

SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED

WHAT IS SIGNIFIER & SIGNIFIED?

IN SEMIOTICS, EVERY SIGN IS COMPOSED OF TWO ELEMENTS: THE SIGNIFIER AND THE SIGNIFIED. THE SIGNIFIER REFERS TO THE PHYSICAL FORM OF THE SIGN—THE IMAGE, WORD, OR OBJECT THAT WE PERCEIVE—WHILE THE SIGNIFIED IS THE MENTAL OR CULTURAL CONCEPT ATTACHED TO IT. FOR EXAMPLE, A HANDBAG IS NOT ONLY A FUNCTIONAL OBJECT BUT ALSO A SYMBOL THAT CAN COMMUNICATE STATUS, IDENTITY, OR BELONGING.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT IN FASHION?

IN FASHION, GARMENTS AND ACCESSORIES ALWAYS CARRY MEANINGS BEYOND THEIR MATERIAL FUNCTION. A DRESS MAY SIGNIFY ELEGANCE, REBELLION, OR GENDER IDENTITY; A LOGO MAY SYMBOLIZE EXCLUSIVITY OR CULTURAL BELONGING. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED ALLOWS US TO DECODE HOW FASHION OBJECTS OPERATE AS CULTURAL TEXTS, SHAPING THE WAY WE PERCEIVE OURSELVES AND OTHERS. BY ANALYZING FASHION THROUGH SEMIOTICS, WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW MEANINGS ARE PRODUCED, CONSUMED, AND RE-INTERPRETED IN SOCIETY.

FASHION AS A LANGUAGE

FASHION FUNCTIONS LIKE A LANGUAGE, WHERE CLOTHES, CAMPAIGNS, AND BRANDS WORK AS SIGNS. JUST AS WORDS FORM SENTENCES, GARMENTS AND VISUAL CAMPAIGNS CREATE NARRATIVES THAT COMMUNICATE VALUES, IDEOLOGIES, AND COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION. EACH FASHION IMAGE ACTS AS A SIGNIFIER, CARRYING CONNOTATIONS THAT INFLUENCE IDENTITY, SOCIAL CLASS, AND CULTURAL TRENDS. FOR THIS REASON, STUDYING SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED IN FASHION REVEALS NOT ONLY THE AESTHETICS OF CLOTHING BUT ALSO THE HIDDEN CODES AND IDEOLOGIES EMBEDDED IN VISUAL CULTURE.

CHAPTER 1 FASHION AS LANGUAGE

ROLAND BARTHES DESCRIBED FASHION AS A LANGUAGE, SUGGESTING THAT GARMENTS, ACCESSORIES, AND VISUAL IMAGES FUNCTION LIKE SIGNS THAT CONSTRUCT MEANING. JUST AS WORDS COMBINE TO FORM SENTENCES, FASHION OPERATES AS A SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION THAT REFLECTS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CODES. IN THIS SENSE, EVERY ITEM OF CLOTHING, LOGO, OR ACCESSORY ACTS AS A SIGNIFIER, WHILE THE CULTURAL, IDEOLOGICAL, OR SOCIAL VALUES ATTACHED TO IT REPRESENT THE SIGNIFIED.

FOR INSTANCE, A CHANEL HANDBAG IS NOT MERELY A LEATHER ACCESSORY; IT SIGNIFIES PRESTIGE, LUXURY, AND TIMELESS ELEGANCE. SIMILARLY, THE SUPREME BOX LOGO, DESPITE BEING A SIMPLE TYPOGRAPHIC DESIGN, CARRIES CONNOTATIONS OF YOUTH CULTURE, BELONGING, AND THE REBELLIOUS ENERGY OF STREETWEAR. THESE EXAMPLES HIGHLIGHT HOW FASHION IS NEVER JUST ABOUT AESTHETICS OR MATERIAL FUNCTION BUT ALSO ABOUT CONVEYING IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY, AND SYMBOLIC MEANING.

