

# Aesthetic Politics in Fashion

Elke Gaugele  
(Ed.)

*SternbergPress* ✨



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Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna  
Eva Blimlinger, Andrea B. Braidt, Karin Riegler (Series Eds.)  
Volume 14

*SternbergPress* 

## On the Publication Series

We are pleased to present this new volume in the publication series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. The series, published in cooperation with our highly committed partner Sternberg Press, is devoted to central themes in contemporary thought about art practices and art theories. The volumes in the series comprise collected contributions on subjects that form the focus of discourse on art theory, cultural studies, art history, and research at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and represent the quintessence of international study and discussion taking place in the respective fields. Each volume is published in the form of an anthology edited by staff members of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Authors of high international repute are invited to write contributions dealing with the respective areas of emphasis. Research activities such as international conferences, lecture series, institute-specific research focuses, or research projects serve as the points of departure for the individual volumes.

With this book we launch volume 14 of the series. *Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* illustrates how fashion can be discussed at the nexus of design, art, politics, and globalism. In this sense, the concept of fashion is seen from the perspective within the arts (as opposed to the cultural industries), enabling insights often neglected in publications on the cultural significance of fashion. Thus, topics like space production, fashion ethics, decolonization practices, and alternative concepts within fashion practice take center stage in this publication. This critical and differentiated approach to fashion is paradigmatic for how textile practices are discussed and taught at the Institute for Education in the Arts of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and with this publication we would like to invite an international audience to participate in this discourse. We would like to thank the editor Elke Gaugele for an excellent job in putting this book together.

The Rectorate of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna  
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Editor: Elke Gaugele  
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Copyeditor/proofreader: Charlotte Eckler, Caitlin Blachfield  
Design: Miriam Rech, Markus Weisbeck, Surface, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin  
Cover images: Bradaric Ohmae, "Pictures Seen," Spring/Summer 2012; Photos  
by Peter Garmusch  
Printing and binding: Holzhausen Druck GmbH, Wolkersdorf

The book's color scheme is based on the Pantone Fashion Color Report Spring  
2014: Women's Colors.

ISBN 978-3-95679-079-9

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Sternberg Press  
Caroline Schneider  
Karl-Marx-Allee 78  
D-10243 Berlin  
www-sternberg-press.com

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# Aesthetic Politics in Fashion An Introduction

Elke Gaugele

For fashion theory there has always been trouble at the intersection of aesthetics and politics. Modernity has drawn out fashion as a figure of ambivalence: it conflates homogenization and individuation, sells hierarchy as democracy, and poses normalization as opposition. In terms of politics, the episteme of fashion has been historically engaged in the program of enlightenment, with its contradicting signifiers of freedom and dependence. It draws spatial, social, and corporeal orders, defined by the colonality of power. As such, fashion became a hegemonical cultural practice of Western nation building, driven by the paradoxes of communization, individualization, and gendering. In parallel with the emergence of industrialized consumer society and as a component of the new spirit of capitalist economy, fashion evolved into a mass phenomenon. In the context of aesthetics, fashion had been construed in antithesis to art as a temporal, transitory aesthetic phenomenon, theorized as a self-oppositional, entangled with the ephemeral and contemporary aspects of everyday life. This has changed during globalization. Now the commonalities of fashion and art are emphasized, their conjunctions are fostered, not least as a model for a globalized aesthetic economy.

## Aesthetic Metapolitics

*Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* proposes modes of critical thinking on the present junctions of design, art, politics, and global capitalism. It therefore outlines a perspective on fashion as an aesthetic metapolitics and aims to transmit some of the energy from vivid discussions of the framework on the interchanges of politics and aesthetics posited by French philosopher Jacques Rancière to the body of Fashion Studies. Aesthetic metapolitics, as Rancière suggests, aims to bring together art and life. The metapolitical project of modernity attempts to realize what politics can only give the appearance of achieving: to change not only the laws and orders of the state, but also the specific forms of individual lives.<sup>1</sup> In its political engagement with questions of freedom and equality, aesthetic metapolitics creates collective as well as individual subjectivities. Art and politics, “like forms of knowledge,” Rancière proposes, “construct ‘fictions,’ that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what could be done.”<sup>2</sup> This imaginative capability and this potential for materialization also pertain to fashion and its body of aesthetic politics. An interplay between the intangible and the material inform the following perspectives on fashion and the study of fashion as an aesthetic metapolitics.

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, “Die Politik der Ästhetik,” *archplus*, no. 178 (June 2006): 94–98.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*:

*The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 39.

## Artistic Regimes, Fashion, and the Distribution of the Sensible

Historically, fashion functioned in the juncture of aesthetics and politics. Rancière has examined this as a distribution of the sensible, which he defines as, “variations of sensible intensities, perceptions, and the abilities of the bodies.”<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, Rancière introduces three artistic regimes: the ethical regime, the representative regime, and the aesthetic regime of the arts.<sup>4</sup>

All three regimes can be considered as long-term historical structures that coexist and intertwine. The ethical regime recalls Plato’s ideal state and characterizes the pedagogical functions of the arts to adapt to an authoritarian class hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> The second artistic regime—the representative—admittedly calls upon the autonomy of the arts in relation to the political. But at the same time it is designed as a pragmatic and mimetic principle that develops into forms of normativity by defining the rules of good or bad art. The representative regime also sets a hierarchy of genres and their political boundaries.<sup>6</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, the third regime arose parallel to the “incoherent label ‘modernity’”: the aesthetic regime of the arts.<sup>7</sup> There, art is imbued with autonomy and freedom insofar as it becomes a potential site for all distributions of the sensible.<sup>8</sup> The aesthetic regime of the arts reversed oppositions between high and low and broke up the interrelationship between “subject matter and mode of representation.”<sup>9</sup> Rancière illustrates this using depictions of fashion in French nineteenth century literature: through “clothes, or gestures of an ordinary individual (Balzac),” when young women were “caught in the equal force of style as an ‘absolute manner of seeing things, (Flaubert).”<sup>10</sup> At that point the concept of the aesthetic regime and the emergence of a new sensorium is closely linked to the aesthetic appearances of fashion. The aesthetic regime, Rancière further states, makes art into an “autonomous form of life” and by that “sets down the autonomy of art and its identification with a moment in Life’s self-formation.”<sup>11</sup>

This insight—that softened hierarchies and modernity’s more promiscuous aesthetic practices bred a new sensorium in fashion, art, and life—is nothing new.<sup>12</sup> It goes back, in fact, to Charles Baudelaire’s definition of modernity.<sup>13</sup> While Baudelaire is best known for his artistic critique of capitalism, he defined fashion as a “political economy of the performative self”<sup>14</sup> that was developed as a cultural industry connecting economy and art.<sup>15</sup>

However, after the normalization of creative selves within a “regime of creativity” in the course of the second half of the twentieth century,<sup>16</sup> even now under globalization and capitalism, the model of the aesthetic regime is more than relevant. Strong evidence lies in its geo- and bio-political aspects, as the fashion system epitomizes the process of the globalization of capitalism.<sup>17</sup> Since the fashion business resembles forms of artistic practice more than

those of other industries, its increasing importance also symptomizes the convergence of economic and artistic logics within global neo-capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Fashion and art create fictions of contemporaneity. The confluences of the fashion and art market are momentous for globalization after 1989. Their significance lies in the geopolitical production of contemporary imaginations and their aesthetic presence in fashion.

Within this cultural matrix, however, it is striking to look through the kaleidoscope of the different artistic regimes conceptualized by Rancière. Designed on different, deep-historical levels in the sense of *longue durée*, the three artistic regimes reveal different functions and effects of aesthetics and politics, expressed to varying degrees as the consequence of contemporary globalization processes. This makes them noteworthy tools for contemporary analyses of aesthetics and politics and likewise for the investigation of aesthetic politics in fashion. Contemporary trends such as Ethical Fashion, for example, could be set in relation to the ethical regime.<sup>19</sup> Rankings between the arts and their different genres, as, for example, between the applied or fine arts or between art and fashion are revealed—under the perspective of the representative regime—as social and societal hierarchies of the sensible. The aesthetic regime, as discussed above, creates new social and economic spaces of imagined global communities through the appearances of fashions. On the level of everyday practices, fashion accomplishes a new sensorium of shared fictions and cultural belonging.

3 Ibid., 39.

4 Ibid., 20–30.

5 Ibid., 20; Ruth Sonderegger, “Ästhetische Regime,” *Bildpunkt: Regimestörungen* (Spring 2010): 8–10; <http://www.igbildende.kunst.at/bildpunkt/2010/regimestoerungen/sonderegger.htm>.

6 Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 21; Sonderegger, “Ästhetische Regime,” 8–10.

7 Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 24.

8 Sonderegger, “Ästhetische Regime,” 8–10.

9 Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 32.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 26.

12 Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

13 Charles Baudelaire, “Modernity,” in *The Painter of Modern Life: And Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 12–15; Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2005), 38.

14 Adam Briggs, “Capitalism’s Favourite Child: The Production of Fashion,” in *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2013), 186–99.

15 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 38.

16 Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Erfindung der Kreativität: Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

17 Patrik Aspers, “A Note on Global Capitalism,” in *Global Capitalism: The Road Ahead*, ed. Bharti Thakar (Hyderabad: Icfai University Press, 2010), 3–16.

18 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*: 8; Ève Chiapello, “Evolution and Co-Optation: The ‘Artist Critique’ of Management and Capitalism,” *Third Text* 6, no. 18 (2004): 593.

19 See in this volume Elke Gaugele, “On the Ethical Turn in Fashion: Policies of Governance and the Fashioning of Social Critique,” 204–27.



## Art, Aesthetics, and the Economy of Fashion

Nevertheless, in the course of the modern age, fashion and art established two particular and differentiated social and economic systems with their own criteria, rules, and value creation processes.<sup>20</sup> Even Georg Simmel had already pointed to the cross-references as well as to the boundaries between the different spheres: “Thus fashion can to all appearances and in abstracto absorb any chosen content: any given form of clothing, of art, of conduct, of opinion may become fashionable. And yet many forms in their deeper nature show a special disposition to live themselves out in fashion, just as others offer inward resistance.”<sup>21</sup>

Both the art and the fashion system have developed through mutual exchange processes as well as by statements of autonomy: proclamations that fashion if necessary can be design, but would never be art; or that art by no means wants to be fashion.<sup>22</sup> Even so, this positioning, distinction, and relation within a cultural industry is highly interesting as an aesthetic politics from a social as well as a global economic point of view. The development of the fashion landscapes of the new millennium is characterized by the extension of the two major fashion conglomerates LVMH and Kering, buying as many leading design houses as they can.<sup>23</sup> Now that more labels than ever before are consolidated under the same roof, the luxury fashion industry has adopted the economic model of an umbrella holding.<sup>24</sup> Currently, it sets out the guidelines under which the brands operate based on the accumulation of the “artistic and financial potential” of its labels, and builds on strategies of “creativity” and “empowering imagination.”<sup>25</sup> Targeting the geopolitical production of contemporary imaginaries and their aesthetic presence through fashion and art, the consortium constantly sets up new art enterprises. It establishes galleries, sponsors art fairs as well as major exhibitions, and pushes brand collaborations with artists, so that present fashion merchandise seems to be run more by visiting artists and/or celebrities than by permanent in-house designers.<sup>26</sup> Ten years ago, art theorist Isabelle Graw characterized the collaborations between fashion and the art market, as the *dernier cri*, the latest thing. She points out that the fashion-shaped arts and art-shaped fashions of the 1990s and 2000s are the effects of networks within a visual industry that builds its image production and visibility on the corporative structures of this new cultural-industrial completion. This promotes not only the entering of fashion logics or celebrity structures into the art world, but also the adoption of art practices and of gestures of artistic ideals of freedom in the field of fashion.

Joanne Entwistle has framed another perspective on the aesthetic economy of fashion.<sup>27</sup> Based on ethnographic fieldwork on fashion buyers and models, she outlines an aesthetic economy that values and distributes fashion as an

aesthetic product with aesthetics as its key value. *The Aesthetic Economy of Fashion* builds upon cultural knowledge as well as on aesthetic sensibility, which comprises its essential form of capital: “aesthetics are the product/s and, as such, are the center of the economic calculations of the practice.”<sup>28</sup>

Side by side, operative techniques related to the art world were introduced to foster artistic reasons as a spirit of capitalism.<sup>29</sup> Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello reveal that the development of flexible neo-capitalism results from an incorporation of the elements of an artistic critique into the economic system. These are assimilated into the “spirit of capitalism,” as an “ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism.”<sup>30</sup> This relates to the convergence of economic and creative logics as well as to management’s support for creative modes of functioning. Arguing that capitalist accumulation stands in close connection with the forms of critique aimed at it, Boltanski and Chiapello also refer, in addition to the “artistic critique,” to a second antagonistic mode of criticism.<sup>31</sup> This social critique—inspired by socialists and Marxists—mainly points to exploitation, inequality, and poverty among workers as well as the destruction of social bonds and collective solidarity.<sup>32</sup> Fashionable apparel is predominantly manufactured in places—sometimes sweatshops—with low pay, long forced overtime, piecework labor, poor health and safety, abusive management, child

20 Isabelle Graw, “Der letzte Schrei: Über modeförmige Kunst und kunstförmige Mode,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 56 (December 2004): 80–95.

21 Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” *International Quarterly*, no. 10 (1904): 153; [http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion\\_1904.pdf](http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion_1904.pdf).

22 Graw, “Der letzte Schrei”; see also Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

23 LVMH (Moët Hennessy-Louis Vuitton), PPR (Pinault Printemps Redoute Group); see also Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, “Introduction. The Changed Fashion Landscape of the New Millennium,” in *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2013), 1–8.

24 Endora Comer-Arldt, “It’s All about the Image: The Cooperation between the Fashion Industry and Celebrities,” in this volume, 44–59.

25 All quotes are phrases of brand strategies from the website of the Kering Group; <http://www.kering.com/en/group/>

about-kering#empowering.

26 Bruzzi and Church Gibson, *Fashion Cultures Revisited*; see also Monica Titton, “Andy’s Heritage: Collaborations between Fashion, Art, and Louis Vuitton,” in this volume, 60–75. Here she demonstrates the examples of the Kering-Group’s holding, the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, the art institution Prada Foundation in Venice, and the “Fondation Louis Vuitton” in Paris. She also highlights the role of Marc Jacobs within Louis Vuitton, cooperating with the artists Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince, Yayoi Kusama, and Stephen Sprouse; and in 1988, Louis Vuitton’s cooperations with the artists César, Arman, Sol LeWitt, Sandro Chia, and James Rosenquist.

27 Joanne Entwistle, *The Aesthetic Economy of Fashion: Markets and Value in Clothing and Modelling* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

28 *Ibid.*, 55.

29 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*; Chiapello, “Evolution and Co-Optation,” 593.

30 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 8.

31 *Ibid.*, 38.

32 *Ibid.*, 37.

labor, lack of job security, and barriers to unionization.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, contemporary fashion cultures reveal an interesting field of tension between modes of artistic and social critique. Through the trend of Ethical Fashion, the fashion system began to adopt and display the critical discourse on its own exploitative modes of production for capitalist reasons. In a neoliberal way Ethical Fashion incorporates and performs issues of a global political agenda: climate change, social inequality, and collective values. With it a new agenda arose in the aesthetic politics of fashion.

## Aesthetics and Politics of Fashion: Strands and Chapters

Taking this dynamic framework as a productive point of departure, this anthology brings together different angles within interdisciplinary studies that are motivated by the question of aesthetic politics in contemporary fashion. Researchers examine aesthetics, economies, and politics of fashion from a number of perspectives such as: art history, cultural science, sociology, design, and fashion studies. They debate fashion as a cultural phenomenon at the intersections of artistic, creative, economic, and everyday practices. Furthermore, they also focus on alternative aesthetic politics based on postcolonial strategies, reflections on critical whiteness, and ecological and ethical demands. Demarcations and overlaps, hierarchies, and alignments are discussed within the contexts of fashion, the arts, and styles regarding their material constitution and symbolic realization.

On the other hand, *Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* investigates the key issues that currently strategize, frame, and form fashion as an aesthetic metapolitics. These are set out in the strands of aesthetic economies as well as in the production of space, and furthermore in the motivations for alternative aesthetic politics. The first chapter, "Aesthetic Economies," focuses on the collaboration of artists, media, and fashion labels. These are investigated as visualization strategies for fashion marketing. The chapter starts with a study of Mallarmé's nineteenth-century magazine *La dernière mode*, along with its underlying marketing strategy, and continues with topical research on fashion, celebrities, and Louis Vuitton's commercialization of the arts. It examines Bernadette Corporation's critical art practices towards fashionable celebrity artists and the arty anti-fashion poses of fashion models. The second chapter, "Production of Space," investigates spaces and media spaces of fashion and art in relation to the regimes of power, gaze, and representation. It examines how new global spaces of exclusivity are produced in contemporary fashion shows as well as in digital fashion films. Finally, fashion is sketched out here as a sphere of liminality that designs imaginations for a "Society in the Subjunctive." "Alternative Aesthetic Politics," the third chapter, reflects on the increase of alternative aesthetic practices and their significance for ecological and postcolonial

lifestyles. It examines Indian textiles as signifiers of decolonization and eco-designs as well as ethical fashion as a carrier for values such as trust, honesty, and, social justice. It proposes critical whiteness studies as a new perspective on a globalized fashion industry, which is inspected here for post- and neo-colonial processes.

Introductory essays at the beginning of each chapter theorize the dominant themes of aesthetic metapolitics: aesthetic economies, production of space, and alternative aesthetic politics.

<sup>33</sup> Briggs, "Capitalism's Favourite Child," 186–99.

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# Aesthetic Economies

# Aesthetic Economies of Fashion

## An Introduction

Eva Flicker

Pelt, leather, fiber, pigment, metal, stone; nylon, polyester, polyacrylic. Materiality is an important factor for clothes and a minor aspect in fashion discourse. The necessity of garment is basically a physiological one but is historically deeply imbedded in complex social and cultural dynamics that we usually do not reflect in our daily lives.

Fashion refers to the materiality and visibility of cultures. But dematerialization does not mean that fashion is only a world of signs and symbols. Aesthetic values in fashion are the central product in aesthetic economies and may of course generate economic materiality. One crucial process in between is attraction.

As a medium of communication, fashion spreads a wide range of negotiations in diverse social directions, in social, political, cultural, religious, moral, sexual, or economic structures.<sup>1</sup> Clothes and fashion influence both technologies of the body and the self as well as technologies of expression and representation. Georg Simmel argues that fashion is a product of class distinction with the aim of following those from the same ranks and being distinguished from those in lower positions.<sup>2</sup> Fashion communicates distinction and belonging—we shift between the individual subject and the collective or group, minor and major social systems.

In aesthetic economies, aesthetics act as the central value and attraction as the central communication. Though aesthetics is a fluid value shifting fluently, paradoxically the permanent change of qualities of aesthetics represent the constancy of aesthetic economies. “However, aesthetic values do not come out of the nowhere; they certainly do not reside in the disembodied signs of contemporary capitalism, but are generated internally to the field of production itself, by the routine actions and practices of individuals and institutions.”<sup>3</sup>

Creating, producing, exchanging, selling, marketing, seeing, touching, listening, wearing, watching, admiring, discarding, demonstrating, performing, commenting, blogging, painting, picturing, imaging, spacing... The complexity of fashion is overwhelming; in it we find all aspects of modern societies: power, hegemony, social inequality, distinction, culture, gender, etc. So I decided to stretch some outstanding ambivalences and contradictions within fashion and aesthetic economies—without raising claim to completeness—as introduction before announcing the following four contributions.

1 Daniel Devoucoux, *Mode im Film: Zur Kultur-anthropologie zweier Medien* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007), 29.

2 Georg Simmel, “Die Mode,” in *Die Listen der Mode*, ed. Silvia Bovenschen (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 182. First

published in German in 1911.

3 Joanne Enwistle, “The Aesthetic Economy: The Production of Value in the Field of Fashion Modelling,” in *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2 (Nov. 2002): 322, doi:10.1177/146954050200200302.

## Originality—Imitation

“Nichts ist so verbreitet (und damit so wenig originell) wie der Wunsch nach Originalität.” [Nothing is as universal (and thus so unoriginal) as the desire to be original.]<sup>4</sup> How to stand out, when everyone wants to stand out, or even needs to be outstanding in our society of expression and self-expression? Managing the balancing act between being original and being the original is a challenge. There is no original without the impulse to copy and imitate. New fashion styles arrive after centuries of nearly all combinations of styles, fashion recalls, and recombinations of materials, forms, and colors. The new occurs within the old and nostalgia is remixed with the future, swinging between the familiar collective traditions and the unfamiliar in the revenant unacquainted.

## Luxury—Poverty

Interests in fashion were not restricted to the female in earlier centuries; they extended also to the male upper class.<sup>5</sup> Fashion and styles included not only clothes, hairstyling, shoes, make-up, jewelry, but also the way of talking, what to say, how to behave, to socialize, etc. The more barriers diminished between the social classes, the more diffusion of clothing styles there was into lower classes. Within this trickle-down process, the distinction of prosperity was cloned with single pieces as products of fashion economies. Fashion industries producing fake styles were exported to countries with large populations of low-wage workers. The global North is swamped by textiles produced in the global South and East. Global textile supermarket chains supply lower income populations with affordable fashions. And so, social inequality is no longer visible through shabby clothes or shoes with holes. Fashion is separated from social habitus and the economic system of low-price fashion contributes to a simulation of prosperity and pretends a fictitious wealth. This practice of concealment of social inequality pushes poverty and precariousness out of the visible public and into the private and invisible sphere.

## Popular Culture—Creative Industries

“What is the case that the excitement which accompanied the emergence of a new fashion design star could be traced through a series of precise promotional strategies involving fashion editors, fashion writers, fashion buyers (who need something avant-garde to liven up a window display) as well as an array of stylists, photographers, models and friends from college, all of whom might be said to constitute a ‘network’?”<sup>6</sup> Fashion industries are a remarkable part of the growing creative industries and the globalized markets in fashion play crucial roles. Markets are social constructions. “Actors relate to other

actors, most notably to other actors on the same dividing line of producers and consumers.”<sup>7</sup> Fashion amounts to a hybrid of art, media, and economy, stretching the logic in all directions.

## Elites—Celebrities

Film has created stars since the early twentieth century and demonstrated the star’s luxury lifestyle in film but also in private life. “Mass culture is immersed in fashion and gravitates toward stars and idols, prodigiously successful and attractive figures, who inspire infatuation and adulation in the extreme.”<sup>8</sup> With a time lag and through social processes, a trickle-down effect spreads upper class values as simulation to lower classes. Boulevard mass media and social media play with servile imitation and hysteria and link stars and celebrities symbolically to their fan communities. Wearing the same shoes as a movie star and buying a wedding dress similar to that of a royal princess opens fashion cultures to fashion markets and fashion consumers all over the world. “Fashion sales have rocketed when promoted by A-list actresses, top models, and popular media personalities, as well as elite society.”<sup>9</sup> Mass media create “it-girls.” The phenomenon of a young woman absorbing attraction with a special expression or attribute or “quality” is not new. Whereas the female “special” characteristic could also have been a quality of mind in the 1920s and 1930s, it is nowadays mainly reduced to fashion and bodily attraction.

## Women—Men

Historically, power, body, and gender intertwined only in the hands of the privileged aristocracy. Court cultures authorized men and women to exhibit prosperity with their body in exclusive garments. Images and pictures of female fashion styles throughout the centuries demonstrate the gendered social order of fashion.<sup>10</sup> At least since the age of Enlightenment and the processes

4 Elena Esposito, *Die Verbindlichkeit des Vorübergehenden: Paradoxien der Mode* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 81.

5 *Ibid.*, 160.

6 Angela McRobbie, “Fashion as a Culture Industry,” in *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2000), 258.

7 Patrik Aspers, *Markets in Fashion: A Phenomenological Approach* (Stockholm: City University Press, 2001), 49.

8 Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 181.

9 James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 296.

10 Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Monika Seidl and Eva Flicker, “Fashionable Queens. Body – Power – Gender,” in *Austrian Studies in English* (Vienna: Peter Lang, 2014).

of democratization in the nineteenth century, fashionable men are said to be mashers, homosexuals, or ridiculous.<sup>11</sup> Normative gender roles and gender stereotypes exclude fashion styles from politics and business. Political functions and economic elites require visual representation. Pictures of political events are laden with symbolic value; women are still a small minority. Female politicians are imprisoned in a double bind communication: when they perform and dress according to feminine patterns, they might be seen as soft players in the hard field of politics.<sup>12</sup> When they accept male dress codes such as the dark suit, they refuse to emphasize the gender shift in politics. No matter how they devise their roles, they remain imprisoned in a situation that does not allow for undoing gender, at least on a visual level and they are always regarded and judged on this basis. No matter which way they chose, the double bind is fixed within the complex field of communication of politics and media. What is optically striking in visual political communication is the imbalance between the dominant group of those wearing dark suits and the occasional individual with a different style.<sup>13</sup> Models in fashion start to cross these gender borders. While we have been used to seeing women in men's clothes for a while now, male models access the catwalk in women's dresses. Unisex as a visual code in both directions is a new dynamic of irritation and attraction in the media, but not yet grounded in everyday life.

Aesthetic economies and the field of fashion have recourse to functional logics of art, mass media/social media, and economics while creating particularities. Intertwined relations between creators, producers, and consumers are imbedded in social structure and cultural and visual knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Selective choices seemingly made by individuals stem from social differences and inequalities, practices of distinction, needs for belonging and codes of communication. In information economies, the increasing overflow of information in all societal aspects challenges processes of selectivity. Attraction has become a scarce and contested commodity. Within the economy of attraction,<sup>15</sup> it is the currency with which capital is constructed. The common basis is economic and cultural capital, social habitus, and taste (Bourdieu 1982, Gronow 1997) in diverse variations of prestige in different social classes.

The following four contributions of the first chapter, "Aesthetic Economies," aim at analyzing sensible relations between actors in fashion and art—producers, communicators, and consumers.

Birke Sturm titles her contribution "The Tension of Mallarmé's Deception Manoeuvre: Temporal, Territorial, and Financial Economies in Fashion." The author analyzes the magazine *La dernière mode*, which was edited by the French symbolist poet and man of letters Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1892). The essay discusses the journal's production and different female writers and how they seem to be "a coup de bleuff" as a virtual figure created by Mallarmé

himself. The magazine became an important style benchmark among European and international elites in the nineteenth century. It propagated images of fashion for "ladies and children," as well as recipes and home interior decorating advice. The invention and investigation of upper class lifestyle and the stereotypical role of women is reflected in three dimensions: temporal, territorial, and financial economies.

Endora Comer-Arldt, in her essay "It's All About the Image: The Cooperation between the Fashion Industry and Celebrities," sheds a light on the relation and co-operation between the fashion industry and celebrities. Practices of celebrity marketing and fashion marketing are intertwined—mainly due to media visibility. Hollywood stars as fashion models and TV-stars as gaze attractors set visual stimuli for a wide audience. Dominant classes or groups set standards of desirability with symbolic and emotional needs and trickle-down effects. Endora Comer-Arldt describes the evolution of celebrity culture in mass media, enumerating examples of cooperation between the fashion industry and a host of pop-culture icons.

Monica Tilton entitles her contribution "Andy's Heritage: Collaborations between Fashion, Art, and Louis Vuitton" and reveals connections between artists and fashion labels. The author focuses on examples of handbags of Louis Vuitton created by artists such as Takashi Murakami and Richard Price. The role of the Japanese and the US-American artist demonstrate the intertwining of globalized markets in art and fashion. International brands create new images with the use of visual codes, logos, and surprising eclectic modifications. The dualistic structure of avant-garde and commercialization is embedded in a re-contextualization of art, economy, and social distinction.

Ilka Becker examines the works of a heterogeneous artist collective, the Bernadette Corporation, under the aspect of aesthetic politics in her article "Life Which Writes Itself: Retrospecting Art, Fashion, and Photography in the Bernadette Corporation." On one hand, she bases this on an essay by Ulrich Bröckling about "being different differently."<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, she uses the observation that, in recent years, art and fashion have grown closer together as accomplices and that—in regard to the culture of consumption—neither an affirmative nor negative stand seems appropriate from the side of art. Becker

11 Barbara Vinken, *Angezogen: Das Geheimnis der Mode* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2013), 70.

12 Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

13 Eva Flicker, "Fashionable (Dis-)order in Politics: Gender, Power and the Dilemma of the Suit," in *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 9, vol. 2 (2013): 214.

14 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).

15 Georg Frank, *Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit: Ein Entwurf* (Munich: DTV, 2007).

16 Cited by Ilka Becker, "Life Which Writes Itself: Retrospecting Art, Fashion, and Photography in the Bernadette Corporation," in this volume: 76–97.

interprets positions that are established in an intermediate field between art, fashion and politics. Bernadette Corporation's position is one that brings fixed identities on a visual level into a flow, as a refusal of identity politics.

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# The Tension of Mallarmé's Deception Manoeuvre Temporal, Territorial, and Financial Economies in Fashion

Birke Sturm

## *La dernière mode*—The Mallarméan Deception

It is almost impossible to imagine the world of fashion without fashion magazines. Fashion magazines build a platform of examples, models, and suggestions that money can buy for a reader in search of self-aestheticization. At the same time, fashion magazines deliver tips concerning a suitable lifestyle, which can be implemented in one's everyday life. However, this cannot be regarded as a new development. It was already in the middle of the nineteenth century that such magazines built a strong economic force and were accessible to a large readership.<sup>1</sup> Especially fashion pictures, which were often attached as so-called fashion plates, built up an important forum for the bourgeois lady who wanted to appear well-dressed, beautiful and modern.<sup>2</sup> Except for the images, which have been replaced by photographs, these fashion magazines were quite similar to the ones we know today. Among other things, they predominantly included advertisements for fashion boutiques as well as cultural tips and diverting readings. If we think of its economical factors, especially three different economies of fashion can be reconstructed on the basis of these magazines. As fashion with its huge market value is obviously part of our capitalist society, the financial dimension comes to mind quite quickly. Another economic dimension is temporal: fashion changes and people follow in order to keep up with time, to be up-to-date. Last but not least, there is a territorial dimension. Fashion is not bound to a single continent. On the contrary, fashion is global—no matter whether the production or the consumption of fashion is concerned.

These economies were already part of the magazine *La dernière mode*, which was edited by the symbolist poet and man of letters Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1892). Eight editions of this magazine appeared every first and third Sunday per month from September 1874 to December 1874. It started out with an edition of 3000, a number that was reduced to 1000 under a different printer in November 1874.<sup>3</sup> Within this period of time Mallarmé's magazine showed innovative changes concerning the style and appearance of fashion and at once offered the poet's idea of modernity. On the one hand, the magazine shows a modern view on how to deal with fashion, which goes beyond exterior appearance, straight towards the soul. Simultaneously, Mallarmé's way of writing about fashion stresses the importance of the temporal, the territorial, as well as the financial economy of fashion and makes them leading and recurring subjects of discussion throughout the magazine. Speaking about the

1 Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 90.

2 Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 87.

3 Philip Nicolas Furbank and Alex Cain, "La dernière mode, and Its Pre-history," in *Mallarmé on Fashion: A Translation of the Fashion Magazine "La dernière mode" with commentary*, ed. Philip Nicolas Furbank and Alex Cain (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 8.

human soul in a capitalist-oriented context seems to be absurd at first glance. However, Roland Barthes describes *La dernière mode* in the following: "If it were a matter of a dialectic of the serious and the frivolous, i.e., if the frivolity of Fashion were immediately taken as absolutely serious, we would then have one of the most elevated forms of the literary experience: i.e., the very movement of the Mallarmean dialectic apropos of Fashion itself (Mallarmé's *La dernière mode*)."<sup>4</sup>

This article will follow the dialectic of "the serious and the frivolous" that Barthes briefly mentions in a footnote. Thus, the effort as well as the deception that Mallarmé undertook in order to edit his fashion magazine and the range of meanings within fashion will be described in order to finally examine temporal, financial, and territorial aspects of fashion that were also part of his project.

Apart from some unsteadily reoccurring characters, the main authors of the magazine can be listed as following: "Madame Marguerite de Ponty," who filled the section "La mode" with the latest news concerning Parisian fashion for the lady. She is described as "une femme du monde qui est aussi un littérateur distingué."<sup>5</sup> It is worth noticing that this lady is not referred to as a female writer as one might suspect, but that the male "littérateur" was chosen: a mistake that might not have happened accidentally. Due to her English name "Miss Satin," another character, is worried about her readers' trust in the fourth edition of the magazine.<sup>6</sup> However, only two editions later, she is described as a very well-known Parisian lady whose actual name remains a secret.<sup>7</sup> She was responsible for the section "Gazette de la Fashion" and discussed shops and places where the latest fashion could be found. Another person labeled as "Ix" wrote about Parisian theater plays within "Chronique de Paris." Additionally, books that were supposed to be a must-read for every lady—whether she was intellectual or not—were part of this section *La dernière mode* 6: Maisons de Confiance. His identity was said to have been revealed one day in the sixth edition, however such a revelation never took place.

These characters seem to be quite shady. And it is indeed because of these strange characters that Jean-Pierre Lecercle was perfectly right when he called Mallarmé's magazine a "coup de bleuff"—a deception manoeuvre—in his publication *Mallarmé et la mode* (1989).<sup>8</sup> The reason for this is that none other than Mallarmé himself was hidden behind all the characters presented above.

What Mallarmé created with his fashion magazine—the surface of which appears like any other magazine published at this time—is a reflection of modern culture: a reflection that shows and supports what Mallarmé must have analyzed in detail before the publication; a mirror that subversively found its way back into the culture it reflected. The subscribers didn't know anything about these means of production. Yet Mallarmé's time and effort speaks for itself.

Apart from the sections "La mode," "Gazette de la Fashion," and "Chronique de Paris," the magazine came with images of fashionable clothes for ladies and children and descriptions of these outfits, as well as tips for recipes and homely interior design in the section "Carnet d'Or" (The golden notebook). In addition, the correspondence with subscribers also made up an important part of *La dernière mode*. Only the last section of the magazine, which consisted of either poems or prose texts, seems to really have been written by contemporary authors, among them Mallarmé himself. At the end of each edition, Mme de Ponty dedicated herself to advice on education about how to make offspring a part of modern life.

### *La dernière mode*—Fashion and the Female Soul

But why did Mallarmé start such an enterprise? At a first glance, it seems as if his concern was quite simple: giving ladies instructions in matters of taste.<sup>9</sup> However, a close reading of the magazine gives a deeper impression. It seems as if Mallarmé, who had a deep interest in the decorative arts and beautiful things, for some time really identified with his readers. Thus, he took up the allure of a female concerned with her own appearance as well as the pleasures of life. However his reflections go far beyond the surface.<sup>10</sup>

Prose texts and verses were part of each magazine. In the first edition, Ix asks the question whether these are in vogue and fashionable or at least ought to be so. According to him it would be wrong to regard this question as being frivolous. The reason for this is as follows: "For it proceeds from an axiom: that all women love verse, as they do perfumes or jewels or the characters in novels; it is as dear to them as their own selves."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the value of

4 Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 242.

5 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Les maisons de confiance," *La dernière mode* 6 (1874). As the magazine does not involve any page numbers, I refer to the section from which is quoted (here: "Les maisons de confiance").

6 Mallarmé, "Gazette de la Fashion," *La dernière mode* 4.

7 Mallarmé, "Les maisons de confiance," *La dernière mode* 6.

8 Jean-Pierre Lecercle, *Mallarmé et la mode* (Paris: Séguier, 1989), 23.

9 Rachel Bowlby, "Modes of Modern Shopping: Mallarmé at the Bon Marché," in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse

(London: Methuen, 1987), 193.

10 Furbank and Cain, "*La dernière mode*," 6. Furbank and Cain also describe here that, when the International Exhibition took place in London in 1871, Mallarmé was asked to review the French stand. According to the man of letters all invention had ceased in the sphere of furnishing.

11 Mallarmé, "Chronique de Paris," *La dernière mode* 1; Furbank and Cain, "The Journal, Fortnight by Fortnight, with Commentary," in Furbank and Cain, *Mallarmé on Fashion*, 30. Philip Nicolas Furbank and Alex Cain published an English translation of Mallarmé's fashion magazine in 2004. In the following, I will give the page of the English translation as well as the section and edition of the original French magazine whenever it comes to direct quotations.

a new book is judged with the help of the criterion of accidental and various interests of women, such as perfume or jewels. *ix* continues: "To please them, or at least deserve to do so: I know of no ambition, becoming a triumph if one succeeds, that is more fitting for a work in prose or in verse. They say that there are no real readers any longer, and perhaps this is true; but there are women readers. Only a woman, in her freedom from politics and gloomy cares, has leisure, once her dressing is done, to feel the need to dress her soul as well."<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, Mallarmé describes women of the upper class, free from obligations, as having the chance for a life full of pleasure-seeking frivolity, which is closely linked to fashionable clothes. According to him, a female lifestyle gives women the unique opportunity to care for their own soul. It is that which makes her a proper reader. On the one hand, it seems as if Mallarmé exposed a lighter and more relaxed part of his character than he does in his poetry. However, his gaze at the material is definitely serious.

Ulrich Lehmann describes Mallarmé's switch into female identities as an investigation of the social status of women. *La dernière mode* offered him the opportunity to dedicate himself to futile, simple, and domestic things, which were connected to the female gender and regarded to be non-male.<sup>13</sup>

Guy Michaud (1953) went further and stressed a feminine precocity in Mallarmé's character, proclaiming a queer reading in his consistency of the identification with femininity.<sup>14</sup> And even if we can only speculate about the actual purpose behind Mallarmé's venture of publishing this fashion magazine, it is a fact that Mallarmé defended against the fast end of his editorship and that he only accepted it reluctantly.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the intensive examination of the functioning of fashion, which results in the revelation of its economies, proves the bourgeois woman's deep interest in the modern world.

No matter whether Mallarmé transgressed gender roles or investigated women's status in society, he saw feminine frivolity as an important counterpart in a life that seemed to be too masculine and therefore too serious.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, this does not mean that femininity can be said to be superficial in Mallarmé's eyes. If we keep in mind that for Mallarmé the aesthetic ideal was reached best via words and language,<sup>17</sup> and if we recall the above quotation about the female "freedom from politics and gloomy cares,"<sup>18</sup> Mallarmé's concern seems to reach deep. He regards women readers as the only proper readers of his time and thus sees a woman's chance to reach these pure ideas and "dress her soul as well."<sup>19</sup> In contrast to this transcendent background, the magazine expresses temporal, territorial, and financial economies of fashion in modern society.

## The Fast-Moving Nature of Fashion Styles—Temporal Economies in *La dernière mode*

When it comes to time, two economies are obvious in Mallarmé's magazine. On the one hand, the fugacity as well as the fast-moving nature of fashion styles must be considered. On the other hand, it is *time* the woman reader must have on her hands to find her orientation and become part of the world of fashion.

In the beginning of Charles Baudelaire's essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, he describes beauty "as made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable, though to determine how much of it there is is extremely difficult, and, on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, he regards modernity, which is "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent" as "one half of the art, the other being the eternal and immovable."<sup>21</sup> It is this changing and futile element that Baudelaire works out theoretically and that ought to become an important practical part within each of Mallarmé's eight editions of *La dernière mode*.

At the very beginning of the first edition, Madame Marguerite de Ponty dedicates herself to the importance that time has for fashion. September 6, 1874—between seasons—was not the best point in time to speak about fashion. Therefore, the first edition starts out with the words: "Too late to speak of summer fashions and too soon to speak of winter ones (or even autumn ones)."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the temporality of fashion is a prevailing topic in nearly all of her articles. In the following edition she writes about how many pretty things she glimpsed during the previous two weeks. And she uses the word "glimpsed" on purpose, "because preparations for autumn are not completed yet, and the great creators of Fashion will not let [people] see their preliminary sketches."<sup>23</sup>

12 Mallarmé, "Chronique de Paris," *La dernière mode* 1 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 30.

13 Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 75.

14 Guy Michaud, *Mallarmé. L'Homme et l'Oeuvre* (Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1953).

15 Lehmann, *Fashion in Modernity*, 87.

16 Bowlby, "Modes of Modern Shopping" 194.

17 Lecercle, *Mallarmé et la mode*, 112.

18 Mallarmé, "Chronique de Paris," *La dernière mode* 1 (1874); Furbank and Cain,

"Fortnight by Fortnight," 30.

19 Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 30.

20 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. P. E. Charvet (London: Penguin, 2010), 4.

21 *Ibid.*, 17.

22 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 1 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 21.

23 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 2 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 21.

Thanks to a “flagrant indiscretion,” which is not discussed in further detail, Mme de Ponty can already furnish her readers with some tantalizing insights into latest versions of shoes and hats.<sup>24</sup> Each version will be unique, she says, because, “fashion does not repeat itself.”<sup>25</sup> In the next edition she refers to the complete transformation that fashion underwent that autumn and that it would still undergo. The fashion she writes of is capricious, spinning “a thousand charming whimsies, indispensable extras for daytime wear.”<sup>26</sup> After a couple of remarks concerning, for example, necklaces, scarves, and bows, as well as how to wear them, she reassures that all these novelties were known to her, “before it was known at the last races in the Bois de Bologne” (a place of fashionable gathering, where the latest fashion could be seen). One glimpse there was enough to confirm her prefabricated opinion.<sup>27</sup> All in all, Mme de Ponty presents herself as a confidant for the lady who wants to know what to wear. A trait that is also obvious in the fifth edition, when Mme de Ponty describes how to dress up for different events such as dinner parties or trips to the countryside. There is no need to worry about the huge choice of materials for Mme de Ponty's readers. Thanks to her descriptions, as she claims, her readers will be able to foresee the following two months—which was in her view a rather long period of time in the field of fashion.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the fast moving and varied fashion styles, time is of importance for the female readers to find their way through the jungle of fashion. In this context Mme de Ponty is not the only one to help out. The dynamic Miss Satin gives tips on where to buy certain products in the section “Gazette de la Fashion.” Some “cartes-de-visites” present a number of shops that sell them. The temporal economy of fashion is therefore immediately linked to the financial one.

### Fashion on the Global Market: Territorial Economies in *La dernière mode*

Territorial economies, as they appear in the magazine, are also connected to financial economies. Thus, as it was typical for fashion magazines in those days, *La dernière mode* was sold far beyond the borders of France.<sup>29</sup> Apart from England, Germany, and Austria, the magazine names its price for Australia, the USA, as well as some countries in South America, to name only a few.

The magazine shows an international orientation not only concerning the circulation, but also in terms of content. When we leave fashion for a moment, various suggestions for different recipes show a global orientation. Consequently, Mallarmé assumed the role of a creole lady to describe the making of a chicken stew.<sup>30</sup> In addition, he explains under his alias Zizi, a “bonne mulâtre de Surat,”<sup>31</sup> how to make jam out of coconuts for everybody who was tempted to buy this

fruit and had little use for it now. Not only exotic ingredients were presented. In order to help the readers with authentic recipes and to give his magazine an authentic flair, Mallarmé made up characters with a colonial background. However, a global exchange was not just proclaimed in the field of food and recipes; also fashion was shown as part of a global market. This is especially thematized in the columns of the two fashionable ladies Mme de Ponty and Miss Satin. Even though Marguerite de Ponty writes that in Paris there is “nothing exquisite that it cannot offer for sale,”<sup>32</sup> she describes strange and big jewels with a “certain intimate charm”<sup>33</sup> that the ones of her own country lack. Elsewhere she points at a “collier-de-chien,” a necklace for women that women were supposed to be given by their husbands, showing the initials of both of them and which was known in London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and New York.<sup>34</sup>

The reason for that is given in one of Miss Satin's texts:

The management has commissioned me to make a confession. It shall be brief and loyal. In your Journal, we had forgotten the Ladies of the foreign colony in Paris, and indeed foreign Ladies everywhere: forgotten them all! We were so preoccupied with yourselves, Ladies, that it was as if the festivities in London or Moscow or Vienna did not exist. In consequence, what a shower of letters there has been, bearing bizarre postage-stamps and delicately hinting that susceptibilities have been injured! Nor is that all. The ladies of Paris were soon sending us requests for new kinds of information.<sup>35</sup>

Referring to a couple of letters she received from subscribers concerning that topic, Miss Satin concludes: “[W]hat such letters reveal is the need for a rapprochement between all members of High Society, whether belonging to Paris,

24 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 1 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 21. Especially the Chapeau Berger and the Chapeau Valois were mentioned in the magazine to be very famous at that time.

25 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 2 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 53.

26 Ibid.

27 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 3 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 75.

28 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 5 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 122.

29 This was not unusual for fashion magazines in those days. For example, the

French magazine *La mode illustrée* was also available in England.

30 Mallarmé, “Carnet d'Or,” *La dernière mode* 4 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 107.

31 Mallarmé, “Carnet d'Or,” *La dernière mode* 6 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 153f.

32 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 1 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 22.

33 Ibid.

34 Mallarmé, “La Mode,” *La dernière mode* 3 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 74.

35 Mallarmé, “Gazette de la Fashion,” *La dernière mode* 4 (1874); Furbank and Cain, “Fortnight by Fortnight,” 100.

the home of all elegances, or to other, perhaps far-flung centres of fashionable life."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the world of fashion is described as highly international in Mallarmé's magazine and the international impact that fashion already had in those days is reflected perfectly well. In the same edition in which *Miss Satin* focuses on the international readership and the importance of their intercommunication and agreement, Mme Marguerite de Ponty writes about the British fashion designer Charles Frederick Worth (1825–1895).<sup>37</sup> After his apprenticeship in England he came to work in Paris. As he was enormously famous for his feminine fashion, Marylène Delbourg called him "le grand organisateur de l'univers féminine."<sup>38</sup> Worth was not only well known in Great Britain and France. In Austria he was known as Empress Elisabeth's outfitter. The most famous example is certainly the dress in which Franz Xaver Winterhalter painted her in 1865. It shows the Empress with white stars in her loosely braided hair and wearing a strapless dress of white tulle and golden appliqués. Two editions after the reference to Worth, Mme de Ponty describes the newest ball gowns and makes the reader aware that the way of wearing them comes from the East (without explaining what she means by "East" in any further detail).<sup>39</sup> Therefore, even though Paris can be regarded as the capital of the nineteenth century, Mallarmé's accomplishments stress the importance of international relations as an economic factor in fashion.

