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Redrawing the Timeline: Teaching the History of Fashion in the Networked Conditions of the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract: It is important for the history of fashion curriculum, to acknowledge the post-digital environment within which fashion and education now operate. One way to address this, is to move concepts of change in fashion beyond the singular narrative of fashion's evolution that is visualised in the fashion timeline. This paper describes an approach to developing historical consciousness in fashion students who are native to the networked conditions of the twenty-first century. These students need frameworks capable of analysing the increasingly decentralised drivers of change in fashion, as well as developments in the fashion system that do not show themselves in garment styles and silhouettes. The study describes how visual metaphors have been used in the study of the history of fashion, to encourage students to view the changing characteristics of fashion from a range of viewpoints. It is an approach designed to open alternative discourses on change, as an inherent feature of fashion. Using these alternative perspectives, it becomes possible for today's students to engage with the history of fashion in a more critical and reflexive manner, and better understand the interconnected and contingent nature of change in fashion, both, in the past and in the current context.

Keywords: history of fashion; visual metaphor; network; historical consciousness; timeline; assemblage; ripple effect

1. Introduction

The study of the history of fashion forms the core content for most fashion courses. Often included at the foundational level of undergraduate courses, it is a subject used to introduce the established practices and terminology of fashion, as well as the key personalities that have shaped the field. Further, the subject begins a discussion on how to define 'fashion', highlighting change as an inherent feature. Through an examination of fashion's history, examples of how and why fashion has changed in the past, offer students a sense of how to navigate change occurring in the present. The nature of the material included in the history of fashion, can be compelling for fashion students; it has a heady mix of nostalgia and resonates with the historicism evident in much contemporary fashion. However, popular learning resources often reduce the complexities and intricacies of change that have occurred in fashion, to a sequence of typical womenswear silhouettes, defined by decades. Although visually appealing, emphasis on the changing aesthetics of fashion does not help to foster flexibility in analysing the mechanisms of change in contemporary fashion. Today's fashion students need to be familiar with the styles of fashion that have defined previous eras, but not only as a source of design inspiration; the way these styles have been shaped helps to understand the contemporary context too. For example, alternative conceptions of fashion–time–change, can help develop the students' capability for understanding aspects of fashion, such as forecasting and trend analysis, consumer behaviour

and fashion communication, where, change in perceptions, attitudes and practices, also inform the production of fashion.

As a subject capable of engaging a high percentage of students in the discipline, fashion's history is an appropriate place within the curriculum to introduce a variety of discursive constructions on how the field of fashion transforms over time. This article outlines an approach to developing a higher level of historical consciousness in fashion students, enabling them to explore the notion of change in fashion over time, in a more useful manner. It explains how certain visual metaphors can assist in extending the students' awareness of fashion–time–change, when studying fashion's history, allowing them to adopt different viewpoints in relation to notions of fashion, conceptions of time and mechanisms of change. Many students lack analytical frameworks for understanding the multiple socio-cultural and economic interconnections that shape fashion. This paper discusses several metaphorical concepts that can help to develop ways of thinking about the connections and intersections of fashion. The structure of each metaphor described here provides a differing spatial representation of time and includes elements implicated in mechanisms of change. The metaphors begin by introducing the simple timeline, then evolving this idea to converging pathways in the assemblage—to represent a moment in time—and finally, move to the concentric rings of the ripple effect, where the centre point represents the present—offering alternative ways of looking back. As such, these visual devices help support various ways of examining the past. This paper does not propose that the visual metaphors included here are ground-breaking or operate separately to the existing theories and learning resources of the fashion's history; rather they co-exist as learning tools, to aid student understanding and extend their ability to engage with notions of fashion–time–change, whether in the past or the present. The intention of this paper is to highlight the need to not only update the content included in fashion's history as the twenty-first century plays out, but to also rethink the metaphorical ideas that usefully explain its continued, yet unpredictable evolution. The need to renew and extend ways of thinking in this area becomes increasingly compelling, in light of the transformation that fashion has undergone, since the turn of the century, shifting to a more decentralised and networked means of realisation. The additional ways of looking at fashion–time–change included here, also provide opportunities to integrate teaching methods that help to bridge potential disconnection to events in fashion's past. The adjustments in thinking are designed to make the study of the history of fashion more suited to today's learners and to connect with contemporary fashion industry practices—both, of which have been reshaped in the post-digital era. The approach detailed below proposes a way for the subject to become more student-centric, embed greater contextual knowledge and establish some flexibility in the way fashion's processes of change can be examined within the learning environment.

