Art seen from outside: Non-artistic legitimation withinthefieldoffashiondesign

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1. Introduction

One of the challenges that any field of cultural production may have to face is the dissolution, or at least the attenuation, of its external boundaries, along with the transformation of its internal hierarchies. In the specific case of artistic production, the boundaries that distinguish this domain

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from others that claim fine arts status, but have traditionally been excluded, have grown increasingly blurred. Many cases have been studied in this regard, such as photography (Bourdieu, 1990), cinematography (Baumann, 2001), classical music (DeNora, 1991), jazz (Lopes, 2002; Peterson, 1972), and fashion (Geczy and Karaminas, 2012).

In this framework, the representation of art predominant in each contiguous domain, on the one hand, is a source of information about the dynamics of contact between the two spheres, whilst on the other, it sets a benchmark that art must consider as it undergoes current transformations and constantly seeks to reconstruct and redefine its social identity. For the identity of art, it is also the product of how it is perceived by those who stand on its borders.

This article examines the relationship between art and one of those adjoining worlds—that of fashion. It dwells, in particular, on the representation of art prevalent among fashion designers of one of the leading contemporary capitals of fashion, namely Milan. By "representation," we mean what designers say about themselves in terms of their identities and practices, how they perceive themselves as professionals, and how they represent themselves when they account their experience.

This article utilises empirical research to focus on the processes by which the cultural field of fashion is legitimated. We show that—whereas in many documented cases, a field of cultural production is legitimated by being elevated from "commerce" to "art" (Baumann, 2007) or through its "artification" (Heinich and Shapiro, 2012; Shapiro, 2007)—Milanese fashion designers do not see themselves as artists; rather, they legitimate their individual creativity in opposition to art, even though both scholars and protagonists of the two sectors have created, at least at a rhetorical level, an intense and ambiguous linkage between fashion and art. The case of Milanese fashion adds breadth and depth to the theory of artification and to the production of culture theory (DiMaggio, 1991, 2000; Peterson, 1994), showing that comparison with the fine arts by actors in a field of cultural production in constant search of legitimation may come about through channels other than assimilation into the world of art.

2. Art and fashion

Scholars who concern themselves with the cultural economy (Scott, 2000), the aesthetic economy (Entwistle, 2009) or the creative economy (Howkins, 2001) have shown that there is a linkage among developments that distinguish the multiple forms of creative activity in metropolitan contexts. For example, artistic vitality is a characteristic common to the cities in which fashion is created (cities, note, which coincide with four or five metropolises in the Western world, namely Paris, New York, London, Milan and, partly, Tokyo, commonly known as "the fashion capitals:" see Breward and Gilbert, 2006) because they are cities in which there has developed a general economy of creativity comprising art, theatre and music together with fashion, art galleries and nightclubs, which generates both profit and culture. This fosters an urban fabric in which operators in the creative sector establish close relations with each other and with their publics. Over time, these relations have structured themselves within even the most intimate parts of the various spheres, such as the institutions of socialisation. In London, for example, which is a world capital of both fashion and art, the principal training courses for fashion designers are delivered by the city's famous art schools (McRobbie, 1998). These institutions foster in their graduates a culture in which art and fashion are only two different ways to understand the same professional vocation.

Andy Warhol was the first to move agilely in the new scenario that we have briefly described. Indeed, his name has been used to denote a corresponding economic system: the Warhol economy (Currid, 2007). But as the Warhol economy has advanced, the suspicion has grown that the New York artist was only a precursor of what has become a broader trend in which artists collaborate with industry, design houses and media corporations to create mass market products for a wider audience. Consider, to cite a concrete and topical example, the contemporary Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, who both creates works expressly intended for the art market (and world) and collaborates with the Louis Vuitton fashion house in the manufacture of mass products like T-shirts and gadgets of various kinds, sometimes selling both types of product through the same commercial channels (Thornton, 2008, pp. 181–218).

The study of the relationship between the art worlds and the adjoining worlds of creative production acquires importance because it is in this border area that emerging features of the artistic sphere become visible. Assuming as an emblematic case the relationship between art and fashion, as we shall do here, it is necessary first to refer to the debate on whether it is possible, and to what extent, for actors, phenomena or artefacts pertaining to the fashion system to be legitimately included in the domain of the arts.

The question as to whether fashion is art may appear nonsensical if we consider, on the one hand, the masters of figurative art (Michelangelo) and, on the other, the industrial production of high-portability garments for a mass public (Armani). But it becomes a much more natural question if we compare, on the one hand, artwear or particular cases of artistic performance like the conceptual artist Jana Sterbak's meat dress (Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic, 1987) and, on the other, the most radical experiments in "fashion to be seen" proposed by Galliano, McQueen, or the leading Japanese fashion designers widely regarded as creative artists by art critics and museum curators (Mears, 2008, p. 96). In these latter cases, fashion—like art—employs the rhetoric of inspiration, genius, and creativity. Although fashion is essentially commercial in its nature, it comprises numerous experiences and professional styles that come close to the model of artistic creation. Fashion design is described as "creation;" its most innovative exponents are considered an "avant-garde" able to transform contemporary aesthetics (Crane, 2000, p. 154); designers work as conceptual artists, forming movements and incorporating social criticism into their works (see Gill, 1998). Moreover, this concerns not only fashion design but also fashion photography, the direction of fashion shows, and other professions typical of the sector. From this perspective, it is preferable to speak, not of fashion as art, but of art within fashion: the fashion system seems to be a world that leaves ample internal space for the activities of people who assume art (or their representations of art) as the model for their action.

This debate, of ancient origin (it can be traced back to the eighteenth century, as shown by Morini, 2012, p. 35), became particularly animated in the second half of the twentieth century. The question "Is fashion art?" explicitly posed by an article published in 1967 in the bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Norell et al., 1967) became the subject of debate by fashion theorists (Kim, 1998; Miller, 2007; Steele, 2012) and art critics. Among the latter, Michael Boodro bluntly declared that he considered the two spheres entirely incompatible because "art is art and fashion is an industry" (Boodro, 2011 [1990], p. 369). In other words, the commercial and serial nature of an ideative activity excludes its artistic value a priori. Of course, the previously mentioned case of Murakami confutes this blunt dismissal. There obviously exist more nuanced theses on the artistic qualities of fashion that acknowledge its distinctively ambivalent nature: a capacity to be both functional and artistic, both commercial and cultural (McNeil, 2008), and indissolubly bound up with consumption (Martin, 1998). The debate has become even more animated since the 1980s, after the controversial retrospective of 1983 with which the Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated the career of Yves Saint Laurent. The entry of a couturier, for that matter one still alive, into the temple of art was an unprecedented occurrence because it seemingly institutionalised the status of fashion designers as artists. A status that Charles Frederick Worth—conventionally considered the father of haute couture—had already claimed for himself in the nineteenth century when he declared, "I am an artist," as reported by Taine (1867).

