

MUKYDL

2021



MJKVDL 2021  
Mark Jan Krayenhoff van de Leur  
Rick Pushinsky



Right to left  
Mark Jan Krayenhoff van de Leur and his husband AA Bronson

In a tall-ceilinged dining room in an airy apartment in Berlin, there is a rail hung with multicoloured shirts—each similar in shape, yet curiously different from the others. Waves of green and white grace one, followed by a flash of zig-zagging red, followed by another dotted with lime green threads. What every one of these vibrant sleeves has in common is that it is punctuated by an impeccably cut cuff, making its final statement like an exclamation point.

The designer stands in front of the rack, gently removing the shirts from their hangers and modelling them one by one. When the fabrics are draped over his body and set against his dramatic white beard, their wonders are instantly revealed. Inspecting a shirt made out of a patchwork of striped blue rectangles, my eyes dart to try to make sense of the irregular patterns, but never quite find respite. New worlds seem to emerge out of the broken patterns. I learn that the shirt has been constructed by sewing together nearly 100 different rectangles, which are then wrapped to form a whole—that is, rather than front and back panels sewn together with a side seam, which is how a shirt is traditionally constructed.

“A sense of wonder is important to me—I want people to stay in that moment of perceiving, of being open, and not judging,” says the shirts’ designer, and model, Mark Jan Krayenhoff van de Leur. To prolong that moment of optical suspense, the designer rarely allows patterns to repeat in his work. “Once you ‘get’ an idea, you’re no longer perceiving or experiencing it anymore,” he explains. Mark is self-taught in all things sewing; originally from Canada, he only began creating his conceptual couture after emigrating to the German capital in 2013. Before that, Mark and his husband—the artist AA Bronson—had been living together in New York City for many years, and Mark practised his long-term profession of architecture, trained in the 70s following the modernist dictum of “form follows function”. In Manhattan, he worked primarily on apartment renovations (Lou Reed referred to him as the “Markitect” after he’d finished the musician’s office). And while AA was director of the legendary artists’ bookstore Printed Matter, Mark designed the interior, including its fluid, shapeshifting shop counter—a steel, plexiglass, and bright orange construction of sharp lines and organic edges. Like the patchwork shirt, no part of its neon surface repeats itself, continually drawing the eye across its complexity. And also like the shirt, it lays bare its own construction process—reflecting a modernist ethos while twisting it into the personal and idiosyncratic.

Highly systematic and rule-driven, Mark’s practise as a clothing designer is inextricably bound to his training as an architect. His shirt patterns first take shape through AutoCAD—the architecture software he’s been using for over twenty years. Manipulating line and volume as

if he were constructing an interior, his philosophy also stems from a kind of architectural thinking: from a drive for the tectonic, for organic wholeness, and for total formal integration. “Being an architect was a good job for me, it was a pretty good fit. And really, the only downside to it was that, for the most part, you’re working for clients and you have to suit their taste, and most of my clients have more conservative tastes than I do,” he says. Shifting his vision to cotton, buttons, threads, leather, wool and ties opened up new possibilities of unrestricted, pattern-seeking play.

Growing up with a love for fashion, Mark always had a vague sense he’d perhaps one day make clothes—it wasn’t until his husband’s year-long Berlin residency, and Mark’s own corresponding break from work, that he found the space to try his hand. Unexpectedly, both the relocation and the medium change became enduring ones. “I didn’t know whether the shirts would lead anywhere, but here I am, six years later,” says Mark in his dining room of intricate wooden furniture where his garments are currently displayed. Years of idle musing—looking at clothes and imagining them as something else—and a critical examination of his own wardrobe became initial points of departure, and it wasn’t long before his architectural intuition located a structural problem. “If you look at a normal shirt pattern, the pieces relate to each other functionally but there is no aesthetic or formal relationship between them—between a sleeve and a body panel, for instance,” says Mark. Learning through looking, then learning by doing, all the while aided by YouTube tutorials as well as one “very simple” sewing machine, he made this discrepancy a central concern and engine of his experimentation.

Each of Mark’s garments begins with one core concept, although the outcomes are anything but simple. In his dining room, he models a forest green shirt speckled with orange threads that seem to glow from the deep fabric like constellations—this design was driven by a guiding question: How do you make a shirt’s body from one piece? The body is indeed one rectangle of fabric, as are the two sleeves: to produce the garment’s shape, Mark scrunched the material into wrinkles, and then sewed those wrinkles into place with the orange thread. “You can see, if you start here, it’s just one piece. And also, the body is one piece. There’s no side seams,” he says as he turns to show me. He holds up his arm: while a normal sleeve is tapered from the shoulder to the wrist, here the sleeve is a cylinder of the same width all the way down to his hand—but it’s been scrunched to create the cone shape, with the wrinkles dramatized by the fluorescent thread, literally highlighting the making process itself. One simple idea, but a complex, visually distinctive outcome.

“My ideas are maybe not the most practical, but they are really a different way of solving the problem,” says Mark, referring to his often puzzling and lengthy processes of construction. He credits the mediums,

Opposite  
Shirt 28A

“If you look at a normal shirt pattern, the pieces relate to each other functionally but there is no aesthetic or formal relationship between them—between a sleeve and a body panel, for instance,” says Mark. Learning through looking, then learning by doing, all the while aided by YouTube tutorials as well as one “very simple” sewing machine, he made this discrepancy a central concern and engine of his experimentation.



if he were constructing an interior, his philosophy of architectural thinking: from a drive for the tectonic and for total formal integration. “Being an architect it was a pretty good fit. And really, the only downside is that most part, you’re working for clients and you have to please them. Of my clients have more conservative tastes than I do. I have a vision to cotton, buttons, threads, leather, wool and the possibilities of unrestricted, pattern-seeking play.

Growing up with a love for fashion, Mark always wanted to perhaps one day make clothes—it wasn’t until his husband’s residency, and Mark’s own corresponding break from architecture, the space to try his hand. Unexpectedly, both the restraints and changes became enduring ones. “I didn’t know what I was going to lead anywhere, but here I am, six years later,” says Mark. He works on intricate wooden furniture where his garments are made. Years of idle musing—looking at clothes and imagining what he could do else—and a critical examination of his own wardrobe led to a sense of departure, and it wasn’t long before his architectural approach to structural problem. “If you look at a normal shirt pattern, the pieces fit to each other functionally but there is no aesthetic connection between them—between a sleeve and a body panel, for example. Learning through looking, then learning by doing, Mark studied YouTube tutorials as well as one “very simple” sewing tutorial. This discrepancy a central concern and engine of his work.

Each of Mark’s garments begins with one core idea. The final outcomes are anything but simple. In his dining room, he wears a green shirt speckled with orange threads that seem to be made of fabric like constellations—this design was driven by a question: How do you make a shirt’s body from one piece? The answer: a rectangle of fabric, as are the two sleeves: to produce a single piece. Mark scrunched the material into wrinkles, and the orange thread into place with the orange thread. “You can see, if you look at it, it’s one piece. And also, the body is one piece. There’s no seam. As he turns to show me. He holds up his arm: while the sleeve is tapered from the shoulder to the wrist, here the sleeve is the same width all the way down to his hand—but it’s made of one piece. To create the cone shape, with the wrinkles dramatize the process, the thread, literally highlighting the making process it’s a complex, visually distinctive outcome.

