

**NOT A TOY**

**FASHIONING RADICAL CHARACTERS**

**edited by ATOPOS Contemporary Visual Culture  
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**PICTOPLASMA**

... and finally, all that is left, is for me to write the introduction to this book; I have missed all the deadlines. This evening, however, I have in front of me the final layout of the book and, hopefully, this will help me. I am, you see, a visual person and, honestly, it is almost impossible for me to write two lines that make sense; images are my strength. From a very young age I would lose myself in the world of images, as I felt words told a lot of lies or did not say what I wanted to see. Pictures, however, could say a thousand things, especially those I wanted to hear.

Besides, the human figure and costume, the principle interests of ATOPOS while it explores visual culture, are by their own means strong images and in the world of Fashion everyone is well aware of this.

The first word that comes to mind while looking at the material is 'toy'. The child's 'toy', when everything around you can be used, can be metamorphosed and can transform you into a new Character. The saltcellar on the head becomes the helmet of Alexander the Great, the wooden spoon the Club of Hercules, and the bed-sheet Superman's Cape. Still, this book is called *Not A Toy* and that is because it is presenting something that is not a 'toy', especially not for small children – just as it is clearly stated on the packaging of vinyl toys, 'This is Not a Toy'.

'It is for older children, not for you', I said to my nephew Myron, who had taken some of my vinyl toys and was playing with them and his Pokémon and toy soldiers. And another time, Myron was taken aback by a pair of Comme des Garçons shoes I was wearing, with a Manga

design by Osomatsu Kun. He said to me, 'Vassilis, I want a pair of shoes like that!', and I, a forty-five year old man, replied laughing, 'They do not come in small sizes; they are only for children of my age!'.

In Ancient Greek, the word 'Character' – *χαρακτήρ* – denotes a 'point' – *σημείο* – created by engraving on any kind of solid substance. It also has the meaning of 'bearing a distinctive facial trait, or having a particular way of thinking and acting'. The word 'Character' originates from the same root as the verb *χαράσσω* – to engrave, which also means 'to design'.

This is why this book is called *Not A Toy, Fashioning Radical Characters*, the first comprehensive investigation into the growing influence of today's Character culture in Fashion. There are examples from ninety emerging and established international designers and artists showing us the endless transformations of the human figure, by wrapping the body, masking the face and distorting the human shape. And with the five essays by specialists in this field, we are attempting to describe the potentials and limits of the human figure, by observing these 'atopic' Characters taking over the catwalk and beyond.

My first encounter with Characters was in 2001, when I designed the costumes for a small, private performance; the 'Man/Watering Can' and the 'Woman/Bucket'. Despite the innuendos, which any over-aged child would have been able to recognise, these were the first Characters I created and they introduced me to the subject making me want to research the influence of the phenomenon in other areas too.

A little later, in 2006, when I was a member of the jury at the Festival International de Mode et de Photographie, Hyères, I noticed the sketchbooks of the collection of one of the competitors and I saw drawings that reminded me of comics. That moment I realised that an entire generation had grown up with all those heroes and stimulations, so what would be more logical than for them to use those references to create their own sartorial codes, which would be very different from those which we all considered the norm.

In 2008, I created 'Op the Cyclops' for *Bulls Eye Special*, an exhibition at 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT, founded by Issey Miyake. I wanted to create a Character that would protect the museum and exhibition from bad spirits and the evil eye. However, more than just protecting the spaces, 'Op the Cyclops' became a friend of not only the youngsters but also of the older visitors to the exhibition.

And eventually I came across Pictoplasma when I first saw their book *The Character Encyclopaedia*. To begin with I was filled with enthusiasm and then felt shocked. But much more than this, I had come across others who were also seeking the odd, the eccentric, the unnatural and the unregistered in their search for the 'atopic'. And this is how I came to start the research into the relationship of Characters with Fashion and Costume.

While researching this project the ATOPOS team has looked at more than five thousand images. From these we have selected three hundred and eight which we have put in an order that can tell many stories about the Plasmata and Characters that live amongst us – or even within us – and

who are possibly our other selves that we have kept hidden. So, maybe now is the time to bring them to life again!

All the grown-up children of ATOPOS, Stamos, Aristoula, Leonidas, Angelos and Dimitra and also those from Pictoplasma, Peter, Lars, Alex and Jaana have played, argued, made up and created this book which we hope you will find fascinating and that it may even become a toy for young and grown-up children.



THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED TO ISABELLA BLOW, WHOM WE MET ON OUR FIRST PROJECT  
IN ATHENS AND WHOSE INSPIRATION HAS REMAINED WITH US EVER SINCE.

Stamos Fafalios & Vassilis Zidianakis, ATOPOS cvc

Isabella Blow,  
© photo: Daniel Klajmic

**CHARACTERS ON PARADE:  
CONTEMPORARY CHARACTER DESIGN  
INVADES THE CATWALK**



**B**oth the fashion show and contemporary Character design are singular hybrids of art, design, popular culture and commerce. Although both forms are devoid of traditional narrative elements – most notably a plot – they are firmly rooted in the world of performance and theatre. Separately, both constructs make ideal tools for branding, tapping into our consumer sensibilities and emphasising spectacle. Interestingly, as designers merge the two forms, what results is not simply a fashion show with integrated Characters, but arguably a new form altogether. Like an unexpected result from a seemingly straightforward chemical experiment, the Character/fashion-show hybrid is more than a sum of its parts; the themes and motivations that can be mined from each form are multiplied and exaggerated in surprising ways.

Second Life, gaming, and virtual reality have established an alternative arena for multiple activities or personalities, providing an outlet for anonymous expression. Avatars stand in for our physical bodies, and we are no longer tied to our genetic make-up but can choose our Character traits and how we want to look, and we can act in ways we would never dare to in reality. On the catwalk, this advanced form of role-play provides designers with a perfect system for expressing their vision without interference – freeing them from supermodel personalities that might upstage the designs, from depicting a particular ethnicity or gender, or from having to limit the performance to a specific time or place.

This book offers numerous interpretations of the contemporary Character and the use of pictographic or iconic figures to communicate on an emotional level. So, instead of beginning with the background information, this essay will delve directly into the use of the contemporary Character within the fashion-show performance itself.

**MASCOTS AS MODELS**

First and foremost, fashion shows are about branding – promoting the brand, generating editorial attention and press, and ultimately driving sales. Even the most conceptual fashion designers exploit the medium, creating idea-driven shows to underscore this image. While Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan have offered vastly different models of the fashion show, both continually satisfied the critics and the market with the consistency of

their approach that stayed true to their respective brands. Contemporary Character design is also firmly rooted in commercial branding. The simplified forms of the Characters represent an elementary visual experience and a direct connection to the consumer.<sup>1</sup> Successful fashion shows lead to strong, graphic catwalk images that can be reconfigured in print and transmitted worldwide.<sup>2</sup> If the celebrity supermodel is replaced with an equally iconic Character representation, the result is a perfectly-crafted sign for the brand.

Aside from the branding motivation (intentional or not), this Character/fashion-show hybrid offers many other opportunities for expression. Characters of this sort signify any number of complex ideas from vulnerability and nostalgia to fetishism and the downright bizarre. Human models wearing clothes can be just that, but a carefully selected Character performing in fashion opens the door to a richer exploration of these and other themes.

### MASQUERADING AS AVATARS

Perhaps the most straightforward motivation behind the incorporation of contemporary Characters into fashion shows is the element of masquerade, or 'becoming' someone or something else altogether. It could be argued that this is the very essence of fashion, to culturally construct the self. Of course, the key element behind the idea of masquerade is the mask, providing the element of animism, or 'the process of attributing a soul to living and non-living entities'<sup>3</sup> that is the key to understanding how contemporary Characters complete the effect in the fashion show.

