

# The Influence of Modernism on Fashion

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## Introduction

The objectives for this unit are for students to research and produce a product that exemplifies (proves) the *Influence of Modernism on Fashion*. Fashion research and art interpretation will come together for the High School student through this unit on the *Influence of Modernism on Fashion*. Fashion ignites passion for many. It is easy to read about, and we all wear it. It evokes mood, comfort, warmth, and creates a first impression. Scientific discoveries and the use of natural forms brought about the changes from romantic and escapism to modern and progressive art. (1) Theatre stage and costume designs have provided imagery and entertainment for thousands of years as has art and fashion. (2)

We will explore the structural relationships between art and fashion. Structural and decorative lines define fashion within the realm of the principle and elements of design. The teacher can focus on design, artists and garments. Textiles are also an interesting study as are jewelry and accessories. Color, texture and abstract design are in the forefront of artistic analysis.

For many of the art elitists, but especially the “lay” person Modern art is a challenging study. Opinions of Modern Art vary from masterpiece to nonsensical splats that a child could do. There is nothing simple about art, unless you want it to be simple. Do not be afraid of this unit. Months of study and discussions have brought me to the following simplified explanation of *Modernism and It’s Influence on Fashion*.

Prior to the 1890’s, works of art visually represented the image realistically. Images were painted on canvas (to name one surface). The images looked like what they were “supposed to look like”. Some were better than others. Technique and skill set masterpieces. Much of our history was captured on those canvases. We can study art to see architecture, fashion, social class, geographies, eating habits, relationships, politics, nature and shelters; it is our glimpse into the past. But when we study works of art classified during the Modernism movements, it just is not that easy to “see”.

Think about what was happening in the world in the late 1800’s. Conformity was on its way out. Rebellion was occurring all over the world, political upheavals, and technology was developing; people were breaking away from the reigns that previously

defined them. Women were corseted. Their bodies shaped an “S” from front to back and side to side. It was confining, sometimes disfiguring and always restrictive. In a way, the late 1800’s became the end of true visual representation of an image. Artists began to explore painting just for the sake of painting, color for the sake of color. Paint for the sake of paint. For the most part the general public did not understand it. It did not explain itself. It lacked traditional dimension, conformity, and restraints. At the same time fashion for women changed. (Men’s fashion will not be discussed in this paper, it too transformed- though not to the drastic extent women’s did). Women’s fashion fell from below the bust line, the waist was not accented, the silhouette went from bell shaped to tubular and comfort was apparent and freeing. Corsets were gone!

What influences an artist? Does a designer influence an artist or does an artist influence a designer? Does it matter? Let us accept that painters and fashion designers are both artists working with different mediums. Defining the movements of Modern Art will be our starting point. The unit will identify modern art movements, then fashion styles or designers for comparative analysis.

As stated in *The Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*, “Fashion itself has served as a canvas of purpose for thousands of years. From the finely gilded armor of crusaders long deceased to the red or blue handkerchiefs that indicate gang affiliation today, fashion has expressed every sentiment known to man, yet none so convincingly as conflict. Perhaps the expressions against complacency that are evident in art are making their way into the world of fashion in preparation for another conflict of sorts, one in which individuals are railing against the social injustices and political malfeasances of the day.”(3)

I have selected a few examples from the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, as reference examples of how art and fashion might become visual design comparisons. I believe that art is always open to interpretation and students will be encouraged to discuss and inquire about those interpretations. Past knowledge, the history- what came before is critical for understanding. This is especially true with art. I ignored the fingernail on the Bechtlers’ Degas and stayed away (literally) from Hans Platte, *Giuseppe Santomaso* initially. Once I acquired more understanding and was able to appreciate each piece (though I still am not a fan of this Degas, and I believe that is fine), I was able to appreciate the power and message of both pieces.

“Dancing Figures” by Paul Klee (watercolor on primed burlap) could be a primitive cave drawing or a beautiful textile print. (Bechtler collection) “Dans La Falmme Qui Consumme” by Alfred Manessier has the look and feel of total elegance. (Bechtler Collection). These works of art are but two examples of art from around that world that students will be able to use for comparative analysis. The analysis will entail selecting a

painting, or sculpture and designing a fashion that reflects the same principles and elements of design in the garment, or selecting a fashion and through research, determining if a particular piece or style of art influenced that fashion.

My years of teaching design have provided a deeper appreciation of aesthetics. Beauty has always been important to people. Textiles, once plain evolved with designs and color. Social order played a big role, as did artistic and political movements. Clothing and textiles with their designs and colors inspired the artist which was then revealed on their canvas. My quest is to learn what role Modernism played in fashion, style and textiles.

While this unit was developed, I realized how many things I would have to leave out: men's fashion, architecture, Post-Modernism, the countless artists and designers. This only begins to touch upon the opportunities of study available through this unit and allows for expansion of ideas and interesting new conclusions by participants.

Discussions of Modernism / Modern Art in the late twentieth century dismissed fashion according to Nancy Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion*, as "superficial, fleeting and feminized".(4) Typically theatre, ballet or film have been the focus of historians. It has only recently come to light that the work of the costume historians is indeed a study and collection of art history. The 1920's are the most powerful period of parallels between fashion and art, but for the purpose of this unit we will open the comparisons up between 1890-1960.

I will provide the background information of art and fashion movements leading up to the twentieth century and explore how the influence is shown. The user (teaching this unit) will be able to modify the unit to different centuries and art forms of their choosing, using this unit as a guide. Research, technology, questions, activities, critical thinking, connections to prior learning, and portfolio presentation and assessment will all be covered.

