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Re-shaping Innovations in the Contemporary
Fashion Show: Emerging Chinese Designers in the
Global Fashion Ecosystem

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Abstract

In the contemporary fashion system the number of Chinese designers has increased dramatically: they have formed a 'new wave' of design power that is changing China's global fashion status. Some Chinese designers showcase their collections at Paris, New York, Milan and London fashion weeks and demonstrate their design capabilities and desire to promote the global image of Chinese fashion. However, existing research on this topic does not fully reveal the processes behind the rise in growing Chinese fashion dominance, particularly for a new generation of Chinese designers. This thesis investigates how emerging Chinese fashion brands are reshaping Chinese design power and how the international creative labour that is presented and exemplified by emerging international-based Chinese designers dynamically operates through the production of fashion shows at different international fashion weeks to systematically bring innovations to contemporary fashion shows within the global fashion ecosystem.

To explore this growing phenomenon, an extended period of ethnographic research was undertaken for 24 months between March 2016 and September 2018. Participant observation, interviews and case studies were used to examine the youngest generation of UK-educated, internationally-based Chinese designers showing at Paris, London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks. Further to this participation in show production was undertaken with Chinese designers Youjia Jin, Xuzhi Chen and Victor Wong.

This thesis finds that innovation in fashion show presentation is a key medium that is employed in reshaping Chinese fashion while accelerating the increasing dominance of China's fashion power. The re-shaped innovations are embodied in two main perspectives. The first perspective is the new

aesthetics of visual innovation in fashion shows brought about by immersive fashion performances featuring physical theatre. The second perspective is the forming of a designer collective that advocates and applies this visual innovation in the global fashion ecosystem, constantly changing the inner mechanisms of this ecosystem. The self-identified independence of designers is, in essence, a cultural identification and interpretation formed within the emerging community of IBC designers who seek autonomy and freedom from traditional Chinese economic, cultural and political constraints to better engage with the multiplicity of global fashion culture. Shanghai Fashion Week, in particular, has seen unprecedented maturation, combining socialist characteristics with a carnivalesque atmosphere, resulting in mass appeal as well as a professional event that is associated with rapid Chinese fashion modernity, attracting Chinese diaspora designers to showcase their iconoclastic work and, thereby, collecting and accelerating the accumulation of aesthetic innovation.

Lay Summary

In today's fashion industry, the number of Chinese designers has increased dramatically and they have formed a 'new wave' of design power that is re-constructing China's global fashion status. With the Chinese government's significant endeavours to upgrade the nation's global cultural status, cultivating and enhancing Chinese design power has become one of its most important tasks. Many people have been shocked by the unprecedented development speed of Chinese fashion modernity, as well as the development speed of Chinese designers and their design capabilities. The image of Chinese design power is being altered by these emerging groups of Chinese designers.

This thesis focuses on the youngest generation of UK-educated, internationally-based Chinese designers and their endeavours to impact the global fashion ecosystem by offering new innovation in fashion shows staged at different international fashion weeks. It will help you to understand the latest Chinese design power by the innovation these designers offer through their fashion shows staged internationally.

As today's fashion week has become a microcosm of the whole industry, designers' participatory experiences are also seen as a microcosm of their interactions with the fashion industry. Through their participatory stories of show productions, which is the most effective way to illustrate their design capabilities and enthusiasm for upgrading the global image of Chinese designers and design power, how the Chinese design status is being upgraded by the fashion show, an effective image-making tool, is explored.

I aim to present and document the rapid changes in today's fashion ecosystem through fashion weeks, fashion shows and emerging Chinese

designers. This thesis narrates designers' experiences in producing shows in three distinguished global fashion cities, Paris, London and Shanghai. It took me two years to finish this research, following three designers' stories with regard to cross-cultural show production and their corresponding participation in three fashion weeks (Paris, London and Shanghai). Furthermore, another five designers of the same generation and with similar features are covered to analyse their show presentations staged at Shanghai Fashion Week as it is one of the most critical fashion weeks in revealing the current situation in the Chinese fashion industry.

Overall, the thesis will provide a transverse picture of the latest Chinese design power and Chinese designers' dynamic interactions with today's global fashion ecosystem.

Abbreviations

BFC: British Fashion Council

CFA: China Fashion Association

CFA: China Fashion Week

CCI: Creative and Cultural Industry

FCF: Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers and Créateurs de Mode, also known as the French Couture Federation

FE: Fashion East

FF: Fashions Finest

FS: Fashion Scout

IBC designers: international-based Chinese designers

LFW: London Fashion Week

MLFW: Milan Fashion Week

NYFW: New York Fashion Week

PFW: Paris Fashion Week

PRC: People's Republic of China

SFDA: Shanghai Fashion Designers Association

SHFW: Shanghai Fashion Week

SMPGGO: The General Office of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government

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Glossary of Names

Youjia Jin: Independent Chinese Designer based in UK and Paris

Xuzhi Chen: Independent Chinese Designer based in UK, Milan, Paris and Shanghai

Victor Wong: Independent Chinese Designer based in UK

Fengyi Tan: Independent Chinese Designer based in UK

Angel Chen: Independent Chinese Designer based in UK, Milan, and Shanghai

Tong Zhao: Creative Directors of Shows Produced for Youjia Jin and Fengyi Tan

Chapter 1: Introduction

- **Industry Imperativeness of This Study: The Significant Rise of a New Wave of Chinese Design Power**

Today's global fashion industry is experiencing a cultural hierarchical reconstruction due to the undeniable rise of Chinese design power on the global stage with a surge in the number of Chinese designers showing on the most crucial international fashion stages in recent decades. There is also a collective of designers forming who advocate and endeavour to explore and stage new aesthetics in showing fashion at international fashion weeks. The number of emerging brands and the scale of fashion weeks in China have grown in the past decade with the global economic power in fashion switching from conventional European legitimate fashion capitals to the emerging capitals in China. International-based Chinese (referred to as 'IBC' hereafter) designer brands, in particular, are upgrading the cultural images and discourse power with rising recognition from the legitimate Western fashion system and are becoming the main contributors to changing the global image of China's design power from garments being 'manufactured in China' to being 'designed in China' (Deloitte, 2018, p. 35). Their active participation in international fashion weeks has become an effective way for China to upgrade its soft power in the global fashion system.

Presenting designs on the official calendars of the 'Big Four' fashion weeks, namely, Paris Fashion Week (refer to as PFW hereafter), New York Fashion Week (refer to as NYFW hereafter), Milan Fashion Week (refer to as MLFW hereafter) and London Fashion Week (refer to as LFW hereafter), is an authorisation and validation process that every designer is seeking (Zhao, 2013). This is no exception for Chinese designers as presenting at these

fashion weeks is an effective strategy to gain international recognition and upgrade their hierarchical status in the global fashion system, as well as in the domestic market. It has been over a decade since Chinese designers began to showcase designs within the Western fashion system (Tsui, 2009). The year of 2006 was the first year that Chinese designer brands started to present their works at international fashion weeks. This journey started at PFW in 2006 and the brands that staged shows were WUYONG, founded in 2006 by Ma Ke, and JEFEN, founded in 2000 by Xie Feng (Fashion Network, 2009). In 2007, the number of Chinese designers included increased to four and they were dispersed across three of the 'Big Four' fashion weeks, namely, Xie Feng and Ma Ke at PFW, Guo Pei at MLFW and the commercial brand Cabbeen at NYFW (Tsui, 2009; Fashion Network, 2009).

By 2017, the previous decade had seen a surge in the number of Chinese designers showing on the most crucial international fashion stages; 49 Chinese designer brands¹ were listed on the official calendars in 2017 for both womenswear and menswear at the 'Big Four' fashion weeks. This represents the undeniable rise of Chinese design power on the global stage. The official organiser of LFW, the British Fashion Council (which is referred to in full in the introduction but referred to as BFC after the first chapter), hosted an event called the 'C-Pop Show' in 2018 (see Figure 1.1) with VIP.com for

¹Chinese Fashion Designer Brands (couture, menswear and womenswear) listed on the 'Big Four' Fashion Weeks in 2016 (LuxeCO, 2017)

Couture: Guo Pei

LFW: Xander Zhou, FENG CEHN WANG, Ximon Lee, Pronounce, Stevetai, HAIZHENWANG, Ryan LO, Xiao Li, HUishan Zhang, Jamie Wei Huang,

PFW: Sean Suen, SANKUANZ, Angus Chiang, Youjia JIn, Masha Ma, Shiatzy Chen, Uma Wang, YANG Li

MLFW: Miao Ran, Riscostru, Angel Chen, XU ZHI, Annakiki, Tommy Zhong

NYFW: Taoray Wang, LANYU, Babyghost, Laurence&Chico, Vivienne Hu, Namilia, Calvin Luo, Chocheng, ZangToi, Cynthia &Xiao, Harrison Wong, LOOM LOOP, Vivienne Tam,

Derek Lam, Luyang, Jarel Zhang, Claudia Li, Vicky Zhang, JIA LIU, YAJUN LIN, TSAI MEIYUE, VANCY LAW

the purpose of promoting Chinese designer brands, identifying the rise of Chinese design power on the international fashion stage as a 'New Wave' in the global industry (Smith, 2018; Miller, 2018).



Figure 1.1: An event called the C-Pop Show, held in the Spring/Summer 2019 season at LFW for the purpose of promoting Chinese designer brands. The Chief Strategy Officer at Farfetch, Stephanie Phair (on the far left) and the Chief Executive Officer of the British Fashion Council, Caroline Rush (on the far right) attended the C-Pop Show' presented by VIP.com at LFW on the 13th of September 2018 in London, England (photograph by Mike Marsland/Getty Images for VIP.com)

Although there is an increasing proportion of Chinese design graduates from international fashion colleges[], they are still a small group in terms of

numbers among today's Chinese fashion designers (based both domestically and internationally). Nevertheless, these IBC designers play the most important role in upgrading the design power of the Chinese fashion image. These IBC designers, having a mixture of a domestic Chinese and an international educational background, often choose to base themselves internationally when setting up their autonomy brands after graduation and see the 'Big Four' fashion weeks as their start to building up their brand images but are starting to return to China and showcase their works at Shanghai Fashion Week (referred to as SHFW hereafter). With an unparalleled development speed and a period of constantly emerging institutions and companies between 2016 and 2018 to support emerging IBC designers in producing and showcasing fashion innovations, SHFW, as well as the city of Shanghai, are nurturing and incubating these IBC designers. SHFW has become a vital feature in the international fashion calendar that integrates IBC talents that, despite having studied elsewhere, return to the runways of their country of origin (Miller, 2018).

Facilitated by the significant rise of the discourse power of Chinese labels in the global fashion system, the rapidly-developing Chinese design power is now reconstructing the global fashion ecosystem and the youngest designers are endeavouring to gain, broaden and deepen their global influences within the changing system. More importantly, they are managing to change the global recognition of Chinese designers of 'imitating rather than creating' (Tsui, 2009, p. 91) by presenting aesthetic creativity in fashion shows at different international fashion weeks. To upgrade the cultural status of Chinese fashion and gain global validation from the 'legitimate fashion system' (Zhao, 2008, p. 89) in Europe which refers to the cultural circles and industry systems formed by the dominant fashion capitals Paris, Milan and London (Breward and Gilbert, 2006) and thereby gain more cultural discourse, fashion shows have become an effective tool for the youngest generation of Chinese

designers to express their increasingly strong capabilities in delivering creativity and innovation, with international fashion weeks being the main platform for them to achieve this.

With such numerous changes in the industry and fashion culture that have altered the existing global fashion cultural system, brought about by the rise of Chinese design power in a short time, it can be seen that few studies have had the chance to emphasise this phenomenon and discuss it in depth. Some (Tsui, 2009; Lindgren, 2013; Williams, 2015) have explored the general images of Chinese fashion designers and the modern evolution of the Chinese fashion industry through the development of CFW (Wu, 2009; Lindgren, 2013) but few studies can be found within the recent decade that have investigated international-based Chinese designers in depth to explore the dynamic repositioning of today's fashion design power and discourse in the global system. Nor have they identified the inner patterns of the Chinese design power that is emerging globally to present a comprehensive picture of emerging Chinese designers and the related shifts in the global power of fashion culture.

Through the empirical study of selected IBC designers and the following of their show productions within a cross-cultural fashion week system and their corresponding interactions with the host cities, this thesis investigates the way emerging Chinese designer brands are reshaping Chinese design power. It also examines the question of how the international creative labour that is presented and exemplified by emerging IBC designers dynamically operates through the production of fashion shows at different international fashion weeks to systematically bring innovations to contemporary fashion shows within the global fashion ecosystem.

- **Theoretical Emphasis of This Study: Origination, Scope, Aims and Contributions**

Apart from the industry itself, the theoretical imperativeness and prior studies that have triggered the origination of this research can be demonstrated in the following section.

The existing academic research on Chinese designers and China's fashion industry, (Zhao, 2008; Tsui, 2009; Wu, 2009; Lindgren, 2013), although highlighting the rise of Chinese design power, was written approximately ten years ago between 2005 and 2013. More importantly, these sources do not fully reveal the changing processes behind the rise in Chinese fashion dominance in terms of culture, particularly for a new generation of Chinese designers. Although Williams (2015) published a book *Fashion China* archiving most Chinese designer labels, it is not research that is rigorously academic but more of an industry report from a journalistic point of view. However, her book still contributes to demonstrating the industrial necessity of undertaking further research on the rapid rise of Chinese designers. The research of Tsui (2009), as well as that of Lindgren (2013), uses interviews and ethnography as main research methods, managing to archive most mature Chinese designer labels since the first generation of independent Chinese designers emerged. Their studies utilise the commercial development of the selected Chinese designer brands as an entry point to elaborate on the evolution of the Chinese fashion industry from the perspective of Chinese designers. Wu's (2009) empirical study focuses on the macroevolution of the whole Chinese fashion industry, instead of individual designers. The topic of Chinese fashion designers, as well as the Chinese fashion industry, seems to have been overlooked since then as few apparent changes have occurred in the global fashion industry from a cultural perspective. The main contribution of Zhao's (2008) research is important,

demonstrating that China Fashion Week (hereafter referred to as CFW) is a microcosm of China's fashion industry, which builds systematic and theoretical connections with Entwistle and Rocamora's (2006) study on LFW and studies of fashion weeks in China.

From a broad perspective, in addition to research on Chinese designers and Chinese fashion culture, prior fashion studies that have triggered and influenced this PhD research are mainly based on historians' research of fashion shows (Skov, 2004; Skov et al., 2009; Evans, 2013; Fury, 2017), the evolution of fashion culture in relation to designers (English, 2013; Steele et al., 2013), cultural studies on fashion weeks (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006) and show productions (Stark, 2018). However, all of the above studies fail to emphasise the dramatic changes regarding the significant rise of Chinese discourse in the global fashion ecosystem since 2017 to 2018. The same situation can be seen with the explicit research of international fashion weeks (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Zhao, 2008). This does not mean that fashion insiders in China have stopped supporting the rise of Chinese design power as the Chinese government and industry institutions have been actively seeking ways to upgrade the international status of Chinese fashion, although few researchers have focused on this topic (Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013; Zhao, 2008). One of the most important of these efforts to upgrading the Chinese global fashion status is guaranteeing the rapid development of fashion weeks within a socialist state.

