SAFETY PIN AS A METAPHOR

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From hard rebellion to equipment for a modern individualised youth identity.

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This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Contents

Abstract

Throughout the post-war period in the UK, young people have formed or joined groups that reflect their views, values, ideologies and interests. These groups grew from physical meetings in clubs and on the streets to become a visible part of their members' identities, influencing the clothes they wore and how they presented themselves to the rest of society. Over time, the collective identity of each movement became instantly recognisable and particular items became symbolic of the ideology of the people that wore them to such an extent that a safety pin worn on an item of clothing today is instantly associated with a punk aesthetic, attitude and ideology.

As a symbol that become synonymous with a subcultural group identity, the safety pin and its association with the punk subculture is regularly referenced throughout this paper. It is used as an example of a subculture with strong aesthetic and compared with the views and behaviours of the current youth generation. The safety pin itself is also examined from a purely semiotic perspective to understand the characteristics that make an object ideally suited to carry a deeper meaning, and what the equivalent of the safety pin could be for the current youth generation.

The explosion of social media and its widespread use by today's youth generation means groups, tribes and movements can form outside of physical spaces and exist and grow entirely digitally. Additionally, the ability for individuals to exercise a higher degree of control over their online identities means they can project different versions of themselves online to how they present themselves physically. This brings into question whether today's young people will form or align with subcultural movements in the same way, and if they will carry the same type of aesthetic identifiers or symbols that made previous movements instantly recognisable.

Young people today are growing up surrounded by very different societal conditions, a need to define and curate multiple identities both offline and online and the apparent absence of a dominant ideologically driven subculture. This raises a question that I kept returning to throughout my research and practice: What, if anything, will be this generation's safety pin?

Fashion and jewellery have long been identifiers of groups and a method of connection for subcultures in society from early tribes and religious groups, to the aesthetically driven cultural movements that have defined the post-war era, such as mods, rockers, rude boys, punks, skinheads and ravers. As John Clarke observed, "together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into character- istic forms of discourse." (Clarke, 1976 p.104).

This research seeks to explore subcultural youth movements in the social media age, the form they take and how they are identified through objects and symbols. It will also look more deeply at social media's impact on the development of individual identity both online and offline and the relationship between the two worlds.

Through primary research conducted in focus groups of 12-14 year old girls, I will explore whether today's young people feel a strong association with a group or tribe and how that impacts how they present themselves, both physically (in the clothes and items they wear) and digitally (through their posts on social media). I will also explore attitudes towards symbolism and iconography to understand whether the tribes and subcultural groups that exist among today's youth generation will be as visually identifiable through objects as the iconic groups and tribes of the post-war period.

The findings will be contextualised by secondary research from leading commentators on subculture and symbolism including Dick Hebdige, Alan Warde, Kevin Hetherington, J. Patrick Williams and J.A. MacArthur, and pre- sented in three distinct areas: the historic use of iconography and symbols in tribalism and the tribes that young people identify and relate to today; peo- ple's primal need to be a part of a collective and how social media is causing a shift from physical to digital; and the overarching impact of social media on defining an individual or group identity.
Theoretical and workshop research is brought to life by practice, creating a series of pins that act as equipment for a modern identity.

The word equipment has been carefully chosen here and as the title for the research to elevate the practice beyond the design and creation of an ac-

cessory or piece of decorative jewellery. The practice aims to create a symbol or set of symbols that can remain relevant to the complex identities of the current youth generation and respond to the particular needs and social pressures of young people growing up in a hyperconnected on- and off-line world. The word 'equipment' suggests that the practice has a use beyond their aesthetic, as will be made clear throughout the research. The current youth generation

The pins were created through an iterative design process informed by theory and feedback from participants in the workshops, and is the visual representation of knowledge gained throughout the research. The practice led outcome of this research was presented at the Royal College of Art's inaugural research exhibition in 2018 as an installation of metalwork and photography.

Each pin symbolises a characteristic that makes up a part of an individual's modern identity. They can be worn as individual pieces or combined with others to show a more complete picture of the individual wearer's identity.

Illustrations

Tables

Appendix 1

The appendices below accompany this thesis and have been referred to within the text. All other supporting material and documentation of metalwork and photography based practice can be found in Appendix 2 and viewed in a digital format.

1.   (page 141) Image references, all images used throughout this paper are the Author's own, with the exception of the images referenced here.
2.   (page 142) Tribal identity presentation for Gen Z workshop (2016)
3.   (page 144) Equipment for a Modern Identity, Photography of final year presentation in inaugural research exhibition at the Royal College of Art June 2018. This section includes images of the exhibition in the gallery space.

Appendix 2

The appendices below accompany this thesis in a digital format allowing the viewing of both metalwork and photography based practice and supporting material.

1.   What are the Momentary Icons of the Future? Documentation of a presentation assembled in the first year of this research presented in bricolage zine format. (2015)
2.   Gen Z workshop handbook designed and supplied to schools (2016)
3.   Gen Z workshop format (2016)

Author's Declaration

1.   During the period of registered study in which this thesis was pre-
     pared the author has not been registered for any other academic
     award or qualification.
2.   The material in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for
     any academic award or qualification other than for that for which it is
     now submitted.

J. Neill, May 2019

About the author

I started my Masters of Philosophy study after ten years of working in the fashion industry, both as a designer for catwalk collections and as head of design and concept for womenswear at Urban Outfitters Europe. Throughout my career, designers I worked with regularly drew inspiration for their collections from a trend or subcultural movement from the post-war period.

While designing and predicting trends for a younger, more mainstream audience I realised I needed to understand the historical references and societal triggers that would cause trends to surface. Through extensive travel I was also able to observe how people from different cultures absorbed the iconography and symbolism from subcultural movements beyond their own into their individual sense of style.

It was in this role in 2014 that I noticed a shift in the way trends were emerging and being followed by young people, and realised that the industry was about to undergo a major structural change. The way young people communicated and experienced the world was fundamentally changing as a result of the ubiquity of smartphones and social media, which in turn influenced their behaviours, tastes and perceptions of 'what's cool'.

As a result, trend cycles were being disrupted and accelerated to the point of being fads. Brands and designers were being forced to adapt by speeding up their design functions, moving from seasonal collections planned months in advance to a continuous design cycle, responding to what their audience, celebrities and influencers are pushing. The speed at which trends were coming and going meant that celebrity and influencer collaborations with high-street brands can sell out in hours and be forgotten about in a week.

I returned to the Royal College of Art as a creative with a multitude of skills and mediums in which to communicate trend, fashion and vision. I wanted to study this phenomena in more detail and to understand the relationship between social media and trends, and its impact on the identities of young people more broadly. With trends moving so quickly, will this generation's young people be as easily recognisable as those that have come before?

And in a world where trends originate on social media rather than the street, are there any symbols or motifs with enough longevity to stick?

For this paper I am the creative practitioner and researcher attempting to identify and facilitate a new means of identity communication that is relevant to a modern society.
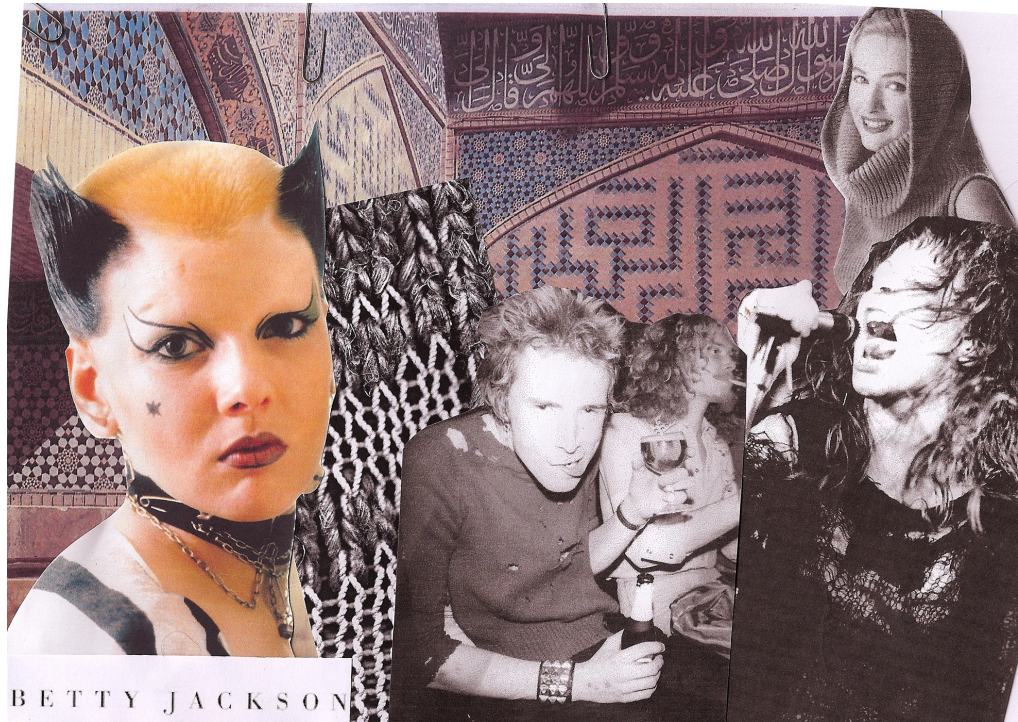
Figure 1 (above): Moodboard for Betty Jackson's 2010
London Fashion Week catwalk collection, drawing
inspiration from prominent punk figures including
SOOCATWOMAN (shown above left)

Figure 2 (right): An example of the textural
knitwear from Betty Jackson's 2010 Autumn/
Winter collection, shown at London Fashion
Week in 2010.

15

Figure 3: Moodboard for Urban Outfitters' design concept 'BABES IN TOYLAND,' referencing Courtney Love's 90s grunge band. While working as head of design and concept (womenswear) at Urban Outfitters (Europe) a prominent part of my role was to predict trends that would be surfacing in six months to a years time. Due to the scale of the global business and how many stores these concepts would need to reach we created in depth narratives that would be used to create collections that would appeal to a broad youth market.

This concept channeled Love's alternative feminine style. The juxtaposition of lace with the biker leather and army surplus to depict feelings of the girl in a band that was empowered and rebellious. Images would be sourced via streetstyle, editorials, reference books, environmental lifestyle scanning, internet research and exhibitions. On the following page you can see how the narrative above was followed for the photo shoot of the collection used in online, editorials and in stores.

Figure 4: Photoshoot of the final 'MOMENTS IN TIME' collection, (originally BABES IN TOYLAND)

shot inline with the original narrative.

Introduction

Looking back across the post-war period in the UK, different generations have come to be defined by cultural markers, such as music and style, that represent a particular place and time in modern British history.

Such markers are present not only in the memories of those that grew up or lived through it, but also throughout images, cultural works and news reports produced at the time. The way people, and specifically young people, present themselves is not only a reflection of their own identity, but situates them as part of an iconic subcultural movement with a clear set of beliefs and a defined aesthetic.

Dressing a certain way, listening to certain types of music and embracing the symbolism associated with different subcultural movements, young people were telling the world "I belong here, I believe this, and I'm part of this cultural movement".

Today, we are able to clearly identify different subcultures from throughout the post-war period by the way their members chose to present themselves through the clothes they wore and symbols they presented. The punk movement, for example, is most closely associated with the safety pin - an inanimate, practical object which came to symbolise the punk ideology and its ethos to shock and subvert. Today the safety pin remains an iconic symbol of the punk movement and but while its use in contemporary fashion continues to conjure up feelings of anti-establishment and the punk scene[1], it has developed a softer, more mainstream aesthetic as years have progressed.

As well as featuring prominently in its original form in fashion collections from high-end to the high-street, the safety pin's rise to prominence in the late 1970s as a wearable symbol of an ideology or viewpoint prompted a new

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[1] In a 2013 collection of essays *Contemporary jewelry in perspective* Philippe Liotard's essay *Body Modification from Punks to Body Hackers: Piercings and Tattoos in Postmodern Societies* notes: "The punk movement of the mid-70s created a new way of wearing jewelry and tattoos and is the starting point for many transformations in contemporary appearance…For punks, the body was a tool as powerful as music. These "ornaments" announced the punks' rejection of social order and normalized bodies" (Liotard, P. 2013, p.209 - 210)

way of thinking about identity and how to display it to the wider world. What followed was a huge rise in the use of badges and patches to show support for a cause or affiliation with a group that people from all walks of life could adopt. In this sense, the safety pin broke down a barrier between people's private and public personas as they began to treat themselves and the clothes they wore as a canvas for communication.

Badges and patches were also used to show support for particular causes, such as the campaign for nuclear disarmament or a particular political affiliation and, like the safety pin, spread quickly across mainstream culture thanks to the low cost and ease of production. Over time, the practice of wearing badges on our clothes, hats or accessories and being a proud standard bearer for a cause or set of values became normalised, leading to what we see today where the youth generation don't just wear badges, they also join public groups on social media sites or publicly follow a set of people or causes that resonate with them.

From an artistic standpoint, distinct parallels can also be drawn between this willingness of people to wear badges on their lapels or belongings and the rise of tattoo culture in the 1970s. As David McComb notes in 2016's *100 Years of Tattoos:* "The rise of specialist magazines, conventions and music subcultures in the 1970s and 80s facilitated the creation of an international tattoo community that allowed ink lovers from wildly different backgrounds to find each other and sent a message to clean-skinned critics that tattooing was no longer a deviant pursuit." (McComb, 2016, p. 199)

Today, many people feel comfortable adorning their bodies with tattoos and piercings that leave a permanent mark on the skin, and for many people their tattoos are an important part of their individual identity.

Communicating views or affiliations externally by marking the body is not a new phenomenon, with the use of tattoos dating back to the earliest tribal civilisations where markings were rites of passage. In effect the safety pin and the striking punk aesthetic were rooted in tribal principles and came to prominence at a time when age-old practices, often with negative associa-

tions, were becoming more culturally accepted and widespread among young people

Today it's not just the act of being tattooed that is mainstream, but historic and tribal symbols are also popular, often being taken from their original context and meaning, showing how once strong, purposeful symbols have their meanings softened and commercialised over time.

While tattoos remain a popular form of expression for young people, albeit carrying less counter-cultural or subcultural associations, the act of permanently marking the body with words or an image that carry symbolic significance or represent a belief or point of view is out of step with the needs of the current youth generation's need for flexibility and the ability to change or evolve their views. Of greater relevance is a physical object that can be worn as the individual chooses, made more or less-prominent as desired, and combined with other representations to show the multiple different viewpoints and beliefs that young people hold today. The pins created through the practice allow for such fluidity.
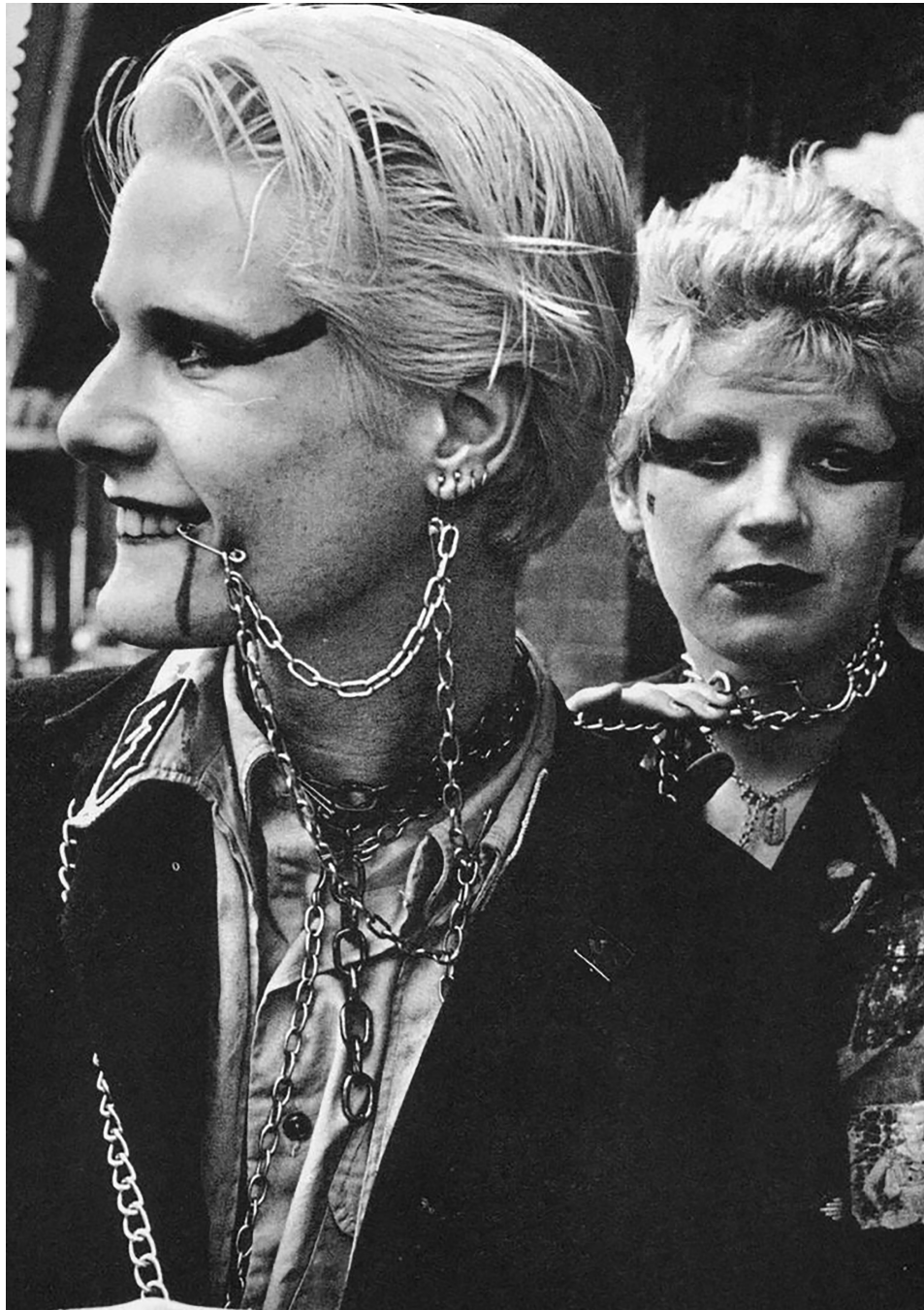
Figure 5: Punks in 1976, using mundane household objects such as the safety pin and bathroom plug chain to pierce the face, using the body as a canvas to shock and subvert

Evolution of the safety pin

1849, Safety pin invented by Walter Hunt as seen here in its most recognised form. Its primary use to fasten pieces of fabric, a cloth nappy, to patch damaged clothing and for haberdashery purpose.

1**976**, Punk using mundane household objects such as the safety pin and bathroom plug chain to pierce the face, using the body as a canvas to shock and subvert.
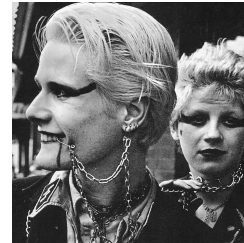
1978, Zandra Rhodes, 'Conceptual Chic' poster,(Butterfly no .121) featuring safety pins and ball chains typically used in bathroom fittings. To be viewed as an example of the speed at which a subculture can be commoditised.

1994, Versace dress worn by Elizabeth Hurley to the premiere of Four Weddings and a Funeral. Versace's use of the safety pin in this dress epitomises the transition from visually aggressive symbol to a softer contemporary use which communicates a rebellious edge in a trend-led mainstream way.

2016, 23rd June the EU referendum took place, the people of the UK chose to leave the European Union. In response to this there was a significant increase in hate crime to minority groups in the UK. People used the safety pin as a symbol of solidarity to other people and wore the safety pin to show support. The previous associated meaning of the pin had changed, it was still tribal but with a different message.
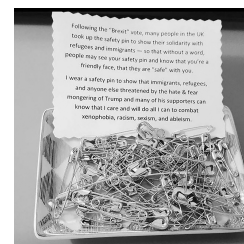
2019, Versus Versace (Versace ethos aimed at youth market) using the iconography of the safety pin to appropriate the essence of punk rebellion on the perennial trainer. The use of this iconic symbol is now so far from the intended punk ideology of aggressive rebellion but continues to be relevant to the trend led mainstream.

Figure 6: Equal pin worn on the ear to clearly display the wearer's affinity with equality.

Figure 7: Pins linked together around the wrist to create a cuff of multiple meaning. Shown here are pins representing Equal, Modify and Select.

Commercialisation of subcultural symbols

Symbolism from the punk movement and the overall aesthetic has proved to be a rich territory for contemporary fashion designers and commercial brands. Couture collections and mainstream retail often feature designs that incorporate safety pins or versions of them. The safety pin - once a symbol of aggression, anarchy and counter-culture[2] - has softened over time to become a mainstream motif, reaching "commodity form"[3].

For an object to become an established symbol of an ideology takes time, and requires a subculture to exist for long enough to permeate the broader culture.

Through primary research and review of subculture and identity theory, this research explores whether the transient nature of trends and the conditions that today's young people are growing up in will give rise to a subcultural movement that future fashion designers would refer back to, or whether the pervasiveness of social media drives a sort of neo-individualism and accelerates trend cycles to such a point that a single, distinct aesthetic or collective identity can't reach the same degree of prominence.

I will make my case by looking at the relationship between trend, identity, and social media through three lenses - the need to satisfy a primal need to belong; the different types of tribes that exist and the different rules of membership; and the impact of social media in leading to a more multi-faceted, adaptable idea of identity for this generation of digital natives.

At their core, subcultural youth movements grow and endure because they satisfy young people's primal need to belong to a group or tribe. I will an-

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[2] As Hebdige notes in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* "…a safety pin, a pointed shoe, a motor cycle…take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile." (p. 2)

[3] In the same text, Hebdige observes that even at the time of writing in 1979, when the punk movement was in its ascendancy, "…the process of production, publicity and packaging led to the defusion of the subculture's subversive power - both mod and punk innovations fed back directly into high fashion and mainstream fashion" (p. 95). Further evidence for the speed at which subculture can become commoditised is Zandra Rhodes 1977 *Conceptual Chic* collection, which features punk motifs of safety pins and torn fabrics prominently.

alyse the impact of social media and other societal factors on the current youth generation's ability to fulfil what Abraham Maslow describes as the "belongingness need" and compare with previous youth generations[4]. Through focus group sessions with young people I will build on Hetherington's definition of *neo-tribes*[5] by reviewing the new types of tribes that exist today and the greater emphasis on individualism over group identity to explain the absence of a definitive aesthetic that represents this generation's young people as a collective.

The strong visual identities and iconography of post-war subcultural groups made it easy for an individual to bear the hallmarks of the group they wanted to be a part of. Such easily-spotted identifiers are less obvious in the tribes of today, that are characterised by being less rigidly defined, less ideologically driven and, from a style perspective, having a less prescriptive uniform.

As a creative who works in metal wear, I will go on to explore what the equivalent of the safety pin is for the digital generation - both as a retrospective symbol that will represent a particular place and time, but also in its contemporary use as a form of individual expression. What people wear and the symbols they choose to pin to themselves can signal a particular ideology, affiliation with a tribe or express a point of view. A symbol or set of symbols like the safety pin can be used as equipment to help this youth generation communicate their identity, as well as identify and be identified by like minded people. In doing so, this equipment fulfils their belongingness need while allowing for a greater degree of individualism befitting of today's young people, who have multiple different identities on- and offline and move seamlessly between them. Pins can be worn in different positions on the body and

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[4] Pre-social media youth generations satisfied their belongingness need by assimilating with one of the groups that were available to them locally that best represented their views and values. As part of that assimilation, the individual would need to assume aspects of the group identity through how they present themselves and, in particular, how they dressed. Social media has made it much easier for young people to pursue their individual interests in different online forums and groups, and, crucially, without the same pressures to dress the part to be accepted.

[5] In *Expressions of Identity* (1998) Hetherington describes a neo-tribe as being "based upon sentiment, feeling and shared experience. A neo-tribe is an affectual form of sociation through which both individual and collective ideas of identity are expressed." (Hetherington, 1998, p.53)

connected to one another to form a chain that represents multiple different facets of identity, as shown in figures 6 (p. 23) and 7 (p. 24).

The ability to find online groups has led to a weakening of the connection between style and subcultural groups as young people no longer need to dress a certain way to be part of a movement, making tribes much harder to spot[6].

On speaking with contemporary philosophers, cultural commentators and young people through interviews and focus groups, it became clear that to focus so specifically on the symbols that could be the outputs of today's youth movements risked overlooking the significant cultural impact that social media is having and will continue to have on young people and the development of their individual identities.

As a result, my research expanded to cover the conditions that young people are growing up surrounded by that spur the rise of neo-individualism, the impact of social media on shaping individual and group identities and how it could spell the end of the iconic subcultural youth movement as we have come to define it.

The pins I have created in response to my research findings are an evolution of the safety pin, drawing on its historical significance as a symbol and its adaptability as an item that can be worn in multiple different ways as defined by the wearer. I will refer to my practice as a pin throughout this piece of research.

Each pin in the series is derived from abstracted symbols that can act as the biker jacket for rockers or safety pin for punks. They are instantly recognisable and communicate a core part of the wearers identity externally, while taking in the new needs of the social media generation. Multiple pins can

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[6] It should be noted that tribes do still exist today, but they are just less recognisable as having a distinctive group visual identity is now less desired by the tribes members and less fundamental to its existence. Today's young people want to develop a look or style that reflects the multiple facets of their identity - they can agree with some aspects of the punk ideology without having to dress like a punk, enjoy punk music, or follow the rules of punk.

also be linked together to make a chain (as shown in figure 8, p. 29) that uniquely reflects the multiple different aspects of the identities of young people today. The modular aspect of the design means that the wearer has the equipment they need to communicate aspects of their identity visually without the need to communicate vocally.

Figure 8: Close up of pins linked together in situ at Royal College Art Show 2018 creating a semiotic dialogue between the pins, shown here, Memory, Occupied and Equal.

Understanding the Social Media Generation

Every generation is impacted not only by the society they grow up as part of, but also as a reaction to what came before[7]. In the case of punk, Ted Polhemus' work *Street Style*, published in 1994 observes that "Punks must be seen as anti Hippies. Think of the love and peace, longhaired, back to nature, smiling stereotype of the Hippy and then conjure up its photographic negative: sinister, black leather, aggressive metal studs, perverse bondage trousers, day-glo artifice and a snarl." (Polhemus, T., Street Style, 1994, p. 91).

In his editorial essay *Millennials Are Doomed to Face an Existential Crisis That Will Define the Rest of Their Lives*, economist John Mauldin notes: "Each generation…consists of the people who were born and came of age at the same point in history. They had similar experiences and thus gravitated toward similar attitudes". (Mauldin, J. Millennials Are Doomed to Face an Existential Crisis That Will Define the Rest of Their Lives, 23rd June 2016). In the UK, this manifested itself in what we now view as the iconic post-war sub-cultural youth movements: mods, rockers, rude boys, punks, skinheads and ravers.

This concept will be explored alongside the specific contributing factors that influence the current youth generation that play a part in defining their individual identities, including:

•   The existence and prominence of social media as a tool for communication and community discovery.

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[7] According to the Fourth Turning Theory (1997), Howe and Strauss assert that each generation's young are a product of the society and conditions they grow up in, and that belief systems and youth movements are influenced by the major historical and cultural events that take place in their formative teenage years.
Hebdige also refers to each subcultural instance as representing "a solution to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and contradictions." (Hebdige, 1979 p.81)

- The relative absence of a single, unifying cause that affects the majority of young people in the UK in the same way[8].

- The greater diversity and inclusiveness of the society they have experienced first-hand through social media acting as a window to the world and their own increasingly multicultural communities. This gives young people a greater appreciation of difference and an innate ability to find common ground outside of the way people look, dress or what they believe in.

- The greater understanding of the bigger world issues that transcend generations and locations, such as climate change, conservation, sustainability and human rights

Comparing these situating factors with the youth generations that developed an enduring identity and aesthetic, such as punk, we find that the experience of today's young people is the opposite in almost every case.

