

Fashion in the Expanded Field: Strategies for Critical Fashion Practices

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Abstract - This article focuses on current strategies for critical fashion practices in an expanded field of fashion. In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, the field of fashion studies has increasingly scrutinized the relationship between fine art and fashion within an art museum context. Drawing a parallel with Rosalind Krauss's notion of sculpture in the expanded field, this article documents the development of interdisciplinary fashion practices, suggesting that an expanded field allows fashion practitioners to engage in a critical discussion of the fashion system. As a fashion practitioner focusing on nonproductivist interdisciplinary techniques across multiple media (fashion and film, sculpture, installation, and performance), I test this notion by developing parallels between contemporary fashion and Krauss's 1979 diagnosis. This article argues for the relevance of establishing theories of interdisciplinary practice to better understand the contemporary field of fashion, challenging assumptions about fashion's role in the twenty-first century.

Keywords - critical fashion practice, fashion in the expanded field, conceptual fashion, fashion and art

Fashion today seems to consist of a vast array of complex and elusive phenomena where the boundaries have become harder to map. Anna-Sophie Berger, Ruby Hoette, Elisa Van Joolen, and Lucia Cuba, among many others, are part of a new generation of fashion practitioners who it is already difficult to address as being fashion designers. Their works seem to have inherited the inherent criticality of their experimental predecessors such as Martin Margiela, Hussein Chalayan, Viktor & Rolf, or Bless, but they have taken it slightly farther by somehow escaping a market-centered fashion framework and focusing more on process and ideas than on product, prioritizing concepts and experimentation over the final product. According to the Dutch fashion curator and theorist José Teunissen, "ever since the 1960s

there seems to have been a steady blurring of the borders between art and fashion,”¹ and in recent years, fashion has been given a platform in spaces that originally showcased art. There has been a broadening set of exhibitions emerging worldwide that have been exploring the boundaries between art and fashion. Key exhibitions have included *Biennale di Firenze* (1996), curated by Germano Celant; *Fast Forward: Mode in den Medien* (1999), curated by Ulrike Tschabitzer and Christian Muhr at Künstlerhaus, Wien; *Addressing the Century* (1999), Hayward Gallery, London; *Radical Fashion* (2001), London; *Rapture: Art’s Seduction by Fashion* (2002), London; *Fashionation* (2004–2005), Moderna Museet, Stockholm; *Dysfashional* (2007), MUDAM, Luxembourg; *The Art of Fashion: Installing Allusions* (2009–2010) at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; and *Reflecting Fashion: Art and Fashion since Modernism* (2012) at MUMOK, Wien, to name a few. As recently pointed out by curator and theorist Matthew Linde in his article in the art magazine *Flash Art*, “it has become remarkably evident at this point that fashion’s sensorium is involved in creative processes that transcend market forces.”²

<1>**Fashion in the Expanded Field**

Drawing a parallel with the art historian Rosalind Krauss’s notion of sculpture in the expanded field,³ this article documents the development of interdisciplinary fashion practices, suggesting that an expanded field allows fashion practitioners to engage in a critical discussion of the fashion system. In 1979, Krauss wrote the seminal article “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” in which she diagnosed the negative condition of contemporary sculpture in the 1970s, addressing the directions sculptural practice took in the postmedium era.⁴ My engagement with the notion of “the expanded field” is not necessarily to prolong Krauss’s systematic analytical grid, indebted to structuralism, but to operate where the legacies of Krauss’s concept enable new points of departures and the understanding of what an expanded field of fashion can be. Krauss’s text was published in the *October* journal of contemporary

