

Fashion and Identity

Simmel and pop fashion

1. Born and brought up in Berlin George Simmel (1858-1918) was concerned with the individual inner experiences.
2. His work *The Metropolis and Mental Life* focused on the role, function and use by individuals of distinctive fashion in heavily populated urban spaces
3. Whilst the study of fashion in popular culture is now common, Simmel was one of the first academics to focus on this
4. He focused on the ways in which fashion enabled social groups to be equalised

Identity

5. But equally he looked at how fashion played a crucial role in establishing a space of identity in the metropolis
6. How fashion could be the main means by which individuals differentiated themselves from each other
7. To be distinctive, to stand out in a crowd
8. In the metropolis it is to make a visual impact in a teeming city space
9. While the pop scene it is to stand out in a crowded musical market place
10. In pop music the sound of a pop performer is equal if not inferior to how that performer looks

Simmel, the individual and fashion

1. The relationship between an individual and society is dynamic and two way because
2. Society is a structure made up of individual beings who simultaneously stand inside and outside of society
3. As Simmel states in *On Individuality and Social Forms* there is a distinctive relationship between a society and its component individuals
4. The two interplay with each other and it is hard to separate them

The city- identities in the metropolis

1. Simmel was concerned with the city as a concept rather than as a physical space
2. And noted that individuals in large-scale metropolitan urban spaces need to resist being swallowed up
3. The metropolis is characterised by a sense of impersonality but this leads to people creating a particular individual style to combat this condition

Fashion and fashion brands

1. Fashion and fashion brands come to represent some of the most evocative and globally recognisable consumer brands in our economic and cultural system
2. Such as Dior, Gucci, Ralph Lauren, Prada, Calvin Kline, Dolce & Gabbana, Donna Karan, Versace, Louis Vuitton, Red or Dead, Paul Smith
3. Fashion brands are part of the cultural landscape

Before capitalism

1. In *Adorned in Dream*, Elizabeth Wilson (2003) states that before capitalism and the expansion of cities in the medieval period, dress was not fashion
2. There was no distinctive fashion system in early modes of human organisation

Fashion systems developing

1. It was between the 12th and 14th centuries in Europe that clothing and dress began to take the form of a fashion system
2. Clothing began to acquire symbolic social meanings

15th and 16th century

- The clothes worn for functional modesty and utility transformed in special and social groups between the 15th and 16th centuries.
1. Clothes began to be discarded by those with money when considered out of date – to be unfashionable
 2. Social stratification could be observed in less affluent sections of societies

17th century

1. 17th and 18th centuries - where public displays enhanced displays of fashion
2. Of course the turnover of fashion is much quicker now in the 21st century than it has ever been - partly due to new technologies.

Industrial revolution

1. The industrial revolution is important in the story of fashion
2. Particularly in relation to the changes in manufacturing processes
3. As well as the manufacture of synthetic materials, nylon, polyester and acrylics
4. The invention of different modes of transport such as railways and mass circulation of newspapers and magazines - all contributed to the rush and pace of modern life
5. These led to a greater circulation of fashion images at much greater frequency levels to a wider audience

Fashion and the city

1. fashion is associated with the practices of imitation and uniformity
2. In Simmel's analysis, acts of imitation are central psychological components of human behaviour but also provide benefits in that they grant individuals with a sense of collective feeling and satisfaction
3. A main source of collective imitation is found in fashion
4. Where the copying of styles of others enables individuals to become part of a group
5. Fashion also satisfies the individual need for a sense of differential from other individuals

The City -Alienation

1. The changing nature of the metropolis puts pressure on individuals to stand out from the crowd
2. To make an impact on others and be noticed
3. One method, Simmel argues is through the use of fashion

Differentiation

1. So fashion can be utilised by individuals to actively demarcate themselves from others and establish uniqueness
2. Because fashion is based on novelty - in the metropolis – the pressure is on to make an impression quickly
3. Fashion and eccentric fashion is a means to do this
4. And to stand out from the crowd in the fast paced, hustle and bustle of the urban space

Mask

1. In Jennifer Craik's analysis (1994) the use of fashion by social actors performs the function of a mask

2. It enables individuals to disguise the true nature of the body or person or to be someone else Or at least to suggest a specific appearance to wider society or to themselves
3. So it functions as a mask – I suppose we could relate this to the notion of Goffman and the performance of self in Everyday life
4. Where we put on performances for others

Postmodernism

1. Postmodernism is a body of thought concerned with the breaking apart of modernity
2. The diverse movement includes thinkers such as Foucault, Guattari, Derrida but it was Lyotard (1924-98) who emerged as the key postmodern theorist

Lyotard

1. His book the postmodern condition –rejects Marx and the core of modern Enlightenment
2. Lyotard appeals to a critical postmodern knowledge that dismantles foundations and disrupts hierarchy
3. Postmodernism has become a significant cultural force in the 80s due to the ways in which it manifested itself in wider culture and popular culture in the form of architecture, art, literature, cuisine, fashion, music and film
4. The lack of fixity and stability at the heart of the postmodern society also showed itself in individual identity

Identity and postmodernism

1. Kellner, argued that in traditional societies, identity was perceived to be fixed, solid and stable
2. In the age of modernity, identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal. Self-reflexive and subject to change and innovation
3. From a postmodern perspective as the pace and complexity of modern societies has increased, identity has become more fragile and unstable
4. It is also associated with the purchase of symbolic consumer items – particularly fashion
5. Although it could be argued there are still norms and rules

