Re-presentation Policies of the Fashion Industry

**Communication Approaches to Commercial Mediation Set**

coordinated by
Caroline Marti

Volume 2

# Re-presentation Policies of the Fashion Industry

*Discourse, Apparatus and Power*

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# Introduction

On October 9, 2005, the luxury ready-to-wear and leather goods brand Louis Vuitton celebrated the opening of its new flagship store[1]. For this occasion, contemporary artist Vanessa Beecroft designed an installation where lightly dressed young women *posed* on the boutique's shelves and coexisted with the merchandise displayed in the same space. A few press articles consulted at the time cited the artist's desire to sublimate "the violence of the brands that women usually suffer"[2]:

> [a] mercantilist ambiguity: [...] under the impassive eye of the boss, Bernard Arnault, twenty frozen models dressed in thongs, their legs surrounded by a thin strip of leather, placed between two briefcases, their heads on a purse, composing a strange and disturbing living picture. A majority of them had brown skin, the others pale. The exact reproduction of the brand's color code.[3] (Author's translation)

The *mise en abyme* of the *commercial spectacle* proposed by this installation posed at the same time, in my opinion, the question of the

1 The flagship store is the largest and most prestigious of all the shops of the same commercial name.

2 Article published on January 16, 2006 in the "Blogs" page of the electronic edition of *Le Monde*, written by Lunettes Rouges: http://lunettesrouges.blog.lemonde.fr/2006/01/16/2006_01_bernard_arn_van/.

3 Article published on October 11, 2005 in *Libération*, headlined: "LVMH met l'art en tête de gondole".

symbolic occupation of a non-commercial space,[4] in this case artistic, by an exclusively commercial authority. Accused of violence – admittedly symbolic – fashion, its brands, its advertisers proceeded to recuperate, even *divert* (Debord and Wolman 1956, reprinted in Debord 2006, pp. 221–229), the said accusation by transforming it into a spectacle within their commercial space.

A few years later, in 2010, another merchandising scheme proposed by the fashion industry caught my attention. The Website of the ready-to-wear brand Zara published the making of its advertising campaign, while the same year[5], the title *Vogue Paris* offered its subscribers DVDs qualified as bonus gifts presenting *behind-the-scenes* photo shoots organized by the magazine as part of its fashion and beauty editorials. I noted tension between the promise of the "communication contract" (Charaudeau 1983) that the "making of" format is supposed to carry and what the audiovisual content produced by Zara and *Vogue Paris* staged. From the object likely to show the conditions of conception, enunciation and production of a film, the "making of" of its two fashion actors – the advertiser and media authority – was transformed into a new advertising discourse. Proposed as an object that made the invisible visible, the "making of" and its derivatives, such as backstage, or behind the scenes only intensified the spectacle deployed by this industry (Mouratidou 2010, pp. 105–124).

Four years later, the French haute couture and luxury ready-to-wear brand Chanel unveiled its spring-summer 2015 collection at the Grand Palais, in the form of a street event[6]. The staging of this communication event was presented as "we can match the machos"[7] and suggested "the wind of freedom" that blew in May 1968 in France was here again[8]. Between 2006 and 2011, another brand in the luxury industry, Yves Saint Laurent,[9] offered

4 Not in the physical sense of the term but in the pragmatic sense, including a whole area of skills and specific actions. The art space is neither a museum nor an art center, but the virtual deployment of works and values related to the field of art.

5 The video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INQLTKtEAx4.

6 An excerpt of the parade is available at: http://www.dailymotion.com/ video/x26yehx.

7 These words were given to Karl Lagerfeld, artistic director of Chanel, and relayed by *Le Figaro*, on October 1, 2014, in an article entitled "Fan des 'seventies'".

8 "Lagerfeld et Chanel dans la rue", *Le Bien public*, article published on October 1, 2014.

9 Yves Saint Laurent for any element resulting from the brand's communication strategies and marketing policies until the end of 2011 and Saint Laurent Paris from 2012, when the brand's artistic director for this period, Hedi Slimane, changed the name of the brand.

its advertising campaign in the form of a leaflet distributed in the streets of major cities, including Paris. As for the examples previously cited, the strategy mentioned here was a *generic hybridization* and a confused staging where the limits between the communication and marketing policy and the artistic (Louis Vuitton and Vanessa Beecroft), film-based (making of, backstage) or, in the case of the last two examples, political claim and citizen movement seemed opaque. I noticed then that the fashion industry's commercial strategies were supported and sometimes even appropriated forms resulting from citizen mobilizations or leaflet discourses (Angenot 1995) which, originally, were not developed to accompany and optimize commercial strategies and mediations.

In 1999, the Dior brand launched one of its most emblematic products. It was the perfume *J'adore*, a product with an undeniable commercial success[10] and whose name contributes to the brand's communication and symbolic positioning. While the advertising campaign designed for this product has always introduced Christian intertexts[11], the product name, having gradually become a brand signature, further deployed a *sacred* dimension that would be unique to Dior: "J'adore Dior" had become a recurring statement in many of the brand's communication strategies and, as a result, the statement implied the *worship* dimension that Dior was acquiring. As for the *formula* (Krieg-Planque 2009) "J'adore Dior", in 2016 it underwent a syntactic transformation and gave rise to a portmanteau word that can be described as a neologism: *j'adior*, a contraction of *J'adore* and *Dior*. Since that year, this example of linguistic creativity, as well as communication and marketing creativity, has been applied to the brand's products: shoes, T-shirts and caps. The sacralization of the fashion brand was once again presented as a long-term strategy to shift the commercial dimension of the company in question.

Finally, the Italian brand Miu Miu, a member of the Prada group, which also specializes in luxury ready-to-wear fashion, designed advertising campaigns in 2015 that took the form of *documentary photography*: the photographs pretended to escape a consciously organized staging while

10 According to the online edition of the weekly business magazine *Challenges*, in 2014, Dior sold approximately 826,000 bottles of *J'adore* "with a turnover of 55 million euros, up 3% over last year": https://www.challenges.fr/ entreprise/classification-j-adore-de-dior-reste-numero-1-des-ventes-de-parfums-en-france_162670.

11 Which I present in Chapter 3 of this book.

seeking to enhance a ready-to-wear collection; the models seemed to have been captured on the spot and the whole of this iconic statement was qualified through the explicit thematization of an *event* not associated with fashion and its products. Beyaert-Geslin (2009, p. 51) defines documentary photography as "the image produced by the practice of journalism. This practice can be called photojournalism (American version), which associates it with a given context, era and cultural sphere" (author's translation).

It seems important to add that its purpose is not the promotion of a commercial instance and a commercial good, but the capitalization, the capture of an event. In the case of the Italian brand's advertising campaigns, there was a difference between their medium (the magazine press, the national and/or regional daily press, poster spaces) and their genre[12].

## I.1. Merchant discourse transformations

These practices are representative of a movement that generally determines the *merchant discourse transformations*, which are transformations that respond to hybridization processes, independently of their products or services and their segments. Behind-the-scenes staging and the "making of" are not exclusively practiced by the fashion industry (Mouratidou 2012, pp. 125–134; Mouratidou 2015, pp. 91–105), neither collaborations between artists and market authorities or the attempt to make a brand or product sacred through marketing policies and communication strategies. Many researchers have questioned these market issues. For example, Bouquillion *et al*. (2013) demonstrate how "the values and *habitus* of the art world [take over] the activities of designing and conducting industrial projects" (p. 11, author's translation), Marti (2012b, pp. 199–210) examines the transformation of brands into museums through the study of the patrimonialization of the Haribo food brand, while Dondero (2009) analyzes from a semiotic point of view the sacred in the photographic image. The scientific literature in the information and communication sciences (ICS), semiotics or sociology provides many different but semantically convergent notions that allow us to understand these hybridization and transformation processes: *culturization* (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013), *culturalization* (Marti 2014, pp. 57–66), *artification* (Heinich and Shapiro 2012), *artistication*

12 This is also called textuality. This difference is analyzed throughout Chapter 1 of this book.

(Rastier 2013) and *artialization* (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2013). These notions testify to the transformation processes affecting the products or the processes of their communicational staging. They make it possible to grasp market pretensions and their *legitimization* processes (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). As the examples cited above, which come from the fashion industry's communication strategies, they can be approached as a process of culturalization or artification. What is of great interest in these examples, however, is not only the transformation processes taking place that affect fashion, but also the spectacular density that accompanies these processes as well as their globalizing dimension. From this perspective, a twofold research problem emerges. *It concerns both the meaning of the commercial spectacle as produced by the fashion industry and the political aim included in this globalizing program that integrates different common areas such as the political, artistic, cultural, sacred and religious*. The commercial spectacle thus allows this industry to increase its *economic and symbolic power*.

## I.2. The spectacular potential of the fashion industry

Fashion shows, advertising films and images, short films, "making of", museum exhibitions, boutiques, private parties but with the right amount of media coverage, Websites and sociodigital networks, fashion and beauty editorials supported by the magazine press are some of the strategies participating directly or indirectly in the promotion of the fashion industry.

In addition, there is an entire sublimation process of the players in this industry, such as artistic directors of fashion brands, models, muses and celebrities from the entertainment industry. These strategies and actors are integrated into particularly spectacular stagings. Fashion and its entire industry is a spectacle that I propose to address here by following Guy Debord, for whom the spectacle "is not a set of images but a social relationship between people, mediated by images" (Debord 1987, p. 4, author's translation). The images produced by the fashion industry, its actors and its events, themselves constructed as images relayed and mediated by allied industries such as the media industries, bear witness in a very spectacular way to this social relationship that the fashion industry proposes, even imposes. Its particularity is to densify this social relation-spectacle and make it particularly captive.

### I.2.1. *Luxury fashion*

This book therefore deals with the *spectacularization of the fashion industry*, a spectacularization that is both economic and symbolic. More precisely, the study proposed here focuses on so-called *luxury fashion*[13], a segment chosen for two reasons that seem to me to be complementary: that of its economic influence and that of its communication strategies. Both – economy and communication – are subject to processes of spectacularization, whether it is a question of economic data or images of esthetics calculated down to the smallest detail.

Starting from the principle that spectacularization is the "process that makes spectacular not only any art, but also any other socio-semiotic field" (Tore 2011, author's translation), it seems relevant to consider as spectacular both the economic performance of luxury fashion and its communication performance. In June 2019, the Bloomberg Billionnaires ranking introduced in third place Bernard Arnault, CEO of the luxury group LVMH, with a personal fortune estimated at 100.4 billion dollars. In the same ranking, we also noted the names of François Pinault, of the luxury group Kering, with a personal fortune of 37.1 billion dollars, as well as the Wertheimer brothers, owners among others of Chanel, whose personal fortune is estimated at 26.7 billion dollars[14]. These figures represent a spectacular performance, since they are extraordinary and attract a certain amount of media interest. By advertising them, the luxury fashion industry introduces into media the space information that unfolds the spectacular potential of its economy, a potential that is transformed into a particularly *media-generated* event. Just as the communication strategies of this same sector, whose aim goes beyond the promotional dimension and which mobilize the spectacle for political purposes: if the spectacle in its primary, archaic form has both a communicative and political dimension[15], it is supposed to lead to a *life form*

13 While luxury is traditionally described as a sector that escapes industrialization, the so-called market luxury fashion belongs to this segment whose goods are produced in a semi-industrial or industrial way and are even threatened by a trivialization of their usage values. Its vocation is the democratization of some of its goods. See also Chapter 5.

14 "La fortune de Bernard Arnault dépasse les 100 milliards de dollars", *Challenges*, article published on June 19, 2019: https://www.challenges.fr/classement/classement-des-fortunes-de-france/la-fortune-de-bernard-arnault-depasse-les-100-milliards-de-dollars_659109.

15 I refer here to the essence of Greek tragedy as defined by Aristotle (1980): "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate

that relates to *being together*. It is to this end that luxury fashion seems to use the spectacle, in order to create something common and to position itself within a project with collective, political pretensions.

The commercial luxury fashion industry has developed a particularly dense potential for spectacularization, which could be described as mediagenic (Marion 1997, pp. 61–88). This potential for spectacularization is also linked to the close relationship that the industry in question has with art and in particular the contemporary art market, which is also highly spectacular. By "fostering closer ties between famous artists and branded objects treated as unique pieces of artisanal origin (for example, Hermès bags or Vuitton luggage)" (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017, p. 33, author's translation), the luxury fashion industry is doubling its spectacular staging.

Entertainment shapes this industry, its goods, its actors and its discourse. Thus, this spectacular capacity aims to *depict* the fashion industry not so much as a creative industry with a commercial vocation, but, on the one hand, as a *leisure* industry, the spectacle being conceived here as a process of entertainment for the general public, and, on the other hand, as a *media industry* of "general interest" (Tremblay 2007, p. 216) and occupying in particular the public sphere, its "economic-social formation, its *schedule*" (Debord 1987, p. 13, author's translation).

### I.2.2. *A collective spectacle of reflexivity*

The spectacular potential of the fashion industry[16] lies particularly in its "*managerial creativity*" (Barrère and Santagata 2005), a process of establishing "a new relationship between creation, production and distribution [and] leading to a new creation and management complex" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 96, author's translation), of which many actors are part. If, as Frédéric Godart reminds us, "the work of the fashion designer exists only because there is an economic and industrial activity that is deployed to enable the production of clothing" (Godart 2016, p. 76, author's translation), this same activity can also promote the latter through communication strategies. Fashion is a spectacle not only because what it

parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear affect the proper purgation of these emotions" (p. 53).

16 Without specifying it at the time of its use, the phrase "fashion industry" now refers to commercial luxury fashion.

produces – its goods – can be spectacular, it is spectacular because of the way in which its goods are promoted based in particular on a spectacular process of *collective reflexivity* (Mouratidou 2012, pp. 11–21): whether they are haute couture workers, ready-to-wear design studios, make-up artists, hairdressers, stylists, models, photographers, directors, fashion journalists, art directors, group presidents, decorators, architects, muses, trainees, assistants of assistants, etc., they are all part of the collective reflexivity process, the fashion industry stages and spectacularizes many trade bodies that could represent it. However, what I will focus on throughout this book is not so much the fashion industry's representation processes as its *re-presentation policies*.

## I.3. From representation to re-presentation policies

"Representing means presenting oneself as representing something" (Marin 1994, p. 343, author's translation). Representation is both presentation, that is "the very act of presenting that constructs the identity of what is represented, that identifies it as such" (Marin 1994, p. 342), and spectacularization, that is, "a spectacular operation, a self-presentation that constitutes an identity and a property by giving it a legitimate value" (Marin 1994, p. 343). If the act of representing makes it possible to double a presence with a semiotic and discursive amplitude, while giving it a symbolic dimension, the representation does not – necessarily – bear any resemblance to what is represented. For art theorist Nelson Goodman (1976, p. 5), "the plain fact is that a picture, to represent an object, must be a symbol for it, refer to it", while according to Bougnoux (2006, p. 61, author's translation), "it is necessary to theoretically oppose manifestation (order of real presence) to symbolic representation (figuration *in absentia*)". Finally, from an interactionist perspective, representation is understood as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way of the other participants" (Goffman 1956, p. 8). Representation allows a relationship to be constructed in an interactionist and semiotic way from the moment it symbolizes what is *figurative in absence*.

While representation is constitutive of communication when it allows the latter to present and symbolize a practice, a situation, a good, a concept, etc., what I aim to question in this book concerns the *metasemiotic* dimension of representation as mobilized, in several cases, by the fashion industry. Certain communication strategies designed and developed by this industry and

questioned throughout this book go beyond the presentation–representation couple and reach a semiotic and strategic level that is a matter of re-presentation.

*By re-presentation, I mean a dialogical process that consists of representing the representation itself, its authority and its agents*. Re-presentation is at the same time presentation, representation and discourse that is as much about presence as it is about representation, in this case that of the fashion industry in the media space. It is at the same time a *reflexive process* (it refers to itself and to the instances that deploy it), a *referential process* (it refers to something external to it) and *metalanguage* because it duplicates its discourse. Louis Marin explains:

> The representation, in its reflective dimension, is presented to someone. The representative presentation is taken in the dialogical structure of a receiver and an addressee, whoever they may be, to whom the framework will provide one of the preferred states of "making known", "making believe", "making something felt", the instructions and injunctions that the power of representation, and in representation, addresses to the spectator-reader. (Marin 1994, p. 348, author's translation)

Re-presentation is a representative representation, which duplicates the representative presentation evoked by Marin and which does not so much establish states of *having done something* as evoked above (knowing, believing, feeling) as states in which this *past action of doing* is made *transparent* and transformed into current action *doing*[17].

Because it carries a discourse on its own spectacular organization, re-presentation is "a system whose content plane is itself constituted by a system of signification; or it is a semiotic that deals with a semiotic" (Barthes 1985, p. 77). Because it is called "metalanguage", re-presentation is thought of here as mythology; "it is part of both semiology as a formal science and ideology as a historical science: it studies ideas in form" (Barthes 2002, p. 826). The latter were thus born of a second semiological system. *Re-presentation is a double mimesis: that of an absence and that of a presence*. While representation is based on "a mimetic operation between presence and absence [allowing] the functioning and [authorizing] the

17 See also section I.4.

function of the present in the place of the absent" (Marin 1994, p. 342, author's translation), the second semiological system that actualizes the re-presentation splits the presence-absence couple. *Representation is qualification: it grants the represented subject a quality because it presents it by symbolizing it. Re-presentation is requalification: it is based on the first semiotic level, which is qualification, while at the same time doubling it, and going beyond it*. When Louis Vuitton solicited the artist Vanessa Beecroft, the brand presented itself in a non-exclusively commercial instance, as a *re-presented* and also *requalified* instance: it re-presented itself through a discourse that emanated from the field of art and contestation; it requalified itself through this same discourse, whereas from the outset, neither art nor contestation were constitutive elements of the industrial and managerial organization of the brand in question. And in its approach, Louis Vuitton, just like the advertisers discussed in this book, aroused beliefs while at the same time carrying out a communicational practice that I describe as *counter-fashioning*[18].

Re-presentation policies, in this case of the fashion industry, encompass strategies and tactics that go beyond the realm of trade and have a much broader focus in terms of *living together* and *living with*. It is in this sense that re-presentation is based on a *policy,* as it takes the form that would be of interest to the *polis,* which sees itself endowed with a certain amount of power.

A *re-presentation policy* is a form of discourse – in the semiotic sense of the term – which shows that "at the heart of power lies the power to develop a discourse about things and thus to value them in such a way as to demand the highest possible price for them. And also, the power to inscribe this discourse and the profits it generates in the fabric of reality" (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017, p. 497, author's translation).

18 I use this neologism in place of the term counterfeiting to refer not to the manufacturing practice and its result, which we call counterfeiting, but rather to a position that emanates from a communicational approach and an axiological aim. Throughout this book, I will use this term as well as the term "counter-fashioned" to further mark the position of imitation and simulacra adopted by the fashion industry with respect to the fields of art, religion and politics. The reason why I maintain this form instead of the verb "to counterfeit" is also to mark the irony that results from a process that is called *mise en abyme*: the fashion industry is threatened by counterfeiting; but the fashion industry *counterfeits* art, religion and politics through its communicative counterfeiting processes.

## I.4. Counterfeits and beliefs

First of all, let us specify that in the framework of re-presentation policies linked to the fashion industry, it is not a matter of questioning the authentic dimension of the marketed products[19], to which I do not grant any artistic value from the start. Fashion industry products "appeal to creativity in the design phase [but] are also backed by the heritage they reproduce and even extend, being preserved for exchange and sale" (Miège 2017, p. 94, author's translation), which is not the case for artistic creative activity[20]. While the couturier's fashion gesture may result in creations whose esthetic qualities can in some cases be recognized, this same gesture is not detached from a production perspective and commercial offer that inevitably determines the creation, itself no longer being, as stated above, the result of a single person but of a team contributing to the *creative management* of the product and its brand. The artistic positioning that accompanies the fashion industry's products must also be related to "the objective of designers who implement avant-garde strategies [and which] is not to attain the status of an artist but rather to acquire a form of symbolic capital that enhances the fashion designer's status" (Crane 2012, p. 248, author's translation). At the same time, with the luxury fashion market being particularly developed and even industrialized, its professionals "know or should know that the realities of the markets in which the brands or houses they represent are present have little to do with the rarity, inaccessibility, and sometimes even absolute perfection of the object" (Bertrand 2011, p. 319, author's translation). Faced with this constraint that opposes luxury and the market, I will question the counterfeit posture of the players in the fashion industry in the design of their re-presentation policies.

"A forgery of a work of art is an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the (or an) original of the work" (Goodman 1976, p. 122). Based on this premise, it is possible to consider counterfeiting as the process of falsely endowing an object with a certain authenticity. Authenticity also plays a key role in the discourse and strategies

19 Even if counterfeiting, copying and imitation are processes that are both praised and decried by the same industry (see also Chapter 6, section 6.2.2).

20 Although there is a great deal of scientific work today, as well as film material, showing how commercial logic influences the creative production of the work of art. I refer, for example, to Menger's book (2002) or Nathaniel Kahn's documentary, *The Price of Everything*, 2018.

of those involved in the sector. Faced with what Abélès (2018a, p. 92) describes as a "logo fatigue", the argument of authenticity becomes a communication necessity. However, it is based on illusionist discourse about the historical and symbolic depth that accompanies the goods and the communication strategies of commercial luxury. By questioning the counterfeit position of the fashion industry's re-presentation policies, the aim is to account for the way in which discourses that are commonplace, such as art and culture, the sacred and religion as well as politics, present themselves as an excellent *communicational pre-text* and *pretext* granting the actors of this industry a *self-referential legitimacy*. It is also a question of accounting for the way in which, just as fashion is copied and counterfeited, art and culture, the sacred, religion and politics can be copied and also counterfeited, probably because of their polychresic[21] dimension.

However, this communicational counterfeiting is motivated by a goal of persuasion, efficiency and belief. This is how spectacular density comes into play, by erasing the fiction, the rigged, the fabricated and by offering what marketing professionals call an experience. Here is Guy Debord's introductory reference to his book *The Society of the Spectacle*, quoting the German philosopher Feurerbach:

> and without doubt our epoch…prefers the image to the thing, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality, appearance to being…what is sacred for it is only *illusion*, but what is profane…is *truth.* More than that, the sacred grows in its eyes to the extent that truth diminishes and illusion increases, to such an extent that the *peak of illusion* is for the *peak of the sacred*. (Debord 1987)

The fashion industry's re-presentational policies, such as certain advertising campaigns, museum exhibitions or commercial scenography, are organized as a smooth, controlled spectacle to *make people see* and *believe*. As historian Daniel J. Boorstin points out, "the most effective images are usually those which have been especially doctored for believability" (Boorstin 1961, p. 188). The regimes of *showing* and *make-believe* instituted by the fashion industry's re-presentational policies are no longer constructed, like the theatrical convention, as a process of illusion in which we want to

21 According to Jeanneret (2008), polychresis is a process that affects practices and objects undergoing "constant reappropriation" (p. 83).

believe because we have agreed to put ourselves in the position of spectators adhering to that convention. Re-presentation is an admission of the concealment of the merchandise and the promotional methods that go with it. "This concealment is not the lie that should be pierced through [it is] its way of telling the truth about the concealment that constitutes it" (Rancière 2017, p. 66, author's translation). What is happening in the framework of the fashion industry's re-presentation policies is a belief system that is no longer a matter of *making people see* and *make them believe*, but of *seeing* and *believing*. Belief becomes an assertion because it is manipulated by the re-presentational device, its mechanisms of orientation and modeling. It offers itself to be seen as a presence and tends to minimize, even erase, its re-presentational discourses (Boorstin 1962, p. 249). It densifies its mythological dimension because it introduces fashion into its system as a presence "rendered as transparent" (Barthes 2002, p. 832, author's translation). The appearance of merchandise and promotional strategies is not an "illusion to be crossed to discover the truth, it is the phantasmagoria that testifies to the truth of a metamorphic process" (Rancière 2017, p. 66, author's translation), a process that describes and even troubles the fashion industry and to which the latter must respond through its re-presentational policies.

## I.5. Re-presentation policies as a response to the metamorphosis of the luxury fashion industry

Fashion is a creative industry that "has become a model for many industries, such as the automobile industry, which now varies in color to the other" (Godart 2016, p. 97, author's translation). In particular, it is integrated into the capitalist system of conglomerates, groups in possession of numerous brands in the sector, aiming at oligopoly, or even monopoly of the latter. This industrial organization affects all segments of fashion, from the bottom of the range to luxury goods. Emblematic brands in the luxury sector with constantly growing sales, such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Gucci or Balenciaga, belong to groups such as LVMH for the first two and Kering for the other two[22].

22 According to data published by Hoovers in 2016 and cited by Godart (2016, p. 99). Thus, LVMH is in first place, with sales of $37,234.41 million, H&M Hennes and Mauritz in sixth place ($20,672.41 million) and Kering in 11th place ($12,655.74 million).

As for luxury ready-to-wear, whose projected values are based on quality, rarity and selectivity, it has to face its *trivialization*, both symbolic and commercial, for two main reasons. The first is the change in its manufacturing methods. Luxury today is produced according to semi-industrial or industrial processes, with craftsmanship being reserved for certain exclusive and unique products. Take the case of the Louis Vuitton brand. Founded in 1854, initially specializing in the handcrafted manufacture of travel trunks, it inaugurated its first ready-to-wear collection in 1998; it currently manages "45 directly operated boutiques around the world"[23]. This beneficial expansion for the LVMH group has led to a certain trivialization of Louis Vuitton brand products, which have become omnipresent and particularly popular. As Bruno Remaury notes:

> Under the effect of the unprecedented transformation of the object into merchandise, we are witnessing in a few decades a shift in the very definition of luxury, from the individual and aristocratic vision of luxury (luxury as use, election, way of life) to that of a mass-produced object (luxury as a consumer item). (Remaury 2011, p. 307, author's translation)

Luxury has to deal with the possible dysphoric values that may emanate from its presence "in a new territory [...] managed by financial groups, based on an industry perspective oriented towards mass markets" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 262, author's translation).

The second reason for this trivialization is the dysphoric discourses and values that are often associated with the fashion industry in general. Many brands are relocating factories and workshops, which is a strategic choice that allows "companies to reduce their labor costs" (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 38, author's translation)[24]. This has two consequences. The first is symbolic, since consumers associate the offshoring process with fast fashion, mass consumption and lower quality. The second is managerial and directly linked to the working conditions and remuneration of workers in developing countries or countries undergoing major economic crises.

23 According to the article "Vuitton accélère l'ouverture d'ateliers en France", *Le Monde*, published on March 29, 2018.

24 However, reducing manufacturing costs is not the only motivation for outsourcing practices. The authors of the article also put forward the argument of seeking know-how that has become rare in France but which can still be envisaged in other countries, in particular for the manufacture of men's ready-to-wear clothing and trunk work (see also Chapter 5).

The fashion industry is also subject to denunciations concerning some of its managerial practices: conditions of recruitment of female and male models, moral and sexual harassment. If the majority of the models remain silent on the psychic and physical pressures suffered, the revelations of some draw a picture of a particularly different view from the aesthetic, beautiful and smooth face of the fashion industry:

> Non-consensual kisses, spankings, pinches. […]. Lack of adequate space for the model to change. Persecution from editors, photographers, stylists and clients who want us to be topless or nude. Publication of nude pictures when the contract stipulates that it is forbidden to use them. Unauthorized massages. Inappropriate e-mails, SMS and calls. Pressure to consume alcohol while underage. [...]. Being forced to sleep at the photographer's home rather than being able to sleep in a hotel. Being threatened with losing my job if I don't cooperate. Being called difficult, feminist, virgin, diva, when I talk or say no. I've lost count. And that's just what's "easy" to share, and that happens at such common times as 9:00 in the morning, at fittings or at lunch.[25]

Likewise, the recruitment criteria for models walking the runway during fashion weeks are also subject to denunciations. With the fashion brands advocating the idea that their collections are more valued when they are worn by slim, even skinny bodies, the models on the catwalk during these periods are also under pressure: forced to lose weight in a short period of time to go from size 4 to size 2, some daring to speak out and publicize the practices of this profession[26]. In addition to this, studies have shown that fashion is a particularly polluting industry,[27] while numerous journalistic

25 Public testimony of an American model, initially published on her personal Instagram account, then relayed by the media. The excerpt is quoted in the article "#YouToo. Que fait l'industrie de la mode face au harcèlement sexuel?", *Vanity Fair*, article published on October 25, 2017: https://www.vanityfair.fr/style/mode/articles/que-fait-lindustrie-de-la-mode-face-au-harcelement-sexuel-/57292.

26 See, for example, the brief from *L'Express Style*, "Un mannequin taille 34 renvoyé au défilé Louis Vuitton", published on May 23, 2017: https://www.lexpress.fr/styles/mannequins/ulrikke-hoyer-mannequin-jugee-trop-grosse-pour-le-defile-louis-vuitton_1910874.html.

27 According to a study published by the Danish Fashion Institute: http://danishfashioninstitute.dk.

investigations demonstrate the tax tricks devised by the industry's conglomerates[28].

Even if the industry's communication and media strategies can be interpreted as a generalized response to the "rise in consumer suspicion and saturation of marketing in general and promotional discourse in particular" (Berthelot-Guiet *et al.* 2014, p. 263, author's translation), it is also because of all the constraints described above that the fashion industry is bound not to restrict itself to canonical promotional strategies. Quite the contrary, it must promote itself through its speaking engagements, which vary according to the media, according to the mobilized media and the promised communication contracts, but which converge toward a staging strategy and minimization of the values and dysphoric qualities associated with it. Throughout the first and second parts, I will attempt to demonstrate how the occupation of the spheres of politics, art, culture, the sacred and religion responds to a strategy of *market mediation* based on re-presentational policies designed and practiced by the fashion industry. *Because they emerge through diverse communicational practices, because they are designed for a multiplicity of media and because they tend towards a general occupation of the fashion industry of the media space and sometimes even of the public space, these re-presentation policies form a generalized apparatus*.

## I.6. The power of the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus

The fashion industry's re-presentation policies will thus be approached as constituting an *apparatus* that grants the industry in question a "power of institution, authorization and legitimization as a result of the thoughtful functioning of the apparatus on itself" (Marin 1981, p. 10, author's translation). It is throughout part 3 of this research that I will attempt to account for the mechanisms through which the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus presents a power aim. Following Michel Foucault and the way he defined the heterogeneous dimension of the apparatus, the objective of this research will be to analyze the fashion industry's re-presentational policies, their *material* and *formal formats*[29].

28 See, for example, the France 2 *Cash Investigation* document of October 9, 2018 entitled: "Luxury, les dessous choc": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IRtRnV92AMeature=youtu.be.

29 For a detailed approach to the notions of formal and material formats, see Chapter 1.

Thus, the apparatus is thought of as "a heterogeneous whole, comprising discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic proposals, in brief: of the said as well as of the unsaid" (Foucault 1994, p. 299, author's translation), as well as "everything that has, in one way or another, the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, shape, control and ensure the gestures, conduct, opinions and discourses of living beings" (Agamben 2014, p. 31, author's translation).

The fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus is therefore a plural continuum of media, discourses and practices understood as a single instance, despite their spatiotemporal discontinuity. Indeed, it draws its power and its symbolic and pragmatic effectiveness from the coupling it offers between the *continuous* and the *discontinuous*.

If practices and discourses manifest themselves in a scattered way in a strategically thought-out space-time, they are also iterative; this allows for the interaction between the event-driven and discontinuous dimension of re-presentational policies and a *programmed and repetitive event*. Moreover, in spite of the heterogeneity of the apparatus's constituent elements, they manage to form, *in fine,* a *homogeneous continuum* because they are determined by the same underlying strategies and their aim is the same issues of modeling, interception or control: those of the presence of the fashion industry as a non-exclusively commercial instance and therefore its re-presentation and requalification.

## I.7. Fashion and communication

Before presenting the theoretical and methodological point of view developed throughout this book, it is necessary to justify the link between the object of *fashion* research and its place within the ICS.

In outlining *The Fashion System* (1990), Barthes attempted to establish the grammar that could structure this language and consider fashion as a discourse. An exhaustive project, it became obsolete in the year of its publication: "From the very first pages of *The Fashion System,* [Barthes] confessed [...] the vanity and failure of his project. It was aimed at fashion; it reached only discourse, small, frustrated texts running on the pages of magazines" (Badir 2014, author's translation). Before Barthes, it was

Greimas (2000) who attempted, in his thesis, to describe the vocabulary of fashion through a study of fashion journals from 1830, offering, like Barthes, a sort of lexical encyclopedia of the practice of clothing as staged by media actors.

In the 1970s, it was the turn of sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsault to take an interest in the atypical object of fashion and to point out the mechanisms that enable it to establish systems of domination (Bourdieu and Delsault 1975, pp. 7–36). Few works introduce this broad object into the ICS. Jeanne-Perrier (2016) analyzed the way in which the Internet has transformed fashion from the point of view of its mediation practices as well as from the point of view of *mediatization*. *Actes sémiotiques* devoted a dossier to the semiotics of clothing in 2014 (Mathé 2014). Research on the creative industries and their socioeconomic models studies the way in which luxury in general submits to issues of symbolic industrialization (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013). Findings such as that of Lipovetsky and Roux (2013) are often mobilized in the ICS in order to highlight the new aspirations of fashion, which the two authors describe as hedonistic consumption, by emphasizing the changes in the sector and also its marketing strategies. Finally, works within the scope of fashion studies approach fashion, its practices, its mediations and media coverage from multidisciplinary points of view, the specificity of fashion studies being the entry into the subject by the object and not by the scientific framework (Mendes and Rees-Roberts 2015, pp. 53–69). This research is significant, but the object "fashion" as a clothing practice, a mediating body, media coverage, industry, etc., remains peripheral in the ICS. However, the sector is arousing a definite interest by the diversity of the communication processes involved and also by the constant evolution of its models, which is taken into consideration more during higher studies.

*To take an interest in the object of "fashion" from a communicational point of view is to try to grasp the complexity of a creative industry as much from the point of view of the processes of production, manufacture and distribution of its goods as per its inscription in the public space*. Finally, at a time when luxury fashion and in particular its representatives such as the heads of the dominant groups in the sector occupy a certain media position and are also seeking to occupy a political position,[30] it seems to me

30 See, for example, the mediations proposed by the LVMH and Kering group during the fire at Notre-Dame de Paris and the media coverage and debates that ensued.

necessary, even essential, to take an interest in this object and to focus on the way in which what we call fashion in general is a multiplicity of gestures, practices, strategies and tactics and constitutes an object whose communicational processes need to be questioned from the point of view of what Jeanneret (2014) calls *media capitalism*.

## I.8. Theory, method, corpus and situations

This research falls within the disciplinary framework of the ICS. It is defined as a *study of the rewriting and transformation of communication strategies and market mediation*, the latter also being understood from an advertising perspective, i.e. "a relay between supply and demand, the advertiser and its addressees, products and consumers" (de Iulio 2016, p. 64, author's translation) generating *symbolic* and *economic* stakes. Its grounding in the ICS also testifies to an interscientific approach and mobilizes as much research in the socioeconomics of the creative industries as in semiotics[31] and discourse analysis. The aim of this analytical position is to bring together around the same object of study a socioeconomic approach to fashion and luxury as a creative industry and a semiotic and discursive analysis of the mediations of this industry, mediations which, let us recall, are understood here as re-presentational policies. These two approaches are considered from a complementary perspective. The semiotic and discursive analysis will illustrate the socioeconomic stakes that shape this industry. The socioeconomic analysis will shed light on the way in which the same models of luxury fashion engender, or even impose, certain re-presentational policies implemented by this industry. The objective is to situate the strategies and market mediations of the fashion industry in the gaps between the production of discourse here conceived as being "at the same time controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to conjure up its powers and dangers, to control the random event, to dodge the heavy, formidable materiality" (Foucault 1971, p.11, author's translation) and "industrialized cultural and informational productions both from the point of view of their production and their consumption as well as the complex modalities of their circulation in societies" (Miège 2017, p. 9, author's translation).

31 See below, section I.8.1, the presentation of the *semio* approach.

Finally, this complementarity is based on the principle of "taking into account, in communication phenomena, that they are at the same time sociodiscursive, socio-anthropological, etc., and that consequently only inter-scientific approaches can give a relevant account of them" (Miège 2004, p. 52, author's translation).

### I.8.1. *The semio approach*

Semiotic and discursive analysis is used to observe and question the communicational hybridizations resulting from the strategies analyzed, the rewriting processes to which these strategies bear witness, and the shaping of discourse – in the semiotic sense of the term – allowing us to grasp the re-presentational policies implemented by advertisers in this industry. In an effort to circumscribe the theoretical framework within which this analytical approach is thought of and applied, the aim now is to evoke a *semio* approach that brings together different theoretical currents.

As much an analysis as a position to be adopted, the semio approach is conceived of through semiotics, semio-pragmatics, semiology and discourse analysis mobilized according to the communicational practice observed and the analytical relevance that accompanies it. In other words, it is a matter of opting for one or another theoretical and methodological framework depending on the objects, the latter being endowed with a "semiotic overdose or [an] emphatic hold over the sign" (Boutaud and Berthelot-Guiet 2013, author's translation), or even on the discourses. *The semiotic point of view that marks current research is defined as the outline of the axiological and symbolic system of commercial mediations as deployed by the fashion industry's re-presentation policies*. It is not a method in its own right, but an approach that consists of bringing together, around a single object of study, different theoretical and methodological frameworks that make it possible to question the *staging* of the communicative processes under analysis and to grasp the "productive tension between semiotics and communication" (Boutaud and Eliseo-Veron 2007, p. 25, author's translation).

Greimassian semiotics and the semiotics of the Belgian school of thought are called upon to account for the visual dimension of certain re-presentational policies such as advertising campaigns or ready-to-wear collections (Floch 1985, 1990; Groupe μ 1992; Klinkenberg 1996a; Beyaert-Geslin 2009; Dondero 2009), their genres, their statutes, their formats (Basso Fossali and

Dondero 2011) and their enunciative strategies (Fontanille 2003, 2015). The relevance of this approach consists of highlighting the visual and generic transformations that are taking place, but also the enunciative hybridizations of the actors who are the ones enacting these practices.

The semio-pragmatic analysis (Odin 2011) is called upon to question the reconfigurations of the communication spaces invested in by the fashion industry. Starting from the source spaces and their semio-pragmatic functioning, this method makes it possible to focus on the pre-textual dimension of the source text and the way it is modified by the new text updated by the fashion industry.

Discourse analysis is included here in the general approach qualified as semio, on the one hand, insofar as it is mobilized as an analytical framework for discursive staging contributing to the fashion industry's re-presentation policies, and, on the other hand, as soon as certain theoretical contributions of discourse analysis are adapted to the study of syncretic elements, bringing together verbal and non-verbal productions. It is from this perspective that I have recourse to Dominique Maingueneau's work on the density that structures an "enunciation scene" (Maingueneau 1998b, pp. 55–71) and on the notion of "reinvestment" (Maingueneau 1991), and to Krieg-Planque's (2009) work on the notion of "formula" and, as far as our research is concerned, on its extension into non-verbal utterances (Mouratidou 2018a).

In an interdisciplinary way, this analytical position is *covered* by Roland Barthes' semiological project, not so much from the point of view of the method as from the point of view of its aim, the search for meaning, making it possible to construct an *ideological critical praxis* (1985). The various analytical frameworks called upon throughout this research will make it possible to grasp *the life of the signs* emitted by the fashion industry *within social life* (Saussure 1916, p. 33), to account for their political influence and the way in which they contribute to the transformation of social life. While the critical dimension is not a position adopted *a priori*, it is because this research is not conceived of as aiming to criticize the luxury fashion industry's capitalist system. However, it can *take place* through the questioning of the "semantic and symbolic system of our civilisation" (Barthes 1985, p. 14), in which the fashion industry participates and gives an account of the societal powers and political stakes that permeate our civilization. As Jeanneret (2007, p. 111) reminds us, "when we read Barthes' inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, given in February 1977 [...], we

cannot help but be struck by the fact that semiology remains, as in the age of *Mythologies*, a political work aimed at defining the circulation of power. It is not for nothing that Michel Foucault recommended Barthes' election" (author's translation).

### I.8.2. *Socioeconomic approach*

The need for a discussion between semiotic approaches and the *socioeconomic stakes* of the creative and cultural industries arises from the observation that "the processual and historical approach that triumphs in industrial society does not entirely erase the importance of a theory of representation, i.e. the link between signs and human and social realities. It merely covers it" (Jeanneret 2008, p. 521, author's translation).

While a socioeconomic analysis of the cultural and creative industries can shed light on the organizational and economic dimension of industrial industries and sectors as well as the practices and social transformations that result from them, it can also be seen as a search for the symbolic issues associated with the industries and sectors studied (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013).

Socioeconomic analysis is mobilized with the aim of grasping the perspectives that characterize what economists Barrère and Santagata (2005) call the "market models" (p. 91) that have replaced the "aristocratic model" (p. 84) of fashion. This socioeconomic transformation is notably governed by "a strategy of dual positioning [set up with] the control of firms by a few powerful industrial and financial groups" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 112, author's translation). It therefore appears necessary to "examine what the analysis using models makes us understand about the functioning of the sectors, their organization and the major values they convey" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 153, author's translation). Finally, socioeconomic analysis is also called upon to account for the way in which certain re-presentational policies of the fashion industry borrow models traditionally theorized within the framework of cultural or media industries. This research uses as much socioeconomic data advanced by scientific literature that addresses fashion as a creative industry or that deals more broadly with the cultural and communication industries as it does data from the activity reports of luxury fashion industry groups or data advertised in the specialized or general press.

### I.8.3. *Corpus (texts, objects, practices)*

The corpus analyzed was composed of heterogeneous but complementary data, resulting from the communication strategies of brands and groups in the fashion industry. The communication strategies here included any practice, any object or any text – advertising campaign, ready-to-wear collection, museum exhibition – likely to produce mediation. These practices, texts and objects were selected according to two criteria established upstream and without spatiotemporal delimitation[32]. The first was that of the segment: advertisers specializing in commercial luxury ready-to-wear[33]. The second is that of *borrowing* and *rewriting*: the aim was to work on objects, practices and texts that witness a rewriting and an *enunciative depth* that explicitly or implicitly cites the fields of art, culture, religion, the sacred and politics. Some data from the specialized press were also introduced into the corpus, since they seemed to present the same communicational aim as that observed in the communicational strategies of advertisers in the fashion industry. The corpus was therefore the result of syncretic materials, such as ready-to-wear and leather goods collections, photographs from advertising campaigns, photographs taken during visits, guided or not, to museum exhibitions offered by advertisers in the sector as well as to places where the heritage of a luxury fashion brand was promoted, but also observations and photographs taken in commercial spaces (boutiques, department stores).

All of these strategies and practices were also illustrated and even discussed using discursive material from all kinds of press articles, selected according to their thematic relevance. I would like to point out that this material hardly constituted a closed corpus, subjected to systematic analysis and did not allow a representative account of the media's position and media coverage from which the fashion industry's re-presentational policies benefitted. On the one hand, its use was illustrative. On the other hand, it provided an overview of the place that certain advertisers occupy in the

32 Even though the majority of the advertisers studied are part of the two French groups LVMH and Kering.

33 Exceptionally, I chose to analyze the collaboration of the H&M brand (Hennes and Mauritz group) with the artist Jeff Koons for the retrospective exhibition devoted to him at the Whitney Museum in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (2014). This choice is based on the fact that although the H&M brand is part of the so-called fast fashion segment, its collaboration with the artist in question enabled the brand to reconsider its merchandise.

media space, including in national or regional daily press titles for which fashion is not a preferred subject. Finally, the consultation of press articles also made it possible to study, I would remind you, in an illustrative and not representative way, a possible "discursive smoothing of the forms of diversity and heterogeneity in general" (Oger and Ollivier-Yaniv 2006, author's translation) likely to harm the image of advertisers in the sector studied.

This research was partly organized around a process of direct observation, implemented in the context of exhibitions offered by fashion brands or department stores and on the occasion of the opening of certain ateliers or group headquarters at special events. These exhibitions were visited as part of a research approach, with the aim of observing the discourses and scenographies offered throughout their visit. To put it another way, this attendance was not motivated, at least not solely, by a personal interest in fashion, but by the desire to seize the device deployed in order to enable retail advertisers to reconsider themselves and their products. From a methodological point of view, this practice of observation, which is both direct and participatory, was in line with the issues pointed out by Fontanille (2006, pp. 13–14), who notes that "the semiotic practice itself has largely exceeded textual limits, by taking an interest, for more than twenty years, in architecture, urban planning, object design, market strategies, cigar or wine tasting, and more generally in the construction of a semiotics of situations" (Fontanille, 2006, pp. 13–14, author's translation). What I therefore call a corpus is more generally a set of heterogeneous materials, of varying levels of relevance, ranging from signs to texts, including formats, practices, situations and even strategies.

