



THE SCOPE OF TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN PEARL EMBROIDERY

Approaches
of developing traditional
craft in a contemporary
way and expressing
social demand of current
time through gained
results

Ksenia Semirova

University of Brighton

MA Textile

ksemasemirova@gmail.com

THE SCOPE OF TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN PEARL EMBROIDERY	4
THE RANGE OF TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN PEARL EMBROIDERY TECHNIQUES	7
8 Sitting without base	
10 Cotton cord sitting	
12 Covering	
14 Embossed sitting	
SAMPLE EXPERIMENTS BOOK	17
WAR AGAINST WOMEN	32
36 Mother of God as the most worshiped woman in the Orthodox	
SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE	38
38 The Flag of Peace and Freedom	
39 Reasons to get rid of the color red	
40 The Flag of the Wonderful Russia of the Future	
PROTEST ART IN CURRENT REALITY	43
46 Fashion is not an option for the protest art now	
48 “Z” and “Potato bug” stripe	
SYMBOLS OF PROPAGANDA	49
51 Ribbon of Saint George	
52 High Class Propaganda	
FASHION TRENDS WATCHING	55
56 Resort and Couture 2022 + Chanel + Dion Lee	
59 Style Board	
PATTERN DEVELOPMENT	61
62 Practical References	
66 Patternt Sketching	

72 Embroidery Scheme Development	
74 Sample #1	
76 Sample #2	
78 Sample #3	
COMBINATIONS OF MATERIALS	81
EMBROIDERY PROCESS	85
86 Sample #1	
88 Embroidery process	
96 Sample #2	
98 Embroidery process	
104 Sample #3	
106 Embroidery process	
DRAPING / PROTOTYPING	113
116 Chosen ideas for the further development	
118 Digital Visualization of Collection	
120 Option 1	
122 Option 2	
124 Option 3	
126 Option 4	
SEWING THE OUTCOME	129
131 Final Pattern	
FINAL OUTCOME	141
BIBLIOGRAPHY	148
150 Illustrations	

The scope of traditional Russian pearl embroidery

Approaches of developing traditional craft in a contemporary way and expressing social demand of current time through gained results.

The original proposal was dedicated to an issue of Russian immigration and to the attempt to find alternative unifying symbol for the international community through the unique national heritage — traditional Russian pearl embroidery. However, 24th of February 2022, became a pivotal-point in each and every Russian who has stood against the local regime. The national war in Ukraine has completely divided Russian society for those who fully support the state's actions (mostly brainwashed by propaganda), who have to be silent due to a range of personal circumstances (mostly fear), and those who can openly express the disagreement and to protest (mostly immigrants).

After 24th of February, Russia completely converted to an authoritarian state. It means that propaganda (or better to say “pure lie”) and fear became the only tools for the state to interact with the society. Currently, any activism is strongly prohibited by the law and the punishment for such “crimes” is equal to rape or murder. Additionally, the notion “activism” must be clarified. Currently, the colors of Ukrainian flag are prohibited, any one-man picket considers as a crime, posting openly any disagreements about “special military operation” (the only acceptable term for war) in personal social media or in private chats is equated to discredit of local military which means criminal act as well. This list that described activist actions can be continued.

In such a context, it is almost impossible to conduct independent social research about the local public opinion for the war or any other state's actions. Only Navalny's team is trying to handle such surveys with indirect questions. Unfortunately, their voice is less heard by the international community than the official propaganda. Thus, the claims

of international press and accusations of the public that Russians do not want to resist or have never wanted to fight back to the regime are spreading around. This is a tough and separate discussion that deserves deep and thoughtful social research. However, from the personal observation, it is stated that since at least 2012 local activists had been constantly trying to confront the government. And the state developed brutal and aggressive machine to marginalize the concept of civil society and to strangle even the tiny thought about protest in the public.

However, it is absolutely clear that the majority of Russian immigrants are strongly opposed to the idea of an invasion of the independent foreign state. And they are ready to openly express the disagreement on rallies, to volunteer for supporting refugees, to donate and to organize charity initiatives. Suddenly, it is become clear that such a community cannot be associated with current Russia. So, the new symbol of “The Wonderful Russia of the Future” (one of expressions by Navalny) has appeared simultaneously in several communities. The White-Blue-White flag. The flag without Red, or better to say, blood. Discussions about the flag were personally observed in social media. Thus, it is confirmed that it is impossible to identify the Copywrite, but generally the symbol was approved by the community. Currently, the WBW (white-blue-white) flag is a recognizable unofficial symbol of Russian resistance. It must be mentioned that it is banned inside Russia.

This project aims to look at Russian heritage from the perspective of the craft. Since hand embroidery is an area of both academic and practice interests, it is reasonable to look at the traditional Russian pearl embroidery technique and give it a contemporary interpretation. It is

believed that this part of national heritage might not only be preserved as an ancient technique, but also it might be modernized and used in fashion and textile industries these days. Additionally, it is possible to express the current social agenda through such craft, which would be the key feature of the project.

The current situation in Russia has forced a dramatic amount of people to search for a new home around the globe. The war has boosted the number of immigrants repeatedly. So now there are no statistics on how many people abandoned the country. It is known that some immigrants decided to leave the state in one day. Also, people claimed that they just cannot stay in such a hostile and aggressive society any longer. Although, they are ready to consider themselves as Russians (and do not support regime) in their new home, but in present circumstances, they do not wish to show the national characteristics without absolute necessity. Such social behavior is absolutely understandable. At the same time, it is believed that even a tiniest voice of disagreeing Russian is vital now.

In present reality, the united community that clearly states their anti-war and against-regime, and represents alternative democratic, humanity-centered Russia, is highly required. It is believed that traditional craft can serve as a medium for interpretation of new national symbol and help to represent national culture and identity as a novelty, not a range of multiply used cliches.

The project aims to study and practice in both canon and alternative ways of pearl embroidery. “Alternative” implies the range of experiments that require finding supplemental visual representations of traditional craft that could have been applied both in industry and in the further creative research. The outcome of this project, that aims to represent the social agenda through gained results, requires additional visual and contextual research to find the proper design idea. However, it is clear that the color palette for the outcome will correspond to the white-blue-white flag — the Russian resistance international community.



Experiments with traditional pearl embroidery technique



Canon example of Russian pearl embroidery technique



Prophet Solomon. Fresco.

The oldest visually recorded mention of pearl embroidery in Russia was at Saint Sophia Cathedral (Novgorod) by the XI century.



The oldest physical monument of Russian goldwork pre-Mongolian period with pearl embroidery elements XII century belonged to Varlaam Khutynsky is placed in Spaso-Preobrazhensky Khutynsky Monastery in Veliky Novgorod.

The range of Traditional Russian Pearl embroidery techniques

Vishnevskaya, I. (2007). Pearl Embroidery in Russia. Moscow: State Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve "Moscow Kremlin," p.66.

Yakunina, Y. (1955). Russian Pearl Embroidery. Moscow: Iskusstvo Publishing, p.156.

The oldest mention of pearl embroidery is by the X century (according to Pereyaslavl chronicle)

Primary application:

- Church Vestments and Liturgical Fabrics
- Secular clothing, hats, shoes
- Horse harness, equestrian archer weapon set
- Folk finery



Sitting without base



Basic cord sitting



Embossed sitting



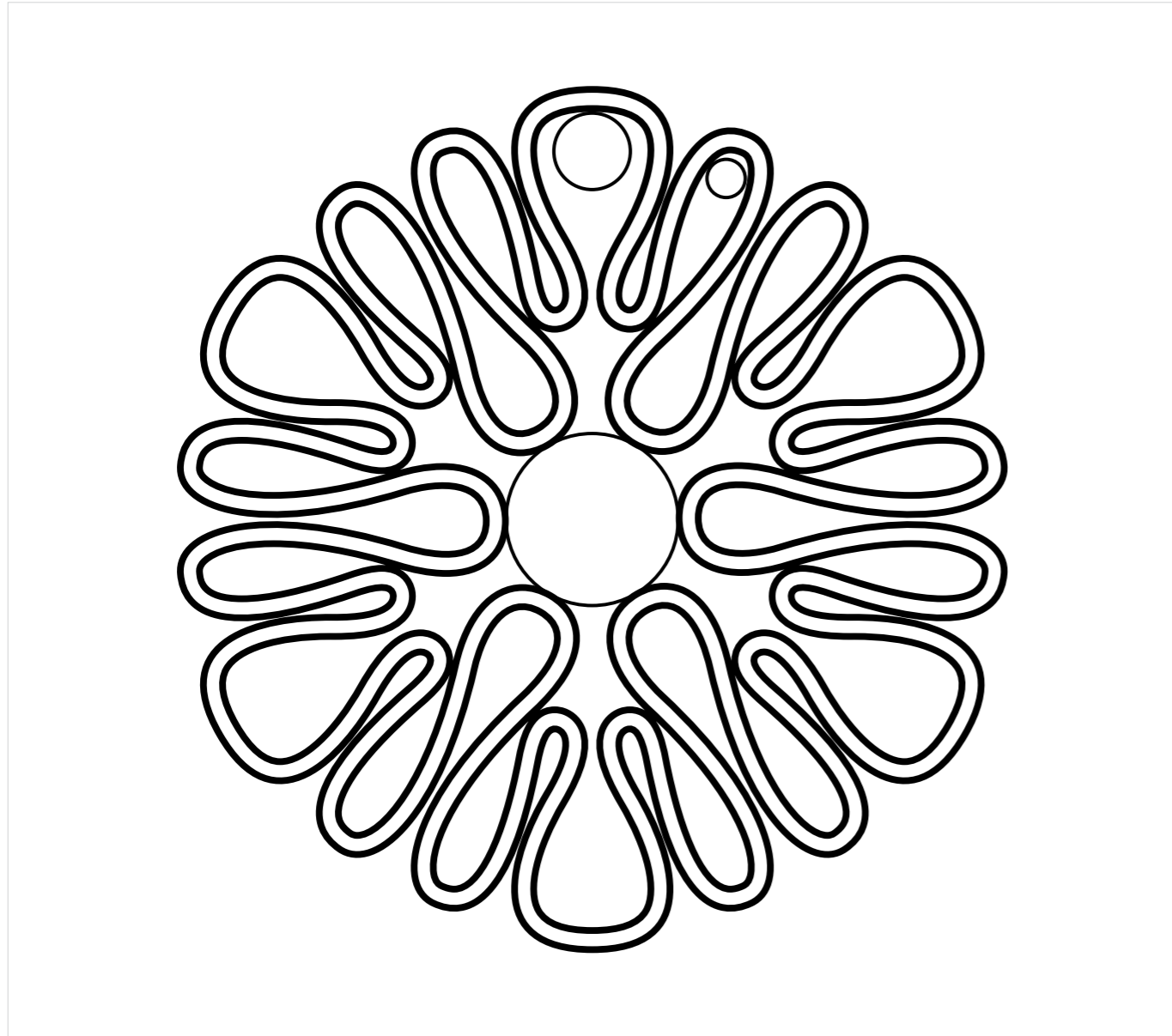
Full covering - Sitting imitation



High covering



Embossed sitting



**Basic pattern
for embroidery
experiments**

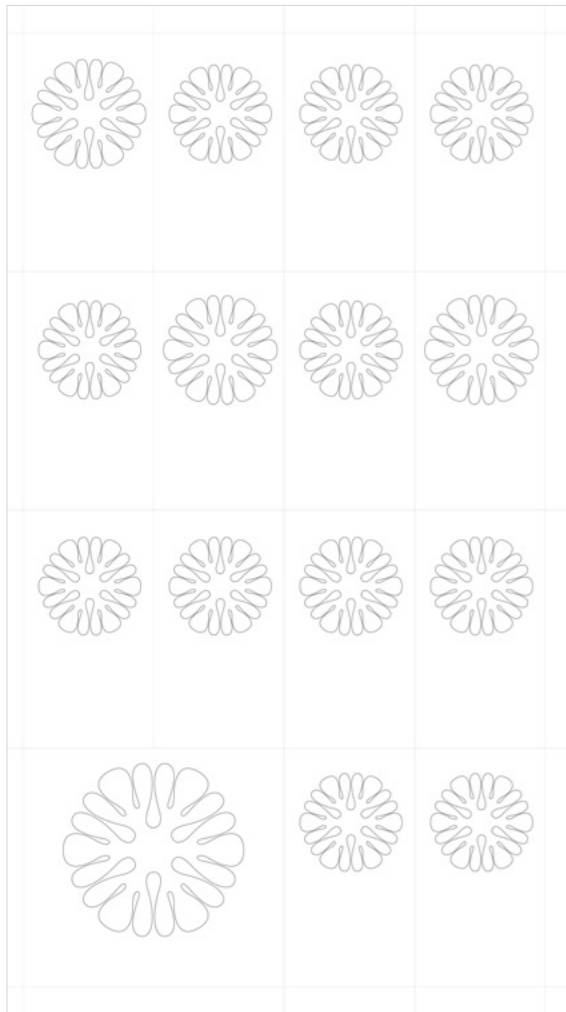
Such a design was developed to check how not really flexible embroidery techniques such as Cord sitting might work on the curvy and dense pattern.

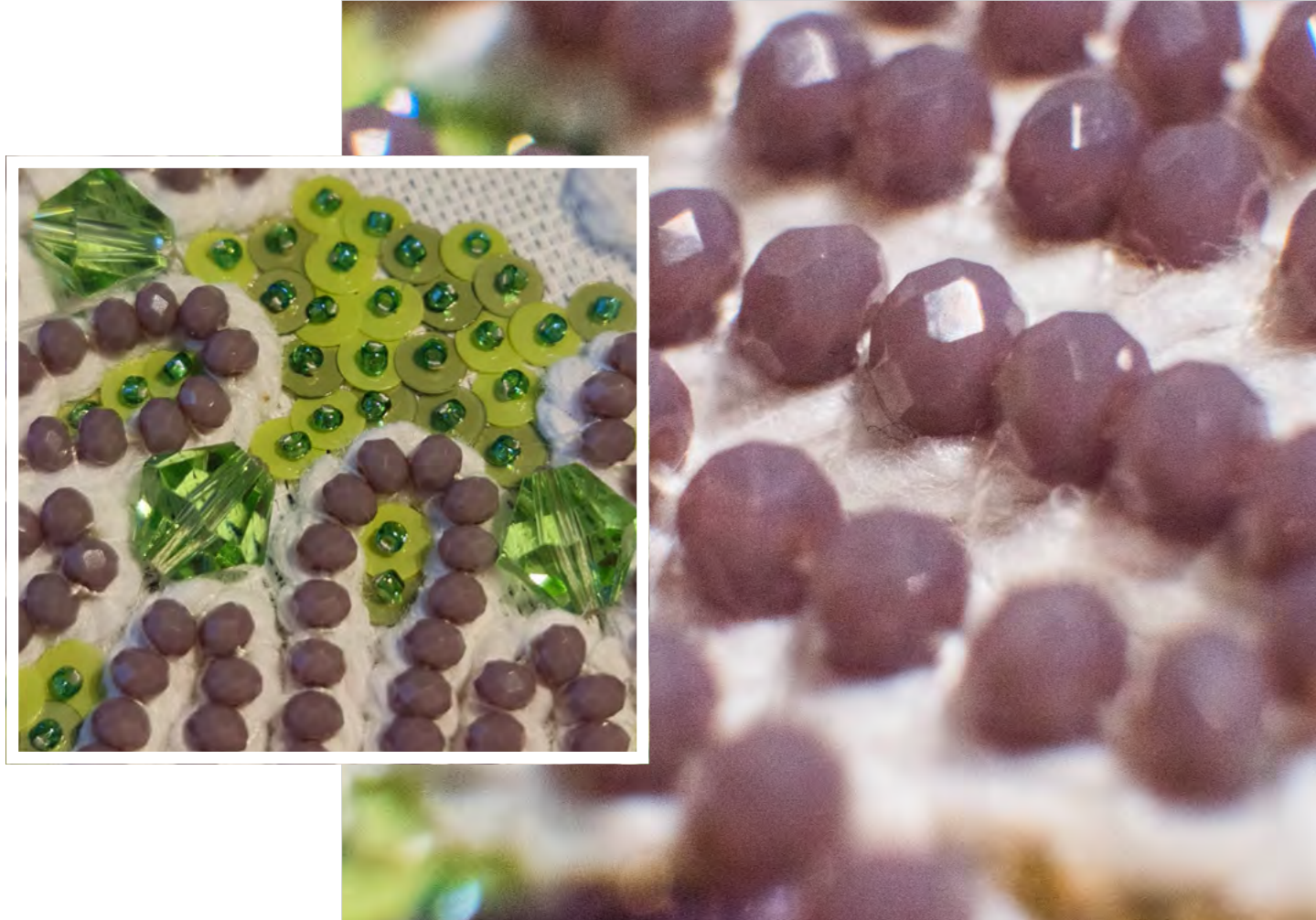
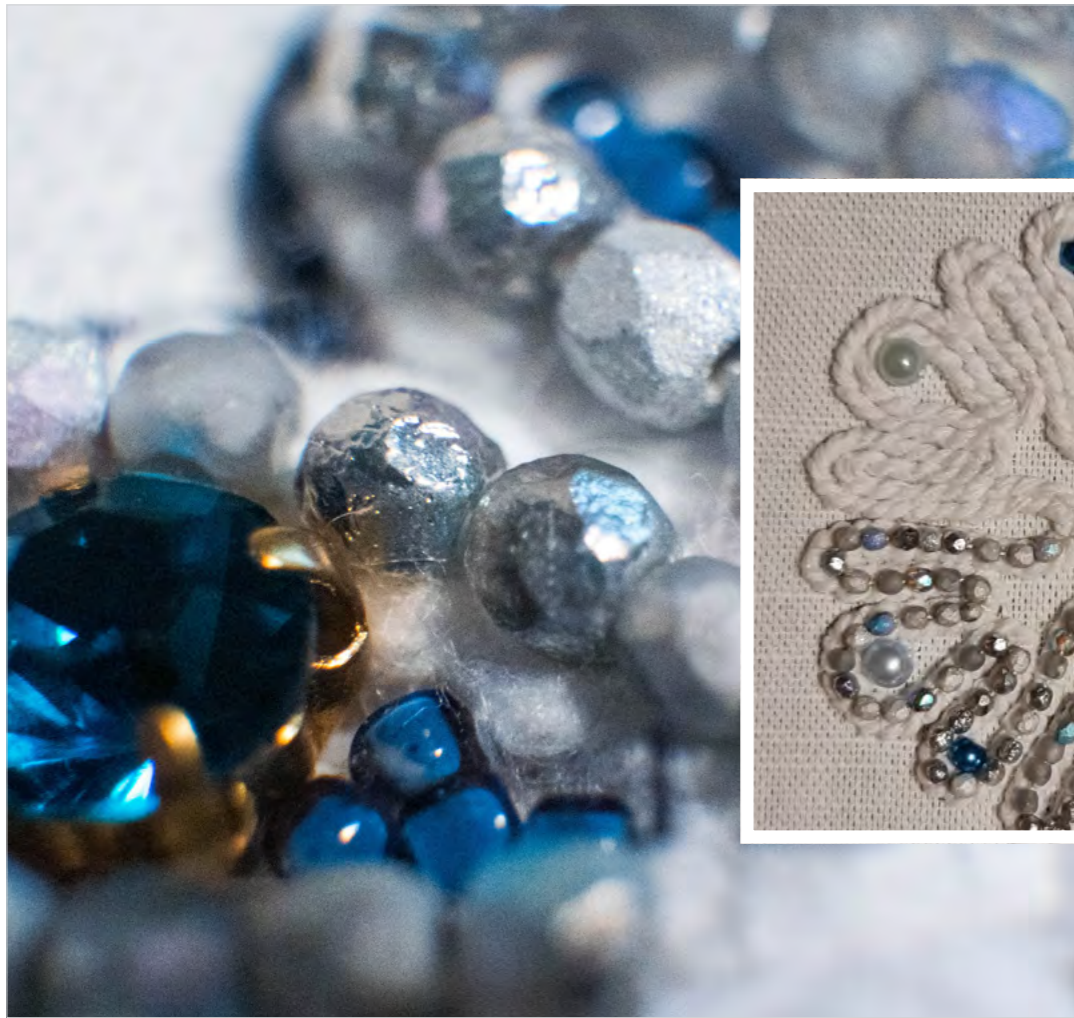
Sample I Experiments Book

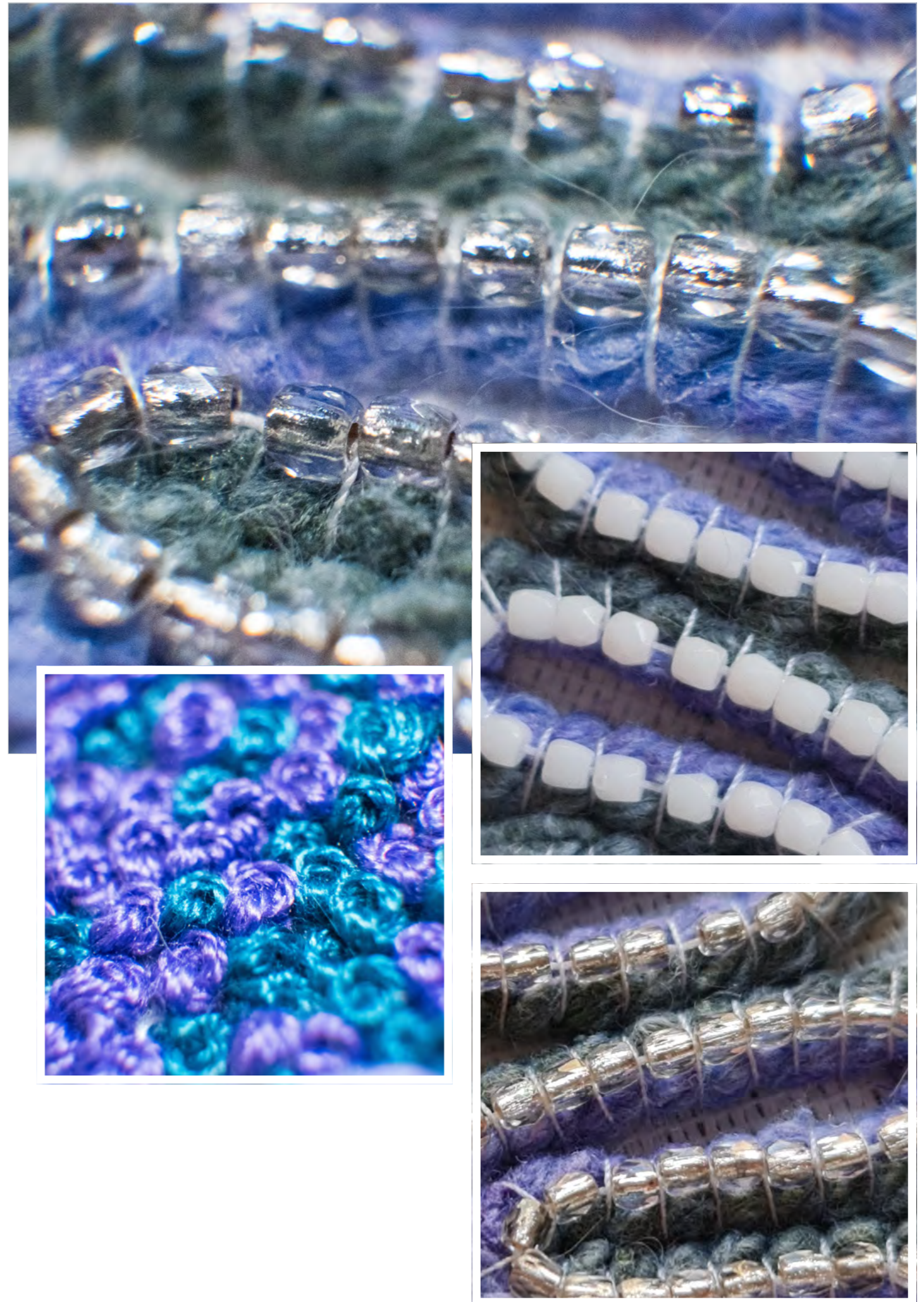




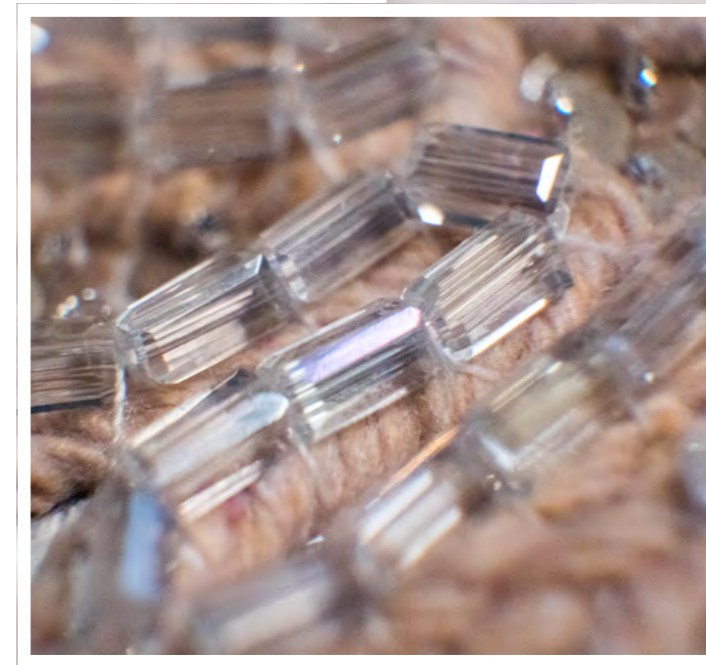
Base fabric
Linen & Satin

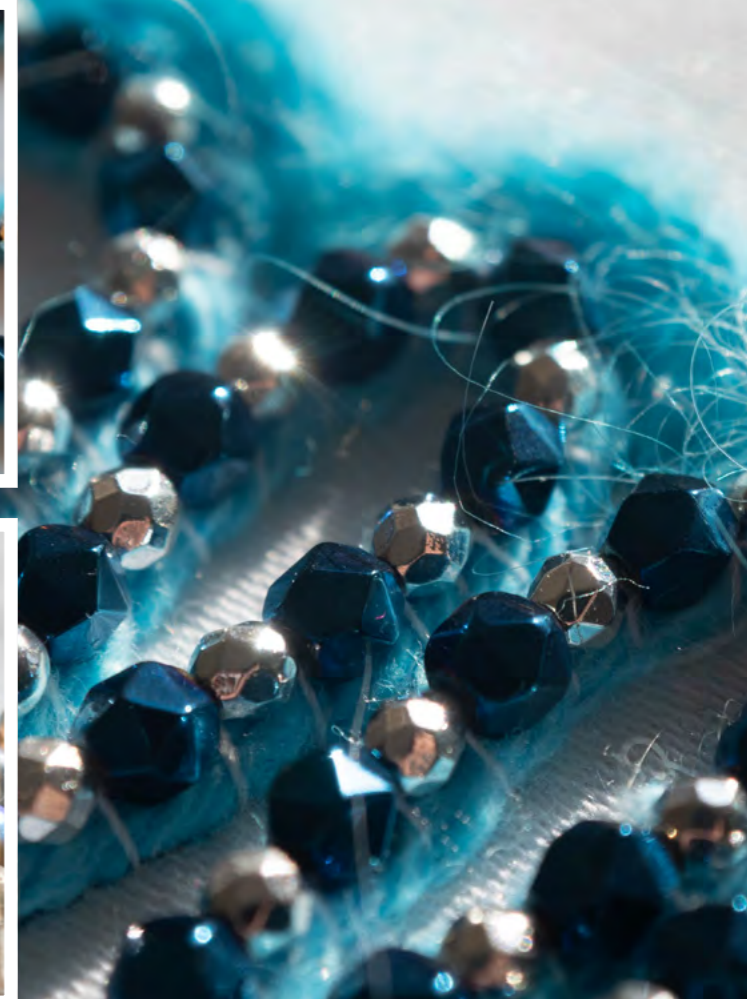
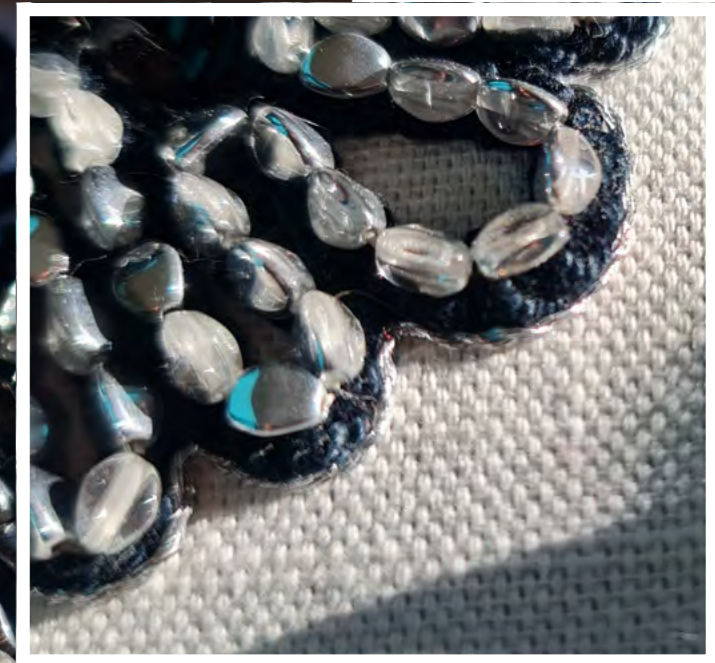
















2020

Irina Slavina (local publisher) publicly committed suicide (self-immolation) as an act of protest against constant personal harassment performed by the local government.

