

# DEVELOPING A COLLECTION

Before you even think about putting a collection together you must identify early on what kind of clothes you want to design and sell, and at what level – are you designing for men, women or children, for example? Do you want to design for the high street or for haute couture? What do you want to include in your collection? You must understand the different types of garment and whether they can form a collection on their own or in combination. You must also consider the fashion calendar and how collections fit into this timetable. Finally, you must think strategically about the different ways you can promote and sell the collection.

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# Who are you designing for?

As a fashion designer you can work at various 'levels' within the fashion industry. The choice you make will depend on your training, ability and interests – and of course how much you would like to be paid for your work. Finding your niche in fashion design may be something you've been working towards from the beginning – or may evolve more organically. But when you start a collection you should have a very clear understanding of who you are designing for.

## Haute couture

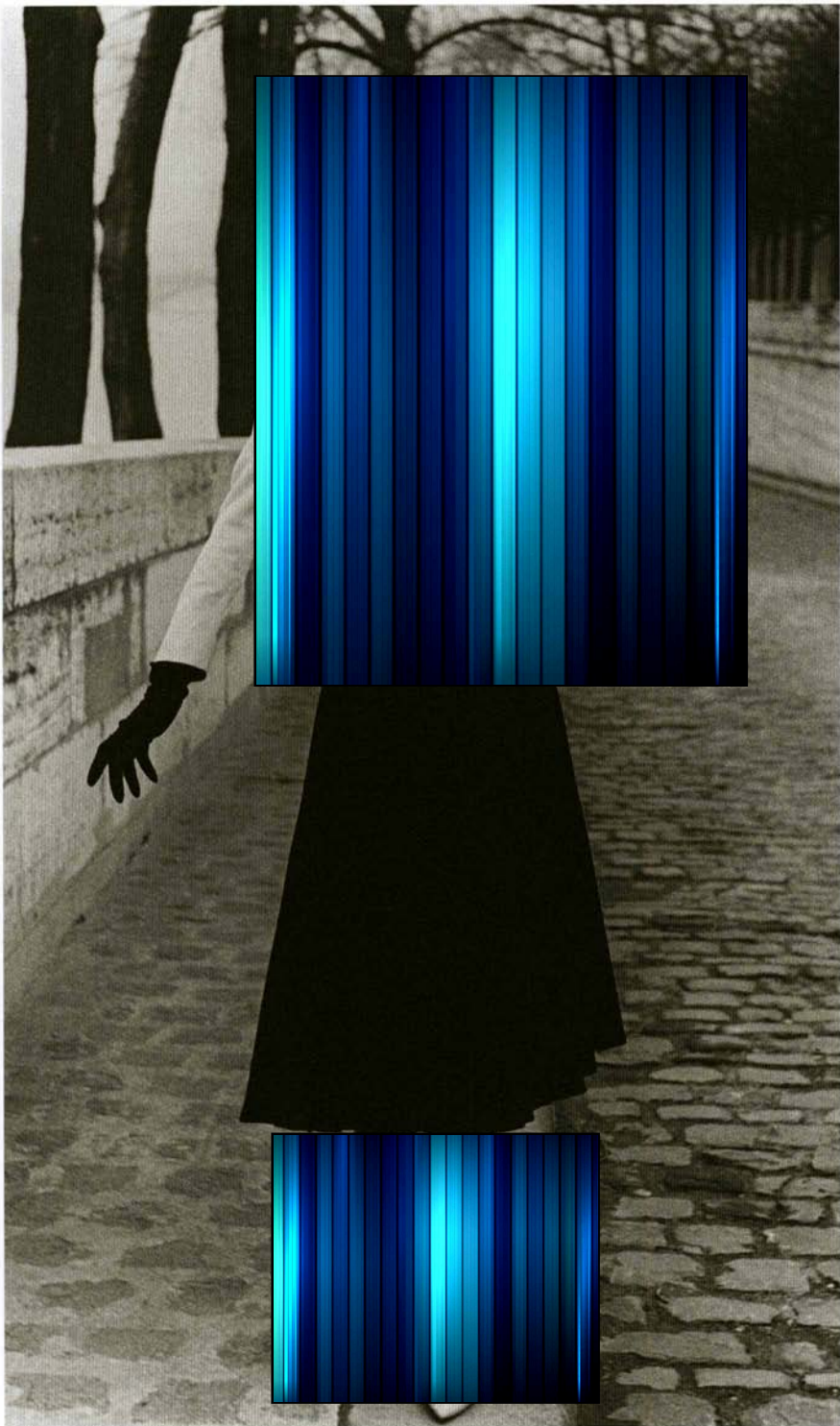
The couture fashion shows are held twice a year in January and July. The shows present womenswear to potential buyers and function as advertising for the fashion houses. The instantly recognisable names of the top haute couturiers include Chanel, Christian Dior, Christian Lacroix, Givenchy, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Yves Saint Laurent.

Haute couture garments are made to fit to individual customers and are very expensive as a couturier uses the most exclusive fabrics and highly skilled artisans. Without couture these amazing making and embellishment skills would be lost. To learn the specific rigorous skills of haute couture you would be best advised to complete a degree in fashion design and then find a placement working in-house with a couturier. The skills required at this level are impossible to cover sufficiently during a three- or four-year degree course and can take years to perfect.

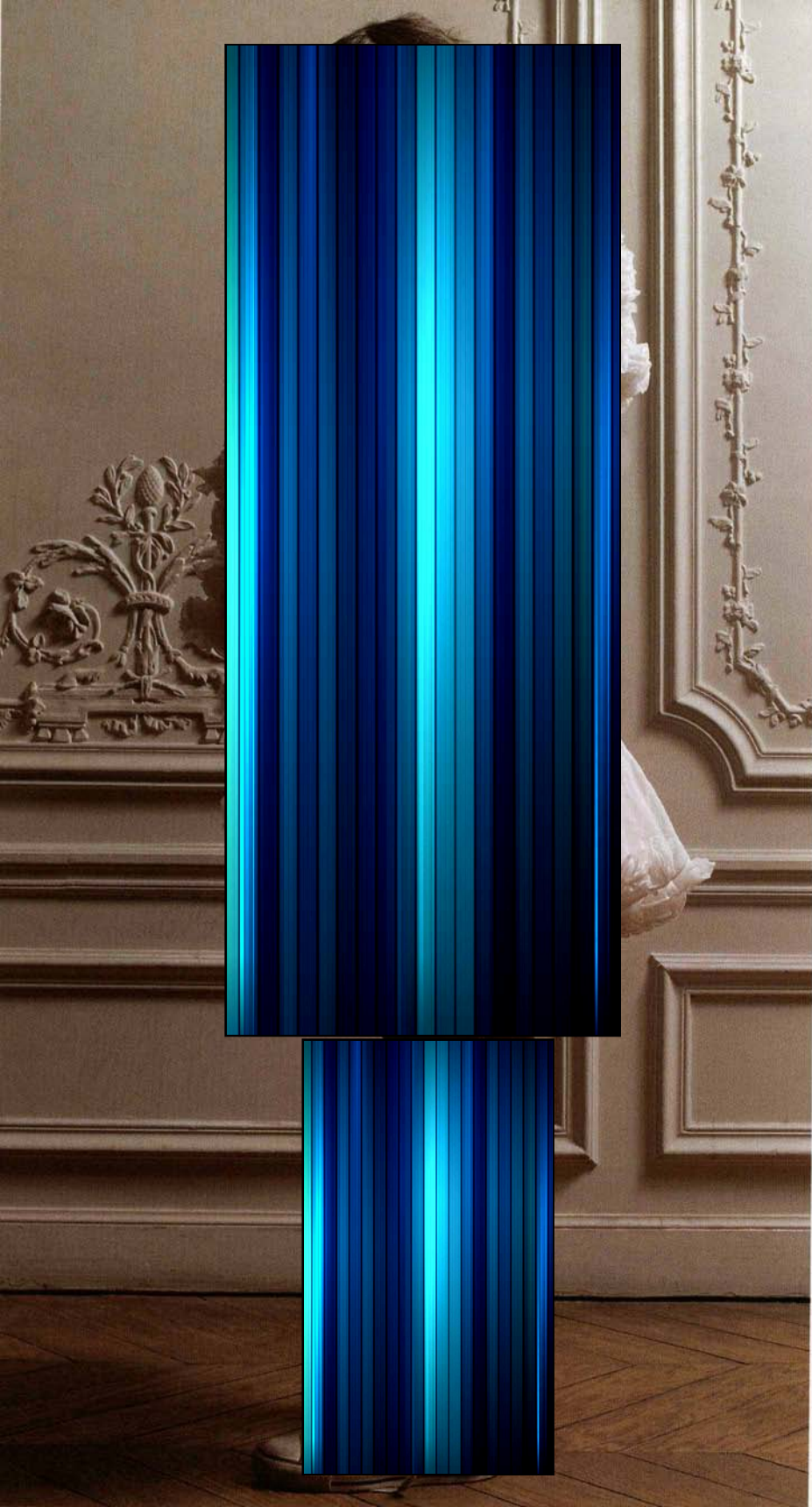
Today there are very few clients who can afford couture, but it is still an essential part of the fashion industry as the collections are innovative and original, and less restricted by commercial restraints than ready to wear (or prêt-à-porter). Haute couture clothes push at the boundaries of fashion.

