

The Pursuit of Individual Freedom in Rudi Gernreich's Fashion Designs

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INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to suggest a new methodological approach in evaluating fashion design to achieve a better understanding of its fundamental ideas, based on the philosophy of a designer. In this case, Rudi Gernreich(1922~1985) was chosen to examine the design philosophy behind his radical approach to fashion. His designs have been rather superficially referred to by fashion critics as simply 'breakaway fashion', 'social statement', or 'optical invention', and yet, very limited studies exist on the analysis of his designs as to how he achieved these qualities, or the influence he exerted on modern clothing.

The aim of this paper is to reevaluate Gern-

reich's designs to reflect the fact that they were rooted in his belief in the importance of the pursuit of individual freedom.

To prove this point, his designs were analyzed in their historical, social and aesthetical contexts. After a detailed study of Gernreich's personal background impacted on his design philosophy, researched analysis of critical articles and visuals, as well as the documentation of the actual surviving examples of his designs, three major themes emerged: Partial Nudism, Unisex Mode and Op-art Fashions.

The first and second themes reflect the fact that Gernreich's designs coincided with the emergence of youth culture during the second half of the 60s to the early 70s in America, thus suggesting an important link between his

designs and social issues such as the Sexual Revolution, Women's Rights and Gay Rights Movements.

The third theme focuses on the aesthetics of his designs. It examines the Op-art principles in relationship with the human body and shows how Gernreich achieved artistically intensified qualities in his designs. Each theme is discussed through case by case analysis of Gernreich's works.

This paper concluded with a reevaluation of Gernreich's designs from a broader perspective. It seeks to explain the reason behind why his influence on contemporary fashion has been on-going by highlighting the historical significance of his contribution to the world of fashion design. Gernreich's pursuit of individual freedom in his designs is still a powerful force affecting the postmodern age in fashion.

The youth culture and sexual revolution : 1960~70s america

In 20th century history, the 1960s and early 1970s America, marks its importance as the revolutionary and disruptive period which brought changes in every aspect of society. The widespread cultural disruption and political struggles accelerated social consciousness in people. These radical perceptions originated from the social conscience in the minds of young people, who protested in support of the anti-war and civil rights movements and these ideas branched to more specific issues such as the feminist and gay liberation movements. The core issue of these major and minor actions was the demand for human freedom and equality. The

idea of freedom and equality was especially appealing to progressive young people and it eventually led to a dramatical increase in the number of student demonstrations against the establishment.

"To many observers at the time, the most important change in American society during the sixties seemed to be the emergence of youth as a distinct political and cultural force."¹⁾ "Political activism by college students on and off campus, the perceptions of a generation gap denoting a difference in values between people born after world war II and those born before, it all attributed to the idea that age might become important indicator of social identity."²⁾ The 1965 January issue of Vogue featured an article on young people who were self-sufficient and already in positions of power in their fields. The title was "Youthquake : The Year's in its Youth, the Youth in its Year."³⁾

The youth oriented culture acted as a catalyst in the development of a new attitude towards new values, the most significant being the morality of sexuality. The long tradition of Puritan morals which their parents possessed were replaced by liberal attitudes towards sexuality which eventually became known as the sexual revolution. The "youth culture" that demanded individual freedom also promoted the view of "sexual freedom", saying that morality should come from within and should not be dictated by the society's set standards. With this radical view, they challenged conventions, redefined standards, and attacked dogmas.

Peoples protest against authority and impos-

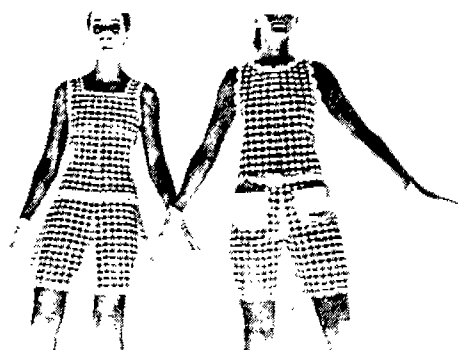


Fig. 1. Courreges, 1968. From James Laver, *Costum and Fashion*(London : thames and Hudson, 1988) 264.

ed set or standards and values, in favor of the quest for individual freedom, was the major impetus underlying the revolutionary movements such as the Women's Liberation and the Gay Rights Movements. In tune with this ideology, the sexual revolution also occurred. The impact of the sexual revolution was felt in every aspect of the sixties culture and in the realms of fashion.

In the realms of fashion, these new radical changes were strongly reflected. Unlike the elegant feminine look of the 50s, the sixties fashion focused upon the "young" and the "young look." In the sixties, for the first time, fashion began to focus upon teenagers (Fig. 1). The youth culture was in command, and "they demanded to look smashing in a theatrical, sexy, and aggressively individual manner. Clothes were free and unbinding. The colors were fun to make them clash, vibrate, gleam and sparkle."⁴⁾ By the mid-sixties, skirts reached the shortest length ever in fashion history.

