

Department of Design and Architecture
Fashion Design

Intersections

*Reciprocal influences between similar practices in
fashion and architecture*

BA Thesis in Fashion Design

Andrés Eduardo Peláez Palencia

Fall 2014



LISTAHÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
Iceland Academy of the Arts

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Abstract

This essay explores the intersection of fashion and architecture through the visual incorporation of elements from both practices onto each other. The author explores this intersection by analysing the recent work of the Parisian fashion brand Chanel, looking to determine how architecture has influenced the design process and details of garments, related to the creative work of Gabrielle Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld. In the context of this investigation, the concepts of architecture are examined through the theory and work of architect Steven Holl, which is later correlated to similar practices in fashion, paying special attention to the use of geometry, form, texture and function as raw influence for fashion. Departing from the premise that fashion and architecture are initially conceived as a means to shelter the body, the author uses the methodology of analysing the interaction between both practices directly in the field of fashion, from which it is then concluded that architecture and fashion are a visual amalgamation that depends purely on proportion, texture and layering in scale, making the intersection visible through the application of theories of construction and sensorial attributes that bestow meaning to the outcome of a design project, therefore clarifying how both practices have influenced each other throughout history.

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Introduction

While the fashion designer and architect create objects that differ in size and materials, their creative processes can be strikingly similar. Both begin with a flat two-dimensional medium, transforming it to create complex three-dimensional forms. The same prevailing aesthetic tendencies, ideological and theoretical foundations, and technological innovations have influenced each other, resulting in garments and buildings that share stylistic or structural qualities or derive from common creative impulses.¹ – Brooke Hodge.

To begin an exploration between fashion and architecture one must understand that references and similar practices in both of these crafts serve vast interpretations. I have been interested in the intersection of fashion design and architecture for as long as my interest for design has existed, eventually developing a particular interest on the influence from one craft onto another, at times in the silhouettes of new collections by fashion houses and other times in the way new building developments are created to resemble the movement of fabrics or focused on the interaction between the human body and its surroundings through proportion and texture.

This essay explores the direct links and influences of fashion and architecture, incorporating the life of Coco Chanel and the perspective of Karl Lagerfeld as Creative Director for the brand; in recent Chanel fashion shows architecture takes an important role to create the mood of a collection; without the set the clothes are merely garments, but the combination of clothing and the surrounding space makes a connection that conveys a mood and a sense of completion.

A good example of this statement came across in the Chanel Couture Fall 2011 fashion show. Style.com Fashion editor-at-large Tim Blanks described the space: „The backdrop for the presentation was a neon-limned mock-up of the Place Vendôme, with Napoleon replaced at the top of his column by a robot Coco. The set was dark and glistening, like rain had just fallen. A perfect film noir atmosphere, in other words. And Lagerfeld had the perfect script for it—Coco's own life story.“²

¹ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, New York, 2007, page 11.

² Tim Blanks, „Chanel Couture Fall 2011 Review“, *Style.com*, July 5, 2011, <http://www.style.com/fashion-shows/fall-2011-couture/chanel>, accessed October 26, 2014.



Image 1. *Chanel Couture Fall 2011 Show Décor.*

Throughout the 69 looks that were presented there were architectural references in the clothing, mostly in the construction of the garments and in the overall silhouette; the elongated lines interrupted by precise and textured layering, the innovative volume of sleeves, skirts and jacket details and the placement of seams and embellishments were a constant reminder that this collection was inspired by the city which Coco Chanel herself adored. The images below exemplify the intersection of architecture and fashion, in this case linked to the city of Paris. The way in which the garments are layered and segmented in different textures and lengths reminds us of the Eiffel tower, the organic flow of lines of the Art Nouveau style and the silhouette references the architectural modernisation of Paris, the pattern on the tweed skirt is reminiscent of the grid plan of Paris and the volume of the layered areas of garments bring a reference to Hector Guimard's Art Nouveau building façades and the grand structural volume and detail of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's architecture during the renovation works of Paris between 1853-1870.



