



HAL
open science

The Enduring Links between Jewellery and Fashion. From Craft to Design

Elizabeth Fischer

► **To cite this version:**

Elizabeth Fischer. The Enduring Links between Jewellery and Fashion. From Craft to Design. Spirit of Luxury and Design. A Perspective from Contemporary Fashion and Jewellery, edited by Jie SUN and Elizabeth Fischer, Oro Publications / Tongji University Press, 2021, pp.72-79, 2021. halshs-03631319

HAL Id: halshs-03631319

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03631319>

Submitted on 16 May 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

SPIRIT OF LUXURY AND DESIGN

A Perspective
from
Contemporary Fashion
and Jewellery

Edited by
Jie SUN Elizabeth FISCHER

ORO
EDITIONS

TONGJI
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

CONTENTS

008

FOREWORD

014

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

018

From Luxury to Contemporary Fashion Design
Jie SUN

CHAPTER 2

FUTURE & INSPIRATION

Design, Art, Craftsmanship, Material
and Culture

032

Introduction
Elizabeth FISCHER

038

Jewellery and Fashion: Their Intrinsic Bond through Art,
Design and Savoir-faire
Donatella ZAPPIERI

062

From Architecture to Fashion.... : Design Is All about Ideas
Guillermo GARCIA-BADELL, Mercedes RODRIGUEZ

072

The Enduring Links between Jewellery and Fashion: From
Craft to Design
Elizabeth FISCHER

080

In Terrā Mediā: The Hybrid Territory of Les Métissages
Nichka MAROBIN

088

Fashion Artifact, and Design as a Social Facilitator
Naomi FILMER

The Enduring Links between Jewellery and Fashion From Craft to Design

072

Elizabeth FISCHER

Professor, Dean of Fashion and Jewellery Design, Head—Genève School of Art and Design, HES-SO Geneva, Switzerland

073

Jewellery and clothing enjoy different life spans—jewellery is made of hard and enduring materials whereas clothing is made of perishable ones. However, both are necessary elements in the play of social appearances. For centuries precious jewels, intimately linked to dress, were the preserve of the elite, worn as patrimonial symbols of rank, prestige, and antiquity of lineage. The major social and industrial shifts of the 19th century deeply changed the manufacturing, materials, and market of jewellery. The trappings of the new wealth of business persons and industrialists increasingly rivalled the prized ornaments of the long-standing aristocracy, while a growing affluent middle class aspired to new kinds of jewellery (Fischer, 2010). To meet this demand, jewellers used cheaper materials, like steel and colored paste, which influenced the design of jewellery and ushered in the costume jewellery of the following century.

The gradual simplification of dress and democratization of fashion during the 20th century marked the rise of costume jewellery and all types of non-precious ornamentation for dress. Gabrielle Chanel's 1926 little black dress is considered one of the starting points of modern fashion and the instigation for new ways of using jewellery. Chanel boldly mixed precious and costume jewellery, thus putting the focus on aesthetic function as signifier of taste rather than indicator of rank, fortune, and status (Banta, 2011). In combining fake and real jewels she consciously charted the way for women to appropriate jewellery as a personal and chosen expression of taste and statement of identity, just like any other accessory, heralded modern consumer practices. Ornament and beauty weren't equated with preciousness anymore. Jewellery, more especially costume jewellery (which started as the imitation of high jewellery), entered the category of accessories that includes shoes, gloves, hats, scarves, bags, etc., which followed the fashion trends. As the main adornment of pared-down modern dress, jewellery, far from being accessory, was deemed an absolute necessity. Furthermore, Chanel freed jewellery from its centuries-old bond with a woman's dependence on a man, as either legitimate spouse or kept woman. Wealth was equated with masculinity and fashion with femininity. High jewellery is now bought by women themselves as adornment and investment whereas for centuries this was the preserve of men. Precious gems, usually worn on formal occasions only, are now even paired with everyday wear such as jeans and sneakers, blurring the boundaries between high and mainstream attire.

