

## ART INFLUENCE ON SLOVENIAN FASHION

Category: scholarly paper

**Abstract:** Art in Slovenia is associated with fashion through four different synergies: art as a source of inspiration for the development of fashion collections, artists being actively involved in the development of fashion collections, fashion designers acting simultaneously as costume designers, and fashion as an art object. The research paper examines the examples of inclusion of painters in the Slovenian fashion industry (in the 1970s, Janez Bernik, Andrej Jemec and Jože Horvat-Jaki for the textile and clothing factories *Prebold* and *Gorenjska oblačila*, and in 1987, Klaudij Tutta for *Ideal* in Nova Gorica). After the dominance of the clothing industry in the establishment of the Slovenian fashion identity in the early 1980s, an alternative subcultural artistic expression emerged from the understanding of fashion and fashionable. In the early 1980s, fashion emerged as an art object and the authors, like Ema Kugler, Alan Hranitelj, the *Linije Sile* group (Mojca Pungerčar, Lidija Bernik and other) and Ksenija Baraga, started experimenting. They created clothing forms that transcended the boundaries between fashion and art, fashion and dress, dress and body representation. Their work cannot be directly related to fashion if we define fashion as a generally accepted style of clothing at a particular time. However, if we define fashion as a cultural phenomenon of the embodiment of identity, then the influence of these authors is undoubtedly recognisable. In the early 1990s, their influence transformed into the design expression of fashion designers who formed their own fashion brands and influenced the establishment of a Slovenian fashion identity.

**Key words:** Slovenian fashion, art object, costume design, fashion exhibition, art.

### Introduction

“A work of art is a concrete work of a certain art form, which is recognised by its exceptional quality status in professional and social evaluation due to its originality, uniqueness, masterful execution of its form and archetypal and cathartic content.” (Muhovič, 2015)

Historically speaking, fashion has always been rejected from the standpoint of acceptance as superficial, ephemeral, useful, and material, unlike art, which has been considered an important form of eternal beauty and spiritual nature. Clothing is often not considered as an artistic discipline, claiming that it has not lived up to the artistic expression. Fashion, due to its constant variability, deprives of the quality of truthfulness and ideal beauty (Steel, 2012). Art and fashion are part of a visual culture that can be observed from an anthropological, sociological as well as philosophical point of view (Celant, 1996).

Fashion critics do not deprive fashion of its creative potential and aesthetic value, but fashion is generally accepted as an activity that sells consumer goods. Despite the existence of a developed art market, we accept art as an activity that goes beyond the status of a commodity itself, whereas fashion is an industry worn on the body (Steel, 2012). We certainly can't claim that every collection is a work of art, but to some fashion designers and their work we can certainly ascribe this attribute. Changeable fashion styles can be an obstacle to understanding fashion as a work of art. However, artistic movements are changeable as well. As Ingrid Sischy and Germano Celant wrote in the editorial of the February issue of *Artforum* (1982: 34-35), fashion is a kind of new form of “artistic creation on the border between art and commerce that retains its own autonomy in entering the field of pop culture.” In an interview Darryl Turner (1996) with Richard Martin (editor of *Art Magazine*, director of the FIT – Fashion Institute of Technology galleries and curator of the Costume Institute – Metropolitan Museum of Art), the latter said that fashion is “the most appropriate form of art and issues related on body and sex”.

In 1996, the first Biennale in Florence was called *Looking at Fashion* and was dedicated exclusively to fashion as a multi-layered and multi-purpose medium, as the artistic directors of the biennial – Germano Celant, Luigi Settembrini and Ingrid Sischy – wrote in a catalogue introduction. They drew attention to the fact that fashion has a big impact on our culture, but it is not recognised as part of a 'real' culture. The purpose of the biennial was not to equate fashion and art, but to show the diverse relationships between them – collaboration, contradictions, inspiration, differences, and cross-ups (Celant, Settembrini, Sischy, 1996).



1. Текстилна фирма *Преболд*, узорци Јанеза Берника (лево), Андреја Јемеца (десно), модни дизајн *Горењска облачила* Крањ Рикарда Гумзеја, 1971.  
1. Textile company *Prebold*, patterns by Janez Bernik (left), Andrej Jemec (right), fashion design *Gorenjska oblačila* Kranj by Rikard Gumzej, 1971.

Fashion (Steel, 2012) is inspiringly related to four general themes: nature, geographical areas (details), history (silhouette of the clothing form) and art. The last is connected with fashion in Slovenia through four mutually different synergies:

- Art is a source of collection inspiration for fashion designers (indirect impact),
- Artists are actively involved in the development of fashion designers' clothing collections (direct collaboration) or they are even designing their own clothing items,
- Clothing and fashion are art objects,
- Fashion designers work at the same time as costume designers.

