

CONTEMPORARY FASHION TASTE- MAKING

CHANGING THE SHAPE
OF FASHIONABLE TASTE

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ABSTRACT

This research was initially triggered by the changing social organisation of front row guests at the runways of international fashion week events, where established seating plans were rewritten in order to accommodate selected fashion bloggers. This visible reordering of fashion's former hierarchies of influence provokes many questions around the role of fashion commentators and draws attention to deeper changes to cultural mediation, modes of aesthetic discernment and taste-making activities undertaken through fashion communication practices.

The thesis investigates the concept of fashion taste-making through an in-depth examination of fashion communication in contemporary networked conditions. It examines the activities of selected fashion commentators to gain an understanding of the unseen social and relational dynamics of fashion that induce change and mobilise taste. In addition, the research considers how taste-making actions are applied and qualified in everyday fashion behaviour, as a distinct yet interconnected part of the fashion taste-making process.

The exploration of this topic uses a number of specific questions to drive the research: how do notions of fashionable taste evolve from the personal preferences of fashion commentators to influence everyday fashion behaviour? Further, how does taste move and evolve through communication practices? Though what processes, structures and concepts is its transformation made evident?

The research utilises a combination of methodological approaches, including comparative case studies, visual mapping techniques, critical discourse analysis and interviews. It is a socio-cultural investigation that is underpinned by Michel Foucault's theories of discourse, Antoine Hennion's theory of the *Pragmatics of Taste* and Bruno Latour's *Actor-Network* Theory that propose alternative perspectives on social organisation and interaction. The findings provide a greater understanding of the topic through the development of new definitions, and a research-based apparatus that allows contemporary fashion taste-making to be more clearly observed and articulated.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | I |
| Contents | II |
| Acknowledgements | VIII |
| Introduction | |
| Research Problem | 2 |
| Research Questions | 3 |
| Thesis scope and ambitions | 3 |
| A History of Fashion Taste-making | 5 |
| Chapter Summary | 17 |
| Methodology | |
| Academic position | 29 |
| Theoretical framework | 30 |
| Research methods – data sources | 33 |
| Research methods – data analysis | 36 |
| SECTION ONE | |
| Chapter 1// Individuals of Influence | |
| Introduction | 47 |
| The Cultural Intermediary | 48 |
| The Gatekeeper | 52 |
| The Opinion Leader | 56 |
| The Cultural Ambassador | 60 |
| The Moneychanger | 63 |
| Chapter 2//Locating Influencers in Systems of Fashion | |
| Introduction | 75 |
| Fashion as Aesthetic Economy | 76 |
| Orthodoxies of Fashion Lexicon | 81 |
| Time and Space in Fashion | 87 |
| Fashion Week as a Locus for Taste-making | 93 |
| Chapter 3// Types and Typologies of Fashion Taste-making | |
| Introduction | 113 |
| Fashion Tastemakers: Old and New | 114 |
| Fashion Taste-making Activities | 117 |
| Fashioning a Typology of Taste-making | 123 |
| Fashioning a Discourse of Taste-making | 127 |
| Taste-making through Interaction and Inter-reliance | 133 |

SECTION TWO

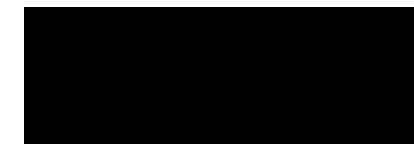
| | |
|--------------------|---|
| SECTION TWO | Chapter 4// Mobilising Taste – Part I The Fashion Commentator |
| | Introduction 145 |
| | Influence Creep 146 |
| | Creating Circles of Influence 154 |
| | Taste-making Transactions 169 |
| | Co-ordinating the Community 174 |
| | A Node in the Network 177 |
| | Activating the Assemblage of Associations 179 |
| | Chapter 5// Mobilising Taste – Part II The Popular Discourse |
| | Introduction 195 |
| | The Travelling Discourse 197 |
| | Travels of the Taste-making Discourse – Cultural Hybridity 200 |
| | Travels of the Taste-making Discourse – Analogy 208 |
| | Travels of the Taste-making Discourse – Reconfiguration 216 |
| | Chapter 6// Mobilising Taste – Part III Between Word and Image |
| | Introduction 235 |
| | Convergence of the Taste-making Context 237 |
| | Intersections and Difference 241 |
| | Between Visibility and Readability 244 |
| | Between Scarcity and Exposure 254 |
| | Between Stability and Mutability 2262 |
| | Chapter 7// The Subjectivities of Fashionable Taste |
| | Introduction 283 |
| | The Individual and the Crowd 284 |
| | Identity and Appearance 288 |
| | The Grammars of Fashion 291 |
| | Personal Assemblages of Fashionable Taste 293 |
| | Perspectives on Fashionable Taste 299 |
| | Conclusion |
| | Findings 316 |
| | Recommendations 320 |
| | Summary 322 |
| | <i>Bibliography</i> 328 |
| | <i>List of Figures</i> 344 |
| | <i>Appendices</i> 349 |

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Rachel Matthews

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INTRODUCTION

The changing social organisation of fashion in the twenty-first century has made its effects felt in a range of ways. Fashion's new social dynamics are evident in its material and immaterial forms, ranging from consumer created marketing campaigns to the assets of *Instagram* 'influencers' measured in followers. This research was initially triggered by the changing social organisation of front row guests at the runways of international fashion week events, where established seating plans were rewritten in order to accommodate selected fashion bloggers. However, as the research has progressed, it has become evident that this situation signaled a more complex series of inter-related changes and re-alignments that continue to transform fashion communication.

The high profile and exclusive arena inside international fashion weeks is a site of media attention and entertainment for a broad fashion audience via digital technologies. The increased exposure of this realm makes visible certain important relationships in fashion, as well as the changing working practices of those in attendance. The commentary from those within this symbolic showcase is no longer in advance of any images, rather in addition to live-streamed runway presentations. Nevertheless, the presence of fashion commentators (whether fashion journalists, editors or bloggers) at such events remains significant as the continued debates around who should be seated in the front row attests.

The visible reordering of privileged positions at these exclusive fashion events provokes many questions around the role of commentators in contemporary fashion. Designers have not undertaken their actions that incite the ire of well-regarded magazine editors lightly. This publically enacted situation draws attention to the less visible mechanisms and relations of influence that shape fashion. The research uses selected fashion commentators who have been actively involved in this social reorganisation as a lens to begin an examination of the encounters, interactions and activities that move and shape fashion and taste.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The situation described above reflects an evolving fashion communication landscape that is enabling the people and practices that exert influence on fashion to change and diversify. Further, the tightly controlled timing of seasonal changes by the fashion industry, that previously allowed access to new fashion propositions only for a privileged few, has been radically undermined. Despite greater speed and access to fashion information and purchasing opportunities in the public domain, there is still much about the changes in fashion that remains unseen. Almost by definition, we anticipate change as a natural feature of fashion. We become aware of changes in fashionable taste sporadically. It is evident in media feeds and in runway coverage; displayed in retail spaces; performed on the streets; and engaged with through our own consumption of fashion products. In the twenty-first century, delineations of fashionable taste are less emphatic and notions of 'fashionable' are increasingly plural, yet questions remain about how change takes effect in fashion. Are the processes of evolution unseen because they are taken for granted and naturalised? If fashionable taste is not held in the physical features of objects, rather in the way we see, speak and think about the objects, what form does taste take in order to change and move? In the 1960s Herbert Blumer described processes of collective taste formation as 'mysterious' and 'problematic' for fashion.¹ The processes that mobilise fashionable taste become a more compelling research topic in light of recent public revisions to the taste-making establishment and the remodeling of fashion communication channels and practices.

At no other time have media forms appeared and transformed at such speed. The rapidly shifting media and communication landscape has, at times, proved challenging for the research process. However, key researchers in the field of fashion communication agree that the digital domain has opened up new opportunities and possibilities for the expression and representation of fashion. Agnès Rocamora recognises that the 'digital turn in fashion' has created new contexts for the "production and circulation of fashion discourse."² While Minh-Hà Pham and Marco Pedroni offer caveats around the perception of openness and democracy in fashion's digital spaces, both noting structures within the online space that enable certain voices, positions and practices whilst restricting others.³ The digital context has created a completely different set of evolving relational dynamics in fashion communications, in particular providing multiple options for individuals when choosing how they wish to connect or interact with possible influences.

This research is concerned with fashion and notions of fashionable; the connections between fashion and taste; and the impact that new communication practices have when they intersect with fashion. It questions whether it is possible to gain an appreciation of the less apparent social dynamics of fashion, especially the interactions and processes that influence and induce change.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The exploration of this topic uses a number of specific questions to drive the research:

- How do notions of fashionable taste evolve from the personal preferences of fashion commentators to influence everyday fashion behaviour?
- How does taste move and evolve through communication practices?
- Though what processes, structures and concepts is its transformation made evident?

THESIS SCOPE AND AMBITIONS

This thesis aims to contribute insights and analysis of the changing shape of contemporary fashion taste-making to the growing interdisciplinary field of fashion studies. The project explores how change is effected in fashion through an in-depth examination of fashion media and communication in contemporary networked conditions. The purpose of the project is to contribute a new appreciation of the topic by providing definitions and an analytical framework through which to view taste-making activities. The research questions seek to identify structures, processes and concepts that allow the transformations of taste to be observed. The thesis sets out a systematic examination of the fashion taste-making that produces new classifications, a typology of taste-making activities and a suite of structures through which to perceive this somewhat nebulous object of study. In an environment where expressions of fashionable taste are arguably more abundant and mobile than ever before, there exists a need for a research-based apparatus that allows contemporary fashion taste-making to be more clearly observed and documented.

While there are a number of ways to examine this topic, this thesis research is undertaken through an examination of fashion media and communication. This approach focuses on contemporary fashion commentators, who have their roots in cultural criticism and practices of aesthetic evaluation, and express their taste judgments via fashion descriptions in the evolving channels of the fashion media. Further, communication has been selected as a sub-category of fashion as it is an integral part of fashion that reveals much about its operations. Fashion is represented, enacted and interpreted through its communication; it has the potential to reveal shifts and changes across fashion. In contemporary communications, rapidly evolving media platforms capture collective notions as well as personal expressions of fashionable taste, in its many discursive forms. As such, this research uses data drawn from multiple sources across fashion communications (from fashion journalists and bloggers, fashion communication professionals and fashion consumers and

enthusiasts) and utilises a selection of qualitative research methods in order to analyse this information.

The research begins with a focus on fashion commentators who have been selected because of their participation in fashion's changing social dynamics; it examines the ways in which these individuals are implicated in the movements of fashionable taste. However, this project is not only concerned with methods of influence that can be measured and assessed through circulation figures, data and digital analytics of online traffic. Ten fashion commentators – five established fashion journalists and five successful fashion bloggers⁴ – were identified at the beginning of the project through the scrutiny of front row seating arrangements at consecutive New York Fashion Weeks (September 2011, February 2012 and September 2012). The details of the selected individuals can be found in *Appendix 1* and further discussed in *Methodology Chapter, Section 1.3 Research Methods – Data Sources*. These identities and their taste-making work have been monitored throughout the duration of this project. Over this period, most of the journalists have moved jobs (but remain fashion commentators) and all but one of the selected bloggers have developed their careers, now often referred to as “superbloggers” or “first wave” bloggers (to differentiate them from the masses that have followed in their footsteps).⁵ The research uses the term ‘fashion descriptions’ to capture the written expressions of both the fashion journalists and the fashion bloggers analysed here. There are many differences in their writing (which are discussed in the thesis), but both groups write descriptively about fashion.

The research aims to provide qualitative understandings of the complex contextual factors active in changing fashion and taste, including those in everyday fashion behaviour. To this end, the thesis also examines how taste-making is applied and qualified in the everyday, where institutional or legitimate discourse opens out into broader forms of discursivity. This study focuses on two online sites, where fashion consumers and enthusiasts describe personal taste-making activities through their discussion of self-fashioning. Employing the notion of taste-making to investigate changes in fashion is, in many ways, more problematic than analysing the trend-forecasting and predictions systems of fashion because taste is something that exists outside of fashion industry concerns, in the socio-cultural sphere where it is less clearly defined. However, using taste and fashion taste-making as a way of examining mechanisms of influence allows this study to move beyond institutionally defined fashion trends. The thesis extends the analysis of this research topic and its changing shape through the inclusion of a personally felt dimension of fashionable taste. In so doing, the research does not aim to investigate personal designations of ‘good taste’ or ‘bad taste.’ Curiosity about how taste is expressed and transformed through fashion and its communication practices is the central tenet.

In the following section, the conceptual framework of the thesis is described through the construction of a history of taste-making. This aims to situate the research and its key conceptual concerns amongst the relevant literature and associated theoretical developments.

A HISTORY OF FASHION TASTE-MAKING

This history of fashion taste-making functions as a literature review for the research. It has been structured chronologically to combine relevant material from three areas of scholarship that represent the body of knowledge underpinning the thesis. Literature about taste and its origins in philosophical aesthetics, the development of commentary and communications in fashion and theories on the diffusion of fashion are drawn together in order to construct the conceptual framework used in this research. Within this framework there are three specific areas of theoretical discussion that are key to the research questions: concepts of taste and taste formation; theories on the process of change in fashion as a socio-cultural activity; and understanding the impact of new communication practices that intersect with fashion.

Organising the literature for this study as a chronology rather than as a conventional literature review is intended to highlight the development of the important debates in each area over time, whilst also providing a sense of how each area intersects with the other. It is not intended to be a comprehensive historical record of all academic discussion in the areas of taste, fashion and communication, rather a backdrop detailing the overlapping theoretical threads relevant to this contemporary study of fashion taste-making.

TASTE

The concept of taste has a long and contested history in the field of philosophy that can be traced back to Plato,⁶ however this review begins more recently with two important philosophical perspectives from the Enlightenment: “the European intellectual movement of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which emphasised reason and individualism rather than tradition.”⁷ As part of this movement, the field of philosophical aesthetics emerged, concerned specifically with artistic appreciation and aesthetic judgment. It focused on the sensations of pleasure or displeasure experienced when engaging with works of art and other aesthetic objects. During this period, taste came to be understood as a human faculty capable of aesthetic appreciation of objects, having evolved from taste as a passive sense of tasting in the mouth, to a metaphor for good understanding, before becoming connected with intellectual thoughts and actions.⁸ In philosophical aesthetics, taste was central to what was considered a dialectical problem of the subjective reaction or felt response to aesthetic qualities of an object and the objective aspect. That is, it is possible to give reasons for aesthetic judgments. Taste became a way to reconcile the relationship between the object and the individual as well as subjective reactions and inter-subjective consensus on ideas of beauty in aesthetics.

There are two salient works that developed the understanding of taste during this period: *Of the Standards of Taste* (1757) by David Hume and *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790) by Immanuel Kant. These works contain a range of philosophical ideas regarding what is referred to as the 'antinomy of taste' – the two aspects of taste (the subjective and the objective) that are at once both true and yet appear to be incompatible. The ideas of both Hume and Kant are relevant here as they form a starting point for understanding aesthetic appreciation and discernment, and the evolving notions of taste.

Hume argues that aesthetic evaluations are directed through one's moral dispositions and sensitivities rather than intellectually driven or achieved through reasoning.⁹ Kant (writing after Hume) sees taste as the interplay of imagination and understanding. He defines taste as "the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest."¹⁰ For Kant, judging something as beautiful is a judgment of taste, and must be 'disinterested'. In other words, it should not be caught up in our own interests, desires or concerns.¹¹ Further, the judgment should be universal, so others should be able to share our view of what is beautiful and what is not. This universality is what we want to achieve when we argue over matters of beauty and try to convince others to share our view.

Both philosophers grapple with how the subjective experiences of aesthetic stimulus connect with universal standards of beauty. Kant's work develops the concept of '*sensus communis*' in response to collective agreement; something that Jukka Gronow equates with "a communal sense or a community of feeling and taste."¹² More recently scholars have challenged this notion, suggesting Kant only proposed this as a possible solution.¹³ Hume argues that beauty is not in things themselves, rather in the mind that contemplates them and as such individuals can develop aesthetic and moral sensitivities through exposure and experience.¹⁴ Hume, referencing earlier works by fellow scholar Joseph Addison, proposes 'manners' (or rules) to help individuals approach aesthetic appreciation. This, as noted by Raymond Williams, sees the understanding of taste narrow "from a description of general conduct to a more localised association with *etiquette*."¹⁵ Alongside setting out certain guidelines around taste, Hume also introduces the notion of a qualified observer, essentially a connoisseur, someone with the superior mental capacity, experience and necessary sensitivities capable of seeing through "all the variety and caprice of taste" and understanding its general principles.¹⁶

*One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.*¹⁷

The qualified observer forms the basis of the modern day critic, who as Peter McNeil and Sanda Miller observe, "can create order in the seeming chaos of the multitude of subjective responses to art."¹⁸ Between the works of Hume and Kant, a conception of taste emerges as a universal human capacity; however, the subjective-objective

dialectic remains problematic in proposing some individuals have enhanced faculties or sensitivities, making their aesthetic discernments superior to others.

The formulations of both Hume and Kant are undertaken in relation to the 'fine arts,' referring to beauty captured in painting, sculpture, poetry and literature. Fashion is excluded from the debate (as it is by many philosophers) because it is not considered a form of true creative expression that demonstrates genius or originality, rather "mere novelty in production...and imitation in fashion's wearers."¹⁹ Despite the reluctance of Kant and Hume to include fashion in discussions of taste, the emergence of the critic and criticism as a practice of aesthetic evaluation assists in understanding how fashion enters the realms of aesthetic discernment. Further, the critic introduces the idea of a taste professional, as someone with the designated experience and sensitivities whose work requires them to make (superior) discernments.

FASHION COMMENTARY

Charles Baudelaire, working as an art critic, celebrated fashion in his aesthetic judgments.²⁰ In his essay *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1859-1860), he defends both fashion and cosmetics, stating that the transient and the artificial can express an ideal beauty.²¹ His writing uses fashion to illustrate his ideas on modernity and argue for modern life (rather than tradition) to be represented in works of fine art. Baudelaire's style of aesthetic evaluation stood in contrast to the art criticism of the mid nineteenth century. He used poetic terminology such as 'charming' and 'elegant' in his criticism and promoted the appreciation of the garments as well as the gestures of those wearing them that draw attention to "the 'moral attitude' and 'the aesthetic value of the time'".²² In developing this style of commentary, Baudelaire not only produced alternative art criticism, he also founded a particular form of discursivity.²³ Michel Foucault defines a very select set of authors who qualify as "founders of discursivity," in his work *What is an Author?* stating, "They are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts."²⁴

In establishing a form of discursivity, Baudelaire and Foucault make it possible for similar discourses to begin, but also allow for those that are modified through evolving discursive practices to diverge away from the founding discourse.²⁵ Baudelaire's work opens the way for a discourse of fashion as a legitimate subject for aesthetic discernment. Further, his attitude to modernity and delight in its changes and transformations permits aesthetic ideals to be fluid and subject to change depending on time and space. Foucault points out that discursivity itself does not change the object of the discourse; rather it changes our knowledge of it.²⁶ In this history of taste-making, Baudelaire plays a role in making a discourse of fashionable taste possible.

Baudelaire was writing for the Salons of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century and his influence was felt among the limited audience of intellectuals of the time. However, another order of ‘qualified observers’ was developing the discourse of fashionable taste for a broader section of society through popular magazines. With a growing emphasis on rules and etiquette around taste, there were sections of society who, as Hume suggested, wished to develop their aesthetic sensitivities as a means of self-improvement and to fine-tune their awareness of beauty.²⁷ They sought to understand how abstract notions of beauty, taste and even charm were manifested in objects, dress, interiors and gestures and formed a growing audience of magazine readers about these topics.

In Sanda Miller’s account of the development of French fashion magazines from the time of the Enlightenment, she identifies a magazine called the *Courrier de la Mode ou le Journal du Gout* (published 1768–70) as a new type of magazine and the first to draw together fashion and taste in its title and content.²⁸ Miller notes the important historical significance of fashion magazines, stating,

*They have functioned not only as repositories of the progress of sartorial fashion and the most up-to-date social, cultural and artistic developments but also as self-styled barometers of taste.*²⁹

The early growth in fashion magazines has been linked with the development of the textile industry;³⁰ however, their popularity with a broader readership was spurred during the eighteenth century by the inclusion of fashion plates in both French titles such as *La Galerie des Modes* (1778–1787) as well as English editions such as *The Lady’s Magazine* (1770–1847). The content of the early fashion magazines was mostly descriptive, both in terms of writing about fashion as well as in the accompanying fashion plates. Fashion plates of this period have been described as “dress (as) a form of visual art” that became exemplars for styles of garments and gestures.³¹ Early illustrations attempted to represent ‘real life’, despite depicting the latest styles of dress of the aristocracy, and in contrast to the more stylised depictions of fashion in the twentieth century.

With the establishment of *Haute Couture* houses in France in the mid-nineteenth century, French fashion magazines such as the *Gazette du Bon Ton* began to use the high profile artists of the day to produce artistic interpretations of fashion as illustrations. Both Cally Blackman and Sanda Miller note the important role of an informed female readership and ambitious editors in transforming fashion magazines after the 1850s. Together, they drove a shift from descriptive accounts of the latest developments in dress towards forms of editorial aesthetic interpretation of fashion influenced by a broader cultural context.³² As such, a more evaluative and interpretative documentation of fashion developed, with Parisian fashion leading the way.³³ As early fashion magazines had established an instructive function, developments in the second half of the nineteenth century allowed both the editors and the illustrators to exert influence on the fashion discourse, by shaping representations of fashion through their commentary and their image making.

The foundation of *Haute Couture* in Paris, beginning with Charles Worth in 1858, was an important time in the development of fashion. The emergence of the *couturier* (who proposed new fashion designs on a seasonal basis) marked a change in the way stylistic innovation in fashion occurred. Previously fashion had been driven by developments in court dress and garments favoured by the aristocracy and actualised by dressmakers, this period marked a move towards a more organised and systematised production of fashion. Importantly for the history of taste-making, a new group of taste professionals emerged as the head of the couture houses, with their aesthetic discernments expressed in material propositions. The couturiers’ aesthetic sensitivities and ‘delicacy of imagination’³⁴ are made evident not as qualified observers but rather as producers, in garments made for their customers. How the mechanisms of influence and evolution occur in fashion shifted with the advent of the couturier. New designs generated through this more centralised system of couture production ensured that silhouettes and design details changed regularly, providing fashion magazines with fresh styles to describe and document. The exclusivity of these designs also ensured that only the wealthy were able to demonstrate their tastes through Parisian couture. Media attention of new fashions worn by the rich and famous (Charles Worth courted the celebrities of the day) increased the awareness and desirability of designs, which inevitably led to forms of imitation. The systematic aesthetic innovation and subsequent imitation of couture designs in women’s dress, was widely publicised and circulated through newspapers and magazines. This drew attention to the visible aspects of fashion diffusion occurring in society; a topic treated with humour and parody by sections of the media, but which became a phenomenon for serious analysis for some sociologists. Some sociological theories of fashion provide insight on the evolving processes and influences on fashionable taste, particularly during the twentieth century.

DIFFUSION OF FASHION

The sociological analyses of fashion over the last century are clearly shaped by the changing structure of Western society and highlight the impact of shifting practices of consumption and identity construction during the last 150 years. Thorstein Veblen’s ideas on the diffusion of fashion at the end of the 1800s are informed by the class structure of society at the time; his theory is based on imitation and a trickle-down process within the hierarchy of class structure.³⁵ He describes new fashions as a manner of distinction; a display of status and wealth for those with leisure time and money to invest. Veblen details how the wealthy upper classes sought out new manners of distinction in fashionable dress and this set the direction of fashion, which other lesser social classes would strive to imitate over time. He identified the connection between fashion, taste and performance by including lifestyle activities (or in-activity) that further constitute the fashionableness of new styles.³⁶

George Simmel’s examination of fashion in the early twentieth century also references processes of social identification and distinction. However, he recognises

fashion's connection with modernity, through its 'contingent and transitory' nature. Further, Simmel sees the social function of fashion as a solution to the antinomy of taste, stating,

*Fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation; it leads the individual along the road which all travel, it furnishes a general condition, which resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example. At the same time it modifies to no lesser degree the need for differentiation, the tendency to dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast on the one hand by a constant change of contents...*³⁷

Simmel proposes "fashion (as) a living antimony,"³⁸ thus aligning the concept of taste with the practices of fashion that allow subjectivity and inter-subjectivity to co-exist. However, the main influences on fashion in Simmel's account remain tied to the hierarchy of the class structure in society and take shape through the imitation and emulation of the upper class by aspirational lower classes.

Herbert Blumer examines influence on fashion from a different perspective, noting, "the origin, formation and careers of collective tastes constitute the huge problematic area in fashion."³⁹ Working in the 1960s, and still concerned with issues of subjectivity-universality in taste, he undertakes empirical research inside the fashion industry to understand the processes through which collective taste (or collective selection) is distilled from numerous individual preferences. Blumer argues that the movements of fashion itself are foremost and come before any forms of differentiation and imitation in the social classes.⁴⁰ He studies taste professionals (fashion designers, fashion buyers and fashion editors) working in the fashion industry and his findings propose three key elements that lead to the convergence of choice and thus to collective taste formation in fashion. He identifies the intense selection process within the industry's working practices that each season restricts the range of possible choice. Blumer notes how important individuals in the fashion industry (such as fashion buyers and editors) who make the crucial selections, are immersed in a common social milieu where they informally exchange opinions. He also describes how fashion designers look at similar sources of inspiration and references when developing new designs. This final point, Blumer argues, is the way designers build a relationship with their customers, stating that designers are able to envision a "proximate future" and capture the "indistinct" and "inarticulate" taste of the fashion consuming public.⁴¹ Blumer's research into the working practices of taste professionals in fashion is insightful and remains relevant; and his work hints at the important role that the fashion consuming public plays in the enactment of collective selection. However, in his discussions, the means of influence and connection between fashion designers and the fashion consuming public remain obscure; it is left to mysterious ideas of 'zeitgeist' and hidden in notions of 'incipient' tastes that have yet to find a form. Blumer, himself states, "The fact that this process of collective selection is mysterious – it is mysterious because we do not understand it – does not contradict in any way that it takes place."⁴²

The role of fashion magazines in the history of taste-making is important to note again here. Published around the same time as Blumer's study, Roland Barthes undertook a semiotic exploration of the written and visual content of fashion magazines.⁴³ In *The Fashion System* (1967), Barthes analyses the relationship between image and text in fashion magazines (*Elle* and *Le Jardin des Modes*: June 1958 – June 1959). Although not a sociological investigation, Barthes establishes a foundation for research into fashion magazines as cultural products, and offers insight into the fashion system through the signs and linguistic systems that communicate 'fashion,' as an abstract notion.

He identifies 'image clothing' accompanied by 'written clothing' – different to each other and separate from actual garments or 'real clothing'. He proposes that these three types of 'clothing' are understood in different manners. Barthes takes 'written clothing' as his focus, deciphering the verbal structures in 'written clothing' that activate ideas of 'fashion' in the real garments. His exploration of 'written clothing' sub-divides the language into various codes – each referring to possible relationships between real garments and the writing and speech used to describe clothing and notions of 'fashion.'⁴⁴ For Barthes, the written description is more authoritative; not only does language offer more information than image, 'written clothing' can contain information on the back of a garment or a detail that is lost in the image, it has the power to impose a particular notion of fashion. Barthes describes the definitive voice used in fashion writing in the 1960s, in much the same way as Hume's qualified observer, stating it demonstrates "the authoritative voice of someone who knows all there is behind the jumbled or incomplete appearance of visible form."⁴⁵ Although Barthes's analysis becomes intensely theoretical, the work forms a basis for subsequent studies of fashion through its evolving communication practices.

Pierre Bourdieu also deals with the role of media and communication in the operations of fashionable taste in his work *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste* (1979). This is an important work in the history of taste-making. Although framed within the class distinctions of French society in the second half of the twentieth century, Bourdieu's work provides definitions and various analytical frameworks in which to examine the function of taste and taste professionals. For Bourdieu, taste is about separation and distinction; it is a device to create visible difference from other sections of society and to shore up one's own social position.⁴⁶ Consumption of culturally significant products and the associated performance of consumption are central to his ideas. His critique proposes certain taste professionals as cultural intermediaries: those positioned within systems of production, circulation and consumption of cultural goods that influence and inform their meaning. He describes cultural intermediaries as those "perform(ing) the tasks of gentle manipulation"⁴⁷ of taste, particularly in marketing and management roles as well as in the media ⁴⁸ (the cultural intermediary is examined in detail in Chapter One). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu expands previous insights about taste-making, by making evident the numerous layers of negotiation and multiple mediations in consumption. However, for him, taste judgments and cultural consumption are socially competitive

acts, undertaken either as a means of fitting in or standing out within clearly defined social structures. Bourdieu's work fails to address the agency of the consumer that creates greater stylistic diversity in fashion, less consensus on notions of 'fashionable' and whose motivations are multi-dimensional.

Before moving on to other theorists who contribute to the understanding of taste-making, other works of Bourdieu should be noted. In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture* (1993), Bourdieu analyses the operations of *Haute Couture*, by applying his theories on *The Field of Cultural Production*.⁴⁹ Bourdieu's theory uses the spatial metaphor of the field, occupied by players of a game, who are competing for dominance and legitimate positions within the confines of the field. As part of the operations of the field, he highlights how the language used in fashion magazines becomes a means for displaying the position and legitimacy of those writing. In Bourdieu's analysis, fashion descriptions become a competitive arena, where certain players can dominate by defining fashion's meaning and claiming ownership of verbal expressions for fashion's aesthetics.⁵⁰

Bourdieu also applies his field theory in *The Metamorphosis of Taste* (1993). In this work, he argues that the process of change in taste and style is driven by struggle and competition between cultural producers within a particular cultural field.⁵¹ Innovation and inventiveness emerge through this competition; it produces novelties that form the basis of symbolic capital for its producer and generates change in cultural products. Bourdieu constructs the cultural field as a social market, where status is gained by dissimulation from others; in this arena, those with dominant positions are able to endow prestige on certain objects and the competition between those producing cultural products drives tastes forward.⁵²

In a move towards understanding taste via the consumer, sociologist Herbert Gans studied American society in the 1970s, and identified five 'taste cultures,' or taste publics, based predominantly on education and economic circumstances.⁵³ Although more demographically diverse, in many ways Gans's study reinforces Bourdieu's formulations that taste functions as a marker of background and social difference and operates by reinforcing social divisions. Colin Campbell however offers a different view of the individual's relationship with taste and the consumption of aesthetic goods. His theories analyse the personal psychological motivations of consumers who seek pleasure through forms of consumption.⁵⁴ For Campbell, taste is 'psycho-historical' and he proposes taste-making as an individual act of hedonistic novelty-seeking, rather than something bound by class or social groups.

Jukka Gronow also looks at taste through the individual, in his book *The Sociology of Taste* (1997). He proposes that individuals seek to express aesthetic judgements through taste and fashion as a solution to the fragmentation of modern society. The performance of taste judgments, he argues, is "how a person can be a homogenous part of a mass without losing his individuality."⁵⁵ He uses fashion as a way to explore taste, and sub-divides it (into luxury, mass fashion, and fashion as an industry) to illustrate different manners and motivations for the consumption of aesthetic goods.

Gronow's perspective helps to consolidate an understanding of taste-making that is at once, both a matter of personal preference as well as a collective concern; he acknowledges the personal motivations for sharing aesthetic preferences with others, in order to build a social space for affirmation and co-production of knowledge around the aesthetic goods. However, developments over the last twenty years in both the communication and consumption practices of fashion have changed the landscape in which his ideas are set.

Indeed, Diana Crane states that it was increasing difficult to study fashion diffusion systematically by the end of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ She argues that the "recent changes in the relationships between fashion organisations and their publics"⁵⁷ make a focus on social saturation in theories of fashion unhelpful, noting that if social saturation happens at all, it is only for short periods, as consumers no longer behave as a mob.⁵⁸ Crane highlights the diversity in mechanisms of influence in fashion, noting the increasing impact of media and popular culture at the end of twentieth century.⁵⁹

From its philosophical beginnings, via sociology, the definitions of taste and the location of agency and influence in taste-making have evolved. The field of sociology has done much to establish certain theoretical structures of fashion and frame its changing social organisation in a way that makes it comprehensible. However, the popularity and accessibility of some theories (such as 'trickle down' and 'bubble up', for example) have helped to perpetuate a view of fashion and its processes of change, simply constituted by leaders and followers. In addition, in the twenty-first century, choice, self-determination and individualism are part of our social fabric. Fashionable taste now needs to be viewed through more finely tuned and adaptable analytical frameworks that advance the theories developed from general observations of broad groups of people.

Antoine Hennion has developed just such a framework in his work, *Pragmatics of Taste* (2004). He sees taste as a reflexive activity and develops his theories on taste formation through the study of what he describes as "amateurs." Hennion argues that many theories about taste cast the (amateur) individual as a "passive cultural dope"⁶⁰ and as such have formulated an understanding of taste that is restrictive and unproductive, simply "re-producing a hierarchy of social positions."⁶¹ His focus on the pragmatic self-formation of taste by amateurs does not simply internalise/individualise the processes of taste formation; rather he sees taste as a mode of attachment to the world, situating the individual amongst multiple "mediations, bodies, objects, situations and equipment."⁶²

Although the 'objects' of taste remain part of the process, for Hennion, taste and taste-making are not predominantly understood through consumption. Instead he argues objects only becoming meaningful through a network of contextual elements and attachments.⁶³ In *Pragmatics of Taste*, he argues no element of taste is stable or pre-existing; its constitution emerges gradually, contingent on our active engagement, exploration and experiences not only with aesthetic objects, but also with other

corresponding influences.⁶⁴ Hennion states, “Tastes are not given or determined and their objects are not either; one has to make them appear together, through repeated experiments, progressively adjusted.”⁶⁵ This conception of taste formation fits the contemporary context as his theory emphasises the reflexive nature of our taste formulated through individual interests, actions and agency. Further, it sets out taste-making as a process made up of multiple heterogeneous connections that shape taste as a lived experience – as a mode of attachment to the world.

Other theoretical approaches, outside of sociology, have offered further understandings of influence and agency in relation to fashion and taste. This diversity attests to the complexity of fashion taste-making in the early twenty-first century. Investigations that examine subversion, street-style and sub-cultural influence in fashion have generated more nuanced theories of diffusion.⁶⁶ Examinations of non-Western fashion practices have expanded the definitions, manners and social organisations within which fashionable taste and influence operates.⁶⁷ Further, the adoption of material culture approaches to the study of fashion has allowed the inspirations and diffusion of fashion to be understood on a micro, material and individual biographical level.⁶⁸

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In concluding the history of fashion taste-making, it is the evolution in fashion communication that has most recently shaped its development. In the early part of the twenty-first century, academic research developed Barthes’s concept of ‘written clothing’ beyond his linguistic and semiotic analysis; Diana Crane, Anna König, Agnès Rocamora, Ane Lynge-Jorlen and Brian Moeran (amongst others) contribute to a body of research that investigates the power of fashion language used within printed media texts.⁶⁹ Although a focus on written fashion suggests prioritising words over images, in these analyses the aesthetic production of fashion media is not ignored. This body of work offers insights on the discursivity of fashion and explores the representations and values that have evolved through print media practices in fashion.

More recently, it is the rapid development of digital capabilities in fashion communication that have attracted greater attention and mark a significant new development in the history of taste-making. There is a growing body of work that critically examines what has been described as “the digital turn in fashion.”⁷⁰ The development of Web 2.0 technology and the subsequent engagement and broader participation in the evolving online production of fashion, has completely transformed the concept of a taste professional, manners of aesthetic discernment and channels of communication and influence. Only research that is most relevant to this study is noted here, specifically that relating to the evolution of communication practices via the fashion blogosphere, media formats and user engagement. The findings are briefly summarised to outline the reorganisation of the fashion taste-making landscape and returned to in the body of the thesis.

Themes in this research emerge around the multiplicity, dynamism and interactivity of digital fashion media. Marco Pedroni describes a “digital evolution towards increased interactivity, sharing and social media,”⁷¹ in stark contrast to former mass, linear communication formats. This interactivity refers to both readers and writers; Ida Engholm and Erik Hansen-Hansen describe how engaging with fashion media is no longer a passive activity for readers (more accurately described as users) who select, control and contribute to media content.⁷² Our adoption of mobile devices such as smart phones has facilitated and normalised this interactivity, as observed in the work of Rocamora and Wissinger.⁷³ For writers, content needs to engage and invite responses from the audience, triggering “real-time virtual feedback loops.”⁷⁴ Recent research has also noted a shift toward greater performativity in digital fashion media; these ideas are explored in the work of Monica Tilton, Rosie Findlay and Agnès Rocamora, where modes of self-documentation (in blogs and in ‘selfies’) as well as increased use of video technologies are discussed.⁷⁵ Multiplicity and interactivity is also a characteristic of the digital interface. Engholm and Hansen-Hansen (amongst others) describes the format of blogs (as well as *Facebook* and *Instagram*) as “bricolage” referring to the accruing patchwork of visual imagery that appears as posts accumulate, while the inclusion of hypertext situates any media content in a multiplicity of other texts and references.⁷⁶ This new media landscape is decidedly non-linear: different types of media content spread easily across multiple platforms and bring forth new formats such as fashion films, virtual dressing rooms and online magazines that enliven and extend this digital space. The noted multiplicity and interactivity has led others to examine the speed and rapid over-exposure of certain aesthetics through digital fashion media.⁷⁷ For example, Wissinger explores acceleration and immediacy in connection with increased use of imagery in fashion media (with written articles reduced to no more than 300 words) and argues shortened attention spans are driving the need for more content.⁷⁸

Within recent research, there has also been analysis of the shifting relationship between commentators and their audience. It has established that the fashion commentator no longer conforms to the historical notion of the ‘qualified observer’ in the open and accessible online environment. The development of Web 2.0 and the emergence of rudimentary blogging technology (around the year 2000) initially generated a new type of space for fashion commentary described as “independent,” “democratic,” and operating as a “community” or a “conversation.”⁷⁹ Through an on-going performance of their personal preferences, the early fashion bloggers built relationships with their audience that, as noted in the work of Tilton, “eroded the boundary between the fashion ideal promoted by the fashion industry and the consumer of fashion media.”⁸⁰ The problem for individuals wishing to assert their aesthetic discernments in the digital media space is not finding a platform through which to express one’s self, rather it is being seen and getting heard in such a crowded domain. Research on fashion bloggers has examined how they establish connections and increase their profile in the online environment.⁸¹ For example, the work of Minh-Ha Pham and Findlay analyses issues of gender, race and creative labour that reflect changes to the position of blogs in the digital landscape and

bloggers' evolving relationship with their audience.⁸² Fashion bloggers build relationships with peers and audiences through interactions in digital channels, such as comments, sharing content and 'Likes' on social media. As the digital media landscape has evolved connections, page views and interactions have taken on another dimension; it has become a form of "virtual currency,"⁸³ that is used to quantify their presence, reach and value to others in the digital media space. Further, work by Tilton, Findlay and Macquarrie (et al) suggests that as subsequent generations of fashion bloggers attempt to gain the successful status of some of the early influential blogging identities, their practices increasingly resembles the operations of fashion industry publishing.⁸⁴ The research documents the increased professionalisation of blogging and its monetisation as a personality driven fashion-marketing channel has changed the bloggers' relationship and their audience. While innovative digital practices developed through blogging technology have been readily adopted by fashion media organisations. In addition, Pham and Pedroni describe how the technical, economic and organisational operations of digital media have evolved, eroding many of the democratic aspects of the original Web 2.0 space.⁸⁵

Fashion media and communication is now characterised by multiplicity and interactivity, transforming the range of options individuals have when seeking inspiration or information about aspects of fashion. In addition, the shifting relationships between fashion commentators and their audiences add an extra layer of instability and unpredictability to the way in which change and transformation may occur in fashion.

Set against this backdrop, the thesis examines the role fashion commentators' play in facilitating the movements of fashionable taste and subsequently, how notions of taste connect and emerge in everyday fashion behaviour. This topic requires investigation because fashion commentary (as a long-standing taste-making activity) is a changing practice – in its performance, its communication and its relevance to a fashion consuming public. This investigation has formulated several questions to examine changes in fashion taste-makers and taste-making practices:

- How do notions of fashionable taste evolve from the personal preferences of fashion commentators to influence everyday fashion behaviour?
- How does taste move and evolve through communication practices?
- Though what processes, structures and concepts is its transformation made evident?

The following section briefly describes how the research project has been structured and presented chapter by chapter.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research is structured over seven chapters. Chapters One to Three form the first section that establishes the particular socio-cultural characteristics that underlie the thesis. The second section contains four exploratory chapters that each investigates fashion taste-making and tracks taste as a mobile mutable concept.

The first section begins with the notion of the influential individual, as someone deemed to have superior or finely tuned aesthetic sensibilities and who is able to exert influence on peers or groups. Chapter One investigates the characteristics of individuals of influence to understand how tastemakers are distinguished. It considers a range of ways these identities have previously been conceptualised and brings into focus the function of social relations and communication in their constitution. Five theoretical concepts frame influential people in various relational contexts: the cultural intermediary (Bourdieu 1984), the gatekeeper (Lewin 1947), the opinion leader (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), the cultural ambassador (Harvey, Press and Maclean 2011) and finally the moneychanger (Foucault 1988). These ideas are contextualised in the fashion communication landscape.

Chapter Two lays out the details of the contemporary fashion context in which this study is set and describes specific conventions that underpin its culture, communication and economies. Existing theories of fashion explain the development of its defining features (Blumer 1969, Crane 2000, Craik 2009). The chapter examines the changing dimensions and working practices that shape the infrastructure of (specifically Western) fashion. This is illustrated using anecdotal material from interviews with fashion communication professionals (see Appendix 3.1 for details) and further developed through analysing fashion as a networked 'aesthetic economy' (Entwistle 2009, Callon, Meadel and Rabearisoa 2002). The chapter describes the important designations of time and space in fashion, in order to situate fashion tastemakers in contemporary systems of fashion (Van de Peer 2014, Rocamora 2013, Godart 2014) and to analyse their continued relevance to its operations.

Chapter Three focuses on types of taste-making within contemporary fashion. It develops a fresh approach to the definition and description of taste-making work for the twenty-first century fashion landscape; it argues that fashion taste-making is better understood through influential activities rather than job titles. The multi-dimensional nature of fashion taste-making is explored through classifications of the originator, performer, commentator, image-maker and selector. A typology of fashion taste-making activities is developed and then tested by examining activities, active agents and interactions in the production of taste. The benefits and limitations of structuring knowledge through categories and typologies are explained in this chapter (McKinney 1969, Barad 2003, Collier, Laport and Seawright 2012). Broad

understandings of discourse and discursive statements frame the influence implicit in this range of taste-making activities (Foucault 1969, Hall 1997).

Chapter Four initiates the second section of the thesis. This part contains a series of in-depth explorations into the mechanisms that mobilise taste and begins by considering the role fashion commentators have in moving and shaping taste. The personal and embodied activities of selected commentators are examined through analysis of individual career trajectories; these track the enactments of their taste-making credentials. The chapter draws on theories of the performance and technologies of self (Goffman 1959, Giddens 1991, Foucault 1997), while concepts of power-knowledge and networked knowledge (Foucault 1984, Latour 2005) are used to explore how different skill sets have changed taste-making practices. The professional performances of selected taste-making individuals are visually mapped from actor-networks to provide a new perspective on taste-making practices. Theories from critical cartography and visual research methods (Cosgrove 1999, Butler-Kishner and Poldman 2010) underscore how the data is gathered and analysed here, an approach that uses material evidence to produce previously unseen relational structures.

Chapter Five forms the second part of the investigation into the mobilisation of taste. In this chapter, the focus is on the role of the dominant fashion discourse. The concept of discourse is used to examine how notions of taste spread through a diverse range of statements and social activities, capable of effecting ways of behaving towards objects and ideas. The chapter develops insights about the popular fashion discourse through the identification and analysis of distinctive discursive patterns in fashion descriptions that permeate social activities. Notions of a travelling discourse are explored through established analytical approaches (Foucault 1969, Fairclough 1995), visual mapping techniques (Cosgrove 1999, Kitchin and Dodge 2007) and are extended to produce fresh perspectives through the addition of assemblage thinking (Latour 2005, Anderson 2012).

Having explored the wide-ranging movements enabled by discursive practices, Chapter Six investigates movements on a smaller scale, in the combination of word and image in fashion media. This chapter analyses the carefully crafted aesthetic discernments of fashion commentators on screen and in print to consider how word and image in combination shapes our ways of seeing, speaking and thinking about fashionable taste. Through textual analysis of fashion descriptions, the chapter deciphers layered structures created in fashion media that have the potential to mobilise fashionable taste. Theoretical concepts of the interplay of word and image (Barthes 1967, 1974, Fairclough 1992, Foucault 1984, Deleuze 2006), on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) and on 'difference' (MacDonald 2015) are used and developed to analyse how concepts of taste move in this form of communication.

The fourth and final chapter in section two adjusts its focus to analyse everyday practices of self-fashioning as a distinct yet inter-related part of fashion taste-making. The chapter extends its examination of taste as a mobile entity, by exploring how

movements occur in the lived experiences of fashionable taste. Personal accounts of getting dressed provide insight on personal approaches to taste-making, as individuals test, adopt or interpret collective notions of taste. Theories of taste formation as a pragmatic and uniquely personal activity (Hennion 2004, Wilk 1997) illuminate movements of taste in this context as well as theories of identity and the performed self (Goffman 1959, Giddens 1991, Ricoeur 1991, Foucault 1988). In this chapter, fashion taste-making goes beyond industry or professional concerns, becoming something shaped by individual and autobiographical influences. The chapter concludes by discussing the specific dynamics of relational space pivotal to the process of taste formation. It explores new relational spaces emerging through digital interfaces and uses the concept of heterotopic space (Foucault 1986) to further the understanding of the relational dynamics of taste in the twenty-first century.

NOTES//INTRODUCTION

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The fashion journalists tracked for this study are: Lisa Armstrong (*The Telegraph*, UK and *British Vogue*), Suzy Menkes (*Vogue*, formerly *International Herald Tribune*), Vanessa Friedman (*The New York Times*, formerly *Financial Times*, UK), Susannah Frankel (*Grazia* and *Another Magazine*, formerly *The Independent*), and Cathy Horyn (*The Cut*, *The New York Times*, *T Magazine*). The fashion Bloggers tracked are: Susie Lau (*Style Bubble*), Bryan Grey Yambao (*Bryanboy*), Leandra Medine (*Man Repeller*), Tavi Gevinson (formerly *StyleRookie*) and Jennine Jacobs (formerly *The Covered*).

5

Minh-Ha Pham uses the term "superblogs" and "superbloggers" as a way of categorising "the most elite blogs according to a variety of metrics, including online traffic" in *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet: Race, Gender and the Work of Personal Style Blogging* (London: Duke University Press, 2015), 4; Rosie Findlay describes the historical

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METHODOLOGY

ACADEMIC POSITION

The thesis documents a qualitative, interpretative research project, situated in the field of fashion studies. Fashion studies is a growing field of research that draws upon research methods from a range of academic traditions in order to examine fashion from multiple perspectives.¹ Here, the research draws upon sociology, science and technology studies (STS), cultural studies, media and communication as well as ideas developed in critical cartography. Through combining these perspectives, this research methodology constructs an approach suitable for the study of aspects of fashion that sit at the intersection with other fields, such as fashion media and communications.

The research is focused on contemporary fashion taste-making examined through the lens of fashion media and communication. Because of the continually changing forms and applications of media technology over the duration of this project, it has been necessary to adopt a mixed methods approach to tackle this rapidly changing topic.² The investigation acknowledges the importance of social interaction in the shaping of both fashion and taste, and is therefore underpinned by sociological perspectives. These are employed around notions of society, but more specifically in relation to sociological understandings of cultural matters. In addition, the thesis acknowledges fashion's role in identity construction, performed through the presentation of self. Theories of narrative identity, reflexivity and technologies of the self support the consideration of individual engagement with fashion, activated in displays of taste and activities of taste-making.³

However, the formation of taste is reliant on aesthetic objects as well as relations, connections and acknowledgements of numerous 'others'. As such, the investigation considers material and immaterial products that take on cultural significance in fashion, alongside people, their interactions, personal perspectives and aesthetic judgments. 'Fashionable' is understood as a quality in certain aesthetic objects and is also important to the mechanisms of taste-making. This research uses methods developed in cultural studies (such as intertextual and discourse analysis) to understand how cultural practices create and transform the symbolic meaning of objects.⁴ The research also considers the impact of a changing fashion media landscape on current communication practices. At no other time have new media

forms appeared and been adopted at such a pace. The methodology therefore integrates theoretical concepts from media and communications studies applicable to the networked conditions of contemporary fashion media. These employ the network (both as a physical entity and a concept), as a framing device for the evolution in media and interpersonal communication.

The theoretical framework that follows details the key theorists and their ideas that have informed and shaped this methodology. This framework enables the competing concerns of this thesis to be drawn together and has guided the research methods adopted for this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project examines the various interconnected factors that constitute fashion taste-making through fashion media and communications. The research seeks to contribute new knowledge on fashion taste-making to the field of fashion studies, whilst at the same time attending to fashion's involvement with social structures, its role in creating cultural value in objects and ideas, and its changing representations in new communication channels.

The theoretical framework for this research is built on theories from three key scholars: Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour and Antoine Hennion. Individually, each has provided formulations and concepts that have guided the selection and analysis of data at various points in the research, these are described below. More significantly, it is certain similarities across their theoretical positions that have informed the research strategy adopted here.

Michel Foucault's examination of socially embedded networks of power explores the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse.⁵ Foucault's ideas on discourse and discursivity propose that a broad set of 'statements' construct popular discourses and discursive practices.⁶ These have been fundamental to this research. Both Stuart Hall and Jonathan Potter insist that Foucault's notion of discourse is best understood as 'language plus actions', making clear that discourse is not only concerned with what one says but also what one does.⁷ Foucault goes further, explaining that a particular discourse is not established on one statement alone; it emerges across a range of texts, in actions and conduct, and at a range of institutional sites, thus characterising a way of thinking or state of knowledge that he describes as "episteme".⁸ Although Foucault's methods of analysing texts have been compared to the semiotic approach, his broad notion of discursive formations (knowledge and statements capable of organising conduct, understanding, practice and belief) greatly expands the scope of what is involved in knowledge production and representation. For Foucault, discourse is influential as it prescribes certain ways of talking about the topic whilst excluding others. This ultimately governs what is 'sayable' and 'thinkable' about a topic at a particular historical moment.⁹ Adopting a Foucauldian approach to discourse and its analysis within this research has

provided a way to understand how words, images, actions and multiple variants of fashion 'statements' can construct ideas of fashionable taste and influence taste formation on a range of levels.

An analysis of contemporary fashion media has been a central activity in this research from the outset. As such, *The Fashion System* by Roland Barthes may seem like an obvious starting point for the theoretical framework.¹⁰ The work undertaken by Barthes provides an enlightening semiotic examination of the contents of French fashion magazines, and is referenced throughout the thesis. However, in light of the transformation of fashion communication, in particular the extension and animation of representations via digital platforms, a purely semiotic approach appears limited. In order to address the changing dynamics in fashion media such as the emergence of influential fashion bloggers (part fashion commentator, part performer, part fashion enthusiast), Michel Foucault's conception of discourse provides a more flexible theoretical standpoint. His approach offers a way to incorporate new and evolving forms of communication. Further, it extends their analysis beyond a system of signs and signification, whilst at the same time recognising media texts as important.

The perspectives of Bruno Latour provide an additional yet complimentary theoretical standpoint that develops Foucault's methodological position, for the examination of people, practices, judgments and objects through their associations and interactions. *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT) proposed by Latour in the early 1980s provides this research with an alternative social theory that challenges a homogenous notion of 'society'. Latour's approach focuses on associations and relations of human and non-human 'actants' to re-construct a new understanding of the 'social' as observed in collectives, networks or assemblages.¹¹ He proposes the term 'actant,' rather than 'actor' to capture any manner of things that play an active role in shaping associations in the social world. This approach removes notional boundaries and flattens the topic of study, in order to see how knowledge is embedded in networks and entities. Sometimes described as the "sociology of translation," ANT is a relational and process-orientated form of sociology that seeks to move beyond divisions of agency and pre-existing structure.¹² The emphasis on links and associations in ANT provides a supporting theoretical structure to critically analyse communication in this research. The central role of the network allows for communication processes and practices to be recognised as meaningful in shaping connections and interactions. ANT readily accommodates the multiple forms of communication at stake in fashion taste-making, whether interpersonal and intimate or institutionally and technologically mediated.

Although their formulations are not concerned with either fashion or taste, Foucault and Latour both propose a methodological foundation for understanding events and effects that occur through interaction, convergence and connection, rather than through separation, boundaries and division. In addition, these theorists bring issues of materiality and practice into the analysis of social behaviour. The concepts

of discourse and actor-networks, which are constituted through the interaction of heterogeneous elements, also provide assistance in developing the theories into workable and appropriate research methods. To further support the theoretical perspective adopted in this research, the theory of taste formation developed by Antoine Hennion (*Pragmatics of Taste*), noted in the *History of Taste-making* section, also makes a key contribution.¹³

Antoine Hennion worked alongside Bruno Latour at *Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation* in Paris. He shares Latour's pre-occupation with the concept of association between subject and object and between human and non-human proposed in ANT.¹⁴ Antoine Hennion argues that our tastes are formed through multiple modes of attachment to the world.¹⁵ His pragmatic perspective on taste and taste-making allows these concepts to be understood as reflexive practices performed in and through our attachments to objects and communities, in relations with others and relations with ourselves.¹⁶ Hennion states "taste is an appreciation of things that comes about via the act of appreciating itself. Less an object of study... more an experience to be approached."¹⁷ Activities that develop our tastes, he describes as acts of tasting or experimental interactions that help to bring forth differences 'in' objects and 'in' the sensibilities of the taster. He asserts "taste is not a given, it must be made to appear."¹⁸ So taste emerges through acts of tasting, but is further shaped and advanced by the gestures and behaviours that accompany it, by the support and response it receives from others and on-going adjustments and re-alignments as associations develop. Hennion sees taste formation as an accumulative process "based on mediations, bodies, objects, situations and equipment" that converge and help to create attachments.¹⁹ In alignment with Foucault and Latour, Hennion promotes a broad and open-ended conception of power relations and influence, understood via the interactions, mediations and connection of heterogeneous entities. Further, all three theorists recognise subjectivity not as something internally generated, but more action orientated, formed through and by our engagement with the world.

Working with the concept of taste formation, Antoine Hennion has been keen to differentiate his theoretical perspectives from those of Pierre Bourdieu. He states that other social theories on taste have over-looked the importance of individuals and their attachments to objects, communities, their deliberations with others and with the self.²⁰ Further, existing studies of taste privilege it's discussion as a marker of distinction and identity, or as a lens on high culture versus popular culture. Hennion argues Bourdieu's theory on taste is restrictive, rendering tastes as unproductive; the objects function as signs and the subjects reproduce existing social hierarchies.²¹ In particular, Hennion notes their diverging positions on the role of objects. The key difference, he argues, is the status given to objects; Bourdieu diminishes belief in the object (using institutions and habitus) while Hennion insists that objects count and need to be understood as an active participant in the process.²² In comparing these two theoretical perspectives on taste, Ben Highmore notes that Bourdieu's theory seems more attractive because it proposes a neat and balanced way to tackle taste,

in contrast to Hennion's messy and open-ended conception.²³ However, he suggests that Bourdieu's analysis is not really examining taste as an experience; rather he uses taste to talk about something else, the maintenance of social distinction.²⁴

This research acknowledges the significant contributions of both Pierre Bourdieu and Antoine Hennion to the understanding and analysis of taste. Bourdieu's work provides critical insights and concepts referenced throughout the body of the thesis, and these have enabled this research to find direction. However, Antoine Hennion's position on taste offers the flexibility needed to accommodate micro and macro negotiations of contemporary fashion taste-making. It is a theory developed in the social conditions of the twenty-first century that seeks to open up taste to a greater diversity of analysis. His theoretical approach aligns with and enhances the perspectives of Michel Foucault and Bruno Latour outlined above, by adding methodological insight directly applicable to taste and taste-making.

The theoretical framework underscored by these three theorists promotes attentiveness to networks, associations and multiple contributing factors. The rapid developments inherent in the object of study (running through fashion, taste and communications in the twenty-first century) necessitate a framework with flexibility. This approach does not advance a linear or bounded perspective on the research topic, instead offering a view based on contingency, evolution and temporary convergence. As such, notions of movement and change are readily accommodated as people, objects, ideas, attachments and associations are potentially both stabilised and destabilised through their interactions.

The formulations and concepts described here have shaped and guided the overall research strategy adopted for this project. The following section describes how this framework has been developed into research methods. It outlines the data sources, research tools and analysis techniques selected for this investigation.

RESEARCH METHODS – DATA SOURCES

This research began by observing the changing profile of individuals invited to sit in the privileged front row seats at international fashion week events. Analysis of this context has informed the selection of particular individuals for case study analysis. Utilising media images from New York Fashion Week, which document guests seated in front row seats, it has been possible to identify those individuals who had established positions, regularly seated front row and those who were new to this context. Further, debate in the fashion media about this changing situation provided detailed commentary on particular individuals who were beginning to make regular appearances in the front row. From this material, ten individuals were selected to profile that regularly attended and published commentary from New York Fashion Week – five established fashion journalists and five fashion bloggers (see *Appendix*

1 for names and profile information). This formed the basis for the instrumental, collective case study undertaken at the beginning of this research.²⁵ The instrumental focus of the case study was to gain insight into what type of individuals were being installed in these symbolic fashion arenas, in order to move beyond generalisations being circulated in the media. The collective nature of the case study allowed cross-case analysis between individuals and offered sufficient insight to highlight certain particularities in contemporary fashion commentators (as my subject of analysis).²⁶

In order to extend the analysis of the case study candidates, a systematic data capture of their fashion commentary was undertaken. New York Fashion Week was chosen as an important time frame in which to document fashion commentary from these individuals. This event, which occurs every six months, was used on three separate occasions – September 2011, February 2012 and September 2012 (see *Appendix 2* for data capture schedule during these periods). During each of these three fashion weeks all possible data from all available sources for the selected voices was captured on a daily basis. This was undertaken through collection of text published on personal social media (*Facebook* and *Twitter*), professional publishing activities on-line as well as in daily, weekly and monthly printed media. In addition, another period of data capture was undertaken on a weekly basis during August 2012, to gather fashion commentary from the case study candidates outside of the fashion week environment (see *Appendix 2* for data capture schedule during this period).

This approach to data not only generated considerable material for analysis, it allowed for a closer inspection of the range of methods being employed to publish views from this event. Observing multiple communication channels during a period of great change in the field provided insight into how types of media were being used or adapted to connect and engage participants in the fashion community.

From content analysis of the case study data, particular themes emerged that necessitated additional research and further data capture throughout this project. Fashion related topics identified from case study candidates, such as collaborative projects between fashion designers and other fields, cities described as fashion destinations and the significance of certain fashion exhibitions, regularly required further investigations to ascertain their relevance and impact on the broader discursive formations in fashion (for example, see *Appendix 4.1, 4.2, 4.3* for complete data on specific topics).

Alongside the data from the case study candidates, this investigation has used the well-established qualitative research method of in-depth interviews. Six semi-structured interviews with fashion industry professionals working in communication and media have been undertaken to gain contemporary perspectives from within the field (see *Appendix 3.1* for interviewee profiles, see *Appendix 3.2* for interview questions). The inclusion of face-to-face interviews as a research tool was designed to generate a source of unmediated data about the research topic, based on personal experience that also captured emotional references.

All the data for this research has been selected from English speaking, internationally distributed media sources. The case study candidates are based in the USA or the UK and regularly travel to write about fashion in other countries. The communication professionals were interviewed in Melbourne (Australia), where they are based. However, all operate within globally structured communication environments, whether as a regional section of an international company or working to distribute their products to audiences around the world.

ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES

At the beginning of the project, this research was focused on institutional fashion commentators and bloggers selected for their inclusion in the changing profile of front row guests at international fashion week events. This focus was reflected in the data selected at the onset of the research process. As it has progressed and particular avenues of investigation have opened up, it became clear that research into fashion taste-making needed to look beyond the fashion commentary generated by those fashion journalists and bloggers who have a privileged position in relation to new emerging fashion.

Two significant factors informed the selection of additional data. Through content analysis of the original data, the movements of fashionable taste as a result of taste-making actions began to emerge as a compelling theme. In pursuing this line of enquiry, the investigations sought to understand if and how fashionable taste continued to move beyond fashion commentary and discourses generated by journalists and bloggers on emerging fashions. Additionally, through continued scrutiny of fashion communication practices throughout the duration of the project, the growing contribution of everyday fashion consumers to fashion media actively participating via online platforms became apparent. This development has resulted in the perspectives of fashion consumers/ enthusiasts forming a significant element of online fashion media, and becoming more potent in contemporary fashion discourse.

In recent times, fashion enthusiasts and consumers have created a parallel yet interconnected realm of user-generated fashion commentary. The material selected as additional data has been taken from this segment of the fashion media. The additional data is drawn from two online sources, selected because they capture the everyday fashion consumers' relationships to fashion and clothing – the *Women in Clothes* project and *What we Wore: A People's History of British Style* online archive (see *Appendix 5* for details). These sources provide access to a diversity of individual insights on fashion and taste as they describe personal attachments and association created through the lived experience of getting dressed (through both word and image). Further, these websites have endured, remaining a relatively stable hub for individuals with an interest in fashion that reflects their personal experiences. This stability is in marked contrast to the changing popularity and functionality of

many social media platforms over the duration of this project (including the shifting popularity of *Flickr*, *Tumblr*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Youtube*, *The Vine*, *Periscope*, *Instagram* and *Snapchat*). By selecting these two sources for additional data – one initiated in the USA and one in the UK, but with contributions from around the world – new and emerging types of fashion media are included for analysis, whilst at the same time enabling the perspectives of the fashion consumer / enthusiast to inform the understanding of fashion taste-making.

Much of the data gathered for the research is in textual form. It has been generated through collective, instrumental case studies, as a variety of fashion media content, recently published surveys, user-generated expressions and transcripts of in-depth face-to-face interviews. The techniques used to analyse and interrogate the data are outlined below.

RESEARCH METHODS – DATA ANALYSIS

Robert Stake defines the case study as “not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied”²⁷ and further states the “case is something that functions, the study is the observation of the operations”.²⁸ The collective case study here involves multiple instrumental cases selected from within a very specific environment; each providing the opportunity for greater insight into the characteristics of the fashion commentators invited to play a highly visible role at international fashion week events. The analysis of such qualitative data has been engaged in as an inductive process, requiring close reading and content analysis before themes become evident.²⁹ The case studies provide topical information giving background and context to the study, while a more detailed examination enables broader themes in the commentary to emerge.

To enable these themes to become more clearly defined, multiple data sets have been collected and analysed. Through this process themes and patterns in the data take shape and provide ways to generate theories induced through immersion in the accumulated data (as grounded theory).³⁰ Glaser and Strauss advocate letting conceptual categories emerge from the data through observation, before undertaking a period of ‘theoretical sampling’ where the emergent theory is applied to further data for nurturing and refinement – inducing rather than deducing theory.³¹ In addition, Kathy Charmaz notes that this technique “acknowledges multiple social realities, mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed and looks toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meaning.”³² Grounded theory offers a way to use bounded research tools such as case studies in a way that fits with permeable and contingent characteristics of the theoretical framework developed for this research.

As noted above, much of the data gathered for this study is in textual form. From this starting point, textual, intertextual and discourse analysis methods have been used to understand the internal and external features that shape this data.³³ Its analysis has followed data processing techniques widely utilised in qualitative studies; beginning with content analysis (to identify the main themes), then assigning codes to the themes, classifying comments and sentiments about these themes, before integrating both the themes and responses into discussions of the research findings.³⁴ Textual analysis is a method that is central to cultural studies. Although a close reading of the text is necessary, as David Silverman insists “realities cannot be simply lifted from the text without consideration of the person and context.”³⁵ In attending to the context of contemporary fashion media texts, the concept of the network has been employed to develop a picture of the intertextual references that also shape its contextualisation. In today’s fashion communication, these may take the form of digital links and hypertext embedded into the text or references and citations included by the writer. Further, fashion media texts are rich in imagery, adding additional intertextual features. Nevertheless, intertextual analysis helps to understand each text in relation to others. At certain stages of the research this form of analysis has been extended further. A growing recognition of actions and performance in contemporary taste-making, has required the adoption of discourse analysis as a key research method. The importance of language and its connections with the social processes and practices of fashion is evident, and has clear connections to Foucault’s ideas on discourse and discursivity.³⁶ Stuart Hall’s approach to discourse analysis underscores how language and practice create discursive taste formations capable of organising conduct, understanding, values and beliefs.³⁷ However, neither Foucault nor Hall suggests that language is transparent. It is only by building a picture of particular discursive practices and formations that the social and ideological work of the text (and language) becomes more apparent.

This research adopts discourse analysis as a key research tool to investigate fashion taste-making. It was selected because discourse has the ability to influence and shape an individual’s view of the world by pulling together various associations. It expands the scope of what is involved in the representation of taste beyond the textual or intertextual features enabling behaviour, interaction and beliefs to be incorporated. According to Jonathan Potter, discourse generates knowledge and has the power to convince people that certain statements are ‘true.’³⁸ Discourse tells us something about the people who speak them, including the assumptions they hold as well as the socially embedded networks of power they are connected to.³⁹ Through its analysis we gain understanding and insights into social behaviour.⁴⁰

This research design has also been extended to accommodate the material and immaterial products of fashion. *Actor-Network Theory* has been utilised to advance the investigations. As a research method, it is not especially complex, as Joanne Entwistle explains “It simply involves ‘following the actors’: observing what they do, where they go and what objects they ‘enrol’ into particular ‘assemblages’.”⁴¹ In the context of ANT, the actors can be any manner of human or non-human entities

that make up the assemblage and shape how the world comes together.⁴² This research has followed the actors and observed the constitution of their assemblages (recorded in methods of data capture recorded in *Appendix 1* Fashion Commentors and *Appendix 4* Fashion Discourse Data) thus ensuring that things such as material qualities in fashion or specific fashion practices that inform taste-making activities are not excluded from consideration.

The research methods detailed here have been applied in different ways, for different purposes during these investigations. As this project has been undertaken at a time of ongoing transformation in fashion media and communication the suite of research methods have been applied to the investigations in various combinations.

The project begins with the collective case studies; this provides a starting point for 'following selected actors,' tracking their networks of attachments in the fashion week context and beyond in their broader taste-making activities. A combination of case study and ANT methods underscores the development of the typology of taste-making activities in Chapter Three and provides significant data for Chapter Four that exposes how taste is mobilised through the practices of fashion commentators. Analysis of the intertextual features of fashion descriptions from selected commentators opens a way to expose the discourses and assemblages in which they are situated. An iterative process of intertextual and discourse analysis as well as attention to the entities in actor-networks underlies the findings of further processes of mobilising taste via the popular fashion discourse in Chapter Five. Chapters Six and Seven investigate fashion taste-making on a smaller scale, refocusing and reconfiguring the research methods. Chapter Six revisits the collective case studies to scrutinise fashion media content at a micro textual level, undertaking comparative analysis of data to identify fashion taste-making structures formed through the interplay of word and image. In Chapter Seven discourse analysis and actor-network techniques are used to examine subjective notions of fashionable taste in discussions of self-fashioning. Here, particular attention is paid to the individual's assemblage of attachments, as advocated by Hennion, in this distinct yet inter-related sphere of taste-making activity.

The research also employs visual mapping techniques both as a process of data gathering and as a method of data analysis. This is a research approach adapted from critical cartography and used as a way to visually document and interpret actor-networks and discursive formations. Denis Cosgrove describes acts of mapping in cultural projects as a means of "visualising, conceptualising, recording and representing" data.⁴³ Mapping has the capacity to capture unfolding action and go beyond the superficial (or immediately visible), to reveal greater intent in structures and patterns.⁴⁴ As noted above, the data for this research has been predominantly textual. The initial analysis of the material has required a close reading of the text, to yield themes as starting points. Once these have been recognised, visual techniques enable the data and emerging themes to be read differently, then organised and analysed spatially. Used here as an investigative technique, mapping and creating

structured collages from the data frees the analysis from a purely linear or narrative description, and uses material evidence to produce previously unseen relational structures.⁴⁵ In addition, it has provided the researcher with additional methods to communicate analysis techniques, observations and findings. The data visualisation is located throughout the thesis and appears as figures. In particular, these figures make a significant contribution to the findings of Chapters Four and Five.

The thesis is a qualitative, interpretative research project about contemporary fashion taste-making. The methodology develops a theoretical approach characterised by interaction and the association of numerous diverse entities in order to study the operations of influence and movements of taste via fashion communication. The data selected to investigate fashion taste-making has been taken from across current fashion media and communication activity, including industry working practices and consumer participation in the field. The methodology sets out a mixed-methods research design both in its approach to data gathering and data analysis in order to consider the heterogeneous "mediations, bodies, objects, situations and equipment" that converge through the taste-making process.⁴⁶

NOTES//METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER 1 | INDIVIDUALS OF INFLUENCE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of terms used to describe individuals who appear to lead opinions and exert influence over our tastes – ‘luminary’, ‘arbiter’, and ‘style setter’ for example. These are however rather general terms that identify the individual, but tell us little about their methods of influence or why their opinions and actions matter to the broader public. This chapter utilises a selection of theories that have been developed to provide greater insight about the key characteristics of influential individuals. Each of the five theoretical frameworks explored in this chapter identifies distinctive aspects of the person as well as the interconnections between people, activities and contexts that allow them to exert their influence. The five theoretical concepts applied in this chapter are: the cultural intermediary (Bourdieu 1984), the gatekeeper (Lewin 1947), the opinion leader (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), the cultural ambassador (Harvey, Press and Maclean 2011) and the moneychanger (Foucault 1988). Examining individuals of influence in this manner opens multiple perspectives on the work, the context and interactions of contemporary fashion tastemakers.

The theories examined in this chapter have emerged during the twentieth century from the fields of socio-cultural research. Many of the conditions in which these theories were first formed have changed. They are considered here in light of evolving social, communication and consumption practices operating within contemporary fashion taste-making. The investigation into individuals of influence begins with an exploration of the cultural intermediary. This is a concept used to describe a broad range of professionals involved in shaping cultural products as they move from producer to consumer. Here, the notion is used to explore the reshaping and renegotiation of space between production and consumption in the contemporary context.

The chapter then moves to the concept of the gatekeeper to examine methods of influence that have been developed specifically within systems of communication. Theories about gatekeepers and gatekeeping were originally conceptualised through the operations of the mass media, but have been necessarily re-modeled for a twenty-first century media landscape of multiple channels and digital inter-activity. Next, the role of the opinion leader is considered as a figure of influence

within a community setting. This discussion enables greater insight into the interpersonal communications and their impact on the dynamics of influence and taste-making. It is a concept that outlines how certain individuals can become a reference point for a group of people. The significance of community and context to influential individuals is further explored through the concept of the cultural ambassador. The operations of this individual are examined within a specific type of community that is defined by its own particular forms of knowledge and cultural practices. The final concept examined in this chapter is that of the moneychanger, a term that describes an influencer who is closely connected to currency, capital and value exchange systems. This concept explores the mechanisms of both symbolic and economic influence that are part of fashion taste-making.

Each of these ideas has a direct connection with the activities of the contemporary fashion tastemaker, and are further contextualised through fashion specific references. This chapter uses these five theoretical frameworks to highlight the importance of the relational context or *special* conditions that allow certain individuals to exert their influence. These special conditions are constituted through a combination of people, objects, spaces and their interactions and associations. As described by Bruno Latour, these conditions can be readily conceptualised as an assemblage of humans and non-humans that shape the social world.¹ From this methodological standpoint the connections and associations that draw these elements together become important. Latour notes that actants (or non-human entities) function as intermediaries or mediators that assist in turning intention into action.² However, he cautions against a perception of actants as passive intermediaries, but rather as active mediators.³

This chapter attempts to make clear the significance of the relations between influencer and community, as well as the network of personal and public connections to objects, ideas and places in taste-making. These issues impact upon both the construction of their authoritative position and their influential characteristics, be they perceived or real. The chapter argues that individuals of influence cannot be seen or understood as separate from their relational context, but rather they are an integral part of co-operating fashion and communication systems.

1.2 THE CULTURAL INTERMEDIARY

A discussion of the cultural intermediary must begin with Pierre Bourdieu's formative conceptual definition of the term. Bourdieu used the term to encapsulate those involved in mediation between the production of cultural goods and the production of consumer tastes.⁴ His writing on the subject is specifically concerned with the French class system of the mid-twentieth century, where he focuses on distinctive cultural

differences of the dominant pre-existing bourgeoisie compared to the new petite bourgeoisie. Having identified cultural intermediaries as part of the petite bourgeois, he specifically locates their occupations in the cultural creative industries, and involved in the work of presentation and representation (through sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth).⁵ Bourdieu notes a particular personal quality of those operating as cultural intermediaries:

*...these 'need merchants', sellers of symbolic goods and services who always sell themselves as models and as guarantors of the value of their products, who sell so well because they believe in what they sell.*⁶

Jennifer Smith-Maguire and Julian Matthews pick up on Bourdieu's notion that successful cultural intermediaries are a type of hybrid; a combination of cultural producer and ideal consumer.⁷ The intermediary's understanding and belief in both the products and the associated lifestyle allow them to know, shape and direct consumer needs, an activity that highlights the interplay and connection of cultural and economic concerns – often a central feature in displays of taste. Keith Negus also identifies how the cultural intermediary forms an important connecting device in cultural economies, however he notes that an understanding of their value has been limited through an excessive focus on the creative occupations that form part of mediation, whilst ignoring some activities that are crucial to cultural production.⁸ He argues for a less 'romantic view' of cultural intermediaries, proposing the term is also relevant to the actions of business analysts, manufacturers and accountants in the production of cultural forms.

In contextualising the notion of cultural intermediary in fashion, Lise Skov takes issue with Bourdieu's position that these individuals are predominantly engaged with educating and shaping of consumer tastes. She argues that cultural intermediaries are not tastemakers, but occupy a more subordinate position that is constrained by market-based criteria, processing market information and facilitating supply and demand.⁹ Skov quotes Regina Blaszczyk who describes intermediaries in fashion as "astute consumer liaisons whose jobs entail studying markets, evaluating tastes and making product recommendations."¹⁰ This position aligns with Negus in that they all recognise the important work of connection the intermediaries perform. They also argue for less emphasis on the creative progressive aspects of their intermediary actions and more acknowledgement of the routine, habitual or market related nature of the work of cultural intermediaries.¹¹ In addition, Negus notes that a broader notion of culture understood as a *whole way of life* would provide a less restrictive view of the space between cultural production and consumption.¹² This is an issue at the heart of Latour's reassessment of the notion of culture and his idea of nature/

culture; he argues that even the most esoteric forms of culture are essentially hybrids of the physical, material and intellectual.¹³ His argument draws attention to the contested issue of boundaries and divisions between production and consumption in contemporary fashion, where the lived experience is never so neatly segregated.

Joanne Entwistle, when describing cultural intermediaries in fashion also highlights issues of divisions. She notes the important role played by cultural intermediaries in forming “the networks of distribution, dissemination and mediation of fashion,” but argues against situating them between separate distinct realms of production and consumption.¹⁴ Instead, she includes them in a group of people who contribute to the process of valorisation in fashion, and who activate the complex interactions of economic, aesthetic and cultural factors in the field.¹⁵ A dividing line between production and consumption was formerly understood as a clear division that required channels of mediation and communication for producers to reach consumers. As Sean Nixon and Paul du Gay note, there is a body of literature that positions cultural intermediaries as a group situated in the “‘middle’ of this space – ‘social middle’, ‘middle brow’, ‘middle class’ and ‘unproductive middling groups.’”¹⁶ However, in the twenty-first century direct interaction between producers and consumers has become a significant feature of social media and other forms of marketing communication. Digital technologies and consumer choice have completely re-modeled perceived boundaries and spaces between production and consumption.

The theoretical examination of the cultural intermediary suggests that their ability to influence emerges from an intermediate position between producers and consumers forming a bridge of connection and communication between the two. For the contemporary fashion tastemaker, a defined or distinct space between producers and consumers in which to position themselves no longer exists. Digital inter-connectivity and accessibility as well as active brand-consumer engagement, has blurred boundaries and made the dynamics of communication between producers and consumers more complex. Nixon and du Gay describe the activities of cultural intermediaries as taking effect at numerous and “discrete moments in the lifecycle of cultural forms.”¹⁷ Antoine Hennion suggests that the subtle differences between mediation and translation need to be considered in cultural mediation.¹⁸ Both are relevant, but he argues mediation establishes a relationship, yet also interrupts it, whereas translation suggests a movement or performance, something more than simply a transmission.¹⁹ The domain of cultural intermediation is noisy, crowded and fractured, operating in various complex spatial-temporal settings. The notion of a specific space or clear site of influence on the shape of cultural production is difficult to locate. Influence emerges through

interconnection and collaboration, through a confluence of different messages that are communicated through multiple-channels and actions.

The notion of a multi-dimensional interface aligns with Entwistle and others who prefer to understand fashion today as more complex, interconnected and multi-layered space, where production and consumption are more readily described as nodes in a dynamic fashion network.²⁰ Entwistle outlines a vision whereby multitudes of micro-actions and complex interactions of the economic, aesthetic and cultural factors of fashion form the relations shaping cultural production.²¹

Although the term cultural intermediary brings some insights about the role of the fashion tastemaker, it remains a rather general term. It designates an approximate location within which cultural mediation or taste-making operates. This place in the fashion industry is occupied by a broad group of industry professionals ranging from designers, journalists, buyers and brand managers through to window dressers and shop assistants. In addition, the nature of cultural labour in the fashion industry in the twenty-first century is not as clearly defined as job titles might suggest. Skov’s study of fashion designers working anonymously for high street retailers, illustrates this point. One can have the job title of fashion designer, but work anonymously for a large clothing retailer developing products that will sell in that environment.²² This role has only the slightest resemblance to the operations of the named fashion designer who shows their new propositions of contemporary fashion at international runway events. One remains anonymous and unseen to the fashion consuming public, while the other has the potential to be perceived as a tastemaker. This is predominantly due to the relational context within which the two fashion designers operate. Their day-to-day activities of designing and developing fashion products may be similar, but their surrounding network and context of their interactions changes the perceptions and the reality of their work.

In the twenty-first century, establishing a clear definition of a cultural intermediary is challenging. The growing contribution of the creative cultural industries to employment sees the number of those who are involved in the space between the physical production of cultural goods and the immaterial production of consumer tastes expanding, while many of the spaces where cultural mediation takes place are no longer clearly identifiable. Methods of mediation lurk unseen (for example in the actions of business analysts), or have diversified and splintered in order to adapt to new forms of communication and consumption practices. It is possible for some individuals to be performing everyday acts of cultural mediation without recognising them or intending them to be so. As such it appears that some individuals may be both cultural intermediaries and tastemakers, yet not all cultural intermediaries or

acts of cultural mediation are part of the fashion tastemakers' purview. Tastemakers have a more specific set of characteristics as this research intends to demonstrate.

This examination of the cultural intermediary as individual of influence opens an understanding of some crucial ingredients that enable influence to take effect. The discussion has highlighted the impact of positioning. The individual of influence must be at a point of connection; at an intermediate position. However, rather than being situated at just one location, such as between producers and consumers, the individual of influence must operate at multiple intersections. The cultural intermediary is more appropriately understood in the contemporary context as a connector or node in a network. Further, the more embedded or enmeshed in the network they are, and the more active their connections, associations and communications are within that network, the more effective their influence.

The chapter now moves to explore the gatekeeper as an individual of influence in media and communications. This discussion provides further insight into the network as an important relational setting for individuals of influence.

1.3 THE GATEKEEPER

Theories about the gatekeeper and gatekeeping have been developed to better understand the interplay of communication technologies and personal motivations in shaping messages in media and communications. Here, the gatekeeper is used as a metaphor for a person who is positioned in the media to control the content and flow of information. They have the power to allow information to progress and circulate through certain communication channels.²³ Gatekeepers have been credited with developing a variety of influential techniques for the construction, timing and diffusion of messages that have had to keep pace with technology since the idea was first proposed in mid-twentieth century. Kurt Lewin proposed the original theory as the *Theory of Channels and Gatekeepers* in 1947. Lewin sought to understand how content is shaped, structured, positioned and timed as it moves through a series of channels and gates within mass media.²⁴ Subsequently David Manning White and Bruce Westley and Malcolm McClean built on this idea, proposing that both internal and external forces might exert influence on messages as they pass through 'gates'.²⁵ Towards the end of the twentieth century, Pamela Shoemaker examined the influence of the gatekeeper in a changing media landscape.²⁶ For her, the notion of gatekeeping is essentially one of cultural mediation: the judging, processing and reconstructing of the essential elements of an event, and

turning it into news. She argues, "Gatekeeping is an integral part of the overall process of selecting and producing messages."²⁷

In her analysis of the fashion media, Yuniya Kawamura describes editors and journalists as having two powerful weapons at their disposal – silence and space. They control space for information that is allowed to pass through the channels and gates, and silence as a manifestation of the filtering activities of the gatekeeper.²⁸ Negus notes that the circulation of information on some products to the exclusion of others can also arise from a lack of knowledge on behalf of the gatekeeper – here ignorance inadvertently becomes part of the process.²⁹ Notions of gatekeepers and influential gatekeeping actions such as the inclusion-exclusion of information still form part of the fashion media landscape. Contemporary fashion tastemakers utilise their position to select and filter the information that is progressed through channels under their control and focus their readers' attention. As a high profile influencer, information deemed important enough to feature in their writing has significance. Space and silence is an important taste-making dynamic and is managed by those in control of the flow through communication channels. However, in the contemporary fashion media context there is a complex range of pressures shaping the tastemakers' messages.

More recently Karine Barzilai-Nahon has re-shaped the concept for the twenty-first century media landscape in her *Network Gatekeeping Theory*.³⁰ She positions gatekeeping in a contemporary communication environment of inter-connected information technologies, increased use of interactive applications and a population with digital skills and Internet access. Barzilai-Nahon re-evaluates the role of the gatekeeper, arguing that they now use information to stimulate user-engagement, provoke participation and allow for personalisation, rather than seeing the message as an end or finite product. The taste-making potential of the gatekeeper in the fashion media reflects this adjustment in a changing communication landscape. User-engagement and measurable interaction between message-sender and message-receiver has become one of the driving forces for those in the fashion communication sector. All the fashion communication professionals interviewed for this research noted audience engagement as a tangible measure of their influence and efficacy. Extracts from the interviews that detail their comments are included in Chapter Two: *Locating Influencers in Systems of Fashion*. For some, engagement was aligned with commercial outcomes such as consumer *click-throughs* to purchasing opportunities, while others looked for social media likes, re-posts and comments as evidence of their on-going relationship with readers. Regardless, all valued the interaction and recognised it as an important source of "capital accumulation."³¹

Gatekeeping theory includes the notion of internal and external forces operating on gates within communication channels. This idea is still evident even in today's complex communication network, and can be seen to shape messages despite the relative ease of publishing in the digital age. Some of these forces are formed by long standing occupational routines, organisational values and traditions of certain media channels. However, in the contemporary fashion taste-making environment there are other forces that influence the shape of the messages. These stem from personally motivated needs such as the tastemaker's desire to display their credentials. For example, they may cite content that reveals their fashion industry connections or knowledge. There may be a need to reflect personal or institutional positions about certain fashion topics such as the use of fur or environmental concerns. Indeed, there may be a whole range of professional obligations that require their messages to acknowledge contacts, sponsors or advertisers. With the increasing complexity and breadth of fashion communication networks, the push or pull of forces on the message-shaping gates can change direction. For example, there is less concern about the relationship between editorial perspectives and advertising content in many parts of the fashion media, whilst the ability to take down rapidly published digital content in contrast to the permanence of print media changes some of the pressures exerted on gates.

