

# Deconstruction in Fashion as a Path Toward New Beauty Standards: The Maison Margiela Case

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## Abstract

As an approach for redefining relations between text and its meaning, the idea of deconstruction appeared in the works of philosopher Jacques Derrida. This philosophical concept received the reflection in the modern architecture: it provokes a denial of stereotypes about the building's forms and functions, a conflict of the architectural elements' dislocation. Some fashion designers use a deconstruction method to destroy fashion standards and fashion stereotypes. Particularly, Belgian designer Martin Margiela questions the traditional understanding of fashion and fashion beauty and rethinks the relations between fashion forms, functions, and ideology constructed by clothing.

This paper provides an analysis of the deconstructionist fashion techniques in the case of Maison Margiela fashion house. By performing the conflicting nature of fashion garments, Margiela constructs the concept of universal, basic clothes but, at the same time, very anonymous, free of labels, tags, and social judgments. This fashion of deconstruction articulates today the next level of relationship between consumers and fashion garments that is not only about standardized functions but expanded values and interpretations.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction; Deconstructivist Fashion; Beauty Standard; Maison Margiela; Fashion Standard; Fashioned Body.

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## Introduction

What does beauty mean today? What is the relationship between beauty and fashioned bodies? And how do fashion standards influence the perception of clothing? The glamorous idea of dressing up to look good has long determined the traditional understanding of the fashion phenomenon and, more broadly, of beauty. But discerning the leading fashion attitude among the various designers and fashion trends today can be a challenge. Some fashion designers are promoting and developing a new understanding of the relationship between fashion garments and fashioned bodies. Using a provocative approach, designers are questioning the unshrinking nature of fashion standards. This paper explores the concept of deconstruction in fashion as a way to analyze the relationships between consumers and fashion garments. The paper articulates this method by examining the case of the Maison Margiela fashion brand.

Fashion designers, fashion influencers, fashion media, and street style fashion all inform the present understanding of fashion and beauty standards. However, fashion items usually tend to serve merely as beautifying instruments to meet the needs of individuals. They express social status, personal taste, cultural identity, gender stereotypes, or income. Thus, the question emerges as to whether fashion functions for individual demands or the demands of society: If fashion articulates an individual approach to fashion standards and fashion beauty, it confronts society's collective and traditional ideas regarding common standards and stereotypes. If fashion serves the interests of society, individuals have less freedom for self-expression and must fit in with the common pattern.

Deconstructivist fashion embodies the provocative model of postmodernist beauty: It challenges female silhouettes, erases the borders between female and male clothing, and creates timeless, universal garments. Moreover, by dismantling fashion garments into parts and by shifting the focus from the utilitarian function of fashion to the independent value of clothing, the deconstructivist fashion facilitates a new vision of fashion garments. Japanese designers were the first to take this independent approach, which Belgian designers then developed further. By bringing about disorder in tailoring, constructing, and performing fashion items, that approach destroys the traditional order in the fashion world.

Symbolically rooted in the philosophy of deconstruction and deconstructivist architecture, deconstructivist fashion emphasizes the context in which beauty does not necessarily consist of beautiful components alone. This provocative and revolutionary approach to fashion challenges not only fashion designers but also fashion followers by establishing new relationships between consumers and garments. Furthermore, deconstructivist fashion is inclusive. All body proportions and shapes, all fashion beauty standards, all fabrics and forms of tailoring clamor for significance on the fashion scene. However, it is important to question the fashion nature, provoke it, and create conflict. Using the example of the Maison Margiela brand, this paper describes three types of conflict that determine the relationships between consumers and fashion garments. First, the conflict of function deconstructs the primary utilitarian purpose of fashion clothing. Clothes receive a meaning in line with that of the dressed body. The body is not simply covered in clothes but also communicates through fashion garments. Second, the conflict of forms explains the plurality of options for constructing a fashion garment. It applies different sewing techniques and non-typical textiles to create fashion beauty. The body is not fashionably embellished but separated from the garment to receive an independent meaning. Third, the conflict of ideology constructs an anonymous expression in fashion that is exempt from fashion stereotypes and prejudices. The body acts independently and does not transmit standardized meanings and relations. Using the example of the tabi boots' success, this paper describes the relationships between modern consumers and garments that are deconstructed in terms of form, function, and ideological message.