WHILE MY MOTHER WAS BURNING ALIVE, YOU WERE SILENT

War against Women

They say that Russians cannot and don't want to protest against the War and regime. This statement is highly arguable. Especially, when the context of current reality is known. During at least a decade, the state has been establishing a strong and complex oppressing system to show the society that protest (any form) is illegal and dangerous. Activists were the primary target for these repressions. The special focus was aimed at female activists who were oppressed with raw violence. In present days, such brutal actions against women are spread wider, including local activist or just individuals who want to show any (tiny) disagreement with the state's course.



2021

During the summer of 2021, Nika Nikulshina (Pussy Riot activist) was detained for 15 days three times successively without any official charge.

2.



2022

Evgenia Isaeva (art activist) was detained for her anti-war performance "Heart is bleeding".

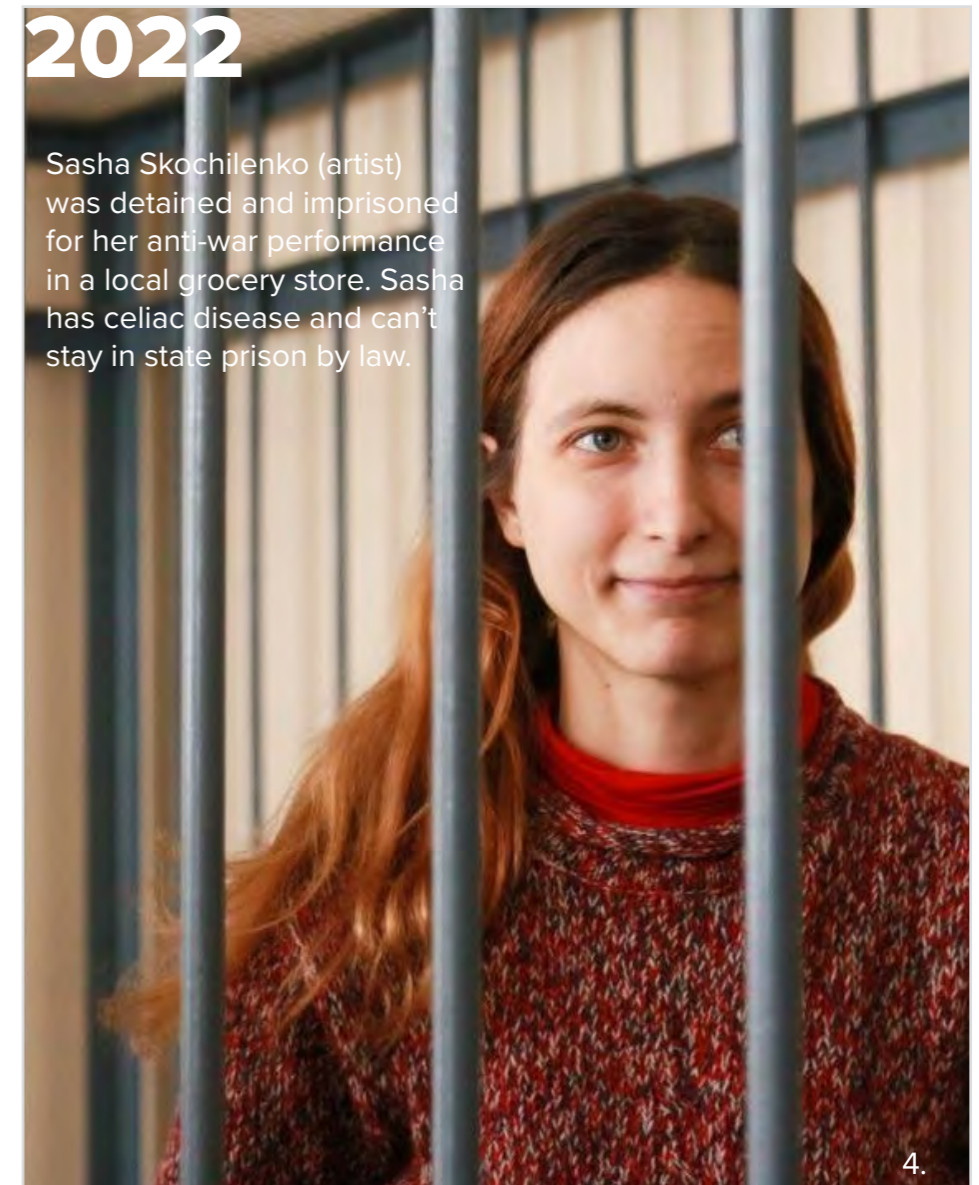
3.



2022

Elena Osipova (77 years old artist) has been constantly protesting against the regime since 2002. In April 2022, she was held by police for her anti-war declaration.

3.



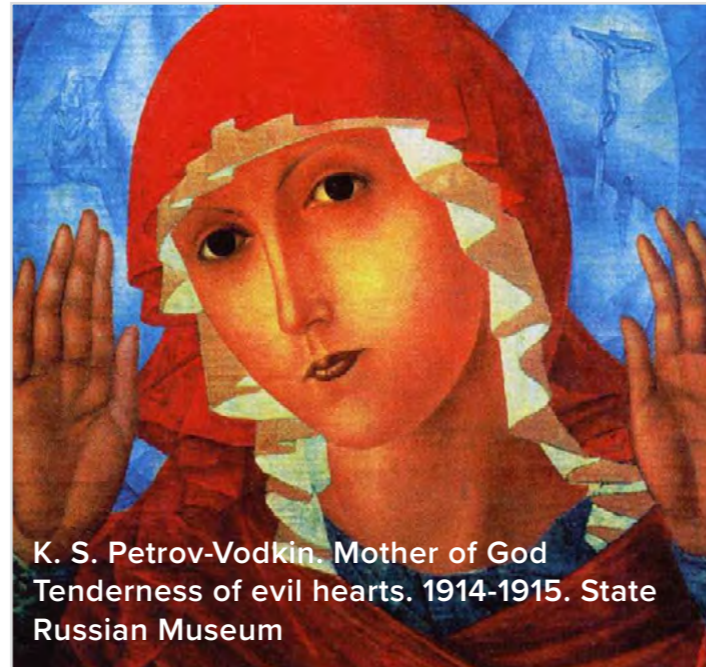
2022

Sasha Skochilenko (artist) was detained and imprisoned for her anti-war performance in a local grocery store. Sasha has celiac disease and can't stay in state prison by law.

4.



Theotokos of Bogolyubovo. 1157.



K. S. Petrov-Vodkin. Mother of God Tenderness of evil hearts. 1914-1915. State Russian Museum



Icon "Mother of God" from the Deesis tier of the iconostasis of the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. Last quarter of the XIV century, Feofan Grek (?)

Mother of God as the most worshiped woman in the Orthodox

Although, most of regime leaders (including the major one) have over one family (official wife and one or more mistresses), the Orthodox is an official doctrine that aggressively imposes to society. And it is funny that in Russian tradition, the Mother of God (a woman) worships almost equally as a Christ. Also funny, that Orans and Agiosoritissa, or simply Mdiatrix, are a frequent motif in local iconography.

So, to me, such brutal violence against women (shown previously) is an offence of official beliefs, complete disrespect and ignorance not only to human being, but to the own culture. Unfortunately, such notions don't bother authorities.



Icon "Yaroslavl Oranta". Apr. 1218. Tretyakov Gallery

Symbol of Resistance



The Flag of Peace and Freedom

Before 24 of February, my project aimed to research the idea of alternative symbols that might connect Russian immigrants. After that date, such a symbol has suddenly occurred. It became clear that for those Russians (who don't support the war against another sovereign country) it is impossible to express their feelings and thoughts after the official state flag.

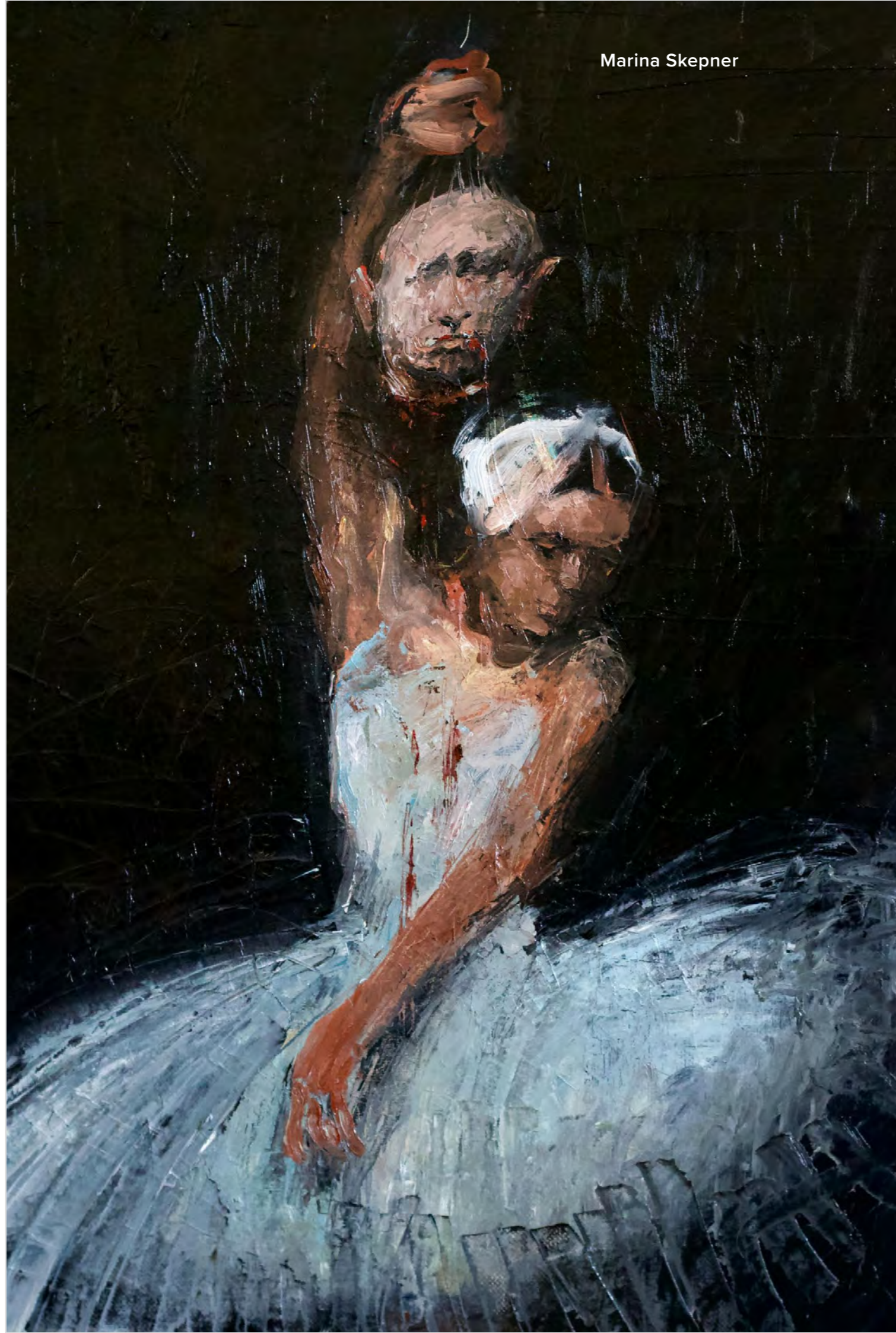
The same idea came to absolutely different people - to get rid of red color on the current flag. Now, at least three groups of activists claim the copywrite. To me, it absolutely doesn't matter. I fully agree with the idea. So the color palette (white and blue) for the project is absolutely clear.



Reasons to get rid of the color red

There are several reasons to get rid of the color red on Russia's flag. The proposed new flag:

- references the former flag of Veliky Novgorod, a town known as the "the cradle of Russian democracy";
- resembles the Belarusian white-red-white protest flag;
- brings to mind sky and snow;
- isn't already used by another country;
- no blood connotation.



ЭТО НУЖНО НЕ МЕРТВЫМ,
ЭТО НУЖНО ЖИВЫМ

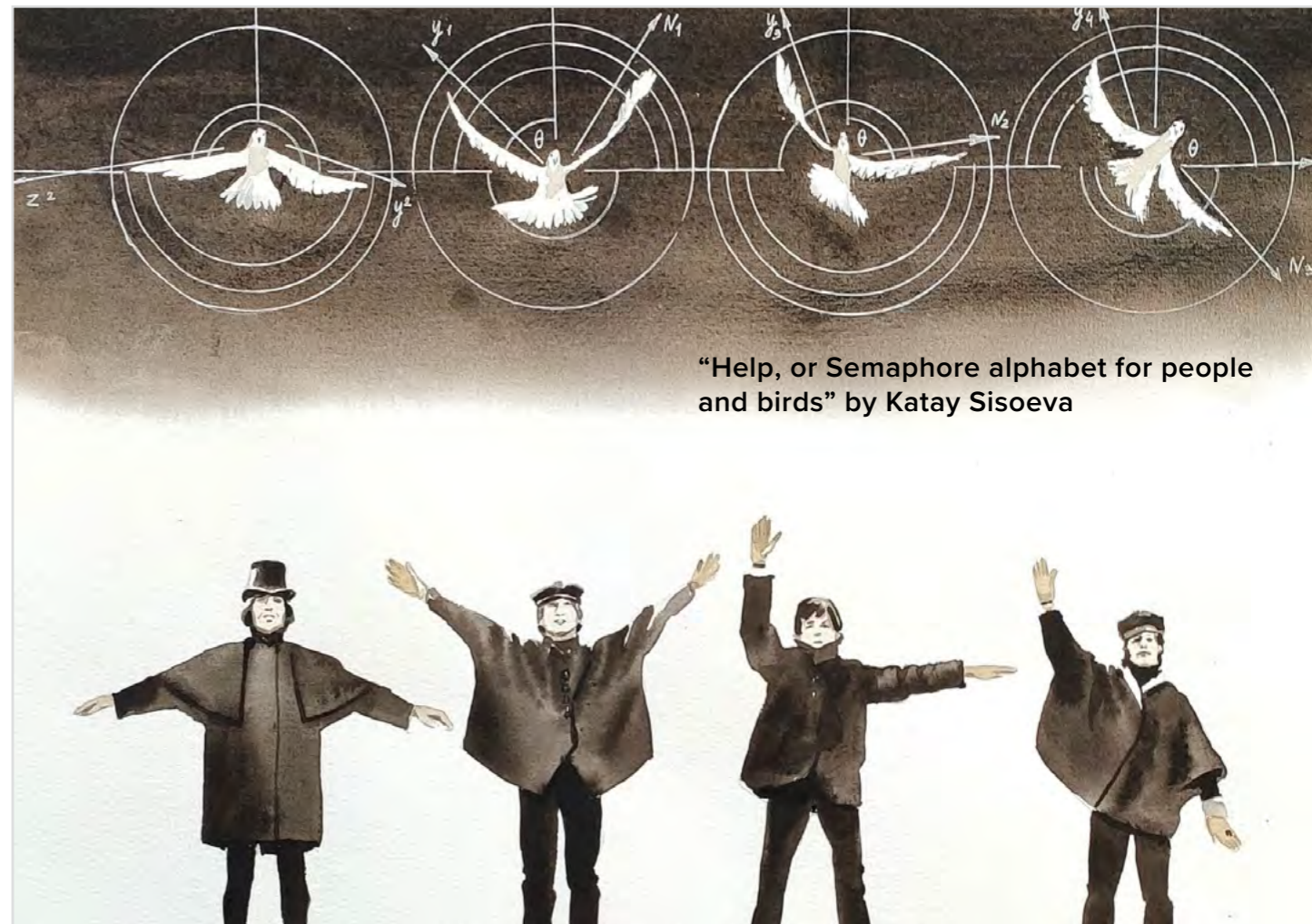


Protest art in current reality



Praematerna

DOESN'T CALL



"Help, or Semaphore alphabet for people and birds" by Katay Sisoeva



Minesweeper, with an encrypted message
*** ***** by Anonymous



Zip Group

GREAT FACELESS RUSSIAN PEOPLE



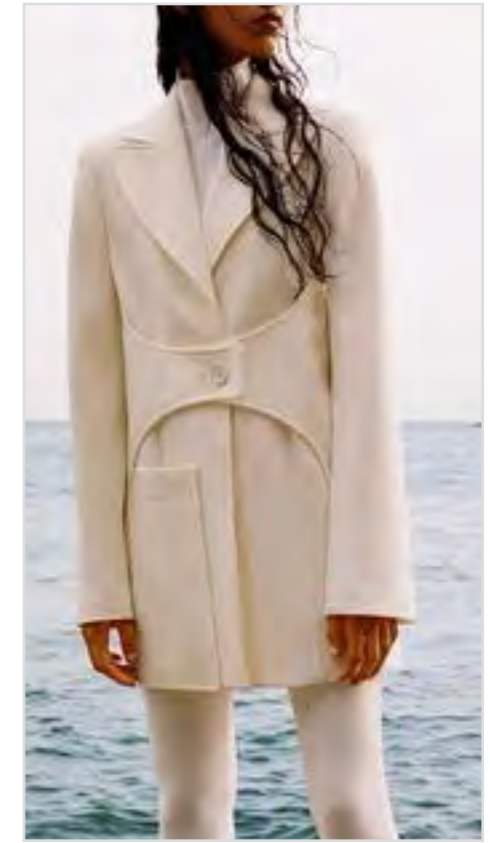
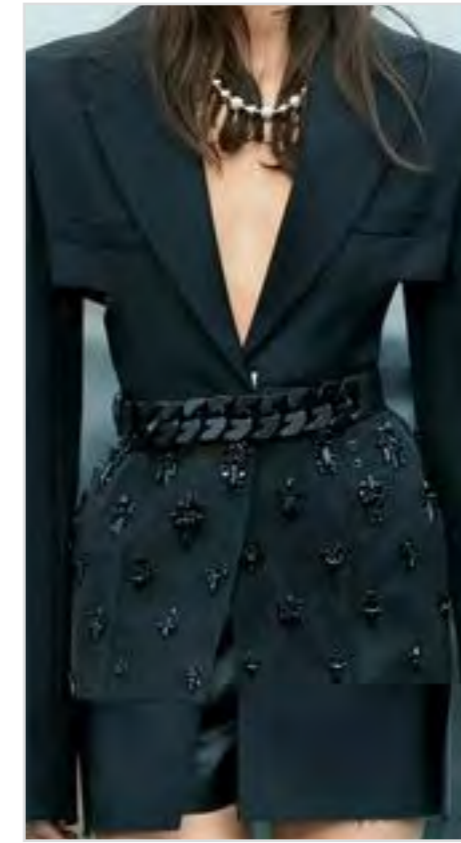
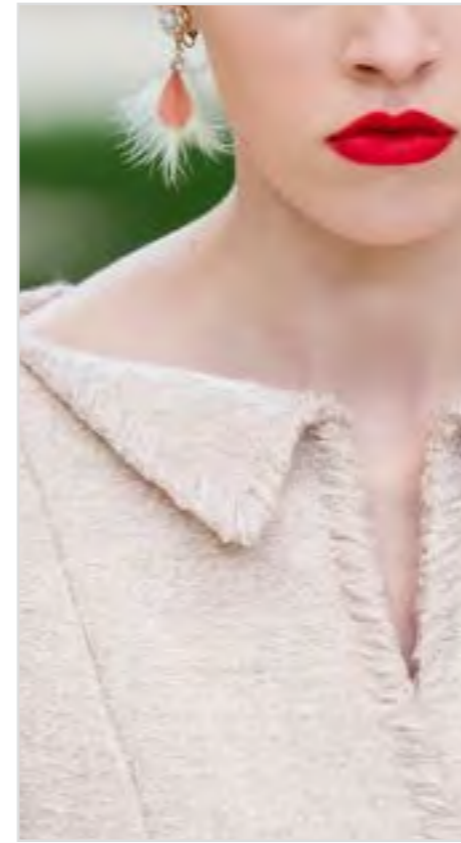
Fashion is not an option for the protest art now

Colors of Ukrainian flag, symbols of peace (say Dove) on brooches or patches, nail polishing, the packaging of burgers, even white paper - almost anything might be a reason for holding by police, considerable fine and/ or imprisonment. So styling and street fashion become a powerful tool to protest in current Russian reality, even if you don't mean it.

At first, to me, it was a kind of surprising that no local fashion brand (big or small) presents anti-war products. After several news about penalties and detentions, the reason became obvious.



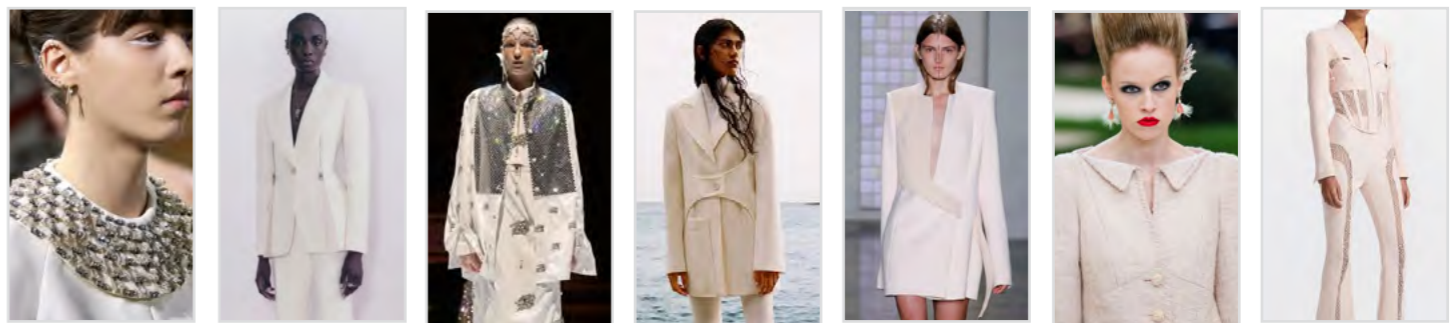
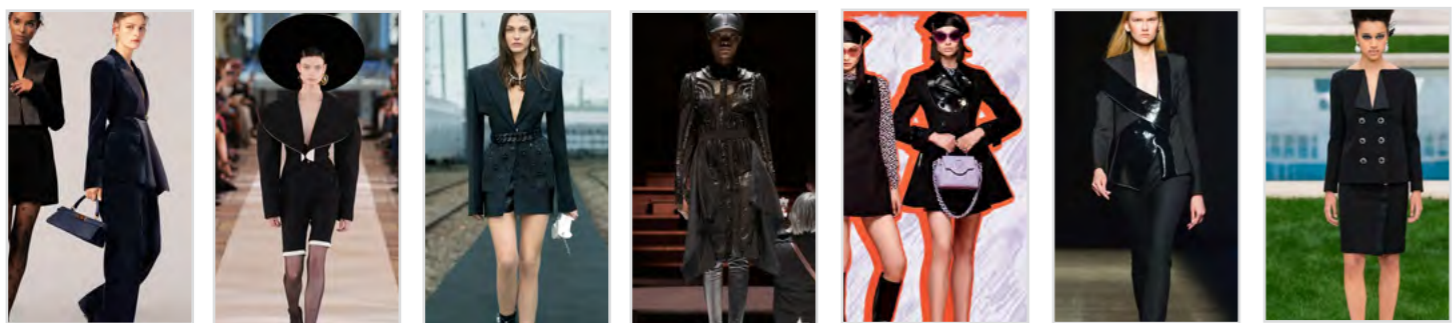
Anna Gorovets in a jacket with a bird patch / Personal Anna's photo



