

in the tension between the theatrical and the mundane. His debut fashion show's innovative staging emphasized the brand's raw, edgy aesthetic. Kouyaté presented the show outside the conventional precincts of the fashion industry, at a public park. He did not use a runway or a sound system. Instead, models emerged from a bus that pulled up at the site, each carrying a boombox that provided her own soundtrack to the event. No stage, no lights, no delineation of theatrical space separated the audience from the performers, just as the garments themselves were but subtly separated from their previous, mundane lives.

African Elements

Kouyaté's work incorporates aspects of his own biography, which encompasses contemporary, urban Africa as well as the fashion worlds of Paris and New York. His company's name draws immediate attention to his African origins. In Oulouf (or Wolof), the predominant language of Senegal, *xuly bët* is a colloquial term that can be roughly translated as "voyeur," or, in a more nuanced definition, as someone who breaks through appearances to see the reality beneath the surface. This notion, peeling back the exterior to reveal the often uneven surfaces layered beneath, is embodied by Kouyaté's exposed seams and loose threads. He has cited his roots in Africa as an important source of inspiration for his recycled fashion, reflecting a widespread African ethic of reusing resources that is born out of necessity. Kouyaté draws on Africa in a more literal sense, using African fabrics in several of his designs and, in the early twenty-first century, working with dyers in Mali to create fabrics that he uses in his other clothing lines.

International Presence

Kouyaté is among the few African designers to have achieved an international profile; XULY.Bët clothing and the designer himself have been featured in prominent

publications, including French *Glamour*, the *New York Times*, *Le Figaro*, and *Essence*. His clothing played a prominent role in Robert Altman's film *Ready To Wear* (1994), in which a fashion show in an underground subway station presents XULY.Bët clothing as the work of one of the film's main characters. The designer's personal background as well as his work drew substantial attention from both the fashion and the popular press, particularly in the early 1990s. In the early 2000s Kouyaté continued to design actively, marketing his clothing through several shops in Paris and for international clients.

See also **Fashion Designer; Fashion Shows; Recycled Textiles; Textiles, African.**

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Victoria L. Rovine



YAMAMOTO, YOHJI Yohji Yamamoto is widely regarded as ranking among the greatest fashion designers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He is one of the few in his profession who have successfully broken the boundaries between commodity and art, by creating clothing that ranges from basics like athletic shoes and denim jeans to couture-inspired gowns that are nothing short of malleable mobile sculptures. Lauded as a blend of master craftsman and philosophical dreamer, Yamamoto has balanced the seemingly incompatible extremes of fashion's competing scales.

Despite the magnitude of his talent and the importance of his work, however, Yamamoto has yet to be the subject of serious critical discourse among fashion journalists and historians. It is perhaps ironic that the only probing analysis of Yamamoto—both the man and the designer—came from someone who possessed little knowledge of or interest in fashion. Wim Wenders, the renowned German filmmaker, produced a documentary in 1989 entitled *Notebook on Cities and Clothes*. Throughout the film, Wenders dramatized Yamamoto's creative genius by setting the words of the late German philosopher Walter Benjamin against the urban backdrops of both Tokyo and Paris. Yet the director's probing failed to illuminate the crucial elements that constituted Yamamoto's fashions. Neither the elements particular to the art of dressmaking nor Yamamoto's particular aesthetic contributions were discussed.

Inspiration from the intangible, mainly images of historical dress from sources such as photographs, has been a mainstay in Yamamoto's work. The crumpled collar in a August Sander portrait, the gauzy dresses captured by Jacques-Henri Lartigue while vacationing on the Riviera, and the gritty realism of Françoise Huguier's travels among the Inuit of the Arctic Circle are but a few examples. It is not surprising that the riveting catalogs created for each of Yamamoto's high-end ready-to-wear women's collections have included the work of such notable photographers as Nick Knight, Paolo Roversi, Inez van Lamsweerde, and Vinoodh Matadin. Whether Yamamoto is evoking historicism via the ancien régime or the belle époque, or ethnic garments made of richly woven silks and woolens, he has come to epitomize the vast range of creative possibilities in the art of dress.

Early Career

Yamamoto was born in Tokyo on 3 October 1943. He never knew his father, who died in Manchuria during World War II; he was reared by his widowed mother Yumi. A dressmaker by trade, Yumi suffered what Yamamoto recalls as the indignities of a highly skilled worker whose gender and station in life afforded her little opportunity to make a rewarding living or to obtain recognition for her talents. Yumi encouraged her son to become an attorney—he graduated with a law degree from Keio University but never practiced. The lure of becoming a designer, however, pulled Yamamoto into fashion.

After completing his university studies in 1966, Yamamoto studied fashion design at the famous Bunkafukuso Gakuin, a fashion institute in Tokyo. Despite his skills as a master craftsman, he started his career as an anonymous creator around 1970. Two years later he marketed his own designs under the label Y's. Clothing under this label is now considered to be Yamamoto's lower-priced, or "bridge," line. In 1977 he presented his Y's collection for the first time in Tokyo. Along with his compatriot Rei Kawakubo, he designed his first high-end women's ready-to-wear collection in 1981 and presented it in Paris. Over the next two years, Kawakubo and Yamamoto pioneered the idea of deconstructed fashions. Their revolutionary aesthetic shocked the world with clothing that appeared to be unfinished, tattered, and haphazardly put together. Yamamoto's loose, flowing silhouettes and ubiquitous use of black further enhanced his groundbreaking work, which became the favored look of the 1980s urban aesthetic. In 1984 Yamamoto presented a deluxe menswear line that incorporated many of these same elements.

