

## THE CLOTHED BODY IN FASHION AND PERFORMANCE

**Abstract:** This paper explores the clothed, communicating body as a site for the meeting of fashion and performance practice. It discusses the relationship between the body and clothing as a potentially shared form of communication in areas of contemporary fashion and performance practice and specifically investigates the symbiotic relationship between the two in conveying narratives and concepts from and on the body.

The methodology draws on an analysis of practice and theory in contemporary fashion and performance design, exposing cross disciplinary approaches and an interchange of ideas that point towards a hybrid practice between the two disciplines. By placing clothing at the centre of this debate it is possible to take into account how the emotional and physical factors as well as the site of the body itself contributes to the making, intention and reading of such work. It is suggested that this area of work could be seen as a type of body located scenographic practice in its own right.

The paper concludes that there are a range of embodied practices where practitioners work with materiality, clothing the body and conceptual approaches that seemingly function in cross disciplinary territory. Attempts to categorise within formal constructs can restrict creative progress and that it is through understanding the body as a site specific context that it is possible to move forward and give meaning to this practice in a contemporary context.

**Keywords:** the body as site, the clothed body, communication, conceptual, cross disciplinary, fashion and performance design, scenography

This paper discusses largely uncharted territory into the relationship between clothing design for fashion and performance and the hybrid area of practice that emerges between the two disciplines. The relationship between the design of clothing for fashion and performance is beginning to emerge as an area of debate in academic circles. There are also an increasing number of contemporary precedents in creative practice that are seemingly exploring the intersection of the two disciplines and that point towards further exploration of this area.

My doctorate research<sup>1</sup> interrogated the relationship between fashion, art and performance from a range of perspectives through theory and practice and concluded, amongst a range of findings, that in contemporary creative practice the intersections of subject disciplines are increasingly complex and that cross disciplinary hybrid practices have emerged that challenge preconceptions of rigid definitions and practices. It also proposed that designers need to establish different methods of working as they increasingly move into new and interdisciplinary sites for communicating ideas. (Fig. 1)

The worlds of fashion and performance have tended to be analysed and understood in the context of their own disciplines as separate and distinctly different in terms of their design process and intention. As performance and fashion practice both increasingly move into new and site-specific contexts and as focus is extended around conceptual and experimental approaches, the divisions between clothing designed as conceptual fashion and clothing designed as costume for performance have arguably become less clear. What is notable in both disciplines is the use of the body as a catalyst and site through which meaning is created and communicated.

### Fashion from Commerce to Concepts

Over the past decade the hierarchy of the fashion industry has shifted from couture and mass production to a multifaceted fashion industry with many more levels and markets. The communicational scope of fashion has also extended in response to new technologies and the growth of the 'image industry'<sup>2</sup> which from the 1980s to present has also shifted the focus of fashion. The garment or collection is no longer the sole focus and far wider ranges of products and ideas are promoted or communicated from this catalyst. Fashion itself is diversifying, serving new purposes and meeting wider audiences.

The space or site of fashion has also diversified and designers' work is now communicated through and within

<sup>1</sup> Bugg, J. *Interface: Concept and Context as Strategies for Innovative Fashion Design and Communication: An Analysis from the Perspective of the Conceptual Fashion Design Practitioner*, Phd Thesis, University of The Arts London, 2006, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Melossi, G., *The Style Engine*, USA, 2000.



1. Jessica Bugg, *Toothpick spine and shoe lace trouser*, movement collection, 2006. Photographer Roy Shakespeare  
 1. Џесика Баг, *Игличаста кичма и панталоне до глежња*, колекција покрета, 2006.

fashion film, animation, the music industry, art photography, fashion illustration and graphics, virtual space, performance and the art gallery. Our understanding of fashion has altered dramatically, as commerce and faster approaches to fashion came into play. High end designers have reacted against this shift dealing with political and global issues to make social comment through their work, taking the subject back to process and craft, communicating ideas and working in interdisciplinary contexts as well as with interdisciplinary methods or collaborating with other disciplines.