### **Background:**

I am fortunate to teach in a school where the norm is not "normal". Students satisfy their creativity through their arts education and their overall style. Sometimes I believe that the wilder they dress, the more they feel themselves. In class, we explore the history of fashion, construction, style, textiles, the colors we look best in (via color collars), technology and its impact on all of these things mentioned, as well as the principles and elements of design. Students prepare research papers on designers, construct projects, experiment with color and fabrics in their projects, develop business plans, learn to understand the basic concept of entrepreneurship, and look at careers in the apparel field.

Career and technical education courses prepare students for the work force, open doors to the global economy and along with technical skills, allow students the opportunity to explore career options. There cannot be a better mix of global, skill and career options than Art and Fashion. What two other disciplines so visual and so vital can be lend themselves to such analysis and debate? Both can be beautiful and enjoyed by some while being distasteful and confusing to others. Both can cause an immediate reaction of mood or emotion, an identification of a period in time, an interpretation.

Northwest School of the Arts is Charlotte, North Carolina's secondary school magnet program specializing in arts education. It is an urban school with approximately 1,100 students' grades 6-12, whose demography is 46.4% Black, 41% White, 5.3% Hispanic, 5% Multi-cultural, 2.2% Asian and .4% American Indian. Economically disadvantaged students are 43.7% and 71.4% have limited English proficiency. I teach Apparel and Costume Design under (CTE) Career and Technical Education (here after referred to as CTE), funded by the Perkins Act through the Federal Government. My course work and position is unique in CTE as I gear my teachings to the visual arts, theatre, dance, and music areas.

My curriculum is adapted to the various areas of art focus in our school by comparing the objective to an activity or stage production at school. Example: 5.0 Apparel Development I- *Assemble an apparel product from selected designs and fabrics*- students will select a pattern, fabric and notions that will be appropriate for a particular play or ballet and support their choice of fabric, color and style. In addition, we are very involved with the theatre department and our Costume Design Program is quite popular. Students audition for a slot in the lottery for entrance to our school. I have a diverse group of students who specifically major in apparel and costume design. To complete an Apparel or Costume "major" students are offered a range of arts electives, fibers, sketching, technical theatre, dance, and photography and graphic design elective courses.

Artists, teachers, craftsmen, authors, and world travelers; master educators have surrounded me while I composed this unit. (My fellow- fellows). Our cohort professor is an expert in his field, fabulous teacher and patient instructor. We meet in the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. I walk by sculptures, paintings and modern works that have only recently become available for the world to see. I learn in small private groups with curators challenging me to experience the art, explore my feelings and understand the work. I am very fortunate. I am challenged, learning and want to share this experience with my colleagues and students through this unit.

We are fortunate to have the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art in Charlotte North Carolina. My students are able to easily catch a city bus to view the collection. In addition, the Mint Museum in Charlotte offers an amazing collection of historical fashion. If your school does not have access to museums that will support this learning,

reference sources listed in this paper can bring the computer screen to life for your students through a variety of group and individual exercises.

Connecting students to prior knowledge will come easily through fashion. Apparel history has many connections with history and sociology. Design will open the door to seeing the world differently and making that whole world connection. Our goal is for students to see the relevance and relationships.

As in fashion, art does not have to be liked by students (or teacher). One must just understand and accept the concepts of the time and find a starting point. Students can understand, through history, popular movies and their parents and grandparents, how the Vietnam war caused rebellion among society and lead to burning bras, unisex clothing, free love, hard rock music- the hippie movement, Pop Art and Minimalism. Freedom of expression, freedom of lifestyle and of choice was the catalyst of the Modernism movements. Over 100 years, as outlined in Amy Dempsey's Styles, Schools and Movements, we are taken from the precision and realism of art to total abstraction. Modernism allows elitists to see what is substantial to them, the dreamer to see what he/she wants to see and the artists themselves to create just to create.

In the twentieth century art and fashion were often tied together. Textile patterns, woven art (rugs and tapestries) were often acknowledged art forms as well as fashions themselves. We will follow the progression of fashion trends and modern art from Art Nouveau simplicity and line to Cubism, Art Deco, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and Op Art. We will touch upon the role technology played in the transformation of fashion and art. Finally we will open the discussion of what, if any, influences are prevalent today and might be in the future.

## **Objective**

The history of fashion is my favorite unit to teach. Though my curriculum only touches on the evolution, I take more time than allotted and whirl through hundreds of years and the critical importance of fashion with my students. It is very basic. The sociological, political, technological and economic impact on fashion is measurable. Clothes are a necessity. They have dictated rank and status since the first animal skin was draped over mans shoulder, by how and what we are wearing. Photographs can be identified in terms of approximate year, geographic location, age, and social standing based on what people are wearing. Clothing silhouettes identify decades in theatrical productions, movies and in renderings. Warmth is a basic need along with food and shelter. As we covered our bodies and learned weaving, construction and design, the utilitarian nature of coverings grew into design, comfort and style. Styles conformed to one's social standing. Colors identified royalty. Clothing changed as the economy changed. Wars, politics and finally

technology all are readily accepted as having direct bearing on fashion and ultimately style and design.

I suggest that we begin our comparative analysis around 1890 and end the unit in the late 1960's despite the fact that it can be argued that Modernism goes on today in new forms: video, internet, body art and sound, to name a few. Finding the fashion designers of today that are influenced by Modernist artists will be one goal of the unit. Looking at designers influenced during the same time as art movements is another goal. Gaining an understanding of the movement can be accomplished by learning the key elements of the movement and then allowing the student to "see" those principles and elements in the work.

Clothing, fashion, style is much more complex than we are led to believe. Art and architecture are given credence as viable masterpieces throughout history. Our museums, history books and documentaries chronicle their importance. Clothing evolved, as did art and technology. Modern art made people stop and consider debate and argue. Does fashion continue to get inspiration from the art world? Does the art world get inspired by fashion trends or specific designers?

