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Cultural Exchange: How Influences of Japanese Culture and European Culture Are Shared in the S/S 1999 Collections of Yohji Yamamoto and Alexander McQueen.

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Abstract

The notion of cultural exchange has become one of the most important in the fashion field. It is related to the concept of 'globalisation', which has been used variously in different concepts such as postmodernism and fashion field. The question motivating this study is how these concepts developed in the collections of Yohji Yamamoto and Alexander McQueen in 1999. Hence, this essay investigates the impact of Japanese and European culture on the two designers' work in 1999. To consider the question, there are four concepts that need to be considered: globalisation, postmodernism, performance and fashion field. To demonstrate the research question, support the case study and achieve a better understanding of the term cultural exchange. Moreover, the key research method used is visual analysis, to establish and discuss Yamamoto and McQueen's collections in Spring/Summer 1999 and explain the historical context. Therefore, cultural exchanged is an approach in the fashion field for producers.

Keywords

G Fashion field; Globalisation; Performance; Cultural exchange.

1. Introduction

This essay will discuss how influences of Japanese and European culture were shared in the Spring/Summer (S/S) 1999 collections of Yohji Yamamoto and Alexander McQueen. In particular, it will explore how Japanese aesthetics were drawn on in Yamamoto's collection in 1999, compare the Yamamoto and McQueen's collections, define the influences and impacts in culture and fashion field between the two collections and understand what made this cultural exchange happen in two designers from contrasting cultural backgrounds.

The comparison of the two designers 'collections is treated as a case study to demonstrate the cultural environment in a historical context. In addition, the essay will discuss the period of the 1990s and mention the significance of 1999. According to Warden (2015), the 1990s were the period of the avant-garde, and the modernist avant-garde was often impacted by history or culture. Hence, the avant-garde became a symbol of the1990s. At the same time, it is worth looking at the impact of globalisation, not only in a cultural context but also in the global economy in relation to consumption. This makes cultural exchange and the influence of globalisation in fashion important. Historically, fashion keeps changing through time, globalisation is not the only factor that affects cultural exchange (English, 2011). Therefore, the essay explains what other elements, such as postmodernism and fashion field, also encourage cultural exchange in fashion. Moreover, we discuss the multiple impacts of globalisation, which will help develop an understanding of how 'cultural exchange 'operates.

However, there is also the question, what is the connection in different fashion fields? In addition, how does fashion work with globalised consumption, and what is the relationship between consumer and designer? Thus, is postmodernism important for Japanese and

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European designers? In addition, how does postmodernism help Japanese fashion become globalised and how does cultural exchange spread fashion globally? Finally, what were the reasons that led both designers to use performance in their shows.

2. Globalised Fashion Culture

Since 1970, the Japanese fashion designers had a chance to display their works globally, and as English (2011, p. 1) states, 'they offered a new and unique expression of creativity, challenging the established notions of status, display and sexuality in contemporary fashion. 'Japanese designers gave the new definition of fashion, dissociated from the contemporary fashion system, away from the historical archetype. In the 1980s, when Japanese designers first came to Western notice, their designs stayed in transition and could be explained as they respected Japan's past and challenged or influenced the West's future (English, 2011). For a long time, Western fashion was held to a neat and tidy body look, which is the extreme opposite status of what Yohji Yamamoto has done. Therefore, that was the reason that led reaction to most Japanese designers 'first shows in Paris being mixed and critical, but they still had the power to shake the French fashion world (English, 2011). The advantage in one aspect is Japanese designers helped Japan become a national character in the fashion world, and the style that displays their internal concept is above the external world. To say that, in Yohji Yamamoto's fashion philosophy, he does not want to explain Japan to the world because he does not want to be labelled (Lochanski, 2015). His value was from clothes rather than being labelled in something that relates to Japanese culture, so for Yamamoto, he was influenced by the West and he put inspirations in his collection. As Figure 2 shows, the hat and the way people helped the model to dress up were deeply affected by Western dresses and haute couture. Yamamoto challenged the traditional of Europe's fashion image character, that impacted and corrupted clothing habitude in both East and West, on account of Japan's clothing structures investigated from global styles and simulated within and to distinguish themselves (English, 2011). Therefore, Yamamoto advised that cohesion between the past and the future is an action of civil creation, and this suggestion is for those Japanese who felt confused or lost in-between tradition and westernisation (The Business of Fashion, 2016). However, by the early years of the 1990s, Western style dress was standard for the social class in Japan (Hori et al. 2012).

