

The image features a collection of fish skin samples, likely salmon, arranged on a light-colored wooden surface. The skins are shown in various orientations and stages of processing, with some appearing as whole pieces and others as smaller, torn fragments. The colors range from dark, almost black, to light beige and white, highlighting the natural texture and grain of the fish skin. The wooden background has a visible grain and some natural imperfections, adding to the organic and rustic feel of the composition.

A LIFE THAT FOLLOWS

Fish skin in the world of design

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Inuit man in a Parka made from whale intestine, 1900s. Nome, Alaska

CONCEPT

For hundreds of years, indigenous communities have understood animals as far more than a nutritional resource. They are sentient beings and partners in survival. Waste is considered a form of disrespect, and this zero-waste ethos sits at the heart of human-animal relations. Humans are seen not as separate from the ecosystem, but as participants within it.

Sewing was regarded as women's magic. Garments were not merely functional objects but symbols of spiritual transformation – a means of maintaining harmony with the animal world. A beautifully and carefully made garment was not vanity; it was devotion.

The quality of the making reflected the depth of the maker's relationship with the natural world, and in turn, offered protection to the wearer.

These are not historical artefacts. They are living systems of knowledge, centred around paying attention and belonging to one's environment.

Innovation does not always mean invention. Sometimes it means looking into the past.

This thesis takes indigenous practice not as aesthetic inspiration to borrow from, but as a framework to learn from – one rooted in reciprocity, care, and accountability to the living world.

Ancestral systems. Regenerative futures.



Vishandel Tel, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



A LOCAL WASTESTREAM

In Amsterdam, I found my own local wastestream.

Every Monday morning, I collected three trays of fish skin from a nearby fishmonger – material that would otherwise be discarded, sent away to be processed into fish food or cosmetics.

In a world drowning in synthetic textiles, why not harness the potential of this material instead?

Fish skin is beautiful, durable, and sustainable – and it is already here, already wasted.

This is not about novelty. It is about coexistence. About learning to see what we habitually overlook, devalue and finding ways to protect each other in the process.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN

: Continuing the fish's lifecycle with the skin as the carrier of cultural memory.



THE FISH & AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS



'A LIFE THAT FOLLOWS'

Forward with care & consideration



FISHING INDUSTRIES

INDUSTRIAL.

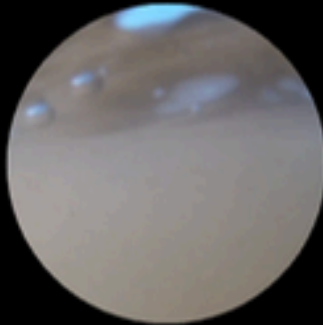
INDIGENOUS.



INTERCEPTED
WASTESTEAM

Not discarded.

CRAFTSMENSHIP
Natural & 100% fish



RETURN...

[understand more on the next page]

A Life that Follows takes a more-than-human approach, considering what it means to continue the fish's life cycle – allowing the skin to become a carrier of cultural memory.

The fish skin is tanned using only natural materials and methods. Every component is considered: no synthetic linings or thread, nothing that cannot be removed and returned.

Considering whole-use, fish glue and fish bones can be used for structure. 100% fish, with the aim to one day return and close the loop entirely.

When the pieces have lived their life, when it begins to return to its origins, the fastenings can be removed and the fish skin given back to the sea. Left to decompose and release its remaining organic nutrients back into the ecosystem that produced it.

This is where the project sits within a deeply extractive industry – not as a solution, but as a proposition. An attempt to cultivate something reciprocal from within a system that has long taken without returning.





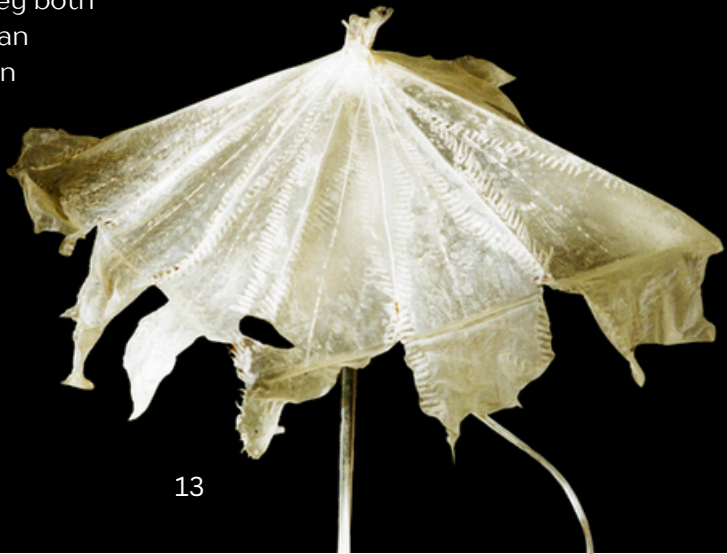
FASHION x INTERIORS

A Life that follows is a showcase of fish skin as a material that can be used within fashion and interiors – honouring the indigenous practices from which it originates.

Why bags and lampshades?

One material, two contexts and shared values. Each tests the material in different but complimentary ways.

A bag represents fashion design, testing durability, movement and strength. Whereas a lampshade represents interior design, focused on structure, translucency and surface quality. Together they both show how fish skin can move fluidly between disciplines.



