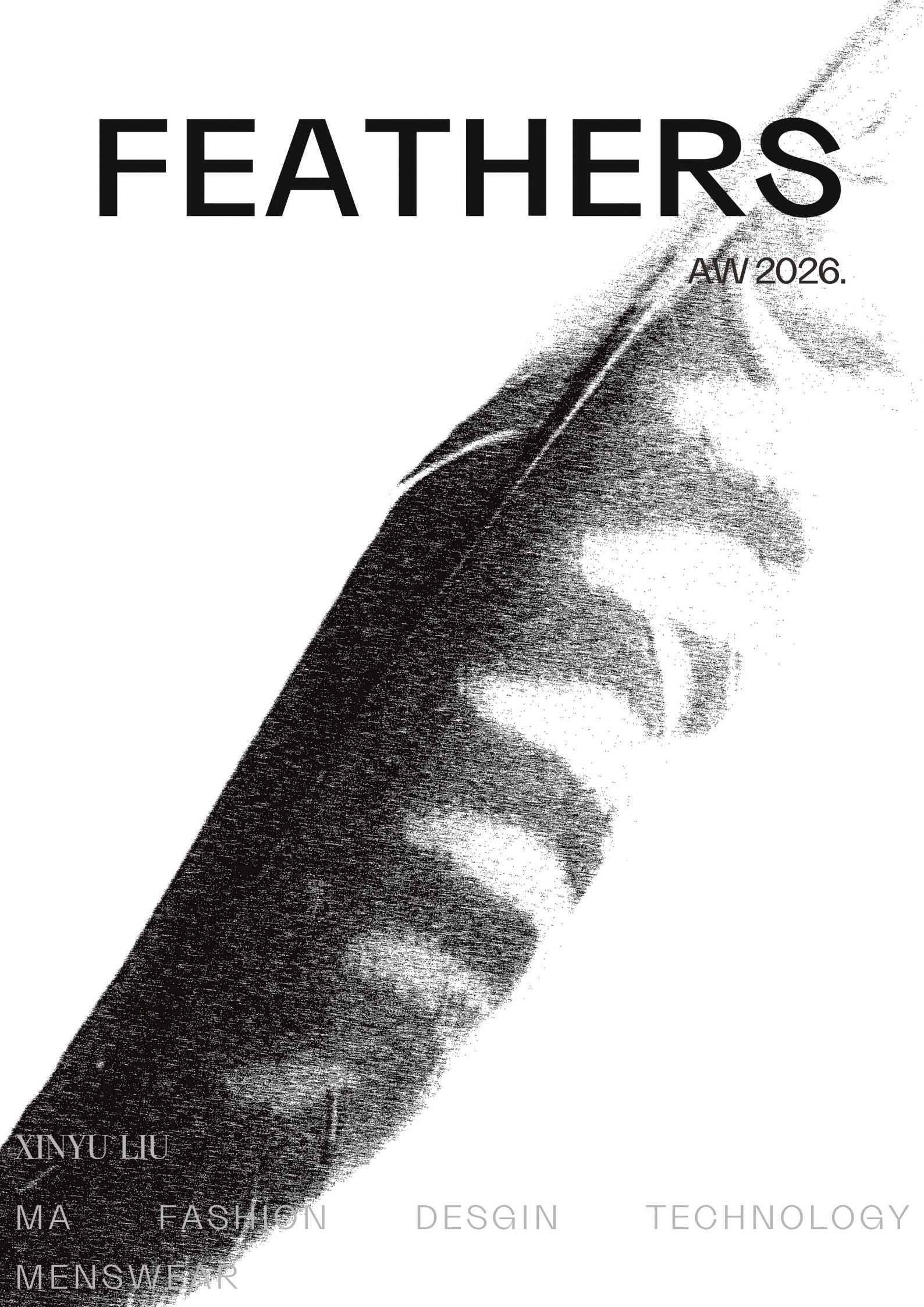
FEATHERS

AW 2026.



XINYU LIU

MA FASHION DESGIN TECHNOLOGY

MENSWEAR

BIRDY

FROM BONE, FEATHERS BEGIN.



Figure1: Still from Birdman Directed by Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2014. Film still, 20th Century Fox.

