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FASHIONATING IMAGES Audiovisual Media Studies Meet Fashion¹

1. FASHION AS A MEDIUM

Over the past decades, fashion has acquired centrality in social and economic processes in Western culture for its capacity to penetrate and influence both cultural production and identitarian practices. In the last few years, the proliferation of media objects, such as fashion films, makeover TV shows, fashion blogs and vlogs has shown how prolific the encounter between fashion and audiovisual media can be. The aim of this special issue is to explore this intersection and, consequently, the cross fertilization between fashion studies and media studies, with particular regard to audiovisual media, such as cinema, television, advertising and digital video.

The fundamental idea behind all the contributions to the issue is that a strong mutual relationship binds the moving-image and fashion together, where by 'fashion' is not meant merely clothing, but rather a wide set of social performative practices characterized by a tension towards – or even an obsession with – the 'new'. This bond is not only a 'thematic' relationship – fashion *in* the moving-image – aimed at exploring what happens when fashion is narrated and conveyed via audiovisual media, and, conversely, what happens when cinema or television assimilate fashion as a key element of their narratives. Nor is it only a 'reciprocal' relationship – the moving-image industry *in* fashion – of professional and creative resources, such as film directors or Hollywood stars hired by fashion brands to produce short films and commercials. Nor is it only a 'conjunctive' relationship – fashion *and* the moving-image – although this is indispensable in order to understand fashion as an essential tool of the *mise-en-scène* (e.g. costume and make-up) in audiovisual objects. Such a bond is also an 'implicational' relationship – fashion *as* moving-image – an *inherent* connection, a sort of radical quality that can be considered not only as a specific attribute present in both the elements or as the border between adjacent terrains but also as a field of *chiasmatic entanglement* of symbolic production and meaning-making attitudes. Rather than offering only an overview of the encounter between fashion and audiovisual media in terms of reciprocal mutual exchange, contamination or syncretism, this special issue intends also to focus on their symbiosis.

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Fashion can be considered as a medium in itself for it both fully takes part in artistic processes as an autonomous aesthetic and semantic object, and generates a space for development of cultural, social and technological dynamics. In fact, fashion has a pivotal role in the creative media industry as a provider of material fundamental for the formation of imaginary worlds. Fashion tells stories (what is more, these are serial stories 'scheduled' in *seasons*), and as a storyteller it activates a number of dynamics, ranging from character creation to audience identification processes, from strategies of *mise-en-scène* to narratological composition and plot development, from aesthetic construction of communication style to the use of photographic codes and techniques. Moreover, as a creative industry and medium of entertainment, fashion shares with media *strictu sensu* the *exhibition* of its *spectacular* products to large-scale audiences. The 'space of visibility' of fashion has extended into online platforms and social media, which have encouraged the development of a new *agency* that directly involves the audience as part of the creative process. Fashion has progressively established itself as an autonomous and institutionalized social field able to influence and shape contemporary culture, affecting both brand identity and individual identity. Because of its symbolic and corporeal substance, fashion can be conceived as a vehicle and a means of direct expression of public identity, a sort of personal medium that intimately involves the body, the self and social relationships.

As the contributions to this special issue demonstrate, the elective affinities between the moving-image and fashion can be explored using a number of approaches, and in regard to a variety of formats and media environments, according to the extension of the moving-image/fashion relationship from cinema screens to TV screens, computer monitors and mobile devices displays. This Introduction traces a genealogy of the intersection between these two media, from cinema to YouTube, and highlights some of the main theoretical issues dealt with by the contributions.

2. DREAM MACHINES

The historical contemporaneity shared by cinema and fashion (as products of modernity) has given rise to several commonalities between the two fields. Indeed, the industries of film and fashion have developed side by side, creating and confirming many affinities that have contributed to their respective modes of expression and circulation². The close collaboration between fashion and cinema, from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, seems to have facilitated both their democratic accessibility and their propensity to generate fantasy and fulfilment for their audiences and consumers.

The long-lasting and even nourishing relationship between cinema and fashion can begin to explain why fashion has today penetrated and invaded various audiovisual media formats, so much so that fashion is now arguably the dominant aesthetic mode of our Western visual culture. Considering this current reality, Guy Debord's famous manifesto *La société du spectacle* (1967)³, which critiques the generalized (and alienating) organization of appearance, is as relevant as ever.

