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Fashion Draft submission for: The Fashion Project: Exploring Critical Issues: 8th Global Meeting

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The borrowing of emotive connotation; a marriage of convenience between fashion and music.

"Both the fashion and music industries...are image-making industries" (Kawamura 2005)

This paper explores the fluid relationship of fashion and music. Exploring the legitimisation of the cultural narrative of moment through the mutual engagement of the different visual and aural expressions. Kawamura (2005) argues that *"culture is not simply a product that is created, disseminated and consumed, but it is a product that is processed by organisational and macro-institutional factors."*

The obsession of image construction of both industries creates the arranged marriage of convenience but all too often neglects the art form in favour of the proven formula. Innovation remains on the fringes of both industries neither considering each other until the commercialisation of each insists on the marriage of convenience.

Each with the aim that the other will add legitimation to their own art form expression. Music gives meaning to fashion as fashion gives meaning to music. It is the dissemination channels that draw the two together each seeking to borrow an icon of the other to trigger the absorption of meaning.

How does this marriage of convenience become consumed as meaningful? Does the collaborative efforts trigger a continuing narrative within our minds each a trigger to connect with the other creating a powerful image within ourselves of which we continue to dance with? The performative self interlocks the emotive expressions with both phonological coding and visual coding each triggering the other to fire in our reminiscence, each firing further reinforces the mutual dependency embedded in our memories. Baudrillard (1996) defines *"the brand's primary function is to designate a product: its secondary function is to mobilize emotional connotations"* thus the marriage of convenience of fashion and music is to borrow emotive connotation from the other. The discussion draws together research from the two disciplines to explore their interdependency in the cultural legitimisation process.

Keywords: Fashion, Fashion and music, Fashion narrative, emotive connotation

Baudrillard, Jean (1996) *The system of objects*, Verso

Kawamura, Yuniya (2005) *Fashion-ology: An introduction to fashion studies*, Bloomsbury

The relationship between fashion and music is an accepted product of our culture in both their expressive nature and performative requirements. Fashion and music co-exist in cultural institutions and are active in the production and expression of new and revised symbolism. Fashion is embedded in a social context providing a visual narrative expressive of the culture likewise popular music exists in the same social context where the expressive narrative is audio. In a world obsessed with consuming ever more information content the need to break out from this with cultural rhetoric increases ten-fold. Kawamura (2005) argues that *“culture is not simply a product that is created, disseminated and consumed, but it is a product that is processed by organisational and macro-institutional factors.”* The social and cultural phenomena is increasingly ‘manufactured’ institution that is risk adverse and formulaic in its construction. The authenticity of the art form becomes the sacrificial lamb in the dissemination process, an attempt to cut through the ‘noise’ of postmodernity. Borrowing from each others’ performance, seeking to enhance expressionism to facilitate greater cut through and impact in dissemination and engagement of time poor consumers who also want to be assured of belonging to the momentary ‘cool’ or ‘popular’. This has become prevalent in recent years through TV star making shows such as the ‘X Factor’ and ‘The Voice’ both seeking to identify musical talent but work to a predetermined strategic formula that both provides popular entertainment, audience engagement and prime time exposure of a hitherto unknown artist. Fashion and music require consuming by a public to commercially exist and sustain themselves in continued production engagement. The process of adoption is vital and it connects the public to the ongoing cultural narrative of the moment.

Exploring the ephemeral nature and fluidity of postmodern society centrally reflecting on the fashion institution as a model for exploring the relationship and interdependency of the expressive media of music and fashion. Considering the co-dependency as an increasing bond that allows for greater impact and facilitates increased legitimation and sub-narratives.

Fashion and music have been long time bedfellows each accepting the presence of the other and in turn believing their own art to be the most prominent and authentic. This paper explores the togetherness of both creative expressions and their interdependency and mutual understanding. Fashion and music most notably are discussed and portrayed as equal partners in cultures expressive forms by commentators of subculture and more precise youth subculture. Because it is an acceptable partnership that has been limited focus on how that partnership works and the benefits for each. Exploring this issue aims to develop not only an understanding of the relationship in its own right but how consumers use this connectivity in forming their own understanding of the cultural narrative and how each acts as a stylistic prompt to the consumer.

What bonds this relationship that each feels that the dependency is necessary? Fashion and music are products that have been created by man, a physical manifestation of our own cognitive responses to the underlying socio-cultural drivers. To borrow a term from trend forecaster Faith Popcorn, the arts apply ‘cultural brailing’ (Raymond, 2010) the process of constantly scanning our environment with great sensitivity for the ‘new’ ideas and concepts for the ‘big’ issues of our society such as the of the invisible threat of terrorism or the challenges of sustaining our planet for generations to come. The arts develop narratives around societies questions, problems and challenges and presents

conceptualised thoughts manifested in art-forms. So in its purest art-form there is a drive for authenticity to the socio-cultural or existential narratives, however this applies to the most creative outputs of the art forms and their creators who are often ridiculed for their eccentricity as they challenge the realm of acceptability.