The gatekeeper must still acknowledge the expectations of various audience sectors. As Barzilai-Nahon's *Network Gatekeeping Theory* proposes the framing of information must consider the user if they hope for participation and personalisation. For the gatekeeper to act as tastemaker they cannot just simply manage the flow of information, they must be able to package the messages in a way that their audience will want to read and to share, consequently optimising their relational network. However, the fashion consumer is a much more active, self-aware and informed individual than previously presumed. The crowded and noisy space of fashion media offers enormous choice, with numerous voices and messages competing for attention. So the notion of gatekeeping as a mechanism of influence is more reliant on the construction, timing and diffusion of the right type of messages in the media. The content, tone and articulation have necessarily taken on a more open collaborative tone, inviting interaction and anticipating response from the audience. The gatekeeper has become adept at purposely packaging content that people will want to share as a way of guiding communities of taste through their networks.

To be an influential gatekeeper in the multi-layered networks of contemporary fashion communication, the tastemakers need to master the technical and fast moving nature of various channels, in order to form an effective tweet, post, review or feature. In addition, new types

of communication channels can rapidly create new types of influential individuals, for example *Vloggers* (or video bloggers) and *Instagram* stars. These individuals gain influence by finding new means of expression that are optimised by new technologies. For the gatekeeper, today's communication network is not structured simply around linear channels and gates. It is non-linear, multi-channeled and cannot be understood in a predictable sequence. Hypertext allows readers to come to the tastemaker's message from any number of linked pathways.

New media communication channels operate globally and unlike many mass-media channels these are not bound by geographical borders. Further, the integration of digital media into the social processes of our everyday lives has lead some to argue that we should recognise how mediatization is not only shaping how we see the world, but also how intertwined it is in our ways of experiencing and interacting in the world.³² Agnès Rocamora notes the difference between an understanding of mediation and mediatization; mediation suggests media as a conveyor of meaning, whereas mediatization proposes a whole range of ways media can intervene, transform, adapt and select as it transmits.³³ So it is amidst a complexity of interacting webs of communication that the gatekeeper attempts to exert influence in the twenty-first century.

The initial mechanical description of gatekeeping as managing information in channels and gates evolves into a more complex proposition in today's media environment for the fashion tastemaker. Indeed, Negus identifies that the information that forms the messages of gatekeepers does not simply arrive in the channels needing to be progressed. Content for fashion taste-making messages are actively planned out, researched and sourced; and details emerge from particular connections and networks.³⁴ Information may be gained through special access or personal invitations; the production of exclusive material is a means of differentiation between fashion tastemakers, derived through interaction and contacts within their relational network. Once obtained, this material may need to be shaped to fit with established, institutional or culturally specific practices, such as runway reports, style guides, features articles or key trends and published at certain times of the year.

The concept of the gatekeeper needs to be understood as an individual within a relational context or nexus that is constructed of, and through others sources of information, from which information and messages are both sent and received. The fundamental structure of this theory illustrates how gatekeepers are able to shape messages. It is a concept that contributes to our understanding of the practices of influential individuals. However, viewed in isolation, the concept of the gatekeeper does not connect gatekeeping influence to other essential stages of the process.

Individuals of influence interact with a range of entities before the message arrives at the channels under their control, as well as once it has passed through. It is important to include the work of research, sourcing of information, user-engagement and interaction in the creation of influence. The network within which the individual is positioned forms the basis of their value. Relationships and interactions within this network are directly connected to the levels of influence individuals are able to exert. The significance of this aspect is more closely examined next through the concept of the opinion leader. Theories on opinion leadership offer insight on the network or community within which the influential individual is situated.

1.4 THE OPINION LEADER

The notion of an opinion leader is that of an individual who has a disproportionate influence on the rest of the population. Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld describe opinion leaders as “the individuals who were likely to influence other persons in their immediate environment.”³⁵ Their initial theory about these influential individuals and their operations developed in the mid 1950s and has subsequently been elaborated, (particularly in the field of marketing science). A typical construct of an opinion leader characterises an individual as one who keeps up with new developments and has an extensive social network. This combination provides many sources through which to learn about new developments and many people to influence when discussing the new developments in a particular field.³⁶ The description outlines the essential attributes of an opinion leader as possessing knowledge of new developments, a social network and interpersonal communication skills. The strength and application of each of these elements clearly impacts upon their level of influence.

The traditional context in which examinations of opinion leaders have taken place is the interpersonal social setting in which their interactions are categorised as word of mouth, but now extends to electronic (e-WOM) in order to acknowledge a diversity of interpersonal communication with network members. Changes in the nature of social interaction, now undertaken both through digital devices and face-to-face, have created new forms of community that transcend geographical location and extend the networks through which an opinion leader can exert influence. This type of interaction has an additional layer of complexity, where algorithms, multiple contributors and search engine optimisation techniques intervene to alter, enhance or manipulate where and how interpersonal communication occurs. For the opinion leader, the digital context impacts upon each of their attributes. By extending their social networks, new interpersonal communication skills are required as ways to transmit their knowledge of new developments to new audiences.

Much research about this topic has focused on identifying the characteristics of opinion leaders, with the intention of being able to recognise the ‘influentials’ are within a given social group. Ed Keller and Jon Berry’s detail the common traits found in studies of opinion leaders. They categorise influentials by such things as educational background and marital and employment status, however this does little to illuminate why their ideas become contagious within their network.³⁷ Malcolm Gladwell references types of adopters and their relationship to innovation as proposed by Everett Rogers to bring more clarity.³⁸ This diffusion model positions opinion leaders as early adopters within bigger groups that are sub-divided into innovators, then early adopters, followed by early and late majority and concluding with laggards.³⁹ He describes both innovators and early adopters of this diffusion model as visionary; as those who seek change and are risk takers. In support of this stance, Colin Campbell states that tastemakers have “an additional inner-directed readiness to defy current norms,”⁴⁰ while others note that opinion leaders are focused on differentiation.⁴¹ Chen and Shekhar describe opinion leaders as people who welcome public scrutiny and are willing to stand out in a group situation either through appearance and behaviour or through greater knowledge of a particular issue or product.⁴² They identify personal involvement and product familiarity as important distinguishing features of opinion leaders. However, their study found public individuation plays a bigger role for those products and luxuries, which are consumed publically than for those consumed privately or through necessity.⁴³

Gladwell, Campbell, and Chen and Shekhar all describe opinion leaders in relation to the reactions and views of a broader public. They are noted for their difference in relation to the prevailing norms. In contemporary fashion media the term ‘influencer’ is currently used to denote an individual who has a large number of followers on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Twitter* or other social media platforms. Influencer is a term that comes from a sub-field of marketing – influencer marketing and is defined as “a third party who significantly shapes the customer’s purchasing decision.”⁴⁴ The current group of social media influencers has been deemed influential through the data online traffic produces, something that has and continues to be difficult to accurately define.⁴⁵ The quantitative data used to identify influencers is leveraged in different ways as a demonstration of credibility and reach; fashion bloggers are ranked on page views and modeling agencies now include *Instagram* followers along with a model’s vital statistics on promotional material. Research in this area notes that the influence of certain key individuals is dependent not on the size of their network, but on whether their connections are progressive or conservative.⁴⁶ Greater analysis of quantitative data is needed to really understand its connection to influence; however, this development goes some way to illustrating how individuals of influence are constituted by the responses and reactions of those around them.

Just as the opinion leader is created and sustained by the community within which they exist, and so too is the contemporary fashion tastemaker. Opinion leadership in the contemporary fashion media context means a constant adjustment of tone and manner of expression in relation to changes in audience dynamics. The digital landscape means that consumers have never had more choice or more information about fashion, factors that have given them the power to drive change. Fashion consumers have become suspicious of experts or industry insiders telling them what to like or wear, instead demonstrating a preference for information more akin to personal recommendations. Through participatory Web 2.0 communication channels the previous gap between expert opinion and personal advice has been bridged. Opinion leaders within the fashion community invite collaboration and acknowledge a diversity of opinions; they share their views by suggesting alternative perspectives on fashion and style.

The contemporary fashion tastemaker is usually an individual with specialist knowledge and connections within the fashion industry. They need to demonstrate their knowledge of new developments, however, to connect with and engage their contemporary audience, they make evident their desire to cooperate, listen and interact. John Summers notes that personality and attitude are important attributes for opinion leaders, as self-confidence and gregariousness of an outgoing personality tends to lead to more interesting conversations with more attentive audiences.⁴⁷ These personality traits are evident in the 'dressing up and talking about it' communication style of many bloggers and in the (recent) willingness of fashion journalists to reveal details of their lives. These actions help to shift their perception from expert opinion leader to team player who is happy to make recommendations for the good of the group.

One of the ways that fashion tastemakers are able to demonstrate knowledge of new developments within their community or network is as the manager or coordinator of change. Summers describes opinion leaders as significant "change agents in the diffusion process" of fashion through greater visibility and a tendency to actively participate in social activities.⁴⁸ In this role, they epitomise the individual who keeps up with all new developments in their field and advocates for change. Their understanding of the need for change in fashion enables them to recognise new developments as an inevitable part of fashion's historic continuum. As opinion leaders they are able to act in order to influence the acceptance and spread of new ideas. Like the gatekeeper, they shape and time their communications as a subtle way of displaying their knowledge of new developments. As opinion leaders, the tastemaker can recommend when the change seems to be appropriate, and suggest how to transition to the change, as well as explaining how the change will manifest differently to the current norm. The tastemaker as opinion leader has the opportunity to influence by designating moments of change, a crucial activity when change is so central (and necessary)

to fashion. This is an act of opinion leadership that reveals expert knowledge whilst assisting with the integration of new developments that are relevant to their community members.

The classic concept of an opinion leader could be conflated with the expert individual or industry insider, who has become alienated from their community through a lack of inclusive interpersonal communication skills when sharing their knowledge. For the opinion leader, it is still important to demonstrate knowledge of new developments; however, in an atmosphere of collaboration and choice throughout fashion, how this knowledge is displayed and articulated has become of vital importance. Opinion leaders need to be in tune with the tone and descriptive language used within their community in order to connect and exert influence. The taste-making opinion leader takes interpersonal communication beyond the simple use of an appropriate tone and vocabulary. Fashion tastemakers perform an important role in creating, up-dating and circulating the fashion discourse. The diffusion of a particular discourse across the community functions to define and normalise not only the descriptive language used within the community, but also influences certain behaviours and dispositions. Carefully crafted interpersonal communications help to shape and cohere the relational context.

The study of the opinion leader emphasises the interactions of their relational network as a significant factor in the mechanisms of influence. The concept sheds light on the careful balance that exists within the network or community; it operates as an eco-system upset by subtle shifts and changes in any one area. The community is not a passive receptacle into which views of influential individuals can simply be fed. The group or community will accept and even actively endorse certain directions of its opinion leader(s) such as risk taking, and overturning norms. However, the balance can be changed through the resistance of the group. Processes of influence may be disrupted if the opinion leader fails to connect when diffusing new ideas and knowledge. Opinion leadership relies on a symbiotic relationship between those who seek to influence and those wishing to be influenced.

As this chapter continues to explore different theoretical constructs of influential individuals, it now moves to examine the cultural ambassador. This concept enables a more detailed consideration of the necessary sensitivities towards the particular values and practices of the community.

1.5 THE CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

The examination of the cultural ambassador as an individual of influence provides a framework to explore some of the multiple and changeable relations that exist within the context of a fashion assemblage and a fashion community. The concept of a cultural ambassador is that of a high-profile figurehead who acts to promote certain professions or fields, with or without official appointment. The nature of the cultural ambassador role necessitates a public profile, often nominated for their visibility in order to explain and publicise a particular view of a field to a wider public. This can be seen in contrast to the opinion leader who circulates their views within their own group or community. The influence of the cultural ambassador is undertaken through their role as a cultural representative or advocate for certain cultural fields or organisations. These individuals lead by example through their public visibility, as Charles Harvey, John Press and Mairi Maclean propose, “the dynamics of taste are driven through the exercise of cultural leadership.”⁴⁹

As part of this discussion, it is important to consider the adjective ‘cultural’ preceding ambassador in this examination of an influential individual. Raymond Williams describes the connection between the words civilisation, cultivation and culture in the development of our modern understanding of the term ‘culture’.⁵⁰ He explains how the adjective ‘cultural’ continues to convey these associations especially in relation to manners and taste, supporting the perception of this individual as both cultured and civilised. The notion of the cultural ambassador suggests a well-informed and educated advocate with certain standards of taste. The term cultural is operational in a second sense in this examination of individuals of influence.⁵¹ Clifford Geertz offers a definition of culture as “an ordered system of meaning and symbols...in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings and make their judgments.”⁵² The cultural ambassador acts as a representative of the culture of fashion, describing and exposing its special systems, activities and rituals.

Authority and expert knowledge of the field is implicit in the position of cultural ambassador, as they work to explain and clarify the meaning of new and existing symbolic forms of the field to those both in and outside of the field. Cultural products capture the thoughts, values and aesthetic sensibilities of the intellectual and social context within which they are generated. As the thoughts and values are not physically held within the products, cultural production and consumption requires some assistance with meaning making. Individuals who have an understanding of intellectual and social milieu most effectively undertake this translation of abstract ideas for cultural artifacts.⁵³ Cultural leaders

use the process of translation as a means of education, facilitating “the translation of the abstract into the particular.”⁵⁴ By discussing abstract or implicit notions of fashion in relation to garments or design details, the ambassador helps to make explicit how intellectual ideas and values present themselves in fashion products.

The cultural ambassador’s acts of translation also identify and draw out connections between fashion (and its practices), and other cultural activities, for example using references to art, exhibitions, films and music as well as pop and celebrity culture. This has resonance with the concept of the ‘boundary spanner’ as someone who opens a conduit between two distinct fields.⁵⁵ The discussion of fashion alongside a range of other high and popular cultural activities extends the cultural ambassador’s educational function (providing clarification and explanation), also allowing them to demonstrate their expert knowledge and their appreciation of culture (and the Arts) more broadly.⁵⁶ The cultural connections made by the ambassador enables the audience to build their understanding and associations with fashion products and ideas in a range of ways – making fashion more meaningful and opening a range of access points for fashion.

It is relevant to discuss the cultural ambassador in relation to a celebrity endorser or a super consumer. There are subtle issues at work that separate individuals who are engaged in the creation or transference of meaning to goods for various purposes. The public relations aspect of the cultural ambassador has similarities with that of celebrity endorser, in that they can both be understood as individuals who enjoy public recognition and use this on behalf of a product, organisation or activity. Brian Moeran uses the concept of the ‘name economy’ to conceptualise the idea that celebrities (or high profile names) can give commodities cultural personalities.⁵⁷ He notes how celebrities not only generate attention, but can also channel meaning from one sphere of culture to another.⁵⁸ Grant McCracken describes the role of personal endorsement in the process of cultural meaning transfer and notes the value that celebrity endorsers can add to certain products.⁵⁹ He states that the concept of celebrity endorsement relies on the display of symbolic properties of the celebrity, rather than simply on the attractiveness (familiarity or likability) or the credibility (expertness or trust worthiness) of the endorser.⁶⁰ Both Moeran and McCracken describe the celebrity endorser in relation to consumption, as ultimately the success of cultural meaning transfer from a public figure to an object rests with the consumer.⁶¹ Their perspectives however highlight the importance of the perceived symbolic properties of those wishing to affect influence as well as their abilities to effectively bridge cultural credibility and authenticity in the eyes of the consumer.

The cultural ambassador needs to be vigilant to ensure that they are not seen merely as a marketing device, despite their role in the promotion of fashion; it is vital for the ambassador to remain a trusted source. Their discussions of the field need to be rational and balanced yet enthusiastic, offering informed perspectives that support their credibility. Fashion commentators use strategies to distance themselves from active promotion, thereby ensuring their readers understand that their role is not to 'sell' fashion, but to critique it; to make fashion communicable and accessible.⁶² For example, references to the price or financial aspects of fashion are rarely discussed in combination with matters of aesthetic discernment by the cultural ambassador. Rather the cultural, creative or historical references usually frame fashionable aesthetics.⁶³

The concept of the cultural ambassador as an individual of influence highlights the multiple balancing acts required by the contemporary fashion tastemaker. As a representative of the field of fashion they are required to articulate and promote positive views of fashion. However, to maintain their credibility and for their discernments to appear authentic with their network, they must endeavor to remain objective and removed from perceived bias for financial gain. Cultural ambassadors must operate effectively inside and outside of their field of expertise and negotiate the cultural and commercial concerns of both. This influential individual is deeply connected with the promotion and the continued success of the field. This suggests that they encourage a general on-going consumption of new fashion ideas and products. However, an understanding of the cultural ambassador as a civilised cultured representative of the field activates an important additional aspect of this role: to provide a discerning, refined and educated guide to consumption. Their aesthetic discernments demonstrate restraint through a highly attuned selection process. The filtering of new fashion objects and ideas through cultural, creative and historical reasoning alleviates the guilt (or vulgarity) associated with unbridled consumption. Using their taste and informed engagement within and outside their cultural field, they identify a particular limited and select range of objects and ideas to focus upon, and objectify and contextualise these for their audience.

The cultural ambassador is an influential individual whose work assists in establishing and translating meaning in fashion products and ideas for their audience. However, through their reserved approach to consumption, the ambassador selects a limited number of ideas and products for attention. As a result, a system of ranking emerges as not all new fashion products are treated equally in their discussion, and subsequently in the minds of their audience. Despite the ambassador's avoidance of the more commercial concerns and specific prices of fashion items through discussion of symbolic meaning and significance of particular new objects and ideas and not others, their activities do have a direct connection with the perception of 'value'. The concept of the cultural ambassador provides a useful framework to look at the strategic positions and proximities of influential individuals in relational networks.

As a cultural ambassador, there is a need to be deeply connected and embedded within their chosen culture, whilst at the same time located at a distance in order to view the field in relation to a wider cultural context. Interpreting and translating meaning in the products and ideas of fashion needs to resonate with those at the heart of fashion as well as those who sit outside. The ambassador needs to have an intimate understanding of the special features and conventions of the field (and highlight these for a broader public), yet remain at a distance from explicit product endorsements. Through the tactful handling of competing elements, this type of influential individual is able to construct a position within their relational network to establish and maintain enduring influence. This examination of the cultural ambassador as an individual of influence has touched upon the important yet complex relationship between influence and value creation.

The chapter now moves to examine the concept of the moneychanger as an individual of influence whose characteristics and operations provides insight on the connections between influence and value.

1.6 THE MONEYCHANGER

The moneychanger may at first appear to be a somewhat unrelated concept to examine in relation to fashion tastemakers, however it is an idea that provides insights into the multiple roles performed by individuals of enduring influence. The moneychanger connects the role of influencer with the production of value and provides a useful perspective on relational networks through the lens of currency, capital and value. The role of the moneychanger within the literal context of foreign currency exchange, is someone who has the knowledge not only to verify the authenticity of a currency, but one who will also assess its relative value in order to convert or translate it into another currency system, thus establishing its equivalence. This requires the moneychanger to be familiar with numerous parallel value systems, and to understand various conditions and methods of doing business in these various systems. Michel Foucault uses the term moneychanger in his discussions of *Technologies of the Self*.⁶⁴ Here the moneychanger is used as one of several metaphors to describe the techniques or methods one may use to become more objective about one's thoughts and conscience.

*The moneychanger, who verifies the authenticity of currency, looks at it, weighs and verifies it. We have to be moneychangers of our own representations of our thoughts, vigilantly testing them, verifying them.*⁶⁵

Foucault goes on to describe others who have applied the metaphor of moneychanger differently. One interpretation is, (that as a moneychanger) one should decipher one's thoughts in order to assess whether these thoughts contain hidden or negative intentions. Another interpretation of the role of the moneychanger is as one motivated to approach one's thoughts in order to understand which rules to apply when evaluating the worth of one's ideas. Whilst most of Foucault's comments relate to the management of the self, his underlying theme of interrogating and assessing value and its authentic representation is useful to this examination.

Foucault's concept is concerned with the impartiality and authenticity of the moneychanger demanded by those who seek guidance about value. It requires the moneychanger to demonstrate expert knowledge and understanding of more than one field, as noted previously, in order to be deemed fit to fairly assess equivalence. The notion of the moneychanger proposes that they act to assess the worth of new ideas, thoughts and various forms of currency for a broader public. The currencies or capital in which the moneychanger deals, as a contemporary fashion tastemaker are cultural, social and economic capital (or a combination of all three as symbolic capital).⁶⁶ In order to assess the equivalence between these, they must employ their understanding of each of these different value systems. As Foucault proposed, the moneychanger needs to know which rules (and measurement scales) to apply when evaluating the worth of ideas, as there are parallel value systems operating simultaneously around fashion products and ideas.⁶⁷ For example, the understanding of a product's value can be as a unit price in the retail context; as an emblem of post-modernism in a photo-shoot; or as a marker of social status in the mind of the consumer. In addition, value systems of fashion are often rapidly changing indices, with very few items maintaining a constant value over time.

The numerous parallel value systems of fashion can be understood from a range of perspectives. Certain objects or ideas matter in different ways for different people and at different times. As such, methods of measurement or systems of value are not all applicable or designed with the same ends in mind.⁶⁸ The significance of the object can be gauged through emotional response; by its economic significance; through its historic or cultural symbolism or through its demonstration of innovation and craftsmanship. Each of these requires a different set of measurement techniques for specific factors and audiences, and reveals a variety of criteria that can be used in the creation of value in an object.⁶⁹

The white wedding dress is an object that can be measured along these parallel systems in western society. The wedding dress will have emotional resonance for some; be recognised as a powerful cultural and historic symbol by many; produced and consumed as an explicit display of financial investment; and is often valued as a garment that demonstrates

great skill and craftsmanship. There are also value systems that emerge around the spatial-temporal settings of fashion. The qualities that create the perception of value in fashionable objects shift and change as they move from concept to manufacture; from promotional settings to the retail environment; from the shop floor to the wardrobe; and from this week's favorite to last year's cast-off. The value systems are situated in different frameworks, and as such the moneychanger needs to be familiar with which measuring systems to use in which context, and be confident when switching between multiple systems.

The moneychanger establishes cultural, creative and commercial worth – but also guides the understanding of use value and exchange value of fashion objects. In a retail environment that is rapidly shifting to on-line shopping, a reliable guide to the value of certain products has become increasingly necessary. As enhanced media and technological applications become integrated into our everyday practices, new ways to explore fashion products on screen have proliferated. As part of this mediatization, extensive use of digital technologies such as *Photoshop* or *Instagram* filters has had the effect of homogenising visual appearance in fashion imagery, leaving the consumer struggling to make a visual assessment of possible material differences in fashion products.⁷⁰ The moneychanger's reliable guide to value and assessment of authenticity helps to establish a ranking or hierarchy of products in the consumer's mind regardless of interaction with the physical product. In combination with other trusted sources, the moneychanger's assessment assists the consumer in building an understanding of the product's possible use value. The moneychanger's technique of comparison and discussion of equivalence in other systems provides an understanding of possible exchange value, but it also highlights the way that value is best understood when seen in association or comparison even across fields. For example – an article on the merits of designer Alexander Wang is entitled "Why Alexander Wang is the Madonna of fashion".⁷¹

So the moneychanger undertakes symbolic conversion of value from one system to another. This allows them to demonstrate expert knowledge of parallel fields, through their recognition of various authentic markers or signs of worth as well as the mechanisms driving other value systems. The moneychanger's authoritative use of comparison or relative value across a range of capital systems makes them an important and influential guide to understanding the cultural worth of specific ideas, people or products. Further, by performing the role of 'the measurer of value', they enhance their own perception (as an embodiment of value), whilst being positioned to instigate new types of measurement. From this position, the moneychanger can use their own (pre-existing) values and relationships to establish new measures and systems of evaluation.⁷² So the moneychanger benefits from being seen as the measurer of value, and fashion products in turn benefit from being measured and evaluated; to be included in the measurement process or used for comparison assumes that the product or idea has some inherent value.

The construction of this influential individual bears many similarities to the operations of the contemporary fashion tastemaker. The tastemaker's view is sought for guidance as to what to value in fashion's continued re-generation, by a process of symbolic conversion – that is, the transference of meaning through reference to other cultural practices, or through evaluation against in other aesthetic and symbolic fields. For example this discussion about second-hand designer handbags notes, "... vintage designer bags are like the *Maseratis* of the purse world. They're gorgeous, they make a statement, and they age with grace".⁷³ The contemporary fashion tastemaker is perceived as important because of their understanding of a broad range of cultural markers and activities, whereby the objects, people and ideas included in their evaluations take on significance and value through association.

The moneychanger is, like the other individuals of influence, one who is constructed through and sustained by the connections and relations with other people and fields of knowledge. It illustrates the importance of expansive knowledge networks needed to exert influence in this context; expert knowledge of value systems in just one field is insufficient.

This chapter has argued that individuals of influence are only understandable and only endure via links to their networks, communities and cultures. These act as sources of knowledge, feedback and information as well as providing the mechanisms through which their expressions can be shaped, circulated and diffused. It has examined a variety of approaches to effecting influence unpacked through the lenses of the cultural intermediary, the gatekeeper, the opinion leader, the cultural ambassador and the moneychanger. Each of these has provided some insights about the operations of the contemporary fashion tastemaker as an individual of influence, as a way of foregrounding their further examination in later chapters. The discussion has revealed a range of conditions and manners that create and sustain individuals of influence such that despite having been conceptualised differently, all are underpinned by essential communication, connection and interaction with other people, products and ideas.

Key characteristics emerging from the analysis of individuals of influence can be summarised as:

- a) *knowledge and familiarity with products, practices and values within the field as well as those of corresponding fields;*
- b) *flexible and multi-layered communication skills that feature both field specific terminology as well as vernacular interpersonal skills that enable micro and macro connections;*
- c) *embedded within important information and communication networks in order to both receive and transmit messages; and,*
- d) *continued visibility to maintain a public profile through actions and words that demonstrate knowledge and reflect familiarity with current pre-occupations in the field.*

Each of the networks, communities and cultures within which these individuals operate has preferred practices that define them. Each environment has its own special or unique ways of 'thinking' and 'doing' which impact upon the nature of interaction and discourse, as well as the types of objects, behaviours and expressions of taste that emerge from within such distinct groups. The next chapter moves to transpose the key components of influence into the culture of fashion. Fashion has its own set of practices, some of which are constant and well established, others that are continuously changing. The fashion tastemaker and the practices of fashion are dependent on each other for authority. Each assists in delineating the codes and conventions of fashion, yet is flexible enough to adapt and adjust when change occurs. Chapter Two describes the cultural context within which fashion tastemakers operate. It lays out the inter-reliant and cooperative structures that formed the foundations of fashion as an industry and as a cultural field, before discussing recent changes that have impacted upon on the operational settings for contemporary fashion tastemaking.

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CHAPTER 2 | LOCATING INFLUENCERS IN SYSTEMS OF FASHION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There have been some dramatic disruptions to the practices and operations of the fashion system in the twenty-first century, impacting upon everything from the manufacturing processes to the retail experience. This chapter outlines the foundations of the fashion industry and a particular set of conventions in fashion that have emerged as a result. The chapter explores how new digital technologies, the effects of globalisation and rising consumer influence have converged on fashion to produce some notable disruptions to established practices, especially evident in fashion media and communication. In this chapter, the contemporary fashion system is examined through the lens of its communication practices to locate the fashion tastemaker, as fashion commentator, within a public and professional context. This perspective allows a closer examination of fashion communication as an intrinsic part of how fashion as a system operates; it forms the arteries that connect its various parts and generates representations of the field for those both within fashion and the broader community.

Here, an understanding of the changing context of the fashion commentator is enriched by insights from current fashion communication professionals (see Appendix 3 for details of the interview process).¹ In face-to-face interviews, selected individuals described their current working practices and offered personal views on methods of influence in fashion communication. The chapter presents fashion as an environment increasingly reliant on interactions and connections, with the fashion tastemaker as a facilitator. It outlines contemporary fashion as a domain still structured by certain established conventions, yet overlaid with areas of radical transformation.

This chapter begins by examining the development of the 'fashion system' as an organisational device or means of regulating fashion's continual changes. It considers the system's evolution in the twenty-first century and argues for an understanding of fashion as an aesthetic economy – a networked system of decisions and interactions within a market driven by aesthetic qualities.² This is a clear step change from a production-consumption view of fashion, and a framework that allows a better understanding of the complexities of the fashion industry in the twenty-first century. The chapter examines the 'orthodoxies' of fashion;

these are the ideas and practices on which a culture of fashion is founded and that have become particular ways of 'thinking' and 'doing' in fashion. The chapter then explores the ways in which notions of space and time have been constructed and manipulated in the conventions of fashion; in particular how certain spatial-temporal arrangements underscore fashion taste-making.

These concepts are illustrated through analysis of *Fashion Week* as an event of significant cultural meaning for the fashion community that is spatially and temporally defined.³ Fashion week is fundamental to the activities and relational networks of many types of tastemakers (including commentators); as such they have become a major locus for strategic adjustments and movements in taste-making activities. An examination of their evolving purpose provides a window onto how certain disruptions to fashion create ripple effects through its practices; further, it illustrates the culture of fashion as 'nature/culture' – comprised of interacting people, things and concepts.⁴ The chapter concludes by considering how recent changes in the field could remove the need for fashion commentators. However, it argues that through evolution and adaptation, fashion tastemakers have found ways to remain embedded in the constantly reforming networks of fashion.

2.2 FASHION AS AESTHETIC ECONOMY

The fashion system can be understood as the coordinated and centralised management of fashion and its diffusion as it emerged from Paris in the late nineteenth century.⁵ In addition, the term 'the fashion system' is synonymous with the complex and intensely theoretical text by Roland Barthes that examines the inter-related practices that produce fashion variously as real garments, image clothing or written fashion.⁶ The phrase has evolved and it is most often used as short hand for the complex inter-connected institutions, on-going operations and social interactions that enable fashion to be produced, circulated and consumed. Yuniya Kawamura's sociological investigation of fashion describes "fashion as a system of institutions that produces the concept as well as the phenomenon and practices of fashion."⁷ However, as this chapter makes evident, institutions are only one active agent in contemporary systems of fashion.

In order to support the growth of a 'fashion industry' in Western Europe during the twentieth century, processes and hierarchies were constructed and formalised to enable the successful expansion of production, distribution and consumption of fashion. These industry regimes sought to regulate the process of renewal and to reconcile fashion's creative applications with enhanced manufacturing and distribution capabilities in this region. Fashion's transient and nebulous form became systemised and centrally managed in order to offer stability to consumers unsettled

by unpredictable changes in fashion.⁸ It is through the measures taken to regulate fashion that the separation of production and consumption became fashion's dominant structural feature. This has helped to construct a view of fashion as a system sustained by active producers and passive consumers.

The timely management of goods and information by fashion institutions ensured that consumers developed an understanding of fashion's cadence or pattern of change. The notion of a 'fashion calendar' has come to dominate not only the design and production cycles of fashion but also the associated retail and media industries as well as consumer expectations.⁹ The fashion calendar has imposed notions of the 'fashion seasons' and 'fashion weeks', constructions of time described as fashion's "temporal anchorage" by Aurélie Van de Peer.¹⁰ The predictable pattern of change (Spring /Summer and Autumn/ Winter) encouraged consumers to anticipate new fashionable ideas and linked the need for new wardrobe items with nature's changing cycle. This seasonality allowed the rhythm to be easily understood and accepted across boundaries.¹¹ The scheduling of fashion shows as week-long trade events has added further temporal structure. Fashion weeks signal the presentation of new ideas nominally based on seasons and continue to regulate certain operations of the fashion industry, despite shortened manufacturing lead times and radically altered buying schedules in many areas of the industry.¹²

For the time-based activities of the fashion industry to be understood and accepted as established practice, there has been a parallel communication strategy. Circulation of fashion writing has been crucial in the production of the fashion system and the creation of a culture of fashion. Keith Negus notes each industry produces its own culture and culture produces an industry.¹³ Key institutions in the fashion media (such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*) dominated the nature of popular fashion discourse for much of the twentieth century, and have been instrumental in transforming the regulating and operational systems into ritualised practices, stipulating the orthodoxies of contemporary fashion.

A cooperating fashion system where those involved in its communication work in tandem with fashion production and retail operations, has created patterns of re-generation in fashion, that have progressed in a relatively predictable manner. However, as noted in the introduction, fashion's operations have been disrupted and disturbances have forced changes in the fashion system that have impacted upon the fashion tastemaker. The fashion terrain of the twenty-first century still bears traces of its historical structure; however, this is now over-laid with a multiplicity of competing, digitally enabled global systems that co-exist to feed an increasingly rapid desire for renewal. As such, today's fashion environment is more fluid, more expansive and less strictly bounded than at any time during the past hundred and fifty years.

Technological developments have opened the way for numerous competing messages about fashion, presenting multifaceted views about the fashionable aesthetic. This has led to a splintering of established patterns and modes of renewal for both material and immaterial goods.¹⁴ For example, new fashion products arrive in store on a daily or weekly basis rather than quarterly, and some designers eschew the conventional runway presentations favouring *zines* or short conceptual films to promote their new collection.

Creative, flexible approaches have undermined the former systematic and exclusive activities of the fashion system, harnessing technological capabilities for a global reach and opening channels of discussion to those often excluded previously. This marks a significant change to the context within which fashion tastemakers operate. Formerly, those working in the fashion industry presented expert statements clearly defining what fashion is and is not. However, Angela Partington argues that innovation in the twenty-first century fashion system occurs differently, because it is “participatory and inclusive...social / collaborative and incremental / cumulative.”¹⁵ The fashion commentator operates in an interactive environment where the views and opinions of many others must be actively acknowledged.

Within the fashion industry there is increased sensitivity to consumer appetites and opinions, plus their demands that are much easier to hear (and more difficult to ignore) in today’s fashion media environment. Through access to digital sources with a global reach, consumers have the opportunity to be well informed and engaged with fashion. The rise of consumer participation, especially in fashion communication provides a new form of spontaneous and unfiltered insight for those operating within the fashion system. One fashion communication professional compares this development to “one massive focus group”¹⁶ suggesting that fashion brands would have previously had to pay large sums of money to get such consumer insights. Fashion companies encourage consumers to comment on their purchases through social media ‘Likes’, shares and re-posts. The informed and pro-active fashion consumer can also demand greater information from fashion brands about their products. Several of the fashion communication professionals interviewed noted the positive effect of the consumer voice in driving greater transparency around manufacturing and behind-the-scenes insights on fashion. One respondent stated that,

*...the best thing about it is that its calling people, designers and manufacturers to greater accountability...calling the fashion industry out on its practices, whether that’s labour practices, ethics around why we are making, how much we are making, so you know, I think it’s a really good thing.*¹⁷

The combined disruptive forces of technology, globalisation and consumer interactivity appear to have bought about greater openness in certain areas of fashion, through participation and interaction of a broader range of people in fashion.¹⁸

In seeking to reflect fashion’s increasingly complicated dynamics and to locate fashion tastemakers in these complex webs, this research uses the concept of an ‘aesthetic economy’ as a framework to represent the contemporary fashion landscape. It is a concept that provides a way to look beyond divisions of production-consumption and material-immaterial and examine the essential inter-reliance of these categories. This research uses the concept of an ‘aesthetic economy’ to define the operations of the fashion industry, in line with other research. It follows Joanne Entwistle’s perspective that the contemporary fashion industry operates as an ‘aesthetic economy’ made up of aesthetic markets and values.¹⁹

Joanne Entwistle has examined the cultural-economic negotiations that drive the (sub) fields of fashion modeling and fashion buying, and highlights the ‘aestheticisation’ of economic concerns in fields of cultural production. Informed by fieldwork undertaken in the fashion industry, she argues that the aesthetic economy “is a commercial practice concerned primarily with an aesthetic commodity and as such depends upon cultural calculations as much as it does upon economic ones.”²⁰ Entwistle continues

*An aesthetic market is one in which an aesthetic quality – be it a look or a style – is commodified...defined and calculated and sold for profit...in aesthetic markets, aesthetics are not something ‘added on’ as a decorative feature once a product has been defined; they are the product/s and as such are at the centre of economic calculations of the practice.*²¹

Central to an aesthetic economy (and fashion taste-making) are processes that establish value around certain aesthetic qualities, which provokes much debate around the objective or subjective nature of aesthetic judgments. Aesthetic values are associated with the visual perception of certain qualities such as colour, surface texture and form. However, the value of these qualities is negotiated through social processes within a particular culture, rather than debated as abstract notions of beauty. The changing perception of aesthetic qualities, especially in fashion makes establishing value of these qualities problematic and creates instability.²² Value production relies on recognisable practices that temporarily stabilise products and qualities; whilst steady, the value can be established. Herbert Blumer and Entwistle (amongst others) note that aesthetic value is formed through networked

collective selection.²³ Entwistle elaborates on a collective selection process describing the ‘circuits of value’ that are produced by and through the routine interactions of individuals and institutions embedded in that culture;²⁴ further she states “...fashion is a kind of assemblage... it arises out of the combination of human and non-human objects.”²⁵

In her research, she proposes the value of a model as an aesthetic commodity is stabilised season by season through a complex interplay of the model’s multiple relations. These converge through connections to particular photographers, model bookers, magazines and designers and are altered by the model’s location in certain cities and social media networks. Fashion communication professionals interviewed for this research also highlight examples of aesthetic value generated through their social, cultural and economic connections. When asked to describe how they measure the influence or success of their own work, the interviewees reported primarily through the reaction and response of others in their fields. Most respondents had quantitative measures such as ‘analytics,’ blog rankings, sales and visitor numbers that gave them a quick tally.

However, all described more qualitative gauges of success and influence that reflect a ‘network of taste’. For example:

...a nice way for us to see how we are influencing is when people approach us...and go ‘can I do a collaboration with you?’²⁶

I draw reassurance that what we are doing is influential by the new people and companies that are signing up for our services.²⁷

I would say that the caliber of contributors is a good way to measure – as long as we are working with good, world-class contributors like we have, I guess it’s a measure of our success and influence.²⁸

The fashion commentator is central to processes that stabilise and circulate aesthetic value, but they do not work alone. They identify new fashion propositions and focus our attention on particular objects or qualities providing a temporary anchor. However, for value to be assigned to these products or qualities they must be taken up or sponsored by others with influence or to put it another way an aesthetic commodity requires a process of “cultural valorisation”.²⁹ This perspective exposes fashion taste-making as a linking mechanism in the operations of an aesthetic economy, that is only able to take effect through connections and interactions with objects and others embedded within the culture. Value creation in an aesthetic economy is dependent on networks of people, processes and cultural calculations, as Patrick Aspers and Lise Skov note, “ fashion is directed by a series

of encounters and negotiations, rather than being the expression of a particularly powerful group.”³⁰

The aesthetic economy provides a contemporary position from which to understand the many layers of inter-connection in fashion. The perceived value of aesthetic qualities is constituted through the intertwined cultural and economic imperatives that are woven through every aspect in the systems of fashion. Fashion understood from this perspective flattens out the many multi-layered webs that form its systems and permit the fashion tastemaker to be seen within the connections that enable them to exert influence. However, the apparent web-like aspects of fashion’s current structure are also underpinned by well-established organising principles that have shaped fashion’s culture. Cultural conventions of fashion are discussed below, highlighting the role of fashion communication in building a sense of cohesion in fashion.

2.3 ORTHODOXIES OF FASHION

Fashion communication is a fundamental part of how the systems of fashion operate and has been instrumental in the construction of the orthodoxies or cultural conventions in fashion. This section explores the transformation of organisational devices and procedures, developed to manage the fashion industry into practices and beliefs that structure the field of fashion. Fashion communication remains a key site for generating and sustaining *traditions* in fashion – a way of connecting and binding a fashion community. Brian Moeran states,

one task of fashion magazines is to convert the agnostic... fashion is a product of social cooperation among those who form ‘a community of faith’, based on a collective belief...in haute couture and pret-a-porter. It is this faith that drives the fashion system.³¹

Moeran further notes that, “In all creative industries, people rely on established conventions to go about their work.”³² In fashion, these are focused around fashion’s process of change. Established patterns of evolution are maintained through the fashion calendar that signal significant moments of change. There is a collective belief in specific differences in fashion’s various segmentations or sub-categories of dressing, *Haute Couture*, *Pret-a-Porter*, *Resort* and *Street style*. Each is understood through a distinct discourse about the value and ‘specialness’ of garment types that is often more focused on immaterial constructions than material qualities. The orthodoxies of fashion have also constructed the sacred sites of the field, through the fashion capitals of New York, London, Milan, and Paris. A shared belief in the special

properties of these cities has created four separate spaces to promote certain attitudes to fashion, building contrasting discursive codes around each site. This set of underpinning ideas (the fashion calendar, distinct types of dressing and fashion cities) are maintained, promoted, adjusted and sustained by the fashion commentators and are ideas that are revisited throughout this thesis because of their significance and symbolic meaning to fashion. The commentators embody these ideas, as tastemakers, they are embedded in prescribed moments of change, they perceive and articulate differences in fashion market segments, and they respond appropriately to fashion's notable cities.

Through the fashion commentators' ongoing discourse, cultural conventions are normalised and offer a 'community' of fashion some stability through common communication practices and a sense of history. Aspers and Skov describe how a foundation of stability is created by conventions and by individuals sustaining certain identities within the 'market place.'³³ The language of fashion appeals to many as it is accessible and can be enjoyed without the investment or risk associated with adopting new fashion garments.³⁴ Fashion parlance is a way engage tacitly with fashion, whilst also creating a sense of shared knowledge, acting as a social tool for constructing collective meaning. Textual, discursive, and linguistic constructions of fashion are also an important element of fashion's representation, namely its particular and special ways of describing itself.³⁵

Of particular importance to the fashion community is the writing and commentary from those invited to review new ideas on the runways of New York, London, Milan, and Paris. 'Fashion-speak' or 'fashionese' are terms used to parody certain affected or obtuse language used by some fashion commentators.³⁶ The act of naming new ideas or experiences has been described as a way of bringing those things into reality, where naming functions to expand our world through the interpretation of experience.³⁷ In 'fashion-speak,' new words are often created to describe objects such as the portmanteau term 'furkenstocks' (fur lined Birkenstock sandals), while familiar words and phrases are reconfigured to take on fresh meaning, such as 'luxury boho' or 'neo nautical', creating what Moeran describes as "taste clusters."³⁸ Indeed, with contemporary fashion's rapid and continual pace of change, there is a need for descriptive terms to be constantly re-defined in relation to new clothing and changing themes.³⁹ The orthodoxies of fashion define and develop special ways of speaking and thinking for the fashion community, the fashion commentators' articulations assist in ensuring that fashion is equipped with the appropriate vocabulary to advance in step with new ideas and products.

The combined impact of developments in technology, globalisation and consumer interaction on fashion has affected many established beliefs; in particular making time (or more specifically speed) a pressure point. The consequences of technological advancements in communication and manufacturing, globally integrated supply chains and pro-active digitally connected fashion consumers has reduced delivery times and increased the availability of new products. This acceleration disrupts accepted patterns of change in fashion. The number of designer collections presented each year has increased. Most brands have added *Resort* and *Pre-fall* ranges to their annual Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter offerings ensuring an almost constant stream of new ideas for the fashion media, retailers and the fashion consuming public.

Many studies have examined the impact that fast fashion business models have had upon the operational processes of fashion manufacturing and consumer appetites.⁴⁰ Frederic Godart describes how the agile supply chains and production methods of fast fashion have led to "the continuous production of new styles and the multiplication of fashion seasons... with a focus on ever-renewed styles at very low costs."⁴¹ Subsequently innovation in the fashion supply chain, product management, marketing and retail activities, enables the fast-fashion sector to provide greater accessibility to designer 'inspired' products for a broader range of consumers.

From a consumer perspective, expectations of speed and access to fashion's material products are further heightened by delivery commitments of online retailers. Agnès Rocamora notes, "speed and rapidity of action and interaction are a regular trope of online fashion."⁴² She describes a contemporary preoccupation with speed and instantaneity in the circulation of material and symbolic goods in fashion enabled through digital capabilities. The reality of this acceleration, she describes as "new fashion time".⁴³ A process of endless circulation has supplanted the former process of supply and demand, which was punctuated by pauses. This has forced the orthodoxies of the field such as fashion's 'calendar' of change and its market sectors to evolve (or risk becoming redundant).

Such changes challenge established ideas of exclusivity in fashion and when seen in combination with greater online access to fashion information has provoked discussions about the democratisation of fashion. The disruptions have diminished many previous boundaries that restricted access to certain aspects of fashion, which has upset some and pleased others within the community of fashion. However, it is too simplistic to suggest that this adjustment has created a democracy in fashion.

Hierarchical structures are still a feature of the orthodoxies of fashion, for example, there is a common perception that significant sites underpin the value of global fashion. The designation of ‘fashion cities,’ such as Paris and London (and later Milan and New York), has created dominant hubs for fashion activities and locations of consumer focus in order to introduce new and emerging fashionable practices.⁴⁴ Godart describes the power of the four cities as “an oligarchic structure” that is rarely questioned.⁴⁵ He notes that the fashion city is a way of directing the public’s gaze towards a limited number of sites where fashion products are more easily recognised as legitimate.⁴⁶ Fashion absorbs meaning from the city’s broader cultural reputations, framed as romantic or inventive, for example. David Gilbert describes the complex interplay of factors that helped to establish and maintain the status of these first fashion cities, listing the interaction of numerous social and economic factors. He connects the urban consumer revolution in the eighteenth century, economic and symbolic European imperialism and America’s enthusiasm for fashion from Europe to the symbolic ranking of these cities especially within the fashion media.⁴⁷

With well-established hierarchies of fashion cities upheld in the orthodoxies, negative connotations persist for other locations. Discourses of fashion in the twentieth century helped tie certain locations to values, such as luxury. For example, ‘Made in Italy’ has been synonymous with high quality materials and craftsmanship, whether true or otherwise. Associations with other global locations are confused, complicated through connection to supply-chains and manufacturing or the use of these places as exotic backdrops to photo-shoots of luxury western fashion labels. Although the sacred fashion cities of Paris, London, New York and Milan still hold their positions in the global order, they are used to test alternative emerging cities that offer a new urban context for contemporary fashion. (The characteristics of new fashion world cities are discussed in detail in Chapter Five: *Mobilising Taste – Part II The Popular Discourse*.)

With fashion communication so central to the establishment of fashion’s orthodoxies, many of its practices have become enmeshed in the conventions that structure fashion. Magazines and newspaper columns that originally functioned as the official media voice have splintered into diverse, accessible and interactive formats; these require updating multiple times per day, in stark contrast to the previous monopoly of monthly ‘glossies’. Changes have cut across the entire fashion media environment, its institutions and audiences, as cross-media referencing and remediation of mass and new media have become common practice.⁴⁸ Despite the transformation of fashion’s communication channels into an inter-textual web of information with ever-expanding distribution networks, some conventions persist.

The fashion communication professionals interviewed for this research expressed a range of sentiments around the multi-channel fashion media within which they operate. Positive comments tended to focus on consumer benefits, summed up here,

*For consumers, it’s just this really wonderful melting pot of chat and constantly accessible. It’s always on and always in our pockets; we all have access to this industry that was once off limits.*⁴⁹

Respondents also expressed concerns around both the quantity and quality of media content,

*I think there are a lot of people saying the same things and for us there is a compulsion for us to have our voice out there about big stories... sometimes topics don’t need another perspective from another person talking about it, but you find something to say just to have (your) voice out there.*⁵⁰

*It’s certainly made prose or beautiful writing in the fashion industry defunct. I don’t think it’s conducive to great content.*⁵¹

The power of each media channel formerly relied on its ability to deliver content that addressed multiple audiences, made up of advertisers, consumers, fashion industry professionals and celebrities in the mass media era.⁵² This has changed, driven by digital media that now allows audiences to control and personalised content. Fashion media content has diverged, no longer offering publications with general material that has to speak to multiple audiences, but finding a range of ways to differentiate. There are now infinite perspectives on fashion as hybrid content – for example, fashion-art, fashion-celebrity, fashion-architecture, fashion-travel and fashion-food (examples in Figure 2.1). The spread of hybrid fashion content creates broader dispersed audiences, seeking expanded perspectives on the subject. This development also helps to drive divergence in the discursivity of fashion.

In an examination of *Instagram*, Lev Manovich notes a distinct hybridisation of cultural trends in the twenty-first century. He suggests that, because of the speed of information technology, “the cultural situations and sensibilities” that matter today are made of small differences or hybrids among already established positions, rather than significant shifts.⁵³ Indeed, themes of hybridity, composite constructions and intersections are returned to in this thesis specifically in Chapter Three: *Types of Fashion Taste-making* and Chapter Five: *Mobilising Taste – Part II The Popular Discourse*.

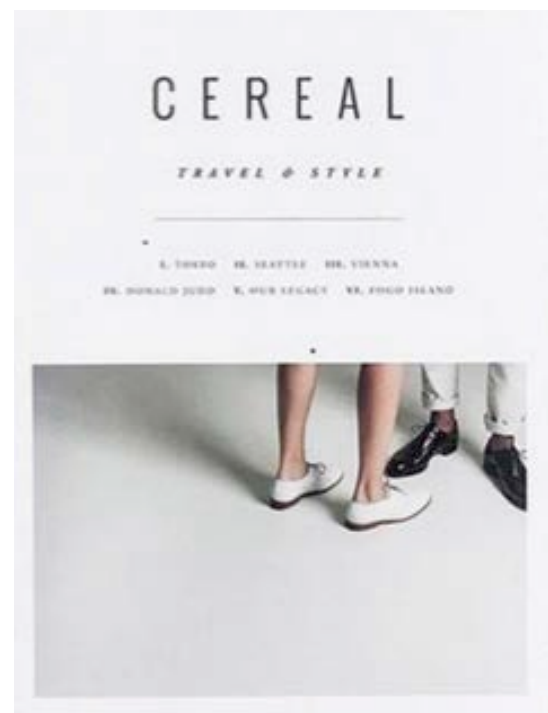


Figure 2.1

Hybrid Fashion Magazine
Covers: *Cereal: Travel and Style*, <https://readcereal.com/> (accessed August, 20, 2016); *Wallpaper: Design-Interiors-Fashion-Art-Lifestyle*, <http://www.wallpaper.com/> (accessed August, 20, 2016); *Kinfolk*, <https://kinfolk.com/> (accessed August, 20, 2016).



Through their close proximity to tangible aspects of fashion, for example, runway shows and product launches, fashion commentators are positioned to initiate, stabilise or renegotiate certain ways of talking about and acting towards objects and ideas in the rapidly moving fashion context. Fashion communication functions to distribute the subtleties of fashion's conventions and in so doing becomes a convention itself. As mentioned above, speed has become an important feature of fashion, however, there are varieties of spatial-temporal characteristics that are implicit in the cultural conventions of contemporary fashion; these are examined more closely below.

2.4 TIME AND SPACE IN FASHION TASTE-MAKING

The orthodoxies of fashion construct a particular way of understanding time and space in the continuity and change of fashion. However, there is a heightened relevance to these ideas for the fashion commentator. This section explores the notions of time and space in the conventions of fashion and how these shape the relational context of fashion taste-making.

As Jennifer Jones and Aurélie Van de Peer note, the unpredictable and transient nature of fashion has been 'grounded' and given a linear sequence through the way time and space have been configured within fashion.⁵⁴ For tastemakers in the fashion media, an important part of their role is as high-profile communicators on change; as such, their work expresses temporal judgments on 'what is right now' or 'of the moment'. Their views promote an understanding of the present (as fashionable) and its antithesis - the past (that which is passé). The distinction is a crucial classification for new fashion propositions; fashionable objects must always be 'up-to-date.' As Van de Peer states "Time is a powerful demarcating concept when discussing fashionable dress."⁵⁵

Fashion tastemakers are vital to the temporal systems that regulate the process of change. The focus of their activities publicises and promotes the established 'anchorage' of the fashion calendar (its seasons and weeks), whilst in addition designating their own temporal boundaries to distinguish fashion's present from its past. Their aesthetic judgments and use of descriptive language around time in fashion commentary reflects ambivalence and changeable positions towards notions of the past, present and future of fashion.

Fashion journalist Suzy Menkes employs such notions below:

There is always a moment when a fashion dies. The strapless dresses that have been prevalent since the phrase “red carpet” came into use for celebrity events suddenly look passé. They now seem like a louche and vulgar distortion of dressing up at what are supposed to be cultural events.⁵⁶

Looking to the future,

The show was Balenciaga’s version of workplace clothing for the 21st century. And from the service personnel at the entrance, in sweaters slashed with a graphic line, to the I.T department, in serviceable jumpsuits, the result was a faultless parade from a fantastic futurist.⁵⁷

One of the functions of a fashion tastemaker is to assist an orderly process of change in fashion, often employing the past to differentiate the future or the ‘new’ in fashion. Their commentary helps to connect new ideas of fashion with what has gone before, framing the shifts and changes as an evolution.⁵⁸ By describing how the new connects with the recent past enables change to be understandable, linear and rational rather than change for the sake of change. However, this creates a paradox; namely that the tastemaker must use the past to assist new fashion ideas to take shape, whilst at the same time rejecting the past to ensure fashion moves forward. The activities of the fashion commentator also concern aesthetic judgments about when and how to revisit the past. The history of fashion provides a rich source of inspiration for many in fashion.⁵⁹ Fashion commentators judge the use and appropriation of historical references in fashion as part of their role in designating ‘what is right now’. Their discernment requires a careful assessment of how notions of the past will be received by fashion consuming public – they may deem references to past fashion as ‘pastiche’ or ‘stuck in the past’ or alternatively may see them as a timely re-imagining of a certain era. The runway reviews below reflect such sentiments:

Vivienne Westwood called her Gold Label show “London.” Although she did not specify whether that was thinking of her golden days on the city’s cool Kings Road or the distant past, the invitation spelt out the message: a bank note featuring Queen Elizabeth I and another with the architect Christopher Wren. The result was a historian’s delight – a not-so-mad mix of a gilded picture-frame top with colour-splashed hose and platform shoes.⁶⁰

Alternatively, a less successful use of the past:

This season the theme was a 1950s high school prom, so the designers sent down the catwalk every sartorial signature of that era...the designers got all the codes right. But no matter how many bouffant-haired models wearing cats-eye glasses and stiletto heels they showed, this collection never made it past looking like a high school production of “Grease.”⁶¹

Time brings pressure and stress to bear on the fashion commentator too. There is a necessity for them to be in advance of their audience when judging new fashion propositions. It is one of the fashion tastemaker’s defining capabilities – the ability to discern the one from the many new ideas before a new direction becomes clear to others. Their aesthetic judgments become highly visible enactments of their credibility for their audience, as well as other tastemakers and fashion institutions, and as such have significant implications. Their discernments need to be articulated with confidence, despite the inevitable anxiety and self-doubt involved in being a first mover.

Taste-making actions require a sense of ‘ahead of time’ in their expression. For fashion commentators, this means writing about fashion of the future to inform their readers; however, they must write from a very particular temporal space for their readers and multiple audiences. If the reader considers himself or herself to be ‘up-to-date’, then the fashion tastemaker must be perceived as one-step ahead of them in order to write with more clarity of vision about the direction of new fashions than their audience.⁶² Therefore, the fashion commentator must sit in a very specific position relative to fashion time, situated in the contemporary time zone, but with an elevated view of fashion’s recent and sometimes more distant past. In addition, their position in the contemporary time zone is not that of just anyone interested in contemporary fashion; they are situated at the boundary of between the present and the future – with a foot in each camp.

The spatial situation is also important in understanding the influence of fashion commentators; their work assists in creating and legitimising sites of fashion. Many important fashion spaces are socially constructed, made up of symbolic and imaginary aspects as well as a range of physical factors.⁶³ Their close proximity to and familiarity with fashion cities or certain fashion sites often inform the commentator’s credibility. A tacit understanding of the location becomes pivotal – writing runway reviews from New York Fashion Week, for example, is informed and influenced by awareness of cultural practices and attitudes of that city. Further, the fashion commentator needs to be in the right place at the right time, witnessing fashion in the making.

For example, sitting front row at the last Alexander McQueen show before the designer's death infers immersion in the essence of his ideas, making the tastemaker's commentary from the show a compelling eyewitness statement. Of course, the commentator needs credibility and recognition to be admitted into the fashion 'hotspot' at just the right moment, further validating their position as a fashion tastemaker. Together location and commentator help to produce mutually enforcing circuits of value and kudos within fashion - cultural valorisation for all concerned. Crucially, it is the relational context that matters, so it is with *whom* and with *what* the fashion tastemaker is sharing the spatial location that assists in creating the conditions for fashion taste-making.

As noted above, fashion media has been complicit in creating and sustaining a hierarchy of fashion cities – New York, London, Milan and Paris are the 'sacred sites' of fashion.⁶⁴ Media discourse has helped to distill a cultural context within which to differentiate those cities and the fashion presented within them. The fashion cities have been constructed as spaces with particular architectural features and spatial layouts that provide unique locations for the purchase and performance of fashion.⁶⁵ The voices, language and images are edited to align with a symbolic and cultural construction of the cities. Images in Figure 2.2 provide examples of Shanghai, London and St Petersburg as stylish cosmopolitan fashion backdrops. The discourse around the city even contains a carefully constructed idealised model citizen of a particular fashion city, such as '*La Parisienne*' (the Parisian woman).⁶⁶ The power of these carefully constructed sites of legitimate fashion production is leveraged in labeling, branding, and marketing through association and across not only fashion, but also many other product categories including perfume and cosmetics (as illustrated in Figure 2.2).

Space in the systems of fashion is not only physical and geographical. There is a necessity for fashion tastemakers to be present in any location where new fashion ideas are emerging; in the contemporary context, this may well be digital space. Fashion's sacred cities continue to resonate, but technology has generated a range of virtual and globally dispersed fashion spaces within which the fashion tastemakers need to function. Freed from the printed page, the changing shape of communication channels within fashion mean contemporary fashion tastemakers express themselves on numerous digital platforms; however, these restrict the amount of words or space available for expression. Fashion commentators find themselves located within certain spatially and temporally limited contexts on the *Internet*. For example, evidence suggests that for readers to digest online content *Twitter* posts should be no longer than 140 characters, and blog posts no more than 1600 words.⁶⁷ Moreover, although many of these digital channels form a type of archive or thread of posts, with each new entry, previous ideas and expressions are pushed down the screen and out of sight.



Figure 2.2

Lady Dior Advertising Campaign (March 2010)
Steven Klein, Lady Dior Campaign, http://www.dior.com/couture/en_int (accessed July, 20 2016).

As one expert interviewed for this research noted,

...you have less space because the places you are saying it in are controlled and time-bound, if it's a blog with three posts a week it will be lost in a bit...you have 146 characters on Twitter or you have an Instagram feed in which people move through very fast...it just won't be seen. These channels have far reduced what you can say about things.⁶⁸

Another said,

...you need to dedicate a lot of time to those things – Twitter and Facebook, I guess you have to see multi-channel as a benefit. The drawback is just that it feels like you are doing the same piece of work four times. Not only are you writing it, you are reposting it and re-appropriating it and talking about it again and it's like, are we done with that one yet? ⁶⁹

If contemporary fashion tastemakers need to be located in spaces where new fashion ideas are emerging, then they must also ensure they are at the top of digital feeds and continually occupying space in on-screen browsers.

This section has outlined the evolving spatial and temporal conditions in relation to fashion taste-making. Within specific designations of fashion time, the fashion commentator needs to sit where the present bleeds into the future; from this position, they can also apply 20:20 hindsight to fashion's past. There are physical and symbolic locations that shape the spatial context of fashion taste-making. Certain geographical sites act as well established backdrops against which to set taste-making activities. However, the conditions for fashion taste-making require a spatial-temporal convergence creating the right place at the right time; a situation that attracts other people, objects and attention that have influence, a taste-making constellation.

Contemporary fashion tastemakers must position themselves as close as possible to the heart of the taste-making constellation where new fashionable tastes emerge. Significant spatial-temporal locations such as front row or backstage at international fashion week events allow contemporary fashion tastemakers to be just ahead of time. This chapter now examines international fashion week events as a locus for contemporary fashion taste-making.

2.5 FASHION WEEK AS LOCUS FOR TASTE-MAKING

Despite their changing relevance, international fashion week events remain predominant markers of the fashion calendar. Fashion weeks are examined here as a pivotal event for contemporary fashion taste-making; they present the ideal setting created through a potent combination of social, cultural and institutional relations. Originally established in the mid-nineteenth century in Paris as a means to coordinate the industry, there has and continues to be much debate around the purpose of fashion shows and these discussed later in this section. Nevertheless, the expense of showing at international fashion week events continues to be seen as a worthy investment for many in fashion. Indeed, even those outside of fashion have acknowledged the benefits that hosting an international fashion week can have on the cultural perception of a city, in terms of its 'soft power' influence, increased tourism and retail revenues.

Godart notes that fashion weeks "are (now) orientated towards image creation and marketing performance while earlier they were designed to introduce collections to clients."⁷⁰ Having evolved from in-store presentations, to trade fairs and promotional events, their role as a central institution of fashion provides opportunities to study "a 'sticky' institution that can be tracked over time."⁷¹ Indeed over the duration of this research, fashion weeks have responded to destabilising influences too, modifying fashion week traditions to incorporate 'live streaming' of events, for example. Described by Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora as "the field of fashion materialised", fashion week events capture the interplay of creativity and commerce in fashion as an aesthetic economy. However, fashion week events are of particular importance here as they expose key interactions in the taste-making process and delineate spatial-temporal imperatives.⁷²

Fashion week is a prestigious and valuable event produced by and through fashion's orthodoxies, played out in the beliefs, routines and practices of both individuals and institutions of fashion. In the orthodoxies of fashion, fashion time has established an understanding of fashion week as a naturally occurring event and part of the field's circadian rhythm. It signals that fashion is about to change. Lise Skov notes how trade fairs and fashion weeks are an essential mechanism for the social organisation of time and space in a globally dispersed industry such as fashion.⁷³ Skov (et al) argue that although these events constitute the staging of newness, they are in fact a technology for controlling newness, rather than producing it.⁷⁴ The events also provide a physical way of holding together the industry or community of fashion – containing and stabilising it temporarily. Entwistle and Rocamora describe how the fashion week environment is able to make visible the

boundaries, positions, habitus and hierarchies that underpin players in the field of fashion, a framework usually obscured as the actors are often scattered.⁷⁵ They draw together multiple micro enactments of various practices in fashion that take place across many sites and involve the negotiation of social, cultural and economic functions of the field. Not only are fashion weeks an enactment of the field of fashion they are also a celebration of it.⁷⁶

International fashion weeks construct the perfect spatial-temporal setting for fashion taste-making. Those invited to attend are given a privileged view of fashion of the future. The spatial conditions are perfected for fashion taste-making through extensive planning, cooperation and coordination to ensure culturally significant people converge on the one location at exactly the same time. This convergence of influential individuals from the field of fashion – models, designers, photographers, commentators acts to enfold all types of fashion tastemakers in one place at one time, a process that constructs further mutually beneficial and enforcing relations. Fashion tastemakers are drawn into an environment that allows them to engage in a range of symbolic work that will produce and communicate meaning.⁷⁷ Most industry interviewees describe their fascination with international fashion weeks as significant sites that frame fashion in particular ways, one notes

...if you think about geographic locations like Paris where Haute Couture is presented and nowhere else, that's an incredibly important site for fashion as its where you get the most experimental, innovative design without cost, fashion as idea, fashion as possibility...the London collections have the kind of edginess that the other collections don't. You look at ... London for a different level of innovation and ideas.⁷⁸

Inside the events, fashion week becomes a magical circle for the field of fashion – providing the perfect arena for building and reinforcing social, cultural and institutional networks. Enfolded within this exclusive environment, each actor and actant has the potential for transformational encounters. Fashion week events facilitate a mix of work and pleasure, with interactions and socialisation that blend business dealings with relationship building and information gathering.⁷⁹ Within this spatial-temporal setting, objects, opinions and preferences are aired in informal discussions and formal presentations. Each is shaped through social exchanges and interactions with those within this evaluation of new fashions.

Many scholars have noted how the simultaneous immersion in this particular environment impacts upon the 'collective tastes' or consensus that emerge in fashion. Herbert Blumer for example observes that:

Tastes are themselves a product of experience; they usually develop from an initial state of vagueness to a state of refinement and stability...They are formed in the context of social interaction, responding to the definitions and affirmations given by others. People thrown into areas of common interaction and having similar runs of experience develop common tastes.⁸⁰

Fashion week events construct the perfect opportunity for individuals of influence from within the aesthetic economy of fashion to stabilise certain new products and for their aesthetic value to be established. Communications from these occasions was previously much anticipated by the fashion community as the first glimpse of the future, however with these communications now undertaken with smart phones, social media updates and live streaming, no one has to wait. Individuals fully embedded in the milieu use their various modes of commentary from the events as real-time expressions of aesthetic discernment. This display begins the process of consideration and evaluation that will designate which aesthetic qualities takes on value and drive economic considerations (albeit temporarily).

Despite greater access enabled through digital capabilities, one's physical position within fashion week events is an important marker for fashion tastemakers. Skov (et al) describe the internal workings of these events as two performances encased in each other, with one staged on the runway and the other staged in the audience.⁸¹ The seating plans for fashion week events have been defined as a micro view of the social hierarchies of the entire field of fashion that reveal political or vested interests.⁸² The seating arrangements make evident particular relations; issues around those who do or do not belong are visible. The designers (and associated PR) staging runway presentation are able to make visible whom they consider the most powerful or influential at their shows. Strategic delays and pauses at runway events are also used as a way of denoting power, for example delaying the start of the presentation until a key audience member arrive and making guests queue to get in create opportunities to observe the performance of the audience. The front row seats become a mechanism of endorsement through peer acknowledgement.

Tastemakers are given the most advantageous positions to witness new fashion propositions emerge, as their words constitute peer review and feedback for the designers. Writing and commentary in the form of runway reports is an accepted method of communication (a convention) for the fashion community. The front row at runway presentations is a

good relational setting to perceive new objects and ideas; however, there are other vantage points such as speaking to designers backstage or invitations to their studios to preview the collections before the runway show. All of these positions during fashion week demonstrate being 'ahead of time' and provide vantage points from which fashion tastemakers can act early to identify particular new emerging ideas and products.

In acknowledging fashion week events as one of fashion's underpinning features, it is inevitable that the disruptive influences of technology, globalisation and consumer power should have been felt in this environment as elsewhere in fashion. The entire performance of fashion week from the construction of venues, movements of tastemakers and celebrities, abundance of street-style bloggers outside show venues through to the after-show parties have become a series of well-documented spectacles. Fashion week events have been transformed from industry showcases into entertainment for the broader public. Greater access to this formerly exclusive realm, which began with the admittance of certain fashion bloggers, has been extended through video and photo sharing from inside the events. This increased access has allowed consumers to feel more included in fashion and its associated celebrity culture, enhancing the appeal and 'newsworthy' value of such events. However, the speed and global reach of information technology combined with the power of consumer demands have created something of a crisis. These disruptions have over-turned fashion week's ability to act as a temporal stabilising device and created what some are calling 'the end of the old order.'

'New fashion time' and its characteristic immediacy are re-shaping the temporal conditions of fashion week events. Fashion week events in New York and London are adapting to meet demands of the consumer. Many designers are working to offer 'direct to consumer' or 'see now buy now' runway shows, which ensure that consumers who are excited by new products on the runway are able to buy them without the traditional six-month time delay before they are available. Other developments such as 'season less' collections and integrating menswear and women's wear into a single presentation are being taken to align the runway show more closely with consumer shopping habits.

As mentioned previously, some established designers are stepping away from fashion week presentations all together. This has created division in the powerful fashion oligarchy, with fashion week events in Paris and Milan unwilling to adjust to consumer demands. Some voices are proposing a different model, one that would separate the fashion business activities from consumer entertainment. Fashion buyers and fashion magazine editors would review new collections in show rooms or private appointments, allowing designers to receive feedback. The runway shows could then be staged for consumers closer to the release date of new products. All of the various permutations of the fashion week convention highlight the ongoing renegotiation and re-alignment of relations underway within fashion. Designers as well as other

industry players look for ways to satisfy their multiple audiences, whilst maintaining the interactions amongst their peers that help to establish new directions in fashion. Further disruptions have played out for the contemporary fashion tastemaker in the fashion week setting, through the re-configuring of social relations and the re-allocation of status positions.

International fashion week events provide a dynamic setting for new fashion tastemakers to be enfolded into the field of fashion. They are cultural events that offer a space for a type of 'official statement' announcing significant associations. The front row is an arena for the public display of new relations, as attested at the *Dior Haute Couture* show in January 2010. Paula Reed, who at the time was fashion editor for the British edition of *Grazia* magazine, tweeted the photograph below. She had been a front row fixture until this show, where she was asked to move to the second row to make room for a twelve-year-old fashion blogger (Tavi Gevinson) who *Dior* wished to seat in the front row. The picture (in Figure 2.3) was captioned "Dior through Tavi's pesky hat".

The fashion bloggers' exploitation of technology enables them to extend an instant global reach; this combined with a casual and personally engaging fashion commentary has differentiated their expressions from conventional fashion journalism. The rise of fashion bloggers as legitimate fashion commentators is dealt with specifically later in the thesis (in Chapter Four: *Mobilising Taste – Part I The Fashion Commentator*), however their disruptive presence in the relational context of fashion week is worth noting here. Despite the growing popularity of fashion blogs as an alternative source of fashion media with a young demographic, more established sections of the fashion industry were slow to acknowledge their contribution. Karl Lagerfeld provided the first public sign of fashion industry validation, when he invited a select group of bloggers to tour *Chanel's* Parisian ateliers in 2007. Blogging as a new stream of fashion media captured the fashion consuming public's attention before much industry validation; it was not until about 2010 that the fashion community began to value certain fashion blogs for their ability to connect and influence audiences no longer engaged by conventional fashion journalism. Monica Tilton describes the public endorsement and ensuing enhancement of the bloggers status, whilst noting the frictions that this shift created:

Their ascent can be traced from many directions and their attainment of status evidenced by their presence at runway shows during fashion weeks in Milan, Paris, London and New York. Since approximately 2010, the discussion around the legitimacy of fashion bloggers has grown into a theme of journalistic reporting particularly during fashion week, indicating not only the feeling of threat felt by established fashion media professionals but also the increasing influence of bloggers.⁸³

The introduction of new tastemakers at fashion week not only disrupts the selective and established field of fashion taste-making, but the entire fashion network. The front row provides a powerful context for nascent influencers to be presented and fashion week becomes a mechanism for evaluating their taste-making credentials. New types of fashion tastemakers bring new taste-making practices that do not reflect and reproduce the existing conventions; instead, they extend what are considered to be cultural practices, by introducing new approaches and activities at this crucial time. In the case of bloggers, they sit with laptops and smart phones posting comments and images in real-time from the front row, a practice that is now expected of all front row guests and a contributing factor in the fashion show evolving into a media event. Yet bloggers did not effect this change by themselves. Their admittance to the front row by certain designers demonstrates the broader co-operation required to enable transformation. Further, the changing preferences of fashion followers, who would rather get their fashion information from bloggers than buy a subscription to *Vogue*, are also complicit in driving this change. One fashion communication professional describes the converging influences that are informing and changing fashion's practices:

...the shift has changed to focus on the people coming and on the bloggers and the bloggers photographing people arriving, with the focus shifting from designers and the runways... we are self-centric, fixated on ourselves... and kids feeling like every moment should be recorded – that sense that there is a camera on all of us all the time.⁸⁴

Given the speed and multiplicity of modern communication channels and the number of presentations, the fashion commentator must have stamina to rapidly filter and process the array of fashion propositions, narrowing their view in order to act with confidence when confronted with the multitude of new possibilities in the fashion week context. Successful fashion commentators guide audience attention through their focus on selected objects, themes or ideas explicitly included in their expression. Fashion week provides a suitably challenging environment



Figure 2.3 Paula Reed, *Dior through Tavi's Pesky Hat* (January 2010) <http://jezebel.com/5456560/tempest-in-a-trilby-fashion-blogger-tavi-gevinsons-hated-hat> (accessed May, 24 2012).

in which to test taste-making abilities. The cultural significance of the event, the industry and institutional investment in the occasions and the broader exposure of the fashion week spectacle as entertainment ensures that there are many people anticipating the aesthetic discernments and communications by those privileged to be seated right at the very centre.

Certain technological developments and changing social relations have disturbed many of the regulating structures of fashion. The emergence of ‘direct to consumer’ runway shows and the willingness of fashion brands to accommodate consumer demands has certainly disrupted the role of the fashion tastemaker. Within the evolving contemporary context, the rapid circulation of endless newness in fashion has led to an abundance of products, events, entertainment, and media channels with more fashion information. In an arena that produces ever-increasing quantities of new ideas and propositions, fashion needs a filter. It needs discerning individuals embedded in the culture that will identify one from the many other possibilities and give choice a meaningful context. The activities of fashion tastemakers act as feedback and reassurance for fashion industry insiders as well as offering a guide to consumption for followers of fashion. Without the refining, classifying and stabilising activities of the contemporary fashion tastemaker, fashion would not be able to get traction and move forward. The contemporary fashion tastemaker acts as a compass; they make it possible for new fashionable tastes to emerge and find a direction to travel from the runway through to the subsequent and inter-related fashion taste-making phases.

This chapter has argued for fashion to be understood as an ‘aesthetic economy’, where the value of aesthetic properties are produced through negotiations and the interplay of objects, people, knowledge and practices particular to the field. Special ways of ‘thinking and doing’ in fashion have been described as orthodoxies or conventions in this chapter. These help to set out the conditions in which fashion tastemakers operate. The orthodoxies inform both the physical and symbolic understanding of garments, cities, events, time frames and communication practices. The conventions are evident at international fashion week events that construct spatial-temporal settings for fashion taste-making, through convergence of important players. Fashion week events provide the environment in which fashion’s new offerings, whether human or non-human, can be tested and classified. Underscoring each aspect of taste-making are the impacts of technological developments, globalisation and consumer power; factors that have forced reconsideration and re-shaping of fashion’s established practices and routines. However, these factors have enabled new voices, activities and perspectives to shape the field and remodel its conventions.

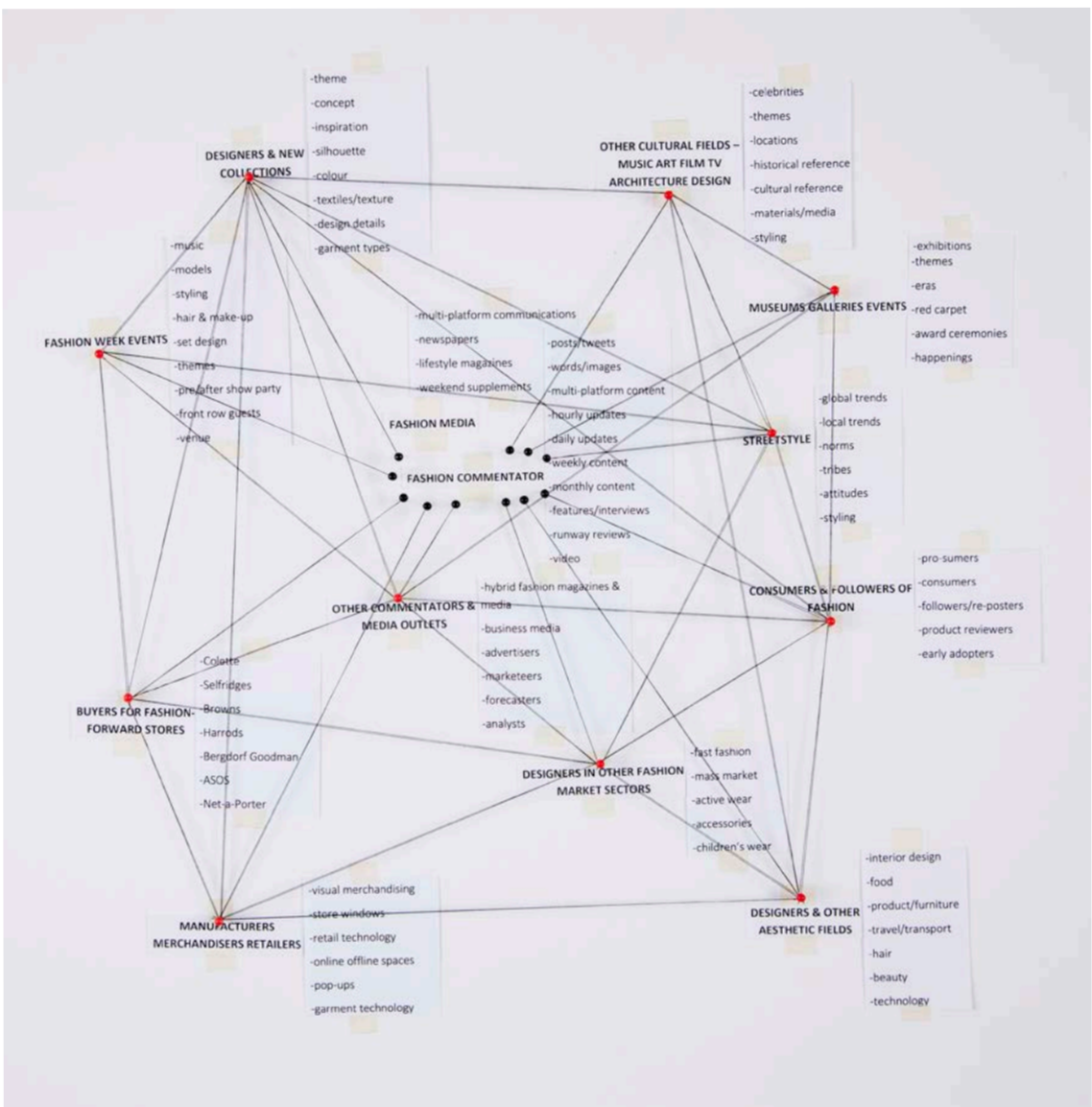


Figure 2.4. Rachel Matthews, *The Interconnections of Fashion Mapped around Fashion Commentators*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the networked conditions of contemporary fashion described in this chapter. The structure has been used to flatten the field of fashion to depict the multiple sectors that intersect and interact in the field. This diagram has positioned fashion commentators at the centre of the diagram (as the main focus of study), and the threads create the interconnections at work in fashion. The structure and focus can be adapted to examine the interactivity focused around other sectors, whilst keeping the visualisation of the field on one plane. Importantly, the diagram aims to move away from a hierarchical depiction of the field of fashion, evident in ‘trickle-down’ or ‘bubble-up’ conceptions of fashion.

The fashion commentator is integral to many of the underpinning processes of re-generation in fashion, sustaining it, whilst enabling it to change. The diagram (Figure 2.4) is a means of visualising the networked systems of contemporary fashion; here the systems are mapped around fashion commentators as the central focus of this research. The structure flattens former hierarchical representations of fashion, instead portraying fashion through its interconnected flows of knowledge, opinion and influence. This chapter highlights the relational nature of fashion that requires engagement and cooperation of many corresponding entities for its production. It has focused on one distinct yet crucial phase of the taste-making process, the fashion industry's structured approach to the "staging of newness."⁸⁵ This phase relies upon connections to the preceding phase where aesthetic objects and ideas are fed into fashion as well as the subsequent phases, where their aesthetic discernments are taken up, valorised, refined and moved on by interactions with a different range of people, systems and processes. The fashion taste-making process is constituted through a series of inter-related stages involving filtering, stabilising and classifying fashion objects, ideas and people.

The next chapter takes up the theme of connection and inter-reliance to provide a more detailed understanding of the distinctly interconnected nature of influence and taste-making. Taste-making is a complex process that allows a range of entities to take on special value – a process of transformation that does not happen unilaterally. The interactions of a broad group of fashion tastemakers and the influence of their differing approaches are explored in the next chapter. This analysis proposes a new set of definitions and meaningful classifications of taste-making activities better suited to the contemporary fashion context in the twenty-first century.

NOTES//CHAPTER 2

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CHAPTER 3 | TYPES AND TYPOLOGIES OF FASHION TASTE-MAKING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The fashionable personas and reputations of fashion tastemakers are often well documented; however, the specific nature of their influential activities is less clear. This chapter analyses and defines the activities of contemporary fashion tastemakers to understand how their influence is enacted and sustained in the rapidly changing world of fashion. The preceding chapters have established the relational context as a significant factor in the taste-making process, with Chapter Two describing the particular frameworks and conventions of fashion that shape and structure such contexts. This third chapter focuses specifically on taste-making activities, initially examining key actions in isolation before considering the vital interaction and cooperation that surround matters of taste. It begins the process of developing new definitions for contemporary fashion taste-making that enable a new appreciation of the subject.

In the field of fashion theory, there is a body of research concerned with the people that drive the cycle of fashion and assist in fashion's diffusion through society. The majority of these studies categorise these individuals of influence by their industry job title.¹ This approach to understanding the role of certain actors in fashion offers insight into the structure of fashion operations; however, the use of job titles has led to generalisations that obscure the more subtle relationships and activities of fashion taste-making. In addition, many job titles fail to reflect the changing nature and location of work in fashion in the twenty-first century.

This investigation proposes that by observing and categorising taste-making activities, rather than utilising the job titles of individuals, it is possible to gain a better understanding of contemporary fashion tastemakers. An alternative perspective provides a way of identifying both the paid and unpaid labour of the fashion tastemakers, as well as a gamut of practices that effect influence. The chapter argues for a new understanding of taste-making in fashion as a way to capture multiple taste-making actions that blur the distinctions between methods of influence. Here, a typology of fashion taste-making is developed as a useful apparatus to outline definitions and distinctions in these activities and as a means of updating taste-making terminology. From this viewpoint, a fresh perspective on the relational context of fashion taste-making becomes

visible, one that also tracks the changing manners of effecting influence in the digitally enhanced communication environment of contemporary fashion.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the current classifications of tastemakers in fashion and details the some of the ways in which fashion taste-making has changed. This forms the basis of the argument for new ways to identify fashion tastemakers and their taste work. Multiple fashion taste-making activities and their application in the current fashion context are then examined before a new framework for their categorisation is proposed. The typology of contemporary fashion taste-making functions as a flexible apparatus that extends the understanding of the taste-making process across various aspects of fashion. The chapter then applies these classifications to the practices of selected fashion journalists and fashion bloggers. This reveals how fashion commentators regularly combine and switch between taste-making methods to remain relevant in a range of situations. The typological framework is also applied to specific fashion discourses to identify significant individuals and different types of taste-making actions. The investigation reveals the multi-dimensional nature of taste-making recast in many forms in order to remain relevant to matters of taste, as well as the interdependence and cooperation that enlivens and animates the taste-making process.

