



18th century, Queen Marie Antoinette of France



1846 fashion by Charles Frederick Worth, known as Father of haute couture, France



Recent haute couture of Christian La Croix

Visual art transforms fabrics to fashion

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How can you create an apparel brand that commands premium price and gains the consumer's high pride of ownership so she/he returns to it and influences others in society? Visual art is the only tool that changes the character of fabrics. It embellishes the shopper's mind with bigger than life images to create the lifestyle trend. Anybody in the world can do apparel business with 5 elements, fabrics, limited texture, color, cut

and fit. But unless fabrics are transformed into the imagination metaphor, it's not a fashion brand. Most Indian apparel brands suffer from missing out on this visual art effect.

Fashion's drawing table is by itself, visual art



Genesis of dressing style

Fashion as we know it today originated from European monarchy's obsession with visual art. Royalty patronized art and desired differentiation from their subjects.



France's 18th century Queen Marie Antoinette wore strikingly different dresses with daily advice from designer Rose Bertin, known as Minister of Fashion.

The Queen's radical, often disturbing fashion gave her visible force and autonomy outside tradition. Her provocative "robe a la polonoise" had a bosom-enhancing bodice, billowy, ankle-baring skirts, a 3-foot powdered hair "pouf" decked with plumes and veils.

Even when she rode to her death by guillotine, Marie Antoinette wore a brand-new white chemise she had secretly saved, a white fichu around her shoulders, and a pleated white cap to dazzle the thousands of citizens who watched in stunned silence.

Her exquisite sense of visual art made her apparel sophisticated and visually differentiated from the masses and this left a grand memoir of fashion.

Democratization of fashion

In Paris in 1846, Englishman Charles Frederick Worth democratized royalty's search for individualism by starting haute couture, the ultimate in high fashion for royals and the rich. The haute couture label belongs to France, possibly because it was invented from French monarchic heritage. Today, haute couture dresses have been known to take up to 900 hours (100 days) to create, with multiple interventions by artistic craftsmen working with the principal designer to show that single dress on the fashion ramp for just 120



In haute couture, the dress is an assortment of different craftsmanship of visual art

Visual art is exposed in every square inch of such a dress, with beads, sequins, different textured embroidery and blend of colors. Visual art then takes that garment into another sphere for public presentation to create an impact beyond imagination.



Catwalk by itself comprises visual art

Haute couture is always presented as a piece of visual art on a model in the catwalk. To make a statement about the intellectual-artistic construction of a particular idea, the designer plans the order in which each model walks out wearing a specific outfit in his collection. It is then left to the audience to visually deconstruct each outfit, appreciate its detail and craftsmanship, and understand the designer's thoughts.





Fashion show glamour with a combination of different accessories on the ramp is visual art

Contemporary designers produce their shows as theatrical productions using elaborate sets of artistic technology components with live music to make the garment totally hallucinating on the fashion ramp.

You may say the dress is just a single element in the show, but this is not true. Represented with visual art, the dress on the model becomes so powerful that it stays on in people's mind even if they cannot afford it. left to the audience to visually deconstruct each outfit, appreciate its detail and craftsmanship, and understand the designer's thoughts.

Sketchy visual art for fashion

Dressmaking was not fashion in the 19th century, it was considered low class, just a matter of cut and fit. In the 1920s when European fine art was booming, visual art brought fashion onto the drawing board. Designers like Gabriel Coco Chanel made drawings and sketches of garments for selective society.

Her 1931 sketch “White Satin” shows how she generated fashion through visual art. Yves St. Laurent was inspired by Pablo Picasso’s paintings, Coco Chanel’s designs among other contemporary art influences. His 1976 collection is based on the 1920s abstract costumes created for Ballet Russe by painter Leon Bakst. The illustrative drawings of Chanel, Dior, YSL transported fashion from royal individualism to a larger clientele.



White Satin by Gabriel Coco Chanel

Industrialization of fashion through visual art

Everybody cannot afford haute couture which is fashion’s window to just build a brand’s image. Prominently using visual art, these styles are made into prêt-a-porter (ready-to-wear) through industrial production systems for mainstream markets.

In 1971 the first St. Laurent Rive Gauche (Left bank of Paris) showroom opened to woo less affluent consumers. In today’s huge market of mass fashion, even low cost brands are injecting high aspiration by creating

Visual art for mass fashion

Mass fashion brands like FCUK, ZARA, H&M among others do not have a designer's name. To compensate that, every customer touch point at the retail store, such as visual merchandising, façade, shelf, fixtures, is interwoven with visual art.



Upper portion of this bag store is full of decorative art and the bottom part is very sober, one visual art element put in the centre. With less quantity of merchandise and outstanding visual art giving hallucinating selling provocation of the store.



Fixture, shelf, rack, selling counter, floor and lighting everything has the visual art without putting too many merchandise.

Visual art with balloon makes small ring in a big impact

In New York's Fifth Avenue, a jewellery store in a high rise building has colourful balloons and huge metal cones, atop which are finger rings that sparkle in laser lighting. Shoppers cannot see the rings from 200 meters, but the display looking like a modern art painting,



From Marie Antoinette to haute couture, prêt a porter to mass fashion, it all happened with visual art, drawings and sketches that have nothing to do with measuring and fitting. Visual art conceptualized fashion, translated fabrics to style, made a grand spectacle with models catwalking the ramp in the backdrop of technology, music and mood.



Merchandize carry home bags also need to be presented with strong visual art

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Shouldn't Indian apparel brands incorporate visual art as part of their strategy too? They need to exit the vicious cycle of improving backend management with fabrics, limited texture, color, cut and fit to price engineer the product for hard discount sales, and instead enter the unlimited avenue of visual art in fashion.



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