

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 is devoted to secrets of and in fashion.

Olga Vainshtein's *The Secret in the Secret: On the Photographs of the Countess of Castiglione* looks at strategies of self-representation in the photographs of the Countess of Castiglione (1837–1899). Vainshtein's main focus is on the images commissioned by “La Castiglione” from Mayer and Pierson from 1856 onwards, for decades. Conceptually, Vainshtein bases

her paper on Jacques Derrida's theory of the secret, looking at the ways in which "secrets" were used in various areas of the Countess's life such as diplomacy, photographic activity, and later life.

The aesthetics of La Castiglione's images are examined within the cultural context of the development of photography as an art in the nineteenth century. The sources that these images drew on include fashionable illustrations, theatre and the culture of the Parisian boulevards. In her analysis of the technical and artistic methods used to create the images, Vainshtein pays particular attention to the Countess's fashion strategies, outfits and accessories, as well as body fragmentation techniques and affective structures. The author also examines the dialectic of the evident and the hidden, the narrative potential of the shots, and the tactic of altering the images as an early type of Photoshop. A closer look is taken at the expressive methods used in the series "Legs" and "Game of Madness". The paper positions La Castiglione as a forerunner of contemporary visual culture and experimental artistic photography. Vainshtein also looks at the Countess's role as an agent of fashion, which extends beyond mere "first photo model". Finally, the author turns to La Castiglione's many twentieth-century fans, followers and admirers, thanks to whom her belongings and photographs became seen as talismans.

In *A Homage to the Fly: Insect Codes in Art and Fashion*, **Irina Sakhno** turns to signs and emblems of the fly in Renaissance poetry and fashion practices. Examining the fly as an important allegorical detail in the works of Carlo Crivelli, Matteo di Giovanni, Petrus Christus, Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Il Guercino) and others, the author interprets this iconic sign in the context of religious and allegorical symbolism of that era. *Musca depicta* — the fly on canvas — turns into a stylistic tool, allowing the artist to show his skill with the aid of *trompe-l'œil* optical illusion. The success of the fly as artistic detail and its iconographic value depended on the technical skill of the painter: an insect so realistic, it appeared ready to fly off the canvas would bring the artist acclaim. The author also takes a special look at insect codes actively used in capsule collections and accessories by world brands such as Patrizia Pepe, Fly London, Pangaia, and others.

Dita Svelte contributes *The Fashion System as Sign Itself: Surprise, Seduction and the Wit of Viktor & Rolf*.

I have previously argued that aspects of fashion's appeal and allure are bound up in a concept of wit. This wit is comprised of surprise—the sudden provision of an unexpected creative insight via a novel quip or image or—and seduction—pleasurable play, mutual challenge, and the desire to led astray from orthodox thinking in intriguing ways. However within fashion studies, the idea prevails that fashion is largely regarded as explicable in terms of a singular, integrated, commercially-oriented fashion system. I will examine Roland Barthes' influential

The Fashion System to explore how the idea of the “fashion system” functions as a sign of fashion itself. I will then analyze the oeuvre of Viktor & Rolf—couturiers who explicitly and persistently comment on the construction of the “fashion system”—to demonstrate how their work might critique and complement this system through a theoretical conception of wit.

Svetlana Voloshina presents *“Beauty Offers Him Additional Means to Be Convincing”*: *Nicholas I as Tsar Dandy*. Emperor Nicholas I, Voloshina writes, excelled not only in matters of governance, but in the visual sphere, also. The Tsar, she claims, constantly constructed and represented a special image which included corporeal and vestimentary practices, as well as signature behavioural solutions. Despite his reputation as an austere military man with little interest in dress or sartorial frivolities, Nicholas I in fact followed the principles and behavioural codes of British dandies — naturally, with certain deviations due to the Russian social and cultural context. The author discusses Nicholas as a contemporary trend-setter for his time (and place), that could scarcely be imitated, and never be fully copied.

Natalia Povalyayeva offers *The Wardrobe of Hercule Poirot: A Sartorial Investigation*. The Belgian detective created by Agatha Christie is well known and loved worldwide. Yet his appearance, it seems, is also a mysterious case worthy of investigation. The sleuth’s sartorial habits are revealed gradually, from novel to novel, each new book describing a new feature of his dress. In order to form a complete impression of Poirot’s wardrobe, one has to read all the books. Only then, by putting together the “clues” from each novel, will one be able to fully picture the appearance of this dandy, as Christie herself and other characters in her books constantly referred to him.

