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# STYLE

Baillie, Claudia. "Exhibit Faye," *The Times Style Magazine*, September 2015.

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# EXHIBIT FAYE

THE MUST-SEE INSTALLATION AT THIS MONTH'S LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL IS BY THE MULTITALENTED DESIGNER FAYE TOOGOOD. SHE TELLS CLAUDIA BAILLIE ABOUT COATS, COLLECTING AND CREATING

One vast cloakroom, 10 intricate sculptures and 150 coats made of dense foam fabric — not your average museum installation, but then the London-based Faye Toogood isn't your average designer. With furniture, a fashion collection and some impressive brand collaborations to her name, including with Dover Street Market, Kenzo and Alexander McQueen, it seems the former interiors magazine stylist can turn her hand to almost any creative brief.

Produced in conjunction with the Danish contemporary textile manufacturer Kvadrat, the interactive exhibition, called the Cloakroom, will be at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the hub of the London Design Festival, later this month. Visitors will enter a circular cloakroom and choose one of the handmade coats, each with a fabric map tucked into the pocket to guide the wearer on a journey around the building to seek out 10 coat sculptures, also designed by the 38-year-old Toogood.

"The V&A is my favourite place in London, and all the sculptures sit next to something that inspires me," she says. "There's a bronze coat next to a patinated bronze ceiling, a coat made of thousands of pins and needles pushed into a stainless-steel mesh that's inspired by an embroidery, and in the British pottery section there is a ceramic coat that takes its cue from Staffordshire pottery. I'm passionate about British manufacturing, and the project is a celebration of that."

What was the thinking behind so many coats? "I wanted to do something related to the project I've been working on with my sister Erica," she says, referring to Toogood, the eponymous clothing line the pair launched at Paris fashion week two years ago. "Coats have a strong identity, and our collection includes several coats named after a trade — the Beekeeper jacket, the Oilrigger coat, and so on. My sister's background is tailoring, and mine is more sculpture and fine art, so it's about how we marry those two things. I see garments in the same way I see furniture, in terms of volume, shape and materials, but it

still amazes me to watch her work with a flat piece of cloth and a pair of scissors to create a three-dimensional thing." Instead of being made from the usual cashmere or wool, some Toogood coats are made from rubberised or screen-printed artist's canvas, and sell for up to £3,795. "When we started, we couldn't afford fancy Italian fabric," she says. Others are crafted from thick industrial felt, or layer upon layer of clingfilm or silver gaffer tape. "The next collection will be hand-painted, so each time it's different."

Her obsession with form and materials started young. The daughter of a florist mother and a scientist father, she was raised in rural Rutland. "There was no television until I was seven, so I had to rely on my imagination. I became a collector — rocks, birds' eggs, sticks, bones, objects from the landscape. It's the one thread that has continued from my childhood. If I could get rid of everything, I probably would, except my collection of sticks and bones." She was also inspired by the art of the St Ives School. "Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth... I remember visiting her house, seeing pictures of this small woman chiselling away at huge pieces of stone and thinking, 'I want to do that!'"

She studied history of art at Bristol University, but it was the sticks and bones that landed the 21-year-old Toogood her first job, as a stylist at the prestigious Condé Nast title *The World of Interiors*. She reportedly turned up to the interview with a box full of objects, and was hired on the spot by the then editor, Min Hogg. "It was a solid grounding for the way I look at things today. I didn't train in furniture, fashion or interior design, so in my head I have no rules. That period allowed me to experiment with interiors, art, antiques, materials, compositions and architecture. It was fantastic."

