

# Summary

Dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of fashion from an academic perspective, the quarterly journal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* views fashion as a cultural phenomenon, offering the reader a wide range of articles by leading Western and Russian specialists, as well as classical texts on fashion theory. From the history of dress and design to body practices; from the work of well-known designers to issues around consumption in fashion; from beauty and the fashionable figure through the ages to fashion journalism, fashion and PR, fashion and city life, art and fashion, fashion and photography — *Fashion Theory* covers it all.

In this issue's **Dress** section, we take a look at fashion and mending practices and start with **Ingun Grimstad Klepp's** paper *Remake and repair — scissors and power*.

For many decades, repair and sewing were essential in the handicraft and needlework education for women in Norway. The goal was to enable individuals to take good care of clothes and reduce the household's financial expenses. Following the growth of fast fashion in the 1980s, repairs have held a low status, and schools have used the ever-increasing

mountain of hardly used clothes and textiles for redesign projects. But something is about to change. Interest in repair is growing from both environmental activists, artists, and the industry itself. Repairs are no longer just frugal, intended to be as invisible and as strong as possible, and remaking with scissors and “creativity” may not be the best way to take care of the large amounts of textiles that surround us.

**Linor Goralik** contributes *Shame and Pride: The Remaking of Clothes as ‘Uber-Soviet’ Practice in the ‘Shifted 1990s’*. Under the ‘shifted 1990s’, we understand the period between the beginning of Perestroika, and the relative economic stabilisation of 1995–1996. Following the fall of the USSR, Soviet people needed all their unique Soviet-era skills in order to be able to dress in the new, non-Soviet world. Their ability to “get hold” of things, to swap items, repair and remake them, set up impromptu markets, trade and bargain at existing ones, organise clothing lotteries in the workplace, turn useless rags into wearable items — all of a sudden, these skills possessed by resourceful Soviets were much in demand. During those years of extreme hardship and severe shortages, they came into play, like never before.

The harsh economic situation and individual aesthetic and personal challenges of the new times called for the total mobilisation of Soviet-era skills in the area of vestimentary existence. The powerful dialectical tension between the ‘non-Soviet’ spirit of the new era, and the ultra-Soviet nature of its vestimentary practices, leads us to recall the upcycling practices of those times with an ambiguous emotional mixture of disgust and admiration, squeamishness and nostalgia.

Upcycling truly became a mass practice. Nowadays, we look back on the unique items it helped create with both tenderness and disgust. Tenderness, because they became significant, filled with meaning as part of our personal history. Disgust, as they were linked with poverty, poor quality, and the need to resort to such practices in the first place.

One of the factors in the emergence, in the post-Soviet years following Perestroika, of the ‘society of upcycling’, was the new openness within society to accept hitherto unknown visual codes. Vestimentary attitudes were shifting. All around, unique items were appearing, homemade, not confirming to any single general standard. Despite their imperfections and, at times, eccentric appearance, these upcycled items no longer challenged socially acceptable norms.

A new, individualistic society was emerging, in which they naturally played a part. Fashion was no longer dictated from above. Instead, it was being created by individuals in accordance with their abilities, creative vision and personal understanding of current trends. If, in Soviet times, such individual contributions to fashion were frequently concealed, during this period, they were made quite openly.

The cultural biographies of these unique upcycled items, as well as the items themselves, were, at times, extremely short. Poorly crafted clothes were sometimes

worn only once. Other items, however, were more fortunate: with a gifted and persistent owner, they served for many years, and some respondents admitted to wearing clothes from their 'upcycling days', even now.

The upcycling process could be deep, or superficial. With deep upcycling, the original items underwent very significant alteration, the process itself often requiring considerable skill. The degree of depth involved was, interestingly, often belittled or underestimated by the wearer. Describing the upcycling process, respondents repeatedly used words such as 'just', 'simply', 'merely', when in fact the degree of alteration was very significant. Other respondents routinely created new items, using the same method ('I altered a lot of clothes, and I usually put the parts together with a crochet hook').

Others saw the upcycling days as an opportunity to use all their skills in handcraft, from leather weaving, to turning clothes inside out to create new items. All kinds of materials were used. *'I think, in those days, that was the first thing I thought of when I looked at clothes: how could they be upcycled,'* one respondent remarked.

