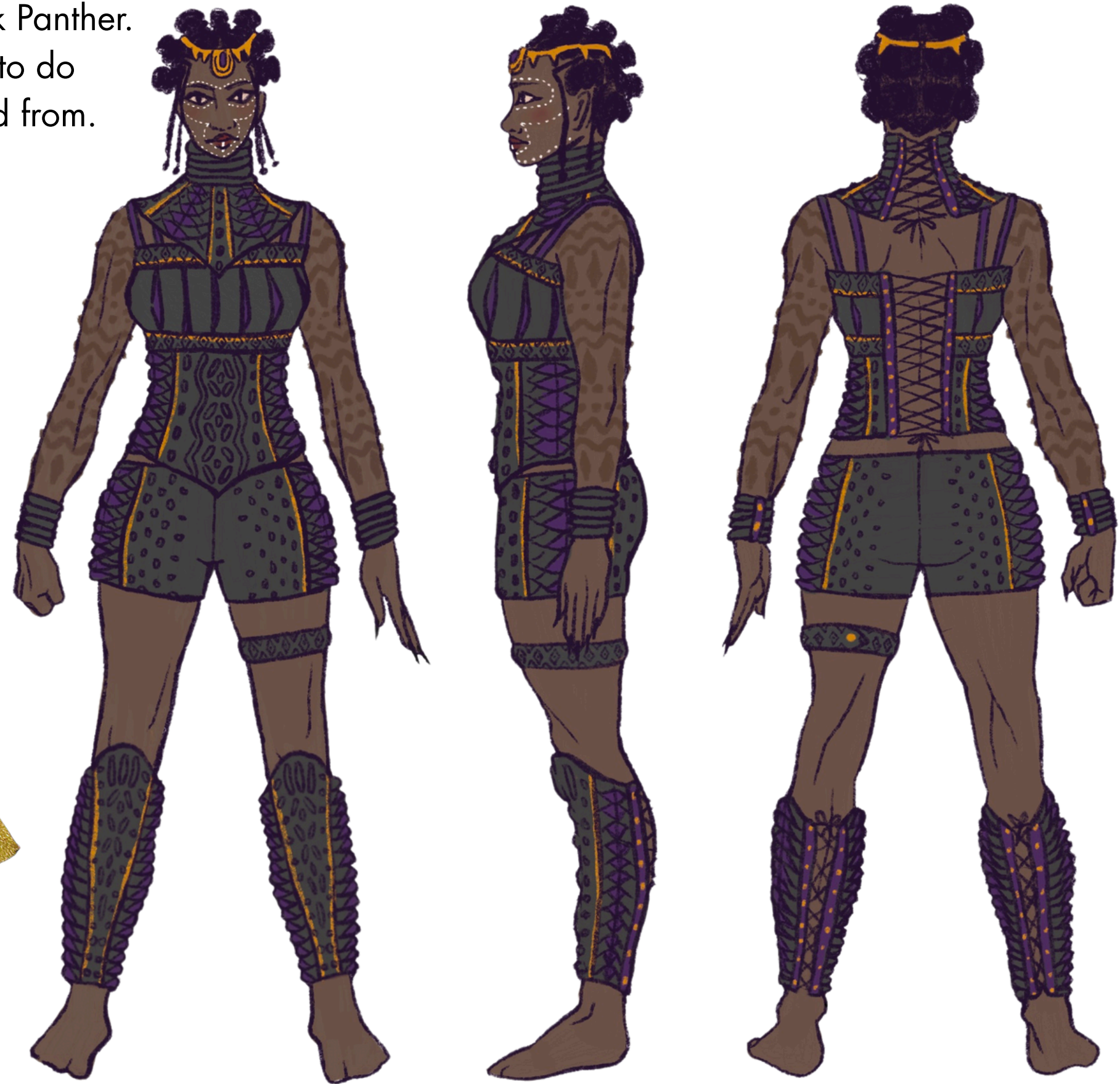
