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### **IMAGE Introduction: Pictorial Practices of Clothing**

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Swantje Martach

## IMAGE Introduction: Pictorial Practices of Clothing

Already in the last century, in *Seeing Through Clothes*, Anne Hollander defined fashion as a “pictorial practice”. Via its *digital turn*, fashion’s rapprochement to the realm of the image is intensifying in multiple directions: In 3D-rendering and AI-prototyping (text-to-image), the production of fashion is streamlined by pictorial means. In its *phygital* version, fashion is marketed pictorial-only, in order to then (still?) be worn materially; as *digital-only*, fashion entirely restricts itself to the pictorial realm: As image, it promises to be accessible (democratizing high fashion) and versatile (intensifying the joy of the latter’s speed, apparently without its ecological footprint). On this vector, fashion is no longer restricted to physical bodies, but dresses also images-of-bodies, as well as their extensions into avatars (as *skins*) and further non- and posthuman spheres.

Fashion purchases are incited by images (Barthes’ conventional fashion media, e.g. the poster, the ad, the mag, are joined by e.g. picture-posts on social media and virtual fashion shows), they happen via images (in online shops,—which often are reached through social media posts—, or already in virtual mirrors or fitting-rooms), and are circulated as images (used for the creation of online identities). Yet Instagram, as the most pictorial of social media, also functions as platform for a counter-movement to the turning-image of fashion, which remarkably operates *from within* the image and uses fashion to remind us of our being-bodies, our ecological entanglement, and our perishability (see e.g. the works of Verónica Madueño or Katerina Shukshina, as forming part of this edition).

All these phenomena, those that are not listed, and those that are yet to come, certainly affect our perception, experience, and understanding of fashion. The broad thesis underlying this *IMAGE* hence is: Fashion is read as, evaluated alongside the, and exists as image, more than ever before! For this reason, the present edition considers it worthy to explore and research the touchstones, tensions, and merits that *image studies* and *fashion studies* have to offer for the present life-world and humanities.

In so doing, this *IMAGE* makes use of the *interdisciplinarity* of the German Society of Image Studies’s journal, and hopes to have been creating interesting and insightful contributions for not just its fashion-theoretical/enthusiast readers.

As a special edition, it aspires to be a crucial step for the implementation of fashion studies in particularly the German-speaking hemisphere. And as the residencies of its contributors range from New Zealand to Peru, it also seeks to strengthen the *IMAGE*'s positioning as an *international* publication organ.

As a matter of fact, this *IMAGE* is the first to include images and interviews. The latter were arranged by the editor of this edition, intending to create fruitful exchanges, often between a German fashion scholar and an international fashion designer or dress artist. It is a particular honor for this edition to include and combine voices of long-established (such as the one of renowned Dutch fashion and visual culture scholar Anneke Smelik) with promising upsurging fashion voices (such as Charlotte Brachtendorf), voices established in other fields, that were motivated to turn to fashion (I would like to express my gratitude to Andreas Osterroth for his openness and flexibility), as well as the knowledges and insights only artists can provide!

This *IMAGE* is structured into four chapters: 1) Anneke Smelik's conversation with Adil Boughala and Vera van Nuenen (the founders of *WETWARE Magazine*) works as a critical yet also entertaining entrance into the topic of digital fashion, which is deepened by the respective contributions of Tyla Stevenson (keenly dealing with digital fashion's materialities) and Charlotte Brachtendorf (criticizing AI's reduction of fashion images).

2) To the re/presentation of fashion in social media, Gerlind Hector as well as Ruth Eaton commit themselves: Hector focuses on dress art, and rounds up her academic insights by an interview with artist and Instagram personality Katerina Shukshina; Eaton specializes on a mixed-method research of one fashion piece in particular, the pocket, and its circulation as and social criticism via memes.

3) The third section dedicates itself to the interplay of dressed/dressing bodies, skins, and images: As gaming theorist, Andreas Osterroth analyzes the development and trade of skins as that particular phenomenon which broke paths for digital fashion. In their cross-written piece, fashion theorist Lutz Hengst and artist Eva Balayan question the body's skin as a border between emotional inside and pictorial outside, whose power crucially stems from its softness and instability. This play with dichotomies is continued in the interview of artist Petja Ivanova with fashion anthropologist Stefanie Mallon, in which hacked and fermented "exo-bodies" grant (metaphorical, pictorial, material) ways to finally address inner wounds ("emo-bodies").

4) The last section of this *IMAGE* is all about posthuman endeavors happening at the intersection of image and fashion: Gwyneth Holland focuses on the inclusion of fat bodies and their fashion futures across conventional and virtual worlds. Artist Esmay Wagemans examines the figure of the cyborg: its development from Haraway's theoretical foundations, to its paradoxical capitalization

by and discrimination in social media, and her own artistic explorations striving for its re-empowerment. And biomaterial artist Verónica Madueño (whom the editor had the pleasure to meet virtually) works with living garments for the sake of creating sensory images and saving first times.