separated from the garment. This has 4 different pieces or layer of garment with black shoes on.

His mask has been created using blender by modelling and sculpting the mask. The material of the cloth will be in glossy sheen and the mask will emit.

THE PLAGUE DOCTOR

Fig 78: Pattern cutting and garment designing in clo3d by the author

Digital Progress

This is the final look of the banshee who is weaing a tube top stitched along with the bottom pants by making this to be one single garment. She also has a veil at the back of her. She has a pattern on her tube top created using internal lines and did piping for the same which glows.

The texture of the leg part of the garment should be reactive to the audio. Due to a lot of issues that I have faced, I was not able to make it reactive to the audio.

Fig 81

This is the pattern making and designing for the entire look of the garment. She has her power of her voice to grief and curing mental emotions digitally through music, internet, etc.

This is the closer view of the pattern on the top garment.

Fig 80

The face texture of Banshee was taken to the photoshop to do the makeup and the veins. The eyes are also red to make the emotion even more deeper as per the character.

Fig 79, 80 & 81: Pattern cutting and garment designing in clo3d by the author

THE BANSHEE

Digital Progress

Fig 82: Author's metahuman character

All the garments will have different audio narrative to make the player more connected to the game. So, whenever they are in the different environments and find the mirror pieces, there will be a background narrative.

Fig 83.2: Author's metahuman with the costume and reflection

I have faced a lot of problems in creating my own metahuman character to represent myself in the digital or the game world on what kind of emotion that I feel. Here the texture was not proper, or the hair is not generating, and so on. It has been playing around while rendering as well.

I tried my maximum to bring this look.
The face was sculpted a little bit and modified accordingly (Fig 83.1).

I have banshee's emotional characteristics, so I have applied the costume to my metahuman to represent myself by emotionally connecting and my reflection in the game environment.

I have controlled the rig of my metahuman character to create a pose.

Fig 83: Author's metahuman character issues in unreal engine

Fig 83.1: Author's 3d scanned face

Fig 83.3: Author's metahuman rig

Digital Progress

Fig 84: All the six costumes and the characters in one frame in unreal engine

This the environment design and the lighting for all the six costumes and the characters together as a collection. There were certain issues that I faced in this file as all the garments were in one file and was crashing most of the times. So somehow, I managed to optimize everything and tried to render my outcomes.

I have mentioned both the lit and the unlit image of the costumes and the characters. Eventually, all the 6 costumes will be visible together once the mirror pieces have been found out from each level.
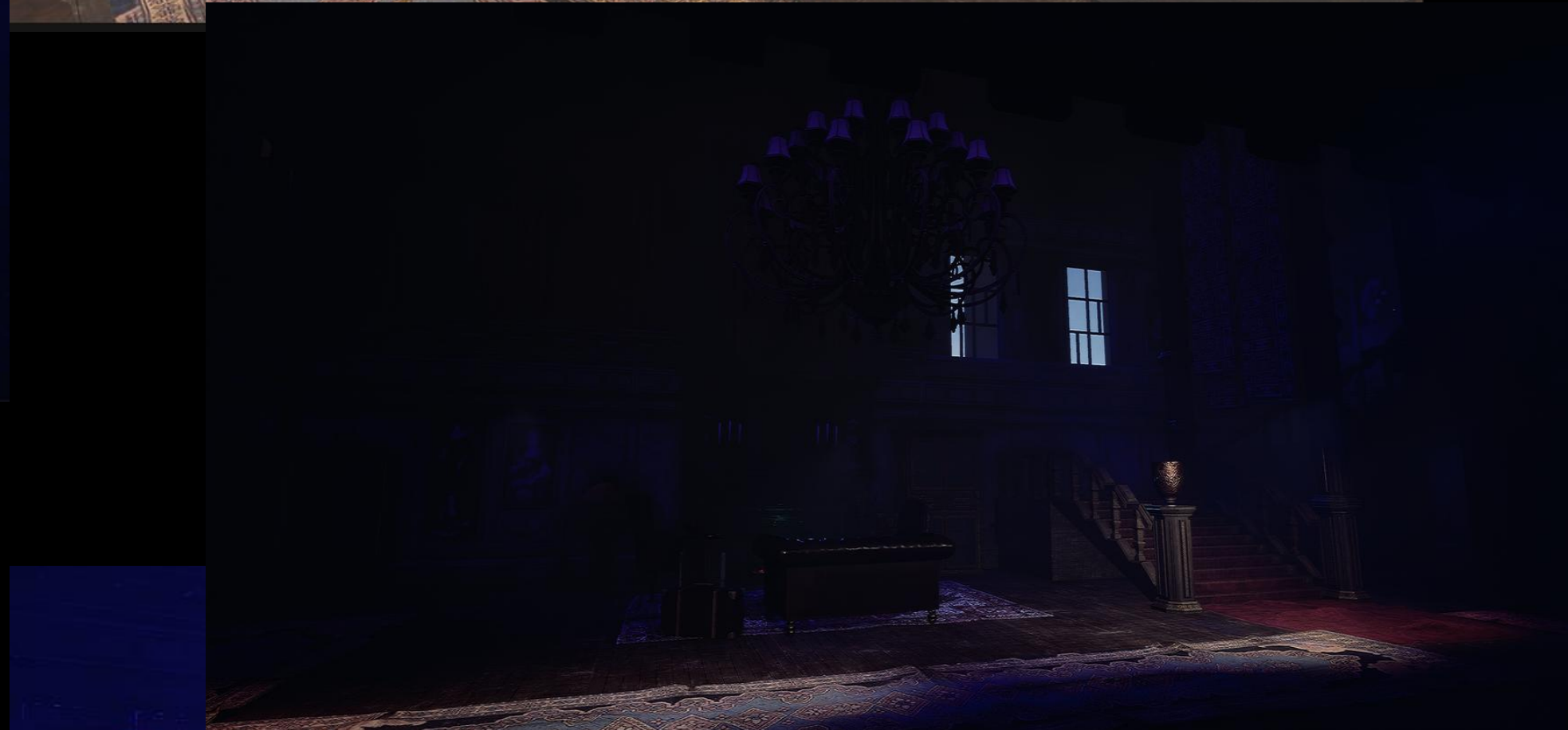
Digital Progress

