ŞÖLEN KİPOZ - BAŞAK SÜLLER ZOR*

YAMAMOTO’S AURATIC RESISTANCE AND THE MATERIALITY OF THE ELECTRONIC IMAGES IN NOTEBOOK ON CITIES AND CLOTHES

Abstract
Walter Benjamin’s argument on the separation of the aura from artwork, due to technological reproducibility, continues to resonate in contemporary visual culture where the ‘image-copy’ has become an accepted means of representation, over the ‘object-real’. In this respect, the aura, which corresponded to material quality of the artwork as an ‘object-thing’, has become less accessible due to the accelerated growth of reproduction through new modalities in the postmodern era. This affected Wim Wenders during the filming of Notebook on Cities and Clothes, a documentary on the conceptual fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto that reveals his craft-oriented, inimitable deconstructive design process, in particular signifying the meaning of identity and the reconsideration of the concept of aura. Reading the film in light of Yamamoto’s open process and his iconoclastic personification – as opposed to the myth of the designer that is prioritized in the hermetic world of fashion – along with Wenders’s challenge to authorship allows us to map out the possible relationships between the aura and identity. Correspondingly, Yamamoto’s auratic resistance to obsessions with image and novelty in the spatio-temporal frame of contemporary fashion are revealed through the film. Enabling a cross-disciplinary reading, the film illustrates interactions between the disciplines of filmmaking and fashion design, i.e. the connections between image production, cutting and processes of assembly. Finally, contrasting the multiplicity of images and products in the age of reproduction, the film specifically focuses on the notion of tactility and materiality in both creative fields.

Keywords
Dialectical image; auratic resistance; materiality; tactility; Yohji Yamamoto; Wim Wenders.

1. REPRODUCTION OF AURA IN THE WORLD OF FASHION

Walter Benjamin described artwork’s loss of aura, its “here and now” representing a unique existence in a particular place¹, as being a result of mechanical reproduction and dissemination, particularly through film and photography. The breakdown of spatio-temporal uniqueness of the artwork has accelerated technological reproducibility of photography and film, and mechanical reproduction by means of hand has been replaced by the “pictorial reproduction” governed by “eye looking into lens”². Moreover, film represented the first artistic form whose character is entirely determined by its reproduc-

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* İzmir University of Economics – solen.kipoz@ieu.edu.tr, basak.suller@ieu.edu.tr.
ibility³. This indicates the complete governance of the image over the thing, as illustrated Ludwig A. Feuerbach’s statement “our era prefers the images to the things, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality; appearance to being”⁴.

In Benjamin’s approach to the dialectical relation between temporal and spatial dimensions of artwork, aura was defined as the “unique appearance of a distance, however near it may be”. Accordingly, Miriam Hansen addressed the potential of aura under its erasure⁵. This distance refers to unattainability of artwork, thus, its cult value, which is diminished through reproducibility. However, the understanding of aura as a mere aesthetic category contrasts with Benjamin’s earlier description of genuine aura, which, he stated, appears in all things. This coincides to “the aura of the habitual” or the aura which reveals itself through the “experience that inscribes itself as a long repetitive practice”. From this point of view, Hansen interprets Benjamin’s argument in terms of auratic relation between the person and the object, including clothes. Accordingly, it is possible to observe aura as inherent property of persons or objects along with the aura of the habitual or the everyday through a metonymic relation between the cloth and the wearer. In this relation, aura of the garment derives not from its unique status as a handmade object, but from a long-term material relationship with the wearer’s physiognomy⁶. This material and tactile relation between object and user was illustrated by enlightenment philosopher Diderot’s bitter lament over the loss of his old gown when given a new scarlet dressing-gown⁷. This particular notion of aura was also reflected in Benjamin’s remark on the effect of human countenance through facial expression in portrait photography⁸, when describing Shelling’s coat: “the shape it has borrowed from its wearer is not unworthy of the wrinkles in his face”⁹.