THROUGH FASHION, INDIVIDUALS CONSTRUCT THEIR IDENTITIES, DISPLAY SOCIAL STATUS, AND EXPRESS CULTURAL AFFILIATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, FASHION BECOMES A TOOL OF RESISTANCE, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO CHALLENGE NORMS, OR ALTERNATIVELY, A MECHANISM OF CONFORMITY, REINFORCING THEM. IN THIS WAY, FASHION WORKS AS A POWERFUL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM—ONE THAT SHAPES COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION, EXPRESSES CULTURAL VALUES, AND ENCODES THE IDEOLOGIES OF A GIVEN TIME.



CHANEL NO.5 CAMPAIGN - GISELE BÜNDCHEN (2014)



NICK KNIGHT - SHOWSTUDIO FASHION FILM STILLS (2000S)



VETEMENTS DHL T-SHIRT (2016)





YEEZY SEASON 3 MADISON SQUARE GARDEN SHOW (2016)



HERMÈS BIRKIN BAG - JANE BIRKIN CARRYING HER ORIGINAL BIRKIN, 1984 PHOTO



MAISON MARGIELA ARTISANAL COLLECTION - FALL/WINTER 2020, JOHN GALLIANO



RICK OWENS "HUMAN BACKPACKS" RUNWAY - SPRING/SUMMER 2016



RAF SIMONS X EASTPAK BACKPACK - 2005 COLLABORATION



BALENCIAGA X LAY'S CHIPS BAG - SPRING/SUMMER 2023



DAVID LACHAPPELLE FOR DIESEL "SAFE SEX" CAMPAIGN - 1995

**SMART
CRITIQUES.**



BESTUPID **DIESEL**
FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

**STUPID
CREATES.**

**SMART
HAD ONE
GOOD IDEA
AND THAT
IDEA WAS
STUPID.**

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DIESEL "BE STUPID" GLOBAL CAMPAIGN - 2010