For a long time, therefore, voices internal and external to the fashion world, but at times also internal to the art world, have advanced the idea that certain creations produced by the former can be equated with those of the latter. Our purpose in this article is not to reconstruct this debate in detail, nor to answer the question as to the artisticity of fashion—a question that we believe to be misleading and futile. Instead, we intend to shed light on the interaction between the two worlds and, especially, on how contemporary fashion designers perceive art.

3. Three different perspectives

Fashion studies have investigated the relation between fashion and art from three main perspectives that have respectively focused on objects, practices, and the institutional setting. The first domain—the one most frequently investigated—is that of objects, or of artistic artefacts and fashion

products. A question very often asked (Bickers, 2002; Sischy, 2004; Townsend, 2002) is this: can the creations of the foremost fashion designers be equated with works of art? Or put more cautiously: are there fashion creations that could be included in a history of Western art? The answers given by several scholars and actors refer to a series of variables concerning the properties of an artefact: whether it is innovative; whether it corresponds to the stylistic choices of a well-established artistic movement; whether it is unique, multiple or serial; whether it is rare; and whether it has no utility other than aesthetic contemplation. Under these conditions, the artefact meets the conventional criteria for evaluation as an aesthetic object. A fashion designer will therefore be regarded as being an artist (or not) when it is deemed that his or her creations exhibit (or do not) the properties typical of works of art.

Note that, from this perspective, much less salience is usually given to the questions in reverse: whether, under what conditions, and to what extent art is equivalent to fashion. The asymmetry of treatment obviously derives from the fact that, whilst fashion aspires to legitimation as art because this brings prestige and also profit, no art aspires to being considered fashion, since this would demote it from the realm of the eternal (art) to that of the ephemeral (fashion). And, contrary to the historical evidence, most of us are convinced that works of art have always been such and will always remain such.

The second area of inquiry investigated by studies of fashion and art consists of people and their practices: artists and fashion designers, ways of "doing" art and ways of "doing" fashion. In this second case, the key question no longer concerns artefacts but instead people and their behaviours. It is therefore asked whether there are fashion designers whose practices can be likened to those most frequent among artists. This question raises a series of further ones. What determines a creative person's inclusion in the domain of fine arts rather than fashion design? What consequences ensue for his or her life from such affiliation (in terms of behaviours, aspirations, representations)? Above all, under what conditions can fashion designers be considered artists? Since it will be said that a fashion designer is an artist because s/he behaves like an artist, the definition of his or her status will come about on the basis of his or her practices. For example, designers who abandon the classic form of presentation of fashion creations—the catwalk—and replace it with more static forms of presentation similar to art exhibitions, as Martin Margiela has done, are more likely to be equated with artists. The same applies to those designers, like John Galliano, who construct their public images on the model of the doomed or bohemian artist. Above all, fashion studies usually equate as artists those designers who distinguish themselves by the radical departure of their creations from the canons of international fashion (e.g., see Wilcox, 2001) and who belong in what Crane (1993, 1997a, 1999, 2000) has termed the categories of the "avant-garde" and the "post-modern." In general terms, here the principal evaluation criteria are attitudes and practices—such as economic disinterest, independence from dominant tastes, a partiality for radical innovations, and the capacity to raise socially relevant issues, with nonverbal tools (e.g., see Sudjic, 2008).

Although the importance of focusing on the third perspective—the institutional setting—is obvious to social scientists, the protagonists of art and fashion, but also historians of fashion and critics of costume, are rarely aware of this third standpoint. Howard Becker and Pierre Bourdieu, in particular, have developed the theoretical framework within which to understand this crucial dimension of the relationship between fashion and art. Becker (1974, 1982) has famously coined the expression "art worlds" to refer to relatively stable cooperative networks among actors (individuals, but also organisations) who agree on the definition of what can be legitimately considered "art" and, therefore, on the set of objects and people which belong to that world: "Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art" (Becker, 1982, p. 34). Whilst this proposal has had the merit of shifting the discourse from the level of objects and people to that of institutions—showing that art is a set of partially autonomous social worlds, as well as the outcome of relational processes and collective practices—less convincing is its ability to explain how and why these worlds change over time. It does not explain what forces induce an art world to evolve and change. Pierre Bourdieu (1983, 1994 [1992]) has suggested using the notion of "social field" for this purpose, denoting it as an arena of "production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolise...different

kinds of capital" (Swartz, 1997, p. 177). Understood as a site of physical and symbolic forces, Bourdieu's theory of the field entails the idea that the people who are part of a field—that has to be understood as a site of physical and symbolic forces—occupy "positions" that stand in a mutual relationship that we may call "hierarchical"-based, that is, on domination and subordination (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992, pp. 94–114). Hence, if art is a social field, rather than being a more generic "world," those who are part of it belong to a network of perpetual struggle to acquire the most sought-after positions. The same applies to fashion (Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975). Hence, Bourdieu's approach has a more markedly conflictual thrust: according to him, art is a field marked by collaborative and antagonistic relationships among its members, and what is considered to be art at any particular time is not the outcome of consensus among all the agents in the field, but rather of an accord among the dominant factions that automatically excludes those in marginal positions from the aura of artisticity. For both Becker and Bourdieu, it is agreement among agents that determines the boundaries of what "art" is; but unlike Becker, Bourdieu acknowledges the existence of actors who do not accept the definition given by the dominant groups, even if they must somehow adjust to it.

If we consider fashion and art from the institutional point of view, and therefore as two distinct social fields, it becomes evident that they have different features. For example, there are art magazines and fashion magazines; and as a rule, the former do not concern themselves with fashion and the latter do not concern themselves with art, unless the declared intent is to deal with something extraneous to their respective fields. The same applies to the principal institutions (corporative associations, awards and competitions, supervisory bodies). There are, then, organisations that pertain to the art world (museums, galleries, auction houses, publishing houses) and organisations that pertain to the fashion world (companies, trade fairs, professional firms, publishing houses), and they almost never coincide. There exist norms and forms of behaviour that are perceived as more or less compulsory by those who belong to the art world, and norms and forms of behaviours considered obligatory in the fashion world. The same holds for hierarchies of values, material culture, and bodies of shared knowledge. On considering fashion and art as social institutions, the questions often arise as to what distinguishes them as institutional fields: what makes them similar, and what makes them different? Are there areas of overlap between them? What types of relations tie the two worlds together? From the institutional perspective, it will be said that a fashion designer is (or is not) an artist because he or she belongs (or does not belong) to the field of art (Church Gibson, 2011; Clark, 2012).