## I.9. Staging of the work

In addition to its introduction and conclusion, this book is structured by three parts and six chapters, each part comprising two chapters. I have opted for a relatively atypical structure in the way in which the various stakes of this research are presented. In the first two parts, I present re-presentation policies of the actors and groups of the fashion industry before addressing the socioeconomic stakes of the sector and the models that structure it. This choice may indeed appear to be atypical because it does not allow us to get to the heart of the matter, which is the link between the economic models of the luxury fashion industry and the way in which this industry sets itself up

in order to disguise some of the constituent elements of its models and in general of its industrialization. I chose this organization based on the following observation: as ordinary spectators of fashion brands, their communication strategies and their merchandise, we are first and foremost confronted with the sector's re-presentational policies, long before we are interested in the industrial workings that organize it[34]. The *fashion industry's re-presentation policies are part of the visible, exposed and circulating face of the sector, which millions of spectators are confronted with on a daily basis*[35]. It is this visible face, its rewritings and its circulations that I wanted to first expose in order to report and discuss the way in which the fields of art, culture, religion, the sacred and politics are invited into the *visible activities* of the fashion industry. Part 1 will address the processes of *culturization* and *artification* that characterize the sector's re-presentation policies. I will look upstream at the so-called "traditional" communication and marketing strategies, such as media advertising, ready-to-wear collections and distribution strategies (Chapter 1), while downstream I will study the way the fashion industry occupies spaces that belong to art and culture while transforming its boutiques into places with artistic aims (Chapter 2). Part 2 will address *belief* and *engagement* as they result from intertextual, anaphoric and sometimes parodic processes in the religious, sacred (Chapter 3) and political (Chapter 4) realms. Part 3, on the one hand, will deal with the industrialization processes of luxury fashion, its managerial creativity and the resulting dysphoric stakes (Chapter 5); on the other hand, it will expose the mechanisms that contribute to the establishment of the symbolic and economic power of the fashion industry's representational device through a new processing of certain elements of the corpus analyzed throughout parts 1 and 2 of this book (Chapter 6).

34 This is not absolute in that we can ignore the socio-symbolic and economic issues that arise from the industrialization of luxury fashion and remain a mere spectator of the sector's staging.

35 For example, Louis Vuitton's Instagram account has 33.4 million followers compared to 35.7 for Gucci, 1.9 for Celine, 9.8 for Balmain, 26.7 for Dior and 10.2 for Balenciaga (observation made on August 3, 2019).

Part 1

# Re-presentations and Artifices

# Introduction to Part 1

The re-presentation policies appropriating the field of art and culture are studied throughout this part 1 as *artifices*. This term has a dual dimension in that it designates both a *technique of deception* and an *art of doing*. As a technique of deception, artifice refers to its very first use, a "skillful and more or less deceptive means"[1].

We will see throughout the analyses carried out how the fashion industry's re-presentation policies propose particularly clever but also misleading product and strategy staging. As an art of doing, the notion of artifice allows us to link the field of art and culture with the re-presentation policies of luxury fashion. By art, I mean the ability to design and realize commercial staging as much as the ability to appropriate forms specific to art and, by extension, culture. Behind the link between re-presentation and artifice lies the process of *artificiality* in the fashion industry, an artificiality that affects products as much as the strategies that accompany them. These policies will be captured both as "unadvertizing" processes (Marti 2015) and as extensions of "advertising artifacts" (de Iulio 2016). It will therefore be a question of reporting on the way in which elements determining an interdisciplinary promotion policy, working as much on market goods as on their promotion and distribution methods, are *staged* as a cultural and artistic offer rather than as a management strategy.

The fashion industry's re-presentational policies studied throughout this section will also be approached as a figuration, i.e. "a representation of the communication process that is not a matter of explanation, as is the case with

1 *Le Robert, Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (2000, p. 221).

promise, but is due to the interplay of mobilized forms, within media productions and textualities" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 74, author's translation). The choice to treat the set of practices and strategies studied as re-presentations instead of figurations resides in the desire to emphasize the spectacular dimension that structures the figurations and that allows us to observe them as forms enriched by a dual representational aura without omitting the ideological and dialogical contributions that organize the same forms. This part will therefore present the interdisciplinarity and the splintering of the fashion industry's re-presentational policies that occupy the fields of art and culture in a generalized manner.

# 1

# Re-presentation as a Form of Artistic and Cultural Legitimization

In 2003, fashion designer Alexander McQueen presented a fashion show explicitly inspired by the film *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*[2]. Presented as a dance competition, the show was particularly critical of the capitalist system, which structures the fashion and luxury industry. Asked backstage by a journalist who asked him "whether [he thought his show] was fashion or entertainment", McQueen answered without hesitation: "It was art"[3]. In another interview, however, McQueen said, in reference to his brand, that "everything is for sale; everything"[4], a statement that underscores the commercial dimension of his previously artistic activity. Although some fashion designers develop an indisputable esthetic, often celebrated as a work of art through media discourse, the economic models and goals that determine a fashion brand can compromise this dimension and the possible artistically oriented values that may result from it.

While fashion has regularly rubbed shoulders with the world of art, in various forms and practices, it remains nonetheless and even essentially a creative industry. Before becoming a couturier, Christian Dior was a great lover of art, visiting many of the artists of his time; one of Yves Saint Laurent's most successful collections dates from 1965 and features motifs inspired by the paintings of Piet Mondrian. In Paris, the *Musée des Arts*

2 Directed by Sydney Pollack, released in theaters in 1969.

3 This excerpt can be seen in the French film *The Legacy of Alexander McQueen* directed by Loïc Prigent and produced by Arte in 2015.

4 *Idem*.

*Décoratifs* is an institutional space dedicated to fashion,[5] among other things, while the *Palais Galliera* is the *Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris*[6]. In her article on the possible link between fashion and art, Diana Crane underlines the many partnerships set up between couturiers and artists but also the desire of men and women involved in fashion to be perceived as artists:

> From the end of the 19th Century and again in the 20th Century, fashion designers like Worth claimed an artist status. [...] In the 1930s, Italian seamstress Elsa Schiaparelli collaborated with artists such as Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau and designed clothes that conformed to the esthetic principles of the Surrealist movement. (Crane 2012, p. 242, author's translation)

Today, the industrialization of luxury fashion is accentuating the *serial* dimension of the sector's goods, which is the antithesis of the aforementioned narratives and practices, linking couturiers to artists and artists to couturiers. Yet, from an obvious point of view, art and culture are particularly present in the discourses and objects of the fashion industry. This presence emanates from the need to make up the industrial or semi-industrial and also serial dimension of certain luxury products – such as purses – as well as the hypervisibility and hyperexposure of fashion brands on social networks. The result of this constraint is the trivialization of the sector, which is supposed to promote rarity, selectivity and craftsmanship.

This is where the sector's strategies come into play, strategies that often consist of disguising the promotional discourse implemented by the various luxury houses and, above all, proposing a new positioning that is likely to reintroduce the original characteristics and values of this industry. While the selectivity and rarity of luxury goods are disappearing, communication and marketing strategies are developing discourses and products that tend toward a movement in line with these characteristics. This movement corresponds, on the one hand, and from a theoretical point of view, to that of *artification*; in other words, to this "transformation process of non-art into art, the result of a complex work that generates a change in the definition and status of people, objects and activities" (Shapiro 2012, p. 20, author's translation).

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5 The decorative arts include design, fashion, textiles, advertising and graphics. See also the museum's Website: http://madparis.fr.

6 See http://www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr/fr.

On the other hand, it corresponds to the *culturization* process, a process in which "products that are not initially cultural and artistic in nature are nevertheless given some of the symbolic attributes of culture and art" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 11, author's translation).

Throughout this first chapter, I will try to account for the way in which both luxury fashion products and their traditional enhancement processes, such as media advertising or modes of distribution, are determined by re-presentational characteristics emanating from the two movements mentioned above: artification, affecting more the actors and fashion brands, and culturization, affecting the industry products in question.

## 1.1. The work of art and its reproducibility at the service of the fashion industry

In April 2017, the French brand Louis Vuitton, a member of the LVMH group, celebrated an exclusive and ephemeral collaboration with contemporary artist Jeff Koons. The collaboration focused on the creation of a collection of purses and some accessories, entitled "Masters LV x Koons", materialized in two special editions, launched, respectively, in April and October 2017. In both cases, the work of the artist Jeff Koons and his creative studio focused on presenting the purses and accessories with motifs from pictorial works such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* for the first edition or Claude Monet's[7] *Water Lilies* for the second. The launch of the first collection was celebrated at the Louvre Museum in Paris, while the launch of the second collection was celebrated at Koons' studio in New York.

Founded in 1854 as a company specializing in the creation of luxury trunks, Louis Vuitton expanded its business activities into ready-to-wear in 1997. It owns 95 commercial spaces, including boutiques and corners in department stores and airports. Firmly established in the luxury sector, the company offers products at fairly high prices, ranging from 250 euros for a small leather goods item to 35,000 euros for a crocodile leather purse.

7 See https://fr.louisvuitton.com/fra-fr/femme/masters-lv-x-koons/_/N-fipr04.

The collaboration between the contemporary artist Jeff Koons and Louis Vuitton was not an original or innovative strategy within the framework of what is called co-branding[8]. On the contrary, with a view to novelty and also as part of the search for notoriety other than commercial fame, luxury brands – and from time to time those of other segments as well[9] – produce so-called "capsule" collections designed by guest artists. One example is the Hermès brand, which has invited artists to revisit one of its flagship products, the *carré Hermès*. Between 2008 and 2015, this initiative resulted in Hermès products signed by Daniel Buren, Julio Le Parc and Hiroshi Sugimoto. In 2013, it was Alexander McQueen's turn to collaborate with artist Damien Hirst to propose a scarf, while in 2011 and for Miami Art Basel, Dior gave artist Anselm Reyle carte blanche to revisit the *Lady Dior* bag.

However, the collaboration between Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons seems to be involved in an approach that is part of an assumed desire to introduce both the product and the brand into a massively recognized and legitimate artistic heritage. Indeed, while the examples mentioned above tend to endow commercial goods with an artistic dimension as soon as they bear a double signature, that of the brand and that of the artist leaving their mark on the product, their recognition and the acceptance of their possible artistic value still require a certain knowledge of contemporary art. This is not the case with the "Masters LV x Koons" collection, whose name (Masters) was indicative of an artistic foundation that affected both the brand and the guest artist. The semantic shift reflected a well-targeted intention on the part of the brand: the Masters in question, i.e. the great masters of classical painting, were mobilized for Louis Vuitton. They gave the brand their legitimacy and their talent. Moreover, the choice to retain an artistic paradigm that is historically and institutionally shared through particularly well-known works of art such as the *Mona Lisa*, the *Water Lilies* or *The Tiger Hunt*, among others, and a contemporary artist emblematic of the sector – Jeff Koons is

8 As per Mendes and Rees-Roberts (2015, p. 64), "such art-fashion collaborations have become a routine part of fashion branding, co-opting artistic signatures for promotional appeal".

9 For example, in 2014 the retail brand Monoprix offered a collection developed with several street artists such as Nasty, Pro 176 and Tanc: see http://www.madmoizelle.com/collection-inspiree-street-art-monoprix-281427; it repeated the experience on the occasion of its 85th anniversary by producing a collection in collaboration with the artist Marion Lesage: see http://www.marionlesage.com; https://www.mono prix.fr/collab-marion-lesage-1960057.

the most expensive living artist in the world – suggest the desire to link tradition and modernity, an institutional and also economic recognition.

### 1.1.1. *Culturization of the purse, and portability of the work of art*

The symbolic transformation of Louis Vuitton brand products *by* Jeff Koons was thus based on two (transformational) movements: culturization and artification. The first does not affect the strategies mobilized by market players as much as the symbolic value of the goods. It is a movement that, from a semiotic point of view, manifests itself *in presentia*[10] and bears witness to the transformation, both material and visual, that determines the market good, in this case the purse. As the authors of this notion indicate, what is culturized[11] is the merchandise that borrows "certain processes from the cultural industries in general and from the editorial model in particular: pre-launch buzz, maintenance of fan clubs, creation of events, artificial production of rarity, starization and mediatization of creative bosses or engineers, etc." (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, pp. 162–163, author's translation). The second movement accounts for the metamorphic process that affects the actors involved in the market good. It is capitalized on as a process *in absentia* because it is part of a "virtualized" semiotic mode of existence (Fontanille 2003, p. 290)[12]. Both the process of culturization and artification are captured here as semiotic modes that determine the operations of enunciative praxis (Fontanille 2003, p. 284)[13] and "the *future of the object* –

10 According to structural linguistics, the relations between units *in praesentia* fall under the syntagmatic axis, while those *in absaentia* fall under the paradigmatic axis and designate associative relations (see Saussure 1916, pp. 172–175).

11 I must specify that I mean by this notion of culturalization a movement of cultural intensity that we should think of as "institutional" culture, which comes from a specific field: pictorial art, contemporary art, street art, book publishing, music, etc.; in other words, a certain legitimated culture that goes beyond the ordinary culture that characterizes *cultural beings,* that is, the "set of ideas and values that embodies an object of culture in a society while being constantly transformed by the circulation of texts, objects and signs" (see Jeanneret 2014, pp. 11–12, author's translation).

12 According to Fontanille (2003, p. 290, author's translation), "the virtualized mode [...] is that of the magnitudes that serve as a background for the functioning of the figures of discourse: the semiotic act then consists in the *realization* of a figure, sending another figure to the virtualized stage, and making them interact, so that, at the moment of interpretation, the enunciatee is led to come and go from one to the other".

13 "Enunciative praxis is [...] particularly concerned with the appearance and disappearance of utterances and semiotic forms in the field of discourse, or with the event constituted by the

the object here being any semiotic magnitude, the product of the signifying act, an utterance, or from the point of view of the *future of the subjects* – the subjects being in this case the partners in the semiotic interaction" (Fontanille 2003, p. 290, author's translation).

What is a purse? In the language of fashion, a purse is an accessory, that is to say, "that which comes with or after what is principal, essential [...] element associated with an outfit, but not part of it (bag, gloves, shoes, belt, etc.)"[14]. It is an everyday object that can be invested in emotionally in a more or less dense way. According to Jean Baudrillard (1968, p. 121), "every object has ... two functions: one is to be practiced, the other is to be possessed. The first falls within the field of the subject's practical totalization of the world, the other is an enterprise of abstract totalization of the subject by himself outside the world" (Baudrillard, 1968: p. 121, author's translation).

The purse is transformed by the symbolic dimension that emanates from the presence of a painting, such as that of Jean-Honoré Fragonard,[15] on its surface. Motifs belonging to an artistic paradigm are manifested on a good from a commercial paradigm. These motifs are deployed on a new medium that is supposed to bring about, without reproducing them identically, the visual qualities present in the original material medium. Beyond the inherent qualities of this commercial good leading to a culturization process, the presence of the purse, even if only ephemeral, on the occasion of a specific event in a museum and its arrangement in its space reinforces this culturization dimension. *Exhibited* at the Louvre, on a pedestal, during the evening celebrating the inauguration of the first edition "Masters LV x Koons", the purse was not *presented* but *re-presented* as a work of art. Its presence did not only refer to the purse object; it also referred to its *re-presentation*, in other words, to this process of reflexive duplication, which makes it possible to "show, intensify, duplicate a presence" (Marin 1981, p. 10, author's translation).

encounter between the utterance and the authority that takes it over" (Fontanille 2003, p. 284, author's translation).

14 "Accessoire", *Le Petit Robert de la langue française* (2006, pp. 15–16).

15 *La Gimblette. Jeune fille faisant danser son chien sur son lit*, 1770–1775, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.


**Figure 1.1.** *The purse from the "Masters LV x Koons" collection with motifs from Fragonard's Gimblette as presented at the collection's celebratory dinner at the Louvre and relayed on the Louis Vuitton brand's Instagram account. Photograph taken by Patrick Demarchelier for Louis Vuitton Malletier (screenshot taken on April 12, 2017). For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

The Louis Vuitton purse is culturalized through its inherent semiotic qualities, which introduce it into a space-time that denies the *merchant* and celebrates the *artistic*. Its visuality marks a process of "radiating the past into the here-and-now" that ensures the re-actualization of the object's instantiation. "The past of this instantaneity upsurges into the present of its observation while the distant pierces the scene of observation" (Beyaert-Geslin 2012, p. 64, author's translation).

The purse in the "Masters LV x Koons" collection is part of the paradigm of both "*objects of contemplation* [and] *objects of doing*" (Beyaert-Geslin 2012, p. 65, author's translation). The presence of the *Mona Lisa* motif on the Louis Vuitton purse, or any other motif from the pictorial works used for this collection, also marks a spatial shift, as the contemplation that the *Mona Lisa* evokes on this *object of doing* projects us into a space outside the purse:

> When we admire the *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre, an aura generated by the work itself can no longer be separated from a

> pragmatic aura methodically constructed by the museum, which is manifested by the successive frames, the security screens, the hanging in the center of the room and on the wall, the inclusion in a tour route, the reputation and all the *ceremonies that* range from the decorative border's pose to the media announcements[16]. (Beyaert-Geslin 2012, p. 66)

Let us note here, however, a disruption that occurs in the perception of the *object of contemplation* that the purse becomes, as well as in its performativity when compared to the *object of contemplation* that is a work of art. Contrary to the latter, the purse, while endowing itself with attributes derived from the artistic paradigm, remains an *object of doing* as soon as it can be touched, tried, carried, bought and thus extracted from its space of contemplation, that of the commercial space.

What then distinguishes the *Masters LV x Koons* purse from the work of art is its potential appropriation, its acquisition, despite the high price it might fetch. For beyond a possible sensitive dimension, its purpose is indeed the transfer of ownership, a transfer that can and must occur, not so much in a unique as in a serial way. While defending an exceptional and limited collection, the Louis Vuitton merchant instance deploys discourses – in the semiotic sense of the term – whose purpose remains commercial.

### 1.1.2. *The purse as an apparatus for commercial and artistic mediation*

As soon as the *Mona Lisa* motif was printed on the material medium[17] in other words the canvas of the Louis Vuitton bag, it underwent a symbolic transformation process. Placed under the sign of commercial exchange, the pictorial work acquired new formal, chromatic and textural qualities. Its new material medium featured the Louis Vuitton logo – at the bottom and on the right-hand side of each bag – and also the artist Koons' logo, affixed at the

16 In italics in the original text.

17 The material medium is a "place of emergence of forms" (see Dondero and Reyes Garcia 2016, author's translation), while the formal medium is determined by rules of inscription that reveal an enunciative process that "engages, constrains and modalizes ... a type of exchange, an ideal communication structure, and enunciative roles" (Fontanille 2005, p. 187, author's translation).

same level as the commercial logo, but on the left-hand side. The figurative monogram of the brand was also scattered over the surface of the bag, while metal letters forming the painter's name were inserted in the middle of the bag. The plasticity of the pictorial work was modified as well as its spatiality. From a two-dimensional work, the *Mona Lisa* was transformed into a three-dimensional commercial motif with new qualities in terms of use. The *Mona Lisa*'s new *material medium* made it possible to move from sensitive contemplation to personal appropriation: the *Mona Lisa* bag received an owner and had a use that was both utilitarian and symbolic, arising from a process of *distinction* involving three actors: Louis Vuitton, Jeff Koons and Leonardo da Vinci.

This observation implies that Louis Vuitton's commercial products, such as Louis Vuitton bags, already have a symbolic dimension that is part of the brand's marketing positioning, and is therefore linked to product, price, promotion and distribution policies. From a pragmatic point of view, the presence of the artistic in the merchant *restructures the overdetermination of the economic value of the good*. The product from the "Masters LV x Koons" collection amply justifies its economic value, in accordance with its symbolic value, while obscuring its relatively massive *reproducibility* dimension. The bag becomes an *artistic mediator* that conveys informational and axiological discourses about the authors of the artistic works that have been summoned and the artist Koons. Indeed, each bag presents in the inner part of its two sides information about the *exhibited* artistic work and the mediating agent – in this case Koons – making this exhibition possible. For example, in the *Mona Lisa* and the *Neverfull MM* bag, on one side there was a fairly exhaustive notice about Leonardo da Vinci and his work, and on the other side there was a second notice about Jeff Koons, his work and his involvement in his collaboration with Louis Vuitton.

The merchant good then adorned itself with mediator qualities, both merchant and artistic. Its quality as a commercial mediator was not new; as soon as it demonstrated signs that identified the presence of a commercial entity – logotype, motifs, standard colors, etc. – it could play the mediator role, i.e. as a device for publicizing and promoting the producer of the good in question. On the other hand, the role of an artistic mediator is relatively new and the staging of the latter function is new and innovative. Indeed, the entire purse, its outer and inner surface, functions as a device that ensured a

mediation that was as much commercial – the logo and motifs of the Louis Vuitton brand were abundant – as it was artistic[18], the latter also undergoing processes of hybridization. The artist Koons' simulacrum was projected onto the outer surface of the purse from its logo-typed representation, a representation granted *a priori* to organizations, lucrative or not, but rarely, if ever, to artists, whose presence was marked by a handwritten signature, this "materialized trace of the artist's body" (Heinich 2008, p. 98, author's translation), here staged and realized as a commercial discourse[19].

This commercial projection of Jeff Koons' presence through the Louis Vuitton purse also, but also implicitly, testifies to Koons' artistic production processes, which arise from and depend on a collective organizational functioning. At the head of a studio of 100 assistants[20], Koons presents himself as the gray matter of any creative process he signs off: "Basically, I am the one who provides the ideas [...] I am not physically involved in the production. I don't have the capacity, so I go to the most competent people for that"[21]. The approach is not unlike that of an artistic director of a ready-to-wear or haute couture brand. Although we are dealing with two different paradigms – creative for fashion, artistic for Jeff Koons' work – the organizational issues determining these paradigms are very similar. What is more, when Jeff Koons represented himself in the "Masters LV x Koons" collection through a monogram as a logotype, he made this hybridization, whose aim was to introduce fashion into art but also art into fashion, even more solid. It was Jeff Koons, for promotional purposes, who evoked the similarities between his artistic work and the activities of Louis Vuitton: "And we both have the same objective. We wanna make something that

18 I understand this dual dimension of mediation following the example of Davallon (2003, p. 43, author's translation): "An action implying a *transformation* of the situation or of the communicational device, and not a simple interaction between already constituted elements, and even less a circulation of an element from one extreme to another". As for market mediation, I am following the work of Caroline Marti, for whom mediation refers to "the speaking out attributed to a brand in the public space to affirm it as a social actor and particularly here as a kind of cultural mediator" (Marti 2015, p. 4, author's translation).

19 See: https://fr.louisvuitton.com/fra-fr/articles/jeff-koons-x-louis-vuitton.

20 "Think Big. Built Big. Sell Big", *The New York Times*, article published June 15, 2014.

21 "Récit d'un employé de studio de Jeff Koons" *Art Media Agency,* article published August 24, 2012.

really uses materials, uses texture, color, communicates, creates something that's desirable; Louis Vuitton does that and my art tries to do that too"[22].

Finally, the inscription of informational elements on the inner surfaces of the purse, borrowing from the format of the *decorative borders*, these boxes, which accompany a museum exhibition in a paratextual way, assume the role of an artistic mediator, transforming the entire commercial property into *a condensed museum exhibition space*. Thus, the product is called upon to set up a process of intermediation between the work of art, the market good and its user, so that it can even proceed to a democratization, not so much reflexive – the market good is sold at a very high price, which makes it undemocratic and accessible – as referential: the market good assumes the role of an *artistic encyclopedia in situ*, through the information provided by the decorative borders, but also *in extenso*, through the referrals it can make to the art world in general. In this regard, for example, when Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons called on the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes to use the image of Rubens' painting *The Tiger Hunt*, the institution seized the opportunity, communicating the event on its Facebook page while underlining the symbolic and effective benefits of this loan: "We have undeniably gained visibility via posters in Paris and via social networks"[23].

## 1.2. Book publishing at the service of the fashion brand's cultural value

Beyond the canonical products stemming from the ready-to-wear or haute couture paradigm, it is interesting to report on the fashion industry's product policies that divert the standard offer and position themselves in sectors other than their own. I propose here to focus on the way in which two emblematic brands of the sector, Louis Vuitton and Dior, both belonging to the LVMH group, claim cultural legitimacy in connection with the field of literature. This was achieved through collaboration with the French publishing house Gallimard. Two collections of short stories are analyzed: *La Malle*[24], published in 2013, and *Lady*[25], in 2016, two editions that

22 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLFRiEyOBuo.

23 "Collaboration Louis Vuitton x Jeff Koons, acte II: sous la lumière de Claude Monet", *Madame Figaro,* online, article published October 26, 2017.

24 See: http://fr.louisvuitton.com/fra-fr/produits/recueil-de-nouvelles-la-malle-version-francaise-006 291.

25 See: https://www.dior.com/couture/fr_fr/la-maison-dior/les-livres/lady-nouvelles.

demonstrate "cultural legitimacy" (Bourdieu 1979, p. 371)[26], because of the partnership with Gallimard and the authors'[27] prescription, proposing short stories inspired by the contents of a Louis Vuitton trunk and the Dior *Lady* purse model.

### 1.2.1. *A book as beautiful as a trunk (Louis Vuitton)*

The collection of short stories, *La Malle*, presents itself as a cultural product developing, through a series of short stories, a certain *literary potential of the brand*, a potential drawn from the imaginary that its original product, La Malle, arouses. The leather goods representing the brand's emblematic products are transformed here into a *pretext* and *pre-text* for literary creation. A pretext insofar as it justifies the motivations for this collaboration with Gallimard Editions. Pre-text insofar as archives collected by Gaston-Louis Vuitton and stored in a trunk of the brand constitute the starting text of the literary creations proposed by the invited authors: "Here is the praise of La Malle by the great authors of today"[28].

While the various news items in this edition can be thought of, from a strategic point of view, according to the principles of brand content, its editorial enunciation can be approached according to the communicative process of unadvertization that "tactic of advertisers that aims to distance itself from the most recognizable forms of advertising in order to substitute it with forms of communication that are supposed to be more discreet" (Marti 2015, p. 6, author's translation). This relatively more discreet form is deployed through the collection *La Malle*, which presents a relatively atypical "editorial enunciation" (Souchier 2007, pp. 23–38, author's translation), deviating from the canonical norms of book publishing. If the editorial enunciation makes it possible to "give an account of the text in its linguistic, visual, physical and material completeness..." (Souchier 2007,

26 In the way that Bourdieu (1979, p. 371) problematizes the question of cultural legitimacy, I retain here the dimension of "the immediate accessibility of the product offered and the signs of cultural legitimacy" (author's translation). Later in this section I discuss both the immediacy and the visibility of the external signs that provide Louis Vuitton and Dior with this immediate and consumable cultural legitimacy.

27 Such as Virginie Despentes, David Foenkinos, Nicolas d'Estienne d'Orves for *La Malle* and Camille Laurens, Alexandre Maksik and Nelly Karpélian for *Lady*, among others.

28 Foreword to the book *La Malle*, unsigned. We can therefore hypothesize that the auctorial voice of this enunciation emanates from both Gallimard and Louis Vuitton.

pp. 23–38, author's translation), it also makes it possible to underline the possible enunciative polyphony (Bakhtine 1977) determining a publication. Thus, when we observe an element that is part of what Genette (1987) calls "paratext", in this case the book cover, we note three distinct spaces engraved on a smooth leather surface.

Following an approach specific to visual semiotics as developed by Floch (1985), we identify, from the top to the bottom of the book's cover, a first space, scriptural, using a relatively large white font, announcing what is assumed to be the title of the literary work: *La Malle*. This is followed by a second, figurative space, using the formal codes of a trunk drawn in golden yellow, presenting distinctive signs from a particularly trivial commercial and communicational base: the Louis Vuitton brand logo. The third and last space of the inscription, by way of a signature, appears at the very bottom of the book cover, with the mention Gallimard, using the same font, smaller in size, and in the same color as the title of the work. The absence of an explicit auctorial voice marks the atypical nature of this statement. We are faced with a "toposyntax" (Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 153) that, from a rhetorical point of view, seems elliptical because it removes a unit (the name of an author or an auctorial collective) traditionally present on such an inscription surface. However, it is possible to associate the linguistic form of a *trunk* with the iconic form representing a *trunk* itself metaphorically endowed, by a process of "suppression-addition" (Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 360), with an auctorial voice. The Louis Vuitton brand logo is there to represent not only the creator – enunciator of the trunk object – but also, by correspondence at the signifier scale, that of the work *La Malle*. From this point of view, we can consider that we are facing an unadvertization process, since the Louis Vuitton brand tends to erase its promotional signs in favor of a non-advertising production, while being present in the space of enunciation that is book publishing. At the same time, the visibility of signs belonging to authoritative communication spaces – the Louis Vuitton and Gallimard motifs are distinctive elements of a class – induces a certain recognition that:

> It is consequently charged with the legitimizing, reinforcing capacity which objectification always possesses, especially when, as is the case now, the logic of structural homologies assigns it to a prestigious group so that it functions as an authority which authorizes and reinforces dispositions by giving them a collectively recognized express. (Bourdieu 1984, p. 231)

In this case, it is the immediate recognition of the partnership of two prestigious groups, although this partnership is paradoxical because it is part of two radically opposed spaces according to a generalized *doxa*: the frivolity of fashion *versus* the nobility of literature. This paradoxical marriage contributes to the production of a cultural good when one of its two enunciators represents a creative industry (fashion, luxury). Yet, while the good is clearly identified as coming from a cultural industry, that of publishing, it seems to represent more the creative industry and luxury fashion.

A closer look at the cover of *La Malle* reveals a series of visual shapes reminiscent of the codes of luxury and more precisely those of the Louis Vuitton brand. In terms of texture, the leather covering the book is reminiscent of the materials used to make Louis Vuitton products. In terms of color, in addition to indicating a luxurious universe, the golden yellow of La Malle (Louis Vuitton's iconic trunk object) is also reminiscent of the color of the Louis Vuitton logo as well as the golden padlocks used to close the brand's trunks.

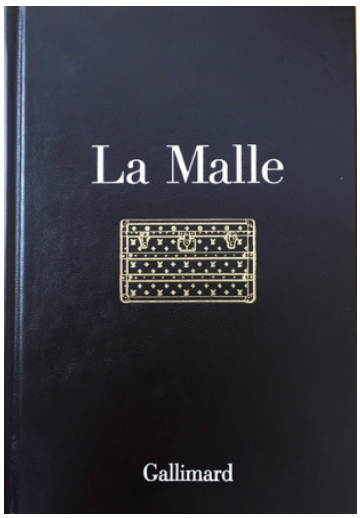


**Figure 1.2.** La Malle *literary collection (photograph taken by the author, personal collection)*

These topological, chromatic and figurative characteristics, combined in the inscription space that is the cover of the book, produce a discursive co-presence (Fontanille 2003, p. 288) in which two modes of existence can be distinguished. The "realized mode" (Fontanille 2003, p. 289)[29] corresponds to the cover as an inscription surface and as a book object. From this realized mode, a second mode emerges, the "potentiated" (Fontanille 2003, p. 289), which projects us into a possible discursive universe of an advertising nature, according to which the cover would be organized like a medium that does not promote *La Malle* as a book-type object but as a commercial object, produced by a commercial structure as well. *We are therefore faced with a transformation that rests on strain between discretion and ostentation of the qualities of a medium – photography, poster – likely to support an advertising discourse, a strain that tends to minimize the discontinuities between the two media and, above all, to make those of the medium with an advertising function invisible*. This eventual erasure of the advertising medium can be interpreted following the example of the unadvertization process that, in my opinion, encompasses another, less visible process, that of the *claim to immediation*[30]: the advertising medium claims to erase itself faced with the book medium, whereas in reality it merely intertwines with the latter, producing a hybrid discourse endowed with codes that are both advertising and literary, a discourse that triggers "the reality of an ever more invasive *hypermediation*" (Jeanneret 2019, p. 109, author's translation).

### 1.2.2. *Literary praise for luxury goods*

From a strategic point of view, this book edition can be described as brand content strategy with a sustainable dimension. After the luxury edition of the *La Malle* collection of short stories, Gallimard collaborated with Dior (although Dior could also be considered as having collaborated with Gallimard) offering a new edition based on the same editorial format of collections inspired by an emblematic brand accessory, the *Lady* Dior purse. Eight novelists were invited to create a literary work around the Lady purse. The purse, like *La Malle* for Louis Vuitton, became a source of literary inspiration for these writers, who were also published by a house as

29 "The *realized* mode is the very mode by which enunciation brings together the forms of discourse with a reality, a material reality at the level of expression, a reality of the natural world and of the sensitive world at the level of content" (Fontanille 2003, p. 289, author's translation).

30 Or "a world present without mediation" (see Jeanneret 2019, p. 109, author's translation).

prestigious as Gallimard. Without claiming the impossibility that an *object of doing* can trigger a creative and precisely literary process, what we see here is the process of creation by constraint and notably by order based on the existence of a commercial good, and therefore, once again, pretextual.

The cover of the book *Lady* presents a topological organization similar to that of *La Malle* and whose visual elements discreetly but effectively recall those of the Dior brand's visual identity. The same typography and the same color that the brand uses for its communication were used for the inscription of the book's title, accompanied by the word "news". A removable platform surrounding the book shows a relatively blurred and distant drawing of the purse, placed on an indeterminate surface and whose shadow is cast on it. The figurative dimension of the drawn object recalls, for those observers with the necessary cultural stock, the shape of the *Lady* purse and creates a link between the title of the collection and the drawing on the cover. Furthermore, the presence of a woman (*lady*) can be metonymically projected because of both the title of the collection and the figurative form of its cover. You have to go to the back cover, and in particular the back of the flowerbed placed on this space, to definitively make the link between Dior and the book edition in question: "An essential accessory of feminine desire, the Lady Dior bag inspired eight writers", followed by the names of each of them.

With a value ranging from 2,550 euros for its miniformat to 4,900 euros for its version in smooth embroidered calfskin, this commercial good became a pretext for literary creation at a time when literature was being used to promote luxury. Although more discreet from a visual point of view than the *La Malle* collection, the *Lady* collection allows the Dior brand and its product to take center stage, to give itself cultural legitimacy, to deviate from the traditional codes of commercial promotion and, *in fine*, to acquire a certain nobility, itself different from that which the frivolity and artificiality of fashion can bring about.

## 1.3. The popularity of fashion accessories

We have previously observed how the Louis Vuitton brand has implemented a commercial strategy claiming to be artistically mediated. We have also observed how artist Jeff Koons positioned himself within this creative and promotional process. The collaboration with Louis Vuitton was

not this artist's only co-branding action. A few years earlier, in 2014 and on the occasion of a retrospective devoted to him at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the artist collaborated with the H&M brand, a member of the Swedish group Hennes and Mauritz, one of the 10 largest groups in the fashion and luxury goods industry (Godart 2016, p. 99) and one of the main patrons of this retrospective. As part of this sponsorship and with a view to generating a return on investment, Jeff Koons designed a purse for H&M bearing the motif of his *Balloon Dog*[31] painting, which was sold in limited editions in some of the company's American stores and at the Whitney Museum. Similarly, during the presentation of this retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou, of which H&M was once again a patron, the brand reissued the *Balloon Dog* purse with a much more selective distribution strategy: it went on sale on December 10, 2014, between 8:30 and 11:00 am, at the H&M boutique on the Champs-Élysées and on the brand's Website.

This approach, combining patronage and derivative products within the framework of a policy developed by a commercial industry, is emblematic of the injunctions made to cultural institutions in terms of cultural policy and the search for equity capital, but also, for what we are particularly interested in here, of the way in which a creative industry develops a process of enhancement and promotion of its products by imitating the editorial model (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, pp. 162–163). Two values emerge and intersect through this approach. The first is the inclusion of a fashion accessory, from the fast fashion world, in the institutional and financially legitimated artistic sphere. Note that the orange version of Jeff Koons' *Balloon Dog* sold in 2013 for $58.4 million. Even though the sale price of the *Balloon Dog* purse was only 39.99 euros, its introduction into the artistic sphere through Jeff Koons' intervention gave it a differential symbolic value: rarity is specific to luxury goods and created here for a product associated with a brand specializing in the mass production of ready-to-wear goods and accessories and whose pricing policy introduces it, in principle, into the so-called low-end segment. Because of the distribution policy adopted for the sale of the purse in question, the rarity created around the product contributed to its symbolic, effective or financial value. The H&M purse revisited by Koons was transformed from a massively produced and inexpensive good into a coveted piece of merchandise, quickly becoming unavailable because it was a limited edition, which contributed to the densification of its symbolic as

31 See: http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/celebration/balloon-dog-0.

well as material value. Indeed, offered on online auction sites such as eBay, its price ranges from 100 euros for a single edition to 1,200 euros for an edition bearing the artist's autograph signature. Likewise, this culturization process of the purse, both in terms of product and price policy, enabled the brand to *claim* a certain authenticity and uniqueness of its good, despite its industrial or semi-industrial reproducibility (Benjamin 1969, pp. 71–72). The evolution of the market value of the *Balloon Dog* purse is thus comparable to the evolution of the price of an artistic work and, in this case, it depends directly on the *presence* of the artist's hand. Following the example of Anne Beyart-Geslin (2012, p. 70, author's translation), the gap is therefore underlined, from a semiotic point of view, between the "basic (Floch) or existential values invested in the object, [the] 'original' values, that is to say economic, [the] syntactic and modal values (the designer's *can-do* and *know-how*)".

### 1.3.1. *The value of a luxury item through the club model*

The economic value of a fashion product from the luxury and high-end segment carries a notorious symbolic dimension, contributing to the process of *ostentatious consumption*[32]. However, it meets an extension of its symbolic value linked to the way in which the products of a ready-to-wear brand are *launched* and distributed on the market. For example, the Supreme brand[33], which specializes in skateboard clothing, produces massively but distributes selectively. This selection does not only concern the areas where the brand's products are distributed. It also involves selective sorting among potential buyers:

> At Supreme, the serious stuff happens mostly on Thursdays. Every week, a curious merry-go-round takes place. In dribs and drabs and under high surveillance, the buyers selected earlier in the week by the Parisian staff enter the shop from 11 am, while a few tourists are kindly passed over. [...] As a result, the potential buyer has every interest in having registered on a website (whose address circulates among insiders). Every Monday morning, he receives an e-mail with a meeting place in Paris where he should be an hour later. There are often more

32 See Veblen (1970).

33 See: https://www.supremenewyork.com.

> than a thousand of them on the spot. Divided into small groups and then drawn at random by the order department employed by the shop, the lucky ones are given a schedule for the following Thursday[34].

Thus, the brand and its products have a dimension that is both *close* – the style of the products on offer being of the so-called "streetwear" type – and *distant*[35], since these same products are inaccessible by their distribution methods. It is these methods that contribute to the increase in the market value of the brand's products, since the buyers selected by Supreme resell the brand's products immediately after the assets purchased on "private Facebook sites such as Supreme Paris France or Supreme France Buy/Trade"[36]. The prices charged in these resale processes vary and can reach very large sums, "six times more expensive"[37] than the initial price. Likewise, the distribution policy through the selection of a few *elected* consumer representatives is partly reminiscent of the principles of the club's *socioeconomic model*, where a certain number of people, qualified as *subscribers* to this or that service – cultural as far as the theory of the socioeconomy of cultural industries is concerned – benefit from it in an exceptional way. The club model allows its users to belong to a privileged community and also to have access to selective services. The case of Supreme's distribution policy, with its consequences for pricing policies, is similar to this club model for the operation of a cultural, not a creative, sector. Thus, a second strategy is highlighted here, which consists of the use of socioeconomic business models and processes for certain brands of the creative industry, such as fashion, to borrow from the cultural industries. Finally, the global strategy of this brand contributes to building around it an imaginary world linked to rarity and selectivity, values that are specific to luxury. It also enables working *collectively* on the economic value of

34 "Comment la marque Supreme a transformé l'achat d'un sweat à capuche en quête du Graal", *franceinfo.fr,* article published on May 16, 2018. See: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/mode/comment-la-marque-supreme-a-transforme-l-a-sweat-a-capuche-en-quete-du-graal_2487915.html.

35 I am paraphrasing here Walter Benjamin's formula about the aura of the work of art, "a strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be" (see Benjamin 1969, p. 23). The cult dimension, in Benjamin's sense, is very present in the modality of distribution of Supreme goods, as the latter become rare.

36 "Comment la marque Supreme...", article quoted.

37 "Comment la marque Supreme…", article quoted.

Supreme products. This collective value is therefore based on this process of:

> Brand building [which] is also a source of value in the collaborative paradigm. Here again, it is necessary to build the belief in the capacity of actors within the collaborative logic to really contribute to brand building. In particular, it is necessary to forge the belief that so-called social networking sites have such a capacity. (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, pp. 48–49, author's translation).

Finally, the brand's value does not emanate from the estimation and assessment of the qualities of products alone, but from their modal values. It is a question of the brand's know-how, in particular with regard to the distribution process and thus of the creation of an imbalance between supply (selective and rare) and demand (massive).

## 1.4. The exhibited advertising poster

Between 2014 and 2016, Louis Vuitton published four series of advertising photographs that explicitly displayed the signature of the photographers who took them as well as information, not so much on the products marketed by the brand as on the photographic gesture through which the brand and its products were promoted. All of the advertisements bore a title, the inscription of which was placed off-stage, outside the photographic frame. The first three series read: "an original series of photographs by Annie Leibovitz, Juergen Teller and Bruce Weber"; the fourth series read: "a curated series of artwork by: Juergen Teller, Bruce Weber, Lightning by Tetsuya Nemura & VW of Square Enix". As previously mentioned, each advertising image displayed the signature of the name of the photographer who took it, appearing above the information transcribed here.

The inscriptions placed below the space reserved for the photographic scene carried a double thematization. The first concerned the way the observer should *read* the photographic scene, and in this case, it fell under what Dondero (2014) describes as a "thematization of enunciation". This thematization is based on the fact that the image provide "instructions for understanding and describing not only how it is made but how it reflects on

how it should be made: its norms, its rules, its missions" (Dondero 2014). As far as our corpus is concerned, it is the verbal inscriptions that manifestly provided the instructions for creating and capturing the photographic scene and which then functioned as a device that imposed on us a certain reading and reception of the photographic scenes in question. The second thematization dealt with the construction of an *image-event*, the event being external to the visual qualities of the image. This second thematization seemed to obscure the value of the ready-to-wear collection proposed by the brand and orient the observer's grasp of the campaign's photographic value.

### 1.4.1. *Self-referential legitimations*

The advertising series proposed by Louis Vuitton proceeded with their generic qualification[38] in a self-referential manner while attempting to defy the canonical advertising rules of the fashion world. This qualification was made concrete through the use of terms such as *original series*, *curated series of artwork*, terms that created a sense of tension between the advertising aspect and the artistic aspect of these scripto-iconic enunciations. While, from the point of view of their purpose and editorial enunciation, these series were presented in order to promote a product and a brand, they needed to be presented in a way that was in keeping with this orientation, which Jean-Marie Floch summarizes around two axiological dimensions: practical values, on the one hand, and utopian values, on the other hand (Floch 1990, p. 130). However, we note here a differential way of organizing the enunciation of these series, which can also lead to a new axiological orientation.

The thematization occurring outside of the photographic frame was the result of an enunciation reminiscent of that accompanying pictorial artistic works or photographs with an artistic vocation. The topology granted to the Louis Vuitton enunciator, introduced off-stage in the same way as the thematization of the image and its photographic auctoriality, itself supported by the mention of the names of the photographer-producers of the photographic scene, assigned the Louis Vuitton brand a double role: that of

38 That is, "the relationship between stratified textual configurations in social memory on the one hand and the expectations of receivers constituted through operations of perceptual and semantic memory/prefiguration on the other" (see Basso Fossali and Dondero 2011, p. 69, author's translation). The authors refer here to the notion of *enunciative praxis* likely to contribute to the "stabilization of visual genres" (Basso Fossali and Dondero 2011, p. 69).

the producer of a ready-to-wear collection but also, and above all, that of the co-producer of the photographic event, the curator legitimizing the original and artistic aim of the photographic images on offer.


**Figure 1.3.** *Louis Vuitton advertising campaign with the caption "an original series of photographs by Annie Leibovitz, Juergen Teller and Bruce Weber". Photographs taken by Annie Leibovitz and Jurgen Teller for the Louis Vuitton Malletier brand*[39]*. For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

By following a path, in this case advertising enunciation uses the procedures of artistic enunciation, as well as by developing a rhetoric other than that of the advertising discourse, the campaign proposed by Louis Vuitton tended, on the one hand, to represent a field, here artistic, in another, advertising. On the other hand, the Louis Vuitton brand attributed to itself, in a self-referential manner, a status other than that of a merchant. It positioned itself on stage and re-presented itself as an expert in the field of photographic art, leaving the role of commercial authority to assume that of artistic curator. At the same time, this approach allowed the brand to distinguish itself from the spectacular and competitive space of fashion advertising photography.

