

Processing Objets Trouvés: A Review of Applying Collage Thinking and Techniques in Fashion

Ruijuan Ren¹ & Jiangbo Liao^{1,2}

¹ School of Fashion Management, Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology, Nanchang, China

² College of Textiles, Donghua University, Shanghai, China

Correspondence: Ruijuan Ren, School of Fashion Management, Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology, Nanchang, China. Tel: 86-158-2990-3666. E-mail: renruijuan@foxmail.com

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Abstract

Collage is generally applied to synthesise the fragments of forms in visual art to create a new effect. This review discusses the application of collage in fashion with its characteristics and influences developing process as a cut-in point; while in terms of methodology, it analyses and generalises the performance of collage aesthetics and collage form in modern fashion details. The research of collaging application plays an oriented role to process design found objects creatively, thus providing rich design languages and methods in today's fashion field.

Keywords: collage, modern art, found objects, fashion, design

1. Introduction

Narrowly speaking, it is generally thought that Collage, as a term of modern art, has originated from the Cubism of the early 20th century. The word collage which bases on "collar" in French language means "to glue" and it is coined by Georges Braque that is, using methods of cutting and pasting to collect and synthesise materials for artistic ideals (Arnason & Mansfield, 2012). The existence of this kind of techniques could possibly be traced to ancient China in the 2nd century BC. For another hundred years, it appears in the enrichment of cultural events in Europe and Japan (Leland & Williams, 2001). Collage in a board way, could be any traditional visual art that is completed by photos, magazines, newspapers, fabrics, etc., and could also be a bitmap or a vector illustration that designers creating with the CAD software. Rowe (1978) has an opinion in his theoretical treatise *Collage City*: collage is a strategy to handle "objets trouvés" preeminently. Admittedly, it is not only a technique but also a thought form, and therefore it can express intentions as well as dealing with conflicts. Bricoleurs rebuild found objects diversely and attach variation, dynamic and history on the scene of reality. Generally speaking, collaging offers design diversification and integrates fragments of inspirations; meanwhile it is feasible to combine form with spirit; additionally, to regulate conflicts, such as the contradiction of utopia and reality, tradition and contemporary.

The technique of collage is widely applied in modern design, like graphic design, product design, architectural design, and fashion design, etc. This paper principally studies on collaging design methods and the embodiments and applications of collage in garments from the latest 2016 - 2017 fashion shows by analysing the design details, and reviewing some art theory books, academic literatures, criticisms and fashion reviews, etc.. The research object divides into "collage thinking" and "collage technique". According to the specific category, on the one hand, the paper discusses the design philosophy in collaged fabric patterns; on the other hand, discusses collaging methods on structure of the garments. Therefore, it is easier to understand modern fashion designers who use collage to express their design language, and provide an updated lesson on the way forward in fashion design.

2. Early Collage and Fashion

2.1 Relationship between Collage Art and Fashion

As a distinctive part of modern art, there is an inextricable relationship between Cubism and Collage. Cubism undoubtedly is one of the most important and most effective genres in various ideological trends of modern art, which has sprung up in the early 20th century. During the Synthetic Cubism period, Cubists attempted to use non-painting materials as the tools to express their feelings in the art works, like newspaper, magazines or fabric and so on. This kind of collaging has gradually been absorbed and enriched by Dadaism, Surrealism, Futurism etc.,

even later it has been developed toward installation art (Chen, 2013). Yet only a handful of people noticing the discrete planes and shapes of cubism brought 3d illusionism to Fashion revolution. Martin (1999) was the curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art who revealed the relationship between Cubism and fashion: An influence in fashion after 1908, which was not caused by cubism itself but the cubism culture, including collage culture which definitely promoted the artistic faith and aesthetic interest of fashion.

2.2 Early Collaging Technique in Garments

Richard Martin analysed a wealth of precious Met's holdings, and it was not hard to see that collage had penetrated the fashion field at the beginning of 20 century. Art Deco master Paul Poiret who made a Chinese style day coat about year 1919 with the cutting leather of the exquisite appliques; Then in a similar way, the turndown collar and cuffs of Chanel's tweed suit (about 1927) was collaged with cutting down individual flowers from a floral printed fabric; Vionnet, Jean Patou, often used then-popular radial geometrical shape to make their patchworks of the couture dresses. This can be extended to collage which lays a foundation for the design tactics of deconstruction and reconstruction; meanwhile enriches the applications of clothing materials; it absorbs changing viewpoint from Cubists for regulating objective image and space, which reinvests complanation clothing shapes with new perspective. In some ways, collage is influential for fashion culture and public aesthetic taste of a later period (Lin, 2011).

