Hussein Chalayan’s film, ‘Freedom is the new luxury’, Markitou’s project thus provides an update of how the human body is reclaiming the public space through fashion similar in intent to Accounco. Markitou’s interventionist projects play with advertising and graffiti in an effort to create better access to urban areas for individuals and thus wrest them from the dominance of cheap investor-architect-ure.

At first, I was shocked by PETZWAR by Miljana Jovan-Djordjevic, aka DJ Mira* (Serbian, residing in Vienna), because the Mondrian icon is used here as one of the most overcrowded commercially, in everything from posters to fashion patterns, and this reduces the icon of modernity to a surprisingly new way in the video Jovan-Djordjevic poses as a dalit model in a titty bar clothed whose design adjoins Past Mondrian’s modular. A precursor to this homage is Yves Saint Laurent’s west jersey Mondrian tunic dress 1955-1966, a piece that first introduced the fashion world to the Mondrian look. The concept of having a dress as a canvas is one in which DJ Mira* “toils” by infusing at Mondrian’s abstract aesthetics meaning to a wearer’s plastic form. Here, fashion confronts a social reality, whose reflection in turn demands a reflection upon the artist’s own social. Through use of a minimalistic mirror reflecting to create the image and the soundtrack of The Beautiful Design, DJ Mira* becomes an interactive part of the scene.

In an off-site intervention, Tenesse Gower (Canadian, residing in New York), turns to the front’s den with her installation Display Modem II (Heppenheim), 2009 – in this case Barneys luxury fashion department store on Madison Avenue. There, his installation of paper-mâché copies of original sculptures by Barbara Hepworth will play on the modus operandi of an art gallery amidst the commercial-world backdrop. I still remember going into the former Helmut Lang boutique in SoHo and not knowing whether I just entered an art installation, a museum’s white cube or a fashion store. Gower emphasizes the artificiality and futility of banal, salable goods, whose value is boosted by adept merchandising techniques.

With his work I based (1997, translated as enriched healthy and happy) Takahiko Sada (Japanese) proposes a radical rethinkering of the fashion fashion industry. For a fashion project he invited around 300 members of Tokyo’s Setagaya Ward district, to cultivate their own cotton. The cottonweds are harvested and hand spun into threads to produce “fluto” (clothing). Sada creates with these homogenous cotton very fragile sculptures in the shape of human bodies. Through this contemplative process, the artist/designer articulates the state of an “enriched heart and mind” where he turns a fragmented, hectic world into an infinitely layered and interconnected environment in the “external time” as the philosopher Yūkōri Nishihara states in reference to Yūkōri.

Edwina Hörl (Austria, residing in Tokyo) also refuses to follow popular fashion trends to create her collections. Instead, she continually seeks out new socially relevant challenges. Her multimedia installation Dead Fashion Robbin – Exchange Faux Market (2009), produced together with sooba, examines the importance of flux markets as an economic make-up as a source of inspiration for installations. Spectacles of A Way Beyond Fashion are invited to participate directly by optionally exchanging a piece of their clothing. In another break with consumerism, Hörl distributes her specially designed toilet paper in public restrooms throughout Manhattan. Visitors have an opportunity to wrap themselves in the paper and print their designs, to create co-eval ephemeral clothing pieces.

Carlos Fernández (Mexico) takes up powerful ethical and sociopolitical themes, while challenging the role of fashion and design to “enlighten” society. Mexico is of course strongly influenced by the USA and the Fashion industry’s mega brands, which often makes one city look like the next. However, DI Mira’s project resonates with original works and techniques, and embraces the indigenous population of the Yucatán and other areas of Mexico in her work. Inspired by traditional patterns, designs, colors and cuts, she also uses her mobile fashion workshop throughout Mexico to carry out design projects with indigenous communities, and to draw attention to their socio-economic situation. Together with Pedro Reyes, Fernández devises the installation Square Cloths for A Mindless People (2009), in which seven pieces of clothing featuring a strictly geometric design of squares and rectangles hang from a bent steel rack. Reyes’ sculpture is a parody of IKEA’s incompletable Open Cube. Films showing how the individual clothing items can be worn in the body in a multifunction manner run parallel to the installation.