Images 2, 3 and 4. *Chanel Couture Fall 2011 models.*

Architecture and city have constantly empowered the evolution of clothing throughout the decades, taking as a key factor the mobility of humans in an ever-changing environment makes visible how architecture has inspired many designers to develop new techniques and silhouettes, it has ignited the development of new trends and meanings to clothing. In the book *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, published in 2007, Brooke Hodge describes this:

...over time, designers in both fields have drawn from each other for inspiration as well as certain technical strategies. Vocabulary derived from architecture has been applied to garments („architectonic“, „constructed“, „sculptural“,etc.). And architects have also borrowed and adapted sartorial strategies and vocabulary from the fashion world, draping, wrapping, weaving, folding, printing, and pleating surfaces and materials.³

This symbiosis can be considered rather ironic since architecture has continuously been regarded as monumental in scale, yet it conceals the human body and activity from the outside world, therefore -just like clothing- it is also something intimate and close to the skin. Taking the life story of Coco Chanel as inspiration, it becomes evident how historical events are a key element in the changes of fashion, it has happened before between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Coco Chanel once stated:

The enclosure before 1914! When I went to the races, I would never have thought that I was witnessing the death of luxury, the passing of the nineteenth century, the end of an era. An age of magnificence, but of decadence, the last reflections of a baroque style in which the ornate had killed off the figure, in which over-embellishment had stifled the body's architecture, just as parasites smother trees in tropical forests. Woman was no more than a pretext for riches, for lace, for sable, for chinchilla, for materials that were too precious.....The uncommon had become the normal; wealth was as ordinary as poverty.⁴

Most notably, the years after each World War and other historical events of great relevance saw the biggest revolutions in style and creativity; the end of Baroque style in fashion after World War I and Christian Dior's „New Look“ in 1947 to name a few. New urban spaces were being drafted at these times, plans to rebuild cities that had been ravaged by the wars and needed new life in accordance to a new way of living; society needed an uplift of freedom through a form of expression that would lead to individuality again, and this-too-would affect the way people dressed.

³ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 11.

⁴ Paul Morand, *The Allure of Chanel*, Illustrated Edition 2013, Pushkin Press, London, pages 48-50.



Image 5. Dior's "New Look", 1947.

This essay takes architecture as an element of influence in the way garments are designed and the way people dress. Cities in our times are being built around the concept of vehicular mobility and mass production, therefore driving creativity towards the needs that we have created in our built environment. Along these thoughts we find architects like Steven Holl and his views on architecture in regards to our environment. He explains that „Unlike painting or sculpture from which one can turn away, unlike music or film that one can turn off, architecture surrounds us. It promises intimate contact with shifting, changing, merging materials, textures, colours, and light in an intertwining of flat and deep three-dimensional parallaxical space and time.“⁵

This perspective reinforces the link between fashion and architecture through the usage of common language and terms that are used to describe works in both practices through the subjective senses of touch and sight.

⁵Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995/ Steven Holl*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1986, page 12.

Through the investigation of parallel processes and statements, terminology and construction of both fashion and architecture I will determine how each craft has influenced one another and influenced the creative work of fashion designers such as Coco Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld who have created a modern visual vocabulary through their interpretation of the intersection of fashion and architecture.



Image 6. *Coco Chanel watching the fashion presentation from the staircase, 1962.*