On the other hand, the British designer Alexander McQueen, was born in London, and he stayed in French fashion houses for five years for Givenchy, and in 1999, after the S/S collection, he was named as the best avant-garde designer of the year in New York (Watt, 2012). In his work, he was always inspired by contemporary culture and he loved to try different things and experiment with 'concept'. In his designs, people can find many possibilities and found a barrier of innovative definitions. The 90s indicated an analysation of femininity, and fashion was tailored in an extremely different presentation (Watt, 2012). He changed the fashion, changed the way people believed in fashion and give a new definition of femininity and fashion, and all of this happened after his S/S1999 collection. McQueen was impacted by the avant-garde, globalised fashion culture, he was part of the result of what he could do in the period of the 1990s (Knox, 2010). The reason seems to be obvious, he and Yamamoto to a certain extent have shared cultural histories in the time period, although it was intangible, but that was a consequence of globalisation.

3. Cultural Exchange

More specifically, 'change 'is a good way of presenting 'innovation 'and 'exchange 'seems likely to be another explanation for 'deep innovation '(Silver and DiLiberto, 2012). The cultural exchange in terms of the S/S 1999 collection effectively shows the era gave designers a good environment for producing innovative designs and because of the time period, designers can

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take from either Western or Japanese cultural influences to keep the world still developing and innovating. Certainly, the relationship between designer and clothes, and in McQueen's concept, he explained women can dress for themselves and that demonstrated something really needed to change through life, and in this look, it is not hard to see what he wants to explain, and that is a visual analysis from him to the audience (Knox, 2010).

To develop fashion, it is necessary to keep traditional culture and succeed in modernising. That is a way of changing the ordinary. At the beginning of the 1990s, the fashion world became much more free than before, women started matching their Chanel jackets with jeans, and the silhouette of clothes became more casual (Silver and DiLiberto, 2012). As a result, that led the designers and brands to be commercially successful, many Western designers in this decade went back to historical non-Western cultures, and were inspired by these cultures (Clark, 2004). Most the fashion journalists had the ability to find what is on now in London and Paris, and for the fashion revolution, it is not just for creativity and innovation, it also means bringing a cultural sense into fashion production. In other words, the example of Japanese designer's designs is taking and combining Western modernity with Japanese tradition, as Figure 2 shows, the layering of the dress is influenced by traditional Japanese kimonos. Thus, as Skov (2003, p. 220) proposed, 'The reference to Yves Saint Laurent is hardly incidental. More than any other fashion creator he has made ethnic influences the emblem of his work. 'What is the advantage of globalisation in the fashion industry? The answer could be the industry is easy to expand if fashion is globalised.

As is easy to see, globalisation will push the economy forward and the different leading cultures influenced each other and inspired by this the designers 'collections. For the global economy, it is always related to fashion industries and fashion brands. As many companies have cross-countries business, and nowadays many different products, not only in fashion but also in other business, the globalisation of markets goes with the continental financial world (Levitt, 1983). Taking from London to Tokyo, more and more Japanese corporations had funds from world trading, and also the long-term influence for Japanese enterprise altered because of the GPD increases, so that companies rose. For exmaple, fashion brands established their branches globally to increase their capital (Levitt, 1983).

Furthermore, in Levitt's view, there are two features that shape the world: technology and globalisation. Technology helps regulate people's choices and decisions; globalisation determines how much preferences develop and assemble from markets where economies need to go.

According to English (2011), fashion design reflects social, political and economic changes through history, especially in the 70s to 90s; this globally impacted society and grew into postmodernist visual arts practice.

4. Japanese Culture Integrates Other Cultural Aesthetic

First of all, 1999 was the most important year in the 20th century in fashion because in 1990 the modernist avant-garde appeared and many fashion designers changed the world (Reed, 2013). At this time, the situation of the global economy and politics was distinct (Appadurai, ,1993). A highlight was that Western culture was impacted by Japanese culture, and fashion designers used this influence as an inspiration to create collections (Dirix, 2016). Hence, the comparison between Yamamoto and McQueen is a study of cultural aesthetics differences between East and West. In addition, comparing Yohji Yamamoto's collection in 1999 with Alexander McQueen's collection in 1999 is a way to understand how Japanese and European fashion design influenced each other by their cultural sense. They broke the conservatism of the 1990s, and particularly in the S/S1999's collection.

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The common point between Yamamoto and McQueen is that before they started making dresses they did not attend or gain any knowledge from design schools. However, after they went to the most famous school in the world, they started learning fashion and started learning how to become a fashion designer (Knox, 2010).

Their purpose was to let a woman be herself, not for her husband, not for men, to make a personal statement for females and make them stronger, they both made dresses for women (Knox, 2010). In McQueen's S/S 1999 collection, he balanced the relationship between hardcore avant-garde and femininity (Watt, 2012). Figure 1 shows the final dress from the show, called 'No. 13', and as McQueen said, that was the only collection that made him cry because it was so beautiful (Fox, 2012). The dress transformed from white to colours would indicate Western culture also going from single to multiplicity. Figure 2 displays look No. 51 of Yamamoto's 1999 collection, called the transformative wedding collection, (the collection was his second wedding collection), and this collection was an enchanting show. Moreover, it also indicates that Japanese culture integrates other cultural senses and makes them globalised.

