

Fashion Now!

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For better or worse, fashion has now become one of the most important drivers of urban development (if not *the* most important). From Prada's commercial-cultural system to the achievements of the LVMH group, from Brunello Cucinelli's "pleasant peripheries" and the village of Solomeo to Gucci's ArtLab on the outskirts of Florence, in recent decades fashion has shown that it is capable of exploiting the spaces of cities of all sizes, that it knows the language of architecture of all epochs and that it is able to manipulate the dynamics of urban life at all times of day, night included. Fashion is (and always has been) an urban phenomenon and the city its natural domain. No wonder then that still today, as the physical world is becoming increasingly confused with the digital world, it is the urban point of view that offers seemingly inexhaustible food for thought.

Thus, when in 2019 the Italian Association of Urban History (AISU) organised its 9th Congress in Bologna entitled *The Global City, the Urban Condition as a Pervasive Phenomenon*,¹ the Culture Fashion and Communication (CFC) international research group proposed the session *Fashion and the City Between Their Global Dynamics and Local Repercussions*.² Coordinated by Simona Segre Reinach and Ines Tolic, the session sought to explore the relationship between fashion and the city from a historical perspective, highlighting the local implications of global phenomena and vice versa. By catalysing the work of a discrete number of scholars, covering the historical period from the 19th century to the more strictly understood contemporary period, the session succeeded in highlighting the great interest in fashion even among scholars of urban history, and in once again emphasising the need to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to cope with the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.³ The session also confirmed the existence of a trend that, over at least a few decades, had produced numer-

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1. Marco Pretelli, Rosa Tamborrino and Ines Tolic (eds.), *The Global City: The Urban Condition as a Pervasive Phenomenon* (Turin: Aisu International, 2020).
2. CFC, "Homepage," accessed July 6, 2023, <https://centri.unibo.it/culturefashioncommunication/en>.
3. Simona Segre Reinach e Ines Tolic (eds.), *Fashion and the City in Their Global Dynamics and Local Repercussions*, in Pretelli, Tamborrino and Tolic, 838–911.

ous publications that delved into the complex relationship between the city and this cultural, creative and undoubtedly increasingly pervasive industry, often with original points of view.⁴ Indeed, fashion places (flagship stores, fashion districts or so-called fashion capitals) and fashion-related initiatives (fashion weeks or exhibitions) have demonstrated an increasing capacity to increase the complexity of contemporary life, making the fashion system a mutant phenomenon to be analysed, understood and, not least, governed.

These topics, examined at the Congress, led in subsequent months to new opportunities to collaboratively explore the dynamics generated by fashion and their repercussions on the built environment. An opportunity to systematise some of these reflections was offered by the call for projects of the Appearances, Bodies, and Societies Research Interest Group (RIG ACORSO) — University of Lille.⁵ With the call, which was announced in 2021, the RIG ACORSO made a financial contribution available for projects belonging to any subject area and specifically dedicated to fashion. The research project presented on that occasion was given the title “Fashion and Urban System between Endurance and Ephemerality (FUSEE).” FUSEE, a term that in watchmaking indicates the spindle that generates and defines the passage of time, was intended to highlight how the contraction of time typically associated with fashion corresponded to an expansion of space, and that this space — urban and metaphorical at the same time — was to be understood as an extraordinary opportunity for research. As if it were a city itself, therefore, FUSEE sought to welcome and systematise the trajectories of the many scholars who deal with fashion, bringing them to Rimini.

Known the world over for its vocation for tourism and hospitality, Rimini has also become an important point of reference for fashion studies over the past two decades. The establishment of two degree programmes dedicated to this strategic sector for Italy and for products Made in Italy has led over time to the birth of the already mentioned Culture Fashion and Communication research centre as well as to a variety of conference and publishing initiatives with an increasingly international resonance.⁶ With the aim of further cementing Rimini’s relationship with fashion and with the ambition of attracting the latest research, the editors organised *Fashion Now!* to be held on 24–25 November 2022. Supported by the CFC and ACORSO, the event was further enriched by the support of the Municipality of Rimini, the Department of the Arts and the Rimini Campus of the University of Bologna, plus the valuable contribution of UniRimini. The first day, dedicated to a protagonist of contemporary fashion, saw fashion designer Antonio Marras converse with Fabriano Fabbrini in the packed spaces of the Fulgor Cinema. On the second day, researchers from various Italian universities (Milan Polytechnic, University of Rome — La Sapienza, University of Camerino, University of Rome Three, University of Parma, University of Bologna) and international universities (University of Antwerp, Cyprus University of Technology, University of the Arts — London, Jagiellonian University, University of Paderborn) presented works that are now included in this special issue of *ZoneModa Journal*.