A comparison of John Galliano's fantasy fashion show for Christian Dior Haute Couture, Autumn/Winter 1998–1999, titled *Diorient Express* and a fashion-show performance by Walter Van Beirendonck for the Spring/Summer 2008 collection, titled *Sexclown*,<sup>4</sup> highlights the distinctions. First, Galliano's over-the-top theatricality merges history, theatre, and fashion into a spectacle that provides a context for the garments. The setting (train station), props, and actions all contribute to the carefully crafted 'story' of the collection. Van Beirendonck's fashion show, while equally theatrical in spirit, is not about telling a story in the traditional sense. More in keeping with our time, his story is not linear or rooted in history, but rather pulls from the disparate resources at our fingertips. His

inspiration comes from the virtual world of avatars, real-world Cosplay performers and the designer plastic-toy trend, to name but a few.

Galliano dips into fashion's closet and mixes all the elements together, but always with reference to established modes of fashion and presentation. Van Beirendonck, on the other hand, does not use fashion history as a starting point, but invents new ways to communicate through clothing on the street as well as on the catwalk. For this particular catwalk presentation, the models (most of whom were completely masked) were shown standing on individual black boxes in a semi-circular configuration in front of the audience. This non-linear format is reminiscent of an Internet home page – with each piece ready to 'link' us to a closer examination – or a display case with each model like merchandise on its own pedestal. The traditional format – models walking single file down a straight catwalk in the middle of an audience, beginning with the simplest looks and ending with the most elaborate statements – is supplanted with a new version, a 'complex and unique visual vocabulary suited to communicating with a fast-paced, concept-driven culture of the 21st century'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nyíri, 98

<sup>2</sup> Evans, 74

<sup>3</sup> Denicke and Thaler, 12

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, 115



Walter Van Beirendonck,  
*Sexclown* collection, S/S 2008

Fig. 1

It is remarkable how many artists and fashion designers are currently researching the human form – transforming the body into a sculpture, turning it into a cartoon Character, or having it become an integral part of a space or environment. These developments can be seen on Paris catwalks, coming from famous fashion designers like Alexander McQueen, Martin Margiela and Viktor & Rolf, but also from up-and-coming talents like Alithia Spuri-Zampetti and Craig Green. At the same time, performance artists such as Andrey Bartenev, LucyandBart, Nick Cave and Urban Camouflage have long been occupied with this theme. From avant-garde to catwalk, from Russia to America, it is clear that many artists and designers have seized on the same subject. Instead of beautifying the body and clothing it with identity and personality, they are searching for the ominous, unsettling fantasies and meanings that the clothed human figure can also communicate.

#### BODY AND IDENTITY

In today's daily life nothing has become as confusing or confrontational as a naturist beach. With no clothing to go by we suddenly find it difficult to place people or to know what kind of person we are dealing with. In our everyday lives we communicate identity and social position primarily by means of our clothing. It is effectively through clothing that we make our tastes and ideas clear in a non-verbal way – and always in combination with body language, because it is also in the body's physical appearance and the 'fashionableness' of its postures that we can read the personality of the wearer. A rapper in baseball cap and sagging pants and a dandy in an impeccable suit, hat and walking stick are obviously wearing different clothes – but their body language and poses are also completely different. <sup>1</sup> Still, fashion and clothing are more than just communication media. 'Dress', as Anne Hollander points out in *Seeing Through Clothes*, 'is a form of visual art, a creation of images with the self as its medium'. <sup>2</sup> By this she means that we should regard clothing and fashion not solely as an applied art or a communication system, but also as a visual art form and a performance art whose focus is an expression of the self and the relationship of the individual to the world. It is exactly this focus which characterises contemporary (avant-garde) fashion and performance art in its research into the body, its relationship to 'the individual',

<sup>1</sup> Teunissen, 194

<sup>2</sup> Hollander, 311

to the world around it, and the experiments with which it is attempting to reinterpret and redefine this relationship.

### FASHION AS PERFORMANCE ART

Ever since the 1960s we have been able to decide more or less for ourselves which groups we belong to and who we are as individuals. Democratization and the rise of youth culture brought about profound changes in society. People were no longer automatically lifelong members of a particular social class, nor did they stay where they were born; from the 1960s on, people were free – up to a point – to chart their own course in life. For fashion this meant that the newest trends were no longer dictated from Paris, but came from the street and from youth culture, and every group expressed itself with its own style of clothing. The result was that fashion was no longer dominated by a single style; different fashion styles existed side by side. More than ever, people could decide for themselves what kind of ideas they wanted to express and which groups they wanted to belong to. The 'individual me' could be fully expressed in one's personal clothing style. Fashion and clothing therefore helped to shape the far-reaching democratization of a society in constant change. Fashion and clothing became the expression and symbol of modernity, of mobile individuals with ever-changing personality and taste. 3

3 Lipovetsky, 197

### THE BODY AS A SOURCE OF EXPERIENCES, INTIMATE THOUGHTS AND FANTASIES

Now that the world lies so open for us, however, it has become an inescapable duty to be an individual and to express who we are through our body and clothes. But is this actually possible today? We now have so much more freedom than in recent decades that we have started to ask ourselves what else our bodies and clothing can mean.

In 1997 the Japanese Rei Kawakubo was one of the first fashion designers to push the limits of 'good fashion taste'. The clothes in her Spring/Summer 1997 collection, which came to be known as *Lumps and Bumps*, had bulk and volumes in unusual places. The models had Quasimodo-style humps on their backs and hips and the public reacted with bewilderment and dismay. Kawakubo had broken the iron rule of contemporary fashion that demands a slim, perfect



LucyandBart,  
*Grow On You Part Two*, 2008  
Fig. 1

body. She demonstrated that volume in unexpected places has an interesting sculptural effect – and also that deviant bodies speak directly to our fears and our most bizarre fantasies. By undermining the idea of the eternally perfect fashion body she forced her viewers to undergo a profound experience.

Around the same time, other designers started undoing the fashion straitjacket by concealing their models' heads. Walter Van Beirendonck had his models wear latex masks, Martin Margiela covered them with nylon stockings, Viktor & Rolf dyed them black and Bas Kosters put cheerful masks over them. The face, as the most important part of human communication, the mirror of the soul, had suddenly been erased. This, too, had a dislocating effect. How are we supposed to read a body without a face? Is it even human? And if it isn't human, what is it – a doll, a robot, an alien, a cartoon Character, or merely a sculptural form? And what does this form have to say? Here, too, as viewers our imaginations are stimulated and doorways to imaginary worlds, full of fears and colourful fantasies, are opened wide. These designers have opened an entirely new universe, one which addresses matters of fashion, clothing and the body in relation to the world and our internal 'I'. Here, fashion is not so much about 'who I am' (the impression I make with what I wear), but 'what I experience' (the effects that this body and appearance have on my brain).

**DECENTERING FASHION:  
CARNIVAL PERFORMANCE AND THE  
GROTESQUE BODY**

**C**ontemporary visual culture is rife with grotesque imagery, the kind that articulates ruptures of borders and, in particular, bodily borders. However, images of the body out of bounds proliferate with particular insistence in work at the juncture of fashion and performance art – two practices which are inescapably embodied. Practitioners in these two fields seem to return time and again to an amorphous, incomplete, often hybrid body, in line with Mikhail M. Bakhtin's theorisation of the 'grotesque body'. In *Rabelais and his World*, the Russian scholar characterises the open-ended, collective body of carnival – an unfinished body in a constant state of becoming – as the grotesque body par excellence in contrast to the 'sealed' and individualised classical body.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bakhtin, 320

It is this grotesque body, defined by hybridity and transgression of borders but also by parody, humour and inversion, that seems to be central to both contemporary experimental fashion designers and people working at the juncture of fashion and performance. Among the contemporary designers and performance artists whose work most obviously tackles these issues is German designer Bernhard Willhelm who, alongside other experimental practitioners such as Danish designer Henrik Vibskov, British designer Gareth Pugh and US designer and performance artist Nick Cave, questions ideals of norms and deviations articulated through bodies and clothes. Antecedents can be found in experimental fashion of the 1980s and 1990s, as in the work of performance artist/designer Leigh Bowery, Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo, and Belgian designers Martin Margiela and Walter Van Beirendonck.

