



## At what time does art become fashion?

The starting point and the end goal as to where art crosses over to become clothing.



Figure 1. McLellan, A. (2018)



Figure 2. PixelFormula (2016)



Figure 3. AFP (1965)

By Colleen Considine

Fashion is no newcomer to the world of collaborations, and brands will often tinker with other brands to force them out of their comfort zone, but what is in it for the artist? Where does the cross over come from? How did an art collection by Piet Mondrian go from being framed in a museum to a clothing convergence with Yves Saint Laurent?

Art and fashion are two industries where the creativity of a person is not specifically defined, but what makes an artist delve into the commerciality of clothing? One designer making these connections is the Irish-born fashion designer JW Anderson whose roots are set deep in East London. Anderson joined forces for SS19 with the cult British conceptual art duo Gilbert & George who have lived and worked together in Spitalfields East London since 1968.

Being known for going against the grain, Anderson presented his first collection in London's 2008 fashion week. Adopting an idiosyncratic perspective and creating a modern outlook forging together both masculinity and femininity. Gilbert and George often take inspiration from life around their East London home, mundanities and real-life people. Known for their graphical prints and combining colour and photography results in a stained-glass effect.

This collaboration has taken 3 iconic artworks from Gilbert and George, and Anderson has remastered the creations across a 25-piece capsule-collection. Including, black heavy-duty biker leather jackets with "Guard plants" (1980) on the back, sweat-shirt with "Heavy" (1988) printed on with black collar and cuff trimming.

And long sailor striped yellow and white shirt including "Dog boy" (1980) printed in a square box on the front.

Fashion designers will seek inspiration from both past and present, using cultural references to tie their collections together. An example of this was Burberry SS17 with past designer Christopher Bailey seeking inspiration from Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel Orlando, a flamboyant ensemble of luxurious cavalry jackets, ruffled white blouses and patterned silk pyjamas. Another was, Yves Saint Laurent who paid homage to Dutch post-impressionist painter Piet Mondrian by creating the 'Mondrian' mini dress of 1966. Using the abstract colour blocked artwork of blue, red, yellow and black lines, created a silk wool jersey A-line. Although other artists previous to YSL attempted to experiment with the design, it was in-fact Saint Laurent's dress that was ground-breaking capturing the public's imagination. Sparking creative energy, this set out the new role and outlook of how art can participate within the fashion world creating the link together.

Being a creative has many forms outside a painting, photography, film, and for designer Zandra Rhodes, who told The Guardian, "fashion is an art form". A collaboration with clothing, therefore, doesn't mean simply painting a bag, it can take place with an independent film. One example of this is, Kino Proby, a Paris production company who take short films of young models in the style of a CCTV camera on a train platform in a vintage film grain, with their models dancing to French electronic punk band Super Besse. Or, Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 classic Blow-up, thriller capturing the swinging London of the 60s.

Although, in terms of all fashion being considered art, Jessica Gallock of The Metropolitan Museum in New York had this to say, “I don’t think I would ever say there’s “a fine line between fashion and art.” I definitely do not think all fashion can be considered art. Some fashion is purely functional, and some designers expressly deny being artists (Vionnet is one of the significant 20th-century designers who explicitly denied being artists).”

JW Anderson and Gilbert & George manipulates the pieces cleverly making them accessible and be wearable in everyday clothing. However, the styles can be refurbished to their original state, meaning that they haven’t completely merged to become one art piece. Looking at YSL the ‘Mondrian’ dress which appears as a complete artwork, whereas modern fashion & art collaborations are interchangeable. We can see where fashion has started and where art has ended within this piece, that is one key element of how transposable art is within fashion.

Measured by the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport between 2011 and 2015 fashion was recorded to have the fastest job growth rate of 29.5 per cent compared to 19.5 per cent across the creative economy during that period. Many will say that fashion is hindered in the perspective against art, making fashion just clothing and nothing more. We also compare

the 800,000 people and a generator of £26bn annually (British Fashion Council). In comparison, the art industry brings in £27bn to the UK economy in 2015. Fashion needs art as much as art needs fashion. Designers take inspiration from the art and culture around them and use this inspiration in their collections. Jeremy Scott at Moschino is well known for his pop art enthused collections with models for autumn 2014 wearing McDonald’s motifs and branding.