The game-changing impact of digital and social media
Hebdige's music and style-centric view of subculture has since been the subject of debate and critique as the nature of youth movements evolve in response to world around them, with J. Patrick Williams noting that "However important music might be for the study of youth subcultures, there are changes occurring in contemporary societies that require we reassess music's central status in facilitating subcultural participation and identification (Williams, J.P., 2006, p.175).

Society today, and the young people growing up surrounded by and subject to it, is not just unrecognisable compared with that which Hebdige observed in 1979, but also to that observed in more recent studies by J. Patrick

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[8] 2017 Office for National Statistics research *Young People's Wellbeing: 2017* indicated that 16-24 year olds felt quality of life was improving in areas related to education, employment, skills, health and personal finances. At the same time, the proportion of young people that reported having experienced anxiety or depression increased (ONS, 2017). This points to a society that isn't failing young people in key areas that might otherwise provide the nucleus around which an ideologically-driven subculture could form. The movements of the past had a reaction to an aspect of society that directly impacted them or their future opportunities at their core, with many young people, of the age to mobilise, feeling optimistic about their future prospects, a key part that shaped the ideology of previous movements is not present today.

Williams in *Authentic Identities: Straightedge Subculture, Music and the Internet* (2006) and J. A. MacArthur's *Digital subculture: A geek meaning of style* (2009)[9].

The Internet of 2009, however, is an entirely different proposition to the Internet of today. The proliferation of social media and how today's young people that define youth culture and subculture experience it is unlike any of the forums, groups and communities that came before. The type of Internet chatrooms and forums of MacArthur and Williams' studies that connected people with similar interests beyond their geographical boundaries, seem primitive compared with the ubiquity, primacy and always-on nature of social media today[10].

The pins created as part of my practice relate to both online and offline identities of young people that can act as a reflection of their identity - digital or otherwise - or be the subject of pictures to be shared with friends and followers to communicate an aspect of their personality or identity digitally. The pins were designed through an iterative process, undergoing revisions as new knowledge was gained during theoretical and workshop-based research.

My practice evolved in a similar way to how an individual's identity evolves, constantly being re-evaluated and examined to make sure it is relevant. Each pin has also been created to have broad mainstream appeal for those that exclusively admire its form, those that appreciate the deeper meaning behind each item and those that seek to join them together to create a unique combination that represents their complex and multi-faceted identity.

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[9] Both noughties studies note the significant impact that the Internet has had on subculture's ability to "affiliate across location and time constraints" (MacArthur, J.A. 2009, p 59.), and how it "functions as a new social space for subcultural identification and change" (Williams, J.P., 2006, p175.)

[10] Social media platforms, which were fledgling in 2009 now have hundreds of millions of active young users logging on multiple times every day to like, share, post, search or observe. According to UK communications regulator Ofcom in its 2017 report Children and Parents: Media use and Attitudes Report , one-third of current internet users are under 18, and half of 11 and 12 year olds have social media profiles (Ofcom, 2017).

Growing up with social media

Today's young people are growing up in a unique environment, with immediate access to information, viewpoints and opinions created by strangers, celebrities, and the people they know in the physical world. At the same time, they are in an environment that perpetuates and accentuates the desire to be liked, accepted and seen as popular by friends, peers and those outside of their social circles[11].

The desire to fit in and be included is a primal urge that causes all youth movements to grow in popularity, but this aspect is particularly amplified by social media and the quantitative, transparent 'like/favourite' function common across the most prevalent platforms including, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram[12].

The long term effects of this structural change in the behaviours on young people's identities are as-yet unknown. There is little academic study in this field due to its contemporary nature, the rapid pace of change and the fact that it will be years before the impact is able to be reviewed objectively.

What is apparent from specific cases, like that of British teenager Molly Russell[13], is that while enabling young people to connect with like minded people from outside of the limitations of where they live, it also carries significant risks of amplifying social anxieties and identity confusion. A 2018 study by

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[11] Ofcom's report also found that one in eight 12-15s (13%) who say they use social media say there is pressure to look popular all the time (Ofcom, 2017, p. 8)

[12] Research conducted by the UK Children's Commissioner into social media use among 8-12 year olds (Life in Likes, 2018) revealed that "maintaining online relationships could be stressful for some…girls were worried about looking 'pretty' and boys were more concerned with looking 'cool' [on social media]…and some Year 7 children (age 11 - 12) were starting to become dependent on [likes]" (Life in Likes, 2018, p. 5). The report also suggests that young people's anxieties are amplified and perpetuated by social media and the desire to be 'liked' and accepted by peers, showing that the primal urge to be included and to fit in now manifests itself on social media as well as physically.

[13] Molly Russell was a 14 year old girl who took her own life in 2017, after which point her parents found distressing material about depression and suicide on her Instagram account. Her family believe Instagram is partly responsible for her death and the UK government has urged social media companies to take more responsibility for harmful online content as a result.

the University of Essex and University College London[14] found teenagers that spent hours on social media had a greater risk of depression. 40% of 14 year old girls were found to use social media for more than three hours per day compared with 20% of boys, and many experts think that girls' use of social media can lead to negatively comparing themselves to what they find online, impacting their mental health.

Further, those who would traditionally provide the support to address such anxieties through therapy or counselling are similarly inexperienced and learning-on-the-job.

The pins created as part of the practice have a higher purpose than simply acting as method of identification. The pins also act as equipment to visualise beliefs and values through a physical object. While the different symbols and meanings will enable young people to communicate the multiple facets of their identities externally without losing their individual sense of style, they also help provide a sense of clarity for those suffering identity confusion or feeling pressured to manage multiple identities on and offline simultaneously, while trying to keep up with "what's cool". The pins can act as an anchor and reminder of the beliefs they hold dear, while knowing, from seeing pins worn by others, that even if their beliefs or interests run contrary to the mainstream, or even those in their immediate friendship group, they are not alone in the offline world. There is potential for transference of emotion or trauma through the pins in an art therapy environment creating a safe space for discussion and reflection for young people in crisis.

Informing the practice
The designs of the pins are influenced by primary research and are intentionally abstracted from historical semiotics so as to elevate them from accelerated trend cycles and give them longevity. In doing so, the pins act as equipment for the wearer to communicate through a new visual language

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[14] From the report Gender differences in the association between age trends of social media interaction and wellbeing among 10-15 year olds in the UK, by Dr Cara Booker (University of Essex), Professor Yvonne Kelly (University College London) and Professor Amanda Sacker (University College London) is published in the March 2018 issue of the journal, BMC Public Health

that is more attuned to the modern world, while being rooted in a definitive meaning.

The practice explores concepts and provides an outlet for individuals to communicate their beliefs, ideologies and identities in an interchangeable and adaptable way through a new visual language. The pieces can be added to, exchanged and re-calibrated to allow for changes in viewpoint, development of ideologies or changes in mindset, keeping them relevant at all times and allowing for changes to the core beliefs that make up individual identity.

Focus groups acted as the primary research for this thesis and captured the views of 12-14 year old girls[15]. The participants had only ever known a world with social media and as the teenagers of tomorrow, their views on identity in the physical and digital worlds; the tribes or subcultures that exist today and the importance of being accepted by their peers, were crucial in testing the hypothesis.

What became clear was the need for communicative equipment that enables young people to show the different facets of their identity in an individual way. It helps to satisfy the primal need to belong to a group while being sensitive to the new rules of the post-subculture age regarding "dressing the part". Further, the workshops revealed a need for the pins to be adaptable and non-prescriptive in the both the way they are worn and the interpretation of the meaning behind them. As with any piece of art, the interpretation comes from the audience, and unlike previous subcultural symbols, the designs of the pins in the creative response allow for a high degree of individual expression and interpretation. They can be worn in a number of different ways, combined with others to make unique chains to the wearer, and,

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[15] 12-14 year old girls acted as a proxy for young people during the primary research phase for three reasons. Firstly, UK girls are noted by PISA as participating in social media and chatting online more than boys (PISA 2015, Students' Wellbeing vol. 3, April 2016); secondly, research by Booker et al, published in BMC Public Health in 2018 showed that females are heavier social media users; and thirdly, 13-15 is, according to Kidron et al in *Digital Childhood (2017)* when young people start to develop a so-called "personal brand" and the importance of popularity and acceptance increases.

through abstracted design, give the wearer the ability to confer their own interpretation of the core meaning onto the pin.

Adaptability was a key design consideration. The new visual language created by the pins needs room to evolve over time. As with all languages, and the overarching concept is one that can exist and grow over time to accommodate new additions to the lexicon[16].

Polaroids were used to document the second workshop, where participants responded to the finished pins and customised them. Polaroids were chosen to capture an authentic moment in a medium that is not able to be altered or manipulated, juxtaposing the current youth generation's desire to capture and then create the perfect image to post on social media.

The safety pin did not only evolve from practical use to fashion accessory to symbol of the punk movement, it also played an important role for the individual wearer in signalling an important part of their identity. It immediately placed them as a part of the dominant subcultural movement of the age, connecting them with their peers and providing a constant reminder that they belonged somewhere in society. The safety pin, as with other symbols and motifs of subculture, gives the wearer a clear sense of their own identity and an element of control over how they are perceived externally and how they want to present themselves. This research uses the safety pin as a metaphor to explore the deeper relationship between subcultural symbols and the identity/ies of the wearer. It will also explore the impact of the unique set of circumstances the current youth generation faces, all without a strong symbol or movement to provide the clear and constant reminder of who they are, what they believe in and that they belong as part of a bigger movement.

Summary

- UK post-war youth movements have been defined by particular aesthetics. Since the Internet came to prominence in the mid-1990s, and social media emerged as a connective medium, the formation of era-defining subcultural groups with strong visual identities has declined. Through practice, workshops and theoretical analysis, this research

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[16] In this case, "the lexicon" represents the dominant trends or movements of the time.

explores the relationship between the pervasiveness of social media among this generation's young people and the decline of ideologically-driven instantly recognisable subcultural groups or tribes.

• Young people's identities were often defined by the tribe they associated with. In the social media age, instant access to information and communities that share individual passions and interests means this generation of digital natives is more empowered to develop their own unique identity that doesn't fit neatly into a single catch-all label. Where previous generations needed to dress a particular way, go to certain places and adopt a specific belief system in order to "fit in," today's young people can form relationships with individuals or groups online, pointing to a shift from the streets to social media as an important place for social interaction.

• The rise of social media coincides with myriad external factors that support the idea that this generation's young people prize individual over collective identity, notably:

   i) The absence of a core issue that affects all young people in the UK in the same way that would otherwise act as the nucleus around which an ideology and, subsequently, a subculture, can form.

   ii) Greater diversity and inclusion in society, and increased acceptance and normalisation of a plurality of cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and fashions.

   iii) The increased awareness of this generation towards global issues like climate change, human rights and conservation. Previous generations were primarily influenced by issues local to them and felt pressure to fit in locally, giving them much less choice than the digital generation. Further, support for macro-issues puts young people into communities that span all ages, locations and backgrounds, meaning the conditions for an ideologically-driven subculture with a clearly defined aesthetic to form are less evident.

Chapter 1

The primal need to belong

Figure 9: Teenage Brain, polaroid exhibited at Royal College of Art Show 2018. Example of pins linked

together worn on the wrist. Shown here Memory, photographed with research practice material.

This section will explore the primal human need to belong; how the means of satisfying that need have changed as a result of the Internet and social media; and whether the social and cultural conditions facing the current youth generation make subcultural movements of the type that came to define post-war generations possible.

In his 1943 paper A Theory of Human Motivation published in the American Psychological Review (vol. 50 p 370 - 96) , Abraham Mazlow defined what came to be known as the hierarchy of human needs.

In the paper, Mazlow observes that after satisfying physiological and safety needs, all humans then seek to satisfy so-called "love needs"*:*
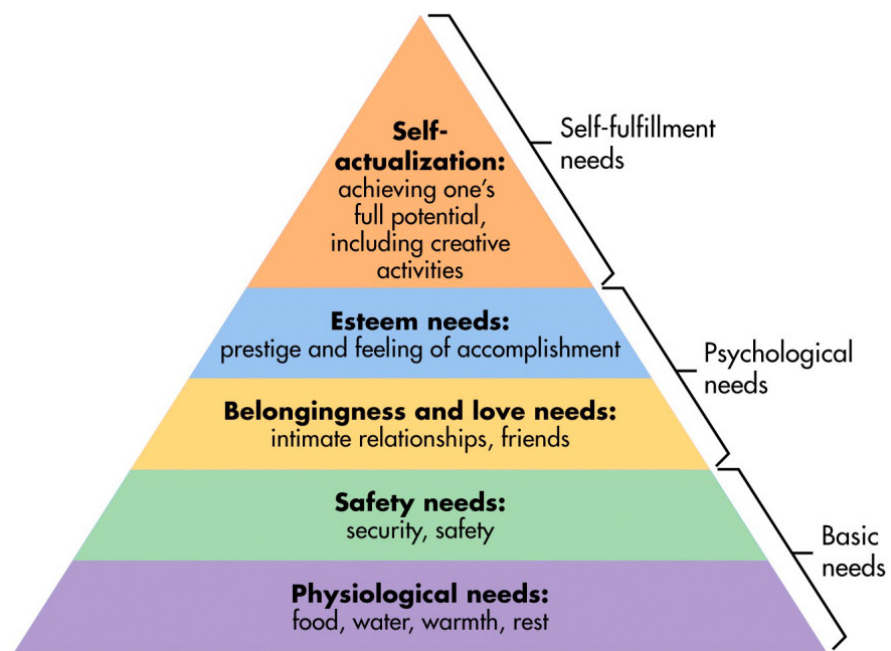

Figure 10: Mazlow's hierarchy of needs (image credit: https://www.simplypsychology.org/sim-plypsychology.org-Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf)

"If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs, and the whole cycle already described will repeat itself with this new center.

"Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations

with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world and may even forget that once, when he was hungry, he sneered at love." (A.H. Mazlow,1943, Psychological Review 50, p.370 - 396)

Applying Mazlow's theory to the modern day UK, basic needs for food and safety are satisfied by the state, or, in the case of the youth generation, the family, and that therefore the first of the deficiency needs (physiological, safety, belonging and love, and esteem) that the individual must seek to satisfy is that of belongingness and love.

The evolution of societal groups and the development of collective aesthetics

In the pre-Internet, post-war period, young people met their innate social belongingness needs by aligning with societal and subcultural groups that were the best fit for their views, tastes and interests. The dynamics for interacting with such groups manifested in physical meet ups with other young people, each seeking to fulfil their own social needs. In stark contrast to today's youth generation, young people in pre-internet generations were presented with a limited number of groups that they could join to satisfy their social needs, resulting in the development of clearly defined collective identities.

Restricted by locality, young people had to make a conscious decision to make to align themselves with one of a handful of groups available to them or would have to find altogether different means to satisfy their primal belongingness need. As a result, the collective groups that did exist had large local, regional and even national spread.

The punk scene, as with the mod movement that preceded it, may have started in London but spread quickly across the UK, taking the aesthetic with it. As the subcultural movement spreads as a package of ideology and aesthetic combined, and reaches critical mass, its aesthetic becomes representative of that generation's youth. For young people seeking to achieve belongingness and social acceptance, dressing in the aesthetic of a popular

41

subculture and wearing the symbols associated with it provides an immediate connection to the community as well as an instant affiliation to the set of beliefs it represents.

Once nationwide and with a large membership the visual aesthetic becomes instantly recognisable and representative of the core beliefs of the movement. It lends itself to the definition of a group aesthetic not just to visually communicate the particular ethos or set of beliefs at the core of the movement, but also to identify like-minded individuals from different social circles beyond the immediate geography.

In this sense, the iconic subcultural movements of the post-war period had such strong aesthetics and collective identities because i) they were one of a small number of groups for young people to associate with in the UK at the time; ii) young people need to associate with something to fulfil their innate social needs; iii) Following a particular aesthetic (in terms of fashion and symbols) provides young people with immediate access to a large youth movement and a connection to other like-minded people in their community and across the UK.

The growth and ubiquity of a small number of defining subcultural movements in each post-war generation is based almost entirely on the need to fulfil the primal need to fit in and the lack of alternative options to do so. Today, the communicative and connective power of the Internet gives young people the ability to connect to a large group of people who share a particular passion or point of view from any background anywhere in the world. As a result, this generation's young people no longer need to exclusively align themselves with a large offline collective to satisfy their primal need.

Further, the social media generation does not need to adhere to a particular dress-code in order to fit in with a particular group. Instead, as will be expanded on in Chapter Two, it's much more important for young people to follow mainstream trends to gain acceptance. The transient nature of mainstream trends often means that looks, styles and particular items become popular quickly and fade before they can be associated with any deeper

meaning, or become emblematic of a particular group with a particular set of views and values.

The practice builds on the concept of communicating through signs and symbols by creating a new visual language through physical objects that can be applied to a variety of different styles. The wearer can utilise the pins in a variety of ways, and can wear them to accent any look or style, overcoming the problem of trying to communicate an identity visually without having convenient access to a clearly defined aesthetic that has been curated for that purpose. In this way, the pins also remain relevant against a backdrop of fast moving mainstream trends and become essential equipment for young people to communicate the different aspects of their increasingly complex identities.

Accessibility, Specificity and Multiplicity

The current youth generation is the first to be born and grow up exclusively in a mature Internet age, and with it the first generation to natively experience the particularities of seeking to satisfy belongingness in both an online and offline world. The Internet and growth of social media has enabled young people to achieve belongingness more easily in three main ways - accessibility, specificity and multiplicity - all of which contribute to a stronger sense of individualism at the expense of the immediately recognisable collective aesthetics of previous generations.

Accessibility means that finding an online group or community with a shared view, taste or interest is only ever a few clicks or taps away, and contributing to the community can be as simple as liking a post, leaving a comment or sharing someone else's point of view. Pre-Internet young people would have had to seek acceptance through following the collective aesthetic and contributing to the community would have meant ingratiating yourself, establishing friends within the group and having the confidence to act.

Specificity means that individuals can find a different community or group for their individual interests, rather than, as was the case for generations previously, having to align with an existing collective group that best approximates all of your individual views, tastes and interests.

Multiplicity means that today's "Internet Youth" are able to join and form communities around any and all of their disparate views, tastes and interests like never before. They also have the added option of compartmentalising their different groups and connections. As such, the Internet Youth is far more able to exert control over their social needs by belonging to numerous different and separate groups at any one time, without the need to aggregate their views to fit one particular collective, and then maintain the collective view as it grows over time.

The practice addressed the need to communicate multiple facets that make up modern identity, both on and offline and took the form of a series of inter-changeable pieces that can be worn independently or separately, or exchanged for different pieces with different meanings. As each item represents a single view or value, and there are no rules regarding how and where they are worn, the wearer can represent the different aspects of their identity in a way that is unique to them. The ability for each wearer to create their own individual collection and demonstrate their individuality further in the way they combine, customise and wear them was a consideration that became apparent during the first workshop. During open discussion, partici-pants agreed that an important part of having an individual identity was being able to communicate that externally. This is illustrated in figures 7 (p. 24) and 11 (p. 45), which show how a unique chain can be created by linking pins together in sequence.

The changing definition of satisfaction

While the growing use of the Internet and social media has enabled young people to more easily find and join groups and communities that match their interests, mainstream or otherwise, social media in particular also has an effect on the individual's perception of acceptance.

The UK's Children's Commissioner 2018 report Life in Likes revealed that some Year 7 children (age 11 - 12) were starting to become dependent on likes and "often adapt their behaviour in order to gain social approval" (Life in Likes, 2018, p. 38).
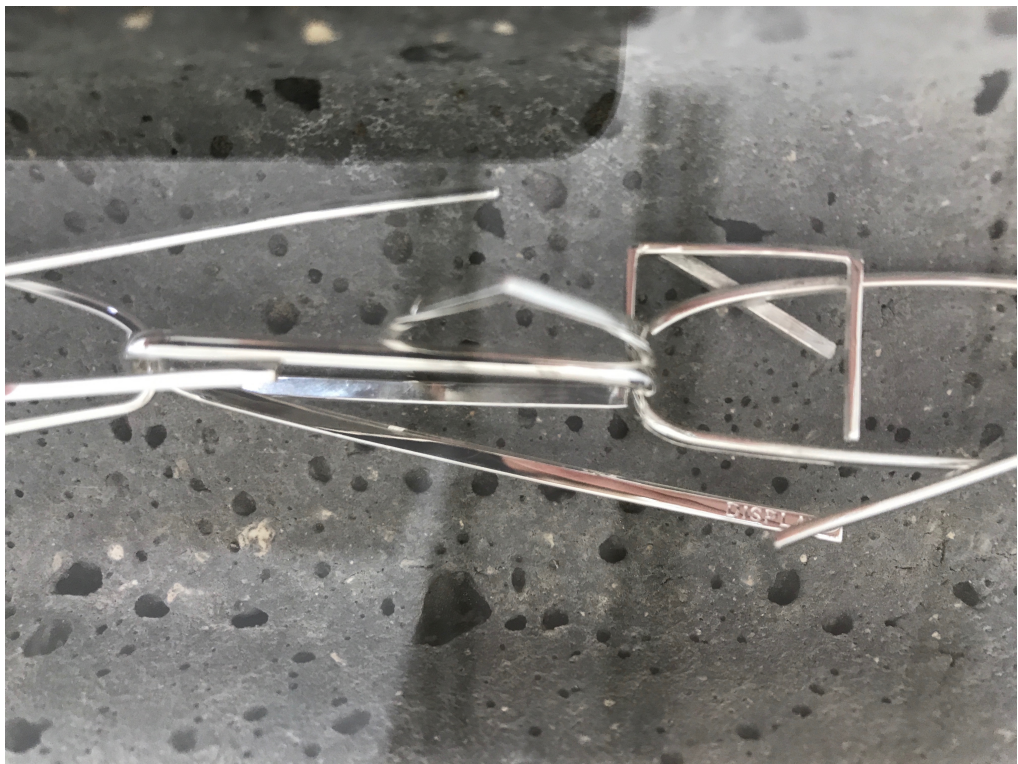
45

Figure 11: Shown here is a close up of the pin representing "Display". Also visible here is the engraving of the meaning, which is a feature of each pin.

As part of the report's recommendations, the Commissioners Office recommends that parents educate their children about the change that takes place when they enter secondary school (Age 11) and in particular "the broadening of their exposure to peers and older children on social media."(Life in Likes, 2018, p. 38).

The workshop engaged for the primary research for this study sampled this age group, allowing for some of the themes and topics highlighted in the report to be developed further and related to the key points raised in this paper around identity, individuality, social media and the development of aesthetically driven youth subcultures.

The report concludes that the way young people used social media changed significantly during their transition from primary to secondary school, and brought with it new concerns. It notes:

"At this age, children were introduced to wider networks of friends and started to follow more celebrities and people they did not know in their offline lives. This meant they were more aware of their own identity, started comparing themselves to a broader group of people and worried about whether they fitted in. This introduced an additional layer of worries, relating to what people would think of them, what they looked like, and who they should be." (Life in Likes, 2018, p 37)

This comes as a response to the findings that "'likes' were seen as an affirmation and validation from peers that made children feel good about themselves and their lives. Of particular note is the growing importance that children placed on generating likes and securing likes as a form representation of acceptance as they grew up, and particularly upon entering secondary school where they are exposed to "a bigger group of unfamiliar people, and the importance of popularity and social identity became more salient." (Life in Likes, 2018, p 29)

This shows that while the internet and social media give young people immediate access to ready-made communities built around specific interests which aid the development of an individual identity, acceptance and popular-

ity online does not always equate to popularity offline, and both must be present to satisfy the individual. In fact, the need to be accepted in offline circles by peers - which are still subject to the restrictions of locality and provide a limited number of groups to meet the social need - influences online behaviour and content shared on social networks.

We can therefore conclude that the social need for belongingness can be easily satisfied online, but the Internet generations' coexistence online and offline, and the increasingly blurred line between the two worlds means that they are still subject to the same social pressures of previous generations that led to the formation of large identifiable collective movements. What sets this generation apart is the additional opportunity they have to embrace and pursue their own individual passions that may not align with the views of their offline peers, and the ability to compartmentalise what might be niche interests and find acceptance and satisfaction of the social need from an entirely different group online.

A unique situation for the Internet generation

No previous generation has had such a complex and compartmentalised approach to developing, defining and maintaining their identity, both as part of a group, multiple groups and individually. Figure 7 (p. 37) shows a newspaper headline from March 2018 asking "What's going on in the teenage brain?", where neuro-scientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore examines how brain development, as well as hormones lead to young people being impulsive and emotional, showing how young this area of scientific study is.

The generation before, labelled by journalist Sarah Stankorb as Xennials in an article for good.is, straddles both the Internet and analogue youths. They are a generation for whom "the Internet was not a part of [their] childhoods… and didn't get cell phones until their twenties."

For this group the dawn of social media came at a time when their offline identities had already been developed and their belongingness needs satisfied. They had experienced formative teenage years either without the Internet at all or without the Internet as a core platform for social interaction. The use of social media by this generation, which lived through the genesis and

47

evolution of MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and others, is as a broad reflection of their offline personas. Friends and contacts on social media are the same friends and contacts they have offline. Content posted to social media is done with little regard for likes and comments, and in that sense it can be argued is primarily used a more convenient way to stay in touch with friends. In 2008, Facebook - the dominant and in many ways the defining social media platform for Xennials - described itself as "[helping] you con-nect and share with the people in your life".

An updated mission statement was unveiled by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg at the company's first ever Community Summit in 2017: "Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together," showing a pivot away from enabling the personal relationships that the plat-form was built on and towards the group building that connects people with shared interests whether they know each other offline or not.

For today's Internet Youth, the lessons of previous generations - including those of Xennials - don't apply. The very nature of youth culture, the forma-tion and development of relationships, communities and individual identities, and the necessary behaviours to achieve Mazlow's social need for belong-ingness have undergone a fundamental paradigm shift that makes the de-velopment of iconic subcultural movements that grow, endure and to come to symbolise a generation, a near-impossibility today. Figures 11 (p. 45) and 13 (p. 55) show how the pins can be used to display different aspects of identity in a non-committal, modern way that is relevant to the wants and needs of today's youth generation.

Summary

- Every youth generation has a desire to fit in and be accepted by peers, summarised by Abraham Mazlow as the "love and belonging-ness need" that drives human behaviour
- Pre-social media, the options for young people to satisfy this need were dependent on the prevailing trends or groups available to them locally that best fit their belief system or areas of interest. Often, the nucleus for the movement was an issue that directly impacted young people across the UK, providing a shared enemy or common cause

for young people everywhere. Aesthetics were defined as a visual language to support the ideology or cause at hand.

- Post-social media, and as a result of greater diversity and inclusion in society and the emergence of a large comfortable middle class, young people find themselves with the ability to meet people online or in social media groups to satisfy all and any of their interests and ideologies in a compartmentalised way. Furthermore, the lack of a particular societal injustice that impacts the entire generation across the UK, means that the nucleus around which subcultures would naturally form is absent, leading to a generation without a unifying ideology to build an aesthetic around. This in turn leads to a reversion to mainstream trends and a need to conform to "what's cool" to fit in and meet the belongingness need. The notion of cool is transient and therefore can't be attached to ideology or form a part of an individual or group identity.
- Online acceptance and popularity does not equal offline acceptance and popularity. Young people need to feel as though they are accepted across both.
- Groups exist among today's youth generation, but a distinctive aesthetic does not.

Chapter 2

The historic use of iconography and symbols in tribalism and the tribes that young people identify and relate to today

51

Figure 12: Link, polaroid exhibited at Royal College of Art Show 2018. Example of pins linked in se-
quence to form a chain connecting like minded individuals. Shown here Memory, Modify, Parallelism
photographed with research practice material.

This section will explore the importance of symbols and iconography among the generation-defining youth subcultures of the post-war period, their role in shaping collective identities and those of individual members. It will also cover how today's youth generation (the Internet generation) use symbolism and iconography to define or represent aspects of their identities or affiliations to groups or tribes they are a part of.

