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Letter from the Editor

From the extraordinary crinoline to the mundane 'normcore,' from curatorial decisions to a consideration of the digital response to Chinese fashion designers, *Catwalk* 5.1 considers a number of intriguing topics.

In 'Hoop Dreams: The Rise and Fall of the Crinoline in Second Empire France,' the historian Leonard R. Koos, PhD, Associate Professor of French in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Mary Washington, Virginia, examines the crinoline, the caged or hooped underskirt, as an ideologically charged undergarment. Koos discusses the ascent of the crinoline in Second Empire France and considers its significance as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. The history of the crinoline in relation to gender politics during this period as associated with the Empress Eugénie and the response to the crinoline as an expression of the ambient anxiety of a society undergoing industrialisation and modernisation are among the topics Koos explores.

Normcore. What exactly does this term mean? In the second article of the issue, 'Normcore or a New Desire for Normality: To Be Crazy, Be Normal,' Cecilia Winterhalter, a contemporary historian whose research focusses on the construction of identity through fashion, consumption, luxury, and food, ponders the most googled term of 2014. Composed of 'normal' and 'hardcore,' normcore refers to the trend of being 'extremely normal,' or a desire for normality. In terms of clothing, normcore is the tendency to dress in a simple and average way. Winterhalter assesses the rise of normcore as a reflection of larger changes in mass society that have led to new ways of behaving. Among the topics she considers are the unsuccessful efforts by fast-fashion clothing chains to co-opt the aesthetic and the ways in which it has surfaced in the collections of famous fashion designers as well as in the clothing choices of celebrities who use normality as a form of communication. For Winterhalter, normcore is an intelligent response to social change, the end of the mass market, the economic crisis, and the commodification of individuality.

Catwalk was an official journal of the international conference *Fashion Tales*: *Feeding the Imaginary*, ModaCult - Centre for the Study of Fashion and Cultural Production, Universita Cattolica, Milan, Italy, 18-20 June 2015. The next three articles were selected for publication by our editorial board from a field of presentations heard at the conference.

'Cornell's Sesquicentennial: An Exhibition of Campus Style' was written by Denise Nicole Green, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Fiber Science and Apparel Design, and Director of the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Green's article discusses the social and political movements that shaped the fashions worn by students on the Cornell campus from 1865–2015; more specifically, she reflects on how pedagogy, historical research, and curatorial design can coalesce to show intersections among fashion change, identities, place, and cultural sentiments. The challenges to and opportunities for representing local fashion change through retrospective costume exhibition is another topic Green discusses.

The curatorial decisions of those combining fashion and costume exhibitions continues in 'Cinderella and the Brilliant Scavengers,' by Sharon Peoples, PhD, Convenor of the Museums and Collections Program within the Centre for Heritage and Museums, at The Australian National University (ANU). Peoples' provocatively titled article deliberates on the concept of the 'new museum,' which emerged in the 1980s as a way to attract wider museum audiences by employing social inclusion, participatory involvement, and critical engagement as strategies. She investigates the phenomenon of the fashionableness of these exhibitions and the tensions among fashion blockbusters, the 'new museum,' and independently curated exhibitions

that engage in critical analysis of the relationship of the body to society. Rather than examining the expected role of museums as the gateway between the fashion industry and the public, Peoples argues that fashion exhibitions fit within the museum as a 'theatre of memory' where social collectivity, commemoration, heritage, myth, fantasy, and desire are played out. She uses Cinderella's glass slipper as a metaphor for the restrictive discourses of history and design typically used by scholars to legitimise fashion exhibitions as a serious pursuit, and discusses how brilliant 'scavengers' such as Judith Clark, 'pick over' what others consider 'remains' and bring to the fore what is sometimes forgotten.

The final article of the issue is 'Born Global: Chinese Fashion Designers and the Digital Response,' by Tim Lindgren, PhD, an Australian fashion designer who is also Convenor of Fashion at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Australia, where his research focusses on creative entrepreneurship, aesthetics in design, digital media, and brand building in China. Lindgren's emphasis is not the aesthetics of fashion but rather the economic flows of fashion, an alternate view of a fashion system emerging from the increasing importance of Chinese fashion design to the domestic economy and from China's intensifying presence on the global stage. According to Lindgren, new applications of digital media have changed the field irrevocably and the concept of fashion is now acutely manifest in the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's depiction of liquid modernity.

Catwalk's reviews section is devoted to recent exhibitions and books. Our Exhibitions section, edited by Laura Petican, features three museum shows in the 5.1 issue of *Catwalk*. Ingrid Mida paid a visit to the Palais Galliera in Paris to access *Jeanne Lanvin.* In New York, Ericka Basile spent part of a day at The Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art to consider the wardrobe of fashion icon Jacqueline de Ribes in *Jacqueline de Ribes: The Art of Style*. In Toronto, Canada, Nathaniel Weiner visited the Bata Shoe Museum to take in *Standing Tall: A Curious History of Men in Heels.* Our Book Reviews section, edited by Jess Berry, features a review of a book that compliments an exhibition by the same name that was reviewed in *Catwalk* 4.2: *China: Through the Looking Glass*, by Andrew Bolton with John Galliano, Adam Geczy, Maxwell K. Hearn, Homay King, Harold Koda, Mei Mei Rado, and Wong Kar Wai. Our reviews sections also highlight Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions and Briefly Noted Books.

Thank you Laura Petican and Elizabeth Kaino Hopper for extra help putting issue 5.1 of *Catwalk* together.

Enjoy!

Jacque Lynn Foltyn, PhD
Chief Editor, *Catwalk: The Journal of Fashion, Beauty and Style*

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Hoop Dreams: The Rise and Fall of the Crinoline in Second Empire France

Leonard R. Koos

Abstract

Crinoline, while originally referring to a stiff linen cloth woven with horsehair and used for petticoats in the 1830s, ultimately became associated with the caged or hooped underskirt frames which became increasingly popular in the course of the 1850s. The crinoline style, while often regarded as an aberrant frivolity of women's fashion of the mid-nineteenth century, nonetheless evoked a surprisingly controversial and ideologically varied amount of commentary during the period. This article examines the history of the crinoline in Second Empire France and considers its significance as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. First, this article considers the social and industrial context within which the crinoline skirt's meteoric and tremendous popularity developed, namely the cultural and economic transformation of France under the reign of Louis-Napoléon and Eugénie. Next, it examines the history of the crinoline in relation to gender politics during this period as associated with the Empress Eugénie who was instrumental in its popularization in the 1850s as the latest in Parisian fashion. By examining a variety of historical documents and literary works, this article demonstrates how the hotly debated arguments for and against the crinoline not only constitute a fundamental critique of the Second Empire and the political power that Eugénie had attained in it, but also a generalised cultural narrative that expresses the ambient anxiety of a society being transformed by industrialisation and modernisation.

Key Words

Crinoline, Second Empire France, Empress Eugénie, theatre, gender, modernity, bustle, Charles Frederick Worth, silhouette.

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> Fashion reigns as a despot on the civilised world and it is not only dress that it governs, it commands things even more serious: the arts, language, the sciences, all walk according to its will.[1]
>
> -Henri Despaigne, *Le Code de la mode* (1866)

> Crinoline, what is this word?
> Does it have a place in our vocabulary?
> Is it French? Is it slang,
> Or quite simply popular?
> The Institute, in one of its courses,
> Will look into its origin;
> While we wait, let us all sing about
> The effects of Crinoline.[2]
>
> -Néron Prades, 'La Crinoline' (1858)

1. Introduction

On 12 January 1858, the musical review *Paris-Crinoline* by the popular playwright and inveterate dandy Roger de Beauvoir opened at Paris's *Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique*. De Beauvoir's witty play features the title character on a tour of the personified novelties of the French capital that include a newspaper gossip column, a restaurant menu, posters, a painting exhibition in *tableaux vivants* (including a representation of Jean-Léon Gérôme's *La Sortie du bal ou le duel de Pierrot*), and characters from current popular plays. The character Paris-Crinoline, whose ample skirt a street sweeper claims clears more refuse off the macadam pavement than he does with his broom, describes in song her inauspicious beginnings and current prominence: 'the crinoline insinuated itself in families; little by little, its empire grew. I conquered in every way. Gigantic hoops, ferocious flounces, colossal cages, astounding petticoats.'[3] Paris-Crinoline's rival, La Fée Epingle, then appears, musically stating her goal: 'I pop false skirts and false balloons, let's pop every false glory, every deceptive success.'[4] Paris-Crinoline, however, prevails over her rival, and in doing so promises that the New Year will be filled with new plays, new dress fashions, and unparalleled marvels.

From the outset, de Beauvoir's play proposes a suggestive conjunction of contemporary discursive values, ultimately revealing just as much about its conception of the crinoline as it does about the nascent fashion system and the culture in which it developed in Second Empire France. As the play's stage directions indicate in the first tableau, the eponymous character initially appears on the Rue de Rivoli across from the *Nouveau Louvre*. This portion of the Rue de Rivoli, from the Louvre to the Rue de Sévigné in the Marais, had been reconstructed and reopened in 1855, soon thereafter heralded as the architectural emblem of Haussmann's reconstructed Paris.[5] Just as the hyphenation in the name of the title character couples the new cityscape with the novelty of the hoop crinoline fashion, so too does this play implicate an image of the emergent fashion system with the Second Empire's proposed consumerist culture of theatrically excessive display and ostentation in which traditionally constructed and understood signifiers, like the streets of old Paris, were being demolished and replaced with those of an emerging coalescence of political power and cultural production.[6] In this manner, de Beauvoir's play, taking the crinoline skirt as an exemplar of the materially real and convulsive changes being effected on the Parisian cityscape, announces a new network of social, political, and gendered relations and activity in which values like modernity, public theatricality, and fashion become cultural manifestations of major and significant shifts in the French cultural landscape of the mid-nineteenth century.

2. Expansionism

> We live in a century of steam power, electricity, gas, guano, crinoline, rubber, photography, sewage drainage, and universal suffrage.[7]
>
> -Edmond About, *Le Progrès* (1864)

The history of the crinoline skirt in nineteenth-century France comprised a hotly debated and perhaps surprisingly controversial proposition in circles that ultimately reached far beyond those conventionally concerned with matters of dress. The word crinoline, which etymologically refers to 'crin' (horsehair) and 'lin' (flax, linen), enters written French in the 24 May 1829 issue of the professional journal *Le Courrier Commercial*, which reported that an inventor named César Louis Oudinot-Lutel had recently presented to King Charles X on 18 May a hunting vest made of the newly developed fabric and that a Paris manufacturer was also using the fabric for shoes.[8] For the next decade, Oudinot-Lutel's name would be inextricably

associated with the fabric (he submitted a patent for its production process in 1840) which was also employed in the creation of military uniform collars, cloth bags, and furniture covers. Later, in 1829, fashion journals like *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes* also indicated that the crinoline fabric was also being used for petticoats, thus establishing the connection between the fabric and nineteenth-century women's fashion.

Women's dresses and skirts, following the simplicity of Empire neoclassical styles, tended during the Bourbon Restoration and early constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe towards more volume, greater size, and a more rounded silhouette.[9] The stiff crinoline fabric facilitated this tendency. The more voluminous silhouettes of the crinoline-enhanced petticoats of the 1830s and 1840s prompted many commentators to note that these exaggerated shapes, like those of the hoop or cage crinolines of the 1850s and 1860s, recalled previous court styles in European women's dress like the English farthingale of the fourteenth century, the Spanish *vertugadin* that became popular in the fifteenth-century court of François I, and the French *pannier* (Image 1) that enjoyed a certain vogue in aristocratic and court circles in the Ancien Régime from the *Régence* to the 1789 Revolution.[10]

Image 1: Mid-eighteenth century French *pannier* made of cane, metal and silk.

By the 1840s, the word crinoline designated the style of the skirt rather than just the fabric that went into its composition. Beyond the stiffened crinoline petticoat, a variety of other elements were employed to create the desirably larger shape like flounces, as many as six petticoats, cartridge pleats (sometimes called fabric gauging), double flounced skirts, stiffened cords sewn into the petticoat hem, and so forth. The resulting bell-shaped silhouette, however, had the disadvantage of restricting movement and being extremely uncomfortable. Moreover, in a century wherein body odours and smells were increasingly anathematised in the context of burgeoning discourses of personal hygiene and cleanliness, this type of crinoline skirt was considered unhygienic particularly in warm weather. As a result, by the early 1850s, the crinoline style was falling out fashion.

Image 2: Early hoop crinoline, ca. 1856, made of steel and fabric.

Dressmakers in the 1850s experimented with the introduction of pieces of wood, whalebone, rubber tubes, and then steel wire into a petticoat's hem in order to create a stable structure beneath the primary skirt. Raoul de Lamorillière's 1855 *Crinolines et volants*, while clearly indicating the continued existence of the crinoline skirt of the 1840s, as well refers to steel wire used in the composition of some crinolines.[11] In the 22 November 1856 issue of the weekly journal *L'Illustration*, Philippe Busoni for the first time refers to a young woman whose 'steel hoops supported her skirts.'[12] While most fashion historians agree that the hoop or cage crinoline composed of steel wire undeniably appeared in second half of 1856, they cannot precisely identify a specific origin for this innovation[13] (Images 2 & 3). Beyond details of entrepreneurial ingenuity in the development of the hoop crinoline in the mid-1850s, other factors significantly contributed to its extraordinary popularity. First and foremost, the crinoline was a fashion that the young Empress Eugénie favoured, and photographs from late 1856 suggest that she was already wearing a structure reinforced with whale bone or a cage of steel wire construction. Another important catalyst for the hoop crinoline fashion in France was the popular play by Philippe Dumanoir and Théodore Barrière *Les Toilettes tapageuses* (Showy Outfits), which premiered at Paris's *Théâtre de la Gymnase* on 4 October 1856. The play features the character Emma who, in her desire to impress high society with her ever more opulent and eye-catching outfits, appears on stage in a dress 'with an enormous width and a miniscule hat,'[14] a satirising exaggeration of a current fashion as well as of women's seemingly blind participation in it. According to the writer and critic Maxime du Camp, 'the day after the premiere, the dress was ordered by more than twenty society women, and eight days later, the crinoline had doubled its dimensions.'[15] In both Eugénie's dress choices and a popular Parisian play on the subject of a new style, a burgeoning fashion press disseminated images and commentary on the enlarged crinoline to bourgeois and provincial readers.

The determination of the origin of the cage crinoline in France or elsewhere is perhaps less important than its significance as a consumer product and a cultural phenomenon in the mid-nineteenth century. In France, England, and the United States, steel processing factories quickly shifted their operations to producing the thin wire used for the hoop crinoline. In 1857, for example, Jules and Emile Peugeot, long before their industrial forays into the production of bicycles and automobiles, bought a second facility in Beaulieu where their flattening mills processed annually up to eight tons of light steel wire which was then sent to their nearby factory at Valentigney and as many as 25,000 cages were produced per year.[16] While comparable to the ready-to-wear future of clothes facilitated in the 1850s by the perfecting of the sewing machine and the emergence of the modern department store, the mass production of the cage crinoline was first and foremost an industrial proposition. In this respect, the combination of technology and fashion enhanced the fashionable dimension of this item with the added value of modernity. Beyond this, the cage's design, which recalls the introduction of steel into contemporary architecture as with Joseph Paxton's 1851 Crystal Palace in England as well and bridge and building construction in France, incontrovertibly conveyed that, its aesthetics in the world of women's dress notwithstanding, the crinoline constituted a triumph of entrepreneurial innovation and industrial ingenuity.

As the literal proportions of the cage crinoline grew in the late 1850s and early 1860s, so too did the popularity of the crinoline as a generalised cultural phenomenon. The crinoline during this period was the subject of many popular songs; it was the name of a prominent racehorse that had some success in the late 1850s, and it was featured in a number of cheap, often erotic, novelty items. As the crinoline craze expanded, its lexical dimensions grew as well. During the second half of the 1850s, for example, a number of sources dubbed the popular fashion 'la crinolinomanie,' most notably as the title of an 1855 album of comical hand-coloured lithographs by leading illustrators of the day including Charles Vernier, Charles

Fernique, and Paul Destouches.[17] In the 31 October 1857 issue of the satirical review *Le Journal amusant*, which consistently published cartoons depicting the new style in the late 1850s and early 1860s, Luc Bardas coined the term 'crinolineuse,' a reference to women who fervently followed the new fashion.[18] In a popular 1859 song entitled 'La Crinoline,' Gustave Leroy warned women not to 'crinoliner votre coeur' (crinolinize your heart), meaning to surround it with artificial obstacles.[19] Finally, by the end of the 1850s, the noun 'une crinoline,' by metonymical extension, additionally designated not only the woman who wore hoop crinoline skirts, but also significantly augmented that value with the pejorative characteristics of vanity, coquetry, and loose morals. This connotation would far outlive the actual fashion of the cage crinoline of the Second Empire, remaining in usage through the end of the nineteenth century.[20]

Image 3: Cage crinoline made of steel wire hoops and cotton straps, 1857.

3. Dress to Empress

> In the end, everything you are saying does not affect me in the least; I will continue on my path, I will follow my route triumphantly and joyously, like a queen of fashion, despite everything that is said against me.[21]
>
> - F. E. Pecquet, *La Grrrrrrande colère de Monsieur Calicot contre Madame Crinoline* (1862)

Image 4: Print of Franz Xavier Winterhalter's painting, *Empress Eugénie Surrounded by Her Ladies-in-Waiting*, hand-coloured by Arthur L. Cox, ca. late 1850s.

The vogue of the ever larger, dome-shaped crinoline of the late 1850s was initially and inextricably associated with the young Empress Eugénie who following the birth of the imperial prince on 16 March 1856 became a far more visible and influential arbiter of public taste in Second Empire France. Manufacturers and distributors alike seized upon this association and marketed a variety of fashion products with Eugénie's name and title attached to them, including W.S. Thompson's popular Empress crinoline model of the 1860s.[22] As Eugénie's persona and role evolved during her eighteen-year reign, so too did the form of this perceived association with fashion[23] (Image 4).

The meteoric rise of Eugénie's social celebrity and influence in Second Empire culture, like the cage crinoline that she favoured, was surprising and unexpected. In the wake of the coup d'état in December 1851, which brought the Second Republic to an end and ushered in the Second Empire, Louis-Napoléon initiated a series of unsuccessful marriage proposals with several royal European families (Princess Carola of Vasa of the exiled royal Swedish house and Princess Adelaide of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, niece of Queen Victoria), but announced on 22 January 1853 his intention of marrying Eugenia de Montijo de Teba, a young Spanish countess who had been residing in Paris with her mother for the previous two years. The countess had distinguished herself in Parisian circles as a great beauty, thus forging from the outset of her Parisian residence a rapport with the world of fashion. In his speech, Louis-Napoléon attempted to justify his engagement to Eugénie by contending that France's revolutionary history and subsequent path towards modernity had made it the upstart of Europe, a position comparable to

his decision to marry the little known Spanish countess out of love rather than due to political motives. The unfortunately chosen epithet of an upstart or a social climber would be associated with Eugénie throughout her reign as Empress. Louis-Napoléon and Eugénie were married a week later on 30 January 1853 in Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral, but the marriage sparked criticism and controversy from the outset. Aside from the substantial age difference between the two, Eugénie's somewhat murky aristocratic lineage and her reputation (along with that of her mother) as an adventuress and a social climber, the marriage was seen as a poor match that provided little or no political advantage in the complicated network of mid-nineteenth-century European alliances and rivalries.[24] Without being able to provide any international political influence, Eugénie was frequently reduced to her status as a foreigner on the French imperial throne, a xenophobic association encouraged by her regular inclusion of foreigners in court circles.

In the early years of her marriage, as many sources during the period and afterwards indicate, the young Empress's public role in the 1850s was associated with court life, the ever opulent high society of the Second Empire, and the world of fashion. Louis-Napoléon, whose '*conscious* use of dress to bolster his political prestige,'[25] provided the perfect context wherein Eugénie could quickly develop her fashion sense as well as establish her role as a trendsetter. As an anonymous critic derisively noted after the fall of the Second Empire, 'the new Empress brought to the Tuileries, with her *demi-mondain* habits, an unheard of taste for luxury and wild spending and showy outfits, a defect that soon spread to all classes in society, under the protection of such a high example.'[26] Nonetheless, contemporary historian Nancy Nichols Barker sees Eugénie's early role as formidable and ultimately consequential to the essence of what the Second Empire would become, contending that 'without her undoubted flair for fashion, Paris would not have again been the cynosure of Europe.'[27]

In 1859, fashion and politics decisively collided as the Empress was named *Régente* while Louis-Napoléon was engaged in the Italian Campaign. For the next decade, in pivotal forays into foreign policy like the disastrous 1862 Mexican expedition and the French military support of the patriots in the Italian unification movement (thus challenging Papal authority), Eugénie asserted a position that was frequently at odds with that of Louis-Napoléon and his ministers.[28] In the eyes of many critics of the Second Empire, Eugénie's role as an ever more powerful voice in French foreign policy in the 1860s contributed to the perception of the regime's inherent illegitimacy. Since censorship laws governing the press prevented direct criticism through visual caricature of the imperial couple, this deeply held dissatisfaction and disapproval was frequently deflected onto the world of fashion as an indirect critique of Eugénie.

The aggrandised political presence of Eugénie, in many respects, corresponded to the conspicuous size of the hoop crinoline and the new approach to fashion that it embodied (Image 5). The phenomenon of the *toilette tapageuse*, as initially represented in Dumanoir and Barrière's play, was analogous to both the crinoline and Eugénie's fashion sense. In that play, the protagonist Emma wants her dressmaker to create a sensational new outfit for an appearance at a reception. Her husband, a well-known stock market speculator, ultimately consents to his wife's overwhelming whim despite the outfit's enormous cost of over 8000 francs, fearing that, otherwise, rumours might surface about the state of his wealth if his wife were to be seen in a less excessively opulent dress. Although Emma causes a sensation in an absurdly large crinoline, she is undone by the revelation that a notorious courtesan named Nichette Mousequeton had been seen in the same dress. Having been shamed into her lesson, Emma vows to organise 'a sainted crusade against the abuse of adulterated skirts.'[29]

Image 5: Photograph of Empress Eugénie by Sergei Ludovich Levitisky, ca. 1864.

On one level, the concept of the *toilette tapageuse* markedly departs from the previous restrictive codes of appropriate dress that had dominated the upper-class French woman's sartorial existence. The crinoline as a *toilette tapageuse* definitively breaks with conventional codes of dress in a visual and physical spectacle of displayed excess of size, fabric, and colour.[30] On another level, the *toilette tapageuse* in the example of the crinoline delineates a shift in a woman's social authority. In *Les Toilettes tapageuses*, the husband Beaupertuis laments that 'when I get out of the carriage, I seem to be coming out of her pocket….At the theatre, I disappear completely, submerged in silk and lace.'[31] In short, the crinoline represents a challenge to his traditional authority and physical presence as a husband and a man.

The issue of gender looms prominently in the ways in which the cage was represented in public discourse, so much so that it was frequently figured as an instrument of female power. Moreover, while the crinoline may have been cumbersome particularly as women learned to manoeuvre and master its increasing proportions, its weight was considered by many women writing in fashion journals as liberating in comparison to the heavy multi-petticoats of the 1840s.[32] In the pages of women's fashion journals in the late 1850s and 1860s like *Le Papillon*, *Le Journal pour toutes*, and *La Revue des magasins*, women supporting and recommending the crinoline to their female readership invariably underscored its ability to modify the visual proportions of its wearer without recourse to more uncomfortable garments like the tightly laced corset. Olympe Audiard, writing in her weekly fashion column in *Le Papillon*, additionally evoked the crinoline as a limit of demarcation between male and female power relations, calling it 'a dispute' between men and women and noting that 'the more that it is maligned, the more it is adored.'[33] Implicit in Audiard's commentary, as elsewhere in these women's journals, is the belief that women had the ultimate authority over matters of fashion regardless of the opposition on the part of men. In this way, the choice to wear a hoop crinoline, irrespective of its advantages or disadvantages, was a political one.

While the majority of the supporters of the cage were women, several prominent men also defended its use. For example, in the anonymous 1857 *Défense de la crinoline*, the author contends that, given that women are prone to bouts of '"fashion-mania,' that is to say a servility without shame or common sense, for that irresistible power that is named fashion,'[34] the crinoline had the remarkable advantage in that it allowed the treatment of maladies and conditions without compromising the patient's vanity. Théophile Gautier, in an 1858 essay *De la mode* defended the cage as a quintessentially modern fashion that opposed the natural since it modified the visual proportions of its wearer's shape and established a sculptural effect as it created 'a pedestal for the bust and the head.'[35]

The most dramatic conflation of the crinoline and female power was Hippolyte Coignard's musical comedy *La Reine Crinoline* which premiered at Paris's *Théâtre des Délassements Comiques* on 11 October 1863. In the play, Frivolin and Citronet, find themselves shipwrecked on an unnamed island ruled by a group of women led by La Reine Crinoline. Clearly an indirect criticism of the Empress Eugénie's perceived political influence and power, La Reine Crinoline presides over a pleasure-filled society in which traditional gender roles have been inverted. The play ends with Frivolin leading a successful revolt of the island's men which seeks to 'break up the empire of the skirt'[36] and re-establish a conventional politics of gender by rendering the women nominally submissive to male authority. In the final musical number, however, La Reine Crinoline, militarily defeated yet in love with Frivolin, slyly sings 'From now on let's leave to the men all the appearance of power; we will keep it in reality.'[37]

While a traditionally gendered system of authority seems to have been re-established at the end of *La Reine Crinoline*, the play suggests that the experience of the crinoline has not definitively diminished women's power, rather it continues to exist albeit subversively. In Coignard's play, as elsewhere in Second Empire cultural discourse, the crinoline conveyed an

explicit and a subversive transgression of traditional codes of societal signification. On a variety of levels from the practical to the philosophical, the argument in favor of the cage crinoline in its motivated departure from conventions in women's nineteenth-century dress marked it as a disruptive signifier of social change and modernity as well as an equally destabilising presence in the gender topology of the Second Empire.

4. In the End

> And so, all things are extinguished
> That flourished in past times;
> The effects carry away the causes,
> Bees suck the lilies;
> And so every reign declines
> The novels from last year,
> And the crinoline skirts,
> And Le Verrier's stars![38]
>
> -Louis Figuier, *Les Merveilles de la science ou des descriptions des inventions modernes* (1868)

In the rapidly developing and evolving discourse on fashion in Second Empire France, the first prominent critic of the new fashion was Philippe Busoni, whose weekly column in the journal *L' Illustration* provided a running commentary on the crinoline mania from mid-1856 on, prematurely predicting in the 28 March 1857 issue that 'this evil that spreads terror among husbands'[39] was reaching its end. Another rhetorical strategy for attacking the crinoline, as seen in Albert de la Fizelière's 1859 *Histoire de la crinoline*, was to reduce the impact of its novelty and currency by associating it with previous court styles like the sixteenth-century *vertugadin* or the eighteenth-century *panier*.[40] Still another commonly articulated criticism of the crinoline was to underscore how it transgressed standards of good taste and elegance, particularly in the context of the notion that eccentricity in dress or behaviour would draw unnecessary attention and ultimately could compromise the reputation of the woman or girl in question.[41]

The most effective catalyst to crinoline criticism from 1856 onwards can be found in the pages of the illustrated and satirical press. In *Le Charivari*, *Le Journal pour rire*, and *Le Journal amusant*, among others, eminent contemporary illustrators like Charles Bertall, Henri Daumier, Charles Vernier, Alfred Grévin, Félix Nadar, Edouard Riou, and Emile Marcelin, among many others, implacably established a visual iconography analogous to print criticism of the cage crinoline. Images of women physically distanced from their husbands or dance partners, having trouble fitting into architectural spaces like staircases or hallways, having their skirts set afire if the crinoline wearers' stood too close to a fireplace, or being victims of windy weather corresponded to similarly humorous anecdotes in Parisian and provincial newspapers.[42]

The most extraordinarily hyperbolic moment in the Second Empire's crinoline controversy transpired on 22 June 1865 when the Bordeaux senator André Dupin, while speaking on the floor of the *Sénat*, took the occasion to rail against the 'unbridled extravagance of women'[43] in the example of the crinoline. Dupin's diatribe against the crinoline begins by evoking a critique of the Second Empire fashion system in which 'the excess of dress that throws everyone off their path'[44] leads to ruinous expenses for the household, a deleterious phenomenon pathologically imitated by the lower classes. Repeating an image used by Busoni, the crinoline is then evoked, in comparison to the classic La Fontaine fable in which the frog desires to be as large as the cow and, in the end, bursts. Dupin's quasi-nationalist anti-crinoline

argument ends with a call to action to the mothers of France to impose decency and restraint on their dress habits by rejecting the ruinous and superfluous styles of Second Empire fashion.

Image 6: Evening dress with corset and bustle, ca. 1884-1886.

