

# STEVEN B. WHEELER

VOLUME 1: Art & Science

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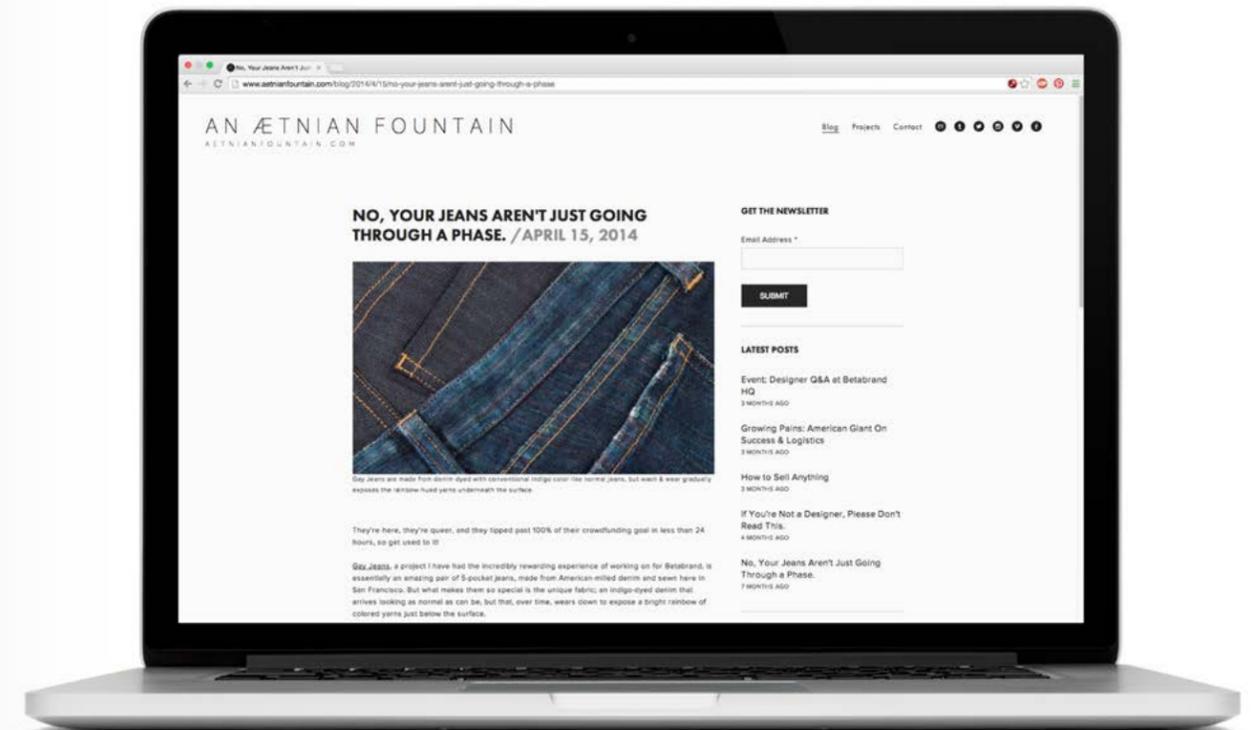
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven B. Wheeler is a designer and maker living in the San Francisco Bay Area. His training as an apprentice tailor at the start of his professional career has influenced his work in streetwear, high-performance sportswear, outerwear, and accessory design. Besides admiring well-designed products, he has a profound love for the creative process, craftsmanship, and materials.

## VISIT THE BLOG



Visit [aetnianfountain.com](https://aetnianfountain.com) for new projects, upcoming events, book reviews, and insight into my life and professional career. There you will also find links to taped events that I've been invited to speak at or participate in, as well as links to my profiles on various social networks.

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*“A designer is an emerging synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic,  
objective economist, and evolutionary strategist.”*

—R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

SELF

# Hi, I'm Steven.

## I AM A DESIGNER

I create products by focusing on the end user, and by finding out as much as I can about them, their expectations, and their experiences. I understand that design is about more than just how something looks: it's also about how it works, how it feels, and how it's perceived.

When I encounter a product I love, I examine it carefully and try to find out why it's so enjoyable. As I do that, there's a point at which I can almost see into the mind of the designer, and catch a glimpse into their thought process as they anticipated how I'll interpret and interact with their work.

I believe that applying this user-centric design philosophy and being open to feedback are the most valuable skills a designer can learn.

## WHAT I DO FOR WORK

I currently work for The North Face as the senior designer of Men's Sportswear. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, we produce a truly bonkers amount of new products; in fact, I just finished working on the initial designs for over 70 styles for Spring/Summer 2017. With prototypes coming in several times a week, it's like the 12 Days of Christmas over here.

Working with a solid team, being in an office with a sweeping view of the San Francisco Bay, and access to the resources of a 3 billion dollar company are all pretty great. In all honesty, there aren't any downsides to my current position.

That said, people like me—and I suspect people like you—are always hungry for the next challenge. In the right creative environment, with the right resources, and with a deeply rooted desire to gain new knowledge and experiences, we can push the boundaries of high-performance design.

## THINGS I LOVE

It would be easy enough to call me a workaholic, but the truth is, rarely have I considered what I do to be “work” in the same way other people think of it. Still, I do have other interests, like film photography, home improvement projects, and wilderness backpacking, and I like to think that all of my non design-related hobbies have contributed something valuable to what I do for “work.” Whenever embark on a new project or adventure, the very thought of learning and applying new knowledge to solve a problem becomes irresistible.

I'm not a know it all, *I'm a learn it all.*

## YOU DESERVE THE BEST

Maybe you've heard the phrase, “A-players like to work with other A-players,” meaning that when you get a team of the most talented and passionate people working together, they'll push each other to new levels of success.

Working with A-players becomes a self-propagating environment of excellence as they only seek out other A-players to join the team.

## I AM AN A-PLAYER

Having an idea is easy; anyone can do it. The truly gifted are those that can take an idea, put some of themselves into it, and turn it into a reality.

As you look through this booklet of some of my favorite projects, you'll see evidence that I'm one of those kinds of people.

With my background in design, concept ideation, and my experience in the development of high-performance sportswear, outerwear, and softgoods, plus my collaborations between brands, I know what it means to work together.



Combine those things with an uncanny resourcefulness and a bottomless reservoir of curiosity that powers me like a turbine, and the result is someone who knows what it takes to make insanely great products.

# Let's talk.



LIFTOFF



*The Space Jacket I wore during a recent trip to NASA's Kennedy Space Center as an invited guest to view the launch of a SpaceX Falcon 9 resupply mission, and to tour the spaceport's facilities.*

## 17,500 MPH

The Space Jacket.

I crafted the first version of it in the fall of 2013, carving out time in the day to make something for myself. For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated with space exploration. Making the Space Jacket seemed like a fun way to combine my interests and have something unique to wear

The exterior layer of material is Tyvek, the tough, nonwoven material made by DuPont that is used in everything from express mail envelopes to building construction. Quilted to the Tyvek is an insulating layer of Primaloft Sport, and the backside is finished with an aluminized 15D nylon.

I found a local person in the Bay Area who offers a quilting service to finish actual quilt tops for home sewers, and worked with her to have the yardages sewn with this box quilt pattern.

Sewign the jacket together on my equipment at home, I attached some authentic patches from my own collection.

I wore it to the office one day, and the team insisted we send photos to contacts at NASA and private space industry companies, then we sat down to fig-

ure out how to create a production version for Beta-brand.

Because the business model is centered around crowdfunding to validate designs before production, I was introduced to people at NASA and invited to meet with scientists and engineers at NASA Ames Research Facility, The Lunar Science Institute, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and several private space industry companies. We did have to make some compromises for production. For example, NASA asked us to change the names of the astronauts from the mission patch (a very reasonable request), so we worked around it by changing the names to the first 5 people that backed the Space Jacket in crowdfunding. It's a nice way to celebrate the first people that helped us make this garment a reality.

I've been blown away by the loving reception it's received, and fans have seen the Space Jacket for what it is; my own personal love letter to the legacy of manned space exploration.

Though it began as a personal project with no expectation beyond wearing it when I finished, it has taken on a life of its own and inspired many new projects since.