FEATHERS



By

Xinyu Liu

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University of the Arts London

London College of Fashion

MA Fashion Design Technology Menswear

Course Director: Darren Cabon



Figure 2:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was completed under the guidance and support of the London College of Fashion. I am grateful to Darren Cabon, Jay Kang and Sylvia Smith-Fuller for their mentorship and professional counsel throughout the research process. I would also like to thank Damian Fitzpatrick for his assistance with language and academic writing.

Special thanks to KNITREAL Knit Studio for providing the knit swatch development, Knitgene Studio for the production of knitwear garments and accessories, and the apparel supply chain manufacturer Weiran Apparel. Their professional expertise and collaborative spirit formed the essential foundation for realising this collection.

Heartfelt gratitude to my parents for their unconditional support in both life and studies. I am also indebted to my flatmates and fellow students for their encouragement and assistance throughout the year, sustaining my motivation amidst demanding academic pursuits.

I, Xinyu Liu, certify that this is an original work. I have acknowledged all sources and citations, and no part of this work has been plagiarised.

INTRODUCTION

If one day the falconer and his eagle were to swap bodies...

My project originates from the ancient nomadic tradition of falconry practised in my homeland. I am captivated by the wordless bond between falconer and bird—a trust and understanding transcending species, born from the repeated contact of sharp talons and soft arms, from moments when breath and posture synchronise. What if this trust and understanding crossed the spiritual plane, leading to a physical fusion?

Thus I envisioned a moment where a blurred boundary exists, and the bodies of man and eagle begin to merge. The eagle's form gradually manifests upon the human frame... This transformation alters the structure of the male body. The development of the knitted sections draws inspiration from the layered texture of eagle feathers, rendering them a distinctive element within the collection. The entire series becomes a natural extension and regeneration of this “hybrid body”.



Figure 3:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 4: Falconer Kurmasy Hutman. (2023). Falconry. SHANG CHENG SHI.

In 1971, at the age of 24, Kurmasy Hutman of the Kyrgyz ethnic group formally began his journey into falconry. This year marks the 54th anniversary of that beginning. The art of falconry has been passed down without written records, relying entirely on oral tradition. Over half a century, he has become the most knowledgeable falconer in all of China.

‘As close as two palms clasped together—friends, brothers, or rather, the falcon is part of one's very body.’

Documentary ——*The Falconer*

RESEARCH

Within falconry culture, the relationship between humans and birds of prey is not one of subjugation, but rather a long-term partnership founded upon “collaboration”, “trust”, and “coexistence”. Donna Haraway (2003) posits in her “companion species” theory that humans and animals are not unidirectional subject-object pairs, but rather mutually shaped entities through daily interactions, shared labour, and reciprocal influence. Falconry embodies this reciprocal dynamic: the falconer must establish effective communication with the bird through physical posture, gestures, patience, and reward systems; conversely, the raptor shapes the falconer's movements through its reactions and flight patterns. This bodily-mediated collaboration fuses “man” and “hawk” into a unified community.

This cross-species collaboration reveals a relationship transcending anthropocentric perspectives. Through studying falconry culture, I have witnessed behavioural and emotional connections between humans and animals, along with deeper interactions, which have helped me expand my understanding of the body.

Figure 5: Kurmasy Hutman's Eagle. (2023). Falconry. SHANG CHENG SHI.

A falconer's glove rests perpetually by Kurmasy's bedside. He explains this is because 'leather gloves left outdoors oxidise easily; the eagle's talons would tear them apart.' Yet there are also sentimental reasons: 'The eagles are part of the family. They cannot remain indoors for long periods, so keeping the glove by my bedside feels as though we are together at all times.'





Figure 6: Falconry Tools. (2023). Falconry. SHANG CHENG SHI.

Within falconry culture, falconry tools serve not only functional roles in control and protection, but also form an emotional and trust-based bond between the falconer and the bird of prey. Tools such as the gauntlet, jesses, leash, hood, and perch. These tools form a "system of bodily extension", enabling the falconer's movements to be accurately interpreted by the bird while conveying the raptor's reactions and state back to the human. Thus, falconry equipment is not merely technical apparatus for training, but an emotional conduit sustaining cross-species relationships. Studying these tools deepened my understanding of how human-animal communication relies upon materiality, while also informing my subsequent exploration of "bodily extension" within fashion design.



Figure 7: Kurmasy Hutman's Eagle. (2023). Falconry. SHANG CHENG SHI.

