VESTOJ
The Journal of Sartorial Matters

Issue Five

ON SLOWNESS
VESTOJ

The Journal of Sartorial Matters

Issue Five
On Slowness
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**THE VESTOJ MANIFESTO**
This is the fifth issue of Vestoj. It was published in autumn 2014.

It was printed and bound by Artes Gráficas Palermo in Madrid, Spain. The paper stock employed is Cyclus Offset, a recycled paper, with the weight of 90 grams per square meter. The dust jacket concealing the coptic bind of the journal is printed on Magno Satin with the weight of 150 grams per square meter.

A note on the type: ‘When in doubt, use Caslon’ is an age-old typographer’s adage. William Caslon was an eighteenth century British type designer, who started a type foundry producing wildly popular alphabets cast in lead, to use with the letterpress printing techniques available at the time. This issue of Vestoj employs Caslon, in a variety of cuts (to be precise: Ed Benguiat’s ITC Caslon 224; Bitstream’s Open Face Caslon; Adobe Caslon; Caslon Old Face; and Founder’s Caslon, used for this text). None is more true to the original design than the other – the problem with trying to authentically reproduce letterforms of three centuries ago quickly becomes evident when considering that even Caslon’s own designs were anything but original. William Caslon was heavily influenced by Dutch letter designs that were already antiquated at the time. Adding to this is the fact that Caslon’s foundry produced a range of letterforms, but not one with the name ‘Caslon’. When designers today refer to the font of that name, it could be any one of a wide variety of different revivals, varying in size, weight, contrast and pretty much everything else, but all with a very long, shared heritage harking back to the first Roman printed letterforms of three centuries ago.

Our ISSN number is 2000-4036. You can buy Vestoj from www.vestoj.com or at www.vestoj.com. You can stay updated on our Facebook account at Vestoj HQ is still located on the beautiful rue Beranger, in the heart of Le Marais, in a house with heavy doors that goes under the number 7. The postcode is still 75003, and the city is still Paris. Now you can probably guess that this is Paris, France, not Paris, Texas, Paris, Ontario or even Paris, Kiribati. On another note, did you know that Kansas City is also called Paris of the Plains? And that Saskatoon is also known as Paris of the Prairies?

If you want to reach us to say something nice or to let us know that we could have done so much better, the address is info@vestoj.com. If you want more Vestoj and can’t be arsed to wait around for another year (yes, that’s how long it takes us!), you can stay updated on our Facebook account or at www.vestoj.com.

Vestoj is published under the patronage of London College of Fashion, so for this issue we want to again extend our humble gratitude to Frances Corner and London College of Fashion – without them you would not be holding this issue in your hands right now.

We would also like to thank Monkey Myron, Mary Myron, Bess Nielsen, Mathias Deon, Sophie Demay, Susanne Tide Frater, Patrick Scallon, Taque Hirakawa, Laurence Oliver, Gon Aya, Studio Blanco, Alexandra Senes, Mimosa Spencer, Scarlett Rouge Newton, Emily McGuire Franquis Quintin and the Fondation Galeries Lafayette.


As we have no advertising we won’t give you the usual blurb about who to contact to bribe us into featuring your products. Give unselfishly instead!
In *Slowness* Milan Kundera, the Czech writer, remarks that 'there is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting'. In the fashion system this bond seems to take on a particularly poignant meaning, with the degree of velocity often appearing directly proportional to the time it takes to forget a style that just moments ago it seemed we could not live without.

The speed of change is a growing complaint about fashion, both amongst those whose livelihoods depend on it, and amongst those who observe these ceaseless shifts from afar. Grumbles about a ubiquitous acceleration are nothing new however; in fact, the grievance we appear to harbour against velocity is as old as modernity itself. Back then the machines that increasingly replaced the human hand aroused fear and trepidation; today our attitudes reflect much the same ambivalence towards the revolutions of time. It seems we always regard our own time as simultaneously the most progressive and the most relentlessly accelerated. The modernist project, however, firmly rooted the relationship between progress and speed, and in so doing also forever altered our notion of time. A universal temporal framework, with time zones, seasonal changes and accurate clocks, was constructed with the help of new technology, and the previous more subjective understanding of time had to make way for expedience and the hustle of modern life. With a more synchronised understanding of time, the future also became easier to grasp and, by extension, to control. For a future that can be measured in terms of the knowable present, is a malleable future, a future that can be shaped according to our will.

With the advent of modernity, past, present and future came to be understood as a linear evolution, and the ‘temporal architecture’ that philosopher Krzysztof Pomian refers to in *L'Ordre du Temps* turned into an implicit and integral part of the experience of being modern. Sharing the same chronology is tantamount to sharing a similar basic understanding of the world, but we must not forget that time is a social construct. The sociologist Norbert Elias and the philosopher Michel Foucault have both argued that the modern ‘disciplinary society’ attains its power by the establishment and internalisation of set structures of time, and chronopolitics are consequently a potent tool for domination. In other words, those who arrive first, win.
In terms of fashion, the depreciation of the past in favour of the present is what keeps the wheels of the system turning. Fashion aims to always be ‘of the moment’, but to do so it has to disown its own past. The seasonal changes in fashion that we today are so familiar with, are an old fabrication. As early as the seventeenth century, Paris fashion was organised according to the seasons in order to further French trade and economy. A more regimented system came into being in the early twentieth century when haute couture shows in Paris became organised into biannual fashion weeks, signalling for creators as well as consumers of fashion that the old had to make way for the new.

Fashion scholar Aurélie Van de Peer has written about ‘the temporal anchorage of fashion’ and points out the relationship between the terminology of time and the degree of fashionability of a garment. The aesthetic judgments we make on ‘out-of-date’ fashion tend to be strong, and terms like ‘passé’ and ‘old-fashioned’ are often used as potent tools for ridicule and scorn, symbolising as they do, a past that is no longer relevant. Similarly, idioms like ‘modern’ and ‘of the moment’ are employed to evoke the present, the moment that in fashion terms is the most desirable. We know of course that, as Elizabeth Wilson writes in Adorned in Dreams, ‘the “now” of fashion is nostalgia in the making’ – perhaps this is why a disingenuous term like ‘timeless’ has such cachet in fashion circles.

But no matter how much we try and convince ourselves that eternal style is possible, in fashion the past is forever haunting the present. Fashion depends on perpetual movement – onwards, forwards – and in so doing, it must renounce its own history. In the vernacular of fashion, the most stinging insult that can be levelled at anyone is belonging to a past no longer relevant; derisively aiming this judgment at a rival is a way of establishing your own superiority. To be passé signals the demise of a fashion professional.

The politics of time are a significant device for separation; it creates a purposeful schism between those who dominate and those who are dominated, between us and the Other. As the sociologist Hartmut Rosa has pointed out, the ones who lead are, as a general rule, those who understand speed. In fashion, as in everyday life, temporal strategies like keeping someone waiting, changing the rhythm or jumping the gun are often cause for strife, as anyone who has ever waited for a show to begin, had their idea copied and produced faster by a competitor or been compelled to endure an interminable presentation by an important patron can attest.

The philosopher Paul Virilio talks of a ‘rushing standstill’, which seems to describe contemporary culture well. The cult of speed can sometimes feel overwhelming, but in the cracks of the system, a slower, more reflective pace is gaining traction. Whereas Virilio’s phrase appears aimed at a heedless velocity that despite its speed will forever return you to your starting point, slowness by contrast allows you to advance at a pace that encourages contemplation and observation. To be slow is far from remaining static; instead, slowness is a temporal notion that prioritises the journey over the destination. In this world of instant gratification we sometimes forget that speed is not a virtue in itself, nor is it to be confused with success or efficiency or happiness or accomplishment.

So, allow yourself to be idle, to dwell a moment, to delay and iterate. Use your hands to make something a machine could make much faster. Look for the beauty in the impermanent, the imperfect and the incomplete. Take your time. Because, as the writer Rebecca Solnit once so succinctly put it, ‘Time always wins; our victories are only delays; but delays are sweet, and a delay can last a whole lifetime’. 

Editor’s Letter

Anja Aronowsky Cronberg
RE-FASHIONING TIME

On the Cultural and Social Mediations of Temporal Infrastructures

By Dr Michelle Bastian
Thus, in contrast to more traditional clocks, which suggest that time is a single steady flow from the past into the future, these sartorial clocks tell us a quite different type of time. Importantly, despite assumptions that fashion is primarily about speed and change, the examples above suggest that fashion can also tell the complicated, context-specific and deeply political nature of time. The recent ambition of slowness in fashion further complicates this picture. The proposed antimonies of fast and slow fashion have developed as part of addressing fashion’s implication in unsustainable capitalist practices that contribute to massive waste, intensive energy use and the exploitation of human labour. These debates illustrate even further the tension between our two types of clocks, by showing how time might be involved in enabling or disabling shifts towards more sustainable ways of life.

Even so, there are many ways in which the logics embedded in international, standardised systems of clock-time obscure the more complicated picture highlighted above. Rather than time being culturally and socially mediated, time becomes universal, with the assumption that it should be possible in principle for everyone to experience the ‘same’ time. Conversely time also becomes individual rather than social, with each person expected to take responsibility for keeping themselves ‘in time’. Finally the politics and ethics of time is hidden behind a framework where time is simply understood as a quantitative measurement.
One advantage of reckoning with the influence of clock-based understandings of time is the framework it can provide for understanding some of the controversial ways 'slow' has been taken up within the fashion industry. The flatness of clock time, and particularly its tendency to suppress qualitative understandings of time, would appear to feed into the deployments of slow that have been criticised in literature on the topic. As design consultant and activist Kate Fletcher has argued, the temptation to understand 'slow' as being solely about pace or speed enables the movement to be hijacked and used as 'a marketing angle or alternative distribution channel in the current model, a tweaked version of today's practices'.

This kind of approach, which might utilise seasonless collections, more durable pieces and the use of traditional techniques, but without challenging the economic logic of mainstream fashion, conforms to the idea that time is only about timing. In co-opting slow in this way, however, have designers failed to heed the lessons that can be learned from the way fashion tells time within social life?

The importance of understanding time as multiple, as imbued with political effects, has been a recurring theme for many scholars, particularly in relation to sustainability. In a recent research project, the kind of time(s) that might support sustainable economies is explored. This particular enquiry includes a range of case studies from the UK and Australia which seek to unpack how sustainable businesses approach the issue of time. An initial analysis suggests that their struggles with time are less to do with pace and more to do with supporting themselves, their customers, suppliers and business partners in adopting the more complex understanding of the times required to do socially and environmentally responsible work.

These engagements with time are not about developing grand new theories, but appeared most often as idiosyncratic micro-strategies. One example that stands out was during a cheese-making workshop, where the class found itself disconcerted by the idea that making ricotta would involve attending to a pot on low heat for at least an hour before curds started to form. The workshop leader, having noticed this fear of 'empty time', introduced the idea that making ricotta required the class to find itself disconcerted with the idea of the empty pot as an opportunity to enjoy a glass of wine.
Indeed she suggests that too often there is a focus on the individual slowing down, without a concomitant emphasis on challenging the structural inequalities that make this impossible for many workers, such as farm-workers and night shift workers, at the heart of the food industry.

Interestingly the slow fashion movement has done much to support an understanding of the way one’s time is dependent upon others, showing how the Western consumer's experience of novelty and speed can only occur due to the oppressive regimes of time control endured by factory workers.

Perhaps then, in the effort to re-time fashion (and re-fashion time) there is much to be gained by recognising and drawing out the multiple stories about time that are embedded within the histories, cultures and materialities of fashion. However, we should not forget to continue to ask, as Sarah Sharma puts it, 'what new forms of vulnerability are necessitated by the production of temporal novelties or resistances to speed. Whose time and labour are re-orchestrated by changes in pace, whether sped up or slowed down?'

Unlocking the hold of the clock over our temporal imaginaries is a formidable task however. Responding to one aspect can mean there are others left intact. Media and cultural studies scholar Sarah Sharma’s analysis of the slow food movement, for example, suggests that while there may be a shift from quantity to quality, the individualising force of the clock has not been adequately dealt with.

of wine, listen to music and relax. Another example was where a member of a workers co-operative, which provided websites built with open source software, talked about needing to challenge customers’ assumptions around immediate solutions, emphasising instead the more unpredictable times of community collaboration.

This emphasis on the need to re-story time as part of a shift towards sustainability would appear to fit well with arguments proposing that designing more durable or less resource-intensive objects needs to be accompanied by ‘social infrastructure, of appropriate consumer behaviour and cultural acceptance’. Part of this sociality of fashion is also formed by the stories it tells about time. Thus, if time is not separate from the world, but arises from worlds and supports some ways of life over others, then part of the work of a more sustainable approach to fashion is creating the necessary temporal infrastructures that might support it.
On Slowing Down Production
By Elongating Wear

By Father Michael Casey OCSO
As told to Laura Gardner
Father Michael Casey OCSO (Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance) is a priest, tailor, author and member of the Tarrawarra Abbey, the only Cistercian monastery in the Southern hemisphere. Observing the ancient rule of Saint Benedict, the Cistercians are an ancient order that broke away from the Catholic Church in medieval times with a desire to lead a more simple and contemplative life. Faith, work and self-sufficiency are the mainstays of the Cistercian way of life, something radically in contrast to the fashion system. The Tarrawarra Abbey in central Victoria, Australia, was established in 1954 by a group of Irish monks, and is now home to fourteen monks. The simple monk garments, tailored by Casey with fabric from a local mill, last the wearer anything upward of fifteen years. The ‘cowl’ in particular, is worn ceremoniously seven times a day for prayer. The garment is symbolic of the daily transition into the introspective space of worship. The excess fabric and draped sleeves of the cloak are specifically designed to slow down the wearer, allowing for contemplation and introspection during the Liturgy of the Hours in the church. This ceremonious dress is observed routinely within the monastery, but outside in the public eye the monks prefer to venture ‘incognito’, adapting to modern dress so as to limit unwanted attention. Father Casey speaks of the power a garment has in a context far removed from mainstream fashion, but also of the act of slowing down the production of clothing by elongating wear.

The Tarrawarra Abbey is a Cistercian monastery in the tradition of the rule of Saint Benedict from the sixth century, when it was the major monastic rule throughout the Western church. The Cistercian element derives from a reform in the eleventh century, which broke away from the Catholic rule with the desire to get back to a simple, contemplative life and the search for God. Throughout the centuries there have been many reforms, but the idea to live a simpler life by supporting and sustaining oneself with one’s own work, remains.

In effect we’re a Catholic religious order based on a life of balance between work and the daily praises of God, what’s called the Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours. Monks go to church seven times a day beginning at four o’clock in the morning, and ending at eight at night, so the day is punctuated by prayer.

Dress has a significant role in monastic life and the ordinary daily dress consists of a tunic, over which sits something called a ‘scapula’, named after the scapula bone in the shoulders. The main monastic garment, and a crucial aspect to the Liturgy is the ‘cowl’. Originally
Father Michael Casey's robe. Photographer David Roberts.
the cowl was worn at times a monk wasn’t working, but we’ve become more practical than the medieval people and now only wear it for times of prayer.

The design of the cowl is a large cloak, with long sleeves and a hooded neck hole. It’s a contemplative garment and meant to be impractical – you can’t run in it for instance. It slows you down and you can’t do much in the way of work as a result of the long sleeves. Because you can’t move quickly, it calls forth a sort of gravitas by imposing a sense of gravity on the wearer. There is a special way of walking within the church, which isn’t always observed nowadays, called walking in ceremony, where you let the sleeves down. The long sleeves merge with the body, which becomes unified. There’s also the added symbolism of the cowl that when you lay it flat, you get a cross.

When you make your commitment as a monk, after five or six years of probation, you are officially clothed in this garment. The experience of being enveloped by the cowl signifies being brought into monastic life. You become part of the fabric. The actual experience for the wearer is to be enveloped, and it induces a thoughtful, sober mood. It’s not frivolous. At the same time, nothing could be simpler in terms of the shape of the garment. But it’s not a totally impractical garment, so long as you don’t want to do a lot of things. If you want to sit, it’s perfectly comfortable, but it gives the kind of sobriety that’s inductive to the contemplative life.

Our dress hasn’t really changed since the medieval era. It’s difficult to know an exact date when it was designed but the earliest description of monastic dress is in the writings of Saint Hildegard of Bingen, a mystic of the twelfth century in Germany. She was interested in clothing and its theological significance and gives very detailed directions about how various monastic garments are to be constructed.

The garments have been fairly standard since their creation: the cowl is simply three metres of cloth with a hole in the middle. We don’t actually have a pattern for this, we just measure the length needed and do a freehand sweep of the shape. For the fabric, we use a product called Prestalene, developed in 1960 for uniforms by an Australian company called Prestige. It’s sixty-five percent polyester and thirty-five percent viscose rayon, and very tough.

My best cowl and my newest (I have three in total), is seventeen years old. My oldest is from 1965 and I’m still wearing it every day. There is the slowness in that it impedes fast movement, but also attesting to the stability of the cowl. I suppose that is another sort of slowness, since you’re wearing the same garment for fifty-odd years and it doesn’t change colour, or season, or style.

Beneficiaries, another monastic order, have a very similar way of dressing, but they wear the belt inside the scapula, and their garments are all black. Their cowl is gathered around the neck, a detail that started in the old European monasteries for practical reasons of warmth. Often in drawings around the seventeenth century, the cowl has a detachable hood since this is the part that would get dirty, and can be washed separately.

The white cowl also has its own history; for instance if you ever cut your finger it leaves a stain which is there forever. So it’s a record of your life in a sense. We expect at least fifteen years from each cowl, so it collects a history over time.

We don’t wear our monastic garments outside of the monastery, this is for efficiency really; if you’re doing the shopping, you don’t want to make a spectacle of yourself. If you’re on a plane you don’t want to attract too much attention. Anonymity is what we are looking for outside the monastery.

My tailoring predecessor would say that he could always tell to whom a garment belonged by how it hung on the hook. People customise their cowls by wearing them. We had a psychologist working with the community in the 1960s who said he always recognised individuals by their shoes, watches or glasses, that’s where they make the difference, where they express themselves. For us, we can be differentiated by some details, but we don’t choose glasses just because they’re fashionable, but because they are cheaper, or more comfortable. In the church space, however, we strive for uniformity.

The monk that taught me to tailor, who has since died, Brother Leonardo Xavier, had been a milliner in Paris for Christian Dior before opening a hat shop, Leonardo’s, in Brisbane. Before coming to the monastery he made hats for famous women like Princess Margaret and Shirley MacLaine, who would fly over to meet him. We used to joke that the only reason he entered the monastery was because women stopped wearing hats!

I don’t really have a view of mainstream fashion. I get the impression that there’s a kind of exhibitionist tendency that something isn’t deemed ‘good’ unless it’s different from everything else. In my distant observation, originality seems to be the prime value, despite whether it’s comfortable, or usable. I compare it to when I pass a house that looks as though its been designed by an ‘architect’, it’s the same for bold outfits that look as though they’ve been designed by a ‘fashion designer’. It’s self-consciously dramatic or glamorous.

For instance if you were listening to a pianist, you might say ‘anybody could do that’, it sounds so natural and effortless. I’d say the same about a well-designed house: it looks as though it belongs in that place, it isn’t shouting at you or pointing to itself. That would be my idea of good design, that it looks easy, and only when you know something about it, you see the work. I’m attracted to things that are simple and elegant, and that have longevity and history.

Laura Gardner

The Contemplative Life

On Slowness

Vestoj

27
SPINNING FOR FREEDOM

On How Viewing Khadi as Theatre Unravels the Narrative of Mahatma Gandhi

By Dr Susan S. Bean
The story of khadi (‘homespun’) and its creator Mohandas Gandhi is well known in India and around the world. In his political campaign for Indian self-determination (swaraj), Gandhi famously promoted the practices of making thread through spinning by hand and wearing simple khadi garments – not only as key symbols of national identity, but also as a central statement of resistance to the colonial regime. As writer, producer and director, Gandhi instigated a national drama centred on the roles of spinner and khadi-wearer. Made from handspun yarn, his khadi would emerge from India’s handlooms not just to costume the nation but to change the essential character of its people, altering colonial subjects into ‘citizens’. Seen as theatre, the narrative of khadi reveals how Gandhi transformed this cloth into much more than a mere textile, and how khadi exerted transformative and long lasting effects in India’s national movement. The drama of khadi illuminates the potency and tenacity inherent in this humble homespun cloth; already having proved itself within the framework of the freedom struggle, the story of khadi still resonates more than sixty years after India gained Independence.\(^1\)
self-determination. In its association with such transformational properties, khadi is deeply rooted in India’s ancient textile culture, which uses cloth to evoke right conduct, enact community and transmit social and ritual standing.²

Despite the great significance that khadi was to have on the image of Gandhi as an icon of national pride as well as on the trajectory of India as a nation, it was not in his home country that Gandhi first discovered the potential of cloth as both symbol and mode of political resistance. Rather it was during his stay in Britain as a young law student that the young Mohandas Gandhi initially experienced first-hand how garments can immediately and insidiously alter and project one’s sense of self. In the harsher, more repressive and openly racist social environment of South Africa, where Gandhi subsequently spent time providing legal assistance to the Indian community, he discovered the extent to which the colonial authorities directed and controlled civil society – and how much power clothing had in the strategies used to reinforce social hierarchy. He soon realised that on the colonial stage of South Africa, wearing Indian headgear with an English suit could not resolve the dilemma created by imperial authority which made it impossible to be both fully Indian and a full citizen of the British Empire.

Gandhi responded to this dilemma by experimenting with his own attire, developing his knowledge of clothing and its power to delineate both personal identity and the social encounters formally scripted into colonial society and the pageantry of imperial rituals. He had already begun experimenting with his garments on his travels through India in 1901, when he was clad in kurtas and dhotis. In South Africa he donned labourer’s clothes adapted from prison garb, and he also tried going barefoot and wearing a dhoti or lungi at political meetings. But when he sailed to England in 1914, he dressed as an Englishman.

His sartorial experiences led him to conclude that within the British Empire, in terms of dress one could not simultaneously be a dignified Indian and an English gentleman. The costumes assigned by the protocols of the regime ensured the debasement of Indians, aggravated the dialectic of the master-servant relationship, and objectified human beings into the category of colonial subjects deprived of fundamental agency. Realising the centrality of cloth to the mechanisms of colonial domination and to the formation of national identity, Gandhi initiated his own explorations into the potential of khadi as a mode of political resistance, and as a means of invigorating the rural economy – and of thus setting India on a path to self-sufficiency that was culturally suitable, avoiding Western materialism and honouring local communities.

With his experiments behind him, Gandhi returned to India in 1915 in the garb of a Kathiawari peasant. He had now fully begun to use the theatre of cloth to advance his concept of
a true Indian nationalism. Gandhi discovered that in this context, what he wore could have an impact that would definitely influence, and to some extent actually direct, the course of political events. However, he quickly found the Kathiawari outfit inadequate for his purposes – it was too closely tied to region, class and religion. In order to promote the unity of all Indians throughout the sub-continent, rich and poor, of all religious persuasions and denominations, Gandhi needed to evolve a simple and practical costume that transcended cultural distinctions.

Through continued personal and political practice Gandhi successfully initiated a new drama of cloth and clothing – one not scripted and controlled by the colonial regime, but one which would emerge from within the nationalist movement. On this stage Gandhi and khadi would be the central protagonists.

ACT 2
SPINNING AS THEATRE

Gandhi promulgated the theatre of khadi not only by advocating its use as attire: he also directed that all supporters of swaraj should spin. Hand spinning was once, of course, the only way to produce yarn for weaving, but in Gandhi’s time it was a rarity in India. By 1908 Gandhi had become aware of the importance of spinning, despite having only a vague grasp of the actual mechanisms of the process. Hand spinning, he reasoned, required the simplest of equipment and could be learned by anyone. He considered it a way to revitalise the rural economy by providing a supplementary source of income to all. True swadeshi (fully indigenous) cloth, he asserted, must be fully handmade.