From the latter half of the sixties, in parallel with the sexual revolution, exposing parts of the body became one of the major trends in fas-



Fig. 2. 'No-bra' Fashion, From *Vogue* April 15, 1971 : 145.

hion and the designers incorporated transparency in clothes as the focal point. By the early seventies the 'no-bra' fashion was observed as one of the distinctive trends among the young women. In *Vogue*, many images of women were wearing buttoned or unbuttoned tight shirts with no bras (Fig. 2).

From the seventies onwards, the new major trend was the unisex look, with diversified styles seen in both men's and women's fashions. The mini skirts of the sixties were replaced by not pants, and pants as a fashion for women dramatically increased. Up until the fifties, pants were confined to casual wear such as sports or leisure wear, however by the end of the sixties, pants for formal or evening wear were introduced by the leading French designers. During the seventies, various styles of pants wear were enjoyed by women and it became mainstream for women's fashion.

A California fashion designer Rudi Gernreich(1922~1985) who was mostly active during this period, also pursued the 'bold', and 'youn-

g' look but they conveyed more than just stylish clothes, rather they were ethical and optical creations.

Rudi Gernreich and his design concept

Rudi Gernreich was born in Vienna in 1922, the only child of Siegmund and Elizabeth Mueller Gernreich. His first exposure to fashion was in the dress shop run by his aunt, where he used to spend hours sketching clothes. These sketches were good enough to get him the offer of an apprenticeship in London when he was twelve, but his mother, widowed when he was eight, felt that he was too young to leave home. Instead, his mother fled with her only child to America in 1938. At the age of sixteen, Gernreich was settled in LA. Whilst there, he was given the opportunity to work as a dancer with Martha Graham's modern dance company. "It had such a tremendous impact on me that it changed my life,"⁵⁾ he says. An instant convert, he dropped art, began studying with Lester Horton, and danced as a member of Horton's company.

Although Gernreich did not continue to pursue his career as a dancer, this brief period of his life as a dancer had a tremendous effect on him. The experience of modern dance provided an opportunity to design performance costumes which can be regarded as the starting point of his career as a fashion designer. Likewise, dance played a major role in influencing his design concept. Freedom of movement and comfort were the main elements for his fashion designs, and these ideas led him to produce innovatively unrestricted clothes. As early as

1952, Gernreich created a bra-free swimsuit in wool jersey. His knitted tube dress of 1953 was the outfit that earned him his first Life magazine credit. In fact, during the fifties, his designs freed women of body-restraining clothes.

The new social values pursued by the youth of the sixties, were also fundamental sources of inspiration for Rudi Gernreich who was mostly active during this period. His radical fashions were expressed as "breakaway." He bared women's breasts by his famous topless swimsuit, and bared pubic hair by creating the "pubikini." He said, "through this I have freed the woman's body."⁶⁾ His most fundamental idea was individual freedom and from this, his themes for fashion flourished.

Fashion became a vehicle for Gernreich's intentions. Through means of fashion, he expressed its social significance. His aesthetic act (fashion design), contained social significance and this "aesthetic act is an expression of existing social forces of change."⁷⁾ To achieve aesthetic quality in his designs, Gernreich used one of the most basic principles of fashion design. The "body" was the most inherent base for his designs, it was the "human canvas" on which any mood or idea could be created. He said, "that the body itself-including the breasts-could become an integral part of design."⁸⁾

The analysis of rudi gernreich's fashion

Partial Nudism

During the 1960s, Gernreich designed clot-

hes based on partial nudism. He said, "the aesthetics of fashion are going to involve the body itself."⁹⁾ With this theme, he created clothes which revealed and concealed various parts of the body. In most cases, he was interested in exposing taboo zones such as the breasts, back, under bosom and the navel. Nevertheless, his bold designs convincingly conveyed the fact that they were not about mere sex appeal but more of symbolic expression of freedom of women and their self-confidence.

The Topless Bathing Suit(1964)

Fig. 3 shows a topless bathing suit made of elasticized wool knit with narrow straps attached at center front waist, and criss-crossed at the back. Apart from the two thin straps this swim suit leaves the upper torso completely bare exposing the breasts. Two thin straps are attached from the center front of the bathing suit creating an illusion of a deep low V-neckline. This V-shape created by the straps, plays the role of connecting the lower torso(the covered) to the upper torso(the uncovered). Proportion wise, the whole torso is divided in half emphasizing the covered and uncovered zones which are further dramatized by the use of black wool material and the conservative design of the bottom part. Gernreich intentionally uses the same thick solid black wool that had been used for Victorian bathing apparel to dramatize the whole effect.

The framing of the neckline with these straps gives the illusion of the upper part being cut out, because we are so used to seeing breasts covered. This design reverses our psychology and our way of perceiving things. The thin



Fig. 3. Rudi Gernreich, The Topless Bathingsuit, 1964.
From Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New
York :Rizzoli, 1991) 71.

straps not only create the neckline, but also frame the breasts. Thus the sexual definition is achieved by the straps and the bottom section, which reaches just above the waistline.