“My ideas are maybe not the most practical, but they’re a different way of solving the problem,” says Mark, reflecting on the puzzling and lengthy processes of construction. He

← colored fabric sewn together like patchwork



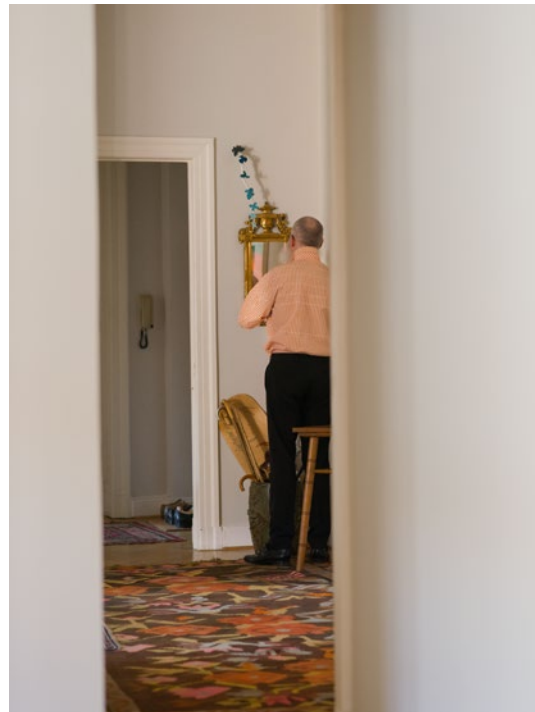


Left to right  
Shirt 39  
Knit 4





Shirt 15G



minds, and material manipulation of Japanese pioneers Comme des Garçons, Yohji Yamamoto, and Issey Miyake for shaping his approach, one committed to the straightforward idea that garments take their forms through flat pieces of cloth. This particular formal sensibility also encouraged Mark to design jackets, t-shirts, vests, and knitwear, adapting to their distinct shapes and challenges. He holds one jersey tee to the light, which features a bold array of red hand stitching. It's been made from one continuous and elegant spiral of fabric, energetically sewn together using one emphatic thread. He then holds up a tank top made of a patchwork of Etsy crochet finds—there's square motifs, doilies, hand sewn bookmarks, and a few 1:12 dollhouse blankets—carefully assembled to take a vest form. Seen in this arrangement, the most mundane and often culturally trivialised craft medium suddenly takes on newfound beauty. Next, he models a green, blue, and white dotted coat; the concept for this one was to construct its shape lengthwise from vertical slices of alternating stripes. All of this highlights a particular strength of Mark's: to rethink the most fundamental things, be it a doily or the basic cut and shape of a garment, and to turn them entirely on their heads, always without the result appearing too studied. "Whenever I hear, 'It's always been done this way, or has to be done this way,' I know it's fertile territory," he says. "Why does it have to be done that way?"

This open questioning of norms, commitment to materials, and holistic thinking combines to form Mark's singular queering of modernism, at once true to its egalitarian mission and resistant to prescriptive codification. Like the architectural giants he studied years ago, the decorative quality of his design emerges out of a deeply systematic approach, rather than something applied on the surface. Patterns and abstract forms offer a kind of freedom to experiment and for Mark, it's important that nothing is hidden—hence the bold threads to highlight seams, or the vibrant patterns that emphasise the shapes underlying a garment's construction. It's a motivation that he sees connected to "being a gay man, being queer, and so wanting to let everything be what it is and be the best of what it is naturally." Making, stitching, constructing, designing, wearing—these acts have the power to make fashion an intensely personal undertaking, one that goes far beyond trends and labels into something more meaningful, serious, and self-defining, an endless variation of a theme. For Mark, coming to terms with his own identity was a challenging process, involving a difficult youth of repressed feelings and a long path to self-acceptance. And now, years later, he still finds an expression of this process deeply informing his making. "It's where the whole drive towards wholeness and integration comes from, too. It's from not feeling whole," he says, wearing his lavender and poppy-red striped shirt. Constructed by delicately sewing together and overlaying stripes of the two fabrics, the design is unique, formally complete,

and entirely perfect: beautiful because of its form, a form that queers the norms of construction, and which looks the way it does by keeping true to itself and its guiding principle.

The dining room of Mark's apartment leads, in a wonderfully open, wrap-around style, to his and AA's studio. On one huge surface stand stacks of books, and, in Mark's section of the room, a table overflows with fabric samples, chunky knitwear, bright threads, and tangles of wool. It's a room brimming with ideas from every direction, and one flooded with light. It's easy to imagine the designer working here, structuring his thought patterns, though he tells me that it's actually in the early hours of the morning and during the hush of night—in nightgown and slippers—that he finds his ideas take their shape. As he gets older, Mark sleeps less, yet finds new use for this liminal time. "Your brain is in a different frame of mind, and all my great ideas come then," he says. "I solve so many problems and I design so many things in that dreamy, half-awake state."







