

#TextMe_PaperFashion

Can paper be considered a textile material? Paper and textile have always been closely related to one another and both have been two of the most important cultural items in the history of humanity. Textile as well as paper is made of fibres. The difference is that textile can be made of both natural vegetable or animal fibres as well as synthetic fibres, whereas the basic component of paper is cellulose.

In Western culture, paper is always associated with writing, printing and the dissemination of ideas through texts. The term 'text' relates to 'texture' and 'textile' and traces back to *texo* - 'to weave', referring to the way words and sentences are 'woven' together. According to an old metaphor, a thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns - but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver.

Are there such things as garments that can be read like written pages? However strange this may sound there are clothes from different cultures and historical periods that are made of paper covered with texts. When these 'written' garments are worn they can send out messages and much more.

The exhibition #TextMe_PaperFashion investigates this relationship between paper and text in fashion. It narrates the little-known story of paper garments and attempts to highlight the many ways in which typographic elements, such as words, logos, headlines, slogans and even poems have been integrated into paper fashion.

You can explore examples of paper garments embellished with words on the central table and read their stories.

#POETRY IN MOTION

The first edition of the poem 'Uptown NY' by Allen Ginsberg, one of the pivotal figures of the American beat generation, a literary movement begun in the 1950s, was published on a paper dress. The dress is part of the series 'Poster Dresses' by graphic designer Harry Gordon. The text is printed in the palm of a photographically reproduced hand, held in the Buddhist gesture of peace. Allen Ginsberg eventually converted to Buddhism, which is what probably motivated the choice of the image. The singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, who was awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition", has been himself the subject of a paper dress. Created by Harry Gordon too, the dress is adorned with a well-known photographic portrait of Bob Dylan, a symbol of his generation, from his 'Blonde on Blonde' period (1966).

#SEND ME A LETTER

The 'Airmail Dress' by Hussein Chalayan, a British designer of Turkish Cypriot background, is inspired by airmail stationery; it is made of Tyvek, a paper-like material, and has the blue and red airmail markings around the edges. The bottom of the dress is finished as the flap of an envelope and can be folded to fit into the envelope in order to be sent by post. Chalayan has long experimented with the ideas of migration and communication, which, as he has said, derive from his childhood, when as a child living in England he wrote letters to his mother in Turkey. His 'Airmail Dress', bearing a handwritten message, can be worn by the recipient. Although the sender is physically absent, he or she is present wherever the dress is worn. In Chalayan's own words, the dress "can become a token for absence or presence". The artist Bjork chose to wear an 'Airmail' jacket for her 1995 album, 'Post'.

#RECYCLING WORDS

Paper was first produced about 2,000 years ago in China. In the centuries that followed, it was further perfected in Japan. The *shifu* garments owe their existence to the lack of raw materials for textile clothing in 16th century Japan. In order to create clothing, poor farmers cut sheets of paper from old accounting books into strips and twisted them into yarn. With this paper yarn they wove or knitted their garments. Soon, however, the wealthier classes took up this special cloth and *shifu* became a cult material in Japan. Traces of the ink texts are still visible on the rare surviving examples. The Samurai used the *shifu* technique in order to make ceremonial clothing. The Japanese warriors wrote prayers on the pieces of paper before these became strips.

#FINAL HOME

The Japanese designer Kosuke Tsumura has touched upon another aspect of the use of newspaper as clothing motivated by the increasing number of homeless people in Tokyo. He designed the 'Final Home' transparent nylon coat with forty four pockets that can be filled with newspapers to provide insulation against the cold, as an 'ideal refuge', a 'wearable shelter' in contemporary urban civilization.

#HEADLINES MAKE FASHION

Newspaper has been used in fancy dress since the late 19th century as an innovative and cheap way to make costumes. The feeling of the immediacy of the moment, and of the ephemeral which is conveyed by the printed newspaper, has inspired fashion designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli, John Galliano, Moschino, Hood by Air, KTZ, Martin Margiela, Balenciaga and Comme des Garçons, amongst others.

In the context of the '60s paper fashion phenomenon, newspaper paper dresses were mainly created as promotional products and featured collages of press cuttings printed on the paper-like, non woven material. The American 'Chicago Sun-Times' dress is printed with articles of political news from May 1967 when the Vietnam War was still ongoing. The American 'Tacoma News Tribune' dress bears a collage with an article printed in May 1969 referring to the launch of Apollo 10, the spaceflight that preceded the landing on the moon by Apollo 11. The British 'Daily Express' dress is adorned with clippings of articles on various news items of May 1967, like the arrest of Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones for drug possession, the Greek military junta ban on miniskirts and Mary Wilson, wife of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, admiring her new wardrobe for her visit to the Expo in Montreal.

