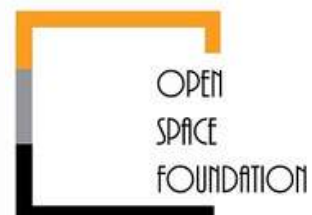




κBulgaria



This project happen thanks to our collaboration with:  
Inter Alia (Greece),  
Professional high school for applied arts, city of Smolyan (Bulgaria),  
Galina Ganova - art textile specialist,  
Prof. Ph.D. Lubomir Stoykov

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**Co-funded by  
the European Union**



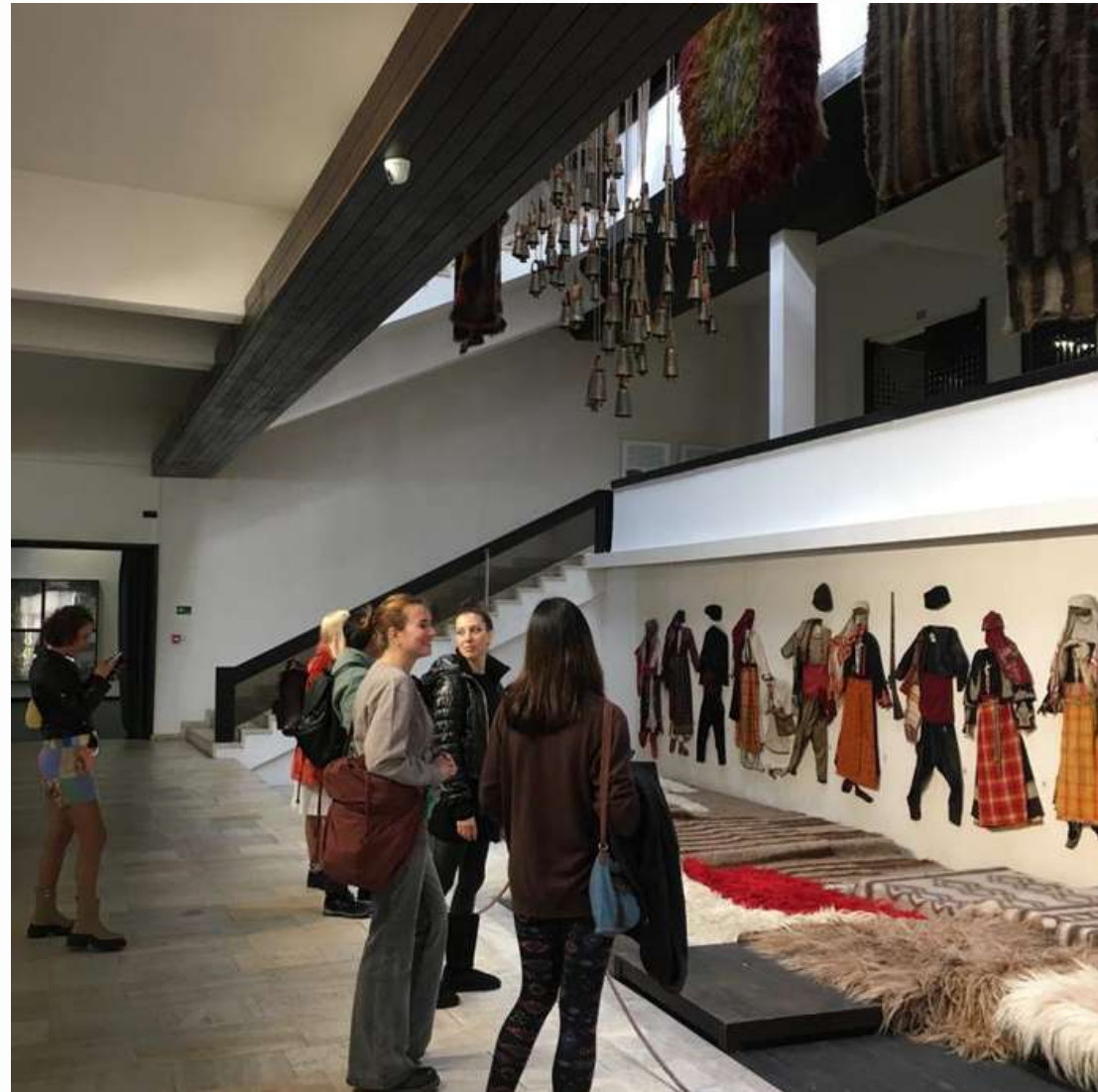
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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The book in hand is the output of the Smolyan ECHO Academy, part of the ECHO Academies project. The ECHO Academies is an arts project that aims to foster young and emerging European talents in the fields of comics, fashion design, music, photography and architecture by using heritage as a means and inspiration for their work.

The Rhodopes are known for their rich cultural and traditional heritage, which is also reflected in the way they create clothing. These areas have been a source of wool and woolen products for many years. The natural wool was collected from local flocks and then hand processed and dyed using plants and other natural materials.





One of the main values of the Rhodope tradition in clothing is **sustainability**. This method of production not only conserves resources, but also reduces harmful effects on the environment. Dyeing with natural products such as indigo, thyme root and lavender creates unique colors and textures that differ from the standard synthetic dyes used in today's fashion.

In addition to sustainability and **unique designs**, the Rhodope clothing tradition also carries **significant cultural value**. It is how the people of the region connect with their heritage and pass it on to the next generations. These handmade garments are not just fashion accessories, they are stories and identities that are worn with pride.

In the world of fast fashion, where production is subordinated to commercial interests and consumption is encouraged at all costs, the Rhodope tradition and the use of natural products for dyeing the wool is an important antidote. They remind us to return to more sustainable and valuable ways of production and consumption, where beauty and value are found in the time, effort and natural resources we invest in the things we wear and using.



**Prof. D.Sc. Lubomir Stoykov** - chairman of the Academy of Fashion, culturologist, journalist and teacher at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", National Academy of Arts and University of World and National Economics in culture, media, journalism, image making, fashion design and lifestyle, pointed out: "Understanding and analyzing the national cultural heritage, folklore and amazing ethnic wealth is an irreplaceable source of inspiration for any creative work and especially for visual art such as fashion design. My admirations for the Open Space Foundation and its wonderful idea to initiate this international competition dedicated to the connection between the past, culture and civilization of the Rhodopes on the one hand, and the aesthetic pursuits and fresh works of the latest wave of fashion designers from a number of European countries. I expect from the candidates maximum creativity, ingenuity and professional dexterity in interpreting the codes of the Rhodope folk costume and an intelligent and modern, realistic re-creation of the Rhodope spirit in their collections. I wish full success to the participants and the organizers in this very valuable undertaking!".



