



**TRAICELINE**

**BY AMBER CHOW**

CHAPTER I – A Perfect Match

CHAPTER II – Beyond Verbal Communication by *TRICELINE*

CHAPTER III – Beyond Verbal Communication, *Rachel's Edition*

CHAPTER IV – Appropriation or Appreciation?

CHAPTER V – It's all good, It's always good man *Pt.1*

CHAPTER VI – It's all good, It's always good man *Pt.2*

CHAPTER VII – I'm gonna change the world

## CHAPTER I: A Perfect Match

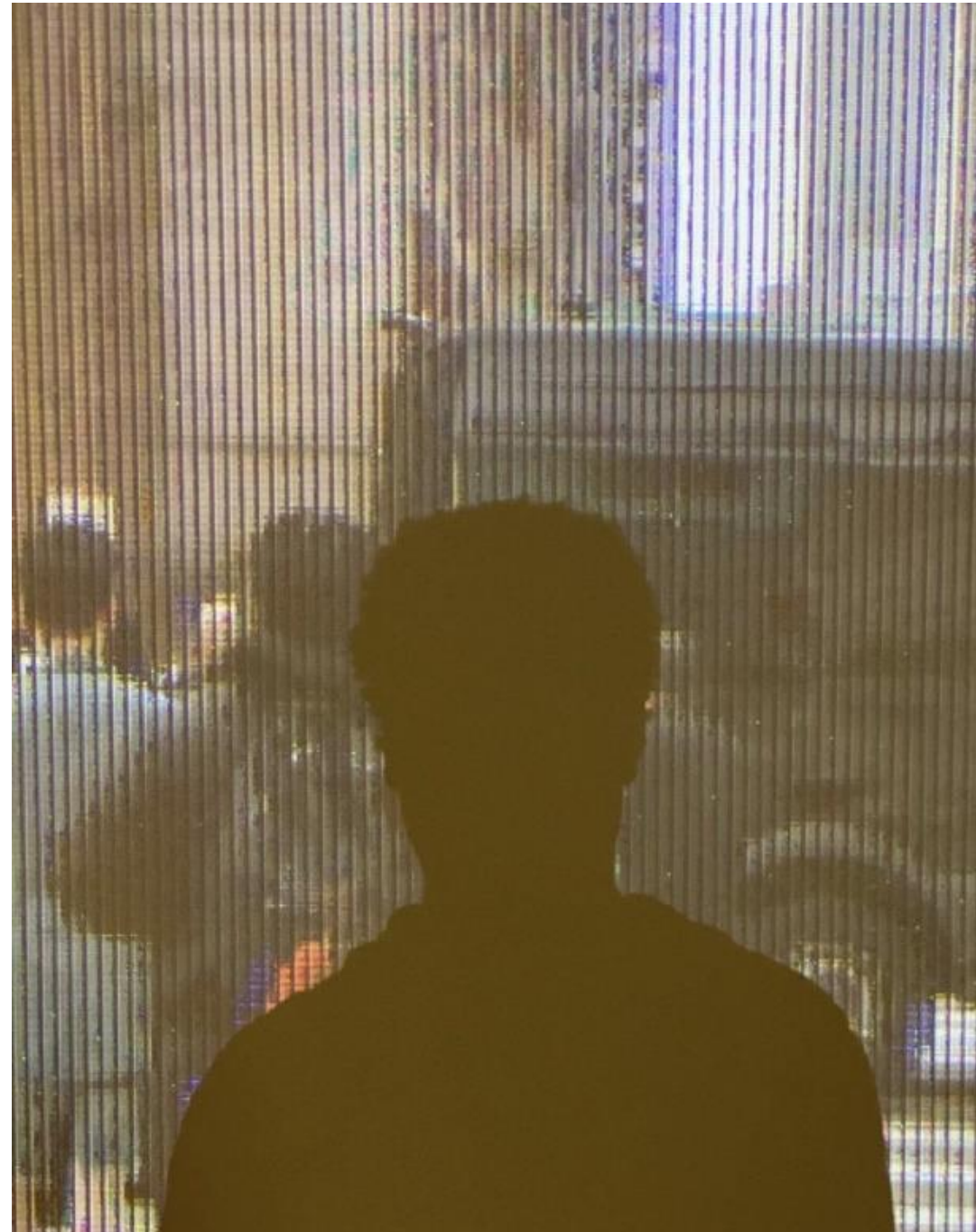
There was no time to waste. It was the second day into the MA Fashion Communication course and a WhatsApp group was made between Anna Maria, Rachele and I. The first collaborative project of the year was to shadow an MA fashion designer and out of all twenty-three students, we had an idea of who stood out to us. Canteen coffee date matchmaking took place almost immediately on the Friday of that week, and it was as clear as day who we all fell in love with; Number 20 - TRICELINE.

