

A woman is shown from the back, wearing a white, long-sleeved dress with a sculptural, draped design. Her hair is dark and pulled back. The background is a soft, warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text "Sculptural design" is overlaid in a white, serif font.

Sculptural design



In this work, I have explored how sculptural bodily forms may enter into relation with dress and the living body, each shaping one another and giving rise to a silhouette formed through their entanglement.

The work sits at the intersection of sculpture, dress, and body. It moves between elegance and the grotesque, between appeal and repulsion, between animal and human. I am interested in what happens when fashion is no longer shaped only around the human body, but around another bodily presence that interrupts, extends and reorganises it. The leather form becomes an added body, while the dress becomes a surface shaped by that encounter.

This interest also comes from my own position as a practitioner. I have never felt that I belonged to one place, one discipline, or one way of seeing the world. Perhaps that is why I am drawn to forms that resist settling into a single identity. Designing, for me, is a way of moving through the world with curiosity and allowing it to reveal what lies beyond the familiar. It has made me question the roles we inherit and the ideals we are exposed to, and has sharpened my resistance to systems that claim one image or mode of being as ideal. I am interested in the unstable space where beauty is not smooth or immediate, but charged, tactile and difficult to place.

At its core, the work questions the fantasy of the self-contained individual. It is a quiet reminder that we are never shaped alone, but continuously formed by what exceeds us: that we are never entirely independent, and never only one thing.







DRESS WITHOUT THE SCULPTURE

THE GROTESQUE “HUMAN” BODY



PROCESS AND MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

The work was developed through an intuitive and material-led process. I began by drawing distorted bodies on paper and transferring their outlines onto discarded soft foam mattresses, allowing flat lines to become three-dimensional forms. The mattresses were waste material, chosen for their availability, softness and ease of construction.

The soft foam bodily form was later covered in vegetable-tanned cattle leather through wet-moulding, using traditional bookbinding techniques to shape the material around the form. This part of the process took place at the Estonian Academy of Arts as part of my MA project from Aalto University.

The leather used was Zero Waste Leather from Elmo Leather, whose cattle hides are by-products from the meat and dairy industry, mainly sourced from the Nordic countries. In this work, the leather included imperfect or surplus material that would otherwise have had limited use. These irregularities became part of the work rather than something to hide. The marks, unevenness and surface qualities helped strengthen the feeling that the material still carries traces of a body.



LEATHER, FASHION AND THE GROTESQUE BODY

Leather is often refined into familiar fashion objects such as jackets, bags or shoes, where its origin can almost disappear. At the same time, real leather has become a contested material within fashion, while many alternatives are marketed as cleaner or more desirable. I wanted to approach this tension without turning the work into a simple argument for or against leather. Instead, I wanted to tell the story of this material as something durable, beautiful, uncomfortable and connected to a larger system of food, farming, waste, craft and consumption.

The grotesque form became a way to speak about this complexity. The sculpture sits between human and animal. It resembles a body, but not one that can be fully understood. It is flesh-coloured and carries vulnerability, even though it is made as a hardened shoulder piece. I see this as a critical response to the way fashion uses animal hides: not as a rejection of leather, but as a way of refusing to let it appear only polished and desirable. Instead, the work asks the viewer to stay with its tensions between beauty and a strange unease, with its material relevance and previous life.

DRAPING AROUND THE SCULPTURE

The dress was developed directly around this sculptural bodily form. I worked with approximately fifteen metres of deadstock silk single jersey, standing in front of the mannequin with scissors, pins, and the leather form already present. Rather than designing the garment separately, I draped it in response to the sculpture. The fabric had to negotiate with the leather piece: falling over it, being interrupted by it, wrapping around it, and sometimes being pulled away from the body because of it. In this way, the silhouette was not decided in advance. It appeared through the meeting between fabric, body and sculpture.

This relationship is central to the look. The leather sculpture can exist on its own as an art piece, while the silk dress can also be worn independently. When placed together, however, they begin to reorganise one another. The sculpture changes how the dress falls, and the dress changes how the sculpture is read.

The work expands beyond conventional outlines and connects with other forms. In doing so, it questions the human body as the assumed measure of fashion. What becomes significant is not only what the work is in itself, but how it opens a conversation about relation: between body and dress, leather and skin, cattle and human, waste and value, craft and industry. Everything exists in relation to something else, always changing through matter, memory and the world around it.



FUTURE POTENTIAL

Although the look is presented as a showpiece, its potential lies in the method and material thinking behind it. The project suggests how leather can be used beyond conventional garments and accessories: not only as a surface, trim or luxury finish, but as a sculptural material able to hold form, protect the body and transform the silhouette.

The leather form could be developed further as modular body pieces and sculptural accessories. Ultimately, the work does not propose commerciality through simplification, but through the possibility of translating its methods into adaptable pieces that carry the same attention to material, durability and bodily transformation.

