

Fashion: Cultural Heritage and the *Made in*

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Abstract

In the last twenty years, fashion has been the main leitmotiv to more than 200 exhibitions in European museums. The rise of fashion exhibitions is linked with the recognition of the economic importance of fashion culture, which has been interpreted as cultural heritage by our society. Thus, despite the relevance of the aesthetical dimension of fashion artefacts and images, fashion exhibitions highlight the “Made in” discourse of fashion — the narrative about the capacity for creating, producing and circulating fashion cultures —, to connect artefacts and people. This article selected several European fashion exhibitions as examples, and it was possible to discuss some discursive strategies to transform the fashion culture in cultural heritage. The intention is to demonstrate that the heritagization process of fashion is based on the exploration of the fashion system and not limited to the visual and material aspects of fashion products.

Keywords: Made in; Fashion Culture; Museology; Fashion Exhibitions; Fashion Heritage.

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Intersection: fashion, museology and cultural economy

It is an undeniable fact that there has recently been a new interest in the fashions in European museums. During the last 20 years, there have been more than 200 exhibitions which have fashion as the subject or central theme and these have attracted a large number of visitors and a good deal of attention from the media. As Valerie Steele pointed out, some fashion exhibitions “have attracted up to 500,000 visitors and brought in millions of dollars of sponsorship money, as well as reams of publicity, not all of it positive.”¹ Countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany and others, have been organizing exhibitions devoted to fashion culture to demonstrate the extent of their achievements, importance, influence, and progress.

It should be noted that when designing fashion exhibitions, the museums did not discover new fashion objects that were previously unknown. It was necessary, however, to define the new premises on the basis of which a wide range of artefacts or collections were turned into exhibitions: a) fashion became an interesting phenomenon; b) a broad concept of heritage was established within the new museology, and finally; c) the strength of a culture was linked to economic growth. These are the three pillars which underpin the rise of fashion exhibitions.

The increasing number of academic studies on fashion confirm the first point. Several authors have claimed that fashion, in academic research, has been neglected for a long time. However, the objects of fashion still might seem a frivolous area and a part of the female world. At the same time, a large number of studies have highlighted the artistic and/or aesthetic features of fashion. As a result, the phenomenon of fashion has been misinterpreted and regarded as merely a sign of social status and only valid for its visuality and materiality.

Since the 1970s, a number of academics have introduced new theories. The New History has redefined the approaches and methodologies which stimulated the study of everyday things as the fashion phenomenon.² In parallel, the historical studies of fashion were substituted with fashion studies to enlarge interests and diversify methodologies.³ Briefly, the economic and social importance of the so-considered minor artefacts — as those which were identified with appearance — was recognized.⁴ Since then, fashion objects or images, besides their dominant visuality, have been seen as a social phenomenon.⁵

The second fact that is linked to the new museology, is the broadening of the concept of heritage, through a shift from artistic heritage to cultural heritage.⁶ The contemporary museum, made heritagization a process that is more closely tied to the community.⁷ Hence, there is a rise in fashion heritagization not because fashion artefacts have become valuable, but because fashion has come to be identified with cultural and creative economies.

Finally, it is clear that many nations are currently using their cultural history as a means of serving their politico-economic interests. According to Ashworth, “History provides the resources ... for a wide range

1. Valerie Steele, “Museum quality: The rise of the fashion exhibition” *Fashion Theory* 12, n. 1, (2008):8.
2. The New History is considered a movement for the renovation of the historiography that emerged in France at the end of the 1920s. The New History reproached the history narrative or the history of events that was represented for the political history to detect what occurs in the “hidden structures.” For the first time, historiography interested itself on the common things, and for this, the New History has inaugurated subjects and methodologies. See Jacques Le Goff (Dir.), *La Nouvelle Histoire* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2006).
3. Giorgio Riello, “The object of fashion: Methodological approaches to the study of fashion,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 3, n. 1, (2011): 1–9.
4. One of the main innovations of the New History was the categorization of historical studies according to its social or economic dimension.
5. In this article, the word *fashion* is not limited to clothing or accessories. Images which represent or are signs of the fashion artefacts or the fashion culture take part in the research.
6. Querol, Lorena Sancho. “Do coração do museu: inventário e patrimônio imaterial em 11 museus portugueses,” in *Informação ICOM.PT*. Lisboa: ICOM Portugal, 2010.
7. Querol.