Stephanie Cumming of Liquid Loft, a dance company from Athens, uses paper to create paper-based media-hyper bodies and stylish body styling, as well as narcissistic and star mania. As the “Anti-Lera

Curated by Robert Punkenhofer

apexart

Robert Punkenhofer ©2009

Cf.: Cumming shows how the media spectacle degrades our heroines from cult into mere picturesque promises of the masses. The layers of clothing that she wears pull over her body in the form of a spring skin not only serve as a synonym for overlaid identities, but also offer a variety of outfit choices.

Hussein Chalayan (Cyprus, residing in London) can be considered as one of today’s most conceptually interesting fashion designers, alongside Carol Christian Poell, Martin Margiela and Walter Van Beirendonck. His chunky cold is precisely on the mark; the work Rudi Gernreich’s unique performance was in Osaka. His LED Dress (2007), in the installation, translates energy and the interesting that takes place with the environment – in terms of environmental change. Chalayan’s film The Absent Presence (2005) was first shown as an art project at the Venice Biennale. It’s a visionary eye on the future in a place where “fashion stars” are used to access private data and track consumer behavior, and where DNA data is used to keep tabs on everyone at border crossings and airports.

Despite this apocalyptic ending note, the exhibition A Way Beyond Fashion presents a selected group of artists and designers who blurs the lines between the two domains and revise some key tech-nological, ecological and socio-economic issues of our day, so that Gernreich’s vision “Fashion will go out of fashion” – should not become reality soon.
Aproaching fashion from a personal vantage point, I am confronted with the topic on a daily basis. My young son frequently asks me for money to buy clothes for American, Calvin Klein or some other popular designer. I also write to my closest female-impired ritual of identity building, which means getting out of bed in the morning as just another young boy and transforming it to self-in a “slip-on”-fashion freak-high-peak-years by the time he’s ready to go out in the evening. It doesn’t even take the “Fuck a Cold” on his t-shirt to make it clear to me what role fashion plays as a medium for communicating youthful rebellion!

A Way Beyond Fashion analyses the shifting boundaries between art and fashion. The selection 11 artists and designers blur the lines between the two disciplines when exploring phenomena related to the global fashion industry in their performances, public art actions, films, animations and installations - all as means of juxtaposing the prevailing discourse on identity and media-related consumption patterns with entirely new concepts and forms of articulation. Indeed, fashion codes, languages and strategies serve as the source material for the presented projects, that charged with aesthetic and economic, technological and ideological implications, are contributing to the design of “real life” worlds.

Naturally, my own passion for fashion resonates with a project also: A Way Beyond fashion. I like to wear Helmut Lang – a vintage suit that I couldn’t afford if I had an newborn – a Vuitton & Ross dress or a housewife from material designer and “the same, that I’m fascinated by the term “wear” art-fashion, and that the art world has developed en expon- 

mass appeal of fashion. A Way Beyond Fashion highlights those designers keeping pace with the artists: Takei Renji, for instance, who has flagship stores styled by artists, and who regularly visits art shows to view content with artistic depth and get inspira- tion for his fashions. Indeed, this fascination is not something new, nor is it mine alone, since once I can trace back the interplay between art and fashion to the beginning of modern- ity. It started with fashion designers using works as models for their creations and by the future Giacomo Balla designing clothes in 1913.