PHASE ONE : PROCESSING

Material exploration of different fish species & tanning methods.

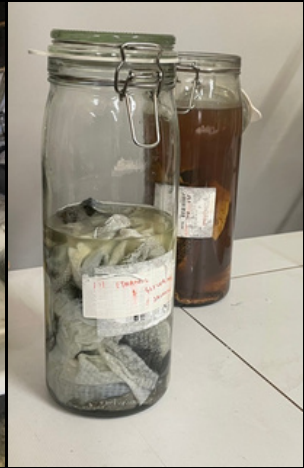




Fat Tanning



Bark Tanning



Ethanol & Glycerine

'Tanning' is the process that transforms raw fish skin into a durable, supple material. Once de-fleshed and de-scaled, tanning agents are used to stabilise the collagen fibres, making the skin resistant to decomposition.

The word itself is derived from tannins found within bark. Bark tanning is an ancient method in which tannins extracted from bark act as the preserving agent – the same compounds trees produce as a defence mechanism against herbivores, fungi, and bacteria. A preservation logic borrowed directly from nature.

In phase one of A Life that Follows, I explored three methods:

Bark tanning produces a firm, earthy result with a warmth of colour that carries the material's origin visibly within it.

Fat tanning cures the skin while preserving its original colour and translucency – the most intimate of the three methods.

Traditionally, the brain of the animal is used, given its high fat content, though egg yolk serves as an alternative. The fat penetrates the fibres, keeping them soft and supple without chemical intervention.

Preservation with ethanol and glycerine works differently to both. Ethanol acts as a steriliser, drawing out moisture and eliminating the bacteria that cause rot. Glycerine then functions as a humectant – reintroducing and retaining just enough moisture to keep the skin flexible rather than brittle. Together they stabilise the material without chemically restructuring it, making it closer to curing than tanning in the traditional sense.





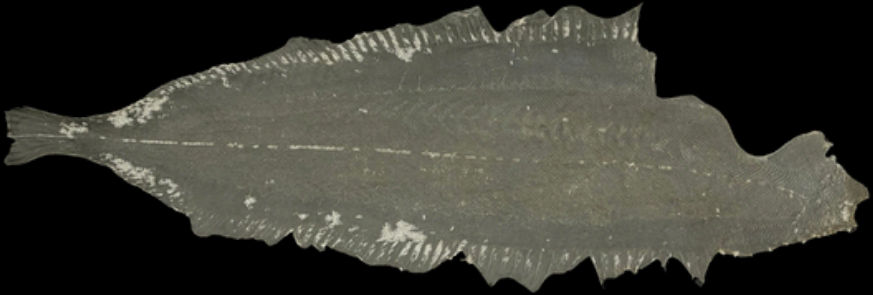
Moving forward, ethanol and glycerine became the chosen method – giving the most consistent and reliable results across species.

What emerged was an unexpected range. Each species carried its own distinct properties, suited to different purposes.

Salmon and Cod are thick and leathery. Sole and Brill are delicate, almost transparent – yet equally strong. The same material, entirely different expressions. A quiet demonstration of fish skin's versatility.



Salmon



Sole : the under side [white]



Sole : the eyed side [brown]



Pikeperch



Brill



Cod

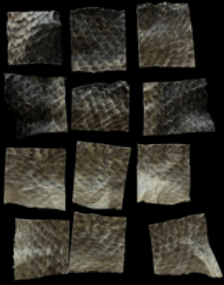


PHASE TWO : FABRICATION METHODS

The experimental phase... exploring fish skin in collaboration with traditional craft methods and modern digital technology.



Modular Construction



Sewing.
Patchwork.
Panelling.
Framework



Moulding & Casting with
Fish Glue [Isinglass] as
the composite.



Isinglass
'ΛΙΖΙΓΛΑ:Σ

Isinglass is a particularly
pure form of gelatin
derived from the dried
swim bladders of fish. As
an adhesive, it has been
trusted for centuries in
bookbinding and fine
woodwork:

strong, flexible, and
entirely natural.

Here, it returns to its
origins – the fish, once
again, holding itself
together.





Digital Fabrication.

Laser engraving
& lasercut kerfing.







DIGITAL x TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

This project sits at the intersection of digital and traditional craftsmanship, each informing the other.

