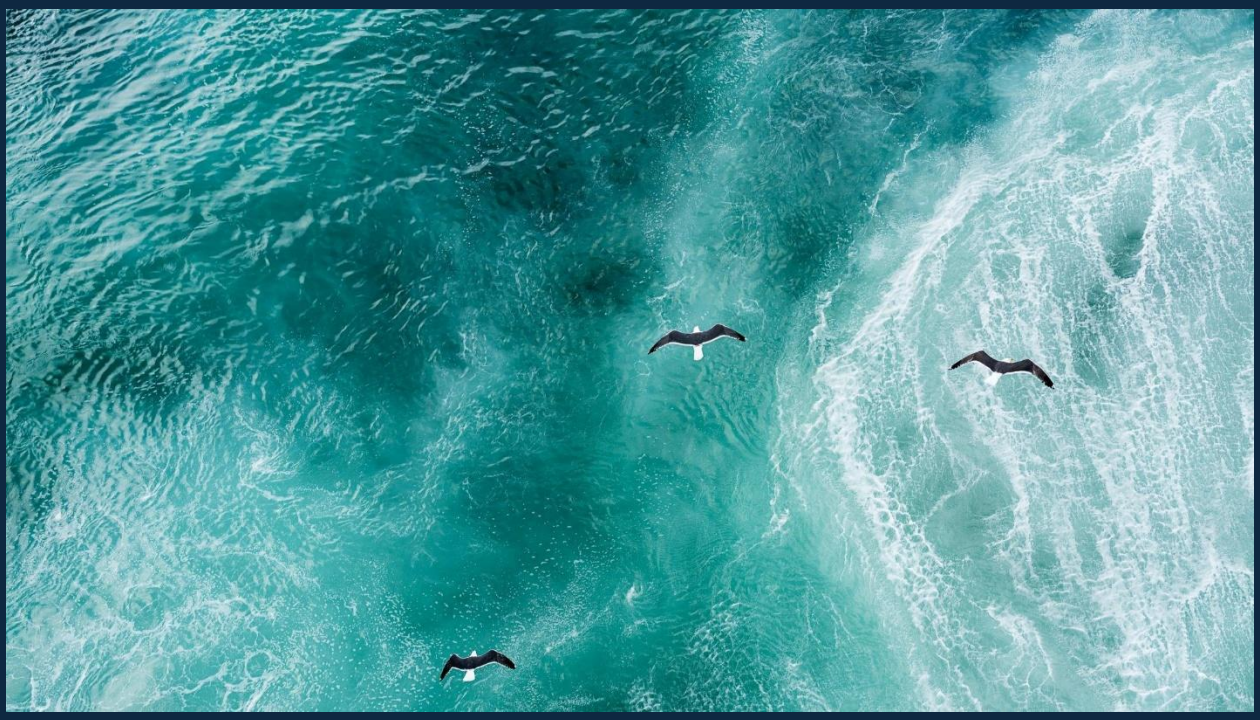
LOVE LETTERS AND WARNING SIRENS

NICKY ZIMMERMANN AND MARINE SERRE

Harriet Furphy — Australian National University



"From stunning botanical embroidery to earrings made from birds of paradise, the relationship between nature and fashion is complex and often controversial… it's about the future of fashion."

– V&A, Fashioned from Nature

Fashion is often dismissed as superficial; yet, like other visual arts, it is a powerful medium for shaping how we perceive and experience the world around us. Fashion designers manipulate form, texture, colour and symbol to construct meaning, using the body as both canvas and concept.

This project examines how contemporary fashion engages with the ocean, becoming a platform for reflecting on ecology, memory, and responsibility.

Nicky Zimmermann, co-founder and Creative Director of Zimmermann (Australia), and Marine Serre, founder and Creative Director of her eponymous label (France), exemplify the divergent yet complementary ways fashion can comment on the ocean. Their works are uniquely positioned to interrogate the environmental crisis, as fashion sits at the intersection of creativity, consumption, and sustainability. It is both a contributor to ecological harm and a site for innovation and change.

