

THE FASHION CONDITION

The Fashion Praxis Collective



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The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective.
(Arendt 1958: 51)

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About this book:

The Fashion Praxis Collective is a temporary alliance of fashion practitioners, researchers and activists, joining forces for a “book sprint”. This text reflects the mongrel mix of their thoughts on the topic and the final mix may in some cases be paradoxical and represent perspectives that not all contributors individually would fully support. We hope the sum of the mix may still produce a platform for further discussions, larger than our individual thoughts.

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Introduction	11
The Banality of Fashion	21
Fashion and Politics	29
Living Fashion: Affirmation, Love, Politics	35
Some Mechanisms of Fashion Politics	47
Fashion and Waste	71
Fashion Education	77
Proposals for Praxis!	83
A Concert of Voices	93
References	105

*Six questions followed us through the book sprint.
Our answers are shown at the back of the book.*

Ask yourself,

1. Why is fashion powerful today?
2. Who makes fashion?
3. Where does fashion exist?
4. What makes fashion political?
5. When did you personally experience the power of fashion?
6. What can fashion do?



Introduction

This book is the result of a “Book Sprint” hosted by the Fashion Praxis research lab at Parsons the New School for Design in June 2013. The intense collaborative aspect of the work made the writing process very different from traditional academic writing, and the outcome also has a speculative focus, drawing from our discussions and musings on the connections between fashion and politics.

Throughout the discussions we approached the works of political theorist Hannah Arendt, professor at the New School from 1967 until her death in 1975. Arendt’s ideas on politics, power, violence, judgement and responsibility all resonated with our efforts to examine the political aspects of fashion. As the discussions evolved, we noticed that our main concerns did not circle around the most frequent political aspects of fashion, such as globalization and labour issues, but rather some of the very basic elements of fashion (more specific ex. - on love and human togetherness -) and its political implications.

As Arendt wrote, what is most difficult is to love the world as it is, as it is plagued by evil and suffering. Yet, as Arendt astutely acknowledges, it is this same love that shapes our human togetherness. We, the collective makers of this text, might add that it is also a love for the world that shapes fashion as a social phenomenon. We hope this book will provoke new perspectives, challenge existing concepts, and generate new ways of seeing/understanding the varieties of fashion(s); as signs and symbols, concrete human relationships and intentions, gestures and movements. As boundaries, fronts and conflicts, but also as passions and com-passions. As systems and industries, as modes of social industriousness of being together.

We welcome you to contribute to our ongoing conversations and projects investigating the intersection(s) of fashion and politics; race, class, gender, and identity in fashion, and not least, love and human togetherness. Please visit our blog: fashionpraxis.wordpress.com

Thank you for reading.

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What is Fashion Praxis?

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt argues that Western philosophy all too often focuses on the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*), a life in thought and theory, while neglecting the living aspect of experience that makes up the active life (*vita activa*). Arendt calls “praxis” the highest and most important level of the active life, the socio-political condition dealing with plurality throughout the web of human relationships, and the natality and sustenance of human bodies through public discourse and action.

According to Arendt, our capacity to analyze ideas, wrestle with them, and engage in active praxis is what makes us uniquely human. Praxis, then, is a mode of human togetherness, which implies cooperation, participation and a public enactment towards human well-being. Arendt shows how participatory democracy, with its mechanisms of inclusion and engagement, stands in direct contrast to the elitist and bureaucratized forms of politics that have come to define most of our modern epoch and is especially present in the Fashion Systems.

We view fashion in parallel to Arendt’s praxis, understanding fashion as a mode of human togetherness, a plurality of voices. Our aim - as makers and thinkers- is to develop a body of tools, techniques, narratives and practices, which emphasize our shared participatory realities and, which counterbalance the competitive, elitist forms and exclusive notions of Fashion appropriated by capitalism and the Fashion-Industrial-Complex that characterize the current conditions of our society in order to contribute to a transformation of this reality.

At the foundation of our research is the *lived experience of fashion*, what we call “living fashion.” We share an interest to re-imagine systems for production, exchange, and education that will help us reconnect to our human potential and our establishing of a public realm. At its base, we believe this public realm supports values and notions of success based on cooperation, longevity and joy.

Approaching fashion as praxis, with its public and political implications, implies a deep engagement with what design historian Victor Margolin has called the “politics of the artificial” (2002). To Margolin, in order to escape the pitfalls of primarily discussing simulations and technologies, there is a need to reintroduce the concept of spirituality into current debate (Margolin 2002: 118). With a perspective on fashion as a living force, in resonance with Arendt’s concept of natality, we may add a modest contribution to Margolin’s call for a deeper discourse on design in which we need to engage if we are not to be engulfed by simulacra, “finding a way of talking about the spiritual that does not present it in opposition to the artificial but instead recognizes particular forms of the artificial as fruitful manifestations of spiritual energy.” (Margolin 2002: 118)

Praxis: ‘Who’ we are, as distinct from ‘what’ we are

Arendt points out that action and speech, ‘praxis’, have two very specific qualities: they always inevitably disclose the ‘who’, the singular, that is acting and speaking and by doing so they constitute a public realm rooted in human plurality. The ‘who’ as opposed to the ‘what’ is always distinct and specific, each of us speaking with our unique voices and acting from our distinct positions and perspectives. If we try to describe ‘who’ somebody is, we inevitably end up describing ‘what’ somebody is, their qualities, their talents and shortcomings which they inevitably share with others, missing out on the unique quality of ‘who’ they are. The ‘who’ remains unnamable and the ‘what’ is always already appropriated and contingent on the one perspective that we have allowed the world to present itself under, financial gain and linear logos. Within a capitalist paradigm we are served by stating ‘what’ we are, making our unique contributions relative to the only value supported within that paradigm, never valuing the unexpected, and allowing the creative to shape our view of the world and our shared reality. Only by allowing the ‘who’ to speak and act from their unique and distinct perspectives and positions can we start to discover our full human potential, embracing the unexpected and the power of our human togetherness by valuing cooperation, creativity, and life over scarcity, exclusion and competition. The ‘who’ discloses itself as the location where human beings are together, neither for nor against each other, but in sheer human togetherness.

Fashion, or more specifically what we would call “living fashion”, already operates within the realm of the ‘who’. The one ‘who’ is dressing is always already disclosing themselves. Fashion moves through moments of introspection, inspiration, resonance, and exchange creating new forms and territories of expression. Yet, fashion is also an extension of capitalism, and

as it becomes a commodity it appropriates the specific into the general, the 'who' into the 'what', regarding it as a means to an end. It makes fashion relative to the one perspective that it values, extracting it from our shared reality, and creating a reality rooted in sanctioned binaries; for example "in" versus "out". This limits the scope of togetherness, and what could be a celebration of a multiplicity of social modes, becomes a funnel of anxiety. As Arendt notices on a parallel subject, "[t]he end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective." (Arendt 1958: 51)

As fashion extracts and streamlines personality into properties we also lose our common ground,

For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects. Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. (Arendt 1958: 57)

Fashion praxis is a mode of human togetherness; fashion, like action and speech, always goes on between human beings, as it is directed toward them. Fashion as a mode of human togetherness recognizes the abundant and vibrant reality in which we share ourselves with others. Dress, in its revelatory character, is always affirmative, self-conscious; it is a positioning, it means aligning ourselves with others, stimulated by the presence of those whose company we may wish to join, but never conditioned by them. We call this mode of fashion "Living Fashion."

Arendt put the emphasis on the disclosure of the 'who' as the specific quality and the inevitable outcome of action and speech. This disclosure of 'who', in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is, his qualities, gifts, talents, achievements, and shortcomings, is implicit in everything somebody says and does. The moment we want to say 'who' somebody is, our vocabulary leads us astray into saying 'what' somebody is; we get entangled in description of qualities they necessarily share with others like them with the result that their specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt 1958: 181)

Arendt speaks to the affirmative quality of the 'who' by rooting action and speech in *natality*; with each birth something uniquely new comes into this world. Merely by inserting ourselves in the realm of human affairs, we are starting something new, something unexpected. Even though our actions and our dress might be directed to achieve an altogether worldly objective, in action and speech, as in dress, individuals always reveal themselves as the unique individuals they are, disclosing to the world their distinct personalities. Drawing a parallel between speech and dress, just as much as our vocabulary leads us astray into saying 'what' somebody is, the moment we

want to say ‘who’ somebody is, dress in its revelatory character can neither be for, nor against, people.

Fashion beyond the ‘what’

Lead, as I do, the flown-away virtue back to earth yes, back to body and life; that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning! May your spirit and your virtue serve the meaning of the earth... Man and man's earth are still unexhausted and undiscovered.
(Nietzsche)

In the introduction to *Being Singular Plural* (2000), Jean Luc Nancy points out that the Nietzsche quote above appeals to a “human meaning”, but that it does so by affirming that the “human” still remains to be discovered (Nancy 2000: xi). In order to find meaning, we must first find the human, and to Nancy this is no inherent nature, no essence at the bottom of our ego’s well, but instead a relation with others. Nancy argues that for the human to be discovered, and in order for the phrase “human meaning” to acquire some meaning, everything that has ever laid claim to the truth about the nature, essence, or end of “man” must be undone. In other words, nothing must remain of what, under the title of meaning, related the earth and the human to a specifiable horizon.

Both Arendt and Nancy call upon us to shift our attention away from the ‘what’ that we are, as an essence or a pure inner life, isolated from external relationships. The ‘what’ that we so strategically have constructed and sustained, providing us with a sense of certainty and identity, may be a social scaffolding, but it is not human. It is a scaffolding of characteristics, a mask of values derived from social competition. They encourage us to embrace the ‘who’ that we are, the ‘who’ that inevitably reveals itself in action and speech and that comes to the fore when people are with others, in being-with, neither for nor against them, but in sheer human togetherness.

Even though Fashion promotes, thrives and prides itself on the notion of the ‘new’, in a capitalist paradigm nothing ‘new’ can ever occur. In a capitalist paradigm there is only one perspective, one horizon which presents itself as repetition. The ‘new’, as promoted through the fashion industry, is always structured relative to one value, that of financial gain. The ‘new’ and the ‘what’ in a capitalist paradigm are always already submitted under accumulation, just think of the many wardrobes today flooding with fast fashion.

As distinguished from this ‘objectivity’, the reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself, for which no common denomi-

nator can ever be devised. The reality of the public realms escapes the standards, equations, and common denominators that so violently masks difference and inequity.

Nietzsche states that the realm of the 'who' in which we find ourselves, is "on the horizon of the infinite" (Nancy 2000: xi); that is, we are at that point where "there is no more 'land'". As a human I am a being infinitely much more than the properties I am given or named by. Nancy remarks that within the realm of the 'who' there is no fixed perspective, no proper name and no outcome to be determined. We leave everything behind that we ever imagined the world and ourselves to be, we are no longer on solid ground, we allow the unexpected and that what is most alive in us to emerge. This rupture, this aliveness, the 'who' that discloses itself in action and speech, will always establish relationships, and therefore it has the inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries. It thus leaves behind the general, the 'what' that we are, to create new meaning, a human meaning, in discovering man and man's earth, a world much greater than the narrow categories put forth by the system of fashion.

As Deleuze and Guattari points out in *Anti-Oedipus* (1984), there is no subject behind the 'who' that is acting and speaking, as the 'who' is pure affirmation, autonomous, self-constituting, and creative; this is the full vital energy of what we call "living fashion".

Fashion in the plural

Fashion as a mode of action and speech is inherently plural yet unique, it always emerges from the particular and the specific, it happens as a movement sparked by singular events; moments of inspiration and resonance, reflecting the impact of this uniqueness in renewed singular events. It continually opens our horizon into new territories, the new not so much in contradistinction to the old, but the new as a continuum carrying the past into the future. The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. A future without specifiable horizon is a future that yet has to be experienced and discovered, giving way to life, expressing itself through our moving bodies interacting and communicating with each other.

Fashion is an expression of our lives, bare and open, purely affirmative, affirming the life we live with others, sharing ourselves to be heard and seen, seeing and hearing others as we appear to each other in the realm of human affairs.

In her text, 'Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era

of Primitive Accumulation' (2010/2012), feminist philosopher Silvia Federici points out that no common is possible unless "we refuse to base our life, our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them, for or against them. Indeed if 'commoning' has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject." (Federici 2012: 145) Federici's highlighting of the act of commoning being debased by abstraction and accumulation under the standard of market exchange, depriving us of human togetherness. Federici's perspective is here similar to that of Arendt who claimed that "[t]he end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective," (Arendt 1958: 51) when everything we do and say is assessed relative to only one dominant value.

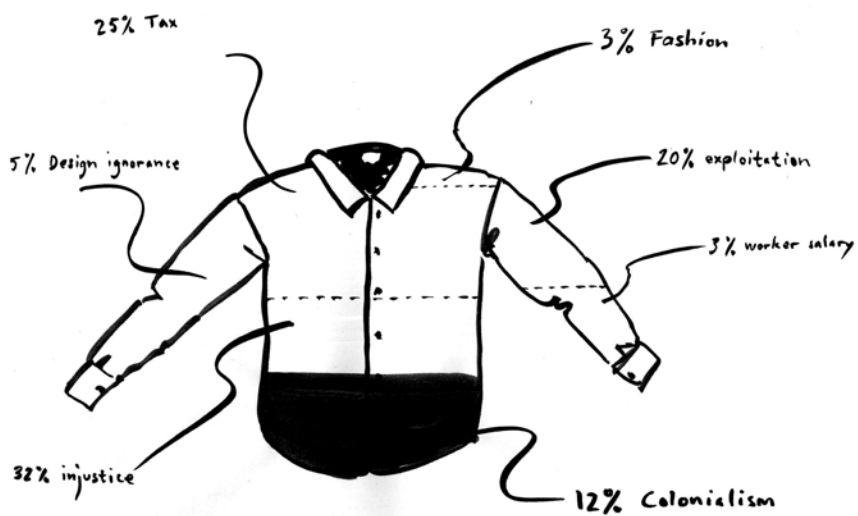
Kate Fletcher's project, *Local Wisdom: The Craft of Use* (ongoing), and the *(un)Fashion* book of Tibor and Maira Kalman (2000) are beautiful examples of fashion as a mode of human togetherness. Both projects speak to the particularities in dress, moving away from the general and the 'what' revealing the distinct and specific, the unnamable. Kate Fletcher's *Local Wisdom* highlights and affirms the creative practices that facilitate and emerge around the extended iterative use of garments through time. It tells the stories of people and the imaginative approaches they developed with the tending and using of garments. The *(un)Fashion* book of Tibor and Maira Kalman is a collection of images showing the inspiring, creative and beautiful ways real people from all over the world dress and adorn their bodies: at work and at play, on the streets, and for ceremonial occasions. Here is where living fashion resides, in the reality of our everyday appearance, appearing to and sharing ourselves with others. It takes courage to appear, the courage of appearance is to understand that the 'who' we disclose will most likely remain hidden from us.

In sharing and disclosing ourselves we become common, distinct and particular. In protecting and naming ourselves we create identities and categories, by which we make ourselves exclusive. Being against and for people, we become isolated and general, disempowering our communities and ourselves. Fashion is here a delicate balance to keep, between the 'who' and the 'what'.

In this sense, the Fashion Praxis lab embraces and celebrates the affirmative creative quality of fashion, fashion that is a mode of action and speech, revealing the particular and the unique, the unnamable that resist appropriation by the universal and general. We choose to move away from a world that we have permitted to present itself to us under one perspective only, financial gain, moving towards a world in which we celebrate diversity and in which we acknowledge a shared reality that we are together, acting and speaking 'in concert', not because we are the 'same' but because we are the

same exactly in the way that each of us is distinct and specific speaking and acting from our unique positions and perspectives.

*Zarathustra knows that to affirm means [...] to lighten,
to discharge what lives, to dance, to create.*
(Nietzsche)



The Banality of Fashion

After so much historical work on the symbolism of power, it would be naïve not to see that fashions in clothing and cosmetics are a basic element in the mode of domination.
(Bourdieu 1996: 311)

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.
(Martin Luther King Jr, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, 16 April 1963)

Locating the banality of (evil) Fashion

Fashion is a celebration of life, a joyful feast of temptation, youth, curiosity and desire. But it also has a back side, a darker problem of exploitation, which has coexisted with textile production all through industrialism, with child-labour, poor pay and abusive working conditions. The news about factory fires and accidents sometimes reaches the media, yet we seldom see any trace of the everyday suffering at the other end of the production chain of our material desire. Textile production, and especially fashion, has since the birth of industrialism been balancing on the tightropes of ethics, between labour rights and profit, fair trade and exploitation, decent pay and factory fires and raised production quotas. In today’s globalized and medialized world, we would think we live in a “global village”, yet, as the distance between production and consumption grows so does the gap of empathy. The global village may just as well be a desert of endless emotional distance.

Sociologist Maria Mies points out that “the distancing of production from reproduction and consumption leads us to ignore the conditions under which what we eat or wear, or work with, have been produced, their social and environmental cost, and the fate of the population on whom the waste we produce is loaded.” (Mies & Bennholdt-Thomsen 1999: 141)

Social scientist and feminist Silvia Federici highlights this distancing and disconnect as a form of willingful ignorance, even in the face of distant

death. To Federici there is a need to overcome our denial of the fact that “the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others. As Mies points out, globalization has worsened this crisis, widening the distances between what is produced and what is consumed, thereby intensifying, despite the appearance of an increased global interconnectedness, our blindness to the blood in the food we eat, the petroleum we use, the clothes we wear, the computers with which we communicate.” (Federici 2012: 144f)

For Hegel, “philosophy is its own time grasped in thought”, and we might say that fashion is its own time grasped in human enfoldment. It may be an irony that in a time with ubiquitous media coverage, and endless reports of worker abuse, we still keep ourselves blind to how our fashion is enfolded by suffering.

Who am I to judge? - The cultivation of responsibility

With the Savar factory collapse in Dhaka on April 24th 2013, leaving more than a thousand textile workers dead, questions were again raised about the moral or even evil aspects of fashion production. A thousand dead for some cheap jeans cannot be right. But who is to blame? Consumers may know that there is a hidden price not displayed in those 10 dollar jeans in the store, but in what sense is there any evil stitched into the seams of them? And we may ask ourselves as consumers: *Who am I to judge?*

To Hannah Arendt exactly this is the crucial question of the thinking citizen, but not as the lame excuse it can often be (Arendt 2003). *Who am I to judge?* should not be the escape from a judgement of justice or responsibility, but the foundational act of pointing out myself as a thinking subject and citizen, to place myself in a willingful position of critical self-reflection. To be a responsible community-member means to *think*, make reflected decisions and take responsibility for one’s actions. Even at the risk of accusations of arrogance, “who has even maintained that by judging a wrong I presuppose that I myself would be incapable of committing it?” (Arendt 2003: 19) A moral or ethical wrong stands before our laws and the rules of reason, not of personal passions. Circumstances may produce the legal excuses for a wrong, but not serve as moral justifications (18). However, we are faced with a widespread fear of judgment of moral wrongs,

For behind the unwillingness to judge lurks the suspicion that no one is a free agent, and hence the doubt that anyone is responsible or could be expected to answer for what he has done.[...] Who am I to judge? actually means We’re all alike, equally bad, and those who try, or pretend that they try, to remain half-way decent are either saints or hypocrites, and in either case should leave us alone. (Arendt 2003: 19)

The problem from Arendt's perspective is exactly the evil that creeps under the radar, the everyday acts that never come to our reflection, and if reading between the lines this type of evil resonates well with the unbound fashion system of today.