Although Dupin's attempt to create a senatorial solution to the crinoline craze only resulted in an equally heated backlash particularly from women,[45] the eventual decline of the cage crinoline took place in the second half of the 1860s through a series of modifications of women's dress silhouettes. In these successive changes, the work and influence of the couturier Charles Frederick Worth was instrumental and decisive. Worth, a favourite designer of the Empress Eugénie as well as of several influential Second Empire fashion plates like Princess Pauline von Metternich and the notorious English *demi-mondaine* Cora Pearl, began to reshape the dress silhouette in the 1864 season by flattening out the frontal width of the crinoline and increasingly shifting volume to the back, first in a conically-shaped cage called the *crinolinette*, then with the introduction by 1869 of the fan train, and finally culminating with his world famous Princess line of soft bustles in the early 1870s.[46] By the 1870s, the hoop crinoline style, so intimately associated with the culture and politics of the maligned Second Empire, decidedly fell out of fashion and quickly disappeared. It is noteworthy, however, that the two undergarments that replaced it in women's dress – the bustle and the corset – while ostensibly functioning in a similar way to the crinoline in that they modified the woman's silhouette, were in the end very different in the ways that they constricted the body and ultimately restricted its movement (Image 6).

The hoop crinoline, emblematic of a new fashion sensibility, played the role of a complex cultural signifier on the discursive stages of Second Empire France. As a product of industrial manufacture and entrepreneurial marketing, the crinoline constituted a harbinger of things to come in the manufacture and consumption of clothing. While the industrial mass production of the hoop crinoline provided the material basis for the widespread dissemination in the late 1850s and 1860s of an affordable style to the entire spectrum of female French consumers regardless of their economic status, its representations in musical theatre, songs, satirical journalistic illustration, current slang, and political discourse attested to its pervasiveness and popularity in Second Empire culture. As a result, the hoop crinoline arguably constituted one of the modern fashion system's first egalitarian styles in its simultaneous appeal to and use by working, middle, and elite classes of French women during this period. As well, the prominence and cachet of the cage crinoline was decidedly enhanced by its use as a favourite style of the beautiful and fashionable Empress Eugénie. In many respects, the figure of Eugénie, an increasingly polarising presence on the Second Empire political landscape as her influence on French foreign policy grew, conflated with the equally controversial fashion of the cage crinoline in French society at large. In the evolving gender politics of the period, similarly, the cage crinoline decisively demarcated a divide between men and women, in this way relatable to other proto-feminist murmurings of the period. For its detractors, the crinoline represented an outrageous attack on good taste and decency, and an immorally ruinous excess, a sure sign of the decadence of an entire society and era. While we might understandably ask how a mere fashion could fulfil all of these diverse roles, what becomes apparent in the Second Empire crinoline controversy is how that mere fashion was transformed into a flexible and ultimately indeterminate figure onto which was projected the enthusiasm and anxiety of a society in transition from tradition to modernity.

Notes

[1] Henri Despaigne, *Le Code de la mode* (Paris: n.p., 1866), 3. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are the author's.
[2] Néron Prades, 'La Crinoline,' *Album chantant ou la chanson de tous pour tous*, vol. 1 (Paris: Le Bailly, 1858-1864), 4.
[3] Roger de Beauvoir, *Paris-Crinoline* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858), 2.

[4] Ibid.
[5] One of the most curious works on the crinoline during this period was P. F. Mathieu's *Les Nouveaux embarras de Paris, ou le macadam et la crinoline* (Paris: F. Malteste, 1858), based on a poem read at the *Athnénée des Arts* on 11 April 1858, which comically criticised both of these novelties of the modern metropolis.
[6] The reconstruction of the city of Paris was meant to be emblematic of the economic and social aspirations of the Second Empire. For more on the political dimensions of the expansion and transformation of the French economy during this period, see Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France* (New York: Pelican, 1961) and Richard Price*, The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For more on the relationship of art and politics during the Second Empire, particularly in the context of public display, see Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Patricia Mainardi, *The Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), and Richard Price, *A Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987).
[7] Edmond About, *Le Progrès* (Paris: Hachette, 1864), 356.
[8] 'Modes,' *Le Courrier Commercial* 15 (24 May 1829): 4.
[9] It is perhaps useful to briefly outline the succession of French regimes during this period. The Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy came to an end in 1830 with the short July Revolution. Louis-Philippe, duke of the House of Orleans, came to power and established a constitutional monarchy (sometimes called the July Monarchy) which existed until 1848. In 1848, another revolution took place and was succeeded by the establishment of the Second Republic. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was elected president of the newly established republic. In December, 1851, in a *coup d'état*, first named himself president for life then as emperor under the name Napoléon III in 1852, thus establishing the Second Empire. The Second Empire was a period of strong economic growth and imperialist expansion. The Second Empire came to an end in September 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War when, following a definitive French defeat at Sedan, Napoléon surrendered to the Prussian army. The Third Republic was established in the wake of the Prussian occupation and the bloody Paris Commune of 1871.
[10] The *vertugadin*, which had originated in Spain in the fifteenth century, in its French version popularized by the middle of the next century, consisted of a stuffed roll placed under a woman's dress and just below the hips at either side. The eighteenth-century *pannier*, sometimes called side hoops, was a structured undergarment that jutted out from the hips on either side, sometimes as much as two feet. Both of these styles differed from the nineteenth-century crinoline by both the type of silhouette that they created as well as by the type of woman who wore them. The *vertugadin* and the *pannier* were both court styles and, in the example of the latter, reserved for formal court occasions. For more information on the historical antecedents of the crinoline, see W. B. Lord, *The Corset and the Crinoline*: *A Book of Modes and Costumes from Remote Periods to the Present Time* (London: Lord, Lock and Tyler, 1868), 9-124.
[11] Raoul de Lamorillière, *Crinolines et volants* (Bordeaux: n.p., 1855), 44. As well, the lithographic album by Charles Vernet entitled *La Crinolinomanie* (Paris: Maison Martinet, 1855) which, like Lamorillière's book included images of both traditional and hoop crinolines, satirised the new fashion, another indication that the large hoop crinoline was already popular by the end of 1855. For more details on the various interworkings of the crinoline from earlier incarnations to its version as the cage or hoop crinoline, see Norah Waugh, *Corsets and Crinolines* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954) and Christina Walkley and Vanda Foster,

Crinolines and Crimping Irons: Victorian Clothes, How They Were Cleaned and Cared For (London: Peter Owen, 1978).

[12] Philippe Busoni, 'Courrier de Paris,' *L'Illustration* 28 (22 November 1856): 322.

[13] In this respect, the history of patents for cage crinolines is equally ambiguous. While patents for cage-like contraptions began to appear as early as the late 1840s, none of these were ultimately employed in the mass production of cage crinolines until the late 1850s. For more on this issue, see Michaela Cornelia Peteu and Sally Helvenston Gray, 'Clothing Invention: Improving the Functionality of Women's Skirts, 1846-1920,' *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 20 (2008): 1-17.

[14] Philippe Dumanoir and Théodore Barrière, *Les Toilettes tapageuses* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1856), 15. It is notable that, in nineteenth-century theater, most stage costuming was arranged for by the performers. In this respect, the exaggeratedly large crinoline worn by Emma can be attributed to Mademoiselle Delaporte who played the character in *Les Toilettes tapageuses.* For more on the suggestive conjunction of fashion and the Parisian stage during the Second Empire, see Brunhilde Wehinger, *Paris-Crinoline: zur Faszination des Boulevardtheaters und der Mode im Kontext des Urbanität und der Modermität des Jahres 1857* (Munich: W. Fink, 1988).

[15] Maxime du Camp, *Paris: ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle,* vol. 4 (Paris: Hachette, 1869), 192.

[16] For more on the Peugeot brothers' early industrial work, see René Sédillot, *Peugeot, de la crinoline à la 404* (Paris: Plon, 1960).

[17] This word was used as the title of an exhibition on the nineteenth-century French crinoline at Paris's Musée Carnavalet which ran 16 June 2009-9 September 2009.

[18] Luc Bardas, 'Bigarrures d'Arlequin,' *Le Journal amusant* 96 (31 October 1857): 7.

[19] Gustave Leroy, 'La Crinoline,' *Album chantant ou la chanson de tous pour tous*, vol. 1 (Paris: Le Bailly, 1858-1864), 17.

[20] From the outset, criticism of the crinoline posited questionable morals for the women who chose to wear it. Interestingly, after the crinoline had definitively fallen out of fashion in the 1870s, the women who reportedly could be seen wearing it were some Parisian prostitutes, thus perpetuating the erotic associations of the style. In this respect, as an undergarment subject to the dictates of erotic taboos in the period, the crinoline functions doubly. As an undergarment, it is literally hidden by fabric that covers it, yet its presence, due to the shape that it creates, is unmistakable, suggestively drawing attention to what lies beneath.

[21] F. E. Pecquet, *La Grrrrrrande colère de Monsieur Calicot contre Madame Crinolone* (Paris: Michel et Augustin, 1862), 7.

[22] For more on Thompson's role in the life of the crinoline fashion, see Lucy-Clare Windle, 'Over what Crinoline Should These Charming Jupons be Worn? Thompson's Survival Strategy during the Decline of the Crinoline,' *Costume* 41 (2007): 66-82.

[23] For more on Eugénie's association with fashion in Second Empire France, see the catalogue to the Musée Galliera's recent exhibition, *Sous l'empire des crinolines* (Paris: Musées de Paris, 2008).

[24] Don Cipriano Palafox de Guzman y Portocarrero, count of Teba and count of Montijo was indicated as Eugénie's father. Her mother, Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick, was the daughter of the Scottish-born diplomat William Kirkpatrick, who later became a wholesale wine merchant, and his part Belgian, Scottish, and Spanish wife Marie-Françoise de Grevignée. Eugénie's older sister Maria Francisca de Sales de Palafox Portocarrero y Kirkpatrick inherited all of the main paternal family titles, yet Eugénie frequently used several of these titles as her own. In addition, rumours widely circulated that Eugénie was actually the illegitimate daughter of a British diplomat named George William Frederick Villiers.

[25] Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 143.
[26] *Le Dernier empire* (Paris: Dentu, 1875), 21.
[27] Nancy Nichols Barker, *Distaff Diplomacy: The Empress Eugénie and the Foreign Policy of the Second Empire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 13.
[28] For more on the relationship between Eugénie's political role and fashion in the Second Empire, see Therese Dolan, 'The Empress's New Clothes: Fashion and Politics in Second Empire France,' *Women's Art Journal* 15 (1990): 22-28, and 'Skirting the Issue: Manet's Portrait of *Baudelaire's Mistress Reclining,*' *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997): 611-629. It is also noteworthy that as the Second Empire crumbled during the Franco-Prussian War and fell in its aftermath, a number of virulent pamphlets attacking Eugénie and her political role appeared. The most well known of these were the *La Femme Bonaparte* (published under the pseudonym Vindex, Paris: Martinet, 1870) and the anonymous *Madame Napoléon* (Brussels: Au Bureau du Petit Journal, 1871).
[29] Dumanoir and Barrière, *Les Toilettes tapageuses*, 15.
[30] By the 1850s, the invention and introduction of aniline dyes revolutionised the use of colour in women's dress, thus adding this dimension to the 'showy' quality of the *toilette tapageuse*.
[31] Dumanoir and Barrière, *Les Toilettes tapageuses*, 15. Another popular play from the period, Victorien Sardou's 1865 farce *La Famille Benoiton* evokes a comparable type of gender politics as it relates to women's fashion. Opening at Paris's Théâtre du Vaudeville on 4 November 1865, Sardou's play features a bourgeois mother and four daughters whose devotion to the *toilette tapageuse* compels them to manipulate the father so they might be able to purchase a number of excessively eccentric and expensive dresses.
[32] Despite the cage crinoline's immense size (by some estimates, up to six feet in diameter at the height of its popularity by the end of the 1850s and the beginning of the 1860s), its light weight makes it comparable to the American bloomer which had appeared in 1851 as part of a proto-feminist attempt at women's dress reform. Interestingly, in both instances, critics of women who chose these fashions frequently also impuned their moral character, suggesting that bloomers and crinolines went hand in hand with loose morals and sexual licence.
[33] Olympe Audiard, 'Courrier de la mode,' *Le Papillon* 15 (10 August 1861): 351.
[34] *Défense de la crinoline* (Paris: Maillet Schemistz, 1857), 7.
[35] Théophile Gautier, *De la mode* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1993), 30.
[36] Hippolyte Coignard, *La Reine Crinoline* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1862), 15.
[37] Ibid., 16.
[38] Louis Figuier, *Les Merveilles de la science ou des descriptions des inventions modernes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Furne et Jouvet, 1868), 58.
[39] Philippe Busoni, 'Courrier de Paris,' *L' Illustration* 29 (28 March 1857): 195.
[40] In this work, which is less of a history and more of a critical commentary, Albert de la Fizilière insists several times, on the fact that the *vertugadin* was a Spanish fashion that influenced the French court, an indirect reference to the Empress Eugénie.
[41] For example, the Comtesse Drohojowska wrote a number of works on fashion, decency in dress, and public manners, *La Vérité aux femmes sur l'excentricité des modes et de la toilette* (1858) being the best example of this sort of guide to good taste. For more on these types of works, see Philippe Perrot, *Le Dessus et le dessous de la bourgeoise: une histoire du vêtement au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
[42] For more on the visual image of the crinoline in the illustrated press in England where political cartoons involving the fashion and major figures like Empress Eugénie and Queen Victoria were permitted, see Christina Walker, '"Nor Iron Bars a Cage": The Victorian Crinoline and Its Caricaturists,' *History Today* 25 (October1975): 712-717.

[43] André Dupin, *Opinion du Procureur Général sur le luxe éffréné des femmes à l'occasion d'une pétition contre la prostitution rapportée par M. Goulhot de Saint-Germain* (Paris: Plon, 1865), 5. This pamphlet reportedly sold many thousands of copies in the weeks following its publication.
[44] Ibid.
[45] See, for example, the equally popular anonymous pamphlet *Les Dames ont toujours raison! Réponse de certaines femmes portant crinoline à M*** de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: E. Crugy, 1865) which makes the argument that Dupin was motivated by financial gain in publishing his pamphlet as well as ascribing his misogyny to the eighty-year old senator's questionable virility, cleverly using a sartorial analogy by conteding that Dupin's was no longer able to fit his foot into a shoe. Although Dupin never proposed specific legislation on the use of the crinoline and its supposedly ruinous effects for middle and working class household economies, the explicitly political and nationalist turn in this cultural debate also underscores how difficult it had become to limit and control the circulation of this fashion on any basis.
[46] For more on the career of Worth and his influence on the emerging world of high fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Diana DeMarly, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990). For an overview of Worth's career during and after the Second Empire, see Edith Saunders, *The Age of Worth: Couturier to the Empress Eugénie* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

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Normcore or a New Desire for Normality: To be Crazy, Be Normal

Cecilia Winterhalter

Abstract

Normcore, the most googled term of 2014, is composed of 'normal' and 'hardcore' and means something like 'extremely normal.' It refers to a new trend, summarised by a desire for normality, which leads to the tendency to dress and behave in a simple and average way. This article explains the phenomenon, not as a temporary fashion, but rather as a deeper change in society and as a new way of behaving, which affects many fields of society. Coined by the trend forecasting agency K-Hole, the term is often criticised as boring or interpreted as the sunset of a preceding subculture. Unsuccessfully imitated by fast-fashion chains, normality surfaces in the collections of famous fashion creatives and in celebrities' use of 'communicative' apparel. Normcore has become a topic discussed in fashion, music, consumer studies, sociology, psychology, and economics; however, it does not operate in ways that the social sciences or subcultural theories have previously conceptualised. Being normcore is a way to seek freedom in being nothing special and a successful way to protect one's intimate sphere. Normcores use normality to communicate higher transversal values (values that transcend traditional regional, national, gender, or class contexts). This innovative attitude is an intelligent response to the end of the mass market, the economic crisis, and the commodification of individuality. This rise of normality shows the ability of individuals to adapt to changing situations, but also protects the private sphere, allowing people to construct their identity without having to communicate it. In a communication society, this is a revolutionary, crazy act, which demonstrates the infinite capacity of culture to invent innovations and turn them into resources for social change.

Key Words

Normcore, normality, new trends, innovation, belonging, subcultures, identity construction, private sphere.

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1. Introduction

Normcore, the most googled term of 2014, is composed of 'normal' and 'hardcore' and means something like 'extremely normal' or 'normal to the extreme.'[1] It refers to an observed new trend, summarised in a growing desire for normality in society, which leads to the tendency to behave and dress in a normal, simple, or average way. Found as a topic almost exclusively in superficial journalistic articles, the term is alternately applied to a series of recent changes in many fields of society.

This article explains that the desire for normality as neither a temporary fashion nor the next subculture but rather as a deeper change in society and a new way of behaving, which affects many fields of society. There is an almost total absence of specialised definitions or scientific literature regarding this term.[2] It is almost exclusively quoted on web pages or web articles and often misunderstood. All this renders this task even more challenging.

2. The Term Normcore

This analysis starts with a working definition of the term normcore and with the search for its first appearance. The main definitions, found exclusively on the web, are discordant. For example, the *Urban Dictionary* defines normcore as: 'a *subculture* based on conscious, artificial adoption of things that are in widespread use, proven to be acceptable or otherwise inoffensive. Ultra-conformists,'[3] while Wikipedia calls it 'a *unisex fashion trend* characterised by unpretentious, average-looking clothing.'[4] For the author of this text, normcore is a much wider change in social behaviour and, in contrast to the two mentioned definitions, should neither be reduced to a subculture nor to a unisex fashion trend. This hypothesis shall be investigated further in the course of this article.

The communication expert Nancy Friedman[5] holds that the term normcore appeared for the first time in the webcomic *Templar, Arizona*, in May 2005, but at the time it was featured as a definition of a 'fictional' population, while normcores are indeed real people. The term normcore, in its current meaning, was first publicised in 2013 by the trend forecasting agency K-Hole in a report called 'Youth Mode: A Report on Freedom.'[6] The general interest in the phenomenon was further fuelled by a *New York Magazine* article by Fiona Duncan,[7] which, along with a rich series of other articles, represented the concept as a short-lived subcultural fashion trend. According to Google's annual 'A Year in Search Survey,' normcore was the most searched for term of 2014[8] and was named by the Oxford University Press as a runner for neologism of the year. A Google search in January 2016 yielded about 702,000 results.[9]

3. The Criticism of Normcore

Identified almost exclusively by outward appearance and the clothing adopted by the people called normcores, the style is composed of unisex T-shirts, hoodies, short-sleeved shirts, jeans or chino pants, and sneakers or Birkenstocks. Normcore has been strongly criticised and mocked as an imitation of provincial middle-aged Americans' informal dress.[10] Journalists and cool hunters especially denounced normcore or 'acting basic'[11] repeatedly, as a boring,[12] blank,[13] bland,[14] mediocre,[15] desolated, [16] or conformist[17] behaviour, which cares about comfort more than fashion and about sameness more than distinction.[18]

The normcore habit of finding and re-proposing the use of vintage items was denigrated as nostalgic retromania or as a tedious re-mixing of past items and ideas. It was explained as the tendency of going back to the past because of a contemporary incapacity to invent anything new, since living digital lives and relationships made people supposedly forget how to make statements with their clothing or consumption.[19]

4. Subcultural Theories

Normcore is often interpreted as the sunset of an immediately preceding subculture (mostly the grunge, the indie,[20] or the hipster[21] subcultures), but upon closer analysis it works neither as the social sciences nor as the subcultural theories have previously conceived. This raises some questions as to the definition of the term subculture, the in/capacity of subcultural theory to explain the normcore phenomenon, and the reasons for these repeated subcultural readings of normcore.

Subcultural studies teach that especially in the twentieth century, at the centre of all Western societies, there are the signs, the styles, and the ideas of the ruling classes while at their periphery there are those of their subcultures.[22] Subcultures are, summarising generally, groups of people which identify with an elective 'tribe' and therefore cultivate the subgroup's values and norms, even if these differ from those held by the majority of people or the mainstream culture. Intentionally different and marginal, these groups are never autonomous from the main culture, which is composed and influenced by the sum of all its subcultures. The cultural

subgroups are differentiated mainly by status, ethnic background, residence, or stylistic factors, which acting collectively on each member, unify the different groups.[23]

Historically, subcultural studies have concentrated on different research areas, dealing first with urban ethnography and criminality/delinquency studies, with the aim of analysing socially excluded non-normative groups.[24] Later studies investigated the social difference in specific subcultures, which were, however, all read as a symbolic resistance against bourgeois society.[25] More recent studies have focussed on identities and suggested that globalisation and the subsequent erosion of national identities are at the bottom of the fluid, 'pick-and-mix' quality of contemporary identity construction.[26]

While the importance attributed to subcultures by the social sciences is tied to the opportunity to analyse these tribes' identity-building processes, which are today, like all identity construction phenomena, undergoing a radical change, there is also a commercial interest in these groups. Driven by a mass consumption industry oriented towards the constant creation of new fashions, specific attention is directed at the so-called subcultures of consumption, which unite buyers according to their purchases, like, for example, Louis Vuitton bag buyers or Harley-Davidson motorcycle riders.[27] It is, nevertheless, only since the studies of the American anthropologist Ted Polhemus and his exhibition *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk, 1940 to Tomorrow* in the 1990s,[28] that subcultures are automatically associated with the dressing styles and the street culture of the young urban tribes, such as the Japanese Lolitas or the American Hipsters. By imitating their styles and consumptions, young urban tribes have been pervasively used to target new consumer markets. The vain attempt to uphold an outdated model of a society moulded by continually alternating subcultures, and the conviction that new tribes allow companies to anticipate and profit financially from future youth trends are probably the cause for the interpretation of all new behaviours as subcultures. They are also responsible for the reading of normcore as the newest youth tribe, even if its characteristics are not explained by the subcultural patterns.

These superficial readings concentrate exclusively on exterior appearance, without analysing how normcore behaviour responds to the change of society, the rise of its new identities, and to the rapid growth of all kinds of differences, which renew continually all styles, values, and ideas. Society's change in all fields[29] allows not only for the rise of individual freedom and the independent coexistence of diverse groups, but above all the spontaneous growth of diversities,[30] which, by their multiplied encounters, produce an infinite range of possible globalisations.[31] The astonishing capacity of contemporary society to incentivise cultural pluralism is not exhaustively explained by the subcultural theories. In fact recent studies have shown that the traditional subcultures, theorised so far, have come to an end. Social scientists claim that the terms subculture and mainstream are today no longer suitable to describe contemporary society.[32] Like the normcore phenomenon, many new forms of social expression now create new identities whose new denominators[33]are transnationalism,[34] common affinities, and behaviours, which all describe a new way of communicating transversal values (values that transcend traditional national, regional, gender, or class contexts) across cultures.[35] People's new behaviours, like the normcore style, accelerate this change by eroding the residual ideas of mainstream and subcultures and by creating new transversal links, which, merging cultures, incentivise the creation of multiple globalisations.

5. Normcore and Fast Fashion

Unfortunately, especially the middle- and low-range market do not react rapidly to new scientific findings, and the mass market fashion industry remains tied to its stereotypical readings of novelties according to subcultural patterns. In hopes of anticipating what was read as the newest subcultural fashion and turning it into the next low-cost street style, the informal

rhetoric of normcore was in fact unsuccessfully imitated by an ample range of fast fashion chains such as J. Crew, COS, Urban Outfitters, American Apparel, among others. In 2014, The Gap used the minimal normcore style, under the slogan #normcore, for its odd Dress Normal campaign, inaugurated in August 2014 with four spots directed by David Fincher. The ads featured nondescript black and white scenes in which a series of young women dressed in normcore style behaved in an indecipherable way.[36] The Dress Normal campaign was carried on in autumn 2014 with another four eccentric spots, directed by the award-winning Sofia Coppola, all closing with the line 'You don't have to get them, to give them Gap.'[37] The first two ads, 'Gauntlet' and 'Mistletoe,' produced for television, show respectively a young woman in a striped sweater arriving home to a bustling house at Thanksgiving and an awkward moment under the mistletoe. While the 'Crooner' and 'Pinball' ads, made to run online, present a young man lip-syncing 'Cry' by Johnnie Ray to his family and a young woman playing pinball in a restaurant while her boyfriend waits for her.[38] The peculiar representations of holiday togetherness introduce without doubt the notion that normal families are anything but normal, particularly during the holidays. At the same time these ads illustrate precisely what normcore normality (and the Dress Normal campaign, which borrowed these ideals for commercial reasons) is about. It is not about being normal. It is about being oneself, regardless of all peculiarities. The campaign is, in other words, telling its consumers, particularly millennials, that The Gap is, or can be, one's personal style.[39]

However, buying trendy outfits off the racks of a fast-fashion chain[40] is not at all what normcore is about and the capitalisation of fake subcultural knockoffs did not meet the consumers' desire for simplicity.[41] Brands like American Apparel, which followed what they believed to be the latest trend,[42] declined spectacularly, to the brink of bankruptcy,[43] for unsuccessfully mass-marketing normcore, which is not a traditional fashion style. In fact, as previously mentioned, normcore is more than a minimalistic way of dressing[44] or a new short-lived, subcultural style, and therefore needs an interpretation which considers the recent changes of consumption, of identity construction, and of society in general.[45]

6. Normcore and Fashion Creatives

In contrast to the lower range fashion market, the desire for normality surfaces, in varying degrees, in most of the recent collections by famous fashion designers. Sensing its importance, these creatives elaborate at least the general tendency, which is at the centre of the normcore phenomenon, in their recent works. The innovative designs of Miuccia Prada and Alexander McQueen[46] had already featured normality years in advance, through their consistent changes of the current concept of beauty. Subsequently, the aesthetics of the designers Phoebe Philo of Céline, Alexander Wang, and Isabel Marant, with their cerebral, minimalistic simplicity[47]and their re-proposition of *déjà vu* normality, show an evident elaboration of the ongoing normalisation tendency, culminating in normcore.[48]

Karl Lagerfeld's last two Chanel Autumn/Winter shows allude covertly to the rising importance of normality. The contrasts created between the glamorous catwalk situation and very normal, even ordinary, everyday life activities, as well as the discrepancies in the sets, the *mise en scène* or the role attributed to the models, create an alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*).[49] The 2014 Autumn/Winter show was staged in a giant 'supermarket' set at the *Grand Palais*. The aisles, stocked with over five hundred different products, colourful shopping carts, and Chanel grocery bags, were used as runways.[50] Instead of special offer sales, the goods re-labelled *Eau De Chanel* mineral water or *Mademoiselle Privé* doormats, were offered with increased prices (+ 30 percent), contributing to the viewer's alienation.[51] In this setting, ironically mimicking, but at the same time distancing itself from normality, trolley-wielding top models walked around in moth-eaten leggings and Chanel sneakers.[52] These

evoke, according to Lagerfeld, 'everyday life - the street…like jeans for the feet' and can be worn…'everywhere these days.'[53] The alienation effect was again perceivable at the Autumn/Winter 2015 show, at which surprisingly a platoon of celebrity Karl-muses such as Kirsten Stewart, Geraldine Chaplin, Vanessa Paradis, Stella Tennant, and Julianne Moore could be observed gambling in glamorous Chanel dresses at the tables of a deserted, fictional casino. More than through the inappropriate setting, the distancing effect was produced by the models, which, removed from their central role, wandered casually like production-line androids through the setting. Some of their luxury clothes had been 3D-printed with a computer.[54] In these performances, what is normal or central to a fashion show, was represented as marginal, while unique luxury garments were shown as normal, serial products. Lagerfeld's satires of consumerism and of gambling play with the concept of normality, by representing alternately the golden, exclusive world of fashion, the cynical games of the money/fashion mass markets, and the flow of normal, everyday life.

In Hedi Slimane's designs the normality concept surfaces more overtly. Since 2012, the creative director of Saint Laurent has presented a series of collections whose already-seen 'normal' forms reach back to collective iconic memories of the 1960s and 1970s. He designed many *déjà vu* basics, with normcore quality, like his *The Wild One*-like leather jackets, his white T-shirts, and his short, dark trousers. A series of models, with an even more accentuated retro recognisability, were dressed in his broad-brimmed Janis Joplin hats, chiffon sleeves, baby-doll dresses, and slouchy sweaters, and illustrate how Slimane renders the normal, desirable. He simply transfers the iconic value of everyday historical goods to his new, exclusive products. His black ankle boots, indifferently wearable by all genders, represent a unisex aesthetics, much appreciated and often worn by normcores. The normcore stress on interchangeability (normal/luxurious, old/new, male/female, street/catwalk) shows also in Slimane's use of worn patina on his new luxury items.[55] It is also visible in his creativity which crosses artistic genres,[56] in his scouting for models on the streets, in his hiring of underground musicians as models or catwalk sound managers,[57] and, finally, in the distinctive mix of rocker cool with traditional Parisian craftsmanship of his garments.[58] Slimane's creativity, which consciously breaks the 'established, normal' fashion paradigms, is ironically often criticised, very much like the normcore style, to be rather a 'simple re-styling of vintage items, than a new fashion.'[59]

7. Normcore Celebrities

A series of celebrities or 'icons of the style of having no style'[60]are identified as engaging with normcore aesthetics. They are said 'not to care' about their exterior appearance. The model Edie Campbell wears Birkenstock imitations, but they are branded Céline. Cara Delevigne, Keira Knightly, Kristen Stewart, and Rihanna cannot be blamed for looking normal when they are off-duty from their overdressed and over-observed red carpet jobs. They dress simply, but surely not blankly.[61] The non-style apparel exhibited by the director Woody Allen and the actors Jerry Seinfeld,[62] Larry David,[63] and Lena Dunham can only be read as a flag of their fictional (or maybe real?) characters' idiosyncrasies.[64]

The future Queen of Great Britain, Kate Middleton,[65] buying low-cost clothes off the web, and Pope Francis,[66] renouncing the glitz of traditional ceremonies,[67] are in their appealing simplicity,[68] famous testimonials of the informal rhetoric of normality.[69] Considering, however, their exposed social position, it would be naïve to interpret their attitudes as simple indifference. It seems rather to be an intentional communication, which shifts the emphasis from exterior appearance to higher values.