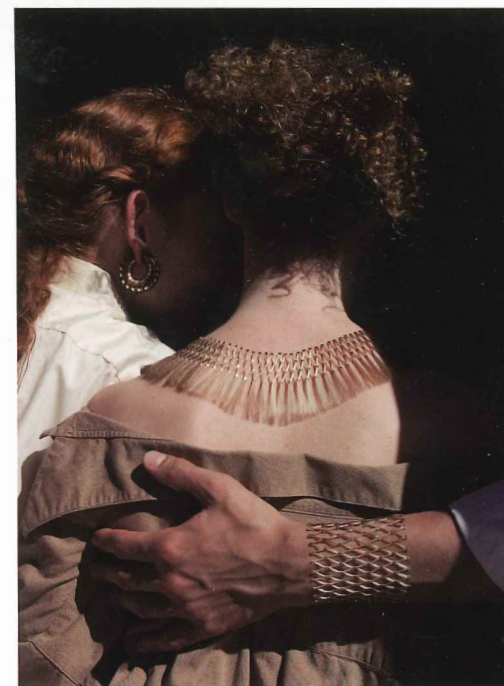
The hippie revolution brought two major changes in Western dress. The body of both men and women was suddenly much more revealed and men adopted



Lisa Defago, *Capillophilia*—hair, silver © Head-Geneva

074

075



Lisa Defago, *Capillophilia*—porté, hair, silver © Head-Geneva

some traits of feminine fashion, among them the wearing of necklaces, bracelets (often in leather and other non-precious materials), and a single earring. The masculine adoption of jewellery further confirmed its transfer to the category of fashionable accessory. Pop singers of the 1970s–1980s such as Elton John were instrumental in popularizing the masculine adoption of jewellery and glamorous accessories. The rap singers who followed used oversized jewellery with unusual ornaments (pendants in the shape of car emblems for example) as symbols their achievement as black men in the Western world, because white role models of male success did not apply to them. Jewellery and fashion for men have become a rich area for design development and constitute a rapidly growing market. Fashion's impact extended to entry-level watch design with the appearance of the revolutionary Swatch in the 1980s, a watch made out of plastic, with fun designs, accessible to the general consumer for less than \$60. In this case, the cultures of fashion and jewellery design were successfully applied to the very traditional field of watch design, hand in hand with engineering, to produce a completely novel way of creating a watch and launch it as a fashion accessory—following trends—rather than a time-piece.

The contemporary body isn't so much clothed as adorned with accessories. This has ushered in new types of ornaments, applied directly to the skin. Tattooing and piercing have existed since antiquity, used as discriminating signs, for specific groups living at the margins of society. These ornaments became particularly visible with the punk movement, as signs of rebellion against the establishment, before being taken up by the mainstream. The fashion industry used this type of skin decoration to create shock waves on the catwalk and in advertisements. With its adoption as an ornament by younger generations, piercing no longer has rebellious connotations. It's used to enhance specific parts of the body and add a kinetic dimension to the human figure (MacKendrick, 1998). The studs and other items used for piercing exactly fit the definition of jewellery. However, they aren't considered as such yet even though they have largely inspired new ways of wearing traditional jewellery, yet another instance of blurring boundaries between high and low.

Gold is now a color that has migrated from immutable precious metal to sequins and spangles glittering on T-shirts and bags, or on wash-away tattoos, and highlights the bling paraphernalia of rap and other musical and street cultures. The generalization of sparkling ornamentation high and low has blurred the ancient boundaries between the preciousness of a status-defining gem and the flashiness of a passing fad.

In the 1990s, jewellery was used in spectacular ways to highlight fashion in catwalk shows. The visual impact created by stunning jewellery brought the focus on the body and was often used to summarize the style of the designer in a kind of pictorial shorthand (Evans, 2007, 231–33). In shows and advertisements, jewellery has become a way of expanding the brand's message. As Suzy Menkes wrote:

When you come out of shows by three powerful, creative designers and remember first the shoes, or perhaps Chanel's fab new bangles and icon-scattered purses, or Lacroix's cute animal-shaped wicker baskets, you have to ask this question: Have accessories become more important than the clothes? (Menkes, 2002)

For the past 30 years, accessories have brought in the most income for high and low brands. In the hierarchical relationship between clothing, considered essential, and accessories, considered secondary, sales have tipped in favor of accessories. Designing accessories can now mean big business.

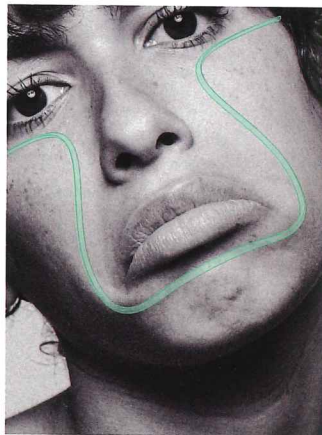
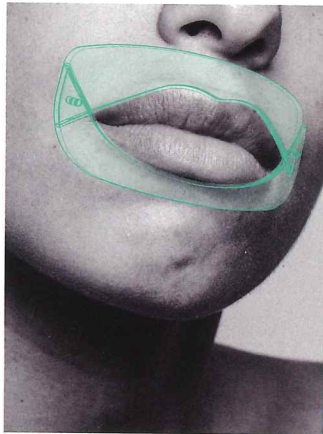
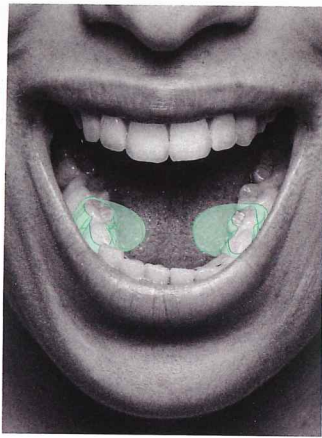
076

