

FASHION VIDEO

CONCEPT BY OLIVIER ZAHM WITH KATJA RAHLWES FOR THE PURPLE INSTITUTE

PASCAL GATZEN - HUSSEIN CHALAYAN (SUMMER COLLECTION 1998) - RUN 5 / SUZAN CIANCOLO - ANETTE AURELL - JUDY ELKAN - VIKTOR ET ROLF - GEORGES TONY STOLL - MARTIN MARGIELA (SUMMER COLLECTION 1998) - SARAH SCHWARTZ - TOMATO - BERNADETTE CORPORATION - ANTEK WALCZAK - GIASCO BERTOLI, CLOTHES BY HELMUT LANG - MARCELO KRASILCIC, CLOTHES BY KOSTAS MURKUDIS (SUMMER COLLECTION 1998) - LAETITIA BENAT, CLOTHES BY COMME DES GARÇONS (SUMMER COLLECTION 1998)

The affinity between art and fashion, a widespread cliché of the late 90's, has grown somewhat stale. In what is fashion supposed to be a form of art? A more perilous interrogation (and a more far out one) would be to ask just how contemporary art might become a form of fashion, a shaping of the present? In the final effect such questions always end up defining the differences and respective territories of Fashion and Art (capital F, capital A). Conceptualising, mapping out and delimiting art and fashion at the very moment that these tend to expand their limits, mix up their concepts and introduce all sorts of blossomings, movements, residual, temporary territorialities, desiring and unstable, imaginary, symbolic – as well as commercial. Which is to say that critical activity which asks questions concerning the differences and similarities of these areas is characterised by a certain measure of despair. Contemporary art and fashion are two sets of practices, two languages, two semiotic universes linked by nothing – if not the obsessions of a fin de siècle in which the body and its anguish, its beauty, its instincts and mutations offer an identifying space that contaminates representation.

What interests me in this closeness between art and fashion is the new exhibition surface that such a contact encourages and authorizes, the extensions, prolongations and perturbations it gives rise to. Art becomes a prolongation of fashion, and fashion a prolonged art. Everything resides in the nature surface of prolongation XXX, what Deleuze calls a "level" : level of emotion, level of perceptions... For this exhibition I chose the screen, a chain of screens analogous to the contents of a magazine. Imagining an exhibition is nothing else than proposing a platform, signalling an area of intervention.

When, before this vogue of fashion cum art, in an exhibition entitled *L'HIVER DE L'AMOUR*¹⁾, we brought together for the first time designers such as Martin Margiela et Viktor & Rolf, and photographers Anders Edstrom, Wolfgang Tillmans, Inez van Lamsweerde, alongside other artists, film-makers, video artists... the intent was not to endow these fashion designers with the status of artists – which by the way they themselves disclaim.... The idea was to create an exhibition area, a contact network, affinities, new forms of touching, "ways of being", "adaptations" and "proximities". To make of this exhibition a medium full of contrast, hot and cold, contradictory and unstable, before the great polystyrene "Fin de Siècle" (General Idea).

In ARTFORUM in 1996, I created FLASHTRACK, a mediumXXX in which a new generation of fashion photographers interpreted a designer (Hussein Chalayan / Mark Borthwick, Inez Van Lamsweerde / Véronique Leroy, Mario Sorrenti / Bernadette Corporation...). This link "art and fashion" offered the possibility of shifting the function of an international art magazine, of confronting two kinds of images, such as those of Terry Richardson and Nan Goldin. Herein also in my opinion lies the interest of the album FASHION²⁾ by designer Camillia Nickerson and critic Neville Wakefield. The juxtaposition of images shot by fashion photographers with others created by artists, in the same format and without credits or explanatory information, gives rise to unprecedented confusion. The scrambling, or rather the placing of these two types of photography on the same visual level (on the surface of this book) irritates Collier Shorr : *"It's just a way of loading the dice by faking information, by absolutely wanting to demonstrate that art and fashion have the same aspect. The images taken from artists are unaccompanied by any of the annotationsXXX belonging to art nor by any fashion credit that could make of it something else than a gratuitous point"*³⁾. But it is this very positioning, at the surface, with formal equivalence free of all references that forms an area of nuances, questions and projections that is unstable, open and liberated of all preestablished meaning. It is the same process we have installed in FRI-ART on the video screen's fluid surface. A long table, television monitors, a monochromatic room and a parade of images :

- The video of artist Georges Tony Stoll, on two monitors : an unframable monochrome, and a performance by three men, confronted by chairs and a few accessories.

- Videos by fashion designers presenting their collection for the summer 98 : Martin Margiela et Hussein Chalayan, who bear witness to the takeover of this surface/medium by designers themselves (a far cry from the show oom video document).
- American designer Susan Cianciolo presenting her summer collection (Run 5) by means of the video interpretation of fashion photographer Anette Aurell and Judy Elkan (artist, performance artist, actress).
- American conceptual artist Sarah Schwartz presenting one of her conceptual objects-accessories (a veil, a shawl, cut in the fine metallic fabric used for computer covers).
- Another designer, Pascale Gatzien, created an original video, meta-representation of catwalk shows as they are presented by the media this season.
- Young French artist Laetitia Bénat made a video of the summer 98 Comme Des Garçons collection.
- Several photographers also made videos : a filmed performance by Marcelo Krasilcic for the summer 98 collection of Kostas Murkudis, and Giasco Bertoli for the summer 98 collection of Helmut Lang.
- A video made by Tomato, a team of English graphic artists.
- A self-referential video by Viktor & Rolf on Viktor & Rolf (corporate reference, a wink at Bernadette Corporation).
- The last video of Bernadette Corporation, an independent New York fashion label.
- The last video by Antek Walczack, "president" of Bernadette Corporation.

The whole constitutes a kind of linear screen landscape, a video backdrop of the coming summer 98 à venir.

Olivier Zahm

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¹⁾ L'HIVER DE L'AMOUR, 10 février/13 mars 1994, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Exposition réalisée par Elein Fleiss, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Bernard Joisten, Jean Luc Vilmouth, Olivier Zahm.

²⁾ FASHION : PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE NINETIES. Camilia Nickerson et Neville Wakefield, éditions Scalo, Zürich, 1996.

³⁾ FRIEZE MAGAZINE