### **Strategies:**

Fashion has long been ignored for its impact and importance as an art form. Most ignored for its significance as an art form. Its creative artists were considered dressmakers, weavers, tailors, designers of a different class, not in the same echelon as an "artist". Some were dressmakers and nothing more; here we are focusing on the fashion designer. Fashion like sculpture is dimensional and has its respected place in Modernism, but fashion tends to be left out in many Modernist histories.

I will outline a selection of Modernist Movements, the principles and elements of design, specific designers and artists for comparative analysis, historical content, background information and provide resources for students and teachers to adapt this unit for a different subject area or a product other than one outlined here. We will be able to teach a brief history of art and fashion then assist students in assimilating information from apparel and art sources that prove or disprove an influence art had or has on fashion.

Students will learn the principles and elements of design and how they are present in fashion and art. Comparisons of art movements and styles will vividly provide a visual connection for students to interrupt.

Through structural and decorative comparisons students will define the arrangement of the principles and elements of design and their relationship to one another for a

particular art movement, fashion style, or artist to courtier, or historical to present day. They may produce a garment and justify their design choices, fabric choices or refer to a particular work of art and justify that. There must be a substantive background given for each project conclusion.

Clement Greenberg, an influential art critic who brought attention to American artist Jackson Pollack, believed art was “constantly changing to adapt to Kitsch pseudo-culture, which was always developing”.(5) He brought attention to the two-dimensional aspect of Modern Art, rather than the former illusion of depth, common in earlier paintings. He saw the paramount statement of Modernism as flatness, lack of identifiable images, and paint for the sake of paint... -as the paramount features of modernism, in short, formalism. Along that same time period styles began to change. Did society have an impact? Surely it did. Did the economy have an impact? I would imagine, of course. As with art- the visual and structural impact of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century on fashion is dramatic. With relevance to art, the period is well documented and critiqued.

While I will explain the principles and elements of design as they relate to my curriculum, there are many versions of what exactly constitute the principles and elements, so other teachers should feel free to add or delete the detailed characteristics to suit your class needs and curriculum standards. Design is “an arrangement or elements or details in a product or work of art. Paintings, buildings and even cities are design. Designing is the art or practice of creating designs.” (6) When the overall effect of a design is pleasing it is thought to be well designed. We will look at these standards to analyze art and fashion. The elements of design are the components that are used to create the work (fashion, art), the building blocks. The principles of design result in what we do to those elements and determine the final outcome.

#### Elements of Design:

Color, line, form and texture are the elements of design. Vertical lines bring the eye up and down and give height. Horizontal lines go from side to side. The horizon is suggested. They add width. Diagonal lines slant and attract attention and excitement. Curved lines bend and add softness or fullness. Line is established in garments two ways. Structural lines are created when sewn together. Some examples are seams, pleats, tucks and edges of a garment. Decorative lines can either be achieved with fabric or through accessories or details added to a garment. The majority of lines identified on paintings will be achieved through decorative elements.

Line creates illusion. It outlines, creates a silhouette, it can create a different body shape, style, make a person look larger or smaller either through structural or decorative means. Placement of lines is important for the overall effect. Geometric forms of cubism

first come to mind when one thinks of art and line. Students will examine paintings from Cubism and find garments created during that same time period with similar lines and compare. Cubism is but one example, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Pop Art, Op Art or any one of the one hundred plus movements in the Modern art period may be used for comparison.

Shape is an outline of an object made up of lines. When a two-dimensional shape takes on a third dimension it becomes a form. Cezanne's method of depicting three dimensions by multiple view points (7) and the way in which he constricted forms out of different planes that seem to slide or pass through one another lead the eye to different areas of the painting, simultaneously creating a sense of depth, drawing attention to the surface of the canvas and projecting into space of the viewer, one of the key characteristics of Cubism. Picasso was challenged to create a three dimensional image on a two dimensional surface, canvas. Braque wanted to depict volume and mass in space. Form is when a two-dimensional shape takes on a third dimension. If an object has height, weight, volume and depth it has form. The area that is enclosed within a design is the form. Form or the silhouette in fashion identifies the fashion style for a particular period of time. The most commonly referred to forms- silhouettes are: full form (bustle), tubular and bell. A recent addition of the natural form reflects late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century clothing.

Texture is the look and feel of a surface, or fabric. In paintings, the canvas, paint, application, brush and stroke all impact texture. In fashion texture adds visual impact; shiny can add weight or size, smooth/flat make one appear smaller, fuzzy, shaggy are thick and bulky, soft can be revealing, dull absorbs light, stiff/crisp conceals while appearing larger, and combinations add interest.

#### Principles of Design:

Design principles are balance, proportion, rhythm, emphasis and harmony. Balance means arranging objects evenly. It usually creates a pleasing effect. Proportion is the relationship between one part to the other. Unequal proportions add interest. Rhythm is the feeling of movement from one part of the design to another. Repetition, radiation and gradation create rhythm. Emphasis is an area of design that stands out from the other. The eye is drawn to that area. Color is most often used to create emphasis. But details, textures and unusual shapes can also create emphasis. Harmony is the goal of good design. When all parts of the principles and elements of design come together in a cohesive, pleasing way harmony is achieved.

#### Color:



Color has three qualities; hue, tint and shade. Color is extremely powerful. Hue is the name of the color. Tint is made when white is added to a color and shade when black is added. Intensity is the brightness or dullness of color- or its value determined by lightness or darkness. Neutrals are black, white and grey. The relationship between colors is most evident on a color wheel. The primary colors red, yellow and blue make up every color. That is astounding. Color is the most important visual element we have. It is valued, identifiable, mood provoking, shocking, soothing. One major change in art during the Modernism movements was the recognition that color was used for the sake of color. It was what it was. Just color.