This book presents ten young and talented designers of clothes and products and their ideas inspired from meetings with local craftsmen, guardians and carriers of the spirit and culture of the Rhodopes. In the following pages you will find projects born from the hearts and inspired by the rich cultural heritage of the Rhodopes. We want to share with you stories of collaboration, of mutual respect and of how modern and traditional can intertwine and co-exist. We believe you will be inspired by the zeal of young designers, as well as the rich spirit and culture of the Rhodopes, which help them create amazing works. Thank you for being a part of this journey and we hope that the book impresses and inspires you as well as those who contributed to its creation.



# YLLKA HAXHIU (KOSOVO)

Yulka believes that artists are simply inspired to walk and look for their own way. Her inspiration is the lifestyle, which is dynamic and diverse.

She was most provoked and inspired by the details in the Rhodope costumes, as well as by their colors, to create the sketches with which she participated in our project.







The adventure begins at the moment when I started researching the beauty of clothing, culture, tradition, and nature of Smolyan. Emphasizing that nature makes each person for himself, in the journey of this collection, the material with yellow and red colors is emphasized more, which symbolize the most prominent details in the national clothing that I came across in different museums of Bulgaria. The details of my collection are unique to the emotions I experienced during this project. The new techniques of colored wool, the richness of the variety of colors in clothing made me realize those sketches with the multicolored balls. Where the combination of yellow and red material and the contrast of the balls make my collection more attractive.

The clothes have the freedom to choose how to use them, both in everyday life and in special events.









Thanks to Galina Ganova - art textile specialist for sharing *felt* - wool processing technique

# EMMA MILIĆEVIĆ (THE NETHERLANDS)

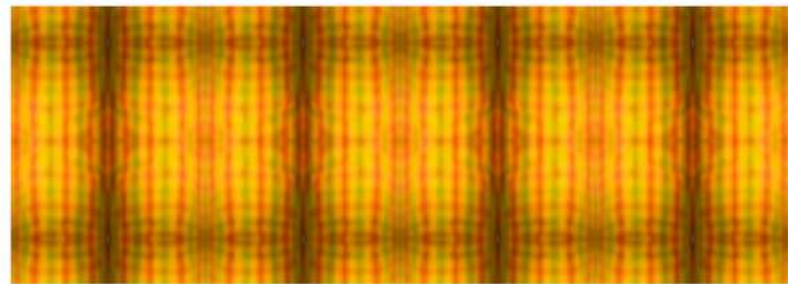
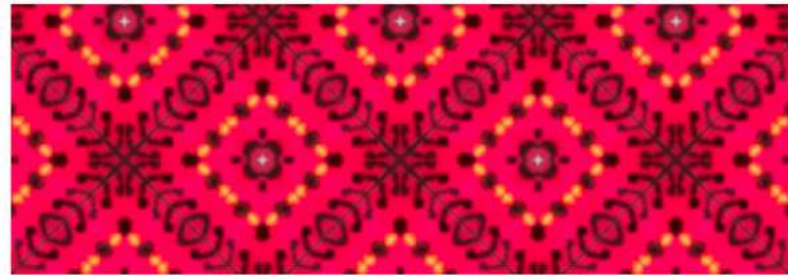
Emma's family is from former Yugoslavia but she was born in The Netherlands. In her work inspiration from her bicultural identity is often used.

"ECHO Academies will broaden my artistic horizons through interaction with artists beyond the Netherlands. This exposure will expand my network and provide valuable opportunities to learn from others who share my passion for heritage and culture. Being in the company of like-minded individuals who prioritize these aspects is significant to me, as it aligns with my desire to engage with diverse perspectives."



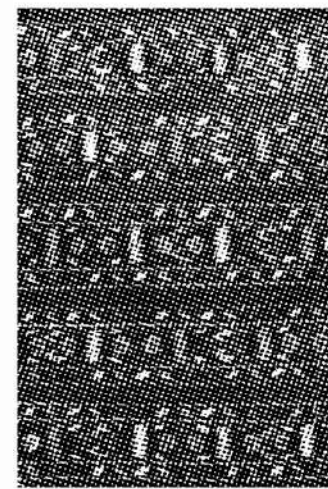


# INSPIRATION

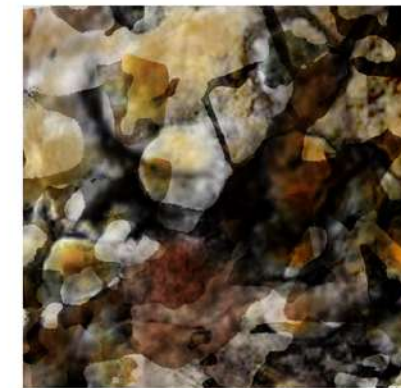


## Inspiration 1

Two prints inspired by traditional woven Fabrics, that Emma would like to incorporate into the garments