Fashion Trends Watching

Resort and Couture 2022 + Chanel + Dion Lee

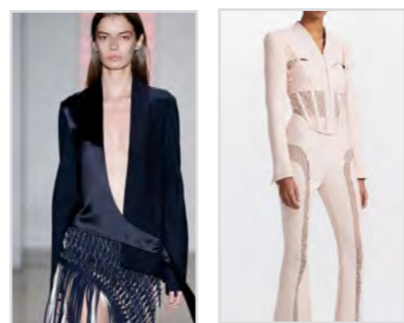
COLOR



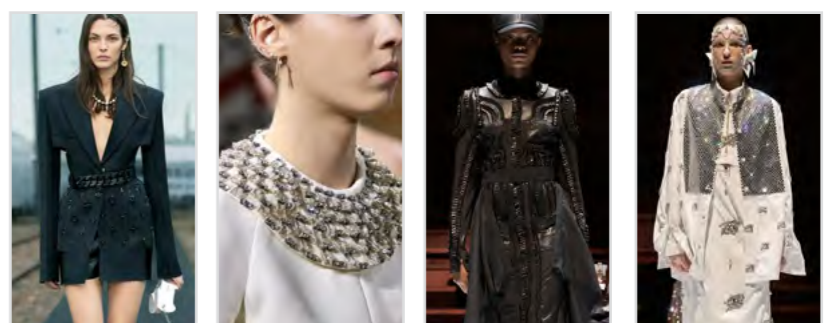
ADDITIONAL FORMS



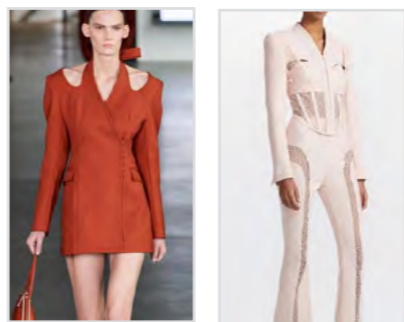
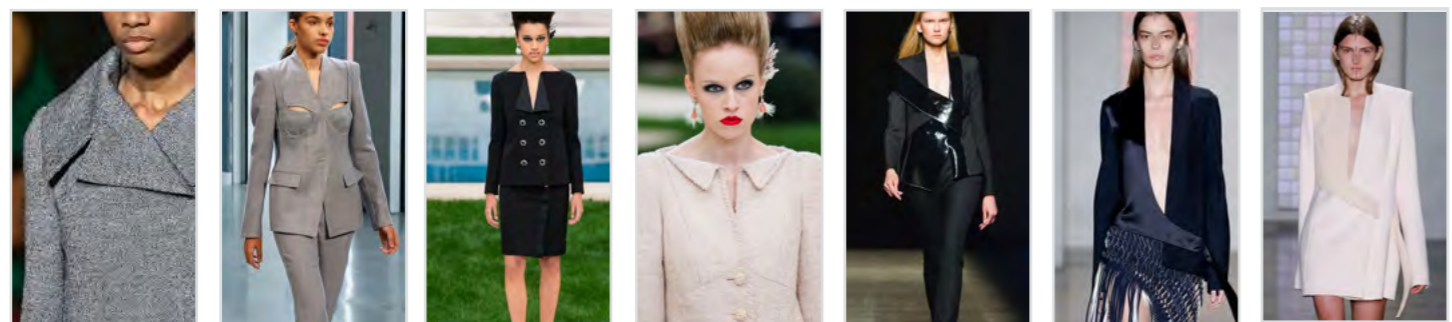
FABRICS / MATERIALS COMBINATIONS



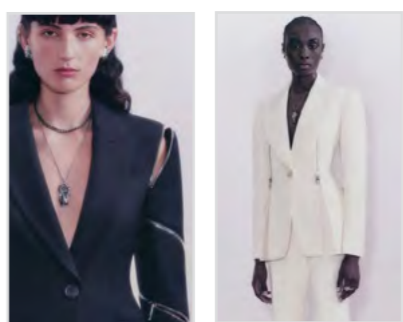
EMBELLISHMENT



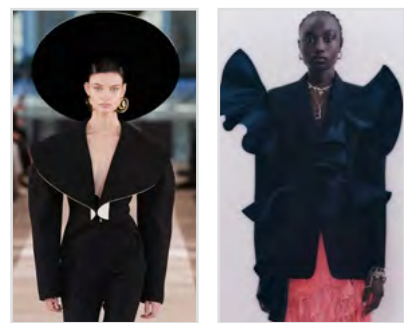
UNUSUAL FORMS



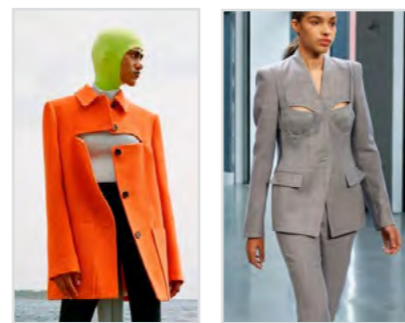
ZIPS



ENLARGED FORMS



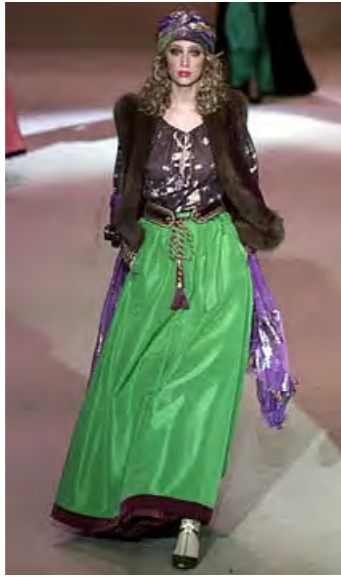
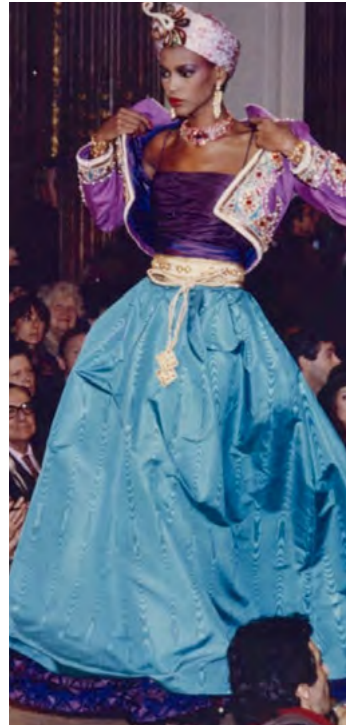
CUTS



After not really insightful search through Couture and Resorts, I decided to look at a couple of other seasons of Chanel. Also, I found an amazing source of inspiration - designer Dion Lee. So this spread is a combination of trends insights enriched with Chanel and Dion Lee in previous seasons.

Such an approach really helps to look wider, explore insights (often underestimated) from previous collections, and adopt everything to the current context.

Free Interpretation of Heritage



Color Palette



Garment as a Statement



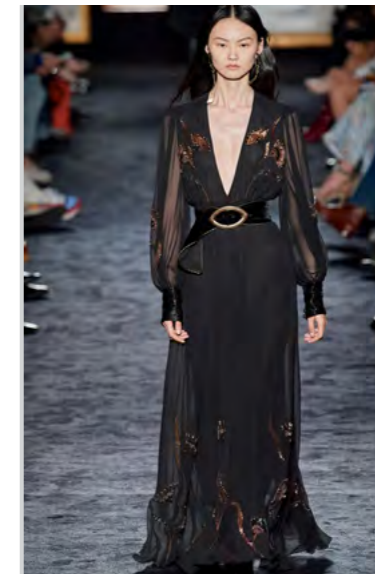
Idea of Protection



Militant Idea of Protection

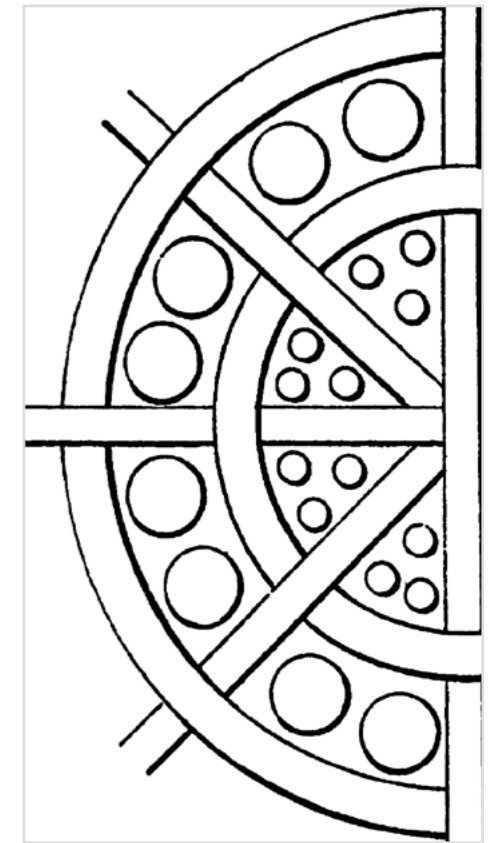
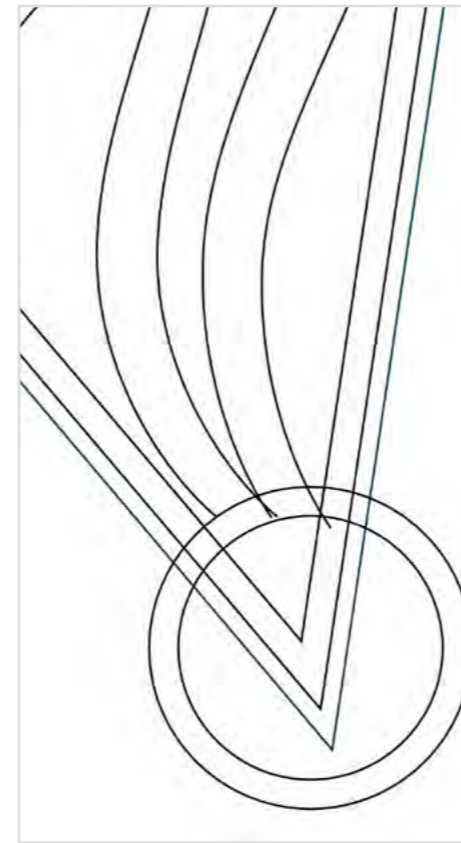


Leather

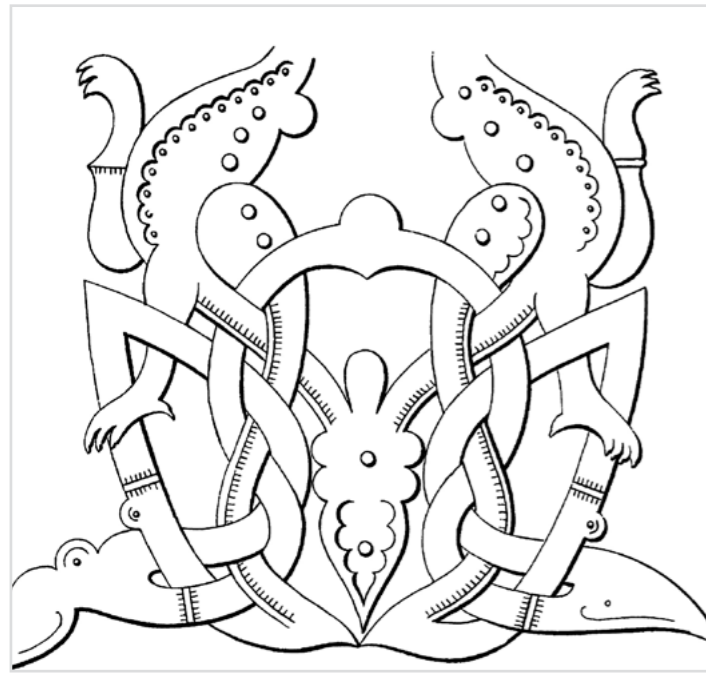


Current trends of modernized 70s

Style Board

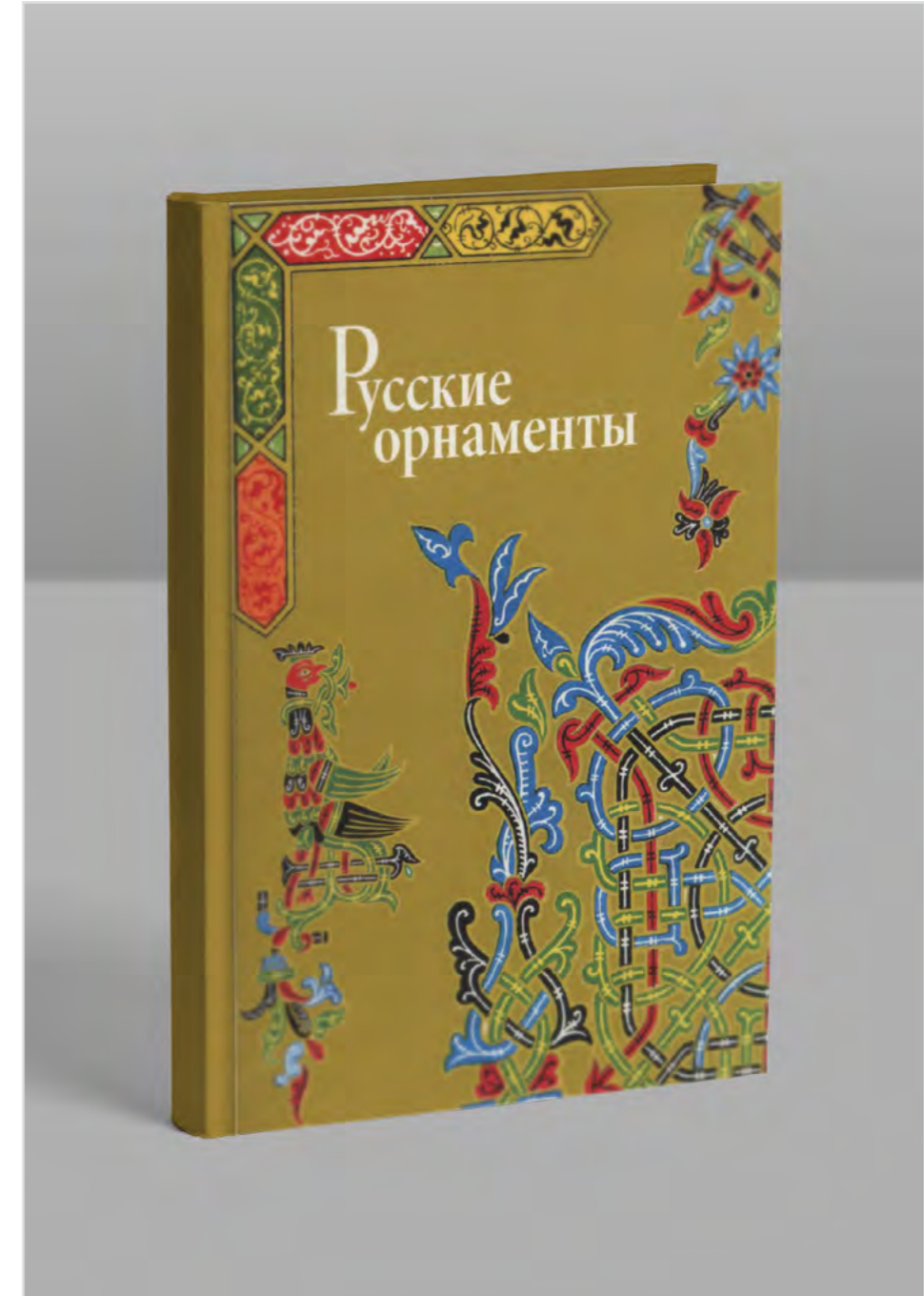


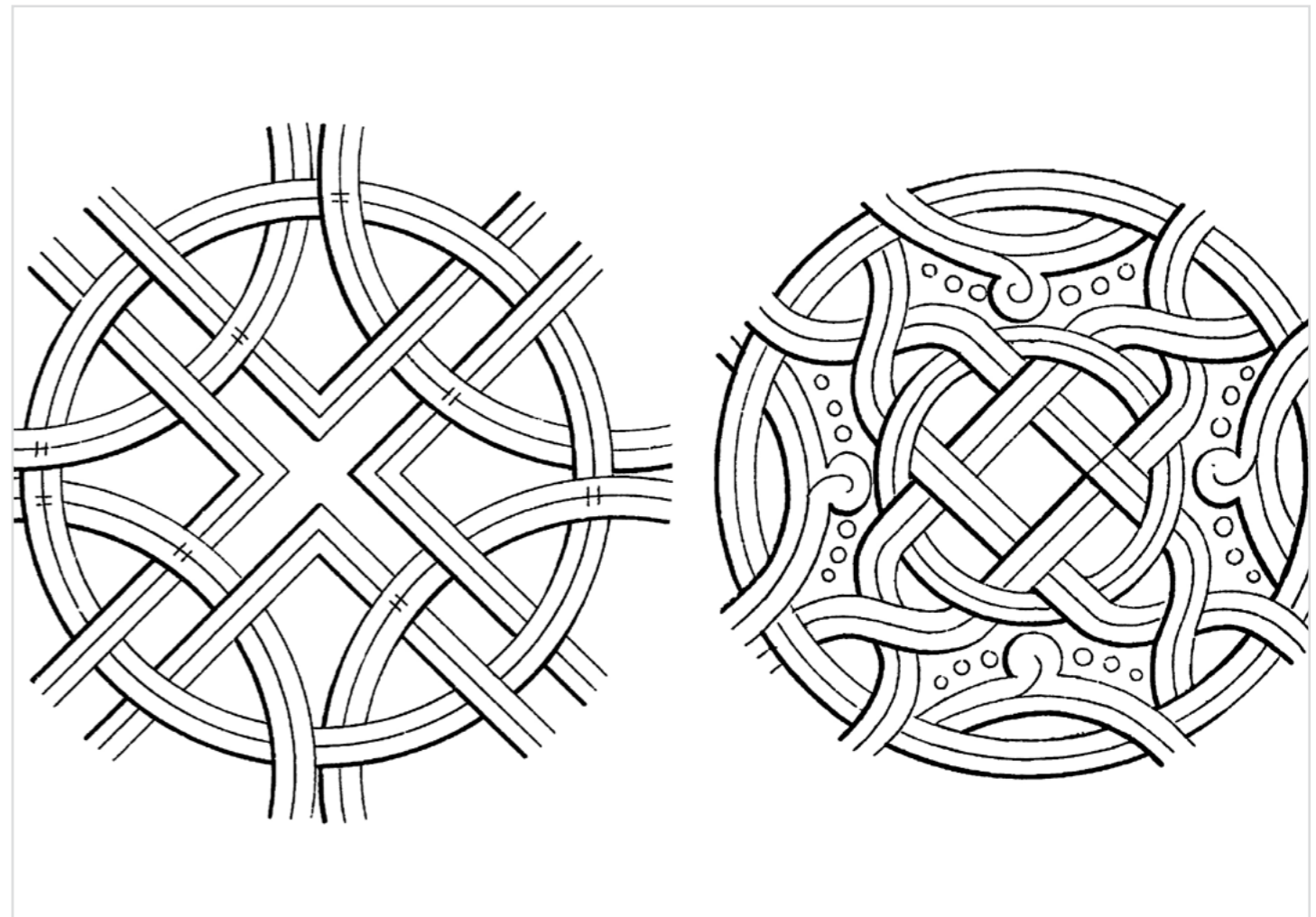
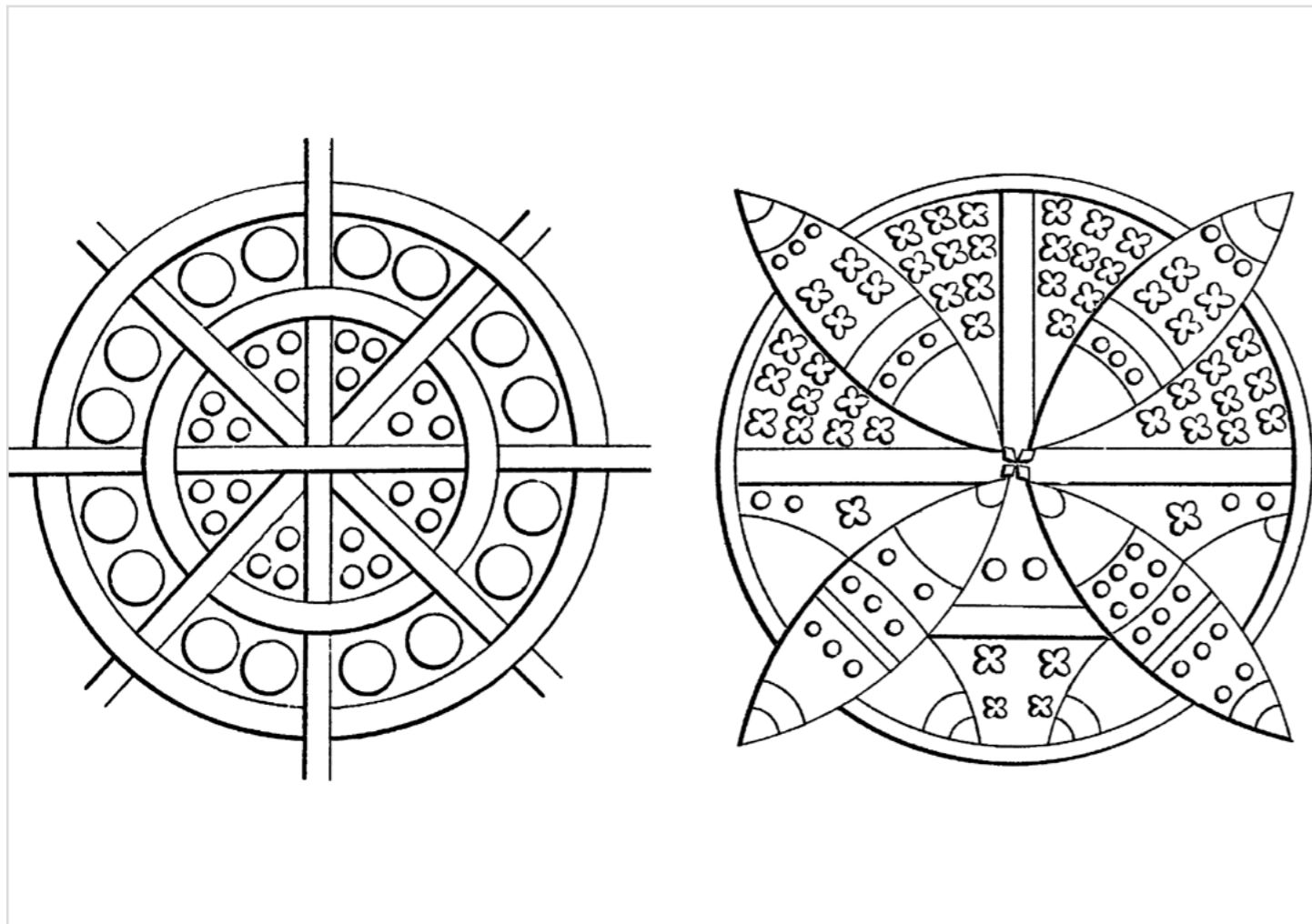
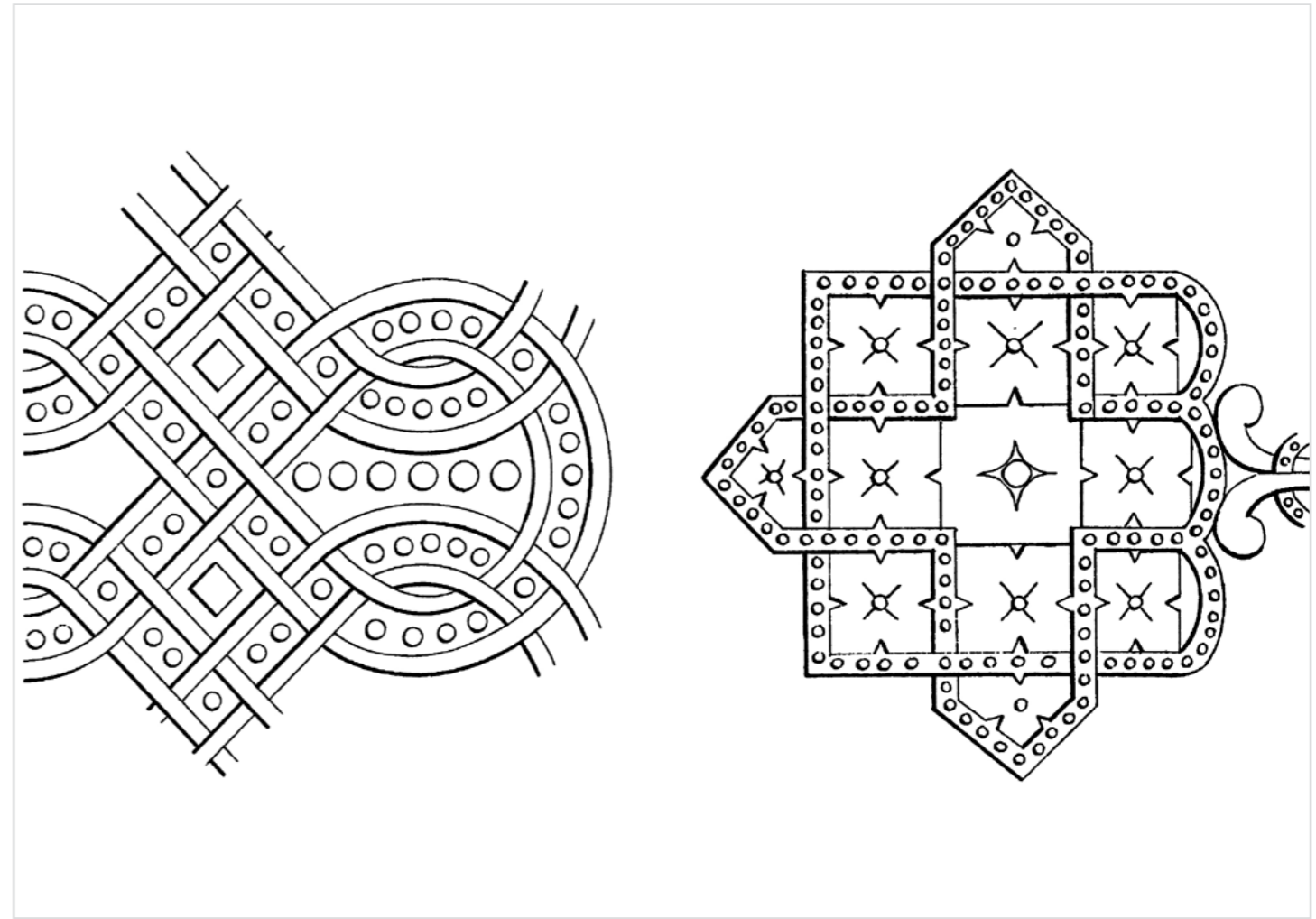
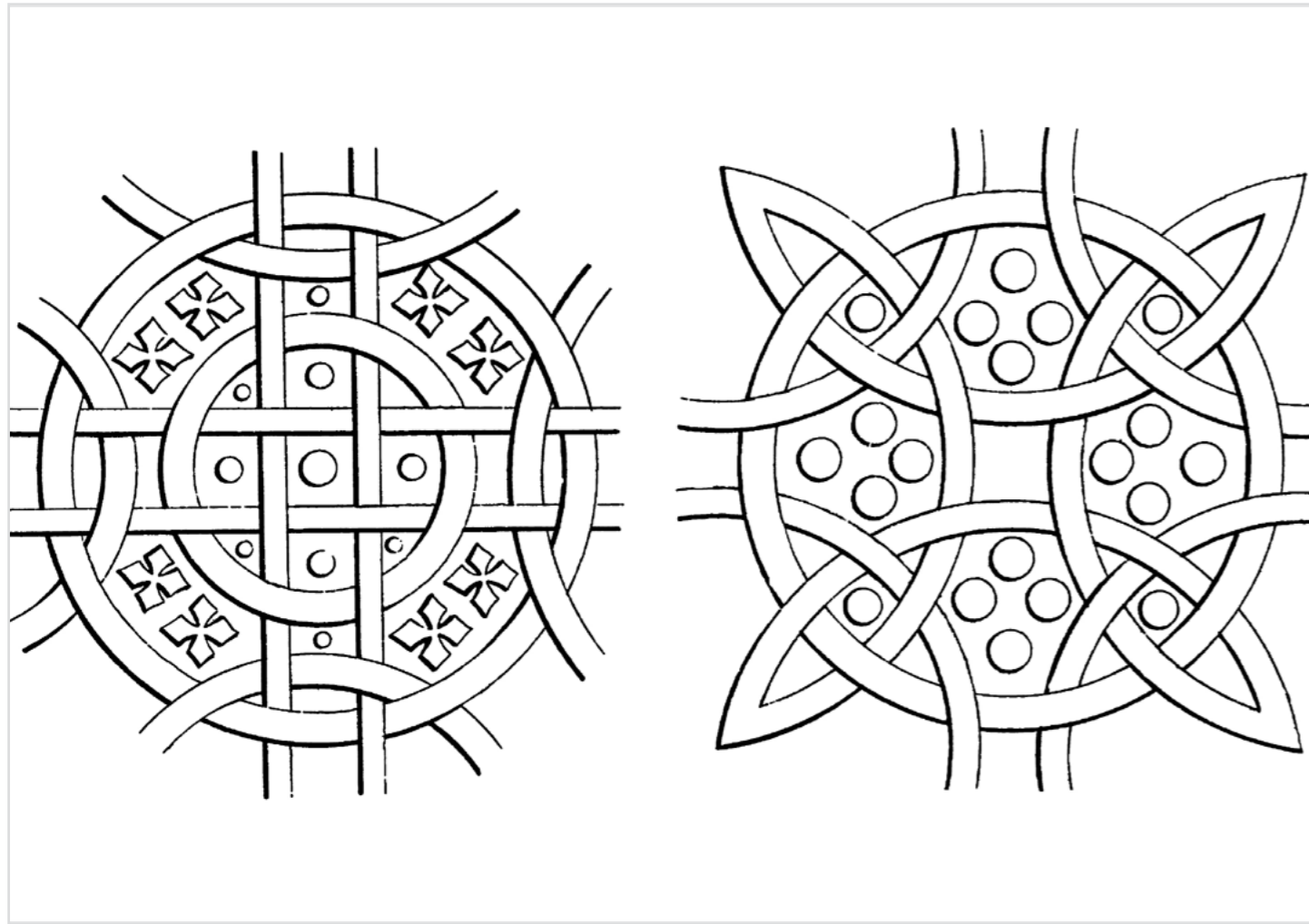
Pattern development