3.2 FASHION TASTEMAKERS: OLD AND NEW

Various fashion tastemakers have been identified as pivotal within theories of fashion diffusion; these have been defined as intermediaries who interpret fashion for the public and influence the future direction of fashion.² The sociologist, Herbert Blumer, studied fashion diffusion in the 1960s. He identified fashion tastemakers as established figures in formal occupational roles such as magazine and newspaper fashion editors, department store buyers, and celebrities lauded for their sense of style. Pierre Bourdieu discusses these intermediary figures as individuals of a certain class who generate meaning and symbolic value around objects; and cites journalists, advertising and marketing strategists amongst them.³ At the end of the twentieth century, the sociologist Diana Crane, amongst other scholars, suggested that the new fashion tastemakers are select fashion designers, fashion forecasters, fashion editors, buyers, high-profile consumers such as movie stars and musicians, and conspicuous protagonists from youth subcultures.⁴ Crane's list signaled a shift to greater diversity in taste-making agents and a broadening of the channels through which taste is diffused.⁵

More recently, Jenny Lantz has listed fashion tastemakers as "magazine editors, photographers, stylists, buyers at fashion-orientated department stores and boutiques and even certain bloggers".⁶ She describes

this group as "cogs in the global trend machinery" and notes their contribution to the packaging, communication and diffusion of fashion.⁷

As noted previously, much of the writing about fashion in the twentieth-century describes a system made up of two halves—production and consumption— a perspective that required an endorsed industry spokesperson to mediate in order to function. This construction of the field of fashion is one in which tightly controlled channels of influence, filtered limited opinions through institutions of mass media such as fashion magazines and newspapers, or through shop windows of leading department stores. Only later did this conception of fashion expand to include subcultural influences from the street. The role of tastemaker has been predominantly assigned to a certain sector of people working within the fashion industry and identified through their job titles. This has created the perception of the powerful fashion tastemaker centrally controlling both domains.⁸ Amongst the most powerful and visible have been past and present high profile fashion 'bible' magazine editors for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* such as Diana Vreeland, Carmen Snow and Anna Wintour or buyers for influential fashion stores like Joan Burstein for *Browns* in London.

However, as discussed in Chapter Two, fashion systems of the twenty-first century are layered and increasingly decentralised, a change bought about in part by disruption due to digital developments in media and communications.⁹ The re-shaped systems of fashion are more diverse and support collaboration amongst a broad range of people including active and informed fashion consumers.¹⁰ However, as Marco Pedroni (amongst others) notes this does not mean that fashion operates in a democratic or dialogic media space; a hierarchy between 'media people' and 'ordinary people' still exists.¹¹ In the digital context, fashion commentators have evolved their methods and have found ways to use their status and communication skills to assist and engage a cross-section of sophisticated, non-passive consumers. This adjustment shifts the focus to a more "intersubjective nature of fashion production"¹² and highlights the cooperative operations of fashion that rely more heavily on interaction for renewal and evolution.

Further to these changes in fashion, technological developments and digital innovations have seen a re-structuring of labour in fashion. One outcome of this is the emergence of new and more ambiguous job titles (such as digital director / head of creative direction / chief people officer) encapsulating the slippage between former types of clearly defined work in fashion and new diffuse work practices. For these, there is no definitive job specification, and as with the contemporary fashion tastemaker, no formal career path exists; this compounds the limitations of defining tastemakers through formal job titles. Since the rise of certain 'superbloggers', discussions in the media have proposed ways for becoming an individual of influence in fashion through building large numbers of followers on *Instagram* or *Youtube Vlogging*.

These descriptions over-simplify the route to power and influence, but do draw attention to how the digital sphere is often reported as a space where opportunities abound and 'influencer' status is simply a matter of working at the "accumulation of capital through immaterial forms."¹³

While there are still many who work under the titles of fashion designers, buyers, journalists, and bloggers, only a selection of these truly operate as fashion tastemakers. To earn fashion tastemaker status, they must have the ability to make a difference; to move fashion forward; and to create an appetite for renewal and evolution in fashion. Fashion designers such as Pheobe Philo at *Celine*, Karl Lagerfeld at *Chanel* and Miuccia Prada at *Prada* and *Miu Miu* have had the tastemaker title conferred upon them for the way their ideas influence fashion. The position of the contemporary fashion tastemakers in today's fashion system is directly linked to their ability to garner 'attention rights.'¹⁴

In the current fashion media environment, all players compete for attention and a fashion tastemaker's visibility must be both earned and fiercely defended through an on-going demonstration of one's ability to discern the aesthetics of new styles, objects or themes. Added to this, the greater the display of one's knowledge and social connections, the more readily one's personal opinions are absorbed as a judgment of taste for one's social group. It is the individual's display of familiarity and connection with social and cultural status markers that assists in changing what appear to be personal preferences into expressions of taste. A special combination of knowledge, expertise, visibility, and abundant connections to socially significant people, events and information provide the perfect recipe for transforming the personal preferences of taste-making commentators' into expressions of taste for their community.

Through the expansion of media channels and appetites for fashion content, anyone involved with fashion can leverage their position to gain public visibility, a development that fashion tastemakers are able to exploit as part of maintaining the profile. Technology and the digitally interconnected fashion media allow active participants to maintain a flow of aesthetic discernments with accompanying images documenting their fashionable existence. Furthermore, fashion journalists who had formerly followed more journalistic conventions of removing themselves from their writing, now write in the first person not only locating them at the heart of the matter, but also sharing details of their domestic context. This modification of journalistic practices can be attributed to a remediation of successful working methods of fashion bloggers, or as a necessary up-dating of their writing style to better connect with their audience's preferences (or both). It is another adjustment in the practices of fashion tastemakers in a new communication paradigm.

A steady evolution in fashion taste-making activities has taken place, enabled by the innovations and expansions of fashion media and communications - from *Twitter* posts about designers' creative processes, to fashion films that launch new collections. However, despite the developments in taste-making practices, what remains constant is the significance of *who* is undertaking these activities. Actions, expressions and practices only become influential taste-making acts when performed by those deemed to have accrued certain legitimacy and credibility. The activities of fashion tastemakers have various functions, and in order for their activities to become a constitutive part of the taste-making process, their whole way of 'being' in the world needs to align with the cultural field within which they operate.

3.3 FASHION TASTE-MAKING ACTIVITIES

Identifying and categorising fashion tastemakers purely through job titles is an approach more befitting of an era when the inner workings of fashion were hidden from view. Today, the documentation of 'behind the scenes' activities has become a way to engage the general public with fashion. Access to the less 'glossy' and less glamorous workings of fashion has helped to soften the perception of industry insiders as elite connoisseurs. A more open fashion media has created recognisable celebrities of people who would previously have remained anonymous or at least low profile, such as Grace Coddington and Iris Apfel, whose personal and professional lives have become the subject of fashion documentaries. This trend has increased the emphasis on the performative abilities of all types of tastemakers including fashion commentators.

High profile fashion bloggers create visual documentation of their performances before, during and after international fashion weeks. They have been quick to recognise the premium of being 'visible' as a way to publicise their acceptance, whilst taking up further profile raising opportunities such as appearing as judges on television programs like *Project Runway* or else featuring in news programs as fashion experts. Even established fashion journalists are not immune to such profile enhancing opportunities and open their lives for public scrutiny.

Suzy Menkes auctioned her unwanted wardrobe items in a well-documented sale at Christie's auction house in July 2013. The auction was widely promoted in the fashion media by Menkes and reportedly made approximately 60,000GBP. Below is the description from the Christie's website,

*Suzy Menkes is an iconic fashion journalist who is held in the highest esteem by designers, models, fellow journalists and fashion followers around the globe. Comprising just over 90 lots, the collection features an inspiring array of dresses, coats, skirts, jackets and accessories by a cross spectrum of the most revered names in fashion from Ossie Clark and Emilio Pucci, to Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Lacroix. All the pieces highlight Suzy's beliefs that colour and pattern make every day joyous and that clothes are like friends: they have to complement your personality, your hopes and desires.*¹⁵

Fashion commentators are stepping in front of the lens, revealing themselves as a way to harness the power of celebrity status, sound-bite, photo opportunity, and performance for their taste-making arsenal. In this shifting environment, fashion tastemakers have become adept at multi-tasking. They are able to exhibit a range of cultural competencies that demonstrate their extensive skills and knowledge, and thus extending the ways in which they exert influence.

This tendency for individuals of influence to maintain their taste-making profile by enacting a range of culturally significant skills and knowledge is noted by journalist Cathy Horyn; she describes certain tastemakers as "today's generation of multi-hyphenate creative types" with "multi-layered careers."¹⁶ This shift is evident among celebrities who describe themselves as 'Model-Stylist-Fashion Designer.' For example, Alexa Chung describes herself as a Model-TV Presenter-Journalist-Designer-Ambassador and is able to morph from writing lifestyle articles for newspapers to designing women's wear for high street retailers. As a result, talent management agencies (such as the organisations that oversee engagements for celebrities) now represent and 'manage opportunities' for tastemakers to display and extend their 'taste work' to other areas.

Often this development can be a logical extension of abilities. For example, the fashion blogger *Man Repeller* (Leandre Medine) has built a reputation for wearing difficult, masculine fashion garments in a stylish way, this has created options for her to display her 'taste' through work with particular brands and styling fashion shoots. However, sometimes such opportunities are not such a good fit and lead to the alienation of the tastemaker's audience. Superblogger *Bryanboy* (Bryan Grey Yambao) has had many occasions where readers have taken issue

(and voiced their unhappiness) with his taste work, including his promotion of wearing fur.¹⁷ Although, causing outrage has become a distinctive feature of Yambao's online personae, he often delivers caustic comments in a camp and 'brattish' manner.

In this era of consumer power, many influential individuals procure opportunities because of their ability to engage a specific type of audience. Fashion commentators form relationships with their readers and their taste-making work is shaped through interaction with their audience, engaging with the instant feedback enabled through technology. However, fashion audiences have expectations that the commentators will alert them to the objects, ideas and people that are emerging as important in the field of fashion. The practices undertaken by fashion commentators to maintain and enhance their appeal are examined in detail in Chapter Four: *Mobilising Taste - Part I The Fashion Commentator*. This chapter is concerned with analysing and defining a broad range of fashion tastemakers

Contemporary fashion taste-making can be understood as a process of influence that is enacted and reinforced across a range of activities, people and products and not achieved by something held simply within objects or the subject. This chapter is concerned with the diversity of taste-making work undertaken by different groups of tastemakers; aesthetic discernments that inform fashionable taste come in a range of forms. Before further examining the networked production of influence, types of taste work are considered independently.

3.3.1 TYPES OF TASTEMAKERS

Taste-making actions take various forms; expressions of aesthetic discernments can be combined, packaged and presented in an assortment of ways. As this research works towards a clearer understanding of the fashion taste-making process, it becomes necessary to define the cultural activities and practices that are involved. This study has investigated the influence of fashion journalists and fashion bloggers as influential fashion commentators; however, in order to identify evolving methods of influence these individuals need to be situated within a broad fashion taste-making framework. This places their actions in a relational context, which has in turn generated a new set of descriptive terms to use for taste-making actions. Through this analysis of the activities of fashion tastemakers, five core tastemaker types have emerged that have been grouped under broad, flexible descriptors. These types have been developed to identify, simplify and order observations from the data for this research and to render diverse activities comparable.¹⁸

THE INNOVATOR /ORIGINATOR:

Fashion tastemakers who act as innovators / originators are essential to the taste-making process. They are individuals who generate a fresh starting point. The term is appropriate for fashion designers as active participants who innovate or originate new novel garments and objects around which fashionable taste operates. However, not all fashion designers generate ideas or material objects that are fresh or innovative enough to move fashion forward.¹⁹ This taste-making activity can therefore only be assigned to a very limited number of fashion designers. The term has other applications if the innovator/originator is understood more broadly as one who introduces a new thing or an alteration to something established such as a distinctive new silhouette or shoe shape. An innovator / originator could refer to one who proposes a change, or a new category, genre or method. Similarly, the term could be applied to a tastemaker who causes, provokes or sets change in-motion such as a model-celebrity initiating a new direction in eyebrow shape or hairstyle. This type of tastemaker is productive and generative – they make new or different things.

THE PERFORMER:

The model-celebrity would appear to be the ideal type of fashion tastemaker who acts as a performer to exert influence. However, in a media landscape where the world of fashion has become a source of popular entertainment, many types of influential individuals perform or enact their role to enhance their recognition and maintain visibility as tastemakers. The term 'performer' as a fashion tastemaker can be applied to one who plays a role in, or is central to public entertainment. For example, high profile fashion bloggers can be described as performers as they form the focus of the spectacle for photographers outside fashion week events. The term also encompasses those who carry out actions or exemplify culturally specific behaviours to demonstrate their aesthetic discernment. Performance as a taste-making activity is described by Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu as 'habitus', or the physical embodiment of cultural capital expressed in attitudes, mannerisms, skills and dispositions.²⁰ This type of tastemaker is active, animated and concerned with personal and bodily appearance – it is about the embodiment of taste.

THE COMMENTATOR:

The term 'commentator' can have a neutral interpretation, similar to a narrator or observer. However, when assigned to a specialist field such as political commentator or fashion commentator the emphasis shifts to infer a critic, analyst or pundit with expert knowledge in the field. 'Commentator' is a term for a tastemaker who exerts influence through explaining the significance or meaning of new ideas or changes within their field. The commentator makes clear 'that which is difficult or hard to see' or simply interprets or translates for others in a particular way. This type of tastemaker is talkative, eloquent and communicative – they make aesthetic discernments through words and language.

THE IMAGE-MAKER:

The image-maker exerts influence through visual means. Certain fashion photographers and fashion illustrators who influence fashionable taste through their depictions would certainly be included under this heading. The term image-maker is also appropriate for stylists and art directors whose creative compositions can inform aesthetic preferences in fashion. The image-maker includes fashion tastemakers who create possible images of the future or who describe objects (and other entities) visually, graphically or vividly. This type of tastemaker is visionary, imaginative and engaged in aesthetic representations – they make visual expressions of new taste.

THE SELECTOR:

The fashion tastemaker defined as a selector uses sorting, picking or singling out as a manner of influence. The term 'selector' is used interchangeably with 'buyer' in certain parts of the fashion industry. This term is an appropriate taste-making descriptor for buyers for high profile fashion stores as well as editors and model bookers who select and then present a refined range of items. It is a category that can be applied to those who have the ability to make a difference 'in' or 'between'. The selector perceives or recognizes the difference; they are able to distinguish and articulate difference through expert knowledge. This type of tastemaker is particular, exacting and discriminating – they influence fashionable taste through editing and segregating.

3.4 FASHIONING A TYPOLOGY OF TASTE-MAKING

Each type of tastemaker outlined above has a particular manner of material expression for their aesthetic judgments. The innovator, the performer, the commentator, the image-maker and the selector each propose ideas of fashionable taste in contrasting ways, producing objects, behaviours, messages, images and assortments through their taste-making practices. This has simplified the field, which is in fact a realm of influence constituted through a range of interacting taste-making actors and 'actants.' Despite the attempt above to define the dimensions of taste-making, actual activities do not always fit into neat categories. The connections of human and non-human entities create various slippages between material expressions of taste and their origins or authors; these form types of hybrid classifications. For example, if a performer is photographed or filmed as part of their taste-making activities (as many celebrities are), is this fashion taste-making produced by the performer or the image-maker? Both are reliant on each other for the expression of their aesthetic discernment. Moeran notes a similar inter-reliance. "The fashion show and the fashion press have long been rivals over which produces the images that define fashion."²¹ Another example is the influence of the taste-making image-maker whose actions are projected through the composition and framing of their visual expressions. The activity is grounded in either expert editing or the inclusion of one element whilst excluding another. So, is the act of aesthetic discernment here in the selection (inclusion-exclusion), or in the image-making or both? Many taste-making activities are reliant on more than one process to take effect. These multi-dimensional qualities of fashion taste-making are examined in more detail below as a typology of fashion taste-making is developed.

Within the contemporary fashion context, taste-making functions as a practice that seeks to make differences and distinctions apparent. Methods of inclusion-exclusion, 'consider this one, not that one' or classifications of old and new, work to make these clear. Concurrently, there is a blurring of distinctions around the working practices of the fashion tastemaker. A new typology of fashion taste-making is developed below; this builds an analytical frame to better understanding the shifting and overlapping practices of tastemakers.

'Typology' is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as,

*The study of classes with common characteristics; classification, especially of human products, behaviour, characteristics, etc., according to type; the comparative analysis of structural or other characteristics; a classification or analysis of this kind.*²²

A typology is an analytical tool regularly used in the social sciences. It is an organising device, and helps in the creation of systems or structures that gives a basic sense of orientation towards a concept.²³ A typology of fashion taste-making is developed here to assist in the conceptual understanding of activities of fashion tastemakers that moves beyond the use of (out-dated) job titles to explain methods of influence. In areas of scientific or quantitative research, typologies are often seen purely as a measuring apparatus, and as such have been the subject of criticism for their potential to simplify complex and multi-dimensional objects of study. However, as noted by David Collier, Jody LaPort and Jason Seawright, a well-constructed typology can be used to enhance qualitative research and help to map out the variations of the concept being examined.²⁴

*(Typologies) make crucial contributions to diverse analytic tasks: forming and refining concepts, drawing out underlying dimensions, creating categories for classification and measurement, and sorting cases.*²⁵

The groups of fashion tastemakers defined above – the innovator/originator, the performer, the commentator, the image-maker and the selector – form the categorical variables around which the typology is based. This typology (see Figure 3.1 below) is designed to be conceptual or descriptive, and in doing so brings insight into a range of actions that can be considered to be fashion taste-making activities. The structure of the typology maps out categories, and then outlines their defining attributes before proposing a form of measurement of the phenomena. Creating this type of apparatus plays a role in the material production of meaning of the concept; however, it is important to note that this apparatus is not neutral.²⁶

| TYPOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY FASHION TASTE-MAKING | | |
|---|---|--|
| Type of taste-making activity | Characteristics | Example of tastemakers and tastes made |
| Innovator / Originator: | <p>One who:</p> <p>Introduces a new thing or an alteration to something established</p> <p>Proposes a change, a new product, new process or method</p> <p>Causes, provokes or sets change in-motion</p> | <p>Tastemaker – Pheobe Philo Celine / Taste: Furkenstocks (fur lined shoes and sandals)</p> <p>Tastemaker – Miuccia Prada / Taste: Ugly Chic as a fashion aesthetic</p> <p>Tastemaker – Scott Schuman / Taste: New genre of fashion photography (street-style photography)</p> |
| Performer: | <p>One who:</p> <p>Plays a role in public entertainment</p> <p>Embodies a particular personae</p> <p>Carries out or performs an action in a specified manner</p> | <p>Tastemaker – Kate Moss / Taste: Heroin Chic</p> <p>Tastemaker – Bryanboy / Taste: How to wear fur collars and sunglasses</p> |
| Commentator: | <p>One who:</p> <p>Explains the significance or meaning</p> <p>Explains that which is difficult or obscure</p> <p>Comments or interprets or translates in a particular way</p> | <p>Tastemaker – Lisa Armstrong / Taste: “Investment” fashion purchase</p> <p>Tastemaker – Man Repeller / Taste: Making masculine / difficult trends easy to wear (and fashionable)</p> |
| Image-maker: | <p>One who:</p> <p>Creates possible images of the future</p> <p>Describes something visually, graphically or vividly</p> | <p>Tastemaker – Katy England / Taste: Real people as models</p> <p>Tastemaker – Nick Knight / Taste: Fashion film – moving fashion images</p> |
| Selector: | <p>One who:</p> <p>Has ability to make or constitute a difference in or between</p> <p>Perceives or recognizes the difference, and is able to distinguish difference (through expert knowledge)</p> | <p>Tastemaker – Anna Wintour / Taste: Endorsement of Marc Jacobs AND Celebrities on magazine covers</p> <p>Tastemaker – Colette (Sarah Lerfel) / Taste: Repetto sunglasses</p> |

A typology utilises the physical arrangement of elements to give meaning to a concept and as with any type of categorising device, the choice of categories will shape the construction of the observations they enable.²⁷ It is a classifying device for the different dimensions of fashion taste-making, through this certain dimensions are made visible. It is also an apparatus that has the potential to be repurposed and applied to map out other phenomena or practices. The typology creates particular groups, marking differences across a broad range of activities. It enables the concept of contemporary fashion taste-making to be studied in greater depth through comparative analysis.

The use of typologies in academic research on fashion is notably in areas of consumer behaviour and fashion marketing, although there are some useful examples in fashion design.²⁸ In the area of influence on fashions and fashionable taste a more casual approach has taken hold. Various fashion media channels regularly publish ‘listicles’ or articles based on a list of their top ten individuals of influence that have little discussion of selection methods. The ‘listicles’ usually contain an array of the latest models, celebrities and highly visible designers, with their influence quantified through their social media following or their connections to other celebrities and influencers.

There is however one fashion media platform that has begun to create a more substantial apparatus through which to understand individuals of influence in the fashion industry. *The Business of Fashion* launched the *BOF500* in autumn 2013, describing it as “a live, visual index of the 500 people shaping the global fashion industry, curated by the editors of *The Business of Fashion* and social media.”²⁹ Imran Amed, *The Business of Fashion*’s founder is keen to emphasise that it is different from the ‘listicles’ approach of a basic ranking, rather it is a way of tracing the activities and evolution of the fashion industry’s top performing individuals in real time.³⁰ It was developed as a ‘professional resource’ for industry insiders, as well as a site of information for those aspiring to work in fashion.

Figure 3.1

Typology of Contemporary
Fashion Taste-making

The broad categories or types used by the BOF 500 are a mixture of job titles and improvised terms. The 500 are grouped under: Designers / Executives / Retailers / Models & Muses / The Creative Class (stylists, make-up artists, photographers and art directors) / Media / Catalysts (a diverse set of entrepreneurs, investors, collaborators, educators and mentors). For each entry there is a sub-heading that locates the individual more specifically in each category, for example in the ‘Executive’ section further job titles such as ‘Vice President’, ‘Chief Executive’ or ‘Founder’ are used. Each category is without internal rankings so there is no apparent hierarchy, however the compilers of *BOF500* have marked selected individuals as ‘Legends’, ‘Trailblazers’ or ‘Upstarts’ adding some detail as to the nature of influence exerted by these selected individuals upon the contemporary fashion environment.

As previously noted, any apparatus cannot be entirely neutral and the same is true with *BOF500*. Not only are the preferences and subjectivities of the compilers embedded in the concept, those included are both legitimised and by return help to legitimise the platform as a 'professional industry resource.' In almost all cases, those included have already been endorsed by and enfolded into the fashion industry. Nevertheless, the concept of 'people who shape the global fashion industry' as documented in the *BOF500* makes a useful addition to contemporary data on fashion taste-making and the classifications used in *BOF500* provide another set of distinctions through which to understand influential activities. Its creators do not note the interplay or overlap of the categories in the *BOF500* project; however, it is an issue that resonates with this examination of fashion taste-making practices. The categories provoke questions about the criteria used to classify as well as notions of hybridity and transversal activities described earlier in this chapter. For example, the Photographers and Art Directors who are grouped in the 'Creative Class' would also form part of the 'Media' group; and what criteria is used to distinguish between Founders and Investors in the 'Executive' classification versus Founders and Investors in the 'Catalyst' group? The new typology of fashion taste-making developed in this research has been designed with a degree of flexibility in an effort to accommodate the pluralism in contemporary taste-making practices.

The methodological approach of this research is underpinned by discourse analysis. The typology of contemporary fashion taste-making, as proposed here, attempts to classify modes of aesthetic discernment that construct discourses about contemporary fashion. As described in the methodology, it utilises a particular understanding of discourse (and discourse analysis) proposed by Michel Foucault and built on by Stuart Hall (1997), Jonathan Potter (2004) and Linda Graham (2005) amongst others. Discourse does not close down or define its own the limits, nor does it restrict those who are able to contribute to the discourse, but rather it promotes an open-endedness that allows for the unexpected. Importantly this approach promotes flexibility, resulting in a framework that is able to embrace on-going changes and adjustments to practices and players in the field.

This research argues that fashion tastemakers have multi-layered careers that require them to evolve their aesthetic discernments depending on the time and place. In addition, the manner or material expression of their initial discernments may be repurposed and distributed in a range of different forms. The typology accommodates a plural or multi-stage approach to taste-making by using hyphenated classifications. For example, this study takes as its focus certain selected fashion journalists and fashion bloggers. These tastemakers can generally be categorised as commentators, but through analysis of their taste-making activities, they could be described as commentator-selector or commentator-

performer. These hyphenated descriptors can also be re-formed and re-ordered to track changes in the actions of fashion tastemakers at different times and in different contexts. The flexibly re-configured classifications can be used to identify both the changing behaviours of fashion tastemakers and the shifting material expressions their taste judgments may take. The necessary versatility built into the typology of taste-making reflects the agility and multiple capabilities through which these individuals exert influence on contemporary fashion. The typology is applied to the numerous practices of multi-skilled tastemakers who can be broadly categorised as commentators in the next section.

3.5 FASHIONING A DISCOURSE OF TASTE-MAKING

As described above, the fashion commentator is talkative, eloquent and communicative – they make aesthetic discernments through words and language. The fashion commentators are key figures within fashion's language community as well as the larger community of fashion tastemakers. A 'language community' is a group of people who share a common language (or dialect) and expectations about language use that creates collective understanding.³¹ The sharing of fashion language circulates through the fashion media; it is a space where fashion generates language and words and gives rise to discourse. However, it is more than words and language that sustains the fashion community and the dominant discourses of fashion.

The high-profile fashion journalists are at once 'commentators' and 'selectors'. They are commentators through the nature of their aesthetic discernments and they are selectors through the discriminating inclusions and exclusions of ideas and objects filtered through their writing. The fashion journalist's written expressions could also classify them as innovators/ originators, as tastemakers who cause, provoke or set change in-motion. In their written expressions, they are often credited with being the first to use a new fashion term that then becomes embedded in fashion's lexicon. For example, Carmen Snow (editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, 1934–1958) provided the fashion world with the term 'New Look' to encapsulate *Christian Dior's* influential collection in 1947.³² The influential fashion journalist is also nowadays a performer. The media surveillance of every aspect of fashion week events from backstage interviews to front row appearances has ensured that the fashion journalist is no longer only known purely through their writing, but also as an animated tastemaker concerned with personal and bodily appearance. Although their performance may not be the explicit illustration of 'how to do' fashionable taste that some performers present, it has become important that their embodiment as a fashion tastemaker is performed or bought to life for all media channels.

The high-profile fashion blogger can be understood as both a 'commentator' and 'performer' in the production of their blogs. Their persona is central to the blog content and plays out through discussion and performance of their public identity. Indeed, fashion blogs have been described as "perpetual performances" through their recurring theme of self-portrait or self-depiction.³³ The inclusion of selected self-portraits and life-style shots could also qualify the fashion blogger as an 'image-maker'. When the fashion blogger posts comments from the front row of fashion week events, they, like the fashion journalists, become both 'commentator' and 'selector' as their written expressions necessitate forms of discernment leading to inclusions and exclusions of specific objects and ideas. Although fashion blogging has become assimilated into the field of fashion to some degree, there was a point in recent history where fashion bloggers should have been classified as innovators/originators for their introduction of new material expressions of fashionable taste. The successful early fashion bloggers bought a significant new contribution to the practices of fashion media and communication, initiating an original process through which fashion taste-making can be undertaken.

Both types of fashion commentator have taken up and exerted influence on the actions of the other. Agnès Rocamora describes this mutual influence or remediation as "a process whereby both new and old media represent and refashion each other."³⁴ There are a number of clear crossovers where fashion bloggers re-post images and information from fashion magazines and fashion media channels. At the same time, print media and institutional fashion channels use blog content and quotes as well as including fashion bloggers in images and articles. Mutual influence (or the borrowing of certain practices), is not simply mimicking, rather it is an appropriation of fashion practices by both parties. The use of these features can be seen as an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of each by the other and an invigoration of fashion's cultural practices. There has been a shift in the writing of fashion journalists, with a softening of their former producer/creator perspective that informed their readers about 'insider information.' Revealing more about themselves and adopting more user-orientated writing styles has positioned journalists as offering a first person perspective rather than at a slightly aloof distance. The reflective passage below written by fashion journalist Suzy Menkes, could almost have been taken from her diary,

*I had always felt that in both Europe and America, the link between fashion and art grew from a frustration that fine art and architecture can be forever, while fashion is essentially fleeting. With so many collections – now up to 10 a year – how much more must designers feel theirs is as insubstantial as a passing butterfly?*³⁵

Fashion bloggers continue to use a mix of familiar fashion tropes such as key trends, runway reports and 'how to get the look' formats that are taken straight from the pages of fashion magazines. They create their visuals using recognised modeling stances and the 'flat-lay' of fashion products to give their images a distinct fashion media signature, ensuring cultural recognition of their discernments. Below, fashion blogger *Bryanboy* dutifully describes one traditional fashion media practice for his readers,

*I rushed backstage to greet Marc Jacobs after his spectacular spring/summer 2012 show. Like clockwork, it's a personal ritual of mine to greet and congratulate the designer after his show... I like to listen to him give a quick interview and sound bytes, feel the fabrics of the clothes on the racks and then take as many photos of the collection as possible.*³⁶

Ida Engholm and Erik Hansen-Hansen argue that fashion blogs have advanced this assimilation in contemporary fashion media. They note that,

*the fashion blog has become an integrated part of the cultural circulation of fashion, joining an ever more complex system of crossovers and cross-references between platforms.*³⁷

In examining the broader taste-making environment, the collision of established fashion journalists and fashion bloggers in the arena of fashion commentary has created a new energy in techniques of influence. The frictions have pushed fashion media and communications to take up new practices, recognise other influential attributes and include a greater diversity of voices. Despite their differences, the aesthetic judgments of both now contribute to popular and dominant discourses of fashion.

Fashion commentators interpret and translate new ideas for the community of fashion through the "culturally available rhetorics of aesthetic judgment"³⁸. In other words, they work with culturally recognisable manners of expression to create a framework of meaning around new fashion ideas – whether journalist or blogger. Existing notions of fashion are referenced to evaluate new objects and ideas, so the discourse of fashion is not free-floating. Discursive statements refer to familiar marks of identification from which the production of meaning and value can begin. Foucault explains that statements of a discourse must have something to which they refer (a referent) such as a subject (or producer), an associated field (or other domains that statements exist within) and a materiality (or means through which it can be expressed).³⁹ The referents and their associated fields become

inter-discursive or pre-discursive content anchoring the new discourse, but also allowing the discourses of fashion to be more expansive. The process actively draws on other people, ideas, fields and perspectives to enliven the fashion discourse. For example:

Cathy Horyn connects fashion with an economic discourse,

*...with the economy entering what appears to be a long stew, Mr Kors's sporty American glamour seems highly bankable.*⁴⁰

Susie Lau connects fashion with a cinematic discourse,

*Broadwalk Empire freaks and anyone into the delicate aesthetics of Picnic at hanging Rock (who isn't, lets face it...) would have oohed and ahed a fair bit with the abundance of dropped waists, delicate embroidery and aged chiffons and silks.*⁴¹

Suzy Menkes connects fashion with an historical discourse,

*Who would have thought that the flower children could have grown up so gracefully?*⁴²

Leandre Medine connects fashion with a childhood discourse,

*...the bright pink suede overalls and corresponding bomber jacket vividly reminded onlookers of the power Barbie once held...*⁴³

The commentators use these methods to give the discourse multi-dimensional and interconnected characteristics. These techniques open their aesthetic discernments up to greater engagement and interpretation through links to other fields and forms. The various referents provide hooks in the fashion discourse to interlock with other taste-making activities. For example, the inter-discursive referent may provide an inspirational theme for a taste-making photographer or may be used in the styling of celebrity performers.

As Susanne Schulz states, the use of cultural rhetoric benefits both the commentator and the community. The rhetoric helps to drive a collective interpretation of new objects and ideas as symbols of fashion, and the cultural capital of the speaker is reflected in their ability to evaluate 'the fashionable' in culturally appropriate ways.⁴⁴ Further, Moeran notes the subtle mixture of language employed in much discourse of discernment in fashion magazines,

*...(fashion commentators) find a way of drawing your attention to a qualitative judgment by pointing out, or merely mentioning, non-evaluative, but easily discernable features in an item of dress.*⁴⁵

Despite the new dimensions to taste-making in the digitally enabled twenty-first century, fashion commentating continues to reference culturally established communication practices. The commentators use culturally recognisable, but reworked 'turns of phrase.' These not only anchor the dominant discourse, they provides loopholes, hooks and opportunities for dialogue and interaction to begin with other types of tastemakers performing other types of taste-making. Discursive statements create possibilities for numerous active agents to energise and enliven the new taste propositions. However, the discursive nature of taste-making is not the only characteristic to provide ways to invigorate these various influential activities, types of taste-making feature a variety of characteristics.

The diagram below (Figure 3.2) depicts an alternative, yet complimentary set of interacting categories that inform and animate the taste-making process. It provides an additional way of analysing some of the complexities of contemporary fashion taste-making. A number of these characteristics have already been discussed in the thesis, such as the discursive and relational nature of taste-making. Other aspects have only been touched upon, such as its subjective quality, which is evident in the aesthetic discernments of fashion bloggers, but which also underpins the taste judgments of others. The performative, material and cultural properties of taste that are more readily identified often occupy a central position in analysis of the topic. However, as with the categories of the typology discussed above, these elements are not self-sufficient. They are interdependent and contingent co-created by a range of active agents and flexibly re-configured in the contemporary fashion context. Despite discourse being the predominant point of entry for analysis here, it is important to recognise the constant interplay of the other characteristics in this investigation into fashion taste-making.

The following section examines the inter-connection of tastemakers and taste-making activities in the shaping of fashionable taste.

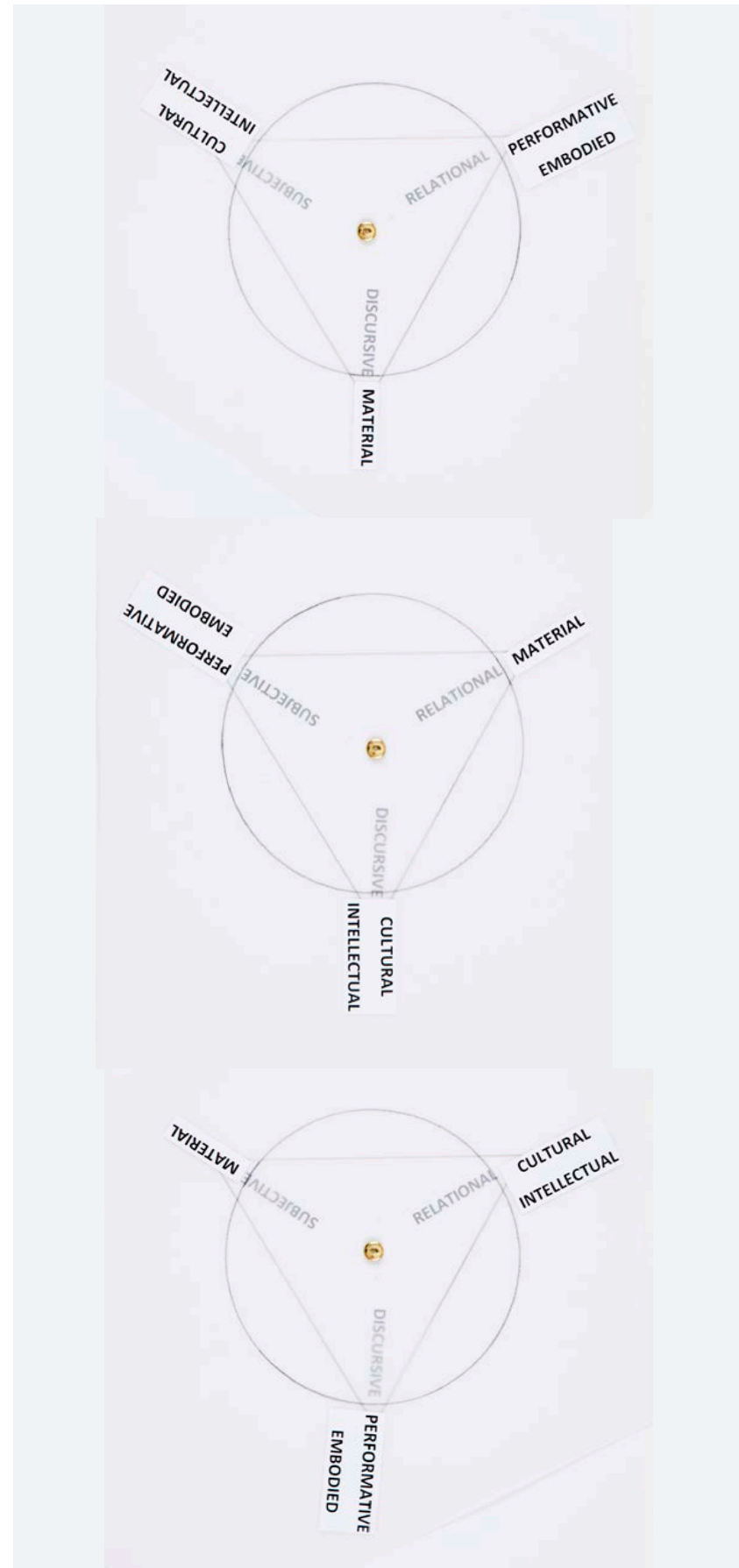


Figure 3.2

Rachel Matthews,
*The Complimentary
Characteristics of Fashion
Taste-making*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed to visualise various interchangeable and complimentary characteristics made evident through the development of the typology of fashion taste-making. The first layer (triangle) is formed of three categories: discursive, subjective and relational. These form a consistent base for all classifications of taste-making in the typology. The second layer (circle) is adaptable and is formed of three additional categories: material, cultural/intellectual and performative/embodied. This layer has been designed to pivot, allowing the characteristics of fashion taste-making activities to be configured differently. For example, some taste-making activities may construct relational aspects using material products of fashion or by highlighting a cultural relationship, just as discursivity in taste-making may be performed / embodied or formed through a cultural / intellectual discussion.

The structure of the diagram is designed to depict the consistent categories observed in fashion taste-making, whilst providing a sense of the variable characteristics that are also at work across this field.

3.6 TASTE-MAKING THROUGH INTERACTION AND INTER-RELIANCE

The typology of fashion taste-making proposed in this chapter has offered a way to understand the different dimensions of taste-making practices. By shifting the definitions of fashion tastemakers from their job titles to their actions, it has been possible to see how the individuals of influence are skilled at borrowing and blending new influential activities with established practices. The classifications of the typology expose a range of material expressions made by tastemakers that rely on the activities of others to take shape as aesthetic discernment. In a competitive multi-channel fashion media environment, fashion tastemakers are attuned to the benefits that other fashion tastemakers can offer in transposing and amplifying their messages. These opportunities see the expression of fashionable taste by the fashion commentators re-shaped through other types of taste-making to become discernments that support and extend their authority.

The influence of the contemporary fashion tastemaker and the authority of their aesthetic expressions appear to be increasingly determined by the relational network in which they are situated. This interdependence makes it difficult to perceive taste-making acts in isolation. Howard Becker's investigation of the art world undertaken in the 1980s attempted to unpack similarly interdependent relations in the production of works of fine art. His research makes it evident that the production of art requires elaborate forms of cooperation among specialised personnel.⁴⁶ In consideration of this, perhaps it is useful to see the contemporary fashion tastemaker as a 'dividual' of influence instead of an individual of influence. The concept of a 'dividual' proposes that of a person as divisible and divided among a society or community. It is an idea that sits in contrast to the dominant western concept of individuality as a bounded, indivisible, unique and self-determining unit. The dividual gains a sense of identity through shared relations with others, whether family, peers or community. McKim Marriott talks about this concept in relation to the traditions of South Asian Hindu communities, where the dividual must be subservient to a range of material influences, whilst also giving out their own active influences.⁴⁷ The dividual cannot be seen as separate or singular, but is always part of something else. As such the dividual is never alone, but always in negotiation or production through their relations.

To situate the idea in a more contemporary context, curator Joshua Simon describes the production of knowledge in an online world in similar terms. He argues that within the digital space there is often no clear ownership of knowledge and subjective positions that are created and spread amongst a shared networked community.⁴⁸

The concept of dividual also connects with the assemblage formulated in *Actor Network Theory* (ANT) where each element is understood through its connections and agency on the other elements. These concepts allow taste-making to be considered as a convergence, an intermingling of people, activities, objects and expressions and not something easily attributed to just one person. This research recognises that fashion tastemakers operate within a context where it is necessary to absorb a range of influences from others whilst emitting influences their own. The typology is designed to better understand the components and contributions that come together in such convergences. Below (and detailed in Figure 3.3) the categories of the typology are used to analyse a discursive formation, a discursive formation that has become evident in fashion during the last couple of years. It is used here to demonstrate the application of the categories defined in the typology. The examination of a recent discourse about gender neutrality and fluidity in fashion reveals a range of active and interactive agents involved in its production.

3.6.1 A DISCOURSE OF GENDER NEUTRALITY-GENDER FLUIDITY

Analysis of a discourse on gender fluidity in fashion here, illustrates the inter-dependence of fashion taste-making carried across a range of activities. As noted above, identifying the statement that initiated the discourse is difficult (certain elements began to emerge during 2013); however central to this fashion discourse are two transgender models – Hari Nef and Andreja Pejic. Using the categories of the typology, they can be seen as ‘originators’ (being the first transgender models to walk international fashion week runways). In this role, they are also ‘performers’ of gender fluidity and both have since become ‘commentators’ through their multiple fashion media interviews and their own social media posts. However, it is the designers who sought a gender-neutral aesthetic for their collections that have sponsored their profile and given them a legitimate platform to generate visibility in fashion.

Fashion brands such as *Comme des Garçons*, and designers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier and Rick Owens have long played with ideas of gender and androgyny, while more recently labels such as *Rad Hourani* and *Nicopanda* have defined themselves as gender-neutral. Nevertheless, it is the endorsement of the discourse by larger fashion brands such as *Gucci*, *Louis Vuitton* and *JW Anderson* that has raised the profile of gender-fluidity in fashion. These brands have made previous distinctions of masculinity and femininity appear out-dated by combining mens and womenswear looks in a single runway presentation, and by selecting

a collection of seemingly gender-neutral models for the runway and advertising campaigns.

It is important to note that the contemporary discourse seeks to differentiate itself from existing ideas of gender play in fashion and dress such as unisex, women dressing in their boyfriend’s clothes or even ‘normcore.’ Contemporary ideas of gender-neutrality (or non-binary fashion), are part of a more emotive discourse that is less about particular styles and more concerned with diversity, dressing without the judgment of others and acceptance. Taste-making image-makers such as photographer Steven Meisel and stylist Nicola Formichetti have been engaged in its aesthetic representations. So too has influential ‘selector’ Franca Sozzani (the now deceased) editor of *Vogue Italia*, who was a long-time collaborator with Steven Meisel. London department store *Selfridges* made a significant material addition to the discourse. In March 2015, Linda Hewson (*Selfridge’s* creative director) commissioned Faye Toogood (Stylist and designer) to create a temporary gender-neutral shopping experience in-store. This translated the discourse into something tangible for consumers and endorsed the fashion labels that it stocked.

Fashion commentators have been part of the discourse too. Writers for *Dazed and Confused* and *Vice*, as well as bloggers Susie Lau, Leandre Medine and Tavi Gevinson have been quick to talk about and play with ideas of gender fluidity in fashion and personal styling. The discourse has been slower to unfold in the statements from established fashion media institutions such as *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. Suzy Menkes wrote an article specifically addressing gender-neutrality in contemporary fashion for *Vogue.co.uk* in January 2016, although she had noted it as a street style theme of fashion-obsessed youth in Seoul in 2015. In addition, celebrity ‘performers’ such as Caitlyn (Bruce) Jenner, Miley Cyrus and David Bowie have been drawn into this discursive formation that has become a strong theme in contemporary fashion.

| CONTEMPORARY FASHION TASTE-MAKING – GENDER NEUTRALITY/GENDER FLUID FASHION | | |
|---|--|---|
| Type of taste -making activity | Characteristics | Tastemakers and tastes made |
| Innovator / Originator: | One who: Introduces a new thing or an alteration to something established Proposes a change, a new product, new process or method Causes, provokes or sets change in-motion | Tastemaker – Hari Nef Taste: Transgender models (male to female to male) on runway for international fashion labels. Tastemaker – Rad Hourani, Hood by Air,Telfar Taste: Fashion brands defined as gender neutral |
| Performer: | One who: Plays a role in public entertainment Embodies a particular personae Carries out or performs an action in a specified manner | Tastemaker – Hari Nef, Andreja Pejic, Laith Ashley Taste: Gender fluidity in fashion models Tastemaker – Street style stars in Seoul Korea Taste: His and hers Twin-dressing - Male and femaile pairs identical outfits |
| Commentator: | One who: Explains the significance or meaning Explains that which is difficult or obscure Comments or interprets or translates in a particular way | Tastemaker – Jayden Smith, Caitlyn Jenner Taste: Acceptance of personal style, as individual statement based on ‘being yourself’ Tastemaker – Man Repeller, Tavi Gevinson / Taste: Using/ playing with fashion as a form of gender equality statement. |
| Image-maker: | One who: Creates possible images of the future Describes something visually, graphically or vividly | Tastemaker – Steven Meisel, David LaChapelle, Bruce Webber Taste: Fashion photography using gender fluid, trans gender models. Tastemaker – Nicola Formichetti Taste: Gender fluid punk styling |
| Selector: | One who: Has ability to make or constitute a difference in or between Perceives or recognizes the difference, and is able to distinguish difference (<i>through expert knowledge</i>) | Tastemaker – IMG modeling agency / Taste: Particular type of transgender neutrality in contempory fashion. Tastemaker – Selfridges (Linda Hewson)/ Taste: Genderless shopping experience (as different from gender assigned shopping experience) |

In the production of material expressions of fashionable taste, questions of authorship or ownership arise because multiple activities are required in its production and endorsement. The necessary inter-reliance of model, designer, stylist, celebrity, writer, photographer, magazine editor and retailer to execute their primary type of taste-making work is evident. However, as Schulz explains fashion is a self-validating concept, it cannot be judged objectively on technical qualities, so the only proof of its existence is in its acceptance by a collection of others.⁴⁹ Fashionable taste demands the sponsorship and validation of multiple fashion tastemakers as a form of verification. As the new idea is taken up and interpreted through different types of taste-making activities, it begins to find its shape – in objects and things; as a behaviour or performance; in words, perspectives and communication; in depictions and visual representations; and in its difference to what had come before.

This chapter has put forward a way to view the work of contemporary fashion tastemakers through the classification of their activities. Motivated by a need to have more relevant and contemporary ways to describe these individuals of influence, this study argues for an alternative nomenclature for the fashion tastemaker that is no longer tied to industry job titles. Through the development of types and their application in a typology, deeper insight into their actions has been revealed. This analysis shows taste-making is not a static or prescribed process, rather it is a dynamic, multi-dimensional and engaging activity that incrementally moves, morphs and transforms fashionable taste. It has produced a typology of fashion taste-making as a way of sorting, ordering and presenting diverse activities. In line with the research questions, it begins to make evident the processes that transform taste.

Figure 3.3

A Typology of Taste-making
developed from Gender
Fluid Discourse

The subsequent chapters in the thesis explore the mechanisms that mobilise taste, variously examining people, practices and published expressions that drive movement. The next chapter scrutinises the perpetual movements of fashion commentators that function to reflexively re-position them as tastemakers, but that also propels fashionable taste along particular pathways. Regardless of the cooperative group work required in the production of fashionable taste, the significance of singularity remains a crucial factor in fashionable taste. The research may have exposed the ‘dividual’ inter-reliant characteristics in the taste-making process; however, fashion tastemakers need to preserve their profile and reputation as unique individuals so they and their particular perspectives on fashion can be readily identified. The role of the fashion tastemaker demands a singular and unique persona, like fashion itself, they must negotiate issues of collectivity and individuality to be successful.

NOTES//CHAPTER 3

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CHAPTER 4 | MOBILISING TASTE – PART I THE FASHION COMMENTATOR

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Fashionable taste transforms and evolves; it is always in a constant state of becoming with multiple taste-making entities creating its driving force. This chapter is the first of three chapters to explore mechanisms that mobilise taste - presenting taste-making as an activity that creates movement and unsettles the status quo. It examines the embodied and performative practices of the fashion tastemaker with particular focus on actions that allow them to find new taste-making ground and refresh their credentials. Their various forms of reflexive activities can be understood as reinvention and re-positioning strategies. The chapter charts the career paths of ten influential fashion commentators as they accumulate status, taste-making reputations and re-enforce their perceived legitimacy. It uses comparative case study analysis and ANT techniques to examine trajectories of selected fashion journalists and bloggers (see Appendix 1 for case study data). These are careers built on cooperation and collaboration with others, yet also cement the tastemakers' position and distinctive profile in the field. It provides a contemporary snapshot of how new settings and locations for the production of taste begins to emerge enabled, embodied and performed through actions of fashion tastemakers.

The position of the contemporary fashion tastemaker is not certain, fixed or stable. It is situated in a rapidly shifting environment, with many willing to challenge for a place in such an exclusive club. Monica Tilton notes, there has been a "meteoric rise of fashion and street style bloggers, ranging from unknown authors of new forms of Web-based, fashion-related publications to notable intermediary agents in the social order of the fashion system" and their emergence can be traced from many directions.¹ The chapter begins by exploring the approaches employed by fashion tastemakers to ensure they remain a dynamic and authoritative force on fashionable taste, capable of defending their position. Using case study analysis of ten fashion commentators, it investigates how these individuals navigate new environments when seeking to extend spheres of influence.

Sustaining a tastemaker's profile requires multiple small adjustments and additions that accumulate over time; these not only produce a credible track record, but also enhance the taste-making setting in

which they operate. In this chapter, these changes have been tracked and charted to elucidate their accumulated movements. The discussion then conceptualises the individual tastemaker within three structures that feature in much academic analysis of influence – the community of taste, the networked society and the assemblage of association. This lays out three dynamic and interactive systems of mobilisation, through which taste can travel. Each environment has a differing infrastructure that enables influence to circulate, and indicates where taste-making individuals are located in such systems. The examination identifies how the fashion commentators use their embodied (taste-making) self in the constitution of systems that propel fashionable taste through structured social groups. The chapter forms the first of three that explore how taste is able to move – here the evolution of taste is mobilised through human agency, personal characteristics and social practices.

4.2 INFLUENCE CREEP

The contemporary fashion tastemaker, like many high-profile individuals needs to manage their profile actively. Their taste-making credentials rely on a continued development and expansion of their role; an intrinsic part of a tastemaker's professional development described here as 'influence creep'. Key to the fashion tastemaker's survival is the establishment of a special reputation (or distinctive position) that ensures their perspective on fashion is perceived as unique and valuable. It provides a means of differentiation from other fashion commentators and creates a persona that is difficult to copy by other would-be tastemakers. In the fashion media environment where many voices compete for attention, they must stand for something. They must voice opinions that articulate their particular perspective and define their difference, although their profile must simultaneously align with the legacy of fashion commentators who have previously left their mark on fashion writing. They follow in the footsteps of much quoted figures such as Diana Vreeland, Carmen Snow and Colin McDowell, whilst also constructing a position as distinct from contemporary actors competing for attention. Their acknowledgement of others in their field, both past and present, allows the fashion commentator to personify their discourse and to display the attributes we expect from such individuals.² Their reputation is reinforced and retold when the words of these fashion tastemakers are quoted, re-posted and referenced as a way of contextualising their remarks. For example:

Leandra Medine (fashion blogger *Man Repeller*): her quotes are often preceded by her description as, "The American fashion blogger and author who has won a loyal following for her humorous, witty observations on 'serious' fashion."³

Vanessa Friedman (fashion journalist for *The New York Times* and

previously at *The Financial Times*) defined as, "...widely acclaimed for her direct and pragmatic approach to the industry, as well as her incisive commentary on the socio-political ramifications of the role of fashion in today's society."⁴

Cathy Horyn (fashion journalist for *The New York Times* and *The Cut* magazine) described as, "The highly respected critic and fashion authority that provoked the ire of several high profile designers with her honest reviews for The New York Times."⁵

Certain fashion commentators develop particular physical markers or stylistic quirks to assist in their visual recognition, thus distinguishing themselves in the crowds at fashion events. There are reports that Suzy Menkes, who for decades has worn her hair in a style reminiscent of 'Madam de Pompadour' has been given the nickname 'Samurai Suzy' by colleagues in the fashion media not only for her distinctive hairstyle, but also because of her frankness and preference for fashion 'maximalism.'⁶ So a particular position, mark of distinction and reputation gives the tastemaker a foundation on which to build; however, they need to ensure a continual accretion of taste-making capabilities to elevate and reinforce this position.

Each aesthetic discernment needs to add to their influential reputation and each judgment is re-enforced by their reputation – a self-supporting loop that becomes an on-going performance. The performance is staged by seeking out opportunities that allow new objects, themes, people and environments to become props for their taste-making work.⁷ Pierre Bourdieu describes this type of activity required in accumulating capital as a process of "cultivation"⁸ or "the labor of inculcation,"⁹ it requires a personal investment of time and sacrifice for "self-improvement."¹⁰ This is manifest in the purposeful development of self for contemporary tastemakers and inflects their discernments and dispositions. These cultivated forms of self, extend more particular or eclectic commentary of fashion and style, for example, 'quirky and kitsch' Susie Lau (*Style Bubble* blogger), 'eclectic odd-ball' Leandre Medine (*Man Repeller* blogger), contextualised in historical references by 'wise' Suzy Menkes (*Vogue* journalist) or fashion industry knowledge by 'business savvy' Cathy Horyn (*New York Times* journalist). For fashion tastemakers to differentiate themselves in such a climate they must seek new, undiscovered locations, fields and people through which to distinguish their taste-making expressions. These moves keep their readers engaged and demonstrate the fashion tastemakers necessary characteristic of being 'ahead of time,' in front of the pack, connected with 'the new' and so able to indicate the incipient direction of new tastes.

In this research the operations of selected fashion journalists and fashion bloggers (included in Figure 4.1) have been analysed over a period of time, in doing this, it has been possible to observe distinct patterns each group have utilised in the growing and securing of their special profiles.



Figure 4.1

Selected fashion commentators analysed in the thesis

The fashion journalists tracked for this study are (top row): Lisa Armstrong (*The Telegraph*, UK and *British Vogue*), Suzy Menkes (*Vogue*, formerly *International Herald Tribune*), Vanessa Friedman (*The New York Times*, formerly *Financial Times*, UK), Susannah Frankel (*Grazia* and *Another Magazine*, formerly *The Independent*), and Cathy Horyn (*The New York Times*, *The Cut* and *T Magazine*).

The fashion bloggers tracked are (bottom row): Susie Lau (*Style Bubble*), Bryan Grey Yambao (*Bryanboy*), Leandra Medine (*Man Repeller*), Tavi Gevinson (formerly *Style Rookie*) and Jennine Jacobs (formerly *The Coveted*).

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Fashion journalists (as commentators) have developed their practice to maximise their intellectual capabilities and highlight certain key skills and experience. This is a strategy for putting themselves at the centre of their taste-making work without resorting to physically dressing up and talking about it (as bloggers do). It is also a method that implies authority without overtly expressing it in their writing, demonstrating insight and expert knowledge. The approach connects with journalistic traditions of education, analysis and intelligent information gathering; it emphasises their officially recognised institutional capital. Fashion journalists emphasise skills of in-depth research, as well as utilising a variety of reporting and content styles, not only in their fashion commentary but also in substantial publishing activities such as writing and editing monographs, novels and exhibition catalogues. Accumulation of expertise in this area allows them to undertake a particular form of fashion taste-making. Aesthetic discernments gain legitimacy through greater contextualisation and references to other fields of knowledge. The journalists' taste judgments are often formed at a fashion intersection, where fashion overlaps with fields such as business, history, health and body image and high and popular culture. As described in Chapter Three, their statements often contain referents that readily interlock with other fields allowing the influence creep.

The fashion journalist meaningfully articulates their taste judgments on a broad range of topics, issues and events. This creates opportunities to produce content that may be reported more seriously than 'mere' fashion in areas of the media. It is a type of taste-making that can use broad cultural and intellectual perspectives to introduce other topics through fashion. Through this educated and cultural approach, themes and ideas expressed as fashion are able to be connected with bigger social shifts or issues – giving fashion more gravitas and making meaningful connections between things that appear to be unrelated or independent.¹¹ This is one manner of 'influence creep' used by fashion commentators; it purposely builds on the professional roots of journalism, emphasising a profession or career path underpinned with training, education and timeserving in the field.

4.2.1 PATTERNS OF LEGITIMISATION – JOURNALISTS

Suzy Menkes epitomises the way in which this group of fashion commentators has undertaken purposeful development of ‘self’ and invested time in accruing capital that allows them to write from a distinctive position.

Suzy Menkes is endowed with what Bourdieu has termed “institutionalised cultural capital”¹²; that is, she possesses conventional and academically sanctioned qualifications. She studied English Literature at Cambridge University and during her career, she has been awarded an *OBE*, a *Chevalier of Legion d’Honneur*, an honorary degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and an honorary doctorate from Central St Martins in London. Bourdieu notes the “performative magic”¹³ that institutions give to this form of capital; they offer a guarantee and a direct way of measuring and comparing holders of such capital.¹⁴

Menkes also demonstrates, what Bourdieu states is the best measure of cultural capital, ‘labor-time’ or time spent acquiring the capital. She has worked as a fashion journalist/writer for more than four decades, working for *The Times* and *The Independent* in the UK before moving to the *International Herald Tribune* in 1988. Menkes remained at the *International Herald Tribune* until 2014, when she moved to *Vogue* to become a “critic and reporter on *Vogue*’s websites across the world.”¹⁵ Throughout her career she has spent time on the process of ‘cultivation’ and invested in ‘the labor of inculcation’ by writing a series of books on fashion that focus on designer monographs and the sartorial choices of Royalty (where she is able to display her extensive knowledge of British history and matters of royal etiquette). Suzy Menkes has also been able to position herself in the field of luxury by chairing an annual conference on the topic (see Figure 4.2 below) and in so doing demonstrates expertise in the many expressions of luxury in the contemporary context – from jewellery, travel, fine dining and hotels, through to wine, watches and technology.

The so-called ‘superbloggers’ also move their position towards areas where they find an over-lap with fashion such as beauty, travel and food. In contrast to fashion journalists, selected fashion bloggers have leveraged their creative characteristics to extend their taste-making profile. Many bloggers have risen to prominence and popularity through their personal takes on fashionable taste, packaged and presented in a humorous, camp or conversational manner. In contrast to the conventions of fashion journalism, there is no fixed way of ‘doing’ a fashion blog. Evolving as part of the new digital communications

Figure 4.2

Suzy Menkes Chairing
Condé Nast Future
Luxury Conference

www.cnluxury.com/
(accessed June, 24,
2016).



frontier, the bloggers have more opportunity to change and adapt their taste-making activities.¹⁶ They have built their taste-making capital via alternative pathways. These are the sorts of pursuits that appear to be innate to – or associated with – artistic, creative personality types, such as acting, presenting or designing.

The fashion bloggers use ‘lifestyle’ as their frame, rather than the cultural views of fashion adopted by fashion journalists, and extend their taste-making influence to depict individual fulfillment.¹⁷ Their influence creep develops from the foundations of their fashion taste-making success – their personal voice, individualistic appearance and easily understood messages – the perfect combination of contemporary communication skills. They have embraced opportunities in creative writing, acting, styling, performing in the media, and demonstrating skills in engaging and entertaining audiences. They are commentators who are able to capitalise on a fluid notion of identity, because unlike some more established areas of fashion media, in the blogosphere one’s persona changes with one’s outfit.¹⁸

The variety of activities allows the bloggers to extend their distinctive worldview via other means of expression; they provide a representation of meaning as well as an enactment of the meaning in these new fields.¹⁹ Through influence creep, readers see the blogger’s attitude played out in music, on television shows or theatre, for example. Many bloggers’ approach to their discussion of new fashionable objects and ideas is in the form of a reassuring ‘how to do it’ voice, offering a relatable consumer-perspective and advice. The bloggers are able to adjust the spectacle they provide for readers by becoming producers of creative products and no longer just offering user-orientated commentary.

In tracing the movements of successful fashion bloggers through the duration of this research, it has become apparent that these individuals have become creative professionals running unique media businesses, built on a personal brand that highlights the credibility of their taste-making credentials. Because of the ways the early bloggers have evolved their operations, some have described them as “in the midst of an identity crisis.”²⁰ However, from a taste-making perspective, the ‘superbloggers’ who have gained acceptance into the fashion tastemakers group are now members of this elite club. Once inside, they become part of the collective management of its operations and help to shape its terms of admittance. They are able to modify how the group defines itself, by re-negotiating the limits of legitimate exchanges and practices of the group.²¹

4.2.2 PATTERNS OF LEGITIMISATION – BLOGGERS

Tavi Gevinson provides an example of an alternative pathway to achieving and accruing taste-making capital. Born in 1996, Tavi began a personal style blog, *Style Rookie*, in 2008 from her bedroom in Illinois, USA. Her blog contained commentary on the latest designer collections and photos of her own personal style choices, which drew a readership of over 30,000 per day. The photographs of Tavi’s self-fashioning displayed her possession of the properties of cultural capital linked to the body as ‘embodied cultural capital’²²; a sophisticated disposition to fashion that is rare in one so young. Tavi’s ‘embodied capital’ had scarcity value and drew the attention of some within the fashion industry. ‘Embodied cultural capital’ is clearly important to the field of fashion and has additional value as a form of capital as it “manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition”²³ in the display of desired goods.

However, this form of cultural capital does not come with the official recognition and guarantees of institutionalised capital. As such, self-taught taste-making competencies and capital are constantly required to prove themselves and Gevinson has done just that. Since her acknowledgement by the fashion industry in 2009 when she was invited to attend Paris fashion week, she has featured in many fashion magazines – as cover girl, model, writer and guest editor. She continued to write her blog until 2011 when she launched another on-line project *The Rookie* and supplemented it with annual print editions. *The Rookie* is a publishing project with less specific focus on fashion and more broadly examines issues concerning young women and pop culture topics. *The Rookie* drew one million page views in its first six days and has provided a way for Gevinson to accrue social capital. As editor / publisher, she has been able to invite a raft of cult celebrities

such as Lena Dunham (actress / writer / producer), John Hamm (actor) and John Walters (film maker) to be guest writers. It has provided a vehicle through which Gevinson has been able to accumulate a network of connections with ‘people worth knowing’ – well known people who themselves are connected to people with social capital. The work of socialising or ‘labour time’ spent accruing social capital is highly productive. Social capital is extended through mutual acquaintances and acknowledgements. It exerts a “multiplier effect.”²⁴ Gevinson has cultivated her embodied and social capital through a range of activities including film roles, acting, singing and voiceover work, she has been involved in design collaborations, public speaking and advertising campaigns alongside her own publishing projects. Her influence is acknowledged through her inclusion in “The 25 Most Influential Teens of 2014” by *Time* magazine. At just 20 years old, the cultural capital of Tavi Gevinson is lacking in ‘labour time’ (or time spent acquiring her cultural capital) as a way to measure its value; however, she has demonstrated stamina in her ability to prove its relevance repeatedly across a range of taste-making activities.

Since fashion bloggers were first admitted to fashion week events (in 2009), there have been many comparative examinations of bloggers and fashion journalists.²⁵ The bloggers path to prominence bears comparison with Pierre Bourdieu’s account in *Distinction* of new (bourgeois) cultural intermediaries influencing cultural production and tastes in France in the 1980s. He describes the new influencers as ‘philistines’, who are concerned “with the mundane interests... of mere ‘practice’”, and who take a trivial and action-orientated view of culture.²⁶ Bourdieu’s comments highlight the annoyance felt by the traditional shapers of taste or ‘intellectuals’ described as “... old-style intellectuals (who) continue to preserve an apparent monopoly over legitimate cultural practices.”²⁷ The recurring antagonism around fashion bloggers from some industry insiders is based on an idea that fashion bloggers are attempting to replace fashion journalists, without having developed the ‘right’ skills and experience required for the job. However, as findings from recent research into fashion bloggers attest, bloggers are not challenging fashion journalists, but rather creating additional manners of fashion communication that offer alternative perspectives.²⁸

By shifting analysis on this situation to look at the knowledge-power operations of digital fashion communication space differently, we can see that the successful bloggers in fact bring a range of highly valuable skills and experience that enhance the entire communication space. Although appearing to be under-qualified in comparison with the skill sets of well-established fashion journalists, bloggers have a wealth of communication skills and experience highly suited to taste-making work in the online context. Michel Foucault's theory on power-knowledge argues that power should not to be seen as a dichotomous construction of "dominators" and "dominated," but as something that can be productive as well as oppressive.²⁹

In the contemporary fashion media landscape, emphasis has shifted towards new communication practices that give rise to new relations of space and power. The superbloggers are 'digital natives', early adopters of blogging technology with some also having worked professionally in online context. The power of the bloggers is put on display in different ways, for example, through rapid incorporation of new features into their blog format or their instant presence on emerging communication platforms. Minh-Ha Pham observes that the "social and economic mobility" of many successful bloggers is "driven by their informational mobility."³⁰ The superior communicative and computational expertise (whether as interpersonal, performative and technical skills) of the fashion bloggers allows new social arrangements to emerge in the fashion commentary space, shaped by techniques and devices; and this changes the people and the entities through which power passes. By adopting Foucault's perspective, knowledge-power exerted by the bloggers can be understood "as a (new) productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative whose function is repression."³¹

The following section sets out the approach taken to data analysis in this chapter that permits the observation of patterns amongst selected commentators. It details how taste-making skills and knowledge have been categorised for comparison and the techniques used to map the 'circles of influence' of each of the tastemakers.

4.3 CREATING CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

As a way of examining the personal and professional expertise that constitute contemporary fashion tastemakers, a body of data relating to the development of their professional profile has been gathered for this research. Case study analysis of these fashion commentators provides information on education, background and personal and professional activities undertaken alongside fashion

commentary. The qualitative nature of this research has generated much textual, descriptive information. In this chapter, visual forms of analysis have offered the possibility of revealing and communicating different types of knowledge that may have remain unnoticed in textual / narrative descriptions.³² Analysing the data in this way has created 'circles of influence' for each commentator.

James Corner argues that analytical research undertaken through mapping entails the construction of an argument; it has been described as a tactical enterprise and practice of relational reasoning.³³ Lynn Butler-Kisber and Tiiu Poldma suggest, "...mapping (is) a means for formulating ideas and articulating relationships among these to help understand phenomena."³⁴ On this basis, mapping provides a highly suitable approach to the study of taste as a mobile entity and the relational settings of its movements. In this specific context, visual methods have helped to open up new interpretations of the data and offered a form of 'visual listening' attuned to emerging knowledge. The diagrams (Figures 4.3–4.12) map taste-making activities of the individuals as task based knowledge; they track knowledge as embodied in a variety of material forms. The visualisations encourage thinking about spatial and relational issues of individual career pathways and allow documentation of movements involved in achieving and retaining taste-making status.

The mapping process has produced a series of circles, proposed as the perimeters of influence for each individual. The starting point for each analysis is a central circle of fashion commentary (identified as either blogger or journalist); these form the foundation (first layer) of each diagram as the individual's central taste-making activity. From this starting point, other professional activities are added building a picture of each commentator's 'trajectory' of resources.³⁵ Each additional circle added to the diagram reflects a particular set of skills; the nature of the knowledge required is detailed within the circle (second layer). The perimeter edge of the circles illustrates the breadth of taste-making activities of each individual. The arrows that run between each domain trace the direction and pattern of movements between activities. Some arrows are double headed, marking a movement back and forth between different activities such as modelling and fashion commentary. Single headed arrows signify a movement from one field to another but with no return, whilst a heavy / bold arrow marks a repeated pattern of movement by individuals between two activities. Finally, the diagrams use the taste-making terminology, developed in Chapter Three, to classify the types of taste-making undertaken by each fashion commentator (third layer).

The circles of influence set up a picture of association for each individual and show an accumulation of expertise – embodied and performed. The overlapping circles demonstrate how influence can permeate between

4.3.1 CASE STUDIES: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

different types of activities that help to cement a solid foundation for a tastemaker and how the tastes of these individuals are taken up and applied across a range of associated fashion practices, not just fashion commentary. Some individuals accrue taste-making capital through writing, editing and publishing work that has a close connection to fashion commentary work, and extend this by commissioning articles and editing magazine content. While other careers are comprised of more diverse activities, such as modelling, design collaboration, styling and being a television presenter.

When the visualisations are viewed alongside each other, they help to reveal patterns in the career development of this group of tastemakers. However, the non-linear format of the 'circles of influence' maps sets aside the time spent in each occupation. The absence of a timeline provides a way to compare the activities of a fashion commentator with fifty years' experience alongside one with only eight years, both of whom have been significant fashion commentators for the duration of this research. The patterns evident in these diagrams re-enforce the idea that 'labour time' or time served acquiring taste-making capital has been reconsidered and modified as a measure of credibility since the endorsement of new types of fashion tastemakers. The 'circles of influence' diagrams point to a correlation between breadth of proven taste-making skills for new members, and the length of time served for established members of the taste-making group.

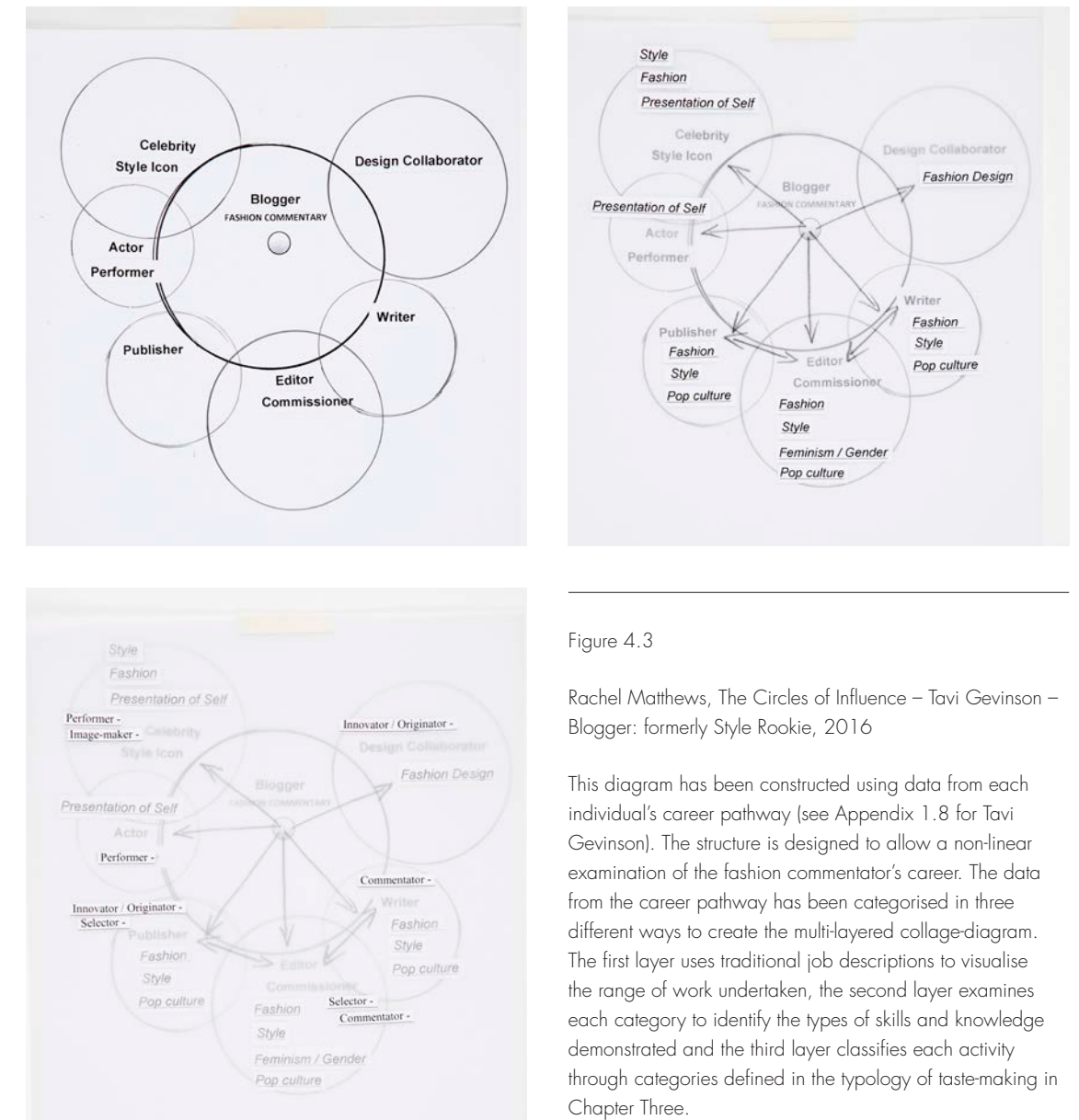


Figure 4.3

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Tavi Gevinson – Blogger: formerly Style Rookie, 2016

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.8 for Tavi Gevinson). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

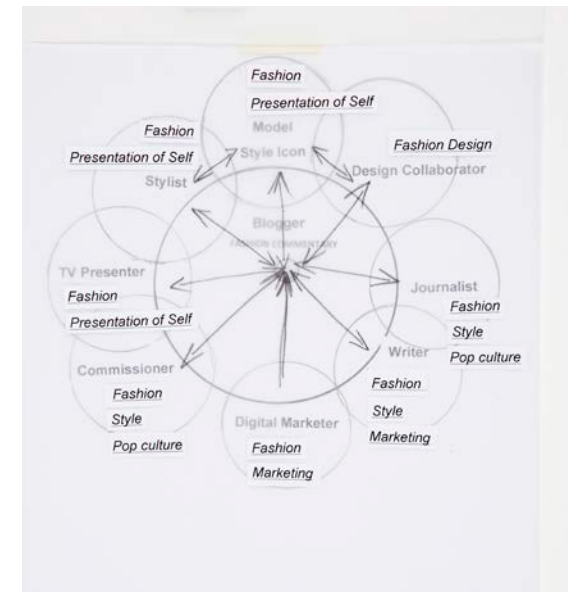
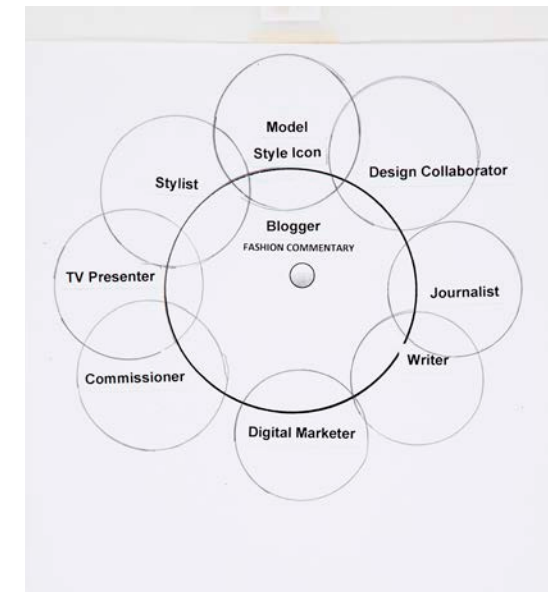
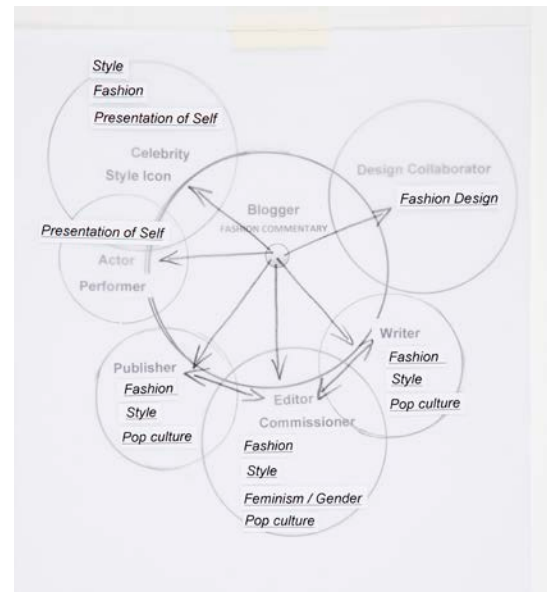
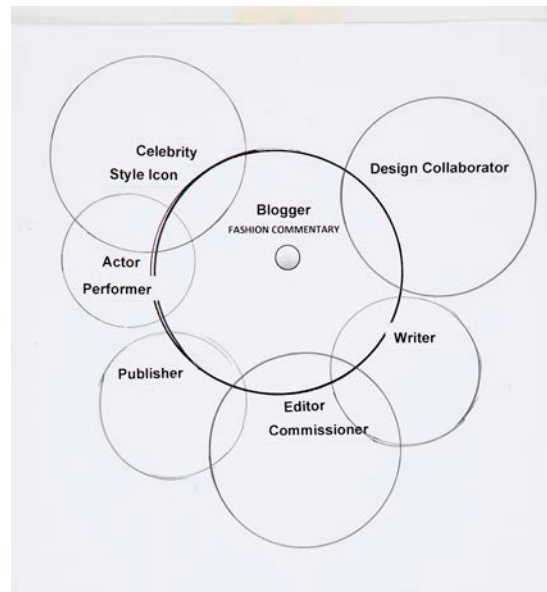


Figure 4.4

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Susie Lau – Blogger: Style Bubble, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.7 for Susie Lau). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.



Figure 4.5.

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Bryan Grey Yambao, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.6 for Bryan Grey Yambao). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

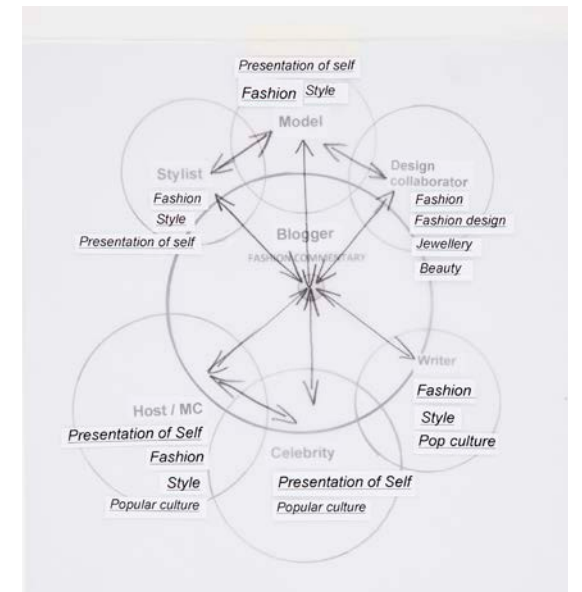
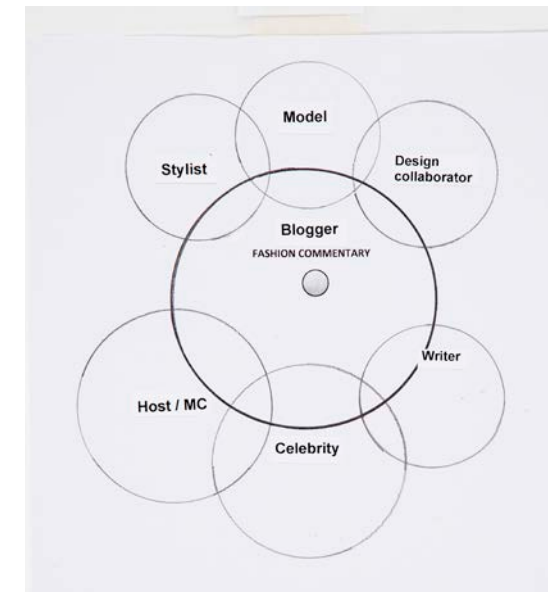
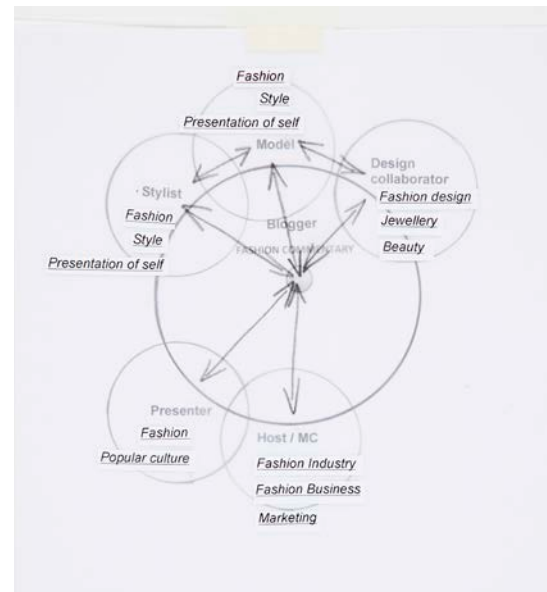
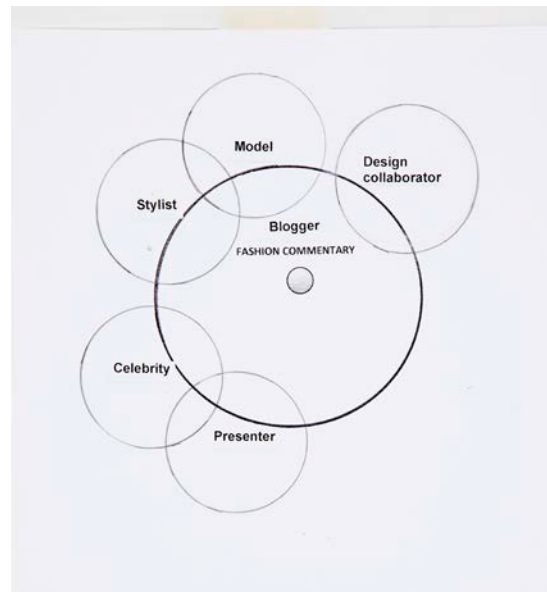


Figure 4.6.

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Leandre Medine, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.9 for Leandre Medine). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

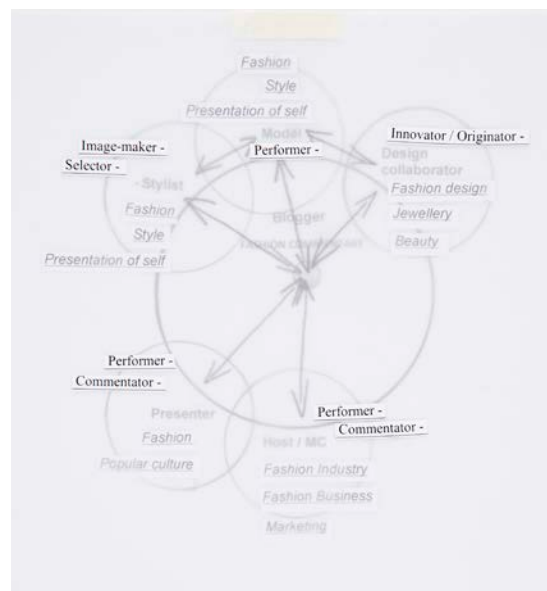


Figure 4.7.