Image 7. *Karl Lagerfeld on the Chanel Rue Cambon staircase, 1983.*

1. Steven Holl:

Architecture and the Pragmatism of Conventional Architectural Perception

Even though architecture can be perceived merely as the building of structures to provide shelter and serve purpose to human and environmental conditions, there are deeper philosophical views towards architecture that can be considered for further analysis. The work of American architect Steven Holl can be reviewed through images, yet his work and philosophy towards architecture are best described in books about selected works. There is a deeper meaning to the foundations of his work as an architect, in first instance on the connection between architecture and site. It is explained that the connection between the structure being built and the site must be a conversation of form and function to develop something to the best outcome. „Architecture and site should have an experiential connection, a metaphysical link, a poetic link. When a work of architecture successfully fuses a building and situation, a third condition emerges. In this third entity, denotation and connotation merge; expression is linked to idea which is joined to site. The suggestive and implicit are manifold aspects of an intention. “⁶ The introduction of the word ‚intention‘ to this premise brings attention to the fact that- just like in fashion- architecture focuses on the intention and purpose of design in the early stages of creation. The term that develops from this premise is called ‚Anchoring‘, and its principle stands on the fact that architecture is bound to situation and that a construction is intertwined with the experience of a place. The site of a building is more than an ingredient in its conception. It is its physical and metaphysical foundation.⁷

Following the previous assertion, we become aware that fashion is also anchored to a time and place, to the metaphysics and cultural intentions under which it is created. It is the job of the designer to draw inspiration from previous decades of style and silhouette and intertwine it with images, location and culture so that it becomes an innovative work that will translate itself as a visually poetic link through texture and construction. Steven Holl believes that „The experience of material in architecture is not just visual but tactile, aural, olfactory; it is all of these intertwined with space and our bodily trajectory in time“⁸, and we can easily identify this concept in fashion, where textiles provide the experience of materials and their importance in the translation of form and construction. Additionally, Architecture transcends geometry. It is

⁶ Steven Holl, *Anchoring: Selected Projects 1975-1991/ Steven Holl*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1991, page 9.

⁷ Steven Holl, *Anchoring: Selected Projects 1975-1991/ Steven Holl*, page 9.

⁸ Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995/ Steven Holl*, page 16.

an organic link between concept and form, just as fashion focuses on geometry as a key element for its construction and meaning. Furthermore, buildings make connections to histories, sites, cultures and passions, just as fashion links clothing with tradition, culture and form of expression.⁹ Recognizing geometry and texture as important factors of design in both architecture and fashion enhances our sensory experience to the final outcome of a design project. This sensory experience is described by Steven Holl as the ‚haptic realm‘, which defines architecture. „The haptic realm of architecture is defined by the sense of touch. When the materiality of the details forming an architectural space become evident, the haptic realm opens up. Sensory experience is intensified, psychological dimensions engaged”.¹⁰ This premise is supported equally in fashion by the existence of a direct link of design to texture, where textiles bring texture and depth to a design and therefore enhance the experience of clothing.

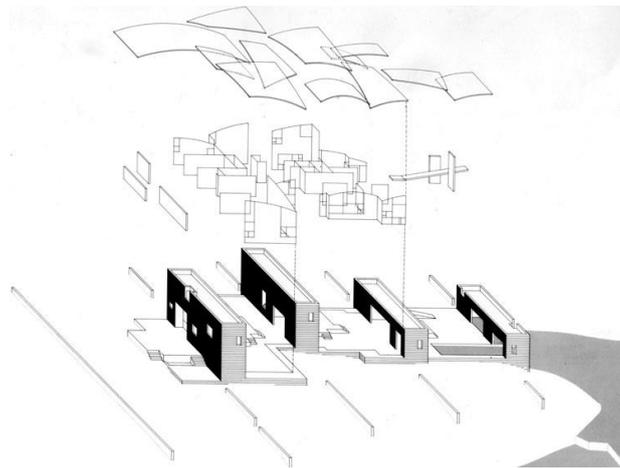


Image 8. Steven Holl *'Stretto House'*, Texas, Floor and Elevation Plan.



Image 9. Elena Manferdini *'Clad Cuts'* Collection, 2005.

⁹ Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995/ Steven Holl*, page 15.

¹⁰ Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995/ Steven Holl*, page 16.