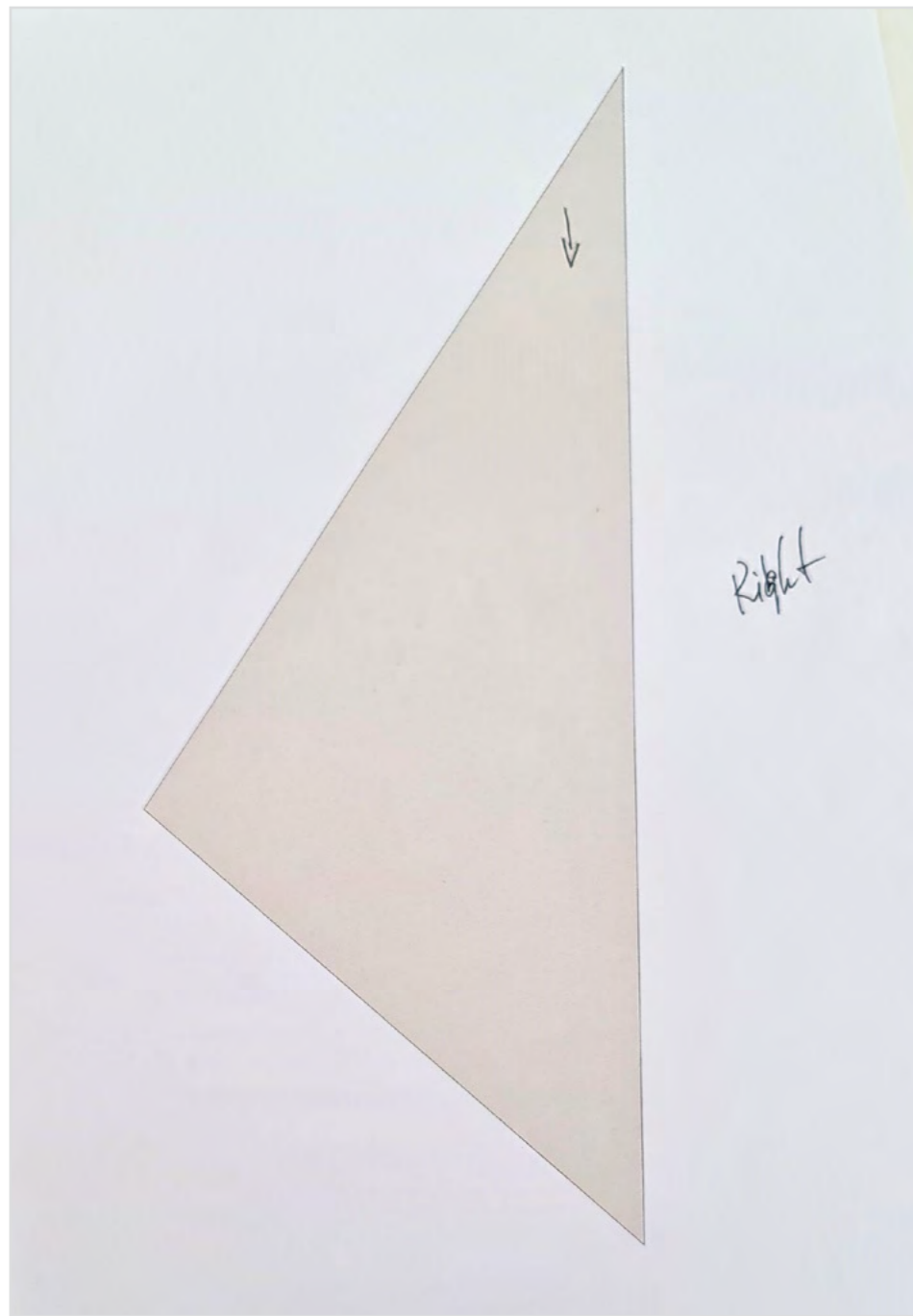


Practical References

This book is actually a mix of traditional (antique) and neo Russian patterns references. Still, it has an impressive collection of elements that is a good starting point for pattern development. There are two primary sources of pattern elements in this book: architecture and books (hand-written or published). For the current project, I will be mainly focused on architecture references since they are more clean and symmetrical.



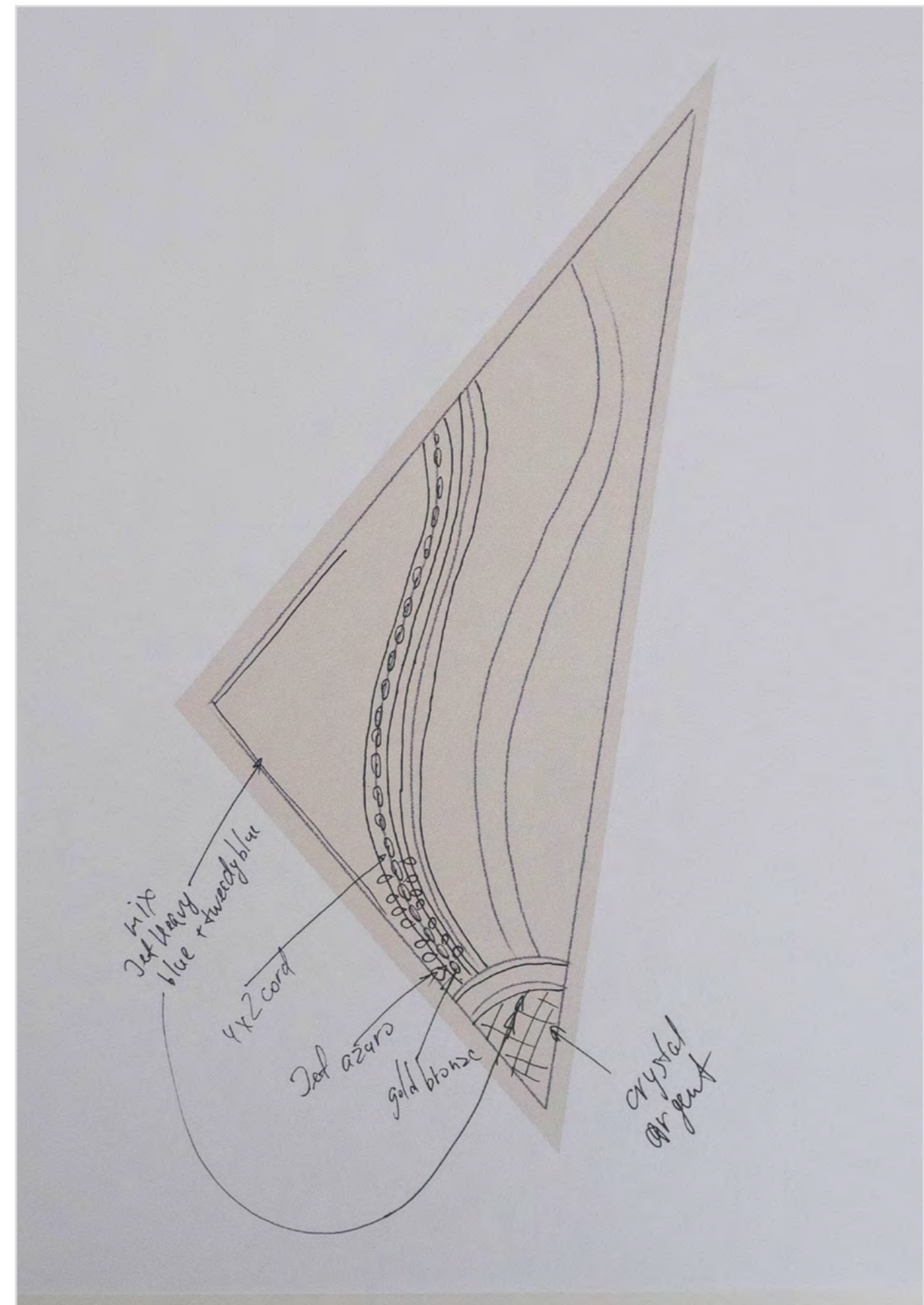


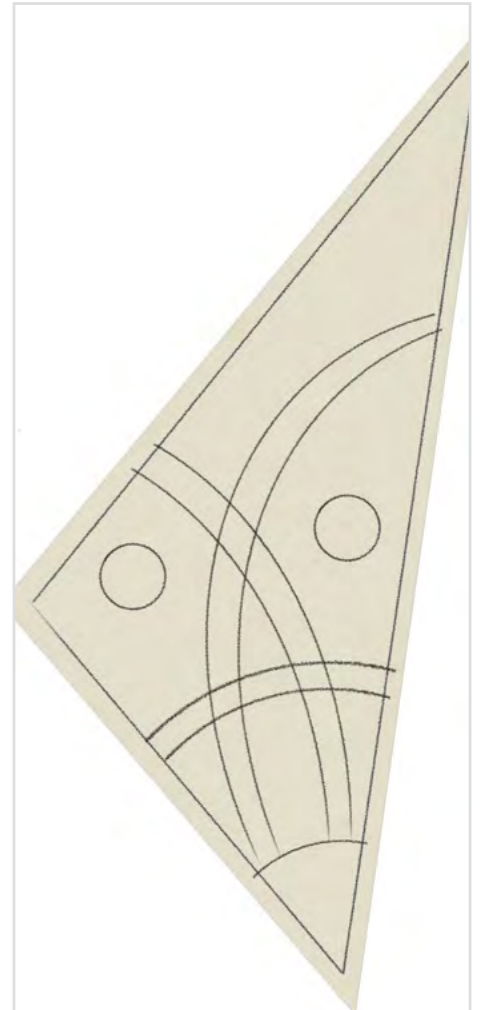
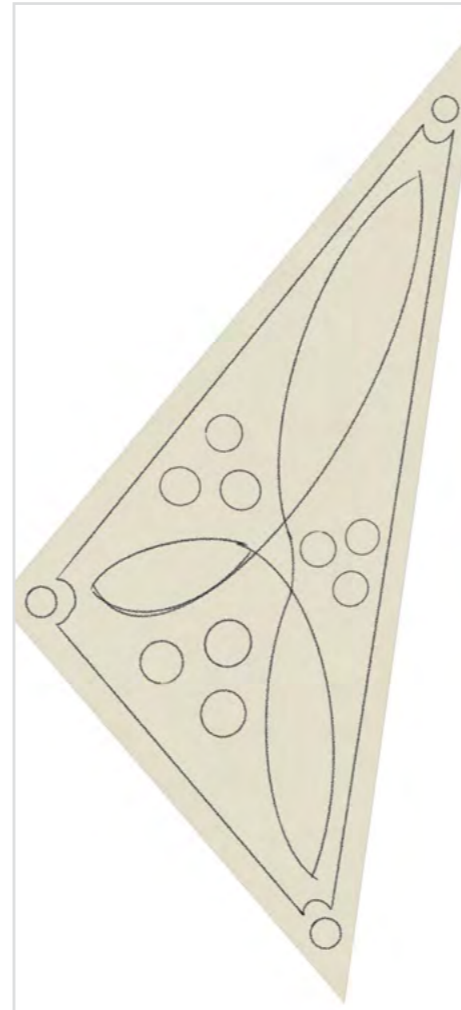
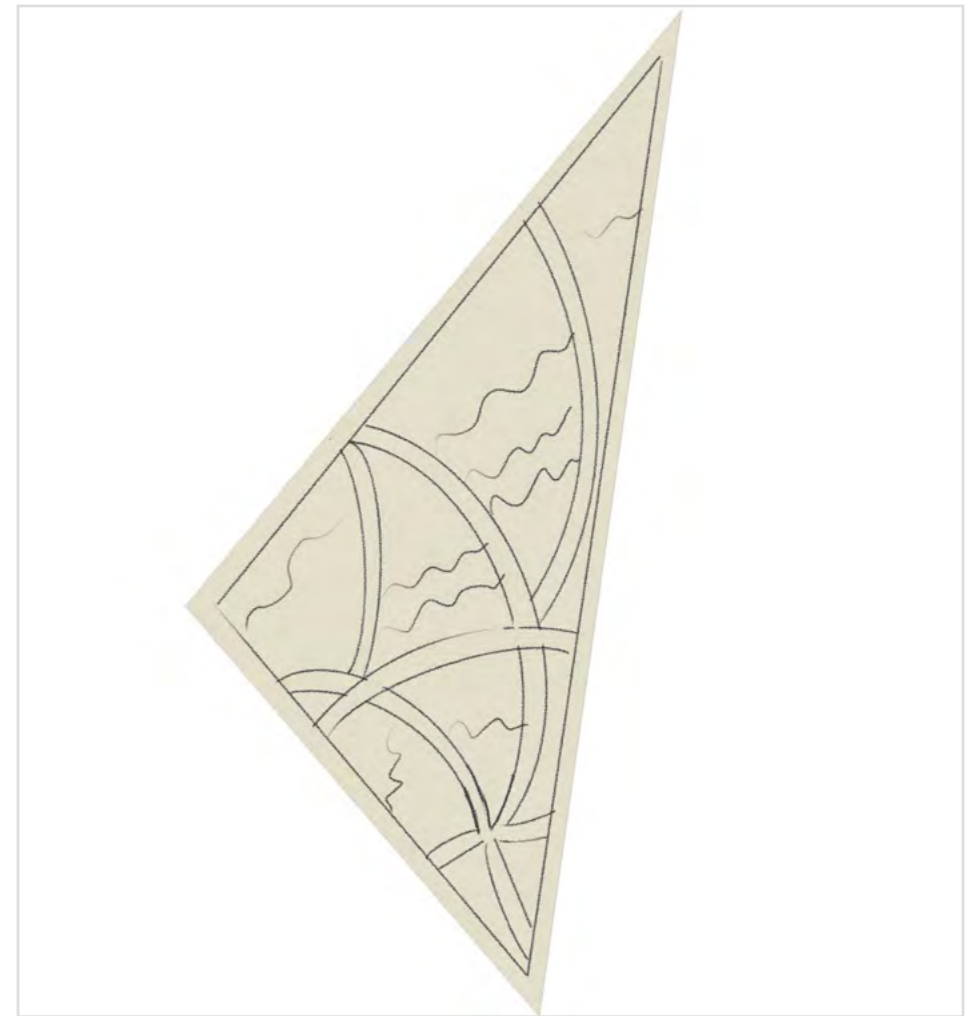
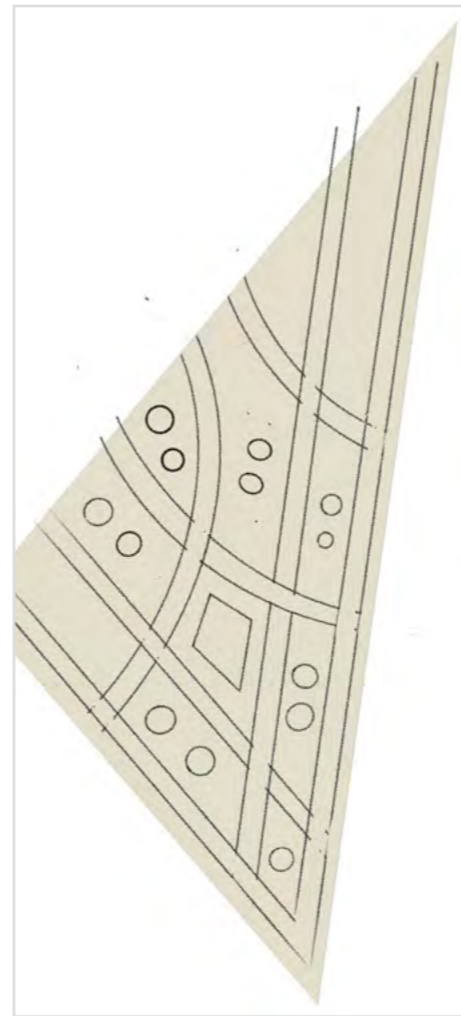
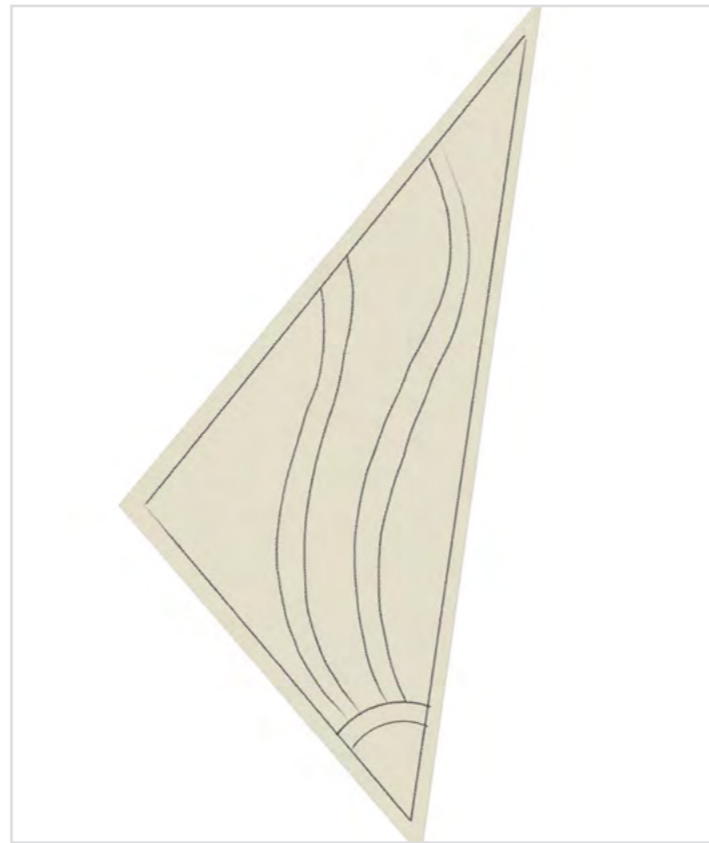
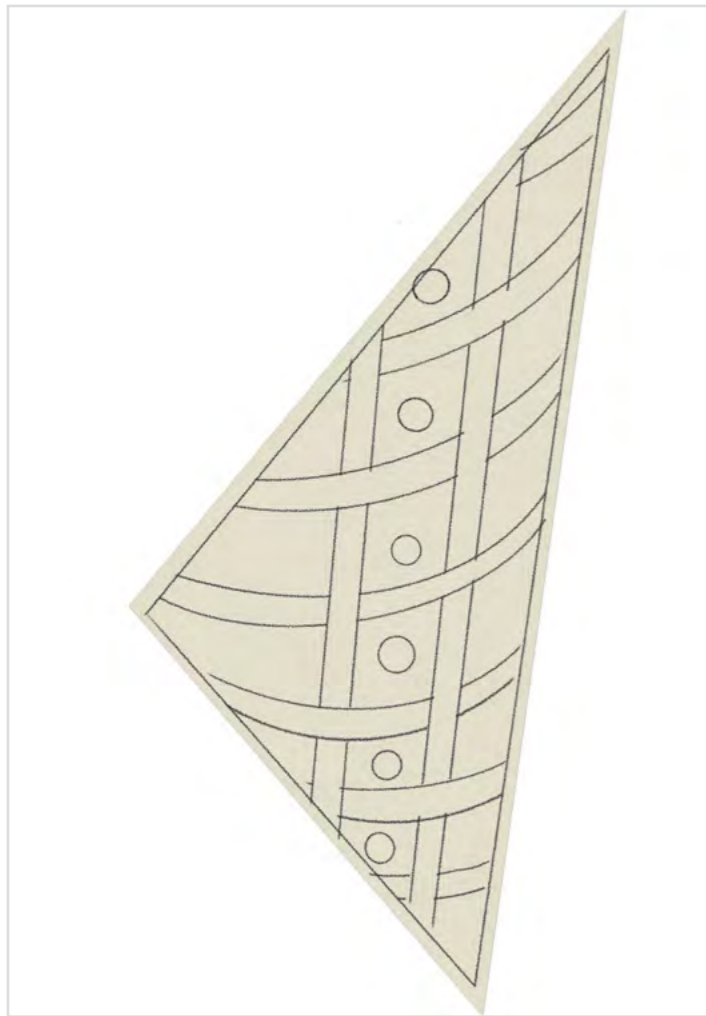


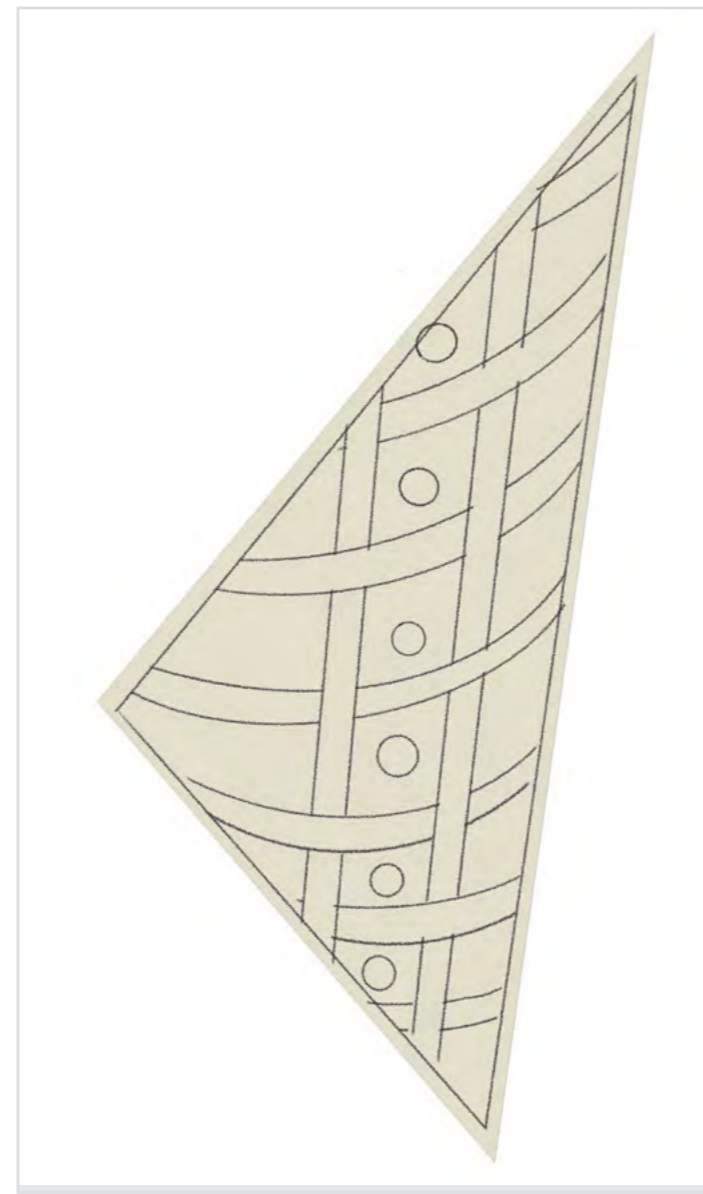
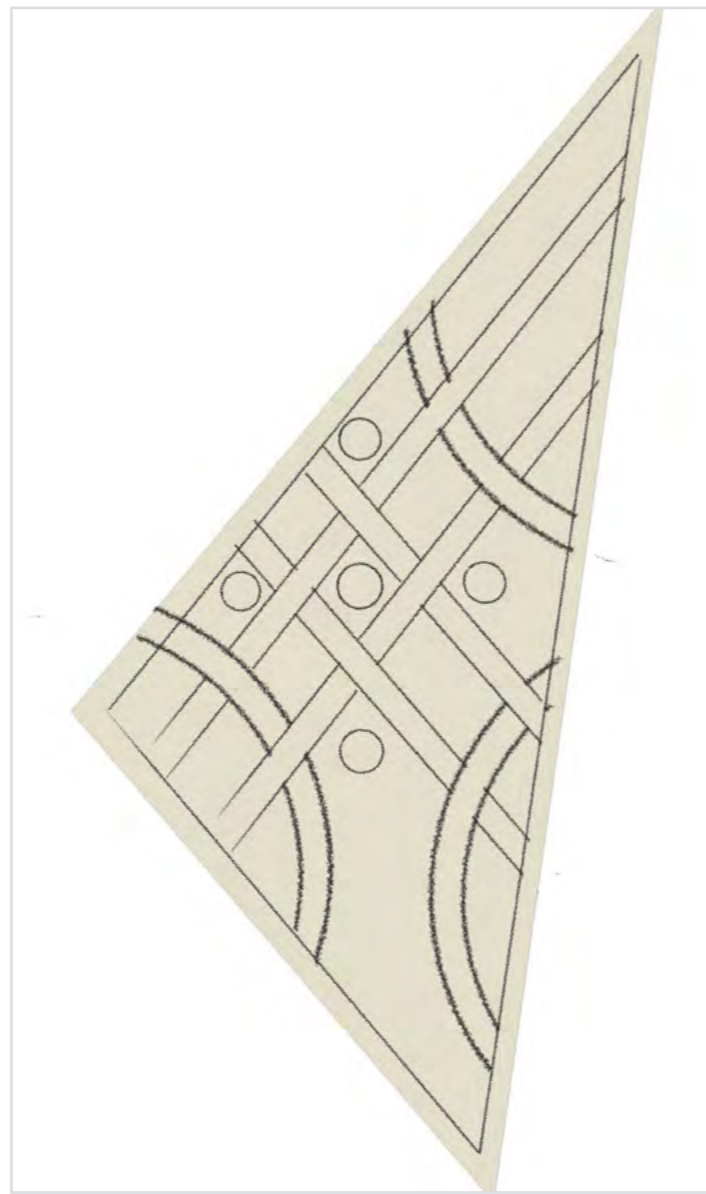
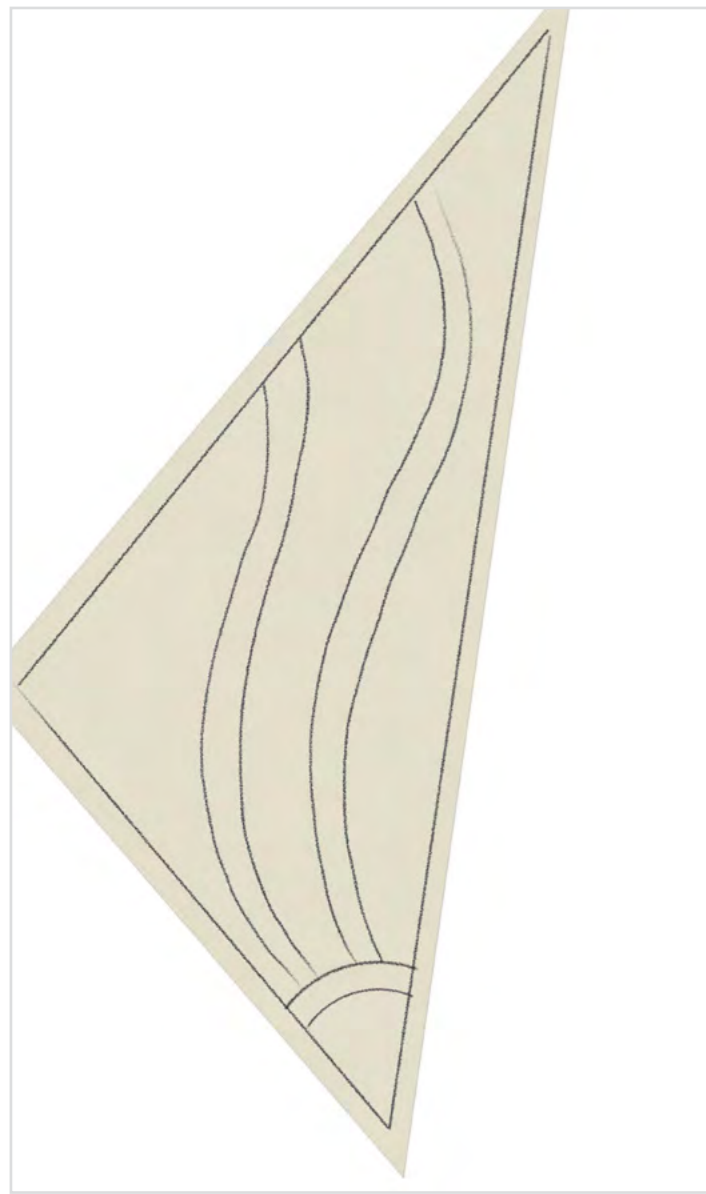
Pattern Sketching

The major approach for the pattern development is to work on already developed collar pattern rather than on abstract form. The final outcome for the current stage is not pattern itself, but a scheme for the embroidery. Also, there is no intention to rethink completely traditional heritage (this task is assigned to another step), on the contrary — I aim to preserve the heritage spirit.