*‘It was interesting to explore historical clothes and to think about those textures, those embroideries, those materials and then to interpret them for a woman today, not as costume but as wardrobe.’*

**Nicolas Ghesquière at Balenciaga**



- 1 Christian Dior 'New Look' dress from 1947.  
(© Association Willy Maywald/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006/  
V&A Images  
Christian Dior)



### **Ready to wear (prêt-à-porter)**

Haute couture collections are far too expensive for much of the fashion-buying public, so designers create collections that are high quality, but which are produced in larger numbers to fit many customers within the range of standard sizes – these are 'ready to wear'. Given this, they still retain an air of exclusivity. As the new ready-to-wear collections are not designed for an individual customer, they can afford to reflect the designer's concepts. Ready-to-wear styles are at the top end of the fashion industry. Ready-to-wear fashion is designed by a diverse range of designers, from independent designers through to the luxury super brands.

### **Luxury super brands**

Fashion super brands are global companies. They have immense advertising budgets, their own stores and produce their own perfume and accessories. Super brands also design and sell diffusion lines under their name. They design and produce luxury designer goods and promote their collections on the catwalk during the designer prêt-à-porter shows.

The LVMH (Louis Vuitton, Moët Hennessy) group and the Gucci group are the two main fashion luxury goods conglomerates that own many fashion brands and super brands. Bernard Arnault is the president of the LVMH group, which owns Louis Vuitton, Dior, Celine, Kenzo, Thomas Pink, Emilio Pucci, Givenchy, Loewe, Fendi, Marc Jacobs and Donna Karan. François Pinault owns the Gucci group, which includes Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Boucheron, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney.

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| <p>1 Anne Valerie Hash<br/>aftershow party<br/>featuring a white,<br/>gathered dress.<br/>(Designer: Anne Valerie<br/>Hash/Photographer:<br/>Fabrice Laroche<br/>/Model: Lou Lesage)</p> | <p>2 Luxury super brand<br/>Prada from the<br/>Spring/Summer<br/>2006 collection.</p> |
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### Mid-level brands and designers

A mid-level brand or designer is not as powerful as a super brand, but is nevertheless an established company that has been trading for a few years with a good turnover and profile. It sells wholesale or may have concessions or franchises, and it may have its own stores. A mid-level brand or designer is usually well known within a specific area of design or within a particular country. A mid-level designer may show on the catwalk and work with a high-street store – for example, British designer Matthew Williamson.

### Independent designer labels

An independent designer works with a small team to produce a collection. They have complete control over their business, so they are able to design very personal collections. Depending on the size of the team, they also need to be in control of all the other areas of the business including finance, sampling, manufacturing, press and sales. This can take up a great deal of time, leaving little time to design fashion, so it is crucial for the independent designer to find a balance.

The independent designer may show his or her collection on the catwalk at the fashion fairs. Typically, the collections are sold wholesale to boutiques or department stores, and the designer either sells directly to them or via a sales agent. For example, designer Emma Cook currently sells her collection at London Fashion Week and is stocked in Selfridges of London.

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| 1 | Examples from the Emma Cook Spring/Summer 2006 collection. | 2 | Casualwear brand Diesel Autumn/Winter 2004 campaign. |
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### Casualwear and sportswear brands

There are also super brands that are involved in the areas of casualwear and sportswear. Nike and Levi Strauss are two such brands. They produce diffusion lines, accessories and toiletries, as well as their large collections and many choose to advertise – but do not show at the prêt-à-porter shows. Casual- and sportswear is also designed at mid-level and as new labels. Evisu is a successful mid-level brand in the jeans and casualwear market.

### High street

High-street fashion companies design collections that go straight to retail. They have chains of stores or franchises across the country or even the globe. The UK has a very strong high-street fashion market. The high-street stores look at the catwalk collections and pick up on trends, and because of their manufacturing set-up, are able to react quickly to these fashion trends. They design and make garments quicker than ready-to-wear designers are able to – in many ways because the quality of the development, fabrics and production is less intensive – and the production process from initial sketch to final garment can take weeks rather than months. High-street stores are not part of the biannual fashion weeks and they do not usually show their collections on the catwalk. One recent exception to this rule is TopShop, which enjoys some crossover appeal.

### Supermarkets

Supermarkets have recently started selling ranges of clothing alongside groceries and other products. Garments are produced quickly and in bulk to satisfy the demands of the consumer, which means the clothes cost less to manufacture and can be sold at a very reasonable price.

Founder of fashion retailer Next, George Davis joined ASDA supermarket in 1990 to start the fashion-led brand George at ASDA. It is stocked in over 250 stores in the UK and is now also sold in Canada, Mexico, Germany, Korea, Japan and the USA. Supermarket retailer Tesco has followed suit by introducing clothing lines Florence + Fred and Cherokee to its stores.

# Genre

## Womenswear

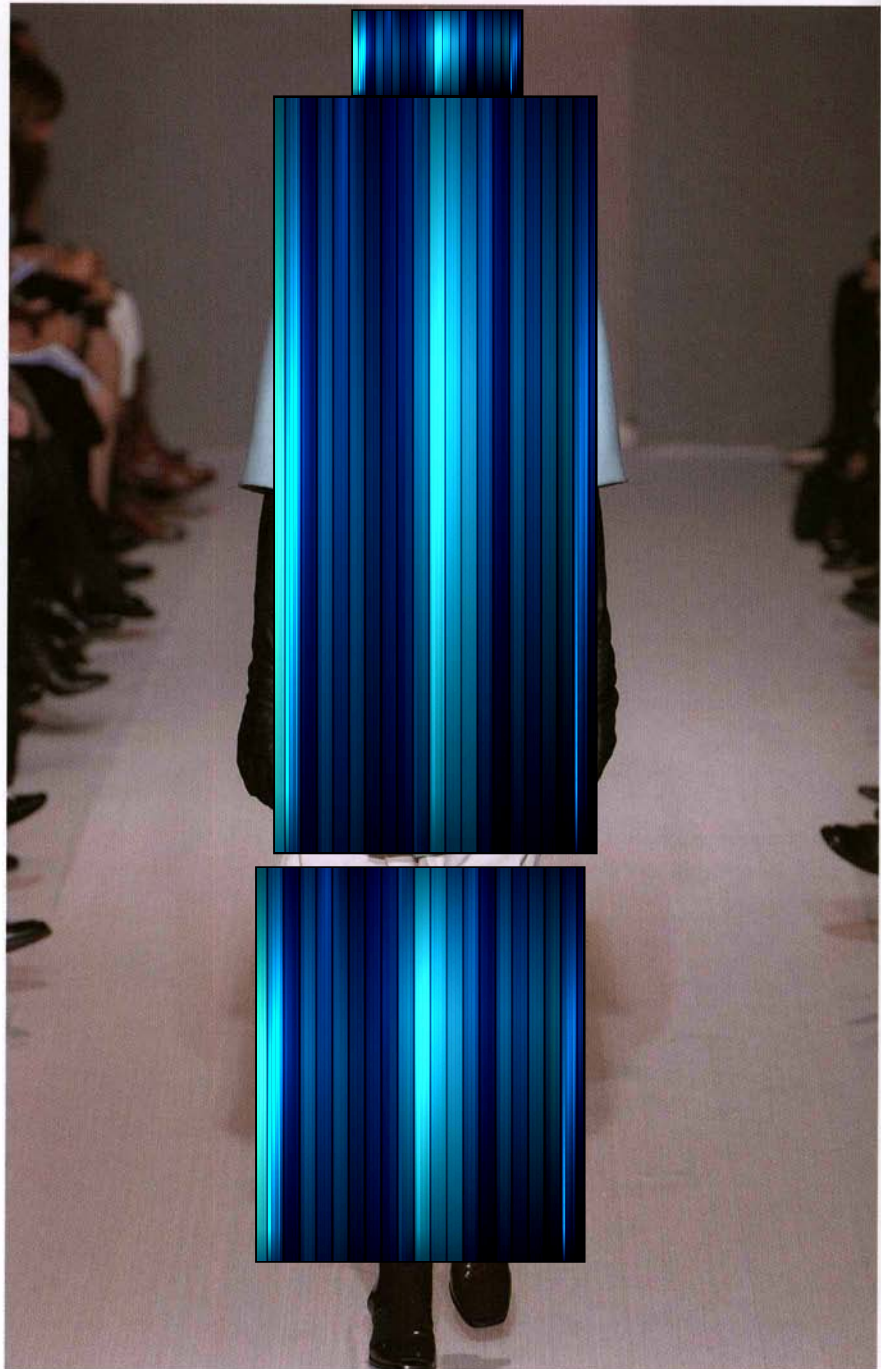
The womenswear market is saturated with designers and therefore highly competitive. This is probably because womenswear is considered to be not only more creative, but crucially more glamorous than other areas of fashion.

