

# **REVIEW**

by Assoc.-Prof. Christina Savova, Ph.D., New Bulgarian University

on a Dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree **DOCTOR**

on the topic: **THE ROLE OF DESIGN AND AESTHETICS IN  
DETERMINING FASHION STYLES**

with author Ariana Djoni

The review is based on a 124-page dissertation the doctoral student submitted and a 22-page appendix with illustrative material on the topic. It is structured in an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, appendices, scientific contributions, and a bibliography covering 145 sources.

Based on excellently mastered material and a skillful research approach, the study sets itself one main goal: to synthesize the issues related to fashion styles, dictating new paths of design and aesthetics for the creation, development, and evolution of design styles in perspective. The author's research is directed in two main directions - on the analysis of the costume in different eras and the related fashion icons, who left their mark on the history of the costume on the one hand, and on the other hand, on the designer-icons and the design practice in the personal project.

The introduction summarizes the problem situation, the main research thesis, the purpose, the subject, and the object of research, as well as the specific research tasks. The

present study presents an overview of the relationship between the concepts of fashion design, aesthetics, and fashion style.

The topic is clearly stated, and with a focus on design as the main factor in determining the style, the aesthetic aspect defines fashion styles, and the aesthetics of the excellent design is a "proven strategy for success in fashion styles." From here, a leading role is given to the analytical study of clothing and styles in history, the artistic originality and technical differentiation of the styles of contemporary designers, and the aesthetic technique of making clothes - moulage. Therefore, the research is dominated by a theoretical focus on professionals and a wider audience.

The toolkit on which the research is based meets the set goals and objectives. The chosen methodology follows a structure starting with an analysis of the history of clothing and style, a study of designer styles, and a personal design project. In this regard, I highlight the analytical method conditioned by the fact that fashion is a phenomenon with a spectacular scope. Next is the retrospective approach to the history of fashion styles, without which such a study would be unsatisfactory, but also where the rationale for the study comes from.

After the "Introduction" in the dissertation appears the "Introduction," presented as "Chapter I," which is practically a continuation of the introduction and gives the impression, to say the least, of a structural disparity.

In the "Literature review/Theoretical framework of the study" chapter of the dissertation, the author analyzes "the general principles of design and aesthetics, ideology, definitions, elements placed on the horizon of literature and design history in general." The main focus is design as a discipline, general issues of fashion design, and the fashion industry as a "modern and decadent product." The dissertation then turns to "style, meaning and elements" and presents "some characteristic features of designers based on their unique creations." Attention is also given to the challenges fashion designers face to "understand the meaning of clothing for consumers, focusing on taste, physical attributes, and other essentials." The dissertation examines fashion sociologically and presents fashion styles based on social groups and subcultures - hip-hop, skater, grunge, punk, goth, punk, etc. The incorporation of clothing into the social context is illustrated in the thesis through the 'zoot' costume used by young people as an expression of social identity. Also analyzed are the fashion styles that caused profound changes in fashion innovation and consumption in the 20th century.

The next chapter, *The History of Fashion and Style*, is devoted to a retrospective analysis of the "historical sources of fashion and style" chronologically from prehistory to the present day. The dissertation aims to show that "the role of clothing in human life began in prehistoric times and has been very important to the development of clothing and style throughout the history of fashion." In short, this chapter mentions "the most notable milestones, events, and names in history and industry over the years." Some fashion icons have also been selected to highlight the "generally known styles and outfits" and describe the "characteristics of clothing and style elements" of their outfits.

The *Design Practices* chapter overviews the successful practices of two iconic designers "renowned for their original style, unique aesthetics, and contemporary design." The author dwells on Yohji Yamamoto, known for his avant-garde spirit, and Rick Owens, one of the most discussed figures of modern fashion.

This chapter also presents the personal project - a women's clothing collection, "Sustainability," made mainly of "zhgun" and "felt," woven from natural wool, using the molding technique. The aim of the dissertation with this collection and its presentation is to appreciate the aesthetic aspect of old woolen fabrics produced according to ancient craft techniques. The emphasis is on the original idea, the selection of materials, the color composition, and the general impression created in the National Museum of Kosovo. According to the author, the entire collection is sewn by hand to preserve "the originality of the used authentic textiles and ancient techniques." The purposefully chosen moulage technique enables the "zero waste" goal achieved during garment creation.

The conclusion contains a summary of the most important research results. The conclusions are tied to the problems posed in the dissertation chapters. The most crucial point is that based on the analysis of fashion processes and the specifics of individual design practices, "the most significant changes in fashion and their influence on the future development of fashion as an art and as an industry are determined." The dissertation also includes an assessment of the influence of fashion design from the perspective of "individual psychology" and from a socio-psychological perspective. The author's finding of combining the conceptual, theoretical, and practical methods in fashion design should add to this. Finally, the author's conclusions are entirely legitimate in that the role of style and aesthetics are defined as the main elements of fashion design, along with the economic and technological aspects and

the social prerequisites for their realization. The presentation of the collection of women's clothing made by the doctoral candidate also makes a practical contribution to the study.

The dissertation research results are presented in two authors' articles (in English).

The dissertation's abstract, in terms of form, volume, and content, meets the regulatory requirements.

The general merits of the presented dissertation include factual and methodological awareness and competence; the demonstrated ability to systematize and generalize; and the handling of terms and details when presenting basic situations; a decent presentation style with factual argumentation and validity of the conclusions.

In short, the dissertation has achieved a result that fills the gap of the lack of similar work on successfully developing an algorithm to implement theory and practice in the real fashion industry. For Ariana Djoni's homeland of Kosovo, the dissertation is the first comprehensive study of clothing as an element of economic and social life, as well as theoretical research and analysis of the history of costume and fashion.

As a remark, the structural disparity in terms of the arrangement of the chapters, the way of citation, and the subsequent reflection and compilation of the "Bibliography" section should be pointed out - the citation is sporadic, and in the bibliography, some titles are indicated several times (e.g., N. Akdemir, R. Barthes, pp. 112-114). The attached links to some of the titles listed refer to the database and abstract, not the text itself. More serious is the need for knowledge of Bulgarian scientific research, development, and literature, especially those related to the theoretical problems of fashion and fashion styles - one of the main problems in A. Djoni's dissertation.

The above findings do not affect my positive assessment of the dissertation work. Overall, Ariana Joni has dealt with the main requirement for a Ph.D. student - to show that he can conduct scientific research and has the relevant capacity to carry out research tasks. She presents a dissertation in which she approaches the problem from many aspects.

My impressions of the doctoral student confirm my belief that she has the potential for professional realization in fashion design. She showed diligence and systematicity in preparing

her dissertation work and initiative in seeking additional opportunities for professional improvement and increasing her competencies.

The above gives me a reason to confidently give my **POSITIVE** evaluation and recommend the honorable Scientific Jury to award Ariana Joni the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the professional field 8.2 Fine Art.

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Sofia

Assoc.-Prof. Christina Savova