We suggest that the institutions-centred approach has the great merit of addressing the relations between fashion and art in a disenchanted manner, eschewing preconstituted ideas of what is art and what is not. If one focuses on objects or subjects perceived as bordering on the two worlds, one is likely to ask questions ("Is this dress a work of art? Is this designer an artist?") that cannot receive unanimously endorsed answers. Conceptualising fashion from the cultural production perspective makes it possible to grasp the collective and relational dimension of both fashion and art. Works of art, as well as fashion creations, can be analysed as the outcomes of practices that involve numerous actors and bind them together in a social space that requires compliance with norms and routines and, over time, that changes as a consequence of the interactions among its members. Giving priority to the institutional level of the issue does not preclude the study of objects and subjects that are part of the field, but rather helps to place them in their social space and to grasp their mutual links.

4. Effects between fields

If fashion and art are correctly understood as institutionalised social fields, their relationship is seen as an interaction between different worlds in which both seek something functional to their survival and perpetuation. This interaction (which, it should not be forgotten, can be real or merely represented—for instance, when a couturier poses as an artist) can generate influences, almost gravitational forces, which produce effects in each of the two worlds—effects of very different kinds. The fashion studies literature has described four specific effects.

There is first a cross-fertilisation effect: the interaction between art and fashion produces multiple forms of "contamination" that, like many types of hybridisation, generate particularly creative and innovative fruits in both fields through the transfer of cultural and technological knowledge. In the context of celebrity culture, for example, fashion seems to have substantially influenced many recent

trends in the art world: art pushes towards fashion if we consider the cases of the British artist Tracey Emin, who in her performances wears clothes designed by Vivienne Westwood, and a fortiori, the Italian Francesco Vezzoli who exhibited in 2011 at the Gagosian Gallery of New York during the local fashion week (Church Gibson, 2012).

Not surprisingly, cross-fertilisation is followed by a metamorphosis of one world into the other, and vice versa: fashion artifies itself, art commodifies itself. The artification process occurs at the levels of object, practice, and institution. This is demonstrated by a number of examples concerning the artification of fashion (Crane, 2012a,b). At the level of objects, garments are likened to works of art, as happens when they enter museums or they become items for auction. At the level of people, the status of fashion creators has changed since when, with Charles Frederick Worth, haute couture gave the couturier the task of inventing (and imposing) garments for the client, thus reversing the traditional relationship between the client and the tailor-artisan (Lipovetsky, 1994). At the institutional level, there have arisen institutions that, from schools to art galleries, promote fashion as a form of cultural activity. On the one hand, fashion tends to disguise itself as art and to appropriate certain models of behaviour (both avant-gardiste and academic) of contemporary art; on the other hand, art tends to assimilate tactics, practices and commercial habits from the world of fashion and, above all, to subject itself to the syncopated rhythms of fashion (Thornton, 2008).

The interaction between fashion and art also generates an identity effect, in the sense that each world is induced by its encounter with the other to withdraw into itself and redefine its boundaries and rationale. Art tends to define itself in opposition to fashion. Since fashion is commonly defined by values that some conceptions of art explicitly disavow (the ephemeral and the temporary, the utilitarian, the commercial, etc.), art uses comparison with fashion to make clear what art ought not to be. By contrast, fashion, given its equivocal and inconstant character, often chooses art as the paragon with which to define itself, but does so—as we shall see in light of our empirical evidence—sometimes by identification, sometimes by opposition.

The fourth and final effect is that of legitimation. This is to be found in many fields of cultural production that refer to art so as to differentiate their products between "high" and "low" (for the case of film, see Baumann, 2001). In truth, in this case, the effect is largely one-directional. Art shuns fashion, whose principles and models could easily be a source of delegitimation. It is for this reason that art tends to dissimulate the dynamics of fashion to its interior, whilst at the same time it increasingly constructs its social legitimacy with the mechanisms of social prestige (celebrity, glamour), which are, in fact, the ground on which fashion itself grows. For its part, fashion can draw on the rhetorics of art to legitimate itself as an activity with value and prestige. And it often does so with success. Since the first great Parisian couturiers of the end of the nineteenth century, reference to art has been used by haute couture to legitimate itself as a creative activity distinct from mere sartorial practice. As Morini (2012) shows, the self-representation of couturiers as artists has the purpose of conferring prestige and credibility on the production of clothes: Worth's claim of "I am an artist" should be read as a declaration of intent made for promotional purposes by a tailor aware that the status of "artist" was entirely to be accomplished. This is a form of legitimation "from within" that, with time, is flanked by analogous sources of external legitimation: for example, art magazines (like Artforum, which in 1982 featured the fashion designer Issey Miyake on its cover) and art museums, which increasingly open their rooms to the exhibition of designers' work (like the Guggenheim in New York, which in 2000/2001 staged a much-discussed retrospective exhibition of Giorgio Armani's work).

It is advisable, however, not to consider these four types of effect solely as forces that operate from fashion to art, or vice versa. They may be also the superficial manifestation of deep-lying forces that act on both fields simultaneously. In a well-known study on Paul Poiret, in which the relationship between fashion and art is a central aspect of the treatment, Nancy Troy (2002) suggests shifting the attention from formal analogies, interactions, and cross-references between fashion styles and artistic movements—a paradigmatic example is the reciprocal influence between Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí—to "deeper" and ''structural'' relations (Troy, 2002, p. 3), i.e., to the cultural and historical nature of the relationship between them. Since the period considered is the first decades of the twentieth century (Paul Poiret's period)—in which the Western world's expanding industrialisation spread the ideas, values, practices and contradictions of modernism and avant-garde movements—the idea underlying Troy's study is that Poiret's commercial strategies and Duchamp's

artistic strategies were bound together, and that the link consisted in the introduction of technical reproducibility of artefacts in worlds based on the principles of originality, authorship, and exclusiveness—something that, following DiMaggio (1992), we may label a "changing opportunity space" outside both the field of fashion and art. When mass production gives access to objects previously sought-after because they were unique and distinctive—as we know from Benjamin's (2008 [1936]) famous essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction—then certain values on which the worlds of art and fashion were originally founded, each in its own way, suddenly become irrelevant. In this view, the efforts to approach art by couturiers like Paul Poiret should be seen not only as attempts to give their maisons a new aura that exceeds their nature but also as reproduction of the avant-gardiste strategy adopted by artists in those same years to counter the expansion of art markets, the reproducibility of artefacts, and the popularisation of taste. It consists, in short, of a dual attention to the elite and the middle class resembling the promotional strategy used by the cubist painters, on the one hand, housed in private galleries and, on the other hand, shown in exhibitions intended for the general public and published in popular books. Troy's (2002) analysis shows that fashion does not merely ape artistic strategies and rhetorics; rather, it perfectly embodies them. Perhaps even more explicitly than art itself, it channels the contradictory pressures of modern culture by merging elite culture and popular culture together. The relationship between art and fashion should not be simplistically understood as a movement in the fashion world that "knocks on the door" of art, but rather as the encounter of two worlds that, throughout the last century, were repeatedly and violently shaken to their firmest foundations (values, conventions, principles of legitimacy) by technological progress and social transformations.