### Fashion and Performance

There has been much discussion of the relationship between art and fashion over the past decade, however the relationship between fashion, theatre and performance design has scope for further exploration. There are notable exceptions for example Nancy Troy has written about the relationship between art and couture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, drawing connections with art and fashion cross pollination in contemporary fashion practice. In her book *Couture Cultures*<sup>3</sup> she addresses theatre and the spectacle of fashion in the early twentieth century, specifically in the presentational methods of couturier Paul Poiret, discussing his theatrical approach to clothing design and presentation. Troy also identifies a growing cross over between theatre and fashion in contemporary fashion practice and states that:

“In the modern period the connections between fashion and theatre are multiple, encompassing not simply the design of costumes for the stage, or the dramatic potential of fashion shows, or even the performative aspect of wearing clothes, but also the exploitation of the 'star' system for the commercial purpose of launching new clothing styles”<sup>4</sup>

Fashion Theory, the journal of dress body and culture, devoted a volume solely to the subject of Fashion and Performance<sup>5</sup>. Within this volume Caroline Evans in her article *The Enchanted Spectacle* discusses the development of early mannequin parades in the early 1900s and their progression into the large scale blockbuster spectaculars of recent years referring to “the spectacle, excess and showmanship” of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano in the 1990s<sup>6</sup>.

To understand better the relationship between the disciplines it is necessary to address this from the perspective of the designer and the design process itself to enable a reassessment of the seemingly clear cut divisions between what is fashion and what is theatre, not only on a presentational level but also from an empirical perspective. The term “theatre” has itself been replaced by “performance”

<sup>4</sup> Isto, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Fashion Theory : The Journal of Dress Body and Culture, Vol. 5, Issue 3, Oxford 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Evans, C., *n.d.*, p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> Troy, N.J., *Couture Cultures : A Study of Modern Art and Fashion*, USA 2003.

which encompasses a broader definition, which includes music videos, film, live performance, opera, contemporary dance, street performance, mime, and site-specific work. This platform gives wider scope for understanding the emerging area of contemporary practice that seems to point towards a hybrid practice between fashion and costume design in recent years. Colin Counsell talks about Performance as:

“an essentially constructive medium, and one for which orthodox distinctions between the real and the theatrical, and the functional and conceptual, cannot be maintained. However and wherever they appear, bodies and their actions are shaped by, give form to, figures drawn from cultural memories<sup>7</sup>”

This quote could equally well apply to Fashion performance where in the 'fantasy world' projected on the catwalk or within an editorial format or fashion film blurs the edge between what is real and what is conceptual however it is the viewers understanding of the body and their own memories and experiences that enable them to engage and connect with the ideas and narratives.

There are many connections between the two disciplines both have a temporality, they are of a moment whether that be the performance of fashion on the catwalk, the production or performance on the stage, they both rely on human reaction and a wearer or performer and both have the ability to question, comment and communicate to audiences through a shared understanding of the body. The sense of the here and now is also important, even if a performance or a collection comments on or communicates something of a time gone by it is still created and received by audiences in the present as Rose Lee Goldberg points out in her writing on performance art:

“the medium demands a 'presentness'- the audience's presence in real time, and content that sharply reflects the present<sup>8</sup>”

In recent years performance of the clothed body has emerged as central to catwalk presentation. The mechanics of performance and the stage are employed in hugely expensive productions and catwalk shows have become highly sophisticated, art directed and spectacular. It is clear that in many cases the relationship between fashion and performance has emerged as a means of promotion and marketing of brands, designers and their work. However in the late 1990s and early 2000s further cross fertilisation between the disciplines could be seen not only in the

communication and promotion of couture designers work but within the design process of costume and fashion. This is most clearly illustrated in much of the work of designers such as Alexander McQueen, Jean Paul Gaultier and particularly evident in the work of John Galliano. Caroline Evans highlights Galliano's focus on character and the production values of his shows saying:

“For each show he created a fictional character around whom the narrative edifice was built. Each model in any one show had only one outfit—there were no quick changes here—and was encouraged really to play the part. These shows moved into the realm of pure entertainment. Generally the collection had been sold beforehand and the show became a kind of show case for the designers mind<sup>9</sup>”

Some of the most spectacular shows are those of the late Alexander McQueen which began to move into the realms of cross-disciplinary performance. Some of the most memorable are McQueen's collection based on the meeting of (Wo)man and machine (S/S 99) where he presented his ideas on a wooden stage as opposed to a catwalk and the show culminated in a concept-driven performance where a lone model stood in a pure white dress on a revolving plate, one industrial spray painting machine on each side and as the model rotated she was slowly sprayed in black and yellow graffiti. His A/W winter 99 collection was even more theatrically motivated. He created a staged environment and collection inspired by frozen winter scenes from the film *The Shining*. The stage was set in a huge perspex box, reminiscent of a child's snow scene depicting a winter forest, complete with ravaged trees, howling winds, snowdrifts and as the show went on a blizzard built up. The theme was not only visually conveyed but also physically projected the mood of the collection and responded to the original narrative and characters through design (London Fashion Week, 2001). Evans extends the discussion of fashion and spectacle in her seminal text *Fashion at the Edge*,<sup>10</sup> where she discusses experimental fashion design and the increased use of spectacle within fashion shows specifically in the work of designers such as Galliano, McQueen and Hussein Chalayan. (Fig. 2)

It could be argued that despite the character focused approach to design and the considered and captivating “performances” of these designers' work that there was still a focus on promotion of the designer and their brand. What my research demonstrated was that there was a group of fashion designers in the mid 2000s that were moving beyond this remit, challenging the subject of fashion itself, exploring the

<sup>7</sup> Council, C., Mock, R. ed., *Performance, Embodiment and Cultural Memory*, Cambridge 2009, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Goldberg, R.L., *Performance : Live Art since the 60s*, London 1998, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, Isto, p.301.

<sup>10</sup> Evans, C., *Fashion at the Edge*, USA 2003.





2. Alexander McQueen 'Spring / Summer 1999 Collection, 1998  
 2. Александар Маквин, Пролеће – лето 1999, колекција, 1998

potential of cross disciplinary practice and communicating themes, ideas and messages through their work in a concept focused and performative manner akin to performance art. Work of designers such as Hussein Chalayan, Martin Margiela, Rei Kawakubo and Victor and Rolf seemed to occupy and resonate in this cross disciplinary territory. These approaches focus on the body and related preoccupations that deal with meaning, political, social issues and physical or visual non spoken narrative communication of messages and ideas that are communicated through the performing body. (Fig. 3)

There are a range of more contemporary examples where fashion designers have moved their work into performance as part of their process, particularly with the development of fashion film. Some are more successful than others for example Gareth Pugh's evocative presentation (A/W 2009) filmed by Ruth Hogben that demonstrates a sensitive use of the filmic medium as a means of telling a story about a garment through the embodied experience of the wearer. Whereas other "fashion films" such as Giles S/S 10 seem to parody fashion editorial in a moving medium, the camera panning the model's clothing whilst she holds poses looking unsure and uncomfortable of her performative response.

It is by no means a new phenomenon for fashion designers to work in performance contexts. Historically designers such as Natalia Goncharova, Elsa Schiaparelli and Paul Poiret have designed for the stage. More recently designers such as Zandra Rhodes and Versace have designed for opera. In contemporary dance there are many examples such as Alexander McQueen who designed for Russel Maliphant and Robert Lepage in *Ennogata* (2009), Yoji Yamamoto for Choreographer Pina Bausch, Yamamoto Dance Festival (Wuppertal, Germany, 1998), Jean Paul Gaultier costumes for Regine Chopinot's ballets, one of the most experimental examples being *Le Defile* (Astoria, London, 1985). Issey Miyake's beautifully integrated work with William Forsythe for the Frankfurt Ballet in 1991 and Walter van Beirendonk's costume for *Not Strictly Reubens*, Royal Ballet of Flanders (Sadlers Wells, May, 2003). Contemporary dance is one of the performance contexts where conceptually led clothing design can be effectively employed through fragmented, visual and physical narrative. This may be why fashion designers have chosen to work in this performance context. In these instances again some are more considered and integral to the performance and the performer than others.