The defining aesthetics and symbols of post-war subcultures

While the conditions that caused the formation of the type of ideologically-driven subcultural tribes that defined youth generations throughout the post-war period are not present in the Internet and social media age, the links between youth and style/trends endures.

Consciously or not, the way individuals dress and the symbols or adornments they wear are all part of the way the individual presents themselves to the outside world and a clear, intentional expression of identity.

The continued traditional social pressures of popularity and desire for acceptance among peer groups offline continues to drive behaviours of the social media generation and influences the way they present themselves online. Life in Likes found that boys were "concerned with having the right branded clothing or material possessions" (Life in Likes, 2018, p.26). Today's focus on needing to have "the right" brands and possessions to be accepted by peers is similar to the motivations of previous generations to adopt the aesthetic and symbols of the tribes they aligned themselves with. Whether mods or rockers in the 60s, punk or skinhead in the 70s - the movements required their members to follow the aesthetic and adorn themselves with particular items or symbols that demonstrated their association with their chosen group. While not as strict as a uniform, each had notable garments, style rules or icons that were expected to be followed, or else risk alienation from the social group.

Symbolism and the development of tribal aesthetics

As Hetherington notes in Expressions of Identity (1998) "This type of [neo] tribe - which is now with us and can be seen quite clearly in what otherwise have been described as new social movements - is based upon sentiment,

feeling and shared experience. A neo-tribe is an affectual form of sociation through which both individual and collective ideas of identity are expressed." (Hetherington, 1998, p.53)

Despite being written at least a decade before social media reached maturity and around the time that the current youth generation was born, Hethering-ton's prediction that the neo-tribes that exist in society would allow for the simultaneous expression of individual and group identity rings true today.

The birth of a generation that simultaneously coexists online and offline and is more free to develop an individual identity, which spells the end of the iconic subcultural youth movements of the post-war period that, by contrast, centred on belonging to an overarching ideology.

The series of pins created during my practice facilitate opportunities for young people to express their identities visually while remaining within Het-herington's definition of neo individuality. The current youth generation, while avoiding association with a single tribe, its values and its associated symbol-ism, does still hold values on an individual level.   Figure 9 (p.47) shows a selection of interlocking pins that connect two like minded individuals physi-cally. As with many original images captured for this work, this was shot on Polaroid film to authentically capture the moment of connection between two individuals via a medium that cannot be digitally manipulated, as is often the case with apps like Instagram.

By disassociating from a tribe in a traditional sense, young people enjoy a more liberated, multi-faceted individual identity with the freedom to evolve or change a point of view at any time.

Each pin symbolises potential facets that could make up an individual's iden-tity. When linked together they reflect the unique combination of the multiple separate interests that combine to visualise a modern identity (see appendix 1.3).

The design as a type of pin rather than a closed loop allows for recalibration, personalisation and attachment to other items. Pins can be traded, collected,

shared and worn as prominently or subtly as intended, creating a new visual language. In the same way that subcultural post-war tribes developed a collective recognisable aesthetic, in part to unite people that share a common set of values, so, too, can the pins be used as equipment to communicate identity for the digitally connected generation in a physical way, and can be worn to project a particular point of view to an external audience of known and unknown people. Figures 6 and 7 (p. 23 and 24) show how the equipment can be worn in practice.

The flexibility of neo-tribes comes in contrast to the devotion and commitment required to be accepted by the type of post-war subcultural movements described by Hebdige in Subculture: The Meaning of Style (1979), where distinctions were drawn between "originators and hangers-on," the latter being the subject of such derogatory labels as "plastic punks or safety pin people, burrhead rastas or rasta-bandwagon, weekend hippies, etc. versus the 'authentic' people." (Hebdige, 1979, p.122)

Today's tribes are formed under entirely different conditions to those that came before. In the 1960s and 1970s, the reaction against the parent culture or perceived societal ills - including a shortage of job opportunities, widening inequality, alienation or subjugation - were contributing factors to not just the formation of mod, rocker, punk and skinhead culture (all of which are rooted in the working class), but also influenced the aesthetic that was a visual expression of the group identity.

While expanding on Hall et al's concepts of homology and bricolage to explain why a particular subcultural style appeals to a particular group of people from the 1976 publication Resistance through Rituals, Hebdige observes the purposeful relationship between aesthetic and values of different groups:

"The skinheads were cited to exemplify this principle. The boots, braces and cropped hair were only considered appropriate and hence meaningful because they communicated the desired qualities: 'hardness, masculinity and working-classness.'" (Hebdige, 1976, p.114)

*Figure 13: This image shows how pins can be linked to create a chain that represents multiple
different facets of identity. Shown here are pins that represent Search, Select and Space*

Further, Hebdige aligns the punk aesthetic to its core values thus:

"There was a homological relation between the trashy cut-up clothes and spiky hair, the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting, the format of the fanzines, the insurrectionary poses and the 'soulless,' frantically driven music. The punks wore clothes which were the sartorial equivalent of swear words, and they swore as they were dress - with calculated effect…" (Hebdige, 1976, p.114)

In this sense, Hebdige, Hall et al. espoused the view that rather than containing particular items that acted as symbols to represent the movement, the ethos and core values of the movements were symbolised by the overall aesthetic. While time has conferred a strong association of particular items or symbols with particular movements (peace signs with hippies, safety pins with punks, bullseyes with mods), their pervasive use at the time was as an element of an overall aesthetic rather than to represent the movement and its values through a single item.

Today's tribes are much harder to identify by the clothes they wear. As explained in the previous chapter, the formation of collective groups with shared interests and values continues to exist today thanks to the need to fulfil social needs offline as well as online, but are without a strong value-based aesthetic, largely due to three main factors: i) the absence of an over-riding societal trigger that negatively impacts young people as a whole; ii) the emergence of a broadly comfortable middle class replacing the working class from which many iconic post-war tribes sprung; and iii) the differing social pressures felt by young people growing up today on social media and experienced on an individual level.

Data compiled by IPSOS Mori published in the National Readership Survey in 2016 showed the shifting demographics. In 1968 two-thirds of households were classified as C2DE, falling to 45.8% by 2015, leaving a dominant ABC1 demographic (54.2%). (IPSOS Morei National Readership Survey, 2016)

56

Curating an image on social media

Societal concerns such as social injustice and inequality and the presence of common enemies of a generation's youth - government and the parent culture - are no longer front-line concerns for this generation. Replacing societal disaffection and a common enemy are more mature individual concerns around popularity and social acceptance which stem from a childhood spent online, with regular access to the digital environment.

Baroness Kidron et al's Digital Childhood report published in 2017 notes:

"The digital environment was conceived as an environment for adult users. Not even its inventors thought it might one day be a place where childhood would be spent. Nor did they make any design concessions for child users. On the contrary, the utopian vision was that all users would be equal. And if all users are equal, then a child user is treated as if they were an adult." (Digital Childhood, 2017, p.3)

Focused primarily on the influence of social media on childhood development, the Digital Childhood report brings the particular anxieties of the generation that has grown up on social media and the differences to previous generations into sharp focus.

"Because at the very time they should be rehearsing and retreating back to 'trusted circles' of family, classmates, teachers or interest groups to define themselves, they are waiting for the tide of Instagram messages to confirm how they compare to an increasingly exaggerated set of social norms." (Digital Childhood, 2017,p.11)

As social media use is primarily through an individual profile, the highs and lows that come with the receipt or absence of likes and comments are also experienced on an individual level. The quest for acceptance (or the avoidance of anxiety) drives behaviours that perpetuate the very anxieties most commonly felt by the social media generation.

Young people carefully curate their online personas to present an idealised version of themselves, and share content with the express purpose of gener-

ating likes and comments from peers. Life in Likes refers to young people posting a "highlight reel" of their life (Life in Likes, 2018, p.31), and details the process many young people go through before posting content to ensure it is shareable and likely to receive peer approval.

My practice realises a new system of thinking that can be utilised by young people, creating a space for them to configure different aspects of their identity as it evolves over time. They reflect values in a physical way that can be documented, shared or exchanged with others. The series of pins will start a dialogue between young people around how to document their multiple evolving individual identities, which are influenced by external factors as well as the company being kept at the time both online and offline. The knowledge gained from these interactions will be used to inform further iterations of the practice to remain relevant to the continuously changing definitions of identity and how it is interpreted by future youth generations.

Kidron et al see this practice taking place primarily in the 13-15 age range and refer to the development of a "personal brand… which can be discordant with sense of own identity" (Digital Childhood, 2017, p.21). While social media and the Internet-at-large make it easier for so-called outsiders to find acceptance with communities that share their interests, for those that have a desire to be accepted by the mainstream the ultimately transparent and quantifiable acceptance metrics (likes and comments) result in the same type of personality aggregation to fit in characteristic of those seeking to fulfil their belongingness needs offline and to join collective subcultural groups.

Where today's tribes are different is that aggregation is taking place at Internet-scale and is subject to the breakneck pace at which social media trends come and go. As such, an individual is never definitively "in" or "out," but in a near constant state of inertia where the success of their last post measured in likes and comments has no bearing on their overall membership of a collective. The careful management of their image or personal brand to harvest likes and acceptance from their peers on a post-by-post basis brings to light the contrast between being able to indulge and pursue true passions online and the presentation of the self on social media to be as popular to the greatest number of people. Both conditions do, however, underline a more

individualised youth movement - aligning around particular issues and causes on an ad hoc basis, rather than being defined by one particular cause, viewpoint or set of values.

Equally, the tribes observed by the participants of the primary research workshop showed a strong relationship with mainstream popular views or activities like sport or pop music, without an overarching ideology or belief system.

From an identity perspective, young people are more likely to complement what they see as their personal brand with a unique configuration of different identifiers that represent the multiple facets that make up their identity and reflect the plurality of different views, values, tastes or interests.

Summary
- Post-war subcultures developed strong visual identities that reflected the strong views or values of the group. As aesthetics were reflective of belief systems, the absence of an overarching belief system leads to the absence of an overarching aesthetic
- Tribes exist today, but they are much less reactionary against perceived unfairness or inequality in society.
- To be popular and accepted into a tribe, it is more important for today's young people to wear the on-trend brands and styles of the day. Transient mainstream trends are formed and popularised by celebrities and influencers, alongside a broad range of factors.
- Primary research identified tribes that were built around mainstream interests, such as sport or pop music, rather than coming from an ideology that then shapes the music and style associated with the movement itself. Tribes identified included sporty kids, geeky kids, pretty kids, smart kids, emo kids and pop kids. More detail and analysis is provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3

The overarching impact of social media on defining an individual or group identity and whether digital identities are authentic representations of the physical

Figure 14: Lives, polaroid exhibited at Royal College of Art Show 2018. Example of pins linked in sequence to form a chain around the neck symbolising the influence of social media amongst young people today. Just seen here Modify, Equal photographed with research practice material.

This section will build on the central themes of previous chapters - in particular the pursuit of satisfaction of social needs to fit in with particular tribes or groups, and how it shapes individual identity.   It will also explore the concept of multi-faceted, compartmentalised individual identities and the impact of social media on their development

One of the defining characteristics of the current youth generation is its distaste for labels and, indeed, being labelled. Figure 14 (p. 61) shows practice research material photographed alongside pins worn around the neck as a chain, showing how the multiple beliefs can be represented.

Where previous generations may have proudly displayed the identity of the collective with which they most associated - be it punk, skinhead, teddy boy or mod - by conforming to the particular dress code, today's young people are less willing to commit fully to the uniform of a single tribe. Rather than a full uniform, today's young people need the tools and equipment to communicate different aspects of their identity in a controlled and highly personal way. The pins can be personalised through how they are worn, how they are customised (if at all) and how they are sequenced with other pins. The series of pins can grow over time, and, due to the iterative design process, will continue to evolve. The wearer will be able to add and remove pins from their collection, providing a communicative tool that is fluid, in contrast to the binary tribal uniforms of the previous subcultural movements.

The absence of a strong collective movement with a clear aesthetic in modern youth culture presents fewer opportunities in this regard, but of greater interest is the development of a more multi-faceted identity which is simultaneously able to indulge specific interests online, while presenting an idealised or curated version on social media platforms and conforming to the mainstream offline.

The seamless switching between online and offline

At the centre of youth identity today is a conflict between being able to find and associate with groups online that match particular interests (however niche or obscure), and the use of popular social media platforms like Snapchat and Instagram to project a personal brand to friends and followers

with the aim of gaining likes and comments that drives mainstream accep-
tance offline.

As such, in the same way that those who have grown up on the internet and
with social media can seamlessly move between online and offline, so too
can they move between the different groups of friends or connections across
both worlds. This brings about the emergence of a much more compartmen-
talised and fragmented sense of self, where the individual can simultaneous-
ly be in the presence of friends offline while actively continuing conversations
with one or more different groups online with whom the individual may project
a different version of themselves.

"Being cool"
When it comes to the relationship between identity and personal style there
are a number of contributing factors that explain the notable absence of a
strong aesthetic that represents young people as a collective.

Firstly, modern day tribes are no longer borne out of a reaction to society or a
sense that the youth generation needs to band together to be heard by the
establishment often represented by government or their parents' generation.
Instead today's young people are growing up in an environment where they
are not marginalised, social policy has developed to provide access to core
services regardless of status or income and they don't need to band together
to have their rights represented to policy makers.

Secondly, acceptance and recognition from peers no longer overtly requires
the individual to subscribe to a particular set of values or a common view-
point that is then reflected by the aesthetic that evolves over time as per
Hebdige and Hall et al's homological relationship argument. Instead, today's
young people are simply striving to "be cool," as asserted by the Children's
Commissioner Life in Likes report, which lacks the type of values that previ-
ous subcultural youth movements were built around and that were the foun-
dations of the iconic aesthetics we reflect on today.

Thirdly, the transient nature of "what's cool" and the fact that it is not rooted in
an ideology means that there is little time or opportunity for a look or aesthet-

ic to evolve or endure for long enough to define a generation. The purpose of the practice was to provide a new way for young people to visually communicate aspects of their identity without disrupting their overall look. Providing an adaptable visual language that responds to the way young people develop and communicate their individual identities today gives this generation a way of communicating through style and iconography that is relevant to world they are growing up in, and that they otherwise wouldn't have access to. Figure 15 (p. 65) shows the engraving of the pin representing "input". Input is important to the series of pins as it relates to both the inputs that form online and offline identities.

Figure 15: Shown here is a close up of the pin representing "Input". Also visible here is the engraving of the meaning, which is a feature of each pin.

In essence, what young people wear today doesn't represent the shared ideology of a social group. It is instead a reflection of what's deemed to be cool now, as defined by external actors (celebrities, prestige youth brands and affordable, accessible high street fast fashion) to gain access to a social group. The research conducted by the Children's Commissioner (Life in Likes, 2017), suggests that more important than committing to an overall look is being seen to be wearing the right brands to gain acceptance from peers, both online and offline.

Verbatim responses included in the report highlight the desire to "be cool," what constitutes being cool and the speed at which that definition changes:

"But by the time you get that kit, and your football boots and your hair, there's a new trend and everyone says oh that's so old. Trends go so fast and people say why are you still doing that"
Joe, 11, Year 7 (Life in Likes, 2017, p.28)

"The coolest person at school will start a trend and then everyone copies her"
Merran, 12, Year 7 Life in Likes, 2017, p.26)

To summarise, the environment in which the Internet generation is growing up in and the need to "be cool" to be accepted means young people no longer have a single cause of injustice around which to collectivise, and from which a consistent and instantly recognisable look can evolve. This generation thinks about image-first, rather than values first, and as such is beholden to the rapidly-changing definition of what's cool and trendy that is accelerated by the whims of particular celebrities and taste-makers (including YouTube vloggers and social media influencers), the emergence of affordable high-street fast-fashion companies, and the output/collections launched by a particular set of prestige brands that are highly prized by young people, the ownership of which offer a way to gain acceptance and recognition from the in-crowd.

Somewhat paradoxically for a youth generation without a discernible stylised sub-cultural movement and aesthetic, there is a strong case for describing the Internet generation as the most image conscious in history.

The individualisation of values among the Internet generation

The detachment of a core set of values and being accepted by one's peers may spell the end for the type of aesthetically iconic subcultural youth movements of the post-war period, but it does not mean that the current generation is without values and viewpoints. In fact, greater access to information and the increasing hyper-connectedness afforded by the internet and social media encourages young people to rally behind particular causes that they believe in in a way that is much more individualised. Young people can, for example, pledge support for and align to all manner of different causes without needing to be concerned about how their personal view will affect them being accepted by their peers. The nature of modern day tribes is such that there is no obligation to subscribe to a broad set of values and ideologies in order to be accepted, and there is no obligation to declare any or all of your beliefs on what are carefully managed social media profiles.

This separation of individual identity and group identity - where the individual has a greater level of control over their public image and how their identity is projected - gives the current youth generation more flexibility to develop individual points of view on causes and issues on a case-by-case basis. Examples of modern movements that are global and purely ideological and without a dress-code or the need to adopt it as part of an individual identity (although many decide to) include the #MeToo and #ThisGirlCan modern feminist movements and the March For Our Lives movement to introduce stricter gun controls in America in the wake of a school shooting in Florida. Similarly, these movements do not exclusively represent Youth v Establishment, rather are causes that resonate across the generational divide.

Summary

- Today's youth generation keeps identity, image and values separate

- There is a greater emphasis on individualism and the development of an individual identity, running contrary to the group-driven thinking of the post-war period

- Symbolism is taken to a much more individual level as a result, reflecting the numerous different views of each individual

Chapter 4

Primary Research - studying attitudes of young people towards subculture and groups

Introduction: Social media and identity

Through primary research conducted in two focus group with twelve 12-14 year old students from the Royal Masonic School for Girls in Rickmansworth, I explored whether today's young people feel a strong association with a group or tribe and how that impacts how they present themselves, both physically (in the clothes and items they wear) and digitally (through their posts on social media).

The sessions also covered attitudes towards symbolism and iconography to understand whether the tribes and subcultural groups that exist among to-day's youth generation are as visually identifiable through objects and symbols as the iconic groups and tribes of the post-war period, and if so, which symbols or icons reflect today's groups.

The findings have been analysed to test the hypothesis that today's youth generation, having grown up on social media, continue to feel a primal need to belong and be accepted by peers but that it no longer manifests itself by joining a particular group within society. Instead, young people are able to gain acceptance online by finding communities that match their individual interests, and project an idealised/curated version of themselves on social media to gain acceptance offline to a much larger trend-led mainstream.

Research Design

I needed to test what I'd learned about identity and validate my thinking around the practice and the objects I planned to create. Research was con-ducted over two workshop sessions with the same group of twelve 12-14 year old students from the Royal Masonic School for Girls in Rickmansworth. The workshops took place 20 months apart - the first in November 2016 and the second in July 2018.

The first session acted as fact-finding to validate recent research into the be-haviours of young people online and on social media and its impact on their relationships. I also wanted to set an open forum for discussion to under-stand first-hand how this generation also considered their identity and the impact of social media in shaping it - an area with little third-party research or

anecdotal evidence at the time of writing. It also crystallised a creative brief that shaped the practical response.

The second workshop, conducted with the same group of students, was designed to measure the change in perceptions and viewpoints of the participants over time, and to present the pins created as a response to the information gathered in the first session and other sources. Participants were presented the pins without explanation and their initial reactions documented. After providing an explanation of the pins and their intended use, participants were tasked with customising the silver objects with enamel to develop a stronger personal connection with each pin and a closer reflection of an aspect of their individual identity.

This exemplifies how the pins are intended to be customised and interpreted at an individual level by the wearer, who in effect add the final finishing touches to the pins before choosing how and when to display them externally.

Participants

12-14 year old girls were chosen as the subjects for the research because:

- According to existing research, females use social media more than males throughout adolescence (Booker et al, BMC Public Health, 2018 18:321), and that 13-15 years old is when a so-called "personal brand" starts to develop (Kidron et al, Digital Childhood, 2017).

- The participants are from the current youth generation, whose views on subculture, the trends, symbols or icons that signify particular groups, and the relationship between social media and the identity/ies of their own group provide the basis for challenging and comparing with the theories referenced throughout the earlier chapters

Workshop form and process

Sessions featured a mix of quantitative and qualitative research, group dis-
cussion and interactive activities (see appendix 2). The first session cov-
ered:

- Group discussion on identity and the participants experience of so-
  cial media, including the completion of a questionnaire

- Setting the scene: an introduction to post-war British subcultures (10
  minutes)

- Group discussion: The existence of subcultures and tribes they see
  today (5 minutes)

- Working in pairs: Understanding partners identity based on interests,
  beliefs and personalities, representing identities visually through
  drawing and discussing outputs (15 minutes)

- Group discussion: The factors that contribute to identity and how the
  growth of digital media has impacted those factors (20 minutes)

- Small group task: Understanding the tribes of today and objects or
  symbols associated with them (20 minutes)

- Individual task: Design your personal iconography. Participants were
  tasked with taking elements from what they had learned to create and
  image that represented the different aspects of their identity (50 min-
  utes)

This format was used to engage the group and build the participants' confi-
dence ahead of taking the final survey in order to gain the most accurate re-
sults possible. All tasks were designed to generate fast, instinctive respons-
es to reduce the risk of participants over thinking their responses to adhere
to social pressures that might exist.

The second session was split into four periods of five minutes and covered:
- Setting the scene: Recapping the first workshop (5 minutes)
- My response and interpretation of workshop 1: Introducing the pins (5
  mins)
- Group discussion: capturing initial responses to pins around cultural
  and generational relevance (5 mins)
- Individual task: Customising the pins with enamel paint

The final task of the second workshop was purposefully conducted under extreme time pressure to promote an uninhibited approach. Participants' were initially concerned about ruining the solid silver objects, responding positively to the original forms. Once they started customising the objects, the concentration in the room was tangible and the students later commented on the therapeutic experience of customising the pins.

The outputs from the primary research were:
- Insights into social media use (platforms, frequency and type of interaction)
- Insights into the views of the current youth generation on identity, individualism and the impact that social media has on the development of an individual identity
- Insights into the tribes that exist in the current youth generation and their cultural signifiers and symbols
- Materials to inform the practice.
- Responses to objects designed in the first session

During interactive elements, the workshop participants were given ultimate freedom to design and create their responses. The workshop prioritised building a dialogue between students on the issues and took care to explore the personalities and identities of the students sensitively.

The topics covered during discussions were informed by responses to questions covered in the questionnaire at the start of the session. Discussions were also timed to capture instinctive responses to the stimulus.
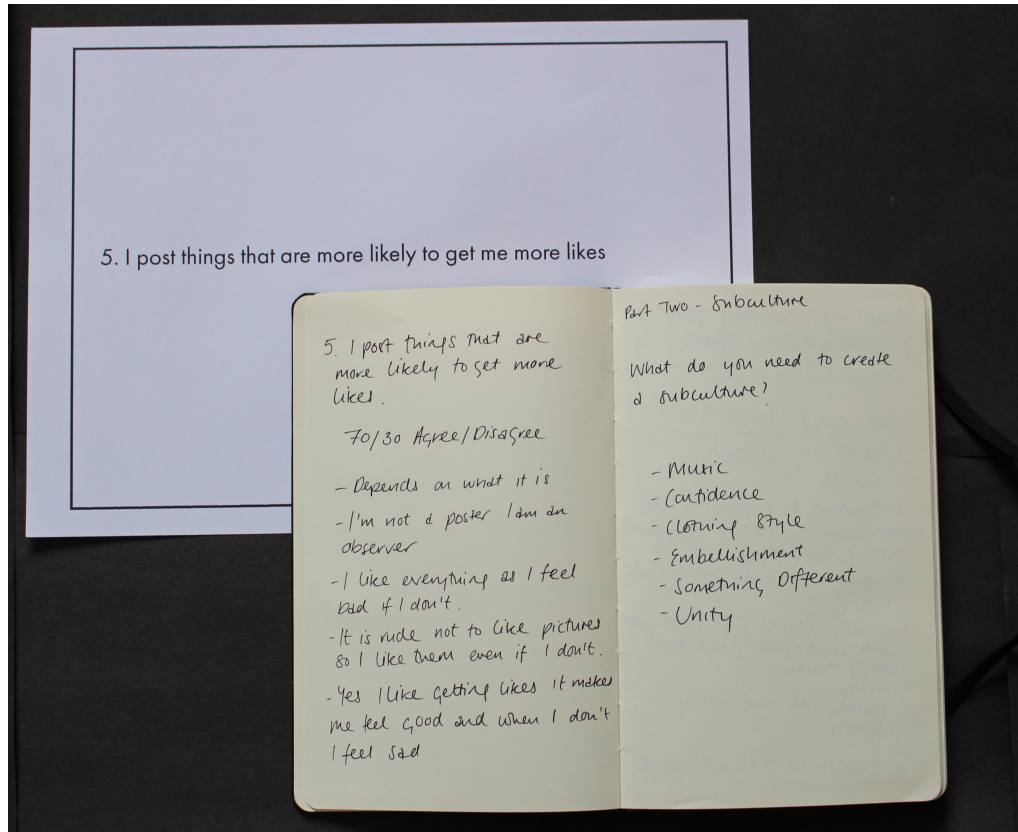
Figure 16: Example of a statement that was shared to the group in the first workshop and the responses gathered, November 2016
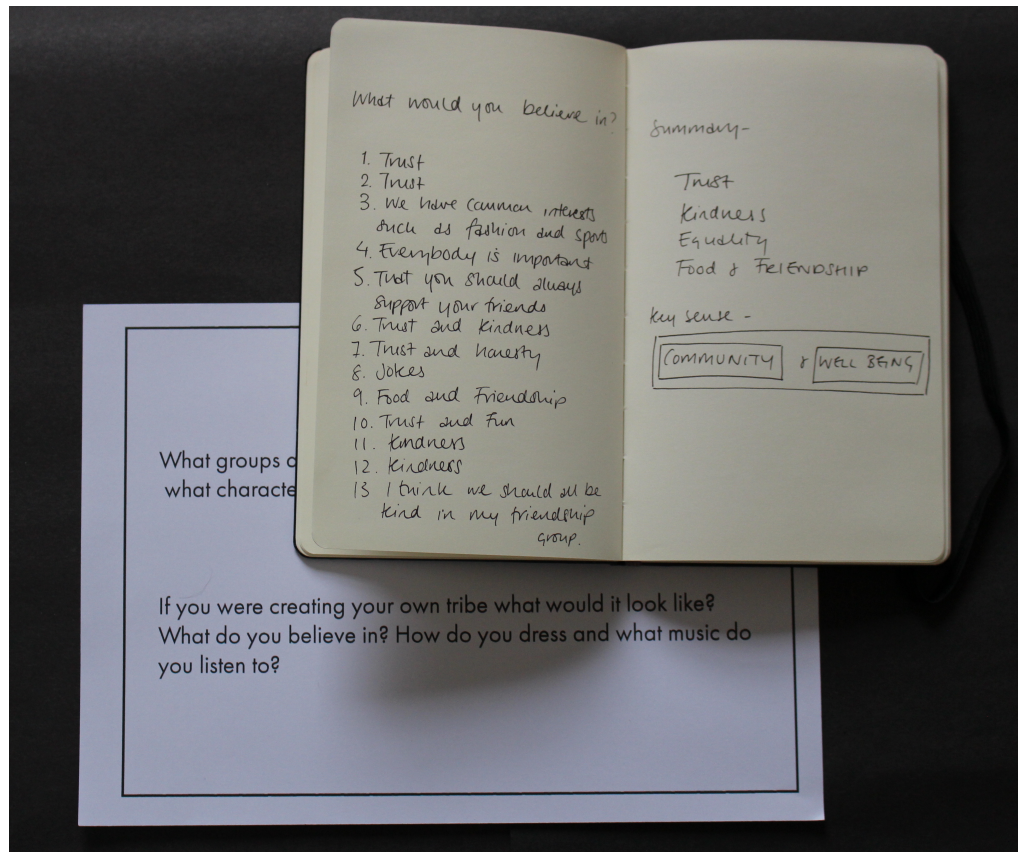
Figure 17: Group discussion on the existence of subcultures and tribes from the first workshop and what they mean today, Primarily a sense of community and well being is prioritised amongst young people, November 2016.