Benjamin’s account of auratic power of the object, and thus clothing, suggests the possibility of reconsidering the auratic power of fashion, fashion designer and fashion object. Benjamin identified fashion with endless revolutions, cycles and repetitions, as indicated by Hroch, based on the Arcades Project (1927-1940)¹⁰; by treating fashion as a dialectical image, he considered its revolutionary repetition and its potential for revolutionary change¹¹. In the present day, reproducibility of fashion due to its inherently repetitive character not only derives from the mass production-oriented ready-to-wear industry, but also its potential to reproduce past styles. Proust’s canonical concept of involuntary memory, derived from constant realization of the past within the present¹², is readily associated with this dialectical character of fashion, described by Benjamin as “tiger’s leap into the past”¹³. In the words of Caroline Evans, “historical time of fashion is not a smooth flow from past to present but in a more complex relay of turns

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³ Ibid., 99.
⁶ Ibid.
⁸ Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, 27.
⁹ Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura”, 336-375.
¹¹ Ibid., 120.
and returns\textsuperscript{14}, she expressed the concept of dialectical image through the metaphor of a labyrinth, as a platform for the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary images\textsuperscript{15}. At the time Benjamin analysed the concept of fashion in the Arcades Project (1927-1940), clothing production was in the pre-fashion system phase, dominated by made-to-measure (custom-made) clothes called “confection”\textsuperscript{16}. An exclusive status was bestowed on the designer, as a result of the work of Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895), who not only pioneered the Haute Couture system, but also suggested that the couturier was an artist, with creative authorship, although through a different technical process from other types of artists\textsuperscript{17}. With the emergence of ready-to-wear clothing by the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, fashion lost its unique quality, in a process parallel to Benjamin’s consideration of artwork, as a consequence of the triumph of industry over art\textsuperscript{18}. As Christopher Breward\textsuperscript{19} noted, the 20\textsuperscript{th} century has been characterised as the age of ‘mass’ in terms of mass-production, mass-consumption and mass-media; nevertheless the fashion trade has been shaped by two poles of production, reproducibility, but also uniqueness\textsuperscript{20}. Thus, unique haute couture work of art which reserved its aura has existed simultaneously with reproducible, mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing, which still needs to be original and novel despite the material constraints of reproduction without aura. However, fashion requires that the mass-produced object is reinvested with an auratic power, and searches the ways to reconcile reproducibility with aura\textsuperscript{21}.

Being a significant tool for social transformation in the society and as the expression of the ‘spirit of the day’, for Benjamin, fashion contained the potential for revolutionary politics in the Arcades Project. He argued that fashion could cause an aesthetic change, preparing the ground for more fundamental change\textsuperscript{22}, in line with his utopic ideal, in which reproduction was seen as offering the promise of a secular and democratic transition in reception of artworks by the elimination of aura, and thus, the cult value. In this view, artworks were measured by their exhibition value, which referred to their displacement. In regards to status of the artist, Benjamin proposed that the displacement of the artwork caused by the democratic reception of art by the masses, had the effect of neutralizing the creativity and genius of the artist\textsuperscript{23}. This concept could be extended to include the ready-to-wear designer in the fashion industry. In contrast, this view reinforces the status of the haute couture designer, whose personal statement creates the uniqueness of the artwork.

