

Question 5:

From the **Lens-Based Image** Making research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists or designers that relate to your practice or interest, and construct a 2,500-word essay. Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.

Research in Context (ADAD5003)

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FASHION HAS A SOUL?



Photograph by Paolo Roversi, Kate et Mario, Paris, 1992

Chapter one

“Naked I came into the world, naked I shall go out of it! And a very good thing too, for it reminds me that I am naked under my shirt, whatever its colour.” ([E. M. Forster, 1938](#))

What does the author mean by these words?

We can interpret, that at the end we cannot take anything with us, we are leaving the world the same way that we came in-naked. *“And a very good thing too, for it reminds me that I am naked under my shirt, whatever its colour”* Let us tell ourselves that we should not conceal who we really are and who we are for others, no matter what clothes we wear. At birth and death, our nakedness reminds us to be the same throughout life. Behind the clothing, position, and success, we cannot hide.

In this essay, we will analyse how the Fashion industry work. The one of Icon of fashion is Vogue Magazine. Conde Nast, a New Yorker, took charge of a failing society newspaper and converted it into the twentieth century's most influential and glamorous fashion magazine. The work of some of the most popular designers, illustrators, and photographers such as Toni Frissell, Edward Steichen, Irving Penn, Erwin Blumenfeld, Annie Leibovitz, Steven Klein, Bruce Weber, Richard Avedon, and Herb Ritts published in past Vogue editions. In Vogue background as a social gazette in the late nine century to the exploration of contemporary fashion photography in the mid-twentieth century. Vogue is the magazine that contributed most to the improvement of photography in general and creative photography, finding better ways to express fashion with elegance and glamour. *“Change is good; it's what fashion is all about.”* ([Tudor, 2014](#)) Says Suzy Menkes, British Art Journalist and Fashion critic at New York Times, Vogue and Harper's BAZAAR, giving an interview about herself. In particular, the Fashion industry need changes too. We would analyse the future more how the Fashion industry works, and what has changed and what could be done more. Fashion is one of the biggest Manufacturing industries in the world, also most polluting and unethical. We will analyse only a couple of problems like modern slavery, beauty standards, discrimination, and “hazardous” art from many more what is hidden under glamour pictures.

Chapter two

Who makes our clothes?



“ The child workers are beaten for falling behind in their production goal, making mistakes or taking too long in the bathroom (which is filthy, lacking even toilet paper, soap or towels)” ([Kelly, 2014](#))

Did we ever ask ourselves why most of our clothes made in countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, or Pakistan, and not in Germany, Canada, or the USA? We all knew the answer-because of money.

“What is ethical fashion? It’s a confusing term. Sometimes it’s easier to define by what it isn’t – and unfortunately that is most of what can be found on the high street. Unethical fashion means very little transparency, accountability and knowledge of the supply chain. It means demands of very quick lead times and production turnaround. It means producers played off against each other. It means a wage that doesn’t even afford the worker an adequate salary for two meals a day.” ([Minney, 2008](#))

In 2013, on April 24th in Bangladesh, the commercial clothes manufacturing factory the Rana Plaza collapsed, and killed 1138 workers, and more than 2000 were injured.



Rana Plaza, Bangladesh, 2013. Photograph by Anadolu agency/Getty images.

Cary Somers, who worked in clothing industry started Fashion Revolution campaigning, to stand up for human rights.



Photograph by Munir Uz Zuman/AFP/Getty images, 2013

"It had to lead to revolutionary change within the fashion industry." ([Blanchard, 2019](#)). Since this disaster, several apparel brands come forward to protect the textile workers, but many of them still don't see the issue, and modern slavery still exists, and after many years of this catastrophe, the poorest and most undervalued people in the world make our garments.

Unfortunately, many luxury fashion companies, such as Prada and Fendi, use vulnerable workers from underdeveloped countries to manufacture their goods. Workers in Taiwan, for example, are charged \$7,000 for a job and if they don't receive enough cash to pay back, they were becoming slaves. Nearly 82% of staff had their passports stolen.