There is more to the senses in design than we care to recognize, mostly because design itself - as a subjective craft- has become inherent through approach and appeal to the senses. One must understand that architecture and fashion are built on levels, layers and movement, as Steven Holl describes:

On one level, an idea-force drives architecture; on another, structure, material, space, colour, light and shadow intertwine in the fabrication of architecture. When we move through space with a twist and turn of the head, mysteries of gradually unfolding fields of overlapping perspectives are charged with a range of light. A range of smell, sound and material returns us to primordial experiences framing and penetrating our everyday lives.¹¹

This concept brings layering and the movement of the human body as an aspect of the sensory experience of design. When a work of architecture or fashion is approached, we tend to move around the object or structure to appreciate details in different angles, the weaving of form, space, texture and light become a conversation with the spectator. Individually, these “proto-elements”, or possible combinations of lines, planes, and volumes in space remain disconnected, trans-historical and trans-cultural. They float about in a zero-ground of form without gravity but are precursors of a concrete form of fundamental geometric precepts common to ancient design styles. However, when they are brought together, they form the interlocking materials that will enhance detail and move us beyond acute sight to tactility. From linearity, concavity and transparency to hardness, elasticity, and dampness; the haptic realm opens to our senses. It is here that we also recognize the importance of materials and layering in fashion, as the concept of developing an object from a flat dimension to a three-dimensional object becomes a matter of juxtaposing elements, textures and abstract geometric fragments to a complete object.¹²

Since the work of Steven Holl and his experiential references to the surrounding space in both abstract and built environments highlight the link between architecture and fashion, we consider that both practices aim at elevating the experience of human interaction with design through the weaving of materials used to enhance the everyday life of individuals who -on a macro scale- live in an urban and psychological space where the simultaneous interactions of topography, program, lines of urban movement, materials and light come together to manifest the spirit of an urban reality.¹³

¹¹ Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995/ Steven Holl*, page 11.

¹² Steven Holl, *Anchoring: Selected Projects 1975-1991/ Steven Holl*, page 11.

¹³ Steven Holl, *Urbanisms: Working with Doubt*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2009, page 29.

This pragmatism of conventional terminology once reserved exclusively to architecture reveals how architectural terminology has been ultimately adopted by designers in various fields, in this particular case, by fashion designers, as means to describe concepts that define their work. The line regarding usage of terms and concepts has been blurred so that new meanings and new conceptual thinking can be adhered to fashion and trends; this is how we understand that spatial and material phenomena meets the imagination.

2. Parallel Practices and Terminology of Fashion and Architecture

Since both fashion and architecture are conceived through intangible forces such as creativity and ingenuity, it is no surprise that we find an intersection in both disciplines, in practice and terminology. There are obvious differences between the two in terms of scale and purpose, yet there are similarities that can be identified. In the book *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, which is based on an exhibition held at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, California (November 19, 2006 – March 5, 2007) on the subject of fashion and architecture, author and curator of the exhibition Brooke Hodge brings to our attention that,

Fashion is thought of as ephemeral and superficial, using soft, sometimes fragile materials, whereas architecture is considered monumental and permanent, using rigid, highly durable materials. Their scales of production, too, are wildly different: fashion designers create garments for the human body, while architects create buildings large enough for many bodies to inhabit simultaneously. Regardless of scale, however, the point of origin for both practices is the body. Both protect and shelter, while providing a means to express identity – whether personal, political, religious, or cultural.¹⁴

Taking this premise as a relevant point of an intersection between fashion and architecture, we also become aware of the influence in terminology that both disciplines have had onto each other. Vocabulary derived from architecture has migrated to fashion so that garments can be described with words such as „architectonic“, „constructed“ or „sculptural“, while other words from fashion have migrated to architecture and adapted to construction language, describing surfaces and materials as „draping“, „wrapping“, „weaving“, or „folding“ to name a few.¹⁵ Moreover, it becomes evident that designers have been constantly influenced by the social and climatic conditions throughout history, and these elements have created a steady succession of interpretations in the form of fashion silhouettes or architectural forms, volumes and textures that are recreated and exposed in a contemporary context. This is most evident in the idea of clothing and structures as shelter. This connection dates back to the Ice Age, when people used animal skins to cover themselves and to fashion exterior walls for crude structures.

