

Summary

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

This issue's **Dress** section turns to Soviet and Post-Soviet contexts and fashion cultures and opens with **Tomasz Frasoński** contributes *Poland in Blue: The Phenomenon of the Denim Clothing Industry in Polish Society During the Socialistic Period*. In the People's Republic of Poland blue jeans were much more than just an element of clothing. They have become a symbol of freedom, a generational rebellion, and an aspiration for the world on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Aid parcels sent by relatives, mainly from the USA and also from Great Britain, Canada, and Australia played a significant role in getting to know denim clothing in socialist Poland. In the second half of the 1960s, the domestic production of substitute denim-like materials, including denim-like trousers, was started. They were a response to the demand, in particular,

of groups of young people for products made of this type of material. The new improvements and material inventions were supervised by the association of clothing industries and research laboratories, which played an essential role in the creation of materials for domestic production. A group of active Polish textile and fashion designers contributed to promote comfortable denim clothing from the West. This article presents the role of the denim clothing industry in Poland during the socialist period (1952–1989), considering the cultural context and the impact of this clothing on discovering alternative forms, replacing the originals from capitalist countries. It should be noted that in the People's Republic of Poland, new types of textile materials were developed and improved so that they corresponded, at least in part, to materials from the West and filled in product gaps. To this end, proprietary commercial versions of fabrics used to produce garments, including the jeans discussed in this publication, were made of a textile known as in Polish word “Teksas” a denim substitute. Researching archival materials and showing achievements in the field of textiles and fashion fills the gap in research on cultural significance of fashion, textile materials and the production of denim and clothing from domestic fabrics of the socialist era.

Olga Lebedeva's contributes *Paris Fashion in the “Brave New World”: Retracing the Steps of Elsa Schiaparelli*. In late November–early December 1935, Elsa Schiaparelli visited the USSR. By then a designer with her own haute couture fashion house, she came to take part in the French Light Industry Fair organized by French Minister of State Edouard Herriot. During the event, an attempt was made to establish collaboration between Schiaparelli and the Mosbelie trust with a view to producing a universal set of clothing for Soviet women. The paper examines this episode, which had not hitherto been the subject of special study, in a broad cultural and political context. Particular attention is paid to the discrepancies between the Paris fashion house's designs and the Soviet sartorial discourse of the 1930s, as well as the representative nature of “socialist fashion” of the era of high Stalinism. The paper attempts to establish the possible influences of this trip on the couturier's further work, and the exact timeframe of Elsa Schiaparelli's stay in the Soviet Union.

Eva Lennartz's paper *Shades and Lengths of Change: Exploring Fashion Changes in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* explores the historical origins and enduring significance of the debates surrounding the color black and the appropriateness of dress length in Azerbaijani society. By combining archival research, fieldwork, interviews, and visual analysis, it was possible to explore the relationship between fashion choices and socio-economic and cultural dynamics. This paper suggests that the preference for black attire and debates surrounding the length of dress are associated with the particular socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the 1990s, set against the backdrop of Azerbaijan's post-Soviet context. This time represents a liminal period in the country's recent history, characterized by ambivalence that enabled a renegotiation of gender

roles and dress norms. There is limited existing literature on Azerbaijani dress and this study offers a socio-semiotic ethnographic approach to understanding the complex relationship between fashion, and social change.

In **Body** section we look at body in the context of jewelry, ceramics and textile arts.

Carrie Yodanis contributes *Wearing: Art, the Body, and Distance*.

Why are the objects we place on our bodies not considered art? In this paper, I argue that distance between an object and the body is a criterion for a craft object to become an art object. Art objects are kept at a distance from most bodies. The distance is tightly maintained by the art world and used within the art world to control art and access to it. In the process, this distance defines an object as art. I present the case of jewelry—objects that do not transition from craft to art and are generally not accepted as art by the art world. I argue that this is because jewelry necessarily requires closeness between the body and the object, a violation of the rules of art. The argument I present here is relevant to questions of fashion and art.

Ebba Van Der Taelen offers *Stains of Significance: Exploring the Stain as a Carrier of Meaning in Monique Lecouna's Textile Jewelry*.