This is the music interactive audio ball that the player has to find it surrounded by millions of floating balls where the final mirror piece will be found. The below ones will be the BLUEPRINT for this audio reactive ball.
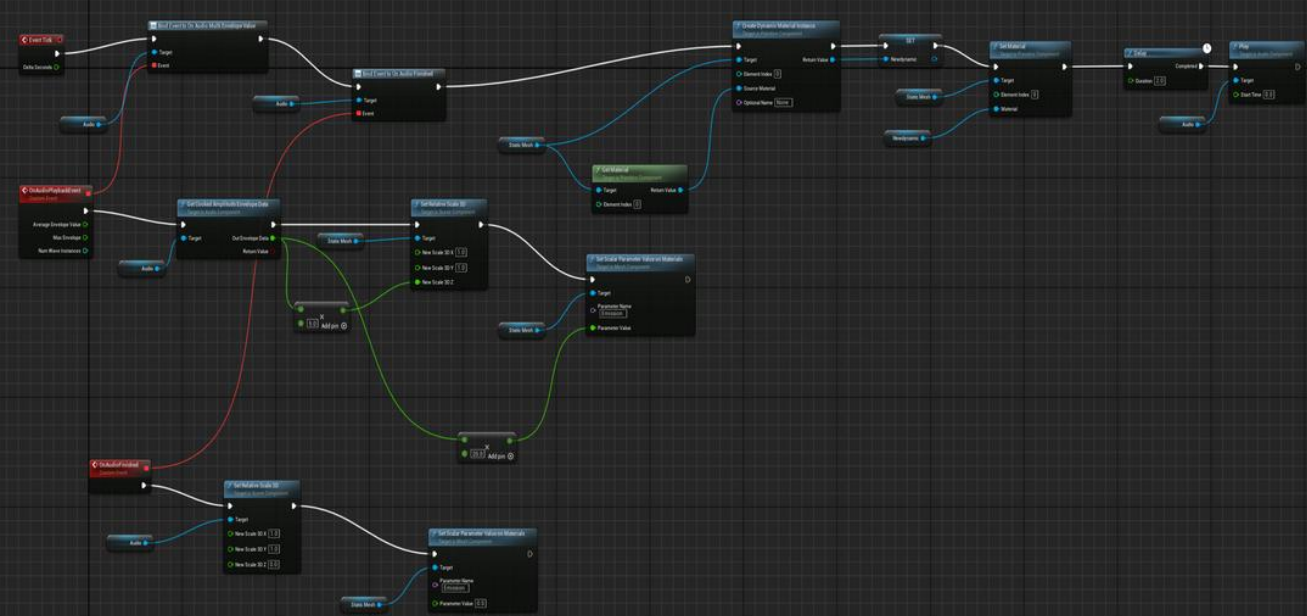
These are the environments for each and every garment on the characters. Once the mirror pieces have been found and placed on the empty spaces, the full mirror with reflection will be formed where the player can see themselves through the reflection by wearing the garment that they are emotionally connected to.