Passé

1. Postmodernism is now considered to be a bit passé, an example of a philosophical/cultural crossover that had its peak from the 80s to 90s – but still perhaps influential
2. Characterised by ceaseless transformation and instability
3. Pop images must never be static and the search for a fashionable and appealing look is a constant moveable feast of performative identities
4. To stand out from the crowd as Simmel suggests

Pop fashion

1. The music and fashion industries are intertwined
2. The distinctive suits of the 50s and 60s with performers such as the Beatles were the product of professional tailors such as Lansky Bros Menswear
3. In the 60s however, record companies took active control over how bands looked
4. David Bowie utilised fashion as a mask to create a variety of musical characters – such as Ziggy
5. The links between fashion and music became solidified in the 70s
6. With regard to Punk, the association between Vivienne Westwood and the Sex Pistols ensure that playing music was subsidiary to how they looked
7. This continued into the new romantic bands of the 80s and others such as the Motley Crue.
8. The arrival of MTV also increased the pressure to construct images using clothing (and this has continued with YouTube)

Madonna

1. One example is Madonna who released her first album in 1983
2. Her recordings, videos and live performances have exemplified fluid image throughout her career
3. And each album is associated with specific looks such as Marilyn Monroe like hair and dress
4. She also formed alliances with Jean-Paul Gaultier and the iconic cone brassiere he designed for the 1990 Blond Ambition world tour,
5. And later Dolce and Gabbana for her Love Kylie tribute T-shirt
- 6.

Kylie Monogue

1. She has worn clothing by designers such as Karl Lagerfeld, Julien Macdonald, Dolce & Gabbana, John Galliano and Stella McCartney
2. She has engaged in continual invention that means she can be broken down into distinctive phases
3. Cute Kylie, Sex Kylie, Dance Kylie, Indie Kylie, Camp Kylie, Cyber Kylie and Showgirl

Beginnings

4. Her career began with childhood acting on Australian television drams but at 17 she achieved mainstream cultural prominence in the role of mechanic on Neighbours
5. She played this from 1986-88 and gained popularity in Australia and Britain
6. Her evolution to sex Kylie – she began to appear on magazine covers such as style bibles, the Face
7. And her image was a departure from Cute Kylie
8. Indie-kylie revolved around her 1997 recording, Impossible Princess
9. In her video *Did It Again*, it featured four kylie's each defined by labels that the media had created for her
10. *Spinning around –and light years*
11. There was an exaggeration of sexual characteristics and focus was on dance, fun and freedom
12. She also wore distinctive clothing
13. Can't get you out of my head established her image – and highlighted the constant evaluation, construction of her image
14. Continuing in 2003 with the creation of Bardot Kylie – adopting the Bridget Bardot's sex goddess image of long, bleached blonde hair, heavy eye make-up pink lipstick
15. Her look on 2010 release Aphrodite was based on glamorous couture and 2013 signed with *Roc Nation*
16. Like Madonna – her career is one of shifting identities
17. A series of masks represented by clothing and style in the busy pop market place

Lady Gaga

1. Lady Gaga links fashion with music
2. But also constructs herself with a determined and knowing use of fashion
3. She is an example of a postmodern subject due to the ways she employs fashion as a series of props to re-invent herself

Outfits

4. With dazzling outfits, oversized sunglasses, odd shaped shoes, hairstyles
5. It could be argued though, that in the metropolis an accelerated commercial space – the ability to stand out visually is essential and is part of a corporate strategy
6. That enhances consumer/fan interest and facilitates media exposure and career longevity
7. She is a self-conscious theatrical construct, creation or sculpture
8. Poker Face sees her emerge from a pool wearing a highly stylised mirror mask but she transforms from one eye-catching costume to another in a constant state of fashion flux
9. Love Game sees her paying homage to 1980s pop culture which joins the hyper stylised sexuality of Madonna with the leather and chain clad dance moves of Michael Jackson's Beat It video
10. Her clothing is employed in hyper stylised ways
11. Gaga's fashion choices are noted for their challenges to taste and conventionality
12. Her fashion created looks are frequently created by designers such as McQueen, Dolce and Gabbana, Gautier and others
13. They are always designed to catch attention

Fashion to gain attention

1. Thus visually standing out from the pop music crowd is a key part of ensuring, or encouraging career longevity
2. There are annual waves of pop singers with shows like X factor
3. Competition is fierce and audience/market attention is short
4. Fashion and image has become an intrinsic part of the pop music culture as a means by which pop singers demarcate themselves and forge individual identities
5. While we may see Madonna or Lady Gaga as examples of postmodern fluid identities, their motivation to transform themselves is geared towards maintaining commercial appeal and visibility
6. This is highlighted by other artists including Nicki Minaj, Marilyn Manson, Gerard Way, Rihanna, Prince.

Fashion and Uniformity

1. The pop stars unite the nature of fashion as a source of imitation/uniformity and differentiation
2. Pop star capitalise on their status by extending their careers into fashion design and releasing clothing ranges based on their pop identities
3. Pop music stars such as Victoria Beckham, Jennifer Lopez, Beyonce, Gwen Stefani, Lily Allen and Madonna have teamed up with designers to release distinctive lines of clothing and accessories
4. Other performers such as Kylie, Jay-Z and Justin Timberlake have all followed suit
5. Further cementing the centrality of practices and uses of fashion in pop culture