¹⁴ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 11.

¹⁵ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 11.

In ancient Greece, the flutes of columns were echoed in the drapery folds and cylindrical form of the chiton- the iconic woollen tunic made from a single length of fabric draped over the bodies of both men and women. Both classical Greek dress and architecture were conceived in harmony with the proportions of the human figure.¹⁶

As humanity progressed in time in both fashion and architecture, these similarities have grown more evident; as an example, the first decades of the 20th Century architecture saw the birth of Art Nouveau with its curvilinear and elongated flowing lines, which inspired the creation of structures that appeared to have natural movement in ornament, lines that took direct reference from nature. Further along the century there were also changes to fashion, as designers began simplifying the silhouette and the structure of garments, stripping ornaments of great detail, forms were pared down and structure began to be exposed. This became particularly evident in the work of architects such as Le Corbusier and J.J.P. Oud and fashion designers such as Coco Chanel and Cristobal Balenciaga, who emphasized practicality and the idea that buildings as well as garments should be expressive of their function.



Image 10. *'Bastille' Metro Station Paris, 1902.*



Image 11. *Chanel Jersey Costumes, Summer 1916.*

¹⁶ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 12.



Image 12. *Chanel Dress, 1927.*



Image 13. *Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier Architects, 1931.*

Furthermore, in the latter years of the twentieth century, fashion and architecture began to follow even more similar aesthetics due to the globalization and information technology that allowed for easier and faster dissemination of the latest developments in both practices, and therefore we arrive at the point where designers and architects embraced minimalist and deconstructivist aesthetics, the clean and modern simplicity that in many ways reflects the international styles and ways of design from the past decades in a reduced and meaningful way.¹⁷

Within the theories and parallel practices of fashion and architecture, Brooke Hodge indicates that one practice affects the other by means of exposing the designers and architects to different media in which design provides a platform of expression, to free themselves from the conventional surroundings and repetitive interpretations of contemporary design. Hodge identifies the initial steps of the cross-fertilization of fashion and architecture in the premise that both fashion and architecture are rooted on the basic need to shelter the body out of necessity, taking the idea that shelter can exist in the intimate form of clothing or in larger proportions that can gather communities, given that architecture is predicated on the need for structures that house and protect inhabitants from the elements.¹⁸

Another important aspect of human expression through fashion and architecture to consider as part of this theory is Identity. Both practices have continually approached personal expression in a vast array of ways, architecture has been used to express collective identity, values and

¹⁷ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 14.

¹⁸ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 16.

status so that human activity can flow seamlessly through time; at the same time fashion has provided us with a method of individual expression of identity through clothing. Traditional costume demands geographic belonging and certain garments have evolved to become stereotypes and archetypes of culture and society. Identity in fashion can be revealed through a glimpse of the transition it has had from its origins to opulence, from adorned to minimalist, and from traditional to global.¹⁹ Brooke Hodge offers the following example in regards to identity and clothing:

Uniforms also reflect collective identity; for example, children's school uniforms signify an affiliation with an educational institution, a relationship to learning, compliance with certain rules, and even connections to a particular social or economic class. These same uniforms may be appropriated and altered by groups seeking to subvert those associations, such as Japanese teenagers who wear them as a type of costume, bringing a different meaning altogether.²⁰

Furthermore, Brooke Hodge explains that the intersection of fashion and architecture originates in the similarities in the creative process of both practices. Both fashion designers and architects begin with taking an idea, analysing its practical requirements, making sketches and developing study models that will later be transformed into three-dimensional structures that mark the first steps of the creation of products in each practice. While fashion designers have the luxury of being able to work directly on the body in early stages of the creative process because of the scale of what is being built, architects are required to use a series of scale models to communicate design as they rarely build a full-scale mock-up of what is being created. Many notations and instructions are to be made on each project, and these standard guidelines can be found both in architectural drawings and in dressmaker's patterns.