In conclusion, it is clear that fashion must be regarded as a global phenomenon in Mallarmé's days. For Mallarmé, fashion was supposed to be of highest importance not only for the so-called Parisienne, but also for women worldwide. His magazine offered a platform on which international news in the fashion business could be exchanged.

### The Fashionable Lady as Sustaining Economic Power— Financial Economies in *La dernière mode*

As typical for fashion magazines in those days (and still nowadays), *La dernière mode* supported a feminized economy of a beautiful woman made up by commodities. The fashionable lady comprised a pillar for the new consumer society of the nineteenth century. A woman who dressed up represented the magic as well as the superficial excess that money made affordable in modernity.<sup>40</sup> Mallarmé's magazine presented an enormous number of rules and instructions and reassured the speed in which fashion styles novated and had to be followed. As soon as the first signs of fashion were in sight "at this moment of renewal," Mme de Ponty wishes "to reclothe our lady-reader from top to toe."<sup>41</sup> Throughout each magazine plentiful images and suggestions are presented. Black and white engravings of the newest fashion are described in color and material to

give a clear idea of the illustration. The aim of the magazine was last but not least to show Parisian life with all "its pleasures and its duties everywhere on the public scene and in private."<sup>42</sup> Celebrations and the way women were dressed for different events were highly important as can be seen by Mme de Ponty's accomplishments: "Celebrations simply for their own sake? Yes, and because they are an excuse, and an occasion, for dressing up. 'Go there' and 'Here is how you should go': these words will constantly be found in our column, and 'Madame, with such-and-such a toilette you could well stay at home, saved from the tedium of the long hours by this silk or that lace, enchanted and as it were made new to yourself."<sup>43</sup>

A similar (more or less) decadent attitude is revealed throughout each edition, for example, when *Miss Satin* points at ladies "who greatly dislike this filling of the pockets of rich manufacturers, and insist, obstinately, that things in Paris are going to the dogs." This is recognized as a problem "for gazettiers" like herself. However, this is dismissed as beside the point with the uncompassionate words: "Not everyone is lucky; not everyone can buy 'blue-of-dreams' [...] gowns, nor otter-fur-coloured tunics of pure Tibetan wool."<sup>44</sup> The unfair distribution of luck and the clearness that fashion cannot be available for everybody did not prevent Mme de Ponty from writing about "laws, decrees, projects, and pronunciations" according to which one needs to dress this season.<sup>45</sup> Baudelaire wrote about a woman's right or even duty to devote herself "to the task of fostering a magic and supernatural aura about her appearance; she must adorn herself, to be adored. It follows, she must borrow, from all the arts, the means of rising above nature, in order the better to conquer the hearts and impress the minds of men."<sup>46</sup> Thus, only a couple of years later, *La dernière mode* gave practical and instructive support for women to live up to these standards that Baudelaire (well-known to Mallarmé) had fixed before.

Although the magazine's main focus is the female appearance, it goes far beyond it including in each edition, for example, the way women were supposed

36 Ibid.

37 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 4 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 97.

38 Marylène Delbourg-Delphis, *Le chic et le look: Histoire de la mode féminine et des mœurs de 1850 à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1981), 47.

39 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 6 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 143.

40 Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, 11.

41 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 2

(1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 51.

42 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 4 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 95.

43 Ibid.

44 Mallarmé, "Gazette de la Fashion," *La dernière mode* 5 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 124.

45 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 7 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 163.

46 Baudelaire, *Painter of Modern Life*, 46.

to dress their offspring too. The clothes presented were no less exclusive than those for the children's mothers. A "costume en cheviotte"<sup>47</sup>—a coat of a special Scottish sheep's wool for a six-year-old girl—is only one example I would like to give here. At the same time, advice on education is given in each edition so that children could be introduced to cultural life from a very early age. The surrounding of such a modern lifestyle was not to be missed either. A variety of the aforementioned recipes and menu suggestions as well as proposals for furnishing the housing space and tips for cultural events were part of the magazine. Thereby, the events themselves were as important as the chance to glimpse the latest trends of fashion while visiting them.

Consequently, the magazine *La dernière mode* points beyond instructions for the female appearance. Again and again, it confirms a lady's task of obtaining the aesthetically valuable things in life that money could buy. This is why Rachel Bowlby sees the establishment of a prejudice that is still current today. In her view, the magazine creates a picture of the natural woman in which female readers can recognize themselves and in which the one thing for women to do is to go shopping.<sup>48</sup>

### "The Serious and the Frivolous"

Finally, the tension of Mallarmé's fashion magazine lies first of all in his own masquerade and his writing from the point of view of different, mainly female characters that were part of the production. But the tension goes further: Mallarmé's magazine is a serious statement on fashion in modern society and reveals his own devotion to it. For Mallarmé, fashion goes deep. Mallarmé's idea is that only women in their freedom of politics could enjoy the pleasures of a newly developed modern culture; a lifestyle which was supposed to give them the possibility to take care of their souls. For him, they were the only real readers. However, this idea is embedded into the temporal, territorial, and financial economies of fashion, which were already in full swing in those days and not questioned at all by the author. They give the magazine a highly superficial flair in spite of all its intensity. Accordingly, Barthes's description of Mallarmé's magazine that describes it as "a dialectic of the serious and the frivolous" turns out to be extremely appropriate.<sup>49</sup> The Mallarméan dialectic seems to involve absolutely taking seriously what actually seems to be insignificant. For the man of letters, fashion is of high significance.

47 Mallarmé, "La Mode," *La dernière mode* 3 (1874); Furbank and Cain, "Fortnight by Fortnight," 76.

48 Bowlby, "Modes of Modern Shopping," 202.  
49 Barthes, *Fashion System*, 242.

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# It's All About the Image The Cooperation between the Fashion Industry and Celebrities

Endora Comer-Arldt

The fashion industry has always been associated with glamour and the work of journalists; photographers and models are therefore important to the process of defining fashion. In a world saturated with images, the image of a fashion house or label has to be carefully manufactured across a number of economic and cultural sites—advertising, marketing, magazines, shop design. The role of these agents therefore needs consideration in a 'systems of provision' approach.<sup>1</sup>

Talking about the image of a fashion house, the collaboration between celebrities and the fashion industry is a good way to scrutinize the hybridity of fashion as an economic business and cultural moment.<sup>2</sup> It combines the production, distribution, and consumption of fashion through fashioned bodies as "agents." With her book *The Aesthetic Economy of Fashion*, published in 2009, Joan Entwistle introduced a new approach by analyzing the way the fashion system works from a combined cultural and economic perspective. Based on her fieldwork in model agencies and department stores, she examines how fashion, as an aesthetic product, is valued and distributed. Using this research, and with reference to Pierre Bourdieu's *Capital Theory* and Michel Callon's and Bruno Latour's *The Actor Network Theory*, Entwistle develops a theoretical framework, which defines fashion as an aesthetic economy—fashion as its own market that operates within the same economic and cultural calculations as other so-called heavy industries.

## Paving the Way

This article shows how the cooperation between fashion industry and celebrities became established as part of an economic system within the aesthetic economy of fashion, an economy that depends on a visual environment. As fashion is distributed by images (fashioned bodies) in magazines, billboards, TV campaigns, and everyday life, the production and distribution of the images has to be manufactured carefully.

A new actor has become more and more relevant within the last decades—the celebrity body. This can be shown by taking a historical look at the development of fashion marketing and celebrity marketing.

1 Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 210.

2 Fashion industry is understood as an economic system of fashion companies, fashion magazines (media) and consumers. The starting point here is that fashion

understands itself as art but is also sold as a commodity. To ensure this, different players are involved in the production of visual stimuli for the sale of goods to the consumer. In this respect, the term used for fashion industry stands for the production of consumption.



In 1928, the American marketing professor Paul Nystrom stated in his monograph *Economics of Fashion* that fashion does not need any known “role model.”

The usual reports of what is worn by social notables do not seem to be as valuable now as they formerly were as a means of predicting fashions. The masses apparently do not imitate individual notables to the extent that they formerly did. Today fashion appears to be more of a social or popular movement in which the imitation is largely of types and ideals, rather than of persons. [...] In other words, it is believed that simple, physical counts made at successive intervals and analyzed coldly and dispassionately for trends is a much more scientific method of determining the direction of fashion than dreamy surveys of what Princess this, Duchess that, or Lady so-and-so wore.<sup>3</sup>

Paul Nystrom would not have been aware, eighty years ago, that the role and function of “social notables” would be used by the fashion industry to develop a new business strategy within the aesthetic economy.

As celebrities are present in our daily lives through the media, fashion companies have realized that the celebrity body offers a perfect ad space for distributing their fashion label and image, which can be inferred from the specialized literature on fashion marketing and branding.<sup>4</sup> Hence, fashion companies reacted to social and economic changes by institutionalizing celebrity marketing as a new marketing and distribution strategy.

Based on the assumption that designer fashion understands itself as art but is also sold as a commodity,<sup>5</sup> different actors are involved in the production of visual stimuli for the sale of goods. Celebrities achieved an important role within the fashion industry during the last decades. A whole new industry, involving different actors, developed around cooperation. To show which value-making image strategies are used to promote fashion, this article analyses the historical, economic, and social context in which the cooperation established.<sup>6</sup>

The concern here is not with another history of fashion but, rather, to emphasize certain changes within society and the economy, which are crucial for the establishment and intensification of the cooperation. This article focuses deliberately on the period from the 1980s until today, since a break in the mutual relationship between fashion and celebrities began after the 1970s. According to Isabelle Graw, the fashion world has been increasingly governed by the principles of “celebrity culture” since the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> A change in the perception of fashion and fashion designers already appeared in the 1960s when there was a close link between fashion and pop culture. Designers themselves were viewed as pop stars.<sup>8</sup> Although from the 1960s major social and economic developments occurred (e.g., the formation of a celebrity culture) the

mentioned period is understood as a time when the partnership between fashion industry and the celebrity system “took off.” This was due to two developments: First, new fashion designers and styles appeared since the 1960s and stated a polarity to the traditional French fashion understanding and hegemony. The second development has to do with the spread of media. Media offers the platform for the visual circulation and distribution of the celebrity body and is therefore a basic requirement for the cooperation between fashion companies and celebrities. Economic conditions are crucial for the establishment of the cooperation. Without the upcoming of a service economy and certain changes within company structures, the cooperation couldn’t develop into its own economic system.

## Fashion Newcomers

As Barbara Vinken describes in *Die Mode nach der Mode*, the self-image of the French fashion houses started to change by the end of the 1960s. If French fashion was equated with aristocratic hegemony only consumable by a few selected, the “trickle down”<sup>9</sup> started to decompose in the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Vinken further points out the change of designers of the 1980s from the Western, predominantly French, hegemony of fashion and the strict categorization of people. Her work accords to Bourdieu’s thoughts on the new clothes of the bourgeoisie, in which he describes how the relationships within the field of haute couture began to change. While the ruling class of haute couture relies on established patterns and traditions in their distribution strategy, new labels (mainly prêt-à-porter) established a new path of differentiation to the rulers.

3 Paul F. Nystrom, *Economics of Fashion* (New York: Ronald Press, 1928), 32.

4 However, literature such as *Fashion Marketing* (Bohdanowicz/Clamp) and *Marketing Today’s Fashion* (Mueller/Smiley), published during 1994 and 1999, still do not mention celebrity marketing. This is changing with the turn of the century, especially from 2005 on. Authors such as Mark Tungate (2005), Uche Okonkwo (2007), Michel Chevalier and Gerald Mazzalovo (2008), Jean-Noel Kapferer and Vincent Bastien (2009), or Tim Jackson and David Shaw (2009) analyze various forms of celebrity fashion marketing.

5 Gertrud Lehnert, “Mode und Modern,” in *Kulturanthropologie des Textilens*, ed. Gabriele Mentges (Berlin: Edition Ebersbach, 2005), 256.

6 The published monograph of Pamela

Church Gibson about *Fashion and Celebrity Culture* (2012) focuses on the cultural perspective without taking into consideration the economic dimension.

7 Isabelle Graw, “Alle Macht der Chefredaktion,” *Texte zur Kunst*, January 7, 2010; <http://www.textezurkunst.de/daily/category/reiche-roemer/>.

8 Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 158.

9 The theory is based on the assumption that “lower social classes” orient to dominant class of society; see Elena Esposito, *Die Verbindlichkeiten des Voruebergehens: Paradoxien der Mode* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 19–22.

10 Barbara Vinken, *Mode nach der Mode: Kleid und Geist am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1993), 57.

The game of the newcomers is almost always to break some existing conventions (e.g., by introducing previously excluded color mixtures or materials), but always within the framework of propriety and without putting the rule of the game or the game itself into question. They are in league with the freedom, the imagination and the new (which are often identified with the youth). While the ruling institutions refuse exaggeration and promote art by excluding advertising and the effect, which means in double negative, the litotes, the understatement, 'balanced' and at 'refinement' ...<sup>11</sup>

Bourdieu's remarks refer to the role and function of the French Comité Colbert (including Louis Vuitton, Dior, Chanel, etc.), which brings together over seventy-five French luxury labels. The Comité Colbert is an association founded in 1954 by French luxury companies, which use the Comité as a forum for joint strategic orientation. In an interview with the business magazine *Brand Eins*, the association mentioned that they discussed how they could use common strategies to position products in the international market. The word "marketing" was, however, frowned upon here.<sup>12</sup> Also, in the reception of newcomers the Comité insists on certain values. Although the conditions for new members are very strict, the Comité sees "renewal" as part of the self-concept. "There is a reputation to uphold. Newcomers must deliver their customers the best quality, creativity and an international presence, and they can't afford weakness. For the best quality, the new must strive to captivate their customers, be creative and international presence and cannot afford any weaknesses."<sup>13</sup>

Since the 1950s, the Comité Colbert has built a marketing strategy upon its long-standing traditional values. American fashion companies could not fall back on such traditional values or "craftsmanship." Although Italian fashion companies rely on a long tradition in craftsmanship they were not seen as exclusive and creative enough. Nevertheless, American and Italian fashion companies developed reputable labels with collections at the bridge and prêt-à-porter market. These newcomers relied on other values as marketing tools, such as celebrity marketing. They succeeded by causing symbolic and emotional needs within a specific target group. Even without a haute couture tradition, American and Italian fashion companies managed to add a certain value to their product lines and to establish corresponding luxury segments.

One of the first who understood to use new ways to market professionally and strategically for the conquest of the American market is certainly Giorgio Armani. Shin'ya Nagasawa describes that, in addition to the validity of the four general marketing principles (product, price, place and promotion), especially publicity takes in the promotion as a decisive factor.<sup>14</sup>

Giorgio Armani took this concept into consideration and focused his marketing and recognition on publicity. To make his fashion and label known and de-

sirable he used celebrities. After starting his career at Nino Cerruti 1881, Armani decided in 1975 to establish his own company with his business partner, Sergio Galleoti: Giorgio Armani SpA.<sup>15</sup> During his work at Cerruti, Armani could already get early insight into the cooperation between movie stars and fashion houses, even if he was not directly involved in movie projects. As Cerruti used movie projects with stars as an "add on" for his marketing, Armani centered his marketing on celebrities.<sup>16</sup>

He dressed Richard Gere in the film *American Gigolo* (1980) and built cooperations with celebrities in the decades following. In the mid-1980s, Armani became one of the highest paid designers in the world by using the media presence of celebrities as marketing tool.<sup>17</sup> Dressing celebrities for the Oscar ceremony was, and still is, a successful form of publicity. In 1991, the American magazine *Women's Wear Daily* called the Academy Awards "The Armani Awards."<sup>18</sup> After Giorgio Armani opened his boutique in 1988 in Beverly Hills, he also started to intensify and professionalize the cooperation with celebrities. He hired Lee Radziwill as "special events coordinator."<sup>19</sup> She was responsible for linking well-known people who attract frequent publicity to the label Giorgio Armani. First she covered the market on the East Coast. To also cover the West Coast, with all of its Hollywood activity, in 1988 Armani hired Wanda McDaniel as "director of entertainment industry communications." McDaniel worked closely with celebrity publicists, agents and managers to ensure the public and media presence of Armani not only at official events, such as the Academy Awards, but also in daily life.

"Rich and famous," was the glamor image Armani used to sell his fashions; his success shows how well his publicity marketing strategy worked out.<sup>20</sup> Versace also pursued this strategy. He convinced celebrities such as Madonna, Courtney Love, Elton John, Eric Clapton, etc., to wear his fashions in public.<sup>21</sup>

By the 1990s celebrities were the new fashion models and many designers used celebrities as marketing and advertising instruments. Miuccia Prada describes the situation of the 1990s in a Vogue interview as follows:

11 Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut, "Die neuen Kleider der Bourgeoisie," *Kursbuch*, no. 42 (1975): 176. Translated from German by ECA.

12 Karin Finkenzeller, "Botschafter des Savoir-faire," *Brand Eins*, no. 43 (July 2010): 132.

13 *Ibid.*, 135.

14 Shin'ya Nagasawa, "Marketing Principles of Louis Vuitton. The strongest brand strategy," *Waseda Business & Economic Studies*, no.44 (2008): 41-54.

15 Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost its Lustre* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 113.

16 *Ibid.*, 113-18.

17 Teri Agins, *The End of Fashion: The Mass Marketing of the Clothing Business* (New York: William Morrow, 1999), 159.

18 *Ibid.*, 137.

19 American society lady, younger sister of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

20 Agins, *End of Fashion*, 147-53.

21 *Ibid.*, 139.

Of course, to dress an actress is very much of this time. And, of course, if you are a designer, you are very pleased when Uma Thurman and Nicole Kidman wear your clothing to search for events. But now there is too much pressure to dress the actresses in Hollywood. Every year, people in my office in New York, say, 'Do some things for the Oscars' and I say, 'But if I do not know how an actress wants to present herself, what she wants to express, how can I design a dress for her? I can not.'<sup>22</sup>

What began as a loose form of "red carpet dressing" and "product placement," transformed in the years that followed into a solid, institutionalized, and contractually designed cooperation that in first place Italian and American Designers as Giorgio Armani, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, Donna Karan, Marc Jacobs, Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, etc., used.<sup>23</sup>

Another aspect that worked to the advantage of this cooperation was that a general social-economic and also technological shift occurred.

The restructuring of the field of fashion is only the equivalent—and the effect—to the restructuring of the field of power (as the objective relations between factions of the ruling class field), which led many observers to see the signs of the downfall of the ruling class, which is in fact only a reorganization of the division of labor accompanied by a change of groups, have access to new modalities to profits and prestige of bourgeois existence ...<sup>24</sup>

Based on Bourdieu's remarks regarding the changes within the field of fashion, this can also indicate a general shift in the economic power, which is related to neoliberalism. A new labor group, e.g., managers, are highly connected to success shown as a factor of income, recognition and power. Success became a new category for the personal achievement: the belief that if you worked hard enough, you could (financially) achieve everything. Celebrities are also part of newly reorganized labor groups.

As Caroline Evans states, the use of celebrities around the turn of the century can also be regarded as a "statement of money."<sup>25</sup> Against this background, celebrities took on a core function with the advent of neoliberalism as a "role model." They reflect the belonging to—as defined by Bourdieu—the group, which "has access to new modalities of profits and the prestige of bourgeois existence."

### ... Spreading Media

This access was also provided by the increasing presence of consumer culture as well as the media landscape, because the reception of the cooperation

took place in the form of visual and material consumption. Celebrities are consumable through the Internet, television and radio, film, newspapers, and magazines. Except for their presence in radio, celebrities are connected through images and words.

Only through the evolving media landscape, which guarantees permanent access to information, a celebrity culture emerged. Global media access was enabled by deregulation and the privatization of television in the 1980s, as well as by new satellite technology. However, these media opportunities also required "acquiring information" for filling the daily media program. In her essay "Always on Display: Affective Production in the Modeling Industry,"<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Wissinger describes the role and function of the model within the media landscape.

A model's work is to produce content for attention-gathering and calibrating technologies such as photography, television, and the Internet. Because of the diverse information channels and programs, the search results in many options: [...] so you search for more subject matter. And in that search, the media writes about the lives of models, which I don't think anyone would have been concerned with twenty years ago.<sup>27</sup>

The advent of celebrity culture can therefore be understood against the background of this development. The beginning of celebrity culture and the meaning of celebrities as commodities coincide with the spread of television and the media system. The faster the media developed, the greater was the demand for new faces and stories within the celebrity system. Celebrities changed from their original professions as actors, entertainers, singers, etc., into purchasable products. Similarly, with regard to the role and function of the model, celebrities became a raw material with which to market fashion. The evolution of celebrity culture meant a significant development for the cooperation between the fashion industry and celebrities, since the presence of celebrities has changed to marketable and tradable goods.

This is also reflected in research literature on the advent of celebrity culture. Ellis Cashmore for example describes in his book *Celebrity/Culture* that celebrity culture developed as a part of society in the late 1980s and early

22 "1990s. Miuccia Prada takes stock of fashion on the precipice of the twenty-first century. Interview with Miuccia Prada." *Vogue* (November 1999): 498.

23 Results from own doctoral thesis research.

24 Bourdieu and Delsaut, "Die neuen Kleider," 177.

25 Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 113.

26 Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (London: Duke University Press Books, 2007).

27 Clough and Halley, *Affective Turn*, 251.

1990s. This development was supported by the media system, which promoted celebrity status through the praise and criticism of certain personalities, since the most important characteristic for the existence and presence of celebrities is their “visibility.”

### ... Economic Conditions

Celebrity culture and the marketing of celebrities was caused not only by social change but also by economic upheaval in the transition from a highly industrialized economy to a service economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>28</sup>

Companies focused on their core business and began restructuring by outsourcing certain work areas to suppliers. By the 1990s the concept of “lean production” took hold completely.<sup>29</sup> Productions were increasingly outsourced and subcontracted to suppliers in low-wage countries. This transition to a service economy has also been accompanied by establishing service functions such as marketing, research and development, transport and financial services within the companies. Many of such companies focused on the transition of the business organization to lean management as well as on building their brand image. The idea linked to this was that successful companies produce primarily brands (and brand images) and not products.

Already in the 1980s, Boltanski and Chiapello describe the introduction of new management structures. These were characterized mainly by the word “flexibility.” This meant both, an internal flexibility in terms of circulation of work organization and techniques, as well as an external, which was characterized by a networked professional organization.<sup>30</sup>

These changes had an impact on the organizational forms and structures within the fashion business. A study published in 1999 by Marie-Laure Djelic and Antti Ainamo analyzes different forms of organization that have been established in the French, Italian and US-American luxury fashion industry. In their study, they outline national examples, which they define as “umbrella holding” for France; “flexible embedded network” for Italy; and “virtual organization” for the United States.

To understand the meaning of the brand, the brand image, and the brand value it is important to take a brief look at the different examples. As these examples show, the shift within the organizational structures can be retraced; it can also be related to Bourdieu’s description of the “newcomers” and the meaning of marketing respectively celebrity marketing as part of the brand’s management of the fashion companies.

As Djelic and Ainamo state, the French “umbrella holding” is ideally represented within the LVMH conglomerate as a prime example.<sup>31</sup> The model concentrates primarily on diversification, meaning that one label offers different products such as perfumes, cosmetics, and accessories. This also includes secondary clothing lines that positioned, for example, in another segment as ready-to-wear, bridge- or mass-clothing. This model highly relates to the understanding of the Comité Colbert. The main focus concentrates on the name of the fashion house and on keeping in house the core functions of “their crafts.”

Compared to the French model, the Italian “flexible embedded network” focuses mainly on the establishment of subsidiaries and the cooperation within a close network. While the French model brings several labels together under one roof, the Italian model concentrates its core business more on product diversification. To achieve higher market coverage they center on the outsourcing of production. While the self-understanding of the French model for market penetration is primarily on the “design” and “creation,” the Italian model prefers the mechanization, standardization, and flexible production through a whole network of suppliers.<sup>32</sup>

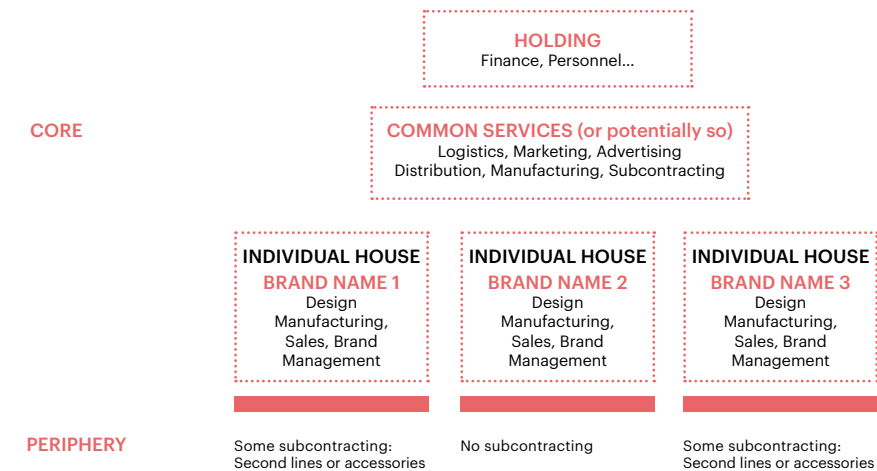


Fig. 1 Marie-Laure Djelic and Antti Ainamo, depiction of the “umbrella holding” organizational model in the fashion industry, 1999.

28 Michael Hardt, “Affective Labor,” *boundary 2*, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 89–100.

29 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005), 112.

30 *Ibid.*, 262.

31 The French luxury goods conglomerate,

Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy.  
32 Marie-Laure Djelic and Antti Ainamo, “The Coevolution of New Organizational Forms in the Fashion Industry. A Historical and Comparative Study of France, Italy and the United States,” *Organization Science* 10, no. 5 (1999): 630.

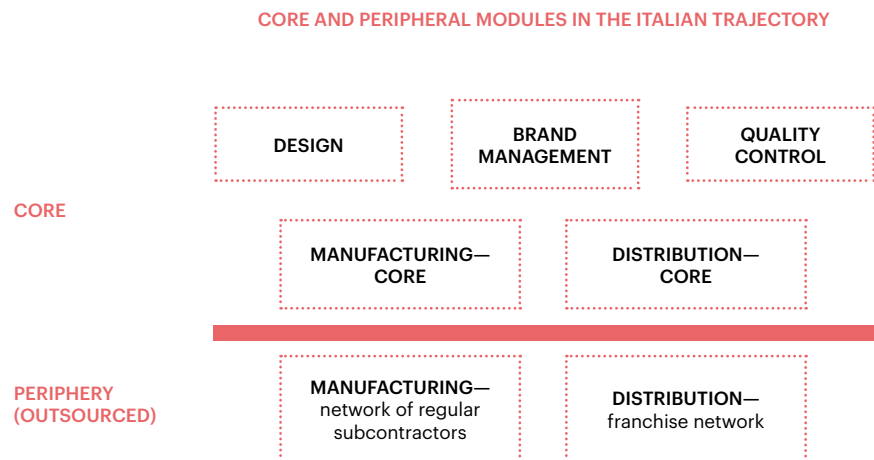


Fig. 2  
Marie-Laure Djelic and Antti Ainamo, depiction of the “flexible embedded network” organizational model in the fashion industry, 1999.

Unlike the French model, the design, brand management and quality control are disconnected in favor of individual flexible modular corporate functions. Except for a few core functions the majority of production and distribution are awarded to an established and stable network of suppliers. This allowed Italian fashion companies to flexibly address market demands and to respond to demands without losing quality. Herein consists, according to Djelic and Ainamo, a substantial difference between the American and Italian models.<sup>33</sup> As the Italian fashion companies can fall back on a tradition of “craftsmanship,” they keep those functions also in house.

While also the American “virtual organization” couples the production from the core business, this model does not work in fixed network structures; instead, it assigns short-term as well as locally and regionally unbound production orders. In an international comparison, the so-called core business takes the strategic management. Even more than the Italian model, the American organization concentrates on a consistent modularization of business functions.

A variety of business functions has been outsourced and monitored in the context of strategic business development. Many American companies decided, in contrast to Italian companies (these are often still in founding family or owner-conditions), for an Initial Public Offering (IPO),<sup>34</sup> in order to have the necessary capital to finance strategic decisions. Compared to French companies, Americans had fewer merger and acquisition (M&A) transactions.<sup>35</sup> The

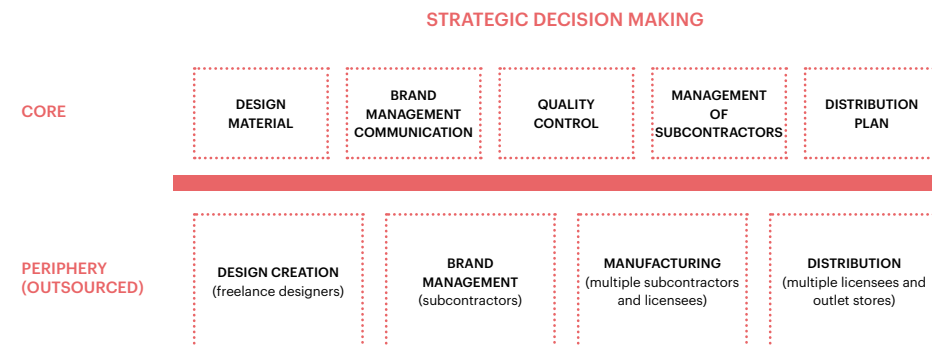


Fig. 3  
Marie-Laure Djelic and Antti Ainamo, depiction of the “virtual organization” model of organization in the fashion industry, 1999.

restructuring of business organizations and the M&A wave of the late 1990s show that, in all international companies, the brand gained importance as an intangible asset. Due to the positive acceptance and standing of the brand within the market, it became possible for companies to sell their businesses for even more than they are worth with regard to revenue or operating funds. That is the intangible number behind the “brand value” or “brand equity” of a company. The more popular a brand among consumers, the higher the “brand valuation.”<sup>36</sup> In this context the role of the celebrity must be understood as an instrument to construct brand awareness and brand value, which leads to a return on investment (ROI) for the company.

## Resume—Celebrities and Fashion Industry—A Visual Dependency

The outlined changes were crucial for the setup of the cooperation between fashion industry and celebrities. Due to changes within established cultural fashion structures and economic conditions, fashion houses became aware of the fact that they have to invest in their brand image. As Cashmore states, while the idea of celebrities in the 1960s was still in its “infancy,” the upcoming celebrity culture was set up in the context of a “production system” in

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 631.

<sup>34</sup> A stock market launch where a private company offers shares of stock to the public.

<sup>35</sup> M&A refers to the corporate strategy for a company to grow in its sector by selling,

buying, dividing or combining different companies.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Noel Kapferer and Vincent Bastien, *The Luxury Strategy: Break the Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands* (New York: Kogan Page, 2009), 120–22.

which the fashion industry took part and from which it benefited.<sup>37</sup> The cooperation with fashion companies was also important for celebrities as they used this form of partnership to support and distribute their own brand image. As the survival of celebrities depends on their presence within the media system, they discovered another marketing tool for themselves. This happened first in the recourse of established marketing strategies from the fragrance advertising. The role of the celebrities often corresponded with the advertised product. A good example is Joan Collins advertising for Revlon. The name of the fragrance Scoundrel coincided with her role as Alexis Carrington in the American TV series, *Denver Clan*.<sup>38</sup>

Celebrities need visibility to build a brand around themselves, a point made evident in sales literature. In the late 1980s, American marketing and communications professors Philip Kotler and Irving Rein published the book *High Visibility: The Professional Guide to Celebrity Marketing*. They describe primarily how the marketing of celebrities has changed over the last years, and how a separate industry has been built up around celebrities, an industry that is, just as the fashion industry, pending on visualizing strategies to sell the celebrity product. As the fashion industry and celebrities are in need of the same distributing mechanisms, their cooperation turned out to be an economic win-win situation. Due to the outlined social and economic changes, the cooperation developed an independent production system as part of an aesthetic economy, which is not only related to material production. Thus, concerning the role and importance of celebrities for fashion houses, Valerie Steele stated correctly that “[f]ashion today is not about designing and manufacturing clothes; it is about communicating an image.”<sup>39</sup> To communicate, develop, and support the image of fashion houses, celebrities are important agents within an aesthetic economy. The shifts within the fashion industry since the 1960s, emergent celebrity culture and the social economic changes were crucial for the establishment of the cooperation between fashion and the media machine.

37 Ellis Cashmore, *Celebrity/Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), 11.  
38 An American sitcom that was shown in the 1980s.

39 Valerie Steele, *Fashion, Italian Style* (New York: Fashion Institute of Technology, 2003), 107.

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# Andy's Heritage Collaborations between Fashion, Art, and Louis Vuitton

Monica Titton

## The Intersection between Fashion and Art

Over the past decade, the relationship between fashion and art has become a widely discussed topic in the media and in academic fields like cultural studies, art history, and sociology. Today, the intersections between fashion and art can be observed from various perspectives. Media strategies related to the representation and enactment of art are increasingly employed in the fashion world and vice versa: on the one hand, exhibition openings and art fair attendances have grown into society events comparable to Paris fashion week.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, fashion shows by designers such as Hussein Chalayan, Viktor & Rolf, or Iris van Herpen are reminiscent of happenings or performance art, not least because of the experimental and avant-garde character of the clothes presented on the runway.

The conditions of production and marketing of fashion and art bear strong similarities. As art critic Isabelle Graw asserts: "The 'art scene' that was formerly described along the metaphor of a small enterprise, today would be portrayed more aptly as a 'visual industry,' particularly because of its structural similarities to other cultural industries such as Hollywood or the fashion industry."<sup>2</sup> Globally operating art galleries such as Gagosian or White Cube face multinational holding companies such as Kering (formerly PPR) or the LVMH-Group that comprise international fashion brands but also cosmetic brands, watch-making companies, and even private museums for modern art, such as the "Palazzo Grassi" in Venice, owned by Kering, or the "Fondation Louis Vuitton" in Paris, owned by the LVMH Group.<sup>3</sup>

A systematic inquiry of the crossover between fashion and art represents a complex academic endeavor not only because of the wide analytic scope but also because of the internal segmentation and diversity of both the field of fashion and art.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I focus only on one facet of the intersection between fashion and art. I analyze collaborations between fine artists and fashion designers on a common product by the example of the cooperation between Marc Jacobs for the fashion label Louis Vuitton with the artists Takashi Murakami and Richard Prince in 2003 and 2008, respectively. The resulting limited editions of handbags were hybrid products half way between fashion accessory and piece of art, which makes them an interesting artifact for a sociological analysis of the relationship between fashion and art.

1 Isabelle Graw, "Der letzte Schrei: Über modelförmige Kunst und kunstförmige Mode," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 56 (2004): 81.

2 Ibid.

3 Isabelle Graw, *Der große Preis: Kunst zwischen Markt und Celebrity-Kultur* (Cologne: DuMont, 2008), 143; Diana Crane,

*Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 133.

4 Efrat Tseëlon, "Authenticity," in *Fashion and Art*, ed. Adam Geczy and Vicky Karaminas (New York: Berg, 2012), 113–21.



I now turn to a brief examination of the key figures from the history of fashion and art history that can be considered predecessors to the cooperation between Murakami, Prince, and Marc Jacobs before discussing these case studies in detail.

## Schiaparelli, Dalí, Cocteau—Historical Precursors

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the works of fine artists served as a source of inspiration for fashion designers, who incorporated artistic visual elements (color palettes, shapes, and design principles) into their designs. One of the most famous examples is the mini dress inspired by the abstract paintings of Piet Mondrian designed by Yves Saint Laurent in 1967.<sup>5</sup> Also fine artists were inspired to experiment within the creative field of fashion: around 1900, proponents of Art Nouveau Henry van de Velde and Anna Muthesius designed so-called “reform dresses,” loosely cut gowns meant to liberate women from the health risks and bodily restriction of the corset.<sup>6</sup> In the 1920s, artists belonging to the circle of Russian Constructivism such as Ludmilla Popova and Vladimir Tatlin extended their artistic vision to the design of clothing.<sup>7</sup> There are numerous other examples of artists and fashion designers switching their trade, however, I will not elaborate further on the existence of mutual historical references between fashion and art.<sup>8</sup>

Elsa Schiaparelli was the first fashion designer to actually collaborate with Surrealist artists on designs for clothing and accessories in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> At the time, the eccentric Italian designer was Coco Chanel’s antipode. In contrast to the reduced cuts and muted colors preferred by Chanel, Schiaparelli used extravagant fabrics and worked with strong color contrasts, and employed innovative construction techniques.<sup>10</sup> Her gowns were worn by Hollywood actresses such as Mae West, Katherine Hepburn, and Marlene Dietrich, and her work was also appreciated by intellectuals and artists at the Paris salons.<sup>11</sup> In 1937, she designed the famous “lobster dress,” a cream-white, silk evening gown on which Salvador Dalí had painted a lobster. A year before, Dalí had used the crustacean in his sculpture Lobster Telephone. Schiaparelli and Dalí collaborated on several other garments and accessories, but Dalí was not the only artist with whom she collaborated—she also worked with Jean Cocteau, Leonor Fini, Christian Berard, Man Ray, and Louis Aragon.<sup>12</sup> Schiaparelli can thus be considered a pioneer of fashion design whose creations are studied and reinterpreted to this day and whose ideas have become part of fashion’s common knowledge. When Schiaparelli used one of Dalí’s lip-shaped sofas to decorate her shop in Paris it was a very unusual sight. Today there are hardly any differences in the interior design of avant-garde fashion boutiques and art galleries.<sup>13</sup> Schiaparelli also hired artists to design advertising campaigns and to array shop window displays—both have become current practices in the fashion industry. Particularly in the luxury segment of the fashion industry,

the proximity to fine art is employed as a marketing strategy, especially by fashion brands Louis Vuitton and Prada.<sup>14</sup> The artistic collaborations that became characteristic for Schiaparelli’s oeuvre, were repeated with comparable success only by Marc Jacobs, creative director of Louis Vuitton, as I delineate in the following section.

## Louis Vuitton and the Arts

French leather worker Louis Vuitton founded his company in Asnières in 1854 and from its very beginning, it targeted a luxury market. Vuitton’s first clients were wealthy Parisians who bought the innovative, lightweight suitcases for their travels to mundane holiday locations such as Nizza and St. Moritz. Already in the 1880s and 1890s, Vuitton started the international expansion of the company with a shop in London and the distribution of the merchandise in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Louis Vuitton quickly grew into one of the first international luxury brands, intent on maintaining a distinguished image by sponsoring sailing trips or rallies and by selling customized suitcases for artists and members of the jet set. Since the late 1970s, the organizational structure of the company adapted to its growing size and global reach, a development that culminated in the merger with Moët Hennessy in 1987. In the 1990s, the majority shareholder of the LVMH group (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy Group), Bernard Arnault, bought a considerable number of fashion houses (Céline, Kenzo, Givenchy, Fendi, Donna Karan, etc.), and hired young, talented fashion designers to take over their creative direction.<sup>16</sup> In 1996, Arnault appointed

- 5 Gill Gasparina, *I love Fashion: L'art contemporaine et la mode* (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 2006), 11; Valerie Steele, “Fashion,” in *Fashion and Art*, ed. Adam Geczy and Vicky Karaminas (New York: Berg, 2012), 19.
- 6 Ingrid Loschek, *Reclams Mode- und Kostümllexikon* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), 412.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 345; Djurdja Bartlett, “Stile e socialismo: quando la moda doveva essere arte,” in *Moda e Arte*, ed. Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonté (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), 69–86.
- 8 For a general overview, see Alice MacKrell, *Art and Fashion: The Impact of Art on Fashion and Fashion on Art* (London: Batsford, 2005); Gasparina, *I love Fashion*; Steele, “Fashion,” 13–27; Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonté, ed., *Moda e Arte* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012).

- 9 Loschek, *Reclams Mode- und Kostümllexikon*, 571; Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 170; Steele, “Fashion,” 17.
- 10 Sanda Miller, “Dal ballo al museo: come l'abito diventa opera d'arte,” in *Moda e Arte*, ed. Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonté (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), 51–68.
- 11 Annette Hellmeister, *Die Pariser Haute Couture* (Trier: WVT, 1996), 75.
- 12 Dilys E. Blum, *Shocking! The Art and Fashion of Elsa Schiaparelli* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 135.
- 13 Crane, *Fashion*, 163; Nicky Ryan, “Prada and the Art of Patronage,” *Fashion Theory* 11, no. 1 (2007): 14.
- 14 For the case of Prada, see Ryan, “Prada and the Art of Patronage,” 7–24.
- 15 Paul-Gérard Pasols, *Louis Vuitton: Die Erfindung des Luxus* (Munich: Collection Rolf Heyne, 2005).
- 16 Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 18.

American designer Marc Jacobs as creative director of Louis Vuitton with the intention to increase the fashionable prestige of the brand and to reposition it on the fashion market. Jacobs was appointed to design ready-to-wear-collections of clothing and at the same time to modernize the brand by transforming the handbags from their status as “classics”—once-in-a-lifetime investments—into coveted fashion accessories. He did so by diversifying the product range; he utilized new materials such as jeans and patent leather in the design of the handbags and thereby fetishized them as seasonally changing “it-bags.”

A handful of renown and established artists had collaborated with Vuitton a few years before creative director Marc Jacobs worked with Murakami, Prince, and recently Yayoi Kusama. In 1988, artists César, Arman, Sol LeWitt, Sandro Chia, and James Rosenquist were asked to design a silk foulard measuring 90 x 90 centimeters for Louis Vuitton. The foulards were produced in a limited edition—just like the handbags designed two decades later—but were conceived as collector’s items in the first place. Moreover, the materiality of a silk foulard is somewhat related to a canvas and therefore simulates the traditional tool of a fine artist much more than a handbag does. However, beyond the difference in the marketing and the formal design, the artistic collaborations of 1988 can be viewed in relation to the ones that took place over the past couple of years.

Starting from 2001, Marc Jacobs repeatedly hired creative partners in the design of new limited handbag collections for Louis Vuitton. Stephen Sprouse, who was a protagonist of the New York fashion scene in the 1980s and re-invented himself as a graffiti artist in the 1990s, designed a collection of handbags in cooperation with Marc Jacobs in Spring 2001. The collection was a huge commercial success and Sprouse was hired to design another collection in the ensuing year. Marc Jacobs always referred to Sprouse as an “artist” in all the interviews and official press releases—a deceptive appellation if Sprouse’s status as an artist is measured by the standard criteria that designate the profession (education in an Art Academy, exhibition in galleries, art fairs and international art shows).<sup>17</sup> Sprouse had organized his first and only art show in 1989, when, inspired by Andy Warhol, he exhibited six screen prints of Sid Vicious, the deceased bass player of British punk band the Sex Pistols.

The promotion of Sprouse as an artist, a personality who could rather be located at the intersection between fashion and art if compared with Murakami and Prince, suggests two conclusions. First, the label of “artist” is associated with more prestige than the label “designer,” a fact that seems to be particularly important for Louis Vuitton as a brand, as becomes apparent in the company’s systematic positioning in the proximity to art to enhance the brand prestige. Secondly, the label “artist” appears to be a fluid and malleable definition. Even though the inclusion in the art system and its institutions is

restricted according to certain parameters, it is nevertheless possible to “pass as an artist” through the recognition of an institution stocked with sufficient definatory power. Marc Jacobs stated that no less a figure than Marcel Duchamp served as a role model for his collaboration with Sprouse: “I think that what we undertook [...] with Stephen Sprouse was unconsciously inspired by Marcel Duchamp, with his mustache-painting on the Mona Lisa that became the provocative *L. H. O. O. Q.* That is, the Monogram graffiti tagging is actually a tribute in the form of a desecration.”<sup>18</sup> Jacobs repeated this claim in all his interviews with the fashion press, thereby further embedding the Sprouse-Vuitton-bags within an artistic context. Even if the marketing and publicity by Louis Vuitton did not lead to the consecration of Sprouse within the art system, the attention derived from the collaboration boosted his late career in the fashion industry (after the assignment at Vuitton, Sprouse worked with fashion brands Diesel, Target, and the furniture producer, Knoll International). With his ostentatious contextualization of Sprouse in art history, Jacobs indicated which elements of the handbag collections were to be considered “art.” While the graffiti signature could be regarded as a simple design element, Jacobs constituted it into an artistic intervention and into a reinterpretation of a piece of art by one of the most important artists of the twentieth century.

## Takashi Murakami

In 2003, Marc Jacobs hired another partner for an artistic collaboration on a limited series of handbags. The first collection (Spring/Summer 2003) that resulted from the collaboration between Marc Jacobs and Japanese artist Takashi Murakami was so successful that the artist was commissioned to create two more collections, in 2004 and 2008 respectively.

For the first collection, Multicolor Monogram, Murakami simply changed the colors of the characteristic Louis Vuitton monogram canvas. Its brown background was tinted white; the beige signs were imbued into thirty-three different shades of pink, yellow, blue and green. For the second collection, Cherry Monogram (Spring/Summer 2005), Murakami designed a pattern with cherry blossoms in his characteristic manga style printed on the LV canvas in various versions.<sup>19</sup> The third collection, Monogramouflage Canvas, was presented in summer 2008. This time, the background patterned with a miliatristic camouflage, and the signs were turned black. This collection was not as commercially successful

<sup>17</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 181.

<sup>18</sup> Stéphane Gerschel, *Louis Vuitton: “Icons”* (New York: Assouline, 2007), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Gill Gasparina, “33 Colors,” in *Louis Vuitton: Art, Fashion and Architecture*, ed. Simon Castets (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 40–63.

as the first two collections, probably because the appearance of the bags deviated too much from their initial appearance and thus could not be recognized at first glance as status symbols, losing much of their “fashionable” connotation.



Fig. 4  
Takashi Murakami, *Eye Love SUPERFLAT White*, 2003 (used as a canvas design for the collaboration with Louis Vuitton).

