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Wear:where? The convergent geographies of architecture and fashion

Louise Crewe
School of Geography, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD, England; e-mail: louise.crewe@nottingham.ac.uk
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Abstract. Fabric, materiality, tissue, construction, sculpture, silhouette, model. The convergent vocabularies and practices of both fashion and architectural design are argued to offer important insights into the relational geographies of the contemporary city. The temporalities, techniques, rhythms, and spaces of fashion and architecture might be intuitively imagined as starkly different—the first fast, pliable, delicate, and embodied; the second slow, solid, rigid, permanent. However, I suggest that both practices are centrally engaged in the creation of urban environments that question our notions of time, space, form, fit, interactivity, and mobility. Focusing on a number of fashion projects, including Chanel, Prada, Lucy Orta, and Comme des Garçons, the paper explores the ways in which the architecture of fashion is centrally concerned with questions of colour, sensory experience, transience, display, and erasure. New fashion spaces offer transformative possibilities for the ways in which we inhabit and understand the built urban form. They reveal the limits and possibilities of materiality and open up a physical and metaphorical space through which to revision the politics of consumption. Boldly, perhaps, I suggest that this exercise in disciplinary boundary crossing has the potential to transform the way in which we envision accommodation, habitation, interaction, space, and the city, creating and sustaining our wider social landscape and revealing new desires and possibilities for progressive and socially inclusive urban design, polity, and policy. In short, to unite in a mutual desire to design a world that is a better place in which to live.

1 Introduction

> "A building's exterior, much like a garment's surface, acts as a mirror of structure left open to a variety of interpretations and representations."
>
> Mores (2006, page 141)

In this paper I argue that the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries can bring new formations and reveal significant intersectionalities. Theorising across disciplines need not imply dilution of significance but rather may reveal unexpected mutual effect. Escaping from subject-specific boxes can be transformative, powerful, and profound. The particular disciplines that I conjoin in this paper are fashion and architecture, two subjects and objects that might at first glance appear to have little in common with one another. The clash between the durability of a work of architecture and the mutability of fashion is particularly obvious. But more substantively, the temporalities, materialities, techniques, rhythms, scales, and spaces of fashion and architecture are so often portrayed as starkly different, discordant even. Fashion and architecture move at profoundly different speeds. Their spatial vocabularies, technical practices, and operational scales appear incongruent. Their material and metaphorical presence in the world reminds us of their very different physical conditions and capacities: bricks and mortar, fabric and thread; buildings in cities, bodies in clothes. Fashion is suggestive of transience, pliability, ephemerality, and superficiality (Hollander, 1975). It uses soft, sometimes fragile, materials. It is characterised by rapid temporality, neophilia, and operates on the smallest, closest in scales of the body. Architecture, in contrast, calls forth notions of longevity, permanence, and solidity. Using rigid materials, architecture is considered monumental, durable, substantive; "the size of its examples [give] more

command over the eye" (Hollander, 1975, page xiv). These representations of fashion and architecture as dualistic in turn owe a great deal to debates about gender and professionalisation whereby design and architecture have tended to equate production with the professional 'masculine' sphere, reinforcing notions of subordinate feminine areas of interest into which fashion is generally relegated (Breward, 2003). Further, the relationship between fashion and architecture is entwined with broader theoretical and political debates about branding, design, commodification, and consumption. For some, the new alliances being forged by the two disciplines smack of "something sinister" (Pawley, quoted in Castle, 2000; Saunders, 2005; 2007), a vehicle to seamlessly meld design, branding, signature, and corporate commercialisation into a mediatised, promotional selling machine drive by celebrity designers and archistars.

Other interpretations are possible, however. In the following discussion I argue that a number of conceptual principles within both fashion and architectural practice are currently converging in ways that suggest mutuality and congruence. This revisioning is significant in that it offers a conceptual means to break out of the unhelpful oppositional logic that defines fashion as fleeting, trivial, and superficial whilst architecture represents "supreme and external truths" (Mores, 2006, page 22). Taken together, I argue that fashion and architecture offer some critical insights into the ways in which we inhabit and understand the built form. I substantiate this claim through engagement with critical debates from within both architecture and fashion, and argue that some of the most interesting, progressive, and socially exciting developments often emerge when disciplinary boundaries are crossed or blurred. Exploring the mutual provocations and entanglements between contemporary architecture and fashion offers important insights into the relational geographies of the contemporary city. The disciplines share multiple points of connection around the analytics of construction and the theoretical practices of deconstruction (Gill, 1998). More specifically the two are united through a focus on the body and its wrapping, revealing and sheltering in space. Both buildings and clothes are a mediating layer between the body, the environment, and others. They protect us. Both are also centrally engaged in the creation and representation of urban environments and together question notions of temporality, space, form, fit, interactivity, and mobility. By bringing fashion and architecture into simultaneous view the paper explores the ways in which the architecture of fashion is concerned with questions of transience, shelter, display, erasure and invisibility, key dimensions of city living. Critically, and of significance in both theoretical and policy terms, I argue that fashion spaces can and do offer transformative possibilities for the ways in which we inhabit and understand the built urban form. New fashion architectures make it possible to resist, escape, or offer alternatives to the dominant consumer culture. Further, I suggest that the new alliances between the disciplines offer the potential to recast our understanding of buildings, bodies, and inhabitation and make possible new articulations between fashion, passion, emotion, and experience through redefining the relation between the body and space.