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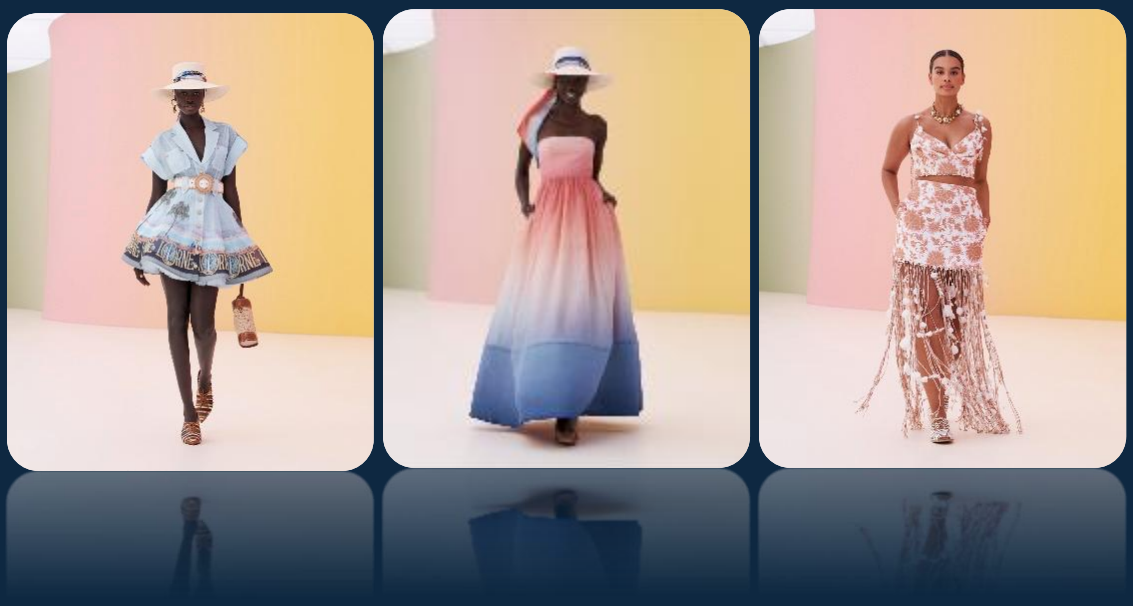

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Zimmermann draws deeply on her homeland's coastal landscape. In her Postcard collection (Resort 2022), garments ripple like water, layered with prints of coral and seaside flora, their pastel light evoking the shimmer of waves. Environmental reflection is primarily conveyed through form and movement rather than slogans. The intricacy can feel ethereal, suiting the subject's delicacy, and recent steps toward more responsible production help preserve the very oceans it celebrates. Zimmermann's position is the ocean as aesthetic intelligence: cultivating attachment through beauty, motion and ease.

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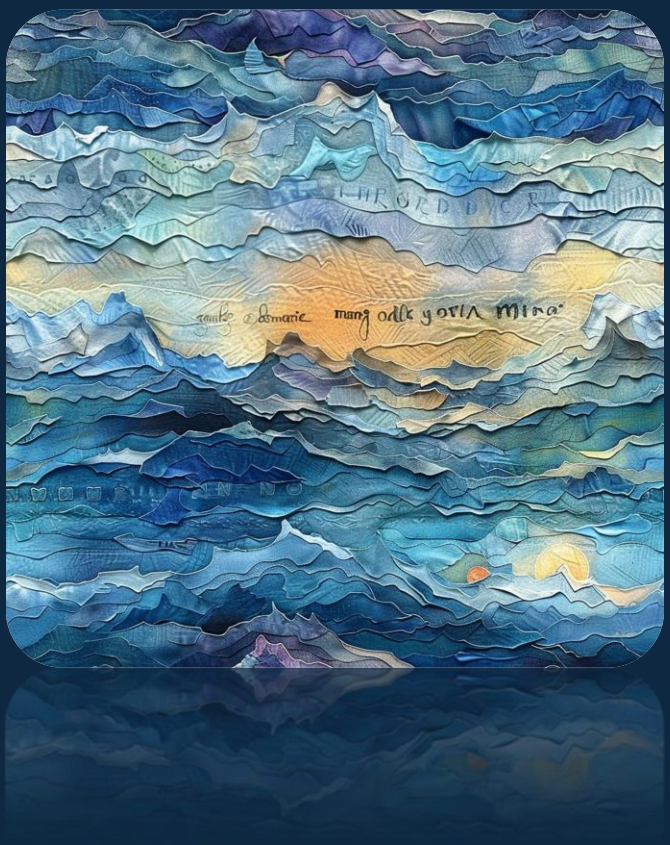
By contrast, Serre offers a more urgent vision. In her Amor Fati collection (Spring/Summer 2021), she foregrounds regeneration and reuse, transforming wetsuits and performance fabrics into couture silhouettes. The results are often amphibious forms — half human, half aquatic — as if fashion itself were mutating to survive in a damaged oceanic world. Serre highlights the industry's complicity in ecological degradation, while insisting that fashion can be an ethical practice of repair. Her work demonstrates that fashion can carry both political and aesthetic weight, forcing us to confront uncomfortable truths.