## The philosophical background of deconstruction

Deconstruction is part of modern philosophy that regards the process of understanding as a breakdown of stereotypes and the creation of a new context. Mainly, it emphasizes the stereotypical thinking that provides standardized explanations and meanings for the context. Postmodern philosophy deconstructs those stereotypes to determine the meanings of the text.

The notion of deconstruction first appeared in the 1970s in the works of philosopher Jacques Derrida to connect text to its meaning.<sup>1</sup> Criticizing logocentrism (i.e., the linguistic signifier privileges over the signified) for its focus only on the text itself as a meaningful construction, Derrida highlights the need to deconstruct the text and split it into words for an analysis of the variety of hidden interpretations. To better understand the meaning of a text, it is essential to review the stereotypes and include the new context from the deconstruction process.

According to Derrida, this process consists of two main steps: first, avoid binary oppositions of meaning (e.g., good/bad, rational/irrational); second, question the existence of both ideas in the binary opposition. In other words, it is necessary to provoke a conflict that leads to the deconstruction process; then, it is essential to analyze the whole by examining the parts of the whole to find contradictions. This idea is critical in postmodernity because of the transformation of the relations between text, language, and meaning. There is a difference between destruction as annihilation and deconstruction as an analysis of the parts to find new interpretations. In the second type, it is essential to reconstruct the parts by modifying the standard order and typical forms.

Deconstruction is a constant process of interpreting the text or the object; by questioning the nature of major and minor, it involves contradictory meanings. The language of interpretation expresses the power to define hierarchies (i.e., what is significant, what is not). Therefore, deconstruction in philosophy calls into question the authority of language and its real nature by providing new interpretations and representations.

## Deconstructivism as a style in architecture

Postmodernist architecture expanded the philosophical concept. Since the 1980s, the visual complexity of buildings — their fragmentation, “broken” lines, and absence of harmony with the urban environment — has characterized the work of postmodern architects. In response to modernist thinking and as a protest against modern reality, deconstructivist architecture broke the traditional understanding of buildings. Through improper forms, complex constructions, and sharp angles, it created a new vision of the urban environment. The “Deconstructivist architecture” exhibition took place in 1988 in the MoMA in New York City. By presenting the works of architects like Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, and Daniel Libeskind, it launched the deconstructivist narrative with a non-typical approach to architecture.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly to text analysis, deconstructivist architecture provokes a denial of stereotypes about the building’s forms and functions. It often looks like chaos, expression, and disorder but symbolizes a search for change, transformation, and new relationships between an individual and standardized thought. Moreover, with the use of modern technologies, it is possible to implement and express innovative ideas in construction and to incorporate new relationships with time and space through architecture. Furthermore, deconstruction in architecture explains not a style but a method. It accelerates a conflict of distortion and dislocation in the architectural elements, which is required to produce a conflict between the perception and the vision of a building.

Another convincing idea in deconstructivist architecture offers a way to escape from the building’s functionality. It is typical to observe and analyze the functional characteristics of construction, along with

1. Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of grammatology* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
2. Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist architecture* [Exhibition catalog] (N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1988).

certain stereotypes. The postmodernist approach develops the concept of constructing a building free of stereotypical prescriptions about its functionality, aesthetic, and equilibrium. Therefore, deconstructivist architecture creates a narrative that describes the story of a building, not its utilitarian characteristics. As a result, postmodern architects like Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, or Daniel Libeskind provide a new interpretation of the buildings' forms and functions by implementing the main theses of conflict and denial.

## Fashion deconstruction

Deconstructivist ideas have implications for the world of fashion. The intentions of deconstructivist architecture have influenced deconstructivist fashion, for example, in the interplay with material structures (forms, shapes, schemes). In 1989, fashion photographer Bill Cunningham was the first to apply the term 'deconstruction' to the fashion phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> He described the particular method of constructing a fashion garment by displacing and disordering its parts. In 1993, Amy Spindler continued the discussion about fashion deconstruction in the *New York Times*<sup>4</sup> by explaining the origins and specific features of the new fashion movement.