3. Hussein Chalayan, *Kinship Journeys*, Autumn / Winter 2003 Collection, 2005  
 3. Хусеин Чалајан, Сродна путовања, колекција Јесен – зима 2003, 2005.

There are specific examples of designers working in contemporary dance where the costume has been central to the development of the performance for example Maria Blaisse's work with Iso Dance company where her foam garments modify the body form and becomes integral to the choreography. The performance would not be as we see it if it was not for the costume and the performers response to it. (Fig. 4, Fig. 5)

Fashion designer Rei Kawakubo's costume for Merce Cunningham's *Scenario* at the Barbican, in London in 1998 took a particularly challenging approach to dance and the body. Kawakubo explored restriction and morphing of the body in dance by developing the ideas of protrusions and padding the body from her S/S 1997 collection. Her costume distorted the aesthetic and again altered the dance. The work reflects some of the most challenging costume design seen in dance and had mixed reviews. Suzy Menkes the fashion critic touches upon the ability of costume to not only enhance the performance but to contribute to the choreography and direction of the total performance saying:

“By the time Merce Cunningham and his modern dance company took a standing ovation at the Paris Opera on Tuesday, those weird goiter-like protuberances had become part of the performance, as the costumes created forceful, sculptured shapes against the surgical white set”<sup>11</sup>

### Fashion and Performance Design

At the same time as new developments were taking place in the presentation of fashion, performance was also redefining its practice and parameters and the term scenography emerged in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century replacing the separate divisions in terminology and practice of costume design, set design or lighting design. There are many definitions of the term as with the understanding of fashion and its many and increasingly diverse practice. However, Arnold Aronson's description in his book *Looking into the Abyss*<sup>12</sup> seems to embrace a perspective on scenography that is more tangible, he understands scenography as:

“something more than scenery or costume or lights. It carries a connotation of an all encompassing visual-spatial construct as well as the process of change and transformation that is an integral part of the physical vocabulary of the stage”<sup>13</sup>

This description may seem to take the focus away from costume itself but looked at in the context of conceptually led design and the body itself as site or stage this gives us a means through which to discuss clothing the body to communicate meaning, concepts and ideas.

The role of the costume designer has changed, as has the remit of the fashion designer and Aronson goes on to raise the issue of hierarchy in the process and development of

<sup>11</sup> Menkes, S., *Ode to the Abstract* : When Designer met Dance, International Herald Tribune, 1998 <http://www.iht.com/articles/198/01/08/dance.t.php> (accessed 12.7.3)

<sup>12</sup> Aronson, A., *Looking into the Abyss* : Essays on Scenography, Michigan, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Isto, p. 7.



4. Walter Van Beirendonck, *Not Strictly Rubens*, costumes, 2003

4. Костими Волтера Ван Бјерендонка, *Ne baš Rubens*, 2003.

performance. Collaboration is central to the production of performance and as such many practitioners are involved in the process, unlike fashion where designers have tended to be seen as the 'guru' and the generator of ideas, the costume designer comes lower down the scale and is answerable to many other parties and has traditionally been in a subservient role to the director who in theatre and performance tends to hold the 'guru' position. Costume has traditionally been designed in response to the script, direction and performance and in response to the actors and their performers. The process appears to be the reverse of fashion where the high end designer is the generator of the concept, narrative or idea and the model wearer is the subservient party.

