

Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process and the Fashion Industry.* A biannual journal published by Berg.

Reviewed by Lori Hall-Araujo

Berg Publishers has recently added a new title to their selection of design and culture journals, *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process and the Fashion Industry*. This peer-reviewed journal is intended to complement Berg's more cultural studies driven journal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*. With a focus on contemporary design and manufacture within the fashion industry, *Fashion Practice* aims to address design processes and new technologies that heretofore have been "largely ignored by scholarship" (Berg 2009).

The inaugural issue of *Fashion Practice* includes contributions from scholars and designers from the United States and the United Kingdom. In addition to two interviews, the first issue of *Fashion Practice* includes four articles, a book review of *Sustainable Fashion: Why Now?* (Hethorn and Ulasewicz 2008), and one exhibition review (*Fashion V Sport* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

The interviews provide a glimpse into design and production processes as well as corresponding trends, specifically sustainability in the case of the Nike interview. These interviews should prove of interest to the design and merchandising academic community whose objective is to train future fashion business professionals.

Fashion Practice editor and professor of design at the University of Minnesota, Marilyn DeLong, conducts the interview with Nike Director of Innovation, Susan Sokolowski. The interview focuses on how Nike aims to meet consumer needs by staying attuned to technological advancements in other industries. How, asks Sokolowski, can Nike create a product as successful as Apple's iPod? For Nike's Director of Innovation, the iPod is a model to emulate because of its ability to inspire swift consumer attachment and enjoyment. Sokolowski tries to balance this kind of market-driven goal with an attentiveness to the recent rise in popularity of products that are eco-sustainable. She wisely deflects DeLong's query on this front by noting that sustainability has many meanings and that one wants to create a long-lasting product that people will actually buy.

The second interview in the journal is with fashion designer and Parsons professor, Shelley Fox, who talks about her recent appointment as professor at the New York design school. In the interview Fox discusses her research heavy art and fashion design projects as well what she sees as an emphasis on retail among fashion designers in the United States.

Two of the journal's articles focus on design and production innovations—scent based textiles in Jenny Tillotson's "Scentsory Design" and experimental fashion design that examines the interplay between designer, wearer and viewer in Jessica Bugg's "Fashion at the Interface." These articles address editor Sandy Black's concern—as laid out in the first issue's editorial—

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that scholarship address design processes and new technologies. In “Scentsory Design” we read about innovative textiles that release scents designed to induce a sense of well-being. Tillotson may be on the brink of an industry-altering breakthrough. On the other hand her research may become the stuff of trivia in response to the question which film included the carefully timed release of scents in the theater? Answer: the 1960 Smell-O-Vision film *Scent of Mystery*.

Bugg’s “Fashion at the Interface” examines the overlapping fields of fashion, art, and performance. While the article does not necessarily provide nuts and bolts practical information for people interested in design and merchandizing, it does open the door to greater consideration of the body and its habits in relation to sellable clothes.

Joseph H. Hancock, II’s “Chelsea on 5th Avenue: Hypermasculinity and Gay Clone Culture in the Retail Brand Practices of Abercrombie and Fitch” is the journal’s most serious nod to readers with a background in cultural studies. The article offers a provocative perspective on the merchandising and marketing techniques of the popular retailer Abercrombie and Fitch. While Hancock implicates the company in subtly crafting a gay narrative, he stops short of discussing the broader cultural ramifications of this practice, ending on the rather bland comment that the company “recognizes the increasing visibility of gays in popular culture” (p. 83).

As the subtitle suggests, the journal is concerned with practice in the fashion *industry* as a capitalist endeavor. Implicit in the first issue of *Fashion Practice* is the understanding that all roads of consumption and production (however “sustainable,” “smart,” or “ethical”) must lead to further consumption in the United States and the United Kingdom. Not an inaccurate characterization. It may not be the responsibility of this particular journal to call such consumption into question, but it would be an interesting exercise for an industry so clearly influenced by art to do so.

Will *Fashion Practice* be of interest to museum and material culture scholars? For *Museum Anthropology Review* readers concerned with the market-driven trends for creation (new and experimental technologies), communication (clothes that ‘read’ as eco-friendly serving as what Penelope Eckert calls “symbols of category membership” [1989]), and consumption (freedom of choice in what to buy), yes. *Fashion Practice* makes the fashion industry its focus as it addresses issues of design processes, manufacture, and consumption practices (and the related area of marketing). The journal’s first issue adeptly addresses all three of these areas. While certain methodological approaches would make an anthropologist cringe—e.g. Bugg’s lone three viewers who provide the designer with feedback on her designs—such readers are not necessarily the journal’s target audience. *Museum Anthropology Review* readers may well find *Fashion Practice* to be a fascinating cultural artifact in its own right.

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