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Jennine Jacobs, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.10 for Jennine Jacobs). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

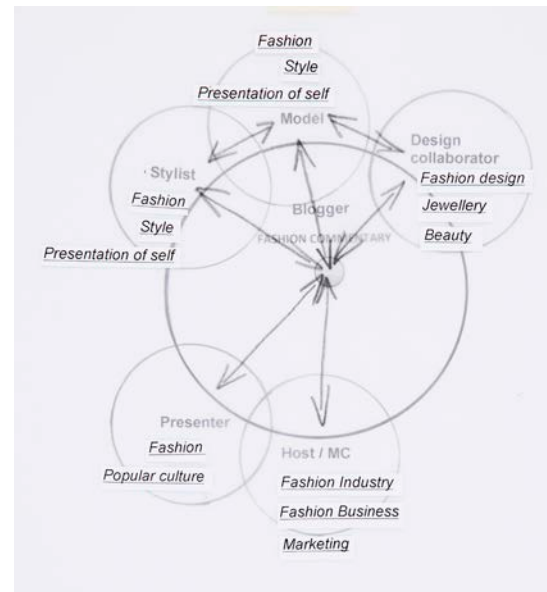
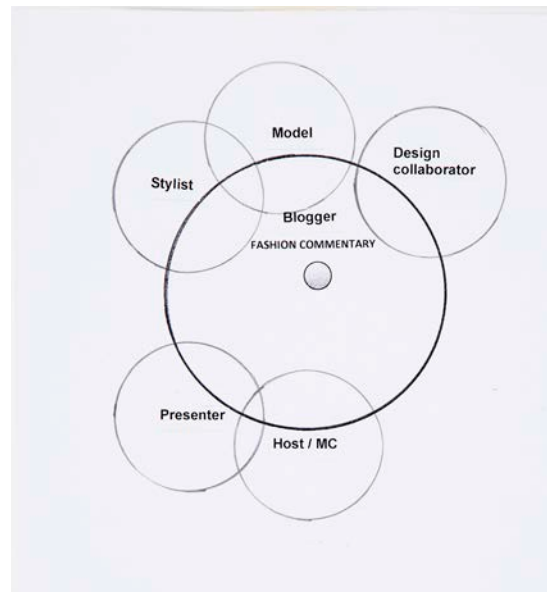


Figure 4.8.

Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Suzy Menkes, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.1 for Suzy Menkes). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

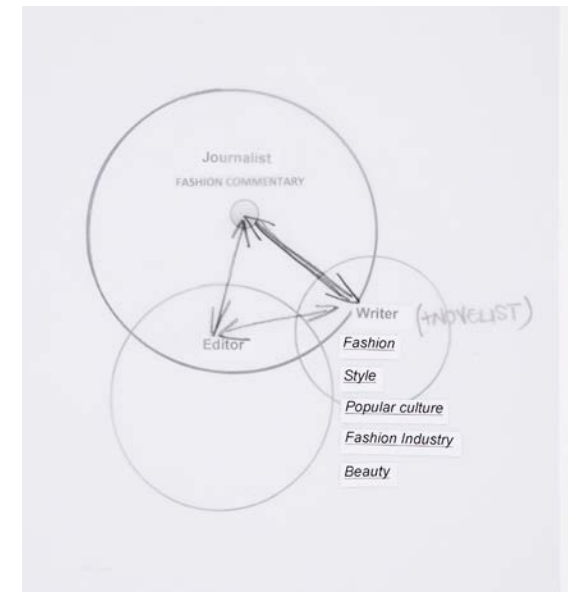
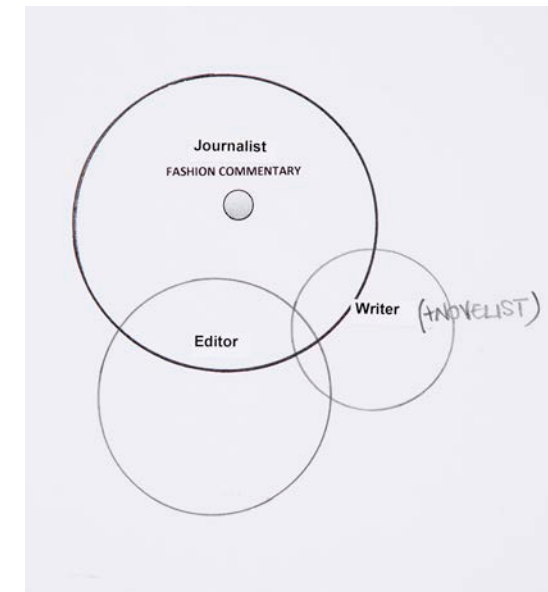


Figure 4.9.

Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Cathy Horyn, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.2 for Cathy Horyn). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

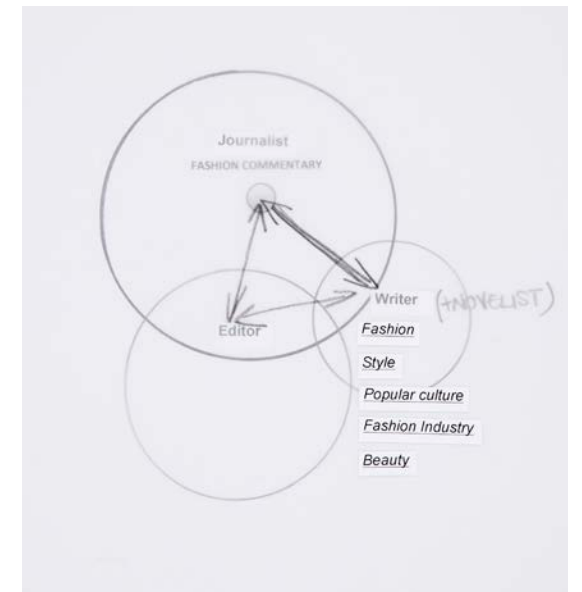
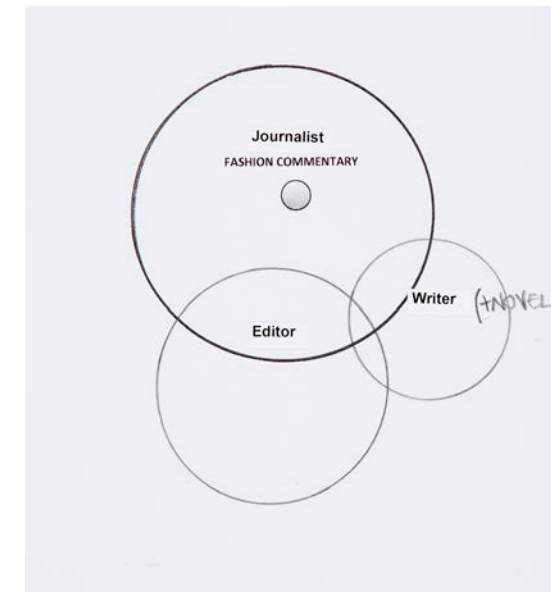
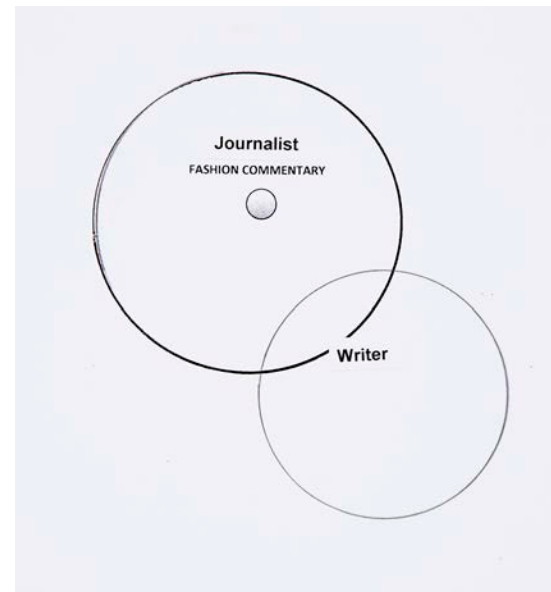


Figure 4.10.

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Susannah Frankel, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.3 for Susannah Frankel). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.

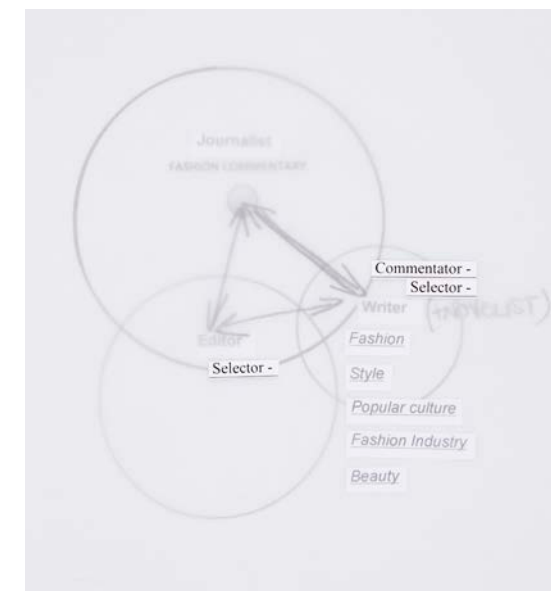
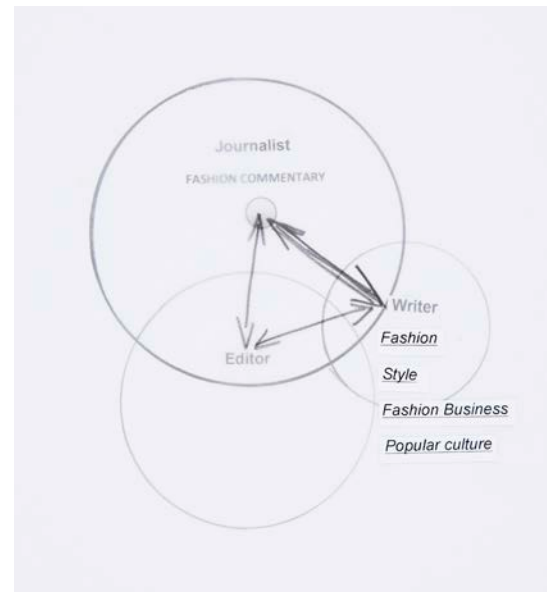


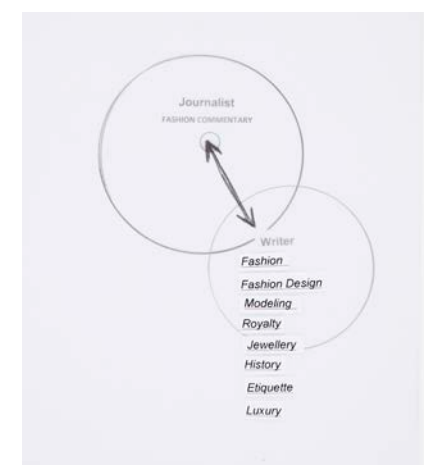
Figure 4.11.

Rachel Matthews, The Circles of Influence – Lisa Armstrong, 2016.

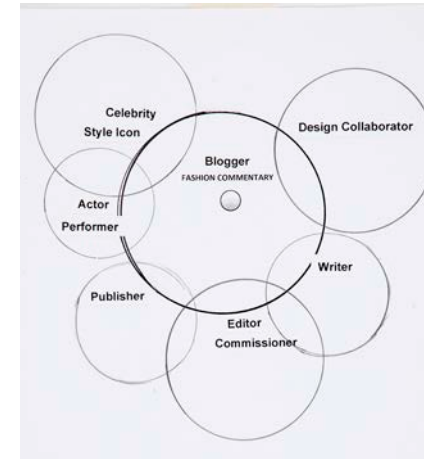
This diagram has been constructed using data from each individual's career pathway (see Appendix 1.4 for Lisa Armstrong). The structure is designed to allow a non-linear examination of the fashion commentator's career. The data from the career pathway has been categorised in three different ways to create the multi-layered collage-diagram. The first layer uses traditional job descriptions to visualise the range of work undertaken, the second layer examines each category to identify the types of skills and knowledge demonstrated and the third layer classifies each activity through categories defined in the typology of taste-making in Chapter Three.



Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Vanessa Friedman, 2016.



Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Suzy Menkes x Tavi Gevinson, 2016.



The 'circles of influence' diagrams construct a picture of the complimentary activities that both underpin and support the taste-making work of fashion commentators – the self-supporting loop. For all commentators, their style of writing and articulation is central to their taste-making personae, but takes greater priority for journalists. For fashion bloggers, the use of their 'fashioned' body as well as their voice to create their taste-making personae, gives the sense of a three-dimensional person, being, acting and interacting in the world. The journalists demonstrate their capabilities across a relatively narrow band of activities that express their in-depth knowledge and specific skills with words and language. Their career appears as a range of solo achievements allowing their distinct voice to be heard (such as the author of a designer monograph). The fashion bloggers apply their taste-making credentials across activities that enable the display of visual, creative and highly personal taste-making judgments. As such, the outcomes of their taste-making work appear much more collaborative and reflective of the networked nature of taste-making practices.

The patterns that emerge through the 'circles of influence' diagrams identify alternative pictures of a fashion commentator – a complimentary and more nuanced view to the established fashion insider. The diagrams visualise contrasting modes of demonstrating fashion knowledge by the tastemakers. Within fashion commentary, knowledge of fashion history, significant people, brands and the practices of the field are referenced as a way of demonstrating familiarity with the field. However, the diagrams illustrate how aesthetic discernments can be artfully expressed through the performance of a variety of tasks either individually or in collaboration with others. As described above, some types of taste-making capital are acquired through education and time served in the field, whilst others are innate, intuitive and embodied, readily expressed as an attitude.

Alternative types of taste-making commentators explicitly demonstrate their personal preferences and commercial partnerships. This would have previously been seen as something that would limit credibility as a fashion tastemaker, yet as these individuals engage in partnership opportunities so regularly, it has become a taste-making practice. The endorsement of the fashion blogger as legitimate fashion commentator has enabled the whole field of fashion taste-making to be transformed and forced the adoption of their alternative practices across fashion communication. New members of this group have facilitated the introduction of new terms of admittance, and from within this space, they have been able to modify the laws and loosen former constraints on the group by displaying new forms of influence and recognition. Analysis of these actor-networks in contemporary taste-making proves to be enrolling an enhanced range of associations to shape the world.

Importantly, this research is not aiming to simply identify the differences between old and new tastemakers, but rather considers the evolution of their taste-making work in relation to the movements of fashionable taste. In examining the nature of taste work, issues of paid and unpaid labour should be noted. Recent research highlights issues of paid and unpaid labour in fashion commentary.³⁶ It notes fashion journalists are usually employed by major media channels providing a source of financial stability. Fashion bloggers have a less secure position. Because of the way in which fashion blogging began, it is still often perceived as a hobby, an unpaid pass-time for enthusiastic followers of fashion.³⁷ Indeed, most successful fashion bloggers are involved in much unpaid taste-making work not only in networking and establishing the necessary social connections, but also in sourcing and compiling content for outfit posts on their blogs. Unlike those in journalistic roles that have colleagues to deal with advertising, bloggers are required to negotiate both their editorial freedom and their commercial ventures without losing the trust of their audience. Successful fashion bloggers have become adept at working within this system; it is a situation that demonstrates the knowledge-power of they possess in the form of highly developed communication skills. These have allowed them to creatively broker new forms of entrepreneurial enterprises. In the following section, the concept of the aesthetic economy is revisited and the transactional nature of taste-making is discussed in more detail.

4.4 TASTE-MAKING TRANSACTIONS

Brian Moeran states that "the relation between culture and economy is, to say the least, tricky", and notes that many academic fields ponder the interrelations of the two in aspects of cultural production.³⁸ It is useful to return to the concept of fashion as an aesthetic economy here. The creative and commercial operations of the global fashion industry are more closely aligned than ever before, emphasising the need to acknowledge the interplay of aesthetic and economic reasoning throughout the field of fashion. Decisions made in the design studio are seldom purely creative choices, just as the conclusions reached in the boardrooms of fashion companies are not solely based on finances.

The aesthetic economy underscores the inter-connection of cultural and economic imperatives that are threaded into acts of fashion taste-making. From this perspective the notion of influence creep as discussed earlier, can be seen as a 'growth strategy'. It is achieved through exchange of economic, social, cultural capital with others for the opportunity to grow or expand influence. The fashion tastemaker

needs to use their accrued capital to extend their field of influence. To maintain their capital and position, high-profile tastemakers seek 'special collaborations' and opportunities that are not available to others. This drives the fashion commentator to look for new taste-making terrain and informs their re-positioning strategies.

Taste-making has an inherent 'value adding' dimension. Grant McCracken describes how the rapidly moving value of objects in fashion requires on-going transformations. These conversions are driven by certain key "fashion influencers (who) are devoted to overturning the established order."³⁹ Fashion tastemakers help to drive this constant movement of value through the exchange of their social or symbolic capital, and in so doing ensure that taste and its material expression does not stand still. Those collaborating with tastemakers are seeking to benefit from association, hoping for a movement of cultural meaning from the influencer to the brand or product. However collaborating with a fashion tastemaker is rarely a straightforward celebrity endorsement opportunity. Something more complex and nuanced is at work when tastemakers are involved.

Top tier fashion commentators have a proven network of connections that link them and therefore their audience to those inside fashion and popular culture as well as outside these domains. Further, they have visibility in the crowded communications space and are regularly quoted or referred to acting as a barometer. Their accumulated attributes coalesce into a valuable commodity that they will exchange for specific collaborations and opportunities; however, to maintain their tastemaker status no available opportunity can be allowed to compromise their personal profile or their audience-network expectations.

The taste-making transaction is a sensitive cultural-commercial exchange that creates a range of tensions especially for the individuals and businesses with which the tastemakers choose to partner. McCracken notes that the objects or ideas at the heart of collaborations often come with more than one meaning; so clumsy associations can easily create muddy or uncertain messages.⁴⁰ Moeran suggest that an exact ideological fit between collaborators is rare in this situation, but ultimately the meaning of these collaborations lies with the audience.⁴¹ Both parties hope for positive outcomes of a cultural and commercial nature through their pairing; they wish there to be a two-way transference of meaning that will create a type of hybrid vigour – a cross pollination that allows the best qualities of each to prevail. In 2015, the skincare brand *Clinique* signed up Tavi Gevinson (Figure 4.14) as a brand ambassador with the specific intention of appealing to "the most desirable demographic, the millenials."⁴² When interviewed about the collaboration, Gevinson used the opportunity to describe how *Clinique* keeps her skin in perfect condition for the long list of photo-shoots, stage performances and film roles she is currently undertaking, whilst name-checking her associates from the world of arts and culture.⁴³

Celebrity endorsement attempts to transfer cultural meaning from the celebrity world onto certain products to encourage consumption. Taste is fundamentally tied to consumption, as one's ability to make discerning aesthetic judgments is most often revealed through consumption practices. And the mechanisms of taste do indeed require an environment of materialism, consumerism, and commodity fetishism. Nevertheless, discussions about taste have a moral tone that proposes taste allows consumption to be negotiated with control and discretion.⁴⁴ Activating notions of taste by collaborating with a tastemaker is a technique to dignify indulgent or overt aspects of consumption through associations with refinement and education. As Moeran states, pairing with certain credible or expert individuals can help brands, businesses and people navigate all manner of "cultural roadblocks."⁴⁵ The taste-making transaction is subtly but significantly different to celebrity endorsement.

The creative-commercial dimensions of taste-making have become more complex in recent times. Part of the purpose of fashion media is to promote fashion products to their readers, whilst simultaneously ensuring their credibility

through an opinion and information exchange. Despite many glossy fashion magazines' reliance on advertising revenues, there has previously been a marked degree of independence in editorial content. However, a formal separation of editorial and advertising content has broken down across areas of fashion communication. The contemporary fashion media landscape has changed becoming an environment where it has becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the purposes of media content – is it purely informative or is it marketing driven? This development has produced several new forms of content referred to as 'content-commerce integration' in fashion media: branded content (paid for editorial content that talks about the brand), sponsored content (editorial content that has a commercial sponsor) and native content (sponsored content designed to replicate editorial content in the rest of the publication).⁴⁶

These features are just part of the way in which fashion magazines have adapted to decreasing advertising budgets in recent times. *Vogue* has a department that interacts with clients to produce native content and produce written content that is fully 'shoppable' (e.g embedded in the text is 'smart' device technology that can take the reader directly to a purchasing opportunity for each product or brand that is mentioned). In a further blurring of boundaries, popular fashion shopping websites



Figure 4.14

Tavi Gevinson in *Clinique* Advertising Campaign, July 2015, <http://www.popsugar.com.au/beauty/Tavi-Gevinson-Beauty-Fashion-Tips-37959473> (accessed September, 16, 2016).

such as *Net-a-Porter* now produce editorial content on their website and in their monthly print magazine, *Porter*. Select fashion bloggers, who were initially heralded as authentic and unbiased voices in fashion media, can be seen as another variation on the ‘content-commerce integration,’ through seamlessly blending fashion marketing opportunities with their personal style commentary. As with many of the boundaries and structures that formerly shaped fashion and its practices, the divisions between editorial, advertorial and marketing content have become more difficult to discern. There appears to have been little resistance to most of the modifications of creative-commercial exchanges in fashion. However, the success of these various taste-making transactions is in their handling and ultimately rests with the reception and response of audiences.

Fashion commentators are required to write about branded content as a matter of course when reporting from runway shows they have been invited to attend. Within the ‘special’ space of fashion week events, there is an understanding that the commentators have a degree of discretion and independence in writing about these events. For both writers and readers there appears to be different responses to branded content depending on the context. The sensitive handling required by tastemakers is reflected in the posts and reader responses (below). First fashion blogger Susie Lau (on *Style Bubble*):

There aren't many soft drinks I can write a 600 word piece about, but when Diet Coke asked me to give up some of my memories of the drink, it all came flooding back. Growing up, the mere act of ordering a Diet Coke in a restaurant felt like a rebellious rite of passage, even better if they came in the old fashioned glass bottles... it was akin to attaching oneself to what I perceived to be a glossy image of grown-up sophistication and glamour, something which stemmed from seeing all the popular girls at school swigging Diet Coke after school.⁴⁷

Readers post:

PV posted: 2013-02-07 at 3:56 PM

an advert for diet coke? really disappointing.

Susie Lau's response posted: 2013-02-07 at 4:07 PM

I'm just going to say this once... 99.5% of free content not tied to advertisers or commercial projects compare to the 0.5% of sponsored content is really not that taxing on the audience. You may be disappointed but I have a mortgage to pay for. End of.⁴⁸

Suzy Menkes posts a review of the Hermes ‘Wanderland’ project (a Hermes curated ‘vanity project’ staged in a commercial gallery) on *Vogue.co.uk*:

Can a collection of whimsical pieces ever have seemed so elegant as those brought together by Emile Hermès, one of the French company's long list of family entrepreneurs. A small portion of his artifacts forms the core of the charming exhibition at London's Saatchi Gallery, known for its modern-art exhibitions. On the upper level that hosts Wanderland (until May 2), the display is modest, intriguing, digitally savvy – and an original way of suggesting both the quirkiness and the craftsmanship behind this famous name... They were in town to show off the refurbished Hermès store on London's New Bond Street, which has opened up its former offices to let light in on a high-ceilinged area devoted to furnishings, especially the signature orange leather.⁴⁹

Readers post:

Dasha Zhivaykina posted: 14 April at 02:31

This is a true spectacle! You go from one room to another like traveling through history and time and WORLDS. Its one of the best exhibition I've ever visited! Great job.⁵⁰

For the fashion commentator as tastemaker, the trust they have built with their audience is paramount to the reception of their messages, yet they must also balance the expectations of others involved in the transaction. This requires a consistent taste-making self. It relies on the perception of a self-determining individual with who audiences can develop trusting relationships. Certain carefully crafted aesthetic discernments on new products and ideas, contextualised in meaningful ways by fashion commentators, are perceived as a refined and thoughtful selection of new propositions. However, seen from another perspective, they can also be understood as an exchange of capital that fuels the tastemaker's continuous process of reflexive re-positioning, whether the exchange of capital is for financial gain or cultural kudos. This taste-making technique requires the idea of taste to be understood as an educated and refined way to approach consumption, thus allowing the cultural-commercial exchanges underpinning it to be masked. The tastemaker is central to this, a consistent embodiment and performance of taste as aesthetic discernment, means that most of the time we do not detect further complexities.

The contemporary fashion tastemaker needs to be perceived as ahead of time in identifying the 'new', yet they influence fashionable taste by developing pathways that are built on a symbiotic exchanges and interactions with others. Their repositioning plays an important role in emphasising and transforming the dimensions of fashionable taste; commentators tacitly performing a strategic economic function for their own preservation and for the aesthetic economy of fashion. To understand these activities more clearly in connection with mobile notions of taste, the next section looks at social organisations whose structures permit the movement of fashionable taste for the fashion commentator.

4.5 CO-ORDINATING THE COMMUNITY OF TASTE

The notion of community has been discussed in Chapter One, as one of the ways to understand the characteristics of influence in a relational context. Here the concept is returned to as a mobilising device, and considered as a system made up of particular types of channels suitable for circulating taste. Raymond Williams notes the term 'community' has always been connected to social relations or feelings.⁵¹ A community is a group sharing something in common – locality, heritage, values, characteristics or tastes. It is an organised social formation, distinct from the formal organisations governed by institutions such as the state. The connections of a community can be described as 'organic' or 'natural', formerly generated through close physical proximity, allowing people to cohere and connect through a shared attachment to a place and its practices. Jukka Gronow highlights how sharing creates a sense of belonging as individuals negotiate their place within communities, in society.⁵² Aesthetic objects, including fashion, produce highly visible signs and codes that are easy to share with others in order to initiate interactions and form bonds.

Much has been written in the social sciences about the impact of globalisation and digital communications on the notion of community.⁵³ Dan O'Connor argues that "new forms of local communities with new forms of social relations"⁵⁴ are a result of the intersection of these two significant factors. In the global, digitally connected world, a community can retain its social gathering spaces, however these are now more varied and geographically dispersed, and have become networked and mobile. Social operations of the community structure have been changed through technology and distance, yet sharing, connecting and belonging still define the community. Whether analogue or digital, the social space becomes the focal point for all in the 'community of *shared* tastes.'

Howard Rheingold proposes that the 'virtual community' emerges through a combination of common interests and shared use of specific media.⁵⁵ This enables a community to develop a particular culture, based on shared communication practices, mediated through technology. Michel Maffesoli proposes the concept of 'neo-tribalism' to describe the new and transient forms of communities that come together temporarily through social networks. Through participatory Internet platforms, Maffesoli's tribes gather interact and bond through empathetic connections to sites of opinion, affective ties and shared experience.⁵⁶ This system of community building amongst social groups is evident in what Liroy Choufan calls 'the hashtag cults of fashion'. He cites Olivier Rousteing (creative director of fashion house *Balmain*), who has leveraged social media to build a 'community of taste' for the brand through the use of #balmainarmy. He described this strategy as "a movement of togetherness, fueled on a hashtag."⁵⁷ The notion of sharing, togetherness and inclusion underpin 'communities of taste'. Designers have used other such terminology, Ricardo Tisci, creative director at *Givenchy* regularly uses #gang or #family, while *Dolce & Gabbana* use #dggfamily. The digital landscape has structured avenues for sharing information, association and connection that cut across conventional social boundaries. However, fashion is still dependent on a rich mix of material and social relations to connect its analogue and digital communities with the tangible and intangible that ultimately mobilise fashionable taste.

Communities of fashionable taste are systems that circulate the display of fashion and its discourse. The starting points for these two vital factors – display and discourse – often begin within a physical fashion community gathered for significant events and focused on material products such as new collections or product launches. Social relations and interactions at the restricted centre of the fashion community (such as fashion week events) generate key topics with which to engage the broader community. Knowledge of new fashions is gained through experiences and interactions; material qualities of fashion are exposed, discussed and experienced firsthand, whilst the associated performativity is recognised and recorded.

Community leaders function as a bridge between the analogue and digital communities of fashion and form an intersection between the tangible and intangible. In the post below, Susie Lau connects the two communities, explaining the latest designer fashion (Louise Gray's collection), through collective childhood memories that move through the physical to the digital:

In the spirit of all things overdone, over the top, pile-it-on and stick-em-on, today with the launch of Louise Gray's collection for Topshop, I had to post this picture of this DIY sticker clutch... what a stupendously simple idea this is – take a clutch (hers is a cheapie £8 ASOS one) and cover it with stickers - puffies, glitteries, gellies, flaties, felties - whatever you fancy. Take every memory you've ever had of filling your sticker albums, decorating your A4 ring binders or exercise books and then lovingly apply them to a clutch. An instant conversation starter. A clever invitation to would-be friends and acquaintances to come and touch your clutch.⁵⁸

Activities in the analogue, physical community of fashion generates content (displays and discursive statements) that drive social interactions for communities of taste to discuss, evaluate and explore. The borderless virtual communities of fashion provide social spaces for rapid circulation and discussion. The accessibility and ease of inclusion in a digital community mean large numbers of people are able to utilise their shared passions to create momentum and consensus in analogue and digital domains. The movements of the community are shared co-constructed movements. The group mobilises new collective tastes as a means of distinction for the community. Fashion tastemakers are integrated into the system through sharing experiences, knowledge and physical interaction with new aesthetic goods. From within the community system, they are able to re-position themselves by feeding new ideas into social spaces, moving themselves as they move the community.

The concept of community provides a structure capable of certain movements of taste; however, its formation presents a homogenous view of fashion followers who seek conformity, rather than self-expression in their aesthetic discernments. The notion of community and its cohesive values leaves little room to consider the reception and reaction of the community members. As a mobilising concept, it fails to address issues of resistance, diversity and individuality that can impact upon the movements of fashionable taste. The fashion commentator as community leader is also an over-simplified analogy; they are one of any number of high-profile individuals competing to engage community members to remain relevant. In the following section, the network is considered as a mobilising system capable of accommodating more complex relations in the movements of taste.

4.6 A NODE IN THE NETWORKED SOCIETY

The concept of the network was used to illustrate the importance of contacts and connections for individuals of influence in Chapter One. Here, it is examined as an organisational system. It is a concept applied in numerous ways to capture a 'web of connections' that serves to link dispersed objects, institutions, people and places.⁵⁹ The network is structured through nodes that are connected by intersecting ties or pathways; a model that is flexible enough to visualise train routes and computer networks through to financial transactions and social interaction. As a mobilising device, the network facilitates anchorage and flow – the nodes anchor the system while the paths allow flow between nodes, enabling networks to spread over a dispersed area.

Many discussions on networking are closely linked to technology.⁶⁰ Manuel Castells proposed the concept of a 'network society' at the end of twentieth century. His definition reflects a society of the 'information age' linked and interconnected through the global flows of media, communications and information,⁶¹ as the realm of digital fashion communication has been described. The network is also embedded in the methodology of this research through the adoption of *Actor-Network Theory* as an underpinning concept. Using this approach, the network is understood as a socio-material framework or a "co-constitution between humans and non-humans."⁶² The network has the ability to simultaneously spread or diffuse ideas through heterogeneous sites whilst 'netting or assembling (these) disparate elements.'⁶³

As noted in Chapter One, the fashion commentator can be seen as a node, a point of reference, that structures network of fashion information. Conversely, the network can be seen as constituting the fashion commentator, as without network effects, their important social relations and interactions would not occur. However, the network's dynamic nature makes it suitable as a mobilising device. It is able to facilitate multiple flows of information and opinion, whilst evolving new forms of anchorage. The fashion commentator seeks to generate a flow of content through its channels, hoping the structure of the network will extend their visibility to new places or interconnect with other networks.

Within this dynamic structure, the introduction of new terminology by fashion commentators becomes a way to make their expressions searchable, findable and potentially more visible. Using the new words as a search term in a digital search engine uncovers a myriad of pathways across the network, capable of presenting a variety of information, opinion, application, in word and image. The language of the fashion commentator provides a way to locate dispersed objects and ideas within a complex and ever-growing network; just as the invention

of unique personal titles such as *Man Repeller* and *Bryanboy* work effectively as digital search terms. Converting new fashion objects and ideas into recognisable search terms produces a range of additional ways for it to be quantified and qualified. Its discussion and display will appear ranked by search engines; it will be tagged, followed, liked and shared in various quantities.

The digital network makes it possible to locate the movements of the tastemakers' aesthetic discernments in time and space, two aspects that support the credibility of statements designed to mobilise fashionable taste. The network's technical capabilities can propel objects or ideas through any number of digital interactions and algorithms. Its technology holds the potential for global exposure, offering increased circulation through various sites and orders of discourse readily diffused through multiple intersecting networks.⁶⁴ In addition, there is kudos for fashion commentators in owning or prescribing the meaning of new terms; it demonstrates their clarity of understanding on things that we are yet to recognise.

The network has other dynamic features that enable the flow of taste and tastemakers. Interconnectivity in digital networks produces many of the characteristics Roland Barthes identifies in his conception of 'the ideal text'.⁶⁵ 'Ideal text' is a form of representation that blurs the distinction between the reader and the writer in relation to the text. This, Barthes suggests, could be achieved through text that branches, links and connects in a random sequence, rather than being given a pre-determined order or meaning by the writer. The interactivity enabled by hypertext has made this possible; the reader is free to take multiple directions through the global flow of fashion communications. Barthes description of the ideal text resonates with the contemporary context:

*...the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable.*⁶⁶

The flow of fashion communications is distinctly intertextual - interconnected to other sources and as such readily reordered or re-sequenced depending on the pathway taken through the network. So despite the contemporary fashion tastemaker's role as a node in the network, regularly introducing new information and creating fresh pathways in its structure, they are still simply part of the network. The entanglement of fashion tastemakers in the anchorage and flow of the network suggests that they function as "*Homo Irretitus* – one who nets

in the net: the netting and at the same time (a) netted human being."⁶⁷ The tastemaker is moved around in the network by the pathways each reader is able to follow through the intertextual content of the network; their position is changed by what has come before and what will be read after. Their expressions get subverted, improved, adapted and distorted in multiple personalised sequences and altered further through channels of mass media, the Internet and social media. Each different reading changes the relational context of the tastemaker and the framing of their aesthetic discernments.

The relational effects of the network can be limited, linking entities by just one common concern (or click!). Durability of network connections can have consequences too; some linkages do not last long (such as Snapchat), while others last longer. Connections in a digital network are very different to connections in a face-to-face social network. Hyperlinks or pathways do not necessarily constitute any shared values or mutual sentiments in networks and although they enable movement, links are inserted by the writer to direct the reader. The network is a useful mobilising concept with great potential to facilitate connection, flow and global reach. However, for the tastemaker, the network can restrict a clear view of their taste-making abilities. It facilitates an "individualisation of experience" in the structure, and with "...few common codes, there is systemic misunderstanding...in this structurally induced cacophony" of messages.⁶⁸ This is problematic for fashion commentators; they require a mobilising system that holds together their relational context not dissipates or dilutes it. This chapter now considers the assemblage as a formation that has potential to bring together the various requirements of tastemakers and their audience, if only for a short time.

4.7 ACTIVATING THE ASSEMBLAGE OF ASSOCIATIONS

Assemblage and assemblage thinking are concepts that have emerged from *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT), as mentioned previously.⁶⁹ The assemblage is a flexible mobilising concept capable of capturing the wide variety of elements that have an active role in shaping social relations, as Martin Muller describes, "(the) assemblage is a mode of ordering heterogeneous entities so that they work together for a certain time."⁷⁰ When brought together, these entities generate new meaning or significance through their temporary relational context.

The assemblage is a transient form that stabilises associations and relations, yet it is not just a passive organising device, it shapes and influences that which is enrolled or assembled.⁷¹ Muller outlines five characteristics of the assemblage that suggests its potential as a mobilising concept.

Mark Slater draws similarities between the assemblage and Michel Foucault's concept of *dispositif* translated as an apparatus or system of relations.⁷³ Following Latour, Karan Barad promotes the assemblage as a way to better understand the connections and relations of entities, or in her words, "how things get entangled."⁷⁴ Although its shape is less clearly defined than the community or the network, the assemblage is a loose but suitable structure to consider in the mobilisation of taste. George Marcus and Erkan Saka note that,

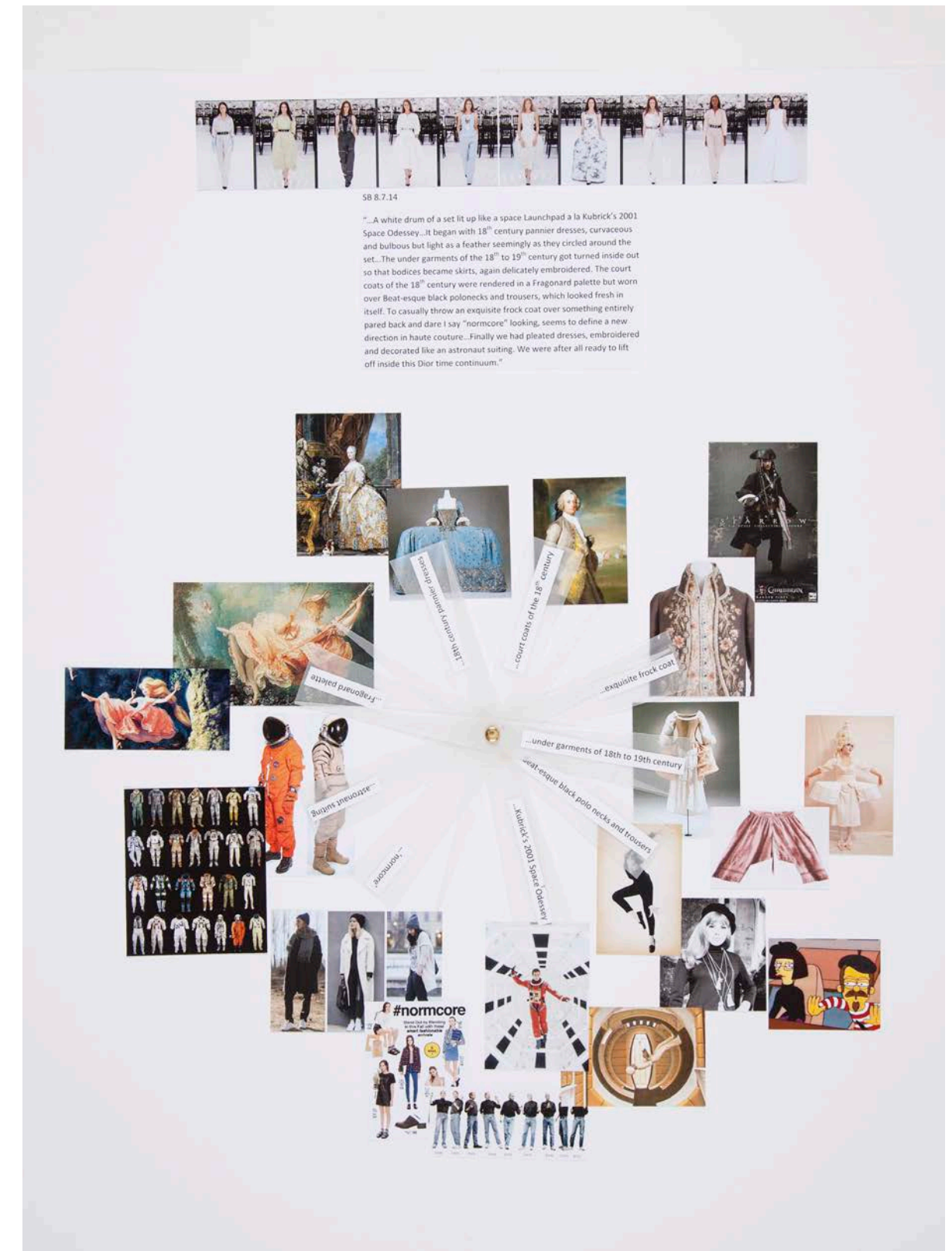
As described earlier in this chapter, the fashion commentator needs to re-position themselves repeatedly as a way of maintaining and expanding their influence as well as restating their taste-making credentials. Their fashion descriptions create a notional collage, or unique assemblage through combinations of references, terminologies and ideologies. The assemblage is not enduring, it is 'localised', and Marcus and Saka suggest that such assemblages produce "an odd, irregular, time-limited object for contemplation."⁷⁶ The assemblage is thus always moving and in the process of happening.⁷⁷ Its repeated process of enrolling heterogeneous entities is the perfect vehicle for the fashion commentator to re-adjust their position and relations whilst articulating their discernments. Below is an extract from a runway review by blogger Susie Lau:

The court coats of the 18th century were rendered in a Fragonard palette but worn over Beate-sque black polo necks and trousers... to casually throw on an exquisite frock coat over something entirely pared back and dare I say 'normcore' looking, seems to define a new direction in Haute Couture.⁷⁸

The statement captures a complex and irregular juxtaposition of ideas and visual language. This assemblage begins with a reference to men's formal attire of the eighteenth century – a garment that readers of Lau's *Style Bubble* blog may understand or a reference possibly more recognisable through popular culture figures such as 'Jack Sparrow' (from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films).

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the concept of an assemblage, using fashion media content. It uses a runway review from blogger Susie Lau posted on her blog Style Bubble (http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2014/07/past-modernity.html). It explores this fashion commentary as a type of assemblage – a place where attachments and associations become visible.

At the top of the diagram are thumbnail images from the runway show being reviewed; underneath is the text from the review. In the lower section is the depiction of the assemblage. The references, associations and comparisons that have been used in the runway review form the star-shaped assemblage of text on moveable tabs. These quotes (and their references) have been used to source a diverse range of images. The images have been composed and collaged as a way to understand the various actants that are enrolled into this assemblage.



Lau then goes on to test the reader's art history knowledge by referencing the painter Jean-Honore Fragonard, whose repertoire contains many Rococo works, but who is most well-known for his painting *The Swing* and its later kitsch re-interpretations. The next association she draws into the assemblage is the Beat movement of the 1960s. Within cultural history this has left its mark on literature, film and music, yet one that has become caricatured with comedic effect in more recent times (for example in the *Austin Powers* films and the *Simpsons*). Finally, Lau uses a contemporary fashion reference – 'normcore'. The term draws contemporary fashion references into the assemblage; however, the term itself is ambiguous. It has evaded a clear definition, apart from a vague sense of 'not really trying to look fashionable.' The assemblage contains multiple access points that depend on the reader's prior knowledge and experience. They require an appreciation of various cultural references from the eighteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries in order to construct a full picture. Despite its nebulous structure, the diagram (Figure 4.15) above attempts to depict the convergence of Susie Lau's taste-making assemblage.

For Lau, the assemblage embodies her and her expertise at that particular moment. She demonstrates a clear understanding of the institutional practices of the *Haute Couture* system by emphasising cultural and artisanal aspects of fashion. The references and associations she invokes display her knowledge of fashion history and pop culture as well as her ability to recognise ambiguous themes amongst contemporary fashion. The assemblage creates new associations for both the garments shown in the *Dior Haute Couture* show and the fashion blogger – they become connected to a new network of ideas that create energetic relations and unexpected impetus or points of departure. Or as Lau suggests 'a new direction in *Haute Couture*.'

The mobility of the assemblage is a crucial characteristic of the concept. The shifting assemblage draws together different assortments, creating fresh perspectives before dissolving – an assemblage of continuous becoming.⁷⁹ However, John Urry argues mobilities within such structures also need certain immobilities as infrastructure, not everything can be in flux all the time.⁸⁰ This division between what is mobile and what is not leads Slater to argue for the assemblage to be understood as a mechanism of circulation, where the co-constitution of agents, entities and structure make particular routes or paths of circulation possible.⁸¹ The concept of an assemblage and its shifting shape encapsulates the inter-related phases through which fashionable taste moves.

The entities drawn together to construct meaning in objects changes, for example the promotional settings of an advertising campaign will invoke different associations to that of the editorial photo-shoot. Each setting will generate various permutations of associations around the same fashion object. Furthermore, the connections and associations

shift and change in collective narratives of fashion (such as perceptions of old fashioned or second hand clothes now valued as 'retro' or 'vintage'). Similarly, our individual emotional attachments change through the fluctuating significance we perceive in these objects, as Muller suggests the assemblage is moved by emotion.⁸² Our 'baggage' or pre-existing preferences and bias will flavour the assemblage differently. So the assemblage is mobilised in various ways, through institutional and cultural practices, as well as competing emotional and subjective attachments.

Assemblage thinking enables the recognition of the movements of taste, facilitated by fashion commentators across a variety of social terrain. It accommodates a 'coming together' of any manner of special combinations that may converge to take fashionable taste to new destinations. It is a flexible construction that helps to extend the possibilities of what can be considered as taste-making activities and taste-shaping entities and therefore perfect for the evolving practices of fashion commentators. The assemblage readily blends displays of knowledge and expertise with referents that indicate the shape of future fashion. The concept of the assemblage is revisited and developed in subsequent chapters as an essential and versatile piece of infrastructure for the mobilisation of taste.

This chapter has begun to explore how taste is mobilised, specifically through the practices of the fashion commentator. It is the first of three chapters that examine the various mechanisms that enable fashionable taste to transform. The concept of movement and mobilisation in this first part has focused on the fashion commentator's continuous process of re-positioning that incrementally extends the perspectives from which they write. The momentum for their reflexive adjustments is created by the interplay of creative-commercial concerns in fashion as an aesthetic economy as well as a personal desire to preserve their tastemaker status and a durable network. However, it is the performance of 'taste as aesthetic discernment' consistently enacted by these individuals that assists taste to move, responding to the proposed new directions. In line with the research questions, it shines a light on how taste begins to evolve from personal preferences of fashion commentators and enters the public realm. Further, the career path of fashion commentators becomes a structure that helps us examine the transformation of taste.

Case study analysis of the fashion commentators' activities has revealed how certain knowledge-power relations have been modified and extended by new members of the taste-making group. They have driven a greater diversity in taste-making work of fashion commentators, a relaxation of the terms of taste-making transactions and 'content-commerce integration' and a reconsideration of 'labour time' as a measure of validity. In conceptualising mobility, the chapter also considers the infrastructure for movements of taste. The community, the network and the assemblage expose certain dimensions or manners in which taste can be moved.

Taste is not only mobilised by the agency of the fashion commentator; it changes and transforms on a variety of levels. This chapter has focused on the actions of taste-making individual, highlighting their social and performative practices. The mechanisms that mobilise taste are observable in different contexts and at different scales. The next chapter considers the power of popular discourse to innovate, transform and propel fashionable taste to new settings. Discourse is also constituted through social and performative practices and the fashion commentator has a role to play in its formation; however, it is a more dispersed means of movement that grows organically. In contrast to the focus on the individual in this chapter, the popular discourse develops new knowledge through the actions of many active agents and is a device capable of mobilising people, ideas, objects, spaces and even changing designated boundaries. Its mechanisms of movement and change are examined in the next chapter to understand the mobilisation of fashionable taste at a completely different level.

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CHAPTER 5 | MOBILISING TASTE – PART II THE POPULAR DISCOURSE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Movement and change are key characteristics of fashionable taste; however, despite its restlessness, taste is not a nomadic subject. This is the second chapter to consider the mobilisation of fashionable taste in its process of becoming. In contrast to the previous chapter, which focused on the human agency of the fashion commentator, this chapter uses a broader frame to understand the movements of taste generated through the power of popular discourse. The concept of discourse allows for the consideration of the multiple active agents that incrementally build momentum. It is studied and observed here through a series of discourse events that cross cultural, geographical and temporal terrain. The analysis of discourse as well as ANT techniques and visual mapping have been used to examine the popular discourse here (see Appendix 4 for details of data). It is an approach that reveals significant movements of fashionable taste that follow particular pathways. Through studying these journeys, it is possible to identify departure points, patterns of movement and stabilising structures that produce movements that appear more as structured circuits and trajectories than nomadic wanderings. The chapter examines the features of these travelling discourses that refresh and renew fashionable taste, making new propositions “seeable, sayable and thinkable.”¹ Through discourse analysis, distinctive discursive patterns in fashion are tracked; each demonstrates how statements grow into knowledge, practices and material expressions of fashionable taste and evolve into new discursive spaces.

The chapter focuses on three particular approaches to mechanisms of movement observed in discourses of fashion. The first approach is cultural hybridity. A fusion of cultural fields within a discourse propels familiar associations, objects and practices into new discursive spaces and sets them within new frames of credibility and legitimacy. This study tracks shifts in language, practices and objects, as they become cultural composites in a discursive formation that blends fashion with fine art. The second approach observed in the mobilisation of fashionable taste uses analogy. Through an analogical discourse, new notions of fashionable taste are linked to existing standards of taste, yet set apart because of new or addition elements. This adds a novel dimension to

the discourse that allows successive movements to reshape fashionable taste in different ways. The analogical discourse is traced through the discussion of fashion's world cities, a convention of fashion previously discussed in Chapter Two. The third and final approach uses a process of reconfiguration to mobilise fashionable taste. This technique moves discussions of taste to new relational contexts through deconstructing and repurposing recurrent themes in fashion. Existing discourses in fashion are broken apart and reassembled to create new knowledge, fresh associations and understandings. The study traces an archetypal reading of fashion's history to examine temporal reconfiguration in discursive practices.

The nature of these three discourses – hybridity, analogy and reconfiguration – are discussed and described through case studies. Each enables taste to be mobilised, whilst structuring the movements. The pathways and trajectories of the travelling discourses studied are mapped to make evident the style of movement of each discourse. The chapter provides further elaboration on mechanisms that generate new relational and discursive spaces for fashion and in so doing makes evident aspects of evolution in fashionable taste.

Discourse forms a central pillar in this research, underpinning the methodological approach and has already had considerable attention in this thesis. In Chapter One, it is considered as a device that defines and normalises various dispositions. In Chapter Two, discourse is considered as one of the conventions of fashion, as a culturally specific way of speaking and thinking about fashion, circulated and supported by fashion media. Chapter Three explored discourse as one device in the taste-making toolbox, one that is readily shared and transformed by other tastemakers. The concept of discourse is also noted in Chapter Four as an element of the fashion commentator's work.

Through these previous explorations, its construction and characteristics, according to Michel Foucault (and subsequently developed by others) have been unpacked.² Its essence as a flexible system of communication and interaction capable of generating new knowledge remains important here. Foucault's discourse is something complex and contingent, not simply a form of dialogue or structured communication; this chapter examines the greater diversity on which discourse rests. The investigation develops Norman Fairclough's concept of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an approach to locating the effects of influence; his model uses three inter-related dimensions of discourse that need to be considered in combination – the text, the discursive practices and the social practices.³ In addition, the chapter extends Fairclough's approach to examine movement as a feature of popular discourse through the notion of 'travelling discourse'. It is an idea that has been explored theoretically, technically and metaphorically in academic research, specifically in areas of geography.⁴ Its various conceptualisations of movement are examined to highlight certain fluid and mobile characteristics of discourse.

5.2 THE TRAVELLING DISCOURSE

The journey begins by recognising the discourse of contemporary fashion taste-making as a travelling discourse. Jing Wang proposes the concept of a travelling discourse as "a viable comparative framework to track place specific economies of knowledge, creativity and content production."⁵ The concept of a travelling discourse emerged in the field of cultural studies and was originally used to mark geographical or trans-national movements of a discourse. Janet Wolff describes how travel and travelling terminology has become a feature of cultural criticism, noting the rise of terms such as travelling theory, critic-as-tourist, nomadic criticism, mapping and site seeing in cultural studies.⁶ The term 'travelling discourse' has been applied to notions of early twentieth century nationalism in non-Western countries, and more recently applied in human geography to systems of deindustrialisation (that move from manufacture towards 'immaterial' production).⁷ The mobility of the discourse should not be surprising. Stuart Hall notes that, in the study of discourse, one must acknowledge that a different discourse will arise at a later moment, supplanting the existing one, opening up new discursive formations with new conception of power and authority.⁸ The discourse of fashionable taste displays just such characteristics with new or evolving formations displacing the existing forms; Brian Moeran notes "fashion is predicated on change"⁹, so processes that unseat existing forms and propose new different forms are characteristic of fashion.

To track particular fashion discourses, a broad range of data has been gathered from a series of discursive events. From this, documents that visualise the movements have been produced and are analysed as maps. Both the terms 'trajectory' and 'map' have clearly defined technical scientific meanings in visualising spatial relations, however they are also terms that have taken on meaning in cultural studies, social theory and critical cartography.¹⁰ Brian Harley argues that maps are not neutral; rather they are a social construction that reflects the culture and the values of those that produce them.¹¹ His proposal moves cartography from a practice of scientific map-making to a position that can consider "how the map emerges through contingent, relational, context-embedded practices to solve relational problems."¹² It is from this perspective that mapping again becomes meaningful to this study. They require an awareness of the situational context of the discourse, recognising its existing position before plotting its new coordinates. Maps are ultimately connected to communication and here they function to make data more intelligible; their development facilitates the perception of certain transformations in fashion that otherwise remain unseen.



Figure 5.1. (Left)

Norman Fairclough,
Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model for Critical Discourse Analysis, 1989, 1995.

Figure 5.2. (Below left)

Rachel Matthews, (After Fairclough) *A Model for Travelling Discourse Analysis*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed to visualise the conceptual integration of an assemblage into an existing model of discourse analysis. It depicts how the emergence of an assemblage can destabilise and disrupt certain discursive parameters. The adaptable structure of this diagram also allows the perception of discourse as something that can move and be flexible – a travelling discourse.

Maps build a record of particular social, cultural and technological relations of a specific time and space.¹³ They provide a means of representing nebulous relational problems of discourse, producing a material expression of the discourse that helps to stabilise 'unfolding action' in new contexts.¹⁴ The travelling discourse is emergent and reveals itself gradually, it produces satellites, temporary pauses and moments that mark its pathway. These can be seen as convergences or assemblages of meaningful interactions that crystallise the discourse and delineate its formation. The assemblage accommodates the unstructured moments that occur or are revealed in discursive practices. Jon Anderson describes these assemblages as coherent yet transient units that enable the assemblage to form part of a larger whole through its connections.¹⁵ The diagram of discourse (Figure 5.1) developed by Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995) to illustrate the process of CDA, has been modified here to include a notional assemblage as important to travelling discourse analysis (see Figure 5.2 below). It contains that same essential building blocks – text, discursive practices and social practices, but allows these elements to adjust their parameters as new discursive events, captured in an assemblage, alter its orientation.

Maps are a way of managing the accumulation of these multiple elements that shape journeys. The types of movements that enable discourses to relocate and refresh are not necessarily linear A to B move. The flow and space of the movements are not set; rather, the travels are dependent on numerous dynamic contributions that together generate new knowledge that will provide impetus. In addition, all discourses have their own previous or existing referents around which their movements are orientated (as described in Chapter Three). The tenacity of an existing discourse makes it difficult to alter the relations of power it has established, so observing changes and shifts in the popular discourse of fashionable taste are significant. The maps created from the data in this research visualise directional or multi-directional spatial relations that generate new discursive spaces for fashionable taste. They produce a framework to better understand the mobilisation of taste and certain orientating devices. This chapter now moves to examine the first of three patterns of movement observed in popular fashion discourses – generating momentum through cultural hybridity.



5.3 TRAVELS OF THE TASTE-MAKING DISCOURSE – CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

This section examines cultural hybridity as a method of moving the popular fashion discourse. It is a technique used to build a new view of fashion that is given direction and momentum by intertwining fashion with the cultural practices of another field. Fine art, film and architecture are all fields of legitimate cultural activity that have been blended with fashion to create fresh perspectives. Successful representations of cultural composites produce a discourse underpinned by authority and credibility for new iterations of fashionable taste. The hybrid discourse can be understood as travelling between two fields of cultural production as defined by Pierre Bourdieu.¹⁶ It follows a path between the sub-field of large-scale cultural production – the popular culture of fashion that appeals to a wide audience – and the sub-field of restricted production such as that in fine art, where rare and symbolic goods are produced for a limited and elite audience.¹⁷

Cultural hybridity generates a discourse of fashionable taste that excludes notions of fashion as commercial, popular and functional. Instead, it emphasises creative expressions of fashion within a very selective value system based on aesthetics and ideas of beauty that have emerged in other fields. As this discourse emerges, it transforms fashion products into aesthetic objects for contemplation. It harnesses the conceptual underpinnings of fine art, film or architecture that are valued for their unique aesthetics and ability to comment on the world. Situated in this hybrid discourse, the fashion product as object of contemplation becomes disconnected from the systems of mass-production and commodification.¹⁸ Fashion as a cultural hybrid also makes very little reference to the functionality of objects or the intimacy of the clothed body; rather it suggests the reification of objects, where products have a higher intellectual significance than the manifestation of a new fashionable style. This discourse engenders a world that requires engagement with fashion on a deeper level necessitating new ways to speak about and behave towards these items. Methods of mobilising taste through cultural hybridity are studied in greater detail below through the blending of fashion and fine art, with further insights offered through case study analysis.

The popular fashion discourse that is structured by notions of cultural hybridity has numerous pre-existing referents to which it is connected. There is a rich history of artists and fashion designers finding avenues of experimentation and inspiration in each other's work. Many fashion designers have referenced the work of artists from Paul Poiret, Elsa Schiaparelli through to Vivienne Westwood and Raf Simons. Equally, artists have found inspiration in fashion, from the Russian Constructivists and the Surrealists through to contemporary artists such as Rebecca Horn, Lucy Orta and Caroline Broadhead (see examples in Figure 5.3 below).

Figure 5.3.

Contemporary Artists whose work sits between Fashion and Fine Art:

Lucy Orta, *Refuge Wear* 1992-1998, <http://www.studio-orta.com/en> (accessed August, 23, 2016);

Caroline Broadhead, *Double Dresses*, 2000, <https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/9517/double-dresses> (accessed August, 23, 2016);

Rebecca Horn, *Remote Control*, 2008, <http://www.rebecca-horn.de/pages/biography.html> (accessed August, 23, 2016).



However, as Melissa Taylor notes, although the history of artists creating fashion-inspired work and art as a literal translation in fashion has an extensive record, it offers only a limited perspective on the numerous relationships between fine art and fashion.¹⁹ This study analyses the relationship between these two fields from a different perspective. Although concerned with discourse, this examination moves beyond the fashion commentator's use of fine art references to contextualise the ideas, instead exploring a broader discursive elaboration that creates new authoritative people, practices and spaces capable of shaping taste. Fashion and fine art come together to create hybrid subjects, techniques and practices. Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonte describe the "artification" of fashion, as a legitimisation device for fashion that differentiates between 'high' and 'low' cultural products.²⁰ However, they argue that this should not be conflated with cultural mobility.²¹ This research acknowledges the legitimising effect of fashion and art, but is more specifically concerned with how it shifts the discursivity of fashion to produce new perspectives and changes the way we see, speak and think about objects.

Hybridisation is produced through incremental movements from one established position towards another until a change becomes discernable. Terminology is part of the shifts that makes the movement discernable. Words and phrases established in one cultural field are borrowed and utilised to communicate ideas about the other, shifting and refreshing cultural activities. In the fashion-fine art discourse, fashion industry terminology such as 'production run,' 'signature piece' and 'in-store schedule' are replaced with 'limited edition,' 'masterpiece' 'installation,' or 'happening,' typically in press releases, marketing material and reviews of new collections. This transference appears to be just a semantic variation; however, it alters the perspective on fashion objects (or *objets*), requiring them to be viewed as something collectable with longevity and enduring value, rather than the passing popularity of fashion.

The 'white cube' of a gallery space is the perfect environment for quiet meditation on such objects, presented in isolation from any marketing or sales references; the retail environment and the shop window become such spaces. It is not uncommon for displays of objects within this discursive formation to use vitrines or plinths to elevate the intellectual contemplation of objects – discursive devices that alter the situated actions of shopping. This heightening permits an appreciation of beauty that is only possible when removed from the distractions of everyday life. Helen Rees notes that the visual language of plinths and glass cabinets encourages a fetishistic reading of objects that infers that those items displayed are held as examples of good taste.²² Discursive practices feature artists' interventions in retail spaces or at promotional events such as store openings or product launches. Further, runway shows that are sometimes referred to as 'fashion trade events' are recast as performance art.

Designers such as *Viktor and Rolf*²³ or *Rick Owens* contribute to the movements of this discourse. They use the media attention of fashion week to create spectacles that are more akin to a 'happening', aligning the fashion-fine art discourse and its cultural practices to their work. In such a situation, issues of wearability, or function are removed and instead value is measured in the moments of creative genius that are captured in the objects.

Moments of creative genius or creative expression in this context are often captured in a special collaboration between designer/ brand and artist that generates objects and material expressions as fashion-fine art hybrids. Yves Carcelle (President and CEO of Louis Vuitton) describes the collaborations of Louis Vuitton with fine artists as "creative collusions." The collaborations generate a means of cultivating taste rather than selling product. The notion of cultivating taste as opposed to the encouragement of consumption is particularly meaningful to the perception of luxury products, which are regularly described as an investment just as a painting or architect-designed building would be. This discourse is enacted at high profile social occasions such as *Frieze Art Fair* or *Art Basel*, both of which have become networking events on the fashion calendar too.

Predominantly fashion brands in the luxury sector have developed this discursive realm. In this research, Prada, Gucci, Chanel and Hermes are all noted as utilising notions of cultural hybridity in building discourse around new products. However, one luxury fashion brand has done more than any other to ensure its products are seen, spoken about and thought of in this particular relational context – *Louis Vuitton*. Within the *Louis Vuitton* website, statements outline a "corporate philanthropy program that supports arts and culture"²⁴ which was initiated in 1990. This is further described as an initiative "conveying brand imagination, advocacy for the arts and the preservation of history." Throughout this examination of cultural hybridity in discourses of fashion, *Louis Vuitton* has sustained their position through multiple cultural activities, such as sponsorship of the annual *Monumenta* art prize held at the Grand Palais in Paris; funding the restoration and digitisation of the classic French film *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*; and the construction of the *Louis Vuitton Foundation Gallery*, in Paris. However, much of the brand's engagement with fine art has resulted in fashion-fine art hybrid products, presented and promoted in fashion-fine art spaces.

5.3.1 CASE STUDY: A FASHION-FINE ART HYBRID: POLKA DOTS AT LOUIS VUITTON

One particular convergence of fashion and fine art captures the creation of authority and power of this discourse. The collaboration between Marc Jacobs (former designer at Louis Vuitton) and Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama is described below to illustrate a significant moment that marks the journey of this discourse and its mobilising impact on fashionable taste.

This example is prefaced with a brief history of polka dots as a decorative motif in fashion.

The polka dot takes its name from a Bohemian folk dance, first performed in Prague in 1837 and brought to Paris in 1840; by 1845 the polka had spread to England, the United States and even India. It became such a craze that numerous consumables were named after it – puddings, hats, fishing lures, drapery arrangements, dot patterns – in the hope they would share its popularity.²⁵

Since its introduction the polka dot as a textile design motif has come to have many associations. It is connected with Spanish folk costumes (through its use in Flamenco dress) and with leading hill climbers in the *Tour de France*. In addition, the polka dot developed an association with playful femininity, popularised by Marilyn Monroe, Minnie Mouse and songs such as *Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini*. It is not a textile motif that has never been a visual mark of luxury compared to Brocade or Paisley.

Arguably, from a contemporary perspective, spots can appear kitsch. However, through the collaboration between Marc Jacobs and Yayoi Kusama, then embedded in a discourse of cultural hybridity the polka dot is re-imagined. Since 2000, Marc Jacobs had been undertaking a range of collaborative projects with artists, largely focused on the re-invention and re-invigoration of the classic *Louis Vuitton* handbags and accessories. In certain cases, these collaborations had extended to shop window installations or marketing material. In 2012, Marc Jacobs undertook his largest collaborative project to date with Yayoi Kusama. Japanese artist Kusama has been producing work for more than six decades, and now works from a studio space within a psychiatric care unit.

During her career, she has produced art in a range of styles from naked performance art in the 1960s through to immersive installations in the 2000s. Throughout her career, spots have been an enduring motif and in more recent times she has developed an obsession with creating objects and environments that she covers with spots. As creative expressions, her work reflects an intense psychological state, suggesting the tireless endeavors of a creative yet obsessive genius. Her collaboration with *Louis Vuitton* presented spots not as superficial decoration, but rather as a unique fine art concept, befitting luxury products such as *Louis Vuitton* accessories. The fashion-fine art hybrid products (such as polka dot handbags, scarves and other accessories in a range of colourways, Figure 5.4) resulting from this collaboration proved hugely successful. They were culturally credible products that were accessible and easily integrated into the wardrobes of *Louis Vuitton* customers (in contrast to some of the brand's fashion-fine art hybrids, such as the limited edition *Louis Vuitton* 'keepall' bag in chrome plated bronze produced by artist Sylvie Fleury in 2000).





Figure 5.4. (Left)

Products from the Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama Collaboration, July 2012,

<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/galleries/TMG9387362/Yayoi-Kusama-for-Louis-Vuitton-the-full-collection-in-pictures.html> (accessed December, 5, 2013).

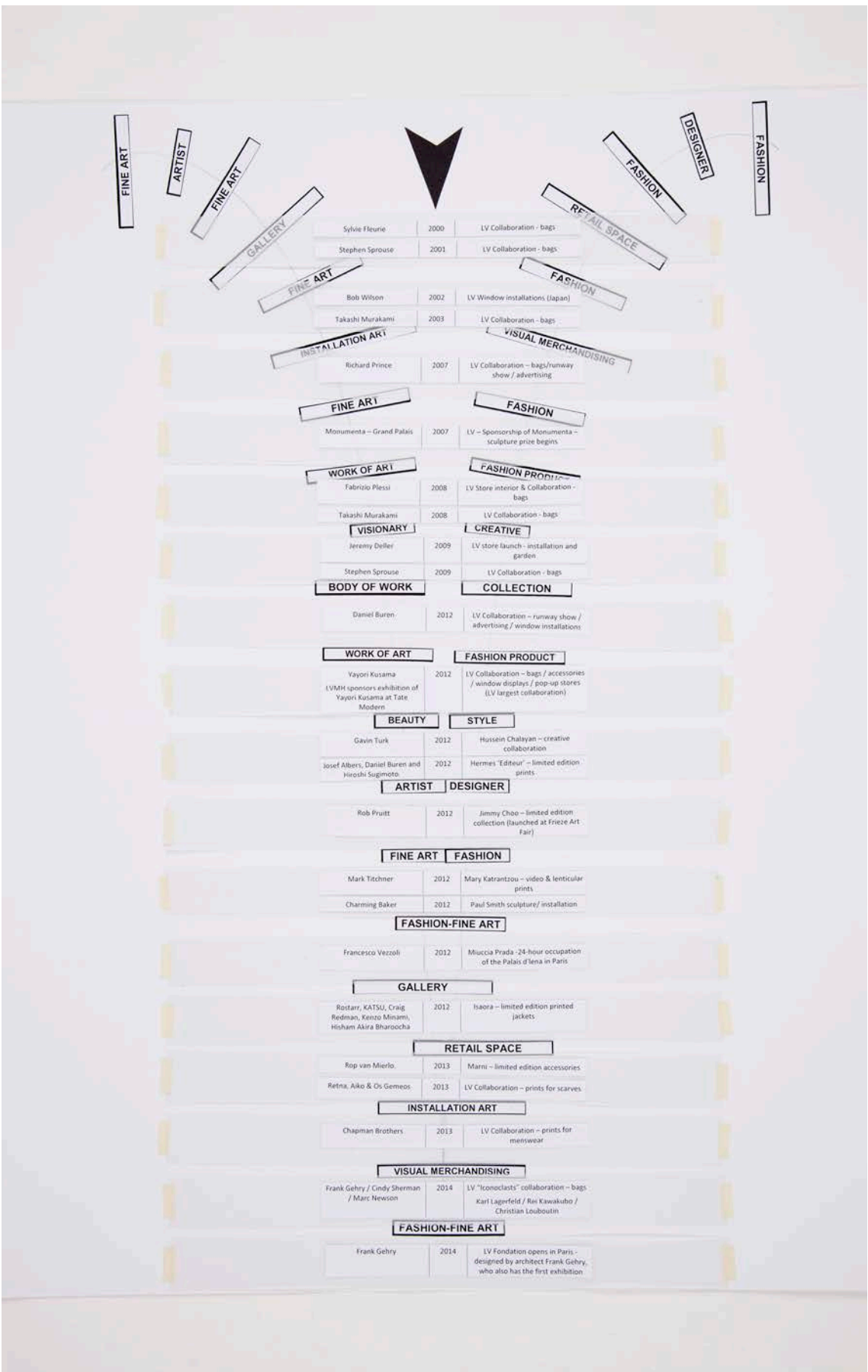
As part of the collaboration, Kusama designed various interior environments as pop-up shops and installations in which to contemplate (and shop for) her art including in *Selfridges* in London and *Louis Vuitton* store 5th Avenue in New York. Recognising the appeal of this particular cultural hybrid, the collaboration was extended to garments for the label. The artist herself, as the embodiment of creative artistic genius, played a central role in marketing activities. She appeared at each launch and small Kusama dolls were produced as part of the product range. For a time, the *Louis Vuitton* brand was saturated in polka dots, conceptualised as fine art and presented in installations, performances, limited edition objects and catalogues documenting the project. By fusing fashion and fine art in both material and discursive ways, *Louis Vuitton* was able to offer its customers new, fun – even kitsch – fashion products, without compromising the cultural credibility of the luxury label. A network of taste-making entities have come together to make this a significant moment in the development of this discourse – international fashion designer Marc Jacobs, fine artist Yayoi Kusama and luxury Parisian fashion brand *Louis Vuitton*. Each performed a role that helps to create and extend a legitimate and authoritative discourse within which fashionable taste can emerge.

The accumulated movements of the fashion-fine art hybrid discourse are mapped below (Figure 5.5), where the increments are marked by increasing numbers of convergences.

Figure 5.5. (Right)

Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: A Hybrid Trajectory*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the developments of a hybrid discourse, one formed by the coming together of fashion and fine art. The structure is created using data gathered on fashion-fine art collaborations between 2000 and 2014 (see Appendix 4.1). Drawing directly from the data, the collage depicts the gradual blending and blurring of formerly separate discourses. This slowly produces a new hybrid discourse where discipline specific terms and practices from fashion and from fine art become interchangeable.



5.4 TRAVELS OF THE TASTE-MAKING DISCOURSE – ANALOGY

This section examines analogy as an approach to mobilising and extending the popular discourse into new territory. It is a technique that uses comparison to generate a new discourse. It is a means of movement that relies on pre-existing standards of tastes and uses these as a departure point from which to move and extend the discourse. Analogy is noted as a practice of the moneychanger in Chapter One, as a way of establishing equivalence in value. However, here analogy and comparative evaluation is used as a discursive trigger for movement, as a collision point for new and existing ideas that generates traction. The movements are driven by difference as well as similarities. As a discursive practice, it is applied to people, objects and places; phrases such as ‘lauded as the next Kate Moss,’ or ‘this season’s answer to skinny jeans’ employ analogy to establish a connection with existing notions of taste whilst noting differences that will up-date perceptions of these new subjects. This method of mobilising fashionable taste seeks out credibility and authority that has already accrued in existing expressions of taste (Kate Moss or skinny jeans, for example). The analogical discourse uses the established legitimacy of its referents as a launch pad for new movements. So particular types of pre- and inter-discursive content are fundamental for movement; however, it is also dependent on adding an element of difference or novelty – something that will refresh and propel the discourse to a new setting.

The constitution of a new formation can be viewed as a break or rupture in the existing discourse, creating an entirely different discourse that supplants and opens up new formations. Alternatively, it can be understood as a thread or sub-discourse that forms part of the discursivity that underpins beliefs and values within the field.²⁶ The pattern of the analogical discourse is a form of serialisation, because it reaffirms certain characteristics or conventions of fashion whilst adding new dimensions. It promotes continuity and change by creating a roadmap defined by certain extant features that nevertheless can be adapted to accommodate extensions, diversions and detours. This discourse creates a world of endless possibilities for new variations of fashionable taste. As long as one section of the analogical discourse is explicitly connected to proven and legitimate fashion subjects, the other sections of the discourse are free to explore new territory. The contents of this mobile taste-making discourse are studied in greater detail below through the constitution of fashion world cities, with further insights offered through case study analysis.

As noted above, this taste-making discourse is reliant on pre- and inter-discursive content. Reference to specific urban backdrops for fashion has been described earlier in this research (Chapter Two, *Section 1.3 Orthodoxies of Fashion*) where fashion’s world cities form part of its institutional framework. Agnès Rocamora notes that it is in fashion media that the city becomes part of the “geography of fashion”²⁷ and describes how through the discourse certain cities can “become active agents in the making of arts and fashion.”²⁸ Fashion has a well-established relationship with the notion of the city that is exploited in the travels of this particular analogous discourse. It uses ‘the city’ or the modern, urban cultural metropolis as the pre-eminent site of fashion production. This idea is connected to Western cultural value systems as an underpinning structure in understanding ‘international’ or ‘global’ fashion. David Gilbert describes a distinct hierarchy of ‘world cities’ in fashion as a form of symbolic geography where place names have become short hand for certain manifestations of fashion.²⁹ It has already been established in this thesis that New York, London, Milan and Paris hold principal positions in the ‘international’ hierarchy of fashion. The dominance of these fashion cites is sustained in part through hosting high-profile fashion weeks, with a sense of place being extended through a long history of making and wearing clothes in these locations. The media discourse around these cities help to normalise the relationship between these cities and fashion.³⁰ Rocamora describes how the fashion media help to construct these locations as “imagined cities” that are often reduced to symbolic “fashionable haunts and goods.”³¹ Nevertheless, New York, London, Milan and Paris remain the benchmark for aspiring fashion cities and these ‘top tier’ cities anchor the discourse as it produces new hot spots. Gilbert illustrates the continued power of the existing discourse of these locations:

*Shanghai’s claim to be the ‘Paris of the East’ worked through fashion and attitudes to consumption, but also in the design and culture of the shops and shopping environment of the Bund. In Melbourne, locals have talked of the ‘Paris end of Collins Street’ for over a century. Both the revived Bund and contemporary Collins Street retain this mimetic relationship with Paris, indicating its continuing force as a symbolic marker of high fashion.*³²

The analogical discourse is shaped and extended to reflect fashion as a socio-cultural practice; it uses inter-discursive referents to identify parts of a city’s infrastructure that facilitate the expression of fashion – spaces for the observation and circulation of fashionable behaviour. Notably, this discourse excludes references to materials, supply chain and manufacturing, removing any possible association with issues of pay, working conditions, ethics and sustainability. As this discourse travels from London or Paris to Taipei or Moscow, it refers to both local and global culture; however, local cultural practices are selectively

framed. Local ‘culture’ in this sense often refers to local residents engaging in global activities such as blogging, documenting ‘street style’ fashion against an urban backdrop, shopping or launching a new fashion label; activities that reinforce certain expressions and performances of fashionable taste, but add novelty through some local flavor.

Through analogy, a sequential pathway is built that extends the concept of a fashion city. The travelling discourse pauses in these destinations as assemblages of people, events, spaces and fashionable enterprises converge on the location. The mapping of this journey creates a trajectory of successive movements that cascade from the pinnacle of what Norma Rantisi calls “the international fashion pyramid.”³³ She proposes ranking of global fashion cities as either ‘first tier’ or ‘second tier’ in this structure, depending on their symbolic capital. David Gilbert however, talks of the endurance of “Fashion’s imperialist power to divide, label and sort (the world) into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser importance.”³⁴ Whereas Frederic Godart describes this hierarchy as “the current ‘oligarchic’ structure of fashion – around New York, London, Milan and Paris.”³⁵

The trajectory mapped in Figures 5.8 and 5.9 follows the development of new fashion capitals constituted by certain characteristics that have historically enabled fashionable taste to be produced. Following the big four (in Figure 5.8), all new fashion cities require a fashion week that is capable of attracting a range of international ‘fashion people’ such as models and fashion commentators. In Godart’s view, a fashion capital is constituted “by the existence of fashion week shows that are routinely covered by major international fashion magazines.”³⁶ This research takes the media connection further, positing that fashion capitals also require their own promotional infrastructure including local editions of global fashion titles such as *Vogue*, *Elle* or *Harper’s Bazaar*. This infrastructure communicates local fashion through international fashion parlance and recognised formats, activating analogy and direct comparison. New fashion cities need a third characteristic, spaces that facilitate the performance, observation and circulation of fashionable behaviour. These spaces are physical features of the city, but they are also constituted socially and symbolically, inscribed by the people, objects and activities bought together at the location. Godart quotes Manuel Castells when

Figure 5.8.

Rachel Matthews, The Travelling Discourse: An Analogous Trajectory (Part 1: London, Paris New York and Milan), 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the basis of an analogous discourse; Part 1 is formed by four key cities defined as idealised urban sites for the production of fashion. The structure is created using data gathered on three important markers of a fashion capital: international fashion week events, local editions of global fashion media titles and space for the performance, observation and circulation of fashionable behaviour (see Appendix 4.2). Drawing directly from the data, the collage depicts the establishment of discursive features for a fashion capital. Figure 5.9 uses this as its foundation before visualising how the analogous discourse develops and is extended.

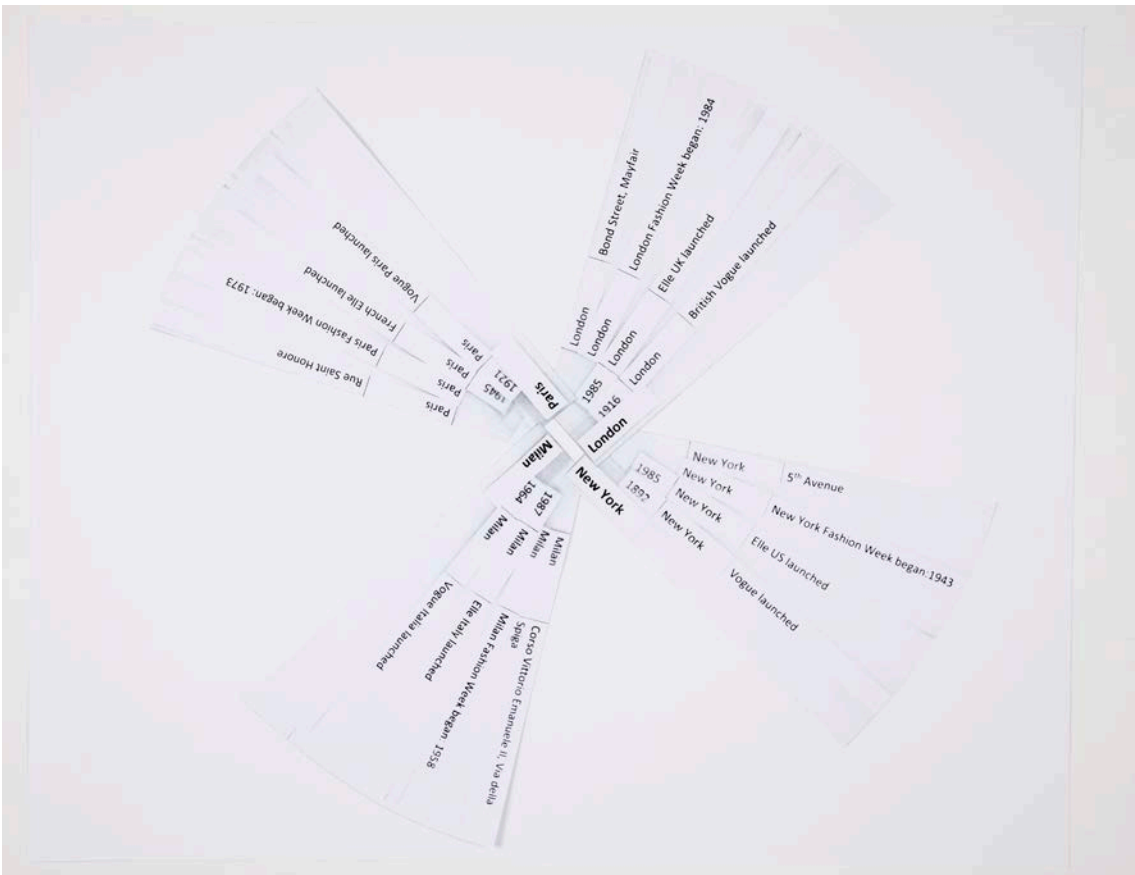
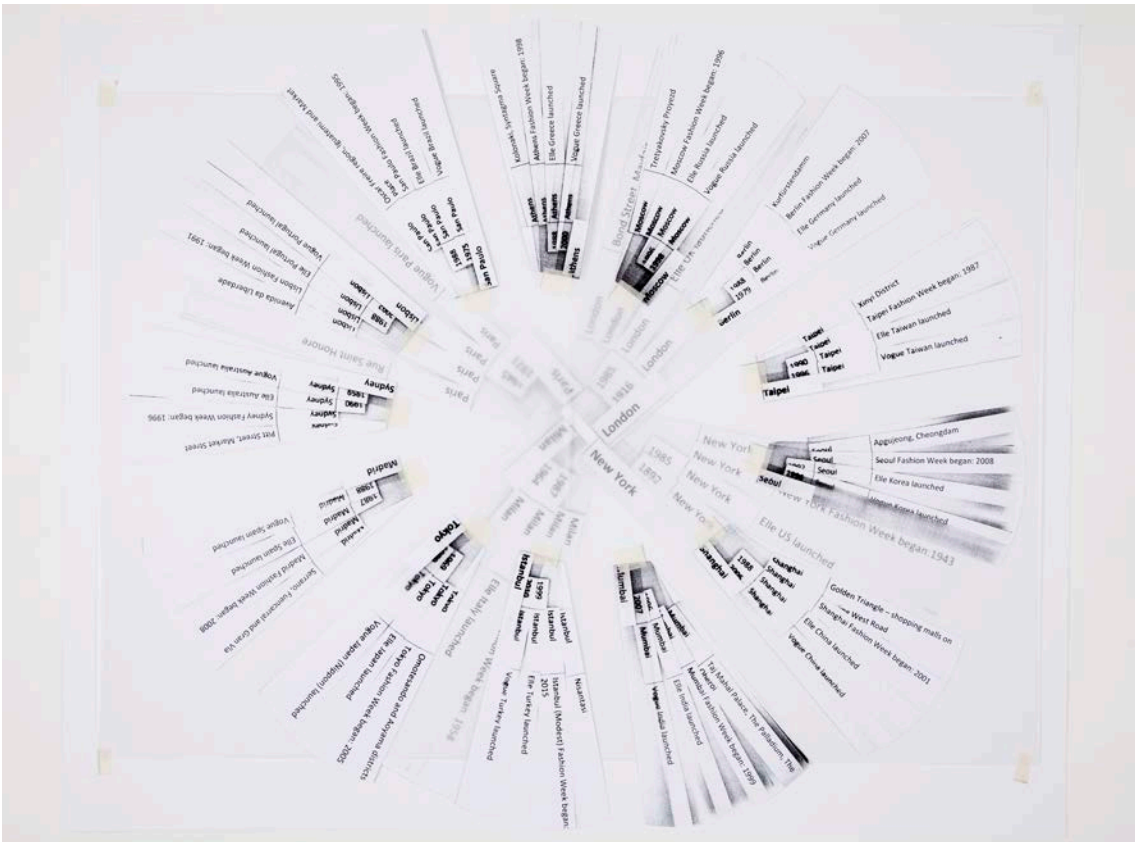


Figure 5.9.

Rachel Matthews, The Travelling Discourse: An Analogous Trajectory (Part 2: Fashion Cities in the Early Twenty-first Century), 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the development and extension of the analogous discourse established in Figure 5.8. It depicts how the four major urban sites of fashion (in the first layer) have been used as a basis from which to advance the concept of fashion capital cities. The structure is again created using data gathered on three important markers of a fashion capital: international fashion week events, local editions of global fashion media titles and space for the performance, observation and circulation of fashionable behaviour (see Appendix 4.2). Drawing directly from the data, the collage represents how the number of cities defined as fashion capitals has grown, by becoming analogous with the four key cities defined in Figure 5.8.



explaining this convergence where city spaces “become a ‘space of flows’ in which symbols, objects and (some) humans circulate freely” when competing for global attention.³⁷ In the analogical discourse such a space is temporarily created by fashion week but more permanently as a shopping destination with distinctive flagship stores, as Rantisi notes “today’s fashion centers are as much shopping meccas as they are production or design hubs.”³⁸

The movements of this discourse can be seen as a place-making strategy, however this approach ‘remakes’ diverse cities through discerning similarities as well as noting difference in the fashion landscape. Lise Skov suggests any location can benefit from fostering associations with the creative culture of fashion, as the place is then perceived as less boring.³⁹ Active presentations of fashion in city streetscapes, at fashion week events and shopping locations become identifiable and consumable. They are easily circulated in fashion media and beyond, connecting the city with the immaterial cultural production of fashion.⁴⁰

The characteristics used as marks of similarity when mapping analogous fashion capitals are interactive inter-related features that help to support and amplify each other. Rantisi notes the “economic multiplier effects” that fashion can produce in certain locations, through its ability to attract associated industries such as fashion magazines, fashion photographers and modeling.⁴¹ This multiplier effect extends further; international luxury fashion brands only open flagship stores in cities with significant numbers of fashion consumers and an international fashion magazine will only launch a regional edition if there is a significant group of fashion consumers to which they and their advertisers (mostly international fashion brands) can appeal. The magazine will be enhanced by the regional fashion week spectacle and the fashion consumers will be entertained and engaged by such content. The fashion week events, regional editions of international fashion magazines, fashion retail environments and the fashion consumers of the city coalesce. This convergence of multiple entities has the critical mass to draw other activities to the site such as design exhibitions, educational establishments and other types of cultural festivals.