Fig 84: All the environments for six costumes and the characters in one frame in unreal engine

Digital Progress
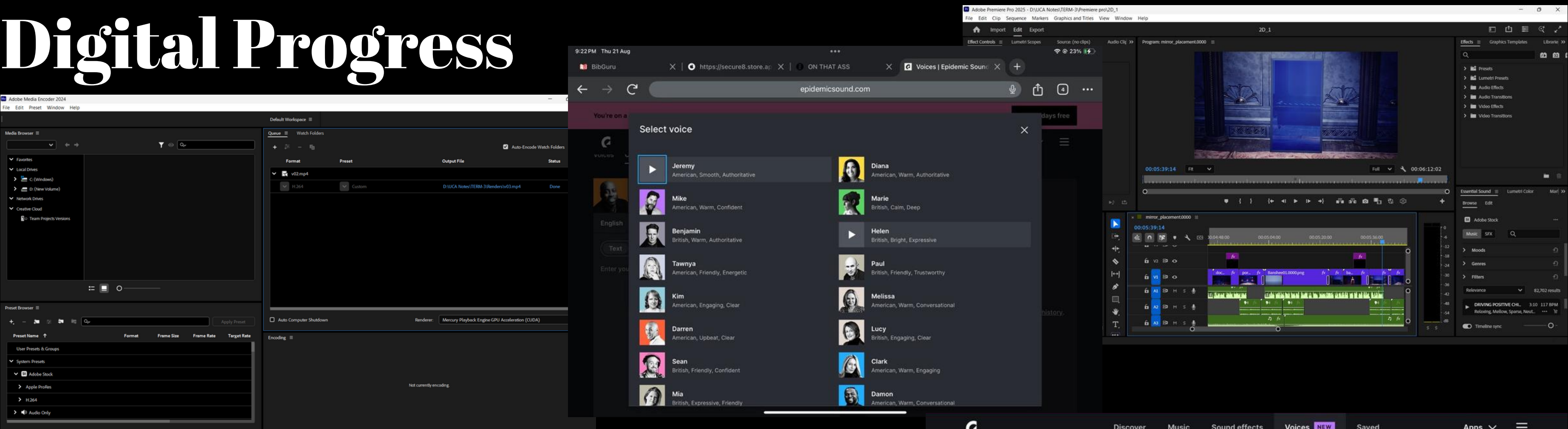
Fig 85: Images from the video editing software