Finally two famous exponents of the digital world are also often quoted in relation to normcore. The Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg wears gray T-shirts and faded jeans that

look all the same, because he does not want to lose precious time choosing among different items.[70] Steve Jobs' simple essential black turtlenecks and anonymous jeans depicted the creator of Apple not as a multimillion dollar tech capitalist but rather as a wise philosopher.[71] Jobs' typical apparel is not a style unaware of simplicity but rather the look of an elegant understatement, such as Coco Chanel's iconic *petite robe noire* or her simple Chanel N°5 bottle.[72] Jobs' ingenious look was in fact invented by the Japanese star-designer Issey Miyake.[73] Zuckerberg and Jobs are perfect examples for the contemporary abandonment of luxury as the costume of power, in favour of a crafted absence of style, which publicises higher, ethical values. Zuckerberg's presumed simplicity is represented in the movie *The Social Network* (2010) as the provocation of a geek, new economy millionaire against the 'establishment.' Jobs' normcore can be read as a studied communication of authenticity, transmitted through a strategic guru essentiality.[74] It is interesting to notice that the appearance of these celebrities cannot be used to deduct any information regarding their identity, wealth, or interests. On the contrary, their 'communicative' apparel hides the wearer's true personality and ideas behind their message. The unobtrusive dress moves the focus towards other issues. Normcore ideas and dress are aware, intentional, and special. The visible normalcy is a carefully chosen shape, in which the absence of certain elements has the purpose of an intelligent communication of authenticity. Not by chance, normcore has also been called a 'boring fashion for interesting people.'[75]

8. Normality in Other Fields of Society

Normalcy is not just a temporary fad or the topic of superficial articles by journalists and cool hunters. During the last few years it has grown into a central theme in many fields of society, such as fashion, music, consumption, cinema, music, sociology, psychology, and economics.

Psychology registers in its patients a constantly rising desire 'to be normal,' as 'feeling different' prevents them from connecting with others. It also creates the 'template' of a successful and loved 'everyone else,' in contrast to one's life situation. An analysis of the meaning attributed generally by patients to this desired normal found that the stereotype representation of this normality, like the 'anonymous, casual clothing of normcore,' means to them simply finding a stable relationship, a house, and a secure job. It is, in other words, the desire to be like the others, to change without struggle, and live in a liberating unawareness.[76]

Similarly an analysis of the economy's 'new normal' revealed that this concept is based on the foreknowledge that after the economic crisis of 2008, the market will revert to a normal growth, but in a fundamentally new landscape.[77] Here, new rules will apply to organisations, institutions, and businesses.[78] No clear prevision of this normality, shaped by a mix of old and new forces,[79] can be made at the moment, but the economy will have to adapt to this innovation and to a society without digital limits. All economic organisations will have to offer services and products to new, demanding consumers, and will have to face the decline of mass consumption and the rising value of knowledge.[80] The economy's 'new normal'[81] will not be a turn of the habitual business cycle, but a total restructuring of the economic order.[82] The analysis of this tendency towards normality in all fields shows, in other words, that the return to the apparently normal (or old) state, to more informal items and ideas, is in reality the motor driving a series of complex changes and innovations.

9. Change and Innovation

Change happens when old traditions and new behaviours give life to new individualisms, communication, and ideas. They mix in alternative combinations and compose new knowledge, processes, and products. Innovation and new products rise from a renewal of already existing

items, through creative ideas and adapation processes, which recombine old and new elements in unexpected ways, generating progress.[83] Innovation, like the normcore ideal, therefore always recuperates and combines the old with the new.

Innovation is not born suddenly but rises from many often unrecognised precursors. It creeps unnoticed into old thoughts, values, and behaviours and modifies them. This is why it becomes visible only by changing perspective[84] and why, rarely recognised, it is often mistaken for what is already known. Columbus 'discovered' America, but for a long time kept calling it the Indies. Taking normcore for the next subcultural fashion, journalists consider it a boring trend. The judging criteria are incorrect, but people's inability to recognise an object does not mean it is effectively absent. On the contrary, the observer's criticism might be a frustrated response to information that remains incomprehensible to her or him and which, in our specific case, makes the normcore style and idea unavailable to a market searching for new subcultures.

Taking the shape of normalcy, normcore is an innovation that remains invisible.[85] The normcore idea is information that takes the shape of an absence.[86] In a world of plenty, however, this invisibility makes the information stand out, rather than disappear, as all the countless Google searches for the term normcore prove. This extreme visibility of the invisible is also the main idea behind the American 9/11 Memorial 'Reflecting Absence,' which commemorates the destroyed World Trade Center and the disappearance of its victims by showing just two empty holes. If we now think of normcore, of its constant revival[87] of the old combined with the new, of its absence of all typical subcultural characteristics and of the general difficulty to correctly interpret it, we must recognise that all these characteristics are, in the end, nothing else but the revealing symptoms of a yet invisible, but true rise of innovation.

10. How Normcore Works

Normcore is a declaration of liberty and self-determination but not in the way the social sciences have been teaching until now. Ideas and dress are not used by normcores in the classical way to 'dress up' or 'dress down' the social ladder, as theorised by the anthropologist Ted Polhemus.[88] The normcore dress inherits certain aspects of Thorstein Veblen's theory, according to which most of the expenses made for dressing are sustained for the sake of belonging.[89] Normcore, however, reverses Veblen's logic and uses clothes not to be part of an exclusive group but rather to mix and hide within the mainstream. Dress gives the wearer (according to Veblen, the late nineteenth-century 'new rich American') an identity, but normcore works in the opposite way and does not make one conspicuously visible but rather invisible. Distinction is no longer sought because, reversing the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's observation that 'social identity lies in difference,'[90] the means for identity construction are changing. The traditional common denominators generating common identities such as place, gender, race, common history, nationality, religion, and tradition are dissolving.[91] In this scenario, normcore becomes a new common denominator for identity construction.

People have grown accustomed to choose randomly from all subcultural ideas and fashions from past and present (in a similar way as they would decide to buy a can of soup over another)[92] in the 'supermarket of styles.'[93] They therefore also feel free to adopt individual, changing styles and behaviours, and to construct identity unobserved, hidden behind normality. In fact normcore is not 'the new way,' but 'a mix of ways' deriving from the liberty to assemble and keep the content to oneself.[94] It is not a look rejecting the mainstream style,[95] but rather a mentality, which internalises the ideas and values used for lifestyle and identity.

11. Why Normcore Works

Although it is often recognised by its average look, normcore is not about clothing. It is a general attitude with contingent reasons explaining its desire to be normal, to be equal, to

belong, to be free, and not to appear. In a world that searches for difference, the normcores embrace sameness[96] and see it not as the frightening evidence of a dissolving identity but as an opportunity to connect with chosen equals.[97] Normcore is not about items or fashions, but about people and identities. Abandoning the search for diversity for the freedom of being nothing special[98] makes being normal a liberating state.[99] Previously, people who were born in united communities sought a way to distinguish themselves; today, lonely and free individuals choose to adapt, so that they can share their belonging in a community.[100] In a time in which all common denominators are dissolving,[101] normcore fosters, in contrast to a traditional oppositional subcultural self, the belonging to a transversal, transnational community, becoming a new key for the construction of shared identities.

Normality is also a reaction against a market in which the commercial and the luxury brands invent new fashions and predict future consumption, and constantly hijack novelties and subcultural inventions and transform them into mainstream fashions. The Punk subculture, a subversive proletarian style invented to shock the bourgeoisie, was in this way turned into a useless, luxurious glossy magazine style.[102] Despite such continuous theft of identifying inventions, a rich sequel of creative subcultures[103] continued to bloom throughout the last century.[104] Nevertheless, recently this prolific flux,[105] according to the experts, may have come to a stop and new subcultures no longer rise.[106] Since the 1990s, all brands imposed their mass market upon consumers and appropriated the sport, museum, cinema, and music scenes through exaggerated funding and sponsorship,[107] in a manner condemned by many experts as a bio-branding[108] or even a neo-totalitarianism.[109] This rampant culture occupation did suddenly stop to concern physical items exclusively. The brands' preoccupation with exclusive services,[110] with reputational capital,[111] with the immaterial auras of their products,[112] and their growing diktat on lifestyles and identities[113] turned into a persistent and fastidious invasion of peoples' most intimate spheres. This created a desire to hide one's private life. Forced continuously to rebuild their identities around new patterns, some people started choosing what is not cherished by the market, abandoning products and lifestyles that are easily imitated, and started refusing to constantly re-invent external identity markers. The normality that makes them invisible protects them from the theft of their personal style. To shelter their conquered identities from parasitic appropriation, people now hide within the crowd, creating a private space in which to live their lives, ideas, and creativity unobserved.

This attitude makes normcore unpredictable for the market and in fact many brands are today losing power. Traditional mass consumption is decreasing, and since 2014, all indicators register a slowdown of the branded market.[114] The repeated devaluation of the Chinese currency, shaking the markets since August 2015,[115] signals that even the once booming Asian markets are reaching saturation.[116] Many brands, especially in the luxury sector, are losing ground. The Milward Brown's[117] 10th annual *BrandZ top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2015* ranking[118] declared that in 2015 the most valuable apparel brand was Nike (28th position), followed by Louis Vuitton (32), Zara (42), Hermès (54), H&M (75), and Gucci (76). In a declining mass market, the rise of normcore accelerates a process by which luxury brands lose the lead, not to cheap fast-fashion giants (a fact which would indicate a low-level extension of mass consumption), but to casual, non-distinctive sportswear. In an unsustainably consuming world, buyers refuse suddenly to communicate only through appearance. The normcores are therefore empowered contemporary consumers with an insight into modern market dynamics. They oppose consumption, with a studied ordinariness or a 'slowed-down' fashion.[119] Aware that consumption choices are relevant, the normcores make only temporary, reversible choices, refusing the definitive ones that would reveal their true position. While hiding under a collective sameness, the normcores can do, wear, and think what they want. Their individuality can be constructed, without being sold to other consumers as the new lifestyle. Being normcore

liberates one from the market's constrictive observation and grants a sheltered, common space for a peaceful identity construction.

Nevertheless, to recognise all these normcore characteristics, reality must be read in a new way.[120]As already mentioned, according to experts the terms 'subculture' and 'mainstream' and the idea of a constant alternation of subcultures, no longer explain contemporary society or the normcore phenomenon. To understand normcore and its novelty, a new paradigm has to be adopted.[121]

12. Conclusion

The normcore phenomenon is not a particular aesthetic, demanding to be minimalistic[122] or to be a uniform mass.[123] It is a general behaviour finding liberation in not appearing to be anything special. The ability to not stand out in one's lifestyle choices reverses the power relations between the needs of the market and individual identity construction,[124] revealing a profound understanding of contemporaneity. Looking unobtrusive is a way to shun the submission to fashions and the trappings of the pursuit of uniqueness.[125] In a world in which markets encourage us to search for exclusivity, the most avant-garde thing to do is to conform.[126]

Innovations and iconic signs, continuously elaborated and remixed with new meanings, are dynamic and adapt constantly.[127] Today, however, this adaptation has become invisible. The distinctive normcore characteristics, not exhibited by any subculture and masked as communication, like Jobs' communicative apparel, remain unrecognised by the public. The normcore style is in fact nearly invisible to consumption. Most of the items used by normcores already exist and are considered uninteresting or not worth copying.[128] Showing no distinguishing sign makes one incredibly different in contemporary consumer culture in a way that cannot be emulated. Normcores do not distinguish themselves from others by dress but use normality to communicate higher transversal values, such as connectivity, sharing, and empathy.[129] This creative and innovative attitude towards contemporary life is an intelligent response to the end of the mass market, the financial crisis, and the commodification of individuality. The normcore style efficiently prevents creative individuals and groups from being capitalised upon by the system.

Normcore uses clothes like the recently invented Australian anti-shark wetsuit. The clever idea behind this suit is to protect surfers from deadly attacks by mimicry. Scientific data about the shark's eyesight is used in the suits to render the diver invisible to sharks.[130] The suit hides the diver, much like the normcore style, by providing information that is unreadable to sharks.[131]

The rise of normality shows the ability of humans to adapt to changing situations. It avoids external interferences and protects the private sphere. In doing so, normcore allows for the possibility to construct one's identity unobserved, deciding in advance of other people what is cool,[132] without being forced to communicate it.[133] In a communication society, to keep something so central for oneself, is a revolutionary, crazy[134] act, and being normal becomes an innovative way to be very different.[135] Normcore is a turning point, the change of the paradigm, which not only shows an otherwise invisible evolution of society[136] but demonstrates the infinite capacity of culture to invent innovations and turn them into powerful resources for social change.[137]

Notes

[1] Among many others see Alex Williams, 'The New Normal,' *New York Times*, April 2, 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/fashion/normcore-fashion-movement-or-massive-in-joke.html.
[2] This absence of definitions and specialised literature is due to the fact that the phenomenon is very recent.
[3] Skaught, 'Normcore,' *The Urban Dictionary*, 27 March 2009, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=normcore.
[4] 'Normcore,' *Wikipedia*, n.d., accessed 4 April 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normcore.
[5] Nancy Friedman, 'Word of the Week: Normcore in Fritinancy: Names, Brands, Writing, and the Language of Commerce,' *Typepad*, 3 March 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://nancyfriedman.typepad.com/away_with_words/2014/03/word-of-the-week-normcore.html.
[6] K-Hole 1824, et al, *Youth Mode: A Report on Freedom*, October 2013, accessed 28 May 2015, http://khole.net/issues/youth-mode/.
[7] Fiona Duncan, 'Normcore: Fashion for Those Who Realize They Are One in Seven Billion,' *New York Magazine*, 24 February 2014, 66-7, accessed 10 January 2015, http://nymag.com/thecut/2014/02/normcore-fashion-trend.html.
[8] Zing Tsjeng, 'Normcore is the Most Googled Fashion Trend of 2014. Other Hot Topics Included Health Goth and Athleisure,' *Dazeddigital,* 15 January 2015, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/22964/1/normcore-is-the-most-googled-fashion-trend-of-2014.
[9] Search by the author 4 January 2016.
[10] Duncan, 'Normcore: Fashion.'
[11] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 23-4.
[12] Lauren Cochrane, 'Normcore: The Next Big Fashion Movement?' *The Guardian*, 27 February 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/fashion-blog/2014/feb/27/normcore-the-next-big-fashion-movement.
[13] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 26.
[14] Adam Tschorn, 'Normcore Is (or Is It?) a Fashion Trend (or Non-Trend or Anti-Trend),' *Los Angeles Times*, 2 April 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.latimes.com/style/la-ig-normcore-20140518-story.html.
[15] Vanessa Friedman, 'Mired in Mediocrity,' *New York Times*, October, 31, 2012, accessed 7 July 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/02/sunday-review/mired-in-mediocrity.html?_r=0.
[16] Jeroen van Rooijen, 'Trendthema "Normcore:" Die Mittelpracht,' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30 May 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.nzz.ch/panorama/die-mittelpracht-1.18312015.
[17] Jonathan Briefs, *Denk um die Ecke und Du Willst Nie Mehr Woanders sein: Die Kunst, sich Selbst zu Überraschen* (München: Koesel, 2015), 99.
[18] Duncan, 'Normcore Fashion.'
[19] See Briefs, *Denk um die Ecke*; Start Kin Woo, 'After Years of Opulence, AW14 Saw Fashion's Pendulum Swing Back to Banality - We Unpick the Season's Obsession with the Mundane,' *Dazeddigital*, Autumn/Winter issue 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/21873/1/perverting-reality; Aimee Farrell, 'Meet Norma Normcore,' *Vogue*, 21 March 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2014/03/21/normcore-fashion-vogue--definition.
[20] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode. A Report on Freedom*, 14.

[21] Briefs, *Denk um die Ecke*, 99; Serena Danna, *Addio Hipster, Ora Fanno Tendenza i 'New Normal,'* 6 Novembre 2014, accessed 2 April 2015, http://www.corriere.it/moda/news/14_novembre_06/addio-hipster-ora-fa-tendenza-new-normal-bcf68c30-65f3-11e4-b6fa-49c6569d98de.shtml.
[22] Tiziano Bonini, *Hipster, miti di oggi* (Milano: Doppiozero 2013), 38.
[23] See 'sottoculturale,' *La piccola Treccani*, vol. XI (Roma: Enciclopedia Italiana 1995), 402; Pier Giorgio Solinas, 'Subculture,' *Enciclopedia delle scienze sociali* VIII (Roma: Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani 1998), 445-50; Roberto Grandi, 'Sottoculture e Moda,' *Enciclopedia della Moda* III (Roma: Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani 2005), 107-19; Luca Salmieri, *Sociologia dei Processi Culturali e Sociologia della Cultura*, Course at Università La Sapienza, Rome 2010.
[24] There are three main research areas, of which the first is based on the works of Robert Park and the Chicago School in the early 20th century, see Robert Pyrah, *Re-Defining 'Subculture': A New Lens for Understanding Hybrid Cultural Identities in East-Central Europe*, *20th Century -Present*, Wolfson College Oxford Paper, 28-29 June 2013, accessed 2 December 2015, http://goo.gl/D3Dv8h.
[25] The second research area identified since the 1960s-1990s with the semiotic and class-based sociological approach of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Dick Hebdige's well-known volume *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge 1979) is also situated in this area.
[26] This research area is composed of individual studies, which are not aligned with a particular academic school. It is also called the 'Post-subculture' – David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, The *Post-Subcultures Reader* (Oxford-New York: Berg 2003) – or the 'After Subculture' – Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris eds., *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004) – approach, see Robert Pyrah, *Re-Defining 'Subculture.'*
[27] John W. Schouten and James H. McAlexander, 'Market Impact of a Consumption Subculture: The Harley-Davidson Mystique,' *E - European Advances in Consumer Research* 1, eds. W. Fred Van Raaij and Gary J. Bamossy (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research 1993), 389-393, accessed 2 December 2015, http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/11476/volumes/e01/E-01.
[28] Ted Polhemus, *Street Style from Sidewalk to Catwal*k (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994) and Ted Polhemus, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk, 1940 to Tomorrow*, exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, 16 November 1994-19 January 1995.
[29] This change affects the market, the sciences, the arts, the behaviours and the mentalities; see Giampaolo Fabris, *Societing. Il Marketing nella Società Postmoderna* (Milano: Egea, 2008).
[30] See Salmieri, *Sociologia dei processi culturali*.
[31] The schematic understanding of globalisation as standardisation, has to be substituted by the more complex idea of diversified contacts among different and changing cultures or diasporas which are able to produce a multiplication of diversification; see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernità in Polvere* (Meltemi: Roma 2007), 58 ff., 65 ff., 119 ff. and 224 ff.
[32] See David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl eds., *The Post-Subcultural - Studies Reader*, quoted by Bonini, *Hipster*, 54.
[33] It is commonly assumed that traditional identities collapsed, due to the emergence of the new consumption cultures and to the crisis of the idea of the nation state, see among many others, J. Dunn ed., *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?* (Oxford: Blackwell 1995).
[34] The term transnational was coined by Randolph Bourne (1886-1918). It describes a new transversal way of thinking about relations between cultures, which facilitates the flow of people, ideas and goods between countries and promotes global exchanges; see

'transnazionale,' *La piccola Treccani*, vol. XII (Roma: Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani 1997), 263.

[35] These transversal values must be imagined, like the transferal of the shift from the national to the transnational ideals, to all other fields of society.

[36] The four Gap Dress Normal Campaign ads showed under the slogans 'dress like no one is watching you' a girl watching herself in the mirror while kissing a guy, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJGMMHs2Vsk; under 'simple clothes for you to complicate' a girl looking at a guy running up the stairs to meet her, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GftyoomDi1I; under 'let your actions speak louder than your dress,' a dancing girl distracting a golf player, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Wum80hBekU; and under 'the uniform of rebellion and conformity' a girl changing out of her wet jeans in the backseat of a running car, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuGhnG7Z86I.

[37] See Richard Benson, 'Normcore: How a Spoof Marketing Term Grew into a Fashion Phenomenon,' *The Guardian*, 17 December 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/dec/17/normcore-spoof-marketing-term-fashion-phenomenon; Roselina Salemi, 'Normal but Special,' *D Donna*, 16 February 2015, 31.

[38] The four Gap Dress Normal Campaign ads by Sofia Coppola can be seen on YouTube, accessed 1 March 2016: 'Gauntlet,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FYmXqyI33g; 'Mistletoe,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B37otfo6Nm0; 'Crooner,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZKgQdvJFNQ;and 'Pinball,' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1uS-51cbck.

[39] Tim Nudd, 'Ad of the Day: Sofia Coppola Directs 4 Oddly Charming Holiday Spots for Gap Love, but not Understanding,' *Adweek*, 30 October 2014, accessed 4 January 2015, http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/ad-day-sofia-coppola-directs-4-oddly-charming-holiday-ads-gap-161076.

[40] Elizabeth Segran, 'The Fall of the Hipster Brand: Inside the Decline of American Apparel and Urban Outfitters,' *Racked*, 3 March 2015, accessed 2 April 2015, http://www.racked.com/2015/3/3/8134987/american-apparel-urban-outfitters-hipster-brands.

[41] Freely, according to Erin Eastabrooks, 'The Mass Production of Indie Culture,' *Seen Heard Known*, 5 June 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://seenheardknown.com/lifestyle/indie-culture/.

[42] Farrell, 'Meet Norma Normcore.'

[43] 'American Apparel a Corto di Liquidità Crolla a Wall Street,' *La Repubblica*, 13 August 2015, 29.

[44] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 24.

[45] Giampaolo Visetti, 'Pechino in Crisi Svaluta lo Yuan. Paura sui Mercati Mondiali,' *La Repubblica*, 12 August 2015, 1-3.

[46] See Claire Wilcox, ed., *Alexander McQueen* (London: V&A Publishing 2015) and the exhibit *Savage Beauty*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 14 March-2 August 2015.

[47] Emily Cronin, *The Celine Effect Boosts Lvmh*, 19 April 2012, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.elleuk.com/fashion/news/the-celine-effect-boosts-lvmh.

[48] Salemi, 'Normal but Special,'31.

[49] The *Verfremdungseffekt* is a performing arts concept coined by Bertolt Brecht. The alienation consists in letting familiar things appear to the viewer in a new light in order to make contradictions visible and allow a more conscious perception of reality. Bertolt Brecht, 'Verfremdungseffekte in der Chinesischen Schauspielkunst,' *Schriften zum Theather. Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik*, Siegfried Unseld ed., (Frankfurt an Main: Suhrkamp, 1993).

[50] Danielle Kwateng, '#PFW: Chanel Takes Fall 2014 Collection to the Supermarket,' *Styleblazer*, 4 March 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://styleblazer.com/226304/chanel-fall-2014/.
[51] Woo, 'After Years of Opulence.'
[52] Farrell, 'Meet Norma Normcore.'
[53] Woo, 'After Years of Opulence.'
[54] The Chanel computer used for this task has a name. It is called 'Sweetie.' See Tim Blanks, *Chanel*, 7 July 2015, accessed 12 August 2015, http://www.style.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-couture/chanel.
[55] Nathan Heller, 'Hedi Slimane Thrills and Scandalizes as Creative Director of Saint Laurent,' *Vogue*, 27 August 2014, accessed 11 May 2015, http://www.vogue.com/865208/hedi-slimane-thrills-and-scandalizes-as-creative-director-of-saint-laurent/.
[56] Hedi Slimane is: 1. creative director of a luxury brand; 2. exposing artist at photographic exhibits; 3. founder of musical projects.
[57] Leslie Camhi, 'A Paris Photography Exhibition Puts Hedi Slimane's Rock Fetish Center Stage,' *Vogue*, 15 September 2014, accessed 11 May 2015, http://www.vogue.com/1447447/hedi-slimane-photography-exhibition-sonic-paris/.
[58] Heller, 'Hedi Slimane Thrills and Scandalizes.'
[59] From a discussion with Adrien Roberts, Director of Education at Accademia Costume e Moda Rome, 16 May 2015.
[60] Annalisa Merelli, 'A Brief History of Normcore and Other Things that Weren't Things before They Became Things,' *Quartz*, 22 April 2014, accessed 12 May 2015, http://qz.com/201413/a-brief-history-of-normcore-and-other-things-that-werent-things-before-they-became-things/.
[61] Salemi, 'Normal but Special,' 31.
[62] Vito De Biasi, 'Normcore, il Nuovo Abito del Potere,' *Doppiozero*, 22 April 2014, accessed 15 May 2015, http://www.doppiozero.com/rubriche/1869/201404/normcore-il-nuovo-abito-del-potere.
[63] Benson, 'Normcore.'
[64] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[65] Kate Middleton's wardrobe choices earned her the surname 'Duchess of Normcore,' see Alison Lynch, 'Kate Middleton is Fashionable! She's the Duchess of Normcore,' *Metro,* 29 April 2014, accessed 5 August 2015, http://metro.co.uk/2014/04/29/kate-middleton-is-fashionable-shes-the-duchess-of-normcore-4712232/; and they are also the topic of Jacque Lynn Foltyn, 'Sustainable Kate? The Recycled Fashions of Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge,' presentation, International Conference Fashion Tales 2, Università Cattolica Milan, 18-20 June 2015.
[66] Pope Francis is known for his concrete examples of simple life (the greeting 'good evening,' his worn shoes, his participation in the Vatican street sweepers' mass, his residing in the Santa Marta structure instead of the Apostolic Palace). Many narrate his individualistic acting, which is close to mainstream feelings (such as his opening towards divorced couples, gays or ecological issues). He has also been described as 'an example of profound interior liberty' or showing 'an emblematic and anti-conformist behaviour.' See Cecilia Winterhalter, 'La Religione: La Chiesa cattolica tra tradizione, innovazione e mutamento,' *Antiche novità. Una guida transdisciplinare per interpretare il vecchio e il nuovo*, eds. Gabriele Balbi and Cecilia Winterhalter (Napoli-Salerno: Orthotes, 2013), 120.
[67] Salemi, 'Normal but Special,' 31.

[68] Ibid.
[69] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[70] Salemi, 'Normal but Special,' 31.
[71] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[72] Cecilia Winterhalter, 'Fashionable through Packaging, Food Design or Scent Project' (presentation, 8th Global Conference Fashion: Exploring Critical Issues, Mansfield College, Oxford University 15-18, Oxford, September 2014).
[73] Caitlin, *Future Beauty at the SAM: Fashion Redefined,* 26 June 2013, accessed 15 May 2015, http://modaandestilo.com/parties-events/future-beauty-at-the-sam-fashion-redefined/.
[74] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[75] Friedman, 'Word of the Week: Normcore.'
[76] Tania Glyde, 'Wanting to be Normal,' *The Lancet* 1, no. 3 (2014): 179-80, accessed 10 Jan 2015, http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(14)70325-6/fulltext.
[77] Ian Davis, 'The New Normal,' *McKinsey Quarterly,* March 2009, accessed 2 April 2015, http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/the_new_normal.
[78] Peter Hinssen, *The New Normal: Explore the Limits of the Digital World* (Ghent: Across Technology 2011), viewed 1 Mar 2016, http://www.peterhinssen.com/books/the_new_normal.
[79] Davis, 'The New Normal.'
[80] William H. Gross, 'On the "Course" to a New Normal,' *Pimco*, September 2009, accessed 2 April 2015, http://global.pimco.com/EN/Insights/Pages/Gross%20Sept%20On%20the%20Course%20to%20a%20New%20Normal.aspx.
[81] Catherine Rampell, 'The "New Normal" Is Actually Pretty Old,' *New York Times*, January 11, 2011, accessed 2 April 2015, http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/the-new-normal-is-actually-pretty-old/?_r=0.
[82] Davis, 'The New Normal.'
[83] See Cecilia Winterhalter, 'Innovative Products: Bags by Tommaso Cecchi De'Rossi,' *Fashion and Its Multi-Cultural Facets*, eds. Patricia Hunt-Hurst and S. Ramsamy-Iranah (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2014), 259-71; Winterhalter, *La Religione*, 120.
[84] Fabris, *Societing*, 6, 12.
[85] Bonini, *Hipster*, 55.
[86] For further information on how content takes the shape of an absence, especially in painful memories. See Cecilia Winterhalter, *Raccontare e Inventare. Storia, Memoria e Trasmissione Storica della Resistenza Armata in Italia* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing Group 2010), 27.
[87] Bonini, *Hipster*, 60.
[88] Ibid., 12; Polhemus, *Streetstyle*, 40.
[89] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Bremen: Outlook Verlag 2011), 116.
[90] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2013), 481.
[91] Jean-François Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna: Rapporto sul sapere* (Milano: Feltrinelli 1985), 30-31.
[92] Bonini, *Hipster*, 55.
[93] Polhemus, *Street Style*, 130.
[94] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 27.
[95] Segran, 'The Fall of the Hipster Brand.'
[96] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 23.
[97] Duncan, 'Normcore Fashion.'
[98] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 23.

