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From the physical to the digital and back: Fashion exhibitions in the digital age

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ABSTRACT

The discipline of curating fashion has experienced a cultural turn in the last decades. What were controversial approaches are now recognized as pioneering and significant in having encouraged debates and opened the discipline through rethinking existing paradigms. This contribution analyses the challenges and criticisms surrounding fashion displays, with the aim to address the centrality of interpretation and performativity in relation to key fashion exhibitions. The article explores 'the power of display' (Staniszewski 1998; 2000) through mediums and spaces, whether physical, digital or both. Within museum studies, the focus on the visitors' experience and on the narrative has been identified as a key feature of a 'new museology' (Vergo 1989; Hein 2000; Henning 2006), which ultimately leads us to question the purposes of museum and gallery displays. With references to museum studies, fashion curation and philosophy, and drawing from insightful conversations with fashion curators, the article examines the exhibition's potential to provide a context for visual and material experiences, as well as for a new understanding and articulation of knowledge. The contribution embraces Foucault's reflection on heterotopia (1986 [1967]; 1992 [1966]), arguing that the content of the museum as a space of difference is the interpretation itself. Reflecting on exhibition design as a medium in its own right (Celant 1996a), the article highlights performativity as a fundamental feature of the exhibits, of the installation and, more broadly, of the museum space.

INTRODUCTION

In the light of the changes that have progressively informed and are still informing the discipline of curating fashion, my contribution explores the dichotomy of the physical and the digital within fashion exhibitions, with the aim to address several questions that fall under some crucial problematics: how can the display translate, within the space, fashion's dynamism and presence? How can fashion curators develop relevant display strategies for contemporary audiences? Finally, and more importantly for this exploration, how can the exhibition allow a new access to the exhibits, and encourage a different articulation of material and visual experiences? An implicit premise for my discussion is Foucault's analysis of the museum (1986 [1967]) as heterotopia, as a space of representation, displaying the difference inherent in the interpretation. In highlighting the cultural turn

that occurred within fashion curation, and the crucial role that interpretation has, this article encompasses discussions and curatorial practices as articulated mainly within western academic and cultural contexts, focusing in particular on exhibitions staged in the United Kingdom and Europe. Studies in curation, and more specifically the contributions of art and cultural theorist Mary Anne Staniszewski (1998; 2000), and critics Germano Celant (1996a) and Paul O'Neill (2012), are crucial in examining the exhibition as a 'medium' and the performative1 nature of the display, which is a priority of this exploration. In line with Staniszewski, digital technology is then considered as an element contributing to what she defines as the 'power of display', as an aid for increased effectiveness in conveying story and meaning. The discussion of key fashion exhibitions extends here beyond physical displays, and includes fragments of interviews with fashion curators that exemplify the coexistence of different approaches and priorities within the discipline. Rather than adopting a medium-oriented approach, this study intends to address exhibition design as a 'medium' in its own right. This concept, which illustrates important changes in the curatorship of art, emerged between the late 1960s and early 1970s with independent exhibition makers such as Lucy Lippard, Harald Szeemann and Seth Siegelaub, who reflected on the exhibition form, treating it as a 'medium in and of itself' (O'Neill 2012: 16).2 Exhibitions such as When Attitudes Become Form (Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, 1969; Fondazione Prada, Venice, 2013), curated by Szeemann, are recognized as seminal in addressing the centrality of the curatorial voice. Nowadays, Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne argue, exhibitions are 'the medium' for the construction and deconstruction of signification: 'part spectacle, part sociohistorical events, part structuring device, exhibitions […] establish and administer the cultural meanings of art' (1996: 2, original emphasis).3 Reviewing these paradigmatic shifts, Paul O'Neill (2012) discusses exhibition making as a complex balancing act between curating and authorship, between reactivity and expressivity. The presence of different approaches to exhibition making, such as the authorial versus the collaborative attitude, which are still central to curatorial debates and practices, reveals inherent tensions within curatorship. While the authorial attitude indicates an idea of curating as a mode of authorship, the collaborative approach expresses a dialogical understanding of exhibition making and of the exhibition as an ongoing process (O'Neill 2012; Obrist 2001: 23–24). Always in a balanced tension, these two modes are both present in some respect within exhibition making.

Echoing some of the debates that have informed the curatorship of art through the decades, the curatorial discourse on fashion has undergone interesting changes, where the idea of the museum as a neutral and objective institution has progressively left space to an increased emphasis on the curatorial stance in articulating narrative spaces, and soliciting in the viewers a critical response. Through the past twenty years, the discipline of curating fashion has dramatically advanced, experiencing a widely recognized cultural turn (Breward 2003; O'Neill 2008; Steele 2008; Granata 2012; Melchior and Svensson 2014).4 Those that were controversial or unorthodox approaches are now seen as pioneering and significant in having encouraged debates and opened the discipline to rethinking existing paradigms. Fiona Anderson (2000) states that a key premise in the current museological debate is the identification of museums and galleries as media, which mirror and contribute to the fast-moving circulation of information typical of the contemporary fashion system. Although Anderson's argument precedes most of the exhibitions that are going to be discussed, it is worthy of consideration for it raises the fundamental question of how museum and gallery displays are different from other types of media: are they? How do they specifically differentiate from each other? Within recent years, fashion exhibitions have represented a driving force for museums and galleries, as attested by the large audiences attracted by shows such as David Bowie Is (V&A, London, 2013), Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2011; V&A, 2015) and Hollywood Costume (V&A, 2012–13). Professor of Fashion and Museology and exhibition maker Judith Clark states that 'the pendulum, has swung from dress exhibitions as the underdog and

underfunded, to huge crowd pullers and demographic "broadeners"' (Loscialpo 2013: 115). The key issue, already highlighted by Melchior and Svensson (2014: 14), consists then in reflecting on the essence and purpose of the museum/ gallery display, to ultimately question 'what can museums do that fashion houses, concept stores, magazines, television programmes, and books cannot?' Moreover, is the museification of fashion still opposed to what is perceived as the 'dynamic freedom of movement of modern society' (Celant 1996b: 10)?5 In addressing these issues, the exploration reviews the debate on the challenges facing the discipline of curating fashion and, rather than providing a definitive answer, which would inevitably be reductive, leaves space for a final – and somehow Derridean – consideration in relation to online displays, just before going back, almost full circle, to the starting point, to the performative nature of the installation.