### Redefining Modernism:

Modern Art and Modernism are two different terms. Modern, or more often contemporary, refers to present times, Modernism in art refers to the particular time period (approximately 1890- 1960) the styles and techniques developed during that 70 or so years. Artists of Modernism are often referred to as making art for the sake of art. Forms were distorted, shapes, color, form, space, all defined the new art begin created. The surface was flat, perspective was not usual. Nothing was usual. Some modern art created uneasiness for the viewer, thus creating controversy, thus following the upheavals around the world. As popular culture came full circle Modernism, recognizable objects and products became art forms of themselves.

For most people to achieve mastery of their talent they must practice and practice until mastery is achieved. Our goal in teaching is to help our students achieve mastery. An artist must sketch and sketch and paint, paint, paint- usually until their product is visually perfect. It is in this most basic form that art and fashion design both begin. An artist sketches multiple drafts before the design is put on canvas (a two-dimensional form). A fashion designer sketches their design before building that design (a three-dimensional design). It is obvious, defined, but nonetheless beautiful and skillful. It is understandable and somewhat predictable.

It is unexpected. The many movements within the period acknowledged techniques and changes throughout the world. Through our studies at the Bechtler we can see the influence of many great European artists. Their diversity is apparent at the Bechtler. The collection exhibits sculpture, paintings, models, rugs and accessories. There is strength, humor, intensity, calm, texture, flatness, weakness, mood, symmetry and lack of, simplicity, complexity- diversity in the collection of well and un- known artists, all in one collection, all Modernists.

I have been privileged in my introduction to Modernism by being on site at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. Our cohort has ventured into the reserves under the

guidance and presentation of Vice President and Educational Coordinator, Christopher Lawing. We sat and had discussions with President and CEO, John Boyer who thoughtfully answered my (what could have been thought as impertinent) question, what makes the collection at the Bechtler important? We have experienced the art about as up close and personal as a person is allowed in a learning environment that encourages contemplation and understanding. Our seminar leader, Shaw Smith, Professor, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina has patiently, expertly and passionately taken us through comparisons, examples and amazing dialogue about Reframing / Redefining Modernism, to the extent that I feel, I actually understand! I'll admit I was somewhat afraid of Modernism. There is an acknowledged elitist cult surrounding the acceptance and understanding of Modernism. Greenberg's manifesto of sorts, "Avant- Garde" and Kitsch basically state, if you do not understand Modernism, that's your problem. It is for those privileged few to appreciate and understand.

Hans and Bessie Bechtler began collecting modern art when they moved to Zurich in 1949. They felt that art should be enjoyed and displayed their collection in their homes and offices. While in the reserves we viewed a ceramic piece by Picasso that was used as a dispenser in one of the Bechtler's bathrooms, a Picasso piece! They socialized with artists, learned about modern art and amassed a private collection of European Modern art not seen anywhere else in the world. There are works by Picasso, Warhol, Tinguely, Giacometti, Degas to name but a few. The museum is a must see if you are in the Southeast. The Bechtler web site is available to use as a resource along with the museum catalog for purchase, as are the collections from museums around the world.

In Amy Dempsey's book, *Styles, Schools and Movements, the Essential Encyclopedic Guide to Modern Art*, classifications begin in 1860-1900 at the "Rise of the Avante-Garde"- Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau occur from 1900 to 1918, Modernisms for a Modern World- Cubism, Constructionism, Dada, 1918-1945, "Search for New Order"- Art Deco, Surrealism and finally 1945- 1965 A New Disorder- Pop Art, Op Art. (1965-today finished the text). There are actually a total of one hundred different movements covered in the guide; I have mentioned just a few popular titles.

The History of Fashion:

Nancy Troy, *Couture Culture* states, "When one considers fashion as distinct from clothing, costume or dress it is as a socially shared concept of what is to be worn at a particular point in time rather than an esoteric, ritualistic, or utilitarian cover or decoration of the body."(8) There are basic needs. Shelter, food and clothing. From its early utilitarian stage animal skins were draped and grasses were matted, clothing provided man with the ability to be warm, eventually helping to change and form a society in which the hunter gatherers evolved into farmers. Man was able to stay in one

place and cultivate the land. Weaving evolved, natural fibers of grasses, wool, cotton, silk and eventually manmade fibers all contributed in the history of fashion. Clothing delineated status (it can be argued that it continues to do that today) class and rank. Function was clothing's initial purpose but that quickly evolved into design and styles that were pleasing, comfortable and ultimately identified cultures, geographic regions, and history.

Clothing styles were limited only by what techniques and fabrics were available at different periods of time. As societies progressed so did design – all around, in homes, buildings and in clothing. In the early twentieth century industrialization changed fashion. Male couturiers who gave more credence to the profession and sought to turn clothing design into profit, overshadowing dressmakers who built dresses for individuals. Charles Frederick Worth was an English man who moved to Paris, began making multiple copies of the same style and design and marketed his designs. By the 1870's his designs were well known. Fabrics, advertising, machinery, all made dressmaking change from one of a kind designs to popular styles of the time for multiple wearers. (9)

Fashion tracked trends in Modern Art, Art Nouveau S-Silhouette, to the uncorseted tubular simplified silhouette of the 1890-1900's. Late 1920's Art Deco, Cubism brought about more embellishments, textiles and shiny fabrics. Further influenced by Cubism, tubular dresses, and rounded cloche hats turned women's bodies into geometric shapes. Designer Paul Poiret created *cloche* hats that fit the head, worked with hair styles and kept with that modern look of the twenties. The *cloche* was a popular headwear from the 1920's-30. Sleek, form fitting and aero-dynamic, it echoed the aesthetics of the Art Deco period. The idea of speed and advances in the refined cutting and piecework incorporated in this example is on exhibit at the Met- Costume Institute. Sharp geometric lines also are associated with the Art Deco period. The early twenties chemise dress was plain, tubular shape, highly decorated with beading. Ornamentation and textile patterns along with color were critical elements of design.