After instituting the making of khadi at the Satyagraha Ashram in Gujarat in 1917–18 and after urging all Indians to devote half-an-hour each day to spinning yarn, Gandhi became convinced that spinning was in fact much more than an essential ingredient of true swadeshi cloth. He recognised the theatrical power of spinning to simultaneously enact and convey the narrative of the freedom struggle. Although traditionally a task performed by women, anyone and everyone could spin. The act of spinning could be staged in every home in India, and in public before assembled multitudes. The manipulation of the wheel or spindle was a dramatic, almost magical act, radiating its own aura as the spinner directed his or her complete awareness to the action, concentrating on the movement of the wheel, feeding the fibre, twisting, pulling and winding the yarn. The audience, whether family members or a mass assembly, watched as the spinner sat with total focus on a task apparently meditative in character, transforming bits of fluff into purposive strands. Observers saw that spinning, like the movement for political freedom, required discipline and sacrifice – and it had to be deeply internalised as personal practice if it was to be accomplished with skill.
Spinning had the power to transform both the nation and its citizenry. The spinner appeared as the simultaneous embodiment of swadeshi and swaraj. By staging spinning in homes, villages and public arenas, members of the audience would have a participatory role on the national stage, rather than being mere spectators to the drama of the freedom struggle. Dramatic scenes of Gandhi and other nationalist leaders sitting at their charkhas were witnessed by multitudes at public meetings, and enthusiastic followers recreated such scenes at home. Committed spinners not only made thread, they made a place for themselves on the national stage – acting out self-sufficiency, and in the process actually developing self-reliance. Singly and as communities, they introduced the script of nation building to towns, villages and homes across the country.

ACT 3
THE TRIUMPH
OF KHADI: SCRIPTING
THE ROLE OF CITIZEN

Gandhi's experiments with clothing and its potential for staging, dramatising and effecting the freedom movement culminated around the same time as his efforts to transform India into a nation of spinners enacting and creating swaraj. In 1919, Gandhi hit upon a solution. From the very beginning of his politicisation in South Africa, he had become acutely sensitive to the power of headgear, as it projected and simultaneously shaped the character of the wearer. The act of bestowing or removing headgear had the power to elevate or degrade; to alter the wearer's social position and even influence the wearer's moral substance. After many years of experimenting, Gandhi came up with a new type of headgear for men. The simple cap, soon popularly named for him, would foreground and augment the theatrical potential of khadi.

Gandhi's simple, small, folded cap made of white khadi was inexpensive, easy to keep and wear, and without strong communal or sectarian associations. At Gandhi's urging the cap was swiftly adopted by the Indian National Congress, and over
the next two decades it became an active signifier of nationalism. Merely by donning the cap the wearer already assumed the role of freedom fighter. Worn en masse at public meetings, demonstrations and marches, Gandhi-capped proto-citizens of a free India united to oppose the colonial administration. These mass ‘performances’ were filmed for newsreels and photographed for newspapers, and people across the sub-continent and across the world recognised them as critical participatory scenes in a drama of resistance.

In 1921, however, Gandhi gave up the simple cap and reduced his apparel to khadi loincloth and chaddar (cotton shawl). This final costume change was a multifaceted action, demonstrating his empathy with and commitment to the impoverished masses. In making this decision he also emphasised the scarcity and consequent expense of khadi. Through his reduced attire, he exhorted the nation to spin more yarn and produce more khadi for all to wear. The image of a khadi-clad Gandhi, the spiritually evolved ‘great soul’ (mahatma) at his spinning wheel was a stunning and absolute repudiation of the persona of the proper English gentleman to which he had once aspired. Through this unequivocal saintly persona, he proclaimed pride in Indian civilisation, the equality of all Indians, and the dignity of all – even the poorest.

EPILOGUE
AFTER GANDHI

India’s independence in 1947 and Gandhi’s assassination in 1948 robbed the theatre of khadi of its creator, producer and director, as well as its fundamental reason for being. After Independence, khadi was institutionalised. It was embedded in the fabric of the nation through the Khadi and Village Industries Commission and successive five-year plans, which maintained spinning as a source of income in rural areas. The powerful association with Gandhi, patriotism, morality and the freedom movement has helped keep khadi alive ever since. Nevertheless, despite innovations and other efforts to achieve economic viability, khadi has continuously required government subsidy to survive. The khadi produced today would be unrecognisable to its spiritual father – the mixtures of natural and synthetic fibres, production of yarn on semi-mechanised charkhas, sometimes with twelve or more spindles, and designs in a plethora of colours and patterns make Gandhi’s khadi seem like a distant memory.

In the decades since Independence, motivations for wearing khadi have shifted as well. Some wear khadi to mark themselves as keepers of Gandhian ideology and supporters of India’s hand-manufacturers. After Independence, the white khadi kurta and cap gradually became a uniform for politicians wishing to signal their patriotic service – sometimes sincerely, sometimes not. In the twenty-first century, khadi has also converged with the ecological movement to be featured among products that are organic, ‘green’ and sustainable. Recently too, textile and fashion designers who appreciate the sturdiness of the coarser counts and the fine, diaphanous qualities of higher counts have adopted khadi for high fashion collections. This elevation of khadi into the domain of elite consumption seems ironic given its original role – that of promoting the democratic values and virtues of equality and material simplicity.

Yet the appreciation of khadi in its specific contemporary manifestations, perennially empowered by its enshrinement in the Gandhi-led freedom movement, does indeed help to maintain its production and its presence as a meaningful industry. Khadi is sustained by intersecting, if not always complementary, forces – ongoing government programmes to support its production as supplemental employment in rural areas; a source of low-cost clothing; khadi’s appeal as a handmade textile in an age of mechanised production; and khadi’s potential as an ecologically viable product. In all these contexts the indelible connection to Gandhi and the freedom movement surrounds khadi like an aura, effortlessly maintaining the historical and psychological significance of this homespun cloth for millions of Indians. The theatre of khadi that Gandhi single-handedly conceived and initiated from the deepest roots of personal conviction has been powerful enough to resonate and remain relevant for more than sixty years after Independence, and there is all likelihood that it will continue to do so for decades into the future.
On Patience in the Age of Hypermodernity

By Dr Donald B. Kraybill
of the Amish, was a tailor, which may account for some of the group’s interest in dress. Prior to arriving in North America, they rejected the use of buttons as ostentatious symbols of pride and instead used wire hooks and eyes to fasten clothing. Their critics taunted them saying, ‘Those with hooks and eyes, the Lord will save, those with buttons and pockets, the devil will snatch’.3

Today North America’s nearly 300,000 Amish live in thirty-one states. Their church is organised into 2120 congregations, each consisting of twenty to thirty-five families living in proximity yet interspersed among non-Amish neighbours. The life of each congregation is guided by its ordnung (order). This unwritten set of regulations governs the use of technology, dress styles, furniture, and other practices. There are some forty different Amish affiliations, or tribes, with unique styles of dress, buggies, and technology that distinguish them from one another. Even within the same tribe, the bishop of each congregation has some latitude to interpret and enforce dress regulations. Although Amish people may appear as a homogeneous cluster from a distance, their dress styles vary between and within each tribe. One researcher found dozens of variations in women’s clothing across fifteen Amish communities.4

This essay, however, focuses on the dress practices of the large (30,000-member) Amish community in Lancaster County, ninety miles west of Philadelphia.

‘Patience’ is the gigantic message scrawled on every Amish buggy plodding on modern highways.1 ‘The horse is our pacer’, as one Amish man puts it, ‘We can’t speed up like you can in a car’.2 The slow-paced hymns in Amish church services linger for twenty minutes. The most traditional Amish do not set their clocks ahead an hour in the summer season as other Americans do. These traditionalists favour slow time, God’s time, established by the rising and setting of the sun. In the midst of a hyper-speed culture that wants more and more, faster and faster, from instant downloads, immediate tweets, express mail, and extreme sports to rushed everything, the Amish stubbornly resist the velocity of hypermodernity.

The Amish emerged in 1693 in the Bern area of Switzerland and the Alsace region of France. They migrated to the United States in several waves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the last European congregation closed in 1936. Jacob Amman, the founder of the Amish, was a tailor, which may account for some of the group’s interest in dress. Prior to arriving in North America, they rejected the use of buttons as ostentatious symbols of pride and instead used wire hooks and eyes to fasten clothing. Their critics taunted them saying, ‘Those with hooks and eyes, the Lord will save, those with buttons and pockets, the devil will snatch’.3

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This essay, however, focuses on the dress practices of the large (30,000-member) Amish community in Lancaster County, ninety miles west of Philadelphia.
The Amish seek to follow
the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. Two pivotal religious
values — separation from the world and self-denial — regulate Amish
wardrobes. Separation from the world means that their religious community
seeks to maintain a cultural difference from the outside society even though
they mingle with non-Amish neighbours and buy and sell products in
the larger economy. Church elders
believe that clothing should reflect
the larger economy. Church elders
say, ‘It’s just the way our people dress’. Nonetheless, dress habits have a
religious legitimation because the
local congregation reaffirms them
twice a year in members’ meetings.
For instance, an Amish catechism
manual devotes nine pages and forty-
three questions and answers to dress —
second only to the topic of heaven.

Individualism is the sharpest
wedge between Amish culture and
modern life. Amish life accentuates
communal obligations and loyalty,
not individual freedom and choice.
Amish culture values deference to
others and ufigeavec — giving up to
the group. All cosmetics and
jewellery, including wedding rings
and wristwatches, are taboo. For the
Amish, self-adornment calls attention
to personal taste and preference.
Clothing that shows off one’s individu-
ality produces a proud, haughty person,
and pride is considered an abomination
in the eyes of God. The fashions of the
outside world, in Amish eyes, are vain
expressions of conceit and frivolity.

In hypermodernity, dress
articulates individuation and personal
taste. In Amish life, clothing expresses
exactly the opposite meaning. When
members wear Amish garb, they relin-
quish their right to self-expression
and signal their commitment to com-
munal authority. Amish dress styles
have several important functions:
to show conformity to the collective
order, to restrain individual expres-
sion, to promote equality, and to
erect symbolic boundaries around
the community. Dress provides a
distinctive uniform that declares
without doubt who belongs and who
does not. In short, dress signals group
loyalty. It shows whether one is
obedient or disobedient, humble or
proud, modest or haughty, loyal
or rebellious.

Amish women and men have a
wardrobe for each of three occasions:
work, dress up (public occasions),
and church. The most traditional,
plainest, and most conforming garb
is worn to church. Men who might,
for example, wear jackets with
buttons for dress-up occasions will
wear suits with hooks and eyes for
church services. Likewise, women
wear darker colours and fasten their
dresses with straight pins to attend
church. Regardless of venue, men
and women wear clothing made of
solid, non-patterned fabrics.

The wardrobe of an Amish
woman includes a dress, an apron,
a cape, a prayer kapp, and, in winter,
a heavy shawl and a protective bonnet.
For everyday work, she wears a scarf
instead of a kapp and does not wear
a cape. The degree of plainness is
signaled by whether a woman wears
a bib apron (a garment that drapes
over the dress and is tied but not
pinned in the back) or the more
traditional waist-style pinned apron
for everyday activities. The typical
woman may own seven to ten dresses
including two or three specifically
styled for church services. Typical
colours for the non-church dresses of
married or older women are dark
blue, light blue, hunter green, winter-
green, olive green, light green, mahogany
and chestnut brown, tan, deep mauve,
and dark plum.

Amish men grow beards but
shave their upper lips because
moustaches have traditionally been
associated with European military
officers. They wear shirts without
pockets, suspenders, and black
zipperless trousers with a ‘broad fall’
flap across the front that is fastened
by a button. A suit coat is worn for
dress-up and for church. Zippers,
belts, and ties are prohibited. These
items as well as pockets on shirts are
considered ornamental and frivolous.
The size and style of men’s broadbrim
hats (straw for summer and felt for
winter) are regulated by the church,
and commonly the wider the brim,
the plainer the man is understood to
be. It is rare to see a boy or man with-
out a hat when he is outside a building.
Typical colours for men’s shirts include
light pink, sky blue, baby blue, lime
green (very common), royal blue, tan,
blue/green, olive green, emerald
green, burnt sienna (for teenagers),
deep purple (for young boys), light
purple, brown and other colours
similar to those worn by women.

Although undergarments are
typically purchased, most Amish
clothing is homemade. A few Amish
seamstresses make suits and over-
coats for men and organdy prayer
kapps for women, which require
special skill. Mothers typically sew
most of the clothing for their family,
including their own dresses. They
purchase fabrics from Amish-owned
shops and spend much time perusing
the aisles filled with dark hues,
holding the fabrics up to the light,
inspecting the slightly different
textures and fabric compositions.
In the past, women wore one hundred
percent cotton fabrics primarily,
which required ironing. Recently,
more women wear cotton/polyester
blends, which wrinkle less. Mothers
occasionally purchase some of their
sons’ and husbands’ work shirts
from thrift shops.

The Amish value thrift and
frugality. They frequently repair,
recycle, and reuse clothing. As one
woman commented when asked, ‘If
the clothes are patched and if the
patch needs to be patched, then
I know it needs to be replaced’. Another
woman said wistfully, ‘I feel a bit badly for my youngest son [of
four boys] because he has never had anything new, but he hasn’t minded, either’. Amish children wear their clothes hard, given all their chores and their frequently long walks to school. Families share children’s clothing among one another. Occasionally, mothers purchase contemporary-looking jackets (without hoods) for their sons and then painstakingly remove the zippers.

From the age of sixteen to the early twenties, Amish youth experience rumspiringa, a time for socialising and courtship with their peers. During this period, they are not accountable to church regulations because they are not yet baptised and official members of the church. Many continue to dress in fairly traditional ways, while others rebel more openly and wear some non-Amish clothing to youth parties. Teenage boys, for example, may wear blue jeans and fashionable shirts and cut their hair according to contemporary styles, all of which is prohibited for adult church members. During rumpspringa, some young women wear dresses in non-traditional colours and complement their dress choices by painting their toenails with brightly coloured polish and wearing sandals or flip-flops or by wearing coloured socks, which they call ‘anklets’, with other non-traditional footwear. Many youths try to respect their families’ preferences even though their dress violates the church code. Such violations may elicit gossip but are not punished because the young people have not yet pledged to obey the ordnung.

In the Amish mind, fashion is a bad word that is associated with the vanity of popular culture. An Amish manual says, ‘We know that worldly fashions have their origin in the most wicked cities on earth, that their foundation is not modesty and godliness but lust and pride’. Amish dress practices are slow to change because they are viewed as religious precepts. But change they do, and not only for utilitarian reasons. Amish fashion – change for the sake of change – exists, but it is subtle, slow, and miniscule. For instance, for many years baby boys typically wore dresses until they were toilet trained, but that practice is changing, as some parents worry that a dress on a baby boy may lead to gender confusion when he grows up. A more progressive mother, with a wink to tradition, may take her baby boy to church in a dress one time and thereafter dress him in trousers and shirt. Individual signs of rebellion or boundary testing include, for women, wearing prayer kapps that are smaller and thus expose more of the ear, kapps with untied strings, kapps with pronounced heart-shaped designs on the back, dresses in brighter colours, decorative pins on jacket lapels, and small frills and ruffles on sleeves. In addition, women’s dresses are now longer than they were in the past. The waistbands, which had been dropped toward the hips, are now at the waist. The pleats on the sleeves of short-sleeved summer dresses have changed and, occasionally, teenage girls add decorative buttons to those sleeves. To circumvent the prohibition of pockets on shirts, some men wear a leather pouch on their suspenders to hold pens, and more progressive men are likely to wear short-sleeved shirts. Occasionally, they may wear a window-pane patterned shirt or a cherry red shirt, both of which exceed traditional patterns of decorum. Other widely accepted changes in the last decade involve more and brighter colour choices, athletic shoes worn in work settings and Velcro, which, in a nod of respect to the taboo on buttons, is frequently used to fasten coats and other clothing items instead of hooks and eyes and straight pins. However, none of these glimmers of fashion would ever appear in a Sunday worship service, where conformity to the dress code is paramount.

Unlike moderns who welcome change and applaud the endless arrival of new gadgets and gizmos, the Amish prize patience and slowness, and are averse to change – especially change simply for the sake of it. Such deference to durable traditions might make Amish life appear drab to the outsider. Yet Amish life has many benefits for those who have chosen to abide by its rules. In a culture where abundant choice frequently spikes anxiety and where the emphasis placed on individuality is often at odds with our desire to fit in with the group, the demure and self-effacing nature of the Amish is arguably not just a way to rebel against the stresses of the modern world, but also a deft manner of finding personal satisfaction in acquiescence to the group. Perhaps then, the Amish know what the rest of us are still struggling to accept: slowness no doubt brings its own kind of joy.
BETWIXT AND BETWEEN

On Liminal Time in the Context of the Fashion Show

By Nathalie Khan
Catwalk shows hardly ever begin on time. Delay, anticipation and deferment are traditionally part of the routine. Waiting for the show to begin is, in other words, an integral part of the experience of the catwalk show as a live event. But time is precious and waiting not only exemplifies anticipation, but also holds an explicit value in itself. The time spent waiting for a catwalk show to start can be described as liminal, a moment that implies transition or passing from one state to another. In the age of information technology and instant image production, waiting – as both process and ritual – is, however, a rare occurrence. The philosopher Harold Schweizer argues that waiting can be regarded as a ‘temporary liberation from the economics of time-is-money, as a brief respite from the haste of modern life’.  

While delayed catwalk shows during the otherwise hurried catwalk season are often considered unprofessional if not rude, waiting can also be seen as a privilege reserved for the small elite attending such events. In this context, the idea of liminal time marks an important aspect of the fashion cycle. As a threshold it implies the experience of a shift from one phase to another.

When exploring the role of liminal time in the context of contemporary fashion shows, its absence within the digital frame is noteworthy. Limitless reproductions of catwalk shows have in recent times altered the experience of the live event, which is arguably no longer rooted within liminal space and time. Recently, the purpose and currency of the live event and ideas of temporality have gained renewed attention in fashion writing. Sociologist Agnès Rocamora’s detailed discussion of fashion and time in relation to new technologies and the proliferation of digital platforms is especially vital for exploring the constant acceleration within the symbolic production of fashion. Rocamora argues that with the instant ‘production of images, fashion has become more immediate’ and that the speed with which fashion discourse is produced challenges the hegemonic position of high fashion.  

What is of relevance when we discuss fashion’s relationship with time is how cultural forms such as the catwalk show are tested through constant acceleration of live streams and instant messaging on fashion media platforms or social media. In this regard, Rocamora refers to Paul Virilio’s seminal essay *The Overexposed City*. Here the French
cultural theorist speaks of ‘real time’ being replaced by virtual time which exposes ‘itself instantaneously’.

Yet physical space still holds meaning in the light of liminal time. The moment leading up to a catwalk show is hardly ever replicated online and in this sense the virtual world has not replaced the ‘real’. Instead, the digital representation of the live event has lost its threshold, as the stream begins the instant the model enters the runway.

The actual waiting, suspension and delay are only experienced or endured by the elite that is present at the show. This marks what can be called ‘real time’. In order to measure duration in time, the philosopher Henry Bergson famously observed a lump of sugar dissolving in water. His aim was to prove that our notion of time relates to our own, subjective understanding. Time spent waiting is informed through our lived experience, such as feelings of impatience or frustration, and not by what he describes as ‘mathematical time’. But in a postmodern context, time as well as consciousness is mobile and notions of duration incomplete. Time flows at different speeds and the instance of delay becomes a manifestation of the structure of the catwalk show, the ritual of waiting contextualising not only the reality of the live event, but also the reversal of social structures.

According to the anthropologist Victor Turner liminal time can be seen as a passage or pathway that is culturally defined. Turner defines liminality as a time or space in which ‘normal modes of social action’ are scrutinised or challenged. The idea of liminal time as a transitional stage is also described as ‘neither here nor there’, or as Turner puts it: ‘betwixt’ – a stage between separation and reassimilation.

In his biography Dior by Dior, designer Christian Dior describes the moment of waiting for the live event as filled with anticipation; a stage before those on and off the catwalk come together:

‘Half an hour before the show, two people are seated comfortably side by side on each step; but twenty minutes later, they disappeared beneath a sea of new arrivals. The staircase begins to look like an overloaded boat.’

positions, which govern behavioural as well as institutional processes. His position differs from that of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who differentiates between the social and the ritual as two separate entities. Rather than making this distinction, Turner defines liminality as a time or space in which ‘normal modes of social action’ are scrutinised or challenged. The idea of liminal time as a transitional stage is also described as ‘neither here nor there’, or as Turner puts it: ‘betwixt’ – a stage between separation and reassimilation.

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Here transitional time is described as an experience of space filling up, a kind of temporality we associate with the ritual of anticipation. The notion of waiting gains ‘meaning in relation to the context in which it is marked out.’ But liminal space and time appear out-dated in the age of ‘speed culture’ as shows no longer rely on chronology or mechanical speed, but are seen, shared and consumed at different times and various virtual locations.

Traditionally, those who wait in silence are seen as powerless. One could even argue that catwalk shows are designed to make those in power, such as fashion media or buyers, seem structurally inferior at the beginning of each show. An example of this is Marc Jacobs’ Spring/Summer 2008 collection premiere in New York, which began at 11 pm rather than the scheduled 9 pm. Critics Cathy Horyn and Suzy Menkes both expressed frustration after attending the show: ‘Delayed by two hours […] Mr Jacobs’ spring show expressed perfectly the dislocating values of our culture’ and ‘A bad, sad show from Marc Jacobs, running two hours late, high on hype and low on delivery, symbolised everything that is wrong with current fashion.’ One could state that these comments exemplify the reversal of power structures. After all, as Turner has argued, liminal space is an expression of anti-structure which is perceived as confrontation by those whose structure is undermined – in this case two of the world’s most acclaimed fashion critics.

Both Horyn and Menkes speak of delay as being symbolic of something other than a simple deferral, while instead commenting on a shift in values within the industry. But the imminent authority of fashion media is challenged even further through the live stream. At the time of Marc Jacobs’ S/S 08 show fashion shows were not yet reproduced in the way we have witnessed since the proliferation of fashion media platforms. With the rise of digital media, different structures are offered. Live streams can be described as what art historian Keith Moxey has called ‘visual time.’

Fashion in the age of the internet has taught us to come to terms with the asynchronous nature of temporal development. Time flows at a different speed at different locations. The concerns of fashion critics who lament a two-hour delay appear less relevant in this context, as fashion no longer relies on simulated ‘clock time’. But what is significant here is that these shows do not simply present a specific structure, temporal or not; structure is all they are.

During Milan fashion week, Jeremy Scott’s Spring/Summer 2015 show for Moschino began one hour behind schedule due to the late arrival of its celebrity guests Rita Ora and Katy Perry. According to fashion critic Vanessa Friedman’s Twitter feed photographers started to become impatient: ‘Katy Perry now getting booed by @moschino. Really, very bad business.’ But the instant feed, now an integral part of the discursive narrative of the fashion show, offers another interpretation. Situations rather than delay, become the focus of reflection. When Katy Perry finally arrived, Twitter presented her posing for the angry mob in order to deflect the situation. Liminal time is filled with a photo opportunity, until the first model enters the catwalk. Delay, no longer empty space, becomes a spectacle in its own right.

The meaning of waiting as a metaphor has been discussed by theatre director Richard Schechner in relation to Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot. Informed by an anthropological approach, he refers back to Victor Turner’s writing on ritual and liminal time by arguing that waiting is the play’s action and time its subject: ‘The characters wish to “fill time” in such a way that the vessel “containing” their activities is unnoticed amid the activities themselves.’

In this context, activities are a means to fill time, not unlike Vanessa Friedman’s Twitter feed. Time is not linear in Waiting for Godot; instead, the characters deflect from consciously engaging with their own situations. Schechner notes that confrontation with time is painful in the same way that waiting is shown as meaningless unless it is an activity in its own right. What is important here is that the characters in Beckett’s play are waiting in vain. Godot of course never arrives, but instead actors and viewers alike get to experience time. In this context one could argue again that structure itself is all that remains.