On first impressions, he maintains mostly anonymous, with no portraits of himself other than the first pinned image on his Instagram showing a "headshot" - rather, a shadow of a headshot on projected images from his rationale. He transforms his birth name Trai Celine Pratt, into his brand name TRICELINE.

Sunglasses indoors with a shrivelled black beanie and a simple black outfit make TRICELINE's everyday uniform. Accessories are kept to a minimum but done tastefully with a Tudor Black Bay 36 on his left wrist and a white diamond stud in his left ear. With a slow, self-assured stride, TRICELINE led us through the sacred halls that make up the MA fashion studio to the little nook that became his atelier. Confidently he introduced his collection, "Fashion is too Eurocentric, it needs to be more inclusive to those who don't have access to luxury"

"All my pieces are an ode to the six women I knew growing up in the Bahamas, all of whom are looked down upon by society." These six women were significant characters to TRICELINE's journey from childhood to adulthood. They are: a single mother, a stripper, a thief, a businesswoman, a side girlfriend, and a stay-at-home wife.

We were sold when he talked us through the manifesto of his collection, with words as simple as 'Accessible, fun, and community.'



"PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOTS FOR PRESS" posted 3<sup>rd</sup> January to TRICELINE's Instagram account





## CHAPTER II: *Beyond Verbal Communication* by TRAICELINE

Through our Instagram group chat, we scheduled our second interview in the studio to discuss the details of his six pieces. “All my garments were made for those women specifically, with each one representing their struggles,” he tells me, “And my goal was to convey their narrative through these ‘luxurious’ garments tailored for them”. Everyone has a different idea of what ‘luxury’ is and TRAICELINE portrays exactly this for these marginalised individuals.

I was most interested in the name of the collection, and it was clear why he had chosen it. “A lot of my peers and tutors, not all, but a handful just couldn’t understand that these women were actually people’s reality.” Potentially it could be due to culture and location, or maybe even class and race, but “I do know maybe that if they were there with me growing up in The Bahamas, it would be easier for them to understand. So at that point it was beyond verbal communication and they just had to be there to believe it and understand it.”