So how is this so different to the role of the costume designer? A costume designer traditionally works with character and script and seeks to extend the potential performance of the performer or actor, contributing to the mise en scene. Theatre seeks to take an audience visually to a different place, space or time period and often will recreate historically accurate garments sometimes with a contemporary twist for the real time in which the performance is located.

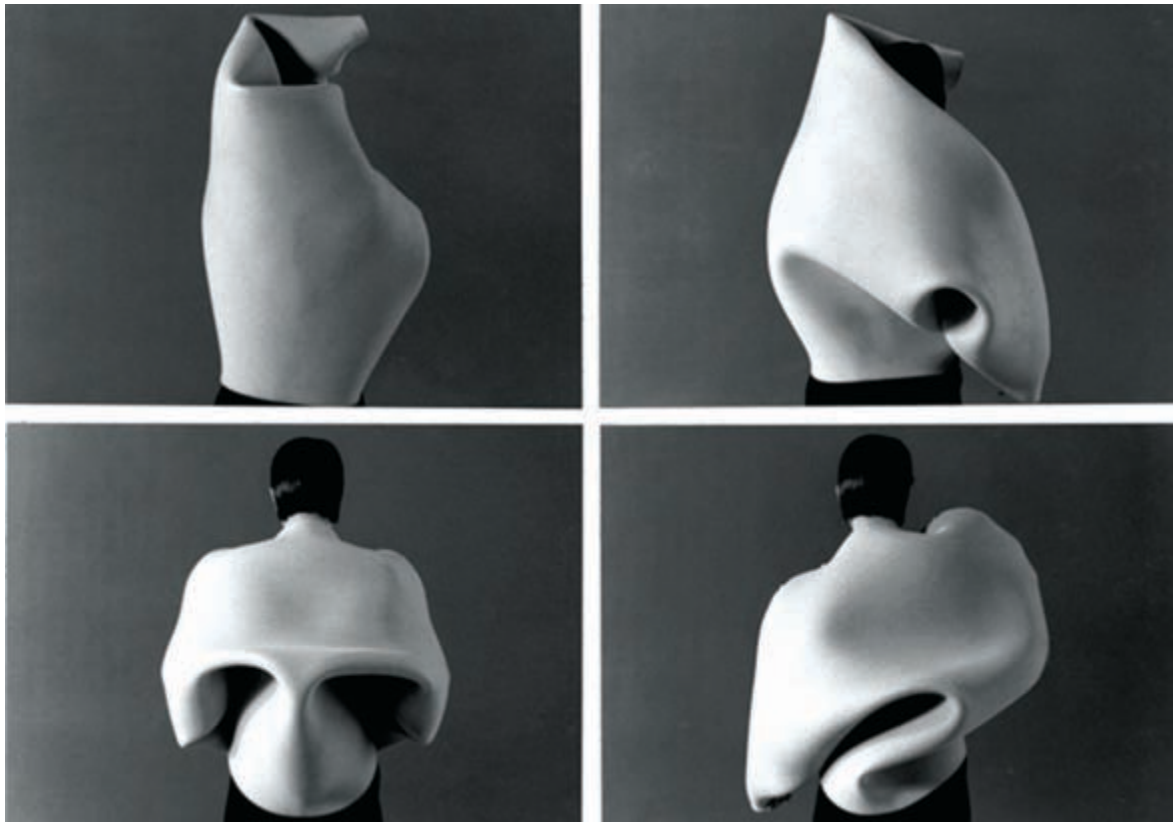
Performance that utilizes the physical body without spoken narrative enables a stronger exploration of the role of costume and it is here that performance has greater potential to extend the role of costume in the communication of ideas and visual narratives. It would seem to me that the grapple with terminology within both practices indicates something of a shift in both cases that has brought the two areas into closer proximity. Design versus scenography, theatre as opposed to performance and terms like visual arts have emerged to try to understand better emerging practice in performance.

