

INVISIBLE MAN: LITERATURE AND THE BODY IN DESIGN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

As a culturally produced text, literature is seen as a lens with the potential to draw attention to the values, ideas, and beliefs that underlie a society. In this paper three key themes in H.G. Wells' novel *The Invisible Man* (1897), are discussed: firstly, the ways that the body may be fashioned through dress and individual practices; secondly, how wearable artefacts may socialize bodies and symbolically communicate; and thirdly, how the fashioned body may challenge personal and cultural boundaries. Collectively, these issues draw attention to the relational network of body, culture, and dress. These relationships are highly relevant to design research in fashion, dress, and wearable artefacts, which all use the body as a site. This study is seen as being an example of how literature may be utilized as a speculative device to encourage experimental and creative design research practices. My doctoral research, which emphasizes the body and skin as sites for design, is used as an example of a cross-disciplinary approach that draws on the issues raised through an analysis of the novel.

THE INVISIBLE MAN: LITERATURE AS A CRITICAL LENS FOR DESIGN RESEARCH

Originally serialised in 1897 and published as a book in the same year, H.G Wells' novel *The Invisible Man* has

since been republished in countless editions and interpreted in a number of films, showing an enduring popularity and on-going relevance to audiences. As a literary trope the *Invisible Man* allows us to speculate on what the physical and psychological ramifications of living in an unseen state might be, while highlighting many of the ways that human bodies visually communicate. The novel acts as a lens to critically examine the complex relationships that form between body, culture and dress through the device of the unseen human. In my research the implications of this intersection of agencies is addressed through developing methodologies for dealing with the living body as a site, and generating wearable artefacts that explore practices of fashioning the body.

Three key themes that emerge through Wells' text demonstrate the relational network linking body, dress and culture. The first of these is the way in which bodies may be fashioned through dress and individual practices, the *Invisible Man*'s self-induced transparency being an example. Following this, the body is examined as a cultured and cultural agency that engages with systems of social communication. Through Wells' text, the body and wearable artefacts are seen as capable of being invested with symbolic meaning in a cultural context. The *Invisible Man* is then discussed as an example of how the fashioned body may challenge personal and cultural boundaries, representing the desire for discipline and order within society.

Literature has the potential to encourage creative avenues of exploration. This novel incites readers to consider ways that experimentation with the body and worn artefacts might alter experiences in the world, as well as drawing attention to the ways that bodies and wearable artefacts symbolically function. As a research device, it highlights the living body as site for and of design through wearable artefacts and practices of dress. Projects from my research are used as an example of how the issues raised through the analysis of this novel may encourage the body and skin to be made 'visible' as sites through experimental and creative approaches to design research and practice.

THE FASHIONED BODY: DRESS AND THE WEARABLE ARTEFACT

Joanne Entwistle has said that fashion is about bodies, and in particular, it is about 'fashioned' bodies (2000a, 1). All bodies are fashioned, and even the naked body is produced or given meaning through cultural readings, as Nina Jablonski observes:

Even when we adopt the "natural look" and don't adorn our skin at all, we are making a social statement. Our skin talks even when we don't; it is not a neutral canvas. Through the expressive functions of skin and body decoration, we have expanded the communicative potential of our bodies and reinforced the primacy of the visual sense in our sensory repertoire. (2006, 164-165)