Shirt 15G





Previous page  
Shirt 15A

Left to right  
Shirt 39  
Shirt 3A





Knit 6





Shirt 23

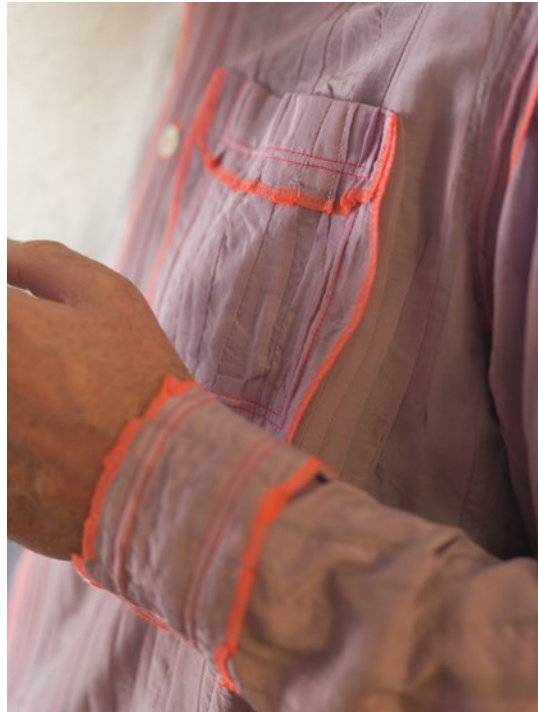




Shirt 23



Shirt 39

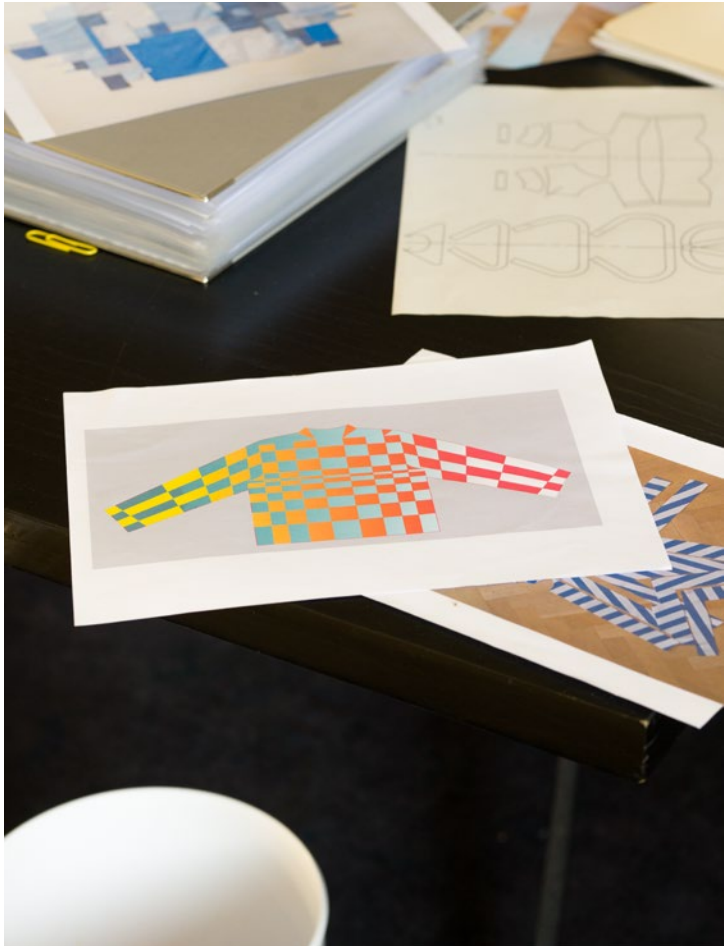




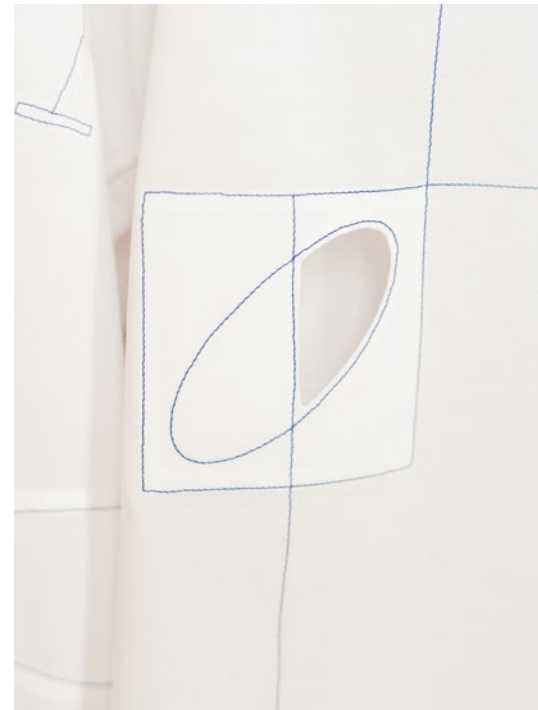
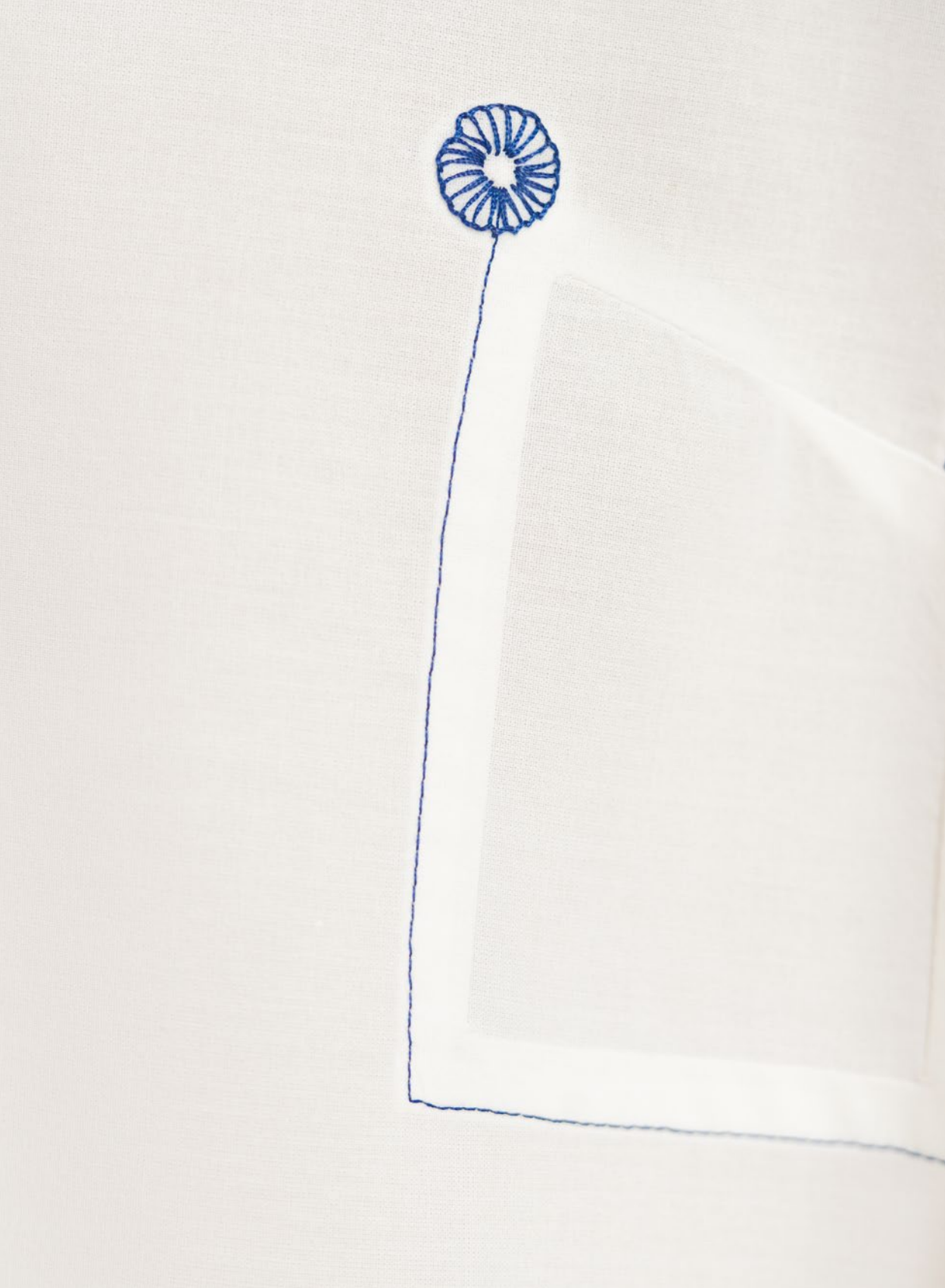
Jacket 3







