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**THE MEANS of SEEING:**



DEFINING SOCIETY THROUGH  
FASHION AND ITS VISUAL  
REPRESENTATIONS.

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Fashion communicates diversely.

Despite the divergence of forms that fashion communicates through, the unification of the fashion experience resonates flowingly, like a symphony when conducted impeccably and in harmony. To be clothed in the fashion object is an intimate relationship between the body and the garment, and in the context of self-expression, there is a feasible sense of belonging from what is worn on the body and what is experienced by the senses.

There is no lie, when it comes to one's change of habit, culminated by the swift growth of technology. But there needs no fear, for what can be learned from change is to strive and adapt, as aptly as fashion has.

In the era of rapid growth of technology and empires built within decades, the fast-growing industry of fashion has established itself into one of the pillars that hold society to become what it is. The infinite extensive publicity for every season that has got every role in the industry work in such endless waking hours favours every sight we see on the street, walls and banners, and on our social media feed. Fashion has always defined itself to be a distinction of one's personality or, in other words, a form of self-expression.

The definition of 'culture' in the study of sociology is divided into two: the material and nonmaterial culture.

The material culture refers to space, physical objects, and resources used by people to define themselves. On the other hand, the nonmaterial culture consists of the intangible products that are not embodied in physical objects, for instance, ideas, beliefs, ethics, behaviour, and anything that is shared between the members of the culture over time.

This study will delve into a minuscule speck of the broad spectrum that visual communication is in the fashion industry. This viewpoint will be defined in two different angles in experiencing fashion. The first chapter assesses the interpretation of fashion as an image in the sociological sense that defines image as the way social reality is shaped and transformed. The journey begins with the idea of the sense of belonging that is sold by fashion and clothing as an act of reaction to one's environment that is germane to subcultures in fashion. This will then connect to the theory of the conspicuous consumption by Thorstein Veblen (1899) that examines the behaviour of purchasing luxury goods to display wealth in order to maintain and/or gain higher social status. Veblen's exposure of the hollow society conjoins the use of art to procure scarcity and value in the fashion industry, supported by a case study of the skateboard-turned-luxury brand, Supreme.

In *The Society of The Spectacle*, French philosopher Guy Debord (1994) with his formula anatomised that the spectacle is more of a doctrine, or as he noted it, a "Weltanschauung that has been actualised, translated into the material realm and a worldview transformed into an objective force, and not a mere literal image or a photograph." The spectacle is the term he used to describe the manifestation of capitalist-driven phenomena in everyday life.



Debord's observation also nods on the alteration in human interactions and relationship. This can be applied to our present-day reliance on technology. The swift advancement of technology raises the rate of interaction between the device and its user whilst also lends a hand for the growth of media and its fabrication of images, manufacturing desires, and aspirations.

The second chapter explores the experience of fashion through the expansive platforms that communicate the garment as the main fashion object. These platforms will be referred to in this chapter as the messengers of fashion. Fashion has been studied by visual experts through paintings, illustrations, and photographs, and fashion image makers' tasks have evolved through the twentieth century as fashion imagery adapts to any technological state and thrives on change. The messengers of fashion will be broken down into 3 platforms of visual communication: graphics, photography, and film, to help contextualise this argument. The Florentine fashion house Gucci will be studied further in chapter three, for their direction, brand image, and brand identity revamp due to the appointment of Alessandro Michele as creative director.

# I: Fashioning Society.

## The manifestation of subtle differences

The creation of novelty and perpetual desire for need and endless difference is what drives the postmodern society, as observed by Barnard (1996) where the desire is conceivable to be a characteristic of what makes oneself a person, a constant drive for showing differences to make ourselves distinctive from each other. Amongst the world's population, 2 percent of them define themselves within the same wavelength. All with similar beliefs and ideas, to, later on, share the same space and create harmoniously-structured objects together and later find themselves in the middle of thousands of other circles, actively sharing beliefs and establishing themselves to share a place in society. The scheme functions just the same in the world of fashion, divided into many different subcultures associated with different genres of music which have existed for the past century.

Holbrook and Dixon (1985) agreed to the idea of fashion as a public consumption, where people communicate the image they wish to project onto others. For instance, the emergence of Goth subculture in the early 1980s developed from the audience of gothic rock, a by-product of the post-punk genre and with a striking look of all black head-to-toe, paired with dark and bold makeup worn by both genders constructs a seamlessly unapologetic remark for the Victorian culture of mourning, their love of visual art, fashion, music, and the Gothic tales of the undead. This suggests that the way in which the Goth subculture dresses itself to physically visualise death is a physical representation of how society was walking itself on thin ice.

The Goths share the same belief as the Punks in thinking that the society, at the time the two subcultures emerged, was on the brink of absolute banality and was dying out. To differentiate the same anger and disturbance felt by the two subcultures, it only lies on the way they express themselves. Whilst the Goths mourned in peace for the expiring society, the Punks vehemently centred themselves around anti-establishment views. Contemptuous of the society around them, the Punks attempted to create a more ideal and honest environment that was not hooked on the status quo, by, essentially, taking everything - from clothing, music, to substance abuse - to the extreme and found themselves in doing anything that was unacceptable at the time. The frustration and sentiment were also conducted by the economic state in England at the time, fresh graduates have no jobs to go to, and alongside the start of the bombing campaign by the IRA that sent out terror through letter bombs.