In the age of live feeds and instant image reproduction the role and function of the catwalk show, as a seasonal event which marks the beginning of the fashion calendar, has been severely challenged. Debate has questioned the validity of such an exorbitant ritual in the light of the seismic shift within online fashion promotion. As the World Wide Web offers instant access, catwalk shows are no longer events exclusively meant for fashion’s elite.

Not the catwalk show, then, but the moment that models step onto the runway to present the new season’s designs has lost its footing. The time proceeding this moment, however, has gained in significance. Liminal time is still an integral part of the fashion season. Existing structures will continue to shape the discourse of fashion and the online experience of live feeds will arguably become meaningless if the experience of liminal time is lost within the virtual frame. What remains to be seen is how those present at the shows will continue to fill their time.
DWELLING TIME

On Examining Experience Economy and the Third Space in Fashion

By Karinna Nobbs
With photographs by Polly Brown

To paraphrase Andy Warhol, stores are twenty-first century museums and the blending of culture, leisure and retail is today an unmistakable global trend within the fashion industry. In consumer culture the third space is one of the foremost locations in your life – somewhere to spend both time and money and where social aspects are stressed and the link to leisure pursuits is of prime importance.

The creation of third space zones in stores works on the premise that the contents of the area will engage the consumer for longer than the products alone would, thereby increasing what is known as ‘dwell time’. This is especially the case if seating areas, art and books are included, as these are commonly enjoyed in a more time-consuming fashion. Marketing scholar Andrew Parsons has shown that the more time customers spend in a store, the more likely they are to buy or buy more, making third space an attractive proposition for fashion brands.3 Similarly, the inclusion of material with prominent cultural capital such as art, books and lifestyle magazines, arguably functions to elevate the perception and importance of a fashion store or brand. As such, third space can be described as having a ‘halo effect’, enhancing the level of sophistication of a retail environment and therefore making it more attractive to customers.

One of the main reasons that third space has emerged within fashion is indeed due to the increasing sophistication of consumers.

Someday all department stores will become museums and all museums will become department stores.

Andy Warhol

The Gentlemen Barbers. Over the last couple of years, all have been introduced into the fashion retail environment as part of a recipe for ‘third space’. First identified within a sociological context by Ray Oldenburg in 1989, this concept refers to ‘places apart from the home (first space) and workplace (second space) where individuals can freely gather, exchange ideas and socialise’.

Building on Oldenburg’s definition, trend scout and retail specialist Christian Mikunda describes this so-called third space in commerce as ‘somewhere which is not work or home but a comfortable space to browse, relax and meet people, even enjoy a meal’.2 Traditionally focused on community and culture, third spaces have in contemporary capitalist culture become centred on commerce and consumption.
As marketing consultants David Lewis and Darren Bridger have pointed out,
customers today are more independent, involved, individualistic and informed than ever before due to a scarcity of time, attention and trust. For a stretched consumer, merging retail and leisure/culture into one space could thus be both a desirable and practical solution.

In 1998 the management strategists Joseph Pine and James Gilmore wrote about the 'Experience Economy', set to follow the agrarian economy, the industrial economy and the more recent service economy. Arguing that the consumer’s search for meaning is no longer provided by the mere consumption of products or services, they instead suggested that businesses should devise memorable events for their clients, making the memory of the event in effect the product or experience consumed. Almost two decades later, this notion is more relevant than ever. As e-commerce increases, brick and mortar stores are in evermore need to evolve and offer added content in order to attract and maintain customers. Online third spaces are hard to create and their sensory appeal and experiential nature can be used by stores as a tool for competitive advantage in terms of PR value. Bearing this in mind, third space, when executed strategically, could hence be the saviour of brick and mortar stores and help keep high streets vibrant and well populated. Yet it is not without its issues. Investing in third space involves both risks and costs, as the retailer gives up pure selling space for something more intangible that may or may not pay off. It is known that the level of risks and costs increases as you diversify from your core business, and retailers often find that certain third space elements, particularly coffee table books, lifestyle magazines and art, do not actually sell. Instead, they seem to function more like props promoting a scene of intellectualism and elitism for the brand. Viewed as such, third space can lose its potential value and meaning as it becomes part of a commercial formula in the quest for custom.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, when the third space is too ‘good’ or overt, it can cannibalise attention from the products and brand. In addition, more conventionally minded customers often see the blurring of retail and leisure as too distracting, preferring to see art in an art gallery, drink coffee in a coffee shop and buy clothes in a clothing store. In this view, third space merely dilutes the experiential value of each activity.

The questions remains, then, whether fashion brands should invest in third space within retail environments. While it does create brand engagement, which can translate into sales, this is contingent on the third space elements being relevant to what a specific brand’s customers aspire to and how they like to spend their time. After all, the day every other fashion store has a bookshop, a barber and a coffee shop, the entire concept risks becoming utterly meaningless.
A TIME FOR DRESSING

On the Symbolic Importance of Splendour

By Professor Barbara Vinken
Dressing is seen today as an activity that should take up little time and be as casual as possible. Not only do we no longer have servants at home to help us bathe, dress, do our hair and make-up, we also no longer receive people or dictate letters while getting dressed. In this unceremonious age of ours, where no time can be wasted with what we consider superficial frivolities, we have lost patience for any kind of dress code. Whereas today clothes are chosen so that they can easily transition from daywear to eveningwear, we appear to have forgotten that even in the bourgeois societies of the nineteenth century people were expected to change clothes at least once a day. Except for very special occasions like weddings or funerals, getting dressed in our present-day Western world is not the ceremonially staged, time-consuming and heavily symbolic activity it once was, but rather one that is intimate, private and invisible to the public. It was not always like this however. In the French absolutist court of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which set the tone for the fashionable world up to the Revolution, the aristocracy cared above all about investment in the most literal sense of the term: the Latin investire means ‘to clothe’. Getting dressed was possibly the most important daily ceremony for both men and women at the French absolutist court – and even more so for the last queen of the Ancien Régime, the most infelicitous Marie Antoinette.¹

When her mother, Marie Thérèse of Austria, had set her mind on making the Habsburg princess the next queen of France, considerable time and money was spent to turn her into the latest fashion icon. Marie Thérèse procured an exceedingly expensive, all French wardrobe for her daughter and set about transforming the girl into a proper fashion doll. Her body and allure were modelled after the French mode: her teeth were set straight, her hairline displaced. Ballet teachers taught her to glide as if weightless in the French fashion. The symbolic weight of clothes, of dressing and undressing, can already be glimpsed when we think of the formal protocol Marie Antoinette underwent upon crossing the border. The princess was required to leave everything Austrian behind in order to become the Queen of France, an event which was embodied in the symbolically charged, elaborate ceremony of her undressing down to shirt and stockings. With these clothes, the princess left her old self behind to be literally invested into another identity: that of la dauphine, the French queen to be.

The great French moralist Jean de la Bruyère once wrote that all the aristocracy was lacking was a private life – the very core value of bourgeois happiness.² In France, everyone at court was constantly on display. The life of Marie Antoinette, minutely prescribed by etiquette, consisted of constant self-exhibition. Central to this exhibition were the clothing ceremonies that had nothing private about them. The lever, the coucher, the diverse clothes-changing ceremonies throughout the day; all were central daily happenings that took place in the public eye. The royal
time table, minutely regulated, was a seemingly ceaseless protocol: after having received her finery every morning in a basket, the Queen chose what dress to wear from a book with fabric samples; her choice was between twelve robes à la française, twelve ostentatious dresses with a smaller panier and twelve deshabillés, or informal dresses. Then the process of dressing started, in full presence of the ladies of the court. Every piece the Queen was going to wear had to be handed over according to the strict hierarchical order of the ladies present. There were numerous half official toilettes every day, where only a few ladies in waiting were present, but the most important toilett was the toilette de représentation before the everyday attending of mass, a moment witnessed by all the ladies of the court. Never seen as a waste of time, this was instead considered performance of essential importance.

The order of rank at court was mirrored in the literal closeness to the royal body during those dressing ceremonies. Those high in rank had the privilege of handing the clothes to the king or queen, and the body of the royal couple was meant to illustrate the divine right of kings as part of a beautifully ordered cosmos. Taking the time to dress that body was to give it its most important function, namely to incarnate the literal meaning of cosmos: adornment. The act of dressing, which took up a substantial part of the day, was here of the highest symbolic importance. It was considered an investment that performed the order of the body politic. The elaborate washing, dressing, coiffure and make-up in front of and by the court was not the putting on of a mask, or an empty frivolous covering over a true, authentic nature as bourgeois critique would later see it. Instead, the glory of the royal body, invested in its royal insignia, represented the cosmic order in all its splendour for everyone to see.

By the time Marie Antoinette entered the stage however, this God-willed order was starting to get out of joint. The queen might have felt it breaking down without being able to articulate it – her trouble to conform to the ceremonies of the court arguably being a symptom of this. Marie Antoinette, though the most lavishly dressed woman at court, had little patience with constantly putting herself on display and thus with enacting the legitimate hierarchy of the courtly order of ranks. A little anecdote told by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, both French naturalistic writers from the nineteenth century, not only affords a glimpse into the rigid and ceremonial etiquette of the Queen’s dressing ceremony, but also allows us to measure her resistance to it:

It is a cold winter day at Versailles, and the dauphine, naked in bed, is about to put on her shirt, handed over by a première femme de chambre when a lady in waiting, une femme d’atours, enters. Since she is higher in rank and thus symbolically closer to the body of the Queen, the shirt is handed over to her. But before she can hand it to Marie Antoinette, shivering in her bed, the duchesse of Orléans enters the room, and the shirt is passed to her. But even she does not manage to give it to the dauphine, since at this moment, her Royal Highness, the contesse de Provence, enters and the shirt is given to her. Marie Antoinette, with her arms crossed over her naked bosom, is heard to have exclaimed: ‘How awfully inconvenient!’

As this story shows, Marie Antoinette was fated to undermine the link between appearance and being that had dominated the French court for so long. By staging herself as an individual, a carefully and obviously made-up fashionable beauty, she dressed, as her alarmed mother back in Vienna scolded her, not as a Queen, but as an actress. While the adorned body of the king or queen, like that of the ranks of the clergy or the aristocracy, put on display the idealised being, the clothes of an actress are exchangeable and variable and show only, if anything, the arbitrariness of clothing.

Resisting the hierarchical ways of the etiquette, Marie Antoinette withdrew her body from the hands and eyes of the aristocracy to hand it over to professionals. She no longer relied on the aristocratic hairdresser appointed for the Queen’s coiffure, but turned to Jean-François Autier, the fashionable hairstylist better known as ‘Léonard’. She spent hours in a tête-à-tête with the modiste Rose Bertin, the rising star of the emerging Parisian fashion scene, and even tried to bend the strict etiquette regulating access to the royal chambers in the designer’s favour – thus overturning the time-honoured hierarchies that the court was so sensitive to. While Marie Antoinette gradually excluded the court from her dressing ceremonies, the demi-monde was ushered in: hairdressers and stylists suddenly had access to the Queen. The French kingdom, one of the great kingdoms of the world, was ruled, the gossip-mongers knew, by a fashion muslin ministry. By opening up the sacred chambers of Versailles to the demi-monde, Marie Antoinette unintentionally undermined the protocols of dressing and getting dressed and, thereby, the very idea of a God-given hierarchy of the estates. Resisting the ceremony of dressing, she no longer performed her most important function: to display the hierarchical celestial order in her adorned body for both the court and the people.

As we have seen, the act of getting dressed took up a vast amount of time in the Ancien Régime, arguably to reflect its enormous symbolic importance. As if to prove this point, the more important you were, the more time it would take to get dressed. But, contrary to contemporary mores, this was neither considered idle vanity nor a frivolous passe-temps. Rather it was implicitly understood to be an activity of emblematic importance, and as such it was a very public act. The cosmic order, represented in the regulation of the ranks, was performed and upheld until it could be maintained no longer.
On May Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement

By Karlijn Slegers
In the late nineteenth century, Great Britain was well on its way to becoming a fully industrialised society. The First and Second Industrial Revolutions, along with the peace, prosperity and national self-confidence of the Victorian era, had paved the way for continuous technological progress and economic growth. These developments in turn prompted vast social changes that transformed the very core of British society. As early as 1829, the Victorian Scottish writer and historian Thomas Carlyle stated that his time should be referred to as the Age of Machinery, arguing: 'On every hand the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster.'

As Carlyle's choice of words suggests, the ever-increasing mechanisation and industrial production of consumer goods was not met only with enthusiasm. In fact, opposition, based mainly on the fear of growing inequities and a highly romanticised notion of simpler times, rose steadily. Rapid industrialisation resulted in environmental pollution and dismal conditions for the working classes, and opponents began campaigning for a better quality of both life and goods. According to adversaries of industrialisation, the division of labour which accompanied mechanisation and mass-production did not just degrade human labour, but also the fruits originating from it; fruits which, though affordable, were all too often the product of inferior and shoddy workmanship.

Quantity, then, arguably started to prevail over quality, making the opposition yearn for times past. In The Stones of Venice, for instance, the prominent English art critic and painter John Ruskin looked to medieval times for inspiration, when craftsmen worked with their hands to create what their supposedly unfettered minds conjured up.

This image of the free artisan became an enduring and influential one, providing both soil and stimulation for one of the most significant international design developments of the era: the Arts and Crafts movement. Gathering force in the 1880s, the Arts and Crafts movement actively rebelled against the loss of workmanship and the designer-craftsman duality that was caused by the accelerating pace of industrialisation. Following Ruskin's preference for creative
and independent craftspeople, its proponents fervently resisted the idea of having workers perform increasingly specialised tasks; rather, they encouraged artisans to go back into their work-shops, where they could pick up their looms, needles and other tools in order to start reuniting design with craft.\(^5\)

William Morris, the main proponent of the Arts and Crafts movement, was a romantic poet and dreamer as well as an astute businessman and political campaigner. He designed all from wallpaper to textiles and printed matter, and his great enthusiasm and magnetism ensured that the movement soon became a cultural force to be reckoned with. While the work was firmly rooted in the wider context of social reform, the beauty and status of designs created by an individual artisan nevertheless lay at its very core. Like her father, Mary 'May' Morris was a designer, teacher, writer and commentator who was committed to strengthening the position of the crafts in a society ruled by industrial capitalism.\(^6\) She became the leading advocate and promoter of Arts and Crafts embroidery, and took over the embroidery section of Morris & Co in 1885 at the tender age of twenty-three, with resulting great success. In addition to designing the bulk of the firm's embroidery patterns herself, she took great care in supervising all female employees who together created the majority of Morris & Co's embroideries. The female practice of Arts and Crafts embroidery was dedicated to restoring the value of traditional rural embroidery, and their work often formed part of the wider progress of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union founded in the 1890s by reform-minded artists to propagate 'sound ideas on the subject of dress'.\(^7\)

Deriving from the Rational Dress Society which in 1888 had stated in their Gazette that they protested 'against the introduction of any fashion in dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movement of the body, or in any way tends to injure health', the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union unsurprisingly rejected Paris-based fashion styles. Instead they advocated garments that adhered to the natural body shape of women and to the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. Handcrafted,
have done so much to debase the public taste’, art needlework sought to elevate the practice of embroidery.\(^9\) Renewing elements of earlier styles, in particular of medieval and Renaissance times, it was characterised by high-quality materials, simplicity, realistic colours, clear lines, original, hand-made designs, and artistic skills – all qualities that May Morris considered of paramount importance.\(^{11}\)

Throughout the years, Morris never refrained from expressing and spreading her idealistic thoughts on embroidery. She published several articles on the subject and wrote her most important document, *Decorative Needlework*, in 1893. Consisting of a brief historical overview of needlework, the book dispenses practical knowledge of embroidery for those who ‘have a love for it and a wish to devote a little time and patience to its practice’.\(^{12}\) Interwoven with her explanation of feather stitches, advice on proper designs and descriptions of the colours necessary for any embroidery palette, May Morris also bestowed ideological titbits on the disparity between fleeting fashion and durable craftsmanship:

‘[Work] done at the demand of fashion or caprice and that done inevitably, that is, for its own sake, are as widely dissimilar as can be: the first being discarded in a month or so as ridiculous and out of date, and the other remaining with us in all its dignity of beauty and fitness, to be guarded as long as may be against the unavoidable wear and tear of time.’\(^{13}\) (original emphasis)

Over a decade earlier, William Morris had made a similar claim, stating that we should ‘resist change for the sake of change’, while ‘[insisting] on having materials for [our] dresses that are excellent of their kind, and beautiful of their kind’.\(^{14}\) After all, or so he reasoned, ‘when you have a dress of even moderately costly materials you won’t be in a hurry to see the end of it’.\(^{15}\)

To ensure that high-quality materials were worked into high-quality products, they had to be handled by skilled artisans. According to May Morris, a skilled artisan herself, ‘the hurry of modern life and the advent of cheap machine-work’ had mainly led to shoddy ‘work that looks shabby in a month’.\(^{16}\) To create the opposite, she believed an embroideress should both design and execute. Ideally, then, she should produce embroidery from start to finish; at the very least it meant that she should interpret designs instead of copying them unthinkingly. By enhancing the connection between, in this case, an embroideress and her craft, Morris also hoped to increase workers’ pleasure in creating their own pieces by hand. Completely in sync with the Arts and Crafts ideals, she proposed to move away from the division of labour and the increasingly bad working conditions that had emerged during industrialisation.

May Morris’ wish to revitalise needlework turned out to be more than that; in the end, she played a major part in its eventual reappraisal. In doing so, she set a strong, entrepreneurial example for other women of her time. However, despite the success of ‘her’ craft, she was still worried about the fate of craftsmanship in general. In 1919, in what would become her last article on embroidery, she expressed her concern that ‘the crafts, which one must insist are an essential part of the industrial life in England, are dead or fast dying; they are passing rapidly in a single generation’.\(^{17}\) She still had hopes, though, as did her father and his contemporaries before her, that the crafts would one day be fully revived. After all, in order to keep creating qualitative, one-of-a-kind and slow work that is ‘guarded as long as may be against the unavoidable wear and tear of time’ – in so far as anything can ever resist time’s inevitable pull – the craftsmanship that creates it should not be discarded ‘as ridiculous and out of date’ either.\(^{11}\)
On the Beauty of Things
Impermanent, Imperfect
and Incomplete

By Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada
With a selection of boro compiled by
Gordon Reece and Philippe Boudin
Over the past decade a genre of Japanese folk textiles has begun to
spark interest in the West. These patched and mended garments and
quilt covers have become collectively identified under the term boro,
referring to objects that have been used, broken, and worn to tatters
and also to those that have been extensively repaired and lovingly used.

Beyond the rough surfaces of the pieces, viewers can sense the
obvious manifestation of creativity: the aesthetic transmutation of
ordinary rags by human hands, and the creation of beauty. Each boro
is a hand-sewn assemblage with a unique shape, size, and history.
The laboriously sewn, evenly sized strips of one boro contrast with
the practical, strategic placement of scraps-over-holes in another.
There is no cutting into the cloth for sleeves or darts like in Western
clothing, which means that worn clothing could be easily taken apart
and transformed into coverlets and mattresses. The vernacular cloth
used by common folk was woven with cellulose fibres, which are
most effectively dyed with natural indigo. As a result the designs
are predominately blue in a variety of shades and in stripes and
some plaids.

The textile fragments used for patching and repair came from
a wide variety of sources. Some pieces were saved and collected in
a household over generations of family members living and dying.
Most of them were recycled from cotton clothing and other castaway
rags. Today we automatically assume that the bits and scraps of fabric
used to make the boro patchwork quilt covers or to mend garments
were discards used far beyond their normal, expected life cycle. Junk,
in other words. Not so. Nor were boro ‘recycled’ as we use the word,
meaning trying to reuse something beyond the point where it is
‘normally’ thrown away. Contrary to the assumptions in our object-
jaded lifestyle, what we now designate as boro were simply a stage
in textiles’ natural life.
Textiles in the countryside were made at home; farmhouses usually contained one or more working looms; weaving alone involved long hours of labour, and textiles were seen as mottai – objects from and of life, received from and credited to whatever forces were thought to be responsible for life and living. It was only natural, then, that a textile's life extended far beyond the life of the object into which it was first made.

The boro textiles encourage thoughtful assessment as well as aesthetic appreciation of the act of mending, the menders, and the mended objects. Subject to exhaustive repairs to maintain an element of functionality, they often underwent significant transformation from their original form – kimono into a basic coverlet, futon into work clothes. Such transformation of goods, a common practice of economy in resources, resulted in a massive accumulation of time and memory of people who used the repaired and recycled objects. These artefacts from the past link us to stories at once personal, social, and cultural. Signifying the unspoken relationships among the family members who worked on them and used them, boro open a window into the daily life experiences of those who came before us; their very existence is a gift.

Viewing the boro we wonder who pieced and patched the textile, stitching and darning it so carefully and thoroughly? And who was the recipient of such love and care? Who used the coverlet night after night and later passed it on to a younger generation? The careful and patient act of repairing or reinforcing mundane, well-worn objects must have provided a foundation for personal relationships and served as a form of silent dialogue among family members. Their transformation of material represents a visual record of the social and cultural history of common folks in Japan.

Our world today is distant enough from when boro were made so that we are able to treasure these textiles and value their 'bornness'. Their message of care, of family lives lived, of warmth and comfort eeked out of minimum materials we see with a mixture of sympathy, nostalgia, delight, and rueful concern for the poverty of the past as well as for ourselves, slipping away from the life values that sustained our forebears. Yet, boro also confront us with possibility – of reinventing for the twenty-first century an attitude and directness of practice. This means seeing things as they are, of enjoying and relating directly to materials and the work crystallised in objects (of acknowledging the intelligence of the objects themselves), of putting into our lives things made with care and attentive attention.

In Japan and everywhere in the world, from the dawn of history until the early years of the twentieth century, cloth – any cloth – was precious, an essence of human labour and effort, a metaphor of life's interactions and vicissitudes. Boro provide fertile ground for the consideration of conventional values of time, labour, and of materials and resources. They nudge us to question our values and to broaden our world, challenging us to consider the perspectives of all those involved in an object's genesis and transmutation: the creator, the mender, the owner, the community member, and the outsider. Encouraging thoughtful assessment of notions of beauty, value, scarcity, care, and respect for labour in both the past and in today's consume-consume-and-dump contexts, boro invite viewers to reassess the concept of value and consider the meaning of mending and recycling in our throwaway culture.
She looked forward to being an old woman and wearing strange clothes. She would wear a shapeless dark brown or black dress of thin material, perhaps with little flowers on it, certainly frayed at the neck and hem and under the arms, and hanging lopsided from her bony shoulders down past her bony hips and knees. She would wear a straw hat with her brown dress in the summer, and then in the cold weather a turban or a helmet and a warm coat of something black and curly like lamb's wool. Less interesting would be her black shoes with their square heels and her thick stockings gathered around her ankles.

But before she was that old, she would still be a good deal older than she was now, and she also looked forward to being that age, what would be called past the prime of her life and slowing down.

If she had a husband, she would sit out on the lawn with her husband. She hoped she would have a husband by then. Or still have one. She had once had a husband, and she wasn’t surprised that she had once had one, didn’t have one now, and hoped to have one later in her life. Everything seemed to happen in the right order, generally. She had also had a child; the child
was growing, and in a few more years the child would be grown and she would want to slow down and have someone to talk to.

She told her friend Mitchell, as they were sitting together on a park bench, that she was looking forward to her late middle age. That was what she could call it, since she was now past what another friend had called her late youth and well into her early middle age. It will be so much calmer, she said to Mitchell, because of the absence of sexual desire.

Absence? he said, and he seemed angry, although he was no older than she.

The lessening of sexual desire, then, she said. He looked dubious, as far as she could tell, though he was out of sorts that afternoon and had only looked either dubious or angry at everything she had said so far.