The underlying narratives of the art-forms are what bring fashion and music together they are both seeking to express this narrative through their own creative medium and the process of dissemination is the 'performance'. North, Hargreaves & O'Neill's (2000) research of the importance of music to adolescents found the reasons for listening to music were '*creating and image*' and being '*cool and trendy*'. '*Fulfilment of emotional needs*' thereby '*expressing emotions*', '*getting through difficult times and reducing tension and stress*'. Finally '*enjoyment*', '*enjoyment of the music and relief from boredom*'. There are some contradictory factors here how can creating an image come from consuming music? An image assumes a visual dominance, the art form is aural. Fulfilment of emotional needs is about feelings and how we manage those feelings it is very much an internal cognitive process neither visual or aural, it is 'our thinking'. Finally perhaps the most authentic reason for listening to music is enjoyment and to relieve periods of nothingness. Fashion too addresses the issue of relief of boredom as illustrated by the most carefully created styled looks often emanating from the youth and 'streetstyle'. Fashion too fits all those reasons as Polhemus (2010) explains about '*Hanging out*' "*The art of being at the right place at the right time. Just hanging around. Looking sharp. All dressed up and nowhere to go. Doing nothing in particular. Making history*".

Frith (1981) noted that 'adolescents use music as a badge' this idea has also been supported in the research findings of North et al (2000) who found adolescent males were more concerned with the external expression created by their music listening preferences. They communicate their music listening preferences to others in the everyday situations through their dress style choices as McCracken (1990) explains "*clothing opens up the possibility of examining culture as it is enacted by individuals in their negotiation of daily life.*" The anthropologist Daniel Miller explains this further, "*Clothes are among our most personal possessions. They are the main medium between our sense of our bodies and our sense of the external world*" (Miller 2009). The music preference is outwardly exhibited by imitating visual dress style of the music artists or bands they relate to. They imitate the performance costumes of those artists this was particularly evident with the fans of David Bowie in the 1970's and the New Romantics of the early 1980's. Others choose to wear a more traditional badge denoting belonging such as a T-shirt with the music band or artist's performance name on or an image of the artist/s or the album art.

McCracken (1990), argues that consumption is cultural in character therefore clothing affords us the basic co-ordinates for a world divided by culture and symbolic integrationist, Mead (1934) defines the self as an ongoing active being whereby the individual identity is drawn from feedback from symbolic resources. Goffman (1956) defines the knowledgeable self is related to the performance and interaction of personal engagements that are monitored and manipulated as a process of feedback evaluation and re-evaluation for the continued production of self.

The ten functions of music identified by Merriam (1964) a music anthropologist, can readily be applied to fashion and therefore helps to breakdown our understanding of the interdependency. Firstly

'emotional expression' North et al (2000) research identified adolescent females engaged with music to fulfil their emotional needs. Whereas clothing is used to conceal or reveal emotional states which is clearly evident with the sub-cultural dress style of 'Goths' and 'Emos' of the 1980's and 1990's. Secondly 'aesthetic enjoyment' seems to be more ambiguous when applied to youth culture. The rebellious nature of youth culture has redefined what is aesthetically pleasing from that of the previous generation, reinventing what is 'cool'. René König (1973) talks of the social structural change that was taking place towards the end of the industrial period that repositioned youth in modern society as exponents of new ideas in fashion rather than the elite classes. The influence of youth fashion König explains goes beyond their own discrete group and influenced a new attitude to fashion that not only was disseminated widely but remained with this group as they have aged. Industrialisation increased leisure time and it was the youth that sought to fill the void by engaging in activities to relieve boredom and entertain themselves, thus increasing engagement in fashion and music.

Thirdly 'entertainment'; the act of entertaining is the performance which naturally brings together fashion and music. Fashion provides a visual expression that contributes to a performance that presents the music for experiencing by listening. The need for visualisation of the performance of music has grown significantly with the advances in communication technology so much so that the costume is an integral part of presenting music to an audience today. The growth of music videos in the 1980's brought about an increased focus on performance narrative and costume which has continued with the exponential growth of digital media advances. Goffman (1956) explains that a performance is often perceived to be for the benefit of the audience, but the that feedback can contribute to the performer being taken in by their own act altering their own perceptions of reality. Appearances are an integral part of the performance Baudrillard's perspective focuses on the postmodern effect of hyper-reality that we live in a world where images are more real than physical experiences and have a greater impact on our self identity as we seek feedback via our screens (Baudrillard, 1983). This is consumption motivated by the need to define and express our self identity engendering narcissistic tendencies.

