

UDK BROJEVI: 7.05"19/20"
ID BROJ: 204310028

Dobriła Denegri
Centre of Contemporary Art, Torun

WONDERINGMODE

Abstract:

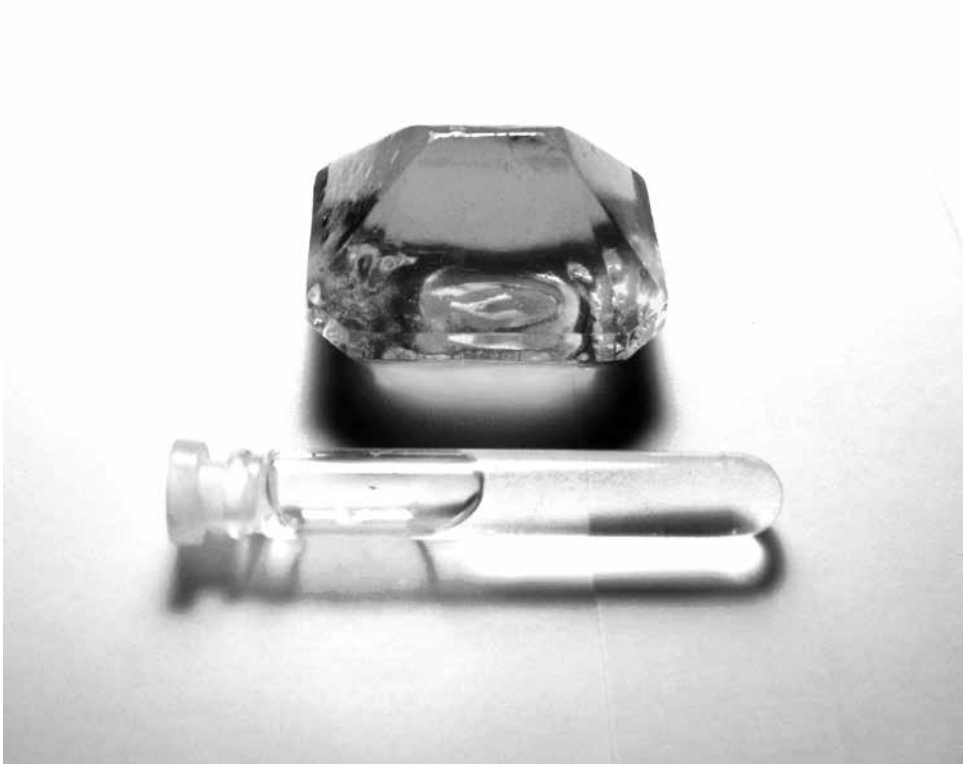
"Wonderingmode" was a title of the exhibition realized in the Center of Contemporary Art in Torun (Poland) from March till June 2013, and being it the first exhibition dedicated to contemporary experimental fashion and jewelry design organized in one Polish art institution. With this text I wished to give an insight to the motivations that led to the realization of it. Posing question how fashion should be not only exhibited, but considered within the frame of more serious theoretical discourse, this text brings together reflections about the term fashion (in French "la mode") from the time of its birth as a social phenomena in the dawn of the Modern Era, and about the potential meanings that this term might acquire today, through the prism of different creative and conceptual approaches operated by young generations of artists and fashion-designers.

Key words: fashion, modernism, Stéphane Mallarmé, transdisciplinarity



ANA RAJČEVIĆ, COLLECTION ANIMAL: THE OTHER SIDE OF EVOLUTION, 2012
(COURTESY: THE ARTIST)

Wonderingmode is a hybrid term in which is contained multitude of potential meanings of the word “wonder”/“wondering” (marvel, sensation, spectacle, curiosity, awe, fascination, surprise, amazement, search) and of the word “mode” which, in this particular context, would like to allude to fashion, style, look but also to the way, manner, approach, process or practice. That’s why *Wonderingmode* seems good term to be used in the context of the exhibition dedicated to those creative paths which tend to push fashion outside its conventional boundaries and link it with art, architecture or design. *Wonderingmode* is related to the show, but for me it’s meaning is much wider: it is a synonym for a state of mind, for a condition of a wonderer who moves freely, guided by the curiosity, by the urge to discover, by the wish to step on the road not yet taken, accepting any direction in which this road might lead. That’s why this exhibition is only one (and hopefully not final) layover on this road; it is just one phase of the wider research addressed towards that type of fashion which goes beyond clothes, beyond the imperative of wearability and in favor of the creation of objects and concepts hybrid by definition, since generated through crossbreeding and intersection of different domains of knowledge and different productive processes.



