

Cross Dressing Fashion

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ABSTRACT

By manipulating properties of body modifications and supplements people communicate their personal characteristics, including the important distinctions of gender. Even when forms of dress and their properties are largely shared or similar for both sexes, gender distinctions can be clearly communicated by a minimum of manipulations of dress. Fashion is never static, never fixed, it is ever-changing. Fashion is a concept that signifies additional and alluring values attached to clothing, which are enticing to "consumers" of fashion. Clothes are one of the most visible markers of class and gender and therefore useful in maintaining symbolic boundaries in society. For social scientists beauty is a social construction and anything can potentially become beautiful and aesthetic. In other words, beauty depends on the context in which it is placed. Styles of clothing can be discussed in their relation to structural changes in society and thus, they cannot be taken out of the social context. There is a strong bondage between fashion and society. Absence of fashion correspond a totally stagnant nature of society.

Key Words : Fashion, Gender, Sexuality, Gender beiding

INTRODUCTION

Gender and sexuality have always challenged the world of fashion. Fashion and clothes reproduce sex and gender identities and positions. Fashion can be seen as cultural barometer for contemporary issues, thus gender as one of the crucial aspects of fashion can be analyzed as a cultural phenomenon and gender differences as cultural differences. Fashion is known to playfully cross traditional gender boundaries, expose stereotypes, and reveal society's artificial construction of femininity. Gender identities are not fixed but they are always in the process of making. To be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl is as much a function of dress gesture occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.

Fashion defines gender, and renders it visible but it is the media that shapes the body by addressing it as a social agent, creating and recreating beauty ideals of the period it depicts. The rise of fashion media in the last century brought with itself standards in terms of gender

roles, fashion, trends and numerous different issues. Fashion magazines have a profound impact on the social and cultural scene and the potential to make a lasting rather than fleeting impression on the consciousness of any individual. Fashion spreads challenge ideals of beauty, on one hand they create stereotypes of how women and men should like, but on another hand, fashion has proven to provoke pre-established a esthetical norms. The advent of new styles has been accompanied by controversies about modesty, morality and sexuality. Dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity have been challenged by the way they have been represented in fashion publications.

During the last two years the "gender bending" motion has reached its pick in fashion media, from cover pages, to editorials and advertising campaigns for recognizable fashion brands. Many of us may feel threatened and insecure related to gender bending.

Gender bending is not a new story in the western society. It is an already established concept, but in the world of fashion, it is the creative energy behind the

current mainstream that forces us to rethink its future. “*Fashion and clothing are instrumental in the process of socialization into sexual and gender roles*”. Clothes are visual representation of our identity and are layered with meanings.

They are used to establish a “code” and through this code members of the community can construct and communicate gender status to themselves and to others. Clothing does more than simply cover the body for warmth, modesty or comfort.

Fashion can be seen as a language that we use in order to be able to communicate our identity with others, but the basic requirement is the interpretative skills of the ones to whom we want to communicate our messages that can be of different nature. Due to the intimacy with the body, clothes are critical tool for representation of different identities, and they are highly effective in endlessly constituting but never fixing them.

Fashion itself may have provided the most important signifier in the construction of queer identities in the West. The idea popularized that a person’s sexual identity was not only an inner quality but could be also determined from appearance. They argued that if a woman is dressed in elegant, masculine tailored suits and tuxedos, it was evidence of cross dressing.

Contemporary fashion is preoccupied with representation of gender issues and ideals as well as how to break the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. It is remarkable to depict the small changes in this trend in order to satisfy the need of fashion for constant novelty every season. Therefore it can be said that there is a strong bondage between social actualities and developments of trends in popular culture and fashion as its inseparable part.

Cross dressing:

The unisex style has been played on by the fashion industry for decades. But it was in the 1960's when it became modern, under various influences of subcultures. That was the period when the adoption of decorative and sexualized styles for man and desexualized and simple styles for the woman, were blended into one, the unisex style. For decades, women’s fashion has mimicked menswear and its aesthetics. But now, the boys are also borrowing from the girls, with both avant-garde and established designers leading the unisex way for both

sexes.

The unconventional unisex fashion at first attracted only a limited audience. The attributes of femininity were replaced by using the unisex mode. Designers such as *Jean Paul Gaultier, Giorgio Armani, John Galliano, Kenzo, Rei Kawakubo* and *Yohji Yamamoto* have purposely pushed the limits of men’s fashion by offering new radical looks. Utility and practicality were in the fore, both approaches evoked sexual imagery, desires and fantasies.

“His Pants for Her” epitomized the adaptation of male pants with minimum seaming, wide elastic bands and cheek-hugging fit. Meanwhile, women started wearing men’s shirts and modified men’s suits, as well as “His Pants for Her” many women prefer to wear trousers and men’s shirts. Nowadays this trend has reached the mainstream. The focus of the media is on fashion, but the ideology of ambiguity is in all aspects of popular culture. It is revealing to depict how fashion industry correctly predicted current trends more than thirty years ago with the unisex style. During 2010, many renowned fashion forecasters made a prediction for 2011 as the year of “gender bender”. The “gender-bender” notion that fashion designers are heavily dependent on currently and the style statements from big-wigs of fashion industry are just a testimony of the same. Almost everyone in the fashion industry is accepting the new wave in cross dressing.

It can be analyzed from a sociological perspective that fashion is a phenomenon. One aspect which is mutual to both fashion and society is the fact that masculinity and femininity should not be conceived as opposite ends of one spectrum. The fashion media which include the various cover pages, editorials and advertising campaigns create an atmosphere that society is more open towards different gender expressions. In fashion nothing stays on top for a long time. However, it is also apparent that in fashion nothing is really new, and due to a limited number of appearances and combinations everything re-appears after a while.

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