The paper is in four parts. It begins with an outline of the alleged and often caricatured distinctions and antagonisms that have characterised the disciplines of fashion and architecture. The section then draws out a number of ways in which fashion and architecture have forged and continue to forge new connections and mutualities. Secondly, the paper reflects on the ways in which the connections between fashion retail and architectural design are offering new ways to aestheticise, project, and (re)present the city, drawing particularly on materiality, colour, and sensory geographies. It is argued that the nature of the association between fashion and architecture is shifting and that architecture is embracing the softer, sensory, emotional, and tactile characteristics more typically associated with dress. Disciplinary convergence has not

simply resulted in ever more effective means of branding the city: both fashion and architecture are questioning conventional cultural practice and offering more critical interventions in the making of cities. Thirdly, I explore a number of ways in which fashion designers are drawing on architectural techniques rather than those based on the normative principles of garment construction to create structural garments: body sculptures. Finally, the discussion addresses the extent to which fashion space may open up new possibilities for political and social critique; to offer radical commentary on contemporary urbanism. In short to reveal the possibilities for a more progressive politics of consumption and a means for consumers to be resistant to and critical of the blandishments of hyperconsumption and crass commercialisation. The paper concludes by suggesting that the framing of fashion space as urban practice opens up a rich physical and metaphorical terrain through which to recast the politics of consumption.

2 Discordant disciplines and mutuality

> "The intellectual venture capital of many an architect has been invested in the new casino economy of fashion."
>
> Fernandez-Galiano (2005, page 7)

There can be little doubt that much public discourse between the more vociferous members of the architectural and fashion design communities has been characterised by mutual hostility, if not outright disdain. In certain architecturally based accounts fashion has been positioned as the inferior craft compared with its weightier intellectual relation—architecture (Wigley, 2001). Throughout much of the last century architectural practitioners and scholars attempted to distance themselves from the fickle and short-term business of fashion whose "ribbon and ruffles" were denigrated as "all froth" (Jencks, quoted in Quinn, 2003, page 9). Fashion, its critics would suggest, is "what used to called a minor art, something like snuffbox making, or glass-blowing" (Sudjic, 2001). Among serious intellectual preoccupations, argues Lipovetsky (1994), fashion has marginal status; it is seen as artifice, a capricious trifling fantasy, shifting ephemera on the surface of life. To be deemed fashionable or on-trend was, in architectural circles, an insult, shorthand for all that is superficial, transient, and frivolous in design terms. The denigration of fashion for its greed and pomp sees only oppressive gendered power relations. Critics emphasise not only the speed at which fashion moves but also the industry's notoriously short attention span (Castle, 2000). Fashion is, for certain architects, little more than a pantomime of merging and marketing, financing and franchising, "a lethal poison. Deadliest in even the smallest of doses" (Quinn, 2003, page 3). Architects, trained to think of themselves as commissioned artists, associate retailers "with snake oil salesmen and pretend to be uninvolved in the 'evils' of consumerism" (Ervin Kelley, 2005, page 48). But as with a number of subject-specific position statements these reflections on architectural practice and convention are as much rhetorical devices to endorse distinctive scholarly credentials as they are accurate reflections of a given disciplinary 'reality'.

In turn there has long been evidence of a sneering and conceited disdain from within the fashion industry who see the architectural profession in little more than a supporting role, adept at surveying, knowledgable about the structural properties of steel and concrete, but ultimately more akin to engineers and builders than to creative fashion designers.[1] Their talent is denigrated as that of technicians not visionaries,

[1] Again the alleged impasse between the two disciplines is in part an intellectual tactic, a caricature that glosses over the long historical associations between the two. A number of highly influential designers including Balmain, Paco Rabanne, and Gianfranco Ferre originally trained as architects.

their skills those of construction not inspiration. In addition, the realisation that fashion now holds a significant allure for young architects has prompted something of a turf war between the professions. As big-name architects compete to rebrand fashion stores with ever more spectacular structures, fashion designers lament their lack of creativity and originality. Emerging as the new heroic city builders, archistars are vilified as depoliticised, desocialised celebrity elites who serially reproduce retail formats in a nasty commercialised mediatecture landscape (McNeill, 2009; Sorkin, 2004, page 116). And in the process they become stylised urban laureates who peddle their own brand. The architect Rem Koolhaas is perhaps most notable in this respect and is alternatively viewed with both reverence and disdain. In his writings on the city, Koolhaas has forcefully argued against the endless globalisation of retailing and the creation of 'junkspace', a kind of monotonous urban vomit. Shopping space and practice are, he suggests, the terminal human condition. Following urban theorists such as Davis (1990), Harvey (1989), and Soja (1989), Koolhaas argues that indefinite expansion represents a crisis and that the current trend of branding is leading towards the creation of a narrow, immutable, and invariable identity that ultimately spells the end of the brand as a creative enterprise (Koolhaas, 2001).

