

Summary

Dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of fashion from an academic perspective, the quarterly journal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* views fashion as a cultural phenomenon, offering the reader a wide range of articles by leading Western and Russian specialists, as well as classical texts on fashion theory. From the history of dress and design to body practices; from the work of well-known designers to issues around consumption in fashion; from beauty and the fashionable figure through the ages to fashion journalism, fashion and PR, fashion and city life, art and fashion, fashion and photography — *Fashion Theory* covers it all.

This issue's **Dress** section turns to fashion, politics, and constructions of femininity, opening with **Adam Geczy** and **Vicki Karaminas's** *Power Dressing and the Aesthetics of Precision*. "Power dressing", a women's dress reform movement as it came to be called in the 1970s, used to distinguish typical feminine dress styles. It was seen as a necessary strategy involving a more serious image on a par with formal professional male dress, namely

the ubiquitous suit and tie. The new career woman became visible through her appearance and choice of dress codes that reinforced her position as a business-woman seriously committed to her work. But from the perspective of the first decades of the new millennium, power dressing, power and fashion have far wider meanings and ramifications. For Michel Foucault, power is a regulatory principle used to control social interactions and to impose structures that inform the ways in which we act and appear. In line with Foucault's analysis, to dress is already to respond to tacit frameworks of power, and to "power dress" is not simply to wield or enact power voluntarily, but also to succumb to it, as it involves already accepted codes of visualisation and behaviour. Furthermore, as this paper reveals, power dressing can also be understood according to Foucault's "technologies of self" that see the historical subject as both subject and object of a network of discursive forces considered normative as opposed to constructed. Power dressing still exists today, albeit in a more nuanced and multivalent configuration. It can also be thought of as a particular form of renunciation facilitating an embodiment of power, much as religious asceticism and privation are (purportedly) constitutive of a more authentic self.

Masami Yamada offers *Cosmetics, Consumer Culture and the Construction of Women's Identity in Edo-Period Japan*. In early modern Japan, fashion and make-up played a central role in shaping women's social identity. Cosmetic practices, which were relatively affordable, provided women across different social classes with a means of expressing their age, social rank, and marital status. During the Edo period (1615–1868), a time of political stability and economic growth following a prolonged period of civil war, makeup became a significant aspect of the thriving urban consumer culture. Composed of a limited palette of white, red, and black, these practices were closely tied to moral values, symbolizing femininity, virtue and societal expectations. Drawing on selected ukiyo-e woodblock prints from the Victoria and Albert Museum collection as visual references, this paper explores how each of the three colours became a focus of significant social and commercial interest. The author concludes that, despite societal constraints, women played an active role as consumers in the emerging cosmetic market. Illustrating the intersection of social identity, commerce, and gender in Edo-period Japan, the paper also highlights the ways in which widespread makeup practices contributed to the growth of a dynamic, consumer-driven economy.

Marta Kargól contributes *Dress, Social Space and Gender Relations in the Perception of Female Hikers and Mountaineers between the 1830s and 1920s*. In the nineteenth century, hiking and mountaineering steadily gained popularity among both men and women. The rise of professional mountaineering coincided with the development of tourism, and the mountains emerged as a space where social relations were renegotiated. Both men and women took instilled etiquette, convictions, and social habits with them into the mountains. The mountains

influenced clothing through their environmental characteristics, allowing female mountaineers to wear more rugged clothing than usual. Professional female mountaineers were expected to wear clothing suitable for the challenging conditions, yet the mountains represented a place for human interactions, and they could not disregard the presence of men. Between the 1830s and 1920s, many essential shifts and debates occurred concerning women's social position, physical activity levels, health, and sports clothing. Through those historical changes, this article aims to reflect on how the space of the mountains gave women the possibility to free themselves from social and mental restrictions related to their dress and femininity. The author seeks to answer questions about the ways in which female mountaineers represented themselves and negotiated their femininity through their outfits in the social space of the mountains.