Eight years later, she left to set up her own studio. "It's multidisciplinary. Everyone here has a different background, be that sculpture, product design, fashion or graphics," she says of the 15-strong team. How did she gather such a diverse mix of creatives? "They gravitate towards me," she says, laughing. "The misfits, I call them. It might be a



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK C O'FLAHERTY; HAIR AND MAKE-UP: CELINE NONOIN AT TERRI MANDUCA USING KERASTASE AND SISLEY SKINCARE AND COSMETICS





The British designer Faye Toogood wearing the Oilrigger coat and Sculptor trousers from her Toogood clothing collection, available from Selfridges. Far left: a coat made from Kvadrat Highfield embossed foam upholstery fabric for the Cloakroom project

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## WHAT WE CREATE, WHETHER IT'S WHAT YOU WEAR OR WHAT YOU SIT ON, IS A LIVING WORK OF ART

furniture designer who wants to work on a garment, or an architect wanting to try something other than architecture. This way of looking at design is becoming more relevant. We deal with space and objects, and what we create — whether it's in your home, what you wear or what you sit on — is, in a sense, a living work of art."

Since she founded Studio Toogood in 2008, there has been a host of commissions, from private interiors to installations for brands, most recently Hermès. "I stripped out the ground floor of the Bond Street store and turned it red, with fixtures made from red resin and leather. That was fun." She has also designed several collections of furniture, the latest being a group of squat, plump fibreglass chairs, a table and a day bed, aptly named Roly Poly. In the pipeline is Pots, a range of ceramics made with the Japanese company E&Y, which will be launched at the Design Museum during the London Design Festival, and a further installation at Somerset House, called the Drawing Room. She plans to cover the walls of the space with tarpaulin, onto which she will draw a two-dimensional, autobiographical room. "There will be things I remember from my childhood — pictures of me and my sister, chairs and tables — hand-drawn on the walls."

After that, she will be heading to Paris to show the fourth Toogood fashion collection. She is also working on two interiors projects — a summer house in Ibiza, due for completion in the autumn, and a large family home in west London. "I've been working on more private interiors lately, and I'm enjoying bringing together the spaces and objects," she says. "Going forward, I'd like to work on a small hotel. The concept of what a hotel design or experience should be has become hackneyed, so to revisit that and to marry up all the things I'm interested in would be amazing. I also think what Nike is doing in terms of collaborations is exciting, and I love Uniqlo — to work with them and see thousands of Beekeeper coats would be great!"

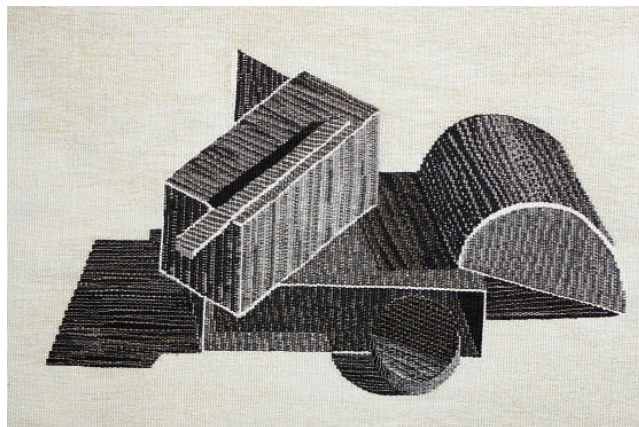
For now, though, the 150 Kvadrat coats are being carefully crafted for the Cloakroom, to take visitors on an adventure around the V&A. "I like the social element, and I'm excited to see all those people walking around the museum dressed in my coats. I think it will be quite comical," she says, laughing. "And with any luck, it will introduce them to amazing parts of the museum that they've never seen." ♦

HEDLERKNEFELD

*The Cloakroom, Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7, Sept 19-27, no booking required; fayetoogood.com*

Main picture:  
Toogood designed the  
interior at the Oliver  
Gustav Studio  
in Copenhagen, as  
well as the furniture.

Roly Poly dining  
table, £9,500, dining  
chair, £3,500, and  
small chairs, £5,500  
each. Right: Play  
limited-edition cotton  
and wool tapestry,  
100cm square,  
£39,000, by  
Faye Toogood



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