THROUGH DEBATES AND CATEGORIZATIONS

Museums: cemeteries!… Identical, surely,

in the sinister promiscuity

of so many bodies

unknown to one another.

Museums: public dormitories

where one lies forever

beside hated or unknown beings.

(Marinetti 1973 [1909]: 22)

Invested by a cultural turn, curating fashion 'has shifted from being something rooted in practice to a more theoretical position rehearsed both inside and outside the institution' (Clark 2008: 325). Reviewing the academic and professional debate around fashion exhibitions is crucial in questioning how different exhibition practices have related to the body, fashion history and archives. In order to discuss the power of display, it is important to focus, at first, on the criticism that has for so long surrounded fashion exhibitions. Metaphors linked to death have often been used in relation to fashion displays, in a way that vaguely reminds the vehement considerations about the museum outlined at the beginning of the twentieth century by Marinetti (1973 [1909]) and Paul Valéry (1960 [1923]). Even though they should be read within the specific contexts they stem from, Marinetti's cemetery metaphor and Valéry's description of the museum as a place populated by 'dead visions' still resonate today with some keywords recurring in the contemporary criticism surrounding fashion exhibitions. Over the years, the academic and professional debate has in fact repeatedly highlighted the static nature of fashion exhibitions – where garments are disconnected from the living body – as the reason for their failure to represent fashion 'as a living phenomenon' (Steele 1998: 334; Entwistle and Wilson 1998). Fashion within the museum and gallery seems to portray 'the atrophy of the body and the evanescence of life' (Wilson 2003: 1). Exemplary of this critique are the observations by renowned curator Ann Buck, who states: The beauty of dress, always ephemeral, is so closely connected with the living, moving body which wore it and gave it final expression, that a dress surviving, inhabited, may appear as an elaborated piece of fabric, an accidental repository of the textile arts, but little more.

(Buck 1958: 3) There are conservation standards and challenges in displaying fashionable dress, which have been discussed extensively by Alexandra Palmer (2008) and Lou Taylor (2002), amongst many others, as the provision of a satisfactory body form that gives shape to an item is both a practical issue of conservation, support and design, and an intellectual issue of interpretation and contextualization. The problem with bodily representations through mannequins lies in the power of identification; the heated discussion occurring within fashion curation, over the past two decades, has then highlighted the '"deep disjuncture" between object-focused curators and humanities-based academics' (Breward 2008: 84), and between a deeply focused empirical research and a curatorial approach unravelling and visually exhibiting the layers of interpretation and editing. From an object-oriented perspective, the display – i.e. the mannequin, whether realistic or stylized, the support material, the stand, etc. – should show 'exactly how the garment would have been worn' (Taylor 2002: 47), whilst other more impressionistic curatorial interventions could be compared to 'installation art' (Taylor 2002: 27). Not by chance, Taylor mentions as an instance of this approach the exhibition Issey Miyake: Making Things (Fondation Cartier, Paris, 1998), which included a 'sensational moving setting' (Taylor 2002: 27). The problem with bodily representations is worthy of close examination since it is symptomatic of greater frustrations with the static display, that is, with 'the hushed stillness of the museum, which transforms the garment into a fetish' (Entwistle and Wilson 1998: 11). In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition Addressing the Century: 100 Years of Art and Fashion (Hayward Gallery, London, 1998), Entwistle and Wilson point to the difficulty for the static display to effectively convey contextual narratives related to bodies and identities, as well as social, cultural and economic aspects, which might be as relevant as the objects on display. The presentation of these narratives is indeed a very complex act, opening up to curators crucial methodological choices. Over the last two decades, the discipline of fashion curation has undergone a crucial and widely documented 'cultural turn' (Breward 2008; McNeil 2008; Melchior and Svensson 2014; O'Neill 2008; Steele 2008; Taylor 2002), which highlights what had already been recognized in relation to exhibiting art. As addressed by critic and curator Germano Celant (1996a: 261), the installation, crucial component of any exhibition, is in itself 'a form of modern work', lying somewhere between art and architecture. Innovative presentation modes – demonstrated for instance by ModeMuseum (MoMu) in Antwerp, or within exhibitions such Maison Martin Margiela (9/4/1615) (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1997), performing patina and decay, or within Judith Clark's practice or Siebe Tettero's installation for The House of Viktor & Rolf (Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2008) – have been object of discussions recognizing the contributions of these methods of exhibiting fashion (Evans 1998; Horsley 2015; Loscialpo 2012; O'Neill 2008; Steele 2008). Within fashion curation, representations of the body have been reviewed in depth by Jeff Horsley, in the article 'Representing the body in fashion exhibitions' (2014), where he categorizes them according to the medium used, and identifies 'pictorial' representations such as illustrations, painting or photographs (e.g. the cut-out images at Maison Martin Margiela '20' The Exhibition, at MoMu, 2008–09; 'The Avenues of Silhouette' in Malign Muses/ Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back, MoMu, 2004, and V&A, 2005); 'sculptural', materializing the body in three-dimensional form (e.g. the matryoshka dolls in Katharina Prospekt: The Russians by A. F. Vandevorst, MoMu, 2005–06); 'audio-visual', using screen-based moving images (e.g. films of runaway shows included in several exhibitions, such as The House of Viktor & Rolf); 'performative', addressing the body 'through implied action or dramatization' (e.g. the long queues of the Soviet era in Katharina Prospekt, formed by retail type mannequins); and finally, 'digital', representing the body through digital devices. The example here is the exhibition Mutilate?/Vermink? (Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, 2001) curated by Walter van Beirendonck, which made use of real-time digital avatars. While Horsley thematizes exhibitions that can be considered milestones in the field of fashion curation, and thereby opens the field for further research, the emphasis on the medium does not allow to fully explore how bodies and garments address the viewers and perform within a narrative. Moreover, a classification based on the

medium does not let grasp the references that the installation bears to similar practices; for instance, among the digital representations of the body, Horsley mentions Kate Moss's ghostly apparition for McQueen's The Widows of Culloden (Autumn/Winter 2006), recreated for Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty, which instead is a modern version of the Victorian optical technique Pepper's Ghost (Wilcox 2015: 243), used also in Malign Muses/Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back. Having presented the terms of the debate surrounding the display of dress, the analysis will now focus on the absence of the living body within the museum or gallery space, and the possibilities it discloses. This contribution draws from the studies on exhibition design by Celant (1996a) and Staniszewski (1998; 2000) and, in discussing key curatorial interventions within fashion, does not adopt a medium-oriented approach but understands exhibition design as a medium in its own right.