## Menswear

Menswear is more conservative than womenswear and is therefore subject to fewer and more subtle changes season to season – for example, trouser-width may alter or a collar may change shape. Menswear sales are also less significant. Men tend not to buy as many clothes and when they do, they are more expensive and longer-lasting. In terms of what men and women wear on a day-to-day basis, men normally wear a less diverse range of garments compared to women.

## Childrenswear

Childrenswear design can be just as sophisticated as womens- and menswear, but, in addition, designers must consider health and safety restrictions and the appropriateness of the garments. Childrenswear includes clothes for newborn, toddler, kids and teenage boys and girls.





- 1 Marni womenswear.
- 2 Menswear from Dior.



‘ It’s great to tell a story in a collection, but you must never forget that, despite all the fantasy, the thing is about clothes. And, all the time while you are editing to make the impact stronger, you have to remember that, at the end of the day, there has to be a collection and it has to be sold. We have to seduce women into buying it. That’s our role. What you see on the runway isn’t all you get. That represents less than a quarter of what we produce. Merchandising is vital. We have to keep the shops stocked, looking fresh and seductive. ’

**John Galiano**, from *Galiano* by Colin McDowell, Weidenfeld & Nicolson

# Types of garment



Whether you design for menswear, womenswear or childrenswear, there are different ranges within each collection – for example, casualwear, jeanswear, eveningwear, tailoring, swimwear, underwear, lingerie, knitwear, sportswear, showpieces and accessories. If you have your own fashion company you will probably design all the areas within your collection. But if you go to work for a large company such as Hugo Boss or Gap you will specialise in a certain area – for example, outerwear (coats and jackets) or dresses.

## Casualwear

Casualwear is defined as everyday clothes that are not typically worn in a formal situation. Casualwear gained momentum in the 1950s with the evolution of youth culture. Teenagers didn't want to look like their parents and so started to dress their own way. Designers and manufacturers – culture at large – responded, and a more relaxed form of dress was developed, which has grown and become a global phenomenon. The two most common fabrics associated with casualwear are jersey and denim. Sportswear and underground urban style are the main influences on this area of fashion.

## Jeanswear

Jeans are trousers made of denim. Originally worn as clothes for manual work, they became popular among teenagers in the 1950s. Levi Strauss, Lee, Diesel and Wrangler are well-known jeans brands, although Levi Strauss is probably the oldest and most famous of these. Today, jeans are a truly international item of casualwear, worn by young and old alike. They are designed in numerous styles and colours. With developments in fabrics and washes every season, designers are constantly reinventing the product by producing a new twist on the classic jeans. Many jeans brands have evolved from designing simply jeans to designing other garments in the casual wardrobe too.



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1 House of Jazz coat using jeans detailing.

2 From top left to bottom right: Levi's 501XXX, Evisu cinch-back, Levi Strauss, High Street, Rogan, Nudie, Blue Lab, Y-3.

3 Stella McCartney for Adidas Spring/Summer 2006 collection. (Photographer: Alexander Gnädinger for Adidas)

### Sportswear

Sportswear design is different to other areas of design in that it is almost entirely led by function. The garments must perform in relation to a specific sport or activity. This has become an interesting area of design as fabric technology constantly evolves, and sportswear is becoming increasingly fashionable for everyone to wear, not simply sports enthusiasts. Sportswear has its own trends, which can affect main fashion trends. This is especially apparent in trainers, where a functional trainer is adopted as a street trend, which in turn is picked up by fashionistas. Converse, owned by Nike, produces trainers that were initially designed for basketball players, but over the years Converse trainers have become iconic and worn off the court as fashion footwear. Converse is currently working on a womenswear range with American designer John Varvatos.

There are many crossovers between sportswear and fashion. Manufacturers are commissioning fashion designers to make functional sportswear more fashionable. Stella McCartney has collaborated with Adidas to produce 'sport performance' design collections, which include garments for running, for the gym, swimming and tennis. Rossignol, which makes skiwear, commissioned Emilio Pucci and Christian Lacroix – who was their designer at the time – to design a range of outfits and boards featuring Pucci prints.

In turn, sportswear influences fashion design – for example, Comme de Garçons produced its own version of the Fred Perry polo shirt for its fashion line, and Yohji Yamamoto is collaborating with Adidas to produce Y-3. The Y-3 collection includes technical sports fabrics and construction techniques. Many of the garments feature the triple-stripe logo that is synonymous with Adidas.

### Swimwear

With the advent of cheaper airfares most of us are able to holiday in hot countries at all times of the year nowadays, thus increasing the demand for swimwear. In sports, fabrication and designs for swimwear have technologically advanced, which has allowed for greater variety within the basic garments.

### Underwear

Underwear design has predominantly been about technology and function, but in recent years has become more self-consciously design-led. Agent Provocateur is an example of one company that designs functional, luxurious, stylish underwear and lingerie. Unusually for an underwear company, it shows its collection during Paris Fashion Week, which underscores its importance as an area of design. Agent Provocateur has its own store and concessions, and also designs a range for British retailer Marks & Spencer.

### Eveningwear

Perhaps obviously, eveningwear is more formal than daywear. Even today, men's eveningwear remains quite traditional, but women's eveningwear is limited only by the imagination. One only has to consider the global media attention on the night the Oscars are held, when the actresses and models make their way down the red carpet, to know how important eveningwear is for fashion and to see how diverse the styles, colours and fabrics are. Eveningwear garments tend to be made from finer, more expensive fabrics, such as taffeta and silk. Eveningwear tends to transcend seasons, and it is less easy to identify an evening gown from one year to the next.

