

CHAPTER 11

STATE OF FASHION: SEARCHING FOR THE NEW LUXURY

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Introduction

Due to the digitalisation and globalisation of fashion at the start of the 21st century a new generation of fashion designers has come to rise, who no longer need to move to established fashion centres to start a global career and to gain global recognition. Through web shops, blogs, social media and local Fashion Weeks they are able to establish a global business from anywhere. As a result, the fashion discourse has slowly started to change into a more decolonial,¹ inclusive narrative and practice.²

As stated in my previous exhibitions and research, this new generation of fashion designers are operating from a new and engaged vision.³ Being aware of the current social and environmental issues of the current fashion system, they have started to fundamentally rethink and redefine the fashion system by implementing new values and new imaginations that are more inclusive and informed, decentred, using sustainability, local economy, craft revivals and new micro-narratives as key drivers. With increasing amounts of newcomers having a non-Western background, the fashion discourse is opening up to include new voices, and different values and aesthetics which are not part of the conventional values and notions of the dominant Western Fashion history, and to welcome the intertwining of this discourse with conceptualism, modernism and post-modernism. Instead, this new generation is taking an approach in line with what curator and scholar Nicolas Bourriaud coins 'altermodernism', a new aesthetic with a more inclusive value-system because of globalisation. 'From the understanding that the universal master narrative of modernism is obsolete, as well as the idea of judging each work according to the codes of its author's local culture implies the existence of viewers who have mastered each culture's referential field, we need to imagine and learn to decode any global language preferable without judgement'.⁴ A globalisation that according to the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has resulted in a new concept of imagination no longer portrays/presents an ephemeral and glamorous phantasy, but an organised field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labour and culturally organised practice).⁵

My findings are based on the research I have undertaken, as a curator, for the exhibition *The Future of Fashion is Now* that took place from October 11, 2014 until January 18, 2015 in Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, addressing how globalisation was driving the current changes in the fashion system then. Here I showcased how sustainable thinking, digitalisation, a new approach to materials and

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craft became drivers for change whilst embedding speculative ideas for a better future reflecting new values – via new narratives and new stories – as well as by embedding more inclusive identities, and political activism.

The exhibition, *State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury* (Arnhem June 1 – July 26, 2018) started as a further exploration of this disruptive transition to the fashion system. Via an open call supported by the Prince Claus Fund, we invited designers from all over the world to participate and to share ideas that offer new perspectives on these fashion themes.⁶ The selection of the panel as well as further research informed the selection of the final 50 contributors to the exhibition and deepened the themes of the exhibition. This chapter focuses on the exhibition themes *interrogating* what fashion luxury means in this moment of time, where we are aware of both big societal challenges and the scarcity of our resources, and with what kind of luxury we want to surround ourselves in the 21st century. In more theoretical terms, the exhibition (and this chapter) explored what ‘fashion luxury’ means in a context where we are re-defining the fashion discourse and fashion system in light of globalisation, de-colonisation, de-Westernisation and the urgent need for more responsible consumption.

Radicant Identities

In *The Radicant* (2009), Nicolas Bourriaud addresses globalisation in the context of aesthetics, questioning how globalisation is affecting our life forms.⁷ Essential to him is to re-think the Western concept of modernity into what he coins altermodernity, referring to a more inclusive aesthetic born out of global and decentralised negotiations and heterogeneous discourses, which are *polyglot*.⁸ Different from postmodernism, altermodernity does not concern itself with the past, origins and ‘authentic’ and ‘national’ identity, but with the future: premised on the destination rather than the source. ‘What I am calling altermodernity thus designates a construction plan that would allow new intercultural connections, the construction of a space of negotiation going beyond postmodern multiculturalism, which is attached to the origin of discourses and forms rather than to their dynamics. It is a matter of replacing the question of origin with that of destination. Where should we go?’ states Bourriaud.⁹