5. Cultural mobility and artification

Treating the themes of cross-fertilisation, metamorphosis, identity and legitimation from an institutional perspective makes it possible to avoid lapsing into the object-centred view which holds that art is objectively defined and that fashion resembles art, or otherwise, for intrinsic reasons. This is the reasoning typically adopted by those who argue that fashion cannot be art because it has a commercial purpose or because it is mass-produced (e.g., see Boodro, 2011 [1990]; Evans, 2003; but also see Crane, 2012a,b). It is assumed that if art is to be such, then it cannot serve commercial ends, regardless of the fact that the world of art also comprises activities undertaken for commercial purposes.

From the institutional perspective, the question that we shall seek to answer with our empirical material is therefore not whether or not fashion is art, but whether or not fashion designers use art as a means to shape identity or gain legitimation and, thereby, institutionalise their field of cultural production (fashion) as artistic. This latter aspect has been mainly investigated in two traditions of study: the production perspective developed by Richard Peterson and others since the 1970s (DiMaggio, 2000; Peterson, 1994; Peterson and Anand, 2004) and, more recently, the theory of artification propounded by Roberta Shapiro (Crane, 2012a; Heinich and Shapiro, 2012; Shapiro, 2007).

The production of culture perspective arose in opposition to the traditional sociological view that culture reflects the social structure, so that cultural changes are the expression of social ones. It instead maintains that culture and society are different "productions" that proceed independently from each other. Hence, the contents of culture are the effect not only of social structures and changes but also, and especially, of the context in which they are produced, distributed, taught, and conserved. In polemic with theories of mass society, the proponents of this perspective have shown that popular culture, in its various forms, did not suffer a decline during the twentieth century due to a greater standardisation, simplicity, and superficiality of products. On the contrary, the cultural industry was able to multiply its supply by adopting diversification strategies dictated by organisational decisions and economic interests, which led to the formation of more sophisticated cultural "niches" alongside the simpler and more serial ones (DiMaggio, 1977).

Regarding the relationship between popular culture and art, if the distinctions between "high" and "low" within and among the fields of cultural production stem from dynamics internal to those fields themselves (and are not objective features), then a cultural or aesthetic "mobility"

(Peterson, 1994, p. 179) is possible. This consists in the elevation of a certain field, previously considered "low," to the status of "high culture." This applies, in particular, to the performing arts, according to a pattern well exemplified by the mobility that raised jazz from the status of folk art to that of popular art and, then, to that of fine art (Peterson, 1972).

DiMaggio (1982a,b) has shown that the distinction between fine art and popular culture, and between highbrow music and popular music, is the product of a series of decisions and actions taken by the social elite of Boston (and other American cities) in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. DiMaggio maintains that cultural capital, like economic capital, must be "valorised:" that is, it requires an institutional system, equivalent to the banking system for currency, able to "guarantee" it. Just as currency can maintain its value only if there exist institutions able to implement monetary policies, so the products of cultural capital cannot acquire and maintain their value without an institutional effort of some kind. DiMaggio's (1991, p. 142) thesis is that, although the simple distinction between high and low still persists, it has been altered by recent social changes. On the one hand, "the social structure continues to generate high levels of demand for the cultural goods with which social identities can be fashioned" (DiMaggio, 1991, p. 142). On the other hand, structural changes "weaken the institutional bases of cultural authority" (DiMaggio, 1991, p. 142). And all of this produces an "inflationary spiral" undermining the traditional cultural capital "while proliferating weaker currencies." This explains why, for example, quilts can be considered art (Peterson, 2003) or, to return to our initial example, why it has become difficult to distinguish between what is art and what is not in the creations of Takashi Murakami.

The thesis of cultural mobility put forward by the production of culture perspective exhibits close similarities with the French theory of "artification." The latter is a neologism coined to denote the transformation of what has not (hitherto) been considered art into art (Heinich and Shapiro, 2012, p. 20), a process of metamorphosis ensuing from changes in the status of persons, objects, and "concrete" activities of a cultural form that include: (1) changes in the social actors involved in the activity, especially regarding education level, social status, artistic knowledge, degree of cultural sophistication, and autonomy in relations with the public; (2) changes in the cultural artefact itself, which becomes more similar to an artistic object; (3) the birth of organisations such museums, schools, or foundations that promote the cultural activity; and (4) changes in the status of the cultural form, particularly on the part of cultural and governmental organisations, which begin to classify the activity as a cultural good to be protected in museums and financially supported (Shapiro, 2007; see also Crane, 2012a, p. 105).

The specificity of the artification approach consists, according to its proponents, in the "genetic" perspective that it promotes. In fact, they are interested not so much in the institutional constraints that the (already existing) art world and its organisations impose on actors as in the individual actions of these latter as they seek to define their own identity. It is this, Shapiro argues, that constitutes the main difference between this perspective and both the Bourdieusian perspective and the institutional one of Peterson and DiMaggio:

> We can never insist enough on the difference between the paradigm of artistic legitimacy, a classificatory approach which establishes degrees of value within the art world, and that of artification, which seeks to understand on the one hand the genesis of the art object or artistic activity, and on the other, the conditions for its existence. (Shapiro, 2012, p. 23)

Put briefly, whilst the institutional perspective emphasises the problem of legitimating fields of cultural production, the artification perspective stresses the problem of their identity, assuming—in our view, too simplistically—that the question of legitimation comes genetically after the question of identity.