arts criticism and theory in 1979, and it described how sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s had become a practice of exclusions. According to Krauss, in ceasing to be positivity, sculpture was a combination of nonarchitecture and nonlandscape: “Sculpture had entered the full condition of its inverse logic and had become pure negativity.”⁵ Krauss refers to the critical operations that accompanied the postwar period of American art that would be a starting point for the extraordinary malleability of art disciplines such as painting and sculpture becoming harder to identify or classify. As a fashion practitioner myself, having worked across various disciplines (fashion and film, sculpture, installation, and performance), I have started testing the notion of an expanded field of fashion through the development of a practice as a parallel between the present condition of contemporary fashion design practices and Krauss’s 1979 diagnosis. This parallel begins with an agreed-upon understanding that artistic practices were diversified and split in the 1970s.⁶ Comparing Krauss’s diagnosis and the present condition of the fashion discipline allows an understanding of what the current postdisciplinary approach to fashion is, not only from within my own practice’s position, but also from that of my peers who, in the last two decades, have been developing new pathways for fashion practices that question the role of the discipline and the mediums used. According to Krauss, in exploring a negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore; I believe that this is the same space of idealism that fashion designers and artists are trying to establish when exploring the borders of the fashion discipline. Krauss explains the condition of postmodern art in the following:

<ext>Now, if sculpture itself had become a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions, the sum of the neither/nor, that does not mean that the terms themselves from which it was built—the not-landscape and the not-architecture—did not have a certain interest. This is because these terms express a

strict opposition between the built and the not-built, the cultural and the natural,
between which the production of sculptural art appeared to be suspended.⁷

As stated by Krauss, in exploring a negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore; I believe that this is the same space of idealism that fashion designers and artists are trying to establish when exploring the borders of the fashion discipline. Krauss considers sculpture a historically bounded category that, just like any other convention, has its own internal logic and is not open to change unless the category itself is made almost infinitely malleable.⁸ To sum up the comparison, fashion over the past fifty years has increasingly become an expression of ideas and concepts rather than clothing. Although Krauss's structuralism is, in my view, too absolute to fit examples whose characteristics are exactly defined by their instability, Krauss's view is still useful in today's current discussions of what fashion is.

The fashion theorist Sung Bok Kim asserts in her 1998 article that fashion is art because the concepts of fashion and art have expanded to contain both of them.⁹ The concept of art itself, according to Lars Svendsen, "[has] expanded so radically over the past century that it is hard to think of any object or any event that cannot be incorporated into it"¹⁰—it is now impossible to draw a line between art and nonart.¹¹ In her article, "Design in the Expanded Field: Rethinking Contemporary Design," the author Malene Leerberg interrogated contemporary design's limits, questioning if the "expanded notion had stretched the categories of design too far"¹² and claiming that categories have been expanded so radically that they might dissolve. However, she also noted that this allows for a rethinking of the definition of design itself, which permits replacing the question "What is design?" with "How does design work?"—freeing design from stiffening definitions.¹³ It seems to me that in liberating fashion from the question "Is fashion art?" we can allow space for exploring how fashion can transcend the current product-centered approach and what its identity can be

extended to when exploring an expanded field; because fashion is both material and immaterial, it can assert itself into a multiplicity of new answers. I would argue that the move toward an expanded field of fashion should be seen as crucial for critical fashion practices in the twenty-first century. Contemporary fashion is no longer concerned with finite categories of design—the concepts of what is designed and how it is designed have been radically expanded. The “how” has become much more important than the “what” when answering the question “What is fashion?” The question “How can fashion be fashion now?” attempts to answer the question “How is fashion?” and asks what processes can redefine it. Although fashion’s identity has always been strongly based on materiality (textiles), function, and skill sets, this essentialness is now being questioned by several practitioners using an alternative set of media and materials. From a postmodern angle, critical reflection can be aided by deconstructing our thinking in order to expose how we participate in constructing power. This opens up the way for us to explore conflicts and contradictions that may have been previously silenced. In particular, it is useful in helping to explore difficulties in practice that are brought about because of perceived (binary) dilemmas or tensions, such as where we have reached an impasse in practice because we believe that there is a fundamental dilemma or conflict involved. From a postmodern or deconstructive perspective, we might try to understand what language was used; if there are any binary opposites taking part in our decision making; and, if so, what is the basis for these? Are any perspectives missing? Which constructions of power are involved in our practice? A critical stance would situate the emphasis on how the critical practice processes can bring about change. The use of digital tools immediately challenges each one of those practices and their boundaries. The lines between art, design, and craft are becoming more easily crossed as each appropriates various theoretical, technical, and philosophical aspects of the other, asking us to critically observe the distance between them in contemporary creative practices. The identity of crafts has been