2. Background

In addition to an extensive arsenal of learning resources that is available to support fashion's history, there have been numerous theories put forward to explain the processes of transformation in fashion, since the end of the nineteenth century. A selection of these are commonly used as the theoretical underpinnings for the study of history of fashion in undergraduate design courses, alongside visual teaching materials, such as the timeline. Notions here are based predominantly on social theories connected to the hierarchical class structures of society, relative to the time of their formulation. The theories briefly noted below are some that are often used to begin discussions of fashion and change, but there are also others.

Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of Leisure Class* (Veblen 2009), describes how the structure of society at the time forced the elite classes to invent new styles of dress to distinguish themselves from aspiring middle classes, who in turn imitated their lead in fashion and lifestyle choices. Later George Simmel (Simmel 1957) evolved this idea into what has become known as the trickle-down theory of fashion. His view still connects the power of change to social hierarchy, but rather than purely aspirational, Simmel proposes fashion as a bridge between the personal desire to express one's uniqueness and the counter need for individuals to connect with a broader group. This notion was built on by Blumer

(1969) who undertook research in the French fashion industry during 1960s to examine the process of collective taste formation. Blumer's version of trickle-down attributes the drivers of change in fashion, not with society's most wealthy, but with the social interaction of fashion industry's elite. By the 1970s, Polhemus and Procter (1978) (amongst others) suggested that the trickle-down theory of fashion had evolved a counter system, a bubble-up theory. The bubble-up theory proposes that fashion innovations and movements are also generated by subcultures and countercultures, with new ideas bubbling up from outside institutional fashion systems to become a mainstream fashion trend.

These explanations of change in fashion over time highlight some important aspects that continue to contribute to fashion's transformation, namely impulses to differentiate, imitate and emulate through fashion. However, these theories were formulated in social conditions of the past when fashion functioned differently. Without a means of making these theories more accessible and applicable for a contemporary context, the concepts alone can create a sense of disconnection with the experiences of fashion students in twenty-first century. However, the addition of relevant visualisations that break open the phenomena has significant benefits in conveying core concepts and critical ideas (Mayer 2009).

3. Visual Metaphors: What Shape Is Fashion and Its History?

Fashion, as a conspicuous activity, readily takes advantage of effective visualisations; its imagery and visual representations capture the attention and improve the learning experience for students engaged in the field. A metaphor is a device whereby one concept is understood in terms of another, new knowledge is assimilated by making associations with existing knowledge. In education, the use of a metaphor draws upon students' existing knowledge or experience to explain alternative or more complex notions. In this study, visual devices are used as metaphors to help students extend their understanding of the relational positions from which to view fashion–time–change. Employing a familiar or accessible graphic structure helps to organise ideas in a meaningful way and allow associated characteristics to convey additional meaning about that idea. This occurs most effectively when the metaphor allows attributes of the source concept to be clearly mapped or connected to attributes of the target concept. 'Metaphors transform prior knowledge into systems of ideas that are richer and more robust' (Gentner and Wolff 2000). In this study, the selection of visual metaphors integrated into the teaching of fashion's history intentionally begins with the simplest and most accessible visual device (the timeline), before the mapping of this concept of fashion–time–change to other metaphors that reveal more complex relational positions.

Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) describe well-chosen visual metaphors as effective and transformative in focusing attention, memory and attitude change; they act as portals into new or alternative ways of seeing and thinking. Koon (2011) describes the successful application of visual metaphors when exploring the history of art education with Art History students, noting that they act to stimulate the cognitive processes that enhance learning, whilst simultaneously assisting with abstract thinking and imaginative ways of visualising. In pedagogical discussions, a tree (with a branching structure), a map (as a way of documenting a journey across terrain) and a container (as a point of accumulation), have all been proposed as useful visualisations that bring meaningful associations to the study of history (Koon 2011; Williams and Rieger 2015).