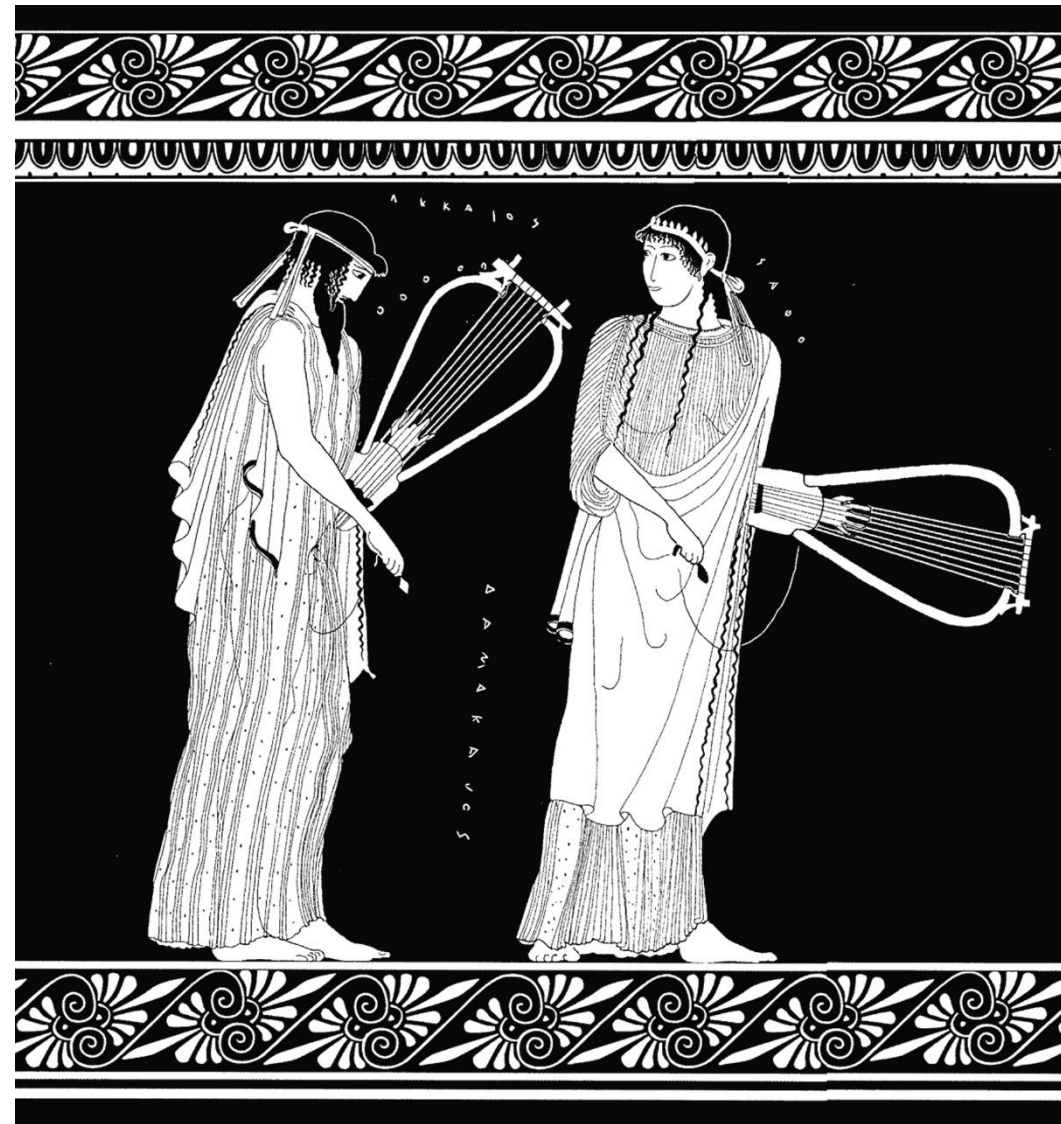
When considering fabric and colour, TRAICELINE emphasised his attention to detail in each chosen detail. “It’s not as surface level to just think about the aesthetics and whether it looks pretty,” he explains, “I take these things very seriously, there’s far much more context to it”.

The construction of his silver puffer dress, designed in homage to the stripper, speaks volumes. Firstly, the padding is accentuated in the bust and the waist, representing objectification in nightclub dancing and stripper culture, “the person who I’m talking about had to get plastic surgery in those areas of her body, to make more money in the club she was working in.” For her, luxury meant earning sufficient funds to invest in other assets to exit the stripping industry.

Secondly, the colour used was chrome, a popular pick for its glossy, mirror-like sheen akin to silver metals and sparkling diamonds. "When I spoke to her, she told me there is a correlation between her black and her white customers," TRACELINE said. "The black customers would always wear diamonds and the white customers would always have a huge silver watch." Despite their cultural differences, both groups share a love for chrome jewellery. So, it made perfect sense to construct the whole garment chrome - symbolic of her life as a commodity for those men in the audience. Not to mention, the club's flashy environment with metallic poles was also taken into consideration, adding another layer of thought to the clothing.

Instead of assigning each outfit to a specific character, the designer opted to mix the garments together when styling. For instance, he paired the off-white ball top made for the housewife with the dark patent purple leather trousers designed for the mistress, aiming to foster a sense of solidarity. "It's common to feel isolated in your struggles, but by doing this, I hoped to create a feeling of community," he explains.

This idea is parallel to a reference in Anna Maria's work when she explores J.J Winkler's concept of 'double-consciousness', developed to give a new reading of Sappho's poems. In this, Winkler delves into the concept that women embody both femininity and masculinity whilst males can only be expressed in masculinity. Women navigate a male-dominated public sphere, assuming both traditional female roles and adopting masculine traits to assert themselves. For example, referring back to one of TRACELINE's characters, the single mother, has taken on the role of being 'the man' by single handedly providing for her family, whilst simultaneously, being 'the woman' and 'mother' to her children. Despite this, there's a sense of community among women, recognising and empathising with each other's experiences. This communal strength is emphasised, suggesting power lies in solidarity. The collection explores women's identities through a male lens, referencing men's fashion and roles. Yet, it adds depth to traditionally masculine styles, reflecting the complexities of femininity. The concept of double consciousness highlights the intricacies of navigating femininity in a patriarchal society, enriching narratives with layers of meaning beyond surface interpretation.