The workflow for the stage is to sketch roughly from six to eight samples and choose three or four for the further development.

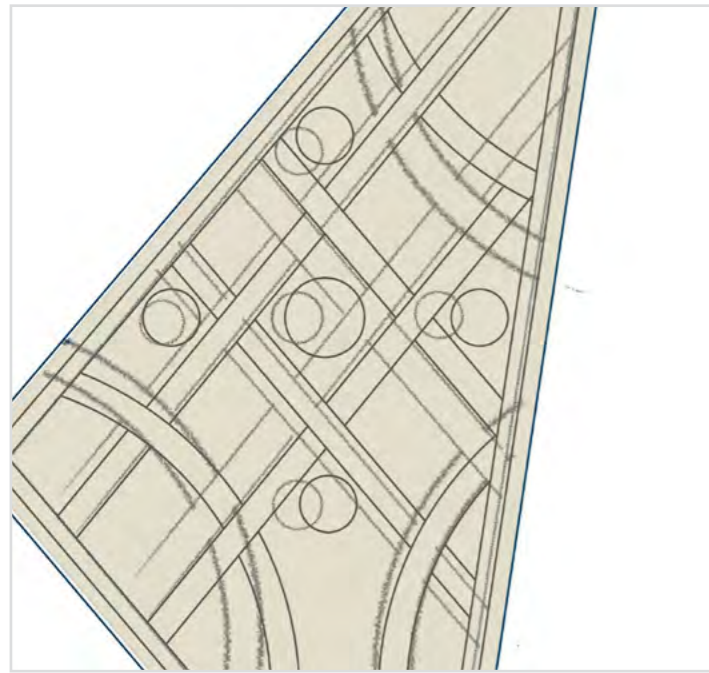
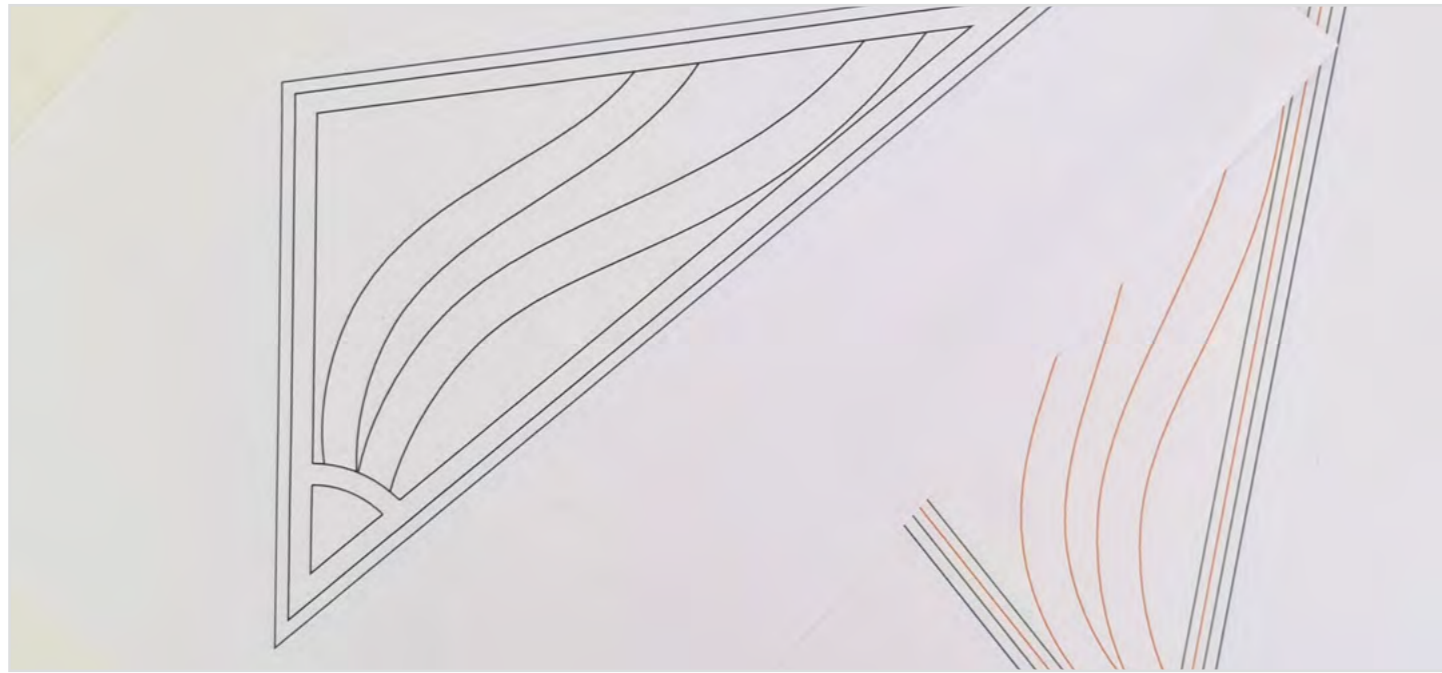






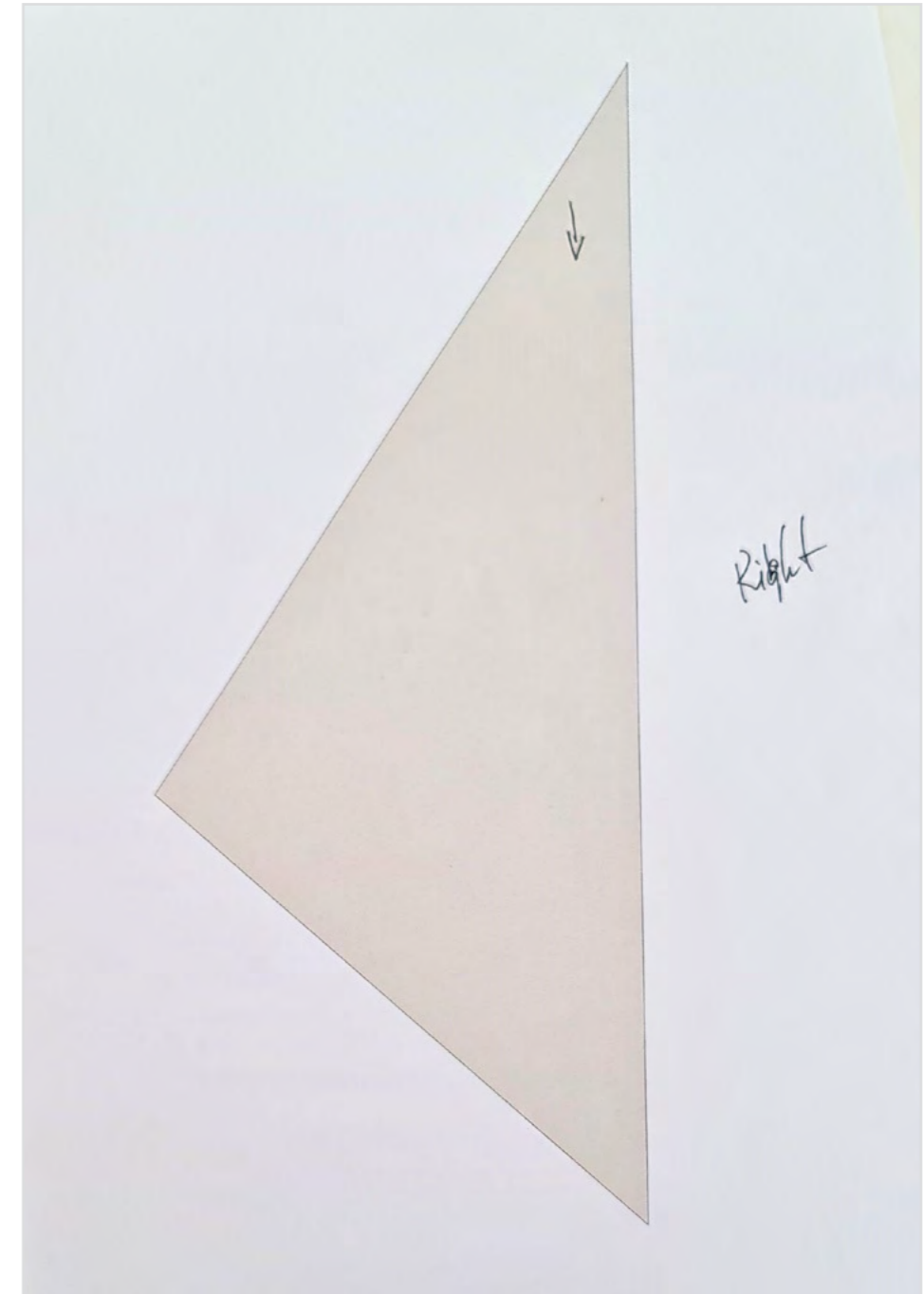
There were sketched nine samples. These three were chosen for the further development. It must be said that all samples are absolutely relevant and might be developed as embroidery schemes. These three were not chosen randomly. From the personal perspective, these samples are the best to correspond with selected embroidery technique and results of experiments from the previous module.

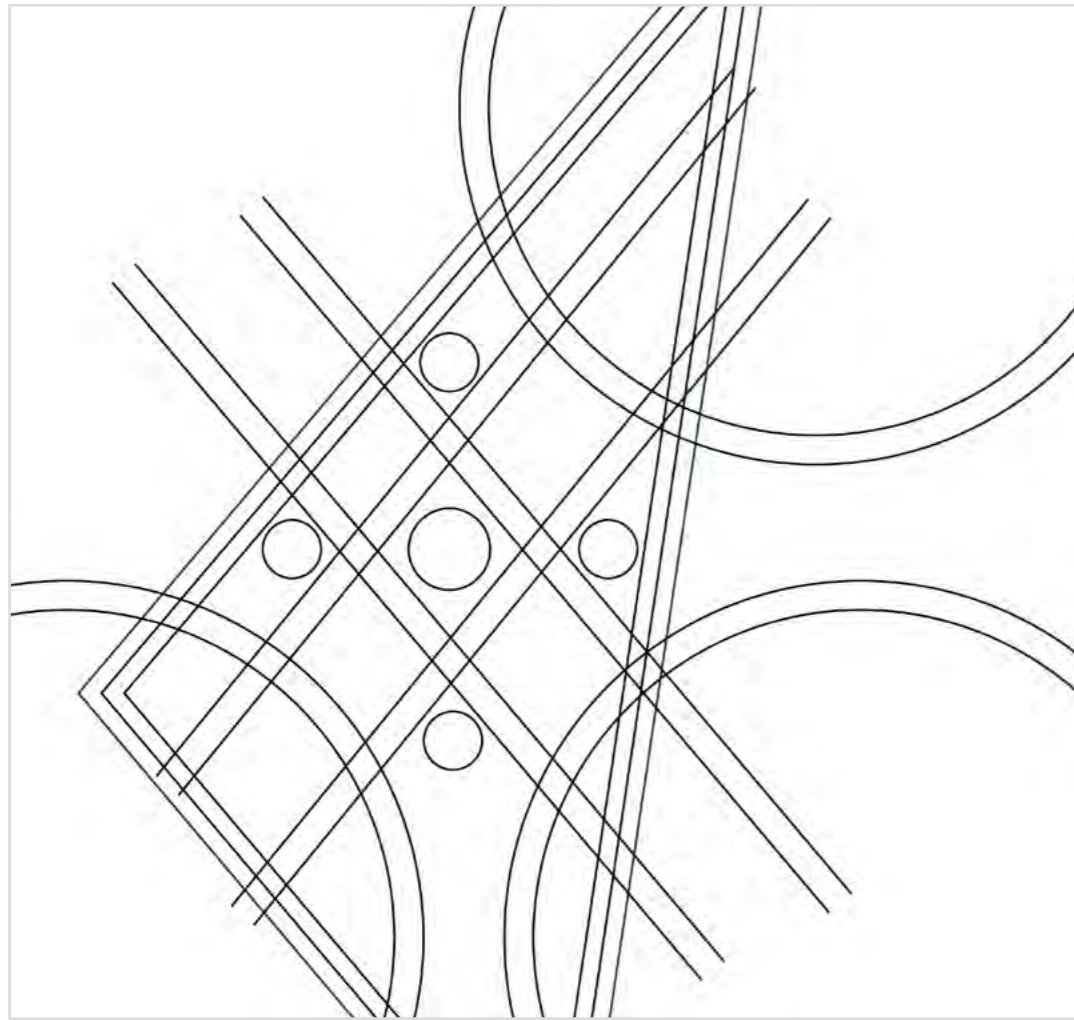
The task for the next stage is cleaning the sketches, making them symmetrical and converting patterns into embroidery schemes.



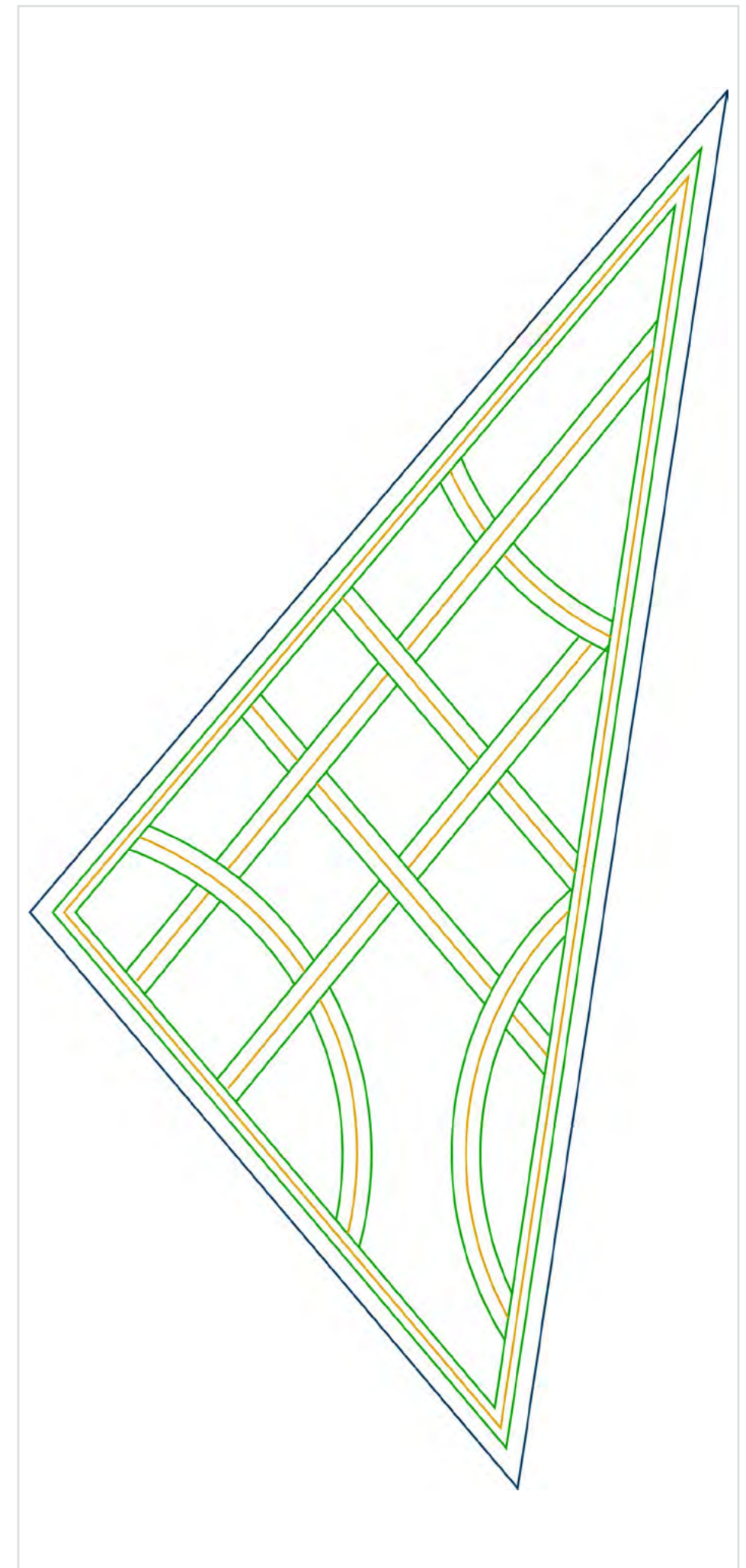
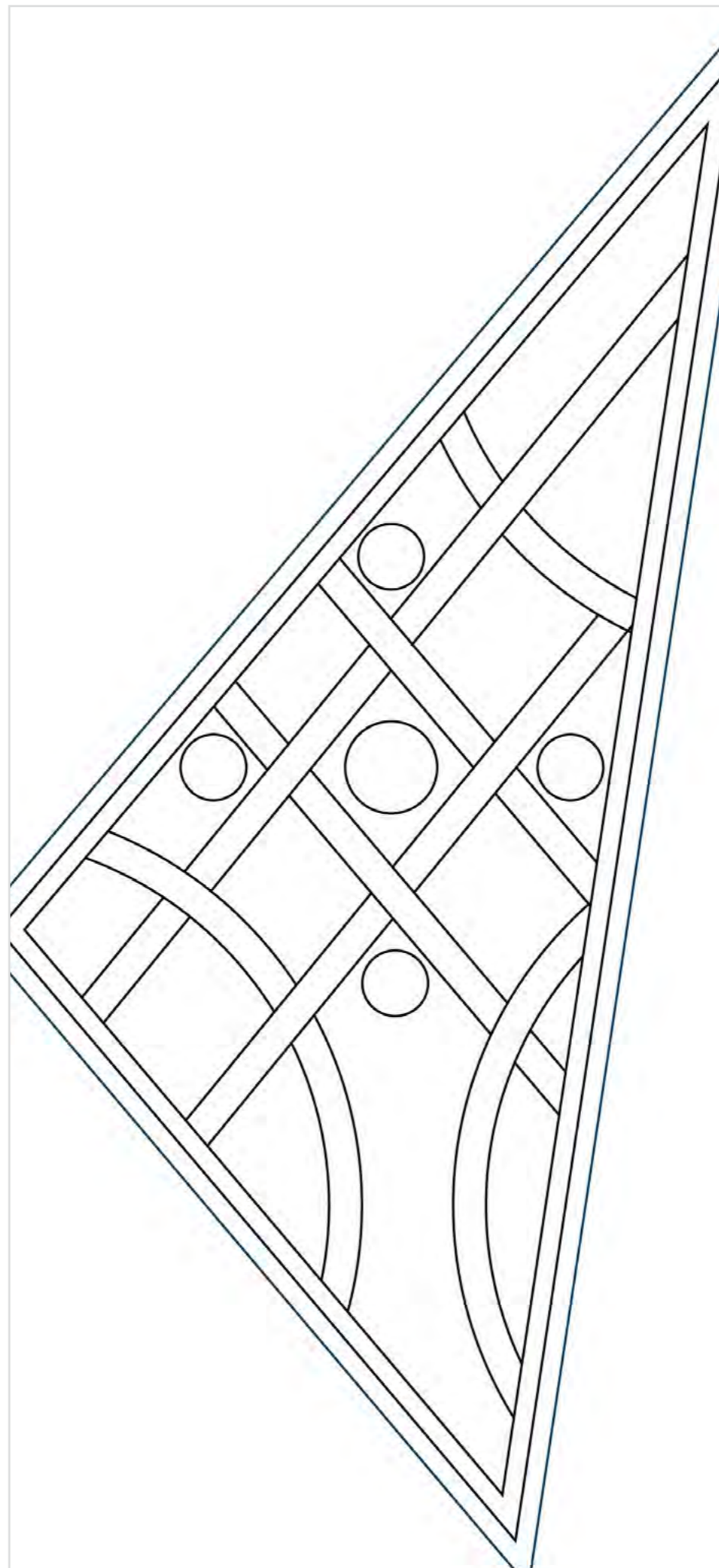
Embroidery Scheme Development

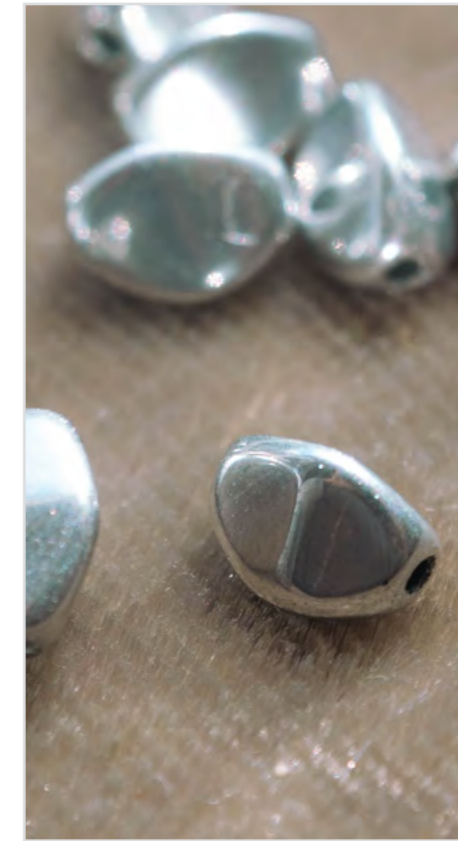
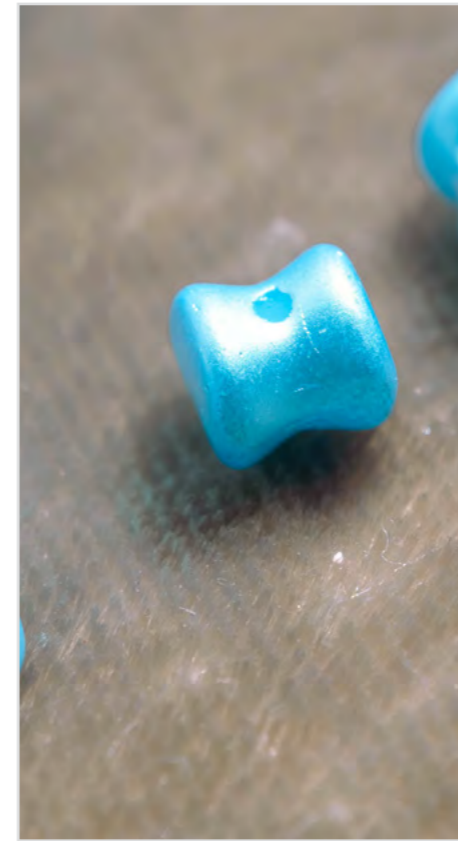
The major difference between pattern and embroidery scheme is the level of detailing for each sketch. The pattern shows the general outlook for the outcome. It might include additional / potential decorative elements. The main purpose of the embroidery scheme is to show the route and thickness for cords. Often such schemes include the best start point for cord sitting to keep continuity of the material. For the personal schemes, I prefer keeping schemes cleanest as possible. Usually, the best solution (embroidery tips) comes to me during the working process, so I can redevelop the scheme.