The traditional understanding of fashion involves the primary dressing function implemented in different fashion garments and styles, fabrics, and tailoring.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, fashion highlights one's beauty, ideal body, and proportions, as well as a particular taste and lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it represents social status, gender stereotypes, income, and cultural values of a person in the clothing.<sup>7</sup> It subordinates one's identity and expresses the role of fashion garments in the individual's life and social and urban environment.<sup>8</sup> Last but not least, mainstream fashion outlines confirmed stereotypes and the influence of fashion designers on fashioning the body.

Applied to the fashion phenomenon, the deconstructivist method creates new fashion representations and interpretations, overcomes fashion stereotypes and fashion attitudes, and crosses typical borders. Through deconstruction, it constitutes a novelty and introduces both resistance and chaos to the traditional clothes paradigm. From tailoring reconstruction to the creation of a new system of understanding, the deconstruction of fashion proposes a philosophical approach to identify the relationship with clothes.<sup>9</sup>

Deconstructivist fashion is also multifunctional in practice. It can be considered a sustainable practice or method of fashion tailoring and fashion ideology.<sup>10</sup> This fashion can also be presented as a form of intellectual movement, an art concept from the second half of the 20th century. As a basis of contradiction, this concept considers the denial of already existing fashion standards. Fashion is based on changing trends and fads for further development and innovations. However, deconstructivist fashion not only carries novelties to the fashion market but also destroys, rejects old patterns, and creates something qualitatively new. Deconstructivist fashion does not create fashion garments from scratch; it mostly reinterprets existing fashion patterns. In so doing, it emphasizes the idea of an independent fashioned body under any garment.

3. Bill Cunningham, "Fashion du Siècle," *Details* vol. 8 (1990): 177–300.

4. Amy M. Spindler, "Coming Apart," *The New York Times*, July 25, 1993.

5. Christopher Breward, *The culture of fashion: a new history of fashionable dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

6. Jennifer Craik, *Fashion: the key concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

7. Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (London-New York: Routledge, 2002).

8. Agnes Rocamora, *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London-New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009).

9. Flavia Loscialpo, "Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction: A Fashion in-Deconstruction," in *Fashion Forward*, ed. A. de Witt-Paul and M. Crouch (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011), 13–27.

10. Ekaterina Vasil'eva, "Dekonstrukciã i moda: porãdok i besporãdok," [Deconstruction and fashion: disorder and order] *Teoriã mody: odežda, telo, kul'tura* vol. 4 (2018): 58–79.

## Japanese fashion and deconstruction

In the 1980s, Japanese designers like Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake, and Yohji Yamamoto innovatively applied the deconstructivist method to their fashion collections. Although coming from an ideologically different culture than their Western counterparts, they assimilated Western fashion traditions. However, they also destroyed the typical fashion image of Oriental fashion. By entering the French fashion market, these designers behaved provocatively with their collections: By interpreting the notion of traditional Japanese costume and general Oriental fashion patterns, designers provided an avant-garde approach to fashion.<sup>11</sup> These provocations shocked and surprised fashion followers. Such deconstructivist fashion, far removed from contemporary fashion standards, sought to become a trend, and they cost as much as traditional fashion outfits.

Thanks to the clothes' marginal character (shapeless fashion garments that hide the body and had non-attractive, monochrome, imperfect, or deliberately unmade tailoring and wrong or broken proportions), these designers — presented the concept of the low social class's fashion. This opinion symbolized the social protest that expressed an economic conflict and a denial of utilitarian beauty. While British punk fashion by Vivienne Westwood expressed political or economic protest, Japanese fashion in the 1970s and 1980s promoted marginal and provocative forms and very specific for Europe tailoring as reserved philosophical aesthetics.<sup>12</sup> This marginal input from Japanese fashion developed the local fashion market and, particularly, the street style fashion, which spread across the globe;<sup>13</sup> it also extended the global fashion market with an innovative approach to fashion garments.<sup>14</sup>