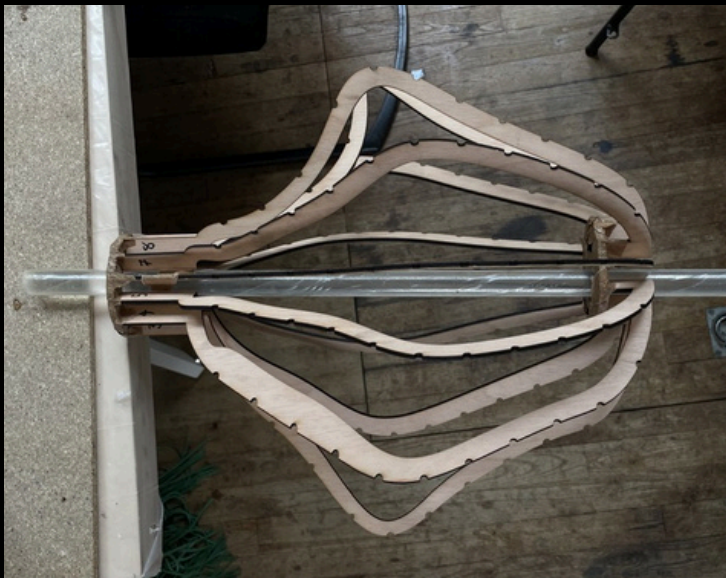
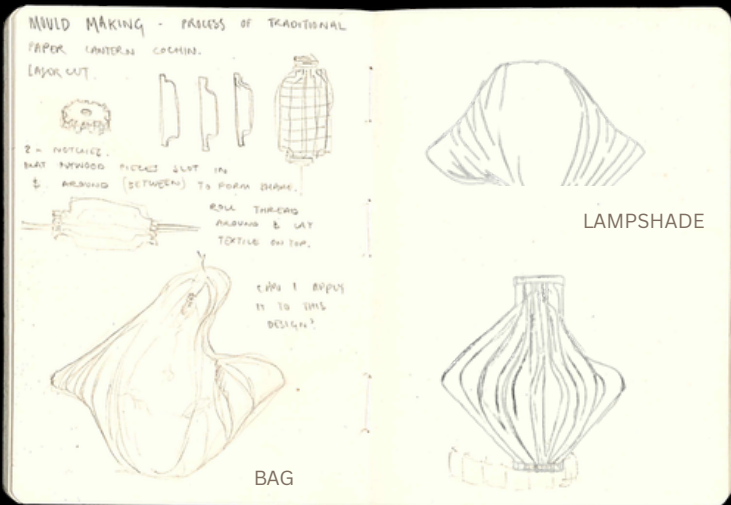
Digital tools were used to explore form-finding processes; to test, iterate, and push the material into new configurations without waste. The reusability and versatility of fish skin made it well-suited to this kind of exploration, where the material could be worked and reworked, the process remaining as considered as the outcome.

But it is in the return to traditional craftsmanship, to sewing, to handwork, to slow and careful making, that the material is truly honoured. Here, the pace changes. The hands slow down. Each stitch is a decision, each seam a negotiation with the skin's natural grain, texture, and memory.

This is where love and care for the material becomes tangible. Where the values that opened this project – reciprocity, respect, attention, are no longer philosophy but practice.

The material and its processes sit at the centre, rooted in care, consideration, and a deep sense of responsibility to what the skin once was. In this way, the project returns to where it began.

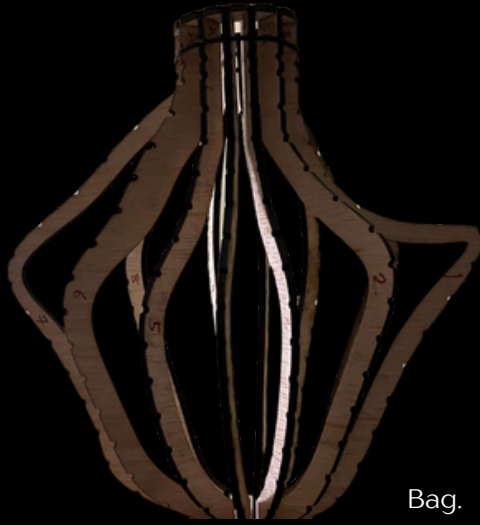
To the women sewing by firelight, whose quality of making was a measure of their relationship with the natural world. The tools have changed. The intention has not.



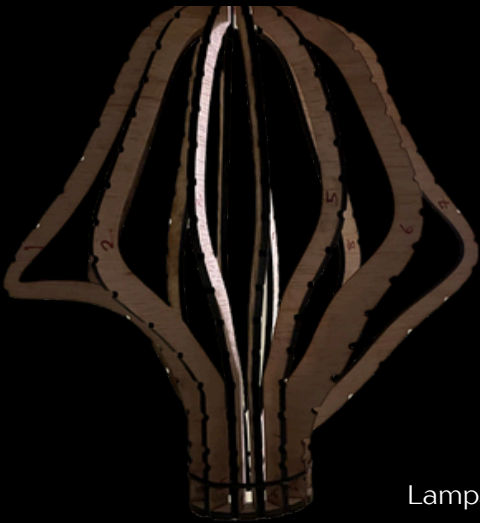
The form-finding process was inspired by the traditional Japanese paper lantern – a structure built on the tension between a rigid skeleton and a delicate skin.

The moulds were designed and fabricated within Rhino3D and laser cut from plywood – digital precision in service of an organic material. The skeleton giving the skin a form to inhabit.





Bag.



Lampshade.

VERSATILITY

The structure was designed with intention, conceived to function as both a bag and a lampshade. Not two separate objects, but one form with two lives. A reconfiguration rather than a replacement.

This versatility is built into the design itself. The components can be rearranged, reassembled, repurposed – allowing less waste and more possibilities.

The skins themselves remain responsive: rehydrated and remoulded, they can be shaped again into something new entirely, the material never truly exhausted.

In a world of single-use design, the most radical act is an object that simply keeps going.

THE MAKING OF THE FINAL COLLECTION

A Life that Follows.



MY BRAIN.

TWO BAGS.



1x CROSSBODY.
PRACTICAL.
FUNCTIONAL BAG.
- BIG YARN.