Throughout the entire Poirot series, dress fulfils a number of important functions. It is one of the detective’s notable features: he is very well aware of the sartorial code accepted in England, yet, at the same time, has his own views on how a gentleman should look, and follows his personal principles. His attitude towards dress shows a certain femininity: for Poirot, the key attribute is not functionality, but style, quality and aesthetic beauty. Throughout the series, we see Poirot in a variety of very different situations, working on solving crimes, on holiday in England or abroad, relaxing at home. For each of these activities, the detective has particular outfits and sartorial habits. His dress also serves to set the sleuth aside from the crowd: anyone meeting him for the first time realises he is a foreigner, even though, paradoxically, all his clothes are made in England by English tailors.

Poirot possesses an elegance that is clearly not English, and which, in the eyes of “typical” Englishmen, makes him appear comical and outlandish. This is made

use of by the detective: when people do not take him seriously, they often say more than they intended. His sartorial knowledge can also be a direct asset to the sleuth in his work, as he notices details in the dress of victims or suspects that law enforcement may miss. At times, these details allow him to reach important conclusions in solving a case. All in all, in Agatha Christie's Poirot books, the hero's dress and sartorial habits are a key defining feature, frequently giving rise to discussions, helping solve riddles, becoming "agents" in themselves. Poirot's wardrobe takes on a mysterious quality that requires thorough investigation, just like the detective's cases, themselves.

Tatiana Bakina presents *The Unhidden Room: Aesthetics and Functions of Wardrobe Spaces and Visualisations of Dress Storage in Cinema*. Bathed in sunlight, the heroine throws open the doors of her walk-in wardrobe. Dozens of pairs of shoes sit on the shelves, impeccably arranged next to rows of clothing, sorted into categories. Dresses, blouses, trousers, tops, and, of course, drawers of neatly grouped accessories. She is confronted with quite some choice...

Such is the picture of the heroine choosing her outfit that we tend to see in today's films and serials. Throughout the history of the cinematograph, the personal wardrobe space has steadily grown, with tiny cupboards giving way to entire dressing rooms and walk-in wardrobes. The process of trying on clothes and making decisions has also become more complex. In this paper, the author attempts to answer questions such as, how did the process of movie heroes choosing an outfit evolve over the years? What did the wardrobes of film characters look like in different eras? How was the process of choosing an outfit visualised, how did characters interact with items in their wardrobe, and how was the final outfit constructed?

Vera Ustyugova and **Dmitry Lobanov** contribute "*Chapayev and Void*": *The Magic of Leather Jackets and Suggestiveness of Red in the Transformations of National Cinema*. In this paper, the authors focus on the insignia of leather jackets and revolutionary red, and their metamorphoses in the "kingdom of mirrors" of Soviet film. Military costume has a practical purpose, and most of its elements serve a rational aim, their function being to distinguish one's own side from the enemy. In the twentieth century, propaganda came to play an important role in society, with politics becoming highly visualised and aestheticised. The romance of revolution and building a new world was stoked by the avant-garde art of the time. In 1920s fashion, "commissar chic" emerged, initially with a macho vestimentary code unconnected with official uniform. The history of "class war" in the Soviet state was condensed as a battle of colours, with, at times, "reds" against "reds". In 1920s and 1930s cinema, the costumes of revolutionary "heroes" are clearly realistic. The Thaw, however, brought transformation and innovation in film costume,

which continued in the adventure movies of the 1970s and 1980s. The obligatory attribute of a commissar or chekist was now the leather jacket. In Tengiz Abuladze's "Repentance" (1986), a new tradition was born, echoed by the more recent "Captain Volkonogov Escaped" (2021). The language of this film is the symbolism of masks, with red "non-sporty" sportswear coming to the fore: a red tracksuit symbolising power, destruction, and warning.

Renata Devityarova offers *Mermaid Style: How Turning Into a Mythical Hybrid Works in the Fashion Context*. Contemporary fashion has been seeing rising interest in so-called aesthetics, micro trends and core trends based on transformation into fairytale and mythical hybrids and monsters: think mermaidcore, succubus chic, goblincore. The many connections between fashion and myth have long been written about by fashion experts, yet transformation into specific mythical creatures remains a relatively little studied phenomenon. In this paper, the author looks at how closely mermaidcore style is linked to mermaids' dress in folklore, and whether this link impacts the mechanisms of transforming into a mermaid, in the fashion context.