As for the scope of the youngest generation of Chinese fashion designers, all the phenomena mentioned above thoroughly demonstrate the significance of the rise of Chinese design power, which is mainly facilitated by the emerging group of internationally-educated Chinese designers who are showcasing their creativity to gain recognition in the dominant fashion systems. As the CSM graduates make up the highest proportion of internationally-educated

young Chinese designers (Liu, 2017), this thesis focuses on this group of contributing to new Chinese design power and the selection criteria is elaborated on in Chapter 3 when discussing the methodological approaches of this thesis: the UK-educated, international-based Chinese designers, who are assisting China in upgrading its global fashion status today and this trend is predicted to continue in the future. In terms of the specific generation to which these young designers belong, this thesis mainly focuses on the ‘third’ generation, who are the youngest generation of designers, born in and after the 1980s during the ‘one-child’ policy and commonly considered to be the hope of Chinese designers (Tsui, 2009, pp.25-30)². This is because the third generation of Chinese designers tends to expand their businesses on the global stage, rather than focusing on the domestic market, and their main purpose for showing at international fashion weeks is to become well-known, thereby upgrading their domestic brand statuses. The emerging generation of IBC designers not only showcase their works at international fashion weeks but also establish their businesses in the cities they showcase at, which tend to have in-depth engagement with the global fashion system on both the commercial and cultural levels.

Another issue that needs to be clarified is the discussion of ‘ecosystem’ instead of ‘system’ in this study, which is discussed in the following content.

² Tsui (2009, p. 13) suggests a rough classification of Chinese fashion designers, split into ‘three generations’, as explained in the following quote: ‘The first generation, exemplified by Wang Xin-Yuan, Wu Hai-Yan, Liu Yang and Frankie Xie, were born in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was an era when China isolated herself from the rest of the world and led various political revolutions and movements within the country. This first generation of designers grew up in the 1980s and became prominent in the late ‘80s and ‘90s. The second generation was led by Liang Zi, Ma Ke and Wang Yi-Yang. They were all born in either late 1960s or early 1970s, prior to the reforming era, and started their own designer labels in the mid-1990s. They blossomed in the late 1990s and early 2000s and now they’re the mainstay designer brands in China. The third generation refers to those born in the 1980s during the “one-child” policy. This generation is commonly considered the hope of Chinese fashion designers’ (Tsui, 2009, p. 13).

A fashion system is a group of interacting, interrelated and interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole, which ‘...forms part of a larger social and cultural phenomenon ... that embraces not only the business of fashion but also the art and craft of fashion, and not only production but also consumption’ (Mitterfellner, 2019, p. 5). It is a neutral description of a stable and complex industry structure, rather than of participants and inner players. If ‘system’ is used instead of ‘ecosystem’, then the word ‘changing’ needs to be added to ‘system’ to emphasise the constantly changing status of the global fashion system. An ecosystem tends to suggest a hierarchy (Lin, 2018) as implied by relationships such as ‘predator-prey, and symbiosis’ (Lew, 2015, p. 135). Moreover, it implies the dynamic flow of an existing system with an anthropocentric focus and is more of a metaphor in addressing the anthropocentric emphasis of this study, further implying the unstable and changing structures within each element, especially the complexity of human ecology within the global fashion system.

The re-shaping of innovation processes is addressed not only in terms of visual expressions but also in the systematic influences on the changing ecosystem of today’s fashion world. This is seen in the upgraded cultural status and increased recognition that the Chinese designers discussed in this study have gained in the most recent five to six years. The use of ‘ecosystem’ instead of ‘system’ highlights the changing interrelationships and resulting upgraded hierarchical status of IBC designers in this ethnographic study. Simultaneously, it effectively implies that changing innovations do not merely lie in the visual expressions in fashion shows but also in the changing hierarchical status of today’s global fashion ecosystem alongside structural reconfigurations.

For the aims of this study, whether the image of Chinese fashion design power will be reshaped by the emerging IBC designers through their exhibited creativities and innovations in fashion shows at international fashion weeks through systematic production practices embedded in and shown through collaboration with diverse creative labour under a cross-cultural context is the main question related to the designers in this research. Another critical aim of undertaking this research is to chronicle the 'third generation' of IBC designers, regarded as the youngest generation of Chinese designers, and to document their fight for survival in today's global fashion ecosystem. The fluidity of fashion culture has increased in recent years as emerging fashion cities like Shanghai try to learn from mature western fashion systems and simultaneously imitate their culture. The last objective of this study is to clarify the ubiquitous use of the self-identified 'independence' of these young IBC designers in today's fashion industry as there is no concrete academic or theoretical identification of independent fashion designers. Investigating the relationships between the pursuit of autonomy and freedom from traditional Chinese economic, cultural and political constraints to better fit into the multiplicity of today's changing global fashion culture is the final objective of this project.

As for the theoretical contribution of this study, it innovatively and systematically connects theories related to creative labour, cultural production, visual images, art, theatre and performance with innovation theories from the perspective of cultural interpretations in the field of fashion studies by elaborating on the aesthetic revolutions presented by IBC designers in today's fashion shows. This study is, in essence, an interdisciplinary study that could be situated in a broader academic field and could add new theoretical interpretations to multiple fields, such as creative labour, the creative and cultural industry and visual culture, as well as innovations, through fashion cultural research. Furthermore, it provides theoretical and

academic explanations to generalise the cutting-edge phenomena happening within the rapidly changing fashion industry by applying theoretical interpretations of diverse relationships between different creative individual or organisational participants in the show production practices influenced by various cultural phenomena. From a broader academic perspective of the creative and cultural industry that this study could contribute to, it adds fashion as another important academic branch in creative labour and creative cultural industry studies. This is because fashion cultural studies should be given more emphasis, especially in the most recent decade, due to the rapid changes within the industry and the increasing incorporation of parallel industries, such as fine art, film, recreation, theatre and performance (Magelssen; 2018; McMillan, 2019).

● **Why Does the Fashion Show Matter?**

As mentioned above, including aesthetic innovations in fashion show presentations is becoming a key medium that is employed to reshape Chinese fashion while accelerating the increasing dominance of China's fashion power, which has made fashion shows the core entry point of this research.

Before exploring the theoretical imperativeness of the discussion on fashion shows, it should be noted that the fashion shows discussed in this thesis are only related to high-end or premium designer, ready-to-wear or couture brands, and not about those targeted at the middle market, the high street or the discount market (Stark, 2018, p. 91). This is because, as a marketing tool, the fashion show has little relevance for mass market brands such as H&M and it has become associated with the luxury or high-end fashions of designer brands or luxury groups (Stark, 2018, p.91) The image-building and

innovation-creating natures of fashion shows are mainly linked to high-end or at least premium-level designer brands.

From the practical perspective, the IBC designers who have international educational backgrounds tend to choose to establish high-end or luxury-level autonomous brands with the selling price of a single garment piece being between £350 and £2000. This is demonstrated by numbers of IBC designer brands such as Haizhen Wang, Huishan Zhang, Youjia Jin, Xuzhi Chen, and Angel Chen. It is under these circumstances that the discussion of these designers' image-building through unconventional fashion shows to bring innovation to the industry is effective and meaningful.

The importance of the fashion show has been demonstrated since the Modern period; it is one of the most crucial tools in the fashion industry from both commercial and cultural perspectives.

From the commodity perspective, the shows staged at international fashion weeks have become the promotional and core medium to enhance a brand's status, as well as its public relationships (Hines and Bruce, 2007; Easey, 2009; Stark, 2018). This is elaborated on more specifically in the later literature review chapter. The function of fashion shows in the contemporary period has become varied, from 'harnessing the power of runway to promote fashion products' to building a community to 'congregate and communicate' to enhancing the high-profile status, thereby constructing or reconstructing brand images, to even just a form of entertainment for the audience to 'escape from the real live' (Stark, 2018, pp. 50-56).

From a cultural perspective, the fashion show has become a cultural event (Bruzzi and Gibson, 2013), not merely reflecting the hierarchical structures of the domestic fashion industry but also representing the cultural status of the host cities of fashion weeks in the global fashion system.

The concept of 'scene' (Scott, 2010, p. 115) or 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993., p. 97) has been used to discuss world fashion cities 'in the form of a wider creative milieu' (Gu, 2018, p. 101). The infrastructure of globally-recognised fashion events, such as fashion shows and fashion weeks, is crucial for a city to build up its global recognition and upgrade its cultural scene (Scott, 2001, p. 124, cited by Bruzzi and Gibson, 2013, p. 26). As a promising emerging fashion city, Shanghai is seeking to become a prominent global fashion city, being recognised as the sixth global fashion city after the 'Big Four' fashion cities and Tokyo (Gu, 2018, p. 103). Alongside the need of IBC designers to refresh and upgrade the global image of Chinese fashion, this thesis mainly investigates and reveals the current development situation of SHFW as the core tool that is driving Shanghai to become the next global fashion city.

As IBC designers are now leading Chinese designers in shaping a new scene of Chinese fashion with stronger soft infrastructure, including design power in the global fashion discourse and ecosystem, one of the main questions is how they use fashion shows to demonstrate their upgraded design capabilities, to showcase their perceptions of innovation and to dynamically interact with the global ecosystem. This research looks at today's fashion shows, precisely referring to the unconventional shows staged by the emerging UK-educated, IBC designers during international fashion weeks. These designers are deeply influenced by the significant cultural changes to fashion shows in the 1990s brought about by a series of lodestar designers in the fashion industry, such as Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Martin Margiela and Hussein Chalayan (English, 2013). The research is presented as an empirical study, following the target case designers' design and production experiences at both dominant Western fashion weeks such as LFW and PFW, and at emerging fashion weeks such as SHFW.

Through the empirical study, this thesis finds that the fashion show has now become an integrated medium for which the production can reveal the soft infrastructure of a fashion week through its sponsoring modes, institutional services, organisational support, precise construction facilities and culture, as well as its global exposure. The participatory stories of IBC designers, through their productions of unconventional shows at PFW, LFW and SHFW, showcase the underlying operating laws of today's fashion week system, as well as the broader fashion ecosystem.

- **Imperative Role of the Fashion Week in the Global Fashion Ecosystem**

The fashion industry ecosystem contains not only creators such as designers and their supporting team in show productions, but also various other agents and players in the field, such as models, journalists, buyers and consumers. This paper discusses the research questions mentioned above on how emerging Chinese designers are reshaping Chinese design power and how they achieve this specifically through their interpretations of innovation in contemporary fashion shows, as well as how they cooperate with the global fashion ecosystem. It also fills this gap by conducting empirical studies on the fashion weeks in Paris, London and Shanghai. It elaborates on the interrelationships between various actors within this field and the dynamic interactions between individual participants and organisers, as well as cultural phenomena, rather than the mechanisms of the system. Although this thesis specifies the systematic structures of these three fashion weeks, this is provided as supporting material for the reader to gain a comprehensive perception of the behaviours of the people and the cultures of the fashion weeks being analysed. To understand the industry ecosystem and its cultural and political significance behind operations, each character's specific roles

and their relative relationships are important. The fashion week has acquired its status as the most critical international industry event that gathers together industry insiders, who work and collaborate with one another. In this way, fashion week forms a perfect space to examine the whole fashion ecosystem more comprehensively.

The main reason that this research needs to elaborate on the fashion week itself in addition to the emerging IBC designers' show production activities is that it is the most effective and integrated cultural field and infrastructural foundation for all emerging IBC designers to showcase their innovation by producing fashion shows. To gain a deeper understanding of these designers' behaviours, as well as of their leadership in upgrading Chinese design power, it is important to investigate their hierarchical positions at fashion weeks within the global fashion ecosystem. Furthermore, the fashion week is the basic platform for examining fashion shows' specific operating systems in terms of shows' design, production, dissemination, cultural and political incorporation in each fashion city and interaction with the corresponding industry institutions (Fury, 2017; Stark, 2018). The fashion week is a type of materialisation of fashion culture and a microcosm of the fashion industry (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). Emphasising the operational systems of fashion weeks, especially their different interconnections with emerging IBC designers under various cultural systems, adds more depth to this research.

The legitimate 'Big Four' fashion weeks have gained global recognition as the central focus of the fashion industry. They have become highly influential in 'rendering and reproducing' the structure of the fashion field (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006, p.741). In the meantime, these fashion weeks have acquired a more mature operating system and developed cultural characteristics embedded with each fashion city due to their hierarchical status and considerable cultural heritage in fashion. As international fashion weeks have

been the most renowned and central platform for brands and designers in publishing their new season's collections, its intimate links to the general fashion ecosystem should not be ignored. Not only because it is the core stage for emerging high-end or premium designer brands to build their brand identities and global images to boost their international sales, the fashion week has also become one of the most crucial tools in driving the host city in becoming a world-recognised fashion city (Scott, 2001).

With the expanding scale of international fashion weeks in terms of culture and commerce, the organizational structures of these fashion weeks are becoming more complex. In the emerging fashion city located in China, typified by Shanghai, a newly –formed carnivalique atmosphere is influencing and transforming the current global fashion ecosystem. SHFW has demonstrated its unprecedented development speed in terms of maturation, combining socialist characteristics with a carnivalesque atmosphere, resulting in mass appeal as well as a professional event associated with rapid Chinese fashion modernity, attracting IBC designers to showcase their iconoclastic work. The trend of combining Western and Eastern fashion in the global fashion system and culture is inevitable and will be a new topic in the fashion field that deserves more academic attention and discussion.

As a microcosm of the fashion industry (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006), a fashion week can represent the most up-to-date situation of its domestic fashion system, from manufacturing and design capabilities to international hierarchical positions, on both the commercial and cultural levels. As the Chinese government is putting effort into supporting the two main Chinese fashion weeks, CFW, which was the first fashion week established in China in 1997 (Zhao, 2008; Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013) and SHFW, it is necessary to research the developing characteristics of fashion weeks in China. This involves comparing them with the mature and dominant fashion weeks to

reveal how Chinese people could learn from the Western fashion system to effectively upgrade the international cultural status of China in fashion, as well as to connect Chinese culture with the imported fashion week system from Western countries in a harmonious way.

This thesis finds that one of the pivotal ways that Western fashion culture is intertwining with Chinese fashion culture is through the participation of emerging IBC designers in international fashion weeks and their fashion shows that have won acclaim. It examines China's significant impact on the reconstruction of global fashion systems, not merely commercially but also culturally.

As two dominant fashion cities in China, namely Beijing and Shanghai, this research will complete the systematic studies of fashion system of the most two representative fashion cities with comprehensive cultural and systematic elaborations on SHFW, thereby providing the most forefront knowledge of fashion weeks and fashion culture in China. The empirical investigation discusses the current situation of today's fashion industry in China via the systematic analysis of SHFW. As the most recognisable and archetypal Chinese fashion week, investigating SHFW is the most effective way to understand today's fashion industry in China. The cultural and political systems of these fashion shows will also function as an entry point in discovering and mapping the constantly-evolving international fashion weeks' operating systems, cultural and political embeddedness, as well as the general fashion ecosystem of the host cities.

- **Navigation of Each Chapter**

To comprehensively fulfill the aims of this research, the thesis is divided into eight chapters in total, and the first four chapters are the theoretical introduction of this project, consisting of a context review, literature review, and methodology analysis. Chapter 1 introduces the general research questions, research context, and scope of this project. Chapter 2 is the literature and context review, which emphasises the existing research conducted on fashion shows and fashion weeks, the formation of the global hierarchical cultural and geographical fashion system, creative labour in the creative cultural industry, and the corresponding cultural productions. It revisits innovation theories and the identified aesthetic revolutions in fashion shows that have fundamentally changed the image of fashion shows led by the 'designerscape era' in the 1980s (English, 2013, p. 156), as well as the evolution of the research on designer brands, Chinese designers and diaspora identifications. Within the revisiting of innovative shows' images, which is presented in section 2.4.3, this research explicitly reviews the changing culture of contemporary fashion shows from the 1980s to the 2000s led by a group of archetypal, pioneering, avant-garde designers, such as Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Martin Margiela and Hussein Chalayan, whose work has already been discussed and identified as revolutionary by scholars. By revisiting the changing images of innovative contemporary fashion shows from the 1990s to the 2000s, which have transformed from being aesthetic and cultural-oriented to having an increasing focus on capital, the innovative connections between fashion shows and cultural and social background, such as fashion globalisation, are also discussed. These pioneers explored new frontiers and set the standard for the subsequent emerging IBC designers who wanted to be avant-garde. Following this, there is a discussion about how the younger generation of designers is following in the steps of their predecessors, endeavouring to reshape the innovation in today's fashion shows.