In the Western society, culturally established ways of conceptualising the passage of time have adopted a predominately linear depiction. This has come to signify a sense of progress, with forward momentum towards a better future. Other cultures (including Hindu and Buddhist belief systems) adopt a circular concept of time, where patterns and events reoccur and rebirth is the goal. More recently, the network has been used to describe not only the transformation of communication systems and practices, but also as a fundamental organisational form in today's society (Castells 1996).

The network should not go unmentioned in this discussion about the search for relevant visual metaphors in fashion, and the teaching of the history of fashion. Although not utilised here as a representation of time, the network is an appropriate visual structure to reflect the contemporary globalised fashion industry and its transformed processes of production, mediation and consumption.

Mobile, digitally interconnected communication systems now define how fashion is mediated and consumed. This has allowed new modes of influence (big data, algorithms) and fashion influencers (bloggers, vloggers and Instagram influencers), to inform the processes of change, as well as facilitate a greater participation from fashion consumers and enthusiasts. In addition, the networked conditions prevalent today also have implications for the way students learn. There is a noted difference between approaches to learning, socialising and accessing information in the digital context, in contrast to more formalised knowledge-acquisition style interactions that occur in an educational setting. Today's fashion students use technology to connect with multiple socially orientated worlds, creating and sharing knowledge through their participation. [McLoughlin and Lee \(2008\)](#) argue that these conditions have created a new learning paradigm, where learning processes are socially situated and where ideas and knowledge are generated through collective efforts. The network is highlighted here, not as a visual metaphor for fashion–time–change, but because of its connection with contemporary learning situations and the current organisational structure of the fashion system—two factors driving the need to revise the visual metaphors utilised in teaching fashion's history today.

This paper describes how selected visual metaphors can be used to initiate different, yet inter-related discourses around the history of fashion. It is important to recognise the issues (as well as the benefits) of visual representation here; no, one, over-arching metaphor exists yet, to effectively capture such a complex and evolving notion, nor does a single viewpoint prove effective for all students. As such, the study proposes the use of multiple visual structures, each can be helpful metaphorical concepts in isolation, yet together, can build a more sophisticated analytical framework that offers three ways of seeing and thinking about fashion–time–change. The timeline, the assemblage and the ripple effect each apply a different lens to this concept; each opens a window on different types of connections that influence and shape fashion's evolution. The multi-dimensional approach benefits learners by offering various access points into the subject and ideas of change, with visual metaphors functioning effectively, in both physical or digital learning environments.

4. The Timeline

This paper does not seek to disregard the usefulness of a timeline in the students' learning process, rather it seeks to re-map it as an effective stepping stone on which to build a series of more sophisticated analytical positions. The linear narrative of fashion's evolution, captured in the timeline structure (see example in [Figure 1](#)), communicates a simple and relevant story. In this study, the timeline is introduced as a learning resource in the first session, it is used as a way to begin discussions of fashion's evolution and the importance of time, in the production of fashion. The spatial representation of time, here, as one continuous chronological line is straightforward and recognizable. The characteristics of change in fashion conveyed in this visual metaphor are focused on silhouette and design detail. It gives structure to the changing shape of women's fashion over the last hundred and fifty years, broken down into ten-year intervals. This approach, described as 'decade-ism', creates an accessible discourse of gradual evolution and continuity in fashion's history ([Lord and Dexter-Lord 2010](#)). For students new to the subject, it provides a quick reference that helps them keep track of fashion's shape-shifting aesthetics; as a teaching resource, however, its singular structure is more appropriate for linear communication channels that define much of the twentieth century. Through the simplicity and accessibility of this device, it has come to dominate the history of fashion and forms an unconscious substructure in the culture of fashion.



Figure 1. Fashion Timeline (Fashion Silhouettes from 1800–1990). Rachel Matthews 2018. Teaching resource used as a way for fashion students identify evolving womenswear silhouettes.

Problems arise with this over-simplification as changes to the field of fashion become less evident in silhouettes and design details and the drivers of transformation become more diffused and decentralised (as has been evident since the turn of twenty-first century). In the timeline, significant developments in production, consumption and mediation of fashion remain secondary to the visual appeal of the silhouettes, whilst the definition of fashion continues to be seen through a distinctly Euro-centric and designer-led prism represented in the silhouettes. It provides an easily understood visual structure to introduce students to the notion of fashion–time–change, however, fashion, here, is isolated; there is little reference in this visual structure that highlights why fashion changes, it focuses attention on how the aesthetic details have evolved.