Diana Crane (2012a,b) has applied the idea of artification to the case of fashion. She reaches the conclusion that, if there has been an artification of fashion, it has to date been only partial. On the one hand, Crane maintains, fashion was indeed artified for a large part of the twentieth century. A first form of artification concerned the greater prestige of designers, and its initiator in the 1800s was Worth. A second form can be observed in the strategies sometimes employed by fashion designers to increase the value attributed to particular fashion objects—for example, collaboration with artists and the production of limited editions with numbered items. A third consists in the creation of schools of

fashion design—a subject now taught at universities and art schools—and the entry of fashion into museums and auctions.

On the other hand, according to Crane, this artification is partial from various points of view. The economic structure of the fashion system today gives a few multinational companies (the luxury conglomerates) monopoly over large part of the fashion brands, thus reducing designers to the role of employees who are, to various extents, subject to the brand's policies. Moreover, fashion is usually exhibited in specialised museums, whose features are substantially different from those of art museums (particularly as regards their capacity to keep themselves independent from the main market actors). Finally, the secondary market (for example, auctions) sets values on fashion products incomparably lower than those for works of art, thus implicitly asserting a substantial difference between the two types of cultural product.

Fashion is therefore a field of cultural production subject to processes of cultural mobility and/or artification that come about only partially. The originality of the Milanese empirical case—which we shall explore in the next sections—consists in the fact that, in this "fashion capital," fashion design is legitimated as a field of cultural production with high symbolic content whilst at the same time rejecting its identification with art, unlike other fields of cultural production that have been artified. In this way, the designers enact a process of cultural mobility whose objective is not recognition of their activity as "high" (in the sense of high culture), but a different form of legitimation consisting in the ability to control the service relation between clothing and the human body. As we shall see, in Milan, individual creativity is constrained within a "culture of wearability." Our thesis is that fashion, as it is conceived and practised in Milan, to a large extent evades the mechanisms envisaged by the theories outlined above.

6. Data and methods

We have interviewed actors in the fashion world, particularly ones who predicate their professional activity on concepts, practices and values similar to those of artistic creativity. They are not, therefore, professionals belonging generically to the fashion system; specifically, they are fashion designers. Our interest is in their representations of art—i.e., in what they mean when they talk about art. The fashion designers' idea of art is not a gauge of what art is in reality. Rather, it is the result and expression of two processes: the biographies (lives and work) of the interviewees themselves, and the history of relations between the two fields (art and fashion). It is a gauge of a certain idea of art, namely the one shared in the fashion world. Hence, the accounts of fashion designers are gauges of the conception of art that art itself must face when encountering the field of fashion.

The relationship between the best-known fashion designers and the contemporaneous world of art has already been amply described in the literature. We know a great deal about the relationship between Schiaparelli and Dalì, the work of Thayaht and Mariano Fortuny, the professional career of Victor and Rolf, and the collaboration between Marc Jacobs and Takashi Murakami. But we know much less about how art is perceived by ordinary designers, those who produce fashion creations far from the spotlight of celebrity.

We base our treatment of the way fashion designers perceive the world of art on data drawn from interviews with a sample of designers working in the fashion industry. The testimonies on which the following analysis is based were collected by 21 in-depth interviews conducted at different moments between 1990 and 2007 by the authors of this article and other researchers at the Centro per lo Studio della Moda e della Produzione Culturale (ModaCult) of the Università Cattolica, Milan. The interviewees were Italian fashion designers or designers who had been working in Italy for several years, mainly female (seven interviewees were males) and aged between 24 and 71 at the time of the interview. The majority of them were based in Milan, and all of them relied on Milan for the publicising and marketing of their products or those of the firm for which they worked. The interviews were conducted in the city of Milan for two reasons. First, it is the Italian hub of fashion-related activities. Second, it belongs, with Paris, London, New York and Tokyo, to the small group of the so-called "fashion capitals" and therefore offers, compared with other Italian cities, the advantage of being at the centre of the Western fashion system.

Only a few of the fashion designers interviewed could be considered famous: two were of international repute; one was very well-known in Italy, and another was well-known to industry insiders. But the majority worked as assistants to other designers or were employed in company style offices. Overall, seven entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs were interviewed, seven employees, four crafts persons and dealers, and three owners of fashion studios. The large majority were clothes designers; the rest were designers of accessories.

These features of our sample did not originate from a previously established research design. Since the researchers found it particularly difficult to access the fashion field, it was not possible to plan the survey procedure. The access was hampered by the accelerated pace at which the respondents worked, but also and especially by the interests of the fashion companies; interests which, given that they concern promotion of the brand and the system of values connected with it, conflicted with the researcher's interests in discovery and understanding. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to safeguard the variety of the structural features of the interviewees and, in particular, to maintain a low incidence of famous designers in the sample, for the reasons given above.

The interviews used the "life-story approach" (see Bertaux, 1981): in particular, they collected professional life-stories. They were non-directive interviews of a duration ranging between 1 and 3 h, and they were conducted on the basis of an entirely unstructured outline. They began with a single pre-defined (but highly generic) initial stimulus, after which the sequence of topics was established by the interviewees according to their associations and orders of importance. This approach is intended to minimise the interviewer's intrusiveness; and, in fact, it is based on various techniques of neutral story resumption. Moreover, it collects information not so much on the objective setting of the profession investigated as on the interviewees' perceptions of it and the interpretations that they give to it. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then they were analysed without the use of dedicated software. The analysis was conducted both cross-wise, through the construction of interpretative categories applied to all the materials, and longitudinally interview by interview.

7. Fashion designers and art

In recent decades, empirical studies have shed light on the profession of fashion designer in various geographical contexts. Besides the survey referred to in this article—which concerns Milan and whose more general results are set out in Volonté (2008, 2012)—more or less detailed information has been published on fashion designers in England (Horowitz, 1975; McRobbie, 1998), Finland (Gronow, 1997), Hong Kong (Skov, 2002), the Netherlands (Roso, 2005), and Denmark (Skov, 2012).

The information collected by these various sources is scant and fragmentary. However, it is sufficient to show that attitudes towards the figure of the artist vary greatly among designers. This is a characteristic that does not unite fashion designers but instead differentiates them. One may come across a designer who says:

> By far the most advanced designers are Miyake and Galliano. They are doing what they want to in spite of the need to make money. Nor is their work just about fashion. It's about imagination and projection. Like them, I find two-dimensional work exciting. And I like the idea of a crossover between fashion, painting and illustration. (quoted by McRobbie, 1998, p. 107)

The model for this London designer is clearly the artist uninterested in the market, focused on conceptual rather than material innovation, attracted by the means of visual representation typical of the art world, and who believes that fashion is more "advanced," the more it approaches the canons of art.