based on their material specificity, and as the theorist Linda Sandino pointed out, their material essentialism can no longer be sustained as a defining indicator only within art, craft, or design practices; a new concern with the semiotics of materials has become more evident in fine arts and design.¹⁴ This expansion of the field of fashion practice will be carefully analyzed in the following sections.

<1>**Contextual Review: Museum**

The exhibition *The Art of Fashion: Installing Allusions* (2009), curated by theorist José Teunissen in collaboration with curator and professor of fashion and museology Judith Clark, is an example of an unequivocal dialogue between art and fashion. The Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen already had a tradition of experimental and interdisciplinary exhibitions, including the pivotal exhibition *A-Historical Soundings* curated by Harold Szeemann (1988). The philosopher and fashion theorist Flavia Loscialpo stated in her article “Traces and Constellations: The Invisible Genealogies of Fashion” how Teunissen and Clark’s exhibition eloquently referred to *A-Historical Soundings*, which reinterpreted the collection of the museum experimenting with proximities and distances, correspondences and resonances, between the single pieces “and underlined the importance of resonances that are thematic associations between the garments and the artworks displayed, thus creating a texture of allusions.”¹⁵ Judith Clark was possibly one of the first fashion curators to take contemporary fashion into the gallery space by commissioning new pieces from designers. As early as 1998 at Judith Clark Costume Gallery, Clark commissioned a collection of couture millinery from the fashion artist Dai Rees for its inaugural exhibition, *Pampilion* (February 21 to March 29, 1998), offering the gallery as an alternative platform from which to present collections and drawing attention to the sculptural qualities of the headdresses against the white walls of the new space.¹⁶ Another of Judith Clark’s pioneering exhibitions regarding the specific domain of fashion exhibitions and interpretation of ahistorical references was *Malign Muses: When*

Fashion Turns Back at ModeMuseum of Antwerp, Belgium (2004), also presented at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2005), with the title *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back*. One of the most recent fashion exhibitions mapping critical practices was held in Rotterdam: *The Future of Fashion Is Now* (October 11, 2014, to January 18, 2015) sought to examine the critical stance that fashion designers worldwide were taking regarding the fashion system and to question the roles of the designer and clothing in contemporary society. In an interview I conducted with curator José Teunissen for my PhD thesis, she described how she relied on the work of Nicolas Bourriaud to understand the present moment and how she addressed it in the exhibition *The Future of Fashion Is Now* (2014), explaining how globalization has affected fashion practices:

<ext>We are now in a very globalised culture, everyone is now part of the same culture, we have a different background but we refer to our roots, but we also have to find a universal language to reach other people. That makes us aware, that the process, the story, is far more important and the product became less important. For fashion, that is a big revolution because it was always about the process, because the process behind the product becomes important, so the whole artistic approach becomes more relevant in fashion.</ext>

Teunissen emphasized this broadening of the fashion context on a global scale, no longer centered on the Paris, London, New York, and Milan fashion weeks. She also discussed how fashion designers are not necessarily referencing their origins but are engaging in a “critique of the present fashion system” and “new ways of imagining fashion”¹⁷ and that performances, films, and installations are most viable for a context

<ext>where the photo or the outfit no longer suffice: the contents and meaning of the work must also be explained by means of the revealed thought and construction processes and background stories.¹⁸</ext>

The works shown at the exhibition shared a criticality toward the fashion system itself and a prioritizing of ideas—most important for these fashion artists—that seems to be more fitting of an art context (i.e., gallery and museum space) than a fashion context. This comes at a higher price range with less accessibility. By moving the pieces from their practical aspects into a conceptual framework, what they gain in criticality toward their own system they seem to lose in terms of what fashion's agency allows in its relation to the world, which is being worn.