The network effect emphasise the creative and cultivated aspects of fashion as manifest in new symbolic hotspots and in turn create media attention and discussion making the new destination ‘seeable, sayable and thinkable’ as a new fashion city. The mobilisation of fashionable taste through the analogical discourse has extended our understanding of fashion cities to acknowledge Seoul in South Korea as one in a series of modern urban hotspots. Seoul has been mobilised by the power of discourse to become one of the three Asian fashion cities alongside Tokyo and Shanghai.⁴² The discussion below examines Seoul as an example of how analogy has shaped a new destination in international fashion.

5.4.1 CASE STUDY: SEOUL: A NEW FASHION CAPITAL

Prior to 2008, Seoul’s main contribution to the international fashion industry was as a global supplier of high quality textiles. In addition, it has a thriving garment production district that has been described as “quick at interpreting trends” (for its burgeoning domestic fast fashion market, not for export).⁴³ In 2008, the central government of South Korea made a decision to invest in Korea’s cultural industries. This investment has raised the profile and cultural standing of Korean films, television and music, in particular, K-Pop, on the global stage. Seoul fashion week began in 2000 and now stages collections of 41 Korean designers, yet it has only recently begun to attract an international audience. The emergence of fashion from Korea has been slow, mainly because much of the early media coverage was distributed in Korean only, and consequently failed to attract any international media attention. This situation has been addressed and in so doing, the international fashion media (especially Condé Nast) has been instrumental in the production of Seoul as a new fashion city.

The acknowledgement and endorsement of Seoul as a fashion city by the international fashion community has been greatly assisted by Suzy Menkes and her reputation. The launch of Vogue Korea in 1996 (Elle Korea was launched in 1992) is a crucial part of Seoul’s promotional infrastructure. Vogue’s annual shopping event ‘Fashion’s Night Out’ has been staged in Seoul since 2012 and in 2016 it hosted the Condé Nast Global Luxury Conference. However, until relatively recently Suzy Menkes was one of very few international journalists to visit Seoul and attend Seoul Fashion Week. Through her credibility and visibility as “best-known fashion journalist in the world,”⁴⁴ her runway reports on Korean designers and the fashion practices of Seoul have gained significant visibility in global media channels. Furthermore, the photographs of her repeated presence in Seoul at fashion weeks, at exhibition openings, and the Condé Nast Conference have become part of a visual stream of photographs of Suzy Menkes at similar events in Paris, New York and London. The city’s international fashion credentials are further supported by luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Dior, who have all recently chosen the city as a site for exhibitions or showcases. These contribute further global connections and media coverage for the city, while the luxury fashion brands are happy to leverage Seoul’s ‘young and hyper-modern’ associations.

A key feature of difference in the discourse surrounding Seoul as a new fashion capital is the emphasis on its young, interconnected and technological savvy population. South Korea is reported to have the world's fastest Internet and 97% of the population has a smart phone.⁴⁵ Photographs of the street style of Seoul show that they dress in a mix of international fashion brands with local designer labels that are, as noted by Susie Lau, styled "in a way that feels fresh, exuberant and enthusiastic."⁴⁶ This has helped to make stars of select Korean fashion bloggers such as *ProFashional Man* and *Your Boyhood* as well as launching the careers of a wave of young Asian models including Lee Huyn Yi, Sora Choi and Ji Young Kwak. These models are stars at home, but have also appeared on the runways of international fashion weeks. They form part of the continuous global flow of people, brands and culture that supports Seoul as fashion city and the narrative thread of this discourse.

Seoul is regularly compared with Tokyo and Shanghai primarily due to a common type of designer emerging from these locations, as well as a shared approach to shopping and street-style activities. It has even been proposed that these three fashion cities should take it in turns to host a pan-Asian fashion week, a move that could have greater potential to attract an international audience than current individual fashion weeks.⁴⁷ In the current discourse though, Seoul appears to be pulling ahead of Tokyo and Shanghai - "(Seoul) sets its stall out as the leading arbiter of Asian taste"⁴⁸ influencing China and Japan and the numbers of Chinese and Japanese tourists visiting Seoul supports this claim. Indeed aspects of Seoul's current profile rely on its international connections, and tourists visiting Seoul as a shopping destination come with such expectations. They are not disappointed when they find the *Dior* store amongst others, within a Zaha Hadid designed shopping mall. Seoul is a city of international fashion brands housed in international spaces, with international architects building a cityscape reflective of other international destinations. As the profile of street wear labels, models and bloggers from Seoul become more visible through inclusion in international fashion communications, the assimilation and acceptance of the new fashion capital becomes assured.

As Seoul is absorbed into the analogical discourse and is normalised as one of fashion's world cities, it has become confident enough to include more marks of difference (other than its young demographic) to ensure it is understood as 'the same but different' to other aspiring and established fashion capitals. Almost as a sign of its newfound self-assurance, Seoul has begun to differentiate itself through references to its more traditional creative activities. This enables a greater range of diverse cultural statements to sure up the movements of the discourse. These additions to the discourse provide dash of exotic otherness. There has been a comprehensive exhibition of Korean applied arts staged at *La Musee des Arts Decoratif* in Paris – called *Korea Now* (September

2015–January 2016), which has been described as "a blend of classic and hyper-modern."⁴⁹ Further adding to the global fashion discourse on Seoul, there is a particular tradition receiving media attention – the Hanbok. The Hanbok is a dress worn as part of Korean traditional costume that many young Koreans have begun customising and wearing with a mix of contemporary garments. When Karl Lagerfeld staged the presentation of the *Chanel Resort Collection* in Seoul in May 2015, he presented the bride at the end of the runway show in a *Chanel Hanbok*. The finale was an assemblage that perfectly captured the nature of this fashion discourse – Seoul as a fashion nexus situated between old and new; local and global; and Western conventions with Eastern traditions. A new fashion capital is formed through its reassuring similarities with recognised fashion cities, yet it moves beyond the repetitive or mimetic through the acknowledgement of its own special, local or different features to create a distinct destination.



Figure 5.6:

Seoul Street Style

Anon. <http://tw.gigacircle.com/4208436-1> (accessed May, 20 2015).

Figure 5.7.

Chanel Resort Collection 2016 Shown in Seoul: Chanel Hanbok

Indigitalimages.com, Chanel Resort Collection 2016 Shown in Seoul: Chanel Hanbok, May 2015, <http://www.vogue.com/fashion-week-review/13258178/chanel-resort-2016/> (accessed September, 27, 2016).

5.5 TRAVELS OF THE TASTE-MAKING DISCOURSE – RECONFIGURATION

This section examines the concept of reconfiguration as a means of mobilising discourses of fashionable taste; a technique that deconstructs or unravels familiar narratives and ideas, then reconfigures them to create new discursive perspectives. The reshaping and repurposing of familiar elements or tropes of fashion drive the movements of this discourse. The use of established motifs gives the discourse its credibility and legitimacy. Reconfiguration uses the established authority of ideas, practices and narratives entrenched in the culture of fashion to underpin new directions. For example, rhetorical devices used to denote certain types of fashion such as 'daywear', 'sportswear' and 'eveningwear' can be reinvigorated, broken apart or rearranged to become new ways of dressing, thus transformed as *sports-lux* or *day-into-night*. Fashion conventions like the runway show are regularly reconfigured, keeping the essential idea of the prestigious presentation of a new collection while completely reimagining the traditional scaffolding of such an event.

Reconfiguration relies upon the referents of pre-discursive content to form an anchor in a similar way to the analogous discourse. However, in reconfiguration, the movements from this founding reference are less predictable, sequential or organised. There is no set pattern in this approach; rather, it uses a pre-existing referent or fashion trope as a trigger point or portal into new perspectives on fashion. Reconfiguration propels discursive movements to destinations through unconventional or unexpected relations. It is able to draw unique or eclectic sets of entities into each orbit to generate interaction and energy. The trajectory mapped for reconfigured discourses reflects this freedom of movement, creating multi-directional pathways. The movements produced here can be conceptualised as diffractive patterns or 'ripple effects' – movements that are disruptive, unclassifiable yet still relational.⁵⁰ Donna Haraway proposes diffraction as a metaphor for re-thinking relationality.⁵¹ It offers an alternative way to understand difference or newness produced in the travelling discourses of fashionable taste that would otherwise appear to be a competing discourse. This type of discourse creates a world of multiple perspectives – it takes notions of fashion that appear steady and secure and allows them to become changeable and open to new possibilities. The mobilisation of taste through this discourse is studied in greater detail below via the recurrent accounts of fashion history, with further insights offered through case study analysis.

The history of fashion is predominantly presented as a singular linear narrative and continues to be used as a device to create stability and order in fashion's heritage. There is a strong connection between

the practices of contemporary fashion and its history. It has become customary to use an archetypal reading of fashion's past to orientate us to many cultural practices of fashion. The chronology of the changes in women's fashion over the last one hundred and fifty years functions as an anchor in fashion design, fashion communication and as a building block in fashion education. It is utilised as a way to illustrate the development of fashion's customs, such as *Ready-to-Wear* and *Haute Couture* fashion weeks, as well as connecting notable historic events to fashion and dress.

Fashion commentators are, as previously mentioned, amongst many in fashion who use the history of fashion as a form of inter-discursive and inter-textual reference. Commentators frame discussions of new and novel fashion ideas in an historical context to enable connections between fashion's past and present, as well as explaining the new through referencing the familiar. In this context, the history of fashion is used as a vehicle to transfer or translate meaning onto new objects as a type of shorthand, being a stable reference point of shared fashion knowledge with agreed meanings. References to the 1960s suggest young, urban and 'swinging', whereas links to the 1980s often infer explicit displays of money and power. Suzy Menkes' runway review below illustrates the point:

Figure 5.10.

Linear Fashion Timeline:

Kent State University
Museum, Fashion Timeline,
June 2012, <https://kentstateuniversitymuseum.wordpress.com/2012/06/06/fashion-timeline/> (accessed December, 22, 2015).

What I saw on the runway was a souped-up 1960s/70s look, with the Courrèges-style focus moving from the Moon to a sex shop. This is an exaggeration of how the vinyl-style shine looked on ginger and black pants or a skimpy 1970s jacket.⁵²

History as a linear device (often represented as a time-line see Figure 5.10) confers a simple structure on the complex and multi-dimensional realm of women's fashion since the mid-nineteenth century and is

broken down into ten-year intervals. This approach, described as 'decade-ism', creates a picture of gradual evolution and continuity in fashion's history.⁵³ Through the simplicity and accessibility of this device, it has come to dominate the history of fashion and forms an unconscious substructure in the culture of fashion.



The authority of this recurrent fashion narrative is further supported by two important interacting referents – ‘history’ as a fixed and stable construct that contains the origins of culture, and the ‘museum’ as custodian of canonical knowledge. Historical fashion in the museum context is perceived by many to be presented in an accurate and neutral manner, with objects and information based on facts and artefacts. The cultural authority of the museum affects our ways of looking and understanding such exhibits. Helen Rees describes how museums are often seen as set apart from daily life (and in particular the commercial concerns of daily life) and as such create a type of separate form of culture.⁵⁴ Michel Foucault also recognised this ‘difference’, describing museums as a heterotopia of indefinitely accumulating time; a place of ‘otherness’ where time never ceases building up yet is protected from ravages of time.⁵⁵ Fashion history in this context suggests that museums have the possibility of reaching back in time to locate *the source* of ideas orderly stored or catalogued in the past. Further, Valerie Steele notes the increasing importance of the museum as a site of meaning production for contemporary fashion;⁵⁶ and Fiona Anderson argues for museums to be understood as a form of media for their role in producing and communicating particular notions of fashion.⁵⁷ Indeed, through exhibition labels, catalogues, marketing material, media coverage and reviews large institutions are able to influence the discourses pertaining to the history of fashion.

Managing the complex and multi-layered domain of fashion’s history by means of a linear timeline is a useful classification, and offers a familiar fashion narrative that can give a discourse credibility and legitimacy. Crucially though, this singular chronology of fashion has left little room to highlight variations, discontinuities or alternative perspectives on past eras. It affirms and sustains a view of the past with a Western Euro-centric bias, with all shades of historical events and cultural changes understood from this singular perspective.

The belief that changes in fashion happened in a regular and predictable manner became so entrenched during the twentieth century that fashion historian and museum curator, James Laver, formulated *Laver’s Law*. James Laver’s theory, first published in 1937, suggested it was possible to predict the timing of adoption of new fashions based on a sliding scale of 10-year increments relative to the present.⁵⁸ Although change and the adoption of new fashion continues to be part of the rhythm of contemporary fashion, revisiting Laver’s Law today one can see the over simplification of this approach. Barry Lord and Gail Dexter-Lord (writers and consultants on the management of cultural resources and industries) describe decade-ism as a ‘historical pastiche’ that has “matured into a mini-industry of exhibitions, shows, documentaries and books purporting to explain cultural changes...in lifestyle, architecture, fashion, film, music and art – as arising from ‘history’”.⁵⁹ Decade-ism can be seen as a historiography of fashion; a digestible narrative

format that persists perhaps out of habit, despite its shortcomings in the twenty-first century. It is important to acknowledge that reliance on the fashion timeline mapped out in ten year intervals has, like other types of classifying apparatus, actively shaped our understanding and from that, the history of fashion. This familiar fashion narrative contains many elements that can act as credible anchor points for a reconfigured discourse of fashion’s past and the reshaping and rejuvenating movements of this discourse appear to be influencing the history of fashion in two distinct ways.

The first appears to be happening inadvertently, while the second intentional approach is described in the case study below. First, museums and galleries have become attuned to the commercial potential in offering crowd-pleasing fashion exhibitions that fall into a popular category of ‘infotainment.’ Marie Riegels Melchoir notes that fashion exhibitions give museums visibility as their eye-catching nature attracts media attention, which in turn encourages greater public engagement. Melchoir argues that “fashion makes museums appear relevant and appealing to contemporary society.”⁶⁰ The fashion exhibition readily taps into growing consumer appetites for information that comes packaged as entertainment, a trend that cuts across all forms of popular culture including museums. In addition, in the twenty-first century, technology has enabled followers of fashion to be well informed via on-line access to information that would formerly have been the realm of the specialist fashion researcher. Today’s culturally engaged public is visually sophisticated and looks for personal resonance in cultural pastimes that are easily accessible.

In order to inspire an increasingly well-informed fashion consumer to visit another fashion exhibition, museums are finding increasingly inventive ways to frame elements of fashion. The life’s work of certain designers or the history of fashion provide ready sources of engaging themes and story lines yet to be told. The choice of who and what to focus on can be influenced by the images or titles that can be packaged for marketing in order to gain traction in the noisy fashion media landscape. This manner of engaging museumgoers is demonstrated in a recent spate of exhibitions about the history of underwear – there have been five since 2010, some of which have toured extensively.⁶¹ The theme provides personal triggers (we all relate to underwear) and an accessible concept of fashion as something intimate and personal yet public and collective. The theme of underwear and lingerie offers plenty of seductive image opportunities (see Figure 5.11) as well as attention grabbing storylines such as ‘Queen Victoria’s Drawers Revealed’ – the perfect combination of information, entertainment and education. Each institution staging these exhibitions has seen the potential in this discourse and each has taken this recurrent theme in various directions, generating multiple versions of the history of fashion through undergarments. For example, one exhibition surveys the evolution of

underwear as health garments, another contemplates underwear as a fashion must-have depicted in the marketing and branding of such products. Some of the histories of underwear begin in fourteenth century; some begin in the eighteenth century. Some histories document dual characteristics of modesty and seduction, while others investigate a history of underwear that has manipulated the shape of the body to create fashionable silhouettes.

These linked discursive events promise to re-tell a familiar story with most institutions using the corset as the visual anchor; however, each perspective generates a discourse that creatively reconfigures the topic. These versions have the ability to create parallel threads that subvert, adjust or improve on a former understanding of history. Multiple perspectives on the story of undergarments create a 'ripple effect' emanating from one element in the history of fashion; this is inadvertently re-shaping a familiar fashion discourse rather than replicating or reproducing it.

The exhibitions provoke a reconsideration time and history, as Caroline Evans proposes, "Historical time...(is not) something that flows smoothly from past to present but is a more complex relay of turns and returns, in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it."⁶² Her comments support the need to break open the linear timeline to better acknowledge the numerous parallel pathways and intersections that, from the vantage point of the present, allow multiple views of the people, places, objects and practices that make up fashion's past. The diffractive reading or mapping of fashion's history (Figure 5.13) in these reconfigurations resembles the 'complex relay of turns and re-turns' described by Caroline Evans.⁶³ Pathways into the past are informed and guided by a key point of departure – the present. And as future positions slowly become the present, new or different points of departure become possible. Something more flexible than a linear timeline is required in order to navigate such conceptions of time. Viewing the creative reconfiguring of people, objects and ideas in fashion history in museum exhibitions as a diffractive process enables the possibility of multiple views of the past. Karan Barad describes the process of diffraction as an 'opening up' or as a way of breathing new life into that which is being diffracted.⁶⁴

The concept of diffraction is applied here to encapsulate the way in which a reconfigured discourse of fashion's history is spread and bends as a result of passing through the filter (of a curator or institution) standing in the present looking back at the past. It is possible to see how certain views of fashion history that in a singular chronology have become fixed, are no longer simply reproduced or reflected in discourses around contemporary fashion exhibitions. Indeed, the multiple underwear exhibitions created ripple effects across Ready-to-Wear fashion collections for Spring/ Summer 2016. Collections

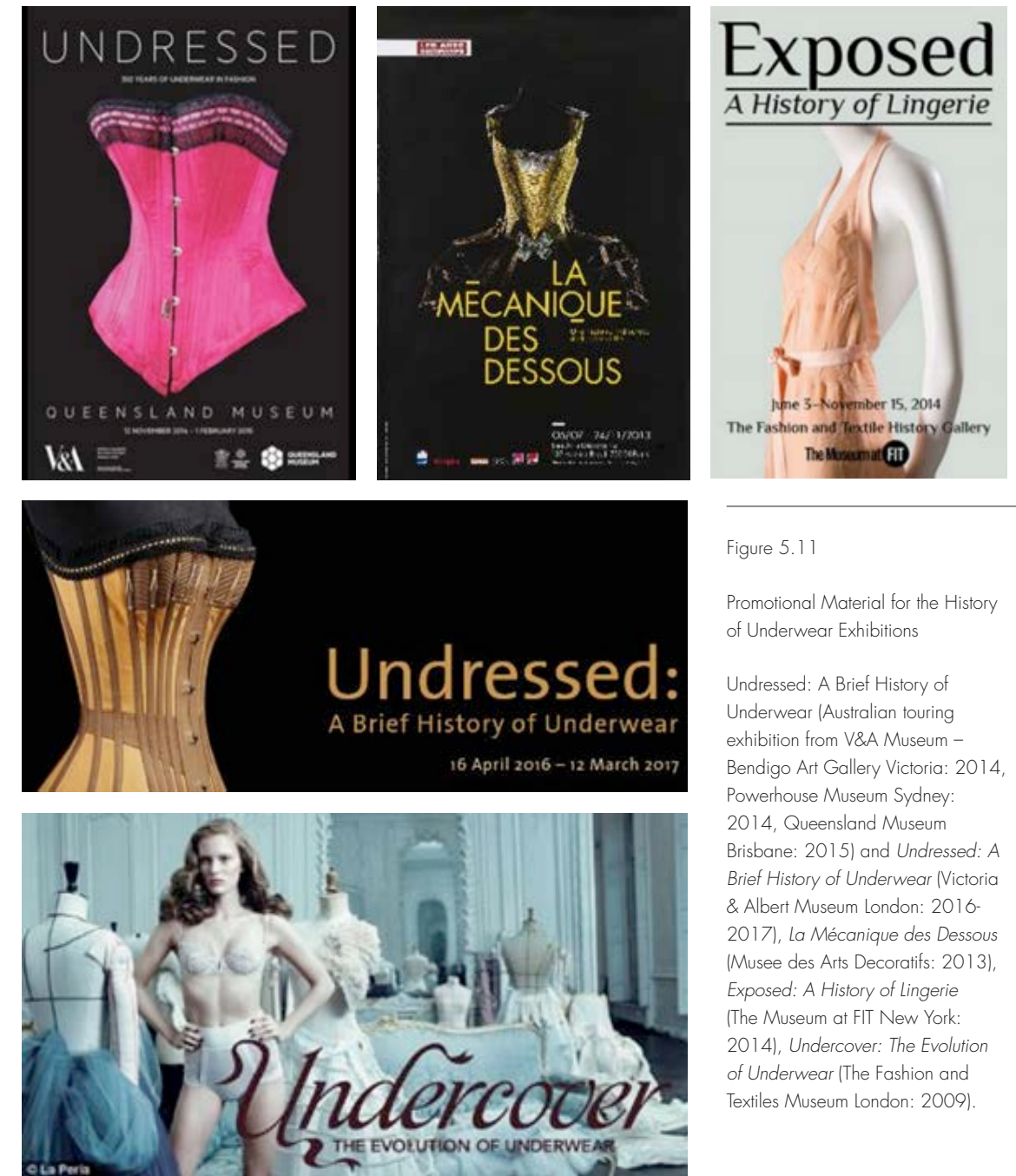


Figure 5.11

Promotional Material for the History of Underwear Exhibitions

Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear (Australian touring exhibition from V&A Museum – Bendigo Art Gallery Victoria: 2014, Powerhouse Museum Sydney: 2014, Queensland Museum Brisbane: 2015) and *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (Victoria & Albert Museum London: 2016-2017), *La Mécanique des Dessous* (Musée des Arts Décoratifs: 2013), *Exposed: A History of Lingerie* (The Museum at FIT New York: 2014), *Undercover: The Evolution of Underwear* (The Fashion and Textiles Museum London: 2009).

of designers in New York (Ricardo Tisci at *Givenchy*, and Joseph Altuzarra at *Altuzarra*), London (JW Anderson, Vivienne Westwood) and Paris (*Celine*, *Dior* and Alexander Wang at *Balenciaga*) all included underwear references, notably ‘underwear as outwear.’ This fashion history term references the 1990s. Underwear as outerwear describes Madonna’s *Blond Ambition* tour stage outfits and is later reconfigured as *Heroin Chic*, a Grunge interpretation epitomised by Kate Moss wearing slips and camisoles with army jackets, laddered stockings and boots.

Historical moments are unraveled, opened up, broken apart and then re-configured, blended in various combinations to see and think different things about the past. It is possible for history to straddle various time frames that move at different speeds. The exhibitions and the history-inspired collections offer a pause, an opportunity to adjust one’s relationship to what has gone before depending on the current location. The museum can now generate a more diverse historical discourse that no longer simply maps our understanding in well-trodden incremental steps; rather it can make connections and open a dialogue with the past through unexpected juxtapositions of near and far. Mapping the movements of a fashion discourse propelled by reconfiguration generates very different types of multi-layered pathways (Figure 5.12 maps the linear trajectory, Figure 5.13 maps the re-configured trajectory of the underwear exhibitions).

Alongside this unintentional re-configuring of fashion history, there have also been some notable examples that intentionally ‘open up’ or provoke diffractive readings of the history of fashion. The discussion below contains examples that help to illustrate the mobilising impact of this approach.

5.5.1 CASE STUDY: NEW VIEWS ON FASHION’S HISTORY

Karan Barad describes her concept of diffraction and ‘reading diffractively’ as a way to notice patterns of difference that make a difference; she again quotes Donna Haraway who says, “diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement and difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history.”⁶⁵ There have been a number of curatorial interventions that have purposely attempted an alternative interaction with the history of fashion. Two fashion exhibitions that make a point of drawing together associations, connections and meanings that create energetic interactions or dialogue between contemporary fashion and its past are examined here: *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations*, and *The Impossible Wardrobe*.

Figure 5.12.

Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: An Un-reconfigured Trajectory*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to emphasise a conventional linear ordering of the History of Underwear exhibitions (between 2009-2016). The structure is created chronologically, based on data gathered about the multiple exhibitions (see Appendix 4.3). This figure should be viewed in relation to Figure 5.13 to understand the movements of the reconfigured discourse.

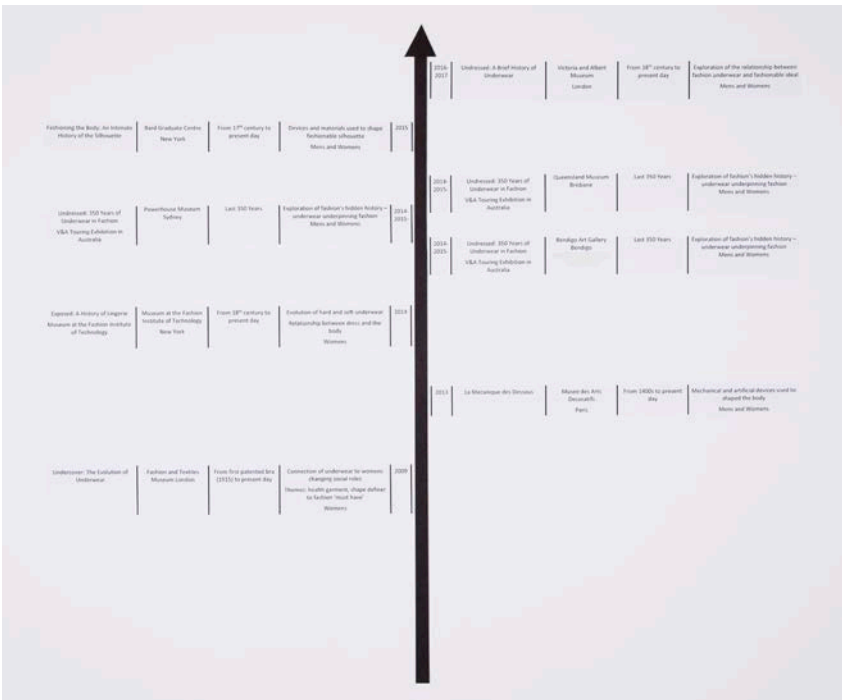
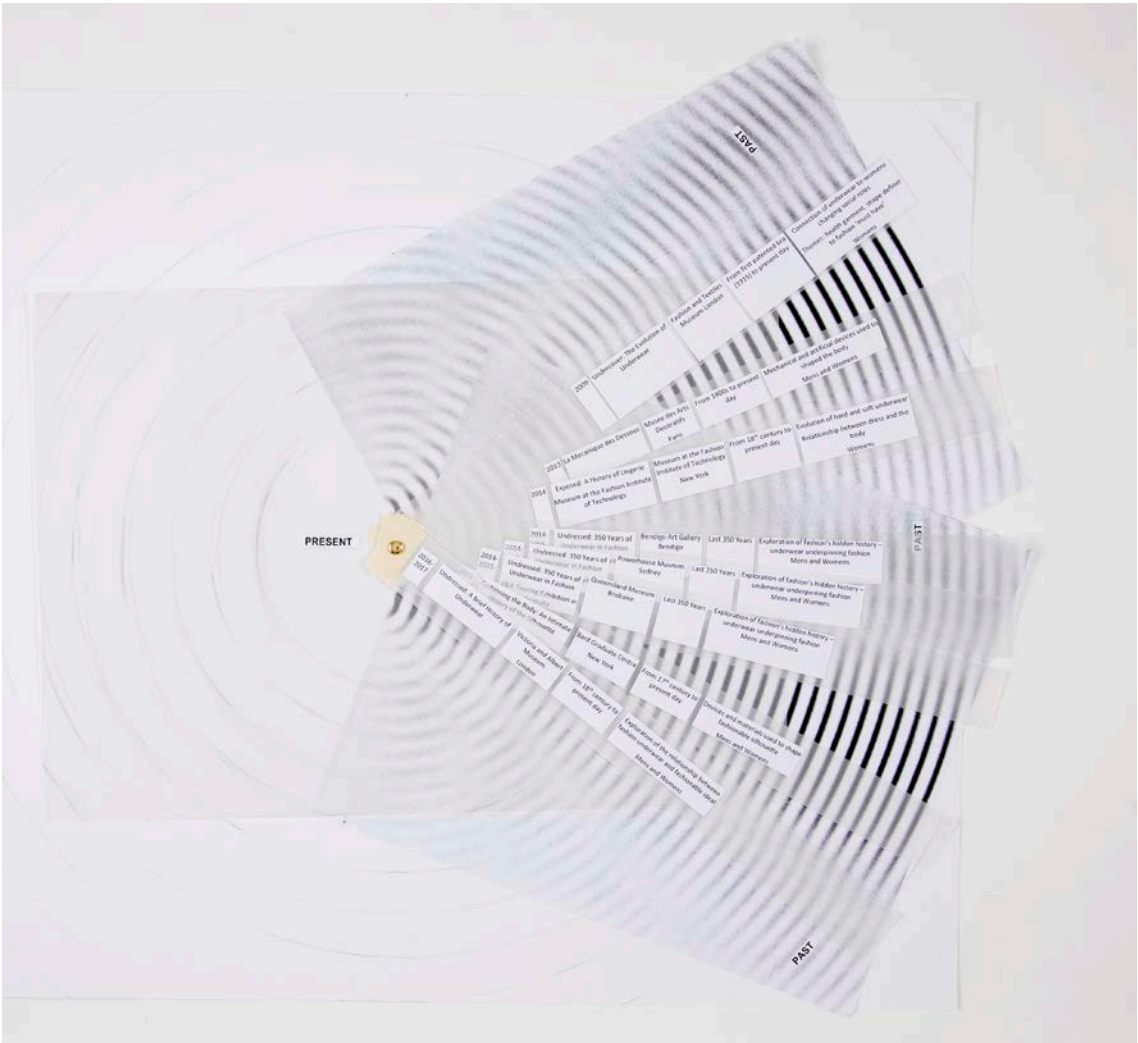


Figure 5.13.

Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: A Reconfigured Trajectory*, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the reconfigured discourse, which emerges from analysis of the History of Underwear exhibitions (between 2009-2016). In contrast to Figure 5.12 (An Un-reconfigured Trajectory), the diagram presents an alternative approach to presenting the multiple discursive constructions of history from these exhibitions. The structure proposes time as a series of pathways that pivot on a central point (representing the present). This constructs a flexible and adaptable mapping process, capable of accommodating numerous versions of past events, rather than one fixed discourse of the past.



Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2012, set up a dialogue between two fashion designers from different eras: Elsa Schiaparelli (1890 – 1973) and Miuccia Prada (1949 –). The concept does indeed propose an impossible conversation, yet using a diffractive lens to open up historical time an interaction between these two individuals can occur. Inspired by a series of articles in *Vanity Fair* during the 1930s, that constructed unimaginable interactions, the curators (Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda) constructed an exchange of ideas between the two through themed juxtapositions of the designers' work and personal quotes on their inspirations and working processes. The exhibition creates a new discursive context for the garments and ideas of both designers, that in turn, sets off 'an iterative reconfiguring of patterns' and themes that disregard any orderly presentation of the linear timeline of fashion history.

A disregard for certain conventions around fashion's history also underpinned a series of groundbreaking performances in 2012 called *The Impossible Wardrobe*, created and curated by Olivier Saillard and performed by actress Tilda Swinton. The project literally created dynamic, active interactions and dialogue between historical garments and the present. The performances consisted of Swinton walking down the runway with a selection of historically and culturally significant garments from the archives of the *Galliera*, the Parisian museum of fashion. She holds and interacts with garments during the performances, but never actually wears them. Rather she creates a dialogue with the former owner of each piece, including a military jacket belonging to Napoleon, and a 1960s chain-mail mini dress belonging to Bridget Bardot. Impossibility is once again apparent in this notion of going back in time, yet a form of dialogue with the past is enabled in the presentation. The stable or static perception of history in a museum context is also over-turned in this presentation. Although Swinton does not wear the garments, they are put in motion, moving down a runway and seen against an animated human form rather than on a mannequin. The garments become more than objects for aesthetic contemplation, acting as the trigger for a more curious and critical perspective on the past. The presentation offers numerous unexpected interventions into fashion's historic chronology in the museum setting.

These inventive manners of connecting the past with present in the museum open up new ways of understanding continuity and change in fashion's discursive practices. They provoke questions around what is stable or mutable in fashion over time and create endless new points of departure for commentating on fashion and time, not only within the museum, but also through contemporary fashion. As a method of up dating and refreshing cultural production, it has similarities with others who regularly seek to make new connections between the past and present. The diffraction of fashion's history resembles the creative

interpretations of designers, stylists, art directors and photographers, working practices that allow them to freely interact and interfere with history to produce something new. Through the continued cultural status of the museum, multiple diffracted versions of fashion history become credible and legitimate tributaries to a widening vista of the history of fashion. Over time, the new threads are popularised, recorded and diffused into the cultural heritage of fashion and taken up by future generations, where they take effect on practices that are underpinned by the historical narrative.

The contribution that alternative presentations and new reconfigurations of history make to our understanding of fashion is important. They not only open-up and enliven discourse on the past, but they tell us much about the value and meaning of fashion in the present. They enable a perspective of the prevailing historiographical influences on fashion and its social relations that underpin matter of taste.

At the time of writing this, there is an exhibition being staged that is pertinent to this point: *The Vulgar: Fashion Redefined* (The Barbican Gallery, London, October 2016- February 2017). Curator Judith Clark and psychoanalyst Adam Phillips have developed a range of themes for an exhibition around fashionable taste that survey the past 500 years focused on conceptions of 'vulgar.' It is an exhibition that examines the history of fashion, yet reconfigures its chronology into themes that explore how nudity, over-exposure, exhibitionism and scale have variously influenced the material expressions of fashionable taste. This approach highlights the history of fashionable taste as mobile. Some of the language used in the exhibition such as "common" and the "scandal of good taste" invokes the more prescriptive role of taste in social relations of bygone eras. However, in the relational project of taste, it also tells us about now; today, the relaxed plurality of fashion and lack of formal dress codes has perhaps made us nostalgic for tighter social delineations of fashion and taste that in the past have produced more exuberant and seemingly joyful expressions.

Fashion in the twenty-first century is entangled with a broad range of cultural fields and activities and framed through nostalgia and subjectivity, all of which inflect its discourse. Representing its movements simply as a sequence of time bound garment details and practices of self-fashioning fails to reflect the multi-layered contributions of fashion, both past and present. This time-travelling discourse demonstrates the potential of reconfiguration as a technique capable of generating increasingly diverse interpretations of fashion, new possibilities, that are made 'seeable, sayable and thinkable' through fashion's discursivity. New knowledge permeates the discourse through the interactions of the conceptual, textual, material and experiential elements of fashion's historical retelling; and this takes effect on the formation of fashionable taste.

Through analysing discourse as a mobile and restless entity, this chapter has traced recent movements and changes in fashionable taste. The chapter has identified three techniques that mobilise the popular discourse to demonstrate its dynamic and mutable characteristics. The research questions for this project seek to identify structures, processes and concepts that allow us to better understand and observe the transformation of taste. This chapter demonstrates how discourse can be used to perceive how taste is able to move and evolve.

Acknowledging the tenacity of existing discourses, each approach uses existing elements of fashion as legitimate and credible starting points for pathways into other fields, locations and contexts, a characteristic noted by Ulrich Lehmann, "Fashion needs the past as a source...only to plunder and transform it with an insatiable appetite for advance."⁶⁶ Travel and movement in the popular discourse is important, because it provides a way for fashionable taste to sustain and renew itself. The different means of mobility create new, novel discursive spaces through assemblages of heterogeneous entities and the creative contributions of multiple agents. The maps generated by tracing the direction of popular fashion discourses provide a way to consider the different flows and the spatial relationships that these movements produce. Discourse operates incrementally, almost by stealth, yet it generates a level of mobilisation capable of altering the cultural and social understanding of objects, ideas, places and spaces – even taste-making individuals.

This chapter is the second in a three-part examination of the mobilisation of taste. Previously, in Chapter Four, mechanisms of movement were examined through the embodied practices of fashion commentators. It focused on the human agency of particular individuals to generate impetus and indicate the direction of travel for fashionable taste. This second exploration has examined movements driven by multiple subjects, interactions and encounters that build strength, durability and energy in the popular discourse. These two studies attempt to demonstrate that fashionable taste is mobilised on a variety of levels and its movements measured on a range of scales – from individual performance through to broad ranging discursive practices. The third part of this examination again adjusts the context and scale of analysis, undertaking a close reading of fashion media texts. The next chapter considers the mobilisation of taste through carefully crafted combinations of word and image in fashion media. It investigates the movement of objects and ideas as they pass through a multi-layered processing system in fashion descriptions. The analysis considers the textual, lexical and situational context of media texts focused on evaluating and distilling the key characteristics of new taste propositions as they travel from obscurity towards fashionable taste.

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CHAPTER 6 | MOBILISING TASTE – PART III BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The items and ideas that become subjects of fashionable taste must acquire certain special qualities of distinction as they pass through the taste-making process. This chapter continues to analyse the mechanisms that move fashionable taste as a way of understanding taste-making processes. It is the third chapter to explore the mobilising of taste and continues to focus on fashion communication as a vehicle for movement, whilst adjusting the scale of analysis to focus on its textual and lexical features. The chapter builds on the momentum created in the practices of the fashion commentator and the broader shifts enabled by dynamic discourses, as discussed previously in the thesis. Specifically, this chapter focuses on aesthetic discernments in fashion descriptions to examine the multiple micro-mechanisms at work, on screen and the printed page. It considers the situational and intertextual context of fashion media and provides an additional complementary context in which to expose the dimensions of travel and movement in taste-making. Through close reading and textual analysis, this chapter identifies three important intersections that together create a multi-layered processing system, constituted through word and image, capable of transforming elements of difference into new fashionable taste.

The concept of discourse continues to be important to the research. Norman Fairclough's approach to intertextual discourse analysis emphasises the importance of form, a point that situates this analysis on the printed page and the screen.¹ Michel Foucault's ideas on normativity and the enunciative function of discourse support discussions of media discourse and its ability to transform,² whilst his writing on the interplay of word and image help to develop these elements beyond the 'written clothing' and 'image clothing' of Roland Barthes.³ The assemblage is also revisited, this time from a Deleuzian perspective where it is again utilised to investigate the convergence of open-ended groupings of ideas, actions and entities, encapsulating effects that are both enabling and constrictive.⁴ Kim Dovey stated, "Philosophically this (notion of assemblage) is an attempt to avoid all forms of reductionism – both the reduction to essences and reduction to text...it seeks to understand the social construction of reality without reduction to discourse."⁵ Martin Muller however notes that the Deleuzian assemblage includes 'an

enunciative dimension' alongside the mechanical dimension. This, he insists, reflects the importance of discourse and meaning in both stabilising and changing assemblages.⁶ The use of both the concept of discourse and of assemblage in this chapter, in contrast to Chapter Five, are operational at a different scale and in a different setting, narrowing the focus to words, language and image as well as their specific relational arrangements in the context of fashion media.

In this chapter, intersections are used to examine how difference and inequality become key characteristics in the production of taste. The intersections function as techniques that imbue selected objects and ideas with a particular combination of traits as a way of raising awareness and transforming difference. Through analysis of language and images juxtaposed in the fashion media, three intersections emerge as an important processing system that mobilises fashionable taste. Each creates mechanisms that enable taste to be both visible and articulable, for taste to be scarce yet subject to wide exposure, and for taste to be at once both stable and mutable. These traits appear to pose a conundrum around how to articulate and define taste that exhibits such dual qualities. The frictions caused by these dual characteristics do however, provide a narrative thread that leads the notion of difference through a series of hurdles, and to be finally recognised as a new proposition.

The chapter begins by revisiting the concept of the taste-making assemblage as a place where transformational encounters can occur. In this context, interactions can be upset easily through relational sensibilities, interfering with the 'coming together' and impacting upon the ecology of the taste-making setting. The chapter then explores various concepts of difference to understand how certain disparities can be used as positive distinguishing features. It discusses methods of highlighting and objectifying difference in fashion communication, before examining three specific intersections. These are important junctions in the fashion taste-making process where changes and movements of fashionable taste can occur:

- the intersection of visibility and readability
- the intersection of scarcity and exposure
- the intersection of stability and mutability

Initially these conditions appear to be at odds with each other, yet their tension creates a means of processing and mobilising new taste propositions.

The first intersection examined is the interface of visibility and readability; it is concerned with the interplay of display and discourse, showing and telling in fashion. These are particular forms of representation that constitute fashion media communications, initiating social interaction

and forming the basis for mobilising the expression and performance of taste. Aesthetic discernments form a bridge between these two types of communication, skilfully using written expression to influence ways of 'seeing and saying' in fashion. Notably though, the interface of visibility and readability does not always function smoothly or predictably, and has become increasingly unstable in the digital environment.

The intersection of scarcity and exposure is then considered within the format of fashion media and communications. It is part of the process that raises issues of value, desire and exclusivity in contemporary fashion taste-making as well as a need to acknowledge excessive choice when seeking direction for new fashionable taste.

The intersection of stability and mutability in fashion taste-making enables the construction of taste as something with both permanent, durable elements as well as aspects that are mobile and fluid. Tensions around stability and mutability exist in fashion, especially around the motivations for, and meaning of, change. This intersection functions to unsettle existing tastes, whilst assisting fashion in switching from one stable state to another. Together, the three intersections move conceptions and perspectives on items, ideas and people; they provoke readers to consider something new that between word and image moves from 'unnoticed' to 'different' and from 'different' to 'new.' The analysis of each intersection is accompanied by examples in the form of composite collages. These refer directly to the corresponding media channels from which the data is drawn, in order to include words and images. Although the examples capture some of the context and texture of these aesthetic discernments, the dynamics of digital media have been lost.

In the section below, the setting of these activities is explored through the idea of a taste-making assemblage.

6.2 CONVERGENCE OF THE TASTE-MAKING CONTEXT

The taste-making context or assemblage is a complex relational place. The movements of people, objects, ideas, practices and associations that assemble temporarily to create this context occur for many reasons. Some attachments are purposeful such as influence creep or taste-making transactions (identified in Chapter Four); however, not all entities come to the taste-making assemblage by intention or design, nor is their connection durable. Dovey discusses the elements of the assemblage as follows: "The parts of the assemblage are contingent rather than necessary, they are aggregated;... as in a machine they can be taken out and used in other assemblages."⁷

Certain entities get caught in or are enrolled into the taste-making context through associations or interpretations. This environment is not one of free flowing and unrestricted entities. Mark Slater warns against seeing movement in an assemblage as evidence of freedom or unlimited mobility.⁸ He suggests that an understanding of movements or constraints on mobility should extend to consider both before and after particular journeys, recommending analysis of movements as systems of circulation to understand the things that enable as well as constrain mobile entities.⁹ Slater's advice is useful in understanding the systems at the heart of the taste-making process and points towards the notion of an enabling constraint where certain entities are repressed while others move freely. This idea is returned to later in the chapter.

The 'coming together' of the taste-making assemblage are more complex than a simple gathering of entities to achieve one outcome. The taste-making assemblage emphasises the interaction and interference of each 'organism' on others in the eco-system. Those within the eco-system each enable the system to exist; yet some elements are more crucial to the operations of the system than others. Within the taste-making assemblage the nature and balance of the relations are not always even. Jon Anderson notes that, "Each assemblage will produce a different relational agency, risk and experience before the constituent parts disengage and dismantle."¹⁰ There are many benefits for taste-making entities establishing new connections or relations, including allowing taste-making transactions of capital, and initiating way of combining or collaborating to create something new. However, the 'comings together' can expose competing entities and agencies. Tension exists around authority and credibility in many taste-making relations. Established fashion institutions such as media channels or fashion labels bring authority through their history and longevity, while credibility in the fashion context is also understood through what is deemed to be new or 'up-and-coming'. So there is tension between the established and the emerging in the taste-making context. The interaction of Suzy Menkes with the young South Korean models, designers and bloggers detailed in the case study in Chapter Five (see Figure 6.1) illustrates how this type of connection can be negotiated, with each making a different contribution to the appeal of new ideas.

In this temporary taste-making eco-system, one can see certain forms of unevenness. Suzy Menkes (with her reputation and institutional fashion capital) will inevitably need to move on to other converging taste-making contexts, whilst the models, designers and bloggers in Seoul would wish to sustain this particular convergence for as long as possible. This perspective illustrates the temporal nature of the assemblage as a moment of time or as Doreen Massy suggests "a constellation of on-going trajectories."¹¹ It captures the sense of movement in these



Figure 6.1

Suzy Menkes with Young Korean Designers at the Beaker Boutique in Seoul, image courtesy of @suzymentkesvogue, <http://www.vogue.com.au/blogs/suzy+menkes/>

‘comings together’ with each component traveling from somewhere before and moving onto somewhere else after the ‘constellation.’

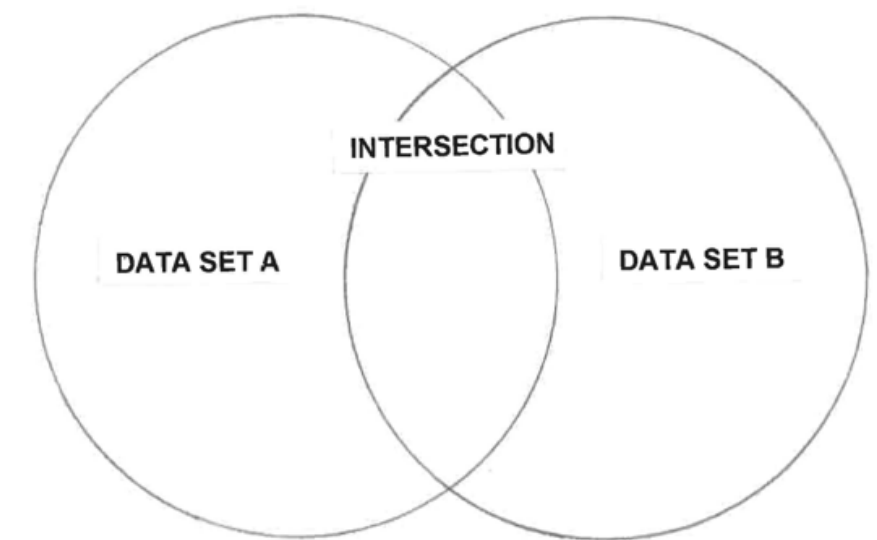
Other tensions occur amongst the web of relations in the taste-making assemblage. For example, somewhere in the fashion taste-making context there exists a commercial or transactional relation. In the most successful arrangements, these types of financial connections sit beneath other layers of meaning generated by the ‘coming together.’ The commercial connections of *Louis Vuitton* and artist Yayoi Kusama as part of their collaboration in 2012 are heavily cloaked in themes of artistic integrity, self-expression and ‘cultural collusion’ that play well for artist and brand alike. Regardless of artistic integrity, the sponsorship of Kusama’s Tate Modern exhibition by *Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessey* produced an additional and more transactional relation from this ‘cultural collusion’. This example exposes the complexities embodied in the taste-making assemblage, where not only competing entities broker connections, but competing imperatives of each party also take effect.

Relations within this context are numerous and multi-layered and in the production of taste these become entangled. For example, ‘underwear as outerwear’ as a fashion trend for Spring Summer 2016 is connected with the history of fashion (discussed in Chapter Five) through multiple layers. The connections are built on the interrelation of the back-catalogue of particular fashion designers, celebrities past and present, elements of music and popular culture, the body and notions of subversion, and desire and provocation. Each of these notions is open to personal interpretation, subjectivity and the preference of the individual while some ideas are understood through collective memories. All, however, are enlivened through personal experience. The entanglement of these ideas, practices and associations in the taste-making assemblage brings these points of connection together for further consideration and development. At a glance, the assemblage produces something meaningful yet not explicitly defined. This allows the connection to be made but leaves room for individual or institutional interpretation and subjective influences to take effect. The taste-making assemblage is a multi-dimensional context within which heterogeneous entities, including people, time frames and practices propose interplay and association that would be irreconcilable elsewhere. The taste-making processes studied below help to arrange environments that both inhibit and enable aspect of these convergences that shape the movements of taste. Before an examination of specific stages in the taste-making process, it is necessary to examine conceptions of difference in greater detail. The section below explores the way in which intersections make difference visible.

6.3 INTERSECTIONS AND DIFFERENCE

The intersection brings into focus boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, the dividing lines between similarities and difference. The Venn diagram (Figure 6.2) is used in Set Theory to visualise these ideas.¹² It creates a simple depiction of where two diverse sets of data overlap – identifying the common features in the intersection and at the same time revealing the differences by capturing that, which is excluded.

Figure 6.2
A Venn Diagram



The study of intersections and their ability to expose difference has been developed into a formal research framework as intersectionality. Kimberle Crenshaw created the concept of intersectionality and promoted its use for the investigation of difference associated with social exclusion and marginalisation.¹³ The concept has been applied to issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, geography and migration and has also been usefully applied to fashion around issues of gender.¹⁴ Crenshaw argues that inequities and inequalities are never the result of a single distinct factor, rather the outcome of intersections of different social positions, various power relations and experiences that lead to exclusion.¹⁵ Her application of this idea emphasises the negative outcomes that difference can produce in the context of social exclusion. However, this notion can be inverted to analyse difference and intersections. James McDonald states that the relations of difference are interpreted

through prevailing norms; he proposes a reframing of difference using queer theory and Foucault's concept of normalisation.¹⁶ The process of normalisation is a key feature of dominant discourse and as McDonald states "normalisation (is) a primary instrument for power and control in contemporary society."¹⁷ He contends that difference is "a discursive construction with no stable essence" and should be conceptualised as multiple, fluid and changeable. From this perspective evolving types of difference can be celebrated and all forms of normativity can be contested.¹⁸ His perspective on difference and its relationship with normativity is much closer to a concept of difference in the fashion taste-making process examined in this research.

Here difference is extended from human subjects and behaviours into a broader range of actants. Matters of taste rely on elements of difference and inequality as distinguishable features that can be used as a means of distinction from other ideas or objects. In fashion taste-making difference is a marketable commodity. It is a mechanism for constructing boundaries of inclusion-exclusion and segregation from other possibilities. Fashionable taste challenges Crenshaw's notion that difference only produces negative outcomes of exclusion, reframing difference (in objects, ideas and people) as a desirable form of exclusivity. Through the taste-making process difference has the ability to become accepted and popular and therefore normalised.

Fashion tastemakers employ notions of segregation and inequality in their work. As they filter and select ideas and objects on which to focus, fashion commentators highlight and objectify difference. They make us attentive to special differences in new fashion propositions; they draw them in from the margins to a more central position in our field of vision – their attention enlivens these objects. Antoine Hennion describes how objects and inert things have a reservoir of differences that can be bought into being. He notes that differences are not already there; rather they are co-formed, multiply and are projected through being social.¹⁹ He explains the importance of attention or attentiveness in forming 'attachments' between subject and object – "objects return to those who take an interest in them."²⁰ Hennion describes a process where once an object attracts attention, it surprises the viewer or interrupts activities through its difference, requiring a 'shift of self' towards the object; in this process "tastes become differentiated through attention and attentiveness (personal, collective and historical)."²¹

In fashion, difference operates as a key device in driving the production of new taste, though difference can take many forms. Which types of difference are allowed? Where is difference possible and valued, and where is it viewed as problematic?

These questions lead us back to Foucault's concerns with enunciative authority, McDonald's problem with the prevailing norms and Crenshaw's issues with (colonialist and imperialist) power structures that help to define how we understand and respond to notions of difference. Difference requires acknowledgement if it is going to move from unnoticed or marginalised, to a place where it can be reconsidered or viewed differently. In mobilising taste, raising awareness of difference is undertaken not for issues of social concern, but as a way of framing novel, rare and desirable characteristics. The difference needs formal recognition from those with authority, for example, either through governmental recognition of protest groups or from those with a proven track record or reputation for identifying important variations. In addition, difference needs to be situated, placed in a relevant context where its active relations are made visible. This falls to those with understanding of this difference, who are able to propose which setting it should be seen in and therefore how the difference is constituted.

Whilst undergoing a process of reconsideration, difference is subjected to a range of measures that can be described as 'inequality regimes', where it is evaluated and may be accepted or resisted through actions or interpretations. Positions produced in the fashion media have authority to influence the understanding of certain differences; however, difference is only truly transformed into new fashionable taste by the public's reception. As Hennion argues, "once a work is created, it escapes from its author, it resists, it has effects or it doesn't."²² The content of fashion media can create engagement or estrangement in readers. The consumer is empowered in the contemporary communication context by either supporting or resisting the notions of difference that are proposed, consequently the authority of fashion media positions can be over-turned in the process. These types of interactions create multiple sites of inclusion-exclusion at a macro or institutional levels as well as on a personal scale. For example, certain types of difference can be proposed in the pages of *Vogue*, yet actively resisted through *Twitter* or a *Facebook* campaign. This was the case in 2011 when *Vogue Italia* produced an issue where the cover and editorial photographs used plus-size models (Figure 6.3). Many in the plus-size blogging community described this as a 'gimmick.' *Vogue Italia* editor Franca Sozzani described the edition as 'a provocation' and stated, "For change to happen someone has to actually provoke it."²³ For certain types of difference to become a feature of fashionable taste they must endure numerous circuits that enable or constrain their mobility.

Hennion states, “Taste is a making, a ‘making aware of’ and not a simple act of sensing.”²⁴ He stresses that taste formation is a gradual process formed through experimentation and incremental adjustments, not only in relation to objects but also to mediations, bodies, situations and devices.²⁵ His comments highlight the productive capacity of convergences in the taste-making process, whilst also noting the manner of movements during the production of taste. Taste-making is an on-going activity; it bears resemblance to Anderson’s formation of the relational context as “a process of dynamic unfolding”²⁶ at a particular spatial-temporal location. The spatial-temporal location of the taste-making assemblage is crucial to the reception of difference and creates multiple thresholds with a range of other influential social determinants. For example, social, economic or political factors may mean that explicit displays of wealth are inappropriate, making understatement or subtlety in luxury products more desirable. The types of difference that are transformed into new fashionable taste have made it through many filters and restrictions, passed through numerous social, institutional and symbolic tests. The next section of this chapter considers one of three junctions in fashion media and communication that drives the process of conversion - between visibility and readability. This intersection begins the process of ‘making’ and ‘making aware of’ required to move particular types of difference closer to notions of taste.



Figure 6.3

Steven Meisel, *Vogue Italia* Cover, June 2011, Condé Nast, <http://www.condenastinternational.com/country/italy/vogue/heritage> (accessed August, 17, 2016).

6.4 BETWEEN VISIBILITY AND READABILITY

This section initiates an exploration of three important intersections in the taste-making process. The intersections are those between visibility and readability; scarcity and exposure; and stability and mutability. They provide an opportunity to understand the mobilising and transformative work of certain statements and content in fashion media that adjusts and rejuvenates our perception of taste. It is argued that these intersections formed through the pairing of characteristics embodied in taste (visibility and readability, scarcity and exposure, and stability and mutability) are not in opposition to each other; rather they generate a type of friction that is exploited productively by the commentators in the taste-making system.

Michel Foucault identifies the productive interstice between the visible and the readable, quoting the artist Rene Magritte who states, “Between words and objects one can create new relations and specify characteristics of language and objects generally ignored in everyday life.”²⁷ The intersections are sites of tension where fashion commentators interfere and intervene on behalf of certain objects and ideas to move differences towards acceptance as new fashionable taste. Pierre Bourdieu (amongst others) describes fashion writing as a site of struggle, but this is most commonly discussed in relation to a competitive struggle between writers as producers of cultural meanings and products.²⁸ The tensions in fashion descriptions are analysed differently here, seen as junctions that set up a push-pull dynamic and making the combination of the two characteristics more effective than either would be alone. These can be understood as stages in processing difference in order for it to be recognised as new fashionable taste, and further demonstrates the fashion commentators’ contribution to the understanding of new fashionable taste.

‘Word and image’ provides a basic and longstanding division in the methods of representation and presentation of information and ideas. Academics have called this division the relation between the seeable and the sayable; the display and the discourse; and showing and telling.²⁹ The relation between these pairs provides a vital junction for the communication of aesthetic discernment and a productive site of influence for fashion commentators. However, the intersection of visibility and readability in fashion communication landscape is not a simple case of image illustrating text or text explaining image, as Roland Barthes identified in his examination of fashion magazines in the 1960s. In *The Fashion System*, Barthes is concerned with how various codes (real vestimentary, written vestimentary and rhetorical codes) produce the abstract notion of ‘fashion.’³⁰ His semiotic analysis does not separate ‘written fashion’ from ‘image fashion’ rather it looks at how language and verbal structures impose a different mode of viewing. Barthes proposes that,

*(language) conveys a choice and imposes it, it requires the perception of this dress to stop here (i.e neither before nor beyond), it arrests the level of reading at its fabric, its belt, at the accessory which adorns it. Thus, every written word has a function of authority insofar as it chooses – by proxy, so to speak – instead of the eye.*³¹

Here Barthes alludes to the way words and images produce two different ways of seeing and different ways of understanding what is seen. Michel Foucault makes much the same point differentiating word from image and noting, “...they are deployed in two different dimensions.”³² Foucault’s remarks about the interaction of words and images were made in relation to Rene Magritte’s painting

This is not a pipe and used to draw attention to “the penetration of discourse into the form of things.”³³ His view on the interaction of word and image resonates with dynamics of digital media and our experience of it on screen. Further, they reflect the contingent and heterogeneous workings of the assemblage. Foucault states,

*...strange bonds are knit, there occur intrusions, brusque and destructive invasions, avalanches of images into the milieu of words, and verbal lightening flashes that streak and shatter...*³⁴

Kelli Feury defines different modes of engagement and interpretation as ‘readership’ and ‘spectatorship’ and notes the blurring or slippage between these two definitions in the digital domain.³⁵ Browsing as a manner of looking at both words and images in the digital space could be both ‘readership’ and ‘spectatorship’ or neither depending on the viewer’s intentions. Digital media makes it harder for our attention to remain in one place. As we navigate our individual pathways through content our engagement is not structured or controlled as it might be with reading the pages in a magazine from cover to cover. The way in which we organise our gaze – how we see, what we see and what we don’t see – forms part of a discursive practice that reflects our preferences through inclusion-exclusion.

On first glance at contemporary fashion media, the image holds a dominant position over any text or verbal structures through the immediacy and prevalence of fashion photography of all kinds. It has a bold and immediate impact on the viewer/user as Jennifer Craik states:

*Fashion photography provokes viewers and consumers into confirming their own identity through structures of desire... its conventions are neither fixed or purposeful, instead constituting a nexus between fashion and selfhood.*³⁶

This nexus between fashion and selfhood captured in photography has now extended beyond the conventional production of fashion photography. Streams of user generated content such as street style images, selfies and many millions of *Instagram* images all purport to speak of the connection between fashion and selfhood. The digital interactive context of fashion media has allowed for the volume of fashion photography to expand unchecked. This is evidenced in fashion communication channels where the variety and space (and applications) devoted to images expands while the space allocated to words/text contract. The immediate and emotional impact of images makes them a powerful way of communicating in fashion. As Janet Wolff suggests images, “often... propose an immediacy of experience that escapes language and interpretation entirely.”³⁷ In this, Wolff is not suggesting that it should be possible to turn all images into language, rather that

the power exerted by images should be recognised as something socially and culturally constructed rather than purely affective. She suggests that, “our seeing is always motivated by desire... our (visual) engagement with the material world is always invested with meaning – meaning produced in us, but ‘discovered’ in objects.”³⁸ This aligns with Hennion’s view that meaning and differentiation becomes apparent to us through attentiveness, where “objects return to those who take an interest in them.”³⁹

The new objects and ideas need to be displayed, seen and felt affectively, but in addition need words and verbal structures to push back, to open up other ways of seeing and building knowledge. Objects have the ability to change or transform with certain types of stimuli; the simple act of naming new objects or ideas enlivens them and alters their reality (descriptors such as ‘clean utility’ can transform a collection of work-wear garments into ‘cool, urban looks’), while adding a prefix to an existing idea can re-animate it – ‘luxury’ becomes ‘neo-luxury’. Text and verbal structures have a way of transforming our knowledge of visual qualities that photography cannot. Written expression opens this other way of seeing providing a means to trigger an intricate interplay of words and images for the viewer. Gilles Deleuze, in his examination of the ideas of Michel Foucault states, “knowledge (is) defined by the combination of visible and articulable... knowledge is a practical assemblage, a ‘mechanism’ of statements and visibilities.”⁴⁰ He goes further in explaining the interdependence and interplay of the visible and the articulable:

*...a visible element that can only be seen, an articulable element that can only be spoken. And yet the unique limit that separates each other is also the common limit that links one to the other, a limit with two irregular faces, a blind word and a mute vision.*⁴¹

Between visibility and readability a particular type of relationship begins to emerge between fashion words and fashion images for the viewer. There is an inter-reliance of the visible and the readable for some very practical reasons as well as for more expressive interpretations. For example, real garments depicted in images need ways to be identified, by information on who made them, how much they cost and where they can be purchased. Technical and functional information contained in labels and captions on fashion images offer a degree of stability in contextualisation. However, in the digital media environment even the relatively stable text-image relation of the label becomes slippery as hyperlinks and QR codes in text open a labyrinth of pathways to more and more information.

The work of the fashion commentator at the interface of word and image has not been concerned with labels for images until recently. With the emergence of the hashtag (#) and tagging with search words as a way of locating and circulating noteworthy images and texts, labels have taken on new significance. Rather than being purely informative, these labels have become emotive, subjective and even subversive forms of the visible-readable interaction that fashion commentators are concerned with. These types of labels have also become an easily accessed and interactive means of expression for consumers and users of digital fashion media. This opens a bigger issue disrupting the work of fashion commentators at the intersection of the visible and articulable. In the previous era of mass media dominated by print in fashion communication, the fashion commentator was able to make aesthetic discernments from a fairly stable position; controlling the connections made between the two visual modes of reading and viewing fashion. The convergence of digital interconnection, interactivity and engaged fashion consumers creating content has opened up this space to the multiplicity of ways people want to engage and interact with fashion, predominantly through photographs.

Fashion communication has become a space that has produced channels for the rapid display and distribution of an enormous diversity of fashion images; however, the meaning of these images is unclear. Susan Sontag comments that photography has become a form of “aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted,”⁴² suggesting that industrialised societies are made up of “image-junkies”⁴³ who need to have their reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs. The immediacy and ease of producing and publishing photographs is apparent in their abundance, but what of the readable, articulable or the sayable? It is the written commentary that, as Barthes identified, imposes fashion onto garments and as Brian Moeran forcefully argues “...fashion as such would not – could not – exist without language.”⁴⁴ Further, Minh-Ha Pham notes fashion writing is a space of negotiation, a space to establish what is “legitimate difference” and “illegitimate difference.”⁴⁵

It is at the intersection of the seeable and the sayable that the fashion commentators are able to draw our attention to difference. As their words interfere with our way of viewing the image, they are able to make seen that which may have gone unnoticed. Their commentary provides terms of reference for certain images that enable the specific identification of one item or one detail – a difference that might otherwise remain unacknowledged. Written commentary offers a slower and less immediate visual interaction – it takes time to both write and read fashion commentary (although both activities also involve looking too), however, carefully chosen language opens an alternative way of seeing fashion and gives real garments an additional mode of communication. The fashion commentators’ way

of seeing alerts us to difference in the visual, conceptual and material expressions of new fashion propositions; their words convey their ability to aesthetically discern difference. Through identifying difference (whether in texture, silhouette or detail, underpinning concept or even in styling, attitude and presentation) an opposition is constructed. Through construction of comparative or evaluative frameworks such as ‘this one, not that one’, ‘new versus old’, ‘rare versus common’, words draw the viewers’ attention to the meaningful or valuable qualities of difference that they should focus on in fashion images. Below Susannah Frankel brings the reader attention to the specific elements of looks on the runway:

*This time coats must be big.*⁴⁶

*Trousers are the new skirts. Often, however, they are worn with a tunic and/or a dress.*⁴⁷

*In place of last season’s exquisitely overblown designs, here came short, sharp, fringed kilts.*⁴⁸

Such written expressions form a pivotal connection between the fashion image, real garments and the specific aesthetic discernments required in judgments of taste. Further, the particular features of difference that come into focus in written expression help to furnish the discussion with details and provide a source of stability, whether expressed as part of a lifestyle discourse by the bloggers or more institutionally by fashion journalists. The details animate certain objects and ideas, drawing attention to possible emergent forms of fashionable taste, whilst ignoring others. The fashion commentators begin the taste-making process by triggering new points of departure through their selective acknowledgement of difference. It is at this intersection that nascent fashionable taste begins to form, inequalities are made visible, and the transformation process begins. It is one key threshold through which difference needs to pass, as Moeran notes “...the use of language more than anything else transforms clothing and dress into fashion.”⁴⁹ Fashion is very photogenic, but needs words to achieve its full potential, as Foucault posits, the power of the visual plays out when “the space where one speaks” and “the space where one looks... fold(ing) one over the other as though they were equivalents.”⁵⁰ His comments capture the push-pull dynamics of word and image interaction. By initiating and articulating specific connections between words and images, the fashion commentators highlight the interaction in the fashion taste-making assemblage. The figures below (Figure 6.4a–6.4d) illustrate this intersection where words and images work together to take effect, specifying a way of looking at the garments.



Figure 6.4a.

Rachel Matthews, Between Visibility and Readability: (Collage material from Susie Lau – Style Bubble, 11 February 2012), http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2012/02/catty.html (accessed February, 14, 2012). 2016.



Figure 6.4b.

Rachel Matthews, Between Visibility and Readability: (Collage material from Lisa Armstrong – The Telegraph UK, 26 January, 2012), <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG9040147/Paris-Haute-Couture-Valentino-springsummer-2012.html> (accessed February, 2, 2012). 2016.

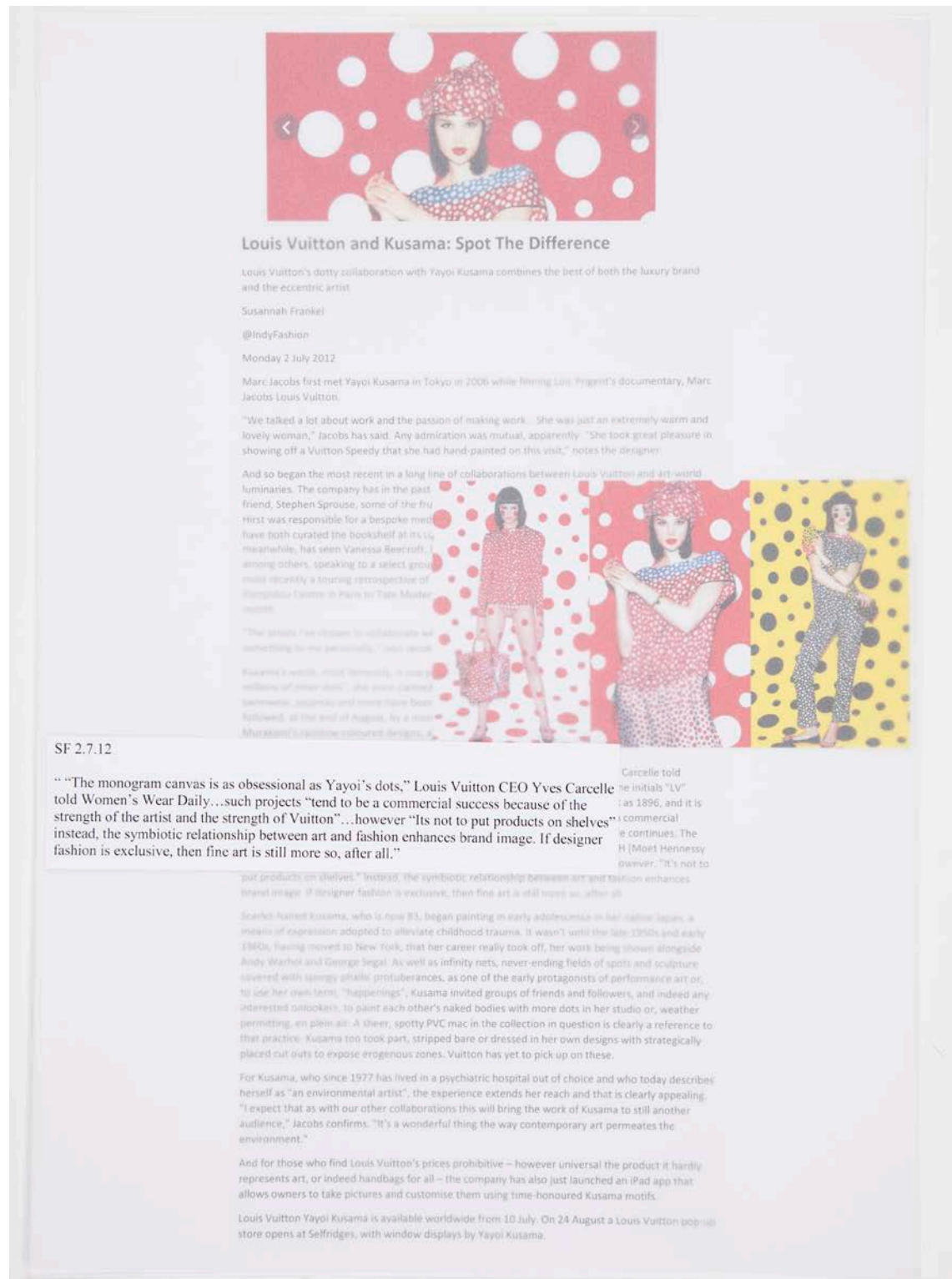


Figure 6.4c.

Rachel Matthews, Between Visibility and Readability: (Collage material from Susannah Frankel – The Independent UK, 7 July, 2012), <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/louis-vuitton-and-kusama-spot-the-difference-7902666.html> (accessed July, 8, 2012). 2016.

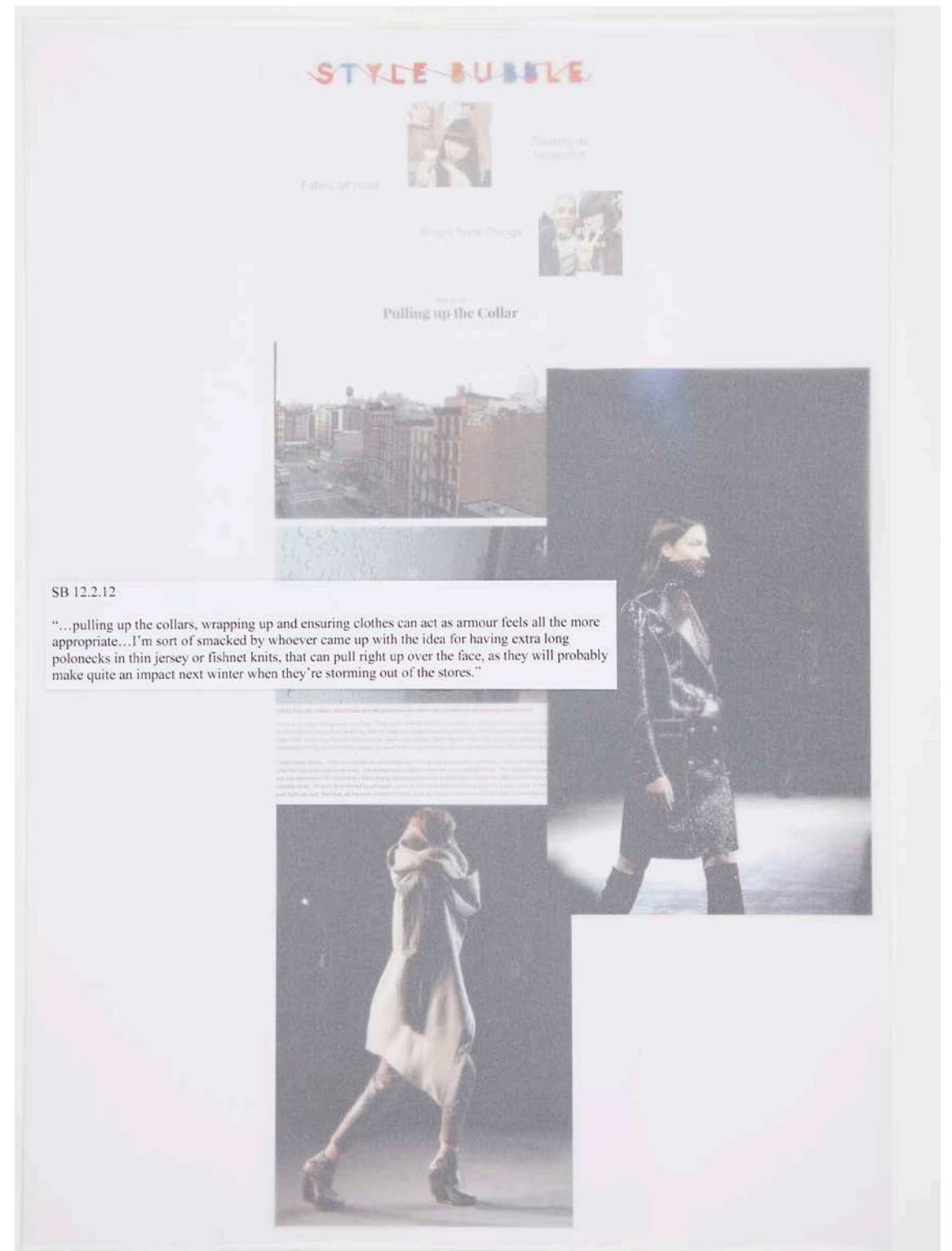


Figure 6.4d.

Rachel Matthews, Between Visibility and Readability: (Collage material from Susie Lau – Style Bubble, 12 February, 2012), http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2012/02/pulling-up-the-collar.html (accessed February, 14, 2012).

This section has examined the intersection between visibility and readability, where fashion commentators use the interplay of word and image to begin a discursive construction of difference. The examples illustrate the various 'orders of discourse' drawn upon by fashion commentators, using and combining various genres and narratives in both personal and institutional expressions. The commentators facilitate a means of recognising and adjusting to difference, but further they articulate certain types of acceptable (or legitimate) difference providing a restricted yet productive way forward. This functions as an 'enabling constraint' or a repressive framework designed to simplify possible choices, it allows some differences to progress but not others. In the section below, difference progresses through another junction on the pathway to fashionable taste – between scarcity and exposure.

6.5 BETWEEN SCARCITY AND EXPOSURE

This section examines the intersection of scarcity and exposure as the second phase in a three phase processing system of fashionable taste. It discusses the relations between these two characteristics and how the interplay of these conditions works to shape taste. The concept of scarcity is invoked as a means of creating value and desire around certain types of difference. Concurrently, the fashion commentator circulates their perspective on the difference in a way that makes it accessible through contextualisation and objectification. In words and images, certain types of difference are cast as rare and exclusive commodities, whilst at the same time its visibility and distribution ensures the difference is positioned to gain the widest possible exposure.

The 'scarcity principle' is a concept drawn from economics and social psychology. It proposes that in human behaviour there is a tendency to perceive rare or scarce resources as more valuable than plentiful resources.⁵¹ There are various schools of thought as to why scarcity or the restriction of resources has a positive effect on our evaluation of any such resource. The intention is not to examine these here, rather extract three factors that make scarcity a particularly powerful characteristic in fashion taste-making. First, the notion of scarcity helps to produce a perception of value and desire in new fashion propositions through distinctiveness. If the object is scarce there will not be many others, therefore it is more special and individual. Second, scarce or rare objects are usually more difficult to attain; to obtain the rare object, one must possess some form of capital (social, economic or cultural), in order to attain it. Also, one's capital would be significantly enhanced once the object is obtained. Third, scarcity can also be defined by a restricted time of availability. New fashion ideas are typically time sensitive; they

are only valuable and desirable until they become common or abundant. Fashion commentators activate these understandings of scarcity to establish value in and generate desire for the specific differences they have identified. The example below from Susie Lau illustrates this. It is useful to note her use of what Douglas Holt describes as "...finely grained vocabularies (used) to tease out evermore detailed nuances within a category"⁵² as a way of defining the particularities of this difference.

*...buying things three sizes too big isn't the solution to the over-sized conundrum as Hernandez and McCollough get the proportions bang on – the sleeves curving away from the arms just so, the shoulders hulked around the body frame at the correct angles, the skirts flaring out from the legs with precision.*⁵³

The concept of a limited supply has historical connections with concepts of taste. In eighteenth century Britain, concepts of taste were promoted as a guide to limit consumption. Taste came to be understood as a set of instructions written by members of the aristocracy and the established upper-middle class for merchants with newly acquired wealth, anxious about how to spend their money and what it would say about them.⁵⁴ Taste became a vehicle for restricting consumption by connecting it with thoughtful decision-making, and informed by one's moral sensibilities. In so doing it was used to bring a sense of order to the society of the time and invoked to demonstrate a refined educated preference for one specific object or idea over a lesser one. Bourdieu also notes the notion of scarcity in taste formation; he argues that through increased emphasis on particular lifestyle 'needs' of the individual, there has been an artificial creation of scarcities in products and competencies.⁵⁵

Andrew Abbott states that in the contemporary consumer landscape both institutions and individuals use an artificial notion of scarcity to stop people becoming overwhelmed by excessive choice.⁵⁶ Scarcity is therefore induced to counter the staggering number of possibilities in fashion and broader markets of consumption. In aesthetic discernments, the difference in new fashion propositions is identified and fashion commentators construct a means of distinction for their readers/ viewers to aspire to by endorsing certain types and details of difference. These differences are designated as scarce because the characteristics do not exist in current objects and ideas of fashionable taste. In their written expression, a narrow band of acceptable differences is proposed as fashionable taste, allowing a temporary hierarchy of objects and ideas to emerge. For fashion with its innovation driven by aesthetics rather than technical or functional potential, a hierarchy is often invoked as an organisational structure to create a way to perceive value in objects and ideas. Those that designate the layers and symbolic boundaries of these hierarchies orientate taste through this ranking system and guide

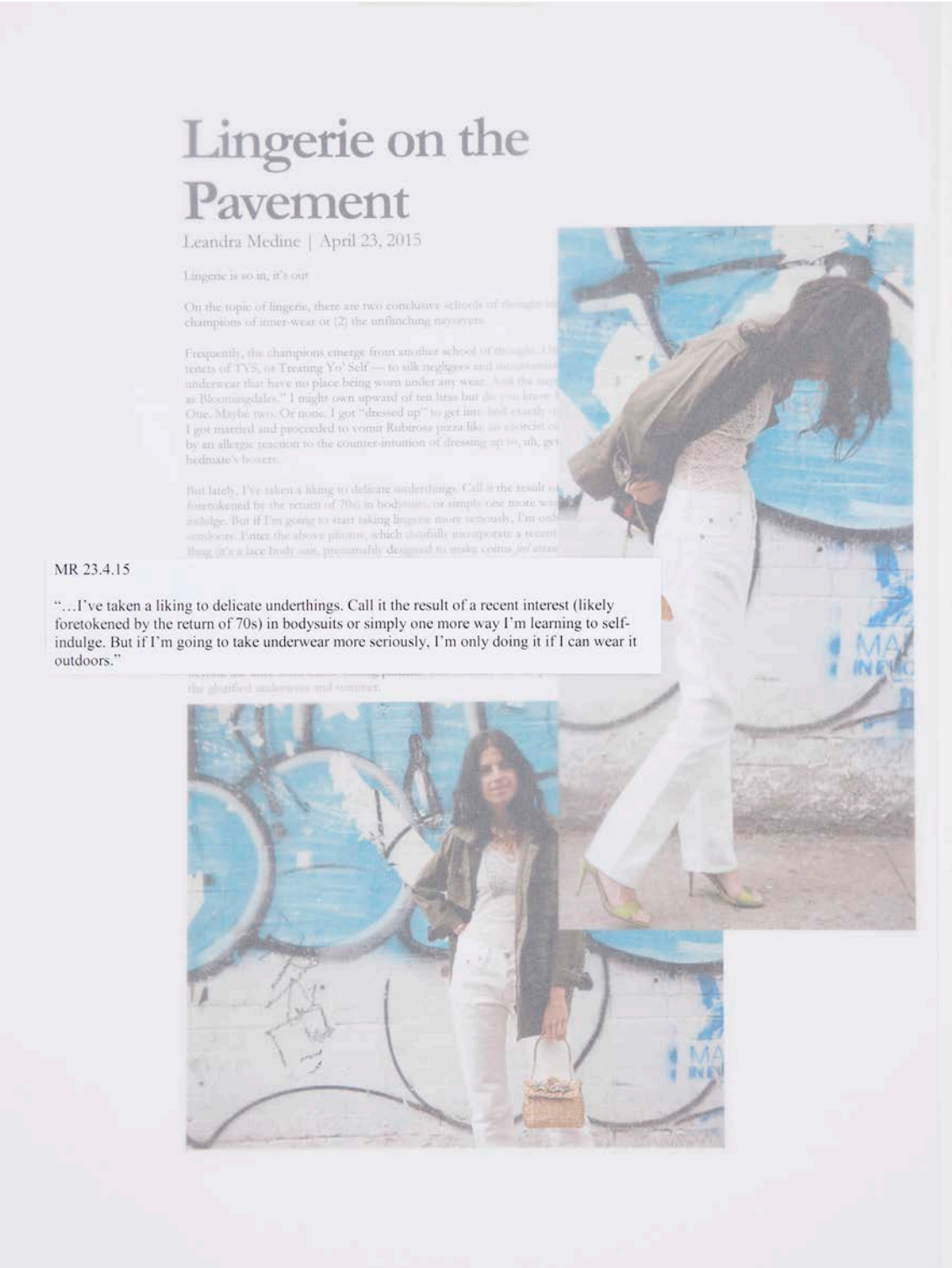


Figure 6.5b.

Rachel Matthews, Between Scarcity and Exposure: (Collage material from Leandre Medine – Man Repeller, 23 April, 2015), <http://www.manrepeller.com/2015/04/lingerie-styling-secret.html> (accessed April, 27, 2015). 2016.