Then he answered, as though it was one thing he was sure of, while she was certainly not sure of it, that there would be more wisdom at that age. But think of the pain, he went on, or at best the problems with one’s health, and he pointed to a couple in late middle age who were entering the park together, arm in arm. She had already been watching them.

Right now they are probably in pain, he said. It was true that although they were upright, they held on to each other too firmly and the footsteps of the man were tentative. Who knew what pain they might be suffering? She thought of all the people of late middle age and old age in the city whose pain was not always visible on their faces.

Yes, it was in old age that everything would break down. Her hearing would go. It was already going. She had to cup her hands around her ears in certain situations to distinguish words at all. She would have operations for cataracts on both eyes, and before that she would be able to see things only straight ahead in spots like coins, nothing to the sides. She would misplace things. She hoped she would still have the use of her legs.

She would go into the post office wearing a straw hat that sat too high up on her head. She would finish her business and make her way from the counter out past the line of people waiting that would include a little baby flat on its back in its carriage. She would spot the baby, smile a greedy, painful smile with a few teeth showing, say something out loud to the line of people, who would not respond, and go over to look at the baby.

She would be seventy-six, and she would have to lie down for a while because she had been talking and planned to talk again later in the evening. She was going to a party. She was going to the party only to make sure that certain people knew she was still alive. At the party, nearly everyone would avoid talking to her. No one would admire it when she drank too much.

She would have trouble sleeping, waking often in the night and staying awake early in the morning when it was still dark, feeling as alone in the world as she would ever feel. She would go out early and sometimes dig up a small plant from a neighbour’s garden, looking first to see that her neighbour’s blinds
were down. When she sat in a train or a bus with her eyes fixed on the scenery outside the window, she would hum without stopping for an hour at a time in a high-pitched, quavering voice that sounded a little like a mosquito, so that people around her would become irritated. When she stopped humming, she would be asleep with her head tipped back and her mouth open.

But first there would be the slowing down, a little past the prime, when there would not be as much going on, not as much as there was now, when she wouldn’t expect as much, not as much as she did now, when she either would or would not have achieved a certain position that was not likely to change, and best of all when she would have developed some fixed habits, so she would know they were going to sit out on the lawn after supper, for example, she and her husband, and read their books, in the long evenings of summer, her husband in shorts and she in a clean skirt and blouse with her bare feet up on the edge of his chair, and maybe even her mother or his mother there too, reading a book, and the mother would be twenty years older than she was, and therefore well into her old age, though still able to dig in the garden, and they would all dig in the garden together, and pick up leaves, or plan the garden together; they would stand under the sky on this little piece of ground here in the city, planning it out together, the way it should be, surrounding them as they sit in the evening on three folding chairs close together, reading and rarely saying a word.

But she was not looking forward only to that age, she said to Mitchell, when things would slow down and when she would have a husband who had slowed down too, she was also looking forward to a time about twenty years after that when she could wear any hat she wanted to and not care if she looked foolish, and wouldn’t even have a husband to tell her she looked foolish.

Her friend Mitchell did not appear to understand her at all. Though of course she knew it might be true that when the time came, a hat and that freedom would not make up for everything else she had lost with the coming of old age. And now that she had said this out loud, she thought maybe there was no joy, after all, in even thinking about such freedom.
The following photographs were first published in the April 1911 issue of *Art et Décoration* as a portfolio of couturier Paul Poiret’s work taken by the then fine art photographer Edward Steichen. Though not the first fashion photographs per se, the series was pioneering in its use of an essentially atmospheric setting, a departure from the largely illustrative and basic fashion photographs published in the late nineteenth century. More than a decade would pass before Steichen took another fashion photograph, but in 1922 Condé Nast persuaded him to join the staff at both *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, a move that would make Steichen one of the most celebrated fashion photographers of his time and his work a template for the modern fashion photographer.
or, argent, vert et mauve figurent, comme sur quelques siécles émail byzantin, sept suisses
assemblés au-dessous d'un ange aux ailes épiaées.

"Pompej".

cette enfin qui, couvrant entièrement un corbeau, y repose sur un fond d'or lisse d'épais
reliefs de feuillages et de roses, dont les tours de cuivre chaud sont soutenus par les
tons d'or, plus rugueux, de motifs en spirale.
De plus modestes matières ne produisent pas de moindres effets. Sur une robe de lin
blanc, un ruban de velours bleu de roi, par
sémid de fleurettes en laine rose, vert éclatant,
bleu clair, fournit la plus lumineuse, la plus
gai des coquilles. À la corse d'une tunique
de mousseline noire, chante un accord de tons

fréquent dans les costumes populaires d'Al-
sace; c'est un surt de satin léger bleu de roi,
brodée de dentelle géométrique bleu pâle,
bleu sombre et or. Sur les manches d'une
robe d'après-midi, en satin brique, courent en
légères broderies d'argent des motifs hindous
robe étroite et longue de velours vert bouteille, arrêtée au bas d'une dentelle vert et jaune, est ainsi agrémentée au col d'un hrur de shingle (1). (3) Magne.

"Batik."

Couleurs, lignes : les harmonies qu'elles déterminent ne font pas que charmer nos yeux. Elles évocent dans notre esprit les plus vivantes images.

Voyez ce manteau de batik, bordé de fourrure (1). Sa longue traîne, qui tombe des épaules et se replie sur les côtés comme de vastes ailes, (3) Batik.
et d'un pastel d'Aman-Jean que nous donnons avec certitude à l'ouvrage, en compagnie d'un décor de Percier et Fontaine et d'un dessin de Poulain, une robe du Premier Empire.
On Human Artefacts
and Stopping the Clock

By Nilgün Yusuf
Fashion Freeze Frame

In geology, archaeology and palaeontology, the frozen is cause for celebration. Fossils, remains of Roman cities, dinosaur bones or a perfectly preserved woolly mammoth have all become the focus of intense media attention, entertainment and education. Through these objects, worlds thought lost are re-imagined with increasing technical audacity, making the frozen a portal through which our imaginations can fly and alternative realities can be conjured.

Fashion, by contrast, is not so hot on the frozen – especially if the preserved happens to still be alive and kicking. The ageing ted, the resolute goth, the staunch classicist or the English eccentric, these are types who refuse to constantly modify their appearance in line with current mores because they have found something: a moment, an identity, a part of their lives, that they wish to preserve. While exposed to the same pressures as the rest of us, constantly buffeted by waves of ideal fashion through media, marketing, culture and society, they endure the ravages of time because they have chosen to stop the clock at a moment that feels significant, appropriate or pleasing. However, unlike the woolly mammoth, which is greeted with gasps of wonderment, these examples of the unfashionable are more ambiguously received. In 1945 historian James Laver went as far as pinning a mathematical equation to the phenomenon, claiming that after ten years, fashion is seen as hideous and after twenty years, it is ridiculous. So it is that fashion’s frozen are commonly dismissed, scorned or made fun of – views perpetuated by representations in film, photography and literature.

‘The stars are ageless, aren’t they?’ uttered Norma Desmond in Billy Wilder’s 1950 cinema classic, Sunset Boulevard. The tragic character, played by Gloria Swanson, presents a melodramatic and delusional case for not moving with the times. As a silent movie actress who failed to make the transition to talkies, Norma Desmond is stuck. As she glides around her Hollywood mansion, waiting for the moment when she will be adored once more (‘I was always big. It’s the pictures that got small.’) we are offered a morality tale on what happens to women who refuse to age gracefully and leave the stage, exit left, when their time is up. A similar message is sent in What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? from 1962. Bette Davis’ interpretation of one time child star Baby Jane Hudson, visage garishly painted, lined, and framed by ringlets, is difficult to forget. The cruel tormentor of her crippled sister, her psyche is forever...
childlike, that of a cruel and spoilt infant, perhaps damaged by her childhood fame. Happiest when clad in baby doll ruffles, she never tires of recreating the act that she used to perform with her Daddy. That was her moment and that is where she chooses to stay. Through the tools of her performance, dress, make-up and hair, she is able to transport herself back to the time of her life. Like Norma Desmond, she is depicted as a deranged, disturbed woman – clearly not an advisable choice.

Photographer Diane Arbus' black and white portrait of former debutante Brenda Diana Duff Frazier is another poignant example of fashion's shelved dolls. Duff Frazier, who in 1938 was Life Magazine's 'Girl of The Year', is revisited twenty-eight years later by Arbus for Esquire magazine. We see her posing in bed (is she sick or is this a metaphor for life on hold?), wearing a white fur stole around her narrow shoulders, her fragile fingers holding a cigarette. She is a frail, fluttering, faded creature. In a 1965 series called 'Fashion Independents' for Harper's Bazaar, Arbus points her camera at Mrs. T. Charlton Henry who by contrast resembles an ancient bird of prey. She twinkles in her best couture as she sits perched, bejewelled and impassive. While losing the battle against youth, these women present both stoicism and vulnerability. Arbus' lens is compassionate and soulful. These women survive. Their wardrobes may be frozen but their pre-Botox faces are full of fallibility and humanity; every line is an experience, a story, a triumph or regret.

While such women are often regarded tragically – mourning a lost youth or former splendour – frozen men of fashion are commonly subjects of comic relief. Rod Stewart may now be approaching his seventies but he continues to sport the same bleached blonde hair that he had in the Seventies. Roberto Cavalli, Hugh Hefner and Peter Stringfellow wear similar ties. Roberto Cavalli, Hugh Hefner and Peter Stringfellow wear similar deep sunsans, flashes of jewellery and chest hair. The narrative seems to be that while women find it hard to part with their figure or looks, for certain men (whose wealth and success once invited female adoration) the anxiety is centred on their diminishing potency and virility. Rod Stewart may no longer be a rutting young stallion of a performer but his big hair remains, a symbol of his one time sexual allure and magnetism; a follicle link to when he was most powerful.

For Ronald 'Ronnie' Kray, the legendary British gangster of the 1950s and 1960s, life as he knew it stopped in 1968 – the year that he, alongside his twin brother Reginald, was given life imprisonment for murder. British tailor, Mark Powell, recalls that when he was commissioned to make a suit for Ronnie Kray in the 1980s, his exacting client wanted it 'cut in exactly the style of a 1968 suit: single breasted, narrow lapels'. For the man doing time, the clock had literally stopped when the prison gates clanked behind him. Life would be forever 1968.

For those who concern themselves with fashionable matters, nothing could be worse than to be considered passé. After all, fashion is change and change is fashion. The fashionable are in a state of constant flux and transition; proud to be mirrors of change, works in progress. To be deemed out of step with the times, to be branded 'last season' carries both sartorial and social stigma. It is, as Laver tells us, ridiculous. Those in fashion observe those 'out of fashion' with fascinated pity or dismissive disdain. These belligerently unfashionable, set in sartorial aspic, are unsettling, perplexing, disturbing. The fashionable do not get on with the unfashionable; they are seen as unrefined, unsophisticated and irrelevant. The typical fashion response towards our frozen system itself? F

Nevertheless, there are many things to admire in those who refuse to move with the times. These individuals have withstood consumerism's onslaught and should be applauded for their fortitude and endurance. They have rejected the cyclical temptations laid before them and chosen a personal narrative of dress that retains its own authenticity and integrity. In fields across the arts and humanities, from sub-cultural theory and anthropology to social studies and fashion theory, there is a growing body of material around the ageing population that is perhaps an indication of a wider re-evaluation of the effect of time on fashion. There is no doubt that these individuals have a huge amount to offer the style connoisseur culturally, historically and semantically. Could these walking archives or human artefacts become the new icons of sustainability? After all, they are not supporting a system that exploits its workers and usurps the earth's resources. Instead of scorned, our fashion mammoths should perhaps be seen as indispensable portals into worlds thought lost, alternative realities that offer up another way of life. By paying these image veterans their due respect, might we not learn to re-negotiate our own wardrobes and the fashion system itself? F

Vestoj
On Slowness
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Dialogue Between Fashion and Death

by Giacomo Leopardi

1824

Fashion Madam Death, Madam Death!
Death Wait until your time comes, and then I will appear without being called by you.
Fashion Madam Death!
Death Go to the devil. I will come when you least expect me.
Fashion As if I were not immortal!
Death Immortal? As the poet says, ‘Already has passed the thousandth year,’ since the age of immortals ended.
Fashion Madam is as much a Petrarchist as if she were an Italian poet of the fifteenth or eighteenth century.
Death I like Petrarch because he composed my triumph, and because he refers so often to me. But I must be moving.
Fashion Stay! For the love you bear to the seven cardinal sins, stop a moment and look at me.
Death Well. I am looking.
Fashion Do you not recognise me?
Death You must know that I have bad sight, and am without spectacles. The English make none to suit me; and if they did, I should not know where to put them.
Fashion I am Fashion, your sister.
Death My sister?

From Operette Morali.
**Fashion** Yes. Do you not remember we are both born of Decay?

**Death** As if I, who am the chief enemy of Memory, should recollect it!

**Fashion** But I do. I know also that we both equally profit by the incessant change and destruction of things here below, although you do so in one way, and I in another.

**Death** Unless you are speaking to yourself, or to some one inside your throat, raise your voice, and pronounce your words more distinctly. If you go mumbling between your teeth with that thin spider-voice of yours, I shall never understand you; because you ought to know that my hearing serves me no better than my sight.

**Fashion** Although it be contrary to custom, for in France they do not speak to be heard, yet, since we are sisters, I will speak as you wish, for we can dispense with ceremony between ourselves. I say then that our common nature and custom is to incessantly renew the world. You attack the life of man, and overthrow all people and nations from beginning to end; whereas I content myself for the most part with influencing beards, head-dresses, costumes, furniture, houses, and the like. It is true, I do some things comparable to your supreme action. I pierce ears, lips, and noses, and cause them to be torn by the ornaments I suspend from them. I impress men’s skin with hot iron stamps, under the pretence of adornment. I compress the heads of children with tight bandages and other contrivances; and make it customary for all men of a country to have heads of the same shape, as in parts of America and Asia. I torture and cripple people with small shoes. I stifle women with stays so tight, that their eyes start from their heads; and I play a thousand similar pranks. I also frequently persuade and force men of refinement to bear daily numberless fatigues and discomforts, and often real sufferings; and some even die gloriously for love of me. I will say nothing of the headaches, colds, inflammations of all kinds, fevers – daily, tertian, and quartan – which men gain by their obedience to me. They are content to shiver with cold, or melt with heat, simply because it is my will that they cover their shoulders with wool, and their breasts with cotton. In fact, they do everything in my way, regardless of their own injury.

**Death** In truth, I believe you are my sister; the testimony of a birth certificate could scarcely make me surer of it. But standing still paralyses me, so if you can, let us run; only you must not creep, because I go at a great pace. As we proceed you can tell me what you want. If you cannot keep up with me, on account of our relationship I promise when I die to bequeath you all my clothes and effects as a New Year’s gift.

**Fashion** If we ran a race together, I hardly know which of us would win. For if you run, I gallop, and standing still, which paralyses you, is death to me. So let us run, and we will chat as we go along.

**Death** So be it then. Since your mother was mine, you ought to serve me in some way, and assist me in my business.

**Fashion** I have already done so – more than you
imagine. Above all, I, who annul and transform other customs unceasingly, have nowhere changed the custom of death; for this reason it has prevailed from the beginning of the world until now.

**Death** A great miracle forsooth, that you have never done what you could not do!

**Fashion** Why cannot I do it? You show how ignorant you are of the power of Fashion.

**Death** Well, well: time enough to talk of this when you introduce the custom of not dying. But at present, I want you, like a good sister, to aid me in rendering my task more easy and expeditious than it has hitherto been.

**Fashion** I have already mentioned some of my labours which are a source of profit to you. But they are trifling in comparison with those of which I will now tell you. Little by little, and especially in modern times, I have brought into disuse and discredit those exertions and exercises which promote bodily health; and have substituted numberless others which enfeeble the body in a thousand ways, and shorten life. Besides, I have introduced customs and manners, which render existence a thing more dead than alive, whether regarded from a physical or mental point of view; so that this century may be aptly termed the century of death. And whereas formerly you had no other possessions except graves and vaults, where you sowed bones and dust, which are but a barren seed, now you have fine landed properties, and people who are a sort of freehold possession of yours as soon as they are born, though not then claimed by you. And more, you, who used formerly to be hated and vituperated, are in the present day, thanks to me, valued and lauded by all men of genius. Such an one prefers you to life itself, and holds you in such high esteem that he invokes you, and looks to you as his greatest hope. But this is not all. I perceived that men had some vague idea of an after-life, which they called immortality. They imagined they lived in the memory of their fellows, and this remembrance they sought after eagerly. Of course this was in reality mere fancy, since what could it matter to them when dead, that they lived in the minds of men? As well might they dread contamination in the grave! Yet, fearing lest this chimera might be prejudicial to you, in seeming to diminish your honour and reputation, I have abolished the fashion of seeking immortality, and its concession, even when merited. So that now, whoever dies may assure himself that he is dead altogether, and that every bit of him goes into the ground, just as a little fish is swallowed, bones and all. These important things my love for you has prompted me to effect.

I have also succeeded in my endeavour to increase your power on earth. I am more than ever desirous of continuing this work. Indeed, my object in seeking you to-day was to make a proposal that for the future we should not separate, but jointly might scheme and execute for the furtherance of our respective designs.

**Death** You speak reasonably, and I am willing to do as you propose.
CONVERSATIONS ON SLOWNESS

Interviews by Anja Aronowsky Cronberg
With portraits stitched by Louise Riley
Dries van Noten speaks with care and reserve, like someone well aware of his privileged position in the fashion industry. In Dries’ case this is a standing that has been deftly and meticulously carved over the years, a feat which, in the eyes of many, makes it even more well deserved. For someone who started designing under his own name when few in the business envisioned that fashion could come from Antwerp, let alone pronounce Belgian brand names, the success and rave reviews that Dries is currently enjoying have been a long time coming. Today he is one of the few remaining independent designers, an accomplishment that makes his brand somewhat of an anomaly in the contemporary fashion industry. Nevertheless, Dries, as the designer himself coyly intimates, has to start thinking about his future. Could it be that another of the enduring bastions of fashion sovereignty is about to end up in the hands of a business conglomerate?

ANJA In an interview you once said that ‘The good thing about fashion is that you always go ahead, the next, the next – you don’t have time to look back’. Why is it good not to look back?

DRIES It is good to look back, but I don’t want to be nostalgic. I don’t see the point of dressing up in clothes from the past; there’s a reason why fashion changes with the times.

ANJA But nostalgia seems to have become a very important element in contemporary fashion – why is that do you think?

DRIES People think that things were easier or more pleasant in the past, but that’s not the case. My team and I often have discussions about this. It’s interesting because I’m an older guy now and they are all very young. When we talk about the 1970s for instance, they think about ABBA as one of the icons of the decade. They don’t know that ABBA at the time was considered to be extremely bad taste – vulgar and completely unfashionable. ABBA was still wearing platform shoes when everyone else had already moved on. What I mean to say is that it’s not always the best versions of the past that live on.

ANJA How do you negotiate the conflict between, as you’ve been known to
Success and happiness are everyday. I never stop questioning what I do, then what's the point? But overall, I put my heart in everything I do. I can only hope that this makes my work worthwhile. I wouldn't say that I'm completely at peace with this, but I don't think it's a pity to just suddenly say, 'Okay, that's it – bye!'

I try to do business in the same way. Had we wanted to, we could have established our own shop in the same building so to speak. We found an incredible building so why move to Paris? The rent is cheap here. We found an incredible view over the Seine. It's all happened very organically. Our business is about making people feel good about themselves and feel good about scoring, as it is to a lot of people. It's about feeling good about their personality. Of course we have to consider our own option. We don't have to consider our own option. In the world, but that sort of success was never for me. When we went to Paris, we had a store in every major city. Our business isn't about that. It's about doing business

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to make pre-collections like all the major brands do for example, is based on the fact that we wouldn’t have the time to make it as well as our main collection. My team is not big enough. Also, I want to see every yarn, every paillette, every button – every element of every collection. That, to me, is the fun part. I don’t like meetings; I like to be hands-on in the creation. But really, we just do the best we can with what we have.

ANJA Are there parts of the fashion industry that you find hard to identify with?

DRIES Actually, I think that the good thing about the fashion industry today is that it allows for a lot of different alternatives. In the Eighties and Nineties there was just one way. In the late 1990s when the big groups started buying up independent designers, it looked for a while as if that was the future – we all had to become part of a big conglomerate. We also considered it seriously for a while. But we didn’t make that leap, it wasn’t for us – or not yet anyway. Instead we just kept working and with time people have come to respect that. Today, difference is celebrated. It’s the same with fashion itself. You can be dressed in Versace or in Yohji Yamamoto and be equally fashionable. There’s a lot more space for individuality today.

ANJA How do you feel about the pace of the fashion system – is there any way to circumvent it?

DRIES I’m lucky in that it doesn’t affect me too much. I get by without the pre-collections that are so essential for many other brands. When pre-collections started to become important, we felt the pressure to make them too of course. But we stuck it out, and today buyers seem grateful that we don’t make any. They spend so much time running around the world buying new collections that they complain about not knowing which season is which anymore. I think they appreciate a little time off.

ANJA I’m surprised to hear you say that. I’ve spoken to so many designers who seem to feel that making pre-collections is an absolute requirement these days. How can you survive without it when so many others seem to think they can’t?

DRIES Well, for most designers the pre-collection is their commercial collection – it’s what they sell. Then they make a ‘fashion show collection’ that is useful in terms of image and gets them attention in the press. The equation, in terms of sales, is usually 75% pre-collection and 25% fashion show collection. The fashion show collection for most designers arrives late in the sales season, but we do it differently. We invite buyers to see us in Antwerp one month before we show it to press in Paris. This means that we can get early orders, which in turn helps us when we place fabric orders with our suppliers. If a fabric won’t arrive on time, we can let our buyers know and they can choose something else instead. All in all, this means that we can deliver a big part of our collection nearly at the same time when others deliver their pre-collections.

ANJA Have you found any disadvantages at all with working in this way?

DRIES The only thing that’s difficult for us is that having only two major collections a year means that we can only deliver one image per season. The shop-in-shops at department stores will only get one direction to work with from us, whereas a lot of the major brands now do as many as nine or ten collections a year, which allows them to deliver new products along with a new image every month. We instead have to rely on good merchandising so that our clients will notice new things whenever they come into the stores.

ANJA This pace that you’re describing owes a lot to fast fashion, doesn’t it? It’s as if the fast turn-around that customers have come to expect from the stores on the high street, has also ended up completely altering the way high fashion brands work.

DRIES That’s true. You have to remember that in the past sell-through at department stores was assessed every six months; now it’s done every month. Department stores look at a designer’s monthly turnover per square foot now, so of course if you always deliver new products you’ll have a much more even sell-through. A brand like ours by contrast has a very high turnover for the first three months after a new collection arrives in stores, but that will be followed by two months of slow sales.

ANJA But seeing as you’ve been in business for over three decades by now you’ve also had a chance to build long-lasting relationships with buyers.

DRIES The fashion industry is full of tricks about how to create desirability and make things more commercial. You can find it in how you merchandise a collection, how you link garments or how you connect an element that sold well one season to items the following season. I try to avoid all that. I want my work to be honest and straightforward – I don’t like tricks.
Hussein Chalayan became known as a 'conceptual designer' in the 1990s and it's been bugging him ever since. Rather than getting attention for his more extraordinary designs (there have been dresses made of giant plastic bubbles, a table turning into a skirt, LED lights and lasers incorporated into garments as well as black chadors either covering or exposing the naked bodies of his models), he would like the focus to be on his wearable clothes, the stuff that people actually buy. But shifting perceptions is hard to do. Especially considering that the fashion press loves a good spectacle. For Hussein this has meant that he has spent years consulting and designing for others, and occasionally selling his work as art to fund his fashion collections. He has made films rather than catwalk shows, and invited buyers to come and look at his tailoring up close. But still he is struggling. Department stores are reluctant to stock his work, and speciality stores rarely order enough to keep a designer in business.