*Sappho and Alcaeus* circa 470 BC, Attic red figure kalathos attributed to the Brygos Painter



CHAPTER III: *Beyond Verbal Communication, Rachel's edition*

With TRACELINE portraying a certain dark lonesomeness in both his image and work, I wanted to speak to Rachel about how she interpreted this in her photography.

"A big reference was Mark Rothko's paintings," she explains. "There is so much movement, yet a static-ness to his work and it does exactly what I want." There are three big themes to unwrap here: movement, adaptability and emotion. At first glance, Rothko's paintings are merely just blobs of colour, but once you look at them long enough, the colours seem to merge, moving in and out of one another. Due to the grand scale of these pieces, Rothko crafts an emotional odyssey with his viewers, who sense an overwhelming emotive presence when engaging with his work. Through Rachel's photography, she achieves the same emotional impact using the movement of the subject matter.

It's also really interesting to use Rothko, I suggest, as TRACELINE came from a background of fine arts and has dipped in watercolour in the past - It seems like things come full circle.

"I relate to TRACELINE's pieces in terms of adaptability," she tells me. "The location and environment during my teenage years forced me to adapt, and if you haven't been through it yourself, you just wouldn't know, like the name of his

collection, it was beyond verbal communication". Just like how those six characters adapted to their harsh environment, TRACELINE adopts a chameleon-esque way of blurring their everyday clothes into luxury. In one of his pieces, the thief character is dressed in dark navy tones, accessorized with a cashmere balaclava. With this simple choice of material, TRACELINE has effectively elevated what is essentially a tool for criminals to hide their identities, and incorporated a subtle essence of luxury for his muse. Through this attire, he blends the thief into a different social environment just like how Rothko's colours blend into each other. The paintings themselves are also a dance of colours, superimposing different faces of motion, creating an illusion of movement. These fluctuating entities are mirrored in Rachel's work as her subjects are captured in motion.



Photographed by Rachel Roland Martin

#### CHAPTER IV: Appropriation or Appreciation?

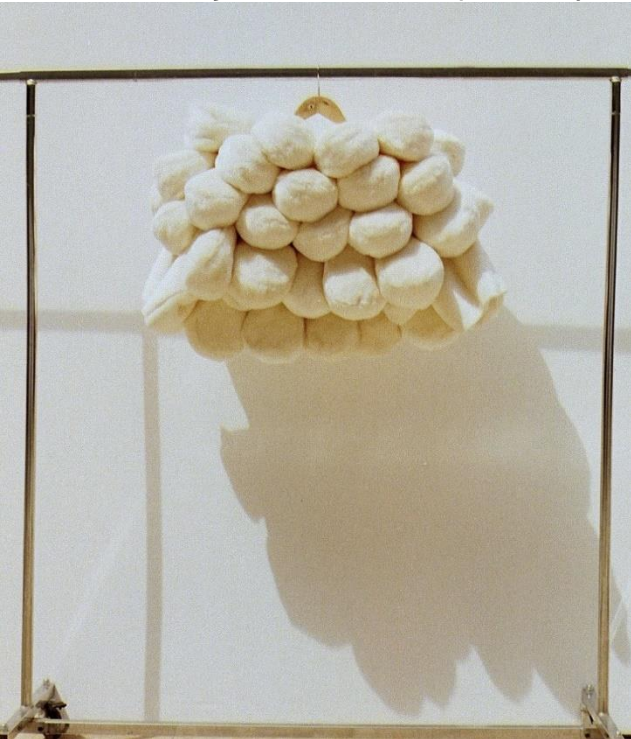
I felt challenged as a journalist, as somewhere during this project, I learnt of a clash between TRAICELINE and a peer stemming from his inspirations for the designs. Questions arose of whether a straight man could sensitively design clothes for marginalised women, especially in such gendered settings as housewives and strippers. In an age of cancel culture, sensitivity to such issues can make or break careers and understandably so, a major concern for TRAICELINE's audience has been this issue of appropriation.