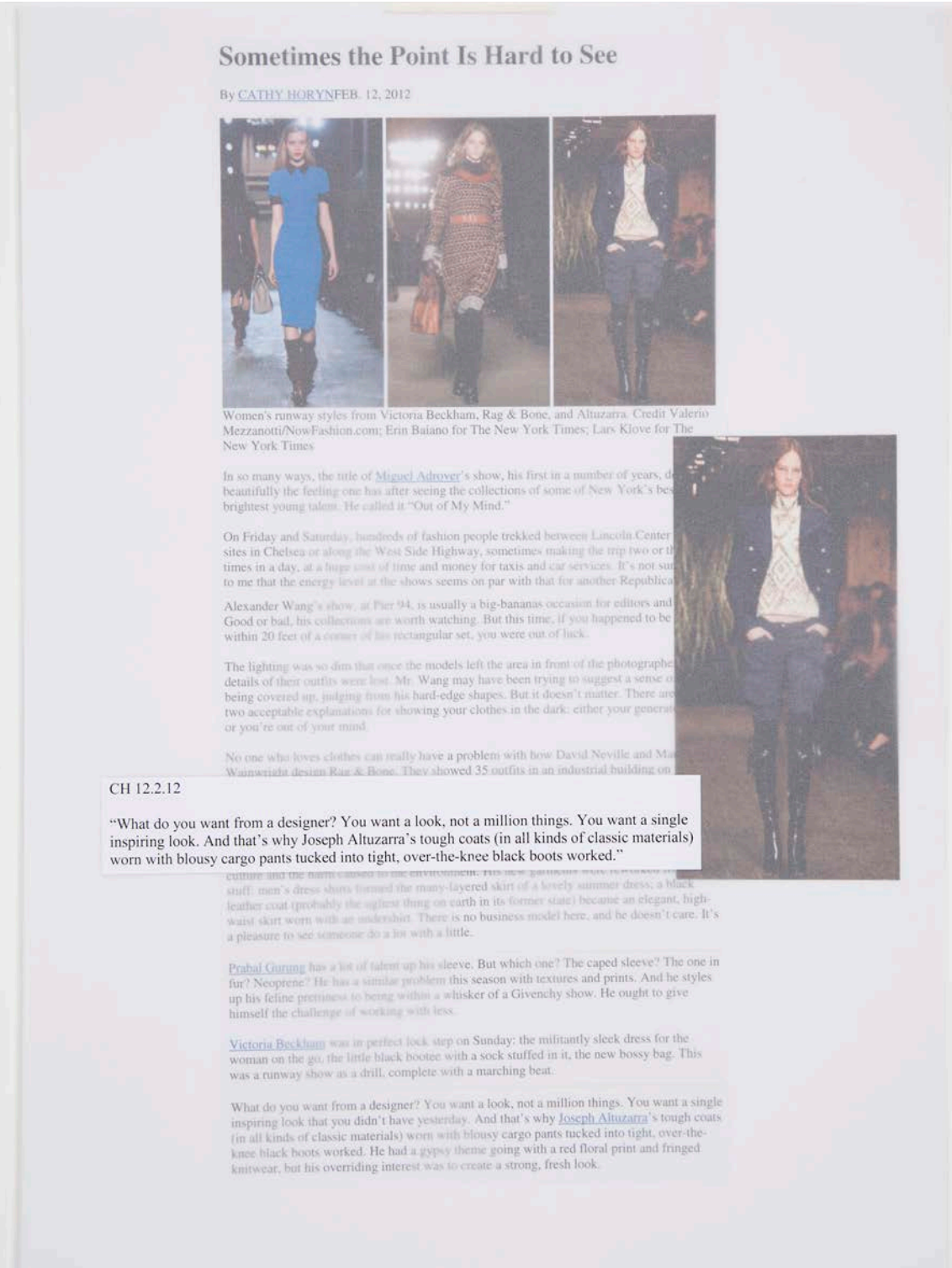


Figure 6.5c.

Rachel Matthews, Between Scarcity and Exposure: (Collage material from Cathy Horyn – The New York Times, 12 February, 2012), <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/13/fashion/alexander-wang-rag-bone-prabal-gurung-altuzarra.html> (accessed February, 14, 2012). 2016.

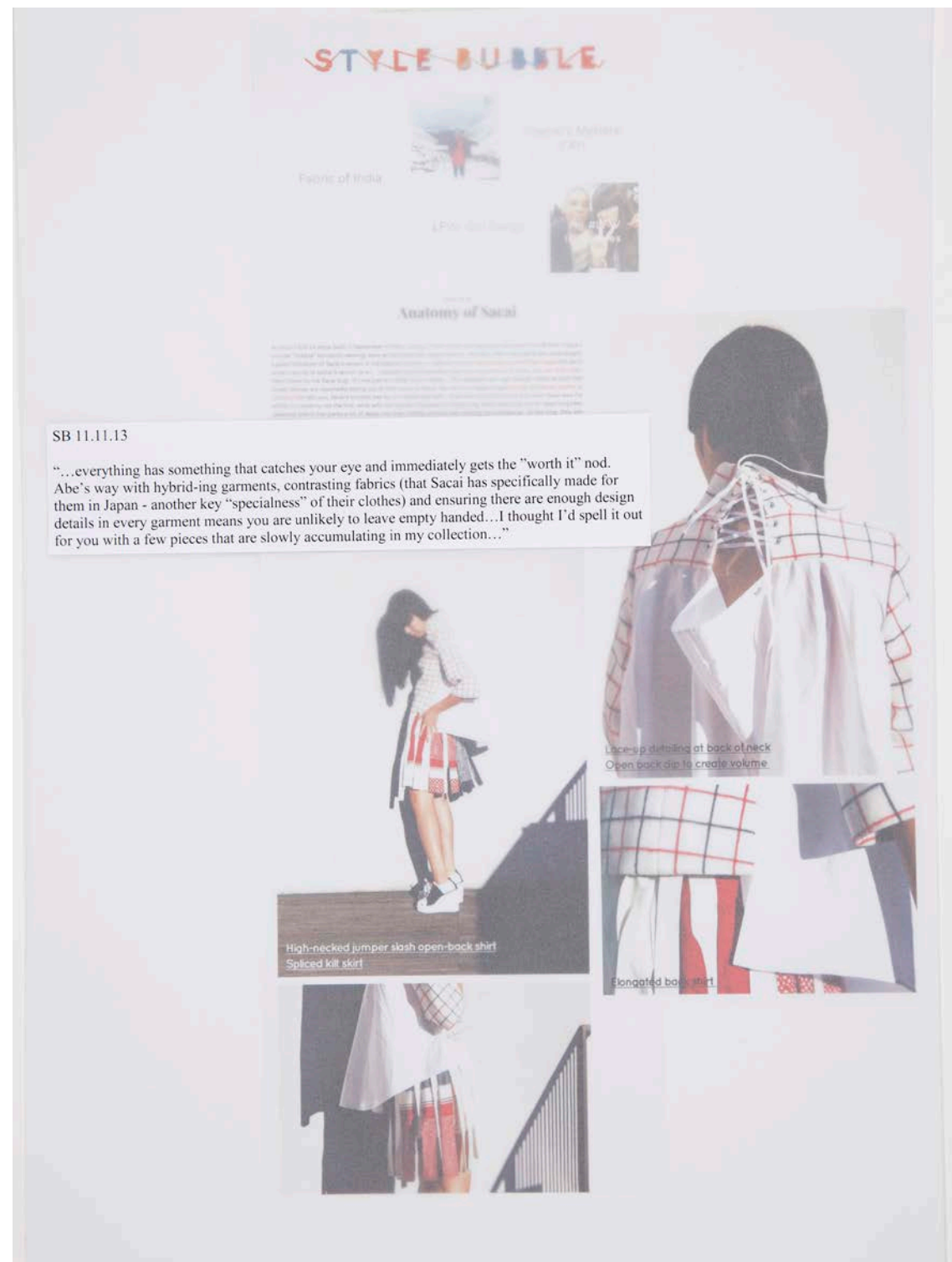


Figure 6.5d.

Rachel Matthews, Between Scarcity and Exposure: (Collage material from Susie Lau – Style Bubble, 11 November 2013), http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2013/11/anatomy-of-sacai.html (accessed November, 13, 2013). 2016.



Figure 6.5e.

Rachel Matthews, Between Scarcity and Exposure: (Collage material from Lisa Armstrong – The Telegraph UK, 1 October, 2014), <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/Article/TMG11130532/951/Chanel-springsummer-2015-catwalk-show-report-from-Paris-Fashion-Week.html> (accessed October, 3, 2014). 2016.

of 'dressing'. This forms a type of 'advice' allowing the acknowledgment of difference and attention to proceed. Between scarcity and exposure is an intersection that ignites the potential demand for such an object in viewers. The combination of carefully articulated differences paired with the expansive networks of fashion communication generates momentum to move notions of difference forward to the next phase.

This chapter now moves to examine a third interface generated in the words, language and images of fashion media. The intersection of stability and mutability is examined below as a mechanism that assists certain forms of difference to achieve recognition as new iterations of fashionable taste.

6.6 BETWEEN STABILITY AND MUTABILITY

This section examines a third taste-making intersection, the interface of the stable and the mutable. The interrelation of stability and mutability assists in transforming certain types of difference into new notions of fashionable taste. Objects and ideas can only be understood and recognised as new when seen in relation to what is old or already exists. The construction of the new relies on symbolic boundaries between old and new, a system of designation that identifies objects and ideas that have had their time and proposals of something that can take their place. Fashion is organised in just such a way, where the perception of change and innovation purely through aesthetic alterations rather than performance allow objects and ideas to become out-moded regularly. Fashion descriptions initiate discussion around particular aspects of new items in relation to familiar or existing elements as a way of arguing or advocating for certain changes. The momentum of this intersection disturbs or unbalances some characteristics of fashionable taste, while leaving others firmly in place. Moeran recognises this in his analysis of the language used in international fashion magazines. He suggests that the use of evaluative terms form a discourse of appraisal that enables a very specific range of garments or design details to be identified as new or fashionable.⁶¹ He further notes many of these statements use implicit contrasts (such as "sexy but cool" or "cool but feminine"), which allow the specific nature of the 'new' to be loosely inferred, rather than explicitly defined.⁶² This provokes the reader to participate in the transformation process, as Fairclough notes, "the question of audience reception is always relevant."⁶³ In this context, transformation of difference becomes the driving force in the evolution of fashion.

Moeran amongst many other fashion theorists notes that "fashion is predicated on change."⁶⁴ The narrative thread of fashion's development

prepares followers of fashion for change – the nature of the next change in fashion is yet to be determined but there will be change. This stable yet mutable narrative also corresponds to concepts of taste and to our understanding of identity and self. All are concepts that permit multiple mutable versions to be reconciled and absorbed into our existing self-narrative. These changing views of our preferences and selves are unproblematic when understood as an on-going refinement of our discernments and grounded in the universal stable conceptions of personal taste and identity. The familiar fashion commentary that ties new ideas to existing ones in aesthetic discernments has normalised the constant changing dynamics of fashion, making change seem like an on-going evolutionary process and necessary part of fashion. So difference or novel propositions enters the fashion discourse as just another in a long series of differences that have been transformed into fashionable taste.

The intersections work to transform our perception of difference into something new, however the word 'new' does not have just one meaning. In her writing about discursive practices of the new, Kelly Feury describes how ideas of 'new' are usually concerned with status rather than their function or their moment of conception.⁶⁵ Aurélie Van de Peer explains how the notion of new in fashion and fashion communication is used as shorthand for 'good fashion', an equivalence that is rarely questioned and always to be celebrated.⁶⁶ Jukka Gronow argues that there are several ways to understand the idea of 'new'. 'New' can be understood as the outcome of some technical development resulting in a brand new product, one that has not existed before. 'New' can refer to the unused quality of a product such as something that is still boxed coming straight from the manufacturer. 'New' can also be understood as something that is fresh or has a novel appearance, classified as 'new' through its unfamiliar visual appearance.⁶⁷ It is this third understanding of new that the fashion commentators most often use in their expressions when transforming difference into a new (novel) proposition of fashionable taste. Gronow argues that in fashion there are no rules about the next new proposal as long as it succeeds in establishing itself with a claim of "exclusive validity."⁶⁸ He suggests anything will do as long as it is experienced as new.⁶⁹

The artful use of words and images work to enable a particular way of seeing and understanding difference and mobilising this process of transformation. Fashion commentators supply various notions of difference, pumping a constant supply of options into the system that could potentially be new propositions of fashionable taste, yet the intersection of stability and mutability creates a mechanism of anchor and flow. At this interface, the use of particular words and phrases ensure certain elements of fashionable taste remain in place whilst other elements are given the freedom and momentum to change and reform – creating what Mark Slater describes as an "assemblage of circulation."⁷⁰

The 'coming together' of immobile / mobile elements at a particular time forms a unique set of interactions for difference. For example, 'key trends,' 'essentials,' 'this season's must have / top pick' or '(X) is the new black', all function as stable accessible categories of fashion in which all manner of difference and change in fashion can be accommodated. Fashion commentators produce and reproduce these categories as durable discursive constructs by establishing certain classifications of fashion as stable and ever-present, so the mutable and fluid aspects of fashion have a structure through which they are able to flow and circulate.

The examples below (Figures 6.6a – 6.6e) illustrate how the interplay of stability and mutability is not only exploited to mobilise new objects, but also assists in propelling designers, muses and garment types too. Frederic Godart notes the stable-mutable interplay as fashion designers attempt to distinguish themselves from their competitors whilst also highlighting some similarities, in order not to be perceived as being anything other than 'fashionable.'⁷¹

Anthony Abbott proposes that fashion uses a combination of stability and mutability to manage an on-going excess of choice. He suggests that the intersection of these two ideas forms a strategy to reduce choice to tractable terms stating, "fashions produce constant novelty (hence exploring excess creatively) and constant stability (hence preventing it from overwhelming us)."⁷² Abbott notes the continued use of the hierarchy as a stable ranking device, deployed as a strategy that limits choice to the top tier and stabilises the churn of new ideas in fashion. Word and image in the fashion media readily implies a sense of ranking, with even the mention of some names, items or ideas signifying a place in the top tier. The hierarchy carries the key features of an enabling constraint that is simultaneously stable yet mutable, repressive yet productive. The hierarchy has been described as crushing creativity, stifling both opportunities and initiative through the creation of arbitrary and excessive layers.⁷³ Seen alternatively as a strategy to manage and refine excessive choice in fashion, hierarchy appears to provide a moment of stability and a position from which to move forward. Needless to say, it is selected notions of fashion that are enabled; whereas others are repressed through the creation of symbolic boundaries of inclusion-exclusion in order to differentiate objects and ideas. Abbot describes how hierarchy reduces and rescales excess from the top down as well as the bottom up:

...the dominant reactive strategy – whether for cognitive, active or even affective excess – is hierarchizing and concentrating one's attention at the top end of the hierarchy... Hierarchy can work in reverse as well: a winnowing strategy can prune excess from the bottom, reducing a complex array of possibilities to a narrower group of serious alternatives.⁷⁴

Indeed the field of fashion is an arena of excess; a situation that can lead to paralysis in a system overloaded with too much choice. The individual who declares they have nothing to wear whilst standing in front of a closet bursting with garments exemplifies this.

Abbott describes other mechanisms of stability and mutability that are designed to stop consumers / users from becoming overwhelmed by excessive choice. He identifies 'serialism' as an adaptive strategy that simplifies choice into a series of general classifications that are then restricted further by using one item to represent the complexities of the category.⁷⁵ Fashion descriptions demonstrate a form of 'serialism' at lexical level where fashion is regularly categorised as 'classic' 'feminine' or 'modern' yet the images used to represent the category vary depending the publication, time and place, or designer. Further, styles of dressing that are 'directional' or 'transitional' are described as a consistent feature of contemporary fashion (especially as many collections become less season specific), but the direction or the passage of transition for such fashion remains mutable.

Certain words are a regular stable feature of fashion commentary, yet their meaning does not stay the same. Moeran notes how the word 'balance', when used to describe wine, is understood as a judgment on the relationship between sugar and acid. However, in fashion this term is applied as an evaluative measure to any number of features from fabric qualities, colour, cut and proportion.⁷⁶ He argues that there are many words and phrases in the popular fashion discourse whose meaning is 'plastic'; they have enough "conceptually ambivalence" that they can be changed or re-purposed to fit with new fashions.⁷⁷ The words and phrases create a stable-mutable infrastructure that helps to organise an environment of excess, so that choices are more likely to be made. The various stable categories of fashion designated by the fashion commentators' function as 'normalising regimes' that give structure to the sheer volume of new possibilities. These are strategies that limit or repress the abundance of choice in fashion as a way of ensuring a system of excess can cope; a direction can be found; and new fashionable taste can be mobilised.

Choice is aligned with individual freedom, allowing self-determination and autonomy, while constraints are conflated with barriers and limitations. It would appear counter-intuitive to propose that reducing or eliminating choice would be enabling, especially around issues of creative self-expression such as fashion. However, the taste-making techniques created in words, phrases and images explored here all activate the enabling potential of constraints. The intersection of the seeable and the sayable enables a particular way of viewing new possibilities, where written expression acts as a viewfinder for surveying a crowded fashion landscape, bringing certain differences into focus and leaving others unseen. At the intersection of scarcity and exposure, the fashion commentators specify the terms of distinction that certain

differences offer. In a contemporary fashion environment where boundaries appear to be dissolving, fashion commentary is creating symbolic boundaries to define new notion of difference, proposing criteria for inclusion and exclusion. This assists their audience to become familiar with the particularity of difference.

The intersection of stability and mutability, creates a discursive mechanism that allows only certain types of difference to move through a 'normalising regime.' The transformation of difference into the 'new normal' in fashion is supported by a celebration of newness and change that emerges through some channels, whilst difference of other types remains ignored or unacknowledged (for example, the variety of body shape, age and race in models).

The creation of these intersections by fashion commentators can be understood as subjective acts of interference or intervention that challenge stability and advocate for certain types of change. However, the discursive process employed in these fashion descriptions provides reassurances regarding the process of change. The constraints that they impose upon the endless choice available in fashion presents a context where difference is understood, certain selections are more likely to be made, whilst at the same time leaving room for personal interpretation.

The figures below (Figure 6.6a – 6.6e) provide some examples of stable yet mutable categories of fashion that define its anchorage and flow.

Figure 6.6a.

Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*:
(Collage material from Lisa Armstrong – The Telegraph UK, 25 January, 2016),

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/womens-style/98399/atelier-versace-ss16-gravity-defying-red-carpet-dresses.html> (accessed January, 27, 2016). 2016.



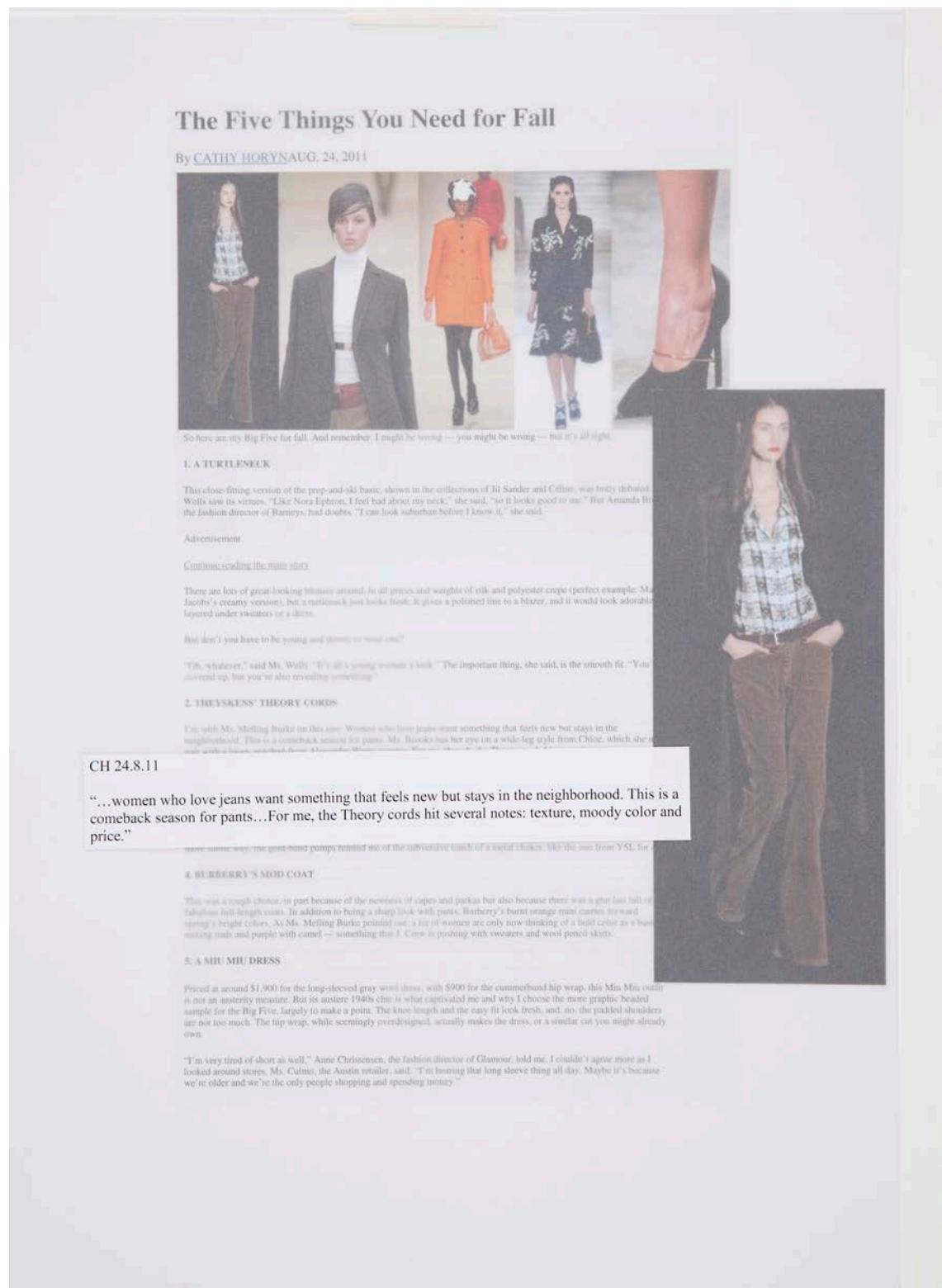


Figure 6.6b.

Rachel Matthews, Between Stability and Mutability: (Collage material from Cathy Horyn – The New York Times, 24 August, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/25/fashion/the-five-things-you-need-for-fall.html> (accessed August, 25, 2011). 2016.



Figure 6.6c.

Rachel Matthews, Between Stability and Mutability: (Collage material from Jennine Jacobs – The Coveted, 8 September 2011), <http://the-coveted.com/cushnie-et-ochs-spring-classics/html> (accessed September, 12, 2011). 2016.

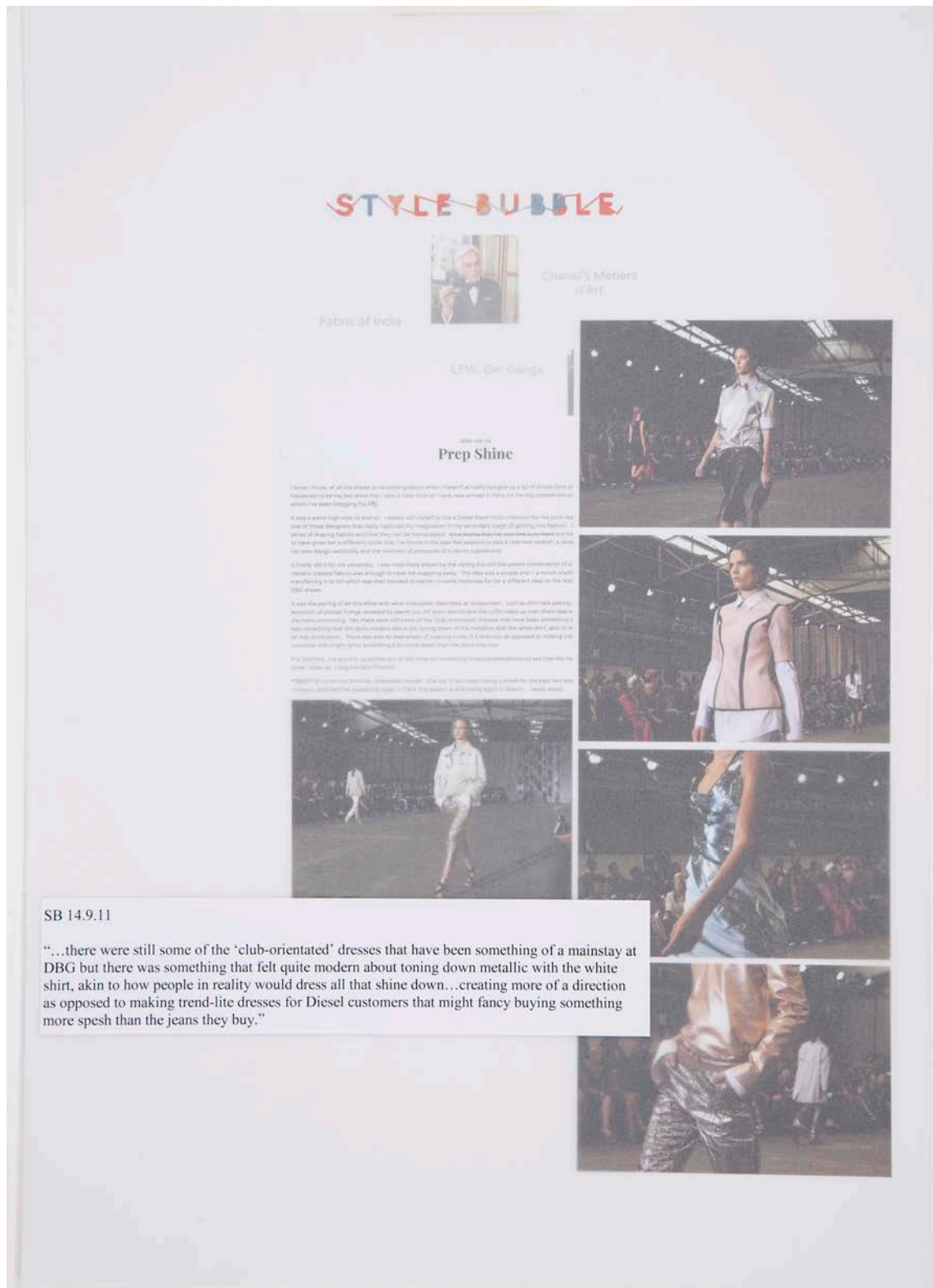


Figure 6.6d.

Rachel Matthews, Between Stability and Mutability: (Collage material from Susie Lau – Style Bubble, 14 September, 2011), [http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2011/09/prep-shine.html?+StyleBubble+\(Style+Bubble\)](http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2011/09/prep-shine.html?+StyleBubble+(Style+Bubble)) (accessed September, 17 2011). 2016.



Figure 6.6e.

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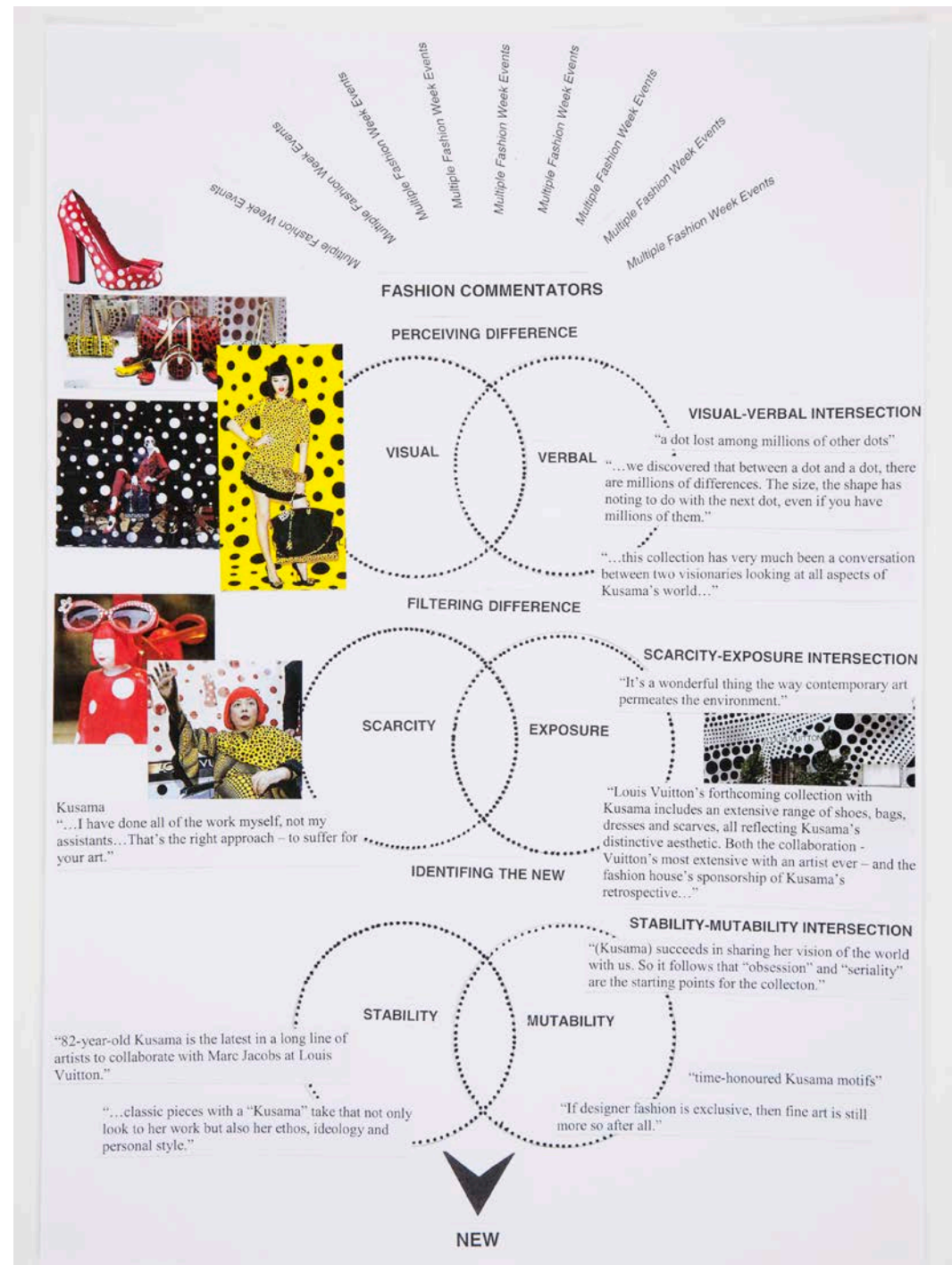


Figure 6.7a. R

Rachel Matthews, Turning Difference into New – Polka Dots, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the three stage processing system described in this chapter. It depicts how a popular fashion discourse (taken from case study data of the Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama fashion-fine-art collaboration, described in Chapter Five) is shaped through the interplay of words and images in fashion commentary.

The structure represents a series of intersections that filter and shape discursive elements. This process begins at the top of the diagram where multiple events or collections compete to be identified and included in fashion commentary. Once within the fashion commentators' purview the intersections of verbal-visual, scarcity-exposure and stability-mutability refine the understanding of new ideas. This diagram uses fragments and quotes from fashion media to illustrate these concepts at work. It aims to represent (in a systematic way) how differences, once perceived and identified, can be transformed into valuable new commodities.

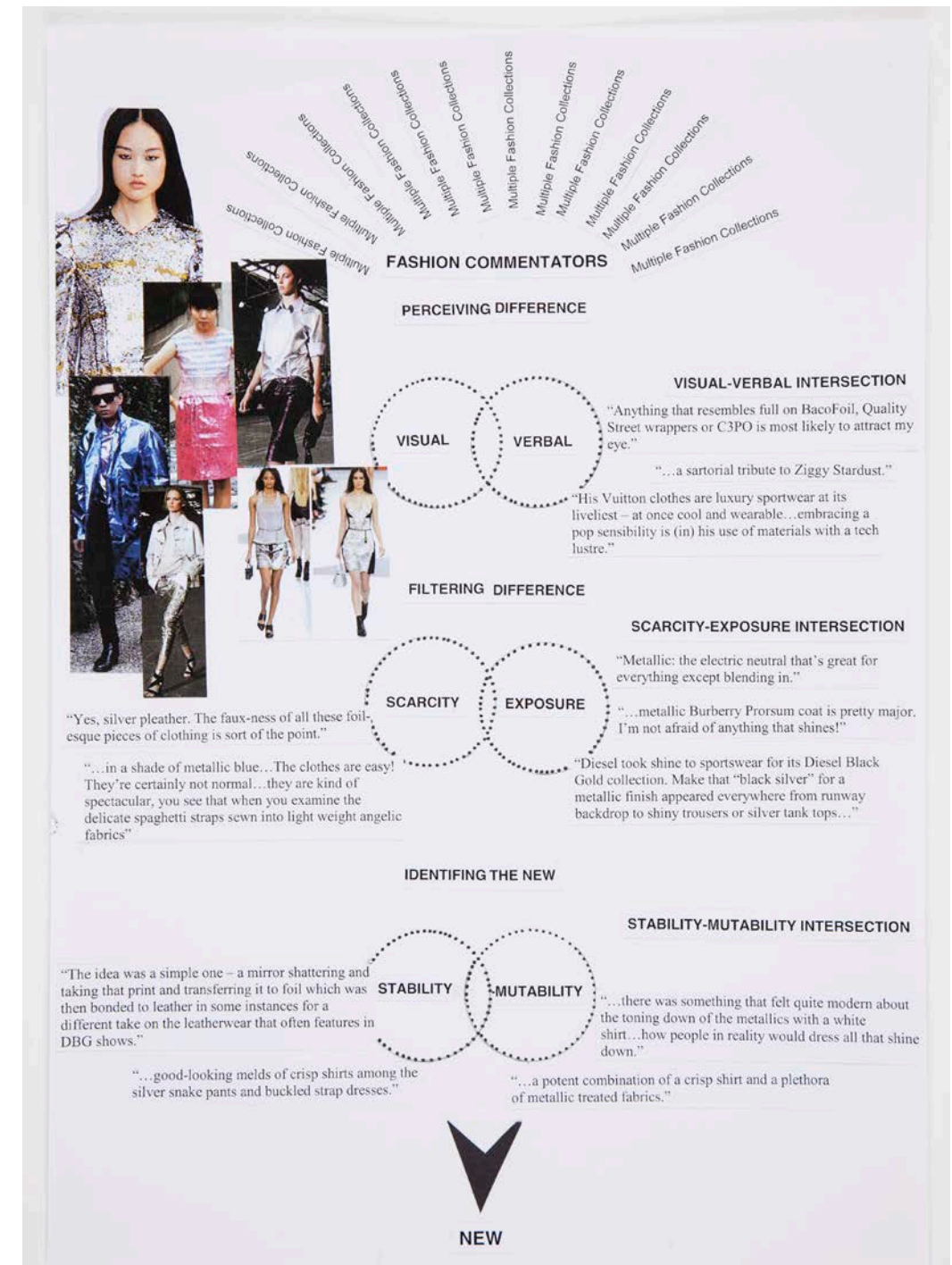


Figure 6.7b.

Rachel Matthews, Turning Difference into New – Metallics, 2016.

This diagram has been constructed as a way to visualise the three stage processing system described in this chapter. It depicts how a particular textile effect (here metallic fabrics in fashion) is identified and endorsed through the interplay of words and images in fashion commentary.

The structure represents a series of intersections that filter and shape discursive elements. This process begins at the top of the diagram where multiple events or collections compete to be identified and included in fashion commentary. Once within the fashion commentators' purview the intersections of verbal-visual, scarcity-exposure and stability-mutability refine the understanding of new ideas. This diagram uses fragments and quotes from fashion media to illustrate these concepts at work. It aims to represent (in a systematic way) how differences, once perceived and identified, can be transformed into valuable new commodities.

The collages above (Figure 6.7a – 6.7b) track two emerging themes as they move through the three-stage process of visibility and readability, scarcity and exposure and stability and mutability. They illustrate the differing types of expressions from fashion commentators (fashion descriptions from journalists and personal experience from the bloggers); each layer helps to adjust the way new objects or ideas are perceived, rationalised and finally endorsed. The fragments taken and compiled from fashion descriptions illustrate the process that requires the reader to look, and then look again; to reconsider what they are seeing and (potentially) adjust their dispositions; and to grasp the nature of ensuing change in the understanding of ‘fashionable.’

This chapter has examined a number of structuring concepts and frameworks constituted through words, language and imagery in fashion communication that mobilise taste. The intersection has been examined as an important threshold in the taste-making process. Here key taste-making components can connect, interfere and entwine with each other before emerging transformed. These intersections act as a stimulus to unleash the potential or latent fashionable qualities lying unnoticed or unseen in items and ideas. Within these various relational contexts the concepts of difference and normalisation are activated in ways specific to fashion, circulating in stable yet changeable forms, such as ‘key trends’ and seasonal ‘must haves.’ This chapter has also considered the role of restriction or suppression in mobilising taste, as a pragmatic step to limit the potential for a system with a never-ending source of abundant choice to become over-whelmed. The intersections utilise the productive capacity of enabling constraints as part of their mechanism of movement. Although identified as three separate phases here, as the examples illustrate, each intersection blends with and influences the other. In combination, the selective and carefully crafted words, phrases and images in fashion media activate a combination of cultural, discursive and relational techniques to adjust the perception of new ideas. In line with the research questions, this chapter proposes a structure developed from the analysis of fashion commentary that assists in the perception of taste transformation.

This chapter is the third in a series that examines the mobilisation of fashionable taste. Each of the three parts has analysed movements that take place on different scales, through various mechanisms and follow different pathways. The variety of these explorations reflects the richness and diversity of the contemporary fashion communications landscape. Fashion tastemakers and taste-making practices are not only concerned with change in fashion, they are fundamentally linked with movement and processes of mobilisation. Taste-making is an activity that purposely interacts, interferes and intervenes with the status quo, finding new ways to move fashion forward and create new perspectives on fashion’s inter-

relations. Notably, the movement and mobilisation of taste does not end with fashion commentators or their taste-making colleagues. The process of taste formation continues in everyday fashion behaviour. The next chapter explores how taste continues to travel once it has passed beyond the realm of the fashion tastemakers and into the world of every day self-fashioning. It examines the discursive elaboration of media messages as the individual considers taste in relation to their personal dispositions and subjective notions of self. The pathways that fashionable taste follow in the next chapter are dispersed, heterogeneous and often not readily observable; nevertheless, they constitute another significant site for movement and mobility of fashionable taste.

ENDNOTES // CHAPTER 6

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CHAPTER 7 | THE SUBJECTIVITIES OF FASHIONABLE TASTE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

How do the expressions and activities of contemporary fashion tastemakers' impact upon everyday acts of self-fashioning? This chapter explores the personal and subjective notions of fashionable taste that are activated and revealed in the presentation of self. The assemblage of fashionable taste drawn together by the individual forms another form of 'coming together'; it exposes a bespoke dimension to taste formation. By shifting the focus of this research from fashion tastemakers publicised in the media to individual accounts of self-fashioning, this chapter provides insights into another important domain in the mobilisation and formation of fashionable taste. This chapter uses data drawn from user-generated sources where fashion consumers and enthusiasts reflect upon their relationship with fashion and taste (see Appendix 5 for further information on this data). Through the analysis of individual voices and their perspectives, as captured in recent surveys and on-line archives, this chapter extends the context of influence to include the personal effects of fashion taste-making. It considers these actions as a distinct yet inter-related phase of the taste-making process, where every day acts of self-fashioning contain the emotional impetus for mobilising fashionable taste. Antoine Hennion's notion of taste underscores this analysis. His concept focuses specifically on how individuals form relationships with aesthetic objects.¹ He sees taste as a form of reflexive work that emerges through a gradual process of awareness, interaction, attachment and practice.²

The chapter considers the use of taste preferences as part of identity construction, where individuals utilise and interpret collective concepts of fashion that have, in part, taken shape through the activities of contemporary fashion tastemakers. This chapter continues to identify movements of taste in this alternative context; however, here the intervening spaces or distance created by the mobilisation of taste is a key concern. It concludes by examining a fundamental dimension of taste produced through travel – relational space.

The chapter begins by exploring social mechanisms that reconcile group or collective ideas of fashion with subjective self-expression. The discussion develops a multi-dimensional view of how fashionable taste

operates in social settings. It acknowledges the complex manners in which it can be mobilised beyond a simple horizontal axis of connection with others or along a vertical axis of elevation as a means of separation from others.

The chapter then examines concepts of self, identity formation and appearance. It analyses reflexive practices that enable the management of identity through changing circumstances and uses theoretical perspectives to show how appearance, gestures, language and behaviour are utilised to adapt to shifting conditions.³

At the heart of this chapter is the self and personal systems of fashion that emerge in an environment lacking previous institutional or social dress codes. It examines methods of meaning production and notions of normativity in self-fashioning, a process that has resonance with the concept of the 'enabling constraints' discussed in Chapter Six. In this chapter, the personal assemblage of fashionable taste is examined through narrative accounts of self-fashioning. The unique assemblages considered here have several notable similarities with the themes that concern fashion tastemakers, yet their referents and associations are original and eclectic, reflecting subjectivity and biographical details. Fashionable taste continues to travel in this context. The complex personal interpretations and application of fashionable taste could be viewed as the final stage in the taste-making journey, though this chapter concludes that movements of fashionable taste are never quite finished. Individual insights on self-fashioning attest that taste continues to travel in ways that are "disruptive, unclassifiable yet still relational."⁴ Here it is argued that distance and perspective created in these movements, are necessary in order to recognise and understand taste and its characteristics. Distance creates a space in which to perceive taste relationally.

7.2 THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CROWD

*Fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalisation with the desire for individual differentiation and change.*⁵

Here George Simmel describes how fashion offers a bridge between the desire to express one's uniqueness and the counter need for individuals to connect with a broader group, a solution to Kant's 'antimony of taste'. This section explores some of the ways in which fashion can accommodate the desires within the individual, whilst acknowledging other influences on acts of self-fashioning in social settings. There have been many academic discussions on the contrasting features of differentiation and conformity inherent in fashion. Some of

these concern issues of dissemination of fashion, where one individual act of differentiation can trigger multiples of the same idea.

This has been the case for numerous explanations of the process of fashion diffusion. Both bubble-up and trickle-down constructions of the fashion diffusion process originate with the notion that where one goes others will follow – based on particular types of leaders and followers.⁶

This broad view of movements in fashion fails to acknowledge the complex and multiple drivers of agency within each individual, that motivate some to express their uniqueness while others seek simply to avoid social embarrassment.⁷ Fashion and clothing offer abundant choice for the individual; getting dressed is a mechanism for many types of expression and has become increasingly important for individuals in a post-modern society.⁸ Jennifer Craik's notion of personal fashion systems provide a relevant lens for this discussion on the individual's application of fashion as a means of orientating one's self with society.

*(The) revised idea of fashion systems entails systematic and changing styles of dress, adornment and conduct; 'grammars' of fashion (bodies of rules and forms) that underpin codes of dress behavior; consensual denotations of power, status and social location; and recognised codes of self-formation through the clothes and bodily adornment.*⁹

This definition suggests the individual is able to evolve their own fashion system in order to find a position to sit comfortably as one amongst many. The definition also highlights how – despite flexibility in personal systems of self-fashioning – it still requires social mediation. It notes that consensus and recognition are necessary mechanisms to establish the system(s). Therefore, these systems are necessarily relational; they emerge in an environment where others are able to recognise and agree on the meaning of certain elements activated in personal modes of self-fashioning.

The growing relevance of personalised systems of fashion connects with broader shifts in contemporary fashion. The disruptions felt throughout the industry triggered by the participatory Internet; globalisation; and the power of the consumer voice have enabled the individual to take a greater stake in the taste-making process. Teri Agins argues that even before the convergence of these elements, fashion consumers were demonstrating dissatisfaction with fashion's restricted view of dress practices, preferring purchases that demonstrate marks of individualism or niche production. She suggests that a number of changes in the mid-1990s such as a greater availability of well styled and well-made clothes at reasonable prices, as well as a societal shift towards more 'smart casual' dressing for most activities (including work and events that had previously been considered formal), saw the allure of high fashion

diminish for many. This, she states, has forced fashion to anticipate the consumer rather than manipulate them.¹⁰

Alison Clarke and Daniel Miller note a similar shift, which they suggest began in 1980s with “a clear decline in what had become the traditional form of fashion authority” that determined “lengths of skirts or colours of the season.”¹¹ They describe how fashion evolved “greater freedom to create particular niches by populations of consumers rather than merely the industry.”¹² A shift in the power relations of fashion certainly began in the latter part of the twentieth century, though it is greater access to fashion information on-line and interaction and sharing in the digital domain that have produced broader interpretations of fashion. As a result, informed fashion consumers are able to make more sophisticated and informed decisions about aesthetic choices, with consumer views recognised as playing a greater role in the development of fashionable taste.

Presenting a fashionable self may require specific aesthetic choices; however, there is room in fashion for this style of dress to be adapted and customised. Personalised systems of fashion evolve through individual experiences of fashion, as each of us finds a way to reconcile our inner selves with the need to connect and communicate with those around us. Agins states, “At every level of society, people care greatly about the way they look, which affects both self-esteem and the way other people interact with them.”¹³ The way in which these personal systems take shape relies on knowledge (local and fashion), emotional connections and shared meaning production around aesthetic objects amongst individuals. Artist Grayson Perry has explored the emotional investment we place in the things and aesthetic objects, as part of his 2013 investigation into taste and social mobility in the UK (documented in the 4 part, Channel 4 series, *In the Best Possible Taste*). Reflecting on his research for this series Perry notes, “Taste is a tender subject. What really fascinates me about the topic of aesthetic taste is that people really care.”¹⁴ His insights highlights a very particular emotional-material entanglement in aesthetic taste across all sectors of society, where getting dressed is seen as an important way of telling people who we are and how we feel.

Different motivations exist behind every act of self-fashioning; no two decisions are shaped by the same set of influences. Therefore, it would be an over-simplification to propose that acts of self-fashioning are undertaken either to fit in or to stand out as the individual in the crowd. These two positions form part of the story, but social contexts generate various pressures, some of which are externally exerted (such as expectations of professional attire in the work place), and some are provoked internally and are self-imposed (such as anxiety over body image or fear of judgment by others). Issues of education, family background, community context, wealth, comfort, values and personal beliefs are also caught up in our dispositions towards fashionable

taste and the objects we use to express this. These tensions create a site of micro frictions, where competing influences shape our personal aesthetics by positive as well as negative emotions.

In the social context, a mutual recognition of dress sensibilities allows our aesthetic choices to initiate communications and interactions with others. This is important for fashion and dress because the response and acknowledgement of others is a vital measure. ‘Fashionableness’ or appropriateness cannot be judged as some type of physical feature in an object; the best ‘proof’ of its existence is in the acceptance and reaction of others.¹⁵ This recognition by ‘fashionable’ others is an integral part of the taste-making and taste-shaping processes. It is a mechanism of orientation for contemporary fashion tastemakers interacting at international fashion week events just as much as it is for individuals experimenting with the presentation of self in everyday life. The alignment of internal intentions and external systems of representation remains challenging for some individuals and one where numerous mechanisms for reassurance are often employed.

Sophie Woodward has undertaken extensive investigations into self-fashioning on the streets of Nottingham (UK). Her research found that many of the individuals she interviewed for the project appeared to be wearing similar styles or outfits. This would suggest aesthetic discernment as a means of conformity. However, when questioned about their choices they explained how various sources of, and associations with, each of the items making up their outfit created a unique and personal assemblage that distinguished them from others.¹⁶ This intimate perspective on decision-making and self-perception reflects the nuanced and highly subjective positions taken in relation to taste judgments. It provides a window on the unique internal narratives that motivate certain choices in the daily process of presenting ourselves to the world – a world where sartorial codes have become harder to read, but individualism is highly prized. As Woodward notes, “the markers of difference are often so subtle they are only readable by those on the inside. The emphasis instead is upon where the items are from and how they are combined.”¹⁷

Her study illustrates how individuals discern their own elements of difference in objects and ideas, despite similarity in appearance. It helps to make evident how human and non-human entities interact and form attachments. In Woodward’s research, garments and accessories are recognised as active mediators that help to bring thoughts and intentions of individuals into the social world.¹⁸ Richard Wilk proposes that there are other important active agents that are difficult to discern in our aesthetic choices, such as our distastes. He argues that distaste, both aversion and indifference, play a part in shaping our relations with the material world; however, he does not follow Bourdieu’s argument where the dislike of the taste of others becomes the defining

means of social division. Negative emotions, for Wilk, can result in non-consumption (potentially initiating other aesthetic choices such as 'making do,' swapping or borrowing garments), and as such have gone unrecognised in studies of taste and consumption.¹⁹

Resistance to the prevailing or mainstream aesthetics is not only evident in 'alternative' or sub-cultural dress practices, as some have argued, but also undertaken in the choice to *not* consume. Lise Skov argues that examinations of fashion often place too much emphasis on consumption and acquiring goods, rather than how people use, repond and live with items.²⁰ Wilk observes, "Negative emotions of all kinds towards goods are generally repressed and hidden in most discourse about fashion."²¹ This pattern persists in many methods of engagement on social media, with the predilection for 'like' rather than any other emotional response. Wilk states that our relations with aesthetic goods are affected by a broad spectrum of emotional responses, not simply by desire and social competition.²² Personal expression within society produces complex entanglements of self where some influences generate external material expressions that can be recognised and acknowledged while others remain unseen and only revealed in internal narrative or intimate relations. These relationships are explored further in connection to identity formation. Using the concept of narrative identity, the following section unpacks how identity and appearance combine to build a stable yet mutable story of one's self.

7.3 IDENTITY AND APPEARANCE

Each individual is a collection of selves – the one and the many! These may range from professional worker, mother, student, lover and community leader; different roles played out by just one person at different times and different locations. These various roles require the individual to appear and act differently depending on the dominant role. One's identity is not a singular static construction; rather, each of us has many selves, formed through, and by, a range of internal and external factors.²³ Appearance, gestures, language and behavior are self-consciously regulated to construct the appropriate guise for each version of oneself, and fashion and dress are a key part of this activity. These multiple versions are not fixed, but change with time and context – bringing aspects of our history through to the present and laying the way for our ideas and aspirations of the future to be enacted.²⁴ Erving Goffman suggests that different roles require individuals to adapt aspects of themselves to fit within each context.²⁵ However, Anthony Giddens argued that individuals make use of contextual diversity to incorporate various aspects (gestures, behaviours, etc) from different settings to form an integrated narrative of self that is comfortable interacting in a variety of contexts.²⁶

Each version of one's self is not complete without an audience. Despite the emphasis on the 'project of self' or self-reflexive nature of identity construction, this work is not solitary and outcomes are not realised purely through the will of the individual. It is, like many aspects of fashion, the response of others to one's communication of self that activates and shapes its constitution.²⁷ There are many spaces and locations in which social interaction and validation are undertaken. We have a locally situated life in society, but in addition, we also now have a vast global mediated world that augments one's social interaction and observation.²⁸ The act of presenting ourselves to an audience for response, validation and the co-creation of self-knowledge has extended from face-to-face encounters through the integration of the digitally enabled, interconnected world of websites, blogs and social media.

Visual communication is at the heart of how appearance contributes to the construction of identity. Much has been written on the communicative abilities of fashion and its reliance on context to send a clear message.²⁹ It is reductive to think of fashion and appearance as a language, rather it is more appropriate to see self-fashioning as a series of complex multi-layered communication practices. The meanings and values of these visual communication activities, however, are mutable and sensitive to time and context. The relevance of objects, gestures and language can diminish at alarming rates, especially in the realm of digitally enhanced fashion communications.

Our own fashion communication practices are refined through trial and error and shaped by our recollections. Experimentation with self-expression through fashion leads to moments of joy: memories of successful connections, enhanced self-confidence and associations understood and appreciated by others. Inevitably, there are also lessons learned the hard way: the scars of miscommunications, fashion *faux pas* and wardrobe malfunctions. Indeed Wilk describes how personal tastes and preferences are often shaped through negative experiences, of learning what *not* to wear as well as learning what to wear.³⁰ The legacy of experimentation with our own fashion systems forms a thread of our personal history or narrative, where memories and emotions are tied to clothing.

Paul Ricoeur explains how by creating a personal narrative for ourselves we are able to understand our identity as something permanent. The narrative thread allows us to understand ourselves in a continuous evolving manner despite the passing of time and other changes.³¹ An internal narrative forms the basis of our developing identity or a fluid sense of self, shaped by personal preferences that inform which experiences and mediated information we choose to include or exclude, reject or re-interpret, as part of actively managing our selfhood.³² Each of our narrative threads can be viewed as a pathway built on a series of unique taste-making assemblages, where

internal subjective narratives, personal preferences and experiences converge with selected external messages.

Ricoeur notes that narrative identities reflect a blend of fictive history and historical fiction.³³ The entangling of these part-real part-imagined elements become blended with our personal narrative in the form of fleeting thoughts, private discussions or daydreams in front of the mirror when deciding what to wear. Further, internal and external sources are more easily interwoven in the virtual world through various forms of fashion media where hyperlinks in editorial fashion shoots move the viewer directly to on-line shopping sites enabling the creation of an image of oneself wearing presented the garments. The creative imaginings in this process of identity formation relies on self-awareness. One needs an understanding of a 'self' that is capable of reflective interrogation about modes of being, something that both Michel Foucault and Paul Ricoeur identify in discussions of self-regulation or technologies of the self.³⁴ One's personal narrative then provides a 'figurable' character – a way for the self to envision itself. From this perspective, the narrative identity provides a mechanism for balancing multiple selves; it is a way of living between two worlds. The internal narrative is a technique for managing continuity and change in one's self as well as a means to present a constant yet evolving self to the world.

Storytelling and narration, like discourse, uses common themes, motifs or referents to anchor the unfolding drama. Personal narratives that conflate identity and appearance employ such techniques. Fashion commentators and their work, shaping and mobilising influential discourses around aesthetic preferences, have guided an understanding of collective fashion narratives over time.³⁵ These stories are used to fuse personal history with fiction creating "historical fictions" or plot lines. Giddens notes that narratives of self-identity are something that needs to be worked on, and requires "creative input as a matter of course."³⁶ According to Ricoeur, these plot lines provide a way to frame "the identity of the protagonist of the story."³⁷ The story telling, myth building and collective narratives generated by fashion tastemakers helps to imbue certain aesthetic objects with transformative powers or mythical status. For example, the enduring promise of style from the perfect 'little black dress' or symbolic powers of the 'It' bag. With this heightened significance, the objects are able to become important active symbols central to the story of one's narrative identity. Fairytales illustrate just how non-human entities such as new items of clothing, capes and shoes can take on agency in compelling narratives. The stories of *Cinderella*, *the Emperor's New Clothes*, *the Red Shoes* and *Little Red Riding Hood* all rely on fashionable actants for their drama.

'Fictions' pervade internal mechanisms of understanding one's self, as well as creating common systems of reference and association around aesthetic objects. It assists in building relations and maps of emerging

meaning associated with aesthetic objects, as Ricœur notes, "Self does not know it's self immediately...only indirectly through cultural signs of all sorts."³⁸ The narrative identity is, however, more than simply a sense of self that continues to connect the internal with the external and vice versa. Anthony Giddens describes this as an on-going project, as "something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual."³⁹ Karan Barad suggests that the constant retelling of the narrative encourages the production of new, revised or re-cycled meanings and enhancements to be absorbed into the story.⁴⁰

Selection of clothing, gesture, behavior and language form the material, discursive and performative means for expressing multiple conditions of the self. At this intersection, recognisable elements, collective codes, or 'grammars' in fashion and dress become useful reference points. Personal systems of fashion develop, adapt and customise pre-existing codes and grammars of fashion as inter-discursive referents in the telling of our narrative identities. The 'grammars of fashion' have their foundations in popular discourses and discursive practices of fashion, but they diverge and develop certain sartorial features in response to local settings. Personal 'grammars of fashion' are explored in the next section, in order to consider independent modes of self-fashioning used to reconcile multiple realities.

7.4 GRAMMARS OF FASHION

Jennifer Craik notes that the "'grammars' of fashion (bodies of rules and forms)...(that) underpin codes of dress behavior" make the codes recognisable to others.⁴¹ There are certain aspects of grammars and codes that have been formed, communicated and circulated through the dominant discourses or representations of tastemakers within the fashion media.⁴² Keith Negus and Michael Pickering connect the concept of aesthetic codes with cultural conventions. They support Craik's view of their communicative ability suggesting that, "within them are inscribed the cultural arrangements that enable communication, co-existence and self-awareness, within particular contexts and periods."⁴³ Our knowledge of these elements as stylistic codes and social canons is co-created through a meshing of various personal experiences with public references and associations. Familiarity with the codes and grammars of fashion requires them to be regularly used, so their forms and rules correspond with changing relational settings. They are made meaningful when they are bought into reality and have their communicative capabilities tested and developed through interactions in the social world.

Codes that are used in personal systems of fashion are material and tangible practices that function in the various environments of everyday life, such as the work place, casual and social occasions as well as more formal displays of fashionable self. Each of these social spaces has parallel sets of rules and forms acknowledged by its actors; a microcosm where certain localised conventions develop. For example, school uniforms demonstrate how certain structured forms of dressing can develop a sub-set of subtle codes through the creative adjustment of school tie, shirt collar or skirt length. Without resorting to major 'fashion statements', small but decisive deviations such as wearing a shirt tucked in instead of left loose or the depth of turn-ups on a pair of jeans can become grammars of fashion in certain social settings; as Grayson Perry observed aesthetic tastes are often expressed and defined through minor details (or a vanity of small differences). Even open dress codes such as music 'festival dressing' or 'dress down Fridays' which suggest that anything goes, develop certain codes that underpin self-fashioning in such contexts. Notably these notions do evolve; Negus and Pickering describe how codes develop, sometimes marked by small changes, sometimes through significant aesthetic or social shifts.⁴⁴ The grammars and codes are an evolving set of practices with different competing influences that are regularly adapted, subverted or customised.

Fashion tastemakers drive some of the changes and evolutions of self-fashioning, though as Woodward notes, "multiple sites and discourses are interconnected in producing meanings" around self-fashioning.⁴⁵ The digital space has intensified the complexity of possible references that become absorbed into multi-layered webs of information around certain objects. These assemblages are further fed by opinions and on-going discourse made up of casual comments from friends, emojies, 'Likes', pins, re-posts, progressively increasing the number of views. However, there is never only one, final, fixed meaning assigned to an object or idea be it on-line or off-line. The meaning each of us makes of it and how we utilise this is dependent on many entangled factors. As Stuart Hall notes, the viewer is implicated in the production of meaning.⁴⁶ In addition, Angela Partington states that each individual is an active producer of meaning through personal recognition of certain references stating, "...intertextuality is a product of the viewer's relationship with images/objects, rather than a feature of images/objects themselves."⁴⁷

For the fashion consumer, who has been freed from the directives of the fashion industry and who has access to a vast array of opinion and referents regarding fashion in the digital domain, the grammars of fashion become a form of normativity to which they can refer. Clarke and Miller note an increasing concern of individuals to understand normativity in fashion choices because of the lack of stated rules or codes. In their research, many individuals expressed anxiety about their own choices in relation to what "the normative fashion choices should

be."⁴⁸ The grammars of fashion become a way of creating self-imposed systems of dress that exist outside of institutional rules and authority as a form of self-reassurance. Normative terms of self-fashioning do however delineate rather than determine. They leave room for idiosyncratic and unexpected combinations and applications. Normativity is not one homogenous look; it is open to fusion, extension and transformation.⁴⁹

Presentation of self is fashioned by multiple layers of subjectivity, infused with personality traits and self-esteem as well as a range of emotional responses. It is adapted in a matter of minutes to work with the weather conditions on a particular day, or to be suitable for both work and after-work activities. Further, self-fashioning should not be simply conflated with consumption. It is better understood as an attachment or disposition toward objects and ideas that, as Wilk acknowledges, may or may not leave material traces. Individual discussions of fashionable taste, expressed in everyday fashion behaviour, hold the potential to offer a more multi-dimensional perspective. With a shift in power relations from institutional fashion towards the fashion consumer, there is a heightened level of interest and attentiveness to the direction of consumer's choices. In this context, the personal assemblages of taste that converge to stimulate and influence self-fashioning take on greater significance. These assemblages contain dynamic relationships and associations "that energise the everyday world of dress practice."⁵⁰ Through the development of the participatory Internet, the sharing of this information on personal influences has become commonplace and has made access to such qualitative information abundant. The section below analyses the contents of personal assemblages of fashionable taste.

7.5 PERSONAL ASSEMBLAGES OF FASHIONABLE TASTE

As no two situations are the same, it is problematic to try to generalise about individual circumstances surrounding how aesthetic goods become entangled with emotions; though there are some similarities in the personal assemblages of fashionable taste with those of contemporary fashion taste-making. Of course, personal self-fashioning decisions are played out on a micro level and in a range of everyday social environments, in contrast to the future-focused aesthetic discernments made by fashion tastemakers at international fashion weeks. Nevertheless, both have the potential to be distributed globally via the Internet. Individual fashion and dress choices are concerned with issues of stability and mutability, as are the fashion tastemakers. For individuals, a particular understanding of which concepts of self are fixed, and which are mutable, shape the evolution of their personal style. The fashion tastemakers consider which elements of fashion remain

stable or continue unchanged whilst highlighting the differences that make fashion appear new. Both utilise notions of difference, whether in their promotion of new ideas or as a means of personal distinction.

The concept of an ‘enabling constraint’ has been discussed in Chapter Six. In the previous chapter, the term was used to describe how fashion commentators enable by restricting or limiting possibilities, so that only the most viable selections emerge.⁵¹ In self-fashioning too, individuals impose structure on their choices, a process Skov describes as an individual’s management of ‘dress dilemmas.’⁵² The concept of personal ‘grammars’ informs this process that narrows possible

options of what to wear, making the decision making process easier. Individuals generate unique, enabling constraints that are not only formed by aesthetic preferences, but also by insecurities about self-image and notions of age or occasion-appropriate styles of dress that circulate as discourses of appraisal in various social contexts. Hennion describes moments of uncertainty or experimentation in taste formation, as “tests of taste,” a qualifying process where the body and the tasted object interact allowing attachments to form.⁵³ In the process of taste formation, personal assemblages draw upon elements from an individual’s entire social universe, whether inside or outside our comfort zone.

This study uses accounts of the daily decision-making processes of ‘getting dressed’ as a way to examine the personal assemblage of fashionable taste. This research has analysed recently published data from a survey undertaken with 640 women, which asked fifty questions

on matters of personal style (Figure 7.1). Also included is this analysis, is content of a growing on-line archive called *What We Wore* (Figure 7.2), which documents personal perspectives on self-fashioning.⁵⁴ It is important to acknowledge that the nature of the material reviewed here – surveys and on-line user generated content – is not necessarily “an authentic or truthful performance of self.”⁵⁵ This caveat aside, these sources provide first hand anecdotal material offering the richness of oral history. The accounts and recollections help to reveal how notions of fashion are interpreted and absorbed into acts of self-fashioning and the on-going narrative of self.⁵⁶ Analysis of these personal perspectives connects the discursive with the material and the subjective in personal taste-making practices, revealing taste as “a performative activity not an observance.”⁵⁷ It is within the individual accounts of getting dressed, or the “situated bodily practices” of fashion, that the interaction of elements occurs.⁵⁸ A complex process, described by Hennion as a “reflexive

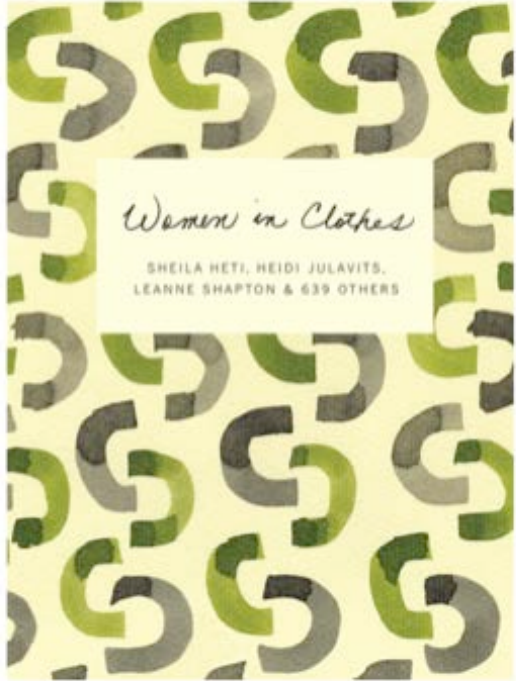


Figure 7.1.

Sheila Heti, Heidi Julavits and Leanne Shapton, *Women in Clothes*, Print edition (2014), <http://www.womeninclothes.com/book/> (accessed May, 12, 2015).



activity concerned with attachments and practices” and “based on mediations, bodies, objects, situations and equipment.”⁵⁹

One of the first features to emerge from the accounts of self-fashioning considered here is the important role that others play in translating or making concepts of fashion intelligible. Fashionable dress is studied and learned through the dress practices and characteristics of others, or “fashion as a practice of the people” as Clarke and Miller describe it.⁶⁰ Items and ideas of fashion take shape through the activities and filtering process of the fashion tastemakers, to be subsequently taken up by others and reconfigured into personal systems of fashionable taste. The manner in which individuals appropriate the ideas and objects then becomes the lens through which other individuals understand and actualise the concept. For example, particular notions of femininity or glamour in the presentation of self take on meaning in the nostalgic recollections of family members.

*I discovered a photo of my grandmother from the seventies, wearing her hair in a chignon, a beautiful beige dress and brown heels. Throughout the following week I wore my hair in that style and an item of clothing that was brown or beige, in homage to my grandmother. Emotional connections make getting dressed very easy.*⁶¹

Figure 7.2.

Nina Manandhar, *What we Wore: A People's History of British Style*, Screen shot of digital archive, <http://what-we-wore.com/> (accessed May, 22, 2016).

I remember desperately wanting all kinds of outfits and shoes, especially things my older sister wore. I have a clear memory of standing at the top of the stairs in white patent leather Mary Janes that she'd outgrown. It was an ecstatic moment.⁶²

Each individual draws upon aspects of their narrative self, depending on the context or situation. It is made up of fragments, a 'bricolage' of references, experiences and aspirations. Some assemblages draw in family members, who have been studied over time and understood in close, face-to-face proximity. Others characters become emotionally entangled with fashion and taste in the assemblage via album covers, books, magazines or films – mediated images of style, fused and enacted by the character.

"I wore...Wrangler 'W' pocket jeans with a kick flare, which I patched as they wore away, in hopeful emulation of Neil Young's jeans on the cover of After the Gold Rush.⁶³

...a double-page spread I pulled out of i-D about London tribes. It ...featured Lord Barnzley and Dave Dorrell, as well as Nelly Hooper and DJ Milo from The Wild Bunch. The day I saw that spread with them wearing buffalo shearling jackets from Westwood mixed with real Gucci loafers and fake Chanel t-shirts, I had found my tribe.⁶⁴

... my role model is the "Charlie Girl" from the Charlie fragrance ads of the seventies and eighties. She embodies everything I want for myself – confidence, personal and financial independence, a "sunny disposition", a fulfilling career, friends, fun, beautiful lovers, et cetera.⁶⁵

Collective notions of fashion have a strong presence in the personal assemblages; however, the established understanding of ideas such as femininity and glamour are routinely customised, personalised and re-imagined. This adjustment allows individuals to see themselves in relation to concepts of fashion and reveal in their comments the emotional responses and interpretations of certain material objects.

(Our) clothes were very much about distorting a traditional representation of femininity – they were pretty and pastel but we wore them grubby, sometimes torn, with chipped nail varnish and unshaven armpits.⁶⁶

I have an ill-fitting '60s puss-print coat that I might wear once a year because it makes me feel like Jeanne Moreau in Roger Vadim's 1959 version of Dangerous Liaisons. I keep it as a reminder of how utterly glamorous and jazzy she was in that film.⁶⁷

Knowing that the most valuable, courageous and intelligent women of Tolstoy, Fontane, Hugo and the Brontes wore finery at their finest moments has led me to feel empowered by feminine dresses.⁶⁸

The accounts of self-fashioning also expose how individuals invoke perceive stylistic details in material objects as meaningful symbols in the construction of versions of self. In these descriptions, some individuals are literally 'putting on' aspects of self to support or sustain their identity. The garments materialise or activate personal qualities or characteristics.

I own one really expensive item. It's a really sexy blazer with these huge power-pockets. If I'm going somewhere I'm scared of, or where I feel I don't really belong, I'll wear that blazer for a hit of courage.⁶⁹

I'm a doctor and I read somewhere that patients don't want their doctor to look like a successful business woman. That liberated me from buying any more 'dress for success' suits that women were told to wear in the eighties. But patients don't want you to look like a clueless frump. So I have a casual-professional look that shows off my own style.⁷⁰

Personal codes and self-imposed fashion rules are evident in the associations of the taste-making assemblages. The grammars noted here highlight the attention paid to tiny details as subtle manners of communication, and there is also a sense of self-assurance regarding the significance of these details and how others understand them.

We bought matching Wrangler jackets stitched in orange thread, distinguishable from the skinhead variety by the sheen of the denim and the tiny slanted front pockets.⁷¹

Those were some early Nike Air brown shoes. Up to that point all sneaks were white. Brown sneaks were kind of intellectual.⁷²

The jeans I have got on in this photo...have big circle patches on the knees...they had white stitching, which was quite a big deal.⁷³

Taste-making influences from sources such as films and television dramas as well as fashion media and advertising can create a kind of slippage in spatial-temporal understandings of particular retro and vintage fashions in the context of today.⁷⁴ They invoke historical stereotypes that imbue particular looks with a sense of nostalgia or romance, enabling a sense of amnesia around certain eras – forgetting certain important aspects of the era and romanticising others. Referencing these popular discourses, individuals undertake a type of taste-making through time that reveals some particularly subjective interpretations of the past that are felt in ways of dressing.

I tend to hark back to Edwardian style, with lots of buttons down the back and on the sleeves, nipped waist, hip-covering jacket, and a curvy look, from well before the liberation of Chanel and the flapper styles. I associate this look with the elegance of the suffragettes and George Bernard Shaw's heroines.⁷⁵

I realised it was more punk to dress like a "normal" person and infiltrate the world from the inside than to have everyone treat you like a freak.⁷⁶

I own a lot of dresses, especially floor-length dresses and brightly colored dresses. The floor-length thing developed after I bought this perfect vintage '70's floral maxi dress that makes me feel like I should live on a commune and bring people baskets of fruit.⁷⁷

The accounts of self-fashioning contain diverse narratives that expose the attachments produced through the interplay of the discursive, the material and the subjective. Notions of glamour, elegance and femininity come to life through enactment, while personal characteristics and expressions of knowledge are held within the very fabric of aesthetic choices. The entities that converge in the personal assemblages expose idiosyncratic references from the respondent's biography as well as their self-awareness of the process. The subjective retelling of one's intentions in accounts of self-fashioning can be seen as a performative mapping of narrative identity. The mapping process draws on real and imagined qualities, internal and emotional responses as well as collective concepts and external discourses. The convergence of these influences has the ability to transform and re-imagine the material qualities of fashion objects when they are worn.

These recollections make evident certain taste-making themes mentioned earlier in this section, where difference becomes an important mobilising factor and the creation of personal 'enabling constraints' to restrict self-fashioning options. There is also a distinct relationship with time evident in the personal accounts of self-fashioning. The contents of

personal assemblages studied here draw heavily on both time and place, to anchor their assemblages to aesthetic discernments – viewed retrospectively through a subjective lens. This draws attention once again to a sense of movement and its significance to the production of taste. The mobilisation of taste generates distance and perspective; this detachment enables the entanglements of aesthetic choices, social meanings and emotions to crystallise and their relations to be more clearly understood.

Distance produces space for evaluation, in which it is possible to discern objects, gestures and behaviours as expressions of taste. The perspective enables a re-consideration of differences, connections and associations that may go unnoticed or seem unimportant at the time. It also enhances the ability to see taste in others or in other places and spaces. The movements of fashionable taste produce relational space of various dimensions. Space is created by temporal movements (into the past or into the future), or is produced through various devices or locations (within physical or virtual settings) providing much-needed perspective. The dimensions of movement and relational space that allow both the individual and the community to grasp taste are analysed below.

7.6 PERSPECTIVES ON FASHIONABLE TASTE

As many visual markers of differentiation become subtler, the value and insight of personal accounts of self-fashioning becomes greater. The recollections capture the individual creativity that exists in the daily act of getting dressed and initiates a fashion discourse that is connected to the lived experience. Further, as the digital environment enables more people to share their perspectives, differing views about the everyday practice of getting dressed become visible. Personal narratives offer insight about our relationships with fashion that reflect proactive, passionate and inventive individuals, who draw on a broad range of sources when making decisions about what to wear. Ted Polhemus describes this anecdotal material as creating threads of alternative fashion histories that need to be shared and cherished; not only to understand what we wore, but also who we were.⁷⁸ He rightly questions the lack of these real fashion histories in 'the official history of fashion.'⁷⁹

...high fashion spirals off in its own fantasy world while most people create their own unique presentation from all the variety on offer in our 21st-century supermarket of style.⁸⁰

In the context of this research, the value of these personal accounts is in the way they reveal a diverse collection of taste-making characters and

characteristics – past and present; real and imagined; family friends and public figures. The narratives also describe the different types of knowledge and meaning that are implicitly transferred and held in objects across different social settings. They identify where emotions, influences and motivations collide with material expressions.

The recollections of self-fashioning rationalise various internal and external depictions of self, whilst also functioning as an extension of the fashion taste-making process; new and existing forms of fashionable taste are tested, transformed and cannibalised at the intersection with personal choice. The mobilisation of taste at this intersection is not reduced to a sequence of logical movements used to thread together one's narrative identity; rather, at this junction, taste is pulled in many directions, travelling in ways that are ever-more "disruptive, unclassifiable yet still relational."⁸¹ The motion and travel of fashionable taste creates a sense of distance – 'past and present' or 'here and there' – through dispersed multi-dimensional movements rather than linear pathways. Its journey ensures a connection remains between the former and the latter, but the intervening space allows the distinctions of taste to be more apparent, and the attachments (and detachments), to be more strongly felt.

New propositions of fashionable taste disrupt ideas of time and place in self-fashioning and generate multi-dimensional movements. They allow us to imagine our future aesthetic choices and possible future self. New proposals of taste, generated by fashion tastemakers advocate for change, but are refined and shaped as they move along bespoke circuits of stability and mutability in personal assemblages. In personal accounts of self-fashioning, tastes appear to move backwards as well as forwards; a multi-directional movement achieved by re-activating garments with memories or associations, so vintage fashions or long forgotten hand-me-downs function to express contemporary aesthetic choices. The movements of taste may change direction as the individual transitions to a new status or sense of self. Alternatively, movements in this personal realm may stall, remain dormant or be slow to move on as personal preference (or confidence) makes the individual reluctant to initiate changes or evolve their aesthetic choices. There are taste-making movements that may be difficult to discern, barely visible adjustments that mark a shift in one's internal disposition towards expressions of taste. Alternatively, the direction of travel may become dissipated and dispersed through a series of micro movements and modifications. The nature of the movement and the direction of travel are contingent on many forces, but the continued transformation of fashionable taste is required to make it knowable as taste.

A number of academics have noted the problems many people have in trying to articulate their own taste and aesthetic dispositions.⁸² Research on this issue has found that when respondents are questioned about their current aesthetic choices most resort to instincts such as gut feeling, 'knowing it when I see it,' or simply just that they like it. In contrast, when

individuals are asked to describe their dislikes they find it much easier to identify and articulate what it is that they find repellant.⁸³ Because of the distance between their own position on aesthetic discernment and that of others, aesthetic sensibilities are more clearly recognised; the distance creates a space in which to perceive taste relationally.

The space, whether generated by temporal or spatial distance, makes particular expressions of taste discernable and graspable, not only in others, but also in ourselves. Temporal distance brings clarity and a way of making sense of previous concepts of taste whether collective or personal. Looking back offers certain objectivity; a way of untangling and classifying the meaningful characteristics of taste after the taste-making assemblage has dissolved. For example, the temporal distance mapped through the history of fashion makes the meaning of aesthetic sensibilities of the nineteenth, twentieth and even early twenty first century appear vividly. Historical perspectives do not however make identifying one's own taste in the here and now any easier. Further, the relational space within which we reconcile our attachments and aesthetic dispositions is a space of difference, quite unlike the everyday spaces we inhabit. As reflected in the accounts of self-fashioning above, it is a space that is at once removed from reality, yet also connected with it.

Previously, institutionally directed systems of fashion offered stable relational spaces and time delays for the consideration and contemplation of new fashion propositions for fashion consumers. Now, constantly updated on-line fashion communications have disrupted the dominance of the slower moving fashion magazine. Meanwhile, the former predictable seasonal cadence of high fashion and its associated time lag for consumer access has been all but replaced by live streaming and 'see now, buy now' opportunities. These developments suggest that technology has collapsed many of the previous mechanisms of distance and detachment that provided a space or distance in which to consider future taste propositions in relation to the present.

However, digital space has generated other sorts of spatial dynamics. Agnès Rocamora has written about connections between computer screens and mirrors; in discussing fashion blogging, she argues, blogs have created a new gendered space for the self-surveillance of women.⁸⁴ She observes, "the screen/mirror shows an idealized self the viewer can identify with and therefore appropriate to work on her own identity construction, whilst also indulging in the pleasure of voyeurism her status as a spectator grants her."⁸⁵ The digital space is not inert; its dimensions make many things happen that transforms its users. It has created other sorts of alternative relational dynamics for taste formation. The nature of these relational spaces can be characterised using Michel Foucault's concept of a heterotopia: a space of 'difference' that relates to an existing space by representing, yet distorting it, a place where the real and the ideal productively interact.⁸⁶ By examining the self-

formation of fashionable taste within heterotopic spaces, it becomes possible to see how interaction with particular interfaces in the digital space creates a contemporary context in which to understand our off-line attachments.

Seeing one's self on screen provides a shift in proximity; it places one's self at a distance from one's physical being and produces a different awareness of self. It allows images of self to be set at a distance and in spaces of 'otherness' or heterotopias. In *Of Other Spaces*, Michel Foucault uses the term heterotopia to describe a 'placeless place' using the reflection in a mirror to illustrate the type of distance they can create.

*In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent.*⁸⁷

Our on-line selves are a way to situate oneself in a place where we are not and assists in the formation of taste by simultaneously providing mechanisms of attachment and detachment from the offline self. Foucault notes how heterotopic spaces "draw us out of ourselves" in peculiar ways.⁸⁸ This process of removal creates a context that enables us to view our aesthetic choices as if they were someone else's. Crucially, taste is an active pursuit, so interaction and participation in heterotopic spaces is the key to unlocking their taste-making potential and activating a relational space that operates in real-time.

Interaction in spaces of 'otherness' in the online environment offers infinite possibilities, however, even the simple activity of searching and browsing in the digital space can trigger relational interactions. Hennion describes how taste formation occurs in a "space of curiosity," where relations and attachments develop through a "continuity of interest".⁸⁹ Our browsing and search histories are tracked in this heterotopic space; technology records where we have been and what we have looked at, and then utilises this information to provide us with 'personalised content.' Personalised content ensures that the objects we have sought out previously return to us in future searches, in the form of advertising or product reviews, thus encouraging ongoing awareness and attentiveness. Some argue that this practice is a sinister form of 'digital stalking,' yet this technological intervention also holds potential for more sophisticated insights into behaviours that constitute 'continuity of interest' in aesthetic goods tracked in online spaces. Our search histories create a relational space with a memory that keeps track of the objects that have been of interest; our engagement not only builds a profile of our online behavior, but also stimulates a responsive and networked relational space.

Moving from search engines to participation in the connective spaces of social media. These spaces provide the opportunity in which to test and practice interaction with aesthetic objects by means of outfit posts, 'selfies' and videos. This virtual environment allows individuals to view themselves 'tasting' one-step removed, or to experience 'taste as a framed activity' viewed through the screen. In her examination of the impact of mediatization on practices of the self, Rocamora has highlighted the integration of media practices into our everyday existence. This, she argues, has shifted the emphasis of our reflexive activities towards the production of our online selves and pre-occupation with 'camera-ready' and photogenic qualities.⁹⁰ In contrast to immersive virtual reality where experiences are removed from the everyday, social media does not limit integration; you are still in the real world, but experiencing another – "worlds within the world".⁹¹ Sites like *Facebook* and *Instagram* offer spaces of self-disclosure in a context that can be strategically managed and tracked over time, replicating yet distorting existence in the everyday. They generate relational settings in which to see the reflexivity of taste-making, a personal catalogue that documents, curates and displays the work we have undertaken on ourselves.

Social media sites provide a space where the key elements for taste formation can converge. They constitute a space within which the "community of amateurs, the devices and conditions of tasting, the body that experiences and the tasted object..." can be simultaneously mobilised.⁹² Social interaction through the creation and sharing of content in posts, 'likes' and image tags gives a 'tasted object' the emotional impetus to be circulated in the digital context. This distribution rapidly garners comments, feedback and builds a discourse and a data set of appraisal. Personal participation generates a relational space that captures feedback in qualitative as well as quantitative form. The digital context produces additional perspectives on the process of making taste through digital mediations and analytics of "objects, collectives, devices and bodies"⁹³ – perspectives that are quantifiable, interactive and searchable.

Social media spaces also enable a view of one's personal or emerging attachments alongside those of others. Research suggests *Instagram*, *Tumblr* and *Facebook* have popularised a form of visual language that juxtaposes images of seemingly disparate objects; it is an aesthetic users have come to recognise.⁹⁴ On *Instagram*, where multiple users' photo-streams appear in a single feed, personal content appears amongst images posted by other connections, forming a 'bricolage' of tastes. This montage creates a relational view in which to contextualise and cross-reference one's nascent attachments, enabling the recognition of similarities and differences, likes and dislikes, and provoking a continuity (or adjustment) of interest. It illustrates Hennion's point on taste formation that, "there is no taste as long as one is alone, facing objects; taste starts with the comparison with others' taste".⁹⁵

It forms a space where individual tastes can be seen as part of a whole, reconfigured and combined in various arrangements. This is a new visual representation of relational space, a more collective comprehensive purview and one that is constantly unfolding.

This is by no means an exhaustive examination of such heterotopic and relational spaces, but it does begin to sketch the very particular types of environment within which one's taste can be grasped and qualified. Relational space forms an active yet often unseen entity in the taste-making assemblage. These examples reflect how the experience of relational space is re-worked and re-shaped through technology and digital capabilities. Spatial boundaries are now permeable, they are no longer precise or permanent – “spatial ‘fixing’, inherent in boundary definition” no longer predominates.⁹⁶ The heterotopic relational space displays a “play of spatial ambiguities...a space where modern boundaries and binary thinking are held within ambivalent but productive suspension.”⁹⁷ However, for taste to function as a personal and social imperative, it requires relational space. This creates necessity and a sense of purpose for the movements of taste. Not only do the travels and mobilisation generate new objects, ideas and understandings of fashionable taste, they construct an environment in which taste becomes discernable and knowable.

The chapter has focused on personal approaches to taste-making. Individual attachments, preferences and opinions play an increasingly significant role in shaping fashionable taste. For the individual, fashion and aesthetic goods remain active mediators in constructing and sustaining identity as well as a vehicle for making material connections with other elements of self. In the everyday activity of getting dressed, taste exists as an expressive practice in a social context and, although it is undertaken through material expression, it is not shaped purely by desire and consumption. The influences on our tastes come from a diversity of sources ranging from the practical to the fanciful; from influences founded in the institutional practices of fashion, to influences that emanate from imagination, memory or personal experience. The personal assemblage of fashionable taste is an active and dynamic construct capable of fusing, extending and transforming the items and ideas that are drawn in and provides multiple possibilities for further travels.

The research questions for this project seek to illuminate how fashionable taste evolves from the preferences of fashion commentators to everyday fashion behaviour. This chapter proposes the personal assemblage of fashionable taste as a site that reveals many details of this process. It is an additional concept, alongside the fashion commentators, the popular discourse and fashion media's words and images that enables a new appreciation of taste's movements and transformations.