Perhaps most of all, fashion and cinema are creative and performance industries that constantly aim to offer distraction, enchantment, and hedonism. Cinema and

² See Christopher Breward's chapter "Fashion and Film", in *Fashion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 131-141.

³ G. Debord, *La Société du spectacle* [1967], Paris: Folio, 1992.

fashion both occur somewhere in between ‘show business’ and the art of show elaborating on their own iconographies and logic of signs.

From a rather general perspective, while fashion and cinema each have their own traditions, in their creation and production of imageries and spectacle they also bear a likeness which becomes even more apparent when both fields overlap, for instance, through the making of films that benefit the fashion industry. The practice of making films, as highlighted by Caroline Evans and Marketa Uhlířová, has its roots in the early ages of moving images when “cinema already anticipated its capacity to not only record (register) but also generate imagery”⁴. Indeed, the history of cinema and the history of fashion have a parallel genealogy that, in our contemporary visual culture, acquires an undeniable position and function.

One of the most obvious places to begin examining the dialogue between fashion and cinema is the wide range of films that are about fashion, in one way or another. Movies like the now canonical *Qui êtes-vous, Polly Maggoo?* (William Klein, 1966), *Prêt-à-Porter* (Robert Altman, 1994), *The Devil Wears Prada* (David Frankel, 2006), as well as documentaries on the fashion world, and TV series or biopic feature films about highly celebrated designers and couturiers (in 2009, Anne Fontaine’s *Coco avant Chanel* and Jan Kounen’s *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky*; in 2014, Christian Bonello’s *Saint Laurent* and Jalil Lespert’s *Yves Saint Laurent*) are only a few examples. Another good place to start is the important relationship between actors/actresses and fashion designers, which presents a dynamic that reinforces questions of stardom and the sacralisation of the visual. Cinema, as an image-making medium, continually fabricates a plethora of fashion styles in the same way that fashion designers continually import their couture signatures onto the screen through costuming characters (Hubert de Givenchy for Audrey Hepburn’s films being one of the most famous cases).

Of course, there are many other aspects to be considered when looking at the intersections of fashion and cinema. Aside from the depiction of fashion objects and styles on the screen, fashion and cinema share more fundamental and inherent features. For instance, they both stem from an interest in corporeal practices and movement⁵; they display a fascination with the body in motion that stimulates visual pleasure. Evans and Uhlířová have traced that co-substantial relationship by studying fashion in the early cinema: clothes have “inherently kinetic and expressive qualities and strong potential to enchant the senses”⁶. Or as Esther Leslie puts it, “Film is a medium of movement and so provides a perfect vehicle for showcasing cloth’s mobile propensities. In turn, cinema needs the drama of movement”⁷.

Accordingly, both fashion and cinema can be considered ‘dream machines’ animated by many common features such as colour, cut, assemblage, composition, as well as motifs of masquerade, disguise and transformation. The alliance also relies on the sensuality and haptic quality of fashion and cinema, and, as Leslie specifies, on the fact that “cinema bombards the senses, displaying a heightened attention to visual

⁴ M. Uhlířová, “The Fashion Film Effect”, in *Fashion and Media: Past and Present*, edited by D. Bartlett, S. Cole and A. Rocamora, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, 123.

⁵ See for instance Caroline Evans’ essay “The Walkies: Early French Fashion Shows as a Cinema of Attractions”, in *Fashion in Film*, edited by Adrienne Munich, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011, 110-34. See also M. Uhlířová, “100 Years of the Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 17, 2 (2013): 137-58.

⁶ Uhlířová, “The Fashion Film Effect”, 102.

⁷ E. Leslie, “Dreams for Sale”, in *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle*, edited by M. Uhlířová, London: Koening Books, 2013, 34.

and aural sensuous effects: sound, light, gloss, texture. Likewise, fashion induces an intensified level of sensory stimulation”⁸.