One of the reasons why the Multicolor Monogram collection was so successful to be permanently integrated into the range of Louis Vuitton designs is precisely the fact that, despite the change of colors, the logo remained recognizable, while the highly fetishized logo almost seemed to disappear in the third collection. Another factor that contributed to the huge commercial success of the collection designed by Murakami is the cult-like following of Louis Vuitton in Japan, one of the largest sales markets of the brand.<sup>20</sup> Thanks to

the cooperation with Murakami, the brand managers of Louis Vuitton diversified the image of the brand so as to appeal to a young, urban class of European and American customers who are able to decipher and appreciate the visual codes of Japanese pop culture. From the perspective of the Japanese market, the collaboration with Murakami appears to be a perfect match for the customers' expectations. Therefore, it can be assumed that the collaboration yielded a big financial profit for both sides.

It is evident that the commercial proceeds obtained—thanks to the maximization of the brand's prestige—were the primary motivation for the brand Louis Vuitton to pursue the collaboration with Murakami. Despite the lack of official numbers, it is safe to assume that Murakami must have been paid a large amount of money for his work—however, I assert that an analysis of this phenomenon would be too narrowly considered if the financial gain would be regarded as Murakami's only motivation for his cooperation with Vuitton. Hence, in light of his creative work, the project with Vuitton appears as a coherent continuation of his career as “artist impresario.”<sup>21</sup>

In his work, Murakami addresses the culture of *kawaii* (which literally means “cute,” “adorable,” or “sweet”): an aesthetic that is characteristic to Japanese society. It revolves around infantilization and minimization, and is reflected in the enormous popularity of manga comics and anime movies in Japan.<sup>22</sup> The lacking account-taking of Japan's traumatic involvement in the Second World War, its Americanization and the tension between individualism and a strong community spirit are recurring themes in Murakami's work. He comments on these topics with a visual language that is deeply influenced by Japanese pop culture.<sup>23</sup> Murakami defines his art as “superflat” because he uses the traditional, two-dimensional, so-to-speak flat Japanese aesthetic for the development of his own artistic position. In the catalogue for his solo exhibition in Los Angeles in 2005, curator Amanda Cruz comments on Murakami's art as follows: “His work so perfectly mimics consumer obsessions that it embodies all the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in those tropes. [...] With his uncanny ability to mirror his culture he is more the Japanese equivalent of Andy Warhol than someone intent on critiquing things.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, *Deluxe*, 81–84.

<sup>21</sup> Kitty Hauser, “Superflat,” *Artforum International* 43, no. 2 (2004): 129; Pamela Church Gibson, “Nuove alleanze: mondo dell'arte, case di moda e celebrità,” in Pedroni and Volonté, *Moda e Arte*, 203–18.

<sup>22</sup> Dana Friis-Hansen, “The Meaning of Murakami's Nonsense: About ‘Japan’ Itself,” in *Takashi Murakami: The Meaning of*

*the Nonsense of the Meaning*, ed. Amanda Cruz, Midori Matsui, and Dana Friis-Hansen (New York: Abrams Books 1999), 30–41.

<sup>23</sup> Midori Matsui, “Toward a Definition of Tokyo Pop: The Classical Transgressions of Takashi Murakami,” in *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Amanda Cruz, “DOB in the Land of Otaku,” in *ibid.*, 14.

Indeed, the parallels between Murakami's works and Pop art, and particularly Andy Warhol cannot be denied: besides his language, culturally influenced by Pop, his production practices virtually qualify him as one of Warhol's heirs. In homage to Warhol, Murakami called his studio "Hiropon factory" that he had founded in 1996 in Tokyo. In 2001, he set up the art production company Kaikai Kiki Company with an office in Sapporo and one in New York. The company is involved in a vast range of activities ranging from art production to merchandise design, managing and agent services and freelance work.<sup>25</sup>

Even if art critics were skeptical about the cooperation between Murakami and Vuitton, no harm came to his career as an artist he is still invited to all the big art fairs and international exhibitions as the Biennale in Venice and his works are shown in museums all over the world. The collaboration with Louis Vuitton even inspired Murakami to incorporate the monogram canvas into his own work and thereupon to reflect it in his artistic vision.

In the retrospective, aptly titled "Copyright Murakami" held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles from October 2007 to February 2008, Murakami incorporated a fully operative Louis Vuitton store as an integrative part of the exhibition into the Museum.<sup>26</sup> In the shop, visitors could buy handbags that were designed especially for the occasion, as well as other items of merchandise such as key chains or prints. The event caused controversial media debates because Murakami had de facto obtained the conservation of the bags in an art museum and had therefore fulfilled the first step in their consecration as art objects.

## Richard Prince

In 2007, Marc Jacobs asked American artist Richard Prince to collaborate with him on a limited edition of handbags for Louis Vuitton, presented on the runway of the Spring/Summer collection 2008 in Paris in October 2007. When the runway show began, twelve models dressed in transparent white nurse uniforms with matching bonnets and surgical masks made out of black lace, strutted down the catwalk, each of them carrying one of the handbags designed by Prince. The performance on the catwalk was based on Prince's "Nurse Paintings," a series of works representing nurses in a sixties look before a roughly painted background.

The look of the handbags was very different from their original appearance, unlike those designed by Murakami. The monogram canvas and the logo were barely visible anymore, they had been spray painted with colors or completely covered, printed with writing or comics, the leather and canvas mix was replaced by suede leather, plastic, and neoprene. Indeed, the handbags differed

in their design, color, and style as much from each other as they did from Prince's most recent painting series that they were based on.

As had been the case with the Murakami-collection, the Prince collection was discussed enthusiastically in fashion magazines, accompanied by pictures of celebrities wearing the eclectic handbags as an ultimate proof of their fashionable allure. Even if official sales figures are not available, it is known that the Prince collection was not as commercially successful as the ones created by Murakami. However, the brand Louis Vuitton profited from the collaboration with Prince: its sophisticated yet experimental image was solidified and the strategy of increasing the brand's prestige was realized. The collaboration with Louis Vuitton in 2007 was neither the first time that Prince came into contact with the fashion world. In 2001, he had photographed a fashion portfolio for the magazine *Purple* and in 2010 for the Japanese fashion magazine *POP*.

As in the case of Murakami, it is worth looking into Richard Prince's development as an artist in order to reconstruct the rationale behind his collaboration with Louis Vuitton. In the coffee table book *Louis Vuitton, Art, Fashion and Architecture* Prince is quoted as follows in an essay by Glenn O'Brien: "If this works, Richard said, I can retire."<sup>27</sup> Prince does not even try to give an elaborate account about his artistic motivation; he rather articulates the provocation that his collaboration with Vuitton could terminate his career as a fine artist. Prince apparently dissociates himself from any artistic ambition and invalidates every form of criticism that could aim precisely at his financial gain obtained from the collaboration. However, it is this particular ironic, elusive attitude that is typical for Prince and only consequential in light of his self-enactment as an artist.

From a very abstract point of view, the commonality between Murakami and Prince lies in their systematic recourse to the symbols, signs, and pictures of consumer culture. Contrary to Murakami, however, Prince denies making any statements about his art, a singularity that art critic Rosetta Brooks defines as the formula for his success: "The key to the success of Prince's work is the way in which he presents both his art and himself, characterized by a muteness—or even a deliberate obfuscation—regarding his intentions. By side-stepping a straightforward response to questions of intentionality, Prince refuses to

25 Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (London: Granta, 2008), 185.

26 Peter Schjeldahl, "Buying It: A Murakami Retrospective," *New Yorker*, April 14, 2008; <http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/artworld/2008/04/14/080414>

[craw\\_artworld\\_schjeldahl?currentPage=1](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/artworld/schjeldahl?currentPage=1).  
27 Glenn O'Brien, "Prince, Richard," in *Louis Vuitton: Art, Fashion and Architecture*, ed. Simon Castets (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 322.

close down meaning, or even to suggest any particular goal towards which the work might be heading."<sup>28</sup> This evasive and deceptive stance towards his art is paradoxically part of the reason why Prince is not only highly acclaimed within the art world but also a very successful player on the art market. His art is accessible also to those art collectors who are interested in "expensive" art (such as, among others, Marc Jacobs)<sup>29</sup> and who have been important agents in the consecration of Pop art as a legitimate art form since the 1960s.<sup>30</sup>

Next to artists such as Sherry Levine, Robert Longo, Jack Goldstein, and Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince is an exponent of appropriation art, a movement that emerged in the 1970s in New York City and in which the central artistic strategy consists in the appropriation of someone else's pictures.<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of his career, Prince mainly took photographs of advertisements for expensive watches, ink pens, perfume, or furniture arrangements.<sup>32</sup> The reproduction, appropriation, and recontextualization of pre-existing elements remained constant features throughout the various periods of his work. The "Joke Series" consists of a series of pictures of retraced cartoons from *The New Yorker* and layered, blurred chauvinistic jokes. One of the joke paintings then served as an inspiration for one of the Louis Vuitton bags: the cartoon was sewn in blue silk thread on a rectangular evening clutch bag made of yellow pony fur.

As in the case of Murakami, I argue that the collaboration of Prince with Louis Vuitton can be considered a coherent perpetuation of his artistic self-understanding. During the last decade, Prince has withdrawn progressively from his critical position and his work has become increasingly self-referential. Graw describes the development in the work of Prince as follows: "[T]he conceptual Prince, whose early work still engaged the social conditions of consumer capitalism (luxury goods, fashion, lifestyle), is sacrificed on the altar of the traditional Prince, whose works orbit exclusively around the universe defined by his own taste (cars, girls with large breasts)."<sup>33</sup> Considering Prince's designs for Louis Vuitton with Graw's critique in mind, one is inevitably reminded of the picture series from his latest work period; the Vuitton handbags almost look like a retrospective printed on leather and plastic. Murakami's mimetic interpretation of the monogram canvas appears like the work of a veritable designer compared to the collection designed by Richard Prince. The Louis Vuitton lettering was simply embedded into art works and then printed on new handbag models designed by Marc Jacobs. In the statement quoted above about his potential retirement after the collaboration with Louis Vuitton, Prince unmasks his contribution as a purely commissional work and steps back from every form of artistic responsibility. Therefore he could be criticized by members of the art system for his superficiality and shallowness, but at the same time, this gesture of overt bluntness protects

him from any criticism from the very same art system because in the end, they are only handbags.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to analyze the collaborations between Murakami and Prince with Louis Vuitton within the framework of the sociology of art. In Bourdieu's art theory, the field of artistic production is conceived as divided in two subfields: the field of pure production on the one hand and the field of large-scale production on the other hand.<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu argues that every segment of artistic production, from literature to theater to fine art, is characterized by a dualistic structure of avant-garde and its antagonist commercial sector,<sup>35</sup> or, "the opposition between art and money."<sup>36</sup> Zahner suggests that in the 1960s a new, third subfield took shape, and that Pop artist Andy Warhol made a significant contribution to its emergence. Drawing upon the work of Bourdieu and Crane,<sup>37</sup> Zahner defines this new sub-field as "subfield of extended production."<sup>38</sup> She argues that American Pop artists have permanently changed the mechanisms of evaluation and marketing of art. The economic boom in post-war America fostered the development of mass media and an unprecedented educational expansion. Pop art appeared as an art form that the emerging, well-funded middle class could apprehend, quite unlike the complex and complicated art form of Abstract Expressionism. Exponents of Pop art exploited symbols and signs from consumer culture that middle class audiences were familiar with and that demanded relatively little background knowledge in art history to be appreciated.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Pop artists developed a new form of self-understanding and assumed a different position towards questions of commercialization and dissemination of their art from the previous generation of artists. Warhol was a key figure in the establishment of a new notion of art and demystified the modernist conception

28 Rosetta Brooks, "A Prince of Light or Darkness?," in *Richard Prince*, ed. Rosetta Brooks, Jeff Rian, Luc Sante (London: Phaidon, 2003).

29 Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, XV.

30 Nina Tessa Zahner, *Die neuen Regeln der Kunst. Andy Warhol und der Umbau des Kunstbetriebs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2006), 254.

31 Brooks, "A Prince of Light or Darkness?," 34.

32 Isabelle Graw, "Reconsidering Prince. On Richard Prince at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York," *Texte Zur Kunst*, no. 68 (December 2007): 30; <http://www.textezurkunst.de/68/reconsidering-prince/>.

33 Graw, "Reconsidering Prince," <http://www.textezurkunst.de/68/>

[reconsidering-prince/](http://www.textezurkunst.de/68/reconsidering-prince/).

34 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 121.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 91.

37 Diana Crane, *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde. The New York Art World, 1940-1985* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

38 Ibid., 277; Zahner, *Die neuen Regeln der Kunst. Andy Warhol und der Umbau des Kunstbetriebs im 20. Jahrhundert*, 248.

39 Crane, *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde*, 64.

of art sustained by Abstract Expressionists by producing art works for different target groups.<sup>40</sup> The modernist understanding of art corresponds to Bourdieu's characterization of the field of pure production within the artistic field understood as "an inverse economy whose particular logic is based on the very nature of symbolic goods—realities with two aspects, merchandise and signification, with the specifically symbolic values and the market values remaining relatively independent of each other."<sup>41</sup> Murakami's self-conception as artist and entrepreneur qualifies him as a post-Warhol artist *par excellence* and as a representative of the subfield of extended production conceptualized by Zahner.

Prince is also often discussed in the context of Pop art; however, in his case the connections to Warhol are not as evident as in the case of Murakami, also because the systematic play with artistic clichés is part of his attitude and artistic positioning. Prince's career, from his critical early period to his institutional and commercial success to the collaboration with Louis Vuitton, is nevertheless influenced by the transformations of the art field described by Zahner and Crane. The shift in the art world did not only affect artists, but also all the other agents and institutions involved in the consecration of art: art collectors, the system of galleries and museums and art critics that affected and indirectly shaped Prince's career as a conceptual post-Pop artist.<sup>42</sup>

Prince's capacity to operate in a grey zone where the appropriation of American Pop culture icons constantly risks blending into a reaffirmation of the appropriated imagery, indeed puts into question the very notion of art works as authentic individual products set forth by Bourdieu. As Tseëlon argues, "many people (designers, artists, critics, curators, or theorists) who address the question of the relationship between art and fashion implicitly reify the concept of art as a nonutilitarian, authentic original creation, expressing its creator's individuality (thoughts, feelings, values) [...]."<sup>43</sup> Both Murakami and Prince overcome the notion of authentic, singular and individual art works and the myth of the artist as creative genius in their artistic practices—either by enacting art as the result of an artistic guild/merchandise factory/Warholian enterprise or by undermining the very concept of authorship and singularity. In this post-modernistic logic of contemporary art as an ever-referential, always connotative and self-reflexive practice lies the fundamental similarity to the aesthetic practice of fashion design and the link to the ongoing and multifaceted dialogue between art and fashion. Thus, the collaborations discussed in this paper are ultimately a consequence resulting from this creative similitude. Yet they differ from other encounters between fashion and art insofar as the LVMH group shaped the cooperations into global marketing spectacles and conspicuous consumption events for a new art-literate clientele of luxury goods.

40 Ibid., 10; Zahner, *Die neuen Regeln der Kunst*, 248.

41 Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 141.

42 Zahner, *Die neuen Regeln der Kunst*, 251–77.

43 Tseëlon, "Authenticity," 112.

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# Life Which Writes Itself Retrospecting Art, Fashion, and Photography in Bernadette Corporation

Ilka Becker

During the last decades, art and fashion have become accomplices in many ways. Being the target of parody, pastiche, and representational critique in the 1980s' so-called "pictures generation" of artists, discussions on fashion and brands have changed in the course of the globalization debate since the '90s.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, tactical interventions such as ad-busting entered the art context. On the other hand, a new type of "celebrity artists,"<sup>2</sup> performing model poses in fashion magazines and showing off with luxurious "identity goods,"<sup>3</sup> entered the scene. Similarly, glossy photos of models (e.g., as visitors of art fairs) grace the pages of art magazines.<sup>4</sup> In this condition of permanent outdoing and immanence, which at first glance doesn't seem to allow any useful alternative, the idea of critique as a mode of resistance seems outmoded in the same way that affirmative attitudes by artists towards consumer culture seems powerless. Really? According to Jacques Rancière, one should get out of this discourse of impotence. But what about the multiple visibilities that flexible consumerism produces? What is the effect of showing pictures of fashion models in a gallery or museum space, such as Bernadette Corporation has done? And how can the problems that are created and exposed by this practice be discussed in terms of aesthetic politics?

## Modeling the Self

In his essay on "being different differently,"<sup>5</sup> sociologist Ulrich Bröckling discusses a mode of subjectivation in the contemporary culture of corporate and "realistic" capitalism which he calls the *entrepreneurial self*.<sup>6</sup> He describes this self as engendered by a regime of subjectivity that makes deviance from the norm normative itself. Thus, subjectivation is "the ensemble of forces acting on individuals and advising them to grasp and 'model' themselves in a specific way."<sup>7</sup> The entrepreneurial self is always in a state of becoming, seemingly trying to be different, avoiding mimicking others, but in actual fact following the conformist tyranny of originality, distinction, and self-fashioning. According to Bröckling, this form of self-governance requires new forms of tactical moves. Too quickly the market incorporates any mode of alterity.

1 See Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), exhibition catalogue.

2 Isabelle Graw, *Der große Preis: Kunst zwischen Markt und Celebrity Kultur* (Cologne: DuMont, 2008), 163–86.

3 *Ibid.*, 137.

4 *Ibid.*, 185.

5 Ulrich Bröckling, "Jenseits des kapitalistischen Realismus: Anders anders sein,"

in *Kapitalistischer Realismus: Von der Kunstaktion zur Gesellschaftskritik*, ed. Sighard Neckel (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2010), 281–301.

6 *Ibid.*, 281; see also, Ulrich Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst: Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2007).

7 Bröckling, *Selbst*, 81. Translated from the German by IB.



With his concept, Bröckling implicitly refers to a debate set off in the '90s by authors such as Tom Frank, who wrote about the commodification of dissent in his much-discussed articles in *The Baffler*, or Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, who published their book on *The Mainstream of Minorities* in 1996.<sup>8</sup> In their diagnosis of Pop culture and body politics in post-Fordism, Holert and Terkessidis called this phenomenon "consumption of dissidence."<sup>9</sup> Also, they emphasized the meaning of representation for the aesthetic self-definition of control society, representation being "the imagination and the image of something in another medium."<sup>10</sup>

Associated with this debate, media and visual culture studies initiated a range of publications dealing with the constitutive role of images within the form of globalized sovereignty then called *Empire* by Hardt and Negri in 2000.<sup>11</sup> According to them, *Empire* is a regime of immanence and as such the "political subject" of the current world order with its new governmental logic and structure.<sup>12</sup> For example, Samuel Weber seized on the Heideggerian concept of the "world as a picture,"<sup>13</sup> in order to apply it to contemporary mass media culture. In his book, *Mass Mediaura*, he regards the "'cinematic' structure of that picture"<sup>14</sup> as an effect of reproduction. The subject here is depicted "as being 'in the picture.'"<sup>15</sup> Following this thesis, "being different" is a matter of "being in the picture," of making visible the bodily and textile codes of distinction in a fashionable mode. Thus, the idea of being different not only lies in the heart of the contemporary regime of subjectivity, but in the heart of fashion as a phenomenon of modernity in general, as Georg Simmel has already stated in 1895.<sup>16</sup>

## Staying with the Problem

Ulrich Bröckling comes to the conclusion that the only way to avoid the aporia of resistance—which instantly becomes marketable in flexible consumerism as just another mode of "being different"—is by "being different differently." Following this idea, anyone who wants to convert the regime of being different has to develop heuristic tactics neither following the logics of the market, nor the logics of opposition. Bröckling's tactical moves are comparable with musical improvisation and introduce a disorder into what Jacques Rancière would call the police order. Police, for Rancière, is not exactly the institution of police as an executive power, but a governmental order distributing the sensible and putting things and human beings in the right place.<sup>17</sup> Hence, the "art of being different differently" means to situatively invalidate and interrupt police order without going back to any fixed position, any identity, any hegemonic knowledge.<sup>18</sup> It means to situate and answer to *problems*, to stay "with the trouble" instead of identity politics.<sup>19</sup>

Analyzing and writing about tactics risks reducing their potency. One cannot forget the hazards of speaking from the position of authoritative knowledge so central to the police order, and which itself is being problematized by tactical activism. The perspective of scholarly writing, then, is in danger of narrowing a tactics exactly to those codes of distinction that again are central for the social imagination of the entrepreneurial self. The same problem seems to exist on the side of visual production, once it has entered galleries and museums. What remains to be done is to focus the problem of the self itself, circling around the seductive and addictive power of commodity, fashion, and image.

## Deconstructing the Grammar of Fashion

Bernadette Corporation can be briefly described as a heterogeneous group of cultural producers. Their approach is to deconstruct the logic of the market, both subverting and expressing the forms of flexible adaptation that are at stake. As Stephan Geene writes, BC is taking as a raw material what Karl Marx was trying to exorcise from commodity: its false pretense.<sup>20</sup> On its website, instead of an introductory selfportrayal, Bernadette Corporation has posted a feature by curator Bennett Simpson published in *Artforum* in 2004.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the members of "BC"—such is the brand logo of the fictional corporation—

8 See Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997);

Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from "The Baffler"* (New York: Norton, 1997); Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, *Der Mainstream der Minderheiten* (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1996).

9 Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, "Einführung in den Mainstream der Minderheiten," in *Der Mainstream der Minderheiten: Pop in der Kontrollgesellschaft*, ed. Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1996), 6.

10 *Ibid.*, 18.

11 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire: Die neue Weltordnung* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2000).

12 *Ibid.*, 9.

13 Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1950), 82.

14 Samuel Weber, "Mass Mediauras: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin," in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stan-

ford, CA: Stanford University Press 1996), 81.

15 *Ibid.*, 86.

16 See Georg Simmel, "Zur Psychologie der Mode: Soziologische Studie," in *Die Zeit: Wiener Wochenschrift für Politik, Volkswirtschaft, Wissenschaft und Kunst* 5, no. 54 (October 12, 1895): 22–24.

17 See Jacques Rancière, *Das Unvernehmen: Politik und Philosophie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002); Jacques Rancière, *Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen: Die Politik der Kunst und ihre Paradoxien*, ed. Maria Muhle (Berlin: b\_books, 2006).

18 Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst*, 288.

19 Donna Haraway, "When Species Meet: Staying with the Trouble," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 53–55.

20 See Stephan Geene, "Greater Gatsby," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 58 (June 2005): 138.

21 See Bennett Simpson, "Techniques of Today," *Artforum International* 43, no. 1 (September 2004); <http://www.bernadettecorporation.com/introduction.htm>.

avoid establishing a fixed and seemingly authentic voice. Rather, the auctorial function of defining what BC is or could be, is delegated to the curatorial voice. Following its own myth making, it was only in 2013, when its first “retrospective,” “2000 Wasted Years,” took place in Artists Space, New York and ICA, London, that core members Bernadette La Huy, Antek Walczak, and John Kelsey gave interviews, historicizing BC in order to highlight a shift in their practice at the same time.<sup>22</sup> It was a shift from radical politics of self-abandonment to a more “regular” visibility in the art context, concomitant with an increased presence of the group in solo gallery shows during the last years.<sup>23</sup>

BC is less a programmatic art group than an experimental and “collective production context”<sup>24</sup> with varying members and a shared interest in fashion, art, film, economics, and politics without “political identity.”<sup>25</sup> It started in 1994 by organizing parties in New York downtown nightclubs. Soon, BC established a fashion label for women’s wear which was characterized by an underground DIY style mixing haute couture and the vernacular culture of street wear, appropriated logos and no name elements, “high and low end looks in single items.”<sup>26</sup>

While BC’s clothes were presented in magazines such as *Harper’s Bazaar* or *Purple* in the 1990s, the group itself published three issues of a fashion magazine titled *Made in USA* from 1999 to 2001, after ending the fashion label,<sup>27</sup> reorganizing the group’s structure and reinforcing their “tactical self-fashioning”<sup>28</sup> with the BC logo. For example, the third issue of the magazine combined black and white photographs of fashion models in dummy-like poses with texts by artists and theorists in an experimental layout. The idea was to disrupt, using techniques of montage and appropriation, the usual concept of fashion magazines: to provide a certain lifestyle in a consumable mode. As Sean Deyoe, graphic designer of the third issue, put it:

Page-within-page devices previewed what was to come or replayed what one had already seen. Articles began in what appeared to be their middle. Sections were designed to perfectly mimic other magazines. Titles looked like ads and ads like titles. On every page, a reader was acutely aware of the construction of an ‘image’ and therefore also aware of how that image was meant to (or meant not to) aid in the their own construction of self.<sup>29</sup>

By playing with typography and design in *Made in USA*, Bernadette Corporation continued its anti-fashion strategies of the 1990s on an advanced, more abstract level. They combined photographs and hijacked logos with a fragmentary, discursive, and artistic framework. The issues featured, for example, a photo collage of designer Susan Ciancolo, a text by art critic and writer Chris Kraus, an interview with artist Vanessa Beecroft, and contributions by artists Jutta Koether and Rita Ackermann. The combination of images and text

was used by BC as a key method to make visible the status of the photographic image in commodity culture and to test the possibilities of rewriting the grammar of fashion in a non-identitary way. Also, the mixing of styles could be understood as an instrument for revisiting and working through the political implications of aesthetic strategies in youth cultures since the 1970s. At that time, punk had started a radical clarification of the semantic relations of fashion signs and set off the sign politics of 1980s’ style wars.<sup>30</sup> And, while first wave hip-hop culture in the late 1980s appropriated and restaged brands and accepted styles such as Adidas, linking their textile signs with political claims, brand culture of the 1990s required new strategies. Fashion photography was characterized by heroin chic and the market performed its ability to absorb and exploit even the most hidden niche of street culture in the mode of a commodification of dissent.<sup>31</sup> Ad-busting in particular aimed at escaping this trap by deconstructing the immaterial capital of symbols that enable the global exploitation of sweatshop workers, without simply regressing to the anti-fashion-reflex of punk.<sup>32</sup>

## Beyond the Entrepreneurial Self

As Bennett Simpson states, it made no sense for BC in the 1990s to follow the modernist model of critique from outside, as “critique was the hottest commodity going: BC began modeling itself after the secret stars of business—the producers, agents, and captains of the worldwide image machines.”<sup>33</sup> Hence, the figure of the critical philosopher could only be introduced in terms of parody. BC did so with the absurd figure of Werner von Delmont (the alter ego of artist Stefan Dillemath) in *Get Rid of Yourself* (2003, DV, color,

22 See Kalya Guthrie, “The Contagious Retrospective: Q+A with Bernadette Corporation,” *Art in America* (September 5, 2012); <http://www.artinamericamagazin.com/news-opinion/conversations/2012-09-05/bernadette-corporation-artists-space>.

23 Such as Greene Naftali, New York (2009), Galerie NEU, Berlin (2010), and Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2011).

24 Jutta Koether, “Ausleben: Jutta Koether besucht Bernadette Corporation,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 49 (March 2003).

25 Ibid.

26 Jason Farago, “Bernadette Corporation: ‘Don’t Have Sex with Each Other,’” *Guardian*, March 24, 2013; <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/mar/24/bernadette-corporation-ica>. BC’s fashion shows are documented in the film *Bernadette Corporation: Fashion Shows, 1995–97*, 6:20 min., color, sound, Electronic Arts

Intermix.

27 The magazine was named after the “worst movie Jean Luc Godard ever made,” ; <http://www.bernadettecorporation.com/musa.htm>.

28 Bennett Simpson, “Bernadette Corporation,” in *Corporate Mentality*, ed. Aleksandra Mir (New York: Sternberg Press, 2003), 153–54.

29 Sean Deyoe; <http://www.theroyalacademy.org/DOD/MadeInUSA>.

30 See Diedrich Diederichsen, “Radical chic,” *Die Zeit*, no. 37 (September 4, 2003); <http://www.zeit.de/2003/37/Jugendbewegung>.

31 Thomas Frank, “Art as Lifestyle (Monoculturalism),” *The Baffler*, no. 4; [https://www.thebaffler.com/past/art\\_as\\_lifestyle](https://www.thebaffler.com/past/art_as_lifestyle).

32 Ibid.

33 Simpson, “Bernadette Corporation,” 153.

sound, 61 min.). The film deals with the paradoxes of political activism and the role of its anonymous protagonists in Empire after 9/11. During the shootings in Genua in 2001, BC cooperated with the post-situationist Le Parti Imaginaire, a collective that is linked to the anti-globalization movement. *Get Rid of Yourself* is a rhythmic montage of documentary footage shot during the G8 riots that intervene with and are ruptured by takes featuring model and actress Chloë Sevigny. As Simpson explains, by “provisionally aligning itself with the so-called ‘Black Bloc’ movement—with the arrogance of its discourse as well as the force and style of their resistance—*Get Rid of Yourself* is an encounter with emerging, non-instituted or identity-less forms of protest that refuse the representational politics of the official Left.”<sup>34</sup>

A key technique in the film is the displacement of images, voices, and signs.<sup>35</sup> For example, by employing voice-over comments by activists from the Black Bloc, and by passing this voice on to Chloë Sevigny, who is declaiming a kind of manual for riots, studded with political reflections on Empire. She acts as if she was learning them by heart, being deeply involved in her role as an actress, but at the same time her speech sounds authentic. Her acting exposes the paradoxical and performative structure of the protests themselves. The activists become desubjectivized, being transformed into ambivalent figures that are indistinguishable from a fictional character. Furthermore, she implicitly points to possible relations of her persona as a model and actress (Sevigny is known for her work with artists like Larry Clark, Kim Gordon, and Harmony Korine) to the intermingled histories of political resistance and youth culture. For example, she states that the punk movement in the 70s provided “a whole counterworld of subjectivities, who no longer wanted to consume, no longer wanted to produce, no longer even wanted to be subjectivities.”

In addition to addressing political activism in Empire after 9/11, the film unfolds the underlying politics of visibility in its adaptive tactics between camouflage, media, and fashion. One of the commentators mentions that the police are well organized because they are all dressed the same. But the demonstrators, as he continues, are uniformed in black as well, because “if everybody is looking the same, it is far more difficult to spot out individuals.” Moving through the streets becomes a question of improvisation as well as “a coordinated thing, a musical.” Thus, the montage of the picture plays with the constitutive relations between mask (riot), makeup (model), and the politics of visibility. The crowd becomes opaque in its uniformity and is obscured by the fog of burning shop fronts and barricades. BC’s images are always on the edge of the seeming no-go of “radical chic.” But they are dealing with this problem offensively, as they explain in a statement:

We were trying to expose the idea of exposure as such, in spectacular democracy today. Exposure in the street and in the magazine. As a kind of

virtuosity shared by models and by protesters alike. Also, a play on the aesthetics of black... from Malevich to Zapatista Marcos. If the Black Bloc [sic!] can be described as a collective elaboration of techniques of showing up without showing up, as a game of being there and not, or showing up to confuse the field of political and media representation with their chaotic anonymity and camera-smashing picturesqueness ... then the fashion model, too, may have a radical potential lying dormant in her ... who knows? What might be the Black Bloc [sic!] version of a modeling agency, of a fashion shoot?<sup>36</sup>

As BC mention furthermore, *Get Rid of Yourself* was meant to destabilize the idea of the Black Block as well as to take up the aesthetics of politics in order to “keep the line between aesthetics and politics alive and problematic, rather than suppressing it and denying it.” Here, especially, the concept of exposure comes into play in a double sense: as disclosure of a political dissent and as photographic process underlying the fashion image. According to my thesis, it indicates a shift in photographic meaning in a biopolitical sense: from “the light which writes itself,”<sup>37</sup> to the *life which writes itself* within the technical sensorium of mediality.

## Radical Black—White Cube

The symptomatic merging of fashion and politics described by BC frequently occurs in fashion photography. The street is the stage for photography, fashion and protest alike. The atmospheric reframing of teargas clouds make violent police actions invisible during riots, at the same time, the style of clothing used by the demonstrators are being incorporated in fashion style and photography.

In a fashion pictorial by photographer Krzysztof Herholdt titled *Black Block White Riot*, a male model assumes typical poses, dressed mainly in black, but also in grey and white clothes. He is wearing accessories associated with anti-globalization riots: a helmet, a gas mask, a Molotov cocktail, knuks. One of the photographs is a composite montage showing a motion sequence of him throwing a brick stone. The picture is obviously invoking a Levi’s ad campaign by photographer David Vasiljevic from 2008.

34 Ibid.

35 See Bennett Simpson, “Techniques of Today,” *Artforum International* 43, no. 1 (September 2004); <http://www.bernadettecorporation.com/introduction.htm>.

36 Bernadette Corporation, “Statement,” in *Klartext: A Series of Discussions with In-*

*ternational Artists, Activists, Curators, and Theoreticians* (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien and Volksbühne, 2005); [http://klartext.uqbar-ev.de/documents/abstracts/Bernadette-statemEN\\_01.pdf](http://klartext.uqbar-ev.de/documents/abstracts/Bernadette-statemEN_01.pdf).

37 See Jacques Rancière, “What Medium Can Mean,” *Pharresia*, no. 11 (2011): 36.

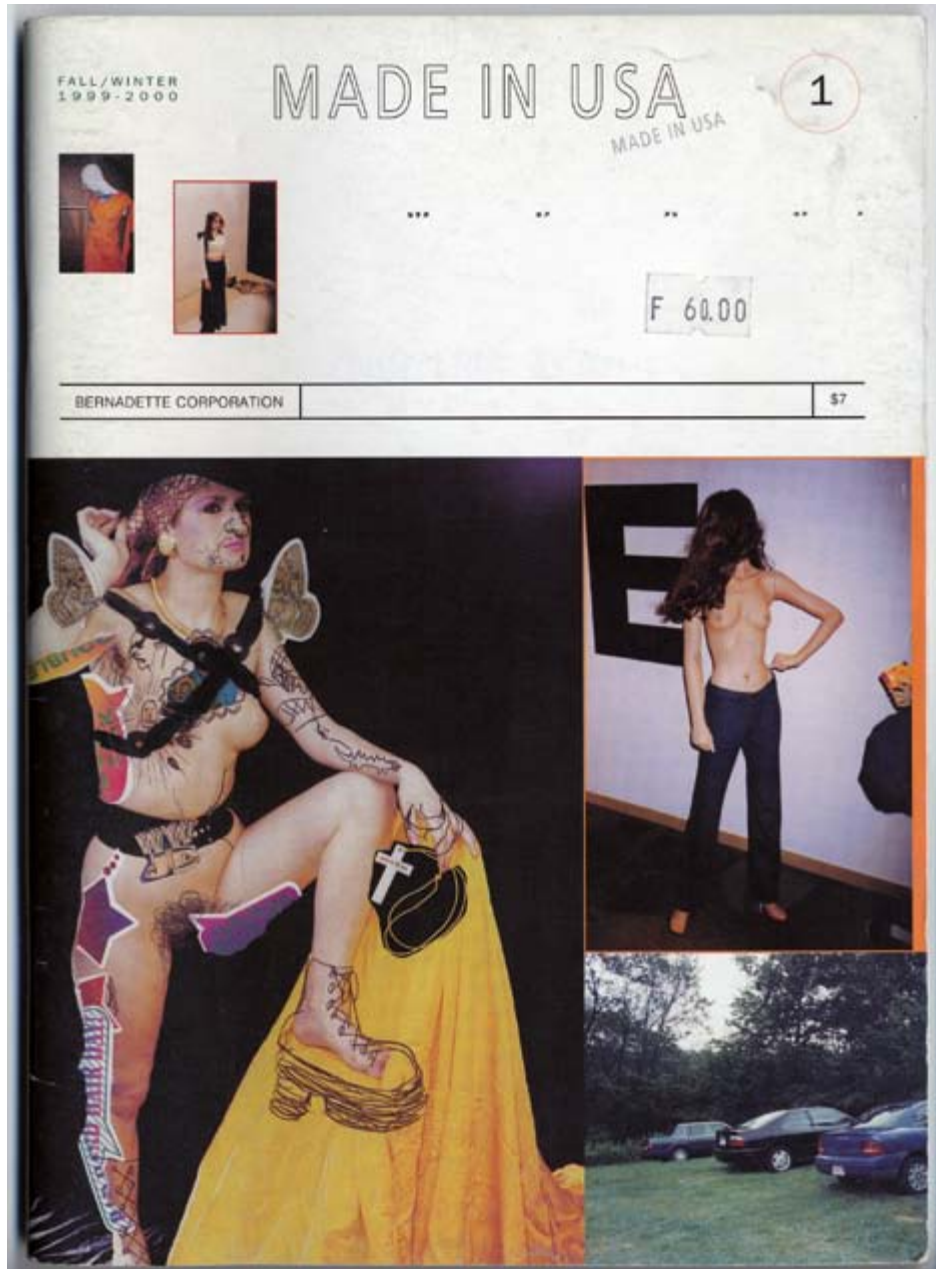


Fig. 5  
Bernadette Corporation, *Made in USA Issue No. 1*,  
*Fall/Winter 1999-2000*, 1999.



Fig. 6  
Bernadette Corporation, *Made in USA Issue No. 3*,  
*Spring/Fall 2001*, 2001.



Fig. 7-10  
Bernadette Corporation,  
*Get Rid of Yourself*, 2003.





Fig. 11  
Krzysztof Herholdt, *Black Block White Riot*, 2010.

In some of the pictures, his face and arms are covered with dirt, suggesting his performance derives directly from street fighting as an activist. Fashion, here, means recognizability. But within the contemporary regime of subjectivity as described by Bröckling, he is not involved in any politics of aesthetics in the sense of Rancière: this would mean changing a situation and generating new forms of relations in the tempo-spatial sensorium of the social world.<sup>38</sup> In Herholdt's pictorial, fashion brings with it instability and the fast change of its frenzied codes. The black marks of dirt in the bright face can be read multiple ways: street dirt, camouflage, makeup. Thus, the techniques of disguise, appropriation, and misuse of clothing used by street activists are deployed to enhance the air of sexiness attributed to the model. Advertising not only serves to sell a certain commodity, but its function is to reproduce the young body as commodity itself.



Fig. 12  
David Vasiljevic,  
*Levi's ad campaign*, 2008.

## The Model as Model

In their polemical book *Raw Materials for a Theory of the Young-girl*, the anonymous French collective Tiqqun<sup>39</sup> introduce the figure of the Young-girl as a blueprint-being and model citizen of consumer society within the Empire's "anthropotechnical project."<sup>40</sup> For them, this figure is an abstraction of collective desires and the embodiment of seduction consumption. She herself is the ideal commodity. So the Young-girl with her symbolic surplus is an abstraction just as the male model in Herholdt's fashion shoot. Similar to art, fashion functions here as a "'magic belief' system that maintains the conviction that one engages in voluntary and self-determined work."<sup>41</sup> The Young-girl's appearance is an overdetermined, pure visibility, a vanishing point of representation, and so she "resembles her photo," instead of the photo resembling her.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, she can be of any gender or age, her main characteristics being her alienation, which suggests that there was a form of authenticity found behind her. This demand of a codified authenticity and originality



Fig. 13  
Bernadette Corporation, installation view of  
*The Complete Poem*, 2009.

38 See Jacques Rancière, "Politik der Ästhetik," *archplus*, no. 178 (June 2006): 94–98.

39 Tiqqun is a French collective of authors and activists founded in 1999.

40 Tiqqun, *Raw Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010), 12. An anonymous English translation of Tiqqun, *Premiers matériaux pour*

*une Théorie de la Jeune-Fille* (Paris: Éditions Mille et une nuits, 2001), was published on [younggirl.jottit.com](http://younggirl.jottit.com), January 2010.

41 Sabeth Buchmann, "Fetish," in *Magazin Textuelle Bildhauerei*, no. 5 (October 2010).

42 Tiqqun, *Theory of the Young-Girl*, 33.



Fig. 14  
Bernadette Corporation,  
*Ars Nova*, 2009.

again is internalized by capitalism and concerns the commodity as well as the commodified body and subject.<sup>43</sup> The fashion model is one of the ideal roles of the figure of the Young-girl, as elaborated in BC's novel *Reena Spaulings* in 2004.<sup>44</sup> In this book, BC took the *Theory of the Young-girl* as a model itself for the design of main character, a museum guard becoming a famous model for underwear and it-girl in New York.

Wishing to become thing-like, the Young-girl is the perfect commodity, or, as Tiqqun writes: "In the act of selling herself, she is trying to acquit herself of herself [...]. But this never happens."<sup>45</sup> She is the "new physiognomy of Capital," a living currency, a form of Empire life and an object of "selection, management, and attenuation."<sup>46</sup> Every one of her activities is "directed to self-valorization" and reification. Thus, the "Young-girl is a lie whose apogee is the face."<sup>47</sup> Self-control goes hand in hand with loss of self. This mode of distance to the self is taken up by BC in *Reena Spaulings* and transformed into a form of self-abandonment, playing with the notion of a commodified body and the sphere of a photo studio. In the "Black Chapter," there are similarities between Karl Lagerfeld's "reductive black method," where the "white is only there to enter the blackness," and artistic avant-garde from Fautrier to Malevich's black square.<sup>48</sup>

## Life Which Writes Itself

In 2009, one year before the *Black Block White Riot* pictorial for *Fiasco Magazine* was published, BC showed a group of mostly black and white photographs and combined them with the 130-page "epic poem"<sup>49</sup> "A Billion and Change" that was displayed horizontally in clean, minimalistic vitrines as a genuine artwork.<sup>50</sup> In each line it included the letters "b" and "c" as a formal rule. The somehow paradoxical exhibition-title, "The Complete Poem," highlighted the poetic, experimental, and fragmentary character of the text, which counteracted the assertion of completeness itself. Moreover, one could only read the texts in a slowed down tempo and an uncomfortable position, as the vitrines were quite low and a book edition of the poem didn't exist until 2010.<sup>51</sup>



Fig. 15  
Richard Avedon, portrait of Andy Warhol,  
director Paul Morrissey, actor Joe  
Dallesandro, actor Candy Darling, and  
members of the Factory, 1969.

While the poetics worked out in the text seemed to be programmatic for BC's collective writing technique under its brand status, the photographs were a commissioned work by fashion photographer David Vasiljevic, parasiting on his authorship and style. BC had asked him to restage an ad campaign he had done for Levi's jeans in 2009, in the same style but with different models of no-name clothing.

43 See Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus* (Konstanz: UVK 2006), 481. Originally published in French in 1999.

44 Bernadette Corporation, *Reena Spaulings* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).

45 Tiqqun, *Theory of the Young-Girl*, 123.

46 *Ibid.*, 17: 12.

47 *Ibid.*, 18: 25.

48 See Bernadette Corporation, *Reena*

*Spaulings*, 187–98. See also Stephan Geene, "Greater Gatsby," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 58 (June 2005): 138–39.

49 Chris Kraus, "The Complete Poem/ Bernadette Corporation," in *Where Art Belongs* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), 51.

50 Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, September 17 to October 17, 2009.

51 Bernadette Corporation, *The Complete Poem* (Cologne: Walther König, 2011).

He used a seamless, white backdrop, as Richard Avedon did in his iconic photo shooting with Warhol and his superstars in the '60s, cited in the '90s by Steven Meisel in a Calvin Klein jeans ad with Joe Dallesandro as model. Thus Vasiljevic symbolically superimposed the modernist white of the white cube, signifying neutrality and rationality, and the blank page of the book with the cited photographic backdrop, "on which a handful of androgynous, vacant-faced models pose[d] conspicuously mirrors the whiteness of the poem's pages."<sup>52</sup> In his restaging of his own photo-shoot for BC, the models are "advertising nothing but themselves and by extension, life in jeans."<sup>53</sup>

As David Joselit states regarding the "2000 Wasted Years" retrospective show of BC in 2012, style—which is not only a key category of fashion but also of art history—is a "bankrupt concept" in contemporary art,<sup>54</sup> remaining alive only as a verb, as styling: "Styling (as opposed to style) offers distinctive opportunities for artists. While the noun was linked to a set of fairly stable practices, the very purpose of styling is to manipulate and transform the status quo. Styling is the creature of fashion and consumerism not because it is inherently corrupt, but simply because consumerism requires creativity and perpetual change, and that is what styling does—it is dynamic rather than inert."<sup>55</sup>

In his view, BC offer an insight in this function of styling as an "opportunistic tool." This conclusion could be transferred to the photographic practices in BC's installations. While the function of the medium was the separation from mimesis in modernism,<sup>56</sup> today's function of photography is relationalism, as described in *Reena Spaulings*. The subject itself appears in the modus of reproduction, which means not individually, but in the mode of replaceability. Therefore *The Complete Poem* is not so much about photography's specificity, but the ways of participating in a milieu of mediality as tempo-spatial sensorium. In this context, the exhibition displays employed by BC constitute the dispositive making visible the photographic ambivalence between documentation (having-been) and construction (repetition). Be it in the form of a graphic tableau, a screen, a projection, a showcase, or a frame, in BC's work the display appears in its hybrid mediality (the "medium as milieu")<sup>57</sup> and as such is an example for the art of the distribution of the sensible in the digitalized Empire aesthetics. Photography isn't "light which writes itself"<sup>58</sup> anymore but life that writes itself. The model's body is a living currency. Those photographs don't reveal any *punctum* or anything behind their surface. As discursive images they speak of nothing other than the non-identity of the photographed and the "individual body" as a spin-off of the cliché.

## Conclusion

Jacques Rancière speaks of the "twofold requirement that constitutes the aesthetic regime of art: that aesthetic experience involves autonomy and that art is always simultaneously something other than art. On this basis, it is possible to analyze the variant ways of thinking the medium as forms of transformation of that twofold requirement."<sup>59</sup> Thus, one could conclude that the practice of BC which is situated in the codes of art and art institutions, must provide a residue of "something other than art" to be able to reflect on the main problem: the shift from mode to modeling which is the logic of the entrepreneurial self. Nevertheless, the "productive contagion" they aim for is only possible in the combination of image/images and text as an operation which produces a being different differently.