The work of German designer Bernhard Willhelm is a prime example of how the grotesque body and carnival humour is explored in contemporary fashion. It articulates an unbound grotesque body through references to porn and horror imagery, while also exemplifying fashion's cross-pollination with contemporary art and, particularly, performance. This becomes evident in the photographs accompanying his Men's Spring/Summer 2008 collection which depict the French gay porn star François Sagat in Willhelm's skin-tight garments, striking lewdly humorous poses. In one of the photographs, Sagat, standing in a fountain and wearing gold spandex, appears to be spurting liquid from his behind, thus literally transgressing bodily boundaries, not to mention those of social decorum. This humorous *mise-en-scène* seems to poke fun at cinematic representation of more conventional objects of desire by reading

as a reference to Anita Ekberg's famous fountain scene in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, while also recalling one of Leigh Bowery's more notorious performances, in which Bowery, after giving himself an enema, spurted liquid onto the catwalk's audience. In another image reminiscent of Bowery's work, Sagat is contemporaneously mooning the viewer while offering up a bouquet of flowers protruding from his anus, thus perverting heterosexual courting rituals.

This theme of opening the body's boundaries is further explored in a series of ghost costumes which Willhelm developed in collaboration with Swiss artist Olaf Breuning for a short 'horror' film he created, in lieu of a fashion show, for his Spring/Summer 2004 collection. <sup>Fig. 1</sup> The ghost costumes, which are actually made of white sheets with painted-on facial features, read as a parody of high-tech costumes and effects, particularly to an audience accustomed to technologically sophisticated images of horror. And in a departure from usual horror film dynamics, the ghosts, as opposed to the girls, are the carriers of the ubiquitous image of slashing knives and spurting blood, a recurrent print across their otherwise white costumes. This trompe-l'oeil motif of slashed surfaces, which was later incorporated onto actual clothes that Willhelm produced for the online retailer Yoox, is reminiscent of Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí's *Tear Dress* from 1938, where the print suggested a ripping of the fabric and metonymically of the body.

An exhibition of Willhelm's work at the Groninger Museum in 2009 seems to give an almost literal rendition of the Bakhtinian account of the struggle between the classical and grotesque body throughout Western visual culture. Here Willhelm, in collaboration with Jutta Kraus, renders grotesque classical statuary – or to be precise, cheap replicas of the original in mannequin forms – by melding two of them together into a 'monstrous' double-body. In another instance, he replaces the body and/or face of the classically inspired mannequins with old computer monitors. <sup>Fig. 2</sup> Hybridised with old junky technology, while wearing Willhelm's Tyrolean-inspired lederhosen and knee socks, the mannequins read as a parody of a man/machine hybrid and bring to mind an obsolete cyborg.

A similarly ironic take on hybrid bodies is developed in the work of Walter Van Beirendonck, for whom Willhelm worked at the beginning of his career and by whom he was obviously influenced. For his Spring/Summer 2008 collection, for instance, Van Beirendonck created phallic protuberances covering the models' faces, which look like



Bernard Willhelm and Olaf Breuning, exhibition at Groninger Museum, 2009

Fig. 1



Bernhard Willhelm and Jutta Kraus, exhibition at Groninger Museum, 2009

Fig. 2

chimerical birds and lewd cartoon Characters rolled into one, and have explicit titles like *Sex-Toy* or *Super-Cum*. As body parts replace the visage, Van Beirendonck's work can be understood as effacing the subject by covering the models' faces, arguably the locus of individuality. Or alternatively it can be understood as creating a new subject – one which, in line with the Bakhtinian grotesque model of the body, eschews an understanding of an atomised closed subject in favour of a composite subject which is open, 'in process' and becoming.

In fact, the development of a grotesque model of the body within experimental fashion implies new models of the subject. This is best observed in the work of Rei Kawakubo and particularly her Spring/Summer 1997 collection, whose unusual silhouettes she recently revisited. For this collection, the Japanese designer, who has been known for challenging the Western aesthetic canon of beauty since the beginning of her career in the early 1980s, radically altered the female silhouette by adding padding to the hips, back and belly. With its ample use of padding, this

## THE EXAGGERATED BODY OF LEIGH BOWERY

**T**he performance artist Leigh Bowery was a big man, tall and heavy, with piercings in his face – one on each cheek, often with a safety pin inserted. For some of his extraordinary 'looks', he used the piercings to pin on a false mouth with thick lips and a central hole, like the mouth of a sex doll. When I met him in 1993, I asked about the piercings, and he said that getting them gave him the sense that he had control over his body. This was an interesting thing to say, because throughout his career, he used his body as a work of art, and control of his body (or lack of control) was central to his aesthetic.

Born in 1961 in Sunshine, Australia, a suburb of Melbourne, he was overweight even as a child and hopelessly out of place in Australia's macho culture. After briefly studying fashion at the Royal Melbourne Institute, he decamped to London in 1980. There he tried but failed to control his weight, and friends said later that he hated the way he looked. But he used his physical appearance as an integral part of the extraordinary 'looks' that he created, which involved bizarre costumes and extreme make-up. Uncomfortable in his own skin, he created alarming personas that functioned both defensively – as armour to protect himself – and offensively – to shock and horrify people. Whereas most people use clothing to minimise their physical flaws, he exaggerated his. Was he fat? Well then, he would make costumes of tight, shiny latex, which made his flesh bulge out horribly. Was he insufficiently masculine? Well then, he would twist and bend the concept of gender to become a grotesque and overpowering creature beyond sex.

Although he had initially wanted to be a fashion designer, dressing up and going to clubs soon became a large part of his life. He did design a surprising number of fashion collections – showing in London, New York, and Tokyo. His notorious *Pakis from Outer Space* collection was part of London Fashion Week in Autumn/Winter 1982–1983, for example. And he later worked as a design consultant for Rifat Ozbek, as well as designing clothes for Boy George. But for the most part, he made clothes for himself. In addition to designing clothes, he was also closely associated with the club scene. In 1985 he even opened his own club, Taboo, although it was soon closed down by the police. He also showed fashions at the Limelight in New York, as part of a show organised by Suzanne Bartsche.

When Bowery first came to London, the dominant sub-cultural style was New Romanticism, one of several post-punk styles that were less aggressive than punk, and more

theatrical. Vivienne Westwood was the most famous exponent of the New Romantics style. Although Leigh Bowery's 'looks' sometimes resembled the New Romantics in their theatrical gender-bending, his personas also drew on a harder S&M style. He frequently used tape to squeeze parts of his body, including his genitals, which he sometimes taped down and covered with a merkin. He once told an interviewer that he was inspired by the boxy stage costumes of the 1920s artist-designer Oskar Schlemmer – costumes which totally abstracted the shape of the body underneath.

Throughout his career, Bowery exaggerated shape and silhouette. This is one of the primary ways that he later influenced designers such as John Galliano and Alexander McQueen, and probably also Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier. The influence of sexual fetishism was especially strong – all those latex catsuits and masks, club-footed high-heeled shoes, and lurid make-up, especially huge, swollen red mouths gaping open like wounds. Many of Bowery's 'looks' evoked sexualised cartoons, creatures with grotesquely large breasts, bellies, and buttocks. Of course, fashion designers did not need Leigh Bowery to tell them about fetishism. Fashion is like a huge vacuum cleaner that sucks up all visually compelling looks, and fetishism has influenced fashion at least since the 1960s. (Think of kinky boots and the leatherman look.) But once he began to become famous, Bowery's 'looks' entered the vocabulary of extreme fashion.

In some respects, Bowery's oeuvre was much closer to work produced within the art world than the fashion world. The grotesque has long been a recognised theme in art, whereas it has only recently begun to impinge on the edges of the fashion world, which remains largely dedicated to the pursuit of 'beauty' and sexual 'charm'. One of Bowery's key performances took place at the prestigious Anthony d'Offay Gallery in London's West End. Behind a two-way mirror, visible to people passing by the gallery, Bowery made himself up, tried on outfits, and generally primed and preened. This display of bizarre exhibitionism fitted into a long history of sexualised performative art work. Later, Bowery famously modelled for the painter Lucien Freud. When Freud's work was subsequently shown at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, the room containing Freud's portraits of a nude Bowery were labelled to prevent entry by anyone likely to be shocked.