THE BODY THROUGH ABSENCE AND PRESENCE: THE EXHIBITION SPACE AS HETEROTOPIA

In the light of the changes that have progressively informed fashion curation, the first question arising is, how can the installation render justice to fashion's dynamism and presence when the body is absent? Moreover, is the medium important? Theorist and media expert Mark Sandberg explores the presence and absence of the body in museum exhibitions, and argues that the absence of a physical body 'encourages spectators to be border dwellers, both inside and outside the display' (2003: 1). According to Nina Felshin, curator of Empty Dress: Clothing as Surrogate in Recent Art (travelling exhibition, United States and Canada, 1993–95), in the artistic practice, the absence of the body demands that visitors 'read between the lines, examining the meaning of what is not presented' (1993: 13). In Empty Dress, which includes contemporary artists working with clothing or representations of clothing in their practice, the absence of the body can be compared to Barthes's authorless text. It creates in fact a space for the viewer, allowing opportunities for exploring notions of identity, sexuality and politics, as well as preconceptions or critical stances surrounding these notions. The categorization provided by Horsley (2014) accurately depicts the scenario of the most common strategies used within museum and gallery displays to represent the body and articulate the narrative of the exhibition. My claim though, is that 'performativity' is not just a category or mode of representation, but rather a crucial feature of the display itself, which might be obscured if a purely instrumental or medium-oriented approach is adopted. In particular, performativity can help address the absent body in multiple ways. In this respect, Pantouvaki and Barbieri (2014) highlight that similar approaches to those used, for instance, by Judith Clark (though this point could be stressed also in relation to other key fashion exhibitions) have been observed in exhibitions of performance costumes, where display strategies can reinterpret the dichotomy absence–presence through the performativity and theatricality of display:

> In an exhibition of costumes, which takes place when a performance is concluded and the performer is absent, the body becomes a notion, a memory, and so acquires a virtual presence. In the context of the exhibition space, the audience is called to experience the costume in a different way. The spectator is introduced to a new visual language, a new spatial narrative, and a new character of the costume. (Pantouvaki and Barbieri 2014: 88)

Within Clark's practice, indeed, the tension between the body, its gesture and the space, projects a dynamic narrative based on dress, which is achieved – in some exhibitions – also through Naomi Filmer's prosthetics giving shape to mannerist bodies (Malign Muses/Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back; Simonetta: la prima donna della moda italiana, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, 2008; Be-hind, Be-fore and Be-yond, Judith Clark Costume Gallery, London, 1999). Similarly, Siebe Tettero's installation for The House of Viktor & Rolf, by playing with the scale of the exhibits, produces distortions in the perception of time and space and, as commented by Evans, creates in the viewers the impression of disorientation (Evans and Frankel 2008: 17–20). In this sense, the exhibition can be a space of difference, a heterotopia, in the Foucauldian sense, in which objects are presented in their difference from the conceptual orders in which they would normally be understood (Foucault 1992 [1966]: 130). The concept of heterotopia is crucial in museum studies (Bennett 1995; Lord 2006; Sherman and Rogoff 1994; Topinka 2010) and holds a specific centrality because 'it has the potential to shift the definition of the museum away from objects and collections [as well as chronological preoccupations] and towards difference' (Lord 2006: 3). The museum is in fact a heterotopia not because it gathers, contains and displays different objects, or because it juxtaposes different historical periods, but more precisely because, as a 'space of representation' (Foucault 1992 [1966]: 130), it displays the difference existing between 'things' and the cultural, conceptual systems for understanding and interpreting them. As Lord argues,

> museums, from their beginnings to the present day, do not only display objects, but display the ways in which objects are related to words, names, and concepts: they display systems of representation […] By putting 'the order of things' itself on display, museums are spaces for representing the space of representation as such. (Lord 2006: 6)

From a curatorial and theoretical perspective, the installation created by Siebe Tettero for The House of Viktor & Rolf is particularly interesting; it holds multiple implications, engaging the viewer in an experience that is not only spatial but also temporal. The manipulation of the scale, as a way of creating space for a new dialogue with the viewer, discloses in fact the access to an 'other' time. In respect to this intertwining of the spatial and temporal dimensions, crucial is the phenomenological correlation between the experience of the scale and the experience of duration. In her study of cultural forms, such as the miniature, the souvenir and the collection, Susan Stewart (2001) explains that, within a museum display or a collection, the miniature is a metaphor for the interior space, while the gigantic is an exaggeration of the exterior, a metaphor for the abstract authority of the public life: 'the miniature, linked to nostalgic version of childhood and history, presents a diminutive, and therefore manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination' (Stewart 2001: 69). Significantly, within Tettero's installation, as the viewers progress through the exhibition, the miniaturized cosmos of Viktor & Rolf is gradually reversed and giganticized in such a way as to create in them the illusion of becoming small, while venturing into a bigger dollhouse. Physically and symbolically distorting points of reference, the scenography seems to threaten the concept of 'domesticity' itself. In this respect, Caroline Evans perspicuously talks of the 'uncanny' as a feature of Viktor & Rolf's work (Evans and Frankel 2008: 19). The word 'uncanny' is in German 'unheimlich', which – as elaborated by Sigmund Freud in the essay 'The Uncanny' (1955 [1919]) – is related to the concept of Heimat, meaning 'home', 'homeland'. The profound imaginative reference to the 'home' underpins the play and poetics of Viktor & Rolf's dollhouse, of which the viewer cannot help sensing the familiar and unfamiliar nature. The house of Viktor & Rolf is thus a 'home', a 'Heimat', and at the same time the loss of a 'home', a 'Heimatlosigkeit', that is, the sensation

of not feeling at home anymore, a feeling of rootlessness, a lack of points of reference and definitions. In this sense, the exhibition is the space where the 'difference' between things and words, the difference inherent in the interpretation, can be experienced; it has hence the potential to be a space of subversion and resistance. In The Order of Things, Foucault explains that heterotopias are disturbing

> probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. (Foucault 1992 [1966]: xviii, original emphasis)

Topinka (2010: 58) addresses that, in The Order of Things, heterotopias are mainly textual, whilst in 'Of other spaces' – based on a lecture delivered in 1967 and published only later – they are understood as physical spaces. And yet, this apparent tension or permutation in the exploration of heterotopias dissolves if one considers that, for Foucault, heterotopias exist in-between, as sites of resistance, where 'the real sites, all the other real sites than can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 24). Therefore, no exhibition stands on its own, independently from cultural narratives, linguistic conventions and conceptual orders; it is rather a space for articulating and re-articulating concepts, representations of bodies, identities, historical resonances, social and cultural issues. Within curation, it is therefore crucial to understand that the installation, 'with the various philosophies of exhibitions, is a 'text', an interpretive tool (Celant 1996a: 261).