## Deconstruction in Belgian fashion

This innovative approach was actively promoted and developed by Belgian fashion designers, including Ann Demeulemeester, Dries van Noten, and Martin Margiela. Teunissen notes that, until the 1980s, it had been almost impossible to talk about Belgian national fashion.<sup>15</sup> Governmental initiatives to provide financial support to local fashion designers started a change. The idea of Belgian national fashion began to spread outside the country, but a few designers decided to distance themselves from others by performing the deconstruction concept in clothing. As Smelik argues, for fashion diversity and the development of a national fashion market, it was necessary to develop local fashion by promoting material components from the cultural heritage.<sup>16</sup> However, the globalization process and high competition reinterpret the unique context of local fashion identities that create hybrid glocal fashion and a mix between material objects and immaterial cultural heritage.

These designers created fashion items that did not primarily signify financial or social status and did not emphasize the wearer's attractiveness. As Gill notes, deconstructivist fashion intentionally uses unfinished forms to create an aesthetic of non-functionality and instability.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, deconstructivist fashion discloses fashion enchantment and destroys the stereotypes in fashion about dressing the body only to have an attractive image. Gill emphasizes that deconstructing by dismantling clothes is an intellectual practice for analytical work — a critical approach to understanding fashion.

11. Yuniya Kawamura, "The Japanese revolution in Paris fashion," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* vol. 8, no. 2 (2004): 195–223.

12. Alison L. Goodrum, "True Brits? Authoring national identity in Anglo-Japanese fashion exports," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* vol. 13, no. 4 (2009): 461–480.

13. Brian Moeran, "A Japanese discourse of fashion and taste," *Fashion Theory* vol. 8, no. 1 (2004): 35–62.

14. Yuniya Kawamura, "Placing Tokyo on the Fashion Map: from Catwalk to Streetstyle," in *Fashion's world cities*, ed. Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 55–68.

15. José Teunissen, "Deconstructing Belgian and Dutch Fashion Dreams: From Global Trends to Local Crafts," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* vol. 15, no. 2 (2011): 157–176.

16. Anneke Smelik, "Fashion Matters: The 'Glocal' Mix of Dutch Fashion," *ZoneModa Journal* [S.l.], vol. 9, no. 2 (2019): 17–31.

17. Alison Gill, "Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Re-assembled Clothes," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* vol. 2, no. 1 (1998): 25–49.

According to Gill, the principle of deconstructive thinking consists of four elements. First, the notion of anti-fashion is an alternative approach, a counter-culture inspired by street culture, the punk movement, and taboo practices in traditional culture. The incorporated protest (resistance) is expressed by destroying clothing's functionality. Second, the notion of zeitgeist (i.e., the spirit of the time) is understood as a cultural reflection of social, economic, and political changes. Moreover, it mirrors cultural, environmental, and aesthetic confrontations in society, where fashion reproduces historical transformations with deconstructed garments. Third, eco-fashion reuses, recycles, and applies second-hand clothing to create new fashion items. As a significant contribution to the fashion market, this eco-fashion deconstructs the understanding of glamorous fashion. Finally, by theorizing a dress, Gill emphasizes that clothing has a function that goes beyond just being utilitarian and is more about constructing a correlation between a body, the garments, and their interaction with each other.

Belgian fashion designers express deconstructivist ideas through fashion items, create innovative visions of clothes, and emphasize various details in their fashion garments. However, all of them demand systematic change in the way we understand the fashion phenomenon. Koda argues that fashion designers express the aesthetic of poverty by using unfinished forms, lacerated tailoring, and outward seams.<sup>18</sup> Such an aesthetic symbolizes the shift from expressing financial status and success through clothing to articulating social protest through the marginal character of fashion items.

Thus, deconstructivist fashion does not characterize commercial profits or fit the trend and is not a fashion fad — it takes into account individuality and destroys the stereotypes and expectations around fashion. Its purpose is to search for the fashion garment's meaning as an independent concept. Deconstructivist fashion detects the structure of a fashion item.