Leigh Bowery and I met when he came to New York City to perform at Lady Bunny's Wigstock, a performance



Leigh Bowery, New York City 1993,  
© photo: Annie Leibovitz

Fig. 1

## ATOPIC BODIES

**L**ook in the mirror – Is it *you*? You are a spy and, because your identity is known to the enemy, your spy masters give you a completely new body. Is it still *you* in the mirror?

Descartes saw the body as a house, a temporary dwelling for the soul. In this view *you* are the soul, your body but a tawdry motel room on the Route 66 of your ultimate destiny. In Descartes' view I am because I think – my physicality failing to qualify as a component of the 'I' that I am. Like Descartes, anthropologists are generally of the view that it was the cognitive abilities of our human ancestors which made ours a special and dominant species – in particular our ancestors' unprecedented skills in verbal expression.

Rarely do we hear any mention of our species' extraordinary (and also unprecedented) skills at *nonverbal* communication, since significations involving the medium of the human body are typically seen as insignificant and not worthy of consideration. Yet, consider for a moment the mind-boggling nuances and symbolic complexity – and the crucial importance of such interactions – when you and a stranger cross paths on a street and transmit and receive all those visual clues of dress, hairstyle, gait, posture, expression, adornment, body decoration and so on and so forth which, taken together, constitute each and every person's carefully crafted presentation of self; their personal style 'statement' of identity. And all this information is transmitted, received and interpreted within a few seconds.

For the Nuba peoples of Southern Sudan it is the shaving off of body and facial hair which distinguishes humans from other, lesser creatures like monkeys. Descartes had a moustache and one of those strange under lip growths favoured by Tom Waits and other hipsters. It is *de rigueur* for male anthropologists to sport full untrimmed breads. Go figure.

What does it say about Western culture that Descartes' blithe dismissal of the fundamental ontological significance of the body wasn't met with incredulous guffaws? And that still, to this day, even in a secular and theoretically soulless world, there remains an unchallenged, residual assumption that somehow my body is exterior and tangential to this 'I' that I am?

## BLONDES HAVE MORE FUN

I have and (except for a 'Blue Period' in my Punk days) always have had blonde hair. Growing up in America in the

'50s I learned that 'Blondes Have More Fun'. But of course Clairol's famous ad campaign for hair bleach alluded to curvaceous, female blondes like Marilyn Monroe and so being a blonde *male* in '50s America slightly challenged one's masculinity. Or it seemed that way. A bully in my school used to regularly call me 'White Mouse'. Today, amazed that even at 63 my hair is still blonde, I'm comfortable with being a blonde – I have a t-shirt which says 'I'm naturally blonde, please speak slowly'. As in the case of any intelligent woman who has blonde hair and battles against absurd, prejudicial 'dumb blonde' stereotypes, a part of the 'I' that I am has been shaped by my hair colour. If Descartes had had, say, black skin or a Cyrano de Bergerac style nose he might more readily have got the point that the 'I' that I am includes a core corporeal dimension.

So I am at least partly a product of my body. Yes, but my body – yours too – is also itself shaped and given meaning within my or your particular socio-cultural, historic circumstances. The American sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman wrote a book with the wonderfully thought-provoking title *The Social Construction of Reality*.<sup>1</sup> Our bodies – your body, my body – are part of that social construction of reality. Indeed, inescapably, in any society, in any historical era, The Body is the ground zero of that social construction of reality.

We are the one and only decorated ape and how we decorate, clothe and modify our appearance is unique to each and every culture. No human beings ever present themselves in a natural state if they can help it. Crayon shaped pieces of bright red ochre (similar to ones used even today in tribal societies in parts of Africa for drawing lines and patterns on the body) and pierced shells, which once formed necklaces recently found in the Blombos Cave excavations in South Africa, suggest that homo sapiens have been altering their appearance for at least 80,000 years.<sup>2</sup> We humans are born with a particular inherited physical disposition but we spend our lives re-shaping our bodies into cultural artefacts.

Our culture provides the context within which we evaluate and understand our own bodies. Look in the mirror again. What do you think of what you see in the mirror? Have you noticed that it is impossible for you to relate to your own body – your own body! – without resort to how the wider world around you relates to and evaluates The Body?

<sup>1</sup> Berger and Luckman

<sup>2</sup> Hirst

## ATOPOS – ALIEN AND UNCLASSIFIABLE

The ancient Greeks used the word *atopos* to mean strange, unclassifiable, odd, eccentric, extraordinary, unnatural, displaced in space and time, out of place and absurd (or, as we would say today, post-modern). Socrates was said to have been very *atopos*. In his book *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Roland Barthes teases further meanings from this fascinating word: *atopos* is 'of a ceaselessly unforeseen originality', resisting 'description, definition and language' and 'unqualifiable' (roughly, to be unable to describe or attribute a quality or characteristic to something).<sup>3</sup> We are our bodies and yet our bodies – abstract constructions of our culture – are always and inevitably *atopos* to ourselves.

When you go to see your doctor and tell him or her that you feel 'pain' you run head long into the brick wall of the limitations of communication and inter-subjectivity: there is actually no way of knowing if the doctor's understanding of the nature of 'pain' is anything like your own experience