The falconer regards the eagle as part of his own family. The feathers shed naturally by the eagle are collected by the falconer, Kurmasy, and fashioned into feather dusters. These are used to groom the horse's coat before riding.



Figure 8: Eagle feathers. (2023). Falconry. SHANG CHENG SHI.

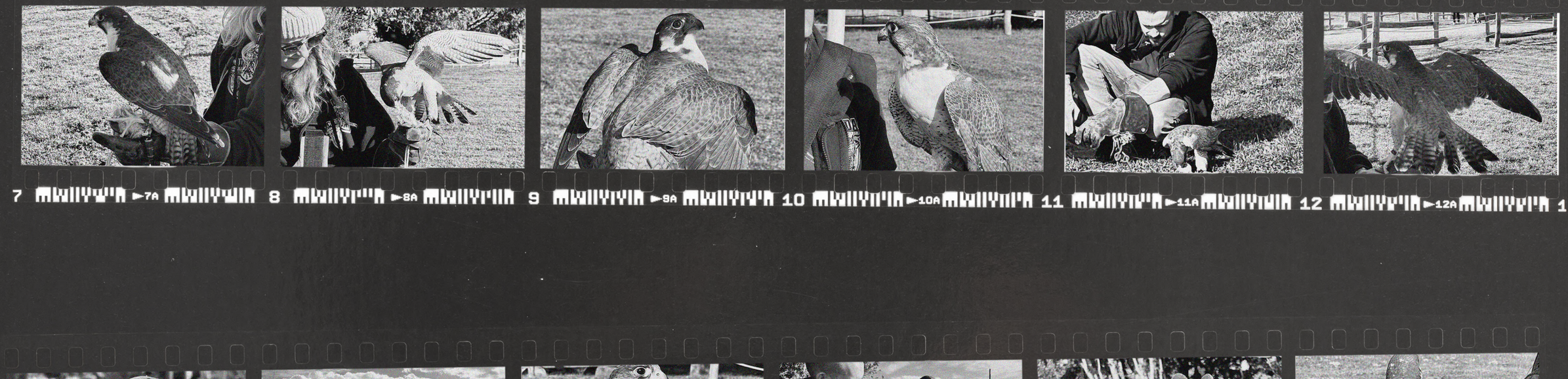


Figure 63: XIN YU, (2024). Falconry experience. [Photography].



Figure 9: J.A. Baker. (2004). The Peregrine.

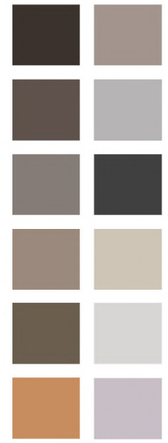


Figure 10: Colour development.

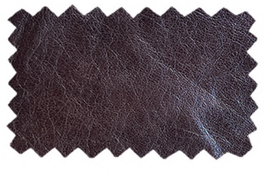
COLOUR

Bird plumage exhibits varied colours due to functional differences, with raptors predominantly sporting brownish-grey hues that create natural gradient effects within their layered structure. Consequently, I drew upon the neutral tones found in eagle feathers as the primary reference for my colour development. This natural palette provided a more biologically coherent visual foundation for the overall silhouette.

FINAL FABRIC



KIDSKIN LEATHER



KIDSKIN LEATHER



KIDSKIN LEATHER



KIDSKIN LEATHER



100% WOOL



100% WOOL



100% WOOL



100% CASHMERE



100% COTTON



100% COTTON

Figure 11: Final fabric

Button



Figure 13: Buttons

Zipper



Figure 14: Zippers



Figure 15:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 16:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

DESIGN METHDOLOGY

My design methodology is grounded in an analysis of avian anatomy, extracting key morphological elements and translating them into structural lines and tailoring for garments. Through iterative three-dimensional draping experiments and structural testing, I have reconfigured the contours of the male form. While ensuring practicality, this approach explores a new silhouette system capable of transcending conventional menswear.