Crucially, the timeline structured as a singular chronology of fashion, does not mark variations, discontinuities or ruptures to the steady flow of change in fashion. Relying on this as the only visual representation of how fashion transforms over time, the process of change becomes a re-occurring pattern that is taken for granted. Unchallenged, students could mistakenly assume that fashion silhouettes will continue to renew themselves in this orderly manner, without questioning why. This presents an opportunity to open a more critical debate on what causes change in fashion, and develop students' historical consciousness by introducing a second visual metaphor—the assemblage.

5. The Assemblage

Once students have understood the visual structure of the timeline, this knowledge can be used to help conceptualise another metaphorical concept related to fashion–time–change. In this study, the second visual metaphor integrated into the teaching of fashion's history is the assemblage, represented as a convergence of multiple timelines, at a specific point in time (see Figure 2). This metaphorical concept enables students' thinking about fashion–time–change to focus on the converging factors that create significant moments of change. It assists students to adjust their view of fashion–time–change, moving from one chronological pathway (in the timeline), to see the fashion timeline as one of the multiple pathways evolving simultaneously in social, cultural, technological, political and economic fields. At certain points in time, these lines intersect, resulting in significant moments of change. Employing the assemblage as a visual metaphor offers an alternative means of understanding and investigating this type of interaction that stimulates the process of transformation in fashion. The assemblage is a concept used in a wide variety of academic fields, with a popular/general definition as 'a group of objects of different or similar types found in close association with one another.' [Latour \(2005\)](#) theorised the idea in his Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which focuses on associations and relations of human and non-human 'actants' to propose a new understanding of the 'social', as observed in collectives, networks or assemblages.

The assemblage becomes a meaningful concept when discussing the process of transformation in fashion, as it provides a way to situate fashion in a broad socio-cultural network of elements, influencing each other and affecting change. It requires students to see the changes presented on the timeline, not as a re-occurring pattern in fashion, but rather each as events or ruptures, resulting in a new trajectory in fashion's evolution. Ruptures and discontinuities influenced by developments across social and cultural fields, as well as global politics, economics and technology, all happen concurrently. Therefore, the assemblage becomes a way to unpack and analyse significant moments in time, that are contingent on the convergence of multiple inter-connected developments in associated fields. It is effectively integrated in teaching fashion's history to examine the impact of the industrial revolution, the Great Depression or World War II, as key moments of fashion–time–change, for example. Further, it is a concept that has proved meaningful in discussions of numerous contributing factors driving fashion's digital transformation in recent times. Each of these significant events feature simply as a fashion silhouette on the timeline, whereas the assemblage is a more complex spatial representation that opens out the fashion narrative. It adjusts the view of change understood as regular, successive movements on the fashion timeline, to a conception of change as something less predictable and reliant

on timing and convergence. The visual structure of the assemblage is not so much a re-drawing of the fashion timeline, rather an over-laying or mapping of other timelines onto its structure. This is a more complex concept than the linear narrative/singular trajectory and a visual device is useful when introducing this idea. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the learning tools used in this study for explaining the central idea—a moment when multiple timelines or trajectories mapped in different (yet interrelated) fields intersect; their combined impact has the power to change the existing trajectory of fashion.



Figure 2. Fashion Timeline meets Assemblage. Rachel Matthews 2018. Example of a visual teaching resource used to introduce students to the notion of change, illustrated on the fashion timeline as a convergence of multiple timelines. The assemblage occurring at the time when these multiple trajectories intersect.

Beyond its usefulness for conceptualising important moments in the history of fashion, the notion of an assemblage can be used as a working method, as well as a visual metaphor in the study of fashion's history. The spatial representation of an assemblage is comprised of multiple components, it has been visually interpreted in this study as a form of mood board, a mosaic or a patchwork. In developing students' understanding of the interconnections that have shaped fashion's history, the assemblage has been used as a basis for student research activities that require them to collaborate. Students are encouraged to work together to research and identify various contributing factors that converge to trigger the process of transformation, at key points in history of fashion. The construction of an assemblage that captures these multiple influences, requires cooperation to negotiate, interact and participate in the visualisation of specific convergences or assemblages. The necessary research requires historical investigation into social, cultural, political and technological trajectories. This builds on the students' existing understanding of the timeline by tracking numerous timelines and marking their intersections; it is an approach that helps to diversify the type of 'mono-knowledge' (Caitlin Moran quoted in (Stephens 2018)) that often emerges in project work because of a ubiquitous Google search around fashion's history. The visual structure of the assemblage guides exercises in learner-driven collaborative knowledge-building, as well as functioning as a way to understand fashion–time–change.

