



UNIT-1

Introduction to Fashion Design

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Analyse and have awareness about the stages of fashion development in history
- ✓ Analyse how the historical, cultural, environmental and economic influences affected fashion industry in the past

Unit 1

Introduction to Fashion Design

For over hundreds of years, society and civilizations have used clothing and fashion as a means of non-verbal communication. The colours, styles, and accessories worn on clothing have been used to show a person's occupation, military rank, gender, sexual needs/desires, class, wealth, and group membership. Fashion not only includes physical clothing, but also jewellery, hairstyles, make-up, tattoos, and piercings. In group settings, fashion provides people with “at-a-glance” information that can be useful in social situations.

Fashion has long been seen a form of both free speech and free expression. Even today it pushes the limits of what is socially acceptable in the mainstream. Although not usually seen as one of the factors that makes a civilization, fashion has been a constant in past cultures. From the ruler to the peasant, the clothing and adornments worn by people of all walks of life constituted fashion. Pharaohs wore pretty fabrics and illustrious jewellery to highlight their power and influence, while peasants and slaves took a more pragmatic approach and used practical clothing to protect themselves from the sun while creating the pyramids.

The 18th Century

Today, when one thinks of fashion, they are likely to think of famous designers such as Coco Chanel or Tommy Hilfiger. It is unlikely that Egyptians had their own version of Vera Wang, and as such fashion as we think of it today originated in the French royal court in the 18th century. During the reign of Louis XVI and thanks to the patronage of his wife Marie Antoinette, French fashion was the hallmark of the upper class. The clothing of the period was quite beautiful but impractical: the dresses could weigh up to several kilos, the elaborate hairstyles and ornamentation could be up to a meter tall, and corsets cinched the waist in such a way that during the summer months women were apt to faint.

In regards to the opposite sex, men often favoured stockings, high-heeled shoes, and wigs with lustrous ringlets that often produced a rather colourful and feminine look.

The 19th Century: Charles Frederic Worth and Haute Couture

The culture of fashion as we know it today began in the 19th under the direction of Englishman Charles Frederick Worth. Until roughly 1857, couturiers (a combination of fashion designer and tailors) travelled from home to home in order to make their custom dresses and suits. Charles Frederick Worth, the famous dress maker of the time, decided that rather than continuing this trend of going from house to house for getting orders for the dresses, he would try something a different. Worth invited this clientele to his home to view his custom collection, which were updated annually.

So the first fashion designer who was not merely a dressmaker was Charles Frederick Worth (1826–1895). A fashion house (maison de couture) was set up in Paris. It was during this period that many design houses began to hire artists to sketch or paint designs for garments. The images alone could be presented to clients much more cheaply than by producing an actual sample garment in the workroom. If the client liked the design, they ordered it and the resulting garment made money for the house. Thus, the tradition of designers sketching out garment designs instead of presenting completed garments on models to customers began as an economy.

In addition to this new way of showcasing designs, Worth also began several fashion traditions such as the organizing a fashion and beginning the concept of sewing labels with his name onto his designs. Worth is perhaps the first individual in the last 250+ years to understand the role of fashion as an important social element.

Early Twentieth Century

From the early 20th century, Paris was considered the hub of high fashion. Paris (and to a smaller degree, London) were home to most of the major fashion designers and buyers. Fashion magazines and department stores sent editors and buyers to Parisian fashion shows where they wrote about the latest designs coming out of Europe and purchased the garments from which to create their own version.

Both made-to-measure salons and ready-to-wear departments presented the most recent Parisian trends, and these styles were adapted to the stores' assumptions regarding lifestyles and budget of their targeted customers. At this time the fashion style magazines began to include photographs and became even more influential than in the future. Talented illustrators including Paul Iribe, Georges Lepape, Erté, and George Barbier drew fashion plates for the most popular of fashion catalogs. The quintessential famous of these catalogs had been La Gazette du bon ton that was formed in 1912 by Lucien Vogel and regularly published till 1925 with a short respite during World War I.

Fashion in 1900's

As the world welcomed the twentieth century, the fashion industry began to grow and expand beyond the high fashion that dominated the 1800s. The growing number of financially independent and married women with large amounts of disposable income demanded a new type of fashion that was both practical and pleasing to the eye. However, unlike the current fashion industry which can change directory at the whim of a few fashion editors, the fashion industry in the 1900s was slow to adopt change. The use of different trimmings was all that distinguished one season from the other. Otherwise the styles were rather stagnant: the curvaceous S-Bend silhouette dominated fashion until roughly 1908. In 1906 an extensive change came about in the fashion world led by Paul Poiret, a modern designer that favored the abandoning of the corset. However, this kind of motions happened to be restricted by the

outbreak of World War I. Towards the end of the decade, the fashionable silhouette steadily became more straight and thin, in part due to Poiret's high-waisted, shorter-skirted line of clothing.