In essence, altermodernity is a translation-oriented modernity that – unlike the modernism of the 20th century that cultivated a Western colonial language of progression – is seeking compromises in singular discourses, to enable disparate elements to function together. As such Bourriaud offered an adequate framework to describe current developments in the fashion system, originally a Western capitalist phenomenon,¹⁰ opening up for more inclusive, non-hierarchical conversations re-defining universal social and aesthetic values as well as addressing current challenges.¹¹ In Bourriaud’s terminology, every artist and every author (and every fashion designer) becomes a translator accepting the idea that no speech bears the seal of any sort of ‘authenticity’, but is entering a world of subtitling, establishing a path in a multicultural landscape.¹²

The so-called altermodern designers understand how to actively re-think and reshape our classical notions of identities explored by the conventional fashion and art system. They are addressing issues such as globalisation, de-colonisation, political, social and economic systems in an open dialogue, whilst using traces of heritage, craft and values of their own cultural and social origins in a space where those elements come together in non-hierarchical ways.

As a result, these changes have an effect on the role of the designer in our contemporary culture. It is no longer the star designer who dominates the fashion system, but the designers who are embodying 'the figure of the immigrant, the exile, the tourist and the urban wanderer'.¹³ As we will see described in the examples in the subthemes here below, fashion designers are taking up different roles, not putting themselves in the centre as the creative genius, instead taking a supporting and collaborative role bringing together skills, ideas, narratives, heritage, artisans, and engineers to create a sustainable, inclusive, ethical future. Living in a globally connected and culturally globalised world, the designers create new paths and practices whilst integrating their local cultural backgrounds into the future using problem-solving thinking approaches. 'With at once dynamic and dialogical signification, the adjective "radicant"¹⁴ captures this contemporary subject, caught between the need for a connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other', states Bourriaud.¹⁵ By definition, they do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks as ivy does.¹⁶ Radicant here means setting one's roots in motion, staging them in heterogeneous contexts and formats denying them the power to completely define one's identity, translating ideas, transcoding images, transplanting behaviours, exchanging rather than imposing.¹⁷ Exploring these new constructions of 'fragmented' identity, designers require new forms of presentation. They are not only producing garments and products anymore, but they invite the consumer to accompany them throughout the entire design and thought process, presented by means of *micro-narratives* and *future scenarios* showing the process.

Imagination in the Post Nation-State

Through an anthropological lens, Arjun Appadurai prognosticates in *Modernity at Large* (1996) that the nation-state has entered a terminal crisis, because the system is poorly equipped to deal with the interlinked diaspora of people and images that mark the here and now. Considering media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics he explores their joint effect on the *work of imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity.¹⁸ According to him, electronic media have decisively changed the wider field of mass media, because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds. 'The image, the imagined, and the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice', states Appadurai.¹⁹ The same applies to fashion, where

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one of the distinctive forces is that it is able to create new worlds and manages to tempt us to immerse ourselves within them. Designers and labels are increasingly using this force of the imagination as a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practice of the modern.²⁰

The Failure of the Current Fashion System

More and more it has become clear the current fashion system is outdated, still operating within a 20th-century model that celebrates individualism and consumption with a focus on 'the new' and the 'star designer'.²¹ On the one hand, designers and big brands experience enormous pressure to produce new collections at an ever-growing pace, leaving less room for reflection, contemplation and innovation. On the other hand, there is the continuous race to produce at even lower costs and implement more rapid life cycles, resulting in disastrous consequences for society and the environment.²² As a result, the classical luxurious dream of escapism into a world of glamour and Parisian elegance as traditionally represented in fashion magazines and luxury brands has ended. More and more designers coming from different continents are exploring new ways to redefine fashion as luxury underlining the values of the 21st century and the Millennial and Gen Z generations, who ride a bicycle instead of owning a car, prefer a 'shared economy' over property and possession and embody environmental awareness. As conscious consumers, they want to know how things are made, as well as what the ethical impact is of what they are buying. Working from their pocket and intensively using social media, they are shifting the traditional boundaries between public and private life, 'blurring' the conventional 'urban landscape' and the place of the flâneur as pivotal to fashion. 'Globalization has shattered the stable hierarchy of centre and periphery, the neat distinction between the city and non-urbanized areas has faded, the mobility of people has immensely increased, and the means of communication (especially social media) have become places for social life', states Patrizia Calefato in *The End of Fashion*.²³ It makes clear that the system as we know it does not function anymore.