PERFORMATIVITY AND REPRESENTATION IN FASHION EXHIBITIONS

Within the last twenty years, the institution of the museum has undergone crucial changes, with the overall number of museums increasing worldwide, while museums at the same time diversify and expand their activities (Sherman and Rogoff 1994; Hein 2000). Especially considering the discipline of exhibiting fashion, not only can we experience an unprecedented popularity and number of fashion exhibitions or museums dedicated to the display of fashion but, and more importantly, we can observe an interesting variety of approaches within fashion curation. Nowadays, presentations of the 'order of things' as historical and progressive exist alongside more thematic as well as experimental approaches that leave greater room to the curatorial voice. Following Foucault's analysis of the museum, it can be argued that exhibitions are not just displays of objects but 'spaces of representation', for the discussion of which it is crucial to consider how things are represented and exhibited, rather than the medium(s) used in the space. In this sense, 'performativity' appears as a fundamental feature of the installation itself – and, more broadly, of the museum space – which has relevant implications for the display of fashion in relation to the body. The museum is not merely a place where items are collected and exhibited, but rather a 'network of relationships' between visitors and exhibits (Henning 2006: 11), where new relationships can emerge. Therefore, the museum or installation can transform how visitors look at objects and bodies, that is, how these objects and bodies address visitors and 'act' in relation to them. Where the intention is not only to create the illusion of 'bodies wearing the costumes' (Hall 1987: 152), or to illustrate how exactly the garments would have looked on living bodies, the absence of the body within a fashion display provides the space for new thematic and 'performative associations' (Pantouvaki and Anderson 2014: 104), and for the viewer to question 'the conditions of

representation itself' (Felshin 1993: 13). The representation of the body – whether digital, sculptural, performative or audio-visual – needs to take into account the spatial and narrative perspective of a garment as well as the potential for interpretation offered by it. Judith Clark states that curating 'is about creating sympathetic allegiances between objects, investing them through association with a lop-sided elegance' (Clark 2002: 150). In this respect, a classification solely based on the medium seems problematic, for it does not fully acknowledge how the installation mediates the experience of the exhibits, how it may reach the visitor, or how it explores dress and bodies as enacted artefacts. The fashion installation can even serve to question the museum as a static and neutral context, which denies to the living body any access and presence. An example is the presentation of the collection Wuyong (2006) by Chinese designer Ma Ke, as part of the Fashion in Motion programme (V&A, 2008). The installation was a static display of garments worn by live models disguised as statues. Even though temporary, this display is particularly poignant for it inscribes living bodies into the otherwise static museum and, Claire Wilcox observes, 'bridges the gap between live catwalk shows and static museum displays' (cited in Anderson 2000: 377). Reflecting Ma Ke's interest in the crossovers between fashion and art, the presentation consisted of performing a static museum installation, with the models acting as statues, or mannequins. The sculptural quality of Ma Ke's collection, the dramatic lighting, the strategic use of plinths, and the posture and stillness of the models, contributed to an ambiguous display representing a museum installation; at the same time, it was a key event within the Fashion in Motion programme, which 'with its theatricality, interactivity and origins in the commercial world, actively disturbs traditional notions of the museum' (Anderson 2000: 379). Different challenges inevitably emerge when exhibiting historical dress; however, the archive itself can be a place of historical re-elaboration, showing how objects and their 'correspondences' – in the sense suggested by Benjamin (1999: 181) – activate new creative processes of interpretation of fashion history. Acknowledging the curatorial agency, Jacques Hainard and Marc-Olivier Gonseth argue that exhibiting indeed 'means placing objects in the service of theoretical consideration, a discourse or a story, and not vice versa' (cited in Reinhardt and Teufel 2010: 29). The variety of approaches currently emerging within fashion curation emphasizes the mediating role of the display, which is always performative, even when the curatorial approach does not expressively acknowledge or embrace this role. If one reconsiders the classification outlined by Horsley (2014), performativity can then be understood, in a broader sense, as a crucial feature of the installation, as narrative, and not only in relation to the body and its representation through mannequins, pictorial devices, moving image or digital technology. The performativity of the exhibition can also encompass interactive sensorial experiences, to provoke, challenge and educate. For the Surrealists, for instance, the installation was in fact 'a cosmogony of the senses' (Celant 1996a), involving touch, smell, sight and sex. Amy de la Haye explains that the role of multi-sensorial experiences is crucial within museum contexts and in displays of both historical and contemporary artefacts: 'perceptions inform our experiences of things and material culture studies and museology have been much enriched by these developments in recent years' (Clark and de la Haye 2014: 72). The use of scent or music in fashion exhibitions, or the less frequent involvement of tactility, as in the Yamamoto retrospective Dream Shop (MoMu, 2007), already draw within the exhibition space the presence of the visitor. In particular, Dream Shop pursued the experience of the visitors through unconventional decisions, such as letting the public try on items from the Yamamoto archive. The installation, which included fitting rooms created in the exhibition hall, thus challenged the museum as a space where only the remote tactility of the gaze is allowed. Even though in different ways, and to varying degrees, performativity characterizes any curatorial intervention, as is exemplified by the re-elaboration of stereotypes and images linked to the Russian past in Katharina Prospekt: The Russians by A.F. Vandevorst, or by the display for Maison Martin Margiela (9/4/1615), which experiments with bacteria and moulds and questions the exhibition space by inverting the relationship between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the museum. In these cases, and in many others, the exhibition