[99] Ibid., 28.
[100] Ibid., 27.
[101] See section 4, 'Subcultural Theories,' in this article.
[102] Bonini, *Hipster*, 38
[103] Examples for creative subcultures are: teddies, mods, punks, beatniks, hippies, surfers, rockers, yuppies, funkies, rappers, grunge, hip hoppers, indies and hipsters.
[104] Bonini, *Hipster*, 39-40.
[105] Ibid., 48.
[106] Ibid., 43, 54.
[107] Ibid., 46.
[108] Vanni Codeluppi, quoted in Bonini, *Hipster*, 45-6.
[109] Nello Barile quoted in Bonini, *Hipster*, 45.
[110] Philip Kotler, 'Products, Goods, Services and Experiences,' *Slideshare*, Ch. 8, 2008, accessed 1 November 2010, http://www.slideshare.net/alwynlau/bus169-kotler-chapter-08.
[111] Bonini, *Hipster*, 46.
[112] Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture* (London: Routledge 2006), 83.
[113] Bonini, *Hipster*, 46.
[114] Reuters, 'Gucci Needs New Ideas, Talents to Combat Brand Fatigue,' *The Business of Fashion*, 17 November 2014, accessed 19 November 2014, http://www.businessoffashion.com/2014/11/gucci-needs-new-ideas-talents-combat-brand-fatigue.html.
[115] See Giampaolo Visetti, 'Pechino in Crisi Svaluta lo Yuan,' *La Repubblica*, 12 August 2015, 2-3.; Giampaolo Visetti, 'Pechino Svaluta Ancora. Borse a Picco,' *La Repubblica*, 13 August 2015, 2; Giampaolo Visetti, 'Terza Svalutazione ma Pechino Stavolta Convince i Mercati,' *La Repubblica*, 14 August 2015, 8.
[116] Associated Press, 'Asia Stock Markets Drop after Japan Economic Data as Investors Anticipate Slowdown,' *Fox Business*, 7 June 2015, accessed 10 June 2015, http://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/2015/06/07/asia-stock-markets-drop-after-japan-economic-data-as-investors-anticipate/; and Audrey Kauffmann; 'The Asian Luxury Market Is Stumbling,' *Business Insider*, 19 October 2014, accessed 10 June 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-h.k.-protests-china-slowdown-takes-sparkle-off-luxury-market-2014-10?IR=T.
[117] Milward Brown is an advertising company.
[118] Vanessa Friedman, 'Nike Is the Most Valuable Apparel Brand in the World,' *New York Times*, May 29, 2015, accessed 1 June 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/fashion/nike-is-the-most-valuable-apparel-brand-in-the-world.html?_r=0. Ranking, viewed on 1 March 2016, http://www.millwardbrown.com/BrandZ/2015/Global/2015_BrandZ_Top100_Chart.pdf.
[119] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[120] Fabris, *Societing*, 21.
[121] Thomas. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1996), 111.
[122] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 24.
[123] Duncan, 'Normcore Fashion'; and Briefs, *Denk um die Ecke*, 99.
[124] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'
[125] K-Hole 1824, *Youth Mode*, 23.
[126] Robin James, *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism* (Alresford: Zero Books John Hunt Publishing, 2015), 208-209.

[127] Bonini, *Hipster*, 37.
[128] Ibid., 60-1.
[129] Thomas Gorton, 'Everyone's Getting Normcore Wrong, Say Its Inventors,' *Dazeddigital*, 16 May 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/19118/1/everyones-got-normcore-totally-wrong-say-its-inventors.
[130] The suit 'Elude' uses knowledge about sharks' poor eyesight and their distorted perception of light and colour to camouflage man with the sea, while the 'Diverter' suit refers to natural repelling techniques. Covered in white and dark-blue stripes, the swimmer looks like a food which is unpalatable to sharks. See Lidjia Grozdanic, 'World's First Anti-Shark Wetsuits Protect Surfers and Divers From Deadly Attacks,' *Inhabitat*, 16 June 2014, accessed 22 June 2015, http://inhabitat.com/worlds-first-anti-shark-wetsuits-protect-surfers-and-divers-from-deadly-attacks/.
[131] Freely, according to Briefs, *Denk um die Ecke*, 99-100.
[132] Fiona, 'Normcore Fashion.'
[133] Freely, according to Bonini, *Hipster*, 62.
[134] Vincent Glad, 'Le Normcore: Plus Hipster que les Plus Hipsters, Soyez Fou: Soyez Normal,' *Slate*, 4 March 2014, accessed 4 April 2015, http://www.slate.fr/story/84161/normcore.
[135] Olivier Talon, Gilles Vervisch, *Dico des Mots qui n'existent Pas (Et qu'on Utilise Quand Meme),* (Paris: Place Des Editeurs 2015).
[136] Joan Billing, 'Normcore: Der Neue Hype um Normalität,' *Girls Drive* 7 (2014): 22-3.
[137] De Biasi, 'Normcore.'

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Cornell's Sesquicentennial: An Exhibition of Campus Style

Denise Nicole Green

Abstract

Fashion unfolds in places, produced by moments of friction between local and global worlds.[1] Broadly, this article examines how social and political movements affected fashions worn by students on the Cornell University campus during different eras, from 1865-2015. More specifically, I focus on the challenges and productive possibilities of representing local fashion change through retrospective costume exhibition, and how pedagogy, historical research, and curatorial design may be combined to show intersections between fashion change, identities, place, and cultural sentiments. Ezra Cornell, co-founder of Cornell University, aspired to 'found an institution where any person could find instruction in any study.'[2] Cornell continues to embrace the 'any person, any study' mantra. The diverse areas of study, alongside educational opportunities provided to women and people of colour in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has made Cornell a unique place within the Ivy League.[3] The campus is a coming-together-place for a diverse group of young people who study in a physically isolated, yet globally connected place. In order to represent Cornell-specific fashions through exhibition design, I worked with a team of undergraduate and graduate students to examine primary sources in university[4] and local archives,[5] material culture in the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection,[6] and oral interviews with current students and alumni as far back as the class of 1938. Combining archival and ethnographic methods enabled a dynamic costume exhibition chronicling fashions across the eras.

Key Words

Space and place, fashion, youth style, curatorial design, dress history, campus style, Cornell University, pedagogy.

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1. Introduction

How do we, as scholars and educators, interrogate and reveal fashion narratives? How do we involve students and the public in the telling and reading of these stories? Fashion unfolds in and is of places, produced by moments of friction between local and global worlds.[7] The philosopher Edward Casey has argued that bodies reflect the places they inhabit and simultaneously carry culture into these same places, making bodies and place mutually constitutive.[8] The university campus is a fascinating example of 'place as event' – that is, a moment in time for youth coming-of-age to experiment with dress, identity, and expression of ideology. With regard to university campuses and student style, anthropologist Denise Green, and fashion studies scholars Van Dyk Lewis and Charlotte Jirousek have argued,

> The convergence of people in space facilitates processes of looking, interacting and interpreting – catalysts for fashion creation and change… individual statements do not happen in isolation; they occur in physical spaces and, we argue, aid in the production of their social and cultural facets.[9]

This article chronicles a particular university location with a unique history: Cornell was one of the first co-educational universities in the United States and the first co-educational Ivy League school. It was established in 1865 to combine practical and theoretical education to both rich and poor, men and women, and people of various religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, making it a unique American university in the late nineteenth century. Within the context of this rich history, I explore the challenges and productive possibilities of using costume exhibition, research, teaching and curatorial design to communicate productive and integral intersections among fashion change, identities, place, and broader cultural sentiments on this unique university campus.

Image 1: Cornell University class blazers. (Cornell Costume and Textile Collection: #2015.01.01 (left) and #2002.37.03). Photo by Mark Vorreuter © College of Human Ecology Communications office, and courtesy of College of Human Ecology Communications Office

In anticipation of Cornell University's 150th birthday, I developed a special topic course about curatorial research and practice, the outcome of which would be an exhibition themed around the sesquicentennial (Image 1). I worked with a team of undergraduate and graduate students to research fashions worn by students on the Cornell campus in different eras. The student curators were part of the ongoing history to be depicted, thus making the exhibition a collaboration with members of the contemporary community. In order to capture and represent the distinctive styles of Cornell students, we began with research in university and local archives, then examined material culture in the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection, and finally conducted interviews with current students and alumni as far back as the class of 1938. The combination of archival and ethnographic methods enabled us to represent how Cornell

students have engaged with fashion and different apparel technologies across time, but within the cultural and physical context of Cornell University.

The outcome of the research was the costume exhibition, *150 Years of Cornell Student Fashion*, which opened on campus in the Human Ecology Building display cases in January 2015 and closed in July 2015. The exhibition primarily included items from the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection, a rich repository of over 10,000 garments, flat textiles, and accessories, many of which fall into the period of 1865 to present. In addition, we borrowed items from alumni and Cornell's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. Even with a large collection and generous loans, we were limited by exhibition space and challenged with representing entire eras through one or two dressed mannequins. Student curators approached this challenge through different research and design processes, which will be discussed later. In this article, I will illustrate and interpret the exhibition research and how curatorial design was used to articulate and share findings of our place-based project.

2. Background: Cornell University

Cornell University is an Ivy League school located in Ithaca, New York and is New York State's land grant university. While the charter was signed on 27 April 1865, male students did not arrive on campus until the fall of 1868, and women arrived just two years later in 1870. Cornell was the first co-educational Ivy League institution, but life for women on campus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was challenging. Female student journals and scrapbooks reveal experiences of harassment, often from resentful male peers. '[Cornell] has all the advantages of a university and a convent combined,'[10] reflected Anna Botsford Comstock, an early female student. Women remained in the minority through the mid-twentieth century. Until the early 1980s, women were referred to (and in our interviews with alumni, referred to themselves) as 'Co-Eds.' De facto quotas on women admittances were linked to university rules requiring women to reside in campus dorms or sorority houses. In 1965 these regulations were lifted, and the latter part of the twentieth century saw enrolments reach the 50/50 mark.[11]

Eventually, Cornell would develop seven different colleges: Arts and Sciences (A&S), Art, Architecture and Planning (AA&P), Engineering, the School of Hotel Administration, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR), and the College of Human Ecology (CHE). The latter three schools serve as contract colleges for the State University of New York (SUNY)[12] and Cornell remains a land grant university for the State of New York today. For the Cornell undergraduate class entering in fall of 2015, 29.1 percent hailed from New York State and 9.4 percent from other countries. While male students dominated the campus in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women now account for 52.4 percent of undergraduate enrolment.[13]

3. The Cornell Costume and Textile Collection

The Cornell Costume and Textile Collection is a product of Cornell's home economics legacy. Martha Van Rensselaer (Image 2) arrived on campus in 1900 to teach distance reading courses for wives of New York State farmers. Eventually, these courses became so popular that a full Home Economics curriculum was developed and a department formed in 1907 with the arrival of Flora Rose (Image 3). Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer would work together to develop the program over the coming decades and in 1915 hired Beulah Blackmore, an experienced educator and talented designer. When the department of Home Economics became a college in 1925, Blackmore took charge of the Textiles and Clothing Department and continued to develop curriculum.

Image 2: Martha Van Rensselaer, c. 1905. (#47-10-3394)

Image 3: Flora Rose (left) and Martha Van Rensselaer (right), 1921
(#23-2-749).

During the early 1920s, Professor Blackmore established the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection (CCTC), a teaching, research and exhibition collection. The collection included both Western and non-Western dress to emphasise cross-cultural studies. Blackmore travelled around the world with other home economics colleagues for five months in 1936 to collect non-Western clothing, textiles and accessories alongside contextual information from source communities. After Blackmore's retirement in 1951, the CCTC came under the charge of Elsie McMurry, who focussed collecting efforts and research on American women's fashion from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. In the early 1970s, faculty member Susan Watkins began documenting newly emerging clothing technologies and collected hundreds of items to chronicle advances in protective clothing, functional apparel design, and textile science. In 1992, Dr. Charlotte Jirousek became curator and focussed collecting efforts on historically and ethnographically significant apparel items. Jirousek developed relationships with alumni working in the fashion industry to collect runway samples, couture, and other examples of designer fashion. Perhaps most importantly for this project, Jirousek actively collected clothing worn by students during their time on campus as a means of documenting campus history as it was unfolding. I worked with Dr. Jirousek on this effort as an undergraduate student, and we produced an exhibition and an article about the collecting and curatorial process.[14] By the time I became Director of the CCTC in September 2014, the collection had grown to over 10,000 items, nearly all – with the exception of Blackmore's 1936 expedition – were donations from alumni, local Ithacans, or others with some kind of connection to Cornell University.

4. Cornell Fashion: A Theoretical Intersection of Time, Place and Subject Position

Large university campuses in small, rural regions of North America tend to be interesting laboratories for fashion experimentation and change.[15] The relative isolation of Cornell University makes it a particularly interesting case study. Whereas universities located in large cities or metropolitan areas educated commuter students, nearly all Cornell students live within, or nearby, the campus. They spend four years isolated from larger cities and develop community with students from all over the world and diverse backgrounds and identities. The result is a unique campus style co-constituted by place, though certainly not disconnected from broader fashions and the influence of world events.[16] The walking commute of students to and from classes facilitates real time and place-based exchange of fashion ideas. As the cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall has argued, we must be cognisant of 'sites of representation' – and while his scholarship emphasises discursive sites – this project examines physical sites where 'looking' occurs (i.e., the Cornell campus), and how ideas about identity are transformed through the articulation of representational sites and spectators.[17] The intimacy of the campus, in combination with its seclusion from the metropolis, has produced a distinctive campus style.

Students cycle through the university, and the population changes by about one-quarter each year. As a result, the place also changes. Our curatorial project celebrated the variable of time amidst place and a consistently youthful population. The dance between places and bodies is dynamic and dialectical. Cornell students are not *in* place, but *of* place through distinct modes of fashioning the body.[18] The seclusion of Ithaca amidst the farmlands, gorges, and waterfalls of upstate New York has fuelled a particularly inter-referential fashion process. Students attend the university because of its elite status and bring with them fashion ideas from other places. The university setting, simultaneously isolated and cosmopolitan, nourishes a unique and an intellectually informed fashion change.

The practice of relating to place, as anthropologist Keith Basso, has argued, is a social activity and 'places are sensed *together*.'[19] How does this unfold on and through the body? How

does the biological body become linked to social and physical worlds? Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that this occurs through habitus, the corporeal expression of identity, especially class, and of 'belonging' to a particular group. In the four years that students spend on campus, emerging from 'the conditions of existence' – that is, life on campus – habitus and bodily expression transform in direct relation to place.[20] As Bourdieu noted, habitus is not entirely subconscious but changes according to shifts in social and environmental conditions.[21] For the last 150 years, Cornell students have reacted to the climate of the university, and the world more broadly, through their dress.

5. Methodology: Curatorial Practice and Pedagogy

Curating this exhibition was an experiment in pedagogy. Six students enrolled in the course: Samantha Stern, Catherine Blumenkamp, Seul Ki (Rachel) Jun, Jiangxia Qin, Xi (Lily) Li, and Daniela Cueva, with each taking charge of an era.[22] The first conundrum was how to define particular eras. After much discussion and debate, we collectively decided that important world and local events (certainly not mutually exclusive) would contribute to the classification of time. The first era was 1865-1913, titled 'The Early Years.' Next, 1914-1945 chronicled 'The Years of World War.' The 'Post-War Boom' period was d 1946-1967. The fall of 1968 was a moment of great transition on the Cornell campus, when dress codes and women's curfews were abolished. It was also a period of great political change locally, nationally, and globally, and therefore the period of 1968-1983 was titled 'Social and Political Uprising.' In 1984, Cornell students developed a group called the 'Cornell Design League' and began organising professional fashion shows on campus; therefore students felt that 1984 was an important year and moment to mark the final era: 1984-2015, which they called 'The Information Age.'

Research methods varied according to each time period. Students exploring earlier eras were limited to archival and material records, whereas students studying more recent eras had the privilege of interviewing alumni about their memories of dress. Because the course was offered within the College of Human Ecology (of which the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection is a part), we primarily interviewed alumni from the College of Human Ecology (formerly the College of Home Economics). As a result, we interviewed many more women than men, which is a limitation of the study. Archival records also tended to privilege women, as female students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries kept more scrupulous scrapbooks and documentation of student life; however, scrapbooks, journals, and other records from male students were also evaluated. The Cornell Costume and Textile Collection also has a gender bias, with women's garments accounting for approximately three-quarters of the collection. Despite these limitations, we explored men and women's dress, and represented both in the exhibition.

In the remainder of this article, I will provide a brief review of dress from each era, drawing from the exhibit label copy, and will use images to illustrate how students chose to represent the diversity of fashion within their period in the limited exhibition space.

6. 1865-1913: The Early Years, Curated by Samantha Stern

Cornell students arrived on campus in October of 1868, two and a half years after the charter was signed on 27 April 1865. The first students were male, and therefore the student curator of this section, Samantha Stern chose to begin the exhibition with a male ensemble: a beaver top hat, double-breasted jacket, scarf, and dress pants from the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection (Image 4). In her archival research, she found the scrapbooks of male students to be much less descriptive than those of female students. She relied primarily on photographs and early issues of the *Cornell Daily Sun*, the student daily newspaper, for glimpses into male dress. Women's appearance during the latter part of the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries was much easier to research through meticulously kept scrapbooks. Ms. Stern decided to focus her section of the exhibit on the individual experiences of students, rather than claiming knowledge of a collective sense of dress. Ms. Stern found students from different backgrounds and social groups dressed with unique detailing, yet shared similar silhouettes.

Image 4: Samantha Stern. Photo by Mark Vorreuter © College of Human Ecology Communications office, and courtesy of College of Human Ecology Communications Office

Stern's research revealed that class disputes were an important part of campus culture and appearance. Male students were required to wear a 'freshman beanie' throughout most of the freshman year. The beanie was institutionalised and unavoidable – resistance to this dress code meant extreme hazing, and sometimes violence. Eventually, women would also be required to wear beanies, but not until the mid-twentieth century at which point the tradition had become passé and would soon disappear. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the beanie was a requirement for men as a mechanism to identify them as first-year freshmen.

In addition to class tensions, gender friction was also present. While Cornell became a co-educational institution just a few years after the first male students arrived on campus, women were not warmly welcomed. Historians Altschuler and Kramnick explained that women were mostly segregated from men (but when they did cross paths, were heckled and taunted).[23] Ms. Stern represented women's fashion through two individuals who were both graduates of 1905, at the height of Edwardian aesthetics. Ms. Stern contrasted these two women to show that differing social and political opinions existed amongst women, as well as small differences in aesthetics. Examination of Edith Garfield Chesebrough's scrapbook was quite telling: she had a refreshing sense of humour and portrayed herself as a free spirit who resisted social conventions, loved athletics and the outdoors. She was photographed in fields of tall grasses, hugging trees, as well as in the intimate space of her dormitory room, which was covered in small photographs and paper ephemera. Her scrapbook was also replete with clever notes

between friends and their jokes, as well as cartoons mocking the popular social activities of her day, like fudge-making dates between men and women.[24] In the exhibition, Edith was portrayed in a white Edwardian dress with more fullness at the sleeve to enable movement (she was an avid tennis player) (Image 5). The background in the display by Stern (Image 4) echoed the Victorian style of Edit's dormitory room: covered floor to ceiling in photographs, cartoons, pennants, and other ephemera.

Image 5: Garment from the Cornell Costume and Textile Collection (#2008.14.85). Photo by Jason Koski © Cornell University Marketing Group and courtesy of Cornell University Marketing Group

Adeline Kiep, by contrast, was a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, enjoyed popular 'mainstream' activities of her day (like the fudge-making dates Edith critiqued), was involved in the theatre, and also graduated in 1905. The ensemble used to represent her in the exhibit was similar in silhouette to Ms. Chesebrough's but much more ornate and included lace embellishments and printed fabric (Image 6). Ms. Stern endeavoured to show that, despite their social, political and cultural differences, Ms. Kiep and Ms. Chesebrough wore similar styles – exhibiting a kind of 'collective taste' as the symbolic interactionist Herbert Blumer has termed. The college campus is primed for Blumer's idea of fashion to unfold; he argued that the cultural arena must be ripe for change 'with people ready to revise or discard old practices, beliefs, and attachments, and poised to adopt new social forms; there must be this thrust into the future.' What better catalyst for fashion change than college years, a time of youthful questioning and exploration?

Image 6: Preparing the mannequin with dress to represent Adeline Kiep (Cornell Costume & Textile Collection #44). Photo by Jason Koski © Cornell University Marketing Group, and courtesy of Cornell University Marketing Group

7. 1914-1945: The Years of World War, Curated by Catherine Blumenkamp

The graduate student curator Catherine Blumenkamp examined the years of the First World War, starting with a Cornell Cadet Corps uniform from 1914 (Image 7), and finishing with a student runway design from the late 1930s (Image 9). Ms. Blumenkamp was able to include items actually documented as being worn (some even designed and sewn) by Cornell students.

Image 7: Cornell Cadet Corps uniform, circa 1914. (Cornell Costume and Textile Collection #2007.27.01 and #2007.27.03). Photo by Jason Koski © Cornell University Marketing Group, and courtesy of Cornell University Marketing Group

The Cornell Cadet Corps was the precursor to the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). Today, ROTC uniform regulations are extremely strict; however, in the 1910s, uniform regulations were strict in other ways. All Cornell male students were required to participate in the cadet corps and enrol in two years of military tactics. Jacob Reed's Sons of Philadelphia supplied uniforms, though unlike today, they included detailing unique to Cornell University – like brass buttons with Cornell insignia (Image 7). Cornell students, both men and women, participated in both war efforts and dress was an important part of publicly and visibly acknowledging support of US troops (Image 8).

Image 8: Cornell Cadets, c. 1913. (#13-6-2497)

Image 9: Larry Newman. (Yellow romper in image: Cornell Costume and Textile Collection #2015.03.02). Photo by Mark Vorreuter

The emergence of the fashion design program at Cornell was also highlighted in this section of the exhibit, with two garments made in the late 1930s for classes in the Textiles and Clothing department (Images 9 & 10).

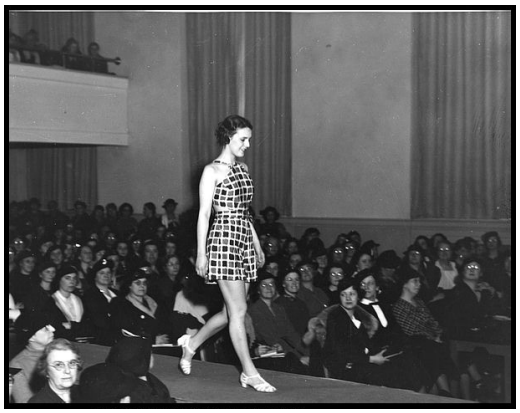

Image 10: Julie Robb Newman, 1937 Farm and Home Week Fashion Show (#23-2-749) © Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

Julie Robb Newman (Class of 1938) is pictured walking down the runway in a romper during a 1937 Farm and Home week fashion show (Image 10). As a promotional for the exhibit, we published this unidentified photograph in the *Human Ecology Magazine* and were contacted by her family, who had the same photograph in their personal collection. They very generously donated another garment for the exhibition: a yellow romper also featured in the Spring/Summer collection at the 1937 Farm and Home Week fashion show (Image 9). Also in attendance and featured on the runway was Eleanor Roosevelt in her inaugural gown (Julie Robb Newman was also her student guide during this trip[25]) (Image 11).

Image 11: Eleanor Roosevelt in 1937 inaugural gown (Cornell Costume and Textile Collection #915). (#23-2-749) © Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University

Featured to the right of Ms. Newman's romper (Image 9) was an evening gown in salmon (Cornell Costume and Textile Collection #98.56.01), designed by Priscilla Frisbee (Class of 1938). Ms. Frisbee was 96 years old in fall 2014, making her the eldest living alumna to be engaged with our research project. Her salmon coloured gown showed that students were actively producing new styles in the late 1930s.

8. 1946-1967: The Post-War Boom, Curated by Rachel Jun

The post-Second World War Cornell campus continued to be dominated by men, and alumni remembered it as a period of intense conformity. 'At that time, we didn't rebel,'[26] remembered Irene Su, who graduated in 1961. Women were subjected to strict dress codes and curfews and continued to live segregated from men on North Campus. Once they crossed the bridge over the gorge into Central Campus, women were required to be outfitted in a skirt. By the early 1960s, these rules had loosened and women were allowed to wear trousers to class but still had to wear dresses to the dining hall.

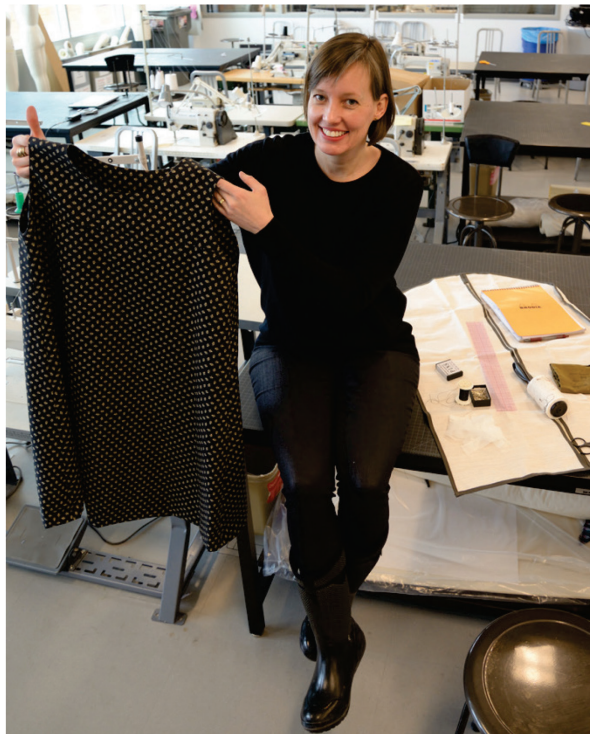

Image 12: Catherine Blumenkamp with 'Dinner Dress.' Photo by Mark Vorreuter

While the 1950s were rather conformist, the 1960s were less so. According to Laura Bowman Gray, who completed her undergraduate degree in 1966, Cornell women developed a garment known as the 'Dinner Dress,' a muumuu-like shift that could be carried to class and easily thrown over trousers.[27] The dinner dress was a means to redress inequality. It also enabled women to 'follow' the rules but at the same time to transform the rules and poke fun at

the idea of dress codes. While dress code and curfew regulations had loosened in the mid-1960s,[28] alumnae remembered that by the fall of 1968 all dress codes had been abolished. One of the highlights of the exhibition was a reproduction made of the dinner dress – it was not a garment that people saved since it was functional and certainly not considered beautiful; however, it was an important garment both socially and politically. Curator Catherine Blumenkamp interviewed alumni about the dress and worked with informants to select an appropriate fabric, develop correct design lines, and ultimately make the dinner dress (Image 12). The reproduction was included in the exhibit, in the transitional panel between *The Post-War Boom* and *Social and Political Uprising.*

9. 1968-1983: Social and Political Uprising, Curated by Jiangxia Qin

The late 1960s was a period of dramatic political and social uprising on college and university campuses across the United States, and Cornell was a particularly active campus (Images 13, 14 & 15). On the Cornell campus, women fought for equal rights, which essentially began with the abolishment of the dress code in 1968. 'Jeans were ubiquitous,' recalled alumna Dorothy Schefer Faux.[29] Beth Burdick, an alumna who arrived as a freshman in 1968 explained, 'We arrived with our dresses and skirts and ditched them in favour of blue jeans and flannel shirts'[30] (Image 16).

Image 13: African-American Cornell students escorted by police from Willard Straught Hall (#4-3-2093) © Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University

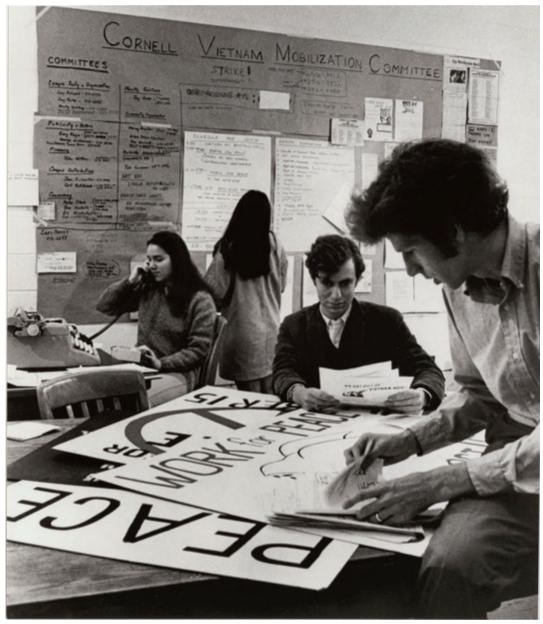

Image 14: Vietnam Mobilization Committee (#4-3-3857)

Image 15: Eric D. Evans (#APC 13242)

Advocacy for civil rights was of particular concern to students on the Cornell campus, and in April of 1969 black students occupied the student union, which made national news (Images 13 & 15).[31] In addition to civil rights, student protests of the Vietnam war were ongoing throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s (Image 14). Alumni remembered the campus as incredibly political, and the screen printed T-shirt, combined with jeans, became a space for emblazoning political messages – a practice still used on campus today (Image 16).