of high-order economic activities,” and museums are the institutions which carry out the mission of discovering, saving and displaying the splendors of each society.⁸ Museums have the ability to select objects and transform them into “discursive practices that make up the perceptions surrounding cultures and nations and how those nations are transformed into a product to be experienced and consumed are of paramount importance.”⁹

Instead the interweaving of these factors explains why steps have been taken to encourage fashion exhibitions, the interest in the consolidation of cultural identities was responsible for these exhibitions to switch from artefacts to processes. Audiences and the media are attracted by the names, techniques, styles and reality of fashion culture, but the discourses around visualities are being increasingly carried out through the *Made in* perspective. The discourses of fashion are establishing links between products and skills, to demonstrate the singular features of modes of production, circulation and consumption in fashion and what can be achieved. These links create a sense of belonging which connects people to artefacts within society.¹⁰

Thus, while the exhibitions are showing the most incredible looks, photographs, accessories, etc., the discourses are asserting that these societies have the conditions to support a complex fashion system. From this standpoint, this discussion assumes that heritagization is a “canonization process” which is driven by utilitarian interests, and this means it is a procedure that is no longer restricted to safe concrete fashion artefacts or registers.¹¹ Thus heritagization focuses on fashion artefacts or registers as well as on the processes which have created and supported them. For the same reason, the appreciation of artefacts in museums, is not confined to their aesthetic qualities (their beauty, singularity or technique, for example). Their appearance can be used as an “observation platform” through which it is possible to observe and find out about the society that produced them.¹² In addition, some of the required conditions of the artefacts displayed in museums on the past — such as their authenticity, the aura of the creator or product, the historic value derived from specific features etc. —, are still not essential for their musealization. The heritagization of fashion, “perceived as an expression of contemporary aesthetic culture, on equal standing with the other artistic disciplines” is one way to recognize its representative nature in our culture.¹³

Evidently, the allusion to the *Made in* in exhibitions, is created by drawing attention to the aesthetic, practical and symbolic dimension of the artefacts, since they characterize the phenomena of fashion in a particular period of time.¹⁴ This means the development of a narrative is indirect. Fashion culture, its creators and users can be shown in terms of authorship, metaphors and identities to glorify cultures and societies.

This article is based on the assumption that the use of exhibitions to communicate themes of social interest, is not a new phenomenon. At the same time, it can be assumed that the highlighting of fashion icons (by the creators, users, producers, etc.), is the target of fashion exhibitions in general, and, is thus a prerequisite for an exhibition. The purpose of my argument, however, is to illustrate with some examples, that fash-

8. Gregory John Ashworth, “From history to heritage—from heritage to identity. In search of concepts and models,” in *Building a New Heritage. Tourism, Culture and Identity in the New Europe*, ed. Gregory John Ashworth (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 14.

9. Eugenia Paulicelli, “Fashion: The cultural economy of Made in Italy,” *Fashion Practice* 6, n. 2, (2014): 164.

10. The fashion historian Adrian Forty, in his book *Objects of Desire*, suggests that design history is not constructed from the artefact only. For him, the life cycle of the artefact has historical relevance. See Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

11. Regina Bendix, “Heritage between economy and politics. An assessment from the perspective of cultural anthropology,” in *Intangible Heritage*, ed. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 260.

12. Ulpiano Meneses, “Fontes visuais, cultura visual, História visual. Balanço provisório, propostas cautelares,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 23, n. 45, (2003): 11–36.

13. Vinken (2005) apud Luca Marchetti, “Fashion curating in the fields of design: Issues in theory and practice,” in *Acts of 11th European Academy of Design Conference: The Value of Design Research*, (2015): 3.

14. The aesthetic, practical and symbolic dimension in design is a concept postulated by Bernd Löbach. The aesthetic dimension is defined by the artefact’s general appearance, the practical by the main use of the artefact, and the symbolic by the significance of the artefact for society. See Bernd Löbach, *Design Industrial. Bases para a configuração de produtos industriais* (São Paulo: Blücher, 2000).

ion exhibitions are the intellectual outcome of discourses and not heritagized artefacts. It is the *Made in* heritagization.

***Made in* in fashion exhibitions: briefly introduction and short examples**

The relevance of the *Made in*'s discourse on heritagization in general and on heritagization of fashion in particular, is a historical fact which is conditioned by our cultural environment. The heritagization of fashion reflects this statement: decades ago, fashion was, in aesthetic terms considered an applied or minor art; in terms of science or technology considered a craft; in terms of society, considered feminine and frivolous. By another hand, today, the economic and cultural importance of fashion is responsible for stimulating the creation of fashion narratives in museums in order to connect past, present and future, evidencing tradition and perspectives.