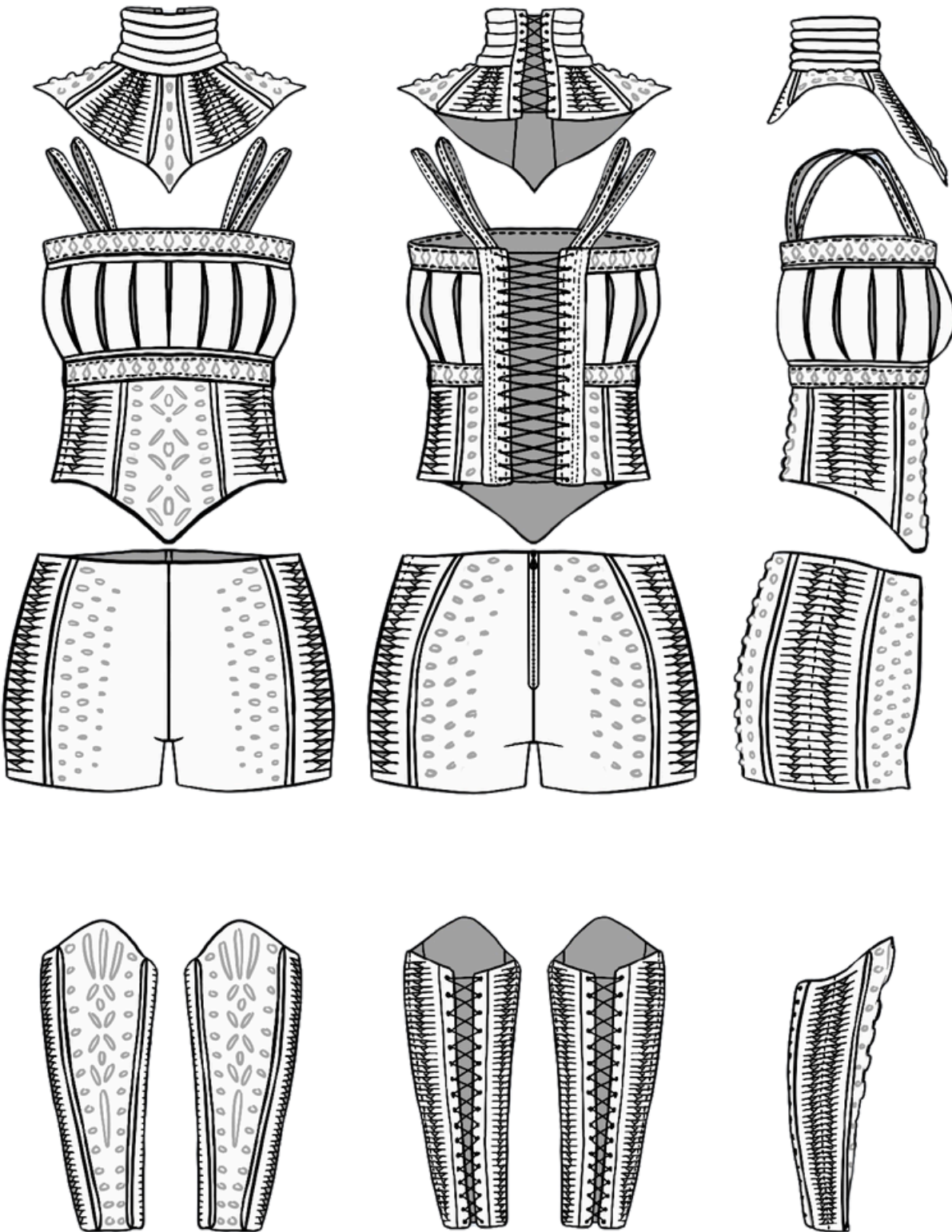