creates an ‘impression’ without being didactic or prescriptive. As explored by critic Germano Celant (1996a), exhibition design can be considered as a medium or practice in its own right, in between art and architecture. This aspect, as well as a collaborative attitude to exhibition making, is particularly evident within the exhibition Utopian Bodies – Fashion Looks Forward (Liljevalchs, Stockholm, 2015–16), curated by Clark’s and de la Haye’s former student and assistant Sofia Hedman. It explores body and fashion as sites of meanings, focusing on the social and political dimension of dress. The eleven thematic sections – ‘Sustainability’, ‘Change’, ‘Technology’, ‘Craft and Form’, ‘Craft and Colour’, ‘Solidarity’, ‘Resistance and Society’, ‘Resistance and Beauty’, ‘Memory’, ‘Gender Identity’, ‘Love’ – inspired by utopian ideas, interpret fashion’s potential to contribute to social challenges (Figs. 1 and 2). Creativity and innovation are not the only criteria for the selection of the exhibits, but the main features of the display itself. The design of each section embodies in fact a utopian idea, a key innovation, or embraces the principles of an artistic movement; for instance, the installation of ‘Craft and Colour’ is modelled on Sonia and Robert Delaunay’s theory of ‘simultané’ (Fig. 3), while ‘Craft and Form’ reinterprets the Arts and Crafts Movement, incorporating references to William Morris in the wood-carved mannequin arms by artist Anastasya Martynova (Fig. 4).

[Figure 1: Utopian Bodies – Fashion Looks Forward, ‘Sustainability’ section. Photograph by Mattias Lindbäck. Figure 2: Utopian Bodies – Fashion Looks Forward, ‘Technology’ section. Photograph by Mattias Lindbäck. Figure 3: Utopian Bodies – Fashion Looks Forward, ‘Craft and Colour’ section, special commissioned room by Orlando Campbell. Photograph by Mattias Lindbäck. Figure 4: Utopian Bodies – Fashion Looks Forward, ‘Craft and Form’ section, Schiaparelli Haute Couture and special commissioned wood carved mannequin arms by Anastasya Martynova. Photograph by Serge Martynov.]

Exhibitions like Utopian Bodies contribute to highlighting the fundamental role of exhibition curators and designers, ‘as creators of a new performative installation, a new mise-en-scène in the exhibition space’ (Pantouvaki and Anderson 2014: 105). Reflecting on her curatorial practice, in an interview for Address: Journal for Fashion Writing and Criticism, Judith Clark remarks: ‘I like the ambiguity of creating an impression rather than stating a fact’ (Loscialpo 2013: 114). For instance, through the use of optical devices in Malign Muses/Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back, the viewer’s presence is originally implied within the exhibition: the installation is not complete without a viewer interacting with it, looking through it and ultimately reflecting on ‘looking at’.6 Malign Muses/Spectres’s optical tricks, such as peepholes, magic lanterns, magnifying mirrors (Clark 2005: 18–24) are reminiscent of old theatrical techniques, and somehow recall the stratagems used, in the first half of the twentieth century, by Frederick Kiesler (International Exposition of Surrealism, Paris, 1947; Kinetic Gallery, for Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century gallery, New York, 1942) and Herbert Bayer (Bauhaus 1919–1928, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1938–39). These innovative installations incorporated optical devices, such as the peephole or a shutter and a lever revealing artworks, which inscribed the visitors into the space, encouraging their active role and reflective attitude towards their own gaze. As highlighted by Huhtamo (2002: 9), these experimentations with visual technology and old optical devices were ‘remarkably forward looking, pointing towards the culture of interactivity’; moreover, in emphasizing the proactive role of the viewers, they suggest a ‘reader-in-the-text scenario’, which is typical of a ‘poststructuralist analysis and the notion that meaning is located at the point of reception’ (O’Neill 2012: 11). In her analysis of museums and contemporary displays, Michelle Henning (2006) explains that the object displayed functions as an ‘actor’ within the installation and the network of other exhibits, and can therefore take on new meanings depending on the context and narrative. Studying museum objects, or more broadly exhibits, means hence to consider ‘them in transition, with

changing meanings and functions as well as material properties' (Henning 2006: 9); it means exploring them in the context of an individual exhibition, as well as across the various displays within which they feature, 'act' and are reinterpreted. In this sense, 'performativity' is a key characteristic of both the object exhibited, which functions as an 'actor', and the installation that groups, choreographs and articulates the narrative of the exhibition; ultimately, it is a key feature of the museum itself, which can disclose a different access to the exhibits, and where a new construction of knowledge and articulation of material and visual experience can take place. Highlighting performativity as a crucial feature of the display allows then to understand the museum or gallery as a dialogic space, where the installation can lead to a different experience of the exhibits, and where the 'possibility of comings and goings' can be varied and endless (Foucault 1988: 199).

THE POWER OF DISPLAY THROUGH MEDIUMS AND SPACES

Space is the medium

in which ideas

are visually phrased.

(Storr 2006: 23)

In the twenty-first century, museums have become laboratories of change, opening to various media and interactive technologies, at the intersections of material and digital culture. Museum and gallery exhibitions nowadays often extend beyond the constraints of the physical spaces in a way that recalls the experimentations of the early 1930s, conducted by Moholy-Nagy, which already spoke the language of new media (Huhtamo 2002: 7). Displays currently incorporate various mediums, media, technologies and devices, occasionally seeming to privilege representations of the exhibits rather than the direct connection with the objects. Henning (2006) and Hein (2000) explain that these changes are a sign of the increased emphasis on the subject, on the visitor's experience, presence in the space and process of 'looking at'. In his book, The New Museology, theorist and art historian Peter Vergo (1989: 46) outlines the characteristics of today's museology, and states that current museum processes and practices tend to focus on the public, 'however diverse that audience might be'; invest in fluid approaches and narratives contextualizing the artefacts and giving them meaning through the exhibition grammar; explore the way exhibits interact with concepts of heritage, authenticity and narrative; and demonstrate awareness of the competition between the museum and the entertainment industry. The last point addressed by Vergo is particularly relevant in relation to the scenario of fashion exhibitions, where luxury brands' promotional and marketing needs are often intertwined with curatorial interventions, occasionally giving life to hybrid displays, part exhibitions and part branding exercises. In some cases, as exemplified by the Instagram-friendly and immersive display of Louis Vuitton Series 3 (London, 2015), the fashion installation is a spectacle in which media forms are eminently structural. Louis Vuitton Series 3, for instance, aimed to disclose an insight into Nicolas Ghesquière's creative process for the Autumn/Winter 2015 collection; it included immersive installations, screenings of craftsmen while they manufactured key Louis Vuitton pieces in real time, as well as artisans creating them for real in the gallery space. In an interview with Business of Fashion, Ghesquière explains that access and immediacy are two crucial aims of the Louis Vuitton's 'Series' exhibitions: 'the exhibition is conceived as a total, physical and interactive immersion inside Louis

