



## Fashion Tales 2012

7-9 June - Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano

Since its beginnings in the middle of the XIX century, fashion has been narrated through multiple media, both visual as well as verbal, and for different purposes such as marketing and advertising, art, costume history, social research and cultural dissemination. At the same time, fashion has worked as an important piece of material culture in the modern industrial urban societies: artifacts that embody workmanship, tastes, lifestyles etc. Fashion, namely, has always been both material and intangible, a system of material production and a system of signs. It has always involved differently skilled people whose purposes have often been divergent and barely overlapping. And the same has happened also with fashion events, tales and writings, i. e. the narrative representations of fashion. Media professionals, communication and marketing consultants, academic scholars and curators develop discourses, use similar languages, try to sometimes work together, comparing and sharing jargons and methodologies, in order to create their products: art exhibitions, catwalks, photo books, movies, magazines, ads, blogs, scientific essays and interviews etc. These tales are a part of fashion imaginary, as well as of collections.

The field of Fashion Studies has become wider and structured at least during the past fifteen years. However, we still need to consolidate an interdisciplinary and international reflection on themes, methodologies and goals of all different forms of narration that constitute today the *corpus* of fashion discourses and imagery (academic, cultural, medial and industrial) that is the way through which the materiality of fashion is represented. Even if fashion discourses (verbal as well as visual) are often

built mixing different narratives, it is tentatively possible to identify three types of discourses that correspond (from an analytical point of view) to three different types of reflexivity. 1. The first type of discourse is produced by people who "make" fashion, working in the design and productive pipeline. They tell stories about fabrics and material components, time and budget ties, translating drawings into patterns, selling collections through traders and buyers etc. Their discourses are focused on managerial and organizational processes as well as on technicalities that constitute the structure of the fashion system 2. The second type concerns stories about fashion and its celebrities in media and events like fashion shows. They are told by people working as intermediaries between the first category of people, those who make fashion, and the general audience attracted by fashion but external to its productive and creative environment. Through those stories, fashion becomes a lifeworld, where things, meanings, people are codified in a language shared by a large and differentiated audience. 3. The third type of story is told by scholars who study fashion as cultural, social, economic and artistic phenomenon and try to understand the role of fashion in the contemporary world. For them, fashion is both a material and an intangible object about which they build discourses that have theoretical implications. In a way, one could put in a hierarchy these three categories from the lowest to the highest level of reflexivity and abstraction. However we believe that whatever type of discourse people use in their jobs, it contains also tales and reflexivity pertaining to other types.

Modacult is an academic research centre that has tried since its inception to propitiate dialogue and to compare the languages and expertise of the different fashion professionals, both by organizing interdisciplinary conferences and promoting ethnographic research. Today we invite scholars, curators, media and consultancy professionals, as well as fashion designers and business people, to share meanings, images and methodologies used in the production of fashion tales.

The conference will aim to:

1. Elucidate how the materiality of fashion is translated into its different representations both at the discursive and visual level.
2. Compare and connect methodologies used in the wide field of Fashion Studies and in professional fashion discourses.
3. Reflect on the difficulties coming out of a multidisciplinary field of research and consultancy.
4. Create a public and critical forum where independent discourses on fashion, free from business pressure, could develop thanks to the contribution of all professionals working in the fashion world.

Papers are expected for example in the following sub fields:

1. **Visual methodologies for fashion studies:** how to use images and video in fashion research and communication.
2. **Fashion languages and linguistic codes:** how to develop a new language for writing and talking fashion.
3. **Fashion houses:** how to study and narrate the living culture of the fashion houses, which is an important part of the cultural capital so secretly treasured and guarded by companies.
4. **From market research to culture listening:** how to go beyond the rough polls and develop an ethnographic understanding of consumers' practices.

5. **Fashion blogging and social network:** How to promote new fashion communication patterns (top down, bottom up, peer to peer) through web 2.0 and 3.0. How to contribute through them to the construction of new fashion discourses.
6. **Living fashion vs museum pieces:** How to exhibit fashion in museums and in private and public collections without wasting its essential dynamism.
7. **Ethical and critical fashion:** sustainability has become the password of the up-to-date discourse about fashion. How to reconcile advertising and information, engagement and glamour in the relationship between the companies and the consumers.

The official language of the conference will be English.

The conference will be organized with plenary sessions every day and many parallel sessions. The Scientific Committee encourage and welcome session proposals.

All those wishing to present a paper at the conference must submit electronically, using the web-based submission form, an **abstract of maximum 350 words** and a **120 words profile of each author** (included affiliation and 2 main publications) in English within **30th November 2011**.

Files should include the following information and in this order:

- a) author(s)
- b) affiliation
- c) email address
- d) title of abstract
- e) body of abstract

Please use plain text (Times Roman 12) and abstain from using footnotes and any special formatting, characters or emphasis (such as bold, italics or underline).

For more info check the website of Fashion Tales 2012 at [www.unicatt.it/fashiontales2012](http://www.unicatt.it/fashiontales2012)