»Nenne ise« - Helene Kask
/MD3 2005
...intuition and theory

Fashion, on the contrary to how the concept is generally conceived, can readily be accepted as one of the most conceptual and reflective disciplines housed by academia, even alongside philosophy and mathematics. However, this interpretation is only possible where theory still bears the meaning of its Greek concept Θεωρία [image, vision], a kind of visioning that totally controls the creator as a self-evident nature law to the one who once believed he created it. As such, this visioning, which is no less than the creation of a liveable world, becomes before its creator[s] to be as normative as any other enforced opus magnum, requiring a complete surrendering to enjoy its benefits as a theory.

At a first glance this statement might seem to be a grave exaggeration, and a long shot for the legitimatization for fashion as an academic discipline worthy the label of science. But this is no so. Not only have archaeologists, sociologist and historians - who put much of their faith in fashion as a scientific method through out the western intellectual history, only then to turned their back to it again in the court of scientific opinion for many decades - reawaken to the new exotic tribes of urbanism, replacing the by now McDonalized tribes of far away islands. Also the economists, managers and organizational theorist have over the past decade devoted fashion an ever increasing attention in its role as a mediator and diplomat, a translator and adapter, between business and art, between bourgeois and bohemia, between creation and constructing, when modelling believed theoretical realities.
Just like the achievements of mathematics, as Poincaré [Poincaré] points out, a theory is as much a creation of an intuitive visioning, as is it a representative modelling. And it is this intuitive vision, this central direction and idea, around which Bergson [Bergson] sees the materialized concept and philosophical construct, that elevates a world-theory to a unique reflected vision - separating it from its purely instrumental counterpart. However, the difference between the concepts created, the worldmaking [Goodman], of fashion and that of scientific theories is that the former makes no claim to be the faith of everyone as a grand vision, but merely that what it is capable of being - just as any scientific theory aught to be - a suggestion and a proposal, liberated from it is normative pretensions. Such recognition would ultimately place a fashion concept and a scientific theory on the same philosophical level.

...garment making and world making
Fashion design has its foundation in the design and production of garment. Textbooks speak about silhouette, line, texture and rhythm, contrast, balance etc. respectively as central elements and principles of garment design (Cf. [Jenkyn Jones], [McKelvey, Munslow]). These notions refer to basic formal and expressional aspects of garments and clothing as such.

But fashion design is not only a matter of expressing the functions of clothing or the form of garments, what we do, in some sense, is also to express people, i.e. to define the way in which they present themselves to us. Garment making becomes world making as we define wearing intentions (what we do dressing and wearing) through wearing expressions (what garment does dressing and expressing us).

As an empirical phenomenon - and problem - fashion has been the subject for numerous sociological, psychological, ethnographical, economical studies. Fashion is also certainly present in art history, cultural studies, there is critical work in the areas of fashion aesthetics and fashion theory (Cf. [Barthes], [Breward], [Carter], [Johnson et. al.][Lehmann]) etc. But research as to develop the practice of fashion design itself in a systematic manner has a more weak position in academia.

Experimental fashion design, i.e. the haute couture tradition, anti fashion, deconstruction fashion, techno fashion etc. (Cf. [Breward], [Gill], [Hollander], [Kim] [Quinn]), is practice based design research in some sense. But to further this as an academic subject there is a clear need for more work in the area of theoretical foundations; to envisioning the theories that link world making and garment making and to establish the methods that makes this a strong force in practice.

The challenge is then not to introduce new theories about fashion, but to further develop the foundational concepts that establish fashion design as an academic subject in its own right. This is basically a matter of design aesthetics and can never be a derivative of empirical studies in psychology, sociology, market analysis etc. To express people; what does it mean from the perspective of design aesthetics? What concepts do we use to explain this? What is form and expression all about in this context? These questions do not ask for the sociology, psychology or history of dressing, but the logic of fashion design expression. And central for these expressions are the mysterious connections that link garment making and world making; fashion expression is always a matter of wearing expression.

...fashion design presentation EXIT2005
World making and garment making at EXIT2005 - the final graduate show at The Swedish School of Textiles 2005. Twelve fashion students presenting their graduate collections and graduate worlds. See the garment expressing people and as conceptual gestalts of the world [making].
»Haute Route Couture« - Emma Hallgren
/MD3 2005
»Beyond Minimalism« - Anna Pettersson
/MD3 2005
»...yours forever, Nadjia« - Helena Larsson
/MD3 2005
»The secret’s fairy tale« - Amy Bondesson
/MD3 2005
»Fragment« - Lotta Lindström
/MD3 2005
»Business Chic« - Sophia Hedström
/MD3 2005
» English upper class with a twist «
- Kristin Andersson/MD3 2005
References