NSA



*The first box of patches to arrive from A-B Emblem, the official supplier of mission patches to NASA since 1961. Besides changing the logo, NASA requested we change the names of the astronauts on the mission patch, so we used the names of the first five people to crowdfund the Space Jacket.*



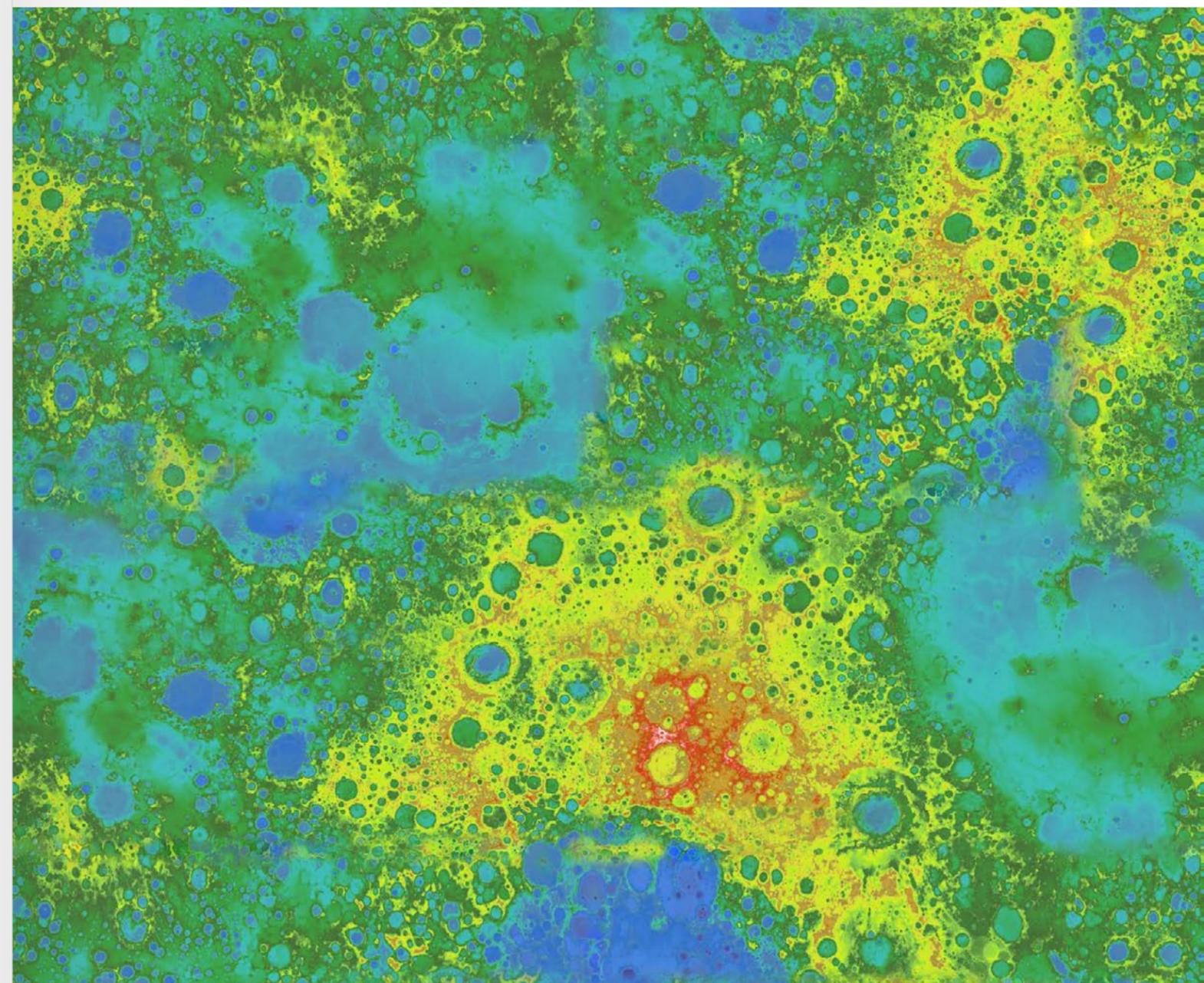
## TAILOR MOON

With the success of the Space Jacket, Betabrand hosted an event called Mission Control and invited researchers from NASA, private space companies, and the public to participate in an evening of discussion and brainstorming with the idea of creating a space-themed streetwear capsule.

We kicked off the evening with talks from Ariel Waldman (NASA), Jason Dunn (MadeInSpace), and

myself before breaking into teams to come up with branding and design ideas.

After the event, we compiled all the ideas from the evening, and together with my design team at Betabrand, created a small space-themed capsule collection that we launched into crowdfunding in 30 days.

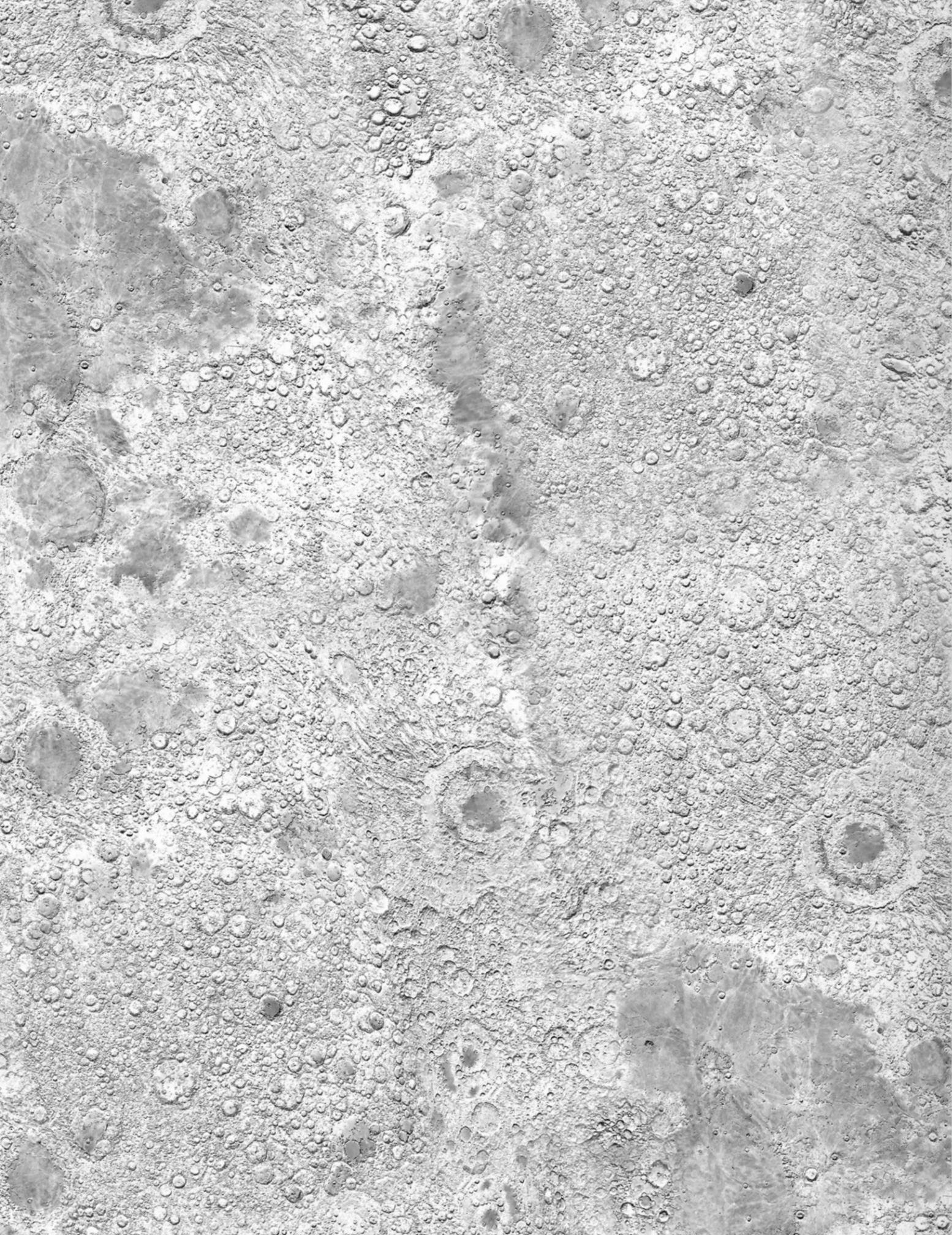


*Seamless print repeat created with imagery from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) spacecraft.*