Monique Lecouna, an Argentine artist creating contemporary jewelry, is fond of old, antique textiles. She uses these materials in her work to encourage reflection on cultural and social restrictions imposed on women in the past by political and religious authorities. The textiles she uses were often made by her female relatives and ancestors and got stained through the passage of time. Instead of trying to remove the stains, she chooses to incorporate them into her own creations. She even makes additional stains on her jewelry pieces and cuts them open. In this article, the author—drawing on Lecouna's artist statements and insights from Ann-Sophie Lehmann, Barbara Baert, Otto von Busch, and Roland Barthes—investigates the three types of stains present in her work and explores how these could be interpreted as “carriers of meaning.” The old stain, operating as a Barthesian punctum, might unlock forgotten stories from the past, hinting at an enigmatic connection between the aging of textiles and the human body. The intentional stain, as an indexical trace, could be seen as marking the artist's (past) presence. Meanwhile, the open stain may offer a glimpse into the artist's inner world, potentially revealing unspoken thoughts and emotions.

Chukwuemeka Nwigwe, Odoja Asogwa & May Okafor's paper *Dress as the Agency of Power: Ozioma Onuzulike's Ceramic Art* examines the ceramic works of a Nigerian artist, Ozioma Onuzulike, which vividly illustrate dress as an agency of power. His oeuvre features among other things the agbada, an extra-large clothing style prevalent in contemporary Nigeria, especially in elitist socio-political and cultural contexts. Over 25 years of Onuzulike's ceramic art practice have consistently showcased modernist works that challenged conventional ceramic art and socio-political norms. His innovative use of clay and palm kernels to depict power dynamics in Nigeria has attracted some scholarly attention. This study employs compositional interpretation

and contextual analysis to explore the visual, sociocultural, and political impact of Onuzulike's hybrid ceramic art that depicts agbada. An iconological approach reveals the formal elements, historical, political, and social nuances embedded in the works. The concept of dress of power is used to unravel the multifaceted political significance of Onuzulike's representations. Unpacking the visual vocabulary and metaphor of power in the works provides insights into the agbada as a status symbol in modern Nigeria. This artistic representation typifies a trend in contemporary African and diasporic art, where textile materials, forms, and ideas are central.

Culture section is yet again focused on the territories of fashion and opens with Siún Carden's article *Authenticity and Place-Based Knitwear: Fair Isle and Aran Knitting in Shetland and the West of Ireland*. The paper examines authenticity as it is understood and used within networks of makers in Shetland and Ireland, in places associated with fair isle and aran knitting. Drawing on 15 anonymised interviews and observations from a 2018–2019 study, the article considers authenticity in relation to four themes: place, handwork, materials and deception. Those engaged in knitting related to small islands are inevitably confronted with demands for and ideas about authenticity, and negotiate formulations of what is real and good in their situated context. Participating in localized knitting cultures requires positioning oneself in relation to existing ideas about authenticity—both the ideas that inform the global market for knitwear and those held dear by one's immediate neighbors. While “romantic” and “enlightenment” models of authenticity are important to maker-customer communication, within local networks of makers “relational” authenticity is key.

Ingun Grimstad Klepp & Kirsi Laitala's *Nisseluelandet—The Impact of Local Clothes for the Survival of a Textile Industry in Norway*

discusses the importance of local clothing for the survival of the Norwegian textile industry. It draws upon stakeholder interviews, as well as desktop research. Local clothes are discussed as they are understood by consumers, as knitted sweaters, bunads (Norwegian national costumes), and home-made clothing. The review shows how these products, and especially the materials used in their production, have been crucial for the continued existence of the Norwegian textile industry. We argue that the concept “local clothes” can contribute to showcasing resources outside the global “fast fashion” manufacturing system.

Britta Kalkreuter's *Anyone's Heritage? Indian Fashion Design's Relationships with Craft between Local Guardianship and Valorization of Global Fashion* contributes to our understanding of current global Indian fashion engagements with textiles craft by studying the work of Manish Arora and Rahul Mishra. The research starts by analysing what both designers say about their use of crafts; it then considers their collections with special regard to sites of craft production before gauging the international fashion press's perceptions of craft in Indian fashion. The paper finds that Arora and Mishra assign variable degrees of agency to the craftspeople they work with, and that their

divergent modes of employing artisans are as strongly influenced by their personal relationships with Indian textiles as by their individual approaches to fashion. The findings are then reflected against recent calls from within Europe for fashion's return to textiles heritage, and while we suggest that fashion design capabilities beyond the global north tend to be underestimated in this context, we propose that interactions between fashion and craft in the global south can indeed offer interesting new working models for fashion cultures even where these have no hinterland of living textiles heritage.

