

ENGLISH Bonnie (Aus)

EAST vs WEST: Japanese Fashion as a Re-Considered Form – paper

In the last few decades, Japanese fashion designers have had an unequivocal impact on Western dress, and have influenced and inspired artists and designers globally. Issey Miyake has been revered as the “Picasso of Fashion” by responding, in innate terms, to the postmodernist dictates of design. His clothing design, based on the Japanese kimono, has a sculptural quality which has remained his trademark throughout his career. Miyake, including others, has placed greater emphasis on form, fabric and the interactive space between the body and the cloth. Clothes speak many languages and according to Miyake ...’ have to be seen on the outside....as well as felt on the inside’. In January 1986, Time magazine acknowledged Miyake’s sculptural entities, as ‘defying convention’, dissimilar to European clothing which was ‘a package that was already formed.’ His fashions proposed radical clothing concepts which challenged the conventional meaning of dress. According to Deslandres, costume curator of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, Miyake’s clothes were declarations of independence for the body, which ‘did not look out of place on exhibit in museums.’

This paper will note the contrast of Japanese contemporary fashion with western dress, that doggedly adhered to the structured and tailored fit which extolled the virtues of sexuality, glamour and status (and which became the mainstay of European haute couture design) for centuries. It will explore the notion that, like other visual arts practices, a plethora of revivalist styles and multicultural appropriations dominated international fashion in the last thirty years. It will ask why fashion journalists wrote about the death knell for high fashion due to ‘the lack of originality among top (western) designers’, who appeared to be ‘walking up blind alleys, uncertain of their role’ (reported by Juliet Herd, London, 10/08/91 Courier-Mail).

Ultimately, this paper will argue that Japanese postmodernist fashion, seen as a re-considered form enriched by traditional and popular reference, not only highlighted the cultural bankruptcy that became apparent in 1970s and 1980s western fashion, but offered an alternative direction in which fashion became more closely allied to art.

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international multi-media Teaching & Learning' award for her CD-ROM entitled ' Fashion & Art' based on 18th century portrait painting from the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Having co-curated the 1st major fashion exhibition in Queensland entitled 'Griffith University's Tokyo Vogue: Japanese and Australian Fashion' held at the Brisbane City Hall Gallery in 1999, she continues her studies in postmodernist Japanese fashion design.