Figure 18: Participants work together to identify symbols significant to each other, November 2016
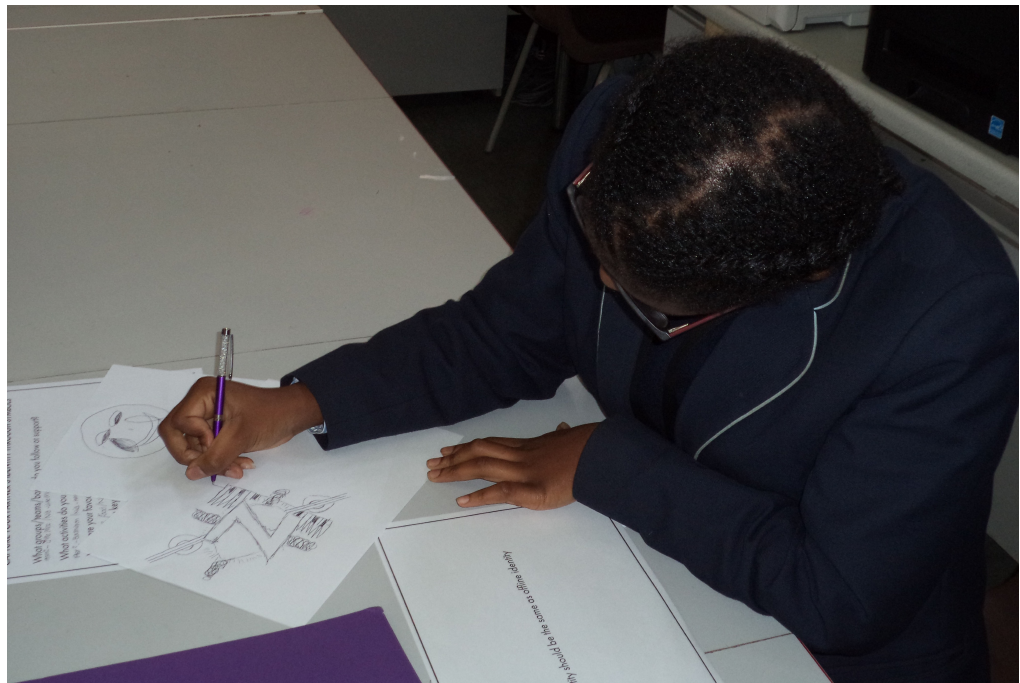
Figure 19: Participant works independently to create a personal icon, November 2016
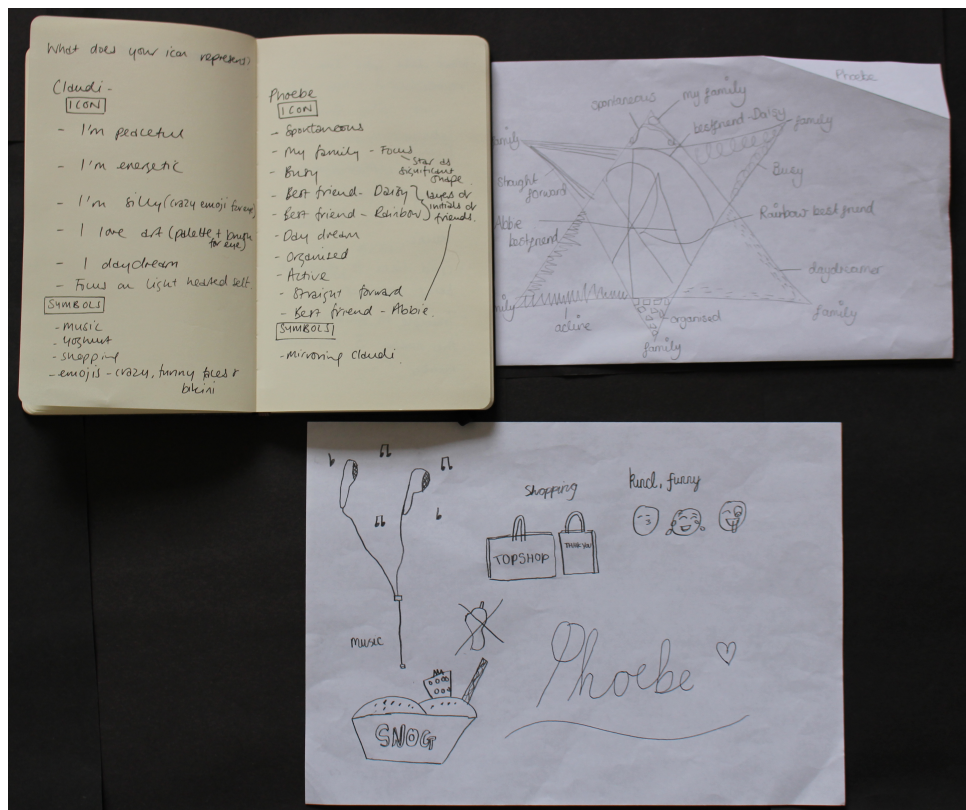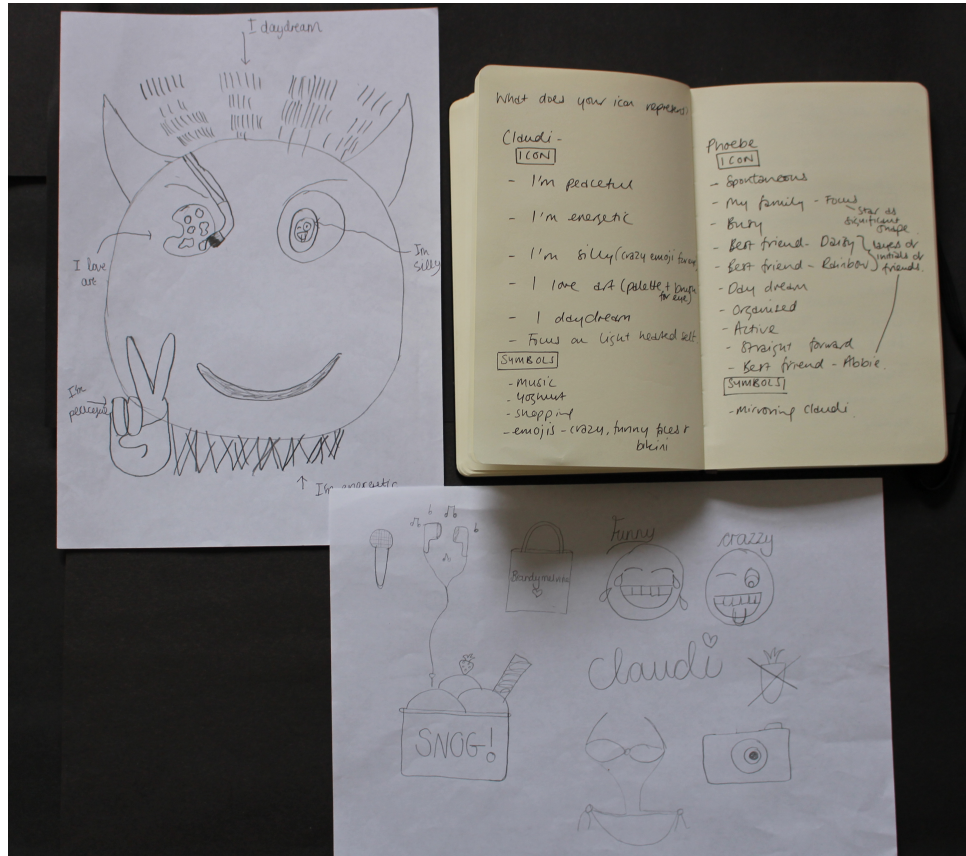
Figure 20, 21:Examples of working in pairs visualising things that are significant to them and their icons

and what they want them to represent, November 2016
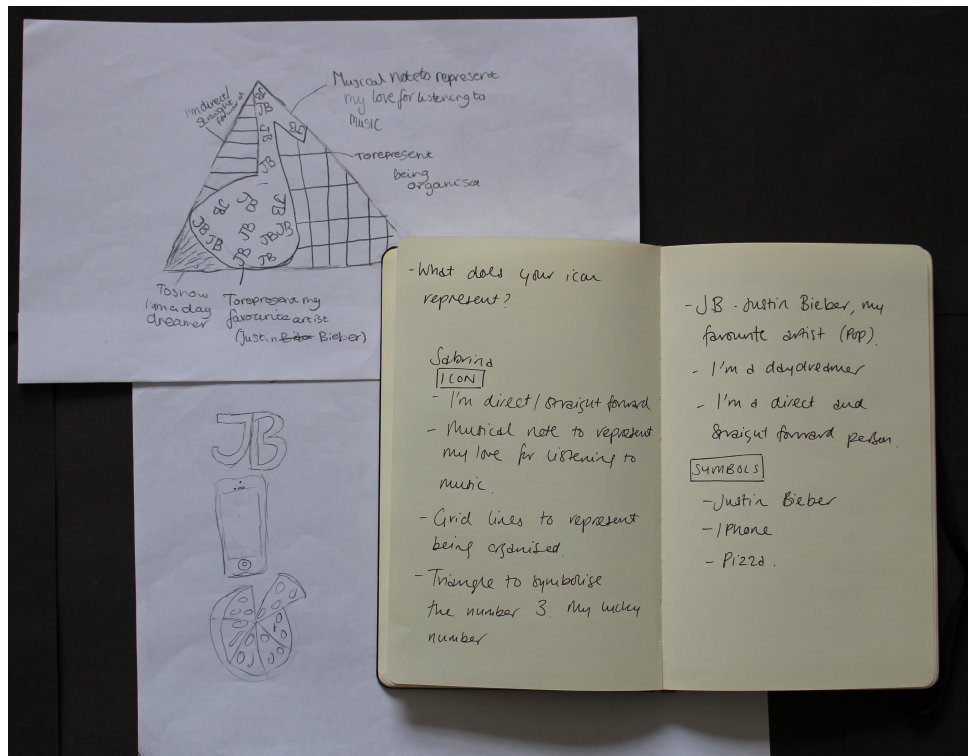
Figure 22, 23: Examples of working in pairs visualising things that are significant to them and their icons and what they want them to represent, November 2016
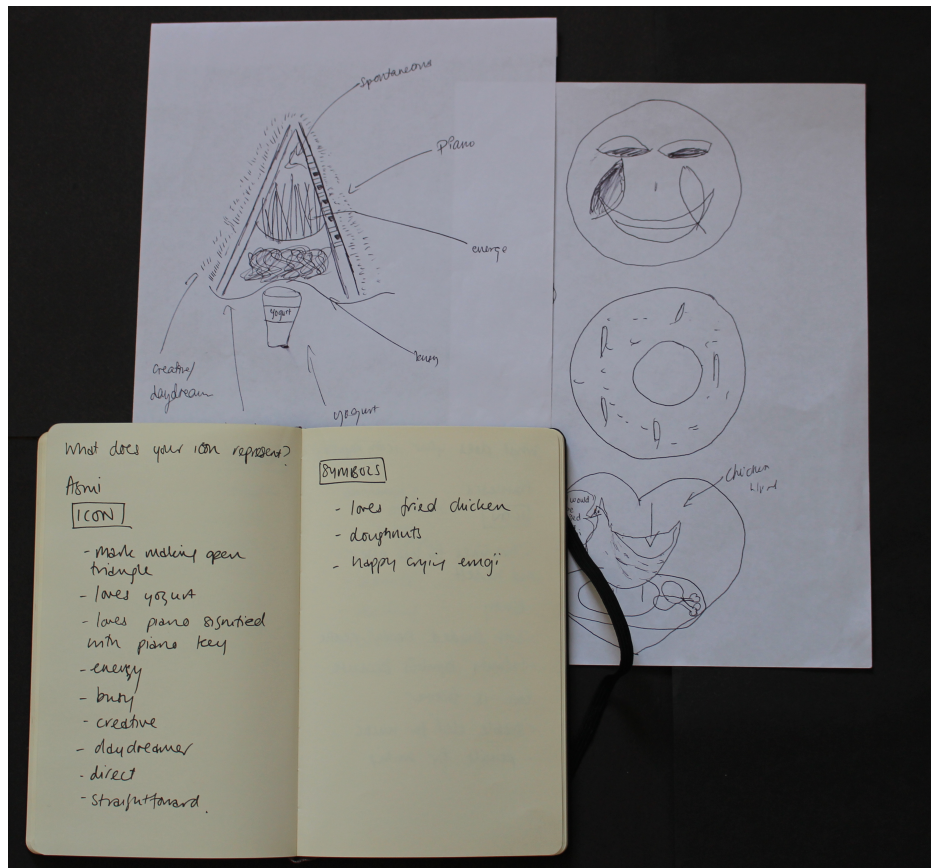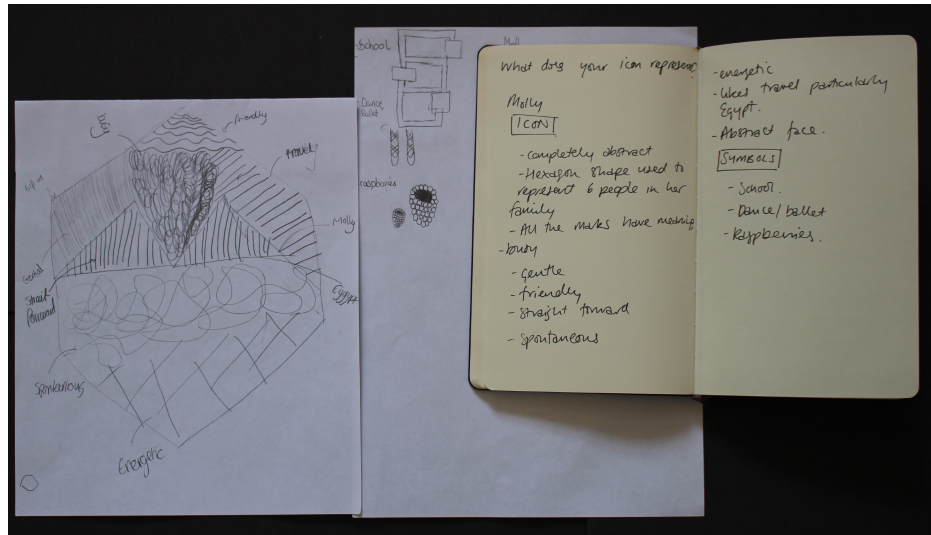
Figure 24, 25: Examples of working in pairs visualising things that are significant to them and their icons and what they want them to represent, November 2016
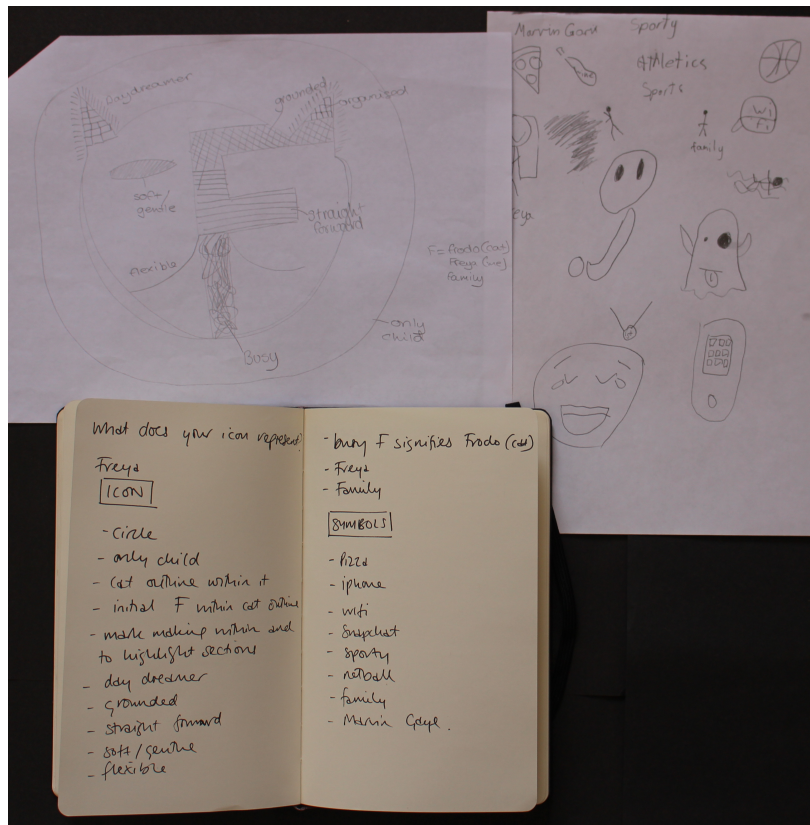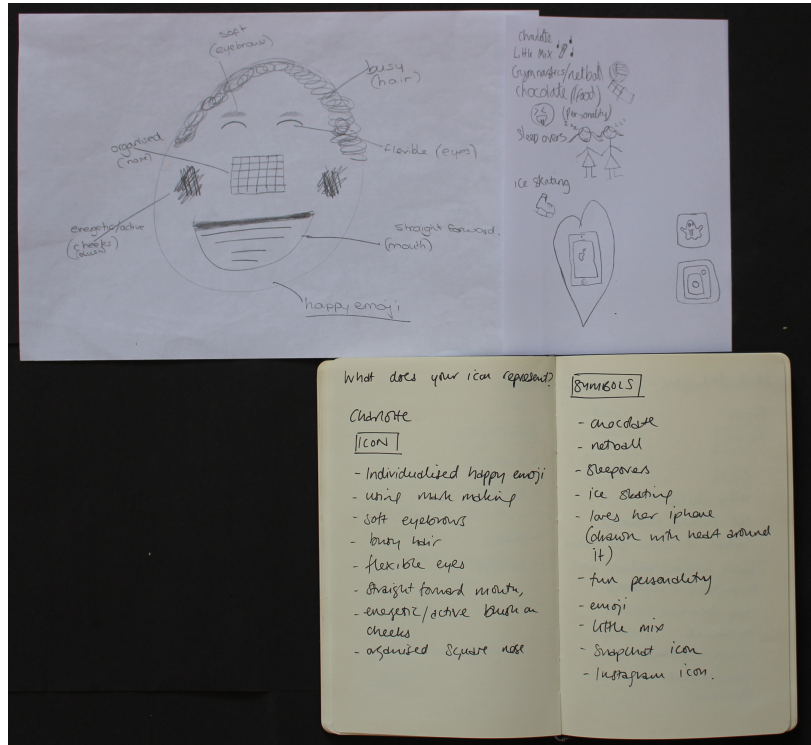
Figure 26, 27: Examples of working in pairs visualising things that are significant to them

and their icons and what they want them to represent, November 2016

Working with a group of young people means specific ethical practices had to be upheld. Consent to participate from parents or guardians was obtained in advance by Royal Masonic School faculty, and each workshop was supervised by a faculty member. Results from quantitative surveys have been anonymised, and permissions to attribute quotes from qualitative research and the subsequent discussion have also been obtained.

Overview

The first workshop took place in November 2016 and captured the views of the group on whether there are differences between online and offline identity; subcultures and their existence today; and the types of groups that do exist and their identifying characteristics or symbols.

It also recorded survey data on the extent to which the group were using social media, including how long they were spending online; which social media platforms they used most often; what they use it for/how regularly they post; and the motivations behind what they post.

The final part of the first workshop had the participants consider the symbols that reflected their own individual identities and create a unique icon for themselves. The participants were provided with an introduction to mark making and shown examples of different styles they could adopt when creating their designs. This task was timed to encourage an instinctive response to the question.   After this brief introduction, the participants were given full creative freedom.

The second workshop took place in July 2018 and brought the same group back together to see how their views had evolved over the 20 months since the first session. This shorter follow-up session was primarily discussion-based and took place after numerous high-profile cases and news articles of fake news, fake followers and criticisms of social media had come to light.

Discussions focused on the girls' relationship with social media and their perception of it as a space for congregation with others as part of a group, or as a platform for self expression and the development of a unique identity.

This session also included a practical element, where pieces designed and created in response to the findings from the first session were shown to the participants and their responses recorded. Participants were given the opportunity to customise the objects to make them unique to them by making combinations of the links that reflected their identity and customising them by painting them in different colours with enamel.

Polaroids were specifically used to document workshop 2 in process due to their authentic capture of a moment in time which is impossible to manipulate, running in stark contrast to the tools available through social media platforms to edit and manipulate images before posting them.

Objectives
The research sought to understand the attitudes of today's digital native youth towards:

- The nature of modern identity, both offline and online, and in relation to symbolism
- The differences between digital and real-life identity and the factors that influence behaviours in both cases
- The societal groups (or 'tribes') that exist today, what influences them and whether they are identifiable through symbols
- The role of symbols or iconography in representing group or individual identities
- In the second workshop, the responses of the participants towards the first iteration of practice, designed and made in response to theoretical analysis and the input from the first workshop

Results and Analysis

The following results are taken from the first workshop, conducted in November 2016. The findings act as a benchmark for the 2018 workshop and serve to inform the positions expressed in other chapters, responding to earlier theories related to aesthetically-driven subcultural youth movements of the post-war period in the U.K. Insights were used to inform the practice part of the study.

Findings - First Workshop, November 2016

Partici-pant	Q5.Thinking about the online identitites of others, rank the below statements from 1-5 to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neither agree, nor disagree; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree					
	People only share the most exciting things that happen to them on social media	People's social media profiles are a good reflection of their actual lives	People share content online that makes them look cool	People's social media profiles are a glamorised version of their actual lives	You can get a good idea of someone's real-life identity from what they share on social media	Digital identity and real-life identity are usually very different
1	2	2	2	3	3	3
2	3	3	2	3	3	2
3	4	3	2	3	3	2
4	3	5	2	1	4	2
5	2	1	3	3	3	3
6	1	4	1	2	4	2
7	5	4	4	5	3	1
8	2	4	2	1	4	2
9	2	4	3	3	4	2
10	2	3	2	2	3	3
11	1	3	2	1	3	3
12	5	4	2	3	4	3
13	3	4	2	1	2	2

Table 1: Attitudes towards authenticity of online identity, from workshop 1, November 2016

The group were in strongest agreement with the statements: "people share content online that makes them look cool"; that "digital identity and real-life identity are usually very different"; and that "people's social media profiles are a glamorised version of their actual lives"

Most people disagreed with the statement: "people's social media profiles are a good reflection of their actual lives."

This shows a clear understanding from the group that digital natives have multiple different identities - a highly curated online identity, which is driven by a desire to be accepted by peers, and their offline identity.

Solving the problem of how to communicate a transient and evolving identity in a physical way which can be utilised by the current youth generation and documented and shared on social media became a key focus for my practice.

Q4. Thinking about how closely what you post online matches your real-life identity, which of the below statements do you most agree with? (choose one)		
I mostly post about things that I know will be liked by my friends	I post about everything I do and don't care whether people think it's cool or not	Did not answer
7	5	1

Table 2: Individual motivations behind posting to social media

Most members of the focus group were highly motivated to post about things that will be liked by friends or followers. Interestingly, on a personal level, a higher proportion of those surveyed agreed that they post about "everything they do," regardless of what other people think.

A notable majority of participants admitted to curating their posts in an effort to receive likes from their peers. The findings in both table 1 and table 2 point to social media being used by today's youth generation to satisfy the primal need to belong and be accepted ("liked") by friends and peers.

Open questions

Following an introduction to the iconic post-war subcultural youth move-
ments, open questions were used to understand the groups or tribes that
young people observed today and what values their ideal tribe would have if
they could shape a new subcultural movement.

What groups or tribes are you aware of today and how can you identify them? (open question)	
Tribe	**Defining Characteristics**
Sporty Kids	Spend majority of time in at least one element of sports gear as constantly at a club
Geeky Kids	Mostly wear glasses and carry heavy bags that are overfull with books
Pretty Kids	They wear short skirts, no blazers and have ribbons in their hair
Smart Kids	Sitting somewhere in-between Pretty Kids and Geeky Kids. They don't have heavy bags because they research everything on their iPads
Emo Kids	They are most miserable and some dye their hair even though it is not allowed. They listen to music in a group at break time
Pop Kids	They like to listen to Justin Bieber and wear leggings instead of tights under their skirts so they can practise dance moves at break time

Table 3: Existing tribes and their visual identifiers

While many of the defining characteristics of the tribes identified by the par-
ticipants stem from appearance, clothes they wear or music they listen to,
none of these tribes have anything to set them apart from groups in previous
youth generations. Every generation's school dynamic promotes the cate-
gorisation into geeks, sporty kids, clever kids, pretty kids, kids with main-
stream interests (pop kids) and kids with alternative interests (emo kids).

What sets these definitions apart from previous generations youth move-ments is the absence of a broader anti-establishment ideology and a belief system that goes beyond appearance.

	If you could create your own tribe, what would it believe in? (open question)
1	Trust
2	Trust
3	Trust and honesty
4	Trust and fun
5	Trust and kindness
6	Kindness
7	Kindness
8	Kindness
9	Common interests in fashion and sport
10	Equality
11	Support
12	Food
13	Jokes

Table 4 :Tribal values for the next generation

Trust and kindness featured strongly in the values of a new tribe and there was a distinct absence of any points related to a reaction against pervasive elements in society. Choosing such broad catch-all values is symptomatic of a generation that feels it has its interests satisfactorily met (online or other-wise) and so reverts to the mainstream.

		What would it look like (open question)?
	1	Common interest in fashion
	2	Casual
	3	Common interests in fashion and sport
	4	Baggy, comfortable clothing - Hoodies, jeans
	5	Pretty
	6	Pretty, cute and classy
	7	Common interest in sport
	8	Common interest in sport
	9	Common interest in IT
	10	Common interest in plants and nature
	11	Common interest in plants and nature
	12	Common interest in pop music
	13	Common interest in music (general)

Table 5: Tribal identifiers for the next generation

The emphasis on having up-to-date clothes, or being into fashion supports the idea that today's young people are primarily concerned with following the mainstream, rather than making a statement against society, the establishment or the generation that came before them.

Findings - Second Workshop, July 2018

The second workshop took place after high profile cases of social media being used for manipulation and a steady stream of reports into fake news being propagated across social media platforms. The most notable examples being the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook story[17] and the 2017 Special

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[17] The Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal involved the collection of 87 million Facebook users' personal information by Cambridge Analytica without the users' explicit consent. The data went on to be used by Cambridge Analytica to try to influence the opinions of voters on behalf of politicians who hired them.

Counsel report into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US election[18], both of which relied on serving particular content (often fake news) to particular target groups through advertising on social media platforms to influence voting behaviour.

As a result, significant levels of trust have been eroded from social media platforms, and security, legitimacy and privacy concerns have been high on the agenda of mainstream media. Where the primary emphasis and mission statements of social networks had originally been to provide a platform where people can connect and share experiences with friends, the second session took place at a time where social media platform's roles in and responsibilities to society were under close scrutiny from regulators and lawmakers.

The second session was split into four periods of five minutes and covered:
•   Setting the scene: Recapping the first workshop (5 minutes)
•   My response and interpretation of workshop 1: Introducing the pins (5 mins)
•   Group discussion: capturing initial responses to pins around cultural and generational relevance (5 mins)
•   Individual task: Customising the pins with enamel paint

Extreme time pressure forced participants to make swift, uninhibited responses and reactions. Participants' were initially concerned about ruining the solid silver objects with enamel, but once they started customising the objects, the participants focused deeply on the task and later commented on the therapeutic experience.

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[18] Headed up by former FBI head Robert Mueller, the special counsel report is investigating alleged Russian interference in the US presidential election, including the use of social media advertising to disseminate fake news about the Democrat's campaign and leadership.