Jablonski recognizes that our skin is not passive, but is a temporal, transformative, and communicative surface constantly invested with meaning. Skin has the ability to visually communicate subtle information about our health, ancestry, lifestyle, affiliations and aspirations. Yet this emphasis on visual primacy tends to overlook the broader phenomenology of skin as a conduit for the transmission of tactile meaning. Didier Anzieu's (1989) concept of the Skin Ego suggests that touch is fundamental to the forming of our 'psychic envelope' that establishes barriers around the self, filters exchanges, and links both touch and emotion to our 'impressions' and how we 'feel'. Claudia Benthien (1999, 227) says that 'many kinds of touch do not *mean* something; they already *are* something (for instance, affection, desire, or anger)', and further to this, gestures of touch can mean many things, posing difficulty in transmitting information. As an interface, skin is prone to miscommunication, misinterpretation, and outright deceit – powders, paints, plastic surgery, cosmetics, and artificial tans can all fashion the skin and alter the narratives that it tells (Anzieu 1989, 17). Joanne Eicher's definition of 'dress' and dressing elaborates why this is a practice not limited to the realm of fashion but one that can equally apply to the 'dressing' and social readings of skin. She explains that dress is a coded system of nonverbal communication that enhances social interaction; dressing occurs when 'beings modify their bodies visually or through other sensory measures by manipulating color, texture, scent, sounds, and taste or by supplementing their bodies with articles of clothing and accessories and jewelry' (Eicher 2012, 78).

H.G. Wells' character of the Invisible Man is a wilful young scientist who modifies his body by using drugs to bleach his blood. With the help of a gas engine working two dynamos that radiate a vibrational frequency, he lowers the refractive index of his body to that of air and renders himself unseen, much like the effect of a piece of glass becoming invisible when immersed in water.

Describing the experience to his contemporary Dr. Kemp, he relates that his 'limbs became glassy, the bones and arteries faded, vanished, and the little white nerves went last' (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 100). The modification of his body has taken permanent affect, and much like tattooing, the process of altering the appearance of his skin has also altered the way that his body visually communicates socially. While this may not enhance social interaction *per se*, the decision to manipulate his body so that it appears transparent has been done with at least some intention of it changing his ability to interact with other people. Harangued by a prying landlord that he wishes to escape, he makes the snap decision to transform himself and goes on to use his invisibility as a tool to enable breaking and entering, stealing, and beating people without fear of being recognised or facing repercussions. While his intent is far from noble it is clear that the Invisible Man has 'dressed' his skin, changing the way that his body is perceived, socially read, and interacted with.

As a cultural body practice, 'dress' is as much about the *practice* of dressing the body as it is about the *things* that are used for adornment. In my own research I prefer to use the term 'wearable artefact' or 'wearable' to explain the latter, partly as it has an inherent openness that reflects my cross-disciplinary design approach (rather than one tied to the connotations of 'an article of dress'), and partly because this is a trope that is implicit to the body, the act of 'wearing', and also the process of material 'wear' – all of which are central to my design approach.

Like dress, wearable artefacts can be sensory modifications to the body (e.g. invisibility, perfume, or cosmetics), garments, jewellery, or accessories; wearables may be in fleeting contact with the body, or in a prolonged and trusting relationship with the wearer such as with a prosthetic; as a practice of dress they may be applied, inscribed, absorbed, implanted, marked, worn, or borne by a body; a wearable may also be a carried object like a cane or spectacles, an artefact that has become incorporated into the body schema. The wearable artefact is a device for the 'fashioned body', and the body is the site that gives it meaning and context. The practices of 'getting dressed' and 'wearing' imbue both the body and artefact with a new array of meanings. Without the body as a site wearable artefacts may appear displaced or evoke the body's absent presence. Cultural historian Elizabeth Wilson observes that in the museum:

We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood,

sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body and the evanescence of life. (Wilson 1985, 1)

Robyn Healy (2009, 108) also explores this in the context of encountering garments in fashion exhibitions, where empty clothes remind us that a human body should occupy the clothing space. Both Wilson and Healy's observations illustrate the close association of clothing with the living, moving body, and highlight one aspect of why the figure of the Invisible Man is so unsettling. In Wells' novel it is the relationship between the unseen body and dress, and the cultural readings of this strange scenario that are of particular interest. Garments worn by the Invisible Man are not unoccupied, nor alienated from the living body like those in the museum. The man within the clothes is corporeal in every sense, yet the effect of an invisible body wearing clothing is similar to that of clothing inhabited by empty space, and the uncanny sense of disembodied threat that Wilson describes. The implications of this are vast. In the fictive scenario of *The Invisible Man*, not only has the protagonist chosen to be rid of a basic and fundamental form of social communication – the expressive, visual medium of the skin and body – as a result he has also altered the way in which wearable artefacts are culturally read on the body.