'Communication and symbolic representations' are the fourth and fifth functions identified by Merriam. Both fashion and music are often considered to be a language with various attempts by academics such as Barthes (1990) whose semiological approach presented in 'The Fashion System' first published in 1967 was an attempt to decode the garment. Miller (2011) reinforces this idea arguing "*The relationship between fashion and music is embedded in and emphasized by sharing of language*". A quote from Kylie Minogue, pop star, referring to her collaboration with William Blake creative director (Baron, 2016) captures the importance of the interplaying narrative. "*Over the years we have built a language, which I feel is our own. Music and fashion, music as fashion, fashion as expression – it's so important because it's able to pinpoint a moment in time without any dialogue*". Fashion and music are expressive communications of a connective cultural narrative and responsible for expressing the zeitgeist of the moment. The sixth function is 'physical response' there is growing research in the physical responses to music however the most obvious is the elicited movement to music in the form of choreographed/un-choreographed dance that is often very specific to the genre, such as '*pogoing*' of punks or '*moshing*' to heavy rock or highly choreographed pop dances. Fashion

is created to encourage the onlookers gaze either in admiration or bemusement particularly for youth subcultures where often fashion is about making a physical visual expression of the cultural narrative often designed to shock. Fashion expression becomes increasingly important in the spaces that allow physical responses to the music such as dances venues, festivals and concerts. The four final functions of 'enforcing conformity to social norms', 'validating social institutions', continuity and stability of culture', and 'integration of society'. In the adoption of the genre comes with it a social acceptance for both fashion and music. Even the most rebellious of genres such as punk have now become accepted and normalised as a defined style of music and dress be it all arguably very stylised and lacking in the original narrative of political activism and youth angst. It is only when the narrative of the genre is widely accepted can it act as a cultural stabiliser and validates social institutions. Fashion validates music as music validates fashion each seeks out a star muse that has the creativity to bond them together creating a visual spectacle. None more so than David Bowie and Kansai Yamamoto's creative partnership that was struck following Yamamoto's iconic first runway show in London in 1971. Bowie and Yamamoto shared the same obsession for performance theatre and identity as explored further by Baron (2016). Both fashion and music need those stars to shoot through the media stratosphere creating a spectacle that makes audiences stop and stare in awe, freeze framing that seminal moment forever.

As posited by Baudrillard (2005)[1968] image indicates an absence which in turn is evocative and provokes a cathexis. The spectacle itself presents an evolved narrative that needs responding to as although evocative it has created a void in the mind of the consumer that mediates a motivation to fulfill by consuming the tangible aspects of the image created that of the ownership of the recorded music or the clothing that creates an imitated look. As fashion dictates, the image is transient, ephemeral as the creators move the narrative on and even subvert the connotation as Bowie so often did by using bold visual statements that appear to contradict the musical content narrative of the song. This creates the methodology that surrounds the creative performative star and in turn legitimizes the cultural narrative disseminated through the diverse media channels repeatedly engaging and re-engaging the consumer in the narrative reducing the cognitive dissonance and promoting collective warmth of belonging and togetherness. As consumers of cultural narrative, we place ourselves in connection to the seminal moment as it is located in time and space. As König (1973) discusses this is not an extinction of fashion but the tangible expression of the spirit of youth to react to creative forces and respond positively to the evolving narrative.

The cultural narratives of fashion and music that create lasting images and stimulate our thinking, self reflection and narcissistic tendencies contribute to the voices within our own internalised narrative of self identity. Fernyhough (2016) coins the phrase '*dialogic thinking*' to describe the multi-voice quality of experience that represents a particular perspective on the world; our understanding and experience of cultural narrative along with emotions and values. Research into the role of inner speech is now suggesting that it is a process by which we seek to regulate behaviour and conscious expressions of self. Memories are notoriously fallible and our memories of cultural experiences are often collective memories of images, a series of memories we continually update, our knowledge modifying the original memory with subsequent thoughts, ideas and images. Your memory of your youth is not a

true record as you will have quite a unique viewpoint that you continue to up date and modify through life and even manufacture to fill in the gaps. The brain processes visual information in a different area to aural information and the subsequent memories are held in differing parts of the brain, it is the role of the hippocampus to act as a cross referencing system connecting memories. The neuroscientist Eagleman (2015) notes that “*cells that fire together, wire together*”, giving a scientific rationale to the interdependency of music and fashion they not only express the popular cultural narrative of the time but by working in sync they increase the impact on the internalisation and cognition of the experience creating complex memory retrieval pathways.

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