Silk Screen print  
For denim fabric  
Puff ink  
Inspired by traditional prints



↑  
Print inspired by crystals

## Inspiration 2

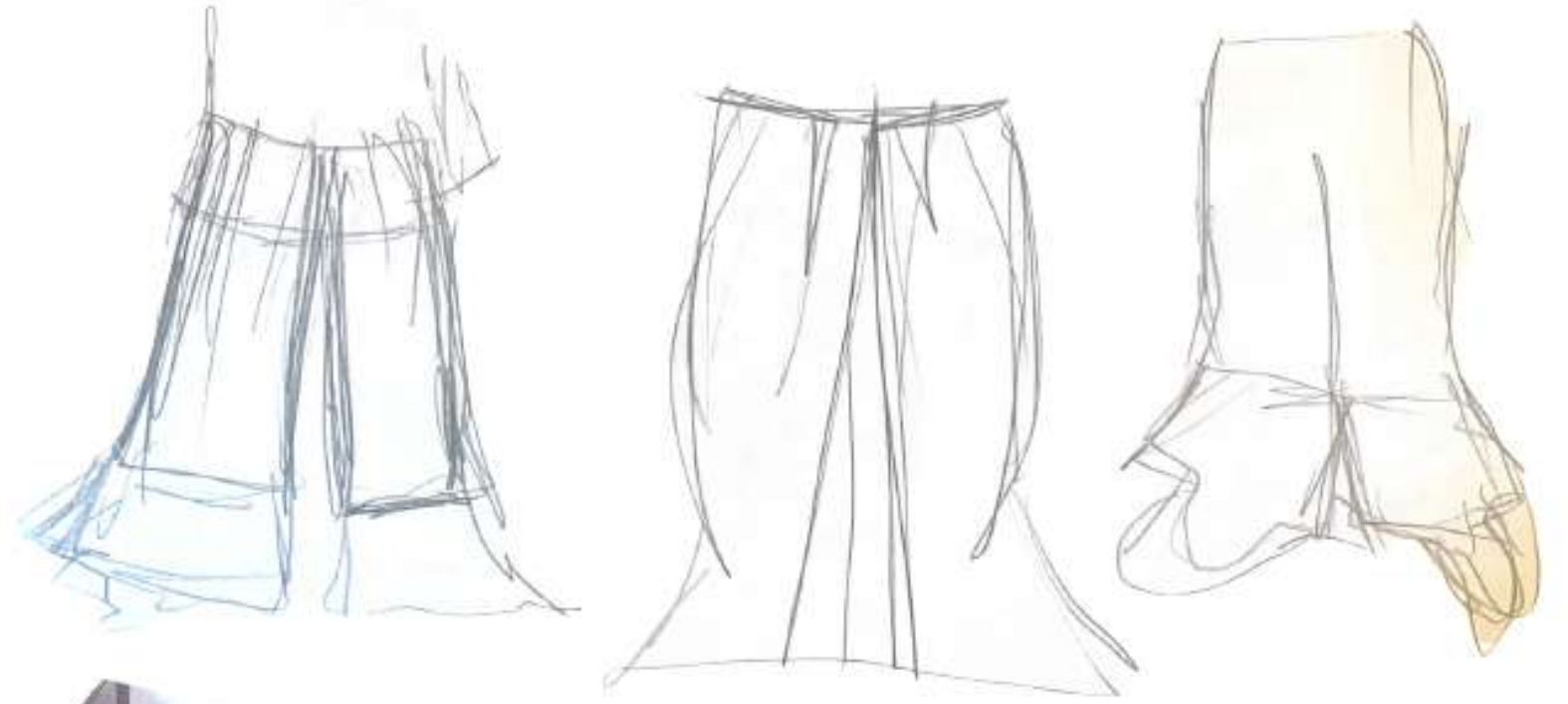
Silkscreen printing for together with AGALAB



## Inspiration 3

Multiple prints that the author would like to incorporate into a tapestry using embroidery.















# ERIKA JANAVI (LITHUANIA)

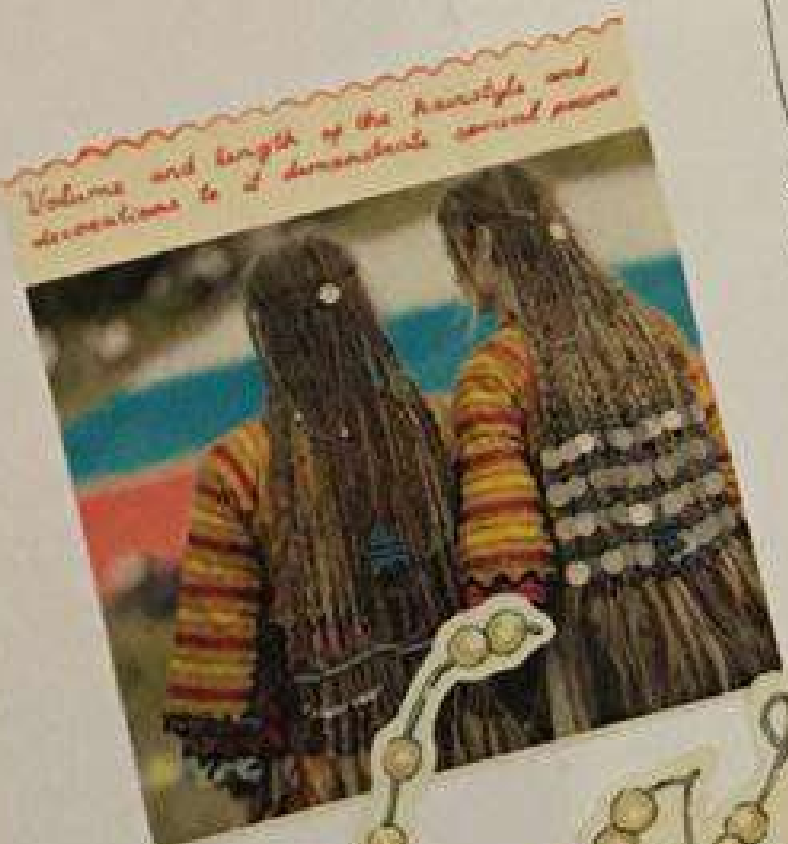
Her favorite material is antique lace. She thinks that artists need courage - turning your hobby into a profitable job. She loves Salvador Dali and the French writer Colette, according to Erica, they are artists ahead of their time, revolutionary personalities.

She would describe Bulgaria as a peaceful country with a peaceful lifestyle, which she considers a luxury, because she compares it to her ten years of living in the United Kingdom. Erika's project is inspired by Rhodope traditional bridal clothes and jewelry.



01

Unmarried girl



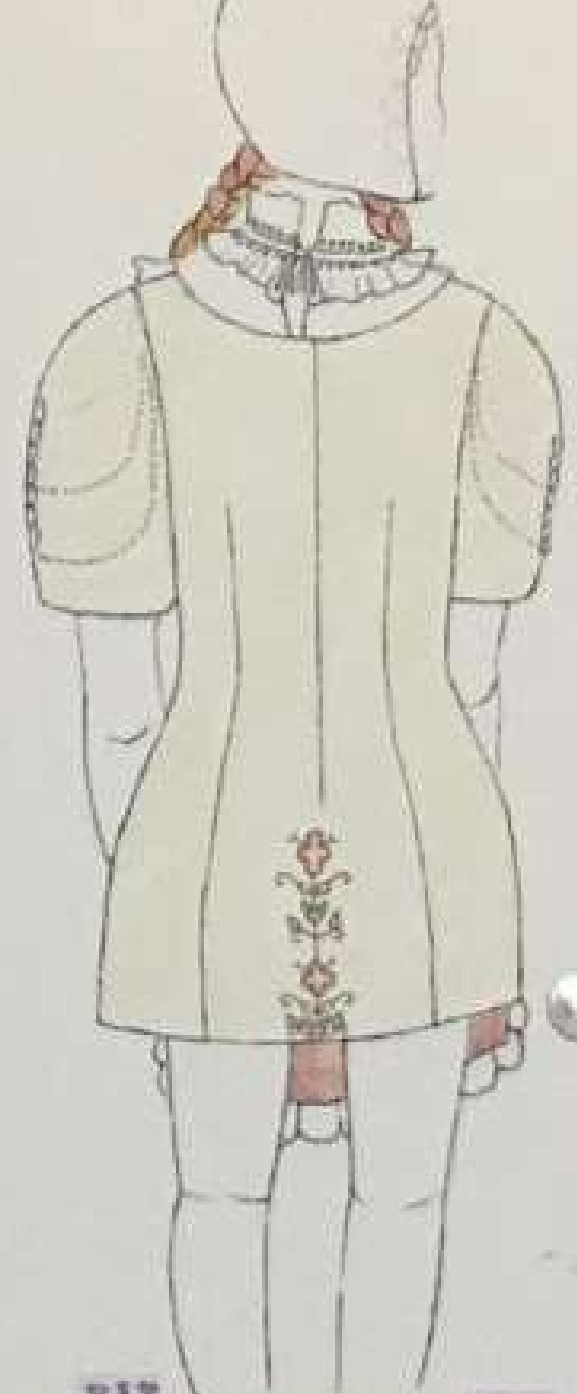
- Headpiece with corn and capris
- Volume uplight and skirt
- Double chain - layers illusion
- Corn for bottom







