

Design Statement

This accessory explores how an extreme **protective system** can be stripped of its original function and reworked into a **decorative menswear object**. My starting point was body armour, especially the neck guard and arm guard, which are designed to protect, cover and restrict the body. I was interested in taking this highly functional language and reducing its practical purpose, so that it could become a **visual** and **decorative** layer instead.

The final design is a **leather accessory worn around the neck** and upper body. It keeps the memory of protective equipment, but it no longer works as real protection. Instead of using thick padding or synthetic military fabrics, I used leather to create a more crafted and long-lasting object. The shape is made flatter and softer, allowing it to sit closer to the body like an accessory rather than armour.

I also combined this protective language with details from **modern bags**, such as zippers, handles and detachable small pouches. However, these details are also partly de-functionalised. They do not mainly exist for storage or carrying, but as signs of function. In this way, the piece sits between protective equipment, leather accessory and body decoration. As a decorative piece, it can also be integrated with garments and become part of the overall styling, rather than existing as a separate object.

The work also responds to fast fashion by focusing on durability and long-term value. Rather than creating a short-life trend item, I used careful construction, hand stitching, machine stitching and edge finishing. Compared with many military and streetwear items that rely on synthetic materials such as nylon and polyester, this piece uses leather as a slower and more durable material choice. My aim is to create a menswear accessory with both conceptual value and lasting physical value.

Protective structure in tactical vests:

Neck Guard

Shoulder Guard

Ballistic Plate



Functionalities they achieved:

Protection

Securing

Modularity



Figure 1: Tactical vest and body armour

Accessories Development

After completing my initial research, I planned to draw some **sketches** based on the tactical vest I had already analysed. I mainly focused on its **protective** function. From this function, I developed several structures.

In terms of material, these protective structures are often made from durable synthetic fibres such as nylon. Although these materials are practical and strong, their production can also create **environmental concerns**, especially because many of them are petroleum-based and can remain in the environment for a long time. Considering leather's visual quality, strength and durability, I decided to use **leather** as the main material to subvert the original use of synthetic materials.

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 show some draping experiments I made for the neck guard and arm guard. To reduce their original function and increase their decorative quality, I removed the padding and used colours that are often seen in traditional menswear. I also changed their shapes, making them flatter and more relaxed. As a result, they look more like decorative layers rather than protective guards.

At the same time, based on my research, I added some functional details from men's fashion bags, but made them non-functional so that they only exist as design elements. For example, I used details such as handles and zippers. **Figure 6** shows the final pattern.



Figures 2 & 3: Draping test

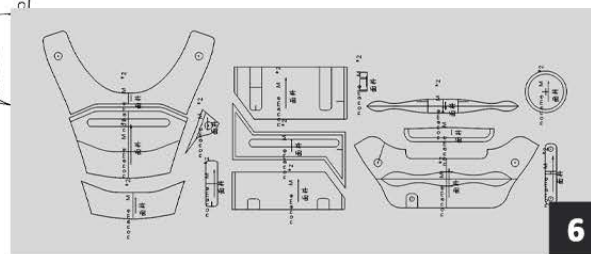


Figure 6: Final pattern documentation

Figure 4 & 5: Paper tackups

Accessories Development

For the material I used a brown cowhide leather purchased from **Leffler Leather** in Melbourne. It is made in Italy and is very strong and durable.

Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 show the making process of this accessory and the leather techniques I used, such as bonding, hand stitching, machine stitching, padding, and edge finishing. I learned professional leather-making techniques to make sure the accessory reaches a professional standard and matches my concept of **high-quality craftsmanship in menswear**.

Figure 12 shows the current **front and back views** of the accessory when worn, although it is not fully finished yet. In my original design, there was also supposed to be a cylindrical bag hanging at the back. Its main purpose was also decorative and symbolic, rather than mainly for carrying. And there will be an arm guard as well. Due to the limited time, I have not been able to finish it yet.

At the front of the accessory, there is a design similar to a luggage tag. It also works as a symbol of bag design, rather than as a purely functional detail.



Figure 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11: Leather making techniques applied, such as bonding, handstitching, machine stitching, edge skiving, edge painting & hardware installation



12 **Figure 12:** Final unfinished accessory



Material List

Brown cattle leather / cowhide leather

Sourced from Leffler Leather, Melbourne. The leather is made in Italy and was selected for its strength, durability and visual quality.

YKK snap fasteners and rivets

Used to connect and secure different leather components.

Riri zipper

Used as a bag-related detail within the design. Although the zipper suggests function, it also works as a visual symbol of modern bag construction.

Angelus edge paint

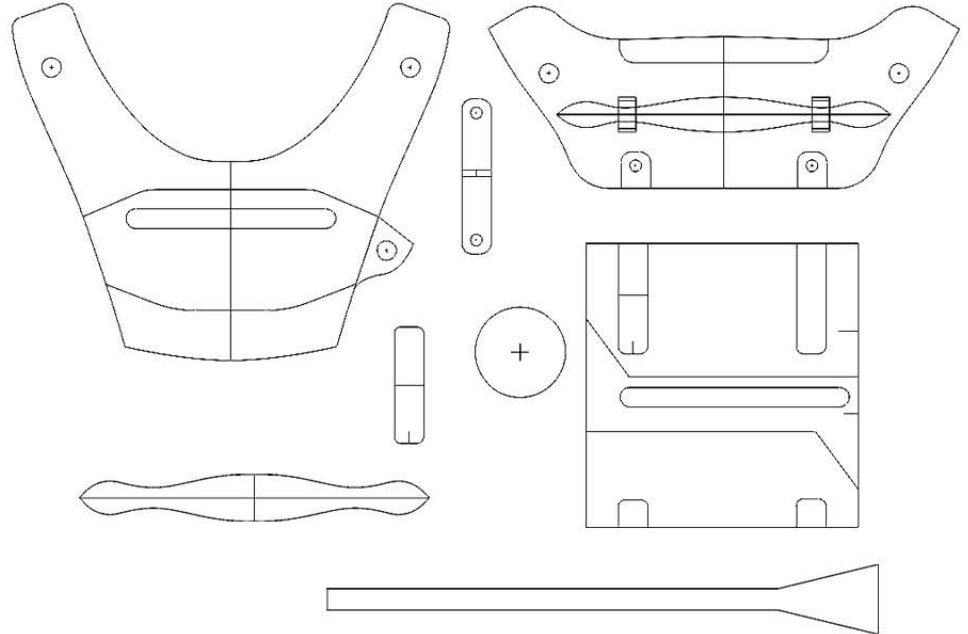
Used to finish and seal the leather edges, creating a cleaner and more professional finish.

Foss Cement 1 Litre N162 adhesive

Used for bonding leather layers before stitching and construction.

The accessory is made primarily from cattle leather. Other materials, such as zippers, snap fasteners, rivets, adhesive and edge paint, are used only where necessary for construction, finishing and durability.

Technical Flat



Unfinished Accessory Outcome



Figure 13: Unfinished accessory wore by model