The Need to Re-Define Fashion and Luxury

In *How Luxury Lost its Luster* (2007), Dana Thomas describes how during the late 1980s small family-run fashion luxury businesses slowly turned into big luxury goods holding companies. It was the moment where a longstanding focus on the artisanship and exclusivity of these brands turned to a focus on enlarging profits by making them accessible for the masses, focusing on handbags, accessories and cosmetics whilst outsourcing their fashion production to developing nations. This has led to an inferior quality and a non-transparent supply chain. The same story – in a slightly different way – applies to fast fashion chains and many high street brands whose aim is to reduce costs as much as possible by outsourcing production to nations where wages are lowest. In

recent years, the devastating effects of this outsourcing policy have become visible, with Rana Plaza²⁴ as an iconic example.

As a result, traditional fashion luxury values seem no longer appealing to (especially) the younger generations – now the biggest consumer market in luxury. ‘Less interested in outward displays of status they buy luxury primarily to please themselves’, states Diane Primo in Forbes (Forbes 2018), based on a Deloitte report *What Makes Millennials Spend More?* (2017). Although the majority of Chinese Millennials still prefer to buy a premium brand, the majority of UK, Italian and US Millennials do not show interest anymore in the status of a premium brand. Remarkably, almost 40% of Chinese Millennials do make sure the brand is ethical and sustainable before they purchase, which is much more than the 20% of UK and Italian Millennials. Although Chinese Millennials still appreciate luxury brands, their sustainable and ethical awareness is almost as high as that of the US Millennials (48%) (Deloitte, 2017). The recent success of the Gucci Equilibrium programme – Millennials and Gen Z already account for nearly 50% of Gucci’s total sales– demonstrates clearly the need for a committed, ethical approach to business and *new fashion luxury* values such as *purpose, authenticity and passion*.²⁵ Oskar Metsavaht



Figure 11.1 ‘Manifesto’ 2018. State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury. @EvaBroekema.

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(Osklen) and Stella McCartney have already proven that a sustainable (conscious and ethical) approach is commercially viable for a luxury brand. In 2011 Franca Sozanni proposed in *Vogue Italy* that luxury fashion should be approached more from the lens of art and design, adding artistic value as experimentation, research and innovation to the values of what fashion luxury might offer.²⁶ Purpose, ethics, research and innovation (digital and material), as well as experimentation in the context of art and design, have brought a new range of values and drivers to the table, which might be able to inform new definitions of a 21st-century concept of fashion and luxury.

With a manifesto of nine hashtags and five subthemes, *State of Fashion Searching for the New Luxury* tried to capture in more detail and depth what these new definitions and directions of 'new luxury' in fashion might entail (Figure 11.1). The nine hashtags of the manifesto refer to a series of concrete actions, solutions and directions that fashion brands and consumers are currently exploring to gain a more ethical, purposeful innovative engagement with fashion. In addition, the five subthemes clustered and underlined new principles, insights and opportunities informing directions and values for the future of fashion luxury. The themes not only refer to the fashion product on a design and aesthetic level, they also involve changes to the fashion system involving new and different values, new designer roles in manufacturing and design processes, as well as new micro-narratives and new business models.

Subtheme 1: New Imaginations

The first theme refers to a new design aesthetic, underlining that imagination is no longer referencing the conventional ephemeral, glamorous fashion history but is shaping new and more responsible, socially connected worlds. The latest campaign of sustainable pioneer Stella McCartney formed such a cornerstone of a new visual identity and concept, imagined for her work in sustainability. The film, made by Viviane Sassen, conveys the symbiotic nature of humans, nature and animals; it explores the idea that to fully protect and care for ourselves we must also nurture the world we live in, as we are one and the same. The words of Maria Barnas' poem 'To Nurture, To Nature' – specially conceived for the project – are recited over the film.