Jacket 3



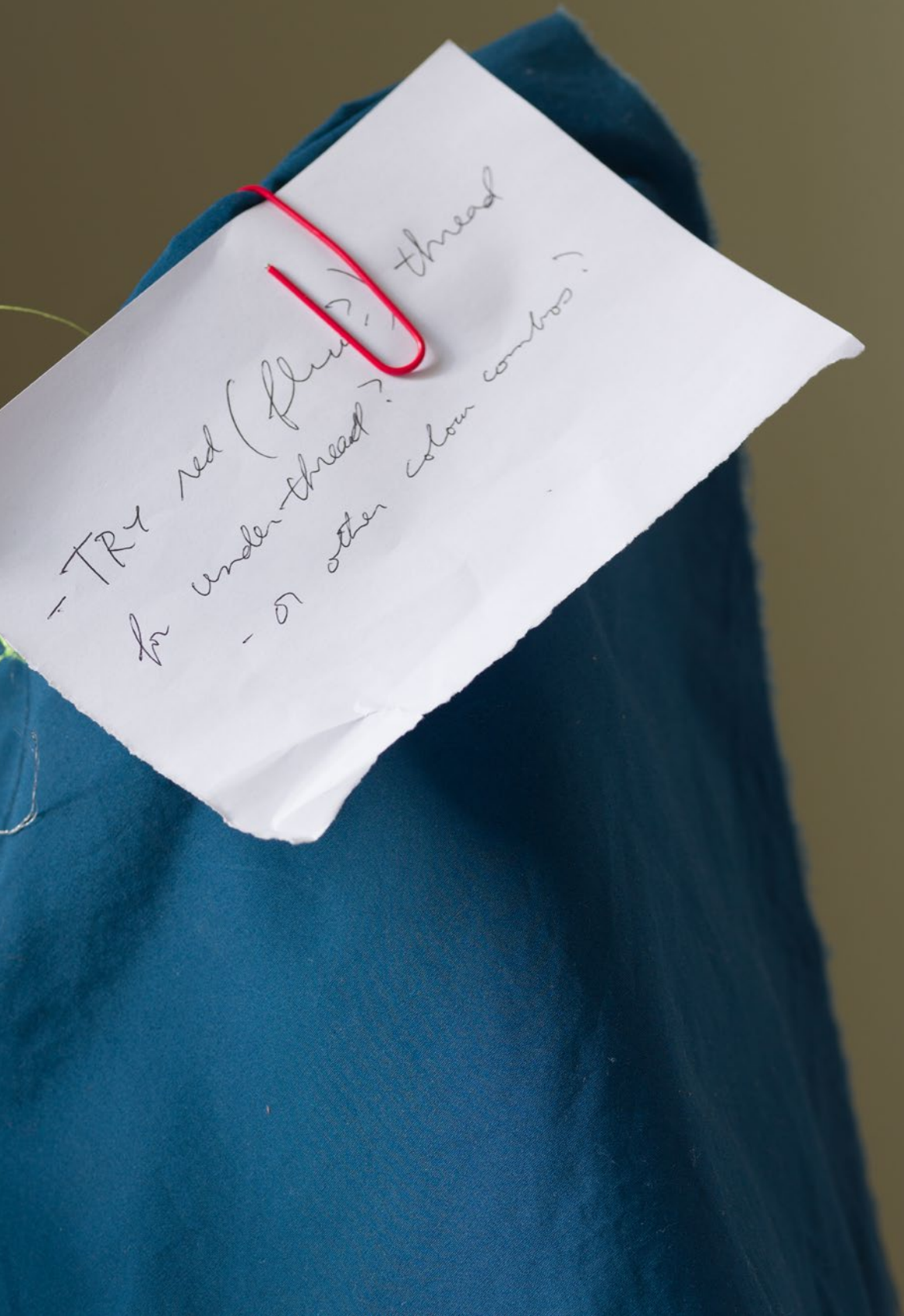
Shirt 55



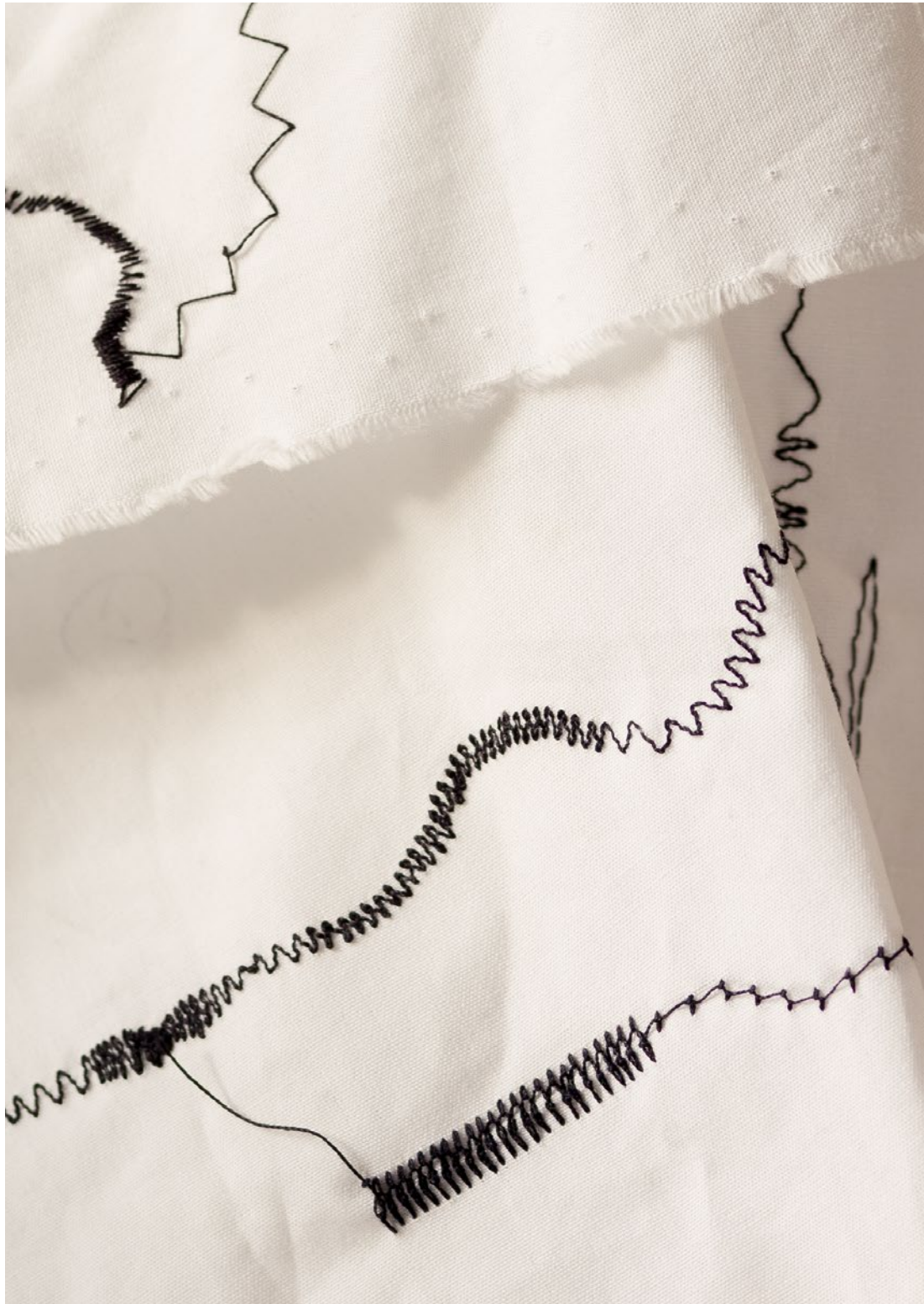
Left to right  
Knit 3  
Knit 4

Following page  
Shirt 42D

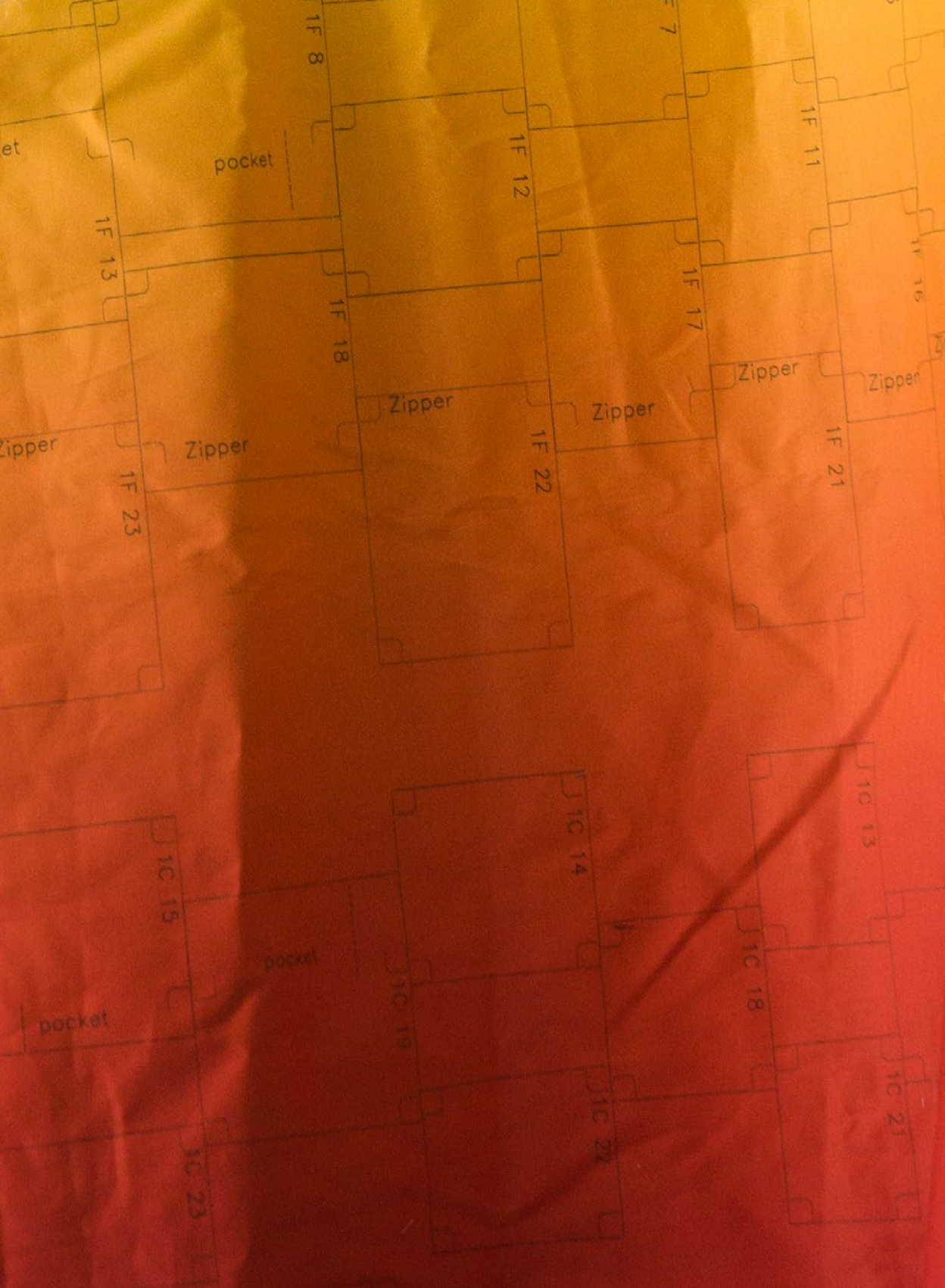








Jacket 2











Left to right  
Shirt 24A  
