

FASHION CURATING

**Critical Practice in the Museum
and Beyond**

Edited by

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HAZEL CLARK**

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FASHION CURATES ART: TAKASHI MURAKAMI FOR LOUIS VUITTON

Peter Bengtsen

Introduction: the relationship between the fields of art and fashion

In November 1976, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu gave a lecture about his field theory at École normale supérieure in Paris.¹ Using as an example a failed attempt of Italian-born French fashion designer Pierre Cardin to be taken seriously by the art world on the basis of his position within fashion, Bourdieu explained that art and fashion constitute separate fields that recognize and operate with different types of symbolic capital that cannot simply be transferred from one field to the other.

Much has changed in the forty years that have passed since Bourdieu gave his lecture to a group of philologists and literary historians in Paris. While the notion that art and fashion are separate fields that hold different values and recognize different kinds of symbolic capital still has some merit in a Western context, *haute couture* and its creators have long since found a place in major art institutions.² Also, in addition to the inclusion of fashion in an art world context, many fashion brands today are associated with contemporary art in the form, for example, of sponsorships, commissions or through foundations that collect and exhibit art. This chapter will address the increasing overlap of the fields of art and fashion by examining the curation of art by fashion outside of traditional institutional settings. The main case explored is the collaboration between the luxury brand Louis Vuitton, under the creative direction of Marc Jacobs, and the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami.

It should be noted that while the chapter mainly focuses on this specific collaboration, it is far from the only instance in which Louis Vuitton has curated artists. As indicated by the publication of the 2009 coffee table book *Louis Vuitton. Art, Fashion and Architecture*, which describes eighty of the brand's creative collaborations, associating itself more widely with upcoming as well as established artists has been an important aspect of the

company's branding efforts. The partnerships Louis Vuitton has established with a range of artists, as well as its work with Fondation Louis Vuitton—an exhibition space for contemporary art designed by architect Frank Gehry, that opened on October 27, 2014 in Bois de Boulogne in Paris' 16th arrondissement—are prime examples of the increasingly close ties between art and fashion.

Apart from Murakami, Louis Vuitton's creative collaborators have included the American theater director Robert Wilson, who in 2002 was responsible for the Christmas window decorations in all the company's stores. In 2006, the same task was undertaken by the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, who created the installation *Eye See You*. Eliasson also contributed to another project in which Louis Vuitton overtly sought to mix the fields of fashion and art: the gallery Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, which opened on January 10, 2006 on the seventh floor of the brand's flagship store on Champs-Élysées in Paris. In order to reach the art space, visitors had to first enter the building through a backdoor on Rue de Bassano and then proceed to step into Eliasson's permanent installation *Your Loss of Senses* (2005). The installation has been described by art critic Simon Castets (2009) as a "working elevator linking visitors to the exhibition hall" which "plunges users into total blackness and absolute silence. By using a specific material that absorbs all sound waves, the black box cancels out all sound-based and visual stimuli and suppresses any trace of natural and artificial light. The twenty-second elevator ride seems like an eternity as the outside world disappears." What struck me when I visited the flagship store and gallery in 2011 was that Eliasson's installation constituted an interesting space of invisibility and inner reflection in a building that is otherwise dedicated to showing off and conspicuously consuming luxury goods.

The inaugural exhibition at Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton featured the work of the Los Angeles-based Italian artist Vanessa Beecroft. Using photo and video, she presented documentations of an installation entitled *VB56* that took place in the Louis Vuitton flagship store in connection with its reopening on October 9, 2005. The exhibition also included the specially produced photographic work *Alphabet Concept*. The work consists of thirteen photographs of naked female bodies that are positioned in the shape of the brand's LV monogram as well as the letters of the company name, thus creating a direct link between the artworks and the brand.