THE CULTURED BODY: DRESS AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

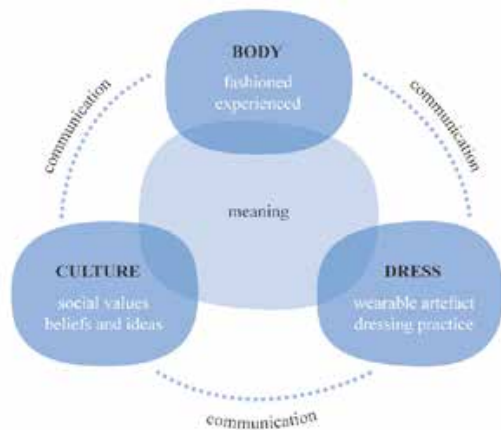


Figure 1: Representation of how meaning may be produced through the relational network between body, culture, and dress.

The Invisible Man highlights how wearable artefacts may play a role in socialising and fashioning the body. The scenarios played out in the fictional village of Iping show how readings of the body can be steeping in cultural meaning through reflecting individual and social values, beliefs, and ideas. Cultural environments reinforce individual and social ideas of how bodies should ideally look, how they should act, and what constitutes an acceptable or desirable body. The way

that bodies may reflect or be produced through cultural meaning is addressed through the two schools of communication thought: process communication and semiotics (structuralism). Process communication poses that information is transmitted from a source through an encoded channel or medium that must be interpreted by the receiver (Barnard 2007, 138). Semiotic communication takes the position that meaning is not sent or received but is produced through individual readings, this means that the meaning is unfixed and may be influenced by an individual's changing values, agency, or even mood (Barnard 2007, 139-40). While process communication relies on the transmission of meaning through cultural agencies with the knowledge to successfully decode the information, semiotic communication suggests that an individual's construction of meaning constitutes them as a member of a culture (or not). Both schools of thought recognize that interference and interpretation is likely to occur, a point highly pertinent to the reading of fashion and dress, and the fashioned and dressed body, as social communication.

Fred Davis takes a sociological interest in fashion and dress, discussing the difficulty of identifying exactly how certain forms, textures, colours, postures, and expressive elements take on symbolic meaning to a culture. He notes that ambiguity is rife in contemporary dress codes as the meanings of garments or styles shift temporally, and meaning is dependent on factors such as context, social variations in what are identified as signifying cues, variations in interpreting signified information, and the tendency to 'undercode' or make presumptions when the meaning of communicative cues is uncertain (Davis 2007, 150-153). This can be observed in an analysis of Wells' novel, which reveals the complex relationships between body, culture, and dress, and particularly how meaning is produced through these interactions. Set in a world that resembles our own, or at least resembles Wells' nineteenth century England (Priest 2005, xvi-xvii), the novel imagines ways in which an individual with an unvisualised body would have to adapt in order to survive physically and socially. The Invisible Man has transformed and fashioned his body in an innovative way, but without forethought or an engagement with society he faces physical, psychological, and social challenges. He exists in a world where his fashioned body is unrecognised and unlikely to be understood. As a result, he must develop new ways of functioning within the world; by renegotiating his body's relationship with dress he is able to gain social recognition, physical protection, and a sense of humanity.

