

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.

In this issue's **Dress** section, we revisit the subject of clothing repair.

Ellen Sampson opens the section with her paper *On Not Fixing Things: Ambivalence and Reparation in the Fashion Industry*. The current resurgence of mending cultures reflects multiple cultural shifts: growing awareness of sustainable fashion practices, responses to global instability, and protests against hegemonic systems that prioritise the new

and unscathed. Yet, for many of us, repair is complicated, with multiple factors making it difficult to achieve — we live in a world where the transformative or anticipatory potential of acquisition is highly prized, and imperfection is often interpreted as a flaw. The fashion industry, in particular, has a complicated and inconsistent relationship with repair; simultaneously increasingly vocal in its support of repair practices yet unable or unwilling to make the structural changes that would facilitate a true ‘right to repair’. Thus, despite the increasing awareness and visibility of repair cultures and fashion narratives, consumers and the industry are often ambivalent about repair. Bringing together Klein’s writing on reparation, ambivalence, and guilt with current work on repair, imperfection, and shame in fashion, this paper explores how theories of ambivalence can help us understand fashion’s complex relationship to repair. Asking how attending to the multiple forms of ambivalence manifest in relationships to clothing and repair might help us unpack the complexity of repair for an industry built upon fantasy and desire.

Julia Valle-Noronha, Marta Konovalov & Kristi Kuusk offer *Layers of Repair — On Mending, Care, and Aesthetics of Affect*. Repair has recently gained attention in both academic and societal activities in the global north context, part of a collective ongoing effort to rethink practices around fashion, clothing and textiles. Much of these efforts focus on the community building and sustainability related aspects of repair, offering good grounds to the discussion of repair as a tool to foster more sustainable ways to engage with clothing and textiles. In this work we turn to what happens between menders and the things they repair, an intimate and enmeshed relationship, broadening the discussion. This article observes repair from an autoethnographic first person narrative complemented with other menders’ observations, collected through longitudinal studies via “patient cards.” It investigates how a mender’s esthetic perceptions of repaired garments evolve through time from the lens of theories of affect. The results show that the act of repair facilitates an accumulation of layers of meanings, adding complexity to the symbolic value of repaired garments as well as their agencies. This accumulation of layers changes various dimensions of esthetics in both garments and wearers, distancing these objects from an esthetic of seriality toward an esthetic of affects.

Sarah Scaturro contributes *Mending in the Museum: Chronomanuality, Value, and the Ethics of Care in Textile Conservation*. The profession of textile conservation is relatively new, only emerging in the mid-twentieth century. However, the techniques of textile repair go back millennia, using needle and thread. This article explores how the ancient

technique of mending made its way into the museum as a professional practice carried out mostly by women. Educational training programs and professional networks emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in North America and Europe, consolidating the discipline of textile conservation by incorporating ethics and science along the way. One key ethical debate — whether to stitch or adhere textiles as a stabilization method — exemplified the subjective nature of conservation, while ultimately confirming the primacy of sewing as a core technique. Yet, even with sewing affirmed as a method of professional museological practice, the high chromanual requirements of stitching textiles underscored an inherent friction in the field: the cost of textile conservation labor may supersede the economic value of the textile itself. This gives rise to an unsettling question: Is conserving this textile worth it?

Kate Sekules offers *Optics of Obvious Mending*. Mending is undergoing a revival. Though the handwork practice of stitching visible repairs into personal garments is fashionable enough today to be widely emulated in industrial product, it has largely escaped formal analysis. This article addresses that gap by defining and contextualizing novel modes of dress-mending using registers of political resistance, craft, fashion, new materialism, and metaphysics. Released from historical bounds of invisible, gendered labor and subsistence strategy, mending can be understood as a transdisciplinary branch of scholarship with roots and relationships in and outside fashion discourse. Within fashion, and expanding on the literature to date, mending is in conversation with histories of vernacular dress, “bias grain” textile research, object-based affective study, and auto-ethnographic experimental methodologies. Ultimately, theorizing the fusion of mending and fashion exposes fissures in supposed degrowth strategies of sustainability and circularity in production-consumption systems. Mending becomes a powerful regenerative technology with metaphorical valence, offering a glimpse of radical, and hopeful, futurities.

The **Body** section this time around opens with **María Isabel Baldasarre’s** article “*Being Gorgeous is a Duty!*” *Hegemony, Agency, and Visual Culture in Modern Argentina*. Throughout the twentieth century, in Argentina — as in much of the western hemisphere —, the female body was an arena to be disciplined. Ideal beauty standards demanded that women be slender, white, young, athletic, affirmatively feminine, modestly sexy, and show no signs of labor or the passage of time. Visual culture played a central role in cementing this canon and rendering non-conforming bodies invisible. This article examines how a hegemonic image of the female body

was shaped and spread through popular culture in Argentina in the first half of the century. At the same time, it focusses on the ways in which these ideas were appropriated by those women not represented by this canonical gaze. Looking into the consumption and construction of working women's appearance allows us to consider fashion and beauty practices as spaces of feminine subjectivity and agency. The case of Argentina constitutes a way to decenter the geography of fashion and beauty industry, to analyze not only the diffusion of models, with their patriarchal parameters and racial standards, but how this hegemony expressed its nuances in the different contexts.