PETER LINDBERGH "SUPERMODELS" VOGUE US COVER - JANUARY 1990

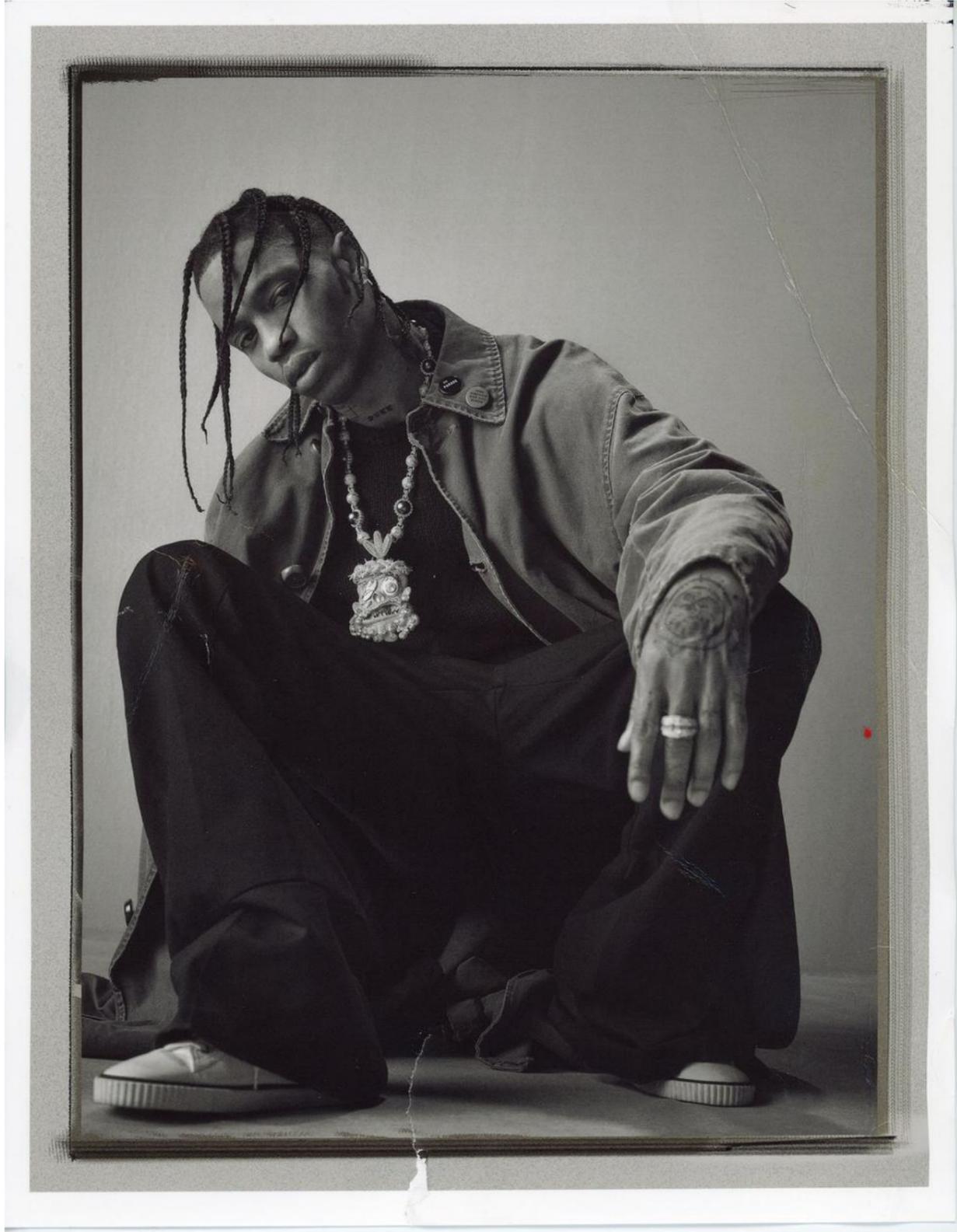


OFF-WHITE INDUSTRIAL BELT - YELLOW, 2016

TRAVIS SCOTT FOR DIOR MEN'S SPRING/SUMMER 2022 CAMPAIGN









VETEMENTS "TITANIC HOODIE" - 2019

STÜSSY 40TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN - 2020



WILL YOU CHOOSE?? DESTROY REBUILD UNITY

STUSSY SMASH RACISM!!



THE REVOLUTION IS IN THE HANDS OF THE

YOUNG...WHAT SIDE OF HISTORY



BALENCIAGA X WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME HOODIE - 2018 CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER 2

LUXURY AND STATUS

LUXURY FASHION OPERATES AS ONE OF THE CLEAREST EXAMPLES OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED. IN THIS CONTEXT, GARMENTS, ACCESSORIES, AND LOGOS TRANSCEND THEIR UTILITARIAN FUNCTION AND ACQUIRE SYMBOLIC MEANINGS TIED TO WEALTH, EXCLUSIVITY, AND CULTURAL CAPITAL. A HANDBAG, FOR INSTANCE, DOES NOT MERELY SERVE AS A CONTAINER BUT BECOMES A MARKER OF SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND DISTINCTION.

LOUIS VUITTON'S MONOGRAM, INTRODUCED IN 1896, IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THIS TRANSFORMATION. THE CANVAS ITSELF IS ONLY A PATTERN, YET IT HAS BEEN RE-SIGNIFIED AS A SYMBOL OF GLOBAL LUXURY AND ASPIRATION. SIMILARLY, THE HERMÈS BIRKIN BAG REPRESENTS MORE THAN CRAFTSMANSHIP: IT IS A SIGN OF SCARCITY, PRESTIGE, AND ACCESS, REINFORCED BY LONG WAITING LISTS AND CELEBRITY ASSOCIATIONS. CHANEL'S NO.5 PERFUME AND THE ICONIC LITTLE BLACK DRESS ALSO DEMONSTRATE HOW FASHION OBJECTS CAN CARRY MYTHS OF TIMELESS FEMININITY AND ELEGANCE.