Chapter 3 is the methodology analysis which pinpoints the main methodology used in undertaking this research, namely qualitative and ethnographic research using methods such as observations, case studies, qualitative interviews, and field research. Chapters 4 to 6 are the core analysis chapters, showing the originality of this study through the empirical elaboration on three selected case study designers' participatory experiences of touring Paris, London and Shanghai fashion weeks, particularly in their show productions, to highlight how they are bringing new aesthetics through innovative mediums to visualising fashion in today's global fashion ecosystem.

For the explicit core analysis chapters, Chapter 4 discusses how the new aesthetics started being brought forward and began to be constructed and produced through the background preparation of show production practices, focusing on the background preparations of this new generation of selected case study IBC designers (Youjia Jin, Xuzhi Chen and Victor Wong) for their show productions prior to their attendance at international fashion weeks. The chapter specifically refers to discussions surrounding finding sponsors and venues under the supervision of the authorities and organisers of PFW, LFW and SHFW. From these experiences, the organisational systems of international fashion weeks are investigated from a show production perspective and the Western and Chinese fashion cultural systems can be compared and characterised in terms of concept development, team assembly, schedule application, sponsorship negotiation and venue selection. This is a cultural production procedure associated with intensive collaborations with diversified international creative labour within the global fashion ecosystem. It elaborates on the broader hierarchical cultural status that these IBC designers are given and how they have managed to balance multiple diversified political and cultural powers and the conflicting Western and Chinese modes of thinking when preparing for and starting the production of aesthetic innovations in fashion shows. Venue selection, in particular, is

highlighted in correspondence with the political interference and authoritative legitimations that IBC designers may have to deal with during their early production practices. The interconnections between the production cultures and systems in the legitimate European fashion cities Paris and London and the emerging fashion city Shanghai are investigated and elaborated on to showcase how the achievement of aesthetic innovation in visualising fashion is different from producing a standard T-stage show for emerging independent designers within today's international fashion week system.

Chapter 5 provides an explicit analysis of how new aesthetics are produced and how Jin and Chen have utilised diversified experimentations with new aesthetics in showing fashion, with the narrative continuing by elaborating on these designers' show production practices for their collections at PFW, LFW and SHFW. Furthermore, this chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of the construction and materialisation of new aesthetics brought about by the case study designer Jin and her creative director Tong. This discussion emphasises how immersive fashion performances featuring physical theatre, one of the most avant-garde postmodern types of Western theatre, are procedurally interconnected to contemporary fashion shows in terms of cultural production alongside the collaboration with international creative labour in various world fashion capitals, such as Paris, London and Shanghai.

Chapter 6 is the last core analysis chapter, which starts by emphasising the case study designers' experimentations with pushing the boundaries between fashion and art, specifically in show presentations. This chapter thoroughly emphasises how immersive physical theatre as a new aesthetic allowed Jin's show presentation to have dynamic interactions with the audience. Furthermore, this discussion follows how this type of art and theatre is followed and advocated by other IBC designers and applied to their shows, including one of the case study designers in this project, Chen. Moreover, it

also presents a broader view of a collective innovative image at SHFW, created due to their performances, as well as those of another group of emerging IBC designers, such as Fengyi Tan, Angel Chen and Wanbing Huang. This chapter argues that there is an innovative designer collective forming that is accumulating through the integrated experimentation with fashion's deepening interconnections with other forms of art and diversified facets of culture. SHFW incorporates unique cultural characteristics, such as mass appeal and a carnivalesque nature, as well as mufti-culturalism in cultivating different categories of fashion. This has provided IBC designers with ample support and freedom to showcase aesthetic innovations within the global fashion ecosystem. The related cultural positions in which these IBC designers are placed within this global fashion ecosystem, as well as these designers' impacts on fashion weeks and the whole system, are discussed in this chapter.

The Chapter 7, which is also the conclusion of the whole thesis, aims to conclude the key findings of this research. These findings can be generalised as follows: First, the innovations in contemporary fashion shows are mainly re-shaped by new aesthetics, which are presented as interactive and immersive fashion performances featuring and embodying physical theatre, which emerged and began to become popular with the emerging generation of IBC designers, especially extreme autonomous designers. Second, this study summarises and provides a cultural interpretation of the concept of independence in the field of designer brands, which is a self-declaration and cultural identity of being autonomous and seeking new aesthetics, as well as uniqueness in being avant-garde and radical in terms of design, although this may lead to problems with commercialisation and business survival. Lastly, SHFW has become a major platform for gathering innovative Chinese designer collectives, showing multi-cultural characteristics and turning itself into a cosmopolitan event that is inclusive in catering to multiple types of

fashion labels, from domestic commercial conglomerates and domestic designer brands to IBC designer brands, as well as Western designer brands. Its carnivalesque cultural phenomena provide a liberalised cultural context in cultivating and generating the Western fashion innovations introduced by IBC designers from their own perspectives.

To conclude, this research can be distinguished from previous studies in terms of both focus and depth, To conclude, this research can be distinguished from previous studies in both its focus and depth as it is dynamically interconnected with multiple academic fields that have not been integrated in the past. Through the comparative study of fashion show productions in two fashion cultural regions, which are the legitimate European fashion cities represented by Paris and London and the emerging fashion cities in China represented by Shanghai, this study connects the fields of creative labour, the creative cultural industry, fashion globalisation, design innovation, theatre and performance, and visual culture and aesthetics. Furthermore, this research provides an in-depth and thorough ethnographic study that cannot be found in the prior studies in the field of fashion, with the comprehensive and in-depth empirical data presenting the most up-to-date phenomena happening within the global fashion ecosystem.

Chapter 2: Literature and Context Review

2.1 Introduction

While some of the core debates on the fashion show system have been presented in the introduction, the literature review provides an extensive consideration of this subject regarding the modernisation and globalisation of the fashion show and the fashion week and the innovation theories that have been applied in fashion and cultural studies. It also discusses the evolution of innovation in contemporary fashion shows, the global fashion cities and their geographies, and the academic field in relation to designer brands, independence and diaspora. Before presenting the methodology and core analysis chapters, the previous research on the above issues should be reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research and historical contexts of this project. This means that this chapter does not merely function as a literature review. It also investigates the anatomy of fashion shows' modernisation from the perspectives of models, audiences, the formation of diversified types of shows and the development of the global fashion week system, as well as the corresponding cultural evolutions accompanying the discussion of innovation. This chapter looks at these factors such as the establishment of the dominant European fashion cultural system, as well as China as an emerging fashion centre and its construction of a fashion week system.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, cultural production and creative labour are two critical theoretical underpinnings that are mediums through which emerging IBC designers are trying to reshape the existing cultural innovations in fashion shows by bringing new aesthetics to the ecosystem. For this reason, in addition to reviewing the modernisation and globalisation of fashion shows in

the global fashion ecosystem, as well as the identified cultural innovations put forwarded by prior studies, theories on cultural production and creative labour are also important. This is because these literature sources can provide a theoretical framework for the core analysis later on in this thesis. Therefore, studies on creative labour and the corresponding cultural productions within the creative and cultural industry is another crucial focus when reviewing the literature.

Another vital function of this chapter is supporting the investigation of whether existing innovations are being reshaped in the contemporary fashion show. To conduct this investigation, it is important to revisit the unconventional changes that have been discussed and recognised as innovative or turning points in culture and aesthetics on the theoretical level, as well as the evolution of the contemporary fashion show since the globalisation that occurred in the 1970s (Robertson, 1994; Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001; Berry, 2008; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009). Therefore, this chapter tracks the literature, as well as the imagery context, that emphasises the aesthetic changes and innovations that altered the global fashion ecosystem before Chinese designers arose within this ecosystem, which began in 2008 (Tsui, 2009). This can provide a basis for the later explicit discussions on how emerging IBC designers are reshaping innovations.

The first section of this chapter is arranged according to the development path of the fashion show since its emergence in 1850s French couture (Troy, 2003). The basic structural components are the models and the catwalk, the venue and the stage, the lighting and the music and the audience (Skov et al., 2009). The changing of the fashion show since it first emerged has followed the functional and cultural evolution of models and audiences (Evans, 2013a), transforming the fashion show from a couture salon sales event to a commercial vehicle. This was followed by the emergence of press shows, as

well as the internationalisation and formation of biannual fashion seasons and fashion week systems. It is necessary to start analysing the historical context of fashion shows following the evolution of models and audiences and then to consider the formation of various types of fashion shows, as well as the establishment of a globalised fashion week system after the globalisation that occurred in the 1970s.

2.2 Evolution of the Fashion Show from the Modern Period to the Contemporary Period

2.2.1 Introduction

The fashion show was first associated with French couture culture and appeared in the 1850s (Troy, 2003). In general, the analysis of fashion shows in this section follows two paths. One is to follow the basic construction and participants of fashion shows, such as the types of shows and the functional changes in terms of models and audiences. The other is to follow the various types of collections, such as couture, ready-to-wear and prêt-à-porter.

In this section, the evolution of the fashion show from the modern period (the 1850s) to the contemporary period is first reviewed following the functional and changes to models. As the central focus is the culture of fashion shows rather than models, the following content in the first semi-section only discusses the revolutionary changes that models have brought to the development of fashion shows as one of the basic characteristics of shows, instead of presenting the whole historical evolution of the culture of the model. Furthermore, the changes to the categorisation of audiences triggered the development of diversified types of shows, from private client shows to the formation of buyers' shows in the modern period and press shows in 1923

(Evans, 2013a, p. 171), which are examined in this section alongside the review of the corresponding changes to seating politics as both the types of shows and the seating politics embody the long-standing hierarchical stratifications in the fashion cultural system. They are indispensable in the review of the historical context of the culture of fashion shows as they lay the groundwork for the later discussion of the anti-elitism and democratising changes occurring in China's fashion week systems in the core analysis of Chapter 6.

This section also emphasises the evolution of haute couture shows, which were responsible for the prosperity of French couture culture from the 1850s to its decline during World War II, as well as its revival in the 1970s until its subsequent diminishing popularity in the 1990s. The development path of these shows reveals the formation of the dominant discourse of Paris being the first global fashion capital and its fluctuation with the rise of the international mass production of fashion led by the emergence of the ready-to-wear industry in the 1940s in New York. The establishment of the first recognised international fashion week, the New York Fashion Week in 1943, marked the beginning of the formation of the global fashion week system and the evolution of international fashion weeks, especially the 'Big Four' fashion weeks PFW, NYFW, MLFW, and LFW. The decline of haute couture in the 1990s was accompanied by the rise of British and Belgian fashion discourse with the global recognition of a group of avant-garde designers, from McQueen, Galliano, Chalayan and Margiela to the Antwerp Six, who subverted the industry's conventional aesthetics and ideology of 'couture as glamorous' in terms of fashion shows and gave fashion more social and cultural implications by adding deconstructivism, and conceptual and theatrical performance art to fashion shows (English, 2013, p. 156).

As this research project is on emerging Chinese designers, the final part of this section provides a review of the emergence of China's 'communist' fashion shows in 1956 (Jin, 2016a; Tsui, 2016b), as well as the establishment of a fashion week system after 1997 (Wu, 2009) when the first fashion week in the country, China Fashion Week (CFW), was held in Beijing. Within the globalised fashion system, the first Western fashion show emerged in China in 1979, produced by Pierre Cardin and held in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing, which can be highlighted as a significant event in the evolution of the fashion show system and culture in China. This event is analysed and summarised with reviews of the corresponding literature.

2.2.2 Anatomy of Fashion Shows

- **Models**

The function of models has been changing constantly since the modern period (Evans, 2013a). From mannequins to the use of real people, models have always been critical to shows as they display the garments and show them to the audience. Fashion historians prove that both the usage and proliferation of fashion models have played essential roles in the emergence of modern fashion shows (Quick, 1999; Mears, 2010, 2011; Evans, 2005, 2011, 2013a). The most significant source linking the emergence of fashion models to the formulation of modern fashion shows is by Caroline Evans. When tracing the origins of runways, Evans (2013a, p. 12) and Mears (2011, p. 30) explain that the first appearance of fashion models was in the late 19th century, when the English fashion designer Charles Frederick Worth showed his designs on live 'mannequins' in his Paris salon in the 1850s. After this, women began to be used as professional mannequins in the privacy of couture houses, indicating the change in apparel presentations from static to dynamic. It was from the 1870s that the industry started to notice the practice

of fashion modelling in couture houses and it was during this period that the term 'fashion model' began to gain traction (Evans, 2013a, p. 15; Quick, 1999).

Evans (2013a, p. 20) connects models gaining publicity to the first illustrations and diffusion of live mannequins in the 1880s. It was from then that live mannequins began to be sent out of couture houses to model the latest fashions. Fashion models began to be utilised and recorded in the exhibiting of fashions when the first illustrated mannequin was sketched by *L'Art et la mode* in July 1885, seen in Figure 2.1 (Evans, 2013a, p. 21). In the period when live fashion mannequins were first illustrated, the images were only visible to aristocratic and royal clients, which indicates the hierarchy and the social status of fashion shows when they first emerged.



Figure 2.1: Live mannequin modelling *le jersey parisien* to a viscountess at Maison Le Roy. From *L'Art et la mode*, 1885
(Evans, 2013a, p. 21)

One of the most crucial contributors to the development of modern fashion shows through their changes to the function of models, was Lady Duff-Gordon, trading under the name of Lucile, who coordinated and accessorised her live mannequins in fashion shows. In 1908, *Femina*, a French magazine, illustrated her London stage show and described the growing tendency to install modelling stages in Paris as an innovation from London (see Figure 2.2). This was the first time that a stage was used in a modern fashion show, which can be considered a predecessor of the T-stage used in contemporary fashion shows.



Figure 2.2: Lucile's first installation of a modelling stage in Paris
(Evans, 2013a, p. 34)

In terms of the development path of the utilisation of models in the presentations of fashion in the industry, movement was already integral to the

late-19th and early-20th century promotional practices of fashion in the theatrical 'fashion play' and the use of live models (or mannequins) in the fashion salons and fashion shows, as well as their parading at races and other social events (Kaplan and Stowell, 1995; Evans, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2013a). This was also seen in the utilisation of moving mechanical elements and live models in retail displays, especially shop windows. Emphasising movement as an underlying feature of turn-of-the-century visual culture, Evans (Evans, 2013a, p. 121) links early fashion shows to technologies available at the time that could visualise motion, especially Muybridge and Marey's chronophotography and the cinema.

However, tracing fashion historians' research, it is not difficult to find that there is a dearth of literature regarding the rise in the status and utilisation of fashion models and their role in shaping and accelerating the emergence and spectacle of modern fashion shows. This is because although the revolutionising of fashion models helped to shape modern fashion shows, they tended to have a limited contribution to the development of fashion shows after they became international spectacles after the 1940s (Fogg, 2013, p. 256).