Vuitton's fashion show' (Judah 2015). Although mainly driven by marketing concerns – a fact that Louis Vuitton's chief executive Michael Burke does not hide (Judah 2015) – Louis Vuitton Series 3 points towards a rising phenomenon within the curatorial landscape, that is, the 'mediatization' of the exhibition. A concept explored widely in media studies, mediatization means 'the spreading of media forms to spaces of contemporary life that are required to be re-presented through media-forms' (Couldry 2008: 376). The mediatization of the exhibition, and more broadly of the museum itself, is discussed within museum studies as a phenomenon involving changes in the way 'material artefacts perform in the museum setting, changes in what visitors are interacting with' (Henning 2006: 83). In relation to curating fashion, it is hence important to consider whether current curatorial interventions actually reflect these permutations, in the way they mediate the experience of the viewer, and tend towards a process of mediation or 'mediatization'. A first point to consider is the potential contribution of digital technology towards the installation in rendering fashion's dynamism and presence, addressing the absent body, and providing an interactive experience. Within recent fashion exhibitions, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of projections, which can incorporate films; animate otherwise static mannequins, such as in The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk (Barbican Art Gallery, 2014); and culminate in immersive and interactive displays, such as the digital wall at the entrance of MoMu, or Jason Bruges Studio's light sculpture Hemline: The Moving Screen, commissioned for the 2010 edition of 'Fashion in Film Festival', Somerset House, London. More specifically, digital technology can be employed as a crucial component of the curatorial strategy itself: an example is the use of digital reconstructions, through XRay and 3D scanning, within the exhibition Charles James: Genius Deconstructed (Chicago History Museum, Chicago, 2011) curated by Timothy Long. Within the show, the CT 3D scan was used to digitally capture Charles James's 'Tree' dress (1957) with the aim of revealing the construction details, the intricate interior layers that would not have been accessible to the naked eye, as well as addressing the void that once was inhabited by the body. In this case, the integration of digital technologies within the exhibition highlights the power of installation design to generate new modes of exploration of dress and the body, possibly enhancing the level of participation. Further questions that therefore arise are: how can fashion curation potentially engage with new applications of digital technology and progressive methods of displaying and communicating fashion? And, more broadly, are digital technologies really the answer to reaching new audiences? French philosopher Bernard Stiegler attempts to answer similar questions, within the art field, by arguing for a return to the figure of the amateur, in the eighteenth-century sense, who is not a passive consumer but somebody actively engaged with the art. Translated into twenty-first-century terms, Stiegler claims that novel photographic and video functions found on smart phones as well as new forms of tagging mechanisms, afford critical spaces for which new forms of editorial and software development must fundamentally transform the relationship between the cultural institutions and their audiences. (Stiegler 2009: 31) The use of mobile technology can encourage a nomadic inquiry as visitors can manipulate information and conduct investigations while moving between the physical exhibit and the online realm. If integrated within the museum context, digital technology can offer access points at different levels; visitors can in fact enjoy a mixed-reality museum visit that, as Chalmers and Galani suggest (2008: 171), may cover needs and expectations that are not easily addressed by the traditional museum. An example of integration of the physical and digital dimension is the installation Fashion Curation'13 by the London-based curatorial collective White Line Projects (WLP), which is dedicated to the exploration of digital practices and the moving image. The Fashion Curation'13 display, which was exhibited at Moving Textiles: Digital Encounters (University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury, 2014), is particularly interesting as it showcases multiple ways of exploring bodily representations and exhibiting historic dress. These included a physical display of the garment, a tryptic of screens projecting a fashion film, and 3D scanning technology, where the 3D digital image continually rotated at 360 degrees and was

projected onto a transparent screen that could be seen on both sides (Figs 5, 6 and 7). Moreover, an interactive online component provided visitors with opportunities to interact with the installation through image-tagging and comments (Fig. 8); finally, an exhibition website contextualized the garment within the Fraser Laing archive of historical workwear and military clothing that it belongs to.

[Figures 5, 6 & 7: Fashion Curation'13, part of Moving Textiles: Digital Encounters, Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury, UK 2014. Photograph by Daniel Caulfield-Sriklad. Figure 8: Fashion Curation'13, online interactive component as part of the display. Photograph by Daniel Caulfield-Sriklad].

The aim of Fashion Curation'13, as stated by White Line Projects, was to create an interactive and immersive experience, also pointing towards the future potential of multimedia within the field of fashion curation:

> 'within the exhibitions we have worked on, more often than not, the online experience was produced specifically as a component to work within a physical space and have a "dialogue" with a physical installation' (personal communication).

The environment of Fashion Curation'13 indeed comprises different media and channels of communication that encourage visitors into a dynamic relationship with the space and the exhibit, addressing at the same time the absent body that once wore the garments. The integration of the physical and digital dimension has significant implications for the display of fashion within as well as beyond the context of the museum. Digital technology can in fact extend the exhibition beyond the actual physical space, allowing access to prospective visitors, for which a virtual display can achieve a key concept for each reproduction, that is, 'the creation of a demand that could be fully satisfied only later' (Benjamin 1999: 230). Within the curatorial practice, digital technologies allow open access to collections, processes and material, as the White Line Projects collective reinforces:

access not only to create a general awareness but also to reveal hidden information such as craft and the creative process, in addition to reinforcing the relevance of history to contemporary audiences […] Within the museum space there has been a drive towards open access. This contradicts the previous role of curator from keeper to progress into the role of sharer. For the curator to effectively utilise digital practices, it offers a new space of exploration to facilitate this shift in the role of the curator. (personal communication)