The greatest evildoers are those who don't remember because they have never given thought to the matter, and, without remembrance, nothing can hold them back. For human beings, thinking of past matters means moving in the dimension of depth, striking roots and thus stabilizing themselves, so as not to be swept away by whatever may occur--the Zeitgeist or History or simple temptation. The greatest evil is not radical, it has no roots, and because it has no roots it has no limitations, it can go to unthinkable extremes and sweep over the whole world. [...] To put it another way, in granting pardon, it is the person and not the crime that is forgiven; in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive. (Arend 2003: 95)

Industrial Fashion, an system which has come to thrive in the liquid state of the zeitgeist and pure temptation, may risk of falling into exactly the unstable rootlessness of never taking any responsibility for its actions, always shifting blame on evasive actors such as the global economy, outsourcing, the "market", or consumer choices. When professionals serve such system they may also be drawn into a position of unreflected disempowerment, rootlessness and lack of responsibility, without staking time to think of the consequences of their contribution to consent.

The freedom to do evil

In the fashion consumption economy we may feel we have limitless choices, and paradoxically our ability to make choices also shifts the blame of the conditions of the world to consumers - they are the ones who buy all this unsustainable stuff and perpetuate the exploitative system. It seems we cannot avoid doing evil - so how are we to act?

To Norwegian philosopher Lars Svendsen we are all doing morally evil acts, since evil exists for one simple reason: *because people are free*. But we are also free to do good,

To be free, moral agents necessarily implies that we are both good and evil. This does not imply, however, that we are all good and evil in the same degree. And it certainly does not imply that the amount of evil in the world will always be the same. (Svendsen 2010: 234)

Being free to choose, free to do good *and* evil, means we are in the position of knowing the right from the wrong. We need to "do the right thing". As Svendsen writes, "we often do evil, well aware that it is evil, because we want to realize a subjective good" (ibid. 232). But the main mechanism perpetuat-

ing evil in the world is not some pure egotism, but the lack of reflection and an “unselfish surrender to a ‘higher’ purpose” (ibid.). The act of surrendering has major implications, for

... simple indifference results in even more victims--and not just the ones who are out of sight and, therefore, out of mind. Indifference, furthermore, is not just a factor of violence crimes, but also a contributing factor to the reality of that 1.2 billion people continue to live in extreme conditions of poverty, and likewise that several million people die from starvation every year (ibid.)

It is just not an evil of subjective egotism, or of indifferent citizens, but also how indifference has played a role in social institutions by excluding reflection on everyday ethics in the name of “efficient” forms of organization and markets. To Svendsen, the main question is not then what is the essence of evil, but rather “why do we do it?” (231). The question for the evil in fashion must then echo this inquiry; why are we indifferent to the sufferings we witness throughout the fashion industry - and why do we accept them as part of our dressed identity? Why do we, as consumers, accept to do wrong, the wrong ends by the wrong means?

In Hannah Arendt’s book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) expounds on how ordinary people turn into “desk murderers”, without being inherently evil or inhuman demons. Rather, for Arendt it is in its domesticity the administration of evil becomes so vicious, as the mechanisms administration and abstraction remove the leverage of individual thinking. Arendt’s concept of “the banality of evil” aims for a critical understanding of these abstract mechanisms. Arendt meant that Eichmann was not exceptionally sinister, but part of a terrible normality, a mode of being that became quotidian within a scenario of total absence of critical thought. From Arendt’s perspective, Eichmann was part of a bureaucratic compact mass of men who were perfectly normal in that they were following the laws of their system, but whose acts were monstrous.

Arendt’s call for critical thinking in the face of power still echoes today. Some evildoers may be seduced by power, others follow orders, most do not think about it. Fashion, in its industrial mode of globalized production, shows similar traits: seduction, obedience, and limited reflection. There are many aspects of modern capitalism and consumer culture which exist in a state of denial or willing self-deception. Hidden under such banal mechanisms of desire lurks potent wrongdoings and even cruelty.

The task ahead: unpacking some of the politics in fashion

If we are to promote some form of ethical fashion, we must try to grasp what mechanisms make fashion consumers live in desirable and willfully ignorant

bliss, looking away from the crimes and violence enacted through fashion. This violence not only takes place in sweatshops far away, but also on our own streets, hidden or exposed in ideals, racial profiling, eating disorders and everyday harassment.

The issue here is not to go on a “fashion-bashing”, expounding on how fashion is a capitalist extortion myth and illusion, or an sinister simulation aimed at promoting self-punishment. If fashion designers, scholars and other professionals are to take ethical fashion seriously there is a need for understanding of some of the basic forces at play at the intersection of fashion and politics. One way to go would be to examine fashion through some of the ideas of Arendt, and take our thoughts on fashion seriously enough to address some of the inner workings of everyday fashion.

A central question in the realm of fashion and politics concerns how the violence of fashion can become so banal that we do not recognize it even when we perpetuate it in the everyday. Fashion, which can also be a beautiful tool for liberation and empowerment, also thrives on spiteful judgement and dissemination of fear. On the other hand, the fear as elaborated in Arendt’s argument comes from a lack of moral independence, that is the ability to think critically. In fashion, that means to courageously resist authority and the seductive desires we keep producing by covering suffering with the sweet icing of glamour. What Arendt teaches us is to face the uncomfortable truth that we may all be engulfed as thoughtless administrators of evil. In order to escape this, we need to train ourselves to think critically, to take responsibility, and to act with courage. As Margarethe von Totta remarks about her film *Hannah Arendt* (2012), “if there’s a message in this film, it’s that you should think for yourself, don’t follow an ideology or a fashion. Hannah called this ‘thinking without banisters,’” (Kaplan 2013).

Arendt’s imperative of thoughtful and political self-reflection is a critical matter in our time, and it is urgently needed within the realm of fashion design and education. Considering the current state of the fashion industry, which includes exploitative yet often unquestioned realities such as fast fashion, as well as the role that education should play in promoting critical thinking and self-awareness, Arendt’s call for personal responsibility is extremely relevant.

But we might also follow Hannah Arendt in fundamentally accepting the world as it is.

Consider politics as ‘action and speech’ in togetherness, and see and hear her ‘plurality of unique voices’. The question is; can we see the possibilities to *begin* things over and over again, because of this uniqueness that is based in our natality, instead of our mortality? Can we see and *feel* the banality of evil everywhere were in a system people are alienated from their own responsibility, that is founded not only in the thinking (and speaking) but just

as well in the ‘feeling’ (and actions), in the body. We need a thinking with our whole being, not the mental part, alienated from the body. Can we also think actively, not only in reflection, for example via our hands?

Fashion must find tools to foster self-reflection, cultivate a sense of responsibility, build courage and encourage action for change towards justice. We must learn to perceive and engage with the politics of fashion and not be seduced into ignorance by the, sometimes banal, glamour of fashion.

Ethical fashion calisthenics

Arendt’s remark on “thinking without banisters” is the everyday ethical consideration. Yet it also rests on the provocative tradition of philosophy since Socrates; to challenge the societal tacit norms with ethical considerations. For philosopher Leo Strauss this keeps ringing true, as “the conflict between philosophy and society is inevitable because society rests on a shared trust in shared beliefs, and philosophy questions every trust and authority.” (Strauss 2000: xi) Strauss continues, “Socratic rhetoric is emphatically just. It is animated by the spirit of social responsibility. It is based on the premise that there is a disproportion between the intransigent quest for truth and the requirements of society, or that not all truths are always harmless. Society will always try to tyrannize thought.” (Strauss 2000: 27) To Strauss, there is a difference between the arts that support the philosophical and just inquiry, the “royal art”, which is “morally superior”, and the “tyrannical art”, which supports greed (Strauss 2000: 33).

Arendt’s “thinking without banisters” is a critical self-reflection in socratic tradition, not too unlike political scientist James C. Scott’s idea of “anarchist calisthenics” (Scott 2012). For Scott, the anarchist calisthenics is the day-to-day ethical gymnastics we employ to be able to break a law in the name of justice. Without such training we follow blindly, or break laws blindly, without engaging our critical thinking or conscience. Scott differs between “vernacular” and “official” orders, whereas the first is the local circumstance and situation that requires our ethical judgement and practice, the second is the general laws which takes away our awareness of the singular and specific. The Latin vernaculus means “domestic” or “native”, and is opposed to *Lingua Franca*, the official, transcultural language or order, which creates some order, but loses important connection to the grounded experience. Scott uses the example of jaywalking where one can either follow the official order of always obeying the street lights, or test one’s ethics, considering if one sets an example in front of children, or if danger is present. Whereas much discussions on sustainable fashion, for example, concern certificates and labelling, which are official orders of production, vernacular perspectives concerns the impacts on domestic and daily experience.

If we are to engage with ethical fashion we must refine our tools for reflection, bring down issues to the vernacular level where we can critically engage with them, and then set out to build new thoughtful actions, or what Arendt would call praxis. With such vernacular engagements with the everyday experiences of fashion, in all its facets of design, production, use and impact, we may help shape new, more ethical and just, fashion practices.

Hopefully this collection of texts and ideas can help everyday fashionistas to see some of the aspects of the politics of fashion, and “think without banisters”.

MACHINE + HAND

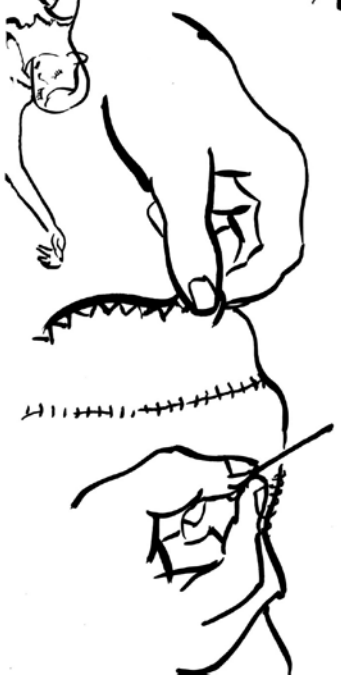
who makes fashion



"FASHION'S SPEECH"

"Power Suit"

"MAN POWER"



Fashion and Politics

The point of departure for our investigation of Fashion Praxis starts from our conviction that fashion, as an affirmative life force of human togetherness, is a celebration of life and community between people. It is an essential part of the human condition, at least as we know it today.

However, fashion is also an industry, a system, an apparatus of visual judgement, a conglomerate of capitalist powers that affects our togetherness. Most often, it is these aspects of fashion that appear and become manifested in media and in education, at the cost of all other possible ways of *doing fashion*. As a consequence, to actively do fashion also becomes a mode of being with others and being -with- politics.

Politics is the set of activities that guide human togetherness, that specifically affects our social conditions. Some political concepts are at the basis of society. On one hand, politics can concern the basic administration of violence between people, the “social contract” or, as with the German political philosopher Carl Schmitt, the friend/foe distinction (Schmitt 1932/1996). On the other hand, politics can be the concern of others, the “ethics of care”, of empathy and ethical responsiveness (Gilligan 1982).

With ideas such as “liberty”, “governance”, “democracy”, “freedom” and “justice”, which are all contested and approached from different perspectives and ideologies, politics take on their relationships to the world.

Most of us want to do good in the world and do no harm. Yet, we seldom come to discuss this in relation to our practices in fashion: what is the role of fashion in our shared endeavours to make a better world?

On the parallels of Fashion and Politics

Fashion and Politics share many traits as well as conceptual uncertainties. Many of the questions that are at the centre of the concept of politics are also shared by fashion, yet seldom examined. Take for example such rudimentary issues that every disciple in politics must encounter, such as: where does politics happen? In the state, government, society, among peers or within the fam-

ily? Is it for the good of society, or is it per definition dishonest and corrupt? Is it an activity that is empowering or oppressive? Can politics ever come to an end, and if yes, should such goal be sought? All these questions could be asked with regard to fashion too, and will affect one's relationship to it.

On a more practical level, we ask ourselves questions about politics and its role. For example, are the institutions of state and government necessary or can society exist without them? What form should government take and how should it differ from that of the state? What immediate role should state and government have? How would they best enact the will of the people? In the same way, what immediate role should educational communities in/for fashion have? Should we not encourage fashion students to debate similar questions concerning the fashion system?

Most of these questions have been often discussed within political theory and have been echoing throughout the history of political thought. Yet, at least within traditional fashion education, we seldom hear reflections on the relationship between the fashion system, the industry and its participants, or questions concerning, for instance, the ways fashion may become empowering or corrupting.

When Bismarck claimed that "politics is not a science [...] but an art", he meant politics as the "exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decisions" (Heywood 1999: 52). Usually, if we think of fashion as art, it is with different connotations than as an art of enforcement; fashion is perhaps an art in Machiavellian terms, one that requires more attention and subtlety to be understood. Within fashion there is a general lack of concern about the core values enforced, created and promoted through the system, as well as, a clear idea of the roles of every participant: who exercises control? who is responsible for it? who is to judge for the values that are disseminated? As American political scientist David Easton notes, politics is the authoritative allocation of values (Easton 1965), and if the values of fashion are to be explored, the processes through which they are actualised and allocated have to be examined too.

However, we may consider the relation between fashion and politics also in a positive light. We could take political scientist Bernard Crick's perspective on politics as "the art of the possible" as starting point. Crick sees politics as that solution to the problem of order which chooses conciliation rather than violence and coercion (Crick 1962). In a similar manner, we would think of fashion as a form of human togetherness that transgresses individual borders, conflicts of interest and imposed forms of dressed conformity. Therefore, we could ask ourselves: can fashion constitute a possibility for reconciliation and peace?

In educational institutions we also become political beings. A key concern that should echo through fashion education, then, must be a key

political issue stretching back to Aristotle: what is a good life, and how is such life supported throughout society? This question highlights how politics is an ethical activity ultimately concerned with creating a just society, a society where everyone has the same opportunity to lead a good life. And if we draw direct parallels with fashion, we must ask: how can fashion support well-being throughout society, and how does fashion contribute to a just society?

However, the abstract and perhaps idealistic concepts of politics, ethics and justice are also in constant flux and renegotiation, in constant need of updating as the human condition, and consequently *desire*, changes. As argued by political theorist Raymond Geuss,

Humans' beliefs and desires are in constant flux, and changes in them can take place for any number of reasons. Transformations of specific sectors of human knowledge are often accompanied by very widespread further changes in worldview and values. People have often claimed that Darwinism had this effect in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, new technologies give people new possible objects of desire and, arguably, new ways of desiring things (Geuss 2008: 4).

As Geuss highlights, it is the very practice of politics that changes values and desires. This means that *real politics* are removed from idealised abstractions upon which much of political theory rests, despite the fact that politics is mostly defined as “applied ethics”. The very application of politics may change values, thus rocking the foundation of ethics as well as our relation to our desires, means and ends. Geuss argues that “as people act on their values, moral views and conceptions of the good life, these values and conceptions often *change* precisely as the result of being ‘put into practice’” (Geuss 2008:5). As a consequence of this, Geuss rejects the assumption that one can first theorize an ideal ethic of action, and then apply this theory to judge the actors’ behaviors. Instead, he proposes a realist political philosophy that is concerned with the way societal institutions move human beings, their desires and values (Geuss 2008: 9ff) Human politics are not “rational” in the individualist sense, but is instead driven by ideals, desires and values which influence human behavior, and thus these are at the foundation of Geussian realist politics.

As an extension of Geuss ideas we could put fashion at the core of contemporary values, desires and ideals. Fashion, the desire-driven passion of the social, could be at the heart of realist politics. This puts fashion at the centre-stage of politics, without relegating it exclusively to the realm of consumerism or lifestyle. Such a move is possible because *real politics* revolves around desire. Fashion dictates desires that are enacted through social relations and at the horizon of our fashion desires shines the political end of perpetual fulfilling. Politics produces desire, that in turn reproduces politics that guarantees more desire. From this point of view, sustainable fashion is nothing but the

facilitator for our of endless fulfilment of desire without ecological friction. We fulfil the desire for sustainability just in order to fulfil an even more important desire, that of keeping on consuming the desire of fashion.

As a response to such Geussian fashion politics, it may be easy to say that fashion only concerns those who are interested and invested in it. However, with the so-called “democratization” of the system through fast fashion, most people can now have access and participate in it, which means that they can exercise their equal “right” to consume or not. However, such supportive approach to fast fashion can be likened to French novelist Anatole France’s scorn, in his book *The Red Lily* (1894), of “the majestic equality of the law which forbids rich and poor alike to steal bread and to sleep under bridges”. The formal equality of being able to consume is not the same as having the equal opportunity, or pressure, to consume. And it could be argued that the perceived “democratization” of fashion has rather shown the importance of a political perspective on fashion: *fashion affects everyone, yet not everybody is included; consumers have inadequate resources or no mandate for influencing the system, and there is no shared power.*

In order to challenge this position of surplus powerlessness, we need other perspectives of what fashion is and *can be*. Fashion, not merely a product to consume or cultural spectacle, but as a mode of human togetherness.



Living Fashion: Affirmation, Love, Politics

From our perspective, fashion can be seen as a living force of human togetherness. It happens between us, it is alive, it triggers us, makes us feel alive. Yet it is also a life force that is controlled, fought over, profited upon, violated and used as a mechanism of subjugation. As there seems to be many layers of contradictions in our concept of fashion, and of its politics, there needs to be some definitions to sharpen the use of the concepts.

Some possible definitions of *Fashion Politics*

Fashion Politics [plural noun, usually treated as singular]

1. The activities associated with the governance and control of fashion, as social phenomenon as well as system
2. The organizational principles and actions regarding the mechanisms of exclusion/inclusion in fashion: *who is “in” or “out”?*
3. The activities that administer the *life and death* of fashion
4. The polemics about (sartorial) equality raised through a “wrong” (Rancière 1998) - the mode of subjectification in which the assertion of equality takes its political shape. For Rancière, by expressing their equality, the people display for all to see that the police order has all along denied them recognition as equals. For fashion this could mean the recognition of being equal beyond the means of consumption.

Living Fashion - Some definitions

Fashion Politics can be seen as the organization and control of the vital “life force” of fashion. This “life force” is what earlier has been defined as “living fashion” in the pamphlet *Belief Systems* at The New School in 2012, inspired by the studies of “living religion” from religious studies at Lang (von Busch *et al* 2012).