A pioneer in specialization women's clothing had been the Maison Redfern, which was the initial fashion home to offer women a customized suit based directly on its male counterpart. The practical and elegant garment soon became a powerful essential part of the cabinet of just about any well-to-do woman. Another indispensable component of the outfit of the well-dressed woman ended up being the designer hat, that later on started to be a staple in each high and low fashion. Fashionable hats at the time were either tiny little confections that perched on top of the head, or large and wide brimmed, trimmed with ribbons, flowers, and even feathers. Caroline Reboux, Legroux, and E. Lewis were the most sought-after names of the time.

Fashion in 1910s

In the early years of the 1910s the fashionable silhouette became much more flexible than in the 20th century. Poiret devised the first outfit which women could put on without the help of a maid. Both art and fashion complemented each other during these years. The rich colours, bold geometric shapes and lavish ornamentation that characterized the Art Deco movement began to be incorporated into the designs of professional and amateur designers alike. The high class also began to favour simple felt hats, turbans, and clouds of tulle. It is also notable that the first real fashion shows were organized during this period in time. Its organizer, Jeanne (the first female couturier), also became the first Parisian couturier to open foreign offices in London, Buenos Aires, and Madrid. Jacques Doucet and Mariano Fortuny enjoyed an impressive amount of fame during these years as well. Their signature garments were made from a single piece of fine silk that was repeatedly immersed in different dyes to achieve illusions of moonlight or water reflections.

The outbreak of World War I necessitated a change in women's fashion. As men were called to serve on the war front, women were encouraged to take over men's role in the factories and fields. Women's fashion was not terribly suited for such labour, so women began to dress like men in order to complete their tasks, as men's work clothes were often tailored to their profession. Women who preferred to wear their style of clothing adopted straight dresses that completely hid their feminine features. Floor length skirts also became increasingly impractical; by 1915 fashionable skirts had risen above the ankle and then later to mid-calf. The bold bright colours that characterized the early years were also abandoned in favour of more sombre colours. Social events were postponed in favour of more pressing engagements and the need to mourn the increasing numbers of dead, visits to the wounded, and the general gravity of the time. As such, black and more earthly tones were considered appropriate and acceptable choices.

Between the Wars

The period between the two World Wars, often considered to be the Golden Age of French fashion, was one of great change and reformation. Carriages happened to be changed by vehicles, princes and princesses lost their crowns, and high fashion found brand new customers in the ranking of film actresses, United States heiresses, and the wives and daughters of wealthy industrialists.

Fashion in 1920s

The legacy of World War I on fashion is one of radical change. In hair, bouffant was abandoned in favour of short bobs. In general clothing, dresses with long trains gave way to above-the-knee pinafores. Women began to borrow clothes from their brothers and fathers, paving the way for the ubiquitous “flapper” style that rose to prominence during this time. The cloche hat was widely-worn and sportswear became popular with both men and women during the decade, with prominent designers like Jean Patou and Coco Chanel popularizing the look.

Among the greatest designers in modern fashion are Coco Chanel, Jeanne Lanvin and Jean Patou. A major figure even during this time, Chanel revolutionised women's fashion, placing particular emphasis on comfortable and elegance. Lanvin had worked in the industry since 1901, but it had been in the 1920s that she reached the top of her popularity and success. The Lanvin design accepted the style of the time, with its use of complex trimmings, dazzling embroideries, and beaded decorations in light, evident, floral colour which sooner or later turned into her trademark. By 1925 Lanvin developed a number of items, including sportswear, furs, intimate apparel, men's fashion, and indoor designs.

Short suit jackets replaced the old long coats of the past these were now solely used for formal events. Males got a wide array of sport garments accessible to them, such as sweaters and brief trousers, naturally recognized as knickers. For evening use, a brief tuxedo was actually considered even more fashionable than the tail-coat, that was now observed since slightly old-fashioned. The London cut, with its slim marks, loose-fitting sleeves, and padded arms, perfected by the English tailor Scholte, was actually popular.