Up until the period that Gernreich showed his topless bathing suit to the public, bare breasts were not shown in family magazines unless they were from other cultures such as certain tribes in Africa. It was taboo to show women's breasts in Western culture because of reasons of modesty just as it had been taboo for women to wear pants. Gernreich believed that these taboos were imposed by an outmoded set of standards and values and we should be freed from such prejudices. This belief was conveyed in one of his comments." I was aware that the great masses of the world would find this shocking and immoral, but I couldn't help feel the implicit hypocrisy that made something in one culture immoral and another perfectly acceptable. The breast had become a sex symbol not out of some preor-

dained plan of nature, but because we'd made it a sex symbol."¹⁰⁾ Baring beautiful breasts seemed logical in a period of freer attitude, freer minds and the emancipation of women. With his firm philosophy he bravely presented it to the public by publishing a photo of his suit in Women's Wear Daily (WWD) magazine.

As early as 1964, Gernreich shocked the world with his topless bathing suit. It started when a WWD reporter asked Gernreich about bathing suit trends. He predicted that in five years U.S. women would be removing their tops to sunbathe. By a request from Susanne Kirkland of Look magazine, Gernreich's prediction came to reality. At first it was only made for a photo shoot but when the bathing suit was publicized by Look, "half a dozen stores asked to carry them."¹¹⁾ Gernreich put it into production, and 3000 were sold.

Gernreich clearly stated that this design was about freeing women's bodies that it symbolized the emancipated woman, and his belief was proven right in later years because this suit now stands as a significant historical piece which epitomized the free spirited fashion concept of the sixties.

"No" Collection(1965)

The conspicuous change from the fitted bodice with cinched in waist that contained a lot of darts of the 50s to the looser, freer and unrestricted trend of the simple dresses of the 60s trend was apparent from 1963 onwards. Although the most drastic change was seen in women's outer garments, the trend of undergarments still possessed the characteristics of the previous decade : heavy padding, boning

to achieve the desired shape or to mold the body. Gernreich with the "No" collection intimate apparel, changed this tendency and opened up a new and freer path for women.

Gernreich felt the same need in women's intimate apparel, as he did in his design of the unstructured bathing suits. In 1965 he created a series of women's underwear and named it the 'No' collection (Fig. 4). In this collection the 'No-Bra' bra, the 'NO-Back' bra and the 'All-In-None' were presented. They all shared the same purpose : to make women look natural and comfortable thus freeing the wearer from any restrictions. The design was not to mold the breasts into a specific shape but merely to cover them comfortably. Gernreich believed that women no longer needed underwear that imposed a shape upon them. Thus a change from wearing up-lift bras and girdles and stockings to wearing light bras and bikini underpants was taking place with mini and micro mini dresses.

The 'NO-Bra' bra consisted of two cups of



Fig. 4. Rudi Gernreich, "no" Collection, 1965. From Vogue April 15, 1965 : 59.

soft, transparent nylon attached to shoulder straps, with a narrow band of stretch fabric encircling the rib cage. The cut of this bra is so simplified that the two cups look like two triangular shapes. They overlap in the middle and form a small triangle at the centre of the bra. The 'No-Back' bra was designed to achieve a nude back by eliminating any straps at the center back. Instead, one waistband which goes around the waist keeps the rest of the bra anchored. Again, it has no trimming, no top stitching and any means of unneeded structure is eliminated. Gernreich's understanding of the body shape led to this harmonious design. The irony of this bra is that it serves the purpose of a bra but at the same time it gives the illusion of not wearing one by revealing the nude back. At the same time this bra is strongly directed to the trend of outer fashion. The advertisement for this bra read, "Now you can wear all backless clothes with a free mind."¹²⁾

"All-In-None" was designed to create a deep plunging front for low-cut fashions. The deep plunging line is achieved by the geometricized cut which criss crosses at the middle of the waist line and continues to form a triangular shape at the genital area. All of the items in the "No" collection were made in sheer nylon tricot and Lycra spandex power net. They came in three shades : nude, black, and white.

In Vogue April 1965 issue, Gernreich's "No" collection was advertised. The title caption of this advertisement read, "Rudi sets you free!"¹³⁾ It also said, "Rudi is a genius of a designer. He wants you to be a free woman." 'Exquisite From supports his philosophy. That's why Ex-

quisite From offered Rudi Gernreich the freedom to design the 'No' collection."¹⁴⁾ The rest of the captions clearly conveys that these bra collection does not stand as mere undergarments, but rather it suggests the new trend in outer garments. Gernreich reveals this idea in some of the captions such as, "'You'll underscore the today's natural look in clothes,' 'now you can wear all backless clothes with a free mind.'"¹⁵⁾ This clearly indicates that Gernreich consciously designed these undergarments in relation to the future trends of outer garments.