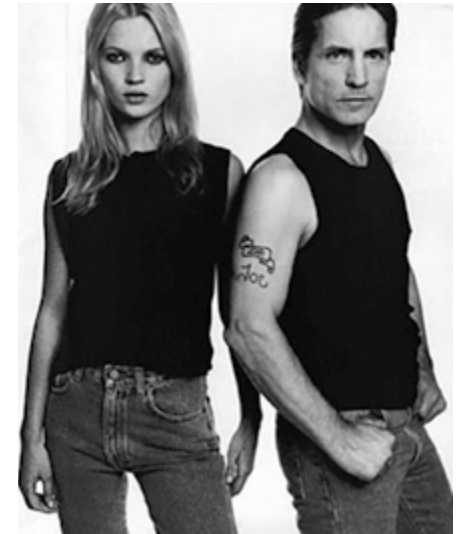


Fig. 16  
Steven Meisel, *jeans ad campaign* for Calvin Klein with Joe Dallesandro, 1995.

52 Bernadette Corporation, "The Complete Poem. Synopsis", <http://printedmatter.org/catalogue/moreinfo>.  
53 Greene Naftali Gallery, Bernadette Corporation, Press Release, New York, September 17 to October 17, 2009; <http://artnews.org/greenenaftali/?exi=1628>.  
54 David Joselit, "The Power to Style: On Ber-

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55 *Ibid.*, 175.  
56 Rancière, *What Medium Can Mean*, 35.  
57 *Ibid.*, 37.  
58 *Ibid.*, 36.  
59 *Ibid.*, 37.



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# Production of Space

# Fashion and the Production of Space

## An Introduction

Barbara Schrödl

“Production of Space” refers to the work *La production de l'espace*, published in 1974 by the Marxist sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Its quintessence is the proposition: “[T]he (social) space is a (social) product.”<sup>1</sup> For analytical reasons, Lefebvre distinguishes three dimensions of social space: *spatial practice, representation of space, and spaces of representation*. Spatial practice comprises production and reproduction, thus specific places and spatial ensembles. Representation of space relates to our imaginations and pictures of space. Spaces of representation means space as it is anticipated through imagination and pictures by people acting in it and with it. One speaks of the perceived, the devised, and the experienced; the three dimensions are intrinsically tied to each other. They are part of one process, the process of the production of social spaces, which we perceive, imagine, and experience every day. If space is analyzed according to Lefebvre as a social product, it is subjected to historicity; every society produces its own space.

The chapter “Production of Space,” which analyzes the phenomenon of fashion under the aspect of spatial production, is, by referencing Lefebvre, put into a context of current discussions of spatial theory. This discussion was started by Michel Foucault. In 1967 he declared in his essay “Of Other Spaces” that the “present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.”<sup>2</sup> He drew the consequence out of his observation that history, which had been the big obsession of the nineteenth century, had lost its importance: “We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.”<sup>3</sup> He thereby announced the “topological turn.” The category of space had not played much of a role in humanities and social sciences for a long time. This changed radically in the 1990s. As the social sciences increasingly turned to an analysis of space, fashion theorists realized that important developments in the field were inexplicable without an understanding of their spatiality across scales. Differences, analogies and interdependencies of places were examined. In the process, micro- as well as macrostructures, and especially their interactions, were of interest. Increasingly, space was understood as emerging out of interactions between matter and social constructions. In this process the dimensions of deeds came into focus. The sociologist Martina Löw declares that “Space is a relational (An)Ordnung of social goods and humans in places.”<sup>4</sup> Her specific writing style refers to order and to its creation. Alongside Löw’s spatial-sociological assumptions,

1 Henri Lefebvre, “Die Produktion des Raumes,” in *Architekturwissen: Grundlagentexte aus den Kulturwissenschaften*, Band 2: Zur Logistik des sozialen Raumes, ed. Susanne Hauser, Christina Kamleithner, and Roland Mayer (Bielefeld: Transcript,

2012), 387. First published in 1974.

2 Michel Foucault, “Andere Räume,” in *ibid.*, 231. First published in 1967.

3 *Ibid.*, 231.

4 Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 224.

there is special attention to be paid to the philosopher Gernot Böhme's concept of atmosphere in contemporary discourses of space. Böhme deals with the space of personal attendance, which is not "relative to our imaginations, but relative to our physical experience."<sup>5</sup> To him the relation between space and feeling is of interest. He says: "Atmospheres are tuned spaces or to refer to Schmitz: spatially poured, quasi objective feelings. Atmospheres are something spatial, and they can be received by surrendering to them or by experiencing their character in the way they modify our feelings or, rather, how we at least respond to them."<sup>6</sup>

Böhme regards the term atmosphere as fundamental to a new aesthetics. This new aesthetics is supposed to react to an increasingly aestheticized reality. Atmosphere is linked to the actual stage of capitalist development in the advanced industrial nations, a phase in which aesthetic work represents a big part of the work of society as a whole. This phase is characterized by the fact that basic needs are covered. A specific aspect of the practical value of goods now becomes important: the use of goods in the context of being applicable for orchestration. Böhme uses atmosphere in an explicitly critical way. Those subjected to the claims and manipulations of atmospheres are to be identified.

This short overview of the concepts of the present theory of space gives us the sense that fashion and space are indeed to be seen in a close relation. But the theory of space so far shows little interest in fashion. Even the theory of fashion has not yet taken the topological turn. Fashion is still interpreted mainly as a connotational system. Only recently have categories such as action and perception—and therefore also space—come into focus. Gertrud Lehnert titled a newly published anthology *Räume der Mode* (Spaces of fashion).<sup>7</sup> For analytical reasons she distinguishes three dimensions of relationships between space, humans, and clothing: "Fashion as Space," "Space Adopting Body Techniques," and "Settings: Spaces/Places."<sup>8</sup> One is reminded of Henri Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace*. Like Lefebvre, the author creates a trichotomy; furthermore, she extends his conception of space, which emphasizes social practices, in the direction of cultural practice. She refers to the spatiality of clothing in "Fashion as Space." Fashion differs from sculpture through its purpose: it is worn. Clothes are in close interchange with the body that wears them. They retrace the bodyline, or shape it. Sometimes they make themselves independent as textile sculptures. As "Space Adopting Body Techniques," Lehnert defines the subject's direction through the fit and the suitability of clothing for different occasions, whereupon the notions of suitable are fast changing. In this process, she notes, the body is not expressed but rather created. "Settings: Spaces/Places" refers to settings of staging and representation of fashion. In reference to Martina Löw's theory generation, the author emphasizes that fashionable actions constitute those

settings in the first place. Furthermore, Hermann Schmitz's theories of space are used to tie space to body. The settings which can be localized in materialized reality as well as in texts and pictures, are disclosed as spaces "which create in *Modekörpern* a third entity in interaction with the human body and clothing" and represent "spaces of experience."<sup>9</sup>

The three theoretical contributions of the chapter "Production of Space" aim at analyzing the regime of gaze, relations of power, and strategies of fashion in different settings. Two articles focus on fashion shows, thereby on fashion marketing. One text examines fashion as an example of transgressing aesthetic borders and as a specific space of liminality. The view on the forth contribution, a fashion editorial, is prestructured by those perspectives, yet this fashion rather encourages our thinking about the spatiality of clothing and our ideas of adequate clothes for eco-correct transportation by means of biking, which is a lifestyle for young urbanites. One could say that the articles bear reference to Lehnert's concretization of the three dimensions of social space by Lefebvre for the purpose of realizing the interrelations of space, humans, and clothing, which brings in a clearly more political dimension in the shift of his conception of space from social practices towards cultural practices.

"It All Started with a Bicycle" was the name Tanja Bradaric and Taro Ohmae gave their Spring/Summer 2013 collection. It is an alluring thought to slip into the jackets, shirts, dresses, or skirts of the collection, mount a bike, cruise through the city and feel not only wind, body, and fabric, but also the gazes of onlookers. The pictures show outfits of diverse plasticity of apparel. The range goes from retracing the body line with close-fitting garments to a considerable transformation of the body's plasticity. The garments are made of either elastic or loose-fitting fabrics. This style never confines, is never too voluminous, and rarely reaches below the knee. It shows ample skin through length, slits, cut-outs, and perforated fabrics. The collection seems to aim not only at the least possible restriction of natural movements but also at expressing the mobility of the human body.

In her essay "Framing 'Saints and Sinners': Methods of Producing Space in Fashion Shows: Michael Michalsky's Fall/Winter 2009 Collection," Alicia Kühl shows the concept of the space of the fashion show by means of an actual fashion. In the fashion show, she sees that the place (e.g., the fashion city Berlin), the location (e.g., the Zionskirche), and the so-called imaginary space

5 Gernot Böhme, *Architektur und Atmosphäre* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 16. Translated from the German by BS.

6 Ibid.

7 Gertrud Lehnert, *Räume der Mode* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012).

8 Gertrud Lehnert, "Mode als Raum, Mode im Raum: Zur Einführung," in *Räume der Mode*, ed. Gertrud Lehnert (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012), 7-23.

9 Ibid., 8-11.

fuse into the actual space of the fashion show. This could be described as atmosphere as Gernot Böhme defines it. Following Erika Fischer-Lichte, the space of the fashion show could also be interpreted as a performative space. The fashion show as a performative act would be defined through boundaries and framing. After all, Köhl construes the fashion show as a ritual, namely, as a ritual for negotiating the current.

In "Fashion Film: Spaces of Exclusivity and the Globalization of Accessibility" Sabina Muriale explores a quite new setting of staging and representing fashion. Unlike a fashion show, which is tied to an actual place and a certain time, she interprets the fashion film as a step towards democratizing fashion, which is still closely linked to commercial interests. Fashion film is a marketing instrument. Nevertheless, it can take on artistic qualities. Therefore Muriale localizes it, as fashion itself, between art and commerce, illustrating that fashion criticism amounts to capitalism criticism.

Finally, Michael R. Müller defines the aesthetic politics of fashion as the creation of a sphere of liminality, which designs the imagination as "The Waywardness of Fashion: Society in the Subjunctive." At that point Müller refers to Georg Simmel, who had outlined aesthetic action as an essential mode of societal life. Aesthetics is not only concerned with reflecting the social, but with giving it form. He argues that fashion is part of a liminal aesthetics that confronts the order of everyday life with unusual perspectives or codes of behavior, seeking for new societal forms and other spaces.

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# It All Started with a Bicycle Spring/Summer 2013

Tanja Bradarić and Taro Ohmae





Bradarić Ohmae, *It All Started with a Bicycle*,  
Spring/Summer 2013 collection.









# Framing “Saints and Sinners.” Methods of Producing Space in Fashion Shows Michael Michalsky’s Fall/Winter 2009 Collection

Alicia Kühl

## A Debate Is Ignited—Is It Permissible to Use Churches for Fashion Shows

The pews were not moved. But the cross was covered over and a catwalk set up in the center aisle. It took eight days for the heater fans to drive the cold out of the church. The girls waited in the sacristy and on the organ loft for their cue. And Luca Gadjus, the model who lives just around the corner, opened a fashion show that was an iconoclastic act and at the same time a profession of faith.<sup>1</sup>

This is how fashion journalist Alfons Kaiser began his article “Jesus must love Michalsky,” on the Fall/Winter 2009 fashion show featuring creations by Michael Michalsky, held in a Protestant church on January 30, 2009. Although Michalsky does not attend church often, he says he is a devout Christian. Following the church’s rejection of homosexuality under Pope Benedict XVI.<sup>2</sup> Michalsky told a reporter, “there is a place for everyone under God’s roof, even if some people sometimes claim the opposite.”<sup>3</sup> That year the designer, who worked for Levi Strauss and Adidas before heading his own label, brashly staged his show at the Protestant Zion Church of the Sophien Parish in Berlin.

Michalsky’s choice and the controversial reactions that arose awakened my interest in the use of urban spaces for fashion shows and led to the question of whether their unusual staging evoked the production of a unique kind of space *within* the urban spaces.

After outlining the contentious issue of this particular show and describing what actually happened in the Zion Church, this article proposes a theoretical approach to fashion show spaces. My research reveals that setting frames is a valuable method of producing space and is therefore taken into special consideration. Furthermore, thinking about frames in fashion shows provokes the question of whether fashion shows can be characterized as rituals.

Despite Kaiser’s rather favorable coverage, in the fashion press using church premises for non-religious purposes such as a fashion show did not meet with

- 1 Alfons Kaiser, “Jesus muss Michalsky lieben,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 31, 2009; <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/mode/berliner-mode-woche-jesus-muss-michalsky-lieben-1760045.html>. Translation from the German by PB.
- 2 Tellingly, *Vogue* proclaimed soon thereafter that Michalsky was the “new pope of German fashion,” as cited in Max Ernst Walbersdorf, “Von Heiligen und Sündern:

- Über die neue Kollektion Michael Michalsky H/W 09/10,” March 13, 2009; <http://www.vogue.de/fashion-shows/designer/designer-von-heiligen-und-suendern>.
- 3 Caroline Bock, “Heilige und Sünder – Der Designer Michael Michalsky,” *Südkurier*, January 29, 2009; <http://www.suedkurier.de/unterhaltung/lifestyle/trends/Heilige-und-Suender-Der-Designer-Michael-Michalsky;art495,3614842>. Translation from the German by PB.

universal approval. The chairman of the International Martin Luther Foundation, Thomas A. Seidel, vehemently rejected "such a mindless and impious utilization," and posited instead: "One longs for a courageous Christian who would put an end to such a vanity fair with the same energetic verve as Jesus cleansed the Jerusalem temple of the money changers."<sup>4</sup>

Seidel found Michalsky's appearance at the end of the show particularly repulsive, which Kaiser described as follows: "Michalsky himself had no doubt as to his divine mission. At the end of the show the messenger of the gods emerged from the sacristy and graced the stage. After lapping up the applause and then turning to leave, the audience could read on his back in large letters: 'Jesus loves me'. Let's believe it!"<sup>5</sup>

A segment broadcast on the television station *rbb* interpreted the repositioning of the pews away from the altar towards the catwalk<sup>6</sup> to the effect that the disciples were not to "pray in the direction of the cross, but solely in the direction of his [Michalsky's] creations."<sup>7</sup>

Was this fashion show blasphemous and did Michalsky actually stage-manage his presence as a messiah? According to the press release issued by the Sophien Parish, supporting fashion, design, art, and music by making available sacral premises is to be welcomed, for the parish wishes to open up its doors to the secular world. As long as the event does "not use sacral elements for its own purposes," then it must be assumed that a desecration of the building does not take place.<sup>8</sup> According to an article by the journalist Liva Haensel,<sup>9</sup> most of the activities were agreed to in advance with the pastors of the parish and the press office of the Regional Church authority, whereby the director of the Sophien Parish's cultural office, Thekla Wolff, acted as intermediary—Wolff later claimed that she knew nothing of plans to use a signet<sup>10</sup> in which the letter "M" was carried by a lamb/the Lamb of God and depicted against the backdrop of a stained-glass window and cross.



Fig. 25  
Michalsky, *Fall/Winter 2009 collection signet*.

This brief sketch of the debate seemed necessary to clarify the explosive nature of this fashion show held during the Berlin Fashion Week and to do justice to the critical voices. The following considerations will forgo taking sides for or against such a utilization of sacral space. Instead, I am primarily interested in investigating how the space of a fashion show is produced—taking this show as an example—and in the discussion as to what extent a fashion show can be described as a ritual—not necessarily a Christian one, which would seem obvious here, but in terms of it being an act of transformation.<sup>11</sup> Precisely in this fashion show's balancing act between fashion spectacle and its liturgical resemblance—which we shall assume for the moment—basic traits of ritual action can be discerned and reconstructed.

## A Description of the Fashion Show Atmosphere of "Saints and Sinners"

As one of around 500 guests, one entered the Zionskirche in January 2009 and took a seat in one of the pews of the thirty-meter-long main aisles, flanked by monumental pillars. The pews were set up facing the middle of the aisle, where a reflective black catwalk was positioned at eye height, even towering over the altar. The space was darkened completely at the beginning. Where the altar and crucifix are usually positioned, a black gate opened slowly, gradually letting a ray of blinding white light fall, becoming more and more intense, on the catwalk.

4 "Kritik an Fashion Week," *Thüringer Allgemeine*, February 3, 2009; <http://www.luther-stiftung.org/dokumente/presse/ThueringerAllgemeine%2003.02.2009.pdf>. Translated from the German by PB.

5 Alfons Kaiser and Anke Schipp, "Im Metallic-Mantel der Geschichte," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 2, 2009; <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/modestadt-berlin-im-metallic-mantel-der-geschichte-1775334.html>. Translated from the German by PB.

6 Here Kaiser's description was not quite correct; although they were not removed, the pews were repositioned to face the central aisles.

7 As cited in "Gehen Prostituierte und Kirche Hand in Hand?" *Idea Spektrum* (June, 2009): 9; [http://www.luther-stiftung.org/dokumente/thesen/IdeaSpektrum\\_Zionskirche\\_04.02.2009.pdf](http://www.luther-stiftung.org/dokumente/thesen/IdeaSpektrum_Zionskirche_04.02.2009.pdf). Translated from

the German by PB.

8 Press release quoted in "Gehen Prostituierte und Kirche Hand in Hand?"

9 Liva Haensel, "Drahtseilakt unterm Kreuz," February 15, 2009; <http://www.luther-stiftung.org/dokumente/thesen/Die%20Kirche%20-%20Drahtseilakt%20unterm%20Kreuz%20von%20Liva%20Haensel%2015.02.2009.pdf>.

10 Like the print pattern of the collection, the signet was created in collaboration with Japanese artist Shinpei Naito.

11 In conformity with Matthias Warstat, "rituals" are understood generally as transformative actions in social contexts which are repeatedly performed according to a determined, passed down pattern. See Matthias Warstat, "Lexikonartikel zum Begriff Ritual," in *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 274.

This imposing moment is then underlined by the playing of dramatic, fanfare-like vocals, which segues into the hard, accelerated beat of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus." Luca Gadjus takes to the catwalk as the first face, but it is not until the second model, Toni Garrn, emerges that it becomes clear how the fake long ponytails of the women swing in perfect tact to the song, a movement symbolizing the sounds of the lashing whip from "Personal Jesus."

Partly studded with Swarovski crystals, the stained-glass window prints of the long dresses and jeans are combined with shiny materials in metallic optics, with studded leather jackets, lace veils, fur jackets, white sneakers, hoodie sweaters, and shirts with clerical collars. In the collection Michalsky plays, as the title "Saints and Sinners" suggests, with the image of a woman, stylized into a Domina, at once erotic and cool, on the one hand, and a reticent, serious, but nonetheless casual man with a side parting on the other. Even when Michalsky in the making-of-video denies any difference between saints and sinners, saying that in his "definition of church and religion [...] either everyone is a sinner or no-one is a sinner,"<sup>12</sup> this attribution to the sexes is relatively obvious and stringent. At the end of the fashion show Michalsky expresses his thanks dressed in a leather jacket, emblazoned on the back with "Jesus loves me." And then it's off to the old city bath in the *Oderberger Straße* for the aftershow party.



Fig. 26  
Michalsky, Fall/Winter 2009 collection show.



Fig. 27  
Toni Garrn parades on the catwalk. Michalsky, Fall/Winter 2009 collection show.

## The Production of Space<sup>13</sup>

The remark by one viewer of the show—that "the location is different and along with it the brand!"<sup>14</sup>—directs my attention to how space is utilized (for a different purpose) as a strategy for staging a fashion event, a strategy other designers resort to extensively.

The following will draw on an in-depth exploration of different theories on space that have led to, or respectively constitute, the *spatial*, *topographical*, respectively *topological turn*.<sup>15</sup> Space is always socially constructed; that means that space as such can only then be experienced when humans have

12 Quote from the official "Making-of-video" (1:55 min.); <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HR-2ZuS-uV8>. Translated from the German by PB.

13 My considerations here take up ideas first sketched two years ago in Alicia Kühn, "Wie Kleidung zu Mode wird: Prozesse der Verräumlichung in Modenschauen," in *Räume der Mode*, ed. Gertrud Lehnert (Paderborn: Fink, 2011), 57–74. See also Sophia Rost, "Designer ziehen Räume an: Neue Trends oder 'Schicht im Schacht' in der Mode? Ein Gespräch mit Alicia Kühn,"

in *Portal Wissen* (Universität Potsdam, January 2013), 89–91.

14 As cited in: "Making-of-video" (2:55 min). Translated from the German by PB.

15 An elaborate introduction to his theoretical approach as well as some of the following arguments can be found in my dissertation, which will presumably be published in 2014 under the working title "Modenschauen. Die Behauptung des Neuen in der Mode" at the University of Potsdam.



Fig. 28  
Alicia Kühn, Overlapping of place, location, and imaginary space, 2013.

formed, built, entered, or lived in it, experienced something in it, or talked about it and so made it recognizable and endowed it with meaning. In terms specific to the fashion show it has to be differentiated between three types of space: the *place*, the *location*, and the so-called *imaginary space*. In the moment of its staging, all three merge to form the space of the fashion show.

The designations chosen for these spaces are not based on existing terminology but are the result of careful deliberations, which come closest to my view. By the *place* of a fashion show I am referring to the geographical place where it is held, but one that, based on the "coloration" it is given in the fashion business, also has social, political, and economic connotations. For instance, while Paris stands for haute couture, as an emerging fashion city Berlin is associated with street wear, green fashion, or an "anything goes" attitude. The fashion vision of Berlin is yet to be given a special profile, revealing that sense of *place* has a relativist composition. The term *location* is used while referring to a concrete point within a place at which or in which the fashion show is staged. This could mean enclosed spaces (such as tents, industrial buildings, railway stations, swimming pools, the Zion Church, etc.), or spaces outdoors, either accessible to the general public or private (such as a park or garden, a beach, a pedestrian zone, etc.). The *imaginary space* is the space the designer creates in his/her imagination, for example the dream Karl Lagerfeld had of his Chanel iceberg landscape (Fall/Winter 2010), as he explained in an interview.<sup>16</sup> This space is not locatable cartographically, but a product of the imaginative creativity of the designer and production team. Moreover, this space is not just a sketch of the fashion show drawn up by the designer but embraces everything that is to be experienced in this space. It is an imagined space that envelops its viewers with an atmosphere and thus evokes the perceptions, associations, and feelings that the designer intends. In the interaction between the three spatial types, however, all that was intended is influenced *hic et nunc*<sup>17</sup> by the physical presence of all involved and the actions they perform, intermingling with the atmospheres inhering in the place and location.<sup>18</sup> What

can now be experienced in the overlapping of the spaces is what I would like to call the space of the fashion show, which is performative and ephemeral.

It could be assumed that the imaginary space comprises the initial place and decisively influences the search for a suitable location. However, it can frequently be the case that an exceptional location, which a designer already has in mind, influences the formation of the imaginary space, or the imaginary space only functions in combination with a specific location. One could even ask if the collection on show is not influenced by the imagined space or the chosen location. It is quite clear in our fashion show example that the design of the clothes (stained-glass window prints, collars) and the decision for the location of the Zion Church in Berlin are mutually dependent. Indeed, in this case it may be speculated that the search for an exceptional location preceded the design process, or at least steered it in a specific direction.

But back to the space of the fashion show as the result of a fusion between place, location, and imaginary space. A similar approach is found in Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory of the performative. As she sees it, spatiality first comes about in and through a performance, turning space into a mobile and performative thing, embedded in an architecture that exists prior to, during, and after the performance:

The spatiality of the performance needs to be distinguished from this architectonic-geometric space. The materiality of the performance, whether it be spatial, corporeal, or phonetic in nature, is produced first in and through the performance—it is generated performatively. Spatiality arises through the possibilities utilized to set the various participants or groups of participants into a relationship with one another, to organize and to structure their movements through space or in space as well as their perception. No matter how the possibilities are exploited they have an impact on the spatiality of the performance, for every movement by persons, objects, or light, every sound made, is capable of changing it.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the performance space is also an immersive space, one into which the viewer can plunge. Here the atmosphere is essential, playing a pivotal role in how the space is experienced. Gernot Böhme has described

16 Karl Lagerfeld in interview with Tim Blanks, accessed July 3, 2013, <http://www.style.com/fashionshows/video/F2010RTW-CHANEL>.

17 On the presentist dimension or what Fischer-Lichte means by *hic et nunc*, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp,

2004), 161.

18 Various uses of atmospheres inherent to locations are explained in Alicia Kühn, "Wie Kleidung zu Mode wird."

19 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Performativität: Eine Einführung* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 58. Translated from the German by PB.

atmospheres as being neither something material nor inherent to the subject; instead, "spaces are in as far as they are 'tinged' by the presence of things, people, or the constellations of the setting, i.e., by their ecstasies."<sup>20</sup> According to Fischer-Lichte, in an atmospheric space the viewers feel their lived experience in a very specific way: the atmosphere penetrates into and breaches the boundary of the body. The performative space is thus "a liminal space in which metamorphoses are passed through and transformations take place."<sup>21</sup> Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner was a key figure in elaborating the concept of liminality, describing ritual as a transgressing of boundaries and entering into threshold states of betwixt and between. Before returning to our considerations of the fashion show, seeking to identify its features as a ritual, it seems advisable to discuss one of the key tasks facing a designer and fashion show producer, namely, the practice of setting boundaries and framing.

## The Practice of Setting Boundaries and Framing

Boundaries separate in order to emphasize the difference between two areas. They do not simply exist just (as territorial boundaries are not naturally given) but are the result of social procedures. What are the types of boundaries in a fashion show? Firstly, there is the boundary set between the three aforementioned types of space—place, location, and imaginary space; secondly, within the fashion show space we have a gap or boundary between the audience [A] and the stage [S], between the stage and the backstage [BS], and furthermore between object (clothes) and the viewing subject, between a viewer and the persons sitting on either side, between the viewer and the model, between seats in the coveted front row and the standing room at the back, etc.



Fig. 29  
Alicia Kühl, Possible frames in a location, 2013.

Interestingly, in "Saints and Sinners," these boundaries largely coincide with the boundaries between the parish's part of the church and the clergyman's, hence between the profane and sacred. Setting up boundaries in a location by analogy with the ones already given proves to be an effective strategy of mutual reinforcement. When we sketch these boundaries from a bird's-eye view, their setting resembles a set of frames. This raises the question as to why boundaries are needed in a fashion show and who determines what is to be distinguished or framed from what and why. My thesis is that the frame of a fashion show is no longer set *only* for the purpose of highlighting the new creation featured, but that the framing itself can represent the new. Fashion show spaces come about through the aforementioned interaction between three types of space in the moment that the boundaries between them dissolve, but also through a boundary being set between what the designer wishes to mark as the new in distinction from the old, for which the audience stands symbolically. This boundary is visible prior to the fashion show and is underlined; it is prohibited, for example, to set foot on the catwalk prior to the show or take a look behind the scenes in the backstage area (exclusion). These boundaries are dissolved during and after the fashion show to enable the audience to become part of the performance and witnesses at the presentation of new creations (inclusion).

A host of authors have elaborated theoretical underpinning for the concepts or terms of *boundary* and *frame*, whereas in my view the most fruitful are those articulated in the theoretical considerations of the performative, in sociology, and in theories on ritual.<sup>22</sup> In the essay collection *Ritualität und Grenze*,<sup>23</sup>

20 Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995: 33), translated from the German by PB. See also his considerations on the atmosphere in a church: Gernot Böhme, *Architektur und Atmosphäre* (Paderborn: Fink, 2006), 139–50.

21 Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, 208. Translated from the German by PB.

22 Next to the publications cited in the following, please note in addition: Burckhard Dücker, *Rituale: Formen – Funktionen – Geschichte; Eine Einführung in die Ritualwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007); Henrik Jungaberle, *Rituale erneuern: Ritual-dynamik und Grenzerfahrung aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (Gießen: Psycho-sozial-Verlag, 2006); Henrik Jungaberle, *Rituale in Bewegung: Rahmungs- und Reflexivitätsprozesse in Kulturen der Gegenwart* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006); Hans Körner and Karl Möseneder, *Rahmen: Zwischen Innen und Aussen; Beiträge zur*

*Theorie und Geschichte* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2010); Georg Simmel, "Der Bildrahmen: Ein ästhetischer Versuch," in *Der Tag: Moderne illustrierte Zeitung*, November 18, 1902; Victor Witter Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in *Symposium on New Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Melford E. Spiro (Seattle: Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, 1964), 4–20; Victor Witter Turner, "Liminalität und Communitas," in *Ritualtheorien: Ein einführendes Handbuch*, ed. Andréa Bellinger (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 251–64; Herbert Willems, *Rahmen und Habitus: Zur theoretischen und methodischen Ansatz Erving Goffmans* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

23 Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Ritualität und Grenze: Eine Einführung," in *Ritualität und Grenze*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte (Tübingen: Francke, 2003), 11–30.

Erika Fischer-Lichte approaches the concept of boundary through an historical performance: Gertrud Eysoldt's portrayal of Elektra in a play by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal in Berlin in 1903 marked a turning point in the art of acting. Through her expressive, wild performance, Eysoldt breaches the traditional boundary between the semiotic (i.e., her role) and her own body. The audience was no longer able to distinguish between fiction and reality—their identification with Eysoldt's own body was too powerful. There was thus no longer any play in the sense of "as if" or "make believe," the acting no longer imitated a reality it merely pretended to embody, but actually constituted reality. This had a profound impact on the boundary between the audience and stage: the transgression of the boundary erected between the semiotic and physical body passed over to the audience. At least during the time of the performance the audience also passes through a physical transformation, lending the performance a ritual dimension. Fischer-Lichte emphasizes that this transgression can be considered an "artistic technique"—in other words something *intentionally* employed by artists as a strategy for staging an event.

In this example the boundary transgression and transformation are based on the physical co-presence of audience and actors. Here we need to keep in mind that in the fashion show it is not just the body of the other that can be experienced through the senses and processed cognitively and emotionally; there are a host of additional elements which constitute the particular atmosphere of a show (such as media-generated images, sounds, smells, temperatures, senses of broad open or narrow constricting space, etc.). The aforementioned immersion, the inclusion of the viewer into a space through plunging into an atmosphere, takes place through a *multidimensional* boundary transgression.

As for the *frame*, it would seem obvious to think of the term as the physical frame given to a work of art. However, because the "fashion show" as a total work of art is not as a single artifact but a performative act, this notion of framing is not particularly applicable. Instead we need to turn to sociology and, once again, theories of ritual and theater, which translate the principle behind the framing of a picture, namely the inclusion through exclusion, to the communication between individuals.

In his essay "The Sociology of Space" Georg Simmel explores the concepts of the boundary and the frame.<sup>24</sup> Simmel uses both terms as a sociological metaphor to describe contexts of meaning and behavior: "The boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially."<sup>25</sup>

The frame of a structure, its self-contained boundary, has a very similar significance for the social group as for a work of art. It performs two functions

for the latter, which are really only two sides of a single function: closing the work of art off against the surrounding world and holding it together. The frame proclaims that a world is located inside of it, which is subject only to its own laws, not drawn into the determinations and changes of the surrounding world. In so far as it symbolizes the self-contented unity of the work of art, the frame at the same time strengthens its reality and its impression. Similarly, a society is characterized as inwardly homogeneous because its sphere of existence is enclosed in acutely conscious boundaries and conversely, the reciprocal unity and functional relationship of every element to every other one gains its spatial expression in the enclosing boundary.<sup>26</sup>

In *Steps to An Ecology of Mind* the anthropologist Gregory Bateson also takes up the analogy of the framing of pictures, explaining that in communicative structures "perception of the ground must be positively inhibited and perception of the figure (in this case the picture) must be positively enhanced."<sup>27</sup> Here, he too emphasizes the ideas of inclusion and exclusion as well as contrasting, thus drawing Gestalt theory. In Bateson's sense, frames can activate specific perception patterns, initiate cognitive and emotional processes, and guide modes of behavior.

In his *Frame Analysis* Erving Goffman assumes even more emphatically that there is an interchanging relationship between frame and event. As he understands it, within the so-called primary framework there are, besides the natural variants (e.g., events of nature), the social frameworks which "provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being."<sup>28</sup> Limiting actions through primary social frames means that the participants understand what is happening, rendering meaningless aspects of the scene into something meaningful. Through keys, defined as a set of conventions, "a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else."<sup>29</sup> One frequently cited example for such a transformation are soccer games, where specific actions by individual radical fans are transposed into a new frame, lending them the character of a fight and thus possibly escalating into outright acts of violence.<sup>30</sup>

24 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Space," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby et al. (London: Sage, 2000), 137–69. First published in German in 1903.

25 *Ibid.*, 143.

26 *Ibid.*, 141.

27 Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 187. First published in 1972.

28 Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay*

*on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1986), 22. First published in 1974.

29 *Ibid.*, 43–44.

30 See Jan Weinhönd, Michael Rudolph, and Claus Ambos, "Framing als Zugang zur Ritualdynamik," in *Rituale in Bewegung: Rahmungs- und Reflexivitätsprozesse in Kulturen der Gegenwart*, ed. Henrik Jungaberle (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 25.

Frames are thus, according to Goffman, organizational principles for events that the individual has formed out of experience or based on his/her knowledge. Taking up the approaches of Bateson and Goffman, the authors Weinhold, Rudolph, and Ambos have come up with a definition of frames fruitful for grasping the dynamics of rituals:

Frames are understood as individual or collective, conscious or unconscious knowledge structures and organizational principles which structure physical and social (and thus also ritual) realities. With a frame actors involved in the ritual are defining which acts, elements, and events are salient and correct in the respective situation and which are not. Frames are cognitive-affective and thus action-guiding sets of information. While frame is understood as a concept describing structures, framing designates the process of perceiving and interpreting a situation. On the individual level this entails actualization of frames, on the social and cultural levels the constitutive process of establishing, changing, and communicating frames.<sup>31</sup>

Two important characteristics emerge from this: firstly, frames enclose something so as to emphasize it; and secondly, to a certain extent frames can ensure that events are experienced and understood in a specific way, and those involved respond in a specific way. In terms of the fashion show this means that, as an event, it is the result of interaction between planning and emergence—planning because the designer and his/her team, through composing a fashion show space, deliberately set a frame around what is to be presented as an "artistic technique," the intention being to distinguish it from an "outside." And emergence because within the time of the fashion show this set frame is dissolved—inside and outside briefly become one.

The frame not only encloses the new but also is in itself new. Up until now, our premise was that the frame encloses and makes something that is to be presented on the stage clearly discernible. The aspiration of the designers is to show something on the stage that is innovative in the sense of a "never-seen-before-in-this-form." The whole fashion system cannot function without the old being supplanted by the new. What happens however, when there are no more innovations in fashion design—or at least have considerably diminished and that which is shown is "only" quotes, deconstructions, and combinations of older fashions and styles, in other words nothing genuinely new? To where has innovativeness been displaced? I state that the strategies of rendering the new visible, namely the framings, are themselves to be visible, discussed, communicable, and saleable. What is shown and declared as the new in Michalsky's "Saints and Sinners" is initially nothing material such as the clothing, but the contextualization of the clothing itself which is given through the spatial and social frames of the church. This context is captured

in what I call a "memory image" (*Erinnerungsbild*) of the show, which is later recoupled to the clothing in the negotiation process which follows every fashion show.<sup>32</sup>

## The Fashion Show—A Ritual?

Is it possible to discern a ritual character in the fashion show, namely as a social process for negotiating (what is new), which would legitimize defining the fashion show as a ritual?

Generally, the new and the ritual, as Burckhard Dücker has explained in detail, are not mutually exclusive but in fact depend upon one another.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the new is only possible within the framework of seriality, and a series, i.e., a recurring order, is ensured when it is affirmed over and again in a similar ritual act. The ritual needs the new so as to be able to verify and confirm itself—and the new needs the ritual as a vehicle to come into the world:

If 'the new' is recognized as such it has passed through a ritual negotiation process, as for example in a fashion show, industry trade fair, or awards ceremony, which leads from a marked beginning (proposition, presentation) through to a consequential end (acceptance or rejection). In this way 'the new' unfolds a specific social dimension that reveals itself as a narrative context creating meaning which revolves around the participating persons.<sup>34</sup>

According to Dücker the fashion show is a ritual by virtue of its negotiating what is new. As discussed above, rituals are also dependent upon and shaped by the existence and use of boundaries and frames, both of which are clearly evident in a fashion show. Goffman's theory of brackets can further nuance our definition of ritual.<sup>35</sup> These are signs that alert actors to the beginning, the progression, or the end of an action or a ritual. Fashion shows are shaped and pervaded by such brackets: as a rule they follow the same pattern (parade with first and last face, finale, and appearance of the designer), involve the same persons (professional models), take place in the same locations (e.g.,

31 Ibid.

32 For further discussions on the nature of the new, the so-called "memory image" and on strategies of recoupling, please note my forthcoming dissertation as mentioned in note 15.

33 Burckhard Dücker, "'Alle Jahre wieder...' – 'Was gibt's Neues?' Das Neue und das Rituelle als Kategorien der Kulturwissen-

schaft," in *Das Ursprüngliche und das Neue: Zur Dynamik ritueller Prozesse in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Burckhard Dücker and Gerald Schwedler (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008), 32. Translated from the German by PB.

34 Ibid., 21.

35 Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 251; Weinhold et al., "Framing als Zugang," 25.



official fashion week tents), in the same cities (the "fashion capitals") and at the same times of year (in six-month cycles). Fashion shows that deviate from this regime attract special attention, for example, when an unusual location is selected, amateur models booked, or the order of events reversed.

Moreover, as Fischer-Lichte and the anthropologists she draws on (in particular Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner) underline, various phases are passed through in a ritual, whereby the status of the person involved is altered or affirmed. Passing through these phases can occur spatially, i.e., crossing spatial thresholds or transgressing boundaries. In the moment of crossing those involved find themselves on a threshold that "forms the passage from one order to another" and "leads them into a liminal state."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, a fashion show can be seen as a kind of fictive transformation in which the models simulate, but do not actually consummate, a transgression of the boundary separating the old from the new.

All fashion shows—and not just Michalsky's—exhibit a ritual character. Those elements of "Saints and Sinners" so vehemently criticized, for instance the opening of the portal mimicking the Gates of Heaven, equating the catwalk with an altar and casting Michalsky as a "Creator" can be perceived as a blasphemous commentary. At the same time, however, this is more of an exaggeration or perhaps even persiflage of the ritual character of fashion shows in general, the character that Michalsky's show called attention to in the first place.

Translated from the German by Paul Bowman

<sup>36</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, 258. Translated from the German by PB.

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# Fashion Film Spaces of Exclusivity and the Globalization of Accessibility

Sabina Muriale

## From Physical to Virtual—The Global Scope of Online Fashion Presentations

The fashion show is not quite the final destination of a new collection, that would be the customers. But it is a strategically important objective for both marketing and advertising. The first impression or so-called “pre-sensation” of journalists, critics, buyers, or in this particular case the customers, is decisive for the product turnover. At the same time, a global image of a brand is also conveyed.

Fashion shows are integral parts of the fashion industry; therefore, it is surprising that over the decades the catwalk has undergone minimal change. It has become at most more complicated and subsequently more expensive in its production.<sup>2</sup> The catwalk acts *inter alia* as a stage for pretentious settings or lavish performances that are sometimes even compared to art installations. For Chanel’s Spring/Summer show 2012, Karl Lagerfeld transformed the Grand Palais in Paris into an oversized water world. A swarm of models strutted through an under-the-sea tableau replete with white coral and aquatic creatures. A huge, shimmering curtain supplied the already opulent setting a note of even more dramatic, climatic grandeur.

Or recall the performance at the end of Alexander McQueen’s show for his spring/summer collection of 1999: the model Shalom Harlow rotated on a platform, embedded in the stage floor, in a white sleeveless dress with petticoat lining. Like a pirouetting ballerina atop a clockwork music box, the model appeared rooted to the ground. Only her arms and upper body were moving to the rhythm of the rotating disc in an unstable, almost vulnerable way. This “mechanical ballet” was flanked by two robots,<sup>3</sup> taken from a car factory,<sup>4</sup> which sprayed the model’s dress with black and yellow paint. In McQueen’s words, this was a carefully prepared project that took one week to choreograph, or rather to program the robots. He was inspired by an installation by the artist Rebecca Horn in which two rifles shot each other with blood-red color.<sup>5</sup>

1 N°47 The “Pre-sensation” Is the Destination—Wear the Enfolding Past, Touch the Contemplative Present and Smell the Soundperfume of the Time to Come. [http://www.bless-service.de/BLESS\\_new/N/Eintrag/2012/9/24\\_N47\\_The\\_Presensation\\_is\\_the\\_destination.html](http://www.bless-service.de/BLESS_new/N/Eintrag/2012/9/24_N47_The_Presensation_is_the_destination.html).

2 Cf. Hayley Mills, “Catwalk Set Trends: Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2009/10,” *WGSN Fashion Trend Forecasting & Analysis*, April 6, 2009; [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com).

3 Shalom Harlow studied ballet in the

1980s. See “Shalom Harlow,” *Vogue*; [www.vogue.com/voguepedia/Shalom\\_Harlow](http://www.vogue.com/voguepedia/Shalom_Harlow).

4 “The Towering Genius of Alexander McQueen,” *The Hapsical*, February 15, 2010; <http://hapsical.blogspot.co.at/2010/02/towering-genius-of-alexander-mcqueen.html>.

5 “Dress, No. 13, Spring/Summer 1999,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (blog); <http://blog.metmuseum.org/alexandermcqueen/dress-no-13/>.

However, these two examples are linked to a traditional catwalk, i.e., models moving enfilade, presenting the collection live and locally in front of the invited audience. *Live, local, invited audience, etc.*, are keywords, which will be discussed in this essay as they are important in relation to new forms of fashion presentation in the digital age.

It is only in recent years that we have seen a hype growing around new forms of fashion presentation that utilize the world wide web and other digital tools for its own merit. The digital fashion film is only one variation of many examples on which we will focus in the following. Especially illustrated by the cooperation between fashion film director Ruth Hogben/SHOWstudio and London-based designer Gareth Pugh.

This kind of fashion presentation generates controversial opinions among fashion critics as well as other fashion designers. Suzy Menkes, fashion editor of the *International Herald Tribune*, commented on Gareth Pugh's fashion film of his spring/summer 2012 collection:<sup>6</sup> "They are the champions of the Internet age designers who can tap into the ultra-modernity of image and sound as part of a multimedia experience."<sup>7</sup> But she warned, thinking of Mugler's collaboration with Lady Gaga, for more caution: "Do not forget the clothes!"<sup>8</sup> And this leads us directly to a debate about pros and cons of digital fashion film and its experiences with a new aesthetic. The rise of a visual industry had already begun. But let us start by looking back on digital fashion presentation and its development over the years, before we continue to observe and discuss current fashion films or other exclusive presentation forms in the following chapter. In the end we will analyze the relationship between spaces of exclusivity and the globalization of accessibility under the perspective of network capitalism.

### First Streams and Fashion Films by Helmut Lang & SHOWstudio

Helmut Lang was one of the first to live-stream his New York debut show for his Fall/Winter 1998/99 collection, solely for an online audience.<sup>9</sup> At that time, it was a scandal for all those eager to be seen in the limited front-row seats. A lot has happened since then. It has already become a mainstream phenomenon that fashion shows are broadcasted directly via the web, and it is worth nothing that there are significantly larger audiences than fifteen years ago. The Internet renders the exchange of information simple and allows access to the fashion business, regardless of one's physical location. In the age of digital culture, imagery from fashion shows are shared—thanks to bloggers and social media applications such as Twitter, Instagram, etc.—in reasonably good quality on the personal computers of dedicated followers of fashion. At first glance, separate and exclusive fashion shows are outdated and are no longer



Fig. 30 a, b, and c  
BLESS, Collection 47: *The "Pre-sensation" Is the Destination—Wear the Enfolding Past, Touch the Contemplative Present and Smell the Soundperfume of the Time to Come*, 2012.

the shortest or most practical way to promote collections.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, ever more fashion companies use the possibilities of the medium of film and incorporate these films selectively into a communication strategy in their presentations.

There are various approaches: the film may be used as a substitute for or to accompany the traditional catwalk. Depending on the content, this could be a sequence of various outfits from a collection, or the film could portray an abstract story. Techniques range from traditional cinematography to cutting edge, digital processes.

Thirteen years ago, in 2000, the fashion film platform SHOWstudio was also one of the first that pushed the trend and developed its own specific type of fashion film.<sup>11</sup> Nick Knight—cofounder of this platform—explains that fashion and film work together as a matter of course because clothes have a strong visual effect and are especially designed for shaping and movement.<sup>12</sup> Experimental filmmaker and Knight's former assistant, Ruth Hogben,<sup>13</sup> supports him

6 See SHOWstudio, [http://showstudio.com/project/gareth\\_pugh\\_ss\\_2012](http://showstudio.com/project/gareth_pugh_ss_2012).

7 Suzy Menkes, "Don't Forget the Clothes!" *New York Times*, September 9, 2011; <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/fashion/mugler-and-gareth-pugh-dont-forget-the-clothes.html>.

8 Ibid.

9 Cf. Harriet Walker, "Out of Fashion: Designers Finding New Ways to Sell Their Style," *Independent*, February 9, 2012; <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/out-of-fashion-designers-finding-new-ways-to-sell-their-style-6669578.html>.

10 Ibid.

11 There are, however, also further platforms for the fashion film medium: *Dazed Digital* (the online platform of London style magazine *Dazed & Confused*) and *A Shaded View on Fashion Film* (formed by mother of all fashion bloggers, Diane Pernet).

12 Cf. Lauren Davis, "Fashion Film Creative Talent: Top 10," *WGSN Fashion Trend Forecasting & Analysis*, December 20, 2010; [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com); Lauren Davis, "Fashion Film: The Digital Future," *WGSN Fashion Trend Forecasting & Analysis*, December 9, 2010; [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com).

13 Other filmmakers are inter alia Sarah Chatfield (YSL) or Katerina Jebb (Givenchy).



when she describes the relationship between clothing and film. Her commentary sheds light on how materiality and gendering manipulate meaning in fashion cinema: “If you see a garment once, it communicates one thing, but if you see it repetitively, you concentrate on its intimately changing form and movement. Each film is led by the elements of the different garments: sometimes it moves to the bass and sometimes it goes against the beat; chiffon might feel feminine, whereas metallic could be aggressive [...]”<sup>14</sup>

Hogben’s own descriptions of her working method are significant with regard to our debate about the rise of a visual industry. *Image building* and *stirring up emotions* are further keywords in our analysis of fashion film as a marketing concept.