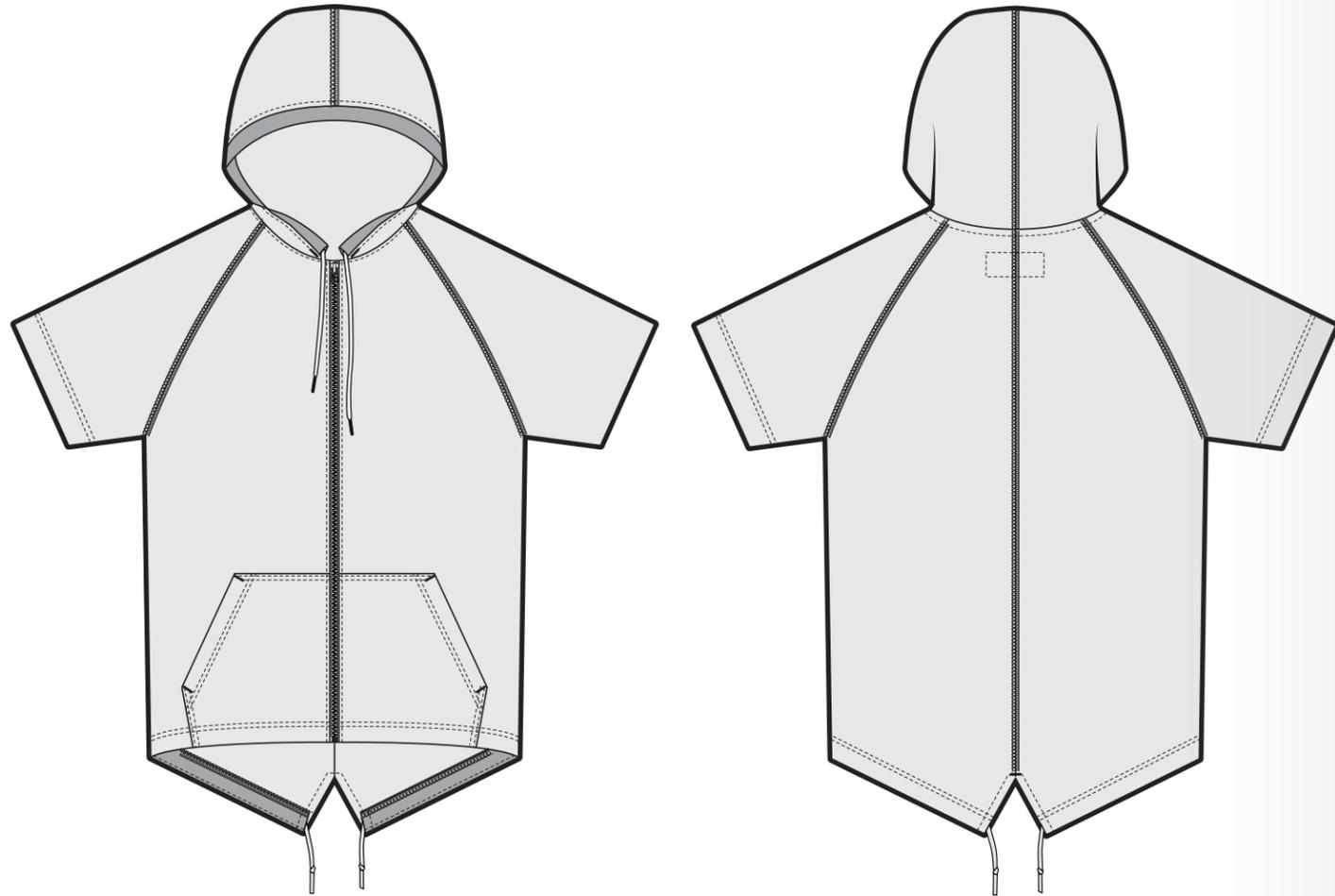


*My own take on the classic windbreaker silhouette: The LRO Windbreaker is made from 15D nylon taffeta digitally printed with artwork from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter spacecraft, currently in orbit around the moon. This product launched on the 5-year anniversary of the launch of the LRO mission.*





*One of Betabrand's Weekender Duffle Bags in a limited-edition Lunar Grey print (left). I worked with NASA's imaging team at Ames Research Facility to create this seamless pattern repeat using ultra-high resolution images from the LRO spacecraft.*



*The Micrograv Fishtail Hoodie: Ultra lightweight brushed cotton & rayon french terry with 20D nylon taffeta contrast, anodized aluminum cord tips, and a two-way separating Vislon zipper.*





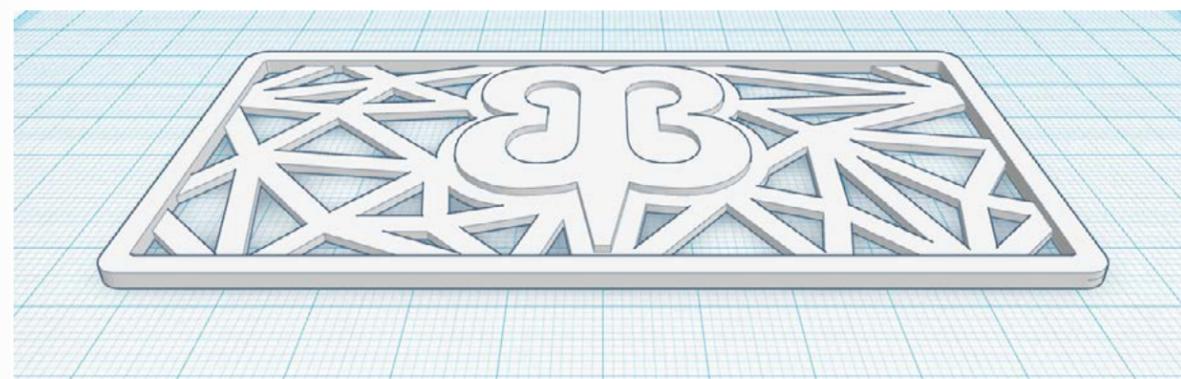
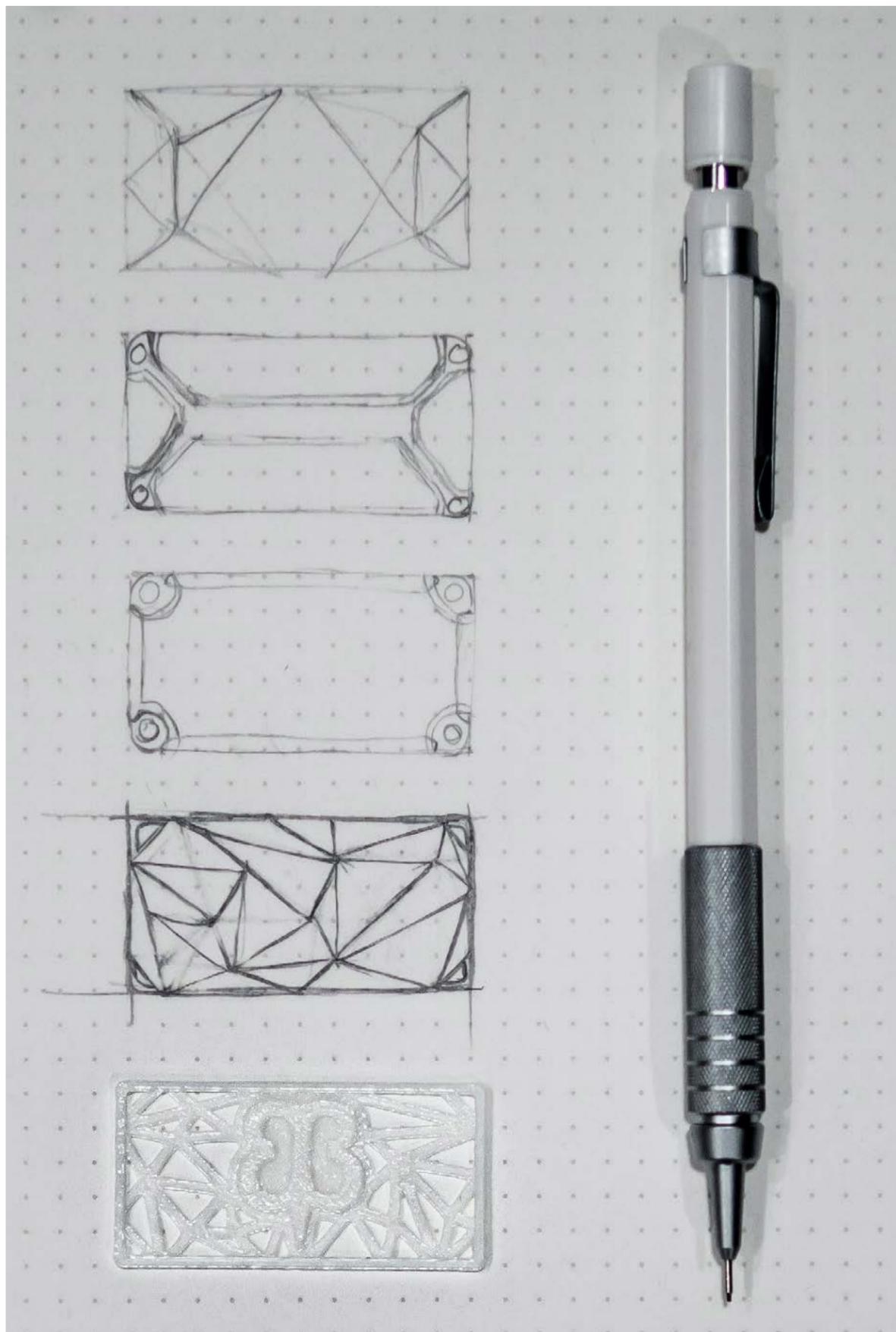






## STL TYVEK WINDBREAKER

The STL Tyvek Windbreaker is the result of a collaboration with Bre Pettis, co-founder and former CEO of MakerBot. The graphic printed to the Tyvek material is inspired by how the .STL files used in 3D printing look on a computer screen.



