

Clothing displayed in museums: from conservation to innovative design representations

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The presentation in museum exhibitions of samples of historical clothing, fashionable costumes from different periods and conceptual costumes of our time has acquired particular relevance. The development of exhibition design has attracted the attention of gallery owners, curators and representatives of the scientific community. The general cultural significance of the practices of preserving the heritage of material and artistic cultures and their representations synthesises traditional and innovative approaches to reconstruction, conservation and perception of costume, while remaining poorly studied. The strategies of contemporary curatorial practices form alternative approaches to fashion exhibitions and their organisation. In the information society, fashion exhibitions have become self-sufficient art projects that require careful scientific consideration.

Keywords: costume, design of expositions, museum space, representation.

Introduction

By the end of the twentieth century, design had become a source of tension in a situation where designers were creating environments and their content based solely on utilitarian and functional needs, outside the realm of traditional spirituality and artistic culture. As a result, the problem of the figurative and stylistic qualities of the material world has become more acute as a reflection of a way of life and an element of identification. It has become relevant to consider culture as a figurative and value-based environment intended for life at a certain moment in the present. At the same time, the synthesis of “past”, “present”, “future” and “timelessness” has brought new opportunities to present the achievements of humanity through design in the most unexpected presentational formats.

Defined as “the art of the industrial world”, design is constantly being updated through the introduction of new technological and communication systems. It has acquired a clear cultural context in which project activities are positioned as a natural result of human culture, the background of which is in the field of crafts and folk art. Within the framework of the culturological approach, the growth of interest in the traditional material world of culture has become natural. One of the leading questions in the practical and theoretical development of project culture is the problem of cultural identity.

Traditional costume, like other forms of fashion, remains one of the clearest forms of evidence for the formation of mankind’s cultural identity and the evolution of material culture. Therefore, the restoration and conservation of traditional costumes, as well their exhibition as design products in museums, are of particular importance. The study of this practice is based on an understanding of the design development processes in general and various types of activities of museum specialists in particular. Thus, an interdisciplinary environment is being formed, synthesising knowledge in the field of art and design creativity and museology.

Theoretical foundations and key concepts of the problem: a literature review

The theme of taken by most modern authors is designers’ “misconceptions” about how the consumer perceives a designer product. This indicates the need to synchronise the designer’s ideas about his creation with the perceptions of potential users, which characterises certain subject–object relationships. Such synchronisation is possible directly in the act of presentation of the design product and its identification.

At the same time, the development of project activities has had a revolutionary influence on technologies and industrial production, by taking control of satisfying not only the material, but also the aesthetic needs of a person, shaping their tastes, and contributing to the social and cultural development of society. This has forced designers to pay more attention to developing means to promote the dissemination of their products through their presentations.

N. Koveshnikova,¹ proposing the most general periodisation of the development of design, distinguishes the pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial periods, which are defined both by a change in ideas about the design of things, and by the strategies of their perception. Agreeing with this, M. Stankevich² points out that there was an enrichment of the medieval manufacturer’s principles of work (sociological, engineering, aesthetic and economic) with the principles of design creativity (ergonomics, ecology and marketing). This is what distinguishes traditional crafts from design formation.

Since the area of clothing has always synthesised the achievements of a significant number of traditional crafts, the point-of-view about the deep roots of design, its hidden form of existence throughout the history of the creation of the objective world, is important for research. The ability to harmoniously combine various crafts in traditional costumes demonstrated both a high level of craftsmanship and artistic and aesthetic qualities due to the level of development and the identity of the culture as a whole. At the same time, secular (urban) costume, altered by fashion, used and developed the same crafts to create quality products within the dominant artistic style. At the end of the nineteenth century, the skill involved in creating a costume reached exceptional levels. Couture became identified with art in European culture. As a work

¹ KOVESHNIKOVA, Natalya. *Dizayn: istoriya i teoriya*. Moskva: Omega-L, 2009, pp. 180–211.

² STANKEVYCH, Mykhailo. Protodyzain, kontseptsii i morfolohiia dyzainu. In: *Narysy z istorii ukrainskoho dyzainu KhKh stolittia: Zbirnyk statei za red. M. Yakovliena*. Kyiv: Feniks, 2012, p. 125.

of art, the costume has become a collectible item, stored and exhibited in museums. This has contributed to the development of research in the field of clothing.

Clothing began to be defined not only as a “design item”, but also as a “museum item” – a component of the system of exhibition materials. Later, it became known as a “museum object”, that is, an object of cultural and natural heritage, the primary source of knowledge and emotions, museified and updated in the process of museum activity. In a certain sense, the concept of “museum object” absorbed the concept of “museum item” in the context of expanding the historical–chronological and cultural approaches with the characteristics of the axiological approach.³ Both objects and objects of museum significance are distinguished by a set of properties – “museality” (informativeness, expressiveness, attractiveness, representativeness and associativity) and values (scientific, historical, memorial, aesthetic and artistic), by means of which they realise genetic, utilitarian–consumer, scientific–cognitive, cultural, modelling and communicative functions.⁴ This serves as the basis for the inclusion of clothing in museums’ exhibitions. The key function of the exhibit is to preserve cultural and natural heritage and set in the context of modern culture. Clothing, as an exhibit, is an object that has museality, due to which it can become the main structural element of a museum exposition.

