

Gynocentrism and Self-Orientalization: A Visual Trend in Chinese Fashion Photography

Authors : Zhen Sun

Abstract : The study adopts the method of visual social semiotics to analyze a sample of fashion photos that were recently published in Chinese fashion magazines that target towards both male and female readers. It identifies a new visual trend in fashion photography, which is characterized by two features. First, the photos represent young, confident, and stylish female models with lower-class sloppy old men. The visual inharmony between the sexually desirable women and the aged men has suggested an impossibly accomplished sexuality and eroticism. Though the women are still under the male gaze, they are depicted as unreachable objects of voyeurism other than sexual objects subordinated to men. Second, the represented people are usually put in the backdrop of tasteless or vulgar Chinese town life, which is congruent with the images of men but makes the modern city girls out of place. The photographers intentionally contrast the images of women with that of men and with the background, which implies an imaginary binary division of modern Orientalism and the photographers' self-orientalization strategy. Under the theoretical umbrella of neoliberal postfeminism, this study defines a new kind of gynocentric stereotype in Chinese fashion photography, which challenges the previous observations on gender portrayals in fashion magazines.

Keywords : fashion photography, gynocentrism, neoliberal postfeminism, self-orientalization

Conference Title : ICSSCVC 2017 : International Conference on Semiotics, Social, Cultural and Visual Communication

Conference Location : Osaka, Japan

Conference Dates : October 09-10, 2017