*Handwritten text, possibly a name or title.*



*Small handwritten note.*

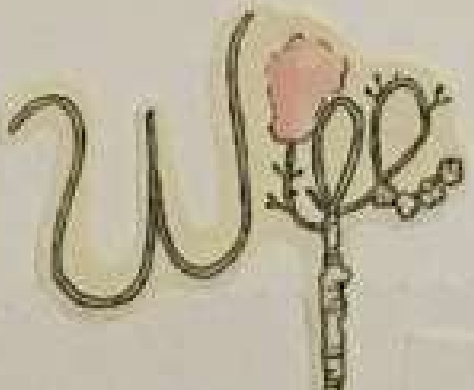
*Small handwritten notes, possibly describing fabric or design details.*

*Bride*



03

Wife







Widow

# NADYA HUBCHEVA (BULGARIA)

The main goal of the project was to reach simplicity, but to retain the main motives at the same time. I tried to present our culture's need to get out of the frame and be presented in a way that also reflects the functionality that we're going for and the modernistic views we're adapting.

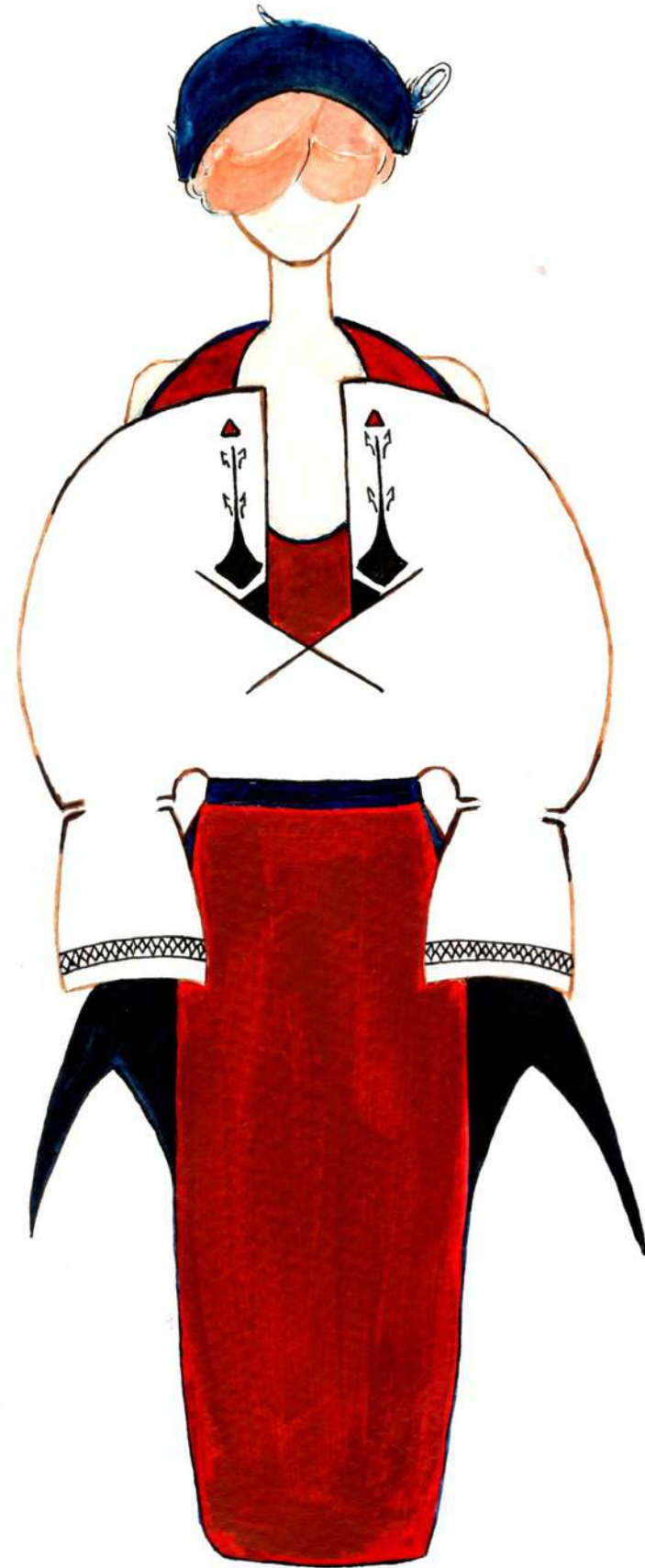






The collection is a modern adaptation of the Rhodope folk costume, inspired by the functionality and elegance of the shapes and ornaments. It was designed in collaboration with the old traditions, preserving the natural materials.





The clothing is suitable both for everyday life and for formal occasions, combining elegance and a youthful appearance. A minimalist approach was used regarding shapes and colors.

Materials: linen and wool fabrics. For the decorative elements will be used silk threads for the decoration of the clothes and metal and glass pieces to make jewelry.