In scientific discourse, two parallel branches of the study of the evolution of costume forms coexist. The first analyses the changes in the samples of material culture that have occurred under the influence of historical, cultural and social transformations. According to this direction, clothing is viewed as a phenomenon of traditional cultures or individual eras, as an item of artistic and stylistic integrity, taking into account fundamental changes in its shaping.⁵ The other approach analyses changes in costume as a fashion item – a sociocultural phenomenon caused by the formation of special value preferences in a particular society. Around the nineteenth century, the processes associated with the change in European costume became almost identical in both cases. Therefore, in relation to them, they began to use the generalising term “fashion”. The change of “fashions” in the twentieth century is reflected in the research of academics, firstly, in the change of the figurative and stylistic elements⁶ and then in the formal–constructive aspect⁷ in each separate decade. On the basis of this, researchers have compiled a periodisation of the development of fashionable clothes as a consumer product.⁸ The significant influence of fashion as an industry on the sphere of creativity of artists and tailors is also evident.⁹

E. Andreeva¹⁰ conventionally divides the development of fashion as an industry in the twentieth century into periods directly related to the activities of designers, namely:

- the period of the dictatorship of Parisian haute couture: late nineteenth to early twentieth century;
- the era of fashion designers: beginning of the twentieth century to end of WWII;

³ ANDREEVA, Irina. *Ekspozicionnye materialy kak ponyatie muzevedeniya: opredelenie, klassifikaciya, harakteristika osnovnoj gruppy*, 2011, pp. 21–23.

⁴ ANDREEVA, Ekspozicionnye materialy..., p. 24.

⁵ TEILOR, Charlz. *Sekuliarna doba*. Kyiv: DUKh I LITERA, 2013, pp. 318–356.

⁶ ZELENG, Sharlotta. *Moda. Vek modelerov 1900–1999*. Koln: Konemann, 2000.

⁷ DZEKONSKA-KOZLOVSKA, Alina. *Zbenskaya moda XX veka*. Moskva: Legkaya industriya, 1977.

⁸ DUBROVINA, Alena. *Moda v aktualnom byitii cheloveka*. PhD thesis. Tyumen. Tyumenskiy gosudarstvennyy universitet, 2016. [In Russian].

⁹ TKANKO, Zenoviia. *Moda v Ukraini XX stolittia*. Lviv: “ARTOS”, 2015, p. 10.

¹⁰ ANDREEVA, Elena. *Upravlenie dizaynerskimi brendami v fesbn-biznese*, PhD thesis, Sankt-Peterburgskiy gosudarstvennyy universitet, 2004, pp. 130–136.

- the period of fashion management by managers: after WWII, 1945 to mid-1990s;
- the period of “reincarnation”: mid-1990s to our times.

She emphasises that the fashion industry has undergone significant changes associated with the processes of globalisation in production and, most importantly, in the practice of distributing fashion products.

Large-scale social changes were accompanied by changes in human life, in industrial production, communications, mass culture and even individual consciousness.¹¹ When, from the mid-twentieth century, the history of *prêt-à-porter* began, it became obvious that a person does not just live in an artificial space: this space contacts them in a special way. Design language is objectified in things, and the use of things leads to its assimilation.

According to D. Dubrovsky,¹² due to contemporary art, the ecological crisis, and globalisation tendencies, a special context has arisen in relation to artistic practices, thanks to which the value of the figurative and stylistic expression of things, the multiplicity of aesthetic tastes, the manifestation of eclecticism and polystylism has increased. The general tendencies of postmodernism have demonstrated the desire for fragmentation, artificiality, theatricality and spectacularly, which are inherent in the processes of creating and presenting modern designer clothes, in particular, in the space of museums.¹³ However, the definition of a costume traditionally positions it as creative self-expression, an individualised aesthetic reflection of the designer and the consumer, which is expressed, first, in the representation of a person in his costume.¹⁴

Since the phenomenon of fashion refers to the value forms of the manifestation of aesthetic relations in culture, it primarily manifests itself in a visual way in its various external forms, in particular, in clothing. Thus, fashion is an important factor in visual culture and can be described according to any characteristic of visibility.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the ideology of the “consumer society” contributes to the growth of the prestige of the fashionable outfit in society.

However, a fashionable costume remains an object through which a person directly expresses his artistic worldview, broadcasting it to others. In this context, any study of costume and its representations is conditioned by the discourse of fashion as a product of human activity – the “vestimental code” that determines the relationship between man and the world. Vestimental fashion, according to R. Barthes, is the opposition of three systems, “three clothes”: clothing–image (drawing or photographic image); descriptions of clothes – explication of the image; and real clothes in all their variety. Their structure is different. The structure of real clothes is technological, determined by the degree of transformation of the material. The description of clothes has a verbal structure, and the image of the clothes has the structure of a sign. Each of these systems has a different level of significance and informational content, which determines the characteristics of communication within the framework of visual culture.

