

From *Art Nouveau* to Green Design: Fashion, Décor, Fashion Writing

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The present issue of *ZoneModa Journal*, edited by Carmen Concilio, is designed to bring to the fore the ‘blue/green turn’ in our Anthropocene that also pervades fashion, text/styles, wall paper, design and decorative applications through the use of natural, organic, biological, new materials and natural dyes for the fashioning of clothes, accessories or pieces of furniture and house wares.

This bountiful exhibition — particularly of floral and vegetal patterns, but also the importance of water imagery — is a revival of what might be considered the injection of a vast floral and vegetal imaginary — as well as the ‘curved line’ — that characterized *Art Nouveau* and its pervasive diffusion. The greenery, represented by botanical and phyto-poietic aesthetics, patterns and motives, has thus evolved nowadays into an innovative use of seeds, vegetal fibers, bio-leftovers, natural dyes, and ‘recycled waste’ — another way to reinterpret *arte povera* — which amplify our closeness and kinship to nature in spheres such as fashion and design, also in terms of recycling and upcycling, and vintage garment retailing, shoe and bag production, new jewel craftsmanship, as well as 3D-printed fashionable accessories and *objets d’art*.

The numerous interdisciplinary contributions hosted here make manifest the entanglement between text-style manufactures and the realization of fabrics, clothes, garments, and also fashionable accessories, through artistic, literary, linguistic, and eco-critical discourses and analyses.

In so doing, the concept of sustainability is embodied in very specific innovative ways of looking at the worlds of fashion and design. Women ‘dressed in nature’ in artistic and literary representations, from Botticelli’s *Flora* to Shakespeare-inspired figurative renditions of *Ophelia* and to similar Tennyson-inspired figurative renditions of the *Lady of Shalott* — following a red thread that connects the Pre-Raphaelites to *Art Nouveau* and to Secessionism — re-compose and re-con-figure kinships between women, floral, vegetal, and aquatic elements, to the point that those same natural elements become the fabric, the text/style and the dress in verses, in paintings, and in contemporary fashionable and *haute-couture* realizations (Concilio-Mondo).

Biophilia and inspiration by *Art Nouveau*, which are at the basis of the present issue, are also the core of Fortuny-Nigrin creations. Their Foundation and Museum, also their *atelier*, preserves their archive.

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Sky-water mirroring reflections and refractions, but also garden-like decorations, as well as textures, wall-paper, pieces of furniture, clothes incarnate a special attention to the body, the costume, and the atmosphere. The colours of the sky, of the clouds, of the stars and planets, but also the impalpable ever-changing atmosphere, all this *Is/is* in Venice, which is outside and inside the Museum, in a continuum of natural colours, natural textures, such as silk, and innovative artistic sensorial creations. As a mirror and a replica of the Venice outside, the Museum is a magical space, where Venice and nature or the Nature of Venice re-live(s). Fortuny's experimental performativity with lights and colours, his silk prismatic reflecting fabrics offer sensorial, holistic experiences to the visitor and availed him the nickname of *magicien de Venice*. His costumes favour the curved and coiling line, but also motifs of herbs, flowers, vines printed with the *pochoir* technique and derived from herbaria collected and preserved by the artist and his wife. Flowers soon leave room to marine and oceanic algae and fauna, while the Delphos dress takes on the curving shape of the woman's body and literary figures such as Proust and Heredia celebrate Fortuny's creations in literature. Finally, a further incursion in the world of nature regards the pigments and dyeing methods adopted by the artist, which are once more inspired by the colours of Venice and of Lagoon waters and skies, in an attempt at creating biophilic Total Art (Ciola-Chiusi-Vaccari).

Since ancient times and in various cultures, embroidery has replicated nature on natural textures such as silk, cotton and wool, and sometimes by the use of natural threads and natural dyes. This is the case with the Punjabi tradition of *phulkari*, or "floral work", as well as with the European tradition of stumpwork. With industrialization, and even more with the so-called Great Acceleration, the textile industry and the production of clothes have started causing the pollution of bodies of water as well as the increasing consumption of water resources. The seas and the oceans are under siege because of microplastics, chemical and nuclear pollution, dead zones and acidification. Yet, the oceanic agency and metamorphic force of waters have clothed and dressed Jason deCaires Taylor's submarine statues and sculptures, once again showing natural elements and organic life as creative forces in designing, fashioning, molding and shaping new life and new costumes for otherwise static underwater sculptures (Banga).

Similarly, Hokusai's *Wave* is an iconic print pattern on high fashion textiles as well as dresses and shoes. Hokusai's *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* is embodied and embedded in the poem *The Hurricane* by Saint Lucia poet and Nobel Prize laureate Derek Walcott. Thus, the poem itself becomes a canvas translating, but also ekphrastically re-producing the *Wave* and *Art Nouveau* whiplash line, which is therefore associated to slavery and colonial history, a topic that has generally been only hinted at with reference to exotic taste and Japanese motifs. The motif of the wave-mountain symbol and movement that characterizes Hokusai's *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* resurfaces in a poem by Dominican poet Jean Rhys. The same geometrical patterns re-turn in Derek Walcott's latest play focused on the two-month collaboration between Van Gogh and Gauguin in Provençal Arles at the end of 1888. *O Starry Starry Night* refashions the cresting mountain wave and delineates a circular and triangular movement as an emblem of Van Gogh's poetics. In this case, art and literature, prints and words are embroidery-machines and nature is a cloak of rhetorical mastery (Cimarosti).