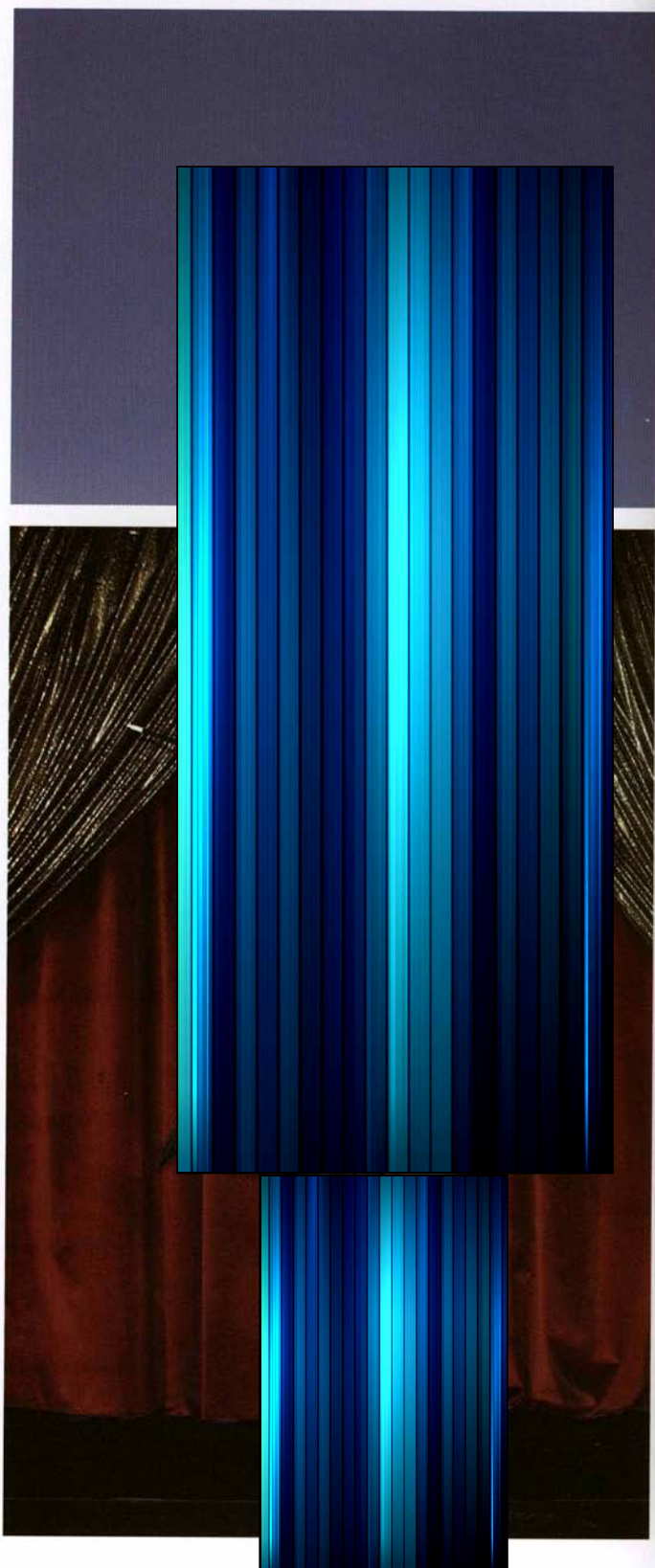
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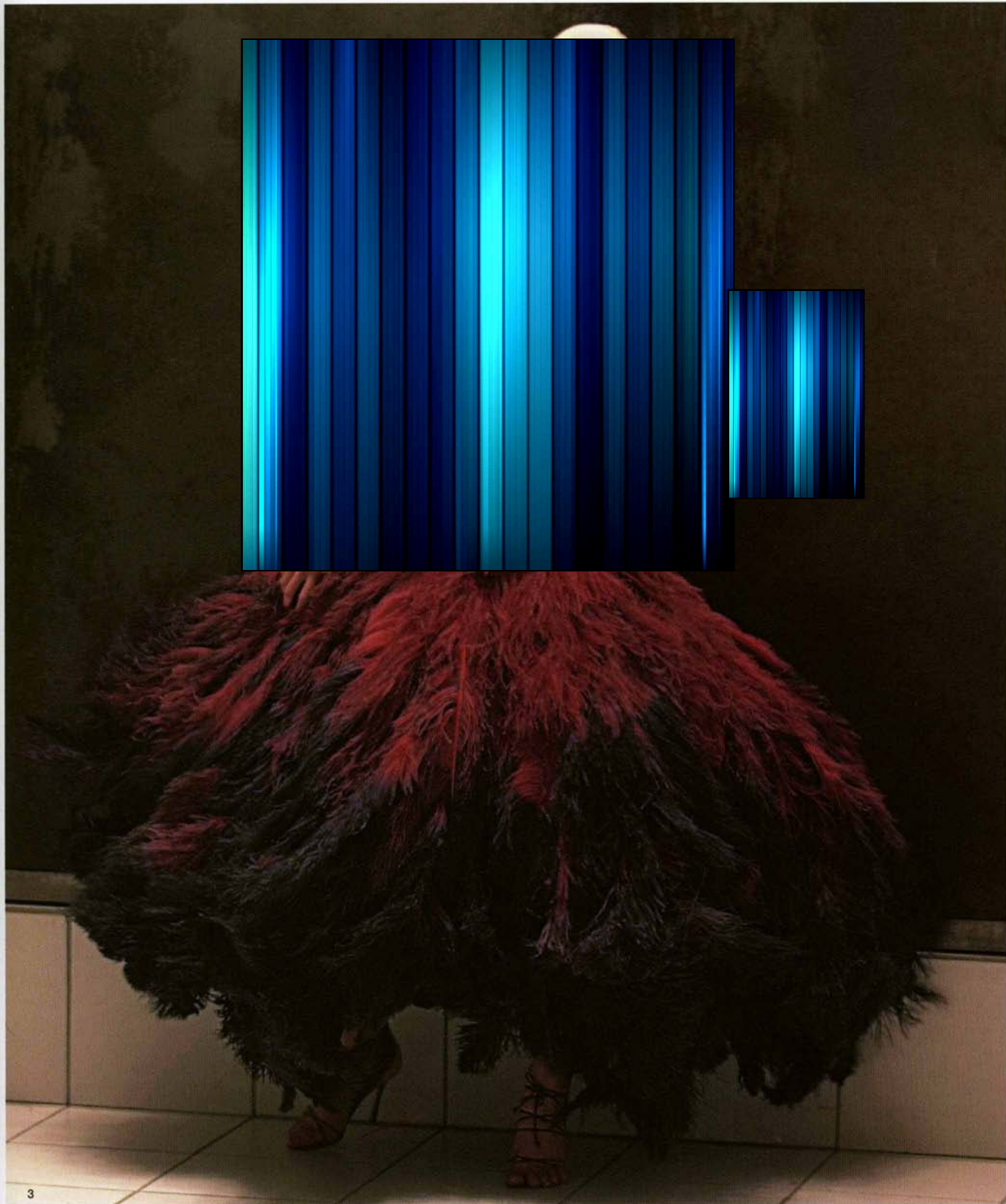
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1 Stella McCartney for Adidas Spring /Summer 2006 collection.  
(Photography: Alexander Gnädinger for Adidas)

2 Agent Provocateur Spring/Summer 2006 collection.

3 Alexander McQueen Spring/Summer 2001 collection.







Viktor & Rolf  
Autumn/Winter  
2005 collection.

2 Knitwear by Vivienne  
Westwood.

### Showpieces

Within many catwalk collections, some clothes are considered to be more wearable than others, but you can always guarantee that some clothes will elicit cries from the public of 'Who would wear that?'. However, what many don't know is that these outrageous creations are called 'showpieces'. These pieces never make it to the rail of a shop or boutique, but are conceived to attract the design press, either as part of the coverage of the show in which they appeared or when worn by a celebrity to a premiere, which promotes the designer to a wider audience. As they look, showpieces are intended to grab attention. They are often time consuming and expensive to make, and represent the designer's undiluted vision.

### Tailoring

As one might imagine, tailored clothes have more structure and fit than casual garments, and specific skills are required in order to understand their construction. Tailored garments are perceived as being formal, and in many places of work, are considered to be the appropriate dress code.

Bespoke tailoring is the menswear equivalent to haute couture. Each suit is made to fit a specific customer. Many men are still willing to pay thousands for a well-cut suit that will last them over many years. Richard James, Kilgour, Oswald Boateng and Timothy Everest are all well-known UK-based tailors.

### Knitwear

Knitwear designers are really the only fashion designers that develop the construction of the fabric of the garment as well as its design, as they are responsible for making the decisions about the yarn, stitch and silhouette. Some fashion brands have developed from knitwear companies that have their own identifiable style. Missoni is known for its multicoloured striped knitwear and Pringle for its diamond argyle patterns.



## Accessories

Accessories finish the look of an outfit. They include bags, belts, hats, shoes, scarves, jewellery and eyewear. Many brands produce accessories along with their clothing collections to offer a complete look. The customer can style themselves from head to toe in one brand if they so choose.