Eugenia Paulicelli, for example, suggests that to understand the *Made in Italy*, it "is necessary to take a few steps back into the past to see how crucial it is to connect key historical moments of the Italian nation to the formation of a discourse on fashion and how these discourses animate the practices and the politics of style and identity."¹⁵ The author characterizes the *Made in Italy* as a meta brand which seems to expand the Italian style's idea. Paulicelli explains that the campaign for the *Made in Italy* was launched in the 1970s to identify the Italian garment with "some examples of innovations in design and history that maintain and reinforce the high levels of Italian craftsmanship, attention to detail, beauty, and cultural heritage, the values that define the Italian character and style at its best."¹⁶ In this perspective, the *Made in* acquires in the museum the heritage sense or vice versa, and the heritage contributes to the valorization of Italian contemporary fashion:

Italian fashion, in fact, is a cultural icon, a style and welfare symbol, an aesthetical reference and a base for the life quality. In it, the history takes a leading role, as a basis. So, the fashion history, its studies and its social and historic cultures are central part of 'Italian Fashion System' and of Made in Italy.¹⁷

The heritagization process is based on a transmission's act since it puts present generations in contact with past generations.¹⁸ The *Made in* rhetoric — when the provenience or belonging of artefacts or images is associated with some society to be used in connection as irrefutable evidence of the creative and productive competence — reinforces the belief in the cultural and economic relevance of nations. The heritagization process or *Made in* discourse, therefore, is a contemporary value which projects the future and uses the past as "an appeal to the continuity."¹⁹

The economic and political value of this kind of cultural practices has been discovered by anthropologists over 40 years and more.²⁰ "Tradition was unmasked" and the concept of authenticity "has been thoroughly deconstructed" to understand the relationship between the "nation-building" and "the process of cultivat-

15. Paulicelli, "Fashion: The cultural economy of Made in Italy," 158.

16. Paulicelli, 169.

17. Daniela Calanca, "Conservação e valorização do patrimônio da moda. O papel social da pós-história." *Visualidades* 11, n. 1, (2013): 101.

18. Alexia Fontaine, "Conditions d'émergence et développement des collections vestimentaires: patrimonialisation, muséalisation, virtualisation: regards croisés en France - Canada - Québec (XIXe-XXIe siècle)," (PhD diss., Université Charles de Gaulle - Lille III, 2016).

19. Ashworth, "From history to heritage - from heritage to identity. In search of concepts and models," 13.

20. Bendix, "Heritage between economy and politics. An assessment from the perspective of cultural anthropology," 253-269.

ing symbolic cultural capital.²¹ Briefly, the heritagization process transforms the culture in an economic good.²²

In general terms, heritagization is a process led by museums. The act of selection, saving, studying and exhibiting artefacts which represent a specific culture is an activity developed in museums or similar institutions. Thus, permanent collections or temporary exhibitions reflect the fluidity of the sense of heritage. Past collections acquire new discursive uses while new collections are selected and arranged to attend new discursive challenges or intentions.

The enlargement of the role of fashion culture in museums is notable. Public and private museums with several vocations have been interested in fashion because it is considered a new knowledge object: artefacts or images which are “used for purposes of acquiring and transmitting knowledge.”²³ Briefly, fashion culture is a way to access knowledge from the scientific and cultural order or aesthetic pleasure, and the discourse about fashion is contributing to building great nations in a cultural sense.²⁴

These premises are observed in the diversity of fashion exhibitions which have been identified in this research. Over time, exhibitions have been enlarged in terms of quantity (there are more exhibitions in the last years than ten years ago) and discourses since fashion culture is used for talking another thing than fashion itself. Nowadays, exhibitions have more intentions than celebrating a designer or historical moment — such as *Hello, My Name Is Paul Smith* (The Design Museum 2013/2014) or *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London 1947–1957* (V&A 2007) — more than remembering historic events, such as *You Say You Want a Revolution?* (V&A 2016/2017), or, still, more than glamorizing celebrities, such as *April Ashley: Portrait of a Lady* (Liverpool Museum 2013/2015). The remembering of persons, periods or places through fashion exhibitions is exalting nations and their products: it is the *Made in*'s museological discourse.

The *Made in* or provenience's discourse seems to be the main goal of a large part of the process of heritagization that fashion exhibitions express themselves. Exhibitions which are dedicated to the system of production, circulation and consumption of fashion artefacts and senses from fashion culture are associated with the social conditions which are specific in a time-space. This discursive process intends to reinforce the image of its origin nations and how it is possible to observe separately.