Living (as in Living Religion / Living Fashion)

(6 first points from von Busch *et al* 2012)

1. *Living as in everyday event* (it happens to all of us, here and now) -[as opposed to petrified; unchanging and eternal - as in traditions/written sources/classics]
2. *Living as in activity/agency/affect* (it has a will to live, or *conatus*) -[as opposed to a passive signifier, decoded by the viewer - as in scripture/magazine]
3. *Living as in everyday practice* (what people DO, not what they think or say they do) -[as opposed to asking people “what do you believe?” - living as beyond street style photography]
4. *Living as in adaptive self-sustaining process with metabolism* (like “life”, consisting of hybrids, adaptation to environment, mutation, environmental and sexual selection etc) -[as opposed to distinct species, survival-of-the-fittest individual]
5. *Living as in the biota, or total biotic component of the Earth that make up the biosphere* (“Gaia” as a whole) -[as opposed to an isolated ecosystem, a section, or part of an ecology]
6. *Living as in not artificially killed* - (still fermenting, still developing culture, still emerging) -[as opposed to prematurely harvested, or artificially killed, for longer shelf-life]

To these six points we could add the bio-political forms of “life” relevant to a study of fashion and politics;

7. *Living as the politics of life, the social and political power over life, and death* (as in the distinction between “Zoe”, bare life, bare survival, and “Bios”, the political forms of life based on sovereignty) -[in death, zoe is a mass grave, while bios has a marked tombstone]

Biopolitics: The control over life and death

Biopolitics concerns the administration and demarcations relating to the “social organism”. Giorgio Agamben highlights that the Greek distinguished between two forms of “life”: “zoe”, bare life, and “bios”, the life of the sovereign citizen (Agamben 1998). Politics concerns the organization, disputes and cooperation between sovereign citizens, but also their punishment and exclusion, or even the transformation of individuals into “bare life”, for example in concentration camps. “Bios” concerns the administration of immunity, what is defined as friend or foe, human or beast, and where parts of life, bare life, becomes redundant and without any value to the survival of the social organism. Arendt draws similar conclusions about the use of camps in totalitarianism, where humans are meant to become redundant (Arendt 1951).

Part of being human is to wear clothes, to be part of the social organism (prisoner garments are strictly anti-social). Agamben highlights a werewolf tale where the wolf could not morph back into human form as its clothes were stolen (Agamben 1998: 64). For the werewolf, the clothes were the human skin that guaranteed the passage back to bios from its condition as beast. The clothes thus form an important interface of being human, being sovereign. The stripping of the prisoner or camp-intern is part of the dehumanising process.

Anthropologist Terence Turner (1980) called the socio-symbolic dimension of the body the “social skin”, the sociality of the human body in relation to others. Every bodily accentuation always has social meaning, and is always shaped by the sociocultural context in and through which it is enacted, it is what Turner calls, just like religion, *a serious matter*. As Turner notices that,

culture, which we neither understand nor control, is not only the necessary medium through which we communicate our social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs and ideals (in short, our identities) to others, but also to a large extent constitutes these identities, in ways with which we are compelled to conform regardless of our self-consciousness or even our contempt (Turner 1980).

According to Turner’s perspective, identity is not only symbolically present in clothes, adornment and our cosmetic practices, but these elements themselves *enact* identity. Turner explains the cosmetic practices of the Amazonian Kayapo tribe. To the Kayapo,

‘Health’ is conceived as a state of full and proper integration into the social world, while illness is conceived in terms of the encroachment of natural, and particularly animal forces upon the domain of social relations. Cleanliness, as the removal of all ‘natural’ excrescence from the surface of the body, is thus the essential first step in ‘socialising’ the interface between self and society, embodied in concrete terms by the skin (Turner 1980).

The health of the body, expressed in the cosmetic practices of grooming, thus acts as a form of appearance immunisation, to draw parallels to Agamben, of cleaning the social interface. Turner argues that the ceremonies and cosmetic practices of the Kapoyo are an integrated form of social life, of making the individual a part of the social whole, and thus just as important as life itself. He finishes his text with a rhetorical question, “Are we dealing here with a mere exotic phenomenon, a primitive expression of human society at a relatively undifferentiated level of development, or is our own code of dress and grooming a cultural device of the same type?”

Turner’s emphasis on the seriousness of cosmetic practices resonates with a somber witness from a concentration camp. Lieutenant Colonel Mervin Willett Gonin, who was in the British Army unit that liberated the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in 1945 wrote,

It was shortly after the British Red Cross arrived, though it may have no connection, that a very large quantity of lipstick arrived. This was not at all what we men wanted, we were screaming for hundreds and thousands of other things and I don’t know who asked for lipstick. I wish so much that I could discover who did it, it was the action of genius, sheer unadulterated brilliance. I believe nothing did more for those internees than the lipstick. Women lay in bed with no sheets and no nightie but with scarlet lips, you saw them wandering about with nothing but a blanket over their shoulders, but with scarlet lips. I saw a woman dead on the post-mortem table and clutched in her hand was a piece of lipstick. Do you see what I mean? At last someone had done something to make them individuals again, they were someone, no longer merely the number tattooed on the arm. At last they could take an interest in their appearance. That lipstick started to give them back their humanity (An extract from the diary of Lieutenant Colonel Mervin Willett Gonin DSO who was amongst the first British soldiers to liberate Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Source: Imperial War Museum, London).

The officer’s observation from Bergen-Belsen gives a heartbreaking witness to the material and symbolic properties of the biopolitics invested in the social skin, and the shapeshifting capacities of lipstick in the context of the liberated concentration camp.

Living fashion as a germ of life

Fashion as a life-force on a macro scale can be like an epidemic, spreading partly through vectors of togetherness, human interaction and street buzz, but may later take the form of going “viral” in media (cf. Gladwell 2000) and on such scale, it may appear as if fashion has a life of its own (von Busch 2012). Because, as sociologist Gabriel Tarde points out, imitation is the basis for life and fashion, as well as all other societal activities, “Without fashion and custom, social quantities would not exist, there would be no values, no

money, and, consequently, no science of wealth or finance.” (Tarde 1903: 16) Thus, at the heart of Tarde’s account of the social is the notion of imitation. But, for Tarde, imitation was never exact, but always contained a potential surplus which allowed an event or an action to deviate into invention. Thus every event contained the seed of something else. To Tarde, imitation may not be the strongest interhuman force, but “the directing, determining, and explaining force” of social life. Thus, Tarde’s world is “panpsychic”, it is a vital living superorganism or infinitesimally small relationships between humans, with living forces echoing and resonating throughout the social body, with pure vibration, pure potential, of life. It is a social body full of small societies, small clusters and associations. From Tarde’s approach, understanding society is as much a science of bio-chemistry as psychology, it is a science of relationships where “every thing is a society, every phenomenon is a social fact” (Tarde 1999: 58).

Social phenomena exists in the “inter-spiritual” or “inter-psychological” scale (Tarde 1902). This means that the individual, for Tarde, was not primarily an autonomous agent, but as a site within which events happen, a meeting point of lines of repetition and imitation, perhaps not too unlike the ideas of Karma. And as the individual moves on, these events will come to matter later, and elsewhere, as movements through the social.

In order to show the emphasis on relationships, Tarde drew parallels between inter-human relations and the forces of gravity in space. Much like planets, we are drawn to each other, and the relationships between us is what defines us as we cluster to form micro-systems within larger (social) space. “In particular, the basic astronomical fact can be defined as the attraction exerted by a sphere, along with the effect of these repeated attractions involving the continued elliptical movement of celestial bodies. In the same way, the basic social fact is the communication or modification of a state of consciousness through the action of a conscious being on another.” (Tarde 1898: 64)

The idea of “living fashion” also resonates with Tarde’s laws of imitation and especially his view on capital which he call a “germ”, an analytical resource “radiating” from each one of us and infecting others. The germ itself is “trapped between pure repetition, endurance and continuity on the one hand, and on the other, pure vibration, pure potential.” (Lepinay 2007: 526) According to Tarde, “germ capital” is also a specific form of capital that cannot be accumulated because as it loses vibration, intensity and passion it becomes dead and worthless.

Tarde’s perspective of the economy is dominated by two concepts, denoting different types of forces. There is a realm of goods and resources, or to put it in simple terms, the “hardware”, and a realm of intangible and dynamic “software”, of imitative rays, inventions and their mutations, a “living” circulation driven by beliefs and desires. The hardware carries, mani-

feats and “executes” the ephemeral and organic software. It is the software that for Tarde carries life. Drawing terminology from botany, Tarde calls the hardware part of the economy as “cotylédon capital” and the software “germ capital” (Lépinay 2007). The “cotylédon capital”, natural resources, machines and labour is not the main part of the economy, as we usually denote it to, but merely the resource that energizes the germination of new ideas or imitations. Whereas economy has usually been seen as the accumulation of cotylédon capital, this is only one part of the economy, and not the “living” part of it. “As germs harden into machines, they also lose their versatility. The germ is dead as a process” (Lépinay 2007: 542) Materialization means “slowing down of the germ into a book or a method”, or any other form of bound or accumulated capital (Lépinay 2007: 546).

From a perspective of “living fashion” the medialized “hardware” of fashion, such as garments or images, is thus not as interesting as the germ part. Living fashion is pure vibration, pure potential, pure life. It is an unforeseen burst, as a singular event, and occasion of encountering life forces. The germ “does not only come from prior associations of unrelated flows, it also makes associations possible and it points towards its future context.” (Lépinay 2007: 545)

To Tarde, it is in the meeting of germs something new happens, “This encounter, this fertile junction, is the most unperceived event at its origin,” (Tarde 1902: 167) Living fashion is the condition of uncontrolled togetherness, hybridization, and meetings in honesty. It is not about accumulation and competition. A consumer may collect fashionable garments in the wardrobe, accumulate branded accessories and fashionable stuff, but the living part of fashion is the event, the occasion where an outfit springs to life, meets a subject in mutual recognition, in a moment of responsiveness and care. Living fashion happens between us, where garments become membranes rather than shields, when they let a person through.

On a larger scale, the concept of “living” is in this sense the political life of a quasi-biological social organism, a “super-individual creature”, a viral organism, let free throughout liberal society (offered by social/symbolic mobility). It is the liberal society that produces the photosynthesis from which the life is virally spreading, but as Foucault noticed, liberal social life is also squeezed into a liberal market model, governing it:

What is liberalism? The problem of neo liberalism is rather how the overall exercise of political power can be modeled on the principles of a market economy. So it is not a question of freeing an empty space, but of taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them on a general art of government. (Foucault 2008: 131)

Biopolitics of fashion means to administer the life and death of the fashion force (the “conatus” or “germ” of fashion), making sure that the living process

of fashion is controlled and administered through the fashion-industrial-complex, not something that happens spontaneously, as pure vibration, pure life.

Fashion-ability as a *living capability* of social well-being

From the perspective of living fashion, fashion is an inherent part of interhuman relations and well-being, yet it is also a force controlled when channeled through the fashion system or the “Fashion-Industrial-Complex”. If we approach politics as the administration of human well-being then these mechanisms of control are highly contested. The controlled substantiation of fashion into commodities makes fashion only accessible through the commodity economy, and sets all values of fashion in relation with the market. The capabilities of togetherness and empowerment turn into objects, as Bourdieu highlights when he notices how the designer logo “transubstantiates” a garment into a quasi-religious commodity (Bourdieu 1986: 113).

If fashion is to be seen beyond products and as a flow of continuous new garments, one approach could be to turn the process around and look at one of the functions of fashion. One such function could be the (ephemeral) production of consumer well-being. The consumer feels a need to buy new clothes as a desire for well-being. Yet this proposes another question: does the fashion garment really offer the well-being sought?

One critique of the garment-based well-being of fashion could come from economist Amartya Sen’s fundamental critiques of our everyday perspective on well-being. Sen’s critique is based on that well-being is commonly measured in economic growth and the measuring of this development is grounded on our access to commodities (Sen 1985).

As Sen argues, possessing a commodity does not mean one is able to use it, or to own a bike does not mean one can use the bike as a reliant mode of transportation. The skills may be lacking, or the infrastructure, such as a safe traffic environment, or the cultural tolerance to use a bike in public. Sen argues that we need to shift focus from the commodities, or the inherent characteristics of these objects, to instead look at “what the person succeeds in doing with the commodities and characteristics at his or her command” (Sen 1985: 10).

To Sen, capabilities of well-being should be understood as what a person is able to do and be, how a person can live and practice the life of a citizen, and this stretches far beyond the limitations of the commodity economy. Buying a fashionable garment is not the same as being fashion-able, or a sovereign member of the fashion-community, or wielding the “rights” of the fashionista. In our economy it is the fashion commodity that is programmed with the characteristics of well-being, but it does not always perform these characteristics in correspondence with the wearer’s intentions, in connection

with the other garments in our wardrobe, or in resonance with our social environment or habitat.

To make his point clearer, Sen further differentiates between internal and external capabilities, our inner skills, knowledges and abilities, and our opportunities to can enact them in the world. As philosopher Martha Nussbaum puts it, capabilities “are not just abilities residing inside a person but also freedoms and opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment” (Nussbaum 2011: 20). These combined capabilities are thus abilities living in a state of symbiosis with the surrounding and lived environment. But our internal capabilities do not grow in a vacuum either. Instead, they are:

trained or developed traits and abilities, developed, in most cases, in interaction with the social, economic, familial, and political environment. [...] A society might be quite well as producing internal capabilities but might cut off the avenues through which people actually have the opportunity to function in accordance with those capabilities. (Nussbaum 2011: 21)

As Nussbaum continues, “The notion of *freedom to choose* is thus built into the notion of capability. [...] To promote capabilities is to promote areas of freedom” (Nussbaum 2011: 25).

If we are to take the capabilities approach to well-being in fashion we need to put the condition of fashion into a much wider context, to come to explore what it means to *do and be together* through fashion. To start such endeavor, we would need to come closer to the myth-production of fashion, the shape-shifting magic of transformation and desirable togetherness, but perhaps first start to explore making, repair and craft closer, as that may be the immediate response to a call for abilities.

The Politics of Ability, and the Dark Crafts of Use

Fashion is an industrial system containing and controlling the abilities of fashion. The regime of fashion only offers the capability of fashion-ability through controlled channels such as the consumption of fashion media and commodities. Thus the capability of being *fashion-able* is a contested craft, a disputed arena of fashion politics.

The politics of fashion capabilities controls many layers of engagement, and in various degrees:

- who has access to the capabilities of being fashion-able;
- what skills are considered “safe” and “legitimate”, “subversive” or “illegitimate”;
- what materials are open for manipulation or alteration (for example overlock seams are made to make alterations impossible by the user as it cuts away the seam-allowance).

In his study of “geek culture” anthropologist Christopher Kelty (2008), highlights how geeks, or hackers, become political as they introduce new entities, practices and skills into the world. These are “new things that change the meaning of our constituted political categories.” (Kelty 2008: 94) As in the world of hacking, or any other craft that challenges the dominant distribution of power, the mere ability to challenge the status quo is a contested capability. In consumer society, even the act of carefulness or repair may be a cause of dispute as such commitment could be seen as subversive to the ideal of “equalising” consumption. Products are sold without screws and thus cannot be opened or repaired, likewise, clothes have no seam-allowance for future changes. Consumers are expelled from the avenues of commitment.

Kate Fletcher mentions the specific qualities of craft in her project *Local Wisdom*, where she means that, “skilful, cultivated and ingenious practices also exist associated with the tending and using of garments, we call them the ‘craft of use’ and they are *raison d’être* of this project. These are the practices that facilitate and emerge around the extended iterative and satisfying use of garments through time.” (Fletcher 2013)

As argued by Fletcher, the craft of use exist as a parallel to the consumption of fashion, or fashion as the continuous cycle of the arrival of the “new”. The craft of use is a not material bound, but a social practice beyond material consumption. She continues, “Rarely, if at all, do ‘craft of use’ practices need much in the way of extra material consumption or money to make them possible. Rather they are contingent on individuals finding creative opportunity in habits, stories, techniques, ways of thinking and with existing clothes.” (Fletcher 2013)

To Fletcher, the craft of use “contributes to the radical ‘post-growth’ sustainability agenda that critiques the central importance of growth to notions of prosperity and attempts to define and describe economic activity by biophysical limits.” (Fletcher 2013) As mentioned by Fletcher, what is radical to these practices of craft is that they offer an alternative, or even a counter-system, to the predominant model of economics and consumerism. In this way, the “craft of use” is a parallel to the contemporary “forbidden knowledges” as it manifests an alternative, or even a potential threat to the current regime of consumption. It adds to the catalogue of “dark craft”, such as the anarchist cookbook or practices of hacking, and the mis-appropriation of everyday tools for subversive undermining of power, black markets, dark rituals.

The “dark crafts” takes as its departure the idea that craft skills empowers users to engage with their social world, and any craft is thus having political implications, especially if enacted as a “praxis”, as a public engagement in concern of other people. In a similar train of thought, if there is “good” design, there is thus not only “bad” design, but also what could be

considered “dark” or even “evil” design, design that is covert and undermining, or even hostile and violent.

Fashion and dress have throughout history manifested dissent concerning contested social values, borders and norms. Some garments reveal too much, or flaunt opulence, and thus expose “moral decay”. Also the arts have been deemed “dangerous” or “deranged” to the ruling order, when artists engaged forces outside the dominant dichotomies of its time, perhaps most famously through the centuries of the Christian iconoclasm, over the Inquisition and later liberal state orders, for example the trials set in motion by McCarthyism.

The Dark Crafts are a form of dissident design, producing contested craft capabilities threatening the current political order. These crafts empower people who from the perspective of power should not have such skills. It can be anything from moon-shining (making DIY booze), to car tuning or file-sharing. Famous examples of manuals of the Dark Crafts can be the legendary *Anarchist Cookbook* (Powell 1971) and as late as 2007 a youth in the UK was arrested for possession of this book. On a more general level it can also be the skills to read and write, which were skills not everyone thought the working classes should have at the birth of public schooling systems. Skills empower.

The Dark Crafts frames the subversive potential of “empowerment”, “capabilities”, “do-it-yourself” or the “craft of use”, as not all do-it-yourself-knowledge is deemed appropriate by the state or ruling economic order. Authorities proclaim some capabilities should remain in the dark, yet they are not held “tacit” amongst the unlawful practitioners, but rather part of explicit subcultures or clandestine organizations. Hacking, file sharing and moon-shining are simple everyday examples that highlight how ordinary “citizen-knowledge” becomes a threat to state regime. This may take the shape of anti-consumerist “fashion hacking” (von Busch 2008) or politically adversarial design, aiming to produce dissident or adversarial relationships (DiSalvo 2012).

Fletcher’s Local Wisdom project can be an example of how the Dark Crafts of use are organized into an archive of practices challenging the status quo. The skills, or crafts, archived by Fletcher are undermining consumerism and the economic growth model, but builds human values, and she documents how everyday practices among fashion users all provide examples of how to avoid continually buying new stuff. To live a life closer to the capabilities of the social skin, the skill to be fashion-able.



