

BOOK REVIEW: MANUS × MACHINA

The publication accompanying the Costume Institute's 2016 exhibition *Manus × Machina: Fashion in the Age of Technology* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, catalogues the work featured in the show

and includes interviews with designers about the relationship between hand and machine in their own processes. By simultaneously provoking the notion that the ontological status of the object is distinguished by its method of production and denouncing its validity

through the ambivalence of display, the publication foregrounds the physicality of surface as the threshold between interior and exterior. The publication makes no value distinction among its artifacts thereby maintaining that the metaphysical parameters of this threshold are deter-

mined by the semiotics of surface. It is interesting to consider that this pre-occupation with the primacy of aesthetics in quantifying the effects of the digital revolution is also present in architectural discourse. In turn, I became interested in the way in which the politics of display

FASHION

in *Manus × Machina* provide insight into the difference between fashion and architecture as a consequence of scale. The pieces are displayed devoid of context; structured by scaffolding as un-human like as possible, against

backgrounds with qualities intended only to enhance the perceived singularity of the object and the harmony of its constituent parts. The plane of reference is left open to be constructed by the user. The artifact is isolated from its operative

condition of cladding the body where it is entangled with the construction of identity. This method of display intends to isolate the tectonics and aesthetics of the object and is an abstraction not unlike architectural representation which

removes the building from its operative dimension and attempts to articulate the surface as an abstract expression of the interior metaphysical depth.

EDITORS' STATEMENT WE PUT ON CLOTHES, WE GO INTO BUILDINGS...

Buildings and clothing were invented to solve problems—each is a container intended to shelter the body. However, the evolution of buildings and clothing diverged from a purely functionalist trajectory when Architecture and Fashion emerged as disciplines of cultural production that transcend the ontological parameters of the utilitarian object.

This conflation of utility with aesthetics, implicates fashion and architecture as simultaneous agents and artifacts of the human condition. Each discipline's proximity to and ubiquitous relationship with the body (physical and social/individual and collective), imbues a communicative virtue that participates reflexively in affecting our perception of the physical world and in constructing notions of identity. There is no precondition for the evolution of style, other than the empty one that what is produced is different from what there once was.

This provocation sets the ideological crystal that assembles the framework of the anticipated dialectic of the intersection of architecture and fashion.

Suzanne Marchelewicz
Francesca Xavier

AN EXCERPT FROM "BREACHING THE BINARY: A LOOK AT TRANSGENDER AS IT RELATES TO THE SPACES THE TRANS BODY INHABITS"

Alexandra Karlsson-Napp

In this diagram (fig. 1) of the Brick Country house, Mies Van der Rohe breaches the architectural boundary between interior and exterior with the intent of bringing man into the world he previously structurally closed himself off from in order to allow him to be physically and emotionally connected with his surrounding environment.

The current day decentered global network and particularization of world has in a curious way brought the battle between interior and exterior closer to home, posing questions and doubts about the authenticity of our core identity and asking us to interrogate the body and dive under the skin. After all, an increased bodily consciousness is perhaps the only thing you are left with when all surroundings seem temporary at best.



Fig. 1 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Brick Country House Sketch

Judith Butler demonstrates that the inside-outside manifold sustains gender identification and rituals of exclusion that can never be totally successful—the body just isn't an impermeable, closed form.¹

Butler also holds that "nature" as such be thoroughly revised through ecological notions of interrelatedness.²

Butler here poses trans as a natural condition, one which promises to bring us out into the world, increasing instances of intimacy and inclusion.

¹ Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1990)

² Butler, Judith, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 2011)

CLOTHING, CLADDING, AND THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY

Joel Sanders

My longstanding interest in the relationship between architecture, fashion and the construction of human identity began in 1999 when I edited *STUD: Architectures of Masculinity*, a book that invited a group of architects, critics and artists to explore the role architecture plays in the *performance* of male identity.¹ Stud borrowed the notion of gender as "performance" from queer theorists who argue that human identity in general, and gender identity in particular are not inborn biological traits but rather culturally constructed, learned modes of behavior. Theorists like Judith Butler

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referred to drag queens whose exaggerated gestures, make-up, and costumes expose how gender is not innate but performed. But the performance of gender identity depends, at least in part, on the design environment: impersonation relies not only on the materials that clothe the body but also upon the designed environment that frames it.