Or there is the designer (employed in the Giorgio Armani style office) who declared during the interview:

> It's fine to be creative, but not to be just creative and not very concrete and rational. In general, this applies to all forms of art, and especially to art intended for practical use. If you make a suit with five sleeves, it becomes a sculpture, it's no longer a fashion object. (female, 35)

Evident in this case is a distancing from the field of art. In fact, fashion is likened to an applied art, as opposed to a fine art. Two alternative forms of creativity are contrasted: pure artistic creativity

considered as being abstract, irrational and undertaken for its own sake; and the creativity of the applied arts, which should be functional to practical purposes. It is not important here to determine whether art is indeed abstract and irrational or whether a fashion designer's vocation is to create functional products. But it is instructive to note that there are some fashion designers who work in accordance with this conviction and others who instead believe that, precisely because artistic activity is extraneous to the laws of the market (or is supposedly such), it should be taken as the paragon for the best fashion designers. These two examples can be taken as the extremes of the gamut of positions assumed by contemporary fashion designers.

Research also shows that fashion designers in other countries exhibit this diversity among those who liken their work to art, those who reject this comparison, and those who ignore the world of art and refer to other environments to construct their identity and legitimation. Highly significant in this regard, even if conducted in a geographical context marginal to the fashion system, is the study by Monique Roso (2005)—who identified the existence of four different ways to pursue the profession of fashion designer in the Netherlands, only one of which is clearly oriented to the art world. Whilst fashion designers who belong in this group draw resources from participation in the art network made up of foundations, exhibitions, administrators and critics, the other three groups—cross-creative designers, entrepreneur designers and consumer-oriented designers—and, in particular, the last two are entirely extraneous to the world of art. In a completely different framework, McRobbie (1998, pp. 33–52) shows that, in Great Britain, the attitudes of fashion designers towards art may differ markedly according to the training that they have received. McRobbie identifies, in fact, three main types of training for fashion designers, which she calls "conceptual fashion," "professional fashion" and "managerial fashion." Of these, only the first type, characteristic of the fashion courses at art schools, is based on the essential identification of creatives in fashion with creatives in art, so that graduates adopt an identitarian attitude towards art. As a consequence, many fashion design graduates from the British art schools privilege the production of "fashion to be seen" as opposed to the "fashion to be worn" preferred by the mainstream of fashion designers (The Malcolm Newberry Consulting Company, 2003, p. 12; McRobbie, 1998, pp. 102–116).

In short, the fashion studies literature evidences that the fashion design world does not uniformly seek to liken itself to the world of art, neither for practical purposes nor for those of identification or legitimation. Nor can it be said that it divides between fashion designers who conceive themselves on a par with artists and those who do so in more commercial terms. Mears (2010) adopts and modifies a conceptual model developed by Entwistle (2009), and she argues that the fashion market can be arranged along a continuum between "editorial fashion" or "high fashion" at one extreme and "commercial fashion" or "mass-market fashion" at the other. The former is characterised by a search for novelty, uniqueness, and an avant-garde look for the readers of avant-garde magazines; the latter is characterised by a conventional and classic look, one relatively "normal" and middle-class. This distinction derives from empirical research on model agencies; but if it is applied to the fashion production system, and in particular—for our purposes here—to the profession of fashion designer, it can appear too simplistic. The above-mentioned studies by Roso (2005) and McRobbie (1998) already show that the situation is more complex. Crane (1993, 1997a, 1999, 2000) identifies five main types of fashion design. Volonté (2008) shows that the five "ideal types" of fashion design described by Crane are present, in different proportions, in all four of the fashion capitals. On reading Entwistle (2009) and Mears (2010), one understands that the commercial sector, which in regard to model agencies falls under the heading "editorial," corresponds to the entire section at the apex of the fashion production pyramid (and perhaps not surprisingly, also to clients, like H&M or Benetton, belonging to lower but strongly style-oriented sections), regardless of the attitudes of company style offices to the art world and to the relationship between fashion and art.

8. The Milanese fashion designers and art

Attitudes towards the archetype of the artist can vary substantially in Milan, as well. At one extreme, there is the case of the designer who stresses the importance of breaching the conventions

imposed by the fashion system so as to be truly creative—a theme closely bound up, as we have seen, with the figure of the avant-garde designer:

> If you are to be creative, you have to be free. If you aren't free, if you have restrictions, too many constraints, then there's no creativity. They've already told you what to do, and that's not right. I mean, you have to start like this, with what comes to you, at most you put it right…You cut it where it's not right, if it's too complicated you make it simpler. But at the beginning you must be unconditioned. (female, 26)

The demand for freedom of invention, for those who work in a firm (as in this case), is the attitude that most closely approaches identification of design work with artistic activity. Implicit in the above interview extract is the constant negotiation (or struggle) with the company management to gain legitimacy and to strike a balance between the demands of creativity and those of production and marketing. However, we did not collect any statements in our interviews that expressly equated the professional figure of the fashion designer with that of the artist, and this was regardless of the interviewee's orientation towards an "editorial market" or a "commercial market" (Mears, 2010), towards avant-garde or innovative fashion (Crane, 2000). The owner of a well-known brand of men's clothing (luxury ready-to-wear and industrially produced second lines, with a maison in Paris) was the only interviewee who identified fashion with an applied art, but he did so solely to differentiate it from the fine arts:

> [Fashion] is an art, yes, it's an applied art. It is an applied art with the great difference, somewhat typical of the applied arts—but which in fashion goes much further—that its expression is tied to time. Pure art is free from time, while applied art is conditioned by time. In the case of fashion even more so, all this is exasperated to the maximum degree. (male, 71)

The concept of applied art is thus related to fashion, not in order to favour its aesthetic mobility, but to shift the dynamics of legitimation in a direction other than artistic. The same interviewee, when discussing the case of Azzedine Alaïa, said that "artists" do indeed exist in the world of fashion, but that they can only survive to the extent that they "reject opportunities to set up on a large scale." Consequently, they end up being "futile embellishments" in a world whose substance is industrial and commercial.