Questioning him on such concerns, the Bahamian designer reassures me not only his recognition of this issue, but also his considerations to those who inspire him. "To reiterate my point, my collection is an ode to six individual women I knew personally, who have not only given me their consent, but are happy that I'm making clothes for them." It was clear why TRAICELINE felt inspired to design a garment paying homage to the housewife archetype he was familiar with.

The garment is made up of creamy off-white fur, chosen to mirror the pristine home she is expected to upkeep as a dutiful housewife. Contrastingly, the spherical shapes making the garment were a deliberate reference to the filling of a rubbish bin, symbolising the mundane tasks of a stay-at-home wife, multiplied to accentuate the accumulation of her

responsibilities. Fur was selected for its soft and cushiony texture, conflicting with the tragic and dark reality hidden beneath the facade of domestic bliss. Despite its outward appearance of elegance, the piece reveals a darker narrative of betrayal, mistreatment, and loneliness experienced by the housewife. So much so, that it ultimately led to her passing. Despaired from her depression, she leaned towards alcoholism as a coping mechanism and unfortunately developed cancer, which caused her death.

The juxtaposition of beauty and darkness within the piece highlights the complexity and depth of her story, and appreciation would be the only way to describe TRAICELINE's respect for her painful struggles.



Garment inspired by 'the housewife', photographed by TRAICELINE



Elizaveta Grivnyak in TRAICELINE, photographed by TRAICELINE

## CHAPTER V: It's all good, it's always good man part 1

Within knowing TRICELINE for a month, it's clear he's fearless. But the time comes for him to style the final looks together and it's safe to say he feels the pressure.

It was 7:30 pm, and he had two BA fashion communication stylists to assist him. The cream crochet top doesn't fit with the outfit planned for the model, "It's frustrating because some pieces have already been used and cannot be styled again with others 'cos they're such strong looks," he tells me. It's a trial-and-error situation, tweaking the cycle at each iteration until a match is made for the awaiting model. Alas, none hit the mark. Maybe a skirt? Or maybe the jeans? I didn't have many insights to offer beyond personal preferences and it made me recognise the depth of thoughtfully curating an outfit, especially for a collection. Subsequently, it wasn't merely about assembling an outfit; each styled look had to be flawless, or else he risked jeopardising his spot at fashion week.

"It's gonna be a long night, man" he joked. By now, he's experimented with two pairs of trousers and a skirt, none of which he feels assured about presenting. He has never broken his composure, but removing his sunglasses for the first time, he says, "Cool, let's take a picture," unconvincingly. With time ticking away and everyone eager to head home, it'll suffice for now. You can feel his gentle, quiet frustration as he sighs evaluating the outfit one final time.