Shirt 15A



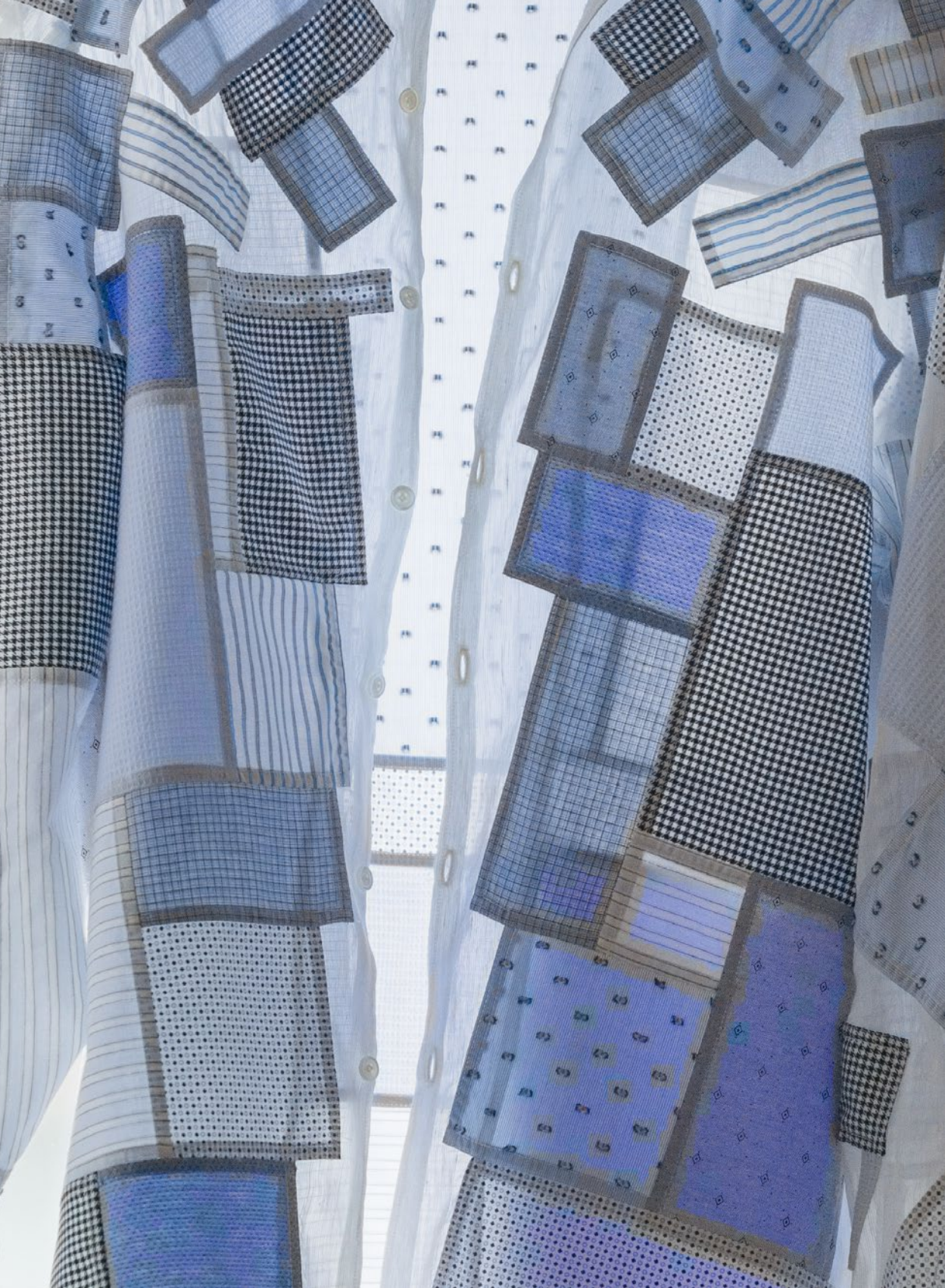


Trousers 4

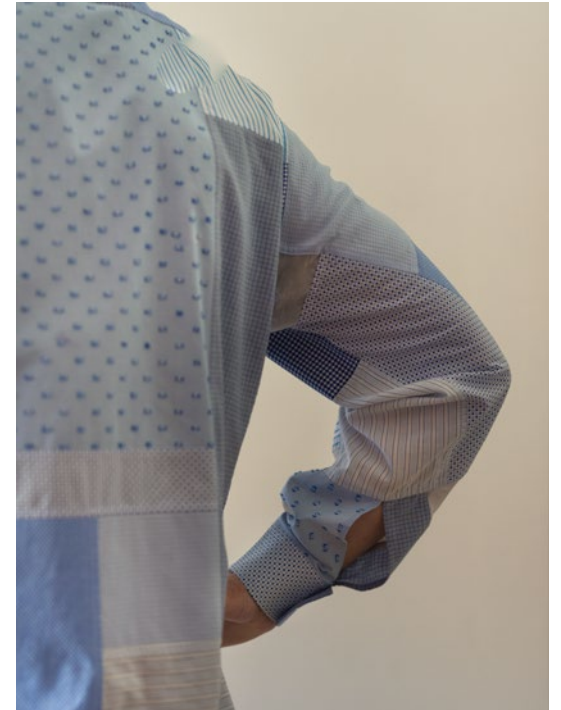








Shirt 19



Shirt 19





Opposite  
Shirt 57

Following page  
Tank Top 3



- at shoulder:

- this has unfinished seams inside, so must be lined.