The most intriguing factor is that Gernreich's suggestion of fashion trends through these undergarments did not become mainstream fashion until the very end of the sixties and the early seventies. According to Vogue magazine which often features fashion one or two years in advance, showed the trend of transparency and partial nudity started to appear from 1967 and it continue to become one of the popular trends into the seventies. This means that the "No-collection" predicted outer fashion trends several years ahead of time. Gernreich's ability to foresee future trends is well proven by this case.

Mini Dresses(1967)

Fig. 5 and 6 show two minidresses which were featured in the cover of Time in 1967. For these dresses, the idea of partial nudism (the revealing of parts of the body such as the navel and underbosom) was blended with the idea of transparency(the transparency of the material : clear vinyl). They both consist of a matching bikini which can be worn with these



Fig. 5. Rudi Gernreich, Mini Dress(Pink), 1968. From Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 152.



Fig. 6. Rudi Gernreich, Mini Dress(Cream), 1968. From Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 153.

micro mini dresses and matching knee socks in the same material. The whole attire is made of wool knit transparent vinyl inserts.

The pink dress has a slight A-line silhouette with a dropped shoulder line and no sleeves. It is a semi fitted dress that reaches the upper thigh and has a zipper closing at the back. The most distinctive feature of this dress is the clear vinyl insert which starts from the front center neckline and comes straight down revealing the navel. This creates the illusion of a long elongated rectangle shape being cut out from the pink dress but in reality there is a clear vinyl insert covering the skin.

The cream dress is slightly A-lined with no sleeves and two vinyl bands inserted and positioned horizontally across the whole dress. One insert is positioned to go underneath the bosom line so that it reveals the underslope of the bosom, another insert is positioned across the navel so that from the front view the very center of this insert is the navel. Because these

vinyl bands go across the body, they also partially reveal the outline of the body line. The matching leggings also feature clear vinyl inserts which are also inserted horizontally at the front.

In these dresses physical freedom and comfort are achieved by the overtly simplified silhouette and the use of wool knit. They also symbolize freedom by revealing parts of the body such as the navel and underbosom. Gernreich's design of revealing the underbosom also incorporated the no bra fashion. All of these elements add to Gernreich's theme of freedom.

The motivation of these designs reflect the derivation of Gernreich's strong belief in the body as the most important element of his fashion design. As in the case of the topless bathing suit where breasts became part of the design, the navel and underbosom become important parts of the design for these dresses. Gernreich's understanding of the body and its

shape has led to the idea of concealing and revealing parts of the body as the main theme.

The concealed and revealed zones can be perceived as the fundamental element in his design theory in terms of negative and positive balance. The perfect proportion of natural body shape is used as the most inherent base of his designs and they are created upon the interaction between the body and the clothes. This theory is well exemplified in these dresses.

Unisex Mode

Gernreich's Unisex Mode is another theme which can be related to the ideologies of the Feminist and Gay Liberation movement. The human equality was conveyed by the disassemblage of gender distinction in his designs. In examining Gernreich's designs under this theme, one is convinced that most of his designs were more directly borrowed by the opposite sex rather than a blending of the masculine and feminine elements. His designs leant more towards cross dressing.

Pin-striped Wool Suit(Fall, 1967)

In 1967, Gernreich introduced the pant suit in women's wear. Fig. 7 shows a suit consisting of a jacket and pants in grey and black pin-striped wool knit. The jacket has double breasted closure and wide lapels. It also features flap pockets on each side. This is worn with a white shirt and a necktie and accentuated with a man's hat. The whole image of this suit suggests cross dressing rather than an adaptation of men's wear, because in this outfit, there is not a single element that suggests fem-



Fig. 7. Rudi Gernreich, Pin-striped Pantsuit, Fall 1967. From Peggy Moffitt, *The Rudi Gernreich Book*(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 138.

inity. Rather, it suggests the image of theatrical dressing or lesbian dressing. This look is further accentuated by the model's(Peggy Moffitt) appearance. Even though she wears heavy eye makeup and earrings her short hair and low heeled shoes lead us towards fun and theatricality rather than sex appeal.

Intimate Apparel(1976)

Gernreich did not confine his unisex designs to outer wear but extended his ideas to intimate apparel. In 1976, Gernreich designed intimate apparel for Lily of France. For this collection, he designed a black and white satin boxer jumpsuit and fighter's robe for women's lingerie(Fig. 8). He designed jockey shorts (Fig. 9) and boxer shorts and a man's shirt (Fig. 10) for women's intimate wear. It illustrated his pursuit of newness by borrowing from the opposite gender's fashion. Thus the concept of "being free to suit one self" res-



Fig. 8. Rudi Gernreich, Boxer's Jumpsuit and Robe, 1976. From Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 218.