Two insights derived from queer studies inspired me to think about architecture in a new way. First, if architects tend to consider buildings as photogenic objects, the notion of "performance" encouraged me to shift my attention to the interplay between human bodies and space and to embrace a conception of the built environment as a "stage" that enables people, like actors, to perform various roles. Second, Butler's analysis of the way drag performers rely on costume to construct identity, led me to discover the affinities between clothing and cladding—the ephemeral elements like wallpaper, paint, fabrics, curtains upholstery and furniture—that interior designers use to dress the interiors designed by architects: both are culturally coded applied surfac-

es that we use to fashion identity. The design of queer enclaves from the 1960's to the 1980's often made explicit this link between clothing and cladding. These subcultural spaces often involved appropriating and exaggerating the binary sartorial codes borrowed from mainstream culture used to signify femininity and masculinity. For example, the décor of leather bars both complemented and often matched the clothing of their customers by combining multiple material references to macho uniforms and environments etched in the collective imagination. Bodies, dressed in leather, studs, and chains harmonized with the leather banquettes, exposed brick, unfinished plank floors, chain link, and steel plates that alluded to construction sites, biker bars, and prisons.

Exploring the way clothing and cladding facilitates the performance of human identity, is not an issue limited to sexual identity alone but one that shapes the entire spectrum of personal and professional roles that make up our daily lives. Architects can learn from fashion designers, expanding their palettes to combine the hard materials traditionally associated with architecture with the soft surfaces typically used by fashion and interiors designers, to create flexible multi-purpose spaces that will allow a diverse range of people of different ages, genders and abilities to productively interact in public and private space.

¹ Sanders, Joel, *STUD: Architectures of Masculinity* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999)

DE-SIGN, I DON'T LIKE IT BUT THEN I LIKE IT SO I DON'T KNOW

Lani Barry and Jeff Liu

Deriving from the same Latin root *signum*, *design* as an act is intimately tied with *sign*, a representation that evokes a signified idea. To design is to designate: to create signs that mark out ideas beyond the object itself. But perhaps one can intentionally misread this etymology in a dumber way. If one interprets the root *de* as a removal (*de*-frost, *de*-lamine, *de*-activate), the act of design is reversed: a removal of signage from the object that complicates the pairing of a singular object with its signified meaning.

This misinterpreted notion of de-sign informs parallel trends in architecture and fashion in which the object sign is removed from its original context to disrupt a singular understanding and introduce a multiplicity of interpretations. Fashion has been particularly infatuated with signage since its inception through its meticulous curation of brands, but in recent years, the appropriation of streetwear sensibilities in high fashion have shifted focus towards the logo as the primary object of design. The streetwear label, Supreme, in particular, has made its iconic Futura bold italic red box logo into a symbol of exclusivity through the pricing and self-imposed scarcity of its items. The logo itself becomes the object of desire in Supreme clothing, so much so that the branding of everyday objects with the box logo (such as bricks, inflatable pool rafts, and even MTA Metrocards) has appropriated everyday things into highly coveted design objects.

While Supreme designs through a signing of objects with its brand, Demna Gvasalia's Vetements appropriates existing signs and recontextualizes them

as objects of desire. Most notably, the Vetements Spring/Summer 2016 line featured the appropriation of the uniform worn by DHL shipping company employees for the runway and later retail at a starting price of \$330 USD. The shirt was a near exact replica of DHL worker's uniforms, save a secondary understated, embroidered logo on the back collar "VETEMENTS/PRINTEMPS-ETE 2016."

While the incorporation of irony and uniform-inspired motifs into fashion is by no means new, the direct quotation of the DHL uniform divorces the sign of the DHL logo from its original commercial association and turns it into a luxury brand within the tightly controlled supply chain of high fashion. The DHL shirt is further de-signed, when Vetements stages an exclusive runway show at DHL headquarters in which the company's CEO Ken Allen wears a Vetements DHL T-shirt. This moment emphasizes the ambiguity of the sign as it is reunited with its original context while retaining its status as a luxury item. Is it an instance of a CEO wearing a company shirt, or a wealthy man dressed in luxury clothing? This layering of meanings creates a totalizing ouroboros, a closed circuit that appropriates the banal into ironic spectacle, then places it back in reality where it is somehow both.