The spectacularization of fashion is constructed from visual productions, in other words, still or moving images that offer discourses with sometimes "hyperbolic" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2002, p. 297) and sometimes "illusionist"

39 Source: http://www.dudessinauxpodiums.com/2015/01/louis-vuitton-series-2.html.

(Pavis 1980)[40] qualities. In general, the spectacle offered by the fashion industry through the images it conveys aims to establish narratives that are extraordinary. However, this aim for the extraordinary tends to become commonplace. Thus, even a print advertising campaign is likely to play a decisive role in differentiating the competition. In this way, the photographic and advertising series proposed by the Louis Vuitton brand stand out for their original and spectacular dimension, which can however be situated at the level of scriptural and not iconic enunciation. Indeed, the spectacularization of this proposal comes from the way in which the Louis Vuitton brand qualifies itself as an artistic agent, thus instituting a process of legitimization through a communicative approach.

### 1.4.2. *Bricolage and illusion: advertising the advertising*

This strategy amounts to a *diversion of the advertising discourse*. From the point of view of its communication contract, which consists of inscribing advertising campaigns in "an instituted space defined by the kind of discourse" (Maingueneau 2009, p. 11, author's translation) that can be an online magazine or blog, all of these images give themselves to be seen and read as advertising. From the point of view of their editorial enunciation and their enunciative praxis, these advertising series are subject to a bricolage process, in which "objects out of context are preserved in order to be able, one day, to dispose of them in arrangements that will have nothing to do with their primary uses" (Floch 1990, p. 174, author's translation). Here, advertising is projected in a generic context that tends to minimize the promotional and commercial dimension of its purpose – to promote a collection, to sell merchandise – and that convenes heterogeneous "collocations" (Floch 1995, p. 38) – advertising and artistic – while implying this process of enunciative praxis. The bricolage approach makes it possible to hold an advertising discourse without it being perceived as obsolete or ordinary, and which leads to political issues as soon as the discursive hybridization succeeds in disguising the commercial status of the Louis Vuitton enunciator and transforming him or her into an artistic agent. Louis Vuitton positions itself as a co-enunciator, not of a ready-to-wear collection, but of a photographic event that tends to make its advertising discourse *transparent* and bring about another, artistic one. In this artification process

40 According to Pavis (1980, p. 168, author's translation), illusion "presupposes a sense of knowing that what we see in the theater is only a performance".

of the advertising campaign, we are witnessing an illusive staging, a re-presentational policy of a promotional nature that aims to *requalify* as an artistic instance the entire commercial unit and not only its products. The illusive, artificial dimension of this approach is materialized through a re-presentational policy that consists of revaluing Louis Vuitton's advertising strategy by introducing it into an artistic realm and into institutional spaces that are not linked to promotional processes of a commercial nature, but to the enhancement of works of art.

In this way, this advertising campaign is part of a meta-communicational approach that transforms images that are ordinary *a priori* into an artistic and media event and therefore into an extraordinary situation. But the brand also proceeds to the implementation of a *diverted bricolage* in order to maintain the conceptual word by placing the advertising object – already transformed by its enunciation into a work of art – in a space that densifies the legitimization of the artistic dimension of a work. Thus, the advertisements in question were *exhibited* for three consecutive years and came out of the canonical spaces dedicated to media advertising. While the very first series was presented in 2014 in the Louis Vuitton boutique in Shinjuku, Tokyo, the second series took place at Palazzo Ruspoli in Rome in 2015, and the third at 180 The Strand in London in 2016. Consequently, once the advertisements in question reached a space reputed to be outside the market, a space legitimized as a social space intended for sensitive disinterested sharing or education, they broke free from the consumerist sphere and reached a new status, a status they had otherwise sought to acquire through their inherent enunciative strategies.

Advertising posters are transformed, as Jean Davallon suggests, into *musealia*, which are "less to be considered as things (from the point of view of their physical reality) than as beings of language (they are defined, recognized as worthy of being preserved and presented) and forms of social practices (they are collected, catalogued, exhibited, etc.)" (Davallon 1992, p. 104, author's translation). As a well-defined social practice, the advertising poster, for example, can be transformed into a language being collected, catalogued and displayed for historical observation and analysis of that particular communicative genre. But Davallon (1992) also points out that "sociologically speaking, objects are or become 'museum objects' because they are so decided at one time or another by a body or person entitled to do so" (p. 104, author's translation). Thus, the museum appointment of an object is the result of a transitive process through which a qualified

authority, external to the object, legitimizes its introduction into the museum institution. This does not seem to be the case here, since it is the authority producing the object that decides to transform it, arbitrarily, into a *musealia*. Once again, it is the commercial advertiser, Louis Vuitton, that grants itself the legitimacy to introduce its own communicational productions into spaces likely to give them *musealia* status. This at least clouds the status of the commercial brand, which positions itself both internally – in terms of its presence in the visual enunciation that determines its advertising posters – and externally, in terms of the role it assumes as a producing authority entitled to introduce the advertising poster in a space with an artistic vocation.

## 1.5. The advertising poster as a testimonial discourse

While the Louis Vuitton brand opts for a re-presentational policy that gives it an artistic dimension through its advertising campaigns, the Italian luxury ready-to-wear brand Miu Miu uses its advertising campaigns as a means of expressing an event. In 2015, this brand, which is part of Prada Holding BV, offered a series of advertising images for its fall-winter 2015 collection whose enunciation scene seemed to depart from the canonical forms of advertising photography in the sector. To account for this generic but also communicational hybridization, I will mobilize the work of Dominique Maingueneau on discourse analysis and that of Anne Beyaert-Geslin on the semiotic analysis of photography.

In addition to framing *the instituted space* in which enunciation takes place, an *enunciative scene* also determines "the *constructive* dimension of discourse, which 'sets itself up', establishes its own enunciation space of" (Maingueneau 2002, p. 515, author's translation)[41]. Similarly, following the work of Anne Beyaert-Geslin, it is stressed that "it is necessary to make a trivial distinction between two types of practices; *production practices* due to the photographer, and *reception practices* that reflect the social perception of photography" (Beyaert-Geslin 2006, p. 120). We assume that the advertising campaigns produced by fashion photographer Steven Meisel, a well-known photographer who is highly recognized for his photographic expertise in this particular sector, are part of a specific enunciation scene – the advertising genre – but tend to side with a *production practice* as well as

41 The notion of an enunciation scene is used here in a broader sense than that of verbal discourse, that is, discourse in the semiotic sense of the term.

*reception* that defies the discourse instituted by the advertising genre, at least in an obvious and partial way.

### 1.5.1. *The caption as a thematic and generic engagement*

While we accept that "the caption is the basis of the meaning of the image" (Beyaert-Geslin 2006, p. 130, author's translation), we must also point out that fashion advertising photography very rarely introduces captions to guide the reading and interpretation of the figurative scene. As for the campaigns proposed by Miu Miu, I have selected two captions accompanying two advertising photographs; the captions take place outside the frame reserved for the iconic and precisely figurative enunciation of this series of fashion photographs with advertising status. Thus, we read: "Subjective Reality. Four ladies on a bench. New York, NY. Mia Goth. Maddison Brown. Hailey Gates. Stacy Martin, by Steven Meisel" and "Subjective Reality. Rush hour switches. New York, NY. Maddison Brown, Hailey Gates by Steven Meisel".


**Figure 1.4.** *Miu Miu advertising campaign with the caption "Subjective Reality. Four Ladies on a bench. New York, NY. Mia Goth. Maddison Brown. Hailey Gates. Stacy Martin by Steven Meisel". Photograph taken by Steven Meisel for the brand Miu Miu (Prada S.A.)[42]. For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

42 Source: https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/7529/lessons-we-can-learn-from-miu-mius-subjective-reality.


**Figure 1.5.** *Miu Miu advertising campaign with the caption "Subjective Reality. Rush hour switches. New York, NY. Maddison Brown. Hailey Gates by Steven Meisel". Photograph taken by Steven Meisel for the Miu Miu brand (Prada S.A.)[43]. For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

Both the first and the second caption introduce a double discourse, qualifying and descriptive. The qualification emanates from the interpretation that the caption proposes for the two figurative scenes, qualified as subjective reality, which appeals more to the sensitive faculty of the observer of the image than to a cognitive faculty. The figurative scene is thus *qualified*, and this qualification is to be linked to the descriptive discourses that follow: rush hour commute for one, four ladies on a bench for the other. Among all the information that the figurative scene offers us, the caption chooses to direct our gaze and thus focus on a precise theme. Thus, the caption maintains a *grounding* relationship with the photographic scene, as defined by Roland Barthes:

> In all these cases of grounding, language obviously has an elucidating function, but this elucidation is selective; it is a meta-language applied not to the totality of the iconic message but only to some of its signs. (Barthes 1964, p. 44, author's translation)

43 Source: https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/7529/lessons-we-can-learn-from-miu-mius-subjective-reality.

In this way, the two captions seem to promote the *realization* of certain figurative themes in place of others, notably those of subjective reality in relation to a state of being (rush hour commute and four ladies on a bench).

The caption also *spatially engages* the figurative scene and is a *dual engagement*[44] of the instance producing this visual utterance. The latter is staged by the reference to the name of the photographer Steven Meisel and also to the name of the brand Miu Miu. The explicit inscription of the photographer of the figurative and photographic scene, accompanied by the marker of agentivity, places him in the position of certified producer of the scene. The inscription of the brand name within the same space dedicated to the caption also makes it possible to interpret Miu Miu as the *delegated producer* of this enunciative scene rather than as a manufacturer of ready-to-wear collections. It is at this scale that the brand gives itself to be seen, re-presenting itself as a producer of an event unrelated to that of the new ready-to-wear collection, which is, let us not forget, at the origin of the conception and creation of this advertising campaign. The event in question is linked to a specific space, the city of New York,[45] but also to a certain number of real people, "questionable in terms of identity and doing" (Odin 2011, p. 51, author's translation), which builds an *emotional relationship* between the observer of the figurative scene and its protagonists.

### 1.5.2. *The presentation of the ready-to-wear collection as an event*

In general, an advertisement, in this case a fashion advertisement, has a double discourse. First, an informational discourse because of which one becomes aware of the new ready-to-wear or haute couture collection that the advertiser is proposing. Then, a promotional discourse that allows us to contemplate the staging of this collection, a staging that has a precise intention: to arouse desire, to make people adhere to the values of the brand, possibly to make them buy, etc.

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44 The engagement corresponds to this instance of discourse that constructs the simulacrum of a presence: "Thus the discourse is able to propose a simulated representation of the moment (*now*), the place (*here*) and the people of the enunciation (*I/You*). The engagement renounces extent, because it returns as close as possible to the center of reference, and gives priority to intensity; it re-concentrates the instance of discourse" (see Fontanille 2003, p. 99).

45 We will see later how the scene projects a simulacrum that is also temporal.

When we consult a magazine title, possibly specialized in fashion and beauty, and discover Miu Miu's advertising campaigns but also other campaigns proposed by other brands in the same segment, we cannot help but notice a figurative divergence linked to the enunciative strategies and discursive configurations that determine each other. Generally speaking, a canonical, *standardized* fashion advertisement proposes an "all-encompassing scene" (Maingueneau 2002, p. 516) in keeping with the type of discourse to which its *text*[46] belongs and the pragmatic status traditionally conferred upon it. When we look at what we call standardized advertising, we see a thematization that focuses on the advertiser's collection, on the actors that contribute to its value, such as the group and the models, for example, and on a general atmosphere that allows us to construct what we call brand *positioning* in marketing. While certain fashion advertisements, like those of Miu Miu, are part of an enunciative process of engagement "where we are directly put in relation with the gaze of the represented character, who is a delegated enunciator who looks at us and who has been looked at by the photographer" (Dondero 2014, author's translation), it seems interesting here to underline that this "direct appeal to the spectator's gaze" (Dondero 2014, author's translation) tends to divert our gaze from the ready-to-wear collection and guide it toward an event, itself qualified by the caption. In terms of ideas, and although the practices of reception of these photographs invite us to *read* them as advertisements as soon as their communication contract imposes it to us[47], it is possible to look at them differently, and to seize them as documentary photographs.

In her book *L'image préoccupée*[48], Anne Beyaert-Geslin (2009, p. 63, author's translation) describes documentary photography as "a representation of an event that raises awareness of the tension between subject and place", while the event is "a spatio-temporal scene in which something *happens*" as soon as this something is staged and enunciated. The event always requires the presence of a third party, a witness who will leave

46 In the semiotic sense of the word.

47 But also their encompassing scene, which according to Dominique Maingueneau should allow us to proceed to a reception practice consistent with the aim of the *text*: "when we receive a leaflet, we must be able to determine whether it falls within the type of religious, political, advertising discourse, etc., in other words, on what encompassing scene we must place ourselves to interpret it, in what capacity (as a citizen, consumer, etc.) it appeals to the reader" (Maingueneau 2009, p. 110, author's translation).

48 Notably Chapter 3 on the event scene (see Beyaert-Geslin 2009, pp. 63–74).

a trace of it and who will, according to Anne Beyaert-Geslin (2009, p. 65, author's translation), "describe it as a *performative word* that carries out the action at the same time as it expresses it". Reporting on an event, leaving a trace of it, is a testimony that positions itself "in relation to a *collective actor* and leaves for the dead, for the absent, for a given social group" (Beyaert-Geslin 2009, p. 65, author's translation). Finally, the testimony of the event and its trace are the result of a double process: the presence of the witness and the mediation carried out by the journalist (Beyaert-Geslin 2009, p. 65).

When we look at the two photographs taken by the photographer Steven Meisel, we are faced with a staging which, in addition to the fact of challenging our gaze as observers, positioning us in the place of the photographer's, thematizes a place, witnesses a situation, which leave an almost historical trace of a given culture. The ready-to-wear collection goes beyond the focal point of iconic and scriptural enunciation, where normally, or even normatively, fashion advertisements tend to introduce captions naming a commercial season in relation to the collection presented. Thus, the advertisements in question contribute to re-presenting the Miu Miu brand through the event they thematize as a non-exclusive commercial instance, capable of carrying this performative word and transforming a commercial discourse into a *sensitive and testimonial discourse*. At the same time, this re-presentational policy allows the fashion brand to transform its ready-to-wear collection into a *media event of general interest* because it testifies for a collective agent, in the words of Anne Beyaert-Geslin.

While the two examples analyzed here are advertising processes that aim to *disguise* the promotional dimension in the commercial sense of the term, Chapter 2 will look at how this attempt at disguise also takes place in intermediate promotional strategies, in connection with the distribution policies of fashion brands.

# 2

# Investing Symbolically in the Museum, Transforming the Store: Re-presentation as an Iterative Event

With a view to enhancing the material heritage of an haute couture or ready-to-wear fashion house, but also for promotional purposes, fashion brands proceed with the non-commercial presentation of their previous but possibly also recent or even current collections. This is done by occupying spaces that are not identified as commercial spaces, either boutiques or department stores: museums, art galleries and exhibition spaces are regularly invested in by the fashion industry, particularly the luxury goods industry.

As Nicole D'Almeida points out:

> All major French companies are conducting the same historical reconstruction process. The luxury industries are certainly the most committed (jewellery, champagne, couture, leather goods) and use time – in its dimension of durability and duration – as a distinctive sign, a factor of excellence for the brand. (D'Almeida 2001, p. 21, author's translation)

However, it should be recalled that this dimension of durability and duration also responds to other injunctions and constraints. On the one hand, there is the "pressure on [fashion museums] from large organizations in the sector that see museum exhibitions as a marketing tool, especially if they celebrate the work of living designers who will benefit from this publicity"

(Crane 2012, p. 250, author's translation). On the other hand, the need for brands to conceal the commercial dimension of their goods, a concealment that must be done in a *total* manner. If, for example, collaboration with an artist within the framework of a limited collection contributes to the enhancement of the *artistic* dimension of the collection in question, this approach is not sufficient, or is no *longer* sufficient in itself. It must be accompanied by other strategies that allow the merchandise and industry in general to be present where marketable goods are not traditionally expected. This chapter will focus on how the processes of artification and cultivation emanate from the formal management of physical spaces dedicated to the enhancement of merchandise.

## 2.1. From the boutique to heritage enhancement sites

Flagship multibrand and department stores and digital platforms are the main distribution areas for luxury and high-end fashion. According to the sociologist Frédéric Godart, "the construction of brands takes place through the distribution modes of clothing, with the fashion industry often constituting a laboratory for the transformations taking place in the world of distribution in general" (Godart 2016, p. 89, author's translation)[1]. Indeed, actors in this industry design physical distribution spaces with a visual identity and positioning consistent with those of their brands. In a general ratification movement, brands' shops often opt for layouts that borrow the formal codes of art galleries by introducing pictorial works and artistic installations into their enclosed areas. In this case, *the shop mimics the artistic and cultural space* (although the opposite is also possible). This is the case, for example, when we compare Louis Vuitton's flagship store in Paris located on the Champs-Élysées to the Galerie des Ateliers d'Asnières of the same brand[2]. The latter is located in the space where the company's first workshops were set up; it is designed as an exhibition space open only on certain occasions, allowing the history of the brand to be retraced. I attended a guided tour of the Gallery on April 9, 2017. Similarly, the French

1 In this excerpt, Godart refers to the work of Abernathy *et al.* (2000, pp. 5–31).

2 On this subject, see also Schiele (2019, pp. 23–51). The author discusses, on the one hand, how objects of the present coexist with those of the past in the case of museum exhibitions of fashion brands, and, on the other hand, how these specific exhibitions contribute to the *commodification* of the museum.

luxury ready-to-wear brand Chloé inaugurated a cultural space called Maison Chloé in 2017, located a few meters from the brand's headquarters, a space that I also visited the same year and whose communication structure I was able to observe.

At the same time, with a view to creating brand content and building transmedia storytelling, luxury fashion brands are implementing other re-presentational policies by occupying different spaces related to cultural or artistic practices that are not intrinsically linked to fashion industry advertisers. In this case, they opt for the exhibition of their more or less recent heritage through retrospectives organized at their initiative. The modalities of these re-presentational processes are relatively formatted and the corpus I am mobilizing here will allow me to put forward the hypothesis *that a certain standardization and even industrialization of the forms of distribution and diffusion of luxury fashion is taking place*[3]. The exhibitions take place in spaces with a high cultural density representing a certain institutional or commercial legitimacy, as far as galleries specialized in contemporary art are concerned. They are fairly short in duration and are free to visit.

### 2.1.1. *The place where the brand's heritage is developed: the advertiser's dual entity*

The Galerie d'Asnières is organized around two levels. The first floor presents in particular the birth and evolution of the Louis Vuitton brand based on archive documents and key objects representing the period when the brand was solely specialized in the creation of trunks. The second level has been designed in a historical continuity with what is presented on the first floor, but its scenography gives greater emphasis to recent collections, particularly from the brand's ready-to-wear creations. When looking at the brand's Website and the section dedicated to this heritage enhancement area, the iconic themes are accentuated, with photographs presenting either the Gallery's spaces or the objects on display. As for the verbal information, it is

3 Throughout the first and second parts, there is more discussion of *formats*: distribution and promotion formats, for example. The industrialized and standardized dimension of the fashion industry's representational policies will be dealt with more in the third part, during a reflection on the hegemonic formats that luxury fashion implements and on its "media capitalism" (Jeanneret 2014).

constructed in the manner of "moralizing discourses" (Odin 2011, p. 50) and "spectacularizing" (Odin 2011, p. 56)[4] deviating from a historical aim constructed from "documenting" discourses (Odin 2011, p. 58)[5]: "customer files, sales registers, posters and other period photographs are close to trunks, suitcases, bags and ready-to-wear collections. In the Gallery, one can thus discover the personal belongings of great aristocrats, princes or maharajas, film stars or great couturiers, as well as simple anonymous people in love with a job well completed".[6] We are faced with discourses that project the visitor into a communicative space endowed with values linked to an underlying axiological system and emanating from the attributes of the users of Louis Vuitton brand products: aristocrats, maharajas, princes or film stars. These discourses construct a reference space which, in addition to providing more or less concrete information, opens toward a symbolic universe linked to luxury.

Similarly, when you look at the design of a Louis Vuitton brand boutique, you can see that it appropriates the codes of art exhibition spaces. In the boutique located on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, many commercial objects are not *displayed* but are *exhibited* because of a scenography where the shelves are replaced by glass boxes that can protect the merchandise, staged as works of art, thus producing a concrete and symbolic distance from the goods in question. Lighting also contributes to the enhancement of each commercial product and to its display as a unique work of art[7]. One can thus read the scenography of the boutiques of emblematic luxury fashion brands such as:

4 The spectacularizing discourse constructs a communicative space where an affective relationship is established with the people (and not the characters). In this case, the affective dimension is built between the visitors, the founder Louis Vuitton and Louis Vuitton as a commercial entity with a history.

5 Unlike moralizing discourse, the enunciator of a documenting discourse is questionable in terms of identity, action and truth.

6 See: http://fr.louisvuitton.com/fra-fr/notre-histoire/asnieres#/home.

7 I should point out that during a visit to this shopping mall, I was forced to stop taking photographs after it was pointed out to me that it was prohibited. Specifically, it was possible to be photographed in any area of the shop, but it was forbidden to take photographs of this space focusing on the products or the general design of the shop without the photographic thematization of a human presence.

> This exemplary approach [which] suggests the possibility of modeling esthetic presence, which museology undertakes pragmatically by isolating the object, keeping the observer at a distance and thus constructing artistic insularity. If the frame and the base symbolize this *added auratic structure*, it is the entire museum structure which, through the scenarization of the space and the inscription of the art object in a visitor's route, contributes to its enhancement and allows it to signify as such. (Beyaert-Geslin 2012, p. 66, author's translation)

While these museum structures can be seen at the Galerie d'Asnières, a *self-proclaimed* exhibition and storytelling venue, one might add, of the heritage of the Louis Vuitton brand, the same structuring, allowing the commercial object to be grasped as an object of contemplation, is offered in the commercial spaces. One of the Louis Vuitton boutiques in New York is deliberately designed on the model of an art gallery where merchandise and artwork interact. The works of Japanese artist Shuji Mukai and Italian Giuseppe Penone are special commissions for the interior design of the boutique. We are therefore witnessing a hybridization of spaces that leads to a confusion of genres: the shop – commercial space – imitating the museum, the art gallery, but also the gallery or museum exhibition imitating the commercial scenography, as we shall see later.

The third floor of the Galerie d'Asnières, which is more dedicated to the Louis Vuitton ready-to-wear collections, displays archives and contemporary merchandise whose history has not yet allowed them to be classified in the paradigm of the heritage collection[8], while demonstrating the brand's ready-to-wear fashion shows on large screens. Walter Benjamin's theory that "Industrial exhibitions as secret blueprint for museums: Art: industrial products projected into the past" (Benjamin 1999, p. 176) is pertinently actualized through these practices. *The historical, documented, archived valuation of the brand is ostensibly projected into the present*. Present, current industrial or semi-industrial commercial goods are *re-presented* in an auratic discourse evoking the past.

8 As defined by Davallon (1992, p. 110, author's translation): "The recognition of the work as a 'monument'. It is noted that it is great works, of exceptional character, which are the expression of genius. This exceptional character will moreover be institutionally guaranteed and legitimized by experts' committee meetings".

**Figure 2.1.** *The third floor of the Galerie d'Asnières (photographs taken by the author). For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

### 2.1.2. *Patrimonialization and unadvertization: from forms to formats*

We encountered the same device when we visited Maison Chloé, described by the online edition of *Vogue Paris* in this way:

> At number 28 rue de la Baume in the 8th arrondissement, in the heart of a Haussmann-style building and a few cobblestones away from its headquarters on Avenue Percier, Chloé is installing a five-storey cultural space entirely dedicated to the history of the house. Inaugurated on the first day of Haute Couture Fashion Week on July 2, Maison Chloé will showcase its world, its Parisian chic and its instinctive femininity. The visit continues on the 5th floor where the archives dating back to 1952, when the Parisian house was founded, are on display. For the occasion, Chloé called on Judith Clark, who has imagined the place as a museum. At the inauguration and as the first exhibition, the house paid tribute to the photographer Guy Bourdin, with the exhibition 'Femininities – Guy Bourdin', revealing pictures of the house since the 1950s – it is worth noting that Chloé is the brand most photographed by – in *Vogue Paris*[9].

9 See: https://www.vogue.fr/mode/news-mode/articles/maison-chloe-rue-de-la-baume-paris-archives-ex positions/52645. Emphasis added and author's translation.

In addition to highlighting both the event proposed by the Chloé brand and the title *Vogue Paris* itself, the wording of this text marks a spatiotemporal engagement in a prescriptive way by thematically focusing as much on Parisian luxury (Haussmann-style building, eighth arrondissement of Paris, haute couture fashion week) as on the cultural, even artistic dimension given to the ready-to-wear house and its collections (a place imagined as a museum). The visit to the exhibition is, like that of the Galerie d'Asnières, reserved for people who have managed to register online; it is only in the form of a guided tour that is free of charge. Two floors are dedicated to this event. The first floor is presented as a space that highlights the history of the Chloé brand and its products; as for its scenography, it differs little from that of a Chloé boutique. The products are either presented on shelves or re-presented as works of art that have been enhanced by time and space. For example, a dress of the brand is *displayed* in a glass box. While this method of presentation has a functional dimension, since the protection of the dress by glass allows it to be better preserved, it also evokes a *utopian* dimension to use the terms developed by Jean-Marie Floch on the subject of advertising. As for the second floor, where the photographs Guy Bourdin made for Chloé are exhibited; it also presents products from these same collections. It is possible, for example, to contemplate an *exhibited* dress, but also a photograph for a magazine of the time showing the same dress, which produces a reciprocal indexical relationship in which the dress quotes the photograph and vice versa.

This event is both a cultural and media one, giving rise to a process of exogenous media coverage – the specialist press relays the event – and endogenous, since the exhibition itself functions as a media device. Indeed, at the end of the exhibition, the public, mostly female, is invited to pose in a space marked by the Chloé brand logo and whose decor is reminiscent of a photographic setting. This modality inviting the visiting public to take on the role of a model, likely to pose for the simulacrum of photographer Guy Bourdin and to promote the products of the Chloé brand has two functions. The first is to leave an intimate trace of the experience when visiting the exhibition. The second is to publicize this trace and thereby contribute to the process of publicizing the exhibition in question. By mobilizing the "small form"[10] of the hashtag with examples such as *maison chloé* or *chloé girls*,

10 A form that "is based on a complex technical writing that allows, through a user's punctual gesture, to produce important effects of meaning and strong economic returns" (see Candel and Gomez Mejia 2013, p. 142, author's translation).

among others, the photographs taken in this particular space are published on social networks such as Instagram and reinforce the *unadvertization* process of the event. These modalities allow us to grasp the exhibition proposed by the Chloé brand and its cultural venue, as well as the exhibition of the Louis Vuitton brand and the Galerie d'Asnières, as constitutive elements of "the propensity of brands to appropriate social forms in order to legitimize themselves in the social space and build their authority" (Marti 2015, p. 6, author's translation). Far from a standard advertising strategy, the intertwining with culture, or even art, allows brands to appropriate codes that belong to social spaces other than exclusively commercial spaces and thus to re-present themselves as double instances producing materially commercial goods and symbolically cultural goods, or even works of art in some cases. This dimension is further accentuated in the museum exhibitions of fashion brands that I propose to address in what follows.

## 2.2. The museum exhibition: a communicational pretext

Numerous haute couture and ready-to-wear collections are presented in museum spaces dedicated to fashion. In Paris, for example, the Palais Galliera is dedicated to the promotion of national and international fashion heritage, while the Musée des Arts Décoratifs regularly devotes retrospectives to couturiers who have left their mark on the history and evolution of fashion. Similarly, in an international dimension, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has a section dedicated to fashion. This is the Costume Institute[11], whose program focuses on monographic collections – retrospectives devoted to a fashion designer or brand – or thematic collections. These spaces offer events that are part of a referential process when an authority such as an institution organizes an exhibition of an haute couture or ready-to-wear house. For example, in 2017 the Musée des Arts Décoratifs presented a retrospective devoted to the Dior brand, which was particularly exhaustive and effective in terms of attendance. Similarly, the musée Bourdelle in Paris presented an exhibition in 2017 entitled *Balenciaga, L'œuvre au noir*, part of a series of exhibitions devoted to Spanish fashion[12]. All of these are part of the cultural policies of the museum institutions aimed at promoting creative industries and crafts. The measures

11 See: https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/the-costume-institute.

12 See: http://www.bourdelle.paris.fr/fr/exposition/balenciaga-loeuvre-au-noir.

implemented in the framework of these cultural events do not differ, *a priori*, from the classic measures of exhibitions initiated by cultural venues and devoted to art or culture. A pricing policy is applied[13], contrary to what happens when luxury brands, on their own initiative, stage and exhibit themselves, not in their private spaces provided for this purpose, but in spaces dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of art, culture and science. The exhibitions offered directly by advertisers in the fashion industry are undoubtedly conceived as a brand content marketing process based on the principle of *donation*: there is no charge to visit these exhibitions. Brand content is in fact thought of by brands – regardless of their sector – as "something of value that the brand makes available free of charge, [it] sees itself as a gift" (Bô and Guével 2009, p. 61, author's translation)[14]. In France, the Chanel brand was one of the first to exhibit at the Grand Palais around themes related to its emblematic products, such as the exhibition *La petite veste noire*[15]. In what follows, we will look at how such an exhibition process allows fashion industry brands to offer a distribution channel of a symbolic nature. In this process, the brand self-qualifies itself as an artistic instance and thus proceeds to its re-qualification and legitimization without going through a channel external to its communication policies.

### 2.2.1. *Staging a symbolic distribution: from the discontinuous to the continuous*

In 2015, the Louis Vuitton brand designed the *Volez, Voguez, Voyagez* exhibition, initially presented in Paris at the Grand Palais, before being shown in other cities such as Tokyo in 2016, Seoul in 2017, New York in 2018[16] and Shanghai between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. It is therefore important to underline that this traveling exhibition has a significant lifespan, having started in 2015 and continuing to tour in different countries and continents.

13 With more than 700,000 visitors, the *Dior* exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD) proved to be particularly profitable in terms of admissions and image for the museum: https://fr.fashionnetwork.com/news/Plus-de-700-000-visiteurs-pour-l-exposition-Christian-Dior,933613.html#.XF1zhi17TOQ.

14 This logic of donation has its origins in the work of Marcel Mauss (2007).

15 See: https://www.grandpalais.fr/fr/evenement/la-petite-veste-noire.

16 See: https://fr.louisvuitton.com/fra-fr/heritage-savoir-faire/nycvvv#the-exhibition.

I had the opportunity to discover the exhibition *Voguez, Volez, Voyagez* during its Tokyo edition, in the Kojimachi district, in May 2016. Its expanded device could be grasped well before visiting the exhibition itself. As the Kojimachi district is relatively far from the center of Tokyo, visitors had the opportunity to get there by traveling in a minibus provided for the occasion and decorated in the colors and motifs of the exhibition. Departing in front of the Louis Vuitton boutique in the Ginza district, visitors could buy tickets for their transfer – free of charge – as well as the exhibition itself, while visiting the brand's commercial space. In this process, the brand became a mediator of the exhibition, ensuring the movement of visitors, who themselves had a dual status: visitors to the boutique and visitors to the art space. A first interweaving, even a first discursive hybridization – in the semiotic sense of the term – took place, modifying the exhibition's structure. Insofar as the latter directed and controlled the gestures of its users, we can consider that the whole visitor's journey, from the shop to the exhibition, via their presence in the minibus, was part of an exhibition device *in extension*. In this way, the exhibition can be thought of as an *extraordinary event* – it was not part of a commercial policy but of a cultural positioning of the brand – while being grasped as a process of extension of the market experience.

Just like the exhibition of Louis Vuitton's old and recent heritage at the Galerie d'Asnières, the *Volez, Voguez, Voyagez* exhibition gives the brand's merchandise a dual status. Far from seeing their status as merchandise canceled, these objects become *museum objects*, in the words of Jean Davallon, previously cited. The exhibited merchandise can tell a story according to a precise communicational context – structured by the museum's scenography and its enunciation – and produce symbolic discourses that determine the posture of their enunciator, in this case the Louis Vuitton brand. As its name suggests, the exhibition was organized around the theme of travel,[17] with the promise of modes of travel: sky, sea or land. Indeed, distinct spaces, each staged according to a specific travel mode, were presented to visitors to the exhibition with the aim of immersing them in each mode. For the car journey, visitors found themselves in a long tree-lined road, for the rail journey, in a luxury train carriage, and so on. Each area featured trunks created by Louis Vuitton for one type of trip or another,

17 A theme that relates to the original marketing positioning of the Louis Vuitton brand, initially specialized in the creation of luxury travel trunks.

and archives – letters, designs, logos, etc. – retracing the company's evolutions and innovations. As part of this dialogue between past and present, each space, in addition to containing verbal information about Louis Vuitton, displayed items from the brand's different ready-to-wear collections for more illustrative purposes, while images of the runway shows from these same collections were projected continuously. This obviously reminds us of the organization of the third floor of the Galerie d'Asnières, whose scenography highlighted the same elements.

This exhibition can be observed as a *discontinuous discourse*[18], itself supporting the advent of an event, "perceived as such only because it is the result of mediation" (Gorin 2006, pp. 316–319, author's translation). Its discontinuity results from its extraordinary and iterative dimension. Extraordinary, as soon as the Louis Vuitton brand leaves a commercial space to position itself on another, non-market space, producing a break in its standard discourse. Contemplating merchant objects invested with a certain history, such as trunks dating from the beginning of the 20th Century, but also those more recent ones, present on the shelves of Louis Vuitton boutiques 2 years earlier, bears witness to an approach that consists of presenting merchandise produced in an artisanal manner for trunks or semi-industrial for ready-to-wear collections as a unique, non-reproducible work. Indeed, the brand's products, such as certain handbags, are *displayed* on pedestals, thus invoking their uniqueness and artistic insularity, while the canvas used in the manufacture of the brand's leather goods is transformed into a pictorial work displaying the Louis Vuitton brand logo. Thus, it is not only the event as an enunciative device that is extraordinary, but also its statements, in this case all of the products on display.

The event is iterative, in that it follows a narrative setting with repetitive motifs: after being presented at the Grand Palais in Paris, the exhibition took place in Tokyo, then in Seoul, South Korea, New York and Shanghai. During this itinerary, the exhibition's dedicated Website also followed an iterative path, announcing the contextualized event at each stopover: presentation of the private viewings, opening nights and interviews with the personalities invited to take part in the event.

18 "In discursive semiotics, the opposition *continuous/discontinuous* is manifested as an aspectual category which subdivides the durative aspect into *continuous durative/ discontinuous durative*" (Greimas and Courtès 1982, p. 59).

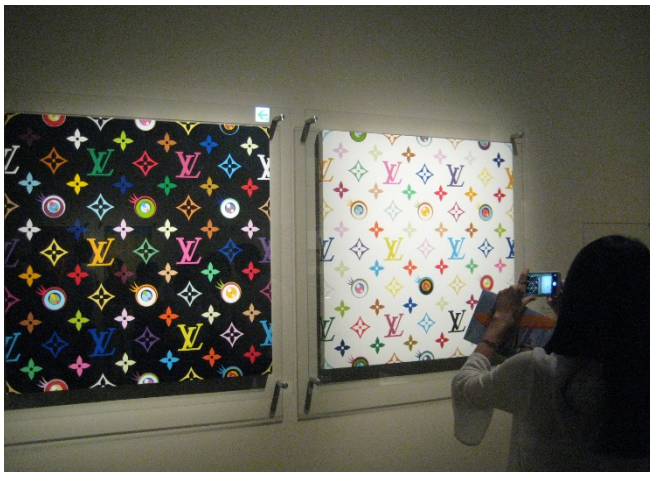

**Figure 2.2.** *The Louis Vuitton canvas on display (photograph taken by the author). For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

### 2.2.2. *The image of a work of art: symbolic distribution and artification*

In addition to producing travel storytelling through its scenography and journey, the *Volez, Voguez, Voyagez* exhibition ostensibly transforms Louis Vuitton merchandise into works of art. When certain handbags were placed on a pedestal within the gallery that hosted the exhibition, they acquired not only the status of *musealia* because they were listed and classified in order to be exhibited, as Jean Davallon pointed out, but also, symbolically, that of a *unique object* because it is re-presented as such (which would bring it closer to the uniqueness of a work of art).

In the same way, when Louis Vuitton celebrated the launch of its "Masters LV x Koons" collection, mentioned above, the celebration took place at the Louvre in Paris. In order to ensure consistency between the historical dimension and the artistic and heritage value of the pictorial works used in this collection of handbags, the Louvre seemed to be the most relevant venue for the brand's event and media communication. Such an event can only intensify its interest when it becomes a media event, relayed as much by the brand as by other bodies, such as the general or specialized press. With this in mind, Louis Vuitton mobilized the Instagram social media platform to communicate the spectacular dimension of the event through two

visual themes: worldliness – the presence of personalities from what is known as show-business – and collection in relation to the works of art it appropriates. For example, an April 12, 2017 publication, with the spatial deictic dimension *Musée du Louvre,* presented the French actress Catherine Deneuve posing next to a pedestal on which was *displayed* a handbag from the collection in question reproducing the pictorial work *La Gimblette* by de Fragonard. In the background was a painting reproducing both the theme of *La Gimblette* and the logotypes of Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons, which I have previously presented and analyzed. The whole of this enunciation, which proceeded to the visual duplication of the theme of *La Gimblette,* but also of that of Louis Vuitton – through the multiplication of the logotypes present in the various inscription formats – was also supported by the image caption, an indispensable tool and ally of the publications of this social network. Also, it read: "Catherine Deneuve photographed by @PatrickDemarchelier before Fragonard at the Louvre in celebration of Master's, a new collaboration between #LouisVuitton and Jeff Koons. See more from the event now on Instagram Stories". In addition to the diversion that took place in terms of a pragmatic and symbolic dimension when the handbag and the canvas behind it were presented as being *a Fragonard*[19], it was the work of art that was also diverted by the transformation of its copy into an original.

## 2.3. Distribution of marketable goods and contemporary art: the full and the void

It has been accepted for some 20 years now that the (museum) exhibition is the result of a communication strategy, a text in a semantic-pragmatic conception, that is to say in the sense of a "mechanism that needs to be updated by an addressee in an interpretative process" (Eco 1985, pp. 66–72, taken up by Davallon 1999, p. 15; Schall 2018, p. 264, author's translation). It is also accepted that "the *exhibition* is a constitutive dimension of the museum as a medium: organizing the space for an encounter, it allows – and at the same time rules – the relationship that is established between the objects and the public" (Davallon 1992, p. 105, author's translation). On the basis of this twofold observation, it seems possible to think of the commercial space, the shop or department store, following the example of the museum, and the presentation of commercial goods, a device understood

19 I return to this process of diversion in Chapter 6 of this book.

in its re-presentational dimension, following the example of the exhibition. In this way, it is appropriate to question, on the one hand, what the museum does to the merchant space and, on the other hand, how the museum exhibition transforms the merchant collection. To do this, two re-presentation policies linked to that of distribution are analyzed: the artistic events offered by the department store Le Bon Marché and the spatial layout of the new Celine boutique in New York.

### 2.3.1. *Cultural missions and department stores*

Located at 24, rue de Sèvres, Le Bon Marché[20] is the first French department store:

> Historically, the first department store, *Au Bon Marché,* was opened in Paris in the mid-19th century by Aristide Boucicaut (1810-1877). The name became *Le Bon Marché* in 1987. Department stores are often major tourist attractions in the cities where they are located, such as *Le Printemps* or *Les Galeries Lafayette* on Boulevard Haussmann in the Opéra district of Paris. (Godart 2016, p. 89, author's translation)

While Walter Benjamin describes the Parisian passages as "the invention of industrial luxury" (Benjamin 1999, p. 31), the *merchant* but also *social life* of the department store is also one of them. At the same time, the department store constitutes "a formidable exhibition space for all the communications of the brands' products and of the brand itself" (Berthelot 2005, p. 44, author's translation).

With a mission to offer a multiplicity of products belonging to well-defined segments, the department store must ensure that this multiplicity does not hinder the *selective* dimension that a place like Le Bon Marché must defend.

To put it another way, faced with the proliferation of brands and products, the department store has to make up for the overflow of goods it offers. Art and culture then become a *helper* in the quest for *distinction* and *selection*. As can be seen on the Website of the LVMH group, owner of Le

20 See: https://www.24sevres.com/fr-fr/le-bon-marche?gclid=CjwKCAiAs8XiBRAGEiwAFyQ-eoEKp wIJvjZC_cTNAK6PudWeMtKoV5HdVEZLGbKkjfS0WrLnrl24BoC5iMQAvD_BwE.

Bon Marché, as early as 1987, 3 years after the group took over the store: "Le Bon Marché became a very Parisian upscale department store where the values of authenticity and culture are closely intertwined with the pleasure of buying".[21]

While the cultural mission of Le Bon Marché has its origins in the creation of the store with cultural and artistic events initiated by its founder Aristide Boucicaut, exhibitions of pictorial, visual and photographic works of art multiplied from the 1980s onwards. Monumental installations of contemporary art have taken place there since 2016, once a year, in the central area of the store. The first artist to be called upon for this event was Ai Weiwei (2016), followed by Chiharu Shiota (2017), Leonardo Erlich (2018) and Joana Vasconcelos (2019)[22]. While in the first 2 years, the works on display benefited from scriptural mediation – decorative borders were displayed in different areas of the shop to explain the artists' approach – in the 2 years that followed, the exhibitions were the subject of guided tours, conducted by mediators upon registration. As a *customer* with a 24 sèvres card[23], I received a poster by post – an invitation to the *Branco Luz – Joana Vasconcelos* exhibition – which also allowed me to register for one of the guided tours of the exhibition. I made the latter on January 26, 2019.

### 2.3.2. *From cultural mediations to market mediations (and vice versa)*

The department store then appropriates the formal codes of a museum or exhibition space and transforms itself into a media and communication apparatus with a "*symbolic operativity*" (Davallon 1992, pp. 102–103) that is typical of traditional museum exhibitions. The discourse of the guided tour's mediator opens with a temporal grounding in the history of Le Bon Marché and its relationship with art and culture, thus legitimizing the intervention and presence of the shop in this field. The organization of the guided tour also functions as a form of discourse – in the semiotic sense of the term – with elements that allow the artistic and cultural authority to be constructed,

21 See: https://www.24sevres.com/fr-fr/le-bon-marche/historique.

22 See: https://www.24sevres.com/fr-fr/le-bon-marche/vu-au-bon-marche/joana-vasconcelos-interview.

23 The "24 sèvres" card allows the store's customers to accumulate points related to the amounts spent and to benefit from certain advantages such as exceptional discounts, receiving the magazine *Vu au Bon Marché* and invitations to openings of cultural events.

not only of the exhibiting artist, but also of the body producing the event. Thus, tools that make the guided tour easier and that connote a certain know-how in the mediation process accompany the latter: from the headphones distributed to each visitor connected to the mediator's microphone to the shelves that *extend* the visit with the presentation of several installations previously created by the guest artist, all of which displace the relationship established with the commercial space in which the visit takes place.

It seems appropriate to place more emphasis on the temporality of these monumental exhibitions. As previously indicated, they occur once a year, but their program takes place during the month of January. According to the exhibition's mediator, there is a correspondence between the month of January, which, according to the temporal organization of the shops, is characterized as a *white month*, and the artistic installations, which must respond to a chromatic constraint: they must be white. But this temporality, which coincides with that of the winter sales, allows the department store to preserve its *social level* in a certain way:

> When the sales take place, the semi-luxury clothing shop ceases to present itself for a few weeks as a "universe of personalized service and precious decor" and becomes a "universe of storage and self-service", at the same time as the "social level" of a large part of the clientele changes. (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017, p. 344, author's translation)

When on a Saturday afternoon, in the middle of winter sales, the Bon Marché visitor turns into a *flaneur*, the device staged in the department store directs the visitor's gaze towards the work of art and the mediation offered to him. Contrary to what Walter Benjamin says about the commercial stroll, in which the visitor "abandons himself to the phantasmagorias of the marketplace" (Benjamin 1999, p. 14), what the installations exhibited at Le Bon Marché offer is a diversion from this abandonment: contemplation aiming, *a priori*, at the work of art and thus managing to create a *void* in the overflow offered by the merchandise on sale. This void is supported by mediation:

> This sort of incorporation – internalization, if you like – of scholarly discourse into the spatial organization of the presentation that seeks to regulate and prefigure the discourse of the visitors (what I have called the discourse of commentary)

> [and which] makes the media device of the exhibition go beyond the framework of a relationship between the individual and the object, becoming a real *communicative device* between an audience and a presentation. (Davallon 1992, p. 108, author's translation)

And in this communicational device, there is also a re-presentation and re-qualification of the market authority.