We can see that not only in poor countries exists modern slavery. Another source says that *“Fast fashion giant Boohoo is facing an investigation into accusations of modern slavery after it emerged clothing workers at factories in Leicester, UK, were being paid just £3.50 an hour. An investigation carried out by The Sunday Times last week claimed that textile workers producing clothes for Boohoo’s suppliers were being paid far below the UK minimum wage (£9.30) while working in unsafe conditions.”* ([Melville, 2020](#))

Chapter three

“I understand that people want to see just the posh side of fashion, but fashion is a lot of work.” Alessandro Michele ([Amsden, 2015](#))



Photograph by Lee Clower for Gucci Kids 2016

This is one of many famous phrases by Alessandro Michele who worked with many luxury brands and working as creative director of Gucci since 2015. At some point, he is right because we see only the glamour side of the Fashion industry. But everything is changing people became more active, they have more knowledge, and more information to make a difference. Future Fashion, how could it look like?

Consequently, there are people like Sarah Klymkiw who making a change by little steps.

“The clothing business model is built on volume and getting the clothes produced as cheaply and quickly as possible – buy cheap, wear a few times and then throw away. This is not a sustainable model for our environment,” says Sarah Klymkiw, head of education at Traid, a UK charity working to reduce the environmental and social impacts of clothing waste.” ([Still, 2017](#))

Also, it is hard to believe but only one percent of used clothes is recycled. The UK recycling thinktank WRAP reports that every year £ 140 million worth of clothes goes to landfill. The production of 'fast fashion' has supercharged this linear paradigm, where customer demand is stimulated by rapid design and pattern formation, large marketing budgets and low pricing. To decrease clothing intake, we should all take two basic steps: buy less and recycle.

"What will the fashion industry look like in a decade? If I had my way, it would have reinvented its approach to 'waste', mass-produced fashion would no longer exist and we would value clothes for how they are made, not by whom." ([Harling, 2020](#)).

Young and talented nine innovators are working to make a difference. *“ From the milliner growing plant-based biomaterials to the designer collaging old trainers, their ideas are blueprints for a fashion future that doesn't cost the earth.” ([Harling 2020](#))*

Chapter four

Size Zero should be banned?



“Dauxerre claims bulimia and cocaine-use are two widespread methods used in the modeling industry so that the models keep thin. However, she says this rarely transcends to the top, household name, models who do not have the same pressures to stay thin to be booked for shows.” ([Blair, 2017](#)). Models Luisel Ramos (age 22), Ana Carolina Reston (age of 21), Eliana Ramos (age of 18), Maiara Galvao Vieira (age of 14), Elmalich (age of 21) died because of Anorexia Nervosa. Sounds horrific, isn't it? Could young girls to avoid Anorexia if underweight Models will be banned from the Fashion industry? Maybe better educate people about this medical condition? Moreover, we have some countries that did first and drastic steps to avoid Anorexia Nervosa, because young girls can look and these models as an example to follow. *“Models working in France will need a medical certificate proving they are healthy and not dangerously thin under a new law approved by French MPs. Failure to provide a certificate will be punishable by up to six months in jail and a fine of €75,000 (around £54,500). The bill also forces magazines to flag up photographs that have been “touched up” or Photoshopped.”* ([Willsher, 2015](#))

“The fashion industry is not a pretty business. Here, one of its own, the former editor of Australian Vogue Kirstie Clements describes a thin-obsessed culture in which starving models eat tissues and resort to surgery when dieting isn't enough” ([Clements, 2013](#))

On the other hand, we have many experts who are saying that Anorexia is a biological illness and showing a possible link between genetics and anorexia. That means young people do not become ill with anorexia because they are looking at very skinny models, they have the gene for this kind of medical condition. And banning thin models do not stop Anorexia. It is good to see the Modelling industry working with all shapes models. Otherwise, it could be seen as discrimination because beauty isn't a size or colour, we need to celebrate the diversity that is out there. For example, the Fashion industry has plus-size models and disabled models and because of medical condition girls who have anorexia should not be banned from a job what they like, to help bring visibility to those with differences who work within the arts.