In the light of these ideas, Wim Wenders’s documentary film Notebook and Cities and Clothes (1989) focuses on the work of one of the most celebrated Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto, revealing considerable insight into the relations between aura and contemporary fashion practice. Commissioned by the Centre George Pompidou in Paris,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Gezcy, Karaminas, “Walter Benjamin”, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{18} N.L. Green, “Art and Industry: The Language of Modernization in the Production of Fashion”, French Historical Studies, 18, 3 (1994): 722-748.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Green, “Art and Industry: The Language of Modernization in the Production of Fashion”.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Hroch, Fashion and Its ‘Revolutions’ in Walter Benjamin’s Arcades, 117.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, 20.
\end{itemize}
the film offers not only a reflective portrait of the fashion designer through his creative process, but also reveals striking similarities between fashion and film production. After presenting his debut collection of his label Y’s in Tokyo in 1976, Tokyo born designer Yamamoto (1943) went on to become the representative of the Japanese fashion revolution in the global fashion capital of Paris in 1981. A child of the Second World War, he was brought up by his dressmaker mother, and he transferred from law to studying fashion at the famous Bunka fashion school in 1969. Following the example of Kenzo (the first Japanese designer in Paris), avant-garde designer Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo (known for Comme des Garçons) were responsible for the French system gaining a broader outlook due to their much-appreciated creativity. Their poverty-inspired style and unconventional sense of aesthetics created a storm on the world’s most glamorous stage. Despite creating a revolutionary movement at the center of European fashion society without making any effort to adopt European clothing norms or aesthetics, they never labelled themselves as strictly Japanese. Yamamoto’s emergence as an avant-garde designer occurred during the postmodern social transformation in society in the 1980s, due to political upheavals such as the collapse of the USSR and the Berlin Wall, and global crises, which caused the rise of street culture, deconstructive and conceptual fashion movement, what Baudot referred to as a new wave so-called conceptualists. Over time, Yamamoto’s label reached the highest rung of the fashion ladder, however he neither positioned himself within the luxury-oriented haute couture market, nor sacrificed artistic quality through his timeless designs of his 3 different lines, Y’s, Yohji Yamamoto and Y3. His impoverish, spiritual and timeless style, largely inspired by working class clothes, not just in look, but also in function, statement and sensuality, was a result of a craft-oriented, ontologically experimental, and sartorially inimitable process.

2. NARRATING FASHION DESIGN PROCESS THROUGH THE SIGHT OF THE FILMMAKER

Benjamin’s dialectical image corresponds to “literary montage”, which is analogous to cinematic montage, the filmic equivalent of collage. For him, the technique of montage in the filmmaking process shares similar features and processes with surgery: it relies on a series of cut and spliced images assembled to form an aesthetic whole. Thus, it is composed of chopped fragments, camera edits, adjusting zoom lenses and other filmic devices. Benjamin provided remarkable insights into creative disciplines through metaphor associating painter to magician who keeps the natural distance from the subject, and cameraman to surgeon who penetrates deep into the subject’s tissue. This analogy can be adapted to utilization of similar creative production techniques by Wenders – the filmmaker – and Yamamoto – the dressmaker –, such as ‘cutting’ and ‘assembling’. This similarity was illustrated by Wenders stating that his ‘camera’ sounded like a ‘sewing machine’ in the voice-over.

In documenting the designer’s creative process, Wenders created, as it were, the

dialectical image through cinematic montage, by traversing the cityscapes of Tokyo (Yamamoto’s hometown, and his atelier location) and Paris (the fashion capital where his label is communicated), highlighting the global character of the fashion designer and fashion object. By showing cityscapes through the images in the monitor of various types of camera, including a small video camera, Wenders creates an image within the image using technique of *mise en abyme*, or ‘mirror construction’ that creates enclosed layers, like a Russian doll. Tokyo was reflected inside Paris, and France inside Japan, shown by architectural styles and road signs through the images in the monitor. Here, despite reproducibility of images due to multiplicity of the scenes, the video monitor itself becomes a mere image, and the ontological presence of a video camera refers to materiality of electronic image. The technique of *mise en abyme* generates dialectic relation between still and moving images, by reconstructing the relationship between the two cities as a layered series of enfolded exchanges. Such a cinematic view creates an auratic persistence of the photographic image-still image and close ups—in the age of electronic images, by bringing multiple screens into one image, which renders the process of montage. By creating “disjunctive temporalities” of *involuntary memory*, he reminds us of the previous scene by bringing past to present, thus restores our memory within material-temporal juxtaposition.

