

Fashion Performing/Fashioning Performances: Catwalks as Communication Tools between Market, Branding and Performing Art

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Abstract : Catwalks are one of the key moments in fashion: the first and most relevant display where brands stage their collections, products, ideas, and style. The garment is 'the star' of the catwalk and must show itself not just as a product but as a result of a design process endured for several months. All contents developed within this process become ingredients for connecting scenography, music, lights, and direction into a unique fashion narrative. According to the spirit of different ages, fashion shows have been transformed and shaped into peculiar formats: from Pandoras to presentations organized by Parisian couturiers, across the 'marathons' typical of the beginning of modern fashion system, coming up to the present structure of fashion weeks, with their complex organization and related creative and technical businesses. The paper intends to introduce the evolution of the fashion system through its unique process of seasonally staging and showing its production. The paper intends to analyse the evolution of the fashion shows from the intimacy of ballrooms at the beginning of the 20th century, passing through the enthusiasm attitude typical from the '70s and the '80s, to finally depict our present. In this last scenario, catwalks are not anymore a standard collections presentation but become one of the most exciting expression of contemporary culture (and sub-cultures), going from sophisticated performances (as Karl Lagerfeld's Chanel shows) to real artistic happenings (as the events of Victor&Rolf, Alexander McQueen, OFF_WHITE, Vetements, and Martin Margiela), often involving contemporary architecture, digital world, technology, social media, performing art and artists.

Keywords : branding, communication, fashion, new media, performing art

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