### Ruth Hogben and Gareth Pugh’s World of Emotions and Needs—Desire Pre-programmed

Gareth Pugh is one of the designers who has, since 2009, recognized the opportunity of viral marketing and advertising, as well as the artistic potential of a fashion film. For several years, in collaboration with Ruth Hogben, he has been integrating digital films into his presentations as an alternative to the catwalk. Meanwhile, Hogben produces and directs a fashion film each season for Pugh, and she seems dedicated when she describes the ethos and standards of her work: “I try to make a representation of every piece of fabric, every shape and sculpture. I am trying to convey Gareth’s world. I play with scale; physically some parts are quite claustrophobic. There is a lot of freedom, depth and space—a vast, endless infinity of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Pugh’s presentation of his Spring/Summer 2011 collection through an eleven-minute digital film as part of *Paris Fashion Week*,<sup>16</sup> was hotly debated in the press. The question of whether there is a need for a conventional fashion show in this day and age, was asked by Suzy Menkes, among others.<sup>17</sup> Pugh



required only a single, albeit huge, screen and two solitary (models primarily Kristen McMenamy)<sup>18</sup> for the presentation of his entire collection. This film, just over eleven minutes long, copied the effects of a kaleidoscope with its interrupted movements and multiple reflections. The use of light and the arrangements of space do not follow terrestrial logic. The absence of gravity and time form new fundamental laws. Everything is artificial and highly aesthetic, and right at the beginning a kind of a Genesis occurs. Out of a black nothingness, a metal cube appears and reminds us of Stanley Kubrick’s opening scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.<sup>19</sup>

But this was not his first move to amaze his audience with recent digital creations. He already organized a space of exclusivity and global accessibility for his Fall/Winter 2009/10 show. On one hand he limited the access to his show and released high-resolution images only for a certain number of people. And on the other hand, he published a fashion film on SHOWstudio’s website with deep-resolution images of his collection. By flirting between the boundaries of accessibility and exclusivity Pugh fosters a desire for the illustration of fashion. But beside this marketing artifice, how does Ruth Hogben’s method of filmmaking work?

<sup>14</sup> Davis, “Fashion Film.”

<sup>15</sup> Menkes, “Is a Runway Show Really Necessary?” *New York Times*, September 29, 2010; <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/30/fashion/30iht-rshow.html>.

<sup>16</sup> See *SHOWstudio*, [http://showstudio.com/project/gareth\\_pugh\\_ss\\_2011/fashion\\_film](http://showstudio.com/project/gareth_pugh_ss_2011/fashion_film).

<sup>17</sup> Menkes, “Is a Runway Show Really Necessary?”

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Baker is the second model in this film, who is visible for only short sequences.

<sup>19</sup> And also Kubrick’s quote on his intention

for *2001: A Space Odyssey* shows references to Hogben’s approach: “I tried to create a visual experience, one that bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content. I intended the film to be an intensely subjective experience that reaches the viewer at an inner level of consciousness, just as music does....”; Gene D. Phillips, *Stanley Kubrick: Interviews* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2001), 47.

Her fashion films may convey in an abstract way not merely the textile vision of a fashion designer, but also the image of a fashion company. In some of Hogben's films, one finds only virtual transformations of clothing, body, time, and space without narration. Artificially generated images appear like avatars, as an abstract expression of what we once understood of clothing and body, and what we had defined before as time and space. Hogben's intention is less about showing details of a textile structure or a pattern in motion, but representing a particular vision and evoking an emotional response.<sup>20</sup>

Fashion journalist Suzy Menkes's benevolent opinion on this matter is: "There is a general feeling that after a quarter of a century of catwalk shows, with zombie-faced models walking up and down, with no interaction between clothes and audience, this system is coagulating fashion blood rather than making pulses race."<sup>21</sup>

But what are exactly the benefits for producer and viewer of such a complex formation of a new cinematic aesthetic?

## The Digital Fashion Film—Benefits and Objections to Going Online

Professional fashion shows cost an enormous amount every season with significant repeated costs for locations, models, and so on.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, the financial aspect underpins a different approach in the search for alternatives to the traditional catwalk. Production costs should be reduced as much as possible.<sup>23</sup> The transformation of fashion shows into fashion films has also formed a new viewer benefit. Lars von Bennigsen, CEO of Temperley London, points out the new and highly necessary event character of the medium: "Consumers may in turn wake up to the fact that spending millions on catwalks does not necessarily make a good or desirable product. Catwalks will hopefully be always around, but maybe in a less formulaic and boring way. After all, fashion is a creative industry and it is amazing that the form of showing clothes has not changed for so long. It only got more expensive."<sup>24</sup> Nick Knight even expands upon von Bennigsen's statement, considering the logistical problems of travelling with the entire fashion-entourage of models, buyers, and journalists and the significant carbon footprints generated.<sup>25</sup> But does it really save money if you change from a traditional catwalk to a digital fashion film? "[I]t was not any easier—and certainly not any less expensive—to take the image option, even if it avoided the 'uncontrollable stress' of the live format," Pugh espoused to Menkes.<sup>26</sup> It remains in an undeviating mood for fashion film. Viktor & Rolf, like other fashion companies, returned to a live-in-person format after the extra effort and costs of their virtual fashion show in October 2008<sup>27</sup> had not been appreciated.<sup>28</sup> The production of a digital film—

even if it is eventually released with only a few megabytes on YouTube—is still labor intensive and expensive with the current state of technology. Perhaps this is because the fashion film is still an evolving, emerging format.

But will the virtually transferred fashion film replace the traditional catwalk? Caroline Evans, professor of fashion history and theory at Central Saint Martins, states a clear "no." The exclusivity is decisive for designer fashion, or a luxury label, more than the immediacy and thrill of this new media.<sup>29</sup> Despite many other positive comments on fashion film as an alternative, fashion show producer Etienne Russo also does not believe that the Internet, and the possibilities of social media or Web 2.0 will replace the traditional catwalk. For this, the live experience of the fashionistas or consumers and journalists is far too important.<sup>30</sup> Ed Filipowski, copresident of KCD, agrees.<sup>31</sup> He does not long for the day when all the runway shows are virtual: "I'm a fashion purist [...]. I can't wait to go to my first couture show tomorrow morning."<sup>32</sup>

Both men are of the same opinion that rather different digital marketing formats will be developed and can coexist alongside the catwalks. Examples of this are seen in the use of augmented reality tools during a fashion show and of interactive apps for smartphones as well. London-based designer Emilio de

20 "Gareth Pugh Womenswear S/S10 Film Prequel," *Dazed Digital*; <http://www.dazedigital.com/fashion/article/4620/1/gareth-pugh-womenswear-s-s10-film-prequel>.

21 Menkes, "Is a Runway Show Really Necessary?"

22 Trend researcher Cher Potter gives concrete figures: £25,000 to £40,000 must be estimated at least for a fashion show and plus €10,000 to €15,000 for a top model. Cf. Menkes, "Is a Runway Show Really Necessary?" For America's top fashion show locations like Bryant Park in New York: \$28,000 and \$58,000. Cf. Estelle Marandon, "Chic durch die Krise," *Die Zeit*, April 6, 2009; <http://www.zeit.de/online/2009/08/mode-sparen>; Christina Binkley, fashion and style journalist, calculates for a small to medium sized show, even \$150,000 to \$300,000; Cf. Christina Binkley, "For Couture Shows, Digital Catwalk Is the New Fashion," *Wall Street Journal*, January 23, 2012; <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203806504577177251392311874.html>.

23 Shared catwalks are another attempt to save costs. For example *Topshop* acts as a host and presents several designers on a common fashion show. Cf. Cher Potter, "Future Fashion: New Forms of Designer

Communication," *WGSN Fashion Trend Forecasting & Analysis*, May 14, 2009; [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com).

24 Mills, "Catwalk Set Trends," 2.

25 Menkes, "Is a Runway Show Really Necessary?," 15.

26 Ibid.

27 One model presented their entire Spring/Summer 2009 collection. See *SHOWstudio* Website, [http://showstudio.com/project/inside\\_the\\_house\\_of\\_viktor\\_rolf/viktor\\_rolf\\_spring\\_summer\\_2009\\_show](http://showstudio.com/project/inside_the_house_of_viktor_rolf/viktor_rolf_spring_summer_2009_show).

28 Cf. Binkley, "Digital Catwalk Is the New Fashion," 22.

29 Cf. Donatien Grau, "An Intellectual Fashion—Caroline Evans," *Another Magazine*; [http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/1826/Caroline\\_Evans](http://www.anothermag.com/current/view/1826/Caroline_Evans).

30 Cf. Walker, "Out of Fashion."

31 KCD is a worldwide operating fashion PR and production company from New York that has recently launched a digital catwalk by invitation only. That means limited access via log-in data as a replacement for a traditional catwalk on their website. See: *KCD Worldwide Project Website*, <http://www.digitalfashionshows.com>.

32 Binkley, "Digital Catwalk Is the New Fashion."

la Morena examined the direct sale-ability of his Autumn/Winter collection 2009 via a mobile phone app.<sup>33</sup> The audience voted via this app for individual pieces and Morena could estimate a possible sale of his collection, and thus he was able to plan the further process of the upcoming production.<sup>34</sup>

But what information is processed directly? Essentially, it is merely an inventory of the moment, a short click for a yes or no, or, as Doug Rushkoff pointedly defines in his latest book *Present Shock*, “to capture the slipping moment.” Without questioning the motivations of such short-term actions: “It is simply an effort to key off what we have just done in order to manipulate our decisions in the future. Their campaigns encourage the kinds of impulsive behavior that fool us into thinking we are living in the now while actually just making us better targets for their techniques.”<sup>35</sup>

### The Promise of Exclusivity Within the Concept of Global Accessibility—Oxymoron or Corollary

We can also speak of a further step in the globalization of fashion in terms of accessibility, in which former exclusive fashion shows are now open to the digital public—globally and instantaneously. Everyone can get involved, and everyone is allowed to share their penny’s worth.<sup>36</sup> Even commenting, critiquing, and copying occur, especially in the world of social media and other network possibilities. It is a paradise for all copycats. This is a known trade-off when one releases their latest collection as a digital film via the Internet: once the fashion film is in circulation, one relinquishes control over who can see the latest collections and who can judge (e.g., on blogs). This is a fact that the fashion business is unwilling to accept.<sup>37</sup>

Put plainly, it is a direct line to customer acquisition and product marketing. A traditional catwalk will never be able to offer these advantages because it is dependent on a physical location and on an announced date. And it looks like even a new designer’s work ethic has emerged. Sara Zenic, a graduate of Central Saint Martins, explains the new type of client relationship: “We want to present our work in a less extravagant way. We want our presentations to be made more through communication and collaboration, with a more tailored approach.”<sup>38</sup>

But what does it mean for all the busy bees of digital multipliers such as fashion bloggers and the like? It seems that a new form of “prosumers” have evolved around Web 2.0 and social media.<sup>39</sup> Briefly explained: as a prosumer, one is consumer and producer concurrently.<sup>40</sup> It is a new hybrid of an old production process and already known capitalist hierarchy. One consumes information, evaluates, and distributes it over the Internet, or via social media portals. This

is often unpaid, during lunch or leisure time, because of their dedication to the product or brand. Just think of all the numerous fashion bloggers, who freely promote the products of their favorite brands.<sup>41</sup>

This phenomenon is not as new as we think. According to sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, we have been witnessing for decades the emergence of a *New Spirit of Capitalism* bound to the rise of network capitalism.<sup>42</sup> The new, unlimited possibilities in the time of digital age and social media give us new approaches to raise profit through a global network. But the communicative and creative possibilities of the Internet lead us to think too easily of democratization and freedom.<sup>43</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello explain:

Capitalism is obliged, if it is to succeed in engaging the people who are indispensable to the pursuit of accumulation, to incorporate a spirit that can provide attractive, exciting life prospects, while supplying guarantees of security and moral reasons for people to do what they do. And this composite amalgam of grounds and reasons turns out to be variable over time, depending upon the expectations of those who must be mobilized and the hopes they have grown up with, as well as the forms taken by accumulation in different periods.”<sup>44</sup>

These benefits can be misused for a justification of capitalism, which makes a possibility of critique more difficult. In our case we just need to replace the promised benefits with the keywords of “democratization” and “freedom” and we are currently right in the middle of another chapter in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* of the digital age. The widespread assumption that a free Internet with its various usage possibilities supports a democratization of the fashion industry is starting to totter.

33 This app is based on a program called Near Field Communication. That NFC program for data transmission is a form of contactless communication between smartphones, tablets or other devices. See *NFC Near Field Communication Website*, <http://www.nearfieldcommunication.org>.

34 Cf. Potter, “Future Fashion.”

35 Douglas Rushkoff, *Present Shock* (New York: Current, 2013), 8.

36 See, for example, the social network Pinterest in pinboard-style ([www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)), which allows users to share and spread a countless number of images taken from the Internet to the public net-community.

37 Cf. Walker, “Out of Fashion.”

38 Potter, “Future Fashion.”

39 The term “prosumer” goes back to American

futurologist Alvin Toffler. Cf. Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980).

40 Cf. George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson, “Production, Consumption, Prosumption—The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital ‘Prosumer,’” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10, no. 1 (March 2010): 13–36; <http://joc.sagepub.com/content/10/1/13.full.pdf+html?ijkey=KKTk6xYE6Vq1c>.

41 Cf. Toffler, *Third Wave*, 37.

42 See Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2007), 107.

43 Cf. Ritzer and Jurgenson, “Production, Consumption, Prosumption,” 38.

44 Cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 24–25.

Yet, Nick Knight still adheres to his vision, and fortifies his position on positive achievements of the Internet. He even considers fashion film as an art form that has been freed from the constraints of an elitist predominance: "Artists have forever had to go through a system of patronage—from the Medicis and the Church to record companies and book publishers. Now you can produce art and put it up, and people can judge it on its own merit. I think that's a fundamentally different relationship between art forms and the audience."<sup>45</sup>

With this statement, Knight emphasizes unintentionally the previously mentioned justification for capitalism, or a marketing product such as fashion film. But—and that is a new point—he argues through an "artistic critique."<sup>46</sup> Fashion film becomes art and the quasi-democratic Internet is the best way to spread artistic freedom globally.

Art theorist Isabelle Graw describes this fusion of the art and fashion world as part of a visual industry in which "the responsibility for image production and visibility remains no longer with single artists or retailers, but with larger networks or cooperations."<sup>47</sup> The emergence of fashion film as an art form can also be seen as a targeted co-branding strategy. Fashion charges itself to a higher level with artistic authenticity: "it is primarily the (justified) hope for image transfer."<sup>48</sup>

What precisely does this fusion of fashion and art mean, especially in relation to the fashion film, which is not made solely for irrigation and art appreciation, but strongly focused on creating customer loyalty? It sounds rather like a communication relationship between buyer and seller, but with high aesthetic and artistic standards. Consequently, the reassessment of a marketing tool as a new art form is first of all co-branding on both sides. Internet-users are indeed the "producers" with their power of likes and dislikes, but the profit, or the potential for it, is still owned by the company, or rather SHOWstudio or, finally, the glorified fashion label.<sup>49</sup>

## Do We Need a New Fashion Term?

And the question arises: how does fashion evolve? Is it now the number of clicks and like-buttons on the Internet? Does fashion develop through the influence of a visual industry and the amounts of images that are transmitted via the boundless Internet? Is this the new generator for a "fashionable" movement? Or is it solely the quantity of personal relationships gained through an emotion-stoking visual medium?

Because emotions create connections between people, create identities, and social affiliations, visual media contributes a new, soul-catching coup of the fashion industry. Caroline Evans recognizes these efforts as a clear manipula-

tion of the fashion industry that finds its way between commercial interest and visual aesthetics. Even though she talks about fashion shows per se, her statement can also be transferred on fashion film:

The fashion show can be understood both in the context of commerce, and in the context of the late-twentieth-century concern with image and identity. For our identities and identifications are framed and given shape by the context of commercial relations, and fashion is a modern paradigm that brings together commerce, culture, and identity in a particularly (post)-modern formation on the runway.<sup>50</sup>

Yet there is also a trend that avoids the Internet and prefers the exclusiveness of a traditional catwalk. In exaggeration the catwalk can even be brought back to a salon format that is only made accessible for a selected audience.<sup>51</sup> The American designer Tom Ford, for example, keeps his presentations strictly limited: 100 guests at the most, no photos or reviews.<sup>52</sup> He thereby swims against the current to make every and any "fashionable" detail accessible on the Internet, and at the same time he gives a clear image of its brand that wants to be created only for a handful of selected customers. In the opinion of several fashion critics regarding these kinds of digital fashion shows, a desire for fashion is built upon exclusivity and not on accessibility.<sup>53</sup> Ford hits the nail on the head with his exclusive salon concept.

It should be noted that such a trend is not the result of an uncertainty with respect to the myriad possibilities and latest digital technologies, or of a longing for simpler times—a search for authenticity in a world which becomes increasingly artificial or, rather, digital. This is all about image. The exclusivity becomes part and parcel of the concept of the brand.

Nick Knight has a more pragmatic approach and still insists on the positive marketing-characteristics of the Internet-savvy fashion film: "There has been

45 Ruth Marshall-Johnson, "Nick Knight, Photographer, Director & Founder of Showstudio," *WGSN Fashion Trend Forecasting & Analysis*, July 22, 2011; [www.wgsn.com](http://www.wgsn.com).

46 Cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 419.

47 Isabelle Graw, "Der letzte Schrei: Über modelförmige Kunst und kunstförmige Mode," *Texte zur Kunst*, December 2004; <http://www.textezurkunst.de/56/der-letzte-schrei/>.

48 Cf. *ibid.*

49 Cf. Ritzer and Jurgenson, "Production, Consumption, Prosumption."

50 Caroline Evans, "The Enchanted Spectacle," *Fashion Theory* 5, no. 3 (2001): 304.

51 Cf. Potter, "Future Fashion."

52 Cf. Susannah Frankel, "Ready To Wear: Fashion Shows Are Becoming Ever-More Exclusive Affairs," *Independent*, February 2, 2011; <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/frankel/ready-to-wear-fashion-shows-are-becoming-evermore-exclusive-affairs-2213737.html>; cf. Walker, "Out of Fashion."

53 Cf. Grau, "An Intellectual Fashion," 27; cf. Potter, "Future Fashion."



a massive change [...]. The public are seeing clothes as they are shown, rather than in magazines three months later. And they want them when they see them.”<sup>54</sup> Knight has certainly no fear of the masses or of a so-called mainstream. He rather sees potential for direct sales and marketing. At least this is the final goal of the digital fashion film.

## Conclusion

Fashion films have become an essential tool for advertising and marketing for the global fashion and luxury industry and are increasingly being used as a presentation medium.<sup>55</sup> Whether to replace or to complete a traditional catwalk, in the end all efforts to find alternatives for traditional catwalks imply the desire to present and to sell a global image of the brand—globally communicated through the Internet, but always focused on the customer. As such, the fashion film as a marketing tool is a different approach by the fashion industry to catch and influence consumers by “arousing emotions” (Ruth Hogben). Gareth Pugh and his film team have so far produced the most successful examples. They are producing films that have on the one hand an abstract artistic form and the other hand can skillfully represent the fashionable vision of the designer and the brand image. The fashion film is not only targeted toward journalists, buyers, or other business insiders. Through its digital form, it will quickly spread on the Internet on YouTube and other platforms to reach users and therefore potential customers. Critical discourse sited herein has demystified catch phrases like “open communication” and identified the contradictions of pseudo-democratization, making visible their role in the machinations of capital. Users of Internet distributed fashion films are among the new prosumers of our time. They provide through free content sharing, their likes and dislikes, and thereby providing free feedback for the production studio and the advertised brand. Fashion films stir emotions in their viewers, thereby instilling identification and loyalty among consumers and generating a viral spread.

The previous examples demonstrate the ambivalence and flexibility of fashion. Fashion and its protagonists switch back and forth between viewpoints and perceptions. They draw inspiration from the conflicting sites of art and commerce; naturalness and artificiality. In the meantime the crossover experiment is officially declared by its maker/producer as a new art form. A factor already described as a rise of a visual industry regarding the fusion and co-branding/network capitalism of the art with the fashion world and vice versa by Isabelle Graw. The boundaries between the two systems are already more permeable and the transitions have become consistently blurred, albeit through a targeted strategy.<sup>56</sup> Shown in examples by Nick Knight, Gareth Pugh, and Ruth Hogben this digital visual economy is part of an absolute commercialization, which

has to be consciously observed and discussed on a socio-, consumer-, and capitalism-critical basis.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Walker, “Out of Fashion.”

<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, major brands cooperate with prestigious directors to produce their fashion films (e.g., David Lynch for Dior, Martin Scorsese for Chanel, and Kenneth Anger for Missoni). However, in the opinion of Nick Knight, such cooperations are not necessarily positive for the film because the directors take up too much space through their own celebrity aura and create a distraction. The brand’s image or the designer’s vision should be prioritized. Cf.

Davis, “Talent,” 10. This example shows the business-political strategy of trading-up. In the language of marketing, this means to make a product more valuable by charging it with value and desirability, e.g., through artistic positions or celebrities. Cf. Magdalena Kröner, “A New Love Affair: Clothes, Art and Moving Images,” *Goethe Institute*, November, 2010, accessed August 5, 2012, <http://www.goethe.de/kue/des/prj/mod/thm/en6800847.htm>.  
<sup>56</sup> See Graw, “Der letzte Schrei.”

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# The Waywardness of Fashion Society in the Subjunctive

Michael R. Müller

Aesthetic action is far more than an incidental accessory to social life; it contains a political dimension as well. This point has already been addressed by Georg Simmel.<sup>1</sup> In his view, aesthetic action is an essential mode of social life that reflects as well as shapes the social. Of the observations that come to mind to support this view, two are particularly noteworthy. There is, first of all, the fact that religious and political dispensations are prone to resort to prestigious forms of art such as architecture and clothing to invest themselves with emotional relevance. Even more to the point for Simmel was another observation. Responding to the rationalization and anonymization of reflects as well as shapes the social life, quite a few of his contemporaries chose to play the aesthetic card, developing a plethora of new lifestyles. He concluded that wherever industrialized societies release individuals from the then established order, such individuals tend to set off in search of a personal lifestyle congenial to them, complete with appropriate forms of clothing and furniture.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 31  
Steven Varble, *Soho Street Art*, New York, 1975.



Fig. 32  
Comme des Garçons, *Spring/Summer Collection*, 1997.

**1** Georg Simmel, "Soziologische Ästhetik," in *Das Individuum und die Freiheit* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1984), 167–77. First published in 1896.

**2** Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes*, Gesamtausgabe vol. 6 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995). First published in 1900.

While aesthetic interventions are therefore instrumental in bolstering order—or in creating it in the first place—they are also excellent tools for those seeking to create disorder. Aesthetic action is by no means limited to prestigious forms. Its possibilities range from minimal deviations to the demonstrative transgression of ideological, moral, and social boundaries. Cases in point are different types of the aesthetics of unseemliness or the hyperbolic *mise-en-scènes* we are familiar with from performance art and street parades (e.g., fig. 31). Complex hybrid forms of such liminal, i.e., transgressive aesthetics crop up again and again in fashion and fashion photography (fig. 32). And where fashion challenges the traditional corporeality of clothing, futurist or tachiste painting impugns the whole idea of the “two-dimensional” identity of pictures (e.g., fig. 42). But not even the decidedly beautiful is immune to border transgressions. One example that comes to mind is Thomas Hoepker’s controversial rendering of 9/11 (fig. 33), a photograph that fundamentally challenges the ways of seeing this event, which was established by CNN and other media companies.



Fig. 33  
Thomas Hoepker, *9/11 From Brooklyn*, 2001.

Through the different contexts, these and similar types of aesthetics are found to be utterly different; yet, structurally, they have two things in common. On the one hand, they penetrate to or even transcend the limits of what everyday reasoning can routinely handle. They throw a wrench into the works of our everyday perception and action styles and push our assorted received wisdoms to the sidelines at least for a time.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, such aesthetic

transgressions are also an integral part of the life of any society and cannot be automatically labeled as exceptional or as crisis phenomena. They are due neither to degeneracy of the “will to the state” or of the will to order,<sup>4</sup> nor to the idiosyncrasies of isolated individuals or of small groups. There seems to be a substantial body of evidence that most societies have ritual measures at their disposal for accommodating such border transgressions whilst at the same time providing structures for their control. Such measures are becoming more and more media based.

My topic here is this very societal organization of aesthetic border transgressions, which started out as ritual before increasingly shifting into the modern medial realm. What I will mainly concern myself with is an aspect of the societal creation of order that is central to an understanding above all of the flow of aesthetic commerce between art, fashion, or street and club cultures. I propose to start with a handful of classic forms of, and theories about, aesthetic border transgressions before moving on to the role that such border transgressions play in fashion and art. I will end with some thoughts on the socio-political significance of this kind of waywardness.

## From the Dionysian Work of Art to the Aesthetics of Unseemliness

One of the best-known mythical figures associated with the transgression of the limits imposed by everyday life is Dionysus, the god of drunkenness, ecstasy, and frenzy; also of blood frenzy and sensual pleasure, at once both cruel and prurient. He is the thorn in the flesh of all people to whom order is dear, grabs them by their desires and goads them to wreak havoc with the order they have created. In ancient Greece he represented the victory of sensuality over rationality. The feast dedicated to him, the *Dionysia*, originally conceived as a carnivalesque revelry, matured into a festive ritual and gave birth to comedy and tragedy—enactments of the comic and tragic aspects of the Dionysian dissolution of order.<sup>5</sup>

The Greek myth of Dionysus and Greek tragedy famously inspired Friedrich Nietzsche to conceive an aesthetic theory that goes under various names,

- 3 Cf. Alois Hahn, “Kunst, Wahrnehmung und Sinndeutung,” in *Diesseitsreligion: Zur Deutung der Bedeutung moderner Kultur*, ed. Anne Honer, Ronald Kurt, and Jo Reichertz (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1999), 153–82.
- 4 Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes*. Translation from the German by MM.
- 5 Wolfgang Schuller, *Griechische Geschichte*

(Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1991), 41; cf. Eric R. Dodds, *Die Griechen und das Irrationale* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991); cf. Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Die Religion der Griechen: Kult und Mythos* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994).

including the “Dionysian world view.”<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche identifies Dionysian ecstasy with an all-engrossing collapse of order. “All the caste-like divisions which necessity and arbitrary power have established between men disappear; the slave is a free-man, the aristocrat and the man of lowly birth unite in the same Bacchic choruses.”<sup>7</sup> Crucially, such instances of the toppling of the prevailing order are no freak accidents in Nietzsche’s view: they are brought about deliberately by society, partly through the use of intoxicants, partly also by artistic practice often involving music.

Émile Durkheim has emphasized the role of pictorial forms of expression for such ritual border transgressions over Nietzsche’s foregrounding of music. Drawing for his view on ethnological studies and travelogues dealing with Australia’s Aborigines, he attributes special significance to the disguises and masks worn by each participant in these rituals. For “the decorations he does and the masks he uses to cover his face give material form to this internal transformation even more than they induce it.”<sup>8</sup> The transition to ecstatic states of mind is by no means caused solely by physiological stimulants. What is decisive for Durkheim is the use of pictorial symbolic forms. The power to fascinate embodied in what lies outside the prevailing order is due also, Durkheim concludes, to culturally nurtured notions about the extra-ordinary, that is, to liminal aesthetics of the kind represented by masks, disguises, and other pictorial forms.

A comprehensive theory of the demarcation and transgression of aesthetic borders was formulated in the 1960s by Victor Turner.<sup>9</sup> His analysis focuses on life in modern industrialized societies (notably the civil rights, black power, and hippie movements). His theory of liminality assumes the existence of a structured domain of everyday life where each of us is assigned fixed roles, functions and positions. Adjacent to this domain is the unstructured sphere of liminality from which everyday order is excluded. Some people only pay temporary visits to this out-of-the-ordinary domain (on ritual or festive occasions or in the context of other types of “events”), while others, as Turner is at pains to emphasize, take up permanent residence in it (religious virtuosos, political dissidents, mendicant monks, rockers and hippies). What is crucial in each case is that the borders separating these domains are highlighted by aesthetic markers, known as liminal symbols. It is remarkable in sociological terms that the classic ritual liminal symbols studied by Turner and the modern medial and performative aesthetics of fashion and the performing and visual arts exhibit astonishing formal similarities (isomorphisms).

## Systems of Liminal Aesthetics in Fashion and Art

One of the most important liminal symbolic forms identified by Turner is (partial) nakedness. As a liminal symbol, nakedness renders its “wearer”—this may sound like a paradox—invisible. It does so by eliminating from sight all the telltale hallmarks of ordinary societal existence: those who depart the orderly realm of everyday life, so-called “liminal beings,” may be “disguised as monsters, wearing only a strip of clothing or even go naked,”<sup>10</sup> but whatever option they choose they shed all references to a societal rank, role, or position. That symbolic forms of nakedness may become detached from concrete



Fig. 34  
Alas and Piggott, *Kate Moss*, 1999.



Fig. 35  
Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin,  
*Thank you Thighmaster*, 1991.

- 6 Friedrich Nietzsche, “Die dionysische Weltanschauung,” in *Die Geburt der Tragödie: Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen; Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 1 (Munich: DTV, 1999), 551–77. First published in 1870.
- 7 Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Dionysiac World View,” in *The Birth of Tragedy: And Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120. First published in German in 1870.

- 8 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 163–64. First published in French in 1912.
- 9 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969).
- 10 Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

actions and become part of the medial pictorial baggage of a society is hardly to be doubted, given the evidence, among other things, provided by fashion and art. What you get in fashion is bodies whose distance from everyday life is almost excessively elaborated, bodies in unusual situations, in *mise-en-scènes* that cannot be accommodated within familiar horizons of interpretation. Such body images offer—in contrast to the body attired for everyday life—few docking points for projections of social status or societal function.

And the projection areas that even the unclothed body provides can be rendered inoperable: Cindy Sherman, Vinoodh Matadin, Inez van Lamsweerde (fig. 35), and other artists create pictures that are impervious to the biological or sexual categories of everyday perception. The *mise-en-scène* of nakedness creates what in terms of its aesthetic effect amounts to a lacuna: perception has no routines to fall back on and is reduced to treading water. The carpet under the received wisdoms of everyday life is pulled away.

Such hyperbolic rejections of the mundane and the familiar can of course also be achieved in other ways. The ethnologist Klaus E. Müller, for instance, speaks of ritual clowns that were a common sight anywhere in the world until well into the nineteenth century: “Their outward appearance borders on the grotesque [...]. They walk around [...] in decaying rags, their faces disfigured



Fig. 36  
Yohji Yamamoto, *Spring/Summer Collection*, 2010.

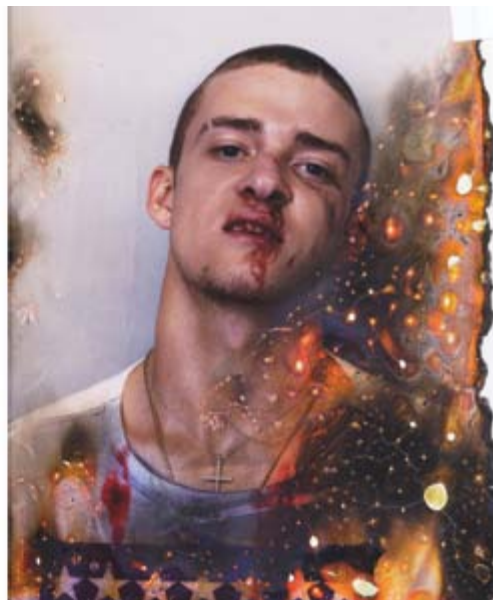


Fig. 37  
Steven Klein, *Arene Homme Plus*, 2001/02.

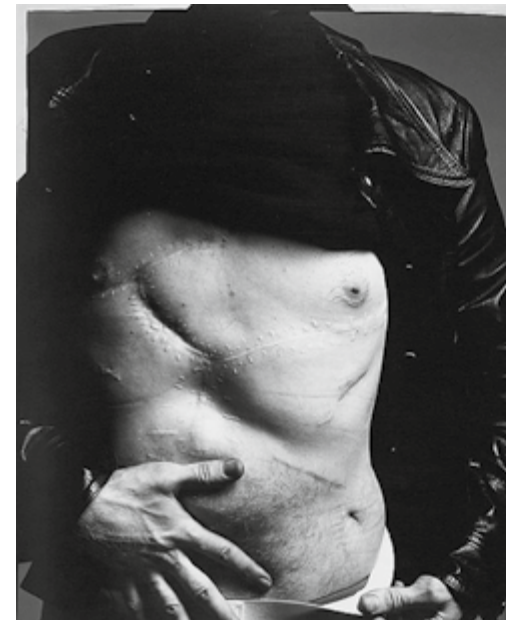


Fig. 38  
Richard Avedon, *Andy Warhol*, 1969.



Fig. 39  
Anders Edstöm, *Martin Margiela's Spring/Summer 1994 collection*, 1993.

by paint [...], their hair matted and dishevelled.” “Occasionally they would turn violent, sometimes running the entire gamut to unbridled destructiveness.”<sup>11</sup> Such burlesque opponents to the orderly cosmos of everyday life are not unknown in the twentieth century. Yohji Yamamoto (fig. 36) for instance, puts his models in such a manner on the catwalk. Steven Klein realizes an aesthetics of unseemliness in his pictures (fig. 37). Eugen Schrick, Guenter Brus, Oleg Kulik, and others resort to the body to realize such aesthetics. A less drastic but no less poignant example is a portrait by Richard Avedon showing Andy Warhol from 1969 (fig. 38). Foregrounding the blemish, it emphasizes what traditional aesthetic criteria strive to play down. Another example is an arrangement by Martin Margiela from 1994 (fig. 39) with its asymmetrical fall of folds, its unsutured layers of fabric and undefined hems. In all these cases what we get is a disclaimer to the ideals of clarity, harmony, and sublimity that have traditionally served as benchmarks for aesthetic orders until recently, a “negative aesthetic habitus,” which, in Wolfgang Iser’s view, acts “as a permanent attack on the conventions from which we take our bearings.”<sup>12</sup>

11 Klaus E. Müller, *Der Krüppel: Ethnologia passionis humanae* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996), 227. Translated from the German by MM.

12 Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976), III. Translation from the German by MM.

Disempowering key expectations relating to our everyday perception ranks foremost among the sociological functions of any type of liminal aesthetics. Dismissive and negative, this momentum is complemented by its twin, which is anticipatory, fanciful, and fictional in essence. It is evident in the projection of possibilities of perception and behavior that are considered downright *impracticable* from a sober, common-sense point of view. Such fanciful and fictional projections are comparatively easy to realize by resorting to a method of representation that is part of the stock in trade of street parades, party cultures, and religious festivals: the master becomes the slave, the slave the master; the old comport themselves as if they were still in the prime of their youth; women act as men, men as women; animals stand in for human beings, etc.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 40  
Marc Jacobs, *Spring/Summer Collection*, 2010.



Fig. 41  
Max Ernst, *La Vierge corrigeant l'enfant Jésus devant témoins: André Breton, Paul Eluard et le peintre*, 1926.

Examples for such inversions of the order of everyday life are not difficult to find elsewhere. Think of “underwear as outerwear,” a nineties fashion trend (fig. 40) that brought what was considered intimate and personal out into the public domain to be shared by all and did so in a breezy, matter-of-fact way rather than as an embarrassed concession. Even more drastic is Max Ernst’s

painting of Mary dishing out corporal punishment (fig. 41). Here our imagination is confronted with an idea that it would hardly be capable of conceiving on its own: Mary spanking Jesus. All of these examples reveal what different types of liminal aesthetics are good at from a sociological point of view: they enable or provoke notions and perceptions that are all but inconceivable as long as established perspectives are in charge. Liminal aesthetics—I am here drawing on literary hermeneutics and philosophical anthropology—arranges things and circumstances in an unorthodox or even heterodox way. By deliberately aiming to create dissonances, it appeals to the imagination to devise alternative dispensations. It challenges us to see and think in the subjunctive: “It might well be / have been like this.”<sup>14</sup>

What is most remarkable here from a sociological point of view is that such an appeal to the imagination is potentially directionless and unbiased as to the result. This becomes especially clear in the context of decidedly non-ironical representations, such as Thomas Hoepker’s 9/11 photograph (fig. 34). Not published before 2006, it has an unmistakable potential to irritate established interpretations and habits of perception about this event. It does not represent any confident point of view but the necessity to explore other perspectives.

Structurally, even if not in every individual case, liminal aesthetics tend to induce a state in which perception, as Walter Schulz (1985) has put it, “floats.”<sup>15</sup> While not putting forward unambiguous conclusions per se, it opens up a horizon of possibilities for perception and imagination. Instead of offering full-blown ideological positions, this kind of aesthetics holds out the possibility of transcending the relatively narrow perspectives that such positions entail.

Liminal aesthetics confront the order of everyday life with unusual perspectives or codes of behavior. This has a profound relevance for those societal institutions and venues where such forms of expression are developed, such as modern art museums. Arnold Gehlen drew attention to the role played by abstract art in this context as early as 1960. If a work of art such as Lucio Fontana’s *Concetto spaziale* (fig. 42) is interpreted, on the basis of its signature format or the

13 The most consistent disempowerment of everyday order patterns and perceptual expectations is achieved through the depersonalized representation of the human body. The figure of the dog is thoroughly typical here: it is to be found both in the context of the early disco movement (see Müller, “Body”) and in Oleg Kulik’s performance art. In both cases it calls into doubt the axiomatic assumption underpinning all social life that we are persons rightfully

entitled to our place in society.

14 Cf. Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens*, 291; Hans Robert Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1982), 31–44; Hans-Georg Soeffner, *Symbolische Formung: Eine Soziologie des Symbols und des Rituals* (Weilerswist: Velbrueck Wissenschaft, 2010), 209–24.

15 Walter Schulz, *Metaphysik des Schwebens: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Ästhetik* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1985).



Fig. 42  
Lucio Fontana, *Concetto spaziale*, 1964–65.



Fig. 43  
Clara Mosch, *Aktion Baumbesteigung Rügen*, 1979.

fact that it was originally hung on a wall, as a painting, this categorization is contradicted by the work's curious object character. Conversely, if it is understood as an object or a sculpture, such an adscription sits uneasily with its pictorial character. Against a backdrop of traditional categories such a work remains "ambiguous" in that "it is doubtful whether it is a work of art in the first place."<sup>16</sup>

In the same way such ostensibly unambiguous categories as "artist" and "work of art" are liable to be shattered. Andy Warhol for instance consistently repudiated the traditional ideal of the artist. All the traditional attributes associated with "genius," such as contemplative mastery, irrepressible expressivity, consummate rhetorical skill, etc., are consistently denied aesthetic recognition.<sup>17</sup> A similar treatment is meted out by action and performance art such as the performance of the artists' collective "Clara Mosch" in 1979 in the GDR (cf., fig. 43): Instead of discrete genres and audiences what you get is the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art, which fuses painting, dance, drama, music into one single entity and, at least in some cases, strives for a fusion of audience and spectacle. The institutions of art as we used to know them, with

their clearly defined roles, routines, genres and styles, are being stripped of their contours at least in aesthetic-situational contexts.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 44  
Corinne Day, *Vogue*, 1993.



Fig. 45  
Corinne Day, *The Face*, 1993.

The same institutional self-abrogation has been a guiding principle for important movements within fashion since the 1990s. Especially noteworthy here are the border transgressions of fashion photography that are frequently if not entirely aptly referred to in the literature as the products of New Realism. If we assume that photographs of the sort reproduced in figs. 44 and 45 are *fashion photographs*—an assumption encouraged by the fact that they have appeared in fashion magazines—their realism—unglamorous and at times destitute—destabilizes such a conjecture. Conversely, if you decide they are really *documentary photographs*, this diagnosis is made dubious by elements that are specific to fashion—poses, suitable captions, the magazine format, ads for consumer goods, etc. The glamorous habitus of fashion and the realistic habitus of documentation cancel each other out and create a lacuna: fashion, as the institution that we thought we know, loses its societally distinctive profile in such images. In close analogy to what we have noted in the discussion of relevant trends in art, such fashion contradicts its own societal definition.

16 Arnold Gehlen, *Zeit-Bilder: Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei* (Frankfurt/Main: Athenaeum, 1960), 212. Translation from the German by MM.

17 Michael R. Müller, *Stil und Individualität: Die Ästhetik gesellschaftlicher Selbstbehauptung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), 179–218.

18 Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, "Verkörperungskonkurrenzen: Aktionskunst in der DDR zwischen Revolte und 'Kristallisation,'" in *Performance und Bild: Performance als Bild*, ed. Christian Janecke (Berlin: Philo Fine Arts, 2004), 115–61.



As is made quite clear structurally by examples such as those named above, the aesthetic challenge to everyday order or its abrogation is by no means confined to club or street cultures or to older ritual forms. Instead, liminal aesthetics emerge from such ritual forms and become part of the medial and artistic baggage of societies. One question remains what are the implications for a society if significant use is made of such types of liminal aesthetics in the key spheres of aesthetic activity, art, and fashion?

## Society in the Subjunctive

Nietzsche and Durkheim, as has already been said, have taught us to view the dissolution of societal order not as a freak occurrence but as an event that is deliberately brought about and usually plays itself out in a regulated manner. Turner has shown that there is a wide range of historical and societal forms for liminality to take. It was and is practiced in rites of passage; it is to be found in the shape of modern escapist practices and “subcultures”; it is forcibly experienced by social outcasts while being deliberately sought as a permanent way of life by others. In the thesis I am proposing, liminality as described above is seeking another and relatively new societal form: the challenge it mounts against everyday order is in this case no longer restricted to certain times nor to the marginal lifestyles of tiny minorities. It is part of a reality that tends to be medially organized more and more so that relevant events, actions and mise-en-scènes only become socially visible through photographs, video recordings or blogs; or, the border transgressions in question rely exclusively on pictorial media for their realization.

As in ritual, the realization of border transgressions in pictorial media involves a distance from everyday life and a domesticating effect. At the same time—and this must not be overlooked—it is the ritual or the image that makes sure that border transgressions become available as models for social learning and for repetition. They do so by providing forms of realization in the fields of music, clothing, and media technology that are required for such cross-border traffic to become possible. Nor is that all: ritual and the pictorial media are each capable of replacing actual infringements of taboo, genuine frenzy, and real revolts by symbolic representations (in the form of action that is only hinted at or of mere images). This does not mean that they are thereby deprived of a facilitating effect. On the contrary: their fictional detachment is conducive to engendering what Max Scheler called a *Phantasieüberschuß* (surplus of fantasy).<sup>19</sup> The very fact that the countless practical, moral and ideological constraints of everyday life are sidelined creates possibilities of conceiving and enacting what would be beyond the reach of everyday common sense. The types of liminal aesthetics that have been at the center of this analysis are therefore neither a priori politically emancipative nor are they a mere medial

illusion. Their cultural significance consists in the thus enabled confrontation between society's routine life and those improbable possibilities of perception, conduct, and existence that would otherwise remain forever beyond the pale.

<sup>19</sup> Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), 30. First published in German in 1928.

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# Alternative Aesthetic Politics

# Alternative Aesthetic Politics An Introduction

Elke Gaugele and Monica Titton

As part of ecological, ethical, and postcolonial lifestyles, alternative aesthetic politics form generative strands within the globalization of fashion. This line of an aesthetic metapolitics in contemporary fashion has been historically formed by the anti-colonial independence movement as well as by the Western reform, youth, feminist, and ecological movement. Both movements were as much opposed to the Western regime of fashion as they had been epistemologically excluded from it. Terms such as “traditional folk costumes” or “non-Western styles,” but also classifications such as unfashionable or anti-fashion still bear witness to this temporally, socially, and spatially outsider fashion. Historically this was perpetuated by a colonially biased, modern fashion theory in which, for example, Georg Simmel’s understanding of fashion had at that point been limited to a “higher civilization.”<sup>1</sup> Based on a colonial-racist theorization, Simmel wrote about “savages,” “primitive races,” or “primitive conditions of life,” who would be afraid of “anything new” that they could “not understand” or “not assign to a familiar category.”<sup>2</sup>

Both movements—decolonization as well as Western dress reform—intriguingly already met in the style of Mahatma Gandhi. In London he had been advised by Anglo-Irish authors to doff his suit and to wear an imagined Indian reform costume for leading the masses to freedom and liberty.<sup>3</sup> For his style of decolonization, Gandhi chose the look of an ascetic fakir, wearing a dhoti handloom woven cloth around his hips, completed by a homespun handwoven khadi-shawl. Furthermore, he staged himself with his spinning wheel and along with it, handmade textiles as signifiers for decolonization and independence.

In the 1970s, Cultural Studies defined style—in contrast to fashion—as a politicized term for subcultural practices. This “resistance through style paradigm” has been closely linked to the everyday practices of subcultural white working class youth groups as well as to those of young black immigrants in Britain.<sup>4</sup> As a postcolonial strategy, style was considered as a semiology narrating the historical sequence of migration routes like that of Africa via Jamaica to Great Britain. Style also could be deciphered as “a phantom history of race relations since the War.”<sup>5</sup> Exemplified by the Rastafarian movement, the meaning of style had, for some, been symbolically infused with emancipatory postcolonial politics “refracting the system of black and white polarities, turning negritude

1 Georg Simmel, “Fashion” *International Quarterly*, no. 10 (1904): 130–55; [http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion\\_1904.pdf](http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion_1904.pdf).

2 Ibid.

3 See Ruby Sircar, “Dressing the Tiger: Decolonization and Style Racism in South-Asian Fashion,” in this volume, 174–85;

Dipeash Chakrabarty and Homi Bhabha, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 67–69.