Wenders also made an in-depth examination of Yamamoto’s sensual and spiritual design language, and the resulting auratic resistance to both luxury-oriented *haute couture* and trend-oriented stereotypical ready-to-wear system in global fashion. Thus, Yamamoto was portrayed through his adoption of an inimitable pattern cutting technique and morphology, and his own understanding of the use of draping. Hence, his hand-made and craft oriented process created enfolded-like and non-fitted clothes, in opposition to the idealized beauty of the ancient Greek or European aesthetic norms. The development of such a universal and timeless style involves the adoption of the aesthetics of imperfection through unstructured and asymmetrical forms. “Symmetry—the symbol of perfection – is not sufficiently human” he explained. Even in the communication of his brand, hand-made production and beauty of imperfection can be observed; instead of a printed and reproduced signature, his *griffe* (i.e. unique mark) as Vinken discussed, was drawn by hand on his productions. Through this particular scene in the film, the audience witnesses this auratic resistance. Yamamoto is currently using this scene in his official web page to publicise his *griffe*. Hereby, this filmic documentation of signing reveals how this hand-made *griffe* was created, and becoming in 1989 as the permanent logo of the Yohji Yamamoto brand, later reproduced in different mediums.

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30 Ibid., 119-129.
31 Hansen, *Benjamin’s Aura*, 348.
32 F. Baudot puts this as “In a society that glorifies and exalts the body and exposes it to view, Yohji has invented a new mode of modesty” (*Yohji Yamamoto*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1997, 10). Also, Suzi Menkes referred to Jean Michel Jarre’s view on Yamamoto’s style; “I like his quasi-religious approach he has to fashion. For me, a woman in Yohji is like a nymphomaniac nun. His clothes are at once sensual and very ritualistic” (http://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/05/style/fashions-poet-of-black-yamamoto.html). Similarly, Japanese fashion curator describes Kawakubo as ‘the leader of a conceptual or religious movement’ (Kawamura, *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion*, 140).
Correspondingly, the reproduced signature as the logo reactivates the original hand-signed one, thus allowing the aura to be reproduced.35

By illustrating ‘Yohji’, as Wenders calls him, and the labour of production in both fashion design and filmmaking, Wenders was able to create a close and tactile relationship with the viewers. In particular he focused on hands. As well as his own hands holding video camera, he showed Yamamoto’s hands touching fabrics, drawing on a sketchbook, and signing his label, as reflected in the signature scene, and also his co-workers’ hands, to emphasize his craft oriented process. King stated that “he uses his camera to point and connect, rather than to take and capture”36 focusing on his subject’s hands to render the materiality of electronic image through the presence of video camera and in the process of recording Yamamoto’s craft. This has a clear parallel with Benjamin noting the tactile, haptic character of 20th century avant-garde art and film against the distance of traditional, cult, auratic art.37 In the era in which contemporary art reproduces its own aura, Yamamoto, as a contemporary artist working in the field of fashion, similarly relies on his tactile and haptic senses to develop a design methodology. He believes that in fashion, “the ultimate industry based on hand work” in the age of digital reproduction, “one has to understand the value of touch and smell of the fabric”38. Despite his departure from strictly Japanese style, his clothes have a certain Japanese feel, because of the unique ways in which the fabric is treated39. The designer expressed his craft by saying “I start with the fabric, the actual material, the ‘feel’ of it”40.

Wenders addressed the tactility, rather than the mere image of Yamamoto’s designs, and also the designer’s sensual approach to clothes, through the materiality of the electronic image. He adopted a filmmaking technique in a sketch-like way, as if keeping a notebook with unfinished and draft-like scenes, as reflected in the film title. Thus, the technically unpolished and even amateurish film, made with a consumer-grade Hi8 video41 is deliberately given a rough and untailored touch. This approach parallels Yamamoto’s anti-glamorous designs, based on the aesthetics of poverty and imperfection, by highlighting the film’s concern with genuine, tactile and craft-oriented quality. Rather than being asked to appreciate the form of the finished product, we become witnesses to the fabrication process of his designs. For instance, Yamamoto’s dressmaking and structural cutting is subject to constant adjustment reflected as a continuous process in a deconstructive way; however, that deconstruction is never actually completed42, as the meaning of the garment is deferred until the very last moment before its appearance in a show. As an explanation, Yamamoto revealed: “I’m still focused on how to cut, how to express how movement is beautiful”43.