Curating artists to collaborate on projects surrounding the brand as well as on the design of products has been a significant way for Louis Vuitton to associate itself with the world of fine art, including the art market, and this practice has arguably played a key role in the transformation of Louis Vuitton from "the brand your mother bought: expensive and well made, but boring and out of date" (Marinovich 2006) to an edgier, contemporary and living brand. The term "curating" is here being used to describe how the company selects certain artists to associate with its brand name. In much the same way as a gallery may curate a mix of artists that are established (to give an air of timelessness and class) and upcoming (to add edge to the gallery profile), fashion labels like Louis Vuitton associate themselves with artists they believe will contribute in a positive way to their brand image and in some instances expose new consumer groups to the brand. It can thus be said that fashion in this way curates art in order to supplement its brand equity with cultural capital.

As will be discussed further at the end of the chapter, Marc Jacobs—who was the creative director of Louis Vuitton from 1997 to 2013—has been a major driving force behind this development. For example, taking on a role comparable to that of a curator, in 2001 Jacobs brought a subcultural flair to the brand by asking the American designer and artist Stephen Sprouse to work on a range of limited edition products featuring graffiti-style designs printed on top of the brand's traditional monogram pattern. This first artist collaboration overseen by Jacobs for Louis Vuitton helped “transform what was a staid French luggage label, whose signature monogram was increasingly associated with cheap knock-offs, into one of the most valuable fashion brands in the world” (Judah 2013). Since the initial collaboration with Sprouse (which was followed by a range of products in 2006 despite Sprouse's death two years prior), Louis Vuitton has continued its production of limited editions in association with different creative partners. Notably, in 2003 and 2005, the company curated Japanese artist Takashi Murakami to re-imagine some of its products. To provide some background to understanding why Louis Vuitton specifically chose to work with Murakami, and why the creative partnership became the success it did, the following section will discuss some of the significant aspects of Murakami's artistic practice.

Takashi Murakami: the art of commercial culture

In 2003 a new brand of chewing gum was launched in Japan. *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Museum: Convenience Store Edition* was a so-called *shokugan* product. “Shokugan” literally translates to “food toy” and is a sales combination of candy and a small plastic toy (Munroe 2005: 242). In the case of *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Museum*, the shokugan product was a combination of a pack of chewing gum and one out of a series of small plastic figures designed by Murakami. Earlier that year, a 254 cm tall glass fiber version of one of the small figures, *Miss ko²*, had sold for \$567,500 at Christie's in New York (Munroe 2005: 243). The shokugan product was just one in a range of so-called *art products* that Murakami has been selling since the mid-1990s alongside paintings and larger sculptures that have been exhibited in high-end galleries. These products include plush toys, key rings, skateboards, enamel pins and t-shirts adorned with the characters that appear in his paintings and sculptural works.

In order to understand why the symbiosis between Murakami and Louis Vuitton has been so successful, it is important to recognize that Murakami's art products should not be seen as products that are *derived from* his work as an artist. Rather, they are examples of Murakami's attempts to blur the boundary between fine- and mass culture—between art and commercial mass production—and his attempt to redefine his own role as an artist. This blurring of boundaries is mainly of significance to a Western audience, since in Japanese culture art has not traditionally been separated or distinguished from design as it has been in the West (Munroe 2005: 244f). Thus, as American art historian Katy Siegel has pointed out, when Murakami established his factory-like studios in Tokyo and New York and took on the role of “designer and supervisor,” it was “a fantasized return to the

role of the Japanese artisan-craftsman” (2005: 278). A result of the blurred line between art and other artisan trades is that there has not been a domestic contemporary art market in Japan comparable to that found in Western countries. This is one reason Murakami turned his attention to an international audience early in his career. As he puts it:

The art scene [in Japan] existed only as a shallow appropriation of Western trends, or an artificial construction of self-contained hierarchies, unable to support an artist’s career over many years. I realized this when I was a student, and stopped operating within the Japanese art market altogether, investing my energies instead into promoting my works overseas. [. . .] Another hurdle I have faced is the difference inherent in Japanese and Western artistic practices, and the frustrating “non-art” status that much of Japanese art bears, both within, and outside of the country. My first response to this was to [. . .] market artistic works in non-fine arts media. But after that, I thought: “why not just revolutionize the concept of art itself?”