*The first 200 units of the STL Tyvek Windbreaker came with an actual 3D-printed logo designed by myself and printed on MakerBot Replicators by Bre Pettis and his team in NYC.*



*Bre Pettis, co-founder and former CEO of MakerBot. The two of us hit it off extremely well and had a blast developing this concept. The STL Windbreaker was released on November 19th, 2014.*



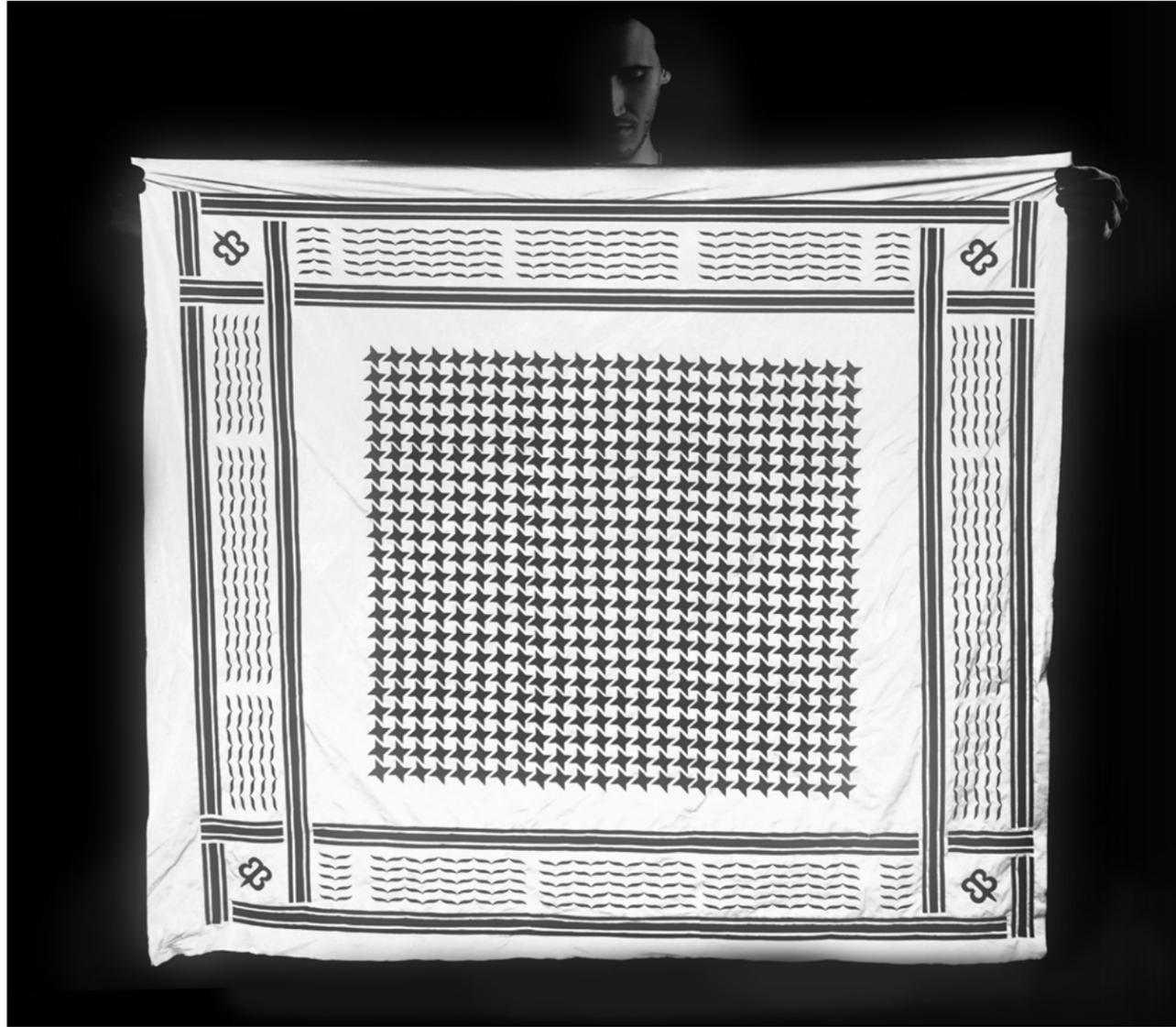
## THE FLASHBACK COLLECTION

Designed in collaboration with celebrity DJ Chris Holmes, the Flashback Collection is a capsule of products designed to foil one of the biggest annoyances to celebrities and DJs: The smartphone-toting amateur paparazzo.

Using fabric coated with millions of tiny glass microspheres, the light from the flash is reflected straight back into the camera, blowing out the highlights and creating vast pools of shadowed areas with little to no detail.

While excellent at providing nighttime visibility, the materials used in the Flashback Collection have also proven themselves useful in letting nightclub DJs foil the efforts of would-be paparazzi.







*The Flashback Reflective Suit is a handmade one-off designed and constructed for the launch of the Flashback Collection. By combining old-world tailoring techniques with high-tech retroreflective fabric, I designed and built a unique showpiece for the collection.*

*Check out [vimeo.com/stevenbwheeler](https://vimeo.com/stevenbwheeler) to see a behind-the-scenes timelapse video of its design & assembly.*





*A sleek, high tech dress shirt that will never get in the way of even the most adventure-prone man.*

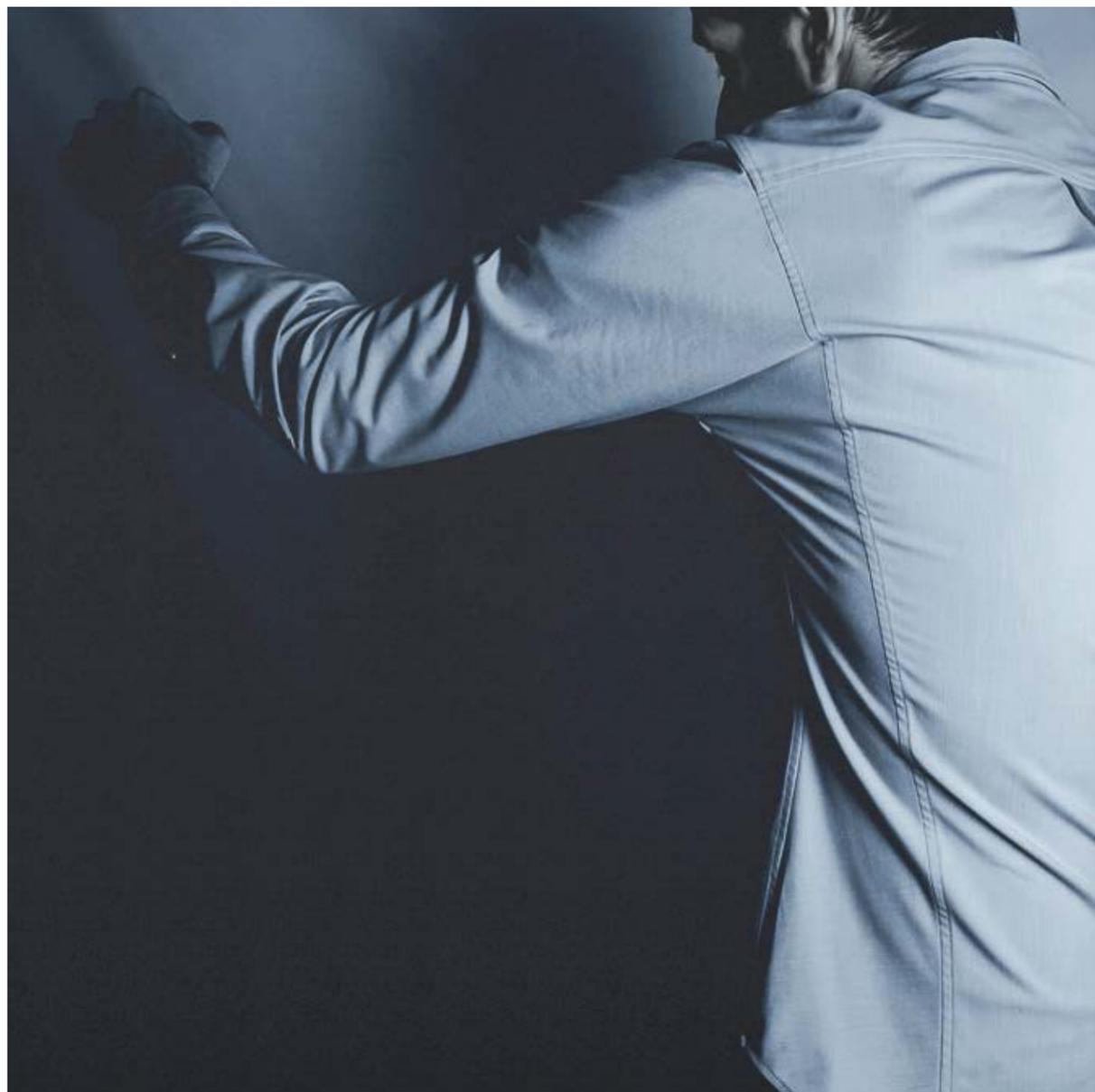
## BORN READY

The READY capsule collection started with my quest to build the best performance dress shirt a man can buy.

In order to do that, I pulled out every technique I learned as an apprentice tailor, plus used high-performance materials that deliver comfort, style, and quality. Each seam is sewn with a clean finish, so it's as beautiful on the inside as it is on the outside. A covered button placket neatly finishes the center front of the shirt, and a crisp, contemporary collar buttons down invisibly from the underside.

The pattern was engineered so that the armhole seam—instead of going under the arm—continues down the side of the shirt, effectively creating a side panel and sleeve shape that allows for an exceptionally well-tailored fit and a limitless range of motion.

Our fabrics, made from high-performance blended fibers with mechanical stretch, UV-blocking finish, and moisture wicking properties make the READY Shirt the most practical everyday button-up shirt for young and active urban professionals.



*Innovative sleeve construction engineered for limitless range of motion, plus clean-finished seam construction, equals a shirt that's as beautiful on the inside as it is on the outside.*



*Color choices for SS14 were Steel Grey, Blue Oxford, and Red Dobby (above).*



*The principles and functional aspects of the READY Shirt have been translated to other products like READY Jeans.*



## CORPORATE CLIMBER PANTS

Designed in collaboration with avid climber and outdoorsman Seth Gourson, the Corporate Climber Pants are a natural extension of the READY collection. The pants have an abrasion resistant nylon face, with plenty of mechanical stretch that won't get in the way of any climbing route.