There is a tendency within both disciplines for each to view the other with caution as both seem to come from distinctly different perspectives. Shifts in education and creative practice more widely have however brought this issue into sharp perspective as both disciplines work with historical and contemporary issues, images and ideas and there is increasing cross over in the contexts in which they work.

I have discussed terminology at some length in previous work<sup>14</sup> and it is evident that in many cases the terms dress, clothing, costume and fashion can be interchangeable

<sup>14</sup> Bugg, J., *n. d.*, 2006, p. 86.





5. *Maria Blaisse's Body Sculptures with the Iso Dance Company, 1993*

5. *Марија Блесе и њено тело као скулптуре са ISO Dance Company, 1993.*

and mean different things to different people in a range of contexts. The use of the term “clothing” is further complicated by the fact that clothing is not only central to fashion design it is also used in theatre, textiles, dance and some fine art. However, clothing and the body can be seen as the shared element of the working method of practitioners in performance and fashion. It also contributes to the difficulty in defining body and clothing focused disciplines but also suggests a shared platform on which to understand these seemingly disparate practices in relation to one another.

The interdisciplinary approach employed in contemporary creative practice has arguably opened up the potential for a shared dialogue. This goes beyond fashion designers working in performance contexts and indeed beyond performance practitioners and scenographers exploring “fashionable” aesthetics or themes. There has been a shift in approach and students are now graduating from performance and costume design courses with a much broader idea of what the parameters of their discipline are and a stronger understanding of their role in the production of meaning.

This has been identified as a significant influence on the emergence of experimental fashion as discussed by

Evans.<sup>15</sup> The creative industries are also more connected than ever before. In an interview undertaken with conceptual fashion designer Simon Thorogood he discussed graduating in the late 1990 with fellow students Chalayan and McQueen and talked of the change in approach and intention in relation to shifts in the creative industries themselves saying:

“generations were coming out of art school as creatives rather than a sculptor or fine artist or fashion designer – arguably a very 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon of the arts. Art trained and non-art trained practitioners could be seen as taking part and engaging in an increasingly cross-fertilized world.”<sup>16</sup>

The interdisciplinary potential of contemporary creative practice, the collaborative approach and the shift in thinking in relation to the body in both disciplines has effectively brought the two practices closer together. Fast development of technology compound this extending the

<sup>15</sup> Evans, *n. d.*, p. 254.

<sup>16</sup> Bugg, *Isto*, 2006, p.128.

potential of the performance and communication as well as the potential for audience engagement and participation. The accessibility of film and animation production and the immediacy of new technologies for uploading and communicating ideas through moving image, mobile and RDF technologies and cyber space platforms have extended the potential performance and communication spaces for both disciplines.

Use of these technologies has significantly developed the way fashion designers work and how their ideas are communicated and this has arguably made way for more performative approaches within fashion communication, particularly in the area of fashion film and new forms of audience/consumer interaction with products. Performance is also exploring these new technologies and writing on the subject of the potential uses of technology suggests that its impact has not yet been fully explored. In the text *The Potential of Spaces* Christine White suggests that for technology to be effectively integrated into performance there needs to be “provision of technologies within the rehearsal space”<sup>17</sup>. This chimes with current debates in scenographic practice and research around the central role of costume design within performance and the need for costume to be part of the devising, choreographic or direction process as opposed to being applied to performance at the technical rehearsals.<sup>18</sup>

The changing audiences and spaces for performance are also being discussed within performance theory as Aranson points out there are significant shifts within theatre and performance. He talks about a 'revolution' within theatre practice in response to new technologies and platforms for viewing performance and specifically cites the work of Laurie Anderson creating performances for the web and asks the question “Are rock concerts, discos, sporting events and political rallies our theatre?” and continues: “What if new forms of theatre have emerged as a result of new ways of thinking and because we are trapped into habitual patterns of perception, we cannot see it?”