TOMOKO HAYASHI, *TEAR MIRROR - JEWEL*, 2011 (COURTESY: THE ARTIST)

In fact, when seeing Ana Rajčević's collection of masks/jewels "Animal: The Other Side of Evolution", or wearable sculptures created by Hussein Chalayan, Iris van Herpen & Daniel Widrig or Marloes ten Bhömer, we are captured by the feeling of stupor and awe, wondering if what we see is fashion? Or art? Or architecture? Or it is the meeting of these disciplines and osmosis of their visual backgrounds. Or maybe it is a challenge to review parameters of classification which appear to be too narrow for the creations which tend to blow away distinctions between organic and synthetic, between the body and what revolves and evolves around it, reshaping its "natural" features. With their geometric, archaic or science-fiction forms, garments and accessories from recent collections by Iris van Herpen, Yuima Nakazato, Emilia Tikka, Mina Lundgren, Kim Hagelind or Ana Rajčević really reshape the body, triggering the same sensation of marvel and aesthetic shock, as African masks and sculptures probably caused to Cubists, Dadaists or Surrealists a century ago. More than garments, their creations are truly masks and costumes suitable for the icons of transformism like Björk or Lady Gaga, but they are also artifacts which allow us to wonder through the labyrinth of the mind, asking us, or challenging us, to attribute them a place and a meaning. These creations implicitly pose the question about fashion and about its fleeting and changeable nature. So again the term "wonderingmode" re-emerges, but this time



KIM HAGELIND, *OSCILLONS*, 2011 (COURTESY: THE ARTIST)

with the accent on its second part: “mode”. It’s meaning in English is: the way, the manner; in French: (la) mode stands for fashion, and each of this meanings is significant for the question above posed. Moreover, both brings us back in time, to the mid ninetieth century, when fashion was born as cultural and social phenomena such we know today.

Etymologically the word “mode” (Itl. “moda”) comes from Latin “modus” (manner, way) and it is also closely associated to another word of a similar root: “modo” (now, at the moment). So even if the word “le mode” was used in France since the middle of fourteenth century, only round 1845 appears “la mode” standing for what we use it still today: for a complex mechanism of cyclical change of style, which is rapid and ephemeral, but nonetheless very capillary and far-reaching.

It is interesting to observe that parallel to the emerging of this complex social and cultural phenomena, the word itself: fashion (“le mode”) went through linguistic change, acquiring female article in front, becoming thus “la mode”. What occurs here is the shift from “the manner” which stood for something authoritative and stabile, to “the fashion” (“le mode” in French or “la moda” in Italian) which becomes a symbol of frivolousness, fleeting and caprice. That’s how the destinies of fashion and female, including all stereotypes to them associated, became interwoven so closely, remaining for the long time distant from the possibility to be considered as valuable subject-matter of any more profound philosophical



DANIEL WIDRIG, COLLECTION *KINESIS*, 2012 (COURTESY: THE ARTIST)

or sociological reflection. But fashion, born in the same time as modernity, remains a phenomena that cannot be excluded from a deeper cultural or social analysis of the modern era, as proofed by great apologists of modernism and postmodernism like Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Simmel or Benjamin, up to Dorflès, Barthes and other more contemporary scholars. All of them were aware of the psychological, social and cultural force of fashion, and for some of them even those capricious, ephemeral and frivolous aspects of fashion had its significance and charm, as testifies one of the most uncommon episodes in which literary writing and sophisticated illustrations served to the “great cause” of Fashion. It is short, but fascinating episode connected to the name of one of the greatest poets of the modernist era: Stéphane Mallarmé. In 1874 Mallarmé founded “La Dernière Mode” (“The Latest Fashion”): a truly remarkable fashion magazine, not only for high level of visual and literary contributions, but most of all, for the series of columns signed by Mme de Ponty, Miss Satin, Ix, Zizi, Madame Charles and other mysterious female names, real only as pseudonyms of the poet, who issue after issue, would undertake an imaginary journey in the domain of femininity and multitude of it’s potential manifestations. Not only that this episode shows how the writing itself can become a mask and a costume, but every Mallarmé’s description of the garment (real or imaginary) becomes an evidence of aesthetic and spiritual ideal of the time, as well as of his own. For each column Mallarmé consulted great Ladies of Parisian society, meticulous-

ly searching, collecting and reporting novelties of the season, but he would also let his imagination wonder under the veils of his alternative female egos, offering us a very special opportunity to look to the fashion beyond the superfluous and superficial, in order to grasp those signs which enable us to comprehend in more profound way reality and its aesthetic paradigms.