Through Sassen's abstract visual language demonstrating ideas about abstraction and objects in relation to their often incongruous surroundings, Stella McCartney finds a new way to engage in sustainability conversations. Perfectly illustrating the cutting-edge sense and original imagination, whilst avoiding any references to the classical fashion dream of elegance, they build in purpose and ethics around sustainability (Figure 11.2). In addition, the visionary work of the Japanese designer Yuima Nakazato, inspired by new technologies, integrates laser cutting techniques and body scanning with traditional samurai buttoning principles, and displays an interesting hybrid of heritage and craft in combination with state-of-the-art technologies.

Eco-fashion designers VIN + OMI (2004) combine Chinese and English backgrounds and call themselves an ideology instead of a brand. They primarily focus on the



Figure 11.2 'Stella's World of Sustainability' 2017 Viviane Sassen for Stella McCartney, The Netherlands/UK @EvaBroekema.



Figure 11.3 'Freedom' a/w 2017–2018 Yuima Nakazato, Japan. @EvaBroekema.

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development of unique sustainable textiles. The origins of each fabric have a social programme built around them. For example, areas of river or ocean in need of cleaning up from plastic waste were identified, and VIN + OMI initiated a clean-up project to collect the plastic, which was then turned into rPET fabric. Until now, they have produced and patented 12 unique fabrics. As such, they use their company primarily as a driver of sustainable change and an activist tool.

All the examples described so far are shaping sustainable stories and innovative products by using new technologies as well as ethics and a political agenda with imagination (Figure 11.3). Precisely these changes have taken the fashion imagination from a glamorous ephemeral fantasy towards an imagination that relates to fashion as a social and embodied practice. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape.²⁷

Subtheme 2: The Product and the Maker in the Spotlight

The internet has made it possible to make all the layers within the production chain visible. It allows us as consumers to make better-informed and more conscious choices when consuming fashion. However, this is not the only benefit. Access to more information can shape new, horizontal relationships between us, and the producers of our garments. With a better understanding of the skills and craftsmanship that go into the creation of a garment (a knowledge that many of us have lost), the artisans involved in making our clothes gain not only our recognition, but also better financial rewards, and intermediaries like shops, producers and marketers (the so called middle men) disappear.

11.11/eleven eleven, a label established by the Indian entrepreneurs Mia Morikawa (1983) and Shani Himanshu (1980), are bringing the journey of kala cotton and khadi denim, from seed to stitch, into focus in their Khadi Way project. Each product within this collection is handmade from start to finish. *11.11/eleven eleven* garments have a product code that traces the human imprint on the product and helps to connect the maker and wearer. The project contributes to environmental sustainability by using organic materials and recycled waste materials. Kala is one of the few genetically pure cotton species left in India, and one of the only species of pure old world cotton that is still cultivated on a large scale without requiring external input from farmers. The project also contributes to social sustainability by cherishing values such as traceability, transparency and local craftsmanship. The product in their approach becomes the materialisation of a novel relationship between consumer and the artisan, which is shifting the focus from the 'star designer' to the value of the artisanship, cultural origins and traces behind it whilst putting them in a new global context of ethical sustainability.

Vivienne Westwood Bags are 'handmade with love' in Nairobi in Kenya, produced in collaboration with the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) of the International Trade Centre, and highlight a comparable story. EFI is a joint body of the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), currently supporting the work of thousands of micro-producers from marginalised African communities. The NGO empowers

informal manufacturers and craftspeople to enter the international value chain, providing an income for some of the poorest people in the world. This promotes the growth of sustainable business instead of aid dependency, and creates stability among these communities. ‘This is not charity, this is work’, states Westwood in *State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury*. Instead of teaching the workers traditional Western styles and techniques, Westwood started to design bags building on existing craft traditions, using recycled canvas, reused roadside banners, unused leather off-cuts, and recycled brass that is produced in the Kibera slum (Nairobi’s biggest), where discarded metal like padlocks and car pieces are collected and then melted down (Figure 11.4).