Bringing patterns and geometry into this equation raises the methods, which architects and fashion designers have developed to shape the structure, the spatial volume and surface of individual designs and buildings. These techniques, also known as "tectonic strategies" bring the haptic realm and all the senses into design of fashion and architecture so that the end result becomes a metaphorical second skin to the body or the culture into which a garment or building is introduced. Perhaps the most frequently shared tectonic strategies shared by fashion and architecture are folding, pleating, and weaving. These affect the structure, volume and proportions of a design and configure the display of either a garment or a building so that the

¹⁹ Brooke Hodge, „Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture“, Syracuse University School of Architecture Channel, published April 12th, 2013, *Youtube.com*, accessed November 27th 2014, <http://youtu.be/EDM58TW-Nx4>.

²⁰ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 16.

mere structure of a fabric or the way a building is pieced together become an introduction to the creative process of the creator; surface patterns and textures become the embellishments that allude meaning and function in a global scope.^{21 22}

It is no wonder, then, that many post-modern architects and fashion designers have recurred to deconstruction as an important element of design. Both disciplines take the foundations of construction and fray and degrade them to build a new object. The weathering of textures and surfaces bring new inspiration as an ironic interaction of old and new.²³ In this way, architects and fashion designers have been able to create a distortion of form and function that translate into visually current and original structures or garments that defy the principles of pre-existing contemporary engineering.²⁴

Subsequently, we understand that the parallel practices in fashion and architecture are based on the interaction of form and function, linked to humans as individuals and as a collective organism through the intertwining of methods and features of design under the premise that scale and proportion in textures, surface and construction represent the contrasts between each practice.

²¹ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, pages 17-21.

²² Brooke Hodge, „Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture“, Syracuse University School of Architecture Channel, published April 12th, 2013, *Youtube.com*, accessed November 27th 2014, <http://youtu.be/EDM58TW-Nx4>.

²³ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, page 31.

²⁴ Brooke Hodge, Patricia Mears and Susan Sidlauskas, *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture*, pages 38-39.

3. Methodology

Following the findings from the previous theoretical structure, this essay now focuses on analysing the intersection of fashion and architecture through the perspective of a fashion designer. In this case I have chosen the fashion brand Chanel in accordance to the theme of this essay, starting with the phrase:

Fashion is architecture: It is a matter of proportions. - Coco Chanel²⁵

In the context of this analysis it is appropriate to recognize Chanel- from its origins and the life of Gabrielle Chanel herself until the recent decades of the brand's history under the creative direction of Karl Lagerfeld- as a fashion house that has been continually inspired by the intersection of fashion and architecture, and through the visual integration of architectural methods and vocabulary into the purpose and aesthetics of fabrics, texture and form, has presented the world with silhouettes ahead of its time and details in proportions and characteristics that make an incursion in the fashion world and have transformed the brand into a beacon of style and heritage that transcends time.

Departing from an analysis of the Chanel Couture Fall 2011 collection -as well as various other collections from the same brand- through the scope of previously mentioned theories and terminology from the intersection of fashion and architecture, it becomes easier to recognize the foundations of this collection and its designs as garments with a final purpose but subjected to interpretations in context of time and style. In this case there was a direct link between the environment in which the clothes were presented - [a mock-up replica of the Place Vendôme in Paris] - and the texture, form and construction of the garments, which relates to Steven Holl's argument that design should link site, culture, tradition and cultural references to the object or structure that is being created.

Since geometry plays an important role in both fashion and architecture, it was important to recognize the geometric planes conveyed by the layering of garments, which, intertwined with the texture of embellished fabrics created depth and volume in different scales through shadows and sheer segments that shelter the body yet boast design features reminiscent of the architectural elements of the city of Paris. Coco Chanel describes design as a sequence of good ideas that are made to perish. At one point during her life she concluded that she had created

²⁵ „Coco Chanel Biography: Quotes“, *Bio.com*, <http://www.thebiographychannel.co.uk/biographies/coco-chanel/quotes.html;jsessionid=40C4CA09958546396E700752FF8550C5>, accessed November 30, 2014.

fashion for a long time because she knew how to express her times. She stated that all designers should back their knowledge with a real sense of purpose for what is being created.