This story makes me think that fashion should now incorporate its "mail" part too, became again "the manner" which seeks to slip away from the consuming and self-absorbing rhythm of the fashion system and fashion industry. It can become a "manner" or a "way" towards alternative models of creating clothes, styles, trends through the subversion and disobedience to the diktats of consumerism and uniformed aesthetics. In fact, younger generations of designers interpret the fashion as "the way" to propose different temporal and aesthetic paradigms, approaching critically seasonal turn-overs and standardized beauty-models.

Swedish designer Minna Palmqvist is creating collection "Intimately Social" over several years, adding from time to time new set of models, but remaining always faithful to the same core-concept and title. "Intimately Social" thus becomes a collection that evolves independently from the imperative of the seasonal change, and even more, independently from the obsession of the "perfect" body. It's the "intimate" body; body of fluids and flash that Minna Palmqvist takes as the departing point for the creation of garments which are like manifestos against long-lasting imperative of statuesque female figure. She fuses and combines the "intimate" with the other, so called, "social" or representative body, obtaining not only the effect of original garment, but the work that contains productive and conceptual premise not so far away from those that characterize artistic work. Similarly Tomoko Hayashi uses body fluids, although not in symbolical but in a concrete way: for her human tears are material out of which to create jewelry. For the work "Tear Mirror-Jewel" she recuperated traditional Japanese technique of making candies, casting in perfect diamond-cut shapes emulsion of sugar, liquid and color, obtaining incredibly limpid and crystal-looking pearls which are displayed as jewels together with the stories of people who shared with her their emotions and tears. This candy-diamonds became a new manner for talking about preciousness, far away from any conventional materialistic connotations. It's the preciousness of emotions and human relations what this work underlines, subverting the notion of adornment commonly bound to the realm of superfluous or superficial. These are some of the examples of possible "ways" in which analytic and auto-reflexive attitude towards the notion of fashion can become inherent to the creative work of the designers. It's the way introduced initially by Hussein Chalayan, who was among the first to charge the fashion with contents that go beyond the surface, creating garments and artworks which mirror the identity and condition of contemporary nomadic subject, which is in the state of permanent shift between different cultural codes. Therefore "Wonderingmode" is like the path which allows us to wonder and even get lost in the charming world of hybrid objects and transdisciplinary creative processes, but at the same time, it wishes to indicate a way (or manner) to reflect about fashion not only as a carrier of a fleeting change, but to understand it and accept it as a system of signs that continuously seeks to redefine itself.

Dobriła Denegri
Centar za savremenu umetnost, Torun

WONDERINGMODE

Sažetak:

Wonderingmode je naslov izložbe koja je realizovana od marta do juna 2013. u Centru za savremenu umetnost u Torunu (Poljska). Budući da je to bila prva izložba posvećena savremenoj eksperimentalnoj modi i dizajnu nakita organizovana u jednoj poljskoj instituciji za savremenu umetnost, kroz ovaj tekst sam želela da ukažem na neke od motiva koji su doveli do njene realizacije. Postavljajući pitanje ne samo kako moda treba da bude izlagana, već i kako bi ona trebalo da bude razmatrana u okviru ozbiljnijeg teorijskog diskursa, ovaj tekst iznosi određene refleksije o terminu moda ("la mode" na francuskom) od perioda njenog nastanka koji koincidira sa počecima modernog doba i modernizma, kao i o potencijalnim značenjima koja bi ovaj termin mogao poprimiti danas, posmatran kroz prizmu stvaralačkih i konceptijskih pristupa novih generacija umetnika i modnih kreatora.

Ključne reči: moda, modernizam, Stefan Malarme, transdisciplinarnost

(KATEGORIJA ČLANKA: NAUČNI ČLANAK – KRITIKA)