Fig. 9. Rudi Gernreich, Jockey Shorts, 1976. Form Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 218.

ulted in a variety of styles and unconventional clothing. Gernreich was the forerunner of this idea by introducing men's underwear into women's underwear, men's boxer jumpsuits and fighter's robes into women's night gowns and men's shirts into women's lounging wear. Thus not only the crossing over of gender differences but also the question of the appropriateness of the dress was transformed by these designs. This suggests that one can wear anything one wants without any restriction or any taboos. The idea of conspicuously borrowing clothing from the opposite gender was evidenced in this collection. This reflects the idea of Gernreich's intentions : that women's body should be free of the constraints that have kept them submissive to men and that women's clothes and men's clothes could be interchangeable, thus making the two sexes truly equal.

Op-art Fashions



Fig. 10. Rudi Gernreich, Man's Shirt, 1976. From Peggy Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 219.

The Op-art principle included the idea of "the precision of clear-cut geometrical forms with a strong contrast of colour and a sense of movement."(Fig. 11)¹⁶⁾ "The emphasis on anonymous geometrical units, the additive principle of picture construction, repetition of a limited num-

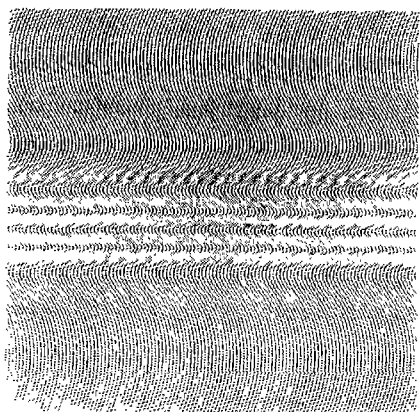


Fig. 11. Bridget Riley, *Current*, 1964. Form Irving Sandler, *American Art of the 1960s*(New York : Haper and Row Pub, 1988) 227.

ber of forms and colours, colour contrast and gradation are essential elements in Op-art.¹⁷⁾ Op-art's "periodic structures" "consisted of a repetition of simple geometric elements such as lines, squares, circles, triangles etc."¹⁸⁾ These generalized characteristics and principles of Op-art were applied in many of Gernreich's designs.

Most of Gernreich's designs are rooted in the fundamental characteristics of Op-art. The reduction of shape to simple geometric units and combinations, the striking juxtapositions of color or repetitive use of dynamic back and white combinations, all are elements of Gernreich's distinctive design characteristics as well as the essential elements of Op-art. These characteristics are conveyed in most of his designs including the example under the theme of "Partial Nudism" and "Unisex-Mode."

However, for this category, the selected examples are those which showed the more direct influence of the Op-art motives, mostly depicted in the use of textiles in relation to the body. "Op-art is an art whose images cre-

ate an illusion of perceptual motion. Its sculptural counterpart was kinetic sculpture, whose components actually do move."¹⁹⁾ This relationship was sought and understood by Gernreich, which led him to design Op-art inspired motifs for his fashion. For Op-art inspired designs, Gernreich related his theme to the nature of fashion : it being a kinetic sculpture. this meant that the shape and the movement of the body in relation to the pattern of the Op-art motifs were considered for his designs. The aesthetic quality which Op-art contains is harmonized with the shape of the body and its movement. Therefore, the combination of fashion and art has been achieved by Gernreich's designs.

Wool Knit Jumpsuit and Skirt(Fall, 1970)

Gernreich showed his enthusiasm in Op-art by saying that "I am terribly excited about Op-art. It is changing the way we see things."²⁰⁾ Based on the idea of Op-art, he created various designs. When Gernreich interpreted Op-art into fashion it was not merely a combination of stripes and dots but more of 'head-to-toe fashion' treating the whole body as the canvas. In this case, Gernreich was constantly thinking about the proportion and the shape of the body in relation to the proportions of the color blocks and their pattern.

Fig. 12 shows a gray plaid wool-knit jumpsuit and a skirt with a wide belt around the hip line. This was made for the 1970 fall knit collection. The jump suit features lines that form a black grid pattern against a gray background and the skirt has a white grid pattern on black and lastly the belt is in solid white.

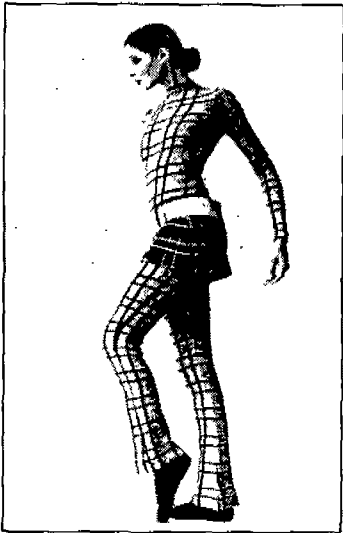


Fig. 12. Rudi Gernreich, Wool Knit Jumpsuit and Skirt, Fall, 1970. From Peggy Moffit, *The Rudi Gernreich Book*(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 179.