The Invisible Man occupies a unique position - wearable artefacts play a truly pivotal role firstly by making him visible, and secondly in socialising his body and enabling symbolic communication within the cultural environment. His body is given a visible form only through the shape of things that come into contact

with him, like his clothes. Dressed, he becomes socially acceptable, albeit unusually attired. The cut of his clothes, quality of the cloth, and texture of his waxed paper nose become points of interest for the villagers he encounters, eager as they are to gain some information about the unforthcoming stranger in their town. Through the eyes of hotelier Mrs. Hall, he is described as a startling presence:

His forehead above his blue glasses was covered in white bandage, and that another covered his ears, leaving not a scrap of his face exposed excepting only his pink, peaked nose. It was bright pink, and shiny... He wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high black linen-lined collar turned up about his neck. The thick black hair, escaping as it could below and between the cross bandages, projected in curious tails and horns, giving him the strangest appearance conceivable. (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 7)

Despite his alarming appearance he is greeted in Iping with interest rather than outright fear, but the villagers quickly characterise him as an unsettling, inscrutable figure partly because they cannot engage in a visual discourse by catching his gaze or reading his expressions. Mrs. Hall and Henfrey the clock-jobber relate the experience of seeing 'the muffled figure of the stranger staring more blackly and blankly than ever with those unreasonably large glass blue eyes of his. He came down stiffly and slowly, staring all the time; he walked across the passage staring, then stopped' (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 33).

The Invisible Man is perceived as an object of distrust, capable of covert observation while giving nothing of himself away. This is not surprising considering that the Invisible Man's motivation to become an unseen entity is an anti-social desire to observe but not be observed. In becoming invisible he actively rejects communicating through visual codes such as his body and dress, which facilitate relationships and maintain continuity and stability between self and society. Fashioned and dressed, the body is a cultured and cultural entity that reflects individual and social values, beliefs, and ideas. His decision to periodically forgo clothing in order to remain wholly invisible becomes a symbol of his social detachment and desire to hold power over those around him. However, he must still negotiate the complexities of living in the social world if he wishes to survive. Without clothes he faces physiological and psychological hardships.

Following his transformation the Invisible Man is naked and vulnerable to the elements, socially isolated, and homeless. Within moments of making his debut into the world he stumbles because he cannot see his feet; and he is violently and inadvertently trampled and hit by those around him on the street, as they are unable to

anticipate his movements or spatial presence (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 103-107). He is driven to assemble an outfit to disguise his true appearance in order to socially function and seek out human comforts. Clothes provide him with much needed physical protection, but they also fulfil a number of psychologically protective functions. Benthien writes that human beings have an archaic fear of the possession-taking gaze of others, and the base desire to protect themselves from this through 'covering oneself – even if, as in many cultures, this is done merely through symbolic ornaments or a specific inner attitude that regulates the act of looking' (Benthien 1999, 99). John Flügel (2007) expands upon this by identifying psychological dangers as moral, magical, and spiritual threats as well as the general unfriendliness of the world.

For the Invisible Man dress is a symbol of human qualities, offering psychological protection against the dehumanising effects that invisibility has on his psyche. Through dress and dressing, his body takes on a physically visible form that enables him to be recognised by, and exist within, society. By comparison the invisibility represented in Ralph Ellison's book *Invisible Man* (1952) is far more difficult to overcome. The invisibility related by Ellison's narrator is psychological, a wilful denial of the social presence of African-Americans in America's South. Wells' Invisible Man need only dress in order to be socially recognized. However, social acceptance proves to be more difficult. It becomes clear that it is not just dress or the act of dressing that will render the Invisible Man as an accepted, cultured body. There is also a system of social practices associated with dress that he must conform to. Through acts like wearing his full coat, hat, and gloves while inside near a roaring fire, and refusing to observe religious days 'even in costume', he conspicuously violates the subtle cultural codes of Iping (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 5-6, 21). The combination of his improbable appearance and persistent wearing of attire that is unsuited to the situation or environment, have the effect of making him more visible and less socially acceptable.

THE UNDISCIPLINED BODY: SUBVERTING SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

Wells' imagining of how the fashioned body may challenge personal and cultural boundaries is the final theme explored in this paper. The 'social unacceptability' of the Invisible Man is due to his anti-social conduct just as much as the threat of his invisible body. Within both the socio-cultural context of Wells' original Victorian-era English audience and the audience of today, the Invisible Man reads as a body 'painfully and violently out of control, a body "uncanny" in Freud's sense that should have remained repressed' (Wisniewska 2010, 191). His characterisation is typical of the late nineteenth-century Gothic body, with contemporaries that include Dr. Jekyll and Mr

Hyde, Stoker's Dracula, and Dorian Gray. The Gothic bodies of this era are made monstrous through the clustering of various deviant qualities, and act as a disciplinary warning of what kind of corruption (and punishment) can occur when body and mind are not subject to self-control.