> "The danger of a large number of stores is repetition: each additional store reduces aura and contributes to a sense of familiarity. The danger of larger scale is the Flagship syndrome: a megalomaniac accumulation of the obvious that eliminates the last elements of surprise and mystery that cling to the brand, imprisoning it in a definitive identity" (page 4).

So far, so good. But the cracks in the foundation of this argument begin to emerge when Koolhaas moves from the role of urban commentator to architectural practitioner. In a valiant about-turn, Koolhaas suggests that, in spite of the above, global expansion *can* be employed as a means of stretching, bending, perhaps permanently redefining the brand. When the flagship is recast as an epicentre store (in this case Koolhaas's store designs for global fashion giant Prada) it can become a device that renews rather than dilutes the brand by counteracting and destabilising any received notion of what Prada is, does, or will become. The epicentre store acts as a conceptual window and conveys the impression that it is at least in part a public space, an attempt to return "the public back to the public" (Koolhaas, 2001, unpaginated). In what strikes some as a profound contradiction, Koolhaas suggests that

> "In a landscape of disarray, disassembly, dissociation, disclamation, the attraction of Bigness is its potential to resurrect the Whole, resurrect the Real, reinvent the collective" (quoted in Foster, 2002, page 51).

Koolhaas the theoretician, Koolhaas the archistar, and Koolhaas the brand appear to be speaking to one another in tongues. How is one to make sense of the suggestion from the retail architect for Prada that "not shopping" is the only luxury left in the late modern world? Critics call this emergence a

> "Remchasm between practice and theory ... . A kind of architectural and theoretical parallel universe called Remworld ... the projects that are presented are not the models of a semifictional urbanoid future but are here, now, in your face and under your arse" (Vanstiphout, 2005, page 80).

The gulf between Koolhaas's Harvard academician-speak and his real-world built structures could scarcely be wider, the rhetoric and the reality startlingly contradictory.

Yet in spite of the evident antagonism between a number of celebrity architects and fashionistas as they jockey for position as the genuine creative talent recasting urban cultural and commercial space, the congruence between the two disciplines has a long and rich historiography. More recent interdisciplinary collaborations are collapsing the distinctions between design, fashion, architecture, art, and commerce. And so, whilst

the two disciplines are often represented as occupying mutually exclusive intellectual ground, it is perhaps more instructive to see them as "hovering on the margins of a mutual existence" (Quinn, 2003, page 15), evolving relationally through their shared interest in design, display, colour, materiality, and space. Both envision space as simultaneously perceptual, political, and physical. Both have the capacity to communicate in nondialogic ways. Both disciplines use the expressive capacity of materials to create signature pieces. And both have the capacity to connect the body to the built form in profound and pervasive ways. The boundaries between the disciplines appear to be folding seamlessly into one another and in the process opening up exciting possibilities for a progressive politics of consumption and for new ways of sensing space.

3 White cube, black dress: building sites and wearing buildings

"Our skin is capable of distinguishing a number of colours."

Pallasmaa (2005, page 12)

Whatever the alleged historical impasse between the two disciplines there has certainly been a sense of renewed rapprochement in the past twenty or so years. Densely populated urban spaces reveal the performative nature of fashion and underscore the range of encounters that individuals enact in city spaces that bombard them daily with a mix of information, communication, consumerism, and commercialism (Breward and Gilbert, 2006). Progressive architecture and fast-moving fashion combine to socially and spatially shape the metropolis (Celant, 2003; Schleifer, 2007). A number of leading architects have competed on the world-city stage for fashion projects with passion, enthusiasm, competitiveness, and success. As cities become adorned with fashion signs, symbols, and logos, retail architecture is rebranding urban space (Quinn, 2002, page 29); the spectral nature of fashion is exposed through the exterior built form and interior retail spaces. Both provide the framework through which the mobility of fashion can be practised. Sudjic (1990, page 13) argues that "the look of shops and the cut of clothes are ... part of the same thing." Architecture and fashion have converged to aestheticise urban space via dazzling displays, staged performances, fantastic spectacles, and dramatised city skylines. This "strangely reciprocated love" between fashion and architecture (Mores, 2006, page 15) demonstrates how together the disciplines are capable of creating spectacle in the city.