While the fashion film, as a ‘genre’, reached its peak recently (undoubtedly thanks to the Internet), the connivance between fashion and film has always existed. Therefore, the contemporary success of the so-called ‘fashion film’ (basically a short film produced from/for the circle of fashion) is not solely a refraction of the digital culture in which we live. Even if the phenomenon of the fashion film has become, in a way, even more fashionable than fashion itself, the need to capture fashion on film has always been present. Nevertheless, a slight distinction should be drawn between the fashion film as moving images emerging from fashion itself (to be produced and presented for multiple digital platforms and/or through fashion film festivals⁹), and the fact that the language of fashion has somehow always been juxtaposed to the language of film. Indeed, clothing, costume, and sartorial ‘fashionable’ elements are central to filmmaking, and they convey a wide variety of meanings that oscillate between the characterization of filmic subjects and their narration, the dressing of the actress/actor as a film icon¹⁰, and the overall aesthetics of the film. Though much can be said about the confusion between the artistic and commercial purposes of the fashion film, one cannot ignore the fact that both fashion and cinema are media to be exhibited, to be worn, to be seen, and thus to be consumed. This alone explains why the pairing of fashion and cinema is at once historical, social, and ontological.

Another sign of the ‘natural’ collaboration between the two fields is echoed in the works of many well-established filmmakers who have made short films for fashion houses and brands, and which have been symptomatically labelled ‘fashion films’. More specifically, this is what Gary Needham calls “the authored film”¹¹, a type of fashion film that combines the reputation of the filmmaker with that of a designer or fashion brand. These commissioned films are high-budget productions that enable well-established directors to experiment with their own artistic language while gaining economic benefits. David Lynch for Dior, Roman Polanski and Wes Anderson for Prada and Miu-Miu, and more recently Spike Jonze for Kenzo are just some examples. Incidentally, this is just one of the trajectories of the fashion film, as Needham argues¹². Locating the fashion film within the vivacity of digital culture, Needham explains that each film comes with a different artistic or commercial agenda: for instance, ‘the boutique film’ used by e-stores, which focuses on the saleability of the fashion goods; ‘the designer’s film’, which expresses the vision of the brand by highlighting the creative signature of the couturier’s work; and, lastly, ‘the artist’s film’, a brand-funded feature created by an established artist that is intentionally related to the art world which fashion needs¹³. Notably, this last type of film reflects a larger concern: fashion designers and brands are often looking for art to legitimize their practice or simply to overcome the dichotomy between art and fashion. Even if

⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹ See for example Alistair O’Neill’s “Festival Review: *Fashion in Film Festival*”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 12, 2 (2008): 271-275.

¹⁰ On this topic, see Pamela Church Gibson’s book *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012.

¹¹ G. Needham, “The Digital Fashion Film”, in *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, 2nd ed., edited by S. Bruzzi and P. Church Gibson, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, 103-111.

¹² See also Nathalie Khan’s “Cutting the Fashion Body: Why the Fashion Image Is No Longer Still”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 16, 2 (2012): 235-250. And thus see also essays by Gary Needham and Marketa Uhlírova, as mentioned above.

¹³ Needham, “The Digital Fashion Film”, 107.

Needham's categorization, as helpful as it may be in defining fashion films, invites the re-configuration of new ones (where does one category start and the other end?), the affinities are still substantial: the tension between art and commerce, the question of attractiveness, and the plasticity of fashion as a terrain of playful experimentations are all, to some degree, at the centre of the fashion film practice.

Early fashion films were mainly made to showcase particular fashion styles. Film was instrumental to that purpose by creating and enhancing the 'spectacular' dimension of the items on a moving body. Obviously, the technological development of the filmic medium has contributed not only to portraying fashion but also to extending the qualities of sartorial fashion. The attractiveness of clothes is mirrored in the attractiveness of moving images, and vice-versa. In other words, the fashion film does more than just document fashion through the visual medium because it enables us to question a great variety of features and motifs at the very heart of both fashion and film practices. Interestingly, while Evans points to the similarities between early cinema and early fashion shows, today much discussed is whether the fashion film is replacing the fashion show, rendering it obsolete¹⁴.

In the 'fashion film', film is a tool used to express and communicate ideas characteristic of fashion or simply to sell certain 'looks'. In 'fashion-in-film movies', by contrast, fashion is utilized to model and polish the film, be it from an aesthetic, narrative, or thematic perspective. Also playing a role in the distinction between fashion films and fashion-in-film movies is the presentation context: for example, online platforms versus movie theatres, shorts versus full length features. However, the difference between the two is questionable in the multiple and flexible contexts of showcasing and presenting moving images.