Some **Mechanisms** of Fashion Politics

In her book *On Violence* (1970), Hannah Arendt challenges Mao's saying that "power comes out of the barrel of a gun" and she sets her discussion of violence apart from this discourse of power and violence. According to Arendt, this discourse takes violence to be identical with power. However, Arendt would argue the opposite and instead understood power as the ability of people to act in concert together, in the form of *empowerment*. This is the power to share and test opinions together, of deliberation and togetherness, and in an unhostile order. As philosopher Richard Bernstein argues, "for Arendt, power and violence are *antithetical* concepts - even though she knows that in the 'real world' they rarely ever appear separate." (Bernstein 2013: 6) But in order to reach that conclusion, Arendt sets about to make a series of distinctions between various forms of power, even if she admits they "hardly ever correspond to watertight compartments in the real world" (Arendt 1970: 46):

- "**Force**" is movements in nature, humanly uncontrollable circumstances, it is the "energy released by physical or social movements" (Arendt 1970: 45);

- "**Power**" is a function of human relations, "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert." (Arendt 1970: 44). It is the human social ability to persuade or coerce others, as power "belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as the group keeps together." Arendt continues, "when we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name" (1970:44). "Power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy (1970: 52);

- "**Strength**" is the individual capacity to affect personal circumstances, as when someone has a "powerful personality" (Arendt 1970: 44), such as someone being a "strong leader". But strength is distinct from power, as

power belongs to groups of individuals, and is dependent on their (tacit) agreement and acts;

- **“Authority”** is a source of power vested in persons by virtue of their offices or knowledge, but also depends on a willingness on the part of others to grant respect and legitimacy. “Its hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed” (Arendt 1979: 45). Authority can easily be undermined by contempt, or by laughter;

- **“Violence”** are instrumental efforts of coercion in lack of power. “Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the ends it pursues” (Arendt 1970: 51).

When approaching power from a perspective of fashion politics it may be tempting to make some form of paraphrase on Mao, such as “power comes out of Vogue magazine”. Often this perspective is still dominant: the power of fashion is always *out there*, someone else *holds it*. Such perspective not only renders the Everyperson powerless, but also free of responsibility. Instead we give power to others by obedience. Everyone has the ability to withdraw that power.

If we reinterpret some concepts of Arendt in relation to fashion we may better see some more nuances of fashion politics;

- **“Fashion Force”**: The human desire and life force of togetherness, affection, and love, of every individual and at every moment, which may take its expression in fashion (the desire to imitate - mirror neurons, the “conatus” of fashion). This force may take expression in the immediate pleasure and affirmation felt by wearing new clothes and feel the attention and appreciation of others;

- **“Fashion Power”**: Fashion power is a collective enactment of togetherness, to act in concert. But this form of togetherness is not necessarily to all dress the same, but the power of *equal recognition*. As for Alexandre Kojève, “recognition is necessarily mutual”, as at its minimum “recognition is always also recognition of others as free and equal.” (Kojève in Strauss 2000: xxi) Fashion power is the power of dressed empowerment where a *plurality of expressions exist alongside in alignment*;

- **“Fashion Strength”**: The individual charismatic capacity to act fashionably, in confidence and presence, without fear, and in a sense of dressed

reciprocity. It is thus not the ego-seeking recognition of “look at me” amplified through the industry;

- **“Fashion Authority”**: The reciprocity of respect perceived as legitimate by the community, the ability to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, virtue, together with others;

- **“Fashion Violence”**: The efforts pushing the Force of fashion into coercion (power) by means of systematic judgements and extortion mechanisms, primarily enacted between peers as a form of peer pressure. The violence is proliferated through easily accessible fast fashion and the swamping of developing markets of (lightly) used consumer goods.

Fashion power is the togetherness of acting in concert. But it is not controlled by any person, it is not a characteristic of a specific position in the fashion hierarchy. Political scientist Gene Sharp argues that “political power is not intrinsic to the power-holder,” that is, one cannot “hold” power, power is *given* in the form of obedience (1973:11). However, power also flows from outside sources that include perceptions of authority, available human resources; skills and knowledge; material resources; and intangible psychological and ideological factors. All these build up coercion. To Sharp, obedience is essentially voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn by the followers, thus highlighting their potential agency for political change. This is equally true for fashion.

Violence is often used to uphold obedience when power subsides. As Arendt argues, “[v]iolence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What can never grow out of it is power.” (Arendt 1969) She continues:

Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course its end is the disappearance of power. This implies that it is not correct to say that the opposite of violence is nonviolence: to speak of nonviolent power is actually redundant. Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it (Arendt 1969).

However, fashion, as it is usually perceived, of people dressing the same or following the latest trend, is full of violence. People who cannot gain power, needs to position themselves by the use of violence.

The Violence of Fashion

To better understand the conflict within fashion, between liberation and empowerment on the one hand, and oppression, violence and anxiety on the other, we will need to dig deeper into the mechanisms of violence inherent in fashion, which are amplified through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex.

The violence of fashion may take many shapes, and the most known, but willfully ignored, may be the overseas sweatshops. The violence sometimes erupts as visible in yet another factory accident, like a deadly fire or something like the disastrous collapse of a textile factory in Dhaka on April 24, 2013 with over a thousand workers dead. But the violence may also take immediate form in our own streets, like in the killing of Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012. The killing was highlighted in media not least because of racial profiling but also because the victim was wearing a hoodie. But as cultural critic Henry Giroux has noted, the outrage about the killing is not about the hoodie itself, but “the real question in this case is, what kind of society allows young black and brown youth to be killed precisely because they are wearing a hoodie?” (Giroux 2012). He continues,

Young people now find themselves in a world in which sociality has been reduced to an economic battle ground over materialistic needs waged by an army of nomadic individuals, just as more and more people find their behavior pathologized, criminalized and subject to state violence. (Giroux 2012)

To Giroux, the violence we see today is an inherent part of individualized consumer culture, in which more and more people find themselves utterly powerless.

One reason violence seeps into fashion is the social constituency of our time. As social mobility is, at least slightly, released from traditional markers of status, such as education and hierarchy, we become more fearful of the social implications of dressed behaviour. A culture of fear contaminates a phenomenon that, at least on the surface, promises empowerment. Social anxiety spreads and we start to fear our peers. Peace researcher David Cortright notices that “We fear the loss of job security or position; we worry how family, friends, and employers will view us. We are so entangled in the comforts of society that we find it difficult to take risks, even for causes we hold dear.” (Cortright 2009: 33)

In many senses the fear is also real, as violence, in the form of abusive exclusion, is an inherent part of the distinctions made by fashion. We just have to remember the oracle character in the “judges” in the popular TV-show *Project Runway*, “one day you’re in, and the next day you’re out.” It is a style judgement which does not dodge the exploitative exclusion which is such vital part of the social tyranny of fashion. As Arendt points out, already

Montesquieu noticed that tyranny is “the most violent and least powerful of forms of government” (Arendt 1970: 41). Thus, it is important to make a distinction between fashion power and fashion violence.

Distinction between Fashion Power and Fashion Violence

Fashion power exists between people as a mode of convivial togetherness, but it is not the same as everyone dressing the same or to seek acceptance from peer judgement by dressing like they do. It is the convivial mode of cultivating supportive and shared self-esteem.

The basis of fashion violence rests on our cultural will of being seen and recognized. In order to do so we use the symbolic tools offered to us. The body becomes the canvas for symbolic self-manifestation and communication. As psychoanalyst and literary theorist Julia Kristeva has noted, “The body must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic” (1982: 102). As fashion adds a layer of representation or social use, it also inscribes itself into the order of fashion and submits to the rulings of the peer-executed violent regime.

Fashion violence taps into the natural force of fashion and imitates fashion power through commodities, making fashion all look the same, as in the distinction of fashion made by Swedish fashion journalist Susanne Pagold where fashion means that of “looking like everybody else, but before everyone else.” (Pagold 2000: 8)

Fashion violence is the processes of organization which makes the desires of fashion act in concert, tapping into the force of fashion to produce conformity with the consumer order. These acts of violent coercion works on several levels and through various spheres.

One mode to separate different spheres of violence in fashion is to subdivide them through peace researcher Johan Galtung’s typology of violence. Galtung differs between:

- **direct violence:** the one to one violation of integrity and one-to-one exploitation, explicit or ambiguous microaggressions, for example a bouncer refusing entrance to a club because of dress, a police officer harassing a hoodie-wearing youngster, a sneer about a new haircut, or a teenager being bullied in school because of dress;
- **structural violence:** structural violence may be the manifestation of fashion ideals into sizes, patterns and social or racial sorting mechanisms, directly affecting the body, if we can wear it or not, if it reveals the body in a “good” way or not;

- **cultural violence:** Cultural violence makes structural discrimination seem “natural” and endorses individual acts of direct violence with the help of mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, social hierarchies and norms, “The culture preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly not exploitation) at all.” (Galtung 1990: 295)

Microaggressions

Through the total dissemination and ubiquitousness of fashion, our peers are the “judges” of our relation to fashion, referencing our dressed expressions to the latest shared trends, and the social comments are the verdicts of the jury. And no law is upheld without systems of judgement, execution and punishment. In the social world of fashion punishment takes the form of microaggressions.

Microaggressions is a term sprung from the studies of racism and are “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages” towards the marginalized (Sue 2010:3). Microaggressions are most detrimental when delivered by well-intentioned individuals who are unaware of their harmful conduct. As psychologist Derald Wing Sue writes,

Because most people experience themselves as good, moral, and decent human beings, conscious awareness of their hidden biases, prejudices, and discriminatory behaviors threatens their self-image. Thus, they may engage in defensive maneuvers to deny their biases, to personally avoid talking about topics such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism, and to discourage others from bringing up such topics. On the one hand, these maneuvers serve to preserve the self-image of oppressors, but on the other, they silence the voices of the oppressed. (2010: 5)

By executing a “conspiracy of silence” the perpetrators keep their oppression from being acknowledged (“don’t be so oversensitive”), maintain their innocence, and leave inequities from being challenged. Sue divides microaggressions into microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations where the last form is perhaps the most insidious, damaging, and harmful form “because microinvalidations directly attack or deny the experiential realities of socially devalued groups” (2010: 10). The reality of the powerful is imposed on the less powerful groups, making them judge their experiences through the values and hierarchies of the powerful. Even a flattering compliment can still reflect oppression as it both confirms the position of the powerful who is allowed to judge, and it allows the perpetrator to cling to his or her belief in the subject’s

inferiority (Sue 2010: 13). The seemingly well-intentioned comment creates an “attributional ambiguity”, a “motivational uncertainty in that the motives and meanings of a person’s actions are unclear and hazy”, to which the victim have trouble responding, or end up in a double bind (Sue 2010: 17).

Classist microinvalidations “broadly negate or demean the lived experience of poor or working-class people” (Smith & Redington 2010: 279). From this perspective, the reality of the poor is not worth anything:

Fashion and lifestyle programming spotlights the wardrobe, dinner parties, and daily activities of wealthy people; issues relevant to them and to middle-class individuals, such as the stock market, comprise the entire programming schedules of cable networks. Simultaneously, we are fed images and narratives evoking our sense that anything is possible and that in this winner-take-all society, we have as good chance of taking it all as anyone. (Smith & Redington 2010: 279)

We may be able to access fashion more ubiquitously today, but we are also quickly judged according to the new standards. Once again, the laws are at work, not necessarily enforced by some authoritarian “fashion police”, but passionately played out between us as a form of social control, driven through our common desire to replicate the reality of the powerful.

Also “kind” groups can display fashion violence. There may even be an avoidance of conflict, yet the withdrawal and isolation from an individual, without any display of dispute, may become a form of violence or mobbing. From the perspective of the perpetrator, the act may seem like an avoidance of conflict, while the victim gets socially expelled. In the realm of fashion this may take the form of willingly ignoring someone with clothing as a symbolic marker or an excuse.

The mechanisms of microaggressions not only breaks down the confidence and integrity of the subject, but through the myth of democratized fashion, it also debilitates the sense of possibilities of identity formation beyond the means of consumerist fashion. Self-contempt is fuelled by namelessness and double consciousness as the subject internalizes the fear of social exclusion.

Fashion Fear

Fashion Fear is the physical and chronic occupation, as well as mental pre-occupation, of status anxiety and social fear based on peer judgement. The fashion system, through all means necessary, administers this fear to control desire (and the fashion force). Fashion fear differs from general *anxiety*, which is a fear without an object, and also from *phobia*, which is the internal anxieties projected onto an external object. Fashion fear binds social anxiety

into the object, product or garment, of fashion on a material, symbolic as well as strategic level. Fashion fear is thus a “habitat”, a place of habits as theorized by Bourdieu, an internalization of social behaviours and practices.

Perhaps paradoxically, the fear of fashion is amplified by its wedding with desire and pleasure. As cultural critics Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write,

Although the spectacle seems to function through desire and pleasure (desire for commodities and pleasure of consumption), it really works through the communication of fear--or rather, the spectacle creates forms of desire and pleasure that are intimately wedded to fear. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 323)

Philosopher Hans Jonas introduced the concept of “heuristics of fear” as a method of science criticism and comparative futurology (Jonas 1980). Jonas sensed a need to imagine the possible impacts of scientific or technological progress on a macro scale in order to understand its impacts on ethics and the holistic perspective of life; in other words, in order to be able to take the right decision and avoid the temptations of irresponsibility. For Jonas, we should start thinking from a sense of fear, of immanent *threat*, especially the fear of losing our planet caused by slow and long-term environmental threats. A substantial critique of the environmental, and social, reach of our technologies must be based on an existential fear rather than an ethics of “good”. Ironically, the holistic fear Jonas refers to is the guiding principle of fashion, as one of the guiding emotions of fashion is the fear of social consequences as the very mortality of style pushes fashion “forward”.

However, as Jonas notes, the deepest root of our cultural crisis is ever-present nihilism (Jonas 1996:5). Most of our meetings with society, our limited and mediated actions may seem ethically neutral for us, and our own Being seems isolated from others. Our Being seems to exist in an “ethical vacuum”, caused by two key assumptions: “(1) that the idea of obligation is a human invention, not a discovery based on the objective being of the good-in-itself; and (2) that the rest of Being is indifferent to our experience of obligation” (Jonas 1996: 9). Without recognition and obligation, fear conquers the ethical vacuum. However, we can become an “event of Being”, with a “transition from vital goodness to moral rightness: from desire to responsibility” (Jonas 1996: 19). We may become “citizens of a biotic community teeming with life” (1996:19). Life in itself may convey courage.

In his book *Liquid Fear* (2006) Zygmunt Bauman sees fear as part of the contemporary social condition, which basis is the lack of direct personal experiences of threat, and thus parts of our imagination is in itself an arena of fear. “Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear [...] ‘Fear’ is the name we give to our uncertainty: to our ignorance of the threat and of what is to be done” (Bauman 2006:2). As Bauman further writes, “The

new individualism, the fading of human bonds and the wilting of solidarity, are all engraved on one side of a coin whose other side bears the stamp of globalization” (Bauman 2006: 146). Global uncertainty of a shrinking world, with migration, outsourcing, terrorism, intersects with an uncertainty of local social relationships and identity politics, where the individual comes to be threatened by forceful exclusion and isolation at any indefinite point. As Bauman notices, in consumer society fear is an inherent part of commodification itself. The commodity is pre-programmed to have a short life and it has desirability as its foundation of value, a value that is in and by itself at continuous risk. Our escape route becomes consumption, by which we can catch seek inclusion through the attention and attracting demand in a social marketplace where consumers “are, simultaneously, promoters of commodities and the commodities they promote” (Bauman 2007: 6). This last element is for Bauman the heart of the ongoing transformation of consumers into commodities, and a merger between the two, a shift Bauman calls the “consumerist culture”, requiring constant updating, remaking, marketing and promotion.

As Bauman notices, fashion has largely replaced social hopes for change and merged with the liberal personal project,

Like so many other aspects of the human mode of being-in-the-world, utopia in the last 30 to 40 years has been, by and large, ‘privatized’ and ‘individualized.’ Utopia once meant imagining a well-designed society, guaranteeing a meaningful, dignified and gratifying life for all. Now, however, it means looking out for oneself, perhaps (though not necessarily) with your nearest and dearest, [finding] a relatively safe and comfortable niche within a hopelessly unsafe and inhospitable world that is beyond redemption – something like buying a family shelter in the period of the nuclear war panic. (Bauman (2013)

Bauman continues,

One of the foremost functions of commercially boosted fashion is now the servicing of this new form of utopian thinking and pursuit-of-utopia practices. The advance of the ‘individualized’ version of utopia coincides with the collapse and demise of the idea of (and hope for) a ‘good society.’ (Bauman 2013)

In a seeming parallel, philosopher Paul Virilio frames how the perpetual “propaganda of progress”, which could be a direct parallel to the continuously accelerating fashion cycles, produces unexpected vectors for fear in the way it manufactures both frenzy and stupor (Virilio 2012). As the world shrinks and time is accelerated, also fear is compressed and seems to come at us from all directions, and “all we can do is manage and administer this fear instead of deal with it fundamentally.” (Virilio 2012:10) He continues by adding that “The administration of fear is politics without a polis; the administration of people who are no longer at home anywhere, constantly squeezed and dreaming of a somewhere else that does not exist” (Virilio 2012:10). To Virilio, this

produces “an environment, a surrounding, a world”, that isn’t only an isolated instance (2012:14). And not only that, as we are constantly preoccupied with fear, our whole world is *occupied* by fear, and this produces a real threat to democracy and reflective decision-making. As Bertrand Richard writes in the preface to Virilio text, “the administration of fear is a world discovering that there are things to be afraid of but still convinced that more speed and ubiquity are the answer” (2012:10).

For Virilio, the administration of fear manages to push politics from communities of shared interest and decision-making based on critical discourse towards a community of emotions, or what he calls a “communism of affects” (2012:30) or a “privatization of communism” (2012:46), which stems from a desperate effort to stay ahead in the social race as quick-tempered “passengers” of our own administered passions (2012:92). Such a shift influences social relationships at a deep level:

With the phenomena of instantaneous interaction that are now our lot, there has been a veritable reversal, destabilizing the relationship of human interactions, and the time reserved for reflection, in favor of the conditioned responses produced by emotions. (Virilio 2012: 31)

To Virilio, in this reign of emotions the administration of fear becomes a tool of totalitarian power. Quoting Arendt, Virilio states that “terror is the realization of the law of movement” (2012:21), that is, when reality is accelerated into a continuous flow of “real time”, or “live feed”, it displaces time for reflection of consequences, justice, and even politics itself. This brings back the issue of the “Now Trending” paradigm of fashion and the “synchronized slavery” of trendsetting and communication amplified by social media. With a continuous flow of new styles and cheaply accessible just-in-time-fashion, we are stuck in the contemporary affect, and it is hard to get an overview, to take time to see the bigger picture. It is even harder to ask the tough questions and build other values other than the easily accessible ones. As Virilio notes, “the mastery of power is linked to the mastery of speed.” (2012:37) The fear creeps on us, occupies us, producing its own violence enacted between us:

Fear not only creates its environment, with its own ghettos, gated communities, communitarianism, it has also created its culture, a culture of repulsion. It relates to racism and the rejection of the other: there is always reason to push out, to expulse the other. (Virilio 2012:58)

The total environment of fear and violence proposed by Virilio resonates with Arendt’s perspective on the mechanisms of tyranny. In her discussion on totalitarianism (1951), she observes how the mechanisms of internment-camps make the imprisoned people redundant by annihilating their human capa-

bilities and value. Within the camp, arbitrary violence produces a continuous experience of a state of exception; all human properties are set aside and the person becomes something to be administered. Following the ideas of Henry David Thoreau - who argued that the prison's purpose is to keep its mechanisms exterior, which means that the fear of prison makes us all imprisoned (Thoreau 1849/1992) - we could argue that also the mechanisms of the international-camp are turned outwards. The international-camps reflect the fear of redundancy outwards, making us all say "I should not become redundant" (I better not become zoe, "bare life").