An *excursus* on the hat as fashionable item, and particularly on a hat in natural fibers, inspired by the floral liberty style, resumes the thread of the discourse about 'women dressed in nature' and floral decorations. The hat in question is named *niniche*, after the heroin of a popular French comedy of the last decades of the XIX Century. Once more, (theatrical) performances, the world of spectacles (both in France and in Italy), the world of nature, and clothes and accessories are here intertwined (Cacia).

While green is the colour of vegetal life and green ecology iconically represents "Life on Earth" (SDG n.13) as one branch of environmental studies, blue ecology refers to the study of bodies of water and oceans, also in terms of "Life under water" (SDG n.14), as another important branch of environmental humanities. Yet, ecological studies have more to do with the kaleidoscopic colours of the rainbow. Therefore, yellow, too, has its place in this naturalistic palette, and the yellow flowers and plant fibers of the tree broom (it. *Ginestra odorosa*) are protagonists of a revival of natural textiles and sustainable practices. Famous under Fascism, originating in Tuscany and lately re-discovered and re-vitalized in Calabria, it combines local and regional sustainable eco- or agri-textural, new and innovative productions

(Papa).

The green aesthetics that is so prominent and so important nowadays as to incite a renewed interest in our kinship with our surrounding world has known other moments of popularity. *Art Nouveau* was such a historical moment in which a fantastic spreading of motifs, patterns, decorations and designs representing foliage, greenery, flowers, vines and privileging the curved line took place, thus dominating the artistic imaginary. Similarly, the *Arts and Crafts Movement* was encouraging to apply art and craftsmanship widely, as a reaction to the rampant industrialization and the mechanization of productions. Today, the fashion industry has turned its attentive gaze towards sustainable practices that respect the environment, while also promoting the pursuit of beauty and aesthetic care in relation to new materials, such as natural fibers, biomaterials, as well as natural dyes. This green aesthetics is also an ethical step forward (Maieli).

An ethical and aesthetical application of organic life to fashion can be obtained through eco-printing, in order to close the gap between art, nature and (serial) production. Thus, sustainable fashion privileges biodegradable, recycled, or waste-derived textiles. In both cases, the material itself becomes a conceptual medium. This attention to sustainable philosophy started with *arte povera* in the 1960s, but it is even more crucial today. In particular, eco-printing, a technique that makes it possible to decorate textiles using natural dyes extracted from flowers and leaves and other organic materials, eliminating the use of polluting chemicals, fits in harmoniously and gives life to a new sustainable market (Tessariol).

Aesthetics, the search for beauty, in a fashion industry that looks at environmental issues and at sustainability with interest, must be combined with ethical choices. Thus, French fashion brands tend to formulate discourses on sustainability through specific terminology, conceptual associations, and emotional framing. A lexicometric approach paralleled by sentiment analysis has revealed how sustainability discourses are structured around key themes such as materials, transparency, and cultural identity, with a strong emphasis on traceability and responsible production. French fashion industry communication seems to privilege a certain sobriety and matter-of-fact credibility, and with the present, increasing environmental pressure it will be interesting to study the evolution of such discursive communication strategies (Mattioda-Civico).

Home design, too, has found new strategies to satisfy the ethical views and needs of our contemporary world. Home furniture and home ware in new materials, such as cork, for a re-proposition of the armchair-cum-pouf Up5-6 by Gaetano Pesce, or the suspended pots by Vibia for plants and flowers, or even the stabilized natural lichens by Verdeprofilo to substitute wall paper are all new frontiers of natural, sustainable, and green artefacts that create a continuum between outside and inside, natural and artificial, design and pragmatic adaptations in one's home (La Fortuna).

New eco-materials are therefore spreading and gaining visibility, particularly new threads which are biodegradable and compostable, such as PLA, or bioplastics, and PET, thermoplastic synthetic material. Even on the domestic scale it is possible to produce such new and ecological accessories, such as for instance a collection of bags made with biodegradable and eco-compatible substances and inspired by the Mediterranean fauna and flora. In the specific case of a domestic experimentation, crabs' claws, sea urchins, shells and waves were reproduced through 3D print. Naturally, this experimentation can also cross new frontiers, with the use of seeds, fibers and ever new recyclable materials (Amoroso).

To conclude, the present issue retraces the co-evolution of art (literature, painting, design), nature (living bodies) and fashion in specific historical artistic movements, and up to our critical present time, when our kinship to nature needs be remarked, reinforced, re-fashioned and re-contextualized. What remains constant in all the researches presented here is the taste for an aesthetic beauty accompanied by sustainable practices and ecophilia. The interdisciplinary approaches here displayed enrich the embroidery of discourses on art, nature, the body, the home, the garden and the ocean, addressing our minds with new ways of thinking with nature, with new eco-sustainable materials, less resource consumption and less pollution. At the end of the day, the contributors to this volume have also co-authored a world of fashion of known and very new eco-friendly potentialities.