Dyese L. Matthews & Denise Nicole Green contribute *Style Narrative Geographies: Black Women Making Harlem Through Fashion and Memory Work*. Black women's spatialized subjectivities are produced through the social, esthetic, and material practices of fashioning the body, which includes the wardrobes the women curate and their dressed embodiment in daily life. Embodied fashion functions as a form of Black memory work, recording and spatializing personal and collective narratives across time. In this paper, we examine how middle-aged and elderly Black women engage in place-making through dress practices and spatial subjectivities, with a focus on Harlem, New York City — a site rich with layered memories and imagined futurities that center fashioned bodies. This critical inquiry is particularly urgent in light of ongoing processes of erasure, gentrification, and structural inequities that have reshaped the physical landscape of the neighborhood and the lived experiences of its residents. We argue that Black women are both place-makers and memory workers who assert and claim Harlem as a meaningful space through embodied fashion. As a form of memory work, fashion amplifies marginalized voices and challenges oppressive power structures. To analyze these dynamics, we introduce style narrative geographies as a new theoretical framework that illustrates and elucidates the complex, power-laden relationships between fashion, dress, spatial subjectivities, and place-making for women of the African Diaspora.

Culture section is yet again focused on sustainability opens with **Kate Fletcher's & Anna Fitzpatrick's** *Decentering Durability: Decarbonizing and Decolonizing Ideas and Practices of Long-Lasting Clothes*. Durability is widely recognized as a key feature of materially resourceful, lower-carbon clothing lives. Yet most of what is known about long-lasting garments is rooted in Euro-American ways of thinking, and reproduces its structures, priorities, values and resulting actions. This paper brings a decolonial concern to understandings of clothing durability to enlarge

the conceptual boundaries around it, including those that break apart dominant ideas and approaches to clothing durability in order to show difference. It presents both the “workings” and the “findings” of a small research project, ‘Decentering Durability’, examining both how research is conducted as well as what is uncovered at the intersection of decolonizing and resource-efficient, decarbonizing agendas for fashion.

Rachael Cassar’s *Innovative Upcycling: The Creative Potential of Collaborating with Degraded Materials* explores the detailed methods of upcycling, contrasting them with traditional linear design processes through autoethnographic documentation. By centering on a material-oriented view of reuse, the study uncovers how upcycling actively interacts with a material’s past, encompassing human imprints, temporality, fragmentation, and signs of aging. While commonly acknowledged as reuse of worn garments, upcycling can entail intricate interactions with historical remnants and weathered materials, including the challenges posed by aged material patina and its transient nature. The research challenges the prevailing upcycling literature’s limited dialogue of the nuanced complexities associated with working with aging materials, which instead often prioritizes consumer-driven goals within a circular remanufacturing context. Through practices like upcycling, which center on physical making and materials, we uncover insights and opportunities for impactful change often overlooked in traditional material processes, design planning, and manufacturing processes.

Yoonhee Cho & Borim Joo contribute *Threads of Change: Advancing Sustainable Fashion Through New Materialist Perspectives*. In the Anthropocene epoch, marked by significant human impact on the planet, the fashion industry stands at a critical juncture. This paper delves into the transformative potential of Jane Bennett’s New Materialism to reimagine fashion design practices in response to the climate crisis. Bennett’s concepts of “thing-power” and “vital materiality” challenge the conventional perception of materials in fashion, advocating for a sustainable and ecologically responsive approach. This study explores the intersection of fashion design and environmental ethics, emphasizing the need for a radical rethinking of material use and design processes in the fashion industry. It highlights the industry’s substantial environmental footprint, from resource depletion to waste generation, and presents case studies where New Materialist principles have been effectively applied in fashion design. These examples demonstrate a shift toward embracing material vitality and agency, fostering innovative, sustainable practices. The paper contributes to sustainable fashion discourse, offering theoretical insights and practical implications for future research and practice.

It argues that integrating New Materialism in fashion design is not just an esthetic or ethical choice but a necessity for environmental stewardship, ultimately leading to a more sustainable, creatively rich, and ethically responsible fashion industry.

Svetlana Salnikova's *Coalteration as a Form of Interaction with Clothes: From Utilitarian Action to Empathic Experience* is based on the author's postgraduate dissertation study *Dress Alteration Practices as an Alternative Wardrobe Strategy*, undertaken as part of the Art and Design doctoral programme at the National Research University Higher School of Economics. In this paper, Salnikova examines dress alteration as a form of empathic interaction between a person and an item of dress. The author traces the evolution of alteration from purely utilitarian action aimed at prolonging the life of a garment, to conscious practice of care with corporeal, emotional and creative elements.