My point in this discussion is, however, to argue that fashion and architecture have more significant, substantive, and profound impacts on urban space than simply those of spectacle and display. Buildings and clothes fashion the city not merely through the surface features of glamour and glitz but via their shared understanding of the affective power of space, form, materiality, and colour (Antonelli, 2007). The disciplines reveal a mutual understanding of the agentive capacities of buildings and bodies, and of their relational capacity. Buildings and clothes touch our senses; they are the mediating layer between our bodies and the world; we feel, smell, and see them as they form a membrane between self and world, enveloping us, touching us.

Of course, this sensory appraisal of architecture is not to deny the very important role that collaboration between architects and business fashion plays in shaping the urban fabric. Striking architectural designs are one means through which fashion houses can define their identity. Chanel is an interesting example of how the elements of colour, material, and light fuse to capture the essence of the brand and quite literally project in onto the cityscape. Coco Chanel long recognised the affective and symbolic affordances enshrined in colour. From the 'little black dress' that has become a fashion classic, to her use of the black sans serif logotype throughout her store and product designs, Chanel understood well the timeless aesthetic appeal of achromaticity.

The Chanel Store in New York designed by Peter Marino reveals the sensual and captivating power of colour and light. Whilst the exterior resembles a white cube, the interior surfaces are uniformly finished in high black gloss and have hundreds of tiny back-lit perforations randomly cut into the surface. The effect is magical, at once both seductive and controlling. The visual collision of white light and black gloss is a tantalising example of the achromatic chic and monochromatic materiality that has characterised both fashion and architecture for many decades (Ojeda and Mccown, 2004). In Marino's Chanel store in Tokyo, Japan, the interplay between white and black, light and dark is again revealed to dramatic effect through the use of technology, colour, and ultramaterials. Through a fusion of ceramics, glass, and iron the store reveals an exterior surface that is illuminated by 700 000 LED backlights. Built as part of the building's skin, dynamic videoscreens enable brand building in its most literal form—Chanel can project an infinite number of corporate images and texts onto the streets of the city. This dramatic use of mediatecture through cladding buildings with visual, branded screens changes not only the aesthetic of the city but also the way in which buildings occupy space. The building itself, through new technological architectures and sensory stimuli, becomes a representational feature of both architect and brand. Both architecture and fashion thus fuse to create metaphorical and material geographies.

Like the use of black as Chanel's signature motif, white too is a colour that reveals much about the shared practices of fashion and architecture (O'Doherty, 1999). The achromaticity that characterised a number of fashion houses in the 1980s revealed a shared aesthetic sensibility between fashion designers and architects about the power of colour in creation. "White walls are never neutral" (Wigley, 1995); they take on active roles by casting and reflecting shadows, defining and animating space. The pristine white geometrical flagship stores of Jil Sander (see colour plate 1) and Calvin Klein are material statements about the power of colour (or its effacement). Rather than seeing such minimalist designs as nullifying and unimaginative, they can instead be read as a material and metaphorical alliance between creators of fashion and creators of the spaces in which they are displayed (Koolhaas et al, 2001). "White is the great backdrop, the nullity against which all else stands out" (Ojeda and Mccown, 2004, page 15). In both fashion and architecture, white has come to represent purity and integrity. It has ethereal qualities, simultaneously ghostly and holy. The white wedding dress is a perfect example of the moral and spiritual affective capacities of the colour white.

The use of colour, as these examples reveal, is emotional, sensory, engaging, affective. "White is not a mere absence of colour. It is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black" (Chesterton, 1908). Both black and white are timeless, essential structural elements; a totality—a convergence of colours. The colour of garments and buildings produces emotional effects and responses. We feel and see colour through our skin (Merleau Ponty, 1968).

4 Body sculpture: clothes as construction

"Fashion is architecture for the skin."

Spector (1997)

Two critical public events were particularly notable for setting the connections between the two disciplines in motion. The first was an exhibition for the MIT Visual Arts Centre in 1982 called "Intimate Architecture: Contemporary Clothing Design". The exhibition examined the work of eight fashion designers from an architectural perspective and underscored the ways in which both disciplines are centrally concerned with creating symbols of originality, individuality, audacity, and risk (Mancinelli, 2006, page 74). The second significant event that pushed further the connections between the disciplines was the "Deconstructionist Architecture Exhibition" in 1988 at the

Museum of Modern Art. It has been suggested (McLeod, 1994) that this event raised the profile of deconstructionism and enabled its cultural dissemination beyond architecture to a range of other professions including graphic design and, crucially, fashion. McLeod, herself an architect, has been a key proponent in furthering the dialogue between the two disciplines and has argued that

> "architecture and fashion share a lexicon of concepts like structure, form, fabric, construction, fabrication and she can see clear points in the history of Modernism where a shared language has made a conversation between these practices possible" (Gill, 1998).