Xinzi Wang and Hui'e Liang offer *Beneath the Surface: The Evolution of Underwear and the Construction of Female Identity in the Republic of China (1912–1949)*. During the Republic of China, Chinese society underwent a transitional stage where tradition and modernity intersected. As cultural and identity-bearing garments, women's underwear embodied multiple meanings in this process of change. Drawing on the theoretical framework of material culture in fashion studies, this research integrates museum collections, private holdings, archival documents, and newspaper sources from the Republican period. From a corpus of eighty historical photographs and illustrations and thirty five surviving underwear artifacts, the study selected representative examples including bellybands, small vests, Western-style chemises, and brassieres for close analysis. These materials reveal how the evolution of underwear marked women's shift from household producers to active consumers in an emerging market economy. Through these transformations, women either actively or passively redefined their relationship with the body, and developed new forms of subjectivity. At the same time, the symbolic decoration of underwear and its circulation through media enabled women to gain greater control over their bodies and to diversify their social identities. Moreover, media representations moved underwear from the private to the public sphere, alternately celebrating and satirizing female bodies, and in doing so created a complex cultural context in which modern female identities were negotiated and reconstructed.

Mark Joseph O'Connell contributes *Simulacra in Silk: Haraway's Cyborg, Performative "Femininity", and the Aesthetics of the Automaton on the Margiela Runway*. This article reimagines the representation of "female" robots through the lens of fashion, exploring how the female-coded machine moves from fantasy object to theoretical agent. Anchoring the discussion in the Maison Margiela Artisanal 2024 show by John Galiano, where models emerged as porcelain-faced, sculpturally swathed automatons, it argues that fashion can be a powerful site for re-performing gender and identity. Drawing on Donna Haraway's cyborg

feminism, Judith Butler's gender performativity, and Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, the article reinterprets iconic robotic figures from *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Stepford Wives* in comparative dialogue with Galliano's live fashion theatre. Rather than depicting women as programmable objects of desire, Galliano's show performs gender as glitched: looped, over-coded, and unravelling. The garments mimic corrugated paper, retro silhouettes, and abraded lace, exposing the costume of femininity as artifice. The Margiela cyborgs walk not to seduce but to disturb, spectral remnants of a gender system collapsing under the weight of its own signs. Ultimately, this article proposes that the runway, like the screen, is a hyperreal stage for resisting visual regimes of conformity, and that the cyborg, far from being futuristic, is already here, dressed in porcelain and theatrical distortion, and moving (staggering) deliberately off-script.

The **Body** section focuses on the politics of women's muscles and opens with Anna Furse's *The Problem with Being Plastic. The Politics of Women's Muscle*. This article is drawn from Furse's forthcoming book *Muscling In—When Women Show Strength*. It introduces the idea of muscle as a form of clothing, demonstrating vigour and status as well as self-discipline, problematizing this as regards women given the ambiguous responses intense muscularity provokes in professional arenas, from awe to fetish, disgust to arousal. Following a brief exploration of the politics of muscle, the author introduces her neologism *emuscultation* that applies to any process of actively inhibiting women's physical strength and mobility through legislation, dress, circumcision, and exclusion from spaces where muscle is cultivated. Moving on to the anatomical, false assumptions about gender difference are corrected, demonstrating that the concept of strength and muscularity as masculine is rooted in gender stereotypes. Muscles are gender neutral. The roots of these gendered assumptions were established in Ancient Greece. The Greek masculine ideal embodied *Areté*, a scheme of honour, excellence, and nobility of both action and intellect, exercised alongside each other in *gymnasia*. These ideals were enshrined in sculptures, emphasizing the connection between virtue and athletics, from which women were *emusculated* through exclusion. One iconic statue *The Discobolus* epitomised male perfection. Hitler adored this so much that he bought it, in 1938 exhorting German people not only to emulate, but to surpass it. This segues to how the strong body, both social and athletic, became enmeshed in state policy and propaganda. In sum, the muscularity women choose to clothe their bones cannot be only a private matter. It becomes *for others*—as women's bodies have always been—drawing to it particular scrutiny, attention, and regimes of control.

In *Do Female Dancers Need Muscles?* Irina Sirotkina exposes a paradox of the dance world, where dancers face confusing contradictory demands. On the one hand, to be a dancer, one requires significant strength and well-developed muscles. On the other, however, movement is expected to appear fluid and effortless,

and bulky frames are actively discouraged. This is especially true for female dancers, who form the main focus of Sirotkina's study. Muscle hypertrophy is a no-no, not only in ballet, but even for pole artists and female bodybuilders. In Socialist countries such as the USSR or Cuba, with their ideological cult of labour, it was acceptable for dancers to appear sturdy and strong, although they were simultaneously expected to look elegant and feminine. In the last fifty years, dance training has embraced somatics, shifting the focus from the outward appearance of movement to its inner experiencing. Dancers constantly refer to their "muscle sense", especially in contemporary forms. Building bulk is avoided: despite the emancipation of dance, the stereotype of the slender dancer persists, and stockiness is discouraged.

