

Press release

Fast Fashion. The Dark Side of Fashion

www.fastfashion-dieausstellung.de

Press preview: 19 March 2015, 11 am

Opening: 19 March 2015, 7 pm

20 March to 20 September 2015



Tim Mitchell, Clothing Recycled, 2005, © Tim Mitchell | www.timitchell.co.uk

The exhibition *Fast Fashion. The Dark Side of Fashion* at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MKG) invites visitors to take a critical look behind the scenes of the textile industry, fashion and consumption. It is the first exhibition to endeavour a comprehensive and discerning examination of the clothing industry system and its socio-economic and ecological consequences. It sheds light on the global triangle of consumerism, economy and ecology from various perspectives: fashion and victims, poverty and affluence, global and local, wages and profits, clothing and chemicals, clothing and ecological balance. In the *Slow Fashion* laboratory, under the headings 'Sustainable Fibres', 'Animal Fibres', 'Innovative Technologies' and 'Creating Transparency', it presents examples of sustainable fashion and relevant textile seals. The visitors receive insights into the ethically justifiable wardrobe of the future and how the consumer can exert an influence through his purchasing decisions. The exhibition moreover highlights the current discussions on this complex topic. A scenography designed especially for this purpose translates the knowledge basis researched for the show into an easily comprehensible visual presentation: the exhibition layout takes the visitor through the entire consumption process from the catwalk, photo studio and billboard to the shop window and fitting room. The show is moreover the first to bring together various specialists concerned with the ecological, economic, ethical, social and design aspects. Their knowledge is summed up in thirty essays in a magalogue (a catalogue in magazine format), which, as an integral element of the exhibition, offers the visitors in-depth background information.

The term fast fashion stands for a specific production and distribution system for mass-produced fashion wear that - frequently copied from high-end designs - is sold worldwide at low prices. It also makes reference to acceleration: in the globalization of the fashion mainstream, in production and trade (the time span between the product's design and its rollout can be as short as two weeks), and in the utilization and wearing out of clothing. In the fashion hierarchy, fast fashion occupies a position at the lower end, after haute couture, prêt-à-porter and medium-priced ready-to-wear apparel. Fast fashion has moreover brought forth a new type of fast fashion consumer. It has attained the status of an economic success model which earns its profits, however, at the expense of ecological and social systems. The fast fashion industry's ecological balance could hardly be worse, and it is among the sectors responsible for disastrous working conditions and below-subsistence-level wages.

The slow fashion movement is presently gaining significance as a counter-model to fast fashion. It calls on producers and consumers to take more responsibility and show more respect towards human beings, the environment and products. The chief aims of slow fashion are deceleration, the environmentally friendly production and selection of raw materials, fair trade, sustainable clothing production and high-quality processing. After the example of other 'slow' movements such as slow food, the products often have regional origins and short production chains. The individual stages from the fibre to its processing are transparent, and the use of chemicals is avoided to the greatest extent possible.

The world of fashion is dominated by globally active corporations that operate according to the principles of fast fashion. They cater to the constant desire for the newest and latest by rolling out new collections at an ever faster rate. Their price policies enable customers to purchase new clothing more often than necessary. The fashion industry is one of the most important in the global economy. Ninety per cent of the clothing for the American and European market is produced at low cost in low-wage countries such as China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia. As a pioneer, the textile industry helps to create jobs worldwide and thus to improve the security and living conditions of people in developing countries. On the other hand, inhumane working conditions often prevail in the production plants: safety standards are often violated and the wages are generally below the subsistence level. In the calculation of the price of an article of clothing, the textile workers' wages account for no more than one to two per cent.

The production of clothing goes hand in hand with tremendous consumption of resources and a burden on the environment that should not be underestimated. Vast amounts of water and thermal energy are required for the production of raw materials and the transport, utilization phase and disposal of clothing. Pesticides are used in cotton production. In the further course of the textile chain, some seven thousand different chemicals are employed in production and processing to 'upgrade' clothing by endowing it with certain aesthetic or functional qualities, from sandblasted jeans to outdoor and wellness wear.

Against this background, the exhibition raises a lot of questions: Does fast fashion mean the democratization of fashion? Does the global fast fashion mainstream really allow people to live out their individuality? How can a T-shirt cost less than a cup of coffee, a dress as much as an ice-cream sundae, a pair of jeans as much as a ticket to the movies? What does that say about the quality and appreciation of fashion? Is fast fashion environmentally and socially acceptable when it has to be transported across half the globe before it is sold in a store? Who are the real victims of fashion? What responsibility do consumers bear and what can they do to bring about change?

Participating artists: Taslima Akhter, Susanne A. Friedel, Christin Losta, Tim Mitchell, Elisa van Joolen, Manu Washaus, Paolo Woods

Magalog: A catalogue in magazine format is being published in conjunction with the show, edited by Sabine Schulze and Claudia Banz, with contributions by Claudia Banz, Marina Beermann, Jamil Bhuiyan, Marc Brandt, Kirsten Brodde, Ina Budde, Stephan Engel, Sabine Franke, Anke Hagemann, Patrick Kugler, Bettina Musiolek, Lucy Norris, Ralph Pirow, Angelika Riley, Frank Schmidt, Marijke Schottmer, Carolin Wahnbaeck, Waltraud Waidelich, Friederike von Wedel-Parlow, Miriam Wolf and Brigitte Zietlow, approx. 200 pages, approx. 35 colour illustrations and approx. 20 prints, 6.50 EUR.

Website, BLOG and accompanying programme: The exhibition website www.fastfashion-dieausstellung.de offers a wealth of background information on fast fashion and related topics. The BLOG www.stilbrise.de encourages an environmentally conscious approach to fashion, presents visitor looks, statements and fair labels and provides information on creative alternatives. The programme accompanying the exhibition includes a "Fair Fashion Tour" to sustainably producing Hamburg fashion labels, an idea exchange for "Fair Fashionistas" with pointers and workshops on recycling and upcycling and much more.

After its presentation in Hamburg, the exhibition *Fast Fashion. The Dark Side of Fashion* will be on view at the Deutsches Hygiene Museum Dresden from December 2015 to May 2016.

The exhibition is being made possible by:

Karin Stilke Stiftung



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Press images: download at www.mkg-hamburg.de

Opening hours: Thu – Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Thu 10 am – 9 pm | admission: 10 € / 7 €, Thu from 5 pm 7 €, free to age 17