The really significant outcome of these events was the revelation that the direction of the shared discourse appeared to be shifting: whilst fashion designers had been drawing on architectural principles for many decades, it is only in the last couple of decades that architects have begun to pay closer attention to fashion design (Hodge et al, 2006, page 11). The historiography of fashion designers adopting architectural tropes and practices is a long and rich one (Lipovetsky, 1994), not least the architectural fashion designers of the 1950s such as Balenciaga who pared away "extraneous detail to achieve the impact of a pure line and a breathtakingly simple sculptural shape" (Polan and Tredre, 2009, page 78). Pierre Cardin too fashioned many of his garments in an architectural style and revealed sculptural qualities, clean lines, and a sense of monumentality in, for example, his cocoon coat, trapezoidal cut, and use of high-tech materials such as vinyl and Perspex (Polan and Tredre, 2009, page 99). More recently Issey Miyake has produced fashions that veer between figurative sculpture and habitations. Above all, Miyake's designs are explicitly spatial and reveal close parallels to architecture. His collaboration with artists and architects over many years of design has resulted in commentators discussing questions of the space between the body and the cloth almost as much as the garment itself (Frankel, 2001), and the subjectivities enshrined in our clothing choices are both complex and well debated: "Clothes are shorthand for being human; they are an intimate, skin-craft form" (Wilcox, 2001, page 1). Miyake's A-POC project, an acronym for 'A Piece of Cloth', for example, tried to revolutionise the way garments are constructed by delving into three dimensional worlds that transcend conventional or normative fashion practice (Miyake and Fujiwara, 2001). Miyake's designs drew more on the style of the kimono than on the formal tailoring practices of European fashion production with their seaming and stitching that eliminates the space between body and cloth. Miyake's designs are explicitly focused on the empty space between the skin and fabric.

Further, by using one long piece of fabric to create multiple garments Miyake could be argued to be making an implicit commentary on standardised manufacturing, mass production and construction (see colour plate 2). His pieces mirror the ways in which new technologies have simplified the construction and craft of both fashion and architecture and resulted in replication of designs, forms, and structures. Miyake's work has also been described as occupying a unique role in forging closer connections between a number of disciplines, including art, industrial design, and architecture, to piece together what has been called 'visual clothing', clothing that involves intense engagement with the body and space. As early as 1960 Miyake challenged the organisers of the World Fashion Design Forum, held that year in Tokyo, as to why fashion design was not included in a conference featuring architectural, industrial, and graphic design. The discipline was eventually included, but the experience highlighted to Miyake how clothing design was viewed at that time in Japan as "merely dressmaking or something nonessential. Clothing design was by nature ephemeral" (Miyake, 2006, page 5).

Colour plate 1. Gabellini Associates Jil Sander's showroom in Milan. The spare, pared down design of space and garment allows each piece to stand in stark relief against the neutral background, whose clean shades are accentuated by dramatic lighting (Ojeda and Mccown, 2004, page 19). © Paul Warchol.

Colour plate 2. One long length of fabric is used to construct several slightly different dresses © AAP/AP.

Colour plate 3. Lucy Orta Refuge Wear Intervention London East End 1998 courtesy Galleria Continua San Gimignano/Beijing/Le Moulin. Photographer John Akehurst.

In a similar way, Rei Kawakubo, the founder of Comme Des Garçons recurrently challenges fashion convention by producing asymmetric, "architectural, sculptural objects" (Mores, 2006, page 141) designs that are radical in structure and form, extending beyond the realms of normative fashion. She argues that she likes it when something is off—not perfect (Kawakubo, quoted in Koren, 1984, page 117). The enigmatic nature of her garments once resulted in her opening a completely empty boutique. She conceives of 'interventions in space' based on architectural principles rather than those of garment construction and in so doing "links fashion and architecture in the most invincible way—making one so invisible that it vanishes into the other" (Mores, 2006, page 15). Kawakubo does not intend for her clothes and stores to be separately commodified but, rather, tries to create a complete space-environment, where the interrelatedness between the intellectual content of the individual garment, the conceptual themes behind the collection, and the spatial representation of this through her architecture is one single expression (Quinn, 2003, page 50).

Helmut Lang's work similarly explores the spatial connections across scales, focusing specifically on the porous boundaries between inside and outside the body, and the evocative and sensory registers that clothing hits. Lang suggests that interior desires rest on the surface, as if worn on the body. He embeds repressed and formerly hidden feelings and emotions within the supposedly unreadable surface of clothing (O'Neill, 2001, page 42). In his collaboration with Jenny Holzer for the Venice Bienale for example, the cadences of language were explored and echoed in Lang's tracings of

routes on fabrics, as if drawing a survival map of the city onto the body (Wilcox, 2001, page 6). In a provocative exposé of the olfactory stimulus of clothes on skin Lang argued "I smell you on my clothes ... I smell you on my skin" (Helmut Lang, Venice Bienale 1996).