<1>**Fashion and Art**

By the 1970s, conceptual art had been fully established, privileging ideas over appearance, processes and self-reflection over resolution. The fashion theorist Nathalie Khan argued that, similarly, conceptual fashion is “not about forms and materials but ideas and meanings.”¹⁹

Like conceptual art practices, conceptual fashion practices share a common ground of using clothes for their symbolic content. In the 1970s, clothes were used by artists to symbolically translate someone's presence/absence or memory within a postwar context. The artwork *All the Clothes of a Woman* (1973) by the artist Hans-Peter Feldman is a good example, where seventy items of a woman's wardrobe were photographed one by one and framed as one archival image as a reminder of her existence in her absence. Feldman's work represents a specific woman whose identity is not revealed but is re-created by her wardrobe. In 1972, artist Christian Boltanski's *Les habits de François C* (*The Clothes of François C*) surveys his main motifs of place, memory, and loss through clothing that represents someone's identity.

<ext>*Les Habits de François C* (The clothes of François C), in which the viewers were confronted with black-and-white, tin-framed photographs of children's clothing. Shot From above, each item isolated in a crude cardboard box, these images of crumpled, well-worn clothes were oddly moving. As With the actual or photographed

objects of the inventories, questions naturally arose as to the identity and whereabouts of the missing owners.²⁰

In the visual arts, according to Bonnie English, the use of found objects represents certain moments in time, “a trace of both presence and absence of the human existence.” English continues, comparing fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto’s interest in old clothes and capturing their timeless quality with Boltanski’s representation of memory:

The artist Christian Boltanski has spent most of his life working on ethereal material: photographs, light bulbs and candles—to evoke memory, loss and death. Boltanski used actual lost property from railway stations to memorialise the unknown owners. These personal effects relate to the memories that have been buried. They are meant to remind us of the experience of remembering. Like Yamamoto, Boltanski is challenging the basic assumption that constitute an artwork—using old clothing or seemingly mundane elements to address some of the most fundamental and disturbing contradictions of twentieth century life.²¹

Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader photographed his entire wardrobe on the roof of his house for *All My Clothes* (1970).

Joseph Beuys also famously represented the body with his *Felt Suit* (1970), strongly representing the in-between-ness of absence and presence of a body as well as the relationship with memory and identity that clothing can carry with it. Beuys uses the felt suit as a symbol.

The symbolic nature of clothing is currently being explored by fashion practitioners like Anna-Sophie Berger, who studied fashion design and interdisciplinary art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In the setting of the gallery space, where Berger usually presents her work, clothing is given the place of sculpture and, as such, when viewed by the public, it is as an installation piece. The sculptural characteristics of her pieces gain relevance

while the border between the fashion product and the art piece is dissolved or at least shifted. It is this threshold that Berger pervades, frequently subverting the rules of both the fashion and art worlds. Berger's work *She Vanished 1* (2015) evokes absence and loss while exploring the sculptural aspect of a garment laid out on the floor (see Figure 1).

<Insert Figure 1 here>

Figure 1 | Anna-Sophie Berger, "She vanished 1," silk, thread, water, dimensions variable (2015), Installation view, Transfashional exhibition, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2017). Photo courtesy of Bartosz Górka.