Black Panther

For my submission to this competition I wanted to showcase a recent project I did for my Costume Design course at LCF. Our theme for this semester was 'Black Superheroes' and how cultural identity can be showcased through intricate design. I choose Black Panther. Rather than looking at modern media representation of this character I wanted to do deeper research into what this character represented and where they originated from.

I used leather to show the connection that different African cultures have to the natural materials around them. Using manipulations such as wet molding and embossing elevated my leather experimentations further.

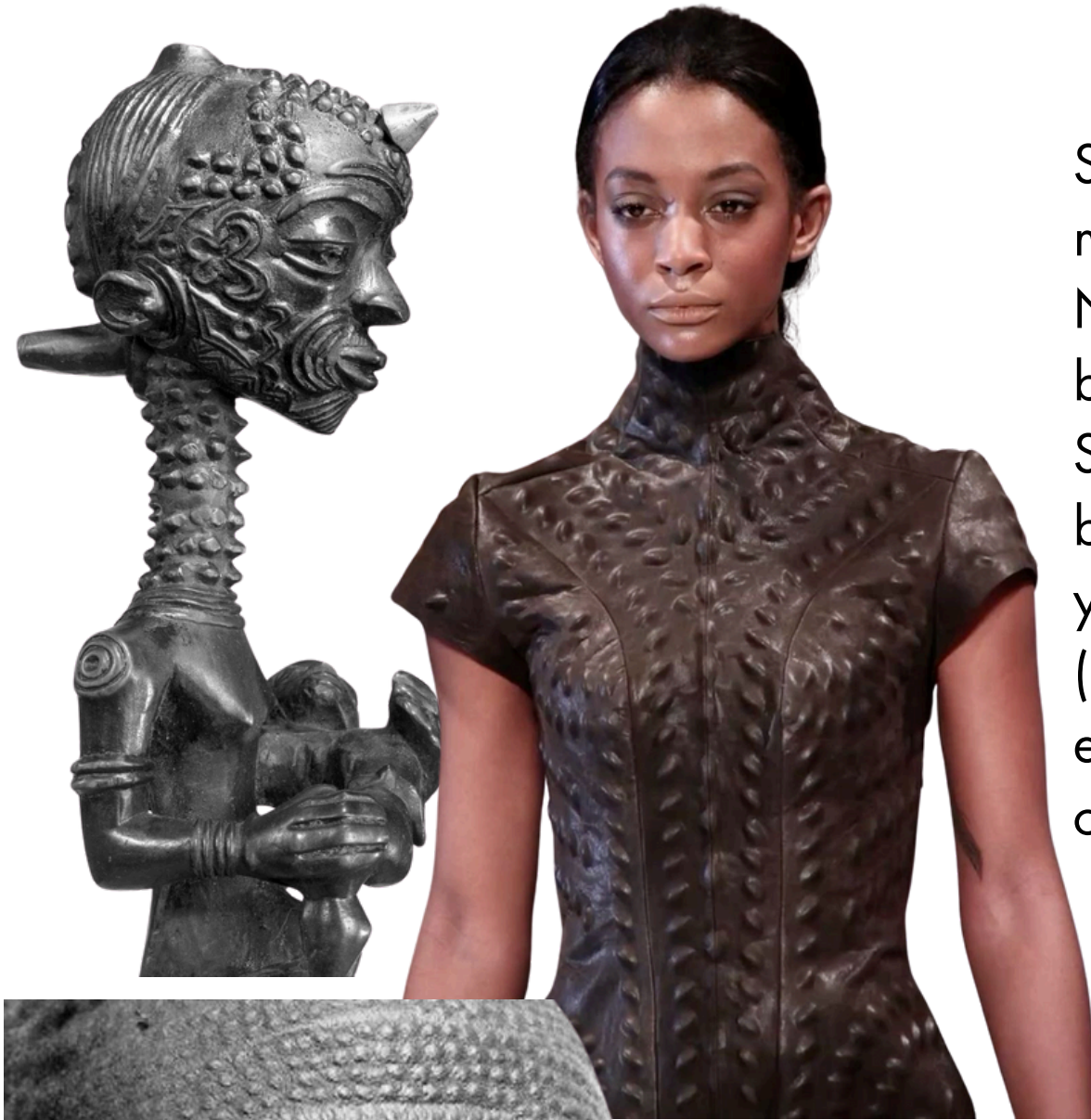
Materials used: black veg-tan cowhide leather, purple sheep skin leather, gold sheep skin leather piping, purple leather cord lacing, recycled polyester lining, gold plated eyelets