#### *Paul Poiret:*

The designer credited for melding Modern Art and fashion is French couturier Paul Poiret. Poiret moved in artist's circles, collected Modern art, had many artists' friends and was considered a master costume designer for the stage. He ultimately became known for his fashion designs that were directly influenced by modern art. By 1909 his artistry with fashion made him the most recognized fashion designer in Paris. His use of colors and association with artist/illustrator Paul Iribe brought his designs to a new level. In 1909 Iribe sketched Poiret's ideas that became images of the first fashion illustrations and advertising in the published brochure *Les Robes de Paul Poiret*. This new mode of communication (magazines and advertising) began the change of the fashion industry

from couture to ready to wear garments. Worth became the first to open a department store and offer multiple copies of the same design. Gimbel's (1889) Macy's and Wannamaker's all followed. The reproduction of art and fashion gave more accessibility, changed the playing field and status. Trademark labels took over the couture status.

French couturier Paul Poiret is quoted as saying. "I have always liked painters. It seems to me that we are in the same trade and that they are my colleagues". He brought fashion to a new era, releasing women from the corset and using fabrics to drape and compliment the body. He could not sew but by cutting and draping fabrics as it never had been done before, Poiret fashioned comfort and elegance. (10) Poiret, who led the way for the changing silhouette eventually lost his place in fashion by not being flexible to the needs of the evolving woman.

Poiret, in the early twentieth century became one of the first to truly market his designs. His social life revolved around artists, the art scene and theatre. Many of his costume designs inspired fashions for every day wear. Because he was an artist and designers were more closely aligned during that time, Poiret chose to display his styles in theatres or social gatherings. He would enlist actresses to wear his creations and mingle amongst wealthy women in attendance. Along with actresses, he used mannequins (French word for model) to wear his creations. His presentations became more elaborate and became events in themselves starting the expectations of what we know today as runway shows. This exposure and presentation of his designs opened the door to an active display of fashion. Clients could watch the clothing and fabrics move.

He also became one of the first to use the artist Paul Iribe to illustrate his concepts in magazines. People looked at the art of the illustration as well as the style of the depicted garment with the same artistic eye. He also is credited for bring the Oriental style to the stage, home décor and fashion. His use of bright colors, common to French Modern Art of its time draw parallels between his contemporary artists and designers. Poiret self-consciously staged his performance as a couturier, designer, art collector, party-giver and entrepreneur.

At the same time, fashion became reproducible. Department stores were developing and their venue was the perfect companion for Poiret's theatrical marketing. He struggled to have his designs recognized as works of art. America in the industrialized world did put into law trademark rulings, which gave status to his name for business purposes but not as an artist. This new fashion business, trademarks and labels led the way to counterfeiters of labels and designs. French haute couture was rapidly industrializing international marketplace, while at the same time exploiting American mass-market thirst for cheaper copies of authentic couturier dresses.

Poiret's designs were simple but the details were colorful and elaborate. Coco Chanel's creation of The Little Black Dress in 1926 wiped out Poiret's place in the fashion world when Poiret refused to modify his designs. The simple elegance of the little black dress became the trend; feathers, heavy embellishment and the detailed extravagance of Poiret's were passé'. Poiret ended up going bankrupt. Coco Chanel showed women that they had freedom of expression through their clothing and women were ready for the change. Styles reflected ease of wear and fabrics flowed comfortably on the body of the wearer.

### *Elsa Schirapelli:*

Another significant designer of the 1920's was Italian fashion designer, Elsa Schiaparelli. Dada and Surrealism movements provided a significant source of inspiration for Schiaparelli. She worked with a number of contemporary artists to develop her imaginative designs, most famously with Salvador Dalí and Alberto Giacometti (whose collection at the Bechtler is very helpful) from these artistic collaborations, Schiaparelli's most notable designs were born. In addition to well-documented collaborations such as the shoe hat and the Tears dress, Dali's influence has been identified in designs such as the lamb-cutlet hat and a 1936 day suit with pockets simulating a chest of drawers. Schiaparelli was later introduced to Gaby Picabia, ex-wife of French Dadaist artist Francis Picabia and owner of a boutique selling fashion to New York. She met artists like Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. Her greatest rival was Coco Chanel who referred to her as "that Italian artist who makes clothes". She used bright colors, large colorful zippers and dyed fabrics to match those accents. Her influence stretched between the two world wars and following World War II, her business closed as Dior's "New Look" took over and like Pioret, she would not adapt to the style changes.

### *Avante-Garde:*

The beginning of experimental, new innovative art, pushing the boundaries from what was considered normal best describes Avante -Garde. The artists of this time set themselves up in studios mimicking the Parisian salons, filling them with art work and cross-referencing that artistic relationship.

### *Cubism:*

Noted as beginning around 1907 with Picasso's fractured, disorientated images, Cubism can be identified as the breaking down of form into lines and angles. Reduction of form, geometric, flat, unrealistic body forms. Cubism stressed basic abstract geometric forms. The presentation came from many different angles. Pablo Picasso was probably the most famous Cubist painter. Every day artists produced cubist art; Rodin sought to protect his

originals from the threat of mass production. Braque and Cezanne are two other artists associated with Cubism. Life and art mirrored through cubism in tubular dresses and cloche hats of the 1920's.