The need and significance of the connection between art and fashion within the Slovenian clothing industry is also evidenced by the record of Hajrudin Djaković in the catalogue of the first fashion fair in Ljubljana in 1959: "It is also an important issue to attract artists as widely and comprehensively as possible to the textile and clothing industry."

As Valerie Steel (2015) argues, the development of a theoretical and aesthetic framework for understanding fashion is important for the definition of fashion as art and consequently the influence of art on fashion and the

formation of fashion as artistic articulation. At the same time, it is important to create 'high-level interpretations' in fashion, as defined by Sung Bok Kim in the text *Is Fashion Art?*. The first evidence of direct cooperation between artists and the clothing and textile industry in Slovenia appeared in the late 1960s, when three Slovenian painters – Janez Bernik, Andrej Jemec and Jože Horvat Jaki, collaborated with the *textile company Prebold*. They designed textile patterns which were later used for designing clothes by Rikard Gumzej in 1971 and were produced by *Gorenjska oblačila* from Kranj (Blatnik Blagotinšek, 2014). (fig. 1)

Furthermore, another well-known collaboration was the one between the painter Klavdij Tutta and *Ideal* from Nova Gorica in 1987. Klavdija Tutta's collaboration did not only consist of the application of his paintings' patterns on the material, but it was more his joint creation with the *Ideal's* fashion designer Vida Slokar. As stated in the catalogue of the exhibition *Clothing: Graphics* (Tutta, 1987) "signs or even entire landscapes from pictures" were transferred to the surface of the clothing forms. In 2014 the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies (ZDSLJU) created a project called *Hand-painted Fashion Line* in which seven Slovenian artists (Bojan Bensa, Elena Churnosova, Evgenija Jarc, Jožica Medle, Arjan Pregl, Silvester Plotajs-Sicoe and Huiqin Wang) designed clothes. (fig. 2)



2. Клавдиј Тутта и фирма *Идеал*, Нова Горица, 1987.  
2. Klavdij Tutta and *Ideal*, Nova Gorica, 1987.

## Research

After the dominance of the clothing industry in the establishment of the Slovenian fashion identity in the late 1980s, an alternative subcultural artistic creation emerged from the understanding of fashion and fashionable. Clothing forms were created as an art object, a social or anthropological manifesto, and a theatrical costume. Clothing forms were often gallery exhibits which did not need the body. The medium of clothing forms and textile materials constituted new artistic activities and expressions. As Mojca Pungercar and Lidija Bernik (*Linije Sile* group) wrote in the presentation of their collection *Black and White Geometry* in the magazine *Ars Vivendi* (1987), their clothing images captured the spirit of the time that “led to a new dialogue between fashion and art.” They form a ‘gallery as a visual sensation’ by exhibiting clothing forms. They call it ‘modart’. Fashion emerges as an art object. As Marina Gržinič, referring to works of Hranitelj, Kugler and Bernik, writes in the text of the catalogue of the *Modo Modo* exhibition in Celje in November 1993: “In the 1980s, these artists caused a ‘radical turn’ in fashion with an almost pioneering media and artistic problematisation of fashion (clothing, behaviour, uniformity, and image) as an independent form of creativity.” (fig. 3)

If clothing forms can be referred to as the “creation of art from various materials”, as Jure Mikuž (2006) defined

the work of Alan Hranitelj in the catalogue of his exhibition at the International Centre of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana in 2006, then we can say that, in the 1980s, individuals and groups of authors began to develop artistic expression in the medium of clothing forms and present them in reference galleries. This leap in understanding and evaluating clothing forms as art objects coincides with events globally. In 1982, in the February issue of a monthly magazine specialised for contemporary art *Artforum* (vol. 20, no. 6), they published a garment on the cover for the first time. It was a rattan and polyester garment from the Bodyworks Spring/Summer 1982 collection, designed by Issey Miyake in collaboration with the artist Kosuge Shochikudo. The work was defined as ‘clothing art’.