Hussein Chalayan describes himself as 'a storyteller with clothes', but where do storytellers fit into a world that premiers status over independence and financial might over creative fearlessness?

Hussein: It’s interesting that we’re supposed to talk about ‘slowness’. There’s a real nervousness in this industry – designers think that they have to reinvent themselves every catwalk show. I’ve been a fashion designer for over twenty years now and I find that attitude very tiring.

On Being Painted into a Corner and Getting Stuck

It also means that the designer is always a bit too far advanced for their client, which isn’t really a good thing. What tends to happen is that people can’t relate to what you do, and you lose out.

Anja: Do you feel that you have lost out?

Hussein: Well, I always wanted my shows to be a cultural experience for the audience, but what ended up happening is that newspapers put, say, my bubble dress on the front page to sell more papers, and it would make people think that I was an ‘artist’, and not interested in making wearable clothes. But actually in the same collection I’d have long tailored coats, and the bubble dress that people actually buy. But shifting perceptions is hard to do. Especially considering that the fashion press loves a good spectacle. For Hussein this has meant that he has spent years consulting and designing for others, and occasionally selling his work as art to fund his fashion collections. He has made films rather than catwalk shows, and invited buyers to come and look at his tailoring up close. But still he is struggling. Department stores are reluctant to stock his work, and speciality stores rarely order enough to keep a designer in business. Hussein Chalayan describes himself as ‘a storyteller with clothes’, but
without the bubbles and those garments never got any attention. ANJA Do you still feel that this is the case, considering how fast information is now shared on social media and websites like Style.com?

HUSSAIN It’s true that with the advent of digital media people can see my collection before I’ve even packed my bags to come back home from Paris. On the one hand, this is great because everyone can see my work and I don’t need to rely on what the papers decide to publish in order to sell more copies. But on the other hand, the high street can also see what I do. I’m effectively giving my ideas away for free to other designers. The problem is that they can often do better versions of those ideas than I can, because they have the funds. That’s life though; you have to take the shit with the good, you know.

ANJA Am I right in assuming that you’re not a proponent of ‘democratic fashion’, or the idea that fast fashion is progressive design available at an affordable price?

HUSSAIN What happens today when high street retailers do ‘democratic fashion’ is that work like mine gets filtered. It’s true that it allows people who like designer clothing to buy simulations for a fraction of the price, which is good I guess, but it also means that I, and others like me, basically end up being designers for other designers.

ANJA What do you mean?

HUSSAIN My work is admired by the industry but it doesn’t reach the end consumer. Early in my career I used to think that it was okay to remain exclusive, to be a designer’s designer and perceived as ‘conceptual’. Today I feel differently. I’d like my work to reach more people, but it doesn’t because I’m seen as ‘too creative’ or ‘too conceptual’. All those stupid words; I find it very limiting.

ANJA Why is it important for you to reach more people?

HUSSAIN Well, to be able to do what I really want to do I have to have a bigger business. I want to be able to experiment more, to invest more in techniques and fabrics. Today, we have an okay business – it’s fine – but I think it could be much better.

ANJA Many of the designers I’ve spoken to mention that having their own store is an important step for a brand. You still don’t have one. What would opening a store mean for your business?

HUSSAIN If you don’t have your own store you rely on established conduits to reach the end consumer – buyers, reporters, stylists and so on. These people are fickle; they might like you one season and not the next. If, on the other hand, you have your own space you don’t need to depend on anyone. It’s hard to rely on press and buyers as filters for what you do, because if they decide that they don’t like you one season… then what do you do?

ANJA With that in mind, and considering that the fashion press is largely dedicated to advertisers today, how does someone in your position ensure that the press continues giving you the attention you need to appeal to consumers?

HUSSAIN It’s a difficult position to be in; I call it ‘the middle child syndrome’. I don’t have the buzz of being a young designer anymore, nor do I have the power that comes with being part of a big conglomerate. I’m in-between. I often wonder who’s really in charge of the great machine that determines what will be trendy next season, or who’s a hot designer and who’s not. I find that whole part of this business very peculiar. At the same time, being at this stage in my career, I understand better than ever who actually buys my clothes. If people really like what you do, they don’t care whether they read about you on Style.com.

ANJA You’ve mentioned a few times now that you used to feel flattered when the press called you a ‘conceptual’ designer, but that you now feelboxed in by the term. HUSSAIN Well, to be able to do what I really want to do I have to have a bigger business. I want to be able to experiment more, to invest more in techniques and fabrics. Today, we have an okay business – it’s fine – but I think it could be much better.

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HUSSAIN It’s as if you’ve been painted into a corner and now you’re stuck. Hussein Chalayan

HUSSAIN Maybe the mistake I made was that I should have spoken less about the collections and let the press and buyers enjoy the garments instead – you know, look at them properly, touch them, try them on. For two seasons I experimented with that approach actually. I didn’t do a catwalk show; I did a film instead and had the clothes in the showroom. And press and buyers came and touched the clothes. Those two seasons made a big difference I think. The people who came could see all the work that goes into each individual garment. For all those who insist on pigeonholing me as this ‘conceptual’ designer, it’s things like that can make a difference. You know, this word conceptual – I hate it now.

ANJA There are a handful of other ‘conceptual’ designers who seem to be using the label to their advantage – Comme des Garçons perhaps being the most notable example. Why do you think it works for them?

HUSSAIN When they started the industry was quite different. They've
been around a long time now, and with time they’ve become legends. They also have an amazing business model. They show a very directional collection on the catwalk and then have a huge amount of sub-lines and collaborations with which they can reach a great variety of clients. They have constructed a system where they can afford to do that. I can’t. I have one major collection, and I have to find a way to reach all my clients through it. This collection has to be both monumental and wearable at the same time, which is no easy feat.

ANJA You’ve said in the past that fashion now is not about creating something new – why has this changed?

HUSSAIN There is so much choice on the market today, so many designers and so many different styles. It’s all a bit diluted. I don’t think there is any one style or trend that dominates anymore. Today what’s making people look the same is plastic surgery, not clothing.

ANJA When you started out as a designer in the early 1990s, the age of the conglomerate wasn’t yet fully developed. Today being part of one is arguably how we define success for a designer. New products need to be generated constantly to ensure that the big companies can keep growing, and that their shareholders remain happy. What’s your feeling about this state of affairs?

HUSSAIN Consumers today are coerced to buy. We get things banged on our heads so many times via all sorts of media outlets that we end up getting used to, and then liking, things that we first thought were rubbish. Living in the age of consumerism means that the market needs us to never stop consuming. Like you say, big companies have to keep selling, or they’ll go out of business. We talked about ‘democratic fashion’ before – it’s a buzzword now. But is consumerism democratic? I don’t think so. It’s made to look like it is, but it isn’t. The system exists to make wealthy people ever wealthier.

ANJA The influence of big business in the fashion industry seems to have helped cement fashion as the perhaps most important part of pop culture today. You mentioned earlier how your most eccentric designs have routinely been placed on the front pages of newspapers in order to sell more copies, and we all know how important celebrity has become to fashion…

HUSSAIN We’re suffering from a design overdose right now. Being a designer has become fashionable. I don’t know any other business where a rich man’s wife can employ a team to work for her and declare that she’s a designer with no prior training. It cheapens our industry. Everyone wants to be a designer today, whereas I’m thinking, ‘Do you even know what it takes?’ Think about it. You have to have something different to say, you have to have a market. Designers have to run a business; we have offices and employees. Stylists can work from their house and charge a load of money. Photographers work from their computers when they’re not shooting in the studio. Designers have to run businesses; those guys run themselves. You can quote me on that. I don’t think consumers know how designers really work. They think it’s glamorous. Actually our lives are difficult. A lot of people give up when they realise how difficult it is.

ANJA Which is why longevity is so…

HUSSAIN Important?

ANJA Noteworthy.

HUSSAIN Yes, and it’s also really important to know who you are as a designer. I’m lucky enough to know my style by now. I’m a compositional designer.

ANJA What does that mean?

HUSSAIN It means that I draw compositions. I have rules; my methods and ways of working are quite developed by now. I’d rather do what I know well than try and change all the time. When I was younger, I explored a lot and each collection ended up looking quite different. In retrospect, I think it confused my buyers. They must have been wondering what to expect from me now.

ANJA We talked earlier about the speed of information sharing on the internet. How do you feel that this has affected the way we work?

HUSSAIN The abundance of information that we have today lowers the appreciation of it. We don’t have time to stop and read anymore. Everything has to be quick now. Fashion attracts a lot of really insecure people. A lot of people in the industry suffer from overdosing. It’s a crap opinion. There is so much choice on the market today, so many designers and so many different styles. It’s all a bit diluted. I don’t think there is any one style or trend that dominates anymore. Today what’s making people look the same is plastic surgery, not clothing.

ANJA Considering the abundance of designers on the market today, what does it take to stand out?

HUSSAIN Fashion is about loving what you used to hate and hating what you used to love. It constantly changes. I think that the people who do well in fashion are the ones with really strong opinions. People with strong opinions are believable, regardless of whether they’re right or wrong.

ANJA I see what you mean – especially considering that fashion people are often accused of being turncoats.

HUSSAIN When you actually come across someone that does have an opinion, they’re respected – even if it’s a crap opinion.
Margaret Howell comes across as very measured and thoughtful, a little coy even. She answers questions carefully and at times meanders slightly off the topic, lost in thought, before remembering that there is a question to answer and a journalist to please. It isn’t hard to see how Margaret Howell, the woman, has given birth to Margaret Howell, the brand. Her practical and evocative pieces, steeped in tradition, have appealed to customers since she opened her first London shop in 1977. In the 1980s the Japanese went mad for her pure aesthetic, full of nostalgia for a Britishness long gone, and the company has since grown to occupy a position as one of the most stalwart fashion brands in the UK. Margaret herself describes her clothes as ‘what you wear when you walk on an empty beach’. Walking, in fact, is an important theme for both the woman and the brand, as is nature. An early incarnation of the Margaret Howell label had two walkers on it, taken from a 1930s railway catalogue, and today you can picture that walking in the country is something that both Margaret Howell and her customers do on a regular basis, either in actuality or in their imaginations.

ANJA I read somewhere that you describe yourself as a ‘maker-designer’, rather than a ‘fashion designer’. Why do you make this distinction?

MARGARET Well, I’ve always considered myself to be on the edge of fashion. When I started I was always making things. I remember finding a shirt in a jumble sale that I cherished for a long time; it was in a beautiful material and so well made. I’ve always found things that are very well made inspiring. It’s in my family I think – both my parents and grandparents loved antique furniture. My mother always used to make things for my sisters and me, and we were all given sewing machines for our twenty-first birthdays.

ANJA When you talk about yourself as being ‘on the edge of fashion’, what do you mean exactly?

MARGARET If you go to fashion college, you’re taught to work in a very specific way, with flat drawings, themes and
whole collections that go together. I’m not that sort of designer. I design a piece of clothing because I get an idea about an old trench coat for instance, or I see a fabric I like, and I want to make that. These days, the company being what it is, I’m actually overseeing designers who can design collections, but for me personally it’s much more about having a concept and thinking about individual garments. The way I approach design is through a personal take on something.

**ANJA** What do you think the current focus on heritage, craftsmanship and slow fashion is all about?

**MARGARET** I think there’s a tremendous excess of clothing in the world. If I weren’t in this business, I’d probably look for clothes in charity shops. In my work, I’ve always been drawn to British heritage: Harris Tweed, linen, Irish tweeds, worsteds, tailoring, Mackintosh trenches. All those things were part of my childhood. They’re also all connected with nature and with walking in the countryside, which I love.

**ANJA** Is nostalgia important to you?

**MARGARET** I could talk all day about nostalgia! When I started I drew very much on things from the past. I remember my father’s Burberry raincoat, hanging faded and soft on a nail in our garage – he must have put it there after walking in the garden. Years later, I made a similar raincoat with raglan sleeves, oversized and soft, just like his. It was the first raincoat I ever made, and I remember struggling to make it look like it wasn’t new.

**ANJA** Why was it so important to you that it shouldn’t look new?

**MARGARET** Well, I thought that if my customers were anything like me, they would feel more self-conscious putting a new piece of clothing on than one that was worn in.

**ANJA** Is the notion of ‘armchair nostalgia’ something that you consider – the idea that we all share a collective imagined nostalgia that informs our tastes in the present, but that we have no firsthand experience of?

**MARGARET** I’ve certainly noticed how customers in our shops are always drawn to herringbone and other very traditional fabrics, so there must be something to it. When I was beginning as a designer, I’d spend a lot of time at the cinema watching old black and white films, or pouring over photojournalism books. I’d see someone in the crowd wearing something interesting and that would spark me off.

**ANJA** Do you have a specific garment that you have a particularly strong emotional connection with? Can you tell me about its provenance?

**MARGARET** There are so many. I remember my father in his white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, mucking about in the garden. It’s funny: I never think of him in his suit, coming back from work. I always think of him in the garden, in work clothes, because that’s what we used to love doing together. I suppose the things you are drawn to as an adult are the things that gave you pleasure as a child.

Some people would never wear grey flannel skirts for instance; it reminds them of a school uniform they hated.

I used to really enjoy my school uniform, with the white shirt, the tie and the V-neck sweater. I used to like going to the school department at John Lewis to pick out my uniform or my sports clothes. I’ve always enjoyed clothes designed for a purpose.

**ANJA** You talk about yourself as an outsider to the fashion system, but what does ‘fashion’ represent to you?

**MARGARET** Fashion, to me, is connected with the urban life; it’s about being seen to be fashionable. There are many elements of fashion that I’ve never quite felt comfortable with – the fashion show for instance. All the people connected with the shows, the producers, the hair and make-up people – I don’t feel at home in that world really. I know how easy it is to make clothes look good on models but at the end of the day we have to make them look good on regular people.

Very often the stylist wants to put the models in high heels for example, but high heels make the model walk in a very different way. It doesn’t convey our spirit.

**ANJA** Do you find that being at odds with the fashion industry has been to your advantage or disadvantage over the years?

**MARGARET** It’s difficult because I understand that I have to compromise at times. As a designer you have to change a look to keep the press interested. We’ve been known to put a small heel on a sandal at times, but it’s not really me.

**ANJA** Seeing as you’re not quite comfortable with the fashion show format, why do you keep doing them?

**MARGARET** For a long time we didn’t do shows actually, but doing one does have its advantages. The shows are for the press really, and we need press. If you get the right sympathetic stylist, they can suggest things that we haven’t thought of, and that keeps things lively and good. On the other hand, I like doing photo campaigns though I’m not very comfortable with the high fashion photographers of the moment who arrive with their big entourages. The cost of it all baffles me.

**ANJA** How do you feel you have changed as a designer over the years?

**MARGARET** I’ve become more self-confident over time, and less awkward or gauche. I was very self-conscious when I started. Over the years, as the company has grown, I’ve also been able to take on a slightly different role. Today I can focus more on doing small exhibitions or on promoting other forms of British design through our stores. I enjoy that very much.

**ANJA** What about your clientele, do you think that they have changed in any significant way since you started?

**MARGARET** Not really, there have always been people comfortable with knowing, rather than showing, the quality of their clothes. When I started, I was interested in men’s clothes above all. To me, wearing trousers rather than skirts made sense because of my active lifestyle. I always wanted my clothes to be comfortable – that seemed the most equal and liberated approach for a woman designer making clothes for other women.
ANJA: Fashion today seems to have moved from the realm of clothes you wear in your actual life to becoming the by-product of the image of a brand…

MARGARET: Yes, I have a hard time understanding fashion designers like John Galliano or Vivienne Westwood – what they make is akin to theatrical costume. I’m not really into the idea of making different clothes for the catwalk and the store. I just think, ‘What’s the point?’ I’m a realist I guess. I’m boring. [Laughs]

ANJA: In a way, considering the focus on rapid change and the dominance of glamour in fashion today, it’s almost surprising that a company like yours cannot just survive, but thrive.

MARGARET: But there have always been companies like ours – think of Jaeger. They made good quality, wearable clothes. Aren’t we a little like a younger version of them? I know that Jaeger stagnated at some point, and I know I’m jolly lucky to have the business partners I’ve had. A lot of our early success has been up to the chap who started importing the brand to Japan in the 1980s. Sam Sugure was only a few years older than me when we started working together, and we just always got on. He grew the company slowly but surely in Japan, and the rest sort of followed.

ANJA: You’ve been talking about the importance of things that last. Do you feel the same way about your company? Would you like it to carry on the day that you’re no longer involved?

MARGARET: Well, I don’t own the company anymore; Sam grew it so much that a publicly listed company in Japan took over in 1990. As for it lasting beyond my involvement or lifetime, the importance of that is something that Sam made me aware of. He always used to talk about the responsibility he felt towards his employees, and it’s had an effect on me too. If I just drop dead one day, I’d like to leave as much information behind as possible. That’s why we’re working on the archives now.

ANJA: Now that the company has grown from the small concern it once was to one where you’re no longer the majority owner, are there any moments that have been particularly hard for you?

MARGARET: Yes, there was a moment that was difficult for me after the Japanese bought the company and Richard Craig came on as the managing director. We were much more financially secure and could start hiring more people. I’ve never had a problem with young designers straight out of college, who work alongside me and learn as they go along. But hiring a womanswear designer to take over the collection was hard for me. I’ve never had a problem with young designers straight out of college, who work alongside me and learn as they go along. But hiring a womanswear designer to take over the collection was hard for me. I used to do every-thing you know, almost down to drawing the lines on the pattern. Now I had to start letting go and trusting other people. That was a little bit tough.

ANJA: You’ve talked a lot about your childhood during our time together. Why is the past so important to you?

MARGARET: The past is very important: it helps form us. For me, I think it’s because I enjoyed growing up; I felt happy and secure. And certain values that I grew up with after the war have stayed with me. Mending things, respecting and looking after things, not being wasteful – it’s all ingrained in me. The way we waste things today, I find it just incredible.

ANJA: We live in a culture of abundance now. We all feel like we should have lots of everything: clothes, books, food, electronic objects and other trinkets…

MARGARET: Yes, it was so different when I was growing up. And when I had my own daughter, I remember being given second-hand clothes and a pram and things like that. I was like, ‘Yes please!’ But now that my daughter is grown up and has her own children, she wants to buy everything new.

ANJA: Maybe with my generation, we buy new things just because we can. Because it’s out there and we can afford it, and because it’s somehow expected of us. But that culture of abundance facilitates your company too surely? Ultimately if people didn’t buy a lot of new things all the time you’d go out of business. So how do you square up your own reluctance towards profusion with the needs of your business?

MARGARET: I think the merchandisers don’t like me very much! I don’t like colours and I always want to have less of everything on display. I’m not at all commercial. Or, I say that, but… I do know what people will like. But honestly, every time Richard says, ‘We’ve got a new lovely shop’ my heart sinks a little. For me it can be quite a headache. I have faith in him, and I accept that we need to grow, but I’m glad I’m not in that driving seat.

My role is to come up with ideas.
In a business where designers often become figureheads for large corporations, to be rolled out when a perfume or handbag needs promoting, Christophe Lemaire is an unusually outspoken exception to the rule. Another exception to the unwritten fashion rules is the time that he gives to everything he does. Even interviews. Over several days, many hours and plenty of coffee Christophe talked candidly and convincingly about anxiety in the fashion industry, the ever-accelerating pace of the fashion schedule and the hypocrisy of big fashion corporations. Christophe himself, after a decade at Lacoste and the last four years at Hermès, is today focusing on his own company, which he runs with Sarah-Linh Tran, his girlfriend and overall sounding board in work and life. Together they are navigating the perhaps riskiest moment for a growing fashion brand – the one when all eyes are on you and those who purport themselves to be ‘in the know’ speak of you as the best thing since sliced bread. With fastidiousness and tenacity, while never forgetting the importance of sound design ideology and solid company ethics, they are moving forward, one step at a time.

ANJA Many people complain about the detrimental effects that the speeded-up pace of contemporary fashion has on creativity. Is that something you’ve noticed too?

CHRISTOPHE Yes, the speed of the business now is crazy. I don’t agree with it. You need time to create and to think, but today designers have to make a new collection every three months. You don’t have a choice. Or I don’t in any case. Pre-collections have become hugely important – if you want to increase sales, you need to offer products as early in the season as possible.

ANJA How do you think that the tempo affects those who work in the industry?

CHRISTOPHE There is so much anxiety in this business. People are anxious all the time. Every few months, you have to prove that you’re still at the top of your game. The competition and the time pressure can be overwhelming at times. It’s very hard to achieve something you’re completely...
satisfied with in the limited time we have now. And at the same time, this is an industry full of sensitive, creative people who are always doubting what they do. I think this is one of the reasons why fashion people sometimes behave in ridiculous ways. We overreact and behave badly. I catch myself doing the same at times.

ANJA What do you think has prompted the industry to accelerate in this way?

CHRISTOPHE It’s something that’s been happening for the past ten, fifteen years. Some powerful company must have realised that the earlier they could deliver to stores, the more they would sell. If you deliver your collection in March, as we used to, you have two months to sell it before the sales start — if you deliver in January you have twice as long. Customers have become used to buying summer clothes in January now, so the smaller companies have had to follow suit to keep up. At Hermès I would be choosing fabrics for the winter collection in June/July. In September I would prepare the fashion show for spring/summer and at the same time present research, design ideas and sketches for the winter collection, which would be shown to buyers in early December. In May we would be delivering the winter collection to stores. You’d be surprised if you knew how many clients want to buy fur in May. The wealthy want to show that they’re first with everything.

ANJA Has this affected the way you work at Lemaire too?

CHRISTOPHE Yes of course. Our development manager tells us that if we want to reach the next level in our own growth, we’ll have to start showing the womenswear autumn/winter collection in January instead of March. The buyers all come to Paris in January with their budgets now. If you wait to show the collection until after the fashion show in March, it’s too late — the big budgets have been spent. Buyers prioritise brands that they know will deliver early. So of course this shift has deep consequences for our way of working, for how our team is organised, let alone for my peace of mind. But it’s just the way the industry works now; we all have to adapt to survive.

ANJA Do you think that this means that a permanent change for the fashion seasons is under way?

CHRISTOPHE Yes, I think eventually what will happen is that the fashion show schedules will shift. They’ll have to happen earlier to accommodate the change in buying. Right now, we’re stuck in between the old and the new rhythm. Fashion is a global business now, and there are so many brands and markets that operate on different seasons. As a designer you have to make sure that you show some wool in the summer season and lighter fabrics in the winter. It’s a bit chaotic now because we have to accommodate two different timings simultaneously.

ANJA On a slightly different note, you’ve received rave reviews these last few seasons, and both critics and buyers seem very susceptible to your vision of discreet sophistication and everyday elegance. Is this something you’ve picked up on also?

CHRISTOPHE I’m very aware that this is our moment. Fashion now is about minimalism, a subtle silhouette and everyday garments. What we do fits the trend. But I also know that the only thing you can count on in fashion is that it changes. So I see this as the moment for us to strengthen our team, our communication and our business. We need to become well established enough as a company so that when the tide changes we’ll be strong enough to carry on.

ANJA The dichotomy between creativity and business is one that’s very keenly felt in the fashion industry. How do you balance your need for creative expression as a designer with the knowledge that you’re also a business leader who has to always be aware of the bottom line?

CHRISTOPHE If you want to endure as a designer today you have to be business savvy. But I’m also aware that when fashion becomes all about business, about profits, it loses the ability it has to really affect change. It’s a bit sad but the designers that become famous are the ones who play ball and know not to challenge the system too much. When it comes to my own work, I’m an idealist really. I’m interested in history, I’m interested in politics; what drives me is how to create better conditions of life.