The workshop itself was set up as an open forum rather than a quantitative and qualitative survey and found:

- A higher proportion of participants believed that social media is a more glamorised version of their offline self - from half of the group in 2016, up to all participants in 2018

- A higher proportion of participants disagreed that they post things that are more likely to be liked by friends and peers - rising from 30% in 2016 to 90% in 2018

- Participants are spending less time on social media in 2018 compared with 2016, and only one member of the group was actively posting. The remaining participants are either observers or no longer use social media at all

- The most common reasons for moving away from social media were being too busy, and the novelty having worn off

- Primary uses in 2016 were to follow what friends were doing (and like or comment on their activity) and to post pictures and updates to friends (with the intention of getting likes or comments). In 2018 usage has shifted towards following influencers they don't know offline that are related to their areas of interest (e.g. for style inspiration), or to act as an online photo journal to record experiences.

- An increased awareness of the negative factors associated with social media and the impact it can have on self esteem and anxiety related to the volume of likes and comments for particular posts, or missing out on particular conversations and events.

- From a groups and tribes perspective, the participants of the 2018 workshop defined their social media identity as primarily individual, observing multiple groups, rather than as someone that identifies strongly with a particular group or groups.

The views of the workshop participants expressed during the second session suggest a growing disillusionment with social media and a greater awareness of the risks and issues associated with over-exposure. There also appears to be a growing divergence between online and offline identities and a growing emphasis on the individual over the collective.

These findings support the need for a new visual language to communicate the multiple different aspects of identity, and that create space for people to document theirs individuality.

Response to practical

The second part of the workshop captured the participants' responses to my practice - a series of pins, which individually represent particular traits or characteristics, and when joined together create a unique combination of links that reflect an individual's identity.

Materials

The pins were made in 925 sterling silver, following a small number of designs being prototyped in resin via 3D printing.

Sterling silver is a material I feel comfortable working in and was ideal for this practice because:

- Its base state is mirrored and highly reflective, making the pin extremely adaptable. By reflecting the colours and styles of the wearer, it also represents an appreciation of the growing separation of identity and clothing choices. It helps the wearers form a connection to the piece, seeing themselves in the reflected surface.
- It holds value as a material that is separate to the symbolic value of the pin. By using a material that has value, the item is unlikely to be treated as part of the commoditised, disposable fast-fashion landscape that they are otherwise subject to.
- Using this makes the communication of the end use more direct and alluring to the wearer.
- It's qualities make it an ideal base surface for decoration with enamel. The resilience of silver means enamel can be removed easily without damage and new customisation can be applied, allowing for identities to continue to evolve and further customisations be made by the wearer.

The final pins were finished with a small hidden engraving detailing their meanings to make them subtle and adaptable while retaining a quiet power, as shown in figures 11 (p.45) and 15 (p.65). It was important to emphasise

the meaning of the pins to anchor them and ensure they could be read as a visual language, but the size and positioning needed to ensure that the engraving didn't overpower the piece, and provide room for the wearer to stamp their own unique twist on the piece. This approach also allows wearers to choose pins based purely on their aesthetic qualities, as opposed to what it represents if they so wish.

3D printing was used as part of the design and prototyping process and provided additional items for discussion during the second workshop. The resin prototypes were also handled and explored by the group.

Looking to the future, modern manufacturing and prototyping techniques could be used to provide alternative base pins, or opportunities for physical customisation to take place.

Design Process

Designs can communicate a belief system, personal ideology, or outlook without disrupting the overall mainstream aesthetic. The reversion back to the mainstream is itself a method of fitting in and satisfying the belongingness needs as explored in Chapter One.

Symbols representing characteristics are abstracted from traditional symbols across a broad range of cultures and uses. The modular design enables the owner to change particular elements over time, and wear the items in different ways on the body and on clothing.

Why a pin?

The form of the pins created draw on the impactful heritage of the safety pin as the ultimate subcultural symbol, updated and made relevant to today's youth generation. The shape of the pins as a curved line, resembling a link in a chain or an open safety pin. A design imperative for the response is the ability to link the pins in a series and configure multiple pins to reflect the multiple facets that make up modern identity. The design of each pin needed to be:
•   Simple, accessible and adaptable, so it can be worn with any style, and could be linked with any other pin

- Symbolic and representative of particular aspects of identity so each carries a defined and recognisable meaning to the wearer and others
- Sequence-able and able to be arranged and linked with other pins as directed by the wearer

The open form also contrasts with the closed form of a safety pin. It represents the openness to change and new ideas that is characteristic of the current youth generation, in contrast to the exclusivity and devotion demanded by punk and other subcultural movements for its members to commit their identity to the cause in order to be fully accepted.

The open design allows the wearer to link multiple pins together to best reflect what's important to them, and also allows the pin to be worn in a variety of different ways, and pinned to almost any garment.

Designing the symbols

The first workshop revealed a selection of beliefs and values that were important to the current youth generation. This formed the basis for the development of the pins.

Once the words and values were established, I researched historical symbols that have been used across a variety of different cultures and industries from around the world using Henry Dreyfuss' *Symbol Sourcebook.* First published in 1975, the book acts as a library of symbols that are predominantly recognised in industrial sectors the functional, utilitarian symbols and were abstracted and translated from their original forms to be appropriate to the pins. While the symbols are rooted in meaning, they are not instantly recognisable, providing scope for the wearer to experience and interpret them as new across different nationalities.
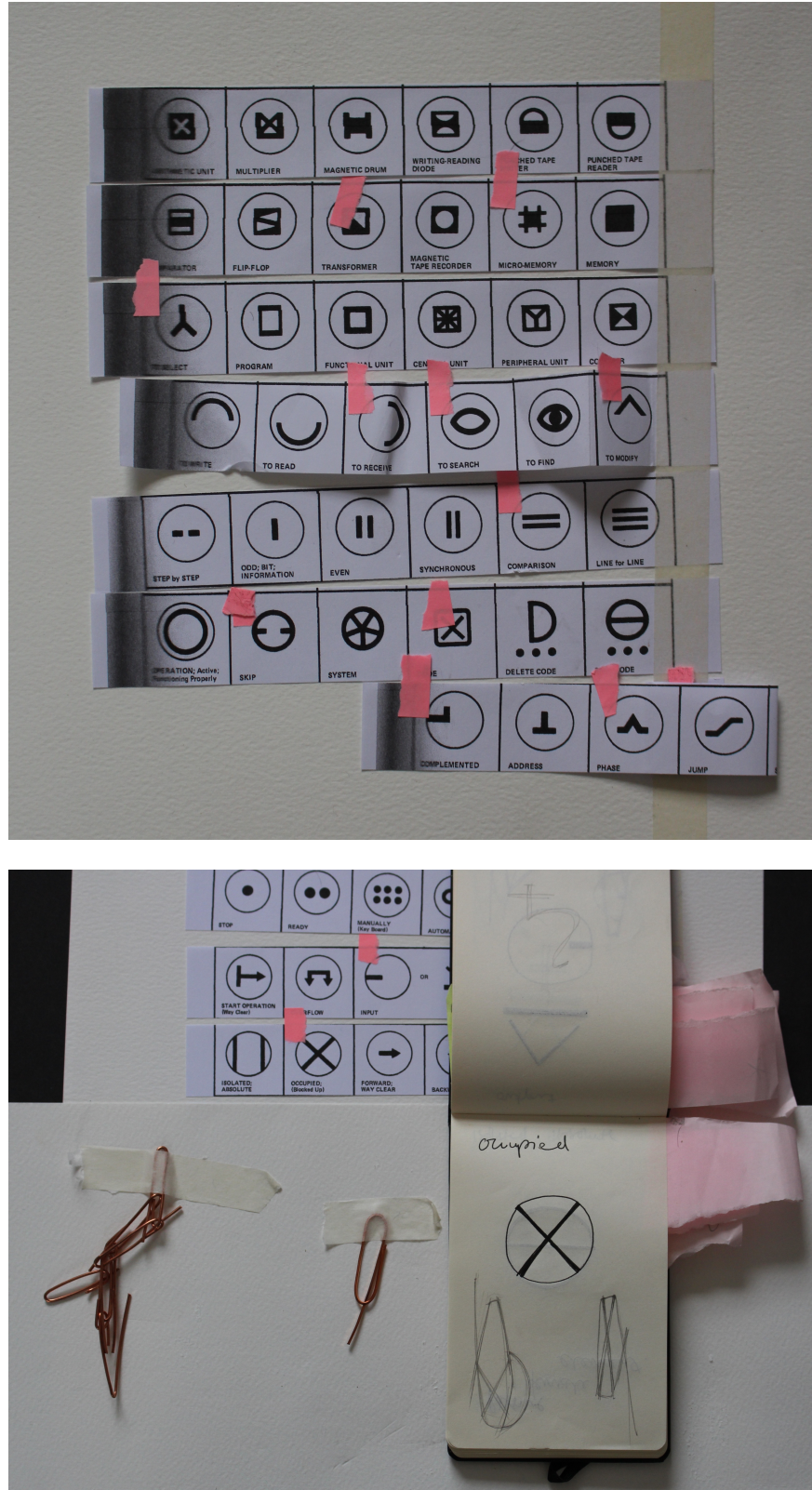
Figure 28, 29: Showing the design process. A selection of sketches and symbols (sourced from Henry Dreyfuss Symbol Sourcebook) and their meanings.   Experiments with metal to create the pin form and visualisation on the pin.
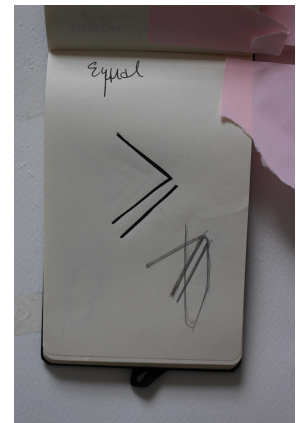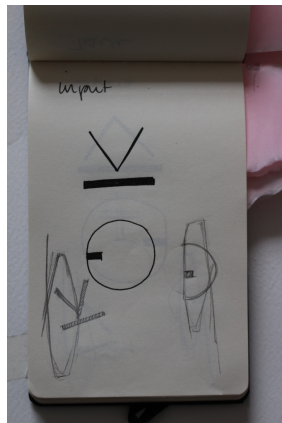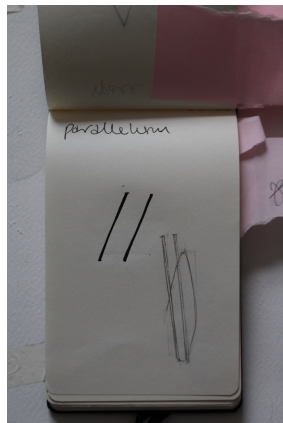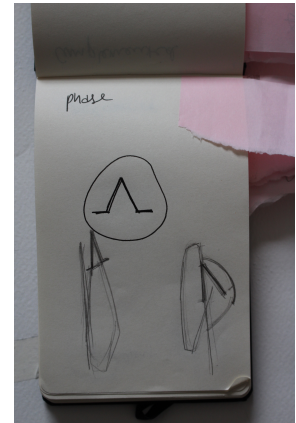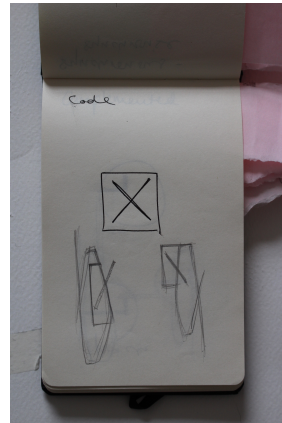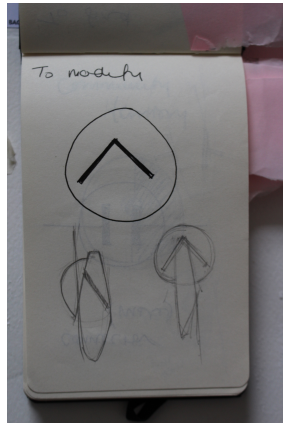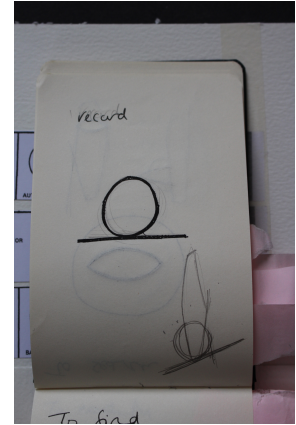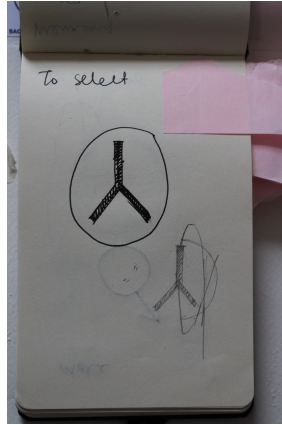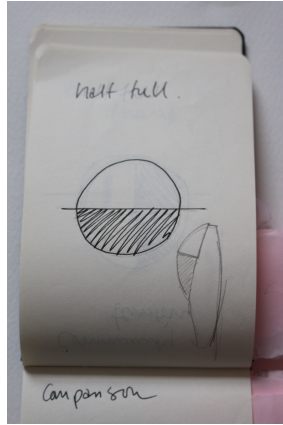
Figure 30: Examples of initial sketches in sketch book

Pin making process
Once designed, the pins were made by hand using traditional jewellery mak-
ing techniques. Silver 925 sheet and square and D-shaped wire were used
to create the uniform size and shape of the base pin and the unique symbol
that carries the meaning. I wanted the pins to be as simple and linear as
possible so they could be worn as individual pins and also be linked togeth-
er as a series that looks intentional.

All pins were created at the bench and polished to a high shine to create the
highly reflective surface of the final piece, before being sent to an engraver
for the meaning to be engraved onto each pin.

Figure 31: Making the pins at the bench

Response of intended audience

The pieces were shown to the students without explanation in 3D printed resin (figure 26) and then in final polished silver and they were invited to share their initial interpretations, summarised below:

- The immediate responses noted that the pieces were a type of pin or badge to be worn and joined together with others to create a completed item

- Different shapes were interpreted as having meanings behind them, and participants understood the concept of creating a unique set of pieces to reflect identity, without being prompted.

- Initial unguided responses to the semiotic value of the pins included expressions such as "two different sides," "solid and open," "two strands of someone's life," "eternal theme" and "a sunset."

Nia, (aged 14) suggested that the pins were "symbolising something unique and that can be customised into something even more unique to the individual."

The group were presented with the series of seventeen sterling silver pins, alongside the 3D printed prototypes. The girls' first impressions of the pieces were that they should be worn on the body in some way to communicate something to others. This response was unprompted and an instinctual reaction to the work. This was a positive and surprising affirmation of the relevance of my practice to the youth generation of today. It was clear from their engagement that my practice could be something that they would investigate using as new visual language and communication tool in order to document and share their values and belief systems with others.

The group was also interested in the qualities of the precious metal used to create the pins. They were curious about the process of making the pins and how this was achieved. The weight and the mirror-like quality of the shiny metal was appealing to them, as it allowed them to see their own reflections in the pins, in particular those which had large surfaces of flat metal in their design.

In this sense, the wearer can see themselves and one aspect of their identity reflected in each item. The subsequent painting of the surface of the mirrored silver would then serve to block or individualise that particular aspect of their identity. Other designs that are more linear and layered would allow sections or slices of the reflection to be visible to the individual and the customisation would also highlight or block aspects of the mirrored reflection of identity.
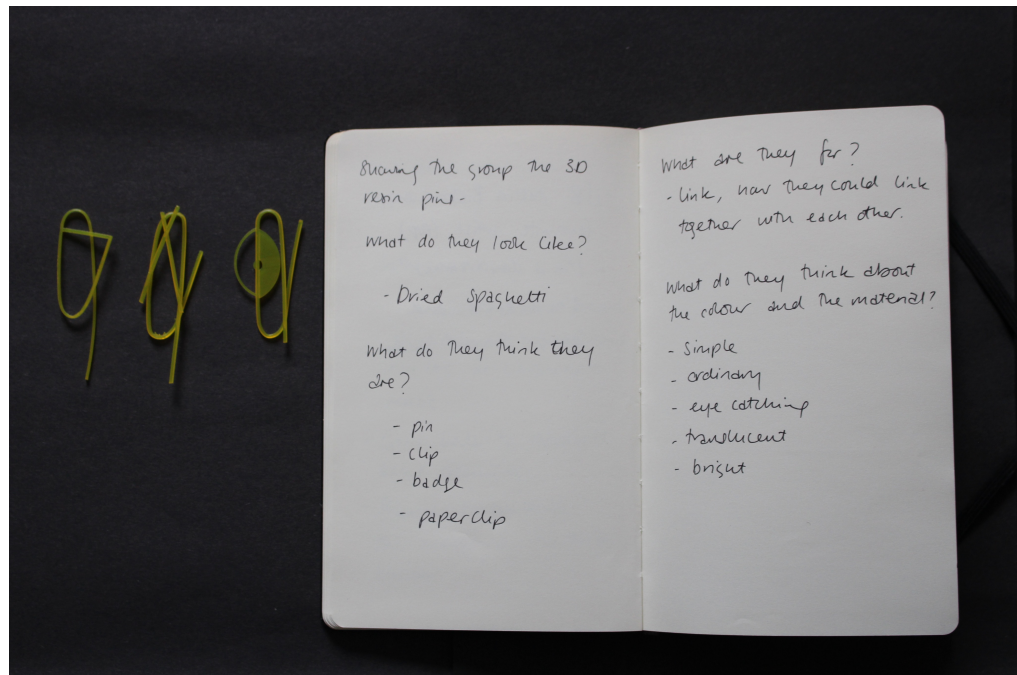
Figure 32: Participants' reactions to 3d resin prints of pins, July 2018

Figure 33, 34: Participants handling and playing with silver pins. Photographs taken on polaroid film to capture an authentic moment in time, July 2018.

Customisation

The group displayed a broad range of ideas when customising the pins to reflect their own individual identities and unique interpretations of the meanings of each pin. Some of the participants chose the pins and the colour of the paints independently, while others chose particular colours that were in some way linked to the meaning of the pins. When applying the enamel paint, some participants deployed an all over paint method, while others painted sections. Some also overlaid multiple colours or contrasting colours.

When speaking with participants, it became clear that each person approached the customisation with distinctly different aims. Some chose very specific colours which had a significant meaning to them, while others wanted to represent their personality traits through painting the pins to create layers of personalised meaning. The pins became the vehicle to communicate aspects of their own interpretations of the meanings of the pins through tangible actions.

Some participants took an instinctive approach to applying the paint with no set goal, allowing the meaning to evolve from the method of application.

Some used the act of customising the pins as an opportunity for self-expression. While these participants did not consciously make decisions of colour and design to represent a part of their identity, their choice to embrace freedom of expression and create is a reflection of their individualism in itself, showing how the wearer delivers the final finishing touches to the pins before choosing how and when to display them externally.

In terms of colour and application, contrasting to the freewheeling approach adopted by some, others were very controlled in their use of the paint and where they applied it. Some sought to achieve a balance of shiny silver and painted surface, leaving some parts reflective and others hidden. Other techniques observed included layering of different coloured enamel to build texture and the mixing of different colours for added uniqueness.
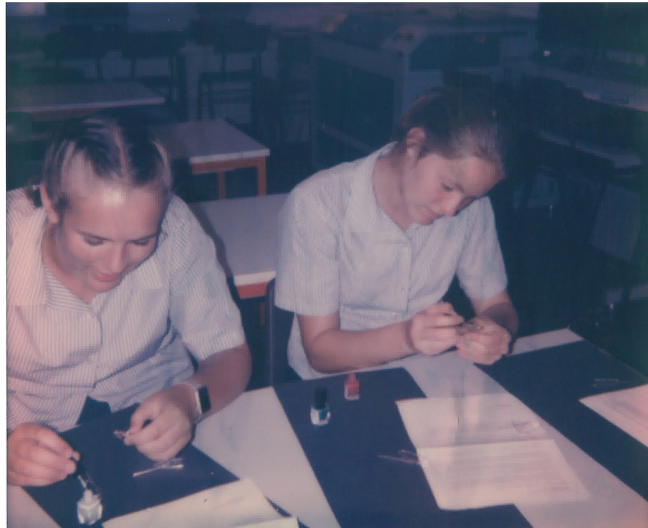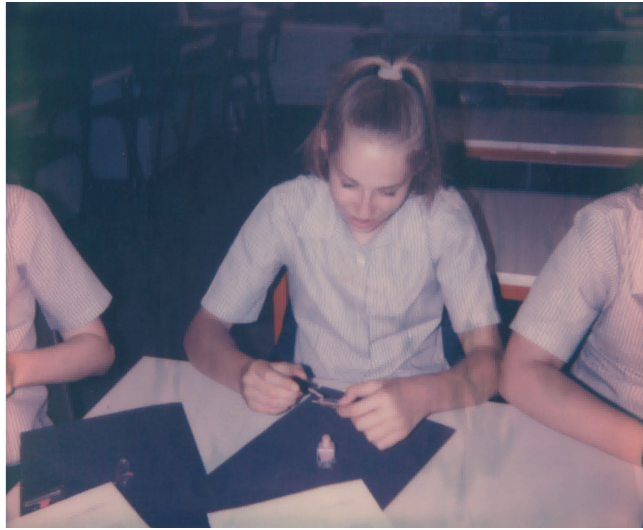
Figures 35, 36, 37: Participants painting their selection of pins, photographs taken on polaroid film to capture an authentic moment in time, July 2018

Following the introduction, participants were asked to pick a pin from the series based on its appearance. Some participants noticed the engraving but they were unsure of the meaning in relation to the pin as the design process had purposefully not yet been explained.

I then asked them to play with the pieces to engage with them on the body. The girls were given enamel nail polish to customise the pin by painting them to make them unique to them. They were able to pick multiple pins and colours to optimise their creative output in the workshop.The participants were then provided with explanations to the silver pieces and asked to choose a selection that represented their identities.

The group identified with the semiotics of the pins, in particular Sabrina found they resonated with aspects of her life experience so far. The visual value of the pins appealed to them due to their simple linear design.

Selected pins and their meanings	
Input,Record,Complemented Fig. 39 (p. 105)	Stephanie liked the way they looked more than the meaning. Colours used blue and pink which is quite contrasting
Space, Modify, Equal Fig. 39 (p. 105)	Charlotte picked space first and kept it clean in its original form, others were picked for the meaning and some picked for the shape. Pink and Green used to create contrast
Code, Memory Fig. 40 (p. 106)	Charlotte used an all over paint technique, colours- blue, lilac, bronze. She was more interested in the shape of the pins versus the colours and meaning. Particularly the layers of the linear lines.
Communication, Union,Phase, Parallelism Fig. 40 (p. 106)	Sabrina used the colour red, this has been significant to her throughout her life even as a young child. Phase - you are always going through a different phase in your life Union- show yourself as one and work together Parallelism- edgy word that I really liked Communication- something you need to do on a day to day basis to get you through life
Search, Display Fig. 41 (p. 107)	Nia picked for the shape first and picked colours because they had a bold and lively, contrasting look. She felt they are a reflection of her two sides.
Half Full, Select, Occupied Fig. 41 (p. 107)	Grace likes the shapes particularly the arrows, the circles used in both pins and the solid area of silver. Colours - yellow, green and red. Doesn't know why she picked those colours. Jamaican vibe maybe, highlighting sections with colour and all over paint.