Skin Scarification

Skin scarification was a highly common practice in many different parts of Africa even in the last century. Now however these 'marks of civilisations' are becoming less and less prominent. (Lathrop, 2012) Scarification differs not only between country but also between tribe. In the Bétamarribé tribe even children as young as 2 get intricate lines carved all over their face. (Krutak) In this tribe the scarring is a sacred ritual that in essence deems the child an official part of the tribe- "a child without these markings is not 'human'". (Krutak)

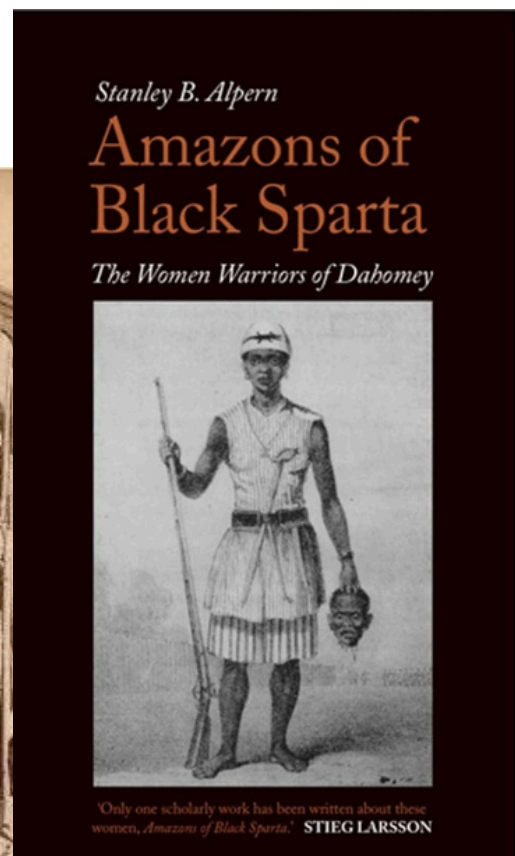
Other tribes however instead use scarification to mark "fertility, marital status, societal ranking, and the ethnic identity of being a woman" (Lathrop, 2012) Femininity is engrained in these markings and not only brings beauty with them but also strength and a sense of community. In my costume I want to incorporate scarification in different stages of healing (wet molding for healed scars, and slicing fabric for new ones) but I also don't want to just limit myself to the scarification of Benin. Since Black Panther is royalty it is important to maintain connection with all of Africa and that can be achieved through the unspoken community of scarification.



The Amazons of Black Sparta

After visiting the British museum I pursued my research into Benin and especially their warriors. The women warriors of Dahomey were an all female military regiment in what is now modern day Benin. Their origins are lost to unrecorded time, but one of the theories suggests that their roots were based around the 10th century AD in a village called Tado. (Alpern, 2011)

Compared to western military regiments the Amazons didn't have a set uniform. Majority of the time they "were finely dress'd from the middle downward, (the Custom of the Country being not to cover the body upward, of either sex)".(Alpern, 2011) I thought it was very interesting that they weren't protecting their chests, as it is a very vulnerable location. In images I've found though they are commonly seen in a breathable top covering their chest.