Photograph by Erwin Blumenfeld, Jean Patchett, January 1950

Chapter five

Being herself?



Photograph by Benjamin Vnuk, 2017

"Aden also posted an image from a photo shoot for Glamour magazine in 2017 showing her with a green wrap under her hijab and feathers around her neck. "I went back to my hotel room and just sobbed after this shoot because deep down I knew this wasn't it. But was too scared to speak up," she wrote. "Also, very common struggle when you are the FIRST to do something." (Yeung,2020) Fashion Modelling comes with both positive and negative. Especially for a model who has Muslim religion like Aden, with so many restrictions and head covering with hijab, unfortunately Fashion industry makes forget the roots, values, religion, faith, and family traditions. *"Aden, the first model to wear a hijab and burkini in the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, posted a series of Instagram Stories describing the*

difficulties she has faced in the "toxic mess called fashion." In the posts, she recounted skipping prayers, wearing clothes she wasn't comfortable in and styling her hijab in ways she felt betrayed her values". ([Yeung 2020](#))

On the other hand, giving the interview for Glamour magazine in 2017 Halima Aden says: *" My peers wore bikinis, which is fine, but I decided to wear a burkini, a full-coverage swimsuit that's more comfortable for me. Growing up, I had used my fear of looking different as an excuse to quit choir. The real reason was actually that my Somali family and friends weren't coming to support me (music is typically frowned upon in our religion), but I blamed it on standing out. I wasn't going to quit again. For me, being in a pageant was about taking chances and not worrying about the outcome."* ([Kitchens, 2017](#))

However, many people and among which are also celebrities including Rihanna, Naomi Campbell, Gigi Hadid, was met her announcement with support. Seems she is not forgetting her identity; her belonging, and she does not need to change herself to please others.

As mentioned earlier, Fashion comes with both positive and negative. Moreover, Fashion monster Vogue doesn't leave behind and stood up for Russian Artist Yulia Tsvetkova, the Russian Artist, Activist, and Feminist. What it feels like to live and create in Russia? Art could be "hazardous"?

" For me an attack on Yulia is not simply an attack on women's body in art, but on women in general. A female body is something natural, something that is with us at all times and not only during sex. For me this project is an attempt for women to reclaim the image of our bodies in this seemingly modern society, which is still ruled by deeply rooted patriarchal morals." ([America, 2020](#)) she asked to take act and support Yulia Tsvetkova by posting images of own body or do remote shooting via FaceTime by using hashtags #ЗаЮлю (for Yulia), #моетелонепорнография (my body is not pornography), and sign a petition to help free Yulia Tsvetkova.



So, what have done Yulia Tsvetkova?

“Tsvetkova is now facing charges of “spreading pornography” for a Vagina Monologues page she published on social media last November, which features illustrations of vaginas, aimed at breaking the stigma around women’s bodies.

“I laughed, my lawyer laughed, my friends laughed. Anyone can see that this isn’t pornography,” she says. Yet she spent four months under house arrest and prosecutors are relentlessly trying to build a case against her. If she is found guilty, as 99% of those prosecuted in Russia’s criminal courts are, she could be sent to jail for up to six years.

Tsvetkova has become a symbol of the resistance against Russia’s enforcement of “traditional values” and despite

the Kremlin's attempt to stigmatize her activism, she has received unprecedented support from celebrities, artists, and journalists across Russia and beyond.” (Roache, 2020)

The body-positive images like “Real woman have body fat and it’s normal”, or “Real woman have wrinkles and it’s normal” According to Russian law, she was charged for the publication of pornography.



Drawings by Yulia Tsvetkova 2020

What does it feel to fit in with beauty standards living in the twenty-first century? In conclusion, we can say, Fashion will become more ethical and less harmless if we respect each other, because we came into this world naked and the rest is art. “Art has a voice - let it speak.” - Rochelle Carr, Abstract Expressionism Artist. (Klein, 2019)

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