- of course it's a more complex junction at curving seams

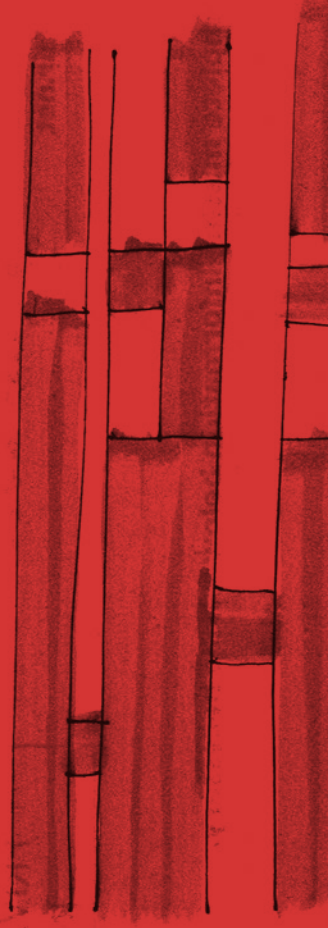




24 Dec 2014  
4:10 am

(SHIRT #23)

- Stripes can be varying width:



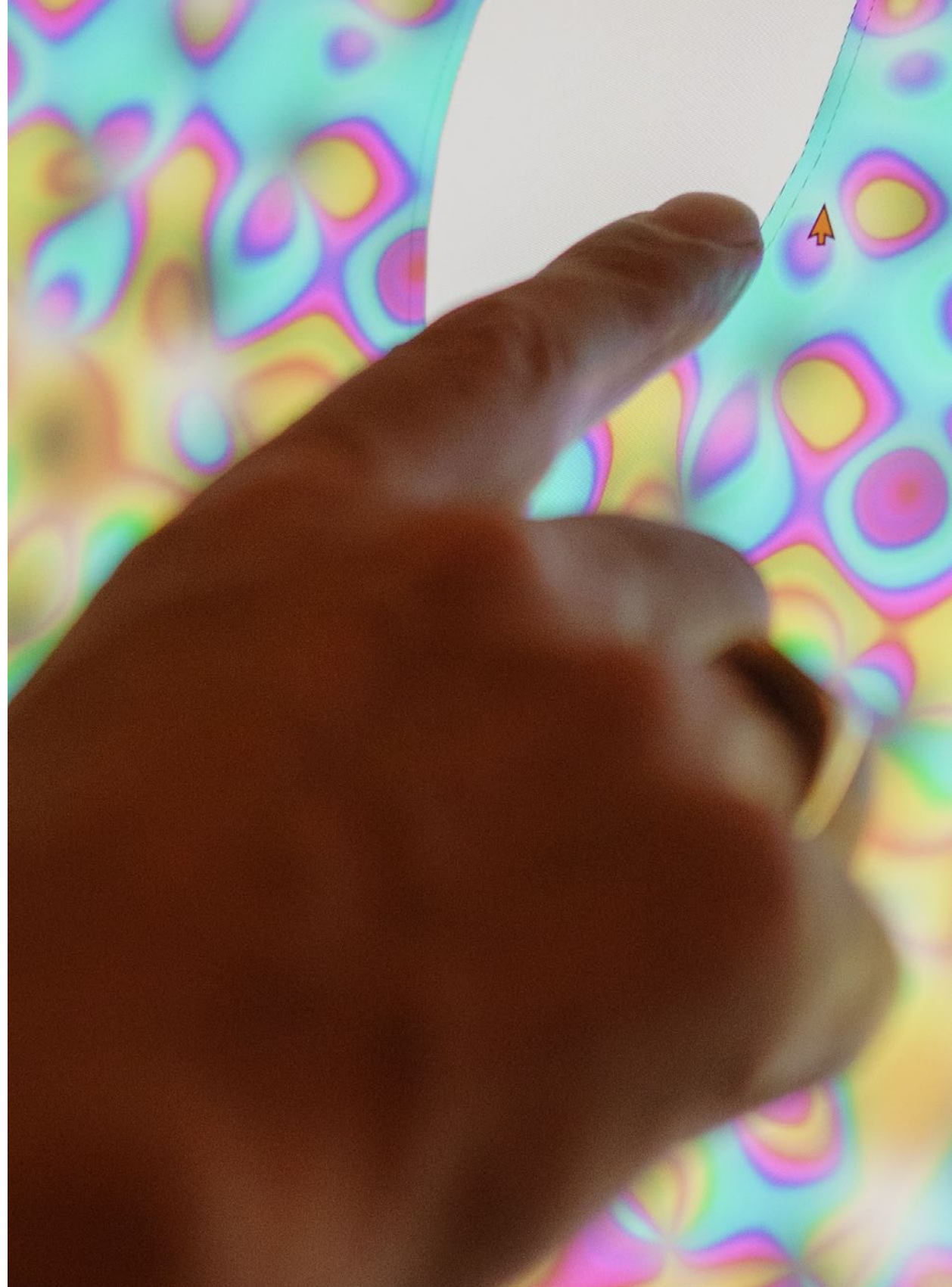
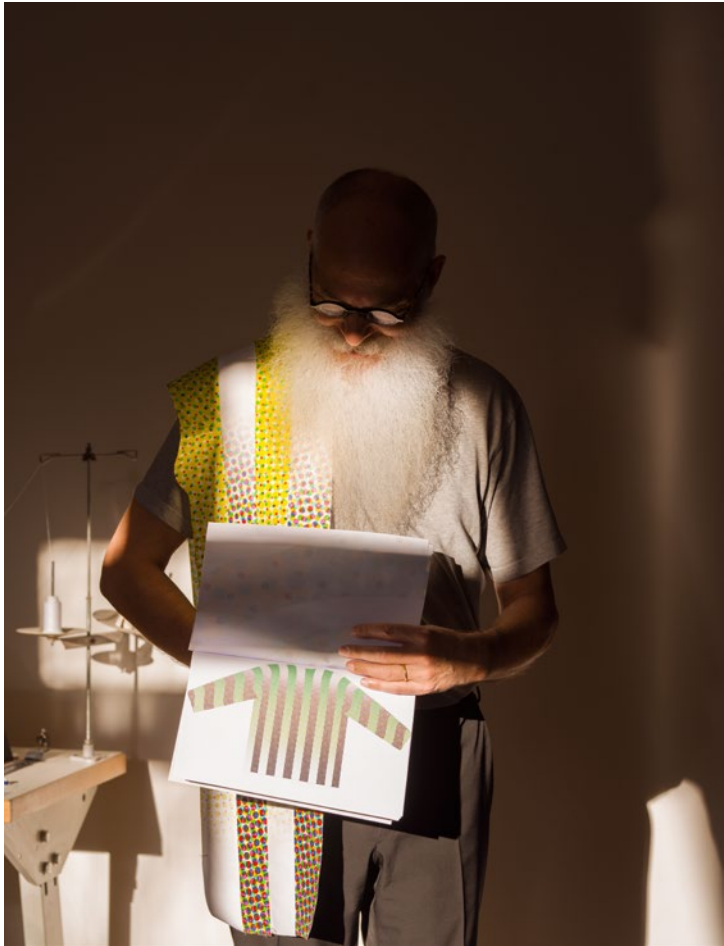


