MIND OVER MATTER.

Better Materials
Better Products
Better World
INTRO.

When we first met with the Nike Sustainable Business and Innovation team in December 2011, it quickly became clear that many of the values and ideals that London College of Fashion promotes through our curriculum, research and beyond were closely aligned with their forward thinking business ethos. We saw an opportunity to bring together two seemingly very different institutions towards achieving one shared goal and our role in the Mobilize Makers project emerged. Collaborating on such an urgent and compelling initiative has been a seminal learning experience for us and provides a blueprint for London College of Fashion’s role in challenging and redefining the way our industry operates.

Professor Frances Corner, Pro Vice Chancellor – University of the Arts London

A product is the manifestation of a series of relationships and when individual distinctions dynamically connect, we create the otherwise unimaginable. Within this book lies stories of an incredible set of relationships borne out of mutual respect, trust, curiosity and tenacity, focused on better design inspired through new knowledge. This project changes things, for all of us involved and for all makers whose design possibilities are made greater through the NMSI app. Crossing boundaries of place, generation, culture and profession, we have navigated new territories to design and make the futures that we dream of, rather than trying to make what we’ve got less bad. The Centre for Sustainable Fashion at London College of Fashion has compiled this book to showcase one of eight stories. These stories demonstrate how the raw talent of students, wisdom of designers, vision of tutors, genius of technicians and agility of communicators has excelled through the absolute belief that Nike places in the possibilities for a Better World.

Dilys Williams, Director Centre for Sustainable Fashion
The Nike Sponsored Studio brief challenged us to work collaboratively, designing, developing and making a small collection or series of outfits, inspired by an athlete or a team of athletes participating in the 2014/2016 winter/summer Olympics.

Athletes have many seminal moments during their Olympic journey and we were asked to think metaphorically and literally about the moments of 'arrival'. Our designs were expected to reference specific events, such as the opening ceremony or the medal stand and we were asked to develop finished prototypes for one or more of these scenarios.

“The one non-negotiable was that we had to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability”
OUR CONCEPT.

How can perseverance transform pain into perfection? How can we transcend fear and negativity to reach a focused place of peace? How can we go one step further, find our third wind, place mind over matter? The desire to answer these questions was the starting point for our concept.

As a team we were interested in waste; wasted energy, wasted time, wasted talent, all vital resources that we often use unwisely. We wanted our concept to be a focused expression of energy well spent, time well used, and talent well applied.

We looked at professional runners and how they overcome physical and mental exhaustion; we began to see running as a kind of religion, a discipline through which the mind becomes calm and can overcome any weakness in the body. It was this higher state that we wanted to achieve in our design work. Our concept evolved around the transformative and meditative nature of running; the purity, balance and synchronicity that can be achieved by overcoming obstacles, building endurance, and allowing time for recovery.

“As a team we were interested in the idea of waste; wasted energy, wasted time, wasted talent, all vital resources that we often use unwisely.”
I wanted to be part of this project because I was fascinated as to how I could bring my technical and aesthetic approach into a sportswear context. I want to create pieces that are carefully constructed and beautifully realised in every sense, avoiding wasteful or ill-considered design decisions.
MATTHEW GHABRIAL.

I'm a British designer in my second year at London College of Fashion. I like to think that through my work I can question some of the tired methods and old-fashioned practices that dominate fashion culture, offering people new perspectives alongside exciting products.

I found the idea of working with Nike hugely inspiring, some of the technologies and concepts they have brought to market in the last few years are truly pioneering. The virtually no waste philosophy of the Flyknit shoe really resonated with me and through the project I wanted to extend this technology into garment making and see what could be achieved.

“The virtually no waste philosophy of the Flyknit shoe really resonated with me”
ALEXA GOULD-KAVET.

I’m an American stylist, currently studying at London College of Fashion. I think sustainability is the next frontier for fashion, it’s an area that excites and terrifies everyone; we all know we need to engage with a new set of values but we’re often not sure how.