Most notable for probing the boundaries between bodies and buildings is Hussein Chalayan, described as an austere, intellectual, architectural designer (Steele, 2001, page 51) whose designs are inspired by religion, isolation, and oppression. "Space is central to his vision: clothing is an intimate zone around the body, architecture is a larger one" (Steele, 2001, page 53). Chalayan has revolutionised the form and function of clothing by addressing how the body relates and reacts to the built environment. Chalayan traces the fabric of urban space through clothing and produces garments that appear architectural. He suggests that

> "everything around us either relates to the body or to the environment. I think of modular systems where clothes are like small parts of an interior, the interiors are part of the architecture, which is then a part of an urban environment. I think of fluid space where they are all a part of each other, just in different scales and proportions" (Chalayan, 2002, page 122).

Such spatial envisioning attests to the powerful affinities between body, dress, and space, and to the progressive potential that can be gained by slicing through the relational geographies of body – space – interior – exterior to create new geographic forms and structures.

5 Fashion as social and political statement

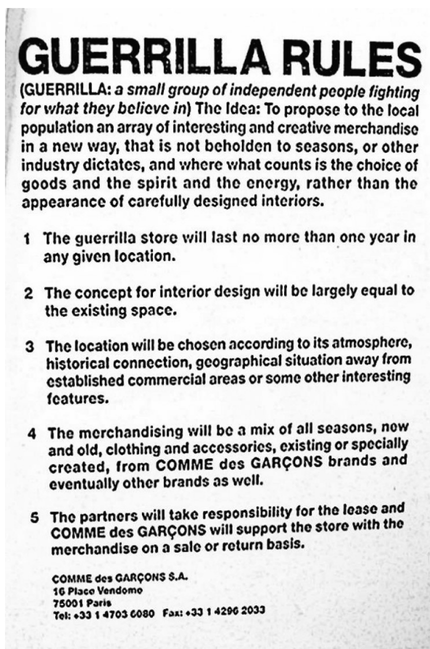
> "I am sculpting clothing as a house for the body."
>
> Hill (2009, page 68)

For a number of practitioners, the coming together of architecture and fashion opens up a whole range of progressive possibilities regarding the unfolding of urban space, offering alternative visions of inclusion, openness, and the spontaneity of spaces of assembly (Sorkin, 2005, page 119). In certain ways fashion has always been political—from gendered historical constructions of appropriate attire (Brooks Young, 1937) to the political – social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought to politicise appearance as part of a broader politics of difference—fashion has been anything but trivial (Edwards, 2007). Fashion space is far more than surface carapace or commercial craft.

> "We think about it, talk about it, wear it and perform it. The ubiquitous space of fashion takes shape at precisely the point where traditional definitions of public space—as an urban site, a physical place, a democratic arena—fail ... . Fashion space provides sites for curiosity, exploration and resistance, routinely deconstructing image and object" (Quinn, 2003, page 34).

The spaces of fashion have the potential to probe the locus of economic power and to critically question processes of commodification and consumption. A number of fashion designers have used their collections and spaces as a means through which to make broader statements about temporality, regeneration, and reuse. In the following examples I draw on recent examples of designers who have 'played' with questions of space and time in order to draw out the more progressive possibilities enshrined in contemporary consumption. One of the best documented exemplars of how fashion and architecture have combined to conceptually question contemporary urbanism is Rei Kawakubo's fashion brand Comme des Garçons. Kawakubo's creation of garments by knitting together past motifs and patterns or by turning old garments inside out for reuse raises a number of questions about value determination in fashion and underscores the valorising potential of second-hand use and exchange

(Gregson and Crewe, 2003). Her use of knitwear as a "sculptural piece full of holes" (Sudjic, 1990, page 10) socially comments on the redundancy of hand-crafted garments in a era of machine-made precision. This parallels the brand's use of architectural reconstruction in formerly decayed urban space. Kawakubo argues that she "thinks forward by looking backwards, recycling old things to make them new" (quoted in Wilcox, 2001, page 158). The opening of the Comme des Garçons guerilla store in 2004 was a particularly noticeable example of the emergence of 'parafunctional spaces' (Papastergiadis, 2002, page 45) in which creative, informal, or unintended functions overtake officially designated uses. The 'store' was located in a redundant bookshop in Berlin and was difficult to distinguish from the surrounding squatted premises. Designed by the German architect Christia Weinecke, it captured the rhythm of local culture, using old water pipes, industrial wire, and factory railings to hang a rapidly changing stock and advertising solely through 'underground' media on the Internet and via harsh and grainy black and white posters (Mores, 2006, page 149), whose '*Guerilla Rules*' slogan is itself wonderfully contradictory (figure 1). These contemporary stores look to find the cracks in the wall of corporate culture, they sell garments with no price tags, change their stock every few weeks, and disregard any notions of spectacle. These deconstructed, liberating, crude spaces emerge and then disappear as quickly as the clothes they display (Carter, 2005).


GUERRILLA RULES

(GUERRILLA: *a small group of independent people fighting for what they believe in*) The Idea: To propose to the local population an array of interesting and creative merchandise in a new way, that is not beholden to seasons, or other industry dictates, and where what counts is the choice of goods and the spirit and the energy, rather than the appearance of carefully designed interiors.

