



The Relationship between World History of Dress and Fashion Design

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ABSTRACT

This research will cover the most important design elements from the Worldwide History of Dress. This study is going to look into the most notable geographical regions, historical periods and styles of costumes worldwide – From Ancient Egyptian linen shifts and Roman togas, through Mongolian shamanic robes, Japanese kimonos and Indian saris, to African ceremonial attire and Middle Eastern burqas. The traditional motifs and designs in which Fashion Designers use as a base for their collections will be investigated in details, as they are used as design concepts by Fashion Leaders in the world, who inspire from the traditional clothing and the way people dress in each culture. This study of the History of Dress, and how designers should understand cultural values, and design elements before they utilize them in their Fashion Collections, will underline the importance of the cultural beliefs, ways of dress, and methodologies, as well as focusing the spot light on the new innovative designs that are inspired from traditional clothing, and how designers can create contemporary looks based on traditional concepts of Design.

Keywords : Design motifs, silhouette, texture, surface design, design details, garment construction, Dress, art History, Inspiration, Modern design, symbolism

Introduction:

A dress (also known as a frock or a gown) is a garment consisting of a skirt with an attached bodice (or a matching bodice giving the effect of a one-piece garment). In Western culture: Dresses are usually considered to be items of women's and girls' apparel. The hemline of dresses can be as high as the upper thigh or as low as the ground, depending on the styles of fashion and the modesty or personal taste of the wearer. In Europe and America, dresses are worn by females of all ages as an alternative to a separate skirt and blouse or trousers. However, dresses can be cooler and less confining than many trouser styles, and are therefore commonly worn in warmer weather. In most varieties of formal dress codes in western cultures, a dress of an appropriate style is mandatory for women. They are also very popular for special occasions such as proms or weddings. For such occasions they remain to be the standard attire for most women. In modern society, dresses can be worn for a number of sports activities such as: figure- skating, and Tennis. Every culture had its way of dress for both men and women, in which many factors were involved. Some of these factors are the cultural beliefs, geographic location, weather, and natural resources. These factors played an important role of defining the way people dressed in each particular culture. The embroidered design elements on the material of the clothing often sends a message that the wearer is from a certain tribe, or belongs to a certain ethnic group, and these design motifs represent the fundamental belief of certain parts of the world. For example: The Chinese dragon represents power (Fig 1), and were often worn by the emperors, and Kings, while the scarabs in ancient Egyptian dress symbolized renewal and resurrection. This in depth study of the History of Costume dress will focus on the major elements of dress for each culture, and will underline the relation between traditional dress and modern Fashion that is influenced from the traditional clothing, and focus on the symbolism, and representations of the design elements from each culture.

The background of the problem (Controversy):

It is critical that Fashion Leaders and fashion Designers understand the historical background of dress and global sources of inspiration and design motifs that represent their apparel collection. Unfortunately, some fashion leaders, for the sake of creating impressive and innovative new looks, employ elements pulled from not thoroughly investigated sources. They not only handle the subject matter with lack of sensitivity, but also diminish the integrity of the people of that particular culture or religion. For example: Today's Fashion Leader, Karl Lagerfeld (born Karl Otto Lagerfeldt, on 10 September 1933) who is a German fashion designer, artist and photographer based in Paris, has collaborated on a variety of fashion and art related projects, most notably as head designer and creative Art director for the fashion house Chanel today. He has his own fashion label, as well as overseeing the designs for many other fashion houses such as Fendi. Karl Lagerfeld has caused many controversies in the world during his lifetime as the fashion leader of the world. In this particular case there was much controversy from Lagerfeld's misusing verses from the holly Qur'an in his spring 1994 couture collection for Chanel. The Arabic calligraphy of the Quran verses was embroidered in gold metallic thread on black formal revealing torso-hugging bustier dresses. This misuse of the holly verses of the Quran has triggered the anger of the Muslim world after his 1994 couture show in Paris. Despite apologies from the designer and the fashion house, some Muslim leaders didn't take this act lightly, and forced Chanel house to take further action. The Indonesian Muslim Scholars Council in Jakarta called for a boycott of Chanel and threatened to file formal protests with the government of Mr. Lagerfeld's homeland, Germany. The designer apologized, explaining that he had taken the design from a book about the Taj Mahal, thinking the words came from a love poem. To remedy the problem, Chanel house destroyed the dresses with the offending calligraphy along with the negatives of the photos taken of the show and garments. It also appealed to press photographers, and television crews to do likewise. This controversial issue could have been avoided if the diligence of Quran vers-

es had been studied thoroughly, researched, and have been respected, and the subject matter would have been handled more appropriately with respect to the Muslim people and their beliefs and culture.