#### *Dadaism:*

Dadaism began around 1916 as an anti art movement with artists rebelling against traditional ideas of art. The idea was to offend and shock the art world. Marcel Duchamp is a well known Dadaist artist.

#### *Art Deco:*

Art Deco entered the art world in the late 1920's, a streamlined aesthetic combining the geometric look of cubism with elaborate embellishments. By the late 1930's shimmery fabrics and body hugging silhouettes of evening gowns reflected the Art deco that emerged. Art Deco was eclectic in design style, purely decorative, elegant and stylish. It was based on geometric shapes. Its opulent style is attributed to the reaction from forced austerity imposed by World War I. Erte, Louis Icart and Tamara de Lempicka are well known artists of this style.

#### *Surrealism:*

Images from eerie imaginations and dreams are well known from the Surrealism movement during the 1920's. It was a way of expressing true function of thought defying all logic outside the normal and moral interpretation of life. The best known artists from this movement are Salvador Dali, Joan Miro and Max Ernst.

#### *Minimalism:*

Very simple paintings and sculptures in presentation and representation came from minimalism. During the 1960's artists increased intensity on meaning without clutter of composition and form to create minimalistic works. Minimalism stripped down form to its very basic, then went even further. The focus of art became whatever caught the eye. Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt and Frank Stella are artists noted during this period.

#### *Pop-Art:*

Materials from everyday, popular culture such as canned goods and comic strips became the focus of Pop Art during the 1960's. The movement mirrored the culture of the modern world. Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Tom Wesselmann are three well known pop artists.

## **Classroom Strategies:**

The goal is to have students as excited and involved in the learning process as I became during the process of writing this unit. I have done the basic legwork. The introduction, background and objective information has provided you with enough information to start the unit and hopefully understand what my quest has been and what your students can accomplish through this unit. I'd like all teachers and students to think about modern art, think about fashion then find connections between the two. I want students to realize the multitude of opportunities for learning open to them in this unit, but ultimately that will be determined by the perimeters set by the instructor. I hope to ease the intimidation of the study of modern art and fashion by understanding the fundamentals and relating it all back to the principles and elements of design.

First we must look at these questions, prompts: *Are there specific artists that influenced fashion designers, who and how? How was Modernism important to fashion? Have there been cycles in Art as there are in Fashion? If yes, what phase of the cycle does Modernism fit into? What differences are there in European and American Modern Art / Fashion? Medium- how much impact does sculpture, architecture, paintings, sketches, clothing, textiles have on society? Are rugs textile designs? Why might an artist use one medium over another and how does that work for the fashion designer with textiles? Do artist/fashion designers today create works that fall within the definition of Modernism?*

With all of the suggested classroom strategies, these basic prompts should be utilized. There are many options for this unit, I encourage you to expand and change any strategies to fit your students, classroom and curriculum. Enjoy the creative process!

### Paintings into Fashion:

The length of this activity will vary greatly depending on how extensively you choose to delve into the projects outlined below. The Fashion Show culmination would require at least one semester. Other aspects can be completed in 3 – 6 class block periods.

*Materials needed for this lesson:* Prepare a power point slide show with the following: Image copies of Piet Mondrian's composition- *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue*, Yves Saint Laurent's dress- Mondrian Look, Andy Warhol's *32 Soup Cans*, Campbell Soup Company Soup Can paper dress, and additional images easily acquired from Museum and Fashion, Art sites that exemplify fabrics, and designs representing modernist paintings made into fashion.

Yves Saint Laurent created the “Mondrian Look” in 1965 transforming Piet Mondrian’s composition, *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1928)* into a garment design which spurred the Op Art look in the fashion industry. The paintings simple form, line and color took direct shape through the structural build of the dress.

Campbell Soup Company used Andy Warhol’s *32 Soup Cans* as a design for a paper dress, a very effective advertising campaign. Art historian Marci Livingston remarks that Pop Art was a sensibility emergence in the 1950’s and rampant in the 60’s. Warhol (who began his career as a fashion illustrator) had been painting Campbell’s soup cans since 1962. Such advertising icons, along with cartoons and billboards, yielded a synthesis of word and image, of art and the everyday. Fashion quickly embraced the spirit of Pop, playing an important role in its dissemination. The paper dresses of 1966-67 were throwaways, open to advertising and the commercial (Met- Costume Institute). These are obvious decorative influences.

There is a wealth of information available to students online for research purposes. Honestly, I had a difficult time deciding what information to present in this unit because there is so much available. Students will research examples of garments where fabric was directly copied from an art piece created during one of the Modernism movements. They will create a report and presentation that explains what art period, artist and fashion designer they discovered. Note whether or not the art is titled and what the meaning may be. In addition, students will show the garment, give a brief biography of the designer and make any connections to the relationship and or influence that artist has on them. I would discourage the use of screen printed art on T-Shirts.

Students will describe structural and decorative elements in the fashion and the art. Students may also decide to design a garment based on a painting or sculpture from a specific period or as influenced by a specific artist. While preparing they must be able to justify their color, style, design choices.

The ultimate adaptation of this activity would be the creation of (building of) a garment that is designed with a specific piece of art as its influence. As a class project, the unit would culminate with a fashion show. Students will develop, design, create and produce a program that expands and enhances their creativity through exposure to and study of the modern art.