The pants also have reinforced chalk loops at the back for use when climbing or bouldering without a harness, a robust slide-snap waistband closure, vented pocket bags, and two zippered pockets to keep personal items secure.





*Office-appropriate, yet totally technical. The Corporate Climbers have hidden chalk bag loops, secure slide-snap closure, vented pockets, and minimal waistband construction that plays nice with a climbing harness.*



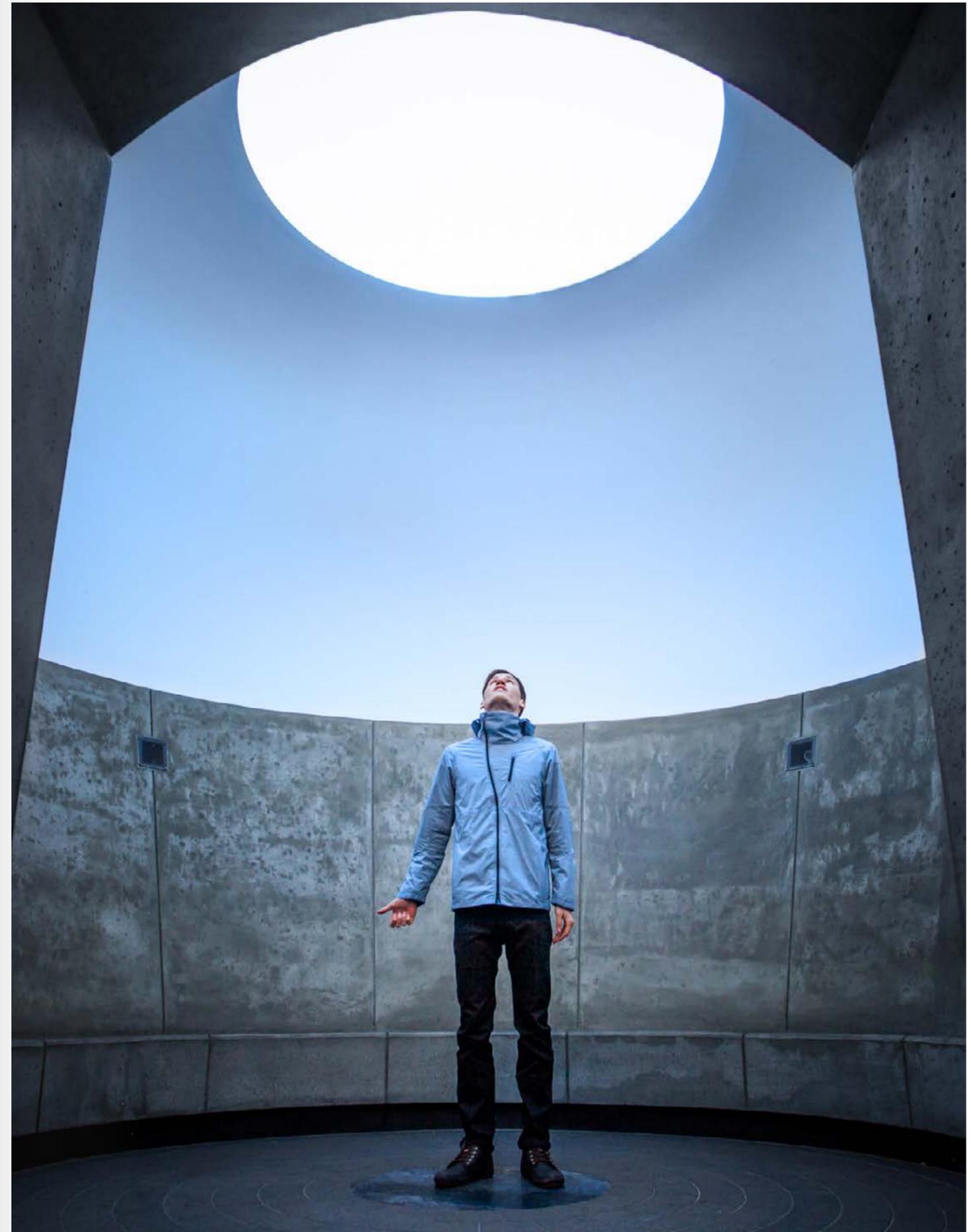
## THE JACKET OF INFINITE IMPROBABILITY

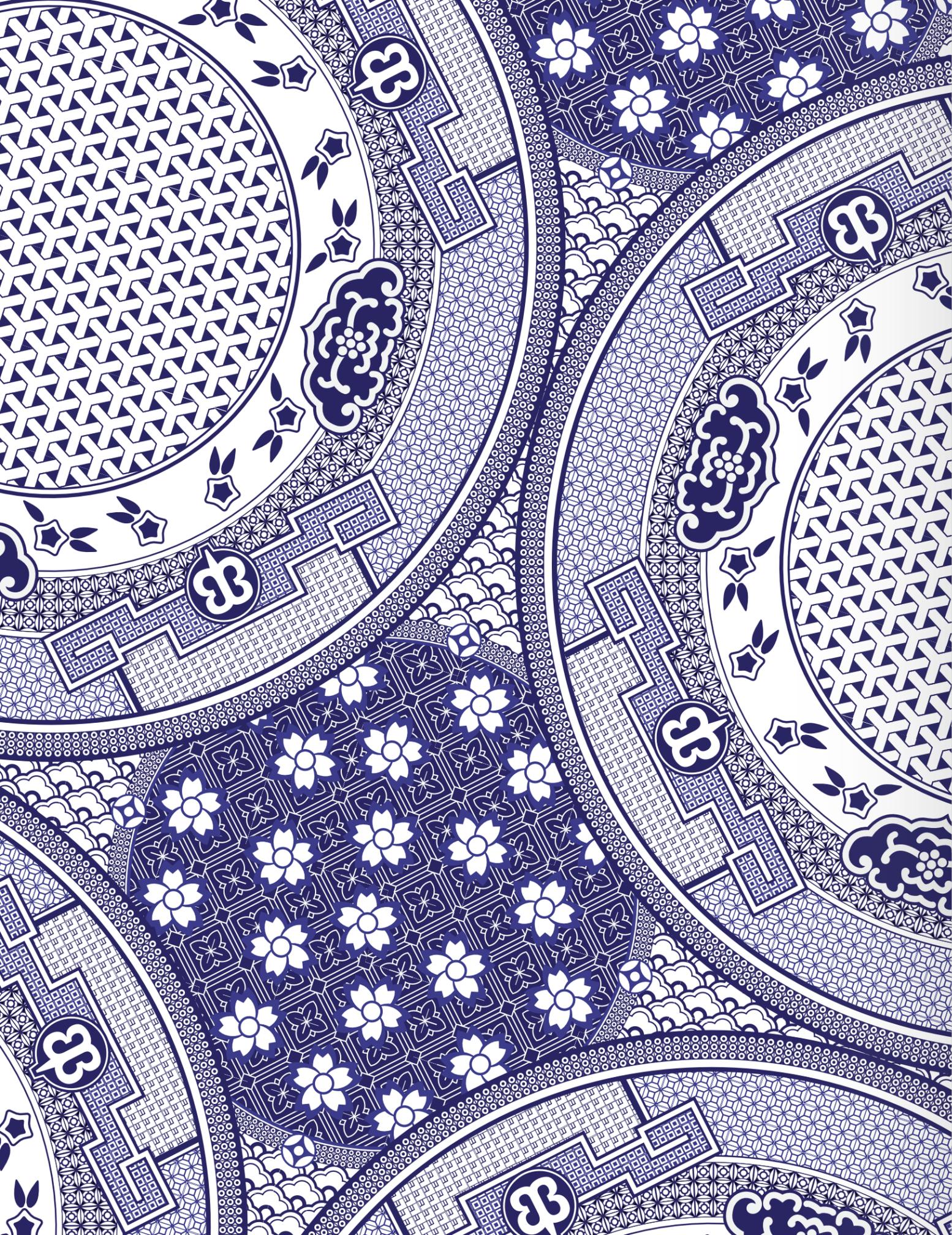
With details that speak to Douglas Adams' classic book *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the Jacket of Infinite Improbability uses a fabric that looks like waxed cotton, but is in fact a high-tech laminated ripstop nylon that is designed to become more and more distressed-looking with each wear, but can be reset back to its solid color with an iron.

The asymmetrical center front zipper, innovative fabric, single layer pocket bags, exaggerated collar, and zip-off hood all make for a dramatic jacket that packs down into an included stuff-sack.



*With each wear, the nylon fabric develops a unique “crackled” surface that looks similar to waxed cotton, but unlike waxed cotton, it is very lightweight and can be restored to its original appearance simply by ironing it.*





*"Blue willow"  
Fall/Winter 2014*

## THE UT LAB TYVEK SHOE

I have wanted an opportunity to participate in the development of a footwear program since college. With the collaboration between Betabrand and The UT Lab, I got exactly that chance.