Outcome of the Problem:

Fashion designers usually gather visual aspects of a particular culture in which they build up into a source of inspiration to develop, an innovative fashion collections every season. Forms of art, such as sculptures, paintings often serve as foundation of perception about a particular culture. In recent history, paintings have utilized as an inspirational form for fashion evolutions. For example: The winter collection of Dolce and Gabbana, 2013 is inspired from the Byzantine Empire dress (Fig 2). Chanel also created a head-gear inspired from the famous Byzantine mosaic of Theodora & Justinian. The Chinese dragons were a source of inspiration for a wedding dress in the collection created by the Chinese fashion house Xuming Haute Couture collection during the bi-annual China Fashion Week in Beijing on November 1, 2012 (Fig 1). This study will increase the awareness of the importance of studying the cultural elements of dress, and design motifs, to be able for the designer to appreciate the meanings and symbolic representations behind them, and also to be able for Fashion leaders to create innovative looks based on cultural studies, that are used wisely with respecting the beliefs, and various religions.

Reasons why Designers Study History of Dress:

Designer's study, and research cultures throughout history and focus on the elements of designs worn by the people from a particular culture. As they base their collections on these elements. The types of dress in each culture, as well as design elements are usually analyzed with the focus on symbolism and representations. Fashion leaders refer to history of dress as a guide to understand the representations and meanings behind design elements. Body adornment plays a vital role in the history of dress as they are considered part of the way people dress. Designers interpret the design elements from the original culture, into a modern interpretation, and create

successful collections, that are inspired from particular cultures and are presented in a modern fashion. Designers may cause controversies if they misuse the sacred elements of design from various cultures, so it is crucial that designers understand the source of inspiration and study it thoroughly. The study of history of dress is based on historical understanding of cultures, peoples beliefs, textiles, geographic location, natural resources, and many aspects of the civilizations. Designers usually take a short cut and look at visuals that they find pleasing to the eye and use them without taking the time to study the sources. There are no resources available that tell the designer that these are design elements that can be used or avoided. Designers have to dig in the past and study these motifs. World history has been studied by few scholars, and with the intention to focus on the cultures, facts of geographical locations, resources, shapes, and items, such as pieces of dress, jewelry, and shoes worn during the particular period in history. The meanings and symbolic interpretations have been studied but not for the sake of basing modern designs on these themes, rather they were investigated from a psychological point of view. The history of dress has been studied to give facts, and statistics, rather to analyze design elements for designers to be inspired from. There are limited design elements that were studied and the meanings behind them were interpreted, which make this research for more design elements a challenge to analyze since in most cases these dresses were burnt in wars, deteriorated in ancient textiles, or just simply disappeared and were not preserved. However, Photographs, and museum pieces can be a guide for any designer who wishes to study the sources in depth

Main Sources of Inspirations for Designers Collections:

Designers usually base their collections on a design concept. There are many sources to get inspired from. For example: A

collection can be inspired from a type of embroidery, such as the Indian Shisha embroidery, or Palestinian needle work. Art movements such as modern art, or Primitivism in Art, can be a source of inspiration for a fashion designer. A good example is the collection by Yves Saint Laurent creating dresses based on Matisse Art, and Piet Mondrian color blocking paintings (Fig 3). "Saint Laurent worked like an artist," said Christoph Heinrich, Denver Art Museum director. "He was very curious about other cultures, about art, about going back in time; everything that defines the global world." The show named "Yves Saint Laurent: The Retrospective", which opened March 25, 2012 covered four decades of the late French couturier's life and included 200 haute couture outfits, films and photos, presented in three galleries in the museum's Hamilton wing. The show was first presented in Paris in 2009; the retrospective was created by the Foundation Pierre Berge-Yves Saint Laurent and then traveled to Madrid. Saint Laurent, an avid collector, paid homage to such artists as Vincent Van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian and Georges Braque. He was a contemporary of Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann and clearly loved modern as well as traditional art. The designer's color sense set him apart. "He was the Matisse of the couturiers," Heinrich said. "He had the color sensitivity and the elegance. Even if he was pushing the envelope, it had a wonderful harmonic balance. Also, like a painter, he was looking for the friction between two colors. He put colors together so a tension built up that added energy. There's a wonderful section of the exhibit where all of these swatches are pinned." Designers can also get inspired by a certain look or a silhouette, such as the flapper look in the twenties, or the Dior look in the fifties. The first supermodel, Lisa Fonssagrives was considered an iconic image which has graced fashion publications and advertisements spanning the 30s, 40s, and into the 50s. Her elegant posture, poise, and constructed beauty were the inspiration for the Dior Couture Collection presentation at the Rodin Museum during July, 2008 show. The show opened with a gloriously flared, white wool coat cinched with a huge black patent leather belt. Designer John Galliano then toughened up the mood with some platforms in suede with tapered metal heels. The show consisted of black crocodile coats paired with sheer skirts, elegant tulle embroidered dresses and a few razor sharp suits in silk chatriuse. The Dior look from the fifties, still look so fresh as if it is today's fashion. Ethnicity is a very important way for designers to base their collection on. Yves Saint Laurent has also mastered the Ethnic look in the seventies. 20th Century fashion had an on-again, off-again love affair with ethnic looks from around the world. From the Oriental craze of the early years of the century to the re-emergence of Bohemian looks at the end of it, the ethnic influences of the 20th Century add lots of spice to our fashion history. Women had been flirting with Orientalism in the form of fabrics for several centuries. Shawls of Eastern design were in high favor for many years, along with paisley and other Oriental prints. But in the designs of Paul Poiret, Oriental motifs came to the forefront of fashion. Another designer who is known for his exotic designs is Mariano Fortuny. In 1907, Fortuny made the first of his Delphos dresses, a design inspired by the costume of Ancient Greece. Fortuny continued making various forms of this dress into the 1920s and beyond. He also printed textiles, using Japanese and Islamic inspired motifs, and often borrowing design ideas directly from antique Oriental textiles. Designers also use nature as their source of inspiration. Many successful designs were based on natural elements, and ocean creatures. These designs inspired by nature are very dramatic, as they are coming from the environment that surrounds us, and from objects, or birds, fish, and animals, that we never pay attention to as a rich source of inspiration to Fashion. Art history and the history of dress, is a very rich source of inspiration, as designers go back in time and study these historical elements of designs, silhouettes, texture, color, and design details. A very successful collection that was recently designed by Dolce and Gabbana, which was Byzantine mosaic inspired, has made headline news during Fall 2013 Fashion week Milan. Wikipedia states that the island of Sicily measures 9,927 square miles. Not that big, real-