The Invisible Man embodies the threat of the unseen and transformative through his modified body. Physically, he is an abomination of scientific irresponsibility. He has transmuted himself into an invisible entity without thought of the ramifications. He relates:

I could not go abroad in snow – it would settle on me and expose me. Rain, too, would make me a watery outline, a glistening surface of a man - a bubble. And fog – I should be like a fainter bubble in fog, a surface, a greasy glimmer of humanity. Moreover, as I went abroad – in the London air – I gathered dirt about my ankles, floating smuts and dusts upon my skin (Wells in Parrinder ed. 2005, 116).

In this passage we gain insight into the disgust that he feels for himself in a half-visible state. The Invisible Man no longer envisages himself as whole but as a subhuman hollow within clothing, a space around undigested food, or a hole amongst the elements. He describes himself as being an insubstantial surface, a greasy glimmer or watery outline, a faint bubble, or grimy skin. Any passage through rain, dust, dirt, fog, snow and mud will render him partially visible, and he cannot eat without the unassimilated food being observed as a floating blur. He has the choice of being wholly clothed and socially recognised (though outcast), or being wholly invisible and depriving himself of food and the protection of clothes, neither of which are ideal. It becomes clear that the Invisible Man does not wish to be a part of society so much as he wishes to dominate it. He sees invisibility as having certain advantages and his intentions are far from noble – to rob, hurt, and ultimately begin a Reign of Terror, killing anyone that does not obey his orders. Roaming naked in public he symbolizes animalistic urges, going in the face of Victorian era values at a time when nakedness was associated with primitive culture.

He poses a moral and physical threat to both society and the individual, and as such can be identified as a form of what Mary Douglas calls 'social pollution'. Douglas explains that cultures provide positive patterns that give order to ideas and values:

The idea of society is a powerful image. It is potent in its own right to control or to stir men to action. This image has form; it has external boundaries, margins, internal structure. Its outlines contain power to reward conformity and repulse attack. There is energy in its

margins and unstructured areas. (Douglas 1966, 114)

In particular, she identifies transitional and boundary states to be most at risk (Douglas 1966, 96, 121). Threats to margins and boundaries, especially the imposition of new ideas or systems, can pose a danger to social structures and order, and thus may be viewed as pollution. Cultures may also project perceived threats to social order onto the body by attributing power to body margins and allowing their 'deepest fears and desires [to] take expression,' as the body comes to stand for any threatened social boundary (Douglas 1966, 121, 115). By mirroring situations that endanger social borders a more manageable 'body pollution', a culture can enact rituals of cleansing to banish the social threat and regain control. In this way the villagers of Iping come to identify the Invisible Man, who has been escalating in violence and indecency, as a threat to both their cultural values and lives. In the novel's climax the villagers resolve to cleanse their society of pollution and restore social order, hunting and killing the Invisible Man to reinstate and reinforce the primacy of their culture.

THE VISIBLE BODY: AN APPROACH TO DESIGN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The subversive body does not have to be a body that is violently out of control, merely a body that operates at the margins of accepted practice. While the Invisible Man meets a grisly end for his undisciplined and anti-social behaviour, it is conceivable that in the hands of a responsible, socially conscious scientist such as the character of Dr. Kemp, that the ability to become invisible could have been applied to achieve great things in Wells' fictional world. What this theme does demonstrate is the strong links between body and culture, and the ability of one to test the boundaries of the other. Wells' novel is a lens that illustrates how the body may be a personally and culturally invested text that may be fashioned using the practices and artefacts of dress, to communicate values and meaning. The themes raised in the novel also reflect the difficulties faced when navigating the theoretical and practical issues of designing wearable artefacts that engage with the body and dress.