¹¹ LAHODA, Oksana. *Dyzain kostiuma. Praktyky reprezentatsii: monohrafiia*, Cherkasy: Vydav. Tretiakov O., 2018, pp. 77–84.

¹² DUBROVSKIY, Dmitriy. (2001) Postmodernistskaya moda. [Postmodern fashion]. In: *Seriya “Myisliteli”*. St Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskoe filosofskoe obshchestvo, 2001, p. 99.

¹³ HUDYAKOVA, Lyudmila. Muzej v epohu postmoderna: poteri ili vozmozhnosti? *Voprosy muzeologii*, 2, 2010, pp. 12–21. [In Russian].

¹⁴ LAHODA, Dyzain kostiuma... p. 55.

¹⁵ ALFEROVA, Zoia. *Vizualne mystetstvo kintsia XX – pochatku XXI stolittia*, PhD thesis, Kharkivska derzhavna akademiia kultury, 2008, pp. 40–44 [In Ukrainian].

Research on the museology of fashion and costume – “fashion research” – was initiated by fashion historian Valerie Steele, the University of Brighton’s Professor L. Taylor, and senior curator of fashion programs at the Royal Ontario Museum A. Palmer. They studied in detail the history of costume exhibitions in Europe and America, researched methodologies for storing clothes, identified changes in “fashionable” museology, and looked at possibilities for practical applications of fashion theory in the museum space. Their research paid much attention to modern fashionable clothing within the walls of museums, as well as to the management of museums as cultural institutions of a new type. They noted that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between “costume” and “fashion” museology, the latter referring to the interaction of fashion as a system with museums as cultural institutions. This approach appeals to the theory of the Danish researcher M.R. Melchior, according to which the history of museums collecting and exhibiting costumes can be split into two areas – “costume” and “fashion” museology.¹⁶ Scientists associate the formation of fashion museology with changes in curatorial strategies. In the postmodern era, according to Melchior, the issue of the status of a couturier, a designer, is important exclusively at the individual level;¹⁷ the media, entertainment and universal recognition are gaining more and more importance, which is actively promoted by museum exhibitions.¹⁸ It is these problems that require systematic and interdisciplinary consideration. They define the research methodology.

Methodology

The study used a number of fundamental provisions that determined its logic and general direction. First, a communicative understanding of the essence of clothing was established. The study is based on understanding the development and formation of the language of costume, its sign system, which turns the costume into a text. In the process of creating a separate product – an object or a costume as a whole – the process of narrativisation takes place. It consists in creating coded symbolic meanings that are expressed in the design of the product itself, as well as in the design of its presentation as an act of communication.¹⁹ The greatest importance in this process is given to the creation, functioning and “sounding” of the image of a design product in a symbolic form, reflecting all its functions and characteristics. Consequently, the second fundamental point of research is that the act of visual presentation of a costume is communication in the field of fashion, where images of costumes predominate.

It is taken into account that representative practices have their own history associated with a person as a wearer of clothing. The presentation of fashionable dresses began in two different ways;²⁰ The first was a direct demonstration of clothing on a wearer or on an object imitating the wearer (a mannequin) in the format of a three-dimensional presentation. The other was the fixation by artistic means of a person wearing an outfit as a generalised image of a contemporary individual, personifying society’s ideas about aesthetic tastes in clothing and the ideals of beauty. In both cases, the goal was to reproduce the features of a fashionable outfit

¹⁶ MELCHIOR, Marie Riegels, SVENSSON, Birgitta (eds). Introduction: understanding fashion and dress museology. In: *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice*, 2014, pp. 1–19

¹⁷ MELCHIOR and SVENSSON, *Fashion and Museums...* pp. 187–194.

¹⁸ BREWARD, Christopher. Between the museum and the academy: fashion research and its constituencies. In: *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 12(1), 2008, pp. 83–94.

¹⁹ LAHODA, Oksana. Komunikatyvno-identyfikatsiinyi aspekt suchasnoho proektuvannia kostiuma In: *Nauka i sotsialni problemy suspilstva: osvita, kultura, dukhovnist*. Kharkiv: KhNPU, I, 2008, pp. 352–354. [In Ukrainian].

²⁰ LAHODA, Dyzain kostiuma... p. 157–160. [In Ukrainian].

as accurately as possible. However, a visual demonstration of the costume allows its all-round view. Features of fabrics, color combinations, workmanship are readable visually. The visual impact of a fashionable outfit, its authenticity and aesthetics, are determined by the skill of a particular artist. Being an important channel of fashion communication, they broadcast the key figurative and stylistic characteristics of the costume, disseminate information about the values of fashion, and limit or regulate the possibility of their reproduction. This is evidenced by the significant number of “luxury laws” (from Latin: *sumptuariae leges*) that regulate consumer habits. There is evidence, in particular, of “costumed and textile restrictions” in human culture at various stages of its development. However, the tradition of contemplating and interpreting a fashionable message in everyday life has contributed to the formation of narratives about the fashionable costume and its wearer.