The historical evolution of the fashion model, which is associated with fashion cultural images and system, is revealed through the popularity of aesthetic changes, such as Dior's New Look initiated in 1947, the representation of Paris elitist culture, such as Chanel's usage of young aristocrats as models and the emergence of the ready-to-wear industry that triggered the homogenisation of the ideal body type (see Figure 2.3). When magazine stars started appearing on catwalks in the major fashion cities, such as New York and Paris in the 20th century, as Mears (2011, p. 32) explains, models quickly gained international attention. They became the stars of cult films such as *Blow Up* (1966) and the symbols of a 'youthquake' culture. According to

Duggan (2001, p. 251), it is Gianni Versace who was responsible for ‘the rise of the supermodel, and its celebrity associations, in the late 1980s and early 1990s’ (Evans, 1999, p. 11). Mears (2011, p. 33) addresses the impact of fashion models on styles within the period of fashion globalisation, noting that:

‘Traditional fashion advertising used to be about the presentation of clothes, but with these global changes in fashion and advertising in the 1980s, clothes developed into one piece in the whole stylistic package of a fashionable “look,” of which the fashion model plays a critical part’. (Mears, 2011, p. 33)

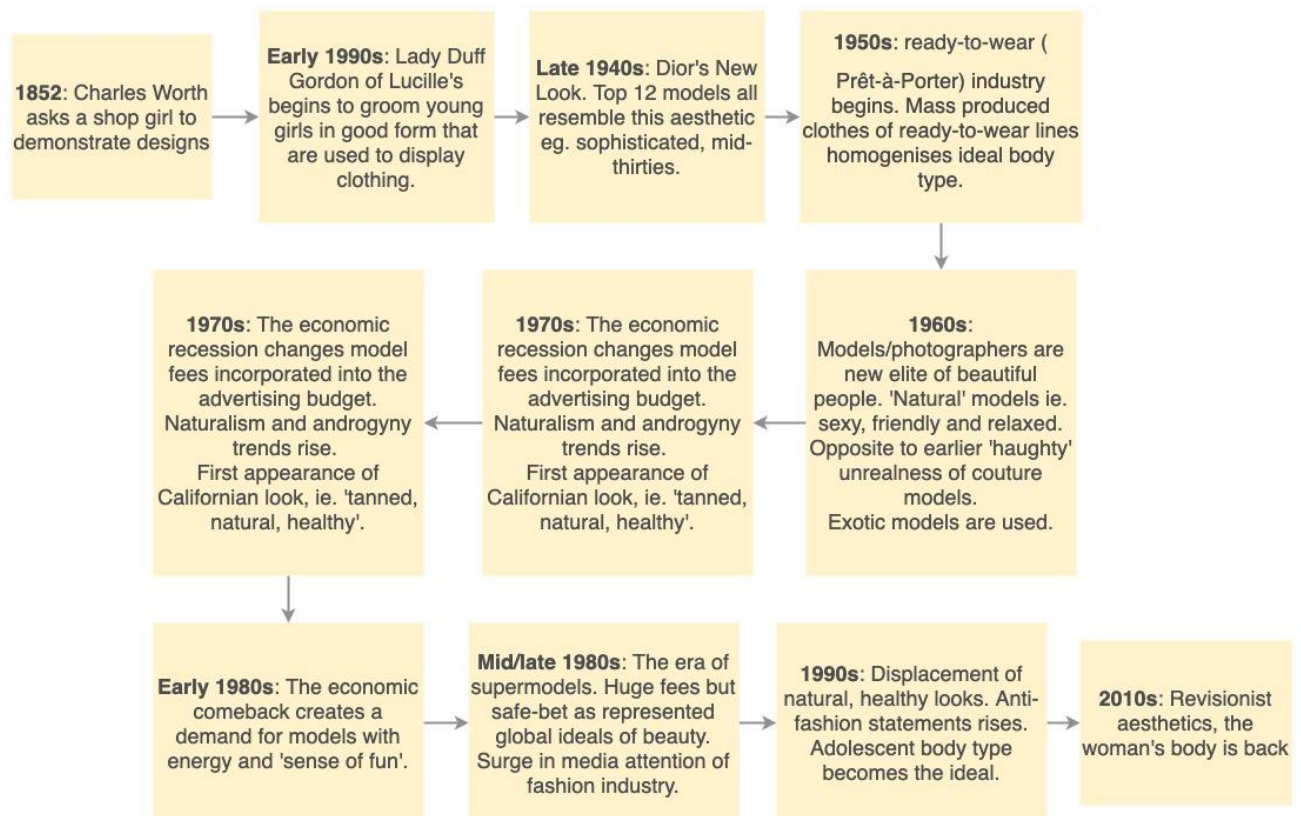


Figure 2.3: The evolution of models starting with the modern period

(Summarised from Helmer, 2017)

This evolution process also includes the extending on the concept of the model to the performers within a show, which was the use of performance art,

adding more bodies to the stage. Different from the ensemble that emerged in modern fashion shows that stayed still on the stage (Evans, 2013a, pp. 110-132), performers can include dancers, singers, action artists and musicians, among which dancers can typically use movement more freely and abundantly than models on stage. Apart from evolutions that models have brought to the fashion show, the changing audiences also saw the functional alternation of the fashion show, which will be reviewed in the following content.

- *Audience: Emergence of Buyers, Private Clients and Press Shows*

The changing audience groups in fashion increased the diversity of modern fashion shows. This started with private client shows, followed by the formation of buyers' shows and press shows. Furthermore, the politics surrounding seating arrangements were different in the modern period compared to the contemporary period, indicating the different social and cultural contexts. By tracking the changes in this system and reviewing the literature related to it, the nature of the differences interacting with the evolution of fashion shows can be better understood.

There were three types of fashion shows in the modern period according to the classifications of the audience, which were buyer shows, client shows and press shows (Fogg, 2013; Evans, 2013a). In the existing literature, scholars tend not to address their formation processes directly at length, instead merely mentioning them in passing (Quick, 1999; Fogg, 2013; Evans, 2013a). For instance, Evans (2013a, p. 30) addresses the first group of audience members in modern fashion shows as being restricted to aristocratic female clients in the 1890s, when Paquin began to organise shows in her salons at fixed times.

The hierarchy in the audience indicates that modern fashion shows were events designed only for private clients who were, essentially, aristocratic women. This suggests the social context in the evolution process of fashion shows.

In the modern period, when fashion shows became spectacles in the 1920s, the audience for fashion shows became diverse and included 'private clients, trade buyers and commissionaires, journalists, copyists and pirates' (Evans, 2013a, p. 134). However, according to Skov et al. (2009, p. 126) this situation is different in contemporary fashion shows, which tend to be more popular and attract a diverse audience from 'editors, celebrities, buyers, business contacts, company employees, design school students and other members of the public' who are interested in fashion. This difference indicates how fashion shows changed from private and industrial events to a form of recreational event.

Solomon-Godeau (1996) and Evans (2013a, p. 125) both discuss different groups within audiences according to their purposes of attending shows and correspondent cultural meanings. Evans (2013a, p. 127) use the word 'gaze' to vividly describe the purposes of audience groups, saying that the gaze varies in different classes. For this reason, private clients and trade buyers would not attend the same shows; buyers have a commercial gaze. For contemporary runways, buyers are still the most crucial group that is targeted, although audiences have become more diversified.

Having a different purpose to buyer shows, press shows were also vital in runways in the modern period. Evans (2013a, p. 171) explains how press shows were established in 1923 by Jean Patou, who was a designer that 'wooed the American market' in the 1920s. Considering the relatively low status of the journalist during the time when fashion shows first came into

being, according to Evans' description, the emergence of press shows in the 1920s marked the noticeable rise in the status of fashion journalists. It was from then that the fashion press could attend shows 'decently and ostentatiously'. Evans (2013a, p. 171). The purpose of journalists attending fashion shows was different from that of buyers. The job of journalists was to produce fashion rhetoric, not consolidate sales, and this type of presentation was geared to the 'production of dreams'. The situation is quite different in contemporary fashion shows compared to those in the modern period. According to Skov et al. (2009), today, the press, including fashion editors and journalists, are considered the most crucial segment of the audience, having an impact on both insiders' and outsiders' views of runways.

All of the information provided above reflects the connections between fashion and culture in the modern period, which could provide a basis for analysing the audiences and the dissemination of contemporary fashion shows. Several historians have explained the extent to which the emergence of press shows contributed to the diversification of the audience in modern fashion shows. For instance, Fogg (2013, pp. 210-213) and Evans (2013a, pp. 166-168) describe in detail how in the modern period, press shows were held in the evening before buyer shows and that they were a combination of socialising and business, organised like social parties. Patou also made a point of inviting not only fashion journalists but also male war correspondents to his shows. Thus, Patou was an example of a designer who made press shows social venues rather than commercial tools.

In addition to increased diversity, the changes in seating politics from the modern period to contemporary fashion shows can also assist in understanding the social background of fashion shows in the respective periods. Evans (2013a, p. 166) provides an example of a picture of a client show in 1923 (see Figure 2.4), which reveals how the clients were seated in a

show. It is noticeable that the audience was seated in the background behind the live mannequins.



Figure 2.4: A fashion show with the audience in the background,
Gazette du Bon Genre, 1923, cited by Evans (2013a, p. 166)

In contemporary fashion shows, Skov et al. (2009) find a set of framing conventions that reflect what Kondo (2014) refers to as the politics of seating. Usually, photographers are placed at the end of the runways to enable long-lens shots of the models walking down the catwalks. Few scholars provide a comprehensive analysis of how seating politics mirror cultural background besides Skov et al. (2009), who also summarise how each audience group works during fashion shows. The seating area in front of the cameras at the end of the stage is considered to provide the best view when it is available. For this reason, based on the analysis of Skov et al. (2009), the status of the press has reached its zenith in the contemporary period. The press is given the best seats in a show, which are in the front row at the end of or on the stage and are also often reserved for celebrities. However, in the buyer shows of the modern period, buyers were also seated in the front row (Evans, 2013a, p. 168); the situation is different in the contemporary period as

most buyers view the collections informally in showrooms instead of being seated in the front rows of runway shows.

Such changes in the audiences between the modern period and contemporary fashion shows interact with the development of different categories of catwalk shows. Additionally, the changes to the audiences of fashion shows indicate the different social backgrounds of each period, which play an important role in understanding the phenomenon of fashion shows from a social perspective.

2.2.3 Haute Couture

The changing functions of modern fashion shows and the fluctuation of Paris's leading status in fashion alongside the development and decline of haute couture

Most of the theatrical shows produced in the modern period were presented by couture houses in collaboration with theatres in Paris or department stores in the United States from the 1900s to the 1920s (Evans 2013a; Stark, 2018). In this section, the history of the theatrical trend in modern couture shows is reviewed, with a particular focus on the establishment of Paris as the first central fashion capital to be influenced by this trend.

Evans (2013a, p. 34) points out the time in the modern period when the function of fashion shows started to become diversified. This was in 1923 when buyer shows started to change from being purely commercial to social events, with small orchestras, musical interludes, dancing and refreshments, with buyers being treated like private clients. The changing functions mentioned by Evans were also seen and expanded by 1925 when the phenomenon of professional entertainers accompanying fashion shows

became prevalent. There were several manifestations in different shows; ‘...the salon shows were arranged like ballrooms or restaurants; night-time shows resembled formal parties, with all the buyers in evening dresses. Afternoon shows were filled with refreshments and music’ (Evans, 2013a, p. 34).

It can be concluded that the changing functions of modern fashion shows represented culture beginning to erode the commercial content of these fashion shows. Evans (2013a, p.145) points out that at the same time, economic values became cultural as they were ‘grafted onto women’s bodies which, in turn, acquired a value that was both economic and symbolic’. Given the limited scholarly discussion on the changing functions of modern and contemporary fashion shows, this research fills this gap both theoretically and practically.

Theatricality is an indispensable topic when discussing Paris couture culture and its connections with modern fashion shows. Some scholars (Benjamin, 1969; Breward and Gilbert, 2006; Rocamora, 2009; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009; Steele, 2017) mention theatricality when discussing couture culture and how Paris became the first fashion capital. Paris was the starting point of the functional changes in modern runways, which first occurred in French couture shows. Evans (2010, p. 77) states that fashion shows became theme-based in the 1920s, and there were three themes that dominated the French couture shows: ‘showmanship, the rationalization of the body and the association of movement and modernity’.

Theatricality is not unique to Paris. During the period when Paris was occupied by the Germans in World War II and lost its domain status of fashion within the global fashion industry during the World War II, the ready-to-wear industry and shows started to emerge in the United States and the first fashion week occurred in 1943, in which theatricality could also be witnessed

(Rantisi, 2004; Potvin, 2013). A number of cultural critics and fashion historians have traced the theatrical trends found in modern fashion shows (Troy, 2001; Troy, 2003; Quinn, 2003; Evans, 2013a). They all discuss the theatrical origins in modern fashion shows with different focuses. Evans (2013a) represents historians who track the first modern fashion shows that were held in theatres and department stores from the beginning of the 20th century in order to illustrate the origins of modern runway shows. Troy (2003) represents researchers who engage in exploring theatrical trends for the sake of seeking the history of haute couture. According to their discussions, theatrical trends triggered the spectacle of haute couture and reflected the costume culture in the modern period.

Scholars have further analysed the relationships between the prosperity of haute couture and Paris becoming the first central fashion capital (Benjamin, 1969; Wilcox, 2007; Fogg, 2013). Benjamin (1969) suggests that it was Paris's leadership in women's fashions that accelerated the rise of haute couture. Wilcox (2007) takes a close look at the contributions and innovations made by iconic designers when the theatrical trend in couture shows emerged from the beginning of the 20th century. Wilcox (2007) and Fogg (2013, p. 288) also describe the golden age of Paris couture by illustrating Christian Dior's prominent status in the couture industry and the brand's contributions to innovation between the 1940s and the 1950s. From the founding of his couture house in 1946 to his sudden death in 1957, Dior was the leading protagonist of mid-century haute couture. His New Look was one of fashion's defining moments and consolidated the influence of Paris and the haute couture system, accelerating the golden age of haute couture in the 1950s.

Among the researchers who have illustrated the different expressions of theatricality in various modern fashion shows, Evans (2013, p. 35) demonstrates that the most significant contributor to the early innovations in

modern fashion shows was Lucile, as mentioned above, who staged and created her first London fashion show, or 'mannequin parade', in 1900. In Lucile's Hanover Square shop, she first demonstrated the innovative use of building a connection between an elite party and a theatrical event. This indicates that she was also the first designer who brought together all of the elements of a fashion show, including a stage, an orchestra, lights, show invitations and show programmes, with a 'glittering mixture' of guests from society and the stage and even journalists to ensure that the event was reported on.

When researchers discuss the couture culture, theatricality is the most evident phenomenon that appeared in modern couture shows. For instance, Troy (2003) states that the first emergence in 1850s of theatricality was presented by Paul Poiret, who aimed to reject the distinction between fashion and fine art and has been described as a highly theatrical figure. Theatricality started in the couture house that was run by Poiret, designed by architect Louis Süe (see Figure 2.5), who used a stage for the presentation of fashion shows in Poiret's couture house in 1909 (Troy, 2003, p. 88). Moreover, (Troy, 2003, p. 81) demonstrated that theatricality, the most significant trend of haute couture when it reached its peak, was a valuable cultural tool for understanding period discourses, such as Orientalism, as well as for exposing the deep structural relationships between art and fashion.

