

DAVIDE STUCCHI STYLE WITHOUT BODIES

I only listen to “musica di moda”—which does not mean that I listen to the hits of the moment. I listen to music specifically produced for the fashion industry: for clothes, and hence, for the body. They are ephemeral soundtracks of style, often composed of numerous tracks and sound effects, compressed into one sonic mood, gone as quickly as they were debuted. The question spurred in this text, as suggested also by the title, is: what happens when we bring this music beyond the runway presentation—towards a style without bodies?

The fashion show, like the theatre, mediates between production and

*consumption.*⁰¹ Fashion storytelling via music is a field that both reveals and constructs designers' and creative directors' cross-cultural tastes (sometimes, lack thereof). Whether live or recorded, crafted by DJs or composers, from artists or musicians, runway music is not just a background or something to keep the attention—it becomes an aesthetic signifier in itself. Aren't these ephemeral mixes a genre on its own? Aren't they structured in conventional, distinct acts, or follow a

⁰¹ Skov, L., Skjold, E., Moeran, B., Larsen, F., & Csaba, F. (2009). *The Fashion Show as an Art Form*. Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School

Davide Stucchi, 2020, *SEND (Couture) NUDES III*, Felt-tip pen on paper, Plexiglass frame, 21,6 x 15 x 2 cm
Courtesy the artist and Martina Simezi, Milan.



kind of theatrical scheme? Aren't they able to transmit something even if you don't see the models or the clothes, like listening to an opera piece? For these exact reasons, I began to collect runway soundtracks in 2014. Ripped from videos of runway shows, I try to recontextualise the sounds that are so tied to the clothes, the bodies, the light, and the walking—things that constitute constitute a fashion show's main choreographic elements—by taking the sounds elsewhere. In the city traffic while driving my car, in my headphones while cycling or playing them at a friend's party. Today I'm playing the soundtrack of Gucci *Le Palace* SIS 2019, which was held in Paris. I can't tell how many times I have listened to it. I press play and without seeing them, I wait for all of the 84 models to enter from the audience aisles of the theater and end up on the stage, like Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search for an Author*. Similarly, they enter from the back of the theatre instead of being already on stage, producing a meta play in which they improvise totally "scripted" roles to undress the paradigm of theatre. The track, similarly, is a sonic demolition of the fourth wall.

*"The fashion show is also a theatrical frame. [...] An individual is transformed into a performer who is watched by, and consciously engages, an audience (the model, but also other performers like the designer and audience celebrities at different stages of the show)."*⁰²

02 Ibid.

DRESSING WITH MUSIC

Moving while being watched looks like pure theatre to me, as it establishes a coded social relationship between bodies and people. "You were our show, and we were your show," stated Alessandro Michele rather elliptically about his Gucci Fall 2020 ready-to-wear show. For the presentation, the famous 'Bolero' by Ravel played as an ongoing soundtrack, echoing Maurice Bejar's scenography and choreography, which saw the whole production team as well as the models turn inside a circular platform that would rotate and continuously present and re-present itself to the public, step-by-step, as backstage preparations were accomplished. Here, a clash between the making and the showing happened, recalling in my mind images of Isaac Mizrahi's transparent curtain for Fall 1994 that allowed the public to sneak into the backstage with their own eyes. The metaphor with dance, choreography, or more generally, the transformation of the moment, was highlighted for me by a giant metronome placed in the centre of the platform exactly where the designer Alessandro Michele was standing: the whole performance dictated second-by-second on a screen, as a director or composer.

So back to my idea of dressing with music, which I admit is a sublimation of presence towards a style without bodies. *An ode to music*. There is always music in fashion shows; it's a type of immaterial atmosphere that is needed to create fashionable worlds. So music is, in a way, a remediator of the

Davide Stucchi, 2020, *SEND (Couture) NUDES IX*,
Felt-tip pen on paper, Plexiglass frame, 21.6 x 15 x 2 cm.
Courtesy the artist and Martina Simetti, Milan.





Davide Stucchi, 2020, *SEND (Couture) NUDES VII*,
Felt-tip pen on paper, Plexiglass frame, 21,6 x 15 x 2 cm.
Courtesy the artist and Martina Simeii, Milan.

images, becoming media itself. Having soundtracks readily available means that I can listen to them and revive or rewrite fashion as a costume and as an embodied system of the production of selves. I can *participate* in it. After years of archiving them, images of one particular show almost totally dissolve in my mind, and sometimes this is better—to totally cut the image off and embrace the immaterial—while other times, it's nice to rewatch the video on occasion. I must admit that I started to be so tied to the music due the interaction with the dramaturgy of the show, as well as the brand itself. I also admit that my fetish for these sounds developed together with an awareness with gesture and the choreographed body in general, from images of Ethan James Green (the "hand lover") to dance theatre with DV8, from musical movies to friends smoking in bars. Once, I suggested to a friend who was organizing an afterparty of an art fair that I would have liked to DJ only using music ripped from runways. I don't remember why, it didn't happen.

Being able to catch the most original (or highest resolution) video to transform it to mp3 is a big part of the process, seeing as almost no brands do live sound recording, and after a few replays of the live video, they change the soundtrack for copyright reasons. I think the first downloads were from Chanel, by their long-time DJ and sonic mastermind Michel Gaubert — especially the Crooker's haunting laugh coming out from the bushes of the Ver-

MY FETISH FOR THESE SOUNDS

sailles garden. Then, it was Rodarte's neon poetry-infused ballads, the Louis Vuitton hypnotic sexy saxes by Woodkid, the SebastiAn's synthesis synth for Saint Laurent. Gucci's glitched odes, Margiela's dada onomatopoeias, and above all, the Prada's foyer of everyday drama by Frédéric Sanchez. I remember something a friend once wrote about perfumes: do models walking by leave in my mind the same as the sillage of a perfume after the wearer passes? Can I smell them everytime I play the songs? Next time, I'll try to only listen to the track and then watch the video, after a few rounds of listening—what will I foresee? By listening to fashion show soundtracks, traces of absent bodies manifest themselves and can be heard moving. Camera shutters, the voices of the audience and finally the applause—which tries, like us, to reach those bodies that cannot be seen. ✂