The UT Lab successfully crowdfunded their first solid colors of printed Tyvek footwear in 2013. This year, we teamed up with them to bring digitally

printed versions of their shoes to the masses. The FW14 hi-tops feature co-branded trim elements and our own custom print designs. For SS15, we're developing a new low-top style that we'll have exclusive for our customers, and four new patterns, including one that will hopefully be made from a laser-etched solid color faux suede, an opportunity for innovation and growth for both brands.



*The Betabrand design team pooling our print ideas at the beginning of the design process for the SS15 shoe program.*



*"Plumage"  
Fall/Winter 2014*



*The Pulsar Case for Jawbone's Mini Jambox portable speaker. Shown here attached to the shoulder strap of a pack, the case has reconfigurable mounting straps and is constructed of acoustically-transparent materials overlaid with a 3M retroreflective heat transfer for nighttime visibility.*

## REFLECTIVE PULSAR CASE FOR THE JAWBONE MINI JAMBOX

When the product development team at Jawbone reached out to Betabrand to develop new accessory ideas for their new Mini Jambox, I leapt at the opportunity to connect the two brands through design innovation.

Because the bike commute customer such a huge part of our market, I wanted something that complimented the Jawbone aesthetically and also allowed cyclists to listen to music without the need for headphones, which are dangerous to wear when cycling.

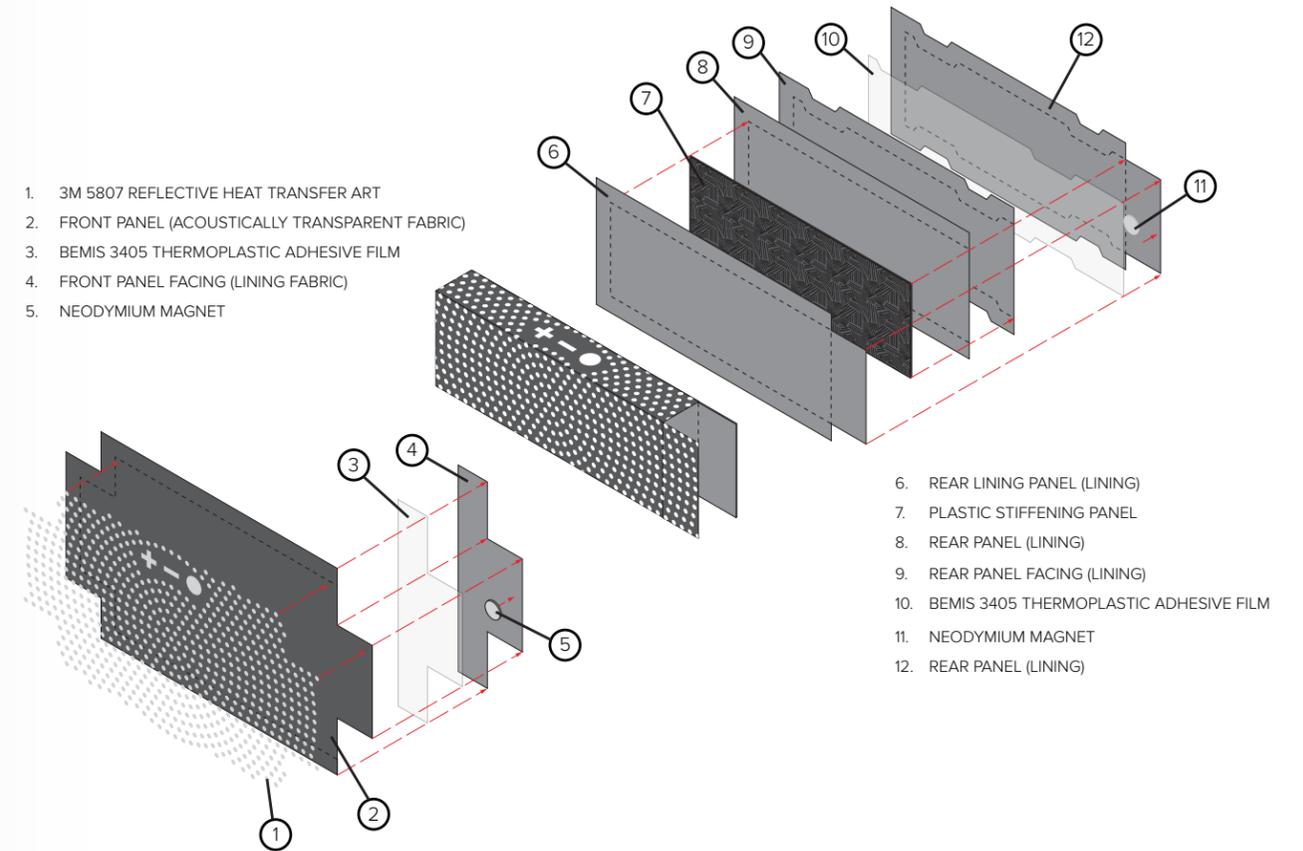
Designed as a protective case for the Mini Jambox, the Pulsar Case is an acoustically transparent sheath for the device, and every side has 3M Scotchlite retroreflective film to reflect light and increase nighttime safety.

In addition, I learned a lot about packaging design, the “unboxing experience” that is such a critical first impression, sharing production resources between collaborators, and the value of rapid prototyping and designing for functionality first.

The collaboration between the two design companies was one of the most enjoyable things I've had the opportunity to do. It was a lot of work, but it was also very cool working with such talented and experienced product designers from the tech industry.



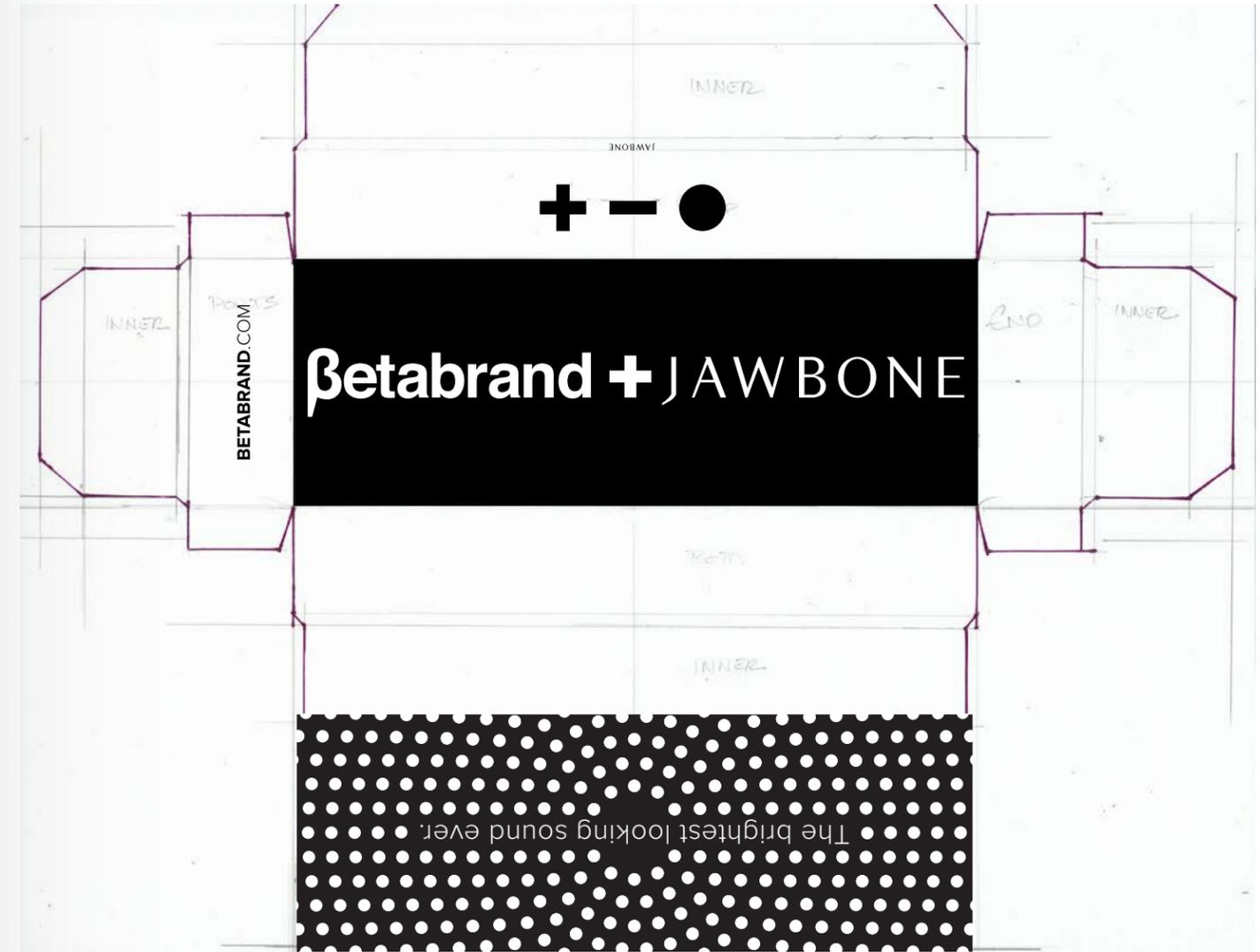
*I worked closely with the team at Jawbone to develop a design that not only maintains full functionality of the Mini Jambox, but also honors the aesthetic language of the device.*