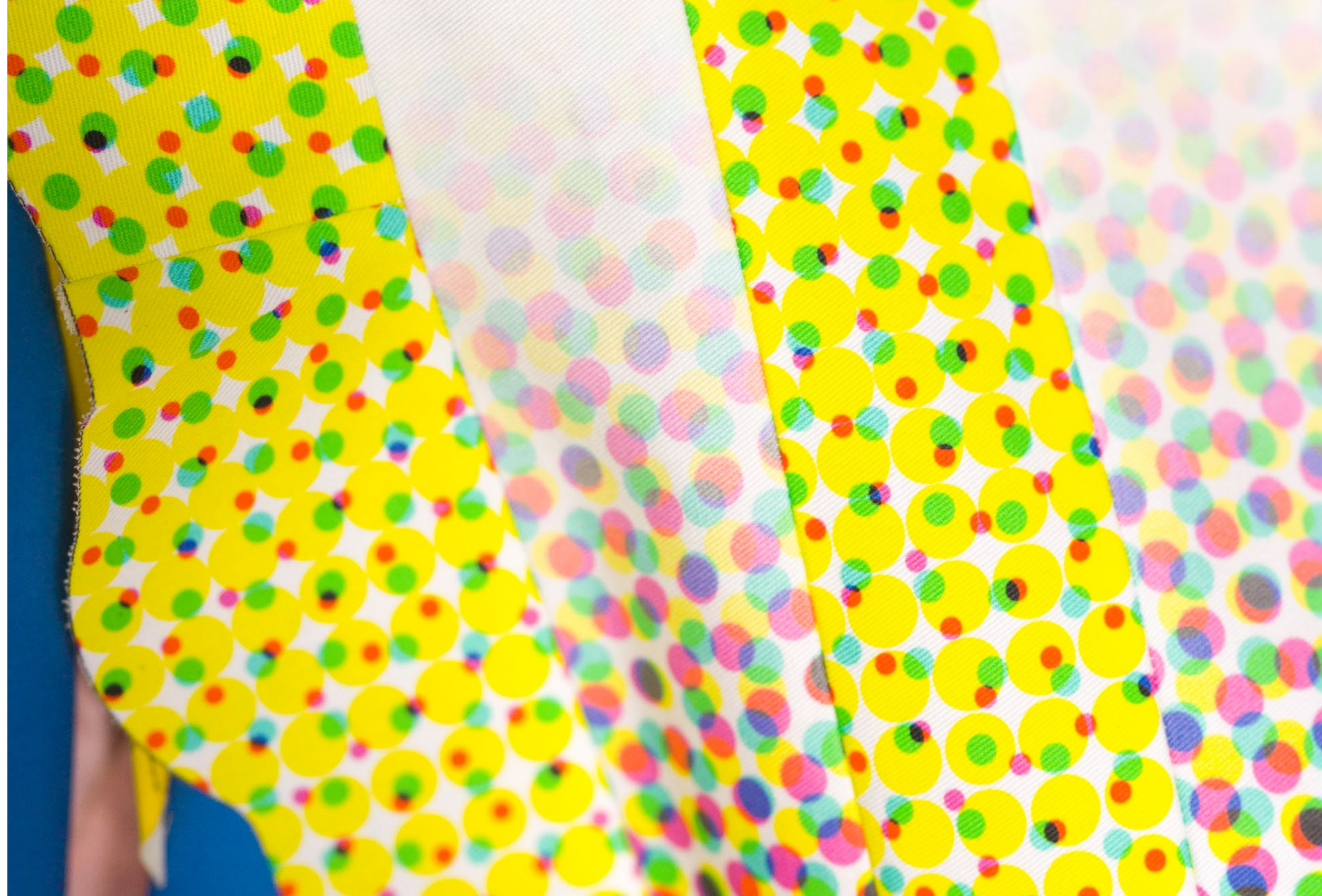


Shirt 15G

Opposite  
Shirt 18A









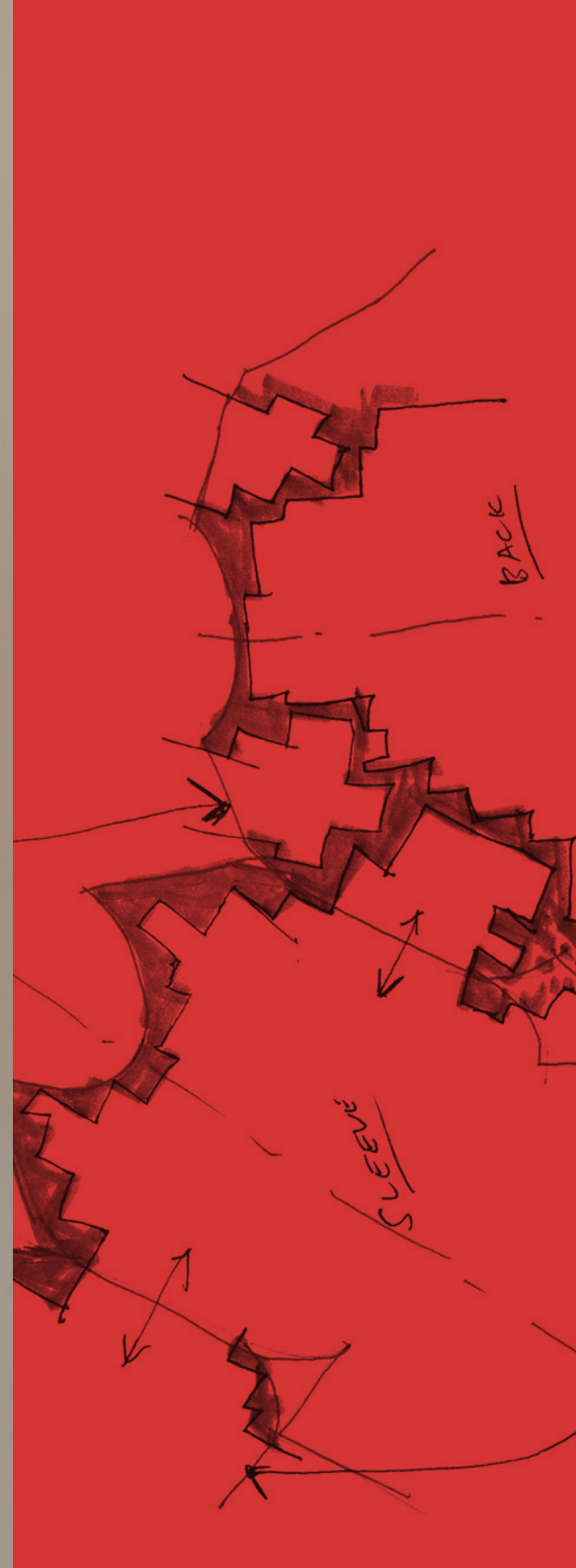


Opposite  
Shirt 18A

Opposite  
Jacket 2







- Shirt 15A Two long ribbons of fabric spiral around each other to form the entire sculptural whole.
- Shirt 15G The concept is as if you had sliced the shirt into horizontal layers, like a contour map.
- Shirt 18A The Almost One Piece of Fabric Shirt. The pattern was wider than the fabric so I had to add extensions to the front shirt tails, and the collar is separate; but otherwise the entire shirt is made from one piece of fabric.
- Shirt 19 Rectangles. The entire shirt is made of a patchwork of 98 unique rectangles with 9 types of fabric. It's all orthogonal and forms a strange poncho shape. This shape is wrapped around the body to form the shirt, and the interstitial spaces are filled with semi-transparent ramie.
- Shirt 23 Interference. There are two sets of stripes, one on the body and the other on the arms. Things get interesting where they meet over the shoulders. Over 350 unique pieces of fabric.
- Shirt 24A Triangles. A continuous three-dimensional patchwork of 64 unique triangles forms the entire shirt. There are no normal pattern pieces.
- Shirt 28A 'Spasm' Shirt. Standard shirt pattern made at 105% size. Covered with irregular 'spasms' of hand sewing which shrinks it back to size. I asked my assistant to stitch like 'an angry, splenetic psychopath' and he replied 'No problem!'. Fabric edges are left raw and fraying.



## List of Garments

- |          |  |           |  |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| Jacket 2 | ‘W’. Comprised mainly of nesting ‘W’ shapes. Each piece starts at the back, goes over the sleeve and then down the front. The striped fabric is at a different angle on each piece.      | Shirt 15A | Two long ribbons of fabric spiral around each other to form the entire sculptural whole.   |
| Jacket 3 | Tape Basketweave. A continuous three-dimensional basketweave of cotton tape. Pockets and shoulder pads are visible.  | Shirt 15G | The concept is as if you had sliced the shirt into horizontal layers, like a contour map.  |
| Knit 1   | Skewed Sweater. Panels of commercially made ribbed wool knit, attached with irregular hand sewing. The panels are skewed – they don’t line up with each other.                           | Shirt 18A | The Almost One Piece of Fabric Shirt. The pattern was wider than the fabric so I had to add extensions to the front shirt tails, and the collar is separate; but otherwise the entire shirt is made from one piece of fabric.  |