The fitting session, photographed by me

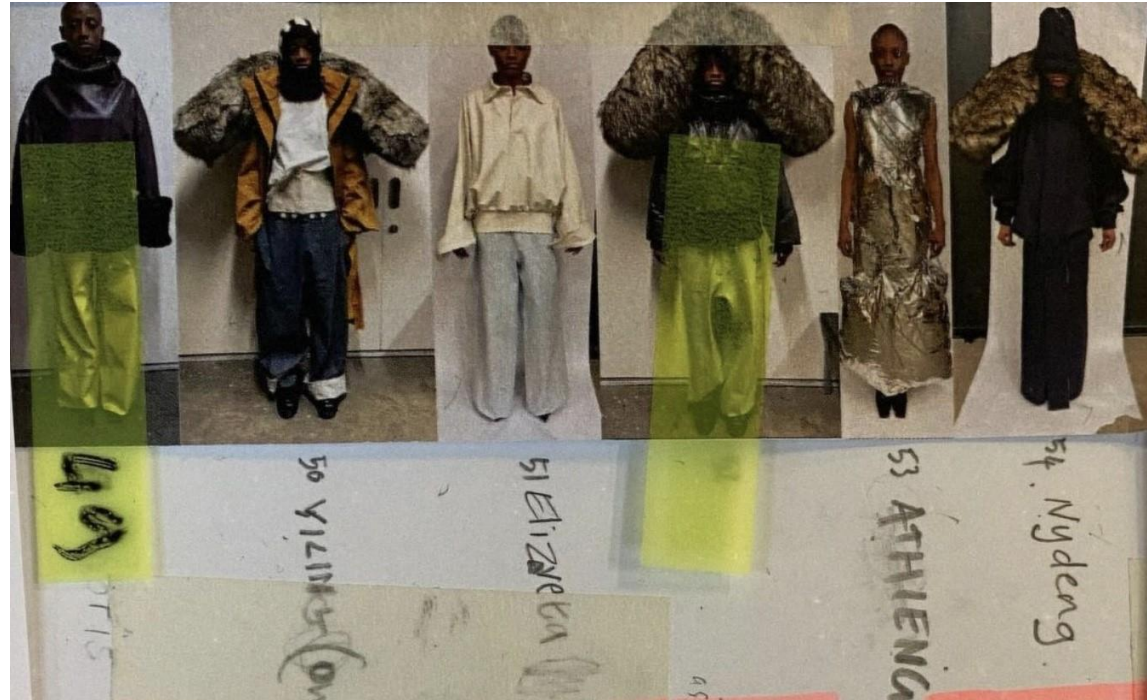


CHAPTER VI: It's all good, it's always good man part 2

The dreaded day of fittings and show selection finally arrived, with nerves palpable in the air. Now confident to enter the sacred halls of the MA fashion studio, we walk straight to his studio corner. Seven tall models are lined up towards the decision room where Piras and Gray, along seven other panellists, will judge the likelihood of student designers making it to London Fashion Week.

"Can someone get me a pin", "I need a clip". These were two phrases that echoed the hall in the closing ten minutes before showcasing. There's fur all over his black trousers and TRAI CELINE mutes his panic to put the finishing touches to his pieces.

His name is called and we all walk in the room. Notes are being taken down, and the panellists talk amongst themselves before Piras admits a small sigh. "Okay... silhouettes are nice, but I hate how you've styled that and the dress is a huge question mark in your collection". The other panellists agree and question the dress. Despite taking the criticism, TRAI CELINE smiles and keeps his composure. His BA fashion communication assistant takes the model to the studio and restyles some of the pieces. When returning, there is a communal agreement across the panellists affirming the assistant's amendment.



Casting and fittings for line up by TRAI CELINE

"There needs to be more resolution rather than unfinished work, I don't understand why it is always so badly communicated, this should be wowing us right now and it's just not there, can you see all we did was restyled the trousers and it's now way better?" Gray nods agreeingly and adds, "This was supposed to be done today, the deadline was today". TRAI CELINE admits he'll restyle and retake photos to submit before the end of the day. Piras adds, "It's annoying

because I know you're capable of it, but it's frustrating. You're frustrating."

As the showcasing ends, we leave the room with a palpable sense of nervousness to finally witness a break in TRAI CELINE's confidence". Amongst reassurance and compliments on his pieces, I hesitantly ask him, "How are you feeling?". "It's all good, it's always good man".

## CHAPTER VII: I'm gonna change the world

It's interesting how close the relationship has gotten, between us as a shadowing group. To think just over four weeks ago, we were on our tippy toes around the MA Fashion studios, and precarious as to how we should approach a busy, high and mighty designer. Aligning the image most have of Fabio, with the image of a luxury designer in the making, we shortly realised we were wrong. We felt a sense of luck that we had partnered with someone as calmly collected and humble as TRACELINE.

Throughout the decision weekend, I found myself anxious to find out whether he had made the cut to show at London Fashion Week (LFW), knowing full well I was probably stressing more than TRACELINE was. Alas, Monday evening came, and an Instagram post was published on his account with the caption "Show date: February 16th 2024", aka the Central Saint Martins LFW show. I was elated to find out and immediately texted Rachel and Anna Maria.

As fashion week approached, the buzz around the Central Saint Martin's MA fashion show heightened and through his Instagram reposted videos, I watched his designs come to life on the runway.