1 The guerrilla store will last no more than one year in any given location.

2 The concept for interior design will be largely equal to the existing space.

3 The location will be chosen according to its atmosphere, historical connection, geographical situation away from established commercial areas or some other interesting features.

4 The merchandising will be a mix of all seasons, new and old, clothing and accessories, existing or specially created, from COMME des GARÇONS brands and eventually other brands as well.

5 The partners will take responsibility for the lease and COMME des GARÇONS will support the store with the merchandise on a sale or return basis.

COMME des GARÇONS S.A.
16 Place Vendome
75001 Paris
Tel: +33 1 4703 6080 Fax: +33 1 4296 2033

Figure 1. Comme des Garçons Guerilla Rules.

Maison Martin Margiela's stores and collections similarly disrupt the conventions of fashion space and suggest a number of possibilities based on recycling, reclamation, and reuse. Margiela argues that, whilst existing spaces or clothes may outlive their original purpose, it is still possible to reappropriate them. He draws parallels between second-hand or abandoned clothing and derelict urban areas that he terms wastelands or warzones. He creates heterotopic spaces by staging fashion shows in the midst of liminal, interstitial, or relic spaces—an abandoned plot in Paris's 20th arrondissement in 1989, a derelict car park near Barbes in 1990. Margiela also explores the congruence between clothing and architectural principles through the mechanics of his garment construction. He sees the garment as architecture that 'fits out' the body and was an

early pioneer of deconstruction, which he deployed conceptually and materially to dismantle architecture's syntax and aesthetics. He reverses sartorial techniques by turning garment construction literally inside out so that many of the garments appear as if their construction is still in process, with raw unfinished seams and pins left in place.

Margiela is also interested in processes of ageing, wear, and decay: some fabrics are made to decay, others are hand silvered to artificially create a patina of age. Some are treated in order to appear covered in layers of dust whilst others are fabricated from old garments: "I love the idea of recuperation. I believe it is beautiful to make new things out of rejected or worn things" (quoted in Hodge et al, 2006, page 35). Through his work Margiela is revealing the possibilities of creating new identities for both the spaces and the clothes through a broader revisioning of the processes of use, wear, recycling, regeneration, and reclamation.

The socially conscious label "Vexed Generation" has created countercultures of resistance against the urban condition and expose the injustices inherent in free market economics. Since the company's inception in 1994, its London-inspired street wear has symbolised social, historical, and political urban struggles and encouraged clientele to "break out of the plastic-cage of mass consumerism" (Mansvelt, 2007, page 104). Through a range of hoods, collars, zips, concealing masks, and parka coats, its weather-proof garments cover most of the body. It therefore renders social surveillance redundant, allowing wearers to reattain social anonymity and provide protection. Its parka coat in particular was designed as a critique of excessive surveillance systems since the wearers could cover their faces and effectively make CCTV redundant. The garments ironically also allow wearers to reveal more of themselves, to be who they want to be by virtue of being covered, hidden from the scrutinising eye of others: "because we are now alienated and unrecognised we have the freedom to re-invent ourselves" (Evans, 2003, page 281). Many of its garments are capable of giving "voice to an inner self that is often imprisoned in everyday life" and subsequently encourages freedom of physicality and perception within cities (Destefani, 2006, page 17). In broader terms its clothes embody the difficult urban condition of 1990s London where the Criminal Justice Act and the government's implementation of poll tax reforms led many to question their own powers in terms of freedom of expression, the right to demonstrate, and to assemble. In terms of its 'store' design, Vexed Generation used space to make a series of political and social statements about London's urban environment in the mid-1990s. Its first 'shop' featured a glass box, similar to an incubator, in the middle of the floor. Small slits were cut into the walls surrounding the incubator display unit so that customers could peep in, reach in, and feel the clothes, but not remove them. The outside of the space was left under decades of grime and the only way for passers-by to see inside the shop was via a black and white CCTV monitor that relayed what was going on inside the shop. There was thus no need for staff or security inside the shop and by placing the shop under the surveillance of passers-by Vexed Generation inverted conventional surveillance tactics and in so doing made a broader political statement about excessive surveillance, the erosion of civil liberties, and individual freedom. Its work reflects very well the difficult relationship between civil liberties and security, consumption and repression, anonymity and visibility, freedom and fear in the contemporary city.