The latter in fact appropriates the tools specific to the museum's exhibition system. Although the main work of the installation takes place inside the store, its partial presence in the showcases of the latter must be underlined. Indeed, after an introduction on the history of Le Bon Marché, the mediator of the guided tour invited us to leave the store and begin the tour in question by contemplating the shop windows. The latter were empty of merchandise and adorned only with excerpts from the installation *Branco Luz,* accompanied by decorative borders that specified both the artist's approach and the invitation extended to him by the department store: "Original creations for the Bon Marché Rive Gauche. Installations from January 17 to February 17; Come into the light! At the invitation of Bon Marché Rive Gauche, artist Joana Vasconcelos presents the exhibition Branco Luz (white light). On this occasion, she reveals a Valkyrie named Simone, composed of two monumental, aerial creatures. In Nordic mythology, the Valkyries are warrior goddesses. Joana Vasconcelos reinterprets this mythological figure and confers protective virtues on her Valkyries. Find the continuation of the exhibition Branco Luz by Joana Vasconcelos inside the Bon Marché Rive Gauche".

From a semiotic point of view, the shop window maintains an *indexical relationship* with the shop it represents, a relationship that is established on the principle of the joint presence of the index and the object it designates (Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 210). But this relation leads to a second, pragmatic, promissive one. The shop window and its layout are part of the promise and are thus organized as an enunciation that imposes a precise horizon of expectation. What the shop window presents functions as a metonymy of what someone is likely to discover inside the store. At the same time, the window is a space where the selection and combination of objects emblematic of a season is carried out. It represents the essence of the merchandise that the store reveals in its interior space. When we choos to

*commutate* the merchandise with the installations of the artist invited by the logo, we change the meaning of both the statement produced – a handbag *does not mean* the same thing as a work of art – and its enunciation – the shop window posing the scene of enunciation that allows the production of meaning. In this way, the shop window becomes a call for artistic strolling and proceeds to the *diversion of the fetishism of the merchandise*[24]: by exhibiting the work of art, the shop window imposes a new fetishism and contributes to the reification of the latter.

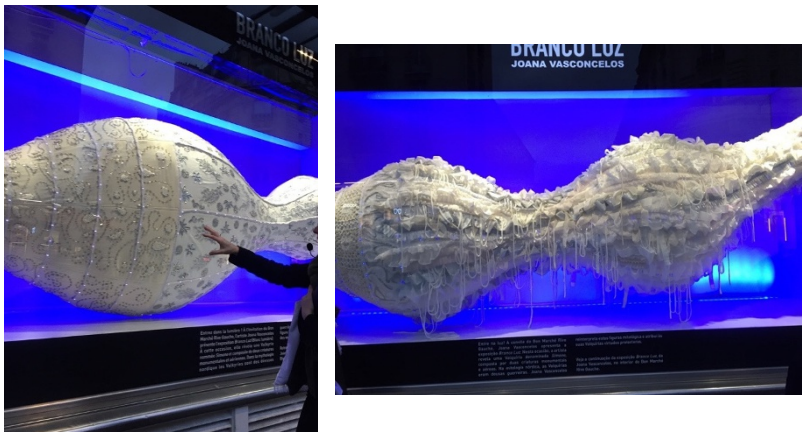


**Figure 2.3.** *Bon Marché showcase and mediation of the Branco Luz exhibition. Art work* The Valkyrie *by Joana Vasconcelos (photographs taken by the author). For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

In Chapter 1, I referred to the notion of *musealia* as developed by Jean Davallon, designating language beings who undergo a process allowing them to access a museum space. On this occasion, I focused on the transfer that Louis Vuitton brand advertising campaigns undergo when they leave their canonical media space – they are media advertisements likely to appear in the press or in public poster spaces – to reach and be exhibited in art galleries. If, generally speaking, any museum exhibition mobilizes supporting discourses that contribute to the process of artistic and cultural

24 I arrive here at Barbara Carnevali's reflection on Guy Debord's work. According to the researcher, "Debord interprets merchandise fetishism as the *first social spectacularization*, based on the affirmation of exchange value at the expense of usage value, that is, on a surreptitious inversion between the authentic and apparent value of things" (see Carnevali 2018, p. 93, author's translation).

mediation, in the case of art exhibitions taking place within a commercial space, accompanying discourses seem more necessary. On the one hand, they enable the commercial space to develop a *discursive ethos* of a syncretic and multimodal nature: from invitation cards to the announcement of the event on the shop's Website, via the mediators' discourses, technical tools and decorative borders to derivative products such as tote bags, all of which *imitate* cultural and artistic mediations and which are introduced into commercial mediations. Thus, the department store produces hybrid discourses, whose re-presentational processes rub shoulders with the artistic spectacle, arousing a certain curiosity, even a certain[25] general, public interest. These processes once again blur the commercial dimension of the department store and allow the actors of the luxury fashion industry not so much to present their goods and to present themselves as to re-present and represent themselves, through filters which, let us remember, belong to the common fields of general interest, such as here art and culture. As Pierre Berthelot points out, "under the 'social dressing' of places of conviviality, these environments are in reality transformed into *branded media*" (Berthelot 2005, p. 47, author's translation).

### 2.3.3. *In praise of the void and the worship of merchandise*

When Jean-Marie Floch analyzed visual communication and more precisely the logos of two competing brands, IBM and Apple, he emphasized that "visual identity is different, in that it ensures recognition and proper attribution of the company and expresses its specificity. On the other hand, the visual identity is permanent in that it reflects the permanence of the industrial, economic and social values of the company" (Floch 1995, p. 43, author's translation).

The fashion industry's re-presentational policies contribute to the maintenance of this enunciative strategy, which allows each advertiser, each market authority to maintain a communicational and axiological coherence with its past but also to differentiate itself to simply stand out from the competition. Even if the purpose of this book is to account for the *standardization* that is taking place and thus for a *re-presentational format* in the policies proposed by the fashion industry, the latter can take on different

25 While the *Branco Luz* exhibition was scheduled to run for 1 month, until February 17, 2019, it was extended until March 24 that year.

forms. This is in order to be a *vector of homogenization* in the generally "centripetal" movement[26] of the market while proposing differentiation strategies, opting, marginally, for centrifugal semiotic codes[27]. Also, as we have seen, luxury fashion tends to re-present itself as a work of art, enhanced by its uniqueness and fragility, while the commercial space opts for the design of art galleries. In a differentiation perspective, the centrifugal dimension of the communication of the ready-to-wear brand Celine attracts attention.

After a change in the brand's artistic direction, a change that received a lot of media attention and that also led to a difference in the brand's visual identity[28], Celine has been communicating since the end of February 2019 about its new boutiques, located in major cities such as Los Angeles, New York and Tokyo.

This communication is orchestrated in particular through the brand's presence on digital networks, notably Instagram. Images of the interior of the shopping areas are published, accompanied by relatively brief captions indicating the opening date of the shop and its location. What draws our attention in particular are the figurative scenes in these photographs, which reveal details of the spaces, as well as the relationship established between them and their captions. While the captions announce the opening of retail spaces that are likely to distribute the brand's ready-to-wear collections, these collections are totally absent from the images in question[29].

The erasure of the merchandise could be initially approached as a *de-spectacularization process* of the merchandise. We have seen above that for Guy Debord, the fetishism of the merchandise is intrinsically linked to its

26 I borrow this notion from Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, according to whom a centripetal semiotic code determines "these unification movements [which] affect all the objects of our culture and are due to various factors, including the multiplication of media, the ease of travel, the progress of education: all these factors allow a growing mass of users to access a unified stock of codes" (see Klinkenberg 1996b, p. 78, author's translation).

27 Centrifugal codes are defined, in contrast to "centripetal" codes, as forces that break "into multiple varieties from a stock of initially relatively homogeneous codes" (Klinkenberg 1996b, p. 78, author's translation).

28 When Hedi Slimane was appointed artistic director, the brand was still called Céline. It became *Celine* and completed a clean sweep of her pre-Slimane communication, at least as far as the brand's publications on social-digital networks were concerned.

29 See: https://stores.celine.com/en_gb/ny/new-york/650-madison-ave.

spectacularization. What happens when merchandise disappears from the commercial space? Is it indeed *de-spectacularized*? To delve deeper into the spectacular and fetishist dimension of the merchandise, we interpret: "Within the capitalist system, the object produced by human labor is idolized not for *what it is,* but for what *it represents,* it is paradigmatic of the substitution of the thing by the image, and the original by the copy, in which all processes of alienation consist" (Carnevali 2018, p. 93, author's translation)[30]. We have observed and analyzed this syntagmatic substitution of the "thing" by the image throughout this chapter. In the case of the images of Celine shops, the "thing" does not seem so much substituted by the image, at least from an obvious point of view, as suppressed by the latter. In addition to enhancing an interior space that conceals the merchant and is re-presented like a space for exhibiting artistic works, such as a gallery or museum of contemporary art, by removing the visible presence of the boutiques' ready-to-wear collection, the brand brings about the symbolic value of the collection. The absence of merchandise is a rhetorical process according to which we observe a tension between one entity (in this case figurative) that is manifest and another that is implied, and which the Groupe μ describes as a *disjoint* mode *in absentia*: "One entity is manifest, the other being exterior to the statement, but projected onto it" (Groupe μ 1992, pp. 271–273, author's translation). It is according to this process that the Celine brand's merchant collection becomes a *simulacrum*; through its boutiques, it virtually attributes to itself the visual and symbolic qualities of the latter. Assuming that "this category [of trope] presupposes that the term disjointed and absent visual can be evoked with sufficient intensity to interfere with the manifest visual elements" (Groupe μ 1992, p. 278, author's translation), it is the scriptural elements and the identity of the enunciator that intensify and recall the term disjointed and absent visual, in this case the Celine brand collection. Added to this, of course, is the format imposed by the social network Instagram, a format that contributes to the intense publicization of information about the brand in question, its market production and its visual culture. As Valérie Jeanne-Perrier (2016, p. 50, author's translation) points out, the "clichés [published on Instagram] establish a link on the side of the '*followers*' (subscribers to an account), providing them with the support of a certain form of familiarity, recorded in the comments". By emptying the commercial space of the essence of merchandise, the latter is re-presented in an even denser way, involving the observers of the images more intellectually and noticeably in this projection process.

30 In italics in the original text.

Finally, to conclude this part and also to open the second one, it is impossible to approach this last analytical case by overlooking the opposition that Walter Benjamin established between *the cult value* and the *exhibition value* of the work of art: "artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult. One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not their being of view" (Benjamin 1969, p. 7). In this way, the absence of images of Celine merchandise contributes to the worship of the latter and would perhaps be the next step in the re-presentational policies[31] of the luxury fashion industry: the *visibility (projected, in absentia) of the object and thus its worship*.

This first part of the book gave an account of the fashion industry's re-presentation policies based as much on the logic of culturization as on artification. In addition to bringing together the fields of art and culture and consequently projecting the fashion industry in these specific fields, the policies analyzed revealed a generalized communication operation relating to all fields of intervention of the fashion industry's strategies: products, promotions, distribution and prices. Thus, a continuum is emerging that could mark a generalized device whose distinctive signs appropriate those of so-called "legitimate" art and culture in order to orient the public toward a perception of fashion as an artistic and cultural instance or as a mediator of art and culture. In other words, the way in which the industry in question occupies these two fields[32] is manifested through different strategies and forms that mark a *homogeneity* in terms of their aims. This homogeneity, which is both "silent and spectacular in fashion" (Baudrillard 1970, p. 264), is realized more extensively through the appropriation of discourses, symbols and ideologies that fall within the realms of the religious, the sacred and the political. The following section will focus on the re-presentation policies of the fashion industry as constructed from rewrites and appropriations of these specific domains. It thus aims to give an account, *in fine*, of the *totality* of the re-presentational apparatus of the industry in question, a totality formed from the *axiological spaces likely to create common ground*.

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31 I am talking about the next step as changes in the fashion industry are very recurrent and repetitive, but it takes some time before re-presentational trends become standardized and therefore become objects of study.

32 I have deliberately omitted in my observations and analyses the foundations of luxury houses and groups because their presence in the public and media space is another explicit display, which is that of patronage. *A priori*, they do not mix the promotion of the commercial goods marketed by their groups with their cultural and artistic activities.

Part 2

# Re-presentations and Forms of Life: The Religious and the Political

# Introduction to Part 2

Before being considered in its spectacular dimension, the fetishism of the commodity "is similar to the primitive stage of religions, which sees men venerate their own creation, granting magical properties, a soul, intentions proper to the things they produce" (Mylondo 2019, p. 40, author's translation) without the things produced letting the genesis of their exchange value show through. The narratives that structure the fashion industry's re-presentation policies take on the task of the *mythical and cult appearance* of the exchange value of its goods. They formally invest in the domain of the *religious* with the objective of the emergence of *worship* and *sacralization* that would be inherent to the qualities of the commodity and also of the mercantile authority. The fashion industry's re-presentation policies summon syncretic motives of the religious and the sacred in order to densify the fetishist dimension of the promoted goods. This is the second area of the common that the industry in question appropriates in order to requalify itself and which I will discuss throughout Chapter 3.

The realm of the religious and the sacred will be complemented by that of the political, although this *cohabitation* may seem paradoxical. If the political seems to be dissociated from the sacred, it is perhaps not dissociated from the religious, according to Debray (2006, p. 6, author's translation): "it appears that a collective action turned towards the future requires from the actors an irrational belief, let us say the adhesion to a proposal that is strictly undecidable", postulating that the religious fact, and notably the spiritual one, can be part of the political fact.

The subject of Chapter 4 will therefore be *the appropriation of politics*, its *diversion* as staged by the fashion industry's re-presentational policies. This appropriation will be questioned as a monopolization process, allowing the industry to assimilate the properties of the religious as well as the sacred and the political in order to assert its quest for authority and legitimacy other than commercial. We will also see how this quest can be given a different, subversive aim, helping to remove the social referent from texts and events that are assimilated and diverted with a view to fictitious transformation. The latter will be treated as a *fictivation* process.

# 3

# Re-presentation as a Cult Form

Whether it is a question of advertising, ready-to-wear collections or fashion shows, the fashion industry summons the religious dimension, imposes the presence of symbols, mostly Christian, in its communication and event strategies in a more or less explicit, more or less dense way. Women's perfume is presented as a forbidden fruit or original sin,[1] as a duality that navigates between good and evil[2]; ready-to-wear opts for advertising strategies that divert Christian scenes honored by art,[3] celebrates Christian imagery through collections that pay homage to it,[4] haute couture goes hand in hand with clerical dress[5], and luxury goods take over religious

1 See, for example, the ad for Nina Ricci's *Nina* perfume, whose bottle is shaped like an apple and whose staging places the spectator in a luxurious paradise where a female model seems to be attracted to the apple perfume hanging from a tree. The perfume *La Tentation de Nina* from the same brand is an intertextual hybridization, linking biblical and contemporary myths, with a crunched apple in the bottle and an adult Red Riding Hood as a female character.

2 Like Givenchy's *Ange ou Démon* fragrance, for example, whose advertising campaigns feature women with angelic stereotypical features – blonde, curls, very fair skin – but whose body posture creates tension that evokes particularly seductive and sensual looks.

3 See, for example, the advertisement for the ready-to-wear brand Marithé + François Girbaud, the result of an intertextual work by simple transformation where we see a reproduction of the painting *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, a painting proceeding to the semiotic translation of a biblical event, Christ's last meal.

4 Many couturiers have included religious symbols in their collections. The most recent and most explicit are the duo of the Italian brand Dolce & Gabbana, which modifies the formal support of clothes by bringing it closer to that of pious Byzantine iconography.

5 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is also an international reference in the conservation and exhibition of fashion heritage, organized an exhibition in 2018 on clerical clothing and its links to fashion: *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination.* The theme of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's annual gala was the link between fashion

spaces for its ready-to-wear or haute couture fashion shows[6]. The religious reference, and more precisely that referring to Christianity, is constantly called upon by brands for all kinds of commercial sectors: the automotive industry and food industry; religion is presented as a narrative that aims to "transform the lay act of consuming goods and services into an activity imbued with spirituality" (Batazzi and Lardellier 2012, p. 412, author's translation). Observing how the sacred and religious are mobilized by the fashion industry's re-presentation policies will, on the one hand, allow us to account for the *worship*[7] dimension that fashion brands grant themselves in a self-referential way. On the other hand, starting from the principle that religion and religious fact are instituting authorities, it will be a question of revealing how the borrowing of their discourse by the fashion industry makes it possible to reinforce the cultural dimension of the sector's brands.

Before proceeding with the observations and analyses of the corpus' elements, the properties relating to the religious and the sacred should be defined.

In order to do so, and without claiming an exhaustive approach to the scientific literature on what opposes and connects the sacred and religion, I will start from theoretical and analytical considerations in semiotics and in the information and communication sciences. From a semiotic point of view, the opposition between religion and the sacred relates to the level of *life forms*:

> If the religious dimension concerns the institutionalization of human questioning about the moral choices of daily conduct as well as about faith and the future, on the other hand, the sacred dimension concerns an individual questioning about what determines the *value of our values* and the path that each one can take to give meaning to his or her own life[8]. (Dondero 2013, pp. 79–100, author's translation)

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and Catholicism, inviting designers to design clerically inspired clothing worn by their muses at the event.

6 For example, the 2018 Gucci cruise fashion show, which took place at the Roman necropolis of Les Alyscamps in Arles.

7 In the primary sense of the term, that of a ritual related to a specific cult.

8 In italics in the text.

Starting from this observation, it will henceforth be a matter of considering the religious as a form of "living with" [that is] a macro-experience that can be analyzed in component experiences: it is the "substance" of social life forms in general (Fontanille 2015, p. 25, author's translation). At the same time, following both Maria Giulia Dondero, cited above, and Jacques Fontanille (2015, p. 25, author's translation), according to whom "the human meaning of this macro-experience and its component experiences is provided by a certain number of modal, axiological, passionate and ethical properties [which allows them to be considered] as semiotic practices", the sacred would be situated at this axiological level, which is part of the semiosphere, calling more for a sensitive, unique and subjective experience.

From a communicational point of view, and without losing the semiotic reflection advanced above, the link between the sacred and religion is not totally broken, as the above remarks suggest: "Far from reserving the exclusivity of the sacred, religion is only its administrative arm, the codification system that defines and manages it in well-defined historical and spatial circumstances" (Dufour and Boutaud 2013, p. 9, author's translation).

It is this non-exclusivity that allows Jean-Jacques Boutaud and Stéphane Dufour to consider that "not only can the sacred prove to be areligious, in the mode of deprivation, but it can also match its opposite and support the oxymoron of a 'lay sacrality' or a 'secular sacrality'" (Dufour and Boutaud 2013, p. 10, author's translation).

As for the luxury fashion industry's re-presentational device, it will be a question here of taking account of certain communicational practices and analyzing them according to their staging in connection either with an explicitly religious dimension, notably Christianity, or with a sacred dimension that would have to be demonstrated through a semiotic analysis. The corpus mobilized here is presented in a gradual manner according to the degree to which religious or sacred discourses included in the devices analyzed are cited. I will begin this chapter with an analysis of communicational practices in which the citation of religion is manifested in a more or less explicit way and refers either to earlier iconic texts from the artistic and pious pictorial tradition, or to verbal texts, especially biblical

narratives. We will see how this citation allows actors in the fashion industry to provide grounding for their brands and products in a religious paradigm and how this same paradigm reinforces the ostentatious dimension of religion as well as that of luxury. Following this first step, it will be a question of observing re-presentational policies that do not explicitly introduce – as far as their figurative dimension is concerned – the question of religion, but that of the sacred. In an interdisciplinary way, it will be a question of demonstrating how both explicit references to religion and those that evoke the sacred are attempts that allow advertisers to endow themselves with a *culturally communicative aura*. In terms of worship, insofar as the brand or fashion product is semiotically constructed as a system of values close to those identified in worship itself, in this case Christian. Communicative, insofar as this re-presentational policy is part of a wider political project, a "struggle for power in such and such a constituted aggregate" (Debray 2006, p. 9, author's translation), or, in relation to this object of study, a struggle for power in such and such a constituted group or brand. At the same time, the semiotic analysis carried out will make it possible to account for the way in which the mobilization of this domain of the common (religion and the sacred) is based on an antinomic law as soon as the sacred or religion are staged and thought out with an intentional purpose:

> The sacred, in order to remain so, must not be thought of, argued, or *reproduced,* or else it will disappear [...]. When the sacred figure or the religious scene becomes a theme of the photographic statement, the mere fact that it has been staged *there before us,* expressed through a productive technique with a testimonial aim, immediately makes it lose its sacred aura[9]. (Dondero 2009, p. 93, author's translation)

## 3.1. Biblical stories and media advertising: fashion and (divine) grace

According to Marion (1997), some stories are very mediagenic, others are less so. Like some stories are particularly photogenic, others are much less so. I propose to start from the following premise: the narratives that luxury fashion calls upon to stage must be both *photogenic* and *mediagenic*. On the

9 In italics in the original text.

one hand, they must select and combine visual and figurative elements of definite interest, in this case photographic (photogenic), in order to be staged. And on the other hand, they must be able to be *well represented* in the media likely to publicize them. As we will see, in particular, in part 3 of this book, a communication policy for the fashion industry must be thought of not only as a strategy that will promote a collection or a brand, *but as an event that will attract media attention in the same way as its collection*. Thus, when fashion offers visual statements of an *anaphoric*[10] nature, it exploits its photogenic and mediagenic potential to a greater extent. It is in this way that the Gucci brand's campaign[11] for its 2019 cruise collection, the *Gucci Gothic* campaign, attracted attention. The brand's website described the campaign as follows:

> Young farmer-punks appear in a surreal, mythological world, where an agricultural landscape and the changing weather emphasize the power of nature. The Cruise 2019 campaign shot by Glen Luchford pictures a rural community where animals and people coexist in harmony. Animals including a tiger, elephant, ostrich, sheep and llama depart for a wooden ark together with the characters from the campaign wearing the new collection by Alessandro Michele[12].

Reading this pitch suggests three narratives: the first evokes contemporary movements, led by city dwellers settled in the countryside – so-called "neo-rurals" – in order to experiment with new trades such as local or organic farming, and which represent a category of *meaningful trades* opposed to certain service trades currently subject to dysphoric qualifications. Linked to the imaginary of a return to our roots and at the same time to a refusal to perpetuate Western lifestyles often described as

10 As Anne Beyaert-Geslin (2006, p. 125, author's translation) states, "the anaphoric relationship implies that certain elements of discourse can only be understood by taking into account their relationship to previously appearing segments (words or groups of words) that are said to be *anaphorized*".

11 A cruise collection, also called a holiday or travel collection, offers a so-called mid-season wardrobe and is an important marketing lever for fashion brands; see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise_collection.

12 See: https://www.gucci.com/de/fr/st/stories/videos/article/2019-cruise-advertising-campaign-shoppable.

vain and meaningless, this movement can also be considered utopian[13]. The second narrative focuses, in an underlying way, on the current ecological crisis that is giving rise to massive citizens' movements such as the *climate march* or political movements such as COP 21. Finally, the third narrative cites, without explicitly naming it, a biblical event.

The introductory text of this advertising campaign could be described as an indexical discourse[14], allowing a more or less faithful designation of what the film and the advertising images state. However, when viewing the advertising film, there is a gap between the verbal text and the audiovisual text, a gap that is not at the discursive level, but at the narrative level[15]. In actual fact, the film does indeed reveal characters working as farmers or carpenters, surrounded by domestic and wild animals, while at the same time presenting a relatively problematic climatic situation through the staging of a particularly violent storm. However, since the introductory text deliberately neglects to name explicitly the biblical event cited, Noah's Ark, it creates a gap between what is perceived and what determines the underlying strategies, with the profound text determining the filmic discourse.

### 3.1.1. *Farmers, a storm and a boat: the biblical story of Noah's Ark*

Running 2 min and 20 sec, the *Gucci Gothic* film opens with the image of a couple walking through a wheat field accompanied by two royal cranes. The female character wears a necklace and a pair of earrings with a Christian cross, while the same symbol, drawn or even *tattooed*, can be seen on the male character's forehead. The two royal cranes have a crown around their

13 See Rouvière (2015).

14 "In index functions, the graphical sign is a sign that one must know (through a conventional rule) that it refers in some way to a given object, contiguous to the sign", see (Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 228, author's translation). In the case discussed here, the entire introductory text of the *Gucci Gothic* advertising film is approached as a discourse that assumes this indexical function, creating a contiguous link between the discourse and the filmed object.

15 I am following the work of Jean-Marie Floch, a work with grounding in the theory of Greimasian semiotics. On the subject of narrative syntax, the discursive level is at a manifest, superficial level, while the narrative level is more profound (see Floch 1990, p. 111, author's translation).

heads that can be compared figuratively to the halo that can be seen around the heads of saints as depicted in pious iconography, but also in the representations of the Holy Spirit with a halo. A few seconds later, a close-up reveals the face of a woman wearing large blue cross-shaped earrings. This is followed by a sequence in which a young man and a young woman are walking through a field of wheat, the young woman wearing a necklace in the shape of a large golden cross. We stop afterwards on two shots: the first shows two young men building a wooden frame; one also wears a necklace with a cross, while the other is the same character as in the opening scene of the film, marked with a drawing of a cross on his forehead. The next shot shows a long and narrow agricultural and tree-lined path through which various animals pass; the scene is followed by a new shot in which we see various characters involved in the construction of the boat-like frame, a wooden hull and a close-up in which one of the characters is wearing a Gucci jacket with the inscription "Angélique Gucci" on it. The farm road appears again, with many more animals, both domestic and wild, crossing it; the boat is now finished, with some of the figures heading there, followed by many animals. The weather conditions seem to be changing, a first sequence shows a particularly bright sky, with a clear and blinding light, while the next sequence shows a cloudy, dark and threatening sky.

By contagion, in connection with symbolic elements from the Christian paradigm such as the presence of accessories in the form of a cross, the bodily inscription of this symbol on a character's forehead and the inscription "Angélique" on the clothing of another, the last two images can also be interpreted as religious anaphores, representing celestial events: miracles accompanied by blinding lights or natural disasters provoked by the fury of God, often depicted in paintings by clouds whose action is "to blur and obscure the blinding light of the glory of heaven" (Dondero 2009, p. 104, author's translation). The scenes in Figure 3.1 depict a flood affecting all the human and non-human protagonists, having taken refuge in the previously built boat, sailing toward a horizon that appears both threatening and soothing, represented by a close sky that is very overcast and clear in the distance. As if the boat, which by its formal characteristics resembles the pictorial representations of Noah's Ark, and its passengers were heading toward a new miracle.

**Figure 3.1.** *The Noah's Ark story in the Gucci Gothic ad (screenshots from the Gucci Gothic film directed by Glen Luchford for Gucci, Kering Group)[16]. For a color version of the figure, see www.iste.co.uk/mouratidou/fashion.zip*

The filmic narrative proposed by Gucci has a narrative level (deep level) whose original source can be found in the book of Genesis of the Old Testament:

> Yhwh regrets having made Adam on the earth and turns with sorrow to his heart; Yhwh says, from the surface of the earth I will erase Adam my creation; Adam as the big beast and the little beast as everything that flies in the sky; Yes I regret having made them; Only Noah finds favor in the eyes of Yhwh; Children of Noah; Noah blameless and without spot among his contemporaries [...] And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is led with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are going to make it [...] For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die; But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its

16 Source: http://www.culturepub.fr/videos/gucci-gucci-gothic-gucci-gothic/.

> kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive... And after seven days the waters of the flood came on earth ... And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days[17].

### 3.1.2. *The Gucci actant: from ready-to-wear to ready-to-save*

The narrative level of the film constructs a set of actants, "fundamental and purely relational roles that are played on the story's stage" (Floch 1990, p. 109, author's translation). If the discursive narrative reveals a quest similar to that described in the Old Testament, it is certain that the actresses and actors in this film, described as *young farmers with a punk style*, symbolize instances other than those described by the brand. Although, from a figurative point of view, the film's narrative does indeed reveal young punk-like people playing farmers and carpenters, the biblical intertext that is called upon and explicitly quoted from an iconic point of view modifies the role of these characters and endows them with the agent value of the *Subject* in search of an *Object*, a quest received by an authority that is the *Receiver*, this "sovereign agent (king, providence, state, etc.), source and guarantor of values" (Bertrand 2000, p. 182, author's translation), understood here from a paradigmatic point of view as being God. The advertising form of *Gucci Gothic* thus qualifies the brand as a *religious archetype*, the one and only agent who has received God's grace to preserve life on Earth. A ready-to-wear brand elevated to the rank of the divine chosen one, *ready to save* the Earth and its animated species.

In addition to the presentation of the advertising film, the brand's Website also publicizes images that reflect the general universe of the film[18]. These are frozen moments, taken from the biblical story proposed by the film, allowing not only a detailed and in-depth contemplation of the atmosphere created by the brand, but also to focus attention on the products marketed by the brand. Each image is accompanied by a legend with a directive character and hypertextual function: "Buy the letter A ring in

17 Translated excerpt from the book of Genesis, Old Testament, The Bible (2001, pp. 46–49). The biblical quotations throughout this book are from this edition.

18 See: https://www.gucci.com/fr/fr/st/stories/advertising-campaign/article/2019-cruise-advertising-campaign-shoppable.

silver; buy the necklace with cameo motifs and cross pendants". If we admit, as Maria Giulia Dondero does, that "the representation of the saint or religious scene [cancels] its own effectiveness simply because it has been posed, simply because a scenography or a posture technique has been used, in other words that there has been *premeditation*" (Dondero 2009, p. 92, author's translation),[19] we must also add that the premeditation in question is here coupled with the commercial discourse that accompanies the advertising images. This makes the *worship* stance of the Gucci brand even more paradoxical, since it puts in tension two value systems that do not coexist *a priori*: market values, on the one hand, and Christian values, on the other hand. The advertising representation of the biblical scene cited certainly makes it possible to propose a narrative capable of creating *common ground* because of the reference of a *story* that is an integral part of Western religious narratives. However, this same representation, once it is subjected to analysis, testifies to the misappropriation of the narrative: if the original narrative arouses beliefs because it is linked to a specific religious instance, Gucci's reconstruction of the myth with a commercial aim makes this same narrative more falsified and even parody like. While the productive intentionality does not aim at parody but at the offbeat narrative, which may indeed be the case when one follows the qualifications proposed by the brand of the characters of the narratives – farmers with a punk look – the whole re-presentational device and the way it shapes its audience's behavior, in particular through the declarative statements directing the latter toward the brand's commercial site, are here considered to be a parody as much of the quoted text as of the brand itself: a self-referential parody.

A closer look at the advertising film and the images on the brand's Website reveals that the Christian theme functions as a *communicative pretext* that contributes to the *managerial*[20] *creativity* that characterizes the Gucci brand. A pretext, inasmuch as the number of products with a religious connotation offered by the brand as part of the 2019 cruise collection requires an adequate staging for promotion. The photogenic and mediagenic dimension of this advertising campaign fades away with semiotic analysis, which allows us to grasp the occasional, ephemeral and opportunistic dimension that determines the religious discourse promoted by the brand.

19 In italics in the original text.

20 This notion will be explained and discussed throughout Chapter 5 of this book.

## 3.2. Biblical stories and media advertising: fashion and adoration

In 1999, the French brand Dior launched the women's perfume *J'adore* through an advertising campaign[21] using anaphoric images[22] from Christian religious iconography and biblical literature[23]. The advertising image has a visual dimension that revolves around converging chromatic and haptic elements: the color golden yellow, on the one hand, occupying in a more or less intense way all the figurative elements of the image except the typographic inscriptions, themselves white in color; on the other hand, the haptic effect caused by textures whose material is none other than gold, a material also accompanied by chromatic nuances of golden yellow, saturations producing effects of luminous flashes. As Karine Berthelot-Guiet notes in her analysis, the model, by her body posture, clothes and accessories, headdress and her gaze, places us:

> in front of a clear, golden goddess, in the distance, chryselephantine, which activates the fact that in the name Dior is contained the word "gold" [*or*] and almost the word "god" [*di from dieu*], which is intensified by the fact that the name of the perfume, J'adore, also includes the word "gold". In addition, the verb "to adore" is initially reserved for the religious, as the saying goes "we only adore God". (Berthelot-Guiet 2015, p. 153, author's translation)

Indeed, while the surname that became Dior's brand name and the product name that would later evolve, as we will see later, into the brand signature "J'adore" updates the term "gold" because of the tension that is created between them and the visual dimension of the advertising image, the

21 See: https://parfumdepub.com/fr/publicite-J–039-Adore-265.html.

22 As Ruth Amossy and Anne Herschberg Pierrot have argued that stereotyping refers to a "social representation, a fixed collective pattern that corresponds to a dated cultural model" (see Amossy and Herschberg Pierrot 1997, p. 64).

23 Karine Berthelot-Guiet has published a semiological analysis of this advertising campaign from its first creation until 2015 with the aim of giving an account of the luxurious and divine dimension of this advertising positioning. The semiological analyses that I have previously presented during my lectures in semiology of the image or semiology of advertising discourse converge with those proposed by Berthelot-Guiet. Here, I observe more closely the intertextual Christian dimension of the advertising campaign in its diachronic evolution and also the way in which the misuse of blasphemy is organized visually but also over time (see Berthelot-Guiet 2015, pp. 152–153).

divine dimension included in "Dior" owes its presence to an external motivation, deployed by the brand itself as a narrative that updates two themes: luxury and the divine. The Dior brand has often communicated about Christian Dior's life and circle of friends. Jean Cocteau, a friend of Christian Dior, is said to have made the following statement: "This subtle genius of our time, whose magical name includes god and gold"[24]. Cocteau's quotation is now updated by the names "Dior" and "J'adore" and also becomes a guarantee of the worship and luxurious dimension granted to Christian Dior as well as to the Dior brand and its product, the perfume *J'adore*.

Other visual elements of the advertising image project a relationship with the sacred as it emanates from the verbo-iconic paradigm of the Christian religion. The face of the female figure, impassive, devoid of affect, recalls the pictorial representation of saints,[25] her headdress borrows the visuality of the Virgin Mary's veil. The bottle, placed on a golden-yellow liquid substance, is *caressed* by the female figure's index finger. A bright halo surrounds the space of contact between the index finger and the bottle[26].

All of these figurative elements quote, by indirect transformation, both pictorial and verbal *texts* from the Christian tradition. Thus, the bottle is here "a thing that is valid for a different thing [a sign that] makes it possible to manipulate things outside of their presence, because it plays the role of a substitute" (Klinkenberg 1996a, pp. 33–34, author's translation). Advertising staging gives it a worship status when the name it bears – *J'adore* – endows it with a transitive quality: the product is worshipped as a deity, a god here portrayed as Jesus Christ. The position of the bottle on the liquid substance quotes the biblical event of Christ walking on water[27], the contact established

24 Excerpt from the brand advertising film created for the holiday season by Dior: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWGbvYmTujk.

25 Free of affect and any potential expression of it.

26 The analytical path taken here is that of the semiological analysis of the image as elaborated by Roland Barthes in his article "Rhétorique de l'image" and responds to an analytical relevance that consists of observing and analyzing the figurative elements (signs in the Berthesian sense) allowing us to grasp the intertextual dimension of the image and the relationship established between the latter and the (linguistic) text that completes its staging (the text/image relationship) (see Barthes 1964, pp. 40–51).

27 And the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost', they

between the female figure and the product recalls the emotional as well as physical relationship established between the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus Christ, thus attributing a divine quality to the bottle and its contents. Moreover, the same physical contact between the model and the perfume is reminiscent of the pictorial intertext depicting the *Creation of Adam* as imagined and painted by Michelangelo and inspired by the book of Genesis. The *J'adore* advert could therefore be compared to a parable marking the *creation of the J'adore fragrance*.

### 3.2.1. *Advertising idolatry*

The commercial product that is this perfume is represented as a nascent, miraculous and luxurious deity that the human subject is supposed to worship and by extension that every observer of this image is called upon to venerate. Contrary to the principles of Christian teaching, which forbids the veneration of objects and idols, Dior proceeds with a staging that transgresses the rules of religion by switching the virtualized figure of Jesus Christ with a bottle of feminine perfume:

> I am the Lord your God, he who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the place of slavery. You must not have any other gods besides me. You must not make for yourself an image of anything in heaven above, on earth below, or in the waters beneath. You must not worship or serve them […][28].

While certain advertising productions that quote or parody biblical events and religious symbols provoke strong reactions and even suffer censorship[29],

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said, and carried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage!. It is I. Don't be afraid'. 'Lord, if it's you', Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water'. 'Come', he said. From Matthew 14:24–29, New Testament, The Bible.

28 Excerpt from Deuteronomy, Old Testament, The Bible.

29 In 2005, the advertising proposed by the ready-to-wear brand Marithé + François Girbaud, parodying the painting *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci, was banned by the Paris High Court, following a complaint filed by the association *Croyances et Libertés*, an association representing the French Bishops' Conference. The reason for the complaint concerned the insulting remarks supported by the advertising staging and aimed at a group of people belonging to a specific and clearly identified religion. The staged advertisement parodied the biblical event of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ: https://www.nouvelobs.com/culture/20050310.OBS0905/marithe-et-francois-girbaud-publicite-prodite-prodite.html.

the one proposed by Dior, although it advocates *blasphemy* and *idolatry*, is deployed in the public and media space without constraints. This is due to the fact that the advertising positioning chosen for *J'adore* perfume is based on a strategy mobilizing an *intertextual* process that is set up by "indirect transformation",[30] requiring a precise analysis so that the parodic, even blasphemous, dimension becomes visible. This underlying dimension of christicism and the elevation of the commercial product to the rank of the divine runs through all the advertisements proposed by Dior for *J'adore* at varying densities.

Thus, the advertising proposed in 2012 placed greater emphasis on the haloed dimension of the female character, while the interior space evoked both the luxury of a palace and that of certain Orthodox Christian churches. The 2016 advert took up the theme of the biblical event of Christ walking on water: this time the female protagonist played the role of this biblical character at the beginning of the filmic narrative, while at the end of the advertising film the product was also placed on a liquid substance, as was the case in the 1999 advert. Finally, the 2018 advertising campaign used elliptical elements that evoke Christian symbols, such as the presence of a basin in the shape of a cross on which the product is placed, in keeping with the Christian positioning of the brand's advertising strategy.

### 3.2.2. *From product name to brand signature*

This product name has a particularly atypical and at the same time *performative* dimension: *J'adore.* Atypical, insofar as the paradigm of women's perfume names almost exclusively presents names, proper names or nominal phrases: *Poison*, *N° 5*, *La petit robe noire*, *La vie est belle*, *Gabrielle Chanel*, *Scandal*, *Twilly*, etc. *J'adore* is constructed as a verbal syntagm, which is composed of a personal pronoun and a verb according to an "*elocutive*" discursive modality (Charaudeau 1992, pp. 574–575) that allows the enunciator to explicitly enter into the enunciative process and assume responsibility for his or her words. We can therefore recognize a performative dimension deployed by any potential producer of the verbal phrase *J'adore.*

30 I borrow this transformational dimension from Gérard Genette, who, however, speaks of a hypertextual and not an intertextual process. According to him, a hypertext is "any text derived from an earlier text by simple transformation (we will now say simply *transformation*) or by indirect transformation: we will say *imitation*" (Genette 1982, p. 14).

It should also be recalled that the name of a brand, but also the name of a product, has "particular modes of meaning that influence the semantic functioning of the advertising message and make it possible to work on the semiotic coherence of a brand's advertising discourse" (Berthelot-Guiet and Marti 2009, p. 64, author's translation). Karine Berthelot-Guiet and Caroline Marti underline, for example, with regard to the brand name and product name analyzed here:

> *J'adore* is the proper name of a women's perfume marketed by the Dior brand and "*Dior* is a brand that markets women's perfume or a perfume for women called *J'adore*". At the same time, the very marked golden tones of the image and the presence of the syllable *gold* in J'adore [*or, meaning gold*] lead to another interpretation of Dior as "a brand that reminds one of *gold*" because its signifier includes this syllable. Perhaps the skill of the advertising discourse lies in this ability to make the content and connotations of the brand name cohabit in the same discursive space and to make both necessary for its interpretation. (Berthelot-Guiet and Marti 2009, p. 65, author's translation)

In what follows, I propose to give an account of this *skill* for advertising discourse as it is deployed through the evolution of Dior's advertising strategy for the product *J'adore*. Its evolution reflects a topological shift in both the product name and the brand name. This topological shift also leads to changes in syntagmatic order, in other words, in the toposyntax[31] of advertising and the way in which it can produce meaning. Early advertising campaigns placed brand and product names in such a way that a hierarchical relationship was established. The 1999 campaign proposed top *versus* bottom opposition, placing the Dior name at the top and the product name at the bottom. The hierarchical meaning was conceived in the sense that the brand dominated the product, it was its source. As this advertising campaign evolved, there was a shift in topological positions, with a syntax that placed the product name in the position of a verbal syntagm and the brand name in the position of a direct

31 "*Toposyntaxes,* or *topological syntaxes,* make use of all positional relationships that may exist in a plan and even in three dimensions. […]. ...] The opposition relationships exploited are for example based on oppositions such as vertical *versus* horizontal *versus oblique*, up *versus down,* left *versus right,* large *versus* small, straight *versus* curvilinear alignment, order *versus* disorder" (see Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 153, author's translation); in italics in the original text.

object complement. Thus, two transformations take place in this evolutionary approach.

The first concerns the way in which the brand builds its identity, identification and recognition (Berthelot-Guiet and Marti 2009, p. 64) through this advertising discourse. By forming the verbal phrase "J'adore Dior", a new process of recognition and identification is set in motion, transforming the product name into a brand signature while giving it a direct object complement ("Dior"). The eloquent dimension of the discourse places every observer in the position of a producer and updates his or her relationship with the Dior brand. The semantic field of the verb "to adore", which primarily includes a cultural aspect, reinforces the religious connotation that emanates from this topological transformation that influences Dior's signature and brand communication. Other advertising statements, apart from the promotion of the perfume *J'adore*, introduce the statement "J'adore Dior" as an interdisciplinary element of the brand's communication[32] while recalling the presence of the product *J'adore*.

### 3.2.3. *Actualization and ostentation of Dior's semiotic and religious capital*

Both the product name and the brand name, as well as all the advertising staging designed for the perfume *J'adore* since 1999 until today, testify to a synergy and a coherent grammatical and syntactic rhythm. Synergy, insofar as we are faced with a constant presence of the brand and its advertising discourse in the media space, which contributes to introducing the statement "J'adore Dior" into the ordinary public space and not just the media, transforming it into a *naturalized* discourse. From this first operation, which is due to the omnipresence of the statement in question, the brand can move forward in a *hyper-advertising*[33] communication strategy and inscribe its

32 See, for example, the end of the branded advertising film available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWGbvYmTujk.

33 By hyper-advertising communication strategy, I mean this approach which consists of accumulating previous advertising *texts* produced by the same market authority; this accumulation functions as a self-referential intertext which, at a given moment, leads to the creation of a stabilized, more or less fixed text. The notion of hyper-advertising strategy finds its source in the notion of a *hypertextualizing* form, defined as follows: "They [hypertextualizing forms] acquire a dynamic dimension by functioning as a sign-passer and a textualizing dimension by contributing to the formation of another text that will eventually

semiotic capital[34] in an *unadvertizatioin discourse* (Berthelot-Guiet and Marti 2009, p. 94), because of the media support that sustains it. Thus, a tension is created between the hyper- and unadvertization of the Dior brand's advertising strategy, which takes shape through the linguistic creativity the brand demonstrates: by including the statement "J'ADIOR" in some of its ready-to-wear products, it intensifies its call to be venerated. It is obvious that if this neologism is made possible, it is because of the creation and circulation of the statement "J'adore Dior" upstream, in a particularly quantitative manner. All the more so because in this new linguistic form, we are witnessing an ostensible staging of both the religious and the merchant, the verbal syntagm "J'ADIOR" being decomposable into the statement "J'adore", itself evoking divine worship and the sacralization of the brand, and "Dior", placed as a complement to the direct object. The conspicuous dimension appears when this inscription no longer appears as an advertising discourse inscribed on media formats that have traditionally been weakened by advertising, but as a trace of the brand and the relationship that one is supposed to maintain with it. The inscription appears as a brand name, or even a *logo*, and imposes itself as a language act that is both *assertive* and *expressive*,[35] reinforcing the cultural dimension, the divine aura accorded with the Dior brand and also the ostentatious nature of this dimension. If we accept, like Frédéric Lambert (2013, p. 15, author's translation), that "belief is above all being a reader and actor in a story, and, through language, belonging to a community", Dior's communication strategy builds beliefs around the brand itself, beliefs that aim, through reference to the religious, at the emergence of a communion, or a process that "combines being *with* and *looking towards*" (Dufour 2011, p. 97, author's translation). Of course, if communion directs the gaze, as Stéphane Dufour reminds us, "towards

become fixed in its final form. The latter, we call it hypertextualized discourse, because it is the result of the union of these hypertextualizing forms, having structured it beforehand" (see Alexis *et al.* 2016, p. 94, author's translation).