The mermaidcore aesthetic offers ample ground for analysis due to the ambivalence of the mermaid image. Associated both with Disney princesses and demonic creatures, this image may, depending on the context, symbolise hyperfeminine identity, or feminist ideals. The author bases her arguments on works from fashion theory, folklore and colour studies, affect theory and gender studies. In conclusion, Devityarova outlines a number of mechanisms underpinning transformation into a mermaid in the context of contemporary fashion. A key role in this process is played by the diverse affective experiences of dissolving of boundaries of the "social body". The aesthetic attributes connected with mermaids in folklore have been linked to Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection. Thus, a vestimentary image is created that transcends conventional femininity. Finally, the author attempts to classify types of emotional reactions and corresponding cultural contexts described in the media and blogs.

Vera Milchina's *Nineteenth-Century Second Hand* offers a glimpse into the selling of used dress in Paris in the first third of the nineteenth century. With photography and cinema as yet non-existent, that period is largely covered by moral essays. These, although fictionalised, tend to offer the best descriptions of the era. The paper contains translated excerpts from two such essays, allowing readers to gain an idea of the sorts of second-hand clothes that were sold at the market in Temple, and of the people who would purchase them.

Asya Aladzhhalova's *Visible and Invisible Geography of the Moscow Textile Industry, 1900–1930* is concerned with the territory of fashion. The paper presents a

study of the geography of the Moscow textile industry during NEP and the first five-year plan. Before the revolution, addresses of textile manufacturers were not published in open sources, thus preserving their invisibility to the public. Between 1923 and 1936, however, directories began to publish not only factory addresses, but also numbers of workers, names of managers and product types. During those years, Moscow's geography of fashion became significantly wider compared to the pre-revolutionary period, including factory areas not previously associated with dressmaking.

An important element of this paper is a directory of addresses of Moskvoshvei trust factories. Researching these addresses brought about a whole host of further questions concerning professional sewing qualifications (for women, in particular), advertising in the late nineteenth — early twentieth century fashion industry, and the “invisibility” and lack of rights of women working in dressmaking. Working on this paper on the cusp of fashion theory and local history saw the author consult a range of less common sources such as local directories, and ponder topics such as memory in the city space.

Agata Zborowska contributes *Bazaars and Found Objects: Thing Culture in Post-war Poland*. Because of the specific political and economic situation, in the period immediately after World War II Poland was characterized by a low standard of living, difficulties in obtaining supplies of basic products, limited opportunities to travel abroad and the arrival of foreign aid packages which fueled consumer desires. This paper explores how clothes were used and valued at a time of shortage, and particularly the way that the bazaar was seen as “a seedbed of fashion and elegance.” This research explores the Polish bazaars as a manifestation of Elaine Freedgood's concept of “thing culture,” contrasted with “commodity culture” in her *The Ideas in Things* (2006). Using three different examples from diverse parts of post-war Poland, the paper explores how people experienced the “thingness” of clothes in a period of extreme hardship. Even in times of austerity, clothes were much more than simple commodities.

Alexander Markov and Oksana Stein offer *Benjamin and the Mysteries of Fashion: Notes on the Arcades Project*. Walter Benjamin's writings can be seen as linking not only fashion and consumption, but also fashion and capitalist temporality. Fashion is mimetic in two ways: besides imitating the world's diversity, it also follows the mystery of the human body. Thus, it stimulates symbolic production, creating its own mystery, aligning the living body and the mannequin/corpse as bearers/wearers of fashionable trends. Benjamin's thought can appear contradictory, accessible only within the context of his research *Passages (Arcades Project)*. In this paper, Benjamin's ideas are contextualised by juxtaposing them with those of Aby Warburg and Bertolt Brecht (the latter, illustrated by Gogol's prose). The authors

show that Benjamin saw fashion as semiotics, constantly overcoming itself, and at the same time as an eccentric turning inside out of the body that manifests the most intimate. This eccentric beginning allows for a Marxist interpretation of fashion not only as consumption, but as art.