Figure 17:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

Figure 19: Toile Development



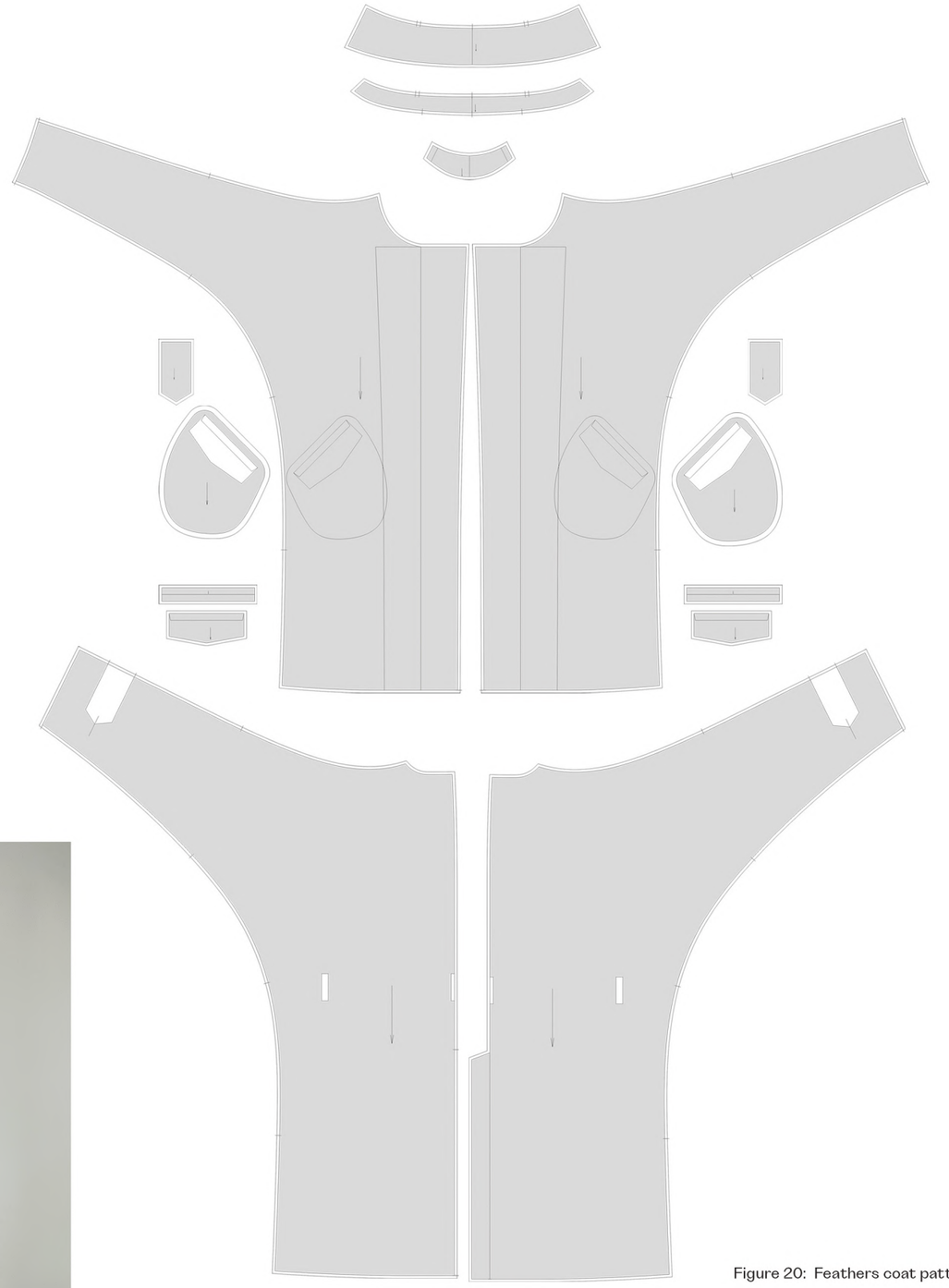


Figure 20: Feathers coat pattern.