Table 6 Response to selected pins by participants
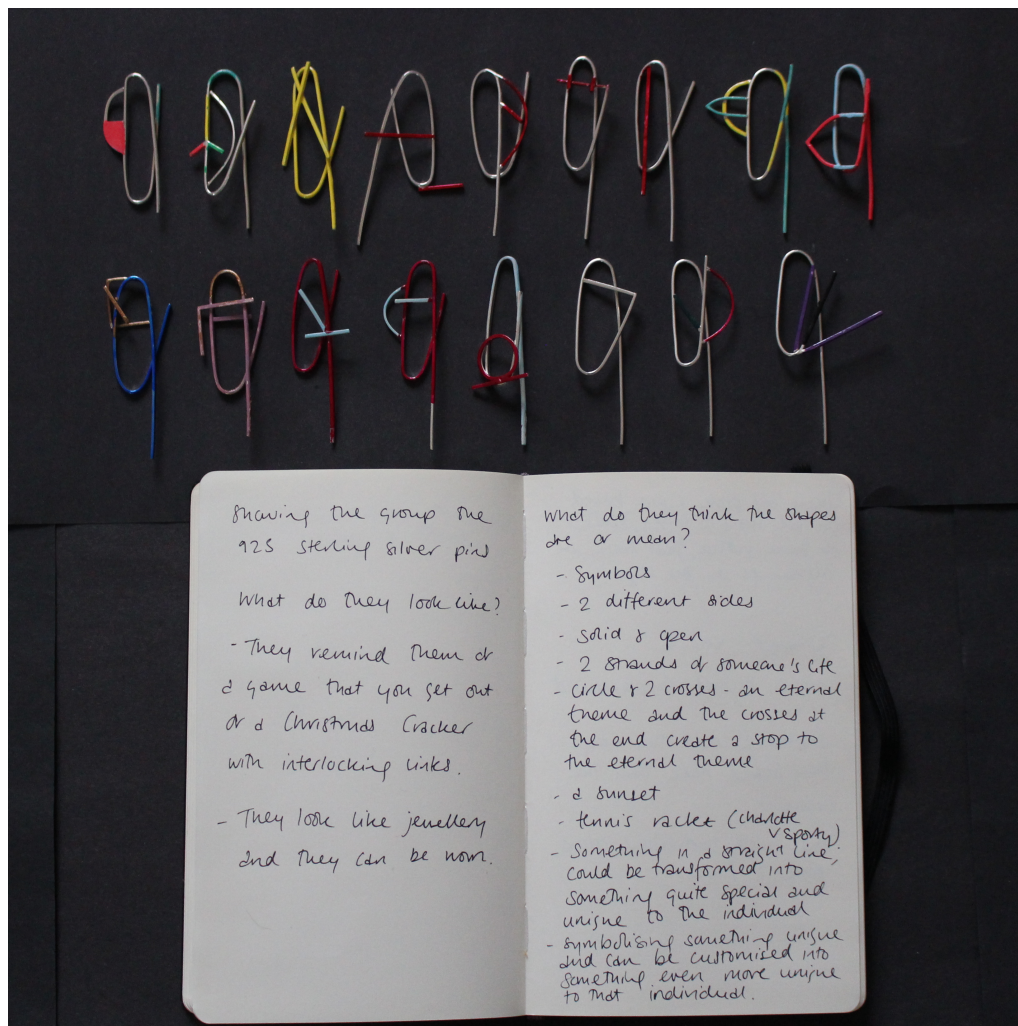
Figure 38: Overview of participants customisation of the pieces, July 2018.
From left to right, Half full, Select, Occupied, Communication, Phase, Parallelism, Union, Search,
Display, Code, Memory, Input, Complemented, Record, Space, Modify, Equal. Shown here is the group
response to the silver pieces before they were customised in the same session.
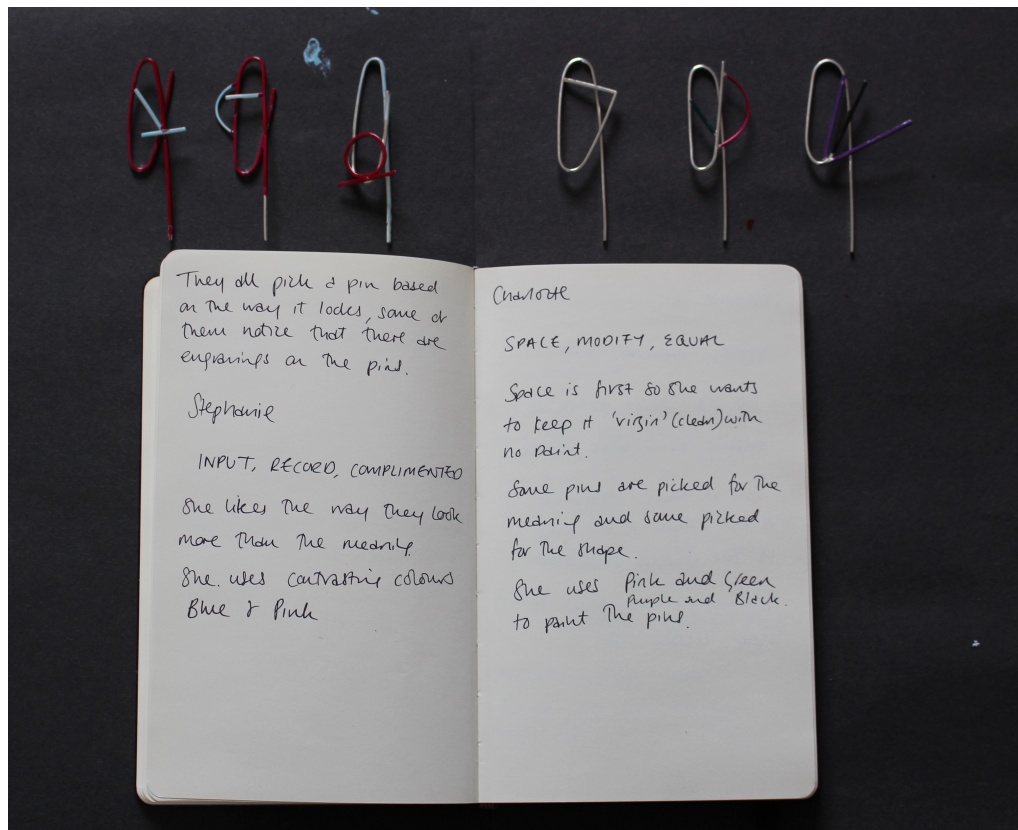
Figure 39: Shown here are the participants selection and application of enamel for Input, Record, Complemented, Space, Modify, Equal alongside research notes around colour, choice and types of experimentation. July 2018
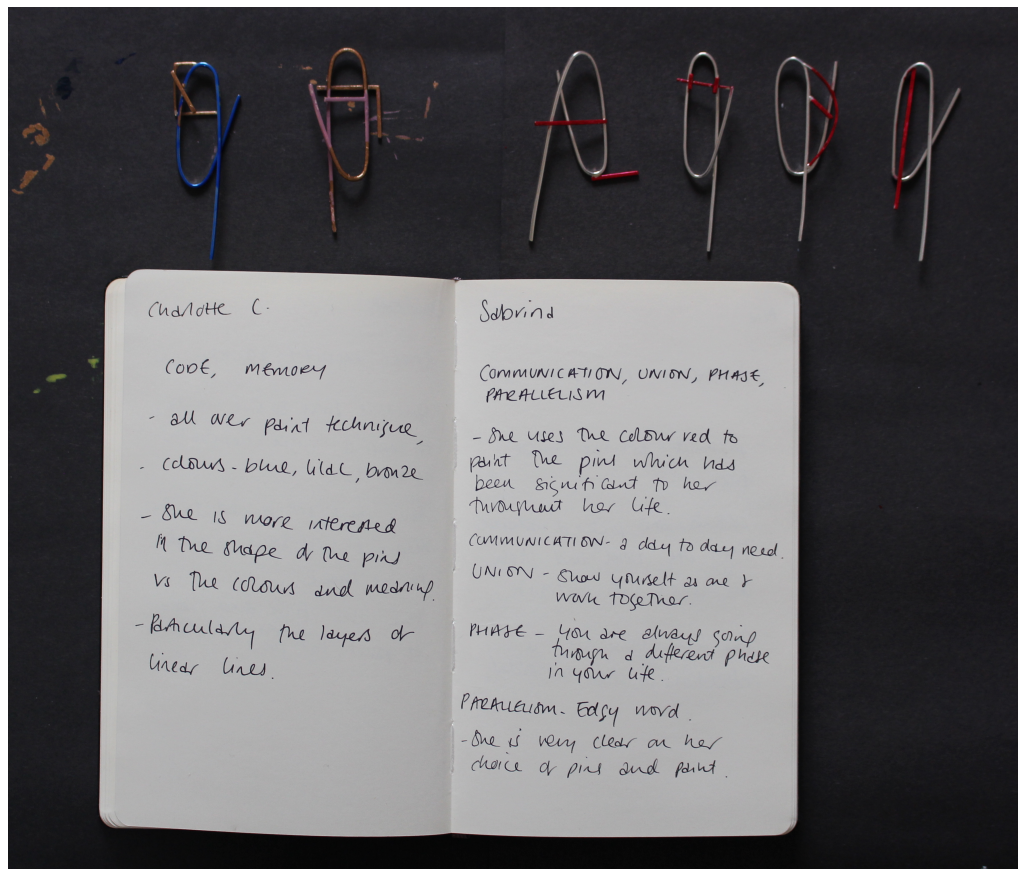
Figure 40: Shown here are the participants selection and application of enamel for Code, Memory, Communication, Union, Phase, Parallelism alongside research notes around colour, choice and types of experimentation. July 2018
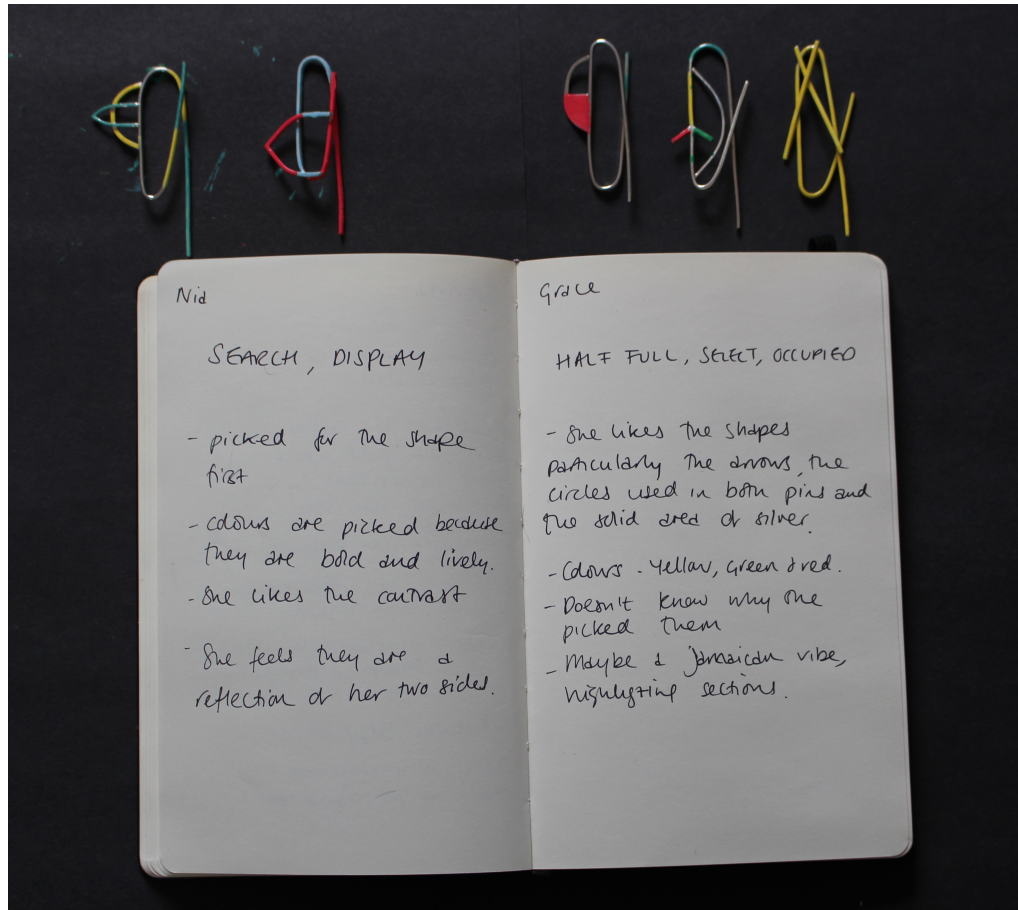
Figure 41: Shown here are the participants selection and application of enamel for Search, Display, Half full, Select, Occupied alongside research notes around colour, choice and types of experimentation. July 2018
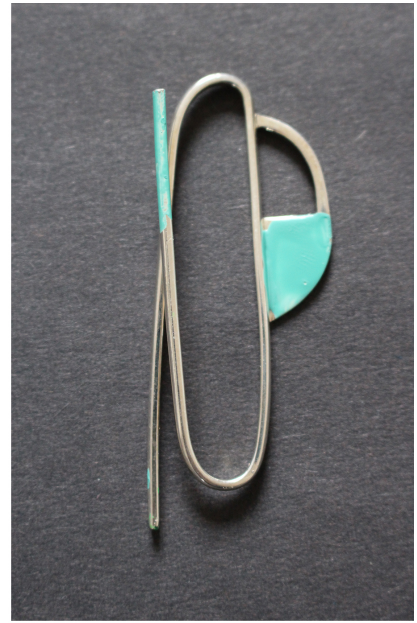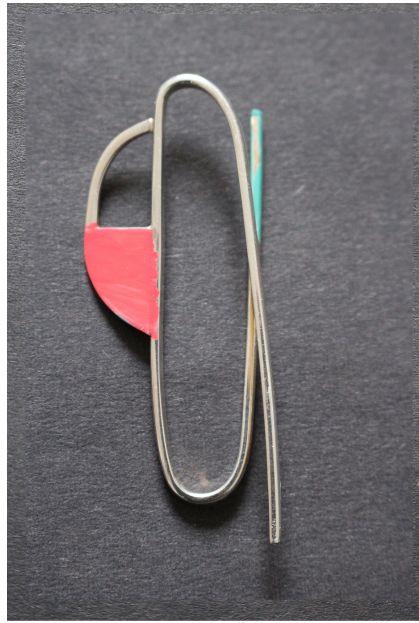
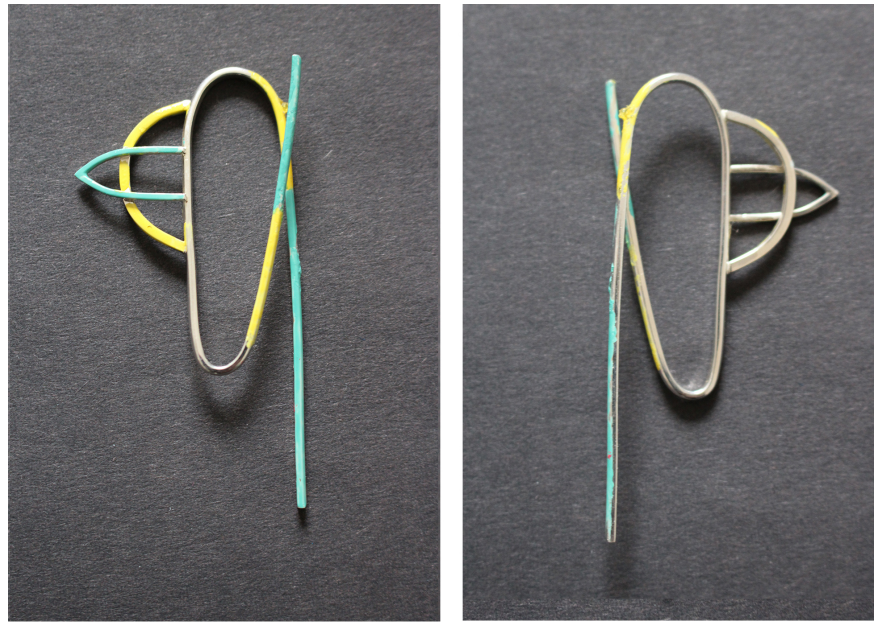*Figure 42: Half Full, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.*
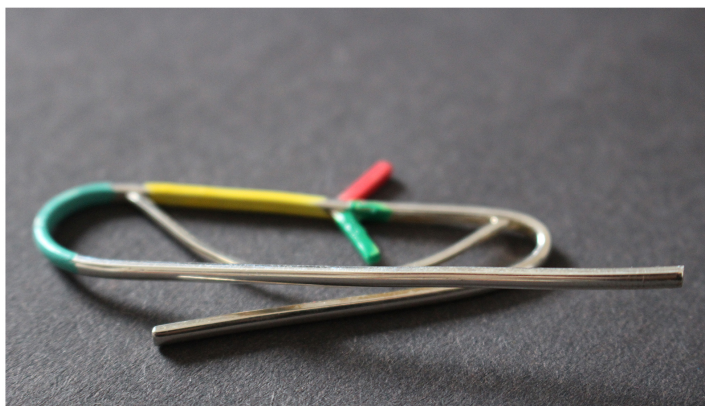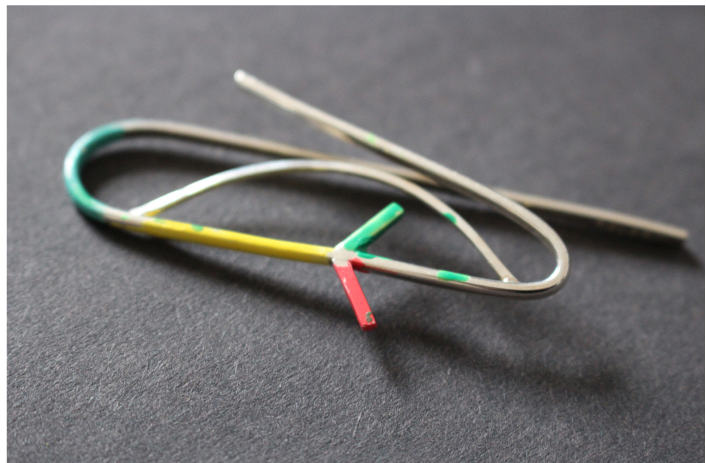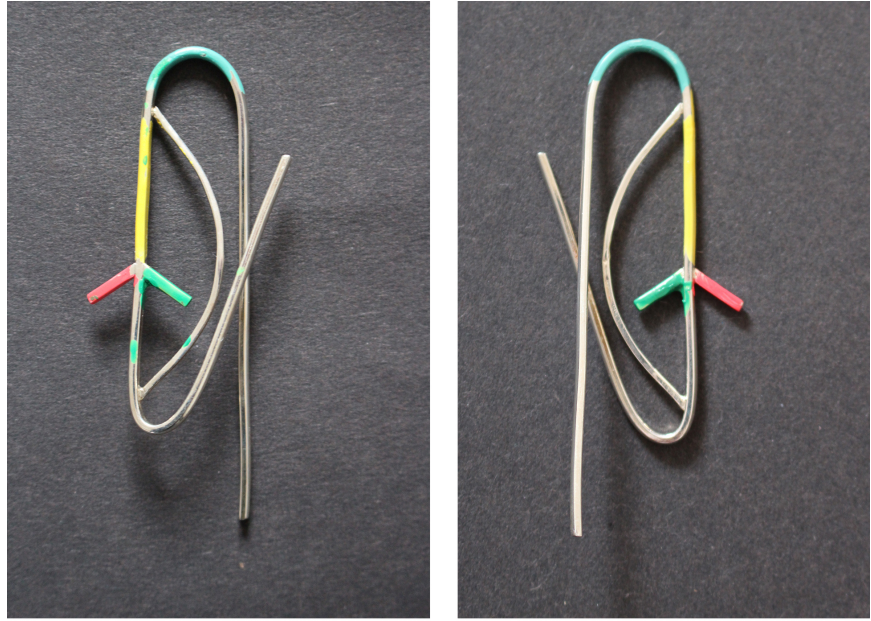
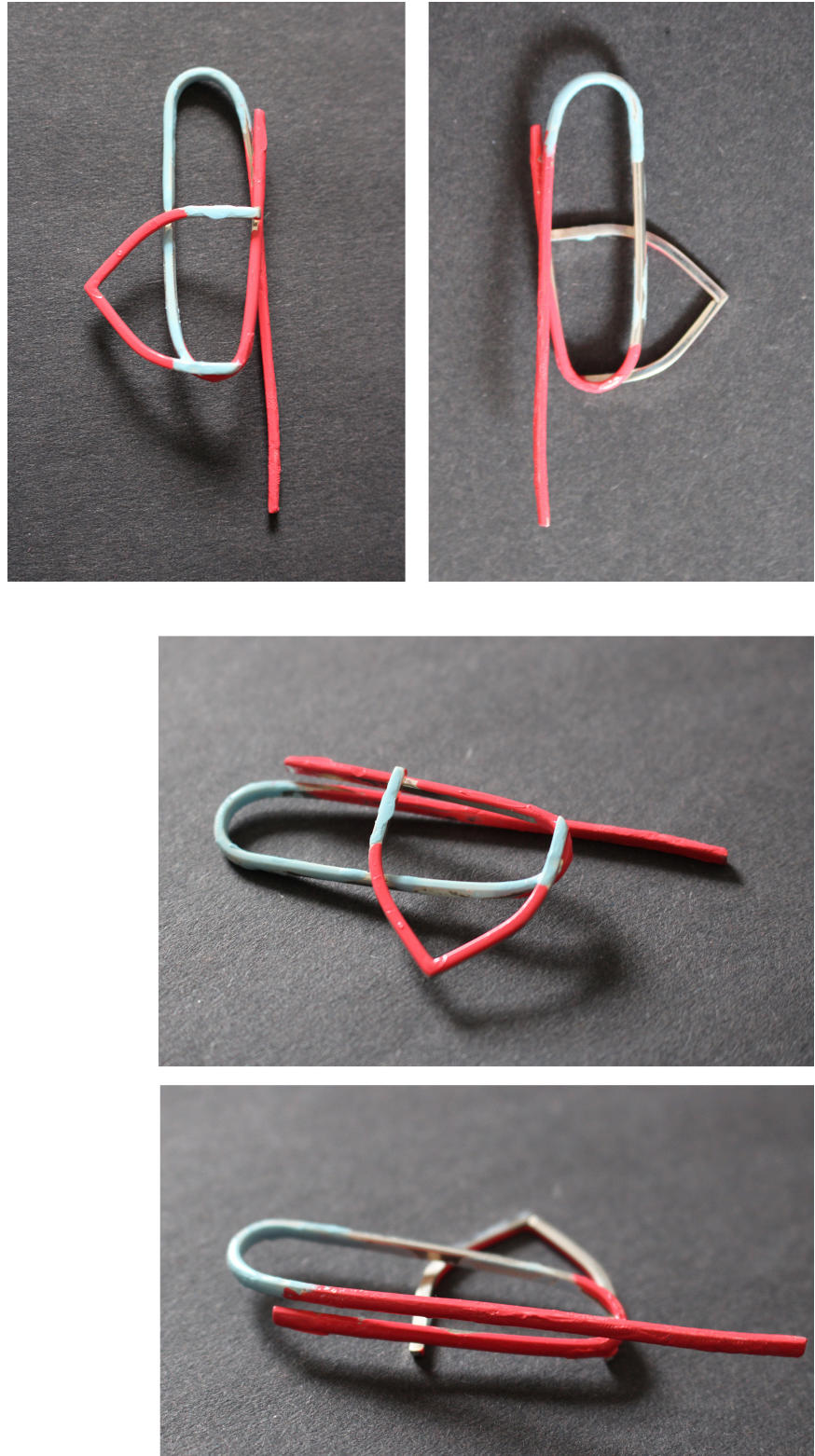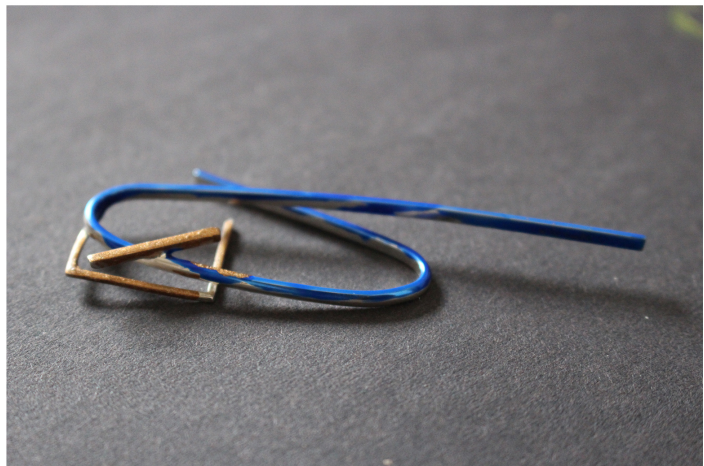*Figure 43: Select, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel*
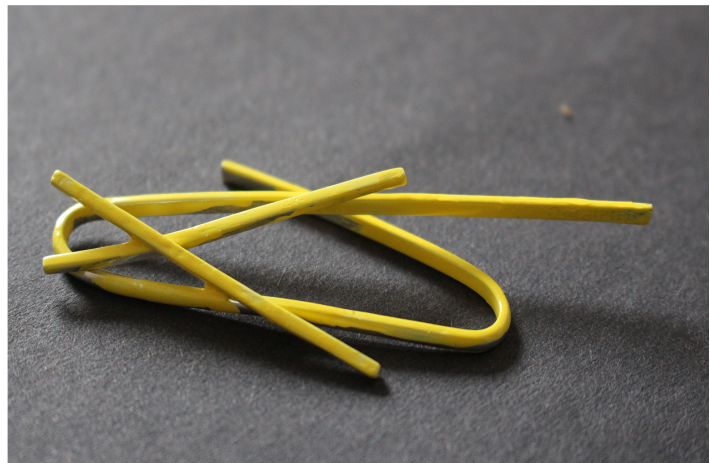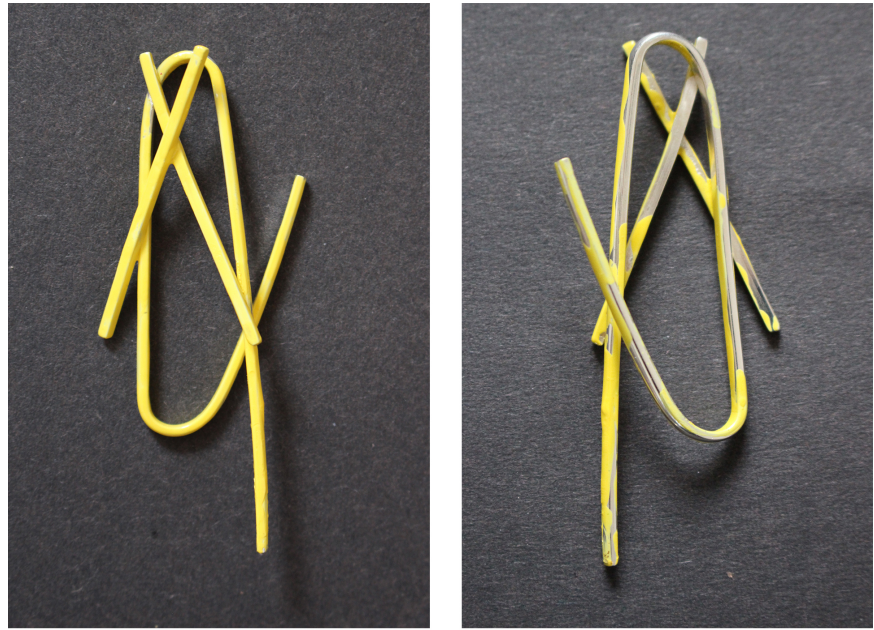
Figure 44: Occupied, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel
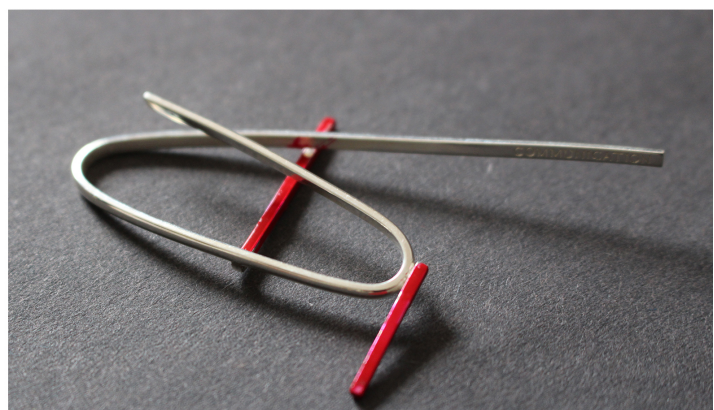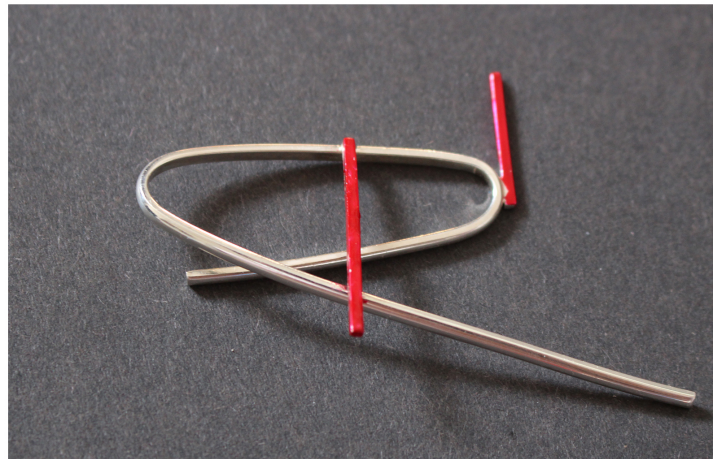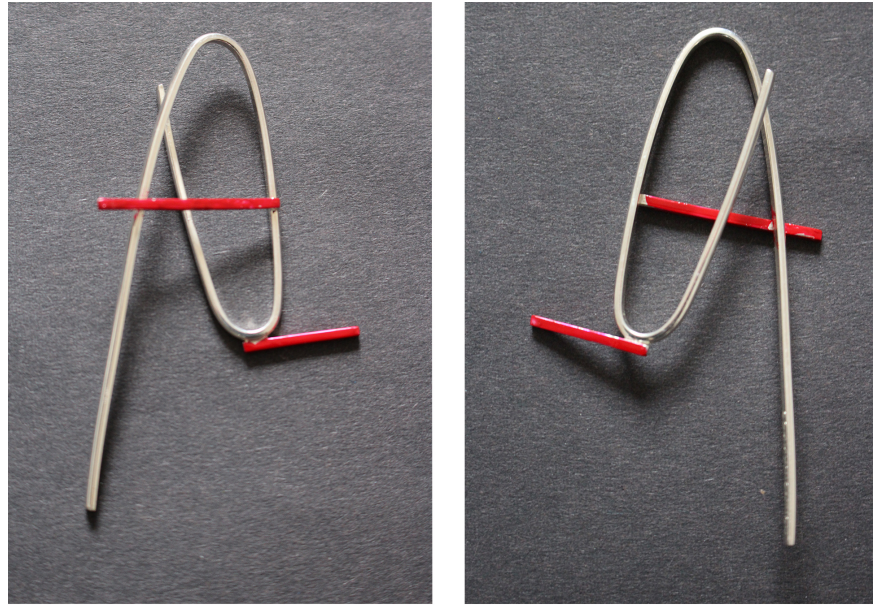
Figure 45: Communication, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.
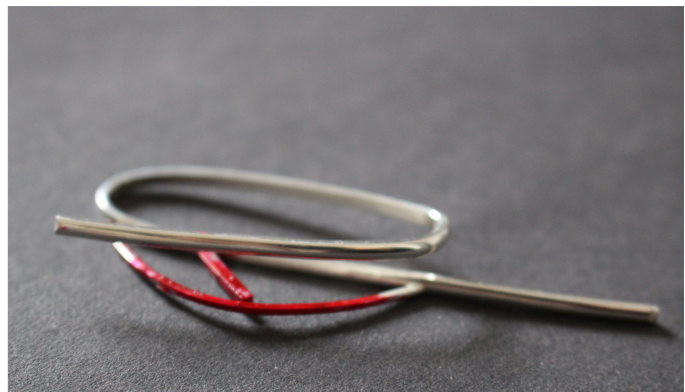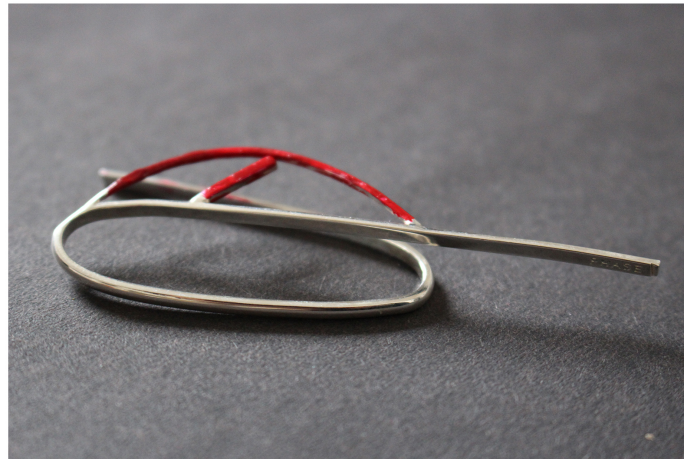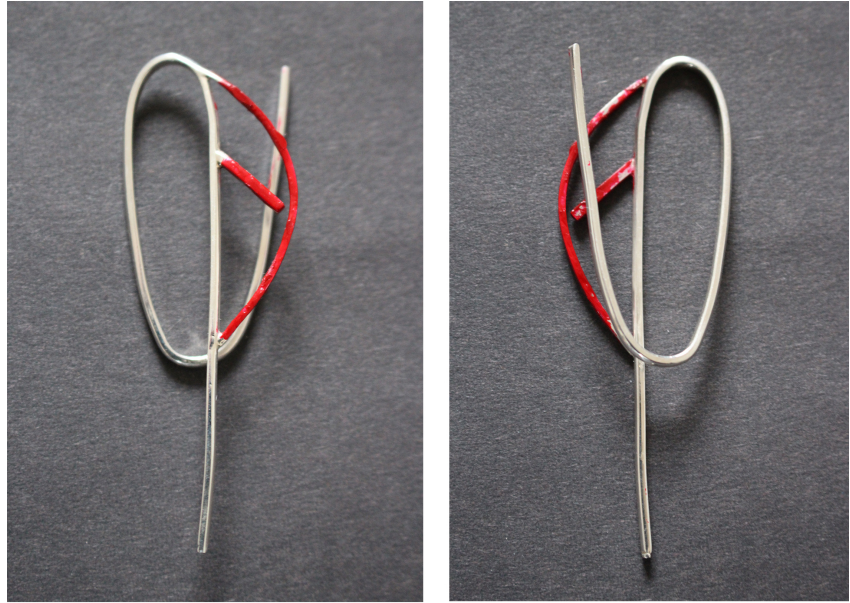
Figure 46: Phase, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.
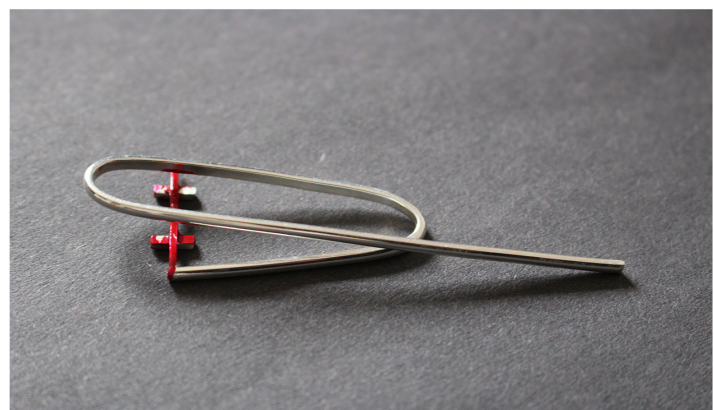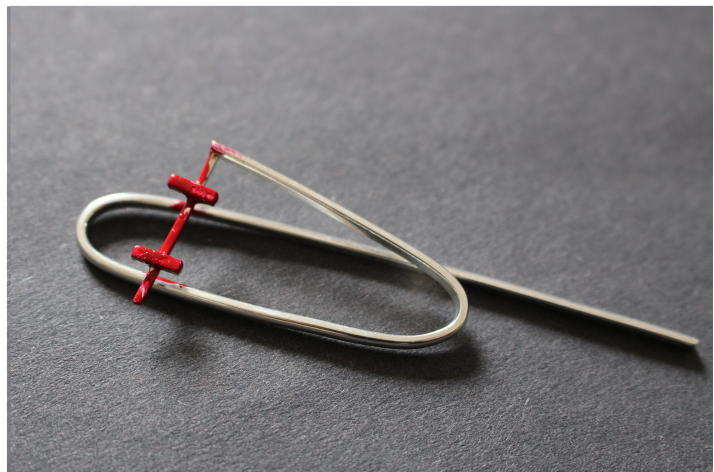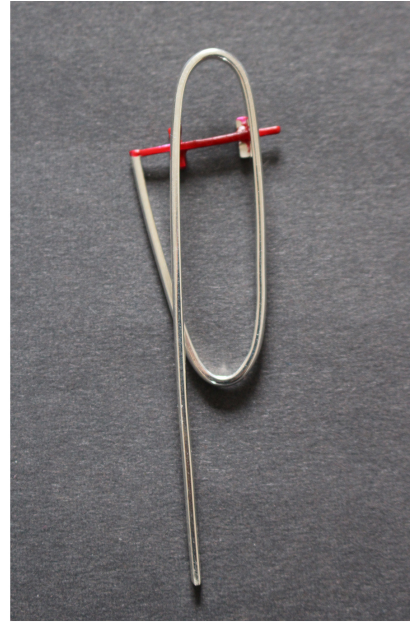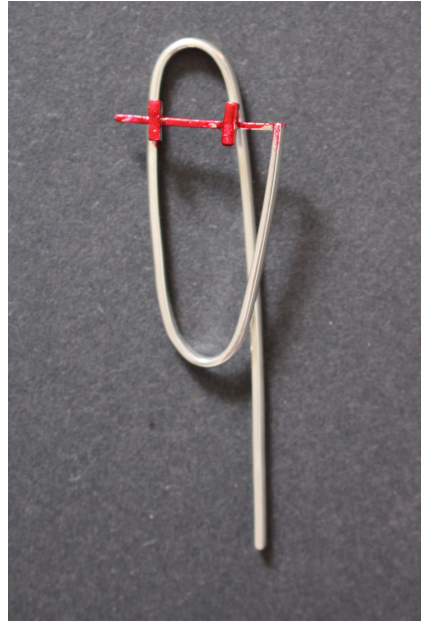
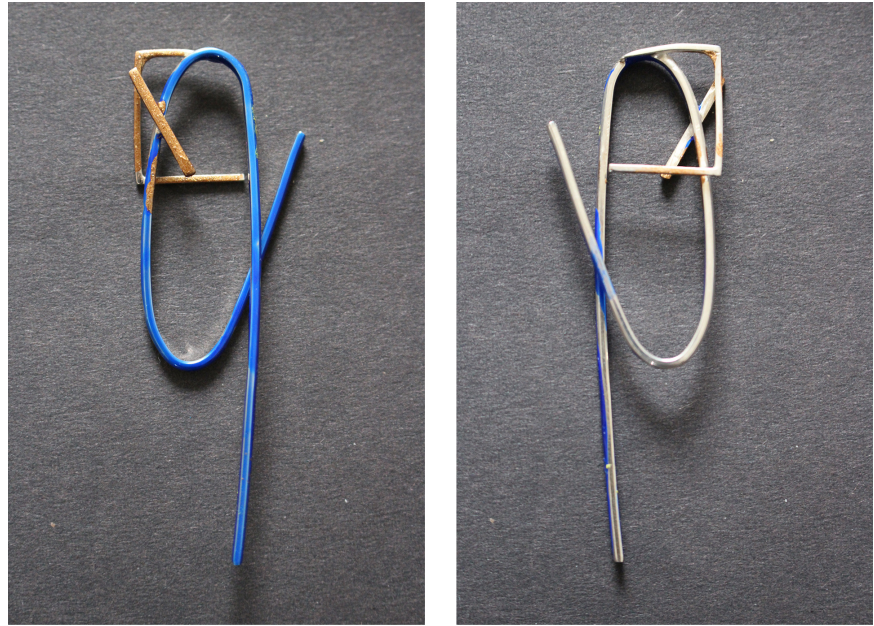*Figure 47: Union, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.*
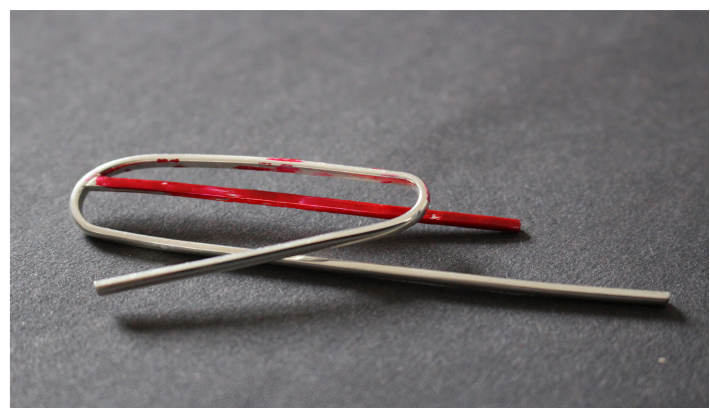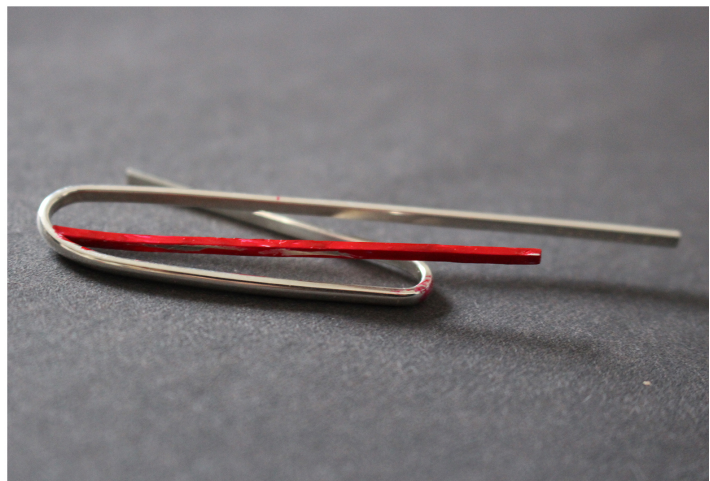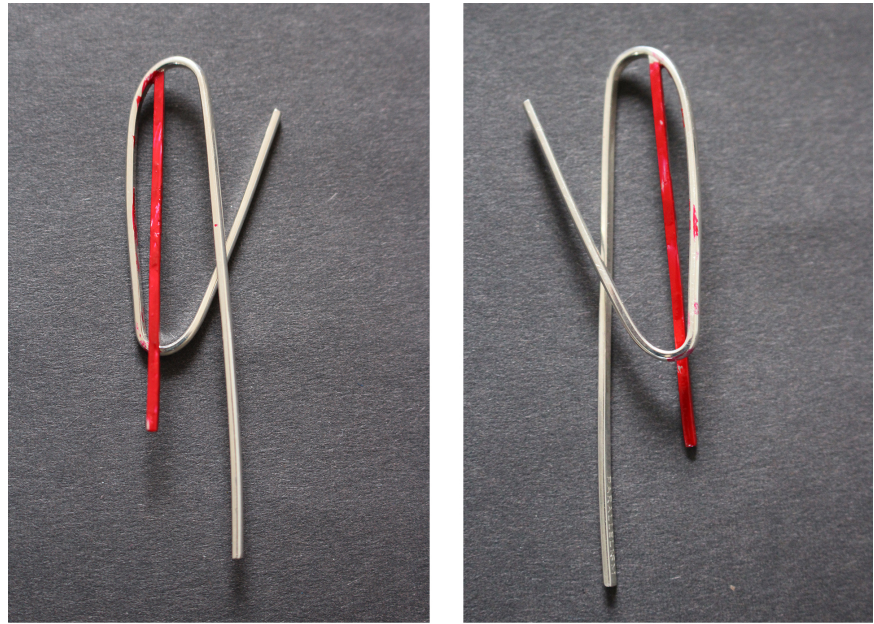
Figure 48: Parallelism, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.
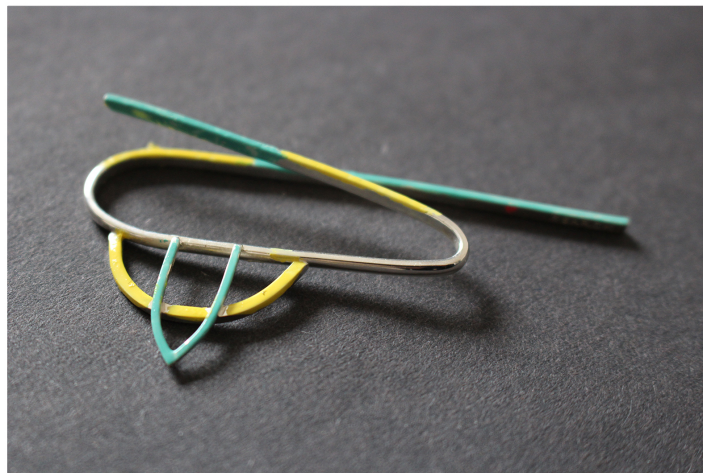
Figure 49: Search, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel

Figure 50: Display, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.

Figure 51: Code, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.
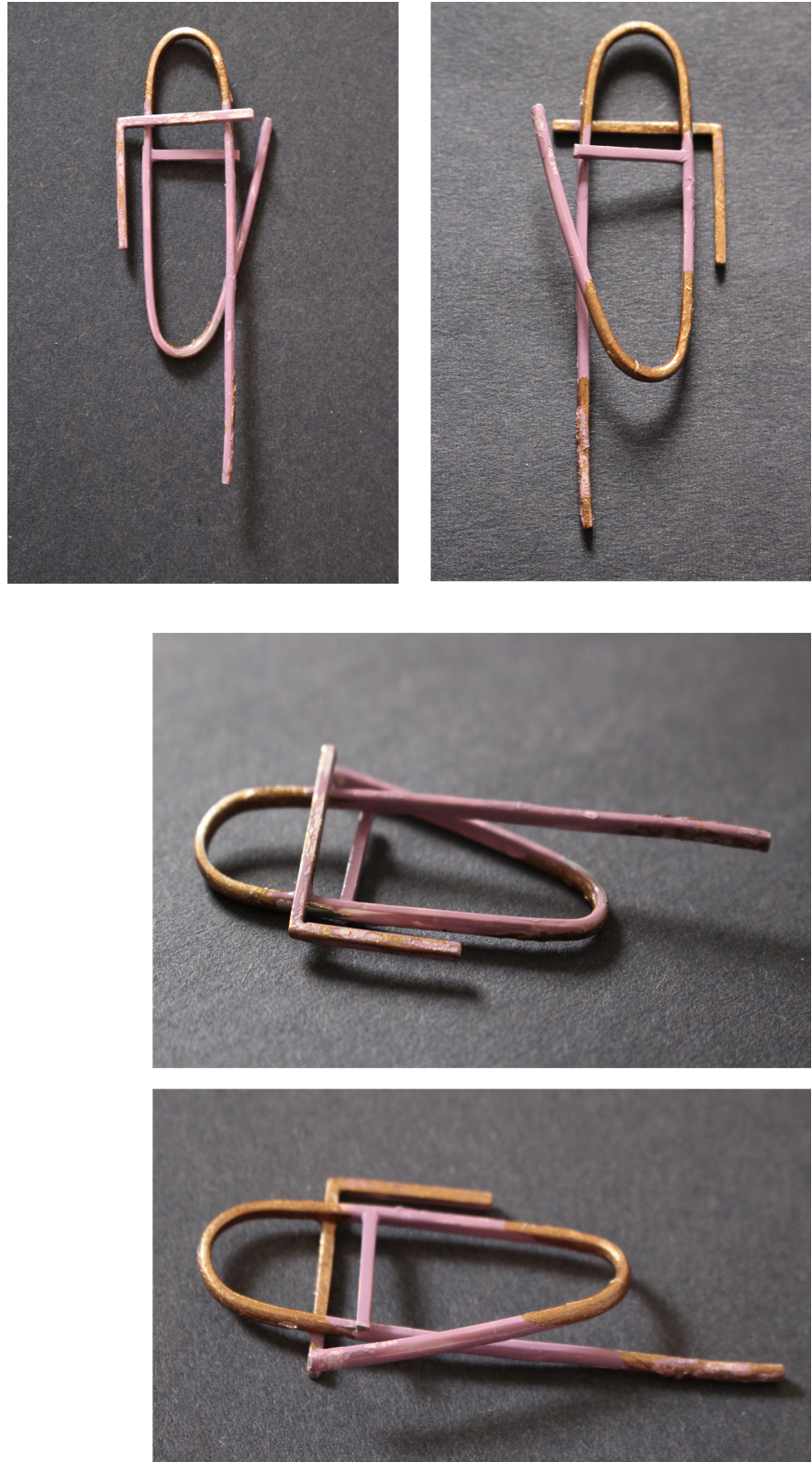
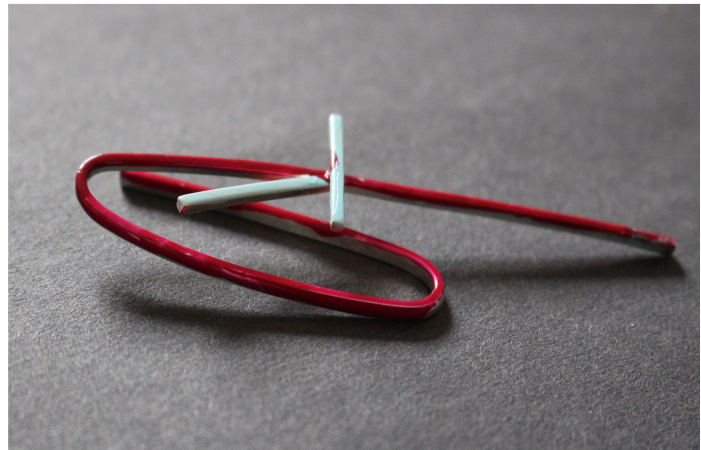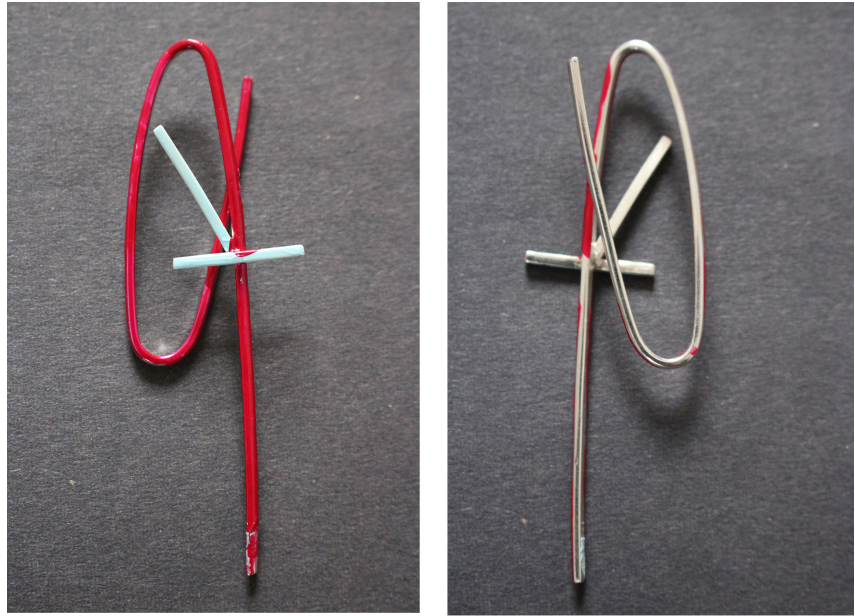*Figure 52: Memory, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.*

Figure 53: Input, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.
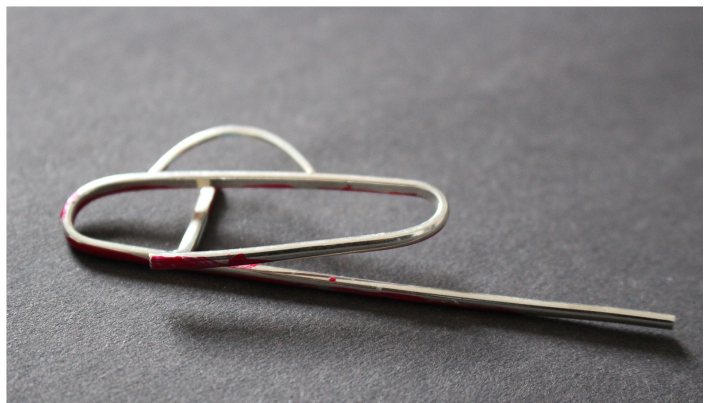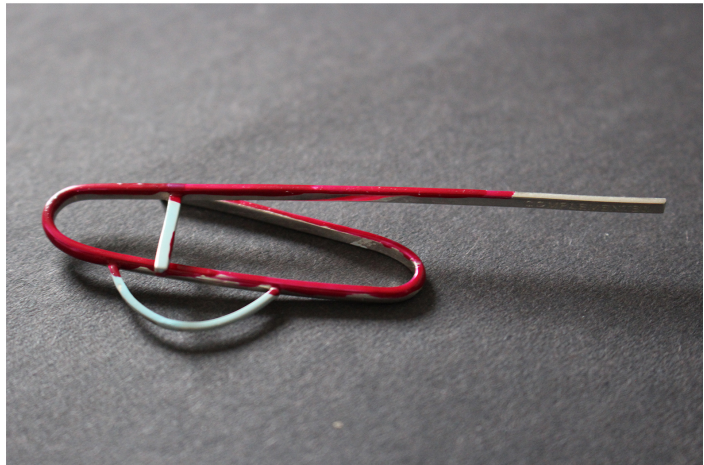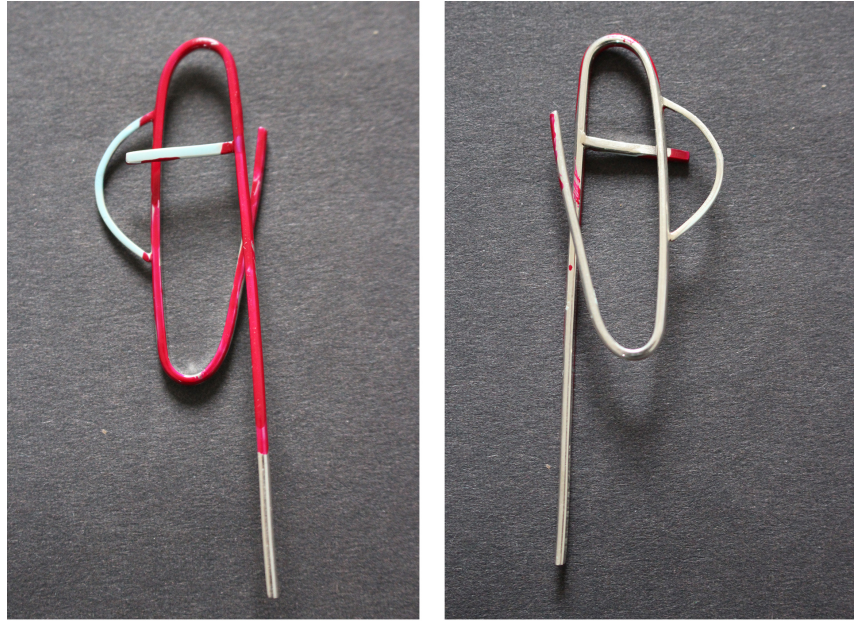
Figure 54: Complemented, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.

Figure 55: Record, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel

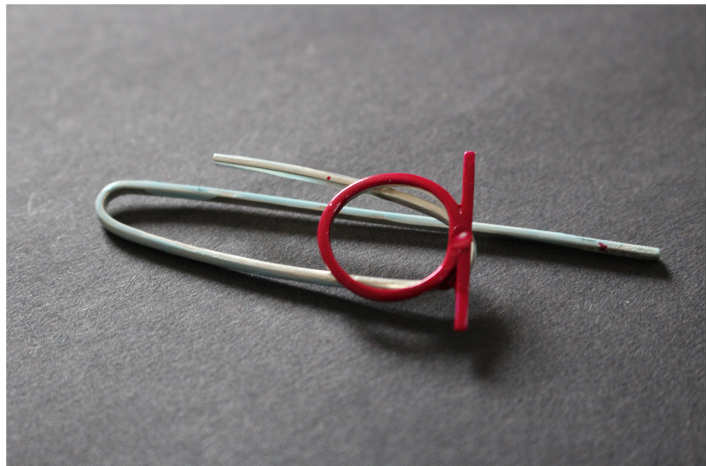*Figure 56: Space, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.*

Figure 57: Modify, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.