*My attempt to deliver a clear and concise assembly diagram for our factory using an exploded isometric illustration.*



*Early prototypes and design mockups made from materials from cardstock to fabric. These were done to feel out some of the design ideas and functional aspects of the product as rapidly as possible.*



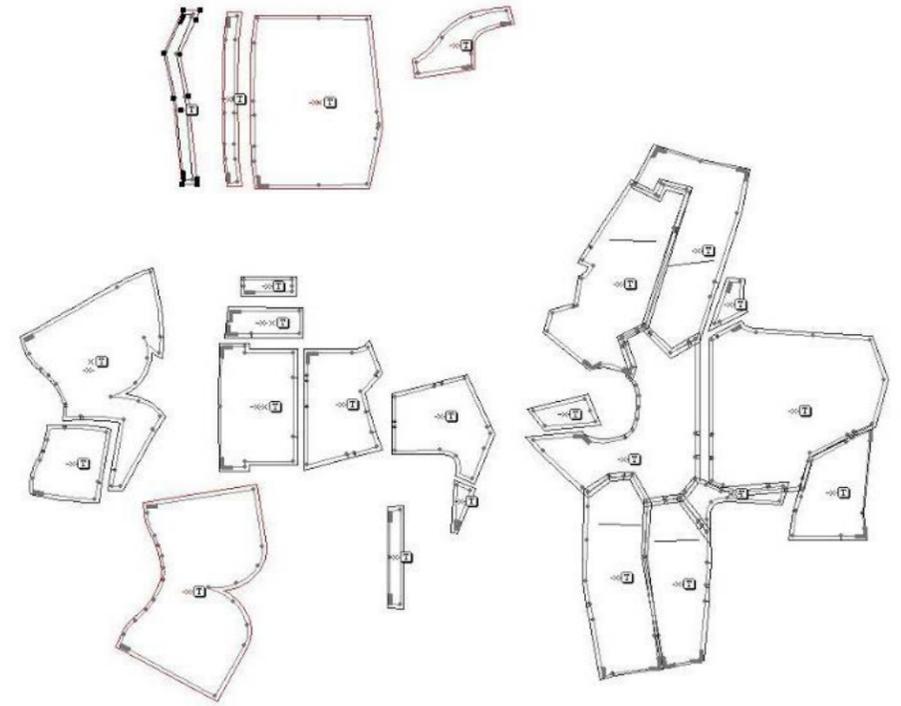
*A first rough template for the packaging of the Pulsar Case. The unboxing experience of Jawbone's products are an important part of the brand experience, and I was challenged to develop a product presentation that gave our customer a first impression that would delight them yet still feel like a logical extension of the brand.*

## THE DARPA HOODED SOFTSHELL

Designed in collaboration with San Francisco innovation studio OtherLab, the DARPA Hooded Softshell was designed using an algorithm developed for topographical mapping by OtherLab and sold to DARPA.

We used this mapping tool to find the best ways to maximize the yield of materials and to reduce waste. Also known as “zero-waste” cutting, the technique can produce really cool design lines. On this product, I saw a lot of similarity to the sharply angular stealth bombers used by our military.

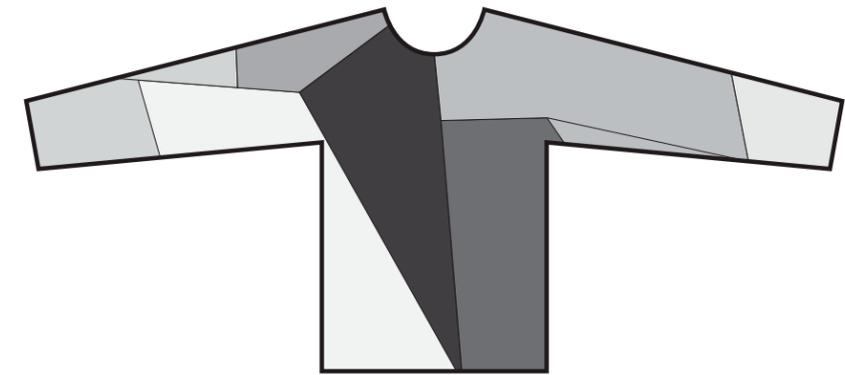
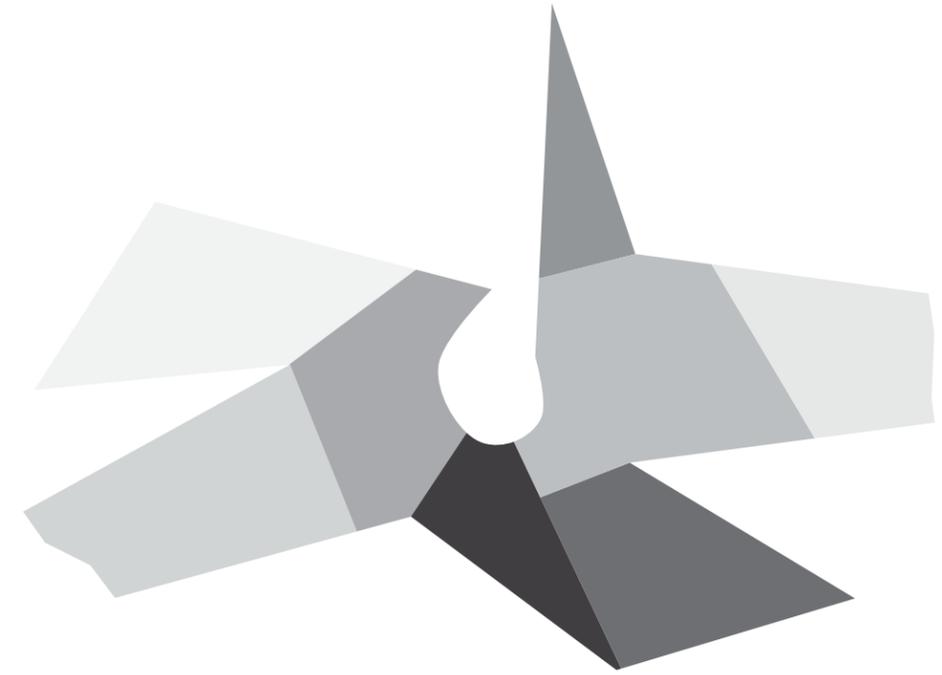








*Further building on the DARPA concept, my work included the design of a long-sleeve crewneck shirt that has the same algorithmic-based pattern technique and asymmetrical style lines.*

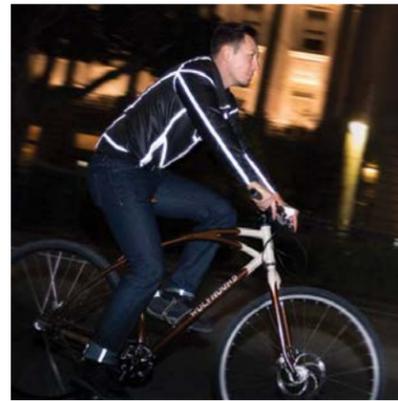




## THE BIKE-TO-WORK COLLECTION

When I first began my adventure at Betabrand, the Bike to Work collection consisted of a pair of trousers and an idea for a softshell jacket. Two years later, we've grown the category into a complete active apparel line with cross-functional design for staying comfortable and safe while on your bike as well as looking smart at the office.

We share as much common design details, fabric and trim across the line as we can, and any new innovations are rapidly rolled into the rest of the line when a concept proves successful. Our reflective yarn dye plaids, reflective heat transfers, and the printing technique we invented for our socks were quickly rolled into as many products as possible. This helps us maintain a margin advantage as well as meet MOQ requirements (important for a smaller brand like ours), plus makes the line look cohesive and easier to mechanize.



*From upper left to right: The Bike to Work (BTW) Softshell Jacket, the BTW Blazer, the Urban Awareness Reversible Windbreaker, the BTW Polo, BTW Trousers, BTW Knickers, BTW Socks, BTW Reflective Plaid Shirt, BTW Shorts.*