Yamamoto's Aesthetic

From the moment Kawakubo and Yamamoto presented their first fashion collections to an international audience in the 1980s, they were defined as Japanese designers. Virtually every article about them as well as the critical reviews of their collections began by describing them as inseparable from and encapsulated in their Asian heritage. Many journalists inaccurately assumed that they produced clothing worn by all Japanese people. The reality was that the loose, dark-colored, and seemingly tattered garments were as startling to the average Japanese as they

were to the Western audiences that first viewed them. Although Yamamoto's work changed and evolved over the next two decades, it retained several key elements—the ambiguities of gender, the importance of black, and the aesthetics of deconstruction.

Gender ambiguity. Yamamoto's professed love of and respect for women has not been evident to many because his clothes were often devoid of Western-style gender markers. He expressed an aversion to overtly sexualized females, and often dressed women in designs inspired by men's wear. Such cross-gender role-playing has long been a part of Japanese culture, and a persistent theme among performers and artists for centuries. The fact that Yamamoto on more than one occasion chose women as models for his menswear fashion shows was another small piece of his sexual identity puzzle.

Even when his later work embraced the sweeping romanticism of postwar Parisian haute couture, Yamamoto's historical recontextualizations contrasted sharply with the work of other marquee designers. Deliberately absent from his runway presentations were the requisites of the contemporary high-fashion wardrobe for women: high heels, rising hemlines, plunging necklines, and sheer fabrics. These characteristics might be the reason that Yamamoto's dark tailored suits and white shirts for both men and women have been some of his most enduring and compelling products. Worn by Western men of all classes for two centuries, the dark-colored suit and the white shirt have a combined ability to convey both sexuality and power through conformity. This blend of erotic appeal and strength was a perfect template for Yamamoto to express his postwar version of male and female sexuality.

Basic black. No color in the fashion palette has been as important in the work of Yohji Yamamoto as black. This early unrelenting black-on-black aesthetic earned his devotees the nickname *karasuzoku*, or members of the crow tribe. Black has certain associations in the history of the West that have been processed through a kaleidoscope of self-conscious modernist or postmodernist theories and assumptions. As a result of historical recontextualization, black had by the last quarter of the twentieth century acquired a range of meanings, such as poverty and devastation for some fashion critics, and sobriety, intellectualism, chic, self-restraint, and nobility in dress for others.

The aesthetic attributes of traditional Japan and contemporary culture, as well as the role black plays in fashion, can be seen in the color's association with poverty. For some observers, black is an illusion of—or perhaps an allusion to—rusticity, simplicity, and self-restraint. In Japan, black dyes may connote rural origin as well as noble warrior status. An important connection between black and the symbolic associations of old Europe, traditional Japan, and the modern urban landscape may also be derived from the couture atelier. Yamamoto, like

Cristóbal Balenciaga, often created day suits, dresses, ball gowns, and coats devoid of any ornament. Charcoal gray, navy blue, and of course black wools were often molded and manipulated into pure sculptural forms that displayed both marvelous engineering and tailoring techniques as well as a love of dramatic form.

Deconstructed styles. The connection between deconstruction, originally a French philosophical movement, and contemporary fashion design has yet to be fully explored by fashion historians. There is no direct evidence that such ideas were the motivating force in the early designs of Yohji Yamamoto. It is more likely that he combined a *mélange* of influences: the devastation and rapid rebuilding of Japan in the postwar era; the revolt against bourgeois tastes; an affiliation with European street styles; and a desire, like that of the early proponents of abstraction in fine art, to find a universal expression of design by erasing elements that assign people to specific socioeconomic and gender roles.

Aesthetically, the dressmaking techniques that gave Yamamoto's work its deconstructed look were also related to traditional non-Western methods of clothing construction as well as to the concept that natural, organic, and imperfect objects can also be beautiful. Yamamoto's clothes masked the body with voluminous folds and layers of dark fabric; in addition, they diminished such evident elements of clothing as frontality and clear demarcations between the inside and outside of a garment.

Yamamoto's version of deconstruction fashion more likely began by questioning the very essence of his postwar existence. Japan's initial efforts to rebuild its physical and political infrastructure, and its later economic ascendancy, did provide the right environment to foster the talents of an amazingly creative generation that included the architects Tadao Ando, Arata Isozaki, and Kenzo Tange as well as the furniture designer Shiro Kuramata and the fashion designers Yamamoto and Kawakubo.

It seems more plausible that Yamamoto was fueled by the anger typical of the generation that spearheaded the social changes of the 1960s. Thus he arrived at a new vision for fashion that railed against the bourgeois conformity that resulted from what Yamamoto obliquely referred to as American colonialism. Though the exact elements that led him to the creation of his particular style may not be known, more than one journalist concluded that Yamamoto's clothing reflected a kind of anger that evoked images of nuclear holocaust survivors and were labeled the "Hiroshima bag lady" look by some. A few critics even made an alliance between his fashions and a coven of witches.

Despite such misunderstandings, the designs of Yamamoto paralleled the rise of punk fashions and street style, and their connection with mid-twentieth-century urban degradation. In fact, more than one writer noted that the look established by Yamamoto was neither a pure invention on his part nor a derivative of Asian culture.

Such London-based designers as Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, like other disenfranchised English youth, turned clothing into a medium for political expression and were at the forefront of the punk movement.

