

RESEARCH THEME

Title of the doctoral research Hand and Machine: Crafting The Futures of Fashion Design

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Abstract

The shift from a handcraftsmanship based methodology to new models of productive processes was marked by the first industrial revolution: the handcraft knowhow had been gradually flanked and, for some sectors, entirely replaced by the use of machine tools, with significant benefits in terms of quantity, speed and efficiency.

It is during the industrial revolution, the transition from the artisanal manufacture to the mass production, that for the first time the contrast between manus and machina comes to light, two opposing elements which have characterised every productive and artistic sphere for the centuries ahead.

Also the fashion industry, thus, has been affected by the dichotomy generated from the manufacturing revolution.

Hand manufacturing and mechanized production, respectively hand and machine, has marked and settled over time two opposite ways of creating and therefore conceiving fashion: from one side the manufactured product, one of a kind, often custom-made, aimed at an elite; on the other side the piece industrially produced, standardised, affordable and addressed to the mass market.

The current revolution has marked the transition from an analogic era to a digital one and it has globally fluidified the system: in the age of digital technology, the distinction among the different spheres is increasingly less defined, the productive paradigms tend to blend and to contaminate each other, reducing progressively the antithetical distance between hand and machine.

Even though the dichotomy is still representing a significant characterising element for the fashion field, the boundaries between the two different production processes are becoming more and more blurred, and the cases of a hybrid approach are more frequent. The changing nature of the relationship between manual labour and mechanical work not only represents a challenge to established assumptions, but also constitutes an important stimulus in fostering technological innovation in the sector, making it possible to achieve results that would never been carried out without this synthesis and encouraging the spread of a new aesthetics.

The aim of the research is to examine the relationship between fashion and production processes, fostering the investigation on the cultural and symbolic meaning of the binomial hand-machine. The purpose is to explore the increasingly slippery borders

between handcraft and new productive technologies and to identify new scenarios through cases of best practice. The discussion is not only oriented to the outcome of the different crafting procedures, but it intends to propose a reflection on the production and distribution processes themselves, their implications with the social context, in terms of sustainability and impact on the research and on the didactics.

Keywords

Fashion Design, Craftmanship, Innovation, Metiers D'art