Read together, Zimmermann and Serre stage a conversation across oceans. One offers a nostalgic, elevated image of its beauty, the other confronts its potential collapse. Both strategies matter as while feeling draws some audiences in; method convinces others to stay.



Within the 2025 theme "Art & the Environment," these designers remind us that fashion is never just decorative. It is a language through which we might learn to see, feel, and ultimately care for the fragile ecologies that sustain us.

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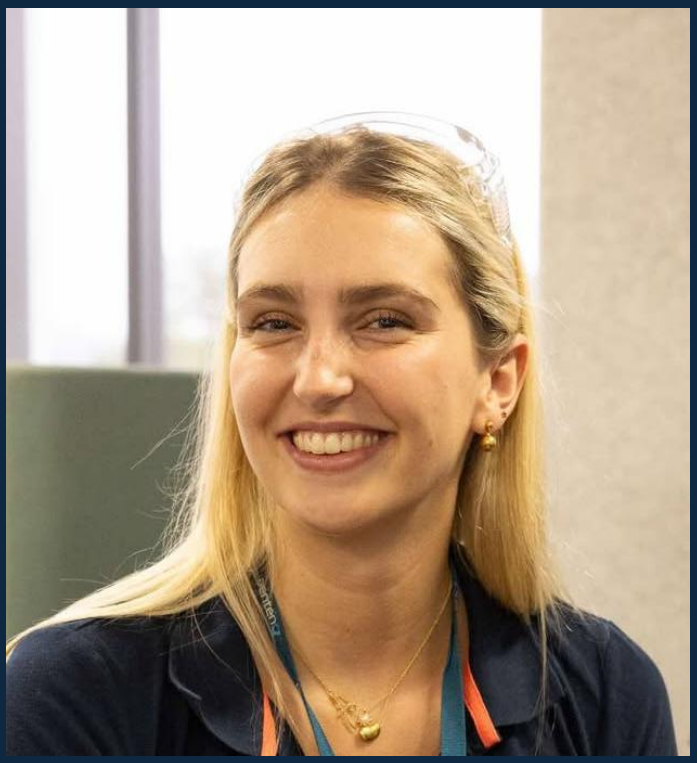

Bio

Harriet studies French, Visual Arts and Engineering at ANU. She explores how fashion interprets ocean ecologies through textiles and sustainable design. In her final engineering project, she is developing an AI assistive device for those with low vision, while in her free time, she enjoys swimming and reading.

OFFICIAL DESIGNER SOURCES

MARINE SERRE — VALUES / PROCESSES (REGENERATION)
HTTPS://WWW.MARINESERRE.COM/EN/CORE/VALUES
BRAND STATEMENT ON UPCYCLING/REGENERATED MATERIALS; CLEAR LANGUAGE YOU CAN QUOTE FOR "METHOD".

- ZIMMERMANN — OUR STORY
  HTTPS://WWW.ZIMMERMANN.COM/OUR-STORY
  FOUNDERS AND AUTHORSHIP (NICKY & SIMONE ZIMMERMANN); USEFUL FOR ROLE/POSITION LINES.

CURATORIAL WRITE-UPS

- MARINE SERRE — "AMOR FATI" (SPRING 2021) — VOGUE RUNWAY
  HTTPS://WWW.VOGUE.COM/FASHION-SHOWS/SPRING-2021-READY-TO-WEAR/MARINE-SERRE
  AUTHORITATIVE REVIEW FOR YOUR "AMPHIBIOUS SILHOUETTES / FILM PRESENTATION / REGENERATED MATERIALS".

- ZIMMERMANN — "THE POSTCARD" (RESORT 2022) — VOGUE RUNWAY
  HTTPS://WWW.VOGUE.COM/FASHION-SHOWS/RESORT-2022/ZIMMERMANN
  RUNWAY COVERAGE SUPPORTING COASTAL MOTIFS, SEASIDE SENSIBILITY, AND COLLECTION FRAMING.

ART-HISTORY / SUSTAINABILITY CONTEXT

- EDWINA EHRMAN (ED.), FASHIONED FROM NATURE. LONDON: V&A PUBLISHING, 2018. (EXHIBITION CATALOGUE FRAMING FASHION'S RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE FROM 1600–PRESENT.)

- KATE FLETCHER & LYNDA GROSE, FASHION AND SUSTAINABILITY: DESIGN FOR CHANGE. LONDON: LAURENCE KING, 2012. (SEMINAL OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION PRACTICE—USEFUL TO ANCHOR YOUR "METHOD" CLAIMS.)