Marylaura Papalas contributes *Avant-garde Cuts: Schiaparelli and the Construction of a Surrealist Femininity*. Elsa Schiaparelli, an Italian-born fashion designer who established herself in Paris in 1922, became one of the most successful women in the industry during the interwar period. This paper closely analyzes Schiaparelli's most innovative designs, in conjunction with her memoirs, in order to elucidate her conception of female identity, an important but often misconstrued theme in surrealist art.

Clair Hughes offers *Mary Quant and Hats*. In any photograph of a street in 1955, women are wearing hats. In a 1965 street, nobody is. To suggest that one person was responsible for the radical style changes of that decade is too simple, but when Mary Quant died in 2023, they said she had defined an era. Quant started her fashion career making hats, and her 'Chelsea Girl Look' launched in 1955, briefly caused London to replace Paris as fashion's capital, but it also emptied female sex appeal focused on the legs, displacing that traditional, the streets of hats. Quant introduced an informal, juvenile, mini-skirted style, where lady-like emblem of status, respect and maturity, the Hat. The Chelsea Girl Look, however, did not on its own cause the overturn of the fashion status quo but reflected a shift in Western class systems altering the social and economic context in which people saw themselves. Quant had recognized that in Britain's newly influential, working-class 'teen kids', unruly but also prosperous, something 'was already happening ... in dress, attitude, everything'. She identified a generation's mood of dissent and hunger for change and fashioned it into a style, an attainable, classless — but hatless — means of expression. But change is the essence of millinery: if Quant transformed the way women wanted to look, she also provided the impetus for radical new approaches to hat making and design, as well as to how we interpret and still desire and buy hats.

Adam Geczy and **Vicki Karaminas** contribute 'Daddy's Lil monster': Suicide Squad, third-wave feminism and the pornification and queering of Harley Quinn'. Harley Quinn as she is represented in the film *Suicide Squad* directed by Ayers (2016) marks a dramatic and provocative departure from the manner in which she was originally cast in the DC comics *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992) and *Mad Love* (1994). Depicted as an anti-hero in a dysfunctional relationship with The Joker, she is now transformed into a deviant and defiant super-villain in the film. Gone is her harlequin costume to be replaced with fishnets, velvet blue

and red hot pants with red brassiere and high-top Adidas sneakers with heels. Although Quinn has been represented as heterosexual and stereotypically feminine there has always been a queer subtext operating. This article will examine the pornification and queering of Harley Quinn, through dress codes and appearance. It will argue that visual signifiers of femininity challenge notions of gender and sexuality and fold heterosexuality back upon its historical imperatives and conventions.

Patrizia Calefato and **Gabriele Forte** present *Fashion performances in a drag scene*. Fashion performances in a drag scene focuses on drag “masquerade” as a form of body transformation. “Masquerading” is a key component in the act of dressing the body. One masks oneself to conceal the “truth” of the body, yet often the mask, the costume we wear, and the fashion we follow reveal, beyond surface appearances, aspects of authentic identity and desire. Drag masquerade, cross-dressing, and transvestism express the relationship between desire, imagination, and gender identification, beyond mere biological identification of sex and irrespective of sexual orientations.

We will specifically examine the forms of emphasis and amplification characteristic of the signs of drag “masquerading” in a precise cultural and media context, highlighting how the world of fashion enables the articulation of bodily metamorphoses that are both mysterious and playful.

Ilaria Coser contributes *Alison Settle, Editor of British Vogue (1926–1935): Habitus and the Acquisition of Cultural, Social, and Symbolic Capital in the Private Diaries of Alison Settle*. Alison Settle was celebrated in her lifetime as the Grande Dame of British fashion journalism. Her career extended over five decades, from the mid-1910s until the mid-1970s, including nearly a decade as editor of British Vogue in the interwar period (1926–1935). This article examines the strategies she adopted to acquire and accumulate the specific knowledge, reputation and connections required to perform her professional role as a “cultural businesswoman” of the world of fashion. This research is based on private diaries that Settle wrote in the early 1930s, during the second half of her editorship at Vogue. The analysis of Settle’s journals focuses on the daily routines she performed in the public sphere, assiduously recorded in the form of lists of social engagements. Settle did not write specifically about dress and fashion in her journals. Yet her life was organized around, shaped by, and intertwined with her profession, making her diaries an invaluable primary source to investigate the social activities and the lifestyle that made Settle the editor of Vogue. This research applies an interdisciplinary methodology to develop an understanding of their content through the critical framework of Bourdieu’s theories—specifically through the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field.