### Fashion techniques in deconstructing clothes

Popular methods in deconstructing fashion relate to typical stereotypes about fashion garments. Deconstructivist fashion embraces visions about asymmetry, the combination of elements, mixture of styles, and sophisticated details. In particular, it is relevant to note the following types:

- i. exposed seams, raw edges, or asymmetric details (unlike commercial ready-to-wear clothing)
- ii. deliberately unfinished clothing (e.g., the unfinished meaning of a garment)
- iii. gender-neutral or anonymous garments (a break with the fashion stereotype of gender-defined clothing)

According to this idea, fashion items should look unfinished — as if they are still in the process of creation — and challenge beauty standards and fashion stereotypes. By performing these views on disorder and deconstruction in clothing, fashion designers offer a new understanding of beauty in fashion. This anti-fashion idea highlights the value of the fashion phenomenon itself, which lies in not fulfilling the expectations of fashion standards and fashion attitudes.

### Maison Margiela case

With his fashion brand Maison Margiela, Belgian fashion designer Martin Margiela promotes a new understanding of beauty and fashion standards that rejects common fashion standards and attitudes and creates new meanings of clothes. Margiela reveals the principles of interaction between clothes and the fashioned body. The fashion from Margiela does not demand a perfect body or sexual attractiveness; it boosts self-confidence and offers freedom from stereotypes.

Maison Margiela's brand appeared in the middle of the 1980s as a contrast to the heyday of sexuality and hyperfemininity when fashion garments aimed to emphasize the feminine sexual body as much

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18. Harold Koda, "Rei Kawakubo and the Aesthetic of Poverty," *Dress. The Journal of the Costume Society of America* vol. 11, no. 1 (1985): 5–10.

as possible.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on gender-prescribed clothes reinforced sexual connotations in clothing and gendered fashion stereotypes. At the time, Maison Margiela presented collections with raw edges, exposed linings, scruffy, imperfect, unfinished-like clothes. With many references to the Japanese designers and their deconstructivist fashion, Maison Margiela was at the forefront of the Belgian wave of deconstructivist fashion.

As Granata argues, deconstructivist fashion like Maison Margiela performs different relationships with time and temporality.<sup>20</sup> The deconstruction process presents a non-linear perspective on time that obtains an anomalous character. Fashion deconstruction appeals to the unusual, which can be expressed through tailoring techniques such as, for example, deliberately unfinished or unstitched clothes, torn edges, and asymmetry. This kind of fashion garments symbolizes a non-linear perspective on time and expresses its protest nature, conflict narrative, and non-typical order.

As a material object, fashion's primary function is often considered to be the dressing of the body. In particular, this process follows defined beauty and fashion standards that are accepted and known in society; the central message of dressing the body is to complete the task of looking fancy, beautiful, and fashionable. It is facilitated through a variety of forms, fabrics, styles, and functions of clothes. Also, as a phenomenon, fashion expresses specific thoughts or identities that are also incorporated into fashion garments.

Like Maison Margiela, deconstructivist fashion can dismantle clothes into equally significant parts that clothes not only accompany the person but express specific ideas. Even while dressing the body, fashion garments act as independent objects. By deconstructing a dressed body, Margiela constitutes new standards of beauty. In this way, the designer rethinks the function and meaning of fashion garments and questions the origins of beauty standards in traditional fashion. Not unlike other deconstructivist fashion designers, Margiela continues to question the understanding of fashion beauty and the fashioned body in Western culture. He features a lot of shapeless silhouettes, deliberately incorrect body proportions, and gender-free dresses in his work. Moreover, by creating multilayered clothing and oversized items to hide the real body proportions and to escape from stereotypes about the model-looking body, Margiela develops an understanding of neutral, anonymous fashion. Three main ideas navigate deconstructionist thinking to arrive at new definitions of beauty in fashion today.

## Conflict of function

In mainstream fashion, each fashion garment usually fulfills a particular purpose: a suit for work, an evening gown for a special dinner, a mini for a party, sweatpants for jogging, etc. Margiela constructs clothes as multifunctional and multipurpose: Depending on the combination of details and the specifics of tailoring, one item can be worn, for example, as both a dress and a coat. With this idea in mind, the designer not only modifies the iterated function of clothes but questions the stereotypes about clothing functions. Such a hybrid dress, because it is universal, fits multiple occasions, dress codes, and social statuses.