The **Culture** section this time around turns to fashion and media, opening with **Panos Kompatsiaris** and **Yulia Trofimova's** *The Luxury of Decay: A Multimodal Analysis of Imperfection in High Fashion*. The paper examines how luxury fashion houses aestheticize imperfection, particularly dirt, wear, and decay, and how these aesthetic choices are resemiotized as they circulate across digital media networks. Drawing on multimodal discourse analysis and theories of media events, the authors analyze two case studies: Balenciaga's "Paris Sneaker" (2022), a pre-distressed footwear campaign priced up to \$1,850, and Elena Velez's "The Longhouse" (SS24), a live mud-pit runway performance at New York Fashion Week. The authors develop the concept of digital micro-event to describe the temporary densification of distributed, heterogeneous mediated attention that such field-specific provocations generate across platforms and communities. The paper argues that imperfection, dialectically bound to historically specific regimes of perfection, emerges as a resource within luxury fashion's imperative of constant aesthetic differentiation under platform capitalism. By commodifying dirt and decay, which are signs conventionally associated with poverty and neglect, luxury brands produce conceptually relatable goods at exclusionary prices, enacting proximity to everyday life while maintaining the distance that sustains symbolic value. Through two-stage multimodal analyses, first of the primary campaign images and runway performances, and then of the discursive networks they generate, the authors identify distinct resemiotization trajectories: the Balenciaga case organizes commentary around the scandalous commodity and its class politics, while the Velez case shifts interpretation from the garment toward the designer's political persona. The study concludes that in both cases, the logics of distributed controversy, outrage, critique or dismissal are subsumed into attention economy, as transgression converses with curated errors.

Juha Park and **Jachoon Chun** offer *Spectacle and Brand Experience in the Field of Luxury Fashion*. People lead their lives with an attraction to the spectacle of fashion, where they can experience aesthetic stimuli in their everyday

life. Spectacle, a sociological term first theorized by Guy Debord in the nineteenth century, refers to an unexpected event or attraction where people are overwhelmed by their environments or surroundings. This study discusses the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand's space from a fashion spectacle perspective. This research focuses on the fact that the extensively cultivated identities of luxury fashion brands are penetrating urban culture and the public's daily consumption. Starting from the theory of spectacle and reviews of many other theories, the study concludes that luxury fashion brands' strategies for using the space are changing from the presentation of a product to the provision of brand experience. In addition, the study highlights the tendency of such a luxurious space to expand to a digital spectacle on social media, creating a visual storytelling effect for users in combination with their need for an aesthetic and conspicuous experience.

Rose Marroncelli and **Naomi Braithwaite** contribute *#insta-fashion: How the Digital Revolution Has Affected Celebrity Culture and the British Fashion Retail Landscape*. The British high street is in a state of demise. Data analysis from The Guardian has revealed that almost every town centre in England and Wales has declined since 2013, with some towns losing over a fifth of their stores. Factors influencing this demise range from Brexit uncertainty, increased rents, business rates and operating costs, to an increase in online shopping. The aim of this paper is to explore the cult of celebrity, its deployment within social media, and how this has been central to the rise of online retailing, and ultimately, the decline of the British high street. Celebrity culture and the British high street have both been affected by the meteoric rise of the digital age, which has created a shifting retail landscape. The digital age affects how celebrities are discovered, and how they promote themselves to remain relevant. A new type of celebrity has been born, as ordinary individuals find fame by appearing on reality television. These celebrities remain in the public eye, becoming "influencers", and promoting fashion brands through their social media. There is a lack of academic research on the credibility of celebrities within social networks. Instagram influencers have affected clothing on the physical high street by encouraging consumers to shop online. "Fast fashion" can be described as "low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends". This type of clothing "helps state deeply held desires among young consumers". Young consumers follow reality celebrities on social media, and this impacts their purchasing choices. Drawing from an archive at Nottingham Trent University, this paper explores connections between fast fashion, celebrity and social media, and addresses the shifting retail landscape. Social media platforms like Instagram encourage consumers to buy clothing at the click of a button. This raises debates on the implications of instant gratification on the fashion retail landscape.