I have used adobe media encoder and adobe premiere pro to edit my final video output for both 2D video render and 3D VR render. Also, I have added the background audio in collaborating with pixabay. I, mainly chose the spooky background audio from pixabay. The narration was by Epidemicsound AI, where I typed the words that my AI has to speak. There were options to try with the male or female voices. I have prompted for each and every narration for each character/garment.
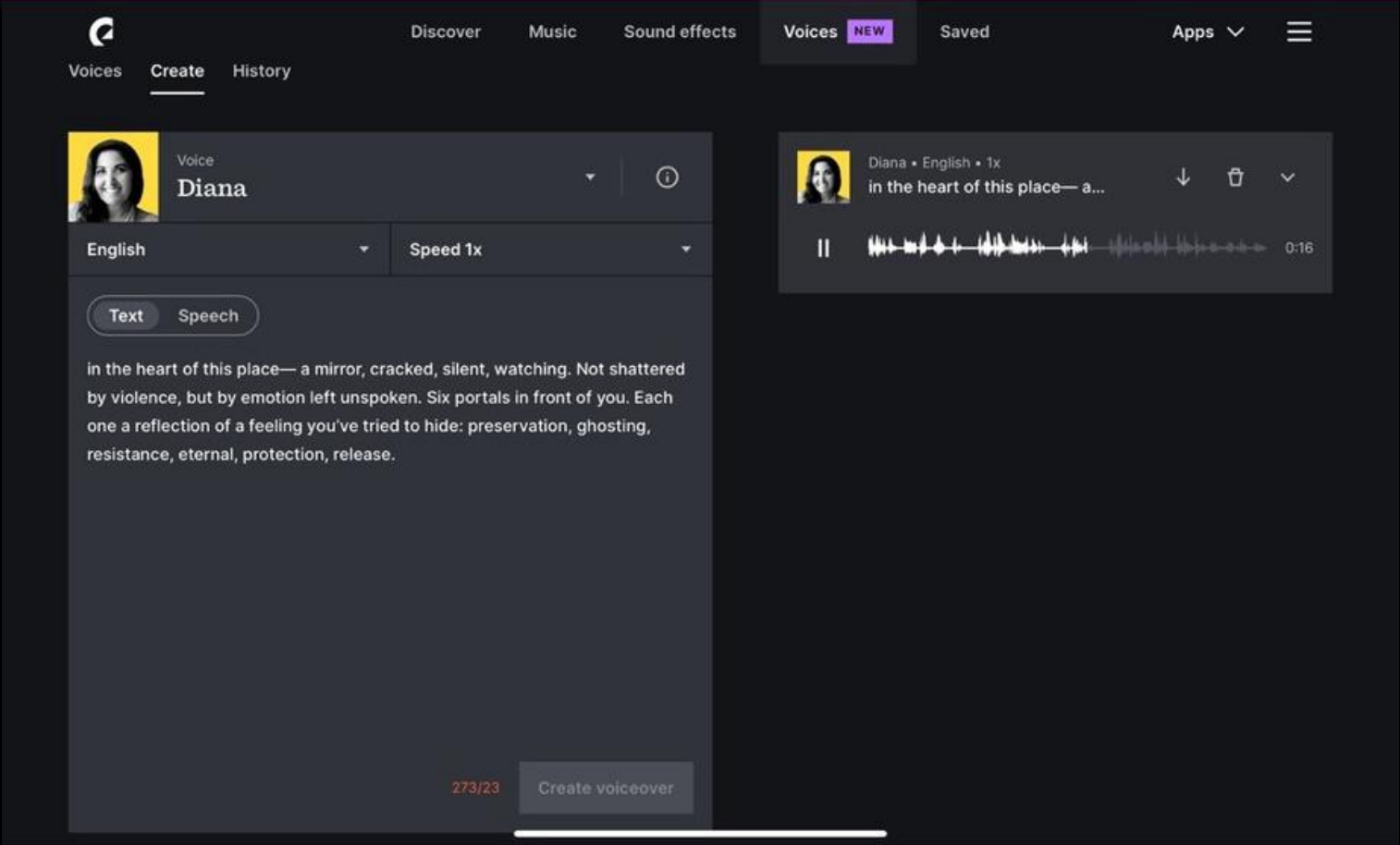
Critical Reflection: Digital Fashion, Identity and Emotion

Digital fashion has emerged as more than just a visual or commercial tool—it is now a critical medium of self-expression, emotional communication and subcultural engagement, especially for digitally native generations like Gen Z. Freed from physical constraints, digital garments offer expanded opportunities to explore fluid identity, mood-driven aesthetics, and symbolic storytelling.

In online environments where selfhood is constructed and performed across platforms, digital fashion functions as a kind of visual language—allowing users to experiment with personas, express psychological states, or resist normative ideals. As Clarke and Miller (2021) argue, digital clothing operates as "affective skins", enabling wearers to externalise internal moods, traumas or desires through symbolic aesthetics. These garments are not passive visuals, but emotional interfaces that communicate what might otherwise remain unsaid.

Moreover, digital fashion allows space for alternative aesthetics—particularly those overlooked or marginalised in mainstream fashion. Goth subculture thrives in virtual environments, where users are empowered to curate highly symbolic, mood-based visuals. These styles often resist capitalist polish and gender conformity and instead embrace ambiguity, ritual, surrealism and emotional intensity. As Roberts, Livingstone and Baxter-Wright (2012) explain in their work on goth subculture, dark aesthetics provide not only rebellion, but "a language for expressing internal contradiction and cultural dissonance." In digital spaces, these aesthetics can be reimagined with greater freedom and complexity.

Digital garments are also increasingly interactive and immersive, especially when integrated into virtual worlds. They can be programmed to change in response to sound, mood input or user interaction—turning fashion into an experiential medium rather than a fixed visual object. This opens up new design possibilities where fashion is not just worn—it reacts, protects or communicates symbolically, echoing the psychological states of the user.

Yet, this expressive potential is not without tension. Much of the commercial digital fashion industry still prioritises futuristic minimalism. Projects like Anatomy of Silent Romance challenge this by positioning garments as emotional avatars and narrative artefacts, grounded in psychological and subcultural depth rather than surface-level innovation.

In conclusion, digital fashion in virtual spaces has the capacity to reshape how we express identity and emotion—not just through appearance, but through interaction, symbolism and narrative. It allows for experimentation with alternative aesthetics and offers new models for emotional storytelling, particularly for users seeking to visualise internal states or reclaim marginalised visual languages. As digital spaces evolve, so too must our understanding of fashion—not just as a product, but as a symbolic and affective system.

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Thank You

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