1x EXHIBITION.
STRUCTURAL.
BEAUTIFUL BAG.
- PATCHED SALMON SKIN

* PRECISE
PATTERN.
- patches
made.

TWO LAMPSHADES.



A WHITE SOLE
LAMP SHADE.



- straight structural frame.
- Fishbones & glue for structure?
(90% done)



A BROWN SOLE
SHADE.

- simple layering of brown sole.
- Natural, flowing.

THE COD
CROSSBODY BAG.





Handwritten notes and a diagram on a small white card in the bottom right corner. The text is partially obscured but appears to include "100 measurements" and some numbers.

1.



2.



3.



Patternmaking.





The Cod Crossbody began with the fish itself... its shape, its scale, its proportion. The initial form was drawn directly from the natural dimensions of the cod, then resolved through simple pattern making into a functional, everyday bag.

Construction is straightforward and considered. Panels of cod skin are sewn together with plant-based thread, lined with 100% linen. Materials chosen not just for their quality, but for what happens to them at the end.

Every component that makes a bag a bag... the zips, hoops, and clasps, are fully removable. Nothing is permanent. Nothing is wasted.

When the bag has lived its life, it can be unstitched, unhooked, and returned to the sea. The skin decomposing quietly, releasing what remains back into the ecosystem it came from.





THE SALMON
HANDBAG.





PATCHWORK
[OR] PANELLED
SALMON
BAG.

- colour coordinated patches.
- * Silver
- * Dark



- fashion statement
- classy
- exhibition piece.





Pattern made of the wooden mould.



Sewn.





Rehydrated & Moulded.





The Salmon Handbag is built from twelve panels of three skins each – cut, arranged by colour, and sewn into a single continuous piece.

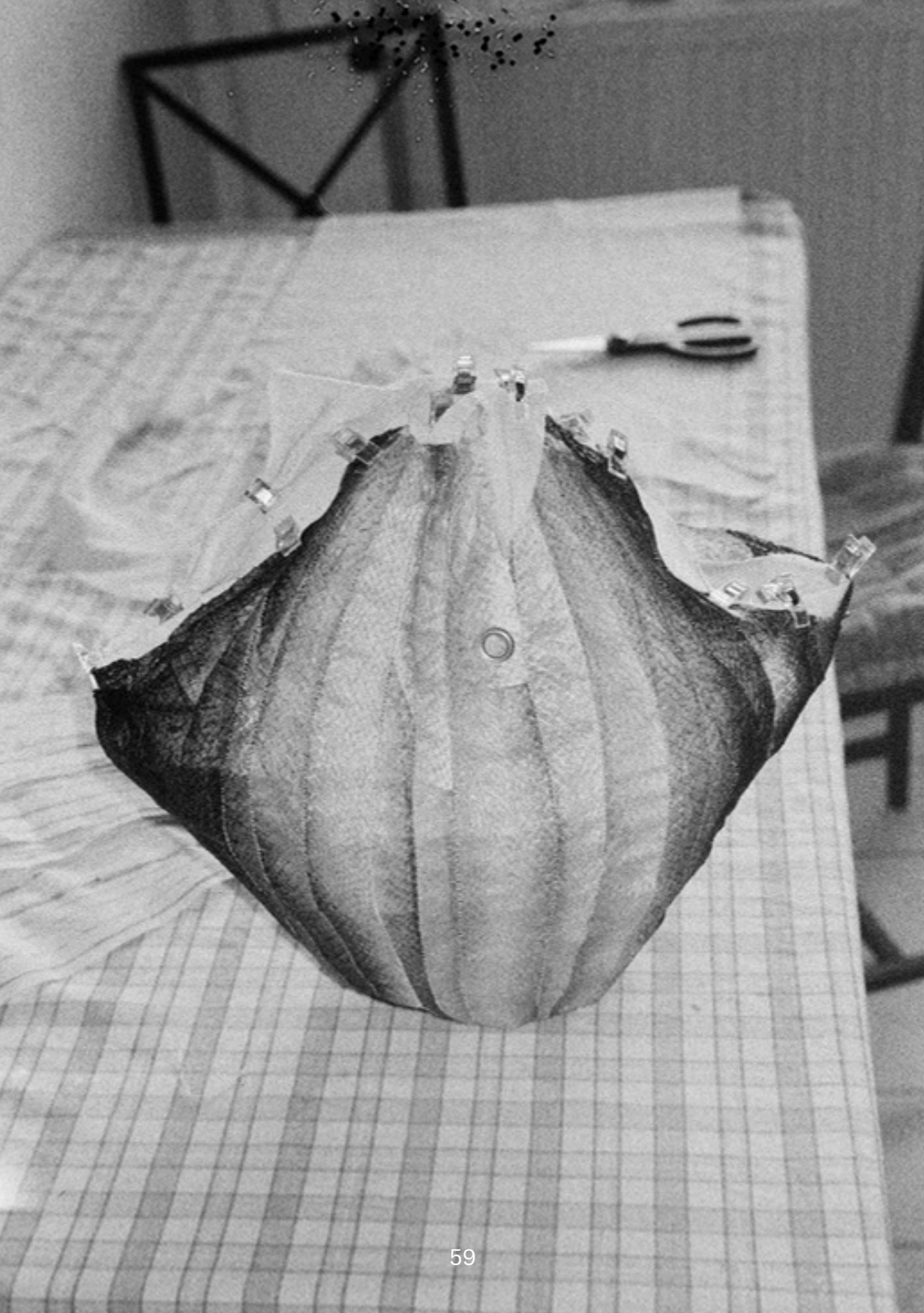
The composition is considered: the natural variation in tone across the skins becomes a surface pattern in itself, no two bags ever quite the same.