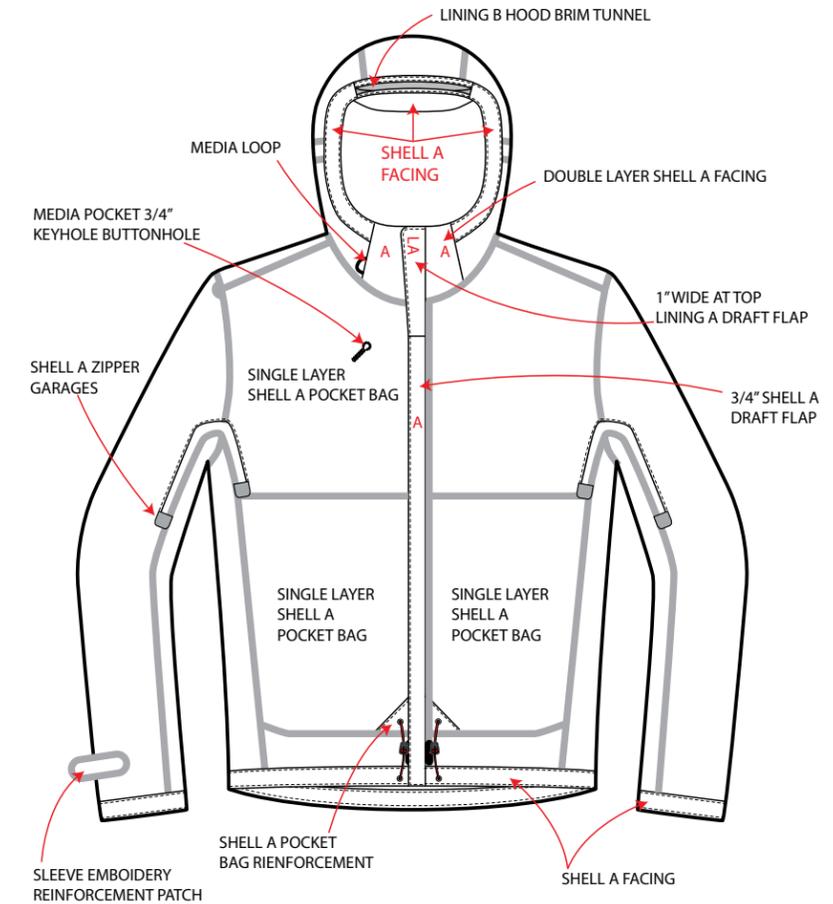
*The BTW Sweater is a machine-washable merino wool blend sweater, which looks fantastic during the day, but at night shines with an innovative construction: Retroreflective yarns are knitted directly into the garment.*



*The Urban Awareness Jacket's reflective side. It's like a simple black windbreaker with a secret identity.*



THE MOUNTAINS  
ARE CALLING



## THE NORTH FACE

I consider my time in 2012-2013 designing men's outerwear and sportswear at The North Face to be one of the most positive and expansive learning opportunities I have had so far in my career. The community of designers I worked with and my love for the brand and its products helped make it one of the most prolific times in my life.

The North Face set a solid foundation for me as a designer, and I continue to build on those lessons as a returning member of the design team. By combining high-tech materials with style, functionality, innovative design,

and industry best-practices, I incorporate my experiences from TNF in all of my work.

Whether designing products for our Core, Explore, or Pursuit (good, better, best, respectively), I have been challenged in ways that helps me grow and mature as a designer. By learning about critical facets of the business like marker efficiencies, colorway minimums, shared trim components, and the way duty rates are calculated on imported goods, I'm able to deliver tremendous value to the customer with products like 2014's GoreTex PacLite Dryzzle Jacket shown here.

## MEN'S S14 SPORTSWEAR

- A7L9 Orangahang Woven
- A4J4 Overhang Woven S/S Plaid
- A4H5 Taggart Stretch Woven Plaid S/S
- A4H6 Taggart Stretch Polo
- A4H9 Paramount Woven S/S
- A4J0 Paramount Peak Convertible Pant
- A7N1 Paramount Valley Convertible Pant
- A4J1 Paramount Traverse Pant
- A4J2 Paramount Cargo Short
- A4J3 Paramount Utility Short
- A4J5 Cool Horizons S/S Crew
- A4J7 Concavo Vest
- A4H3 Pura Vida Boardshort
- A4H0 Class V Shirt S/S
- A7N3 Class V Shirt L/S
- A7M9 Class V Cargo Trunk
- A4H2 Class V Boardshort
- A7M2 Class V Printed Belted Trunk
- A4H1 Class V Belted Trunk
- A4S9 Class V Rapids

## MEN'S S14 OUTERWEAR

- A4E1 Dryzzle Gore Jacket
- A8AV Resolve Jacket
- A7N8 Young Resolve Jacket
- A4E5 Cipher Hybrid Hoodie
- A4F2 Flyweight Lined Jacket (Pictured)
- A4F4 New Sphere Jacket
- A4C4 Windwall Jacket
- A4U2 Windwall Vest
- A4F5 Slackline Hybrid Full Zip Jacket
- A4F6 Slackline Jacket



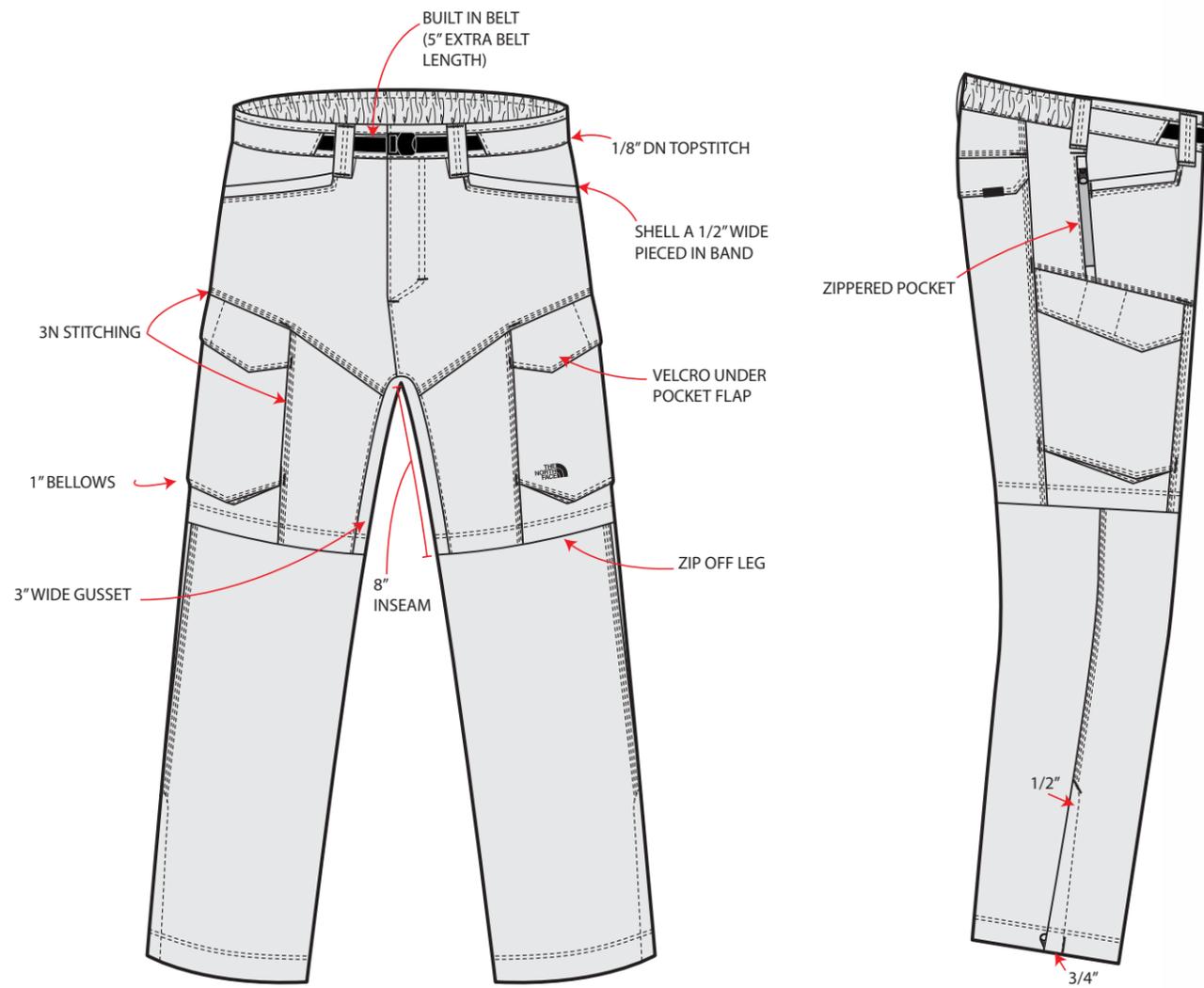
## MEN'S F13 SPORTSWEAR

A7TL Gordon Lyons FZ (Pictured)  
A7TM Gordon Lyons 1/4 Zip  
A7TN Gordon Lyons Crew  
A7XN TKA Trinity Vest  
A7TU 1/4 Zip Men's Paramount Grid  
A7YY Paramount Grid Crew  
A7TW L/S Paramount Woven  
A7ZC RDT Crew S/S

## MEN'S F13 OUTERWEAR

A7SA Redpoint Vest  
A6GY Tiberius Triclimate Jacket  
A6GZ Windwall 2.0 Triclimate Jacket  
A6HB Heatseeker Classic Triclimate Jacket  
A6HC Exertion Triclimate Jacket  
A6HE Anden Triclimate Jacket  
A7SP Pumori Wind Jacket  
A7VD Windwall 2.0 Jacket





*Technical illustration and the final production version of my redesigned TNF Paramount Valley II convertible hiking pant released Spring 2014.*





*The Men's Overhang Short Sleeve Plaid Shirt, new for Spring 2014. Shown here in Zinnia Orange.*





## YOUR TURN

You're probably thinking that we only got to go over a couple of projects that I'm really jazzed about. You're absolutely right! There are plenty of other examples of great projects I've had the privilege to be a part of at Betabrand, the rest of my work with sportswear and outerwear at The North Face, and other projects that I can't wait to share with you.

I wake up every day knowing that my best work is still ahead of me, and it would be an honor to contribute that work as a member of your team.



STEVEN B. WHEELER

9-28-2015