Image 16: Ensemble displayed to represent campus style during 1960s. Photo by Jason Koski © Cornell University Marketing Group, and courtesy of Cornell University Marketing Group

10. 1984-Present: The Information Age, Curated by Daniela Cueva and Lily Li

In the mid-1980s, Cornell students began adopting new technologies as fashion accessories, either worn on the body or carried by hand. While portable typewriters were used in the 1970s, and transistor radios commercially were available since the late 1950s, it was the Sony Walkman of the 1980s, Discman of the 1990s, and iPod of the 2000s that became truly widespread wearable technologies. Students carried laptop computers to and from classrooms and the library as another kind of portable, functional accessory. The colourful, decorative form of the 1999 Macintosh iBook G3 Clamshell shows that computer manufacturers were responding to aesthetic desires of college-age consumers: portable technologies were, and continue to be, fashion accessories (Image 17). In addition, the fashion silhouettes changed during this period, and these changes were highlighted through a common garment: blue jeans. Yoked, high-waist, tapered acid-washed jeans were included to represent the mid-to-late 1980s, distressed 'grunge' denim for the 1990s, and finally a mild, low-rise boot cut pair of True Religion designer jeans for the aughts. The jeans, of course, served as a material connection between new technologies and the fashioned body, as devices became small enough to fit inside pockets.

Image 17: Student curators Daniela Cueva and Lily Li. Photo by Jason Koski

This digital revolution began with the adoption of personal computers by students and the Cornell Library system in the 1980s (Image 18). By the late 1990s, the Internet had reached a critical mass. The digital World Wide Web was suddenly a new realm for expression of fashion ideas. Cornell students could make profiles on 'Facebook' in the winter semester of 2004, providing another place for representation of fashion. The evolution of technologies and rapid global communication has shaped the lifestyles, classroom experiences, and fashion choices of Cornell students.

Image 18: Computers on campus. (#4-14-2883)

Image 19: Lily Li. Photo by Mark Vorreuter © College of Human Ecology Communications office, and courtesy of College of Human Ecology Communications Office

Examples of early technologies, like typewriters, were exhibited alongside the garments of the earlier eras. In this last era of the exhibit, technologies became 'wearables,' and student curators – having never lived in a world without the Internet – wanted to exhibit the influence and ubiquity of wearable technologies. The exhibit ends with a mannequin holding an iPod, one earbud in and the other hanging out, a cell phone in the pocket, standing next to a classroom desk with a laptop (Image 19). The university, as a physical place, is in some ways questioned by the virtual realms that the laptop suggests. Representations of fashion, once recorded in scrapbooks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are now recorded digitally and shown publicly in virtual places like Facebook and Instagram.

11. Conclusion

This course on exhibition research and design enabled students to explore archival, object-based and oral history interview approaches to research and the benefits of collating findings from different methods. Students also reflected, in auto-ethnographic form, on their personal experience with fashion on Cornell's campus and in virtual realms. Ultimately, they pieced together a fashion history of place – certainly not divorced from broader national and international trends. They were able to examine styles unique to place, like the Cornell freshman beanie and the 'dinner dress,' and understand how these trends are entangled with identity politics, particularly struggles around class and gender. Since the opening of the exhibit, an overwhelmingly supportive response from alumni has encouraged students to engage in further research. Ultimately, students learned how social and cultural histories affect fashion trends and how places, like the university campus, provide a unique temporal nexus for the exchange and development of fashion. Costume collections, and the exhibits that arise from them, become another kind of place for telling fashion tales.

Notes

[1] Anna L. Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.
[2] Ezra Cornell, quoted in 'Any Study,' *Cornell University Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection*, 2006, accessed 14 November 2014, http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/ezra/exhibition/anystudy/.
[3] Morris Bishop, *A History of Cornell* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 143-146.
[4] *Cornell University Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections*, accessed 1 June 2015, https://rare.library.cornell.edu.
[5] *The History Center in Tompkins County*, accessed 21 October 2014, http://thehistorycenter.net.
[6] *Cornell Costume and Textile Collection,* accessed 18 September 2014, http://costume.cornell.edu.
[7] Tsing, *Friction*, 5.
[8] Edward Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,' *Senses of Place*, eds. S. Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), 34.
[9] Denise Green, Van Dyk Lewis, and Charlotte Jirousek, 'Fashion Cultures in a Small Town: An Analysis of Fashion and Place-Making,' *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* 4, no. 1 (2013): 72.
[10] 'A Hearty and Equal Welcome,' *Cornell University Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections,* 2006, accessed 10 October 2014, http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/ezra/exhibition/heartywelcome/.
[11] Glenn C. Altschuler and Isaac Kramnick, *Cornell: A History 1950-2015* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 121-122.
[12] The College of Veterinary Medicine is also a contract SUNY school, though it does not serve undergraduates.
[13] 'Entering Class Profile,' *Cornell University Undergraduate Admissions*, accessed 1 December 2015, http://admissions.cornell.edu/pdf/entering-class-profile.
[14] Green, et al. 'Fashion Cultures,' 71.
[15] Ibid., 87.
[16] Ibid., 101.
[17] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, in association with The Open University, 1997), 323-9.
[18] Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place.'
[19] Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 109.
[20] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 80.
[21] Ibid., 79-80.
[22] Lily Li and Daniela Cueva worked together, while all the other students worked on an era individually.
[23] Altschuler and Kramnick, *Cornell*, 60.
[24] Edith Garfield Chesebrough, 'Scrapbook,' #37-5-3792 (Cornell University Library: Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 1901-1905).
[25] Personal communication, email. Ann Newman, 15 November 2014. Ann Newman is the daughter of Julie Robb Newman, Cornell class of 1938).

[26] Irene Su, (Cornell College of Arts and Sciences Class of 1961), telephone interview by the author, 26 January 2015.
[27] Laura Bowman Gray, (Cornell College of Home Economics Class of 1966), telephone interview by the author, 5 January 2015.
[28] Altschuler and Kramnick, *Cornell*, 141.
[29] Dorothy Schefer Faux, (Cornell College of Human Ecology Class of 1969), telephone interviewed by the author and Samantha Stern, Catherine Blumenkamp, and Rachel Jun, students, 25 November 2014.
[30] Elizabeth Burdick, Cornell College of Human Ecology class of 1972, interviewed by the author in Ithaca, NY, 4 December 2014.
[31] Altschuler and Kramnick, *Cornell*, 174-5.

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Cinderella and the Brilliant Scavengers

Sharon Peoples

Abstract
Since the late 1980s, through the concept of the 'new museum,'[1] exhibitions have employed social inclusion, participatory involvement, and critical engagement to draw in wider museum audiences. The ethnologist Marie Riegels Melchior notes that fashion is fashionable in museums.[2] Fashion museums and fashion exhibitions are on the rise and fashion blockbusters have also been successful in enlarging the numbers of museum visitors, but arguably not broadening the social spectrum of audiences. The fashions of celebrities such as the designer Vivienne Westwood, the singer Kylie Minogue, and Princess Grace draw in the crowds, quantifying the relevance of museums to funding bodies. This article explores the tensions among fashion blockbusters, the 'new museum,' and independently curated exhibitions that engage in critical analysis of the relationship of the body to society. Rather than examining museums as the gateway between the fashion industry and the public, this article argues that fashion exhibitions fit within the museum as a 'theatre of memory' where social memory, commemoration, heritage, myth, fantasy, and desire are played out. While institutions construct the academic frameworks, or here as in my usage, use Cinderella's glass slippers as a metaphor for restrictive discourses of history and design in order to legitimise fashion exhibitions as a serious pursuit, I show that it is the arousal of memory through dress and a seeking or reaffirmation of identity that is the work of fashion exhibitions. Curators, brilliant scavengers such as Judith Clark, pick over what others consider as remains, the dissonant, bring to the fore what is sometimes forgotten, and retrieve from all kinds of spheres to fashion exhibitions that reflect the complex mix of the tangible and intangible that is present in fashion.

Key Words
Fashion, museums, folk museums, transformation, curators, blockbusters, narrativity, memory.

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1. Introduction

In March 2015, I visited the Lambing Flat Folk Museum (LFFM, established 1967) in the 'cherry capital of Australia,' the town of Young, New South Wales, in preparation for a student excursion (Image 1). Like other Australian folk museums, this museum focusses on the ordinary and the everyday of rural life, and is heavily reliant on local history, local historians, volunteers, and donated objects for the collection.

It may not sound as though the LFFM holds much potential for a fashion curator, as fashion exhibitions have become high points of innovation in exhibition design. This could be attributed not only to the rise of the 'new museum,' but also to a shift in gender away from a masculine culture in high level positions within museums.[3] The impact of this trend has seen the development of fashion collections from clothing used particularly as descriptors in the late nineteenth century ethnographic collections, to garments primarily charting linear historical shifts in social history collections in the mid-twentieth century, towards fashion as design and fashion as contemporary art in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It can be difficult to return to old style folk museums, when shows such as *Alexander McQueen: Savage*

Beauty (Metropolitan Museum of Art 4 May - 7 August 2011; Victoria and Albert Museum, 14 March - 2 August 2015), or *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* (Victoria and Albert Museum, 9 April - 25 August 2011; National Gallery of Victoria, 7 October - 8 Feb 2014) are travelling around the globe. While audiences tend to adjust their expectations to location and the nomenclature of museums, be they national or regional, the contrast stimulated me to reflect on the role and the power of curators, as well as to question what fashion does in museums. This article will show that the potential for fashion as a vehicle for demonstrating ideas other than through rubrics of design or history has been growing. We all wear garments. We express identity, politics, status, age, gender, social values, and mental state through the way we dress, each and every day. These key issues are also explored in many museum exhibitions.

Image 1: The Lambing Flat Folk Museum, Young, New South Wales © 2015. Photograph by Sharon Peoples

Small museums often have an abundance of clothing. For them, it is a case of not only managing and caring for growing collections, but also of curating objects in a way that communicates regional and occasionally national identity, as well as narrating stories in meaningful ways to audiences. There is far more potential for fashion to be used by museums to fulfil long-term public engagement and to propose valuable social benefits. Fashion curation is on the rise,[4] but the direction in which it is heading needs examining to avoid fashion exhibitions as just a whim of fashion.

2. Cinderella and the 'Brilliant Scavengers'

Cinderella is a story of transformation. Dress has been used in fairy tales as a metaphor for transformation: the golden ring, the cape that makes the wearer invisible, a crown that shifts the body natural to the body politic and here, with the tale of Cinderella, glass slippers and a ball gown that transport a young woman from the cinders to the ballroom, from poverty to wealth. Traditionally, we use clothing as markers of transformation from one state to another. Christening gowns, bar mitzvah shawls, graduation gowns, wedding gowns, and shrouds all serve that purpose. Ceremony is attached to these markers and requires an audience to view the

transition. I argue that fashion exhibitions can be sites of transformation, utilising memories and bringing narrativity to exhibitions that allows the audience a dialogic experience. The curator Judith Clark has observed that 'there is a profound identification with what you are looking at.'[5] The anthropologist Jay Rounds argues that in museums 'we do maintenance work on our existing identities while simultaneously laying the groundwork for future changes on identity.'[6]

The metaphor of brilliant scavengers is used to highlight the potential capacity of fashion curators to evoke the power of objects in museum exhibitions to bring about transformative experiences. Curators pick and choose interesting 'morsels,' digest them, and re-configure ideas and objects into exhibitions. The morsels need only be of the ordinary and the everyday. Combined with narrativity, placement, lighting, and scale of size and numbers, these can trigger transformation in the visitor. The display of a large pile of ordinary boots and worn-out shoes or masses of inmates' hair at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, for example, helps to transform an individual's understanding of genocide through commonplace authentic objects. While these objects are not so much a 'live memory' for most viewers, they stand in for the large numbers of bodies directly implicated in the Holocaust; as well, they are a memory and representation of the past.[7]

Image 2: Christening Cape from the LFFM Collection © 2015.
Photograph by Sharon Peoples

At the LFFM there are a number of transformational fashions in the collection: christening gowns, indicating an infant's shift from a state of blemished soul to that of purity; christening capes (Image 2), trousseau clothing, and wedding dresses, signifying a change from a virginal to a reproductive state; and military uniforms, signifying a move from an individual

body to a political corporeality. These can be gems of discovery for visitors when evocative and emotive interpretation material accompanies the display. In the metaphoric 'fairy tale kitchen' of the LFFM, sitting amongst the 'cinders' with students, without quality interpretive material and emotive display methods, it required effort through critical reflection and discussion to draw out the clothings' intrinsic value. For example, Mrs. Martha Wilson, whose underwear is part of the LFFM collection would be surprised at the discussion on female suppression elicited by her embroidered underwear exhibited at the museum (Image 3).

Image 3: Underwear of Mrs. Martha Wilson from the LFFM Collection
© 2015. Photograph by Sharon Peoples

Meanwhile, in pride of place in the 'front' room of the LFFM is a 'destination' object, the Lambing Flat Roll Up Banner. The banner is material evidence of the Australian regional race riots against Chinese gold miners in 1863, which are arguably germane to the country's former and longstanding 'white Australia' policy, and draws in visitors with a keen interest in Australian political and social history.[8] The banner's display received national, state, and local funding for a bespoke display cabinet. While this is not the place to discuss the accompanying problematic narrative of white male hegemonic history, it nonetheless reflects the LFFM's gendered hierarchy of objects, with fashion and textiles placed at the lower end of the scale. Here at the museum ideas about gender and hierarchy had to be conveyed through verbal discussion rather than through museum texts or a more sensitive arrangement of displays to do this work. It also illustrates an inability or resistance to comprehend how careful curation enhances the potency of all objects, from the mundane to the nationalistic.

It is easy to poke fun at a country folk museum such as the LFMM, as my students did. Back in the 1970s when folk museums were emerging, the historian Howard Wright Marshall likened folk museums to 'the commercial entertainment industry, a faker's paradise.'[9] There is discomfort in seeing old clothing displayed in mid-twentieth-century retail display cases with discarded shop mannequins populating the entire length of one of the museum galleries. In the LFFM, no two mannequins are the same or from the same era (Image 4). As well, some clothes with inadequate labels pinned to them hang on coat hangers in the glass cabinets, lit by

fluorescent lights. The dissonance caused by lack of attention to display, poor conservation practices and curatorial expertise is rooted in the paucity of museum funding. In turn, this affects the displays. It is easy to be dismissive of such small museums that are distant from large cities where museum exhibitions are rapidly and regularly changing and well-funded.

Image 4: Mannequin variety at the LFFM © 2015. Photograph by Sharon Peoples

Museums are also repositories of memories. When visitors come to museums the 'work' they do is memory[10] and even the re-shaping of memory.[11] The work of triggering thoughts and enabling viewers to make personal connections with items on display is part of the curator's craft. Fashion constantly plays with memory: styles, themes, textiles, and colours are repeated and recycled. What better avenue to arouse memory in museums through fashion, as the 'work' it does is to evoke a specific time and location. Some museums specifically use dress for this purpose. Part of the 'House of Memories' programme (Museums Liverpool) targets both dementia patients and their carers. Videos show museum staff dressing up in 1950s fashions and singing songs of the period. The fashions provide contextual information which clients often joyously respond to as their memories are aroused.[12] Fashion exhibitions fit within the museum as a 'theatre of memory' where social memory, commemoration, heritage, myth, fantasy, and desire are played out.[13] While institutions construct the academic frameworks of 'history' or 'design' in order to legitimise fashion exhibitions as a serious pursuit, this article contends that it is the arousal of memory and the evoking of personal, critical reflection through dress, as well as seeking, or reaffirming of identity that is the work of fashion exhibitions. Memory is subjective and the plaything of the emotions.

I am not suggesting that museums construct exhibitions for audiences to 'wallow in memory's own warmth,'[14] or to be used as 'social technology,' as in the reminiscence museum.[15] The critical heritage anthropologist and archaeologist Laurajane Smith's extensive

work in interviewing over 4,000 museum visitors indicates that the memory work they do is identity and meaning-making.[16] Brilliant scavengers such as curators Judith Clark and Andrew Bolton pick over what others consider the dregs, the deserted, and the dissonant. They bring to the fore personal and communities' memories, where reclamation from all kinds of spheres is used to design exhibitions that reflect the complex mix of the tangible and intangible that is present in fashion.[17] Fashion has great interpretative capacity. Bolton's *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 3 May - 4 September 2006), created a dialogue between the past and the present by placing garments dating from 1976 to 2006 (designed by Vivienne Westwood, John Galliano, Manolo Blahnik, Christopher Bailey, Philip Treacy, Stephen Jones, Shaun Leane, Malcolm McLaren and Westwood in her punk phase, Alexander McQueen, and Hussein Chalayan) and juxtaposing them in densely coded and furnished English period rooms.[18]

The art critic and curator Gabi Scardi argues that fashion is 'like an important generator of energy: creative energy, social energy and propulsive force that can unhinge habit, undermine convention and spark new visions and possibilities.'[19] As the fashion scholar Jennifer Craik argues, fashion maps social conduct and, in turn, is shaped by it.[20] At the LFFM these elements are present, yet without skilful curation greater meaning-making is lost.

3. The New Museum and the Blockbuster

There is tension between the fashion and museum worlds. Fashion museums and fashion exhibitions are on the rise. As ethnologist Marie Riegels Melchior notes, fashion is fashionable in museums.[21] The concept of the 'new museum'[22] has been used to draw in wider museum audiences and increase visitor numbers through social inclusion,[23] participatory involvement,[24] and critical engagement to demonstrate the public value of museums. The blockbuster has also had an impact from a different direction in increasing numbers. The new museum can be viewed as a 'glass slipper,' for trying to fit into this new museum concept might require cutting off toes or parts of their heels, as the step-sisters of the original Cinderella fairy tale did, in the hopes of marrying the prince. Yet, the blockbuster often plays a strategic role. It can link beyond the core of the fashion business to wider parameters of tourism and economics which are situated within political frameworks to ensure the blockbusters' success.

The blockbuster has been a mechanism for fashion to make substantial inroads into museums. The rise of blockbusters in the late twentieth century caused alarm, with art critics such as Robert Hughes referring to them as a 'new vulgarity' which were 'demeaning to the public sense of art,'[25] or as 'a well-marketed broadway (sic) musical.'[26] Writing about blockbusters, David Gordon, the former director and CEO of the Milwaukee Art Museum, noted that 'Marketing departments are let loose in ways that undermine the mission of the museum. Museums follow the false gods of money and attendances.'[27] The art museum was viewed as a sanctuary from commercial environments and a place for the contemplation of art.[28] Welcoming all has never been the mantra of the avant-garde of the fashion world. In exploring this tension, I am also calling for room for the new museum's refrain of social inclusion, participatory involvement, and critical engagement. This is yet to be wholly embraced by art museums. Art museums are generally reluctant to share their decision-making processes with audiences beyond the lower rungs of outreach programs.

While many may argue that the astonishing visual experiences of fashion blockbusters transform audiences, some do in a superficial way. The transformation may only be temporary by transporting visitors away from daily life, momentarily moving from the 'profane to the sacred,' entrancing them through lights and music that alter moods, with mobile audio technologies that totally envelope and isolate visitors with voices in their ears, rather than looking at the objects on display. After exiting the exhibition, they may return to the quotidian

without any alteration to identity. However, Rounds reminds us that the capacity for transformation through the alteration process, or shift in identity, may occur in the future, and not particularly within the gallery spaces.[29]

Some brilliant scavengers, such as Judith Clark in the exhibition *Spectres: when Fashion Turns Back Time*, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 24 February - 8 May, 2005, use challenging and enigmatic devices to play with ideas and distort and transform structural elements to engage visitors to make physical, visual, and perceptual connections between fashion, objects, and ideas. The theatre designer Greer Crawley notes that this 'exhibition gave curators permission to take risks, to challenge what is possible, to question the curatorial role and procedures and introduce "theatricality" as a legitimate narrative from of presentation.'[30]

For visitors to Clark's *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* at Blythe House in London, from 28 April - 27 June 2010, normal visitor behaviour was challenged. When the curator and historian Ingrid Mida visited, she 'felt a profound sense of vulnerability.' Tight security meant leaving bags and purses behind, viewing the installation in a group of seven, escorted by 'a guide who brandished large rings of keys through the labyrinth of corridors.' Speaking during the tour was prohibited and reinforced by frequent reminders to remain silent.[31] The juxtaposition of fashion and objects, Mida notes, 'provoked a range of emotional reactions including surprise, delight, distress, and perhaps even "vertigo" in the way that Baudrillard predicted from the erasure of meaningful signs in fashion.'[32]

Stage-managing and challenging audiences to discover the interconnectedness of ideas and objects are important to alteration or personal change. For the sociologist Jack Mezirow the transformation experience:

> refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.[33]

Can fashion exhibitions do this work? It may be possible. As the sociologist and museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill explains, museums 'use what we already know, or half-know, in new combinations or relationships or in new situations.' She also notes that individuals can create and transform their museum experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, and senses.[34] We all know something of fashioning our bodies, we might half-know something of designers or historical fashion styles, and most of us understand the importance of wearing clothes in the right context of time and location.

Clark's work is provocative, leading the display of fashion in new and stimulating directions, creating new layers of intellectual engagement in the fashion world. While visually provocative and innovative, I cannot help but think that exhibitions such as Clark's maintain elite hierarchies and continue to inhibit museums as socialising and democratising agents.

4. Cinderella's Shoes: What Can Fashion Do in a Museum?

Exhibitions in cultural institutions are required to align with the museum's mission or vision statements. Some might believe fitting fashion into these glass slippers is difficult. Audiences are also asked to adopt the 'curator's critical gaze.'[35] Many artists working away in their studios, now and in the past, would give little thought to the restraints and mechanisms of museum management. However, some fashion designers such as Viktor & Rolf work within the fashion-as-art matrix. Caroline Evans cites their Spring/Summer 1999 collection 'Black Light' as an example. The clothes were not meant for production but as an illustration of ideas.[36]

Living artists do rely on curators who can make their work fit within museum collections and exhibitions. Riegels Melchior has rightly argued that fashion exhibitions are perceived as a strategy to engage with new museology. She lists the growing number of new museums specialising in fashion, from Mode Museum in Antwerp to the Costume Moda Immagine in Milan, and highlights the more established museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Japan's Kyoto Costume Institute, the United States' Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, to the UK's Fashion Museum in Bath.

While Riegels Melchior accounts for the rising interest in fashion in museums, this article asks the question: what does fashion do in museums? Or perhaps, more critically, what can fashion in museums do? Surely museums should be more than a repository for the elite and their collections of the limited club of haute couture buyers. The film and television director Margy Kinmonth's documentary *Haute Couture Peeling Back the Layers* (2006)[37] notes that the world-wide club numbers around 200 members. The 'exquisite craftsmanship of social privilege' is reflected in these garments.[38] These hidden, personal collections are often self-documented by the owners or author-curators: what garment was worn to which function and so on. This preparation work is completed for the museum, hence, requiring less work for staff when the collection enters the museum and perhaps influencing the way the collections are framed. The documentation becomes an 'object' in and of itself. As such, these collections are a limited memory or narrative of fashion. For example, the stories and voices of those on the workroom cutting floor, the skilled artisans, the embroiderers, and the beaders rarely surface. This is also absent at the LFFM. The inadequate labelling, as shown in Image 3, tells little and reinforced for my students the importance not only of informative interpretation material, but the power of these texts to evoke a range of emotions and responses. In the early days of the Gold Rush there were very few women, like Mrs. Martha Wilson, present on the gold fields. There was little time for fancy needlework in this harsh working environment. Engaging audiences to reflect on the narratives that are enmeshed in making fashion deepens our understanding of the relationship between the body and society.

5. Narrativity and Identity in the Museum

Brilliant scavengers are editors, as was Diana Vreeland.[39] Vreeland, as editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* magazines, used her editing skills when employed as a special consultant at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Biased, scavengers direct the audience to view an exhibition in the way that matches their curatorial vision. However, the audience comes with its own expectations, narratives, identity, and memory. During the 1980s, a surge of theoretical interest in storytelling, known as the narrative turn, influenced museums to place an emphasis on collective memory, personal stories, and vernacular perspectives in exhibitions. The education theorist Shawn M. Rowe and the psychologists James V. Wertsch and Tatyana Y. Koseyaevar suggest that narratives facilitate a 'way of knowing' about the world.[40] Linking our own 'little narratives' to the larger-scale, collective, or national narratives becomes a dialogue. Dr. Xerxes Mazda, Deputy Director of Engagement of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada, suggests that audiences should be helped in making sense of the world through stories.[41] Long and complex narratives can be conveyed in an hour through film, theatre, and opera; why not museum exhibitions, he asks. The small labels, i.e., very small narratives, on gallery walls are often insufficient. Reflective questioning and dialogic statements in extended labels engage the viewer more actively.

Visitors' vernacular conversations as they respond to exhibits can be frustrating to some curators who hear them and fail to understand how their audiences' lives are tied to an exhibit.[42] Museum audience developers are interested in how audiences make sense of the world through stories. Hearing the responses of students after their workshop would have been valuable for

staff and volunteers at the LFFM. Museum staff responsible for assessment use audience engagement evaluations at some point in an exhibition schedule to make their exhibitions more effective. Some gather information throughout the exhibition and many do evaluations afterwards. For the Australian Museum, Sydney,[43] curators bring in potential audiences early in the design process. Audience engagement developers incorporate ideas from psychologists about identity and construction of the self. Writers on fashion have also been interested in this process; for example, the psychologist and psychoanalyst J.C. Flügel (1874-1955) was one of the earliest when he wrote *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930).[44] He was interested in the 'internal economy' of the psyche.[45]

Writing on fashion today tends to be interdisciplinary, with scholars, for example, writing about the construction of the self through dress: *The Fashioned Body*, as the sociologist Joanne Entwistle puts it, or as in the title of the sociologist Joanne Finkelstein's book, *The Fashioned Self*.[46] Craik notes that clothes construct a personal habitus.[47] The anthropologist Sophie Woodward gives a very detailed insight into *Why Women Wear What They Wear* through an ethnographic study of a group of women as they discuss their identity and how it is expressed through their choices of clothing for the day ahead.[48] Woodward's work clearly illustrates the narrativity of dress and the construction of the self.

Image 5: Performing the museum: 'Couture/Sculpture: Azzedine Alaïa in the History of Fashion' © 2015. Photograph by Sharon Peoples

Seeing is the prime mode of operation in museums. Fully engaging audiences with narrative does not always mean it must be through text, although the cultural theorist Mieke Bal argues that 'walking through a museum is like reading a book' – the objects themselves are 'text' with the 'reader' as the viewer.[49] However, a quick glance at an object can convey and evoke other senses – hearing, smell, touch. The museum visitor perceives surfaces sensitively.[50] The performance artist, museum and art educator Charles Garoian notes that 'performing the museum' can be a 'dialogic process that enables the play between the public narrative of the museum and the private narrative of the viewer'[51] (for example, Image 5).With the intimate

relationship we all have with clothing, the material characteristics are experienced and embodied, yet, the physicality is inseparable and contaminated by personal stories. Critical engagement allows for the opportunity to give balance between didactic information and a space for 'reading between the lines,' for the audience to contribute their own narrativity stimulated by informative didactic exhibition texts.

Fashion exhibitions using the narrative in the way Bal suggests are not new. Walking through exhibitions such as *Napoleon and the Empire of Fashion*, held at the Milan Triennial, (6 June - 12 September 2010), the Victoria and Albert Museum's *The Day of the Peacock Style for Men 1963-1973* (2009), and *Sari to Sarong,* held at the National Gallery of Australia (11 July - 6 October 2003), illustrate a linear narrative through chronological order of display. This is reinforced by the exhibition catalogue essays.[52] Yet, linear exploration is dissipating in exhibitions. The authorial/authoritative view has begun to shift towards the visitor-centred view by creating opportunities for provoking memory triggered by the objects. The anthropologist Paul Basu notes that 'the challenge would seem to be how to use narrative to deconstruct narrative without merely replacing one *grande histoire* with another.'[53] Basu explores the use of a labyrinth paradigm in order to decentre the curatorial authority. In exhibitions, objects can set off a trail of memory that is rarely linear.

This mode can be replicated through new technologies which allow the visitors to bounce around the exhibition space, taking up the narratives that best align with their own construction of the self, but importantly within the framework of the exhibition's thesis. Memory, prompted by the museum objects, can allow audiences to be diverted, taking mental detours and delays. The dominant narrative put forth by the exhibition designers avoids fragmentation, perhaps to avert frustration of progress through the gallery. Although many curators may think it is important to avoid an exhibition without end, memory does not stop at the exit through the museum shop. This is apparent by the public programs that often follow on from exhibitions dealing with hard-hitting topics such as genocide of indigenous peoples. Exhibitions using the voice of source communities where ideas about forced adoption,[54] migration,[55] and sweatshop labour[56] provoke highly emotional responses. Bringing in wider audiences requires museums to facilitate making sense of the world. Exhibitions, therefore, can be a continual social process.