Among others, the *Linije Sile* group, Ema Kugler, Ksenija Baraga, Mojca Marija Pungercar, Lidija Bernik and Alan Hranitelj were active in Slovenia at the time. They created clothing forms that transcended the boundaries between fashion and art, fashion and clothing, clothing and body representation. Their work cannot be directly related to fashion if we define fashion as a generally accepted and worn clothing style at a certain time, which cannot be claimed in the case of subcultural fashion performances they created. However, if we define fashion as a cultural phenomenon of the embodiment of identity, then the influence of the mentioned authors is undoubtedly recognisable in the establishment of

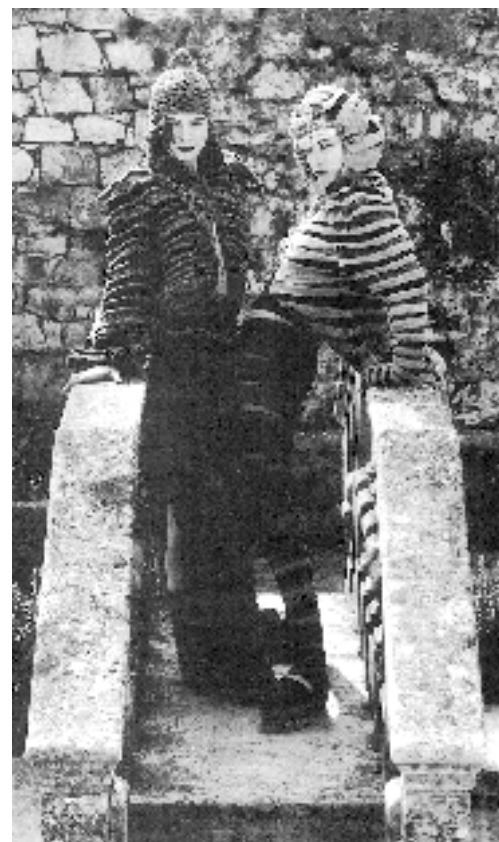


3. Ксенија Барага (лево) Успавана лепотица, 1997; (десно) Црно-бело, 1992.  
3. Ksenija Baraga (left) *Sleeping Beauty*, 1997; (right) *Black and White*, 1992.

the Slovene fashion identity. In this context, the influence of these authors is also seen in the design expression of independent fashion designers in the early 1990s. Some fashion collections were designed in the context of sample clothing, which included numerous experimental research processes in the design of textiles and the experimenting with technological manufacturing processes (e.g. knitwear studio *Draž* and Almira Sadar). But cooperation between the Slovenian clothing industry and subcultural authors of the 1980s has never fully developed. The specifics of the new understanding and research of the meaning of the clothing form developed by these authors were the reason for associating their work with historical stylistic references, e.g. the work of Alan Hranitelj is often associated with the Baroque, and the work of Lidija Bernik with the Gothic.

According to visual parameters, the works of Bernik, Pungerčar Hranitelj, Baraga and Kugler are diverse. Lidija Bernik and Alan Hranitelj use several diverse structures and expressive ornaments. The clothing forms of Ema Kugler and Alan Hranitelj are voluminous, but with Hranitelj, they contain historical references in which he seeks inspiration to imitate the basic form of clothing, while with Ema Kugler, the voluminous clothing forms resemble animal armour or turn the body into moving sculptures. Pungerčar and Kugler are related by the purity of form, while Marija Pungerčar's works of art reflect the context of social and economic frameworks of

fashion, and Ema Kugler initially explores clothing form at a symbolic level. Alan Hranitelj's work turns into costume design, Lidija Bernik is engaged in theatrical performative presentations, Ema Kugler initially also works as a fashion designer, later she works in the field of art film. At the beginning, Ksenija Baraga also participated, together with other, then independent fashion designers (knitwear studio *Draž*, Thaler, Jastrobnik) at two fashion shows organised by the advertising agency *Imelda 8000*. Later, her knitted clothing forms became more of an art object. The influence of Ksenija Baraga's work is evident in the early works of knitwear studio *Draž*. Some elements of Ema Kugler's artistic performances, like the use of leather, performative character of fashion shows and development of clothing forms as social armour can be traced later in the fashion works of *Cliché* (Jelena Pirkmajer) and *Akultura* (Alenka Globočnik). Social and anthropological context of clothing form, highlighted by the *Linije Sile* group, is detected in the fashion brands by Mateja Benedetti (Benedetti Life, Mateja Benedetti and Terra Urbana). In the 1990s, the direct collaboration between artists and fashion designers rarely developed. The exceptions are collections of knitwear studio *Draž* – collaboration with the photographer Eva Petrič on the spring/summer 2013 collection, and Almira Sadar on *Lisičke* project – collaboration with the visual artist Zora Stančič, and on T-shirts collection with the visual artist Petra Varl.



4. Ема Куглер (лево), изложба *Модо Модо*, Ликовни центар Цеље, новембар 1993; (десно) Студио за плетење *Драж*, 1994.  
4. Ema Kugler (left), exhibition *Modo Modo*, Art Centre Celje, November 1993; (right) Knitwear studio *Draž*, 1994.