If, today, upcyclers usually work with items not that dissimilar to the desired end product, in the 'shifted 1990s', due to the circumstances, people often had to work with material which was nothing like the final item.

Describing the results of these complex creative endeavours, respondents, perhaps unsurprisingly, often used superlatives. 'Everyone was bowled over', 'it was incredible', 'awesome', 'amazing', 'unbelievable'. The reason for this could be linked to etiquette, which did not allow observers to criticise, or to a desire to erase unpleasant memories, or, perhaps, to reluctance to share narratives of unsuccessful experiences. None of this, however, accounts for the degree of exultation in these narratives of success. Emotionally, they are striking and vivid, recounted in elated tones.

In our surveys and interviews, many male and female respondents spoke of the era of total upcycling as a unique period of designer creativity. *'You could do anything with your clothes,'* people enthused, because *'you could simply wear anything you liked.'* It is my hope that this will not prove the case, yet the current situation, with its new economic reality, may provoke a return of upcycling. Albeit not in total form, upcycling could, nonetheless, once more become much more popular than it is today. At present, at least in the larger towns in developed countries, it mainly exists as a hobby, or a practice chosen out of personal beliefs.

Should upcycling return on a major scale, the older generation of Russians might, once more, be forced to recall their Soviet-era practical skills. At the same time, nowadays, both they, and younger Russians will, one hopes, at least have at their disposal a vast array of online information on this topic. More than thirty years after the start of Perestroika, the vestimentary world of the 'uber-Soviet' person has, it seems, receded into the past.

**Iryna Kucher** offers *The New Is Not 'Well-Forgotten Old': A Comparative Analysis of Mending Practices in Western and Post-Soviet Contexts*. This paper describes the increased interest in mending practices. The research on mending is currently somewhat limited, and mainly conducted in the Western world. Assuming that the answers regarding how to rediscover and redistribute mending knowledge are to be found in the everyday repair culture of the post-socialist world, the author proposes to acknowledge the post-socialist Ukrainian melange of everyday repair practices for their meaning of resilience, diversity and unintended but real sustainability. The theoretical foundation underpinning this practice-based PhD study is the theory of consumption temporalities. Through the wardrobe interviews conducted with the participants of the design research project, this study describes why people engage with mending, and how these practices are linked to the growing trend of second-hand consumption. Moreover, the narratives of the co-explorers of the project illustrate the different interpretations of the mending aesthetic codes by people approaching mending and those who practice clothing repair regularly. Finally, repair infrastructures in the Danish and Ukrainian contexts are compared, accentuating the two-level repair infrastructure in the Ukrainian context, which facilitates the development of mending competencies through school education and a network of competent and affordable seamstress services.

**Amy Twigger Holroyd** contributes *Perceptions and practices of dress-related leisure: shopping, sorting, making and mending*.

This article explores the attitudes of seven women to four dress-related activities: shopping for new garments; sorting clothes within the wardrobe; making — specifically knitting — clothes for themselves; and mending damaged items. This topic is of particular interest within the field of fashion and sustainability, because clothing consumption could be reduced if activity were to be diverted from shopping to alternative fashion practices. Positioning these practices as intrinsically rewarding leisure activities may encourage such a shift. The research demonstrates that all four of the dress-related activities occupy a grey area between leisure and chore. However, because perceptions are personal, context dependent and flexible, there is scope for attitudes to be changed. An experimental project indicates that it is possible to reframe mending as a desirable leisure activity by integrating attributes such as social interaction and creativity. This reframing is aided by individuals' concerns about wasting resources, but can also be limited by concerns about wasting time.

**Sanem Odabasi** interviews Sarah Scaturro in *Repair of Fashion Objects: An Interview with Sarah Scaturro* Fashion conservation practices could overlap with sustainable fashion design methods in some instances, and one of the most prominent upcycling methods, "repair," is such an example. Sustaining the longevity of garments and repairing the damages to give multiple lives to a garment is

a common intent for both practices, yet, the interventions and manifestations of repair could be opposite intentions. This interview with Sarah Scaturro reflects her experiences of repairing fashion objects from both worlds of fashion, inside the museum where delicate skills and in-depth knowledge are required, and outside where imperfections and practical applications are received well. This paper suggests that a garment's meanings deepen and change as the conservator interacts with each object for a long time, creating diverse memories. Fashion conservatory practices are similar to the Bergsonian sense of time, where fashion garments mean more than a temporal object whose duration, time, and memory are involved in every detail of the process. Thus, the perceptions about the fashion objects differ, and the decisions do not necessarily follow a linear path.