Why have the ocean liners, the salons, the big restaurants never adapted to their real purpose? Because they are conceived by designers who have never seen a storm, by architects who have never been out in the world, by interior decorators who go to bed at nine o'clock and dine at home. Similarly, before me, couturiers hid away, like tailors, at the back of their shops, whereas I lived a modern life, I shared the habits, the tastes and the needs of those whom I dressed. Fashion should express the place and the moment.²⁶

After further investigation of Chanel fashion shows under the creative direction of Karl Lagerfeld, it became apparent that the result of intersecting fashion and architecture through visual interpretations of the similarities in both practices is often expressed in a symbiotic relation between the space in which the garments are presented, the details spread as embellishments placed on the textiles used in the collections and the time that is being referenced in the overall presentation, the decades referenced in the silhouettes and the movement of the brand through innovation of materials, techniques and intertwining and weaving of form, function and visual attributes.

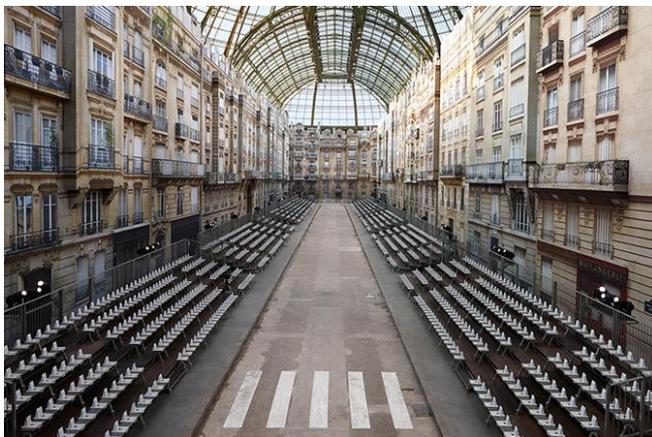


Image 14. *Chanel Spring 2015 Show Décor.*



Image 15. *Chanel Spring 2015 Model.*

In the images above from the Chanel Ready-to-Wear 2015 fashion show, the intersection between fashion and architecture is highlighted by the scaled replica of a Parisian street décor within the Grand Palais building in the city centre of Paris, and the garments that were presented feature volumes and characteristics that make the outfits evolve into a modern urban uniform

²⁶ Paul Morand, *The Allure of Chanel*, Illustrated Edition 2013, page 170.

for the 'Chanel woman', which gives us the impression that the brand heeds the implication of keeping up with modern times while maintaining a clear focus on the functionality and requirements of clothing in form and function in keeping with tradition to the brand's historic '*know-how*' and style. Additionally, within the statement that this collection presents a type of uniform, we can reference the perception of uniforms as an expression of collective identity. Uniforms can endow an individual with status or hierarchical position in society and the surrounding space. In the extent of this methodology, the Chanel attire can be described as a uniform for an elite whose main objective is acquiring clothing made with the finest materials and the most attentive care to detail and fit. Similarly, we find the same scenario in architecture, where only a certain elite has access to having buildings, homes, galleries, etc. commissioned by the most renowned architects. In recent years we can recall Karl Lagerfeld's collaboration with architect Zaha Hadid in the creation of the Mobile Art Chanel Contemporary Art Container, a travelling structure that contained an exhibition of Chanel icons and clothing in direct reference to the modern structure that contained them.

All of the previous statements recall Steven Holl's assertions about the built environment and how we approach an object or structure by moving around and interacting with the perspectives under which the object can be analysed. Since there is room for a vast array of interpretations to fashion, it is necessary to concur that we can link it to human interaction and collective identity as means to develop individual expression, and to a broader extent, an artistic identity. Through these methods it becomes easier to understand the visual interpretations of the intersection of fashion and architecture from the perspective of designers like Coco Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld, most notably in the way they have used perspective, planes, volumes and textures through weaving and intertwining of materials, geometry, form and colour to achieve the contemporary success of their creativity.