Yamamoto's ability to see beauty in degradation, however, and to strip things to their foundation in a search for the inherent integrity of each object is profoundly Japanese. This aesthetic of imperfection, incompleteness, or poverty, is a hallmark of *wabi-sabi*. A worldview that originated in Zen Buddhism, *wabi-sabi* was later applied to the creation of objects characterized by external lack of ornamentation and internal refinement (*wabi*) and an emphasis on the ephemeral nature of all things that eventually leads to decay (*sabi*). While Yamamoto did not formally study *wabi-sabi*, he is the product of his culture, one that is arguably the most aesthetically refined in the world.

Mature Work

The initial impact of Yamamoto's designs began to diminish as the 1980s came to a close; the designer fell into a self-professed decline for the next few years. By the mid-1990s, however, Yamamoto experienced a resurgence of creativity rare in contemporary fashion. His output was vastly different from his work of a decade earlier, in that it fully embraced the most lyrical and fleeting elements of historical modes. His designs became a blend of street-style realism and Victorian romanticism, reshaped and reconfigured for a contemporary audience. At both extremes, Yamamoto retained his very personal vision—creating clothes for an ideal woman who, according to the couturier, does not exist.

Perhaps the most potent quality that Yamamoto displayed was his brilliant ability to recontextualize the familiar into wearable creations that came as close to works of art as any clothing designed in the early 2000s. Although he created several lines of clothing for both men and women, it was his couture-inspired creations for women that manifested this concept most completely. One of the best fashion presentations in recent memory was the spring 1999 collection that Yamamoto created around the theme of a wedding. All the Yamamoto hallmarks were evident: the play on androgyny as seen through an array of masculine-tailored suits; the reliance on a neutral color scheme of black, white and khaki; and magnificent three-dimensional gowns that evoked both the Victorian era and the golden age of twentieth-century Parisian haute couture. The glory of the garments was further enhanced by the lyrical presentation itself, with the highlight being a young bride who performed a reverse striptease. Rather than disrobing, as is usually the case in fashion shows, the mannequin, dressed in an unadorned hoop-skirted wedding gown, pulled her mantle, a pair of sandals, a hat, gloves, and finally, a bouquet of flowers from pockets hidden in the gown. Fittingly, the usually jaded fashion journalists found themselves shedding tears before giving Yamamoto a standing ovation.

After the success of this collection, he was honored as international designer of the year by the Council of Fashion Designers of America in New York City in June 2000.

Yamamoto continued to evolve in the early 2000s. His spring 2003 collection was not shown during the Paris ready-to-wear fashion week in October of 2002, but instead during the haute couture presentations earlier that year. Simultaneously, he became the designer for a new line of clothing produced in conjunction with the Adidas sportswear company called Y's 3. This agreement came about after Yamamoto first designed an astoundingly successful set of trainers, athletic shoes, and sports shoes for Adidas in 2001.

See also **Benjamin, Walter; Fashion, Theories of; Film and Fashion; Japanese Fashion; Punk; Street Style; Westwood, Vivienne.**

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YARNS Yarns are linear structures that are formed by collecting and twisting fibers together. Converting fibers into yarns is a necessary step for weaving or knitting fabrics. Yarns can be classified in a number of ways: by type, size, number of parts, or similarity of parts. These classifications determine the specification of yarns for end-use textile products with different properties. Yarn structure can affect fabric strength, appearance, comfort, feel or hand, and drape among other properties.

The two main types of yarns are staple and filament. Staple yarns, also called spun yarns, are made of fibers

that come in short discrete lengths. All natural fibers except silk are staple fibers. Filament yarns are collections of long continuous filament fibers. Silk is such a fiber, and manufactured fibers are produced in filament form. The manufactured filaments can then be cut into staple lengths if staple yarns are desired.

Staple Yarns

Staple fibers are formed into yarns by a series of processing steps that have been developed over time for specific fibers. Cotton, wool, and linen yarns all have their distinctive processes. The cotton system is the most commonly used, for both cotton and cotton-blend yarns.

In the cotton system, fibers from bales are first run through rollers with spikes to pull the clumps apart, and are then further separated in an opening and cleaning step where trash is removed. This is followed by carding, in which the fibers are passed through fine wires or pins to individually separate and align them. They emerge as a loose collection of aligned fibers known as a sliver. The sliver can then be combed, an optional step in which the carded fibers are pulled through fine combs to remove shorter fibers and arrange the longer fibers into a parallel form. Cotton fabrics made from these yarns are smooth and soft and often labeled “fine combed cotton.” As can be imagined, combed cottons are more expensive than yarns that are carded only. After several processes in which the carded or carded and combed fibers are drawn through rollers, they are slightly twisted to form a soft rope called a roving. The roving is tightly twisted in the final spinning step.

Preparation of wool fibers for spinning is similar. Fibers that are carded only are formed into woolen yarns, which are soft and bulky. Worsted yarns, on the other hand, are combed and also subjected to a special drawing process, gilling, where pins help to straighten the fibers. Worsted yarns are more tightly twisted in the final spinning step, making them smoother and more compact in appearance.

There are several techniques for inserting the final twist in staple yarns. Ring spinning is the most mature spinning method. The yarn is wound on a bobbin or spool that rotates at a high rate of speed. The rotation twists the loose rope of fibers into a strong yarn. Ring spinning gets its name from a ring that travels up and down the spindle. A small clip, the traveler, holds the yarn and moves around the ring. Ring-spun yarns are smoother and stronger than yarns made by other spinning techniques, and can also be made in finer sizes. Ring spinning is slower and therefore more expensive than other methods, prompting garment makers to identify ring-spun yarns in products such as cotton underwear and T-shirts.