This thesis has already established that the movements of fashionable taste are undertaken to renew and rejuvenate aesthetic discernments, their dimensions of value and measurement, their contexts and application. In this chapter, additional reasoning for the concept of travelling taste has been developed, outlining the relevance and purpose of its constant movements (as described in previous chapters). The distance and perspective enabled by movement and the intervening space it creates allows us to recognise and grasp notions of taste. Different forms of detachment or distance from the ‘here and now’ create relational spaces as a necessary component of the fashion taste-making process, and the identification of these spaces provides a more detailed picture of the contemporary taste-making landscape. Time and space remain important mechanisms in the formation of fashionable taste; however, technology and interconnectivity have altered their dimensions. Digital space has adapted and augmented the relational contexts in which we form our tastes, providing enhanced visual perspectives, dynamic and interactive feedback loops and a way of locating personal worlds within a global arena.

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CONCLUSION

EMERGING GEOGRAPHIES
IN CONTEMPORARY
FASHION TASTE-MAKING

Taste is first and foremost a problematical modality of attachment to the world¹

Antoine Hennion's statement hints at the difficulty in analysing taste. Its predominant characteristic is troublesome and he infers that taste takes more than one form. Taste has the perception of being a rule maker, a standard setter; it is a concept that uses designations of inclusion-exclusion to build divisions and forms of segregation around notions of 'right and wrong' or 'good and bad'. Taste has had an association with guiding consumption in Western society since the eighteenth century. This legacy has resulted in an understanding of taste as a monitor or judge of our aesthetic choices, yet taste is not one unified concept, it takes a variety of "contingent, local and variable" forms.² Further, taste is seen and felt in different ways depending where we are positioned in relation to it – if we are too close, it is difficult to perceive; at a distance, its form becomes clearer. In this thesis, taste has been examined pragmatically to understand its processes of change; and this approach has identified and exposed some of its heterogeneous characteristics.

Taste and the fashion taste-making practices studied here through fashion communication exhibit subjective and emotive workings. Rather than taste understood purely as aesthetic or stylistic characteristics that divide and segregate, it has another side that is flexible, enterprising and capable of adapting to new conditions. Despite the role taste plays in the construction of symbolic distinctions and divisions, it demonstrates an eagerness to transgress boundaries and collaborate with others. Taste is contingent on relationships and relational settings that allow all manner of things to connect and become knitted into its formation. This elides the rigid and exacting reputation of taste, with something more yielding to contextual factors.

Through an examination of the contemporary fashion media landscape, the thesis offers new insights about the mechanisms that mobilise fashionable taste in the early twenty-first century. Fashion commentators have been central characters in this investigation. Their fashion descriptions provide momentum for new tastes through their influence on popular fashion discourse, as well as the ability to filter and process new ideas, making them seeable, sayable and thinkable as fashion. Further, the fashion commentators' personal performance of their taste-making role has a mobilising influence on fashionable taste.

This research has also identified broader understandings of taste-making, tracked through interviews with fashion communication professionals and personal accounts of everyday dress. These highlight processes of interpretation and translation that further mobilise taste.

Positioned in fashion studies, the mixed-method research approach of this project draws on sociological and cultural studies as well as visual research methods for tracking and analysing data. However, it is the combined theoretical approaches of Michel Foucault, Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour (in particular his assemblage thinking) that have enabled the observation of fashionable taste in a variety of flexible, mobile configurations. The study reveals numerous types of multi-directional movements that draw together the material, performative, discursive aspects of taste. These occur through integrated communication practices, both online and offline that inform and shape our experiences and understandings of taste. Further, critical analysis of the mechanisms of mobility in this research has made visible a diverse range of the spaces in which taste evolves. The findings elucidate an understanding of contemporary taste-making as a process far more complex than an act of endorsement by appointed fashion commentators seated at the runway's edge. By utilising this combination of methods, the thesis has produced research outcomes that directly address some of the unseen and 'mysterious' aspects of taste formation.

FINDINGS

The contemporary fashion tastemaker has been defined in this research as an individual with a combination of knowledge, expertise, visibility and connections to socially significant people, events and information. As part of refining the definition, this group of influential individuals has been further classified through their taste-making activities as originators, performers, image-makers, commentators or selectors. Throughout the study, contemporary fashion tastemakers have revealed themselves as advocates for change, providing an antidote to potential stability and stagnation in fashion. Taste-making practices are designed to unsettle and destabilise the present, and their techniques are not restricted to the rejuvenation of garment silhouettes and aesthetic style within the field of fashion. The introduction of fashion bloggers to front row seats at fashion week events can be seen as a taste-making act as it unsettled and destabilised established conventions of fashion. This was driven by the combination of designers, fashion PR professionals and public preferences. Indeed, taste-making techniques are adaptable and transposable. Aesthetic discernments that sit at the heart of taste-making practices are continually adjusted, re-modeled and re-shaped to retain their function in the digital landscape, as well as applied in everyday acts of self-fashioning.

The findings of the thesis show that taste-making practices disturb and unsettle the status quo through movement. These movements are manifest in the adaptable embodied practices of fashion commentators, as travelling discourses, as processing systems formed of words and images in fashion descriptions and through the translation of ideas in individual fashion behaviours. These are actions that energise ideas, objects and people by creating new interactions and collisions, by moving on from the present and by initiating chain reactions that ripple through the responses of others.

The mutable and mobile nature of contemporary taste is initially marked in the thesis by the development of a new typology of fashion taste-making. In developing the typology, it is argued that a new classification system, capable of being flexibly re-configured, is necessary for categorising contemporary individuals of influence. Many fashion tastemakers no longer have defined industry roles with formal job titles, and they switch between multiple taste-making activities.

In focusing more specifically on the fashion commentators, the thesis analyses their actions undertaken to redefine and re-enact their taste-making credentials. Incremental shifts and adjustments occur as the fashion commentators collaborate, negotiating new positions in order to secure profile-enhancing opportunities whilst concurrently building new manners of personal distinction. It is argued that these activities simultaneously move the tastemaker and mobilise understandings of taste. The shifting positions of fashion commentators follow different paths in the performance of their taste-making roles as the case of Suzy Menkes, in contrast to Tavi Gevinson, demonstrates.

Investigating travel in other contexts, the mobility and movement of taste is made evident through the popular fashion discourse, identified as a travelling discourse in the thesis. Critical analysis of a broad range of statements on fashion collections, marketing and retail activities, establishes patterns of movement created by a specific set of discursive taste-making techniques. Travelling fashion discourses develop through connection with existing ideas, in this research they emerge as a hybrid discourse, an analogous discourse and reconfigured discourse. Data analysis maps a gradual transformation of statements and behaviour towards objects, ideas and people that eventuate in an alternative perspective such as polka dots in fashion, Seoul as a new Asian fashion capital and a non-linear representation of time in fashion history.

The movement of taste is also identified in the interplay of textual and visual fashion language in the thesis. Although fashion media formats are now diversely configured for multiple communication channels, it is argued that lexical aspects of fashion communication generate micro-movements that enable notions of taste to evolve. Within an assortment of media texts, mobility is observed in three stages, through expressions that portray taste as both verbal and visual, scarce yet exposed and stable but mutable. By passing through these intersections, the perception of 'difference' changes; garment details, ways of dressing, and even specific designers are processed and marked with particular exclusive traits by the fashion commentators. This makes new propositions seeable, sayable and thinkable as fashion, subsequently moving them closer to becoming fashionable taste.

The thesis has tracked the mobility and movement of taste beyond the operations of highly visible fashion tastemakers, into the realms of everyday fashion behaviour. The project argues that this is a site where notions of fashionable taste proposed by tastemakers are ultimately tested and qualified as a felt and lived experience and where new propositions of taste may be embraced, adapted or resisted. Analysis of anecdotal and online archive material that captures accounts

of getting dressed reveals unique multi-directional movements of taste. In this context, autobiographical forms of taste-making transform collective notions into personal expression of taste, through bespoke translations, interpretations and reconfigurations of objects, ideas and people.

The thesis has uncovered the structures, arrangement and corresponding positions that constitute these movements. It has recorded the various journeys of taste through visual methodologies of mapping and plotting that has given shape to the emerging patterns from the data. Movements denote spatial relations, and as such the mapping of pathways and trajectories of taste also propose the settings and spaces in which such movements occur.

Michel Foucault observes that space is fundamental to any form of communal life and social relations.³ The social and the spatial are co-joined, as spatial metaphors such as 'fields,' 'boundaries' and 'networks' that run through many social theories attest. They help to make evident social infrastructure that cannot be seen. In *Of Other Spaces* (1986), Foucault extends these spatial imaginings stating, "We are in an epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of side by side, of the dispersed."⁴ Such descriptions of spatial settings allow for conceptions of space at multiple scales, containing multiple agencies and capable of various temporal durations. In this thesis, space is significant because of the role it has in characterising forms of social and contextual relations. The importance of the relational context to mechanisms of influence is highlighted from the beginning of this research, before subsequent investigations track taste as it moves across spaces of various different scales and dimensions.

There are culturally significant spaces such as those inside fashion week events or iconic cityscapes described in the thesis. These, it is argued, have the ability to contribute to the transformation of the people, objects and ideas that circulate within them. There are numerous types of discursive spaces (in physical or 'mediatised' forms) through which taste travels. New discursive spaces emerge through the research formed through the combination of two cultural fields to create a fashion-fine art space, by serialising the concept of a global fashion city to extend the discussion of fashion capitals and by time-travel to broaden the historical discourse of fashion. While on a smaller scale, newspaper articles, blog posts or online interactions also constitute discursive spaces for the movement of taste.

The spaces perform various functions in the mobilisation of taste. Some are important sites for collaboration and interaction such as backstage after a runway show, when fashion commentators and designers discuss inspirations behind new collections for the first time. Further, this research has conceptualised the assemblage as a space of significant interaction and convergence that generates meaning and influence. It has examined the fashion description as an assemblage; a space where multiple references are drawn into association, interact and work together to generate new understandings of fashion. Other spaces operate as locations for the performance, exposure and circulation of new propositions of fashionable taste. These types of

spaces co-exist in both the online and off-line worlds, where street-style photographs shot in geographical locations are documented and distributed via online platforms and also appear in the pages of fashion magazines.

There are also spaces that are used for comparison, reflection and evaluation in this study of taste-making. These relational spaces emerge as vital to understanding taste formation. The spatial component often remains unacknowledged in preference to the more tangible elements of taste formation such as the material, performative and discursive aspects. However, through the analysis of taste-making in the accounts of self-fashioning, relational space becomes evident as a necessary ingredient; it provides perspectives to assist in the observation and understanding of taste. Academic studies have shown that identifying our current taste and its formation in the present is particularly problematic.⁵ Tastes become most clearly visible at a distance, for example, in the appearances and behaviors of others rather than our selves, or in retrospect as time elapses. We need a means of detachment to separate us from the 'here and now' in order to understand and grasp the formation of taste; relational spaces offers a way of separating us from our usual sense of time and place. The thesis identifies certain temporal and physical forms of relational space that provided detachment prior to 'the digital turn' in fashion, such as time delays between showing new fashions and their availability to consumers. With these former structures all but dismantled, this research argues today our engagement with a range of digital interfaces is generating new forms of relational space.

Taste-making and its mobilising capacity not only refreshes the objects, ideas and people that express our fashionable taste, but also generates spatial relations between the 'here and now' by shifting our focus on to something new. The thesis has established that for taste to function as a personal and social imperative it requires a relational context, its movement and repositioning produce relational perspectives between the present and the future. The taste-making process is structured in two distinct ways; first, by advocating for change and enabling taste to take shape as a mobile entity; and second, by provoking the mechanisms that will create particular types of spaces within which new tastes have the opportunity to be seen, felt and framed. At a distance from ourselves, we notice our tastes, "tastes become differentiated through (our) attention and attentiveness."⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has been undertaken during a period of great change in fashion communication and contributes some insight on the processes of on-going transformation. Throughout this research project, the technical structure of fashion media and communications has continued to evolve rapidly. The research has tracked the rise of emerging communication practices, such as blogging, only to be eclipsed by the popularity of certain social media platforms. The speed of developments in media and communications has, at times, made it difficult to recognise what is significant and what is not. Although the findings of this thesis will inevitably be over-written as movements of taste are re-routed via other mechanisms of influence, the findings offer useful insights into contemporary systems of fashion communication at this time.

This investigation into taste-making proposes a way of establishing some appreciation of the current disruptions in fashion communication. The reorganisation underway in fashion has produced 'contingent, local and variable' circumstances framing this research. So, it would be unwise to use the findings to draw conclusions about taste-making in other fields such as music or food, despite the thesis arguing that taste-making is adaptable and transposable. However, this project has established certain frameworks and apparatus through which to examine taste-making which can act as departure points for future research of the topic. The classifications developed in the taste-making typologies, and concepts employed to enable a view of taste as a mobile entity, provide useful devices to be taken up and adapted for the study of other groups of fashion taste-makers and their practices.

The visual methodology applied in the project is not intended to produce definitive models of taste formation. Rather, it is utilised as a process of analysis and interpretation, animating aspects of taste that have previously remained unseen. Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge describe mapping as an activity that is "sensitive to capturing and distilling the unfolding and contextual nature" of the subject being mapped.⁷ Further, the act of mapping has allowed for alternative forms of analysis that compliment and enhance more narrative descriptions. However, "maps are 'of-the-moment', beckoned into being through practices; they are always mapping,"⁸ and as such, maps are partial and provisional. They are specifically time bound, recording observations from the particular position, and do not claim to represent a comprehensive survey of contemporary fashion taste-making.

One of the central planks of analysis in the thesis has been discourse – its statements, its subjects and discursive practices. Discourse has well established research frameworks that have proven suitable for analysing many orders of discourse. However, this research has extended the methodological approaches to discourse analysis through the addition of the taste-making assemblage to structures of discourse. This extra feature captures the unforeseen or rapidly converging and contingent aspects of influence that may appear only temporarily, but have the ability

to take effect. Further, the assemblage can adapt to the multiple scales and agencies of performative, cultural and material entities that give greater texture to discursive statements in fashion. For research in the current fast moving and networked conditions of fashion communication, the assemblage has proved a useful extension to existing analytical approaches particularly in tracking travelling discourses.

These methodological combinations demonstrate a pragmatic approach to 'doing' research into multiple forms of communication. The new definitions and the analytical framework outlined in the thesis provide building blocks and a baseline from which future changes and the evolution of the field can be measured and evaluated. These findings provide a form of orientation in contemporary fashion taste-making, making it easier to develop new directions for future research.

The research has been necessarily selective in the entities it has chosen to focus upon. However, it is apparent that influence on fashionable taste is dispersed and distributed amongst many active agents. Future research could productively focus on a different selection of taste-making individuals who may emerge from the categories in the typology of taste-making. This would potentially test the classifications developed in the typology and provide insights about the evolving practices and interconnections of influential originators or image-makers. Alternatively, a longitudinal study of the current cast of tastemakers selected for this research could provide useful insights about communication practices in a rapidly developing fashion media landscape.

The findings of the thesis also suggest another avenue for further research on the evolution processes of fashionable taste. To comprehensively understand processes and structures of change that influence fashionable taste, techniques that divert and dismantle new taste propositions as well as those that make taste should be examined. The thesis has demonstrated how movements of taste that have previously remained unseen can be made visible; some of these findings could be usefully adapted to examine why certain notions of taste lose their momentum. This would not only offer greater understanding of the mobility of taste, but also potentially provide insights about spaces where new and existing tastes compete for attention. Further, this particular research could elucidate the processes of social interactions that allot some expressions of tastes a place in the collective history of fashion, while others are forgotten entirely. Fashion taste-making should not only be understood as activities that bring new propositions to public attention, but also activities that are capable of repressing and resisting objects and ideas that subsequently get left behind. The 'problematical modality' of taste, noted by Hennion, is reflected in the 'making and breaking' of the taste-making process whether collectively or individually. It is a complex constitution of light and shade, a waxing and waning of passions, likes, dislikes and disinterest.

SUMMARY

There are situations where fashionable taste and its process of evolution appear clearly, for example, at fashion week events, in accounts of fashion history and even in photographs of our former selves. At other times, taste and taste-making activities disappear from view entirely – like a lenticular image, the visibility of taste changes depending on the perspective.

Establishing a clear and definitive picture of fashionable taste and how it evolves remains challenging. Nevertheless, the findings of this investigation provide a framework through which to observe, analyse and speculate on forms of contemporary fashion taste-making. The thesis has proposed alternative classifications for taste-making activities. It has then proceeded to apply and develop concepts that make the movements of taste comprehensible and, in so doing, the thesis has advanced the perception of the distinct settings that influence the formation of fashionable taste. During the research, the significance of relational contexts and spatial relations has recurred in observations and analysis. Where taste is located, and how it is positioned in relation to other entities, is a defining factor in understanding fashion taste-making. At the same time, the thesis has demonstrated that fashionable taste is always on the move. It continually shifts its position, adjusting its coordinates and re-shaping its relational correspondence. In drawing together these ideas, an awareness of orientation and alignment becomes vital.

To conclude this investigation, it seems fitting to conceptualise the findings of this project as emerging geographies in contemporary fashion taste-making. The research outcomes can be understood as a provisional set of guides, maps and infrastructure. These offer a way of finding one's bearings within the various landscapes of fashionable taste, and a means of locating a relational position for a clearer perspective on the changing shape of contemporary fashion taste-making.

NOTES//CONCLUSION

1 Antoine Hennion, "The Pragmatics of Taste," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Culture*, eds by Mark Jacobs and Nancy Hanrahan (Oxford: Blackwells, 2004), 131.

2 John Law, "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity." *Systems Practice* 5 (1992): 387.

3 Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), 252-253.

4 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16, 1 (Spring 1986): 22.

5 Richard Wilk, "A Critique of Desire: Distaste and Dislike in Consumer Behaviour." *Consumption Markets and Culture* 1, 2 (1997): 175-196; Alison Clarke and Daniel Miller, "Fashion and Anxiety." *Fashion Theory* 6, 2 (2002): 191-214; Frederic Godart and Ashley Mears, "How do Cultural Producers Make Creative Decisions? Lessons from the Catwalk." *Social Forces* 88, 2 (December 2009): 678-679.

6 Antoine Hennion, "Those Things that Hold us Together: Taste and Sociology," *Cultural Sociology* 1, 1 (2007): 108.

7 Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge, "Rethinking Maps," *Progress in Human Geography* 31, 3 (2007): 343.

8 Kitchin and Dodge, "Rethinking Maps," 343.

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Y

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Z

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LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 2 //

LOCATING INFLUENCERS IN SYSTEMS OF FASHION

- Figure 2.1.** Hybrid Fashion Magazine Covers: *Cereal: Travel and Style*, (<https://readcereal.com/>); *Wallpaper: Design-Interiors-Fashion-Art-Lifestyle*, (<http://www.wallpaper.com/>); *Kinfolk*, (<https://kinfolk.com/>).
- Figure 2.2.** Steven Klein, Lady Dior Advertising Campaign (March 2010), *Lady Dior Campaign*, (http://www.dior.com/couture/en_int).
- Figure 2.3.** Paula Reed, *Dior through Tavi's Pesky Hat* (January 2010), (<http://jezebel.com/5456560/tempest-in-a-trilby-fashion-blogger-tavi-gevinsons-hated-hat>).
- Figure 2.4.** Rachel Matthews, *The Interconnections of Fashion Mapped around Fashion Commentators*, 2016.

CHAPTER 3 //

TYPES AND TYPOLOGIES OF FASHION TASTE-MAKING

- Figure 3.1.** Rachel Matthews, *The Typology of Contemporary Fashion Taste-making*, 2015.
- Figure 3.2.** Rachel Matthews, *The Complimentary Characteristics of Fashion Taste-making*, 2016.
- Figure 3.3.** A Typology of Taste-making developed from Gender Fluid Discourse

CHAPTER 4 //

MOBILISING TASTE – PART I THE FASHION COMMENTATOR

- Figure 4.1.** Selected Fashion Commentators Analysed in the Thesis
- Figure 4.2.** Suzy Menkes Chairing Condé Nast Future Luxury Conference in Seoul, 2016. (<http://www.cnluxury.com/>).
- Figure 4.3.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Tavi Gevinson, 2016.
- Figure 4.4.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Susie Lau, 2016.
- Figure 4.5.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Bryan Grey Yambao, 2016.
- Figure 4.6.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Leandre Medine, 2016.
- Figure 4.7.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Jennine Jacobs, 2016.
- Figure 4.8.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Suzy Menkes, 2016.
- Figure 4.9.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Cathy Horyn, 2016.
- Figure 4.10.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Susannah Frankel, 2016.
- Figure 4.11.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Lisa Armstrong, 2016.
- Figure 4.12.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Vanessa Friedman, 2016.
- Figure 4.13.** Rachel Matthews, *The Circles of Influence* – Suzy Menkes x Tavi Gevinson, 2016.
- Figure 4.13.** Tavi Gevinson in *Clinique* Advertising Campaign, July 2015. (<http://www.popsugar.com.au/beauty/Tavi-Gevinson-Beauty-Fashion-Tips-37959473>).

- Figure 4.14.** Rachel Matthews, *A Tastemaker's Assemblage: The Convergence*, 2016.
- Figure 5.1.** Norman Fairclough, *Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model for Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1989.
- Figure 5.2.** Rachel Matthews, *(After Fairclough) A Model for Travelling Discourse Analysis*, 2016.

CHAPTER 5 //

MOBILISING TASTE – PART II THE POPULAR DISCOURSE

- Figure 5.3.** Contemporary Artists whose work sits Between Fashion and Fine Art: Lucy Orta, *Refuge Wear 1992-1998*, (<http://www.studio-orta.com/en>); Caroline Broadhead, *Double Dresses*, 2000, (<https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/9517/double-dresses>); Rebecca Horn, *Remote Control*, 2008, (<http://www.rebecca-horn.de/pages/biography.html>).
- Figure 5.4.** Products from the *Louis Vuitton and Yayoi Kusama Collaboration*, July 2012, (<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/galleries/TMG9387362/Yayoi-Kusama-for-Louis-Vuitton-the-full-collection-in-pictures.html>).
- Figure 5.5.** Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: A Hybrid Trajectory*, 2016.
- Figure 5.6.** *Seoul Street Style*, Anon, (<http://tw.gigacircle.com/4208436-1>).
- Figure 5.7.** *Chanel Resort Collection 2016 Shown in Seoul: Chanel Hanbok*, Indigitalimages.com, *Chanel Resort Collection 2016 Shown in Seoul: Chanel Hanbok*, May 2015, (<http://www.vogue.com/fashion-week-review/13258178/chanel-resort-2016/>).
- Figure 5.8.** Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: An Analogous Trajectory (Part 1: London, Paris New York and Milan)*, 2016.
- Figure 5.9.** Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: An Analogous Trajectory (Part 2: Fashion Cities in the Early Twenty-first Century)*, 2016.
- Figure 5.10.** Linear Fashion Timeline: Kent State University Museum, *Fashion Timeline*, June 2012, (<https://kentstateuniversitymuseum.wordpress.com/2012/06/06/fashiontimeline/>).
- Figure 5.11.** Promotional Material for the History of Underwear Exhibitions: *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (Australian touring exhibition from V&A Museum – Bendigo Art Gallery Victoria: 2014, Powerhouse Museum Sydney: 2014, Queensland Museum Brisbane: 2015) and *Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear* (Victoria & Albert Museum London: 2016-2017), *La Mécanique des Dessous* (Musée des Arts Décoratifs: 2013), *Exposed: A History of Lingerie* (The Museum at FIT New York: 2014), *Undercover: The Evolution of Underwear* (The Fashion and Textiles Museum London: 2009).

Figure 5.12. Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: An Un-reconfigured Trajectory*, 2016.

Figure 5.13. Rachel Matthews, *The Travelling Discourse: A Reconfigured Trajectory*, 2016.

CHAPTER 6 // MOBILISING TASTE – PART III BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE

Figure 6.1. Suzy Menkes with Young Korean Designers at the Beaker Boutique in Seoul, image@suzymenkesvogue, (<http://www.vogue.com.au/blogs/suzy+menkes+generation+gender+neutral+seoul+seoul+fashion+message,37688>).

Figure 6.2. A Venn Diagram

Figure 6.3. Steven Meisel, *Vogue Italia* Cover, June 2011, *Condé Nast*, (<http://www.condenastinternational.com/country/italy/vogue/heritage>).

Figure 6.4a. Rachel Matthews, *Between Visibility and Readability*: (Susie Lau – *Style Bubble*, 11 February 2012), (http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2012/02/catty.html).

Figure 6.4b. Rachel Matthews, *Between Visibility and Readability*: (Lisa Armstrong – *The Telegraph UK*, 26 January, 2012), (<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG9040147/Paris-Haute-Couture-Valentino-springsummer-2012.html>).

Figure 6.4c. Rachel Matthews, *Between Visibility and Readability*: (Susannah Frankel – *The Independent UK*, 7 July, 2012), (<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/louis-vuitton-and-kusama-spot-the-difference-7902666.html>).

Figure 6.4d. Rachel Matthews, *Between Visibility and Readability*: (Susie Lau – *Style Bubble*, 12 February, 2012), (http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2012/02/pulling-up-the-collar.html).

Figure 6.5a. Rachel Matthews, *Between Scarcity and Exposure*: (Suzy Menkes – *The New York Times*, 15 February, 2012), (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/fashion/marc-jacobs-offers-a-sweet-melancholy-collection.html>).

Figure 6.5b. Rachel Matthews, *Between Scarcity and Exposure*: (Leandre Medine – *Man Repeller*, 23 April, 2015), (<http://www.manrepeller.com/2015/04/lingerie-styling-secret.html>).

Figure 6.5c. Rachel Matthews, *Between Scarcity and Exposure*: (Cathy Horyn – *The New York Times*, 12 February, 2012), (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/13/fashion/alexander-wang-rag-bone-prabal-gurung-altuzarra.html>).

Figure 6.5d. Rachel Matthews, *Between Scarcity and Exposure*: (Susie Lau – *Style Bubble*, 11 November 2013), (http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2013/11/anatomy-of-sacai.html).

Figure 6.5e. Rachel Matthews, *Between Scarcity and Exposure*: (Lisa Armstrong – *The Telegraph UK*, 1 October, 2014), (<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/Article/TMG11130532/951/Chanel-springsummer-2015-catwalk-show-report-from-Paris-Fashion-Week.html>).

Figure 6.6a. Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*: (Lisa Armstrong – *The Telegraph UK*, 25 January, 2016) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/womens-style/98399/atelier-versace-ss16-gravity-defying-red-carpet-dresses.html>).

Figure 6.6b. Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*: (Cathy Horyn – *The New York Times*, 24 August, 2011), (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/25/fashion/the-five-things-you-need-for-fall.html>).

Figure 6.6c. Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*: (Jennine Jacobs – *The Coveted*, 8 September 2011), (<http://the-coveted.com/cushnie-et-ochs-spring-classics/html>).

Figure 6.6d. Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*: (Susie Lau – *Style Bubble*, 14 September, 2011), (http://stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2011/09/prep-shine).

Figure 6.6e. Rachel Matthews, *Between Stability and Mutability*: (Suzy Menkes – *The New York Times*, 7 March, 2012), ([http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/fashion/chanel-crystal-inspires-lagerfeld.html?+StyleBubble+\(Style+Bubble\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/fashion/chanel-crystal-inspires-lagerfeld.html?+StyleBubble+(Style+Bubble))).

Figure 6.7a. Rachel Matthews, *Turning Difference into New – Polka Dots*, 2016.

Figure 6.7b. Rachel Matthews, *Turning Difference into New – Metallics*, 2016.

CHAPTER 7 // THE SUBJECTIVITIES OF FASHIONABLE TASTE

Figure 7.1. Sheila Heti, Heidi Julavits and Leanne Shapton, *Women in Clothes*, Print Edition (2014) and Online Survey Page, (<http://www.womeninclothes.com/book/>).

Figure 7.2. Nina Manandhar, *What we Wore: A People's History of British Style*, Screen Shot of Digital Archive, (<http://what-we-wore.com/>).

APPENDICES

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Fashion commentators (case studies) |
| 1.1 | Suzy Menkes - profile and career path |
| 1.2 | Cathy Horyn – profile and career path |
| 1.3 | Susannah Frankel – profile and career path |
| 1.4 | Lisa Armstrong – profile and career path |
| 1.5 | Vanessa Friedman – profile and career path |
| 1.6 | Bryan Grey Yambao - profile and career path |
| 1.7 | Susie Lau - profile and career path |
| 1.8 | Tavi Gevinson - profile and career path |
| 1.9 | Leandre Medine - profile and career path |
| 1.10 | Jennine Jacobs - profile and career path |
| 2 | Data capture schedule and sources (for case studies) |
| 3 | Fashion Communication professional (interviews) |
| 3.1 | Interviewees |
| 3.2 | Interview questions |
| 3.3 | Interview analysis summary |
| 4 | Fashion discourse data (Chapter 5 – Travelling discourses) |
| 4.1 | Fashion-fine art hybrids |
| 4.2 | Fashion capitals |
| 4.3 | Multiple fashion histories |
| 5 | Additional data sources |
| 5.1 | The Women in Clothes project |
| 5.2 | What we wore: A People’s History of British Style online archive |

1.1 Suzy Menkes - profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Suzy Menkes |
| Role / job description | Fashion Journalist Fashion writer |
| Lives | Paris / London |
| Age | Born 1943 |
| Publishing | International Herald Tribune / New York Times - print & online Various books Moved to Vogue / Conde Nast International fashion editor across all platforms |
| Social media | Eventually Twitter & Instagram |
| Circulation / ranking stats | Vogue est. circulation figures (based on Vogue UK & Vogue.com) Print – 195,083 /month (readership 1,327,000) Unique digital users 2,34,856 Twitter followers = 53.8k / Instagram = 331.8K |
| Reputation | Fair & Balanced – vast knowledge of fashion history |
| Notes | |
| | |
| | |

Suzy Menkes taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of taste-making activity & work | Expert Knowledge |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1943 | Born | | |
| Early 1960s | Spent a year in Paris studying fashion at Chambre Syndicale Saw first fashion show | | |
| 1963-1966 | Studied English Literature at Cambridge University | | |
| 1960s | Several junior writing posts: The Times & Daily Express | Journalism | Fashion |
| 1967 | First job as fashion journalist: London Evening Standard | Journalism Writing | Fashion |
| 1969 | Publishes book: “How to be a Model” | Writing | Fashion (modelling) |
| 1983 | Publishes book: “Knitwear Revolution” | Writing | Fashion |
| 1985 | Publishes book: “The Royal Jewels” | Writing | Royalty |
| 1980-1987 | Fashion editor at The Times | Journalism | Fashion |
| 1987 | Publishes book: “The Windsor Style” | Writing | Royalty & Etiquette |
| 1987-1988 | Fashion editor at The Independent | Journalism | Fashion |
| 1988 | Fashion editor at IHT and through it's transition to NYTimes | Journalism | Fashion |
| 1993 | Publishes book: “Queen and Country” | Writing | Royalty & Etiquette |
| 1999 | Co-authors book: “Walter van Beierndonck & Wild and Lethal Trash: Unbelievable” | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2001 | Convenes first IHT annual luxury conference – now New | Expert Voice / Editorial duties | Luxury |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------------------|---------|
| | York Times conference (now convened by Vanessa Friedman) | | |
| 2005 | Awarded OBE - UK | | |
| 2005 | Awarded Chevalier de Legion d'Honneur - France | | |
| 2005 | Awarded Honorary Degree from FIT - USA | | |
| 2005 | Co-authors book: "Hussain Chalayan" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2007 | Publishes book: "Valentino" | Writing | Fashion |
| 2008 | Awarded honorary fellowship from Israel's leading fashion design college, Shenkar. | | |
| 2009 | Awarded Honorary Doctorate from CSM - London | | |
| 2010 | Co-authors book: "Manolo's New Shoes" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2010 | Co-authors book: "Stephen Jones and the Accent of Fashion" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2010 | Co-authors book: "Ermenegildo Zegna : an Enduring Passion for Fabrics, Innovation, Quality and Style" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2011 | Co-authors book: "The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2012 | Co-authors book: "Jazz Age Fashion: Dressed to Kill" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2012 - 2013 | Co-authors series of books: "Fashion Designers A-Z" various designers – Prada, | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |

Suzy Menkes taste-making trajectory

| | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Missoni | | |
| 2013 | Co-authors book: "Fashion Antwerp Academy 50" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2013 | Christie's auction of her wardrobe | Celebrity / Fashion Expert | Fashion |
| 2014 | Leaves IHT / NYTimes - Joins Vogue "the independent eye of international fashion" Global fashion editor – writing for all 19 International Vogue websites (in 13 languages) | Journalism | Fashion |
| 2014 | Convenes 1st Conde Nast Global Luxury conference in Florence | Expert Voice / Editorial duties | Luxury |
| 2015 | Convenes 2nd Conde Nast Global Luxury conference in Florence – theme "Hard Luxury" | Expert Voice / Editorial duties | Luxury |
| 2015 | Co-authors book: "Graff" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion / Jewellery |
| 2016 | Co-authors book: "Undercover" | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2016 | Will convene the second Conde Nast Global Luxury conference in Seoul – theme "Future Luxury" | Expert Voice / Editorial duties | Luxury |
| | | | |

1.2 Cathy Horyn – profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Cathy Horyn |
| Role / job description | Fashion critic / fashion journalist |
| Lives | New York US |
| Age | Born 1956 |
| Publishing | New York Times since 2003 (print & online), NYTimes fashion blog “On the runway”, T magazine, later (fashion editor at-large) The Cut magazine (print & online) Also occasional Vanity Fair, Vogue US, Harpers Bazaar |
| Social media | Twitter |
| Circulation / ranking stats | NYTimes (2010 – print 1,926.8 thousand / 2016 – 1.2 million digital subscribers) NYTimes “on the runway” blog (2011 - 42 in most influential fashion blogs – signature9.com) Twitter followers = 363K |
| Reputation | V straight talking for a fashion critic , referred to as fashion critic rather than fashion journalist |
| Notes | Has been banned from numerous fashion shows because of her honest / frank commentary |
| | |
| | |

Cathy Horyn taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Types of taste-making activities and work | Expert knowledge |
|-------------|---|---|----------------------|
| 1956 | Born | | |
| | Graduate of Barnard College | | |
| | Masters degree in fashion journalism (from Medill School of Journalism) | | |
| | Various writing gigs for Associated Press & Virginia Pilot | Writing | |
| 1986 | Fashion Writer at The Detroit News | Writing | Fashion |
| 1986 | First runway show | | |
| 1990 | Fashion Writer for the Washington Post | Writing | Fashion |
| | Contributed to Harper's Bazaar & Vogue | Writing | Fashion |
| 1995 | Contributed to Vanity Fair | Writing | Fashion |
| 1998 | Began as fashion critic at NYTimes | Writing | Fashion |
| 2001 | CFDA – Eugenie Sheppard Award for fashion writing | | |
| 2002 | Published <i>Bare Blass</i> | Writing | Fashion |
| 2011 | Co-authored <i>Carine Roitfeld: Irreverent</i> | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2012 | Co-authored <i>Impact: 50 Years of the CFDA</i> | Writing Collaboration | Fashion Industry |
| 2010 - 2011 | Arts Critic in Residence at Stanford University | Writing Collaboration | Fashion + culture |
| 2014 | Co-authored Dior: New Couture | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2014 | Published Joe Eula: Master of Twentieth-Century Fashion illustration | Writing | Fashion Illustration |
| 2014 | Resigns from NYTimes as chief fashion critic | | |

| | | | |
|------|--|---------|---------|
| 2015 | Fashion critic at large on NYTimes magazine – The Cut | Writing | Fashion |
| | | | |

1.3 Susannah Frankel – profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Susannah Frankel |
| Role / job description | Fashion journalist / editor The Independent newspaper Fashion director Grazia UK magazine in 2012 Commissioning editor AnOther magazine Also occasional contributor Showstudio Writer |
| Lives | London UK |
| Age | Born mid 1960s |
| Publishing | Former the Independent - print & online Grazia UK magazine – print & online Books, exhibition catalogues designer monographs |
| Social media | Twitter |
| Circulation / ranking stats | The Independent – 2015 – circulation daily 225,516 Grazia UK – 2011 circulation 127,109 (readership est 287,000) Unique digital users in 2015 435,933 Twitter followers = 3626 / Instagram = 2549 |
| Reputation | Cool fashion insider with roots in magazines such as Blitz magazines – written designer monographs and for Visionaries |
| Notes | |
| | |
| | |

Susannah Frankel taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of Taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|-------------|---|--|------------------|
| Mid 1960s | Born | | |
| | Studied English at Goldsmith's University | | |
| 1989 - 1991 | Fashion editor at BLITZ magazine (closed in 1991) | Writing | Fashion |
| 1998 | Begins contributing to Dazed & Confused | Writing | Fashion |
| 1996 - 1999 | Fashion editor at The Guardian | Writing | Fashion |
| 1996 | First runway show – Galliano debut at Givenchy (Haute Couture) | | |
| 1999 - 2012 | Fashion editor at The Independent (introduces her column Susannah Shops) | Writing | Fashion |
| 2001 | Published <i>Visionaries - Interviews With Fashion Designers</i> | Writing | Fashion |
| 2001 | Fashion features director AnOther | Writing | Fashion |
| 2008 | Co-authored The House of Viktor & Rolf | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2009 | Co-authored Design in Britain: Big Ideas (Small Island) | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2010 | Co-authored exhibition catalogue Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2011 | Co-authored <i>Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty</i> monograph | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2011 | Co-authored Peter Jensen & Mary Miles Minter & Mildred & Emma & Olga & Nancy & Gertrude & Cindy & Tonya & Fanny & Sissy & Helena & Tina & Christina & Mink & Candice- | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |

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1.4 Lisa Armstrong – profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Lisa Armstrong |
| Role / job description | Fashion journalist – also writes about beauty / beauty products |
| Lives | London |
| Age | 50s ish |
| Publishing | The Telegraph (UK) 2008 in print and online (also Telegraph's weekend mags Stella & luxury mag ST) Formerly Fashion editor at The Times (UK) for 13 years before that Elle & The Independent Also occasional contributor to Vogue UK |
| Social media | Twitter (and later Instagram) |
| Circulation / ranking stats | The Telegraph UK Print circulation 2011 467,601 Digital subscribers 2015 unique users 4,280,004 Twitter followers = 12.8K / Instagram = 27.2K |
| Reputation | Knowledgeable, insightful and accessible – credited with describing certain fashion objects as “investment” pieces or investment dressing Knows fashion & how to wear it Witty & frank |
| Notes | Always happy to discuss budget & prices |
| | |
| | |

Lisa Armstrong taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Types of taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|-----------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | Born in 1960s | | |
| 1984 | Graduated from Bristol University – English & French Literature | | |
| | Studied Journalism at City University London | | |
| | Worked at Elle UK editing Arts section | Writing | Arts & Culture |
| | Works at British Vogue First on features desk Moving up to fashion features director | Writing | Arts & Culture Then fashion |
| 1992-1993 | Fashion editor at The Independent | Writing | Fashion |
| 1993 | Returned to British Vogue | Writing | Fashion |
| 1998 | Wrote first novel Front Row | Writing | Fashion |
| 2000 | Asked to select “Dress of the Year” for Bath Fashion Museum | Selecting | Fashion |
| 2001 | Wrote second novel Dead Stylish | Writing | Fashion |
| 2004 | Wrote third novel Bad Manors | Writing | Fashion |
| 2005 | Wrote fourth novel Deja View | Writing | Fashion |
| 2005 | Fashion editor at The Times (London) | Writing | Fashion |
| 2011 | Given an honorary degree from University of Arts London | Writing | |
| 2011 | Fashion editor at The Daily Telegraph (UK) | Writing | Fashion Lexicon also Beauty |
| | | | |
| | | | |

1.5 Vanessa Friedman – profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Vanessa Friedman |
| Role / job description | Fashion journalist |
| Lives | Formerly London UK / now New York US |
| Age | 40s / 50 ish |
| Publishing | The Financial Times (from 2003) Personal blog – material world Now Fashion Editor at The New York Times (in 2014) Also occasional articles for Vanity Fair, The New Yorker & Vogue |
| Social media | Twitter & eventually Instagram 1 post |
| Circulation / ranking stats | The Financial Times – 2011 circulation across digital and print 850,000 NYTimes (2010 – print 1,926.8 thousand / 2016 – 1.2 million digital subscribers) Twitter followers = 117,583 / Instagram = 349 |
| Reputation | Describes fashion from socio-political perspective - She states her perspective is from real-life |
| Notes | |
| | |
| | |

Vanessa Friedman taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Types of taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|-------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | Born ?? | | |
| | | | |
| | Studied at Princeton – BA in History | | |
| | Writes for variety of magazines in New York including The New Yorker, Vanity Fair | Writing | Fashion / Arts & Culture |
| 1999 | Fashion editor at Instyle magazine in UK from its launch | Writing | Fashion |
| 2000 | European editor for Elle US Arts Contributor for Economist | Writing | Fashion / Arts & Culture |
| 2003 | Fashion critic / editor The Financial Times | Writing | Fashion / Arts & Culture Luxury |
| 2003 | Wrote Material World blog alongside | Writing | Fashion & Luxury |
| 2010 | Wrote Emilio Pucci book (with Alessandra Arezzi Bora) | Writing Collaboration | Fashion |
| 2014 | Moved to New York Times to become fashion editor (replacing Cathy Horyn & Suzy Menkes) | Writing | Fashion / Arts & Culture |
| 2014 / 2015 | Also running & chairing NYTimes International Luxury Conference | Presentation & promotion | Luxury & Business |
| 2015 | Wrote Louis Vuitton: Ultimate Collection of Windows (with Francesco Bonami) | Writing Collaboration | Fashion / Arts & Culture |
| | | | |
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| | | | |

[illegible]

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Name | Bryan Grey Yambao (Bryan Boy) |
| Role / job description | Personal style blogger (Former web developer) |
| Lives | New York (Originally from Manila Philippines) |
| Age | Born 1981 (ish) |
| Publishing | Bryanboy blog (began 2004) bryanboy.com |
| Social media | Twitter |
| Circulation / ranking stats | In 2008 Bryanboy blog = 5000 readers / day 38 in top 100 influential blogs since 2011 (Signature 9) Twitter 583K followers 2015 / Instagram 612.3K followers |
| Reputation | Camp, Out-spoken, Flamboyant Marc Jacobs helped his celebrity status by naming a bag after him BB Credited with creating the popular bloggers pose for outfit posts |
| Notes | Began as independent blog, became part of Nowmanifest stable of blogs until 2013, reverted to independent blog (controlling his own advertising, etc) |
| | |
| | |

Bryan Boy taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Types of taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| | Born 1982 | | |
| | Pre - Bryanboy life is kept very quiet | | |
| | Worked as web developer in Manila (Philippines) | Web development | Online media & technical functions |
| 2004 | Launched Bryanboy blog | Writing / Blogging | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2007 | Blogging from Manila (and still working as web-developer) | Writing / blogging | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2008 | Posted famous "Leave Marc Jacobs alone" video | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2008 | Subsequently Marc Jacobs named a green ostrich bag (BB) after Bryan boy | | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2008 | Judge on Phiippines edition Project Runway | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2009 | Sat front row Marc Jacobs & D&G | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2010 | Collaboration with H&M | Designing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2011 | Permanently moves to New York | | |
| 2011 | Brand ambassador Hugo Boss | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2011 | Collaboration to promote Diet Coke | Blogging / performing | |
| 2012 | Judge on US edition Project Runway | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2012 | Brand collaboration – eyewear for Hugo Boss | Blogging / designing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2012 | Bag promotion for Coach | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2013 | Fashion fur collaboration with designer Adrienne Landau | Blogging / designing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2013 | Judge on America's Next Top Model | Performing | Fashion & presentation of self |

| | | | |
|------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2014 | Promotional work for Prada (Coats & accessories) | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2015 | Collaboration with Coach & Gary Baseman – fashion pieces | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2015 | Starred in Hugo Boss eyewear advert | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2016 | Promotional work for Loewe | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2016 | Promotional work for Melissa shoes | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
| 2016 | Promotional work for Gucci | Blogging / performing | Fashion & presentation of self |
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1.7 Susie Lau - profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Name | Susie Lau / Susie Bubble |
| Role / job description | Personal style blogger (Formerly worked in digital marketing, then worked as commissioning editor for Dazed Digital) |
| Lives | London UK |
| Age | Born 1983 |
| Publishing | Stylebubble (est in 2006) was part of Nowmanifest stable, now independent again Also guest blogging IFB, Showstudio, BBC website and various print articles for Elle & Dazed |
| Social media | Twitter Facebook & Instagram |
| Circulation / ranking stats | 2011 Stylebubble.typepad.com est 35000 readers / day 2011 9 in top 100 influential fashion blogs (Signature9.com) Twitter followers= 22.7K / Instagram = 340.9K |
| Reputation | Champions emerging British designers / wears masses of print, colour and embellishments |
| Notes | Probably most long-standing high-profile blogger – integrated into fashion industry but still likes to describe herself as outsider |
| | |
| | |

Suzie Bubble taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1983 | Born - UK | | |
| | Studied history at UCL | | |
| | Working in digital marketing | Digital marketing | On-line environment |
| 2008 | Commissioning editor at DazedDigital.com | Commissioning digital content for fashion website | On-line fashion content |
| 2006 | Started Stylebubble | Blogging while still commissioning digital content for fashion website | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2007 | 7&8 / 9 / 2007 – 15 bloggers(selected from 100s) invited to Chanel (only UK blogger) | Blogging while still commissioning digital content for fashion website | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2009 | One of only 2 bloggers invited to Gucci's NY show / also invited to Chanel & Lanvin this year (First runway invites) | Blogging while still commissioning digital content for fashion website | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2009 | The Guardian article – The rise of the E-Con (November) Featured in articles in: Sketchbook magazine Vogue Italia Telegraph.co.uk The Independent Interview magazine | | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2010 | Gave up day job at DazedDigital to focus on Stylebubble | Blogging | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2011 | Stated that 65% of income come from freelance writing, speaking engagements and consultancy projects – working with: The Gap(2010) – demi- | Writing journalistic pieces Writing sponsored content Guest appearances | Fashion (and presentation of self) |

| | | | |
|--------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | celebrities campaign Dr Martens (2011) Armani (2010) Selfridges (2012) Google's Boutique.com(fashion search & personal recommendations site) Elle (on-going) The Daily Rubbish Dazed Digital (on-going) Diet Coke (2012) Uniqlo(2013) HK boutique Joyce (2010) Samsung (On-going) | Styling Modelling Design collaborations | |
| 2011 | Style feature 'Fashion week wardrobe' in Vogue Nippon | Trans-national style icon – quotes, styling & modelling | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2011 | Magazine – the China Issue Personal style feature “the girl in the bubble” | Trans-national style icon & voice of fashion blogosphere – quotes, styling & modelling | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2010 2011 | Various in the closet of / fashion & style video interviews / style the high street / round table discussions W / Vogue UK / Vogue Nippon / Elle US / 10 China | Trans-national style icon & voice of fashion blogosphere – quotes, styling & modelling | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2011 | Net a Porter – blog power list (top 10) | | |
| 2011 | Elle – London Fashion week collections reporter | Blogging & print media journalist | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2010-2016 | Regular feature on Best Fashion blog list from NYTimes – Marie Claire | Trans-national style icon & voice of fashion blogosphere – | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2012 | Cover of Company magazine | Trans-national style icon & voice of | Fashion (and |

Suzie Bubble taste-making trajectory

| | | | |
|------|---|---|---|
| | "Superbloggers" issue | fashion blogosphere – quotes, styling & modelling | presentation of self) |
| 2012 | Wrote the forward to "Style Feed: The World's Top Fashion Blogs" by William Oliver | Voice of the fashion blogosphere Writer | |
| | On-going global fashion blogger- star / fashion insider Sponsored content Blogging Guest appearances Design collaborations Freelance writing Promoting new talent | | Fashion (and presentation of self) Fashion marketing |
| 2013 | Asked to select "Dress of the Year" for Bath Fashion Museum | Industry expert | |
| 2015 | BBC TV series – back stage at fashion Week | TV presenter | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2015 | Wool trends from London Fashion Week for Woolmark / Merino | Trend analyst | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2016 | To publish her first book – (release date Feb 2017) Stylebubble | Writer | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| | | | |
| | | | |

1.8 Tavi Gevinson - profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Name | Tavi Gevinson |
| Role / job description | Personal style blogger Evolving profile independent publisher of the Rookie print & online Actress / writer / publisher / celebrity |
| Lives | New York US |
| Age | Born 1996 |
| Publishing | Originally Style Rookie (2008) Then Tavi's blog Then the Rookie Also occasional guest writer / editor for various mags |
| Social media | Twitter |
| Circulation / ranking stats | Style Rookie – 2010 12 in top influential fashion blogs (signature9.com) The Rookie – Twitter followers = 365K / Instagram = 558.9K |
| Reputation | Youngest fashion blogger to gain attention – controversially seated front row at fashion weeks in 2009 / 2010 (raised profile for fashion bloggers) |
| Notes | The rookie – independent online magazine and book (annually) |
| | |
| | |

Tavi Gevinson taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of Taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|-------------|---|--|---|
| 1996 | Born | | |
| 2008 | Started Style Rookie fashion blog | Blogging | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2008 | First film role – <i>first bass</i> | Acting | Presentation of self |
| 2009 | Cover for POP magazine | Modelling | Presentation of self |
| 2009 | Article for Harper's Bazaar | Writing | Fashion |
| 2010 | Article for Blackbook magazine | Writing | Fashion |
| 2010 | Front row Grazia moment & blogger back lash | Blogging Guest appearances | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2011 | T-shirt line in collaboration with Borders & Frontiers | Designer | |
| 2011 | Stopped Style Rookie / Began Rookie – on-line (1million page views in first 6 days) Not fashion more young women and pop culture, with high profile guest writers 4 print editions of Rookie Yearbook plus on-line | Blogging, commissioning writers, interviewing and editing content Artistic direction | Presentation of self Self-expression in young women Pop culture |
| 2011 & 2012 | On the "Forbes 30 Under 30 in Media" list | | |
| 2012 | Featured in film – Enough Said Voice over of animated film - Cadaver | Acting / performing | Presentation of self |
| 2012 | Ted x Teen Talks Speaker at The economist world festival | Guest appearances Voice of young pop culture scene | Presentation of self |
| 2013 | Recorded records – cover of Pet Shop Boys & Cover of Neil Young | Performing | |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|--|--|
| 2013 | Interviewed in documentary – the punk singer | Interviewer / guest performer | |
| 2014 | Named one of "The 25 Most Influential Teens of 2014" by Time magazine | | |
| 2014 - 2015 | Has been acting in Broadway production of "This is our youth" Acting in 'The Crucible' | Describes her self as writer and actress Also described as: Writer, magazine editor, actress, singer Voice of new feminism And a multi-hyphenate phenomena – journalist, editor, actress Also a role-model-cum-oracle | Presentation of self |
| 2015 | Part of Beauty brand "Clinique" #Face Forward ad campaign | Modelling / young female "role model" / | Presentation of self Celebrity /public personae |
| 2015 | First year student at NYU | | |
| 2015 | Poses for 2016 Pirelli calendar – clothed & shot by Annie Liebovitz | Modelling / young female "role model" | Presentation of self Celebrity /public personae |
| | | | |
| | | | |

1.9 Leandre Medine - profile and career path

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Leandre Medine |
| Role / job description | Personal style blogger |
| Lives | New York US |
| Age | Born 1988 |
| Publishing | Manrepeller blog (started in 2009) |
| Social media | Twitter / Facebook |
| Circulation / ranking stats | Not listed on Signature9.com lists in 2011 2015 (Similarweb = ranked #215 fashion magazine category) 2015 Twitter followers = 258,000 / Instagram = 909,000 |
| Reputation | Humour & self-deprecation / started the use of term man repelling (wearing masculine or difficult trends – interesting fashion but repellent to men) |
| Notes | Began blog as independent, working alone – before developing it into a media company, employing team of people to produce content for Manrepeller “where an interest in fashion never minimises one’s intellect |
| | |
| | |

Man Repeller taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of Taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1988 | Born | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| 2009 | Began first blog “Boogers & Bagels” – humour more than fashion | Blogging | ?? |
| 2010 | Founded The Man Repeller fashion blog | Blogging Dressing up & talking about it | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2010 | Contributed to Lucky & Harpers Bazaar US | Writing about herself & her tastes | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2011 | Graduated from The New School in Journalism | | |
| 2011 | Guest blogger for The Cut | Runway reviews | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2012 | In Forbes “Top 30 under 30” – as most influential trend setters | | |
| 2012 | Time magazines – “25 best blogs of 2012” | | |
| 2012 | In Adweek’s “Fashion Power 25” | | |
| 2012 | Leadre Medine gets an agent | | |
| 2013 | Published book: “Man Repeller: Seeking Love, Finding Overalls” | Writing about herself & her tastes | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2014 | The Man Repeller followers = 184,000 Twitter / 547,000 Instagram / 144,000 facebook Now has 3 x full-time employees Revenue from advertising, sponsored blog posts, appearances, designer collaborations | Blogging Writing sponsored content Guest appearances Design collaborations Modelling Styling Hosting events | Fashion (and presentation of self) |

| | | | |
|------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | Man Repeller collaborations: Gryphon (fashion) Del Toro (footwear) Superga (Footwear) Dannijo (Jewellery) PJK (fashion) Michael Kors (fashion) Maje (Jewellery) Baublebar (Beauty) Stuart Weitzman Saks J Crew Miu Miu | | |
| 2016 | Man Repeller has 1.5 million unique visitors 6 x full-time employees – The Man Repeller is now a brand, not just a personality | | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name | Jennine Jacob |
| Role / job description | Personal style blogger Also founder of Independent Fashion Bloggers group |
| Lives | San Francisco US |
| Age | 30s - ish |
| Publishing | The Coveted blog (established in 2007) IFB website – fashion bloggers community (established in 2007) Eat Sleep Denim blog (established in 2008) |
| Social media | Twitter IFB - Facebook |
| Circulation / ranking stats | The Coveted (2011 – 80 in top most influential blogs Signature9.com) IFB (2011 – 82 in top most influential blogs Signature9.com) |
| Reputation | Girl next-door style, fashion enthusiast. Interested in inclusion and community via blogging |
| Notes | Evolved blogging projects from fashion blogging after career break to have baby Now blogging as Mrs Peasey – sort of home-maker / party planner project |
| | |
| | |

Jennine Jacobs taste-making trajectory

| Date | Activity | Type of taste-making activities & work | Expert knowledge |
|-------------|---|--|---|
| | Born 1980-ish | | |
| | | | |
| | Working as graphic / web designer | | Visual communication Online communications & functionality |
| 2006 | Discovered Stylebubble – inspiration to start blogging | | |
| 2007 | Began The Coveted blog | Blogging | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2007 | Began Independent Fashion Bloggers – web-community for bloggers to connect and help each other | Networking Entrepreneurship | Fashion Blogging & communications |
| 2010 - 2011 | Organised IFB conference twice per year | Blogging Networking | Fashion (and presentation of self) Blogging & communications |
| 2011 | Stopped The Coveted briefly, and a lawsuit ensued regarding rights to use the name The Coveted Resumed The Coveted | | |
| | Running three blog / businesses – The Coveted, IFB Eat Sleep Denim Mostly ad-revenue operations, some brand collaborations | Blogging / performing | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2013 | Has a baby (& bit of a break from The Coveted) | | |
| 2014 | Re-launches The Coveted | Blogging | Fashion (and presentation of self) |
| 2015 | Sold the IFB onto others to develop further | Networking Entrepreneurship | |
| 2015 | Launches new blog / party | Blogging | Home making and |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| | plan concept – Mrs Peasey | Entrepreneurship | presentation of self |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Appendix 2. Data capture schedule and sources (for case studies)

| Data Capture Schedule | Dates | Commentators tracked |
|---|--|--|
| New York Fashion Week 1 (September 2011) | 09.09.2011 (Daily) 10.09.2011 11.09.2011 12.09.2011 13.09.2011 14.09.2011 15.09.2011 16.09.2011 | Suzy Menkes Cathy Horyn Susannah Frankel Lisa Armstrong Vanessa Friedman Susie Lau Bryan Grey Yambao Jennine Jacob Tavi Gevinson Diane Pernet |
| New York Fashion Week 2 (February 2012) | 10.02.2012 11.02.2012 12.02.2012 13.02.2012 14.02.2012 15.02.2012 16.02.2012 | Suzy Menkes Cathy Horyn Susannah Frankel Lisa Armstrong Vanessa Friedman Susie Lau Bryan Grey Yambao Jennine Jacob Tavi Gevinson Diane Pernet |
| New York Fashion Week 3 (September 2012) | 06.09.2012 07.09.2012 08.09.2012 09.09.2012 10.09.2012 11.09.2012 12.09.2012 13.09.2012 | Suzy Menkes Cathy Horyn Susannah Frankel Lisa Armstrong Vanessa Friedman Susie Lau Bryan Grey Yambao Jennine Jacob Tavi Gevinson Leandre Medine (replacing Diane Pernet) Rumi Neely (as back-up for Tavi Gevinson, not at fashion week) |
| August 2012 (No Fashion Week Events) | 03.08.2012 (Weekly) 10.08.2012 17.08.2012 24.08.2012 31.08.2012 | Suzy Menkes Cathy Horyn Susannah Frankel Lisa Armstrong Vanessa Friedman Susie Lau Bryan Grey Yambao Tavi Gevinson Leandre Medine Rumi Neely |

| Commentator | Sources of data (during data capture schedule) |
|-------------|--|
| Suzy Menkes | International Herald Tribune (print and on-line) No Facebook / no Twitter |

Appendix 2. Data capture schedule and sources (for case studies)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Cathy Horyn | New York Times (print and on-line) On the runway (NYTimes blog) The Cut (print and on-line) Twitter No Facebook |
| Susannah Frankel | The Independent (print and on-line) Then Grazia UK (print and on-line) No Facebook / no Twitter |
| Lisa Armstrong | The Telegraph (print and on-line) No Facebook / no Twitter |
| Vanessa Friedman | Financial Times (print and on-line) No Facebook / no Twitter |
| Susie Lau | Stylebubble blog Independent Fashion Bloggers blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Bryan Grey Yambao | Bryanboy blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Diane Pernet | A Shaded View of Fashion blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Tavi Gevinson | Style Rookie blog Tavi's blog The Rookie blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Jennine Jacob | The Coveted blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Leandre Medine | Manrepeller blog Twitter / Facebook |
| Rumi Neely | Fashion Toast blog Twitter / Facebook |
| | |
| Changes during project | |
| Suzy Menkes | March 2014 – leaves International Herald Tribune / joins Vogue Becomes International fashion reporter across Vogue websites Starts Instagram posts |
| Cathy Horyn | January 2014 - retires NYTimes as chief fashion critic September 2015 – returns as fashion critic on The Cut magazine Facebook |
| Susannah Frankel | 2012 – leaves The independent (fashion editor) and joins Grazia UK (as fashion director) 2015 – becomes editor-in-chief at Another magazine Instagram & Twitter |
| Lisa Armstrong | 2013 – starts Twitter Instagram |
| Vanessa Friedman | March 2014 – leaves Financial Times / joins NYTimes as fashion director & critic Twitter |
| Susie Lau | Constant throughout project |

Appendix 2. Data capture schedule and sources (for case studies)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Bryan Grey Yambao | Constant throughout project |
| Diane Pernet | 2012 - Diane Pernet stops attending fashion week, only posting photos by Sonny Vandevelde from back stage – more focus on fashion films |
| Tavi Gevinson | 2008-2011 – blogs on StyleRookie (fashion focused) 2011 – stops attending fashion week, begins the Rookie (not fashion focused) |
| Jennine Jacob | 2012 – stopped blogging on The Coveted (focused on IFB & Eat Sleep Denim blog) 2015 – begins lifestyle/ party planner blog MrsPeasey.com |
| Leandre Medine | Began blog in 2010 – 2014 started to employ others to write content & expand Manrepeller brand |
| Rumi Neely | Began blog in 2008 – launched own fashion line in 2014 |

Fashion Communication professional (interviews)

The six individuals interviewed for this project work across a range of institutions and in a range of roles. They have been selected to offer insight on the diverse working practices of fashion communication. However, each operates within and contributes to the production and circulation of contemporary fashion media. They are all situated in a position that allows them to inform, mediate and shape messages in the fashion media. Although geographically situated in Australia, they all have global reach via online activities.

Selected individuals for interview:

Respondent A is a data analyst for an international fashion retail analytics company. She has five years experience working in this role. The company translates and interprets data tracked through online activities to provide fashion retailers with business insights and quantitative measures of performance.

Respondent B is a fashion curator for a national Australian gallery. Her role requires her to develop themes for fashion exhibitions, acquire material objects of fashion for the gallery's collection, stage fashion and dress exhibitions. In addition she writes about fashion for both exhibition display purposes as well as for catalogue content, press releases and other promotional material.

Respondent C is an independent fashion publisher who runs a print and on-line magazine. She has worked in the field of media and communication as a brand manager for 12 years before starting her own project. As an independent publisher she commissions, selects, develops and edits fashion content.

Respondent D has worked as the Australian editor of a global fashion media title for eight years. The magazine covers fashion, music and culture and has developed from a street / youth sub-cultural roots in the UK; it is published in print and online. As the Australian editor, she is involved in commissioning photographers and stylists and collaborates with writers to produce content relevant for a very particular Australian perspective on fashion and style.

Respondent E is an agent for Australian fashion bloggers. He works for a marketing company that specialises in connecting bloggers with marketing opportunities. The company represent a group of popular fashion bloggers (The Bloggerati). Respondent E liaises with brands wishing to promote products and events to match them with a suitable blogger and their audience.

Respondent F is a social media manager for global beauty brand. She is responsible for planning, selecting and delivering all social media content for the brand across Australia. Her role involves finding opportunities, selecting images, editing captions and planning the timing of social media posts to generate maximum engagement with the brand across Facebook, Instagram and Youtube.

Contemporary Fashion Tastemakers – New Voices / New Spaces / New Approaches

Individuals selected for interviews have been chosen to provide insight on the changing practices of fashion communication. All are working within the contemporary fashion media landscape, but in very different roles. They will be asked to respond to the questions below from their professional perspective (to provide insight from an institutional / operational perspective) as well as from a personal viewpoint.

1. How and where do you see your role connecting with / contributing to contemporary fashion taste-making?
2. What are the most effective / powerful ways to communicate new tastes in fashion today? And could you please give specific examples of these?
3. For you, what are the key sites, locations or places of fashion taste-making today (social / geographical / virtual)?
4. How do you measure influence both in terms of what you do, as well as how you quantify the influence of others?
5. For you, what are the benefits and drawbacks of the recent changes to fashion media listed below?
 - Speed at which fashion media operates
 - Rise of the consumer's voice and influence in fashion media
 - Multi-channel global fashion media platforms
6. Can you name THREE public figures that you consider to be contemporary fashion tastemakers and why?
7. What are the new or emerging activities that you think will be increasingly significant / influential on tastes in fashion? And what are the existing activities that for you no longer seem relevant / influential?
8. How important are words and language in the communication of new tastes in today's fashion media environment?

Interviews

Discourse analysis / themes and patterns

Recurring words themes:

Social media (esp. Instagram) generates strong responses, emphasised as important

Some interviewees not sure if it has tangible effects, but feel they should be part of it

Others firm believers as it generates a form of data (measurable)

Engagement is another word spoken about often by all interviewees. All emphasise importance of engagement, but not any old engagement (such as suggestions for content / letters to editor as this type of engagement does not help to expand network or spread personal message). Particular type of engagement desired: Likes, click-throughs, shares, following (obedient & extends reach, not necessarily interested in consumers' voice as such).

Collaboration / Interaction another common theme to all interviewees

Many talk about power of collaboration in all sorts of contexts – designer + retailer / architect + brand / fashion + art in hybrid mags / consumers + brands producing on-line content

Cities / Fashion city come up in discussions of taste-making, places to watch not only for fashion week, but also because of the layers of elements that converge on the city (street style, art, exhibitions, cultural activity, people of the city, stuff inside & outside of fashion weeks)

Q1. Keywords used when describing taste-making:

Shaping / guiding / assisting / helping / informing / steering

Other terms used when describing own process of taste-making:

- Saying or highlighting things – bringing attention to...
- Providing reference through data - numbers, quantitative measures
- Material objects + stories – story-telling devices
- Selecting and matching – pairing products with bloggers / matching correct content with particular communication channels
- Filtering and focusing on particular items, topics or ideas – bringing attention to...

Q2. Most powerful ways to communicate new ideas of taste today:

- Social media (any on-line platform that shows how many views / likes, etc)
- Material objects + contextualising information (on-line or off-line)
- Print media (a material object that is shared in a different way – permanent, luxurious, demonstrates commitment)
- Outfit posts / straight-ups (what people are actually wearing and their attitude)
- Words and images that show new idea integrated into people's life-style

Q3. Key sites where taste-making happens

- Cities where fashion / art / culture intermingle (on-line Instagram = easy & immediate)
- Multiple layers build the site: Fashion capitals but not just fashion weeks, street style, blogs, mags, music scene, exhibitions
- Instagram, Youtube and Pinterest – also online retailers have become inspirational sources
- Music festivals

- Creative collectives – making fashion, film, music, publishing away from mainstream making own aesthetic
- Fashion cities – viewed and understood through blogs & street style

Q4. How do you measure influence?

- Blog ranking / analytics and online engagement / data tracking
- Calibre of our contributors / likes & numbers
- Anecdotes & comments / profile of companies signing up for our services / likes & numbers
- Peer feedback & reviews, media coverage – opinions of others in field v important
- Sales figures & analytics / number & type of people who want to collaborate or advertise with us

Note: all construct sense of themselves from responses of others – either collaborations, interactions or working together – orientating device

Q5. Pros & Cons of current multi-channel super-fast fashion media

- Variety of channels is good / speed & amount of content needed a curse
- Calling the bad guys out is good / increased access to info is good / lack of critical analysis over simplified is bad / lack of context & balance in much media
- Negative impact on quality of writing / desperate drive to find something new to say / Positive for brands to get free insight from consumers / positive as niche can still exist online – just need to know where to look
- Speed is negative: relentless and repetitive – just posting tiny snippets & lack of diversity in commentary / Feeling compelled to keep feeding beast / variety of channels is good
- Consumers pressuring media for more content + media producing ever more content = viscous cycle, but all feel compelled to be part of it otherwise fear of missing out / Choice is good and keeps everyone on their toes

Q6. People who are fashion taste-makers:

- Anna Dello Russo / Cate Blanchette / Mary Kate & Ashley Olsen
- Petra Collins / Hari Neff / Alexa Chung / Tavi Gevinson
- Cara Delivigne / Yasmin Sewell / Kylie Kloss / Kate Foley
- Suzy Menkes / Show Studio / Judith Clarke / Bernard Arnault
- Carine Roitfield / Karl Lagerfeld / Madonna
- Karl Lagerfeld / Donatella Versace / Lorde / Matthew Linde

Note: all describe global profile needed for FTMers and all note that appearance is crucial, but opinions and their work also crucial

Q7. Taste-making activities (new ones & those no longer relevant)

- Guerrilla-style marketing, pop-ups, impromptu fashion shows feel new / Facebook is passé
- Collaborations but bringing together unexpected combos, elements of surprise feels new / corporate product launches, unimaginative & predictable events boring & old fashioned
- New categories of hybrid magazines, plus new hybrid retail experiences / publishing not dead, just evolving / important to have physical and online

- Platforms and activities that let consumers be creative and interact online are imp contemporary activities / Trend predictions, forecasting and street style spotters are passé
- Independently run fashion stores & fashion festivals feel new / Store-driven publications creating content about their product under the guise of independent editorial is old & tired

Q8. Value of Words v Images in communicating new taste:

- Less words & shorter messages full of buzz words – numbers, emojis, buzzwords, # most important, pared back messages
- Image circulates more quickly & generates quicker reaction / images allow you to covet something but not understand value of it (words change the way you see it)
- Different types of people – text readers & image readers, so it still is about both / change is lack of quality control and volume of both images and words (inverse relation)
- Both are needed for new tastes – it happens in layers (first step images for impact – then words are needed to go further)
- Images and how things look are always important in fashion, but words with images – naming new ideas brings them into reality, helps to make sense of things

| Fine Art | Date | Fashion |
|--|-------------|--|
| Anish Kapoor, Michael Heizer, Carsten Holler | 1995 | Prada Fondation begin to stage contemporary art exhibitions in Italy |
| Sylvie Fleurie | 2000 | LV Collaboration - bags |
| Stephen Sprouse | 2001 | LV Collaboration - bags |
| Bob Wilson | 2002 | LV Window installations (Japan) |
| Takashi Murakami | 2003 | LV Collaboration - bags |
| Tracy Emin | 2004 | Longchamps - bags |
| Richard Prince | 2007 | LV Collaboration – bags/runway show / advertising |
| Monumenta – Grand Palais | 2007 | LV – Sponsorship of Monumenta – sculpture prize begins |
| Takashi Murakami | 2008 | LV Collaboration - bags |
| Fabrizio Plessi | 2008 | LV Store interior & Collaboration - bags |
| Stephen Sprouse | 2009 | LV Collaboration - bags |
| Jeremy Deller | 2009 | LV store launch - installation and garden |
| | 2011 | Venice Prada Fondation opened |
| Antoine Bourdelle Collaboration between La Musee Galleria (fashion) & Musee Bourdelle (art) | 2011 | Madame Gres: La Couture a l'Oeuvre opened at |
| Yayoi Kusama LVMH sponsors exhibition of Yayoi Kusama at Tate Modern | 2012 | LV Collaboration – bags / accessories / window displays / pop-up stores (LV largest collaboration) |
| Daniel Buren | 2012 | LV Collaboration – runway show / advertising / window installations |
| Charming Baker | 2012 | Paul Smith sculpture/ installation |

| | | |
|--|------|---|
| Rob Pruitt | 2012 | Jimmy Choo – limited edition collection (launched at Frieze Art Fair) |
| Gavin Turk | 2012 | Hussein Chalayan – creative collaboration |
| Cerith Wyn-Evans | 2012 | Stephen Jones – millinery & installation |
| Mark Titchner | 2012 | Mary Katrantzou – video & lenticular prints |
| Rostarr, KATSU, Craig Redman, Kenzo Minami, Hisham Akira Bharoocha | 2012 | Isaora – limited edition printed jackets |
| Francesco Vezzoli | 2012 | Miuccia Prada -24-hour occupation of the Palais d'Iena in Paris |
| Anselm Reyle, | 2012 | Christian Dior – limited edition accessories |
| Josef Albers, Daniel Buren and Hiroshi Sugimoto. | 2012 | Hermes 'Editeur' – limited edition prints |
| | 2013 | Chanel construct giant art gallery as runway, including giant Chanel inspired sculptures to shown Spring/Summer 2014 RTW collection |
| Chapman Brothers | 2013 | LV Collaboration – prints for menswear |
| Rop van Mierlo. | 2013 | Marni – limited edition accessories |
| Retna, Aiko & Os Gemeos | 2013 | LV Collaboration – prints for scarves |
| Cannes Film Festival | 2013 | LV funded restoration of "Umbrellas of Cherbourg" |
| Frank Gehry / Cindy Sherman / Marc Newson | 2014 | LV "Iconoclasts" collaboration – bags Karl Lagerfeld / Rei Kawakubo / Christian Louboutin |

| | | |
|-------------|------|--|
| Frank Gehry | 2014 | LV Fondation opens in Paris - designed by architect Frank Gehry, who also has the first exhibition |
| | 2014 | Milan Prada Fondation opened |
| | 2015 | LV sponsorship of artists for Havana Biennale |
| | 2015 | Louis Vuitton 'Series 3 exhibition': "A modern and unexpected reinterpretation of a fashion show" |

| Date | Activity | Artist |
|------|--|--|
| 1995 | Prada Fondation begin to stage contemporary art exhibitions in Italy | Anish Kapoor, Michael Heizer, Carsten Holler |
| 2000 | LV Collaboration - bags | Sylvie Fleurie |
| 2001 | LV Collaboration - bags | Stephen Sprouse |
| 2002 | LV Window displays (Japan) | Bob Wilson |
| 2003 | LV Collaboration - bags | Takashi Murakami |
| 2004 | Longchamps - bags | Tracy Emin |
| 2007 | LV Collaboration – bags/runway show / ad campaign | Richard Prince |
| 2007 | LV – Sponsorship of Monumenta – sculpture prize begins | Monumenta – Grand Palais |
| 2008 | LV Collaboration - bags | Takashi Murakami |
| 2008 | LV Store interior & Collaboration - bags | Fabrizio Plessi |
| 2009 | LV Collaboration - bags | Stephen Sprouse |

| | | |
|------|--|---|
| 2009 | LV Launch & Event installation - garden | Jeremy Deller |
| 2011 | Venice Prada Fondation opened | |
| 2012 | LV Collaboration – bags / accessories / window displays / pop-up stores (LV largest collaboration) Plus LVMH sponsored touring exhibition of Yayori Kusama from Tate Modern | Yayori Kusama |
| 2012 | LV Collaboration –runway show / ad campaign /windows | Daniel Buren |
| 2012 | Paul Smith sculpture/ installation | Charming Baker |
| 2012 | Jimmy Choo – limited edition collection (that was launched at Frieze Art Fair) | Rob Pruitt |
| 2012 | Hussein Chalayan – music collaboration | Gavin Turk |
| 2012 | Stephen Jones – millinery/installation | Cerith Wyn-Evans |
| 2012 | Mary Katrantzou – video & lenticular prints | Mark Titchner |
| 2012 | Isaora – one-off printed jackets | Street artists such as Rostarr, KATSU, Craig Redman, Kenzo Minami, Hisham Akira Bharoocha |
| 2012 | Miuccia Prada -24-hour occupation of the Palais d'Iena in Paris – an installation that "created unabashed kitsch monsterpieces" based on celebrities | Francesco Vezzoli |
| 2012 | Christian Dior – limited edition accessories | Anselm Reyle, |
| 2012 | Hermes Editeur – limited edition prints | German artist, Josef Albers, French artist, Daniel Buren and |

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| | | Japanese photographer, Hiroshi Sugimoto. |
| 2013 | LV Collaboration – prints for menswear | Chapman Brothers |
| 2013 | Marni – limited edition accessories | Rop van Mierlo. |
| 2013 | LV Collaboration – prints for scarves | Retna, Aiko & Os Gemeos |
| 2013 | LV funded restoration of “Umbrellas of Cherbourg” | “Umbrellas of Cherbourg” at Cannes Film Festival |
| 2014 | 6 Iconoclasts collaboration - bags | Karl Lagerfeld / Frank Gehry /Cindy Sherman /Marc Newson / Rei Kawakubo / Christian Louboutain |
| 2014 | LV Fondation – Gallery opens (architect Frank Gehry & first exhibition) | Frank Gehry |
| 2014 | Milan Prada Fondation opened | |
| 2015 | LV sponsorship of artists for Havana Biennale | |
| 2015 | Louis Vuitton series 3 exhibition: “A modern and unexpected reinterpretation of a fashion show, this exhibition, following on from SERIES 1 and SERIES 2, invites visitors to discover Nicolas Ghesquière’s inspirations for his fourth ready-to-wear show as the Artistic Director for women’s collections at Louis Vuitton.” | |

| Date | City | Mags |
|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1892 | | Vogue launched |
| 1909 | New York | Vogue acquired by Conde Nast |
| 1916 | London | British Vogue launched |
| 1921 | Paris | Vogue Paris launched |
| 1945 | Paris | French Elle launched |
| 1959 | Sydney | Vogue Australia launched |
| 1964 | Milan | Vogue Italia launched |
| 1969 | Tokyo | Elle Japan launched |
| 1975 | San Paulo | Vogue Brazil launched |
| 1985 | New York | Elle US launched |
| 1985 | London | Elle UK launched |
| 1987 | Madrid | Elle Spain launched |
| 1987 | Hong Kong | Elle Hong Kong launched |
| 1987 | Milan | Elle Italy launched |
| 1988 | Berlin | Elle Germany launched |
| 1988 | San Paulo | Elle Brazil launched |
| 1988 | Shanghai | Elle China launched |
| 1988 | Stockholm | Elle Sweden launched |
| 1988 | Athens | Elle Greece launched |

| | | |
|------|--------------|--|
| 1988 | Lisbon | Elle Portugal launched |
| 1990 | Amsterdam | Elle Netherlands launched |
| 1990 | Montreal | Elle Quebec launched |
| 1990 | Sydney | Elle Australia launched |
| 1990 | Taipei | Elle Taiwan launched |
| 1992 | Seoul | Elle Korea launched |
| 1996 | Johannesburg | Elle South Africa launched |
| 1996 | Moscow | Elle Russia launched |
| 1996 | Seoul | Vogue Korea launched |
| 1996 | Taipei | Vogue Taiwan launched |
| 1998 | Moscow | Vogue Russia launched |
| 1999 | Tokyo | Vogue Japan (Nippon) launched |
| 1999 | Mexico City | Vogue Mexico (Latin America) launched |
| 2000 | Athens | Vogue Greece launched |
| 2001 | Kiev | Elle Ukraine launched |
| 2002 | Lisbon | Vogue Portugal launched |
| 2005 | Shanghai | Vogue China launched |
| 2007 | Mumbai | Vogue India launched |
| 2009 | Paris | Vogue launches Fashion's Night Out – a |

| | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--|
| | London Milan New York | late night shopping event Began in New York London Milan & Paris to mark the start of 'fashion month' 4 x international fashion weeks |
| 2010 | Istanbul | Vogue Turkey launched |
| 2012 | Shanghai | Louis Vuitton re-stages Paris runway show in Shanghai |
| 2014 | Kuala Lumpur | Elle Malaysia launched |
| 2014 | Shanghai | Fashion School Parsons establishes campus in Shanghai "contextualised fashion programs" |
| 2014 | Mumbai | Fashion School Parsons establishes campus in Mumbai "contextualised fashion programs" |
| 2014 | Miami | Conde Nast International Luxury Conference (formerly IHT Luxury Conference) |
| 2015 | Florence | Conde Nast International Luxury Conference |
| 2016 | Seoul | Conde Nast International Luxury Conference |

| Date | City | Fashion Week |
|------|----------|----------------------------------|
| 1943 | New York | New York Fashion Week began:1943 |
| 1984 | London | London Fashion Week began: 1984 |

| | | |
|------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1973 | Paris | Paris Fashion Week began: 1973 |
| 1996 | Sydney | Sydney Fashion Week began: 1996 |
| 1958 | Milan | Milan Fashion Week began: 1958 |
| 2005 | Tokyo | Tokyo Fashion Week began: 2005 |
| 1995 | San Paulo | San Paulo Fashion Week began: 1995 |
| 1987 | Madrid | Madrid Fashion Week began: 2008 |
| 1969 | Hong Kong | Hong Kong Fashion Week began: 1969 |
| 2007 | Berlin | Berlin Fashion Week began: 2007 |
| 2001 | Shanghai | Shanghai Fashion Week began: 2001 |
| 2005 | Stockholm | Stockholm Fashion Week began: 2005 |
| 1998 | Athens | Athens Fashion Week began: 1998 |
| 1991 | Lisbon | Lisbon Fashion Week began: 1991 |
| 2004 | Amsterdam | Amsterdam Fashion Week began: 2004 |
| 1990 | Montreal | Montreal Fashion Week began: 1990 |
| 1987 | Taipei | Taipei Fashion Week began: 1987 |
| 2011 | Johannesburg | Johannesburg Fashion Week began: 2011 |
| 1996 | Moscow | Moscow Fashion Week began: 1996 |
| 2008 | Seoul | Seoul Fashion Week began: 2008 |

| | | |
|------|--------------|--|
| 2010 | Mexico City | Mexico City Fashion Week began: 2010 |
| 2010 | Kiev | Kiev Fashion Week began: 2010 |
| 1999 | Mumbai | Mumbai Fashion Week began: 1999 |
| 2000 | New Delhi | New Delhi Fashion Week began: 1999 |
| 2015 | Istanbul | Istanbul (Modest) Fashion Week began: 2015 |
| 2016 | Kuala Lumpur | Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week began: 2016 |

| Date FNO | City | Shopping location & FNO |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| 2009 | New York | 5 th Avenue |
| 2010 | London | Bond Street, Mayfair |
| 2010 | Paris | Rue Saint Honore |
| 2010 | Sydney | Pitt Street, Market Street |
| 2009 | Milan | Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, Via della Spiga |
| 2012 | Tokyo | Omotesando and Aoyama districts |
| 2009 | San Paulo | Oscar Freire region, Iguatemi and Market Place |
| 2009 | Madrid | Serrano, Fuencarral and Gran Via |
| 2012 | Hong Kong | IFC, Canton Road, Times Square |
| 2010 | Berlin | Kurfürstendamm |
| 2010 | Shanghai | Golden Triangle – shopping malls on |

| | | |
|------|--------------|---|
| | | Nanjing West Road |
| 2012 | Stockholm | Ostermalm, Sodermalm |
| 2010 | Athens | Kolonaki, Syntagma Square |
| 2010 | Lisbon | Avenida da Liberdade |
| | Amsterdam | |
| | Montreal | |
| 2011 | Taipei | Xinyi District |
| | Johannesburg | |
| 2010 | Moscow | Tretyakovsky Proyezd |
| 2010 | Seoul | Apgujeong, Cheongdam |
| | Mexico City | |
| | Kiev | |
| 2010 | Mumbai | Taj Mahal Palace, The Palladium, The Oberoi |
| 2010 | Istanbul | Nisantasi |
| | Kuala Lumpur | |

| Date | Activity | City / country |
|------|----------------|----------------|
| 1892 | Vogue launched | New York |

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| 1909 | Vogue title acquired by Conde Nast | New York |
| 1916 | British Vogue launched | London |
| 1921 | Vogue Paris launched | Paris |
| 1945 | Elle launched in France | Paris |
| 1959 | Vogue Australia launched | Australia |
| 1964 | Vogue Italia launched | Italy |
| 1965 | 5 international editions of Vogue – US, UK, France Italy & Australia | US, UK, France Italy & Australia |
| 1969 | Elle Japan launched | Japan |
| 1975 | Vogue Brazil launched | Brazil |
| 1985 | Elle US & Elle UK launched | US & UK |
| 1987 | Elle Spain, Elle Hong Kong, Elle Italy launched | Spain, Hong Kong, Italy |
| 1988 | Elle Germany, Elle Brazil, Elle China, Elle Sweden, Elle Greece and Elle Portugal launched | Germany, Brazil, China, China, Greece, Portugal |
| 1990 | Elle Netherlands, Elle Quebec, Elle Australia & Elle Taiwan launched | The Netherlands, Quebec, Australia, Taiwan |
| 1996 | Elle South Africa & Elle Russia launched | South Africa, Russia |
| 1990s | Elle embraces digital: Consolidates and offers a global on-line product | |
| 1996 | Vogue Korea & Vogue Taiwan launched | Korea, Taiwan |

| | | |
|------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1998 | Vogue Russia launched | Russia |
| 1999 | Vogue Japan (Nippon) launched & Vogue Mexico – Latin America launched | Japan, Mexico & Latin America |
| 2000 | Vogue Greece launched | Greece |
| 2001 | Elle Ukraine launched | Ukraine |
| 2002 | Vogue Portugal launched | Portugal |
| 2005 | Vogue China launched | China |
| 2006 | ELLE Orientale, with a version in French, Arabic and English launched Also expansion Elle decoration / Elle a Table / Elle girl internationally | |
| 2006 | Vogue US includes political and cultural issues by featuring the burqa, as well as articles on prominent Muslim women, their approach to fashion, and the effect of different cultures on fashion and women's lives. Vogue sponsored the "Beauty Without Borders" initiative with a US\$25,000 donation that was used to establish a cosmetology school for Afghan women. Anna Wintour's idea "Through the school, we could not only help women in Afghanistan to look and feel better but also give them employment." | US & Afghanistan |
| 2007 | Vogue India launched | India |
| 2008 | Vogue Italia – controversial 'All black' issue, attempting to promote more diversity in fashion media | |
| 2009 | Vogue launches Fashion's Night Out – a late night shopping event Began in New York London Milan & Paris to mark the start | |

| | | |
|------|--|----------------|
| | of 'fashion month' 4 x international fashion weeks "Anna Wintour's idea was designed to jump-start an industry battered by the global recession in 2009" | |
| 2010 | Vogue Turkey | Turkey |
| 2011 | Elle offers limited editions of Elle Man, Elle Accessories, Elle Marriage in specific locations | |
| 2012 | Elle International Beauty Awards launched Elle Decoration International Design Awards launched | |
| 2012 | Louis Vuitton re-stages Paris runway show in Shanghai | Paris Shanghai |
| 2013 | Vogue / Conde Nast has expanded with contract publishing ventures, a restaurant division, fairs, conferences, festivals and the first Condé Nast College of fashion and design. | |
| 2014 | Elle Malaysia launched | Malaysia |
| 2014 | Parsons establishes campuses in Shanghai & Mumbai offering "contextualised fashion programs" | |
| 2014 | Suzy Menkes Vogue's International Fashion Editor chairs Conde Nast International Luxury Conference (formerly IHT luxury conference) (2014 Miami / 2015 Florence / 2016 Seoul) | |
| 2014 | Conde Nast – Voyages launches as a luxury global tour operator | |
| 2015 | Elle has 43 International editions | |
| 2015 | Vogue has 21 International editions Vogue hosts Fashion's Night Out events in 23 cities across 19 markets confirmed to date Conde Nast host Conde Nast International Luxury Travel | |

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|--|----------------|--|
| | fair in Moscow | |
|--|----------------|--|

| Date | Unconventional applications (diffractions) of fashion history in museums | Use of fashion history |
|------|--|--|
| 2005 | Spectres: When fashion turns back Judith Clark / V&A London | Juxtapose Fashion history x contemporary fashion |
| 2005 | Christian Lacroix: Les Histoires de la Mode Christian Lacroix & Olivier Saillard / Les Arts Decoratif Paris | Juxtapose Fashion history x contemporary fashion |
| 2010 | The Concise Dictionary of Dress Judith Clark & Adam Phillips / V&A Archives – Blythe House London | Interventions / installations in V&A archives |
| 2011 | Madame Gres: La Couture a l'oeuvre Olivier Saillard / La Musee Galleria & Musee Bourdelle Paris | Intervention / installation in artist studio - museum |
| 2012 | Schiaparelli & Prada: Impossible Conversations Andrew Bolton & Harold Koda / The Metropolitan Museum NY | Juxtapose Fashion history x contemporary fashion |
| 2012 | The Impossible Wardrobe Olivier Saillard & Tilda Swinton / Paris Fashion Week & Galleria Archive | Performance art x history of fashion |
| 2015 | Hermes Wanderland Hermes / The Saatchi Gallery London | Construction of a museum within a contemporary gallery space to tell brand's history |
| 2016 | The Vulgar: Fashion Redefined The Barbican Gallery London | Juxtapose Fashion history x contemporary fashion |

| Date | Multiple/competing fashion histories | Aspect of fashion history |
|------|---|--|
| 1993 | Infra-Apparel Costume Institute NYC | History of what lies beneath fashion silhouettes |
| 2000 | The Corset – Fashioning the Body Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology NYC | Focus on history of the corset and its various re-inventions |
| 2005 | The Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show: 10 years of Sexy Las Vegas - Caesars Palace | Branded Underwear - history of fashion exhibition (10 year period) |
| 2009 | Panty Poetry exhibition Launch of Belgium’s underwear museum Brussels | History of underwear |
| 2009 | Undercover: The Evolution of Underwear The Fashion and Textiles Museum London | History of underwear |
| 2011 | Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty Andrew Bolton / The Metropolitan Museum NYC | Recent fashion history produced by one person as lens on the past |
| 2015 | Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty Andrew Bolton & Claire Wilcox / V&A London | Recent fashion history produced by one person as lens on the past |
| 2013 | La Mechanique des Dessous Denis Bruna / Musee des Arts Decoratif Paris | History of underwear |
| 2014 | Exposed: A History of Lingerie | History of underwear |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| | Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology NYC | |
| 2014- 2015- 2016 | Undressed: 350 years of Underwear in Fashion V&A London plus toured the world including Bendigo Brisbane Sydney Australia | History of underwear |
| 2015 | Fashioning the body: An intimate history of the Silhouette Bard Graduate Centre NYC | History of underwear Fashioning the Body: An Intimate History of the Silhouette examines the extraordinary ways in which women and men have shaped their bodies into distinctive silhouettes in the name of fashion. |

5. Additional data sources

As this research project progressed additional data has been sought in order to look beyond the fashion commentary generated by my selected fashion journalists and bloggers who have a privileged position in relation to new emerging fashion. The additional data is drawn from two online sources selected because they capture everyday fashion consumers' relationships to fashion and clothing. Further, these sources have remained constant through the duration of the project, in contrast to the rise and fall in participation of consumers in various social media platforms.

