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An outlook of the fashion industry through fashion history

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Abstract

In this presentation, survival theories and visuals of the Kaunake garments which have historic roots in Sumerian Civilization around 2500 BC to present in the eye of fashionable textile have been presented. For most people; FASHION is the important word and part of our life, the way of our living in a fast changing world. Fashion changes very fast and affects people's life accordingly. We could see the cycle of fashion history from past to present eventually. Today we can call them in categories such as "70's fashion", "60's", "50's look", etc... What are the affections? How we refer it as a specific style era? How does it change our visual culture? But there is especially one and very special garment that always takes place in every era of fashion history, because its interest to human being whereas meaning is not the same anymore. It used to be the most basic human garment in ancient times still survives and today visually repeats itself in many different styles and made of in different materials and furs. Most of the fashion designers used as an inspiration, Kaunakes still encountered in different forms today, though the fashion concept has changed through the fashion history.

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1. Introduction

The dictionary meaning of Kaunakes is; "thick cloak". From Greek, it was a woolen skirt or cloak woven in a tufted pattern suggesting overlapping petals or feathers, either by sewing tufts onto the garment or by weaving them into the fabric."

Kaunakes has been adapted as an art form through the ages, by its shape and texture. It's popularity appreciated and used in many different cultures. The Kaunakes played a major role; from the most basic needs of human beings who lived in the caves, to the most extra avant-garde outfit in a ball room in fashion history.

Since the Fashion industry established, in many designer collections, Kaunakes appeared as textile fiber materials and sometimes fur and feather forms and/or trimmings used to make them. Not like casual wear but preferred for fancier or special occasion dress to look chic and attractive to many fashion followers. Even today's fashion designers you can recall Kaunakes in a display window as well as in recent fashion magazines.

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Definitely, what we see in those figures as a form and shape perceived pretty and attractive in the eye and accepted to our given fashion culture. The fashion designers inspiration from the ancient times to create beautiful clothing besides many economic and business meanings can be appreciated as design.

“Design is the sum of the functional object and the work of art, of functional aesthetics and artistic expression. We talk of good design only when the proportions are right.”¹



Figure 1. Ebih-II, the Superintendent of Mari. Louvre Museum, Paris. www.louvre.fr/en*

2. Right proportions always provoke of beauty in fashion design.

The ideal of beauty has been changed throughout fashion history including proportions of a female shape. For example, 17th century corsets form into cinched waistline of 50's. Proportion on female body has been changed not only vertical but also horizontal. Empire cut of 1800's; torso comes down until hip line in the 20's repeated dress style in the 80's fashion cycle.

We can compare figure 6 emphasizing the empire cut dress to the figure 7, which is a 20's vintage look dress designed by John Galliano. Besides how the style differentiates from each other Kaunake inspired skirt fitted through to both design. Both designs look very attractive and impressive of high fashion.

In fashion, how we decide or accept? What is beautiful and comport to us maybe exceptional personal choice and differs to a person's aesthetic understanding and response. Accordingly to the book "*The Way We Look, Dress and Aesthetics*" written by Marilyn Revel DeLong explains what is **aesthetic response**?

*As you look through a magazine advertising apparel, what is it about a photograph that catches your eye—a special look, a color, a beautiful model, an unusual message? It could be that you find a picture of just the look you like,.....You may be drawn to a photograph of a model wearing the latest fashion and your eye scans the lengths and takes note of how the jackets fits the body. You may be attracted to a unique color combination, or even a fabric that looks as though it would be pleasing to touch and wear on a cool morning. Often what you notice is what you relate to in a personal way and from which you derive pleasure. This is your **aesthetic response**-your involvement in looking and your resulting experiences stimulated by looking, such as pleasure or satisfaction.²*



Figure 2. Dress made from silk chiffon By Cristobal Balenciaga **Figure 3.** Lauren Bush wore a romantic haute couture gown from the atelier of Christian Dior in 2000.



Figure 4. Design by Hakaan, *Vogue magazine (Turkey)*: August 2010 issue, vogue.com

Figure 5. Alexander McQueen, Fall 2009 ready to wear collection, Style.com



Figure 6. Alexander McQueen, Fall 2012 ready to wear collection, Style.com

Figure 7. John Galliano, Fall 2008 ready to wear collection, Style.com



Figure 8&9. Oscar de la Renta - Ready-to-Wear - Runway Collection - Cruise 2012, firstview.com

Conclusion:

The phrase “A picture is worth a thousand words” would be appropriate to present Kaunakes in today’s fashion industry.

Everything becomes a subject for Fashion design, major changes and developments in the world affects Fashion accordingly. A simple shape of ancient era wrapped or draped reconsider again and again for inspirations through the fashion history. As long as the industry develops new inventions let to search history in more detail. Kaunakes is a great example of how far we can go back to look for inspirations when the historic sources become available. What makes the Kaunakes special is always running in the fashion cycle after the decades because of the visual aesthetics understanding under today’s technology. High end fashion designers of our generation deeply values history and ancient times for their collections to keep their fashion business as remarkable and intellectual as always. Mostly consider as an art form. What’s make them masters, a myth of fashion business. In fashion industry recently lost its “brilliant fashion creator” Alexander McQueen inspired from Kaunakes and used in his fall collections 2009, 2011 and 2012 (see figure 5,6,) And other couture fashion creators, such as John Galliano in 2008 (figure 7) and Oscar de la Renta in 2012 (figure 8&9)

Notes

1. Loschek, Ingrid (2009). *When Clothes Become Fashion, Design and Innovation Systems*. New York: Berg (Chapter 10), p.174.
2. Revel DeLong, Marilyn (1998). *The Way We Look, Dress and Aesthetics*. (2nd ed.). New York: Fairchild (Chapter 1), p.2.

*Ebih-II is seated on a wicker stool. He is bare-chested and wears a long kaunakes skirt, a garment made from sheepskin or goatskin or from a cloth simulating the fleece of an animal. The kaunakes was worn by both men and women. The way in which the woolly texture of the kaunakes worn by Ebih-II is depicted, as well as the presence of a tail at the back of the garment, confirms that it is made of animal hide, rendered here with a realism that is quite rare. The figure has a shaven head and wears a long beard, which must have been inlaid with another material. Only the eyes have retained their inlay of shell and lapis lazuli set in shale, the whole set in bitumen. (www.louvre.fr/en)

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