Anthony Sullivan contributes *Britain's 'Dark Factories': Specters of Racial Capitalism Today*. Recent revelations about illegally low wages and abject working conditions in Leicester's "dark" garment factories—endured by its vulnerable mainly global majority and migrant workforce—have once again high-lighted British fashion's benighted "other" and its reliance on cheapened and "expendable" "racialized" sweated labor. Forced to work on through the Covid pandemic to produce fast fashion for e-commerce brands, "British" fashion manufacture now reflects the wider plight of the global CMT (Cut, Make and Trim) army, who at considerable personal risk and cost, manufacture most of our fashion. Drawing on a set of theoretical innovations in Marxist and post-Marxist theory, notably Smith and Suwandi theory of labor "super-exploitation," De Genova's work on the disciplining of migrants through "border regimes and spectacles" and Gargi Bhattacharyya's critical reading of Cedric Robinson's thesis of "Racial Capitalism" (1983), this article explains how and why its specter still casts such a deep and troubling shadow over the production of fashion.

Sartorial Strategies of Female Punks in Malaysia's Socio-Religious Landscape by **Mengye Liu, Roslina Ismail & Adil Johan** explores the sartorial strategies employed by female punks in Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country, to navigate the complex interplay of subcultural identity, local socio-cultural norms, and religious expectations. Utilizing an ethnographic approach, the research reveals how these women selectively adapt their appearance across various social settings, balancing their allegiance to the punk subculture with the pressures of local societal norms. By using clothing as a symbolic tool, they maintain a coherent sense of self while negotiating different social landscapes. Drawing on symbolic interactionism, this study portrays punk identity as a dynamic and interpretive process, challenging the notion that subcultural styles are purely about resistance. Instead, it suggests that these practices can facilitate integration and acceptance, enabling individuals to bridge multiple social worlds. By advancing the conceptual framework of localization of subculture the research not only examines the formation and expression of subcultural identities through style but also how these identities are continuously adapted to personal and social changes. This study underscores the importance of local context in shaping subcultural practices and highlights the adaptive responses of these women, thereby repoliticizing punk subculture styles in a Malaysian setting.

In'utu Imbuwa & Yasemin Y. Celikkol's study *Tailoring Modernity and Wrapping Tradition: Chitenge [African Print Fabric] Class and Culture in Zambia* delves into the

historical and contemporary significance of African print fabric known as chitenge in Zambian dress practices, critically scrutinizing sartorial choices and developments. We explore and unravel chitenge's multifaceted meanings for contemporary Zambians, in terms of gender, class, religion, and urbanity vs. rurality through a critical cultural hybridity approach with oral history, ethnographic, and digital qualitative methods. Our research reveals conflicting perceptions—from being labeled as backward to its proud representation as national dress during special occasions, chitenge in Zambia reflects wider global trends of local dress positioned as “traditional” contrasting with Western styles perceived as “modern.” Chitenge is desirable when tailored into Western-style attire customized for individual use, highlighting its role as a sign of conspicuous consumption, instead of its more versatile wrapped form that could be worn in multiple ways, shared, and repurposed into various other uses ranging from a baby carrier to household decor. Beyond our findings, this study also contributes to epistemic justice as one of the first studies on sartorial practices in Zambia by a Zambian scholar.

Chinese Fashion in China's Fashion Magazines (2005–2015) by **Yating Jin** explores the status of Chinese fashion media from 2005 to 2015 to understand the role of fashion discourse and information flows in mobilizing activity and meaning in the Chinese fashion industry. By examining ten-year issues of two fashion magazines, *Vogue China* and *iLook*, alongside interviews with two fashion media workers, this research reveals that during this period, the diffusion channels for Chinese fashion media are experiencing significant change, with a shift in focus to the presentation of more localized fashion content and the creation of a closer relationship between Chinese fashion media and the Chinese fashion industry. The rise of online fashion media has provided an unprecedented way of engaging Chinese consumers with Chinese fashion, supporting a two-way information flow and a new dimension of interaction. Despite this development, the continuing dominance of fashion retailing and consumption, much of this being comprised of global fashion brands, and the scarcity of fashion professionals in China continue to marginalize Chinese fashion discourse.

In this issue's **Events** section, Tatyana Dashkova contributes her review of 'Louvre Couture. Art and Fashion: Statement Pieces' at the Louvre (January 24th — August 26th, 2025).

Celia Pullen Smith offers her thoughts on 'Deborah Turbeville: Photocollage' at the Photographers' Gallery, London, 9 October 2024 — 23 February 2025.

Simona Segre-Reinach contributes her review of 'Elio Fiorucci' at the Triennale Milano, November 7, 2024 — March 16, 2025.

Anna Furse offers her thoughts on 'Leigh Bowery!' at the Tate Modern, London 27th February — 31st August 2025.

Maude Bass-Krueger presents her review of *Behind the Seams: Women, Fashion, and Work in 19th-Century France* by Susan Hiner (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023).