# IVANNA OUZOUNOVA (ITALY)

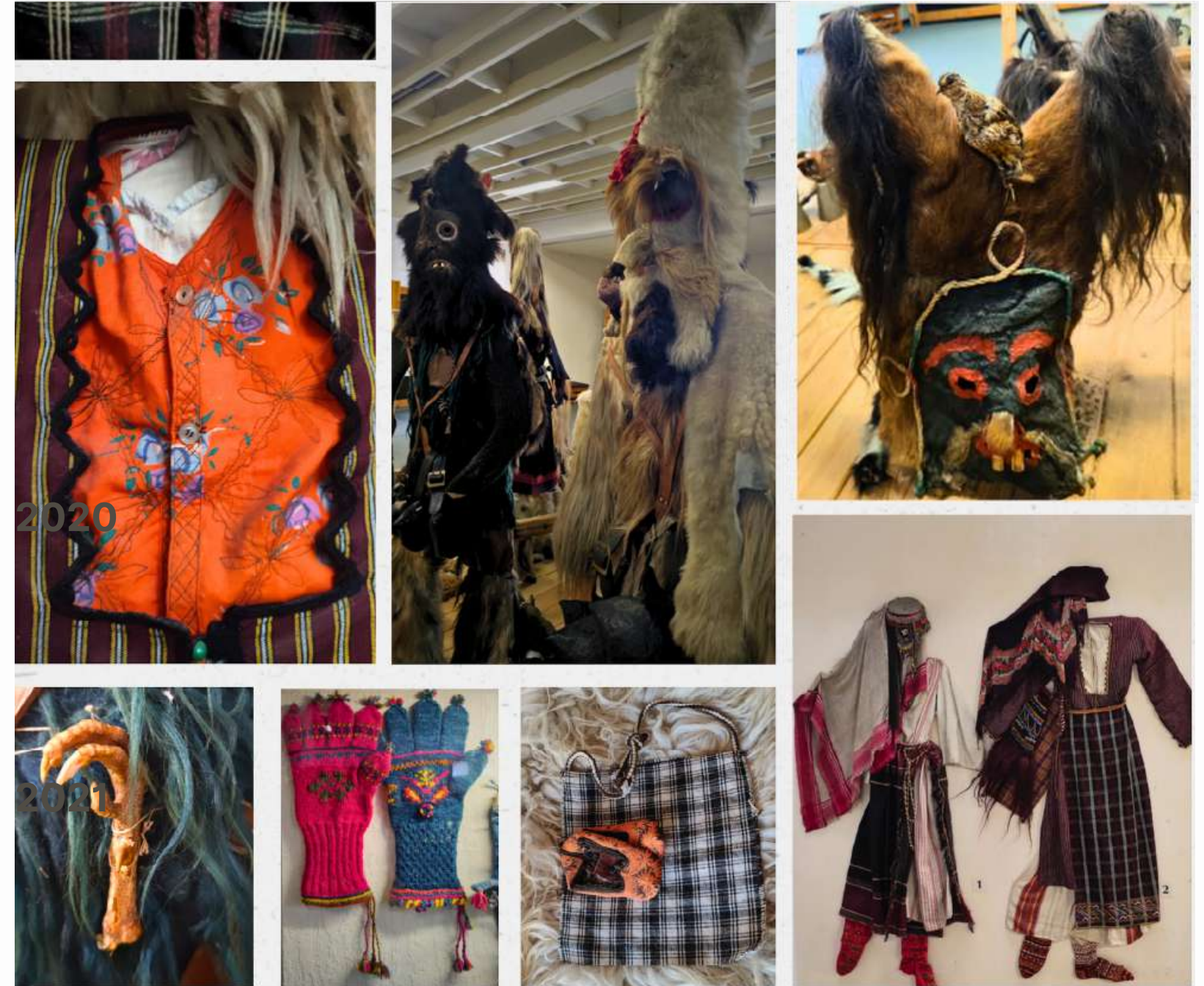
Ivanna sees Bulgaria as an opportunity to explore many things.

"I have decided to include topics that I find important not only on a personal level, but also as a commentary of the society we live in. These include immigration, neurodivergency (such as autism), our new idea of gender, and perception of those who do not adhere to society's expectations of what is appropriate and acceptable."



# INSPIRATION

“I took most of my inspiration from the *kukeri*, whose overall meaning I believe is still relevant today. The idea behind the masks can be interpreted in two different ways: the necessity to cover one’s true face in order to survive, and at same time scare away the evil spirits who resort to judging and giving bad looks.”







The veins on the horns is not casual: it is a literal representation of my blood (and ethnicity). I might move to several countries, but like many young immigrants, I can't erase my ancestors identity that my body carries to this day. The long strings show the intertwining of a person's different identities, creating a complex personality.





In the designs of my clothing, you can find a clear presence of femininity, in contrast with the kukeri being a traditionally male role. Besides giving a modern twist to tradition, it also shows how much society's perception of gender has shifted. We are realizing the importance of women outside of their homes.



# JONIDA HASKURTI (ALBANIA)

"My idea is related to placing the female silhouette in high dimensions. In the period of fast fashion my focus is on importance of choosing a permanent garment. Undoubtedly, the conditions, way and style of life require more comfort and elasticity, than folk clothing can offer. This is precisely where my idea comes to life. What if we created clothes that satisfy our living conditions and satisfy our needs based on the cultural values that folk clothing represents? In this way, consumers will be educated to make smart purchases."









# MATERIALS

Linen is a textile made from the fibers of the flax plant. Linen is very strong and absorbent and dries faster than cotton. Because of these properties, linen is comfortable to wear in hot weather and is valued for use in garments.



Chiffon is a lightweight, balanced plain-woven sheer fabric, woven of alternate S- and Z-twist crepe yarns.

Georgette is a sheer, lightweight, dull-finished crêpe fabric. Originally made from silk, Georgette is made with highly twisted yarns.



## Dyeing wool yarns with natural dyes - eco friendly

Red – Madder root.  
Turmeric – Yellow.  
Avocado Skin – Green.





# IVANKA STAVREVA - IVI (BULGARIA)

The collection of bags it offers is the result of an accumulation of past and present searches, impressions, conversations, touches, drawings... What they all have in common is the recreation of the shape of the mountain. The bags will be made of leather, wool, silk... While some of them will have embroidery or a print of horses, others visually remind of the mountain silhouette....

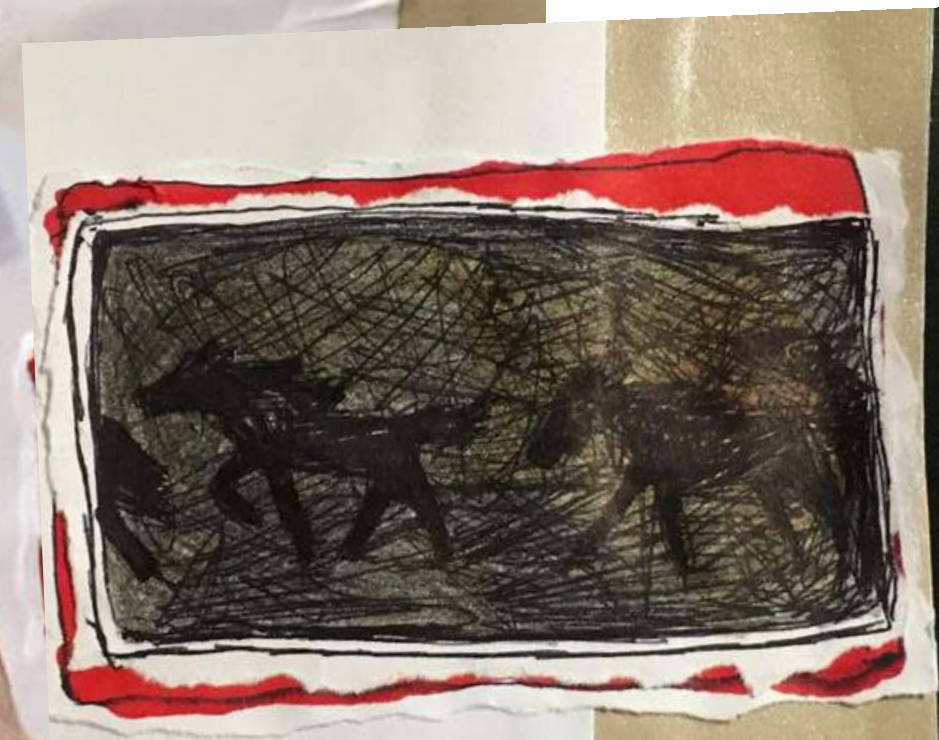
“There is no person who can encompass the Rhodope Mountains with one glance. There is no peak to climb to get to know her at a glance. You have to go through it, suffer it, and then collect it in your heart and look at it: but you have to have the heart of an eagle. You cannot see the Rhodopes with your eyes, you have to see it with your heart.”