The assemblage provides a vehicle to develop a more sophisticated understanding of 'why' and 'how' fashion has changed over time. However, the assemblage does not make an ideal visual metaphor. It is difficult to generalise about the shape of an assemblage. There are issues with finding ways to depict its extended formation. The contingent nature of each assemblage makes its edges indefinite, and therefore, difficult to determine where it ends. Any attempt to represent moments

of change via the assemblage, will always be partial. Despite its limitations, the assemblage opens another discursive construction of fashion's process of change, over time, and draws attention to the possibility of multiple and differing perspectives on historical events. Although implicit in any historical study, what the assemblage does not clearly identify is how our view of fashion's history shifts, as time passes. Our understanding of history and historical events are shaped and influenced by our own position in the present; our perceptions of time are informed by our lived experience. In seeking to find an approach to studying the history of fashion that allows fashion students to draw on their own experiences to advance their understanding, a third visual metaphor has been used to analyse fashion–time–change, the ripple effect.



Figure 3. The Assemblage Infrastructure. Rachel Matthews 2018. Example of a teaching resource used to initiate the production of a fashion's history assemblage as a group learning activity.

6. The Ripple Effect

"Historical time . . . (is not) something that flows smoothly from past to present but is a more complex relay of turns and returns, in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it."

—Evans (2000)

The ripple effect is used here as a visual metaphor capable of offering another spatial representation of time; it is intended to encapsulate the way in which a discourse of fashion's history can be reconfigured, it spreads and bends as a result of passing through our personal lens. The structure of ripples, expanding across water from a central point, creates an impact, outwardly or incrementally. This metaphor has been used in sociology to reflect how an interaction can affect situations not directly related to that moment (Weber 2014). Standing in the present, looking back at the past, it is possible to see how certain views of fashion's history, which have become fixed in a singular chronology, can now be questioned and challenged. It offers an alternative starting point for analysing changes in fashion, using our own position in the here-and-now. This shifts the axiom from notions of objective fashion's history, to subjective. It provides a framework for seeing ourselves as part of the continuum in fashion's history and acknowledges our own self-fashioning as a part of this story. Using this visualisation of fashion–time–change, the students' own dress practices become part of a dialogue

between past and present, functioning to make the study of the history of fashion, more personal, material and experiential.

The metaphor of ripple effect provides a visual device to introduce the notion of a dialogue between the past and the present; a conversation that revisits and proposes alternative views on what has happened in earlier times. The ripple effect is useful as a metaphor because it represents a situation where one event causes a series of other things to shift, where small changes can have a significant effect. The visualisation (see Figure 4) places a notional 'present' at the centre of concentric circles, the circles represent ripples or diffraction; the diffractive pattern or 'ripple effects' signify disruption. This type of disruption interferes with fixed timelines or perspectives on the past (represented by dashed arrows in Figure 4), making the viewpoint less predictable, stable or organised.