ly, but for more than three decades, Domenico Dolce (it's where he comes from) and Stefano Gabbana have harvested an incredible amount of inspiration from it. And never more so than for this collection of fall 2013, as they looked to the exquisite Venetian and Byzantine mosaics of the twelfth-century cathedral in the city of Montréal, a place of worship consecrated to Santa Maria Nuova. They drew on the workmanship and allure of these painstakingly produced mosaics and used them for their stunning vision of elaborately gilded, and embroidered glamour dresses that gently traced the lines of the body to a few inches above the ankle, or which were cut loose and short, and bejeweled tees worn with even more bejeweled tiny skirts. That, though, was only the beginning, as the designers took us on a journey that went northward to Rome to the era of Fellini and Cinecittà, portraying the look of the *bella figura* double-peplum jackets and hourglass dresses, cut from Salt-and-Pepper herringbone tweed, golden cage heels entwined with little floral buds. Recycled Material, is also a very innovative way to create Fashion as many designers create High Fashion using recycled material. 18 dresses were made from newspapers, laundry bags, old trench coats and more by the designer Gary Harvey that were showcased at the Green Shows during New York Fashion Week. Gloria Dawson reports in TheDailyGreen, for the second season of the GreenShows: Models strutted down the runway showing off the best in sustainable, recycled and really awesome attire. The events were held at a new yet-to-be inhabited eco-friendly apartment building in New York City's East Village. The GreenShows opened with a unique showcase of Gary Harvey's recycled couture. Newspapers and laundry bags rustled down the runway, along with old sweatshirts and baseball jackets repurposed into gowns on July 28, 2013. The collection was designed to challenge people's perception of secondhand clothing. Gary, who was previously creative director of Levi Strauss and Dockers Europe, believes, "Too many garments end up in landfill sites. They are deemed aesthetically redundant and get discarded at the end of the season when there are often years of wear left." So, we say, long live the trench coat! Long live the baseball jacket! Long live whatever else Harvey uses to create his collections! Certain civilizations, such as the Greek, Chinese, Japanese, and Egyptian, are considered rich sources of inspiration for fashion designers. The Haute Couture Lebanese Fashion Designer Walid Attallah has inspired from the Egyptian civilization and he based an entire collection on the Egyptian Art, and symbolism. As all his collection was dedicated to Egypt, and was shown in Muscat, Oman, Mr. Walid presented his collection in May 2011, as he was inspired from the pharos and queen's styles, and his models were dressed like Cleopatra and Nefertiti. The show includes 30 evening dresses with charming colors and one wedding dress with a hand-made crown, which was created to resemble the Queens of Ancient Egypt's crowns. Certain forms of Art from native groups in certain parts in the world were also utilized as sources of inspirations by many fashion designers. The Aboriginal Art of Australia and the Aztec art are few examples. In 2012, Sydney, Australia's first indigenous fashion week opened its door for business. Called Australian Indigenous Fashion Week (AIFW), the organization will be a platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designers to showcase high quality traditional and contemporary fashion arts, textiles, accessories and furniture. The first year will include about 30 artists and designers, with shows set to kick off a year from now, in September 2013. One of the main aims of AIFW is to improve the economic status of Aboriginal people by brokering relationships with local and international buyers. Beyond that, it is also a chance to celebrate indigenous designers and increase their profile. There have been a few recent examples of Aboriginal artists working with contemporary Australian brands. The label Antipodium collaborated with indigenous artists Barbara Merritt, Manapa Butler, Ruby McIntosh and Roy Merritt on a collection a few seasons ago, and recently the swimwear label Kooney worked with Aboriginal artist Anne Hanning Kwarreye on exclusive prints. The trend report for examiner.com website in 2012, reports many fashion items inspired from the Aztec prints. Fashion Designers went as far as the