The frustration was channeled through the same wavelength; Sex Pistols, The Clash, Buzzcocks, and there it was, London streets in the early 70s were filled with biker jacket, studded boots, accessories and pieces of clothing that referenced sexual deviance. Vivienne Westwood who contributed to the emergence of the punk scene, with her then-husband Malcolm McLaren, kicked off a stylistic revolution and marketed the movement successfully unlike anyone else then, and after quite a journey of changing their retail store a couple of times whilst Westwood was also still perfecting her sewing skill, she finally embraced the BDSM culture possibly influenced by the intensely-high sex appeal on the notably-hardcore fetishism in that brief period of time, hence the choker, chains, all skin-tight leather pieces and straps.

The manifestation of subtle differences can also be signified by fashion phenomena that allow social mobility. Fashion sociologist Yuniya Kawamura clarified that as the class boundary becomes blurry, there will always be a demand to make subtle distinctions in order to differentiate themselves from others. This supports the idea of having a sense of belonging and living the certain lifestyle that makes up a portion of the

amalgams of our social identities. It is later elaborated that the transformation of the collective taste, is resulted by the diversity of experience that occurs in social interaction. The mixture of technological change, political occurrence, occasions of disaster, the biological decrements of the life cycle, catalysed the reaction of identity outcry and results in the contradictions within ourselves and ambivalence towards our self-image. Consequentially, it is this collectively experienced identity volatility that fashion often feeds. Furthermore, fashion sufficiently expresses that desire for change, of which, in itself, is a characteristic of life in industrial capitalism.

The term 'conspicuous consumption' was coined by economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of The Leisure Class* in 1899 which anatomised the behaviour of consumers who purchase expensive goods to display wealth and income rather than to cover their real and fundamental needs. The flashy behaviour becomes more than a façade only to gain or maintain a higher social status. As Veblen (1899) predicted, the outcome is a society defined by wasted time and money. The theory is dynamic in terms of relatability in time and subject matter, in this case, the luxury fashion scene.

## Image, conspicuous consumption, and the recreation of rarity.



Fig. 1.1



Fig. 1.2

Figure 1.1 Supreme skateboard decks in collaboration with artists & photographers

Figure 1.2 Queue for a Supreme release in London store

In order to exhibit the appearance of wealth and worth with the intention of gaining an easier social mobility, clothing as a form of display is a function adjunct to the purpose of clothing fashionably, thus brand association plays a huge role in the manifestation of hyper-consumerism. The illusion of owning luxury goods that scream a person's capability of making fortune provokes the widespread disease of hyper-consumerism as well as the commercial tidal wave that will be examined later. The mentality of who owns and wears the most valuable goods has intoxicated and turned society into the postmodern society that we live in today.

Supreme, as of recent, is an excellent example for the case of conspicuous consumption and hyper-consumerism. Founded by James Jebbia in 1994, Supreme is a renowned American clothing brand catered to skateboarding culture, hip-hop, and youth culture in general. When it was first established, Supreme was an independent small clothing & skateboard shop on Lafayette Street in New York City until it became a massive brand with a cult-like following of artists, collectors, and skaters all over the world, and collaborations with brands such as Louis Vuitton, Nike, and Comme de Garçons. Supreme collaborations with artists such as Kaws, Takashi Murakami, Jeff Koons, Larry Clark, etc., produced eagerly-hunted skateboard decks that became a proper hype then and later on for every "drop". The production has always been limited to a quantity and it results in a massive

hunt-down contributed by collectors and buyers who resell these limited edition skateboard decks in twice or more the price when one of these decks could cost hundreds of dollars at its original price. This form of exclusivity also applies to their collaborative production on clothing, thus it increases the amount of hype surrounding a Supreme's release, especially being put against the limited quantity. Such scarcity in the age of digital era raises a concern when displaying any Supreme item on a social media platform increases self-worth. It becomes even more problematic when self-value becomes dependent on these rare and treasured objects, as it arguably can culminate a toxic behaviour of the constant need to purchase more, supported by the needs of validation and peer pressure.

On the other hand, this also supports the argument of how art can be used to recreate rarity and value for luxury brands by Claude Chailan, where his findings indicate that art provides a role to neutralise the risks exposed to the industrialisation of luxury by preserving a certain distance from the non-luxury market.

Moreover, Chilean has argued that the embodiment of luxury by art becomes 'an experience of esoteric artistic knowledge whose comprehensibility is complex, subtle and accessible to a select few only'. The fusion of art into fashion creates an opportunity for a luxury brand to refocus itself and convey their exclusivity and unique qualities that are based on their value and mission that will differentiate them from other luxury brands, thus allowing the brand to maintain their timelessness and elevate brand image.

