

Visible Expression of Social Identity: The Clothing and Fashion

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Abstract : Clothes are more than a piece of fabric, and the most visible material item of the fashion symbol is the garment, which carries multiple and various meanings. The dynamism of the clothing symbol can carry open or closed codes depending on culture, gender, and social location. And each one can be the expression of social identity over ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, education and social class. Through observation of clothing styles over these items, the assumptions could be made about a person's identity. A distinctive and typical style, form or character of the clothing such as 'zoot suits', 'ao dai', removes the garment from functional and ordinary element to the symbolic area. Clothing is an 'identification' tool that functions in determining the symbolic boundaries between people in a sense. And this paper includes the investigation of the relation between social identity and clothing and also fashion. And this relationship has been taken into consideration over the visual expression because even during the ancient times, the clothes were the basic and simple way of representing the identity and social classes. The visible expression of identity over clothing from Ancient Egypt to today's clothing and fashion has been researched in this article. And all these items have been explained with visual images and supported by the literature investigations. Then the results have shown that every piece of clothing from fabric to coloring have visual significations about social identity.

Keywords : social identity, clothing, fashion, visual expression, visual signification

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