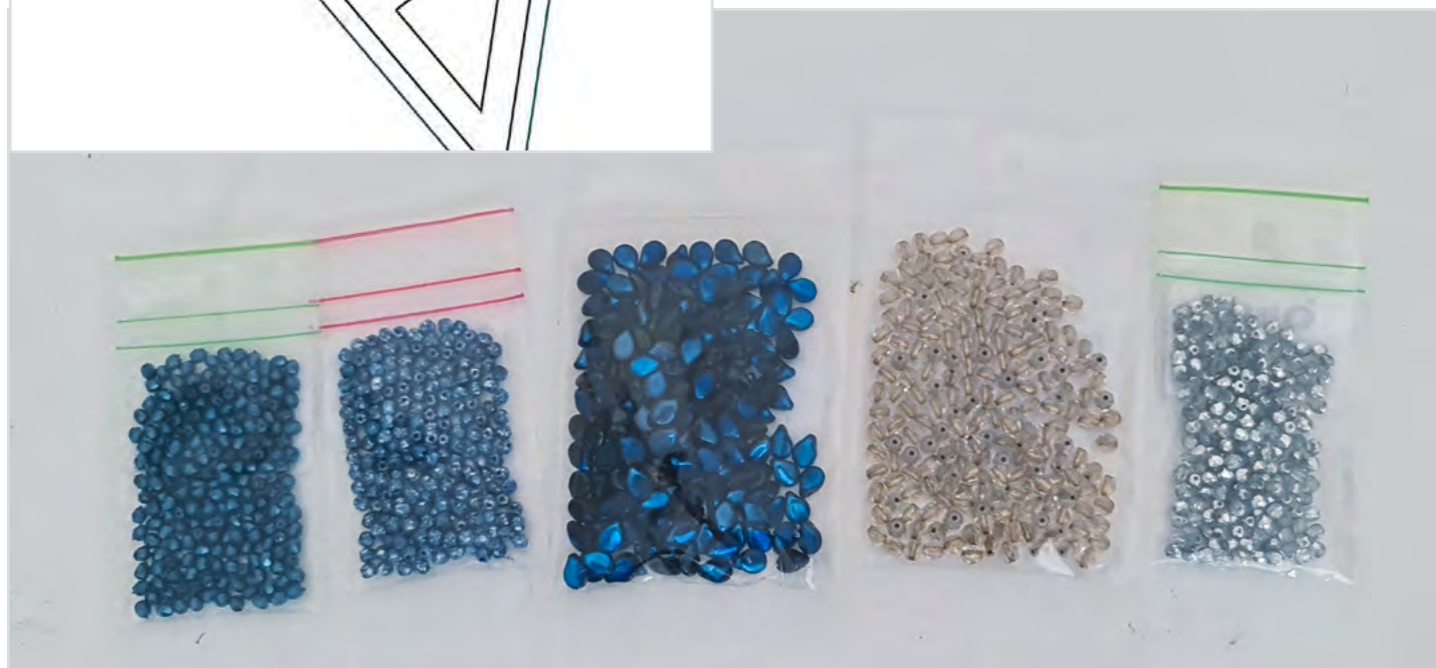
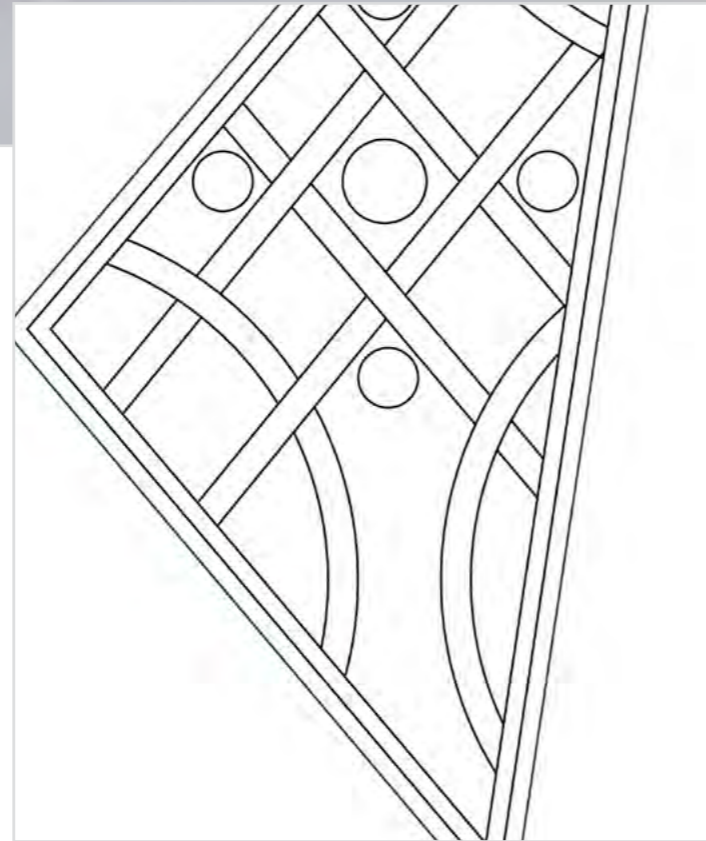
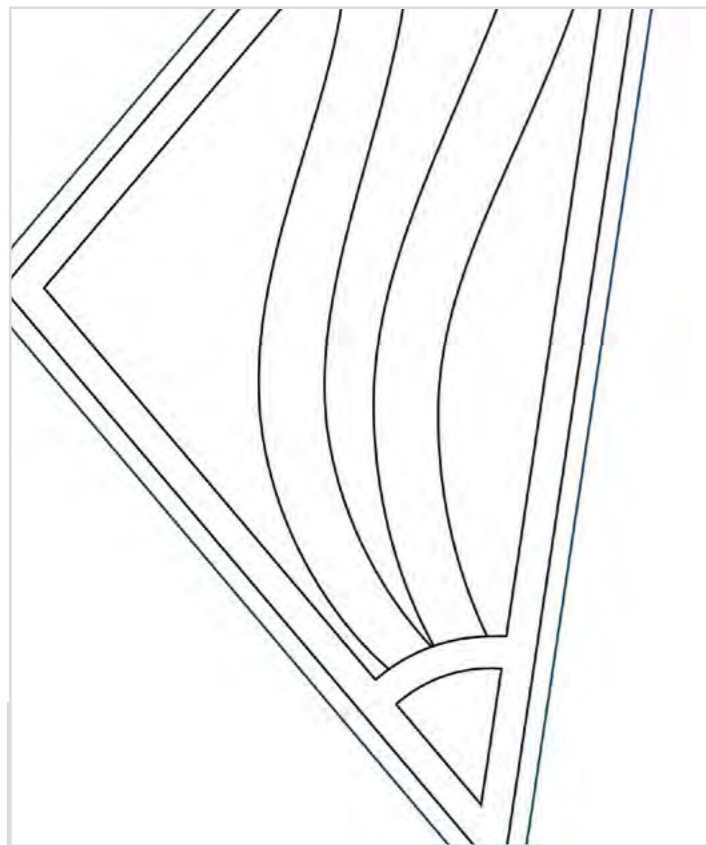


Embroidery pattern and scheme



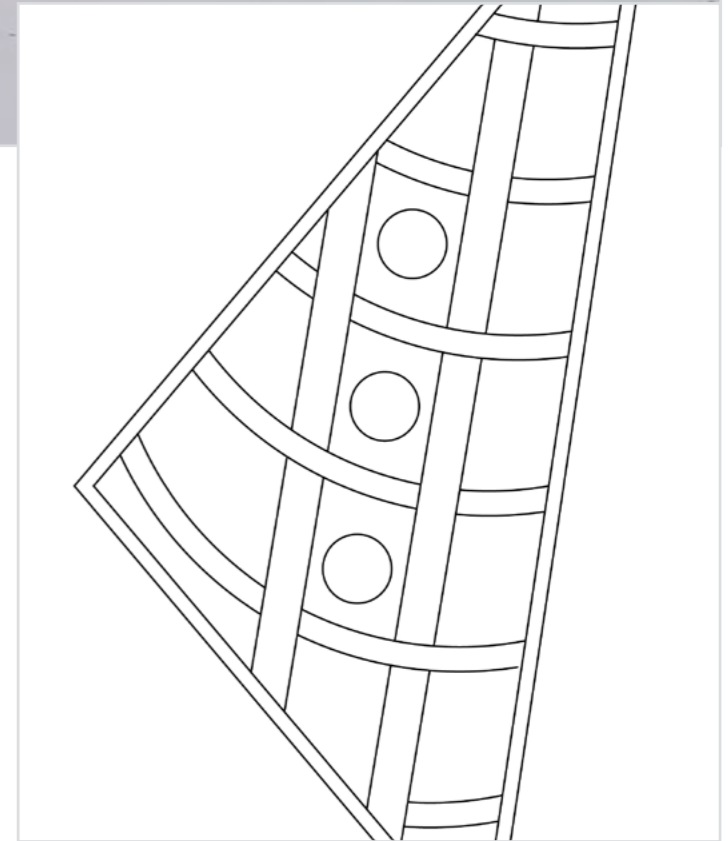


Combinations of Materials



For each sample, I chose the unique combination of beads to avoid repetition and use majority of materials. Although, my color palette is white-blue, samples will be made in different tint of blue.

It is also must be mentioned that getting beads in local stores became a tricky and challenging task. At the end of the day, all beads were ordered abroad. So to me, using most ordered beads was an act of sustainability.





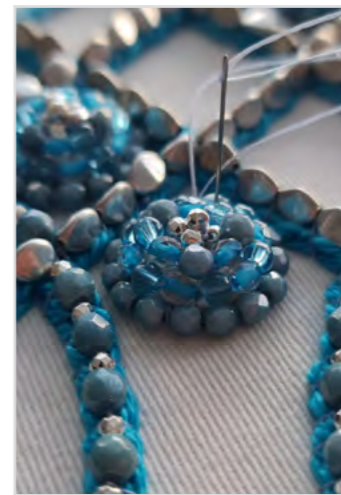
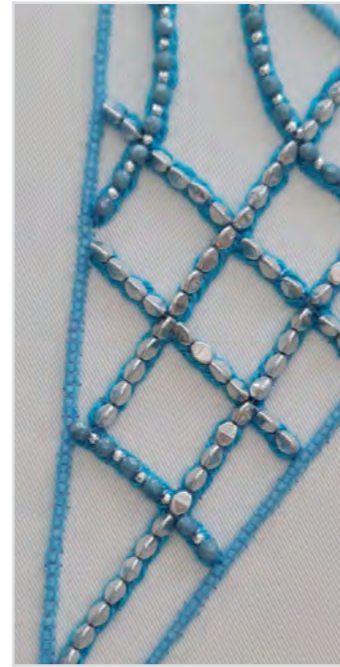
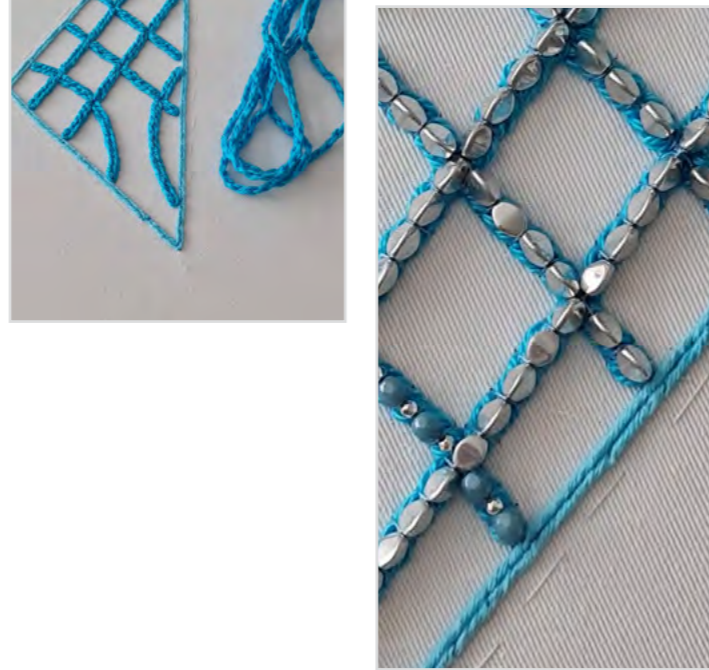
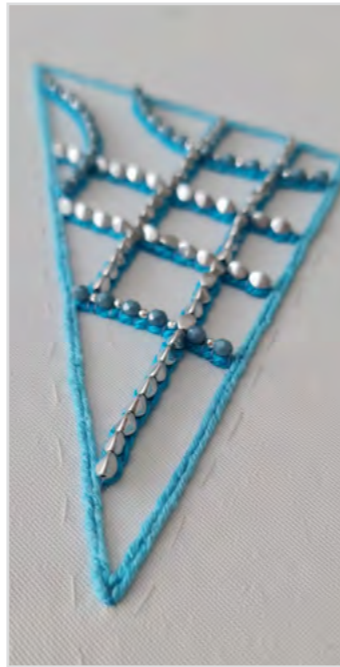
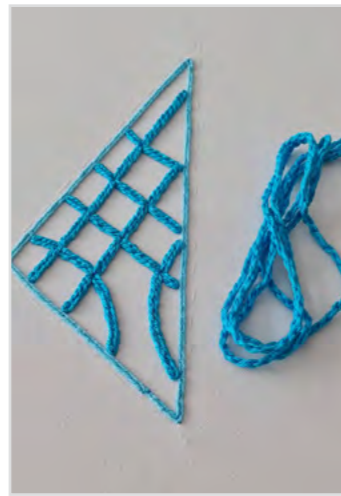
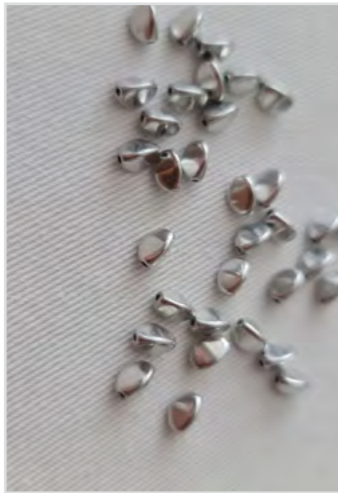
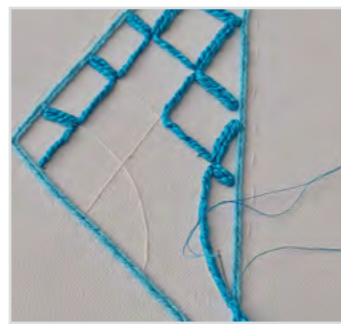
Embroidery Process



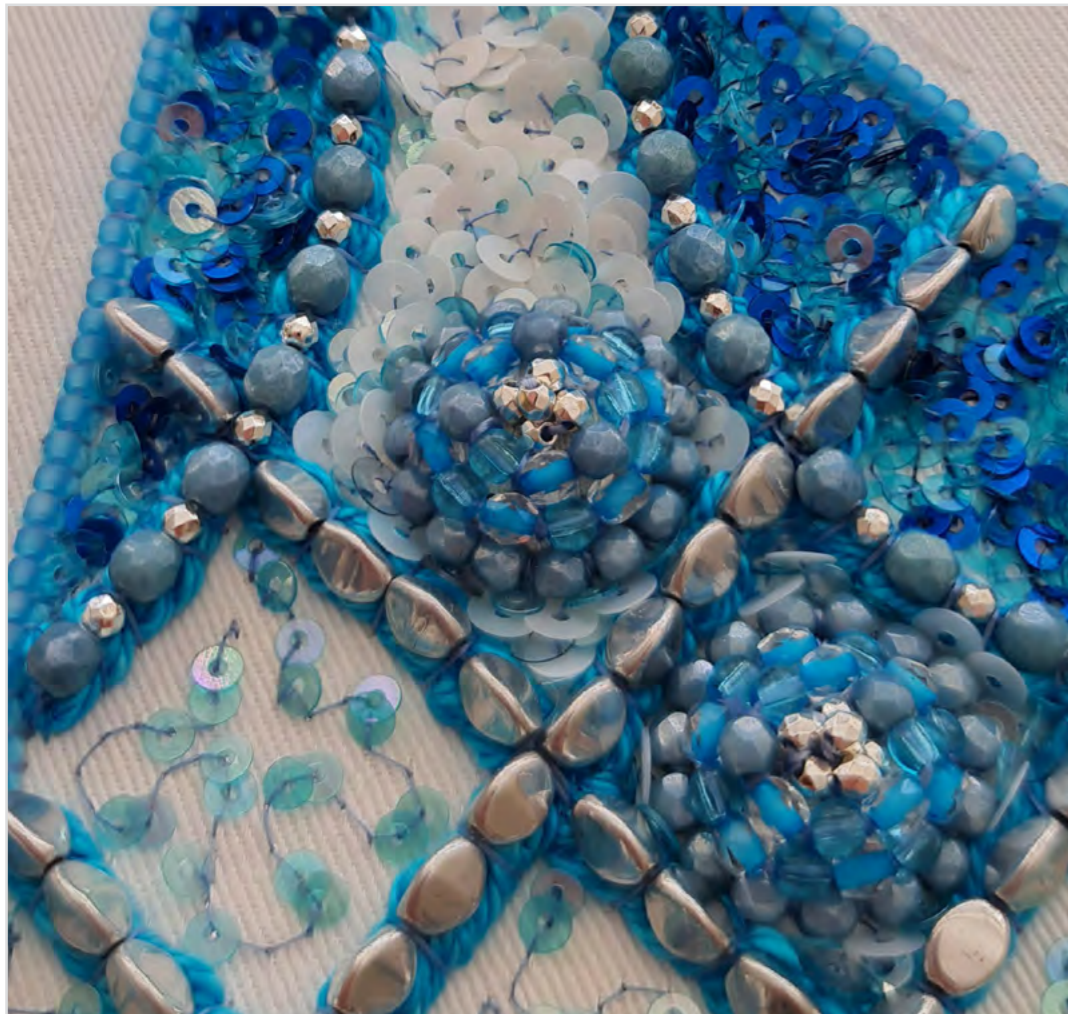
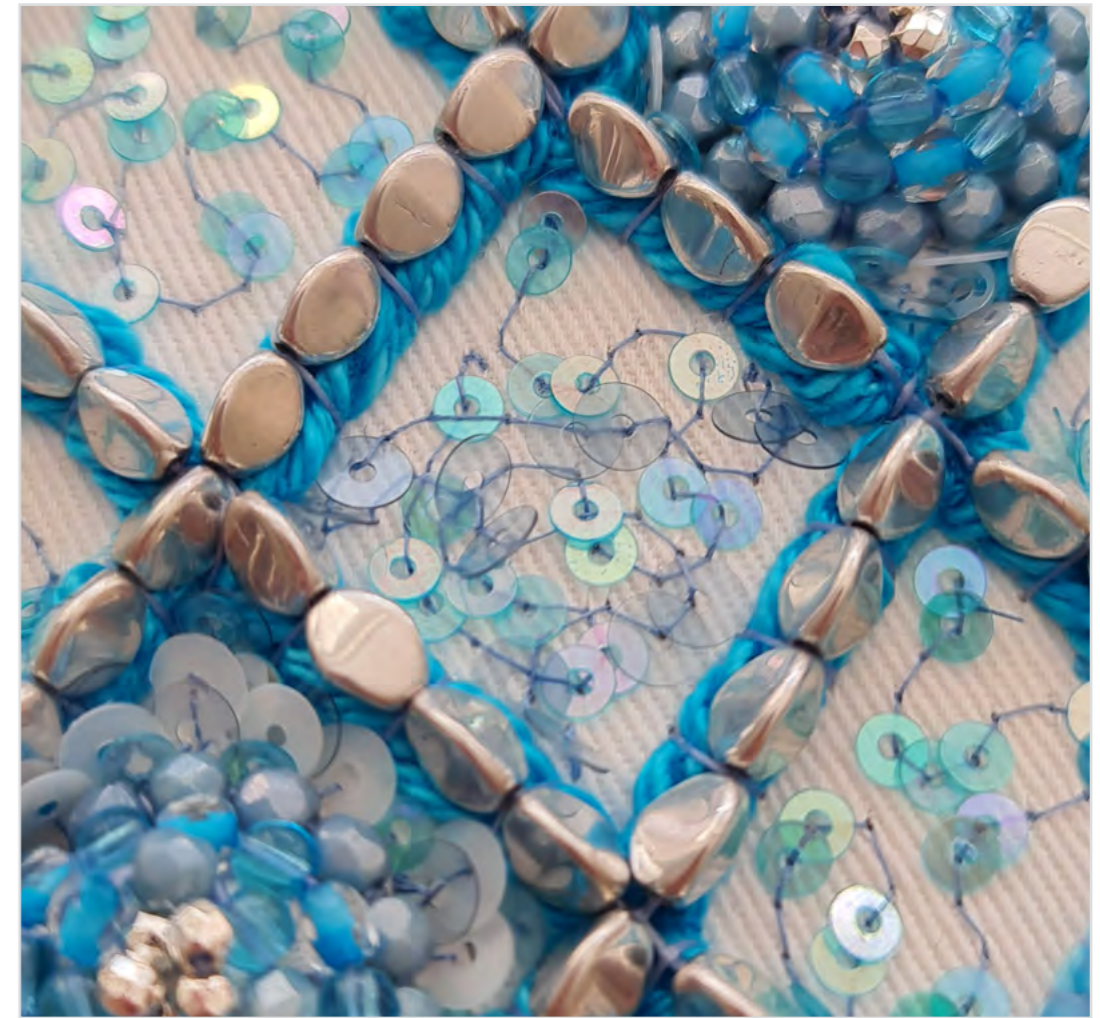
Sample #1

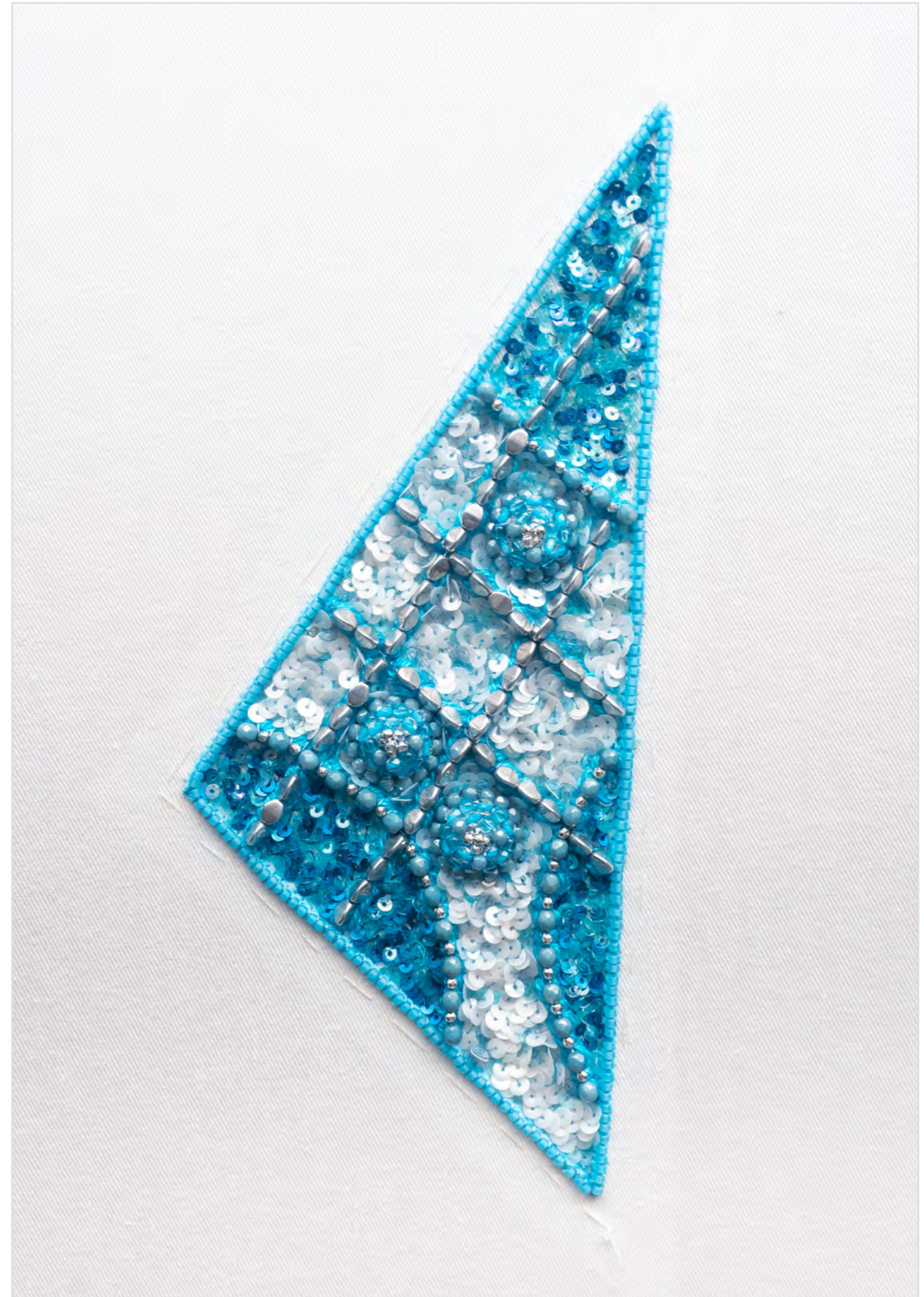
In this sample, cotton hand-dyed yarns were used to make cord in two types of thickness. For one type of sitting, the triangle beads were used. For the second type of cord, the mix of beads (4 and 2mm) were applied. For the collar contour, the sitting technique with regular Delica beads was used. Half-sphere beaded elements were randomly placed instead of keeping symmetry (as on the original pattern). For the filling, the Luneville technique - vermicelli beading - combined of two types of sequins were used.





Embroidery process



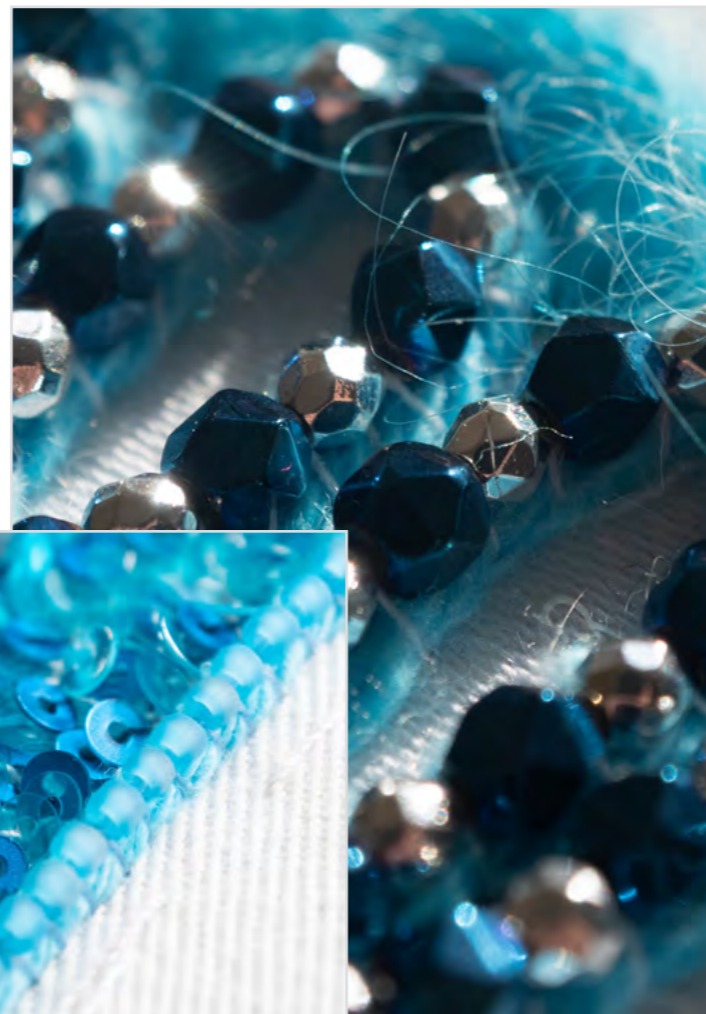




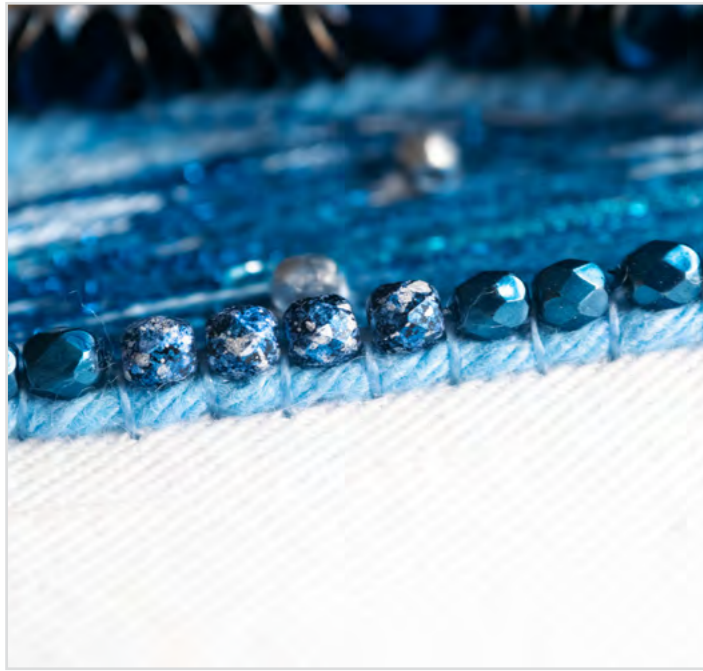
This sample was one of my favorites from the all experimenting stage. At that time I decided that this effect I definitely want to keep and use for the further development.