<sup>3</sup> Barthes, 34–36, figure 'Atopos'; see Schlosser



Kikuyu girl with ear ornaments

Fig. 1

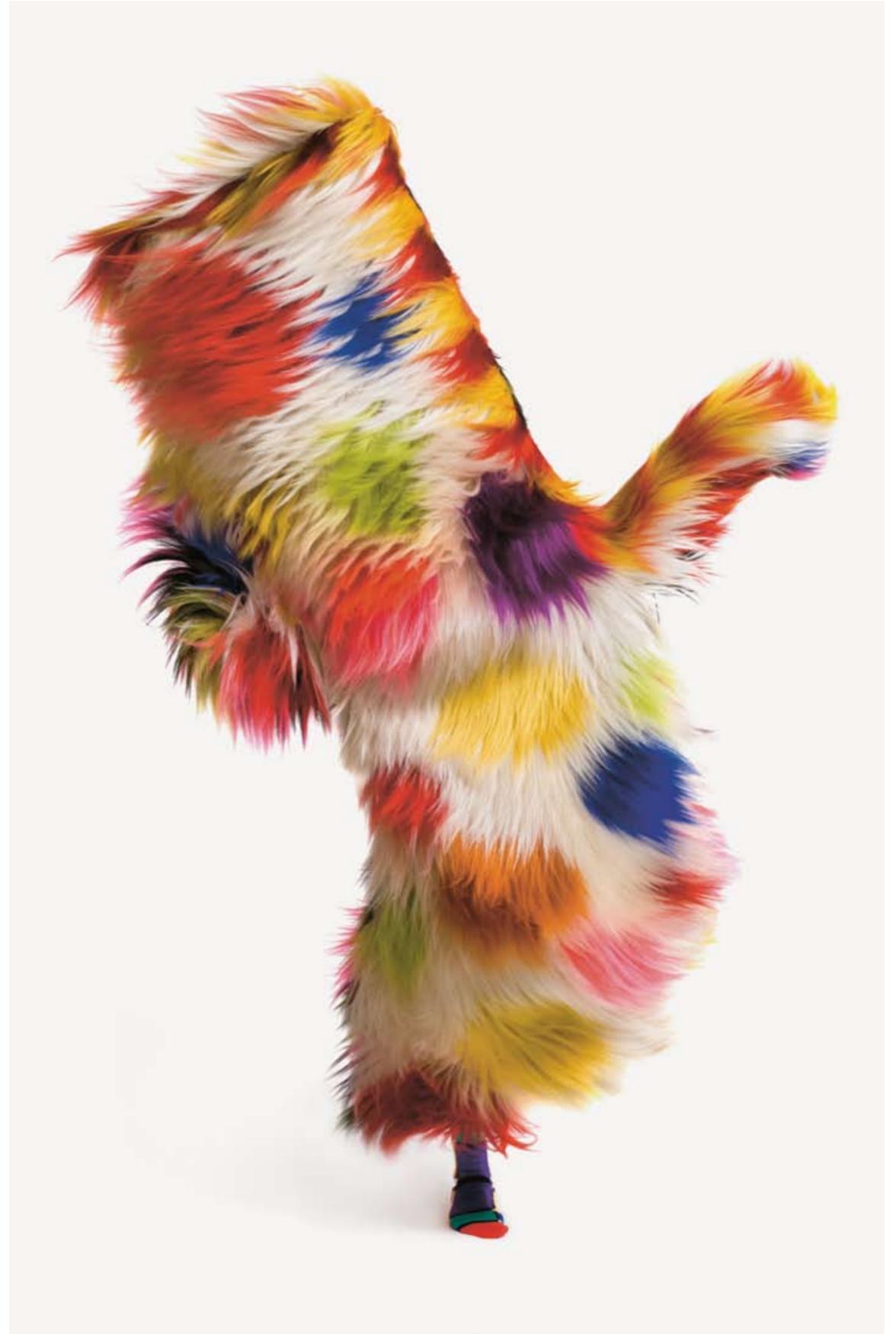
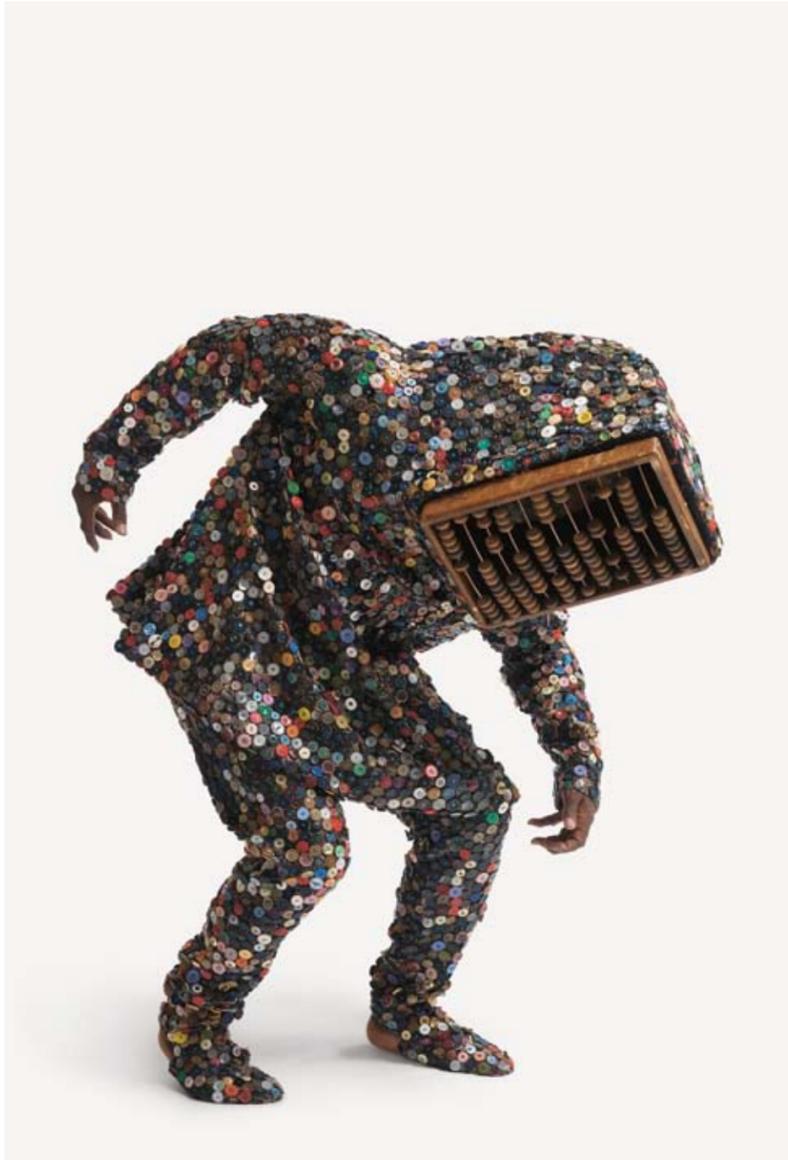


Native of New Guinea with an artificially constricted waist (after Bruce-Haddon)

Fig. 2

11







1



1





II











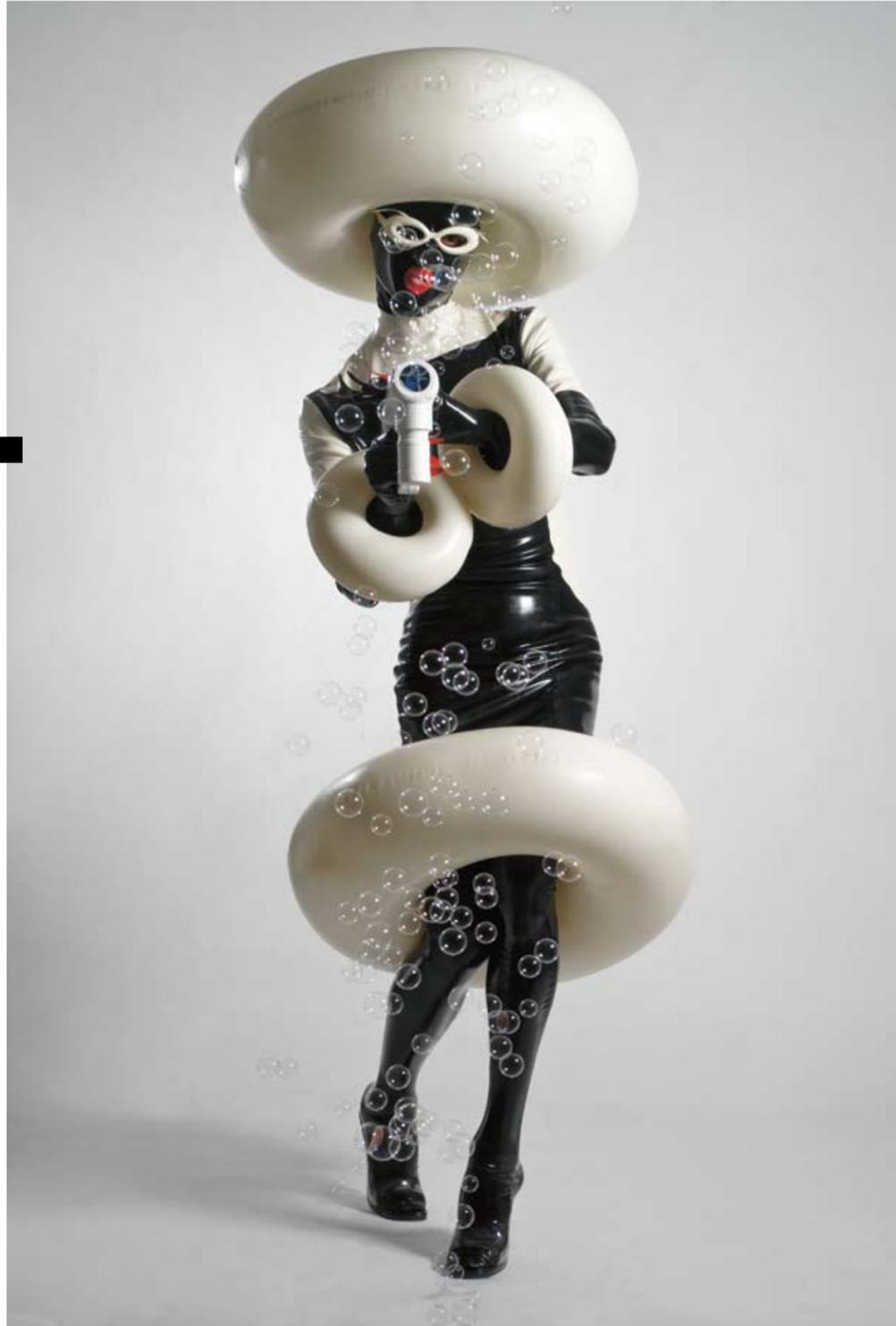


1



















in film direction, Character and costume writing, installation, performance art and design. Her work has been presented in the Guggenheim Museum, New York, Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Pyyupiru's creations incorporate the opposing forces of life and death, male and female, hurt and damage, transforming them into conceptually staged Characters. In the *PLANETARIA* series, she created zany, candy-striped knitted costumes to experiment with the ideas of performing the Character of Mars or Mercury. Identity itself is a work in progress for Pyyupiru, who is creator and her own creation at once.