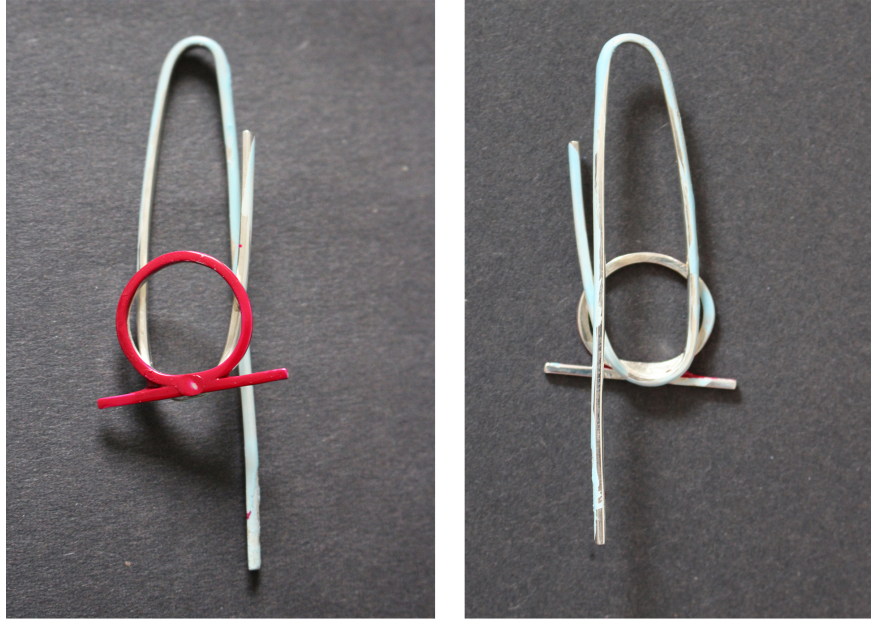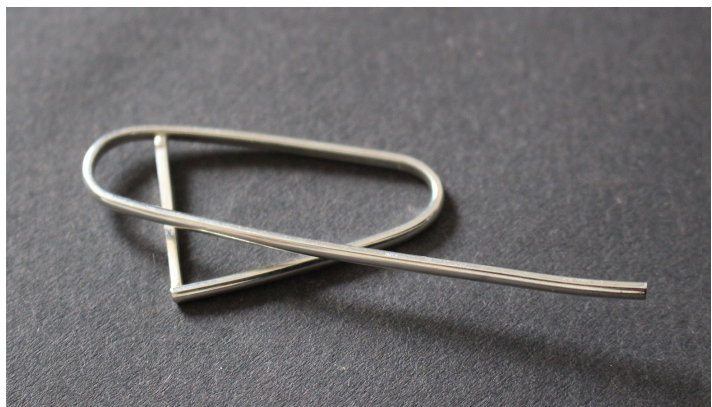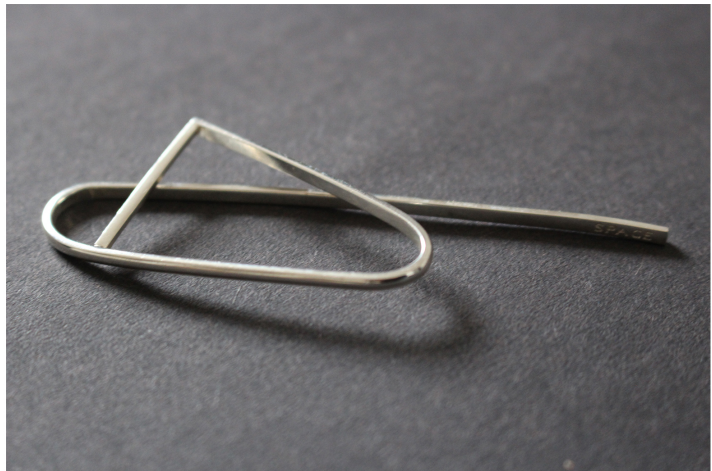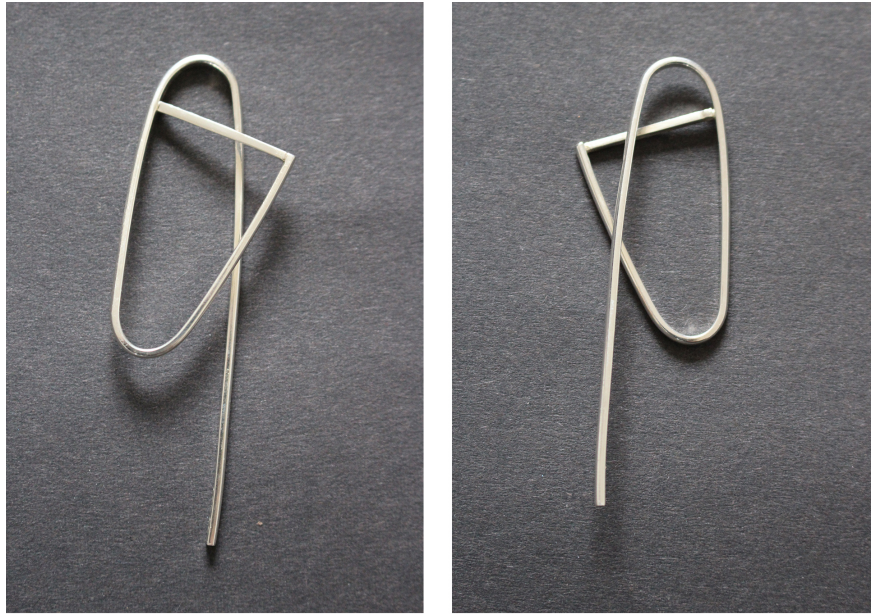*Figure 58: Equal, 360 close up view to show the range of application of enamel.*

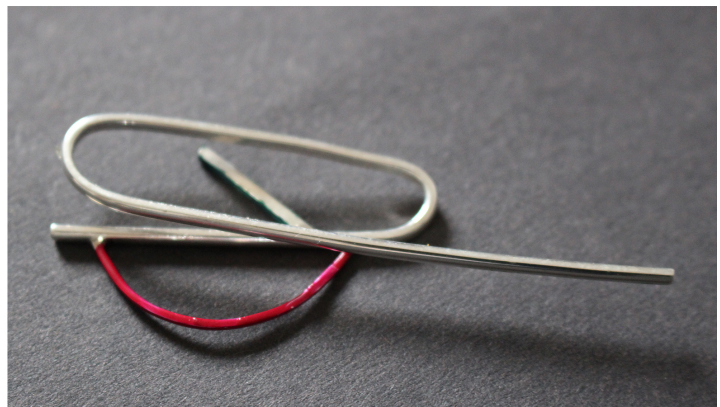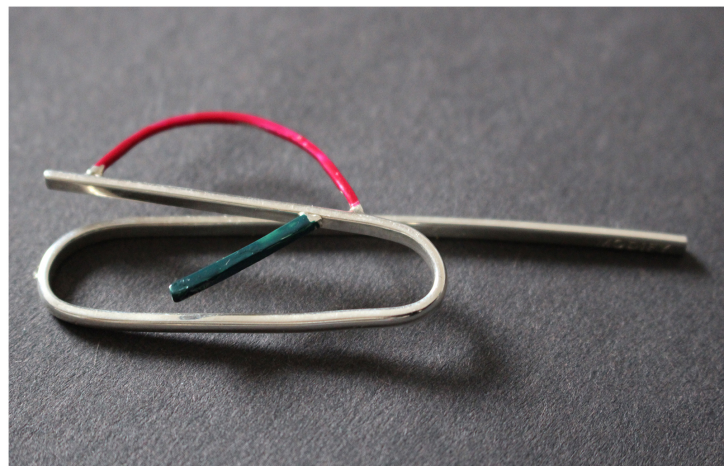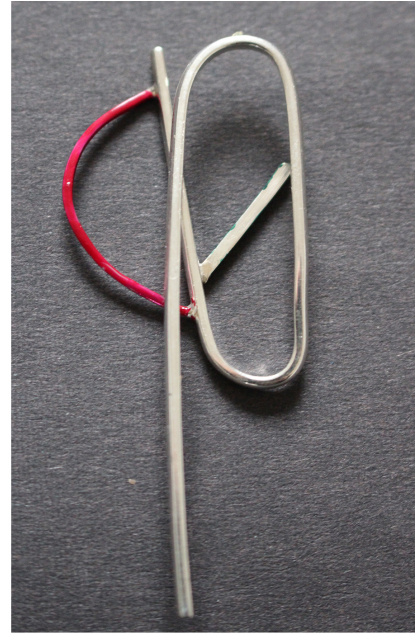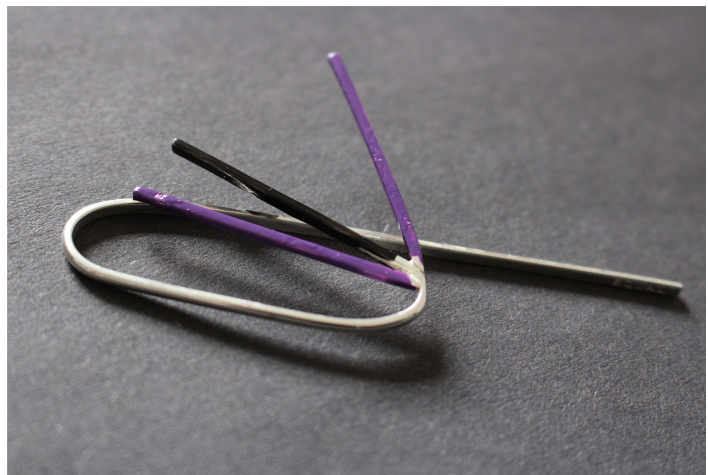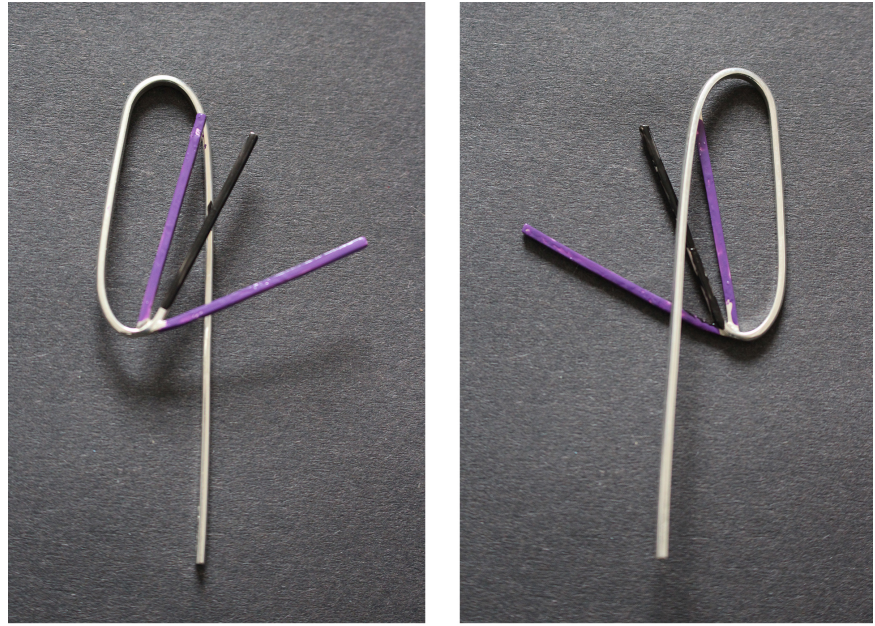*Figure 59, 60: Participants experimenting with customised pins on uniforms, using them as equipment to display a modern individualised youth identity.*

Figures 61, 62, 63: Participants experimenting with customised pins on uniforms,using them as equipment to display their modern individualised youth identity .

Summary and conclusions

In terms of outputs, the two-phase pilot proved successful in shaping and testing the practice with the intended audience.

The mix of group sessions and individual tasks delivered on the objectives of the practical, despite having limited time interacting with the workshop participants. I was able to engage and initiate instinctive responses to multiple questions that resulted in highly productive and insightful sessions. Considering the fast pace of the workshops and the need to educate the group at the start of each session, the participants were completely immersed within the subject matter and found the sessions engaging and beneficial, with the added bonus of the customisation session being deemed therapeutic.

The intuitive responses gained from the group motivates and demands further enquiry and additional workshops to compare with the responses from a more diverse demographic to understand whether the views expressed are exclusive to the youth generation, or reflective of the dominant culture across the spectrum of ages and backgrounds. The pins have been proved to be a scalable and adaptable mechanic, with scope for additional meanings and values to be added to keep pace with new and emerging societal and cultural movements affecting all ages.

Helping Young People Engage with Themselves Across Social Spectrums

The learnings and outputs from the workshops can also apply to a wide range of real world scenarios in an accessible way. The simplicity of the workshop structure and the speed at which it can executed means it is easily replicable with other groups and can be repeated with the same demographic at regular points to ensure continued relevance.

Scene-setting can be adapted to different audiences and cultures to ensure accessibility.

The pins, which are the outcomes of the workshop and the practice more broadly are unique physical objects to be customised and interpreted by the individual. They provide an anchor and reminder of the core beliefs and val-

127

ues of a generation that is used to, and often confused by, needing to switch gears quickly and often as they straddle the online and off-line world. While existing in the off-line world, the pins are also understandable and recognisable when posted online. The wearer's choice of pin, their input of documenting the selection and subsequent display of the pins personalises their interpretation of and the distribution of their identity digitally. This could lead to young people developing a stronger sense of their own identity and potentially help them overcome the social anxieties that have become more prevalent with the rise of social media use among this group.

Across both workshop sessions the participants showed a strong appreciation for the concepts of accessibility, multiplicity and specificity when exploring the impact of social media on the definition of individual identity.

The break between the two workshops left sufficient time for the participants to reflect on the first workshop and to mature as individuals. During the second workshop, participants agreed more strongly with the assertion that they possessed and were curating multiple different identities online and offline at any given time, potentially influenced by increased awareness of the so-called social media generation and its characteristics.

The participants engaged fully with the series of pins and responded positively to their use as symbols to communicate aspects of their identity. Participants primarily chose colours for decorative purposes when applying different coloured enamel to the pins to customise them, although some colours held personal significance for some participants. While there are few examples of participants using colour to represent their values, the process does enable even obvious personalisation meaning that the pin customised by the wearer is a truly unique item, drawing a parallel between the object and the unique individual identity of the wearer.

Reflecting on the group dynamic during the interactive colour session, I observed first-hand a distinct lack of traits associated with tribes. Specifically, I had expected there to have been some copying or production of similar customised items as may have been the case if the exercise were repeated with a group of young punks in the 70s. The fact that each participant ap-

proached the task in their own way reaffirms the belief that this generations young people have a more individualistic approach to identity than those that have come before.

Future development

This pilot has vast potential to be disseminated globally, to gain a worldwide view on the values and beliefs of this generation, reflecting the borderless realm of social media, where connections and conversations can span geographies, social groups and cultures. The varying degrees of exposure to social media in other global markets would also produce further avenues to exploration, expanding on the identity-subculture link.

By gaining such a broad view I would be able to get a real understanding of whether what we find to be true in the UK is true for other countries and communities, and quite how influential global issues are in shaping identity and beliefs.

While conducting this research it became clear that there was a deeper meaning materialising. Using the pins to display and communicate your identity or beliefs was positively received, and once the pins took their physical form and became tangible for the participants, it became clear that the playing with and handling of the pins would have a meaningful purpose for well being or therapeutic use. If research continues to show that young people's identities are becoming increasing fluid and complex, the pins can prove valuable anchors to help overcome the anxieties and self esteem issues that are amplified by social media use.

There is also scope to build greater collaboration into the design process, extending the agency afforded to collaborators to take the mechanic forward in a variety of different directions.

Further workshops would inform further iterations of the pins and could observe how participants respond to having greater input and control over the pins themselves. Modelling materials such as annealed metal, clay or CAD software would be used by participants to create their own pin designs in a way that would be completely unique and meaningful to them. This concept

would be viewed as a direct collaboration between myself and the participant. The subsequent ownership of that pin would be by the participants but if permitted could be used and made available to others by myself as the practitioner and researcher of the creative concept.

Learnings

The impact of social media on our daily lives is keenly felt and near-unavoidable, but its impact on our psyche and the development of the current youth generation, for whom social media is all they've ever known, is still being discovered. This is a very young area of academic study that is very much in the documentation stage, made more complex by the constant evolution of social media and the way young people use it. As a result, identity politics are in a constant state of flux.

My continued role as the creative practitioner is to present options in the role of pins, that individuals can interpret for themselves. I must continue to observe and create symbols and icons that help fill the void left by increasingly online social interactions and to help young people satisfy their need for belongingness and acceptance among their peers. That could be in the offline world, a mix of on and offline symbols or signifiers, or entirely digital representations that help bring people together.

The unintended consequences of the research have been the opening up of new avenues in new disciplines, in the form of educational aids or art therapy tools for young people in crisis or suffering from anxiety or confusion about their own identity during this transitional time. The transference of emotion and beliefs onto the pins provides a safe environment for discussion and reflection for young people helping to build confidence and coping mechanisms that can add clarity to young people around who they are and what they believe in.

As a recent mother my outlook on the fashion industry has evolved. This project may not aid my journey as a fashion professional, but the underlying theme of how we perceive our identity and how we display that externally is becoming less focused on the way we dress. Safeguarding the emotional state of young people today and tomorrow is of far greater importance. We

are no longer defined by fashion signals. My practice hopes to provide a new form of signalling to others that is decoupled from the clothes we wear and is better suited to the nomadic, multi-faceted identities of digital natives living in this unique period of time.

Conclusion

People still need to belong to something. That "something" used to be the prevailing subculture, that itself was a product of living in a hyper-localised society, being part of a youth generation with a common cause or system of beliefs that formed the nucleus for the subculture's ideology. That belief system was then communicated visually through clothes and style.

Today, that "something" is no longer solely a subcultural group in the local area that friends are a part of. Instead, it is a number of different, disparate groups that exist both online and offline, and don't require young people to align all aspects of their identity, from their physical appearance and outfit choices through to their ideologies and belief systems, to be accepted.

The emergence of digital technologies and social media networks give this generation's young people the opportunity to escape the limitations of their locality and belong to a group made up of people with one or more shared interests from anywhere in the world, across a diverse age profile without having to change the way they look or subscribe to an overarching ideology that shapes their identity. They can hold different views on different things and develop a truly individual identity on their terms, while making whatever sartorial choices they like.

As a result, tribes of the sort that dominated the post-war period no longer exist in the same way. There is an absence of a clearly defined ideological youth movement precisely because this generation is more empowered to develop their individual identities more than any of those that have come before them. The absence of ideology leads to an absence of a common visual identity and the death of the idea that clothes and appearance are primarily a visual language to express and represent the ideological views of the group. Today, what people wear isn't to align themselves to a group but to represent who they are as an individual, signalling the end of the type of iconic subcultural looks that defined previous youth generations.

The findings of this study show the need to belong to a group and the newly relaxed uniform regulations of modern societal groups causes a reversion to short-lived mainstream fashion trends that are seen as "cool" at the time. As they are not rooted in ideology and are subject to near-constant change as

celebrities and this generation's idols - from sports stars to YouTubers - set the trends and show off their styles to their millions of fans, followers and connections on social media. Trend cycles have accelerated as a result, and what this generation wears to "fit in" does not have the ideological basis that gives a particular style the longevity it needs to become elevated to iconic status like those associated with punks, mods, skinheads or ravers.

In this research I put forth the view that identities of this generation's young people are more multifaceted than ever before. They exist online on numerous social networks and offline in numerous social groups. The management and curation of multiple different identities comes naturally to this generation of digital natives, and just as it is possible to have different views on different topics, it is also common for views to develop and change over time, causing identities to evolve over time, too. In essence, everything from trends and "cool" fashions to the individual identities of the current youth generation are transient and diverse, and therefore lack the necessary building blocks that formed the basis of the iconic post-war subcultural youth movements with clearly defined visual aesthetics.

This research has been conducted at a crucial point in time, coinciding with an influx of information being published about the effects of social media on children and teenagers today, and how it might shape who they are as adults in the future. The practice draws inspiration from these findings and responds to the new needs of this generation when it comes to needing to express themselves, belonging to a community or group, embracing their individuality across multiple areas and having the ability to change and evolve their views over time. Furthermore, this element of the research creates a new system of communicating online and offline identity physically that can also be documented digitally.

When exploring how social media has impacted the identities of young people and the formation of aesthetically driven subcultural youth movements, we can conclude that as well as fundamentally changing the way people communicate and interact with each other, social media has allowed young people in particular to define much more flexible, numerous and transient individual identities. This generation will not be remembered for having a

certain look or holding a particular ideology, but will instead be defined by being the first generation to grow up on social media, and the first generation to natively form and curate multiple individual identities both online and off-line.

The practice that integrates with the theory creates a space where people can come together through an understanding of each other's views expressed by this new visual language. My practice is sympathetic to the new generation by opening up avenues of self-expression that are personal to them as individuals. The series of pins can be worn in various ways by being positioned on different parts of the body, attached to other items, and either worn as single pins or joined with others to make chains. The process of combining and sequencing generates completely original and unique representations of identity.

The iterative creative process behind the practice was informed by the icons and symbols that defined post-war UK subcultural movements and knowledge gained from workshops with young people growing up and defining their own identities today. Considerations and opinions on groups that exist in society today and how they could be symbolised were discussed in the first workshop, and concept designs were shared in the second and customised by the participants with colours that made them unique to each individual. The purpose of the practice is not only to design a set of symbols that communicate the identities of this generation's young people, but to create a new visual language and system of expression that has the potential to evolve to apply to future youth generations. Future objects will be designed and created in-line with the new considerations that apply to future generations in order to remain relevant.

The synchronicity of this research with an increase in awareness of social media and its impact on young people provides first-hand accounts from young people living through this unique period, and interpretations that can form the basis for future research and a reference document for cultural historians. The practice in metalwork, design accessory and photography also provides inspiration and reference points for future makers.

The findings also suggest a unique and significant contribution to the current body of knowledge in the fields of cultural studies, and the history of style and trends. It places a lens on the changing dynamics of subculture within society today and how the rise of the Internet and social media has changed the way children develop their identities and their relationships with groups they seek to associate with as they enter their teenage years. Primary research has opened a dialogue for both children and adults and informs a theory of the future for subcultures and their visual identifiers and leaves space for further investigation at PhD level. This research which comprises a multidisciplinary approach is intended to be useful to future scholars who can build and diversify on the observations in this work.

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Gender differences in the association between age trends of social media interaction and wellbeing among 10-15 year olds in the UK, by Dr Cara Booker (University of Essex), Professor Yvonne Kelly (University College London) and Professor Amanda Sacker (University College London) is published in the March 2018 issue of BMC Public Health

https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-018-5220-4

Appendix 1

1. Image references, all images used throughout this paper are the Author's own, with the exception of the below:

Page 14, Fig. 1, images in this formation owned by Betty Jackson as inspiration for her Autumn/Winter 2010 collection.

Page 14, Fig. 2, image owned by Christopher Moore at www.catwalking.com

Page 15, Fig. 3, images in this formation owned by Urban Outfitters as inspiration for in-house label Pins and Needles.

Page 16, Fig. 4, images in this formation owned by Urban Outfitters for the promotion of in- house label Pins and Needles.

Page 21, Fig. 5, image sourced from Jessye Bloomfield, www.jessyeb.com

Page 22, Evolution of the safety pin-

      Safety pin, www. indiamart.com

      Punk, www.jessyeb.com

      Zandra Rhodes, pg 176,Rhodes, Z, Knight, A (1994) The Art of

      Zandra Rhodes. London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited

      Liz Hurley, Getty Images

      Brexit pin, Instagram user b00knook

      Versace trainer, www.farfetch.com

Page 40, Fig. 10 Abraham Mazlow's hierarchy of needs, https://www.simplypsychology.org/simplypsychology.org-Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf)

2.Tribal identity presentation for Gen Z workshop, examples of tribal groups from the presentation. The complete presentation can be viewed in Appendix 2 (2016)

1970s PUNKS
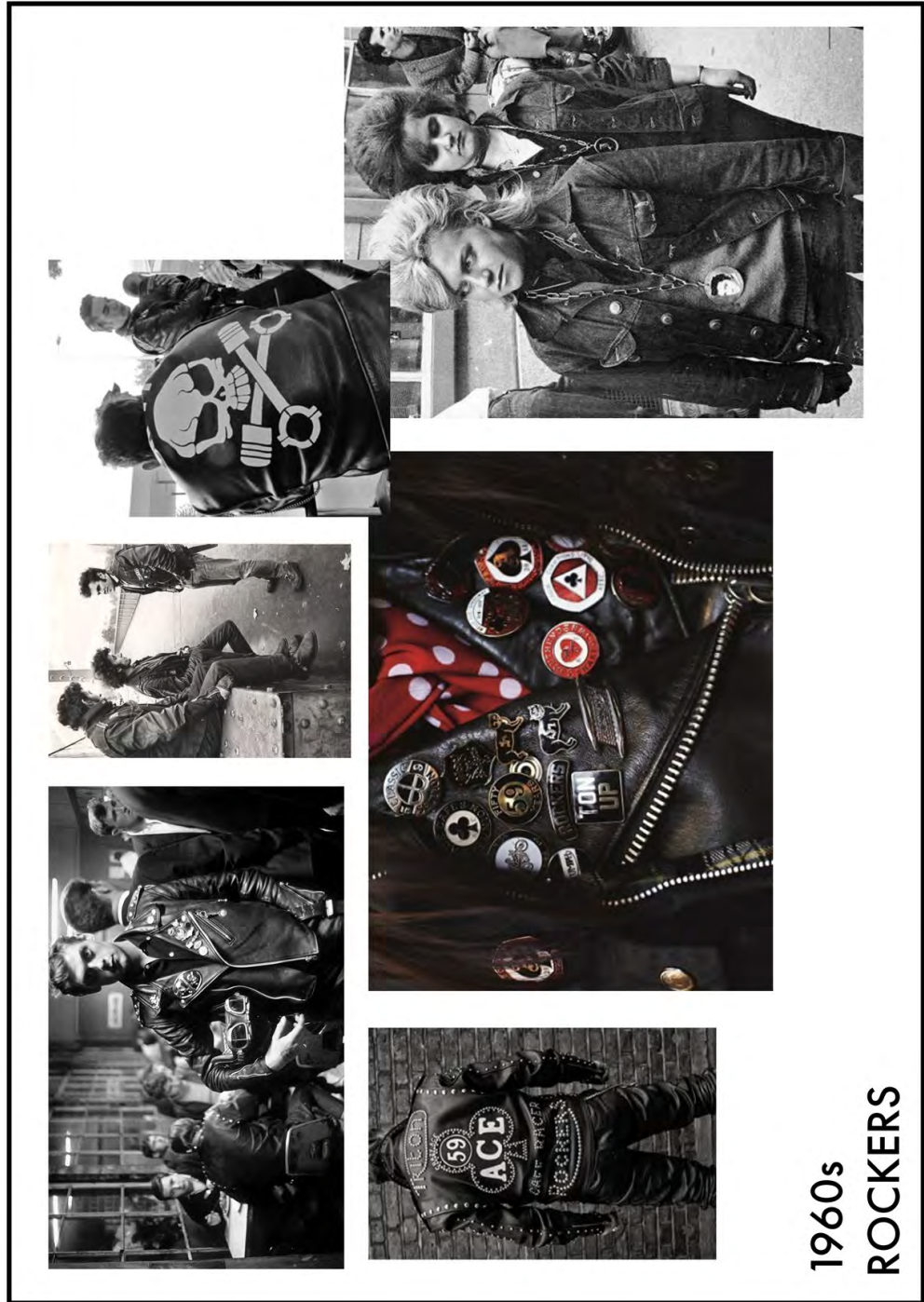
3. Equipment for a Modern Identity, photography of final year presentation in inaugural research exhibition at the Royal College of Art June 2018. This section includes images of the exhibition in the gallery space.
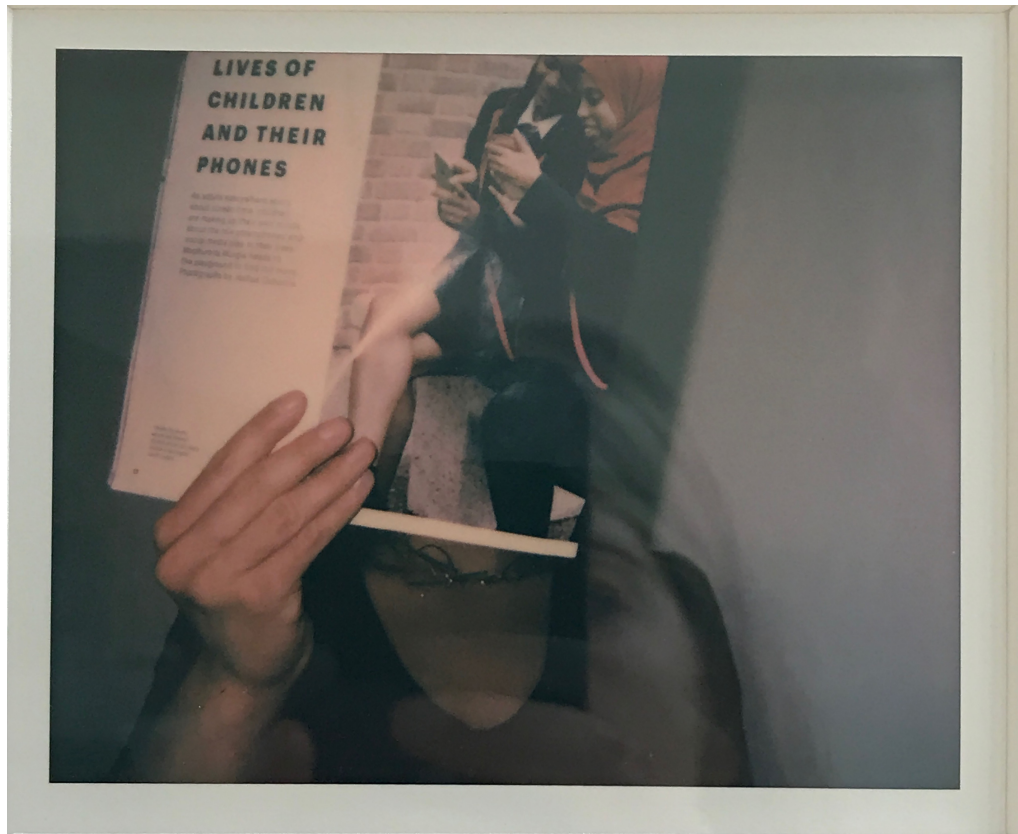
145

Pieces in situ linked together to create a chain. The interaction and sequence between the pieces creates a dialogue of identity.

Low level concrete installation used to symbolise the connection to the street and the relevance of the practice to the youth generation of today.

A series of polaroids documenting research practice.

148

Lives, 2018

Link, 2018

Teenage Brain, 2018

Double Self, 2018

152

Chat Machine, 2018