The final example of the powerful combinatorial potential harnessed by clothing and architecture is the work of Luca Orta. Orta refutes the premise that clothing and shelter are separate entities and uses her work to highlight the ugly social reality of contemporary urbanism where dazzling retail and residential spaces coexist with a rising problem of homelessness. Through a series of projects Orta addresses the structural

social conditions that leave some individuals marginalised or rendered invisible in our city spaces. She describes the plight of the homeless as "tangible invisibility" and follows their traces as they "literally melt and disappear into the margins and framework of the city" (Pinto et al, 2003, page 40). She sees no distinction between the aesthetic function of art, architecture, or fashion and its political institutional, or economic function, and creates garments that can be both worn and quite literally inhabited. Her project entitled "Refuge Wear" occupies the territory somewhere between architecture and fashion and explores notions of community, shelter, and social networks through the construction of modular garments that protect the wearer from the elements but also connect them to at least one other person (see colour plate 3). Using the principles of fashion Orta creates wearable shelters and interconnecting survival sacs. It has been argued that Orta's work operates "like a scalpel in social consciousness, peeling back the skin of indifference to expose the ruptures soothed by unawareness and indifference" (Quinn, 2003, page 158). Like Vexed Generation, this work emphasises the individual's right to occupy public space without fear of stigmatisation.

Orta's Refuge Wear is transportable—the very antithesis of the built form but emblematic of the contemporary city that compels mobility. Significantly Orta's work offers the capacity to move beyond the idealism of contemporary art spaces such as galleries and flagship stores and moves instead into mundane and ordinary spaces, thus making broader statements about the politics of consumerism and the inequalities and exclusions that characterises the contemporary city (Orrell, 2007). Her work is a powerful means through which dwelling and wearing enable a broader questioning of spatial politics, identity, collectivity, and belonging. The centrality of the subject (the wearer) underscores the way in which "It is not possible to conceive a garment without the body ... the empty garment ... is death, not the body's neutral absence, but the body decapitated, mutilated" (Barthes, 1967). And so it can be seen that once we strip the aesthetics away from fashion and architecture one is left with two much simpler equivalents: clothing and shelter. The common denominator between these two words is protection. Each protects our bodies from the elements of nature and society. In this way, fashion and housing are becoming pseudo-synonymous; near twins (McLuhan, 1994, page 120).

6 Conclusions and reflections

> "There are many spaces in architecture now that are neither solid, nor void, nor in between."
>
> Koolhaas (2000, page 39)

I conclude with an evaluation of the significance of convergent practices in fashion and architecture for broader debates about urban form, function, and practice; about how we imagine, inhabit, and represent the contemporary urban condition through our clothing and buildings. Clothing and architecture overlap to fashion the contemporary city. Yet both are about far more than retinal stimulation, fabrication, and fantasy, the spectacular or the superficial. Rather, they articulate our experiences of being in-the-world and strengthen our sense of space and self (Pallasmaa, 2005, page 11). Buildings and garments comprise part of a broader spatial landscape that defines and delineates the relations between private and public, social space, and intimate space. The disciplines reveal both the constraints and the possibilities of materiality, and both transform the status of the surface (Wigley, 2001). On a microscale, fashion represents the construction of individual identities by mapping the physical bodily form. On a larger scale, these layers of wrapping, threading, sewing, folding pleating, and draping of garments provide theoretical frameworks for architects to create buildings as both material and emotional spaces, solid yet sensuous (Sidlauskas, 1982).

Both disciplines reveal the inseparability of a work and its context. The creative envisioning of fashion space as economic, political, and cultural practice—that is, as material *and* representational capital, ultimately reveals the impossibility of severing buildings from being, fashion from urban form, inhabitation from fabrication. Fashion and architecture are critical elements in the creation of city spaces; they are the material autographs of contemporary design; communicators of what our urban fabric is and may become. Thinking about fashion and architecture takes us to the heart of key questions about the contemporary city. Fashion and architecture, like the city, are multilayered. They are also double sided: characterised by new forms of constraint and new possibilities for more active, progressive, and creative intervention in the production of habitable and hospitable cities.

Secondly, architecture, like clothes, touches us, is intimate. Clothing and buildings have the agentive capacity to be 'life-enhancing' (Montagu, 1986), they address all of our senses simultaneously and can be the very locus of memory, imagination, and reference (Pallasmaa, 2005). As I have argued here, we live, feel, inhabit, and embody both fashions and buildings. Buildings and clothes are performative elements of everyday life. They produce emotions, sensory experiences, and feelings, and engender memories. Architecture, like clothes, touches us, is intimate. Thinking about 'wearing' buildings and imagining architecture as clothing may offer profound new ways of visualising and inhabiting architectural discourses and practices as sensory, emotional, lived. For we feel buildings, we become attached to them, they hit all of our sensory registers. Buildings are alive, they have agentive capacities—the shock of warm skin hitting cold metal; the creak of the wooden floor; the revulsion of one's naked flesh reflected in the changing room window. Like the memories enshrined within our special clothes (the great night out, the worn-in worn-out jeans), buildings too are sensory spaces that hold personal memories and feelings; they become associated with moments in time; even with time itself (Wilcox, 2001). The intimacy of clothes and buildings goes far further than their touch; it is an external representation of inner intentionality; personhood in aesthetic form (Gell, 1998; Wilcox, 2001, page 1).

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