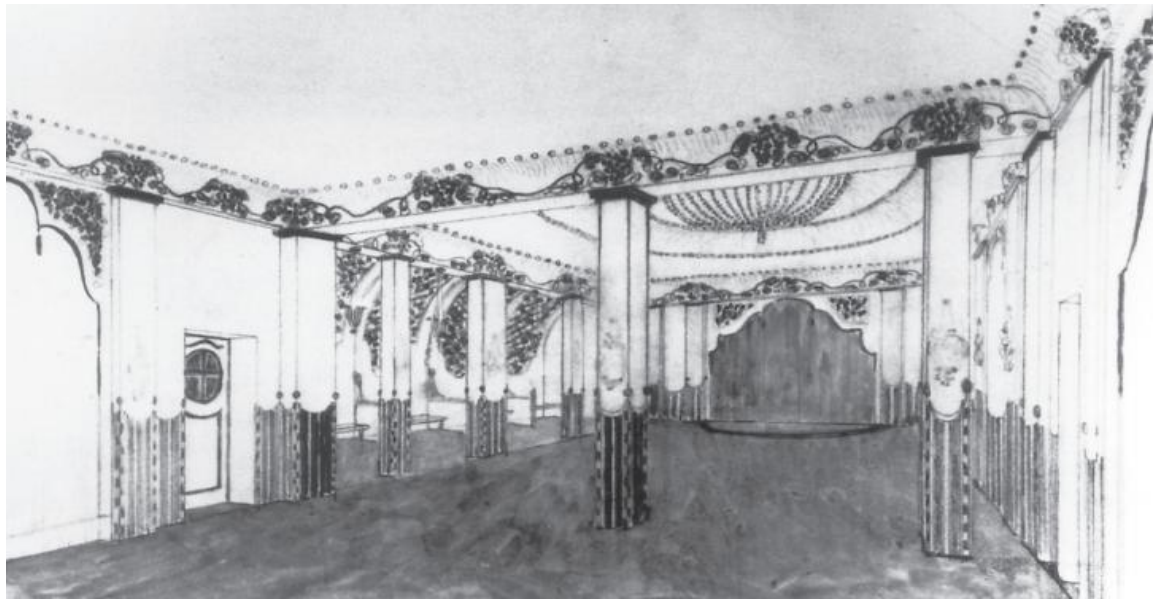


Figure 2.5: Süe's sketch for a salon for the couture house of Poiret in 1909 (Troy, 2001, p. 8)

In addition to tracing the history of couture, Troy (2001) also underlines how theatricality influenced the fashion culture in the modern period. He also discusses the function and imperativeness of staging theatrical fashion shows in the modern period by pointing out that the distinctions between the different social classes were blurred by the popularity of theatricality because 'the theatre provided an occasion to advance a designer's business interests, functioned figuratively as well as literally in conjunction with a range of interrelated activities in the domain of fashion...' (Troy, 2001, p. 4). He also notes that 'the theatre provided an ideal venue for fashion display both on the stage and in the audience, and it, therefore, afforded a significant opportunity for elite couturiers, who were increasingly involved in costume design during this period...' (Troy, 2001, p. 4). The intangible influence that theatricality had on modern fashion culture provides evidence of a framework when identifying the return of theatricality trends to contemporary runways.

There are scholars who have put forward views on how theatricality blurred the boundaries between fashion shows and theatrical spectacles. For instance, Schweitzer (2008) points out that modern fashion shows started to become increasingly dramatic when the line between the fashion show and the theatrical spectacle, which was progressively being eroded, was blurred in 1915. It was also at that time that the typical high-society fashion shows were deriving their form and content from vaudeville, which fused the fashion show format with the showgirl format (Schweitzer, 2008; Evans, 2013a).

As James Laver (2011, p.25) remarks, the zenith of the theatrical trend in the early 20th century was when

‘...mannequin parades of the fashionable dressmakers became themselves fashionable occasions, which had certainly never happened before in the whole history of dress. People went to a fashion parade as their fathers had gone to a play or a private view of pictures...’ (Laver, 2011, p.25).

Laver’s comments echo those of a *New York Times* correspondent, who remarked in 1911 that putting a display of fashions on stage ‘is surely the most dramatic way of showing off splendid gowns that has ever been invented...[Such a spectacle] is something well worth going to see, even if one does not buy the gown’ (*New York Times*, 1911, cited by Troy, 2001, p. 7).

In addition to the couture house, other kinds of venues were used to express theatricality in modern fashion shows. For instance, Lucile and Poiret both used the gardens of their couture houses, as well as the theatres in their salons, as backdrops for their fashion shows (see Figure 2.6), after which venues started to become diversified when couture shows were staged.



Figure 2.6: Live mannequins modelling outfits in the garden of Poiret's couture house, Paris, from *L'Illustration*, 1910 (cited by Troy, 2003, p. 101)

Modern theatricality did not only exist in Europe; it also flourished in the United States accompanied by the emergence of early fashion shows. However, in contrast to the French salon shows that could only be attended via invitation and were only visible to a small audience (Evans, 2013a, p. 77), modern fashion shows in the United States were open to the public via ticket sales. For modern runway shows in the United States, a great variety of venues were explored. For instance, Evans discusses the first department store show in 1908, when both the New York and Philadelphia branches of Wanamaker offered live shows of empire-line fashions from Paris. The first venue in Philadelphia was the Egyptian Hall, which was newly opened by Wanamaker in 1909 and included an orchestra pit for up to 100 musicians and an enormous organ (see Figure 2.7). Furthermore, it was a theme-based show based on Napoleon and Josephine, with fair mannequins being chosen 'as if they were in a Napoleonic court' (Evan, 2013, p. 78).



Figure 2.7: Wanamaker fashion show of 1909 in the Egyptian Hall
of the Philadelphia store (Evans, 2013a, p. 81)

In terms of the contemporary period, researchers (Loschek, 2009; Fury, 2017; Stark, 2018) have discussed the returning theatrical establishment of haute couture from the 1980s and the future of haute couture since then. With the long-term decline of haute couture that was brought on by World War II, 1980s European couture, once again led by Paris, experienced a renaissance in which the peak was marked by Karl Lagerfeld joining the House of Chanel as artistic director in 1983 (Lehnert, 2000, pp. 80-85; Martin and Koda, 1989, pp. 60-70).

The renaissance of theatricality in the haute couture of the 1980s can also be seen with the emergence of some leading fashion conglomerates, taking LVMH as an example, whose foundation in 1987 is mentioned by Fogg (2013, p. 451) and Sorkin (2002). Together with its rival, the companies in Gucci Group, these two elite groups dominated the fashion and accessories industry in that period. Crane (1997a, p. 405) describes the leading status of these two companies. By the late 1980s, there were two groups of couturiers: 'one

group included older designers...who produced collections that often consisted of restatements of ideas and motifs from the history of designers' fashion and who took few risks, varying their collections just enough to keep in step with the times', which is in reference to Gucci. When the selling of haute couture garments is no longer a priority, the more outrageous the collections are, the more publicity is generated by the designer brand which, in turn, results in the sales of 'profitable auxiliary products' (Crane, 1999b, p.61).

Some scholars hold the view that in post-1980s, couture shows were gradually becoming a 'style lab' (Lehnert, 2000, p.136) for Paris fashion, in which striking designs never became real fashion. For instance, Lehnert (2000, p. 97) states that 'large-scale fashion shows called 'Defiles' were held in Paris, in which the big names, including Mugler, Gaultier, and Lagerfeld, created spectacular designs. However, few were ever transformed into real fashion'. Bernard Arnault (cited by Steele, 1988, p. 143), the financier behind Dior, Givenchy and Lacroix, tactfully describes couture as 'the research and development laboratory of Paris style'. This view represents the opinion that it did not matter whether the striking designs and fashion shows in that period were ever made into real fashions and clothes because the purpose of couture was to facilitate experiments with functions of clothes, rather than make clothes for people to wear in their everyday lives. Signer (2015) proposes that fashion can be regarded as 'embracing the renaissance of runway theatricality', from the contributions of Gareth Pugh to Christian Dior. This view is also held by Iseman (2014) in relation to contemporary fashion shows.

The 1990s is also seen as the beginning of the 'extinction' or 'death' (English, 2013, p. 141) of the haute couture industry led by Paris (Herd, 1991; Berge, 1991). This was triggered by the rise of a new generation of young,

avant-garde designers such as McQueen, Galliano and Marc Jacobs. With the growing sleekness of novelty and the emerging stylistic pluralism, and to consolidate its business within the declining couture industry, the French 'syndicate' (English, 2013, p. 145) conglomerate LVMH chose to invest in the above three designers to show its attitude towards art. This enabled the proliferation of a generation of integrated 'genius' designers. They brought aesthetic innovations to their fashion shows and garments, leading the industry in entering an era of the maximum awareness of designer-oriented fashion or the 'designer as the product' (English, 2013, p. 128); designers have become the key to a brand's success both culturally and commercially. These iconic designers, who brought revolutionary changes to couture aesthetics from the 1990s to the 2000s, are elaborated on alongside their works in the following chapter in which the evolution of innovation in the contemporary fashion show is emphasised.

The following section discusses the rise of the American ready-to-wear industry during and after World War II, which triggered the industrialisation of global fashion and the emergence of the first internationally-recognised fashion week, the press week that was held in New York in 1943. The following growth of the French prêt-à-porter industry and the formation of the Milan fashion industry both laid the foundations for the emergence of the modern PFW and MLFW. This also triggered the construction of a globalised fashion week system and the 'Big Four' global fashion weeks and corresponding fashion cites. Within the context of globalisation (Robertson, 1994; Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001; Berry, 2008; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009), the 'nations have become more interdependent through the flows of goods, services, and financial capital since the 1970s' (Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001, p. 01). The growing importance of 'export-oriented industrialisation has made integration into the global economy virtually synonymous with development for a number of nations' (Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001, p. 01). The global

fashion industry and the globalised system started to form an alignment with the growth of the French prêt-à-porter industry after 1970s (Paulicelli and Clark, 2009), as well as the development of the international PFW.

2.2.4 Ready-to-Wear Fashion and the Forming of a Western Cultural System

Occurrence of international fashion weeks and the formulation of the dominant 'Big Four' within the global fashion ecosystem

As explained at the beginning of this section, the emphasis on ready-to-wear fashion shows and the corresponding industry functions as the foundation for discussing and elaborating on the formation of the Western dominant fashion week system, which is associated with the construction of the 'Big Four' fashion weeks. This is key to investigating the changing images of the contemporary fashion show as the shows at the 'Big Four' fashion weeks not only have discourse power in leading the aesthetic standard but are also viewed as the economic, political and cultural centres of the global fashion system. This section starts with the emergence of American ready-to-wear fashions, both in terms of shows and the industry, and continues by elaborating further on fashion globalisation and the changing images of fashion culture within the Western fashion system.

Evans (2013a, p. 139) compares the functions of modern couture shows to ready-to-wear shows, stating that the latter were more 'commercial gazed'. This means that the function of the ready-to-wear shows was more commercial than the couture shows of the same period. Fogg (2013, p. 278) demonstrates that when Paris haute couture declined during and after World War II, this had a far-reaching impact on the fashion industry and the subsequent distribution of ideas and modes of garment manufacturing.

Henceforth, Paris was no longer the only central fashion capital in the world. English (2007) demonstrates that over the past 20 years, the growth and nature of fashion weeks around the world signify their importance as key marketing tools to increase revenue in the fashion industry and its associated industries. Promoted as cultural events, he explains that the formulation and internationality of fashion weeks broaden the perception of 'what fashion is and what it can be' (English, 2007, p. 175).

When tracing the origins of international fashion weeks and the fashion week's globalization in the post-war period, scholars often start with the emergence and the spectacle of the American ready-to-wear industry. Richards et al. (1951), Green (1997), and Druesedow (2002) all mention that the first emergence of the ready-to-wear concept in the United States was in the late 1920s. After that, a more affordable, accessible and fashionable alternative began to materialise in the form of ready-to-wear clothes. It can be concluded from the research of the aforementioned scholars that the New York fashion industry and New York fashion week were the inevitable result of the spectacle of the ready-to-wear industry.

The formulation of ready-to-wear systems was one of the most important causes of the emergence of the first international fashion week. Fogg (2013, p. 281) states that the World War II 'provided an opportunity to formalize the already flourishing ready-to-wear industry' in the United States. Richards (1951) and Schrank (2004) also point out that the rise and spectacle of American ready-to-wear industry accelerated the internationality of fashion weeks as well as the whole industry system. Eleanor Lambert (cited by New York Fashion Week: A Quick Guide, 2013), the press director of the New York Dress Institute, organised fashion shows into a single timeframe called 'Press Week', which is considered the first emergence of a fashion week in the world. This also triggered the later establishment of New York Fashion Week in 1943

(Rantisi, 2004; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009; New York Fashion Week: A Quick Guide, 2013).

Led and influenced by American ready-to-wear industry, the French prêt-à-porter fashions emerged during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bailey and Sandy (1998) demonstrate that the resurrections of the French and Italian fashion industries were stimulated by the prosperity of American ready-to-wear industry. Druesedow (2002, p.56) gives the first emergence of the European prêt-à-porter system as the 'optimum' period for the introduction of fashion-led ready-to-wear industry because the increasingly sophisticated manufacturing systems that were being used in the United States were adopted in Europe.

In terms of to the internationalisation and formation of the three traditional central fashion capitals, namely Milan, Paris and London, scholars have described their social and industrial contexts. For instance, the above mentioned World War II is considered the social backdrop that offered Milan the most crucial opportunity to become an international central fashion capital (Merlo and Polese, 2006). As explored by Steele and Carrara (2010), the first fashion show presented by an Italian designer was staged by Giovanni Battista Giorgini and was attended by the international press, whose purpose it was to distance Italian fashion from the influence of Paris. This show was held immediately after Paris Fashion Week to attract the same buyers. Steele and Carrara (2010) also address how the fashion week emerged and became a spectacle in Italy. Walter Albini, as mentioned by Steel and Carrara (2010), was the first designer to initiate a series of innovative reforms that set in motion a move towards French prêt-à-porter collections, resulting in the system of prêt-à-porter that is known today. In particular, Albini also made great contributions to encouraging the emergence of Milan Fashion Week. With the rise in manufacturing companies in the north of Italy, Albini and

several other designers led the fashion designer exodus to Milan in 1972 to present their collections on the runway of Circolo del Giardino, thus establishing Milan as a fashion capital (Merlo and Polese, 2006).

The French fashion week started in 1970s alongside the flourishing of the prêt-à-porter industry in the 1960s. This is mentioned and elaborated on by Green (1997), Lehnert (2000), Fogg (2013) and Steele (2017). In 1971, Grumbach and Putman (b. 1925), the renowned French interior and product designer, formed the prêt-à-porter collective called 'Créateurs et industries', which aimed to bridge the gap between designers and industry. This was followed in 1973 by the first prêt-à-porter fashion week in Paris (Tiel, 2012).

The emergence and the development of LFW, as well as the rise of London as a global fashion capital, are significant as they coincide with the appearance of avant-garde designers in the late 1980 (English, 2013, p. 135). The era of the 'designerscape' (English, 2013, p. 156) appeared in the late 1980s and proliferated in 1990s, featuring at avant-garde fashion, has fundamentally changed the image of fashion as well as the shows (Duggan, 2001; Fogg, 2013). This designer era was led by two main collective phenomena. One was the establishment of the Belgian designer collective named the Antwerp Six (made up of Walter van Beirendonck, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries van Noten, Dirk Van Saene, Dirk Bikkembergs and Marina Yee), and Margiela, while the other was the rise of British avant-garde designers like McQueen and Galliano (Debo and Bruloot, 2007).