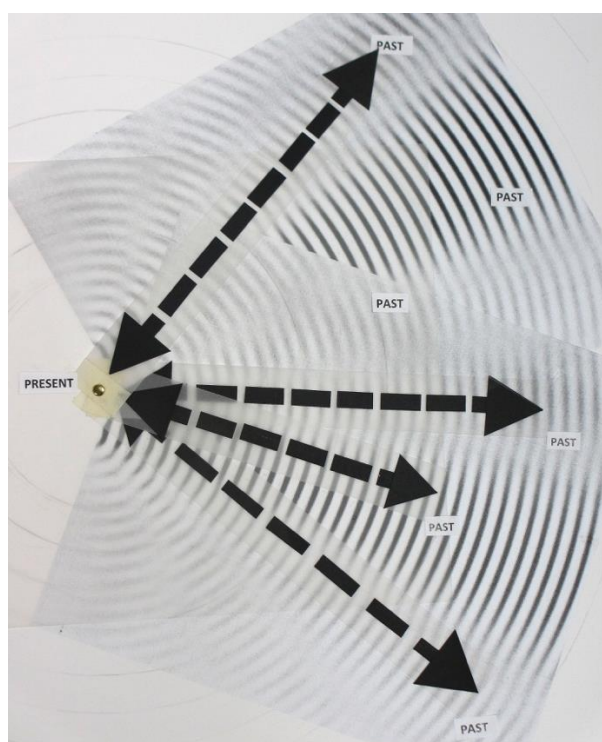


Figure 4. The Ripple Effect. Rachel Matthews 2018. Example of a visual teaching resource used to depict how our understanding of history can be changed, interrupted and adjusted by the present. The dotted lines, ripples and double-headed arrows convey the notion of a dialogue between the past and the present, that is rarely direct or continuous.

Conceptually, this fluid, subjective notion of history can be challenging for some students; however, making personal opinions, reflections and individual stories central to the discussion on this view of fashion (and change), helps illuminate the idea. This alternative framework for exploring the processes of change in fashion, over a period of time, is particularly significant in the contemporary context. Introducing this third metaphor is designed to allow a more student-centred starting point, using their own recollections to understand the processes of transformation. This ensures that students' participation and viewpoints play a more meaningful role in the discourses of fashion's history, and encourages a sense of reflexivity in learners. It is the manifestation of a subjective position to the history of fashion. Contemporary positions offer opportunities for new perspectives on how we view the past, allowing us to re-assess the way moments from history are retold. Using the ripple effect metaphor to explain this concept to students, there are no solid lines, rather dotted lines. This signifies a lack of straight, continuous lines connecting the past with our present—literally and metaphorically redrawing the timeline. Our view of the past is disrupted, fractured and interrupted; ripples in our sightlines on the past are caused by new knowledge and current thinking, as well as our own

experiences of fashion. Recognising this effect on our understanding, invites us to revisit historical accounts, as Evans (2000) observes, making it possible to ‘activate the past by injecting the present into it.’

Significantly, fashion students as active members of the fashion-consuming public, have never been more directly connected to the processes of change in fashion, than at this time. Some discussions on the history of fashion, tend to portray the fashion consumer as passive or secondary in the processes of change, happy to buy into new ideas emerging from designer innovations or endorsements of institutional channels. Changes to communication technologies at the turn of the twenty-first century (enabled by Web 2.0 and social media applications), have allowed consumers a voice, and they have used this to engage with the fashion industry. As a result, fashion companies and institutions have become much more consumer-facing, actively seeking feedback and commentary, in order to accommodate their demands and desires. The fashion-consuming public (and today’s fashion students) are part of this de-centralisation of power in fashion; they form part of the network of influences that precipitate change. The ripple effect metaphor can be used to prompt students to reflect upon their position within this system and their agency in mechanisms of fashion–time–change.

The ripple effect metaphor opens discussions on a world of multiple perspectives, capable of taking notions of fashion that appear steady and fixed in the past, and allowing them to transform. It is a concept that uses the space between our current understanding and past events, to open more critical discussions on fashion and change. For example, the systematic seasonal wardrobe changes (Spring–Summer and Autumn–Winter) that continue to underpin fashion industry operations, were designed to regulate the introduction of new fashions in the nineteenth century. This appears a rational solution to coordinate the production and distribution of fashion; however, from today’s viewpoint, it is a move that has provoked discussions of over-production and over-consumption in contemporary fashion, amongst fashion students. Arguably, the notion of a new wardrobe every season appears to have generated more problems than it solved, when re-examined from the position we occupy today.

Integrating the ripple effect as a visual metaphor as a way of studying fashion’s history requires students to draw on their own experiences to examine transformation in fashion. Its focus on personal perspectives, actively encourages students to question events and practices that have been normalised over time and perpetuated through a singular view of fashion’s evolution. Introducing this conception of fashion–time–change to students has proved to be most effective when used as a way to review and draw conclusions on the subject. It opens a discourse on how the past connects with the present—a discourse shaped by their involvement with fashion. Further, it is a discourse that proposes fashion’s history is not finished, it is still in the making.