Berger initially gained attention in 2013 with an ongoing series of cheaply produced black T-shirts featuring the words *Fashion is fast* in white sans serif font above the year the shirts were produced. The printed year will be updated annually, nullifying the previous cycle and announcing the project's continued timeliness.²² Although she shows a certain indifference toward distinctions between fashion and art, Berger uses both to question differing modes of production, distribution, and value attribution, all of which are threads she carries throughout her artworks.²³ Her works lend themselves to transposition, not least because her garments are the result of a stripping down of things to their elemental units: Works such as *Square Window Tunic* (2011) comprise hard edges and grid patterns. The works' aesthetic evokes minimalist sculpture—Berger's *Scarf* (2014) recalls Robert Morris's series of heavy felt sculptures.²⁴ Berger creates objects that connect individual perception and intimate use with questions of material reality as part of a socioeconomic circulation and consumption. Her works address the ambiguity of a sensual need to yield and a conscious effort to resist.

Elisa van Joolen's project *11" x 17"*, begun in 2013, is an ongoing series made from clothes provided by several fashion labels. The designer found a way to hack into the fashion system by upcycling fashion brand production surpluses together with other high-street fashion items in a combination of low-priced and high-priced items, questioning their

commercial value and social status. The project began with a series of conversations with representatives of various fashion brands including G-Star, O'Neill, Gsus Industries, Rockwell by Parra, Converse, Monique van Heist, and Nike. These companies then donated clothing and footwear, which van Joolen complemented with pieces of secondhand and no-brand clothing, applying a process of cutting out and reconstructing to create 11" × 17" sweaters and invert footwear. The aesthetics of van Joolen's 11" x 17" (see Figure 2) are quite plain, its reduction not necessarily betraying her purpose at first glance—what is essential is the process itself and the way the project has been processed. 11" x 17" creates a network, uniting different categories of clothing and different values within fashion—an eclectic mixture of midmarket, secondhand, and high-end items. What differentiates van Joolen's practice from other upcycling techniques is how it opens up a dialogue about value. For van Joolen, the project's focus was its interaction with the fashion industry; she engaged in conversations mainly by e-mail, asking company public relations people about who designed their collections and where they were produced.²⁵ Discussing these issues with the fashion companies was a provocative gesture, helping to raise awareness about the political agency involved in the creation, production, and consumption of fashion. Van Joolen's approach is not only about upcycling clothing; it is about fashion deconstruction, questioning fashion hierarchies and power relations through the product itself. As the designer states in an interview with Beata Wilczek in 2016, her work is driven by "the critique as a proposition."²⁶

<Insert Figure 2 here>

Figure 2 | Elisa van Joolen, "Tultex × moniquevanheist × G-Star RAW × Union Made," 11" × 17" sweater (2013 – present). Photo courtesy of Blommers/Schumm.

Fashion practitioner Ruby Hoette works by collaging and reworking different parts of outfits in a practice reminiscent of Rauschenberg's combines. She generally works with found clothing, sewing the pieces together into new forms, giving them a second life via a process

of appropriation. Although these projects are not necessarily innovative design, they represent a change in the designer's role by predominantly focusing on process and conceptual development, giving less relevance to commercial imperatives.

<1>**Critical Fashion Practice**

Critical fashion practices ask carefully crafted questions and make us think, just as importantly as fashion design solves problems or finds answers. They differ from conceptual and deconstruction fashion by seeking to extend the medium to a postproduct logic, ignoring any need to create for mass production and mass consumption. Fashion practitioners work with dress as a symbolic element through which they critically address current concerns regarding production, consumption, and representation. Their purpose is to stimulate discussion and debate among designers, the industry, and the public about fashion as a mediation of existence.

The examples presented in the previous section were selected based on their critical agency. Critical fashion practice is now synonymous with a movement that uses fashion as a form of critical investigation. Critical fashion uses artistic methods to challenge narrow assumptions, preconceptions, and givens about the role fashion plays in society. There are many people who work within fashion as a form of critique who have never heard the term *critical fashion practices* and who have their own way of describing what they do. Naming it *critical fashion practice* is a useful way of making this activity more visible and subject to discussion and debate.