077

Jewellery is now in the fore, indispensable in the performance of fashion (dress and accessories) on the catwalk and in the street. Today, both young men and women have wholly adopted this culture of the accessory, wearing caps, earrings, chains, bracelets, sporting and indispensable electronic devices, and wearables decorated with trinkets, i.e., jewellery as ornament for accessories. These items often embody what is most precious to the contemporary individual. With wearables, preciousness may be in the immaterial and not the material, and longevity in the age of obsolescence has taken on new meanings. However, their function as indicators of status, social relationships, and taste remain paramount in our society.

The bodies of today engage us in our social life, are the standard bearers of our identity, and are still the main seat of emotions, sensations, actions. The bionic bodies so often imagined for the future should retain the same capacities, augmented by extensions made of materials. Fashion, accessory, and jewellery designers are now free to explore much wider avenues than practicality and social rituals. Using the body as a catalyst rather than a location, they question our relationship to materials and to artifacts and can challenge the traditional narrative of body, product, and identity.

The skills and processes used in fashion and jewellery design can be instrumental in redesigning objects outside the usual scope of these fields. Eyewear, more specifically sunglasses, entered the realm of fashion as a statement of status and taste as of the 1950s, having come a long way from its function as medical prosthesis (Pullin, 2009). This revolution came about through embracing the design culture of the fashion industry. The same process could benefit the development of prosthetics, which is usually oriented by medical considerations and developed by engineers intent on performance, out of touch with the needs of a normal existence. Aesthetics, comfort, ease of use, and everyday wearability are key for the acceptance of a prosthetic device, and are elements designers are used to take into account (Sobchak, 2004; Fischer, 2013). In 2018, one of the prize-winning projects at the Hyères international fashion festival focused on designing hearing aids as desirable jewellery.



078

079

Fittingly, the Swarovski Fashion Accessories Grand Prize of the Jury went to product designers Flora Fixy and Julia Dessirier who were approached by photographer Kate Fichard to re-think the crude, perfunctory design of domestic hearing devices. The resulting project H(Earring) sits at the junction between medicine and fashion. The judges were impressed with how the aid had been emphasized and exaggerated using wax casting and 3D modelling – its sculptural qualities rendered in precious metals. “Fashion is an amplifier for socio-political issues. Our jewellery is first an answer to the user’s needs, but it is a political tool too,” the winners said.¹

These examples speak in favor of a more cross-disciplinary, collaborative approach and testify to the fact that fashion and jewellery design have embraced a wider shift in attitudes to creation. Craft and engineering can work hand in hand to bring innovation in the creation of equipment for the body. As long as objects are meaningful vectors in our relationships with others and our environment, and the more materials are intricately incorporated to the body and the person, fashion and accessory design will have a part to play in society and in individuals’ lives and can bring about innovative pathways in the conception and production of highly complex contemporary artifacts.

Reference

- Banta, M. 2011. “Coco, Zelda, Sara, Daisy, and Nicole: Accessories for New Ways of Being a Woman.” In *Accessorizing the Body, Habits of Being I*, edited by Christina Giorelli and Paula Rabinowitz, 82–107. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Evans, C. 2007. *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness*, 2nd ed. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Fischer, E. 2010. “Jewellery and Fashion in the Nineteenth Century.” In *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*, edited by Giorgio Riello, Peter McNeil, 311–13. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fischer, E. 2013. “The Accessorized Ape.” In *Contemporary Jewellery in Perspective*, edited by D. Skinner, 202–08. New York: Lark Books.
- MacKendrick, K. 1998. “Technoflesh or, ‘Didn’t that Hurt?’” *Fashion Theory* 2(1): 3–24.
- Menkes, S. 2002. “Baubles, Bangles and Bags: Who Cares about the Clothes?” In *International Herald Tribune*, 6.
- Pullin, G. 2009. *Design Meets Disability*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Sobchak, V. 2004. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

1. <https://www.wallpaper.com/fashion/hyeres-2018>