Another process for twisting staple yarns is open-end spinning. In its most common manifestation, rotor spinning, the fiber roving is carried by an air stream into a rapidly spinning rotor with a V-shaped groove. The fibers

are deposited by centrifugal force in the groove and then drawn off through a center delivery tube. The operation bears some resemblance to a cotton candy machine. As the fine candy fibers are formed they are caught and collected. In rotor spinning, fibers are caught by the “open end” of a previously formed yarn and the rapid rotation of the rotor twists the yarn. Rotor spun yarns are more uniform than ring-spun yarns, but not as strong. In addition, they cannot be made in very fine sizes. Most cotton yarns for denim are rotor spun.

Friction spinning is another open-end method. A mixture of air and fibers is fed between two drums rotating in opposite directions. This inserts twist into the fibers, much as spinners did in ancient times by rolling clumps of fibers between their fingers.

An increasingly popular spinning method is air-jet spinning. Yarns are formed by jets of air forcing the outer layers of fibers in a sliver to wrap around the interior fibers. Air-jet yarns are weaker than ring or open-end spun yarns, but can be made in finer sizes.

Filament Yarns

Filament yarns are made by gathering together long continuous fibers, with or without inserting twist. Filament yarns produce fabrics that are smooth and slippery to the touch. They are also stronger than staple yarns, which is why before the discovery of synthetic manufactured fibers parachutes were made of silk. Because of their value, the parachutes used during World War II were often retrieved by civilians and made into garments. Filament yarns are also associated with luxury fabrics such as satin and velvet, which were traditionally made with silk filament yarns.

To change their properties, filament yarns can be textured or “bulked.” This makes them softer, stretchier, more resilient, and more like staple yarns. Textured yarn fabrics are also more permeable to moisture and air, increasing the comfort to the wearer. Common texturing methods are: false twist, in which the yarns are twisted, heated to set the twist, and then untwisted; and air jet, in which the slack filaments in the yarn are entangled and formed into loops by jets of air. False twist imparts stretch as well as the look and feel of staple yarn fabrics. Air jet yarns are soft and bulky but have little stretch. The polyester double-knit fabrics of the 1960s were made of textured filament yarns.

Yarn Size

Over the years different systems have emerged for designating the size of textile yarns. The oldest systems are “indirect,” in that the higher the number is the smaller, or finer, the yarn. Cotton count is an indirect system for specifying the size of cotton and cotton-blend yarns. It is the number of 840-yard lengths of yarn in one pound. As spinning processes were developed for wool and linen, specific yarn numbering systems were created for these



Yarn dyeing. A worker lowers four spoils of yarn into a dyeing vat with a remote control. Textile styles such as bouclé and tweed can be produced by blending different color yarns. © ROGER BALL/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

fibers, differing in the lengths that are specified per pound of yarn.

These indirect systems for yarn size were based on English measuring units (yards, pounds); the move toward universally accepted metric units has resulted in yarn numbering systems in which the yarn count varies directly with the size. Tex is the weight in grams of 1,000 meters of yarn, while denier is the weight in grams of 9,000 meters. Tex is the more general term as it can be used for sizing both staple and filament yarns.

An understanding of the relative sizes of yarns can be used to determine appropriate end-uses for fabrics. Properties such as strength, smoothness, drape, and wrinkle resistance are affected by yarn size. For example, heavier yarns are used in denim fabrics for jeans and pants because both strength and some degree of wrinkle resistance are desired. Cotton blouses and shirts, however, would require smaller yarns for a smooth comfortable feel.

Number and Similarity of Parts

Yarns can be single, ply, or cord. Single yarns are made from staple or filament fibers twisted together. Ply yarns are two single yarns twisted together. They are stronger and smoother than singles. Most sewing threads are ply yarns. The strength and smoothness help the threads withstand the friction and mechanical action during sewing. Twisting two or more ply yarns together forms cord yarns, which are stronger still. Cords are mostly destined for industrial uses such as cables and ropes, although they can be used in apparel for different effects and textures.

If all parts of a yarn, be it single, ply, or cord, are uniform in size and have a regular surface, the yarn is termed a simple yarn. Varying the structure of one or more of the parts of a yarn produces a novelty yarn. An example of a novelty single yarn is a crepe yarn, which is over twisted to yield kinks and an irregular surface.

A great variety of novelty yarns can be made by plying two dissimilar singles or twisting similar singles in an irregular structure. In a bouclé yarn, one ply (the effect yarn) forms irregular loops around the base yarn. Ratiné yarns are similar in structure, but the loops are regularly spaced along the yarn. The loops are visible in fabrics made with bouclé or ratiné yarns. Another variation of this is twisting the effect yarn irregularly around the base yarn so that it creates knots or nubs in some places. These are called knot, spot, or nub yarns. Varying the degree of twist along single or ply yarn produces thick soft "slubs" in the yarn. Slub yarns show these irregularities in the fabric; one such fabric is shantung, often made of silk. Spiral or corkscrew yarns are made of two plies, one of which is heavy and soft, winding around a finer core yarn.

Chenille yarns are different from other structures in that a fabric is first woven, then cut into strips that form the yarn. The strips have fiber ends sticking out on all sides and the yarn resembles a caterpillar. These fluffy ends protrude in fabrics containing chenille yarns.