One noticeable cultural change in fashion that was brought about by the aforementioned avant-garde designers was an era defined by ground-breaking 'anti-fashion' (Fogg, 2013). Although the earliest appearance of anti-fashion was in the 1970s (Steele, 1997), the 1990s is seen as the decade when this phenomenon rippled throughout Western fashion systems

and was mainly showcased through fashion shows (McRobbie, 2003; Duggan, 2001). Deeply influenced by pop culture, revolutionary changes were widespread, led by the avant-garde designers who brought new aesthetic visions to fashion aesthetics by introducing loose materials, destructive or deconstructed sculpturing in the clothes and experimentation with fashion show presentations through performances (Loschek, 2009; Loscialpo, 2011; Polhemus, 2011).

The image and the perceptions of contemporary fashion, as well as fashion shows, were altered by the emergence of the Antwerp Six, who are viewed as the most influential avant-garde designer collective (Debo and Bruloot, 2007; Arslanian, 2016). They used a trunk to display a fashion performance at LFW in 1986, signifying the strengthening of avant-garde fashion. They were followed by McQueen and Galliano in the 1990s. These 'emerging designers chafed at the restrictions and boundaries' (Fury, 2017, p. 343) of the aestheticism set up and dominated by the French ideology of 'couture as glamorous' (English, 2013, p. 156).

Within the broad concept of anti-fashion, both the Belgian designer collective and the British designer collective, renowned and recognised at LFW and then producing shows at PFW, exhibited the predominant design characteristics of being 'dark, rebellious, radical and de-constructivist' and have been defined as avant-garde (Emberley, 1987, p. 41). What fashion offers in order to escape 'the regime of fashion' is diversity and the freedom to create an individually unique style that is 'specially marked with personal and artistic idiosyncrasies' (Emberley, 1987, p. 43). They were core contributors who augmented British fashion culture and shaped London as an internationally renowned fashion capital with its distinctive avant-garde and radical designs (McRobbie, 2003).

The Antwerp Six, as a group of representative avant-garde designers who have brought a 'radical distinct aesthetic' to catwalks, have challenged the existing perceptions on fashion shows in cooperating with the endorsement with the popular culture (Arslanian, 2016). They have shaped a new radical 'scene' (Martínez, 2007, p. 2451) in fashion culture internationally, which is viewed as 'revolutionary, and innovative, revealing that fashion is also a realm heavily freighted with contradictions, dualities, defiance, and subversive ideas rather than only a culture where only aesthetic goals are central' (Quinn, 2002c, p.168). Together with Margiela, these designers, who advocate de-constructivism as a new aesthetic in garments as well as fashion shows, have, to some extent, marginalised traditional fashion and arts (Crane, 1997b). Appropriating motifs from social and political issues and connecting them with popular culture, Margiela and the Antwerp Six have brought innovation to fashion shows from both functional and aesthetic perspectives.

Regarding the emergence and the specific analysis of London Fashion Week, Goodrum (2005, pp. 56-78) and Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, p. 738) distinguish the cultural characteristics and identity of London Fashion Week from those in Paris, New York and Milan due to its pursuit of the avant-garde and radical style. Porter (2016, p. 35) elaborates on the formation of LFW from 1983 to 1984. All of the above scholars emphasise that the spread of radical designs originating in London's art colleges was the direct cause of the recognition of London as a fashion capital. McRobbie (2003) views LFW as unique in the European fashion week system due to the radical styles presented there and its willingness to accept and support emerging designers.

From a broad perspective, the globalisation in the 1970s triggered the construction of the global fashion cultural system, as well as the hierarchical

discourse in the Western fashion week system and the host fashion cities of fashion weeks. The cultural characteristics of the 'Big Four' dominant Western fashion weeks and the corresponding fashion cities are discussed alongside the cultural system in the third section after elaborating on the fashion and cultural studies on innovation. This is because this kind of literature is critical in understanding the innovation in fashion shows within the global fashion cultural system. The characteristics of the Western dominant fashion cities and the corresponding literature could support the elaboration on Shanghai as an emerging fashion city with the analysis of the changing images of contemporary fashion shows, as well as the evolution of SHFW.

Under globalisation, the emergence of the Chinese fashion industry and culture since the 1980s and China's participation in constructing the global fashion system are indispensable in understanding the cultural context of Chinese fashion, especially the historical context and the literature review of SHFW. These are key to understanding today's characteristics of China's fashion culture which the emerging IBC designers cooperate with.

2.2.5 First Fashion Show and Emergence of the Fashion Week in China

Although China's fashion industry was not constructed until the 1980s and its first fashion week emerged after this, which is elaborated on later in this section, the first fashion show in the People's Republic of China (hereafter referred to as PRC) was held in 1956. This signified the first flourishing of fashion in the PRC, or indeed, the first significant display of public interest in the ideas and issues about dress, design and appearances (see the report in Figure 2.8) (Jin, 2016a).

Shanghai Is Revived as a Fashion Capital; Tops Peiping as Reds Seek Sleeker Styles

Special to The New York Times.

HONG KONG, March 5—Shanghai, thwarted for some time as the suppressed Paris of China, apparently is outdoing Peiping now that its tailors are being officially encouraged to help relieve the grim sartorial picture on the mainland.

Sixty-four "dress-up" models for women's and children's clothing have been chosen in Peiping for national popularization. But Shanghai's tailors and dressmakers were reported today to be working on a larger assortment of 250 new creations.

The Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao, a Chinese Communist newspaper, said the new models included twenty kinds of festival dresses, ten kinds of party dresses and fifty types for ordinary daily wear.

Among the models the newspaper reported are clothes for expectant mothers, women athletes and such Chinese career women as factory workers, political cadres, tractor drivers and bus conductors.

Detachable collars are being made for young women's dresses so the Chinese collar necks can be altered as fashions change.

The new children's clothes

were said to include a sun suit for toddlers. Children's clothes are being made of bright cotton prints to symbolize a "healthy, happy and fortunate life."

Copies of some of the models being prepared in Shanghai, the Ta Kung Pao said, will be sent to Peiping for exhibition there.

The Hsinhua (New China) News Agency reported earlier in an overseas dispatch that Communist China's first fashion show would be held in mid-March. But according to a domestic Chinese report, a fashion show was held at the Peiping department store on March 1 with fifty sales girls serving as models.

Clothes exhibitions in different Chinese cities are expected to continue for some time in the Peiping Government's campaign to liven up revolutionary fashions. New clothes also are being designed for men.

The Chung Yuen department store in Tientsin is reported to be featuring a new striped woolen number for men. It is described as a "kind of spring suit for gentlemen" with "stripes on the surface."

BIG FASHION SHOW OPENS IN PEIPING

Fuller Skirts (Some Pleated)
and Bright Colors Feature
Display of 500 Designs

Special to The New York Times.

HONG KONG, March 31—A fashion show opened today at the Workers Palace of Culture in Peiping.

More than 500 new designs were officially reported to have been put on display in Communist China's drive to brighten up things sartorially.

The fashion show was mainly for women and children. But according to the Hsinhua [New China] News Agency there were also a few men's styles in the way of "sports jackets, slacks, some Western style suits and figured silk ties."

Various previews of the Peiping Government's "first fashion show" already have been held. This, however, was the big show that had been advertised for mid-March and then postponed because of the large number of fashion suggestions by a grimly clad public.

More than 3,000 designs were officially said to have been submitted by the public in addition to those contributed by artists, tailors and dressmakers. A domestic Chinese dispatch said that more than 80,000 persons in Peiping had applied for fashion show tickets to see the results.

Figure 2.8: (L–R) *New York Times*, 11/03/1956; *New York Times*, 01/04/1956

(Jin, 2016a)

This show was held in isolation from Western fashion culture and was presented as the first fashion show held in a 'communist country' (Jin, 2016a). The first fashion show that revealed China's connection with Western fashion culture was presented by Pierre Cardin in 1979 (Tsui, 2016d). Cardin is deemed as the most critical person who brought modernity to China's fashion culture as he was a pioneering French designer from a dominant fashion city who brought western fashion culture to China.

Cardin held his first post-Cultural Revolution Chinese fashion show at the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing (see Figure 2.9). At that time, China

was still under the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and it was difficult for foreigners to enter the country. The only way to enter was group tourism. Therefore, Cardin organised his company's employees as a 'tour group' to enter China (Tsui, 2016d). This show was exclusively presented to government officials and professionals in the garment industry and was seen as the first offering of Western fashion in China.



Figure 2.9: The first fashion show that Pierre Cardin produced in China in 1979 at the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing (China News, 1979, cited by Tsui, 2016d)

In 1981, Cardin held his first fashion show for the general audience at the Beijing Hotel. Song was in charge of selecting Chinese models and, at that time, most Chinese people had no idea what a fashion model was, so Song had to approach attractive girls and boys on the streets and explain the concept to them before they could be recruited (Jin, 2016a). In the end, nearly all of the 12 models were selected in this way and included vegetable sellers,

carpet weavers, fruit sellers and textile workers, who gathered every evening under the guidance of two professional coaches from Paris (Tsui, 2016d).

At that time before 1980s, fashion shows also undertook the 'political task' (Tsui, 2016a) of China-France exchanges and receiving foreign guests. Facing the public for the first time, the organisers also worried that Chinese people would not like to see contemporary fashion shows, so they worked hard to insert traditional Peking Opera into the show. As Cardin has recalled, at that time, the scrutiny of the clothing was so strict that many clothes suspected of being 'revealing' or too 'exposing' were not allowed to be displayed (Tsui, 2016d).

With regard to the research on China's fashion weeks, Zhao (2009) follows Entwistle and Rocamora's (2006) theoretical analysis of LFW and applies it to CFW, which emerged in Beijing in 1997 and was China's first fashion week. Cultural critics (Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013) tend to investigate CFW as a factor within the cultural economy, emphasising and identifying its cultural characteristics as part of deep embodied politics.

The economy in a socialist society relates to the ways in which people make a living that are integrated with other aspects of culture. As China is home to the world's largest textile and apparel market, the importance of which is matched by the scale of the apparel industry as a whole (Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2008, 2013; Williams, 2015), the economic policies and reforms in China have profound influences on the formation of Chinese fashion identities from a cultural perspective.

Wu (2009) Zhao (2013), and Zhao (2008) note that the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China' (CCP), held in December 1978, was a 'watershed event' (Wu, 2009, p.45) during which

Deng Xiaoping led the shift of the national focus from political struggles and campaigns to economic reforms. The government enacted economic policies that involved 'implementing economic reforms domestically (duinei gaige) and opening up China to the world (duiwai kaifang)' (Wu, 2009, p.56). These measures meant that China shifted from a centrally-controlled and 'planned economy (jihua jingji)' in the radical socialist period (the Maoist era), in which the state was 'the ultimate owner and manager of the entire economy, to a market-oriented economy (shichang jingji)'. The goal of the reforms adopted by China was to realise 'the Four Modernisations (sige xiandaihua)', which were 'agricultural modernisation, industrial modernisation, the modernisation of national defence and the modernisation of science and technology'. Although this policy was originally advocated by Western academics, according to Zhao (2008, p. 10), 'this [was] merely a means to achieve a Chinese modernity, not the Westernization of China'.

Zhao (2008, p. 197) explains that one of the key differences between CFW and LFW is the position of political power in the field of fashion. As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) observe, the boundaries set up at LFW indicate that the British field of fashion is an autonomous space that is independent of politics. However, Zhao (2008) does not specify the interrelationships between political power and the organizational systems and cultural characteristics of CFW.

As stated by Zhao (2008), 'if the Chinese fashion industry is a puzzle, then the CFW is an occasion when all the pieces of the puzzle come together'. This vividly presents the issues raised by the significant rapid growth of the Chinese fashion industry in which the state plays a major role. The government has done more than just facilitate the industry; it also formed the first fashion association in China in 1993, the China Fashion Association (Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013).

CFW was first held in 1997 by the China Fashion Association (CFA) (Zhao, 2008, p. 133). The purpose of establishing the CFA was to assist and regulate the Chinese fashion industry. The president of the CFA had to be approved by the CCP and the State Council (CFA official website, n.d.), thus highlighting the connection between the CFA and the state. This stands in contrast to the prevailing practices of European fashion weeks, which are held and organised by professional fashion associations in which the leaders are decided autonomously within the associations themselves. Moreover, the CFA's funding comes partially from the state (Zhao, 2008, p. 137). Under the instruction of the government, CFW, a main event organised by the CFA, was created to 'jumpstart the Chinese fashion industry' (Zhao, 2008, p. 144).

Also differing from the European fashion industry that has experienced centuries of evolution to become a mature system (Craik, 2003), the Chinese textile and apparel industry has existed for less than 50 years. The first fashion week in China was, in a sense, a 'jumpstart' that took place even before the Chinese fashion industry had fully developed a stable structure. For historical and political reasons, Chinese garment manufacturers are split into categories and fall under the administrations of three relevant governmental or semi-governmental industry organisations: The China National Textile Industry Council, the China National Light Industry Council and the Ministry of Commerce.

In European fashion systems, as discussed in the section on historical context in the introductory chapter, all fashion weeks are constructed under a mature industrial context and are relatively independent of the state, controlled and driven by needs and markets. Few industry associations are fully controlled by the state and the government, let alone by political parties. The state may have played a vital role financially in supporting the rebuilding of the industry

after World War II, as with Italy's fashion industry and MLFW, but it only played a role in the provision of industry resources from behind the scenes.

In contrast with the European fashion week's political systems, the first group of Chinese fashion industry associations were founded and owned by the government, with their leadership requiring approval from the CCP, which has long taken an authority-centric approach to operations, a tendency that inevitably resulted in a situation in which outsiders led insiders as most members of the associations were not fashion professionals (Wu, 2009, pp. 89-102). Such conditions can be attributed to the macro-cultural atmosphere and national-centric values in China alongside the heritage and history of Chinese civilisation, which are discussed in detail in Chapters 7 and 8 with the elaboration on the political characteristics of SHFW.

The Chinese apparel and textile industry (*fangzhi gongye*) was owned and controlled by the government before 1978. Although the structure of the Chinese fashion economy has been fundamentally altered at the national level by the reform of economic policy enacted in 1978 (Zhao, 2008; Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013), it is still unable to comprehensively escape from the influence of the planned economy and national-centric and collectivist values, resulting in a bureaucratic atmosphere in the industry. As the apparel industry is an important sector of national manufacturing in China, its operating features would have inevitably been influenced by the macro-economic atmosphere during that period.

The form and the discussions surrounding the identity of the Chinese fashion industry is mainly based on the first fashion week that emerged in Beijing, CFW. One of the most vital factors underlying the cultural characteristics is the government's strict control over all forms of media in the early 1980s at

the start of the reform era that began in 1978 when China looked to the West for fashion inspiration. As argued by Wu (2009, p. 110),

‘...access to foreign entertainment and fashion media was still extremely limited, and the majority of the populace had no direct access to Western fashion. Without such access, the Chinese lacked the criteria to judge what was fashionable according to “international standards” .’

Since then, China has had a strong desire to join the international fashion community and have its own authority and powers from within the fashion industry. China’s long, self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world after 1949 when the People’s Republic of China is founded somewhat obscured the need for a symbol of national identity in the form of fashion, although nationalism remained a prominent feature in Chinese politics. It was only after China opened up to the world in 1978 that the need for such a symbol of national identity became apparent. Wu (2009, p. 103) also mentions that Japan and China are homogeneous cultures that both experienced the ‘throes of a national identity crisis’ in their attempts to identify a national design symbol during their respective modern transformations.