THROUGH THESE EXAMPLES, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT LUXURY OPERATES NOT JUST IN THE REALM OF MATERIAL GOODS BUT IN THE SEMIOTIC SPACE OF DESIRE. THE SIGNIFIER—THE BAG, THE LOGO, THE GARMENT—SIGNALS WEALTH AND SOCIAL BELONGING, WHILE THE SIGNIFIED LIES IN THE CULTURAL VALUES ATTACHED TO EXCLUSIVITY, TRADITION, AND PRESTIGE. LUXURY, THEREFORE, SPEAKS A LANGUAGE THAT ENCODES IDENTITY THROUGH POWER AND STATUS.



MONOGRAM KEEPALL



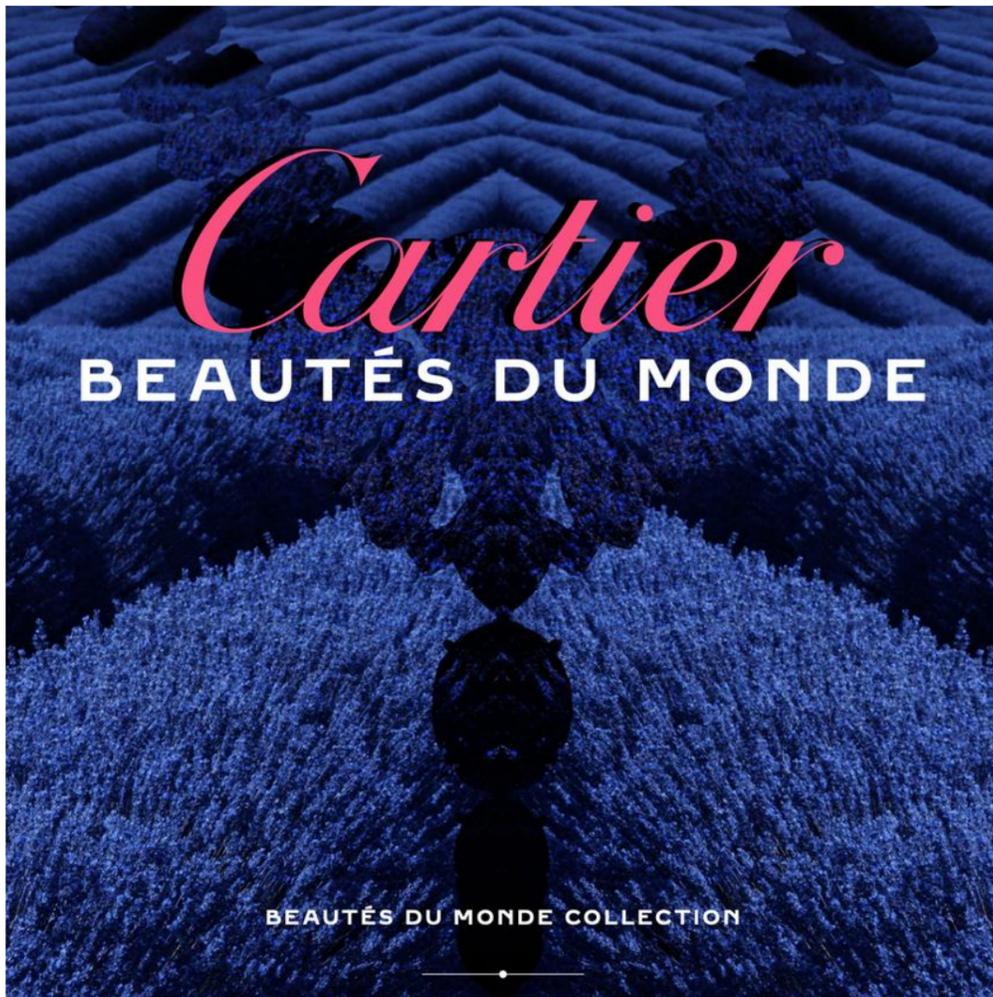
LOUIS VUITTON X YAYOI KUSAMA: INFINITY AND BEYOND