Costume historian Valerie Steele, describing the active development of fashion museums, emphasised that “every viewer feels able to understand and appreciate fashion, because it is much more accessible than art... Fashion presentations in a museum context promote the idea that that fashion is an art, and it looks very attractive for manufacturers of luxury goods”²¹. Steele argues that visitors to fashion museums influence the organisation of the exhibition space, and this changes the activities of museum curators as well as their strategies.

This study analyses the curation and overall design of costume exhibitions as a practical aspect of fashion museology. The authors refer to “Fashion Show: Before and After 1971” by Amy de la Hay and Judith Clarke,²² which explores the problem of how to “tell” fashionable clothes using not only costumes and signatures, but other visual elements as well – catwalks, lighting, mannequins – and how to shift the emphasis from the material and social value of a costume as a commodity to its artistic value as a museum piece. The monograph contains a list of over 900 costume exhibitions in various museums around the world dating back to 1971. However, the authors note that it was the 1971 exhibition in London, curated by photographer and designer Cecil Beaton, that marked a turning point in the transformation of the curatorial strategy for fashion dress exposition. Thus, the next point that we adhere to is that fashion within the framework of the exhibition, which strips it of its commercial component, is an object of art. It “claims to be a status equal to art”, since in the modern world the boundaries between “popular” and “high” cultures have become permeable, and sometimes even completely erased.

The research methodology applies the theoretical understanding of how the presentation of design objects has evolved, and how organisers of exhibitions strive to place a significant number of heterogeneous objects within a single exhibition space. The formation and development of exhibition design is associated with the development of the World Expositions showcasing industrial developments, which have been held since 1851.²³ They laid the foundation for a certain kind of presentational format, aimed towards finding the most effective way to organise the exposition in order to make the strongest impression on observers.²⁴ The intensive development of exhibition practice evolved into the art of exhibition design, which M. Maistrovskaya describes as an extremely complex, synthetic and multidimensional sphere,

²¹ STEELE, Valerie. Museum quality: the rise of the fashion exhibition. In: *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 12(1), 2008, p. 18.

²² DE LA HAYE, Amy and CLARK, Judith. *Exhibiting Fashion: Before and After 1971*. Yale University Press, 2014.

²³ INOZEMTSEVA, I. Vsemirnyie vystavki, ih rol i znachenie. In: *Analitika kulturologii*.

²⁴ LAHODA, Dyzain kostiuma... pp. 25–26.

balancing on the verge of clear and rational architectural thought related to functionality and comfort, technology and economics, fast implementation of projects and ... practically unlimited possibilities of artistic expression, metaphors, the ability to create vivid, emotional and meaningful images.²⁵

The exhibition is a unique communication system. Museum professionals define its intended impact as a “gesture of exposure”. One of the most important features of the practice of modern exhibition activities is that this gesture has become valuable in itself. In the context of visual practices, it acts as a special type of creativity, focused on the formation of values, ideas and specific methods of implementation. The task of the designer is to ensure the entertainment and theatricality of the event through creative self-realisation.

As a communication system, exhibitions are formed from various independent elements synthesised into a single structure. They organise the exhibition space and ensure the interaction of demonstration, communication and advertising. Any exhibition in the context of a general idea has its own figurative unit, which is considered as a “compositional block” or “exhibition stand”. The exposition requires thematic clarity, compositional perfection and plastic certainty.²⁶ The designer organises visual connections between the subject and the object of the exhibition in the subject-spatial environment; develops a scenario of perception; and determines the accents of the composition of the exposition, its structure and programs, the navigation of the overview and the sequence in which visitors will view the exhibits.

One more provision: the complex implementation of such functions as information, advertisement and entertainment in the design of the exhibition makes it spectacular. The exposition as a spectacle appears as a visual narration, and the improvement of the exposure technique reveals a general tendency towards ever more unexpected and effective methods of using the latest technical and technological means and frank theatricalisation of expositions as a show.²⁷ In the form of a spectacle, the exhibited objects are participants in a certain story which is not only about the object, but also about its creator, about a potential consumer and about the author of the exhibition at the same time. Effective storytelling was relevant as a strategy as early as early as the 1930s for art exhibitions. In the second half of the twentieth century, storytelling dominated both art exhibitions and trade. In a newly synthesised form, this direction still prevails in the early twenty-first century.

In the context of this methodology, the exhibition of fashionable clothes in the museum space is considered one of the formats for presenting a designer product. The exhibition is positioned as a spatial–communicative object and a complex of systematised purposeful actions, conceptually aimed at presenting exhibits in a projected object–spatial environment in the form of a spectacle, measured by the temporality of visual perception and its emotional and sensory influence. Such an exhibition ensures the creative self-realisation of the curator and designer.