If joining fashion industry associations before the industry infrastructure was developed to maturity helped the Chinese people to gain security and social identity, then the purpose of using national financing to invest in and supplement designers was to find and strengthen the national identity through fashion. As mentioned by Wu (2009, p. 98), the sartorial symbol of the Chinese national fashion identity was developed in an era of globalisation in which ‘popular fashion trends and ideas’ were inevitably borrowed from and influenced by other cultures.

In order to form China's own fashion identity, the early rush to create CFW aimed to provide a platform for the CFA to hand out awards to fashion companies, brands, designers, models and journalists. In order to build the recognition of Chinese fashion designers and brands as quickly as it was able, the CFA also initiated an official project named the 'famed designers project'. Under this background, a series of awards were created, among which the most prestigious was the Golden Award (jinding jiang), handed out annually to a 'highly accomplished Chinese fashion designer' (Zhao, 2013, p. 112).

One year after being launched in December 1997 (Wu, 2009, p. 114; Zhao, 2013, p. 145), three types of awards began to be given out at CFW in the autumn season. This has become a traditional function of this fashion week that is vital in the running of CFW, which has taken place biannually since 2003 with all of the awards given out in the autumn season. China's first fashion week, CFW, has exhibited a closeness to officialdom and an unusual degree of politicisation, which is a relatively unique cultural characteristic. In contrast to winning an award within the European fashion system, which represents strong recognition from the professional and legitimate fashion design system, winning an award given by the CFA at CFW also signifies a form of political recognition and is sometimes not solely determined by design capabilities.

Although two scholars (Zhao, 2008; Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2013) have studied CFW relatively comprehensively, few have mentioned or undertaken comprehensive studies on another vital fashion week in China, Shanghai Fashion Week (referred to as SHFW hereafter). SHFW was first officially established in 2003 and originated from The Shanghai International (Clothing) Festival, which emerged in 1997 (Bian, 2017). Shanghai, as the most important fashion city since the fashion modernisation of China, exhibited similar characteristics when launching its first fashion week. As Bian (2017)

has mentioned, ‘...SHFW was, at first, an action of government; it was held by the government as a comprehensive (all-round) culture festival...’. The 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee marked the official end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978 and the gradual resuming of regular cultural activities. From the 1980s onwards, the event has been seen as the renaissance of Haipai culture as it has regained its vitality and become more mature.

As for the development processes of the fashion industry in China and Shanghai becoming the fifth world fashion city, Yang (2007) points out that this development was accelerated when the government began to strongly support domestic Chinese designer brands in 2007, as well as supporting SHFW. The fifth SHFW in 2007 saw a strategic transformation, with domestic Chinese designer brands and large manufacturing brands beginning to emerge (Yang, 2007). A series of industry events, such as ‘2007 Chinese Autonomy Designer Brands’ CEO Talks in Shanghai’ were put on by a number of core governmental institutions, namely the National Development and Reform Commission, the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Information, the Shanghai Fashion Week Organization Committee and the Shangtex Holding (Group) Corporation (Yang, 2007, p. 113).

A number of Chinese scholars have discussed SHFW and its issues in the early stages of its development. Shao and Zhang (2009) discuss the core purpose of establishing SHFW and the lack of a professional buying system in China, which has inevitably led to weaknesses in the operational system of SHFW. Yang (2009, p. 12) categorises the brands that participate in SHFW into four classes, which are the overseas brands, Chinese brands coming from external provinces, small designer brands, and traditional manufacturing brands that are seeking to upgrade their design capabilities. He questions the operational situation of SHFW, including its relationships with the domestic

government and the increasing number of industry institutions that could create potential communication issues, causing operational problems for SHFW. Ling (2012) emphasises this issue, analysing the interrelationships between potential business opportunities and promotional exposure at fashion weeks in China, pointing out the inner immaturity in the Chinese fashion industrial chain compared to that in the European and American fashion systems. However, she also comments on both the economic and cultural values of SHFW, stating that SHFW is a cost-effective promotion vehicle for designer brands in China, comparing the production cost of a show at SHFW with that at New York Fashion Week (at over US\$1,500,000) and China Fashion Week in Beijing (at over 50,000 RMB), which are much higher than the cost at SHFW (Ling, 2012, p. 5).

2.2.6 Section Conclusion

In conclusion, fashion historians tended to split the historical period of modern fashion shows into pieces and discussed them separately, stating the emergence of fashion weeks together with the process of globalization. They underlined the commercial imperative and economic values that accelerated the proliferation of fashion shows around the world. Some of them have mentioned fashion weeks as a global cultural phenomenon. However, few of them bring forward a further analysis of the cultural and aesthetic value of fashion shows.

Theatricality in modern fashion shows tends to be an essential phenomenon addressed by fashion historians and modern cultural historians together with the development of modern couture culture in its initial emergence. They have illustrated the mixture of theater and modern runways and their connection with the arousing of modern couture. Some scholars (Duggan, 2001; Skov. et al., 2013) argue that there is a theatrical renaissance in contemporary fashion

shows, discussing the spectacle of contemporary fashion shows and their theatrical embodiments with performance art. However, most of the shows that these studies have covered were produced and staged by luxury brands or well-known global designer brands within the legitimate European fashion system. Few studies have discussed emerging designer brands in a globalised context, or Chinese designer brands in particular, whose performances on the global fashion stage have formed influences yet have not been documented.

Previous studies indicate that Chinese scholars tend to overlook the industry and commercial value of fashion weeks, as well as their influence on cities being seen as world fashion cities due to their commercial strength and industry value. Few scholars have recognised the cultural values and importance of fashion weeks as cultural events. This research fills this gap by conducting an empirical study that emphasises the changing image of the contemporary fashion show brought about by emerging IBC designers and expanding on the cultural examinations of fashion weeks, especially in Shanghai, facilitating China in upgrading its cultural status in the global fashion ecosystem.

Centring on the emerging generation of IBC designers who are the followers of the era of the Western 'designerscape' from the 1980s to the 1990s (Englisch, 2013, p. 155), the most recent and related period of fashion cultural evolution, which is the 1990s and the 2000s, is reviewed in more detail in the next chapter. The work of a group of avant-garde designers, such as Gaultier, McQueen and Galliano, who challenged the traditional Parisian aestheticism and eluded style categorisation by introducing innovation to contemporary fashion shows, is revisited. This lays a systematic foundation for analysing the emerging IBC designers as followers of the above designers, endeavouring to

experiment with and investigate more diversified art forms within contemporary fashion shows.

2.3 Creative Labour and Cultural Productions in the Creative and Cultural Industry

2.3.1 Introduction

The core topic of this study is emphasised through the elaboration on internationalised fashion show production. As addressed in Chapter 1, the fashion show has long been a cultural event that incorporates comprehensive categories of creative labour within the fashion industry, varying from industry authorities and creative teams to production and marketing teams. Discussing the revolutionary aesthetic and cultural changes that have occurred through fashion show production is the main path for achieving the research aim. For this reason, it is necessary to review the core theoretical basis of the analysis chapters, which involves prior research on creative labour and cultural productions. More specifically, the reason that creative labour and the creative and cultural industry are included in the literature review is that show production practices and activities, operated by international creative labour within the global fashion industry, make up and shape the core analysis of this research. The analysis of creative labour in the fashion industry can be viewed as the investigation of the construction of aesthetic innovation, which underpins the theoretical mechanism of this study as a whole.

The section that reviews the literature on creative labour and the creative and cultural industry follows the investigation of the explicit evolution and history of fashion shows alongside their interconnections with the forming of the global legitimate European fashion system, as well as the first emergence of fashion

shows in China and the corresponding system as the main research context. Among the theories and studies that are presented, Bourdieu's theory (1993) for cultural productions is highlighted as it serves as the most critical theoretical basis for the construction of the following analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

2.3.2 Creative Labour and Cultural Production

As mentioned above, the analysis of creative labour and cultural production in this study is an ontological process that connects show production practices with the cognitive construction of new aesthetics. Revisiting existing studies on creative labour and cultural production could more intensely interrelate the current academic understanding with the analysis of on-going industry phenomena. Furthermore, as one of the theoretical contributions of this research is to add fashion as a new academic branch in the study of creative labour and cultural production, it is necessary to revisit the most up-to-date comprehension of creative labour, the current scope of this academic field and the theories that can be applied to the core analysis in this study.

With the increasing importance of addressing the non-physical, cognitive and immaterial perspectives of work in the past three decades of the post-Fordist period (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Van Marle, 2017; Mould, 2018; Morgan and Nelligan, 2018; Anderson, 2019), scholars (Morgan and Nelligan, 2018; Anderson, 2019) in recent years have updated the conceptual comprehension of creative labour. Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 23) explains that creative labour can be seen as labour that 'produces cultural and informational goods' within the cultural industry. Anderson (2019, p. 326) notes an increase in the academic field of investigations into the topic of 'interrogating the interrelations of the material and ideological elements of creative labour', which contributes to shaping new theoretical interpretations of creative labour.

This is demonstrated through Morgan and Nelligan's arguments (2018, p. 145) that creativity in the workplace, if presented and reflected by the labour, can be identified as 'a response to countercultural demands for more autonomous and dignifying forms of work'. These discussions have led to the differentiation between a creative identity and non-creative workplaces, with this situation associated with 'precarity, subjectivity, and autonomisation' (Anderson, 2019, p. 331). Under these circumstances, Anderson (2019, p. 332) raises a valuable question to discuss: 'how should we, as we face the atonomization of productive work under new forms of neoliberal capitalism and the entrepreneurialization of many traditional productive roles, envision and organize solidarity and collective action?'. This study could provide insights into this question in the fashion industry, as an important creative cultural industry, by discussing the new rise of a creative labour collective that shares new aesthetics in entrepreneurialised cultural productions.

Prior research on the two topics of cultural production and creative labour overlap with each other in several explicit aspects, such as flexibility and accumulation (Lee, 2013, p. 4), the power of legitimacy (Huws, 2010, p. 509), changing economic and organisational structures (Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Randle et al., 2003), individualism and collectivism (Huws, 2010), economic and artistic logic in practice (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007, p. 531) and complex methods of symbolism and distinction (Bourdieu, 1983, 1999). Lee (2013, p. 4) points out that 'influential work' has been undertaken by cultural production researchers on multiple topics, varying from 'the field of human geography and economic sociology, investigating issues such as "clustering" (Pratt, 2004), co-location (Pratt, 2005, 2006), cultural regeneration and gentrification (Zukin, 1982) and globalization (Scott, 2000, 2004, 2005)'.

Taking the angle of cultural production, this study, while aiming to discuss the aesthetic, cultural and systematic innovations brought about by emerging

fashion designers, also elaborates on the informalities of these designers' working environments, as well as the legitimacy and discourse power of the 'Big Four' fashion cities and institutional authorities. It also discusses the paradox of the economic and artistic logic (in particular, artists' autonomy and heteronomy) in show production practices and the accumulated cultural influences that these production practices have on the organisational structure and cultural characteristics of a fashion city as a whole. In this way, this section reviews the most important research and theories relating to the aforementioned discussions in terms of the studies on creative labour and cultural production, rather than generally reviewing these two topics within the prior studies as a whole.

Recent research has also drawn on the informality of creative labour within the global cultural industry (Alacovska, 2018; Mears, 2012; Neff, 2012; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McKinlay and Smith, 2009), which expands on the discussion of the flexibility and accumulations of creative labour (Lee, 2013). Terms such as 'non-hierarchical, bohemian, playful, sociable' (Alacovska, 2018, p. 1564) and 'flexible, casualisation, precarious' (Lee, 2013, p. 5) have been found to represent the current features of international creative labour. Creative labour markets are, thus, typically seen as informally governed (Blair, 2001; Wittel, 2001; Menger, 2006; Antcliff et al., 2007). Theorists largely agree that, as mentioned by Alacovska (2018, p. 1565), in an industry 'dominated by short-term project-by-project employment where no formal labour market regulations exist such as educational credentials, apprenticeship systems or legislated recruitment procedures', creative labourers working within the cultural industry are mostly operating and are secured informally, through 'the accumulation of social capital including friends, acquaintances and family' (Blair, 2001; Menger, 2006). 'Network socialities', as Wittel (2001) puts forward, feature 'fleeting but intense occupational connections' (Alacovska, 2018), which, to an extent,

compensate for 'the erosion of formal labour regulations' (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013).

Scholars also argue that this decentralisation and informality of creative labour are crucial features and the result of post-Fordism. Curran's argument (2000, p. 27), which explicitly points out that one of the most crucial post-Fordist methodological influences on creative labour and the cultural industry is the 'decentralised networks of companies and highly skilled, flexible and professional workforces', has been proven in the creative and cultural industry with the aforementioned characteristics. These features are applied to the core analysis in this research when discussing emerging designers' production behaviours under an insecure, informal and decentralised context within fashion weeks with different organisational structures and cultural phenomena, especially for artistic-oriented designers. This paves the way for further discussion on the relationship between art autonomy and commerce heteronomy.

Scholars (Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Randle et al., 2003; Huws, 2010) have also demonstrated that creative work should not be solely concentrated on the circulation of the commodities of the market itself; it should also incorporate the legitimisation and reproduction of the power of the state or the workforce (Huws, 2010, p. 509). The power of legitimacy (Huws, 2010, p. 509), as well as its influences on changing economic and organisational structures (Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Randle et al., 2003) when discussing creative labour, is another important perspective that is related to this research when analysing fashion legitimacy and organisational manipulation and reproduction.

Adequately addressing the question of why so many people seek careers in the creative sector requires a change in the scope of creative labour from

'industries' to 'fields' (Brook, 2013, pp. 2-3). Bourdieu's notion of social inertia provides a plausible hypothesis concerning the social trajectories of those who are inclined to work within the cultural field (Brook, 2013, p.1).

The next section concentrates on Bourdieu's theory and concepts associated with cultural production as they are the theoretical basis for the core analysis that classifies and frameworks the subject designers according to their different artistic pursuits when producing fashion shows. This classification is useful for the further discussion of interpretations of new aesthetics in fashion show production brought about by art autonomy, as well as the struggles and paradoxes between art autonomy and commerce heteronomy in the global fashion ecosystem.

2.3.3 Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Production as an Analytical Basis

The discussions of the relationship between economic and artistic logic within practices outline the central paradox of creative production (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007, p. 531). Two principles of hierarchisation have been emphasised in terms of the domination of cultural production, as demonstrated by Bourdieu (1993, p. 40):

'The heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g. 'bourgeois art') and the autonomous principle (e.g. 'art for art's sake'), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise'.

This classic identification of art production has become a commonly used and classic theoretical basis in research that discusses creative and cultural production (Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005; Fillis, 2006, 2010, 2011; Rodner and Thomson, 2013). The intentions of those who create art for art's sake versus

art for business's sake have long been the subject of a core debate in arts marketing management and production (Singer, 1954; Macaulay, 2007; Fillis, 2010), as well as within discussions of autonomy in the art market (Haskins, 1990). However, few fashion studies have applied this identification when discussing the paradoxes between art and commerce, seeming to prefer to demonstrate the intimacy between art and fashion, although a number of studies have already proved the affiliations (Cawthorne, 1998; Bruzzi and Gibson, 2013). In fact, industry production practices have long presented the philosophical intentions between art for art's sake versus art for business's sake within designers' practices (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2011), in which designers are demonstrated to struggle in the fashion market in the same way that artists struggle in the art market.

In order to provide a thorough behavioural analysis regarding fashion show production and to elaborate on how new aesthetics are accumulated through creative labour within the broader global fashion ecosystem, Bourdieu's (1993, p. 40) classic identification is used as a theoretical basis when selecting and classifying the subject designers as case studies. The explicit selection processes are further emphasised in the following methodology chapter. The later core analysis is built up within the framework of categories created according to the different extents of artistic pursuit found in the case study designers' production behaviours. How and in which form these production behaviours can contribute to the emergence of innovation within the fashion system are specifically discussed in the analysis chapters.