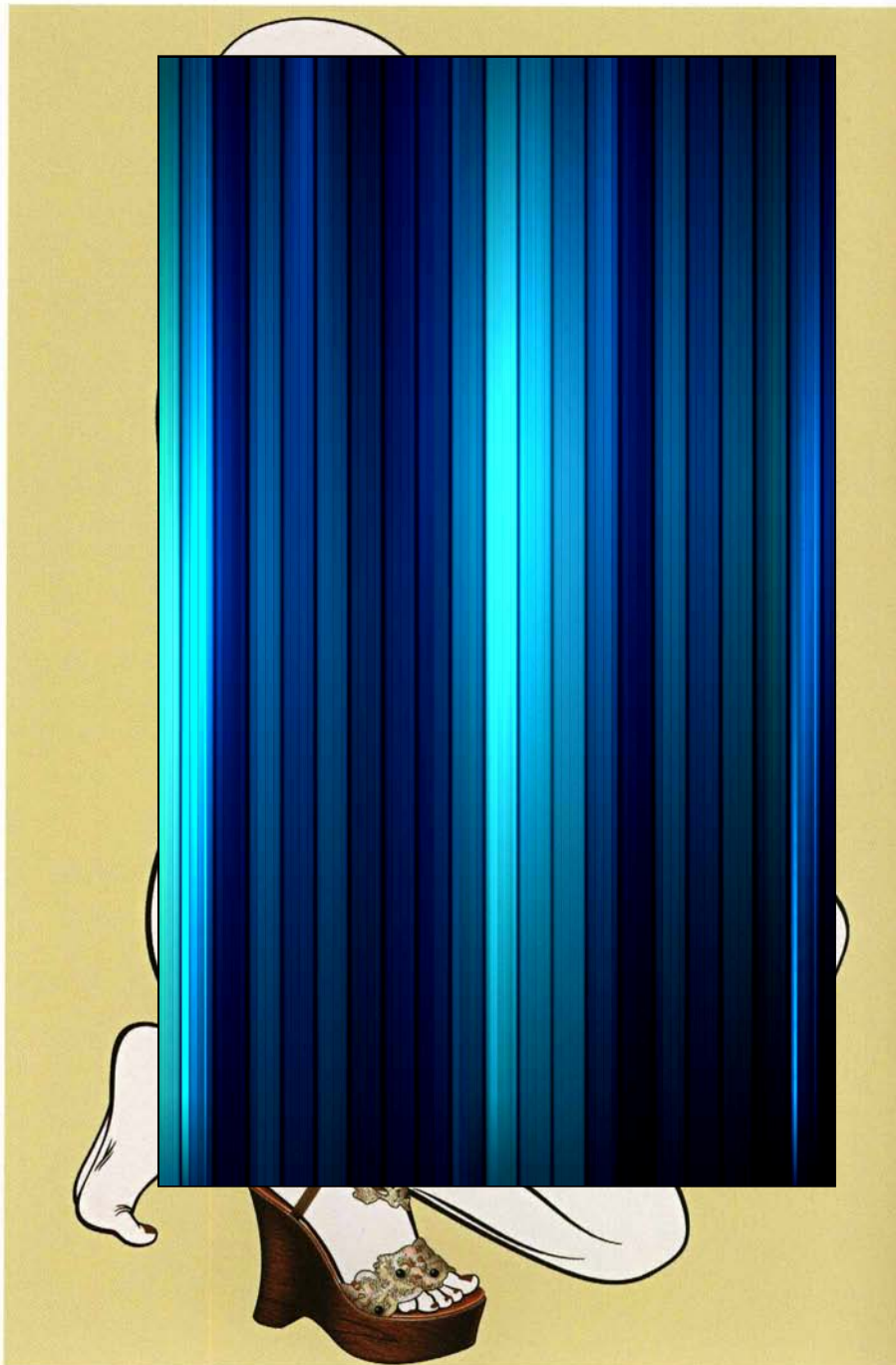
Accessories are generally cheaper than garments and enable consumers to buy into a brand via the purchase of a pair of sunglasses, a belt or a signature bag when they may not be able to afford the clothes.

Accessories can change the look of an outfit – they can dress it up or down. A pair of trainers with a women's outfit will look more casual than a pair of high heels.

They can also work as fashion status symbols, made desirable through media endorsement. This is especially true of bags, and each season there is a new coveted bag with its own identifiable name and look from the major fashion houses – for example, the Birkin at Hermès, named after style-icon Jane Birkin and the Novak at Alexander McQueen.

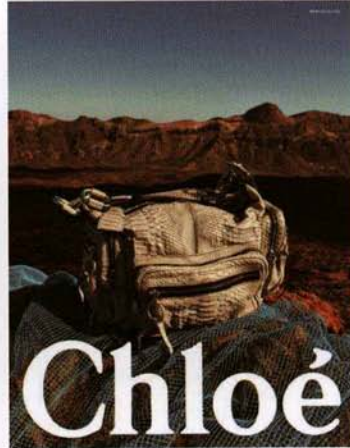
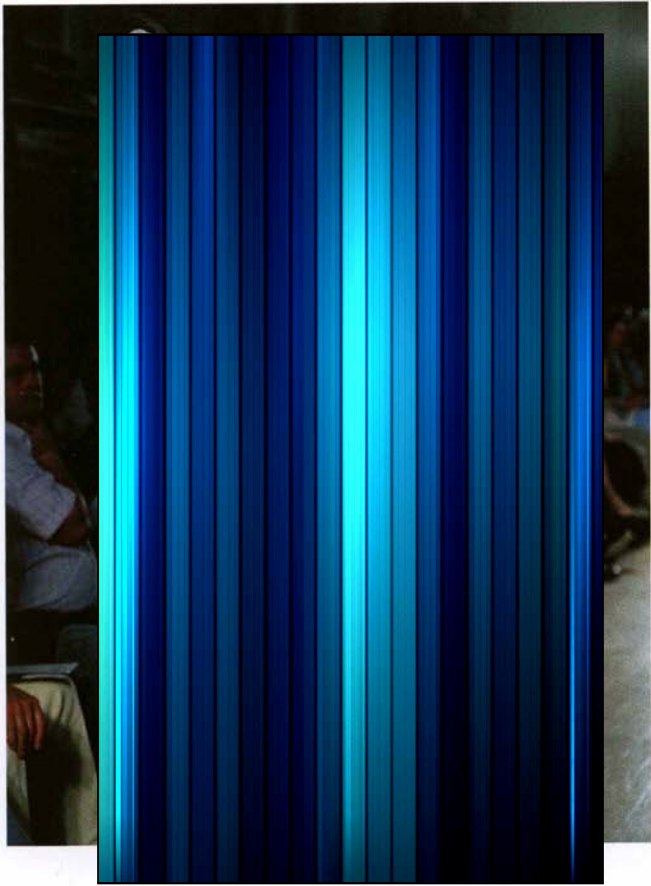
Footwear, hat and bag design are specific areas of design which require a great deal of skill in terms of construction, as well as design and function.

With the evolution of the celebrity hairstylist in the 1960s and 1970s, wearing hats fell somewhat out of favour. These days, there are few occasions for which wearing a hat might be appropriate. However, there are a few successful established milliners in the UK. Philip Treacy and Stephen Jones produce a range of ready-to-wear hats, but also design elaborate pieces for the catwalk shows of Dior and Alexander McQueen.





- 1 Autumn Whitehurst illustration of a Prada wedge shoe.
- 2 J. Smith Esq. couture hat.
- 3 Chloé Betty bag.
- 4 Boots by Boudicca.



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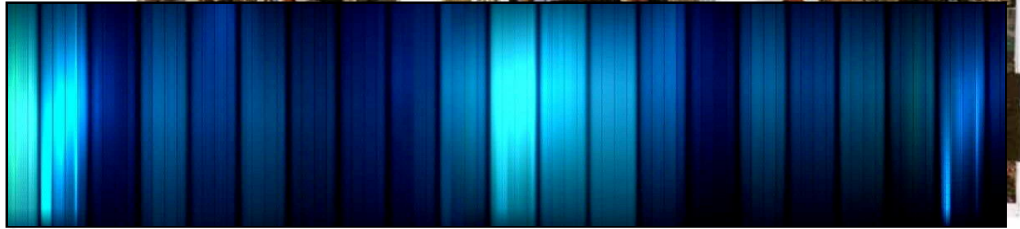
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*‘ No one can be prepared for how much work is involved, and it's so important to maintain one's integrity and sense of self while enduring the tough times. It is a pleasure to do, and without doubt has its rewards so stick to it! ’*

**Autumn Whitehurst, Fashion Illustrator, interviewed by the author**

# Putting together a collection

Fashion design is a fast-moving industry. In order to succeed you must be well-organised and be prepared for a lot of hard work.



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| Womenswear Prêt-à-Porter Fashion Year |  |     |     |                   |     |  |      |  |      |     |   |     |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-------------------|-----|--|------|--|------|-----|---|-----|---|--|
|                                       | Jan  | Feb | Mar | April             | May | June                                   | July | Aug  | Sept | Oct | Nov   | Dec | Jan   | Feb  |
| Spring/Summer 1                       | Yarn + Fabric Fairs.<br>Premier Vision.<br>Showing S/S ideas.<br>Start designing<br>Spring/Summer. |     |     | Selling finishes. |     | Sampling Spring/<br>Summer Collection. |      | Samples black +<br>finished.<br>Spring/Summer<br>Fashion Weeks. London/<br>NY/Paris/Milan. |      |     | Orders collated +<br>order fabric + trims.<br>Start production. |     | Deliver Spring/<br>Summer collection<br>to store.   |  |
| Autumn Winter 2                       |  |     |     |                   |     |  |      | Yarn + Fabric Fairs.<br>PV + Pitti. Start<br>Autumn/Winter<br>designing.                   |      |     | Sampling Autumn/<br>Winter Collection.                          |     | Samples finished.   | Autumn/Winter<br>Fashion Weeks.<br>London/NY/<br>Paris/Milian. |
| Spring/Summer 3                       |  |     |     |                   |     |  |      |  |      |     |   |     | Yarn + Fabric Fairs.<br>Showing Spring/<br>Summer ideas.<br>Start designing<br>Spring/Summer. |  |

*Menswear shows are earlier, but delivery times are the same*

- 1 Mood-boards illustrate 'stories' and are often used by fashion retailers to subdivide collections. These storyboards are by Whistles.
- 2 Calendar showing the basic Prêt-à-Porter fashion year. In addition designers could also be working on other collections including pre-collections and cruise collections.