The works of authors from the 1980s, whose artistic expression includes the medium of fashion design, later directly influenced the group *Rotodin* (Sanja Grcić, Iztok Hrga, Metod Črešnar), which began operating in 1992, and the development of conceptual fashion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Conceptual fashion started with the authors, such as Peter Movrin, Jana Zornik and Nika Ravnik, who researched and shaped the issues of cultural identity. Their work is related to the understanding of fashion as a symbolic, social and cultural phenomenon, with ideas being equivalent to appearance.

### Costume Design vs. Fashion Design

The involvement of fashion designers in theatre projects in the role of costume designers began in the late 1980s, which led to the emergence of the hybrid profession known as a fashion/costume designer – fashion and costume designer in one person, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The boundaries between these two professions are blurred, despite their obvious differences; the costume designer puts the character of the costume wearer – the actor – in the foreground, while in fashion design, the clothing is supposed to be designed so as to blur the wearer's character. For such designers, costume design is a research field for the development of fashion collections and fashion design is the creation of characters in their own fashion story.

Most of the authors were firstly fashion designers and later, on certain occasions, they became costume designers. Thus they move between the two forms of creativity – Tanja Zorn (costumes for the Glej Theatre, Slovenian Permanent Theatre Trieste and Slovenian National Theatre Nova Gorica), Uroš Belantič (costumes for the dance groups Betontanc and En-Knap, and the films of Sašo Podgoršek), knitwear studio *Draž* (costume design for the Slovenian National Theatre Ljubljana, performances by Marko Peljhan, Sašo Steparski and Nina Mavec), Mateja Benedetti (mainly active as a costume designer and later as a fashion designer), Sanja Grcić (for Jasmina Cibic, Plesni Teater Ljubljana) and Jelena Proković (regularly works as a fashion designer and as a costume designer for various theatres). If fashion is a jigsaw of economic capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital and social capital (Fajt, 2017), then all four are equally important in the context of the connection of simultaneous activities in the field of costume design and fashion design in Slovenia. For many creators, this connection reflects the fact that costume design has the potential to provide revenue for the support, development and maintenance of an individual's fashion design. At the same time, successful costume design generates social and symbolic capital.

### Clothing as An Art Object

In the early 1980s, the artists appeared in Slovenia who, together or separately, questioned the established norms of fashion in relation to art: what it is, what it looks like, what its attitude towards the body is, what its representation is and where it comes from (Clark, 2012). Their work does not originate from fashion design, but from alternative subcultural artistic creation in the social circumstances of the time. They had no intention of having an active role in the Slovenian fashion system, least of all in the clothing industry.

Their work was only a reflection of the social and cultural context of the time. Rough references to their work can be found in conceptual and performative visual art in the 1960s and 1970s, in Louise Bourgeois' performance *A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts* (21<sup>st</sup> October, 1978) as part of the *Confrontation Exhibition*, in which she makes fun of fashion and her own long-standing fascination with fashion and costume design (1982: 30).

In the early 1990s, the research artistic approach of the authors, such as the *Linije Sile* group and Ema Kugler, indirectly influenced the development of independent fashion designers, who, changed fashion system from within. They upgraded the heritage of authors – creative individuals – who created clothes as art objects in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Slovenian fashion has later developed in the context of experiment, but with emphasised technical competencies that resulted from the newly established, higher education in the field of fashion design in 1979. Namely, the authors who, in Slovenia, started creating clothing as an art object did not have technical knowledge, as in most cases they were trained painters (Pungerčar, Bernik, Baraga). The idea of clothing as an art object is continued in the knitwear studio *Draž*, but as an artistic expression within fashion design. Their clothing forms are 'painting canvases' and the creation of sculptural forms. (fig. 4)

### Conclusion

In Slovenian fashion, the connection between art and fashion is multifaceted. Through some earlier examples, the research has shown that art significantly influenced the Slovenian fashion identity in the early 1990s. Some of the artistic practices had more significant impact, especially clothing as an art object. The Slovenian fashion developed in the second half of 1990s in the context of sample collections, which included artistic research of textile, form and production. There were some traces of direct collaboration between visual artists and fashion designers. Social and anthropological context became the relevant issue in the works of some younger Slovenian fashion designers and the form of fashion shows transcended the tradition of commercial presentation. The references of art in fashion and today's understanding of its influence on the establishment of the Slovenian fashion identity was discussed by Urška Draž in the interview she gave for the magazine *Ona* in 1994 (June 21, 1994):

“Clothing in itself has not only a practical role, but also a very strong psychological function that can be understood as a message, a provocation or a manipulation. Dressing is the expression, the confession of both the wearer of the suit and the designer. That is why fashion design has probably the most in common with art among all branches of design.”