The combination (and contrast) of two types of beads (2/4mm) was really promising. In the current sample, it was complementing the triangle beads sitting.



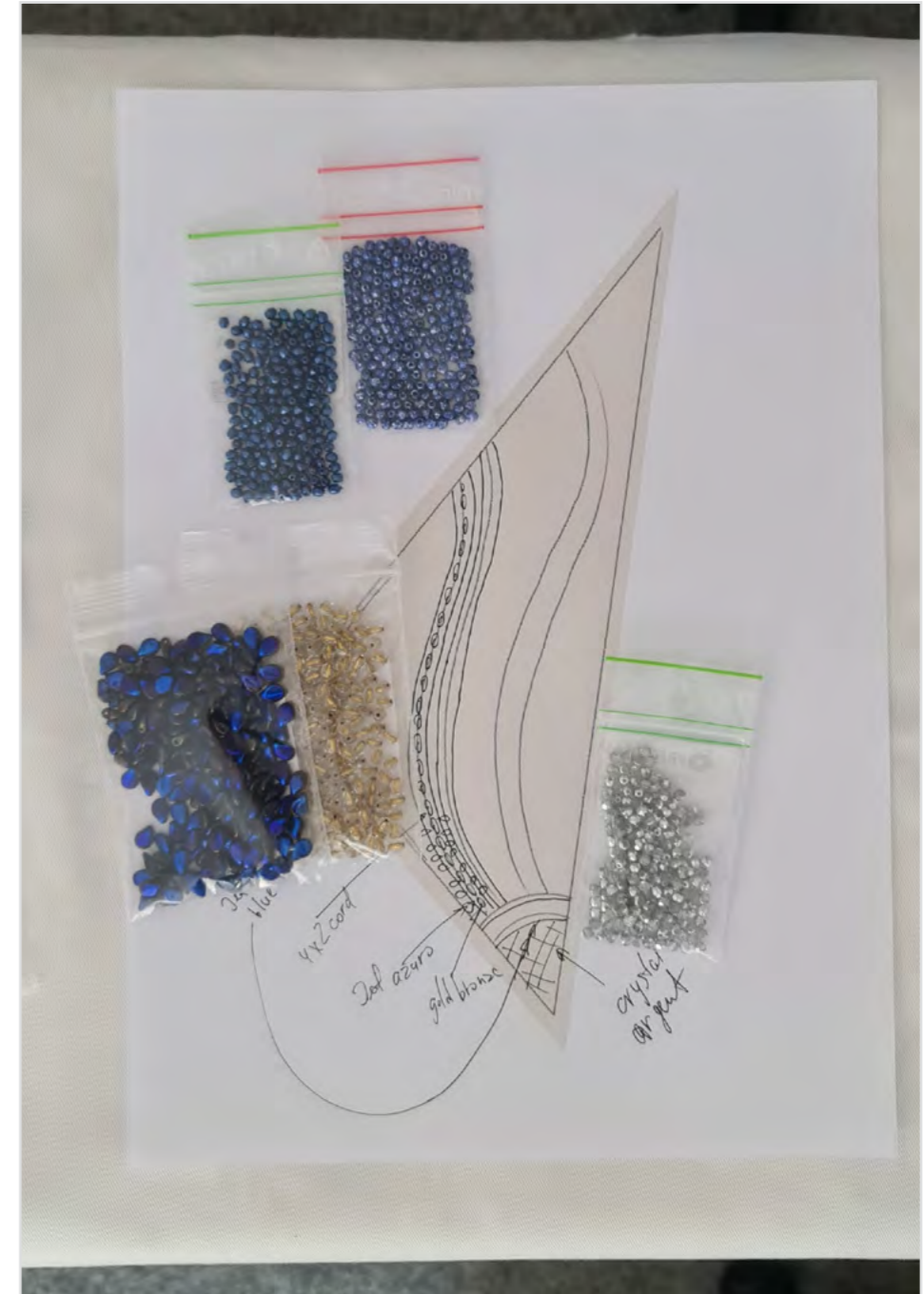
For the cords, I used my hand-dyed leftovers from previous experiments. Originally, I dyed two types of yarn to check the effect and color. In the sample, I have used the most suitable cord. Since I have dyed plenty of yarn, it seemed reasonable to use already made cord instead of preparing a new sample.

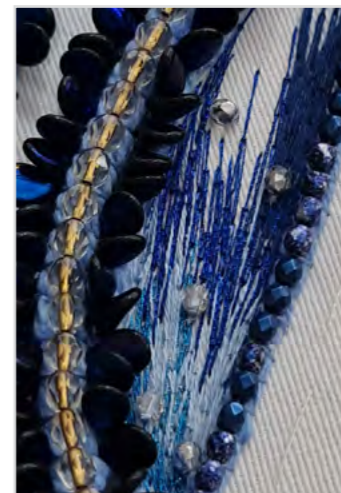
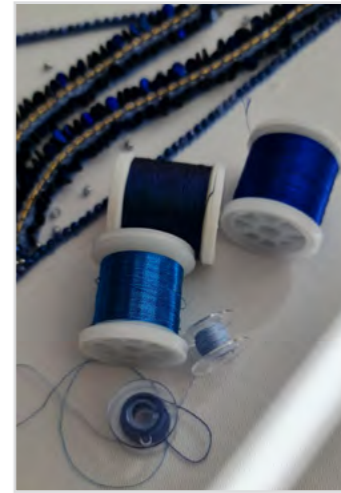
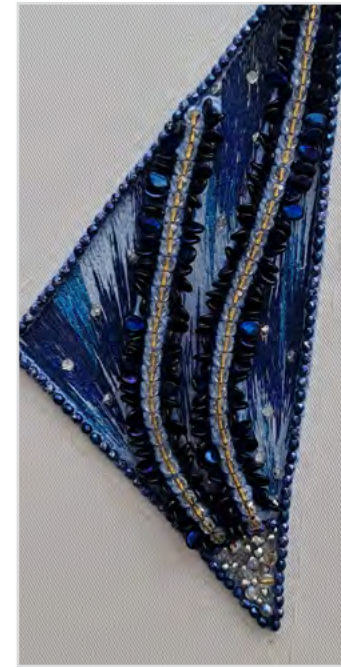
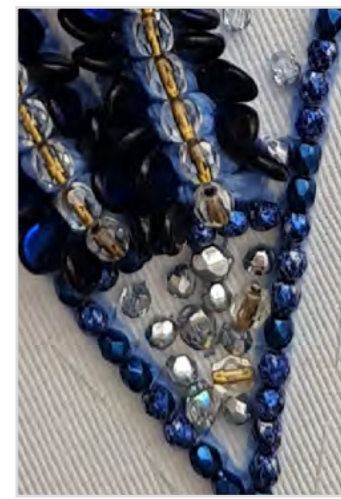
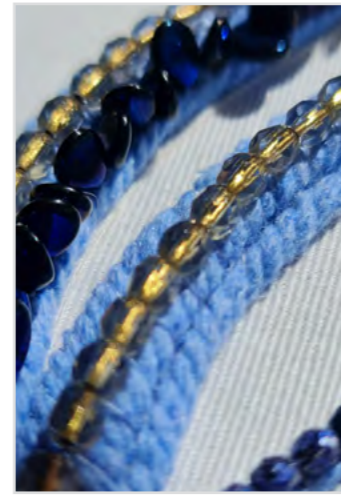
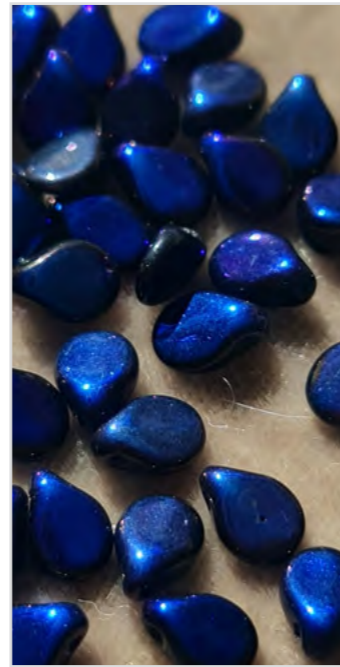
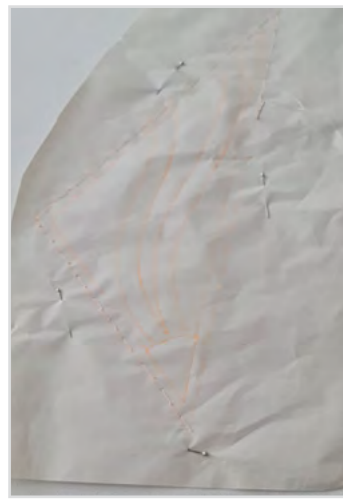


Sample #2

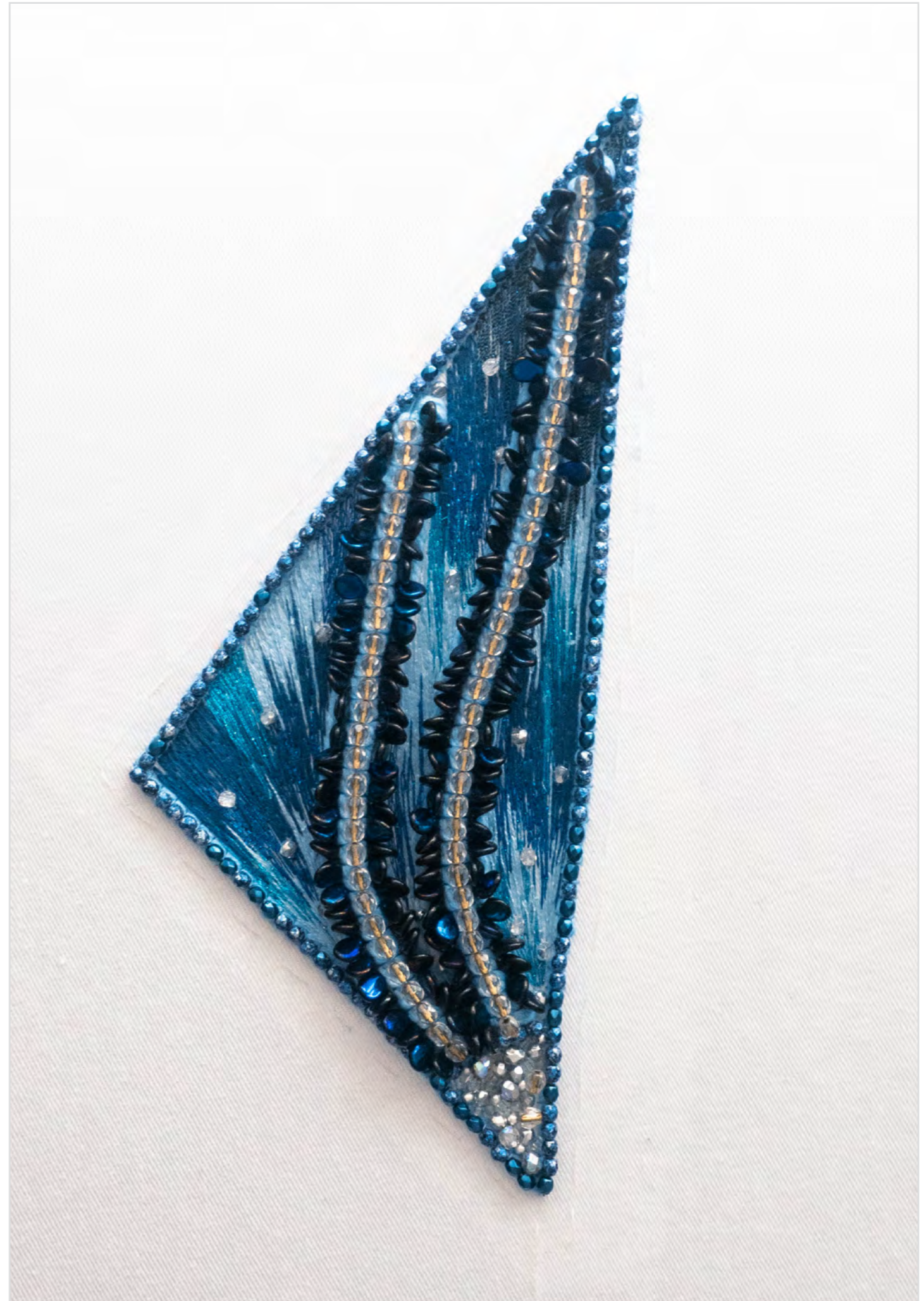
This sample was one big experiment. Petal beads were a challenge. Deep blue color palette didn't match the concept. Also, beads with a golden center didn't fit to the concept either. However, it was clear that such a combination can be compensated by filling the empty space with more relevant colors and appropriate embroidery technique.

As a conclusion, I could say that this sample is definitely my favorite as the most experimental. I don't think it will be my final choice for the collar, but it gives an amazing alternative view.



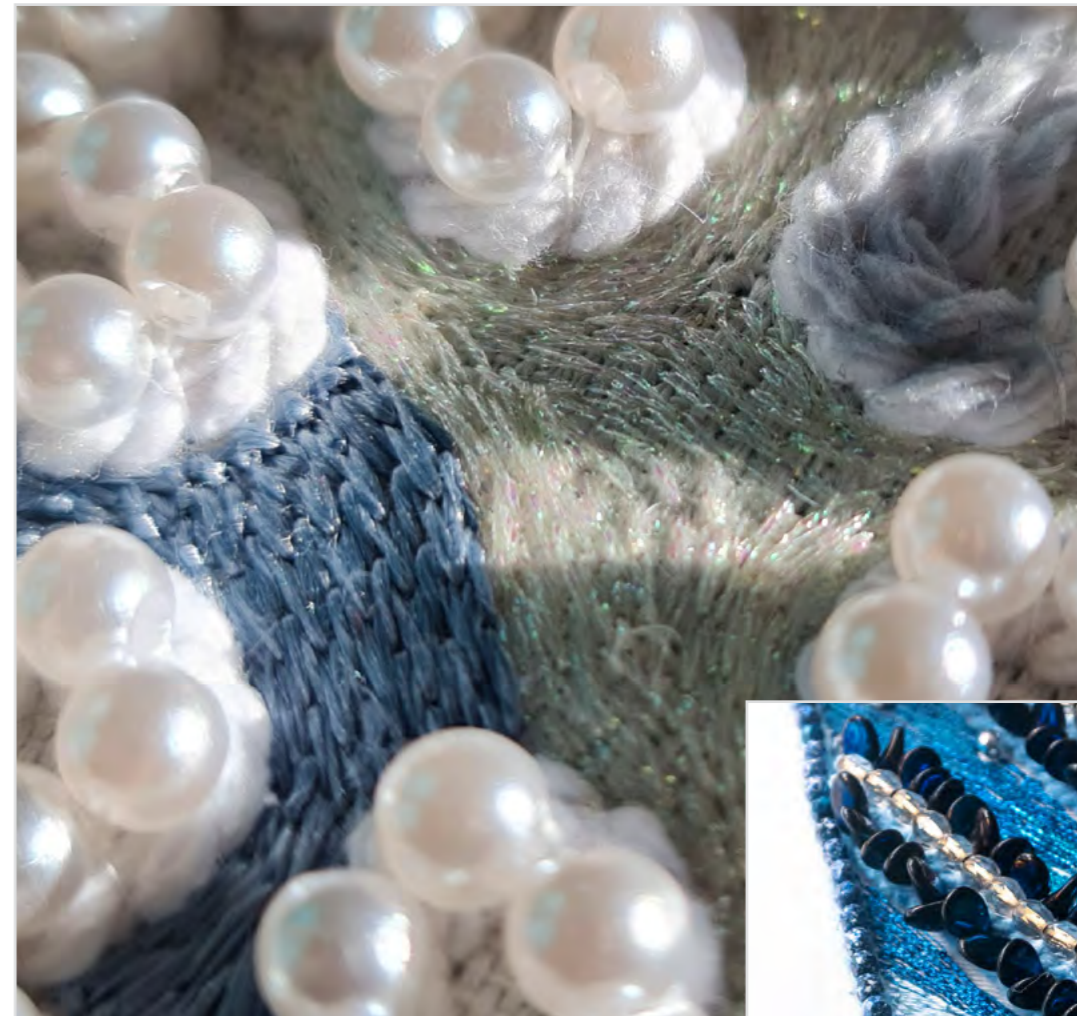


Embroidery process



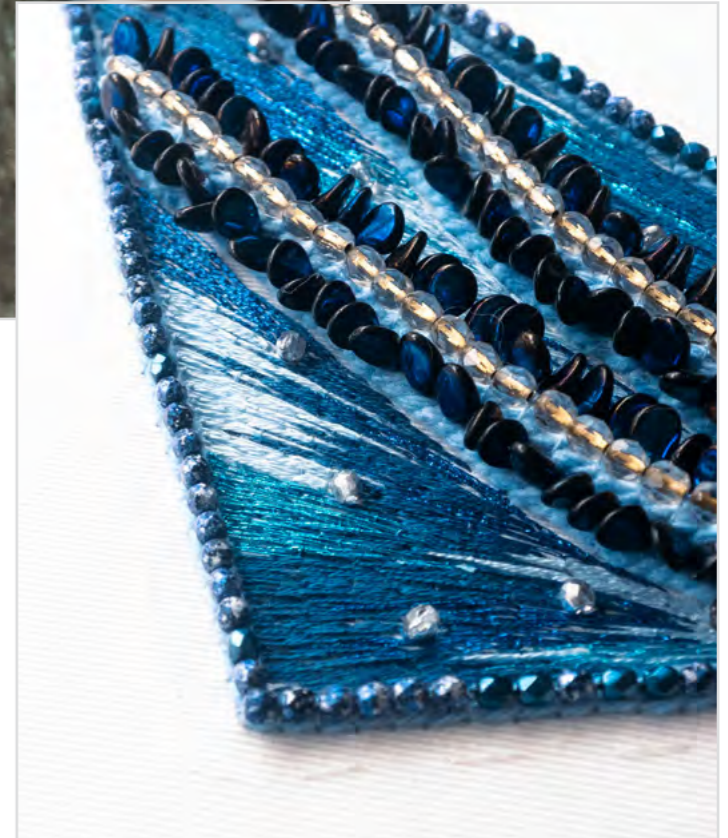


For this sample, a pretty tight cord was required. Also, the color of cord should be a bit washed out rather than vivid. Such an effect is simply to get when you dyed semi natural yarn with the dye for natural materials. This effect has been accidentally discovered before and applied now.

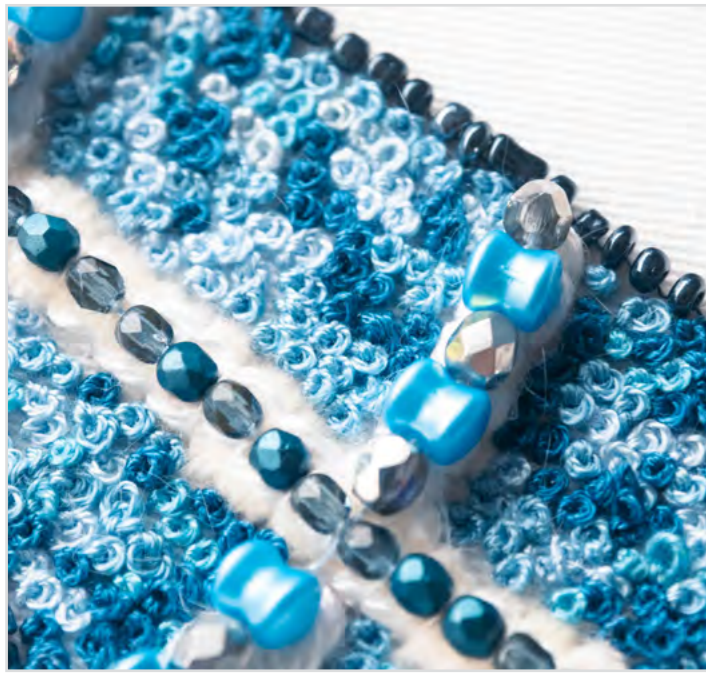


Petal beads were really a big question during experiments. But in this sample, I decided to risk. And it was the right decision. These beads worked amazingly, especially mixing with other material.

I see a huge potential of this approach for the further development.



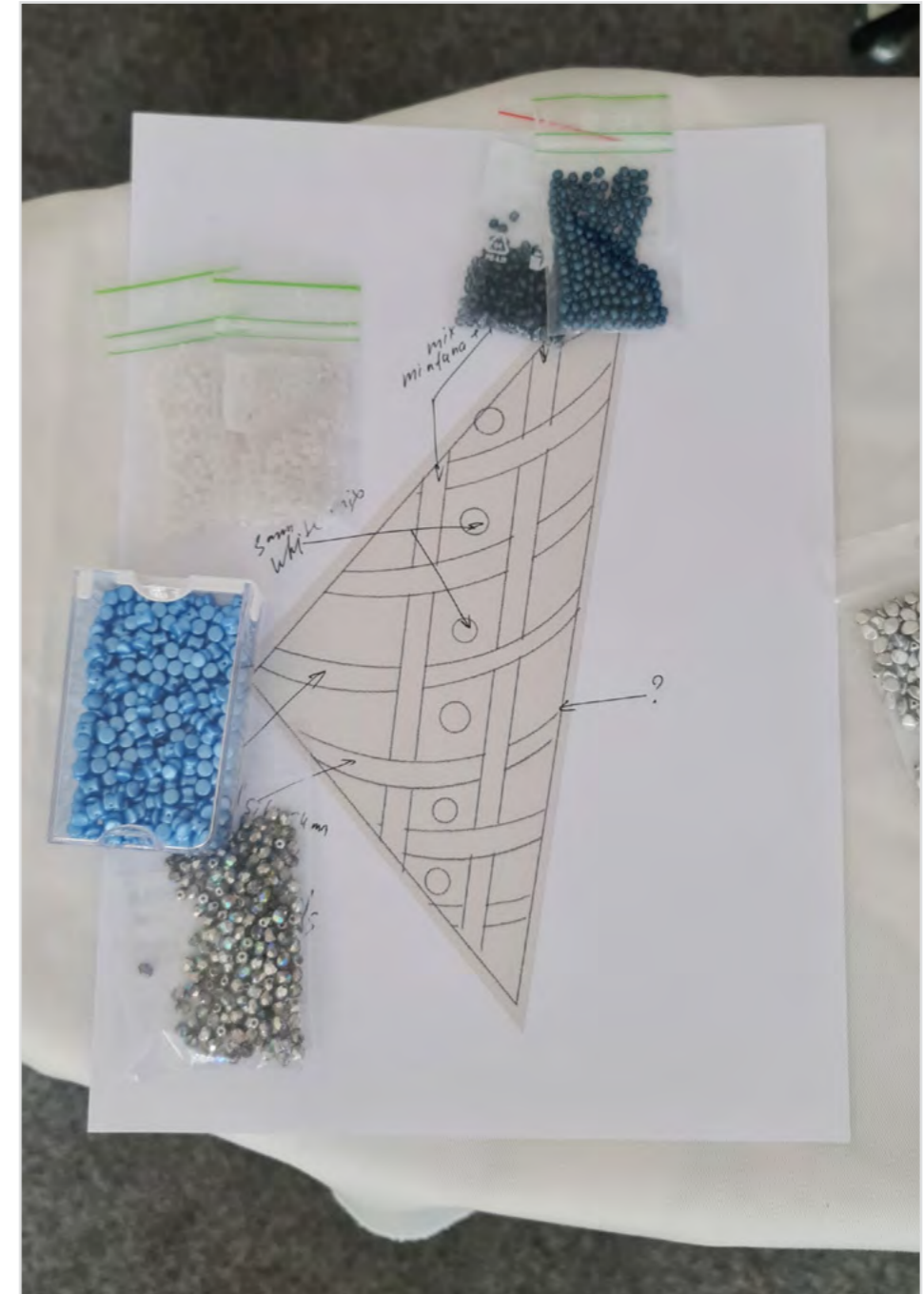
Tambour stitching for filling was not the most successful part of experiments. That time I decided I won't be too judgmental about the results and keep everything as a possibility. This sample is a proof that such a strategy was correct. Here, I used the variation of tambour stitching (enlarged stitches), and got a pretty interesting texture.