This interpretation of the act of design informs an understanding of contemporary architectural production as influenced by social media. Scrolling through Pinterest and Instagram has become a codified ritual of architectural production that seeks out visual signs to appropriate into a synthesized de-sign. As it stands, these images are often uncritically consumed as simplified visual signs without regard for their context. But as the example of Vetements proves, de-sign is an ambiguous political act of de-signing and re-signing to create objects that simultaneously undermine and embody the original sign: a conflict that critiques the act of de-sign itself.

BAUHAUS BODIES

Kathleen James-Chakraborty
with Francesca Xavier
and Suzanne Marchelewicz

Discussions of the Bauhaus today almost inevitably begin with a recitation of the ways in which it has become exemplary of the modern, its designs epitomizing the "new" not only in its Weimar home, but also in the history of Architecture and design more generally. The nature of this Bauhaus influence is often left rather unclear, however, the name serving as a talisman for a commitment to newness and progressive aesthetic and political values.

Kathleen James-Chakraborty's situates herself as one of the leading historians involved in efforts of the last decade to challenge dominant readings of the Bauhaus and trace the histories of its mythologization. Previous works of her and her colleagues call into question the degree to which the school should continue to symbolize an uncomplicated relationship between art, modern technology, and progressive politics. The following interview discusses her most recent article "BauHaus Bodies." The piece looks critically at the value of Fashion at the Bauhaus (specifically the clothing of worn by women weavers), and its role in ensuring the timeless quality of the school's design approach. The intersection of Fashion and Architecture comes into question through the lens of design identity and time.

FRANCESCA XAVIER/
SUZANNE MARCHELEWICZ
Bauhaus dress is nonetheless unintentionally revealing not of Bauhaus bodies, which—arms and legs aside—it often effectively obscured, but as unexplored evidence of how the school participated in and yet stood outside of contemporary fashion in ways that helped ensure that its approach to design would eventually appear timeless. Many of the garments women students could easily be donned today.

For me, this quote somewhat parallels the difference between fashion and trend in that the temporal condition of fashion compared to that of architecture, is often considered to be more "of the moment," more "fleeting." What becomes interesting to consider is the presence

of "timelessness," in almost all fields of design and the moment in which this became a possibility. How was this related to or caused by the Bauhaus's philosophy of the body in space?

KATHLEEN JAMES-CHAKRABORTY
I don't think its really that much related to the Bauhaus philosophy of bodies in space and i don't think the Bauhaus is the only kind of timeless design, there are certain kinds of Classicism that are extremely timeless. There is always an edge of architecture that is fashionable, I think of some of my favorite designs by Charles Rennie Mackintosh which go in and out of Fashion like lightning, there is that side that is exciting because it's "hip" but then there is the other kind of understated good design that doesn't change much. If you solicit work from certain architects today, you are hoping for an aesthetic lifespan of twenty to forty years and if you're lucky it will really look important over the long haul. An Alvar Aalto or Louis Kahn building is a real product of its period, but it doesn't go in and out of Fashion a whole lot. Whereas if you're looking to build an exhibition pavilion or other contemporary typologies, they are designed to be of the "now," (these designs) don't seem to last very long. I think there is a part of architecture that is purely fashionable and a part that tries to transcend passing styles.

FX
Clothing provides a compelling window into the Bauhaus, because it confirms both the precociousness of the school's experimental character in a field upon which it had almost no actual influence. Examples of Bauhaus furniture and metalwork have become modern classics precisely because they became so familiar and thus inspired subsequent designers. Fashion, however, has not been highlighted in any public presentation of the school. No Bauhaus faculty and probably no Bauhaus students built careers in this arena.

One of the most salient explanations I've heard as to why the art world tends to snub Fashion is that Fashion is still considered to be in the "female" space, therefore it's seen as "less than." Do you think this is perhaps why there was a lack of consideration for Fashion as fine art at the Bauhaus?