The architect Greig Crysler and the urban planning theorist Abidin Kusno indicate that the Holocaust Museum in Washington seeks to simultaneously place the visitor as 'witness' and 'victim' in order not only to allow a particular memory of the Holocaust, but also to align them with the institution that reproduces it.[57] Bal argues that in a museum exhibition there is

> a "first person", the exposer, tell[ing] a "second person" the visitor, about a "third person," the object on display, who does not participate in the conversation. But unlike many other constative speech acts, the objects, although mute, are present.[58]

It is perhaps in these ways that a reconciliation of the hidden 'dirty' production of fashion, that is, the sweatshop conditions of garment makers as juxtaposed with the spectacle of the catwalk and glamourous blockbusters, that fashion exhibitions can continue the sense-making process outside the walls of the museum. Exhibitions that involve wider issues experienced by the constellation of workers orbiting the fashion industry would provide a greater understanding of fashion and its social, political, economic, and environmental impact.

Yet, we still need the brilliant scavengers to deconstruct or 'unpick' the prey for viewers, placing and spacing objects for the visitor, designing in a way at to provoke the affective in the viewer – enchanting, horrifying, amusing – as well as entertaining and educating. They need to

keep interest alive throughout demanding exhibitions, allowing spaces for responding, thinking, and the welling-up of memories. Mazda notes the ways in which this can be executed in exhibitions, suggesting that there are seven criteria by which he determines and evaluates how the narrative can fully enhance an exhibition. These include resonance, communication, multi-dimensionality and narrativity through extended labels and causality, emotion, and flow.[59] This article lauds the brilliant scavengers picking and choosing from their prey to deliver narrative and elicit memory through well-considered and intuitive choices.

6. Performing the Museum

Reflecting on Mazda's list, exhibitions must have resonance and relevance in order to connect with the visitor. I would argue that both are entwined in fashion exhibitions. Both the visitor's and the museum's narrative must resonate. For exhibitions focussing on dress, all who walk through the museum door go about their public lives clothed. Each has a story to tell about dress. As Rounds notes, museum visitors attend to displays about which they already know something, rather than looking at each and every object and reading all the texts.[60] Added to that is the complexity of fashion exhibitions: those who amble among the exhibits may be conscious themselves that they are performers in the museum, on show along with the exhibits. They have learned how to behave, how to position their bodies, how to read the labels, how to look, and how to socially interact in conversation based on aesthetic judgement.[61] This is explored by former curator and museum director Helen Rees Leahy, who examines how museum visitors have been conditioned to behave in particular ways since museums first opened their doors to the public in the eighteenth century. Knowing how to fashion our bodies for a day at the gallery, museum, or a fashion exhibition sets audiences up for narrativity.

Mazda focusses on how embodiment is vital to fashion exhibitions. As can be seen in exhibitions such as the aforementioned *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier*, animating the fashions through lighting, music, and mannequins that move and speak makes the clothing come alive. Fashion is a complex mix of the tangible and intangible, and I contend that the intangible – the confidence, the performance, the voice and speech of the wearer, essentially what the anthropologist Marcel Mauss terms as 'body techniques,'[62] are constituents in making clothing fashion. Similarly, 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent' was how Charles Baudelaire described the modernity of Paris of 1863, but he may just as well have been describing the intangibly of fashion.[63] How fashion exhibitions deal with the intangible is a difficult task. Back in the LFFM there is little tangible in the galleries. Garments hung on coat hangers under glaring lights suppress any chicness or bravura with which they may have been associated.

Clothing is embodied. The fashion historian and sociologist Elizabeth Wilson notes the unease one feels in the presence of mannequins in a museum, as well as the 'dusty' silence and stillness of the fashions in the space (Image 6):

> The living observer moves with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead….We experience a sense of the uncanny while we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much a part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life.[64]

Image 6: Mannequin display at the LFFM © 2015. Photograph by Sharon Peoples

Animating fashions in static presentations in museums has been problematic. Lou Taylor has written at length on the history of dress display and acknowledges that the 'whole range of human experience attached to the clothes is inevitably lost on the static dummy placed behind glass.'[65] In 2002, at the time of Taylor's writing, there seemed little more that museums could do other than educate the audience to understand the problems associated with enlivening dress display. Fashion exhibitions and new technologies have evolved since, as more recent blockbusters attest.

The curator Alexandra Palmer writes on the importance of comprehending that visitors approach museums with the personal knowledge they have in wearing clothing and that they understand touch is essential to the textiles and fashions they wear. This makes museum visitors, on some level, connoisseurs of clothing even before entering the dress exhibitions.[66] The perhaps subconscious awareness of embodiment and the intangibility of fashion may make viewers, in a positive sense, vulnerable, that is, open to experiences that spark memories, self-discoveries, and past experiences, thereby having strong personal meaning and association.[67] Palmer claims that the remembered experience is a purely visual experience that 'should strive to broaden our cultural and intellectual understanding of fashion and textiles.'[68] However, fashion exhibitions need to go beyond this to give audiences a multi-sensory experience that parallels the sensations of wearing fashion.

Since 2011, new technologies have worked toward making fashion come alive in the museum. Fashion video clips, films, motorised belts moving mannequins around a simulated runway, blinking, singing and speaking mannequins, and holograms give the illusion of real

bodies within the best practices of museum standards. Live mannequins wearing fashion seemed to be a thing of the past after they were ruled out by the International Committee on Museums in 1986.[69] However, performances by live bodies, such as the actor Tilda Swinton in the *Impossible Wardrobe* on opening night at the Palais de Tokyo in 2012, have been used to overcome problems of the disembodiment of garments. The curator Olivier Saillard quipped: 'Two years ago, when I started the new job as director of the Musée Galleria, I realised that I was like a choreographer: costumes without bodies are my dancers.'[70] Saillard plays on the notion that once costumes enter a collection, they cannot be worn again. The fashion theorist and curator Gabriele Monti argues that Saillard's experimental methods of bringing life to museum collections may have found an answer. His experimentation in performance both questions the nature of fashion museums and adds to transforming clothing back into fashion with all its intangibilities.[71]

No doubt the audience in a fashion blockbuster exhibition does feel sensations, through clever lighting and surrounded by colour; visitors may not rationally understand what they have experienced but are responding nevertheless. My sense is that for some the blockbuster rarely calls on the viewer to empathise with the 'Other' or that the alteration process has any transformative effect. Exhibitions of haute couture or the dress of celebrities, while increasing visitor numbers to the museum, may not call on the general audience to engage critically. What is important is that the exhibition mannequins reflect the real bodies, the bodies of the visitors and the transformation of the bodies of everyday lives.

When visiting a museum exhibition, audiences expect an exhibition-like experience. They expect to learn. Mazda observes that when the audience pays for a temporary exhibition they behave by reading the labels and carefully attending to the exhibition (he also describes that when visitors attend a permanent exhibition, such as those of the British Museum, they spend little or no money and very little time reading and looking).[72] If fashion is a fashion in museums, is the trend sustainable? Like folk museums in Australia, will all these new fashion museums eventually be relegated to the back of the wardrobe? The dress historian Naomi Tarrant notes that in the late 1960s and 1970s, there was a flood of fashion items into museums with several directors questioning the usefulness of fashion.[73] Framing fashion as art was one response.

While this article has explored a different 'usefulness' for fashion, it also reiterates the narrowness of utilising fashion only in the context of art (or design) for museums. It is important to evoke critical engagement and interrogation in audiences. The power of fashion needs to be realised in museum exhibitions. Exhibitions such as *Fashion and Politics*, held at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York (7 July - 7 November 2009), *Fashion India: Spectacular Capitalism*, held at the University of Oslo (13 September 2013 - 28 August 2014), and *Fashion as Social Energy* held at the Palazzo Morando in Milan (29 May - 30 August 2015), show that fashion can explore deeper social concerns and political issues. As well, they mirror the way in which the boundaries between the types of exhibitions shown in contemporary art and museums in general are increasingly blurring. As well this may reflect the change in gender at higher levels of museum management and curation.

7. Conclusion

The Lambing Flat Folk Museum was used as an illustration of high contrast and as a prod to think about critical engagement in fashion exhibitions, particularly in blockbuster exhibitions. As well, the LFFM was enlisted to examine the potential of fashion as a solid contributor towards social inclusion and participatory action, key ideas instigated and generated by the new museum concept. Through using the metaphor of Cinderella and the scavengers, this article has explored transformation: transformation of bodies through fashion, transformation of

visitors, and transformation of museums through fashion exhibitions. It also examined what fashion can do in museums and the tensions between the fashion and museum worlds by looking at the impact of the blockbuster fashion exhibitions. Landmark exhibitions, such as those curated by Clark, have given innovative fashion elites new intellectual and physical spaces within which to work. They still maintain an aloof, intellectual distance. I argue that as these new hierarchies of the fashion system emerge through museums, more experimentation with integrating methods to invite audiences to critically reflect on the sensations of fashion and the relationship to the body is needed.

I have noted the importance of narrativity in fashion exhibitions. The narrative turn has opened the way for a range of memories to be expressed in museums as well as serving as a reminder of the power of fashion to provoke memory. For this author, the narrative causality may well be the key mechanism to the sustainability of fashion exhibitions and museums. The difficult, unpleasant, or controversial side of the fashion industry should also be considered more than it is presently; and should be juxtaposed with the fantasy, escape, and entertainment that are offered by the fashion catwalk and magazines. The increasing focus on the ethics of the fashion industry should more often be brought into the museum. Exhibitions that examine the relationship between labour and the catwalk, between the makers and the designers, and between the audience and the museum will reinforce the fashion of fashion in museums.

What is apparent is that more visitor studies on fashion exhibitions need to be done. It would be useful to ask questions about audience engagement such as: What do visitors experience in fashion exhibitions? What are they thinking and what, if anything, are they learning? Can putting oneself into another's shoes, or imagining oneself wearing haute couture alter one's knowing or identity? Understanding these points will facilitate utilising fashion in museums and help to guide the direction of the future use of fashion in museums.

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Born Global: Chinese Fashion Designers and the Digital Response

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Abstract

In this article I contend that by emphasising the economic flows of fashion instead of the aesthetic field, an alternate view of a fashion system emerges that focusses on the increasing importance of Chinese fashion design to the domestic economy, while an intensifying presence on the global stage is re-creating China's importance as a production powerhouse as well as a design force. The consumption of fashion is understood to be fundamentally 'a cultural practice where clothes function as symbols that indicate social markers such as status, group allegiance, personality and fashionability.'[1] Yet new applications of digital media have changed the field irrevocably and the concept of fashion is now made acutely manifest in the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's depiction of liquid modernity.[2] In China new centres of fashion are emerging in sites of increased financial activity, which in turn contradicts the hegemonic supremacy of traditional European fashion capitals. In this context, digital media allows Chinese designers and consumers alike to respond quickly. Traditionally, profits were repatriated to Europe, yet increasingly financial capital now flows in reverse to Asia for the benefit of Asian investors. In this way, China's reputation as manufacturer to the world is being reshaped by a political mandate that underpins a new creative and financial impetus that challenges established models, offering China as a future powerhouse of global fashion design.

Key Words

China, digital, fashion, global fashion system, business.

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1. Introduction: Qingdao

In the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao, a garment manufacturer called Red Collar has invested 1 billion RMB (US$163.6 million) over the past twelve years in cloud computing. Red Collar has built an online platform that allows the company to accommodate increasingly specialised and sophisticated needs for its global clients. The platform enables Red Collar to better comprehend unique demands from each client and organise manufacturing capacities accordingly. For instance, it produces 3,000 tailored garments each day for clients in New York, with plans to double the availability of this kind of highly customisable production in the future. Red Collar's approach to software development illustrates the possibilities of cloud computing in transforming the Chinese garment manufacturing industry.[3] Yet while Red Collar moves forward with changes to long established industrial methods of garment manufacturing, at the creative end of the scale Chinese fashion designers are also seeking to establish their presence on the world stage.

In mid-February each year, designers from around the world relocate to France in readiness to show their clothing collections at Paris Fashion Week during March. Masha Ma is among a new wave of Chinese fashion designers who have emerged from Mainland China in recent years with their eyes firmly fixed upon this prize. Ma works between a studio on the Bund in Shanghai and an office in Paris, commuting between Asia and Europe. This

sophisticated cohort is part of a growing momentum that challenges the perception that China is better at making consumer products than creating them. According to Angelica Cheung, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue* China, 'For many generations we Chinese were not encouraged to think creatively, so there's a certain element of truth to say that the Chinese were not great designers.'[4]

Masha Ma typifies a new breed of international Chinese fashion designer and is often mentioned alongside her contemporaries, Qiu Hao, Xander Zhou, and Huishan Zhang, all of whom share a foreign education, a contemporary design aesthetic and are prolific on the global stage. Ma was born in Beijing, studied at prestigious Central Saint Martins in London, and was inspired to follow in the footsteps of the late English designer Alexander McQueen, for whom she interned. Ma's growing successes stem from her business-oriented outlook; despite the fact that there is a growing popularity of designer ateliers offering couture and made-to-measure fashion in Mainland China, Ma seeks to build a business model that will eventually sustain itself. In 2013, a diffusion line called 'MA by MA Studio' was established, with plans for expansion into five commercial lines, and an increased presence in more global fashion cities.

Some key elements are important to developing a style for success beyond China's cultural borders. Ma speaks of colour and the simple silhouette of the design, yet another requirement is difficult to define as it denotes an almost religious experience, or a sense of holiness. 'For me, Chinese elements are something philosophical,' she explains. It is not the appearance but the meaning behind, that matters, she argues. 'The figurative dragon and phoenix motifs are simply exotic points of view from the Western world.'[5] Indeed the age of Chinese 'red and gold' is well and truly over. Edward Said's ground-breaking book *Orientalism* pointed particularly to the problem of creative works deemed 'orientalist,' noting the reliance on patronising racial stereotypes of exotic or mystical Eastern cultures, and the tendency to portray them as static or regressive.[6] According to Said, orientalism was out of touch with on-the-ground realities in Asian and Middle Eastern countries. One might argue now that the rubric of orientalism has been reshaped. Where this once represented an exchange of ideas and China's role as a source of influence, or perhaps as evidence of a reciprocal relationship between the East and West, the balance has now tipped in favour of the Chinese market and the potential it offers in the field of design.

Yet, stereotypes and misconceptions still exist that accompany Chinese fashion design. In recent years a surge of designers of Chinese descent have taken the helm at major fashion houses. Increased numbers of Chinese celebrities are seated in the front rows at fashion presentations, not to mention Chinese models opening the runway show. Masha Ma sees no point in contributing to the argument. 'Being labelled a Chinese designer is not something you get to choose. It comes along with the package, it's automatically attached to you,' she says.[7] Nevertheless, the reality is that without the solid infrastructure of a fashion industry in China, Chinese fashion designers will gravitate to traditional fashion centres for education and experience before returning home to build businesses that in turn will enrich the fashion system in China.

Henceforth, in this section I argue that the gathering momentum of Chinese fashion design, as well as the coming together of the Chinese fashion system, has reached an irreversible tipping point at a time when the Chinese fashion industry also seeks to reinvent itself. Typically this new impetus has been constrained by several key forces that have shaped the perception of Chinese development. Chinese culture and Chinese politics have long held an almost insurmountable presence in many aspects of daily life, including creative expression; however, this is changing rapidly in part due to China's global ascendency as an economically powerful nation. Moreover, increased access to the Internet since the 1990s has paralleled

China's rise. Connectivity to digital and social media platforms has great implications for Chinese fashion design and for the perpetuation of creative activity.

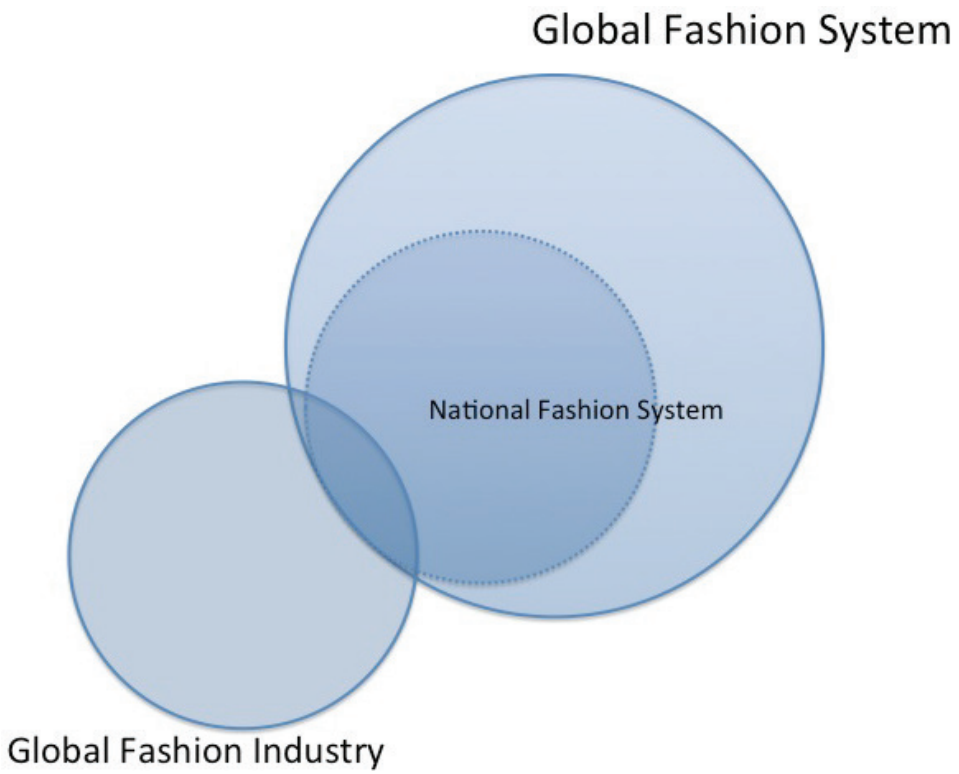

Diagram 1: Global fashion industry.

Yet some broad questions have arisen concerned with the nature of creative identity and of the ongoing relevance of national culture to the field of design. This is especially so in a nation where new and unsaturated consumer markets are attracting the attention of foreign fashion brands, and it is occurring at a time when the country's domestic economy moves inexorably from 'made in China,' to 'created in China.' While the rhetoric of this turn of phrase may be well-trodden, I argue that only now has it gained momentum. Recently China's State Council unveiled a ten-year plan for improving the nation's manufacturing capacity. The Ministry of Industry and Telecommunication Technology (MIIT), which instigated the 'Made in China 2025' plan, intends to give China an edge in innovation, green development, and quality consumer products. Sha Nansheng, the vice director of the MIIT's Department of Science and Technology, has said Chinese manufacturing industries face pressure on dual fronts: competition from other developing countries with lower labour costs, and a renewed push by developed nations of the West seeking an advantage in industrial manufacturing.[8] Upgrading manufacturing industries in the manner of Red Collar has become an urgent priority in China, as its status as 'the world's factory' is undermined by developing countries, and it seeks a new engine of growth amid a slowing economy. In the context of the production of fashion, this is an important step if it aligns with the development of the country's creative and

cultural capitals, particularly with an emphasis on innovative technologies that incorporate sustainability and environmental initiatives that forge a new kind of contemplative fashion design.

In order to frame this discussion, I distinguish the commercial, financial, and logistical implications of the fashion industry from the idea of a fashion system: in this way I am separating activities of production from consumption. The concept 'fashion system' refers to a site where fashion is legitimised, provided with value, and disseminated to consumers through various sales channels.[9] At this point in time the Eurocentric fashion system that originated in France during the period of industrialisation remains dominant, and maintaining its hegemony provides an important source of income to the European economy. Yet the fashion industry is different and is where garment production or manufacturing occurs prior to entering a fashion system. This is no longer located as it once was in Europe, but now moves constantly to geographic sites with low labour costs, mainly in Asia. This simple conceptualisation allows a dual focus on the underlying economy of fashion, as well as providing a means to discuss the impact of technology and communication as aids to production and as a facilitator of consumption. This is key to the purpose of this article because it provides for the suggestion that there is no global centre of fashion production, yet there exists a global system of legitimisation.

2. Fashion Economy

In many ways the global fashion economy, which is represented by the movement of money through a fashion system, behaves like the ebb and flow of an ocean tide, motivated by the forces of consumption. As it moves into new national markets a kind of cultural adaption occurs, and in retreat the tide takes with it fresh actors who in turn influence its own constitution. As a result of this action, a kind of equalisation occurs as knowledge is shared. Yet it is in the overlapping areas of the diagram above that the state of flux is most apparent where in the meeting of the tides, Chinese companies are moving outwards into the global economy to revitalise ailing foreign brands. Here the boundary also blurs as new ideas are quickly assimilated often before the infrastructure of the legal system can keep up. Therefore it is against this backdrop that some key topics arise that lead toward a new perspective for Chinese fashion design. They include the shifting commercial momentum from 'made in China' to the value-adding properties of 'created in China,' the rise of the globetrotting Chinese consumer, and the almost ubiquitous access to knowledge via digital media that has transformed the global landscape for fashion consumption.

As Breward and Gilbert remind us, China is a global centre of clothing production.[10] In the context of global consumption of fashion this sector is undergoing rapid change, illustrated by Red Collar's investments in cloud computing in Qingdao; yet, as the Chinese middle class continues to grow, so do the costs of domestic production. When China opened its doors for trade in 1978 foreign fashion companies were attracted to the economies of scale and competitive costs of garment production, resulting in China becoming the garment manufacturer to the world.[11] Since then, the Chinese government has become increasingly aware of the importance of moving beyond this role, particularly as it has re-focussed its domestic economy towards domestic consumption. New policies such as 'Made in China 2025' provide evidence of the importance of these initiatives to the Chinese economy.

A government-controlled industry body, the China National Garment Association provides revealing data.[12] In 2012, these industries contributed 1.7 trillion RMB (approximately US$283 billion) to the Chinese domestic economy, in addition to an export value of US$153 billion. As well, the Chinese textile and clothing industries employ approximately ten million people and are rapidly improving their infrastructure so as to take part in a new phase of

development, which corresponds with increased brand development and profitability. In contrast, the global fashion system contributed US$1.3 trillion to the global creative economy.[13] It follows that a strong domestic fashion system means China's internal economy will retain a greater share of the profit margins that occur from the increased values of Chinese clothing, as these products move through a fashion system to become legitimised as Chinese fashion design. This is especially so as Chinese fashion designers move to form international brands.

The Chinese government's 12th Five Year Plan, implemented in 2011, clearly articulated a renewed focus on the domestic economy. This planning moves China's economic momentum from an export-led income to domestic-led consumption. Furthermore, the Plan stresses less reliance on foreign technology and the importance of domestic innovation, known as 'endogenous innovation.' Point eight, of the ten-point plan, specifically encourages cultural production in order to increase China's 'soft power.'[14] In the field of fashion, soft power is represented by the renowned Chinese fashion designer Ma Ke, who provided clothing for Peng Liyuan, the Chinese First Lady for her first state visits, and by the dress that the Chinese couturier Guo Pei provided for the American singer Rihanna for the annual Met Gala Ball in 2015.[15] On the other hand, 'Made in China 2025' focusses specifically on innovation. Yet for China to truly transition from 'Made in China' to 'Created in China,' success is needed in its design industries.

In robust Asian design economies such as Japan, design has flourished, for example the global lifestyle brand Muji, the carmaker Toyota, and the fashion designer Issey Miyake. In general, 'Made in Japan' has come to represent an attention to detail and a quality that was previously understood as an industrial manufacturing capacity. Creative sectors such as architecture and product design have high barriers to entry, for instance the amount of time and money needed for investment in research and development. These restrictions mean the architectural and industrial design sectors tend to form around the collaborative work and investments of a firm. Fashion, on the other hand, requires less investment and in China a robust clothing industry infrastructure already exists. Yet the business of fashion is fundamentally concerned with anticipating the needs of the consumer in a free market, a relatively new idea in China.

Consequently, there is great financial value yet to be realised from this infrastructure while China's need to provide employment for a domestic populace is increasingly urgent. The accompanying demands of consumption means re-thinking how these processes will take place and what the implications are for the established Eurocentric fashion system. Michael Keane has previously explored this transition phase in terms of the Chinese government's early grasp of the economic importance of the creative industries, a concept that originates from the British government's mapping of their own creative sector.[16] In the United Kingdom, the exploration was undertaken as a means of identifying key aspects of their creative economy, so as to understand and better manage its flows of financial and aesthetic capital.[17]

The Chinese government is pursuing a similar purpose. Not only does China desire to transform into a largely urban society that enjoys consistent growth, it desires such growth to be measured in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. Rising incomes, demonstrated particularly by the burgeoning middle class, need to be accompanied by increased leisure, a better physical environment, expanding arts and cultural activities, and a greater sense of economic and social security. For instance, a recent report suggests that by 2022 more than 75 percent of China's urban consumers will earn 60,000 to 229,000 RMB (US$9,000 to $34,000) per annum.[18] It is apparent that moving forward, the domestic Chinese economy will need to create social conditions supportive of growth and development. According to another report from the World Bank the core tenet of this mandate demands a basic level of security for the domestic populace.[19]

As a result of these broad shifts in policy, and the importance of design to the spread of Chinese soft power, Chinese fashion designers are well-placed to move into roles where they will have a greater say about the lifestyle representations of their emergent brands, and where they will become soft power ambassadors in the same way that Giorgio Armani is inextricably linked with the Italian fashion design sector, or that Chanel is to Paris. Designers increasingly have the opportunity to include in their practice new global values that reflect not only a growing pride in their accomplishments, but make comment on some of the environmental and cultural problems the country faces on a daily basis. As Masha Ma has indicated, Chinese fashion designers have new opportunities to consider the human condition by thinking about the philosophical underpinnings to design.

3. The Chinese Traveller

Some of these problems are made more apparent by comparisons with the quality of life in other countries. The Chinese traveller has become a relatively recent phenomenon, accelerated by a relaxation in visa application procedures by European Union and Asian countries. Rapid urbanisation and rising incomes mean that more Chinese residents can afford to travel. Increasingly this is an individual effort, where the focus is on an experiential appreciation of alternate cultures. Fundamentally though, this is an economic equation, measured in terms of the spending power of this relatively new demographic. Until now the transfer of knowledge that occurs as people explore new cultures and undergo new experiences has been under-valued, yet this is the most important aspect of these experiences, for upon their return to China these travellers bring with them new expectations of the permutations of fashion, of the hierarchy of fashion brands, and their importance for the creation of identity, along with improved ideas about product quality and raised expectations of consumer service. These experiences also indirectly serve to draw comparisons with their domestic living conditions. Yet this has new implications.

More than two thirds of Chinese luxury purchases are now conducted outside Mainland China, and every major market is eager to attract Chinese tourists and their disposable income.[20] Several factors have contributed to the change. Enormous price barriers in China are caused by high tax and import duties and have combined with a weak euro. As well, booming outbound Chinese tourism and the explosion of Chinese luxury e-commerce has been facilitated by middle-men or ‘daigou’ websites. All indicators point to more Chinese luxury spending moving from Mainland China, further draining Mainland Chinese stores of traffic and negatively impacting sales densities. As a consequence, European luxury brands will take advantage of relatively short-duration leases to trim their local retail infrastructure. In regions such as Hong Kong, this has already occurred, as some luxury retailers close their shops.[21]

Like Masha Ma, many Chinese fashion designers also travel frequently. In the early stages of their careers some relocate for education at prestigious institutions such as Central St Martins in London and Parsons in New York. Parsons, like some other schools, has taken advantage of the tidal flows and established an academic centre in Shanghai. In turn, an increasingly large cohort of Chinese students return to Mainland China to establish new businesses and fashion brands replete with a fast tracked fashion education and with an entrepreneurial bent, and importantly with a greater sense of their place in the global fashion system. Most importantly in this phase they are ‘of the moment,’ equipped with the kind of tacit knowledge only to be found in the most recent iteration of the fashion construct. Upon their homecoming, they become responsible for shaping the structure of the Chinese fashion system with new cultural and aesthetic messages. However, there are some difficulties in the implementation of this process bought about by rapid urban growth, social unrest, and the

difficult and often utopian nature of the government's vision to build a modern, harmonious, and creative society with coherent social values.

4. Aesthetics

It is commonly understood that a fashion designer's aesthetic vision, as with other creative practitioners, is shaped in a mutually dependent relationship between the structures of culture and the manifestations of creativity which is produced in a social system, as Janet Wolff explains.[22] As has been shown, the Chinese social system is undergoing dramatic change. Furthermore, it is the aesthetic sensibility of a fashion designer in tune with his or her cultural surroundings that is important for recognition by a fashion system; this intangible representation or creative signature forms the core of a creative business, allowing ideas to materialise as tangible products for the consumer market. Importantly, the strength and unique characteristics of their creative signature in a crowded marketplace will foretell their viability. The sociologist Howard Becker describes the aspect of self-support or independence as an important stage in the development of an art career.[23] This capability allows some designers to develop their own aesthetic, independently of the aesthetic gatekeeping that occurs in established fashion systems. Developing an aesthetic, or in other words, a refined capacity to use one's senses to make a critical observation about one's culture in the pursuit of beauty, is an individual attribute, yet this is a difficult task in the kind of global culture of dislocation that the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman refers to.[24] For instance, Masha Ma described this process as implementing her key elements of colour, silhouette, and philosophy. As Becker explains, 'artists create an unformalised aesthetic through workday choices of materials and forms.'[25] Therefore, forming an aesthetic is a way of making sense of the lived environment, and a personal aesthetic defines our terms of engagement with our culture. This aesthetic is used either to determine methods of consumption, as well as the production of cultural artefacts such as fashion.