Middle Eastern Burqa (Burka) and used it as an inspiration for high fashion collections & accessories. The veil which was a controversial issue and always is has become an item of glory for fashion Designers. An article titled "A 'Topless Burka-Clad Model' and Radical Islamic Fashion, published on September 21, 2013 states that: "The art of apparel is made all the more important in Islamic countries by the absence of any human image," wrote Titus Burkhardt (1908-1984), a scholar of, and convert to, Islam. "It is," he said, "the art of clothing that in a way conveys the Muslim's ideal image of himself as a Muslim." Perhaps this partly explains the negative reaction to American fashion label Diesel's latest ad campaign – Diesel Rebooted – that features a woman in a makeshift denim-niqab (a face veil that leaves the eyes visible). Using "real people" as models, in conjunction with the slogan, "I Am Not What I Appear to be," the campaign was the brainchild of Nicola Formichetti, the former stylist to Lady Gaga who joined Diesel, as their artistic director, in April. The campaign uses, among others, a "plus size" and an androgynous model. No big shockers there. The ad that has provoked a stir shows a heavily tattooed female model wearing a makeshift denim niqab, or full Muslim face veil (Fig 4). In 1996, Hussein Chalayan, a young Turkish-British designer – darling of British fashion – launched his "Burka" show. Down the catwalk went a parade of young women, the first of which emerged completely naked except for the golden mask often worn with the black, body-covering abaya (a "cloak" or body covering, sometimes worn beneath the niqab). The next model wore a niqab along with an abaya cut off just above the waist, exposing the model's sex. Then another model appeared, with the abaya cut off just below the waist. The procession continued with the models increasingly covered, until they were completely hidden beneath the garment. Chalayan had meant to make a statement about nature (symbolized by the nudity) and nurture (symbolized by the chador).

Conclusion:

Fashion designers keep looking for innovative sources of inspiration to create High Fashion. They search the world history of dress, study, and investigate in details the most important elements of design in each civilization. They utilize the most important and apparent motifs that were key in representing the methodologies, religious, and beliefs of these cultures. These design elements whether they were embroidered, or painted on textile, tell a story about each particular culture. Designers and fashion leaders in the world need to understand the sources of inspirations that they use in their collections of apparels, and they need to be sensitive to the sources, as they pull these elements from a cultural context, that if it is not studied thoroughly, it may lead to major controversies such as the example of Carl Lagerfeld, who used verses from the Quran on bustier dresses, not knowing the sacred meaning behind these calligraphic motifs, and the ad by Diesel Company using a tattooed woman wearing Burka out of Denim. This study showed that fashion designers, use the world history of dress, Art, ethnic looks, cultural beliefs, body adornments, and even items used as a cover-up as in the Muslim niqab, as sources of inspirations, and base their high fashion collections during fashion weeks on these sources. This study proves that fashion designers always look into the past, and try to find something different to create a new look. Fashion designers study ancient civilizations, various cultures, and focus on certain methodologies, such as the Greek, Chinese, Japanese, and Egyptian. Symbols from various cultures are emphasized in fashion shows, such as the Chinese dragon which symbolizes power, tribal prints, and African motifs, aboriginal dotted art, and Aztec patterns, are also utilized as base of textile print. The byzantine mosaic was a major theme for Dolce and Gabbana Fall collection 2013. Recycled material, such as newspaper, and made headline news in Fashion weeks, as designers used them to create awareness for saving the environment. We will continue to witness many fashion shows and amazing creations from fashion designers and fashion leaders around the world, as they surprise us with the modern fashion that is inspired from the past. Modern fashion based on the art of the mas-

ters. Civilizations, which practice unconventional art, or ways of life, is considered high art, and controversies will still arise, as designers, either make mistakes along the way, by misusing the sources of inspirations, or they deliberately become outrageous, and draw attention during their campaigns, to stand out among the rest, and to be different.



(Fig 1) Chinese Dragon



(Fig 2) Dolce & Gabbana Collection Fall 2013



(Fig 3) Yves Saint Laurent dress inspired from Modern Artist Mondrian



(Fig 4) Diesel Burka ad

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