Taking a conscious, social responsibility approach, this project explores a fair and transparent system where respect for local craft and cultural heritage is driving the aesthetics and the design of the bags. Traces of local heritage and the highlighting of



Figure 11.4 ‘Handmade with Love’ a/w 2011–2012. Vivienne Westwood in collaboration with the Ethical Fashion Initiative and UN. United Kingdom @EvaBroekema.

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artisans – radicant identities – have become an integral part of fashion's value, story and imagination, including more cultural diversity and more inclusiveness in a meaningful and hybrid system. Cultural heritage in this project is the starting point to Vivienne Westwood and *11.11/eleven eleven* reflecting cultural values with relevance for future 'pluriversal' fashion systems.²⁸ In terms of Bourriaud, you could say they act as 'semionauts' – defined as creators of paths in a landscape of signs – whilst integrating different cultural backgrounds in future, and problem-solving thinking approaches.²⁹ In order to find a universal language, designers act here as *translators* 'accepting the idea that no speech bears the seal of any sort of "authenticity": we are entering the era of universal subtitling'.³⁰

Subtheme 3: New Business Models

Digitalisation has opened radical new business models, creating opportunities to change and innovate the fashion system. Biannual collections, big investments and compulsory catwalk shows are no longer conditions for a successful fashion business. Through web shops, blogs, social media and local Fashion Weeks designers are able to establish global businesses from anywhere, as well as contribute to the current critical fashion discourse to re-think the system. Fundamental new ways of producing and selling have been developed such as circular production and upcycling that also have led to more equal collaborations, horizontal networks, consumer involvement, and to more inclusive, environmental- and people-friendly businesses. Maven Women, displayed at *State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury*, is an online clothing company that designs, manufactures and releases new products with the help of a worldwide community of members. Members co-design and crowdfund the designs into existence within a matter of weeks. This new system helps the fashion system to transform from a push market where 40% of the garments are not sold, into a made-to-measure market via a far more sustainable business model where clothes will be made strictly according to demand and on a much more locally produced basis. In addition, the direct involvement of the consumer in the design process increases the agency of the consumer, as well as resulting in a more engaged connection to the product. This project underlines how we can become co-creators in a culture where the real seat of agency is not the consumer but the producer and the many forces that constitute production.³¹

A second example from the *State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury* exhibition is Matti Liimatainen (1983), a Finnish fashion designer who specialised in conceptual and computational design, who creates ready-to-assemble garment construction kits by using a custom CAD/CAM system for his label 'Self-Assembly'. All the products are made with a special seam that allows them to be assembled by hand without any tools or machinery. The products are delivered as loose, packed components, which need to be joined together prior to wearing. Some of the garments can also be amended. The most essential aspect about the design process of Self-Assembly and the foundation of the design method is that products are not ready-to-wear but ready-to-assemble. Self-Assembly is an example of personalised luxury with more agency offered to the consumer, and a focus shifting

from the product towards the processes and stories of making. As such, it shows similarities with new practices such as upcycling, recycling, and cradle-to-cradle principles that are changing the design practices and aesthetics, as well as the business models, of the fashion system, and are resulting in consumption that is more conscious.

Subtheme 4: Fashion Design for a Better World

For too long innovations in fashion have been led primarily by functional and economic drivers where the latest business innovation – fast fashion — has made fashion the second most polluting industry and detached it from its socio-cultural role of criticism, condemnation, protest, and progressivism that it had in the 20th century.³² Recent initiatives have shown that fashion has opened up its scope, by regarding the discipline not only as a field of production or as a market and using its design capabilities to shape diverse socio-cultural contributions. The ‘Conscious Contemporary Craft: Connecting Communities’ project, for example, is a collaborative initiative that involves the community of San Patrignano, supported by Fondazione Zegna, together with participants from the London College of Fashion’s (LCF) ‘Making for Change’ project. San Patrignano, located in Northern Italy, is a community promoting the rehabilitation of young people affected by substance abuse. Supported by Fondazione Zegna, San Patrignano enables young individuals to transform themselves through education and the acquisition of artisanship.