Kaikaikiki.co.jp 2005

From a Western perspective, it is significant that Murakami’s art products should be seen as an integral part of his artistic practice. Or, alternatively, that his artistic practice should be seen as a part of his commercial production. It is easy to draw parallels here with the American pop artist Andy Warhol, who to some extent attempted to achieve a similar dissolution of clear cultural distinction through the appropriation of mass cultural and commercial symbols (Siegel 2005: 273). However, according to French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard, Warhol and other pop artists of the 1960s never managed to truly turn their art into everyday objects. This was because the artists removed their subject matter from its original context—a context that was paramount for the subject matter’s status as an everyday object.³ Murakami’s work, conversely, appears to be much more integrated in the spheres of commercial mass production and everyday life. As art critic Ben Luke has observed, “Andy Warhol had the Factory, but it was as much a countercultural place of decadence as a production line. Murakami’s Kaikai Kiki organisation is genuinely like a corporation” (2015).

While Murakami’s work is rooted in old art traditions like *Nihonga* painting (Siegel 2005: 270), he is best known for his association with the Japanese Neo Pop and Super Flat (or Superflat) movements. According to Japanese art critic Midori Matsui, Japanese Neo Pop emerged as an art movement in the early 1990s as a reaction to the consumption culture that since the 1970s has been engulfing the country with *kawaii* (Japanese: *cuteness*) products like Hello Kitty and Licca, a Japanese version of Barbie (2005: 212). While Murakami and other Neo Pop artists were critical of commercial *kawaii* culture and adopted its “‘childish’ gestures in order to make a subversive attack on the ideological structure that keeps the Japanese infantile” (Matsui 2005: 214f), Murakami seems to have embraced commercial culture in a different way in his subsequent work within the Super Flat movement.⁴ To the artist, the notion of “super flat” is conceptually related to the extreme two-dimensionality of “[s]ociety, customs, art, [and] culture” (Murakami 2000: 5), but the term is also related to a Japanese heritage with specific visual characteristics:

According to Murakami's Superflat thesis, brilliant color, planar surfaces, stylized features, and the absence of illusionistic space define a lineage in Japanese art that links Rinpa screens to *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints to early modern *Nihonga* painting, and ultimately to postwar manga and anime. [. . .] Basic to Murakami's Superflat "installation" of contemporary Japanese art is the radical interconnection and lack of distinction between Japan's fine and popular arts.

MUNROE 2005: 244

In addition to the above, Siegel argues that it is Murakami's goal to create "an engagement with popular culture—not in order to subvert that culture or use it against itself, but to use its formal and emotional powers for his own purposes" (2005: 273). Thus, for instance, Murakami does not just reference Japanese *otaku* culture in his works.⁵ According to Siegel his artworks actually exist as legitimate parts of that culture. An example of this is the previously mentioned shokugan version of *Miss ko2*, which is now sold in specialty stores along with other collectable otaku objects (Munroe 2005: 243).

Murakami and Louis Vuitton: a symbiotic fusion of art and fashion

Looking at Murakami's artistic vision provides a useful basis for understanding why Louis Vuitton chose him as a creative collaborator. While his products are directed at audiences within diverse economic, cultural and social spheres, the aesthetics of his artistic output leading up to the initial Louis Vuitton collaboration had generally been relatively simple and polished. It may have been a combination of Murakami's broad appeal and the visually clean style of his art—which could easily be adapted to patterns on the products of the company—that made collaborating appealing. Additionally, the curatorial choice was likely influenced by the wish on the part of Louis Vuitton to reinforce the company's position in the extremely lucrative Japanese market.⁶ As for Murakami, teaming up with a brand like Louis Vuitton enabled him to spread his work to new spheres and target audiences, both within Japan and internationally. The collaboration thus served as a further step towards dissolving the division between fine art and mass culture.