### Collections and ranges

The fashion year has two seasons, six months apart. Thus, the industry works on a cycle, with a collection for the spring/summer and for the autumn/winter seasons. Small fashion companies produce just these two collections a year, but larger companies produce more. Often they sell two smaller collections that go in-store for the Christmas period and high summer. The Christmas collection or 'cruise' collection can include partywear or clothes for winter holidays. The high-summer collection focuses on swimwear and summer holiday clothes.

In addition to this, pre-collections are produced that are smaller and include a taste of what is to come. These are shown to the buyers just before the main collections. Designers may also

produce a commercial selling collection. The buyers place their orders primarily from these collections, therefore allowing the main collection catwalk shows to be more experimental in order to catch the eye of the press.

High-street fashion retailers introduce ranges of clothes more frequently into their stores to keep the customer constantly interested. This is done by subdividing the main collection into smaller collections, or 'stories', and staggering their release to the stores across the selling period. These are easier to market and merchandise than a single, very large collection. Stories are usually given names – normally a word that sums up the theme of that story, for example: Contour, Zanzibar or Marianne.

A designer may be working on many collections at one time. For example, in January a designer may be showing a pre-collection, finishing the look of the autumn/winter mainline collection for selling, finishing the cruise collection and starting to design the main spring/summer collection.

For a large ready-to-wear company, the autumn/winter collection may have around 200 pieces, the cruise collection 100 pieces and the spring/summer collection 160 pieces. By comparison, for a new independent designer, a collection might be more in the region of 20–100 pieces (15–50 outfits) in different colourways. A shirt designer for TopMan would be expected to design around 50–60 different styles of shirt a season over six stories.

### Womenswear Prêt-à-Porter Fashion Year

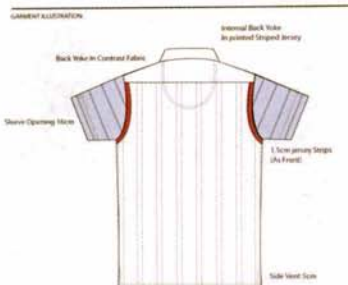
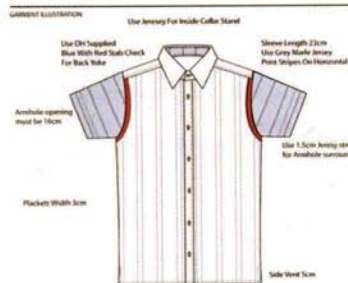
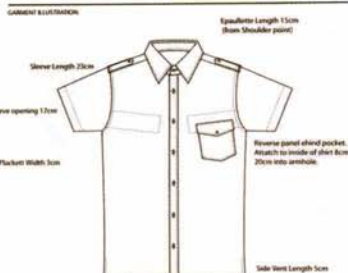
| Mar | April                             | May  | June                        | July  | Aug               | Sept                            | Oct               | Nov                                    | Dec | Jan                                 | Feb | Mar | April |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|
|     |                                   |  |                             |   |                   |                                 |                   |  |     |                                     |     |     |       |
|     | Selling finishes.<br>Books close. | Collate orders +<br>order fabrics + trims.<br>Start Production |                             | Deliver Autumn/<br>Winter Collection to<br>store. |                   |                                 |                   |  |     |                                     |     |     |       |
|     |                                   |  | Sampling S/S<br>Collection. |   | Samples finished. | Spring/Summer<br>Fashion Weeks. | Selling finishes. | Orders collates.<br>Production starts. |     | Deliver S/S<br>Collection to store. |     |     |       |

*Menswear shows are earlier, but delivery times are the same*

‘ *The constant hunger for renewal in fashion is driven not only by a commercial imperative and the consumer’s delight in “newness” but also by a fascination with image and narrative.* ’

**Claire Wilcox**, Curator of the Twentieth Century and Contemporary Dress collections at the V&A, from *Radical Fashion*, edited by Claire Wilcox, V&A Publications





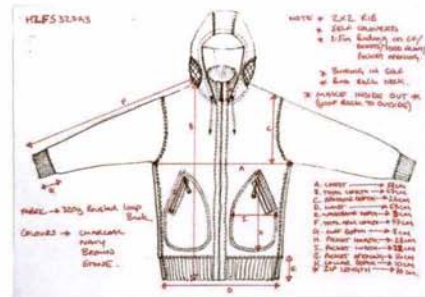
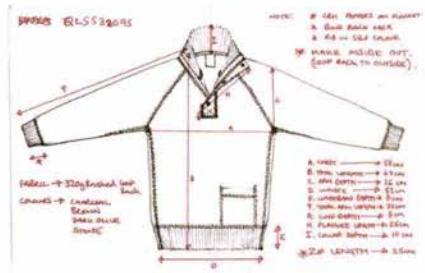
### Garments designed for a season

Garments are applicable to different seasons. For example, coats are obviously more important than swimwear in the autumn/winter season. Fabrics also differ; heavier, warmer fabrics are used more in autumn/winter and cooler, lighter fabrics for spring/summer. However, as many of us work in air-conditioned buildings and live in heated houses the differences between seasons are becoming less apparent, and clothes are becoming less significantly seasonal. We tend to layer clothes up so we may wear summer pieces with sweaters for winter.

### The design process in industry

As a designer working for a company, the first task in designing a collection is research. You may be involved with forms of research other than those already discussed in chapter one. Going on shopping trips in your location and around the world keeps you informed of fashion and other cultural trends. Fabric and fibre fairs are important for finding out about the latest developments in fabrication. Depending on the size of the company you work for, you may have to talk with merchandisers and buyers to discuss the shopping habits of your target customer, which garments have sold well and which have not from previous and current collections.

Having digested the research, the collection is designed and a range is drawn up. A specification drawing is made for each garment, and fabric samples and trims are selected. From this, a pattern is cut and sampled. The samples are assessed on their individual merits and how they work in the collection as a whole. The sample may be altered in terms of fit, fabrication and detail and then re-sampled. The entire sampling process may take place in-house or it may be sent out to the factory that manufactures sampled clothes. The designer or other members of the team will be in charge of this process.



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From the Chanel Cruise collection. Originally shot for *i-D* magazine, December

2005. (Photographer: Jamie Isaia/ Art & Commerce) 2/3 Working drawings for manufacture and shots of the end result.

# Showing a collection

Once a collection is designed and made, your priority is to show it to the press and buyers. It is important to thoroughly research different fashion events to find the one best suited to your product. Try and show at the same place for a few seasons as this encourages the press and buyers to get to know you and to see that you are committed.

Designers generally show in the country in which they work and live – at least initially. This is because they understand their home market and because it is much less expensive than showing abroad. As the business grows they may start showing internationally and which city they choose will depend on the kind of product they are showing and the stores they wish to target.

There are many fashion events around the world. The main womenswear ready-to-wear shows are held during Fashion Weeks in Paris, Milan, London and New York, and the haute couture shows are in Paris. The menswear ready-to-wear fashion shows are during the mens' Fashion Weeks in Milan, Paris and New York. (Which are usually ahead of the womenswear shows.) There are also shows that cover all the other areas of fashion, including casualwear, jeanswear, underwear, accessories and childrenswear.

‘ *It's more like engineering than anything else. It's finding the limits of what you can do when wrapping the body in fabric. Everything evolves. Nothing is strictly defined.* ’

**John Galliano, from Galliano by Colin McDowell, Weidenfeld & Nicolson**



- 1 Backstage at Justin Smith Esq.
- 2 New designers usually show 'off-schedule', whereas established names show 'on-schedule'.