34 By semiotic (and also religious) capital, I mean any significant property of a brand that can be used and translated into a communication and representation strategy. Both require semiotic management.

35 As a speech act, this statement stands as an assertion, defending a principle of truth and engaging "the responsibility of the speaker (to varying degrees) for the existence of a state of affairs, for the truth of the proposition expressed" (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p. 20, author's translation). It is also posed as an expressive act, defined "as having the aim of expressing the psychological state specified in the condition of sincerity, with regard to a state of things specified in propositional content" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p. 21, author's translation).

something beyond the tangible of the sensible world" (Dufour 2011, p. 97), in the case of the communication deployed by the Dior brand, communion does indeed have a tangible point of departure and arrival: while the brand accentuates its symbolic dimension, the starting point of the communicative dimension of its communication is a product, the perfume *J'adore*, while the point of arrival corresponds to any ready-to-wear product marketed by the brand and bearing the inscription "J'ADIOR".

## 3.3. From places dedicated to Christian worship to places dedicated to fashion worship

In 1984, the French Ministry of Culture inaugurated the "*Journées portes ouvertes dans les monuments historiques*", allowing the public to visit and discover, free of charge, cultural spaces (monuments, museums, etc.). The novel aspect of this event consists of access to places usually closed to the public and the possibility of making visible, even if only partially and according to a precise staging, the backstage of these spaces.

Gradually, this national event acquired a more global dimension, and the open days became, from 1991 onwards, "European Heritage Days", established by many countries, in Europe but also outside the Member States of the European Community. In 2018, the French edition of this event was built around the theme of "The Art of Sharing"[36]. Among the many venues participating in this event was "40, rue de Sèvres", the new headquarters of the Kering Group.

### 3.3.1. *From the Hospice des Incurables to the Balenciaga showroom*

The so-called "40, rue de Sèvres" is a place located in the seventh arrondissement of Paris, built in the 17th Century. It designates the place known as Le Pré aux Clercs, "a frequent meeting place for duels"[37]. In 1634, the hospice des Incurables was founded there, whose vocation was to "receive the sick who were too seriously ill or too poor to be received

36 See: https://journeesdupatrimoine.culture.gouv.fr.

37 According to the information provided by the Kering Group in the booklet offered on the occasion of the site visit, p. 8; visit carried out on September 16, 2018.

elsewhere"[38], with the condition of admission being "Catholic and donating all one's possessions to the hospice"[39]. It is a place invested in and full of values related to the Christian religion and Catholic worship. "It was built in the form of a double Jerusalem cross, with crosses on either side of a chapel, now classified as a Historic Monument. The chapel was of prime importance in the design of the building in the 15th Century, since the salvation of the soul and the salvation of the body were inseparable at the time". One of the main functional characteristics of this chapel was the possibility for patients to attend mass without leaving their beds:[40] "The interior doors allowed patients who were too weak to move around to listen to mass from their beds"[41].

After a first closure, the hospice became an independent hospital in 1874, then from 1878, the Laennec Hospital. It was in the 1990s that the French state put the hospital up for sale "in order to finance the construction of the Georges-Pompidou European Hospital. The new owner then undertook a vast renovation project. The old buildings dedicated to medical treatment were renovated to house the headquarters of the Kering Group and the Maison Balenciaga"[42]. The renovation and restoration of the site respected the religious dimension – in the worship sense of the word – of the place:

> The stained-glass windows and the interior of the building have been completely restored, as has the cultural furniture consisting of the high altar, side altars, altarpieces and the so-called "de Bossuet" pulpit. Within the chapel are several graves, including those of Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld, Bishop Camus, and four generations of members of the Turgot family"[43].

Indeed, when visiting the interior of the chapel at 40, rue de Sèvres, one can see many elements that bear witness to the Catholic worship coexisting today, on the one hand, with the space dedicated to Balenciaga's showroom

38 *Idem*, p. 8.

39 *Idem*, p. 8.

40 *Idem*, p. 14.

41 *Idem*, p. 14. See the visual documents from the press kit published by the Kering group on its Website (http://www.kering.com/sites/default/files/kering_-_40_rue_de_sevres_-dossier_de_presse_web.pdf).

42 *Idem*, p. 10.

43 *Idem*, p. 14.

and, on the other hand, with the exhibition of contemporary art works, an exhibition designed for the European Heritage Days and part of the Pinault family's private collection, founder and head of the Kering Group.

The Kering group was founded in 1963 by François Pinault, a wood and building materials industrialist. Formerly called PPR, or Pinault-Printemps-Redoute, the group became involved in distribution with the acquisition in 1991 of Conforama, Printemps in 1992 and Fnac in 1994, which enabled it to position itself as a world leader in the mass distribution sector[44]. In 1999, the group began to penetrate the luxury sector with its first flagship acquisition: 42% of the Italian brand Gucci. In 2013, PPR changed its name to Kering[45]. Today, the Group has 14 brands specializing in luxury ready-to-wear, including some particularly emblematic brands such as Saint Laurent Paris, Alexander McQueen and Gucci, in jewellery, such as Pomellato and Boucheron, and in watches, such as Ulysse Nardin. Its turnover was 12,385 million euros for 2016 and 15,478 for 2017[46].

According to *Challenges* magazine, the Group's results for 2017 were unprecedented, due to the development of the Gucci brand[47]:

> Gucci and its "spectacular" performance, in the words of Mr. Pinault, posted organic growth of 44.6% for the year, whereas the brand had experienced a chaotic 2015 before recovering in 2016 thanks to the bold style of Alessandro Michele's collections. This success enabled the Luxury Goods division to surpass 10 billion euros in sales for the first time. Its operating margin reached 27% thanks in particular to Gucci,

44 See: https://www.infinance.fr/articles/entreprise/societe-cotee-en-bourse/article-ppr-presentation-et-histoire-du-groupe-378.htm.

45 This name was the result of the fusion between the name *ker*, which in Breton means home – the Pinault family is originally from Brittany – and the ending -ing, which in English indicates continuous action and process and testifies to the international dimension of the group. At the same time, the signifier kering evokes that of *caring*, which refers to the act of protecting, taking care of someone and/or something. On the transformation of the Pinault Group into Kering (see Boltanski and Esquerre 2017, pp. 305–314).

46 See: http://www.kering.com/fr/finance/le-groupe/group-key-figures#anchor0.

47 See: https://www.challenges.fr/luxe/kering-des-resultats-annuels-historiques-grace-a-gucci_567031.

> whose profitability reached a historic level of 34.2%, said Chief Financial Officer Jean-Marc Duplaix[48].

As for Kering itself, it describes itself as "a group with a human, family and entrepreneurial dimension"[49] and François-Henri Pinault justifies its location in the place of worship that was once 40, rue de Sèvres in this way:

> From the outset, I wanted the choice of the Kering headquarters and the Balenciaga House to reflect our identity and our values. It was an ambitious undertaking to be part of the atypical restoration project of the former Laennec hospital. In the heart of Paris, this place, singular by its history, its scale and its simple beauty, has a soul. Thanks to the original harmony of the site and the high quality of its renovation, 40, rue de Sèvres is for our employees not only a source of pride, but also a place of exchange and inspiration. It reflects the image of the Luxury group that we are, a group in motion that embodies audacious Luxury, free to make its own choices[50].

This discourse seems to actualize an axiological dimension that the Kering group claims. It is that of the benefactor who offers new life to a place that is historically, aesthetically and symbolically charged. It should be noted, however, that the geographical location of 40, rue de Sèvres, where the group has been headquartered since 2016, is particularly strategic because the hospice is adjacent to another emblematic place of French luxury, Le Bon Marché – Rive Gauche. In addition to being the first Parisian department store, as mentioned above,[51] it belongs to the LVMH group, a direct competitor of the Kering group. If luxury is mainly represented in this geographical area that is traditionally called the *Golden Triangle*, located in the eighth arrondissement of Paris, the presence of Le Bon Marché on the left bank of the capital, and in a district that traditionally had more bookstores than clothing stores, allows the LVMH group to establish itself in new territories and to set new trends in selective distribution. The location of

48 *Idem*, article published February 13, 2018.

49 According to the booklet distributed to visitors at 40, rue de Sèvres on the occasion of the European Heritage Days in September 2018, p. 24.

50 *Idem*, p. 24. The text is signed by François-Henri Pinault, President and CEO of Kering.

51 Its creation dates from the second half of the 19th Century: https://www.24sevres.com/fr-fr/le-bon-marche/historique.

the Kering headquarters, 2 m from the Grande Epicerie de Paris,[52] establishes the co-presence of the two giants of French and international luxury in a geographical area that only the world's number one in the luxury sector, LVMH, once occupied.

It is not, however, as a *competitive response* that 40, rue de Sèvres draws our attention here and enters into the general question of the sacred re-presentation of the fashion industry, and in this case the luxury industry. On the other hand, it is because of the commercial occupation of a place formerly devoted to Catholic worship and the treatment of the suffering faithful. To put it another way, it is because of the tension between the profanation of a place of worship, a profanation carried out symbolically by a fashion and luxury goods manufacturer, and the attempt to make sacred, not the place, but the group in general and the Balenciaga brand in particular.

### 3.3.2. *Profanation of the sacred, sacralization of the lay public*

The first impressions you get when you enter the hospice chapel are in fact linked to the tension that is created between a place that seems to have been preserved as it is, with furniture dedicated to worship, and the works of art exhibited in the same space. All of this is traversed by the underlying presence of the Kering group and the Balenciaga brand, both of which specialize in fashion and luxury. Monumental works and installations from the Pinault private collection are displayed[53] alongside the objects of worship and worship spaces. When a mediator was asked about the relationship between the religious and sacred dimension of the place and the presence of the Kering group and the Balenciaga brand, the answer was: "The place is not desacralized, even though it is no longer a place of worship"[54]. The non-desacralization of the place is possibly due to the conservation of the mobilization devoted to worship. The question arose, however, of the

52 Attached to Le Bon Marché – Rive Gauche: https://www.lagrandeepicerie.com/fr/rive-gauche.

53 François Pinault is one of the greatest collectors (and negotiators) of contemporary art. His collection includes more than three thousand works of art from the 20th and 21st Centuries. It is notably exhibited in Venice in the Palazzio Grassi: https://www.palazzograssi.it/fr/about/collection/.

54 Information collected during the visit to the site on the occasion of the European Heritage Days on September 16, 2018.

approach to the sacred in this case, since it is directly linked to an ostensible presence of religious signs and discourse, but not to that "dimension which exists only beyond our desire and which we cannot 'prefabricate' and prepare" (Dondero 2009, p. 93, author's translation). The mediators mobilized on the occasion of the European Heritage Days evoked, on the one hand, "the disused status of the place"[55] and, on the other hand, the "respect for the place during the course of meetings; we do things in this space, no matter what"[56]. Finally, the Kering group's desire to settle "in a discreet place in accordance with its values"[57] intentionally gives this same group a sacralizing axiological dimension, as it results from the discourses of the event's mediators and the accompanying communication formats. We are therefore faced with a tension that brings a disused place of worship into dialogue with a merchant group which, despite the official discourse – *a group with a human, family dimension, etc.* – benefits from a capital that is as much symbolic as it is financial, and represents a structure that is solidly established both in France and internationally. I therefore hypothesize that, in addition to the discretion and the eventful history of the place, its religious, worship and possibly sacred value contributes to the re-presentation process of the Kering group and the Balenciaga brand as a decommodificated and possibly sacred instance. We are thus dealing with a diversion of the biblical account of the presence of the merchants in the temple and the anger of Jesus: "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers'".[58]

The story is distorted when the market authority tends to value this space, not as a place of ordinary and massive frequentation – what was once the temple – but as a preserved space, with a respected and in some cases, such as the European Heritage Days, valued culturally. By making the commercial sign elliptical and emphasizing the religious sign, the sacred dimension of the place is enhanced.

55 *Idem*.

56 *Idem*.

57 *Idem*.

58 Excerpt from the New Testament, according to Matthew, 21, v. 12–13, The Bible.

### 3.3.3. *Apparatus – Relic*

The decommodification and elliptical staging of the merchant sign, in favor of an enhancement of the sacred dimension of the place and the instance that occupies it, is also the result of the discursive staging that accompanies the exhibition of contemporary art works within the chapel's enclosure. *Reliquaires* is the title of this exhibition, presenting works by artists such as Damien Hirst, Günther Uecker, James Lee Bayars, Huang Yong Ping, Camille Henrot and Giuseppe Penone. The exhibition draws its theme from Héloïse and Abélard's reliquary chest, "an object of major interest for our country's heritage",[59] and from the presence of the latter in a place of worship; this theme is briefly taken up by a *paratextual*[60] element of the exhibition, its catalogue, in which we discover François-Henri Pinault's discourse:

> Many of the works on display are citations from natural or urban reality, from "*reliquae*" (Latin for "remains"), which the artists have made the very medium of their creation. All of them evoke, in a certain way, with a visual vocabulary of our time, what was the splendour of the collections of relics in the great Western churches"[61].

Whether it comes from the title of the works on display, such as Damien Hirst's *Jacob's Ladder,* or the way they are presented through their paratext, we are also faced with a paradigm that convokes the religious or the sacred, as is the case with the discourse on the work *The Philosophical Nail* by James Lee Byars: "The 'philosophical' dimension of the work arises from the questions it raises about man's relationship to materiality and the sacred. The nail is reminiscent of the torment of Jesus Christ, of whom it could be a

59 Text (translated to English here) introducing the exhibition and the history of Héloïse and Abélard's reliquary chest, signed by François-Henri Pinault and distributed during the exhibition on the occasion of the European Heritage Days. Visited on September 14, 2018.

60 Following the example of Gérard Genette, according to whom the paratext is "what makes the text a book and proposes itself as such to its readers", the communicational elements of this *exhibition* are paratextual elements that allow us to orient our perception of it; they allow the creation of the *text – exhibition* (see Genette 1987, pp. 7-8, author's translation).

61 See also: http://www.kering.com/sites/default/files/press_release/communique_-_journees_du_patrimoine_2018_-_07.09.2018.pdf.

relic, protected from man's destructive madness.[62] "It is therefore through the presence of the reliquary chest in question, as much as through the way this presence affects the works of art exhibited, that the ostentation of the religious sign would give way to a sacred dimension, or that both, sacralization and religiosity, would cohabit in this same space: "We pass from the register of religion, as an organized system of belief and control of destinies, to that of the sacred which precedes and, above all, exceeds the principle of religion" (Dufour 2011, p. 95, author's translation).

**Figure 3.2.** *The chapel in the hospice des Incurables (40, rue de Sèvres): high altar partly covered with the work Byars is elephant, 1977, by the artist James Lee Byars, stained glass windows and crucifixes (photographs taken by the author)*

A closer look at the *experience* offered by Kering on the occasion of the European Heritage Days, in other words, the discourses developed and the visits and exhibitions on offer, shows that this composite and syncretic whole forms a device that not only guides the discovery, reception and interpretation of the different elements on offer – a virtual tour of the site's history, a visit to the exhibition, the Balenciaga showroom, the gardens and the building's reception hall – but also the grasping and position of the group in question, its value system. The latter ultimately emanates from a *re-presentational* apparatus that seems to function almost entirely on the model of the *relic*. The place is staged in the image of a relic as much in the initial religious acceptance of the term, either the remains of a body, as in its figurative value, or a "thing to which one morally attaches the greatest price,

62 About the work *The Philosophical Nail,* by James Lee Byars, 1986; presentation text for the exhibition *Reliquaires,* on the occasion of the European Heritage Days, September 15–16, 2018.

which one keeps in memory of a loved one",[63] the question being represented here by the brand. The Kering group's headquarters stand out as this *reliquary apparatus*, "this material part [which] is to the brand what the physical body is to the identity" (Dufour 2011, p. 100, author's translation).

### 3.3.4. *Materiality, cult value and transparency*

The Kering group's brands, and in particular Balenciaga, present at 40, rue de Sèvres, represent a domain of ready-to-wear clothing that is particularly inaccessible due to their pricing policies. The opening of the doors of the group's head office allows the visitor, during the time of his visit, not only to discover this place steeped in history, but also to visit a space that is traditionally inaccessible both from a concrete and symbolic point of view. The inaccessibility of the group and its brands lies in the segment to which they belong. When we are given the opportunity to penetrate this space, three elements are actualized: the *materiality* of the market instance, its *cultural value* and its supposedly *transparent* position.

The innaccessible dimension of this place is given a materiality because the time of a *visit*, the forbidden becomes possible. If we admit, like Jack Goody, that "in [the relics] the part represents the whole; better still, in the case of bodily relics, the inanimate represents the animate, the dead represents the living" (Goody 2006, p. 89), the spectacle offered by the *Reliques* exhibition offered by the Kering group makes it possible to represent the living in the place not of a dead instance, but of an inaccessible yet omnipresent instance in the public and media space.

The cultural dimension of the group and its brands concerns *cult value* as developed by Walter Benjamin. Although it is transformed during the visit into *exhibition value*, it retains its *cult* dimension because it is not visible *a priori*, secret and forbidden. It is furthermore reinforced by the *worship* aspect – in the ceremonial and religious sense of the term – that characterizes the place in question. The act of coming closer to this collective instance – the group, its brands, its place, its works of art and objects of worship – actualizes what Benjamin describes as the possibility "to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly" (Benjamin 1969, p. 5).

63 "Relique", *Le Robert, Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, edited by Alain Rey, p. 3163.

Finally, the so-called "transparent" position is the result of this aim assumed by the Kering group to remove the material veil that separates it from the world. As 40, rue de Sèvres is surrounded by a high wall, it is impossible to *see* what is hidden there. When its doors open, the transformation of the opaque dimension of the place into a *transparent* dimension takes shape. The so-called transparency functions as a "figure [...] in its material (objects, techniques, spaces) and immaterial (discourse, representations, relations) dimensions. A figure that is at once light, creative and playful, in the great registers of aestheticization (image, *design* of objects and spaces, fashion)..." (Boutaud 2005, p. 3, author's translation), which is abundantly updated by the group's communication and re-presentation strategy. For any representation process, what happens here is a selection and combination of elements that one wishes to *show* well and make *transparent*. It is as if Kering allows us to go *behind the scenes*, even though the latter are carefully prepared to be *exposed* as well. When the merchant body makes this intrusion possible, it does so in an orchestrated and intentional way, it is *staging transparency*, which is a paradox.

This paradoxical dimension will also be addressed in Chapter 4, which questions the presence of political engagement in the luxury fashion industry's communication strategies.

# 4

# Re-presentation as a Rewriting of Politics

In March 2019, the French government announced the "Sentinelle" operation mobilizing the national army with the intention of preserving public order and security during the Yellow Vest movement demonstrations. Numerous press titles published images publicizing these demonstrations and the damage caused by the so-called "troublemakers". Others focused on the wounded and injured bodies of the demonstrators and the violent actions of law enforcement officials. The city of Paris and in particular its eighth arrondissement were transformed – according to the media productions circulating – into a battle space exposing, in particular, burnt cars, nebulae of smoke caused by tear gas bombs, masked and injured faces. A few months earlier, France had seen other protest movements, initiated by high school and university students, demonstrating and occupying schools and universities in order to oppose the "Parcoursup" law. These general assemblies and blockades of universities took place in the spring of 2018, 50 years after May 1968. At the same time, commemorative events, debates and symposiums, exhibitions and retrospectives devoted to May 1968 were found throughout France, while at the same time some social movements were either banned or criminalized. It was during this period that the Gucci brand advertising campaign entitled *Gucci dans les rues* appeared, reproducing images and street situations that occurred during the events of May 1968[1]. If we accept, like Denis Barbet, that advertisers "tend to frequently annex political events, past or present, [and that] the objective is to confer on the products concerned the reputation and depth of history and tradition" (Barbet 2012, p. 17, author's translation), it is necessary to

1 See: https://www.gucci.com/us/en/st/stories/advertising-campaign/article/pre-fall-2018-shoppable.

question this "intensification of the relationship between advertising and politics [as well as] the representations that these two types of discourse and imaginations nourish" (De Montety 2012, p. 63, author's translation). This will be the challenge of this chapter, which will focus on the presence of *politics* in the promotional and re-presentational discourses of the luxury fashion industry.

Back to the events that occupied the political and media news in France: while the Yellow Vests were demonstrating in many French cities, an event was about to affect the fashion industry. The couturier Karl Lagerfeld, artistic director of the Chanel brands since 1983, of Fendi since 1965 and of his eponymous brand since 1984, died in February 2019. The event received particularly extensive media coverage and the documents dedicated to him recalled, among other things, the spectacular fashion shows that the couturier had set up under the dome of the Grand Palais in Paris for Chanel. Since 2007, the brand has presented its collections there exclusively, mimicking and spectacularly reproducing both outdoor and indoor spaces: from the airplane cabin and Place Vendôme in 2012 to the forest or sandy beach in 2018, via monumental installations such as a reproduction of the Eiffel Tower or a rocket in 2017. Also in 2015, Lagerfeld orchestrated a catwalk in the Grand Palais in the form of a street demonstration in which models were seen brandishing signs with protest messages: "History is her story", "make fashion not war", "tweed is better than tweet", while the couturier himself told the press that both his collection and his fashion show were a tribute to the "wind of freedom that blew in May '68 in France, whereas today everything is forbidden, political correctness has destroyed everything [...] people have become much more bourgeois since then"[2]. The street demonstration took place in a simulated street – a reproduction of a Parisian boulevard surrounded by Haussmann-style buildings – and became the backdrop for a promotional event for the fashion industry, while celebrating women in a "feminine but not feminist" spirit,[3] the fashion *catwalk-demonstration* showcased the Chanel brand's ready-to-wear collection.

2 "Lagerfeld et Chanel dans la rue", article published on October 1, 2014 in *Le Bien public*. The comments collected, translated and relayed here are supposed to come from Karl Lagerfeld. See: https://www.puretrend.com/article/fashion-week-paris-jour-8-la-manifestation-feministe-de-chanel_ a94047/1.

3 "Mannequins", article published on October 2, 2014 in *La Montagne*. The comments collected, translated and relayed here are supposed to come from Karl Lagerfeld.

While Chanel and its artistic director at the time seemed to make a clear distinction between femininity and feminism, more recently and notably following the so-called "Weinstein affair" and the MeToo movement, brands in the luxury fashion industry have also developed discourses defending both women and feminism. The Dior brand "opened the 2018 autumn-winter fashion show [...] with a sweater 'C'est non non non et non!' (It's no no no and no!)[4]", and extended this proposal by covering the walls of some of his shops with the same message. It is also the same brand that, a few years earlier, marketed t-shirts with feminist messages such as "we should all be feminists".

The examples mentioned above fall under the third common area that the fashion industry convenes and invests in for re-presentational purposes: that of politics. The aim here is to give an account of the way in which the fashion industry mobilizes and even diverts discourses grounded in a political paradigm linked to class struggles or so-called "minority" groups. It is also a question of highlighting the communication methods that allow such diversions: advertisements, fashion shows, fashion editorials, products and press releases. Finally, the aim is to show how the fashion industry mobilizes[5] discursive and semiotic "formulas" that are political in nature, in a dimension that is both anaphoric and subversive. Starting from the principle that anaphora and subversion constitute the organization of the diversion, the challenge of the analyses carried out here will be to show the enunciative density introduced by the fashion industry's re-presentational policies. While misappropriation has its origins in the scriptural gestures and manifestos of the situationists (Debord and Wolman 1956, reprinted in Debord 2006, pp. 221–229), its necessity rests on the imperative of modifying the discourses that value the capitalist order. Indeed, the enunciative density emanates from this anaphoric doubling in which it is the capitalist discourses that divert the discourses originally produced with a view to denouncing capitalism itself. As Simona de Iulio points out, advertising, but this can also apply to other forms of communication with a

4 "Dior transforme sa boutique de l'avenue Montaigne en banderole de manifestation", article published on July 3, 2018 by *Fashion Network*. See: https://fr.fashionnetwork.com/news/Dior-transforme-sa-boutique-de-l-avenue-Montaigne-en-banderole-de-manifestation,993755.html#.XJjg2i17TOQ.

5 In the sense of Alice Krieg-Planque, "the set of formulations that, because of their use at a given time and in a given public space, crystallize political and social issues that these expressions contribute at the same time to construct" (Krieg-Planque 2009, p. 7).

promotional vocation, can proceed to "recover the diversions" (de Iulio 2016, p. 33, author's translation).

As mentioned previously, the mobilization of political discourse and symbols through communication, and more specifically through advertising, is a relatively recurrent strategy. Researchers interested in this intertwining have, for example, questioned the critical dimension that advertising has regarding policies but also politics. Caroline Marti reminds us that the "credibility of politics is [...] questioned [especially since] the current depoliticization often evoked makes it much easier to grasp the words of politics and these misappropriations" (Marti 2012a, p. 63, author's translation) while, according to the same author, some advertising discourse values "something else, which could be described as the greatness of politics" (p. 64, author's translation). In the framework of re-presentation policies of the fashion industry, the major question that arises is as follows: to *what extent does the diversion of politics grant the fashion industry a political posture, that is to say a position that opens itself to the collective interest and that motivates the activities of this industry, at least partially, by a common cause other than economic?* It will be a matter of questioning the possible suppression of the legitimacy and authority of the political field when it is introduced into and diverted by the fashion industry's promotional discourses. Following Emmanuël Souchier for whom, "in this [commercial] strategy of the 1960s and 1970s, advertisers exploited the political world, but depoliticized the content of their discourse" (Souchier 1992, p. 50, author's translation), I will attempt to account for the way in which the social referent constructed by the *political formulas* mobilized by the fashion industry for re-presentational purposes is discredited, even suppressed.

To do this, I will be interested in advertising campaigns (Gucci), fashion shows (Chanel, Dior) and merchandise (Dior) but also in fashion editorials published in magazine titles (*Citizen K*). All of these elements are approached as a *direct* re-presentational policy, coming from an advertiser in the fashion industry, or *indirectly*, proposed by an *intermediary,* a media body directly linked to this industry, such as the magazine press[6]. Two

6 The dual socioeconomic model of the media industry – editorial and surging – very often organizes fashion and beauty editorials according to the principle of journalistic marketing: by proposing photographic staging around the season's trends, fashion and beauty editorials indirectly promote their most loyal advertisers. The introduction of the latter's goods in these editorial formats and their explicit indexing by means of the explanatory texts accompanying the images not only ensures certain advertising, but also contextualizes the marketable goods

*motives*[7] emerge from these policies of re-presentation: that of the politics as an *pretension* and that of politics as a *(pre)text*.

## 4.1. The pretension of politics and its market value

While advertising is often used as a propaganda tool, allowing the staging of ideological discourse, it would not be wrong to consider that advertising and any unadvertization or hyperadvertising discourse are built on ideological, though not constantly political, aims. To put it another way, the syncretic discourses conveyed by market promotional strategies very rarely ignore the values and doxas established, regardless of their communicational intentionality. Far from an assumed aim of political propaganda, when the fashion industry appropriates forms reserved for the political domain, it seems to hold a double discourse that could be described as both *serious* and *fictitious*. I would like to draw a comparison between the fashion industry's re-presentational policies mobilizing forms of protest from the realm of politics, and the theatrical theory that opposes the *blocking text to* the *dramatic text*.

According to Michael Issacharoff:

> The dramatic text (in the sense of the published text rather than in the sense of the scenic or spectacular text) has the peculiarity that it has two levels, one fictitious (the dialogue), the other non-fictitious or "serious" (in the Austinian sense): the blocking, those statements usually not designed to be pronounced on stage during the performance. (Issacharoff 1993, p. 464, author's translation)

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and their producing authorities. While some media, as Nathalie Sonnac points out, depend on public policies and are therefore "under trusteeship", others can be considered as being under the trusteeship of financial groups. Such is the case of the specialized fashion and beauty press, whose main advertisers come from the few groups in the sector such as LVMH, Kering, H&M Hennes & Mauritz, Chanel, Hermès International, etc. (see Sonnac 2006, pp. 49–58).

7 I borrow this notion from Yves Jeanneret designating the different commonplaces of discourses on knowledge sharing (see Jeanneret 2004, pp. 15–32). In previous research on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), this notion was mobilized to account for the way in which "actors construct a discourse on their social role and the way in which they present the values they associate with this role" (see Labelle and Mouratidou 2017, p. 157, author's translation).

Based on this observation, it would be possible to consider the political text – in the semiotic sense of the term – as this serious text while its transformation and appropriation by the fashion industry would correspond to a fictitious text, if only partially. However, there is a major difference. Texts produced by the fashion industry for promotional purposes update the serious text that has partly structured them by making it visible, although transformed[8]. However, the starting point for the texts produced by this industry is the *fictivation* of discourse and forms from the field of politics. The term fictivation should not be confused with fictionalization. *By this term I mean the emergence of fiction from the modification of a source text presenting a situation whose protagonists are questionable in terms of fact and truth*[9]. When, for example, Gucci modified the biblical text of Noah's Ark, it took the source text and put it into a work of fiction, with an advertising nature. On the other hand, and this is what I propose to analyze in what follows, when the same brand modified the *photographic texts* representing the events of May 1968 as well as the historical and enunciative density that determined them, it proceeded to fictivate this source text. *Fictivation is synonymous with misappropriation and even subversion when it gives a fictitious dimension to non-fictitious discourses*.

### 4.1.1. *Demonstration: presence, representation, event and spectacle*

Defined as "a movement intended to manifest some political intention" (Marin 1994, p. 47, author's translation), the demonstration must take place in the public space and thus acquire a spectacular dimension, destined *a fortiori* to be contemplated, observed, or even repressed. As a movement bringing together a relatively large number of people for a protest and a demand of a social, political, geopolitical, peaceful nature, etc., the demonstration is a spectacular presence and therefore responds to a more or less thoughtful staging. In fact, it is the result of a formal organization that structures the space: main procession, spokespersons, banners, signs, music, songs, while the demonstrators present gestures that contribute to the

8 This is also true for the transition from the written dramatic text to the theatrical performance, which itself updates the didascalic text. On the relationship between the latter and the dramatic text (see also Mouratidou 2007, pp. 75–86; Mouratidou 2009a, pp. 249–259; Mouratidou 2009b, pp. 115–123).

9 Or the documenting mode as described by Roger Odin and discussed in Chapter 2 of this book.

formation of a specific language such as raised fists[10], dynamic postures and expressive faces. As a result, the demonstration acquires a "general structure of theatricality or spectacularity" (Marin 1994, p. 49, author's translation).

From a communicational point of view, the event constitutes a *discontinuous and extraordinary* but also iterative *presence*, inviting spectators to focus their gaze on what happens during the event. As a presence, the manifestation is already representation, the presence being included in the latter, as we discussed in the introduction to this research[11]. This presence-representation manifests itself in a discontinuous and extraordinary way in that it is eventalized, motivated by events of a political nature – in the broadest sense of the term – arising in a relatively exceptional way and provoking the constitution of the procession, the constituent element of the demonstration. Finally, it is iterative, since it has similar formal qualities with the events that preceded it but also with those that will take place subsequently.

From a semio-pragmatic point of view, a street demonstration takes place in a spectacular space, "separated from the spectator space by a visible [...] or invisible barrier" (Odin 2011, p. 51, author's translation), while its enunciators are, as we have already mentioned, questionable from the point of view of their identity, their actions and the truth of the latter. These two characteristics correspond, respectively, to the spectacularizing semio-pragmatic mode and the documenting mode. Finally, a street demonstration can mobilize discourses that are based on proven observations, factual data – discourses of truth deployed in the documenting mode – but also discourses of values, which also refers to the ethos of the enunciators of the moralizing mode (Odin 2011, p. 51). Finally, if the street is the medium of an event, the media coverage of the latter through other media formats such as photography or video contributes to the creation of the *metaspectacle*, insofar as the latter depends on the point of view of an observer (photographer, journalist, cameraman, etc.) allowing the event to be captured and possibly covered. This media coverage is the result of syncretic forms, which are stereotypical and very often give rise to standardized or even fixed representations.

10 See, for example, Burin (1986, pp. 5–20).

11 See section I.3.

Often bringing together a large number of citizens and responding to injunctions that are common to a country's internal and external policies, the event is also a quantitative political event:

> Contrary to parliamentary or union representation, a *demonstration* does not delegate or differ, nor does it compress itself: since its number gives the exact measure of its message, we will say of the demonstration that it does not think, but that it *influences* (hence the battles over numbers between the organizers and the police prefecture). The real presence of the vector and the very physical embodiment of its message make the manifesto to parliamentary life what poetry is to prose. (Bougnoux 2006, pp. 63–64, author's translation)

As a result, the demonstration, a political street spectacle that occurs collectively and very often massively, can be a photogenic and media-generated event (Marion 1997) whose media circulation can also give rise to misappropriations, citations and diversions.

### 4.1.2. *Re-presenting and misappropriating the demonstration*

Thus, the photogenic, mediagenic and spectacular dimensions of the demonstration, as well as the *common* and *collective* motivations that determine it, constitute a commonly shared and recognizable sociomediatic paradigm. It seems easy to grasp the dual interest of media representations of demonstrations when they are taken up, reformulated and introduced in new texts with a different generic status, in this case promotional. It is in this order of ideas that the Chanel catwalk-demonstration in 2014 is approached here, as a *mise en abyme*, a spectacle within a spectacle, which grants its producing body – the Chanel brand – the possibility of re-presenting itself through the mimetic reproduction of a street demonstration.

Under the dome of the Grand Palais in Paris, Chanel's 2015 spring-summer collection was presented by models walking along a boulevard called "Chanel", surrounded by Haussmann-style bourgeois buildings. At the end, the fashion show turned into an event where all the models paraded, signs and speakers in hand, accompanied by Karl Lagerfeld, the brand's artistic director. The atmosphere was festive and joyful, the procession was applauded by the observers of the catwalk demonstration. While, during a

fashion show, a model is supposed to adopt a sensual approach – walking along a catwalk – the Chanel fashion show ended with a modification of this body language. It borrowed the codes of a language specific to street demonstrations in its euphoric version. As for the messages proposed on the numerous signs worn by the models, they were more about femininity, feminine freedom and the relationship with fashion: "be your own stylist", "boys should get pregnant too", "divorce for all", "history is her story" and "ladies first". The first level of spectacularization of this event was live; it took place in front of a guest audience that applauded both the ready-to-wear collection proposed by the brand and the show that allowed its presentation.

The Chanel catwalk-demonstration can be interpreted as a *hyperbolic intertext*, i.e. a set of "free echoes of one (or more) text(s) in another text" (Adam 1999, p. 85, author's translation) whose signs are exacerbated. As a spectacle imitating another spectacle, this catwalk-demonstration reminds us of its fictional dimension insofar as "no reader/consumer really believes in the paradise language proposed by modern advertising" (Adam and Bonhomme 1997, p. 54, author's translation). At the same time, the signs reminiscent of a street demonstration give the catwalk, a promotional and indirectly advertising strategy, a duality that blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality, and tends to adopt a position that goes beyond advertising by opting for a positioning grounded in the foundation of social struggles.

This grounding is all the more visible in the fashion editorial proposed by the magazine title *Citizen K* and its 82nd issue – Spring 2017. Entitled *"Le printemps. C'est la lutte des sacs!"* (Spring. It's the bags' battle!) the editorial depicted a conflict situation taking place outside and reminded us of a certain disorder that can be encountered during an event[12]. The title of the editorial, appearing on its double opening page, announced its theme; it is formed from a substitution made beforehand with the phrase[13] "class

12 See: https://www.lebook.com/creative/citizen-k-lutte-des-sacs-editorial-2017.

13 According to Gaston Gros, a locution is a group in which "the elements are not individually discounted" and "there can be no predictive relationship between the different elements that are within the scope of fixed expressions" (see Gros 1996, pp. 14–15, author's translation). According to André Martinet and functional syntax, a fixed expression functions as a syntagm whose elements are neither interchangeable nor able to enter into "particular relationships with any other external moneme [...]; a *hollow railway* or a *forged railway would* no longer be *a railway*" (see Martinet 1985, p. 37, author's translation). Qualifying the statement "the class struggle" as a locution or a syntagm allows us to grasp and establish its fixed and therefore non-switchable and unmodifiable dimension, without taking into account,

struggle" and having given rise to the statement "the bags' struggle". As for the temporal mention provided by this editorial, "Spring", it led to two possible interpretations. The first to the segmentation of fashion collections according to two main seasons[14]; the second to the qualifications of different political and societal revolutions and therefore to other locutions, such as "Arab Spring" or "Prague Spring".

The double page featured animated and non-animated actants in an atmosphere reminiscent of a demonstration: iron barricades, scattered tires, a charred vehicle, smoke and numerous models[15]. The latter were presented at the front, fists up, hoisting signs with messages of protest. A large scarf bearing the Louis Vuitton brand logo was also hoisted and waved like a flag. A pink sign featured the statement "*sous les pavés, la mode*" (under the cobblestones, fashion) next to a drawing of a raised fist and a factory. The scripto-iconic elements of this photographic scene actualize the diversion of the statement "*sous les pavés, la plage*"[16] under the cobblestones, the beach as much as of its utterance. As an utterance, it is a slogan that accompanied the struggles during May 1968; its enunciation, taken up by demonstrators during the uprisings of that period, and its inscription on a material format – a sign – transformed into a formal medium of claiming messages symbolizing social struggles, which contributed to the formation of its symbolic value as well as to its semantic fixation. As with the expression "class struggle", the expression "*sous les pavés*, *la plage*" is *non-fixed* in terms of its introduction into the communication space of the fashion editorial and the specialized press. The same non-fixing operation can also be observed for the drawings proposed on the protest placard. The symbol of the raised fist refers, historically, to the fight against fascism and later against racism, while the drawing of the factory symbolizes the struggle of the working classes. The introduction of these two images into this precise communicative context deprives them of their symbolic meaning and subjects them to a new semantization process.

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of course, the intervention of advertising creativity. As Amossy and Herschberg Pierrot (1997) point out, these fixed statements can be disfigured "with puns, in press titles and advertising slogans" (p. 88).

14 Either fall-winter or spring-summer.

15 For this double-page spread, all the models were dressed, as the editorial mentions in the margin of the photographic staging, exclusively in articles of clothing sold by the Louis Vuitton brand.

16 An emblematic statement from the 1968 protests in France, which can be translated literally as "under the cobblestones, the beach".

### 4.1.3. *From stereotype to irony: political pretension*

The reproduction of politically relevant forms linked to protest movements and events is inspired by a base of cultural codes, with more or less fixed semiotic expressions, in other words, subject to a standardized representation of the event in its organizational dimension. This reproduction is made possible only because it mobilizes a stereotypical form, that is, "a social representation, a fixed collective schema that corresponds to a dated cultural model" (Amossy and Herschberg Pierrot 1997, p. 64, author's translation). Formed from the principle of anaphora[17], the two promotional and media events analyzed above divert the manifestation from its original meaning by its enunciative inscription in a media space whose purpose is, at least partially, commercial. Advertisers and their intermediaries[18] appropriate discourses that *a priori* do not have a commercial promotional purpose by transforming political references full of history into advertising catchphrases. From this point of view, the diversion of politics gives the fashion industry a political posture, a posture based on the principle of *irony*.

Based on the observation that, ironically, "there is [...] *lack of support* for the utterance by the speaker and *discordance* in relation to the expected discourse" (Maingueneau 2002, p. 330, author's translation),[19] it seems relevant to approach the misuse of politics, as deployed through the fashion show and the fashion editorial, as a discourse that is certainly discordant and whose explicit aim, contrary to the doxa determining the function of irony, is not to disqualify the source text – irony is often a citation, a polyphonic discourse – but to give itself a *discursive ambiguity*, between disqualification and appropriation[20]. While the irony in the Chanel catwalk emanated from the gap established between the animated and non-animated actants who participated in the demonstration event[21], a gap linked to the incompatibility between the brand's values in question and the form mobilized to explicitly

17 Anaphora both verbal and non-verbal.

18 In this case, the magazine press.

19 In italics in the text.

20 What we will see in the third part with the discursive principle of *reinvestment*, a principle that goes beyond the discursive framework to account for the spaces invested in and reinvested in by the fashion industry both semiotically and economically (see Chapter 6).

21 Either the Chanel ready-to-wear collection, those who contributed to its realization, the catwalk as a creative form also produced by a team, personalities and professionals invited to attend the show such as celebrities from the entertainment industry, journalists, models and privileged clients of the brand in question.

or implicitly defend these values, in the context of the editorial "*La lutte des sacs!*" The irony is the result of a hyperbolic gap between the photographic staging and the diversion of the social message. But at the same time, the irony allows the two bodies that mobilize it to equip themselves with a protective armor that can defend them from any social criticism. Irony produces a paradoxical enunciation that simultaneously advances and cancels, in this case, the anaphorized statements. Thus, "to make irony is not to mimically contradict the previous or virtual, or at least external, act of speech of another. It is to register oneself as false against one's own utterance, while at the same time accomplishing it" (Berredonner 1981, p. 216, author's translation). The accomplished utterance can thus allow the fashion industry to adopt a political stance, while the false registration of the same utterance can allow this stance, constructed from the second degree, to be registered as false against one's own utterance. This is done by producing but also by adopting the signs and discourse of the source text. This is also part of the strategies of what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiappello (1999) describe as the new spirit of capitalism, strategies to which I will return in the third part of this book.

## 4.2. From text to (pre-)text: (political) mediations in the fashion industry

The second reason that the fashion industry's revival and diversion of political forms and discourse is the (pre-)text. This notion is also borrowed from the theory of the theatrical text and its staging. While the dramatic text (including didascalies) is a pre-text, its theatrical representation is its text, this syncretic semiotic material occurring *a posteriori* and from this pre-text[22]. In the case of the fashion industry's re-presentation policies, the communicational productions observed are constructed from a pre-text that constitutes an event and that has been transcribed or even translated semiotically in multiple ways.

22 André Helbo, for example, uses the notions of *proto-text* and *meta-text* in order to account for this temporal and semiotic relationship established in adaptation processes, where one encounters *a fortiori* a first and a second text; these two notions (proto-text and meta-text) are also relevant to the relationship between dramatic text (*proto*) and spectacular text (*meta*) (see also Helbo 1997).

"Describing the event implies that the event has been described", wrote Roland Barthes in 1968 (1968, p. 108, author's translation). The event that Barthes refers to, May 1968, was written and therefore described, according to the semiologist, through three *discourses*: a first, radiophonic, a second referring to "the balance of power between the different groups and parties involved in the crisis [whose] tactical and dialectical displacement [...] took place *through and by* press conference, declaration, speech" (Barthes 1968, p. 109, author's translation), and a third, that of the students. While the media image is absent from Barthes' list, it is probably because the latter refers to speech as an instance of mediation, making it possible to construct a relationship between the May 1968 event, the actants who produced it, and society. But the writing of the event also occurred through exposure processes that looked at the said event, commented on it and qualified it. These multiple discourses gave rise both to circulations in the media space and to fixed representations, associated with visual and audiovisual productions that themselves constituted an event. For example, the productions of the photo-reporter Gilles Caron[23] are particularly representative of the uprisings of this period and can therefore be grasped as a *metonymic representation* of the May 1968 event. In terms of ideas, before becoming a speech, a text – oral, visual, audiovisual – May 1968 was a pre-text, a situation that preceded the text in a more or less short temporality. In what follows, I will question the pre-textual dimension that the political event represents when it is mobilized for communication purposes by the fashion industry, while at the same time questioning its pretextual dimension, namely "an alleged reason to conceal the true motive for an action"[24].

### 4.2.1. *Rewriting the media image: reintroducing the formula (to better deconstruct it)*

If, as mentioned above, an event is always written and therefore described, when it is taken up in an intertextual dimension, it is rewritten. While the media images of May 1968 constitute a first textual level representing the pre-text that is the event as it arises, when the luxury ready-to-wear brand Gucci took them up for advertising purposes, it proceeded as much to quote them, producing an intertext mimicking the media images of

23 See: https://www.fondationgillescaron.org.

24 "Prétexte" entry, *Le Robert de la langue française*, Paris, Dictionaries Le Robert, p. 2065.

the time, as to update them. How then did Gucci invite us and allow us to interpret the May 1968 event through this new focus and its point of view, no longer that of a documentary photograph but of film and advertising photographs?

To answer this question, I will analyze excerpts from the Gucci advertising film *Gucci dans les rues*, a selection of advertising images offered by the brand on its Website and how this campaign is qualified by Gucci. Introduced as an audiovisual document that "evokes the revolt of young Parisian students in May '68 [the advertising campaign] by Glen Luchford [...] reproduces black and white documentary photography, a new art form emanating from the events of the time"[25]. The historical, sociopolitical and media pre-text is therefore clearly announced and assumed by the producing brand. In order to grasp this pre-text and its transformation into an advertising discourse, I will contrast photographic documents that have been in the media since May 1968 with those proposed by the Gucci trademark.