#### FRIDA RINGSTRÖM

162–163 *The Foam Rubber* collection, 2009, photos: Kristian Löveborg, courtesy of Frida Ringström

Swedish designer Frida Ringström (b. 1983) studied at Steneby School of Craft and Design and at Beckmans College of Design, Sweden. In 2009 she was awarded the Daniel Sachs and Johan Rencks Creators grant and the H&M Fashion grant. She is a product designer at the men's youth department at H&M Head Office and her work has been published in *Dazed and Confused*, *Untitled* and *Mykromag* magazines. *The Foam Rubber* collection is the translation of the designer's illustrated world. Using a naïve aesthetic, Ringström explores simplified geometrical shapes and low-tech materials, such as foam and cardboard, to create her entire collection. The use of exaggerated proportions creates a monstrous, alien Character on the catwalk, an ironic statement on the fashion industry.

#### FREDDIE ROBINS

338 *Skin – A Good Thing To Live In*, 2002, photo: Douglas Atfield, courtesy of Freddie Robins

339 *The Perfect: Eddie*, 2007, photo: Douglas Atfield, courtesy of Freddie Robins

Artist Freddie Robins studied at Middlesex Polytechnic, London and the Royal College of Art, where she is currently teaching. Robins' work questions notions of normality, and intersects the categorisation of art and craft. She has exhibited widely, and most notably at the *Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting* show in the Museum of Arts & Design, New York. The British artist uses knitting to explore domestic issues, gender and the human condition. Her work *Skin – A Good Thing To Live In*, explores the human form and questions physical norms by playing on our fears and our sense of humour at once. In *The Perfect*, Robins creates three-dimensional Characters that examine conformity, standardisation and perfectionism.

#### ROZALB DE MURA

336–337 *The Remains* collection, S/S 2010, photos: Tibi Clenci, courtesy of Rozalb de Mura

The Rumanian Oláh Gyárfás (b. 1975), a textile arts and fashion graduate of the West University of Timisoara, Romania, is the driving force behind the collective Rozalb de Mura, which is also the name of the fictional baron who inspires the label in time, space, reality and fiction. The dark fairy tale about the discovery of the blood-stained

clothes of an ancient Transylvanian warrior dynasty forms the narrative context of *The Remains* S/S 2010 collection. It consists of two full-body outfits, one male, one female, both made of sewn and tied crimson strips which can be taken apart and reassembled through a system of knots. The wearer can choose between a variation of looks, on a scale from simple and primitive to extravagant and aristocratic.

#### AGATHA RUIZ DE LA PRADA

304–305 A/W 2009–2010, © photos: Ugo Camera

Spanish designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada (b. 1960) studied at the Escuela de Artes y Técnicas de la Moda in Barcelona and entered the fashion world in 1980. All her works, from textiles and furniture to ceramics and children's products, bear her strong signature style that celebrates the small things in life in an explosion of colour and vitality. Agatha's designs radiate love, humour and optimism as the basis for the universe of her creation. In her A/W 2009–2010 collection, she creates surreal Characters by transforming everyday objects into enigmatic designs.

#### HIDEKI SEO

051–053 *Swimming in the Garment* collection, 2005, © photos: Etienne Tordoir

054–055 *Poyon Poyon* collection, 2004, © photos: Etienne Tordoir

Hideki Seo (b. 1974) graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp after studying visual design at the Kyoto University of Art. He is currently working for Azzedine Alaïa and his work has been exhibited at Loveless, Tokyo and Labels Inc., Antwerp. Strongly influenced by animation and cartoon heroes, the Japanese designer's creations are a playful take on Japanese vinyl-toys, which he combines with cartoonish reinterpretations of traditional elements of clothing from different cultures. The *Poyon Poyon* collection combines elements from niku kabuki costumes, and Dackko Chan, a black inflatable Japanese doll. The *Swimming in the Garment* collection, where he collaborated with Keizo Murase on the Godzilla costume, is strongly influenced by Inuit culture. Hideki works principally with foams and artificial materials which enable him to create puffy, exaggerated forms and silhouettes that make every outfit a Character.

#### LISA SHAHNO

093 *Squaring the Square* collection, A/W 2009, photo: Lena Vazhenina, courtesy of Lisa Shahno

The Moscow-based designer Lisa Shahno (b. 1985) uses high-tech materials and geometric forms to create her vision of the future. The Russian designer is studying at Moscow State University of Design and Technology and won the Avantgarde Award at Createurope 2009. For her debut collection *Squaring the Square*, she translated geometrical principles into mysteriously elegant garments that transform their wearers into abstract works of art.

#### PATRIK SÖDERSTAM

200–201 *Orgasm* collection, 2003, © photos: Patrik Söderstam

202 *Contract*, 2010, © photo: Patrik Söderstam

203 *The Core*, sculpture, 2008, © photo: Patrik Söderstam

Patrik Söderstam (b. 1973) is a Swedish artist and fashion designer. He graduated from Central Saint Martins, London and worked on his own label from 2000 to 2006. Influenced by photography, design and film, his work experiments with volume, shape and pattern and his experimental installations explore the relationship between the body and clothing. For his latest performance-based project *Contract*, he has created an ominous-looking Character that, in its shape and design, symbolises resistance.

#### ALITHIA SPURI-ZAMPETTI

056–057 S/S 2009, photos: Bruce Robinson, courtesy of Alithia Spuri-Zampetti

Graphic patterns with accents of brilliant colour dominate debut collection of Alithia Spuri-Zampetti (b. 1985). Inspired by the flower designs on Japanese kimonos, especially the furisode type, the Italian Central Saint Martins graduate translated this traditional technique by cutting out the motifs and applying them onto the 1950s high-waisted, pencil skirt silhouette. This collection won her the L'Oréal Young Talent Award 2008, and the Maria Luisa Award at ITS#SEVEN and was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The designer has focused on the upper part of the body. Her flowery female Characters, which are created using oversized foam cut-out collars, seem to have stepped out of an eerie two-dimensional world.

#### SO TAKAYAMA

092 *Report from Iron Mountain* collection, 2010, photo: Martin Bing, courtesy of So Takayama

After studying fashion at Creapole ESDI, Paris, So Takayama (b. 1986) continued his studies at Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. For his *Report from Iron Mountain* collection, the Japanese designer drew inspiration from George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* and Leonard C. Lewin's book *Report from Iron Mountain* to pose ironic questions about political notions of war, peace and coexistence.

#### DHARMA TAYLOR

205 *Knock Out* collection, A/W 2010–2011, © photo: Dharma Taylor

The British graphic and menswear designer Dharma Taylor (b. 1987) graduated from Rochester University and completed her MA in digital fashion at the London College of Fashion. Signs, symbols and psychedelic designs applied directly to the body and colourful, graphic prints make up Dharma's unique fashion vocabulary. Her work reflects how the self has become a creature that exists only to escape reality by entering an altered state. Inspired by Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, the *Knock Out* collection combines mysticism, physical restriction and processes of transformation, illustrating clearly how a Character comes into being.