ANJA When you say ‘better’, what do you mean?
ANJA You talked earlier about how the pace of the industry affects designers, but is there anything that can be done to circumvent it?
CHRISTOPHE I don’t know if you can circumvent it but you can find a way of dealing with it. When I started I wasn’t confident enough to be at odds with the fashion world. I felt I had to reinvent myself with every collection, which was very stressful. It was only when I understood that the problem wasn’t actually the pace itself, but that I’d bought into the idea of having to renew myself every six months, that I reconciled with the fashion system. I realised that I could actually rework the same garments season after season – that was a very liberating moment actually.
ANJA You seem to have found an interesting way over the years of balancing your own brand with, at times, being a designer for hire at major fashion houses. What are the advantages or disadvantages of working like this?
CHRISTOPHE Well, the luxury of having your own brand means that you decide who to listen to. I know firsthand how hard it can be to work for a big corporation: the hypocrisy, the fierce competition who to listen to. I know firsthand your own brand means that you de-liberate moment actually.
CHRISTOPHE At Hermès, they would always place a PR in the room with me when I was being interviewed. If I said something even slightly divisive, they would break in and say, ‘Oh Christophe, maybe you shouldn’t say that – it’s a little bit controversial’. I realise that an interview is a promotional exercise most of the time now. But I wish it wouldn’t have to be at the expense of the actual opinions or ideology of a designer.
ANJA What do you mean?
CHRISTOPHE I’m incredibly frustrated by how enormously powerful fashion conglomerates have become. I’ve seen how it affects the level of honesty and freedom in what critics write. For instance, everybody knows that you can’t say a word against LVMH today. I remember one of the last shows Marc Jacobs did for Louis Vuitton, for autumn/winter 2012, where he showed women dressed all in black with huge hats, in early twentieth century style. They could barely move. There were men on the catwalk carrying the models’ suitcases, like servants, as if they were on their way to board the Orient Express. But what does this say about the woman of today? Fashion has to say something about life today, about what a modern woman’s life is like. When I saw that Louis Vuitton show, what I saw was a big circus and a lot of money being spent. There was nothing progressive about what a woman should be today. And still, the reviews were all predictably good.
ANJA What’s your opinion on how women are represented in contemporary fashion?
CHRISTOPHE Fashion today propagates the wrong idea of femininity or what being sexy is about. Women are told that being sexy is about showing off your body. But what about looking smart?
ANJA You’ve talked in the past about the importance of having a partner in fashion, as you now have Sarah-Linh, and also of working as a team. Why is it important to emphasise fashion as a team effort?
CHRISTOPHE How you work together says a lot about the ethics you have as a company. I used to play hockey for a long time; I play soccer. I like team sports. A team has to have very strong ethics. When you succeed, you share the glory, and when you fail, it’s the responsibility of the whole team to correct the flaws. In work, I try to apply the same logic. I want everyone I work with to feel that we’re building something together that’s bigger than any one of us, and that depends on us all. It’s about creating team energy. That doesn’t mean we have to be nice all the time, but it’s about having the right expectations and playing to everybody’s strengths. In a capitalist culture, an enterprise is a little society. I see it like that. Of course, I’m the leader; this is my project. But I could never do it alone.
ANJA The politics of design has been a recurring theme during our conversation, and I’m getting the sense that you’re constantly oscillating between needing to fit in for survival, and wanting to rebel against the system.
CHRISTOPHE I try to be radical in my own quiet way. I want to go to the source of what I think is the problem in fashion today and look for long-lasting and profound solutions. That doesn’t mean destroying and replacing everything – that never works. It would be pretentious and conceived to think that I could change the system. The system is what it is. If you want to survive, you have to deal with it. I have employees that depend on me. I’m not an artist. I’m a manager; I can’t take risks that jeopardise the livelihood of those who depend on me. But having said that, I believe in reform. I believe in real democracy. I very much admire the French Socialist leader Jean Jaurès. As he said, one must ‘aller à l’idéal et comprendre le réel’. Aim for the ideal, but be aware of reality. Small, subtle changes can become very important over time. 🙌
Spending time with Nigel Cabourn is a little like being carried along by a minor tornado. He talks a mile a minute, makes friends with just about everybody, and is, by his own admission, ‘like the fucking Pied Piper’. Though we sometimes had to fight for attention with various photographers, textile manufacturers, waiters, taxi drivers, receptionists and countless young and pretty girls, each and everyone a new friend of Nigel’s, the appeal isn’t hard to see. Straight talking and twinkly-eyed, Nigel ‘goes around the world talking to people’, building his niche empire along the way. In business for over forty years now, he has seen the industry change and change again. His faithful interpretations of iconic military and mountaineering garments have made him a bit of a celebrity in Japan, and he now spends much of his time on the road, talking up a storm to loyal followers and new aficionados alike. You might think that all this travelling would take its toll on a man past his retirement age. You’d be wrong. Our own evening ended with Nigel offering to walk us home, only to set a pace so fast and furious that we – forty years his juniors – were struggling to keep up. The last we saw of Nigel he was marching down Rue de Rivoli, camo jacket flapping in the wind, an increasingly smaller dot on the horizon…

ANJA You’ve had a real upswing recently in terms of popularity – why is that do you think?

NIGEL I’ve had plenty of ups and downs but I’ve had my own brand forty-three years now. There aren’t many people around who can say that today. It took me sixty-three years to figure it all out so I ain’t that fucking smart. I’m sixty-five now and I started to get really popular when I was about sixty. I was like, ‘Why am I so popular all of a sudden?’ And I realised that it’s because I’m so approachable. I’ve got plenty of personality, plenty to say for myself and I love what I do. I travel around the world and a lot of people know who I am. A lot of people photograph me. All these things are part of the brand. At least my brand has got a character to it. I look like what I am. A twat. [Laughs]

ANJA Your work today is completely based on vintage clothing. When did you first start working with vintage?
NIGEL Well, my first love was pop music. English pop music between 1967–1971 was fucking brilliant! I was a fashion student then and everybody was into flower power. I only went to fashion college for the birds you know. I met this kid when I was about seventeen and he told me, ‘You’ve got to go to this college, it’s full of fucking birds!’ It’s true! But pretty soon I realised I wanted to design menswear, which was unheard of in Newcastle then. Everybody else did either womenswear or children’s wear. And I wasn’t gay like most other male designers. They’re all gay, let’s face it. And they all design womenswear because they want to dress like women and look like women. So it was hard to get inspiration for me back then. When I went to Paris in 1968, all I saw was the couture houses. And of course, they all had gilt chairs and giant mirrors – it was all crap. I thought, ‘What’s this? What have I gotten myself into?’ ANJA Clearly the gilt chairs and elaborate mirrors didn’t put you off fashion for long… NIGEL True. In my third year of fashion college I started my own business. I was manufacturing everything locally and selling to a radius of about forty miles, that’s what we all did back then. And in 1972 I met Paul Smith who became my agent – he got me into all the London shops. In fact Paul showed me the first vintage garment I ever saw – I didn’t know vintage existed until 1978.

DAVID What was the garment?

NIGEL It was a RAF jacket, a little short green one with the button and tape. Paul gave it to me and it made me a fortune. Once I discovered that button and tape, I did a whole range of similar pieces in 1979 – I was the first one to do that.

ANJA What were your clothes like before you discovered vintage?

NIGEL When I first started all I did was clothes inspired by pop music, but in the mid-Seventies I lost my way a bit. When I discovered the vintage I got myself fucking up to speed again and I never looked back.

ANJA What do you mean you ‘lost your way’?

NIGEL Well, I was showing in Paris from about 1973–1985. I can’t even remember what I was doing back then. Life’s always been a big rush for me; it never was easy. I’ve always been rushing. Everyone thinks I’m on drugs! [Laughs] Truth is, my only drug is the exercise.

ANJA Exercise? Really? What’s your routine?

NIGEL I read a book a couple of years ago and it said that if you want to stay young you’ve got to exercise six days a week. So I thought, ‘I’m up for that!’ Now I get up at 5.30 every morning to go training. I take a ten-pound medicine ball with me when I travel, and I go running with it. When I’m at home I have three trainers: a boxing trainer, a table tennis trainer and a tennis trainer. I train two hours every day, six days a week.

DAVID That’s very impressive! But back to the fashion… How do you decide on what historical eras to focus on?

NIGEL Mainly that’s to do with the events that took place at the time. For me the 1910s is Robert Falcon Scott and the British Antarctic Expedition, the 1920s are about George Mallory’s Mount Everest expeditions, the 1950s is Sir Edmund Hillary ascending Everest. I always start with a character. I even did a collection based on my dad once – he was in Burma during World War II you know.

DAVID Do you ever think of who actually designed those vintage garments?

NIGEL That’s a good point. Mountain-climbing garments would, for example, usually have been designed by someone on the expedition. Clothes were often passed down too. But if an expedition was going up Mount Everest they would probably have employed scientists to work on their gear. The Everest parka I make was originally designed by Fairydown in New Zealand, a company that made sleeping bags.

ANJA A lot of your garments are still designed by Fairydown in New Zealand, which is official. They sign your back.

NIGEL Because I’m an old fart. [Laughs] England is my heritage but I also do it because I have control, it looks beautiful and I’m proud of it. I don’t want to make stuff in fucking China.

DAVID You make quite a few things in Japan too, right? How do you get on with production there?

NIGEL I have partners in Japan, six shops and a full team. I go to Japan five times a year. I have a wife and children and everything there. I’m just joking! [Laughs]

ANJA How did you get big in Japan?

NIGEL It started in 1980. I was showing in Paris and this Japanese man came to my stand. He loved my product and said he wanted to represent me. I was one of the first European designers in Japan. Margaret Howell was there before me, in about 1979, but she’s a bit older than me – thank-fucking-god. Anyway, I arrived the year after. We had the same partner then, Sam Sugure – he’s seventy-one now. The Japanese love British style and they love vintage. If everywhere were like Japan I’d be a multi-millionaire by now.

DAVID Your brand seems to fit very well with the trend in menswear that’s been around for the past few years: heritage brands, made in Europe, Japan or America with great attention to craftsmanship and details.

NIGEL It’s true that my product is niche. There aren’t that many niche products out there: Engineered Garments is sort of niche, Yuketen is niche, so is Viberg, Visvim is sort of niche, but then he makes it all in China and charges the earth for it. I’m sorry but I don’t see how you can charge £1000 for a pair of shoes made in China.

DAVID When you use the word ‘niche’ – what does it mean to you?

NIGEL ‘Niche’ means that something is exclusive, small and beautiful. I’m all about niche. I still support Scunthorpe United, where I was born. I don’t support fucking Newcastle even though I live there! I’ve always been an underdog. I’ve had to fight for everything I get. I compare myself to my football team, which is in the lower divisions of the English football league. You can get from the lower division to the premier league, but you’ve got to be the best.
Nigel Cabourn

You're a well-known vintage collector by now, but I imagine a lot of the garments that have been the most important to you – Edmund Hillary’s or George Mallory’s mountaineering gear for instance – can’t be bought. How do you get to the garments that aren’t on the market?

Nigel: I’m a nightmare in museums. They all know who I am, and if they don’t know I tell them! And when I go I want everything out too! The only place that hasn’t helped me is the Imperial-fucking-War Museum – I’ve been knocking on their door for twelve months now. The Royal Geographical Society opened their arms to me though. They asked me, ‘Would you like to see George Mallory’s clothes? We’ve actually got them here!’ I was like, ‘You’re fucking joking!’ I picked up his neckerchief – it’s still caked in blood you know. I tell everybody that he went up the Everest in a tweed jacket, but he didn’t really. What happened was that he kept a tweed jacket in his rucksack – it’s still caked in blood you know. I found images of Hillary and Tenzing and their whole team and their clothes are fucking amazing. I just looked at them and thought, ‘I’m going to fucking make all those clothes’. And I did. And I’m still living on it today. It’s a bit like that song ‘Tell Laura I Love Her’. Ricky Valance recorded it in 1960, and he was still fucking singing it in 1990. Let’s face it, Bill Haley & His Comets, they only had ‘Rock Around The Clock’, but it kept them going a long time!

Anna: Are there any living men who have inspired you?

Nigel: I’ve worked a lot with Nino Cerruti, he’s a marvelous man. A fucking card. He’s inspired me, I tell you. I bought cashmere from him and made him a duffel coat. He makes amazing fabrics. He employs four thousand people now and he’s eighty-four. You know what he told me five years ago? He said, ‘I was an international playboy until I was sixty. Then at sixty I really started to work’.

[Laughs] Well I’ve always been a hard worker but I’ve worked harder between sixty and sixty-five than I’ve ever done in my life! My business had a real facelift in 2003. Not me though. I’m still the same – I have a droopy eyelid and a few other bits and bobs that need sorting out. [Laughs]

Anna: What happened in 2003?

Nigel: I was pretty much on the bones of my arse in 2000. I was doing terrible. Sam Sugrue told me, ‘Look, you’ve got to get back to doing things you really believe in’. At the time I was doing a consultancy job for Berghaus and I was digging into mountaineering books for them and I realised that the fiftieth anniversary of Sir Edmund Hillary’s ascent to Everest was coming up. I went to the Lake District to look at his clothes and I couldn’t believe what I found. I just hit lucky, and it changed my whole life. I found images of Hillary and Tenzing and their whole team and their clothes are fucking amazing. I just looked at them and thought, ‘I’m going to fucking make all those clothes’. And I did. And I’m still living on it today. It’s a bit like that song ‘Tell Laura I Love Her’. Ricky Valance recorded it in 1960, and he was still fucking singing it in 1990. Let’s face it, Bill Haley & His Comets, they only had ‘Rock Around The Clock’, but it kept them going a long time!

Anna: How do you decide which vintage garments to work from? Do you alter or update the pieces at all?

Nigel: I do. I Cabournise them.

I mean, there’s only so much you can learn from images; at some point I have to decide what fabrics, colours and textures to use. And I can’t have the clothes fitting the way they did in 1950. But I do try to copy the little things when I can, trimmings and things like that. I love all the wooden components from the 1940s and 50s – nobody else makes those.

David: What was the first garment you made in that way?

Nigel: It was the Everest parka, and after that I made the Cameraman jacket. I actually found out that Sir Hillary’s Everest parka still exists, in a museum in Christchurch, New Zealand. I couldn’t get off the plane quick enough to get to the fucking museum! When I saw the Everest parka – well it’s actually the Antarctica parka. I tell everybody it’s the Everest parka, but actually he went across the Antarctica in it. I’ve just rolled it all into one. Everyone thinks he went up the Everest in a red parka, but it was a blue one actually. [Laughs]

David: What’s the value of the – real or imagined – narratives that you spin around your garments?

Nigel: I’m a great romantic – I could tell you stories about every little detail on a garment. People come up to me and ask me why my clothes are so expensive, so I tell them. The stories justify the price you know. What I’m saying is that it’s not just any old garment. The thing is, most people make clothing just for money. I do it because I love making a good product. If I make money out of it, that’s a bonus. If I don’t, it still doesn’t bother me too much.

David: Designer collaborations have become hugely popular the last few years – they’re like the contemporary versions of the licensing deals of yesteryear. You’ve done several – what’s the appeal?

Nigel: Well you make money from it. You loan your name to somebody and they pay you for it. But I don’t say yes to everything. I said no to Moncler. They were doing a collaboration with Visvim but didn’t want to continue and I said to them, I said, ‘If you can’t make a success from working with Visvim, you’re not going to make one with me – we’re two peas in a pod’. And also I asked them about their vintage and they didn’t have any. When I asked them about their customer they were after the same as me so I just thought, what’s the point? I’d be doing a me two. But I could have made a lot of money from it; for those sorts of collaborations you can make £3–400 000.

Anna: Recently you started doing womenswear, after forty years of only doing menswear. How come?

Nigel: Well I met this girl, a real pretty girl she was too. When I first saw her I thought, ‘She looks like a nice girl, I bet she’d be good to hang with’. But she turned out to be a nightmare. She was Hungarian and I’m romantic about the Hungarians because of Ferenc Puskás. Do you know him? I love Puskás. He was one of the best footballers in the world. This girl, she looked like Gerda Taro. At the time I was obsessed with Robert Capa and Gerda Taro and I was thinking about doing something on the Spanish Revolution. But I had to find a British angle, because that’s always my take. I found out that 2000 British civilians

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volunteered to go there and so I did the story on them. And Robert Capa of course. I roll it all in. And what I don’t know, I make up! Anyway, so I worked with this girl for eighteen months on the women’s wear. We travelled all over the place. I didn’t lay my hands on her or anything – I’m not like that! I just liked her company. And she looked like Gerda Taro. Have you seen Gerda Taro? She got crushed by a tank in 1937.

ANJA Is this girl still working with you? NIGEL No she ran off. She was completely mad, but I liked her. One day she just flipped and ran off. I was quite shocked actually. Now I have a girl from Dover Street Market who designs the collection. She’s so good. She’s normal and she just fucking gets on with it.

ANJA What does ‘authenticity’ mean to you? Why have you chosen to use it as a tagline?

NIGEL Authenticity means that something is original, and that it comes from a vintage piece. The fabric is real. It’s functional. It does what it says. If I’ve taken a design from a 1950s garment with wooden trimmings, then my garment will have wooden trimmings too. I want my garments to be the real deal. I don’t want anything nancy pansy.

ANJA How does the ‘authenticity’ of a garment change when you adapt a piece intended for practical use – like the military or mountaineering garments you so often use – into a ‘fashion’ garment?

NIGEL You’re asking me deep questions now. I don’t know if my thinking goes that deep most of the time. If my garments happen to be fashion garments, then so be it. They’re only fashion garments because that’s what people perceive them to be – I don’t see them that way. You could still go mountaineering in them. They wouldn’t be so practical because garments today are much lighter than they used to be, but you could still do it. I just do what I do because I love it. I don’t know if I have a better explanation. It’s like when Sir Edmund Hillary was asked why he decided to climb Everest; he said, ‘I just like going up’.

DAVID Considering that you’ve been working in fashion for over forty years, what changes in the industry have you found the most striking?

NIGEL Fucking hell – they’re endless! When I started in the 1970s everybody wanted to help me. I got a £6000 loan from the bank, just based on the fact that I looked like a nice young lad. You didn’t have to put your house up back then – bank managers were willing to take a chance. And then there’s all the new technology. Until 1982, before the fax machine, we had to send everything by courier. And the last ten years the mobile phone has changed everything again. My daughter has taught me how to send emails with my phone. I still can’t send emails with the normal computer. [Laughs] Fucking technology is frightening, you know, for an older person. I get loads of help. My boxing coach tells me ‘Nige, you’ve got someone doing everything for you!’

ANJA Except the training.

NIGEL Yeah, except the training – I’ve got to do that myself! [Laughs]
Idle Days

On Warm Gravel, Languid Afternoons and Pointing Overhead for the Passing Day

Photographs by Mark Borthwick
With words by Henry David Thoreau
from Walden; or, Life in the Woods, 1854
My days were not days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock; for I lived like the Puri Indians, of whom it is said that 'for yesterday, today, and tomorrow they have only one word, and they express the variety of meaning by pointing backward for yesterday forward for tomorrow, and overhead for the passing day'. This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting.
SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE

On Making a Case for Fashion Education in Cultural Capitalism

By Professor Frances Corner
building communities, transforming knowledge and creating a tangible sense of purpose for staff and students through the activities, talents, skills and learning that we develop. A confluence of challenges, a perfect storm of influences, is forcing fashion educators to rethink the purpose and means of the education we provide. This concerns not only technological shifts, but also the pressures of climate change, globalisation and shrinking resources as well as an increasingly well-informed student body, well versed in social media and with high expectations.

With a purpose of preparing for the future while understanding the present, educators have a duty to draw out the tensions within the contemporary fashion system. While it exploits the labour and resources of developing countries, those very countries and their populations are also dependent on the industry for progress and growth. As educators, exploring this tension with our students is one of our most important tasks. Faced with an industry that is itself responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by the shifting sands of the twenty-first century, we need to ensure that a fashion student's education is not only the basis for a future career within a complex and ever-changing business, but also one that does not miss opportunities to help the industry face its challenges by adopting creative and experimental solutions.

Slow fashion, with its aim to bring about changes to the fashion...
system whereby the constant need to buy new trends is slowed to a more realistic and sustainable pace, is perhaps one answer to this conundrum. However, the challenge for slow fashion is not merely how to curb capitalism’s relentless drive for growth but rather the apparent contradiction in doing so while honouring an industry that lives off the constant need for change and reinvention. After all, while resources are growing scarce, consumer appetite for commodities appears insatiable. With this in mind, it is apt to ask whether the slow fashion movement is in fact a form of greenwash. Can a system based on rapid production and consumption ever incorporate slowness?

In a globalised and plural society where we can seemingly access all knowledge at the click of a button whilst simultaneously buying any product we want, slow fashion seems a tough ask. Today when we know that branding is king, claims to sustainable or slow fashion by global labels can easily seem like just another marketing ploy. The philosopher Slavoj Žižek has argued that when we buy into green modes of consumption, we essentially buy into an ideal – fair pay for workers, sustainable production methods or ecological balance. This form of ‘cultural capitalism’ means that rather than separating charity and capitalism, the two have merged. Buying an eco garment at a fast fashion company for instance, you, as Žižek puts it, ‘buy your redemption from being only a consumer’. In other words, the arguably egotist act of consumption is compensated and we can revel in the warm feeling that comes with having done a good deed.

Nevertheless, global arrested consumption seems an unlikely solution. In spite of everything, fashion, for all its flaws, caters to the human need for expression. As the philosopher Simon Critchley argues: ‘The human being is the fashioned animal and fashion is the key to understanding the human being’.2 Though our need to continuously explore who we are through the clothes that we wear questions whether we can ever achieve a truly sustainable fashion industry, it also points to the fact that fashion is today a necessary part of modern life.

With this in mind, new methods and models of production, and questions about what it means to consume, should be at the heart of the subject of fashion. Education has to be about how we transform the thinking of our students, how we give them opportunities to investigate, experiment and thoroughly test their ideas. But education should also be about how it transforms the way we think as a society, as a culture, and how, as educators, we can take responsibility for not only our students and our subjects, but also for our external environment. As British novelist and scientist Charles Percy Snow stated in his controversial 1959 lecture The Two Cultures:

‘With good fortune, however, we can educate a larger proportion of our better minds so that they are not ignorant of imaginative experience, both in the arts and in science, nor ignorant either of the endowments of applied science, of the remediable suffering of most of their fellow humans, and of the responsibilities which, once they are seen, cannot be denied’.3

Snow was interested in how higher education institutions through their subjects, discipline and research could address great global challenges such as poverty. We are being challenged in this complex world to see how a topic such as fashion, which for many is ephemeral at best and lightweight and exploitative at worst, can be harnessed to fully capitalise on its economic, cultural and social strengths. Through the application of inspiration, aspiration, beauty and fun, all inherent qualities of fashion at the best of times, we should be challenging ourselves to rethink how we produce and consume fashion. As educators we need to channel such thinking (by students as well as staff) into research and curriculum projects, special events and other enterprising activities to work beyond traditional academic boundaries to instead reach out to industry and communities. How can we champion the capacity that fashion has to make you feel better, its inherent value in the development of personal skill, craft, and technology, its quality of communication and connection? After all, though complex political and economic interdependencies and uncertainties abound, the desire to find personal expression through the clothes we wear means that there is hardly anyone or anything left in our world not touched by fashion.

In a creative education, practical and intellectual experiences are combined with the use of relevant technologies and media, so students can come to realise their intentions in order to create a series of innovative, expressive and dynamic outputs. Whereas the teaching and learning of fashion was once focused on developing the creative and aesthetic skills, talents and abilities of the students, it has today evolved into a subject discipline that greatly values critical, contextual and conceptual dexterity. Rather like the creative process itself, creative education should be a holistic experience that ensures that students understand how the range of skills they develop interrelates and can be applied to the world outside university walls.

In an age of instant communication there is no excuse for apathy or ignorance. We are all made well aware of the sufferings of fellow humans and of the impact of climate change and resource depletion. The UN definition of a sustainable future is one where the needs of those in the present do not compromise the lives of those in the future. For fashion, and by implication fashion educators, this means creating an environment where all aspects of the creation, manufacture, retail, consumption and disposal of clothing does not compromise the world’s peoples and its resources, either now or in the future.  