The film clearly reveals the designer’s inspiration, dressmaking process and fashion show preparation. This contrasts with previous biographical films. The glamorous world of fashion was emphasized in two early designer films, *Chanel Solitaire* (1981) by George Kaczender focusing on Chanel’s life story, and *Unzipped* (1995) by the director

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35 http://yohjiyamamoto.co.jp/.
37 Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura”, 353.
41 King, *Lost in Translation*, 119-129.
43 Allwood, “Yohji Yamamoto On How Not To Be a Fashion Victim”.
Douglas Keeve following Isaac Mizrahi. Since then, designer documentaries during the last decade have been monogrammic records of designers’ legacy which is now a film genre itself: House of Versace (2003), a chronicle of Donatella Versace by Sara Sugarman; Lagerfeld’s Confidential (2007) by the director Rodolpho Marconi which, through an interview, follows the career of Karl Lagerfeld; Valentino: The Last Emperor (2008) by Matt Tyraneur; Dior and I (2012) a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of Raf Simons’s first haute couture collection by Frederich Tchend; and Yves Saint Laurent (2014), a dramatic life story of the legendary designer by Jalil Lespert. In contrast, Notebook on Cities and Clothes (1989) is notable in the secretive world of international fashion designers for being the first film to examine not only the designer, but also his creative process. In this way, Wenders’s film challenges the myth surrounding a designer name; it reflects a dialogic process between the film director and the documented designer, as Thomas Elsaesser stated, “the film is with Yamamoto rather than about him.” This aspect closely relates to the comment by Benjamin, cited by Caygill, that film in general has created a mode of presentation based upon exhibition value and an audience familiar with its conventions, leading to the possibility of the ‘withering away of the aura’ of the performer. This response involves the re-creation of an ‘artificial aura’ through the cult of the movie star. However, as King stated, the film defies the convention of portrait genre, aiming not make Yamamoto into a cult movie star, but focusing on designs and their genuine aura. Hereby, Wenders’s iconoclastic portraiture of his main protagonist challenges both the hierarchy between performer and the director as auteur, and also his own status, by acting in collaboration with the performer. It is also worth noting that the film reveals Yamamoto’s non-hierarchical relation with his atelier laborers.

3. SEARCH FOR IDENTITY THROUGH REAL CLOTHES

In the film, Wenders seeks to rediscover the identity in retrieving aura in the world of reproduction. He opened by asking; “What is identity/to know where you belong/to know self-worth/to know who you are”. Is he addressing the identity of Yamamoto, or to his clothes, or to the designer’s opinion of identity, or to all of these? Tokyo-born global fashion designer Yamamoto produced his designs in Tokyo (as we understand from the film) and showcased his label worldwide through 95 shops and presented his collections in Paris fashion week. Despite notable cultural influences from Japan in his designs, cultural input itself has never at any time been presented as a decorative motif. This can be seen in his obsession with black, which he found both modest and arrogant; it symbolizes secrecy and stealth in Japanese culture. Traditionally indigo blue was dyed many times to make it close to black, allowing the samurai to transform his body into nothingness, and for the farmer, this dye repelled insects. Yamamoto, as indicated, adopted a universal style of timeless structural clothes, and avoided labelling himself as Japanese per se. From this “no man’s land”, he tells Wenders; “people of my generation born in urban areas have this feeling of not belonging to any nation, I like this feeling”. In a similar way, to split screen film video production allows Yamamoto to appear on.

44 King, Lost in Translation, 119-129.
45 Caygill, Walter Benjamin, 107.
46 King, Lost in Translation, 29.
47 English, Japanese Fashion Designers, 45.
different sides of the monitor, as well as in multiple monitors; the camera moves through the streets of Tokyo and Paris, emphasizing the global circulation of the designer. This recalls Baudelaire’s flâneur, traversing the cityscape to trace the modern, one of the instrumental figures in Benjamin’s Passages of Paris, as well as reflecting the global character of the fashion object and the image.