This ensemble is mostly fitted to the body and covers the body from neck to the feet. It has a zipper closing at the back.

This ensemble can be examined in two aspects. First the transformation of the straight lines depicted in the textile in relationship to the movement of the body and its shape can be examined. The body conscious design of this ensemble transforms the straight lines into curved lines according to the movement of the body and its shape. Second, the use of non chromatic colors in relation to the proportion of the outfit can also be examined. The motif of the design on the jumpsuit achieves the continuous lines from the neck to the feet. In between these lines, a disruption of color and continuation of the lines results from the wearing of the miniskirt and the belt. As a result, the gray and black plaid is divided by the black and white plaid of the miniskirt in the middle, and then the gray and black plaid appears

again. In other words, what appeals to the eye are the proportions achieved by the non-chromatic color blocks in two different non-chromatic color combinations. Then the whole image is accented by the solid white color in the middle, which is the belt.

The image of the bold grid pattern depicted throughout this head-to-fashion reflect the high rise buildings of scientific and technological mechanization of modern society. Thus the image of highly intensified of modern dressing is resulted by the fusion of Op-art and fashion.

Caftan(1968)

Gernreich liked the basic and simplified shape and the comfort which the caftan possessed. He designed over sized caftans also based on Op-art inspired patterns. Peggy Moffit described Gernreich's caftan. "It slipped and slid around the naked body and felt like a thousand baby's hands caressing me."²¹ She also added that "to me the whole point of a caftan is freedom. There is beauty and sensuality in comfort ; that is the caftan's appeal."²²

Utter freedom of movement and comfort were provided by this caftan(Fig. 13). The oversized and simple cut of this design did not need any means of closure or trimmings because it could be easily slipped over the head. The lightness and softness were provided by the use of silk and the China silk lining. Having achieved the primary function as being a comfortable dress by its oversized cut, the caftan also created a large area for the textile. The aesthetical aspect of this dress lay in the harmonious textile design in relation to its simple form.



Fig. 13. Rudi Gernreich, Caftan, 1968. From Peggy Moffit, *The Rudi Gernreich Book*(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 155.

Unlike Gernreich's other body conscious fashions, the focus of this caftan did not rely on the shape of the body but rather on the design of the textile. The shape of this caftan was being treated like a canvas on which Gernreich depicted his Op-art inspired motifs. Thus the shape of the body is abstracted by the design of the textile. In this case, the black and white 'checkerboard' print dominates a large area of this caftan and the rest is contrasted with a yellow dot print horizontally inserted on the front left side of the caftan. This positioning of the insert can create different visual images according to the wearer's movements. The dynamic contrast between the two geometric shapes (squares and dots) and colors (black and white with yellow and white) results in an aesthetical harmonious design. As a result, the drastic changes in the pattern and the color make our eyes focus on the whole image rather than on a restricted area.



Fig. 14. Rudi Gernreich, Shirt Dress, Fall 1972. From Peggy Moffit, *The Rudi Gernreich Book*(New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 202.

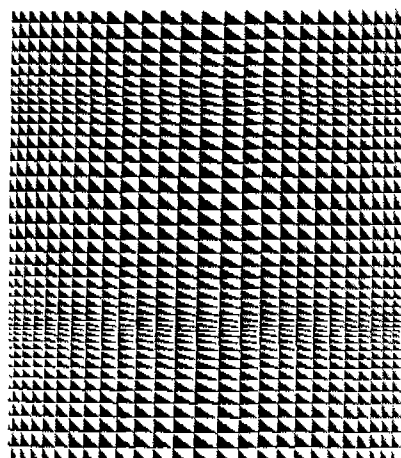


Fig. 15. Bridget Riley, *Straight Curve*, 1963. from Cyril Barrett, *Op Art*, (New York : the Viking Press, 1970) 45.

Knit Shirt Dress(1972)

Fig. 14 shows a simple cut full length wool jersey dress in a shirt style. Peggy Moffit described this dress, "In every collection there were always beautiful, easy to wear clothes. They were never dowdy or boring and could be worn by people who didn't look like fashion models."²³⁾

The pattern of this dress is a simple periodic structure of triangles of the same size. This pattern can be directly related to an Op-art painting done by Bridget Riley in 1963 (Fig. 15) entitled Straight Curve in black and white. This also contains a periodic structure of triangles but the variance of different sized triangles results in a strong sense of movement that generates different images of optical illusions. "Although every line on the surface is straight, curves criss cross in waves diagonally over the whole picture, bending in and out, merging, disappearing and reappearing. The 'hollowing' 'egg-box' effect may appear momentarily, but it is quickly dispelled by the diagonal curves. An over-all rhythm controls all these movements and relates them."²⁴⁾ These effects described for Straight Curve are directly related to the effects of this dress. Even though the triangles depicted on the dress are the same size, the same effects of movement and curves are achieved by the curves of the body and its motion. Without having to vary the size of the triangles, the real effect of the optical illusion is achieved by this dress.