#### ALEXIS THEMISTOCLEOUS

322–323 *Out of This World* collection, 2010, photo: Demetris Vattis, courtesy of Alexis Themistocleous

The Central Saint Martins graduate Alexis Themistocleous (b. 1985) is from Cyprus. Set designer, founder and general creator of A Conceptual Magazine, Themistocleous experiments with various materials. His versatile activity influences him in perceiving each project through the spectrum of art. Moreover, his work involves designing sets, costumes and props for fashion shoots. His *Out of This World* collection employs unique imagery of an alien world through the dreamy sense of paralysed time, archeologically futuristic architecture and peculiar creatures.

#### AITOR THROUP

270 'Shiva', *When Football Hooligans Become Hindu Gods* collection, 2006, courtesy of ITS and Aitor Throup

The ITS#FIVE winner Aitor Throup (b. 1980) is a London-based fashion designer who creates distinctive garments driven by his perception of the human anatomy. The MA Fashion Menswear Royal College of Art, London graduate is fascinated by the drawing process where he explores the human body in continuous motion. Throup has won multiple awards over the years, including the Collection of The Year Award and has also collaborated with Stone Island and C.P. Company. His work combines innovative methods of design, interpreting them into garments with transformable features, all of which are directly connected to the narrative structure of his collections. For the Argentine designer the *When Football Hooligans Become Hindu Gods* collection is about evolving Characters, each with their own individual story.

#### URBAN CAMOUFLAGE

104 *Action #6: Plastic Foil*, 2009, © photo: Urban Camouflage

105 *Action #4: Gloves*, 2009, © photo: Urban Camouflage

106 *Action #3: Plastic Bags*, 2007, © photo: Urban Camouflage

107 *Action #5: Bottles*, 2009, © photo: Urban Camouflage

Sabina Keric (b. 1984) and Yvonne Bayer (b. 1983) are two Dutch communication designers, performance artists and the creative force behind the Urban Camouflage project. Launched in 2007, the project provides tongue-in-cheek strategies for concealing the body and identity in the consumer world. Inspired by so-called ghillie suits, camouflage worn by hunters and snipers, the two artists construct suits out of materials and objects found in DIY and home stores to create abstract Characters that blend subversively into their surroundings.

#### PIERRE-ANTOINE VETTORELLO

262 *Bonnie Magnum vs Samantha Beretta* collection, 2009, © photo: Ronald Stoops

Pierre-Antoine Vettorello (b. 1985) is a French-born designer who recently graduated with an MA from the Royal Academy

of Fine Arts, Antwerp and was trained at Karl Lagerfeld and Balenciaga. His work has been shown in museums such as the Tropen Museum of Amsterdam, and the ModeMuseum, Antwerp. In 2010 he received the A Shaded View on Fashion award from Sonny Vandervele and Diane Pernet. In the *Bonnie Magnum vs Samantha Beretta* collection Vettorello makes imaginative use of military imagery, combined with embroidery and African fabrics, to make a statement about the fight for women's liberation and equality.

#### HENRIK VIBSKOV

066–067 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

068 /1 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* Womenswear collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

068 /2 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* Menswear collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

068 /3 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* Womenswear collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

068 /4 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* Menswear collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

069 *The Solar Donkey Experiment* Menswear collection, S/S 2010, photo: Shoji Fujii, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

070–071 Henrik Vibskov and Andreas Emenius, *The Fringe Projects #1*, 2007, photos: Asger Carlsen, courtesy of Henrik Vibskov

Danish artist Henrik Vibskov (b. 1972) is a graduate of Central Saint Martins, London. His work blends improvised music and filmmaking to create a constantly evolving universe with fashion at its centre. Vibskov's work has been shown in numerous fashion festivals and art exhibitions, including MoMA and Palais de Tokyo. In *The Solar Donkey Experiment* collection, the human face and hair are combined with sculptural elements to become a series of almost abstract structures. Since 2007, he has been collaborating with graphic designer Andreas Emenius on *The Fringe Projects*. In edition #1, bodies are almost entirely covered with bristling, cut-up paper designs to form Characters that vacillate in the surrounding space.

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#### ANNE DE VRIES

180 *Blossom Heads Sister*, 2007

181 *Untitled*, 2007

182–185 *A Sweater a Table and a Plastic Bag*, 2002

Dutch artist Anne de Vries (b. 1977) lives and works in Amsterdam and Berlin. Besides working with installation and video, his primary medium is photography, which he uses to generate and illustrate ideas. He is fascinated by photography in the age of digital mass media, as a way to experience the world as it is not, transforming the known into an unknown but unapproachable virtual reality, and as a way to pose questions. De Vries is currently enrolled as an artist in residency at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam.

#### JUNYA WATANABE

212–213 A/W 2008–2009, headpiece: Katsuya Kamo, © photos: Yannis Vlamos

Junya Watanabe (b. 1961) has received international acclaim for his inventive designs that explore garment-construction techniques and technologically advanced textiles. In 1984, the Bunka Fashion College, Tokyo graduate started working for Comme des Garçons and in 1993, he showed his first collection in Paris for the renowned label under his own name. His A/W 2008–2009 collection show featured headpieces by his long-term collaborator and make-up and hair artist Katsuya Kamo, whose clientele also includes Chanel and UNDERCOVER. The models' faces were wrapped in fabric which also contained unwieldy lumps and bundles held in place with strings, paper clips and knots to form monstrous deformations of the head.

#### LAURA WELKER

130 *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* collection, 2008–2009, photo: Lieven Segers, courtesy of Laura Welker

The German designer Laura Welker (b. 1985) studied Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam and fashion at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and is currently working with the Spaghetti Gangbang collective. She is interested in discovering new techniques and experimenting with possibilities of representation in fashion. In her *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* collection, Welker transforms traditional materials and handicraft by adding small, surprising details that undermine expectations and open the door to hidden worlds.

#### BERNHARD WILLHELM

132–133 S/S 2006 Men, photos: Melanie Bonajo, courtesy of Melanie Bonajo and P.P.O.W, New York

134 A/W 2007–2008, © photo: Damien Blottière

135 A/W 2007–2008 Women, © photos: Shoji Fujii

The designs of German Bernhard Willhelm (b. 1972) have earned him international acclaim and awards such as the French ANDAM first prize and accessory prize in 2005. Following his graduation from the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the former Walter Van Beirendonck intern started his own label in collaboration with Jutta Kraus, and the duo presented their first collection in Paris in 1999. Willhelm takes a humorous approach to fashion, combining prints with embroidery, pleats and folds, fusing pop and street culture with folklore and handicraft. His collections create a dope smoking universe, populated by grotesque, hybrid bodies that are endlessly becoming.

#### YOSHIKAZU YAMAGATA

206–207 *The Fashion Show of the Gods* collection, S/S 2010, photos: Daniel Sannwald, courtesy of Yoshikazu Yamagata/writtenafterwards

208 *The Witch*, 2004, photo: Kiyotaka Makihara, courtesy of Yoshikazu Yamagata/writtenafterwards

- 209 *A Long Story*, 2004, photo: Koomi Kim, courtesy of Yoshikazu Yamagata/writtenafterwards
- 210–211 *-0 Points-* collection, 2005, © photos: Yoshikazu Yamagata/writtenafterwards

A Central Saint Martins graduate, Yoshikazu Yamagata (b. 1980) uses his fashion label writtenafterwards to pick apart the concept of fashion. He represented his school at ITS#THREE, where he received the special jury prize and the INGEO Sustainability award. The Japanese designer has participated in the Arnhem Mode Biennale in 2007 and 2009. Yamagata's collections and projects contain a strong visual narrative in which the garment becomes a conceptual medium for experimentation. The result is a string of wearable sculptures that challenge issues of identity and self-adornment in the modern world, with both insight and humour.