The wooden mould served as a mannequin – the pattern drafted directly around it, the form emerging from the structure rather than imposed upon it.

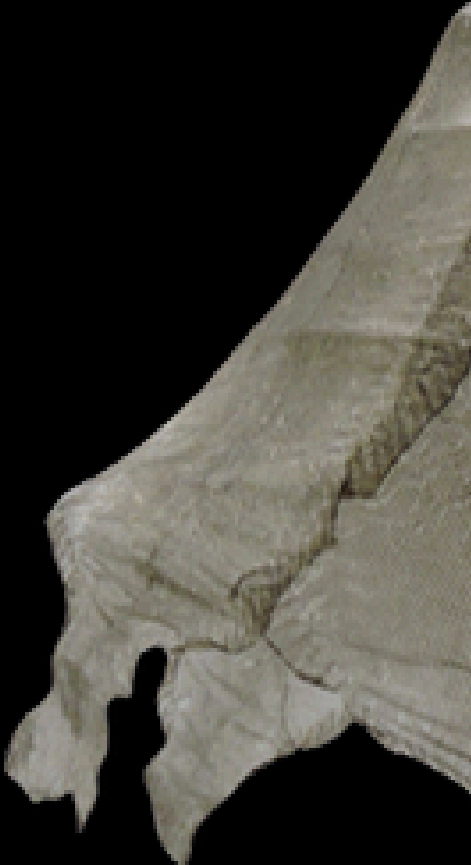
Once sewn, the piece was rehydrated and moulded around the form, the skin drawing itself into shape as it dried – a process inspired by traditional leather moulding.

From there, the work became quiet and slow. Hand-finishing, tidying edges, closing seams. The final stage always the most intimate with the hands closest to the material. Lined with 100% linen, finished with eyelets and a handle of rope and fish skin.





THE BROWN SOLE
LAMPSHADE.







Rehydrated & cast with fish glue.









The Brown Sole

Lampshade is the simplest object in the collection – and perhaps the most quietly beautiful.

The 'brown' side of the sole is its eyed side – the face that looks upward from the seabed.

The same wooden mould used for the handbag becomes the form here, simply inverted. The skins are rehydrated and made pliable, then layered directly over it – the material finding the shape naturally as it conforms to the surface.

Fish glue is applied to bind the layers, strengthening the structure as it dries and sets.

The result is 100% fish.

Once removed from the mould, the shade holds its form entirely on its own. Lamp wiring is added, and the object is complete – layered to illuminate to natural shape of each fish.

THE WHITE SOLE
LAMPSHADE.





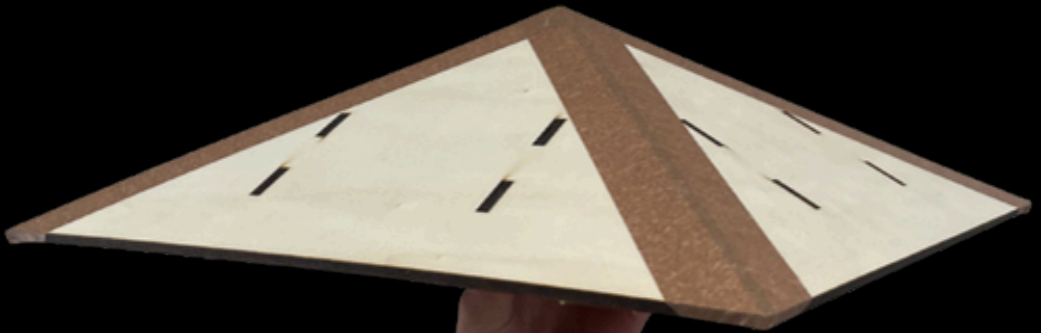
The mould itself was designed and fabricated within Rhino3D - a shallow pyramid, laser cut from plywood.