Frances Corner

On Slowness
In Praise of Shadows

by Junichiro Tanizaki

1933

One thinks of the practice of blackening the teeth. Might it not have been an attempt to push everything except the face into the dark? Today this ideal of beauty has quite disappeared from everyday life, and one must go to an ancient Kyoto teahouse, such as the Sumiya in Shimabara, to find traces of it. But when I think back to my own youth in the old downtown section of Tokyo, and I see my mother at work on her sewing in the dim light from the garden, I think I can imagine a little what the old Japanese woman was like. In those days – it was around 1890 – the Tokyo townsman still lived in a dusky house, and my mother, my aunts, my relatives, most women of their age, still blackened their teeth. I do not remember what they wore for everyday, but when they went out it was often in a gray kimono with a small, modest pattern.

My mother was remarkably slight, under five feet I should say, and I do not think that she was unusual for her time. I can put the matter strongly: women in those days had almost no flesh. I remember my mother's face and hands, I can clearly remember her feet, but I can remember nothing about her body. She reminds me of the statue of Kannon in the Chuguji, whose body must

Excerpt from In Praise of Shadows.
be typical of most Japanese women of the past. The chest as flat as a board, breasts paper-straight thin, back, hips, and buttocks forming an undeviating straight line, the whole body so lean and gaunt as to seem out of proportion with the face, hands, and feet, so lacking in substance as to give the impression not of flesh but of a stick – must not the traditional Japanese woman have had such a physique? A few are still about – the aged lady in an old-fashioned household, some few geisha. They remind me of stick dolls, for in fact they are nothing more than poles upon which to hang clothes. As with the dolls their substance is made up of layer upon layer of clothing, bereft of which only an ungainly pole remains. But in the past this was sufficient. For a woman who lived in the dark it was enough if she had a faint, white face – a full body was necessary.

I suppose it is hard for those who praise the fleshly beauty we see under today’s bright lights to imagine the ghostly beauty of those older women. And there may be some who argue that if beauty has to hide its weak points in the dark it is not beauty at all. But we Orientals, as I have suggested before, create a kind of beauty of the shadows we have made in out-of-the-way places. There is an old song that says ‘the brushwood we gather – stack it together, it makes a hut; pull it apart, a field once more’. Such is our way of thinking – we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates.

A phosphorescent jewel gives off its glow and colour in the dark and loses its beauty in the light of day. Were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty. Our ancestors made of woman an object inseparable from darkness, like lacquerware decorated in gold or mother-of-pearl. They hid as much of her as they could in shadows, concealing her arms and legs in the folds of long sleeves and skirts, so that one part and one only stood out – her face. The curveless body may, by comparison with Western women, be ugly. But our thoughts do not travel to what we cannot see. The unseen for us does not exist. The person who insists upon seeing her ugliness, like the person who would shine a hundred-candlepower light upon the picture alcove, drives away whatever beauty may reside there.
On Mourning and Memory in a Papua New Guinea Village

By Professor John Barker

All photographs: Maisin widows, Papua New Guinea, c. 1902-1910, Photographer Percy John Money.

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FAshIONg REBIRTH
The British Museum is famed for the magnificent collections from ancient
dating back to Captain James Cook’s famous voyages in the eighteenth
century, all but a handful of objects
are stored permanently in warehouses
in the greater London area.

The sailors who brought back the oldest clubs, carved gods, painted
bark-cloth, among other things, called their souvenirs ‘curios’. I imagine that
the few tourists who pause to glance at the Oceanic displays regard them
as little more than curious. Pacific Islanders have a very different
response. Along with oral traditions and fading photographs, these few
objects are often the only link they have with an ancestral past that has
largely vanished. They hold an inner
power, aptly described by the Poly-
nesian word *mana*.

This May, my wife and I felt the
tug of *mana* as we toured the Oceanic
display. For more than three decades,
we have worked in a remote coastal
area of Papua New Guinea document-
ing the lives of the Maisin people. The
British Museum holds more than 300
objects purchased from the Maisin and
their neighbours by Anglican missio-
naries working in Collingwood Bay
around the year 1900. I had seen
most of these objects in the British
Museum stores before – intricately
designed bark-cloth skirts, dancing
ornaments, plumed headdresses and
everyday items like fish nets. Nothing,
however, prepared us for the emotional
charge we felt as we came upon one
of the most significant of the Maisin
pieces on open display: a bark-cloth
cap and vest covered with strings of
fine grey-pearl Job’s Tears seeds.
In the late 1890s, a bereaved woman sat quietly in a secluded corner of an in-law’s house, hidden by a bark-cloth curtain, quietly preparing her widow’s costume (which also included seeded armlets and earrings). Upon the death of her husband, she had wailed and sung dirges with her sisters in his memory, lacerating her breasts with obsidian and burned her chest and arms in her grief. She lost everything. Her house had been pulled down, her food gardens destroyed, her children turned over to her husband’s kin. Time stopped… and then reversed. The widow was symbolically reduced to an infant at the total mercy of her in-laws. They had to show her how to drink, how to eat, how to sew, how to speak, and so forth. And she remained invisible to others. When she needed to relieve herself, she was covered in a bark-cloth blanket and made to crawl to the toilet following a line in the sand drawn by a sister-in-law.

The widow’s return to full life could take years, marked by a gradual change in her appearance. When she first emerged from seclusion, her body was covered and face obscured by heavy Job’s Tear seeds. She was made to sit under her in-laws’ house, a silent sentinel to death. As the weeks passed, she was allowed to remove layers of beads, reflecting the gradual lightening of the burden of loss felt by her and the community. Eventually, she quietly removed her costume and resumed ordinary daily life, her bereavement marked only by her unkempt hair, downcast eyes and lack of adornment. Meanwhile, villagers avoided the areas most frequented by her dead husband so as not to irritate his lingering spirit. There were almost certainly some strains between her people and her husband’s extended kin, given pervasive suspicion that most deaths are the result of sorcery. A year or more after the death, the husband’s people held a feast to remove the final mourning restrictions and to signal the restorations of good relations with the spouse’s kin. Time which had at first stopped and then gradually gained momentum now resumed its regular pace.

The Anglican missionaries who came to Collingwood Bay in 1898 were relatively tolerant of native customs for the period. All the same, they were appalled by the mourning practices and worked hard to suppress what they perceived as the cruel treatment of widows. Yet they left a precious record by selling widows’ costumes to several museums and writing letters to supporters describing the customs. When my wife and I first came to Uiaku village in late 1981 to spend the next eighteen months living with the Maisin, we soon learned that death provided the major ceremonial occasion in people’s lives apart from church services. But much had changed. Only a few very old people recalled the widow’s mourning costume or bore the self-inflicted scars honouring a death. Many associated customs had lapsed and the mourning practices had been modified to better conform to church teachings. Yet the core idea that a widow or widower reverts to a dependent child remained at the heart of the Maisin way of responding to death. In fact, this idea has become stronger. Over the decades, there has been a shift in emphasis from the initial emotionally violent moment of the passing of life to the gradual rebirth of mourners and the healing of the community. And despite the fact that the Maisin have long accepted Western clothing as their daily wear, the transition from death to rebirth is still conveyed in the appearance of mourners.

In 2006, my good friend Rufus passed away. His passing was announced to the village by the mournful sound of a conch shell blown three times. People gathered around his house, the women wailing in their grief and the men sitting silently, eyes downcast. An elder stood at the door, calling out for Rufus’ spirit to be at peace and not bring sickness to the village. A few minutes later, the priest arrived to lead a procession to the cemetery where the burial rite was read out. Three days later, the community gathered to share a meal in the memory and the release of death’s hold on the community.

Like other rural Papua New Guinea communities, the Maisin have experienced immense change through the colonial period and into the present. The establishment of churches and schools familiarised people with the discipline of the clock and calendar and provided an entry point to the new world of cash and employment. Yet to a remarkable
FULL MOURNING

A MAISIN WIDOW.

HALF MOURNING.
extent, village life continues to resonate with ancient conceptions of deep time. The nine month maturation of taro, the key crop, recalls pregnancy and birth. The public decorating of widows at the end of the mourning period recalls the moment adolescent girls undertaking the puberty rite of passage emerge from seclusion with tattooed faces, glistening skin and resplendently adorned bodies on display for all to admire. The magnificent dances which mark important occasions in the life cycle and church high days recall a deeper temporality. While each costume is unique and ephemeral in the ways that individual dancers combine tapa, shells, feathers, fragrant plants and paint, they also mark distinctions between clans, each of which holds rights to specific timeless insignia such as bark-cloth designs. The pounding of the drums, the rhythmic shuffling of feet, the gentle swish of the costumes, the chants in an ancestral language that no one today understands – as all of this whirls and blends deep into the night, the dancers merge with their ancestors at the moment of creation when the clans emerged from the underground.

Maisin continue to adapt to modern conditions. They no longer tattoo their daughters and rarely hold the once mandatory first-born initiation ritual. Yet they remain committed to their ancestral heritage. A number of years ago, when I brought a film crew to the villages, I was surprised and delighted to watch village women perform a play depicting the old mourning practices, passing on the memory to the next generation. The missionary who purchased the widow’s mourning costume now held in trust in the British Museum was no doubt motivated not just by the profit he made in selling it, but equally by the thought that he was hastening the demise of a ‘barbaric’ custom. Ironically, he helped preserve its memory. For Collingwood Bay people who visit the British Museum and other institutions holding the mana filled objects of their ancestors, the widow’s vest is as foundational to their ongoing and evolving civilisation as the Parthenon marbles are to Europeans and their descendants.
One meter of corduroy fabric, one tube of acrylic paint, dried blue flower dye, one beetroot, coffee and turmeric were used to produce the following paintings.
White sewage discharged from textile dyeing factory in Yangtze River in Yichang, China.
and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the synthetic creations of man’s inventive mind, brewed in his laboratories, and having no counterparts in nature.

To adjust to these chemicals would require time on the scale that is nature’s; it would require not merely the years of a man’s life but the life of generations. And even this, were it by some miracle possible, would be futile, for the new chemicals come from our laboratories in an endless stream.

[...] Along with the possibility of the extinction of mankind by nuclear war, the central problem of our age has therefore become the contamination of man’s total environment with such substances of incredible potential for harm – substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends.
Violet foam effluents from dye factories upstream in Tullahan River in Manila, The Philippines.
River dyed bluish-green from dyes and sludge from textile industries in Balotra, Bithuja and Jasol in the River Luni in Western Rajasthan, India.
On Mending and Making Do

By Anja Aronowsky Cronberg
With photographs by Justine Kurland

THE ART OF JEANS
We have come a long way from the days when denim was the rebel's uniform.

Today the fabric is as ubiquitous in the businessman's wardrobe as it is in the teenager's and the hobo's. We can buy diamond-encrusted denim, made in ateliers of the haute couture or resort to versions manufactured in far-away factories by dexterous children's hands. Indeed, we are consuming denim, along with just about everything else, as never before. But in this culture when virtually anything can be bought for money and when denim is for square and hepcat alike, how can it remain distinctive to its users?

With these six portraits we propose a future for denim in the singular relationship between garment and wearer that arises when a piece of clothing has been worked on by hand. Returning then to the time honoured tradition of repurposing, customising, mending and making do, this stance could be seen as an anti-consumerist protest of sorts, or maybe just as a way of finding an original voice in a sea full of carbon copies. Whether embroidered, ripped, torn, bleached, cut, mended, accessorised or patched, these denim garments are made unique by the intimate connection that they have to their owner, and by the passing of time. The connection between denim, craftsmanship, time and fashion is a highly personal one, measured neither in capital nor technological advances, but rather in the accumulation of memories.

In a world where information overload threatens to engulf us, passing the time carefully working on the garments in your wardrobe becomes a way of, at least momentarily, slowing down the frenetic pace of our culture. There is an ever-growing number of people like these six, questioning temporal irreversibility and what appears to be our need for constant progress. In that questioning lies a myriad of alternative voices and divergent answers, but one thing is clear: whatever the method, these garments are, perhaps more than anything else, autobiographies in cloth.
This dress was a gift to myself; I made it from denim given to me by friends over the years. I’m pregnant and making it made me think about the baby growing in my belly. I love how spacious it is and how free wearing it makes me feel. When I found out I was pregnant I was immensely moved but also scared. Somehow I couldn’t quite believe it. Making a maternity dress was a kind of manifestation of my pregnancy in that sense, and a way to prove to myself and to the world that I’m actually pregnant.

I first started making clothes for myself from recycled denim when I moved from Japan to New York. At the time I was unsure of what to do with my life. I started working with a designer and she gave me some leftover material. I began experimenting, making whatever I felt like wearing and, though I never asked for it, more friends started giving me their old clothes. Since I’m not a trained designer I don’t use patterns, I just put the fabric on my body and start to sew. I never start with a fixed idea of the result; I just let the moment guide me. I sew everything by hand, and when things break I fix them. I love the stories hidden in repairs. Recently I moved to the countryside and I’m learning about permaculture. It’s helping me immensely to feel at ease with my work and my circumstances. When I worry or doubt myself I try to remember its core principle – harmony. Whether I make a dress or plant a seed, this is my guiding light now.
I’m more of a dandy than I look actually and I do love to talk about clothes. I have a basic uniform that carries me through work and casual situations; it consists of black jeans and a work shirt. When you deal with students, as I do, you have to be careful because they project their own narratives onto you and I don’t want to give them more ammunition. The weekend is the time when I wear what I want, which these days tends to be overalls.

The jacket I’m wearing in the image is from Old Navy, I bought it about ten years ago. It was one of those fashionable pieces that are sold looking already distressed and with time it’s taken on a real patina too. The trousers are from Carhartt and I love how beat up they’ve become around the cuffs. I would never wear them to work, they’re too grimy, but I wear them on the weekends or when I’m going out. I must have had them for almost twenty years now. Let’s just say that they’ve been effective date bait over the years. I wear them with suspenders which frame my belly in a really nice way. These days I’m blessed with a size that means that I’m automatically out of the running for most fashion. Nobody really designs for guys that are my size and shape. Believe me, I’ve looked. So generally I hold onto things for a long time and if I find something that works, I’ll just keep wearing it.
I made this skirt for myself out of a pair of old jeans about ten years ago now. The jeans were well worn to start with and over the years the skirt has become even more ragged. I love finding vintage clothing or things that people have discarded and repurposing them. My mum used to make costumes at Renaissance fairs around the country when I was growing up, and she and my grandmother taught me how to sew as a girl. I started repurposing clothes as an adult when I realised that I couldn’t find what I wanted in the stores. I have mixed feelings about the way we buy clothes nowadays. On the one hand I like that I can walk into a high street store and buy a version of something I’ve seen and liked on the catwalk, available at my price point. But on the other hand, the fact that these clothes are mass produced and have such a rapid turnover sometimes makes me feel like I’m just buying landfill.

By contrast, when I buy old clothes the hunt is one of the things I like the most. I get a rush from knowing that I’ve found a long-forgotten garment that I can turn into something really unique. It’s contemporary hunting and gathering. With this skirt, it was a bit like that. I like the rock ’n’ roll grunginess of it and the fact that it also has an element of elegance because though it’s tattered and worn, it’s still a long skirt. I remember wearing it with a tube top on the beach in Miami when my daughter was still really little, and how good wearing it made me feel.
I made the first pair of these jeans in 1999. At the time there was a lot of unrest in the city because an unarmed African street vendor called Amadou Diallo had just been shot by the NYPD. I was working at the time so I couldn’t join the protests in the city, but I still wanted to show my support in some way. I made these jeans during the trial, and to remember what had happened I patched them forty-one times – as many times as Diallo had been shot by the police. Recently we’ve had several similar shootings in America and it’s made me think of how little things have changed. As a black man this is something I’m acutely aware of, so I decided to make another pair of jeans as a reaction to what’s happening. The jacket I’ve had almost ten years now. I turned one I already had inside out, altered the pockets and added a zipper to make it more utilitarian.

My clothes are a nod to Do-It-Yourself culture. People say that you can’t do it all yourself, but I’ve always had to, and today when so much is identical fast fashion it makes me feel really good to know that my clothes are not store-bought. I love turning things inside out or picking them apart to find out how they’re made. It all comes from my old sewing teacher I think. She used to say that garments should look as good inside as out, so I figured that if that’s the truth, why not just wear a garment inside out?
My shorts were originally trousers that belonged to someone I was seeing for a summer, two summers ago. It was just a summer fling really, not very serious – most of my friends didn’t even know we were dating. He wasn’t the most organised or neat person and one day he just left these jeans behind. Time passed and I neglected to remind him because I really liked them, and when he left the city in August they got left behind. That I made them into shorts was partly pragmatic and partly symbolic I think. I’m sensitive and I get attached quite easily so although I knew that our relationship was temporary I still felt pretty sad when he left. His jeans were full of his smell and seeing them became quite painful. I considered throwing them out but that didn’t feel quite right because I still really liked them, and I knew they looked good on me. So cutting them became symbolic, a bit like when Delilah cuts Samson’s hair off in order to break the spell. Cutting them made me feel that they properly belonged to me. I knew I’d want them rolled up rather than frayed. I like lines and evenness, and the roll-up feels more severe and more me somehow. I also think my legs are my best feature, which makes the shorts a good advertisement for my body. I wear them almost every day in summer. From time to time their provenance comes back to me a little, but mostly I don’t even think of where they came from anymore. They’re just my best shorts now.
I've had these jeans for quite some time now. They're old Gap jeans that I bought on one of those shopping sprees you do with your friends when you hang around the dressing room together and tell each other ‘that looks nice’. Somehow they just never got worn – I suppose I didn’t like how much I cared about how I looked in them. So I decided to cut them up instead. I started with a silver chain that I cut off this really horrible handbag and then looped across the back. After that I attached some velour leopard print to create more of a flare. I’ve glued and stitched flowers cut from other clothes in silky materials and a horseshoe and gun cut from old jeans. The gun is on the right side of my thigh, where I’d keep a real gun if I had one. There’s a dagger there too, taken from an old jacket that I used to love when I was in third grade. On the front I have this chain of gold coins that jingle when I walk and remind me of my Persian heritage. And on the back it says ‘angel’, but not in an ironic way – I’m quite bored with irony now.

I think it’s curious how often loaded, iconic images get watered down in consumerist fashion. I mean, we spend hours analysing the iconography of a painting for example, but when we wear the same motifs on our clothes they automatically become devoid of meaning. I guess you could say that these jeans are my way of challenging that.
machine oil smells sweet

one day we will use ourselves up the symptoms of our speed will wear bare parched contact between finger and thumb fleeting ding ding ding ding ding we will not be able to faster we will keep to the shade away from reflective surfaces clock time precise monsters we will make exactly the same movement one hundred times an hour our stitches converging into even with the old machines we could have a bit of a breather control our the next break ding ding ding ding ding ding ding now the machine controls the pace owns our the machine is never tired touched with tender fitted with surprise gifts the machine’s future too far unknowable from where we sit here machine oil smells sweet our end is accelerating same time every morning except this one chin drops ding ding ding ding ding ding ding we do not know how to everything we were only shown not necessary to see the this bit and this bit do not necessarily finish this bit ding ding ding ding ding ding ding no women under twenty five
nimble eyes more washed than ours
beginning from slack scraps
allowed nothing with your hands except for the needful
dead is detail we skim
shadows arriving early to catch the dawn
leaking gracefully
borders are created only by the repetition of our hands
simply binding shallow hem to hair
we can almost make out
layers stacking we are not able to
move about our necks
light pumping as blood soft
motes lose road
five red petals drop brown
we leave a small gap in the pattern by hand
the pattern completes itself without us
learns more quickly than we ever will
we are no longer needed by what we created

Maria Fusco
The drawer was always kept locked. In a household where the tangled rubbish of existence had collected on surfaces like a scurf, which was forever being cleared away by her mother and the maid, then by her mother, and, finally, hardly at all, it had been a permanent cell – rather like, Hester thought wryly, the gene that is carried over from one generation to the other. Now, holding the small, square, indelibly known key in her hand, she shrank before it, reluctant to perform the blasphemy that the living must inevitably perpetrate on the possessions of the dead. There were no revelations to be expected when she opened the drawer, only the painful reiteration of her mother’s personality and the power it had held over her own, which would rise – an emanation, a mist, that she herself had long since shredded away, parted, and escaped.

She repeated to herself, like an incantation, ‘I am married. I have a child of my own, a home of my own five hundred miles away. I have not even lived in this house – my parents’ house – for over seven years’. Stepping back, she sat on the bed where her mother had died the week before, slowly, from cancer, where
Hester had held the large, long-fingered, competent hand for a whole night, watching the asphyxiating action of the fluid mounting in the lungs until it had extinguished the breath. She sat facing the drawer.

It had taken her all her own lifetime to get to know its full contents, starting from the first glimpses, when she was just able to lean her chin on the side and have her hand pushed away from the packets and japanned boxes, to the last weeks, when she had made a careful show of not noticing while she got out the necessary bankbooks and safe-deposit keys. Many times during her childhood, when she had lain blandly ill herself, elevated to the honour of the parental bed while she suffered from the ‘auto-intoxication’ that must have been 1918’s euphemism for plain piggishness, the drawer had been opened. Then she had been allowed to play with the two pairs of pearled opera glasses or the long string of graduated white china beads, each with its oval sides flushed like cheeks. Over these she had sometimes spent the whole afternoon, pencilling two eyes and a pursed mouth on each bead, until she had achieved an incredible string of minute, doll-like heads that made even her mother laugh.

Once while Hester was in college, the drawer had been opened for the replacement of her grandmother’s great sunburst pin, which she had never before seen and which had been in pawn, and doggedly reclaimed over a long period by her mother. And for Hester’s wedding her mother had taken out the delicate diamond chain – the ‘lavaliere’ of the Gibson-girl era – that had been her father’s wedding gift to her mother, and the ugly, expensive bar pin that had been his gift to his wife on the birth of her son. Hester had never before seen either of them, for the fashion of wearing diamonds indiscriminately had never been her mother’s, who was contemptuous of other women’s display, although she might spend minutes in front of the mirror debating a choice between two relatively gimerack pieces of costume jewellery. Hester had never known why this was until recently, when the separation of the last few years had relaxed the tension between her mother and herself – not enough to prevent explosions when they met but enough for her to see, obscurely, the long motivations of her mother’s life. In the European sense, family jewellery was Property, and with all her faultless English and New World poise, her mother had never exorcised her European core.

In the back of the middle drawer, there was a small square of brown-toned photograph that had never escaped into the large, ramshackle portfolio of family pictures kept in the drawer of the old break-front bookcase, open to any hand. Seated on a bench, Hedwig Licht, aged two, brows knitted under ragged hair, stared mournfully into the camera with the huge, heavy-lidded eyes that had continued to brood in her face as a woman, the eyes that she had transmitted to Hester, along with the high cheekbones that she had deplored. Fat, wrinkled stockings were bowed into arcs that almost met at the high-stretched boots, which did not touch the floor; to hold up the stockings, strips of calico matching the dumpy little dress were bound around the knees.
Long ago, Hester, in her teens, staring tenaciously into the drawer under her mother's impatient glance, had found the little square and exclaimed over it, and her mother, snatching it away from her, had muttered, 'If that isn't Dutchy!' But she had looked at it long and ruefully before she had pushed it back into a corner. Hester had added the picture to the legend of her mother's childhood built up from the bitter little anecdotes that her mother had let drop casually over the years.

