

***Untitled, George Egerton-Warburton***  
***Etiquette, May 17 2025***

“I was cruising, and then I was hanging.” As if on a runway, and then an abattoir hook. The metronome of a machine, seasons, cycles. Of wear. Too many hours in the day. What is an unpopulated machine? Evolution?

George’s first machinic works in 2017 were proposed as suicidal “replacements for men” or war machines. *Untitled* continues this metonym through its marriage of audio and machine, recalling the descent of helicopters to Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries* in *Apocalypse Now*. Here the candied, distressed sound of hyperpop, composed by Governor Vomit, is the soundtrack for a 1980s garment conveyor sourced in Kearny, New Jersey. The slowed, reverb-rich audio relays the fast outfit changes of a fashion show as much as the notion of being under the influence. A naked mannequin is witness to this ambiguous war.

Dry cleaning is a laundering method for fiber (eg wool, silk) and garments (eg fitted jacket) allergic to the violent hygroscopic swelling of water-based cleaning. The carcinogenic solvent perchloroethylene is the most common dry cleaning chemical used today, followed by a variety of petroleum-based solvents. Newer, upscale alternatives include the patented silicone-based solvent by GreenEarth® Cleaning, a bioaccumulative compound that builds up in organisms and disrupts human endocrines.

In Ancient Rome, dry cleaners (fullers), used clay and urine to lift the oil and grease from garments. Piss was collected from public urinals and taxed as it became a valuable cleaning agent. These vats of piss whitened the citizenry’s woolen togas and tunics. For an added finish, garments were fumigated with sulfur. In the 17th century, dry cleaning turned to kerosine or turpentine. The highly flammable spirits dissolved candle wax and body secretions for wealthy clients and caused frequent devastating accidental fires... Dry cleaning as our brutal solution for bodily excess... How to purge human stain: ammonia, sulfur, kerosine, now the silicone residue in neural tissue (plastic in our brains). The conveyor, void of garments (or even clear allegory), looks to tone, atmosphere, contamination or influence. What is conveyed? What is laundering: A symptom?

Around the age of 18, George read Caroline Evans’ 2003 book *Fashion at the Edge*—a prescient exegesis on the dereliction of late 1990s high-experimental fashion, framed through a dialectical return to 19th- & early 20th-century critics of modernity: Marx, Benjamin, Simmel, etc. This recent period of fashion, addled with themes of anxiety, phantasmagoria and alienation, ostensibly reveal modernity’s defining leitmotifs. It is an impressive book—both as coffee table and critical theory—and one endlessly regurgitated by fashion studies students and fashliterati.

In chapter seven, *Deathliness*, Evans invokes Kracauer’s 1927 essay *The Mass Ornament* with its simple enough Frankfurt polemic: aesthetics—perhaps even cognition—are determined by the prevailing economic system. His touchstone is the Tiller Girls, an American chorus line whose standardized, smooth, mirrored bodies instantiate the mass-produced industrial logic of 1927... 98 years later (circa 2025) George’s objects of machinic labor, now bizarre to the synthetic metropolis, break down the internalization of such chorus through manners and practices of behaviour, slurred through the reverberations of Governor Vomit. George’s installations are typically impressionistic, using a language of grubbied conceptual art, a kind of kitchen sink realism.

*Collins St., 5 pm, 1955*, by John Brack is considered “quintessential” Melbourne painting. Used as the invitation image to this exhibition, it depicts the mass of urban, indistinguishable office workers at close of business on their way to home or the pub. The triangles of heavy woolen coats in various shades of beige and brown cut through the painting like a serrated blade. *Etiquette* is a new fashion exhibition house, conceived roughly a decade ago, in Melbourne, where we met.