Production: *Made in* as authorship

The conditions which have permitted the development (production in the large sense) of fashion culture are explored by the heritagization process. Through the linking between some product or technique with specific conditions of its development, it is possible to build the *Made in*'s discourse.

In the case of fashion material culture, the sense of authorship is widely present as a sign of *Made in*: ideas expressed for designers are connected with the place where they came from or the place where they have been settled. By this reason, the affiliation between designers, ideas, products and places enhances all of them.

The heritage discourse that is used to connect the authorship with the *Made in* differs according to the period of reference. There are three different possibilities — past, present and future — to produce several perspectives in terms of heritage: the past values the tradition, the present values the importance of contemporary fashion, and finally, the future presents new perspectives for fashion. Three different exhibitions could exemplify this idea:

21. Bendix, 254.

22. Bendix, 253–269.

23. Razgon (1982) apud Peter Van Mensch, “Towards a Methodology of Museology” (PhD diss., University of Zagreb, 1992).

24. Peter Van Mensch, “Methodological museology; or, towards a theory of museum practice,” in *Objects of Knowledge*, ed. Susan Pearce (London: The Atholone Press, 1990), 141–157.

In 2013/2014, the Museo del Tessuto de Prato (Italy) organized the exhibition *Prato Workshop: Italian Fabrics from the Renaissance*. The region where the museum is located (Tuscany) was an important center for the production of luxurious fabrics during the Italian Renaissance. According to the curatorship,

Great wealth, technical perfection and exquisite design of textiles such as velvets, damasks and lampas make Italian fabrics from this period the most requested by national and international markets for luxury goods. The exhibition highlights the beauty of over eighty fabrics, making a connection between some of the most important figurative works of the Renaissance, including those featured in the exhibition of the Praetorian Palace.²⁵

The influence of the Italian Renaissance on architecture, painting and sculpture extended to the exhibition's finest textiles, making them appear as one of the pillars of Western culture. According to Peter Burke, although some question him, "Renaissance Italy was a society where not only 'so much art,' but also 'a greater variety' of art has been produced."²⁶ This association is a discursive mechanism which intends to assert that these fabrics are a legacy to humanity.

The *Made in* is also hidden in the declarations which affirmed that the silk fabrics had been produced in Florence, Milan, Venice and Genoa, glorifying the Italian glorious past. Not only because of the "refined aesthetic" of the textiles, but also because velvets, damasks and lampas achieved "excellence in terms of raw materials and the technique of craft work," the Italian fabrics were "requested all over Europe." They were seemed as "only in the world and largely desired."²⁷

If the past attributes tradition to the *Made in*, the heritagization of contemporary creations reinforces aspirations in the fashion's field. The focus on the cultural influence that one country or region could have is understood by the audience as economic power. In this sense, exhibitions devoted to contemporary creators or producers exalt multiplatform actuations, connection with the arts, high cultural influence, brand's significance and also the private life of the people enrolled in the fashion system. The large public is interested in fashion as a spectacle, and the contemporary scene provides this information.

One good example of this is the high performance of Karl Lagerfeld, who is considered the most prestigious German fashion designer in the last decades.²⁸ He was the subject of the exhibition *Karl Lagerfeld: Parallel Contrasts* that occurred in the Museum Folkwang in Essen (Germany) in 2014.²⁹ The designer himself contributed to the curatorship of the exhibition.

Lagerfeld symbolizes to Germany, in terms of fashion design, one contemporary voice. The exhibition, with focus on Lagerfeld's obsessions—photos, books and fashion—represents the trajectory of one contemporary fashion designer. Not only Lagerfeld's presence in consecrated fields, his role as a creative director of Maison Chanel, but also his performance in the fashion industry (his name is a brand in perfumes, glasses, cosmetics, clothing, etc.) put Germany in the global fashion scene.

Lagerfeld is much more than a simple fashion designer, and *Parallel Contrasts*, which features more than 400 works, reveals the diversity of his creative output. From Chanel to Fendi and from his namesake brand to his collaboration with H&M, Lagerfeld has always known how to catch everyone's attention. On show there will be his photos, his favorite books, various

25. "Fabrics from the Italian Renaissance opens at Textile Museum in Prato," SACI The Art Blog, accessed December 1, 2017, <https://saci-art.com/2013/09/20/fabrics-from-the-italian-renaissance-opens-at-textile-museum-in-prato-monday-september-23/>.