Color can be used to produce or enhance novelty effects. In plied yarns for example, single yarns of different colors can be twisted together. This effect is enhanced in bouclé, ratiné, or corkscrew yarns. Tweed fabrics are made from novelty single yarns; the novelty lies in combining different colored fibers in a single spun yarn.

Blended Yarns

Blended yarns, which contain mixtures of fibers, have several purposes. Self-blending is done to more thoroughly mix fibers, particularly natural fibers, from different sources. This minimizes the possibility of concentrating fiber defects in one section or batch of yarn. Another purpose of blending is to combine the properties of different fibers, for example the comfort and absorbency of cotton with the strength and wrinkle resistance of polyester. Cotton-polyester blends are popular fabrics and are usually made by mixing the fibers at some stage of processing.

Fibers can be blended when bales or boxes are opened and cleaned prior to carding. They can also be mixed by drawing several slivers together. Repeated drawing of blended slivers enhances the mixing. Yarns for Harris tweed fabrics are made by blending different colored wool fibers in large chambers supplied with air streams, prior to carding.

See also **Spinning; Spinning Machinery; Wool.**

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Billie J. Collier

YEOHLEE A native of Malaysia, Yeohlee Teng (1955–) came to the United States to study at the Parsons School of Design in New York City. She worked in New York since her graduation from Parsons, and opened her own house, Yeohlee Inc., in 1981.

Yeohlee's strong and consistent approach to clothing design has made her name synonymous with efficiency, striking geometrical designs, and concise functionalism. All of her clothing patterns have incorporated the principle of maximum utilization of fabric. Her signature garment was a one-size-fits-all hooded cape cut from a single 3.25-yard piece of 60-inch fabric, using all of the material with no waste whatsoever. This unique cape brought her widespread attention when it was included in her first collection in 1981, and it has been in every one of her collections since then. Yeohlee also pioneered the use of high-tech fabrics and surface treatments to produce wrinkle- and stain-resistant clothes that are easy to care for and easy to pack. She worked with a

palette of colors that emphasized black, white, and earth tones, though her collections were also often accented with striking shades of green, red, and orange. Yeohlee designed for the urban nomad, a postmodern customer who demanded adaptable, functional, low-maintenance clothing that looked appropriate and made a powerful impression in a wide range of situations. The designer was associated with the phrases “clothing as shelter” and “intimate architecture.”

The output of Yeohlee Inc. was aimed at a relatively small and loyal customer base rather than at the mass market; the company sold through a limited number of department stores and specialty shops in the early 2000s. Yeohlee’s designs tended to be relatively uninfluenced by seasonal and annual fashion trends, but rather followed the evolution of her own design vision. Her clothes appealed to the sophisticated, design-conscious clientele of the early 2000s.

Yeohlee’s work, often described as “architectural,” attracted the attention of critics and professionals in other fields of design. To an extent unusual for fashion designers, her clothes were exhibited as design art in many museums and galleries in the 1990s and early 2000s. Her participation in the group show *Intimate Architecture: Contemporary Clothing Design*, presented at the Hayden Gallery at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1982, won a great deal of favorable attention for her work and was an important factor in the early success of her company. Her clothes were also featured in solo shows at the Aedes East Gallery, Berlin; P.S. 1, New York City; the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam; the London College of Fashion in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, as well as in a number of other group shows. Her work was also placed in the permanent collections of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, and other major fashion museums worldwide.

In the words of the late fashion historian Richard Harrison Martin, Yeohlee “is one of the few practitioners of her art who has fully eschewed fashion hyperbole to engage in a critical discourse about clothing in space [and] on the body.”

See also **Fashion Museums and Collections; High-Tech Fashion; Performance Finishes; Techno-Textiles.**

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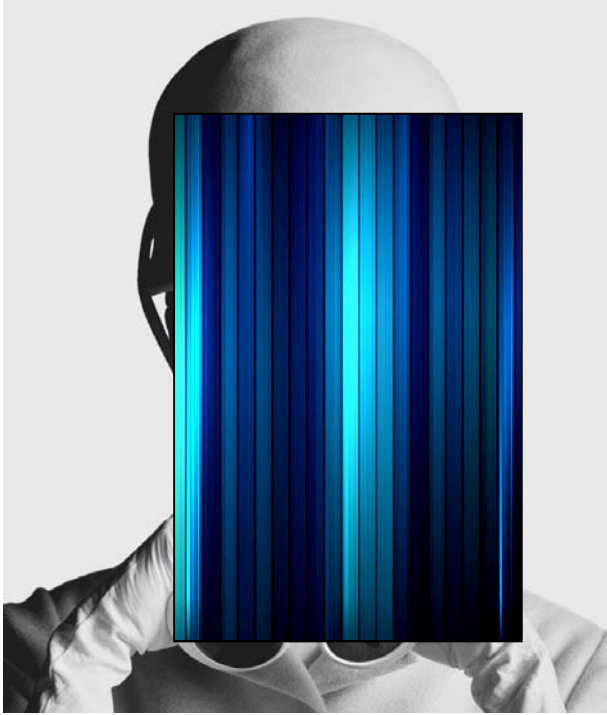
YOUTHQUAKE FASHIONS A tag, a slogan, and a rallying cry, “Youthquake” exemplifies the slickness as well as the conviction, the spontaneous ebullience as well as the commercial aggression that during the 1960s marked the triumph of London ready-to-wear. Powered by the momentum of a cresting youth culture, a cadre of British designers, mostly women, wrenched dominance away from the Paris couture houses and profoundly altered global fashion.