Visually, Murakami often uses multiple, vibrant colors in his artworks, and this also became a prominent feature of his first collaboration with Louis Vuitton in 2003. Tasked with reimagining the brand's classic gold-on-brown monogram pattern (see Figure 12.1), the artist opted to create a range of products that featured one of two new base colors, replacing the usual brown with either black or white. Whereas the monogram pattern was traditionally screen printed in a single color (gold), Murakami's design—the so-called *Eye Love Monogram*—included thirty-three colors (see Figure 12.2). The colorful design of the *Eye Love Monogram* products was a radical, but also very popular, departure from the relatively muted look of the brand's traditional assortment. According to a press release on September 12, 2003 from LVMH (the French multinational luxury goods conglomerate that owns the Louis Vuitton brand), the design was so popular that customer waiting lists had to be created (LVMH 2003).



Figure 12.1 Louis Vuitton products featuring the brand's classic gold-on-brown monogram pattern. Courtesy of Getty Images.



Figure 12.2 Customers at Louis Vuitton store in Roppongi Hills, Tokyo on September 4, 2003. The woman on the right is posing with a bag featuring Takashi Murakami's *Eye Love Monogram* design. Courtesy of Getty Images.

The curation of Takashi Murakami by Louis Vuitton likely helped increase the brand's profile in Japan, which—as mentioned previously—was a key market for luxury products at the time. In addition to the already established customer base, Murakami's design appealed specifically to alternative consumer segments, such as members of the otaku subculture. One reason for this was the strong connection Murakami's design had to the Japanese ideal of *kawaii*, which is closely related to the gender role of young women in Japanese society in general and in the otaku subculture in particular (Matsui 2005: 210). The Murakami-designed products are linked to *kawaii* in a few ways. First, the connection between Louis Vuitton and Murakami's name is important, as it creates a direct association between the brand and Japanese culture. Second, the eye, which is one of the most emotive and common means of expressing *kawaii* in otaku, is used both verbally in the title and pictorially in the design of the *Eye Love Monogram*. Third, the products designed by Murakami were much more colorful and lively, one might even say more youthful, than the traditional monogram pattern. This focus on the expression of youthfulness, bordering on the infantile, continued in the next collaboration between Louis Vuitton and Murakami with the so-called *Monogram Cerises* from 2005. Here *kawaii* was expressed by adding red cherries with smiling and surprised faces over the classic gold-on-brown monogram pattern. In *LVMH Magazine* (2005), the effect of the cherries was described as follows: "The cherry, fruit of an intense, bright and appetizing red, brightens up the Monogram canvas with communicative joy. This new pattern gives freshness and cheerfulness with all its different expressions: laughter, surprise and amazement!"

I would argue that the combination of a classic luxury brand and the strong visual connection to the predominantly female ideal of *kawaii* created by Murakami's design may have contributed to the success the products achieved among the female segment on the Japanese market. The focus on female consumers is further indicated by the fact that a later iteration of Murakami's *Eye Love Monogram*—called *Multicolore Canvas* (the eye that was present in the original Murakami design was replaced with the four-petal flower from the classic Louis Vuitton monogram pattern)—was solely included in Louis Vuitton's female collection.

While members of the target female consumer base were able to live up to the central ideal of *kawaii* through the consumption of the Murakami-designed Louis Vuitton products, the latter also created an interesting sense of ambivalence. Due to the brand's long history and high price, the consumption of the products could be interpreted as a way of communicating a certain sophistication, maturity and status. Through the consumption of the *Eye Love Monogram*, the Japanese female consumers at once presented themselves as youthful and mature, helpless and strong, traditional and modern; a combination of characteristics that fits well with the ambivalent state of the postmodern individual in Japan.