In this section of the paper a selection of my research projects, which focus on the relationships between bodies and wearable artefacts, are used as an example of the ways that experiments in design research may draw on the forum of literature. Analysis of the novel is part of an on-going experimental approach to practice that I have adopted in order to study the body as a site for and of design. The Invisible Man has the potential to be a helpful lens, inviting creative and critical exploration of the relationships between body, culture, and dress.

Following the understanding of human interactions with dress and wearable artefacts as an embodied practice (Merleau-Ponty 2002, Entwistle 2000a), the provocation of the Invisible Man has been to render the body 'visible' in my research. The novel has been a device to overcome what jeweller Susan Cohn has called 'the canvas fallacy' – a tendency to reduce the body to a still life, to discourage attention to the living body and instead use to it as a 'background to jewellery ideas' (Cohn 2009, 8). In response to *The Invisible Man*, my approach has been highly experimental, drawing on a cross-disciplinary background in jewellery and object design as well as concepts from fashion, sociology and anthropology. It has resulted in implementing a methodology with the intent of designing for the living, moving body and not for a static canvas. This includes techniques for carrying out in-depth analysis of the body as site, and the development of projects that produce wearable artefacts in intimate relationships with the body's form and surface. The outcomes are projects that consciously draw attention to the body's surface, specifically to the transformative qualities of skin and its communicative potential. They aim to engage with the relational network between body, culture and dress that is highlighted by the Invisible Man's act of 'fashioning' his body.

BODY AS SITE: EXPERIMENTS IN SITE ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The development of site analysis methods for the living body has been key to this research. By encouraging a highly detailed understanding of the body over a period of time, these methods have offered a way to overcome the canvas fallacy. Rather than designing wearable artefacts against the background of an 'invisible body' the process of analysis allows a living, transformative body to take centre place and inhabit the wearable work.

The aim of the site analysis techniques was to produce data that could inform a series of wearable artefacts open to the possibilities presented by the living body. This included a series of studies using visual documentation techniques capturing the minute and shifting details of the body's spaces and surfaces. Observational drawings and photography were developed into a collection of image sequences that zoomed from microscopic to macro views, gathering information about the same area over different periods of time, and at different scales. While the series of images illustrated the complexity and temporality of the body, it also became clear that this technique would not suffice to gather the breadth of complex information that the projects required.

As a result I began to experiment with new methods of gathering data, firstly by creating etched casting plates of the body sites that reflected the depth of skin details and body spaces, and secondly by taking moulded impressions of motile areas in sequences that captured

the range of movement. To gather information that was only fleetingly present body casting techniques and materials including alginate, silicone and latex were utilized. These produced 3D representations of the body's forms, surfaces and textures. In order to gather data on the embodied experience associated with a site, a 'skin diary' was also kept, documenting sensory perceptions over a period of time.



Figure 2: Body site analysis techniques (top to bottom) skin detail drawing, photography, etching plates, detail of a body cast.

MATERIAL APPLICATION PROJECTS



Figure 3: Details from applications of *Gold Leaf*, pictured on an ear, elbow and between two fingers.

The first wearable artefacts to come out of the site analysis findings were the Material Application Projects (MAPs). The MAPs were produced in response to the desire to experiment with temporal wearable artefacts, and to collect feedback on the types of experiences people had with artefacts there were in brief contact with their body. The changeability of the body as a site, revealed through the analysis process, led to a design response that shied away from the static and instead embraced the potential of the transient, transformative body. I wanted to create wearables that could be read as an extension of my jewellery practice by subverting what it meant to 'dress' the skin using a jewellery artefact. This was in response to the ways that the Invisible Man's process of fashioning had the ability to redefine how he related to his own body, as well as how his body related to others. Most of all, with this series I

wanted to avoid the body being treated as a static background site. This meant placing the living body at the centre of my practice rather than the artefact as a design object. It also raised the challenge of producing a wearable that when removed from the living body's context would avoid evoking an 'invisible body', a fictive form with the potential to inhabit the hollow spaces of unworn pieces.