The advertising film, which lasts 1 min and 20 sec, offers a story about the occupation of the streets and universities by young men and women. It contains formal elements that border on the symbolic and are in keeping with a specific period (the late 1960s, early 1970s and its dress codes), a category of people (young women and young men, students in general and for some Fine Arts students) and specific actions (processions demonstrating in the street, assemblies and occupations of interior spaces identified as university institutions). In addition to being grounded[26] by the text, this advertising film and certain visual selections offered by the brand on its Website summon elements that explicitly anaphorize the events of May 1968. Two images caught my attention. The first depicts two young men hanging from the windowsills of a building with the handwritten words "it is forbidden to forbid"; the second image depicts a situation that is relatively identical to the first, with five young men clinging to the wall of a building that looks like an educational institution (school or university), brandishing a banner that reads "*sous les pavés, la plage*".

25 See: https://www.gucci.com/int/fr/st/stories/advertising-campaign/article/pre-fall-2018-no-shoppable#.

26 In the sense of Roland Barthes (1964) designating the grounding function that determines the relationship between text and image.

Contrary to the misappropriation of slogans linked to citizen mobilizations observed and analyzed in the first part of this chapter, here the slogans born during May 1968 are not misappropriated in their linguistic formation but only in their belonging to a communicational context. Alice Krieg-Planque evokes the role and the responsibility of the media in the creation of formulas; she underlines the fact that the latter "arrive to the media [...] from the periphery" (Krieg-Planque 2009, p. 123, author's translation) and reminds that "the media have in the making of formulas a publicization role, but they appear more frequently as operators of circulation than as creators or initiators" (Krieg-Planque 2009, p. 125, author's translation). It would not be wrong, in my opinion, to complete this observation by emphasizing the fact that this contribution from the media to the publicization of the formula ends up "overdetermining the signifying forms" (Jeanneret 2004, p. 87, author's translation) of the formulas and making them trivial. As a result, as a trivial form, the formula can become more grounded in the public and media space, but it can also very easily be deconstructed and subjected to diversions, in this case advertising.

Thus, the formula used in these advertising images is being revisited insofar as it is introduced in a new communication context and has a different purpose, even if only partially, from the one initially adopted. The introduction of the phrases "*sous les pavés, la plage*" and "*il est interdit d'interdire*"[27] in the advertising discourse of the luxury ready-to-wear brand Gucci is, in my opinion, a process that further reinforces the deconstruction of these phrases, much more so than the one observed for the "class struggle – bag struggle" couple and "*sous les pavés, la plage – sous les pavés, la mode*". The reason for this is that while the diversion of the formula in the fashion editorial of *Citizen K* is explicit, its deconstruction in Gucci's advertising discourse is implicit. And it is in this *ambiguity between mobilization and deconstruction of the formula* that the entire advertising strategy is constructed, allowing the *social referent* included in the formula to be removed, that is, "a sign that means something to everyone at a given moment" (Krieg-Planque 2009, p. 55, author's translation). We will see in what follows how this set of *signs that mean something for everyone at a given moment* that the two locutions constitute ceases to signify the struggles of May 1968 to say something else and thus to be updated in a new communicational context, particularly antinomic and at the antipodes of the one that gave rise to them.

27 Literally meaning, it is forbidden to forbid.

### 4.2.2. *Imitation and counterfeiting of the event formula*

First of all, it is appropriate to develop what I mean by the phrase *formula-event*. Based on the work of Alice Krieg-Planque on the formula and in particular on its constituent elements, such as "its fixed character, its discursive inscription, its functioning as a social referent [and] its polemical dimension" (Krieg-Planque 2009, p. 14, author's translation), I propose to extend the notion of formula, valid for the lexicon or linguistic idioms, to syncretic discourse. The locution "under the cobblestones, the beach" would fall under a *syncretic formula* because it is linked to a precise sociopolitical context and organized around other elements that are not exclusively part of a linguistic system. Thus, the mediations and media coverage carried out about May 1968, their circulation and stabilization in the sociomediatic space constitute a formula itself resulting from an extended event with as much a polemical dimension, a social referent, a discursive inscription (in the semiotic sense of the term) as a fixed character. While May 1968 and its syncretic words have benefited from sociomediatic re-presentations endowed with the characteristics mentioned above and borrowed from Alice Krieg-Planque's theory, it is the *whole event that can be qualified as a formula*. Gucci's imitation of the sociomedia representations of the May 1968 event is a counterfeit action of this formula-event, despite the brand's stated intention to pay homage to the young Parisian students of May 1968. To justify this observation, I propose to report on the counterfeiting processes constituting the advertising film *Gucci dans les rues*.

Let us recall what we already observed in the introduction of this book about the counterfeiting of works of art, as theorized by Nelson Goodman (1990). It is a form that has similarities with the imitated form while claiming the same enunciative density and historical depth as the imitated form. The counterfeiting process also affects the creative management of the fashion industry, particularly the luxury goods industry, as many products are copied and offered on the market at lower prices. At the same time, it is important to recall the fertile space for counterfeiting represented by certain productions in the fashion industry, which function more like fixed productions, stereotypes such as accessories and certain garments with multiple logos[28]. *However, just like the counterfeiting of art, the counterfeiting*

28 The Lacoste t-shirt with its crocodile logo has been one of the most copied fashion items. Louis Vuitton and Fendi brand logo bags have also been counterfeited, as were certain

*of fashion has its flaws, the lack of enunciative depth and historicity*. This is how the imitation of the sociomedial representations of the May '68 formula-event can be considered a *counterfeit* production.

Three elements of the advertising film motivate my remarks: (i) the schematization of the advertising film, promoting more an enunciation of the *show* rather than *description*; (ii) the *rewriting of the image* and thus of the story, producing tension between the spoken word and what is shown and also a negation of the sociopolitical facts; and (iii) the *disagreement between the pre-text*, that is to say the formula-event *May 1968,* and the characteristics of *Gucci*'s *producing instance Gucci dans les rues.*

Demonstration in documentary photography is the result of a "tension between tense criteria ...: when [the photograph] captures the action at its peak and reaches the heart of the event [the tension] is a matter of demonstration" (Beyaert-Geslin 2009, p. 74, author's translation). On the contrary, the description "moves away from the spatio-temporal scene and takes advantage of the stability of the shot" (Beyaert-Geslin 2009, p. 74, author's translation). Although *Gucci dans les rues* does not fall within the realm of documentary photography, it appropriates the iconic world of it, from the time and also, as stated on the brand's Website, "the campaign is inspired by the bold, experimental and iconoclastic French Nouvelle Vague filmmakers of the late 50s and 60s".[29] Although the film in question offers a reproduction of the events during the May 1968 uprisings*,* it avoids an all-encompassing approach to what it recounts and seems to focus on the details of most of its scenes. By *depicting the event*, the advertising campaign succeeds, on the one hand, in *highlighting* the "strength of the speech act" (Beyaert-Geslin 2009, p.74, author's translation), in this case filmed. On the other hand, the focus on the action at its peak also allows for tight shots that accentuate the details, the visual qualities of the actants in the film's narrative and consequently those of the ready-to-wear collection for which the film was made. While representing the action in an intense way, the film manages to represent the collection consecutively and in the same way. From this point of view, it is not the event-formula that is represented by the film, but the microcomponents that make up the latter in its fictional

products described as iconic and therefore easily recognizable, such as the Chanel *2.55* handbag.

29 See: https://www.gucci.com/fr/en_gb/st/stories/advertising-campaign/article/pre-fall-2018-shoppable.

reproduction, and in particular the commercial good that makes up the main *text* of this film.

The question of the fictional dimension is included in the second argument that justifies the film's classification as counterfeit. Although the film uses symbolic intertexts such as the phrase "*sous les pavés, la plage*", an expression which, in addition to its metaphorical dimension,[30] is also endowed with a realized reference, i.e. the cobblestones used by the May 1968 demonstrators as a weapon against the forces of law and order, the film negates the formula and thus generates tension between what the latter says and what the film shows us. For a better look at this audiovisual document, the scenes reproducing the occupation of the street and the moments of confrontation between the demonstrators and the forces of law and order – the latter, on the other hand, remain absent from the audiovisual document – proceed to a major negation, that is of the cobblestones, although the word is written on the banner hoisted by the film's characters. The characters representing young students defend themselves with pieces of paper and cloth, the cobblestones being reserved for photographic representations that are not fiction but of a documentary nature.


**Figure 4.1.** *Showing the event and denying the sociopolitical facts, "Gucci dans les rues" campaign, film made by Glen Luchford for Gucci (Kering Group) (screenshots)*[31]

Finally, while the events during May 1968 are a pretext for the brand to speak out on political issues, we can highlight a fundamental disagreement

30 On this subject, see the post by Hugues Constantin de Chanay published on the Website of the *Société d'étude des langages du politique* (SELP): https://selp.eu/grand-huit/sous-les-paves-la-plage/.

31 Source: http://www.culturepub.fr/videos/gucci-dans-les-rues/.

between the inherent qualities of the Gucci trademark, certain elements valued by the advertising film and the ideological basis of the 1968 uprisings. While young French students rose up against the political order of the time, it should not be forgotten that the workers did the same, who were largely absent from Gucci's film. It might be possible to envisage students occupying the streets and universities dressed in a panoply whose commercial value easily amounts to 5,000 euros; it is impossible, however, to suggest the same projection with the working class as the protagonist. Finally, among the major demands that marked May 1968 was that of increasing of the minimum wage, accompanied by discourses against the massive development of capitalist society. The observation of the film allows us to grasp the antinomic dimension that is established between this pre-text and Gucci, insofar as the brand with its annual turnover is one of the best representatives[32] of this capitalist system rejected by the demands during May 1968. Finally, May 1968 was also a movement that was born in the prolongation of the movements of American students protesting against the war that the United States was then waging in Vietnam. However, a closer look at the Gucci ready-to-wear collection, which plays the role of lead actant in this film, reveals the presence of a merchandise whose visual qualities are reminiscent of those of the American flag, thus thematizing an America against which the youth of 1968 fought[33]. The question then arises as to whether the "May 1968" event formula should be used as a pre-text or as a communication pretext, with the Gucci brand seizing a temporal opportunity – the 50th anniversary of the event in question – and transforming it into a promotional discourse. It is this discourse that allows the brand to also claim the status of a political mediator. By exploiting the sociomedia circulations and representations of the event formula that was May 1968, the brand aimed to set up a historical–political and also artistic mediation. By evoking in the introduction of its advertising film the new black and white photographic genre that inspires current film production and the cinematic genre known as New Wave, Gucci established a relationship, because of its advertising discourse, between the event in question and us, citizens, observers of the brand, potential customers, etc.

32 2.095 million for the third quarter of 2018; source: https://www.kering.com/fr/actualites/chiffre-affaires-3eme-trimestre-2018-un-nouveau-trimestre-crois sance-exceptionnelle.

33 See: http://www.culturepub.fr/videos/gucci-dans-les-rues/; https://www.matchesfashion.com/fr/products/Gucci-Jupe-culotte-en-soie-à-imprimé-étoiles-1215935.

## 4.3. Removal of the pre-text, and celebration of the pretext

It would not be wrong to consider that the social media representations of May 1968 form a textual basis that is topical at a time when the commercial actor Gucci claims to pay homage to it through its own advertising discourse. Current events constituting a communicational pretext and allowing advertisers to be part of these instances have celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the May 1968 uprisings. The Dior brand also introduced the event-formula into its communications strategy through three different *discourses* – in the words of Roland Barthes: some of the products in its collection were the first discourses, the scenography of its 2018–2019 fall-winter ready-to-wear fashion show, the second, and the design of the façade of its boutique on rue Montaigne the third discourse rewriting the May 1968 event.

### 4.3.1. *Esthetization and commodification of the protest*

Whether it is products from the Dior collection, and in particular its wool sweater with the declarative statement "C'est non non non et non!" or the scenography of the fashion show and the brand's boutique, the pretextual mobilization of the May 1968 formula-event, coupled with that of the so-called "Weinstein affair" and the MeToo movement, is constructed according to two modalities. The first is that of an estheticization of the protest movement honored by the brand; the second is that of the antinomic tension observed between the Dior brand's products and their market value.

In the general movement toward an estheticization of the world as described by Lipovetsky and Serroy (2013, pp. 160–167), spectacular shop windows and merchandising displays are described as auxilaries to the figures of what the authors describe as artist capitalism. "The shop window becomes a place of creation, which is judged according to esthetic criteria" (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2013, p. 161, author's translation), and this can also apply to the entire commercial space. Also, when Dior covered the front of its store on Avenue Montaigne with a decor that included, in the form of a collage, protest messages, it took care of its appearance and its form, while the content of the verbal inscriptions remained relatively illegible. Apart from the voluminous typography used for the inscription of the "No", the messages-quotes of the May 1968 slogans were only partially presented

because they were cut out at the location of the windows, which needed to remain uncovered in order to present the products of the sign.

Although the decor of the fashion show planned for this same collection entirely covered the collage spaces of 1960s fashion images and messages of protest and demand, their proliferation and their superimposed inscription in this same space made them illegible and particularly illustrative. The Dior boutique, like its catwalk space, displays a semiotic opposition confronting the continuous and the discontinuous and thus introducing an opposition between *coherence* and *cohesion*. "*Coherence* underlies a global aim [and] translates the "all-supporting" of the composition [while] the mosaic model then underlies a principle of *cohesion*, a weakened and local version of coherence" (Beyaert-Geslion 2005, p. 135, author's translation). This observation can be contrasted with the tense opposition between demonstration and description that we have identified for the filmed images of the Gucci advertising campaign. While in the latter, it was the demonstration that was emphasized, in order to give an account of the qualities of the brand's goods, we note that for the collages proposed by Dior, it is the principle of coherence that determines this enunciation, that is to say, a global aim that would produce *an effect*, *an atmosphere*, but would focus little attention on the detail of the message[34].

Finally, with prices averaging around 1,500 euros for a wool and cashmere sweater[35] and 500 euros for a cotton t-shirt with a feminist message[36], Dior brand products seem to develop a dual perspective of their exchange value. In addition to positioning themselves as the products of a luxury brand resolutely grounded in French culture and creativity, they also promote another dimension of this same culture: that of protest and the right to demonstrate. It is undoubtedly in this vein that the women's press title

34 See: http://madame.lefigaro.fr/style/defile-dior-pret-a-porter-automne-hiver-2018-2019-sous-les-paves-le-style-photos-270218-147476; https://lemag-ic.fr/en-ce-moment/dior-emballe-facade-de-boutique-de-lavenue-montaigne/.

35 See: https://www.dior.com/fr_fr/mode-femme/pret-a-porter/maille?gclid=CjwKCAjwtYXmBRAOEiwAYsyl3Jgp9MxQen9L8rRt95XZVNLHxHmhBthZsmcKdDleeRZwSYUGdeJs7hoC_dYQAvD_BwE.

36 *We should all be feminists*, source: https://www.journaldesfemmes.fr/mode/looks-de-star/1740893-t-shirt-dior-we-should-all-be-feminists-maria-grazia-chiuri-printemps-ete-2017-feminisme-people/.

*Marie Claire* came to describe the Dior sweater as feminist and committed,[37] proceeding from an anthropomorphism of the commercial good. But behind this *feminist* and *committed* positioning, the commercial logic remains assumed and follows the common theme of the brand's pricing policy. Thus, the estheticization of the protest – illustrative and very selective – underlines the phatic dimension[38] of Dior brand's committed language, while its merchandising also cancels out the collective dimension of the protest and, in so doing, it hybridizes the emotional dimension[39] of this same language. While feminism, for example, is a collective movement, when it is inscribed in the merchandising formats of a ready-to-wear brand, it is taken up by that same brand and therefore renders a collective enunciation obsolete. This dysfunction of the material and formal format ultimately transforms the discourse of protest. This is what I propose to observe in what follows.

### 4.3.2. *Discrepancies between the medium and message*

A closer look at the image of the Dior fashion show displaying the t-shirt whose scriptural message emphasizes a feminist position reveals the tension that arises between the meaning of the message in question and the meaning the image conveys. From the spring-summer 2017 ready-to-wear fashion show, the image revealed the product we are interested in, worn by a very thin model with tired features and a dark facial expression. While feminism inspires *a priori* demanding postures and *paradoxical* attitudes, i.e. going against the *norm* and the *doxa* that define the feminine condition in and by the fashion industry and the magazine industry, it is striking to notice the *stereotyping* of this image and of the female body that *carries* both the product and the so-called "feminist" message. The stereotype being understood as a "reduced set of characteristics attributed in a recurrent, repetitive way to a constructed category (a population, a place, an object...), at a given time, in a certain discursive space" (Kunert 2013, p. 32, author's translation), the model's slim body falls within a category constructed in a

37 Article published in the Belgian, electronic edition of *Marie Claire* magazine on March 1, 2018 entitled: "Fashion Week de Paris: le pull féministe et engagé de Dior", source: https://marie claire.be/en/dior-pull-feminist/.

38 Introduced by Roman Jakobson, the phatic function emphasizes, according to Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, less "the act of transmitting information than the very act of communicating" (Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 54, author's translation).

39 The emotive function "highlights the condition [of the sender] at the time of transmission" of a message (see Klinkenberg 1996a, p. 53, author's translation).

stereotyped and standardized manner, which has been criticized many times, including in the context of the contested pre-text directly affecting the fashion industry[40]. This same body as a mediator of the feminist message renders the latter obsolete and not credible because it is introduced into a particularly standardized communicational paradigm whose characteristics are antinomic with the values defended by a feminist cause.

The same antinomic process is observed in the collage proposed by the material format of the Dior boutique, a collage that consequently modifies the formal medium of this same medium[41]. Traditionally devoid of any full illustration likely to overshadow the merchandise displayed in the window, the façade of a luxury boutique and its formal medium enhance the presentation of a collection through the predominantly monochrome visual dimension of this said format. Dior boutiques opt primarily for white color and material mediums with smooth haptic effects. Similarly, traditionally, no exterior surface of luxury industry boutiques is invested in with inscriptions other than those inherent to it. When Dior inscribed collages on its material medium, the brand modified the formal medium of its boutique by transforming it into a medium likely to expose messages of a political nature, probably because this same medium is considered relevant for carrying this type of discourse. This is the case, for example, of the surfaces of the commercial spaces occupied by the inscriptions produced within the framework of the yellow vest movement, which introduce subversive messages with regard to the material mediums on which they are inscribed, in this case the shop fronts of luxury brands, including fashion. What the Dior boutique inscribed on its material medium presented a form of *isotopy*[42] with what the protest movements inscribed on the material medium of shopping spaces, consisting of a denunciation of their capitalist functioning. A "no" or a phrase such as "beauty is in the street" introduced on the front of

40 Some models have indeed denounced a certain and consequent pressure exerted by luxury fashion brands regarding diets and the obligation of the latter to display measurements that allow them to fit into clothes of size 2, maximum 4. It is these denunciations that pushed, and even obliged, the two major groups in the luxury industry – LVMH and Kering – to establish the charter for the model's well-being, which I will discuss in the third part of this book, throughout Chapter 5.

41 For hardware and formal formats, see Chapter 1.

42 Isotopy is defined, among other things, "as the recurrence of semic categories, be they thematic (or abstract) or figurative (which, in older terminology, produced an opposition between semantic isotopy – in a narrow sense – and semiological isotopy" (see Greimas in Courtès 1979, pp. 164).

a luxury boutique by an authority other than the manager of the same boutique would be vandalism. On the other hand, the same inscription taken care of by the management authority in question, in this case Dior, was a political commitment and stance. Thus, the modifications of the formal mediums of the commercial spaces as produced by the current protest movements make it[43] possible to question the compatibility between the messages mobilized and the formal medium that publicizes them. In the end, this lack of adequacy reinforces the re-presentational dimension of the fashion industry, giving itself the pretext of both protest, even revolt and revolution, and thus of an objective other than a commercial one.

Although the elements questioned throughout this chapter are not representative of the fashion industry's communication strategies with regard to the recapturing of politics, the examples analyzed here testify to the way in which this same industry proceeds with a hyperadvertization of politics formed from the principle of an alleged hyperpolitization of communication and particularly of advertising forms and discourse. Starting from the principle that hyperadvertization "consists indeed of a hypertrophy of advertising communication" (Berthelot-Guiet *et al.* 2013, pp. 56–57, author's translation), the corpus analyzed has made it possible to account for the way in which the political pre-texts and the visual, audiovisual and sociomedia forms that represent the protest movements constitute a paradigm that can be mobilized and actualized from the fashion industry's re-presentational policies. Just like art, culture, religion and the sacred, politics and its pretexts form a common pretext that allows the luxury fashion industry to build its re-presentational device with a high symbolic density. Concerning more specifically the field of politics, it is important to emphasize the metamorphic dimension that characterizes the pretexts used, a dimension that is a process of fictivation. As we have observed throughout this chapter, the actors in this industry make fictitious the social referent included in the event formulas mobilized for promotional purposes (May 1968, feminism). It is in this way that the social media representations of citizen mobilizations are undergoing a transformation based on the semio-pragmatic modality of fiction and which breaks with both the historicity and the legitimacy of the political values called for by the fashion industry.

43 Between November 2018 and April 2019, when this work is partially developed.

Part 2 of this book focused on the processes by which the fashion industry appropriates areas of the religious, sacred and political through its re-presentation policies. If the first two chapters allowed us to observe the processes of *culturization* and *artification*, the next two chapters revealed those of *worship* as well as those of *politicization*, or, at least, the fashion industry's political pretensions and the sacred experience.

These pretensions testify to the extension and expansion of the strategies, texts, objects and practices of the sector, and from this point of view they are in line with what was observed in Part 1: a trend toward the introduction of a re-presentational device that transforms any communication policy and any space invested in by fashion. From media advertising to linguistic creativity, from group headquarters to boutiques, from fashion show locations and scenography to the magazine press, the fashion industry and its intermediaries mobilize the sacred, religious and political realm in all communicational circumstances. I will retain two major points from these two chapters: the first is that of the *concealment of the idolatry that the fashion industry manufactures through the sacred and the religious*, a concealment that can obviously be compared to the concealment of the merchandise discussed in the introduction to this book[44]. The second is that of the *counterfeiting process that results from what I have described as the fictivation of politics and its event-formula*. In the third and final part, I will deal with two issues. (i) *What is the purpose of the fashion industry's re-presentational policies*, and *what is the industry's inherent need?* I will answer this question by exposing the evolution of fashion's economic models, the industrialization of luxury and its creativity and the socioeconomic and symbolic consequences that flow from it. (ii) *By what means does the mechanism formed by the fashion industry's re-presentation policies manage to confer power on itself and to disguise the consequences of its industrialization?* A detour through certain elements of the corpus will make it possible to answer this question.

44 See section I.4.

Part 3

# The Power of the Fashion Industry's Re-presentational Apparatus

# Introduction to Part 3

The policies observed throughout the first two parts are constitutive of the fashion industry's re-presentation apparatus. The formation of the latter is based on strategic, economic, symbolic and ultimately oligopolistic, even monopolistic stakes. Commercial luxury fashion, this relatively accessible luxury that is produced on a massive scale, is based on a creative managerial system that determines as much the conception of a collection as its promotion, distribution and the enhancement of the entire industry mobilized for these purposes.

Chapter 5 will focus on fashion *business models* and their evolution. It will present and discuss the notion of *managerial creativity, its "panoply" dimension* (Labelle 2007) *and how it leads to a staging that is part of a "collective reflexivity"* (Mouratidou 2014). The managerial creativity of the commercial luxury fashion industry will also be questioned from the point of view of its deployment within an organizational system based on the tension between *creation and industrialization*. Industrialization, as it transforms luxury fashion, will also be treated from the angle of the symbolic and/or pragmatic constraints that result from it, constraints that are confronted with the very positive financial results that groups in the sector are announcing.

Based on these points, Chapter 6 of this book will attempt to account for the invisible mechanisms that are likely to give the fashion industry's re-presentational device a symbolic power capable of concealing the constraints linked to the industrialization of the sector. These mechanisms will be questioned through the notions of *reinvestment*, *diversion* and *reformulation*. While the fields of art, culture, the sacred, religious and political transform fashion and requalify its products and actors, all these

fields will be approached as an *apparatus* based on the leisure-form principle.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, this part will enable a dialogue between the semio approach and the socioeconomic data characterizing the fashion industry's commercial luxury model. The aim is to give an account of the way in which the industry's re-presentational device reflects the rational and standardized organization of luxury fashion and to question what this organization imposes in terms of figurations, representations and re-presentations.

# 5

# The Industrialization of Creativity

Fashion creativity "is a value that is essentially attached to production and economic activity" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 98, author's translation). Although it regularly or occasionally calls upon artists in the design phase (but also in the promotion phase) of its commercial goods, its creative as well as economic activity cannot be confused with that of the cultural industries, even if "there is indeed a need to bring them closer together" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 101, author's translation) because the goods produced by the fashion industry "are part of personal heritage and are therefore monetizable and transmissible" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 103, author's translation). The aforementioned researchers underline that it is at this level that a difference can be noted between luxury goods and cultural products, whose possible patrimonialization cannot give rise to monetization or transmission movements. "From this point of view, luxury goods or mass fashion only resemble semi-reproducible cultural and informational products" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 103, author's translation). But what happens when luxury fashion ceases to be linked as much from an organizational point of view as from a symbolic point of view to craftsmanship? What happens when it is based on *semi-industrial and even industrial production*?

There regularly appears an opposition between *elitist luxury* – in this case fashion from this segment – and mass-produced *luxury goods* produced either semi-industrially or industrially. It is to this *constraint* of luxury fashion, which tends toward its trivialization, that the re-presentation policies analyzed in parts 1 and 2 of this book seem to respond. A constraint, insofar

as the selective and rare dimension, specific to elite luxury and, as far as luxury fashion is concerned, specific to the so-called aristocratic model, gives way to new characteristics that are those of a new model and the market.

The economists Christian Barrère and Walter Santagata emphasized the transition from this aristocratic model to the luxury goods industry, pointing out, among other things, the characteristics of limited collections and industrial collections. Thus, "the limited collection production of luxury goods [is determined by] their low diffusion, the irrelevance to them of the 'cost price' category, and the fact that 'they are sometimes unique or limited collection models'" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 241, author's translation). On the other hand, luxury goods produced in industrial collections, and as far as we are concerned those of fashion:

> are those that are mass-produced (Louis Vuitton produces more than three million bags annually). These goods, which come from large industrial units, are often the product of prior artisanal-type work carried out by craftsmen or small businesses. This organization makes it possible to reconcile the quality of luxury goods with mass production economies of scale. (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 241, author's translation)

However, this organization does not make it possible to conceal the suppression of elite luxury characteristics and in particular their rare dimension and also their selective distribution. It is in the face of this organizational transformation of luxury that the mobilization of art and the sacred, for example, presents itself as a spectacular and illusionistic response to the massive reproduction of goods that are meant to be exceptional and elitist. This same organization, leading to industrial logics that break with artisanal manufacturing – relocation of factories, exploitation of cheap labor, environmental pollution linked to overproduction and overconsumption – also imposes re-presentational strategies that are political. This chapter will allow us to observe the economic models that determine luxury fashion and to question the possible *tension that may arise between the creative dimension of fashion and its industrialization*.

## 5.1. From the aristocratic model to the market model: the industrialization of luxury fashion

Originally, fashion allows for a contrast between what is distinctive and what comes from functional clothing. When the elite appropriated fashion, the collection of collective clothing habits adopted by more or less homogeneous groups, distinguished itself from other social strata, particularly the population. Fashion reserved for the elite was structured by the aristocratic model, which came in two variations: the Court and the designer.

### 5.1.1. *From the Court model to the designer model*

The Court model created and reserved fashion for the aristocracy. Fashion helped to mark and identify the place that each individual occupied within the Court, "hence the existence of canons which, thanks to the graduations of both sophistication and luxury, made it possible to identify the place of each individual in the social hierarchy, the functions in the organization of powers (thus the costumes of ambassadors, ministers or bishops)" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 85, author's translation). The Court model ensured a marking by the signs of the social organization's dress: aristocracy, bourgeoisie, people; it thus laid the foundation of what would never cease to be, a tension "between individual and society" (Godart 2016, p. 12, author's translation) dating from the Renaissance and which became a notable social fact. The capitalism that took off at that time made possible the emergence of a new social class, the bourgeoisie, which challenged the pre-eminence of the aristocracy (Godart 2016, p. 13, author's translation). This pre-eminence gradually introduced the transformation of the Court model into the so-called "designer's" model.

From a managerial as well as a creative point of view, the Court model was based on the artisan manufacture of products with a very weak creative dimension. It was the client, the person placing the order, who decided on the esthetic aspect of the goods ordered, an approach that the economists Barrère and Santagata likened to that of the artistic commission of the time: "The craftsman or artist proposed a project to the client, taking into account in particular the evolution of the techniques and resources of the trade; this project was generally amended by the client, who remained the final designer of the product" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 86, author's translation). But

gradually, the designer asserts himself as the product's designer and "the subordination to the client's wishes was eroded in favor of the supplier's creative initiative" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 86, author's translation).

The couturier-designer model, although elitist and aristocratic, no longer placed the heart of creation in artisan work but in that of the couturier, whose creativity "ensured the continuity of a differentiated offer – it was the different styles of each of the couturiers" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 87, author's translation). The first French couturiers such as Charles Frederick Worth and Paul Poiret developed their activities from the second half of the 19th Century onwards. Although product design required certain creativity, the organization and conception of work around fashion remained the same: "glory and social status, to be sure, but not creative autonomy" (Lipovetsky 1994, p. 75). Charles Frederick Worth was a pioneer of the sector's management organization and invented an archaic form of *creative management*:

> By repeatedly dreaming up original designs among which the client had only to choose, by having his own wife serve as a model at the races or in the Bois de Boulogne, Worth implemented the dual principle that constitutes fashion in the current sense of the term: the designer-couturier gained autonomy in theory and in fact, while the client lost the initiative in the matter of dress. (Lipovetsky 1994, p. 75)

In this way, Worth introduced both a product and promotion policy, which later led to the management of fashion as a brand. The legal and de facto empowerment of the fashion designer evoked by the economists Barrère and Santagata was materialized by the fact that Worth signed all of his designs, while the fashion designer Madeleine Vionnet went "further by signing the models by affixing her fingerprint, the origin of the label, on each garment" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 89, author's translation). Finally, this innovation was completed by the intervention of Paul Poiret, who transformed "the label bearing his name into a label that could be applied to different types of luxury products" (pp. 89–90, author's translation).

This variation of the aristocratic model, during the 20th Century, conditioned the functioning of French haute couture, combining "the couturier's creativity with the use of luxury craftsmanship, which was also

characterized by the competitiveness of its workforce" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 87, author's translation). It is therefore possible to affirm that while in the Court model, fashion was the result of artisan production largely orchestrated by the client, in the couturier-designer model, it was the result of the latter's creative gesture. Specific to haute couture, the latter model was clearly different from the ready-to-wear fashion that began to emerge, particularly in the United States, because of the development of department stores and the massive imitation and reproduction of haute couture models. The latter "refused to compete on price and favored competition through product differentiation, a source of emulation in terms of creativity" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 88, author's translation). In the same way, the couturier-designer model selected consumers according to their status, favoring those from the social elite, whose "preferences [...] were profoundly determined by the fashion paradigm and the social etiquette that flowed from it. As such, they were rather passive and stable" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 90, author's translation). This predominantly supply-driven model reinforced the dimension of social distinction, navigating between "the severe luxury of orthodoxy and the ostentatious asceticism of heresy" (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975, p. 8, author's translation) and thus gradually opening up to another model. Indeed, it was replaced from the 1980s onwards by the market model, which the two economists mentioned above describe as follows: "Fashion became everyone's business; made for the masses, which does not mean that all products had the same quality; formally, it was democratized; finally, it was defined for the market" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 91, author's translation).

We will see in the following how this model also determined the functioning of luxury fashion.

### 5.1.2. *From the market model to commercial luxury: pragmatic and symbolic democratization*

When Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut opposed the severe luxury of orthodoxy to the ostentatious asceticism of heresy, they were notably opposing an *old fashioned luxury* to a new one breaking with the codes of the old and tending toward its *democratization*. This opposition not only heralded the emergence of the market model; it announced and described in a particularly pertinent way the emergence of a *mass luxury*, a *commercial luxury*. Faced with the dominant fashion of the 1970s, represented by haute

couture houses such as Dior and Balmain, the two researchers observed the arrival of novelty, with companies such as Paco Rabanne or Ungaro, and the way in which the new organizational forms of fashion renewed the imagination. "At one extreme, austerity in luxury and sober elegance, the 'great class' that suits 'old-rock capitalism' as Marx says, and more precisely women of canonical age from the highest and oldest established fractions of the upper middle class" (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975, p. 7, author's translation). This extreme is reminiscent of the aristocratic model and is threatened by "the somewhat aggressive, somewhat boisterous audacity of a so-called 'research' art that the law of competition, i.e. the dialectic of distinction, can lead to proclaiming 'the hatred of perfection' and 'the necessity of bad taste' by one of those 'artist' exaggerations that suit this position" (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975, p. 7, author's translation).

Fashion became a plural object as much by the multiplicity of trends it offered, by the multiplicity of qualities as by the different elements that are peripheral but essential to it. The market model no longer defined fashion solely as a collective clothing practice; it approached it as a system of production of goods that required *creative management* to enable its dissemination and promotion. On the production side, it was no longer the customer or the designer-couturier alone who defined the product, but a collective process that resulted in "three types of production: artisanal, neo-artisanal and strictly industrial [i.e.] production in advance with sales from stock and not production to order aimed at differentiated clienteles" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 93, author's translation).

With regard to the interaction between supply and demand, the latter was set up according to a single criterion, breaking with the aristocratic model and the selection of clients according to their social status. The market model was addressed to any potential buyer as long as the latter was indeed able to pay the necessary sum for the desired good. Finally, the customer was faced with a multiple offer and his preferences did not come into play at the level of product design, the latter no longer being defined by its unique dimension, but by its introduction into a precise range. The customer's preferences were in a way guided, determined by the range and segment offer that fashion and its model established.

All of these characteristics contributed to the democratization of fashion, first from a pragmatic and then from a symbolic point of view. Pragmatic, insofar as "the accentuation of horizontal differentiation (different designers,

different styles, according to ages, tastes, social backgrounds) and the establishment of strong vertical differentiation, in terms of quality" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 91, author's translation), enabled the adoption of fashion or fashions on a massive scale. Clothing was no longer a functional garment; it came to acquire an aspirational dimension affecting a massive clientele. Symbolic, since fashion was accompanied by creative management, one of the aims of which was to create a link with a public that was not necessarily synonymous with a clientele. This, in order to work over a long period of time that linked production, distribution and desire. On the subject of commercial luxury, for example, the anthropologist Marc Abélès evokes the importance of desire:

> If there's no desire, it doesn't work anymore. A more or less attainable desire. I think that the way luxury products are declined still allows a certain number of people to have access to them: small bags or Prada sandals for example, accessories in general can be acquired once in a while by a middle class who makes a decent living. (Abélès 2018b, author's translation)

From the market model and the industrial production of fashion, there was a gradual shift to market luxury and the industrial production of one's goods. This movement began in the 1980s, particularly with the grouping of haute couture and ready-to-wear houses – known as "brands" – around powerful financial groups such as PPR[1] or LVMH, thus allowing a more consequent production and a massive distribution of luxury goods. While the entry of these groups "consisted in part of a buyout of assets – made up of the Houses, the brands, the reputation – assets that were undervalued and underused" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 254, author's translation), their development was also linked to financially sustained research into the marketing and creative management of the brands. It is in this sense that a brand like Dior manages its heritage as much in terms of style – the Dior style and spirit – as in terms of symbolism and semiotics. The example of the re-presentational policy that we studied in Chapter 2 bears witness to this global management that mobilizes, for example, a cultural dimension linked to the history of Christian Dior and its translation into the brand's communication strategies based on the signatures "J'adore Dior" and "J'ADIOR".

1 Pinault, Printemps, Redoute, the current Kering group.

This management contributes to the cohabitation between what fashion – including luxury fashion – is today, a *creative industry*, and its *industrialization*. It is for this reason that luxury fashion is being introduced into what Bouquillion *et al*. (2013, p. 54, author's translation) call the "industrial paradigm of creation" and within the framework of which "actors not very concerned by the other paradigms[2], active in particular in design, fashion, or arts and crafts, will find connections for their actions and interests, either because they develop more intense relations with the actors of the cultural and communication industries, or because they share with them certain strategic traits and interests" (Bouquillion et *al.* 2013, pp. 55–56). The examples that we have discussed throughout part 1 bear witness to these relationships established between the creative industry that is fashion and the cultural industries – partnerships between fashion brands, artists, artistic spaces or publishing houses – as well as the communication industry, i.e. the entire deployment of the re-presentational device that accompanies the brands in question and which is handled by actors specializing in different sectors: advertising, events, commercial scenography, museum scenography, etc. (Bouquillion *et al*. 2013, pp. 55–56). It is these encounters and relationships that determine one of the central functions of the fashion and luxury goods industry: *managerial creativity*.

## 5.2. Managerial creativity as a panoply[3]

As a central part of the organizational functioning of luxury fashion as much as in the discourse of its brands, creativity is a collective process specific to the market model, bringing together a number of players from a variety of sectors. Frédéric Godart reminds us that the creators of a fashion brand are surrounded by a more global organizational system: "First of all, the work of a fashion designer only exists because there is an economic and industrial activity that is deployed to enable the production of clothing" (Godart 2016, p. 76, author's translation). For their part, the economists Barrère and Santagata emphasize that "in the fashion world, creativity is the very basis of the value production chain [while the goods produced by the fashion industry] when they are the result of creativity and when this creativity concerns esthetics, form and function at least partially, take on a symbolic aspect" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 40, author's translation).

2 Either those of collaboration and convergence.

3 See Labelle (2007).

This observation is in line with the point made by Bouquillion *et al*. about the specific characteristics of commercial luxury fashion and haute couture. More precisely, the authors recall that the creative industry's design phase is based on a paradox:

> If it is always carried out within the framework of a work process that remains artisanal, the workshops in which it is carried out employ all the highly qualified personnel who cooperate in the development of the products: artisans for luxury goods, textile workers of great skill and competence in the fashion industries and even more so in haute couture, craftsmen who continue the traditions of craftsmanship, etc. (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 106, author's translation)

This presence of trades, although it remained invisible for many decades, today benefits from increased visibility which contributes to the symbolic construction of the luxury fashion industry. While taking up the elements analyzed in part 1 of this book, we will see in the following how, indeed, *fashion creativity and more precisely its managerial creativity is constructed both symbolically and industrially*.

### 5.2.1. *Forms and powers of managerial creativity in the fashion industry*

Creativity is described by Barrère and Santagata as the result of creative work which "is less and less an individualistic phenomenon but results from the collective contribution of teams, of studios. If the genius of the creator remains, it is supported by many assistants, each one being a creator in his field" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 96, author's translation). Thus, managerial creativity not only imposes a certain organizational form; it also establishes *visible forms*, since what is valued is not only the product, but a whole *panoply*, both visible and invisible, that determines fashion products and the bodies that market them. The notion of a "panoply reflects the multiplicity of issues it raises, its capacity to adapt to different functions and spaces, and its power of propagation. This underscores the fact that it is not a single device, but rather that it comes in heterogeneous material configurations" (Labelle 2011, pp. 33–44, author's translation).

Based on this definition of the panoply offered by Sarah Labelle, it seems relevant to convene this notion in a double dimension. First as a theoretical approach to the professional practice of managerial creativity. The notion of panoply makes it possible to understand that managerial creativity in commercial luxury fashion can in fact be presented in heterogeneous material configurations, which constructs various forms of this creativity: staging of fashion muses, short films involving well-known actors and actresses, reports and audiovisual documents on the backstage areas of a fashion show, a photo shoot, the creation of a collection that enhances the value of the couturier-director's art and his assistants, the models, make-up artists, hairdressers, but also the interior designers who design the fashion show, set designers and stage managers, etc. This capacity that the panoply presents and which, as Sarah Labelle points out, allows it to adapt to different functions and spaces shows, in my opinion, the plasticity of the notion and its potential to lead to forms of action. The panoply is not a tool platform; it is a process of mobilizing tools at the service of a *strategy* and also a *tactic*. While strategy "postulates a place that can be circumscribed as its own and be the basis for managing relations with an exteriority of targets or threats" (de Certeau 1990, p. 59, author's translation), tactics are designated by de Certeau (1990) "as the calculated action determined by the absence of one's own. However, no delimitation of the exteriority provides it with the condition of autonomy. Tactics only takes place in the other. It must therefore play the terrain imposed on it as the law of a foreign force organizes it" (de Certeau 1990, p. 60, author's translation). The panoply that oversees the managerial creativity of the luxury fashion industry acts as a device that is both strategic, it is built around an attack and defense objective, and tactical, it is designed to pretend the absence of strategy. It claims to offer the actants of managerial creativity the possibility of implementing action plans, strategies likely to emanate from their own creativity. These action plans position themselves as devoid of any strategic orientation. *In fine*, if the tactic is infra-ordinary, in the case of managerial creativity in the fashion industry and its panoply system, it is envisaged as a the strategy, it is derived from it and made possible thanks to the latter. Strategy becomes the *sine qua non* of tactics, tactics bear the traces of strategy.

It is in this perspective that "both those involved in design and those responsible for organizational and production structures, marketing, communication and distribution" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 201, author's translation) strategically and tactically compose the tools of

managerial creativity in fashion while describing "the establishment of a new relationship between creation, production and distribution that leads to a new complex of creation and management [...]. Fashion then enters the brand regime" (Barrère and Santagata 2005, p. 96, author's translation), which goes beyond the product and designs "symbolic intermediation devices through which [it] will be able to speak and address the end customer" (Aïm and Billet 2015, p. 154, author's translation). Based on this observation, it is also possible to hypothesize that the creativity that characterizes the current fashion model is not only managerial; it is also commercial. The managerial dimension that determines the conceptual and organizational processes of the fashion industry is motivated by a commercial aim, despite the fact that the latter must not overlook another, symbolic aim.

The contemporary language of the fashion industry partly reveals its panoply of tools. For example, commercial luxury fashion no longer has couturiers – as was the case for Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent or Pierre Balmain, for example – but designers or artistic directors, or even creative and brand image directors[4]. This shows the collective dimension that organizes not only the manufacture, but above all the design of a collection as well as the conception of policies to promote and enhance the value of the product and the brand. Thus, any promotional policy, from media advertising to museum exhibitions, short films and private but widely publicized events, is taken on by the so-called managerial creativity of the fashion brand. For example, both the catwalk proposed in 2015 by Chanel and the advertising campaign broadcast in May 2018 by Gucci[5] were an integral part of the managerial creativity that drives fashion brands and manages them creatively, while managing their products and their re-presentation policies in this way. Similarly, the places where a brand's heritage is valued, such as Louis Vuitton's Galerie d'Asnières or the Maison Chloé created by the eponymous brand, as well as book editions, head office and boutiques, etc., constitute this eminently syncretic panoply.

4 The appointment in January 2018 of Hedi Slimane to replace Phoebe Philo at Celine marked a new direction in the artistic director's creative role. Indeed, Phoebe Philo was Celine's artistic director; Slimane's arrival at Celine inaugurated a new position, that of an "artistic, creative and brand image director" in question; see, for example, the brief in the French edition of *Vogue* title published on January 21, 2018: "Hedi Slimane, nommé directeur artistique de Céline": https://www.vogue.fr/mode/news-mode/articles/hedi-slimane-nomme-directeur-artistique-de-celine/ 59624.

5 Discussed throughout Chapter 3 of this book.

All of these forms attribute to the brands of commercial luxury goods a power that is both pragmatic – notably financial – and symbolic when they are thought of as a *panoply device*, one that can be understood as "all the weapons given to the infantryman to go into battle" (Labelle 2007, p. 2, author's translation), the battle being for the fashion industry twofold. On the one hand, to produce a strategic battle that enables it to acquire the formal qualities that constitute this re-presentational device, by exploiting places and discourses, and which falls within the order of attack. On the other hand, to develop a strategy that results in a defense mechanism whose aim is to confront the dysphoric discourse and observations that accompany the managerial organization and the industrialization of luxury fashion. However, it seems relevant to question the forms that this panoply mechanism takes and in particular to examine to what extent it tends or not to standardize processes. To put it another way, although the *weapons* of the device may be heterogeneous, I make the hypothesis here, in view of what has been examined and analyzed throughout the first and second parts of this book, that the forms to which this panoply device leads are of a kind of *ready-to-wear* or *standardized fixed forms*.

### 5.2.2. *Standardization: the industrialization of managerial creativity*

The market model, and more precisely the luxury market model, introduced the industrial dimension of fashion, including that which was originally thought of in an artisanal way. Faced with this production process, there was a need to question the way in which the luxury fashion industry's re-presentational device was also subject to a logic of industrialization. Thus, although the policies of re-presentation studied and analyzed upstream were presented as a strategy involving disguising the industrialization of fashion, *its iterative manifestation and its standardizing editorial forms*, based on events coming, as we have seen, from the field of politics, religion and the sacred, art and culture, tended to construct a *range of re-presentations*, corresponding to *formats* rather than forms, to frameworks themselves subject to industrializing processes.