²⁵ MAYSTROVSKAYA, Mariya. *Kompozitsionno-hudozhestvennyie tendentsii formoobrazovaniya muzejnoy ekspozitsii: V kontekste iskusstva, arhitektury, dizayna*, Ph.D. thesis, Moskovskiy gosudarstvennyiy hudozhestvenno-promyshlennyy universitet im. S.G. Stroganova, 2002, pp. 93–94.

²⁶ Dizayn: Illyustrirovannyiy slovar-spravochnik [Design: Illustrated Dictionary]: pod obsch. red. Minervina G.B. Moskva: Arhitektura-C. 2004, p. 214.

²⁷ MONINA, Tatyana. *Modulnaya sistema kak kontseptualno-obraznaya osnova ekspodizayna*, PhD thesis, Moskovskaya Gosudarstvennaya Hudozhestvenno-Promyshlennaya Akademiya im. S.G. Stroganova, 2019, p. 19.

Representations of historical and modern costumes in the museum space

The first exhibitions of clothing in museums presented costumes of a particular era, informed viewers about how they were worn, and presented associated jewellery, norms of behaviour, and the rituals of life associated with it. Separately, collections of ethnic outfits were created that were never associated with fashion. In addition, textile museums were established, for example, in Boston (1870), Lyon (1890) and Paris (1905). It should be understood that all significant changes in clothing are associated with the development of the textile industry. Such developments were key in the development of fashion, both as an art of costume and as an industry. Another significant aspect that arose was museum exhibitions of the collections and archives of leading fashion houses. Such exhibitions traditionally corresponded to the chronological and historical principles of the development of textiles and clothing as part of the culture of everyday life. Along with the historical strategy of perception, over time, a thematic strategy of curatorship arose and was actively developed. The visual and sensory aspects were accentuated, actualising the spectacle as a narrative event. For curators, the mythological dimension of fashion has become a key component. From a practical point of view, curatorial strategies transformed “fashion stories” into narrative strategies of representation.²⁸ Therefore narrative – the performance and theatricality of fashion – became dominant.

In general, scholars conditionally divide the history of relations between fashion and museums into three periods. The first covers the second quarter of the twentieth century and is characterised by the active acquisition of clothing by museums, primarily the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London. The oldest museum of arts and crafts in Europe, it was founded back in 1852 after the world’s first Great Exhibition. The most interesting exhibits formed the basis of the museum’s funds.

The collection of historical costumes began to form only at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1954 the museum was gifted the wardrobe of one of the most famous fashionistas, widely considered the most elegant woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s, Lady Fairbank.²⁹ Until then, as far as clothing was concerned, the museum had taken more interest in costumes, or rather, the decorative arts and crafts with which they were made. This created the most reliable idea about the subject. The narrative of such exhibitions treated the costume as an element of the general atmosphere of the epoch and country concerned, a bearer of information about the realities of everyday life. Chronological sequences, verifiable facts and careful descriptions of the exhibits – which were often presented on a neutral tailor’s mannequin – were supplemented by documentary evidence such as artistic or photographic records of the costumes being worn. The costume was perceived as an object with a specific cut (technique, technology) made of specific materials (textiles), which had a certain material and artistic value. Predominantly pre-industrial clothing samples were collected and exhibited, and were studied from historical and ethnographic points of view. Scientists might take interest in the artistic aspects of the outfit – its uniqueness, decorative originality or preciousness – and, as a rule were interested if it belonged a famous person. The main problem for the museology of the costume at that time was the problem of storing exhibits.

²⁸ KONEVA, Anna. Muzei modyi: istoricheskoe znanie ili kanonyi iskusstva? In: *V poiskah muzeynogo obraza: materialyi nauch. konf.* Sankt-Peterburg: izd. SpbGU, 2007, pp. 257–264.

²⁹ Dama iz vysshego obschestva: platya ledi Ferbenk, 2015. http://www.vogue.ru/magazine/articles/dama_iz_vysshego_obshchestva_platya_ledi_ferbenk/

Until the latter half the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of museums adhered to traditional approaches to exhibiting historical costumes. For example, two of the largest museums in Paris are the Museum of Fashion and Textiles (Musée de la Mode et du Textile, or the Fashion and Textile Department of the Museum of Decorative Arts, part of the Louvre Museum complex) and the Parisian Fashion Museum at the Palais des Galliera (Musée de la Mode et du Costume de la Ville de Paris). They are housed in historic buildings associated with particular architecture styles, and exhibitions within are organised in ways that respond to the recreated interiors. In the exhibitions, costumes are placed next to examples of art – sculpture, painting, decorative and applied art, and household objects. Faceless mannequins are used to present the outfits, following the principle of demonstrating the costume itself. This principle allows a circular view of the historical object, enabling the viewer to examine the smallest details of the form, features of cut, manufacturing technology and decoration. It also accentuates the visual characteristics of the materials used and their quality. The narrative strategy of presenting a historical costume carries information as a generalised “cultural experience”.