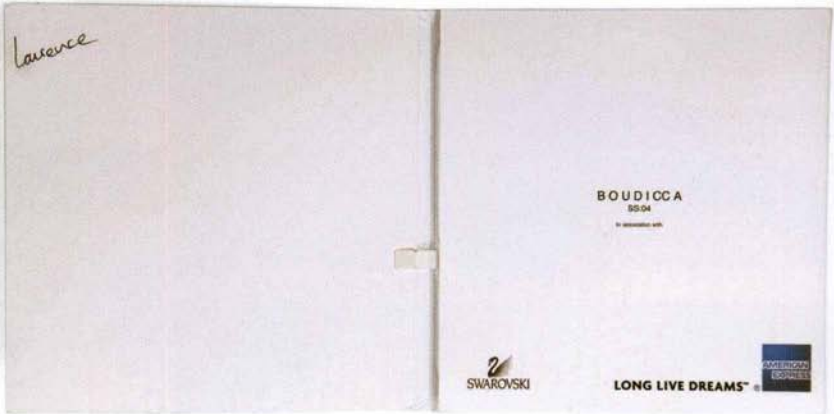
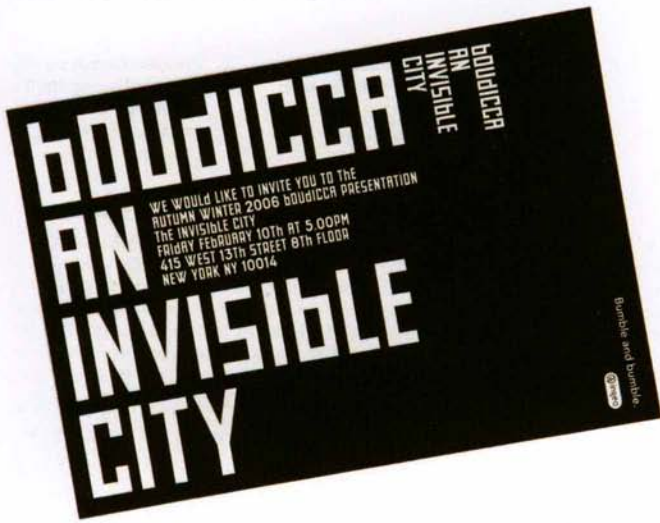
**The catwalk show**

The catwalk show, or runway, is a great way of showing the collection as clothes are best seen on the body, in motion and showing their fit and drape. The designer can create a complete concept with the show through his or her styling of the models and the setting of the show itself. Press, buyers, stylists, possible investors, sponsors and peers are invited to the show. Buyers will make notes on what they might like to buy for their stores. Press will be commenting on the collection for newspapers and magazines, as well as looking at which pieces they might use for photo shoots in future issues.

The catwalk show can be a very expensive event with no direct financial return. The return will only come if it receives good press and if orders are taken at the showroom afterwards. It can cost upwards of £20,000 (or the equivalent). Because of this expense, new designers often try to secure some form of sponsorship for the show. Some high-street retailers offer sponsorship in return for a collection designed by the designer to go in-store. However exciting a fashion show may seem, as a designer it is important not to show on the catwalk too early. If the collection is poor and the show unprofessional it can do more harm to the designer's credibility and bank balance than good.

Organisers of the fashion week shows vet designers and decide who will show on the official schedule. It is usual for new designers who are not on the official list to show 'off schedule'. This means that they can show their collections, but perhaps in smaller, less high-profile venues. They may attract press and buyers hoping to discover an exciting new underground talent. Press will support a new underground designer for a while, but may lose interest if the momentum does not seem to build around the designer and his or her business. Buyers tend to wait a few seasons before buying a new designer's collection. They want to make sure that the business is established enough to manufacture and deliver a good-quality collection on time to their stores.







- 1 Boudicca are very experimental with their invites to their fashion shows; from talking invites to an engraved false nail.
- 2 Hussein Chalayan Autumn/Winter 2000 collection was staged at Sadler's Wells in London.

A catwalk show can take many different formats and there is no single rule or approach. It may be a simple raised catwalk running down the centre of a large auditorium or room with seating areas at either side with an area for the bank of photographers at the end of the catwalk where the models parade up and down in turn.

However, some designers choose to show their clothes in a more personal or conceptual way – the show being a very important part of the collection's ethos.

Designers try to find unusual venues, such as car parks, football stadiums, warehouses and subways. The designer must think about what lighting and music best suits the collection and will create an ambience for the show. The guests' invitations and the 'goody bag' they receive when they arrive also help to set the scene and attract the right people.

Alexander McQueen is known for his dramatic fashion shows. For spring/summer 1999 he staged his show in a huge cube containing a snow-covered landscape with his models skating on ice. The show was inspired by the horror film *The Shining*. He has also presented a show where the catwalk was on fire, and another where he manufactured rain falling on the models.

Hussein Chalayan's autumn/winter 2000 show was held at Sadler's Wells in London, UK. He set the stage like the interior of a house, on which the models deconstructed the furniture to create garments; tables turned into skirts, and seat covers became dresses.

Another recent innovation that designers have experimented with is to take their collections off the catwalk altogether and to show them as a film or on the Internet.

2





- 1 Views of the crowded floors at Magic 2006 in Las Vegas, USA.



#### Trade show and showrooms

Whether they have a catwalk show or not, all designers have a static display of their collection. This presentation may be at a stand, an exhibition or in a private showroom. Here the clothes can be viewed in detail by the press and by buyers who will hopefully then take orders.

To attend a trade show, normally you must make an application to display your collection and hiring space can be expensive. It is possible to get government funding to show at some of the international trade shows.

The ready-to-wear trade shows are part of the Paris, Milan, London and New York Fashion Weeks. Casualwear and jeanswear designers and companies usually show at the big trade shows, including Magic in Las Vegas, Who's Next? in Paris, Pitti Uomo in Milan or Bread and Butter, which has shown in Berlin, Tokyo, New York and Sydney.

Showing your collection in a showroom can be more intimate than showing at a trade fair. The show room can be in your own premises, in a hotel room or at your selling agent's premises. You may show alone or as part of a group. It is important that your showroom is easy to get to as the buyers and press will have many showrooms and catwalk presentations to visit in any one Fashion Week.

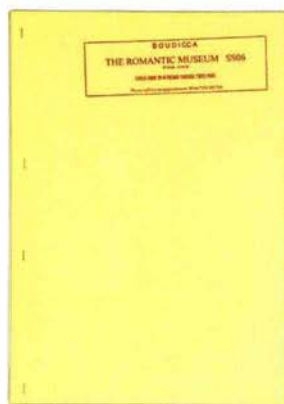
## Selling agents

Some designers sell their collection through a selling agent. An agent can be useful as they have contacts with buyers and can arrange appointments for you. The agent charges a commission on orders placed in the showroom. If you use an agent, make sure that you ask for feedback about how the collection is selling. This advice is invaluable and can impact on your next collection.

## Look books and line sheets

A 'look book' documents the collection and is a valuable selling and promotional tool. It enables press and buyers to leave the show room or trade fair with a detailed record of the collection they have just viewed, which they can use as a reference later. The look book can take various forms – it may simply be photographs from the runway or something more creative.

A line sheet is a more detailed document showing all the designs as working drawings or photographs with fabric, colour options and prices, which is very useful for buyers.



- 1 Look books from Jessica Ogden, SorgerKirchhoff and Georgina Goodman.
- 2 Boudicca line sheets and look book for The Romantic Museum, Spring/Summer 2006.
- 3 As well as carrying important information, swing tags can be used to extend the brand identity.
- 4 Bags are another form of promotion for a brand.

2

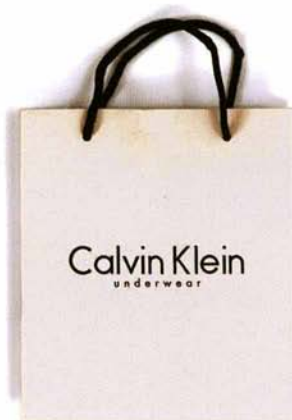
# Promoting a collection

As a designer it is very important to stand apart from the other brands and designers with whom you are in competition. Invest time and money in your branding. Think about what you are trying to say. You can make yourself look far more established than you are through meticulous planning and design. Get garment labels woven up and swing tags made. Have a business card printed as they are useful for all the networking you need to do. They are also essential at fabric trade fairs. If, initially, you must work from home to save money, get a separate phone line as this will make you seem far more professional. Make sure you have an answer phone as it is important that people can contact you. Think about producing a website, but, be careful – it is better to produce a stylish, easily navigable one than a poorly and quickly produced one just for the sake of having an Internet presence. Wait until you can afford to do one properly.

Do not try to sell your own goods on the Internet until you are well established and have lots of knowledge of selling online. It is a complicated business and it's important to remember that you are a fashion designer rather than an IT specialist. A sustainable fashion brand will take many years to build.