Moreover, this dress adds another optical effect by the use of the color red. Although the motif of the pattern has not changed, the continuous pattern is disrupted by the red color. The red portion of this dress forms a continuous diagonal shape across the body. When viewing the dress, one notices the diagonal shape of the red color and the black and white pattern rather than the actual shape of the body. Thus this dress successfully achieves its dual purposes. It can cover the imperfections of the body while generating the aesthetic

quality derived from the Op-art inspired motifs and colors depicted in the textile design.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of Gernreich's works in various dimensions, it becomes clear that his fashion designs have influenced a wide range of important aspects of the role of modern clothing. Within this role, individual freedom was expressed in a variety of ways by Gernreich.

Partial nudism and the unisex mode are the two major themes that Gernreich used to convey his ideas of freedom. Gernreich's idea of Partial nudism was about freeing the woman's body by revealing various body parts which were conventionally considered as taboo zones. By freeing the woman's body, the image of the emancipated woman was pursued. Gernreich also pursued his idea of human equality in the Unisex Mode which led him to design cross dressing for both sexes.

Gernreich's designs also contained an aesthetic quality which was achieved through the 'body' and Op-art principles. He believed that the "body" was the most beautiful form and it should be revealed or enhanced by clothes. The Op-art principles were applied in most of his designs in relation to the shape of the body or its movements. This relationship was best conveyed in the examples selected under Partial Nudism, where parts of the body are revealed by the division of sharp geometricized shapes or lines. The area of the revealed body as opposed to the area of the covered is divided by these shapes in aesthetically harmonious ways by Gernreich's understanding of

Op-art inspired principles. On the other hand, under the theme of Op-art Fashions a more direct aesthetical approach was pursued. Op-art motifs were applied on the textile designs of his clothes. In these cases, juxtapositions of various shapes and color combinations played a major role in achieving the aesthetic quality. Therefore the fusion of Op-art motifs and fashion resulted in aesthetically intensified designs.

Another significant factor in Gernreich's fashion design was comfort in clothing. His designs were mostly made of knits and jerseys which allowed freedom of movement for the wearer. He has freed the woman's body from the constraining bustlines, high heels, tight clothing and closely fitted hips in favor of designing clothes that bared or revealed parts of the body. This theme ranged from the topless bathing suit and intimate apparel to day dress and evening wear. In the cases of the Unisex Mode, comfort was pursued by suggesting women to wear pants for all occasions giving them an increased freedom of movement and an additional degree of comfort. Thus, pants became the ideal clothing for emancipated women. In Op-art Fashions, comfort was achieved by the lightness of silk in oversized caftans which did not constrain any part of the body or restrict any movements.

Gernreich's designs pertained to the new characteristics of democracy in fashion. He was opposed to the idea of haute couture, believing that clothes should be designed primarily with the comfort of the wearer. Gernreich's pursuit of "youthfulness" in his designs led to a detachment from luxury clothing. Instead of

exhibiting one's social rank he advocated the destruction of conventions or taboos that promoted boldness and simplicity. The dynamically simplified shapes of his designs rejected any means of trimmings or unneeded decorations. His clothes were mass produced ready to wear and were not highly priced. He was not concerned with perfection or luxury in his designs, but instead, he conveyed freedom, originality, and classlessness.

These findings highlight the elements of modern clothing which are also shared by the postmodern era. Gernreich's pursuit of individual freedom in his designs has built a bridge to the postmodern age and he has been influential in its inspiration. The distinction between clothes, genres, social ranks and pure art and design have been disassembled by Gernreich's designs by combining, fusing, or intermingling them which resulted in a new sensibility. This tendency opened up limitless possibilities for contemporary fashion. It is perhaps why his designs have an on-going influence over even the most recent fashion. His influential power lies not so much in the details of his designs but in his fundamental design philosophy. In an article in *Detail* magazine, Priscilla Tucker commented on the nature of Gernreich's designs. "Not one of them is a style, rather they are prototypes for functional breakthroughs or optical inventions. The difference between fashion as design and fashion as passing style is that years later design still has a life and force, whereas style looks depressing or hilarious."²⁵ As fashion approaches the twenty first century, it is a testament to Gernreich's insight and foresight that his des-

igns continue to be influential in the creation of clothes which are functional as well as emphasizing the beauty of the body.