The 'fashionating' of images is simultaneously a representational strategy, a new way to experience (and thus consume) images, and a creative alliance that encompasses the multiple aesthetic qualities of both media. To put it differently, fashion(-in-)films not only portray and document fashion items and motifs, they are also an integral part of what fashion is and what film can mean in the digital age.

In sum, analysis of the encounter between fashion and film draws on fashion-in-film movies and on the ubiquitous phenomenon of the fashion film, but does not limit itself to them. Whatever perspective is taken to discuss the matter, the same conclusion is reached: fashion has invaded all filmic practices to the point that it now influences, and even dictates, the way in which film is conceived. All in all, fashion is not only a central feature of cinema; it is also a key factor in understanding film and audiovisual culture.

3. AUDIOVISUAL FASHION EXTENDED

Needless to say, fashion is all about communication. As Malcolm Barnard has demonstrated, fashion and clothing are ways to communicate (and at the same time to challenge) social identities, be they related to class, gender, sexual orientation or social position¹⁵. Communication via fashion takes place through two main channels: at the individual level, any person communicates with the (not so) simple act of dressing,

¹⁴ This is, for example, clearly reflected in Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas' title of the chapter "Fashion Film, or the Disappearing Catwalk" in their book *Fashion's Double: Representations of Fashion in Painting, Photography and Film*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016, 111-128.

¹⁵ M. Barnard, *Fashion as Communication*, London: Routledge, 1996.

using his/her wardrobe as a dictionary whose lemmas build a complex language; at the corporate level, fashion as a system communicates in a voluntary and organised way through advertising (as any cultural industry does) together with specific fashion channels (such as fashion shows, whose primary function of presenting new collections has been largely overtaken by that of creating and circulating a brand narrative)¹⁶.

Branded communication is in fact a crucial point for our analysis of the encounter between fashion and audiovisual media because, as several essays in this issue point out, fashion companies often act as enhancers of new media products by financing them as channels of product promotion and/or brand storytelling. The 1990s represent an important turning point in this process because it was then that a shift from a communication focused on the *image* to a new one centred on the *imaginary*¹⁷ took place. In that decade new languages and strategies were adopted by fashion campaigns: consider Diesel's irony or Calvin Klein's sexual ambiguity, but also the fashion brands sponsoring artistic initiatives or sport events¹⁸. Today, companies are interested in developing a clear brand identity instead of working on simple product placement. The advent of 'fashion-branded entertainment' has reinforced and completed the shift from 'selling' to 'telling' products, from advertising goods to branding values. Increasingly often, fashion companies resort to narrative audiovisual formats and languages (and professionals) in order to create more appealing and entertaining advertising strategies. By addressing the audience rather than customers, and by focusing on a story rather than on product features, fashion films convey the brand's values indirectly, i.e. seductively and more effectively, far from being mere television commercials.

The same tendency towards entertainment is adopted in contemporary factual television, a specific field that has institutionalized and spectacularized the individual level of communication through fashion. TV fashion-based factual genres (e.g. the makeover and the game show) perfectly embody the need to express and transform personal identity through the medium of fashion 'encapsulated' in the medium of television. In those genres, the 'makeover' is both a narrative mechanism (in terms of change of a given situation) and the thematization of the transformative power of fashion, which in turn reflects the medium's 'performative' role, one even more evident in its 'gamified' version.

More generally, the enhancement of performativity is a typical characteristic of contemporary television. The rise of television as a convergent media transformed passive viewers into content-generator users and fans; and the advent of 'social TV' expanded the social discursive space to the virtual environment of the Internet. Social discourse on fashion TV series, however, demonstrated how fashion is able to create a circulation between fictional worlds and everyday life. Audiences not only share their opinions on and materials about the outfits of TV characters on social media; they also trigger a process of appropriation of symbolic fictional fragments, e.g. the imitation of a character's outfit in order to adopt his/her postures and attitudes and 'feel' like that character in real life.

The Internet is, in fact, the convergence environment *par excellence*, where TV

¹⁶ U. Volli, *Contro la moda*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1988.

¹⁷ On the notion of imaginary, see E. Mora, A. Rocamora, P. Volonté, "Editorial: Feeding the Imaginary", *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, 3, 2 (2016): 177-184; E. Mora, M. Pedroni, "New Frontiers of the Fashion Imaginary", in *Fashion Tales: Feeding the Imaginary*, edited by E. Mora and M. Pedroni, Bern: Peter Lang, 2017, 13-25.