It would seem that both practices are meeting the same challenges and opportunities but that the critical message is that as ideas and processes change we need to understand both practices from this altered perspective as opposed to looking at how it has always been done before. Although there are a range of factors that from my perspective bring fashion and performance together in contemporary practice I propose that it is the focus on the clothed, communicating body that is the site for the meeting of fashion and performance practice.

The relationship between the body and clothing as a form of communication in contemporary fashion and

performance practice and the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the two in conveying visual and emotional narratives and concepts from and on the body enables a fresh perspective on both practices. I would argue that the two areas have a shared language one of 'temporality' but more importantly both performance and conceptual fashion have the ability to communicate to performers/wearers and audiences through a shared understanding of the body informed by lived experience.

### The Body as Site

As performance and fashion practice both increasingly move into new and site-specific contexts and as focus is extended around conceptual and experimental approaches, the divisions between clothing designed as conceptual fashion and clothing designed as costume for performance have arguably become less clear. What is notable in both disciplines is the use of the body as a catalyst and space for creation and communication of meaning.

Costume design as implicit to its process deals with the body as a site for communication of narratives, character and concepts whilst conceptual approaches to fashion design over the past decade have also increasingly employed approaches focusing on concepts over commerciality, addressing issues of identity, character and narratives. Simultaneously fashion theory has increasingly embraced the concept of the body itself as a site for the communication and more specifically the generation of concepts and communication of meaning, theorists have begun to analyse fashion from this perspective; (Warwick & Cavallaro (1998); Entwistle & Wilson (2001) and Fraser and Greco (2005).

Warwick and Cavallaro in their book *Fashioning the Frame* (1998) explore this idea saying that:

“The 'imaginary anatomy' becomes the point of organization of relations, and it provides a means by which the self can be perceived by others, it is now both subject and object: the specula image is the basis of being in the world. The name Lacan gives to this moment, in English translation as well as in French (stade=stadium), indicates not only the relevance of the visual, but its significance for the subject: it is not simply a developmental phase, but a theatrical stage upon which the drama of subjectivity is constantly enacted.”<sup>19</sup>

Writing around embodiment in performance practice and theory offers us a way of understanding the

<sup>17</sup> Oddey, A., White, C., *The Potentials of Spaces: The Theory and Practice of Scenography and Performance*, Bristol 2006, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Aronson, n. d., p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Warwick, A., Cavallaro, D., *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and the Body*, Oxford 1998, p. 24.



relationship between fashion and performance. The texts mentioned begin to deal with the complexity of fashion and dress in relation to the discourse of the body. It is however Joanne Entwistle in her book *The Fashioned Body* who importantly identified that although there was writing on discourses of the body it had not been related to embodiment and she identifies fashion as a “Situated bodily practice” which needs to take into account the lived and experienced elements of wearing fashion and dress and goes on to say: “Dress in everyday life is about experience of living in and acting on the body.”<sup>20</sup>

This approach gives a shared understanding to contemporary embodied and performative approaches in both fashion and costume design. It is on this level and in relation to the practice of “Performance Art” that we begin to understand the significance of the body itself as the site and it is in the context of the performing body that ideas are experienced, communicated and understood. It is the focus on the body both physical and emotional and the experience of clothing as part of a complex performative dynamic that enables communication through and on the body. I argue that it is the concept of “situated bodily practice” that resonates with and in many cases drives the practice of conceptual fashion design, performance art and costume design. The body in effect is the site for the creation of and communication of meaning whether that be a narrative, a concept, an emotion or character.

It is often assumed that the difference between costume designed for performance and for fashion communication/ performance is the lack of narrative or story in fashion communication. I would argue that the examples of fashion performance discussed here all have some form of narrative communication whether we are looking at the catwalk performances of Hussein Chalayan or the narrative and theatrical editorial shoots of photographer Tim Walker.