# II: Messengers of Fashion.

## Facets of fashion.

The private experience of fashion does not stop at the garment. Fashion is defined as a way of communication of one, and its mediation lives as an interface between the body and the visible, (Shinkle, 2008). Supported by the Fashioned Society (Pristia, 2018), the extended fashion experience manifests in the brand experience, as a way to communicate the ecology of a brand and the lifestyle offered, and the messenger entails a range of different disciplinary of visual records. Kawamura (2018) stated that these visual records, such as illustration, photography, and film, also partake in the frequent study of fashion, and have been used to examine fashion from the wearer's point of view, these mediators of fashion amplify the fashion experience and orchestrate the fashion narrative into a rhapsodic harmony when done cohesively.

The brand image of a fashion house is one of the factors to drive emotional attachment. This can potentially be of the spectacle the consumer hope to be associated with when displaying the fashion object on the body. As previously elaborated in chapter one, the fashion body is likely to be caused by an image to project oneself onto others as a public consumption as a form of self-expressionism. The conscious decision of the fashioned body feasibly derives from one's values and personality.

Mittal (2006) affirms that consumers seek brands whose values, personalities, and lifestyles match their own. Moreover, conglomerate companies such as LVMH, Gucci Group NV (now Kering), Prada, and Richmond Group have expended millions of dollars on developing comprehensive corporate brand identities as part of their branding strategy (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008).

Brand identity has a purpose of clarifying a brand's intended audience, their experience, and perception. Kapferer's Branding Identity Prism established distinguish features that formed the audience's perception and experience of a brand, in this case, high-end fashion brands. The Kapferer's Branding Identity Prism consists of qualities such as Physique, Personality, Culture, Relationship, Reflection, and Self-image.

In short, the Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism provides a form of identification of the key aspects to the communication of a brand. The physical feature is as literal as it can be, thus in the case of fashion brands, it is the garment and other items produced by a label. The personality feature is, explained at best, more of a character of a brand, communicated through the graphics aspect of a brand which consists of logo, typography, colour, and other graphics assets. The culture feature refers specifically to the culture of demographic, with the intention to create a solid foundation of the brand's behaviour to distinguish their market and target their products more efficiently.



The relationship feature draws more towards the relationship between the brand and the client, clarifying the cost of the brand's goods, thus moderates information of the economic and possibly social status of the demographic who would enjoy their goods. Whilst the reflection feature can be described as the stereotypical impression of a brand's customer origins, the self-image feature is a slightly different feature where this feature focuses more on the ways customers of a particular brand see themselves whereas the reflection emphasises on the ways the customers are seen by others.

The characteristics of a luxury brand convey multi-faceted benefits such as social status, identity affirmation and a sense of belonging (Peng et al., 2011). Accordingly, in the light of brand experience and incorporating ourselves in brands that assert the same values and belief, the means of seeing the communication of belief in the visual culture becomes more purposeful, additionally, in the hope of helping visual storytellers define extensive practice in the broad spectrum of the fashion language. In the context of branding for fashion, graphic design has provided fashion a platform of brand communication for consumers to delve themselves in.

The collaboration of graphic design and fashion cultivates a plethora of products working harmoniously in fabricating a

universe for a market pursued in a brand's philosophy and its image as the works of brand identity is one of the main factors in delivering a certain way of living nurtured by the customer's ideals and values, proven by findings of a study conducted by So, Parsons, and Yap (2013) which indicates branding as one of the several antecedents driving a customer's emotional attachments. Within the fashion industry, branding acts as the conscious management of the personal identification with, and the public perception of, a fashion label (Hess, Pasztorek, 2010). Furthermore, the existence of branding in the luxury fashion industry is considered an experience and a promise.

The message that is communicated through the visual & physical assets - few such as retail space, and the branding itself - needs to show the ambition of the label in order to persuade consumers and show the personal and social benefits when purchasing. Hess & Pasztorek (2010) explored the impact of graphic design in the fashion industry in their book, *Graphic Design For Fashion* showcasing the collaboration between the fashion brand as the client and the graphic designer, of which the copulation of the two disciplines give birth to a 'unique creative playground for experimentation within the commercial world'.

Figure 2.1 - 2.3 Imagery produced by the collaboration between Yohji Yamamoto, Marc Ascoli, Peter Saville, and Nick Knight.



Fig. 2.1



Fig. 2.2



Fig. 2.3

The creative realm of the integrated disciplines of fashion and graphic design was not explored in its entirety until graphic designer Peter Saville, fashion photographer Nick Knight, and art director Marc Ascoli joined forces with the renowned Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto for the Autumn/Winter 1986/87 lookbook. The message as conveyed by the imagery shows a form of advocacy to a new vision; women in dresses showing few to no skin. A whole new playground was then discovered and started

to be taken further and observed thoroughly through branding, starting from fashion show invitations, lookbook, packaging, adding graphics element onto the collection, fusing image manipulation into fashion photography along with illustrations, and Nick Knight's revolutionary initiation to capture fashion with moving image format and propagated SHOWstudio in 2000.

The renowned logo of the Greek mythological Goddess Medusa head is well-recognised as the facet of Versace that decorates its accompanying assets of their symbolic, flashy prints and brightly-coloured garments. Another prime example is the interlocking C-letters logo of the Parisian fashion house, Chanel, that is often associated with the elegance of women, no matter the era, empowering femininity all over the globe, revolutionised by Gabrielle Chanel.