The project provides lessons to Apparel students in modern art and its relation to fashion and allows all students to submit a design for consideration for a culminating fashion show. All levels of Apparel students will be required to submit designs and participate in the culminating show as a modification to their entrepreneurial curriculum unit. Apparel I students will submit designs but do not have to build the garment; Apparel



II students will build the garment. Students will first learn about some of the modern art movements, study the collection at the Bechtler, or a museum in their location, or use online resources and books, and then begin sketching fashion designs. Students may work in pairs and submit more than one design and may also build more than one outfit or hat. Their designs must depict their journey through the process of discovery and creation, in the piece of art they select as inspiration, in their renderings, selected fabrics, and the building of the garment and/or headpiece. All student submissions will be critiqued by the Apparel/Costume Design teacher and a knowledgeable group of art and fashion mentors.

The culmination of this special project will be a fashion show to present the final garments and accessories created during the semester by the designing students. The fashion show will be an educational and entertaining evening as the audience will be versed on the art and design creations via a multimedia presentation and runway show.

To prepare for this endeavor students will participate in a field trip to the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art to examine the modern art collection currently on exhibit as well as to the Mint Museum of Art where they will examine the costume collection in relation to the visual arts of the period. These local trips can be substituted with a build-up of media center materials, or computer lab research presented by the teacher in field trip like preparation.

Students will be challenged to translate paintings, sculptures and prints into apparel and in so doing help them understand and bridge the gap between the two art forms. As fashions have changed across history so too have trends in art. Fashion and art have influenced each other significantly throughout history. For instance, in 1920s Paris fashion designers were held in as much esteem as contemporary artists who were experimenting with new styles and media. This emergence of the modern era in art – exemplified by the modern art collections around the world – coincides with radical changes in fashion and style. This project will highlight the interconnectivity of fashion and art and inspire apparel students to find sources of inspiration in visual arts.

The students will benefit from this project in many ways. They will gain experience and knowledge by creating a work from inception of idea through submission of a sketched concept to presentation of their garment. They will be able to work with textiles they have not used before; having the ability to work with various fabrics will be a new experience for many students as most of their projects are done with what can be found around the classroom. All of the students will gain an understanding and appreciation of modern art and its relation to fashion throughout history. The students will be exposed to museum etiquette as they tour two of Charlotte's art museums (the Bechtler and the Mint) as they help plan and produce the event. Students and fashion show participants will get

to appreciate the art and the fashion for the basic elements of its design and composition. Assessment will come from a rubric that breaks down the planning, research and presentation process.

Political Influence:

Art is a deliberate recreation of a new and special reality that grows from your response to life. It cannot be copied: it must be created. Christian Dior's "New Look" in the early 40's grew from a response to life. The war had ended, rations were over. The use of material was limitless and that is what Dior did. He created flowing, feminine designs that made women feel good about themselves. Compare and contrast the look of Dior with the art of Jackson Pollack. How are they both a result of Modernism? Compare and contrast the designs of Dior and Pollack. Dior seems to have captured simplicity and softness. Can Pollack's work be described in the same way? Give examples. Why had rations been imposed? How did that impact fashion?

Journey to America:

**Brown University (2001) associates published a research paper, Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop, detailing and the journey of two Italian immigrant sisters whose design work and dress shop capitalized on the changing times and began designing garments to be mass-produced for department stores. Their fabrics and design reflected the art of the mid-twenties and they were highly commercially successful. They asked the question, "What does it mean to be Modern?" Paul Poiret was noted as the most influential designer of this time. Was he the main competition of the Tirocchi sisters? How were their designs similar, different? What other designers of this time period played a role in changing fashion? In this project students will research journeys from Europe to America by designers and artists during a specific artistic movement. How did technology and art influence these sisters, other designers and their garments? Why did they immigrate to America? How was their adjustment to their new country? Are there particular garments that can be compared to Cubism, (or a particular movement)? Explain how. Cubism's influence can be found in many textiles. Find garments and textiles that have been influenced by cubism and other modern art movements. Explain why you feel your examples are good.**

**Art Deco:**

**Described as a streamlined aesthetic that combines Cubism and embellishments, the first thing that comes to mind when describing Art Deco is the Empire State building. This project will compare architecture, art and fashion. Students will complete a three-dimensional product that is comprised of elements of design from art, fashion and architecture. Students may discover those elements to be the same,**

**or completely different. What are the characteristics of those elements from each medium that exemplify Modernism? Are they the same? Compare and contrast each elements used, remember that streamlined is essential and embellishments are required. This project can be a model or garment. This project will provide ample opportunity for creative behaviors and self initiated learning. Students will be encouraged to test their own ideas, use critical thinking and experiment. Students must make the connection between the Art Deco movement and fashion. They should be able to defend their position / their project.**

**Objectives in Practice:**

This can be a quarter long project or simplified into three block periods. Teaching the Vocational Apparel 1 and 2 Objective 12.0, *Analyze the use of elements and principles of design in fashion.* 12.01 *Explore the effect of the elements of design on apparel.* 12.02 *Examine how principles of design are used in apparel,* this unit will expand the basics and end with a product using line, shape, space, texture, color, proportion, balance, emphasis, rhythm and harmony in either fashion, style, or textiles. Breaking down the Principles and Elements of Design, Color and Style, we will learn how each concept is defined in Modernism and Apparel Design either in definition or for a specific art form or piece.

Example: Line- “a *line* is a series of points connected to form a narrow path”. How is line used in Modern Art and how is line used during that time period in fashion (for textiles, style or fashion in general). Cubism is the obvious example.

During a season of the popular television show Project Runway, fashion designers were brought to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and asked to select an art piece from which they would create a design. We will incorporate the same concept with the Bechtler and Modernism and the product I assign in this unit. Students will use a piece of art from the Bechtler as design inspiration. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute on line link provides a plethora of information and examples as well as special exhibit information and photos for projects being done without the benefit of an art museum within close proximity.