3. Collage in Contemporary Fashion Design

3.1 Traditional Collage and E-collage

Traditional Collage could be one single work by modern artists, or "bricoleurs", and also a sketchbook that is commonly created by designers who combine their thought fragments into new vivid pictures. Eugenia Alejos (2012) is clever at this kind of collaging, Figure 1 is the one of her collage collection "You don't need a computer to make a poster". The work is based on a fashion photograph with rebuild fabrics and rough sewing threads which are fantastic forms to aggregate her "objets trouvés"—they could be every available thinking, object or space.



Figure 1. Fashion Collage by Alejos, E.



Figure 2 Fashion E-Collage by Peianov, B.

Collage means to paste on a surface by combining diversified materials or substances, for instance, the online Oxford Dictionary (2016) defines collage as "a piece of art made by sticking various different materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric on to a backing." Nowadays, the rapid-developing computer science provides greater spaces and more techniques to do art. To be more concretely, quite a lot of image manipulation softwares are like a collage board, e.g. Adobe Company released Photoshop 3.0 in 1994 with an important addition that its layers allowed operators to process each individual image in different layers, which was a digitised collage, namely an E-collage. The processing methods of this kind of collage not only can patch and paste, but also it can digitalise colour and blend them by using particular formulas, moreover, E-collage allows transparency expression,

colour adjustments, and nondestructive changes which traditional techniques are unable to do so. Figure 2 (Peianov, 2013) is constituted by using of a CAD software to cut the screen in which the artist makes vector lines more crisp and sharp to generate a clear two-dimensional linear cubism which provides a distinct design perspectives. Because conceives cannot come from nothing, the combinations of visual pictures offers designers more enlightenments with increasingly sophisticated means due to the improvement of technology.

3.2 Collaged Pattern Design in the Fabric

There is no lack of clothing details with fantastic collaging style design appearing at fashion shows: strange combination of lines and colour blocks; fractured and misplaced visual fragments; psychedelic scenes of ignoring perspectives, etc., there is just something charming about them showing a sense of an unknown power by way of collaging that decomposes and rebuilds inspirational elements. Sometimes, collage can be used to perform regular repetition or collect random factors, and sometimes to undermine integrity, even to present contradictoriness easily.

3.2.1 Regularity and Randomness

The beauty of regularity is like the aesthetics of de Stijl complying with their explicitly order; while the beauty of randomness is, for example, the vivid snowflakes are cut off by the late Matisse who earnestly delights in such things. These are an annotation of formal beauty, which also frequently appear in fabrics' pattern design.

At Fendi's Resort 2017 fashion show (2016), the collection is about order and law with its tasteful gameplay: Red and white rectangles are like interlaced dominoes following a rigorous shape change to spruce up a A-line dress. Relatively, Delpozoz's (2016) ankle-grazing coat shows bright colour-contrast, and the seemingly random and selfless style of the pattern is actually well considered as Matisse's stunning paper cutouts (Figure 3). And there are a large number of designer brands usually use such regular or random patterns in this season, for example, Josie Natori, Emilio Pucci, Erdem and so on. Iterative geometric shapes or organisms, harmony color blocking, and carefree tropical hues of Gauguin's palette, which are collaged to display a remarkable visual enjoyment by designers — Hegel (1997) thinks it is equation and symmetry that comprise the beauty of abstract forms, or conforms with the more advanced regulations, moreover, achieves harmony transcending the law.

3.2.2 Fracture and Integrity

In Lessing's book *Laocoon* (2009), he presents that plastic artists usually avoid to depict the moment of reaching a passion vertex, because that means it comes to an end. This may also explains the fact that intriguing art works (e.g. Venus de Milo) express vague integrity in individual's mind through visually fracture and psychologically gratification pursuing, it is just "the Most Beautiful" in each person's own expectations.