Starting from the observation that "industrialization [...] is a process that encompasses instrumentation, standardization and instrumentalization, and furthermore works each of these dynamics from within" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 170, author's translation), it is already a question of reporting both on the

standardization of communication and on the way in which this standardization develops from the instrumentation and instrumentalization of the situations that it summons and transforms into *re-presentation mediums*. The conditioning of communication is carried out from the emergence of four moments:

> *Instrumentation* comes into play as soon as certain innovations make it possible to provide a cultural practice with tools and material means; standardization consists of a set of processes that make it possible to produce objects systematically and economically; *instrumentalization* concerns the possibility of turning the trivial life of cultural beings into a means at the service of various ends other than cultural, mainly economic and political; *industrialization* is a way of integrating these various operations into a strategy obeying the imperatives of efficiency and profitability. (Jeanneret 2014, p. 142, author's translation)

When fashion iteratively mobilizes the figure of the artist, as, for example, that of Jeff Koons, when it summons biblical texts or when it integrates literary publishing into its re-presentational panoply, for example the editions published by Gallimard, it makes use of an *instrument*, an *actant commonly shared and symbolically used*.

Let us take the case of fiction publishing. We have seen[6] that Louis Vuitton and Dior, together with Gallimard, have published literary short stories inspired by a commercial product manufactured and marketed by the two brands in question: *La Malle* presents texts inspired by a Louis Vuitton trunk, *Lady* is a collection of short stories based on the eponymous Dior brand bag. A relatively atypical proposition, this unadvertization process is also being developed by other luxury fashion advertisers. In 2018, the Spanish house Loewe took on a publishing strategy. Instead of going through the prescription and authority of a publishing house such as Gallimard – which was the case for Louis Vuitton and Dior – the brand took on this role by proposing the republishing of major literary works: *Madame Bovary*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Don Quixote*, *Dracula*, etc. Loewe republished a series of classic literary works, the covers of which are signed by the

6 See Chapter 1.

American photographer Steven Meisel[7]. "It seems easy to see in these cultural and communicational approaches a phenomenon of *instrumentation* consisting "of the fact of conferring on a process that had hitherto been more or less improvised a rational and effective material support, based on the use of a tool" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 147, author's translation). The tool, in this case, is that of the book, which here undergoes a transformation while retaining its initial qualities. The *book publishing* instrument acquires a new dimension of an advertising nature, a dimension that refers not only to publishing itself, but also – and perhaps above all – to the commercial bodies responsible for book production.

This instrumentation makes the book *polychresic*, especially from a symbolic point of view. As literary works, the editions offered by luxury fashion advertisers ensure multiple uses: the images proposed by fashion photographer Steven Meisel for Loewe's novel editions, the praise of the Dior handbag or the Louis Vuitton trunk are forms placed at the service of "a strategy of power and/or value" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 150, author's translation). In doing so, the tool becomes *instrumentalized* and is transformed into a *communicational pretext*, allowing the advertisers in question to shift their notoriety and confer cultural authority on themselves. Notoriety and authority are not unrelated to economic issues. Also, many luxury fashion groups and brands have developed financial partnerships with publishing houses. Shortly before the publication of the *Lady* collection, LVMH, owner of Dior, "had acquired a 9.5% stake in the publishing house created by Gaston Gallimard, in order to help, among other things, to support the cost of the acquisition of Flammarion"[8]. Return on investment, effective and symbolic occupation of a space other than that of the creative industry that is fashion, the book here becomes a *product-communication* compendium and its instrumentalizing dimension is a matter of "rationalizing the means-goal relationship in a strategic approach" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 157, author's translation), the latter taking shape around three main aims: "technical, political and economic" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 158, author's translation). It is in particular the political and economic dimension of the

7 "Loewe marie mode et grands classiques de la littérature avec Steven Meisel", *Numéro*, article published on August 2018: https://www.numero.com/fr/culture/loewe-reedition-serie-ouvrages-litteraires-classiques-steven-meisel-photgraphe-madame-bovary-dracula-portrait-dorian-gray-don-quichotte-hauts-hurlevent-coeur-tenebres#_.

8 "Le livre, objet de luxe", *Le Modalogue*, article published on April 6, 2014: http://www.lemodalogue.fr/?s=Le+livre+objet+de+luxe.

instrumentalization put in place by the fashion industry's re-presentational device that draws my attention here, instrumentalization that, "under the criterion of *power,* [...] mobilizes symbolic operativity to reserve force [and,] under the criterion of *value,* [...] exploits the force of representation for the benefit of a hegemony" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 157, author's translation)[9].

The instrumentation and instrumentalization of the book object by the fashion of commercial luxury can be related to another field, that of pictorial art, which undergoes the same process. For example, when Louis Vuitton *published* the "Masters LV x Jeff Koons" collection, the brand used the same semiotic process as that observed for the three book editions: a commercial actant who endowed himself in a self referential manner with an authority and legitimacy other than commercial through the competences conferred on him by the presence of the artist (Jeff Koons for the leather goods collections, the writers invited by Louis Vuitton and Dior for the literary collections), the presence of a cultural authority (Gallimard, classical authors such as Miguel de Cervantes or Gustave Flaubert) and the presence of an artistic authority (painters and their reinterpreted masterpieces such as Leonardo de Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Claude Monet's *Watter Lilies*).

All of these actions are directly linked to the process that determines the fashion industry's managerial creativity as it concerns commercial goods, their forms as well as any policy aimed at enhancing them and also advertisers. However, there is a tendency to *standardize* these practices, whose forms seem to vary, whereas their framework and, ultimately, their mediums are based on and respond to the same principles and issues. It is from this trend that a certain industrialization of managerial creativity in the fashion industry is taking shape, which also means a *standardized morphology* of the re-presentation policies that this same creativity stages. The latter is composed of:

> dissemination of fragmentary forms of brand expression in the course of media discourse [and] falls under what De Montety calls *semiotic management:* a certain virtuosity in the fact of assembling within a given form (a news story, a cultural article, a photographic report, a portrait) formal elements and signs that gradually construct a coherent space of meaning disseminated

9 In italics in the original text.

> throughout the text for the benefit of a *brand world*[10]. (Jeanneret 2014, p. 164, author's translation)

Within the framework of the fashion industry's re-presentational policies, this assembly tends toward the standardization of forms, leading to a kind of serialization of both commercial and communicational production, a serialization that would not be so far removed from an industrial mode of existence, whose "collective organization is undergoing a particular rationalization" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 170, author's translation).

### 5.2.3. *Semiotic management of managerial creativity in the face of the market model*

Although with a tendency to standardize, the managerial creativity of the fashion industry, its panoply dimension, deploys re-presentational devices likely to minimize the rational dimension of industrial production and maximize the creative, even artistic and distinctive effect. *Distinction*, a central element in consumerist choices, is also not unrelated to *ostentation*, or even inseparable from it, the latter also qualifying the consumerist practices and stagings of this class that Veblen (1970) describes as "*leisure*". This semiotic management of managerial creativity in fashion is therefore organized around the transformation "of the act of buying into leisure. However, distraction refers to a mode of appreciation of goods, places or works, which indicates a distancing characteristic of the relationship with objects specific to the industrial era" (Assouly 2008, p. 52, author's translation), a distancing and a constitution of the industrial dimension of luxury goods. While, as we have observed above, the market model has given rise to pragmatic and symbolic transformations of fashion, *market luxury* requires refined semiotic management, constructing a *simulacrum of deindustrialization* of goods. Leisure, and more generally any discourse of a semiotic nature that qualifies advertisers as non-exclusively commercial instances, enables shifting the symbolic but also economic question of the industrialization of fashion and, above all, to *neutralize* a dysphoric situation. *Art and culture first*, *then religion and the sacred and the political domain enable the symbolic construction of luxury fashion affirming its de-industrialization*.

10 Jeanneret refers here in particular to Marti (2005); in italics in the text.

Olivier Assouly, for example, evokes the importance of art in the invention process of fashion: "Invention flourishes fully in art, in the pure affirmation of itself, exempt in principle from any prior repetition. At least in principle, art escapes repetition and measurable quantities to achieve uniqueness of quality, namely difference" (Assouly 2008, p. 52, author's translation). However, and as we saw in section 5.2.2, the repetitions and measurable quantities in question are not really removed from the industrial and economic project of the luxury fashion industry. A brand such as Louis Vuitton, for example, before investing in the Louvre for its "Masters LV x Jeff Koons" collection, had already provoked relatively controversial reactions when, in 2007, "on the occasion of Takashi Murakami's exhibition at the MOCA in Los Angeles, an ephemeral Vuitton boutique was set up in the middle of the exhibition to sell bags from the collaboration with the Japanese artist"[11]. It should also be remembered that works by Jeff Koons can be found in some of the brand's boutiques, which makes the artist's figure particularly linked to the commercial body in question. Another example of the iterative dimension that qualifies the relationship between luxury fashion and art is the Armani brand and its partnership with the Guggenheim Museum: "In 2000, Thomas Krens, then director of the Guggenheim in New York, made headlines by organizing an exhibition devoted to the Armani brand, eight months after the Italian designer donated 15 million dollars to the foundation",[12] while in 2015, the brand "Max Mara brought out a bag designed by architect Renzo Piano to celebrate his building designed for the reopening of the Whitney Museum in New York"[13]. These two examples remind us, for different reasons, of the commercial partnership established between the Whitney, Jeff Koons and H&M, allowing the artist to produce his *Ballon Dog* handbag sold exclusively by the museum, which at the time dedicated a retrospective to the artist[14].

11 "Les musées multiplient les partenariats avec les maisons de luxe", *Le Monde,* article published on May 25, 2017: https://www.lemonde.fr/m-moyen-format/article/2017/05/25/les-mus ees-multiplient-les-partenariats-avec-les-maisons-de-luxe_5133680_4497271.html. See also Mendes and Rees-Roberts (2015, pp. 61–63).

12 "Les musées multiplient les partenariats avec les maisons de luxe", article quoted.

13 *Idem*.

14 See Chapter 1.

The result is a hermeneutic contrast between the pretension of fashion actors to produce what is common, because of the presence of art in their discourse, for example, and what they produce from a re-presentational point of view. Although "art is not only a neutral source of esthetic satisfaction, but what brings together to govern individuals around the same sensitive perception" (Assouly 2008, p. 52, author's translation), and that the sacred is situated "on the fringes of the banal, the familiar, the trivial [and therefore] experiences a distinct, separate, inaccessible, even forbidden reality" (Dufour and Boutaud 2013, p. 11, author's translation), *their semiotic management tends toward the trivialization of these two domains as soon as it mobilizes them in an iterative and confused manner*. The confusion is linked to the fact that, often, commercial luxury fashion brands mobilize these two domains as well as the political domain in a pretextual but also encompassing way. When a brand such as Gucci presents itself as a *committed* player in the fashion industry – with its *Gucci dans les rues* campaign – as well as a religiously worship-based body – as it is seen and perceived by the *Gucci Gothic* campaign – it summons two domains, politics and religion, in a short space of time, without developing a common thread justifying the passage from the political to the religious. And yet, in spite of the *grammatical disjunctions* observed in the fashion industry's re-presentational policies, the fashion industry, and particularly the luxury goods industry, constantly announces rising sales figures, as well as an avowed loyalty and admiration from a very broad public that is not part of its commercial target.

## 5.3. Physical space, media space and symbolic space

Luxury fashion invests in space from a commercial point of view: multiplication of boutiques and corners in department stores and in high-density neuralgic axes, such as airports, online shops of advertisers or multibrand platforms. It invests in space from a media point of view: the LVMH group owns the press titles *Les Echos* and *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui*, while the brands offer their YouTube channels; the fashion and beauty magazine press, an essential representative for the fashion industry from both a journalistic and advertising point of view, has around 20 weekly,

monthly or quarterly[15] mainstream titles and countless online blogs[16]. Valérie Jeanne-Perrier explains how we have gone from the traditional media visibility and promotion of fashion based on a single media system to what the author describes as *fashion media systems*:

> For a long time, fashion in the media was only visible to the general public, in the women's press, which until the end of the 1980s reported on a great moment, that of the catwalk [...]. Theme channels on cable and then on the YouTube site have more recently broadened the visions of this medium to a wider audience gathered together, but still focusing on the catwalk and focusing on collections. (Jeanne-Perrier 2016, p. 30, author's translation)

Let us add here that the fashion show is part of this event process in which a particularly high number of actors from the so-called managerial creativity of the fashion industry take part. The fashion show is therefore an excellent communication pretext likely to enhance the value of many actants in the industry by introducing them into film stories with documentary pretensions, stories that are also highly unadvertising in nature; without forgetting brand magazines, which for some advertisers replace traditional advertisements. This is the case of the Swedish brand Acne Studios and its newspaper *Acne Paper*, which adopts an editorial line close to an art magazine while promoting the brand and therefore, although very implicitly, its products: "*Acne Paper* is not used to sell our products but to provide a reflection on the world, the artists and the people who inspire us"[17]. Finally, the luxury fashion market invests in the space from a symbolic point of view: building virtual communities through social networks with a particularly high

15 For example, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Jalouse, Madame Figaro*, *Vanity Fair, L'Officiel*, *Gracia*, *Biba*, *Vogue, Numéro*, *Citizen K*.

16 See Jeanne-Perrier (2016, p. 45, author's translation): "*fashion bloggers*" have thus played the role of "*ferrymen*" between consumer fans and almost journalists. Through regular commentary made possible by online tools, commentary that has become autonomous from the traditional media and an analysis of fashion products and events, "*ordinary*" individuals have opened up a gap in the closed world that a fashion show, with its rules and communication actors, its hierarchy of interests, represented until recently for audiences to be influenced, in italics in the text.

17 "La mode sous presse", *Le Monde,* article published on May 11, 2011: https://www.lemonde.en/m-styles/article/2012/05/11/la-mode-sous-presse_1698961_4497319.html. It is this same sign that exhibits a reproduction of the statue of Venus de Milo at the entrance to its Parisian shop.

quantitative density and also producing conversational content that shows adoration, worship dedicated as much to the brands of the sector as to the actors of its managerial creativity[18]. All of these investments constitute the distinctive features of the fashion economy and its political power.

### 5.3.1. *Material value and the immaterial value of fashion*

I propose here to take into consideration the following observation: *the material value* of fashion, its effective economy, rests as much on a whole marketing and industrial conception of fashion as on its *immaterial*, aspirational *value*. And conversely, the immaterial value of fashion depends on the sector's economic behavior and must above all be adjusted to it. A second observation follows from this observation: if we are able to speak of an economic fashion model, in this case commercial luxury fashion, we must account for the way in which this or these model(s) influence(s) the industry's re-presentational policies and, *vice versa*, emphasize the way in which these policies explicitly or implicitly illustrate the model(s). Dependent on short lifecycles, fashion and its products rely on a "forced renewal of the offer [allowing] on the one hand – thanks to short design/manufacturing times – to be as close as possible to consumers' aspirations, and on the other hand – through the regular introduction of new products in stores – to arouse the curiosity of shoppers and encourage impulse buying" (Carloti and Minvielle 2007, p. 15, author's translation).

With a turnover for the French economy much higher than that of the automobile and aeronautics industries, the fashion industries[19] represented 2.7% of the French GDP in 2016, with a direct turnover of 150 billion euros,

18 According to *Luxus* +, "Gucci and Louis Vuitton are the most popular brands among millennials with 23% of respondents in France, Italy and the United States mentioning Gucci as their favorite brand, while 19% chose Louis Vuitton. These results are in line with an earlier UBS research, which found that both brands get the most 'Like' ratings on social media posts", article titled "Gucci et Louis Vuitton sont les marques les plus populaires auprès des millennials", published on October 16, 2018: https://luxus-plus.com/2018/10/16/gucci-et-louis-vuitton-sont-les-marque-les-plus-populaires-aupres-des-millenials/.

19 In the plural, as it designates several categories of activities: textiles and clothing, shoes and leather goods, watchmaking, jewellery, optics, perfumes and cosmetics; see according to a study published in October 2016 by the *Fédération française du prêt-à-porter féminin*, and carried out by the *Institut français de la mode*: https://www.ifmparis.fr/fr/expertise-economique-et-marketing.

including 33 billion euros in exports[20]. The study also emphasizes the indirect effects of the activities of the fashion industries, such as the "creation of added value for companies providing services to the fashion industries such as the media, communication, advertising, transport and logistics"[21]. In 2018, the luxury goods sector had a turnover index of +8.5 for the period June 2017 to July 2018, +8.0 for the period March–June 2018 and +7.4 for the period January–June 2018[22]. These data are supported by those published by major groups in the sector, such as LVMH, Kering or Chanel. For the year 2018, the LVMH group reported a 10% increase in turnover, with sales in excess of 46 billion euros (all sectors combined)[23]. The holding company Chanel Limited announced for the year 2017 a turnover of:

> 8.3 billion [...] up 11% at constant exchange rates. This puts the house on rue Cambon well ahead of Gucci (Kering), whose sales last year reached 6.2 billion, and neck and neck with Louis Vuitton (LVMH), now the world's leading luxury brand. Its operating profit stands at 2.3 billion euros, up 22.5% in 2017.[24]

Finally, the Kering group posted an operating profit for 2018 that jumped "by 47% to 3.9 billion euros, i.e. doubling in two years"[25].

Despite these economic data showing that the luxury industry – including fashion – is grounded in the public and even symbolic space, many processes linked to its industrial and managerial strategies seem to be hindering it. In what follows, I will briefly present some points relating to these strategies.

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20 *Idem*.

21 *Idem.* We will see in Chapter 6 how this added value also makes it possible to approach fashion not only as a creative industry, but also as a media industry.

22 According to the report published by the IFM "Indices rapides de chiffre d'affaires industries habillement France": https://www.ifmparis.fr/fr/expertise-economique-et-marketing.

23 According to the 2018 annual report published by LVMH "LVMH, la passion creative", https://www.lvmh.fr/rapportannuelinteractif2018/fr/data/LVMH_RA_FR_2018.pdf.

24 "Pour la première fois, Chanel lève le voile sur les résultats financiers", *Les Échos,* article published on June 21, 2018: https://www.lesechos.fr/2018/06/pour-la-premiere-fois-chanel-leve-le-voile-sur-ses-resultats-financiers-997152.

25 "Kering atteint une profitabilité record grâce à la pépite Gucci", *Les Échos*, article published on February 12, 2019: https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/conso-distribution/porte-par-gucci-kering-enregistre-une-annee-2018-record-963692.

### 5.3.2. *Offshore manufacturing and production: a partial "made in France" approach*

Following Germany in the 1970s, France began to follow a process of relocating production in the clothing sector, including luxury goods. Developed during the 1980s, the relocations carried out by France, particularly to the Maghreb countries, "corresponded to a search for gains in competitiveness of large clothing companies (Devanlay, Biderman, Playtex, etc.), thanks to significantly lower wage costs" (Carlotti and Minvielle 2007, p. 16, author's translation). Moreover, on a global scale, clothing accounted in 2012 for "80% of Bangladesh's exports or 55% of Pakistan's exports but also about 20% of those of the Mediterranean Basin countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey)" (Jacomet and Minvielle 2012, author's translation). Some European countries are also concerned by the industrial presence of the sector's brands:

> Hundreds of luxury clothing and accessory factories are located in Sibiu, a beautiful medieval town in Romania. Prada, Ferragamo, Tod's... benefit from competitive production costs. Louis Vuitton has discreetly opened an important components workshop on the outskirts of the city. The French leather goods manufacturer has transferred the time-consuming tasks there: 600 workers make handles for its handbags or wax leather slices [...] But the subject is taboo and the brand prefers to communicate on "*its considerable investments in France*", in particular its project to open a thirteenth workshop in 2014 in Maine-et-Loire.[26]

Indeed, the LVMH Group's 2018 annual report emphasized its strong roots in France:

> The year 2018 saw our Group strengthen its production capacities to meet ever-increasing demand. These investments were most significant in France: after the Allier in 2017 and the Vendée in 2018, Louis Vuitton opened a new production workshop in Maine-et-Loire at the beginning of 2019 – the 16th

26 "La vérité sur les... délocalisations du luxe", *Challenges,* article published on July 2, 2012: https://www.challenges.fr/magazine/la-verite-sur-les-delocalisations-du-luxe_173631; in italics in the text.

> of its Houses in France, soon to be joined by two other workshops in the coming months.[27]

Brands in the sector seem to have developed a communication strategy that aims to inform, symbolize but also blur the boundaries between the countries where their goods are manufactured and those where they are designed. While from an organizational point of view this dissociation between design and manufacturing is "relatively old for mass fashion and even some luxury industries [...] the design workshop continues to occupy a central reference position, maintaining the fiction of the uniqueness of the production process" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 107, author's translation). This central position and its publicization tend to minimize the potentially harmful effects that relocation can produce from a symbolic and economic point of view. Thus, brands often display on the labels of their goods in a particularly explicit way the product's country of design and in a rather discreet way the country of manufacture[28].

According to economists Maxime Koromyslov, Björn Walysser and Elyette Roux, there are two reasons for the development of offshore factories and manufacturing facilities. The first is the one we have already mentioned, and it is related to the possibility of reducing labor costs:

> This is why leaders choose to relocate all or part of their productive structure to countries with low labor costs. These may be Asian countries (Bangladesh or China), the Maghreb (Tunisia or Morocco), Eastern Europe (Romania, Slovenia or Hungary), or even certain Western European countries such as Italy, whose production costs are "30% cheaper than in France" (according to the information provided by the managers of these companies). (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, pp. 36–37, author's translation)

27 LVMH Group Annual Report 2018, p. 7: https://www.lvmh.fr/rapportannuelinteractif 2018/en/data/LVMH_RA_EN_2018.pdf.

28 In their article, the economists Maxime Koromyslov, Björn Walysser and Elyette Roux present labels from the designer labels of Courrèges and Dior where one can read, for example, Courrèges. Designed in France, *Dessiné en France*, Made in Romania (see Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 38, author's translation).

The second reason that justifies the relocation movement is the search for know-how – particularly artisan know-how – that is difficult to find in France or has disappeared from the country, "as is the case for knitwear work or men's ready-to-wear clothing, which have now moved from France to Italy" (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 37, author's translation).

The relocation of the manufacturing and production of luxury goods, however, triggers major criticisms. The products of commercial luxury fashion are *a priori* perceived as being goods of irreproachable quality, based on traditional and unique know-how, which would also justify their very high selling costs. Since their manufacturing origin differs from that of their design, and especially since this origin is synonymous both with poorly regulated working conditions for workers and low production costs, a climate of mistrust is developing among consumers toward the companies responsible for these industrial processes. This is the first hypothesis put forward by the three economists mentioned above and whose results obtained following a field study draw particular attention[29]. They postulate that, "regardless of the stage of the relocation process, relocation leads to negative consequences on consumer evaluations, namely a drop in the perceived quality, overall evaluation and purchase intention of brands" (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 41, author's translation). The hypothesis put forward by the economists is only partially validated by the survey conducted. While the negative aspect regarding perceived quality and overall evaluation is indeed mostly put forward by the respondents, the purchase intention of relocated brands is not questioned. "For example, relocation to Bangladesh or Taiwan automatically leads to a 2 to 3 point drop in perceived quality or overall brand evaluation" (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 41, author's translation). The researchers state in their study that the impact on perceived quality is greater than the impact on overall brand evaluation. This implies that respondents continue to have more or less strong ties with the brand being evaluated, its intangible heritage, which could also justify the fact that

29 The economists offered a sample of 278 people the opportunity to test two products made by the Hermès brand: a scarf at the price of €250 (accessible luxury segment) and a *Kelly* bag at the price of €4,100 (intermediate luxury). The test was conducted in two stages, with respondents not initially informed of the second stage. In the first stage, respondents were asked to give their opinion on the quality of both products and their intention to purchase. The products in question were presented as being made in France. The second stage, produced 1 month apart, was based on the same protocol with the one and only difference being the country of origin of the products tested. The latter were shown as not being manufactured in France but resulting from a delocalized production process (Koromyslov *et al.* 2013, p. 40).

relocating production does not affect their purchasing intention. This observation reinforces the hypothesis that I initially deployed, concerning the way in which the fashion industry's re-presentation policies are, if only partially, responsible for the declared attachment to luxury brands, despite their industrial aberrations. In the same way, the *overconsumption* to which the fashion industry in general aspires, and also that of commercial luxury, overconsumption linked to the multiple lifecycles of the industry, could hinder the development and sustainability of the industry in question.

### 5.3.3. *Modes and cycles: an environmental problem*

The large-scale industrialization of fashion is characterized by the development of very short lifecycles that "confer many commercial advantages and place the fashion product at the forefront of the marketing scene" (Carlotti and Minvielle 2007, p. 19, author's translation). As mentioned above, luxury ready-to-wear collections are no longer reduced to a winter-fall and spring-summer timeframe alone. They are often preceded by winter-fall and spring-summer pre-collections and supplemented by the so-called "cruise" collections[30]. A brand like Chanel also presents a fifth collection, the Métiers d'Arts collection, celebrating the house's expertise[31]. Even in the case of commercial luxury, the products are therefore constantly renewed, and encourage "purchases when the primary need to equip oneself is already satisfied" (Carlotti and Minvielle 2007, p. 19, author's translation). The multiplication of fashion cycles contributes to an overemphasis not only of the aspirational dimension emanating from the appropriation of this or that style, this or that brand, but also to the densification of the ostensible dimension of consumption, the latter being partly based on the re-presentational policies previously studied. This overproduction leads first of all to an overconsumption incentive: "A fair product, in phase with the aspirations of the moment and the positioning of the brand or retailer, is instantly popular and has immediate commercial results. Because consumers are on the lookout" (Carlotti and Minvielle 2007, p. 17, author's translation). This overproduction also leads to a particularly rapid obsolescence of luxury goods, an obsolescence that cancels out their unique and rare value and reinforces their trivialization: "The new season brings a

30 Offering a mid-season changing room.

31 See: https://services.chanel.com/fr_FR/faq/mode-12/produits-13/combien-de-collections-sont-presentees-within-a-year-26.

new fashion context, and success or failure is valid for six months" (Carlotti and Minvielle 2007, p. 19, author's translation). Finally, this over-consumption leads to major constraints from an environmental point of view. If the fashion industry – including luxury goods – has turnover, as mentioned above, greater than that of the automobile and aeronautics sectors, it also has a higher pollution rate than the aeronautics sector[32].

Published in 2017 and focusing on the economics of the textile industry, the Ellen McArthur[33] Foundation's report draws attention to the fact that "the fashion industry produces 20% of the world's wastewater and 10% of global carbon emissions"[34]. Fashion is a particularly polluting industry, both in its production phase and in its absorption by the environment. In 2015, "the textile sector emitted 1.715 million tonnes of $CO_2$, used 79 billion cubic meters of water and generated 92 million cubic meters of solid waste"[35], at the same time as "120 billion US dollars of used fabrics waiting in warehouses to be burnt or buried"[36]. In addition to these figures, which are invisible inasmuch as they are not put on display, there are also practices resulting from the communication strategies of fashion brands that have provoked criticism and particularly strong reactions. For example, in March 2018, the Chanel brand reproduced a forest set up in the Grand Palais as the backdrop for the 2018–2019 fall-winter fashion show. To this end, oaks and poplars from the Perche region were cut down, provoking numerous reactions from associations and NGOs, but also from citizens expressing their views on the brand's social media spaces. For example, France Nature Environnement, the French federation of associations for the protection of

32 According to the report "Towards the circular economy. Opportunities for the consumer goods sector", published by the Ellen McArthur Foundation in 2013: https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/publications/TCE_Report-2013.pdf.

33 "A new Textile's economy: Redesigning fashion's future": https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/publications/A-New-Textiles-Economy_Summary-of-Findings_Updated_1-12-17.pdf.

34 Quoted by the article "La mode : une industrie très polluante qui pratique l'esclavagisme moderne", *Notre Planète Info,* published on May 9, 2019: https://www.notre-planete.info/actualites/10-purchase-clothes-fashion-pollution.

35 "L'éveil écologique de l'industrie de la mode", *Le Monde,* article published on September 18, 2018: https://www.lemonde.fr/m-mode/article/2018/09/28/l-eveil-ecologique-de-l-industrie-de-la-mode_5361410_4497335.html. The article notably cites the annual publication of the Copenhagen Fashion Summit and the audit firm BCG, *Pulse of Fashion Industrie Report.*

36 "La mode: une industrie très polluante qui pratique l'esclavagisme moderne" article quoted: https://www.notre-planete.info/actualites/10-achat-vetements-mode-pollution.

nature and the environment, published a press release pointing out the particularly poor vision of the brand in terms of ecological exemplarity: "Promotion of the diversity of French forests, invitation to return to nature, desire to give itself an eco-responsible brand image... Whatever Chanel's motivations, it failed. Because nature is not trees cut down in the forest, transported by truck to be staged, then sent to the dumpster".[37]

Therefore, in order to address both the harmful impact of fashion on the environment and the negative image of the industry and its brands, commitments are regularly communicated, either by collectives bringing together different brands in the sector, or by companies or groups. For example, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's mission is to measure the $CO_2$ emissions of each member brand, groups such as Kering or LVMH have set up a department entirely dedicated to sustainable development, and some brands have committed to "removing hazardous chemicals from their production lines by 2020"[38]. However, waste remains because overproduction persists and also the call for overconsumption. The most interesting initiatives come in particular from emerging fashion brands adopting economic models that place ecology at the heart of their organization and operation: short circuits, biodegradable and recycled fabrics, fabrics not used by the major brands of fast fashion and luxury goods. At the same time, major industrial groups are posting their ethical charters in terms of sustainable development, such as the Kering Group's *Care for the planet*, which sets objectives such as "Reducing EP&L (Environmental Profit & Loss Account) by 40%; reducing $CO_2$ emissions by 50% (*Science Based Target*); ensuring 100% traceability of the Group's key raw materials; reaching 100% of the Group's suppliers in compliance with Kering Standards; defining and achieving the most demanding standards in terms of animal welfare"[39]. However, the report published by Greenpeace entitled "Destination zéro: impacts de sept ans de campagne Detox sur

37 See: https://www.fne.asso.fr/actualites/forêt-désenchantée-quand-chanel-abat-des-arbres-pour-quelques-heures-de-défilé.

38 "Greenpeace signe des avancées contre la pollution de l'industrie de la mode", *La Parisienne,* article published on July 15, 2018: http://www.leparisien.fr/laparisienne/style/mode/greenpeace-souligne-des-avancees-contre-la-pollution-de-l-industrie-de-la-mode-13-07-2018-7820169.php.

39 According to the integrated report of the Kering Group, published in 2018, p. 23: https://keringcorporate. dam.kering.com/m/2f77f2503e4021cf/original/Rapport-integre-2018.pdf.

l'industrie du vêtement"[40] only lists two luxury brands, Burberry and Valentino, as participants in the Detox project launched by the NGO. Finally, it also seems relevant to question the discourse produced by luxury groups in the face of the need to adopt new modes of design and production:

> There is little internal resistance, swears Sylvie Bénard, at LVMH. In fashion, the major limit remains the relationship with time: we are obsessed with rhythm. It's sometimes complex to make a designer understand that he has to change his habits in terms of raw materials or be patient so that a product arrives by boat and not by plane[41].

This testimony isolates the environmental constraint by placing it on the side of the creative process, omitting to take into consideration both the collective dimension of the manufacture of fashion collections and the short deadlines imposed, not so much by the designers as by the entire commercial and industrial chain that conditions the model of commercial luxury fashion. As Mensitieri (2018, p. 10, author's translation) states, tension is "caused by the changes in the fashion industry, with its injunctions to profit that clash with the creative work on which it is based". The researcher refers more particularly to the constraints that emanate from the tension between production and creativity, constraints that regularly push the artistic directors of major luxury houses to resign. When, for example, Raf Simons, artistic director of Dior, announced his departure from the brand, Giulia Mensitieri cites the way this event is commented on by "Suzy Menkes, one of the most famous fashion writers [...]": "Like that bird in a gilded cage, creative people at the major fashion houses have everything: a circle of assistants, drivers, first-class travel, access to elegant homes and celebrity clients. Everything, but time" (Mensitieri 2018, p. 10, author's translation)[42]. Indeed, attributing resistance to change to creators is a media discourse that spares the industry and condemns those who serve it.

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40 See: https://cdn.greenpeace.fr/site/uploads/2018/07/Résumé-Detox-2018.pdf?_ga=2.92579997.1248 404837.1531301779-1989101024.1530001735.

41 "L'éveil écologique de l'industrie de la mode" article quoted: https://www.lemonde.fr/m-mode/article/2018/09/28/l-eveil-ecologique-de-l-industrie-de-la-mode_5361410_4497335.html.

42 The researcher quotes from English the article by Sujy Menkes, "Why fashion is crashing", which appeared in the British edition of *Vogue* (online) on October 23, 2015.

The final observation that draws attention is the management of the men and women working in this industry, whether they are invisible actors and actresses, far from the spectacular scenes of the sector, or all those people who benefit from increased visibility. Constraints arising from the relocation of luxury brand factories to countries with low-cost labor, but also from denunciations of moral and physical harassment have emerged in recent years. The collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013, killing 1,100 workers in the textile industry, was perhaps the most tragic event to highlight the working conditions of these people in this sector. "In January [2019], Human Rights Watch released a report on the pressures on Pakistani textile workers involved in trade unions, and modern slavery expert Siddharth Kara published an investigation into the exploitation of girls and women in Indian sweatshops"[43]. At the same time, the recent movement to denounce moral and sexual harassment, known as "MeToo", has enabled many actors in the fashion industry, particularly female and male models, to reveal the pressures they are under from the brands or photographers in the sector. Social media spaces have given the opportunity to speak more easily and to report many dysphoric situations of pressure related to an ideal model of the body projected by the fashion industry and the magazine press.

### 5.3.4. *From the back to the front region: the fashion industry, the stage and backstage*

In September 2017, the LVMH group announced the implementation of a charter on labor relations and the well-being of models, drawn up in collaboration with the Kering group[44]. Among the various commitments included in the text announcing the position of the two groups was the following: "All LVMH and Kering fashion houses commit to eliminate size 2 for women and size 2 for men (French sizes) from their casting requests"[45]. This announcement came shortly after a media event pointing the finger at Louis Vuitton and the way a model had been fired from the brand's runway show for reasons of weight not conforming to the items in the collection. Selected to participate in a Louis Vuitton fashion show in Kyoto, Japan, the model was withdrawn from the fashion show *in extremis*:

43 "Vestiaire militant. En mode Révolution", *Glamour*, No. 8, April/May 2019, p. 70.

44 See: https://www.lvmh.fr/actualites-documents/communiques/lvmh-et-kering-lancent-une-charte-sur-les-relations-de-travail-et-le-bien-etre-des-mannequins/.

45 *Idem*.

> According to her [the assistant to the casting director] I had a very bloated stomach, a bloated face, and urged me to starve myself with this statement, 'Urlikke needs to drink only water for the next 24 hours' [...].Go to the show and see for yourself, even the tightest pants float off the chosen models[46].

The model's testimony was initially published on her personal account on Instagram and, as a result, benefited from very high visibility and heavy traffic. Louis Vuitton was under pressure, plunging the brand as well as the entire luxury fashion industry into a management but also, and perhaps most importantly, media crisis. The press relayed the event with headlines such as "Judged too big, a size 4 model was booted from a Louis Vuitton show"[47]; "A size 4 model judged 'too bloated' to model for Vuitton"[48]; and "This model claims she was fired from a Louis Vuitton show for being 'bloated'"[49].

While "in general, modeling work requires a very rigorous discipline of the body, which concerns the control of weight, the volume of muscles, the concealment of age" (Mensitieri 2018, p. 131, author's translation), this same work is based on norms and stereotypes conveyed both by fashion brands and by the magazine press. When the artistic director of Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld, stated that "no one wants to see plump women in fashion",[50] or when Nicholas Ghesquière, then artistic director of the Balenciaga brand, spoke about the body of actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg: "a dream, a size 4 or 6" (Mensitieri 2018, p. 131, author's translation), the same work is based on norms and stereotypes conveyed by both fashion brands and the

46 "Un mannequin de taille 34 renvoyé du défilé Louis Vuitton", *L'Express Styles*, article published on May 23, 2017: https://www.lexpress.fr/styles/mannequins/ulrikke-hoyer-mannequin-jugee-trop-grosse-pour-le-defile-louis-vuitton_1910874.html.

47 "Jugée trop grosse, une mannequin taille 34 virée du défilé Louis Vuitton", *La Provence*, article published on May 24, 2017: https://www.laprovence.com/actu/en-direct/4463719/juge-trop-grosse-un-mannequin-taille-34-vire-du-defile-louis-vuitton.html.

48 "Un mannequin taille 34 jugée 'trop bouffie' pour défiler chez Vuitton", *La Libre*, article published on May 24, 2017: https://www.lalibre.be/lifestyle/mode/un-mannequin-taille-34-jugee-trop-bouffie-pour-defiler-chez-vuitton-59258311cd702b5fbec2c958.

49 *Cosmopolitan*, article published on May 20, 2017: https://www.cosmopolitan. com/style-beauty/fashion/a9874779/model-ulrikke-hoyer-fired-body-size/.

50 "Jouer à la manif", *La Presse*, article published October 3, 2014.

magazine press[51]. These are prescriptive discourses enriched by the authority of their speakers. This prescription reflects the stereotypes and therefore the selection criteria of the models working for this industry. Once the behind-the-scenes of the organization of a fashion show is revealed and this unveiling is not enhancing for the industry in question, the latter is obliged to retaliate and proceed with what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello qualify as part of the strategies of the new order of capitalism: "When capitalism is obliged to respond positively to the points raised by critique, to try to placate it and maintain the support of its troops, who are in danger of listening to the denunications, *by the same gesture it incorporates some of the values in whose name it was criticized*"[52] (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 28). It is not obviously a question here of considering that the charter established by the two groups – LVMH and Kering – on the subject of the well-being of models would not allow an optimization of their recruitment and working conditions; it is a question of emphasizing the fact that this same charter contributes to the appeasement of a dysphoric situation *by incorporating the criticisms made of the luxury fashion industry and by transforming them into a re-presentational policy, in this case discursive and declarative*.

The fashion industry has developed the habit of revealing its *backstage area*, the *back region* which is the space "where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (Goffman 1956, p. 70), and of integrating them into its communication strategy as a form of unadvertization. Traditionally circulating as audiovisual or visual content, behind-the-scenes images of the fashion industry, produced by actors in the same industry, emphasize the managerial creativity of the sector and remove all kinds of constraints, tensions and problematic situations. Likewise, documentaries that promise the discovery of the backstage while revealing certain constraining situations do so with a lot of humor and particularly smooth discourses[53].

51 "Tandem", interview with Nicholas Ghesquière published in *Vogue Paris*, December/ January 2007–2008, No. 883, p. 277.

52 In italics in the text.

53 For example, the documentaries of journalist Loïc Prigent often film the backstage of the creation of a haute couture collection, the work of helpers, the particularly short deadlines, the pressures... But the world of his films is also very euphoric, the seamstresses interviewed are constantly exhausted but all say, in front of the cameras, that they are honored to work for a house like Chanel or Dior.... See, for example, the documentary *Signé Chanel*, broadcast in 2005, available on Arte VOD. In 2016, Chanel even orchestrated a fashion show, the decor of

It is when the industry's backstage is unchecked that the industry is forced to consider strategies to turn this loss of control into a particularly framed situation. For example, when the television program *Cash Investigation* broadcasted a report on the secrets of luxury goods[54], information on unregulated working conditions that sometimes endanger the physical and mental integrity of workers hired by subcontractors of the LVMH or Kering brands was revealed. The program also revealed the particularly problematic breeding conditions of animals in China, whose fur is exploited for the manufacture of luxury coats by the Italian brand Max Mara. Finally, the program focused on the operations of the Kering group's Swiss-registered subsidiaries, which enable the group to reduce its tax liability by a considerable amount. Faced with these denunciations, which are not marginal, luxury brands respond in the same way as previously mentioned, i.e. by incorporating into their strategies elements for which they are criticized and by transforming them into auxilaries. For "the more violent and convincing the critique for a large number of people, the justifications advanced in response will have to be combined with reliable mechanisms that guarantee *a positive improvement in terms of justice*"[55] (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 28). It is in this perspective that Chanel announced in 2018 that it "would no longer use fur or exotic skins in its future collections"[56], while LVMH diverted the situation by presenting a relatively opaque strategy: "In line with the various initiatives taken by brands in favor of animal welfare, the world's leading luxury goods company LVMH

which was a workshop for haute couture creation; the small hands were there, working, putting the finishing touches to the models' clothes who were walking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtpiljDFBak. The Kenzo brand also proposed a fashion show where the stage was not separated from the backstage area and where the preparations for the show were visible to the guests: hairdressing, make-up, styling, all the craftsmen gathered for the occasion took part in the show. On the subject of the backstage as a process of mediation and mediatization of the fashion industry (see Mouratidou 2012, pp. 105–124, 2013, pp. 309–317, 2015, pp. 91–105, 2018b, pp. 86–100).

54 *Cash Investigation*, October 10, 2018 issue, France 2, "Luxe: les dessous chocs": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IRtRnV92AM.

55 In italics in the text.

56 "Victoire! Chanel se défait des peaux exotiques et de la fourrure", PETA France, article published on December 4, 2018: https://www.petafrance.com/actualites/victoire-chanel-se-defait-des-peaux-exotiques-et-de-la-fourrure/.

announced the creation of the "very first standard for the supply of crocodile leather".[57]

These processes, in my view, are based on a complex strategy, syncretic and trivial, which is that of *reinvestment*. Chapter 6 will report on this strategy. By taking up some of the examples dealt with and analyzed from a semiotic point of view in part 1, I will try to show, in this final chapter, how the luxury fashion industry's re-presentational policies constitute a *power apparatus*. In particular, this apparatus *would divert* what is art and politics and thus aim at the establishment of a power that adopts a hegemonic discourse.

57 "Bien-être animal: LVMH crée un standard d'approvisionnement responsable des cuirs de crocodile", *ABC-Luxe,* article published on February 20, 2019: https://www.abc-luxe.com/launch/animal-well-being-lvmh-cree-a-responsible-standard-supply-of-crocodile leather/.

# 6

# Reinvesting, Diverting, Reformulating and Entertaining: The Leisure-form of the Fashion Industry

What is known as commercial luxury fashion is part of a major evolution in the sector leading to what is known as *globalized luxury*. Its development "leads us into its infernal round, to the point that the focus on the commodity goes so far as to prevent us from even considering the possibility of a reappropriation of what is now assimilated to the monopoly of wealth" (Abélès 2018a, p. 75, author's translation). This monopoly is illustrated throughout the first part of this work through the corpus mobilized. A closer look at the latter reveals the recurring presence of certain brands and consequently of certain luxury groups. The re-presentational policies submitted for analysis emanate from the strategies of the largest groups in the sector: LVMH, with brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Celine and Le Bon Marché; Kering, with Gucci, Balenciaga and Saint Laurent; the Chanel group, with its homonymous brand. Is this a methodological problem or oligopolistic concentration? While the criteria for selecting the elements of the corpus were based on the identity of the communicating authority – a luxury brand specialized in ready-to-wear, among other things – and on the aim of the communication strategies – appropriation of the field of art and culture, the sacred, the religious and also the political – I quickly found myself faced with a few brands from the most powerful groups in the sector[1].

1 Other brands are present in this research, also from groups firmly integrated in the commercial luxury sector: Miu Miu (see Chapter 1) is a brand of the Prada group, and Chloé (see Chapter 2) belongs to Richemont Holding France.

Although my research did not focus on the analysis of the re-presentation policies of these emblematic commercial luxury firms, the constructed corpus provided the possibility to account for an oligopoly as much economic as communicational, and therefore symbolic. Indeed, if "consumption is increasing and becoming more international, as well as the places of purchase (but more slowly), while it is always the same groups and firms that dominate" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 111, author's translation),[2] this domination also leads to an *oligopoly* of a re-presentational order. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer once evoked the *decomplexed* dimension of economic speculation resulting from the monopolistic industrialization of culture:

> Under monopoly, all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an analogy in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972, p. 121).

The publication of the activity reports of luxury groups is a recurrent practice, while the display of rising figures reflects a strong quantitative and spectacular performance. However, and contrary to the claim to which Adorno and Horkheimer refer, the groups in the sector must strike a balance between the war of figures – the industrial value of their firms – and the need to maintain the nobility of luxury, a nobility which, symbolically speaking, is not compatible with the quantitative assessment of the sector. As Marc Abélès reminds us, "the production of a luxury subject is synonymous with its inspection by the reign of merchandise and capital. In fact, we are entering an infernal cycle where the commercial expansion of luxury is thwarted not by morality, but by the fear of trivialization and downgrading" (Abélès 2018a, p. 74, author's translation).