In **Focus column** presents *Mending Diaries*, a joint contribution from the participants of the Mendit Research Lab at the Higher School of Economics. The Lab researches into the practices of mending (predominantly in clothes) and its socio-cultural, economic and political contexts.

In **Body** we yet again turn to hair and open with paper **Catherine Wilkinson, Samantha Wilkinson & Holly Saron's** "*Wearing Me Place on Me Face*": *Scousebrows, Placemaking and Everyday Creativity*. This paper emerges from a multidisciplinary research project called "Brews and Brows: Shaping Stories from Eyebrows to Scousebrows" that entailed gathering stories about eyebrow grooming from women and men from the city of Liverpool, UK, and creating a new taxonomy of the eyebrow where none currently exists. The point of departure for this paper is to challenge the negative commentary on the Scousebrow in the press and social media by engaging people in discussions surrounding the personal significance of eyebrow shaping and styling. In challenging this denigration, this paper uses data from in-depth interviews with eyebrow artists and clients and ethnographic interviews at a four-day event held in Liverpool. This paper argues that the everyday (little c) creative practice of eyebrow grooming is not only an important part of crafting and performing identity, particularly for Scouse women, but also an example of bottom-up placemaking in the city of Liverpool.

The Hair Sculptures of Yasemen Hussein Beatrice Behlen London-born mixed media sculptor Yasemen Hussein started to make hair out of wire after stumbling across a heap of electrical copper cable in a scrapyard in the mid-1990s. Since then her hair and other sculptures have been featured in offices, shops, galleries, and museums in Britain and abroad. In 2009, on the recommendation of Philip Treacy, Yasemen was commissioned to make metal "wigs" for mannequins in the Museum of London's Pleasure Garden display. Yasemen and the museum's senior curator of fashion, Beatrice Behlen, bonded over the many challenges thrown up by this not entirely straight-forward project. In this conversation, Yasemen and

Beatrice discuss the sculptor's attitude to her own hair, chart the development of her work, explore what drew Yasemen to recreating something soft and pliable out of heavy metal, the reasons behind the particular hairstyles she chooses to sculpt, as well as her working method.

**Pauline Rushton** contributes *A Dress Made from Human Hair: A Reflection on Its Display, Interpretation and Ethics*.

In 2012 the National Museums Liverpool (NML) acquired a dress made from human hair extensions for its fashion collection. It was made to be worn at the 2011 Alternative Miss Liverpool pageant, organized by Homotopia, the city's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) arts organization. This paper outlines the dress's purpose as a performative garment and looks at the reasons for its acquisition by NML. The different approaches taken to its display to date are examined, set against the broader background to the display of hair in museums over the past century. Other examples of human hair garments are also considered in relation to the dress. Some of these were made as fashion garments, some as artworks or, like NML's dress, for performance. All of them have provoked a variety of reactions in viewers, conditioned by the different contexts in which they have been viewed. The ethical issues related to the sourcing and the display of human hair in museum settings are also considered, together with a proposed approach for the future display of NML's dress.

**Culture** is devoted to fashion and labour.

**Myles Ethan Lascity** offers *"Cool" Workings: Glamour Labor and Identity Issues in Fashion Branding*. As Japanese retailer Uniqlo expands across the USA, it has been building its brand identity in a multitude of ways. Flagship store experiences, athlete sponsorships, online videos, and sponsored articles have worked to raise Uniqlo's name recognition and promote its simple, trendy designs. This paper explores Uniqlo from the human aspect, specifically how consumers engage with and help shape the brand. Scholars have noted that consumers and workers play a role in establishing, promoting and personifying retail brands. Recently, discussions of immaterial and aesthetic labor have been extended with the idea of "glamour labor" — the actions individuals undertake to seem "cool." Glamour labor helps celebrities, models and individual consumers build a personal image in everyday life and through social media. This paper applies the idea of glamour labor to a case study of Uniqlo shoppers and consumers. Drawing from a series of in-depth interviews and "shopper observation", it is possible to see how the brand is extended and altered through consumers' glamour labor. Consumers who engage in this process are helping to extend the brand while also burnishing their own cool credentials.