Fashion in 1930s

In 1930s both designers and buyers began to feel the effects of the Great Depression. Women's fashions moved away from the brash, exciting style of the 1920s near a more enchanting, girly silhouette. The waistline had been recovered to its accurate position, hemlines dropped, and backless evening gowns and softer, slim-fitting day dresses turned into popular. The fashion for outdoor events stimulated couturiers to make what can nowadays is known as sportswear. The term 'ready-to-wear' wasn't yet popular; however the boutiques undoubtedly outlined these garments because being 'for sport'.

Four of the most prominent and influential fashion designers of the 1930s were Elsa Schiaparelli, Madeleine Vionnet, Mainbocher and Hermès. Each influenced and drew inspiration from one another. Mainbocher, who was the first American designer to live and work in Paris, was known for his plain, yet elegant designs for his frequent use of the bias cut that was pioneered by Vionnet. Hermès began selling the silk scarves they are internationally famous for in the 1930s in addition to popularizing the zip and other practical innovation. Towards the end of the ten years, women's styles took on a slightly more imposing and broad-shouldered silhouette, possibly influenced by Schiaparelli. Men's trends proceeded the informal, useful trend that had dominated ever since the end of the Very first World War.

Fashion in Mid Twentieth Century

The legacy of World War II in the fashion industry is far reaching. After the liberation of Paris and the end of the war, Paris reputation as the global centre of fashion began to diminish and the mass-manufactured fashions that were both quicker and cheaper to produce became popular. As central heating and air came to popular use, a new innovation known as “minimum-care” garments became increasingly popular and paved the way for synthetic fibres to be used in tailoring and designing.

Fashion in 1940s

The occupation of Paris, as one can imagine, crippled the fashion industry. The Maison Vionnet and Maison Chanel were closed during the occupation, and many designers such as Mainbocher permanently relocated to New York and other places in the United States. In spite of the fact that numerous fashion houses closed down or moved away throughout the war, several brand-new houses remained open, such as Jacques Fath, Maggy Rouff, Marcel Rochas, Jeanne Lafaurie, Nina Ricci, and Madeleine Vramant. Like the Germans directly occupied France, there was clearly much discussion because to whether or not to relocate French high fashion to Berlin and Vienna, neither of that had any significant fashion custom. Rationing also got a deep influence on fashion performances. The number of designs in performances had been limited to seventy-five, night make use of had been shortened and day make use of was a lot skimpier, made making use of substitute components as much as possible. From 1940 onward, not more than four m (thirteen feet) of cloth had been permitted to be utilized for a coating and a little around one meter (three feet) had been every that authorized for a blouse. No belt could be over 3 centimetres (one and a 1 / 2 inches) wide.

The dilemma in Paris opened the door for American to explore the ingenuity and creativity of American-born designers. Vera Maxwell's specialized in plain, simply cut outfits and, in general, her innovative designs were highly regarded.

One of the greatest challenges in fashion culture was born during this time. In February 1947, the couturier Christian Dior created widespread discussion with his first collection, which featured dresses with tiny waists, majestic busts, and full skirts swelling out beneath small bodices. This was the birth of

the “Dior woman,” who embodied the strength of femininity. However, given the world’s unstable situation at the time, many criticized this new aesthetic. One of Dior’s biggest detractors was Coco Chanel. She had retired prior to the war, but with the success of Dior, the French grand dame rose from the ashes. This set up a struggle – albeit a respectful one – between the designs of Dior and Chanel.

Coco was not opposed to Dior for political reasons; rather she simply believed that women had been subjected to the rigors of fashion for too long. According to Chanel, Dior bound women with his fashions; therefore, she felt it necessary to establish a new code in the female wardrobe: femininity and elegance without the need to balance in stiletto heels. Chanel became an icon that represented classic, elegant and comfortable fashion, while Dior was the champion of sensual, elegant fashion that was more difficult to wear.

Fashion in 1950s

The designers of Hollywood created a particular type of glamour for the stars of American film, and outfits worn by the likes of Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall, or Grace Kelly were widely copied. Quantitatively speaking, a costume worn by an actress in a Hollywood movie would have a much bigger audience than the photograph of a dress designed by a couturier illustrated in a magazine read by no more than a few thousand people.

Using apparently luxurious materials, such as sequins, chiffon, and fur, the clothes were very simply cut, often including some memorable detail, such as a low-cut back to a dress which was only revealed when the actress turned her back from the camera or some particularly stunning accessory. The most influential and respected designers of Hollywood from the 1930s to the 1950s were Edith Head, Orry-Kelly, William Travilla, Jean Louis, Travis Banton, and Gilbert Adrian.