#YELLOW PAGES

The name and concept of Yellow Pages originated in 1883, when a printer in the U.S. working on a regular telephone directory ran out of white paper and used yellow paper instead. The yellow pages refer to the telephone directory of businesses whereas the white pages for non-commercial listings. As a promotional product, the 'Yellow Pages' paper dress was launched circa 1968.

In 2017, the UK publisher of Yellow Pages, Yell, announced that the business would be fully digitised from January 2019, ending the publication's 51-year run. In order to re-use and experiment on the collection, ATOPOS cvc gave duplicates of the 'Yellow Pages' paper dress to artists and fashion designers commissioning them to give new life to them.

Demna Gvasalia, one of the most influential designers today, was one of the first fashion designers to be commissioned by ATOPOS cvc in 2006, the year he graduated from Antwerp's Royal Academy. Gvasalia chose to explore homosexuality through his creation and transformed a 'Yellow Pages' dress into the wearable 'Paper Polo', where he sketched the logo CAMPUS ROYAL BAREBACK. Since 2006, the Georgian fashion designer

has led design teams at Maison Martin Margiela and Louis Vuitton. Today, he is the creative director at Balenciaga and head designer at Vetements.

The American fashion designer Michael Cepress confronted a garment's architecture and structure with unlikely ornamentation and pattern. Cepress chose to draw inspiration from the historical paper attachable collars and created his 'Collars for the Modern Gentleman'.

The famous British artist Howard Hodgkin (1932-2017), who painted representational pictures of emotional situations, painted the 'Yellow Pages' dress given to him in his signature style with a single brushstroke transforming the garment into a canvas. His intense and emotional creation is entitled 'Gouache on Yellow Pages Dress'.

#WEARABLE BILLBOARDS

The '60s paper fashion originated as an advertising ploy, that met with great success. Paper dresses provided a convenient backdrop for surprising and colourful logos. Films, disposable kitchenware or food and drink – such as the Butterfinger and Baby Ruth candies, Seagram's whisky and the well-known Campbell's Soup – are amongst the products that used paper fashion as an advertising tool. The wearer was transformed into a 'walking billboard' of consumerism and this potential was playfully exploited by companies, who often employed Pop Art's bold and iconographic images.

In 1967, Time magazine produced a dress, with the Time logo in graphic Op Art style. The dress was packed in a box with an accompanying card that read, "For Your ValenTIME... For every week in homes like yours across the country, some six million women slip into a little black-and-white print that just fits their taste and interests: TIME, The Weekly News Magazine."

In the same year, the 'Souper Dress' by Campbell's Soup was launched. The 'Souper Dress' traded on Warhol's use of commercial multiples, in this case the Campbell soup tin, in a humorous take on Pop Art. Andy Warhol's silk screen portraits again provided the inspiration for the Universal Studios 'The Big Ones for '68' dress with printed titles of the movies launched in 1968 and portraits of their stars, such as Elisabeth Taylor, Marlon Brando, Richard Burton, Paul Newman, Julie Andrews, Doris Day, Vanessa Redgrave, Henry Fonda, etc.

#POLITICAL PAPER-DOLLS

The potential of paper dresses for propaganda did not escape political campaign leaders in 1968. Paper dresses were used in the presidential election campaigns of many candidates in the United States shortly before the fad started to decline. The young female supporters of Richard Nixon, called the 'Nixonettes' wore paper dresses, in the fashionable A-line style of the period, with the letters NIXON in stencil type red lettering, and blue stars, against a white background.

Paper dresses proved to be a successful promotional ploy for Richard Nixon, but not for Nelson Rockefeller, George Romney, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, whose paper dress was taken off the market after his assassination.

Stratis Tavlaridis Empty, 2014 – 2016

The work of Stratis Tavlaridis consists mainly of paper and is created entirely by hand. He works with handmade, lightweight Asian papers and follows the traditional paper-cutting technique using a scalpel.

The idea of detaching pieces of paper transpired from his need to see through his work and from his obsession with the design and repetition of patterns. He is motivated by the creative process, the material that allows him to express himself freely and the discipline and high level of concentration required for the creation of his works.

With the 'Empty' series, Stratis Tavlaridis is inspired by images of everyday life which he feels escape our attention and he recharges them with the value they deserve. His technique encourages us to look more closely at these images and challenges us to rediscover their beauty. The perforated works acquire a different dimension once removed from their everyday situation and placed in a showroom.

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