However, the digital era challenges accepted ideas of the linear progression of time and in doing so alters the perception of historical or cultural heritage. China's historical legacy has also been disrupted numerous times since the end of the last ruling Chinese dynasty, the Qing at the turn of the twentieth century, causing many people to ask what in fact an identity as a Chinese citizen means. In re-thinking what it is to be a Chinese fashion designer, the question of what comprises China must be considered. From its northern borders with Russia, and Mongolia, India and Kazakhstan to the west, and to its Westernised port of Hong Kong in the far south, China is an ethnically diverse and geographically large country that contends with the close proximity of other Asian countries like Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Indeed, these regional Asian neighbours exert a great deal of influence on Chinese popular culture, including fashion, music, television, and film. Nevertheless, it would appear that for some, China has become a state of mind, rather than a nation fixed in a singular geographic location.
Consequently, it is the development of a unique aesthetic signature that correspondingly resonates with a sophisticated global consumer that Chinese designers must focus upon as they establish and enlarge the financial underpinnings of their fashion brands.

In the Western model, the design and production of fashion is often reliant upon renewing the contextual position of previously established creative ideas, which are recast as a new version of one's creative identity or as an aesthetic signature in line with changes in the immediacy of popular and immediate culture. This model is fundamentally based upon anticipating the desires of one's consumer. Yet the Chinese philosophical model often looks to the craft of making and the relationship of people to the natural environment, as a similar representation of one's self in culture.[26] A recent shift by some Chinese consumers toward more discreet fashion products, perhaps those without obvious logos, is a sign of change. In this way the consumers' redirection from the outward manifestation of identity to the inward concept of

self demonstrates this idea, providing that ultimately fashion is associated with lifestyle, and in turn, one's lifestyle is determined by the culture in which one lives.

Collectively, new attractions of craftsmanship and quality in Chinese fashion products, a well-expressed design aesthetic, and a respect of time for brand-building means some designers have stepped away from the irrational 'gold-rush with Chinese characteristics' that mobilised earlier groups to concentrate on a truthful and perhaps not-so-authentic manifestation of their creative vision.[27] In this way, these designers ask their consumer to reconsider the values of living and consumption. However, while the fashion system provides structures, institutions, and behaviours for fashion designers to cling to, as Juanjuan Wu posited, ultimately it is an aesthetic content that fills these structures and which will differentiate Chinese fashion designers.[28] As domestic consumption increases and more products are designed rather than simply manufactured in China, it is apparent new actors, new systems, methods, and processes of legitimisation will arise to challenge the hegemony of the dominant Eurocentric fashion system where the flows of economic capital currently leave China to become profits for foreign companies. This is precisely the response that the Chinese government is planning for.

Chinese fashion designers face a difficult challenge as they move toward legitimisation in the fashion system. While the Chinese government focusses upon the 'money' or retaining more of the value-added capital from the economy of fashion, fashion designers often focus upon the idea of turning their creative vision into a brand. This raises Michael Polanyi's view that the universe is always seen from a centre within ourselves and truth is always personal.[29] However, is truth the same as authenticity? As Hobsbawm and Ranger explain, authenticity is malleable and open to coercion,[30] and as Richard Peterson contends, authenticity is a very different concept when compared to creativity.[31] In the space between Hobsbawm and Peterson lies the magic, malleability, and mythology of the legitimisation of fashion, and here also is the opportunity for Chinese fashion design. Authenticity might be described as a cultural manifestation, while creativity through the process of design is an intrinsic process that is driven by the search for a personal truth, a desire to achieve harmony, or balance, and most often made tangible in the context of the 'commercial market.' In this situation Chinese fashion design would appear to be less concerned with the nationality of the designer and more about the designer's ability to attract a global audience while imparting a strong sense of cultural value. In fact, the oft-observed Chinese designer Masha Ma, who attended Central St Martins, seems focussed more on the development of a sustainable global business model in conjunction with her adept understanding of digital and social media. In Ma's view, being labelled as a Chinese designer is not a matter of choice, yet without the solid infrastructure of a fashion industry in China, one must go elsewhere to sell one's wares.[32] Likewise, the designer Qiu Hao has indicated how this question may no longer be of relevance. His global mobility means that although he is a Chinese national, he thinks this is an external label that bears little relation to his design philosophy. Accordingly, 'China,' may be conceived of as both a geographic location, and a third place where the concept of 'China' differs, depending on one's life experiences.[33]

However, there is another broad social issue that infiltrates the field of fashion, that of trust, which is often the reason for the preference of buying consumer goods abroad. Genuine safety concerns exist with the quality of domestic products ranging from food to cars, clothing, and electrical goods. These include *shanzhai*, localisation, and the grey market for clothing, which are processes of innovation and production that depend on the value-generating properties of the fashion system, and that further raise questions in the discourse of copyright in the Chinese creative industries.[34] Yet another activity involves representing a Chinese product as foreign in origin, described as lobalisation.[35] These activities are contentious because they

taint nearly every activity in daily life in China, and while they are not relegated solely to the clothing industry, their impact contributes to undermining the country's national stability.

5. Counterfeit

Counterfeit versions of almost anything can be found in markets in China, including fake luxury goods, electronics, household goods, food and beverages, certificates, official documents, receipts, and even counterfeit Apple stores. The tainted milk scandal that was widely reported in global media in 2008 still resonates and epitomises the deep mistrust the Chinese public have with their government's ability to provide food security.[36] In a recent research project, many designers indicated how these activities cause ongoing concern about the basic tools, materials, and components required by a fashion designer and how they contribute to many problems that undermine the structure of the Chinese fashion system.[37] When considered in conjunction with the oppressive and relentless daily vista of visible levels of pollution, the routines of tainted food, and the relentless official pursuit of corruption, a reaction is made manifest in the work of the designers who prefer to import the fabrics and other components of their garments.

However, the economy of fashion now operates without the constraint of seasons, and is most evident in rise of fast fashion and the twenty-four hour cycling of the Internet, while the sustained growth of online shopping, or eTail encourages fashion designers toward global as well as symbiotic engagement with their consumers. The Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba facilitates this mechanism as a great tidal arbiter with T-Mall, an online shopping mall. Here this powerful corporation attempts to mitigate cultural barriers and provide consumer trust, a particularly problematic quest, as well as certainty of payment for foreign and domestic brands alike. However, it has competition in the form of Shangpin, Baidu, and Tencent, all vying for market-share in this rapidly expanding space of product mediation. These platforms provide domestic shoppers access to many global fashion brands at cheaper prices than in China, where imported brands are comparatively expensive due to a variety of taxes on consumer goods in China.

As well, changing consumer tastes are reshaping the expectations of well-established brands, and as consumers become more sophisticated, so do their expectations of the products they purchase. To put the digital environment in context, in 2013 online spending in China totalled approximately US$307 billion, yet growth is expected to compound at 20 percent per annum until 2019, at which point in excess of US$1 trillion will be spent across a variety of platforms including mobile commerce, where growth is forecast to be a compounding 44 percent. Cultural change has never been more evident in the field of consumption in China. For example, 'Singles Day,' or 'Anti-Valentines' day began on the campus of Nanjing University in 1993, initiated by mainly male students who visited bars to meet other single people. November 11th became the official day for this activity, as the date of 11/11 is a physical representation of single people. The celebration evolved to include women and special singles-only parties arose that involve eating a Chinese snack called *youtiao*, a fried dough stick that also resembles the number 1. Now the combination of growing consumerism in China with a growing bachelor population, due to the one-child policy and a preference for male children, and access to the Internet means Singles Day is now a nationwide shopping phenomenon. Alibaba alone recorded more than US$9 billion in revenue on this one day.

In the fields of fashion production and consumption, domestic Chinese fashion designers like Masha Ma and her contemporaries have numerous opportunities to move quickly in their attempts to navigate the digital realm, and some have proven particularly adept, despite vigilant and authoritarian intrusions into the use of the Internet in China. In this way, they will renew China's design presence at the centre of a new world of Asian design, and with the gathering

momentum of Asian consumption and population growth, China is on track to assume the mantle of the Middle Kingdom once again. In many ways, contemporary Chinese fashion designers have been fast-tracked because of their familiarity with the Internet, and because fashion is such a fast-moving consumer good, the knowledge base moves rapidly. Culturally, China's digital revolution is greatly enabling; however, the most important ramification is that Chinese fashion designers must first become proficient at their craft before they can draw upon their heritage to create a point of distinction because they now compete globally for exposure.

6. Conclusion: A Global Fashion System

To conclude, instead of considering the Chinese domestic fashion system to be independent, it is evident that it is an integrated part of a global fashion system whereby the components of the system are geographically separated yet come together to form one whole system, supported by a geographically disparate fashion industry. Here national identity is less concerned with national borders, and cultural differences merge. Good design is good design, regardless of nationality; yet good design must also serve to improve the human condition. In addition, the digital creative economy has further enabled the spread of a new kind of virulent tacit knowledge enabling the learning processes of fashion producer and consumer alike. Consequently, in many ways emergent Chinese fashion designers are now born global, heavily laden with easily accessible knowledge gleaned from the Internet, but lacking experience and industry structure while burdened by the need to reframe the rhetoric of 'Made in China' as an asset for the national good.

In this way Chinese designers are able to draw upon a culture of ingrained philosophy for incorporation in a fresh Chinese design aesthetic. Yet for success, agile and responsive business models that bypass cultural and national boundaries are vital for engagement with a global fashion system. A multi-channel portfolio strategy is now required to gain traction in a diverse global marketplace. Although fashion will likely remain within a relatively constrained commercial infrastructure, there is now considerable optimism for the making and telling of new ways of living in China that include the adoption of more inclusive, sustainable, and responsible behaviours. In this way fashion designers may have great input into the production of a new kind of Chinese culture. Instead of the kind of cultural dislocation espoused by Bauman, a new location for this kind of creativity exists in the digital realm where nationality is less important than authenticity and transparency.[38] China's reputation as manufacturer to the world has moved on, and a new political mandate now underpins a powerful creative and financial impetus that challenges established models, offering China as a future powerhouse of global fashion.

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Exhibition Reviews

Jeanne Lanvin

Palais Galliera, Paris
8 March-23 August 2015
Curated by Olivier Saillard, Director of the Palais Galliera, with Sophie Grossiord, General Curator of the Palais Galliera, assisted by Christian Gros; Alber Elbaz, Artistic Director of Maison Lanvin and Laure Harivel, Katy Reiss, and Romain Stiegler, Artistic Direction; and Laurence Le Bris, Scenography
Catalogue: *Jeanne Lanvin*
Directed by Sophie Grossiord, with texts by Olivier Saillard, Solène Béraud, Laurent Cotta, Christian Gros, Hélène Guéné, Sylvie Lécallier, and Dean L. Merceron.
Paris: Paris Musées
2015, 352 pages, €45
Illustrated, with selected bibliography and index
ISBN: 978-2-7596-0288-9

In a museum, our encounter with an object or display is mediated by the nature and quality of the physical space in which it is presented since we experience the sensory qualities of space – its aesthetics, materials and physical dimensions – through our bodies. Yet surprisingly, it seems that few reviews of fashion exhibitions assess the nature and quality of the space within which they are presented. In John Potvin's introduction to the book *The Places and Spaces of Fashion: 1800 to 2007* (2009), he argues that 'space thickens fashion, it extends it, attenuates it, grounds it, while fashion adds texture, color and life to a space,' and he also notes that space is rarely considered in scholarly writing about fashion.[1] In this exhibition review, I argue that the Palais Galliera does not simply serve as a backdrop to the exhibition of the work of Jeanne Lanvin but is integral to the affective quality of the exhibition itself.

Originally intended as an art museum, the Palais Galliera is the current home for temporary displays of fashion for the city of Paris. Situated in the sixteenth arrondissement, the site was donated to the city by the Duchess de Galliera in 1879. Designed by the architect Léon Ginain, the museum reflects the opulence and grandeur associated with the Belle Époque period even after the renovation was completed in 2013. The museum exterior still maintains the classical lines of its ornate cut stone façade and its existence as a dedicated site for fashion exhibitions sets it apart from many other museums of fashion and dress, which are often relegated to less than optimal galleries in the basement or in the rafters.

There is a sense of procession as one approaches the park-like setting of the museum site. After entering the gates at 10 Avenue Pierre-1er-de-Serbie, the curved aisle leads the visitor to the main portal with each step adding to the anticipation of an imminent encounter with beauty. Once inside, the sumptuous galleries, which have been restored to their late-nineteenth-century grandeur, create a graceful backdrop for the exhibitions of the Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, including the exhibition *Jeanne Lanvin*.

The House of Lanvin is the oldest surviving French couture house and celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2014. Surprisingly, with such a long and distinguished history, this is the first museum exhibition dedicated to Jeanne Lanvin (1867-1946). The exhibition included over one hundred of the finest pieces from the collections of the Palais Galliera as well as the House of Lanvin archives. At the helm was Olivier Salliard, Director of the Palais Galliera, with

Sophie Grossiord leading the research as General Curator with Maison Lanvin Artistic Director Alber Elbaz, and Laurence Le Bris acting as scenographer.

The fashion retrospective is a distinct genre of exhibition with its focus on the work of a single designer. It was in 1973 that Diana Vreeland presented *The World of Balenciaga* at the Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and since then many such exhibitions have been beset with concerns about curatorial independence and merit. Considerable ink has been spilled on the topic from journalists like Suzy Menkes in 2007, as well as from scholars like Valerie Cumming in 2004, N. J. Stevenson in 2008, and James Potvin in 2012. Although the issue seems less contentious in Europe, where curators like Pamela Golbin feel 'it is necessary to stay close to living designers,'[2] addressing the issue is relevant to this review, especially given the active participation of Lanvin's Artistic Director Elbaz in the curatorial process.[3]

Image 1: Installation shot, side gallery, *Jeanne Lanvin*. Palais Galliera, Paris.
Photo © Pierre Antoine

With the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the House of Lanvin in 2014, this exhibition could have encompassed the entire history of the design house, including the display of Elbaz's most recent designs. In focussing only on the garments and objects related to the fifty-seven year period during which Jeanne Lanvin herself was designing for the house (1889-1946), the exhibition sidestepped the issue of undue influence of the design house in staging an exhibition as a marketing exercise. As well, I would argue that the collaboration was appropriate and necessary since the house retains such a rich archive of materials belonging to the founder. Having visited the storage facilities of the Palais Galliera looking for comparable beading designs to authenticate a Lanvin wedding dress and headpiece with Art Deco influences from the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection in Toronto, Canada, I have witnessed many of these early and fragile Lanvin artefacts in their storage drawers. Although there is no doubt that the Galliera could have put on an excellent exhibition without borrowing from the House of Lanvin, the display would not have been as glorious or complete without their cooperation. Only a few privileged people have ever gained access to the albums and the private office of Jeanne Lanvin that still exists as it did in her lifetime on the fourth floor of the Lanvin headquarters.[4] In the process of researching for this exhibition, Grossiord spent considerable time studying the records and artefacts that had been maintained.[5] Examples of never-before-seen objects from that archive that were featured in the exhibition included the record books containing documentation of beadwork designs, the sculpture of the iconic Mother-and-Child logo (*Poupées de vitrine Femme et Enfant*), and the larger-than-life garments created for the Exposition International des Arts et des Techniques (Image 1).

Like Coco Chanel, Lanvin first began her career in fashion as a millinery designer. She opened a shop in 1889 at 16 Rue Boissy D'Anglas and on Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré in 1893 and designed the hats of the most fashionable Parisiennes at the time. It was only after the birth of her daughter Marguerite in 1897 that she decided to expand her line to children's clothing. Marguerite became a long lasting source of inspiration to Lanvin and that love is echoed in the logo for the house. Lanvin later extended her line to womenswear and soon became known for the exquisite artistry of her gowns. The Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Harold Koda described the Lanvin woman as both pretty and elegant, and in his introduction to Dean Merceron's 2007 tome on the designer, wrote, 'Even at her sleekest, the Lanvin woman never conveyed the hard chic of Chanel. The air of prettiness created in the Lanvin ateliers of *tailleur* and *flou*, reflected a gentler ideal of elegance.'[6] Merceron sums up the hallmarks of Lanvin as encompassing 'various readily identifiable characteristics including beading and embroidery, ethnographic inspiration, sublime combinations of texture and textiles, and most of all, original use of colour.'[7] Lanvin died in 1947, and since then various designers have led the couture house with Elbaz holding the position of Artistic Director from 2001 until 2015.

The influence of Elbaz was most in evidence in the ahistorical arrangement of the main gallery space called Salon d'Honneur. This large rectangular room presented what Elbaz considered Lanvin's design vocabulary in her masterful cut, her use of the colour blue, topstitching, beadwork, and appliqué, as well as the interplay of transparency and opaqueness. In the four corner vitrines, Elbaz chose what he identified as the four masterworks of Lanvin's design legacy, including a bias-cut ribbon dress in black organdie called 'My Fair Lady' from 1939, a midnight blue silk velvet evening gown with metal sequin embroidery called 'La Diva' from winter 1935-1936 (Image 2), a gold lamé topstitched navy blue silk evening gown called 'Walkyrie/Brunehilde' from 1935, and an ivory crèpe dress with a studded collar from winter 1934-1935. In the middle of the room, other artefacts including gowns, coats, dresses, and perfume bottles served to represent Lanvin's affinity for Fra Angelico blue, her development of her logo and perfume, and her taste for black and white (Image 2). Some items were behind glass and others in the open, depending on their fragility, but each item was exquisitely

displayed to best effect on abstracted mannequins, as seems to be the norm for Galliera exhibitions.

Image 2: Installation shot, first gallery, *Jeanne Lanvin*.
Palais Galliera, Paris. Photo © Pierre Antoine

What stood apart as unique and even revolutionary were the specially created display cases for fragile garments that had to be exhibited in a flat format. These cases translated glass coffins for dead gowns into something extraordinary. Elbaz designed custom mirrored display cases in the shape of an open grand piano with a small glass-topped drawer positioned below to represent the keyboard and to hold related artefacts. This abstracted piano shape apparently was intended to honour Lanvin's daughter Marguerite's career as a concert pianist. The open mirrored top of the case reflected the dress below, animating the dress through the multiplied reflections from the mirrors in the top, bottom, and sides of the case. In some areas of the museum, these cases also picked up reflections of the painted ceilings of the restored Galliera, adding a temporal dimension as well as mirrored beauty. And in a simple gesture of displacement, these delicate dresses were placed with arms or waist slightly askew with gentle ripples in the fabric as if their owners had dropped them casually to the floor. This thoughtful but effective illusion of movement elevated flat display to something new and utterly breathtaking. Elbaz called these dresses his 'sleeping beauties' (Image 3).

After passing through the portal into the Grande Galerie, the exhibition resumed a more conventional practice of thematic display with objects presented in small groupings of related artefacts. The Grande Galerie was organised into groups that were given the titles 'Hats,' 'Children,' 'Dresses as Jewels' (a set of dresses from the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes that were heavily beaded), 'Beaded and Embroidered Dresses,' and garments showing inspiration from 'Exotic and Ethnic' influences (decorative

motifs inspired by China, Turkey, Japan, and the French colonial empire), from 'Religious and Medieval' influences, as well as from 'Geometry and Art Deco.' The smaller side galleries showcased the *robe de style*, bridal wear, as well as themes of glitter and romance. The final gallery revisited the major themes of Lanvin's work and included eight ensembles from 1925 (*Robe La Cavallini*) to 1945-1946 (*Manteau du Soir Sérénade*). Throughout the galleries, contextual material, like photographs and paintings, and open pages from Lanvin's design albums, were placed adjacent or close to garments. These albums represented hours of meticulous research and offered the rare privilege of witnessing how a design idea for beading or embroidery was later translated into an object.

Image 3: Installation shot, side gallery, 'Sleeping Beauties,' *Jeanne Lanvin*. Palais Galliera, Paris. Photo © Pierre Antoine

The text on the wall panels attempted to convey the depth of research that had been undertaken to present this exhibition, and was provided, perhaps in recognition of the expanded audience for fashion exhibitions, in both French and English. While many labels conveyed didactic information about the objects on display, some of the labels read like poetry, especially the first panel near the entry, which read in part:

> Lanvin artistic director Alber Elbaz wanted to design the exhibition and contribute to the curating: delighted with the creations he found in the Palais Galliera reserves, he has set out to preserve the mystery – that mingling of restfulness and insomnia – that makes each of them a sleeping beauty. Jeanne Lanvin's dresses are displayed like pages fallen from a book whose story he wants to tell. Set against streams of mirrors, they speak silently of the life path of the couturier who founded the world's oldest surviving fashion house.

Also available was a free Lanvin app, which could be downloaded before or during the visit with free access to Wi-Fi at the museum. This was not linked to the exhibition itself and seemed to be intended to extend the reach of the exhibition to a virtual audience and possibly also to forestall the taking of photos which was prohibited inside the galleries.

Like many exhibitions, most of the scholarly research that underpins this exhibition is contained within the 352-page colour catalogue itself, which unfortunately is only available in French. One aspect of the research in which I had a vested interest was the precise dating associated with different versions of the Lanvin label. The early versions of the label had been previously undocumented but now are clearly spelled out on pages 21-22 of the catalogue, and will aid in a more precise dating of pieces in the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection.

In a review, one is expected to offer a critique. As a critic, my aim is to offer a measured opinion, weighing my impressions against the intent of the curator. And yet, I must confess I am biased. I am smitten with beautiful objects, especially when they are presented in beautiful surroundings. Frankly, I wonder whether the beauty and grandeur of the Palais Galliera would make any dress look good. The architecture of the facility itself is both elegant and refined – with the finishes and spatial dimensions befitting of a small palace (Image 4). The impact of such a setting is often overlooked in reviews of fashion exhibitions, but I would concur with the art history scholar Reesa Greenberg in asserting that, 'the meanings of all exhibitions are more site-specific than is generally acknowledged.'[8]

Nonetheless, I argue that the curatorial team led by Salliard does not rely on the backdrop; rather, it has sought out innovative forms of display and accepted nothing less than perfection in displaying objects of dress. I was utterly enchanted by the mirrored cases, and with a slight lean I could see my head reflected in the mirror as if I was wearing one of these delicate confections. This reflective trick was highly effective in overcoming the uncanny that is pervasive in displays of dress artefacts, and no doubt will become the new standard for flat display.

Despite being almost blinded by the beauty of Jeanne Lanvin's legacy, I opine that this exhibition was both scholarly and thoughtful in its organisation. Although the ahistorical presentation in the main gallery might have initially created some confusion if one skipped reading the text panels outlining how the exhibition was organised, the groupings of objects created their own narrative and visual links. Elbaz identified two options for the exhibition:

> either to be historical and do a very academic retrospective with a succession of dates; or to follow our feelings, to love and admire the clothes, touch the

> visitors' heart through the sheer beauty of these garments, and finish the exhibition kind of up on a cloud.[9]

This affinity for beauty is evident in the scenography for this exhibition and I would argue that nothing has been lost in favouring aesthetics over chronology. After all, curators of art exhibits do it all the time.

Image 4: Installation shot, final gallery, *Jeanne Lanvin*, Palais Galliera, Paris. Photo © Pierre Antoine

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Jacqueline de Ribes: The Art of Style

The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
19 November 2015-21 February 2016
Organized by Harold Koda, Curator, The Costume Institute
Catalogue: *Jacqueline de Ribes*
Harold Koda; forward by Diane von Furstenberg, art direction by Jacqueline de Ribes, photographs by Patricia Canino
Paris: LBD Editions
2015, 157 pages, $50
Illustrated, with selected bibliography and index
ISBN: 978-2955278000

A life of constant expression almost always includes a life of style. Each sartorial execution predicated upon taste, experience, and imagination is such a joy for some that they find themselves declared icons of style. Countess Jacqueline de Ribes (b. 1929), a Parisienne born of European aristocracy, is one such star in the annals of twentieth-century fashion, and the subject of The Costume Institute's latest exhibition *Jacqueline de Ribes: The Art of Style* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

A sweeping, thematic exhibition focussed on one woman certainly begs the question: What constitutes a fashion icon? In our contemporary climate of actresses and pop stars that are often named icons of style early on in their careers and regularly dressed by professional stylists, the term is repeatedly tossed around. Like many of her contemporaries and regular clients of bespoke luxury, de Ribes had access to haute couture looks right off the runway and to ensembles styled by the current experts of taste. However, unlike many women of her day whose access to such quality simply earned them a passing mark for dressing well, de Ribes went above and beyond, inserting originality and spunk into the pieces she acquired and wore boldly throughout her life. According to the writer Truman Capote who along with the photographer Richard Avedon named de Ribes one of ten elegant 'swans' of fashion in the 1959 book *Observations*, a woman of style's iconic status was based upon an aesthetic system that she had created for herself, an imagining of her own self-portrait expressed through visual code.

In true artist's fashion, de Ribes painted her own self-portrait through dress, with a do-it-yourself approach to tailored elegance. Married at the age of nineteen to Édouard, Vicomte de Ribes, who was later named Count after his father's passing, de Ribe's early life was one surrounded by haute couture dressmaking. As a young girl she made a point to be present at her grandmother's private fittings and idolised Coco Chanel. This fascination with both the constructed utility and fanciful decoration of fashion never left her, and when she was in her mid-twenties, her first nomination for 'best dressed' came from Eleanor Lambert's 'Best Dressed List' in 1956. At this time de Ribes designed most of her own clothing with dressmakers and had only a small number of couture gowns. However, as her eye developed, her couture collection grew and nominations continued. She was placed in the International Best-Dressed List Hall of Fame in 1962, and photographed by Richard Avedon the same year (Image 1).

A woman of de Ribes' birth and means was expected to remain quietly in the shadows of the home and society parties, focussing any extra energy upon philanthropic endeavours. However, the Countess bent conventionality at every turn and developed a varied set of professional talents that led her into journalism, television production, theatre, interior design, and ultimately fashion design when she launched her namesake brand in 1982. The incorporation of de Ribes' own designs in the exhibition, which comprises almost sixty

ensembles of haute couture and ready-to-wear, dating from 1962 and including designers such as Pierre Balmain, Marc Bohan for House of Dior, Valentino, and Yves Saint Laurent (YSL), makes for an interesting look at the relationship between the couture client and the couture client's imaginings for her own luxurious, ready-to-wear designs.

Image 1: Jacqueline de Ribes in Yves Saint Laurent, 1962.
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photograph by Richard Avedon © The Richard Avedon Foundation

Spread throughout the two main galleries of the Anna Wintour Costume Center, a simple black box space encases the platforms and mannequin displays. Upon entry, a wall-mounted Richard Avedon photograph of de Ribes from 1955 hovers over the stairway. In it, a bust of the Countess is displayed in profile, regal and serene like an ancient sculpture.

Inside, the exhibition's themed sections open with 'Emblematic Looks,' displaying de Ribes' deft ability at mixing couture and ready-to-wear pieces to achieve her own flair. Her innate styling skills are evident in an ensemble featuring a colourful YSL wool flannel coat from 1969-1970, the first printed winter coat, which she paired with an orange cashmere turtleneck c. 1983 from the early days of Banana Republic. Rather than adorning her bespoke designer suits and coats with blouses underneath, de Ribes preferred the casual warmth of a turtleneck. Her pursuit of utility, comfort, and movement while dressing is particularly evident in a look combining a purple puffy 'sleeping bag' coat by Norma Kamali with a pink wool knit dress of her own design, YSL scarf, and black crocodile Dior handbag, making for the ultimate combination of active wear and luxury accessories.

In the 'Eveningwear' and 'Haute Couture' displays, silk satins, stiff taffetas, and airy chiffons light up the black box with candy colours: grape, apricot, sea green, cerulean blue, and magenta (Image 2), and couture ensembles by YSL and Emmanuel Ungaro mix and mingle with pieces from de Ribes' own ready-to-wear line. Through her close relationships and loyalty to houses such as Dior and YSL, the Countess became well known for her incredible taste and artist's eye, so much so that radical modifications and custom alterations to items were supported by the ateliers, who were more than willing to help her achieve the look she desired. In one example, de Ribes reimagined a Lesage embroidered sheath dress design of black silk crepe from 1983, adorned with black and silver beads, crystals, and paillettes into an evening jacket for 2002. In another from 1968, she substituted an original silk taffeta YSL blouse embroidered with gold sequins, for a black sequined version, and paired it with a tunic of black fringed buckskin and black silk skirt, for a solidly chic all-black ensemble.