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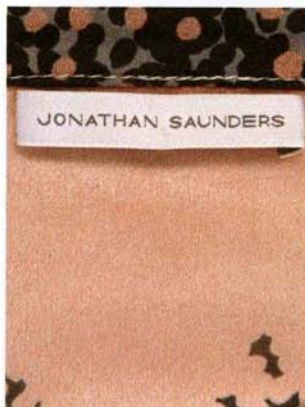
# Branding

The brand is made up of a mixture of elements, including a name, product, designer, quality, packaging, labelling and the inevitable 'X' factor of how it is perceived by the public. Some elements of the mix are more important to certain brands. If you think about Levi you think of quality denim jeans and the big, worn, leather-like label on the back of the jean. With Jean-Paul Gaultier you probably think of the designer's personality and contemporary, humorous, experimental fashion. The name 'Prada' reflects an expensive high-quality design and product. The best brands are those that have a strong identity that endures.

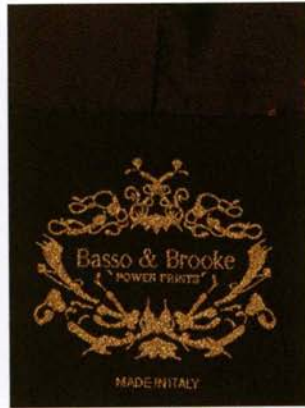
Branding is the communication of the brand elements to the target customer, including the ticketing, labelling and the venue where it is sold. The branding of a garment is an integral part of the design of a garment; it is the part of a collection that remains consistent season to season.

All fashion brands have a label for identification, usually positioned in the back neck so they can be seen on the hanger in-store. There are myriad variations, and it is interesting to note how radically labels differ in the choice of font, colour or fabrication – even how they are stitched into the garment. All these things reflect on the designer. For example, Martin Margiela garments are easily identified when worn by the signature four white stitches on the back neck where the label has been sewn in. Garments also have a swing tag that is attached in the store; it has the designer's name on it and the size and style number of the product.

Fashion garments are not packaged in-store – they simply hang on a rail, so the customer can easily handle and try them on. They are packaged after purchase and usually presented in a bag to protect their journey from the store to home. Of course, the bag is also another important form of promotion for the store and sometimes a desirable object in its own right.



- 1 The branding of a garment – here shown through a selection of labels – is an integral part of the design of a garment.



1



## Boutiques

Designers with the finance to open their own boutique or store have the opportunity to present their clothes to the customer in their purest form. They can merchandise and display their garments exactly how they want. They can package their goods exclusively and train their staff to sell the collection perfectly. Stores that do this successfully offer the customer a total experience as soon as they walk in the store. It is important that the shop is in the right location to reflect the right image of the brand.

Prada used architect Rem Koolhaas to design their Los Angeles store. It has no signage on the front of the store – in fact, it has no frontage at all, opening out directly on to Rodeo Drive, with only a wall of air to seal the interior and protect the garments from the outside. The store looks more like a gallery than a fashion shop.

In 2004, Comme des Garçons opened the first of their 'guerrilla' stores in Berlin. The guerrilla stores open in an underground area of a city, normally in a derelict building with no signage, and news of the store is spread by word of mouth. The store only trades for a period of time then closes and moves on to another city.



2





- 1 Margiela's London store feels like little has been done to it to accommodate the clothes. The walls, floors and fittings
- 2 Marni's London store, designed by Sybarite, opened in August 2003. This store has a modern, clean pod-like feel. Highly
- 3/4 Y-3.com and catwalking.com are examples of successful Internet presence.

have been given a white wash and then left to wear and tear.

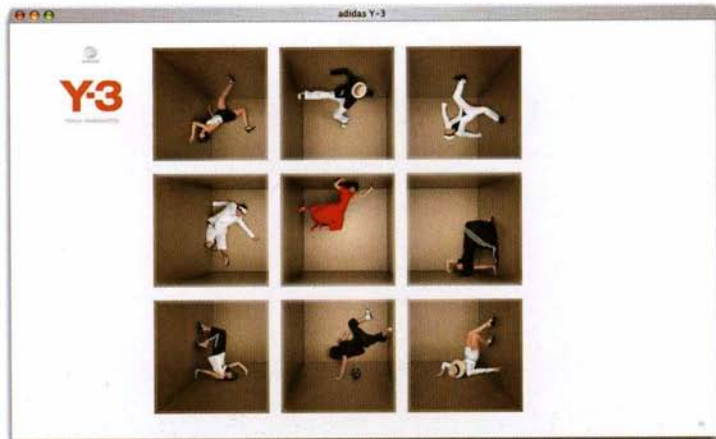
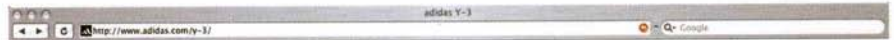
designed curves and smooth forms lead you in and through the shop.

## The Internet

Having a website on the Internet gives a fashion company a strong and easily accessible presence in the fashion market. It provides information about the brand, including a profile of the designer, images of the recent collection, and a list of stockists. The Internet is becoming increasingly popular as a selling point as customers are able to purchase goods easily and efficiently.



3



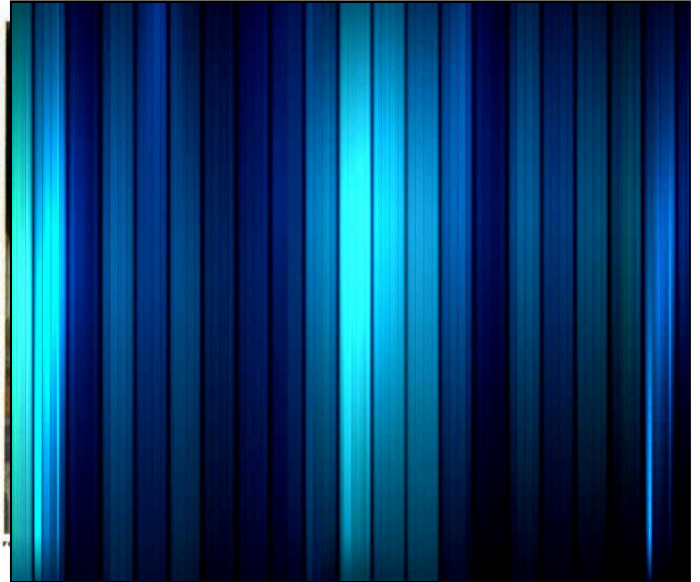
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### Selling lifestyle

In order to increase profitability, larger brands produce different products as an offshoot of their original fashion line, thereby creating a lifestyle for the consumer to buy in to at various points and levels. Many fashion designers and companies now produce their own handbags, luggage, small leather goods, shoes, timepieces, jewellery, ties and scarves, eyewear, perfumes, cosmetics, skincare products and home accessories. Versace, Paul Smith, Prada and Gucci are examples of designers selling lifestyle. Armani is even opening an Armani hotel in Dubai in 2008.

Some brands have also developed diffusion lines that are marginally cheaper and target a younger customer than the main line collections. McQueen launched his diffusion line McQ in Milan at the autumn/winter 2006 Milan fashion week. Chloé's second line is called See by Chloé, Marc Jacobs's diffusion line is called Marc by Marc Jacobs, Dolce and Gabbana's second line is D&G.

Many designers also develop ranges for high street stores. The product shares similarities to the designer's main line, but is produced using cheaper fabrics and techniques which make the product more affordable. These ranges can be very lucrative for the designer, as well as attracting customers to the high street store. It is a clever move by the designer to capitalise on the success of the name to make more money. Karl Lagerfeld and Stella McCartney have both designed ranges for H&M in the UK.



## MARC JACOBS PERFUME

GARDENIAS FLOATING ON WATER. ENHANCED BY CREAMY MUSKS.

1

1 Sofia Coppola lends her face to Marc Jacobs perfume. (Image courtesy of the Advertising

Archives. Photographer: Juergen Teller)

2 Balenciaga rebranded to appeal to a younger market.

**Relaunching brands**

In true fashion-cyclic style, a flagging existing brand can be refreshed and relaunched. A team of experts and designers are brought in to rebrand, redesign and successfully promote the brand to a younger and more fashion-aware clientele. Tom Ford joined the struggling Gucci brand and turned it into a directional fashion company again and a super brand. In 1997, Burberry brought in Rose Marie Bravo as chief executive to make the brand younger and more accessible. She employed designer Christopher Bailey to successfully design the collections and commissioned a new advertising campaign featuring Kate Moss to promote the new clothes. Balenciaga similarly employed Nicolas Ghesquière in the same year to introduce the brand to a younger, affluent market. Balenciaga, which was once one of the top couture houses in Paris, is now once again a very influential fashion house.