This fear of redundancy plays a fundamental role in the construction of fear as produced by fashion. The inclusion mechanisms of fashion, the commodities we buy to feel that we belong, are turned inside-out; in fact, they exclude people. The barbed wire points outwards. Fashion makes non-consumers redundant, labelling them as the ones who cannot keep up with the acquisition of the "latest trend" (or "Trending Now" as the signs in Forever21 stores say). The only capability promoted in consumer culture is that of quickly purchasing goods and services valued by consumer culture, by the system itself. As cultural critic Henry Giroux stated, youth in consumer culture are subject to social conditions that are based on mistrust and fear; they can only access society by means of consumption and, if marginalized or devoid of wealth, they are considered expendable or redundant (Giroux 2009). As Giroux notes, non-consuming youth are not just excluded from "the American dream," but are utterly redundant and disposable and, by the same token, seen as waste products of a society that no longer considers them of any value. Giroux notes that under such circumstances, matters of survival and disposability, life and death, become central to how we think about and imagine politics, leaving the excluded no point of re-entry. For non-consumers, few options are available as they no longer have any roles to play as producers or consumers. In a consumer-driven society, civic values are reduced to the obligations of consumer-driven self-interests, leaving no room for alternative values beyond the flourishing of the market.

Fashion Tyranny

The mechanisms above brings about a consumption regime of "fashion tyranny", a concept not unlike political philosopher Sheldon Wolin's concept of "inverted totalitarianism" (Wolin 2008). Such "fashion tyranny" is not a tyranny of violent intimidation in the strict sense - because coercion through violence is not really effective as Arendt argues - yet consumers are controlled and affected through the fear of being left out of the value system of fashion consumerism. In this respect, fashion comes to resonate with the current state of democracy where, according to Wolin, society expresses totalitarian ten-

dencies through an “obsession with control, expansion, superiority, and supremacy” (Wolin 2008: ix). In this state of “inverted totalitarianism”, the fashion industry may have little power over governance and state politics, yet it may still play a crucial role in the desire-driven demobilization of consumers, while simultaneously celebrating the subject’s illusory individualism and autonomy, where voters become as “predictable as consumers” (Wolin 2008: 47). It is a managed consumerism tyranny, far removed from a general and self-reflective participation in self-government, and it leaves citizens without real power and in constant fear of losing what little they have.

For Leo Strauss, we often fail to recognize tyranny even when we see it (Strauss 2000:23). Political science may claim tyranny is a “value judgement”, or even “mythical”, and the characteristics of cruelty, oppression and deliberate indifference to suffering seems not to match our observations as a “real” tyranny. Yet the mechanisms of tyranny are present in consumer society; the fear, misery and subjugation are a reality. And as Strauss argues, it is the role of philosophy to reveal its form as “society will always try to tyrannize thought” (Strauss 2000: 27).

Fear hampers the individual’s ability to act upon the world. It hides behind the cold rationality that one action will not change the conditions, especially not with high stakes against the odds. Fear wisely sticks with the good habits or decent virtue: “I only obeyed orders”, or “everybody else did it”. Yet, thought, will, judgement and reflection, combined with training and action, may hamper the impact of fear on our endeavours.

Fashion Courage

It would perhaps be absurd to say outright fear is the common denominator in the everyday life of a fashionista. But perhaps the nature of this fear becomes more apparent when contrasted with its opposite, fashion courage. This courage is not the “early adopter” trendy people we see in the magazines, as they already have been blessed by the system for acquiring the new “courageous” style shown with approval on fashion media.

Instead, fashion courage is the trivial heroism of acting gracefully under social pressure. Dutch textile artist Joke Robaard calls these everyday wearers “fashion heroes (and heroines)”, they have a “terrific presence” about them with an “inseparable link between external features and inner qualities”. (Robaard 2004: 11) Expounding on this feature, she argues they are “no ordinary heroes, these are people whose presence in public life is such that we could flay them alive, that is to say, copy them, devour them, assimilate them.” (11) It is their courage we try to mimic, but in vain, as “we go out and buy the clothes of these heroes and heroines, thought without their presence or personality.” (11)

This type of fashion courage is unselfish and it does not require witnesses, yet still never leaves the world untouched. Courage transforms the individual and is a form of generosity of the ultimate order and it loves the silent mercy of encouraging others. This is the everyday threat of courage: it reveals to conformists that there exists options beyond cold rationality, and it undermines the good habits of silent submission to domination.

We can sometimes meet such courageous fashionistas. Their mere presences and self-confidence radiates, not a “look-at-me” self-centeredness, but instead a loving generosity of an honest appearing-for-the-world. They sometimes make us feel slightly debased in our mass-market fear. But they often also encourage us, because just like fear, courage is contagious.

The Fashion-Industrial-Complex

The fashion system is not a totalitarian dictatorship, even if we may follow the “decrees” of fashion. However, the world of fashion has many resemblances with totalitarian systems of organization. The Czech dissident Vaclav Havel coined the term “post-totalitarian” in his essay *Power of the Powerless* (1978) in order to describe the condition of state-supremacy in Soviet bloc countries during the 70s. As he clarifies, “I do not wish to imply by the prefix ‘post-’ that the system is no longer totalitarian; on the contrary, I mean that it is totalitarian in a way fundamentally different from classical dictatorships...” (Havel in Keane 1985:27). Political theorist John Keane describes the scenario described by Havel:

Within the system, every individual is trapped within a dense network of the state’s governing instruments...themselves legitimated by a flexible but comprehensive ideology, a ‘secularized religion’...it is therefore necessary to see, argued Havel, that power relations...are best described as a labyrinth of influence, repression, fear and self-censorship which swallows up everyone within it, at the very least by rendering them silent, stultified and marked by some undesirable prejudices of the powerful... (Keane 1985: 273)

The Fashion-Industrial-Complex is the regime of consumer fashion, and could be said to be such post-totalitarian “secularized religion” where consumer-induced social fear and identitarian self-censorship reigns in the same labyrinth as desire, affect, pleasure and self-fulfilment. Historian Jill Fields used the concept of the Fashion-Industrial-Complex to denote the combination of image, goods, desire and sexual practice-production through fashion on an industrial scale in her examination of the history of intimate apparel (Fields 2007). To Fields,

the history of undergarments in modern America both as manufactured objects and cultural icons, intertwining their fabrication and distribution as mass-produced goods and objects of material culture with their construction

and circulation as representations of the female body and producers of meaning. (Fields 2007:5)

As Fields points out, corsets were marketed as transforming figure flaws to avoid the wearers confusion with the uncivilized, or “thick” bodies, of the “racially impure” (Fields 2007).

As fashion is made available through mass production in consumer society it is processed and channeled through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex, making sure it becomes an integrated part of consumer society. As philosopher Jean Baudrillard notices, “our society thinks itself and speaks itself as a consumer society. As much as it consumes anything, it consumes *itself* as consumer society” (Baudrillard 1998:193). It does not matter if consumption is more or less “productive” or “unproductive”, what matters is that it is a *re-productive* consumption, producing ever more consumption. Fashion is such wonderful “perpetuum mobile”, a self-propelling machine that, through its own inner tension between forces, keeps reproducing itself in an endless cycle of movement (Bauman 2010). By reproducing ever-new difference to itself, it keeps moving, and also keeps power within itself, self-revolutionizing and appropriating any imbalance.

Through consumer society, fashion is reproduced as both material component (commodity) and as myth. As Baudrillard writes,

Consumption is a myth. That is to say, it is a *statement of contemporary society about itself*, the way our society speaks of itself. And, in a sense, the only objective reality of consumption is the *idea* of consumption [...] which has acquired the force of common sense. (1998:193)

As such, the consumer mythology fits perfectly into the regime of power that is perpetuated through the system. The consumer experiences an immediate change in his or her world, having acquired a new commodity that temporarily boosts the ego and provides a sense of meaning. Even a “subversive”, anti-fashion statement may boost the consumer’s standing on his or her scene. Yet, simultaneously, this change challenges nothing of the ruling order. It is part of the surface changes that keeps the mechanisms veiled. Fashion perfectly fulfills what the consumer asks for, but never keeps any promises of real social change. As Baudrillard argues, “fashion embodies a compromise between the need to innovate and the other need to change nothing in the fundamental order” (Baudrillard 1981: 51). Or, in Bauman’s words,

fashion seems to be the mechanism through which the “fundamental order” (market dependency) is maintained by a never ending chain of innovations; the very perpetuity of innovations renders their individual (as inevitable) failures irrelevant and harmless to the [overall] order. (1987:165)

One of the primal myths reproduced through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex is the idea that any threat to consumerism, for example climate change, is also the fault of the consumer him or herself. The system keeps telling us, “You made this mess through your consumption, so you better fix it too!”. According to this rhetoric, the consumer should thus “be the change”. Consumers are encouraged to change their bad behaviour, to consume sustainable stuff, start composting, take shorter showers and shift light bulbs, so they can save the planet, *in order to keep consuming*. Even if you are a rebel, you promote yet another “subculture”, another consumable signifier (Heath & Potter 2005). As curator Nato Thompson notices, even activism risks becoming yet another “scene” based on individualist expression of singularity, “We are alone. We are a nation of rebels.” (Thompson 2005:125). We seem locked into a dilemma where every form of dissent quickly may turn into a new commodity. Through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex, the system becomes all-encompassing, channeling every expression through commodities, making sure in consumer society, *everything* is consumed, even resistance to consumption itself.

The fear and violence of fashion is administered and amplified through the organization of fashion through the transnational Fashion-Industrial-Complex. The industry is not only a producer of goods, but of ideas, dreams, and images, but also of sizes, proportions, standards of beauty. It produces structural and cultural images that legitimize direct violence and it feeds on both the desire and the anxiety that flows through consumer culture. Exceptions may be displayed at the fringes, sometimes as honest initiatives that challenge the status quo, but also as green-washing or alibis for massive exploitations.

Similar to the Beauty-Industrial-Complex (Nader 1997), the Fashion-Industrial-Complex (FIC) makes people see harmony rather than justice as desirable, and induces women to undergo body altering surgery under the illusion of free choice. The ideology of the industry is “self-help”, which implies that the female consumer is never good enough and must always “improve” according to the standards set by the industry itself in order to produce a “feminine fear factor” (Nelson 2012: 155ff). The critique to the industrial dissemination of the conformist ideal of beauty is not new. A well-known example can be Naomi Wolf’s bestselling *The Beauty Myth* (1991), in which she argues that the concept of beauty is fluctuating “like a currency system” (Wolf 1991: 21) and is used as a weapon to make women feel badly about themselves as nobody can live up to the ideal. Psychologist Nancy Etcoff, on the other hand, opposes Wolf’s belief that beauty is a cultural construct, and argues instead “that beauty is a universal part of human experience, and that it provokes pleasure, rivets attention, and impels actions that help ensure the survival of our genes” (Etcoff 1999: 25). Indeed, desire for attention is eas-

ily tapped into for profit, and the Fashion-Industrial-Complex reproduces beauty within the state of consumer redundancy, the social and individual fear of not-being-able-to-consume.

The supposed “democratization” of fashion as promoted through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex is an asymmetric process that primarily produces increased consumption, styled obsolescence, social anxiety and waste. It is far from a process of shared accountable governance, dissemination of power or disarmament of corrupt elites, as the word democracy would suggest. Like in any peacebuilding process, a democratization would be about aligning elites with society at large. Yet, as in many post-conflict situations (cf. Zürcher *et al* 2013), and in the realm of fashion, the élite is threatened by the real influence of anyone who does not belong to it, as it would put their interests at risk. The process of democratization may come at a high cost, and produce rejections, retaliations, and non-adoption conflicts as the powerful do not let go of their dominance with enthusiasm. With radical democracy, peacebuilding and reconciliation must be at the core of fashion praxis.

Fashion Freedom

Fashion Freedom could, at first thought, mean the possibility to acquire anything fashionable, yet this is still only a freedom within the settings of consumer culture, which is a very limited field of action. Likewise, such freedom would offer no possibility to alter the rules of the game while also diminishing the social and environmental impact of such “freedom”. Fashion freedom must exist beyond the narrow scope of ready-to-wear clothes, however cheap and accessible they are.

As Arendt speaks of political freedom, she means the freedom from another’s power, that is, the strength of self-determination and the responsibility that follows from that position. Fashion freedom, then, is the individual possibility to be able to create power, by forming new alignments of power, new alliances and free expression of the force of fashion. It allows for a multitude of ways to be together, over and above the scope of the economy.

Freedom is pulled between desire and reason, who both in their purest form offer no freedom. It is the category of the will that allows for freedom. As Arendt notices, “[t]he will is the arbiter between reason and desire, and as such the will alone is free. Moreover, while reason reveals what is common to all men, and desire what is common to all living organisms, only the will is entirely my own” (2003: 114). Arendt points out that by acknowledging the will as the foundation for freedom means that freedom becomes a philosophical issue, rather than a mere political fact.

Today, as many discuss the urgency of making fashion more sustainable for the planet, the reason says we should consume less, while desire

keeps feeding us with cheaper clothes. And there is a general lack of will to do anything about it.

To Arendt, the will, which is free, is also the basis for responsibility. If desire and reason in their purest form leaves us with no freedom, but only necessity, there is no individual responsibility. If fashion is pure desire, we cannot take any responsibility for our consumer behaviour. Likewise, if we followed reason and focus exclusively on sustainability, we would leave no room for the freedom fashion offers. We have to find other means, or rituals, by which we can enact our personal will for fashion freedom. But is there any real willingness for responsibility? Isn't fashion, as produced by the industry, all about moving on so quickly that one escapes both history and responsibility?

Another perspective on fashion freedom would be to once again return to the "democracy" of fashion, to the idea that the premise of fashion rests on the promise of accessibility and consumption (as opposed to birth-rights, nobility, and so on). However, also the individualist perspective promoted through democracy, where one votes for one's interest, is also criticised as being a "democratic paradox", for example by political theorist Chantal Mouffe, who argues that

The failure of current democratic theory to tackle the question of citizenship is the consequence of their operating with a conception of the subject which sees individuals as prior to society, bearers of natural rights, and either utility maximizing agents or rational subjects. In all cases they are abstracted from social and power relations, language, culture and the whole set of practices that make agency possible. (2005:95)

This paradox, that democracy both promotes the individual as an atomised agent, and simultaneously undermines its position by stripping bare the social community on which the subject rests, is also a paradox of fashion freedom. The illusion of individual choice, the illusion that fashion can make the wearer "unique" and that the consumer somehow transgresses the system itself by exercising her or his free will, is at the core of the fashion experience.

Fashion sorting and compartmenting

As Oscar Wilde remarked in *De Profundis*, "Most people are other people" (Wilde 1905/1999: 73). Not only are they different from us, but their thoughts, opinions, come from others, their peers and idols. Similarly, fashion comes from "other people" and we are judged by "other people".

Fashion judgement differs from moral or reflected judgement as it is an activity of social sorting, not a moral consideration. Rather, it is the neglectance of any moral consequences of one's judgements, effectively blam-

ing fashion judgements on “the system”. Fashion judgement not only sorts dress, and the wearer, in categories such as “in” or “out”, into confinement, as adversaries or opponents; this sorting also operates in microsegments, compartmentalizing the wearer into subculture, profession, race, morality, and all that such stereotypes carry with them.

Fashion judgement is done between peers in every social situation and it matches our perceptual sets, or what in psychology is called “perceptual expectancy”, that is a predisposition to perceive things in a certain way, a framing or connotation that results into judgement. Judgement and perception merges into a “perceptual set”. Perceptual sets occur in our senses as is a perceptual bias or predisposition or readiness to perceive particular features of a stimulus, modelling it into a mental image based on biases from earlier experience or myth. A perceptual set focuses attention on particular aspects of the sensory data, the mind sorts the data, classifying it into selected stereotypes and memories.

This type of sorting mechanism is similar to how “identity”, that is the idea of “being identical to oneself” simultaneously as that of “sharing an identity with others”, is explored in Amartya Sen’s study on identity and violence (2007). Sen examines how identity has become a central feature in the sorting of subjectivity, and also a great sense of destiny, produced by a violence of identity, where religious or colonial identities, for instance, are seen as the “singular and overarching system of partitioning” (2007: xxi). This type of sorting ignores all the other possible ways in which, beyond the categories of the dominant logic, people may see themselves, thus producing a hierarchy of values that builds and legitimizes a vast array of forms of violence and a sense of inevitability incarnated into subjective form. Beyond, for example, the abstraction of religious identity, are also layers of loyalty between professions, solidarity between parents, between classes and ideologies, producing a diversity of sources that are not in opposition, but can coexist in harmony. The dominant type of identity production severely limits responsibility and reasoning, in an attention *to actually see the other*, to instead make identity the excuse for illegitimate judgements and violence, based on the presumptions and illusions of “identity”, making it a “violence of illusion”.

Sen’s argument resonates well with fashion, as through fashion judgements we sort and compartmentalize others according to dress. This sorting mechanism redirects attention between persons and signals, and also stabilizes our perpetual sets (so we don’t need to confront our bias too often). Parallels could be drawn between this type of judgement and the sorting of people according to illness. Foucault differs between two models: the leper model of “exile” and the plague model of “confinement” and compartmentalization, which later, in the time of cholera, brought about a total governmentality model of “social medicine” that focused on regulations in population

control, circulation of air and water, location of cemeteries, and so on (Foucault 1965).

Similar “abstract machines” can be said to work on the sorting model of perception enacted through fashion judgement. According to philosopher Gilles Deleuze, an abstract machine is a “diagram”, an abstract “functioning”, not a structure or a system, but a sorting device that actualizes a specific assemblage of the world. It gathers matter to give it form according to its programming. As noted by Deleuze,

The concrete assemblage of school, workshops, army, etc., integrate qualified substances (children, workers, soldiers) and finalizes functions (education, etc.) and this carries on right up to the State, which strives for global integration, at least in the form of the universal Marketplace. (Deleuze 2006: 32)

The diagram redirects and stabilizes. It corrects and molds. However, this does not mean that the diagram is rigid, because “every diagram is intersocial and constantly evolving. It never functions in order to represent a persisting world but produces a new kind of reality, a new model of truth.” (Deleuze 2006:30)

Like the panoptic model, another example of abstract machine that sorts through visual and discursive articulations, fashion is a diagram of visuality and social articulations. In the words of Deleuze:

Sometimes the assemblages are distributed in hard, compact segments which are sharply separated by partitions, watertight barriers, formal discontinuities (such as school, army, workshop, and ultimately prison, and as soon as you’re in the army, they tell you ‘You’re not at school any more’). (2006: 35)

However, the abstract machine also produces microsegmentarity, creating variables through one continuous, formless function. Confinement is related outwards, as “confinement refers to the outside, and what is confined is precisely the outside” (Deleuze 2006:37). It is our fear of social exclusion and exile that makes us turn our everyday into a prison where we enact the imprisoning mechanisms on ourselves. We are constantly on trial in a vain hope to be free.