Being a facet of a brand that attributes a collection that could be of a particular season or of under a different direction, identifiable logo creates an association with two different situations; one: where the graphics asset is associated with a label's brand image, and two: where it is associated with the image associated to the stereotypes of the consumers of said-brand.

Another facet of a fashion brand that complements the sold philosophy is spatial experience, that can be in a form of exhibition or simply retail stores, capable of driving consumers' emotional attachment by direct interaction with the environment, set up in accordance to the art direction of the label's collection at that moment. One of the defining moments as a branding asset, spatial experience grants an adequate amount of emotional attachment of a label's consumers, and the collaboration of art applied to retail spaces establishes recreational worlds offered by the brand. This

idea suggests that the audience's experience with fashion is then extended when noticing, seeing, observing these assets.

In the summer of 2018, Peter Saville was commissioned to create new assets by Burberry's Riccardo Tisci, anticipated for his debut in September 2018. The heritage brand whose logo had an intricate-looking serif logotype combined with the renowned Chevalier/Equestrian Knight logo had a remark that is associated with the iconic Burberry check often seen as a lining in their trench coats. Briefly, Burberry had a traditional remark of one of the true luxury brands at its roots, resulting the iconic Nova check and the Chevalier-looking serif-combined logotype to be synonymous with "country aristocrats" (Richardson, 2018). Saville ditched the previous 'Burberry London' logotype (Figure 2.4) with a stark bold sans-serif logotype and decided to make the call on the mark with 'Burberry London England' (Figure 2.5). Saville also revamped the already-iconic Burberry check (Figure 2.6) into a bold monogram print featuring an interlocking T's & B's (Figure 2.7) for the brand's founder, Thomas Burberry, evidently-outlined with the colours a little bolder. The monogram print seemed to have passed to labels such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Dior in the 2000s, and at the time, the monogram print appeared to do the labels' brand image justice in envisioning the direction of collections they had released.



Fig. 2.4



Fig. 2.5



Fig. 2.6



Fig. 2.7

Figure 2.4 Burberry's old logo by Thomas Burberry (1920s)

Figure 2.5 Burberry's new logo by Peter Saville (2018)

Figure 2.6 Burberry's iconic nova check

Figure 2.7 Burberry's new monogram by Peter Saville

This suggests that Saville's commissioned rebrand justified Tisci's fresh new narrative for Burberry starting from the autumn of 2018, as these new assets accommodate an insight of the collection by Tisci to the audience — old and possibly new demographic. Moreover, this hints to a possibly-major conversion to Burberry's brand image, observing Tisci's both debut and upcoming collection as posted on Burberry's official Instagram. The revamp of the brand image can be noticed further when comparing pre-Tisci collections that still held the classic upper-class Burberry men and women with a minimal tweak on the iconic trench coat over time. The renovation seemed appropriate, in bringing a new era to the British heritage brand.

## Capturing fashion.

From the heart of mid-nineteenth-century Paris with its shops filled with luxury goods, Baudelaire (1850) addressed that ‘all the visible universe is nothing but a vast emporium of images and signs. The technology that was produced in the 1990s that had been improved since, allowed mutation that transformed the fashion object into image and sign, which echoed Baudelaire’s observation. French philosopher Guy Debord anatomised a profound similarity in viewing the society, in his formula of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1994), and had written that the visible universe and its relation to capital are colonised by false desires and illusions, epitomised by the omnipresence of commodity form. The growth and development of technology in the 1990s allowed the fashion object to be captured, staged and perfectly, which resembles Debord’s notes on false desires and illusions in the post-modern society.

However, when *Vogue*, as noted by Borrelli (2000), led the decline of fashion illustration in fashion magazines, of which at the time had a role in illustrating their covers and stylishly showcasing clothes, and correspondently replacing their celebrated illustrated covers with photographic images, the abundant exchange of sensibilities between the consumer culture and contemporary art was seemed well-reflected by the use of commercial photography techniques on fashion photography. The expansion of the internet and e-commerce has a contribution to the increasing popularity of fashion photography, increasing its demand by fashion publications by the likes of *Vogue*, *L’Officiel*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Elle*. With the bedrock of imagination and desire that commercial, or in this case fashion, photography is built upon, fashion photography seemed to revolve around the gestures of satisfaction and joy that we are inclined to interpret. A fashion photograph is, substantially, a fiction, as Geczy and Karaminas noted:

*“fashion photography is solely a theatrical fiction that enacts a scene comparable to real life events ‘with greater or lesser degrees or credibility, yet the world depicted in it is constructed around a set of co-ordinations corroborated by the brand’.” (2015)*

Thus, the depth of the purpose of fashion photography deemed to have excavated in the recent years, from the shape-forming monochromatic works of Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, the provocative fashion images by Guy Bourdin, to the boundary-pushing, technology-fused imagery by Nick Knight, fashion photography transmogrified into a compelling platform of storytelling that reflects social, economic, political, or technological depiction of society. The fashion form has yet again unraveled.



Fig. 2.8

The breakthrough of the moving image format implemented into fashion has improved fashion storytelling at an exceptional level which craftsmanship had not been explored by photography in the earlier journey.