The criticality of fashion practices has rarely been directly addressed. The first publication addressing this notion, *Critical Fashion Practice: From Westwood to Van Beirendonck* by Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, was published earlier this year. Most literature connecting fashion and art focuses on defining this relationship. Some authors discuss the evolution of fashion image makers throughout the twentieth century as having

moved from depicting perfection and elegance to articulating fashion's ephemerality via digital media formats.²⁷ In this context, according to Robyn Healy, the cinematic/video apparatus has given fashion designers and curators the possibility to construct atmospheric environments and facilitated interdisciplinary practices, where clothes are presented as part of a larger work signifying the fashion idea.²⁸ With the advent of the digital age amid growing concerns regarding sustainability and the fast fashion system, could this mean the end of a certain form of fashion related to production and consumption? Indeed, a postmodern understanding of fashion might suggest open-ended explorations of a possible new role for the designer within a postproduct society.²⁹ "What is it to offer a critique?" asks Judith Butler in her essay on Foucault's virtue.³⁰ Foucault delivered a lecture in 1978 titled *What Is a Critique?*—this question does not only try to circumscribe critique as an activity but also "enacts a certain mode of questioning that will prove central to critique itself."³¹ The French philosopher Michel Foucault stated:

One will be surprised to see that one tries to find a unity in this critique, although by its very nature, by its function, I was going to say, by its profession, it seems to be condemned to dispersion, dependency and pure heteronomy. After all, critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate. All this means that it is a function which is subordinated in relation to what philosophy, science, politics, ethics, law, literature, etc., positively constitute.³²

If critique "only exists in relation to something other than itself," as Foucault claimed,³³ then by using artistic processes, fashion practitioners question fashion itself by releasing the practice from its commercial imperative and mainly focusing on processes and ideas. The design theorist Clive Dilnot described how the word *criticality* trips "uncomfortably off the

tongue.”³⁴ It feels awkward in its use here because, in the fashion discipline especially, *critical* used as a noun is unfamiliar, and therefore it is approached with unease. Yet the urgency of criticality in fashion practices is unarguable. The etymology of the words *criticality* and *crisis*, according to Ewa Domanska and as used by Hippocrates in his medical works, is the Greek word *krisis*, meaning the turning point of the disease, the *critical day* (Aristotle), a sudden change that determines the patient’s future condition.³⁵ In this sense, the word *critical* was synonymous with *crisis*, meaning both the turning point and the crucial moment.³⁶ These etymological considerations are relevant to my argument insofar as I believe that criticality is itself the product of a critical moment in fashion. The crisis can be easily detected just by looking at the headlines that have spread across the fashion media in the last two years announcing the “end of fashion.” Following in the footsteps of the conceptual designers from the 1980s and 1990s, fashion practitioners of the early twenty-first century are prioritizing thought over product, offering alternatives to the current production model within the fashion system and using fashion practice as a tool for criticality. Critique is dependent on its object, but its object also will, in turn, define the very notion of critique. Fashion has obviously had other crises, and these debates are not new, but the current debate pointed out by fashion trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort in her *Anti_Fashion: Ten Reasons Why the Fashion System Is Obsolete*³⁷—a manifesto for the next decade in which she challenges the consumerist understanding of value, questions the low prices of fast fashion, and regrets the exploitation of labor—is critical in the sense of relating to the crisis of a disease. The crisis of the fashion system that the manifesto *Anti_Fashion* captures represents the spirit of present times. This is certainly the moment for informed criticality, as the historian and fashion theorist Christopher Breward notes “while innovation and standards have seemingly atrophied in the world of fashion business, critique and commentary have blossomed in academia.”³⁸ My own practice, which appropriates methods and discourses

usually characteristic of fine arts, has been seen as “not fashion” because it is presented within gallery and museum spaces, which are often subjected to art discourses. I argue that my assertion of the work as fashion is important because the power of critical fashion lies in its object being seen as fashion. The refusal to abandon the fashion framework through the application of language, methods, and fashion principles offers a contribution to the discipline of fashion and an understanding of what fashion knowledge can be. The critique of fashion through the subversion of its limits and traditions reveals new perspectives and adds a new practice value to the discipline. My own practice operates through symbolic use of clothing and fashion rhetoric to establish a critical practice of fashion.

