

Welcome to Ravensbourne BA (Hons) Fashion Year 1 2025-26

To kickstart your journey and feeding into your first modules, this summer project should be completed *in advance* of your welcome induction (during the week commencing 15th Sept 2025).

UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH: Analysis of the Shirt

Please focus on the classic men's shirt regardless of your own specialism. Don't worry, this will *not* tie you into menswear in your onward work.

Part A: Topic: Study of men's shirts throughout the ages.

Historically, you can go back in time as far as you like, but you should focus on how 20th Century shirt styles have evolved.

1. Task: Create A 'research file'.

The research should include visual analysis primarily in the form of your own drawings. These could be a combination of observational and/or stylized. These should be complemented by photography, sourced primary and secondary images (referenced) and/or annotation.

Consider contemporary conventions in style, details, shape and fit.

Investigate the differences between styles, for example a single and double cuff / a dress shirt and a formal business shirt.

Evaluate cut/fit, size, trims/fastenings, details, collar shape, construction.

Deduce the fabrication: textile composition and quality.

Tips:

- Avoid generic online sources such as Pinterest, Google images etc.
- Referencing does not have to be formal, but an indication of what the image is and where it is from *eg: 16th century painting xx by artist xx from xx.*
- This is not an 'essay' activity, so written evaluation should *not* be dominant.

Part B: Topic: Understanding conventions.

It is important to understand 'rules' before subverting or even breaking them!

Investigating a classic shirt will provide a strong foundation to build skills that can be applied to all tops, jackets, dresses... and more.

1. Task: Source at least TWO second-hand long-sleeved SHIRTS.

Must be high quality, well-made classic men's styles: dress / formal business shirts. Long sleeved with traditional cuff and sleeve opening (placket), a back yoke, and a stand collar (a 2 piece collar with a collar stand).

Tips:

- Shirts do *not* need to be in pristine / as new condition. They can have some signs of use, wear, small marks, holes etc.
- They can be any size, but larger as opposed to fitted is preferable.
- They must be plain and pale coloured: no dark colours / prints / bold checks.
- Quality and construction is key.
- Styles can be similar or distinctly different from each other (on face value).
- Ask a relative / friend if they have any shirts they no longer wear.
- Charity shops are a good place to find shirts at reasonable prices.
- You can also purchase shirts from re-sale websites such as eBay and Vinted, but bear in mind the quality may be more challenging to evaluate online.
- Women's shirts / blouses can be overly fitted and constructed *without* cuffs, plackets and 2-piece collars and therefore *unsuitable* for this project.

Suggested brands to look for include:

- Saville Row / Jermyn Street traditional shirt brands: Charles Tyrwhitt, Hawes & Curtis, Thomas Pink, TM Lewin, Turnbull & Asser etc
- Branded (not casual wear lines): Hugo Boss, Jaeger etc
- Heritage high street brands: Marks & Spencer (vintage: St.Michael label), Moss (vintage: Moss Bros), John Lewis, Burton Menswear

Avoid: Fast fashion / value high street or e-commerce brands such as Shein, ASOS, Boohoo, Matalan, Primark, supermarket own brands.

2. Task: Record your garments and their details with photography.

These can be on a model, mannequin, hanger or laid flat.

Tips:

Camera phone is sufficient but collate / present the images in an organized digital or physical file (not just stored on your camera roll).

3. Task: Create a series of observational drawings

Display one shirt on a hanger.

Draw the full garment, front and back plus every detail accurately.

Include accurate depiction of shape and proportions.

Include all the seams and topstitching, trimmings and fastenings, details of the cuffs, collar and any other details.

Tips:

You can use any media you choose to illustrate your shirts, but this should be suitable to illustrate detail.

4. Task: Deconstruct a shirt.

Select the most traditional of your garments (this could be same one as you used in the previous task or a different one)

Unpick* the whole garment (take-apart at the seams).

Observe how the shirt has been made: how many pieces same / different? other materials / trims used in the internal construction? types of seams / stitching? etc.

Press / iron all the pieces.

Record your findings with photographs and/or diagrams.

Tips:

*Use an un-picker or small pair of scissors to cut the threads.

Do not cut off any fabric or trim the 'seam allowance' off.

Record your process whilst you are undertaking the activity, plus the end result.

5. Task: Collate and save your work

Organize your work, ensuring it is easily accessible for future exercises:

Consider your presentation techniques from a logical and aesthetic perspective.

Save *all* of the deconstructed shirt pieces.

Keep the other shirt(s) you have sourced.