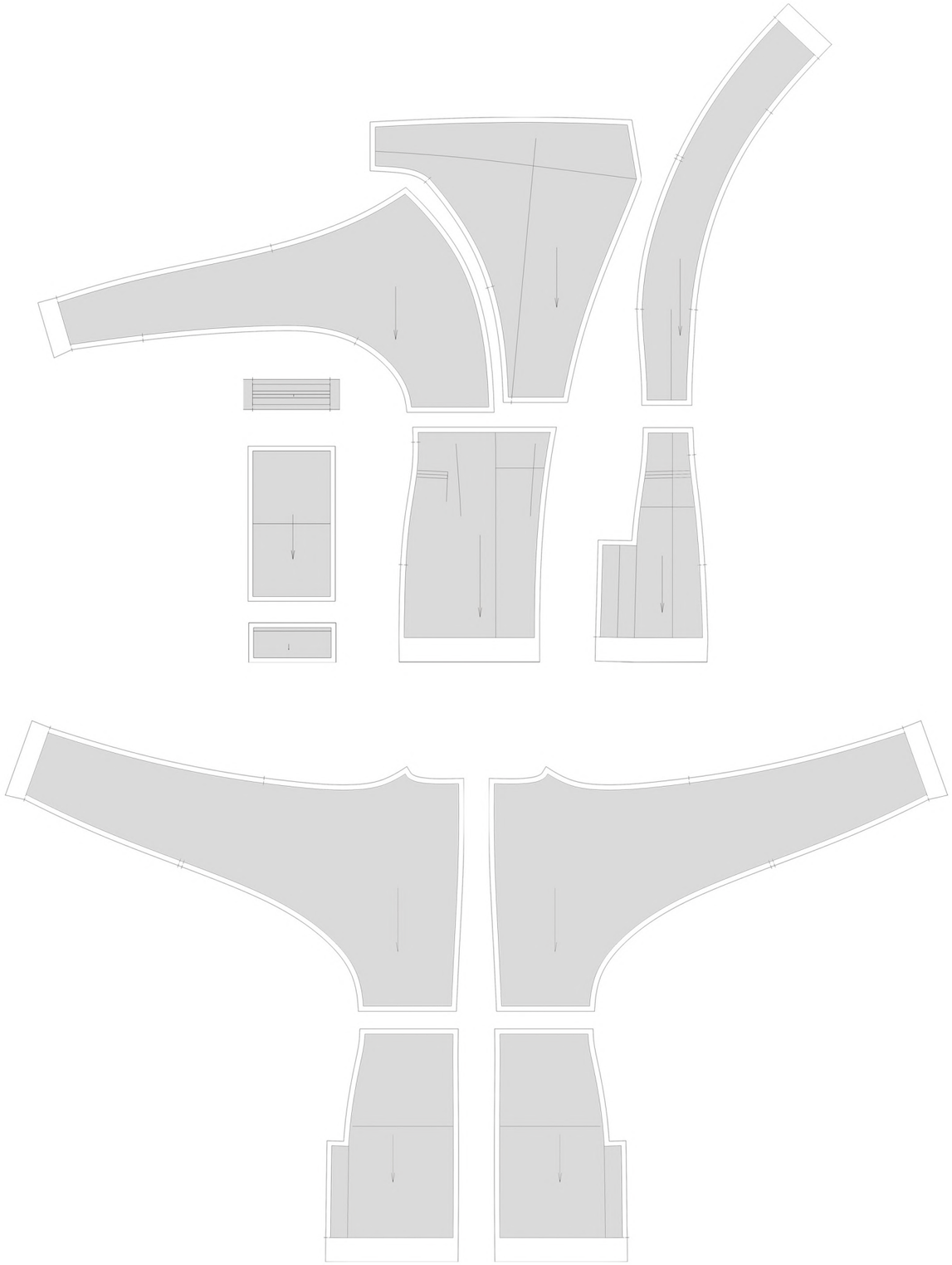


Figure 21: Feathers jacket pattern.