¹⁸ S. Buffo, *Modalità espressive del fashion advertising. Evoluzione di un linguaggio*, Milan: Franco-Angeli, 2012; S. Saviolo, S. Testa, *Le imprese del sistema moda: il management al servizio della creatività*, Milan: Etas, 2000.

and cinema outputs can be distributed and consumed and other original audiovisual contents can be produced. This is what the so-called ‘fashion influencers’ are doing. That of influencers is a category used to denote a broad range of new social agents, such as bloggers, vloggers, Instagrammers, YouTubers, and so on, who have gained visibility in the field of fashion by posting fashion-related contents on their social networking websites¹⁹. After starting their social media platforms as amateurs – a feature that allows them to maintain the appearance of spontaneous and genuine web users even when they are influential gatekeepers – the most successful ones gain an international audience and become part of the field of fashion media, as fashion brands use them as marketing channels by developing commercial campaigns with them or hiring them as brand ambassadors.

However, only a few of these new content providers are able to gain international recognition and really enter the fashion system as professionals. While most of them fluctuate between a state of meso-celebrity²⁰ and micro-celebrity, all of them can be listed in the ‘army’ of the new ‘fashionating-images producers’ within a fashion industry where the companies and the traditional gatekeepers (e.g. fashion journalists) have lost their monopoly on the production of fashion imaginary.

4. THE WIND OF MEDIATIZATION

The processes and cases discussed thus far and in this issue can be better understood if they are framed in the theoretical notion of ‘mediatization’, an object of study that has become paramount for both professionals and academics because of the evident pervasiveness of the media in everyday life. If media have been able to generate both enthusiasm and worries since the advent of mass-communication with tools such as radio and television, the rise of digital, personal and mobile new media have provided new arguments for those who try to reflect on the influence of the media on all the spheres of social life²¹.

The starting point of studies on mediatization is the 1979 book by Altheide and Snow where media are described as being powerful because “people have adopted a media logic”²². This media logic contains the idea that “media disseminate the *formats* required for everyday performance”²³, a process whose consequence is that media literacy is an essential requirement for taking part in social life. The extent of this transformation can be understood only by recognizing the importance of media “in the social

¹⁹ See A. Rocamora, D. Bartlett, “Blogs de mode: les nouveaux espaces du discours de mode”, *Sociétés*, 104 (2009): 105-114; A. Rocamora, “Personal Fashion Blogs: Screens and Mirrors in Digital Self-Portraits”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 15, 4 (2011): 407-424; A. Rocamora, “Hypertextuality and Remediation in the Fashion Media”, *Journalism Practice*, 6, 1 (2012): 92-106; M. Pedroni, “Stumbling on the Heels of My Blog”: Career, Forms of Capital and Strategies in the (Sub)Field of Fashion Blogging”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 19, 2 (2015): 17-199.

²⁰ See M. Pedroni, “Meso-Celebrities, Fashion and the Media: How Digital Influencers Struggle for Visibility”, *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, 5, 1 (2016): 103-121.

²¹ G. Mazzoleni. “Mediatization of Society”, in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, vol. 7, edited by W. Donsbach, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, 3052-3055. DOI: 10.1111/b.9781405131995.2008.x.

²² D. Altheide, R.P. Snow, *Media Logic*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979, 237.

²³ N. Couldry, “When Mediatization Hits the Ground”, in *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*, edited by A. Hepp and F. Krotz, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 54-55.

construction of everyday life, society, and culture as a whole²⁴, something that makes mediatization a kind of meta-process “grounded in the modification of communication as the basic practice of how people construct the social and cultural world”²⁵. The mediatization of society can be defined as “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic”²⁶.

With regard to fashion,²⁷ mediatization affects, first of all, social agents in their role of fashion consumers, as they experience the world through the filter of media which have become ubiquitous. Second, on the side of producers, mediatization implies that the traditional ways of manufacturing, communicating and selling fashion products may be no longer effective because the audience has developed digital-shaped habits and tastes. In short, mediatization has become a constitutive part of individual and collective practices. This process occurs together with a “mediatization of consumption”²⁸: media contribute to the establishment of new, deterritorialized communities since “people can experience a new sense of community through the sharing of lifestyles and certain cultural tastes”²⁹. Media, and especially new digital media, are thus tools to mediate the way we learn, experience, discuss and consume fashion. Fashion films and TV series, as well as the outputs of bloggers, vloggers and digital influencers, work on a terrain comprising entertainment, information and commercial communication, contributing to a process of mediatization of fashion as both a consumption object and an entertainment experience.