Fashion can be such ever-evolving diagram of social sorting, exercised between peers, but programmed through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex. We sort each other, we enact violence, exile or socially compartmentalize each other, when it is not made by bouncers or other proxy-authorities in the social sphere. Consumers wilfully engage in fashion judgement, sorting and exiled violence, perpetuating it on each other in order to “keep up” in the social race.

Fashion judgement is done in passion, in affect, in speed. It is a judgement forced by the speed of fashion, and within the boundaries of controlled fashion. We make judgements on what we *see*, on the foundation of

style and *media*. We actually do not see the person we judge, but only their social skin.

Fashion has *affect*; it demands to be passionately evaluated. And it often does so subconsciously, or with very little of our own critical thinking, it leaves no other values for judgement than fashion itself. It is exquisitely self-referential. Judgements about taste and style are inherent into dress as processed through the fashion system. Fashion provokes an answer; “in” or “out”, right or wrong, yes or no, guilty or innocent.

The immediate response to this type of behaviour is to seemingly withdraw from judgement and say “Who am I to judge?”. However, this resignation of partisanship is a far too easy escape route from responsibility. Not only does this stance neglect that we are still programmed by the taste socially and through the system, but it is also a way to neglect that we all judge. We must reprogram our perception, pick apart the mechanisms of judgement we enact, and question our responses to everyday judgement. To counter fear we must not only “do no harm”, but we must resist the violence on a larger level, disarming the mechanisms and train for resistance against them. It is very hard to escape a judging perception, but we must at least question it and take responsibility of it.

The Total Fashion Apparatus

According to philosopher Vilém Flusser (2000), our vision today has been deeply affected by the “techniques” of vision, mostly the proliferation of the photographic image and the camera. For Flusser, all our human and social technologies, or techniques, are processed through various forms of apparatuses. From the organisational flows of companies (big apparatus) to the smallest microchips in our everyday technologies (small apparatus). Flusser highlights how the latin word *apparatus* derives from the verb “to prepare”: an apparatus prepares the world for us, it has already processed the world before we encounter reality *through* it (Flusser 2000:21). Flusser specifically applies this perspective on the process of preparation, where the camera is only one part of the apparatus, our most tangible, but the full apparatus is the organisation of vision in contemporary society: “The photographic apparatus lies in wait for photography; it sharpens its teeth in readiness” (2000:21).

For Flusser, photographs are produced through the operations of an apparatus, the extended vision of the camera. Like many other technological systems, the apparatus operates in ways that are not immediately known by the spectator or even operator. Similarly, the apparatus influences the full medium and modes of observation, meaning that vision itself becomes tainted by the apparatus; it even becomes part of the social technique of vision. The

apparatus is *programmed* with certain intentions and power relations, affecting both the camera hardware, as well as the social software of how we relate to the photographic medium as such (2000:30). Thus the program, or the relation between apparatus and social situation, affects the whole relation between image-apparatus-program-information (2000:76). Nothing which is seen through eyes escapes the apparatus of vision.

Fashion is an embodied practice, but it is also deeply affected by its own visibility - both the mirror and camera. Perhaps today the two blend into the same gadget, the smartphone, with its direct connection to the social media publishing platforms, ranking, sorting, affirming or denying, candidly controlling as we try to please our peers according to its values and streamlined practices. And, of course, with its powerline plugged straight back into the Fashion-Industrial-Complex: Welcome to the *total fashion apparatus*.

Through this apparatus our perceptual sets are reproduced in ritualised forms. Before we go out to party we just have to get a great photo up on this or that platform. As philosopher Jean Baudrillard suggests,

Photography is our exorcism. Primitive society had its masks, bourgeois society its mirrors. We have our images. We believe we can overpower the world with technology. But through technology, the world has imposed itself on us and the surprise effect generated by that reversal has been considerable. (Baudrillard 2000)

Baudrillard continues, “For illusion is not the opposite of reality, but another more subtle reality which enwraps the former kind in the sign of its disappearance” (Baudrillard 2000). In this sense, our social skin, with its rituals and full seriousness, is tapped directly into the hardwired program of consumer culture.

Yet, as Flusser highlights, the format of vision is already set, it is pre-programmed, *we see what someone wants us to see*. Our vision is tainted with power. In his discussion on ultra-sound photography, Verbeek (2011) argues that the ultra-sound imaging technology itself produces a certain perspective on the foetus as an individual floating in the dark space of the mother’s uterus, *separate* from the mother. Similarly, the total fashion apparatus can be seen as an isolation-machine, only relating the individual to other fashionistas, and on an imaginary plane of equality.

The photographed fashion-subject, a street-style snap shot or a social media “selfie”, captures the subject as an isolated (dressed) individual, beyond social relations, beyond community and modes of togetherness, instead amplifying the individuality and mechanisms of atomization. Yet on the apparatus social platforms the individual is “tagged”, linked to other identity consumers, graded and accumulatively affirmed by views and comments, of-

ten seen and discussed by fellow peers, amplifying peer-pressure and the fear of exclusion.

On a forum such as [lookbook.nu](#) the individual is also encouraged to link to the brands and sites of their garments. Viewers “hype” outfits that match the perceptual sets of what is worthy of being hyped. The most popular have new outfits every day, they keep updating their desire, their affect unspoiled by age, poverty or a limited wardrobe. The individual is seen as a the sum of social consumption affirmations, the social skin of commodity rituals.



Fashion and Waste

In *The Death of Fashion* (2007) Harald Gruendl argues that fashion is part of the various feasts and rituals that render social relations stable throughout the shifts of time, and fashion is thus a contemporary form of worship which aims to preserve social equilibrium. Gruendl writes that rituals “separate the profane from the sacred. Sacred not meant religious, but as a part of the everyday” (2007:26). Whereas ancient rituals focused on the transcendental realms of its time, today’s serve the purpose of transferring basic human needs from the social dimension into the responsibility of consumer culture (2007:47). As Gruendl notices, primitive agrarian societies anxiously awaited the return of vegetation in spring, and thus produced rituals to mark the arrival of the season of growth. Consumer societies, in contrast, worry about the periodical advent of the new trend. Like our ancestors we, too, create rites in order to exert control over nature. Rituals create power; they do not give form to power (2007:45).

However, what Gruendl focuses on are the seasonal sales. At the end-of-the-season sale, the previous collection is ritually and symbolically slaughtered before the arrival of the new. In order for the new to arrive safely, the old needs to be killed. It is on sale, the windows are draped in brown paper, the mannequins in the shop window are re-dressed in sacks or naked. The goods in the store are purposefully piled in heaps, the customers made into scavengers. Waste is needed for the ritual to keep on running. For spring to arrive, autumn and winter must be ritually sacrificed, the goods must be wasted.

Gruendl’s argument builds on the ideas of French philosopher Georges Bataille and his concept of “general economy” (Bataille 1988). According to Bataille, the general economy is not an economy of scarcity, where money administers distribution within a system lacking resources. Instead, the general economy is an economy of superabundance. Nature is a perfect example: there is *too much* energy in nature: when I clean the grass from the garden path, the next week it is overgrown again. Out of a million flowers and seeds, only a few become new plants. Human societies work in a similar way: we need to produce in superabundance in order to survive. Thus

we also need to squander our resources, we need to waste our wealth, and invent powerful symbolic rituals to do so. This is the purpose of religion and luxury in the general economy. We waste our resources through war, religion and consumption, and all are rituals serving the general economy. Earlier cultures squandered life in ritual killings and enormous temples, we squander resources on arts, sports, fashion and consumption. All rituals need to be re-invented over and over: a new ritual for every season, for every trend, for every new year. All human culture is, in this sense, an activity of *pure production of waste*.

Following Bataille's argument, fashion needs to be wasted. The wastefulness of fashion serves a deeper purpose in human culture and the place of humanity on earth. So how are we to reduce material waste, while still celebrating the ritual importance of fashionable and symbolic waste production? *In general, fashion is waste, with a brief existence as clothing.*

A former student of Timo Rissanen, assistant professor in fashion design at Parsons, recently said she had calculated that, where she worked now, she had approximately 25 minutes to design each garment style in a collection. Perhaps there exists a correlation between that time and the time that someone might engage with the garment. Does an economically forced lack of engagement at an early life cycle phase become a systemically forced lack of engagement at another phase? Fashion design through the lens of economic growth and profit often looks like this: the focus is on speed, of turnaround of new styles and of manufacture. Other than sometimes creating profit, it is difficult to see how this speed – or we could call it lack of attention? – is serving anyone.

This brings us to the equation: does zero-waste equal zero growth? What are the politics of growth, and can fashion move to a zero-waste model if there is no larger movement towards zero-growth in society at large?

Post-growth fashion design is not dominated by economic growth as the primary goal. Rather, post-growth fashion design is an array of practices that are directed towards a diverse range of human needs and desires. Inherent to this is the absence of waste creation, be it waste of fabric, garments, time, effort, or human life. Following Bataille, these material waste lacks intention and purpose. The inevitable question arises: in the context of post-growth fashion, how does one purposefully create symbolic wastefulness? The question is asked by the maker and the user alike.

Politics of fabric waste

Fabric waste created during fashion manufacture is invisible to most people, as is pattern cutting. The public 'face' of fashion is often the fashion designer, with the rest of the system rendered invisible or at best supportive to the

fashion designer. What happens to the fabric waste is also largely unknown to most; while some is reused or recycled, much of it is landfilled or incinerated. There is no economic imperative to care about fabric waste. Arguably, it is better to eliminate waste of any kind than having to ‘manage’ it, though the Garbage Industry might have us think otherwise. In its success as a prolific waste maker, fashion is a kind of a proto-Garbage Industry. When the demand for recycled PET fabrics (fabric made from recycled plastic bottles) began to increase, some recycling plants apparently did not have sufficient stocks of post-consumer plastic bottles to meet the demand. Instead, these plants purchased brand new bottles from a bottle manufacturer and ‘recycled’ those. Then again, the use of a plastic bottle to quench half a litre’s or a litre’s worth of thirst is perhaps so inefficient a use of plastic as to not make much of a difference whether it is turned into fabric before or after use.

In zero-waste fashion design the pattern cutter has the most power to eliminate fabric waste from fashion manufacture. Yet in the hierarchy (or politics?) of fashion the pattern cutter is below the fashion designer. When a Malaysian friend of Timo’s was a fashion student in New York in the 1970s, she was told she could only ever be a pattern cutter because she was Asian. Leaving racism aside momentarily, the statement is illustrative of how pattern cutting is viewed and valued in the system: it is less than fashion design. Timo adds, “much of my career I was a pattern cutter more so than I was a fashion designer and I have long since stopped apologizing for it”. In order for zero-waste fashion design to become adopted in the industry, fashion design might have to give up some of what is today some of its core elements, while taking on new types of vulnerability. Fashion design as vulnerability – what would that open up? What would that make possible?

Fashion hoarding

Cheap fashion leads to a wider social body of fashion hoarders. However, we seem to live in a time where an ambivalence towards hoarding reigns. We buy stuff of bad quality because it is cheap, yet we are ambiguous towards throwing it away, so we often wind up storing it until we make up our mind. Thus the cities, and our homes, resemble self-storage facilities and we all seem to need walk-in-wardrobes, mostly for garments we never wear.

H&M’s garment take-back scheme, introduced in 2013, could be viewed as a part of a system of legitimized hoarding. Hoarding has a geographic element to it, and in some ways H&M can be seen to be supporting hoarding - in the same way the storage space providers can - by addressing the question of physical storage space. ‘Bring us your ‘old’ clothes and buy more!’, the clothing chain claims. While TV shows like ‘Hoarders’, built upon exploitative *schadenfreude*, create the impression that we are doing fine, a quick look

at any landfill or recycling facility demonstrates that we are all complicit in this endless collective hoarding.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt traces the processes in which human activity is more and more dominated by the ubiquitous, and often thoughtless, activities of production and consumption. Today's waste economy follows this process too. It may indeed be the most vital part of today's fashion condition: objects are used up instead of being re-used over time. We rarely allow them to acquire new values over time, and to age together with us, with dignity, care and love.



Fashion Education

Is it possible to be an educator and be apolitical? Is there any point to being apolitical? Whether consciously or not, through our actions and conversations as fashion educators we may perpetuate the same system that produces the situation we are in. Education shapes the world, but sometimes it becomes nostalgia, and fashion education is chronically nostalgic. A useful approach to teaching fashion today is to look for the nostalgic attitude towards old, redundant, or destructive ways of being, and discuss them with students upon detection. It is not always easy; we may be as nostalgic as that person, and without external auditors we may remain unaware. And to be clear, by critiquing nostalgia we should not diminish that which can be learnt from the past. Histories, real and invented, are the bedrock of education.

A critique of nostalgia can take a similar approach to what cultural critic Cornel West calls “socratic patriotism” (West in Yancy 2001). West suggests that patriotism is a way to acknowledge one’s roots, one’s ancestors we are indebted to; in order to have a firm sense of origin and tradition, and one must have a deep sense of belonging. In this sense, patriotism means to acknowledge that one has roots. But these roots must also be questioned, must constantly reintroduced into the present in order not to petrify or become burdens. The main risk of total non-patriotism is that we fail to see our own roots and the extent to which we are shaped by history. Fashion designers, even when saying something like “the 80s are back”, often lack a knowledge of their own situated perspective. The lustre of the new, the latest season, seems to emerge without a history, as a promise of things to come. When we teach the history of styles, we must also situate these within their social contexts, their lines of thought, the dissenting politics of their time, otherwise we do nothing but perpetuate a shallow understanding of fashion. So we will need to ask: what is fashion design in the 21st century? What could fashion design education look like?

One of the problems that need to be addressed is the predominance of abstract concepts or 2D design over ‘studio methods’ or 3D design. In other words, drawing an idea is somehow considered of higher value than the act of

cutting and sewing, which are the outputs of an idea. One might ask if, especially in the state of current crisis, we still have the time to pontificate about the rendering of a hairstyle in a fashion illustration.

What about inspiration in fashion education? Inspiration, that potentially powerful tool that can bring about transformation? It is common, both in fashion schools and in the industry, to present inspiration as a cause-and-effect process. Here is a lobster, therefore this red jacket. Holiday in Hawaii, thus this floral dress. Inspiration is, in fact, entirely absent from much fashion, which is in reality reduced to mere pointless sampling. To be inspired is to breathe in an idea so vivid and powerfully present, that it burns inside like inexhaustible fuel, leading to hitherto unimaginable achievements.

With *Project Runway* airing everywhere, there are obvious signs that fashion today is so ubiquitous, that there is little curiosity fostered in education about what fashion can be beyond the current model. Likewise, our experience is that few students raise their vision towards other forms of fashion other than the glamorous model presented in mainstream media. For inspiration to exist, curiosity and a desire to explore must be present.

Furthermore, if we are to seriously question the current model of fashion education, we need to consider empathy. Do we teach it enough? And if yes, empathy for what and for whom? This brings us back to the need to address issues of fashion politics in education.

The politics in fashion education are currently powerful dominant structures. Bureaucracy and traditions idealize fashion practices, differentiating good and bad practices, and good and bad designs. Some observations about how fashion design education exists and is perpetuated now may include:

- Fashion design education as one that is not understood/created/provided in a holistic way;
- Students – future fashion designers - are demanded to learn and respond to a ‘concept’ class from one professor/ environment, one in which both students and professors are not necessarily encouraged to be curious or to consider ‘different’ fashion practices;
- Both students and professors are not encouraged to do practice and-theory-based research;
- Academic research, scholarship and theorization of fashion is more often than not divorced from the foundations of its practice;
- A final thesis or project that only includes “looks” and “heads”;

| - Perfection through industrialization and mass production, with the imperative ‘make it look expensive’.

The politics of fashion education are still, in general, apolitical and uncritical. Education institutions mostly partner with the industry, thus making implicit political statements. Neutrality is not an explicit political position, but it also does not encourage change. Interdependence makes it almost impossible to criticise the industry.

At the same time, new ways of understanding fashion are emerging that are not necessarily related to the parameters of the industry. Dress as political statement, DIY culture, the growing presence of fashion in museums and the emergence of fashion theory and criticism have contributed to a shift in understanding a field that is still in becoming. In this sense, showing different fashion expressions to students is already a political statement in that it proves that institutions do not necessarily need to be complicit with the existing power structures and capitalist drive of the industry. Fashion politics in education is thus located in the classroom, in everyday interactions among students and between students and teachers. It also needs to be located on the outside of the institution, as politics happen in a wider, more complex context than the educational one. Students need to see more than just their studios and classrooms to understand how politics can operate within and through fashion. It is also essential for fashion education to include more than just strictly technical courses. To understand what fashion really is one needs to look at society as a whole, for fashion is but one manifestation.

What fashion education can do is reconnect people and politics through clothing. Clothing is something we all wear and experience and it is never really detached from our body. Politics has become something we usually assume is distant, separated from our everyday reality. Clothes and fashion can help bridge this gap and make people understand how even our bodies and what we wear is political. In the end, fashion cannot help but be political due to its social and collective nature, so we need to get students to dig deeper into it.

Academia is also helping to establish fashion criticism as valid form of cultural criticism by providing tools. This is a way of promoting fashion politics in that it provides students with tools to think critically of the system, of fashion as cultural phenomenon.

The paradox of designing for sustainability may be that every new piece of clothing is an addition to an unsustainable whole, however ecologically it is made. To design more stuff to reduce the amount of stuff in the world may indeed be contradictory, but the paradox can also be approached from a different angle. Just like Robert Pirsig’s critique against the notion of

choosing between the two horns of an angry bull, there can be many ways in which to subvert the complicity of opposites: one can “refuse to enter the arena”, “throw sand in the bull’s eyes” or “sing the bull to sleep.” (Pirsig 1974) There has to be more ways to do fashion beyond fashion.



Proposals for Praxis!

In the first act of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Cassius tells Brutus "Men at some time are masters of their fates. The fault [...] is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." (quoted in Dillon 2007: 58) From Cassius view, even the powerless, the downtrodden, have the remedy to their own powerlessness, and have thus also to be blamed for their sustained subordination.

However, the tools or access to power is not distributed equally and as Vaclav Havel noted in his essay about the communist regimes, *The Power of the Powerless*, "the system serves people only to the extent necessary to ensure that people will serve it." (Havel 1978) Any act outside of the system denies it, or may even attack it, and in order to avoid becoming its faceless puppets Havel encourages us to live life in ways that surpass the system, according to values such as trust, openness, responsibility, solidarity, love. Havel encourages us, "Only by creating a better life can a better system be developed." It is a cultivation from below and against all odds, cultivating "the independent life of society." (Havel 1978)

In order to influence or change a ruling system, one needs to understand the power dynamics which put it into place, stabilize and fuel it. In the case of fashion, there are several forces synergizing to form such a powerful system: the dynamics of human behaviours, the emergence and power of capitalism and the neoliberal order, consumer culture and "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000).