ENDNOTES

- 1) David Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America (New York : Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995) 88.
- 2) Steigerwald 88.
- 3) "Youthquake," Vogue 1 Jan. 1965 : 112.
- 4) "Miniskirt is Here to Stay(Till Spring, Anyway), " Time 1 Dec. 1967 : 70
- 5) "Miniskirt is Here to Stay(Till Spring, Anyway), " Time 1 Dec. 1967 : 70
- 6) Marylou Luther, Rudi gernreich : A Retrospective : 9.
- 7) Charles Russell, The Avant-Garde Today (Urbana, Chicage, London : University of Illinois Press, 1981) 13.
- 8) Priscilla Tucker, "Remembering Rudi Gernreich," Detail June 1985 : 93.
- 9) Peggi Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book (New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 27.
- 10) Peggi Moffit 19.
- 11) "Miniskirt is Here to Stay (Till Spring, Anyway), " Time 1 Dec. 1967 : 80.
- 12) "'No" Collection," Vogue 15 April 1965 : 59.
- 13) "'No" Collection," Vogue 15 April 1965 : 59.
- 14) "'No" Collection," Vogue 15 April 1965 : 59.
- 15) "'No" Collection," Vogue 15 April 1965 : 59.
- 16) Cyril Barrett, Op Art (New York : The Viking Press, 1970) 36.
- 17) Cyril Barrett 36.
- 18) Cyril Barrett 38.
- 19) Irving Sandler, American Art of the 1960s (New York : Harper and Row Pub., 1988) 222.
- 20) Robert Walker, "Gernreich Views Op Art as Head-to-Toe Fashion," New York Times 15 May 1970.
- 21) Peggi Moffit, The Rudi Gernreich Book (New York : Rizzoli, 1991) 154.
- 22) Peggi Moffit 154.
- 23) Peggi Moffit 202.
- 24) Cyril Barrett, Op Art (New York : The Viking Press, 1970) 42.
- 25) Priscilla Tucker, "Remembering Rudi Gernreich," Detail June 1985 : 90.

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논문요약

루디 건라이(Rudi Gernreich)패션 디자인에 나타나는 개인적 자유에 대한 추구

본 논문에서는 패션 디자인(fashion design)을 평가하는데 있어서 새로운 방법론적 접근 방식을 제시해 보려 하였다. 즉 패션 디자이너의 디자인에 대한 철학을 이해함으로써 패션에 대한 근본적인 면에 대해 보다 나은 이해를 갖도록 하는 접근 방식을 모색하려는 것이다. 본 논문의 분석대상은 디자이너 루디 건라이(Rudi Gernreich : 1922-1985)와 그의 작품들인데, 그의 작품들에 나타나는 급진적인 성향 뒤에 숨어 있는 그의 디자인 철학을 집중적으로 분석함으로써 작품과 철학의 상관 관계를 조명하려는 것이 그 주된 목적이다. 기존의 그에 대한 평가는 '파격적 패션', '소셜 스테이트먼트(Social Statement)', 또는 '시각적 창출' 등의 표현으로 극히 피상적인 것이었다. 반면에 그가 어떠한 경로로 이러한 디자인을 구상하게 되었는지 또는 그가 현대의상에 얼마만큼의 영향을 미쳤는지에 대한 연구는 극히 소수에 불과하였다.

본 논문의 초점은 건라이의 패션 디자인을 그가 중요한 가치로 믿고 있었던 '개인적 자유에 대한 추구'의 반영으로써 재 평가해 보려는 것이다. 이것의 입증을 위해서 그의 디자인들을 역사적, 사회적 그리고 미학적인 관점에서 분석하였다. 먼저 그의 디자인 철학을 도출하기 위해 그의 개인적 배경에 대한 상세한 검토를 하였고, 그의 디자인과 관련된 자료와, 현존하는 작품들과 그에 따른 참고문헌들에 대한 분석 조사 작업을 하였다. 이 작업을 통해 필자는 건라이의 작품들을 세 개의 주된 주제들, 즉, '부분적 누디즘(Partial Nudism)', '유니섹스 모드(Unisex Mode)', 그리고 '옵 아트 패션(Op-art Fashion)'으로 구분하였다.

'부분적 누디즘(Partial Nudism)'과 '유니섹스 모드(Unisex Mode)'는 60년대 중반에서 70년대 초반에 출현한 유스 컬처어(Youth Culture)에 부합하는 그의 디자인의 반영으로써 성의 혁명, 여

성 인권운동과 동성애자 인권 운동과 같은 사회 이슈들과 그의 디자인이 갖는 상관 관계를 보여주는 것이다.

‘옵-아트 패션(Op-art fashion)’은 건라이 디자인의 미학적 요소에 초점을 맞추고 있다. 그의 작품에 나타나는 인체와 옵-아트 원리의 관계를 조명해 보고, 건라이가 옵-아트와의 연계하에 그의 디자인을 어느만큼 예술적으로 승화시켰는지

를 보여주고 있다. 각 주제들은 건라이 작품들의 개별적인 분석을 통해 논하였다.

본 논문은 보다 넓은 관점에서의 건라이의 디자인에 대한 재 평가로 결론을 지었다. 이러한 재평가 작업을 통해 패션 디자인계에 미친 그의 공헌의 역사적 중요성을 강조하고 현대 패션에 그의 영향이 계속 미치고 있는 이유를 설명하려 하였다.