The red color in their visible and invisible side is not accidental... it reminds of blood, of life, of the continuation of the family...



# JOSE MARIE STA IGLESIAS (THE NETHERLANDS)

"My name is Jose Marie, originally from the Philippines but immigrated to The Netherlands. Coming from a tropical island, I see life in a different way most of the times it clashes to my European life. My Filipino upbringing and European way of life are both values I try balance. I romanticise over people who worked with their hands; the fisherman who meticulously handles his net, the intimate relationship between the farmer and his water buffalo. Local folks such as fishermen and farmers live a romantic and vulnerable life in society. The local life can be easily jeopardise. I remember walking in the streets in the Philippines, how vulnerable are these people yet they live and celebrate their life- Romantic Vulnerability. I am also fascinated by how we humans create and display beauty."







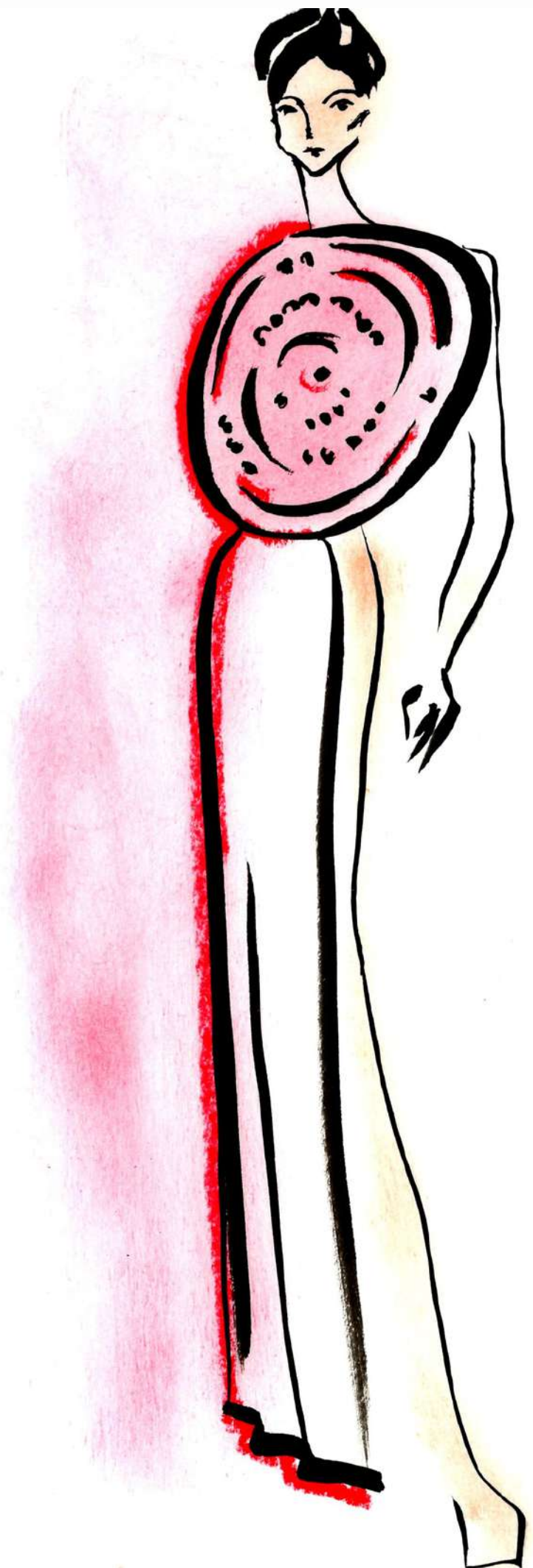
HARSH  
REALITY



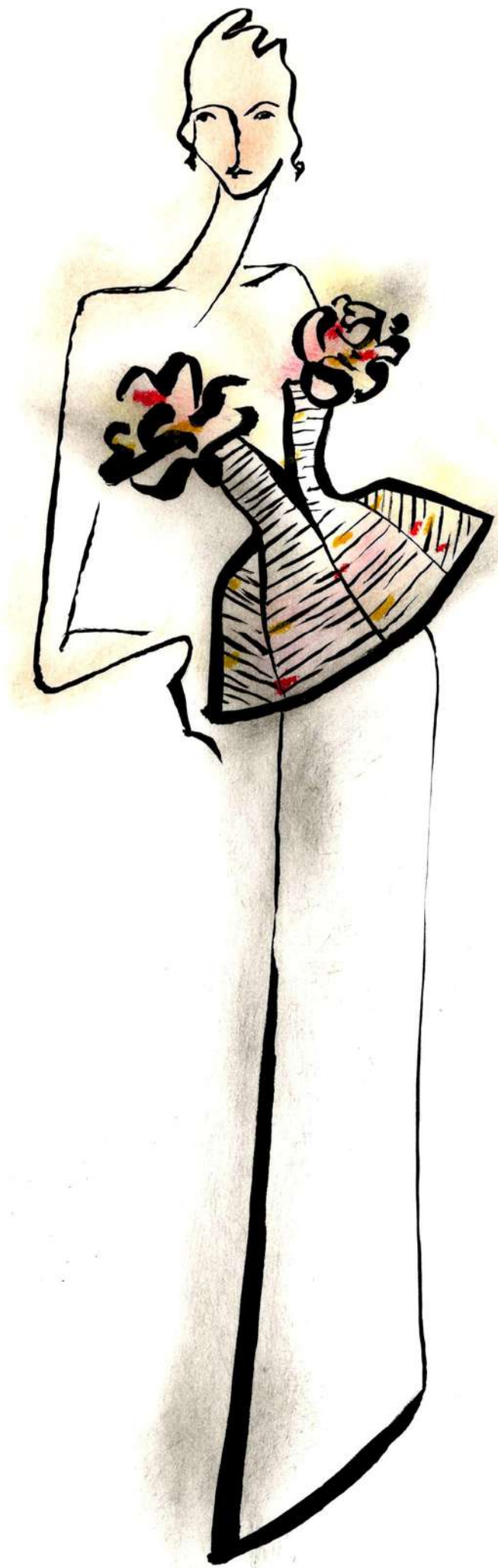
ROUGH  
SILK SCREEN  
PLAID











# JORDAN MIHALEV (BULGARIA)

"I expect the the designs that I present to the viewer are expected to represent the unique Balkan experience of sacrificing your individuality for the greater good or the conflict between being an individual and serving your kin in the most traditional way / fulfilling your familial duties and securing the successful continuation of the family name.