### REFERENCES

- Fajt, E., 2017: Slovenska moda, sezuta gospa. Center za kreativnost.  
URL:<https://czk.si/gradiva/slovenska-moda-sezuta-gospa/><2. 9. 2019>.
- Muhovič, J., 2015: Leksikon likovne teorije. Celje: Celjska Mohorjeva družba, p. 793.
- Blatnik Blagotinšek, S., 2014. Obleka po meri nekoč in danes. In: Pušnik M., Fajt, E. (ed.). *Moda in kultura oblačjenja*. Maribor: Založba Aristej, pp. 110–126.
- Steel, V., 2012: Fashion. In A. Geczy, V. Karaminas (ed.). *Fashion and Art*. London: Bloomsbury, pp 13-27.
- Clark, H., 2012: Conceptual Fashion. In: A. Geczy, V. Karaminas (ed.). *Fashion and Art*. London: Bloomsbury, pp 67-75.
- Mikuž, J., 2006: Oblačilo kot umetnina. In Hranitelj, A., 2006: *Kostumografija 1986 – 2006*. Ljubljana: Mednarodni grafični likovni center.
- Kim, S. B., 1998: Is Fashion Art?. In *Fashion Theory 2*, no. 1 (March 1998). London: Berg Publishing.
- Turner, D. 1996: Couture de Force: Interview with Richard Martin. In *Artforum*, March 1996.
- Celant, G., Settembrini, L., Sischy, I., 1996: *Biennale di Firenze: Looking at Fashion*. Milano: Scira Editore.
- Dragan, C., 1994: Evropska slovenska moda. Slovenske novice – Ona, 13 (21<sup>st</sup> June, 1994), pp 20-21.
- Gržinič, M., 1993: In Bernik, L., Hranitelj, A., Kugler E. *Modo, modo*. Celje: Zavod za kulturne prireditve Celje.
- Tutta, K., 1987: *Oblačila; Grafike*. Nova Gorica: Modna konfekcija Ideal.
- Pungerčar, M., Bernik, L., 1987. Črno bela geometrija. *Ars Vivendi*, 1 (March 1987), p. 8.
- Sischy, I., Celant, G., 1982. *Artforum*, Vol. 20, No. 6, February 1982, pp. 34-35.

**Резиме**

ТАЊА ДЕВЕТАК

Универзитет Приморска, Факултет за дизајн, Трзин, Словенија

tanja.devetak@fd.si

**УТИЦАЈ УМЕТНОСТИ НА СЛОВЕНАЧКУ МОДУ**

У Словенији је веза између моде и уметности остварена кроз четири различите синергије: уметност као извор инспирације за колекције модних дизајнера, уметнике који активно учествују у развоју модних колекција, одећу и/или моду као уметнички предмет, и модне дизајнере који истовремено раде и као костимографи.

Током друге половине XX века, словеначка одевна индустрија је из малих предузећа прерасла у важан фактор у привреди земље. Паралелно са развојем својих производних капацитета, фирме су развијале и модни дизајн који је имао значајан утицај на словеначку моду. Поред моћног модног дизајна, словеначка одевна индустрија је била свесна важности укључивања разноликих креативних активности у сам процес стварања колекција. Тако је почетком 1970-их, фирма *Преболд* позвала три словеначка сликара – Андреја Јемеца, Јанеза Берника и Јожета Хорвата – да дизајнирају узорке текстила. Рикард Гумзеј је касније од овог

материјала дизајнирао одећу за фирму *Горењска облачила*. Неколико година касније, 1987. године, сликар Клавдиј Тута је сарађивао са фирмом *Идеал* из Нове Горице и њиховом дизајнерком Видом Слокар на развоју јединствене колекције. Промене у друштвеном контексту крајем 1980-их, на које одевна индустрија није реаговала, довеле су до појаве стваралаца који су испитивали уметнички израз у медијуму одеће. Алан Хранитељ, Ема Кутлер, група аутора *Линије силе*, Мојца Пунгерчар, Лидија Берник, Ксенија Барага и други стварали су одевне форме које су превазилазиле строга функционална и производна ограничења у односу одеће, моде и тела. Одевне форме су тако ушле у поље костимографије, перформанса и уметничких предмета. Рад ових аутора с краја 1980-их и почетка 1990-их огледао се у раду независних модних дизајнера, који су се појавили као паралелни актери у словеначком модном простору.

Превод Драгана Рашић