4 Oliver Marchart, *Cultural Studies* (Konstanz: UTB, 2008), 100–30.

5 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 31.

into a positive sign, a loaded essence, a weapon at once deadly and divinely licensed.”<sup>6</sup> Within style politics the styles of the Black Power movement, of Black Cool and its celebrations of Negritude, were rated as the “darkest of rebellions,”<sup>7</sup> and with that valued with the highest subcultural capital. With good reason the concept of style had been criticized; for its blindness towards gender and commodification, for its subcultural romanticism based on Marxist ideas, and for its outlines of grass-roots resistance. Nevertheless, it has brought about an alternative aesthetic politics as a utopian strategy and an ideal, where style emancipation deconstructs the categories of race and class and creates idealistic spaces, where “anti-European values available to the dispossessed black could begin to congregate.”<sup>8</sup>

Hence, the 1970s also saw an expansion of the fashion industry in many emerging economies, calling into question Simmel’s notion of fashion as a mainly Western phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> The introduction of prêt-à-porter collections in the late 1950s and early 1960s challenged the “aristocratic hegemony” of French haute couture and introduced new fashion designers attuned to the political and social changes around them, which they translated into new aesthetic forms.<sup>10</sup> Designers like Yves Saint Laurent and Zandra Rhodes drew their inspirations from travels to Morocco, Afghanistan, and India, and resuscitated Orientalist<sup>11</sup> and “ethnic” fashion trends by proposing fashionable adaptations of kaftans, saris, and colonial uniforms (as in Yves Saint Laurent’s 1968 “Saharienne” collection).<sup>12</sup> At the same time, in 1969 the Indian designer Ritu Kumar started her career by designing contemporary fashion in recourse to vernacular-historic handicrafts.

However, this exoticization of places and costumes also went hand in hand with an inclusion of Asian and black fashion models, epitomized in the launch of a sari collection by Hermès in October 2011. Throughout the past two decades, the gradual globalization of fashion production was facilitated by “the neoliberal erosion of protectionism,” i.e., the cutback of economic charges that protected the Western clothing industries.<sup>13</sup>

As part of globalization processes after 1989, we also witness a veritable boom of new fashion media outlets so that fashion is discussed here as an “aesthetic metapolitics,” which Rancière conceptualizes primarily as a symptom of modernity. As a form of metapolitics, the aesthetic inextricably intertwines art and life so as to encompass specific forms of life—not only the laws and orders of the state pertaining to the domain of politics.<sup>14</sup> Today we witness an expansion of media images that is similar to the increase of fashion magazines in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> This expansion of visual reproductions and disseminations through media<sup>16</sup> historically created a new social and aesthetic sensorium through fashion, which is establishing itself once again. Once more, as an expansion of fashion’s aesthetic metapolitics, this development

can be framed with recourse to Rancière’s notion of art as an aesthetic regime “of perception, sensation and interpretation.”<sup>17</sup> In very much the same way as art is “constituted and transformed by welcoming images, objects and performances that seemed most opposed to the idea of fine art,”<sup>18</sup> fashion has also perpetually redefined and renewed itself since modernity, not only in terms of fads and trends, but also in terms of what is considered fashion—or anti-fashion, for that matter. In this context, fashion’s specificity consists in its capacity for creating identificatory spaces through its media. Fashion media permanently re-affirm fashion’s gendered, racialized regime of conduct. While the aesthetic regime of fashion guarantees the fortification of its power structures, in the context of globalization this configuration simultaneously opens and expands spaces for the production of alternative aesthetic politics in the form of countercultural and postcolonial representations of identities, bodies and styles. Today, fashion as an aesthetic politics orients itself toward global cultural participation. In contrast to nineteenth-century concerns about fixating national belonging, the imagined communities of contemporary fashion assemble the new middle classes and emerging elites in global contemporaneity.<sup>19</sup>

The four essays compiled in this chapter analyze these developments from different angles. Ruby Sircar’s exploration, “Dressing the Tiger—Decolonization and Style Racism in South-Asian Fashion,” traces the textile and fashion history of modern India for its colonizing, decolonizing, and neo-colonizing patterns. Fashion and textiles are laid out here as antithetic transcultural signifiers; for colonial admiration as well as for postcolonial independence, as ongoing eras of exoticization and as reiterating patterns of style-racisms. Martina Fineder’s study “‘Jute Not Plastic’: Alternative Product Culture between

6 Ibid., 37.

7 Ibid., 31.

8 Ibid., 32.

9 Patrik Aspers and Frédéric Godart, “Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 39 (2013).

10 Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut, “Le Couturier et sa griffe: Contribution à une théorie de la magie,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 1 (1975): 7–36.

11 A style which had already been en vogue in the 1910s thanks to Paul Poiret, see Nancy Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

12 Frédéric Monneyron, *La frivolité essentielle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 59.

13 Adam Briggs, “Capitalism’s Favourite

Child’ – The Production of Fashion,” in *Fashion Cultures Revisited*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2013: 194).

14 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 96.

15 Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies and Fashion* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 47.

16 Christopher Breward, *Fashion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 115.

17 Jacques Rancière, *Aesthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. Zakir Paul (London: Verso 2013), X.

18 Ibid.

19 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

Environmental Crisis and Fashion” investigates how the alternative product culture in the 1970s was critically dependent on new, adequate media outlets to disseminate its environmentalist messages from the perspective of Material Culture Studies.

Elke Gaugele’s research, “On the Ethical Turn in Fashion—Policies of Governance and the Fashioning of Social Critique” inspects the commodification of trust and honesty after the global financial crisis in 2007–08 as well as its modes of Othering. Also, the United Nations’ shift from blue helmets to ethical fashion is investigated here as an eager embracement of the luxury industry.

Birgit Haehnel’s chapter “Performing Whiteness: Revisioning White Textiles in Visual Culture” shows how performances of *whiteness* are produced and represented in fashion media imagery as well as through art images and their disseminations from a Visual Culture Studies approach.

Taken together, they examine the study of fashion as an aesthetic metapolitics within contemporary globalizing processes from the following approaches: Postcolonial and Critical Whiteness Studies, Material and Visual Culture Studies, and Studies on the Critique of Capitalism.

## Fashion, Postcolonial, and Critical Whiteness Studies

For Fashion Studies this chapter proposes postcolonial as well as critical whiteness studies as a perspective; for the analysis of visual culture as well for investigations on the global apparel industry. Fashion critique has blamed the lack of racial diversity in the visual representation of fashion for a long time.<sup>20</sup> In the forefront of 2013 fashion shows was the launch of a Diversity Coalition of black American and British models, the campaign of which blasts the business for its whitewashed model casts; furthermore, in five out of nine seasons, Asian models have even *less* representation than black models.<sup>21</sup> Critical Whiteness Studies also urges the critical analysis of performing whiteness, including the gaze, as an ethnic performance and political attribution that constitutes a racist politics in fashion.<sup>22</sup> This approach could be also transferred to strategies and modes of othering within contemporary green lifestyles when, for example, faces of black fashion models are painted with green make-up in order to express ecological consciousness. Alternative fashions are inspected critically in this chapter in two respects: for their participations in neocolonial developments and for their own creation of style racisms. Referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who states that the idea of a Third World itself is part of a neocolonial process, neocolonialism is basically defined by economics rather than by territory or culture.<sup>23</sup> Spivak’s postcolonial

critique of contemporary politics in human rights cultures reveals that underlying the contemporary ethical regime of fashion are political governance and politics of class.<sup>24</sup> A growing luxury market for Western as well as for African, Asian, and subcontinental elites is built up on this neocolonial economy, presented and marketed as “alternative aesthetic politics.” Therefore, the Easternization, Orientalization, and currently also Africanization of fashion historically expose once more the idealized notions and spaces of nature and culture that promise to find what has been seemingly lost in the Western industrialized world.<sup>25</sup>

Inspecting contemporary processes of self-ethnification of fashion designs, i.e., the so-called Indian style, brings to light exotic parameters that are closely linked to what colonialism defined as Hinduism in the late nineteenth century. Concurrently, the inspection also reiterates style racisms that quote anti-Western colonial sentiments.<sup>26</sup>

## Materiality and Material Culture

Materiality is one of the crucial components that formed an alternative aesthetic politics from a postcolonial as well as from an environmental and ethical perspective. Daniel Miller states that materiality is one of the driving forces “behind humanity’s attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be.”<sup>27</sup> For all enquiries in this chapter, the materiality of cloth and the historically emblematic reiterating reprocessing of specific textile materials are crucial for the creation of a sensorium of alternative politics.

Focusing on postcolonial processes, textile materials and the materiality of the handmade had played an important role within India’s way to independence.

20 Minh-Ha T. Pham, “Why Fashion Should Stop Trying to Be Diverse,” *Threadbare*, September 30, 2013; <http://iheartthreadbare.wordpress.com/2013/09/30/just-stop/>; Bethann Haridson, Naomi Campell, and Chanel Imam, Diversity Coalition (blog); <http://balancediversity.com>.

21 Ibid.

22 Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness: Postmodern Re/Constructions in the Cinema* (New York: State University Press, 2003).

23 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge: an interview with Robert J.C. Young,” in *Neocolonialism, Oxford Literary Review* 13

(1991): 220–51; online at <http://www.robertjcyoung.com> (2007), 44.

24 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 523–48.

25 Jackie Stacey, “The Global Within: Consuming Nature, Embodying Health,” in *Global Nature, Global Culture*, ed. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey (London: Sage, 2000), 112.

26 See Ruby Sircar, “Dressing the Tiger: Decolonization and Style Racism in South-Asian Fashion,” in this volume, 174–85.

27 Daniel Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 2.

As a political act of resistance and a strategy of decolonization, this also meant getting rid of the reliance on British hemp and textile production. At that time the term khadi, which entails all kinds of hand-spun and hand-woven textiles, became a signifier for resistance. Furthermore, this fabric took in the struggles of the working class, which were connected through the fight over cotton and hemp products.<sup>28</sup>

Developing an alternative political sensibility, the post-1968 Western environmental movement has shaped the question of materiality as well as the critique of materialism. Once again, specific materials such as jute or hemp, or handcraft techniques, turned into textile signifiers for alternative commodity cultures as they symbolically united anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and ecological critique.<sup>29</sup> While eco-dresses as well as eco-textiles of that time were still considered as unfashionable from a mainstream perspective, today's ethical and eco-fashions stand at the center of a globalized commodity culture. Therefore, a new production of smooth, soft, and light, sustainable materials arose. Within this next generation of environmental lifestyles we detect a new material culture of fashion and with it an alternative aesthetic politics, with its claims of transparency: about materials, manufacturing details, working conditions, price calculations, and even about the carbon footprint of the cloth. At present, we observe interesting analogies between the slow food movement and sustainable fashion and between vegan eating and dressing as modes of consumption. In that sense the materiality of alternative and postcolonial lifestyles on all layers constitutes a sensorium for ethical, political, and also religious cultural belongings.

## Globalization, Capitalism, and Critical Social Theory

The contributions collected in this chapter tackle the effects of globalization and network capitalism on fashion both as an industry and as an aesthetic metapolitics. Global governance tools such as multilateral trade agreements and environmental regulations contributed to an intensification of global hierarchies and worsening inequalities of labor conditions. Thereby, globalization unfolded a negative dialectic and with ethical fashion it provided grounds for a revitalization of early capitalist and colonial humanitarian aids and class-specific practices.<sup>30</sup> The discourse revolving around the production and consumption of eco/sustainable fashion thereby also assumes religious undertones: from redemption to purity and righteousness, it is reminiscent of Weber's characterization of the Protestant ethic of capitalism.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, with its mantras and shibboleths, eco-fashion evokes a generic, holistic understanding of ecology and humanity, as well as fragments of a diluted, globalized notion of Buddhist and Hindu teachings. The consumption of ethically, morally, and ecologically "correct" garments creates a ranking between

"good" and "bad" consumers that echoes the inequalities responsible for the very necessity of "eco-fashion." Ethical fashion with its emphasis on class-specific values such as honesty reflects the dialectic amalgamation between social critique and capitalism.<sup>32</sup>

With recourse to Weber's classic analysis of the Protestant ethic of capitalism, Boltanski and Chiapello argue that throughout its history, capitalism as an economic system has had to go beyond mere economic goals (i.e., the accumulation of wealth) and incorporate the very arguments of its opponents in order to legitimize its existence.<sup>33</sup> As in the past, Boltanski and Chiapello argue, capitalism has been able to incorporate the economic critique and to thereby consolidate its economic structures and ethical and moral system of values.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Werner Sombart declared that "fashion is the favored child of capitalism."<sup>34</sup> Like many other historical accounts of nineteenth-century fashion, his clear-cut verdict was inadequate. As we discussed earlier, alternative aesthetic politics could emerge only thanks to the mobilization of the critique of capitalism. Critique against the economic and cultural agenda of globalized capitalism, but also the outcries against the devastation of the environment and the protests against colonial imperialism were vital stimuli for the emergence of the aesthetic metapolitics of fashion. Fashion as a social and aesthetic phenomenon is entrenched in a heterogeneous network of global economic interdependencies, political and cultural processes and strategies of aesthetic signification. In the face of its contemporary kaleidoscopic configuration, fashion must be theorized as bearing spaces of global contemporaneity, as a force that aggregates new middle classes and emerging elites on a global scale and thus creates symbolic spaces shaping new subjectivities and imagined communities.

28 Ruby Sircar, "Dressing the Tiger: Decolonization and Style Racism in South-Asian Fashion," in this volume, 174–85.

29 See Martina Fineder, "Jute Not Plastic': Alternative Product Culture between Environmental Crisis and Fashion," in this volume 186–203.

30 Patrik Aspers, "A Note on Global Capitalism," in *Global Capitalism: The Road Ahead*, ed. Bharti Thakar (Hyderabad: Icfai University Press, 2008), 13.

31 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons

(London: Routledge, 2001).

32 See Elke Gaugele, "On the Ethical Turn in Fashion: Policies of Governance and the Fashioning of Social Critique," in this volume 204–27.

33 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2005).

34 Werner Sombart, *Economic Life in the Modern Age*, ed. Nico Stehr and Rainer Grundmann (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 225.

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# Dressing the Tiger Decolonization and Style Racism in South-Asian Fashion

Ruby Sircar

Since early modernity, beginning with the marriage of steam and cotton in 1750 and hence industrialization, there was a tightly knitted exchange of materials between the British dominion India and Europe. This exchange, which came along with an intensive creolization of textile styles and formal parameters, can be documented on all levels of custom and trading. When counting the years backward from the early 2000s we may follow the glittering thread of exotic saris through the centuries: in the 2000s Selfridges promoted the so-called Bollywood style, in the aftermath of the New Asian Cool era and as an advertisement of the London-based musical sensation "Bombay Dreams" (2002) by Andrew Lloyd-Webber.<sup>1</sup> Further down the years: Manish Arora's Phish Label cooperation with brands such as Reebok and Swarovski (also early 2000s), which tried to hang on to the defined Western love for exotic sparkles and a subcontinental, imagined need for European/Western high-end/street brands; the Beatles and international jet set of the 1960s, who promoted the Nehru jacket which was picked up repeatedly by Italian fashion producers such as Etro;<sup>2</sup> the 1930s and 1920s extravaganza for an Indian as well as European high-end consumer such as Lady Mountbatten (the Vicereine of India) who had Cartier produce her celebrated Tutti Frutti set or the khaki-drenched uniforms of colonial power soldiers (from Canada, to Africa via India and onto Oceania).

How may these epochs and eras of exotification be differentiated? And what exactly is happening today? How has the exchange between India and the Western fashion market changed over the last 20 years? What is the hidden political realism behind a change of stylistics and formal languages in textiles and fashion?

In 1992 the Indian central government decided to end the socialist market economy and replace the former through a more liberal enterprise system, thus supporting export schemes and development plans. For the fashion industry this was a two-edged possibility: on the one hand non-regional high-end and high-street brands gained access (especially after 1996) to the Indian metropolitan consumer and the fashion industry. For example: Hermès designed a sari line between 2008 and 2012, Louis Vuitton campaigned the opening of their Mumbai flagship store in Mumbai's Taj Land's End by launching their ninth city travel guide (2003) or Swarovski's hitting South-Asian soil in 2001 in Mumbai. But also Indian designers began producing for a larger global audience. Thus styles, developed by designers such as Manish Arora or Ritu Kumar, became almost undistinguishable between those developed by

<sup>1</sup> See Valerie Rigsbee, "Bombay Dreams," September 26, 2013, <http://www.broadwaymusicalhome.com/shows/bombay.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> See Sothebys, "The Mountbatten Jewels," *The Royal Magazine*, June 25, 2008, <http://www.royal-magazin.de/england/mountbatten-jewels.htm>.

such brands as Etro. Nevertheless, the consumers and their prime interest for consuming certain brands differ widely. Contemporary Indian designers are still mainly consumed within a growing Asian and Arab market, mirroring the growing self-confidence of consumers and markets—which no longer require European or Western brands and labels to mark their self-esteem and aplomb, even indulging in style racisms clearly quoting anti-Western/European/colonial sentiments. This development clearly states the following questions: who is being represented and clothed? What happens to these styles and its carrier fashion when reaching a non-Indian consumer circle? To whom do brands and designers such as Etro, Burberry, and Hermes—on the one hand—and Arora, Kumar, and We the PPL as contemporary and politically left-winged neo-nation labels—on the other hand—cater? The latter quoting the Indian freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose, the Tiger of Bengal: “Give me blood and I will give you freedom!” (Indian Rally in Burma, 1944). Gandhi is dead.

## History: The Nineteenth Century, Salons, and the Labor Movement

When in the 1750s the first wave of industrialization hit Great Britain and rolled over Europe a change of perception of material and its exchange with the Empire’s colonies took place, materiality was redefined and stylistics were either pidginized, imagined or creolized. This can be easily sketched through developments such as Europe’s fascination with Far Eastern styles,<sup>3</sup> or the re-imagination of a uniquely Pan-African style of wax printing, all produced on the British isles; as well as copying the imperial Mughal peacock designs: renaming it after a Scottish village and selling the industrially and machine-made paisley scarves to an ever-growing British population, all yearning for colonial glory and bought self-esteem.

The British Raj’s government, as well as the East India Company, followed two key notions at the beginning of their colonial textile style and parameter exchange. Firstly, form follows function: British natives/original citizens must be allowed to adopt local styles as per their usefulness to survive tropic climates and diseases. Inventions such as pith helmets, jodhpurs, khakis, and pajamas, etc., found their way from native/local clothing into fancy military gears and later into the Western everyday household. Secondly, the Empire sought for a solution of marketing the found colonial diversity within the region of origin as well as on the British Isles, other colonies and the Western world at large. As well as offering cheaper ways of producing certain textiles such as chintz and silk, styles such as paisleys and ikats, patolas, madras checks, etc., were reproduced. They first found the possibility for the latter peacock/paisley weave in crafty tartan weaves from Scotland. Later, machine crafted textiles from Southern France and Vienna replaced British craftsmanship.<sup>4</sup>

For both key notions they found historically well-documented answers and possibilities. The textile industry was, next to the heroine enterprise, the second and important pillar to the British Empire in India. Thus on the one hand they crossed and annexed successfully manufacturing structures on the subcontinent, creating a larger need for drug supply. Further, by using raw fabric material to manufacture cheap textiles for the large Indian market, they also caused a breakdown in the Indian homespun tradition. On the other hand they found profitable markets in Europe and defined exotic styles, arts, and crafts anew. Apart from interior textiles (from rugs to cushion covers and wall hangings) Indian style and fashion, subcontinental fabrics became bon ton for the European masses after 1857/8. The nostalgic, yet—unlike the African—not barbaric, thus wearable innate styles influenced European fashions from then on highly. Why not barbaric? India and her princely houses, her wealth and the impressive Mughal culture could not be neglected as non-culture but had to be at least respected from the crafty side as cultural, thus British denizen-worthy products. Especially clothing styles and textile fashions from within the realms of the northern and northwestern territories, the Mughal era and the splendid courts of the Indian Princes have received such a nostalgic yearning.<sup>5</sup>

It is, furthermore, interesting that from the very beginning, the products were not merely designed for European/Western customers. Also subcontinental customers were considered, as well as how to use them for promoting industrialization in Europe and its enterprises. We may trace this development on a large political and regional development scale in 1821 with the introduction of a uniform sari style as well as a Puritan-designed ideal sari blouse, which is still valid as a folk costume accessory today.<sup>6</sup> Further racist ideals can be seen in court dress and white beauty definers from the 1840s onwards, as well as developing an Indian men’s costume by simplifying the Mughal court dress and Farsi bourgeois costume.<sup>7</sup> One must also not forget John Forbes Watson’s (1827–1892) work for the India House (now the Victoria and Albert Museum in London) when cataloguing and categorizing Indian textile wealth. His idea for “portable industrial museums” led to the publication of *The Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India* in 1866, eighteen volumes of mounted and

- 3 See Kashmiri/Pashmina shawl fashion, Japonism, Orientalism, and Chinese silks and lacquer ware.
- 4 Angela Völker, “Die Produktion von ‘Wiener Shawls’ in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Documenta textilia, Festschrift für Sigrid Müller-Christensen* (Munich: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 1981), 409–22.
- 5 Anna Jackson, Amin Jaffer, and Christiane

- Lang, *Maharaja: Die Pracht der indischen Fürstenthöfe; Katalogbuch zur Ausstellung in München, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung* (Munich: Hirmer, 2010), 25.
- 6 Judith Benhamou-Huet, *21st-Century Embroidery in India: In Their Hands* (London: Prestel, 2009), II–IV.
- 7 William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Tale of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857* (New Delhi: Vintage, 2007), 87–89.

classified samples of Indian textiles containing seven hundred examples in all. The samples were mostly taken from Indian textiles shown at the 1855 Paris International Exhibition. Thirteen sets of the books were distributed in Britain, mostly to textile manufacturing districts; seven went to India.<sup>8</sup> This allowed local British producers to copy and to market possible and imagined exotic/Indian styles. The exercise in colonial marketing is taken further when entering the South-Asian princely courts—from Jaipur all the way south to Mysore. Now a new market of promises opened its doors to European producers and haute couture. Cartier, for example, built its wealth on princely jewels and wealth. They played and used or generated the interest of the princely houses in European contemporary fashion by marking them as the peers or carrying vessels of modernity. But also artists such as Man Ray, Constantin Brancusi and architects such as Le Corbusier profited from the Europeanization of the court system in the late nineteenth century. The wish to join an international aristocratic jet set, thus not being compared with other objects of the Raj, drove the princely court to support Art Deco artists, modern architecture, and the fashion industry. Early twentieth-century fashion and women magazines such as *Vogue* were funded by the Princes of Mysore and Hyderabad to portray and show case the beauty and wealth of their princesses (see: *Vogue*, Spring 1924) flouncing off saris and jewelry to the envy of the vicereine and consorts.<sup>9</sup> While Cartier had earlier catered to the style and taste of the princes, imitating Mughal Renaissance patterns, when creating head sets and Polo watches, Mountbatten's diadem—cum—necklace is full of racism towards the Empire's objects—a show of glee to earlier financial supporters who had bought their piece of Western polish through their diamonds and heirlooms.

Apart from the world of the Indian and European courts and the growing international jet set, the 1920s also witnessed another movement: the urge for religious and political independence was expressed through textile too. The style, which was mainly supported by congressional politicians in Gandhi's vicinity, became known as *khadi*. The term *khadi* covers all kinds of hand-spun and hand-woven textile products. The cloth can be found traditionally all over South Asia, from Afghanistan to Bangladesh and Burma. Nevertheless, the movement was shaped ideologically by Gandhi who tried to free the subcontinent from the reliance on British hemp and textile production. The goal was to disrupt the transport from India to the Isles of cotton, which was made into clothing and then sold again to Indians. Thus, *khadi* became the cloth of independence and the *Swadeshi* movement, because Gandhi saw it as a possibility for rural self-employment and rural self-reliance. He himself always donned, on returning from his studies and work in Europe and South Africa, a *dhoti*: a hand-loom cloth wrung around his hip and a shawl made from *khadi* which he had spun on his *charkha* (spinning wheel). The anti-colonial implementation of this mythical and simple cloth still lingers on today, when contemporary designers such as Basant Rai, Ritu Kumar or Rohit Bal, We the PPL

use it in their designs. An interesting side note to the use of *khadi* is that Indian languages (spoken or textile) are often used to mark anti-imperial movements in English-speaking science fiction (films, literature) such as the Jedi in the latest Star War episodes, who fight the Dark Side. The use of the cloth as something indigenous to the whole subcontinent is, just as imagined, a mere political demonstration and was applied by Gandhi to his theories.

Why? If we follow the documentation of Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Habitations of Modernity*, we will discover that Gandhi was not wearing indigenous costumes.<sup>10</sup> He was advised by Anglo-Irish authors based in London's Bloomsbury to acquire the look of an ascetic *fakir* who celibately leads the masses to freedom and liberty.<sup>11</sup> Donning *khadi* styles can be also seen with other internationally acclaimed Indian leaders of the time, such as Swami Vivekananda, who started his journey to the Parliament of the World Religions in Chicago in 1893 dressed in Western costume. On his way through New York he hit ground with various feminist salons, which advised him to rather wear an imagined Indian reform costume than to don Western evening garb during his *Vedanta* and *Yoga* lessons, which he made popular in the West. Also the Nobel Prize winning poet Rabindranath Tagore, who came from a well-educated Bengali background just as Vivekananda, was advised to represent himself as a modern Indian teacher and educator. He was advised in 1919 by his theosophic friend Annie Besant, who herself wore a sari to show her native solidarity.

The costumes and styles described so far can be traced to the present. The question, however, is: Which racisms are repeated from the mid-twentieth century to today and how are they reproduced or are there hidden emancipatory traces? Apart from the resistance woven into *khadi* cloth there is of course the inlaid history of the working class, connected through the fight over cotton and hemp products. Gandhi's visits to the mills in Manchester and Lancashire were poignant moments; in 1931 the hand-loom war was on. Gandhi showed his sympathy and empathy with the British and migrant workers at these mills and their bitter and desperate everyday situation. The workers in Manchester, Lancashire, and further down in London also showed their understanding and empathy with the Indian cause as both groups perceived

8 See Victoria and Albert Museum, "Indian Textiles and Empire: John Forbes Watson. Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India," <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/indian-textiles-and-empire-john-forbes-watson>.

9 Nevertheless, the latter's Tutti Frutti diadem and necklace is, the best documented example of the exchange between fashions and an understanding of how to present,

according to modernity, regional possibilities. Cartier offered to use Indian gems, such as rubies, sapphires, and emeralds to carve exotic fruits (out of which not all are native to South-Asian soil and flora).

10 Dipesh Chakrabarty and Homi Bhabha, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 67–69.

11 Ibid.

themselves to be slaves to merchandise and subaltern states. Not only were Indian manufacturers and consumers boycotting British textiles, but also Indian imported goods to the Isles were restricted by the British government. The media suddenly had to document the unexpected. Gandhi was welcomed by the workers who understood his and the Indian cause visibly and audibly, thus bridging from working class to working class. One must not forget that the majority of British mill workers at that time perceived themselves as sub-alterns and colonial objects, as quite a large number hailed either from Ireland, Southern, and Eastern Europe or even South Asia. The workers applauded the prime issue of Gandhi's visit—the round table conference in London requiring the preservation of indigenous textile manufacturing. Even though the Congress Party had of course larger and more universal goals (such as freedom), Gandhi picked this as his personal priority.

### The Last Fifty Years: From Hippies and Dropouts to the Global Cat Walks and All the Way Back

"India will never be out of fashion!" This quote from India's leading fashion designer Ritu Kumar<sup>12</sup> applies to the exoticization of India across cultural platforms. Shockingly, the racism born of Empire, and knit into its textiles, has only increased in the last fifty or so years by finally hitting the mass market. This movement is easily decipherable when following the industrialization of production and the ways cheap material maneuvered colonialism into neo liberal enterprises such as neo-colonialism and globalization. By looking again at the given examples of haute couture, Gandhi, Vivekananda, Tagore, and Annie Besant one can observe the development as follows:

1. Haute couture becomes high street by being marketed through the media. A vivid example is Fritz Lang's *Indian Epic* (*The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb*, both 1959) in which the Indian prince and his court all don so-called towel or widow turbans, a kind of turban which was also worn by Vivekananda, undistinguishable of all marks of cast and regionalism as is otherwise decipherable with this piece of costume. Vivekananda who was also the original model for Peter Seller's *The Party* (1968) and Jimi Mistry's adoption in *The Guru* (2002).
2. The so-called Indian style and exotic parameters are closely linked to what colonialism defined as Hinduism in the late nineteenth century. These religious/spiritual concepts are reflected through a certain fashion. From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, this fashion is supported by styles worn by the Beatles, when the first generation of twentieth-century dropouts and anti-intellectual Western elites hit the subcontinent. Using the bought clothes, they designed their own understanding of Indian

spirituality; Oshos, Prabhupadas, and other religious leaders pop up. It is a popular repetition of the fashion earlier promoted by linguists and authors such as Hermann Hesse, Vivekananda, and the theosophs of the earlier half of the century. While Besant supported Krishnamurti and Tagore, the new (self-fashioned) gurus no longer aimed to link themselves with the Indian region and culture; they rather chose design as a certain perspective for Western audiences. Their dresses/clothes do not mirror a certain caste or their inherited social and regional standing but instead Western-imagined Indian outfits. Their textile styles and mantras became icons for popular personae such as George Harrison, Boy George, and Stevie Wonder (see the Hare Krishna mantra). Nevertheless, in the 1990s another sense of self-fashioning starts to intervene with the orientation towards the West. Gurus and leaders such as Sri Sri Ravishankar begin to wrap local lifestyle and the teachings of Osho together, addressing thus the newly found Indian urge to create a postcolonial identity, which is superior and free of former Western influences. This movement also strongly supports nationalistic undercurrents in the Indian global/international society.

3. Concentrating on the world of luxury and imagining a glorious (colonial and princely) past, as well as embedding into this a political consciousness and emancipatory act is what the Italian fashion industry promotes from the 1960s onwards. On the one hand, it comes as an aftermath to such stylistic iconic films as Fritz Lang's *Indian Epic*; on the other it is a clear and misogynist bow towards a specific political class within the Indian freedom movement: the Nehru jacket—a reflection of the 1960s to 1970s—places its wearer well between the image of a gentleman and connoisseur of the Beat generation, knowing about Nehru's socialist leanings, as well as his playboy image in the chit-chattering yellow press. Thus, the fashion industry picks up on independent India with a flair of wonder and romanticism.
4. The first Indian label is established—not a government-owned enterprise such as Cottage Industries Emporium, which quotes the *khadi* movement and claims to produce fair fashion, according to a Gandhian ethos. Fabindia is a community-owned enterprise (at least on the production side of the enterprise). But, unlike a direct link to Gandhi and thus bridging into an emancipatory consciousness with a national flavor, like so many other designers and brands in the last third of the twentieth century, Fabindia rather links to urban myths at large and caters to an urban Indian upper class only (at least till the end of the 1990s). Being founded by the grandson of Mark Twain, Fabindia was fast in understanding the necessity

<sup>12</sup> See Sreya Basu, "India Never Goes Out of Fashion," <http://getahead.rediff.com/>

[report/2009/sep/10/glamour-ritu-kumar-at-kolkata-fashion-week.htm](http://report/2009/sep/10/glamour-ritu-kumar-at-kolkata-fashion-week.htm).

to cater and create a new Indian style that was not bound to colonialism and the fight for independence, but brought in a new understanding of the customer's role in a globalized world. The fashions also reflect a market niche which gapped between those wearing the 1960s Nehru jackets and those admiring Western dropouts. With the change of Indian Central government export policies in the mid-1990s Fabindia also began expanding to Europe and North America. Here, the company not only catered to the needs of the international Indian elite, but also to customers which would consume high end exotic fashion such as Burberry's eclectic styles, Etro, Ermengildo Zegna, but also more sober and minimalist schools such as the Antwerp Six, etc., thus also reflecting or quoting the costumes developed in the early 1820s by the colonial powers and local elites to manifest certain styles. The often quoted Nehru jacket with its mandarin collar is after all the modernist outlook on a Farsi/Punjabi *achkan* or Mughal court *sherwani*. Further, the clothing line and interests developed and broadcasted by Fabindia for a larger audience were picked up by designers such as Rohit Bal to design sherwanis for the cabin crew of British Airways on the route to South Asia.

Now, what is the difference between today and the 1940s? The biggest difference is not the change in an outside perception, which still plays off the image of India as the destination of dreams, but the change in self-perception. India is no longer a country as designed by the outside, or as described by such movements as *Jute statt Plastik* (which propagated in Germany in the late 1970s and 1980s reusable jute bags instead of plastic shopping bags that not only helped to prevent waste in Europe but that also supported local farmers in Bangladesh and elsewhere); or bourgeois goodwill movements which fought a fight against neo-imperial and neo-colonial capitalist (textile) enterprises but very often used the same trampled marketing paths, with different product stylistics.

### Feeding Back—What are Today's Expectations?

Looking at the development of these different epochs, the question arises: How do they differ? And: What is happening today? How did the exchange of textile and fashion material change in the last twenty years? What is the agenda of political realism, what is the principle and language of styles hidden and how are they used?

These questions can be followed up on all levels of consumed and marketed fashion/textile products, if we take a closer look at Manish Arora's cooperation with Reebok, Swatch, Nespresso, and Swarovski through the brand Phish,<sup>13</sup> before becoming creative director of Paco Rabanne in 2011. Who to

the glee of the Indian public conquered the heights of former colonial powers, supposedly designing and formulating their style and fashion. Running a global brand against neo-colonial waves of enterprise such as the sari collection by Hermès,<sup>14</sup> which copy the exact marketing strategies applied by Cartier and others a century earlier on the Indian princes. Indeed, the styles used by Arora as well as Western/global labels to lure consumers are flippantly alike; only the market strength differs. While Indian designers cater to a larger international Asian and Oriental market and not yet global masses, they do reach a certain string of confused twenty-first century nationality and regionality that builds on the opposition and survival of former colonial times. Thus very often, even stylistic racisms go unnoticed by the Western politically aware eyes.

Nevertheless, how is this development supported by governmental regional politics? In 1992, the Indian central government decided that they would greet capitalism and related market formats and end socialist market principles on the subcontinent, furthering production conditions in textiles and fashion that are closely interlinked with those pre-Independence situations which were fought for by Gandhi and his principles. Rural manufacturing became even more marginalized and had to escape to such niches as described by Suraiya Hasan Bose for NorBlack NorWhite in 2011: new high-end fashion labels pick up on them temporarily, and government run emporia still support hand loom, but high street consumers are unwilling to invest in everyday hand loom products.<sup>15</sup> This very much brings us back to Gandhi's dilemma in the 1920s and 1930s. But, as the Indian metropolitan areas are growing and with them an eco-friendly and nationalist bourgeoisie, bohemian hand-loomed items as a carrying material for certain ideas of regional self-empowerment, even though only imagined, survives, having lost the *swadeshi's* longing for anti-force, at least on a theoretical level.

13 See Manish Arora, "About Manish," <http://www.manisharora.com/index.php/about-manish>.

14 See Shoba Narayan, "Saris from Paris," <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/6547b042-2a76-11e1-9bdb-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2j>

QU2bEev.

15 See NorBlackNorWhite, "NBNW does Hyderabad," February 24, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOr48MqtjGg#t=41>.

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# “Jute Not Plastic” Alternative Product Culture between Environmental Crisis and Fashion

Martina Fineder

Time marched on, IKEA and wooden furniture also entered on their triumphal march; the first man on the Moon had long been a legend, and ecological problems increasingly dominated daily events. Wood, even when coated with a layer of plastic and impregnated with highly toxic media, was ‘in’, plastic was ‘out.’<sup>1</sup>

—Günter Beltzig, “My Sixties”

These words by the furniture designer Günter Beltzig put in a nutshell a central complex of problems facing the Western design and consumer culture of the 1970s, the reciprocal effects arising from environmental crisis in combination with the quest for an environmentally friendly product culture. The main impulse behind this development is generally held to be a reawakened love of “nature.” Starting out from a new systemic understanding of the relationship between human being and nature, the blue planet was declared to be “Spaceship Earth” (as coined by Richard Buckminster Fuller) and subsequently conceived as a “boat,” which threatened to sink with everyone in it. This anxiety about the “repercussions on the life and ‘environmental’ conditions of human beings themselves ensuing from their social utilization of nature” (as described by Karl-Werner Brand),<sup>2</sup> was projected as a result in consumerist-critical actions such as “Jute Not Plastic,” and also in random, market-conformist innovations such as the IKEA principle. In this charged field between the polarities of counter-culture and mainstream, design and anti-design, consumer society and its critique, the following essay pursues the question of how the new social value of nature is negotiated through making and consuming things. Following design historian Judy Attfield, this essay attempts to reach a dialectical understanding of design and consumption as a process through which “individuals and groups construct their identity, experience modernity and deal with social change.”<sup>3</sup> According to anthropologist Daniel Miller, this article sees “the stance to materiality” as “the driving force behind humanity’s attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be.”<sup>4</sup>

1 Günter Beltzig, “My Sixties,” <http://www.beltzig-playdesign.de>.

2 Karl-Werner Brand, “Die Umweltbewegung (inklusive Tierschutz),” in *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2008), 220. See also Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

3 Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (London: Berg, 2000). Attfield’s approach is shaped by the work of British anthropologist Daniel

Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, 1989, where the focus does not lie—as in Marxist design critique of the 1970s—on the difference between “good” and “bad” design and consumption but on processes of objectification. See also Daniel Miller, *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), and his most recent book *Consumption and its Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

4 Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Materiality*, 2.

## The New Environmental Awareness

The emergence of the environmental crisis in the mass media during the 1970s made an intense impact on public awareness. A number of alarmist publications contributed to this and warned about the ephemerality of the planet from diverse perspectives. In 1971 *Schon möglich, dass die Erde sterben muß* (The Earth may have to die), and *Müllplanet Erde* (Earth planet of trash) were published and in 1972 *Die totale Autogesellschaft* (The total automobile society) and in 1975 *Ein Planet wird geplündert* (A planet is being plundered) written by the influential politician Herbert Gruhl.<sup>5</sup> But a real shock wave broke out after the report of the Club of Rome, published in 1972, on the *Limits to Growth* in the Western industrial nations. Radio, television, and the major German newspapers helped to spread an atmosphere of crisis. The report was borne out by the oil crisis of 1973, which drew diverse energy-saving programs and car-free Sundays in its wake, and it provided for severe cracks in the model of progress and the related expectations of prosperity that were anchored firmly in the mindset of West German citizens.<sup>6</sup> The new understanding of global resource contexts and the fear of the planet's ephemerality intensified the awareness aroused by reports of human and ecological catastrophes in countries of the so-called Third World.

From the political perspective, a paradigmatic change took place after the failure of 1968: the focus of the social movement in the fight against exploitation of the working classes by capitalism shifted rapidly towards the protest against



Fig. 46  
A shopping bag made of jute bearing the words "Jute Not Plastic" and the sub-line "Handmade in Bangladesh," ca. 1978.

the exploitation of nature.<sup>7</sup> Originating in various milieus in the well-educated middle class, the new environmental awareness became the determining factor in developing an alternative political sensibility that was strongly influenced by questions of lifestyle. The jute bag came to be the most pertinent symbol of the alternative lifestyle.

The brown shopping bag with the slogan "Jute Not Plastic" challenges shoppers to replace artificial substances with natural materials and is a declaration of solidarity with people who have to suffer under unfair trade conditions. Jute had always been the main vector in debates on issues of cultural rights and ownership, hence, during the 1970s with its constant supply of catastrophe scenarios, jute united the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, feminist, and ecological critiques of large-scale industry (first and foremost nuclear power).<sup>8</sup> For Manon Maren-Grisebach, the executive of the Green Party, the sale of "jute bags made for example by the poorest of the poor in Peru" were the "expression of our hatred of environmental destruction as well as our love of these suffering under the yoke of conniving money sharks."<sup>9</sup> "The bag," remembers Gert Nickoleit, project manager of the action "Jute Not Plastic," "stood for a different way of life." "With it you were saying: I care for the environment and I'm doing something for the poorest of the poor."<sup>10</sup> This ethical attitude toward consumption is also embodied in the self-knitted jumper and linen sandals, as well as rattan furniture, Japanese balloon lamps and untreated, do-it-yourself wooden furniture. To reiterate the words of Maren-Grisebach: "The appearance is the sole sign of the inside."<sup>11</sup> The origin and manufacture

- 5 Christian Schütze, *Schon möglich, dass die Erde sterben muss: Anfänge öffentlicher Meinung zum Thema Umweltschutz*, *Merkur*, no. 25 (1971), 470–85; Hans Reimer, *Müllplanet Erde* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1971); Hans Dollinger, *Die totale Autogesellschaft* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1972); Herbert Gruhl, *Ein Planet wird geplündert: Die Schreckensbilanz unserer Politik* (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 1975). A detailed summary of this literature can be found in Jost Hermand, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland: Zur Geschichte des ökologischen Bewußtseins* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 1991).
- 6 Cf. Brand, "Umweltbewegung"; Arne Andersen, *Der Traum vom guten Leben: Alltags- und Konsumgeschichte vom Wirtschaftswunder bis heute* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999); Hermand, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland*.
- 7 A detailed study of this paradigmatic shift can be found in Klaus Eder, "The Rise of

- Counter-Culture Movements against Modernity: Nature as a New Field of Class Struggle," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, no. 4 (1990): 21–47.
- 8 Cf. Susanne Kuchler, "Materials and Design," in *Design Anthropology: Object Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Alison J. Clarke (Vienna: Springer, 2011).
- 9 Manon Maren-Grisebach, *Philosophie der Grünen* (Munich: Günter Olzog, 1982), 21–23.
- 10 The action was supported in the Federal Republic by the trade organization of Gepa (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Partnerschaft mit der Dritten Welt / Society for Promoting Partnership with the Third World). See the interview with Gert Nickoleit by Jörg Burger, "Plastik statt Jute," *Zeit online*, no. 24 (June 8, 2006); [http://www.zeit.de/2006/24Selbst-schuld-Jutetuete\\_xml](http://www.zeit.de/2006/24Selbst-schuld-Jutetuete_xml).
- 11 Maren-Grisebach, *Philosophie der Grünen*, 21.



of clothing, utility objects, and furnishings ought to be able to manifest this attitude and be "more committed to the heart than to the purse."<sup>12</sup>

## A New Lifestyle Needs a New Style of Product

In 1973 the Des-In group was formed at Germany's Offenbach School of Design. In contrast to many young people working and studying in this branch who rejected product design, the group members wanted to use products to take a stand against "the negative situation of our society and the diverse reasons for this."<sup>13</sup> Their aim was to pursue a "post-industrial," decentralized and self-determined, sensuous method of production, based among other things on the critique propagated by Robert Jungk of large-scale industry and the conditions of ownership related to it. According to Jungk, a "humane and democratic society [...] should create a new technology that corresponds to its concepts."<sup>14</sup> The group therefore sought a product style capable of combining an ethical yet sensuous and hedonistic lifestyle with socially and ecologically acceptable methods of production. A new lifestyle needs a new "style of product," Jochen Gros, founding member of the Des-In group, stated in *form* magazine.<sup>15</sup>

With the motto "Small series make you free," they cultivated the rediscovery of handicraft. The combination of "head and hands" was seen as a key weapon in combating alienation from the social and natural environment.<sup>16</sup> The demand of "More sensuousness through ornament" manifests the group's reaction not only to functionalism's prohibition of ornament, which they provocatively reformulated into "Form Phallus Function," but also their quest for a procedure to "make fundamental ways of thinking palpable to the senses, to the eyes, and enable them to be grasped by brain and hand."<sup>17</sup> This search is also characterized by feelings of belonging to nature and the preoccupation with appropriate symbols of nature, which could be correspondingly mediated, visualized and (re-)imagined through nature and naturalness:

Nothing in the range of technical products reminds us today of the prime model of harmonious sensuousness in nature. On the other hand, symbols expressing the memory of nature have never been completely eradicated from our daily life. On the contrary, we seem to be clinging to them more than ever, the less nature—destroyed, poisoned and despoiled—still corresponds to what we seek in it. We can see this in such things as the growing popularity of room plants, floral stickers, rustic designs, Chinese imports, etc.<sup>18</sup>

The floral stickers are the so-called "Pril flowers" invading households on liquid detergent bottles to spread gaiety on kitchen and bathroom tiles. Beate



Fig. 47  
Des-In, lampshade crafted of recycled jute, ca. 1977.

Rosebrock, founding member of the Des-In group, calls the stickers "the true plague of the times" and "pseudo-ornament."<sup>19</sup> Her description seems to tally with the fears of the influential designer and former director of the University of Ulm, Tomás Maldonado; in his essay "Umwelt und Revolte" ("Design, Nature, and Revolution") of 1972, he fears that the new environmental awareness could become high fashion and thus might miss its purpose.<sup>20</sup> Countering this, Des-In uses a language of forms and symbols that does more justice to the new appreciation of nature than pop flowers designed for the market.<sup>21</sup> They developed their ornamental vocabulary mainly from the recycling of everyday

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>13</sup> Lothar Müller, "Des-In & Entwurfsbeispiele für eine alternative Produktionsform (Des-In & Design Examples for an Alternative Form of Production)," (typewritten diploma thesis, Offenbach School of Design, Department of Product Design, 1977), 4. Müller is co-founder of the Des-In Group, formed of a core of twelve male and female students surrounding the young Professor Jochen Gros at the School of Design in Offenbach/Main. In the years between 1973 and 1978 among the members were (in alphabetical order): Philine Bracht, Bernd Brokhausen, Ingrid Ute Ehlers, Klaus Gebauer, Jochen Gros, Michael Kurz, Eberhard Lacher, Irmtraud Hagmann, Lothar Müller, Beate Rosebrock, Dieter Rosenburger, Norbert Wagner, and Michael Walz.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Jungk, *Berliner Extradienst* 3, no. 40 (1969): 4; as quoted in Müller, "Des-In & Entwurfsbeispiele," 3.

<sup>15</sup> Jochen Gros, "Eine Design-Initiative: des:in," *FORM. Zeitschrift für Gestaltung*, no. 79 (1977): 15.

<sup>16</sup> See Jan Kotig, "Neues Gewerbe—Neues Leben: Zur Versöhnung von Handarbeit und Industrie," *Werk und Zeit*, no. 3 (1978): 37–39. This *Werk und Zeit* edition is entitled *Kopf und Hände* (Head and Hands).