As an example I will choose the Sam Francis oil on canvas *As for Appearance II* in the Bechtler .This vibrant piece of abstract expressionism, using primary colors and light is a happy, playful yet sophisticated design. It was Mr. Bechtler’s first purchase. It offers a wide variety or project choices.

-A line of children’s clothes with an explanation of why primary colors are used in children’s lines.

-Using this painting as an inspiration the students will try to mimic the color, light effects and intensity of this piece onto fabric as a textile design. Different fabrics (note fiber

content); paints and markers can be used. Size of design can be varied also. Compare color intensity and fiber context of most desirable fabric.

Shape and Texture:

Accomplished in one block period.

Students will find a painting that uses clothing in its content then find a picture of a fashionable outfit in a current magazine that has the same interesting shape. Describe its overall silhouette. We find many current day fashions inspired by art from the past, why does this happen? Describe how texture plays a role apparel, in art and this silhouette in particular.

Designers we Know/ Artists we Know:

Following the careers and influences of great designers is like following the work of great and influential artists. Coco Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Ralph Lauren, choose a designer (the student is not limited to the few listed here) past or present. Become familiar with their styles and runway shows. Have they ever used a particular artist or Modernism movement as inspiration for a line? (Alexander McQueen's February 2010 runway show reflected strong modern and post modern designs). Show the line and explain how it reflects the principles of Modernism.

Important technological and global changes occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. Courtiers began to mass produce and mass market clothing. This posed a problem for those who felt wearing couture was what was needed for their social position. Magazines began advertising styles; dress shops could reproduce styles in a variety of sizes and fabrics. Textiles were more readily available, designed by couriers, transportation was consistent and women took on new roles in society and relished in style and comfort.

Fashions connection to Modernism. It is there. We just need to find and prove it! As we look into these important designers of the early twentieth century we find concrete connections to artists, and social acceptance. This has been lost in translation. Perhaps it is because art created by fashion designers become possessions worn and put away, not accessible or for all to wear and see regularly. Some have even defined art as being something not worn. How did advertising impact the connection between modernism and fashion? What is the impact of fashion magazines on art and fashion? Give examples, be specific.

Who are modern artists who were also fashion designers? Did you know that Picasso was a costume designer? There are and have been many great artists and designers who

have designed for the theatre. Students will explore artists, fashion and theatre and compare creations of famed artists. Are there principle and elements of design that exemplify their particular style on canvas that can also be identified in their costume design?

What significance does fabric play in the designs of Cristo and Jeanne Claude? Are their creations reflective of modernism? Describe their use of color and overall impact of their designs. Examine the principles and elements of design in their works.

#### Notes:

1. 2. 6. Weber, Jeanette. *Clothing, Fashion, Fabrics and Construction*. 4th ed. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2003.
3. Dempsey, Amy. *Styles, Schools and Movements*. 1st paperback ed. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2004.
4. 9. 10. 12. Troy, Nancy J. *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003
5. Avante-Grade and Kitsch essay, Clement Greenberg, Partisian Review, 1939.
7. Dempsey, Amy. *Styles, Schools and Movements*. 1st paperback ed. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2004.
13. *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*. 1, Academic Dress to Eyeglasses. Valerie Steele. Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2005.

#### Resources:

#### Bibliography

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Collins, Lucy. "Modernism and Fashion *Worn Through*". (2010), 1 of 5, [www.wornthrough.com/2010/07/08/modernism-and-fashion](http://www.wornthrough.com/2010/07/08/modernism-and-fashion). (Accessed September 30, 2010).

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<http://www.bechtler.org/>

<http://www.moma.org/>

<http://www.sfmoma.org/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elsa\\_Schiaparellu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elsa_Schiaparellu) (accessed 10/7/2010).

## Student Resources

Bos, Harriett P. *Bechtler Museum of Modern Art*. 1st ed. John Boyer Michale Godfrey. Charlotte: Belk Printing Technologies, 2009.

-This museum 1<sup>st</sup> edition catalog provides background and descriptive narrative of the collection.

Collins, Lucy. "Modernism and Fashion *Worn Through*". (2010), 1 of 5, [www.wornthrough.com/2010/07/08/modernism-and-fashion](http://www.wornthrough.com/2010/07/08/modernism-and-fashion). (Accessed September 30, 2010).

-This academic apparel web site has a question, answer link that provides informed insight to topic related questions.

Dempsey, Amy. *Styles, Schools and Movements*. 1st paperback ed. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2004.

-This book provides and in depth overview of Modern art and Styles. It is valuable resource for examples of art and artists and gives specific references.

*Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion. 1, Academic Dress to Eyeglasses.* Valerie Steele. Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2005.

-This first in a series of Fashion Encyclopedias answers inquiries for in depth fashion Information.

"Fashion and Art." [http://tirocchi.stg.brown.edu/514/printables/fashion\\_art.html](http://tirocchi.stg.brown.edu/514/printables/fashion_art.html) (accessed 5/13/2010).

-This resource provides a step by step breakdown of a different curriculum unit. It is a very good reference in an easily followed format.

Griffin, Judith. *Wear Your Chair, When Fashion Meets Interior Design.* Penny Collins. China: Fairchild Publications, 2007.

-Great comparative analysis of art, architecture and furniture design that can easily provide inspiration to analyze art and fashion in the same format.

Taschen, GmbH. *Fashion. The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute. A History from the 18th to the 20th Century.* Kyoto: Barnes & Noble Publishing, 2006.

-This incredible manual has amazing photographs and historical fashion Information.

Weber, Jeanette. *Clothing, Fashion, Fabrics and Construction.* 4th ed. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2003.

-Your tried and true textbook will start you on the right track for design and apparel analysis information.

Web sites for museum art and fashion/costume collections are valuable resources.