In line with Murakami's ongoing artistic ambition to transcend with his work the spheres of popular and fine culture, the collaboration with Louis Vuitton soon spread beyond the design of fashion products. Thus, while it is clear that Murakami influenced the brand by introducing elements of his established visual language in the design, it is interesting to note that this was not a one-way process. On April 11, 2003, shortly after the first Murakami-designed products were made available by Louis Vuitton, the artist's third and

eponymous solo show opened at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York. The ten new works included in this exhibition made it clear that it was not just Murakami's style, symbols and use of color that had moved into the commercial sphere of fashion products; the symbols of Louis Vuitton had also entered the world of fine art by being integrated in the artist's paintings and sculptural works.⁷

One of the works featured in the show, *LV Monolith*, is an acrylic painting on canvas. It depicts a number of floral vines carrying an array of smiling flowers. Included in the painting is also a multi-colored "LV" symbol, on top of which is standing a small, white anthropomorphic character with four flower petals on its head. The title of the painting is quite significant, as it creates a verbal connection between Louis Vuitton (represented by the shorthand "LV") and the word "monolith". The latter connotes something solid and established; something impressive, unique and grand. In other words, the verbal level of the artwork associates the brand with a number of positive attributes.

On the pictorial level, the prominent featuring of smiling flowers is a recurring motif known from many other works, both earlier and later, by Murakami. By way of example, an almost identical motif can be found in the painting *Cube* from 2001. When comparing *LV Monolith* and *Cube*, it becomes clear how Murakami in different ways has appropriated and incorporated the symbols of Louis Vuitton in his gallery art. The most obvious is perhaps the inclusion of the LV-symbol, which is the biggest depicted element in *LV Monolith*. The sharp, straight lines of the symbol are a significant departure from the rounded forms that otherwise characterize the motif, making the LV symbol stand out. However, Murakami has actually adapted the appearance of the symbol in order to make it fit the visual universe of the painting. This has in part been done by applying multiple colors to the symbol, and by covering some of the letters' serifs with flowers and two white hands that create connotations of the sort of gloves cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse would wear. The colors and gloves serve to integrate the brand symbol in the world of kawaii which the smiling flowers also represent. As mentioned, the painting also includes a small, white anthropomorphic character, which is standing on top of the left half of the V in the LV-symbol. To the uninitiated viewer, it might be mistaken for a character solely made to invoke a sense of kawaii. While this is certainly one possible function, the character is in fact also a direct reference to Murakami's design work for Louis Vuitton: the character, along with the whole scenario depicted in *LV Monolith*, can also be found in the artist's short anime film *Superflat Monogram* which was published in early 2003 to promote Murakami's designs for Louis Vuitton. In the film, the anthropomorphic gestalt serves as a guide for the protagonist, a young girl who is drawn into a magical and colorful Louis Vuitton universe while she is waiting for her friends outside one of the brand's stores.⁸

The connection with Louis Vuitton can also be seen in the shape of the flowers in the paintings, which has changed between *Cube* and *LV Monolith*. Whereas in the older work all the flowers have twelve petals, the majority of the flowers in *LV Monolith* carry only four, which in some cases are contained inside a circle shape. With this change Murakami references a similar flower symbol which, as previously mentioned, is part of the original Louis Vuitton monogram. This is a concrete visual example of the exchange of symbols between the spheres of fashion and art, and between different cultures, which Murakami

works towards: while the eye and smiling flowers, which have been dominating elements in Murakami's gallery art, have migrated onto the products of Louis Vuitton, the shape of the flower symbol from the classic monogram pattern has travelled in the opposite direction.

The link between Louis Vuitton's luxury products and the artworks presented in the 2003 exhibition is underscored by the exclusive gallery environment in which the works are presented. This context emphasizes the monetary value of the artworks and their status as collectors' items, as objects of desire. While the show at Marianne Boesky Gallery was the first instance in which Murakami explicitly drew on elements of his collaboration with Louis Vuitton in a fine art context, it would not be the last.