‘Making for Change’ is LCF’s training and manufacturing unit based at HMP Downview women’s prison. The project aims to increase well-being and reduce reoffending rates amongst participants by equipping them with professional fashion-related skills and qualifications within a supportive environment. This project promoted the effectiveness of two social facilities, namely a therapeutic community and a prison. Working with menswear designer and LCF graduate Bethany Williams, women in the weaving workshop of San Patrignano used traditional handlooms to create innovative textile samples from industrial waste materials, textile fibres, plastic tapes and electrical wires. These textile samples in turn inspired LCF students to design garments and accessories reflecting contemporary issues, including what it means to ‘protect’, ‘migrate’, ‘protest’ and ‘survive’ (Figure 11.5). Six garments incorporating fabrics woven at San Patrignano have been produced at LCF’s workshops and displayed at *State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury*. The collaborative project illustrated how fashion can be used as a cultural and symbolic value-driven force where craft, heritage and design can open dialogues with women about disclosing their sense of lost, forgotten or unknown value, whilst at the same empowering them.

A comparable project also shown at the exhibition was *Dress for Our Time* (2014) by Professor Helen Storey, an artist, designer, and researcher at LCF’s Centre for Sustainable Fashion. Storey uses the power of fashion to communicate and act upon some of the world’s most complex issues, such as climate change and the mass displacement of people. A dress was created from a decommissioned UNHCR (United Nations High



Figure 11.5 ‘Conscious Contemporary Craft: Connecting Communities’ 2018. Fondazione Zegna/San Patrignano and Making for Change at London College of Fashion (UAL), Italy/United Kingdom. @EvaBroekema.

Commission for Refugees) refugee tent that once housed a displaced Syrian family at Za’atari Camp in Jordan. It was given a second life. The public art installation explored the unbreakable bond of humanity and represented the importance of nurturing and protecting all people and the need for safeguarding generations to come. Based on this installation, Storey led some follow-up projects working with refugees in the camp responding to their living challenges using crafts and design to engage with them and to explore with those who have lost everything, the basic (and overlapping) values of life and garment making.

Subtheme 5: Interdisciplinarity

Finally, cross-disciplinary collaboration and research and the merging of technical science and fashion are prerequisites for creating a more sustainable and resilient future. This has led to practices where designers take a much more collaborative approach with engineers and scientists from scratch, knowing that material experiments can lead to new opportunities, shapes and functions for fashion, whilst also challenging the status quo. Using new materials made from algae, fruit residue, and other celluloses, designers are showing how scientific technologies are leading to new design applications. Trained as an anthropologist as well as a footwear designer, Catherine Willems is looking into

alternative footwear that is sustainable for both the environment and the body. By hybridising the craftsmanship and knowledge from indigenous footwear in combination with biometrics and the technology of the bodyscan and 3D printing techniques, she is developing unique, 3D-printed sandals informed by the design of an indigenous sandal. The intellectual property of the community has been respected, as they will get paid royalties with each 3D-printed version.

Where Bourriaud defines altermodernity as a future in art 'to be constructed on a global scale, through cooperation among a multitude of cultural *semes* and through ongoing translations of singularities',³³ one could add the importance of a multidisciplinary approach. Here artists, designers and scientist work together using a multitude of cultural and scientific *semes* in order to be able to address current, complicated societal challenges.

Conclusion

At this moment in time, designers are seeking a renewed and meaningful relationship to society and culture reflecting 21st-century values. By taking an interdisciplinary, explorative design approach, they are shaping new values and new definitions of what fashion luxury might entail in more inclusive terms. Five exhibition subthemes highlighted some of these new directions of the fashion system. It is clear that imagination is no longer being employed as a materialised fantasy, a form of escapism – as evoked in conventional Western fashion glamour – it needs a *purpose* and is a 'staging ground for action creating ideas of neighbourhood in a post-national society'.³⁴ As a result, fashion designers are shifting priorities from a focus on fashion as a short-term ephemeral product towards a much more resilient product development that contributes to solving the big societal change reflected in new values.