KJC
I think that Fashion was not widely viewed as part of the same kind in the 1920s, there is very little dispute about that. It was a place where women expressed their own identity in daily life, but it didn't intersect in a major way for them in their careers, this was not the place where Fashion was held. Historians of early modern europe in particular are finding that the extents and importance of textiles is that people invested far more money in fashion, not necessarily in architecture, but certainly in painting and furniture.

Today people spend much less money on clothing than we do on furniture, housing, automobiles etc. I think this has also pushed its status down. I think historians are only now going back and looking at what really mattered in earlier social times, partly because of gender issues. In terms of the investment of intellectual energy, artisan skills, and materials, the clothing the bauhaus women wore required less time and skill than a silver teapot with a never handle would in many cases so those works were far more valued.

The skills required to make clothing at that point were widely shared among women across all classes and so it was not appreciated as something extraordinary. When women are doing extraordinary things like making lace which takes an enormous amount of artisan skills they are paid almost nothing.

Nevertheless I think gender is a part of (the devaluation of Fashion at the Bauhaus) but these issues of artisan skill, gendered skill and cost of materials are a larger part of the problem.

FX
Could you speak about the work of the women weavers and their impact on textile art, as well as the conversation of Fashion as an art at the time?

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PAPRIKA

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KJC

Most of the women who were in the weaving workshop didn't start out wanting to be weavers. Meaning to go to the most experimental art school, they would do anything they can to do so, unless they really fight like Marianne Brandt, they end up in the weaving workshop. Most of them are trained as artists that are pretty skilled, that being said the story of the weavers has only been important for the last twenty five years, aside perhaps from Anni Albers (fig. 2), but even she wasn't important enough for Yale to hire her when why hired her husband.

When one thinks about textile art it doesn't descend one hundred percent from the Bauhaus, but figures like Albers certainly made huge contributions (to the art) impacting upholstery fabrics, dress fabrics, etc. Textiles were meaning to be an art, but they were not intended for dress, there was a lot of intent at free standing works of art and later there was a lot of textile work intended for upholstery fabric, certainly a great deal of it wasn't to be worn. Little scholarly work exist that tell us of bauhaus woven clothing, or fabrics meant to be worn, They were not thinking a lot about clothing.

Clothing as an art form is under discussion at the same time, and you would have quite a big Fashion center in Berlin, Paris even bigger. There would have been people in Berlin that would have thought they were producing if not art, something close to it. Someone like Sonia Delaunay in Paris, who would have been at the absolute cutting edge of the invention of abstract painting was also engaged in fashion design. But she is a very different kind of figure than the bauhaus women who didn't see their dress as an extension of the design of their textiles or tea canisters.

FX

Fashion becomes inextricably implicated in constructions and reconstructions of identity: how we represent these contradictions and ourselves in our everyday lives. Do you find that the correlation between the dress of the architect and their design style was more prominent in the late nineteenth century than today?

KJC

Someone should do something on Corb's glasses, Hans Poelzig had those glasses—he was less well known but he wore them all the time... and so I think these things start then but most of the rest of what Corb wore wasn't interesting—he didn't spend a lot of time thinking about it whereas other architects did.

As for women, not many were architects in the 19th century, but otherwise many were interested in reform fashion and arts and crafts; they often wore very distinctive types of clothing which was on one hand healthier and on the other hand a design sensibility—many of them being the wives of architects.

One of the interesting things between fashion and art representation is that they share some of the some problems in terms of the production of images. For example, abstract art becomes the story in the 70s and if you aren't abstract you aren't modern. However, in both fashion and architecture, representation has to actually tell you about the clothing or building so as designers they both use different vocabulary but have that same issue of needing to be contemporary. Moving forward, today in architecture we have hyper-hyper realism to the point where you can hardly tell the difference between buildings that have been built and renderings. On the other hand, fashion today is mostly represented through photographs and you no longer have many people doing fashion illustrations.

FX

Precisely what was most exceptional about the school's success, is its ability to reframe the new as what became known as classically modern rather than the embodiment of a particular Zeitgeist unique to complicated conditions of the Weimar Republic, that made it most enduring. How do you think this parallels with the idea that there has been no end to modernism since its fruition?

