

## **SMITH Natalie (NZ)**

### ***Conceptual Couturiers And The Flight From Art Fashion - paper***

This paper examines the practice of conceptual couturiers arguing that they consciously take flight from the “culture industry”. Stripping their work of hype, and focussing on ideas, the couturiers convey a refreshingly disinterested disposition towards an artworld driven by aspects of the concept of fashion.

Arthur Danto calls our time the “post-historical era of art,” by which he means the end of the grand narratives of art history. One outcome of this is that there are no longer any constraints on what a work of visual art can look like, therefore, fashion design can be considered a work of art. In *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in the Post-Historical Perspective*, (1992), Danto further wrote that art history is no longer internally dictated to by its own history, but is now externally dictated by fashion. However, our capacity to objectively recognise fashion design as a work of art has been eroded by the artworlds new relationship with the mechanisms of the fashion industry: specifically its emphasis on newness, sensationalism and relationship with the mass media. Under these conditions we do not see fashion design, in exhibition, as a work of art, we view it as novel and audience conscious. The blockbuster exhibition *Versace: The Reinvention of Material*, (*Versace: The Reinvention of Material* (Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, April 7 - July 15, 2001) is an example of this. The exhibition played to a public desire to know about the celebrity of Versace and his clients. Exhibitions, like *Versace*, trivialise the relationship between art and fashion and do not add to our knowledge of art or fashion design as a work of art.

In contrast, conceptual couturiers, by placing a distance between themselves, and the elements of the fashion industry that are now part of the artworld, create a space in which we can make objective judgements about the burgeoning inter-relationship between art and fashion.

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