For more than a century, fashion was very much about *representation* and the *new*, where the new meant that it was in tune with and demonstrating the zeitgeist. Within the 21st century, the product is no longer outdated as soon as it has been launched on a catwalk, but gains more value during its lifecycle. In essence, the value of *new* (as the repetition of the same but different) has been replaced by a set of different values. Besides the value of *innovation* materialised in digital innovative products, there is the value of *patina*,³⁵ the value of micro-narratives based on local heritage and artisanship; the value of purpose and the value of *re-use*, *repair* and *recycle* in business models, shown in transparent and traceable and socially inclusive products.

Finally, designers are exploring new aesthetics and a new design language that are no longer searching for an authentic national style or are being expressed in terms of regional craftsmanship. Today's fashion designers bring together a collection of heterogeneous elements to which they impart meaning in an ever-changing context, 'in the infinite text of world culture'.³⁶ Intrinsically, they bring together fragments of identity acquiring meaning in the context of the *project*, in which the focus is not only on the product but also on the process and story behind it.³⁷ This results in an artistic fashion

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practice and fashion system that includes pluriversal voices and narratives to break through the hegemony of a primarily Western fashion history or modernity.³⁸

In this post-Western context, artists and designers are converting their cultural background and stories into a universal visual language – in a translation that is very often a process – that is comprehensible to everyone. All this has led to a new, open and more inclusive and pluriversal definition of fashion as ‘a desirable dress at a given moment and place’,³⁹ whereby its desirability is based on a wide range of values, whether social, political, nostalgic, or based on exclusivity, modernity, innovation or nationalism.⁴⁰

Notes

1. Where the conventional fashion system, developed and defined during the industrialisation and democratisation of the early 19th century, was very Western oriented – defining other dress cultures as non-fashion and exotic – the new fashion discourse refers to a more inclusive aesthetic born out of global and decentralised negotiations amongst heterogeneous discourses and cultures.
2. José Teunissen, ‘On the Globalisation of Fashion’. In Jan Brand and José Teunissen, Eds. *Global Fashion, Local Tradition* (Arnhem, Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 2005) 8–23; José Teunissen, ‘Deconstructing Belgian and Dutch Fashion Dreams: From Global Trends to Local Crafts’, *Fashion Theory*, 15 (2) (2011) 137–215; Lise Skov, ‘Dreams of Small Nations in a Polycentric Fashion World’, *Fashion Theory*, 15 (2) (2011) 137–157. José Teunissen, *The Future of Fashion is Now*, Jan Brand, Ed. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2014); José Teunissen, ‘State of Fashion: Searching for the New Luxury’, *Issuu* (2018), https://issuu.com/stateoffashion/docs/stof_07_2018_catalogus_interactive_, (accessed 12 July 2019).
3. Teunissen, ‘On the Globalisation of Fashion’; Teunissen, ‘Deconstructing Belgian and Dutch Fashion Dreams’; Teunissen, *The Future of Fashion Is Now*; Teunissen, ‘State of Fashion’.
4. Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009) 29.
5. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (London: Minnesota Press, 1996) 3–5.
6. To widen the scope of State of Fashion 2018, the Sonsbeek & State of Fashion Foundation organised an open call for projects in collaboration with the Prince Claus Fund. Designers and concept developers from all over the world were invited to share ideas that offer new perspectives on the fashion system and on the way we deal with the things that surround us. The call resulted in 97 applications from 22 countries. Thanks in part to the network of scouts from the Prince Claus Fund, but also through international contacts mobilised by the curator and the organisation, as well as social media, we were able to reach participants in Asia, Africa and South America. The selection for the open call was made with the help of an international expert panel, consisting of: Joumana El Zein Khoury (Prince Claus Fund), Corinna Gardner (Senior Curator of Design & Digital, V&A Museum), Dr Hakan Karaosman (Expert – Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Value Chains in Garment Industries, United Nations Economic Commission, Politecnico di Milano), Han Nefkens (Han Nefkens Foundation), Johan Maris (Control Union).
7. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 7.
8. *ibid.*, 43.