The MAPs were realised by creating unique, one-off wearable artefacts for voluntary participants. *Gold Leaf* utilized gold leaf sheets and liquid latex typically used for special-effects makeup. Participants chose the site for their wearable, and the skin was dressed using the latex and gold. The application was made in response to the forms of their body and their personal preferences. Over the course of a single day (the wearable's lifetime) the gold leaf took on qualities that reflected those of the wearer's skin. Applied as a membrane, the gold and latex warmed to the temperature of the body, shifted with the wearer's skin, and cracked in response to repeated movements and gestures. Like the Invisible Man's garments, *Gold Leaf* acted as a covering that simultaneously concealed and gave form to the body's characteristics. The MAPs created an unnatural gilded veneer that drew attention to the site's forms and textures.

In feedback gathered from participants the experience was likened to wearing a form of jewellery, particularly as the gold leaf was visually interpreted as a precious material. The changing quality of the surface, produced through the movements of the wearer's skin, drew awareness to the body's perpetual transformation. Situated so closely to the skin, the wearable artefact was not only a form of dress but was also engaged in the body's perceptive experience, presenting the possibility of mediating the wearer's sense of touch and highlighting their surface motility. It was seen as both a personal experience as well as a performative piece observed and interpreted by others.

When removed from the living body at the end of the day the pieces disintegrated, and with them, the spectre of the 'invisible body'. In terms of moving away from the static effect of the canvas fallacy this could be considered a relatively successful project. The moving body reproduced individuating characteristics in the gold leaf, which drew participants' attention to a relationship between the living body and wearable artefact, as well as its communicative potential. These qualities are explored in the exhibition item, *Hands On*. Participants are invited to experiment with the form of their own hands by creating temporal wearable skins using gold leaf, dyed liquid latex and cast components. They are encouraged to reflect on the imaginative, performative act of fashioning and wearing a new skin by documenting both the artefact and their thoughts on the experience using media provided.

Participants can also interact with the strings of brightly coloured latex *Fingers* on display. These artefacts are cast from the hands of different people then are joined in mixed arrays. Much like *Gold Leaf* and *Hands On* these pieces address the themes of *The Invisible Man* by drawing attention to the ways that wearable artefacts may redefine how we relate to our body and the bodies of others. The pieces are palpable and flexible with the fingerprints of the original bodies concealed on interior surfaces. Only by engaging with the work through a combination of visual, tactile and material senses can the subtle differences in these details be perceived. Wearing *Fingers* introduces surfaces of unseen, unfamiliar bodylines that intercede between the acts of touching and touched. This slows down the experience of concurrent endogenous and exogenous sensations that occur when we use one hand to touch the other, raising awareness of the interchangeable states of object and subject known through this phenomenon of 'double touch'. As artefacts intimately aligned with the skin surface they engage with the living body's experience of touch, mediating how the wearer can feel by introducing the invisible touch of others.

100 HAND SITES

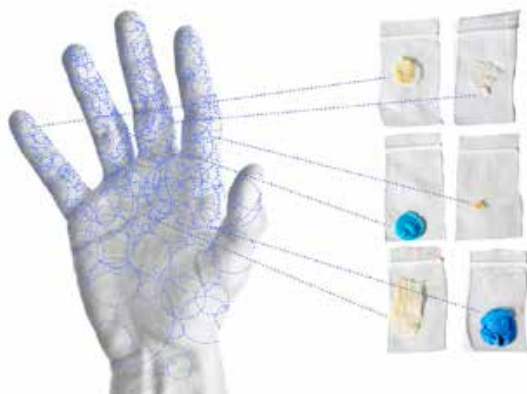


Figure 4: Diagram representing the cast sites in *100 Hand Sites*, and a sample of the casts (shown stored in airtight bags).