"The Other Side of the Brocade": Translating Fashion Blogs and Data Mining by **Zheng Shen** takes both a literal and figurative approach to dress and translation. With the breakthrough of social media, microblogging has become an influential

medium for marketing fashion brands and products online. The article reports on the findings of a three-year research project that studied ten Irish and ten Chinese fashion microblogging influencers' blogs using Text Mining and Netnography. The author first designed a digital tool for data mining that allows the simultaneous translation of Chinese microblogs into English and vice versa, also enabling visualizations of most frequent words through word clouds, and displaying the context in which they were used through collocations. These linguistic and visual translations became the basis to elaborate a typology of blogging strategies. Next, using the metaphor of translation as "the other side of a brocade", the author compares the strategies followed by Chinese and Irish microbloggers as if they were the two sides of a single work, given that they are all arranged around the same list of categories. The article thus provides empirical and visual evidence on the use of translation to understand fashion blogging and the values there expressed, across cultures.

Ines Kaivonen, Nina Mesiranta and Elina Närvänen contribute *"I Do What I Do to Drive Change": The Social-Symbolic Work of Sustainable Fashion Influencers*. This paper aims to study how sustainable fashion influencers (SFIs) conduct social-symbolic work in their efforts to purposefully transform their followers' fashion consumption patterns. The authors conducted a netnographic study of the Finnish SFI scene, including observations of the SFIs' social media content and complementary in-depth interviews with a subset of SFIs. The study identified three types of social-symbolic work conducted by the SFIs: identity work (narrating, reflecting and balancing), community work (tightening, expanding and magnetizing), and practice work (shaping meanings, competences, and materials). Most of the SFIs studied were micro-influencers in Finland. The paper contributes to research on sustainable fashion by highlighting the role of SFIs as drivers of institutional and cultural change, the role of social media in this pursuit, and the way sustainable fashion consumption is interlinked with digital life.

Zemfira Salamova presents *The Scent Wardrobe Trend: The Digital Life of Perfumes in the 2020s*. The 2020s saw a rise in perfume sales, which market analysts and journalists alike have attributed to the Covid pandemic and subsequent global recession. In the early 2020s, marketing and mainstream media articles began to refer to so-called scent or fragrance wardrobes. Unlike the approach of favouring a signature scent, the assembling of a fragrance wardrobe implies collecting a range of perfumes for different moods, seasons, life events and looks. Online debates show that consumers differentiate between using a signature scent and assembling a fragrance wardrobe, with many describing the process behind creating their own wardrobes. These debates can be seen as part of the wider media fashion discourse. Examining Reddit debates on fragrance wardrobes, the author draws a number of conclusions regarding consumer attitudes towards scent in 2020s digital culture.

Emma Horowitz presents *Self-care or Instrument of Torture? Competing Narratives on the “Ballet Body” in the Russian Blogosphere*. In this paper, the author investigates how Russian ballet dancers use digital self-representation to construct competing narratives on the professional “ballet body”. The narratives examined are virtually polar opposites: from object of disciplinary aggression (“instrument of torture”) to subject of conscious care (“self-care”). For this study, Horowitz focused on the YouTube channels, VK videos and TikTok accounts of three Russian ballet dancers: Maria Khoreva, Anastasia Limenko, and Arina Dubkova. The author also looks at the dancers’ appearances on YouTube interview shows. The paper discusses the particular nature of representative practices in the virtual space. How do ballet dancers interpret their experience of the professional body through verbalising taboo subjects such as injuries, diets and pain, and constructing new images of corporeality to counter traditional media images? In order to answer this question, the author turns to discourse analysis, narrative analysis of the dancers’ self-reflection, and visual analysis of the impact of corporeal techniques and the space of filming on the image being created. This study in the sociology of art shows how digital platforms can become battlefields where embodied cultural capital of the traditional hierarchy clashes with alternative forms of authority based on authenticity and direct communication with the audience.

This issue’s **Events** section opens with **Şölen Kipöz’s** review of “Giorgio Armani Privé 2005–2025: Twenty Years of Haute Couture” at Milan’s Armani/Silos (21 May to 28 December 2025).

Isabella Volpi contributes her review of “Rick Owens: Temple of Love” at Palais Galliera, Paris (28 June 2025 to 4 January 2026).

Imogen Carter de Jong visits “GIRLS. On Boredom, Rebellion and Being In-Between” at MoMu Fashion Museum, Antwerp (27 September 2025 to 1 February 2026).

Rikki Byrd reviews “Superfine: Tailoring Black Style” at the Anna Wintour Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (10 May to 26 October 2025).

Anna Davydova shares her impressions of “Ianis Chamalidy. Non Finito” at St. Petersburg’s Erarta Museum of Contemporary Art (26 February to 28 June 2026).