In 2016, the Museum of Fashion and Textiles hosted a large-scale exhibition, “Fashion Forward, trois siècles de fashion (1715–2015)”, which demonstrated the history of European costume over the past 300 years. Its chief curator, Pamela Holbein, brought in British choreographer Christopher Wildon and set designer Jerome Kaplan as artistic director to design the original catwalks in the form of a semicircular staircase. The rest of the museum’s thematic exhibitions were original and frank, as were their names: “The dress code is respected. When clothes provoke a scandal”; “Christian Dior: Dream Designer”; or “Unbuttoned Fashion”, dedicated to a unique collection of buttons. The exhibitions used original mannequins which clearly conveyed the characteristic features of the original owners of the presented outfit. This is evidence of the presentation of the principle of “costume” and “costume on human”. The exhibition contained artistic and photographic images that carried the main image load.

The Paris Fashion Museum keeps unique historical samples: garments once worn by Marie-Antoinette and her son, Louis XVII; dresses owned by famous personalities such as Sarah Bernhardt and Cleo de Merode; and the collections of Paul Poiret and Jeanne Lanvin, made according to sketches of these prominent artists of the early twentieth century. The museum displays original works of illustrators of Parisian fashion magazines of the first third of the twentieth century, such as P. Iribe and J. Lepap, as well as illustrations by R. Gruau. The museum has never had a permanent exhibition of fashionable attire, but these days it presents three or four thematic exhibitions per year, such as: “Jeanne Lanvin”, “Balenciaga: In Black”, “Madame Gre: Sculptural Fashion” and “Delilah: In Life and on Stage”. These exhibitions focus on representing the creativity of an individual couturier or the wardrobe of a famous or important person as a significant element of their lifestyle. The conceptual design of each exhibition takes into account the images of mannequins and catwalks that provide artistic and emotional connections in the narrative strategy of the representation of a famous personality.

Thus, the second period in the 1960s–1970s marked the fundamental division of exhibition strategies into historical and thematic content (the conceptual–narrative approach). It was arguably during this period that the separation of the spheres of “fashion” and “costume” museology took place.³⁰ Melchior emphasizes that there has been a distribution of functions between the “proscenium” and “behind-the-scenes” areas of fashion museums. In the forefront,

³⁰ KONEVA, Anna. Fashion curation: ot mifa – k performansu. In: *Mezhdunarodnyy zhurnal issledovaniy kultury*, 2013. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/fashion-curation-ot-mifa-k-performansu>

as in a theatre, fashion shows were performed, while behind the scenes clothing was preserved according to traditional norms.³¹ Scientists associate this period with the curatorial activities of Diana Vreeland at exhibitions of fashionable costumes at the Metropolitan Museum. Her goal was to connect the person – the wearer of the costume – with their clothes, in order to reveal, first, the emotional side of the relationship between them. Therefore, the visual and sensory aspects of the expositions received as much attention as their content. While S. Beaton built grandiose decorations for his exhibitions, ordering a variety of mannequins – thin and fat, tall and short – to display clothes as believably as possible, Diana Vreeland collected and exhibited items that could describe the history of twentieth-century design. Her exhibitions – in particular, “The World of Balenciaga” 1973, “Romantic and Brilliant Hollywood Fashion” in 1974 – demonstrated not only a radical change in the vector of costume representations, but the introduction of an “immersive environment”, that is, conceptual context.

Vreeland eliminated the use of makeup and hairstyles on mannequins. In her opinion, they limited the viewer’s imagination. She painted the exhibition environment in colours associated with the work of a particular designer and sprayed the perfume he or she created in the hall. As a leading fashion analyst, Vreeland was interested exclusively in visual impressions outside the historical context and the authenticity of objects. She made a fashion show from exhibitions of fashionable costumes in the museum, combining in her curatorial activities the experience of studying fashion and its representations in the industry into a single whole as a theatrical performance: models (or their imitations), scenery, lighting and other visual attributes of symbolic meaning. The narratives of her exhibitions demonstrated a connection with the current social reality, even if a historical costume was presented. She exhibited copies alongside genuine historical items. Steele defines this kind of a curatorial strategy as virtual, since it conveys myths about fashion and images demanded by the mass consciousness, and creates a visual context around a certain myth. This can also be considered in terms of the author’s curatorial technique of representation.

Each curatorial project is an interpretation, a curator’s vision. For example, E. de la Haye’s exhibition “Street Style: From Sidewalk to Catwalk” in 1994 at the V&A Museum in London, took inspiration from Vreeland’s exhibitions, but was driven by its own concept: to demonstrate the social context of fashion and its attributes. The main focus in this project was the demonstration of curatorial strategy as a research project and as a narrative.³² This type of exhibition can be defined as historical and cultural, as it focuses on the analysis of cultural practices and the content of cultural objects, rather than on the values of the costumes represented.