7. Fashion–Time–Change

There is nothing new about the use of visual metaphors in teaching, or utilising them to conceptualise the ideas of history and time. However, the combined use of visual metaphors, described here, is designed to promote a multivalent understanding of how fashion–time–change interact. These ideas help to make studying the history of fashion a subject, more than a retrospective and nostalgic part of the fashion curriculum, it can be used as a way to also refocus on the present.

The visual devices used to extend the students’ understanding, begin with the simplest representation of time and change in the form of the fashion timeline. This forms a useful concept to begin discussions on ways to visualise fashion–time–change. Once this conceptualisation has been absorbed by students, it is readily enhanced and connected to the notion of the assemblage as a visualisation of converging timelines evolving from associated fields. The timeline makes an accessible starting point, while the assemblage offers a meaningful adjustment in thinking when examining complex historical events that generate changes in fashion—events that require the consideration of changes felt beyond just the adjusted silhouettes. The third visual metaphor of the ripple effect extends the notion of the timeline as a way of visualising fashion–time–change. In the first instance, the timeline

functions as an uninterrupted linear construction of time; the ripple effect proposes that the timeline structure can be less rigid and open to alternative interpretations. In this metaphor, the timeline is better understood as a personal sightline on past events. Sightlines generated using this perspective on fashion–time–change are fractured, evolving and informed by our on-going engagement with fashion and its social purposes. We, as individuals, re-draw and re-shape these lines in the visual structure, depending on the vista from our current position. The benefits and utility of this visual metaphor are most keenly felt when students have spent some time studying the history of fashion, when students are capable of reflecting upon what they have learned and its relevance to their aspirations.

Together, these metaphors help to form a framework that fosters intellectual flexibility in fashion students; a framework capable of developing cognitive skills and agility, when examining change as an enduring characteristic of fashion. In other words, it is a teaching and learning strategy that allows students to recognise and apply various relationships to the past, as well as relating these events to their practical understanding of the present. It values individual self-fashioning impulses, encouraging students' reflexive capabilities by seeing their own fashion practices in relation to fashion's evolving history. An integration of these three metaphors seeks to strengthen meta-cognition in learners, by considering not only what students think, but how they think, whilst developing a range of inter-related discursive practices. From this perspective, the fashion's history unit moves on from its concerns about memorising silhouettes, names and dates, to a subject capable of engaging students in a discourse of criticality that relates both to the history of fashion, as well as evolving contemporary fashion practices. With this addition to the curriculum, the study of the history of fashion enriches the subject's value to students and enhances its contribution to a broader contemporary fashion curriculum.

New approaches to investigating fashion–time–change, update teaching methods and help to make the study of the history of fashion relevant for fashion students in the twenty-first century. These types of revised and updated metaphors for fashion–time–change, are also necessary to provide relevant visualisations of the complex structure of a global fashion industry, in the post-digital era. In a connected age when everything is enmeshed in the constantly changing web, it is difficult to pin down just one metaphor or visual device that fulfils this need and a linear narrative of fashion's development into the twenty-first century, certainly, will not capture this reconfiguration. Fashion has evolved from its mass/institutionally managed model to systems and operations that are increasingly decentralised, and allow for plural notions of fashion. Visual metaphors that help to conceptualise these types of adjustments to the fashion system from a variety of angles, can enable the continued tracking of fashion's evolution across the fashion curriculum. The three graphic devices used in this study to represent fashion–time–change, begin to address this challenge; however, the divergent nature of the field requires a continued exploration of meaningful concepts that make sense of how the field transforms. Further (and on-going) research is needed to find fitting visual metaphors capable of keeping pace with the evolution of contemporary fashion.

8. Conclusions

Proposed as a re-drawing of the fashion timeline, this paper describes the integration of learning resources that help students develop an enhanced historical consciousness and encourage them to think more critically and reflexively about the history of fashion. This adjustment to a conventional history of fashion curriculum has synthesised the simplicity of the timeline structure with more sophisticated metaphors relating to fashion, time and change; these help to develop analytical positions from which students can see themselves as part of the fashion's history continuum. Opening an active and critical dialogue with the past, through the study of fashion–time–change, offers ways for students to begin to identify new and emerging mechanisms of change on fashion's future timeline.

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