LOUIS VUITTON "LV DREAM" EXHIBITION VISUALS - PARIS, 2023



CARTIER "TANK FRANÇAISE" WATCH CAMPAIGN - 2023 (RAMI MALEK & CATHERINE DENEUVE)



CARTIER "BEAUTÉS DU MONDE" HIGH JEWELRY CAMPAIGN - 2022



MIU MIU "WOMEN'S TALES #23 - EYE TWO TIMES" FILM BY ALICE ROHRWACHER, 2022

19 Guianme



BALENCIAGA "THE LOST TAPE" CAMPAIGN - FW 2022

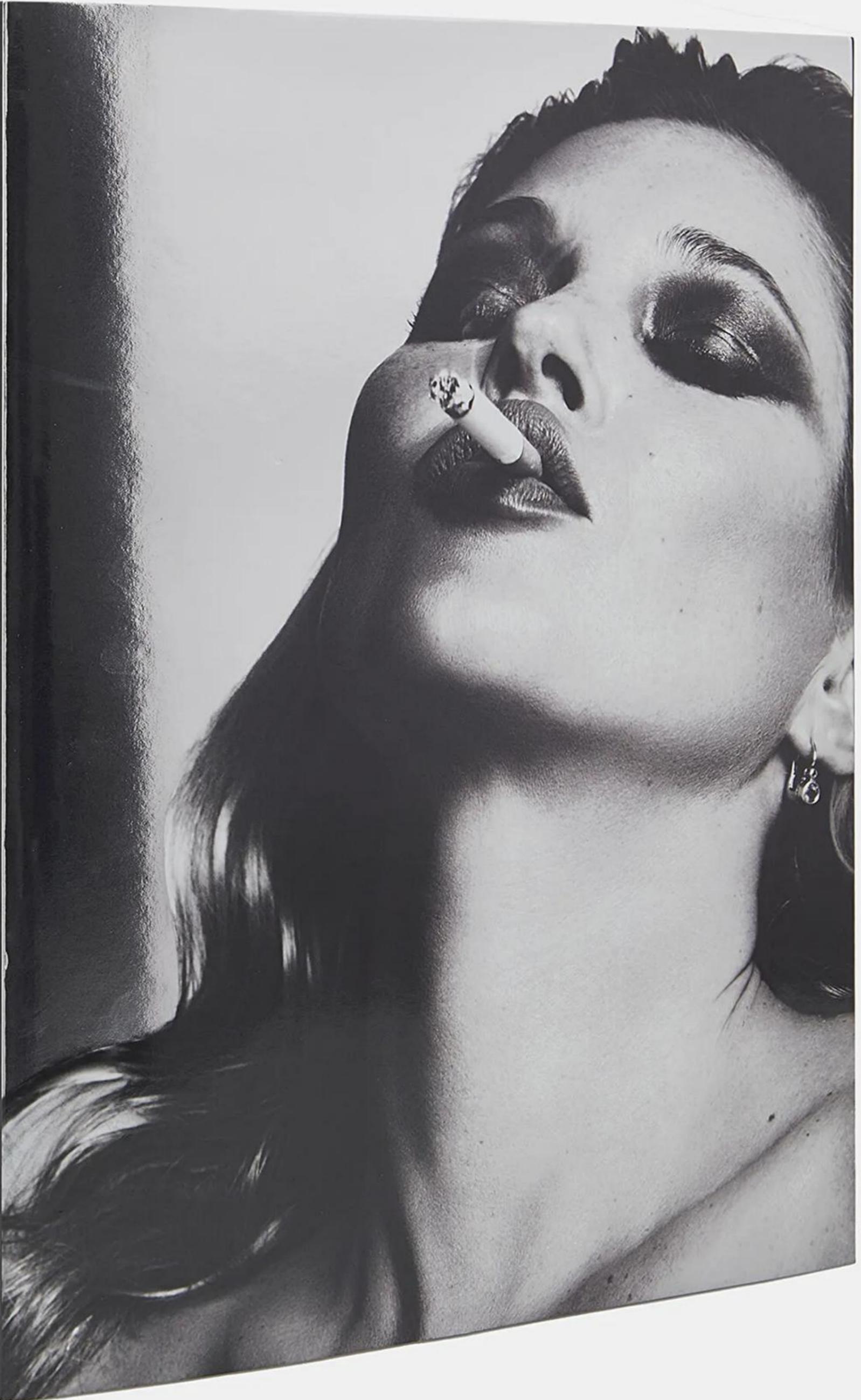




BALENCIAGA "OBJECTS" HOME COLLECTION VISUALS - 2021

MERT ALAS & MARCUS PIGGOTT

TASCHEN



MERT ALAS & MARCUS PIGGOTT - "PORTRAITS OF POWER" SERIES, 2020 (SHOT FOR INTERVIEW MAGAZINE: GLOSSY, HYPER-REAL PORTRAITS SYMBOLIZING DOMINANCE.)



LOEWE SS 2022 CAMPAIGN - "DEFLATED BALLOONS" SERIES



LOEWE SS 2024 RUNWAY - GIANT "PIXELATED" CLOTHES



GIVENCHY "ANTIGONA" BAG CAMPAIGN - 2022



GIVENCHY

GIVENCHY FW 2021 "DIGITAL HUMAN SERIES" - DIRECTED BY MATTHEW M. WILLIAMS



SAINT LAURENT FW 2023 CAMPAIGN - BY GRAY SORRENTI



SAINT LAURENT FW 2023 CAMPAIGN - BY GRAY SORRENTI

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY AND SUBCULTURE

FASHION HAS ALWAYS FUNCTIONED AS A SOCIAL CODE THAT EXPRESSES IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND RESISTANCE. BEYOND AESTHETICS, IT COMMUNICATES WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE COME FROM, AND WHAT WE BELIEVE IN. WITHIN SUBCULTURES, CLOTHING ACTS AS A POWERFUL SIGNIFIER OF BELONGING – A VISUAL LANGUAGE THROUGH WHICH INDIVIDUALS CONNECT AND DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES FROM MAINSTREAM SOCIETY.

FROM PUNK'S RIPPED LEATHER JACKETS TO THE SLEEK MINIMALISM OF TECHWEAR, FASHION OPERATES AS A SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS THAT DEFINE PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY. STREETWEAR, IN PARTICULAR, HAS REDEFINED THE SEMIOTICS OF STYLE, MERGING EXCLUSIVITY AND AUTHENTICITY IN A SINGLE VISUAL CODE. THROUGH BRANDS LIKE OFF-WHITE, SUPREME, AND STÜSSY, FASHION BECOMES BOTH A CULTURAL MANIFESTO AND A MARKER OF STATUS WITHIN YOUTH COMMUNITIES.

CONTEMPORARY DESIGNERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS NOW EXPLORE FASHION AS IDENTITY POLITICS, FOCUSING ON GENDER FLUIDITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSIVITY. COLLECTIONS BY RICK OWENS, MARINE SERRE, AND TELFAR CHALLENGE CONVENTIONAL BEAUTY STANDARDS AND TRANSFORM CLOTHING INTO A MEDIUM OF EMPOWERMENT. IN THIS WAY, FASHION FUNCTIONS AS BOTH A PERSONAL AND POLITICAL LANGUAGE – ONE THAT CONTINUALLY REDEFINES IDENTITY IN A GLOBAL, INTERCONNECTED, AND VISUALLY DRIVEN CULTURE.