26. Peter Burke, *The Italian renaissance: Culture and society in Italy* (Cambridge: Princeton Press, 2014), 18–19.

27. "Officina Pratese. Tessuti del Rinascimento Italiano," Oltre Pistoia, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.oltrepistoia.it/scoprire-il-territorio/prato/arte/mostre/82-officina-pratese-tessuti-del-rinascimento-italiano.html>.

28. "Karl Lagerfeld," Folkwang Museum, accessed January 6, 2018, <https://www.museum-folkwang.de/en/news/exhibitions/archive/karl-lagerfeld.html>.

29. "Karl Lagerfeld the Focus of Two German Exhibitions," WWD, accessed January 6, 2018, <http://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/double-exposure-7351970/?module=Fashion-Fashion%2oScoops-main>.

sketches from his collections, architectural models specially made for his catwalk shows, his illustrations and even a piano he has designed.³⁰

The *Made in*, finally, can also be built from promises about the future. Countries which did not enjoy tradition or recognition in the global field of fashion design are investing in the innovation and transformation discourse in fashion. It is the case, for example, of the Nordic countries.

One exhibition which has been organized in the National Design Museum in Helsinki in 2014 about the Danish designer Henrik Vibskov is a good example. Vibskov was born in 1972 and takes part in a generation which is contributing to erect the image that fashion from Nordic countries is auspicious. In short, proposals in fashion that came from those countries would be an alternative to the traditional (or old) ideas that came from the traditional European nations.

This kind of approach is well evaluated because it presents to the cultural scene names and proposals which are considered a newness. Emma Davenport has affirmed in the blog Wornthrough that when she visited the exhibition, she did not know Henrik Vibskov but also did not have any information about fashion design from Scandinavian countries in general.³¹ When she looked for information about Vibskov in the *Berg's Companion to Fashion*, she did not surprise herself by not finding anything about him.³²

Yet, perhaps that was part of the problem. What was I looking for? A nice summarized discussion on the identity of Scandinavian fashion that would explain the cultural identities of several quite distinct geographical locations? Well, yes, sort of.³³

The absence of this reference is an indication that, in fact, Scandinavian fashion design, until this moment, does not occupy a featured position in fashion history. But the presence of Henrik Vibskov in this and in more exhibitions or moments when the Scandinavian brands and names are spotted demonstrates that the region is emergent. The *Made in*, in this case, could indicate the region should anticipate the future in terms of fashion. In theory, the region is renewing what came from more traditional places in the fashion field.

Generally Scandinavian fashion is quite sleek, and it's known to be minimal and simplistic. But a lot of the new designers have studied at the best schools in London so they're more extreme and more focused on details than before.³⁴

The climatic and geographic singularity of the Nordic region has produced a generalized idea that the fashion from these countries is simple and monochromatic. Vibskov should be a revolutionary because in his hands, Scandinavian fashion is more colorful and offbeat.³⁵ Thus, his name and other Nordic names are using the tradition but are producing aesthetic experimentation.

30. "Karl Lagerfeld and his parallel contrasts," HG Issue, accessed January 6, 2018, <http://www.hgissue.com/new/karl-lagerfeld-and-his-parallel-contrasts-exhibition-at-the-folkwang-museum-essen-germany/>.

31. "Henrik Vibskov exhibition, Helsinki Design Museum," Worn Through, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://www.wornthrough.com/2014/02/henrik-vibskov-exhibition-helsinki-design-museum/>.

32. *Berg's Companion to Fashion* (2010) is a kind of encyclopedia or a reference book which is dedicated to students and to those who are curious about fashion in general. It is more than 300 entries about designers, clothing and key concepts in fashion. *Berg's Companion to Fashion* is edited by Valerie Steele.

33. "Henrik Vibskov exhibition."

34. "Scandinavian Invasion," Dazed & Confused Magazine, accessed January 7, 2018, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/15696/1/scandinavian-invasion>.

35. "Unravelling the Eclectic World of Henrik Vibskov, Denmark's Adored Fashion Designer," *The Culture Trip*, accessed January 7, 2018, <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/denmark/articles/unravelling-the-eclectic-world-of-henrik-vibskov-denmarks-adored-fashion-designer/>.

Circulation: *Made in* as a metaphor

The circulation, a second approach of the *Made in*, is a process to social intermediation. Through the association of fashion products with meanings which encourage the consumption, clothing is interpreted besides its functional perspective. Thus, circulation is responsible for producing and supporting the imagination which connects creators, materials, silhouettes, rules, users, etc., to positive values which are required for the consumption and use of clothing and styles.