I suggest two things, one that the type of narrative of message may be significantly influenced by the context in which we view the body or in relation to the length and context of the performance but what is more interesting is that Entwistle's concept suggests that performance does not necessarily require a lengthy or possibly even linear narrative or story, if understood in the context of the body itself, as the designer, wearer and viewer come from a shared understanding of embodiment. I suggest that by placing focus on clothing and the body as opposed to wider special contexts we are able to take into account how the emotional and physical factors as well as the site of the body itself contributes to the making, intention and reading of work in the context of hybrid practice between fashion and performance that seems to speak most directly to performance art.



6. Lucy McRae and Bart Hess, *Wearable artwork*, 2011.

6. Луси Макреј и Барт Хес, *Уметност која се носи*, 2011

### At the Intersection of Clothing and the Body

Since the 1970s the body has been a preoccupation of designers, artists and performers. Clothing as part of a creative “Bodily Practice” has been integral to the works produced. There have been attempts to locate this type of practice within existing understanding of terminology and frameworks of practice within disciplines. Subject remits have been extended, renamed and refocused to contextualise developments in practice predominantly from the perspective of site as place and environment or the components thereof. The body has been integral to this process in many cases but is rarely identified as a site in its own right apart from in the context of performance art. Clothing has tended to be understood as craft and in different disciplines it has adopted different status. New terms have emerged such as wearable art, conceptual clothing, conceptual fashion and devised costume. However the significance of the clothed and communicating body is often misunderstood as it is a practice that can transcend disciplines and has the potential to be further explored in this interdisciplinary landscape but grounded in an understanding that it is situated on the body.

There are precedents from the 1960s onwards in the work of artists and performance artists such as Rebecca Horn, Louise Bourgeois, Leigh Bowery and Yayoi Kasama, that pave the way for the growing community of contemporary

<sup>20</sup> Entwistle, J., *The Fashioned Body*, Cambridge 2000.

practitioners working in this area. These contemporary clothing focused and body sited practitioners come from diverse backgrounds such as fashion, textiles, costume, architecture and fine art. Some have trained or worked in more than one discipline and they all have a preoccupation with clothing the performing body to one degree or another. Practitioners such as Gareth Pugh, Maria Blaisse, Lucy Orta, Nick Cave, Lucy and Bart, Margret Wibmer, Azara Aksamija, Acconci Studio, Aitor Thrope, Helen Storey and Hussein Chalayan lead the way for a tradition of clothing design for the body that does not need to be shoe horned into the safe parameters of a discipline. The work itself finds its own space to communicate derived through the production of the work in the context of the body. (Fig. 6)

In conclusion there are a range of embodied practices that employ clothing as integral to the communication of ideas and practitioners working with materiality, the body and conceptual approaches can be seen to have struggled to locate their practice within the parameters of specific creative disciplines. I argue that this attempt to categorise within formal constructs can be stifling to creative progress and forward movement. Our task as creative practitioners is to challenge and re evaluate the role of our practice and to contribute to a wider creative debate communicating fresh perspectives and new ways of producing, making, seeing and communicating. It is through understanding the body as the site for this exploration and communication that we can start to move forward and give meaning to this practice in a contemporary context.

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ЏЕСИКА БАГ\*

## ТЕЛО И ОДЕВАЊЕ КАО ПРЕДМЕТ МОДЕ И УМЕТНИЧКЕ ПРЕДСТАВЕ

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075

### *Резиме*

У тексту се, са аспекта дизајнера, истражује одевено тело као средство комуникације и место сусрета моде и сценске представе. Разматрајући однос тела и одеће као могуће заједничке форме комуникације у савременој моди и на сцени, посебно се испитује симбиотички однос тела и одеће, којим се наративи и садржаји преносе са тела и ка њему.

Смештајући одећу у жижу теоретске расправе и праксе савременог модног и сценског дизајна, узимам у обзир начин на који емотивни и физички чиниоци, укључујући и само тело као простор, доприносе стварању, намери и читању таквих дела. Уверена сам да се ова област може посматрати као својеврстан сценографски поступак на самом телу.

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