To Gene Sharp, the degree of power by the dominant regime can be traced from,

- (1) the relative desire of the populace to impose limits on the government's power; (2) the relative strength of the subjects' independent organizations and institutions to withdraw collectively the sources of power; and (3) the population's relative ability to withhold their consent and assistance (Sharp 2012:33).

From a perspective of fashion, resistance to the Fashion-Industrial-Complex would mean to; (1) undermine the dominant forms of managed desire and

prototype alternative forms; (2) mobilize new collective forms of community and shared practices which builds loyalty and collective values beyond the individual consumer; and (3) build individual and collective abilities that challenge consumer culture. These forms of resistance we call *pro-active praxis*.

What is Pro-Active Praxis?

A pro-active form of resistance avoids a reactionary stance which reproduces and reaffirms the domination by the current order. A pro-active practice is constructive, a risk-taking that puts an alternative into the world and then tests it as a form of micro-utopia. The function of such micro-utopia is to build a pathway towards an alternative that defies the “there is no alternative” model of capitalist order. As laid out by design theorist John Wood, a micro-utopian plan renders an alternative imaginable, discussable, and further on, implementable (Wood 2007).

Pro-action realizes micro-utopias by temporarily displacing the tyranny of the “impossible.” It opens for new routes of action, affirmative mobilizations of the imagination, and builds transversal connections between different “ecologies of practice.”

These “ecologies of practice” challenge three spheres of commercialization and fear in fashion: on the cultural (such as style, media or image), interpersonal (between peers) and intrapsychic (internalization) levels, in order to produce social change beyond the individualist-consumer paradigm.

Creative defiance builds alternative “ecologies of practice,” mobilizing several forces against the dominant system. Such defiance accentuates a non-acceptance with the dominant order, aggregates weaknesses of the ruling order and it is hard for the dominant order to combat, and perhaps most importantly, it strives to overcome the fear that propels obedience. The leverage is made to effectively disseminate practices throughout the population as a whole in order to spread fearlessness, and in turn, defiance. But the practice also, by creative acts, aims to mobilize a vision of other possible ways to establish a more democratic and peaceful society of convivial communities.

> *Playing with the rules*

One type of pro-active praxis can be characterized as ‘playing with the rules of the game’ and the ‘laws of the system’, in order to question this system and cause more awareness. Resisting and avoiding reproduction and representation of the current order by mobilizing several forces *against* the dominant system is *one* strategy. Another strategy is finding new routes of action, building pathways towards alternative practices, by playing with the old ‘rules and notions’ aiming to transform them.

To play with the rules, thus questioning the system. This can be in favor of reciprocal relationships in an inclusive community where fashion can become, in one way or another, always a co-creation including at least the wearer.

In this strategy you take the (fashion) 'world as it is', as a starting point, in the same spirit as Arendt speaks about taking the world as it is (the cultural level). You don't exclude yourself from 'the system', or the system from you. You admit its power, you examine and research it also *in* yourself (the intrapsychic/internalization level).

As in Tai Chi, you take the movements of the dominant power as a starting point. First you give in, then by receiving and examining its energy you start working with it, to get to know and feel the force and energy of the movement. Then you use this to go to another direction, or to transform the movement.

Similarly, alternative pro-active fashion practices can be very small, not always mobilizing forces *against* whatever system, but mobilizing forces to (co)create fashion on your own condition, out of love, and playfulness.

An example of this can be 'Golden Joinery'. In Golden Joinery the hybrid fashion collective *Painted* invites people in an ongoing series of gatherings, workshops, to bring a dear but broken garment, to repair this with 'gold'. Inspired by the old Japanese technique Kintsugi, where broken pottery was mended with gold, *Painted* translated this idea into fashion. The recognizable 'golden scars' actually add value, and reveal and celebrate the beauty of imperfection. By offering (old) repair techniques, empowering people to make this common gesture together (the peer level) in an overfed fashion world, *Painted* wants to play with the notions of that fashion system, and invites people to play with them. To act and speak in togetherness. By speaking of a 'growing collection' of enriched garments that together form the 'new brand' Golden Joinery, they question the meaning of that notions in the current system, deliberately using this notions.

What is a *collection*, Who 'owns' a *brand*? Is value a verb? What's *new*? *Painted* embroiders a small echo of their own 'label' in each garment, playing with this idea of branding and appropriation. Thus the garments often carry three 'signs'. All makers 'own' the 'brand', and it is spread immediately into the world by themselves without *marketing* and *retailers*. By naming and avoiding to use these commercial notions, the capitalist paradigm and its parameters in the fashion system are also being questioned.

Each piece has its own personal signature that connects the wearer even more with his/her dear garment, and the handwork during the workshop connects people with their inner resources and capabilities and gets them out of their mind.

As Hannah Arendt speaks about our uniqueness according to our natality, and stresses out the possibilities of new beginnings, this Golden Join-

ery says: everybody can at every moment everywhere start a new movement, and make your own fashion condition. *Painted* chooses to position this ‘temporary mini utopia’ from outside the fashion world *in* a fashion context.

> Critical Fashion Pedagogy (the “clashroom”)

A critical examination of fashion is essential for praxis. Fashion-as-we-know-it must be redefined and remade, liberated from the wrongs amplified through the Fashion-Industrial-Complex.

A basic step can be to apply the pedagogical method of Parsons-based design strategist Christian Schneider, centered around the concept of the “clashroom” (rather than classroom). For Schneider, the clashroom is a place for cultures and ideas to confront each other in dis-census, as a form of pedagogical agonism. Cultures need to meet with and engage with each other, digging deeper into various human practices and values so as to not further reproduce a western consumerist “ideal”. With violent [ideological] clashes, students can study, analyze, compare, negotiate and compromise between the expressions and practices of multiple cultures. These clashes reveal new ways to practice culture through fashion, and vice versa.

> Repair as boot-camp to civic engagement

Starting from repair of one’s own stuff, something which is not advertently per se subversive, one gets a few valuable insights into the workings of consumer society that can later turn out to be points of departure for more radical engagements.

First, stuff breaks, and is not made to be repaired. *Who controls the lifecycle of the things we have bought for our hard-saved money?*

As we start we may find we lack tools and skills. *Who controls these assets, and why are they not part of basic education anymore? What has replaced these assets, and who is now served?*

As we start repairing we may get a sense of accomplishment and pride from a work well done as well as an emotional attachment to our things. *Why do we not get this kind of lasting affection more often?*

We may get together with others and form a little mending group, discussing the issues our repairs have revealed. *Why do we not get together more often to discuss the basic values of our society?*

We may start repairing more of society. *How can we together change the world?*

> *Building a strategy*

In order to produce change one needs to start. Start early, start small. But after a while, one will need to stop and overlook overall aims, gains and leverage. Building a sustainable, powerful and constructive resistance, that will produce larger change, and reduce the risks of backfiring, needs long vision and strategic planning. Here are some points of interest inspired by Gene Sharp (2012: 75)

- What are your main objectives?
- What are the main obstacles to achieve freedom?
- What are the main strengths of the opposing system?
- What are the various weaknesses of the opposing system?
- In what way are the sources of power for the system vulnerable?
- What are the strengths of the alternative system, and who are its supporters in the general population?
- What are the weaknesses of the alternative system, and how can they be corrected?
- What is the status of the third parties, not immediately involved in the conflict?
- How can these third parties assist the alternative?

> *Fashion Safehouses*

The establishment of safe spaces is the foundation of a pro-active resistance. These spaces, both ideological and physical in form, provide a locus from which to start building alternative systems. Here, individuals work as a collective, collaborating in the exchange of ideas, building reparative strategies and furthering group consciousness and knowledge production. The safehouses are the manifestation of a movement's unity, a sentiment vital to avoid competitive and fearful reactions to the dominant logic and regime of violence. The safehouse functions a temporary base, a platform for discussion and a boot-camp for training.

For a philosopher like Paul Virilio, the safehouse is the basis from which to challenge a culture of fear. It is a protected platform from which to build critical thinking, judgment and responsibility. Resistance must "first [take] refuge at the heart of the micro-collectivity of the family, then the building or the town" in order to get out of the administration of fear (Virilio 2012: 20)."

A fashion safehouse is not a place beyond fashion, but instead, a place where fashion is collectively disarmed and displaced with other values. Here, in the safe house, sincere attention is paid to the human capabilities and values of its participants. Thus, it is important that the safehouse not become a place of new oppression, under a new style or "subcultural" dictatorship.

> **Affinity groups**

An affinity group is a small group of people who share an interest or common goal. The group forms an autonomous unit of radical democracy and shared support, fueling discussion, belonging, connectedness, encouragement, action and post-action assistance. Different roles may be assigned within the group to facilitate the interpersonal relationships, such as spokesperson, marshal, peacekeeper, facilitator, vibe-watch, etc. These roles may also help external operations and the interaction with partners and other groups.

An affinity group is a micro-society strengthened over time by training. Organized in such groups, actions can become very strong and sustained over time. Affinity groups allow for members to maintain a strong sense of community and support, while taking on their own initiatives and maintaining individual agency.

Affinity groups are a vital resource for fashion activists, as the support and strength provided by these groups serve as the lynchpin for future actions, sustained duration and productive resistance.

> **Citizen fashion schools**

Taking the cue from the civil rights movement in the US south in the 1950s, citizen schools are organized teach-ins which not only teaches participants the methods, means and ends of civic participation, but also teaches critical methods and pedagogics for civil disobedience and wider democratic discussions on the constitution, justice and citizen rights. When fighting for an equal right to vote, one also needs to fight for access to the full framework of representation within democratic institutions. A real “democratization” of fashion also needs to include critical pedagogy, media literacy and influence etc.

A Citizen Fashion School is a place for radical and critical fashion pedagogy, avoiding the reproduction of the Fashion-Industrial-Complex. The stance is a pro-active one, to produce the alternatives to the dominant regime of consumerist fashion and advance the interpersonal skills of community and commons.

Following the ideas of Parsons-based design strategist Christian Schneider, the pedagogy should be based around the “clash-room” (not classroom) - allowing for ideas to clash with reality and each other in creative and visionary ways, beyond the mind of the individual (or “genius” artist).

Some subjects of a Citizen Fashion School could include;

| - **media literacy** (a critical perspective on the medialization of fashion and its violence)

- **co-viewing** (collaborative sessions of viewing and discussing media, especially with youth)
- **comprehensive sexuality education** (a sexuality beyond the images of media)
- **craft-ins** (training a trust in skills and community, rather than consumerism)
- **creative community groups** (forming creative community by building own cultural scenes)

> ***Citizen Inspection Group***

Similar to the UN-weapons inspection groups, such as the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) searching for nuclear weapons, citizens may also form inspection groups. Such group would seek right to inspect facilities which are suspected to contain illegal practices, such as banned pesticides, sweatshops or systematic use of unpaid interns. They could also include inspection of segregation, accessibility, sizing and service.

> ***Craft-ins***

Craft-ins are temporary occupations of space and time outside of market spatialities and temporalities, where an alternative mode of operation with fashion is trained. A craft-in produces a displacement of consumer passivity, opening for collaborative skill-exchanges with crafts. The ability to produce, for and by oneself, builds a type of confidence and “fashion strength” beyond the consumer logic. An exchange of skills and sensibilities furthers our awareness of each other and the recognition that we don’t depend on formal education as the only point of access to our personal and communal growth.

> ***Fashion addiction 12-step program***

The twelve-step program is a set of guiding principles originally proposed by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as a method of recovery from alcoholism, but are also used to recognise and treat other forms of addiction. They outline a course of action for the user to recover from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioral problems. A version aimed at compulsive fashion consumerism could read something like this;

- admitting that one cannot control one’s addiction or compulsion to fast fashion;
- recognizing an ethic that can give strength towards change;
- examining past errors with the help of an experienced member or friend;

- making amends and seek to limit one's addiction to the values of fashion consumerism;
- learning to live a new life with a new code of behavior and other values; helping others who suffer from the same addictions or compulsions.

So what are the 12-steps for *Fashion Addicts Anonymous (FAA)*?

> *Liberated Runways*

Liberate runways is a sweeping term for attempts to move beyond the exhibitionist modes of fashion expression and the oppression of the industry-based models of showing and being with clothes. Catwalks can also be places for discussion, critical pedagogy, visualization of community-based models of collaboration, other modes of exchange and reciprocity.

The runway, still an arena for visualization in the spirit of fashion, can be better utilized for revolutionary means.

> *Creative withdrawal*

A strike, lock-out or boycott is only effective in some means, and offers no alternative as an inherent part of the process. A creative withdrawal builds in the alternative in the process of rejection. Setting up own networks of distribution, parallel models of production and consumption--next doors to the industry--produces an immediate perspectives on what could be. Such actions are the basis for pro-active resistance and can be exposed as the viable alternatives they are. The aim is to expose, criticize, counterbalance, and manage a stance of resistance, but beyond mere opposition.

> *Spaces for co-creation and co-production.*

Fashion as a social practice. Exploring collaborative creation, using horizontal and inclusive decision making processes. Creating practices of collective action to counterbalance internalized neo liberal structures of competition and individual reward structures.

> *Make*

Learning through making, manifesting things in the world, moving away from the narrow notion of "professional" skill in order to produce and manifest. Strategic making is making from below, from the grass roots or the existence of everyday life. It is not a matter of applying means to some utopian end, but instead to manifest new meaning into the current as a proposition, a

dialogue. In order to bring about high-impact making, the endeavour could take three steps into account:

1. Create. Realize your goal in the size you are able to do now. Start small, start early, invite others to contribute. Build outwards from there. Create societies.
2. Actively withdraw your cooperation from the system you do not want to support, use this act in a creative way that points to the alternative.
3. Obstruct your opponent. Resist. Build the alternative as a counter-system that hinders or displaces the wrong from being made.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt put emphasis on the importance of action, to act deliberately and raise the issues of the social into the realm of speech and debate, “To act in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin [...] to set something into motion (Arendt 1958: 177). Making in the realm of living fashion is tightly bound to its display, its enactment as part of togetherness. So make, take initiative, begin, set something in motion!



A Concert of Voices

Questions:

1. Why is fashion powerful today?
2. Who makes fashion?
3. Where does fashion exist?
4. What makes fashion political?
5. When did you personally experience the power of fashion?
6. What can fashion do?

Margreet Sweerts

1. Because it is 'everywhere'. Because our culture is a visual culture. Above that there is the credo that you can and should 'shape' yourself. Because of the scale of the industry, the 'volume' of the fashion magazines. Because of globalisation and/via the internet.

2. We do, I do, designers do, magazines, bloggers, industry does. We all make/create fashion every day, as a fresh beginning of our day, our future. The fashion industry, producers, produce fashion all the time, as a continuum of their system of production.

3. Fashion exists between us, between you and me, on my body, on your body, between our bodies, in the commons, in the 'common inbetween us'. FASHION only exists in our head.

4. We can express, communicate, differ, belong, celebrate life, make our bodies move, change our behaviour, comment, expose opinions, play (power) games etc. via our clothing, via fashion. We, a bigger than us WE, can also create fashion to control our bodies, to control the experience of ourselves and others, to isolate our 'personalities'...to create exclusive 'communities'. The 'fashion system' with its fast rhythm, aiming on production, has to please the

shareholders of the big companies. This system is the result exists in a capitalist economy/ideology.

5. For the first time: when I refused the shoes my mother chose for my first communion; that is to say, I HAD to wear them to the church, but I got some others that I preferred, more 'fashionable', for the rest of the day. Then I felt more ME. I remember feeling so happy about them. All the time: when I see and hear my 14 year old daughter and her friends speak about and play with fashion, strongly influenced by marketing strategies of the fashion industry. The power of the industry, the marketing, the fashion magazines. Me in between being seduced to play that game, and totally refusing it and act rebellious.

Pascale Gatzert

1. It is a smart industry that understands the human condition of our society, intuitively. The human condition of our current society is capitalism, it is based on fear, division of labor, division of the people, low self esteem, being in service of capitalist mode of being. It triggers our desires and promises to fulfill them by ever changing and effective marketing strategies. It feeds into our sense of low self esteem , it promises fame, 'being seen', being important, being better than anyone else, if one is in the know.

2. Fashion is created by the condition of being together, of occupying space and time together, of wanting to belong, of being inspired, it is a dynamic reality that moves as we move, that is created as we create ourselves and each other.

3. Fashion exists as a social all-inclusive reality, it is the public realm as described by Hannah Arendt in the human condition, it is the outcome of action and speech, it is action and speech, it exists as an exchange as conversation as a dialogue.

4. Fashion is highly political exactly because it implies a positioning, an awareness of our human togetherness, a positioning in the realm of human affairs. This positioning and spacing is where fashion becomes political, it is negotiation that unfolds itself as definite actions, that cause reactions which become actions themselves, capable of manifesting new reactions and so on.

5. I became aware of the power of fashion when I was about 10 years of age. From an early age on I had a specific way of dressing that didn't necessarily coincide with the way my peers were dressing. I took a certain pride and sense

of identity in my specific choices of dress. One day one of my classmates copied me wearing my tall socks over my pants. On the way home, I beat her up.

Lucia Cuba

1. I believe that fashion has always been powerful. However, in the past 10 years, especially with the appearance, development and access to Internet, traditional platforms for fashion were exposed, shared, and rethought, which creates new channels for “fashion awareness”, and for the development of alternative and/or diverse systems for fashion practices and theories.

2. Everyone. Fashion is not exclusive, but fashion should be retaken, renowned.

3. Everywhere. In the personal and the social, in the contemporary, in history, in tradition, in the everyday life.

4. It will always be political in the sense that it's based on frames, structures, hierarchies and cognitions of the social and the individual.

5. As a child, specially through my mother's approach to garments -and her notion of aesthetics -and through the freedom of choice that I was taught and given to build my personal aesthetics.

6. Anything “fashion” wants to do. Depending on who thinks, create, consumes, adapts, rethink, promote, analyze, and so on.

Alessandro Esculapio

1. On the one hand, it is a system with rules, a hierarchy and given ideas about what is beautiful/tasteful and what's not. This somehow gives people certainties, parameters that will release their anxieties concerning appearance, morality, taste and fear. In that sense, the fashion system frees its followers from responsibility. On the other hand, fashion is creativity embodied in dress, it is a platform, it is a web of social relationships and a means of expression. The media, the markets, migration, and the predominance of the visual in contemporary culture have contributed to make fashion as powerful as it is today.

2. It depends on the way we interpret the verb “make”. If it is the material manifestation of fashion we are referring to, then it is the workers in factories, studios, ateliers and so forth. If we think of the image, the symbolic element infused in fashionable garments, then it is designers and fashion media who

make fashion in the sense of a system of signs. It is also us that make, create and reappropriate fashion by wearing it. So everyone makes fashion.

3. Fashion exists where change becomes a relevant shared value within a community/society. It exists where one has the agency to dress her or his body to communicate and exchange information, ideas and intentions.

4. Fashion is intrinsically political because it is a collective phenomenon that would not exist outside of a community. Whenever we act in a shared, public space our actions can be read as political. I look at the word political in its original meaning, as derived from the ancient Greek notion of polis, the city/public realm, as well as the particle poli, meaning “several”, “diverse”, “numerous” (as for instance in polyhedric/polymorphous).