2 The authors note this oligopolistic convergence by referring to data on worldwide sales of luxury goods, on the behavior of French groups (LVMH, Kering then called PPR, L'Oréal) and on the way in which the industrialization of the sector affects – negatively – the subcontracting professions traditionally associated with it.

How does the sector manage to reconcile industrial production, pricing policy, hedonism and distinction without losing its economic strength, on the one hand, and its symbolic power, on the other hand? And how does this same sector define itself, not as an industry – to take up Adorno and Horkheimer's observation about cultural industries – but as an artistic, cultural and political[3] body?

While the re-presentational policies analyzed tend to answer, even if only partially, this question, they are themselves based on a strategy that serves a double power, both economic and symbolic. This strategy is that of reinvestment as developed in discourse analysis and here taken up and worked on in a semio perspective. And this, while taking into consideration the political and economic dimension that the notion of reinvestment encompasses, itself is grasped as an extension of its source notion, that is, investment.

## 6.1. Reinvestments and reintroductions: from appropriation to subversion

Theorized by Dominique Maingueneau (1991, pp. 152–168), the notion of *reinvestment* finds its sources as much in the theory of *dialogism* developed by Bakhtine (1977) as in that of *transtextuality* as discussed by Genette (1982). It also seems possible to account for this notion, from a semiotic perspective, through that of *enunciative praxis*. For Bakhtine (1977), dialogism reflects a social organization that is implicitly equipped with ideological discourses; its study requires "*not separating ideology from material reality and the sign* [...] *not cutting the sign from the concrete forms of social communication* [and] *not cutting communication and its forms from their material basis*" (p. 41, author's translation)[4]. Dialogical discourse carries ideologies and "plays [...] on two closely related levels: that of the interaction between enunciator and co-enunciator, but also that of the immersion of discourse in an inter-discourse from which it emerges and which never ceases to traverse it" (Maingueneau 1991, p. 153, author's translation). Throughout parts 1 and 2, I have emphasized the interdiscursive and anaphoric dimension of the re-presentational policies of the luxury

3 Obviously not in the sense of a political party, but in the sense of politics, whose discourse and practices are of common interest.

4 In italics in the source text.

fashion industry. Moreover, it is this discursive (dialogical, transtextual) as well as enunciative (anaphoric and pragmatic) density that structures the *metasemiotic* dimension of representation as analyzed here. It is also this dual density, discursive and enunciative, that describes the re-movement of representation, that is, the re-presentation.

Considered as a complex process of discursive transformation, the notion of reinvestment designates a hypertextual practice that "*aims less at modifying than at exploiting in a destructive or legitimizing sense the capital of authority attached to certain texts.* Reinvestment may correspond to two opposing strategies, appropriation and subversion" (Maingueneau 1991, p. 155, author's translation)[5]. Although rooted in the discursive tradition, this notion has analytical relevance for the re-presentation policies observed throughout this research. This is due to the fact that reinvestment occurs each time the re-presentation process takes place by *investing* in a space that is not part of the fashion industry's commercial activities and by appropriating it either *legitimately* or *subversively*. At first glance, the fashion industry's re-presentational policies resort to reinvestment with a view to *appropriation*, benefiting from the authority attached to the reinvested text or genre. However, we will see that behind this obvious aim of appropriation and legitimisation, there is also a movement of subversion, even diversion, of the reinvested text.

### 6.1.1 *Investing, reinvesting, re-presenting, appropriating: legitimacy and re-qualification*

From an etymological point of view, the verb *to invest* is borrowed from the Latin *investire* in the sense of "*to clothe*" in the literal sense, and from the figurative "to surround closely" (like a garment), which in the 16th Century meant "to clothe with the insignia of a rank" and "endow with authority"[6]. Its evolution attests to a military meaning, that is, surrounding with troops, attacking or encircling. From an abstract point of view, the verb *to invest* also refers to the act of solemnly assuming a power, a dignity, by the symbolic handing over of an attribute. Finally, a materialistic orientation is attributed to the verb, which from the beginning of the 20th Century also refers to the act of "investing funds". All the meanings of the verb – to

5 In italics in the source text.

6 "Invest", *Oxford English Dictionary*.

clothe, to attack, to place funds, to symbolically assume attributes – seem to me to be relevant to designate a first movement that was set up within the framework of the fashion industry's re-presentational policies. It is that of the occupation of a space (in the physical and symbolic sense of the term) and its appropriation. Occupation is carried out through the process of dressing this or that space. Twice a year Chanel *dresses* the Grand Palais with monumental scenographies designed for its fashion shows; Kering dresses 40, rue de Sèvres and transforms this place of religious worship into a place of commercial worship. But the occupation of these new spaces is also the result of an *attack*, strategic and often implicitly polemical. While the fashion industry's re-presentation policies are stratagems of a communicational nature, they also constitute, by their iterative and encompassing nature, a re-presentational device that ultimately occupies the public space and directs the way in which it is represented. When the LVMH group collaborated with Gallimard, it did not simply offer a product that would be considered as being on the side of publishing and the cultural industry. It invested in Gallimard in a doubly strategic way. From an economic point of view, the group integrated the capital of the publishing house. From a symbolic, but also pragmatic point of view, the group invested and reinvests in the field of literature. This investment enabled the luxury group to acquire a cultural functioning and legitimacy. On the other hand, it placed the publishing house, if only in an underlying way, on the side of the creative industries. From there, the luxury industry proceeded to the appropriation of the spaces invested, that is to say, to "a perceptible empowerment in taking control rather than being subjected to" (Marti 2015, p. 20, author's translation).

Gucci appropriates in a self-referential way the attributes of a symbolic power, which is that of Christian worship and the stories associated with it; Dior sets itself up as a divinity to be adored. But all the physical and symbolic spaces occupied and incorporated by the fashion industry are already laden with narratives and values, and that is why they are of interest to the luxury fashion industry. As pre-existing texts to those proposed by the latter through its re-presentational policies, these domains are themselves guarantees of legitimacy and authority. When they are mobilized by luxury brands, they are not only invested in, but reinvested in as well. On the one hand, because their values go beyond their respective frameworks – art, the sacred, politics – to become one with those that emerge from the discourse of the sector's brands. They are therefore reinvested, because they are

revisited and also *trivialized* (Jeanneret 2008, p. 85)[7]. On the other hand, because these physical and symbolic spaces occupied by the fashion industry are *rewritten* and therefore modified. They retain their source text in a more or less visible manner and offer new narratives that can, depending on the case, reinforce the authority of the text in question or work toward its erasure or displacement.

The appropriation induced by a reinvestment process provides both referential and self-referential legitimacy. The source text will, in a transitional movement, give an auratic dimension to the new text and its producing authority. It will allow the latter to claim the authority that derives from it, while at the same time providing the pretext for enriching the reinvested text. When the president of Louis Vuitton noted, with regard to the "Masters LV x Jeff Koons" collection, that "in the store, people marveled as in a museum, they were naturally attracted by one or another model [...] behind a headline act, we are telling four centuries of art",[8] he not only summoned up the authority of the quoted text, but he also proceeded to transform it. The pictorial works used in this collection of leather goods were not only transformed from an esthetic point of view. They were also transformed symbolically, as they are introduced into a discourse that was part of a commercial mediation. On the occasion of the inauguration of the brand's brand new boutique on Place Vendôme in Paris, the CEO of Louis Vuitton stressed that "customers don't come to the store just to buy a bag. They come to share our vision, to dream [...]. It's like a small museum"[9]. The museification of the store then reinvests in the source text – in this case the reference to the museum – and imposes a new vision of the latter, which is also subject to a "commodification" process (Schiele 2019, p. 42). From this observation, it is possible to hypothesize that, in addition to the requalification and authority that the fashion industry grants itself by

7 Let me use the adjective "trivial" to emphasize the movement that occurs when source texts are rewritten and reinvested in. If they are of interest for reinvestment, it is probably because they demonstrate a trivial potential, which I will discuss later about the trivial dimension of street protests. Yves Jeanneret uses the adjective form of the notion in some cases, such as when he deals with the iconography of Abbé Pierre as analyzed by Roland Barthes.

8 "Collaboration Louis Vuitton x Jeff Koons, acte II: sous la lumière de Claude Monet", published in the electronic edition of *Madame Figaro*, October 26, 2017: http://madame.lefigaro.fr/style/louis-vuitton-presente-le-deuxieme-volet-de-sa-collaboration-avec-jeff-koons-sacs-masters-2-261017-134970.

9 "Paris: Vuitton s'offre royalement la place Vendôme", electronic edition of Le *Parisien,* article published on October 4, 2017.

reinvesting in *legitimate* texts, *a subversion process of these texts is taking place*.

### 6.1.2. *Reinvesting and subverting: the cultural hegemony of fashion*

Let us recall the special event given to the "Masters LV x Jeff Koons" collection through the conception of a device honoring this commercial activity, a device that imitates the celebrations of cultural goods. As we have seen, the first series of this collection was publicized with an inaugural dinner at the Louvre. The Louvre's involvement – and its reinvestment, since it lended itself to an evening of festivities celebrating a collection of fashion accessories – was part of an appropriation process, since the museum contributed, through its institutional authority, to the legitimacy of the event.

A closer look at this event and the way in which it was publicized by Louis Vuitton[10] reveals a subversion process that takes place in a particularly subtle way. By looking at the scripto-iconic production published on the brand's Instagram account, a production that we have already dealt with previously, we can see a transformation taking place in the qualification of both Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *La Gimblette* artwork and the Louis Vuitton handbag. When one discovers the caption of this publication, one notices its dialogical orientation – to take up the notion theorized by Bakhtine – and also its subversive orientation toward the reinvested text. Indeed, we read "Catherine Deneuve photographed by @PatrickDemarchelier before Fragonard at The Louvre in celebration of Masters, a new collection between #LouisVuitton and #JeffKoons"[11]. I qualify this discourse as dialogical and therefore ideological because it shows an enunciative depth that suggests different voices. The first, which seems to be highlighted on the surface, is the reference to Fragonard's painting and the Louvre. The combination of these two actors with strong cultural authority and legitimacy allows the market authority to appropriate this legitimacy and even to appropriate some of its qualities. The second is the subversion of the source text. The photograph shows the actress Catherine Deneuve, of course, but what the caption describes as Fragonard refers either to the copy of this painting, a

10 In Chapter 2 of this book, I focused on the process of artification and culturization that takes place when the market authority and its goods invite themselves into an area of high cultural density.

11 *Catherine Deneuve devant un Fragonard.*

copy furthermore enriched with the logos of Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons[12], or to the handbag placed on a pedestal and adorned with the painting in question. The caption of this publication therefore subverts what was previously used to appropriate the commercial event. The institution and the heritage it defends and promotes are here undergoing a *rewriting*: the Louvre Museum is being transformed into a shop, its works of art are being erased and replaced by copies or merchandise claiming artistic value. This approach is deployed in such an underlying way that when we discover this scripto-iconic publication, we are confronted with "commercial mediations [...] naturalized by professionals because they cannot exhibit the very foundations of their ideology" (Marti 2015, p. 13, author's translation). From this point of view, it is the entire involvement of the institution that is called into question in its role as curator and mediator of an artistic and cultural heritage.

This questioning may be the result of both the mediations and the policies of advertisers and the media coverage they receive. "Is this a bag or a work of art? The question seems to arise in the face of the explosive collaboration between American artist Jeff Koons and the luxury leather goods house Louis Vuitton".[13] Similarly, and on the occasion of the partnership between The Whitney Museum, H&M and Jeff Koons, we read: "Can't make it to the Whitney? No problem! You can go to H&M instead: an image of "Dog Balloon" sculpture is splayed out over the entire storefront, and there's a limited edition ($49.95) bag for sale with the same depiction".[14]

The discourse defended in the article published by *Le Monde*[15] and quoted above tends to *naturalization* and even *smoothing*, a process that:

12 By representing himself through such a form, Koons qualifies himself as an instance other than artistic and gives himself a brand specific signage.

13 "Jeff Koons et Louis Vuitton mettent le Louvre à sac", *Le Monde*, article published on April 13, 2017: https://www.lemonde.fr/arts/article/2017/04/13/jeff-koons-et-louis-vuitton-mettent-le-louvre-a-sac_5110960_1655012.html.

14 In "Things we love: H&M's Balloon Dog Bag", *Fashion and Beauty Blog*, article published on July 17, 2014: https://fashionista.com/2014/06/hm-jeff-koons-bag-balloon-dog.

15 72% owned by Le Monde Libre, whose two owners are Xavier Niel and Mathieu Pigasse. Since 2010, Xavier Niel has been married to Delphine Arnault, daughter of Bernard Arnault, owner of the LVMH group, of which the Louis Vuitton brand is part. Delphine Arnault has also been Louis Vuitton's Deputy Managing Director since 2013 and a member of the LVMH group's Board of Directors since 2003.

> It is not limited to the erasure of conflictuality in the narrow sense, but includes operations as different as the generalization and decontextualization of statements, and practices as diverse as the anticipation of objections and misunderstanding, or the "coherence" of a collective, negotiated, harmonized, honed into "compatible" statements. (Oger 2013, p. 241, author's translation)

This discursive smoothing through which the commercial event is qualified reinforces the *subversion* process while clearly emphasizing the authority and legitimacy of this collection. Just as when the aforementioned article from the fashion blog also mentioned above put the Whitney and the H&M boutique on the same generic level by *claiming that both offer the same services, the same merchandise or the same cultural goods, depending on the point of view one decides to adopt from the article above*. As Dominique Maingueneau notes, "subversion always implies a certain recognition of the value of the reinvested discourse [while] reinvestment can be ambiguous, that is, it can be interpreted as both appropriation and subversion" (Maingueneau 2002, p. 94, author's translation).

Media coverage of the fashion industry's re-presentation policies can also give rise to polemical discourse, further highlighting the subversive nature of reinvestment. Entitled "Lady : des écrivains pris la main dans le sac", the article written on February 12, 2017 in *Mediapart*, on the one hand, denounces "the decadence of our world in general and of our literature in particular"[16]. On the other hand, its author emphasizes that "Gallimard and Dior have common interests, since LVMH is present in the capital of each of the two groups to which these companies belong"[17]. As for Audrey Vernon, a columnist at France Inter, she approached the publication of *Lady* with humor, sarcasm and criticism: "The literature died on February 2, 2017 and it was Bernard Arnault who killed it. [...] And now Gallimard is Dior. Eight writers have agreed to write a book of short stories about a bag! The Lady Dior. I bought it at the French Literature Department. Simone de Beauvoir, Boileau, Debord, even Marx are quoted. I read the word Bangladesh, and I thought, oh great! It's going to evoke the fate of the workers crushed during

16 "Lady: des écrivains pris la main dans le sac", *Mediapart*, article published on February 12, 2017: https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/120217/lady-des-ecrivains-pris-la-main-dans-le-sac? tab=full.

17 *Idem*.

the collapse of Rana Plazza, the building where clothes were made for Carrefour, in which Arnault is a shareholder... but no, it's the apology of a handbag from every angle [...] I heard that they [the writers] had been paid a bag [...] how can you be the muse of Dior and an ecologist? Bernard Arnault was the first to go and congratulate Donald Trump, a climate sceptic. And the bags are made of crocodile leather [...]"[18]. This excerpt, translated here from France Inter's chronicle, evokes in a particularly representative way certain fields reinvested in by the luxury industry: ecology, politics, art, culture and feminism. Their subversion is also linked to a suppression process of the social referent of the formulas-events[19] mobilized and rewritten by the fashion industry, that is, *misappropriation*. Its relevance lies at the level of a metasemiotic process that takes place, a kind of enunciative duplication. Misappropriation, as observed in what follows, is a doubly reinvestigative discourse because it deals with source texts whose creative origin was already aimed at misappropriation, notably of all discourse and practices linked to capitalism.

## 6.2. Diversions

Like the process of reinvestment, diversion requires two texts: the diverted text, constituting the source text, and the diverting text, corresponding to the new textual formation. Thought of as a *parodic process*, diversion initially designates a metamorphic process of artistic *texts*[20], a process whose aim is political. Little by little, the diversion is constructed from advertising discourse, always with a political aim: "In a metagraphy relating to the Spanish War, the sentence in the most clearly revolutionary sense is this incomplete claim for a brand of lipstick: 'pretty lips have red'" (Debord and Wolman 1956, reprinted in Debord 2006, p. 222, author's translation). In addition to advertising space and its potential for diversion, Debord and Wolman also emphasize the performative power of the movie image and the possibilities it offers for diversion. As a semiotic form, bringing together several forms of expression – text, moving image, sound, music – the cinematic image can be translated as a trivial paradigm

18 See: https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-billet-d-audrey-vernon/le-billet-d-audrey-vernon-17-fevrier-2017.

19 A concept I discussed in Chapter 4 of this book.

20 In the semiotic sense of the word.

whose misappropriation would have a certain pragmatic and symbolic effectiveness[21].

In terms of the policies observed throughout this book, it seems important to emphasize *media maneuverability* offered by *diverted texts.* Whether we are dealing with street demonstrations and the slogans that accompany them or with particularly mediatized or media-generated events – May 1968, biblical stories, feminism – we are faced with media discourse that is stereotyped but also trivial. *The more a social representation tends to become standardized, the more it can give rise to misappropriations, caricature discourse and semantic shifts*. As we have seen before, demonstrations are spectacular events in which the media have contributed to accentuating their signifying dimension and ultimately to transforming media representations into a kind of *ready-to-use* element can be mobilized and retrieved for and by any discursive genre. It is this recuperation that misappropriation allows. Provided with creativity and inventiveness, diversion as updated by the fashion industry also updates a paradox. Initially, diversion is linked to a movement that denounces the transformation of society into a spectacle and whose main theme is the representation of capitalism. Nowadays, it is itself a spectacle, the spectacle that the fashion industry offers us, and more precisely its re-presentations. *The latter are organized, in part, around this same process of diversion, itself diverted by capitalism previously denounced*.

### 6.2.1. *Diverting politics*

When Chanel proposed its fashion show as a street event at the Grand Palais, it claimed to celebrate feminism, as much through the slogans it incorporated in its procession, slogans carried by the models hired by the brand, as through the discourse of its artistic director, which was picked up and publicized by the press. This particularly glamorous celebration, to use a term favored by the fashion industry, masked a managerial reality that not

21 Debord and Wolman, for example, remind us of the importance of a movie such as *The Birth of a Nation*, an importance they do not place on the level of its esthetic quality or its narrative, which is otherwise racist, but on the level of the fertile ground it constitutes as a source to be diverted: "It is better to divert it as a whole, without even touching the editing, with a soundtrack that would make it a powerful denunciation of the horrors of the imperialist war and the activities of the Ku-Klux-Klan, which, as we know, are still going on in the United States today" (Debord and Wolman 1956, reprinted in Debord 2006, p. 227, author's translation).

only had nothing glamorous about it, but also presented a cynical dimension of the capitalist functioning of commercial luxury fashion. In an interview with a model modeling for emblematic brands in the sector, anthropologist Giulia Mensitieri notes:

> Just because we do fashion shows doesn't mean we'll get the next Dior contract. And these girls, yes, they make very trendy magazines, but they don't pay. They do fashion shows, it always pays a bit more than the magazines, but that's not it either, you pay the plane ticket. New York doesn't pay at all, you get paid in clothes. For the Marc Jacobs fashion show, she [a colleague] got a new perfume, she got shoes with her name on them. It's nice, but it doesn't make you eat either... In France, for Chanel, they always have a little bag with a little bit of make-up in it. (Mensitieri 2018, p. 127, author's translation)

In fact, representing a rare opportunity for a model's career, the fashion shows organized by the major brands in the sector rarely include remuneration, except for girls whose presence is an added value for the brand[22]. At the same time, the Chanel fashion show was staged as a discourse that diverted, on the one hand, from trivial texts and, on the other hand, from the principle of political contestation in general. Behind this spectacle celebrating femininity and freedom, the brand not only hid the economic and social misery produced by its industrial strategies, in this case the unpaid work of models[23]; it also diverted an entire paradigm of political and citizen contestation by transforming it into an ally of the spectacle it produced.

We can make the same observation when we look at the re-presentational policies of Dior, which diverted the slogans of May 1968 by inscribing them on the facade of its shops as much as the feminist movements by making models wear clothing with a protest message, economically exploited by the

22 This is also the case for the fashion and beauty editorials that models do for trade magazines. Being present in the pages of a title like *Vogue Paris* for example, or even on the cover, is often the intermediary that really launches a model's career. This is why models are very rarely paid for this type of service. The professional opportunities where a model will get a real paycheck are advertising campaigns and exclusive contracts for cosmetic brands.

23 It should also be remembered that during fashion weeks, a model may be required to do several fashion shows a day, starting her day at 6 am and finishing at midnight, with therefore random remuneration.

managerial strategies of the industry. The same issues were at stake when Gucci portrayed itself as the only *elected* body capable of saving the world from a natural disaster, whereas, as we have seen previously, the fashion industry represents a major factor in pollution. Finally, the same process of diversion can be seen when Kering defined itself as a human-sized and family-oriented structure that respects the historical and religious significance of the place where its headquarters are located, while at the same time, the group is subject to a tax adjustment in Italy amounting to 1.25 billion euros, notably concerning its Gucci brand: "The Milan public prosecutor's office considered that Kering had invoiced on behalf of LGI, its logistics platform located in Switzerland, for activities actually carried out in Italy in order to reduce its taxes in the peninsula"[24].

### 6.2.2. *Diverting the diversion*

The luxury fashion industry therefore seems to be getting its hands on what can stand in its way: from protest discourses to offensive commercial practices, it tends to completely occupy the space that tends to elude it, and above all to tame it.

Dapper Dan was the founder of an American boutique specializing in counterfeit luxury ready-to-wear, including brands with emblematic logos such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Fendi. In the 1980s and 1990s, his boutique represented the clothing counterculture that diverted the mainstream brands of the time. It was notably frequented by celebrities from another counterculture, musical and choreographic, such as rap and hip-hop. During this period, counterfeiting was both *imitation* and *diversion*, creating a tension between *political correctness*, *appropriation and denunciation*. Counterfeiting is also a manufacturing and production process that can damage not only the image of the imitated brands, but also the economic results of the sector.

> According to the Colbert Committee, a body representing 80 prestigious brands in several sectors, the seizure of counterfeit goods increased 45-fold between 1994 and 2011 and, in addition to the loss of 30,000 jobs a year, represented a loss of

24 "Kering écope d'un redressement fiscal record en Italie", *La Croix*, article published on 10 May 2019: https://www.la-croix.com/Economie/Entreprises/Kering-ecope-dun-redressement-fiscal-record-Italy-2019-05-10-1201020791.

> 6 billion euros a year for the State. It is considered by counterfeiters to be less dangerous than other forms of trafficking but extremely lucrative, and by consumers, who buy a counterfeit item on the market in Ventimiglia, on a street in China or, as is the case in the vast majority of cases, on the Internet, it is nothing more than an infringement of the intellectual property of the rich luxury goods houses without suspecting the impact, origins and consequences it represents[25].

Although a supporter of the luxury economy and little concerned about the impact, origins and outcomes it represents for the social economy in general, this article recalls the repercussions not only of counterfeiting on the luxury industry in general, but also of the desire that the latter arouses. Luxury certainly, but visible luxury – even if it is fake – above all.

Forced to end his illicit commercial activity in 1992, Dapper Dan disappeared from the fake luxury scene before returning, this time legitimately. It was Gucci, one of the brands most copied by Dapper Dan and which had once sued him, which tried and succeeded in 2017 in recovering the manufacturing techniques and esthetics that Dan introduced in the past. By offering him a collaboration, Gucci set in motion a process of institutionalizing a figure that was the antithesis of this process. By collaborating with Dapper Dan, a collection that mimicked the counterfeiting style of the 1980s, the brand *diverted counterfeiting* from its original focus on luxury. Commenting on the latest collection developed in collaboration with Dan, Gucci's Creative Director said:

> We recognize the greatness of his work. The message I wanted to send is that in a way we've recognized a lot of the history of the brand. It's time to say that fashion isn't limited to the windows of Fifth Avenue stores. It's more than that. It's about culture. It's about self-expression. It's about expressing a point of view[26].

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25 "LVMH, de l'art de la guerre contre la contrefaçon", Centre de réflexion sur la guerre économique, article published on February 15, 2016: https://infoguerre.fr/2016/02/lvmh-de-l 'art-de-la-guerre-contre-la-contrefacon/.

26 "Dapper Dan, le roi de la contrefaçon ressuscité par le luxe" *Andidote*, undated article: https://magazineantidote.com/mode/dapper-dan-roi-contrefacon-ressuscite-par-luxe. The article cites an interview with the *New York Times* by Gucci's artistic director entitled "Thanks,

It is also an attempt to control and divert anything that tends to escape the policies of this industry.

## 6.3. Political power of the fashion industry's re-presentation apparatus

The processes of reinvestment and diversion define "the transformative and creative character of the transmission and rewriting of cultural beings through different social spaces" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 15, author's translation). This rewriting is an integral part of the formation of the *re-presentational apparatus* of luxury fashion and is a testimony to the way in which "various social actors seize upon all these [rewriting] processes to produce power and value" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 20, author's translation). The fashion industry's strategies lie at the interstices between the production of discourse, here conceived as being "at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to conjure up its powers and dangers, to control the random event, to dodge its heavy, fearsome materiality" (Foucault 1971 p. 11) and "industrialized cultural and informational productions both from the point of view of their production and their consumption as well as the complex modalities of their circulation in societies" (Miège 2017, p. 9, author's translation).

We have seen in Chapter 5 that the managerial creativity of the luxury fashion industry and its panoply system are also part of an industrialization process, and not only for commercial luxury goods. Forms, formula-events, reinvestments and diversions are some of the processes that characterize the political and symbolic organization of the discourse[27] of the actors in the luxury industry and that lead to the constitution of their oligopolistic system. These materials, such as forms and event-formulas, as well as the strategies on which mediations such as the processes of reinvestment and diversion are based, also designate the foundations structuring the fashion industry's re-presentational device. They make it possible to account for "the relationship between needs and the market in a society endowed with a political order and the rule of law" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 519, author's translation). They thus

Internet, Outrage! Now Dapper Dan and Gucci are Buds", published on September 10, 2017: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/10/fashion/dapper-dan-gucci-partnership.html.

27 The term "discourse" is used here in its *syncretic* sense.

contribute to a reflection on the political economy that determines the fashion industry, and which in a way forces us to think of it as a *media industry*, an industry that is supposed to produce "a lasting relationship with an audience to which it promises quality production" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 12, author's translation).

### 6.3.1. *The media industry in question: a phantasmagoria*

The fashion industry's re-presentational device is one of *political power* because it is endowed with ideological discourses based on the principle of *dialogism*, *recovery* and *re-formulation*, a principle that allows messages and their circulation to be blurred as long as both are the results of complex formations. The latter are based on the dense and itself complex dimension of the entire fashion industry, traditionally qualified as creative but evolving as a media industry, which moreover allows it to access "value" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 641) and which is linked as much to the industrialization processes of fashion as to those affecting its re-presentation policies. Traditionally, fashion must call on the *media industries*[28] to design its direct promotion and on the media industries to ensure its indirect communication. Without ignoring this intermediation by the media industries, the fashion industry functions as a media industry because it "carries out a type of mediation that allows the triviality of cultural beings in a form and with effects that fall within a particular competence" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 642, author's translation). What this book has enabled us to report on is the long process of *skills transfer* that the fashion industry is tracing. If one of the objectives of the media industry is to produce a relationship of quality and sustainability, because of mediation, which is itself endowed with ideology, the fashion industry goes beyond its commercial field and enters the media field because it ensures the production of mediations: cultural, artistic, religious, political and also entertainment.

By confronting economic models, design, manufacturing, production and data processes with the re-presentational policies likely to present fashion from an angle other than that of the market, I have emphasized the political

28 "The media industry exploits the media universe to reach consumers and treats them as a target" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 13, author's translation).

economy dimension of communication as mobilized by the industry in question. I questioned these multiple and heterogeneous re-presentational policies as practices that are part of the same system, the latter being endowed with as many forms as ideologies, with power contributing to the enrichment – economic and symbolic – of the luxury fashion's actors. Following Yves Jeanneret's project on the *link between semiology and the media industries*, the work carried out throughout this book has made it possible "to discuss in particular the industrial transformations in the communication sector as realities inseparable from the structuring role of representation devices" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 531, author's translation). The fashion industry's re-representation system also derives its communicational, economic and symbolic – and therefore media related – effectiveness from its phantasmagorical dimension. Because of this dimension, it succeeds in orienting our perception, our choices, our attitudes and our representations by constructing its own simulacrum as that of a *leisure industry*.

When Walter Benjamin questioned the mechanism of world exhibitions as places "of pilgrimage to the commodity a fetish" (Benjamin 1999, p. 7), he defines it as a space of commercial worship calling the faithful. This sacred, religious call hides another: that of *phantasmagorical entertainment*. "World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity. They create a framework in which its use value recedes into the background. They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity" (Benjamin 1999, p. 7). Let us observe how this observation dating back to the beginning of the 20th Century is actualized today and especially how the phantasmagorical device of the fashion industry tends to erase – symbolically – the commodity through the paradigm of entertainment and leisure.

During the first quarter of 2019, Galeries Lafayette became a place of attraction and entertainment through various microevents for its visitors. For example, the department store installed a trampoline under its dome where visitors could jump, play, admire the view and take the photos necessary to publicize the animation through their circulation on the social networks. To benefit from this experience, people had to wait in line for a waiting time that varied from 5 to 20 min depending on the time of day. As for the

number of visitors attending the animation in question, the daily average was 12,000[29]. The store at 40, boulevard Haussmann in Paris is a tourist attraction with a commercial vocation, welcoming an average of 100,000 visitors per day.[30] The store also offers paying guided tours lasting approximately 1 h. In January 2019, the department store also inaugurated a 9-m ice bridge known as the *Glasswalk* "suspended 16 meters above the void"[31]. Another specific example of the department store's phantasmagorical device is the exhibitions of pictorial works of art or installations offered by Le Bon Marché.

In addition to the extraordinary exhibitions presented in Chapter 2 of this book, Le Bon Marché regularly offers free guided tours of its permanent collection of contemporary art and interior design objects. These visits are organized in the same way as those of the annual monumental installations[32].

These two examples, without being exhaustive, allow us to consider the department store as a device with a double pretention: commercial and entertaining. The department store proposes and exhibits works of art, installations and merchandise as entities that allow for strolling, contemplation, hobbies and leisure. Just as it offers experiences that openly assume entertainment and fun. Every event lends itself to the transformation of the commercial space into a *hobby*[33]. It is in this sense that the fashion industry's phantasmagorical device organizes the exhibition of its goods. As Yves Jeanneret observes, "in phantasmagoria, we do not obey instructions but, through a dense set of images, objects and places that testify to the

29 A guard is in charge of regulating the flow of visitors and also of counting them. I was able to question him during an observation made on site in March 2019.

30 According to the Cultival tourist platform: https://www.cultival.fr/visites/les-galeries-lafayette-plus-de-120-ans-dhistoire.

31 See: https://haussmann.galerieslafayette.com/events/glasswalk/.

32 I took part in the guided tour of Le Bon Marché's contemporary art collection on April 28, 2019. I was able to observe the same mediation tools mobilized for this approach as during the guided tour of the Joana Vasconcelos exhibition on January 26, 2019.

33 Once again it was Galeries Lafayette who, on the occasion of an event around the Polaroid brand, installed ball ponds where children could jump and play, while their parents immortalized the moment by photographing them. The publicization of these moments, transformed into events, seems to me to be particularly evident as it passes through the canonical channel of social networks.

glorification of innovation, of the modernity of merchandise, we learn *a form of life*"[34] (Jeanneret 2014, p. 225, author's translation).

### 6.3.2. *The leisure-form*[35]

In questioning the re-presentational policies of luxury fashion, its processes of reinvestment and diversion, I insisted on the trivial dimension of the domains convened and also on the standardized and industrialized dimension of their recovery and rewriting. Brands in the sector mobilize the process of diversion, and more precisely the diversion of politics, to varying degrees of intensity. For example, with the paradigm of May 1968 and by disregarding the foundations of this same paradigm, they proceed, through their re-presentational policies, to the suppression of the enunciative density of the diverted text. These commercial authorities construct discourses with political and even authentic pretensions, insofar as *the claim of authenticity* in the face of fiction is part of the political discourses taken up, reinvested in and diverted by the same authorities. This is what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello point out, recalling that:

> In the years around May 1968, this form of denunciation of inauthenticity was unprecedented diffusion and public success. The critique of the "consumer society" brought out onto the streets, as it were, the denunciation of a world given over to the series, mass production, standardized opinion or, as Marcuse puts it, the drugstore culture where "Plato and Hegel, Shelley and Baudelaire, Marx and Freud" are on the same shelves as detective novels or romantic novels and are thereby reduced to a function of pure entertainment"[36]. (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 441)

34 My use of italics.

35 I specify that this formula ("leisure-form") is not to be put in relation with what Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre qualify as leisure, likely to characterize the differences and temporalities of a commercial form. In any case, such a comparison would require a thorough and in-depth reflection, which has not been the subject of such an approach in the present work.

36 The authors cite the work of Herbert Marcuse (1968, p. 89).

What the fashion industry's phantasmagorical apparatus succeeds in doing today is *the celebration of series, mass production and standardization*, in the words of Boltanski and Chiapello.

The use of symbols that are political, such as May 1968, also allows the fashion industry to *subvert the symbol*. By reinvesting in what we have called the *event formula*, the fashion industry recalls and even celebrates the victory of capitalism over the anti-consumerist claims of the protest movement.

> According to Michel Clouscard, May '68 would be the "perfect liberal counter-revolution" which would have saved a capitalism in crisis by allowing the advent of new markets: behaviorism and marketing recovering for their benefit the criticism, resulting from May '68, which composed the basis on which a "market of desire" and leisure developed. (Renaud 2013, p. 60, author's translation)

Fashion is constructed in a new way as an entertaining instance. It is establishing itself on the terrain of cultural industries and partly on that of entertainment, such as cinema. The short films offered by the sector's emblematic brands proliferate by following an editorial mode that has nothing to envy to that of cinematographic films[37].

From the two observations made above, I retain the fact that a certain hybridization of the status of the commodity, on the one hand, and a recuperation of political contestations by capital itself contribute to the development of a new transformation of the fashion industry, a transformation that allows it to position itself as a *leisure industry*. As a *form of life*, re-presented fashion "is torn from its prosaic value and monetary status, which are its economic truth, to be endowed with presence, brilliance and cultural value" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 225, author's translation).

Fashion constitutes a new form of life, a *leisure-form* that, in my view, goes beyond the specific framework of cultural value mentioned above and

37 For several years, the Dior brand has produced a series of short films directed by renowned artists in the film industry such as Olivier Dahan, Marion Cotillard, Eliott Bliss and John Cameron Mitchell.

is generically based on the properties of *indirectly productive labor*, which "exploited labor contributes not to creation but to the realization of value and is therefore exercised in the circulation sphere as opposed to the production sphere" (Huet *et al.* 1978, p. 23, author's translation). According to Thorstein Veblen, for whom leisure "connotes the non-productive consumption of time, which (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness" (Veblen 1994, p. 28), the values produced by the fashion industry's re-presentational policies seem to exceed the use and exchange values of its goods.

The leisure-form that characterizes luxury fashion cuts across all areas of this industry's re-presentational policies. Its qualities ultimately determine the luxury fashion system, oriented toward the construction of a smoothing process in the sense that everything that is mobilized, staged and discursive aims to produce on the manifest level of consensus, common ground, agreement and the ability to *living together*. Living together, contrary to the political, artistic or religious symbols used as a basis for rewriting the image of fashion, is based mainly on this new form that characterizes the industry, the leisure-form.

> If the need for amusement was largely produced by industry, which used the subject matter of a work to recommend it to the masses, the reproduction of a sweet to praise chromolithography and, conversely, the image of pudding to sell pudding powder, amusement has always revealed how much it depended on commercial manipulation, the salesman's spiel, the fairground huckster. But the affinity that originally existed between business and amusement can be seen in the objectives assigned to it: to be the glorification of society. To have fun means to agree. This is only possible if we isolate fun from the whole social process, if we cut it down by sacrificing at the outset the claim of every work, even the most insignificant one, to reflect the whole within its modest limits. To have fun always means: to think of nothing, to forget suffering even where it is shown. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1974, p. 153)

Catwalks, exhibitions, advertisements, book publications, music concerts, shoes and handbags, short films, boutiques and department stores, delicatessens and group headquarters, digital content, CSR and management charters are the phantasmagorical actants of the funfair[38] that promises happiness, albeit paradoxical.

38 Not to mention the fact that the funfair form has already made its way into intermediate strategies for promoting the sector's brands. Russian model Natalia Vodianova, founder of the Naked Heart Foundation and also the partner of Antoine Arnault, son of Bernard Arnault, regularly organizes an entertaining *fund fair* to raise money for her foundation. The February 2019 edition took the form of a fair, a celebration where different game stands were designed and set up allowing the various guests to participate. Each stand was associated with a brand member of the LVMH group.

# Conclusion

> Capitalist production has unified space, which is no longer limited by outside companies. This unification is at the same time an extensive and intensive process of *trivialization*[1]. The accumulation of mass-produced goods for the abstract space of the market, just as it had to break down all regional and legal barriers, and all the corporate restrictions of the Middle Ages that maintained the *quality* of artisanal production, also had to dissolve the autonomy and quality of places. This homogenization power is the heavy artillery that brought down all the walls of China[2]. (Debord 1992, p. 129, author's translation)

These lines originally written in 1967 by Guy Debord sound like a prophecy of the current socioeconomic and symbolic situation of the luxury fashion industry. They point both to the implementation of an industrial production of luxury goods, the globalization of the sector, the geographical displacement of know-how transformed into *cheap goods*, but also to the economic power represented by the homogenization of the sector. By way of conclusion, I would like to put forward the contributions of this research first with regard to the object of this study – the fashion of commercial luxury goods, its industrialization, its re-presentation apparatus – and second with regard to the theoretical and methodological approach adopted.

1 In the ordinary and not conceptual sense of the term as that developed by Jeanneret (2008, 2014).

2 In italics in the source text.

## C.1. Unification: trivialization and industrialization of representation

At the start of this research, two hypotheses were presented. The first postulated that, faced with the semi-industrial or industrial reproduction of luxury goods, the fashion industry opts for re-presentational policies giving it a higher value by sublimating its products as unique, authentic, artistic works. The second envisaged other re-presentation policies drawing on the sacred, religious and political realms, responding to the criticisms made of this industry on environmental, managerial and also organizational levels. The samples of texts, objects, practices and strategies analyzed revealed a convergence around the mobilization of the three common domains of art (and culture), religion (and the sacred) and politics. This convergence is also iterative and tends toward a generalized and even standardized manifestation.

The authenticity sought through artification and culturization processes, the aura or worship, even a transcendental aura staged through religious intertexts, the structuring aimed at the emergence and experience of the sacred and finally the rewriting of events and symbols that are political in nature are introduced into a system that, despite its obvious heterogeneity – different texts, different objects, different practices and strategies – imposes frameworks and formats that are reproduced in a serial manner. While the transversal *problem* of the constraints determining the fashion industry is a matter of its industrialization, the re-presentational policies likely to displace these constraints also present *a tendency toward unification and reproduction*.

At first glance, it might seem paradoxical to consider that this movement of the serial reproduction of re-presentation policies is based on a logic of industrialization. However, it is the socioeconomic and symbolic stakes resulting from these policies that impose media reproductions and industrializing standardization. Museum exhibitions are multiplying and constitute formats of branded cultural content; shops simulating artistic spaces and ready-to-wear collections designed as artistic collaborations are on the increase; the policy is constantly being introduced into the advertising strategies of the sector's brands and the lexical fields that result from it are proliferating: *committed fashion*, *committed products*, *committed actors*, *committed commercial bodies*; the experience of the sacred and religious references, once only present in the sector's advertising strategies, are

gaining other media spaces such as group headquarters, boutiques[3] and even the places where the brands' shows take place during fashion week. The iterative advertising of these event formulas through social media networks and the possibilities they offer for relaying published content contribute to the massive reproduction of re-presentational policies and their industrialization. Moreover, there is a paradoxical tension that is actualized through the term event-formula discussed in Chapter 3 of this book. *On the one hand, the notion of formula evokes fixity and standardization; on the other hand, the notion of event actualizes the extraordinary and the discontinuous*. And yet, brought together in the same syntagm, each notion appropriates the qualities of the other and the two, together, lead to the construction of events which, while claiming the extraordinary and the discontinuous, constitute fixed frameworks,[4] serial productions and industrialized formats. The closure that the framework offers and even imposes on representation in general has been considered here as the closure of the general device that carries and distributes the fashion industry's re-presentational policies and that endows itself with the effects not only of standardization but also of "ideologization" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 619).

## C.2. Unification: a panoptic reflex apparatus

In evoking the panoptic effects, Michel Foucault recalled that the latter aims at arranging things so that:

> surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus

3 Which is not just for the fashion industry. Lardellier (2013, pp. 121–144) has shown the experience of the sacred staged in the Apple shop at the Louvre. The majority of luxury boutiques present two distinct spaces that recall the spatial organization of Christian churches: the space devoted to the liturgy occupied by the faithful corresponds to the main space of a boutique where any potential customer or visitor can enter; the sanctuary, a space reserved for priests, is symbolized in the boutique by recessed, even private but always signaled spaces, where only a few privileged customers are invited to enter.

4 I am here following Louis Marin's theory of the representation framework. Although the framework, as evoked here, is devoid of materiality and is defined as a space of mental, virtual structuring, it seems to me possible to describe this space as the apparatus that "every representation comprises in order to present itself in its function, its functioning, even its functionality of representation", and also in its enclosure (see Marin 1994, p. 343, author's translation).

> should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (Foucault 1977, pp. 201)

Let me compare the panoptic apparatus as theorized by Foucault with the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus. Just as panoptism imposes a discontinuous surveillance with permanent effects, the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus diffuses, as previously mentioned, events that are both discontinuous and iterative. Similarly, if what Foucault describes as the *perfection of power* develops through a surveillance system, the power of the fashion industry and its quest for perfection is constructed through the constant and global spectacularization of this industry, a spectacularization that can be described as *a total social effect*, both based on a policy of visibility, or even *panvisibility*, and affecting "all areas of collective life" (Heinich 2012, p. 561) since it concerns the areas of the common, questioned throughout this book. At the same time, the spectacle offered by the fashion industry is also a machine of *naturalized* power, so much so that its omnipresence makes it transparent. Finally, the spectator, caught up in the circuits and orientations of the device, contributes to the reinforcement of the latter and to the establishment and stabilization of its power. Unbeknownst to the spectator. In his treatise on fashion philosophy *Philosophie de la mode*, Georg Simmel announces: "the enemy is transformed into a servant" (Simmel 2017[5], author's translation), which is actualized today through the fashion industry's strategies and re-presentational policies: its audience, its opinions and its contributions carry and circulate the power of the industry in question. Fashion is re-presenting itself as a *common cause* likely to bring together and serve not targets, but spectators, followers and citizens.

The show that the fashion industry offers is ultimately part of this process that I call *collective reflexivity*. In addition to establishing a requalification regime through the rewriting processes that the re-presentational device offers, it also succeeds in making representation a reflexive spectacle, which not only states what it seems to be designed for – the sector's goods – but also, and perhaps above all, the sector itself, its creative quality, its strength and its power.

5 The above quote is from the blurb of the 2017 edition.

## C.3. Unification: the apparatus as a reflection of the industrialization of luxury fashion

Finally, it seems relevant to focus on the theoretical and methodological approach that determined this work and on the contributions of this approach. If socioeconomics calls for the study of the economic foundations, practices and social appropriations of cultural, creative and media industries, etc., the semio analyses I have conducted have shed light not so much on these practices as on the way in which the fashion industry projects the audience – its consumers, its spectators – into a position of appropriation and effective or symbolic use of its goods and services. It is therefore on the basis of communicational and re-presentational policies, approached here as actions that aim to produce the common but also to establish forms of visibility and governance that allow luxury actors to acquire a legitimacy other than commercial, that I have tried to describe the power of the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus.

Commercial luxury fashion aims to establish policies close to those instituted by the cultural and media industries. Philippe Bouquillion, Bernard Miège and Pierre Moeglin point out that "it is with them [the cultural and media industries] that the socio-semiotic (as well as practical) information at the heart of brand strategies undoubtedly generates the most addictive effects; it is also there that audiences identify most with signatures, presenters or animators" (Bouquillion *et al.* 2013, p. 40, author's translation), the latter two of which can easily be replaced by the brands' artistic directors and muses. In the same way, the project that I have discussed here can be understood as "a contribution of media semiology to a political economy of communication" (Jeanneret 2014, p. 519, author's translation), having made it possible to *account for the economic and political workings that organize and shape the fashion industry's re-presentational apparatus*.

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