She saw the small Hedwig, as clearly as if it had been herself, haunting the stiff rooms of the house in the townlet of Oberelsbach, motherless since birth and almost immediately stepmothered by a woman who had been unloving, if not unkind, and had soon borne the stern, Haustyrann father a son. The small figure she saw had no connection with the all-powerful figure of her mother but, rather, seemed akin to the legion of lonely children who were a constant motif in the literature that had been her own drug – the Sara Crewes and Little Dorrits, all those children who inhabited the familiar terror-struck dark that crouched under the lash of the adult. She saw Hedwig receiving from her dead mother's mother – the Grandmother Rosenberg, warm and loving but, alas, too far away to be of help – the beautiful, satin-incrusted bisque doll, and she saw the bad stepmother taking it away from Hedwig and putting it in the drawing room, because 'it is too beautiful for a child to play with'. She saw all this as if it had happened to her and she had never forgotten.

Years later, when this woman, Hester's step-grandmother, had come to the United States in the long train of refugees from Hitler, her mother had urged the grown Hester to visit her, and she had refused, knowing her own childishness but feeling the resentment rise in her as if she were six, saying, 'I won't go. She wouldn't let you have your doll'. Her mother had smiled at her sadly and had shrugged her shoulders resignedly. 'You wouldn't say that if you could see her. She's an old woman. She has no teeth.' Looking at her mother, Hester had wondered what her feelings were after forty years, but her mother, private as always in her emotions, had given no sign.

There had been no sign for Hester – never an open demonstration of love or an appeal – until the telephone call of a few months before, when she had heard her mother say quietly, over the distance, 'I think you'd better come', and she had turned away from the phone saying bitterly, almost in awe, 'If she asks me to come, she must be dying!'

Turning the key over in her hand, Hester looked back at the composite figure of her mother – that far-off figure of the legendary child, the nearer object of her own dependence, love, and hate – looked at it from behind the safe, dry wall of her own 'American' education. We are told, she thought, that people who do not experience love in their earliest years cannot open up; they cannot give it to others; but by the time we have learned this from books or dredged it out of reminiscence, they have long since left upon us their chill, irremediable stain.
If Hester searched in her memory for moments of animal maternal warmth, like those she self-consciously gave her own child (as if her own childhood prodded her from behind), she thought always of the blue-shot twilight of one New York evening, the winter she was eight, when she and her mother were returning from a shopping expedition, gay and united in the shared guilt of being late for supper. In her mind, now, their arrested figures stood like two silhouettes caught in the spotlight of time. They had paused under the brightly agitated bulbs of a movie-theatre marquee, behind them the broad, rose-red sign of a Happiness candy store. Her mother, suddenly leaning down to her, had encircled her with her arm and nuzzled her, saying almost anxiously, ‘We do have fun together, don’t we?’ Hester had stared back stolidly, almost suspiciously, into the looming, pleading eyes, but she had rested against the encircling arm, and warmth had trickled through her as from a closed wound reopening.

After this, her mother’s part in the years that followed seemed blurred with the recriminations from which Hester had retreated ever farther, always seeking the remote corners of the household – the sofa-fortressed alcoves, the store closet, the servants’ bathroom – always bearing her amulet, a book. It seemed to her now, wincing, that the barrier of her mother’s dissatisfaction with her had risen imperceptibly, like a coral cliff built inexorably from the slow accretion of carelessly ejaculated criticisms that had grown into solid being in the heavy fullness of time. Meanwhile, her father’s uncritical affection, his open caresses, had been steadiness under her feet after the shifting waters of her mother’s personality, but he had been away from home on business for long periods, and when at home he, too, was increasingly a target for her mother’s deep-burning rage against life. Adored member of a large family that was almost tribal in its affections and unity, he could not cope with this smouldering force and never tried to understand it, but the shield of his adulthood gave him a protection that Hester did not have. He stood on equal ground.

Hester’s parents had met at Saratoga, at the races. So dissimilar were their backgrounds that it was improbable that they would ever have met elsewhere than in the somewhat easy social flux of a spa, although their brownstone homes in New York were not many blocks apart, his in the gentility of upper Madison Avenue, hers in the solid, Germanic comfort of Yorkville. By this time, Hedwig had been in America ten years.

All Hester knew of her mother’s coming to America was that she had arrived when she was sixteen. Now that she knew how old her mother had been at death, knew the birth date so zealously guarded during a lifetime of evasion and so quickly exposed by the noncommittal nakedness of funeral routine, she realised that her mother must have arrived in 1900. She had come to the home of an aunt, a sister of her own dead mother. What family drama had preceded her coming, whose decision it had been, Hester did
Hester had a vivid picture of her mother’s arrival and first years in New York, although this was drawn from only two clues. Her great-aunt, remarking once on Hester’s looks in the dispassionate way of near relations, had nodded over Hester’s head to her mother. ‘She is dark, like the father, no? Not like you were.’ And Hester, with a naïve glance of surprise at her mother’s sedate pompadour, had eagerly interposed, ‘What was she like, Tante?’

‘Ach, when she came off the boat, war sie hübsch!’ Tante had said, lapsing into German with unusual warmth, ‘Such a colour! Pink and cream!’

‘Yes, a real Bavarian Mädchen’, said her mother with a trace of contempt. ‘Too pink for the fashion here. I guess they thought it wasn’t real.’

Another time, her mother had said, in one of her rare bursts of anecdote, ‘When I came, I brought enough linen and underclothing to supply two brides. At the convent school where I was sent, the nuns didn’t teach you much besides embroidery, so I had plenty to bring, plenty. They were nice, though. Good, simple women. Kind. I remember I brought four dozen handkerchiefs, beautiful heavy linen that you don’t get in America. But they were large, bigger than the size of a man’s handkerchief over here, and the first time I unfolded one, everybody laughed, so I threw them away.’ She had sighed, perhaps for the linen. ‘And underdrawers! Long red flannel, and I had spent months embroidering them with yards of white eyelet work on the ruffles. I remember Tante’s maid came in from the back yard quite angry and refused to hang them on the line any more. She said the other maids, from the houses around, teased her for belonging to a family who would wear things like that.’

Until Hester was in her teens, her mother had always employed young German or Czech girls fresh from ‘the other side’ – Teenies and Josies of long braided hair, broad cotton ankles and queer, blunt shoes, who had clacked deferentially to her mother in German and had gone off to marry their waiter’s and baker’s apprentices at just about the time they learned to wear silk stockings and ‘just as soon as you’ve taught them how to serve a dinner’, returning regularly to show off their square, acrid babies. ‘Greenhorns!’ her mother had always called them, a veil of something indefinable about her lips. But in the middle drawer there was a long rope of blond hair, sacrificed, like the handkerchiefs, but not wholly discarded.

There was no passport in the drawer. Perhaps it had been destroyed during the years of the first World War, when her mother, long since a citizen by virtue of her marriage, had felt the contemporary pressure to excise everything Teutonic. ‘If that nosy Mrs. Cahn asks you when I came over, just say I came over as a child’, she had said to Hester. And how easy it had been to nettle her by pretending that one could discern a trace of accent in her speech! Once, when the family had teased her by affecting to hear an echo of ‘puplic’ in her pronunciation of ‘public’, Hester had come upon her, hours after, standing before a mirror,
colour and nose high, watching herself say, over and over again, ‘Public! Public!’

Was it this, thought Hester, her straining toward perfection, that made her so intolerant of me, almost as if she were castigating in her child the imperfections that were her own? ‘Big feet, big hands, like mine’, her mother had grumbled. ‘Why? Why? When every woman in your father’s family wears size one! But their nice, large ears – you must have those!’ And dressing Hester for Sunday school she would withdraw a few feet to look at the finished product, saying slowly, with dreamy cruelty, ‘I don’t know why I let you wear those white gloves. They make your hands look clumsy, just like a policeman’s’.

It was over books that the rift between Hester and her mother had become complete. To her mother, marrying into a family whose bookish traditions she had never ceased trying to undermine with the sneer of the practical, it was as if the stigmata of that tradition, appearing upon the girl, had forever made them alien to one another.

‘Your eyes don’t look like a girl’s, they look like an old woman’s! Reading! Forever reading!’ she had stormed, chasing Hester from room to room, flushing her out of doors, and on one remote, terrible afternoon, whipping the book out of Hester’s hand, she had leaned over her, glaring, and had torn the book in two.

Hester shivered now, remembering the cold sense of triumph that had welled up in her as she had faced her mother, rejoicing in the enormity of what her mother had done.

Her mother had faltered before her. ‘Do you want to be a dreamer all your life?’ she had muttered.

Hester had been unable to think of anything to say for a moment. Then she had stuttered, ‘All you think of in life is money!’, and had made her grand exit. But huddling miserably in her room afterward she had known even then that it was not as simple as that, that her mother, too, was whipped and driven by some ungovernable dream she could not express, which had left her, like the book, torn in two.

Was it this, perhaps, that had sent her across an ocean, that had impelled her to perfect her dress and manner, and to reject the humdrum suitors of her aunt’s circle for a Virginia bachelor twenty-two years older than herself? Had she, perhaps, married him not only for his money and his seasoned male charm but also for his standards and traditions, against which her railings had been a confession of envy and defeat?

So Hester and her mother had continued to pit their implacable difference against each other in a struggle that was complicated out of all reason by their undeniable likeness – each pursuing in her own orbit the warmth that had been denied. Gauche and surly as Hester was in her mother’s presence, away from it she had striven successfully for the very falsities of standard that she despised in her mother, and it was her misery that she was forever impelled to earn her mother’s approval at the expense of her own. Always, she knew now, there had been the lurking, buried wish that someday she would find the final barb, the
homing shaft, that would maim her mother once and for all, as she felt herself to have been maimed.

A few months before, the barb had been placed in her hand. In answer to the telephone call, she had come to visit the family a short time after her mother’s sudden operation for cancer of the breast. She had found her father and brother in an anguish of helplessness, fear, and male distaste at the thought of the illness, and her mother a prima donna of fortitude, moving unbowed toward the unspoken idea of her death but with the signs on her face of a pitiful tension that went beyond the disease. She had taken to using separate utensils and to sleeping alone, although the medical opinion that cancer was not transferable by contact was well known to her. It was clear that she was suffering from a horror of what had been done to her and from a fear of the revulsion of others. It was clear to Hester, also, that her father and brother had such a revulsion and had not been wholly successful in concealing it.

One night she and her mother had been together in her mother’s bedroom. Hester, in a shabby housegown, stretched out on the bed luxuriously, thinking of how there was always a certain equivocal case, a letting down of pretense, an illusory return to the irresponsibility of childhood, in the house of one’s birth. Her mother, back turned, had been standing unnecessarily long at the bureau, fumbling with the articles upon it. She turned slowly.

‘They’ve been giving me X-ray twice a week’, she said, not looking at Hester, ‘to stop any involvement of the glands.’

‘Oh’, said Hester, carefully smoothing down a wrinkle on the bedspread, ‘It’s very wise to have that done’.

Suddenly, her mother had put out her hand in a gesture almost of appeal. Half in a whisper, she asked, ‘Would you like to see it? No one has seen it since I left the hospital’.

‘Yes’, Hester said, keeping her tone cool, even, full only of polite interest. ‘I’d like very much to see it.’ Frozen there on the bed, she had reverted to childhood in reality, remembering, as if they had all been crammed into one slot in time, the thousands of incidents when she had been the one to stand before her mother, vulnerable and bare, helplessly awaiting the cruel exactitude of her displeasure. ‘I know how she feels as if I were standing there myself’, thought Hester. ‘How well she taught me to know!’

Slowly her mother undid her housegown and bared her breast. She stood there for a long moment, on her face the looming, pleading look of twenty years before, the look it had once shown under the theatre marquee. Hester half rose from the bed. There was a hurt in her own breast that she did not recognise. She spoke with difficulty.

‘Why … it’s a beautiful job, Mother’, she said, distilling the carefully natural tone of her voice. ‘Neat as can be. I had no idea … I thought it would be ugly.’ With a step toward her mother, she looked, as if casually, at the dreadful neatness of the cicatrix, at the twisted, foreshortened tendon of the upper arm.

‘I can’t raise my arm yet’, whispered her mother. ‘They had to cut deep … Your father won’t look at it.’
In an eternity of slowness, Hester stretched out her hand. Trembling, she touched a tentative finger to her mother's chest, where the breast had been. Then, with rising sureness, with infinite delicacy, she drew her fingertips along the length of scar in a light, affirmative caress, and they stood eye to eye for an immeasurable second, on equal ground at last.

In the cold, darkening room, Hester unclenched herself from remembrance. She was always vulnerable, Hester thought. As we all are. What she bequeathed me unwittingly, ironically, was fortitude – the fortitude of those who have had to live under the blow. But pity – that I found for myself.

She knew now that the tangents of her mother and herself would never have fully met, even if her mother had lived. Holding her mother's hand through the long night as she retreated over the border line of narcosis and coma into death, she had felt the giddy sense of conquering, the heady euphoria of being still alive, which comes to the watcher in the night. Nevertheless, she had known with sureness, even then, that she would go on all her life trying to 'show' her mother, in an unsatisfied effort to earn her approval – and unconditional love.

As a child, she had slapped at her mother once in a frenzy of rebellion, and her mother, in reproof, had told her the tale of the peasant girl who had struck her mother and had later fallen ill and died and been buried in the village cemetery. When the mourners came to tend the mound, they found that the corpse's offending hand had grown out of the grave. They cut it off and reburied it, but when they came again in the morning, the hand had grown again. So, too, thought Hester, even though I might learn – have learned in some ways – to escape my mother's hand, all my life I will have to push it down; all my life my mother's hand will grow again out of the unquiet grave of the past.

It was her own life that was in the middle drawer. She was the person she was not only because of her mother but because, fifty-eight years before, in the little town of Oberelsbach, another woman, whose qualities she would never know, had died too soon. Death, she thought, absolves equally the bungler, the evildoer, the unloving, and the unloved – but never the living. In the end, the cicatrix that she had, in the smallest of ways, helped her mother to bear had eaten its way in and killed. The living carry, she thought, perhaps not one tangible wound but the burden of the innumerable small cicatrices imposed on us by our beginnings; we carry them with us always, and from these, from this agony, we are not absolved.

She turned the key and opened the drawer.
Three hundred bookmarks have been distributed at random in this print run of Vestoj. If you're lucky enough to get a golden ticket, this is what you should know:

This bookmark is hand embroidered with cotton thread on silk. It is designed by Jackie Villevoye of Jupe by Jackie and crafted by master embroiderers in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. The embroiderers are all men, and their craft passes from one generation to the next, and has done so for centuries. When a young boy decides to become a master embroiderer, he knows that it will take him almost fifteen years to become a professional. Like a soccer player or ballet dancer, his childhood is devoted to learning his intricate craft. He stays indoors to prevent his skin from hardening as every nerve ending in his fingertips has to remain sharp to guide the needle as he works. At the age of forty the detailed work of the craftsman finally degrades his eyesight to the degree where he will have to abandon his work and retire. The career of the master is over.

Each bookmark has taken one master embroiderer thirteen hours to complete.
REFASHIONING TIME (pp.13–19)
By Dr Michelle Bastian

1 e.g. H Clark, ‘SLOW + FASHION – an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future . . .?’, Fashion Theory, Vol. 12, Issue 4, 2008, p.428


3 Ibid., p.262

4 To find out more visit www.sustainingtime.org


8 Ibid., p.150

SPINNING FOR FREEDOM (pp.29–39)
By Dr Susan S. Bean


2 For an analysis of the visual culture of spinning in relation to Gandhi’s khadi, see R M Brown, Spinning without Touching the Wheel: Anti-Colonialism, Indian Nationalism and the Deployment of Symbol, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2009, pp.230–245


6 1 Timothy 2:9–10; 1 Peter 3:3–4

7 1 Corinthians 11:2–16


11 Judy Stavisky interview with Pennsylvania Amish woman, July 24, 2014

12 Judy Stavisky interview with Lancaster Amish woman, July 23, 2014


17 Ibid., p.270
CONTRIBUTORS

Agoera
When Agoera starts a new painting, the first thing he does is select a sad colour. Then he gets to work. Sitting at home in Kanagawa, Japan, he picks up his favourite melancholy colours (dark blues and reds mostly) and with bold brushstrokes turns plywood boards into poignant scenes of loss and woe.

John Barker
John is a socio-cultural anthropologist at the University of British Columbia whose research revolves around the religious change among Indigenous people in colonial and post-colonial Oceania and British Columbia. With his wife, the psychologist Anne Marie Tietjen, he has travelled extensively in Papua New Guinea since the 1980s, doing fieldwork with the Maisin people: ever inquisitive about the interface between local and global religion, John was one of the first to study the adoption of Christianity amongst Melanesians.

Michelle Bastian
Michelle is a Chancellor’s Fellow at Edinburgh University, researching the inter-connection between time and community. Drawing on anthropology, sociology and philosophy, she explores how concepts of time are used in social methods of inclusion and exclusion, while questioning the idea that linear conceptions of time denote a single reality or universal commensurability.

Susan S. Bean
Susan is a very elegant scholar whose photograph has been featured in Vogue India. She writes, curates and consults on the visual arts and culture of modern South Asia, and chairs the Art & Archaeology Centre of the American Institute of Indian Studies. She once taught anthropology at Yale, and is today an Associate of the Peabody Museum at Harvard.

Mark Borthwick
When Mark writes emails they read like poetry, and sometimes it takes a little while to decipher them. But that’s okay, because with Mark you take time. His photographs have the same evocative and somewhat numinous quality as his words: a reflection of his world, which is as full of the everyday as it is of the sacred. Mark loves feathers, bones, ribbons and musical instruments, and the lucky will get to hear him sing.

Polly Brown
Polly obsesses about airports, plants, feet and ear lobes. Lately, it’s been mostly plants. Recently she published her first book Plants which took her from office to office at some of the world’s most recognisable brands, and had her explain again and again to bemused security guards just what she was doing on her knees, photographing that wilted plant in the corridor.

Philippe Boudin
Philippe deals in Japanese art from a gallery on the Parisian Left Bank. Walk down his steps into a series of sixteenth century caves, and take your time to enjoy the objects on display: tea ceremony paraphernalia, bamboo baskets, lacquered objects, boro textiles and wabi-sabi ceramics. Together with his wife Maiko, Philippe specialises in the Mingei period – Japanese folk art from the late 1920s and 30s, once handmade by unknown craftsmen for the masses.

Frances Corner
Frances is the fairy godmother of this journal. Through steadfast support and encouragement, she has ensured that we’re given the backing we need to grow at our own pace, and for that we take our hats off to her. Apart from championing Vestoj, Frances is the Head of College at London College of Fashion, a post she’s using to turn the university into a bellwether for sustainable and ethical practice in the curriculum.

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Maria Fusco
Maria looks at fiction as a critical practice – she, in her own words, writes through the art object. Whether she’s defined as an artist, writer, editor or critic, her work always explores the role of writing in the contemporary art arena, i.e. what writing in this context ‘might be’. Today she has a role as Chancellor’s Fellow – Reader in the School of Art at Edinburgh College of Art, while keeping her journal The Happy Hypocrite on hiatus.

Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada
Yoshiko is a California based textile artist, author, teacher, curator and researcher and a champion of traditional and sustainable practices in fashion and textile production. She is the founder of Slow Fiber Studios and the president of the World Shibori Network, and has been awfully influential in the art-to-wear movement and in introducing Japanese shibori to America.

Nathalie Khan
Nathalie is an Associate Lecturer in Fashion History and Cultural Studies at Central Saint Martins and London College of Fashion. With a background in fashion sales at Donna Karan, her research interests now include iconography and celebrity culture, the
social history of the fashion image, catwalk shows and their narrative as well as psychoanalytic discourse in relation to fashion. Oh, and fashion film!

Donald B. Kraybill
Donald grew up milking cows on a Mennonite dairy farm in Lancaster County, and is today the world’s foremost expert on the Old Order Amish. He is a Senior Fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, and lectures widely on Anabaptist faiths. Growing up in the Mennonite church, the mores of the faith have stuck with him – Donald wears nothing superfluous, not even a wedding ring. As his parents once told him, rings are for bulls only.

Justine Kurland
Justine spends her summers travelling around America with her young son Casper, photographing nomadic subcultures – vagabonds, drifters, squatters and hitchhikers – often portraying them in a pastoral or utopian style reminiscent of nineteenth century landscape painting. Excitable, impulsive and naturally restless, Justine’s work seems a good approximation of the artist herself.

Alice Lemoine
Alice was once an architect but now she’s a fashion designer. She worked with Rick Owens before starting her own line of hand knitted garments, Le Moine Tricote, in 2011.

A counterbalance to the current climate of fast fashion, Alice says that she’s ‘not in a hurry to make a lot of money’, preferring instead to have time to develop ideas, remain independent and allow for little accidents to take her work in new and unexpected directions.

David Myron
David is the Big Monkey. While not just generally monkeying around or playing strategic computer games, he crafts objects out of wood, from the most delicate of rings to sculptures, furniture and even houses. With a background in the fine arts and a great knowledge of both fashion and design, his artisanry has attracted the attention of all from gallery owners to artists, designers and fashion editors.

Karinna Nobbs
Without Karinna we would not be where we are today. With boundless energy and plenty of drive, Karinna has made us (a little) less afraid of social media and a lot more forward thinking in terms of what the internet can do for us. An expert in luxury brand management, integrated marketing communication and fast fashion, she is today a Senior Lecturer in Fashion Branding and Retail Strategy at London College of Fashion.

Louise Riley
Louise says that the slowness of sewing allows her to think. A pattern emerges while she works: when laying out the bolder areas she obsesses about things that have bugged her, injustices small and large. She works in arduour. In the next phase she consolidates, corrects and refines, finding balance as she moves along the image. This is when she begins writing letters to loved ones in her head, often apologies or offers of forgiveness. The pattern repeats as the image grows forth on the cloth.

Jackie Villevoye
Originally trained in law, Jackie founded Jupe by Jackie in 2010 after buying a one-way ticket to India. With five children all grown up, sourcing yarn suppliers, textile factories and skilled embroiderers became an effective way to combat an otherwise slippery slope into days filled with respectable lady activities like yoga and bridge. Today she oversees the work of over one hundred artisans for her own line, while also producing a collection in collaboration with Comme des Garçons.

Barbara Vinken
Barbara belongs to that rare breed: the glamorous academic. Not just alluring, but affable too, she is a Professor of French Literature at the University of Munich and has written extensively about fashion. Writing with much erudition, her observations on fashion are probing and thought-provoking and focus on the relationship between contemporary dress and its interface with the past.

 Nilgin Yusuf
Nilgin established the MA in Fashion Media Production at London College of Fashion, intending it as the place to go for technology-embracing communicators of the twenty-first century. Before that she wrote about fashion for various illustrious UK broadsheets, but what she likes more than anything is thinking about the clothes worn by criminal icons – particularly the threads worn by the Kray Twins back in the bad old days.
THE VESTOJ MANIFESTO

1 All articles must relate to sartorial issues. We are interested in people’s relationship to their clothes, and fashion’s relationship to identity.

2 We must bridge academia and industry. We will place academia and industry side by side, and give equal significance to both. We will place the academic in an industry context and vice versa in order to increase the understanding and collaboration between these two fields. We will work for the greater good of our discipline.

3 Fashion must always be taken seriously. We must never be afraid to have pretensions. We are as interested in the minutiae of clothing as we are in the grand themes of fashion. We will see the trivial in the substantial and the substantial in the trivial, and ensure that all is given equal importance.

4 The tone must be inviting. We must never be excluding in language or approach. We will use humour to draw readers in and themes that many can relate to.

5 Text and image shall be given equal importance. We must always integrate word and picture and guarantee that there is an ongoing dialogue between the two.

6 Everything shall be questioned – nothing is holy. We must challenge the status quo. We must always ask why.

7 We must always remain independent in thought and action. We must actively encourage critical thought and never be satisfied until we have examined every theme intrepidly. We will keenly promote criticism and draw attention to the paradoxes within the fashion world.

8 Advertising is forbidden.

9 The reader’s intellect must be as gratified as her aesthetic sense. We will encourage creativity as well as an intelligent discourse. We will take nothing for granted.

10 We will have an interdisciplinary approach. We will take care to examine each theme from various angles and make certain that we represent other lifestyles and ethos than our own. We will work from within the fashion world, but maintain an outsider’s perspective.