#### THE YES MEN

- 316–317 *The Yes Men Fix the World*, 2009, © photos: The Yes Men

The Yes Men are a culture jamming activist duo from the US who raise public awareness of social issues. Formed by Andy Bichlbaum, an associate professor of communication, design, and technology at Parsons The New School For Design, School of Art, Media and Technology, New York and Mike Bonanno, associate professor of media arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York, The Yes Men use satire to expose the flaws of Republican America. In 1999 they started creating fake websites in the style of those they were parodying, using reconfigured logos and newspapers to challenge the concept of personal freedom and consumerism. Their films *The Yes Men*, 2003 and *The Yes Men Fix the World*, 2009, satirise personalities they dislike, a tactic they call 'identity correction'. The Yes Men have also created extreme fashion props, like the SurvivaBall Character, an ironic comment on post-apocalyptic survivalist fantasies.

#### GINGER GREGG DUGGAN AND JUDITH HOOS FOX

- 011 Fig. 1: Walter Van Beirendonck, *Sexclown* collection, S/S 2008, © photo: Ronald Stoops
- 012 Fig. 2: Cassette Playa, *L.S.I.* collection, S/S 2007
- 013 Fig. 3: Alex Mattsson, *The Sixth Sun*, pre-collection, 2009

Ginger Gregg Duggan studied art history at the Savannah College of Art and Design and at the Florida State University. She has worked as a curator at the Bellevue Art Museum, the Krannert Art Museum and the Ford Lauderdale Museum of Art. Recent projects include *Fashion: The Greatest Show on Earth*; *OVER+OVER: A Passion for Process*, and *Branded and On Display*. Duggan also teaches and writes on contemporary art.

Judith Hoos Fox studied art history at Bryn Mawr College and museology at the University of Minnesota. She has held curatorial positions in many public and university museums such as the Krannert Art Museum, the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design and the Harvard University Art Museum. Her recent projects include group exhibitions *OVER+OVER: A Passion for Process*; *Pat-tern Language: Clothing as Communicator*

and *Branded and On Display*. In the course of her long career, Fox has published extensively.

In 2008, Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox joined forces and founded C<sup>2</sup>, a curatorial partnership that develops exhibitions of international, cross-media art and design, which explores current critical issues.

#### FRANCESCA GRANATA

- 023 Fig. 1: Bernhard Willhelm and Olaf Breuning, S/S 2004 collection, from the exhibition by Bernhard Willhelm and Jutta Kraus, Groninger Museum, 2009, © photo: Marten de Leeuw / Groninger Museum, Netherlands
- 023 Fig. 2: Bernhard Willhelm, from the exhibition by Bernhard Willhelm and Jutta Kraus, Groninger Museum, 2009, © photo: Marten de Leeuw / Groninger Museum, Netherlands
- 024 Fig. 3: Comme des Garçons, Rei Kawakubo, *Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body* collection, S/S 1997, © photo: Catwalking.com

Francesca Granata recently completed her Ph.D. at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts in London, with a focus on experimental fashion, performance and gender studies. She has previously worked as a lecturer in the visual arts department at Goldsmiths, University of London and as a fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute, New York. She currently lectures at New York University and Parsons The New School for Design, as well as working as an independent curator. She is also the editor of *Fashion Projects: A Journal on Art, Fashion and Visual Culture*.

#### TED POLHEMUS

- 035 Fig. 1: Kikuyu girl with ear ornaments, from Adolfo Dembo and J. Imbelloni, *Deformaciones Intencionales del Cuerpo Humano de Carácter Étnico*, Buenos Aires: Humanior, Biblioteca del Americanista Moderno (José Anesil), 1938
- 035 Fig. 2: Native of New Guinea with an artificially constricted waist (after Bruce-Haddon), from Dembo and Imbelloni, op. cit.
- 036 Fig. 3: Tahitian facial tattooing (after Stolpe), from Dembo and Imbelloni, op. cit.
- 038 Fig. 4: Tattooing on a native of Rapa-Nui, Easter Islands (after K. Routledge), from Dembo and Imbelloni, op. cit.
- 043 Fig. 5: Punk girl, King's Road, London early 1980s, © photo: Ted Polhemus/PYMCA

Ted Polhemus is a freelance anthropologist, journalist, writer, photographer, teacher and curator, interested in the social and communicative importance of style, design and visual signals. He studied anthropology at Temple University, USA and University College London. Polhemus has gained international recognition with the books *Street-style: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*; *Style Surfing: What to Wear in the 3rd Millennium* and *Hot Bodies, Cool Styles: New Techniques in Self Adornment*. He was the external curator of the exhibition *Streetstyle in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1994–1995* and of *Style Surfing in the Bonnefonten Museum, Maastricht, 2000*. Polhemus works as a fashion and style consultant for marketing and advertising companies.

#### VALERIE STEELE

- 029 Fig. 1: Leigh Bowery, New York City 1993, © photo: Annie Leibovitz
- 030 Fig. 2: Leigh Bowery, Taboo Club, London 1980s, © photo: Ted Polhemus/PYMCA

Valerie Steele (Ph.D., Yale University) is a fashion historian and the director and chief curator of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She has curated more than twenty exhibitions, including *Gothic: Dark Glamour*; *Love & War: The Weaponized Woman*; *The Corset: Fashioning the Body*; *London Fashion*; *Femme Fatale: Fashion in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* and *Japan Fashion Now*. She has authored numerous books, including *The Corset: A Cultural History*; *Paris Fashion*; *Fifty Years of Fashion: New Look to Now* and *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power*. She was editor-in-chief of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* and is the editor and founder of *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*. In 2002, she received an Iris Award for distinguished contributions in the decorative arts and in 2003 she received the Artistry of Fashion Award at the American Images Awards Ceremony.

#### JOSÉ TEUNISSEN

- 017 Fig. 1: LucyandBart, *Grow On You Part Two*, 2008
- 018 Fig. 2: Freddie Robins, *The Perfect: Alex*, 2007, photo: Damien Chapman
- 018 Fig. 3: Nick Cave, *Soundsuit (Untitled)*, 2008

José Teunissen is a writer, curator and professor at the ArteZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem and visiting professor at the University of the Arts in London. She studied Dutch Language and Film Studies, focusing on the narrative function of costume in film, and was for ten years lecturer in Film Aesthetics at the University of Amsterdam. She worked for nine years as a fashion curator at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, where she curated many exhibitions. She has contributed to a number of books, magazines and newspapers and has authored several publications. She is the co-editor of *The Power of Fashion: About Design and Meaning and Fashion and Imagination: About Clothes and Art*. Teunissen was also the curator of *The Art of Fashion* at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam in 2009 and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg 2010.

#### VASSILIS ZIDIANAKIS

Vassilis Zidianakis is an artist, curator and the Artistic Director of ATOPOS cvc, Athens. He studied Ethnology and Anthropology as well as History and Civilisation at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. He has worked with the costume designer Ioanna Papantoniou and the director Robert Wilson. In 2003, together with Stamos Fafalios he founded the cultural organisation ATOPOS cvc, which explores contemporary phenomena and their impact on the human body and costume. ATOPOS cvc has participated in various exhibitions and projects such as *Ptychoseis = Folds + Pleats. Drapery from Ancient Greek Dress to 21st Century Fashion*, Benaki Museum, Athens, during the 2004 Athens Olympic Games; *Bulls Eye SPECIAL 2008, 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT*, Tokyo and *Atopic Bodies [THREE]: The Leiotrichous Tribe*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, in 2011. ATOPOS cvc became internationally acclaimed through the exhibition *RRRIPP!! Paper Fashion* which was first presented at the Benaki Museum, Athens in 2007 and has then traveled to, amongst others, the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxemburg and ModeMuseum, Antwerp.

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ATOPOS Contemporary Visual Culture (ATOPOS cvc) is a non-profit cultural organisation, founded in 2003 in Athens by Stamos Fafalios and Vassilis Zidianakis. Its aim is to implement innovative projects of contemporary visual culture, with particular emphasis on the human figure and costume. ATOPOS, a name inspired by the ancient Greek word *άτροπος* denoting the strange, the unwonted, the eccentric and the unclassifiable, is a meeting point for different visual disciplines. It operates by researching projects of international interest, collaborating with designers and artists, realising new ideas in the form of exhibitions, publications, performances and events.



**NOT A TOY  
FASHIONING RADICAL CHARACTERS**

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