100 Hand Sites is a project that also emerges from the techniques developed through analysis of the living, moving body and the skin surface. It is a series of body casts that record the changing forms and textures of a single hand, with a focus on experimenting with what a site for design on the body might be. Made using dyed liquid latex, this on-going collection has long outgrown the one hundred sites of the title, and is potentially without end because of the difficulty in definitively mapping an area of the living body. Complex and dextrous, the hand is capable of an infinite number of permutations that alter its form and surface. Added to that, the living body is perpetually in a process of being, becoming, and breaking down. It transforms from moment to moment, and over an extended period of time the body accrues marks and ages - the cells of today are not those of tomorrow.

The project then, is a collection of fleeting body moments. Each cast preserves a site that existed briefly and is gone forever as the body continues to transform. The casts themselves range in size from a pinhead to a whole palm. Many of them need to be viewed closely or with a microscope in order to recognize the texture of human skin or to identify the form they capture. They are delicate and membranous, embedded with skin cells removed by the latex as it is peeled off the living skin. The casts themselves will continue to evolve over time as latex is an organic material prone to wear, colour change, hardening, and deteriorating in areas exposed to skin oils as it ages.

In contrast to *Gold Leaf*, this is a project that conjures the 'invisible body' into being. There is an eerie sense that these skins are flakes separated from their source, much like Wilson's museum of empty clothes. Yet, the pieces evoke an absent body rather than a transparent form like the *Invisible Man*'s; they are a collection of bodies and moments that have passed rather than living relics. *100 Hand Sites* didn't definitively isolate what a body site might (or might not) be, but it has resulted in a collection that visualises the temporality of the living body and its potential to endlessly transform. As such, the living body as a site that presents the possibility to design for bodies that have already passed, that may only be present for a moment, or that do not yet exist. Heeding Wells' moral warnings to engage in socially responsible research and practice we can perhaps take a cue from the *Invisible Man* and see this as a challenge to innovate new ways of dressing, fashioning, and transforming the body.

DISCUSSION

In the first part of this paper three key themes in H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* have been analysed in terms of issues that arise in the research of wearable artefacts. Firstly, the cross-disciplinary trope of the wearable artefact was introduced to describe the particular relationship between the body as a site for design and the artefact that dresses it. The *Invisible Man* was identified as a fashioned body, along with a discussion of the ways that bodies may be fashioned through culture, artefacts, and practices of dress.

Secondly, the ability of wearable artefacts to play a role in socialising and culturally fashioning the body was addressed. Bodies and wearable artefacts were seen to be part of systems of social communication, and ascribed with symbolic meaning. In *The Invisible Man* this is illustrated through the way that clothes allow the protagonist to function within society. However, repeated violation of subtle social codes that surround clothes and clothing practices also prevent him from being fully accepted by the Iping community. The symbolic meaning of clothes was also explored through examples within Wells' text, which demonstrates ways

that dress may provide physical, spiritual, and psychological protection.

Finally, the Invisible Man is seen as a fashioned body that challenges cultural values and boundaries. Within the cultural milieu of the novel and its original audience of Victorian-era society he is positioned as a subversive and transformative figure, a form of social pollution that must be disciplined. As a culturally produced text, literature is seen as a lens with the potential to draw attention to the values, ideas, and beliefs that underlie a society. Collectively, these issues show the network of meaning that constructs, and is constructed by, the relationships between bodies, culture, and artefacts.

In the second part of this paper, *The Invisible Man* is viewed as a lens through which to creatively and critically examine design research. In light of the themes raised by the text research projects that focus on the living body as a site for design are discussed. These examples demonstrate an experimental approach to design research techniques, in response to the challenges of analysing the living body as a site, and making the body 'visible' through the performativity and practice of wearable artefact design. The figure of the Invisible Man is seen as a sign of possibility that encourages experimental and imaginative design research practices, a disciplined approach, and an awareness of the relational network surrounding the body and wearable artefact. This study is seen as being an example of how literature may play a role in experiments in design research and practice. As an unseen entity the Invisible Man is a device through which to speculate on how the visualised body plays a role in constituting the functions of wearable artefacts and their meaning to social audiences.

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