In general, the process of rethinking curatorial activity turned out to be long and difficult. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century, the world’s first museum focused exclusively on fashion opened – the Antwerp MoMu, which was headed by Linda Loppa, a well-known specialist in the fashion industry but without special knowledge and experience in museology. This could well be why the exhibitions it organises are more reminiscent of the windows of expensive shops and fashion shows than typical mid-twentieth-century museum displays focused on the history of textiles, crafts, and the culture of everyday life. Contemporary exhibitions blur the lines between the practices of museology and the traditions of the fashion

³¹ MELCHIOR and SVENSSON, *Fashion and Museums...* pp. 203–205.

³² DE LA HAYE, Amy. *Travellers’ Boots, Body-Moulding, Rubber Fetish Clothes: Making Histories of Sub-Cultures. Making History in Museums*. Ed. Gay-nor Kavanagh. London, NY: Leicester University Press, 2000, pp. 84–92.

industry, which is something the vast majority of art critics see as a big problem. According to such critics, exhibitions which expose the output of designers who are living and creating today can become powerful advertising and marketing tools, and often resemble stores, with their own visual and narrative strategies. It might seem that the purpose of such exhibitions is not so much to convey information about the designer's contribution to the development of culture as to make visitors want to buy designer items. In addition, in modern curating, there is a prevailing tendency to pay attention not only to individual design objects – things and their history – but to enter private wardrobes of public figures, treating them as collections which reflect the social and cultural history of a particular period.

The third modern period in curatorial technique is notable for the fact that fashion exhibitions have become a strategic weapon for attracting a wide audience. This goes hand-in-hand with the growth of media coverage, which has resulted in the activation of so-called “case studies” – the personal experience of modern museum curators and exhibitions of fashionable costumes.³³ There has been a “visual loss” of the artistic and cultural value of the exhibition as such. Academics have stated a new problem, namely, that the curator's personal vision – which inevitably permeates the exhibitions they create, even when they did not set out to demonstrate it – deprives the exhibition of objectivity. A special role in this debate is assigned to conceptual mannequins, devoid of any identity. An example of this is found in an exhibition of the creative heritage of Jean-Paul Gaultier, “The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk”, which took place in Stockholm in 2013. The fantastic works of from different periods of the avant-garde designer's career acquired a special quality thanks to the mannequins. When the viewer approached a specific mannequin, a projection of the face of an ordinary person appeared was projected onto its face. This effect confused the audience. The mannequin would then begin to recite a monologue, which was even more shocking. Such a curatorial move, like designer finds, emphasised the originality of the couturier and shocking as an integral element of his work³⁴.

In the last ten years, the V&A has hosted several large-scale exhibitions, first of all: “Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty” (joint project with the Metropolitan Museum); “Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear”; “Wedding Dresses 1775–2014” (curator Edwin Herman); “The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945–2014”; “Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion” (curator Sonnet Stanfield); “Shoes: Pleasure and Pain” (curated by Helen Persson); “Grace Kelly: Style Icon” and “London Society Fashion 1905–1925: The Wardrobe of Heather Firbank” (curated by Jenny Lister). All of them implemented the outlined methods of representations and related problems at the conceptual level.

The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, founded in 1870, has long demonstrated historical costume, primarily in the context of the development of textile production in a particular period or civilisation. The intentional formation of the fashionable clothes collection in this museum is associated with the year 1944, when a private fashion museum, founded by sisters Irene and Alice Levison, joined the institution. The collection was formed in order to provide a fund of textile samples that would be useful to industrialists, artists, art historians and students to further the understanding of the importance of clothing in the

³³ VAN MENSCH, Peter and MEJER-VAN MENSCH, Leontina. *Novye trendy v muzeologii*, Per. s angl. V.G. Anan'eva. Moscow: ITD “PERSPEKTIVA”, 2021, pp. 59–73.

³⁴ TARASENKO, M. The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk in Stockholm, 2013. <http://i-gency.ru/news/moda/308-the-fashion-world-of-jean-paul-gaultier-from-the-sidewalk-to-the-catwalk-v-stokgolme>

development of humanity. A narrative series of exhibitions was formed which conveyed the importance of costume as an “achievement” of cultural, scientific and technological progress; these exhibitions were curated according to traditional presentational techniques.

However, approaches are changing, as experimentation and innovation in the principles of curatorial strategies, along with a focus on maximum media exposure of expositions, have reoriented these principles towards consumer psychology and maximising public interest. The content of modern exhibitions reflects the fact that modern audiences tend to be more interested in engaging with exhibitions associated with a specific individual.