Figure 3. Delpozoz Resort 2017 Fashion Show



Figure 4. Off-White Spring 2017 Menswear Fashion Show Details

This type of collaged patterns show apparent rupture that seems like natural destruction of the designers. Alexander McQueen as an excellent fashion designer manipulates vandalism that plays to his strengths (Steele, 2013). He has more or less paranoid destrudo and libido that are traceable to his design inspiration: seeing himself as an orthopedic surgeon, or, as a mad scientist to dismember and recombine a beauty (Bolton, 2011).

There is no lack of fracture style designs in today's fashion shows. Peter Dundas perspicuously advocates the rebellious and disruptive spirit of rock and roll at Just Cavalli's Resort 2017 lineup (2016) including a vintage biker jacket which is collaged by the offcuts-like pieces of leather. A little earlier, Off-White's menswear collection (2016) was released, in which the portrait of the Gallagher brothers is broken as a collaging form on a knitting sweater (Figure 4). Their faces, hands, sunglasses and hair can be seen from multiple perspectives, just as the title of this collection "Mirror Mirror"— in some ways the space can indeed be badly disorganised by two or more mirrors. With the same season, Raf Simons (2016) creates a discontinuous sense by blending absorbing garment structures and Mapplethorpe's photographs which presents another form of break in his collection: he not only damages real shapes of the artworks' printed garments, but breaks through the barrier of plane and body, breaks the boundary of art and design. Additionally, he challenges his fashion environment to seek breach.

3.2.3 Unity of Opposites

The contradiction between tradition and modern is not just in what Colin called "collage city" (1978), also, exists in almost all kinds of design activities. Collage has its special usages for handling the conflicts of classic and avant-garde, form and consciousness, decorativeness and practicability etc. And sometimes these combination forms are singular and ironic to imply the design intents (Wang, 2012).

Faith Connexion's Resort 2017 lineup (2016) presents a street-style art show with some political atmosphere. Both the design of painting slogan on a Union Jack top and the Chanel type tweed coat have become a weapon to express strong value and faith. Because of the same season, Fausto Puglisi (2016) releases his spring collection with dazzling decorations — flowers and the sun, knights and shields, marbles and the cross — massive classic elements are exhaustively covered on the fabrics with typical Italian style which correspond with each other as if a high renaissance period is reproduced (Figure 5). It is different from Italianate Dolce & Gabbana's lithesome and graceful pattern, Fausto Puglisi's design is both classical and advanced, both proud and rebellious. On the other hand, it can be seen that marble portrait is also used in Trussardi's (2016) menswear collection. The designer applies bright colour bars to blind the unseeing eyes of the statues, and especially in the showroom that is more moonstruck creating a conflict of madness and civilisation.



Figure 5. Fausto Puglisi Spring 2017 Menswear Fashion Show Details

3.3 Collaged Methods on Structure

It is an excellent and effective way to use collage techniques to design fabric patterns; fashion design itself is an activity of collaging on human body by using fashion materials. According to the unrestrained and vigorous imagination, fashion designers could contrast the colours, patterns, shapes and textures, moreover, the 3D structures of fashion materials by following the principles of aesthetics to finish their creative fashion works.

3.3.1 Patchworks

The application of the combination of these different fabrics is very common in the latest fashion shows. The contrast of the cloth pieces can generate rich details of clothing, for example, the matching of woven textiles and

nonwoven, thin and thick fabrics, and other cloth materials with different surfaces, that is sincere and unobtrusive with a beauty of temperance.

Japanese fashion designer Chitose Abe is well versed in collage and brings such patchworks about showing of chaos and order every season. There are wonders effects in her Sacai Resort 2017 collection (2016) no matter how she organises the lace or fur, or mixed folk arts. This time Abe assembles Afghan embroidery cloth, paisley jacquard denim and woven Mexican blankets and so forth into jackets, raincoats and workwears. Meanwhile the designers of Ports 1961 present their playful intention of patchworks obviously (2016): regular striped, iterating pattern, fonts and buttons are distributed on the garment which looks like a childish doodle board (Figure 6). Coincidentally, Antonio Marras (Figure 7) also loves synergy of integrating various elements, and he shows interest in blending of Chinese and western styles in his Resort 2017 collection, such as combining fabrics of bird and peonies on oriental vase with French nautical stripe. Besides that, Louis Vuitton (2016) seems to deconstructs scuba suits; Gypsy Sport (2016) mixes feminine decorations like tassel, falbala, floral print and lace into its menswear; Dries Van Noten (2016) breaks fabrics of quilting, camouflage and mural-like painting to rebuild his new jacket. It is exactly the diverse embodiment of collage. Fashion designers actually do not follow traditional patchworks crafts, thus they often mix their imaginations and stories together when they collaging on human body, which is beyond the pure use of the techniques and materials.



