

Technology Images of the 20th Century Fashion

Park, Eunkyong* · Kim, Minja**

*Assistant Professor, Anyang Technical College

**Professor, Seoul National University

The purpose of this research is analyzing various technology images of the 20th century fashion associated with social and cultural aspects, in accordance with technological advance. For this purpose, the technology is defined as the whole method that is used for making or doing something beneficial and as the artifacts created by the method. The term of technology in this research implies not only the machine technology in industrial age but also the high technology in postindustrial age. Also, technology images in fashion are defined as technology fashion images which express technology and its artifacts with multiple senses.

As for the research methodology, literature survey has been undertaken in order to study the history of technology advance and the related changes of society, culture, and fashion. In addition, a demonstrative study with fashion photographs has been performed for analyzing the plasticity (or formative style) of the technology fashion images. To investigate view differences on technology, the scope of this research ranges from the industrial age to year 2000. The study of the technology fashion images covers the historical range from 1910s when Futurism introduced technology images apparently in fashion history, to year 2000.

The technology advance affects fashion significantly in physical and mental ways. Firstly, the technology advance fundamentally promotes the changes of materials, production tools, production processes, and distribution, all of which can be considered as the physical change of fashion. Secondly, the mental changes correspond to the social, cultural, and artistic changes which show the different viewpoints on technology. Specifically, this research focuses on the analysis of the external forms and aesthetic values of the technology fashion images according to both physical and mental changes.

Through the literature survey on the social and cultural changes associated with technology, optimistic, pessimistic, and fusion viewpoints on technology are discussed. As the result of historical survey on the technology fashion images, major changes in fashion can be chronologically classified as European avant-garde fashion in 1910s-1930s, Space Age fashion in 1960s, Techno fashion between the late of 1980s and the early of 1990s, Cyber-Punk in the early of 1990s, Fusion Techno fashion since 1990s. Also, all of these fashion images coexist in 1990s.

European Avant-garde fashion has been attempted by Futurists, Constructivist and artists of Bauhaus. Futurists regarded machinery as the symbol of the advance of new technology and as the ideal of beauty. In particular, they admired the dynamics and velocity of machinery. They used to reflect the metaphorical forms, colors, and rhythm of technology in their arts. The dresses designed by

Futurists were geometrical and dynamic using asymmetrical cuttings and discordant colors, as well as sanitary and functional. Some of the Constructivists and Bauhaus artists experimented the subject of human body as machine. The costumes designed by them were very geometrical.

Space Age fashion has much drawn attention since the first space voyage to the moon. It was influenced mainly by the objects and colors related to space science and scientific fiction movies. Namely, Space Age fashion intended to express the optimistic aspects of the achievement of technology by using new materials.

Techno fashion was initiated by youth sub-culture groups, who tried to seek the meaning and pleasure of life from high technology and its futuristic images. Techno fashion consists of futuristic, protective clothes and high technological gears. Since the mid of 1990s, Techno fashion has shown changes in design from its early exaggerated style to moderate style. This research names the changed style as Modern Techno.

Cyber-Punk has the synthesized meanings of high technology and social, cultural rebel or heresy. This style, beginning from London clubs and streets, combines primitive and high tech elements with Bricolage technique, and it expresses the pessimistic aspect on technology using offensive, rebellious, and sensational ways.

Fusion Techno, a style which softens Techno fashion, has attempted to harmonize human (or nature) and technology. This style proceeds towards the mixture of various other styles. One typical example is the style of combining classical or romantic designs and high tech fabrics or trimming. In addition, this style either uses new materials which are characterized as deliberately artificial imperfection and irregularity, or uses decorations by handwork.

In summary, European Avant-garde, Space Age, and Techno fashions which have optimistic viewpoints on technology, express confirmative and geometrical forms in order to show the belief on the reason of human and the progress of history. Cyber-Punk fashion which has pessimistic viewpoint on technology, expresses indefinite and de-constructive forms to show the disbelief on the reason of human and the progress of history. Finally, Fusion Techno fashion which has the fusion viewpoint of transcending the optimistic and pessimistic aspects on technology, is representing the combined form to show the hope for happiness and progress of mankind by harmonizing the reason and the sensibility.

The plasticity of the technology fashion images was analyzed as showing geometrical forms, the use of high tech materials, futuristic colors and lights, dynamics, and the mixture of various techniques. The properties are not competitively used, but are expressed in harmonized and integrated ways.

Compared with other fashion images, technology fashion images intensively represent geometrical forms, which is obtained by human reason. That is, the use of geometrical forms expresses the discovery of truth by science and technology and the belief on the technological advance. Also, it is an expression of the representative aesthetics of the Machine Age and high functionality.

Technology fashion images have used high-tech materials in the sense that the materials are

the visual resultants of technology advance. Although the materials used in technology fashion images are created by technology advance, from the viewpoint of clothing, there are two types of materials: normal materials and abnormal materials for clothing.

In addition, futuristic colors and lights are distinctively represented in technology fashion images. Together with lights, white, metallic colors, such as gold and silver colors, and artificial colors, such as digital colors, maximally visualize the representation of technology advance. For example, white color symbolizes the image of light, cosmological universe, and hopeful world. Metallic colors, the representative symbols of Machine Age, are still favored in the present times as the symbol of technology. Digital colors, generated by computers and visualized through monitors, maximize visual effects so that they motivate the interests of the users' living in cyber culture. In technology fashion images, they are expressed as intensive color effects.

The expression of dynamics changes from the symbolization of the machine aesthetics to the new aesthetics created by cyber culture and the condensation of time and space. As examples of the new dynamics, there are (1) the holographic clothes that express the depth of the fourth dimension changed according to visual angles, (2) the clothes of which patterns and colors are changed with temperature and body heat, and (3) the high-tech jewelry of which surface graphic is dynamically changed. Moreover, the variable clothes that can be decomposed or assembled are regarded as having the dynamics.

The technology fashion images of postmodern ages, such as Techno fashion, Cyber-Punk, and Fusion Techno, are characterized as using various techniques like Bricolage, Parody, and Eclecticism.

The aesthetic values of the technology fashion images are understood as the Utopia orientation, future orientation, and creative avant-garde.

The technology fashion images represent the confidence that technology can realize much better world like Utopia. In modern society, since Utopia was attempted to achieve by the reason and intelligence of human, the images that reflect the rationalism was used in fashion. Whereas, in postmodern society, due to the desperation that Utopia cannot be realized, the images of Dystopia appeared. Finally, the Utopia-oriented images that focus on the recovery of humanity while accommodating the rationalism of modernism was addressed. Utopia orientation can be also interpreted as future orientation. Therefore, the technology fashion images have the implication of preparing more promising future on the basis of the realities of life. Since the future orientation has the dynamics of actively preparing the future and exploration intent, it is closely related to creative challenging spirit. Namely, technology fashion images have the meaning of creative avant-garde that makes novelty by actively accommodating technology advance.

In conclusion, the technology fashion images of the 20th century express various viewpoints on technological advance based on both modernism and postmodernism. Their distinct properties are to use the artifacts of technology and technology itself in fashion. During the 21st century, the technology fashion images are thought as a main fashion area coexisting with other fashion images and are expected to be the representation emphasizing the harmony of human and technology.