OFF-WHITE "THE TEN" NIKE COLLABORATION - 2017



OFF-WHITE "METEOR" DRESS - SS2020 PARIS SHOW



SUPREME FW2020 BOX LOGO CAMPAIGN - SHOT BY HARMONY KORINE



SUPREME X COMME DES GARÇONS COLLABORATION - 2018



PALACE X RALPH LAUREN COLLABORATION - 2018



TELFAR "NOT FOR YOU - FOR EVERYONE" CAMPAIGN - 2020



A-COLD-WALL FW2022 RUNWAY - BY SAMUEL ROSS*



1017 ALYX 9SM - MATTHEW WILLIAMS CAMPAIGN, 2022



RHUDE X LAMBORGHINI COLLECTION - 2021



CORTEIZ CLINT 419 POP-UP LONDON - 2022 VIRAL STREET MOMENT



RICK OWENS FW 2023 "LUXOR" RUNWAY - EGYPT-INSPIRED REBIRTH



DILARA FINDIKOGLU FW 2023 SHOW - LONDON OCCULT AESTHETIC



MARINE SERRE "HARD DRIVE" COLLECTION - 2021



HAJAR BENJIDA - "YOUNG THUG ARCHIVE" VISUAL DIARY - 2022



CARLOTA GUERRERO - "BODY ARCHIVE FOR A NEW AGE" - 2023 INSTALLATION



EWEN SPENCER - "UK GARAGE ARCHIVE: REVISITED" - 2022







KHALIK ALLAH - "NEW YORK STREET SOULS" VISUAL DIARY - 2022



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o



Woman for the
Future
— 2020





MATTHEW LEIFHEIT - "FIRE ISLAND: QUEER SPACE" PHOTO ESSAY - 2023



MATTHEW LEIFHEIT - "FIRE ISLAND: QUEER SPACE" PHOTO ESSAY - 2023



MATTHEW LEIFHEIT - "FIRE ISLAND: QUEER SPACE" PHOTO ESSAY - 2023



MASHA POPOVA "DENIM MUTATION" COLLECTION - 2023



PRIYA AHLUWALIA "FUTURE ANCESTORS" FW2023 RUNWAY - MILAN

CHAPTER 4

RE-SIGNIFICATION IN FASHION

FASHION CONSTANTLY REDEFINES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OBJECTS AND MEANING. THROUGH THE PROCESS OF RE-SIGNIFICATION, DESIGNERS AND ARTISTS ASSIGN NEW VALUES TO EXISTING FORMS, CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE ORDINARY AND THE EXTRAORDINARY. A SIMPLE OBJECT, WHEN REFRAMED WITHIN A FASHION CONTEXT, GAINS CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL WEIGHT – A PLASTIC BAG BECOMES COUTURE, A WORK UNIFORM BECOMES LUXURY, AND RECYCLED MATERIALS TURN INTO STATUS SYMBOLS.

CONTEMPORARY FASHION THRIVES ON THIS REINTERPRETATION OF CODES. BRANDS LIKE BALENCIAGA, DIESEL, AND MAISON MARGIELA ELEVATE EVERYDAY MATERIALS INTO ICONS OF CRITIQUE, WHILE DESIGNERS SUCH AS MARINE SERRE AND GABRIELA HEARST TRANSFORM SUSTAINABILITY INTO A NEW AESTHETIC OF AWARENESS. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AMPLIFIES THIS PROCESS: GARMENTS NOW EXIST AS NFTS, VIRTUAL SKINS, AND AI-GENERATED COUTURE, TURNING IMMATERIALITY INTO THE ULTIMATE FORM OF LUXURY.

RE-SIGNIFICATION REVEALS HOW FASHION MIRRORS SOCIETY'S EVOLUTION – A MIRROR OF IRONY, INNOVATION, AND SELF-REFLECTION. IT SHOWS THAT MEANING IN FASHION IS NEVER FIXED BUT CONSTANTLY REBORN, QUESTIONING WHAT IS AUTHENTIC, VALUABLE, AND REAL IN AN AGE OF CONSUMPTION AND ILLUSION.