A related idea that interests me is the cultural aspect. Art de facto a luxury industry. On the one hand, we see this in the art boom that reigned over the collapse of the mar- ket amidst the most recent recession. On the other, we notice the increasing glamour and hype that surrounds grand openings and cocktail parties at art exhibitions, to a point nearly matching the pomp found in the world of fashion shows. Additionally, we no longer speak only of star designers, but also of star artists. Of course, the ques- tion of commodification also applies to all these days. Take, for example, the works of Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst. The latter’s For the Love of God is a diamond-stud- ed skull, in my view, is no more than an inflated piece of jewelry. With respect to high fashion, the topic of luxury is intertwined with haute couture, which is ulti- mately a self-conscious character it leads back to the dress- maker who sits in the atelier and creates pieces by hand – as do most artists. Even fashion’s history offers plenty of excellent costume examples, such as Viennese men’s tailor Krämer, who not only mastered his craft, but also collaborate with the architect Adolf Loos - and subsequently opened the world’s first “flagship megastore” in 1913. Though a talk, Krämer deliberately cooperated with the greatest intellectual partners of his day, such as Loos and the designer Ernst Dryden.

For A Way Beyond Fashion, my primary intention was to find works on the periphery between art and fashion. Together, the selected projects – relating to communication, identity, technology and ecological sustainability – provide exciting fashion themes, which in turn are analyzed from the perspective of fashion. Fashion designer Rudolf Germerich, whose conceptual approach to art and fashion found itself out in to find in the contemporary fashion world, provided the historical starting point for the exhibition. I was immedi- ately fascinated by Germerich’s unique design concept, which he first presented at the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. There, he asked the male and female models to show all of their body hair, including their pubic areas, and then sent them across the catwalk, which to me was a per- formance comparable in significance to a signature Yoko Ono action named Cut Piece. With his Project FIN, Rudolf Germerich the- mazilated sexual identity as an important component of the Germerich also experimented with technology, toyed with unusual fabrics, including vinyl, plastic and paper, and created the space suit and military outfit.

In projects by Lucy + Jorge Orta: The Liquid Loft and Arxour, wearable situation suits for homesickness in the private or public realm, “wearable clothing and became salut, a tool, a way of life, politics, a kind of symbolism.”

The judgment by critic Marilyn Bender applies to the political impera- tive behind the performances – the wearable”-wearable situations” – described by luminaries of fashion in (New York) Manhattan. It has heavily explored scents and smells, primarily focusing on the scents of lighting and pin-up styles.

To Counterbalance Multitude – “the wearable” aspect is a means of accessing memories or identify- ing the individual.” – the collective practitioners develop a modular “body architectures” for environmental resistance, and their creative process is an exciting scientific work in isolated areas while always remaining mobile with integrated laptops and cell phones.

Though Orta & Orta is an unyielding ethical commit- ment against selling out as artists and taking designers. This autonomy and protective function a deep further leads to us. How do we go about reclaiming the pub- lic space in a manner which places the focus on human beings, as opposed to commodities?

With their Umbrella project (2005), the Accooni Studio creates a new concept of an umbrella whose foldable sur- face is made of reflective polyester film. When closed the umbrella is no longer a fixture, but it transforms into an “umbrella” when opened. Not only does the thin skin of the “umbrella” prove to be a thick skin in the end, but it also provides a reflecting, camouflaged hideout in the urban environment as it can be fully wrapped around when unfolded serving as a mobile, “urban retreat” and which can hide looks like succu- nidi nursi, Rudolf Germerich the- mazilated sexual identity as an important component of Germerich also experimented with technology, toyed with unusual fabrics, including vinyl, plastic and paper, and created the space suit and military outfit.

A Way Beyond Fashion curated by Robert Punkenko September 16 to October 24, 2009 Opening reception: September 16, 6–8 pm

Lucy + Jorge Orta, Connective Multitude Village II - Múzeum Kárpátok, Ilavár, 2005, mixed media, hand-certified, polyurethane portable solar panel, solar cell, polyethylene, steel, air, silicon, 360 x 360 x 60 cm

Lucy + Jorge Orta, Connective Multitude Village I - Múzeum Kárpátok, Ilavár, 2002, mixed media, hand-certified, polyurethane portable solar panel, solar cell, polyethylene, steel, air, silicon, 360 x 360 x 60 cm

Lucy + Jorge Orta, Manuel Delgado’s Studio, 2004, mixed media, hand-certified, polyurethane portable solar panel, solar cell, polyethylene, steel, air, silicon, 360 x 360 x 60 cm