Youthquake fashion cannot be explored or understood without acknowledging its social and political context. In *Fifty Years of Fashion*, Valerie Steele notes that the “narrow, apolitical approach,” preferred by many fashion journalists “becomes insupportable when dealing with the 1960s” (p. 49). These clothes garbed armies of protagonists in the ongoing narrative of women’s economic, sexual, and social independence, and the consequent and reciprocal expansion of men’s personas. In 1988, Mary Quant recalled: “Women had been building to this for a long time, but before the pill there couldn’t be a true emancipation. It’s very clear in the look, in the exuberance of the time—a rather child-like exuberance. “Wow—look at me!—isn’t it lovely? At last, at last!” (Conversation with author, December, 1988).

Youthquake fashion was also a lever as well as a product of the increased social mobility engendered by the postwar Labor governments of Britain. Due to government-subsidized tuition, an unprecedented number of students of humble origin were now able to pursue careers in the fine and commercial arts. At the Royal College of Art, Madge Garland, formerly editor in chief of British *Vogue*, had developed a graduate program in fashion design. Professor Janey Ironside became the program’s principal in 1956. “We were trained to see, to explore, to enjoy ourselves,” recalled RCA alumna Sally Tuffin, one half of celebrated Youthquake design team (Marion) Foale and Tuffin. “We felt as though we could go off and do anything, without restriction.” (Conversation with author, November, 1988).

Boutiques

Throughout the 1950s, British fashion was dominated by the Paris couture, and the long shadow it cast over London couturiers such as Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies. British manufacturers followed the parameters laid out by the high end of fashion. But the emerging generation wanted something entirely different and entirely their own. They were out of sympathy with the mores of expensive made-to-order clothing. “The couture was for kept women,” said Barbara Hulanicki, who opened the London boutique Biba after working as a fashion illustrator in the late 1950s and early ’60s. As she sketched the couture for London newspapers, Hulanicki objected as well to “the snobbery that was designed to make everyone feel inferior.” (Conversation with author, November, 1988)



Audrey Hepburn wears a Courrèges hat, 1965. Youthquake designers pushed forward the mod look, which favored monochrome and streamlined outfits. © DOUGLAS KIRKLAND/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

Youthquake fashion found its own staging ground as the boutique replaced the couture salon as fashion incubator. The Youthquake boutique was somewhere between a neighborhood dressmaker's atelier and the auxiliary shops maintained within some Paris couture strongholds, in which accessories and related bagatelles might be sold. Youthquake fashion could be said to have begun in November 1955, when Quant, recently graduated from art college, opened her boutique "Bazaar" in the London district of Chelsea. A year later she started designing because she couldn't find the type of clothes she wanted to stock her store.

"What was wrong at that stage was that fashion only came through one route," Quant recalled, "which designed for a way of life which was very much that of a minority."...She instead would design for "women who had a job and a fantasy life that took that job into account" (conversation with author, December 1988). The daughter of schoolteachers, Quant was married to Alexander Plunkett Greene, scion of an aristocratic lineage. Their marriage became emblematic of falling class barriers.

The Miniskirt Emerges

Chelsea had long been a magnet for London artists and bohemians, and during the 1950s it was a haunt for the city's Beatnik culture. Quant paid tribute to their mini-

mal and monochromatic uniforms. As the couture never could, Quant and her brethren acknowledged, even asserted defiantly, that a primary design inspiration was the clothes of the young wandering the streets outside their workrooms. Quant was enamored, too, of the look of tap dancing students she'd watched as a child, as they practiced wearing short skirts, black tights, and patent-leather shoes. She kept on raising hemlines, and eventually Quant became known as "Mother of the Miniskirt." Some accounts have her showing skirts above the knee by 1958, although Quant's claims to precedence were challenged by Paris couturier André Courrèges. But who was first, or if there indeed was a first, is of peripheral importance. As far back as the late 1920s, hemlines were almost above the knee, and it was inevitable that after the long skirts of the late 1940s, they would rise again. As well, the inexorable shifts in society provided an historical imperative. In 1968, British fashion historian James Laver described the miniskirt as "the final word in the emancipation of women—in proving her economic independence...Long, hampering skirts were fetters to keep a woman at home. The very short ones scream: 'I am stepping out'" (*WWD* March 22, 1968, p.8).

King's Road

Eventually, there were three Bazaars in London. They survived until 1968, by which time Quant was presiding over a vast wholesale and licensing empire. Bazaar was a catalyst in King's Road's transformation into a streaming, coursing artery of fashion and display. Kiki Byrne, who had worked as Quant's assistant, also opened a celebrated boutique there, where Hulanicki was enthralled by Byrne's "wonderful black dresses ... shifts that weren't over-designed" (conversation with author, November 1988). Her generation wanted something much looser both philosophically and structurally even than the unfitted shape that was being shown in the Paris couture as the 1950s progressed. The Youthquake silhouette was less determined, less sculptural, less constructed, and usually less decorated. "Our clothes *had* to be comfortable," Tuffin recalled. "That was the main requirement" (conversation with author, November 1988).

While the Paris couture continued to take itself very seriously, the kingdom of Youthquake teemed with humor and irreverence. Quant gave droll names to her clothes and arranged gag tableau in her store windows. Foale and Tuffin put Y's across the front of shift dresses—"Y-fronts" were men's underwear briefs.