A distinctive feature of the Italian fashion system, compared with those of the other principal Western countries, is the persistence of important and widespread productive organisations in both industry and crafts (Pasqui and Bolocan Goldstein, 2002; Ricchetti and Cietta, 2006; Segre Reinach, 2006; Steele, 2003). This, together with the characteristics of the education system (Bucci, 2002) and a series of other significant "geographical variables" (Volonté, 2012), means that Italian fashion creatives consider productive experience to be an essential component of their training and creativity. The dimension of "doing," whether in crafts or industry, was often cited by the interviewees to define the identity of the fashion designer. For example, an employee in the style office of a large firm said that:

> A designer is indeed a creative, but she must also be a entrepreneur. She must have both features. Armani, for example, is one of these people: he's a creative but also an entrepreneur. According to me, it is this double aspect that the designer of today should take into account. (female, 35)

A fashion designer who owned a crafts firm confirmed this observation:

> The logic of design means that you must also understand industrial things like costs. I mean, I would never do things unless I know where they're going to end. It's not this type of experimentation that interests me. I prefer experimenting with something that will have a large market. Curiously, I'm here, but to be here I need to "withdraw into the background" (laughs). (female, 60)

Designers must be innovative in the creative phase, but they must be able to "withdraw into the background" when the collection is defined. It is as if fashion products must be devoted to the clothing demands of the final customer, not to the need for artistic expression of their creators. A similar idea is

implicit in the following statement by a designer of accessories who works freelance with his own firm:

> The designer must acquire experience by working for companies and then perhaps find ways to work as a consultant or…[set up on his own]. However, if a designer wants to start up, he must have a great deal of experience in a specific sector. I mean, he must first gain experience at some company. Then he can perhaps become an external consultant. (male, 56)

A small entrepreneur effectively summarised all this by saying:

> As I conceive it, design is not an art, because I don't believe that art exists. So I would define design as a mix among technology, industry and craftsmanship. (female, 44)

The most striking aspect of the interviews with the Milanese designers was a view of the fashion design profession that not only ignored identification with the archetype of the artist but often expressly rejected it, usually objecting that the fashion designer must deal with industrial manufacturing, sales volumes, and a retail market that cannot be put at risk by proposing garments that consumers may find eccentric or useless.

To grasp this aspect fully, consider again the brief quotation from an interview conducted by McRobbie (1998) and reported at the beginning of the previous section, where Galliano is cited as an example of the "most advanced designers" by virtue of his artistic bent. Because of his life-choices, as well as his professional ones, and because of the way he presents himself in public, Galliano can well be considered a prototype of the avant-garde designer, constantly poised between radical subversion of aesthetic and moral canons and social marginalisation. The quotation from McRobbie illustrates how many English fashion designers read and interpret his story. That same story was recounted in entirely different terms by the Milanese designers interviewed, who saw it as an example of how to do fashion that did not concern them. A paradigmatic case follows:

> I don't see myself as like a painter, for example. This has got nothing to do with me: We're not artists. Because what is to be done in fashion has already been done. Artists were the original creators of fashion; we must be good at proposing what has already been done with some variations…I don't see myself as an artist. No. I'm not an artist. I see myself as more a psychologist than an artist. Yes, I reckon that a psychologist gets closer to what a designer could be…But I don't see the fashion designer as an artist, because you see what designers as artists do, like John Galliano. He is now an artist, he has fun. But that's normal, he's got to the top and he's said: "okay, now that I've had everything from life, I'm going to enjoy myself and bring these weird characters out on the catwalk," dress them in impossible clothes, with awful shoes, or absurd make-up like a mask. Who'd go around like that? Nobody. But he's just having fun. So, yes, in that way he's become an artist because he can create, like, jackets with hugely dreadful collars, which weren't around before, but we've got now because he's created them. But a normal designer is not an artist, I'm sorry. Many of them deceive themselves that they are, but they aren't. At school, we saw John Galliano's shows, and we said: but how does he sell this stuff? In fact he doesn't sell what he shows. He designs a completely different line, a soft one, which he then sells. But those impossible high-fashion things stay with him. They don't even wear them in Hollywood…In fact, I don't think that, for example, a scrubbing brush and a bucket are art. You know, these young artists that we've got now. Art used to be art. It was Michelangelo, it was Leonardo. It can't be you! Do you understand? Perhaps … abstractionism yes, but these don't say anything to me, they don't give me any input. In the end, even a housewife does it: well done, you've made art! Understand? I see it this way. The same goes for the designer. I repeat it again: we are absolutely not artists. (female, 24)

We have reported this outburst by a young fashion designer in its entirety because it contains many elements recurrent in the view expressed by the Milanese fashion designers about their profession. Firstly, it contains the central idea that being a fashion designer is very different from being an artist. This depends not only on the conception of their profession cultivated by the Milanese fashion designers but also, and especially, on their notion of art. The term "artist" does not connote prestige. A distinction is drawn by the interviewee between the classic artist—the producer of a cultural heritage

to be protected because of its historical importance (Michelangelo, Leonardo, "perhaps" also the abstractionists) and who is therefore the "true" artist—and the contemporary avant-garde artists, who are not "true" artists because they produce works that do not require any great technical mastery, and which "even a housewife" could produce. The designer is instead compared to a psychologist of dress; a comparison anything but eccentric if one considers the subtle psycho-sociological work (often unconscious) of understanding consumers performed at various levels throughout the industrial manufacturing process of clothes, from coolhunting to merchandising. The fashion designer is therefore conceived more as a cultural mediator, the producer of tools for communication and social interaction.

The interview cites two main reasons why a fashion designer cannot be identified with an artist. The first is that fashion is not driven by radical innovation, but by an incremental innovation that constantly recovers the creations of the past. Because there is only a limited range of possible solutions, they have been thoroughly explored in the history of fashion. Another interviewee expressed this concept by distinguishing between new and innovative:

> There's very little left to invent nowadays. There are certainly very innovative ideas; but they're innovative, they're not new—which according to me is different. Let me explain: for example, we proposed a woman's tie made of fur as an accessory. This is innovative but it isn't new. Many other designers have created ties for women, and in any case ties are not new because they come from the man's wardrobe. What did we do: we made the tie from fur, something not seen before. There have been scarves made of fur, but never fur ties. Yet this is something innovative; it isn't new. (female, 27)

The second reason is that fashion is not produced for those who create it or for a public of observers but, instead, for a public of consumers, of final users who must wear it. Consequently, as another interviewee pointed out, fashion is different from art because "it is something which touches people's lives; it is not a cold thing" (male, 34). It is true that the creation of something visually ("optically") innovative can help attract the consumer's attention. But as Galliano showed with his collections for Dior, true fashion, which is intended to be worn, is very different from artistic creation.