5. I come from a city where people who do not follow certain style paradigms are considered guilty, because they are seen as displaying arrogance and superiority. That meant that while growing up I was always extremely self-conscious and I had to defend my fashion choices constantly. There were times where I gave up on my favourite clothes because I felt the social pressure was too strong. At the same time, it also became my form of resistance, my armour.

6. Fashion is a tool, which means it carries an endless potential. It all depends on how we decide to make use of it.

Lauren Gomez

1. Fashion is a language more easily translated than any written or spoken word, though it is often misread. Its signs and symbols may be lost in translation, but its medium is accessible. As in, one can feel or see or hear fashion. The smell of leather; the click of a heel walking down a corridor; the sheen of satin. It is not only a system, but also exists in the smallest of details. Some cannot see, some cannot hear, some cannot experience the sensation of touch. But fashion is always felt. When a person walks into a room, when that person leaves it. When meeting new people, giving a speech, performing in public. It is an inescapable performance, for the stage is everywhere that you/we exist.

2. Consciousness. The mind, body and its enactments.

3. In plain sight. In the unnamable. In language, in sound, in form, in ideas. In gesture, speech, inflection, intonation, suggestion. In the concrete, the theoretical, the symbolic. Fashion is noun, verb, adjective, simile, metaphor,

preposition, paragraph, essay, manifesto, experience, narrative, propaganda, comedy, tragedy, beginning and end. Fashion is routine, banal, extravagant, superfluous, spectacular, necessity, inevitability. It is both imagined dreamscape and lived reality.

4. The fact that is inescapable. The fact that it is both a vehicle of agency and the very force that strips the individual of it.

That is put on, worn, interpreted, commodified- bought, sold, distributed, adored. Fought over, died for. That bodies are policed by cloth and projections of images. Fashion is a site of power, control, resistance, oppression, revolt & dominion. Of insurrection.

Fashion is a normative system laden with infinite subversive possibilities.

5. I can't remember a time when I did not experience the power of fashion. I grew up in the very strange land of Miami, Florida. Miami is a very self-conscious place. I felt the power of certain objects from a young age, of status symbols, of 'things' – literal objects- that made kids cool in school or 'part of the club,' so to speak. I entered a Catholic all-girls school at the age of 14, and quickly learned that part of the unspoken 'uniform' was a pair of pearl earrings adorning your earlobes and a Cartier watch on your wrist. I'm not kidding. It was very intense, both in terms of the visual landscape of designer-fetishism and in terms of the social environment. I struggled with both wanting to fit in- being a very social person- and not wanting to compromise who I felt I was. I developed a thicker skin in that school, but also cried a lot. Fashion can highlight this idea of fitting/not fitting. Fashion can be employed to disguise oneself as part of the crowd, or reveal times when you do not fit. It's a life vest on a sinking ship, because if fashion is the sole mode by which you define yourself, you may be doomed from the start.

6. Fashion can challenge tradition/traditional ideas of gender, sexuality, class structure. It can also reaffirm really destructive ways of categorizing people and reduce identities to one-dimensional caricatures of personhood. It is a powerful and potentially dangerous force. It can marginalize, exoticize, stigmatize, and reinforce both stereotypes and prejudices between/among persons. It can also, slowly, shift the public consciousness. We have to remember, fashion IS public. It is not just the catwalk and the models and couture. It is pop-culture materialized. It is so ubiquitous that it plants ideas into the mass-consciousness. When these ideas spread, they have the power to change how people conceive of their realities. If you change the way people see, you change the way they think. And fashion is a visual language. We know we are living in the "digitized," "globalized" age— where everything is visual. So,

when you think about it, fashion has enormous power. It's both the disease and the cure of our present and future selves.

Emily Spivack

1. Because it is everywhere. I guess I wonder about the difference between fashion and clothing, because clothing is really everywhere.

2. In my own definition of fashion, I think you find the most interesting fashion in the most unexpected places/ways, particularly when it's unintentional. Seeing an old man sitting on a stoop, wearing a shirt buttoned in a certain way, wearing his hat: that becomes fashion as we find ourselves absorbing it and embracing it.

3. Everywhere and in the most unexpected places. I see it on the subway, I see it walking around everyday, I see it in the small decisions someone makes by coordinating their nail polish with their t-shirt or by deciding how much skin to expose. Especially in the summer now, it's in your face.

4. I believe that fashion is political but it is not thought of that way. There needs to be more awareness, which usually we have when things like the collapse of the factory in Bangladesh, or other very similarly physical things, happen. To me it is about how we wear what we wear, the decisions we are making. Some people are making political decisions without being aware of doing it. It is not in the vernacular, it is something that we take for granted.

5. I learned the power of fashion growing up as a mode of self-expression. But the most prominent experience for me was my project about women with cancer and their relationship with clothing. Working with my mom, in particular, and see how her body was changing when she went through her treatment for cancer made me think about clothing and well-being. Through her experience I tried to make women with cancer feel better about their bodies, which is extremely difficult when you are living that medical condition.

Otto von Busch

1. Consumerism plays a big role in social competition over status and positions. Under social pressure, we need to update ourselves, continually express where we are heading and who we want to be seen as. Fashion, due to its connection to the body and personality and its cheap and ubiquitous abundance becomes our main vehicle of expression.

2. Fashion is made by us, it exists between us in modes of innovation, difference and imitation. But as a form of delegation we give away our agency to the system of consumption. Under present conditions, we become consumers of fashion, rather than producers.

3. In its “living” form fashion exists between us, but through the economy it becomes medialized and manifested in ephemeral status objects.

4. Clothes is the frontier between myself and my social environment, thus it concerns most of us, whether we care or not. But as consumers we have very limited control and influence. As we delegate some of our social agency to the fashion system or industry we also give away our autonomy and influence over fashion, and we come to rely on the proxy-choices offered to us through consumer culture. We consume or relay fashion media and we buy ready-to-wear. These mechanisms of delegation are abstract to us, not too unlike how we transfer power to parliamentary democracy. But we do not have equal votes, and there is no justice.

5. It can happen every day. I can get a comment about my remade clothes in town, and then I feel this is the liberating power of fashion. But I also experience the desire for the new, the desire for change, and I know it is amplified by a system beyond my influence, and I can feel a deep sense of powerlessness.

6. If used right, fashion may help us come closer to each other.

Timo Rissanen

1. Fashion has always had great agency; today it might be directed with more purpose, and we can improve on that still.

2. Fashion is a collaborative effort between producers and consumers, and it is not always a consensual effort. For me it's a bit like that RuPaul quote: “You're born naked and the rest is drag.” I think the only way we'd be able to stop fashion would be to have some sort of artificial intelligence dress us every morning.

3. Fashion exists in actions, and in those parts of the world where people get dressed. Fashion is where the people are. Fashion also exists in language though perhaps not as powerfully as in actions, because in language it is representational.

Speaking with Thelma Young about the garment factory workers near the Thai-Burma border pointed towards the pervasiveness of fashion,

as well as its agency in creating community. There is nothing wrong with the fashion capitals; we must take care, however, not to be distracted from the more subtle, quiet homes that fashion has.

4. Fashioning - making something - becomes political when the action of making is connected to more than one person, whether through collaboration, control, etc. As business and as an industry it is inseparable from the economy, and thus it is inherently political. To design the cheapest possible t-shirt is a highly political act, because it involves the suppression of another (or many others, in fact), whether knowing or not.

5. As a teenager in high school. The power of these limp pieces of fabric sewn together, the power of arranging hair in a particular way, both as an individual and a community, became quickly apparent through others' reactions.

6. Fashion is capable of a lot, as the deaths of more than 1100 garment factory workers in Bangladesh demonstrated.

Christian Schneider

1. Because it has increasingly diverse faces and less “mainstreams” and “tendencies”.

2. People. What we see around us influences our perceptions, filters and values. The more we move away from TV and Magazines towards the web the more we can choose (and avoid) ads and get more and more influenced and inspired by individuals and groups rather than industry that could afford expensive marketing campaigns. For fashion industry this means that design languages arise from people and movements and not from star designers. For fashion design this means that rather than getting “inspired” and implementing our “talent” we need to understand people in real life scenarios and translate our understanding into fashion. From “top down” to “bottom up”.

3. Wherever there are people.

4. The fact that the way how people dress is part of their expression. The fact that fashion industry is part of our economic settings.

5. Whenever I moved to a new country and changed or evolved my perception of societies through the way people live, dress and create their environments (which is also a tool to better understand how people think).

6. Complement people's identity (and not determine them).

Hazel Clark

1. I see two reasons: first, fashion has become very important in building personal identity, and secondly, fashion is a huge global business.

2. Individuals - in different ways - as bodies and wearers of clothes - ie users/ consumers - using fashion for self-identity at the one end of a spectrum - with anonymous makers/factory workers producing those clothes at the other end of the spectrum. In the 'middle' so to speak is capitalism - companies, brand names, manufacturers. Fashion is 'made' as communication, but also as tangible, material garments. Designers and other 'creatives' such as stylists, photographers etc are also part of the process/the 'fashion#system' - as we know.

3. In the contemporary world fashion exists in most places, at least in the westernized world. It exists in identification, as well as production/manufacturing: it exists with people who engage in fashion. It also goes back to Marx and 19th century, and alienation, and fashion as demonstrating identification. The reference to Marx relates more to the second sentence - and also to the point above - the overarching point being that fashion 'exists' in different ways - in different contexts/places for different people - the key point being that the 'existence' of fashion has to be addressed on a variety of levels and from a range of perspectives.

4. Fashion ie clothes/bodies/appearances can be used to make political statements on the one hand; but as a huge global industry it is political due to issues already signaled - worker conditions, production of waste, use of materials, consumption etc.

5. This is tricky to answer; I don't know, but the question reminded me of a quote, something I recall my mother saying when I was quite small: "If you are not in fashion you might as well be dead." Shopping with my mother in local department stores, or looking at women's magazines - fashion was there - as clothes, looks images - fashion was part of being/becoming female. Certainly for people in the second half of the 20th century it is a way of identification. After the war there was not just more clothes but also the imperative to demonstrate individuality and subjectivity.

6. We hope fashion to be more than something superficial; fashion can make political statements. I'm reminded of Lucia Cuba's work. Fashion speaks about how people feel about themselves, as well as those of communities and

their beliefs, even in covert ways. Fashion from a corporate perspective can be very powerful. It has the potential to do what we want it to do; fashion has agency.

7. Is there a case study that you find inspiring in relation to fashion and politics?
I spoke with Kerrie at Junky Styling for a few hours. Junky Styling were recently used as a case study in a high school in the UK. They have always inspired me, and I would love to be able to research, document and offer such case studies e.g. in a high school in the U.S. Becky Earley and her colleagues' 'TEDs Ten' is another valuable case study. Also inspiring to me are individuals like Natalie Chanin, and others with small businesses who are very motivated and have taken ideas and developed their projects, and had impact through sharing about them. I'm also reminded of Becky Earley's exhibition at Craft Council, which included people like Amy Twigger (Keep and Share) and Kate Fletcher.

Kate Fletcher

1. Fashion is powerful because it's closely aligned to the dominant story within modernism, that of growth and consumerism. It is also powerful because it has come to reflect how it extends humans' innate sense of being a social animal.

2. We do. All the people who wear fashion [make fashion], and also the people who construct the garments, which is often people in low wage countries. Who does fashion make? The answer is sort of different. Fashion has a cultural currency, people use it to convey something about themselves with it. It can be used as a key mechanism if we are to act within the market and consumer society. One could argue that the consumer society makes the types of fashion that we most often see.

3. Probably in my cutlery drawer as much as in the garments that are commonly associated with the word fashion.

4. I would say the production system makes it political. Having control over the production gives you control over the political economy. It is also political because fashion affects the lives of all citizens. It's on everybody's body.

5. My first experience was when I was about 13 and I made my school uniform. And I did that because I wanted to be different. I felt very empowered. I was ridiculed by my peers but I felt empowered. I made this incredibly long tube skirt that I could barely walk in. I would do what I do today which is

wear a lot of badges, which I did with my v-neck jumper. I had to wear a tie as well. I had extremely small collars on my shirts. Once everyone started wearing long skirts, I chopped mine off and wore an extremely short skirt. It was a crossover skirt, and when I cut it short, I had to stitch it up and I couldn't walk in it because it was extremely tight.

6. It can reflect a challenge to the way we do things. It's a mirror in that we get the fashion that is there, but there is also a part of that mirror which has a different quality to it, like a prism, that allows us to see different facets to it. In a sustainability context, this has particularly to do with quantities. It is not to be stifled, but to keep the power switched on, to keep the conversation going.

Sophy Naess

1. Is it more important than for example a 100 years ago? It is a manifestation of our values, of how we relate to others, just a way we present ourselves to the world.

2. Everyone who get dressed, or walks on the street. To me is just as 'appearing'.

3. It is a way of addressing, it is in the public roam. Is it in the home too? It is not until it gets negotiating...

4. We have our bodies, it is the way we code our body, which is a necessarily political thing.

5. In High school, middle school. The first time it was through my hair. I discovered that this bunch of hair I had was considered as provocative. I think, however, this is a period you start to notice that you can be different.

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FASHIONS... GROWING UP GROWING DOWN ...?

- WHEN DO WE REALIZE THAT THINGS ARE GOING, / GROWING? ^{When we wake up & we present to new realities...}
- WHAT MAKES US QUESTION THE SYSTEM? → BECAUSE A PART OF IT ^{SEEKING OUR WELL BEING AS JOYFULL COOPER} ADD IT IS NOT
- WHY DO WE QUESTION IT? ^{SEEKING OUR WELL BEING AS JOYFULL COOPER}
- WHY NOT SPEAK ABOUT FASHIONS AS INCLUSIVE PRACTICES, AS DIVERSE MEDIUMS ^{HUMAN BEING}
- & take this into our classrooms - & create questioning spaces of enquiry.

a child's natural capacity to learn, till when? ^{all} we are sentient beings -.

if learns how to speak, it has a natural curiosity and seeks to communicate, cooperate, participate. 'All life is Pedagogical.'

going to school: pushed into expectations that drive ^{the} system of capitalism. Antonio Gramsci.

squeezed into school seats arranged in rows in the classroom.

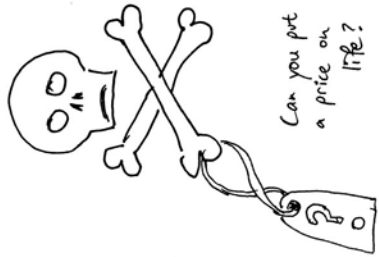
yes! Fashion is Al inclusive, Abundant, joyful,

exchange, inspiration, belonging, communication,
silent & loud, language, we, us, together,

diverse, -

- so where does fashion become violence, crisis, anxiety, oppression, discrimination, racist profiling, hate crimes, harassment?

- price is never a true cost, but
a potential (or actual) meeting of
supply & demand

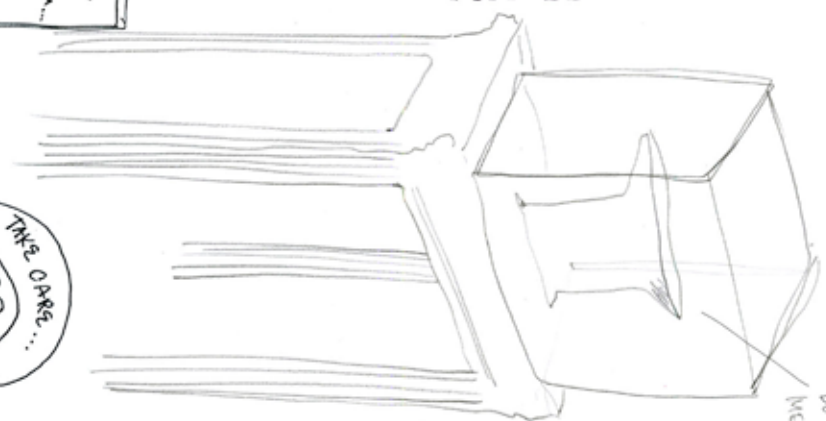
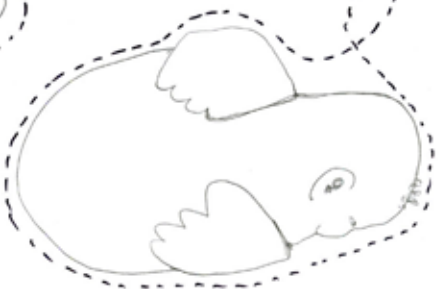


price = where you put value
in the production chain?



rice appears where
immorality disappears

Take care



DO NOT TOUCH
ME, I AM
SPECIAL.



THE CARE...



R. B. B. B.

TAKE CARE OF OVER POPULATION

Anti-bombs "taking care"
of the wrong bacteria...

Erasure of the personal, familial, cultural in order to
'please' and receive your praise--

Why not encourage
what you don't know
yet.

Disappearing myself & what matters to me for your acceptance--

Becoming you and not me--

WHY?!!!

Subterfuge--

Validation — If it looks like in VOGUE, it is good (or project worthy)

Empiricism has no place in your theorising--

a person who is

'I can tell 'fashion' the minute they walk through the door-- & You are not it!

if the fashion designer/teacher would have to make

= educating "soldiers" of fashion

— obey orders (internship)

— reproduce their order (blend into the 'fashion world')

— look away from the uncomfortable (we are ethical)

teachers "score" via
students

from the
head

IF ONLY 9-12-20
HEADS COULD
RETHINK FASHIONS



PRIDE

SHAME

→ IF WE ARE TALKING ABOUT "THE LOWEST DENOMINATOR" IN SOCIETY, WHO IS THE HIGHEST MULTIPLIER?

— compare with Arendt's "banality of evil"

the strict compliance with status quo, "following orders" = evil

CONSUMER

Success shame
aesthetic shame
academic shame

lack of alternative's? have no other option. need to continue working, I have no time to behave differently.

AWAKEN

maybe it is desire

suicide
FASHION SPENDERS
FASHION DESIGNER / FASHION WEEK

I AM IN DENIAL OR I AM STUCK IN JAIL

Technical system/order = sweatshop labor = capitalism as meaning of life

desire
aesthetics



CONSUMER

Fashion keeps reproducing mechanism of deception / willful ignorance / denial
Helen about Bangladesh accident "It is not our fault" we
Consumer — "I do not buy them" etc...

son, attend time a 12 year old very clever & intelligent boy, had a problem

Sick one:

- MONEY ☐
- FAMILY ☐
- HAPPINESS ☐
- RESPECT ☐

First Political Party

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL
FOR THE DESTRUCTION AND DESTRUCTION
OF THE DESTRUCTION

Worst Books
of the Century
A Great Disappointment
Operation, open
1972-1988

STORY of the
BOOKS
1972-1988

Not a
MASTER
STUDENT
PROPOSAL
M2

INSIGHTFUL
FINDINGS
WOULD LOVE
TO SEE YOU
AT THE
SYMPOSIUM

STUDENT A
PROFESSOR B PhD
FALL 2014

With
Poor
Lovers
in
the
Room

*How wonderful that we have met with a paradox.
Now we have some hope of making progress.*
Niels Bohr