An excellent example would be a film produced by SHOWstudio for Gareth Pugh’s A/W 2017 collection, directed by Nick Knight (Figure 2.8).

*Figure 2.8 Gareth Pugh A/W 2017 shot  
by Nick Knight*

The collection explores Pugh’s vision of the world “on the precipice of anarchy”, as declared by the show notes. Pugh’s collection represents ferocious, lethal female resistance in the form of monolithic garments.

The depiction of austerity by the grim set within a closed concrete space depicts Pugh’s phantasm on a world where the prevailing mindset is to build walls and reclaim territory, a genuine understanding and to the real-life political stake of Donald Trump’s presidency and his infamous call for the wall bordering the United States and Mexico.

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The black leather trench, shoulder-padded double-breasted coat dress, and the shades of midnight black, the coalescence is eerily audacious and is vehement to its true unnerving ambience, emphasised by the bug-like black lenses worn by the models. The story that is carried out by the garments is accentuated further in the film. The ghostly lights exposing the models lurking in the dark in pair with the flagrant monochromatic contrast orchestrates an estranged atmosphere that feels alienating yet claustrophobic, yet the light reflected on the diverse material of garments of the collection reveals the sharply-dramatic shapes and forms of Pugh's collection.

The moving image format also introduces audio in order to add depth to the fashion narrative. In the background can be heard the voice of Donald Trump clamouring "Build the wall!" repeatedly which elucidates the agitation and fear that perhaps is needed to be felt and shared by the designer. The contemporary format for fashion has grown yet again and the complimentary features that represent the fashion object is a collective stimulus, an embodiment that can be a tool for our own image establishment and for visual practitioners to study fashion in disparate perspectives.



# III: Guccification.

## Gucci brand image before Alessandro Michele.

On the Via Vigna Nuova, Florence, 1921, Guccio Gucci opened his first store dedicated to luxury leather goods. Gucci expanded his company, joined by his three sons Aldo Gucci, Vasco Gucci, Rodolfo Gucci to open stores in Milan and Rome. Relying on the equestrian aesthetic, Gucci established himself as a notable designer known for his finely crafted leather goods in Florence, alongside with knitwear with signature pattern and silks. However, due to World War II, the company faced material shortage and replaced leather with cotton canvas for his handbags.

The change was prominent for the company and the cotton canvas handbags managed to successfully authenticate its iconic green-red-green stripe (Figure 3.2), which success then led to the opening of stores in Paris and New York City and gave the company visibility in the international fashion business. The passing of founder Guccio Gucci in 1953 unified his sons to carry on their father's legacy, and the unification was branded with a new logo, the double-G, paying homage to the founder.

The post-war travel and economy had a major effect on the brand at the time, with goods that were only accessible to anyone prosperous enough to travel to Italy or the brand's flagships in New York or London, transmogrified the brand to become a signifier of wealth and taste. The history of the interlocking-G had turned forever since as a customary to socialites (Figure 3.1), inculcating the brand's opulent image to be more prominent as ever, placing the brand among the same pedestal as renowned luxury brands such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton.

Figure 3.1 Gucci historical monogram  
Figure 3.2 Gucci iconic green-red-green stripe