As has previously been established, Murakami's designs for Louis Vuitton should not be considered separate from his other artworks. In light of this, and given the symbiotic nature of the relationship between Murakami and Louis Vuitton, it makes sense that the show *©Murakami* which ran from October 28, 2007 to February 11, 2008 at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles would include examples of their collaboration.⁹ The exhibition was curated for MOCA by the museum's then chief curator Paul Schimmel, who had worked with Murakami for years (Strick 2007).¹⁰ The show later travelled to Brooklyn Museum (April 5 to July 13, 2008), Museum Für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany (September 27, 2008 to January 4, 2009) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain (February 17 to May 31, 2009). Although its core remained the same, the exhibition was adapted to each specific site. For example, due to its architectural layout, the Brooklyn Museum presented the artworks in a more chronologically oriented manner than had been the case at MOCA (Vogel 2008), and according to *Artnews.org* the Frankfurt iteration of the show "was site-specifically designed by Takashi Murakami with the specifics of the MMK's architecture in Frankfurt in mind, and [was] complemented by works specially produced for this situation" (2008).

While showing the collaborative work of Murakami and Louis Vuitton was to be expected in a retrospective like *©Murakami*, the inclusion in the exhibition of a fully functional Louis Vuitton boutique still raised some debate in the art world. As was reported in *The New York Times*, "[t]he show, with its \$960 handbags and \$695 agendas for sale, created a flap even before its opening on Oct. 29. Art-world purists charge[d] that it [. . .] eroded the line between culture and commerce." However, in the same article, the show's curator was reported to have "maintained that the boutique is integral to the artist's message" and to have stated that "[o]ne of the most radical aspects of Murakami's work is his willingness both to embrace and exploit the idea of his brand, to mingle his identity with a corporate identity and play with that" (La Ferla 2007). In addition to browsing and purchasing fashion products designed by Murakami, visitors could also acquire canvas editions featuring a selection of Murakami's LV monogram designs. The canvases were editions of 100 each and were made from the same material as some of the available fashion products, mounted on a 16 by 16 inch chassis signed by the artist.¹¹

The integration of an operating luxury brand store in the middle of an art show may seem like a gimmicky piece of installation or performance art, but according to an article in *Los Angeles Times*, "Louis Vuitton earned \$1.4 million by selling 214 Murakami works in the MOCA boutique" (Boehm 2011). This information came to light in court documents

in connection with a lawsuit filed by one customer, Clint Arthur, after he discovered that two canvases featuring Murakami's multicolored LV monogram pattern, which he had purchased at the boutique at MOCA, were made from the same mass-produced material as the Louis Vuitton handbags and other accessories.

Arthur initially went to court and demanded compensation on the basis that the products had fraudulently been presented as original works of art made for the exhibition, and that their material origin had been concealed. While these claims were dismissed by the US District Court in Los Angeles (Boehm 2011), the case highlights the common perception, and expectation, that art products and fashion products have fundamental differences. The idea of the artwork as an "original" is strongly connected to what the German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin ([1936] 2008) has famously called *aura*. However, given that a major point in Murakami's artistic practice is precisely the blurring of the boundary between art and commerce, it makes perfect sense to sell mass-produced items as art. In addition, as was pointed out in a post by "juggernut3" on the art blog *Arrested Motion*, "there is one *small* difference between the bags and the canvas. Takashi Murakami signed each canvas and the bags were never touched" (2009). The signature is indicative of a direct connection between the artwork and the artist and adds some level of *aura* to the individual canvas, even if the motif of the latter has not been hand painted. In a contemporary art market where it is commonplace to publish large editions of multiples (e.g. prints, sculptures), and where artists often leave much of the work to studio assistants, and in some cases completely outsource production, the signature is often the *only* indication of the artist's involvement.

Marc Jacobs and the curation of art for fashion

As mentioned previously, Marc Jacobs' has played a key role as a curator of artist collaborators for Louis Vuitton. The importance of Jacobs' direct influence on the brand's partnership with Takashi Murakami was indicated when the former stepped down as creative director for Louis Vuitton in November 2013, as his successor, Nicolas Ghesquière, soon opted to discontinue the line of Murakami-designed products (Milligan 2015).