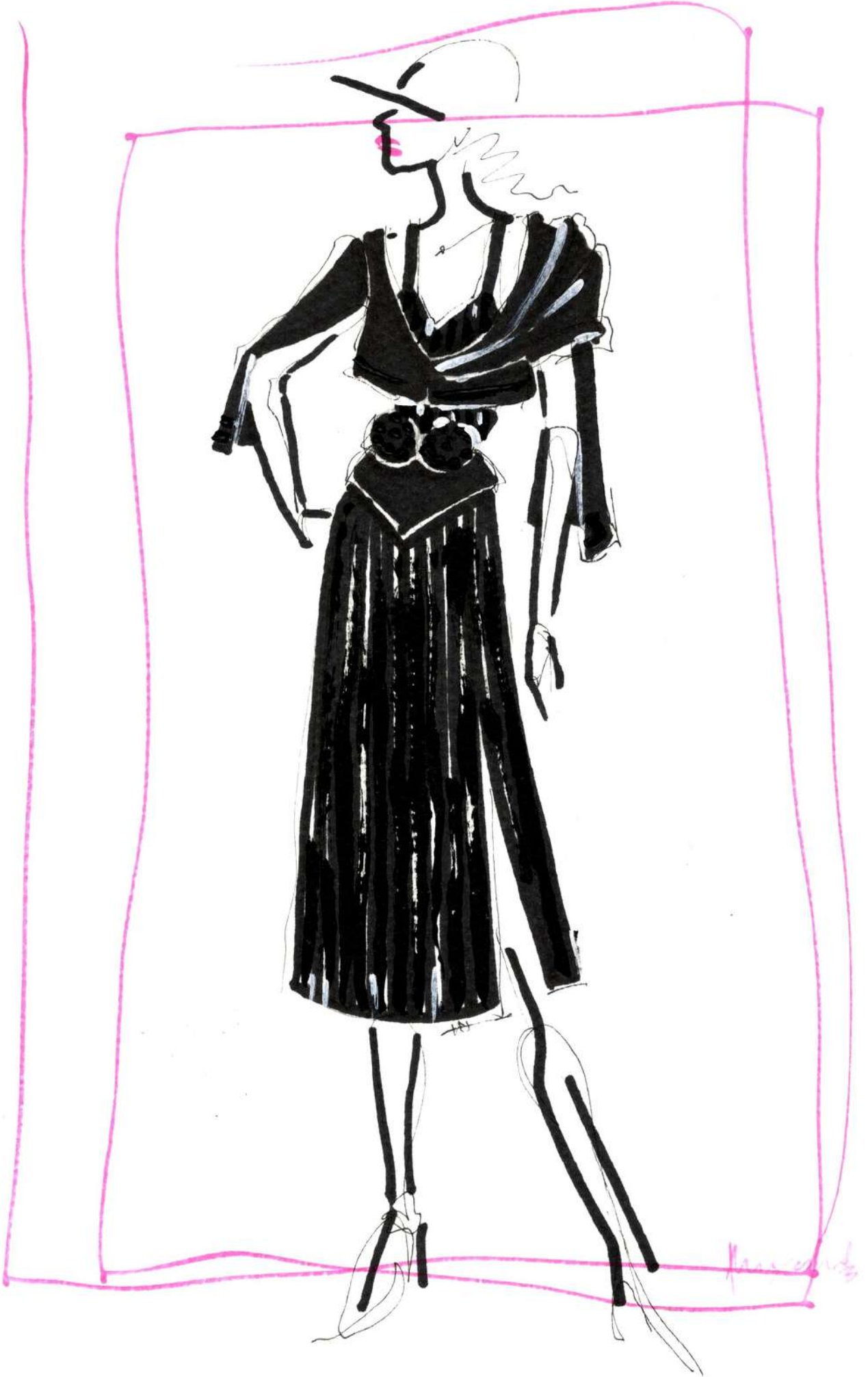
The cooler that I chose for this collection is black and more so the nuances of black. The way a sole black material reflects light and the experience of having to get close enough to see how the materials interact on the pieces. The intimacy required to experience the pieces is akin to the closeness that traps you within the traditional role of heir."













# MAJD RUCHOU (SPAIN)

"Designers do not have to wait for assignments; they should formulate their views on the world and elaborate on them role designers can play within specified contexts. A designer not only develops products but also the context in which they exist. The world is not only in need of creative minds but more of analytical minds, of designers with ethics, passion and persistence, who are engaged with the needs and possibilities of the world and know the mechanisms of global and local emergencies."



My process-based interdisciplinary project investigates the intercorrelation between fashion, choreography, body performance, screendance, technology and urban fabric within the context of Bulgarian folklore costumes of Rhodopes region. Despite folklore being the DNA of a society, it is a controversial issue whether to dispense with the folklore (strike out), display the folklore costumes in vitrines in museums, wear them at weddings and other events, or infuse it in the cultural, social, economic and environmental transition.

My project is about creating a buffer zone for contemplation, analysis and propositions for the everlasting controversial narratives of the past, present and future, and positioning Smolyan town today and in the past and rethinking them as both inspiring and productive environments in which stories unfold and sites for presentation in which things are explored and seen.