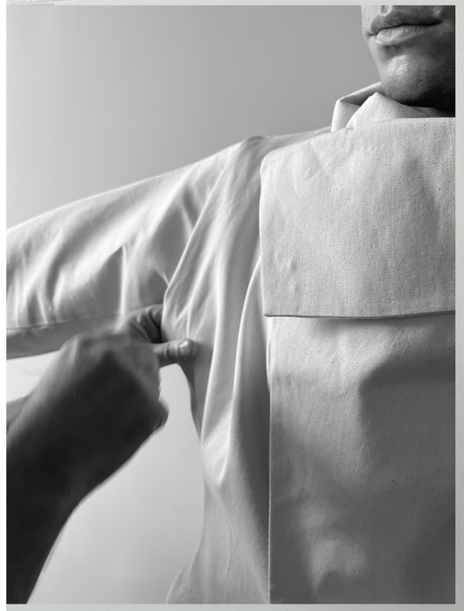


Figure 22: Toile Development

Figure 23: Toile Development



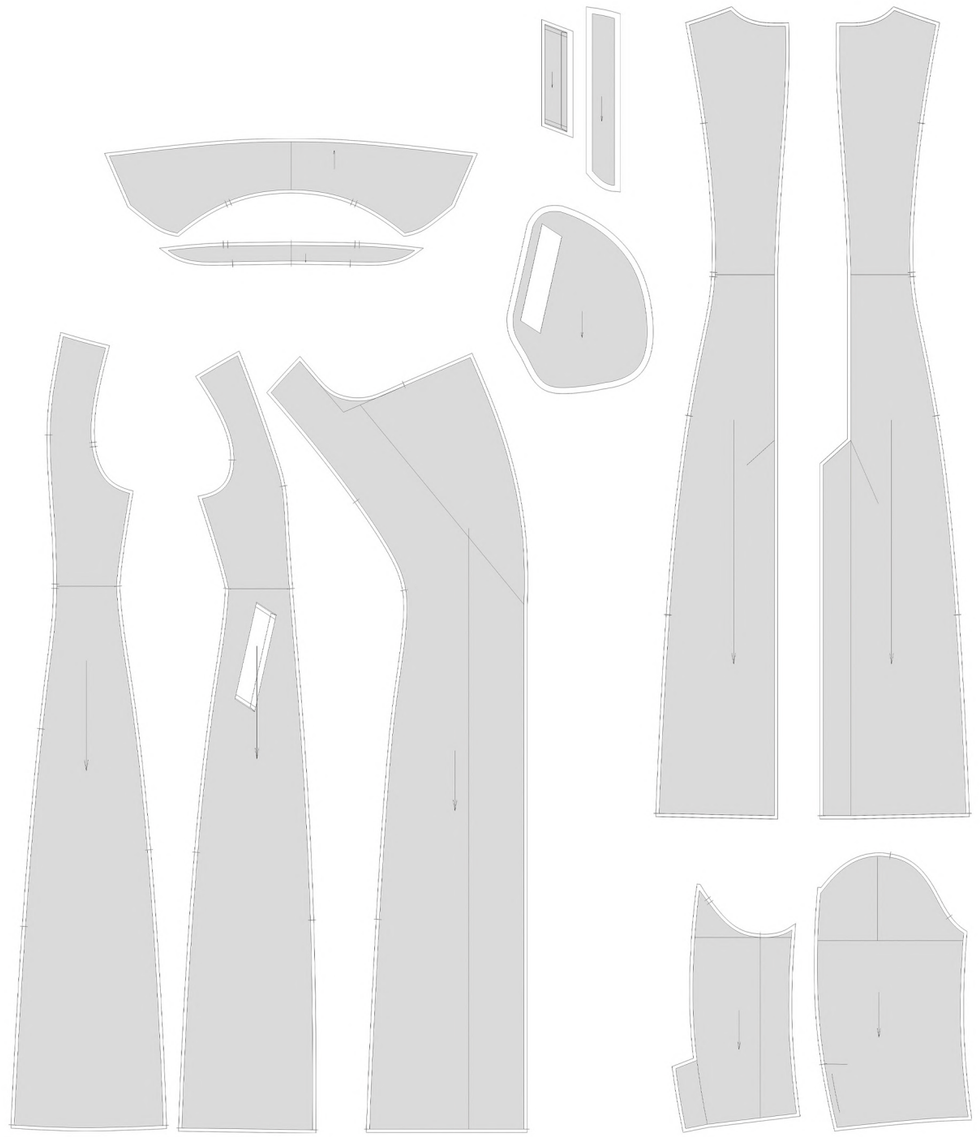


Figure 24: Feathers coat pattern.

LINEUP



Figure 25: Final Lineup.

KNITTING DEVELOPMENT



Figure 28:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 29:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 118:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

Figure 36:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 37:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Xueling Chen

Figure 38:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 39:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

Figure 40:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



LOOK BOOK

LOOK1



LOOK2



LOOK3



LOOK4



LOOK5



LOOK6



Figure 41:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 42:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

Figure 43:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen

Figure 44:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 45:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
Xueling Chen



Figure 46:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Figure 47:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 48:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 49:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 50:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 51:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 52:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Figure 53:
Feather3 FW2026
Xinyu Liu
Photo by
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Figure 54:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Figure 55:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Figure 56:
Feathers FW2026
Xinyu Liu
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Figure 57:
Feathers FW2026
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Figure 58:
Feathers FW2026
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