Fig. 3.1

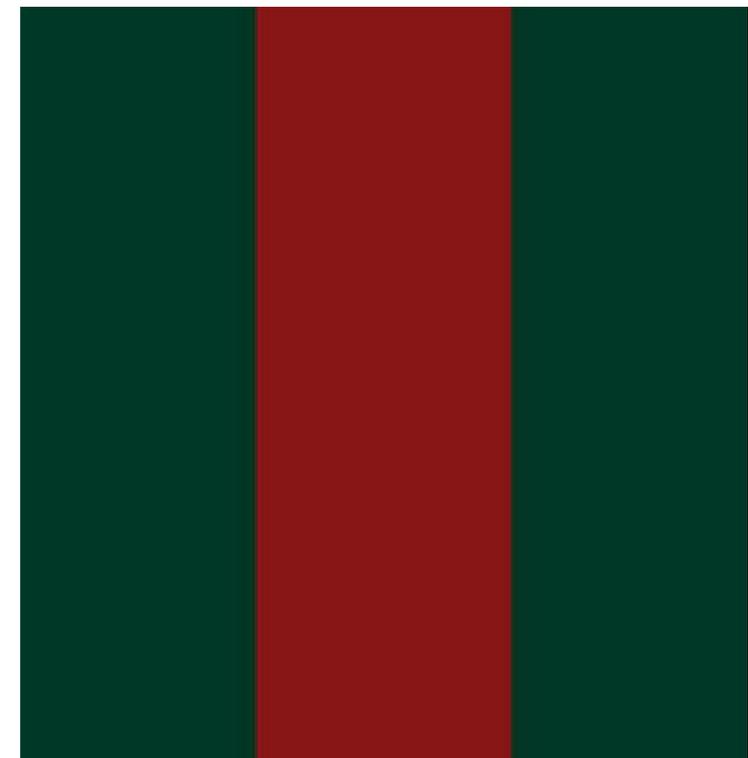


Fig. 3.2

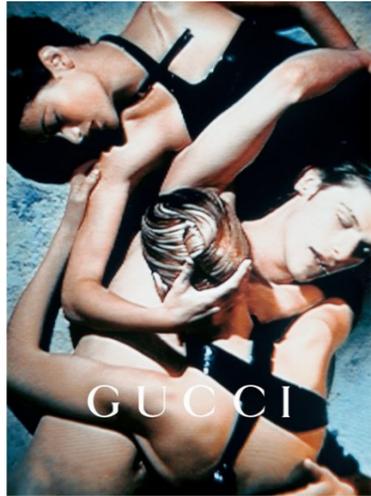


Fig. 3.3



Fig. 3.4

However, the Florentine brand had no story to be told when it was on the brink of bankruptcy in 1994 and the creative director role was nobody's dream job. It was different, however, for the young Texan designer, Tom Ford. The brand took Ford in and his appointment as Creative Director changed Gucci's brand image forever. Ford's tenure brought a different story to the table as an effect of absolute *carte blanche* given by the brand. In an interview with fashion critic Bridget Foley, Ford sensed that Gucci's clothes were more than just editorial-friendly pieces in the vast fashion industry. His strategy in revamping the brand image was to "make the brand appealing through fashion and then sell loafers." (Ford, *et al.*, 2004)

Gucci's sexual revolution was then initiated.

With collections that were possibly inspired by Studio 54, a former New York City nightclub which was a hotspot for the glamour hedonistic celebrity life involving sex and open drug-use, the slinky white jersey dresses with cutout adorned with golden fitting, sensual patent leather evening gowns, cutout corset dresses, Gucci's seductive silhouettes were essentially sleek and polished lascivious, sensual luxury for both gender. Ford's collection from 1994 throughout 2004 was stimulated by debauchery and the campaigns insinuated sexual appeals, as seen in figure 3.3.



Fig. 3.5

Ford's legacy became a retrospective when he stepped aside and the brand's direction was taken off by Italian designer Frida Giannini whose stewardship was previously given to the renowned Italian fashion house known for its fur goods: Fendi. Giannini's tenure seemed to be an act of looking in retrospect. Ford's legacy of the hedonistic, sensual image of Gucci he had put out seemed to stay lingered. However, Gianni managed to revive the floral prints classic Gucci staples such as the iconic red-green stripe and the bamboo bag, both introduced in the 1950s. Giannini was inspired by the empowerment of modern women and accessibility. Her columnar gowns and fur jackets in a sophisticated palette of bold colours from time to time gave women who were not a European royalty something to wear. Albeit her ability in tapping into popular

desires made her narrative rather disoriented when compared to Guccio Gucci's, Ford's, and Michele's visions, the collections from Giannini's era, as put by the market then, were "a little too commercialised" (Collins, 2010). The campaigns all through her residency connoted modern women revived from the Ford's era (Figure 3.4), created from the same universe but evolved into something new.

However, as aforementioned, the commercial attitude and image given during her tenure did not seem to engage consumer with a whole new different story to tell in comparison to Ford's narrative. Thus it was until the beginning of 2015 when Giannini abruptly left the Florentine fashion house a few weeks before the Fall/Winter15 collection was to be unveiled.

Figure 3.3 Gucci by Tom Ford  
(F/W 1997 campaign)  
Figure 3.4 Gucci by Frida Giannini  
(S/S 2012 campaign)  
Figure 3.5 Gucci by Alessandro Michele  
(F/W 2015 campaign)

## Guccificated.

Alessandro Michele (present-day Creative Director) who previously worked in Gucci's accessory department came on board and unveiled his debut in early 2015 on the opening day of Milan Fashion Week (F/W15) and as it turned out, had quite an astounding effect on anybody watching. The aesthetic turnover of his predecessors' sensual glam gave onlookers an otherworldly vision as a starting point of his tenure with maximalism and rural imagery. The sense of quixotic utopia is extended throughout, all through the garment to brand identity: statement sunglasses, renaissance-styled frills, bejewelled prints, and his take on the classic Gucci identity assets such as the double-G monogram and the red-green stripe.

His direction for the Italian luxury brand is a nod to the age of appropriation – without the lousy connotation, as exemplified by Michele's reinterpretation on the classic Gucci monogram canvas bag and can be seen on the Dionysus bag, scattered with floral and animal prints and metal tiger head closure as a new bucolic addition to the family. His reinterpretation of the brand also took a turn for Gucci's interlocking-G logo from its heyday, suited for a more modern audience. His flamboyant maximalism grew progressively intensified over the course of 4 years of his tenure and the coherence has stayed persistent.

This can be identified in the comparison of each season's collection and its campaign, starting from Michele's debut (2015) to present (2018). The campaigns are consistently bizarre and bold (Figure 3.6 – 3.8), with the now-established reality-merging "Alessandro Michele's maximalist hallucination" – Guccification. This reestablishment of the new luxury began to coalesce realities when the brand recruited Spanish painter Ignasi Monreal to paint for their 2018 campaigns (Figure 3.8). The result is full of fantasy delights, and a contemporary refinement to this new direction.