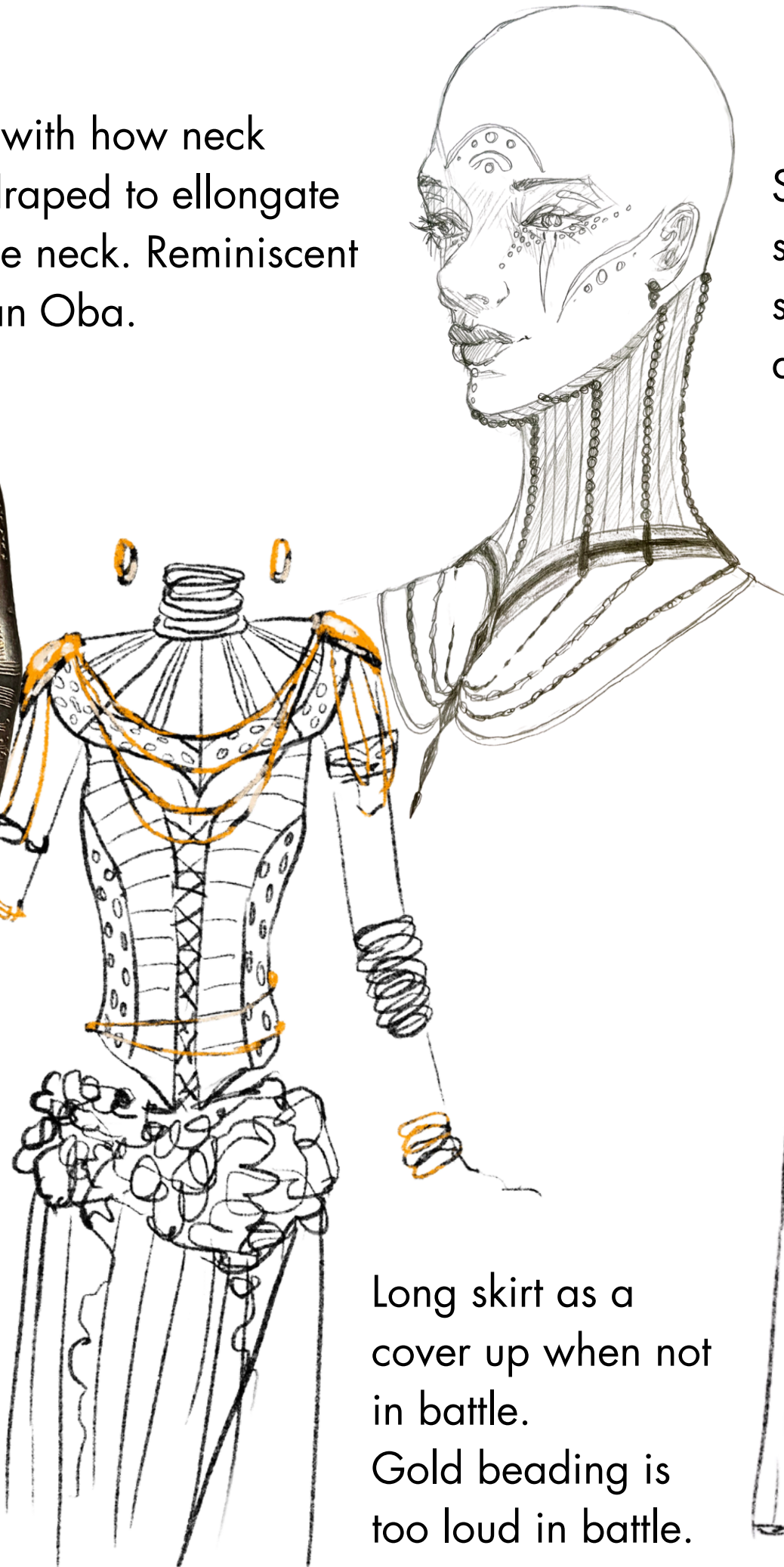
There are a lot of myths about the Amazons, but one that caught my eye was about why they left Tado. Usually it is because of a leopard! Most myths say it is because a princess had a divine child with the animal. In one variation the leopard shape shifts into a woman and marries the King of Tado instead. In this story the leopard is a symbol of power, royalty, and divine lineage.



Playing around with how neck pieces can be draped to elongate and decorate the neck. Reminiscent of the head of an Oba.



Imitating the stomach scarification through lacing and panneling. Using natural materials to create a draped belt.



Long skirt as a cover up when not in battle. Gold beading is too loud in battle.



Initial Sketches

Sharp angles on the corset to imitate sharpness of the panthers features. The shapes of the corset look too westernised and not armour looking enough.

How could the headpiece imitate a panther yet keep the face uncovered?



Could hair be used as a way to bring animalistic connotations rather than the mask?



Pleating on skirt imitates the panels on the armour.



Moodboard