9. *ibid.*, 40.
10. Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago Press, 1982) 17.
11. Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vasquez consider modernity inseparable from coloniality. Therefore, decolonial aesthetics to them is 'not modern, postmodern, or altermodern, but rather the multitemporal movement of those who look and have looked to rebuild the world from the ruins of the modern/colonial system, with all the specifics of what this may look like in a given time and space'. However, the designers I describe in my contribution are all part of and contributing to the existing fashion system, where they try to open up the narrow value system by adding pluriversal stories and narratives. Walter Mignolo and Roland Vasquez, 'Decolonial AestheSis Dossier', *Social Text Online* (2013), https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/the-decolonial-aestheSis-dossier/ (accessed 12 July 2019).
12. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 44.
13. *ibid.*, 51.
14. Bourriaud calls this form of identity a radicant, like a plant that sends out roots from its stem and propagates in order to keep re-creating its identity. Here identity is constructed as a series of fragments that tell the story together. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*
16. *ibid.*
17. *ibid.*, 22.
18. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 3.
19. *ibid.*, 31.
20. *ibid.*, 4.
21. Lidewij Edelkoort, *Anti-Fashion: A Manifesto for the Next Decade* (Paris: Trend Union, 2014); Calefato Patrizia, 'Fashionscapes'. In Adam Geczy and Vicky Karaminas, Eds. *The End of Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 32–45.
22. Teunissen, 'State of Fashion', 13.
23. Calefato, 'Fashionscapes', 31–32.
24. On 24 April 2013, an eight-story commercial building, Rana Plaza, collapsed just outside Dhaka. The building contained five clothing factories: most of the people in the building at the time were garment workers. Over 17 days of search and rescue, 2,438 people were evacuated, more than 1,100 people died, and many more were left with lifelong debilitating injuries.
25. Gucci Equilibrium has started an ambitious program around sustainability based on an aim to help deliver the UN Global Goals as well as the Paris Climate Agreement. A program where women empowerment, diversity, inclusion and social responsibility are key, as well as scouting start-ups and innovations in tech and natural materials. Diane Primo, 'What Can Luxury Brands Learn from Gucci about the Millennials', *Forbes*, 2 November 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/11/02/what-can-luxury-brands-learn-from-gucci-about-millennials/ (accessed 12 July 2019).
26. Franca Sozani, 'What is the Meaning of Luxury', in *Vogue Italy*, 5 March 2011, www.vogue.it/en/magazine/editor-s-blog/2011/03/march-5th (accessed 12 July 2019).
27. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 7–10.
28. Walter Mignolo, 'Delinking', *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2) (2007) 500.
29. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 39.

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30. Ibid., 44.
31. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 42.
32. Jennifer Craik, 'Globalization'. In Adam Geczy and Vicky Karaminias, Eds. *The End of Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) 133.
33. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 39.
34. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 7.
35. Calefato, 'Fashionscapes', 32; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 76.
36. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 39.
37. Teunissen, *The Future of Fashion is Now*, 18.
38. Following Mignolo's concept of decolonialism, we need to step out of the global capitalistic fashion system. 'For decolonization to be fully operative, we must create alternatives to modernity and neo-liberal civilization. We must begin to imagine such alternatives from the perspectives and consciousnesses unlocked in the epistemic, ethical and political domain of the geo- and the bio-political loci of enunciation and of action. Such alternatives are not mere fantasies or the imagining of another utopia. Liberation and decolonization are currently being enunciated (in writing, orally, by social movements and intellectuals, by artists and activists) from nodes in space-time (local histories) that have been marginalised by the temporal and spatial colonial differences. Although silenced in mainstream media, multiple fractures are creating larger, spatial epistemic breaks (e.g. geopolitics of knowledge) in the overarching totality of Western global and universal history that from Hegel to Huntington was successful in negating subjectivities from non-Western, non-capitalist, non-Christian nations'. Mignolo, 'Delinking', 492.
39. Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press, 2000) 1.
40. Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik, Eds. *Modern Fashion Traditions* (London: Bloomsbury 2016) 8.