Traditionally fashionable clothes perform a beautiful look and apply bright colors and a variety of palettes and shades. Those methods and techniques attract attention and highlight a person's beauty. As other deconstructivist designers have done, Margiela often operates with monochromatic colors: black, white, and gray. Doing so turns the focus from colors' functionality to the color value. Margiela's palette is not very attractive at first glance but offers a perspective on the beauty of a person and of clothes, far from stereotypes and standards.

Likewise, Margiela works with non-traditional fabrics. While mainstream fashion, following the fashion design paradigm, operates with typical textiles (natural or synthetic), Margiela creates his fashion

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19. Agata Zborowska, "Deconstruction in contemporary fashion design: Analysis and critique," *International Journal of Fashion Studies* vol. 2 (2015): 185–201.

20. Granata, Francesca. "Deconstruction Fashion: Carnival and the Grotesque," *Journal of Design History* vol. 26, no 2 (2013): 182–198.

garments from cellophane and leftovers from ad banners. He deconstructs vintage clothes to use their fabrics for new fashion items (e.g., a dress made of vintage silk scarfs). Already at the end of the 1980s, recycling and upcycling methods, which have become so popular today in discussions about sustainable fashion, became standard tools for the Belgian designer (e.g., sock sweater, jacket from gloves). Margiela promotes the reuse concept and claims that fabric leftovers have a chance to create a new aesthetic concept.

### Conflict of form

In mainstream fashion, tailoring produces a fashion garment by using standardized proportions and patterns. It fluctuates from season to season, from one designer to another, from one fashion fad to another. However, some forms of fashion are relatively stable in the application. Margiela intentionally uses asymmetric shapes and overlaps to provide a dynamic range of clothes, uneven hems, and extra clothing parts (e.g., third sleeve); he calls into question the beauty standards in dressing and makes use of unstitched seams and raw edges to create a new vision of the fashioned body.

The creative mix of styles and fabrics in one of Margiela's items provides a new form of clothing that builds relationships with a dressed body. These clothes deconstruct the opposition to the major role of a body and the minor role of clothes. The deconstructivist designer again provokes a denial of fashion stereotypes, the ideal vision of fashion clothes, and the fashioned body. Furthermore, by using exaggerated, oversize, excess elements and multilayered clothing, the Belgian designer denies the norms of body proportion. Mainly, oversize clothes are not in line with the glamorous ideas of fashioning the body through exaggerated sexuality. Sexuality is hidden, protected, and distorted. It changes the focus from a fashion function and form to the relationship between a body and clothes. Moreover, the Belgian designer decorates clothes with seams or hems on the outside of the garment, as well as frayed edges and exposed zippers, to produce a new aesthetic of clothes. Such an aesthetic ignores the traditional perception of functional details and explores its pure beauty.

By denying the traditional norms of cutting, sewing, and seam processing, Margiela provides a new interpretation of everyday clothing, displays the accents from the dressing to its details, to clothing as a complex combination of independent parts. Such a visual clothing transformation emphasizes the universal idea of fashion garments and accelerates the blurring of borders between fixed fashion norms.

### Conflict of ideology

One of Margiela's dresses is targeted at women but is worn by a man at his fashion show. Therefore, the designer destroys the fashion stereotype about fashion-gendered clothing by offering a gender-free dress. Such a performance reflects the goals of gender-neutral goods, gender tolerance, and free choice for self-expression. By promoting fashion freedom, the Belgian designer supports the concept of independent self-expression that has become so widespread. Margiela also implements the idea of anonymity in his collections. There is no logo and no brand name on the fashion items — only a symbolic white rectangular and four stitches to mark the clothes. It is not simply a unique approach to branding but an approach to clothes themselves, new ideological relations between a person and a dress. The designer neither appears at his fashion shows nor gives public interviews in front of a camera. He destroys the stereotype about a designer creating fashion; he constitutes a new relation to fashion garments based on equilibrium and anonymity. This behavior comes in response to the extensive commercialization of the fashion market.