The study brings together a conceptual examination of alternative wardrobe strategy and current cultural factors prompting dress alteration, with an analysis of official media discourse in 1990s–2010s Russian magazines and the subjective narratives of people who alter clothes at home, as well as the author's own creative research and experience. Based on all this, Salnikova introduces the term 'coalteration' to imply a process of interaction between person and garment, in the course of which the transformation of the clothing becomes an act of attention to the item's history and the body's experience while performing the alteration. The author shows that coalteration is a form of alternative wardrobe strategy based not on renewal and consumption, but on longterm attentive care for the materiality of the clothes we wear. The concept of coalteration allows us to view the reworking of dress as an aesthetic, ethical act of research that presents new opportunities for the study of sustainable fashion and material culture.

Alberta St. John James & Anthony Kent offer *Clothing Sustainability and Upcycling in Ghana*. The aim of this paper is to assess opportunities for the upcycling of waste clothing through design workshops held in Accra, Ghana. An upcycling approach to clothing longevity examines how garments can be re-designed and resold in a new form. Significant amounts of surplus and second-hand clothing from the developed world and large producer nations, for example China, are distributed to Africa and sold in local markets at affordable prices. The research was conducted into upcycling waste clothing from the market by five groups of fashion design students at Accra Technical University (ATU). A participatory research design was applied to the project and the initial briefing to design groups confirmed the concept of upcycling

and the design parameters. Each group defined a design theme, made a selection of clothes and accessories in the Accra market and returned to the university to conceptualise and re-create clothes and accessories. The project culminated in presentations of finished garments modelled by the students. It addressed the disposal stage of the circular economy model of clothing sustainability by providing new knowledge of how waste clothing, readily available in a developing country's market can be sourced and creatively re-designed into new garments and accessories.

Mila Burcikova contributes *One Dress: Shaping Fashion Futures through Utopian Thinking*. This position paper draws upon and expands the research presented in the special issue of the journal *Utopian Studies* 'Utopia and Fashion', guest edited by the author. The issue examined the under-researched relationship between fashion and utopia through the lens of Ruth Levitas' concept of utopia as method for exploring alternative scenarios for the future. With reference to key lines of enquiry in 'Utopia and Fashion', this paper demonstrates how utopian thinking can be a helpful tool for examining some of the dilemmas and ongoing challenges in the current discourse on fashion and sustainability. Focusing specifically on reducing fashion consumption, the paper builds on empirical evidence provided by author's current practice-based research on emotional durability of clothing. The metaphor of One Dress, a utopian vision of one garment for life, then helps to examine the possibilities as well as the boundaries of attempts to radically reduce the number of items in our wardrobes. The overarching argument here is that the inherent complexity of our relationship with fashion and clothing requires stronger activist agendas in both design thinking and user behaviour. To direct our actions to solutions that address the core issues of unsustainable consumption rather than its symptoms, we need a shift in focus from materials and product development to everyday experiences of people who wear clothes while facing an entangled world with numerous and often contradicting demands. This paper aims to further the discussion on the potential of utopian thinking to re-imagine and inspire better and more sustainable futures of fashion.

Henna Kettunen, Janne Poikolainen, Anna Kouhia & Minna Autio offer their paper *Crafting Sustainable Fashion: Dimensions of Care in Wearer-Clothing Relationships*. The manufacturing, overconsumption, usage, and disposal of clothes generate a significant ecological burden. Clothing care has been perceived to mitigate the negative sustainability impacts of clothing consumption. Prior studies indicate that textile care strengthens the bond between the wearer and the garment, resulting in a dedication to maintaining the product and extending its usage over

time. However, there is a need for more nuanced analysis concerning different levels of care, as well as their relation to sustainability and the wearer-clothing relationship. By analyzing interview data from Finnish consumers, we identify four dimensions of clothing care: excessive care, balanced care, inadequate care, and non-care. These dimensions indicate how consumers' approaches to care range from avoidant to overcaring and from negligent to nurturing. Furthermore, we study how this variation connects with varying levels of the wearer-clothing relationship, particularly focusing on the degree of commitment to clothing care. We suggest that consumers' caring activities are diverse in nature and can either enhance or reduce the longevity of a garment, thus making the sustainability outcomes of clothing care more complex and self-evident than is perceived.

In this issue's **Events** section, **Asya Aladjalova** contributes her review of "Red Moscow: A Woman in the Big City" at Zotov centre, Moscow (11 July — 19 October 2025).

In the **Books** section, **Steve Zdatny** offers his thoughts on "Beyond Vanity: The History and Power of Hairdressing", by Elizabeth L. Block (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2024).