From a general point of view, the papers deal with four major issues: the relationship of fashion with design practices and project cultures; fashion as a form of expression of identity; the role of fashion in relation to sustainability and social transformations; and finally the role of new technologies in defining possible futures. The first of these areas is discussed in Silvia Maria Sara Cammarata’s essay entitled “La moda come emblema italiano: Modelli e discorsi delle mostre di Germano Celant sull’Italia dal 1981 al 1994.” The paper addresses the expansion of the Italian fashion and design industry in the 1980s by showing how this process was supported by a communication system focused on Italian creativity in

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4. See among others Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (eds.), *Fashion’s World Cities* (Oxford: Berg, 2006); Vanni Codeluppi and Mauro Ferraresi (eds.), *La moda e la città* (Rome: Carocci, 2007); Alessandra Vaccari, *Moda, città e immaginari* (Milan: Mimesis, 2016); Daniela Baroncini (ed.), *Moda, metropoli e modernità* (Milan: Mimesis, 2018); Alice Janssens, Mariangela Lavanga and Ben Wubs (eds.), “Fashion Capitals,” monographic issue of *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 24.3 (2020).
 5. RIG ACORSO, “Homepage,” accessed July 6, 2023, <https://acorso.org/en/home/rig-acorso/>.
 6. Convention initiatives include *S M L XL* (2017), *Be Cool! Aesthetic Imperatives and Social Practices* (2019), *Celebrity and Crisis, Celebrity in Crisis* (2021) and *Fashion 3D — Decolonizing, Deconstructing, Decentering* (2023). Editorial initiatives include *ZoneModa Journal*, launched in 2012, the book series in Italian *Cultura, Moda e Società* and its English twin *Culture, Fashion and Society* (Milan: Pearson Mondadori, 2015–2023).

a broad sense that also included contemporary art and exhibitions in the “overflowing” decade of the ephemeral.⁷ The contribution of design and technology to the updating of shopping experiences are discussed in Mariagiovanna Di Iorio’s essay, “Fashion retail experience transformations informing new design approaches and tools for managing technological integration and value creation through retail experience design,” while flagship stores and their role in the debate on fashion retail spaces are explored in Francesca Fontana’s contribution entitled “The Evolution of the Flagship Store. Re-defining the design of commercial spaces for fashion.”

Fashion as a form of expression of identity is addressed in Dorothea Burato’s essay “Emilio Federico Schuberth: Intermediality Practices between Fashion, Cinema and Television” conveys the complex personality of a protagonist of Italian fashion. In “Negative Aesthetics, Grotesque Bodies and Disgusting Fashion in the 21st century,” Danae Ionno attempts to free fashion from the all-too-narrow confines of the “beautiful.” In the paper “Countersurveillance aesthetic: the role of fashion in the reappropriation of identity,” Irene Calvi takes a look at the boundaries of speculative design, asking whether in an age of hyper-surveillance the task of fashion is to conceal our identity rather than to enable us to express it.

The role of fashion with respect to sustainability and social transformation is considered by Joana Monteiro in her essay “Patternmaking as vehicle for social change — A Participatory Practice Research with Diverse Women’s communities in London.” Her work draws on some of the author’s first-hand experiences and analyses patternmaking as a creative practice that can effectively contribute to processes of innovation and social inclusion. Conversely, in her contribution entitled “Fashioning Circular Fashion: A Transformative Challenge across the European Fashion System,” Erminia D’Itria analyses the circular economy model with respect to the fashion system, identifying actions to reduce its environmental impact.

The fourth major topic, namely the role of new technologies in shaping fashion’s possible futures, is addressed in the essay “Leveraging Multistability and Ambiguity in Wearable Technology Design: A Postphenomenological and Design Perspective.” In this paper, Chiara Di Lodovico questions the way in which the representation of data acquired through wearable technologies conditions users’ experiences and behaviour. In her essay “Uniformization in the Digital Age,” Anna Kamneva-Wortmann discusses uniformisation as a positive process that can unite people through similarities, thus departing from postmodern trends and mass individualisation processes. Finally, Angelica Vandi’s essay “Dealing with objects, dealing with data. The role of the archive in curating and disseminating fashion culture through digital technologies” addresses the debate on fashion archives in relation to technological innovations, developing innovative trajectories capable of redefining existing cultural expressions and thus anticipating possible futures for fashion, and beyond.

In summary, one could observe how taken together the contributions outline an overview of what are the most topical issues on the research front and whose urgency is also underscored by the exclamation point at the end of the title: *Fashion Now!*. In fact, according to the editors that exclamation point was meant to emphasise the urgency of certain issues that, due to the acceleration triggered by the recent pandemic, can no longer be postponed. The collected essays and their authors can therefore in some ways be understood as a map of a possible tomorrow that, in order to be approached with the right tools, needs new opportunities for discussion and other networking opportunities. With this in mind, the FUSEE project has also developed into a network that, through its LinkedIn page, aims to grow the community of those involved in fashion with a special focus on the research carried out by younger scholars, such as those who took part in the Rimini study day. Following academic conventions and good research practices, the FUSEE project, the *Fashion Now!* event and the publication that collects its outcomes were supported by a Scientific Committee of international calibre consisting of Marco Belfanti (University of Brescia), Gabriela Maria Micaela Germain (Universidad Argentina de la Empresa in Buenos Aires), Valeria Iannilli (Milan Polytechnic), Francesco Mazzarella (London College of Fashion) and Nadzeya Sabatini (University of Lugano, Italian-speaking Switzerland). Our thanks go to them, the CFC, RIG ACORSO, the Municipality of Rimini, the Department of the Arts and the

7. Gilles Lipovetsky, *L’Empire de l’éphémère : la mode et son destin dans les sociétés modernes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

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Convinced that, as with *Fashion Now!*, the future of fashion lies in its ability to network people, resources and cities, we hope you enjoy the read.

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