Conclusion

Where then does the couturier's genius lie? The genius is in anticipating. More than a great statesman, the great couturier is a man who has the future in his mind. His genius is to invent summer dresses in the winter, and vice versa. At a time when his customers are basking in the burning sun, he is thinking of ice and of hoar frost. Fashion is not an art, it is a job. If art makes use of fashion, then that is sufficient praise. – Coco Chanel²⁷

To attain success in the intersection of fashion and architecture, the designer on either practice requires an acute creative understanding (and perhaps even intrinsic knowledge) of the interaction of geometry, texture and form of our surroundings, for it is creative human nature to draw inspiration from our surroundings to create something new, either by referencing directly or by innovating to conceive a new material perspective.

Fashion designers and architects around the world have continually been exposed to local and global media and situations that has empowered the influence of each practice onto the other, blurring the lines of methods and terminology that was once reserved to each individual practice and bringing a new visual vocabulary to the art world. This has enabled designers such as Coco Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld to adopt certain characteristics from their surrounding space and translate them into new forms of visual interpretations in clothing.

Following Steven Holl's remarks about the haptic realm we become aware that fashion –just like architecture- is a practice that demands tactile attention to detail by means of form, texture and structure to trigger the senses so that the outcome or product becomes an experience to the senses. It is only after we have observed the geometry and the existence of an object in its surrounding space that we can fully understand the condition in which it has been created, anchored to a culture, time, site or idea that advocates its meaning and existence.

In this context, I regress to the statement that indicates that fashion and architecture are established on the primitive premise of protecting the body from the elements, and within this theory it became apparent that scale is an ambivalent term, for architecture can be created in monumental proportions designed to contain within a large number of individuals, yet it can also exist as an intimate and psychological space that connects closely to an individual and a site. Herein lies one of the most significant similarities of architecture and fashion concluded in this essay, as garments have been described as becoming a second skin and a structure over the body, also designed to protect from the elements, and this has ignited the creation of

²⁷ Paul Morand, *The Allure of Chanel*, Illustrated Edition 2013, page 172.

different silhouettes and forms in both practices through the decades, developing new techniques applicable to the materials used for construction of garments and structures, and taking into consideration that fashion and architecture are subjected to the social, physical and historic events that affect society at a certain point in time.

The similar methods for innovating a design project in both fashion and architecture revolve around the concepts of intertwining, weaving, folding and pleating, amongst other terms, which have become part of the shared vocabulary that is applied to the different materials and techniques utilized in the construction of both garments and architectural works. In fashion this translates to words like “architectonic”, “sculptural” and “constructed”, which helps designers reference their work easily to a source of inspiration outside the realm of fashion.

It is necessary to confirm that both practices also tend to be useful devices to express individual and collective identity. The concept of uniforms can be linked to this premise as they represent a type of clothing that has been bestowed with a specific function and status in the built environment in which they are to be worn. School uniforms, as an example, involve details in their construction that are only present in their design and purpose, in chosen materials and colours that represent a specific location and convey social status. In the same way, the Chanel attire has become a uniform of timeless elegance; the little black dress or the black tweed jacket, both icons throughout the history of the brand, represent the height of design and detail, once created by Coco Chanel and later in the twentieth century modernised by Karl Lagerfeld, whose interest in architecture has been featured frequently in the clothing he has designed throughout his years at the helm of the creative direction for the brand.

Finally, the intersection of fashion and architecture has been made possible through the visual and sensorial incorporation of details and methods from one practice onto the other by means of adjusting the scale and proportion of structures, the innovation of movement, usage and feel of materials, and by re-evaluating the reality of geometry and volume in the built space, therefore enhancing the design process in both fashion and architecture and keeping in mind the importance of corresponding to the needs and demands of an ever-evolving society that is modernized daily thanks to technology and globalized information. This represents and encourages the feat of human ingenuity and creativity through design.

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