In the last years, this approach has been potentialized because it permits that the same artefact is interpreted in different angles. Several exhibitions are using fashion to produce singularities with regions or contexts. The more unique or original, the bigger the sense of belonging will be.

The positive connection of product image to place yields a kind of monopoly rent that address to places, their insignia, and the brand names that may attach to them. Their industries grow as a result, and the local economic base takes shape. Favorable images create entry barriers for products from competing places.³⁶

The artefacts, in this case, are not moved to heritage. The *Made in* is generated for the relationship between fashion and a political-economic-social condition and produces a determined meaning. The possibility of demonstrating that a specific fashion culture emerges in an exclusive context is explored as cultural heritage.

This is the case of the exhibition *Vogue 100: A Century of Style*. It was an exhibition to celebrate the 100th anniversary of British *Vogue* in 2016. It is a kind of exhibition to prove that the United Kingdom was and is a nation that new lifestyles, models, products, aesthetics, photographers, etc., have been stimulated. The value of *Vogue* as a state's spokesperson is indisputable, especially that the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, was photographed for their cover to celebrate their centenary.

The place selected for the exhibition, the National Portrait Gallery in London, is a clear demonstration that fashion has been put in the same level of painting, especially portrait. Two hundred eighty images to remember ten decades of the magazine have been organized in an inverted chronological order. The first one is Kate Moss, one of the most important symbols of British fashion.

British *Vogue* is considered one fashion bible with histories full of metaphors, where images capture the “peculiarly British sense of aristocracy, adventure and female power” that “has created and molded our aspirations, not just reflected them.”³⁷ Not all can buy clothing that is in the magazine, but yes, all of us can repeat “the idea behind the photograph.”³⁸ This attitude permits that the imagination produced by *Vogue* is desired and reproduced around the world.

Finally, the exhibition *Rik Wouters and the Private Utopia* associates fashion with art. Attributing value to fashion design, mainly in its heritagization, is a rhythmic process. In 2016/2017, the MoMu and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp celebrated 100 years of Rik Wouters's death. They promoted an exhibition which superimposed the paintings from Wouters with the fashion production from contemporary Belgian designers and artists.

The central theme of this exhibition is the intimate relationship between the painter and his wife. Rik Wouters was the only fauvist who made paintings of everyday domestic scenes. The exhibition will combine a selection of Rik Wouters' paintings with various garments by acclaimed fashion designers. Prominent designers including Walter Van Beirendonck, Dries Van

36. Molotch (1996) apud Allen Scott, *The cultural economy of cities. Essays on the geography of image producing industries* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), 5.

37. “Vogue at 100: models in the blitz, Diana with a tiara and the Kate moss creation myth,” The Guardian, accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2016/feb/09/vogue-100-models-blitz-diana-tiara-kate-moss-fashion-bible-century-of-style-british-female-power>.

38. “Vogue 100: A Century of Style, National Portrait Gallery, review: ‘leaves you reeling,’” Telegraph, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/vogue-100-a-century-of-style-national-portrait-gallery-review-le/>.

Noten, Ann Demeulemeester and Dirk Van Saene have found inspiration for their designs in the artwork of the Belgian painter.³⁹

The connection that has been proposed was not limited to the aesthetic dimension. The central question in the artwork of Wouters — a good life — has been associated with Belgian contemporary fashion. The exhibition seemed to demonstrate that the fashion industry ruins the creative process, and because of this, “contemporary designers are going back to their roots and focus once again on craftsmanship, daily life and slow fashion.”⁴⁰

The clothing that has been produced for the exhibition does not attend dressing requirements. For this reason, the utopia that is present in Rik Wouters’s paintings has been individually reinterpreted with the use of materials, techniques or other idiosyncratic elements.⁴¹ All of them contribute to the uniqueness of Belgian fashion.⁴²

Consumption: *Made in* as identity

It was in the twentieth century that fashion was understood to be more decisive as an identity expression.⁴³ Fashion identity, not only can describe short social groups that are united for a common interest — the teenagers, punks, hipsters, etc. — but also can nominate entire populations that are from circumscribed geographical areas, such as Parisians or Brazilians. In the case of national identities, despite the critique to the artificiality of its construction, its efficiency is inevitable:⁴⁴

When people identify with one another as compatriots, over and above the many more specific gender, ethnic, cultural, or religious identities they may have, they are more likely to display generalized trust, and to show solidarity. This reduces social conflict and increases willingness to cooperate, which in turn makes it easier for the society to produce public goods, to decide a wide range of matters by democratic means, and to channel its resources in the direction of disadvantaged members.⁴⁵

Sometimes persons are considered a symbol of a nation because they are assumed as an example of the population’s positive qualities. Their appearance towards their fashion identity, therefore, would acquire significance to represent power and distinction. Through this way, independent of the approach assumed in fashion exhibitions dedicated to identities, the fashion identity of the nation’s icons promotes the context where they have lived.