**Alexandra Tuite** contributes *Gendered Entrepreneurialism and the Labour of Online Consumption in the Independent Fashion Sector*. In the intersecting space

between contemporary economic models, social media, and fashion and the body, it has been suggested that women are performing emotional and esthetic labor with increasing scrutiny, intensity and impact. This article considers interactions between and within two Instagram accounts from the perspective of these intersecting issues, using the labor they perform within the context of online consumption as a case study. The purpose is first to understand how these interactions occur in online contexts; and secondly, to examine what insight these interactions can offer into gendered labor and entrepreneurialism in fashion. Data was collected over a 12-month period in which the Instagram accounts of the fashion label Elizabeth Suzann and an Instagram community dedicated to her clothing were observed. Findings highlight the centrality of the body in their interactions and it is proposed that the accounts studied reflect a type of gendered entrepreneurialism in which esthetic and emotional labor is performed in order to create a welcoming, safe and useful space — especially for women whose bodies do not conform to social and industry norms.

**Olga Gurova** presents *In Search of a Dream In Between Two Worlds: Models Who Blog*. The author looks at the working practices of certain Russian-speaking models. On the one hand, they work in a market where the model's body is a commodity offered by agencies to companies which use models to promote goods and services (Mears, Finlay 2005, Mears 2010).

The models described are however also bloggers who have set up and present their own YouTube channels, which they use to talk about modelling and to build up their own personal brands. This image reflects their identity in a given professional setting, as well as the cultural narratives connected with modelling (Titton 2015). Besides YouTube, the models have profiles on social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, and, more recently, Telegram. The work of these models and bloggers is digital, but also physical and emotional. How did digitalisation affect this work? What narratives about the wellbeing of the models are discussed in their blogs? These are among the questions examined by the author of this paper.

**Zemfira Salamova** contributes *The Position of the Fashion Critic and the Digitalisation of Fashion*. Since the 2000s, fashion blogging has spread globally, first via personal websites, later via social media such as Instagram and YouTube. With the growth of the digital media and internet use, fashion magazines and specialised educational establishments ceased to be the sole purveyors of fashion information. The entire mechanism of access to the debate on fashion has changed.

In the past, fashion critics had traditionally worked for special publications, playing the role of mediators between the constantly shifting fashion industry, and the general public. With modern virtual communication, this institutional role has become less clear. English-language social media are full of self-appointed fashion critics, some of whom, admittedly, eventually declare themselves to be traditional 'field agents,' fashion brands or publications. Whilst not dissimilar to

fashion bloggers, this new generation of fashion critics has chosen a different approach to the debate on fashion, combining entertaining material with intellectual content and critique.

The balance between different forms of content may vary depending on the platform, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok. What kind of fashion discourse is being established by the fashion critics of today? And what functions do they see themselves as performing in the field of fashion? To answer these questions, the author takes a closer look at the self-presentation of fashion critics Luke Meagher (@hautemode) and Pierre Alexandre M'Pelé (@pam\_boy) across social media.

**Ilaria Vanni** offers “*Why Save the World When You can Design It?*” *Precarity and Fashion in Milan*.

This paper considers precarity and the fashion industry, focusing on Serpica Naro: a fictitious designer invented by a Milan-based fashion collective involved in social research on intellectual property, subjectivity in the creative industries, and precarious forms of labor in the fashion system.

In our column **In focus** we offer some notes from the participants of Mendit Research Lab on the way the idea of mending is becoming increasingly relevant in the current political and social situation. We also offer some contributions from a few female artists who refer to mending in their creative work.

In *Events* **Asya Aladjalova** reviews Russian Constantinople exhibition at the Museum of the East (December 17, 2021 — February 23, 2022).

In *Books* **Peter McNeil** reviews *Bally — A History of Footwear in the Interwar Period* edited by Anna-Brigitte Schlittler and Katharina Tietze Transcript (2021).

**Emanuela Scarpellini** offers her review of *Biki: French Visions for Italian Fashion* by Simona Segre Reinach (2019).