As design inspiration, Yamamoto sought to render a particular identity for his clothes, highlighting conceptual attitude to identity, stressing “People wear my clothes to make a statement”. Through the film, two meanings of identity were invoked; one is the sense of individual particularity and traits, similar to the inherent property of objects or persons as an indication of aura, and the other is ontological persistence of image, as opposed to rapidly changing fashion and technology. In addition, Yohji designs “real clothes for real people” as he stated in the film. This becomes evident through his inspiration from the German photographer August Sanders’ seminal work, *Man of the 20th Century* (1910s-1960s). Sanders’s work was considered by Benjamin as the atlas of instruction, constituting an unprejudiced observation and a bold and delicate form of empirical study on humanity, which was unfortunately terminated by Hitler’s Third Reich. For Yamamoto, these photographs were striking, not only their historical testimony or their auratic quality, but their potential to portray the dignity of the poor.

The inalienable individuality of the portraits corresponds to an identity of life form and expression, which he sought to convey through his clothes. He was particularly attracted by images of the working clothes of farmers and railway workers – faded and tattered boiler suits, dungarees, pea jackets and overalls – as opposed to workers in suits, symbolic of sedentary power, which had been artificially imposed upon the working class.

Yamamoto believes that the clothes portrayed in the photographs sharply reflect their wearers’ lives, and that garment and wearer become one; that is, the garment is entirely subordinated to the force of the wearer’s personality. Rather than style, he shows that he is attracted by the clothes’ attitude and function, commenting on a photograph of a female worker: “Look at this warm coat. I would like to make something like that. You can see that she will use it. She will need it all the time to survive”, and he added, “the person who works is always beautiful”. Paradoxically, for the high fashion consumer, Yamamoto provides the auratic power of the historical image of poverty, and the state of being *fully at home in effort/functionality* of real men/women. In this process, however, he changes the status of the clothes of the working class, revaluing them by “drawing time”, and through his personal touch and signature, the clothes achieve their exalted position. However, they stand neither as the symbol of luxury, consumption, or excess, nor do they reflect the new silhouette for the fashion season through their image; rather they become beautiful and real through their pure functionality and expression.

The experience of wearing a Yamamoto jacket evokes a similar feeling in Wenders. In the film, when playing billiards with ‘Yohji’, he became fascinated by the jacket because it made him feel the new and the old simultaneously, in the sense of Benjamin’s

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51 Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist*, 73.
52 Berger, “The Suit and the Photograph”, 33-34.
55 Ibid.
dialectical image, but it also gave him a sense of protection\textsuperscript{56}, and of being himself\textsuperscript{57}. He asked “What does Yamamoto know about me, about everyone?”\textsuperscript{58}. For Wenders, the jacket was a link to his father, recalling his paternal legacy\textsuperscript{59}; in a parallel process a collection of photographs of Elbernis\textsuperscript{60} taken in the Weimer period, caused Yamamoto to recall his own past. The similarities in their post-war childhoods imply a kind of Proustian \textit{mémoire involontaire}; Yamamoto’s clothes create a “disjunctive temporality”\textsuperscript{60} through a dialectical relation between past and the present, with a sense of timelessness to evoke this memory, and thereby providing a counterbalance to the self-destructive, obsessive novelty of fashion. This familiarity can be seen in Yamamoto’s expression of his attitude: “I like old clothes, clothes are like old friends”\textsuperscript{61}. This creates an auratic persistence, referred to above, as the ‘inherent property of persons or objects and the aura of the habitual or the everyday and metonymic relation of Shelling’s coat and himself’\textsuperscript{62}.

4. Conclusion

The loss of aura due to technological reproducibility promised, in Benjamin’s view, a more democratic, secular and classless society, in which visual and material artworks would be collectively received in new forms of production at the turn of 20th century. However, rather than abolish the capitalist system, as Benjamin predicted, the increasing pace and rate of dissemination of works due to their reproducibility, paradoxically served to strengthen it, resulting in the harsh exploitation of labour, and eventually the establishment of the current fashion system. Through his “Arcades Project”, Benjamin highlighted the instrumental role of passages in 19th century Paris as being the spaces of fashion development, which allowed textile trade boom and the development of iron structures, that reflected social and transitory features of the fashion industry\textsuperscript{63}. In these passages, fashion became a catalyst for social transformation through continuous proposal of the ‘new’, due to the creation of a dialectical relation between past and present. Nevertheless, following George Simmel’s\textsuperscript{64} account of class-based social structure in the adoption of fashion, Benjamin regarded this dialectical move of fashion, not as progress, but as a tiger’s leap back into the past, to a period under the control of the ruling classes\textsuperscript{65}.