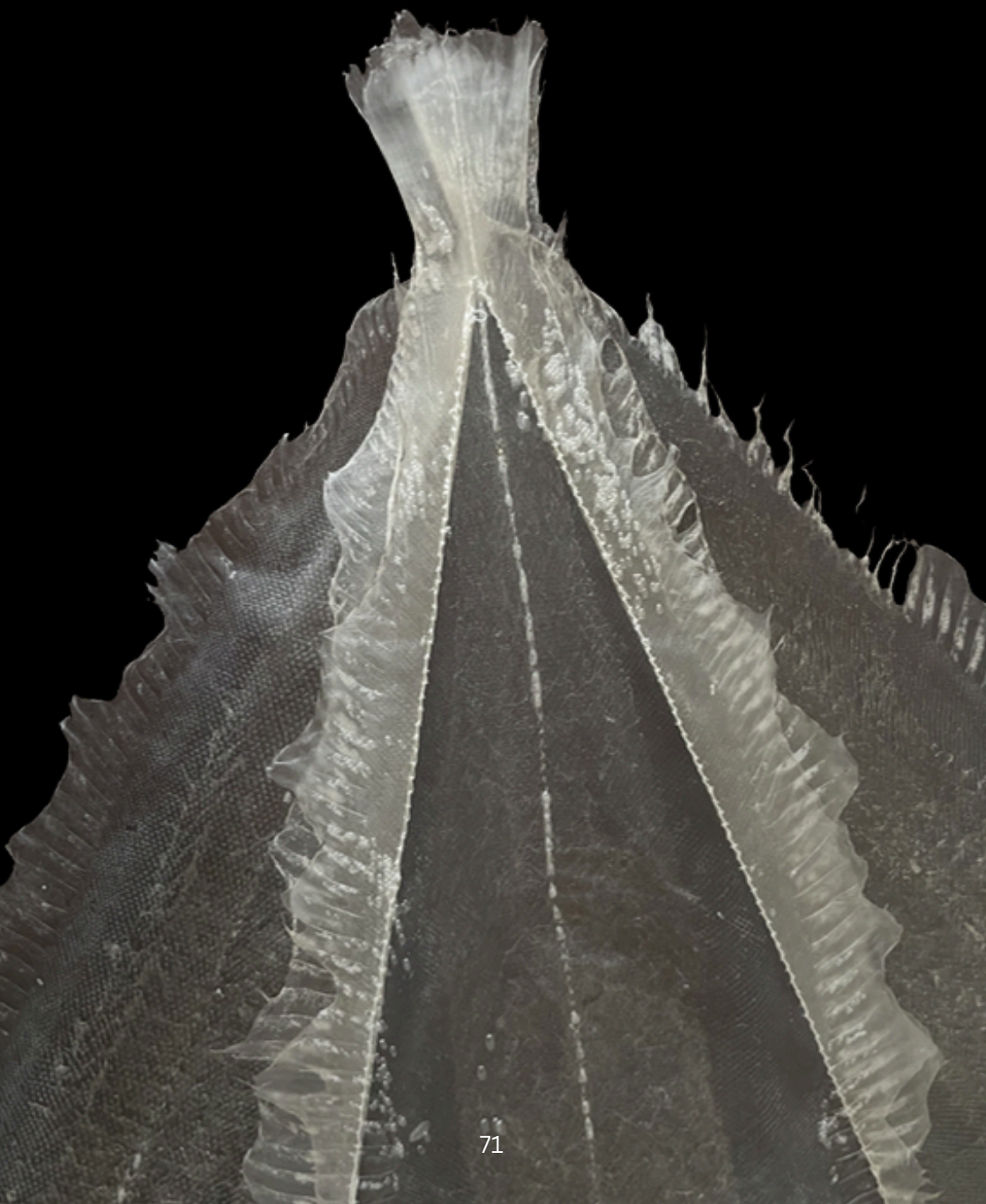
Collapsible & reusable.

Width : 350 x 350mm

Height : 100mm

Three white sole skins sewn together to make one of the four pyramid faces.







'Waste' fish bones collected from local fishmonger.



Fish skin, fish glue & fish bones

100% fish.