# INSPIRATION



the single stitches out of the frame

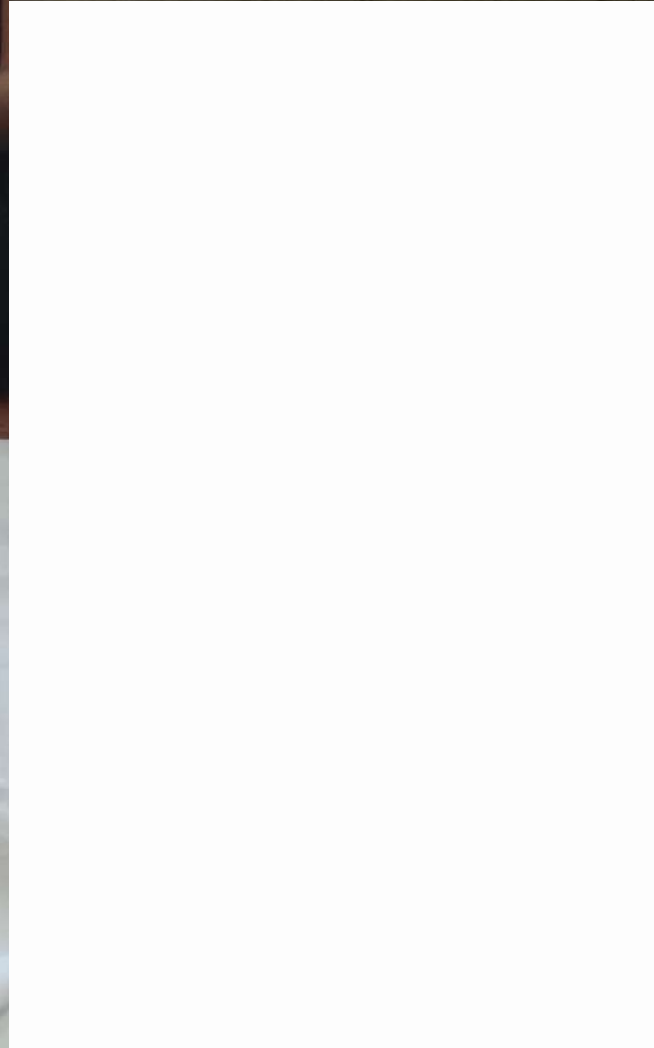
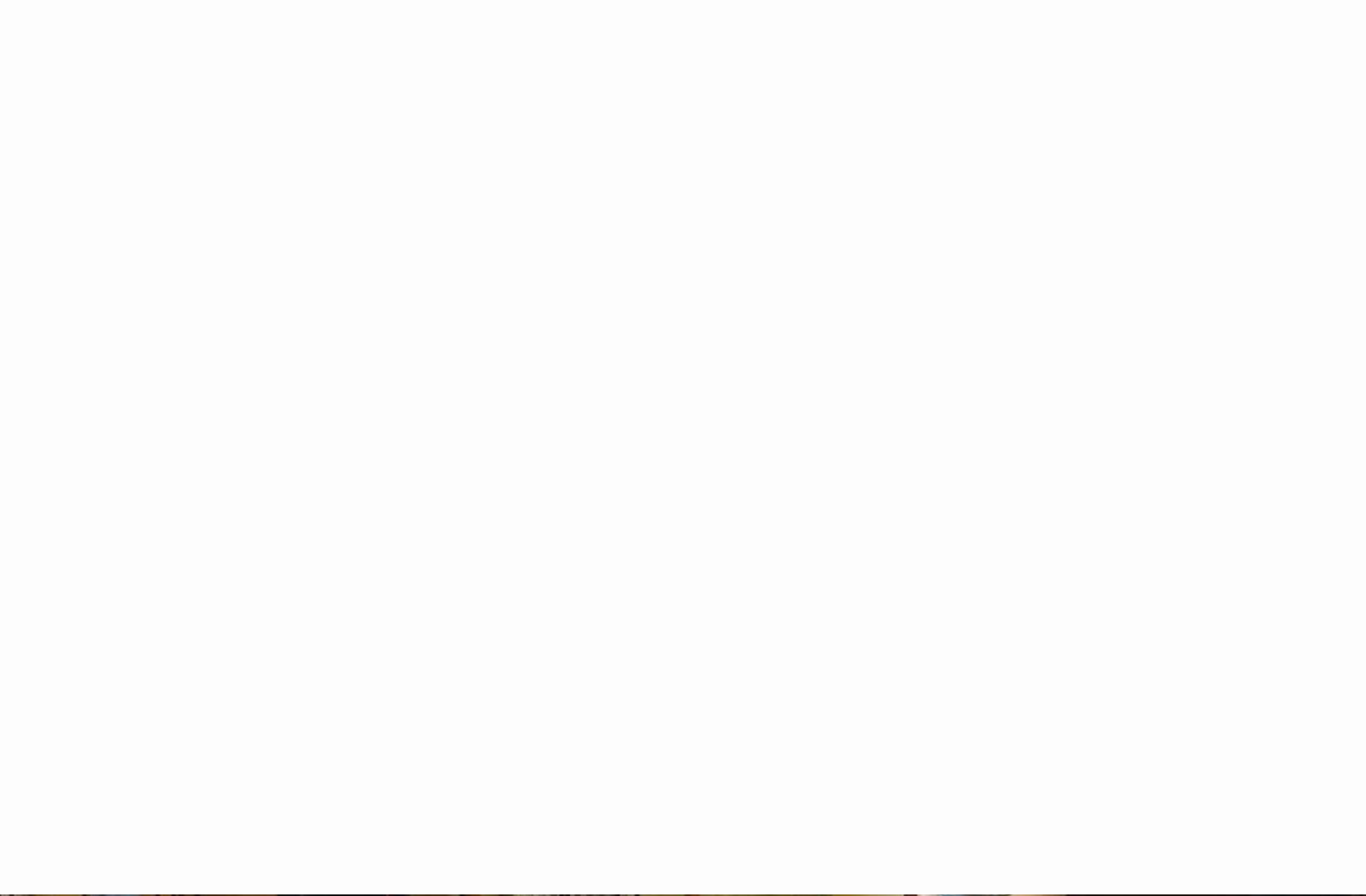


the embroidery mainly on the margin of the clothing body



coloured stitches along the seams that differ from the fabric colour,









I'll create 'choreographic objects', wearable spatial textile structures for a sequence of site-specific experimental installations and performances with the prospective participants. The textile structures will be made from natural textiles, fastening devices, mini audio recorders, mini speakers, eco sensors and light (LED) that interact with the environment. The structures can be folded and transformed from 2-dimensional elements into 3-dimensional modules, incorporating multiple functions, including clothing, furniture and shelter. The performances are public statements in which notions of the body, collective living spaces and temporary or mobile shelters create ideas about personal boundaries and city-human scale.



## CONTACT US

**OPEN SPACE foundation**

**E-mail**

[info@openspacebg.com](mailto:info@openspacebg.com)

**Website**

[www.openspacebg.com](http://www.openspacebg.com)

**Phone**

+3590889916483

**Address**

9, Industrialna str. Sofia 1202, Bulgaria





*"Church of Saint Vissarion of Smolenski"*

Shirit and veil decoration

Author: Jose Marie Sta Iglesias (The Netherlands),  
made during ECHO Academy Smolyan (Bulgaria),  
October 2023