In museum studies literature, discussions often focus on the so-called real/ virtual divide, with advocates of 'materiality' and 'reality' (Mintz 1998: 33) treating remote visits as surrogate or secondary experiences to the physical ones, and prioritizing what they consider the 'unmediated' experience of the museum object over the 'mediated' experience via technology. It can be argued that the power of a museum display might be lost on a webpage or on other digital platforms. Mary Anne Staniszewski (2000), for instance, refers to the act of viewing a virtual exhibition almost as a disembodiment from the self, for the physical interaction with an object is absent. Advocates of 'materiality' tend to refer to Benjamin's aura concept; however, it is worth considering that for Benjamin the technical reproduction 'enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record' (1999: 214). If the technological reproducibility of the artwork undoubtedly increases the opportunities to exhibit it,7 for Benjamin it also changes the relation of audiences to art or museum objects. In The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Benjamin (1999: 218) writes: 'to an ever increasing degree, the work reproduced

becomes the reproduction of a work designed for reproducibility […] the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production'. In respect to this pervasive change, it can be argued that artworks – but this is valid also for other exhibits, such as a piece of architecture, or fashion – have gained a new 'auratic' singularity in the museum age. Henning (2006: 2) explains that 'museum objects are constituted by the museum and are, at the same time, material things'. For what concerns fashion, we can observe that when garments enter the exhibition space they indeed 'embark upon a new "life" and serve new functions' (Clark and de la Haye 2014: 83). As a 'system of theatrical artifice' (Vergo 1989: 9), the museum display mediates the experience of the viewer and contextualizes the garments within a new grammar. In relation to the curatorial practice, it can be suggested that virtual displays and even the virtual museum – or otherwise called digital museum – are no competitors or danger for 'traditional' displays and museums since, by their digital nature, they cannot offer a physical interaction with the exhibits. Although this concern is crucial for the exploration and display of fashion as material culture, key examples illustrate that the 'power of display' can also inform the online realm, through storytelling, contextualization, inspiring presentations and possibly interactivity. For instance, Prada's digital platform A Future Archive is a comprehensive display of the brand's archive, which includes advertising campaigns, catwalk images and videos, exhibitions, books and special commissions, from 1987 to the present. In sketching the journey, it uses multimedia not only as content but as a key component of the narrative, allowing the users to immerse themselves in the archive and unfold the brand's projects. In a different way, the Valentino Virtual Fashion Museum, launched in 2011, and created in collaboration with Novacom Associés-Paris and architects Patrick Kinmonth and Antonio Monfreda, is a presentation of the designer's archive through a digital architecture. Resembling a physical museum, the immersive galleries, organized by themes, lead the visitor through various exhibition spaces. Although a closed, non-interactive museum, it demonstrates how the design can articulate the exhibition journey beyond a physical gallery or museum space. The Valentino virtual museum raises several considerations, first of all about the isolated experience it provides, which is divorced from other methods and platforms used for sharing content and comments. Moreover, one can question the choice to apply the museum metaphor to the digital experience and model it on the conventions of a physical gallery (BOF 2011). As addressed by White Line Projects, the interactivity with the digital objects has in fact the potential to create new ways of experiencing collections online:

> It is important to acknowledge that digital interpretation is different from physical interpretation and both the physical and digital space offer different potentials for interpretation. In order to fully utilise the potential of the digital space, objects that exist online need to be considered as objects in their own right, as opposed to mere digital surrogates. Then we can begin to fully interpret these digital objects as opposed to relating digital interpretation back to the physical. (personal communication)

Interestingly, media expert Lev Manovich (2001) discusses the rhetoric of computer interactivity, which overlooks intellectual endeavours. Being based on the premise that the web is by definition interactive, it does not fully explore the potential of the interaction between users and media objects. When reflecting on the increasing digitization and accessibility of cultural heritage and fashion collections, it becomes apparent that the interpretation plays a crucial role in encouraging a reflective and interactive experience, as well as shaping the display and the digital space. In this respect, it is interesting to follow Derrida's (1995) reflection on the pervasiveness of electronic media and, more specifically, on the concept of the 'archive', its relationship with and responsibility towards the past and the future. Derrida argues in fact that the documents in their techno-prosthetic form (Derrida 1995: 26) are 'the

mystic pads of the past and the future, what they represent or what they supplement'. He explains that not only does the archive store and include, but it also testifies to a narrative of exclusion, maintaining one memory at the expense of another. For Derrida, the archive in fact is not just a place for storing and conserving an archivable content; it also refers to the gathering together of signs in such a way that there is a system or synchrony, that 'all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration' (1995: 10). Welcoming Derrida's considerations on the concept of the 'archive' and electronic media, it can be noted that online exhibitions or museums help address or re-address important questions about the curator's agency, the 'power of display', and the nature of the visitors' experience, which is never unmediated, not even within a physical exhibition. Just as through physical displays, museums and galleries developing and digitizing their collections for online access have the potential to communicate them, progressing beyond the use of the static web galleries or catalogues to engaging environments. Freed from the concerns of physical spaces, online exhibitions put further emphasis on the power of display, which according to Staniszewski (1998) is often overlooked as the 'unconscious element' of any exhibition. In investigating 'exhibition design' as a medium in its own right, Staniszewski states that 'museum websites' or online galleries are, in some ways, a realization of the technological and interactive experiments of the international avant-gardes of the early twentieth century. Already in the early twentieth century, artists and designers like Herbert Bayer and Frederick Kiesler reacted to the challenges posed by technologies such as photography, film and sound recording. In the article, 'Aspects of designs of exhibitions and museums', Herbert Bayer (1961) states that 'exhibition design has evolved as a new discipline, as an apex of all media and powers of communication […] the total application of all plastic and psychological means makes exhibition design an intensified and new language' (1961: 257–58). Bayer's words sound nowadays particularly relevant. Contemporary displays are in fact like 'barometers' (Clark 2006; Hein 2000), reflecting disciplinary changes, availability of physical resources and technological innovations. The installations discussed – whether physical, digital or both – highlight the centrality of exhibition design as a hermeneutical medium in itself, which through different realms 'expresses connective possibilities' (Obrist, Rehberg and Boeri 2003: 151). The challenge for curatorial interventions within the digital space is hence to promote a truly reflective and interactive experience that is not limited to the physical navigation of the digital space.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Where does an exhibition begin and end? Reflecting on this point, American artist Joseph Grigely, in a lecture delivered at the Architectural Association (London, 2009), used the poignant expression 'exhibition prosthetics' to indicate the array of conventions through which art is represented, such as wall texts, images, captions, ephemera, catalogues, digital-based media and – one might wish to add – even websites. Rather than being a mere appendage of the exhibits, these conventions establish a sense of place for the works on display: 'to what extent are these various exhibition conventions actually part of the art – and not merely an extension of it?' (Grigley 2010: 7). Before Grigely, Derrida asked similar questions in discussing the key role of the parergon (that which frames the ergon, the artwork). According to him, what frames the exhibits is neither simply outside nor simply inside the exhibit, it is 'neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition […] and it gives rise to the work' (Derrida 1987 [1978]: 9). Although elaborated within different disciplinary and critical contexts, Derrida's parergon and Grigely's 'exhibition prosthetics' appear particularly relevant when reflecting on attitudes towards and conventions in exhibiting fashion. The concepts of parergon or 'exhibition prosthetics' suggest how the conventions used within exhibition making create a framework that