Where pants for women were concerned, London was more adventurous than the Paris couture or even the "ye-yes," the young ready to wear designers of Paris. The Foale and Tuffin trouser suit became a global prototype—"The cut was incredible," Betsey Johnson recalled, "the best I've ever seen" (conversation with author, August, 1987). They were strongly advocating trousers well before Courrèges's pants-dominated couture collections of the mid-1960s. Yet in 1961, when they first began

teaming pants instead of skirts with jackets, the combination seemed so incongruous that “we actually fell about laughing,” Tuffin recalled. Lines were straight, shoulders natural, the jacket semi-fitted like riding attire, but devoid of constructed reinforcement. The trouser suit was one of Youthquake fashion’s most controversial provocations, but also one of its most enduring legacies.

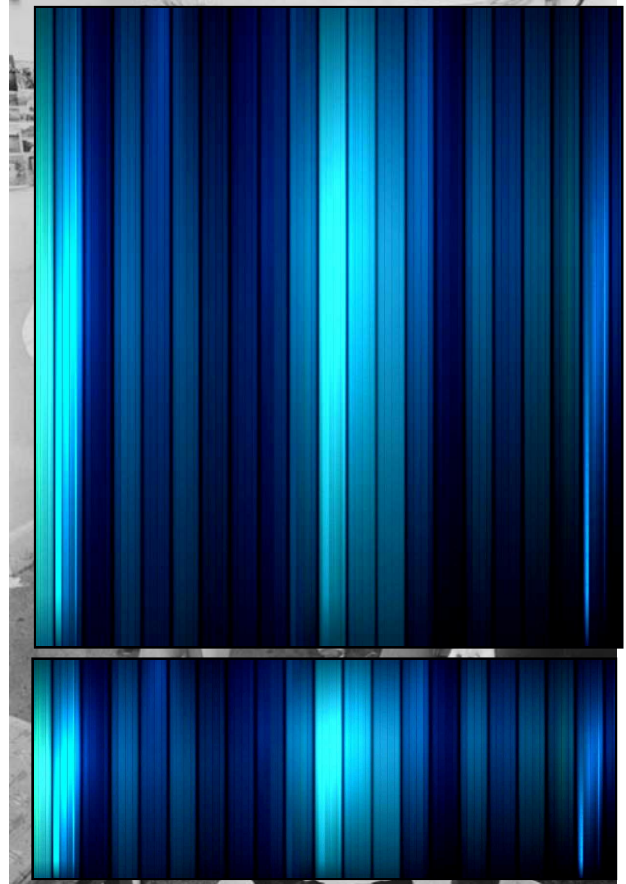
Youthquake fashion at its most egalitarian and inclusive was represented by London’s Biba boutique, which Hulanicki opened with her husband Stephen Fitz-Simon in 1964. “We practically gave our things away to the public,” Hulanicki claimed. Biba practiced a rapid response to the trends of the street, alternately spurring and parrying the restless experimentation of the young. “I couldn’t stand wholesale,” Hulanicki said, “because it’s just between you and the buyer, and the buyers are always wrong, anyway. They want what sold last year, but we were working right on the moment, all the time” (conversation with author, November 1988). Biba kept moving to larger and large quarters, its decor an iconoclastic *mise-en-scène* of oddments and antiques. With Biba, the Youthquake boutique reached its apogee as destination, event, parade ground, and crossroads.

Although at Biba the use of inexpensive synthetics was dictated by the need to keep prices down, synthetics were also championed by Youthquake fashion for reasons other than necessity. Rather than simply a pallid imitation of natural fibers, they could manifest novel textures and appearances. Machine-tooled fabrics were celebrated as a threshold to a utopia of increased leisure and lessened drudgery. Quant extolled their ability to look “like a delicious soufflé that happened with a pure kind of joy—without anybody’s tears on them” (conversation with author, December 1988).

Youthquake designers were certainly gratified by the boggled attention their work received by mainstream manufacturers, journalists, and even the couture itself. But they were primarily concerned with designing for themselves and their contemporaries, and because of the exploding youth market, were able to do so without compromise. Certainly mature women could legitimately complain that the ubiquitous narrow armholes of the Youthquake silhouette were not easy to fit into. Women who’d been brought up on the postwar British rations were not robust. Hulanicki noted that the average women’s shoe size during the 1960s was 3 1/2 or 4, while twenty years later it had jumped two sizes. The somewhat androgynous silhouette privileged by Youthquake fashion was also an aesthetic and sexual statement, however, a rejection of the overblown ideal of hourglass femininity that been promulgated during the 1950s by the couture and, perhaps more oppressively, by the imagery of popular culture.

Men’s New Look

Women’s reassessment of gender-specific clothes and behavior, unleashed from men a rejection of the dour



Mary Quant with model wearing miniskirt. Quant became known “the Mother of the Miniskirt,” a garment that became very popular with young women in the late 1960s. © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

clothes that had been obligatory since the Regency epoch of the nineteenth century. Young working-class men of the late 1950s organized themselves into coterie—the Teddy Boys, The Mods, the Rockers—each with its own odd and distinctive uniform. Around this time, Scottish-born retailer John Stephens began to transform London’s Carnaby Street into a chockablock concentration of stores inviting men to cast off the fetters of old. Once all but completely polarized, men’s and women’s clothes could now converge into unisex outfits designed to be worn by either sex. A colony of men’s and unisex boutiques sprung up around London, allowing men a selection unlike anything previously imaginable.