Another indication of Marc Jacobs' personal involvement with, and influence on, artist collaborations is the fact that they have also been part of the work with his eponymous brand. As a recent case in point, echoing the initial graffiti-inspired collaboration with Stephen Sprouse for Louis Vuitton in 2001, since 2011 the Brooklyn-based artist Bast has contributed designs to the Marc Jacobs label.¹² Like Sprouse, Bast—who has been doing street art since the late 1990s—has brought a certain subcultural flavor and edginess to the Marc Jacobs brand, blending high fashion with DIY street aesthetics.¹³

Continuing to blur the line between art and fashion, in 2014 the Marc Jacobs Collection Store in New York City hosted a so-called "celebration" of Bast's art. On display was a mix of original artworks by Bast and products designed by the artist in collaboration with Marc Jacobs.¹⁴ A limited edition signed screen print featuring one of the artist's designs for

Marc Jacobs was also available on the evening. A comparable mixing of art gallery and fashion retail store had previously been seen at the opening of Agnes B's "Galerie Boutique" on Howard Street in New York City on March 31, 2011. At this event, artworks by a plethora of artists, including Bast and New York-based South Korean artist Rostarr, were shown along with the brand's apparel ("juggernaut3" 2011). In a similar vein, during the spring of 2015, the young New York-based label Cocurata arranged so-called *openings* in select fashion stores around the world to promote its first collection which featured designs by Rostarr, Bast and British artist Paul Insect, all of whom are associated with the world of street art.¹⁵ Venues for Cocurata's shows included Lane Crawford in Hong Kong, Ron Herman in Tokyo and Le Bon Marché in Paris. In addition to the clothes designed by artists for the brand, the displays comprised of other types of artwork, such as collaborative papier-mâché sculptures by Bast and Paul Insect and Bast's screen prints pasted on the store walls (echoing the kind of street art aesthetic the artist is known for). It is worth noting that Bast created similar walls with paste-ups at the Marc Jacobs showroom in Milan in 2013, which were used as backdrops for a fashion photoshoot.¹⁶

The use of the *opening*, something that carries strong connotations to the inauguration of an art show, as an event to frame a brand's fashion products, along with the mixing of artist-designed apparel and more traditional art objects, contributes to blurring the line between retail store and art gallery, and—indeed—between fashion and art. As such, the effect of the events arranged by Marc Jacobs, Agnes B and Cocurata was in some ways similar to that of the inclusion of the Louis Vuitton boutique in the ©Murakami show. However, a major difference is that the former approach turned on its head what Murakami and Louis Vuitton had done at MOCA, by moving the art out of the established institutional context (i.e. art museums and galleries) and physically embedding it in the world of fashion retail.

The ongoing fusion of the art gallery and fashion store exemplified by Marc Jacobs, Agnes B and Cocurata suggests that the boundaries between the fields of art and fashion, which Bourdieu so sharply separated, will most likely dissolve further in the years to come. While this development is to a large degree driven by financial interests and marketing concerns, it does not necessarily mean that art is acquiescing to the values of the marketplace of fashion. Rather, fashion is becoming just another viable way for artists to express and market themselves.

For artists, working with multinational fashion brands presents an opportunity to reach a global audience, whereas the collaborations can add to a brand's cultural capital. While the blatant commercial nature of the fashion industry may cause some concern that the fusion of art and fashion risks compromising the purity often associated with art, it should be kept in mind that vast amounts of money flow through the art market, and that art has long been about both cultural and monetary capital. In terms of critical fashion curation, in a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to clearly separate the products and the valid forms of symbolic capital of the fields of art and fashion, the cases presented in this chapter serve as indications of ways both producers and consumers are encouraged to more fully embrace the artistic nature of fashion products as well as the commercial nature of fine art.