A third level is related to the ‘places’ where the display of fashion comes about, such as the both physical and digital spaces of fashion events and fashion communication³⁰. Consider, for example, the rise of live streamed fashion events. Runways used to be fashion events concealed from public view and reserved to fashion professionals (such as buyers and journalists) who were allowed to preview the collections of the fashion brands. Many companies have decided to broadcast their catwalks via live streaming. Among the first to adopt this strategy were Victoria’s Secret in the US and Krizia in Europe. The latter chose this method by presenting its Spring-Summer 2000 collection in Milan; the backstage was also shown, and the Japanese buyers were allowed to order without being in Milan. The live streaming of runways has become a mainstream practice in less than ten years. The overall meaning of catwalks has changed through a process of disintermediation that opens the runway from secrecy to a worldwide and real-time view³¹.

“Understanding contemporary fashion practices [...] means understanding practices of digital media”³² and, vice versa, studying digital media means studying fashion practices: the wind of mediatization, in conclusion, blows on contemporary fashion, and

²⁴ F. Krotz, “Mediatization: A Concept with which to Grasp Media and Societal Change”, in *Mediatization*, edited by K. Lundby, New York, Peter Lang, 2009, 24.

²⁵ Krotz, “Mediatization”, 26.

²⁶ S. Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Society. A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change”, *Nordicom Review*, 29, 2 (2008): 113.

²⁷ A. Rocamora, “Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion”, *Fashion Theory*, (27 April 2016): 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349.

²⁸ A. Jansson, “The Mediatization of Consumption: Towards an Analytical Framework of Image Culture”, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2, 1 (2002): 5-31.

²⁹ Jansson, “The Mediatization of Consumption”, 15.

³⁰ Rocamora, “Mediatization and Digital Media”, 5-9.

³¹ C. Lunghi, “Le sfilate vanno online”, in *Oltre il CRM: la customer experience nell'era digitale*, edited by M. Ornati, Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2011, 50-63.

³² Rocamora, “Mediatization and Digital Media”, 14.

the renewed and empowered *liaison* between this cultural industry and the audiovisual media will further boost the diffusion of media logic among fashion consumers.

5. FASHIONATING MEDIA AND MEDIATING FASHION

The essays in this special issue adopt different methods and theoretical perspectives – from semiotics to audience studies – and they are written with different formulas – from wide-ranging exploration to close analysis of single case studies. All contributions, however, question the encounter between fashion and specific audiovisual formats, e.g. cinema, videoart, television, advertising, web media.

A first group of contributions describes the features of fashion films. They focus on how fashion brands use audiovisual media formats, languages, creative and professional resources to renew their communication strategies. With the aim of studying the contamination between advertising and audiovisual fictional formats, Massimo Scaglioni and Giuseppe Suma consider a corpus of forty ‘fashion-branded entertainment’ projects conducted from 2010 to 2016 by Italian fashion and luxury brands (one of the major fashion ‘hotspots’ in the world). Lucio Spaziante discusses a series of ‘textual’ dimensions – displaying, narrative, rhythmic and aesthetic – that fashion films borrow from pre-existing audiovisual formats such as feature and short films, TV commercials, music video clips and art films. As a case study, Elena Caoduro analyses the fashion film series *Women’s Tales* (2012-) commissioned by the fashion house Miu-Miu, and questions tensions typical of post-feminism and consumerism that some of the short films in that series try to overcome.