Two exhibitions that occurred in Paris and London during the last decade are good examples of this practice: *Dalida: A Wardrobe from the City to the Stage* in the Palais Galliera (Paris) in 2017 and *Diana, Her Fashion History*, which will be exhibited in the Kensington Palace (London) in the period from 2017 to 2018.

39. “Rik Wouters & the Private Utopia,” Focus on Belgium, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://focusonbelgium.be/en/events/rik-wouters-private-utopia>.

40. “Expo @ MOMU: Rik Wouters & The Private Utopia,” Philosophie, Accessed January 11, 2018, <https://philosophiesite.wordpress.com/2016/09/25/momu-rik-wouters-the-private-utopia/>.

41. “Rik Wouters & the Private Utopia at MOMU,” Itsliquid, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.itsliquid.com/rik-wouters-the-private-utopia.html>.

42. “Rik Wouters & the Private Utopia,” Rubens Project, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://www.projetrubens.eu/en/rik-wouters-the-private-utopia/>. Rubens Project. “Rik Wouters & the Private Utopia.”

43. Luca Marchetti, “Fashion curating in the fields of design: Issues in theory and practice,” in *Acts of 11th European Academy of Design Conference: The Value of Design Research*, (2015): 1–16.

44. Daniel Miller, “Introduction,” in *Clothing as material culture*, ed. Susanne Kchler and Daniel Miller (Berg: New York, 2005), 1–20.

45. David Miller and Sundas Ali, “Testing the national identity argument,” *European Political Science Review* 6, n. 2, (2014): 238.

Dalida was a French superstar (1933–1987) exalted for her sophistication and beauty. As a singer, she represents an aural period for the French music: “An Egyptian-born, Italian female singer who became France’s most commercially successful female artist of the second half of the twentieth century.”⁴⁶

The exhibition occurred on the 30th anniversary of her death and suggests that her personal and professional trajectory is mirrored in her clothing: “Her wardrobe always followed the movements of fashion, but it also reflected her artistic development.”⁴⁷ The museographic discourse has two main intentions: the first one demonstrates that Dalida was dressed for great designers and the second one explicates that her wardrobe followed the fashion tendencies. If all this has been narrated from French creations, the exhibition also is, in a certain sense, one way to praise French fashion design:

She was a fervent lover of fashion and prepared to wear everything: from 1950s New Look dresses by Jacques Esterel to a Balmain’s seventies pinafore dress; she was chic and understated in Loris Azarro, dazzling in sequined disco outfits by Michel Fresnay in the 1980s, classical and timeless in Yves Saint Laurent rive gauche, and then there was Jean-Claude Jitrois who said dressing Dalida was ‘like dressing the stars for the Cannes Film Festival.’⁴⁸

Diana, Her Fashion History, an exhibition in Kensington Palace from 2017 to 2018, is also another example of the success of the national identity through clothing. The exhibition, which contains 25 looks, tells in six steps the history of the fashion progress of the Princess of Wales. Similar to the Dalida exhibition, there is a chronology of fashion, but especially of British fashion design.

The large part of the princess’s emblematic looks (which have been reproduced in the media so many times) is in the exhibition. Diana’s role as “a proud ambassador for the British fashion industry” is explored by the museography which, beyond clothing, is constituted for accessories and photos. The importance of the British designers—Bill Pashely, Catherine Walker, Victor Edelstien, Victoria Haddock, Bruce Oldfield, Bellville Sasson, Christina Stambolian, David and Elizabeth Emanuel, Regamus and others—for the development of the Lady Di look is highlighted.⁴⁹

Princess Diana (1961–1997) benefited British fashion during her lifetime as a representative of the monarchy because she was dressed by British brands and designers. She was conscious of the meaning of her choices, and after the divorce, she was dressed by continental designers.⁵⁰ This fact is an evidence that nations attribute importance to the fashion phenomenon.