Fashion in 1960s

From the 1960s onward, there would never be just one single, prevailing trend or fashion but a great plethora of possibilities, indivisibly linked to all the various influences in other areas of people's lives. Fashion equality disappeared; separate fashions developed for adults and youth.

In stark contrast to their mature, ultra-feminine mothers, the women of the 1960s adopted a girlish, childlike style, with short skirts and straightened curves, reminiscent of the look of the 1920s. At the start of the decade skirts were knee-length, but steadily became shorter and shorter until the mini-skirt emerged in 1965. By the end of the decade they had shot well above the stocking top, making the transition to tights inevitable.

Many of the radical changes in fashion developed in the streets of London, with such gifted designers as Mary Quant (known for launching the mini skirt) and Barbara Hulanicki (the founder of the legendary

boutique Biba). Paris also had its share of new and revolutionary designers, including Pierre Cardin (known for his visionary and skilfully-cut designs), André Courrèges (known for his futuristic outfits and for launching the mini skirt along with Mary Quant), Yves Saint Laurent (YSL), and Emanuel Ungaro (known for his imaginative use of colour and bold baroque contrasts). In the United States, Rudi Gernreich (known for his avant-garde and futuristic designs) and James Galanos (known for his luxurious ready-to-wear) were also reaching a young audience.

The main outlets for these new young fashion designers were small boutiques, selling outfits that were not exactly 'one-offs', but were made in small quantities in a limited range of sizes and colours.

The basic shape and style of the time was simple, neat, clean cut, and young. Synthetic fabrics were very widely-used during the 1960s. They took dyes easily and well, giving rise to colours that were both clear and bright, very much mirroring the mood of the period.

Hats suffered a great decline and by the end of the decade they were relegated to special occasions only. Flat boots also became popular with very short dresses in 1965 and eventually they rose up the leg and reached the knee. Two notable and influential designers in the 1960s were Emilio Pucci and Paco Rabanne.

Fashion in 1970s

During the 1970s brands greatly increased their share of the international market. Hems began dropping in 1974 to below the knee, until finally reaching the lower mid calf in 1977 and shoulder lines were dropped.

In 1974, Sonia Rykiel designed her first pullovers with reversed seams. However, more than that, she created a whole range of clothes that were extremely individual and yet could be worn almost anywhere. The Rykiel style, dominated by fluid knitted garments, dark blacks, rhinestones, long boa-like scarves, and little crocheted hats, conquered the American market, and even to this day Rykiel is considered by many Americans as the true successor of Chanel.

Because of punk, London retained a considerable degree of influence over fashion. Another popular British style was the resolutely un-modern, feminine, countrified style of clothing popularised by Laura Ashley, which consisted of long flounced skirts and high-necked blouses in traditional floral prints, worn with crocheted shawls. Laura Ashley started out running a small business in Wales in the mid-1960s and the company continued to expand until the accidental death of its owner in 1985.

Bill Blass, who launched his own range in 1962, developed the habit of travelling all over the United States in order to hear for himself what his customers desired. One of the most popular designers of the time, he was almost too successful in fulfilling his customers' wishes. His disciplined style and workmanship was particularly favoured by businesswomen and the wives of senior executives.

Also significant are the developments in Italian fashion that happened during the period. In the course of the 1970s, as a result of its ready-to-wear industry, Milan confirmed its status as second only to Paris as a center of international fashion. The two most influential Italian fashion designers of the time were probably Giorgio Armani and Nino Cerruti.

Fashion in Late Twentieth Century

During the late 20th century, fashion began to criss-cross international boundaries with rapidity. Popular Western styles were adopted all over the world, and many designers from outside of the West had a profound impact on fashion. Synthetic materials such as Lycra, Spandex, and viscose became widely-used, and fashion, after two decades of looking to the future, once again turned to the past for inspiration.

Fashion shows were transfigured into media-saturated spectacles and frequently televised, taking high priority in the social calendar.

Fashion in 1980s

Fashion took yet another turn. It ceased to be a political tool, and it became instead an aesthetic element. In the 80s men and women took care of their bodies and their appearance. It was the era of yuppies, shoulder pads and “the working woman,” during which women demanded even higher stilettos. Everyone wanted to be a “10” to squeeze into those Calvin Klein jeans and to look as fantastic as Brooke Shields in the ads. It was the supermodel era. Claudia, Naomi, Cindy, Christie and Amber were Versace’s muses, an icon of fashion understood as beauty.