A second group of essays considers the ‘working in tandem’ of fashion and film and raises a series of theoretical issues related to the problem of materiality and performativity (organic/inorganic, human/non human agency) in the fashion-cinema couple. Patricia Pisters follows the ‘metal’ of fashion in the work of three fashion designers – Paco Rabanne, Alexander McQueen, and Iris van Herpen – and points to the various audiovisual ages in which they operate, arguing for the transformative power of sartorial metal together with the transformative power of media. Her essay evokes Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the ‘body without organs’ in order to challenge and overcome the conflict between technologies and nature. Geli Mademli analyses Greek film director Athina Rachel Tsangari’s multi-media artwork *The Capsule* (2012) through science historian Andrew Pickering’s notion of ‘mangle of practice’ in order to rethink the connection between fashion and film as a *performative* process that includes self-reflection on human/non-human agency and in the use of technical media. A radical position on the ‘bodily implication’ of fashion and film is taken by Andrea Rabbito, who creates a virtual conversation among Benjamin, Simmel, Leopardi and Bataille and analyses fragments of films by Antonioni, Almodovar, Carax and Refn with the explicit aim of criticising fashion as a perverse phenomenon in which the pleasure-corpse tension emerges as a drive, a simulation of a sacrifice, a violent, disruptive and destructive parody of murder. Şölen Kipöz and Başak Süller Zor conduct a close reading of Wim Wenders’ documentary film *Notebook on Clothes and Cities* (1989) on Yohji Yamamoto to highlight his meditation on the analogy between filmmaking and dressmaking in the context of a culture of photographic and electronic images. Because the photographic medium of film is the emblem of the work of art in the age of its reproducibility, fashion also oscillates between uniqueness and reproducibility, between the loss and the reassignment of auratic power.

A third group of essays focuses on the transformation of spectatorships and consumption into a series of appropriation practices based on the *performative* use of digital media. Antonella Mascio analyses three TV *quality dramas* (*Downton Abbey*, 2010-2015; *Pretty Little Liars*, Family 2010-; and *House of Cards*, 2013-) and related audience/users activity in Instagram and Pinterest pages. Her analysis reveals a virtuous circle between fictional worlds and spectators' everyday lives in terms of an 'extra-diegetic' appropriation of the series characters' outfits and styles, a circuit of mutual enrichment – even commercially – of the value of the series and that of the outfits worn in the series. Conversely, in her analysis of factual genres in Italian 'native digital' TV channels, Anna Manzato concludes that, in the makeover category and the game show, fashion expresses the adaptation to a *canon* of rules and style codes rooted in common sense rather than allowing a personal appropriation of symbols and values. A radical form of an appropriation, enhanced agency, fandom, self-rule and identitarian practice is 'cosplay' (costume + role playing), i.e. the practice of dressing up and pretending to be a fictional character. Sara Pesce's study on Superman cosplay (in a series of Andrew Michael Phillips' photographs, 2014) offers a reflection on the act of 'self branding' by ordinary individuals through costume. This is an interesting case given also the fact that Superman's character is the result of a sedimentation in more than one medium – i.e. comics, television and cinema. Moreover, the Web widely expands the space of self-visibility, and facilitates the transformation of fans and cosplayers into 'ordinary' celebrities. Romana Andò provides an analysis of another performative web-based and fashion-related practice realized by micro-celebrities: *haul* videos, i.e. videos that show the 'unpacking' of recently purchased items. The study focuses on the relationship between haulers and teenager fandom and highlights how an online intimacy is built by sharing fashion brands and contents that are clearly identifiable in a generational sense. What we are facing is the rise of both new producers and new users of fashion contents via digitally-enhanced audiovisual tools, together with renewed social practices of interaction between production and consumption, whose distance is significantly reduced. In the same direction goes Rebecca Halliday's discussion of Tom Ford's live fashion shows, a case study that highlights how fashion companies are opening the catwalk ritual, traditionally reserved to professionals belonging to the field of fashion production and communication, to the global audience of fashion consumers. This is another signal of the wind of mediatization making fashion an experience that no one can have without going through audiovisual media.

Ultimately, all the essays in the special issue enables us to reflect upon the ubiquitous presence of fashion in our media-saturated landscape, and at the same time upon the ubiquitous presence of media in socio-cultural practices and industrial processes such as fashion. Questioning the encounter between audiovisual media and fashion brings an elective affinity to light. If fashion is central to cinema and television and gives rise to a wide range of new genres and formats, it also impacts on the forms of representation and expression of identity and the body via personal and social media, according to the prevailing customs and tastes of our place and time. This encounter is a terrain of experimentation with new *trends* in the media experience – ones that rely on performativity and the enhancement of the viewer/user's agency. The manifold etymological root of fashion as both 'a making or doing' (from Latin *factionem, factio, facere*) and as an artifact 'made by or resulting from art' (*factitious*) resonates in this kind of experience and agency. After all, audiovisual media are similarly about constructing a fictional (and entertaining) world and creatively inhabiting it as an essential part of the actual world.