Figure 6. Ports 1961 Resort 2017 Fashion Show Details



Figure 7. Antonio Marras Resort 2017 Fashion Show

3.3.2 3D Collage

People always pursue the stereoscopic effects: surround sound, 3D films and 3D print, even virtual reality. They are dissatisfied with collaging on a flat surface, and then the fashion designers have to offer the products with more textured and visual impacting details to stimulate numb nerve of people who live in this “age of picture reading”, as a result, designers add 3D materials and structures to this fashion collage game.

Walter Van Beirendonck’s menswear (Figure 8) has never lacked for groovy 3D details of standing out in his garments. In this spring 2017 men’s collection, Van Beirendonck applies folding and drifting grosgrain ribbon to form various frames which are sometimes grouped together into a strange face; and he designs diverging serrations on the sleeves of the blackish green jacket which looks like an amphibious reptile; additionally, the materials has not only textiles, but plastic combs which are superimposed to a Arcimboldo style animal head. At the Fall 2016 Haute Couture collection (2016), Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren perform their new wearable art by leftover fabrics and hardware: they collect the buttons to fill clothing surface, and present ragged texture with piecemeal tatters, and swirl tulle volumes to form stacked frills. At Maison Margiela’s Artisanal collection (2016), John Galliano deconstructed his 3D design elements, e.g. a Greek-style empire line dress with leather jacket knotting around the arms and a fur coat with fully binding woolen sleeves. The designers process the added 3D decorations into a topsy-turvy form, simultaneously twist and exaggerate them to create collages as a kind of restless symbolic art.

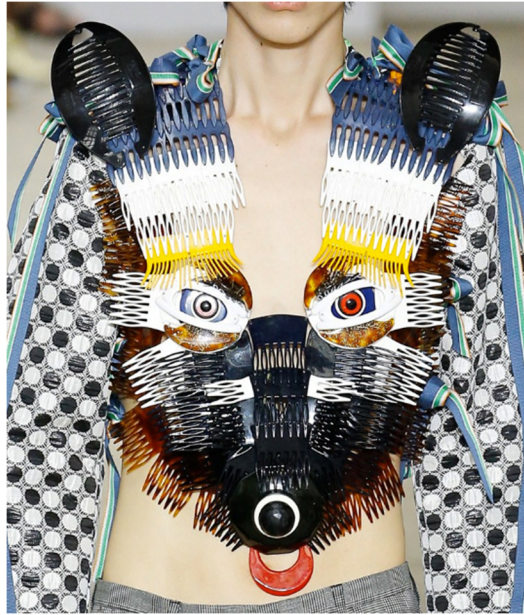


Figure 8. Walter Van Beirendonck Spring 2017 Menswear Fashion Show Details

4. Conclusion

To describe Colin's (1978) "collage city" he quotes a line of Eliot: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." In fashion design, the same principle of collage applies these fragments which is definitely "objets trouvés", namely, found object for the collections of collaged fashion as a symbolic art — Hegel (1997) says the three relationships between ideals and images. Collaging garments draw simple and primordial materials while designers endow them with ideals and significances, thus for one thing they are organised as a regular or random form, and they have both fracture and integrity, both contradiction and unitarity; on the other hand, the collaging methods in fashion can be the contrasts of colours, textures and materials, also the 3D shapes to increase the visual effects of garments, yet these contrastive methods must base on the above collage thinking, or any excessively general method. Fashion designers apply collage as a strategy for synthesising natural images and pre-existing elements; in addition, to deal with more complicated relations of ideals and images although they are conflictive. Various visual information, flickering inspiration fragments, and even certain ideologies are basic units of final collage fashion collections. And all of these contribute to a good fashion designer.

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