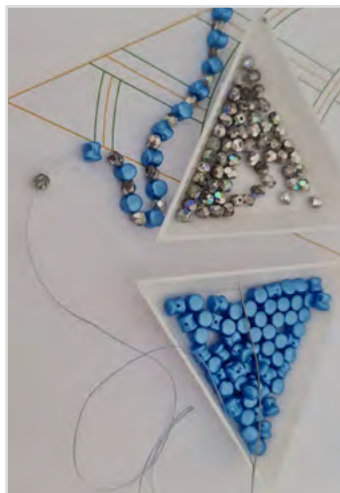


Sample #3

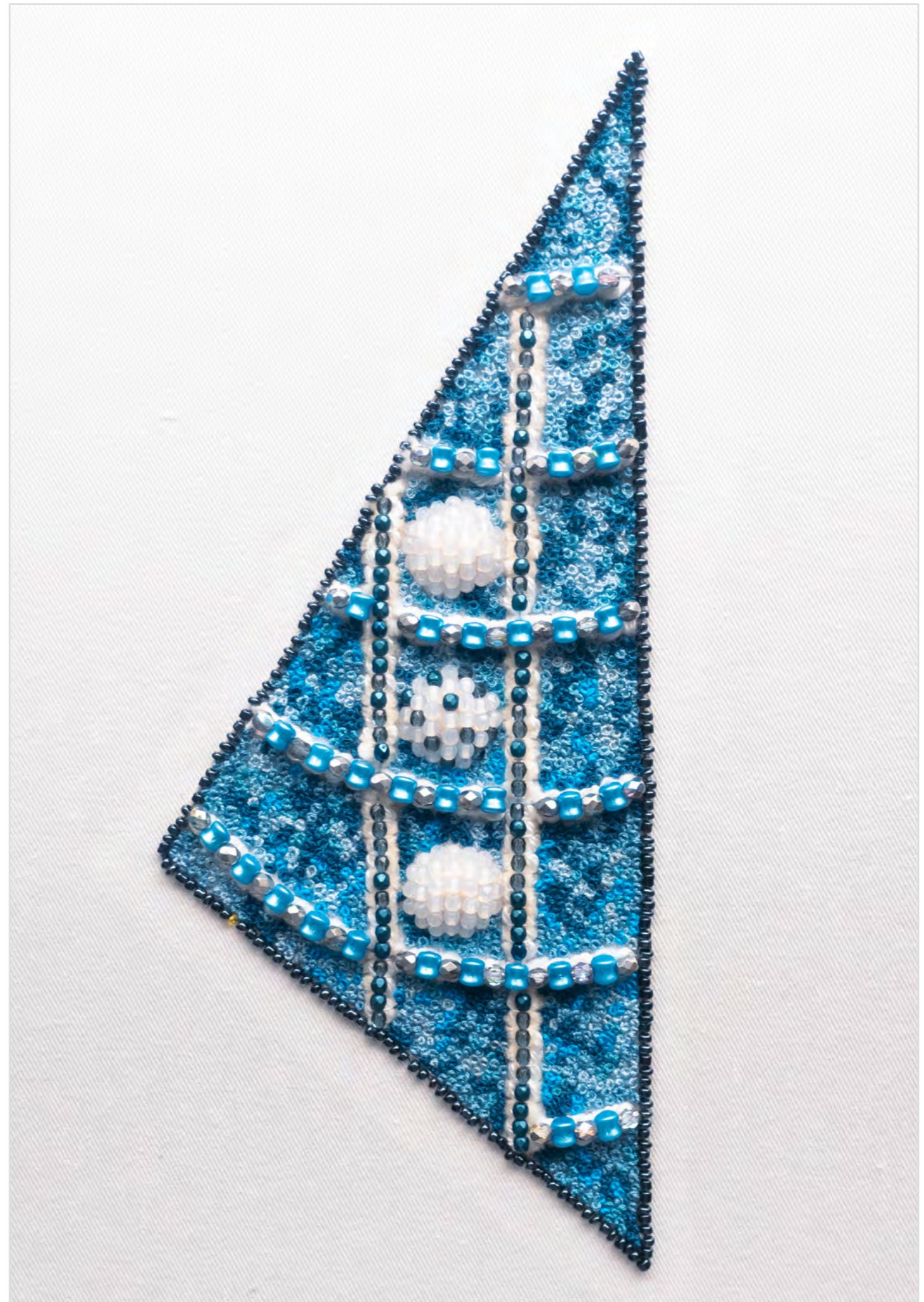
This sample will be put on a jacket as a collar for the several reasons. It has a balance between traditional and external (taken not from traditional scope) techniques. It shows a combination of fancy (bone shape) and faceted beads that were not used during the experiment stage. The color matches the white-blue-white concept the best.

When this sample was finished, I decided I will use the identical shape of the collar in collection to show all three samples on the garments.





Embroidery process





Before my MA, the French knot, to me, was a technique from “grandma’s chest”. Even during my couture embroidery practice, I’ve used it just as tiny decoration. Here, I discovered that this technique is highly appreciated. But during my experiments, I’ve noticed how amazing it might work when a significant surface is covered. So this is the reason I used it in my current sample.



Another improvement of “beads mixing approach”. Instead of 2/4 formula, I mixed bone beads with 4mm.



The approach to make cords of two different threads were taken, not the direct idea from experiments. Soft cotton yarn (as a base) were mixed with mohair for one type, and with chenille for another. I didn’t want to make pure white classic cord, so took an additional yarn to make more complex shade and texture.



Draping / Prototyping



I haven't thought about my outcome as a purely fashion piece. I have no intention of creating another meaningless garment. So when I've been doing rough sketches, I saw those women brutally captured, beaten, humiliated mainly by police but also by the public, who said that Russians don't even try to fight back.

The primary thought I've had in mind: I want to protect them. But I'm only an embroidery artist and a product designer, not a superhero. And the symbolic protection is the only option that I can give. So, to me, it was not about fashion, but about the suit of armor.

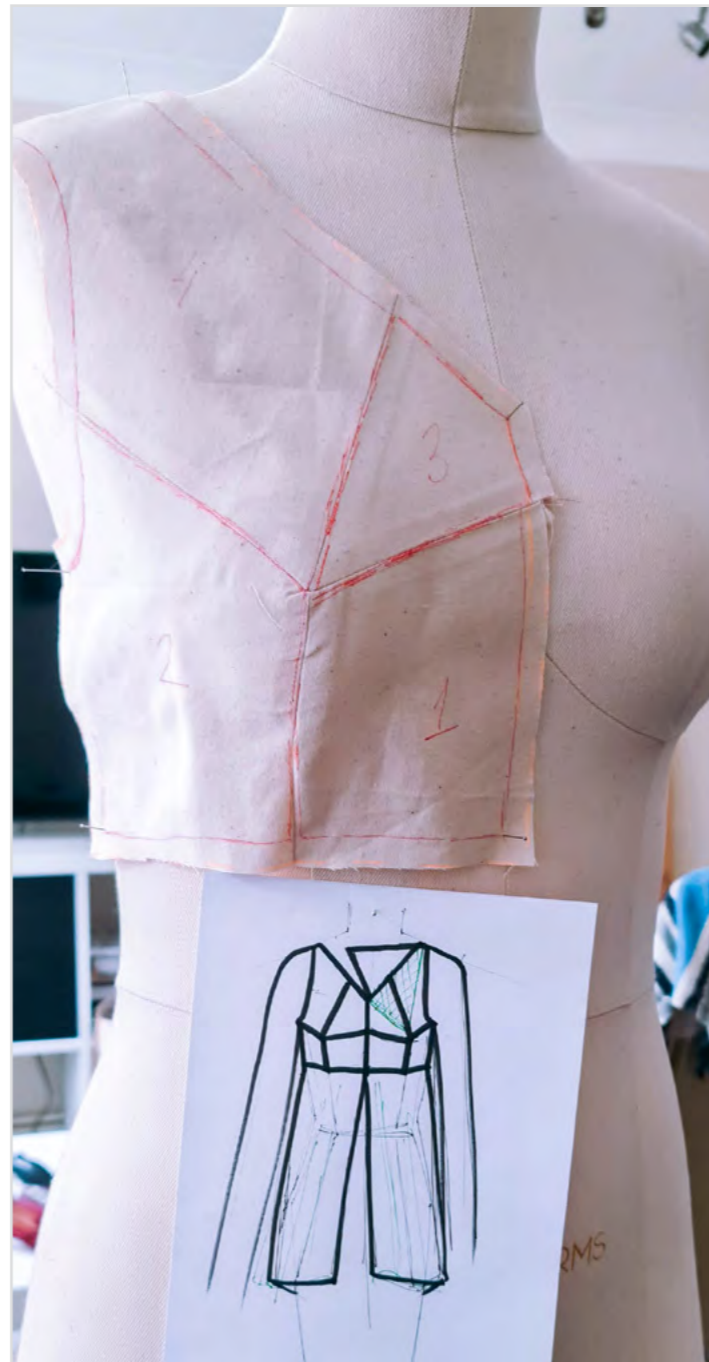
It could be said that such a concept deserves a part of research about the history of the national army uniform. I say it does not. From the research for another project, I can state that the Russian army uniform is not the most fascinating notion. And also it has highly negative connotation with the current context. I don't want to be inspired by the military.

This part of the project is a big personal challenge. I'm an experienced sewer, but completely have no idea how to construct garment from scratch. So, the first part of the challenge will be using draping as a fastest way to physically visualize my fashion ideas. The more challenging part will be creating a digital collection of garments in Clo 3D. This soft solves two major tasks: visualizes garment and creates a pattern for the further sewing. I hope to make at least one physical piece with an embroidery. But all samples will be applied to digital models.

The design workflow will be the same as for embroidery sketching - to choose three or four most promising ideas for the further development. And picking at least one design for the physical realization.

Also, it must be said that embroidery creation and garment development were almost paralleled processes. During the draping stage, it has become clear the size of collar. But I decided not to divide this part of the work to demonstrate the development clearly.

Chosen ideas for the further development

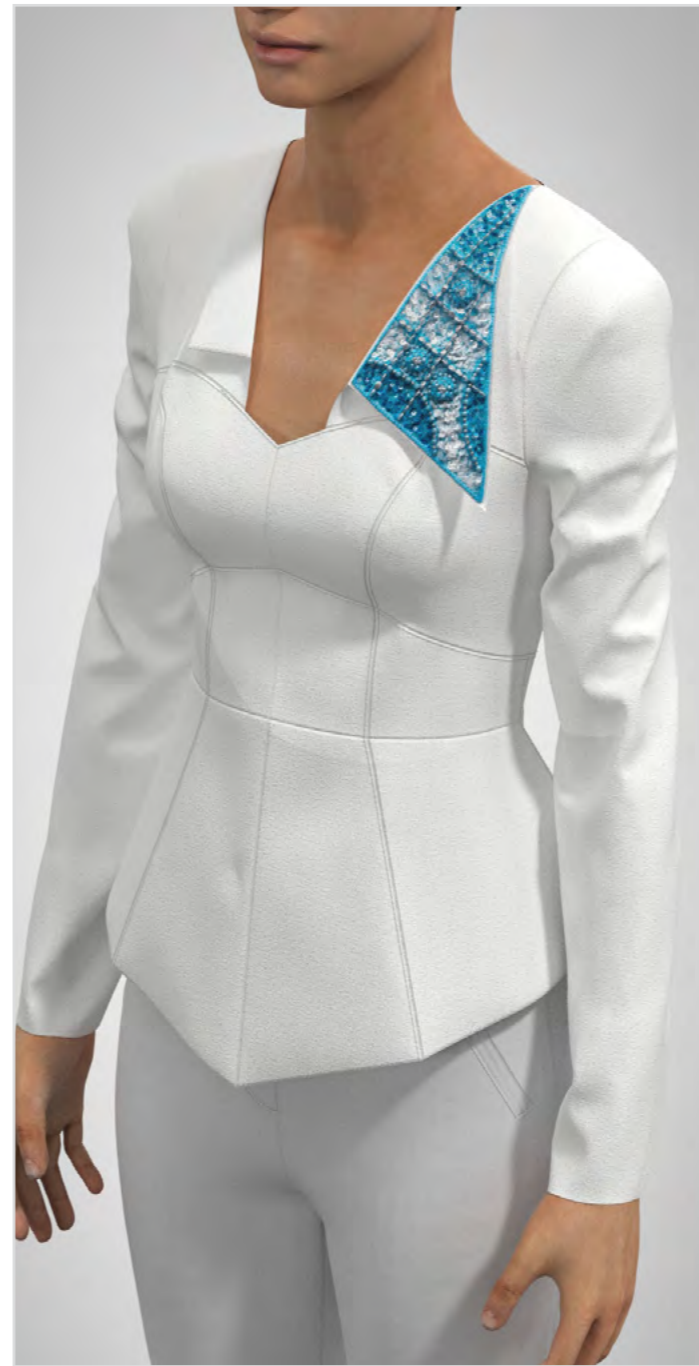


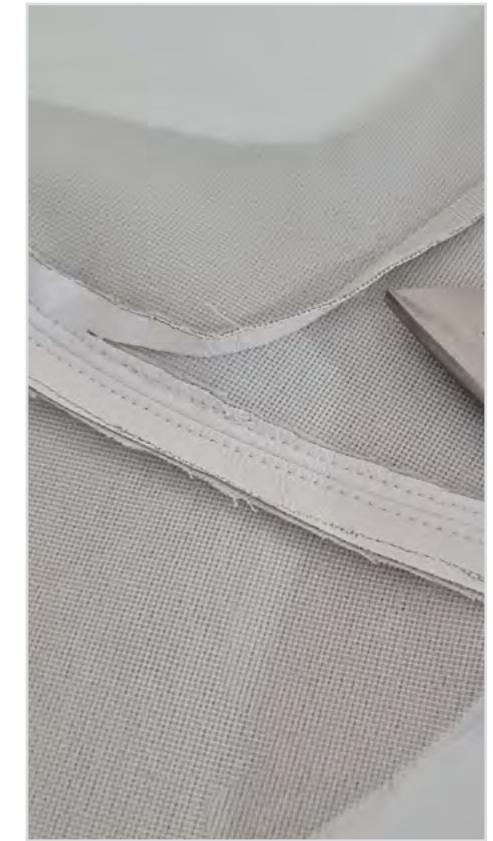
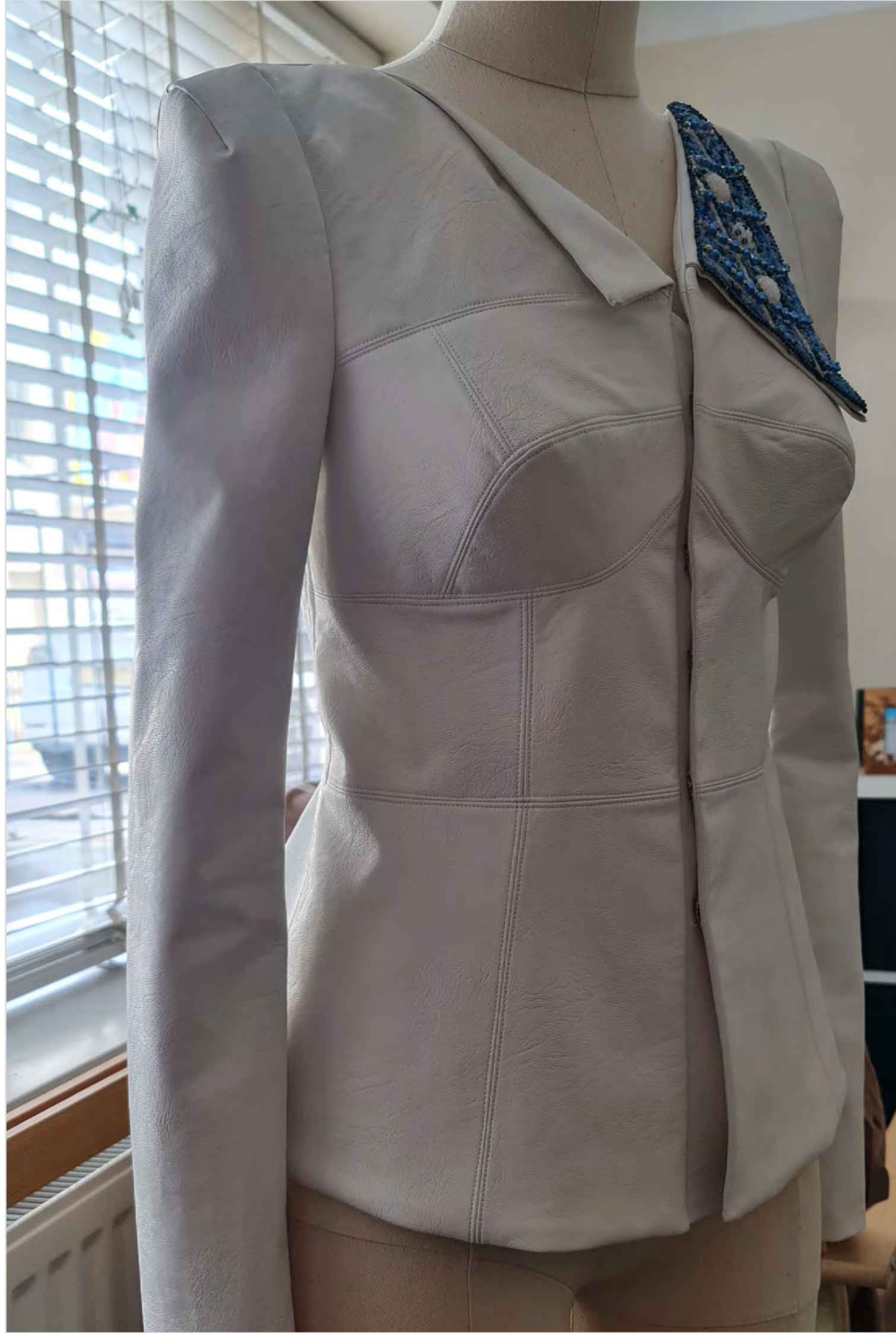


Digital Visualization of Collection

Visualization in Clo3D was definitely a personal challenge. I've had a minor experience in a soft. Mainly, it was a practice with tutorials and pattern development for simple bags. Developing pattern from scratch and rendering was a complete novelty.

After I've started to work, it became clear that I could make only one physical jacket of four. Thinking about pros and cons, I decided I need to practice more in soft and develop my digital skills, rather than sew everything with poor quality.





Sewing the Outcome

Mockup Ver.01



Mockup Ver.02



Mockup Final



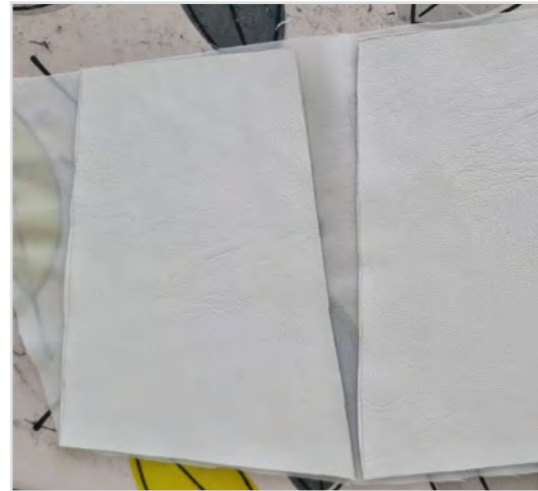
Even though the avatar was set up according to the personal measurements, it took three more calico mockups to fit the pattern more or less properly.



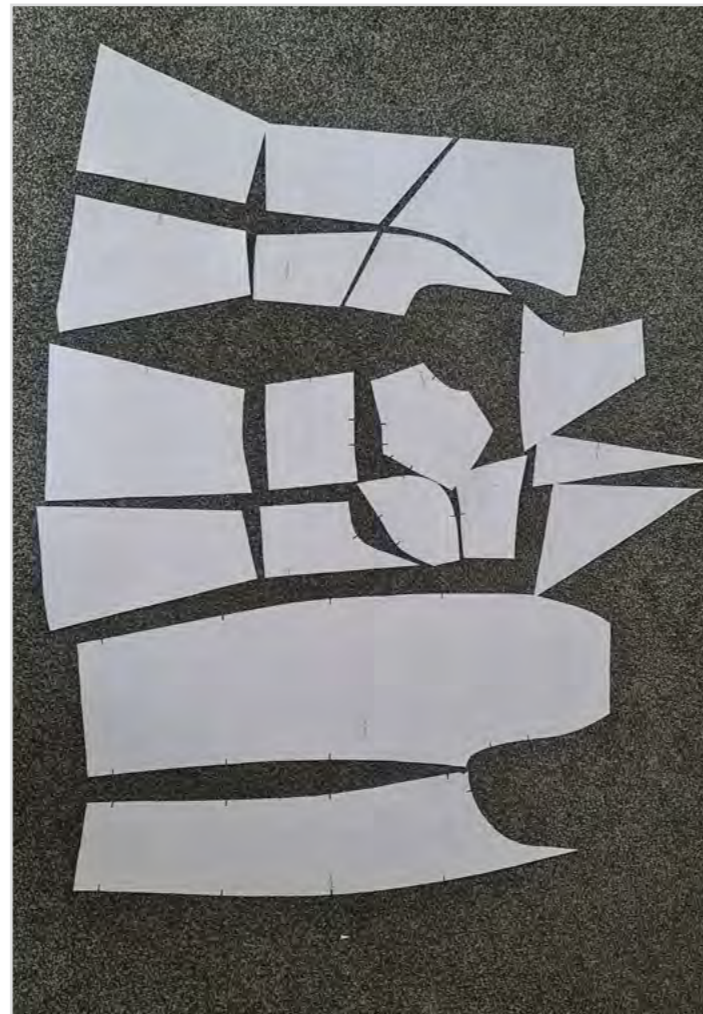
more that 18 parts of pattern



cutting workflow the same as for natural leather



interfacing all the parts



additional patter for lining



my equipment for sewing leather



additional interfacing



cutting allowances to reduce thickness



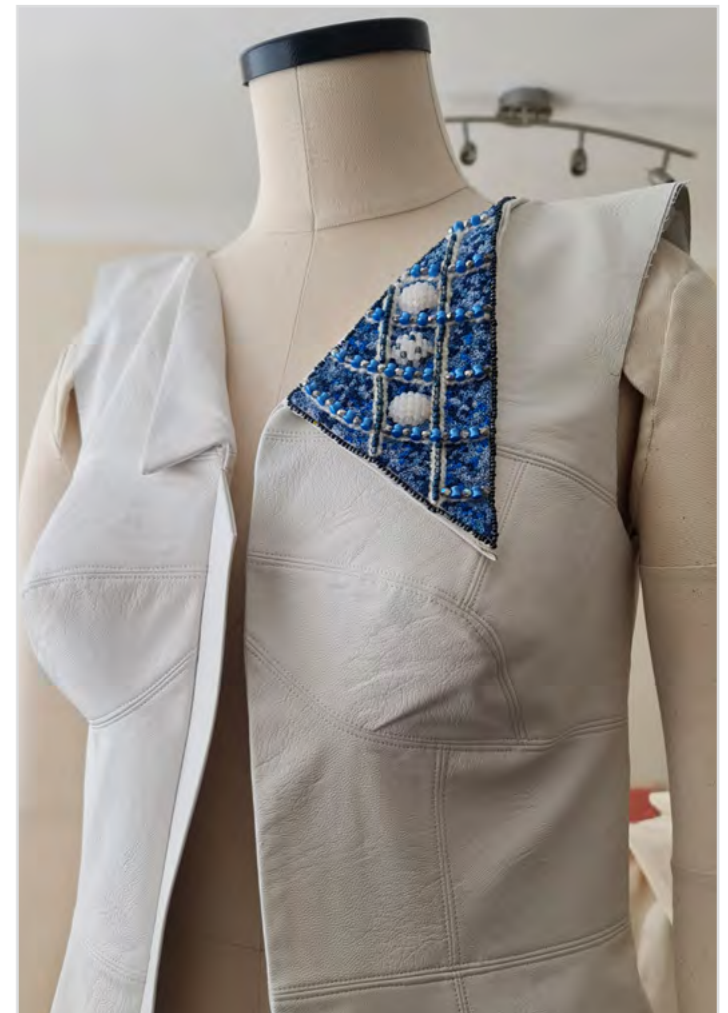
flat stitching



face collar



custom shoulder and breast pads



collar attached

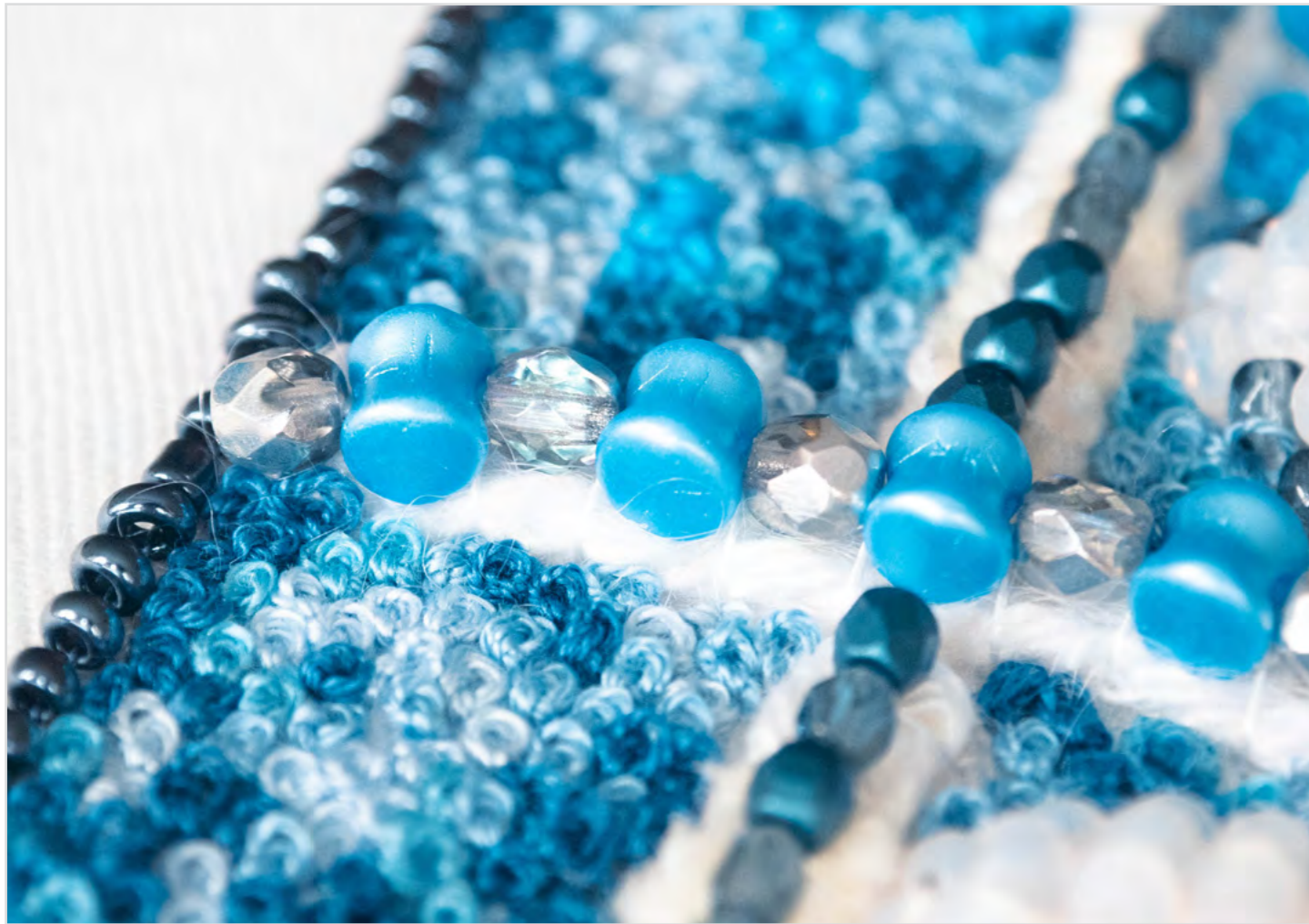




Final Outcome







Now, when the project is ended, I see that the fully sewn and more creatively presented collection would have depicted a stronger statement. Probably, more efficient time planning could help that. However, I really don't want to reduce my time for research and concept development. So, another solution is collaboration with someone who can cover production and promotion. Also, I see a lot of space for the improvement of technical skills (pattern development and digital visualization). I can't say that I'm fully happy with the quality of jacket. It works nice as a prototype, but it is still not couture level. As a craft person, I have plenty of things to think about in terms of the further personal development.

The only thing I'm really happy about is my embroidery outcomes. As an embroidery designer, I'm singing right now. I've started my library of creative samples. I've grown professionally as an embroidery master. I've developed some novelty (not innovation, but have a hope). Most of all, I expressed through embroidery something what I really care about and tried to present national heritage not as a range of cliches but as something unusual and hopefully interesting.



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