Fig. 3.6

Figure 3.6 Gucci S/S 16 campaign by Glen Luchford  
 Figure 3.7 Gucci F/W 17 campaign (Gucci and Beyond)  
 by Glen Luchford  
 Figure 3.8 Gucci S/S 18 campaign by Ignasi Monreal



Fig. 3.7



Fig. 3.8



Fig. 3.9



Fig. 4.0

The opening of Gucci Garden Galleria (Figure 3.9) in the brand's hometown, Florence, has also augmented the rebirth of Gucci's image. Combining the real and the imaginary, the Gucci Garden is a translation to Michele's vision, embracing history, anecdotes, objects, and geography (Figure 4.0) that have built up Gucci's mythology over time. The audience's travel of the fictitious space, with the first to the second floor as an archival journey from the founder's vision and slowly translates into Michele's imaginary vocabulary. The Gucci Garden's coherent direction and phantasmic storytelling with spatial experience creates an illusion of eternal time and enhances the Guccification narrative.

Michele's new narrative does not seem so farfetched in comparison to his predecessors. From Guccio Gucci's equestrian aesthetic, Ford's polished hedonism and Giannini's modernised ready-to-wear, Michele seemed to reinterpret the classic Gucci, iterate a fusion with Ford and Giannini's extravagance with an adjunct of his personal touch. The fantastical wonder of Michele's imagination does not discredit the extravagance that has been the DNA of the Florentine fashion house but rather enhances it, whilst constructing a whole other realm of luxury. Perhaps, the eccentric phantasmagoria was also composed as a dawn of the new era and the birth of a contemporary brand image, set for the modern and sophisticated audience, and modern future.

Figure 3.9 Boutique in the Gucci Garden Galleria, Florence  
 Figure 4.0 Original archives of Guccio Gucci kept across  
 the first and second floor

# Conclusion.



Fashion is one of the ways visual storytellers can aid in changing society. Through studying the fashion experience in its diverse platforms, it becomes a matter of experimentations for visual storytellers in the fashion industry to hone their craftsmanship in storytelling, and also to deliver the intended message or story through the fashion object and the visual representations. It can also be concluded that the anchor of storytelling is embedded in cohesive art direction supported by a clear and evident story, told through aesthetically-unified or complimentary-juxtaposed assets. One of the first intangible products produced by the first body is one's thoughts and outlook on fashion in general, derived from belief and values.

This then connects to using the fashion object as a tool of self-expressionism, establishing one's image that is seen by the wearer and the wearer's surrounding, potentially perceived differently. The distinction of the perceived image is a tool to discover like-minded individuals and generate a sense of belonging. The diverse opinions, belief, and standpoint of the fashion objects also attain critics and connoisseurs to constitute the fashion system that we are aware of today, thus creates continuous demands that are familiar in the industry.

On the other hand, the intangible products of the second body are the perception of a collection or a label in general made by the audience. The perception comes with the

label's association which image is associated with a certain subcultural group that could be stereotypical to the label's consumers.

The collaboration between fashion and graphics has indeed given creatives a new platform to experiment on. Even though the collaboration is not discovered recently, the depth of it is yet to be excavated.

Although the staged-imagery embellished with semiotics produced for fashion creates desires that are also an intangible product, it is also a vast field to experiment with that generate groundbreaking ideas useful for practicing visual narrators. The case of brand identity misalignment, the false-desire-inducing language of fashion photography, disjointed art direction can be used by visual storytellers in understanding the better narrative that is a non-material memento that not only adorns society with philosophical meaning but also provides purpose. This study has examined that the tangible products do manifest into the intangible products, both embody their tangible variables separately. The intangibles that are produced by both tangible bodies seem to create demands that keep the fashion industry moving at such fast pace, resulted by the reasons from the first chapter, and the Gucci revamp is a case study of a passionate and story-driven narrative that whilst staying by the side of the past consumers, it is also an attempt to fetch a more modern market without losing the house's heritage.

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## Framework Synopsis.