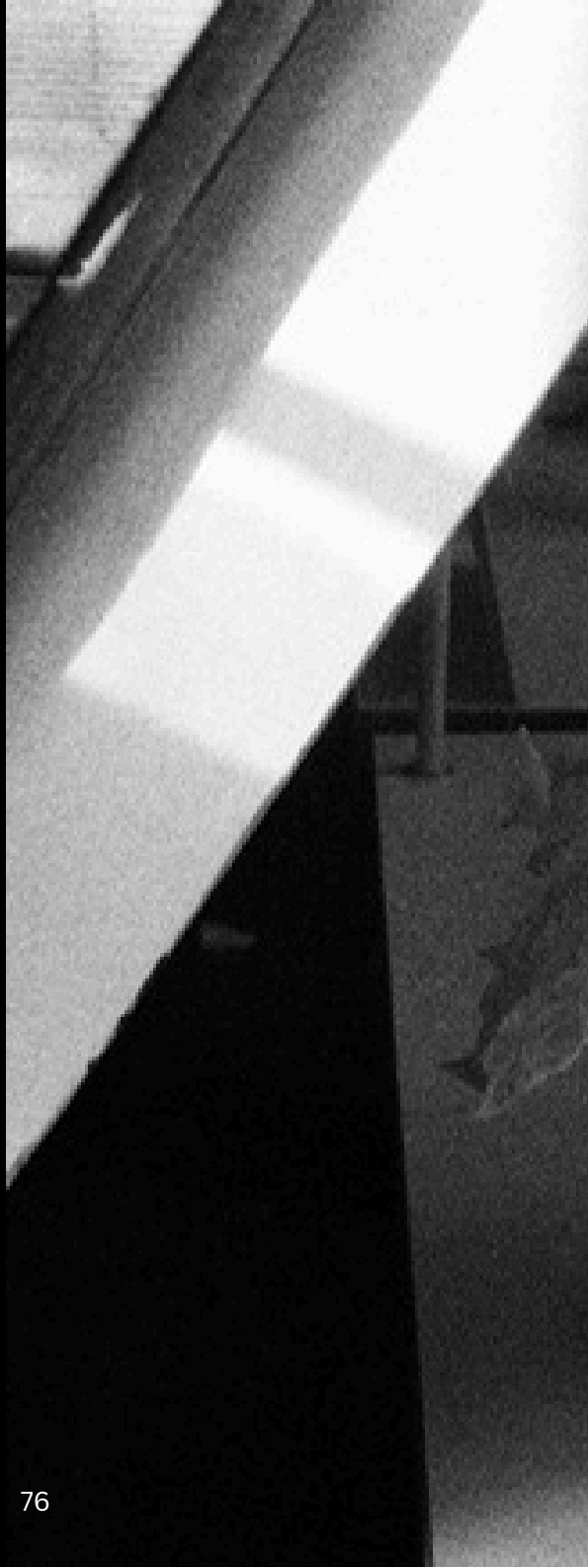


Where the Brown Sole Lampshade reveals the fish's eyed side, this shade turns to its underside – the white, pale belly that faces the seabed below.

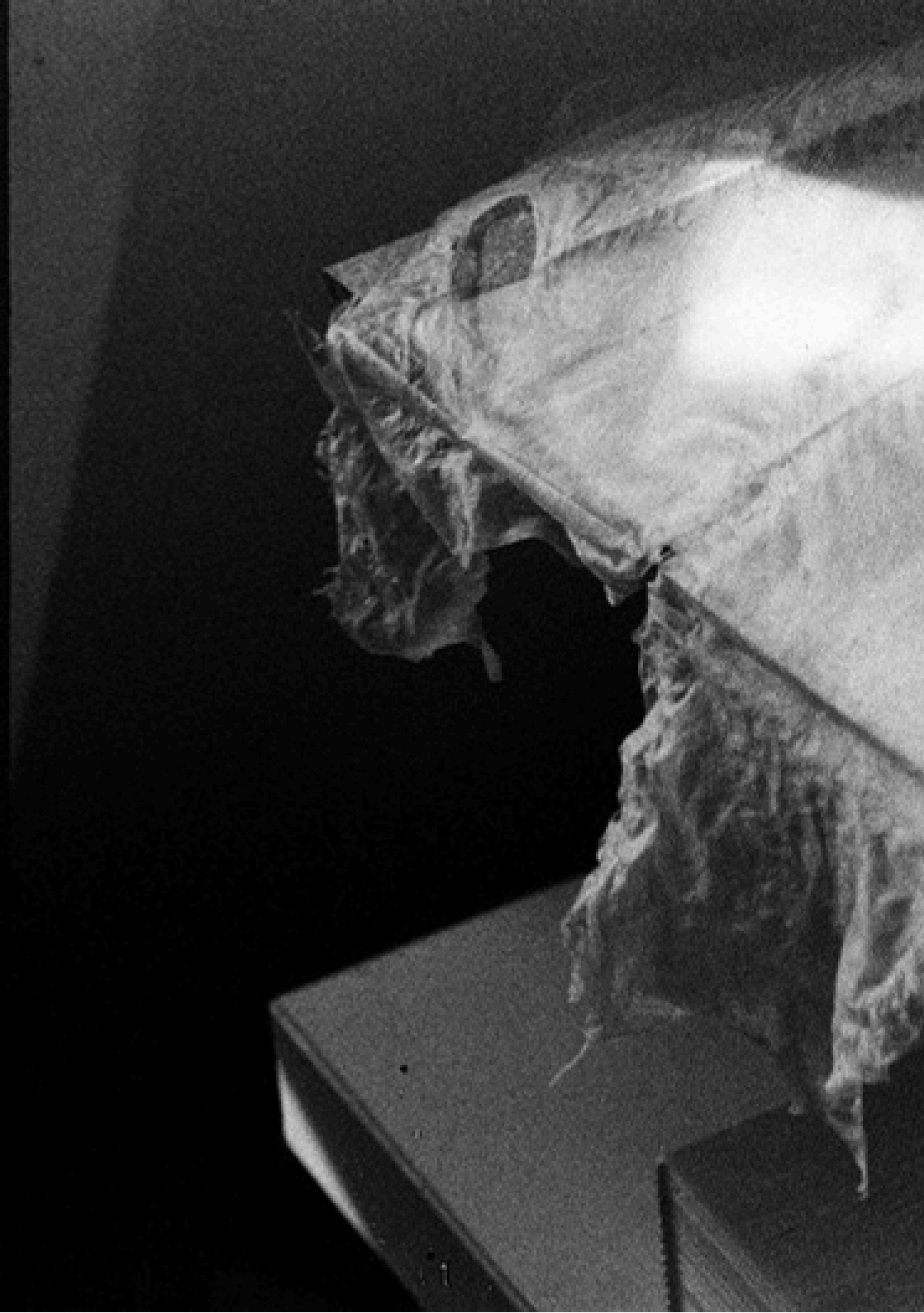
Twelve sole skins are sewn in groups of three, each group cut and composed to fit one of the pyramid's four faces precisely. The panels are then individually rehydrated and laid over each face, a coating of fish glue binding them into shape as they dry.

The rim is finished with fish bones – structural and symbolic in equal measure. The bones and glue working together to give the shade the strength to hold its form, while honouring the whole-use ethos at the heart of the project. Nothing introduced that the fish did not already carry.

The shade attaches to its base through a 3D printed notch, designed to sit discreetly within the form. It is fully removable... making the lampshade, also, 100% fish.