5. Fashion Field

The fashion field is helping people to visualise fashion as a structured social space with 'forces', 'players', 'capitals 'and 'strategies '(Bourdieu, 1993). As Bourdieu (1993, p. 132) states, 'Fashion is a very prestigious subject in the sociological tradition, at the same time as being apparently rather frivolous. 'In fashion, the hierarchy of objects has divided into worthy or unworthy, which means everyone can judge any products in a subjective experience. Therefore, in his opinion, a field can be explained as an area relating between individuals or institutions competing for the same interests. Applied to the case study, Figures 1 and 2 are in the invisible competition field, because two cultural background designers in 1999 did a revolutionary show in the same field.

On the one hand, the reason for this happening could be coincidence, but on the other hand, it is a corollary in the field, because two different cultures are shared with each other in different approaches, which led to virtual competition happening, and that competition is more interesting than others; the fields of cultural and information sharing are helping economic markets and society develop. The purpose of field competition is to produce valuable goods, that is not only a challenge for designers but also a way of showing their ability in the field. Bourdieu (1993) also figured out field is an undirected choice of space, it marked the items for members of the society, but no options for choice, individuals can compete with the various strategies to choose and come with a result, and that shows the boundary and limitation of the topic, but also shows the creativity of the member (Bourdieu, 1993). For example, the field of McQueen's 1999 collection is to re-identify the beauty of women, and he is the only designer who makes audiences react intensely to a show. As Figure 1 shows, McQueen used robots to reproduce the clothes by inks, and this field of practice provides a field as a microworld built by the relations between conservation and transformation. Figure 2 shows Yamamoto hides his looks in the look and is an aesthetic way for the presentation.

6. How Did Performance Become A Popular Way

In McQueen's collection, it can be understood as he has been given a topic by himself for S/S 1999's collection, and he created the collection under the set topic. Hence, he used performance and robots in the show, and that is his strategy and genius in the field, therefore, the success of the show increased the capital, as well as the value of 'Alexander McQueen 'in the field (Bourdieu, 1993). In Baudrillard's (1994) point of view, the value of everything is not produced in the process but is produced by the communication and exchange. In particular, McQueen requires a larger market boundary and production; in his show, he displayed the combination

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of fashion creativity and technology production (Fox, 2012). Hence, the value of the show depends on the calculations amounted by agents, the price in markets and also the 'cultural background 'among the collection (Bourdieu,1993).

In the society, imagine the fashion field is a circle (Bourdieu,1993), the market is in the centre, and the connection between designers or producers and consumers is the market, and that makes the whole field operate. Both McQueen and Yamamoto are in the fashion field, therefore they must follow the role in this field. The value for their dress was from producers, brands, buyers, press and consumers in the market. However, avant-garde designers are used to being described by the words unusual, exclusivity (Kellner, 1994).

Fashion is not only a symbol through clothes, but also plays a 'communication role 'between designers and consumers (Smelik, 2106). As Yamamoto's collection did a clear communication to the audience, in Figure 2, the model was adding clothes by herself, but after a few steps, two staff came and helped her, that is an indication to define the difference between his and McQueen's show. The value Yamamoto added to the show was manual, and it will make the journey along the networking valuable (English, 2011).

7. Conclusion

In summary, through analysing the images of McQueen and Yamamoto's 1999 collections and applied to theoretical works, it is noted the 1990s were the turning point in fashion. Avant-garde fashion first appeared and that was one of the influences of cultural exchange, because fashion is nonconservative, which needs multiple cultural forces to push the boundary and make it globalised. Most Japanese designers broke traditional cultural fashion and created collections that integrate with Western culture or were inspired by Western fashion garments after the booming economy in Japan, which led the public to accept an explosion of creativity in the industry. Simultaneously, McQueen designed the minimal dress in Figure 1 and in contrast Yamamoto designed the complex dress in Figure 2, and that is one of the expressions of cultural exchange.

On the other hand, cultural exchange was the result of globalisation and postmodernism in the fashion field. In particular, it can be demonstrated as 'creativity 'because in the fashion field producers tried to be inspired by different cultures and integrate with itself for creating new collections. First, in the case study, both designers used performance in the same season's show and that indicates the impact of performance between 1997 and 1999 was extensive and led to performance becoming a new form in the way of presenting fashion. Second, the successes of these two shows led brand's value and consumption increased, which is the most powerful evidence in the field to show that competition between different brands is a 'force 'that pushes 'players 'to use the right 'strategy 'to make a 'capital 'increment. As Giddens (1991, p. 11) states, 'For authors influenced by Marx, the major transformative force shaping the modern world is capitalism. 'In addition, Yamamoto and McQueen showed that postmodernism fashion designs, in both figures and the way they approached their collections, was cultural sharing in this field and is trending in the global world.

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