| Knit 3   | Spiral T-shirt. The whole shirt is one continuous spiral of fabric. The stripes end up at all angles as the fabric twists round the body. With red & white hand stitching.               | Shirt 19  | Rectangles. The entire shirt is made of a patchwork of 98 unique rectangles with 9 types of fabric. It’s all orthogonal and forms a strange poncho shape. This shape is wrapped around the body to form the shirt, and the interstitial spaces are filled with semi-transparent ramie. |
| Knit 6   | Crochet Tank Top. Various sizes of granny squares and rectangles. These hang from green thread webbing like a suspension bridge.   | Shirt 23  | Interference. There are two sets of stripes, one on the body and the other on the arms. Things get interesting where they meet over the shoulders. Over 350 unique pieces of fabric.   |
| Knit 4   | ‘Y’ Tank Top. Pattern is one single piece in the shape of a ‘Y’; made from commercially-available knit material. Irregular hand stitching for the seams & hems.                          | Shirt 24A | Triangles. A continuous three-dimensional patchwork of 64 unique triangles forms the entire shirt. There are no normal pattern pieces.   |
| Shirt 3A | Body & sleeves are straight cylindrical tubes, and the shaping normally made by the pattern pieces is here created by wrinkling the fabric into shape and then sewing the wrinkles down. | Shirt 28A | ‘Spasm’ Shirt. Standard shirt pattern made at 105% size. Covered with irregular ‘spasms’ of hand sewing which shrinks it back to size. I asked my assistant to stitch like ‘an angry, sullen psychopath’ and he replied ‘No problem!’. Fabric edges are left raw and fraying.          |

- Shirt 39 Flanges. Lilac voile with many irregular darts sewn in. This produces a textured surface and irregular edges, highlighted by fluorescent orange overlocking.
- Shirt 42D Herringbone. Eight kinds of fabric cut in diagonal strips. There are no conventional pattern pieces, instead the strips fit together in a continuous patchwork that forms the three-dimensional, sculptural whole.
- Shirt 55 Geometric Drawing. Looks like a blackboard at the end of a geometry lesson.
- Shirt 57 Leather Muscle Shirt. Made with a computerized cutting machine which cuts directly from CAD files. The holes graduate from smaller at the top to bigger at the bottom, corresponding to the weight on the leather.
- Tank top 3 Network of knotted linen strips, made as a continuous whole.
- Trousers 4 Sewn Down Wrinkles. The pant legs are made as straight cylinders; they don't taper towards the ankle. They are wrinkled to create the tapering, and sewn down to hold it all in place.  
- MJKVDL

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Mark Jan Krayenhoff van de Leur  
Rick Pushinsky

Essay by Madeleine Morley  
Design by David Hitner and Kerry Williams  
Colour grading work by James Midwinter

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- MJKVDL

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- Rick Pushinsky

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