<1>**Conclusion**

This article has sought to articulate a strategy for critical fashion practices in an expanded field of fashion by mapping fashion’s relationship to art. Strategies and terminologies such as allegory, juxtaposition, assemblage, fragments, and appropriation, identified in the writings of Rosalind Krauss, also become prescient to contemporary critical fashion discourse. In 1979, reacting against contemporary art’s transformation of modernist medium specificity into postmodernist medium multiplicity, the art historian Rosalind Krauss published an essay that laid out in a precise diagram the structural parameters of sculpture, architecture, and landscape art. Krauss tried to clarify what these art practices were, what they were not, and what they could become if logically combined. Taking a cue from Krauss’s analysis, I have attempted to make a parallel case for critical fashion practices. There are obvious differences between modernist sculpture and contemporary critical fashion practices, but nonetheless we find similar patterns of change in both sculpture and fashion—a move from object to process, from materiality to immateriality, and an increasing degree of heterogeneity within both fields that seems to disrupt their internal logics. I have attempted to contextualize fashion within a wider field; the question then becomes whether it is useful to understand fashion as

an expanded field. Although these boundaries are indeed blurring, as has been suggested by many in the past, there are opportunities for further research, with the intent here only to encourage further dialogue around fashion and an expanded field.

Unlike traditional fashion designers, critical designers and practitioners primarily focus on the communication of an idea rather than the development of a product within a system that has always been product focused. Fashion practitioners already question the fashion establishment through their practice by subverting traditional aspects and symbols of fashion into parodies or satires. The “critical” in “critical fashion” is about questioning assumptions about what fashion is. Following in the footsteps of the conceptual designers from the 1980s and 1990s, fashion practitioners of the early 2000s prioritized thought over product, offering alternatives to the current production model within the fashion system and using fashion practice as a tool for criticality. The use of a structuralism model that is more than thirty-five years old may be questioned, although the essay has proven to be useful in discussing architecture, cinema, and photography’s expanded fields. We exist in a quite different moment than the one described by Krauss in her 1979 essay “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” and as the theorist Hal Foster remarked upon Krauss’s essay, we should resist the latent urge for recentering implicit in the expanded field model in the first place: Foster wrote that although Krauss had liberated the term *sculpture*, that term had been replaced by other terms like *landscape* or *architecture* because it depended on these other terms to define itself.³⁹ The modern attempt to make a concrete definition for each medium was on the condition of “pure negativity”; that is, sculpture was sculpture because it was not-landscape, not-architecture. If fashion seems to be in crisis today, we are entering a period not when the medium has come to an end, nor where the expanded field has simply collapsed under its own dispersal; rather, the terms have become more complex and the need to map their effects is more necessary because these effects are both less obvious and self-evident.⁴⁰

As George Baker wrote in his reflection on “Photography’s Expanded Field” (2005), referring to Fredric Jameson’s commentary on the development of postmodernity, that given the potential of these expansions, what we need in the contemporary moment are maps: We should map the possibilities of an expanded field and also deconstruct its potential closure and further open its multiple directions.⁴¹

<aubio>Lara Torres is currently a PhD student at the University of the Arts London, where she is concluding her research project titled “Towards a Practice of Unmaking: A Strategy for Critical Fashion Practices” under the supervision of Professor Sandy Black and Dr. Thomas Makryniotis at the London College of Fashion. She is a teaching fellow in fashion at the School of Art and Design at the University of Portsmouth. Her experimental fashion practice was featured in international exhibitions including *The Future of Fashion* in Rotterdam, Shenzhen, and Shanghai in 2015–2016 and *Tranfashional* in London, Warsaw, and Vienna in 2016–2017.</aubio>

Notes

<Insert endnotes>

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