The modern curator of the Anna Wintour Costume Center at the Metropolitan Museum, Harold Koda, known for his exhibition projects on individual personalities, seems to indicate the role of the costume as an instrument of the cultural and social component of society. As his exhibitions demonstrate, studying the wardrobe of an individual can be a tool for studying an entire era, allowing parallels to be drawn between the periods of life and work of a particular person and the historical era. For example, the 2014 project “Charles James: Beyond Fashion” presented more than 100 “elegant and erotic” dresses from the 1930s and 1950s by one of America’s leading designers. Koda broadcast the narrative of the creative concept of Charles James – who considered fashion to be something rare, sharply proportional and absolutely sensual – not only through real design objects, but also through x-ray images of dresses, which made it possible to examine their complex cut in detail.³⁵ The 2015 project “Jacqueline de Ribes: The Art of Style” aimed to demonstrate through costume the charisma and desire for self-expression of the Countess, who not only “consumed”, but also transformed design objects, herself becoming a successful designer with her own style. Demonstrating sixty dresses from her wardrobe, supplemented with photographs, videos and clippings from newspapers and magazines, Koda reproduced the chronology of fashion since 1962 through the views of an elegant and daring woman. On appearing in her wardrobe, designer dresses acquired new content, carrying social and cultural codes that could not be read from other types of artefact. This endowed clothing with a special status of a cultural object. According to Koda, the entry of de Ribes’s costumes into the space of the museum marked a new narrative, proving that it is inexpedient to study an object of art out of context.

The narrative curatorial approach to representations of costume design has taken shape in recent decades. Almost all contemporary exhibitions are held within the framework of a narrative strategy and are focused on acute sociocultural problems. For example, questions about glamour or vintage determine the vector of development of the modern art of the costume and the fashion industry. A separate problematic is the anesthetisation of the ugly: ideas of death, violence, alienation, which were realised, for example, in the work of Alexander McQueen. Exhibitions in this context are exhibitions of ideas, not objects that turn them into performances. The new concept of showcasing performance-relevant collections relates fashion as art to the context of its consumption. The twenty-first century offers museums a concept of expositions of topical fashionable clothes, which links commercial success with media and entertainment. The most serious problems of social reality exposed in this concept in the museum appear as spectacular shows, for which a new neologism “artainment” – that is, “art” as “entertainment” – has already been formed.

Designers use different techniques to create the context of the exhibits. Fashion exhibitions

³⁵ KODA, Harold and MARTIN, Richard. *Diana Vreeland: Immoderate Style*. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993. p. 73.

have become as close as possible to advertisements and solve similar problems; they advertise the work of the designer and demonstrate the concept behind his activities. Fashion in the museum is identified with fashion from the catwalk – a narrative event, a performance exhibition, an expression of a designer's personal strategy, substantiating the ways in which it is created. This is usually a conceptual performance. It can also be a functional performance, if the emphasis is on demonstrating the process of creating a fashionable design product. Theatrical performances have gained popularity in the format of representation as a holistic show with decorations, scenography and visual effects. There may be ideological performances, in the context of which a certain social or political message is broadcast. An exposition in a museum, like an advertisement, is a visual means of narrativisation; it affects the audience through a form, spectacle, process, or sociopolitical statement – a manifesto. For a designer, performance is a way of constructing his own image, a recognition strategy, an identification tool. Therefore, the positioning of fashion as an art and a designer as an artist remains relevant. The latest trend was the presentation of Valentino Garavani's virtual fashion museum in 2011. However, such an exposition requires separate consideration.

Summary

The museologies of costume and fashion are actively developing as scientific disciplines. The difference between them lies in the coexistence of two branches of thought in the professional discourse regarding the evolution of clothes. The first treats changes in clothing as an example of material culture under the influence of complex historical, cultural and social transformations. In the museology of costume, this is confirmed by the principles of historical accuracy and chronological correspondence. The second examines change in fashionable costumes that bear special values in a given society. These changes are based on the concept of visual storytelling and are due to the representativeness of the chosen strategies. Fashion remains an important factor in visual culture, where the costume meets the requirements of iconic functions in the social system. The growth fashion's prestige in the field of exhibition design has been facilitated by the ideology of the consumer society.

“Fashion research” promotes a detailed study of the history of costume exhibitions, the development of methods for storing clothes, their conservation and their presentation as a way to practically apply the achievements of fashion theory in the museum space. A communicative understanding of the essence of clothing is of great importance, that is, awareness of the act of communication through the demonstration of clothing in a museum as a process taking place at a certain level of narration. And the practices of representation have their own history associated with a person as a bearer of a costume, which can take place in different formats. Curators collect, catalogue, archive and, at the same time, develop conceptual strategies for organising costume exhibitions in ways that makes fashion feel like a work of art. Contemporary exhibitions have shown a steady trend towards greater theatricality and show-making.

Academics divide the history of exhibiting fashion in museums into periods:

- the second quarter of the twentieth century: the period of active acquisition of items of clothing by museums;
- 1960s–1970s: the period of fundamental division of exhibition strategies into historical and thematic (conceptual–narrative), determining the distribution of the spheres of “fashion” museology and “costume” museology;
- 1980 onwards: a period of modernisation of museums and exhibitions of fashionable

outfits due to the increase in media coverage and the importance of case studies, that is, the personal experience of curators. Curators use different techniques to create the context of exhibitions, and performance exhibitions are the embodiment of the personal success strategy of an individual designer and curator.

For curators, performance is a means of constructing the style of a museum, a strategy for its recognition and a tool of identification. For these reasons, the positioning of fashion as an art in the museum space remains relevant.

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