Clothing Anarchy

Biba’s enveloping of new world fashions in the warm patina of vintage furnishings could be seen to anticipate the historical bent of late ’60s London fashion. The city’s archival closets were turned inside out and its streets became a fantastic masquerade. The rage for antique clothing, as well as the folklore and psychedelic panoply of the

hippies dominated this second phase of Youthquake. The hippies' sartorial revolution evolved from the fashions of the Beats and the British ready-to-wear sisterhood; its founding mothers smoothly negotiated this second phase of Youthquake. The late '60s also saw the rise of designers like Ossie Clark and Zandra Rhodes, whose gossamer and fanciful creations recalled the romanticism of Arts and Crafts dress of the previous century. Vanguard London fashion of the late '60s was more anarchic than earlier in the decade. The laissez-faire of the hippies necessitated less homogeneous internal consistency to broadcast its sartorial and cultural message.

The End of an Era

By the mid-1970s, however, the very moniker Youthquake was superannuated. Many of the movers and shakers were in states of decompression or stately retreat. Quant was by now concentrating entirely on licensing. Foale and Tuffin disbanded. After Hulanicki and Fitz-Simon's alliance with outside capital, Biba suffered a bitter demise not long after reaching its apotheosis taking over a huge Art Deco department store. On the other hand, designers like Rhodes thrived amid a London fashion environment that continued to appreciate the eccentric. Conversely, the more muted and classic designs of Youthquake's Jean Muir became more popular than ever.

The plucky young firebrands of Youthquake had succeeded in radically upending global fashion markets. London itself has never returned to the fashion backwaters it was in the 1950s. The social and economic leveling proclaimed by Youthquake's habits and habiliments were not defeated by reactionary political developments during Britain in the 1980s. The Youthquake movement will always be an inspiration to those who seek to democratize fashion and tap the creative vitality of youth.

See also **Biba; Miniskirt; Quant, Mary.**

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Joel Lobenthal

YUKATA The *yukata* of the early 2000s has remained, since the Edo period (1603–1868), an unlined cotton garment, with the traditional T-shape and overlapping lapels of the kimono. Purists may consider it more of a bathrobe than a true kimono. An ancestor of the modern yukata is the *katabira*, an unlined bast fiber (usually hemp or ramie) *kosode* worn in the summer by the upper classes. A *yukatabira* (*yu* is derived from the word for bathing) was



A Japanese woman wearing a floral yukata. Made of lightweight cotton, *yukata* are kimonos usually worn in the summer. © ROBERT ESSEL NYC/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

put on after a bath as a way of drying the body; bath towels were not used in Japan at this time.

By the late Edo period cotton was abundant in Japan, having first been successfully cultivated as a commercial crop in the seventeenth century. As cotton, while still a bast fiber, is a softer and more absorbent fiber than hemp or ramie, it became the fiber of preference for the yukatabira. By the time cotton was readily available, the garment became known by its current abbreviated name, yukata.

Cotton is more easily dyed than other bast fibers, and indigo is one of the most colorfast of all natural dyes. It has the additional benefit of not requiring a separate mordanting process. Blue, therefore, became the dominant color for cotton yukata, and remains so, in spite of the prevalence of the more practical and versatile synthetic dyes, which can create virtually any desired color on cotton. Blue remains as popular a color for yukata as it was during the Edo period, when the color brought to mind coolness and water, welcoming thoughts during the hot Japanese summers.

The most common method employed for the dyeing of cotton fabric intended for yukata involved the use of paper stencils and a resist-paste made from rice. Stencils slightly wider than the width of a single bolt of cloth were cut with intricate designs, both figural and abstract. Rice paste was applied through the stencils, and the bolt of cloth would then be dyed by immersion in the indigo vat. The indigo dye would not penetrate the cloth in areas where the rice paste adhered; therefore, the designs would appear in white and the background in blue.

The custom of soaking in a wooden tub filled with hot water is relatively recent in Japanese history. Prior to the eighteenth century, bathing consisted of taking a steam bath. The rise of the public bathhouse (there were more than 500 in Edo [modern-day Tokyo] by the mid-nineteenth century) created a milieu for the wearing of yukata in a public place on a regular basis. Bathhouses were popular not only for reasons of hygiene and relaxation, but also because they often included rooms for eating, drinking, and having sex.

The most enthusiastic customers of the bathhouses came from the lowly merchant class, and they welcomed the opportunity to make a show of the latest in yukata designs. As with kosode, it was kabuki actors and other entertainers who often launched new fashions in yukata. Witty and amusing larger-scale motifs were most popular, and required the use of the *chûgata* stencil, as opposed to the tiny-scale repeats of the komon stencil. Komon patterns were typical of the dignified and conservative samurai class.

Another reason for the popularity of the yukata as a fashionable garment was the existence of sumptuary laws, which impacted most strongly on the merchant class. A yukata, being made of cotton rather than silk, and patterned by the inexpensive process of stencil dyeing, might be excessive in design, but was never very costly. Therefore, yukata escaped the scrutiny of the government authorities.

As Japan modernized in the Meiji period (1868–1912) and beyond, yukata became the one traditional garment that a man might wear in public. Hot spring resorts were, and still are, another popular venue for the yukata, as are traditional summer festivals, such as Obon. Foreign visitors to Japan, especially those who stay at a traditional inn (*ryōkan*), will find a yukata in their room, which conveniently presents the foreigner with an opportunity to wear a kimono-like garment.

See also **Japanese Fashion; Japanese Traditional Dress and Adornment; Japonisme; Kimono.**

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