Margiela influences the understanding of fashion models and fashion shows by promoting non-standardized thinking about fashion performance. Maison Margiela's models often hide their faces with a piece of textile, a mask, or a haircut on the catwalk — their performance is completely anonymous. In addition, viewers' focus shifts from the model's body to the fashion item itself. Some models are literally chosen from the streets — the designer destroys the understanding of a perfect fashion model. His fashion shows often take place in unusual locations (subway station, crossroads, old factories); thus, by denying the idea of glamour in the fashion world, he creates new spaces in which



to express fashion thoughts. The considerable ideological position of Margiela's works points to a category of success — in the social, cultural, financial dimensions — that is independent of fashion garments. The privileged status of the fashion phenomenon is under consideration. Thus, clothes become irrelevant to expressing great achievements, happiness, or beauty.

Maison Margiela's fashion wardrobe is easy to use and universal; it constructs basic items that are comfortable and convenient for everyone. At the same time, Margiela's ideology explains to consumers the relationships with clothes: They are equal, innovative, universal, and always questioning. Even pretending to be called "ugly fashion" for its destructive and disseminated forms and functions, Margiela's fashion establishes new beauty by breaking the stereotypes about fashion clothing being only attractive and accurate.

### **Tabi boots as an example of Margiela's fashion deconstruction**

The most significant and recognizable fashion item from Maison Margiela is tabi boots. For many centuries an element of the Japanese wardrobe, tabi boots received major attention from fashion followers after its fashion presentation by Martin Margiela in 1988. As a reconstruction of traditional Japanese shoes, these split-toe sock boots from the Belgian designer with 30 years of fashion history epitomize the brand's success and importance. Japanese culture and fashion inspired the Belgian designer to include tabi boots as a key fashion item in many of his collections. With its very unusual performance at the catwalk, he highlighted the significance of these shoes for his creative art. And by rethinking the traditional Japanese garment, Margiela brought tabi boots to the catwalk and reshaped the understanding of female footwear. Wearing tabi boots has become fashionable and noteworthy, especially in tiny communities of fashion influencers. Moreover, this fashion garment has appeared in many of his collections, every time receiving new interpretations or variations.

The form of these shoes is unusual, deconstructed, and changed. Their function is questionable due to the controversial application and performance within the fashion house. The ideological message combines local cultural heritage and fashion traditions with a modern interpretation and deconstructed understanding of utilitarian beauty.

### **Conclusion**

This paper explains the concept of deconstructivist fashion by using the example of the Maison Margiela fashion brand. Inspired by philosophical discussions about deconstruction and practical inputs of deconstructivist architecture, fashion designers, mainly from Japan and Belgium, have established a new idea of fashion. This idea denies the traditional understanding of clothes' utilitarian function and dismantles fashion garments to generate new meanings and interpretations. Moreover, the paper explains the cultural and aesthetic roots of the fashion of deconstruction. The nature of protest and the intention to establish conflict in order to find new inspiration for and interpretations of fashion garments characterize deconstructivist fashion designers.

Particularly, by deconstructing familiar fashion and beauty standards, Martin Margiela represents the Belgian component of postmodernist fashion. He explains the conflicting nature of clothes by deconstructing, first, the functionality of clothes, second, typical forms and manufacturing, and finally, the ideology of fashion items. By bringing symbolic disorder to the understanding and interpretation of clothing, Margiela promotes the inclusiveness of his clothes. He creates fashion out of social status, gender stereotypes, and fashion standards and norms. Similarly, he constructs the understanding of universal, basic clothes but also, at the same time, clothing that is very anonymous and free of labels, standards, and social judgment. The branding of his items also reflects this idea as they do not feature the name of the designer. This confirms the anonymous character of the clothes, which should be considered separately from the person.

Deconstructivist fashion today has changed the traditional relationship between fashion consumers and fashion garments. Fashioning the body is more than just standardized functions and stereotypes. It is about expanded values and interpretations, freedom of self-expression, and beauty for everyone.

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