establishes a sense of place and recontextualizes what is being 'framed': following Derrida's words, they 'give rise to the works'. Nowadays fashion curators have multiple strategies and instruments to represent fashion in the museum context, propose a dialogic relationship between the exhibits and the audience, while also addressing the absent body that once wore the garments. The analysis conducted in this article embraces Foucault's reflection on heterotopia (1986 [1967]; 1992 [1966]), arguing that the content of the museum as a space of difference is the interpretation itself; exhibitions are not just displays of objects but 'spaces of representation', where performativity is a fundamental feature of the exhibits, of the installation and, more broadly, of the museum space. In this sense, as demonstrated by pioneering practices in fashion curation, the installation 'is both presentation and commentary, documentation and interpretation' (Storr 2006: 23). Building upon the studies of Celant and Staniszewski on curating art exhibitions, I have analysed exhibition design within fashion as a medium in its own right, rather than adopting a medium-oriented approach, especially in exploring bodily representations. The installations discussed highlight that the integration, or coexistence, of the physical and digital dimensions is just being explored within current exhibitions. In particular, within fashion, it provides a space for understanding the role that exhibition design has, through different mediums and realms, in addressing bodily representations, concepts of heritage, authenticity, narrative and interactivity. Drawing from the observations of Staniszewski (1998; 2000) and Henning (2006), the study understands the online display just as another manifestation of the power of display, with the 'visual machine' of the installation including now also the online dimension. As emerged in relation to innovative curatorial interventions, digital technologies can extend the exhibition beyond the physical constraints of the museum or gallery space. Nowadays visitors can even enjoy a mixed-reality museum visit, moving between the physical exhibition and the online realm. In this respect, media theorist Mark B. N. Hansen (2006: 2) explains that artists – and we can add curators or exhibition designers – have the opportunity to articulate a 'fluid interpretation of realms'. Although useful for addressing the power of display and its performativity, the relevance of the dichotomy physical–digital has gradually dissolved within the present study, which instead considers the application of digital technologies in terms of their contribution to the exhibition narrative. Contemporary displays reflect the shifts that have occurred recently within fashion history and museology and, Anderson (2000) remarks, they force us to question how museum and gallery exhibitions might be different from other types of media. With reference to museum studies, fashion curation and philosophy, I have argued that museums provide contexts for visual and material experiences. What distinguishes museums and galleries from media is indeed the material, tangible aspect that characterizes most fashion exhibitions and their exhibits. However, the integration of new technologies within the installation, and the extension of the exhibition space beyond the physical one, opens the field for further research and debate. In my view, if museums and galleries can be understood as media, they can be so in the sense suggested by Henning who, rather than reducing media to technologies, or to an 'intermediate substance' circulating messages, interprets media as 'material social practice' (2006: 73). In relation to fashion as material culture, where the materiality of the exhibits and display is so central, an understanding of museums and exhibitions as media can only explore how 'these are spaces capable of articulating lived experience, as well as compensating for it with illusions' (Henning 2006: 98). Within museum studies, the focus on the visitors' experience and on the context has been identified as a key feature of the new museology (Vergo 1989; Hein 2000; Henning 2006). With new opportunities and challenges emerging, the curatorial discourse may consider further how, through technological innovations, cross-disciplinary debates and experimentations, fashion exhibitions can be 'evidently self-conscious, heightening the spectator's awareness of the means of representation, and involving the spectator in the process of display' (Vergo 1989: 20)

Notes

1. Within museum studies (Vergo 1989; Henning 2006; O'Neill 2012), the expressions 'performativity' and 'performative' refer to the construction and performance of meanings within the museum context. Crucial to contemporary museological and curatorial discussions is the recognition that museum and gallery displays always perform particular interpretations of history and reality. On museums as active agents in the construction of knowledge and experiences, see The New Museology (Vergo 1989) and Museums, Media and Cultural Theory (Henning 2006).

2. Paul O'Neill explains that, in the late 1960s and early 70s, the increased emphasis on the mediation and framing of the art saw the emergence of a new mode of expressive curatorial practice, intended as an authored form of mediation. As exemplified by figures such as Szeemann, the curator acted as a 'proactive agent […] primarily responsible for the production of the means (exhibition formats) through which forms of information (artworks, curatorial ideas) were mobilized (O'Neill 2012: 25)

3. O'Neill (2012: 89–90) clarifies further that 'medium' within the discourse on art curatorship is to be understood not in technological or instrumental terms, as suggested by the Adornian interpretation, but as 'a particular method of determining material practices […] exhibition as a medium has become understood as a primary agency both for reifying extant social, spatial, and art historical practices and for generating new institutional practices to enable a rethinking of these realities'.

4. The cultural turn experienced in fashion curating indicates here the emergence of approaches emphasizing the cultural relevance of dress on display, and exploring fashion within the museum not only in its materiality or historicity but as a complex cultural phenomenon. These permutations contributed to addressing the 'practical and theoretical concerns of a fashion curator' (O'Neill 2008: 134), as well as to the emergence of a 'new fashion curator' (Melchior and Svensson 2014) or exhibition maker, which mirrors similar and earlier changes within art curating, such as the advent of the 'curator-as-auteur'.

5. It has to be noted that Celant's statement is made within the specific context of the publication celebrating the first Biennale della Moda (Florence, Italy, 1996), which explored the connections between art and fashion and challenged the boundaries of fashion presentation; in this sense, his contribution and critical stance are situated beyond the norms that at the time characterized fashion exhibiting

6. On the use of optical devices to articulate the narrative of a fashion exhibition, see also de Greef (2014).

7. Some authors emphasize the revolutionary potential of this development, see for instance Sherman and Rogoff (1994: 136–38).

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