The exhibition captures the evolution of the princess’ style, from the demure, romantic outfits of her first public appearances to the “Dynasty Di” glamor and self-assured international confidence of her final years — the Versace, Dior, and Chanel, they came in the ’90s, after her separation.⁵¹

Fashion, heritage and *Made in*: final considerations

Museums are the perfect place to demonstrate the conquests of each nation because they are institutions which represent official voices. At the same time that museology contributes to establishing some sense of

46. Barbara Lebrun, “Daughter of the Mediterranean, docile European: Dalida in the 1950s,” *Journal of European Popular Culture* 4, n. 1, (2013): 85.

47. “Dalida, une Garde-Robe de la Ville à la Scène,” Palais Galliera, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr/en/exhibitions/dalida-une-garde-robe-de-la-ville-la-scene>.

48. “Dalida, une Garde-Robe.”

49. “Diana: Her Fashion Story (Part 1),” Costume Society, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/diana-her-fashion-story>.

50. “Diana: Her Fashion Story.”

51. “Inside the Princess Diana Style Exhibition at Kensington Palace,” *Vogue*, accessed January 20, 2018, <https://www.vogue.com/article/princess-diana-exhibition-kensington-palace>.

belonging which corresponds to political-economic interests, today fashion is one of the most important expression of the economic and cultural conquests of the nation.⁵²

The human and social sciences showed that fashion is a word-luggage, one door opened to the comprehension of dressing fact: the appearance history and culture, the economy and sociology of the visibility, the technical and industrial system of apparel.⁵³

It is possible that the fashion curation transformation during the last decades can contribute to associating the cultural heritage of fashion with the *Made in* discourse. In the museums and galleries, “the so-called ‘new’ art history as practiced in the university draws on alternative approaches and methodologies derived from cultural studies.”⁵⁴ The “productions of fashion designers, or artists of all stripes for whom fashion is a subject of reflection” are welcome.⁵⁵ According to Valerie Steele, many exhibitions are controversial and widely criticized for attending to the economic interests of the sponsors, such that they seem like entertainment shows, and demonstrating historical inaccuracy.⁵⁶

In a certain sense, this could be a manner to continually amplify the dimension of the heritage from a nation since “cultural heritage is considered to have high social value and to be endowed with the capacity to foster positive identification within groups or entire polities.”⁵⁷ According to Asworth, museums, in addition to transmitting values (socialization), also legitimize the values to reinforce political ideologies, “and groups can justify their dominance by an appeal to the continuity of the past and present.”⁵⁸

The examples used to discuss the heritagization of *Made in* are shown in these points:

- a. The exhibitions are interpreted as evidence of distinction, power, singularity, etc., from the nations which they represent.
- b. The element of continuity is always identified and past, present and future are merged.
- c. The exhibitions that were previously commented can indicate that the discourse of belonging is not dependent (only) from the artefact or material dimension of fashion.⁵⁹ Any country could present one fashion discourse.
- d. The association of some fashion culture with a specific place includes the process of creation and development of products and images, the system which produces senses about them and, finally, the use that people make of fashion.
- e. The heritagization process, therefore, tends to create a singular relationship between nation and fashion to identify and legitimize the immaterial or abstract dimension of fashion.⁶⁰

Thus, the exhibition of historic, consecrated or emergent designers is an affirmation that one country has tradition, recognition or perspectives. The connection of fashion culture with arts, media or any cultural system previously legitimated is a clear demonstration that one country has a symbolic or cultural capital. Finally, the valorization of some fashion culture through the use of local brands for representative people is a recognition of the superiority of one fashion culture.

52. This idea was developed by Benedict Anderson. He argues that the nation is an abstract concept used by countries to maintain the political union. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

53. Fontaine, “Conditions d’émergence et développement des collections vestimentaires: patrimonialisation, muséification, virtualisation: regards croisés en France - Canada - Québec (XIXe-XXIe siècle),” 1.

54. Steele, “Museum quality: The rise of the fashion exhibition,” 24–25.

55. Marchetti, “Fashion curating in the fields of design: Issues in theory and practice,” 8.

56. Steele, “Museum quality: The rise of the fashion exhibition,” 7–30.

57. Bendix, “Heritage between economy and politics. An assessment from the perspective of cultural anthropology,” 258.

58. Ashworth, “From history to heritage—from heritage to identity. In search of concepts and models,” 14.

59. Riello, “The object of fashion: Methodological approaches to the study of fashion,” 1–9.

60. Riello, 1–9.

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