A number of promising newcomers entered the fashion scene in the 1980s. Angelo Tarlazzi, an extraordinary technician who once worked for Patou, bewitched both the press and his customers with his 'handkerchief' dresses.

Guy Paulin was one of the first designers to promote a severe, plain, and uncluttered look. His garments were classical in their proportions and made for comfort and simplicity, with their harmonious lines reinforced by a subtle palette of colours and fine materials.

Japanese designers such as Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto offered a look which marked a total break with the prevailing fashion image of the time. Flat shoes, no make-up, reserve, modesty, and secrecy were the hallmarks of this modern look.

In American fashion the seductive, clinging style of Donna Karan and the casual sophistication of Ralph Lauren were very influential.

Fashion in 1990s

In 1990's Clothes by ready-to-wear retailers such as The Gap, Banana Republic, and Eddie Bauer came to the forefront of fashion, managing to tap into the needs of women who simply wanted comfortable, wearable clothes.

The famous Italian fashion house, Gucci was created in 1921, by Guccio Gucci and was originally a firm that sold luxury leather goods. Under Guccio Gucci's children, by the end of the 1960s the label had expanded to include a plethora of products with a distinctly Latin glamor.

In the 1990s the designer label Prada became a true creative force in the fashion industry. In America three of the most influential fashion designers of the time were Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs, and Calvin Klein.

One of the first fashion designers to anticipate the globalisation of world markets, the already well-known designer Calvin Klein started to market his fashions, perfumes, and accessories not only right across the US, but also in Europe and Asia, achieving an unequalled success. A brilliant artistic director, Klein used carefully constructed advertisements containing images tinted with eroticism to promote his sophisticatedly functional mass-produced designs, which won massive popularity among the urban youth of the 1990s.

In Italy, Gianni Versace, with his brilliant, sexy, and colourful designs, and Dolce & Gabbana, with their super feminine and fantastical style, broke away from the serious and sober-minded fashions that dominated during much of the 1990s.

The sports label Nike had great popularity and materials such as Lycra and Spandex were increasingly used for sportswear. Increasing eco-awareness and animal rights made even top couture houses such as Chanel introduce fake fur and natural fibres into their collections.

Fashion in 2000s

In the 2000s, as the future began to seem increasingly bleak, fashion, and indeed the Arts in general, looked to the past for inspiration, arguably more so than in previous decades. Vintage clothing, especially from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s became extremely popular and fashion designers. The early 2000s saw a continuation of the minimalist look of the 1990s in high fashion. Later on, designers began to adopt a more colourful, feminine, excessive, and 'anti-modern' look. Name brands became of particular importance among young people and many celebrities launched their own lines of clothing. Tighter fit clothing and longer hair became mainstream for many men and women.

Karl Lagerfeld (Chanel), Marc Jacobs (Louis Vuitton), John Galiano (Dior), Nicolas Ghesquière (Balenciaga), Stefano Pilatti (Yves Saint Laurent) and Alber Elbaz (Lanvin) are just some of the geniuses

who hold the position of creative director at these renowned houses of style. Our era is the era of luxury, led by a group of young talent that knows the trends better than anyone, has a social circle filled with celebrities and understands what influences our world: exclusivity and astronomical prices.

For many of the own-label designers who emerged in the early years of the 21st century, financial factors became increasingly critical. Many new young talents found they now depended on investors. Designers like Rodrick Gilchrist and Berny Martin of Catou struck out on their own to places like the midwest. By 2011 Martin had devised a simple blueprint for other cities to follow. His own line spread across the U.S. and abroad. He borrowed from the previous eras and created a line of custom clothing that he called 'business forward'.

The Evolution of Fashion

Fashion has been and continues to be a reflection of society and current events. Fashion trends are influenced by popular figures in culture like celebrities, musicians and other high-profile individuals. Current fashion trends are often cyclical, taking cues from decades past and reworking them to fit within modern tastes. Clothing styles that were snubbed a decade ago are now enjoying resurgence in popularity.

Just like disco fashion inspired the punk movement, mainstream trends continue to co-exist with underground fashion trends. And trend forecasting is now a profession; high-profile designers, writers and photographers rely on these tastemakers to predict the next popular style, but this is no exact science. Even these trend forecasters, however, rely on some degree of instinct. And modern fashion trends are less widespread and universal than they were in decades past. Today, individuality has come into vogue.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Understanding Fashion History (By Valerie)*
- ✓ *Fashion: A Very Short Introduction (By Rebecca Arnold)*
- ✓ *Introduction to Fashion Design (By Patrick John)*