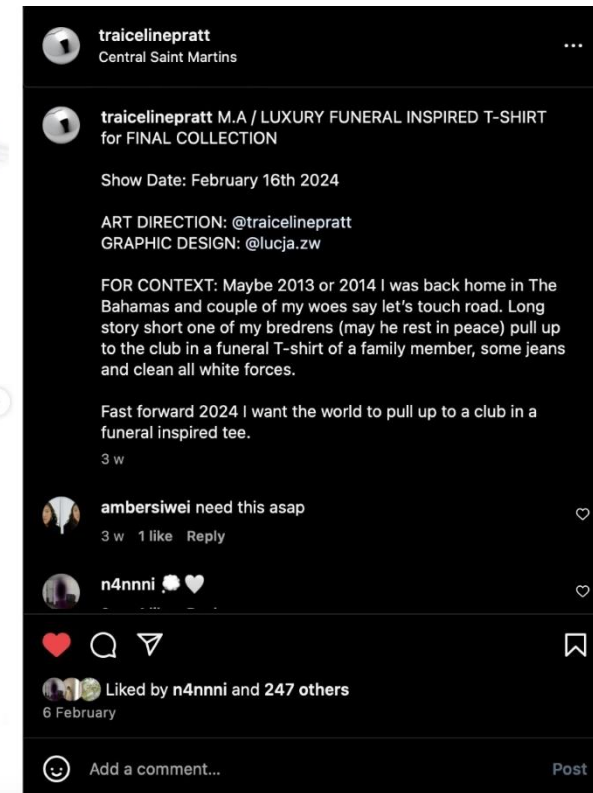
TRACELINE shared press coverage from magazines along the likes of DAZED, 1Granary, Vogue, WWD and many more on his Instagram account. Having been on this journey alongside him, I felt a certain proudness. It's funny because being merely just a spectator, like a fly on the wall of his studio, was the most insightful experience I could have ever gotten. The hard work and dedication to his craft over the last seven years of fashion education has paid off with recognition from the fashion industry.

I planned my final trip to the MA Fashion Studios to interview TRACELINE one last time. Most designers have already or are in the process of packing up their work. The once busy, tireless and even anxiety-ridden studio was now almost empty. And by the end of March, it will be completely abandoned. TRACELINE in his nook in the corner, welcomes me with a smile, and I press record on my voice notes app for the last time. "So what's your plan now?" I ask. "I'm gonna change the world." I don't doubt it for a second.

"My delusion is that one of these conglomerates will look at me, take a risk and decide they want me as their creative director," he explains. For him, the path to success is not paved with conventional milestones but rather with bold leaps



TRACELINE promotional Instagram post for upcoming Central Saint Martin's MA Fashion show



of faith and unwavering self-assurance. And I agree, maybe the most radical and exciting thing a brand can do is think, 'let's snatch this kid straight from MA and put him in that position to see what he can do.' He admits "I have just as or even stronger visions than anybody who is sitting in these creative director's positions right now." With much more to prove and bigger shoes to fill, it would be a huge challenge but TRAICELINE is fully aware of his capacity and reassures me that he'd be a perfect fit. With his parents working in visual design for luxury brands, he was exposed to the fashion industry from a very young age, and at 11 years old, he was outsourced work from his father and trusted to draft a visual display for Cartier. With approval, the draft went on to become one of the Cartier store visual designs. "I understand the fashion industry and I understand what sells. I can stand toe-to-toe with these creative directors, give me the job and you'll see."

This isn't just confidence, this is TRAICELINE. He used to run track and field, and that was work. It was a chore to wake up and run. But fashion isn't work for him, "Fashion for me is forever being out of school, I am forever free from obligations." He wakes up at 4am, meditates and prays before starting his day. He leaves the studio whenever he feels like, and for most if not all, days, this is late evening. It's evident he lives and breathes fashion, and because it comes so naturally, there isn't a need to actively be self-assured.

He told me a story of a friend he grew up with, who from 11 years old, worked on a construction site with his father whilst studying, and working another part-time supermarket job. To this day, this person still works in construction, rather now as a project manager, but this was his life from a young age. "Some people in this world have to do what they have to do to survive, I was fortunate enough to do something I chose to do. Nobody forced me to do fashion, that right there my friend, is hustle and struggle."

"You have people right now, who don't know when their next meal is. And then you have people, who choose to be in fashion and complain about how difficult it is. Bro if you don't wanna do this, leave. Because real people are having difficult, real-life problems. Some people aren't built like how I'm built. They don't have the 'dog' in them. The Bahamas instilled that dog in me. I've seen struggle and I know what darkness looks like."



Athieng Bul and NY Deng walking TRAICELINE at the Central Saint Martin's MA Fashion show, 16 February 2024