AVA

AVAVAV FW 2023 "DISASTER SHOW" - SHOES COLLAPSING ON RUNWAY



ANCUTA SARCA SS 2024 - HYBRID NIKE-HEEL SNEAKERS



CHOPOVA LOWENA FW 2022 CAMPAIGN - RECYCLED CLIMBING GEAR KILTS



ELENA VELEZ "DAUGHTER OF DIRT" SHOW - 2022 NEW YORK



CHET LO SS 2024 RUNWAY - SPIKED SILICONE KNIT TEXTURES



RUI ZHOU "THREAD SKIN" SERIES - 2022 SHANGHAI



MERYLL ROGGE "HOUSEHOLD GLAMOUR" EDITORIAL - 2023



KAROLINE VITTO "BODY AS MATERIAL" FW 2022 SHOW



DURAN LANTINK "FASHION REMIXED" INSTALLATION - STEDELIJK MUSEUM 2023



PAOLO CARZANA "IMAGINE WE COULD BE THE BEES" COLLECTION - 2022



RAVE REVIEW "DOMESTIC REMAINS" SHOW - STOCKHOLM 2022





FENG CHEN WANG X CONVERSE DECONSTRUCTED SNEAKERS - 2023



PRINCE GYASI "TECHNICOLOR ROYALTY" SERIES - 2023



SHANELLE NYASIASE X KENNEDI CARTER "BLACK VENUS 2023" EXHIBITION - LONDON

PUBLIC (P)



SARAH PIANTADOSI "DISPOSABLE HEAVEN" EDITORIAL - 2023



SERGE ATTUKWEI CLOTTEY "AFROGALLONISM WEARABLES" - 2023 ACCRA

CONCLUSION

“FASHION IS A LANGUAGE MADE OF SYMBOLS – A DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT WE WEAR AND WHAT WE MEAN.”

THROUGHOUT THIS DIGITAL CONCEPT BOOK, FASHION HAS BEEN EXPLORED AS A SEMIOTIC SYSTEM – A LIVING LANGUAGE BUILT FROM SIGNS, CODES, AND SHIFTING MEANINGS.

**EACH CHAPTER UNCOVERED A DISTINCT LAYER OF THIS VISUAL DISCOURSE:
FASHION AS LANGUAGE → HOW GARMENTS COMMUNICATE MEANING.
LUXURY AND STATUS → HOW EXCLUSIVITY BECOMES A CULTURAL CODE.
IDENTITY AND SUBCULTURE → HOW STYLE REFLECTS BELONGING AND REBELLION.
RE-SIGNIFICATION → HOW NEW MEANINGS ARE BORN FROM TRANSFORMATION.
WHAT BECOMES CLEAR IS THAT FASHION IS NOT STATIC; IT EVOLVES THROUGH INTERPRETATION.**

A SINGLE OBJECT CAN BE BOTH STATEMENT AND CONTRADICTION – A SIGN REWRITTEN BY EVERY GENERATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE. FASHION THUS MIRRORS SOCIETY’S EMOTIONS, ITS TENSIONS, AND ITS DREAMS. SEMIOTICS TRANSFORMS THE WAY WE PERCEIVE THIS FIELD: IT TEACHES US TO SEE MEANING.

EVERY COLLECTION, CAMPAIGN, AND IMAGE BECOMES PART OF AN ONGOING CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE – BETWEEN WHAT IS SHOWN AND WHAT IS FELT.

SPECIAL THANKS

TO PROFESSOR CARLOS GAGO RODRÍGUEZ, FOR HIS INVALUABLE GUIDANCE, INSPIRING LECTURES, AND SHARP VISION THAT SHAPED THIS RESEARCH.

YOUR TEACHING HAS TRANSFORMED THE WAY I UNDERSTAND FASHION – NOT AS DECORATION, BUT AS A PROFOUND LANGUAGE OF CULTURE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND HUMANITY.