In stark contrast to the deep blacks of the YSL look, evening gowns in whisper shades of pink are unapologetically feminine and elegantly sexy. A sculptural, one-shouldered gown designed by de Ribes from Autumn/Winter 1983-1984 sports a playful, upright ruffle that winds its way from back to front and back again. A signature design from her first collection, the dress was prominently featured on the cover of *Town & Country* magazine in October 1983. Alongside this gown are additional de Ribes designs in the previously mentioned candy colours, which display many of her work's signature details – tailored construction juxtaposed with softened *flou.* Dresses for evening from the late 1980s to early 1990s in matte silk satin, silk gazar, silk moiré, silk-viscose velvet, and silk duchesse satin in a rainbow of shades paint a perfect picture of the Countess's busy society life of parties, galas, and entertaining at home.

Opposite the gallery of gowns, a wall of framed periodicals dating from 1953 to 2010 illustrates the media's tireless fascination with de Ribes' personal life, style, and influence on the world of fashion. In articles from *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Interview*, and *Vanity Fair*, titles such as 'De Ribes Style: Allure and Tradition,' 'Great European Beauties,' 'Allure, the Quintessential Vicomtesse,' and 'The Last Queen of Paris,' make crystal clear her lasting impact. In addition, a patchwork of images from every decade of her life is projected onto the walls behind the mannequins, fading in and out, evidence of a life well lived.

In some of the gallery's final displays, de Ribes' own designs paired with select pieces from her personal archive in 'Black and White for Night' and 'Flights of Fantasy' illuminate her love for structure, texture, and a sense of playfulness with fashion. Evening dresses from Jean Paul Gaultier, Marc Bohan for Dior, and de Ribes herself, juxtapose cotton and silk, black velvet and ivory charmeuse, lace, fringe, and metal, resulting in gowns with sinuous lines, playful poufs, and a luxurious sensuality. Her sense of play with dress was always evident in her ability to mix pieces from high and low end, from haute couture to ready-to-wear and even sometimes incorporating elements of fast fashion. In one 'Western Belle Ensemble' she mixes a Ralph Lauren twill skirt with an Express blouse, Ungaro choker, and Caché jacket. In another, a Cavalli turtleneck, cardigan, and waistcoat from 1981-1982 with an Ungaro skirt from the same

time period, is paired with a headpiece of her own design, and a nineteenth-century Tibetan handbag, for a 'Gypsy de-luxe' look.

Image 2: Gallery View, Evening Wear. Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

De Ribes was a voracious consumer of haute couture, often injecting her own sensibilities into designs from luxury houses in an unprecedented way. In the exhibition's last space, de Ribes' feverish love for creating the perfect look culminates in a gallery display of the gowns she made for the grand Parisian masquerade balls of the twentieth century. For a ball she was to attend in 1969, despite her title, de Ribes could not afford the cost of having the dress made by a couturier, so she composed one herself, out of a deconstructed couture gown, inexpensive fabrics, and embroidery. Her use of this mélange of materials is only more evidence of her love of the creative process, of performance through the act of dressing. In a sea of expensive, bespoke costumes, and forgettable celebrities, Jacqueline de Ribes was the one remembered for her fashionable wit in the face of fun. It is her wit and graceful spirit that pervades *Jacqueline de Ribes: The Art of Style*, in which one of the most impressive personal archives of haute couture is injected with a dash of humanity, a wink, and an elegant smile.

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Standing Tall: A Curious History of Men in Heels

Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada
8 May 2015-June 2016
Curated by Elizabeth Semmelhack, Senior Curator

Image 1: *Persian Riding Shoes*, seventeenth century.
Photo: Ron Wood © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

Two years ago, after much searching, I chanced upon a pair of 'new old stock' American-made longwing brogues on eBay. Buying shoes online is always a bit of a gamble, but when the shoes arrived a week later I was delighted to discover that they fit. However, something wasn't *quite* right. Upon closer inspection I realised the issue lay with the heel. My trusty measuring tape confirmed my suspicions – the heels on these Dexter brogues were 1/8 of an inch higher than on similar pairs of shoes that I owned. This caused me much distress as I wondered: did these shoes look like that most discredited of 1970s fashions, the platform? Eventually I came to love these monster shoes, assuaged by the knowledge that for many, shoes with a stacked heel and sole were much-sought after in the 1960s; with such shoes, sometimes referred to as 'gunboats,' the ever-so-slightly higher heel was a selling point. But what was it about that 1/8 of an inch that caused me such anxiety? And why is it that most men's soles are that 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch shorter today? These are the kinds of questions addressed in *Standing Tall: The Curious History of Men in Heels*, an exhibition at Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum. The ever-changing shape and meaning of men's heels and the ways in which they have both affirmed and troubled masculinity over the centuries, was the focus of this exhibition, which featured over thirty boots and shoes from the museum's collection.

Image 2: *English Riding Boot*, c. 1690-1710.
Photo: Ron Wood © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

As with all garments, the gendered meanings attached to heels are variable across history and cultures. The wall text at *Standing Tall* explained that prior to the seventeenth century men's shoes in Europe were flat. The heel was imported to Europe from Asia, where it was used on riding boots to stabilise riders in their stirrups. The exhibition included examples from Persian (Image 1), Bedouin, and Turkmen culture to show us the heel's pre-European history. Like so many aspects of male dress, the heel's European origins were military in nature, incorporated for the advantages they provided whilst riding. The curators argued that these associations with military equestrianism, along with the added height and stature that they offered, made heels emblematic of seventeenth-century masculinity. However they were to fall out of fashion in the eighteenth century, taking on the associations with femininity that continue to haunt men's heels today.

As the exhibition wall text explained, it was in the eighteenth century that Enlightenment values raised concerns about whether heels were compatible with masculine rationality. As those familiar with men's fashion will already know, such notions led to what the psychoanalyst John Flügel would term in 1930 the 'Great Masculine Renunciation.' Heels were re-defined as frivolous and thus unsuitable for men. Yet heels remained masculine for the man-of-action when they appeared on riding boots, and the exhibition featured a number of examples of riding

boots from the eighteenth century. An English stacked heel boot dated from the turn of that century (Image 2) features heels which to, today's eye, look excessively high.

As the exhibition moved into the nineteenth century, a standout item was a heel separated from its boot by a bullet shot during the Battle of Gettysburg of 1863. The bullet remains wedged in the heel. In the United States, the opening of the Western frontier saw the evolution of the riding boot into the perennially masculine, albeit sometimes camp, cowboy boot. The cowboy boots on display, many of them from the twentieth century, showed how heels are perhaps not as troubling to masculinity as we might think. The same goes for the 1940s American motorcycle boots (Image 3), designed for the mechanical horses of the twentieth century.

Image 3: *American Biker Boot*, mid-twentieth century.
Photo: Ron Wood © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

While this was an exhibition about masculinity, it was only when it reached the 1960s and 1970s that visitors saw any real evidence of gender norms being transgressed. The Peacock Revolution of the 1960s brought us the English Beatle Boot, and the exhibition included a boot from a pair worn by John Lennon. More dramatically, the Peacock Revolution re-defined the limits of masculine dress, as seen in the high-heeled platform shoes for which the 1970s are known. This was the most interesting section of the exhibition, and I was left wanting more. Alongside a pair of boots worn by Elton John one found some striking examples with a local connection, including a pair of platform boots custom-made in Toronto by Master John. The standout piece in the exhibition, they featured a yellow, red, and black star and sun motif (Image 4). While not quite as ornate, one was struck by the examples of 1970s shoes *not* meant for musicians or music fans. With their exaggerated heels and colour patterns, they appear flamboyant today, but for a brief period of time in the 1970s might have been considered appropriate for the office.

Image 4: *Master John Platform* (Canadian), 1973.
Photo: Ron Wood © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

The nature of these more everyday shoes, and their relation to the ways in which fashion shapes our perception of heels, was an aspect of men's heels that was under-explored in *Standing Tall*. While the exhibition material made an argument that heels came to assert masculinity in the 1960s and 1970s period, it was not really made clear how this was the case. Rather, it seemed to be a question of changing tastes in a decade when the limits on male fashionable expression were temporarily suspended. This was an era when even football hooligans wore platform boots and glitter! One wonders what happened to bring us back to today's more sober male heel.

It is on the question of which male heels are – and are not – acceptable that the exhibition falls short (pun intended). While *Standing Tall* did an excellent job of showing us where and how the heel has featured in men's footwear and at the same time provided a coherent narrative explaining the ways in which attitudes towards heels reflected changing notions of masculinity, it did not address the fact that aside from sneakers and wedge-soled shoes, *most* men's shoes have some sort of heel. Men's heels are not perceived to be gendered or even fashion-forward until they reach a certain height; that liminal space between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' heel height is clearly historically variable. The 1/8 of an inch of

extra heel height on my Dexter brogues was not in excess of what was considered appropriate in the decade in which they were manufactured, but it is in excess now. The shoes are not 'too feminine' but they are perhaps 'too costume-y,' and we would certainly say the same of any platform shoes worn today. It is remarkable that for all the pilfering of the past in menswear, fashion designers, vintage collectors, and heritage aficionados alike stay clear of the sort of 'glam rock' 1970s style exemplified by the platform boots and shoes displayed at *Standing Tall*.

In spite of these minor oversights, *Standing Tall* provided some fascinating insights into how the heel has figured into the history of men's footwear throughout the centuries. The last thing that visitors to the exhibition saw before the exit was a pair of size 16 red stilettoes worn by a drag queen. This was the perfect pair of shoes with which to end the exhibition. As the gendering of clothing is increasingly coming into question, these men's stilettoes gave the visitor a sense of where men's heels might be headed in the future.

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Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions

Fashion Victims: The Pleasures & Perils of Dress in the 19th Century

(Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, 18 June 2014-June 2016)

Taking examples of footwear and fashion garments from its own collections, this exhibition, curated by Senior Curator Elizabeth Semmelhack and Alison Matthews David, Associate Professor, School of Fashion, Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, reconstructs a history of fashion in the nineteenth century cantered on the shift from traditional, independent craft processes to the fragmented, factory-generated footwear of the twentieth century and the social implications of this evolution. While fashionable figures of nineteenth-century society were often depicted as the height of glamour and beauty, the price of this lifestyle was paid in the form of succumbing to poisonous materials and constricting garments. Arsenic, mercury, impossibly narrow footwear, and suffocating corsets were the underpinnings of high society in this newly industrialised society.

Fairy Tale Fashion

(Special Exhibitions Gallery, The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, 15 January-16 April 2016)

This exhibition explores the transformative power of fashion through the lens of fairy tales by the likes of Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, and the Brothers Grimm. A display of over eighty objects, organised by Associate Curator Colleen Hill, is installed in a fantastical

setting designed by architect Kim Ackert and includes examples from the eighteenth through twenty-first centuries. Garments and accessories are accompanied by illustrations and photographs that articulate the relationship between fashion and storytelling. The exhibition space, organised into thematic areas called 'Forest,' 'Castle,' 'Sea,' and 'Parallel Worlds,' is accompanied by a catalogue published by Yale University Press, featuring more than 150 illustrations and photographs.

Vogue 100: A Century of Style

(National Portrait Gallery, London, 11 February-22 May 2016)

Almost 300 prints from the Condé Nast archives and various international collections will be on display to celebrate the legacy of photography commissioned by British *Vogue* since its founding in 1916. As part of the magazine's centennial celebration, many works in the exhibition will be shown together for the first time as a documentation of its contribution to the arts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

#techstyle

(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 6 March-10 July 2016)

Situated in the Henry and Lois Foster Gallery, the MFA Boston has opened an exhibition dedicated to highlighting the latest developments in fashion technologies. With examples of garments that respond to the external environment, others rendered on a 3D printer, and some that can 'tweet,' the exhibition will demonstrate the evolving synergy between designers, software engineers, and craftspeople, articulating the ongoing relationship between fashion, art, and technology. Key pieces from the museum's own collections of fashion and accessories will form the foundation of the exhibition, underlined by special contributions by Alexander McQueen, Iris van Herpen, and Hussein Chalayan.

Art Textiles: Marian Clayden

(Fashion and Textile Museum, London, 11 March-17 April 2016)

In recognition of the work of the renowned British designer Marian Clayden (1937-2015), this exhibition offers examples of how she transformed the realm of tie-dyed psychedelic fabrics into a multi-million-dollar business of art textiles in cotton, wool, velvet, and silk. *Art Textiles*, curated by historian March Schoeser, demonstrates Clayden's process, her use of the shibori technique, and celebrates her contribution to fashion in luxury textiles.

Miyake Issey Exhibition: The Work of Miyake Issey

(The National Arts Center, Tokyo, 16 March-13 June 2016)

This retrospective exhibition highlights the designer's forty-five year career with examples of his work dating from 1970 to the present. Co-organised by The Miyake Issey Foundation, Miyake Design Studio, and Issey Miyake Inc., the exhibition is organised in thematic 'Rooms,' labelled A through C, which focus on concepts ranging from his early experimental practices and design solutions, his concern for the body and its relation to space, and his team-oriented approach to 'radical research.' Conceived in close relation to the designer's socio-political context over the course of recent decades, instances of technical innovation and investigation in

his design practice will be represented by experimental fabric samples and strategic construction elements, such as his distinctive 'garment pleating' process.

A History of Fashion in 100 Objects

(Fashion Museum Bath, Bath, 19 March 2016-1 January 2018)

With a historiographical approach, this exhibition aims to construct a material history of fashion using 'star' objects from the museum's collections, ranging from the sixteenth century to today. Taking the evolving socio-political context into consideration, examples of haute couture, bespoke, and famous garments tell the story of society's ongoing relationship with fashion rendered in silk and glittering metallic threads, in waistcoats, jackets, gowns, and shoes. Important moments of Bath's history are represented by robes owned or worn by notable figures such as Vivien Leigh, aristocratic figures from Shakespeare's era, and political figures such as Mary Chamberlain, wife of British politician Joseph Chamberlain. These garments, remarkable for their craftsmanship and luxurious finishing, are also notable for their appearance in works of art such as portraits by Sir John Everett Millais in the late nineteenth century.

Fashion Forward: Trois Siècles de Mode (1715-2015)

(Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 7 April-14 August 2016)

Curated by Pamela Golbin, Chief Curator of Fashion and Textiles, 1940 to the Present, along with Associate Curators Denis Bruna and Marie-Sophie Carron de la Carrière, and under the Artistic Direction of Christopher Wheeldon, *Fashion Forward* highlights three centuries of fashion, centred on a collection curated in concert with the museum's other departments. The exhibition will feature over 300 items of women's, men's, and children's clothing, jewellery, and textiles stemming from the eighteenth century to today, with highlights chosen from the museum's collections of haute couture, ready-to-wear, accessories, drawings, and photographs. Important 'fashion moments' in history will be represented by materials from the archives of such notable figures as Elsa Schiaparelli, Madeleine Vionnet, and Cristobal Balenciaga.

Reigning Men: Fashion in Menswear, 1715-2015

(Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 10 April-21 August 2016)

This exhibition problematises the common association of 'fashion' with 'femininity' and instead, proposes an assessment of masculine identity in light of the history of men's fashion from the early eighteenth century to today. With over 200 examples from LACMA's own collection, the exhibition re-casts masculinity against the bright light of opulence in female fashion with examples of aristocratic dress for men from the 1700s, to samples epitomising the nineteenth-century 'dandy,' the 'mods' of the 1950s, and represents the enduring popular appeal of the uniform. It will demonstrate that the re-imaginings of the woman's body throughout history by way of padding and cinching were not in fact exclusive to the female realm.

Manus x Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology

(The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 5 May-14 August 2016)

This exhibition, installed in various locations throughout The Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, will interrogate the long-standing relationship between the hand

and the machine, as seen through juxtapositions of haute couture and ready-to-wear. With examples from the industrial age of the late nineteenth century to the contemporary era, the Robert Lehman Wing and the Anna Wintour Costume Center will be host to innovative curatorial pairings of hand-made and machine-made garments, reconstructions of ateliers and petites mains workshops, and displays of fashion's new technologies, including 'in-process' 3D printing, laser cutting, and various forms of welding and laminating.

Catwalk: The Journal of Fashion, Beauty and Style, volume 5, no.1, pp. 117-123 (2016) Inter-Disciplinary Press
ISSN: 2045-2349

Book Reviews

China: Through the Looking Glass

Andrew Bolton with John Galliano, Adam Geczy, Maxwell K. Hearn, Homay King, Harold Koda, Mei Mei Rado, and Wong Kar Wai
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New Haven and London: Yale University Press
2015, 256 Pages, $45
Illustrated
ISBN: 978-1-58839-563-4

Chinese fashion was the focus of the 2015 exhibition *China Through the Looking Glass* held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Notably, this latest effort has commercial overtones, evident in the sponsor's message where CEO Marissa Mayer of the digital media company Yahoo manages to align a corporate mandate with the vagaries of global fashion. And why not? The consumption of fashion is among the most accessible and commercial of activities. This weighty tome consists of 254 un-cut pages, including photographer's credits. There are nine sections that loosely track the various evolutionary perspectives of Chinese fashion – including fashion film – culminating in perhaps the most interesting and contemporarily relevant section, in which the renowned designer John Galliano speaks with Andrew Bolton. Galliano discusses the impact of China on his design aesthetic at the various fashion brands he has overseen in his career thus far.

The heavy reading begins, after a brief note by the acclaimed film director Wong Kar Wai, with Maxwell K. Hearn's essay on the dialogue between East and West that imparts an artistic commentary to the Chinese historical context, speaking of the inspiration of Chinese imagery and aesthetics. Next, the exhibition's curator Bolton looks to various theorists, notably the literary theorists Edward Said and Roland Barthes to investigate the binaries of East and West, of reality and fantasy, and of film and fashion. In turn, Adam Geczy's dense, multi-layered and all-encompassing essay delves further into the theme of Orientalism introduced by Bolton, by incorporating a multi-faceted and geographically diverse perspective that is framed in the reflective, whispering nature of the transfer of knowledge during some defining moments in the cultures of various countries.

Harold Koda, the now retired, former head of The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reinvigorates Geczy's compact focus, by artfully invoking several delightful *Caricatures Parisiennes* to illustrate the assimilation of various Chinese stylistic attributes into European dress. He moves the narrative in his essay with ease toward the field of fashion, most specifically by utilising the themes of colonial power and industrialisation to draw attention to the work of the designer Paul Poiret, the Art Deco period, and on to Lanvin, Chanel, and Jean Patou. Koda works methodically through some important designers of the twentieth century, concluding with John Galliano and Alexander McQueen.

The art historian and literary critic Mei Mei Rado, in the next and most lengthy essay provides a well-rounded view of the depiction of fashion in art. Through an analysis of engravings and oil paintings, Rado draws our attention to the appearance of Chinese clothing as ancillary to the expatriate. Here she invokes the idealised dream world that was accessible only to intrepid adventurers who returned from their travels with new ideas and motifs. According to Rado, few Chinese citizens travelled beyond their territories. Her account of the mandarin Shen

Fuzong and the consternation of his Chinese dress at the Royal Court fascinates, as does the mysterious appearance of 'a Chinaman dressed in magnificent robes' at the opening of London's Great Exhibition in 1858, when the final moments of the last Chinese dynasty were in formation. Rado moves adeptly toward the moment the Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, and then onwards through the political turmoil of the Chinese twentieth century. I am very grateful for her mention of Chen Yifei, a man grounded in the art world and who perhaps single-handedly transformed the contemporary Chinese fashion industry in Shanghai during the 1970s and 1980s.

Image 1: Dragon Robe, China, eighteenth century, silk gauze embroidered with silk and metalic thread, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1935 (35.84.8) © Photo Metropolitan Museum of Art

Before the book moves to the first photographic pages, the art historian's Homay King's take on a virtual, or an alternate China, leads to an interesting, necessary enquiry of the role of China in film. From the era of silent film in the late 1920s to the film *The Last Emperor* (1987), King's focus relies on the enigmatic signifiers that characterise this medium. Here, attention is drawn to the film set where 'a sense of exotic mystery' is conveyed by the strategic placement of Eastern curios such as jade necklaces, calligraphy, and various other Orientalist motifs. A favourite is the image of Marlene Dietrich in *Shanghai Express* (1932) in conjunction with the Chinese-American movie star Anna May Wong.

Despite the at times layered, ponderous, and wordy wanderings of the scholarly contributors in the early pages, this book does not constitute a serious analysis of Chinese fashion; nor is it conclusive of the diverse ramifications of Said's theme of Orientalism. Yet it is not meant to be so. It is a wondrous, colourful, and desirable coffeetable souvenir of an exhibition that attracted record numbers of attendees and a great deal of media attention, just as a fashion show should.

Image 2: Jar with Dragon, China, fifteenth century, porcelain painted in underglaze blue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Robert E. Tod, 1937 (37.191.1)

For the industry professional or serious fashion designer, however, it is most frustrating that the finer details of garments and Chinese objects have been mostly obscured. The photographer Platon has for some reason applied after-effects to glorious images that blur clarity, reduce detail, and ultimately serve to present a 'pop culture' representation of a most

important, often documented, yet still not fully understood post-industrial period of global cultural intermingling. In this case, the treatment of museum quality cultural artefacts such as the magnificent examples utilised in this book held by The Metropolitan Museum of Art might have been better expressed with a view toward a contribution to new knowledge instead of the easy, yet glamorous media-ready 'fashion moment.'

In this capacity, this book is certainly representative of Bolton's 'Through the Looking Glass' mandate; however, the lens in this case is slightly out of focus and needs clearer purpose. Despite this critical viewpoint by an industry insider, this book sits comfortably upon my bookshelf and will be taken down often so I might explore further the intersections of the mythology of Chinese fashion and European interpretation, in the context of the outsider.

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Briefly Noted Books

Fashion Victims: The Dangers of Dress Past and Present

Alison Mathews David. London: Bloomsbury, 2015, 256 pages, illustrated, $49.99, ISBN: 978-1-84520-449-5.

A facinating foray into dress as a dangerous harbinger of death and disease throughout history, this lavishly illustrated book explores the myths and realities of well-known and obscure cases of fashion's victims. Combustible crinolines, arsenic laced gowns, and hazardous hats are among the many garments that are examined for their lethal effects on wearers, workers, animals, and the environment. This rich historical source focusses primarily on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in France, the United Kingdom, and America and is both entertaining and horrifying in its gruesome details of fashionable misadventure.

The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion

Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim. London: Bloomsbury, 2015, 224 pages, illustrated with an index, $49.99, ISBN: 978-1-47257-397-1.

Enormously useful for the budding fashion historian or curator, this publication provides a textbook approach to the study of dress artefacts as a source for research. The authors, both of whom have curatorial backgrounds, provide a practice-based framework and a range of interesting case studies to instruct readers in the methods for observing and reflecting upon objects of dress. This accessible guide will surely become a crucial source for students of fashion studies.

Irving Penn: Beyond Beauty

Merry A. Foresta. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015, illustrated, 240 pages, $45, ISBN: 978-0-30021-490-1.

Accompanying a touring exhibition derived from the extensive holdings of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, this catalogue is illustrated with significant examples from Irving Penn's career. The accompanying essay emphasises Penn's use of photography to consider social and cultural change, while the stunning photographs attest to his mastery of fashion and art photography as well as streetscenes and portraits.

Thinking through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theorists

Agnes Rocamora and Anneke Smelik, eds. London: I.B Tauris, 2015, 320 pages, illustrated, $28, ISBN: 978-1-78076-734-5.

This book is a much-needed overview of the key critical thinkers who have shaped our understanding of the fashion field. Each of the expert contributors introduce key concepts and describe how these ideas have been contextualised in relation to fashion. Social and cultural theorists covered include Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Erving Goffman, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre Bourdieu, Bruno Latour, and Judith Butler, amongst others. As such this book is sure to prove an invaluable reference guide for students of fashion from a range of disciplines.

The First Book of Fashion: The Book of Clothes of Matthaeus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg

Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward eds. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, 432 pages, illustrated, $59.99, ISBN: 978-0-85785-768-2.

An extraordinary primary resource of portraits from the Northern Renaissance, coupled with fashion commentary from Mattaeus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany this book is described by the publishers as the equivalent to sixteenth-century fashion blogging. The accountant Matthaeus Schwarz and his son Veit Konrad recorded their social distinction through dress by commissioning portraits by illuminists to demonstrate and document their evolving style. Both the images and accompanying captions provide fascinating detail of styles, colours, and materials. As such the book offers unique insight into the everyday dress of professional men and the experiences of Renaissance life.

A Portrait of Fashion: Six Centuries of Dress at the National Portrait Gallery

Aileen Ribeiro with Cally Blackman. London: National Portrait Gallery, 2015, 288 pages, illustrated, $24.95, ISBN: 978-1-85514-556-6.

This lavish publication centres around 190 images from The National Portrait Gallery, London. The Courtauld Institute Professor Emeritus Aileen Ribeiro and the fashion historian Cally Blackman examine the purpose and context of dress as worn by sitters over the last 600 years – from Henry VII to Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge. This scholarly account of fashion history examined through art identifies significant societal shifts and cultural moments that shaped the dress worn by notable figures.

Art + Fashion: Collaborations and Connections between Icons

E.P Cutler and Julien Tomasello. New York: Chronicle Books, 2015, illustrated, 224 pages, $45, ISBN: 978-1-45213-869-5.

Art and fashion have often been described as uneasy bedfellows, but not so through the eyes of the fashion historian E.P. Cutler. This book examines a range of art and fashion collaborations through thought-provoking essays and stunning visuals. Twenty-five art and fashion projects are presented, including Elsa Schiaparelli's and Salvador Dali's lobster dress, Cecil Beaton's 1951 *Vogue* images of models positioned in front of Jackson Pollock paintings, Cindy Sherman's self-portraits dressed in Chanel, and Elmgreen and Dragset's *Prada Marfa* installation.

Invitation Strictly Personal: 40 Years of Fashion Show Invites

Iain R. Webb. London: Goodman, 2015, 304 pages, illustrated, £30, ISBN: 978-1-84796-084-9.

Combining graphic design with the intent of the fashion designer, the fashion show invitation is a unique item of ephemera often unconsidered. Professor of Fashion at the Royal College of Art and Central Saint Martins in London Iain Webb opens up his personal collection of invitations, programme notes, and posters from a range of designer collections over the past forty years. It is perhaps not surprising that the theatrical fashion shows of the likes of Jean Paul Gaultier, Alexander McQueen, and Thierry Mugler were also accompanied by inventive, humorous, and artistic invitations. These examples and many more are presented here for those outside the fashion industry.

Fashion's Double: Representations of Fashion in Painting, Photography and Film

Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, 176 pages, illustrated, $39.99, ISBN: 978-0-85785-711-8.

Constructed around a series of case studies that examine fashion as translated through visual culture, this book is likely to be an important source for fashion studies as it intersects with art history, film, and photography. Primarily dealing with fashion from the late twentieth century to the present, significant photographers including Helmut Newton and Nick Night are examined alongside films such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Madonna's *Blond Ambition* tour.

Diana Vreeland: The Modern Woman: The Bazaar Years, 1936-52

Alexander Vreeland ed. New York: Rizzoli, 2015, 400 pages, illustrated, $60, ISBN: 978-0-84784-608-5.

Diana Vreeland's visionary creative direction and editorial expertise is visually represented in this book, which features every *Harper's Bazaar* cover under her direction and a selection of features. Iconic images that are a result of her collaboration with industry luminaries are coupled with her unique, daring, and witty insights to provide an understanding of this unique fashion maven's mindset.

Fashion Tribes: Global Street Style

Daniele Tamagni. London: Abrams, 2015, illustrated, 292 pages, $35, ISBN: 978-1-41971-390-3.

A multitude of street-style fashion photography books have been published since the popularity of the *Satorialist* engulfed the Internet in 2005. *Fashion Tribes*, based on the photographs of Daniele Tamagni, may prove to be one of the more interesting and wide-reaching in its approach. The author of *Gentlemen of Bacongo* (2009), the Milanese photographer extends his remit to include female wrestlers in Bolivia, punks of Burma, and rockers of Botswana. Accompanied by essays by experts in fashion, photography, anthropology, and sociology, this is a broad world-view of the street style phenomenon.

Remotely Fashionable: A Story of Subtropical Style

Nadia Buick and Madeleine King, eds. Brisbane: The Fashion Archives, 2015, illustrated, 180 pages, $ 45, ISBN: 978-0-99443-220-9.

An historical meditation on the ways in which fashion operates outside of the big fashion cities in remote locations – in this case Queensland, Australia. Geographically specific, contributions such as Amanda Hayman's study of indigenous dress and Melissa Bellanta's and Alana Piper's analysis of prostitute street style engage with broader fashion discourses that are often overlooked.

Women I've Undressed: A Memoir

Orry-Kelly. Melbourne: Random House, 2015, 432 pages, illustrated, $39.99, ISBN: 978-0-85798-563-7.

Orry-Kelly won three Oscars for costume design and dressed some of the biggest Hollywood stars of his time including Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like it Hot* (1959). His recently recovered memoirs (hidden in a pillowcase in a cupboard for forty years) were published alongside the Gillian Armstrong documentary *Women He's Undressed* (2015). Kelly created costumes for more than 300 movies from 1932 to 1963 and dressed Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland, and Bebe Daniels, among others. As such this is a compilation of anecdotes and Hollywood gossip, accompanied by some beautiful illustrations of Kelly's designs.