<sup>17</sup> Müller, "Des-In & Entwurfsbeispiele," 24.

<sup>18</sup> Jochen Gros, "Mehr Sinnlichkeit im Produkt-Alltag: Funktionalismus und ästhetische Aspekte des Produktdesigns," *hfg forum 1: Zeitung der Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach am Main* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1976/77); n.p.

<sup>19</sup> Beate Rosebrock, interview with Martina Fineder, Frankfurt/Main, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Maldonado was not alone with this anxiety. The French Group (among them Jean Baudrillard) warned of the dangers of a "mythologizing of nature" as early as 1970 at the international design conference in Aspen. In their statement "The Environmental Witch-Hunt," French intellectuals and artists saw an instrument in eco-hysteria that might actually drown out political problems.

<sup>21</sup> See Müller, "Des-In & Entwurfsbeispiele," 6.



Fig. 48  
Des-In, series of lampshades crafted of a discarded offset printing plates, ca. 1977.

objects. Using simple tools and devices, the young designers refashioned printed metal packaging, discarded car tires, offset printing plates and tea chests from ocean transport into new utility objects and furniture. In a series of lampshades made by hand from discarded offset printing plates and printed metal food packaging they experimented with butterfly and moth forms and various blossoms.<sup>22</sup>

The printing plates previously used for printing travel brochures, art catalogues, and food packaging are likewise rich resources for pictures, patterns, and texts, as are the metal food containers. By using such materials the group propagated a kind of ornamental richness of poor materials.<sup>23</sup> A lampshade from the series shows the picture of a dreamy little town nestling harmoniously between riverbank and well-manicured landscape.

Above the little town, as far as we can see without color, the sky is blue—no chimney stacks, no smoke, no smog, a hospitable sky, under which you can go fishing directly at the gates of the city. This image of bygone days contrasts the depressing scenarios such as were circulated by critical voices from the design scene back in the early 1970s. Among others, Tomás Maldonado has outlined such scenarios in the publication *Umwelt? Design wird in Frage gestellt* (Environment? Design under Question) as early as 1970:

Out of the blue we now discover that the blue sky—at least above our big cities and industrial zones—is no longer blue but gloomy, coal-black and threatening; the sky, a reservoir of air, has now been transformed into a reservoir of poison. In other words, the sky, heaven, is no longer heavenly, and we are not really sure today whether we can go on living under such an inhospitable roof. A short time ago I saw the following sentence written on a poster showing the marching protest movement: "Don't breathe." Consequently the next slogan might very well be: 'Don't drink anything.' And the one after that 'Don't walk anywhere.'<sup>24</sup>

The critical confrontation with the environmental situation in design is not an invention of the 1970s, but was already heralded in the design world in the late 1950s at the Werkbund Conference "Die große Landzerstörung" (The



Fig. 49  
Des-In, lampshade crafted of a discarded offset printing plate, ca. 1977.

22 For more on Des-In recycling products, see Martina Fineder, "Recycling-Design revisited: Mit der Des-In Gruppe auf der Suche nach einer sinnlichen produktkultur (1974–1978)," in: *de Towards Postcolonial Fashion*, ed. Elke Gaugele, Sabina Muriale, and Ruby Sircar (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag, 2014).

23 See, for instance, Müller, "Des-In & Entwurfsbeispiele," 29.

24 Tomás Maldonado, untitled contribution, in *Design? Umwelt wird in Frage gestellt*, ed. Der Themakreis, Internationales Design Zentrum Berlin (Berlin: Internationales Design Zentrum Berlin, 1970), 88.

great land destruction). In 1959 the Werkbund president Hans Schwippert gave people food for thought by saying in his opening talk that although modern design had produced a great number of high-quality drinking glasses, unfortunately, actual enjoyment of the drink had been missed out on. This was not so surprising, he said, because in the meantime wine was deteriorating and water was scarcely drinkable.<sup>25</sup> Wine—as seen on one of the Des-In lampshades—sparked off far-reaching environmental protests in the nineteen-seventies.



Fig. 50  
Des-In, lampshade crafted of a discarded offset printing plate, ca. 1977.

The resistance of winegrowers in Whyll on the Rhine against the construction of a nuclear power station in the Kaiserstuhl winegrowing area whipped up momentous anti-nuclear demonstrations with international impact. The fear of the destructive force of atomic energy united the farmers with political activists from the most diverse camps and with anxious citizens throughout the Federal Republic. "Better active today than radioactive tomorrow," was a slogan of the Whyll winegrowers, who attained popularity well beyond the national borders.<sup>26</sup> The anti-nuclear movement caused the topic of environmental protection to grow in public interest from the mid-1970s onwards.<sup>27</sup> At the time Des-In produced a papier-mâché lampshade with the yellow-and-red logo of the anti-nuclear movement—the laughing sun.

Another lampshade fashioned out of a honey jar shows busy bees flying between flower and hive. The hive, which forms the center of the lovingly designed advertisement illustration, is surrounded by a radiant aura. On one half of the shade we can read the words "Genuine," "Bees," "Honey," "Medicine," "Whole," "Nature." The side half of the jar reveals that it is bees' honey from Germany.



Fig. 51  
Des-In, papier-mâché lampshade with the laughing sun of the anti-nuclear movement, ca. 1976.

What's more, German beekeepers vouch for the genuineness of the product, lending it authenticity. Aura and rhetoric promise good health and harmony for body, mind and soul, which can be consumed through the product. In addition, we may mention at this point that a connection was already being made in the first half of the twentieth century between a healthy bee population

<sup>25</sup> Hans Schwippert, "Die Große Landzerstörung," *Werk und Zeit* 8, no. 12 (December 1959): 1–2; as quoted in Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 255.

<sup>26</sup> Fritjof Capra, *Wendzeit: Bausteine für ein neues Weltbild* (Munich: Knaur, 1988); ap-

pendix to the special edition. The physicist, who lives in the USA, mentions that the slogan was popular even in the USA.

<sup>27</sup> A detailed description of the development of the anti-nuclear movement in Germany can be found in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2008).



Fig. 52-53  
Des-In, lampshades fashioned  
out of a honey jar, ca. 1977.



and the preservation of the human living environment, by the anthroposophist, designer and architect Rudolf Steiner among others. As the century ran its course, bee mortality became the harbinger of the end of mankind.<sup>28</sup>

## Designing and Consuming Nature

The alternative movement's affinities with nature are strongly influenced by its knowledge about these contexts. Thus, the visual and material culture is correspondingly symbolic and psychologically loaded. Trees, floral and faunal motifs are used to express the new values of alternative interest groups and their forums: The left-wing Munich newspaper *Blatt* (Leaf), for instance, chose a large, evidently not artificially trimmed tree for its logo. The editorial team used this logo to express the newspaper's open and democratic ethos.<sup>29</sup> The *Pflasterstrand* (Concrete Beach), one of the most influential alternative magazines of the Federal Republic, alludes with its floral, art nouveau lettering to the history of the alternative movement. The feminist network *Selbsthilfe e.V.* (Self-Help) has the wild boar as logo. The alternative Nuremberg newspaper, the *Plärrer* (which means bowler), has a perky beaver advertising the "genuine hand-made" Roots shoes from Canada.

Designer Dorothee Becker who in 1975 opened the legendary design boutique "Utensilo" in the chic Munich suburb of Schwabing, chose a cricket for her logo. Dorothee Becker loves the beautiful, natural noise made by the insect and simultaneously marvels at its efficient locomotion. This combination of emotion and functionality is a manifestation of her fondness for practical and beautiful things.<sup>30</sup> In elaborately arranged shop window decorations she manages to combine the value of good design with the new ideas of good consumerism. In doing so, the range of products she has compiled remains faithful to principles of classical modern design— functionalism, longevity, material simplicity, modest elegance. Nevertheless, she indulges in a certain sensuous frisson with decorative objects, even bibelots. This approach can indeed be compared to the Des-In work method. But it can also be seen in the context of "humanizing modernism" as cultivated by the US designer couple Charles and Ray Eames.<sup>31</sup> Like the Eameses decorating their home in California, Becker frequently implements figures, materials, pictures, and other home accessories, which either derive from nature or evoke associations of it. She draws on material culture of Asia, especially Japanese tea culture as the epitome of elegance, simplicity, functionality and the respectful treatment of natural resources, and is blended with examples of European product culture. In window display views we find postcards that convey impressions of the harmonious relationship between the human being and nature in the Far East.

28 Albert Einstein would famously say: "When bees at last disappear from the Earth, Man has only four more years to live. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more people."

29 See *Blatt* 1, no. 1 (July 1973): editorial statement.

30 Dorothee Becker, interview by Martina Fineder, Munich, 2010.

31 Pat Kirkham, "Humanizing Modernism: The Crafts, 'Functioning Decoration' and the Eameses," *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 15–29.



Fig. 54–57  
Dorothee Becker, Details of a shop window in Dorothee Maurer's shop "Utensilo," 1976.

The postcard in the display window shown here has a woman in traditional Japanese costume with a paper umbrella over her head, walking through a bamboo forest. The second postcard shows a woman with two small children at an open fireplace. We see an imposing mountainous massif in high-altitude Tibet spread out in the background.

Here, any further context is left open to the audience's imagination. Those images serve as necessary counterparts to the modern world. In combination with other elements of the window displays, such as dried plants, stuffed animals, ginger roots, pine cones, tropical fruits, shells, stones and eggs, herbs and flower-based soaps, also traditional glass jewelry, the postcards are woven skillfully into landscapes of longing and desire. Wallowing in nostalgia, fantasy trips to the "exotic" Far East (and as introduced in the following, imaginings about the untouched wilds of Scandinavia), also all promise romantic and extraordinary encounters and experiences of nature.<sup>32</sup> These products and product scenarios offer "landscapes of longing" for the modern Westerner harassed by feelings of alienation. For sociologist Jackie Stacey, who comprehensively examines the Easternization of nature, idealized ideas of nature

promise to find elsewhere what is meant as lost in the Western industrialized world.<sup>33</sup>

Such remediations, no matter how topical they are, are influential in shaping our imaginations of a thing's origin and its relation to nature. As they mediate particular ideas of nature, they may also contribute to the authentication of products and materials. The Swedish furniture company IKEA seems very much aware of this. For instance, the German edition of the 1978–79 catalogue shows a simple set of wooden shelves standing in the midst of a forest.

A friendly, grunting elk sits in front of it. The shelves appear to have been made directly on site. The happy elk communicates to us that his living environment is in no way endangered by the manufacturing of the shelves; quite the contrary, the animal seems to take part in making use of it. According to Jan Kotig, here the human-nature relationship is embodied enduringly through such shelves: "Because the tree always remains inherent in a shelf, which is yet again part of the forest with its plants and animals, and of course the human beings who make use of it."<sup>34</sup>

For the educated middle class the reasonably priced IKEA furniture has been regarded as the epitome of alternative consumer culture ever since the opening of the first West German branch near Munich in 1974. The do-it-yourself furniture made of bright pinewood stands for an environmentally friendly production method and a democratic business enterprise and consumer culture. Another edition of the 1978–79 catalogue promotes the concern with the words *Unser Stammbaum ist die Kiefer* (Our family tree is the pine). The younger generation utilized the pine wood furniture for their symbolic protest against the small-town, stuffy home-living style of their parent's generation, associated with heavy oak furniture. Moreover, the Scandinavian pine acted as an excellent demarcation line for keeping out the historically negative connotations of the German forest. The German forest, intimately connected with German cultural history and likewise a fundamental part of the romantic fairytale and spiritual landscape, was loaded heavily with negative significance

32 Compare the work of Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey, *Global Nature, Global Culture* (London: Sage, 2000). Here as elsewhere, the examination of the Westerners' longing for the "exotic nature" of the Far East is shaped by Edward Said's book *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

33 Jackie Stacey, "The Global Within: Consuming Nature, Embodying Health," in *Global Nature, Global Culture*, ed. Sarah

Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey (London: Sage, 2000), 112.

34 Jan Kotig, "Das neue Gewerbe" (The New Crafts), page three of a manuscript from the unpublished collection of documents accompanying the exhibition "Neues Gewerbe und Industrie" (New Crafts and Industries) at the International Design Centre Berlin, November 2–December 31, 1977, (2nd edition), composed by Kay Klockenhoff.

through the fascist *Blut-und-Boden* (blood and soil) ideology. The Scandinavian forest, in contrast, is a democratic forest for the young generation. It is therefore better suited to assimilating the new feelings of belonging to nature.

The variety of products and product scenarios introduced here illustrate how furnishing and decorative objects, self-knitted jumpers and linen sandals, and also other articles of everyday use convey the new social and cultural value of nature, but likewise create new feelings of belonging to nature. Thus, the new yearning for nature is simultaneously the driving force for avoiding and combatting consumerism, and also the impetus for a new form of consumption and new design. These reciprocal processes generate a field charged between the polarities of consumerism and its critique, design and anti-design, alternative culture and mainstream. In fact, in daily life it was (and is) difficult to distinguish between environmentally friendly and environmentally harmful products. In this context we remember the formaldehyde scandal surrounding the Billy shelves or the uproar over the jute bags, which were proved to contain an excessive concentration of dangerous and toxic chemical residues. But, corresponding to the dialectical way of observing design and consumerism introduced at the beginning of this essay as processes through which individuals and groups define their relationships to the social and natural environment, these objects—from the jute bag, the Des-In lampshades to the IKEA shelves—are the physical manifestations of the new alternative stance to production and consumption in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 58  
IKEA, cover of the German catalogue edition, 1978/79.

<sup>35</sup> This essay is a development of the paper presented in 2011 in Barcelona at the conference *Design Activism and Social Change*, "Jute, Not Plastic! Designing and Consuming Nature," and part of my thesis project "The Promise of the Alternative: Environmentally Critical Design and Consumption in 1970s West Germany."

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# On the Ethical Turn in Fashion Policies of Governance and the Fashioning of Social Critique

Elke Gaugele

"The Earth is in an environmental crisis," announced Antwerp fashion designer Bruno Pieters at the opening of his fashion label, Honest By, in 2012. Dame Vivienne Westwood held up the phrase "Climate Revolution" on a banner for her 2013 spring collection at the London Fashion Week. Performing as a climate warrior on the stage at the Paralympics, she even challenged the audience to "Buy Nothing." An "honest buy" at Honest By—the "world's first transparent company" by Bruno Pieters—on the other hand is a question of honor and honesty. His enterprise, based on the mission of transparency and traceability, offers consumers the chance to "do something good" through ethical spending.



Fig. 59  
Vivienne Westwood,  
*Climate Revolution*, 2012.

Fashion set up a new arena of *aesthetic politics*, where designers and labels seem to compete as activists demonstrating and struggling against climate change, the ecological crisis, overconsumption, and exploitation of labor. Therefore, a new paradigm of fashion has to be outlined. After many small fashion labels followed models of social entrepreneurship and introduced alternative production, material, and consumption strategies ranging from "up-cycling," "cradle to cradle," "social design," "eco-textiles," "vegan" clothes and "D.I.Y.," ethics entered contemporary fashion. As eco fashion activist Katherin Hamnett states, for mainstream brands, ethical fashion became "an economic imperative, not just a moral one."<sup>1</sup>

Ethical claims on the global fashion industry have taken two routes. On the one hand, there is the rise of a commercial alternative production chain of green, ethical, and organic products that demands an ethical commitment of

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Dafydd Beard, "The Branding of Ethical Fashion and the Consumer: A Luxury Niche or Mass-Market Reality?," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and*

*Culture* 12 (2008): 447–68; cit. Kathrin Hamnett from Jessica Brinton, "The Green Dream," *Sunday Times Style Magazine*, May 11, 2008, 26–29.





Fig. 60  
Honest By, Bruno Pieters's Spring 2012 collection.

its members. On the other hand, ethics have been incorporated into the traditional segments of the garment industry.<sup>2</sup> In parallel with their fast fashion production, the apparel industry launched double strategies trying to change their image by also coining the new terms of “social fashion,” “ethical fashion,” “eco fashion,” “sweatshop-free fashion,” or “planet-friendly” fashion. Since the 1980s, organizations and consumers increasingly directed pressure on garment retailers to trade and produce more ethically. NGOs such as Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) or the International Labor Organization (ILO) had been fighting for more than a decade for solidarity and better working conditions for the workers in the sweatshops of the global fashion industry, until in 1999 the United Nations opened its Global Compact as a strategic policy initiative for businesses. Although the UN Global Compact’s aims for a global standardization of ethical codes has been heavily also criticized for its neoliberal blue-washing effects, the United Nations began to discover ethical fashion as its political tool for global governance. Fulfilling a political “jump [...] from blue helmets, to food aid to fashion,”<sup>3</sup> the United Nations intensified programs on ethical fashion as an instrument of global governance and development policy by teaming up with the luxury industry.

“Ethics is a fashionable word,” the French philosopher Jaques Rancière diagnosed in his essay “The Ethical Turn of Aesthetic and Politics.”<sup>4</sup> Various fashion theorists have focused on ethical fashion, characterizing it from a paradox (Black 2008) to a utopian promise (Clarke 2008); as celebrity activism (Winge 2008; Church Gibson 2012), an oxymoron (Clarke 2008), a green commodity fetish (Winge 2008), a precarious pedestal (Thomas 2008) and a necessity (Beard 2008).<sup>5</sup> Drawing on Rancière’s distrust in the “overturning of aesthetics into ethics”, my essay traces the disciplinary, riving, and hierarchizing functions of the “ethical regime” within the *aesthetic and political* dimensions of the contemporary *ethical turn* in fashion.<sup>6</sup> By investigating examples from both labels Honest By and Vivienne Westwood, I will contextualize their politi-

cal frameworks and juxtapose these in opposition to an analysis on contemporary politics of human rights cultures, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has outlined.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, I will follow the redeployment processes of social differences, global hierarchies, and economic capital that are reflected by the *ethical turn in fashion*, exploring how they are produced within the economic and political networks that reclaim ethical fashion as their eco-governmental tool. Therefore, three strands of the new ethical regime of fashion will be outlined: the Western commodification of trust and honesty after the global financial crisis in 2007–08 and its modes of othering; the UN’s shift from blue helmets to ethical fashion as a political tool for governance and development policy in Africa and its embracement of the luxury industry; and the integration of social critique as ethical capital and a new spirit of global capitalism.

## Crisis, Commodification, and the Fashioning of Trust and Honesty

Since the mid-1980s Honest Fashion has been associated with Dries van Noten and his modest, untheatrical design as one of Antwerp Six. The term is said to have been brought into circulation by Suzy Menkes, fashion critic of the *International Herald Tribune*.<sup>8</sup> Labeling his enterprise Honest By, Pieters—who graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp in 1999—builds on this tradition. While protest movements against fast fashion and NGOs had been reclaiming social, ethical, and ecological guidelines for the fashion industry for over twenty years, Pieters himself explained in a completely relaxed mood

- 2 Patrik Aspers, “Ethics in Global Garment Markets,” in *The Moralization of Market*, ed. Nico Stehr, Christoph Henning, and Bernd Weiler (London: Transaction Press, 2006), 287–307.
- 3 Natalie Domeisen and Prema de Sousa, “Why Is the United Nations Working in Fashion?” *International Trade Forum Magazine*, no. 3 (2006); <http://www.tradeforum.org/Why-is-the-United-Nations-Working-in-Fashion>.
- 4 Jacques Rancière, “The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics,” *Critical Horizons* 7, no. 1 (2006): 1–20.
- 5 Sandy Black, *Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox* (London: Black Dog, 2011); Hazel Clarke, “Slow+Fashion – an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future...?,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 12 (2008): 427–46; Theresa M. Winge, “‘Green Is the New Black’: Celebrity Chic and the ‘Green’ Commodity Fetish,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and*

- Culture* 12 (2008): 511–24; Pamela Church Gibson, “Sustainable Fashion in the Age of Celebrity Culture,” in *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook*, ed. Sandy Black (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 20–24; Sue Thomas, “From ‘Green Blur’ to Eco-fashion: Fashioning an Eco-Lexicon,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 12 (2008): 525–40; Beard, “Ethical Fashion and the Consumer.”
- 6 Rancière, “Aesthetics and Politics,” 16.
- 7 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 523–48; <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/saq/summary/v103/103.2spivak.html>.
- 8 Peter Bädle, “Mode aus Belgien: Dries Van Noten - Der stille Revolutionär,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Online, February 25, 2011; <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/mode-aus-belgien-dries-van-noten-der-stille-revolutionaer-1.1032934-3>.

that he had been enlightened to honesty in fashion during his sabbatical year in South India. From that time on, the former art director for Hugo Boss explains, Mahatma Gandhi's mantra: "Be the change you want to see in the world" became his driving force.<sup>9</sup> Beforehand, economists had in fact prognosticated the growth of ethical markets as a driving force and had given advice on how to green and to even spiritualize commodities. Furthermore, the global financial crisis in 2007–08 has actually evoked a Western debate on Trust Design. Premsula, the Dutch Institute for Design and Fashion, for example, started working on solutions for how design could answer the contemporary crisis.<sup>10</sup> Trust Designers summarize: "When the global financial crisis hit in 2009, trust catapulted from a personal thought during a handshake to a defining ingredient of our daily lives and business."<sup>11</sup> Their approaches, such as



Fig. 61  
Honest By, Lookbook I, Autumn/Winter 2012 collection.

"Trust is the New Currency," correspond in a broader way to that of Honest By using the materiality of clothes as a symbol to create presence for a sensorium of trust. Honest By uses fashion as a fabric to enforce a presence of socially, ethically, and ecologically controlled relations.<sup>12</sup> As part of a new commodification originating from crisis, fashion becomes the carrier of emotions like trust or of virtues like honesty. In response to that, honesty has become highly relevant in Western consumer decisions, just as social responsibility and environmental consciousness.

For his first honest collection for women and men, Pieters created a minimalistic line consisting of fifty-eight clear, purist pieces in black, white, gray, and beige. Upright pleated trousers, slim shirts and tees, frank bomber jackets and sweaters, prissy wrap dresses; virtuous jersey pants and pullovers with honorable epaulettes became available as limited editions.<sup>13</sup> Thus the fashion



Fig. 62  
Honest By, Lookbook I, Autumn/Winter 2012 collection.

- 9 Tamsin Blanchard, "Bruno Pieters's Honest By: The Only Way Is Ethics," *Telegraph*, March 9, 2013; <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/columns/tamsin-blanchard/TMG9918892/Bruno-Pieters-Honest-By-The-only-way-is-ethics.html>.
- 10 Scott Burnham and the Netherlands Institute for Design, Premsula, "Trust Design: The Relationship between Design and Trust," *Trust Design*; <http://trustdesign.org>.

- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Hans-Georg Soeffner, *Auslegung des Alltags: Der Alltag der Auslegung; Zur wissenssoziologischen Konzeption einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 162.
- 13 Bruno Pieters, "Lookbook I," *Honest By*, January 2012; <http://www.honestby.com/en/page/92/bruno-pieters.html>



Fig. 63  
Fidus and Gusto Gräser, activists of the German Reform Movement, ca. 1900.

collection gives expression to the whole palette of conservative middle-class virtues. Asymmetry is to be found only in the women's fashion, under the honest linen tops and wrap skirts. The collection makes references to the black and white contrasts of modernity. But at the same time, natural colored pieces do also refer to the material history of anti-fashion and the styles of the reform dress area from around 1900. Other styles resemble the stereotypical body images associated with hippie subculture and its sociopolitical values of animal and human rights and environmental issues.<sup>14</sup>

The firm therefore designs dogmas starting with "we believe in" or "we respect." Correspondingly, the debate on Trust Design regards ecology and sustainability as promises based on religious belief: "Faith is trust. Faith is connection to a promise. Trust is a promise. Sustainability is a promise. Green design is a promise. The object may not hold the promise in itself, but it is a connection to a promise."<sup>15</sup> Asking Nicolas Taralis "How green are you in your daily life?" Bruno Pieters receives the following answer: "To quote a famous friend: it ain't easy bein' green."<sup>16</sup> Sue Thomas confirms in her book *From "Green Blur" to Eco-fashion* that ethical fashion has a quasi-religious implication "in which ethical referred to philosophically guided actions and behaviors as determined by their impact on others."<sup>17</sup>

As a web platform, Honest By invites other designers to present their "ethical," "vegan," or "green" looks, so that, besides from Bruno Pieters's designs, the whole palette of fashion and accessories is offered: garments by Calla, Muriée, and Nicolas Andreas Taralis, jewelry from Heaven Tanudiredja and vegan shoes by Maison des Talons. All products are showcased with an undertone of revelation: 100 percent transparency about "material information," "manufacturing details," "price calculation," and even about the "carbon footprint"—fashion's CO<sub>2</sub> emission. We not only get to know that a sweater produces an output of 2.31 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>, corresponding to 14.44 car kilometers or burning a light bulb for 88.85 hours, but we also are taught that a tree would need about 259 days to neutralize the emissions. The label presents itself as sustainable by offering this information about every garment right up to the smallest button and the thinnest thread. In addition, it also names the manufacturers of its threads and buttons.<sup>18</sup>

#### FILTER BY

- All
- Organic +
- Vegan +
- Skin friendly +
- Recycled +
- European +

Fig. 64  
Bruno Pieters, *Honest By*, Filter By, 2012.

Beside such information, the web page offers filters to search the collections by the following categories: organic, vegan, recycled, skin-friendly, and European.

Honest By classifies cloth in a specific manner that draws analogies between the materiality of ethical fashion and organic or even vegan food, grown from ecological plants by regional farming. Additionally, the self seems to be capable of swallowing up and incorporating feelings of trust, safety, and placing. Pieters even emphasizes this in press interviews: "Like organic food, the quality is ac-

<sup>14</sup> Winge, "Green Is the New Black," 512.

<sup>15</sup> Burnham, "Trust Design."

<sup>16</sup> Bruno Pieters, "A Man of Mystery: An Interview with Nicolas Andreas Taralis," *Honest By News*, July 15, 2012; <http://www.honestby.com/en/news/64/a-man-of-mystery.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, "Fashioning an Eco-Lexicon," 533.

<sup>18</sup> Honest By, "Carbon Footprint and Manufacturing Details," <http://www.honestby.com/en/product/66/jersey/fleeced-grey-unisex-cotton-jersey-puzzle-crew-neck-sweater.html>.

tually better, the organic cotton is better.”<sup>19</sup> “We believe in animal welfare,” is another dogma of Honest By. The label abstains from animal fiber by distributing vegan shoes and by sourcing most of the woolen textiles either from recycling or from regional organic animal farming. Such decisions may give rise to new sartorial lifestyles: as a fashion vegetarian who never wears anything animal, such as leather, fur, or horns. It might also create a consumer behavior as a fashion flexitarian, who asks only now and then for wool or silk—and even then it should be consumed in the most modest way. In an exemplary manner, Pieters shows how this should come from recycled materials or from certified regional organic animal farming. The design theorist Hazel Clarke had also pointed out parallels between the slow food movement and sustainable solutions for fashion. In this context, she described three lines: “The valuing of local resources and distributed economies; transparent production systems with less intermediation between producer and consumer; and sustainable and sensorial products that have a longer usable life and are more highly valued than typical ‘consumables.’”<sup>20</sup>

Apparel is regarded, right after food, as the key market of green economics and its sales increased tenfold since 2000. In 2012 the Ethical Consumer Markets Report refers that sales in ethical clothing have risen in the UK from £5 million in 2000 up to £150 million in 2012.<sup>21</sup> In the interest of ethical consumerism, market researchers also recommend the neo-regionalization of products because this should foster the meaning and sensuality of commodities.

### Green Styles of Othering: Bruno Pieters and Vivienne Westwood

Honest By introduces the category “European” as a material classification of its collection. From a culture-historical perspective, the interconnection of fashion and European draws on the spatial policies of Western costume history as well as on the epistemologies of fashion theories of the late Enlightenment. Here, fashion had been classified as a Western phenomenon of enlightened and advanced societies. In modernity fashion has been defined as an expression of culture, civilization, and communization and in a colonial meaning as a phenomenon of “advanced nations,” respectively a genuine European appearance.<sup>22</sup>

By coding white bodies as “European” on the website’s filter, in 2012, Honest By accentuates the construction of the European through race and through dress. In resemblance to colonial strategies of othering, these are repositioned by a black model visualizing the column “the world responds.”<sup>23</sup> The model’s green-painted black face contrasts the white bodies categorized as “European” through fashion. Made up with green color, the black face seems



Fig. 65  
Honest By, *Othering: Green-Faced Black Model*, 2012.

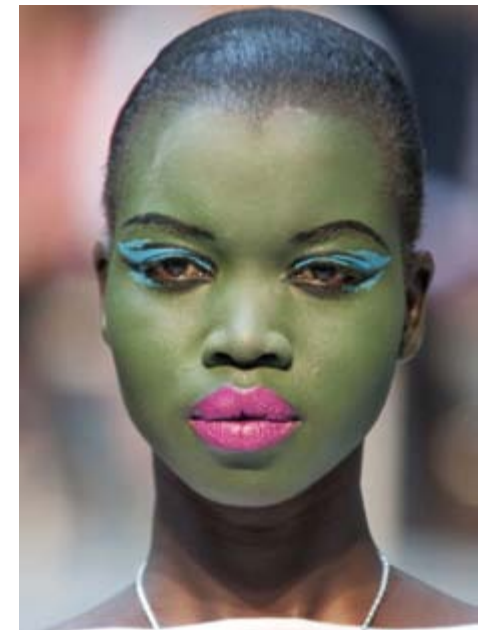


Fig. 66  
Vivienne Westwood, *Green Othering*, 2012.

19 Blanchard, “Bruno Pieters’s Honest By.”  
20 Clarke, “Slow+Fashion—an Oxymoron,” 429.  
21 The Co-operative, *Ethical Consumer Markets Report 2012*, <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/linkclick.aspx?fileticket=96yXzu8nyrc%3D&tabid=1557>.  
22 Christian Garve, *Über die Moden: Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der*

*Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaftlichen Leben* (Breslau: Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1792; Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1987), 23. Citations refer to the Frankfurt/Main edition.  
23 Honest By, “The World Responds,” *Honest By News*, January 30, 2012, <http://www.honestby.com/en/news/18/the-world-responds.html>.

to represent a model of the noble savage expressing Western ecological consciousness. This pattern was repeated in autumn 2013 when Honest By introduced the collection of South African fashion designer Pholoso Selebogo, naming her a “native” and a “true fashion princess.”<sup>24</sup>

Similar green-facing strategies could also be observed at Vivienne Westwood’s Show, “Climate Revolution” at London Fashion Week in September 2012. Again the green make-up on the black skin of the models generated associations of a green colonization that makes and marks black bodies green. However, by presenting various faces made up in different colors from blue to pink, Westwood breaks this style of “black skin—green mask” and deconstructs in opposite to Pieters’s ethnification and racialization. Nonetheless Westwood also reiterates figures of green colonization on her active resistance blog. Referring to James Lovelock’s Gaia theory, Westwood terms the “the Human Race” an “endangered species” and offers enlightenment, on how to “Get A Life.”<sup>25</sup> Clearly she’s tapping the self-help market.

From a closer perspective, her *Climate Revolution Shirt* reveals the sketch of a map outlining a global order, where the northern European and Northern American space is marked as green. Here the climate of the green Northern space seems to be threatened by global warming, represented by a much bigger South which is coded as red hot, explosive, and politically charged. This also refers to James Lovelock, whose green world order is based on environmentalist activism in favor of nuclear energy and with it on nucleonic metaphors:



Fig. 67  
Vivienne Westwood, *Climate Revolution T-shirt*, 2012.

“Gaia and her life-forms have evolved together in a self-regulating system, and together they create the atmosphere which keeps her cool. If this harmony is broken then Gaia can no longer sustain or tolerate those same life-forms; she, herself will find a new equilibrium by moving to a hot-state.”<sup>26</sup>

Westwood’s T-shirt thus highlights the centrality of the Western world by expressly underlining the graphic design of a green Northern Europe and America by the term “peace” and the word “yes” that is even enhanced by a checkmark. These landmarks of her politics of style transport a Western mission to green up and thereby pacify the southern hemisphere. This supremacy could be set also in the political context both of Agenda 21 and the United Nations fashion programs. Their Marrakesh-Process had started in 2003 with seven task forces for sustainable consumption and production trying to implement eco-labeling and sustainable lifestyles and education in Africa.<sup>27</sup>

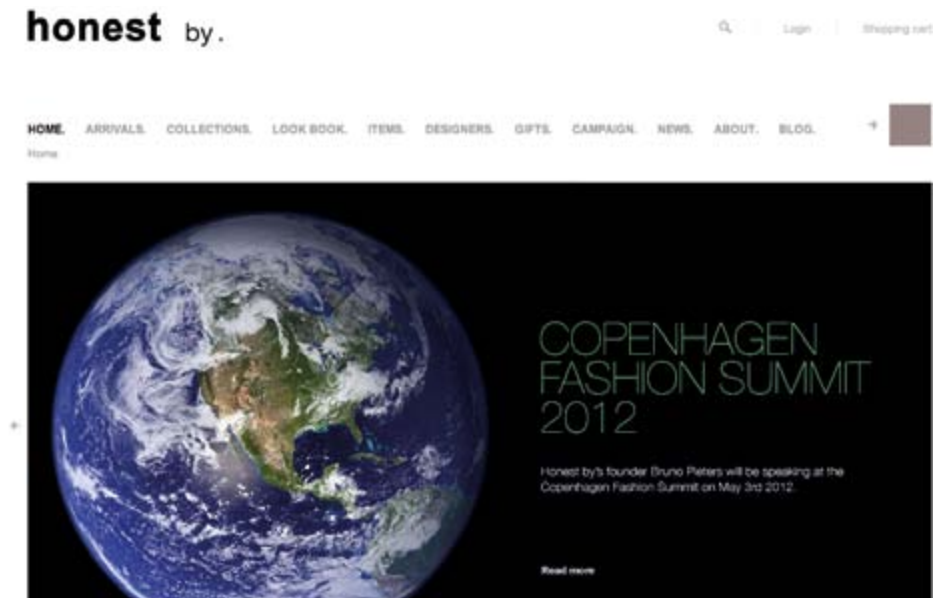


Fig. 68  
Honest By, website, 2012.

- 24 Bruno Pieters, “An African Princess of Style,” *Honest By News*, September 2013, <http://www.honestby.com/en/news/153/an-african-princess-of-style.html>.
- 25 Vivienne Westwood, “The Human Race: Our Survival,” *7 Wonders*. *Get a Life: Vivienne Westwood* (blog), January 20, 2012, <http://www.activeresistance.co.uk/ar/?p=1354>.
- 26 James Lovelock, “Gaia Theory,” *7 Wonders*.

- Get a Life: Vivienne Westwood* (blog), January 20, 2012, <http://www.activeresistance.co.uk/ar/?p=1354>.
- 27 United Nations, “The Marrakech Process: Issues – Sustainable Lifestyles & Education for Sustainable Consumption,” [http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/Issues\\_Sus\\_Lifestyles.pdf](http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/Issues_Sus_Lifestyles.pdf)

Bruno Pieters and Vivienne Westwood are both players within the new supra-national political and economic fashion networks that support ethical fashion and pursue the development of luxury markets. While Vivienne Westwood became an actor for the United Nations Ethical Fashion Initiative, Pieters also shares governmental networks himself. Shortly after the opening of his label, his website announced that he will participate at the Copenhagen Fashion Summit in May 2012, where more than a thousand key stakeholders from the fashion industry, CSR experts, and EU politicians gathered, and also the new ethical fashion code had been introduced by the UN.

### From Blue Helmets to Fashion—Policies of Governance

Hosted by the International Trade Center (ITC)—a Joint Body Initiative of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization located in Geneva—the UN Ethical Fashion Initiative had been established in 2006. A leading article from 2006 entitled “Why is the United Nations Working in Fashion?” outlines the UN’s move from Blue Helmet interventions and humanitarian assistance to fashion as a political tool for governance and development aid. Following Rancière’s notions of the ethical turn of aesthetics and politics from 2006, he describes the emergence of a new international landscape, where ethics has established its reign changing from its initial form of the humanitarian into the form of “infinite justice against the axis of evil” that should legitimize the



Fig. 69  
Trading bases of the Ethical Fashion Initiative, 2014.

War on Terror after 2001.<sup>28</sup> One could also speak of a third form of these ethical regimes: trying to develop governance by an Ethical Fashion Initiative. The contemporary ethical discourse, Rancière summarizes: “is only the point of honor given to the new forms of domination.”<sup>29</sup> That human rights culture runs on an unremitting Northern-ideological pressure, even when it is from the South, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out in *Righting Wrongs*.<sup>30</sup> Contemporary ethical discourses based on the idea of human rights could act as forces of hierarchization as they “may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of Social Darwinism—the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit—and the possibility of an alibi.”<sup>31</sup> According to Spivak, ethical practices create hierarchical orders, where the subjects and dispensers of the work of righting wrongs “shared above a class line that to some extent and unevenly cuts across race and the North-South divide.”<sup>32</sup>

The United Nations started to set up its ethical fashion program for countries that have suffered from civil conflicts such as Ivory Coast, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Aiming to bridge “the work of development and the fashion system” the initiative is mainly focused on bringing off a new niche market for luxury fashion: “We connect the poorest of the poor to the markets of the world via fashion.”<sup>33</sup>

Since then the *new ethical regime of fashion* has been built up to an economy in Africa involving more than 7,000 artisans and establishing trading bases in Haiti, Kenya/Nairobi and Ghana/Accra. They are mainly producing for Western luxury labels including Venturini Fendi, Sass & Bide, Stella McCartney or Hollywood’s Jeweler Chan Luu’s and three additional major brands: United Arrows, Macy’s (USA), Manor (CH), and Myer (AU). In 2010 even a second UN fashion initiative titled Fashion4Development (F4D) started under the patronage of Bengal supermodel Bibi Russell. On the one side, F4D gives start-up assistance for African designers. On the other side, it educates unemployed women in sewing and tailoring for the garment production on orders from fashion outlets.<sup>34</sup> As a political tool to push the UN’s F4D developmental targets, a marketing website was launched in June 2012 for African designers: “a global platform to advance the millennium development goals.”<sup>35</sup> Niche markets and

28 Rancière, “Aesthetics and Politics,” 7.

29 Ibid., 18.

30 Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” 527.

31 Ibid., 524.1

32 Ibid.

33 Domeisen and de Susa, “Why Is the United Nations Working in Fashion?”

34 United Nations, Department of Public Information, News and Media Division,

“Press Conference on ‘Fashion 4 Development, A Global Platform to Advance the Millennium Development Goals,’” New York, June 28, 2012, [http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2012/120628\\_Fashion.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2012/120628_Fashion.doc.htm).

35 Fashion4Development, Store Website, <http://store.fashion-4-development.com>.

especially crafts, named as “the skills of the artisans”<sup>36</sup> are rated high within the UN initiatives as strategies for developing countries that are not set up to compete with high-volume, low-cost manufacturing states.

Vivienne Westwood used the economic structures of the UN Ethical Fashion Initiative when she produced her Ethical Fashion Africa Collection in Kenya.<sup>37</sup> Westwood’s collection also worked as a flagship campaign for the Ethical Fashion Initiative using the same political watchwords “We are not a charity” or even calling upon women’s emancipation, with a nod to the “white woman’s burden of the fittest”.<sup>38</sup> “Our overarching goal is to empower women.”<sup>39</sup> Simone Cipriani, the leader of the UN-Fashion initiative keeps the notion of this ethical added-value in mind, when he speaks about a mutual benefit for luxury designers: “We connect the most marginalized people to the top of fashion’s value chain for mutual benefit.”<sup>40</sup> As her part of this swap Westwood receives the status of a do-gooder. “It’s quite incredible to think that we might be able to save the world through fashion,” Westwood spread in press interviews.<sup>41</sup>

The same sentiments are echoed by artist Jürgen Teller who had photographed the Ethical Fashion Africa Collection in Kenya: “We had been part of something good, not such fashion-idiot.”<sup>42</sup> Following Spivak’s diagnosis at that point, one could see connections between world governance and a self-styled international society.<sup>43</sup> ITC’s executive director Patricia Francis even enhances political interconnection between ethical fashion and governance on her level: “The glossy world of fashion is far removed from blue helmets, food aid, or peace treaties—but it is also part of the United Nations’ work to ensure the world’s people have better, safer lives.”<sup>44</sup> Spivak, however, gives her voice to the concerns about global social movements:

The leaders from the domestic “below”—for the subaltern an “above”—not realizing the historically established discontinuity between themselves and the subaltern, counsel self-help with great supervisory benevolence. This is important to remember because the subalterns’ obvious inability to do so without sustained supervision is seen as proof of the need for continued intervention.<sup>45</sup>

With its slogan “This is not charity, this is work” the UN initiative aims for both: pacification strategies and a working business where—using Spivak’s term, “subaltern”—artisans and textile workers produce an ethical capital as an added value for Western consumers as well as for the global fashion industry. It is remarkable that “Righting Wrongs” uses textile metaphors to define the subaltern at the same time also emphasizing their removal from the “dominant loom” at a historical moment: “[...] see the same knit textile as a torn cultural fabric in terms of its removal from the dominant loom in a historical moment.



Fig. 70  
Jürgen Teller, Vivienne Westwood, Ethical Fashion Africa Collection, 2011.

That is what it means to be a subaltern.”<sup>46</sup> The “subordinate subaltern,” Spivak writes, is as diversified as the “recipients of Human Rights activity.”<sup>47</sup>

I use the word subordinate here because they are the recipients of human rights bounty, which I see as “the burden of the fittest,” and which [...] has

36 International Trade Center, “Ethical Fashion Initiative,” <http://www.intracen.org/exporters/ethical-fashion/the-initiative>.

37 Vivienne Westwood, “This Is Not Charity, This Is Work,” *Vivienne Westwood Ethical Fashion Initiative Collection*, January 28, 2011, <http://www.vivienne-westwood.co.uk/w/news/this-is-not-charity-this-is-work>.

38 Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” 524.

39 International Trade Center and Ethical Fashion Initiative, “We Use Fashion as a Vehicle out of Poverty, at the Same Time Fulfilling Fashion’s Desire to Be More Fair,” <http://www.intracen.org/exporters/ethical-fashion/>.

40 Suzy Menkes, “A Matchmaker Helps Artisans Find Luxury Jobs,” *New York Times*, November 14, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/15/fashion/a-matchmaker->

[helps-artisans-find-luxury-jobs.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/15/fashion/a-matchmaker-helps-artisans-find-luxury-jobs.html?_r=0).

41 Olivia Bergin, “Vivienne Westwood’s Mission to Save the World, One Handbag at a Time: The British Designer’s New Range of Handbags Will Benefit the People of Kenya Who Handmake Them,” *Telegraph*, August 9, 2011, <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG8691362/Vivienne-Westwoods-mission-to-save-the-world-one-handbag-at-a-time.html>.

42 Elisabeth Raether, “Es sieht gut aus in Afrika,” *ZEITmagazin*, no. 41, October 6, 2011, <http://www.zeit.de/2011/41/KollektionWestwood>.

43 Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” 550.

44 Domeisen and de Susa, “Why Is the United Nations Working in Fashion?”

45 Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” 535.

46 *Ibid.*, 544.

47 *Ibid.*, 546.

the ambivalent structure of enabling violation that anyone of goodwill associates with the white man's burden.<sup>48</sup>

Ethical Fashion with its value added chain of "ethical capital" as a new sort of capital produces new fields of producing social and global hierarchies. Under the signs of a so-called mutual benefit a new "fashion's value chain" emerged fabricating a class of ethically better people and morally superior consumers.<sup>49</sup> Correspondingly, a definition of luxury highlighting the accumulation of ethical capital had been distributed by the networks of the Ethical Fashion Initiative and its partners of the global luxury industry: today's luxury should be socially responsible and ethical; true luxury should be sustainable also under economic viewpoints. This definition had been also disseminated at the *International Herald Tribune* 2012 Luxury conference entitled "Empowering African Artisans" in which actors of the Ethical Fashion Initiative such as Cipriani, Fendi, and Westwood had been invited as speakers under the patronage of fashion critic Suzy Menkes. At the same time the conference contributors also discussed Africa's potential as an ultimate consumer of luxury goods.<sup>50</sup>

Global capitalism is defined as profit making in global markets.<sup>51</sup> In an effort to accumulate ethical capital, contemporary global luxury fashion brands develop communication strategies not only for transparency and traceability, but also presenting themselves as do-gooders giving development aid and charity. Also, Honest By donates twenty percent of its profit to humanitarian aid projects. From a historical perspective, these practices of ethical fashion stand both in the colonial tradition of White Charity and in a history of industrialization in which textile labor had been a social instrument of gender and class distinction. Currently these practices of a hierarchical structuring are redefined and adapted by the neoliberal global economy under the signs of ecology, social justice, and ethical consumption. At the same time, this is historically connected to class-specific gestures of doing good and welfare practices of early stages of modern, Western-liberalist capitalism in which women in need had been taught and employed for textile workshops and housework. Thus the UN Ethical Fashion Initiative calls upon "female empowerment" and emphasizes that their employees live in "slums" and "rural areas."<sup>52</sup> The simple economic act of remunerating people acceptably for their labor is transformed into a performative ethical act of class hierarchy. Therefore Simone Cipriani, Head of the United Fashion Initiative, claims to create a new business model: "a system to organize employment and therefore give dignity to people. Another kind of fashion is possible, bringing social and environmental sensibility."<sup>53</sup> Global capitalism is still in an early stage, states sociologist Patrik Aspers, "and in the same way as capitalism caused social commodities in the West during its early phases, global capitalism does in the developing world."<sup>54</sup> In parallel the idea of a Third World itself is part of a neocolonial process as neocolonialism was basically defined by economics rather than by territory or culture.<sup>55</sup>

## The New Spirit of Global Capitalism and the Fashioning of Social Critique

In their essay "Le couturier et sa griffe" Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut (1975) highlight that reorganizations in the field of fashion can be seen as an equivalent of restructurings in the field of power.<sup>56</sup> The reorganization of the hegemonies of labor division is accompanied by a social transformation, where altered groups shape their access to the profit and prestige of the bourgeoisie through novel modalities. As debated above ethical fashion as well as ethical consumption with its modes of producing ethical capital can be seen as part of a new spirit of global capitalism characterized by ethical, political, and moral values, which at the same time creates new forms of supremacy. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello had introduced the concept of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* as the respective ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism.<sup>57</sup> They argue in continuation of Max Weber, who defined ethos as the center of the "spirit of capitalism" and as a set of ethical motivations, which although their purpose might at first sight be foreign to capitalist logic, inspire entrepreneurs to accumulate capital.<sup>58</sup> Weber stresses that rational modern capitalism just exists though the ethical restriction of the legitimate forms of monetary acquisition.<sup>59</sup> Concepts of Honest Fashion can be seen as part of such a "new spirit" anchored in: a social and artistic critique on the obscurity of financial capitalism after its 2007–08 crisis and in reference to class-specific values of earlier capitalist stages of nineteenth-century liberalism.