The Women in Clothes project

This project is a multi-faceted investigation into women's relationship with their clothes. It is not concerned with formal or collective concepts of femininity and fashion, rather it is a vehicle for discussions about how we choose to present ourselves everyday and the material products we choose to employ in that task. At the heart of the project is a survey of 83 questions (at the time of the research 639 people had completed the survey, however the number of respondents continues to grow). The questions and respondent answers are available online and are accumulating as more people choose to take the survey. Although there is little information on the profile of the respondents, the data generated by the survey provides much material that describes personal influences and attachments when deciding what to wear. For example, one particular question from the survey that triggered my interest in this project and led me to further explore the material generated asks:

QUESTION 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU?

Website: <http://www.womeninclothes.com/survey/view-by-question/>

Publication: Heti, Sheila, Heidi Julavitis and Leanne Shapton. *Women in Clothes*. New York: Blue Rider Press, 2014.

What We Wore: A People's History of British Style online archive

Nina Manandhar developed this online project as a way to document "a people's style history of Britain from 1950 to the present day." It began as a pool of photographs on Flickr, before its evolution into a stand-alone website in 2012. She encourages contributors to post pictures and tell their style stories. What We Wore is a growing archive of personal photographs and accompanying comments from those in the images who describe why they wore what they did and what it meant to them. The project is informal in its approach, resembling a personal scrapbook or photo album rather than a formal repository. The user-generated content is unedited and unself-conscious; it contains images of diary pages, passport photographs, holiday snaps, Polaroids, formal portraits and album covers. The accompanying text details the time, place and event of the photographs as well as describing associations and attachments to the clothing felt by the wearer.

Website: <http://what-we-wore.com/>

Publication: Manandhar, Nina. *What We Wore: A Personal History of British Style from 1950 to Today*. Prestel: London, 2014.

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

| Taste & Style quote | Author & link |
|---|---|
| I try to. Taste is more important. Taste implies being smart in all aspects of life. | Alyssa http://www.womeninclothes.com/view/23-do-you-think-you-have-taste-or-style-which-one-is-more-important-what-do-these-words-mean-to-you |
| Taste, yes, style, a bit. taste is way more important. | Sophia Ruthkowski |
| Semantics. | See Mags |
| I have neither | Marta Ochnio |
| I certainly hope that I have good taste and style. Good taste to me is recognizing the quality and uniqueness of something, while good style is the ability to combine and put pieces together to create a look that you're proud of. At the moment, with a college-grad bank account, I'm spending a lot of money at H&M and T.J. Maxx, but I do try to limit it and look at care instructions and quality of the product before purchasing. | Lauren Campbell |
| Both | Valentine |
| My taste is in comfort and practicality. It's hard to find anything to call my style because every shop seems to have the same five items with different prints. | Jas White |
| I think style encompasses taste | Lissy Irions |
| I don't think I have any of those. I don't really know what they mean anyway... | Alice Grillet |
| Someone told me I had 'swag' once. I think that probably means confidence in pulling off something that could potentially be terrible. I think that probably means I have style more than taste. 'Tasteful', although giving something a certain qualification, also has many negative connotations for me, as being a bit bland or within the rules. Style is more individual and interpretable. I like swag best though | Sarah Hill |
| I think style is something that everybody has, but taste is not. Taste is refined, mostly involving quality clothing and classic pieces. But taste is also knowing to pair your 200€ silk shirts with converse or vintage boots. I think I have both, because I have an eye for fit, quality and details. | Natalie Petro |
| I think I have both taste and style. Neither is really more important to me, but I guess taste probably comes first as you need good taste to have good style. Taste is choosing good items of clothing, style is choosing what looks good with what. | Emily G |
| I mostly think I have taste. Style is much more important because you get to see yourself and describe yourself without communicating | Monthati Mkwanazi |
| Both, meaning is individual, I wear what I like | Rachel X |
| I think I have both, but that style is more important. When I think of "style" versus "taste", I think of a creative expression that is impossible to replicate. | Kay Belardinelli |
| Both. Taste means you know what looks good. Style is your personal flair. | Elizabeth Siebel |
| people often say, I do have good taste. I would say taste is something inside of you. it differs from person to person and other people can't influence it easily. style is the realisation of taste - it can be developed but also influenced or manipulated by others. | Barbora B |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Both | Linda Lincoln |
| Hmmmm. I think I've got reasonably good taste. And every now and again reasonable style, but style is so fleeting, and unless it is a classic style doesn't really fit with my sustainable ethos (which invariably means I don't buy clothes every 5 mins so don't keep up with 'the stylish folk' per se). Taste, implies values and transcends seasons | RL McMaster |
| Taste is what you choose, style is how you put your choices together for impact | Anna Maria Purcelli |
| I am not sure, I just wear what I think compliments my body | Shea Simon |
| Taste = is what I like Style = is the way I put my taste together. I have both | Joan Baez |
| Yes I do. Everyone has their own taste and style. I'm much more sure of mine as I get older, and I don't think one is more important than the other particularly. Taste to me is about what you are drawn to, and what you instinctively go for e.g. certain colours, types of books/art, and style is more about what kind of looks you go for whether it is more wild or minimal or tomboy etc. Both of them are your own, but influenced from many different places. | Emma Holland |
| I'm not sure where this falls in terms of "taste" or "style" but I think I have a strong sense of spotting a piece of clothing that feels very "me". I really get a kick out of materializing myself in clothing and items. | Elizabeth Kirshner |
| I have taste. I have an eye for nice things, so I can appreciate them. | K Brower |
| Both words seem a bit superficial. | Marta Lilly |
| taste is input. style is output. taste is how you observe and select. style is how you combine and create. | Bridget Nielsen |
| I've tried to answer this a couple times, but I don't really think I can | Lottie G |
| Taste is unique to oneself and may or may not be flattering. One's culture usually dictates style. I have taste and once in a blue moon achieve style. | Rachel Smith |
| I think taste feels like more of an old fashioned word than style. | Alice Meikle |
| I think my style is non style. I choose pieces I Like and mix them in sometimes controversial ways. I do not subscribe to the colour of the year, or seasonal fashions dictated by some corporation. Im no fashionista. | Jette Mederre |
| Taste seems elitist. I have developed style where the artistic and the homespun meet the architectural. | Leslie Haynes |
| Yes I believe I do have taste and style. Taste is knowing what is appropriate and suitable and style is about knowing how to dress for your body shape and colouring. I believe they go hand in hand. | Christine Connell |
| taste to me is what you like in a piece of clothing (e.g. certain colours, a certain type of boot, a style of formal shirt) style (when talking about an individual) is things that someone will like to/often wear. I have certain tastes, but no style. | Ondine Bernard |
| yes my own style | Bettina Frohlich |
| they are both important to me and they both overlap, style and taste go hand in hand. | Alison Browning |
| Taste. I think this signifies a capacity to "read" messages about fashion, whether or not one dresses stylishly. One can have great style and bad taste. Whether they're being ironic or not. | Melissa Slattery |
| Taste. Taste is something that will represent the inner you, style can | Patricia Nunez |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| be stolen or misrepresented | |
| no matter the style, one has to have taste for dressing | Gabriela Carrera |
| taste and style is in a way the same for me. Taste is what you like, maybe also on others but you don't need to buy it or have it. Style is in a way something that just comes with your personality because only then it's real. We live up the clothes we are wearing often without even knowing and that's the best because then it's real and other people see it's real. | Anna Carinee |
| I think that taste is what you like and style is how you express that on yourself. Some people might like a certain look but not feel confident enough to express it on their own body. I don't think it's fair to say which one is more important. I have both taste and style but there have been times in my life when my style didn't reflect my taste. I didn't have the resources or the time to devote to developing my own style. I feel like people can get a little bit judgemental or self-righteous when they talk about the definition of the word 'style' -- like anyone who follows fashion trends or doesn't have unique taste is somehow inferior. Some people just don't have the time to care about these things, and that's okay. | Hannah Claire |
| I hope I have great style, that's my favorite. Great taste is a good one, too. Like, Grace Kelly and Ginger Rogers. But Scarlett O'Hara and Nefertiri, you know, they had that great style. | Megan Rose Quirk |
| I think I have style and taste, and the most important for me is to have style. Style means that I wear things that people would recognize as mine, and taste means that I can find something beautiful although I wouldn't wear it | Ana Meneses Naranjo |
| I believe that I have both. Both of them are important because if you have taste and choose beautiful clothes but can't combine them, your taste is useless. And if you can make an outfit but can't pick outstanding clothes then your style is useless. So taste is about picking nice items and style is matching them | Thalia Bamicha |
| I like to think I have good style, which to me means that I can take anything and make it work. I think style is more an inherent, instinctual thing, and taste is learned. perhaps taste has to do with money. | Maya Critchfield |
| Clothes should be flattering, should not emphasize figure flaws, but should also be comfortable. Women should feel free to bare their upper arms or wear shorts if the weather requires it for comfort | Ellen Shay |
| You have a style if you have taste. To have taste is to care about aesthetics, proportions, lights, colors, shapes. If you manage to balance all those, then you probably have a great style. To have a personality also equal to have style. Then if you have personality and taste, you may be just beautiful and awesome to hang out with! | Coralie De Gonzaga |
| I think that when something doesn't fit your taste, it's just not your preference. But when something doesn't fit your style, it doesn't show you how you want to be seen | Julia Harrison |
| I think I have both. I love well made clothes. However, as I have grown older, I have started to realize how important the style is. To me, it's a way to communicate your beings to the world and also a way to protect yourself from it. I began to learn more about the history of clothing and fabrics. Through understanding different fabrics, my discrimination against certain fabrics have dissolved. | Yuling Chen |
| Taste as of this moment, I am not that deep knowing when about fashion, maybe if to level my knowledge I am just a first grader at | Abigail V Manalo |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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|---|-----------------------|
| primary school. Taste is about the kind of clothes, materials you want to apply and portray while Style its what you present. | |
| I think I have taste, a little style, and mostly a uniform. I think neither of them really matters but you know when you see someone who has one, or both. I think having taste means you're discerning, you wear the best things in your budget, you know how to pair things. Style is a bit more personal, like putting your signature on a look. It's not manufactured. | MV (not my real name) |
| I have taste, but not style. I think style IS taste, but just on a grand scale, to the point of allowing taste to affect your every decision... I have the taste of a picky eater. I stick to what's familiar, try everything once or twice, and react negatively to a good amount of it. | Zoe Cat |
| taste all the way. Style comes and goes with the day; taste is bred much deeper in the bone. wish I had both but if I had to choose it would be taste. | JD Lambert |
| I think I have both, to some degree. Style is much more important. Good taste on its own can result in dullness and conformity. I love the idea of each person having her/his own distinctive style. | Jessica G |
| Yes, taste is the type of clothes you like and style is how you wear the clothes. Both are as equally important | Ella Mae |
| I think I have both, a funny taste and a good style. People may not agree but I feel both say something about me: I am smart, fun and artistic. | Alyse Butler |
| Yes I do. Taste means the type of clothing you like and Style is how you wear the clothing, both are equally important. | Daisy Grey |
| I think so, although I also think that I have cultivated it by consulting external sources, so while I think I have some flair I have also educated myself a lot. Taste is about understanding what is appropriate, attractive, pleasing. Style moves more into the territory of beginning to make a statement, a signature look for yourself - ensuring that in presenting an attractive mien you are also doing so with flare and verve | Lady Mcnut |
| no. i don't have taste or style. I often get it wrong. too complicated, ends up being fussy. maybe I overthink it | Mari Macdonald |
| Style I believe. I know what I love and what looks good on me. I do try to be "tasteful" as I am now older (55)....(no attempting to wear items of clothing meant for the very youthful anymore) | Janice Bowie |
| Style is the God and taste is just its servant for me. Style is everything, you can find it everywhere! | Georgia Tsaousidou |
| My style works for me. It encompasses my taste for casual comfort. | Cav Ciccoritti |
| As I designer, I hope that I have both! Taste I think is more generic; I have good taste even for things I wouldn't buy or wear. Style is how I put things together, I think. The finesse of one's personal presentation. | Fif Sabatini |
| I'd say I have more style, it's not to everyones tastes, but it's what I like. I don't think one is more important than the other. Style for me is your personality expressed in what you wear. Taste is very personal, it's what you like or a drawn to. | Heidi Flaherty |
| Style is more important as it is individual. I have my own style, but my taste does not tend to sync with the general populace much | Ahna C |
| I have a taste. Of course taste is more important. | Veronika Zetkova |
| I think I have my own style, maybe I'm not very happy with the | Cristina Dominguez |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| things I put together, but most of the times I'm very happy with the way I dress. I think that having taste depends of the eye of the person that looks, but style is undeniable. | |
| Taste is what you like, and applies more to a single item - clothing, a painting, music, whatever. Style is how take the different elements of your taste and put them all together. Neither one is more important | Betsy |
| I have both and they are equally important. Style isn't when you see somebody popular or a celebrity wearing a particular pair of shoes and you make it your goal to get an identical pair - that's called insecure conformism - style is when you know yourself what you like and you don't spend tons of money on labels but you can still put together a sassy outfit that you feel comfortable in. | Crescent Wilson-Wood |
| I THINK I HAVE TASTE BUT NO STYLE. I THINK HAVING TASTE MEANS YOU CAN CREATE STYLE RATHER THAN COPY IT. | Jane Slogan |
| Taste. Taste means you pick things that suit you and style means you pick things that keep up with the trends. | Lily Morsillo |
| I have good taste. I think they are equally important. You have to dress in the way that matters to you, not what is "fashionable" | Jessica Holslt |
| I have taste- I can distinguish between high & low quality. I am very very picky about fabrics, construction. If funds were unlimited, I could follow my tastes! Don't think I have a lot of style, which I think is a unique approach to aesthetics | Emily S |
| Not really. Taste maybe, which I think is more important to not over sell my body for approval from others/strangers. Style is something elusive to me, and is sometimes an insecurity | Sarah G |
| I do have taste. I know what is right for various situations and what is appropriate. But I think beyond that I have style which is a unique expression of my values and is utterly trend-proof. | Carolyn London |
| I think I have taste because I know what I like when I see it. As for style? I don't think I show off enough of my true style. | Dana Seif |
| I have taste and style. Sometimes they don't align. I think taste is more important, because it is less limited to what I would wear. I can admire somebody else's style as part of my taste without ever wearing what they are wearing. Taste is better because it's bigger and more inclusive. | Monica Fox |
| I think that taste and style are two terms that are relative. I think everybody thinks that they have taste and style - so, yes, I think I have taste and style. I think they are equally as important. To me, taste is in making ethical decisions and buying elegant, timeless pieces of quality that will last. Style is being able to takes these varying elements and put together these items in a way that you think looks and feels good. Style is also in the way you wear the clothes - like you own them | Angela Grace Arsenault |
| I think I have my taste than style. People tell me I dress very classically. I guess that's a style | Terri Bardenhagen |
| I have OK taste but I have lost my style. I am working on finding it again. By that I mean that i generally look fine, tasteful, things work well on me, etc. But real style? I have lost it. | Daphne Phillips |
| Thats a hard one, it's difficult to have one with out the other. I think | Letty McHugh |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| style is more about the way you put things together and taste is the things you choose. You can have taste with out having style, but I don't think you can have style with out taste | |
| <p>I do now, I really do. I came a long way, made all the mistakes and learned with every single one of them.</p> <p>I think my taste revolves around the quality and the details of things, and also their design. I became an extremely picky shopper - which also means a satisfied one.</p> <p>As for style, I know what colors, shapes and materials I like and what suits me. And I also let myself be intrigued with some interesting design that I think would work on me. Ultimately, I think style is a visual narrative of who we are. And, as it is the narrative with which we present ourselves, it must be succinct.</p> <p>I think both style and taste are important</p> | Tamora |
| <p>Taste..I've been told I have taste.I think it means I choose handmade,well made pieces that work together,and have meaning. Not a formula,but an interesting mix that works.</p> <p>Style...I think I have, as most do, a style unique to me.</p> <p>I am influenced by nature,travel,art..</p> <p>Style,I think is made from life experiences,exposure and is at the persons core of being, that is expressed in their spaces, dress,way of life.</p> | Heather Waugh |
| <p>Is it arrogant of me to say that I have good taste and style?</p> <p>Taste is knowing whether something is "good" or "bad" if it is cool or acceptable to own or wear something. Style on the other hand is how you incorporate these things you find in good taste. For example. I know that this dress I'm looking at in Vouge is great. It fits the bill of tasteful. I however, would never wear it. It doesn't fit into my style.</p> <p>I have always thought of myself as someone with expensive taste but a cheap paycheck. I can't afford a lot of things I like, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate them, or pick them out for other people.</p> | Taylor Nelson |
| I have great taste and appalling style. I recognize quality, have an eye for color, great fabrics, good design. But I still have a poor sense of how to dress myself in a way that is both comfortable and stylish. | Jen Bradford |
| I am not sure. I think I have a consistent look and I don't know which category that falls under. So these words don't really have meaning I can comprehend. | Charley C |
| It's funny because I never really think that I have a certain style, but when I look back on older pictures I most certainly do. Taste means there's a certain level of sophistication. Style is about continuity in one's appearance. | Christy Lorio |
| I think I have taste. I think taste is more important because style to me is just following what everyone else is doing, but taste is your own individual fashion. | Mary Morcos |
| <p>Everybody has taste and style. To say that you don't, well, that's a specific taste and style, no?</p> <p>I never think that mine is that defined but then I look around my room, my closet and realize it really is. It's meaningful in the sense that it is my identity; something that I'm trying to define in my late 20's.</p> | Pascale |
| I think taste is universal and style is more individual. At the risk of sounding conceited, I'll say I have both. But people with a different | Francia |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| sense of style might not like mine, so to each their own. In these days, good taste is a blessing that you should be thankful for. Lets face it, most people like seeing things that please the eye. | |
| Everyone has tastes, whether they are innate, tutored or bad. I have some taste and style, not that great ability I see in some people who can really pull colours and outfits together. But not bad either. | Kathryn Manonyme |
| To me, style is the way in which you address or take part in a creative culture (art, music, fashion, interior design) given your current financial limits. Taste is your opinion on those certain matters, but without any boundaries to hold you back. Someone's taste is harder to see because they might not be able to afford it, so their style would look a little bit different than their taste. I think if both were in sync, each person would feel so groovy. | Leah Schreiber |
| I think i have taste. I can always find the god things in shops, easily get out of the rack what will look good on me. I don't have style win the sense that I have a style. Or ways to look different from everybody else. Taste to me means an eye for nice things. Style means an eye for mixing things together to look nice. | Sofie Van Westrenen |
| Style is way more important. Good taste is boring, and bad taste can be totally stylish. God, who is more fabulous, Barbara Bush or Divine? I rest my case | Jackie |
| yes. and neither. i think both go hand in hand. i dont really care though. i just wear what i like and what makes me comfortable and happy. | Elisa Chaudet |
| Taste and this matters Style is luxury | Jill Ecuyer |
| I guess I have taste. I have pretty good taste but not great. I feel right now that I have NO style and I'm in transition. I'm sick of all my clothes and I kind of want to start wearing all black. I'm sick of presenting something about myself with my clothes. I don't care as much as I used to | Claire L |
| taste - can't afford style | Maura Graham |
| Nah, I go with the flow, and like a bunch of clothing. | Kelsey B |
| I wear what I like- stylish but not over so on a daily basis. Yes for formal | Judy OConnor |
| I think I have both. Taste because you need it to have style. Taste means deciding what is good and what is not and style is putting the good taste items together in the right way. | Adrienne |
| Hmm good question. I think I have style. To me style is something you express with the way you dress. Taste is what someone likes or dislikes. | Trina Mckim |
| Both. Taste is knowing if something is cool Style is assembling. I have more taste than style, cos I'm lazy | Georgina Neill |
| I think I have taste with colours, an eye for wearing clothes that that flatter my body, although I would not say that I have style because I do not normally sacrifice my comfortness in order to be fashion/stylish. You can have taste, being armonious.You have style by standing out from the crowd | Serenade Wilson |
| Hmm - I have a bit of both and sometimes I have none of either if I'm going through a stressful stage in my life. Style to me doesn't | Justyna Burzynska |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| relate to current trends, but having confidence to try looks that match your mood and personality. As for taste...I'm not sure... | |
| Taste. I know when something is good quality and classic. This informs my style to an extreme extent. | Genevieve Price Stafford |
| yes, style, they are important, i want to be known for my (good) taste and most important i want to be qualified as stylish | Renee Dito |
| Taste I acquired after leaving the house of my parents and marriage, my style became more casual. Taste is your own pick of what is supposed to be tasteful in your cultural world. Styles are often defined in the fashion world, but you have to wear what becomes you and is acceptable in your environment | Elje Doodhagen |
| I have taste and style, I dress body and age- appropriate and mix it with trends I like and that suit me. To me style and taste dont exist without the other. | Yolande Ave |
| I have taste, but I don't care enough about clothes to have style anymore. Taste is dressing to suit your body and how you feel and the situation, and making it all fit together. Style is being creative, having flair, having a set way you dress which reflects who you are. | Naomi Anderson Whittaker |
| I would say so. People say they like items that I own, so I suppose I have good taste. I've been told things look good on me, so I guess I have something going for me re style. Taste is what you like, style is how you wear something. | Lynn O'Liam |
| I think I have both. Sometimes, my style doesn't catch up with my taste level...I can spot and like nice things, but often am unable to afford and since i have my own business and a family, I don't have time to shop around for alternatives. | Nico P |
| I think I have taste, but lately I have been hesitating about my style. There has to be a balance between the two of them. Taste | Meritxell Serra |
| I have a style, not sure if it's a "good" one by any means. I also have tastes. They mean my preferences and how I express them. | Sascha Erin-Veine |
| I think I have taste and when I feel like it I have style | Maria |
| hm. i do have taste, i do have maybe a certain style but it isn't all thought trough well, i'm not cerryain i could describe my style. i could best describe it as accidental. | Annelena de Groot |
| I have taste, I don't really have style. I know how to select well-made clothing that is generally flattering: taste. Those clothes, however, run the gamut and it would be hard to stay I have a particular "style" of dress. | Audrey Brooks |
| Yes, I think I have both. Style is more important than taste. Taste is more linked to aesthetics, and aesthetics are generally linked to time; whereas I consider style something more atemporal. They don't mean much to me, though. | Paula Alvarez |
| I thing I have taste because I think style sometimes goes with money and I am not able to spend what I would like to in clothes | Anabel Gonzalez |
| it really depends on the day and where am I going | Mara Valencia |
| I think I quite have both. I think both are important although maybe style is more important. To me, taste has a more specific value: something is nice or not. Style comprises a lot more: an attitude, a certain way. | Gema M |
| Yes, I think I have both. People sometimes ask me for advice what they should wear, so I guess I appear trustworthy ;-) Taste and style are similar to me so one is as important as the other. These words mean a lot to me - but in the end we will all die. | Christina Mohr |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| Sure! Taste is having a great eye, sensibility to find the beauty in variety and chaos. Style is about making what you wear part of your personality and way of life, giving your clothes your final touch, your own flavor. Both are important, but I appreciate taste more because it is really hard to find people with great taste. I think I have an excellent taste, no matter how casual I dress. | Claudia Alejandra |
| I know what the rules of style are and how to apply them, but I don't care for them. A lot of time I wear stuff that I know is not obeying the rules of fashion. Sometimes to deliberately annoy people for whom these rules are holy, most of the time because I feel like it. Anyway, since I'm part of the culture and culturesensitive or something I usually intrinsically like the stuff that is fashionable. | Femmeke R |
| I think I have good taste (which defines how you can mix clothes and patterns) and style (which defines the total look and matches with your body language and person). For me the important thing is having something personal. | Lydia |
| I think I have taste now, not so much two years ago. For me, the two are very important. Taste is the capability to choose good clothes and style is the way you put them together. | Almudena Garcia |
| I think I have taste but I would like to have more style. Both of them are important | Laura Galache |
| I think I do have these things, but I often find it hard to talk about. I like the idea of self-expression, collections, or comfort rather than taste or style. The latter seems to evoke a classist feeling to me. I do not feel that they do not exist, just that it is less important to talk about for me. Those words seem to have a lot of baggage. | Jessica Marie Griffith |
| I have taste and style. Style is the tool box and taste is how one uses the tool. They are both important concepts in the realm of creativity in fashion. | Lily Taylor |
| Ha ha! This is tough! Taste I think is what is accepted at the time. It is what has become mainstream in your circle/society. It is safe. Style is a little more fearless. Personally, as I try to be more consistent in how I dress, I am more tasteful, less stylish. I'm starting to regret that - it feels anonymous, boring. | Sandra Conway |
| Taste. I have good taste. Even when I was young, Mom always wondered where I got my great taste in high-end fabrics. Style is all about perception. Like junk: one person's idea of good style may be another's idea of bad style. | Celestial Young |
| I think I have good taste in that I'm usually drawn to the more expensive things, the things you can see are made very well, the items that will last and be worn for a long time. Style is the ability to put all kinds of things together in ways that are beautiful. I'm not sure if I have that or not. Maybe sometimes | Angela Jeanne |
| Yes. I've always been fond of expression through clothing. When I was a child, my parents owned an antique and vintage clothing shop in Chicago. Their tastes were free and theatrical. If you can imagine my delight as a child seeing heaps of lace and tulle, silk chiffon dresses, a monkey hair collared jacket (which frightened me!), fascinators, kimonos, turbans, fur stoles, etc. This exposure to fashion and aesthetics has had a lasting impression on me. When I am getting dressed up for a special occasion, my style leans towards the | Christy-Claire Katien |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| theatrical. My mother would say "make an entrance," not by being brash or ostentatious, but by radiating your mood. At the core of my taste and style is improvisation. My mother has passed down this trait to me in dressing; seeing the fur collar on an old vintage coat and making a hat out of it, taking an old beaded collar and creating a headpiece. | |
| Taste is probably more classic and subtle, style might be more modern and relevant? Maybe for now I am hoping for style but as I grow older I will look more towards taste. They both develop with age though, so I'm not sure really! | Katie Barber |
| I have both....mainly taste. I think Style is more important. Style means glamour, charm , imprevidible combinations of ways of dressings which everyone notices. Taste means a particular way of choosing ,mix and combine fabrics, colors and accessories. | Blairbali |
| I have taste but not much style; or rather, my style is hampered by the dearth of suitable clothing. I tend to express my style more through jewellery than clothing. Taste is a sense of appropriateness, which is not limited to formal occasions. Wearing a suit to a footy game isn't terribly appropriate, even if it won't get you arrested. Taste has a more timeless and universal sense about it. Style, on the other hand, is individualistic. How you choose to interpret things within the range of appropriate options. I think they are both important, but style is harder. | Athanassiel Romaine |
| Good taste doesn't always mean good style. Style is about knowing who you are and dressing to reflect that. I think I have style. | Sabrina Jeria |
| I would say taste and I think it's more important. I think taste means having good judgement about wearing something appropriate and good quality. I think style is keeping up to date on what's in. Or having a very clear and unique type of look. | Katie Jeanes |
| Taste connotes a hierarchical ranking of styles, to me. I definitely have my own preferences and style, but strive not to impose that on others as taste. | Rose Proulx |
| Ooooh - style, maybe not taste in all things...i grew up a huge John Waters fan, and I have a soft spot for bad taste...and reflect it frequently in accessories, etc. | Taffeta V |
| I do have taste. Taste on it's own can be boring. Sometimes I can have style. Style is more of a state of mind really, like proclaiming something. Performing something, not necessarily TO anyone else. | Person Glasseyes |
| I definitely have taste, and a fairly good sense of style. Taste is much more important; it helps us to make good choices and to be authentic. | Hillary Easom |
| I think those words are fairly meaningless these days. | Rather Not |
| Taste = is what I like Style = is the way I put my taste together. I have both. | Joan Baez |
| Yes I do. Everyone has their own taste and style. I'm much more sure of mine as I get older, and I don't think one is more important than the other particularly. Taste to me is about what you are drawn to, and what you instinctively go for e.g. certain colours, types of books/art, and style is more about what kind of looks you go for whether it is more wild or minimal or tomboy etc. Both of them are your own, but influenced from many different places. | Emma Holland |
| I'm not sure where this falls in terms of "taste" or "style" but I think | Elizabeth Kirshner |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| I have a strong sense of spotting a piece of clothing that feels very "me". I really get a kick out of materializing myself in clothing and items. | |
| I have taste. I have an eye for nice things, so I can appreciate them. | K Brower |
| Both words seem a bit superficial. | Marta Lilly |
| taste is input. style is output. taste is how you observe and select. style is how you combine and create | Bridget Nielsen |
| Taste is unique to oneself and may or may not be flattering. One's culture usually dictates style. I have taste and once in a blue moon achieve style. | Rachel Smith |
| I think taste feels like more of an old fashioned word than style. | Alice Meikle |
| I think my style is non style. I choose pieces I like and mix them in sometimes controversial ways. I do not subscribe to the colour of the year, or seasonal fashions dictated by some corporation. I'm no fashionista. | Jette Mederre |
| Taste seems elitist. I have developed style where the artistic and the homespun meet the architectural. | Leslie Haynes |
| Yes I believe I do have taste and style. Taste is knowing what is appropriate and suitable and style is about knowing how to dress for your body shape and colouring. I believe they go hand in hand. | Christine Connell |
| taste to me is what you like in a piece of clothing (e.g. certain colours, a certain type of boot, a style of formal shirt) style (when talking about an individual) is things that someone will like to/often wear. I have certain tastes, but no style. | Ondine Bernard |
| yes my own style | Bettina Frohlich |
| they are both important to me and they both overlap, style and taste go hand in hand. | Alison Browning |
| Taste. I think this signifies a capacity to "read" messages about fashion, whether or not one dresses stylishly. One can have great style and bad taste. Whether they're being ironic or not. | Melissa Slattery |
| Taste. Taste is something that will represent the inner you, style can be stolen or misrepresented | Patricia Nunez |
| no matter the style, one has to have taste for dressing | Gabriela Carrera |
| i've got both | Renate Do |
| Both. Taste is more important. Style - personal expression utilizing currently available products and trends. Taste: personal expression of Values | Stephanie Allison |
| Yes, I think I have taste, i.e. I know what suits me, and I have style, i.e. I can express my personality through what I wear. | Lot Oostveen |
| I believe I have taste and style. Taste implies knowledge about how certain pieces may or may not work together, whereas style suggests a certain category of dress in which a particular individual consistently adheres to. For example, although my style may be very feminine and girly, I would still have enough taste to be competent enough to put together a masculine ensemble. | Miss M |
| I think style is more important. Style is how you interpret or reinvent ordinary things, whereas taste is the stuff that curators claim to have. Taste is an invisible, unquantifiable thing that makes someone a vessel of cool or sophistication. Taste feels stuffy and better-than-thou. | Lauren Kim |
| I think I have taste, not style. I wouldn't necessarily value one over the other; I think taste is the eye and style is the execution. I know | Laura Snapes |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| exactly what I like in other people and if I were adept at photography I could create some kind of street fashion blog that had a recognisable aesthetic. But I'm no good at applying these ideas to myself. That's what I think style is. | |
| I hope I have style. I don't know if one is more important than the other. Taste is good for interior decorating I think. I do wish I was better at that, but style is easier for me. Taste feels like it's for people from old money, which I don't have. Style feels like anyone can access it, it's a journey of the self | Sarah Millman |
| I think I have both. I think style inches over to being more important; you can have taste but never exercise it, and style seems to me to be innate. | Eleanor Slee |
| Everyone has taste. Their own taste. Thus the expression, "it's not really my taste". I think my taste is classic but what do I know. Re-reading this, I could say the same about the word "style". | Catherine Stockhausen |
| I think I have both taste and style. To me taste is knowing how to dress your body well and with class. Like knowing what fabric cuts work best on you and knowing what sizes work best on you. I think style has more to do with how you put clothing items together and what kinds of colors and patterns you like to wear. Taste is wearing a nicely fitted dress. Style is choosing a dress with a funky pattern and pairing it with boots. | Sydney Dow |
| I think I have taste _ a cautious, unoriginal taste. As to style, it is mostly a question of avoiding mistakes. | Penny Henderson |
| I think I have taste, but I don't necessarily think I have style. I think taste is more important, but I do wish I had style. Taste to me means a sense of refinement or classiness that affects how you see things or experience them, and how you make the choices you make. Style is about how you dress and present yourself, using your taste to clothe yourself. | Lyla Moon |
| Style. My taste can be a little "over the top", but on me, it's just my style. | Charlotte Sachs |
| i have style, i guess. i also definitely have taste, but it doesn't show in my clothing--it's more like taste for art or music or literature. i think the word "style" is more about originality and "taste" is a judgment. | Elena Goukassian |
| Yes, I'd like to think so. Style is more important. Taste is your opinion on clothes and trends and can be influenced more easily I feel. Style is how you wear what you're wearing, your overall aesthetic, it's more lasting than just what the cool kids of the moment are wearing. Hopefully, it's enduring | Nina Wilson |
| I like to think I have taste, and I much prefer that word. Taste to me means that you are discerning, and this can be applied to all facets of life. I suppose it is my enthusiasm for 'good taste' that sees me poring over Pinterest and other such sites into the wee hours. | Martha Jane Harris |
| I definitely think I have taste over style. Or rather, I have my own style that most people wouldn't classify as style. But I do think my unique sense of style sprang forth from having my own particular taste. Taste is simply what you like. And good taste is knowing quality in the cut/lines of something. And knowing if it is classic, and adaptable on first glance. Style is how you put everything together, and wear it. | Drea Cohane |
| I suppose that I like nice things, and expensive things, but "taste" or | Lindsay Ross |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| "style" are words that other people use about you, instead of words that you apply to yourself. | |
| i think taste is from the perspective of an observer. i think style is from the perspective of a participant. i think i have taste. | Sarah Mackenzie |
| Taste to me means dressing appropriately for all events. Style is the way the pieces of clothing are assembled. I think that Style can override taste if you know/understand the person. For example, I think Tim Gunn is the epitome of taste. His personal style the past few years is atrocious in my eyes. | Rose Bork |
| I dont know. I know that i am what i am and it isnt for me to decide. I dont dress to give you answers I dress to start a story or to give you insight. | Abigail Keever |
| I think I have some of both, but I'm not sure which is more important. Taste is a grasp of aesthetic quality that affects what you choose to wear and how harmonious it is together. Style is the combination of shapes, colors, textures, and attitude, resulting in a composition that has a definite look and feel. In other words, taste is a matter of judgment, and style is a matter of design. | Claire Z |
| My husband has more taste. And he knows my style. We make a good pair when we go shopping! | Rise Ruhl |
| both. Taste is about choosing wisely and KNOWING what I like Style is being able to put clothes and accessories together well. Having lots of money is helpful, though not necessary for either of these. | Birdy Ring |
| I think I know what I like. I hope the people whose opinions I care about think I have both good taste and style. | Justine |
| I think I have both. To me taste is how you interpret fashion- ie: what you like or don't like, and style is how you use that. For instance you can have great taste but still not dress like it. | Jennifer Stopper |
| No, unfortunately. I think I have neither. | Treacy Colbert |
| I think I have good taste but not a sense of style. I guess taste is more important, but I love looking at women with a sense of style. I'm going to work on that | Jenna Nicely |
| Yes, I do, but whether either is of particular note, is anyone's opinion. Taste is understanding what the event/surroundings are, and purporting oneself appropriately in or to them. Style is a quality of self-expression that sets one apart from all others in any event/surroundings. To me, both are important. | Cruella Deville |
| I've never really thought about it, I like comfortable clothes, but also vintage and pieces that engage my imagination. | Sophie Crompton |
| taste i think is what youre into and style is how you put it all together. i think style is more important | Jacqueline Moizer |
| I have both, but I'm not sure either is more important. Taste is a | Nicole Larson |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| sense of what works together, propriety, etc. Style is harder to explain--it's what a person puts together and how they put those things together to decorate a home, clothe a person, design a workspace, etc. | |
| I think i do, however they do not manifest themselves in the way I dress. I do not buy anything that is remotely stylish because I don't like the way anything looks on my body, and I think i just kinda want to be invisible. When it comes to my work I definitely use my style and taste level in the selection of my materials and design. To me style is personal preference of aesthetics, and taste is the way those aesthetic preferences are put together with an editing eye. | Christina Smith |
| taste for colours, but my style is classic | Ariel |
| Yes, I enjoy fashions that persons admire and have good value, but only as safe for where I'll be and what I'll be. | Mary Wellis |
| A little of both. Taste is more about balance to me. I work with typography and taste is very clear there. Style feels more versatile, more loose. | Barbie Insua |
| A little of both. I think taste is more important; dressing appropriate for what you will be doing or where you will be at is incredibly important. Style means to be creative and trendy with the way you dress. Taste means to be aware of how your style will be perceived. | Andrea Peters |
| I have taste and style, but you wouldn't know it. Comfort is more important. So I like to buy tasteful and stylish clothes for my daughter. They can be the same, but fashionable "styles" can lack taste. Personal style is expression, and it's hard to say that expression in any form isn't a good thing, or that it lacks taste. Although they say it a lot on "Project Runway." | Joanne Schafer |
| I think I have more style than taste. Taste is being able to tell is something is unambiguously good or quality. Style is more unique, about your individualness. Neither is really more important. | Gwenn Lyons |
| I have both.. I have my own taste and style. I prefer style, not everything is my taste, but it doesn't have to be. I love individuality! | Shushoni Cavalcanti |
| I have taste still defining my style. Style comes from refined distinguished really laser-focused taste. Taste is an inherent appreciation in quality and commitment. Style is living life on your terms, honoring and celebrating your differences. | Linda Zhang |
| Taste - which is more important to me. Style sounds like "latest fashion" and taste sounds like "ongoing approach" | Jen Ostendorf |
| Taste, applies to the ability to apprehend the appropriate dress for a situation. This is my life. | EM |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| Style speaks more to personality, and an effort in upholding it. I don't have the care to create a look. | |
| I am not sure if I have style, which to me means some kind of individual flair. My taste is fairly simple and minimal. | Flora Nevarez |
| I think I have more taste than style. I think they're both important, but taste ranks higher. Taste has to do with knowing what works and what doesn't, what suits someone or a situation, etc. Style has to do with specific clothing/accessory/hair choices, and might not fit certain others' ideas of good taste. | Jennifer Hansen |
| taste and style are class identifiers at best and antagonistic diversifiers at worst words and uniforms that are used by the ruling class to identify their herds and how much their beasts of burden will raise them at the auctions of shopping | A. Aaay |
| my taste in clothing or fashion is fun but not an issue now...my style is mountain northwest casual....and that is important only that it is my comfort zone for what i wear | Colli Kincaid |
| taste--not wearing pj's to walmart | Josephine Black |
| I think I have both and to me it means looking appropriate to the situation in clothing that fits well, is suitable for my age and where I'm going that day. | Sharon Craig |
| Bad taste is still a style, I suppose. Virtually everyone has some kind of style or system, surely? Taste is more a flavour, good or bad being an individual preference, and whether others agree that you're well turned out. | IT Geek |
| Taste means differentiating between ugly trends and lasting qualities. Style means a genre ie tailored but with an overlay of knowing what one feels well in. I think style indicates individuality and is more important to me. | Patricia Findlay |
| I have both a taste and multiple styles. I think they work together as a whole. | Tara Hunt |
| Yes, I do think I have taste and style. I guess taste is more important. For me, the word "taste" connotes "class" whereas the word "style" refers to a manner of presenting oneself which might or might not be tasteful. A person with taste has style, but a person with style might not have taste! | Cynthia Lesley |
| I'm pretty sure taste and style are about the same - preference and action. So... just yes. | Danielle Corsetto |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| I do! I think both style and taste are a constant process, and like your sense of self or identity, they evolve as your life changes. Style is about making decisions, and about how those decisions change your way of thinking, about yourself and the world too. Style is a little more inside you, whereas taste is determined by what you see and what you learn, especially of the tastes of those around you. I like to think style is a little more innate, or at least deep-seated. E.g., I like delicate costume jewellery because my mother wore it when I was growing up, not because it's in the magazines I read and because the people around me wear it. Or I like pleated skirts because it speaks to a girlish frivolity that I don't want to let go of, rather than because I saw Lou Doillon wearing one and thought it was a good look. | Ana Kinsella |
| Classic. not too outrageous. Words mean.....relatively timeless.....jeans, white blouse or t shirt...blazer....good boots..... | Jane |
| When I think of taste, I think of the home. People with great taste have the right furniture, that kind of thing. It seems like a whole religion. "Style" feels looser to me, and sexier. I think of partial strangers saying this: "You have such great style!" It's the thing we say about the traveling circus that is our bodies. I love for people to look at how I move through the world and think, "Wow." | Leopoldine Core |
| I have style. That means that my clothes are an expression of how I feel about myself. I have very expensive taste and not the budget for it but no one would know by looking at my clothing. | Patricia Leroux |
| i aspire to have both. i know i have taste. i hope i have style. i'm working on style. i think in a way they are equally important. taste to me means discernment and education. style means self-awareness and a connection with your soul. | Lauren Matthews |
| Taste. I really dont have a lot of style. I always choose pieces that are classic and simple. Things that would generally look good on anyone. 90% of my clothes could be worn 10 years ago or 10 years from now. I think style is individual-how my queer friend can wear combat boots with a printed romper and bright blue lipstick but I would look ridiculous in the same. | Elizabeth Dunlap |
| Taste & Style. I think they both go together. In general, attributes that someone has whether it be good or bad. | Blythe Greene |
| taste is in the eye, style is how you as an individual show it off. I think I have taste but am often too lazy to have style? | Britt A |
| Both. Taste is knowing when to use style or leave it be. Taste by far. | Friday Chamberlain |
| I like to think I have style. I work hard at looking effortlessly chic. At least I think I do. LOL | Heather Maclean |
| Taste is too attached to class. Style is much freer and more | Rebecca Scherm |

5.1 The Women in Clothes project

Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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| thoughtful. | |
| Taste seems more innate to me whereas style can be learned. Style seems more fashion related whereas taste can be fashion, home, gift giving, etc | Jennifer Bowles |
| I think I have style, and to me that is more important. Style can border on tasteless (in the opinion of some people). I think style is innate, taste, acquired. Style is personal; taste is cultural. | Sarah Campbell |
| Taste is your predeliction in choice. Style is the choices you eventually make. I am not very clear about the distinction. | Aakrapti Gupta |
| I don't think I have much taste or style. I'm super basic- does it fit? Does it look alright? Do I like how this looks? I wish I were more adventurous with how I dress but I feel like I've been in a fashion rut for years due to chronic under-employment, having so little money for so long, and trying to focus my energies on other things like my relationships with family and friends, my potential career, and my creative side. | Sarah Cameron |
| I think I have both, but style probably getting more old fashioned as time goes by. Taste = knowing what combines well; Style = one's choices from what is available on the market. | Arcedes Dickins |
| I have both, i think taste is inherently genetic and style must be nurtured. They are equally as important, and one without the other is obvious, and even sad | J Mcsee |
| Well, these words are subjective, depending on how deeply involved with fashion culture one is. I'd almost rather not pin myself down with a "taste" or a "style", but it's hard to escape as a woman living in an urban area of western society. | Maggie Brown |
| Yes and yes. Both are important. Taste means an attractive aesthetic sensibility that permits one to make good choices. Style is about making those choices in a way that conveys something distinctive about oneself within the currently available sartorial idiom. | Claire |
| I think I have more taste than style. I know a lot about fashion and I know what looks good, but sometimes I struggle to translate that into my outfits on a daily basis. I think that taste is more important because it also applies to a wider range of culture. Although style is also very important. | Sophie Wilson |
| I think that I have taste. Taste to me means having a lens with which you personally perceive what you like, how you make decisions. Style means that you choose within a larger sphere that is affected by media outlets, companies, etc. Style probably affects peoples' individual tastes and taste might be what style is built out of. I'm comfortable relying on my taste rather than tapping into various styles especially because of the way I shop. Keeping up with style/s | Lindsay Ruoff |

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Women in Clothes – Question 23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU

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ANNE SCHEPERS

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1. WHEN DO YOU FEEL AT YOUR MOST ATTRACTIVE?

When I'm wearing something new and classy, a mix between tight and loose clothes, beautiful shoes and luxury accessories. And lipstick. Mostly I think just wearing clothes that feel special.

2. DO YOU NOTICE WOMEN ON THE STREET? IF SO, WHAT SORT OF WOMEN DO YOU TEND TO NOTICE OR ADMIRE?

Women I notice or admire are fashionably clothed, but not in the way that everyone wears at that moment: it has to have a classic feel to it and if they have their own twist in their outfits I admire them.

3. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU ADMIRE ABOUT HOW OTHER WOMEN PRESENT THEMSELVES?

Different things, it can either be a woman that is dressed very chic, in a dress or suit with the highest heels possible, or a woman that has something that is unique in her style, the je-ne-sais-quoi.

4. WAS THERE A MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE WHEN SOMETHING "CLICKED" FOR YOU ABOUT FASHION OR DRESSING OR MAKE-UP OR HAIR? WHAT? WHY DID IT HAPPEN THEN, DO YOU THINK?

About a year ago I finally saw that my style isn't colorful or bubbly or whatever. I like basic colours, black, grey, blue, white, and old men's clothes, and old leather shoes and bags. I think I finally saw it because I am a dedicated follower of fashion, but at that time I didn't like anything

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follower of fashion, but at that time I didn't like anything that was in stores. So I realised that I do have my own style.

5. WHAT ARE SOME SHOPPING RULES YOU WOULDN'T NECESSARILY RECOMMEND TO OTHERS BUT WHICH YOU FOLLOW?

I never buy prints. Especially flower prints. Whenever I buy a piece of clothing I think about if it will match with other pieces I already own. Clothes have to fit well. I'll never buy a cheap, bright coloured thin summer dress, especially when it doesn't match my body type. I don't buy clothes that look cheap.

6. WHAT ARE SOME RULES ABOUT DRESSING YOU FOLLOW, BUT YOU WOULDN'T NECESSARILY RECOMMEND TO OTHERS?

I combine loose fitting clothes with tight clothes, so no bodycon dresses, except for when they're combined with a big coat or something. High waisted jeans make my body look better. Shoes have to be classical and can never be the most outstanding part of your outfit.

7. WHAT IS THE MOST TRANSFORMATIVE CONVERSATION YOU HAVE EVER HAD ON THE SUBJECT OF FASHION OR STYLE?

I have a friend whoms style I very much admire. She wears vintage clothing and looks like a sixties lady. But in a very classical way, so not like the hipsters. I had a conversation

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classical way, so not like the hipsters. I had a conversation with her about wearing clothes that are different, but still combining them so that you don't draw attention - like: look at me, I'm so special because I wear vintage, OMG. That can never be the purpose of your outfit.

8. DO YOU HAVE A UNIFIED WAY OF APPROACHING YOUR LIFE, WORK, RELATIONSHIPS, FINANCES, CHORES, ETC.? PLEASE EXPLAIN.

I'm always pragmatic but work better on deadlines. But I don't have a unified way of approaching life and relationships. I like to think I'm very positive but in a relationship I'm also jealous and scared.

9. ARE THERE ANY CLOTHING (OR RELATED) ITEMS THAT YOU HAVE IN MULTIPLE? WHY DO YOU THINK YOU KEEP BUYING THIS THING?

I keep buying one model of high waisted jeans from a German store. I have them in three colours now. They fit perfectly and form the basis of my outfits.

10. HAVE YOU EVER SUCCESSFULLY GIVEN SOMEONE A PRESENT OF JEWELRY OR CLOTHING THAT YOU CONTINUE TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT?

Very much. My four best friends and I gave each other silver bracelets with our initials engraved in them, which was my idea. For my sisters birthday me and my brother bought a beautiful set of a ring, bracelet and necklace with a small heart. Also for her graduation we once bought a bracelet. Those are valuable things. And to a friend I once

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bracelet. Those are valuable things. And to a friend I once gave a bracelet with a butterfly which was relatively cheap (it was vintage), but she still wears and loves it.

11. IS THERE ANY FASHION TREND YOU'VE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN AND WHY?

Yes. Floral prints. I hate them. They are so fussy and just disgusting.

12. CAN YOU SAY A BIT ABOUT HOW YOUR MOTHER'S BODY AND STYLE HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN TO YOU, OR NOT?

My body resembles my mothers body in a lot of ways. Especially the hips and thighs part... Thanks mom. Style: her style right now is different from mine, she maybe is even more fashionable and wears prints and dresses. But I do resemble her style from when she just knew my dad, I even wear clothes that she used to wear back then.

13. HAVE YOU STOLEN, BORROWED OR ADAPTED ANY DRESSING IDEAS OR ACTUAL ITEMS FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

Clothing from my mother and sister. A few years back I wore all my little brother's old clothes. Also sometimes I borrow something from a friend that I forget to return. Dressing ideas from my sister and two friends whose styles I very much adore.

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20. IN WHAT WAY IS THIS STUFF IMPORTANT, IF AT ALL?

Sometimes I think: why is it even important, but clothing is my way of showing people what kind of person I am, it's about selling myself.

21. WITH WHOM DO YOU TALK ABOUT CLOTHES?

Everybody except my male co-workers.

22. HOW DO INSTITUTIONS AFFECT THE WAY YOU DRESS?

I am very much influenced by fashion magazines and webshops of the big stores like H&M and Forever 21. Also when I see a nice outfit in a movie or TV series I go after it.

23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU?

I think I have taste because my style can be very different at times (although I believe it became more clear what it is over the last year). I wish I had a style that would just describe me and only me. But maybe that's also something to hide behind.

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Christy-Claire Katien

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CHRISTY-CLAIRE KATIEN

1. WHEN DO YOU FEEL AT YOUR MOST ATTRACTIVE?

When I have the softness of face and hair after a good nap—or that lazy calm after sex.

3. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU ADMIRE ABOUT HOW OTHER WOMEN PRESENT THEMSELVES?

Women who wear their natural skin tone, posses good posture, use lyrical hand movements, and embrace their body type.

19. WHAT ARE YOU WEARING ON YOUR BODY AND FACE, AND HOW IS YOUR HAIR DONE, RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT?

No makeup, glasses, ballerina bun. Striped shirt, striped skivvies, bare feet (its 90° in New York right now!)

I lightened my hair a few months ago and I love it! My skin has warmer tones because of it, and so different colors speak to me now. It's thrilling. It also brings out my eyes.

23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU?

Yes.

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I've always been fond of expression through clothing. When I was a child, my parents owned an antique and vintage clothing shop in Chicago. Their tastes were free and theatrical. If you can imagine my delight as a child seeing heaps of lace and tulle, silk chiffon dresses, a monkey hair collared jacket (which frightened me!), fascinators, kimonos, turbans, fur stoles, etc. This exposure to fashion and aesthetics has had a lasting impression on me. When I am getting dressed up for a special occasion, my style leans towards the theatrical. My mother would say "make an entrance," not by being brash or ostentatious, but by radiating your mood.

At the core of my taste and style is improvisation. My mother has passed down this trait to me in dressing; seeing the fur collar on an old vintage coat and making a hat out of it, taking an old beaded collar and creating a headpiece.

25. ARE THERE ANY DRESSING TRICKS YOU'VE INVENTED OR LEARNED THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GETTING AWAY WITH SOMETHING?

Have fun with your hair. It's your free accessory.

37. WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS GETTING DRESSED IN THE MORNING? WHAT ARE YOU CONSIDERING?

Often I am inspired by a movie or a photograph that resonates with my mood. I will challenge myself and my wardrobe with that emotion. For example, this past October I discovered a photo of my grandmother from the

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was brown or beige, in homage to my grandmother.
Emotional connections make getting dressed very easy.

52. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF PHOTOGENIC?

I would say yes, but it wavers. Depending on my mood, I can feel at ease in front of the camera, other times complete distrust. It all depends on my confidence.

54. ARE THERE ANY FIGURES FROM CULTURE, PAST OR PRESENT, WHOSE STYLE YOU ADMIRE OR HAVE DRAWN FROM?

Isadora Duncan, Solange Knowles, Audrey Hepburn, Megan from Mad Men, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Jane Birkin.

59. ARE THERE ANY DRESSING RULES YOU'D WANT TO CONVEY TO OTHER WOMEN?

Always consider the silhouette.

Be considerate with your purchases, but get dressed quickly.

Knitwear is the most unforgiving fabric.

Heels are wonderful so long as they agree with you; if they compromise your gait, don't wear them—float, not stomp!

71. WHAT'S THE FIRST "INVESTMENT" ITEM YOU BOUGHT? DO YOU STILL OWN OR WEAR IT?

I have a pair of Chanel pumps that I have literally run into the ground. I remember the little booklet that came in the box that read "these shoes are meant to be danced in, box that read "these shoes are meant to be danced in, walked around the streets of Paris, etc etc" and I took those words to heart. They have suffered through rain showers, shitty Williamsburg dance parties, and high tea at Bergdorf's, all with reckless abandon. I couldn't be precious about these shoes, as the life you live is more interesting than some prim pair of shoes. The more banged up, the more beautiful they are to me.

78. DO YOU LIKE TO SMELL A CERTAIN WAY?

Yes!

A mixture of a natural facial tonic and shampoo that is a fail safe compliment catcher.

81. IS THERE AN ARTICLE OF CLOTHING, A PIECE OF MAKE-UP, OR AN ACCESSORY THAT YOU CARRY WITH YOU OR WEAR EVERY DAY?

YSL sheer lipstick!

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JUSTYNA BURZYNSKA

1. WHEN DO YOU FEEL AT YOUR MOST ATTRACTIVE?

After a good nights sleep, a swim and shower...

2. DO YOU NOTICE WOMEN ON THE STREET? IF SO, WHAT SORT OF WOMEN DO YOU TEND TO NOTICE OR ADMIRE?

Women who mix dark colours and textures. I'm into a classy gothic look. Considered silhouettes and smart tailoring. Women of colour, and dark colourings.

3. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU ADMIRE ABOUT HOW OTHER WOMEN PRESENT THEMSELVES?

Being adventurous and not taking cues directly from trends. Creativity and humour in the way they dress. You can tell that dressing is a joy, not just to show off.

4. WAS THERE A MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE WHEN SOMETHING "CLICKED" FOR YOU ABOUT FASHION OR DRESSING OR MAKE-UP OR HAIR? WHAT? WHY DID IT HAPPEN THEN, DO YOU THINK?

Exercising, it really makes everything fall into place - understanding my body deepens my understanding of what to put on it.

Not using bright coloured make up any more - a more muted palette makes me look far more sophisticated. A lot of trial and error has got me to finally understanding what suits me.

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5. WHAT ARE SOME SHOPPING RULES YOU WOULDN'T NECESSARILY RECOMMEND TO OTHERS BUT WHICH YOU FOLLOW?

Don't bother shopping just pick things up via friends, boyfriend or the lost property box at work. A lot of what I wear has found it's way to me rather than me shopping for it. I would always insist on shopping as little as possible for the environment's sake.

6. WHAT ARE SOME RULES ABOUT DRESSING YOU FOLLOW, BUT YOU WOULDN'T NECESSARILY RECOMMEND TO OTHERS?

Wear as much black as possible. I love it, but it's not for everyone. Most of my favourite looks are different shades of black and grey.

Do your makeup on the tube. I do this every morning on the way to work and saves me lots of time. Again it's not for everyone - a steady hand and confidence is required.

7. WHAT IS THE MOST TRANSFORMATIVE CONVERSATION YOU HAVE EVER HAD ON THE SUBJECT OF FASHION OR STYLE?

I have a lot of very good people around me - so I've had a multitude of positive conversations about body image and style that have impacted how I choose to dress.

8. DO YOU HAVE A UNIFIED WAY OF APPROACHING YOUR LIFE, WORK, RELATIONSHIPS, FINANCES, CHORES, ETC.? PLEASE EXPLAIN.

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Planning. Nothing is ever chucked on. I plan what I wear the night before, or put together something I know works on the spur of the moment. In my life I write tons of lists and tick everything off as I go along. Planning and organisation goes into everything I do, and that includes clothing, hair and makeup.

And then I have compulsive and decadent splurges - fancy wine on a work night, buying distinctive earrings in my lunch break, cutting my hair off on a whim.

9. ARE THERE ANY CLOTHING (OR RELATED) ITEMS THAT YOU HAVE IN MULTIPLE? WHY DO YOU THINK YOU KEEP BUYING THIS THING?

Black leggings and black tights - I have loads - I wear them all the time under skirts, shorts and the former for running / doing sport.

Other multiples are black vests, they work by themselves in summer and add warmth in winter.

Dr. Marten knee length boots, whatever style that year has a lot of buckles. I love the utility and hardness of the brand.

10. HAVE YOU EVER SUCCESSFULLY GIVEN SOMEONE A PRESENT OF JEWELRY OR CLOTHING THAT YOU CONTINUE TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT?

I don't really understand the question. I make jewelry out of fimo and through soldering dog tag chains. It tends to

WOMEN IN CLOTHES

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of fimo and through soldering dog tag chains. It tends to be necklaces - the people I have gifted them to or asked for them tend to be chuffed. I've passed on things that I've purchased that didn't work out for me to people that have taken an interest in them - again urging people to share and donate rather than buy things. Also an emphasis on DIY and the personal touch.

11. IS THERE ANY FASHION TREND YOU'VE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN AND WHY?

Ha - almost everything that isn't minimal and dark coloured. So pastels, bohemian, aztec patterns, flouro, playsuits, anything in blue denim...as I said basically everything that doesn't meet my personal style criteria!

12. CAN YOU SAY A BIT ABOUT HOW YOUR MOTHER'S BODY AND STYLE HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN TO YOU, OR NOT?

My mother and my sisters all have the same shape body, large hips and no breasts - I look after mine a little better though!

My mother is a nervy woman that seeks other people's approval when it comes to most elements of her life, she's not a confident dresser and this is an attitude that I have rejected. It's my life and my clothes and I direct the story. It's important that my style represents me, I don't care what other people think.

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dreadful. I use own over 20 corduroy items - now I wouldn't be caught dead in cords. I also constantly wore knee length skirts with fancy details and patterned / fishnet tights which I don't anymore. I'm streamlined and simple, avoiding any unnecessary details. I use to wear loads of chunky jewellery and accessories - now I don't bother or wear one piece. Simple and sparing rather than trying to wear everything as I use to in my early twenties.

15. IS THERE ANYTHING POLITICAL ABOUT THE WAY YOU DRESS?

Well yes, wanting to appear as neutral as possible and not shopping at places where humans have been exploited. My emphasis on not shopping exemplifies my anti-consumerist nature. I care about the way I look but I care about the environment, human rights and crushing capitalism more. Also as a feminist bodily autonomy is a concern for me, in attitude toward the style choices I make.

16. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR BODY.

Short stature and fit - but I wouldn't say athletic. I'm pale and heavily built but quite small at the same time. I grow my body hair, have a few subtle piercings and a large tattoo of a 1500s momento mori book plate.

17. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR MIND.

Bright, intelligent, never resting. Strong, determined and active.

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20. IN WHAT WAY IS THIS STUFF IMPORTANT, IF AT ALL?

I feel comfortable. The utilitarian look is simple and compliments my figure. I'm at work so it's fit for purpose and also is in keeping with my love of different shades and textures of black!

21. WITH WHOM DO YOU TALK ABOUT CLOTHES?

I find it a bit tedious to do so, but probably with a few friends and my sister - and only in passing, as I really have better things to talk to my friends about!

22. HOW DO INSTITUTIONS AFFECT THE WAY YOU DRESS?

I've worked in a library for the whole of my adult life, and at present at London College of Fashion - this has meant I've been fortunate to dress exactly how I want every day for my whole career.

I steer clear of any places that have a dress code or an inherent formality. I'm not interested in being stifled.

23. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TASTE OR STYLE? WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT? WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU?

Hmm - I have a bit of both and sometimes I have none of either if I'm going through a stressful stage in my life. Style to me doesn't relate to current trends, but having confidence to try looks that match your mood and personality. As for taste...I'm not sure...

24. DO YOU REMEMBER THE BIGGEST WASTE OF MONEY YOU EVER MADE ON AN ITEM OF CLOTHING?

Ill fitting biker jackets - I've done it twice - I should no better by now! They found their way to other people, so I can sleep at night.

WOMEN IN CLOTHES

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27. CAN YOU RECALL SOME TIMES WHEN YOU HAVE DRESSED A PARTICULAR WAY TO CALM YOURSELF OR GAIN A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER A SITUATION THAT SCARED YOU?

I suppose planning my outfits the night before and setting them out for myself for the next day lets me get through the daily grind more serenely.

Doing my hair and makeup for nights out has a calming and therapeutic effect, sitting down and taking as long as it take. A calming time before the onslaught of sensations and people - as an introvert 'going out' as always freaked me out a bit.

Looking together and in some ways hard through my choice of outfit is a regular occurrence so I can move through the world without any hassle, hopefully instilling a tiny bit of fear here and there.

28. WOULD YOU SAY YOU "KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE" IN THE AREA OF FASHION AND CLOTHING? IF SO, DO YOU ALSO KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE IN OTHER AREAS OF LIFE, THAT IS, ARE YOU GENERALLY GOOD AT DISCERNMENT? CAN YOU SAY WHERE YOUR DISCERNMENT COMES FROM, IF YOU HAVE IT? OR IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT, WHY OR WHY NOT?

Yes. Like dark colours and clear perspex jewelry - it's through trial an error and experimenting a lot to find things that work. This would apply to what I eat and drink and how I spend my time. As before - it's from periods of wild experimentation and then distilling it to what really makes me happy. I'm always open for new experiences though, to keep myself interested.

WOMEN IN CLOTHES

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31. MANY PEOPLE SAY THEY WANT TO FEEL
"COMFORTABLE," OR THAT THEY ADMIRE PEOPLE WHO
SEEM "CONFIDENT." WHAT DO THESE WORDS REALLY
MEAN TO YOU?

People at ease with themselves and at ease in their skin,
any fashion choices that follow from someone that feels OK
with themselves will seem effortless.

32. IF DRESSING WERE THE ONLY THING YOU DID, AND
YOU WERE CONSIDERED AN EXPERT AND ASKED TO
EXPLAIN YOUR STYLE PHILOSOPHY, WHAT WOULD YOU
SAY?

Anti consumerism is at the top - therefore considering what
you buy and why? Simplicity and minimalism - my
collection of clothes, jewelry and make up is a distillation
of things that I love - and it feels powerful in that sense -
no chaff, just the things that I love and 'need'.

33. WHAT IS REALLY BEAUTIFUL, FOR YOU, IN GENERAL?

This is a little too broad to answer! Laughter.

34. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER VERY UGLY?

Arrogance, selfishness and self obsession - highly repulsive!

35. ARE YOU GENERALLY A GOOD JUDGE OF WHETHER
WHAT YOU BUY WILL END UP BEING WORN? HAVE YOU
FIGURED OUT HOW TO KNOW IN ADVANCE?

I'm almost there. I think before I even step out of the house
what I need. I try things on multiple times and if after I've
purchased it, it's not right I'll take it back straight away. I
don't want anything that doesn't make me feel great
knocking about in my wardrobe.

36. WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOURSELF BEFORE GOING OUT,
AND YOU ARE TRYING TO SEE YOURSELF FROM THE
OUTSIDE, CAN YOU DESCRIBE A BIT ABOUT WHAT THIS
"OTHER PERSON" IS LIKE? WHAT DO THEY LIKE, DISLIKE,
WHAT SORTS OF JUDGMENTS DO THEY HAVE? IS THIS



WHAT WE WORE

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF BRITISH STYLE

What We Wore is a project initiated by **Nina Manandhar** to create a people's style history of Britain from 1950 to the present day. It's about people and their personal stories: why they wore what they did, and what it meant for them.

Order a copy of the What We Wore book, a compilation of the best submissions so far, published by **Prestel** now available in all good bookshops.

The What We Wore Archive is ongoing and still open for submission. Add your memories to the history by sending in your photographs and stories **here** or email to **submit@what-we-wore.com**.



QUICK OFF THE MOD MARK

I failed to get the trend right. I took hemlines up by hand as I was always a bit short! Always hurriedly taken up because I wanted to go out that evening. Later on I was a Beatnick, and then to acceptable dress but still keeping my own style.



I failed at being a mod, pleated skirt and wrinkle pickers with heels - and very neat hair, but my hair never looked quite as neat as I would have liked.

Hippy changing to more acceptable but still a bit offbeat. I never looked like anyone else, I had cheap clothes, as I never had any money! The Beatnik look was dyed t-shirts, shrunken/bleached/slashed jeans (looked like you had been painting the house) and mid length skirt Amy Winehouse hairstyle - half a beehive with the rest down. I wore black tights with holes - which was fashionable if you were a beatnik, wore moccasins with jeans or skirt with a little black heeled shoe.



I was about 20 years old then and I had a Triumph Bonneville 650 (one of top bikes of the time) The combat jacket was probably part of the gear I was issued with when I joined the TA, couldn't afford a leather jacket.



In the late 60s/early 70s I wore - knee length brown maxi wool skirt, very Bonnie and Clyde. I used to wear it with boots or a Biba shirt, at the time Biba was very cheap too. We were incredibly innocent but my parents read an article about people having sex in the garden/drugs and my dad forbade me to go but we never knew about that. We often went to Wimbledon Palais, a dancehall, with big lights, no particular style - live music - some Mods and some non-Mods. We got accused of being Beatniks by some lads, we spent so long trying to look like Mods!



In Soho, we went to Ad Lib a couple of times but it was very elite and hard to get in. We managed to get in with a regular - very exciting! Also went to The Pheasantry, famous posh place that people like Twiggy went to but we only went a few times but we were very impressed. We used to stroll along the Kings Road and hope

people would come and talk to you but no one ever



When I was in the TA about 1968, this was when the regiment was the Lancashire Fusiliers. as an aside I tried to join the regular army, I'd signed up for REME and all I needed was a medical. Unfortunately about a year before I'd had a motorcycle accident and had a spleenectomy, so they wouldn't accept me, but the TA was OK. As it happens I was taken ill on weekend exercise and had to have an emergency op!!!



This was taken at Hollingworth lake (Littleborough) with colleagues that all worked in the laboratories at Transparent Paper in Bury, we were more than colleagues we were friends and went out together drinking etc. I ended up marrying the girl on the far left, still with her today (2013)

people would come and talk to you but no one ever did!

In the late 70s's I changed my hair to platinum after being a warm reddish blonde, that was a big change because I started to have more sex appeal after that! I remember getting a blue linen dress with a keyhole back, to me was very daring at the time.



I found a pair of 6 inch round toe beige stiletto and was delighted, you couldn't get them anywhere (only in film star shops) and I wore them with shiny lycra jeans or my turquoise Fred Perry dress. The shoes used to get caught in the escalator if I wasn't quick off the mark.



Image and text courtesy of Lynda Dagley

#WHATWEWORE

#WHATSOHOWOREUK

#1970

#1960

#70S

#60S

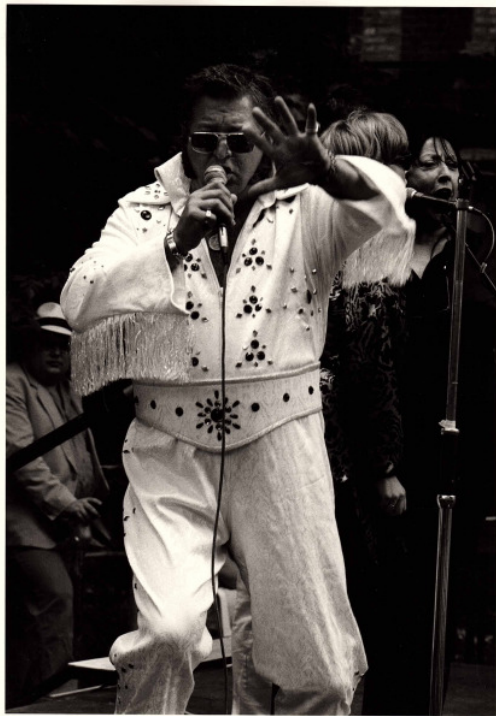
THE FRENCH HOUSE DAYS



GLAM METAL



I was eighteen at the time, and by 1992 the Glam Metal look of 1990 was well and truly gone. Grunge was doing a great job of hoovering up all the debris Glam metal had left behind, informing, converting and directing youth culture that stood in its path, a bit like Punk. I was well and truly sucked in, I didn't resist, Nirvana ruled. Rundown backdrops for your band pics were a must, looking scruffy and down and out was a bonus, it was all so D.I.Y. In this picture I was intent on finding the right backdrop to create a punky scene, the graffiti in a Manchester backstreet was perfect, along with the first release version of this iconic Nirvana T-shirt. Displaying a long ponytail down the back of my leather jacket separated me from the trendy short hair brigade. A black bobble hat with the bobble ripped out completed the look, this was before they were known as 'Beanie hats', wouldn't of known where to buy one from back then. The hat had belonged to my mates' sister that had somehow ended up living on the dashboard of his grubby orange X



Noel Bolhart co-owner of the Trench House
Playing Elvis at the Soho Festival
Circa 1995.



Keith Waterhouse, Lesley Lewis and Noel Bolhart
at The Soho Ball.
(late 90s)

living on the dashboard of his grubby orange a
Reg Volvo that he used for his gardening
business.

I remember being on a mission with a pal of mine
to find a rundown backdrop to pose in front of.
The pointy finger gesture looks far from menacing,
think I had spent too much time studying the
grittier visuals from the Oi Punk genre often
pictured on the back of albums such as the
Cockney Rejects Greatest hits. After this photo
experiment, sadly it was back home to a boring
middle class suburban 1930's semi in Chorlton
South Manchester, a far cry from squatters ville.

#WHATWEWORE

#WHATWEWOREUK

#EIGHTEEN

#1992

#GLAM

#METAL

#1990

#GRUNGE

#PUNK

#D.I.Y

#MANCHESTER

#NIRVANA

#T-SHIRT

#BOBBLEHAT

#BEANIE

#LEATHER

#KREG

#COCKNEYREJECTS

#1930SSUBUBIA

#SQUAT



ALWAYS HAD GOOD TRAINERS THOUGH...





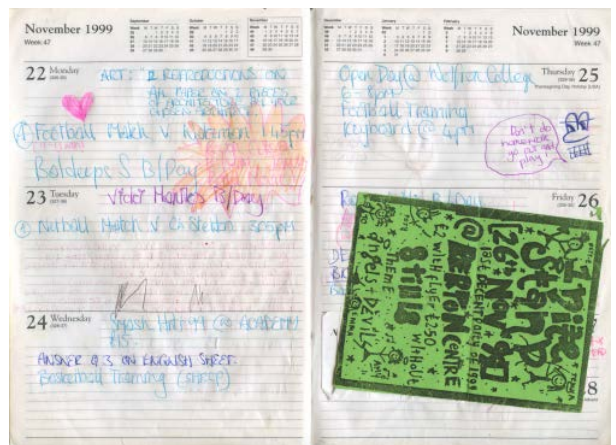
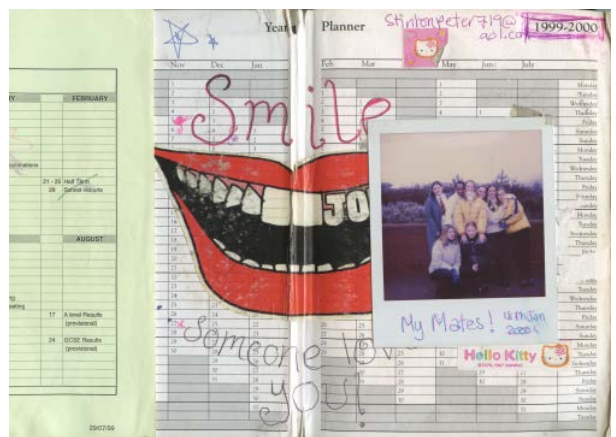
The Waiters at L'Epicure Restaurant.
Centre chef proprietor Nigel Tarr.



The End of another Bashille Day
1994



Billy Jay dressed for Bashille Day
outside the French House early 90s.



These are pages from my diary of 1999, when I was in my final year of school. The outfit in the photos is an example of a 16-year-old me mixing sportswear and formalwear. I'm still wearing black men's overcoats with Nike caps! This was a typical school outfit. I always wanted to dress smart. While the other kids were wearing football manager coats, I wore a formal coat from Next bought with my own pocket money. I also had a handbag instead of a backpack. I always had good trainers though.

Images and text: Sharmadean Reid, owner and founder of WAH Nails



1989 Gaston's leaving Day
Dan Farson opposite the pub
outside Nostalgia records.



Gordon Kaye playing 'Rene' at the
French House
The then lady mayors
is to the far right



Must be Bashille Day - I am wearing
a crown. (I don't usually)

Images and text Lesley Lewis

CLAIRE DE ROUEN

#UK
#90S
#SCHOOL
#TEEN
#SPORTSWEAR
#FORMALWEAR
#MIX
#SWAG
#MENS
#NIKE
#CAPS
#SMART
#NEXT
#POCKETMONEY
#HANDBAG

THE ORIGNAL FUNKY DRED



This picture is from back in the day when I was about 18-19 and getting my swagger together. Check out the head band. Behind that is the start of the funky dread hairstyle!

Image and text: Jazzie B, DJ, music producer, entrepreneur and a founding member of Soul II Soul

#WHATWEWORE
#ONTHESTREET
#BACKINTHEDAY
#TEEN
#SWAG
#SWAGGER
#HEADBAND
#FUNKY
#DREAD
#JAZZIEB
#80S



CAMP LIFE



Claire was born in Alexandria in Egypt, her family were Italian, she's an Italian expat from Egypt, so she grew up learning French, which is why she spoke with a French accent. But when she moved to London she fell in love with an American man who's surname was De Rouen, but he was fully American and he had previously had a different surname that was something like De Rainer, and he didn't like it so he changed it to De Rouen because he thought it sounded chic. So she ended up with a French surname and a French accent and she spoke French, it's typical of her.



This has to be one of my favourite photos. Taken after a hard days work at Tea time but without the chocolate Imperial biscuits!!!



Relaxing during a Ski holiday to Val Disere, I still have that scarf - somewhere, it was a 2 week holiday and stayed at the Hotel Khandahar with a lawyer from Australia who I later went to stay with in 1998 in Brisbane Queensland where I explored with him the Sunshine coast.



Ancient but thoroughly reliable Toyota jeep with me behind the wheel at one of our stations.

she set up the CDR shop in 2003. she went to art school as well and then she started working at the ICA in the bookshop and then after a while she was really good at that and she moved to The Photographers Gallery doing just the postcards there and she was so good at it that she ended up doing the books.

This is from an exhibition in the Exit Gallery, but yeah its just full of sexy ladies, pretty much naked sexy ladies. But she was very dark, she had a very darkly sexy mind I think.



ON MY WAY TO RAW



I took this picture in '92, '93 when I was in college at Thames Valley uni. It's Mark Anthony, Isaac/Alistair, Sodeye, Tom and someone's older brother. We used to go to bars on the Kings Rd and then head to crazy Larry's near Chelsea, Subterranea, The Wag and Slow Motion at Mazimus. The boys didn't always get into the clubs, and never in a group, so we girls used to pair up



Although I passed out or graduated in 1978 - I returned there to complete my returning officers course - polo necks were the in thing then.



LEATHER QUEEN



I remember the night this photo was taken vividly as it was the opening of Stephen Jones, who was my roommate, very first shop which was in the basement of PX. Stephen insisted that I wear a hat expecting me to turn up sporting one of his fabulous creations. I instead arrived wearing my splendid 'Leather Queen' cap which I had bought that day from a shop in Soho. Stephen was furious as he wanted me to wear a grey taffeta beret that he had made me. Anyway few months later he took my leather cap unpicked it and remade it into something fabulous that he sold to Steve Strange!

Words by Fiona Dealey and image taken by Graham Smith - <http://www.grahamsmithdesign.co.uk>

6/1/2017

never in a group, so we girls used to pair up (whether we were pairs or not) to get everyone in. We wore old Levis, leather flight jackets and secretly listened to the Smiths and New Model Army, but it was more fun to dance to soul and funk.



This may have been in the toilets of Subterranea, exact memories may have been compromised. We also went to canal Brasserie on Kensal Rd, Woody's in Wood Field Rd and the Cobden.



In a club somewhere in Harlesden in the 90's.



On my way to Box at YMC, I had arrived in London

WHAT WE WORE

#WHATWEWORE
#WHATSOHOWORE
#STEPHENJONES
#PX

FIVE FRIENDS IN SILVER PLACE



Five friends in Silver Place, Soho in January 1981, stopping to have a quick pose in mainly 1960's revival gear, Sta- press trousers and bandmans jackets, while on a Soho shopping trip. After thirty five years you would expect change. Silver place encapsulates the changing face of Soho, then its was grubby with its cobblers and sandwich shops, now its all bunting and flower baskets with hair and beauty salons.

CHARMING MAN



My 23rd birthday, in Ghetto, Falconberg Court 1998. A club so sweaty, it dripped down the walls and off the ceiling. First birthday spent with my partner, who I'm still with now.

Images and text courtesy Nick Paget

#WHATSOHOWORE
#SOHO
#LONDON
#GHETTO
#FALCONBERG
#1998
#CLUB
#PAINT
#BIRTHDAY

#WALLS

On my way to Raw at YMCA, I had arrived in London from Germany in the early 90's to study Design and Media Management and found the London club scene invigorating and intoxicating, free uninhibited and unhinged, full of interesting people and love! Best years of my life!



Myself and Patrick, the mid 90's were the best! Big hat from High St Ken market, hot pant catsuits from Hyper Hyper, platform boots from Buffalo and Woolford tights that did not run when someone's cigarette burnt a hole in it. We went to Raw at the YMCA Tottenham Court Road, Ben and Andy and Seb Fontaine were DJing. We also went to Jceni in Mayfair and in the second half of the 90's to Bar Rumba on a Monday Turmoil's, Bagley's and many other places I cannot remember. Babes in Toyland was my favourite, though I remember that sinking feeling when it got to 3am and the night was going to end...

Text and Images Gunilla Karlson

#WHATSOHOWORE
#WHATWEWORE
#1990S
#KINGSROAD
#CRAZYLARRYS
#MID90S
#HIGHSTKENNSINGTON
#MARKET
#SUBERRANIA
#BARRUMBA



#23RD
#COUPLE
#LOVE
#TOGETHER
#CHARMING
#MUSIC
#NIGHTOUT
#SWEATY



017 WHA



Below that is a quiet drink with my old mate Andy Beattie (who emigrated to Australia and rumour has it he may be back in UK) dress of the day was corduroy trousers brogue shoes and double cuff shirts - at the house that I used to live in at Port Lympne Estate in 1982.

Images and text courteously of James Frankland

#WHATWEWORE
#LILLYWHITES
#NIKE
#ARMY
#SOLDIER
#CAMMO
#BROGUES
#DOUBLE CUFF
#CORDUROY