KJC

What interests me about the women at the Bauhaus is that they are standing outside of fashion yet what they are wearing is incredibly new at the time. Most of those garments that they wore,

we could wear today.

I am also interested in the way things that are modern at that time became timeless. Take for instance that you are working in a shop—you could market something as modern that is in fact, something over a 100 years old to a customer who has no idea that it is that old. You could do that with a number of Bauhaus designs but you can't do that with most of women's clothing before 1920.

save ourselves from the impending doom of being controlled by technology if we return to the essential meaning of art by creating work that doesn't aim for consumption. For instance, work should represent an inner part of our being, the way that aboriginal art used to.

KH

We need think about how we use the word beauty or english words even. When I use the world aesthetic I use it in a techn-



Fig. 2 Anni Albers in Berlin, 1926

It doesn't look so strange right now yet still it is marketed not as being historicist from the 1920s but simply as modern. That just fascinates me because in the 20s you couldn't have marketed anything from the 80s as being modern—not just clothing but pretty much anything—maybe a chair but certainly nothing from 100 years ago.

AESTHETIC OBJECTS, BEAUTY, AND "RUNNING OUT OF SPACE?"

Karsten Harries and Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, with Francesca Xavier

FRANCESCA XAVIER

Since we are in a school of Architecture, following what you are saying do you see the architect analogous to a musician or composer of music?

KARSTEN HARRIES

Well I use that analogy. A score is incomplete without the performance; it requires a performance- however it can be performed in a different way by an artist who interprets it. I think a successful building should be open in this sense, so that the openness is part of the design and so it remains sub-consciously incomplete. It should not try to be a complete work of art in the image of a painting, where every part should be just as it is.

Its interesting that when we photograph great Architecture we do so without people, and that's how we like it. For instance when I showed the interior of the Baroque church it was empty and not covered by people so that you could see the space. But it's really these people who should, even in a formal sense, complete the work of art. I teach a course this semester on the Baroque and there are churches that have the Last Judgment fresco painted so that the people are deliberately left out of the image because it is people that are to be judged. All of a sudden you realize it is you who is missing, you are needed to complete the work. In a formal sense the architect leaves the building incomplete.

There are many examples of this during the Baroque. In this sense we should not try to create aesthetic objects that satisfy one just as it comes of the computer or whatever, that is certainly true of the Zaha building (I showed last night).

EEVA-LIISA PELKONEN

I love to talk to my students about this building, because there is something about the very friction of the building that always seems to produce something in art. The friction can be productive, but it's not an easy score to play.

FX

To question Heidegger's Essay "The Question Concerning Technology" in the conversation he states that we can

ical sense in reference to the avant garde. When it was first used in the early 18th century there existed an idea that about painting that the work of art should present itself to you as a self sufficient whole; that ideally the painting is a complete and whole thing. That conflicted with an earlier view about art where this was not at all the idea. Art had the function of serving some other thing. If you made a statue of the Virgin Mary, you would try to make it beautiful, but the main thing was that it was a statue of the Virgin, so beauty had a serving function to the public.

I think this still remains, we can illustrate this through the function of a bracelet. Someone gives you a bracelet as a gift. That bracelet might be looked at as an aesthetic object, that bracelet might be so gorgeous that you don't even want to wear it; the person that gives you the bracelet probably thought of the bracelet in relationship to your arm and how it would represent you and look on your body. So jewelry has a representational function, it's not just an aesthetic object in its own right. I think that's the real point we want to illustrate, that jewelry is not first of all an art of objects, and I think that can be extended to architectural beauty.

FX

You mentioned The Metropolitan Museum in reference to the objects displayed as having lost their primary function, only now to be seen as aesthetic objects of beauty. How do you think this idea of functionality has played a role in keeping critiques from looking at fashion as high art while architecture assume the role of aesthetic object so easily?