The purpose of fashion’s tiger’s leap into the past was in order to establish absolute novelty\textsuperscript{66}, thus creating the “aura of novelty”, and the social inequalities created by fashion. However, Benjamin considered that the dialectical structure of its leap would free it from dependence on the new, and thus create a tool for rewriting history. In this view, this historical-materialist nature of fashion would create a revolutionary social response

\textsuperscript{57} King, \textit{Lost in Translation}, 119-129.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{59} Hansen, \textit{Benjamin’s Aura}, 336-375.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 336-375.
\textsuperscript{62} Hansen, \textit{Benjamin’s Aura}, 336-375.
\textsuperscript{63} Hroch, \textit{Fashion and Its ‘Revolutions’ in Walter Benjamin’s Arcades}, 110.
\textsuperscript{65} Lehmann, \textit{Tigersprung}, 241.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 247.
in regards to the spirit of the times. Through Wenders’s film, we can witness Yohji Yamamoto making such a response, of which there are two aspects. Firstly, as opposed to the exploitation involved in the capitalist fashion system, the film reflects the designer’s iconoclastic character, as he treated workers equally, thus adopts fair and respectful relations. Secondly, the film represents Yamamoto’s deconstructive craft oriented process, as opposed to mass production. This is achieved through his second-hand look designs, which acquires a patina with the passage of time, reflecting his conceptual, anti-fashion design character, fed by the beauty of imperfection and poverty. He explained to Wenders: “My dream is to draw time”, highlighting his resistance to the constant change in the fashion system.

Yamamoto’s distinctive fashion identity and practices inspired the film, not only to emphasize the similarities between fashion craft and film craft, but also the relation between identity and aura. The concept of designing “real clothes for the real people” was based on Yamamoto’s visual archaeology of August Sander’s photographs in the search for a particular identity. This attitude is evidence of his aural resistance both to fashion (the global fashion system which lost its aura due to focus on mere image reproduction, and its obsession with novelty), and to aura itself (the cult, the conception of art as distinct from the ordinary, the myth of the brand or designer). This approach reveals his aim of recreating the genuine aura, by rendering the clothing real, functional and essential for survival, and ontologically experimental. Correspondingly, rather than focusing on the symbolic value of the brand, or the image of the clothes, the wearers appreciate the designer’s personal touch, which becomes an expression of their own personality. Yamamoto stated his belief that a garment is entirely subordinated to the force of the wearer’s personality: “Whether a season’s fashion is interesting or not does not depend on the designers who created, but on those who see and buy it”. This implies a metonymic relation between the user and the object; the latter becomes habitual, thus real, in regards to reclaim aura.

The film, produced in the form of a diary, focuses on the materiality and tactility of both image and fabric, highlighting cinematic montage, and cutting and assembling in dress making, respectively. As the title suggests, the film reflects the creative processes in terms of a notebook sketch, rather than a finished product. The film also aims to challenge the hierarchy and the authorship relations between director and performer, and designer and the public. This is achieved through an iconoclastic portraiture of the main protagonist, in an interview with Yohji, Wenders referred “the film that we did together”. Rather than reflecting a mere portrait, the subject was the director’s field of study as understood through the designer’s practices. In the light of these remarks, the aura, considered within the state of its habitual and familiar character in relation to contemporary fashion, reveals its ‘material-temporal imbrications, which creates clearer relationship between time, matter and self’, as reflected in Yamamoto’s aural resistance. The film leaves the audience pondering on the paradoxical relation between ‘multiplicity/transitoriness’ with ‘tactility/materiality’ of electronic images, thus rather than merely viewing the image, coming to an awareness of its thingly quality.

67 Ibid., 243.
68 Baudot, Yohji Yamamoto, 13.
69 Ibid., 14.