What does it mean for an artist to collaborate with a fashion designer, what does it lead to? It can be considered a PR tactic for fashion collaboration with artists as it gains possible much-needed exposure. Although Gilbert and George are well-known a collection with JW Anderson gives added exposure. An alliance may also happen because they believe in the ethos of the designer and what they are aiming to provide with their brand, therefore may fit well with their own goal.

Particularly when something substantial in society happens many designers will look to older creators, to illustrate a key point or message. Jean Michel Basquiat x Uniqlo 2015 for example, regaining the exposure that he once had, but instead for a younger market unknown of him. In the perspective of Terry Newman, a lecturer at the University for the Creative Arts and author of new book, “Legendary Artists and the Clothes they



Figure 4. Blow-Up (1967)



Figure 5. Joe Sweeney (2016)

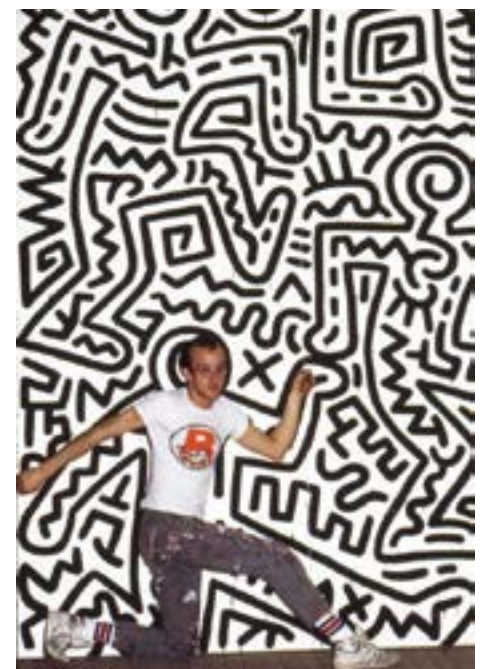


Figure 6. Keith Haring (1985)

Wore (coming out May 2019). Today certainly the relationship between art and fashion is a happy one; artists like to be fashionable and fashion likes the kudos of art.”

Britain’s changing times are ever-present with the looming thought of Brexit youth are using their creative means to express life around them. They are using their platform to cross over art and fashion using both skills to create one brand. Joe Sweeney, a London based artist who is using art to collide with fashion. By visually referencing the changing time around him, playing with Britain’s love of nostalgia he creates humorous works. His first solo show at Camden’s Cob Gallery in 2016, called, ‘Take Away’, collage works of shrimp over newspapers and hanging plastic shopping bags from a pole. Most recently collaborating with Vivienne Westwood, creating screen printed t-shirts of ‘closing down’ and asked to make three one-minute videos wearing the new autumn/winter 2018 collection.

For someone like Sweeney who is an upcoming creator, the

thought of a collaboration with such a high profile hat is Vivienne Westwood can achieve great results. For example, it creates brand presence and keeps the brands legacy alive. Take Keith Haring foundation for instance, set up to sustain and expand the legacy of his art and ideals. Art within fashion is hard to escape, but that shouldn’t stop designers fledging the waters. Is it easier for an artist to transfer into the fashion world than for a designer to be a painter? As Terry Newman explained, “Yes, for now, but perhaps not forever; digital life and culture means, creative content is eaten up so quickly. People want more and more choice.... why shouldn’t a fashion designer create art and be taken seriously?”

Collaborations with both spheres allow for creative relevance that brings together ideas that blend into their own ethos. Art and fashion blend together, bring inspiration to both creative compasses, one more so than the other. In answer to, ‘Can art become fashion?’, of course, whether fashion being art, is another story in itself.