THE LIFE THAT CAME BEFORE

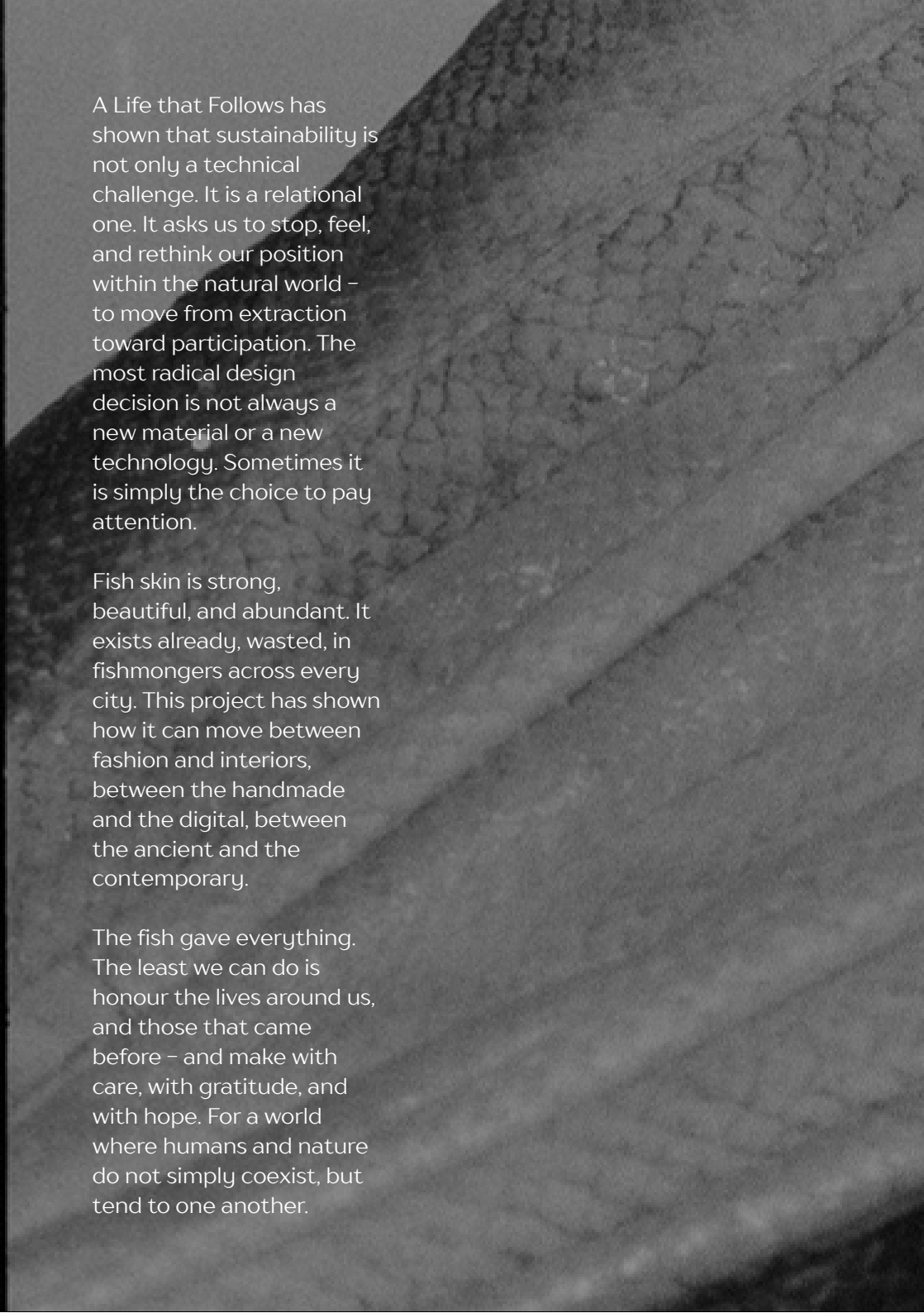


Each product carries a label – laser engraved with drawings of the species whose skin it wears. Cod on cod. Salmon on salmon. Sole on sole.

A small act of recognition. A record of the life that came before.

In a world that so often obscures the origins of its materials, these labels insist on transparency – not as a statement, but as a matter of respect. The fish is not hidden. It is celebrated.


This is what it means to make with nature rather than take from it. To find, in the act of making, a form of coexistence and in the finished object, a small but genuine cause for hope.



A Life that Follows has shown that sustainability is not only a technical challenge. It is a relational one. It asks us to stop, feel, and rethink our position within the natural world – to move from extraction toward participation. The most radical design decision is not always a new material or a new technology. Sometimes it is simply the choice to pay attention.

Fish skin is strong, beautiful, and abundant. It exists already, wasted, in fishmongers across every city. This project has shown how it can move between fashion and interiors, between the handmade and the digital, between the ancient and the contemporary.

The fish gave everything. The least we can do is honour the lives around us, and those that came before – and make with care, with gratitude, and with hope. For a world where humans and nature do not simply coexist, but tend to one another.



*Innovation does not always mean
invention. Sometimes it means looking
into the past.*

**And perhaps, in looking back, we find
exactly the future we need.**



With love & respect for the natural world,

Fluoranth