Notes

- 1 The lecture was later reworked and published as the essay “Some Properties of Fields” (Bourdieu [1984] 1993: 72–77).
- 2 As for Pierre Cardin, on November 30, 2016, Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris hosted his fashion show *70 years of living sculptures*. Apart from being a celebration of Cardin’s seventy-year career, the event also marked his twenty-fifth anniversary as a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts (AFP 2016). Cardin was elected as a member of Académie des Beaux-Arts on February 21, 1991 (*Academie-des-beaux-arts.fr*).
- 3 To explain this point, Baudrillard writes that “the everydayness of [a] chair [. . .] is precisely its context and, specifically, the mass-produced context of all similar or almost similar chairs [. . .]. Everydayness is *difference in repetition*. By isolating the chair on the canvas, I remove all everydayness from it and, at the same time, deprive the canvas of its character of everyday object [. . .].” ([1970] 1998: 118).
- 4 According to Murakami, “‘Super Flat’, one form of ‘Japanese’ ‘avant-garde’ ‘art’, is an ‘-ism’—like Cubism, Surrealism, Minimalism, and Situationism before it—only this one [the Japanese] have created” (Murakami 2000: 25).
- 5 Otaku literally means “‘your home’; obsessed fans, primarily of anime and manga” (Murakami 2005: xiv). However, otaku also refers to the products these fans consume.
- 6 In 2002, the year before the first results of the collaboration with Murakami were made available to consumers, Louis Vuitton sold product for \$1.4 billion in Japan alone. This was equivalent to more than one-third of the company’s worldwide revenue for that year (Chandler and Kano 2003).
- 7 The works included in the show can be seen at www.marianneboeskygallery.com/exhibitions/takashi-murakami/works (accessed December 2, 2016).
- 8 The film can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha26vA-tkw> (accessed December 2, 2016).
- 9 According to La Ferla (2007), Louis Vuitton “did not pay for the show; however, it did underwrite a splashy opening-night party that attracted celebrities like Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell and Pharrell Williams.” The same observation is made by Drohojowska-Philp (2007).
- 10 While ©Murakami also blended the commercial and artistic spheres, 2012 saw the “departure under pressure” of Schimmel in response to the more populist direction of Jeffrey Deitch, who became director of the institution on June 1, 2010 (Smith 2012; Boehm 2012; Bengtson 2014).
- 11 The Louis Vuitton boutique at MOCA was designed by Jean-Marc Gady. Images of the space, including some of the available fashion products and canvases, can be found at <http://jeanmarcgady.com/en/projets/lv-magasin-ephemere/> (accessed December 2, 2016).
- 12 This collaboration was ongoing from 2011 through 2015. At the time of writing it is unclear if Bast will be contributing further to the Marc Jacobs line.
- 13 Jacobs’ affinity with the world of street art can also be seen in the curation for Louis Vuitton of artists Retna, Aiko and Os Gemeos, who all designed scarves for the brand’s 2013 Spring and Summer Collection (Killip 2013). Jacobs’ engagement with street art and graffiti culture was also evident when in May 2012 the artist Kidult vandalized a Marc Jacobs store in SOHO by using a fire extinguisher filled with pink paint to write the word “ART” in large letters across the façade. In response, Jacobs released a \$686 t-shirt featuring a screen printed image of the vandalized store (Crotty 2012). The artist responded to this appropriation in June 2013 by spraying “686” (a reference to the price of the first t-shirt) in green paint across the façade of a Marc Jacobs store in Paris. The result of this action was also photographed and released on a T-shirt and a cap by Marc Jacobs, leading to speculation that the ostensible feud between the artist and the brand was in fact a consensual collaboration (Mau 2013).

- 14** A video entitled *Marc Jacobs Celebrates the Work of Bäst*, documenting the event and promoting both the artist and the brand, can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wGykeg8cRs (accessed December 2, 2016).
- 15** Cocurata—which has described itself on Instagram as an “art & fashion atelier designed to exhibit culturally reflective artists through curated collections”—was co-founded in 2014 by George Gorrow, who also founded the Australian fashion label Ksubi, and George Benias, director and curator at the New York-based Allouche Gallery. Bast and Paul Insect are both represented by the gallery.
- 16** Images of the walls can be found at <http://arrestedmotion.com/2013/07/streets-bast-x-marc-jacobs-milan/> (accessed December 2, 2016).

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