KH

There is a tension that exists in fashion if we look at fashion shows. There are people whose latest designs are ideally not wearable but they are creating objects with a purely aesthetic purpose, objects which merely say "Wow this is really something" "On the other hand there are fashion designers which clearly serve and very much have in mind the individuals who are going to wear whatever it is that they make. So that tension I think goes through the fashion world to approach us to beauty. One is more representational and one is aiming at the idea of self-sufficiency. I think that goes for both fashion and architecture then. I think many architects are fascinated with the idea of a building as an ideally self sufficient aesthetic object. I think we have to get away from that, for the world's sake, I think it's a bad way of doing art.

A SPACE OF CONTRADICTORY DISPOSITIONS

Shreya Shah

Masik Pass Ski Resort acts as a performance space, one which attempts to

soften the unnerving, threatening, and violent appearance of a dictatorship through a tourist destination of luxurious comforts and amenities. The appearance of Masik Pass as a place of tourism and luxury is essential to the DPRK's competitive aspirations among eastern and western nations because its commercial aesthetic actually becomes a political tool of empowerment. Meaning, the ski resort doesn't soften the country's appearance as a violent dictatorship, it enables it. This paper investigates the display of propaganda, architecture, the resort's physical siting, and its acquisition of commercial products to find their unfolding relationships and their implications for such a tourist destination.

The act of constructing the resort itself required motivation through violent propaganda. Military personnel operated like the dynamics of factory workers who built the ski resort as their finished product. The DPRK's soldier builders were pressed to build speedily and aggressively. During construction, a sign stood at the base of the mountain which translated to "Full attack. March Forward. Let's Absolutely Finish Building Masik Pass Ski Resort Within This Year By Launching A Full Aggressive War and Full Battle." There is a strange underlying contradiction in the violent rhetoric, act of construction, and the softness of the log cabin motif.

Masik Pass references an unusual juxtaposition of architectural vernaculars on its exterior facade. The facade cleverly provides the warmth of the "log cabin aesthetic" at the pedestrian level with windows framed by stacked logs, a motif which also frames the ski mountain map. The roof profile references a socialist modernism aesthetic, similar to that of the Palace of Youth and Sports, built in Kosovo in 1977. These contradictions, between the log cabin and the socialist references, present an unnerving kind of appearance.

The interiors of the resort buildings borrow scenes from typical ski resorts which one might find in Canada or Switzerland. The Masikryong Hotel is furnished with wooden chairs with woven seats and countertops supported again, by crisscrossed stacked logs. The hotel room walls have carefully cut and assembled knotted wood paneling and the ceilings of the indoor pool are decorated with wood beams. The interior amenities provide all the trappings of a fine resort and include facilities one might expect: ski rental shop, souvenir shop, children's nursery, sauna, spa, pool, bar, dance floor, and salon. Visitors may indulge in foreign commercial products as well such as chocolates, Heineken beer, liquors, and cosmetics. The room service menu includes foreign tastes such as French inspired croissants, Italian inspired spaghetti, and Black Label Whisky imported from Scotland, along with more traditional flavors of the region such as kimchi and egg and laver soup.

The most critical of these commercial products for the resort to function is the ski equipment itself. In an attempt to punish the DPRK for its nuclear testing in the past, the United Nations has placed sanctions on North Korea to prohibit the sale of "luxury goods" including ski lifts and snowmobiles. Despite these sanctions, the country manages to still acquire these products. The indeterminacy of how these products are entering the DPRK becomes a powerful tool. The rules are not meaningless but the act of undermining such rules presents the DPRK as increasingly unsettling. In September of 2013 (three months prior to the resort's opening), Switzerland's Federal Council prohibited Barholet Maschinenbau AG Flums, (a Swiss company specializing in fabrication of structural metal and transportation equipment) from carrying-out a \$7.5 million ski lift transaction with North Korea. The North Korean media described it as a "serious human rights abuse that politicizes sports and discriminates against the Koreans. Kim Jong-un, uninhibited by such sanctions stated, "We can make nuclear weapons and rockets, we can build a ski lift."

Masik Pass appears to be a pleasant luxurious ski resort but the relationships drawn among its architecture, products, spatial arrangements, and appearances seem to represent an alternative appearance: a brilliantly crafted political tactic. The ski resort takes on a new meaning and becomes an opportunity to make a space of complex contradictions and dispositions.