



Vegetation, A Tribute to the Oregon Coast Part 4  
Laura Kane, Framingham State University

*Vegetation* is the fourth garment in a series of creative scholarship pieces dedicated to the recreation and celebration of natural elements found along Oregon Coast. My creative scholarship is “rooted in the translation of natural movement, texture and phenomena into original surface and textile design” (Kane, 2018, p. 1) with a focus on bringing awareness to issues of sustainability and climate change. The previous garments in the series focused on coastal seafoam (Kane, 2016), endangered golden oysters (Kane, 2017), and fish vertebrae (Kane, 2018). As this garment is the final garment in the series, I wanted to tell a more positive and hopeful story through this garments creation. The purpose of this garment is to celebrate the growing kelp farming industry and its impact on helping reduce ocean acidification and creating sustainable farming initiatives (Burns, 2018), and to do so through the lens of a ready to wear garment in a personally previously unexplored target market and fabrication. Unlike my previous three garments in the series which were designed for slim female figures, this garment is a menswear piece specifically designed for an individual client. My client served as both a model and muse for this piece.

The specific inspiration for this piece comes from the kelp species *nereocystis*, or bullwhip kelp. Bullwhip kelp grows in large vertical tubes that anchor to the ocean seabed. At the top end of the kelp is a small gas filled sphere that keeps the kelp vertical. Bullwhip kelp is a popular farmed and foraged species of kelp due to its flavor and ease of access. Scientists at the Puget Sound Restoration Fund suggest that kelp beds are helping reduce the effect of ocean acidification on the oyster population (Burns, 2018). The second garment in this series *Oyster Shell* (Kane, 2017) specifically addressed the effect on acidification on the oyster population, so I found it important to focus on how kelp farming can aid in counteracting this problem.

My client for this project was a personal friend of mine that was born in the Pacific Northwest, has Scottish heritage, and enjoys dressing in non-binary gender conforming fashion. I approached this design project with the aim of making an ensemble that he could incorporate into his personal wardrobe. One of his go-to fashion pieces are his two kilts, which like many wearers of modern kilts, enables him to comfortably explore non-binary fashion (Reddy-Best and Howell, 2014). We agreed during the design process that a unique kilt design would be a positive addition to his wardrobe. He also requested a shirt in the style of a traditional Norse men’s tunic. Once we established these two elements of the design, I began designing a jacket that would incorporate the texture and shapes of the bullwhip kelp. I also designed an original print for the tunic to have printed onto 100% cotton shirting fabric.

The kilt was drafted using a combination of draping and flat patternmaking techniques. I created an A-line wrap skirt to establish the basic fit pattern and drew design lines directly onto the skirt. The design lines were transferred to paper and each pleat, pocket, and seam detail were added into the paper pattern. The kilt is made of cotton spandex sateen and features asymmetrical pleating, a back welt pocket with leather snap detail, and a side patch pocket with piped edging details. The pocket piping and topstitching details are done in rows of three to mimic the rows of piping on the jacket. The kilt closes with gold metallic snaps and leather straps.

The tunic pattern was altered using flat pattern making techniques and was based on a men's convertible collar shirt sloper block. The collar, yoke, and sleeves were altered to incorporate piping details, a leather lacing detail, and contour mandarin collar. The print for the shirt was created using a drone photograph of the Oregon Coast taken by Terry Richard of *The Oregonian* newspaper. The photo was cropped, edited in Photoshop, rotated, and tiled to create an abstract print repeat. The print was printed onto 100% cotton shirting at Spoonflower.com. Several iterations of the print were tested and printed at several scales and color variations before printing the full length of fabric.

The jacket was constructed using flat patternmaking techniques and is made of green leather and lined with green polyester satin. This was my first large scale garment in leather and required experimentation of embellishment techniques and sewing procedures before moving into the final fabric. I created a small sample in my leather to test which stitching and applique techniques worked best for my intended design. A mockup of the jacket was sewn in marine vinyl to test fit and piping techniques. Once perfected, the pattern was cut from a large leather hide. The final jacket has rows of decorative piping at the hem and sleeves to mimic the look of the kelp when washed upon the shore. The back of the jacket has a topstitched panel in the shape of the long stem and bulb of the kelp. The body of the sleeve is embellished with trapunto kelp motifs. The yoke and shoulders of the jacket are embellished with flat appliqued leather strips, 3D piped hanging leather appliques, and rows of topstitching. The collar of the jacket is constructed with rows of piped leather with long hanging tendrils to mimic the wrapping and tangling of the kelp when washed ashore.

In the end I view the project as a success, but I need to acknowledge the shortcomings of my material selection to the overall purpose of this project. I selected a leather hide for the body of the jacket for its color and texture, despite the well-known detrimental impact of leather production on the environment. Due to several factors such as limited funds and my relatively limited knowledge of biologically based textile science I was unable to source a material that I found aesthetically more appropriate for this project. For future studies I would like to revisit this project with a more sustainable material choice or in collaboration with a textile scientist to develop a material that would resemble the texture and color of the bullwhip kelp.

- Burns, J. (2018). Can kelp and seagrass help oysters adapt to major ocean change?. *Oregon Public Broadcasting/EarthFix*. Retrieved on April 17<sup>th</sup>. [www.opb.org](http://www.opb.org)
- Kane, L. (2016). Dancing Seafoam: A Tribute to the Oregon Coast. *International Textiles and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 35.  
[https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa\\_proceedings/2016/design/35/](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa_proceedings/2016/design/35/)
- Kane, L. (2017). Oyster Shell: A Tribute to the Oregon Coast Part 2. *International Textiles and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 18.  
[https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa\\_proceedings/2017/design/18/](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa_proceedings/2017/design/18/)
- Kane, L. (2018). Vertebrae: A Tribute to the Oregon Coast Part 3. *International Textiles and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*.
- Reddy-Best, K. & Howell, A. (2014). Negotiations in masculine identities in the Utilikilts brand community. *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*. 1(3), 223-240.