What we say and what we do in fashion must work together to create an engaging and exciting experience that also starts a new dialogue with our customers.

“Work together to create an engaging and exciting experience that also starts a new dialogue with our customers.”
OUR INSPIRATION.

As a team with an eclectic aesthetic and a varied approach to design, we needed to seek out shared inspiration and a common space in which we all felt confident to contribute. Running provided us with a starting point for this shared space; it’s a discipline that we all understood; we’ve all faced motivational challenges; we’ve all overcome pain thresholds and felt the high of achievement. We worked with our mentor Alina who is also a keen runner to explore inspiration and ideas that would draw together all our interests and design methodologies.

We looked at the history of running and found a discipline that is deeply embedded in many cultures. The marathon monks of Tibet and Japan in particular inspired our concept; running is part of their path to enlightenment; they undertake extraordinary feats of endurance and experience extremes of pain and self-doubt to achieve a perfect synchronicity between body and mind. We wanted to represent this difficult path to enlightenment through the design of our ‘kit’, offering preparation, performance and protection through differing but interconnected layers.

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We spent several weeks exploring images, colours and textures and came up with a shared visualisation of the path from pain and sickness to enlightenment and peace.
OUR INSIGHT.

We decided that the best research we could undertake as a team was to run ourselves every day before we started work, experiencing first hand the impact on our bodies.

We noted down the specific areas of pain that we felt as we ran; we observed and discussed the thought processes that surfaced dependent on the length of the run. We wanted to design for the runner who personifies purpose over adversity, demonstrating how calm focus and determination can translate anger and pain to recognition and success. We created a signature look that captures this journey from pain to glory, each layer of our kit represents a different phase in the runner’s process.

The jacket and shorts are inspired by the monk’s robes representing the preparation phase; a moment for reflection and focus, the gathering together of mental and physical fortitude. The second knitted layer is the protection; it is inspired by the bandaging and support runners use to combat injury. The final base layer is a compression suit designed specifically for performance.

“We wanted to design for a runner who personified purpose over adversity”
Our entire approach to design, development and materials selection was inspired by the concept of minimising waste, both through innovative construction techniques and the use of recycled fibres. Our aim was to create garments with a very simple clean aesthetic but an evocative shape, reflecting the clear, calm and focused mind.

ORGANIC COTTON CANVAS.
We wanted a simple ubiquitous white fabric that could provide structure for the body of the jacket; an organic cotton canvas proved the most accessible, appropriate and sustainable option.

NEW LIFE RECYCLED POLYESTER.
We found that recycled polyester was the most easily available and developed recycled fibre on the market. We were able to use it in a variety of garments including as yarn in the 3D knitted pieces and as fabric in the jacket sleeves and hood, the shorts and the body suit. This was our staple fibre, fitting neatly with our no waste philosophy and providing us with the performance and flexibility we required.

“Our aim was to create garments with a very simple clean aesthetic but an evocative shape, reflecting the clear, calm and focused mind”
Our no waste mantra lay at the core of our process and inspired us to look for innovative solutions to design challenges. Amongst other things we looked at a variety of construction techniques including the one piece weaving and no waste cutting approach used in the creation of kimonos; we applied some of this learning in the design and construction of the runner’s jacket. The jacket features a gradation print that embodies the progression from pain to purity, starting in intense chartreuse at the bottom and working through to brilliant white at the top.

In the knitted layer Matthew developed a closed loop system incorporating fibre selection, advance knitting technology, and the use and re-use of the garments. The piece is created from recycled polyester on a Stoll 3d knitting machine and the yarns are connected at a central location on the garment called the cockpit; when the garment reaches the end of its life the cockpit tab is broken and the yarns re-attached to the bobbin and wound back on for re-use.

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OUR PRODUCT.

We wanted the final look to speak for itself, embodying the considered calm and harmony that the designers and the runner share. It offers a unique identity through unusual shapes, texture and the use of a simple colour gradient.

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