In 1904 Georg Simmel had already formatted an analogy of fashion and honor for the modern age by underscoring the class-formative function of both: "Fashion [...] is a product of class distinction and operates like a number of other forms, honor especially, the double function of which consists in revolving

48 Ibid., 544.

49 Menkes, "Matchmaker Helps Artisans."

50 International Herald Tribune, "The Promise of Africa. The Power of the Mediterranean," Luxury Conference Rome, November 15–16, 2012, <http://www.ihntconferences.com/luxury-2012/press-coverage.aspx>.

51 Patrik Aspers, "A Note on Global Capitalism," in *Global Capitalism: The Road Ahead*, ed. Bharti Thakar. (Hyderabad: Icfai University Press, 2008), 13.

52 International Trade Center and Ethical Fashion Initiative 2013.

53 Menkes, "Matchmaker Helps Artisans."

54 Aspers, "Note on Global Capitalism," 13.

55 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge: An interview with Robert J.C. Young," in

*Neocolonialism. Oxford Literary Review* 13 (1991): 220–51, online at <http://www.roberttjyoung.com> (2007), 2.

56 Pierre Bourdieu and Ivette Delsaut, "Le couturier et sa griffe: Contribution à une théorie de la magie," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no.1 (January 1975): 736.

57 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005), 9.

58 Ibid., 8.

59 Gabriele Wagner and Philipp Hessinger, "Max Webers Protestantismus: These und der neue Geist des Kapitalismus," in *Ein neuer Geist des Kapitalismus? Paradoxien und Ambivalenzen der Netzwerkökonomie*, ed. Gabriele Wagner and Philipp Hessinger (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2008), 9–40.



within a given circle.”<sup>60</sup> Relating to Simmel, honor is originally a “class standard” (*Standesehre*) and with that a successful stabilizer of corporate formations of modernity that aims for cohesion against other circles or states.<sup>61</sup> Also the transference of social duty in individual welfare is according to Simmel a criterion that constitutes honor, and makes it an extremely successful stabilizer of estate-based societies controlling and standardizing its corporate formations. Honor supports respect and does stabilize the regularity and fostering within the life processes of a specific class, Simmel argues:

... [H]onor owes his character, and above all its moral rights, or the fact that the individual in his personal honor at the same time represents and maintains that of his social circle and his class. These moral rights, however, are frequently considered unjust by those without the pale. Thus fashion on the one hand signifies union with those in the same class, the uniformity of a circle characterized by it, and *uno actu*, the exclusion of all other groups.<sup>62</sup>

Generating the prestige and the profit of its ethical capital, Honest Fashion interweaves both class distinctive and cohesive strategies of honor and fashion and thereby initiates a symbolic transubstantiation.<sup>63</sup> Ethical consumers paying for sustainable materials, fair wages and charity, show off a more or less luxurious distance from economic needs. Hence the ostentation of a negative economical conditionality redefines economic power structures and its related class-specific habitus.<sup>64</sup> Even ethics consultants and fashion academics like Sue Thomas point out the riving social structures underlying ethical fashion as a term with its imposed correctness: “A polarizing disjuncture exists between ethical and unethical clothing, and therefore it can be a precarious pedestal when clothing is described as ethical.”<sup>65</sup> Following Rancière’s concept of the “ethical regime” the pedagogical role of the arts lies in the assimilation of people to the modes of existence. Under the perspective of the “ethical regime” art operates as a normative entity that introduces individuals into an authoritarian structure of class hierarchies.<sup>66</sup> As stylization of life, Ethical Fashion had become part of the habitus of socially conscious, upwardly-mobile people performing new lifestyles of health and sustainability: as an *ethos* of involvement, responsibility, and social justice.<sup>67</sup>

The spirit of capitalism itself is characterized by historically alterable patterns of values, which mainly result from a dynamic relationship between capitalism and critique.<sup>68</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello point out two forms of critique leading historically back to the nineteenth century: “the artistic critique, which elaborates demands for liberation and authenticity, and the social critique, which denounces poverty and exploitation.”<sup>69</sup> Critique has got the role of a motor in changes of the spirit of capitalism.<sup>70</sup> While themes from the artistic critique were integrated into the discourse of capitalism and therefore have been partially satisfied during the 1990s, we see a revival of social critique in the twenty-first century.<sup>71</sup>

Ethical Fashion definitely signifies a shift towards a new spirit of capitalism, where global capitalism aims to integrate social critique into its system. As Boltanski and Chiapello outlined, capitalism cannot be generated exclusively out of its own resources and needs an orientation toward the common good, as it requests reasons for committed engagement.<sup>72</sup> Ethical fashion is a product of a dialectics operation, where global capitalism needs and uses the opponents of globalization to generate its ethos: “As a result, it needs its enemies, people whom it outrages and who are opposed to it, to find the moral supports it lacks and to incorporate mechanisms of justice whose relevance it would otherwise have no reason to acknowledge.”<sup>73</sup>

But during the last decades there has also been built up analogousness between the mobility of new protest movements and capitalist structures, so that many NGOs took root where traditional humanitarian organizations had lost ground.<sup>74</sup> Ethical fashion mirrors this dialectic and ambivalently incorporates social critique in contemporary discourses of global capitalism.<sup>75</sup> In the course of this, the networks in which fashion producers such as consumers and even their critics are involved become a presentation surface where new economic power relations as well as a new spirit of capitalism is negotiated. Fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood or Bruno Pieters are part of this new spirit of global capitalism focusing on the fashioning of social critique by teaching benevolence as well as cultural relativism and with it cultural absolutism at its best. What is formulated as a conversion of political debates over methods is at the same time part of the sensorium of a green economics, which meets the “crisis” with the design of “trust in trust,” and not least also in its “ethical regime” of global governance.

60 Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” *International Quarterly* no. 10 (1904): 133; [http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion\\_1904.pdf](http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion_1904.pdf).

61 Georg Simmel, “The Persistence of Social Groups: I,” *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 3 (1897): 681; [http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Simmel/Simmel\\_1897a.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Simmel/Simmel_1897a.html).

62 Simmel, “Fashion,” 134.

63 Bourdieu and Delsault, “Couturier,” 29.

64 Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*, trans. Bernd Schwibs and Achim Russer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 102. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

65 Thomas, “Fashioning an Eco-Lexicon,” 533.

66 Rancière’s concept of the “ethical regime”

overlaps with Bourdieu’s habitus model that conceptualizes the habitus as an organizing practice for the internalization and production of hierarchical class division. Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*, 278.

67 Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*, 102; Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Perseus Book Group, 2002).

68 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 4.

69 *Ibid.*, 346.

70 *Ibid.*, 28.

71 *Ibid.*, 346.

72 *Ibid.*, 28.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*, 389.

75 *Ibid.*, 346.

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# “Performing Whiteness” Revisiting White Textiles in Visual Culture

Birgit Haehnel

## Whiteness in Fashion

This text focuses on performances of *whiteness* as an aesthetic politics in fashion, art, and visual culture. How can the semantic of white clothes in fashion be understood as a visual signal of *whiteness* and which strategies are used to subvert this ethnicized representations of dominant culture? First of all I like to emphasize that in general, white textiles do not have this symbolic meaning, but the discursive and institutional contextualization is responsible for the aesthetic production of *whiteness* by white dresses. For this reason it is necessary to have a closer look not only at the dresses' visual representations but also at the textual framing. As a reaction to the constancy of structural racism in spite of public and political consciousness-raising actions, the *Critical Whiteness Studies*, or *Kritische Weißseinsforschung* in German-speaking countries, puts weight on the construction of the dominant culture in a process of becoming *white* as an ethnic performance and political attribution.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, who analyzes the permanent staging of *whiteness* in Hollywood films, I would like to speak of “performing whiteness.” In respect to Judith Butler, this phrase points to the realization of *whiteness* as an ongoing process of creating meaning which fixes mental images and stereotypes in the collective memory. Recognizing the performative character of becoming *white* would help to change dominant power relations.<sup>2</sup>

Critical analysis of classical Hollywood cinema had already brought into mind that *whiteness* is a simulacrum without a beginning. The failed search for a pure white “race,” which was shown to not exist, generates the simulacrum and, through myriad ways and means, still allows the vision to become real. Special cinematic technologies such as light exposures, measurement of the degree of light reflection on the skin, and white makeup as a concept of whitening were developed in order to whiten performers and actresses who were thought to be never white enough. I will show how white clothes are

1 See also Maureen Maisha Eggers et al., *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland* (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2005); Gabriele Dietze et al., *Weiß—Weißsein—Whiteness: Kritische Studien zu Gender und Rassismus* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 2006); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women—Race Matter: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Rosa Reitsamer and Jo Schmeiser, *Born to Be White: Rassismus*

*und Antisemitismus in der weißen Mehrheits-gesellschaft* (Vienna: IG Bildende Kunst, 2005); Eske Wollrad, “Getilgtes Wissen, überschriebene Spuren: Weiße Subjektivierungen und antirassistische Bildungsarbeit,” in *Rassismus bildet*, ed. Anne Broden and Paul Mecheril, 141–62 (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010).

2 Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness: Postmodern Re/Constructions in the Cinema* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

used in visual media for similar reasons.<sup>3</sup> I like to investigate, in which context the semantics of white dresses become markers of whiteness in fashion politics. Forster's analytical term "performing whiteness" is very useful for analyzing the theatrical presentations within the fashion industry. Furthermore, it is an apt measure to determine when modish styles transform into bizarre representations of whiteness, exposing the perfidious masquerade as a fake. Art is particularly suited, in a postcolonial context, for exposing visual structures of dominant culture in a critical way. For this reason, the following introduces examples that create a parody of whiteness or which, by intervening into the performance of whiteness, even overcome the marker of racial dominance.

### Ladies in White Costumes

Reinventions of white supremacy through photos are used playfully in fashion. From time to time, lifestyle magazines pick up the semantic of the European Grand Dame dressed in white, such as the *Vogue Magazine* in 1990, showing photos of the model Christy in Africa.

With the headline "Tropical Whites," it refers to European colonial fantasies. With respect to Roland Barthes's "Written Clothing," text and pictures produce a special fashion context which allusively defines white clothes belonging to the former colonial oppressors and therefore as markers of whiteness.<sup>4</sup> At the



Fig. 71  
Hans Feurer, "Tropical whites"—Christy in Africa,  
*American Vogue*, May 1990.

beginning of the twentieth century, advertising that employed images of women in white dresses became popular, especially in the context of an exotic setting. The noblesse of European ladies in white garments symbolized "notions of purity in the fragrance given off by the snow white linen of a clean household, an amalgam that reached into the colonies. The white dress ennoble every social setting overseas and thus draws a clear line between rich and poor, between European and indigenous cultures."<sup>5</sup>

During the Weimar Republic, fashion- and self-conscious women in white suits symbolized the Modern Age, usually in combination with the representation of new technologies such as automobiles and modern architecture. "Liberated from all the frills, this clothing represents most radically the reformist goals of dynamism and progress, based on a logical rational design of the world."<sup>6</sup> This rationalism of the world was also attributed to European culture to define its superior civilization against wilderness and barbarism in other continents.

### German National Costumes as After-Images

In 1990 the fashion journal *Elle* represented diverse collections with descriptions of different ethnical stereotypes. Interestingly, Germany is presented as a multicultural nation with the headline *Deutschland bunt—wir und die Ausländer* (Germany multicolored—we and the foreigners). The well-meant intention turns immigration and conflict-ridden diversity in Germany positive by using colorful clothing. But it simultaneously evokes a latent mental image of a monochrome or less colorful dress code for Germany without foreigners.

Fifteen years later, multiculturalism re-emerges. In 2005 the fashion journal *Petra* published an article about the history of German fashion with the collection

3 See Eva Warth, "Die Inszenierung von Unsichtbarkeit: Zur Konstruktion weißer Identität im Film," in *Projektionen: Rassismus und Sexismus in der Visuellen Kultur*, ed. Birgit Haehnel et al. (Marburg: Jonas Verlag 1997), 125-30. Barbara Schrödel, "Strahlendweiße Wäsche, weibliche Unschuld, das Wirtschaftswunder und der Tod: Weibliches Sterben in einem deutschsprachigen Spielfilm der 1950er Jahre," in *Das letzte Hemd: Zur Konstruktion von Tod und Geschlecht in der materiellen und visuellen Kultur*, ed. Karen Ellwanger (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), 193-214.

4 Roland Barthes, *Die Sprache der Mode* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 13-27.

5 Birgit Haehnel, "Lady in White: A Type of

Woman between Fashionable Change and Constancy," in *Anziehen - Transkulturelle Moden // Dressed up - Transcultural Fashion. Querformat. Zeitgenössisches, Kunst, Populärkultur* 6, 2013 (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), 117-22.

6 Ibid., 121. For the photo montages of modern-styled women and technological innovations, see also Christiane Keim, "Anordnungen und Gegenüberstellungen: Weiblichkeit und Mode im medialen Diskurs der Architekturavantgarde," in *Erbitterte Identitäten: Mode—Kunst—Zeitschrift*, Stadthaus Ulm, ed. Katharina Ahr, Susanne Holschbach, and Antje Krause-Wahl (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2006), 81-88 exhibition catalogue.



Fig. 72  
Eva Gronbach collection, *mutter erde vater land*, 2003.

"*mutter erde vater land*" (mother earth father land) of the designer Eva Gronbach on top of the development.<sup>7</sup>

Two models dressed in white are posing in front of a white curtain. Against this blended setting the colors of the belt become more obvious. The accompanying text addresses them as accessoires in the German national colors and identifies the white emblem on the breast of the foregrounded woman as the national heraldic animal. The author of the fashion article, Christa Thelen, instrumentalized national symbols on white dresses, appealing to a supposed German team spirit. In the place of multicolored fashion for a hybrid nation, now the white textile with national symbols unifies diversity into one people. Instead of creating a playful and sneering fashion design, national symbols are reloaded with new content by the iconic and written form of clothing, to use Roland Barthes' expressions.<sup>8</sup> In 2001 Gronbach had already provoked controversy and discussions in the same direction with her statement, *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (Declarations of love to Germany).<sup>9</sup>

What seems at first like a provocation soon fits very well into the public's general mood, which emerged in the forefront of the FIFA World Cup 2006. Worn by the dark-skinned model, the combination of white trousers, shirt, and a black-red-gold belt turns inevitably to a political plea for Germany, which was advertised by a major publicity campaign in advance of the World Cup 2006. *Du bist Deutschland*<sup>10</sup> (You are Germany) emphasizes the diversity of the German population—in view of parentage, skin color, age, and gender—

in order to gain a positive national image. Besides party politics, this event was sponsored by the economy only. The call for the individual to improve Germany is entirely in line with the neoliberal ideology of "anything goes."<sup>11</sup>

Gronbach's "confession design" corresponds with the need for a new national feeling after German reunification in 1989. What seems to be at first hand apolitical was soon defined as *positiv politisch engagiert* (positively politically involved).<sup>12</sup> The positive image of a peaceful and at the same time highly efficiency-driven new Germany is ideally reflected in Gronbach's corporate identity and her product lines.<sup>13</sup> The gloomy burden of history and the dullness of actual right-wing symbols were highlighted by white clothes. Textual discourse charges the stylish laxity of patriotism with meaning: current Germanomania is coupled with experienced tolerance for foreigners gained by a successful coming to terms with the past. It is declared that this mentality is hardly found in other countries and therefore could represent the whole nation.<sup>14</sup>

While Barthes focuses on the "language of fashion," I would like to emphasize additionally the "represented clothing."<sup>15</sup> In visual history, as I have mentioned above, there still exists a discourse about white clothes underlining national and colonial interests. In contrast to the direct language, pictures are less clear and more complex. Nevertheless, they provoke visual analogies—coming into the mind as after-images. In cultural production, the effect is used as a metaphor to describe the after effect of pictures over history. Thus, using white dresses in a German national context is not by chance since pictures of the past are still effective in the present as after-images.<sup>16</sup>

7 Cf. Christa Thelen, "Der neue Höhenflug der deutschen Mode: Schwarz-Rot-Gold," *Petra* (January 2005): 46–49.

8 See Barthes, *Die Sprache der Mode*.

9 Ina Soetebeer, "Mode in Schwarze-Rot-Gold," *Deutsche Welle*, March 31, 2009, <http://www.dw.de/mode-in-schwarz-rot-gold/a-4133612>.

10 See "Kampagne: Wir in Deutschland," *FAZ.net*, September 24, 2005, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/netzwirtschaft/kampagne-wir-in-deutschland-1256557.html>.

11 Ibid.

12 See Ingrid Loschek, "Vielseitig und politisch engagiert – Eva Gronbach und ihre Kollektion," Goethe-Institut e. V. Online-Redaktion, October 2006 / January 2009, <http://www.goethe.de/kue/des/prj/mod/dsg/abc/de4084364.htm>; "Eva Gronbach im Lifestyle Magazine iQ," May 7, 2003, <http://www.evagronbach.com/>.

13 See Petra Engelke, "Eva Gronbach: Die Köpfe zu erreichen ist ein großes Gefühl," interview at Cafe Hallmackenreuther on May 19, 2004 in Cologne, *Galore* 3 (2004): 140–45; <http://www.evagronbach.com/pdf/galore.pdf>.

14 See Thelen, "Der neue Höhenflug der deutschen Mode," 49; "Evas Liebe zu Schwarz-Rot-Gold," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 17–18, 2001, 6.

15 Barthes, *Die Sprache der Mode*.

16 See Peter Frieze, *After Images: Kunst als soziales Gedächtnis*, Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen (Frankfurt/Main: Revolver, 2004), exhibition catalogue; Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, "On and beyond the Color Line: Afterimages of Old and New Slavery in Contemporary Art since 1990," in *Slavery in Art and Literature: Approaches to Trauma, Memory, and Visuality*, ed. Birgit Haehnel and Melanie Ulz (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2010), 64f.

Gronbach's archetypes become more obvious in contrast to a more critical approach made by the artist Anselm Kiefer in 1990.

Kiefer's piece *Lilith on the Red Sea* is very well known for its aesthetic command of German memory. In the recent context of the work, the use of white clothing is interesting. On a monumental canvas, the artist attached wavelike curved sheets of lead on which ash-covered garments with tufts of black hair were scattered in smaller and larger sizes. The clothes, which must have been white once, now became dirty, drifting without bodies over the leaden heaviness of



Fig. 73  
Anselm Kiefer, *Lilith on the Red Sea* (detail), 1990.

the greyish sea. They are traces of dead female bodies, adults, and children. Kiefer allegorized the history of the Jews' persecution and murder during fascism in the female figures of Lilith and her daughters. Furthermore, their absence points to the loss of the annihilated Jewish culture and what this means to German culture. The ash-covered clothes carry the traumatic memory of Nazi Germany's terror—the *Shoah*.<sup>17</sup>

This picture also evokes ideas of white garments before pollution. In the twentieth century, bleaching white tricots and shirts underlined the health and

welfare of the suntanned wellness body in the context of the life reform movement. This aesthetic setting was used in the context of Nazi propaganda in order to aryanize white body images. For example, on a calendar sheet of family advertisement in 1938, the designer Ludwig Hohlwein confirms the racial purity of the adults by using white clothes.

As a second skin, it carries the values of civilizational superiority, which are closely connected with the phantasm of a "white" skin in order to underline aryan values. The suntanned bodies are ennobled by the blending white textiles as pure-bred, whereby a dominant culture of *whiteness* in the context of a German nation is performed.<sup>18</sup>

Returning to Kiefer's work, the counter image of white garments could be understood as a metaphorical attribution to Jews who once thought themselves to be Germans and were very brutally disappointed. The white dresses on Kiefer's panel metaphorically point to the assimilation of the Jews into the German nation, or in other words, to their becoming German. In this context white textiles stands for German-ness. Against this background the actual performance of German nationalism in bleaching white clothing and national symbols in fashion journals makes one suspicious, even if it is not the same context. As after-images the fashion photos of Gronbach's collection operate within a global market earthed in *Deutscher Heimat* re-inventing white clothes in a spectacular way of whitewashing.<sup>19</sup> The confession belongs to the economic ideology of increasing profit, which is enforced by sensation. National symbols could be easily instrumentalized by it. The focus on a relaxed handling of these symbols propagates a casual lifestyle for those who can effort it, gained by hard labor. In the image of the "self-made man" or the "self-made woman," economic ideology weakens intellectual, particularly critical, expert knowledge in order to convert it into a market strategy and profit from its implementation. But this actually has nothing to do with either the acceptance of immigrants in Germany or a national identity as a multicultural, migration society.

17 See Lily Fürstenow-Khositashvili, "Anselm Kiefer—Myth versus History" (PhD diss., Humboldt-Universität Berlin, 2011), 97–98, 113–15, <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/docviews/abstract.php?id=39789>; Doreet LeVitté-Harten, *Anselm Kiefer Lilith* (New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 1990).

18 Cf. Birgit Haehnel, "Weiße Hemden—Reine Körper: Zwischen Gesundheitskult und Rassenwahn," in *Do It with Others: Postkoloniale Perspektiven und Alternativen in Mode, Kunst und Textil* (Weinheim: Belz-Verlag, in preparation).

19 See Engelke, "Eva Gronbach."



Fig. 76  
Gerhard Keil, *Die Turnerinnen*, 1939.



Fig. 75  
Gerhard Keil, *Turner*, 1939.



Fig. 74  
Ludwig Hohlwein, *Neues Volk*, 1938.

## Subversions of Whitening Dress Codes

The change of perception from *white* standardization to the parody of *whiteness* through clothing is imprinted in one of Max Abadian's photos. In 2009 he did photo shoots with US pop singer Lady Gaga for the fashion magazine *944*.<sup>20</sup> As a portrait it speaks to the many self-inventions of Lady Gaga to a pop diva controlled by media.<sup>21</sup> There is no pure identity, it has already vanished in a sequence of simulacrum in media spectacle. Interesting enough, in 2011 it was the cover of the journal *Texte zur Kunst* where the artificiality of the female image dressed in white attracts the eye. The porcelain complexion with lightly rouged cheeks, the pale lips and reddish blond hairs with rough, teased curls of a wig play with issues of covering and uncovering. A capricious hat with white laces, feathers, and pearls covers half of the flirting face like a mask. Indications of this are the black inkings, which corresponds to the darkly made up eyes and strongly defined eyelashes. Through the embroidered gauze of the white outfit, the skin of the arms appears only partly. The half-figure portrait hides the lower part of the body. The forward-pushing pose is taken back by her left arm crossed over her breast. In this change between showing and hiding, the question arises: Is there still someone behind the masquerade?

The mask-like appearance of the woman reminds one of Cindy Sherman's early photographs from the 1970s. The *Untitled Film Stills*, for example, deconstruct the creation of Euro-American femininity in media.<sup>22</sup> Sherman's exaggerated restagings of white female stereotypes aim to expose voyeurism. But at the same time the models refuse to be looked at, never entirely showing themselves. In this process, conventional female images transform into parody. A similar aesthetic belongs to the art journal's cover image. Dressing in white brings to mind several mental images: marriage dresses, seductive ladies in white robes of noble European societies, patriarchal fantasies of female purity and virginity. The eccentric white costume as well as the doll-like appearance of the female model on the art journal's cover are performing the image construction of the white diva, while they simultaneously also parody these images by revealing their aesthetic structures.

<sup>20</sup> See Max Abadian, "Photos of Lady Gaga 2009," <http://www.944.com/944/ladygaga/>; <http://gagallery.org/thumbnails.php?album=470>.

<sup>21</sup> See Vanessa Grigoriadis, "Growing Up Gaga: The Self-Invented, Manufactured, Accidental, Totally On-Purpose New York Creation of the World's Biggest Pop Star,"

*New York Times*, March 28, 2010, <http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/features/65127>.

<sup>22</sup> See Gabriele Schor, *Cindy Sherman: The Early Works: Catalogue Raisonné, 1975–1977* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), exhibition catalogue.





Fig. 77  
Max Abadian, *Lady Gaga*, 2011.

Under the photo a word written in white letters pronounced with an exclamation mark guides the interpretation process: Feminism is defined as an overdrawn form of *white* femininity like the photo above. The artificial appearance of the single woman formulates a critique of an aesthetical level, which recalls the strong women of color's protests of the racism of *white* feminists based on their privileged positions.<sup>23</sup>

The white lady's parody in Max Abadian's photo undercut the order of the regimen of white gazes, identifying not only femininity as a masquerade but also the ethnicizing of *whiteness*. It gives an ironic comment on ethnocentrism and the racializing gaze within a *white* feminism.<sup>24</sup> Looking at it more closely, something appears awkwardly shaped—the female figure is not as pleasing as the photo models in fashion journals. Perhaps this photo will offer a perspective for a future feminism: No female power in baggy trousers, nor haute-couture styled postfeminism—instead the picture could be understood as a critical statement to recognize visual structures of performing *whiteness* including the gaze, which constitutes fashion politics, too.

The last example I wish to introduce is about the empowerment of a Black women artist through re-interpreting the white robe. In 1989 Maud Sulter, born in Scotland, created the image of a dark-skinned woman dressed in white as a direct response to the lack of positive images of Black women in the public.

The work is part of the catalogue *ZABAT*, where Sulter addresses representation of Black women in Western culture in studio portraits of creative Black women, each representing one of the nine muses of classical antiquity.<sup>25</sup> In the recent image the woman artist Della Street performs *Terpsichore*—the muse of dance. She created the costume as part of a dance performance and installation called *The Quizzing Glass*. It is about the relationship between women within the power hierarchy of the mistress and the slave. The piece of pyrite in the hand of *Terpsichore*, the so-called "fool's gold," points to foolish material values of white European societies which lead to the "gold rush" and slavery work. But the photo does not show a mere change of roles from white and Black women. Using visual citations Sulter emphasizes the racist and sexist implications of Black women's representations in art history and visual culture. Many European ladies were portrayed in white robes referring to the whiteness of antiquity which functions as the ground of European civilization. Ideal female beauty was connected with the wealth of ownership of white linen and silk and contrasted with the uncivilized non-owners of these. These pictures, which have been reproduced so many times, help to construct the difference between Europe as superior in a process of *othering* in view of the occupation of and commercial trading in the colonies. Around 1800, the values and norms produced in art were transferred into daily life via the gauzy muslin dresses of the Empire style.<sup>26</sup>

The wig and particularly the lace-trimmed silk gown in Sulter's portrait emphasize through their bright white color against the dark background the beauty of the dark skin. In the catalogue *ZABAT*, the *Terpsichore* image is underlined by poetical lines that refer to former paintings of black court servants. Following Angela Rosenthal the figurations were used in order to lighten the skin of white ladies' portraits. That's why she interprets this aesthetical practice by using the words of Valerie Amos and Parmar Pratibha as an example of "the fundamental way in which white women have benefitted from the oppression of Black people."<sup>27</sup>

23 See Dagmar Schulze, "Unterschiede zwischen Frauen: Ein kritischer Blick auf den Umgang mit 'den Anderen' in der feministischen Forschung weißer Frauen," *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis* 27 (1990): 45; Stanley M. James and Abena P.A. Busia, ed., *Theorizing Black Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1993).

24 See Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, "Weiße Blicke: Bild- und Textlektüren zu Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus," in *Weiße Blicke: Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus*, ed. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, Karl Hölz, and Herbert Uerlings (Marburg: Jonas-Verlag, 2004), 8–18.

25 See Maud Sulter, *ZABAT: Poetics of a Family Tree* (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1989).

26 See Angela Rosenthal, "Calliopes Reisen: Maud Sulter's politische Collagen," in *Projektionen: Rassismus und Sexismus in der Visuellen Kultur*, ed. Birgit Haehnel et al. (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1997), 243–61; Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Ästhetik der Differenz: Postkoloniale Perspektiven vom 16. Bis 21. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2010), 158–81.

27 Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," *Feminist Review* 17 (1984): 5; see also Rosenthal, "Maud Sulter's politische Collagen," 247.

Instead of the white female body, Sulter uses white tools to warm up the dark skin color of the woman in the portrait. The white robe refers to the wealth of Western colonialism based on the transatlantic slave trade. The painted textile material carries European values of pureness, nobleness and ideal female beauty. The brilliant white clay addresses the European longing to become whiter than white. But with Della Street in a white robe of the eighteenth century Sulter creates an afterimage of the visual history of slavery. She refers to and transforms the art-historical archetypes into a portrait of a well-known Black woman. Thus, she intervenes in dominant processes of constructing public memory on an aesthetic level, which was dominated by *white* looks with all its denial of a problematic or even traumatic past. Maud Sulter and Della Street's intentions were to decolonize the aesthetic structure of representing the Black female body. The photo refuses a discriminating *white* look on the lady and empowers the critical black look on the strong personality of Della Street.

The subversiveness lies in the inter pictorial structure between this photo and the standard. Within this structure the white textile play an important part, because it refers to the ideology of classicism but put a different weight on its meaning. The white garment on the dark brown female body is not the romanticized counterpart of white femininity, but opens the concept of classicism for transcultural issues.<sup>28</sup>

To conclude, the aesthetic politics of fashion working on the meaning of the white dress is not as much untroubled as it seems to be. Often texts and images in fashion journals re-establish in an apparently playful way national and colonial contexts but nevertheless transport racializing values of *whiteness* at the same time. Critical interventions through art and photography had lead to new concepts of perceiving white clothing, but still refer to the previous pictures. While stylistic interventions in fashion such as Gronbach's in *Petra* and Christy's in *Vogue* recur on former values of colonialism and nationalism to instrumentalize them for economic reasons, the more critical photographic staging of strong Black women's subjectivity or the construction of *white* womanhood break out of the dominant visual structure. The liberation from discriminating stereotypes by appropriation and transformation intervenes in the genealogy of hegemonic picture discourse. The aesthetic superscription constructs afterimages, which as postcolonial images nevertheless transport ideologies of former times, but disrupts the power-keeping process by transforming them at the same time. The performance in Sulter's photo lets go of the black and white symbolism. Because it focuses on inter pictorial structures in a complex and very critical way, they are going to subvert them and give way for new politics in fashion.



Fig. 78  
Maud Sulter, *Terpsichore* (from the ZABAT series), 1989.

<sup>28</sup> See Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Ästhetik der Differenz*, 171.

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Fig. 3

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Bernadette Corporation, *Get Rid of Yourself*, 2003, videostill, screenshot by the author. Courtesy of the artists and Greene Naftali, New York.

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Bernadette Corporation, *Get Rid of Yourself*, 2003, videostill, screenshot by the author. Courtesy of the artists and Greene Naftali, New York.

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**Birgit Haehnel (PP. 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 241)**

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Gerhard Keil, *Turner*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 215.5 x 155.5 cm. Dresden, Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, *AK Kunst und Propaganda im Streit der Nationen*

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## Biographies

Ilka Becker, Ph.D., studied Art History, German Philology, and Philosophy in Cologne; in 2006 she completed her doctoral studies with a dissertation on "Fotografische Atmosphären" (Photographic Atmospheres). Since 1992, art critic; since 1996, curator; in 1996/97 she conducted scientific archival work of the photographic collection at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn; from 1998 to 2000, she was editor at *Texte zur Kunst*; from 1998 to 2002, scientific assistant at University of Cologne; from 2003 to 2008, scientific assistant for the research project "Medien und kulturelle Kommunikation" (Media and Cultural Communication); from 2003 to 2008, she taught and project at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste HBK Braunschweig and at the Universities of Bonn and Cologne; in 2010, she participated in the project "Schnittraum – Raum für Kunst und Diskussion" in Braunschweig (with Corinna Schnitt and students at the HBK Braunschweig); since 2009, she has been a faculty member and since 2013 professor at the Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, HBK Braunschweig. Selected publications include: *Just not in Time. Inframedialität und non-lineare Zeitlichkeiten in Kunst, Film, Literatur und Philosophie*, edited by Ilka Becker, Michael Cuntz, and Michael Wetzel (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011); *Fotografische Atmosphären. Rhetoriken des Unbestimmten in der zeitgenössischen Kunst* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010); *Unmenge – Wie verteilt sich Handlungsmacht?*, edited by Ilka Becker, Michael Cuntz, and Astrid Kusser (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009).

Tanja Bradarić, is currently pursuing a Ph.D. as a doctoral student at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. After her undergraduate work in the fashion studios of Veronique Branquinho and Raf Simons, she went to Paris to work for Balenciaga and Chloé. Her special interest of research lies in the fashion industry's power relations and means of production, as well as the competition and the synergies between fashion metropolises. Based on her experience and empirical work, she founded the fashion label Bradaric Ohmae in 2011.

Endora Comer-Arldt, completed her graduate studies in 2006 at the Technical University in Darmstadt with a Masters degree in

History and Education. From 2003 to 2007 she worked as project manager in youth and adult education for a non-governmental organization in developing an institution for young immigrants. From 2007 to 2012 she was a consultant for an international firm for personnel and corporate consultation. In 2014 she finished her dissertation, "Producing Images. Die Zusammenarbeit von Modeindustrie und Celebrities als ästhetische Ökonomie" (The Cooperation between the Fashion Industry and Celebrity System as an Aesthetic Economy) at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In 2012 she was lecturer at the Wella Stiftungsprofessur at the Technical University of Darmstadt and, since September 2012, she has worked for Mediabrands, an international media, marketing, and communications firm.

Martina Fineder, is a design historian and cultural scientist. Her work focuses on the ecologically and socially motivated culture of design and the consumer society. A trained product designer and cofounder of D+ Buero for Design, she shifted her interests to design history and material culture studies, teaching and researching at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and the Vienna University of Technology. Her doctoral thesis focuses on "The Promise of the Alternative. The Development of Critical Design and Consumer Culture in West Germany's 1970s." She also works as a curator for institutions like the MAK—Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art, where she curated the exhibition "Nomadic Furniture 3.0 – New Liberated Living?" (2013). Together with Thomas Geisler she initiated the establishment of the Victor J. Papanek Foundation (2011). Martina is the coeditor of the German re-edition of *Design for the Real World* (2009).

Eva Flicker, Ph.D., is professor at the Institute for Sociology at the University of Vienna. Her professional concentrations are on Film and Media Sociology, Visual Sociology, Gender Studies, Organizational Sociology, and group dynamics. From 2008 to 2012 she organized the Gender Studies program at the University of Vienna. From 2010 to 2013 she was a faculty member of GIK – Gender Initiativkolleg at the University of Vienna.



Current projects include: "Fashionable Queens: Fashion – Power – Gender," following an international symposium in December 2010 at the University of Vienna, together with Monika Seidl (publication in 2014); "Alte/r/n in den Medien," a project on the representation of age and elderly people in media; poverty and social inequality in Austrian film; and "Fashionable Power"—images of women politicians in international media.

Elke Gaugele, is an academic in Empirical Cultural Studies (Ph.D.), a writer, curator, and professor of Fashion and Styles at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. At the Institute for Education in the Arts (IKL) she chairs an innovative study program that brings together conceptual art and design practices with critical studies in fashion and popular cultures. Prior to this, she was assistant professor at the Institute for Art and Art Theory, in the department of Textile Studies at the University of Cologne, Research Fellow at the Department for Visual Arts Goldsmiths/University of London, and a Lise-Meitner-Habilitation grant recipient as well as a recipient of the Maria-Goeppert-Mayer guest professorship from the state of Lower Saxony. Her recent work as international researcher, lecturer and author focuses on the epistemologies of fashion and design, on gender, biopolitics and aesthetic politics, on postcolonial approaches in fashion and design studies and on craftivist practices. A selection of publications includes: *Craftista! Handarbeit als Aktivismus*, ed. Elke Gaugele, Sonja Eismann, Verena Kuni, and Elke Zobl (Mainz: Ventil, 2011); *Techno-Naturen. Design & Styles*, eds. Elke Gaugele and Petra Eisele, (publication series by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and Schleebrügge.editor, 2008); "Fashion Design," in *Design Dictionary. Perspectives on Design Terminology (Board of International Research in Design)*, ed. Michael Erlhoff and Tim Marshall. (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2008).

Birgit Haehnel, Ph.D., is an art historian with research interests focusing on Postcolonial Studies and Gender Studies in the field of art and visual culture. She currently heads the research project supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) "Weiße Umhüllungen – Weiße Verblendun-

gen. Zur Bedeutung des weißen Tuchs in der visuellen Kultur seit dem 20. Jahrhundert" at the Technical University of Darmstadt and at CePoG (Centrum für Postcolonial und Gender Studies) at the University of Trier. Lectures and publications on art in the seventeenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries on the semantics of skin color (racism critique), art theory, mobility concepts, bio politics, and trauma research. Recent study areas: textiles, migration, and critical whiteness studies.

Alicia Kühl, Ph.D., completed her Cultural Science studies at the University of Leipzig with a Master's degree and has just completed her doctor thesis entitled "Fashion Shows. Claiming the New in Fashion" („Modenschauen. Die Behauptung des Neuen in der Mode“) at the University of Potsdam under Prof. Dr. Gertrud Lehnert. Her doctoral thesis is based on the theory that the scene of invention has shifted from fashion design to fashion show design, thereby putting not only the position and function of the fashion show into question but also the apparel within the fashion cycle. In the winter semester of 2010, she was a lecturer at the University of Potsdam and since April 2011 she has been a postgraduate scholarship recipient from the German Research Foundation (DFG) under the title "Visibility and Visualisation. Hybrid Forms of Pictorial Knowledge." Her research interests lie in the theory and history of fashion as well as in the concepts of space, performance, atmospheres, and newness. A selection of publications include: *Modetheorie. Klassische Texte aus zwei Jahrhunderten*, edited by Alicia Kühl, Gertrud Lehnert, and Katja Weise. (Bielefeld: Transcript, forthcoming in 2014). "Die Choreotopografie oder das Schreien von Modenschau-Räumen (WT)," in *Die Medialität der Mode*, edited by Rainer Wenrich, (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014). "Mode ist Fernweh. Das Thema Reise in der Modenschau," in *Querformat* (6). (Bielefeld: Transcript, forthcoming). "Wie Kleidung zu Mode wird. Prozesse der Veräumlichung in Modenschauen," in *Räume der Mode*. Edited by Gertrud Lehnert (Paderborn: Fink Wilhelm, 2012). For further information see: [www.sichtbarkeit-sichtbarmachung.de](http://www.sichtbarkeit-sichtbarmachung.de).

Michael R. Müller, Ph.D., completed his doctoral studies at the University of Konstanz and is Professor of Visual Communication at the University of Chemnitz and Senior Fellow at the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen. Prior to this he was professor of Sociology at the University of Vechta and a junior professor at the Institut für Kunst und Materielle Kultur at the Technical University, Dortmund. His research focuses on: figurative hermeneutics, sociological aesthetics, cultural anthropology of fashion and textiles, and the sociology of science, media, and the body, and research of political culture. A selection of publications includes: "Apartheid' der Mode. Eine symboltheoretische Revision der formalen Modesoziologie," in *Mode als Moderne: Konjunkturen wissenschaftlicher Aufmerksamkeit*, edited by G. M. König, G. Mentges and M. R. Müller (Bielefeld 2012); "Figurative Hermeneutik. Zur methodologischen Konzeption einer Wissenssoziologie des Bildes," in *Sozialer Sinn. Zeitschrift für hermeneutische Sozialforschung*, vol. 1, 2012; *Körper Haben. Die symbolische Formung der Person*, edited by Michael Müller, H. G. Soeffner, and A. Sonnenmoser (Weilerswist 2011); *Stil und Individualität. Die Ästhetik gesellschaftlicher Selbstbehauptung* (Munich 2009).

Sabina Muriale, is a cultural anthropologist, curator, and lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in the discipline of fashion and styles. She is moreover the PR and Art Director of the fashion label Edwina Hörl, Tokyo, as well as a buyer and shop manager of the Viennese Shu!. In her doctoral work she investigates the presentational forms of contemporary fashion in the digital age. Her research concentrations include: presentational forms of contemporary fashion in museums and fashion shows, interaction between art and fashion, as well as technoculture and new marketing strategies of the fashion industry in the age of social media and other digital tools.

Taro Ohmae is a fashion designer and holds a Bachelor of Arts from Bunka Fashion College, Tokyo and a Master of Arts in fashion design from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna. He studied in the fashion class under the guidance of Veronique Branquino and Bernhard Wilhelm. He worked with Radic&Morgner, Wendy&Jim, Chloé and

Balenciaga. Together with Tanja Bradaric, he launched the fashion label Bradaric Ohmae in 2011. The Vienna-based label has won a number of awards: iD-International Emerging Designer Awards, Golden Centre Mall Prize, Dunedin, New Zealand (2012); Fashion Award of the City of Vienna (*Modepreis der Stadt Wien*) (2013); Vienna Awards for Fashion and Lifestyle, Category Accessory Designer (2014).

Barbara Schrödl, Ph.D. is art historian with research concentrations in the media history of art history, cultural-scientific research of clothing, myths about artists, art and film, as well as the visual culture during the Nazi and post-war eras. Since 2005, she has been assistant professor at the Institut für Kunstwissenschaft und Philosophie at the Catholic-Theological Private University Linz and since 2009 lecturer in the discipline of fashion and styles at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Prior to this, from 1995 to 1999, she was scientific researcher at the University of Bremen; from 2001 to 2002, she was guest professor at the Berlin University of the Arts with numerous teaching fellows at universities and art colleges in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Publications on cultural-scientific research into clothing include: "Introduction," together with Karen Ellwanger, Traute Helmers and Heidi Helmhold, and "Weiße Wäsche, 'reine' und doch schuldige Frauen, das Wirtschaftswunder und der Tod. Weiblicher Opfertod im Künstlerspielfilm der 1950er Jahre," in *Totenkleidung. Zur Konstruktion von Tod und Geschlecht in der materiellen und visuellen Kultur*, edited by Barbara Schrödl, Karen Ellwanger, Heidi Helmhold and Traute Helmers, (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010); "Fighting Machines, Authorities in Need of Protection and a Dominant Woman. Leather Clothing in German Films of the 1940's and 1950's / Kampfmaschinen, schutzbedürftige Autoritäten und eine dominante Frau. Lederbekleidung in deutschen Filmen der 1940er und 1950er Jahre," in *Macht-Leder-Lust. Verborgene Codes der Lederbekleidung im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Rosita Nenno and Christian Rathke, exhibition catalogue, Deutsches Ledermuseum, (Bielefeld: Offenbach 2008).

Ruby Sircar is a cultural producer and currently teaching as Senior Artist at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where she received and published her Ph.D. in Post-colonial and Cultural Studies. She was Research Fellow at the Jan van Eyck Academie Maastricht and Research Coordinator for the Initiative of Minorities in Vienna. Her work was shown, among other places, at the Gallery for Contemporary Art Leipzig, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Essor Gallery Project Space London, and Shedhalle Zurich. Her work focuses on cultural and migrative translation and knowledge production.

Birke Sturm, studied Art Education and English at the Universities of Regensburg, Aberdeen, and Vienna and at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where she completed her teaching degree in these subjects in 2008 with honors. She received a merit award from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna for her thesis. From 2008 to 2012 she was an assistant and finally student advisor in the Department of Fashion and Styles at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Since 2009 she has been teaching English at the Oberstufenrealgymnasium at the Lauder Chabad Campus Vienna. She is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis on different promises of feminine beauty ideals in modernism.

Monica Titton is a sociologist working in the fields of the sociology of fashion, the sociology of culture, media, and critical social theory. She is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at University of Vienna, where she worked as a research assistant between 2008 and 2012, and where she currently teaches Sociology at undergraduate level. From October 2012 to March 2013 she was a visiting researcher at the London College of Fashion (University of the Arts, London, UK). Her research interests include the links between fashion, collective, and personal identity dynamics, cultural transformations, and society. Her Ph.D. thesis deals with the cultural significance of fashion and street-style blogs as fashion media in their own right. A selection of publications includes: "Styling the Street. Fashion Performance, Stardom and Neo-Dandyism on Street Style Blogs," in *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explanations and Analysis*, edited by Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2013); "Erschöpfte Prominenz / Exhausted Celebrities," in *Leistung und Erschöpfung. Burnout in der Wettbewerbsgesellschaft*, edited by Sighard Neckel and Greta Wagner, (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013); "Fashion in the City. Street-Style-Blogs and the Limits of Fashion's Democratization," in *Texte zur Kunst*, 78, June 2010.

This publication was kindly supported by Gesellschaft der Freunde der bildenden Künste.

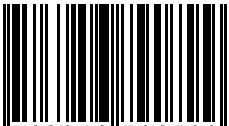


*Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* outlines critical studies in the present cross-sections of fashion, art, politics, and global capitalism. Critically examining contemporary collaborations of artists, media, and fashion labels, this groundbreaking anthology locates fashion within ecological and ethical discourses, postcolonial styles, and critical reflections on whiteness. Contributions from a distinguished group of international scholars debate fashion as a cultural phenomenon at the intersection of artistic, creative, economic, and everyday practices.

Aesthetic economies, the production of space, and alternative aesthetic politics are explored from interdisciplinary angles: art history, cultural science, sociology, design, and fashion studies. *Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* advances theorizing of fashion as an aesthetic metapolitics.

With contributions by Endora Comer-Arldt, Ilka Becker, Tanja Bradaric, Martina Fineder, Eva Flicker, Elke Gaugele, Birgit Haehnel, Alicia Kühl, Michael R. Müller, Sabina Muriale, Taro Ohmae, Barbara Schrödl, Ruby Sircar, Birke Sturm, Monica Titton

ISBN 978-3-956790-79-9



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