Art—contemporary art—was perceived by these interviewees as something "cold," something that does not "give any input" and as extraneous to "people's lives." Hence, although art is akin to fashion because of its creative content, it is distant from the ideal of "true fashion," since this is designed "to be worn." The loyalty to a culture of wearability, as opposed to the culture of visibility, typical of a conceptualisation of fashion design inspired by art and avant-garde movements, and which—as said above—is particularly widespread in the UK, is another distinctive feature of Milanese fashion designers (Volonté, 2012). An interviewee defined the concept of wearability as follows:

> It is difficult to find wearable things, because if the person designing the clothes doesn't know the proportions of the body, then perhaps everything may go well with the show, but what I mean is something else. With clothes everything is very concrete, they must look good, they must be durable, they must be wearable. You have to be able to wear them for a long time, so that nothing is left to chance, there's a great deal of attention to detail so that everything is perfect. (female, 60)

In its general meaning, wearability distinguishes clothes designed to be worn by the consumer from those intended to be appreciated by colleagues, critics and journalists. They are clothes whose essential quality is not manifest at the moment when they are seen, but rather when they are worn:

> We are maniacal about fit and wearability, which I think are certainly our strengths. Something that I like a lot when I'm in the shop is seeing that, when a girl goes into the fitting room with the clothes, nine times out of ten she buys them. While in many shops I assure you that nine times out of ten they don't buy anything. (male, 33)

Rather than "artistic" quality enjoyable through perception, therefore, it is the capacity to produce garments that suit the requirements of the user that distinguishes "good" from "bad" fashion and, therefore, gives legitimacy to quality fashion design. Of course, the meaning of "suit the requirements of the user" varied according to the interviewees. For some, it corresponded to the idea that clothes

should be acceptable to the taste of the average consumer, that they can be worn without the fear of being too daring or attracting too much attention. For others, there prevailed the idea that clothes should fit the shape of the body without hampering its movements: that is, they should be designed with maximum attention paid to shaping the constructive details in relation to their behaviour during use. For yet others, wearability comprised the idea of "sincere" clothes that attract the purchaser, not with gimmicks that make them particularly ostentatious, but rather with their capacity to "sit well" on the human body. Finally, there were interviewees who insisted on the idea of durability, whereby clothes are able to withstand changes in fashion and resist wear and tear, thus becoming truly personal objects. But overall, all the interviewees believed that they were subject, not to the judgement of colleagues, journalists and critics, but to that of final customers (i.e., consumers). This was not in the sense of passively submitting to the standardising power of the market, as argued by Crane (1997b, p. 410) in regard to small French fashion companies, but in the sense of conceiving fashion design as serving the cause, not of personal artistic expression, but of the diverse needs of consumers who require clothes for the harmonious conduct of their everyday lives.

In short, the interviews with the Milanese fashion designers clearly conveyed a view of their profession in which the archetype of the artist was not only regarded as a model not to be pursued but was often taken as a reference point to say what a fashion designer should not be or do. In a striking case, this became apparent when an interviewee described himself as an "artist" but at the same time said that he had had to stop being an artist to become a designer:

> I attended fine arts school by taking evening classes. I graduated in engraving and drawing. I'd say that I've always had an artistic vocation…But then, apart from some drawings, I didn't continue. It was useful for my hobbies…also when designing stage sets for the theatre. But that was it, the end of my artistic career! (male, 44)

This footwear designer with an artistic vocation had used the skills acquired for that vocation in his hobbies (such as stage set design), but he said that he had been forced to abandon them in the exercise of his profession as a fashion designer.

The symmetrical opposite was the case of the fashion designer who confessed that he dreamed of becoming an artist when he finally stopped being an eyewear designer:

> In the future I plan to be an artist and to stop designing glasses. I want to be a painter and that's it! A painter of abstract art. I want to do what I want to do, be creative pure and simple! With no conditionings of any kind, not to have these problems with firms any more. (male, 56)

To be able to create art, he says, it is necessary to escape from the fashion system.

9. Conclusions

In this article, we have considered the question of the relationship between art and fashion—two fields of cultural production marked by contacts, contrasts, and shifting boundaries—and we have investigated it in light of the perceptions of art among ordinary fashion designers.

We have identified three different approaches to analysis of this relationship in fashion studies. In doing so, we have abandoned the emphasis on fashion products and fashions designers for an institutional perspective that conceives fashion and art as social fields. In this framework, we have drawn on the literature to outline the effects produced between the two fields—cross-fertilisation, metamorphosis, identity, and legitimation—and we have concentrated, in particular, on the processes of identity formation and the legitimation of fields of cultural production. These are themes considered principally by the production perspective and the theory of artification.

The empirical materials—interviews with Milanese fashion designers—have been analysed in order to determine not whether fashion is or is not art but, instead, whether or not fashion designers use art as a means to acquire legitimacy and to create an identity, thereby institutionalising their field of cultural production (fashion) as artistic. The finding was that they do not use art for this purpose.

We found that, in the representations of ordinary designers, the effects of identity and legitimation operate otherwise: identification with art is often rejected by fashion designers, who seek to legitimate their cultural production, not through art, but through a culture of wearability.

This result adds further elements for discussion about the theory of artification and the production of culture theory. We know from the former that fashion is in principle a social terrain susceptible to artification, but our empirical case study shows that fashion does not pursue it—at least, it does not do so generally and systematically (institutionally) as the theory of artification would have it. The Milanese fashion designers interviewed—who were neither marginal actors in the field nor representatives of a fashion "other" than avant-garde—were not involved in any of the transformations that elevate objects, practices, and people from non-art to art.

As regards the production perspective, the distinction between "high" and "low" apparent in Milanese ready-to-wear fashion does not derive from the attribution of artistic value to the products or the designers, as in the period of haute couture, but rather from the drive for wearability, without any (evident) institutionalisation of the product but, instead, with a strong emphasis on individual or collective creativity in opposition to the artistic dimension.

In this regard, it is useful to compare the case of fashion with that of the cinema (Baumann, 2001). In both fashion and the cinema, there is an "artistic" sector and a purely industrial mainstream one. What the Milanese fashion designers show, however, is that even when they work in the industrial mainstream, they may reject the idea of working for the massification of cultural consumption. They do so, however, in order to legitimate themselves through the idea, not of art or "high culture," but of wearability. The Milanese fashion designers interviewed rejected identification with art because they were inclined to individual creativity: the culture of wearability concerns garments suited to the needs of the individual, it is not a culture of mass production. Fashion design is therefore in this context a social field that legitimates itself as a field of cultural production with high symbolic content—being, in this respect, different from the typical media and culture industry. But at the same time, it rejects identification with art, also distinguishing itself from those fields of cultural production that have been artified or seek artification. It is this paradoxical feature that makes the Milanese case interesting. The Milanese fashion design scene is neither a cultural industry affected by aesthetic mobility nor one undergoing artification; rather it is a form of cultural production that seeks legitimation through reference to a value of its own, that of clothing intended to be wearable.

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