

Global Narratives on Fashion

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This issue of *ZoneModa Journal* contains the essays presented in the panel ‘Global Narratives on Fashion’ by colleagues of the CFC (Culture Fashion Communication) research group of the University of Bologna, Rimini campus, at the international conference *Fashion Tales 2020+1* held in digital mode on 17-19 June 2021 at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. The keynote speech by Wessie Ling from London Metropolitan University and member of the CFC research group opened the session.

The title of the conference was ‘Politics Through the Wardrobe’; this is a particularly ‘hot’ topic in the recent fashion studies debate. Indeed, we can say that between the 1910s and the 1920s of the 21st century, in a process of globalisation of fashion phenomena, an important transition took place that established the authoritative presence of fashion among the great narratives capable of representing and even promoting change:

Global thinking requires the disciplines of fashion to challenge once again the hierarchy and presumed purity of styles and movements. Existing narratives of fashion production and creation have shifted in the wake of transnational realities towards a more complex picture of global interconnections.¹

As is well known, today the recognition of fashion thinking also comes from other disciplines, such as philosophy. Fashion is recognised as a system of thought and visual representation. As Pamela Church Gibson has already written (Bruzzi and Church-Gibson 2013), instead of asking questions about fashion, one can therefore use fashion to ask questions: a fundamental approach to arrive at a broader view of fashion’s influence in society, including the political aspect. Djurdja Bartlett, in *Fashion and Politics* (Bartlett 2019), provides a systematic account of the political dimension of the fashion system. Her argument is that, in the crisis of politics in our time, fashion can take on an unprecedented role in representing and counteracting inequalities. Thus, if fashion is now considered part of the ethical and political discourse (Marchetti 2020), even the concepts of ‘serious’ and ‘frivolous’ are no longer in contradiction but enter into a constant dialogue. We could say that *fashion studies* have in fact turned

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1. Wessie Ling, Mariella Lorusso and Simona Segre-Reinach, “Critical Studies in Global Fashion”, *ZoneModa Journal*, Vol. 9.2 (2019): X–XVII.

into *critical fashion studies* where social responsibility, postcolonial theory and posthuman theory meet the aesthetic representations that characterise our time in which art, dress and culture are closely intertwined.

The ‘Global Narratives in Fashion’ panel is in line with this research field that transcends the usual disciplinary fences. The essays presented are intended to offer an overview of the most interesting directions in fashion studies: Giampaolo Proni’s semiotic analysis in “The Emperor’s New Clothes” analyses a representation of dress behaviour, highlighting its structure and dynamics. These patterns are compared with contemporary theoretical assumptions of fashion and dress research, shedding light on trends and patterns of past and contemporary Western culture; anthropologist Enrica Picarelli’s essay “Play of surfaces and tactile encounters with the city: Selly Raby Kane’s alter-wordly fashion + art” deals with the emblematic case of Senegalese designer Selly Rabi Kane. Kane authoritatively represents the “new black canon”, i.e. the set of aesthetic practices of black artists who have set out to dismantle the structures of visualisation and description of blackness through a de-colonial perspective; Fabriano Fabbri’s text “Heterotopia and Heterochrony” analyses the so-called *time travellers* in contemporary fashion, with a focus on the collaboration between Givenchy and the designer Riccardo Tisci (b. 1974), author of a fashion devoted to the cult of heterotopia and heterochrony and space-time travel. Fabbri’s essay is situated in the field of fashion criticism close to art and exemplifies the thesis on “generational collocation” put forward by the author in recent works (Fabbri 2021); finally, Nadica Maksimova and Flavia Piancazzo’s essay “Culture and Sustainability: An Interplay between the Local and Global Perspective in the Italian Born-responsible Fashion Brands” reports the results of a research on sustainability and so-called “green washing” on a series of Italian fashion brands. It emerges that even in the context of so-called ‘born-responsible’ Italian fashion brands, there is ample room for improvement, as the logic of old-fashioned economic growth is still strong and hinders the holistic transition towards a more responsible, ethical and sustainable fashion system.

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