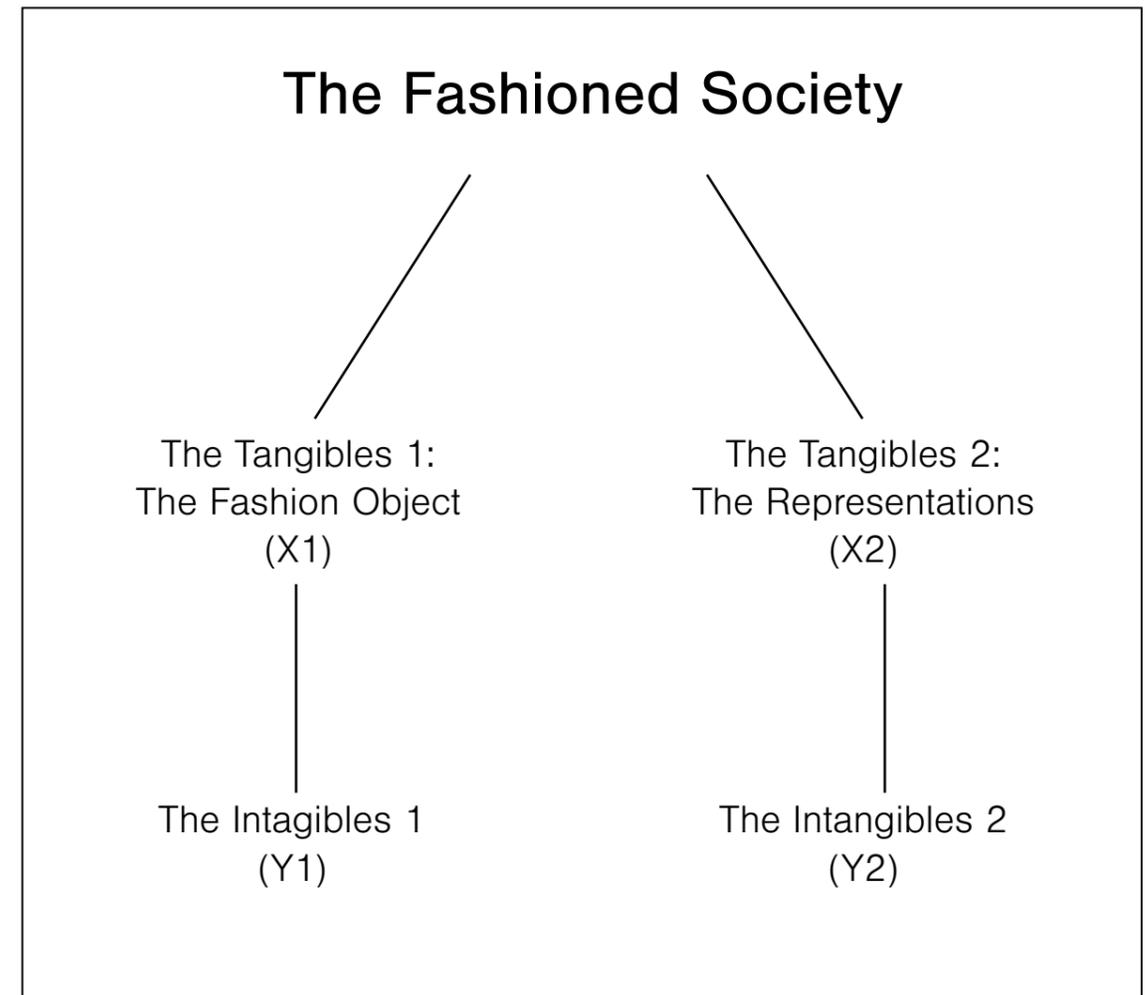
This study is based on the framework created conducive to celebrate the means of seeing society through the lens of fashion and facilitate stepping stones for visual storytellers with diverse practice. This framework has been modelled to guide reader in understanding the ways of experiencing fashion, which consists of a combination of different platforms across the visual communication spectrum. The two bodies of fashion are as important to one another and support the visual culture of fashion as a celebration in seeing society through fashion.

The first body of the fashion experience is the garment, and the second body is the messengers, which both are put in the same pedestal. Each of the two bodies consists of "The Intangibles" variable, X1 is the variable name of the first body and X2 being the variable name of the second body. The Fashioned Society (Pristia, 2018) theorises that the tangible products of society manifest into its intangible products. This examination seeks the manifestation of the tangible products of the fashion experience (the garment and the messengers) and whether the manifesto of the tangibles (X1, X2) is linked to the establishment of the non-material culture.

The first body looks at fashion as an image in a sense that the image is an impression of a person, organisation, or product presented in public. Music subcultures have lived within fashion for decades and have breathed life into the term self-expression. The different ways of expressing ourselves through clothes and music in different subcultures supports the idea of the sense of belonging, as one of the primary needs in living as humans - social beings. Produced by

that process of identity establishment, materially, is clothes, or the expressive garment itself, and the aesthetics that we see on the streets is the stylish body and the attitude that is popular at a certain point in time. The non-material, intangible matter produced by the first pillar is the belief, the social identity, the norm and ethos that are born within the subcultures (Y1). While two subcultures could dress distinctively from one another, it is possible for both to share the same belief, and it is only a matter of the outcomes from the two similar equations.

The second body is the representing factors or the other messengers of fashion aside from the garment. Essentially, the representing factors are the brand its physical memento made in order to capture the fashion objects and later on be shown to public. From the equation, the resulting material objects are that as such fashion photography, film, brand identity consisting of its graphics asset, packaging, and retail space. Disembodied, the effect that is left is Y2, one's experience of the brand, his or her perception towards it, infinite reactions towards change - when it comes to constant alteration of trend conceivable to be progressive, regressive, or retrospective - that could be favourable or detrimental.



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## **Gucci Garden (museum)**

Piazza della Signoria, 10, 50122 Firenze FI, Italy

## **Rick Owens: Subhuman, Inhuman, Superhuman (exhibition)**

La Triennale di Milano

Viale Emilio Alemagna, 6, 20121 Milano MI, Italy

## **Azzedine Alaïa: The Couturier (exhibition)**

Design Museum

224-238 Kensington High St, Kensington, London W8 6AG

## **By Design: Peter Saville (talk)**

Sir John Soane Museum

13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3BP

Private recording available here: <https://soundcloud.com/saintmatta/by-design-peter-saville-talk-sir-john-soane-museum-291018/s-83nbF>