Ana Balda Arana's article "Balenciaga and la vie d'un chien" offers data, hitherto unpublished, about the professional life of Cristobal Balenciaga during the years following the official announcement of his retirement from the world of fashion in May 1968. These are contributions that help understand some of the issues that are reflected, either in the words of the journalist, or in those of the designer himself in the interview he granted to Prudence Glynn of *The Times* in August 1971, and that the newspaper decided to publish under the surprising heading of "Balenciaga and la vie d'un chien," taking the same expression used by the designer himself during the interview. This interview has transcended to this very day as a singular chapter in the biography of Balenciaga, since the granting of interviews was quite unusual throughout his life and, taking into account this peculiar headline, which serves as a shocking expression that corresponded to the aura of enigma that hung over Balenciaga. However, and in light of the new data provided, the designer expressed himself in the context of the experience he lived until his retirement, and especially in the context of realities he was suffering precisely during that August of 1971.

The information provided comes from research in Spanish and French archives, in national and international newspapers, as well as interviews with people who belonged to the Balenciaga circle during their final years of his life.

In *What's Behind New Seams: Remade Clothing and the Secrets Behind Its Creation*, **Svetlana Salnikova** looks at the process of upcycling as a practice combining personal and professional experience of fashion. Taking the first encounter with an item of clothing such as mother's dress as the starting point, Salnikova traces the route of its transformation — for instance, into a blouse — through several practical stages including photographing the item, trying it on, unpicking seams, sewing, and wearing. Using practical research methods, the author documents the process of reworking and shares her reflective analysis, as well as quotes from diaries. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, affect theory and Walter Benjamin's notion of aura, Salnikova presents the remaking of clothes as a new wardrobe practice capable of responding to the challenges of the contemporary fashion industry. Stressing the importance of the agency of dress in this process of co(re)working, the author points out that the maker's feelings and wishes become intertwined with the history and material essence of the item. This approach offers an alternative solution to issues of overconsumption and overproduction, whilst putting the emphasis on the connection between the item and its wearer.

In *Searching for the Present: Methods of Attribution of Soviet Dress Styles*, **Ksenia Guseva** recounts her experience of working with the legacy of the Soviet fashion industry, in particular, seeking and attributing items for the "House of Models. Industry of Images" exhibition. Despite pertaining to the recent past, the history of

Soviet fashion abounds in lacunae and myths. Addressing these requires in-depth research in a number of different disciplines. Describing the sources available to contemporary researchers in this area, the author shares her own methods of attributing new items and bringing them into the field of study.

Susan Marshall contributes *Thirty-eight Boxes*. What started with a simple question — would you be interested in some paper patterns from the 1980s and 1990s? — has rapidly grown into a fascinating research project that explores the connection between French Haute Couture and a group of independent Italian seamstresses in the latter half of the twentieth century. This visual essay will look behind the scenes at the working process of an Italian couture dressmaker working in a small town in Italy and try to uncover the first secrets that thirty-eight boxes of designer patterns have revealed.

Shirley van de Polder presents *Dialogue between Obsession and Dress*. Inspired by the writings of Adam Phillips, Ali Smith, and Giacomo Leopardi, the “Dialogue between Obsession and Dress” explores the presence and importance of association and imagination in the process of collecting dress. Stepping away from the traditional form of academic writing, this contribution invites the reader to think differently about obsession and its origins.

Elizabeth Fischer offers an essay *The Daughters of Obsolescence* on Elisabeth Llach’s in Totchic, Ne t’inquiète pas, Stilleben and Öl and Giacomo Leopardi’s Dialogue between Fashion and Death.

In **Focus** column we present an interview with a set designer and art director **Ania Marchenko** who worked as an exhibition and interior designer, as well as a fitting room and runway model for Maison Martin Margiela in 2003–2008.

In this issue’s **Events** section, **Bradley Quinn** contributes his review of ‘Secrets of Couture’ at Sven-Harrys Konstmuseum, Stockholm (January 26 — April 8, 2018).

Anna Arustamova and **Alexander Markov** offer their thoughts on ‘Little secrets’ at Perm Exhibition Centre (June 21 — August 4, 2024).

In this issue’s **Books** section, **Alexandra Volodina** presents her review of *Fashion, Disability and Co-Design: A Human-Centered Design Approach* by Grace Jun. London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2024.