Another important Bourdieu theory on cultural production that contributes to the core analysis of this study is his emphasis on symbolic production in terms of the explicit logic of the process of autonomisation (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 112-120), which clarifies the interconnections between autonomy and the whole system of cultural production. This is because Bourdieu's theoretical

identifications inherently elaborate on the rationale in the cultural production of innovation. As he has noted:

‘The autonomisation of intellectual and artistic production is correlative with the constitution of a socially distinguishable category of professional artists or intellectuals who are less inclined to recognize rules other than the specifically intellectual or artistic traditions handed down by their predecessors, which serve as a point of departure or rupture’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 112).

Simultaneously, this theory contributes to the further discussions on the development of the system and individual behaviours as he has also noted that ‘the development of the system of cultural production is accompanied by a process of differentiation generated by the diversity of the publics at which the different categories of producers aim their products’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 113).

In this project, fashion shows, especially those that are unconventional with artistic visual expressions, are treated as intellectual and artistic productions and Bourdieu’s (1993) emphasis on autonomisation is deeply incorporated, which can provide an example of empirical application within fashion cultural studies. The accumulating and gathering of emerging designers, especially those who show a strong pursuit of art, as a new group or ‘new wave’ of design power, creating new diversifications within original fashion systems, is interpreted in a wider discussion of innovation theories.

2.3.4 Developing Features of the Creative and Cultural Industry in Shanghai as an Emerging Fashion Capital

Shanghai as an emerging fashion capital, with SHFW being one of the critical contexts in which to elaborate on IBC designers’ work in this study, and its broader context of the creative and cultural industry should be briefly reviewed here after the development processes and issues of SHFW have

been reviewed in section 2.2.5. As a crucial part of the creative and cultural industry (which is referred to as CCI hereafter), the characteristics of the fashion cultural ecosystem are correlated with and influenced by the broader development features of the industry as a whole. The development path of Shanghai's fashion industry is chronologically consistent with that of the CCI, with the emergence of in 2004 and Shanghai becoming the first mainland Chinese city to produce a formal policy on the CCI (Keane, 2007, 2009, 2011; Li and Peng, 2008; White and Xu, 2012; Bao, 2013). Fashion was explicitly listed as one of the five broad areas of the CCI's developing typology from 2006 to 2011, with the other four being research design, architectural design, culture and media, and consultancy and planning (Li and Hua, 2009, p. 169). This typology was extended to the 'media industry, art industry, industrial design, architecture design, internet and information industry, software and computing service, consultancy, advertisement and exhibition service, leisure and entertainment service' from 2011 to 2015 (Shanghai Government News Office, 2011, cited by White and Xu, 2012, p. 252).

Apart from the history of the start of the CCI, what is important for this study in relation to the development path of the CCI in Shanghai, as well as in China, is 'experimentation under hierarchy' (Heilmann, 2007, p. 3) due to the difficulty of 'crafting a uniform policy for a country as diverse as China', which has led to a cultural characteristic of 'practice coming before policy' (White and Xu, 2012, p. 253). A number of public cultural institutions have no funding support from the government, which has cultivated the entrepreneurialism and commercialism of the public institutions throughout Shanghai's CCI development (Zhang, 2006; White and Xu, 2012). Being an experimental zone for the CCI in China, Shanghai has experienced high autonomy in implementing development policies, seeing a mixture of Western creative

cluster models, exemplified by M50,³ and Chinese economic and technological zones (White and Xu, 2012, pp. 253-254). This section provides contextual and analytical materials when discussing the interconnections between IBC designers' development paths within SHFW and the broader CCI in China, which is also revisited in the concluding chapter.

2.4 Innovation Theory and its Application in Fashion and Cultural Studies

2.4.1 Introduction

The studies on innovation theory and identification, initiated by Schumpeter in the 1930s (Śledzik, 2013), have become an independent academic realm in which a wide range of definitions of innovation have been created and discussed by scholars (Schumpeter, 1935,1939,2020; Druker, 1984; Evans, 1991; Fagerberg, 2004; Jin et al., 2004; Popa et al., 2010; Greenacre et al., 2012). The core insight that more recent innovation studies has provided is the importance of systematic thinking, although these investigations mostly tend to focus on technologies rather than culture (Greenacre et al, 2012). This is demonstrated by Greenacre et al. (2012, p.15), who explains that innovation literature has increasingly emphasised the importance of 'occupying niches, in which new technologies may be more able to compete with incumbent rivals'. Few studies shed light on the creative cultural field when discussing innovation, only placing it within organisational and systematic changes, but it cannot be discussed without mentioning

³ M50 is also called the Moganshan art cluster, 'which was originally a state-owned textile factory space along Suzhou Creek in Shanghai. It stopped its manufacturing industry in 1999 because of industrial reforms in Shanghai. In order to survive, the factory had to think of a way to rent out the space. From 2002 on-wards numerous independent visual artists and private visual art galleries both from China and abroad started moving into the space because of its cheap rent and its location in a historical site. By now it has been formally registered as a cultural enterprise, the Shanghai M50 cultural development co. ltd.' (White and Xu, 2012, p. 254).

technological revolutions. Jin et al. (2004) discuss the procedures of creative and adoptive innovation. 'Creative innovation' (Jin et al., 2004, p. 260) explicitly refers to an organisation's capability of implementing and carrying out 'technological innovation through its own system', typically actualised through introducing 'new products or services' (Jin et al., 2004, p. 260), while 'adoptive innovation' (Jin et al., 2004, p. 260) is the capability to apply and implement new products, ideas and services from outside the organisation to have a broader influence on the management of the whole system by changing the components of innovation between different organisations. Jin et al.'s explanation (2004) of innovation in the creative and cultural context is useful to this study and is applied in the analysis when summarising the overall changes that emerging IBC designers have brought to the global fashion ecosystem as a whole.

As this study is not centred on the discussion of innovation theories, this section focuses more on its direct cultural and fashion applications, rather than explicitly examining the evolution of the definitions of innovation. Today's changes to the contemporary fashion show, which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, function as the most effective mediums in leading these systematic changes from the cultural perspective and have impacted and reconstructed the global discourse power regarding fashion culture, cannot be discussed and analysed merely from the aesthetic and cultural perspectives. This is because it is comprehensively interconnected with the changes to the whole fashion system and the opening up of a new market through the exploration of aesthetics and China's fashion culture, which aligns with and incorporates the above definitions of innovation put forward by scholars. This has made this research more appropriate in placing the contemporary fashion show within the reconstructed fashion ecosystem and viewing it as an integrated cultural phenomenon that is interconnected with the whole system. This research discusses this emerging phenomenon in terms of its relationship with

innovation to emphasise the integration of changes and revolutions, rather than these happening independently.

In essence, this research investigates how emerging IBC designers and their contributions in upgrading the Chinese fashion cultural status through cooperating with the global fashion ecosystem have brought changes and revolutions to fashion show design and production via interacting with the global industry of creative labour. Their changes to the existing cultural images of fashion shows, as well as Chinese designers, are culturally influencing the global fashion ecosystem. Whether these changes to today's global fashion cultural images within fashion shows bring and re-shape innovation or are new interpretations of innovation could be examined by incorporating Schumpeter's (1935; 1939; 2020) theory, as well as the cultural and aesthetic revolutions in unconventional fashion shows identified by fashion historians and cultural researchers.

Therefore, this section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section reviews Schumpeter's (1935; 1939; 2020) innovation theory that will be used as a theoretical underpinning of this research and briefly introduces the current affinities between innovation theories and fashion and cultural studies. The second sub-section, although not concretely sticking to the use of 'innovation' as a theoretical term in fashion culture and visual studies, reviews the existing literature on the most relevant theoretical explanations of the identified revolutionary cultural and aesthetic changes that have appeared in fashion shows. These shows have been presented by iconic designers such as Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Issey Miyake, Rifat Özbek, Hussein Chalayan, Dries van Noten and Martin Margiela, who have brought changes in terms of imagery and function to fashion shows, as well as the fashion stage (Gill, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Duggan, 2001; Quinn, 2002a, 2002c, 2005; McRobbie, 2003; Seymour, 2008; Knox, 2010).

2.4.2 Innovation Theories and Their Applications in Cultural and Fashion Research

Schumpeter defines innovation as ‘that kind of change arising within the system which so displaces its equilibrium point that the new one cannot be reached from the old one by infinitesimal steps...as the setting up of a new production function. This covers the case of a new commodity, as well as those of a new form of organization such as a merger, of the opening up of new markets, and so on’ (Schumpeter 1939, p. 84). This definition reveals a reasonable consideration of understanding a systematic change as innovation, under which a new function or form of a product can emerge, thereby creating new markets. It can be said that since Schumpeter, few scholars have examined the interpretation of innovation through systematic changes as a whole (see Table 2.1 produced by Popa et al., 2010, pp.151-152).

As mentioned in the introduction, among the recent innovation studies, most tend to focus on the interpretations of innovation for technological topics. Scholars (Geels, 2002; Jin et al., 2004; Popa et al., 2010; Greenacre et al., 2012) mention the importance of addressing niches as an important standard when examining innovations. As Geels (2002, p. 135) explains, ‘niches are in some way insulated from ‘normal’ market selection, they act as ‘incubation rooms’ for radical novelties. They also provide the space to build the social networks that support innovation, such as supply chains and user-producer relationships’. This might be useful as a theoretical supplement in this study in addition to the utilisation of Schumpeter’s (1935; 1939; 2020) classic interpretations as the target designers researched are viewed as the main characters or players within the emerging niche market of the global fashion industry. Apart from interpreting the new aesthetics brought forward through fashion shows by emerging IBC designers from the perspectives of creative

cultural labour and productions, emphasising these changes structurally by incorporating innovation theory, as well as addressing the management of niche markets from designers' perspectives, could give this study a new theoretical significance to the future research of fashion management.

Table 1: Defining innovation

Author	Definition
Joseph Schumpeter (1930)	• Introducing a new product or modifications brought to an existing product; • A new process of innovation in an industry; • The discovery of a new market; • Developing new sources of supply with raw materials; • Other changes in the organization.
Peter Druker (1954)	One of the two basic functions of an organization.
Howard and Sheth (1969)	Any new element brought to the buyer, whether or not new to the organization.

Mohr (1969)	The degree to which specific new changes are implemented in an organization.
Damanpour and Evan (1984)	Broad utility concept defined in various ways to reflect a specific requirement and characteristic of a particular study.
Kenneth Simmonds (1986)	Innovations are new ideas that consist of: new products and services, new use of existing products, new markets for existing products or new marketing methods.
Kenneth Simmonds (1986)	Basic creative process.
Damanpour (1991)	Development and adoption of new ideas by a firm.
Davenport (1991)	Complete a task development in a radically new way.
Evans (1991)	The ability to discover new relationships, of seeing things from new perspectives and to form new combinations from existing concepts.
Covin și Slevin (1991), Lumpkin and Dess (1996), Knox (2002)	Innovation can be defined as a process that provides added value and a degree of novelty to the organization, suppliers and customers, developing new procedures, solutions, products and services and new ways of marketing.
Business Council Australia (1993)	Adoption of new or significantly improved elements to create added value to the organization directly or indirectly for its customers.
Henderson and Lentz (1995)	Implementation of innovative ideas.
Nohria and Gulati (1996)	Any policy, structure, method, process, product or market opportunity that the manager of a working business unit should perceive as new.
Rogers (1998)	Involves both knowledge creation and diffusion of existing knowledge.
The European Commission Green (1999)	Successful production, assimilation and exploitation of novelty in the economic or social environment.
Boer and During (2001)	Creating a new association (combination) product-market-technology-organization.

Table 2.1: Brief introduction to the evolution of interpretations of innovation theory, produced by Popa et al. (2010, pp.151-152)

As for cultural studies discussing innovations, they tend to discuss this topic in terms of its embeddedness and applications in various cultural contexts, such as its associations with and influences on cultural systems and organisations, as well as the way it drives the evolution of specific fields in certain cultural contexts (Shane, 1993; Asheim and Gertler, 2005; O'Brien, 2010; Kash, 2010). Innovation is also compared geographically in terms of its relational positions with cultural production and its dynamic interactions with cultural values. Studies in this field tend to be discussed on the macro level, rather than the micro level. They tend to solely focus on the dynamic nexus between innovation and different topics related to shaping cultural values within various regions.

In fashion studies, with its nature of interdisciplinarity, it is not rare to see the direct application of topics of innovation, but with more of a focus on business and manufacturing topics. The explicit perspectives of design and manufacturing techniques (Pesendorfer, 1995; Cappetta et al., 2006; Seymour, 2008; Loschek, 2009; Tzou and Lu, 2009; Quinn, 2010; Guercini and Ranfagni, 2012), management and marketing (Mora, 2006; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Chesbrough, 2006; Park et al., 2007; Cillo and Verona, 2008; Tran et al., 2011) and industrial trend estimations (Sproles, 1985; Pesendorfer, 1995; Crane, 1999b; Phau and Lo, 2004; Brannon and Divita, 2015) have been investigated, rather than culture and aesthetics.

Among these studies, Loschek's research (2009) should be highlighted here as Loschek is a fashion scholar who has used Schumpeter's innovation theory (1939) to examine the innovation in textile design techniques by analysing the presentations of several radical designers as case studies, such as McQueen and Chalayan. The most critical contributions of Loschek (2009, p. 191) are clarifying the concept of innovation, how it should be evaluated and the reasons for assessing it in the research of fashion design due to its

technological significance, the aim of which is to 'reduce future uncertainties using anticipatory thinking and action'. This study is different from that of Loschek (2009), although they both incorporate Schumpeter's theory, as it embodies this theory through the macro and systematic structures brought about by accumulated micro aesthetic and cultural changes, rather than explicitly applying it in interpreting these detailed and micro changes.

Within the topics of cultural and aesthetic changes, particularly in terms of fashion shows, fashion scholars tend not to directly apply innovations as a theoretical term or underpinning, although they identify the reinventing or bringing of a new aesthetic to visual fashion, the fashion show as a paradigm of a significant aesthetic, and cultural and imagery changes (Gill, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Duggan, 2001; Quinn, 2002a, 2002c, 2005; McRobbie, 2003; Seymour, 2008; Loschek, 2009; Knox, 2010). Few drew attention to or directly discuss the interconnections between systematic changes as the cultural consequences of the imagery and functional changes brought forward to fashion shows and the fashion stage since the 1970s by iconic designers such as Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, Issey Miyake, Rifat Özbek, Hussein Chalayan, Dries van Noten and Martin Margiela (Gill, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Duggan, 2001; Quinn, 2002a, 2002c, 2005; McRobbie, 2003; Seymour, 2008; Knox, 2010).

This has posed a theoretical question, or a new potential academic perspective, of interpreting how the accumulated imagery changes brought about by the emerging of a new aesthetic or culture within a certain creative cultural field that already has a stable and mature ecosystem can be viewed and identified if these changes influence and systematically change the whole ecosystem, which is aligned with Schumpeter's definition of innovation (1939). As mentioned in the previous section discussing creative labour and cultural production, the new aesthetic in fashion shows is consistently connected with

wide and diversified types of creative labour within the global creative cultural production. It is more reasonable to analyse the changes within the context of the global system or organisation rather than discussing them in isolation. From this point, this study can provide a new angle of interpretation for cultural and fashion studies when analysing symbolic changes. Furthermore, it utilises a new branch of applications for innovation studies as a whole. Within this study, Schumpeter's definition (1939), although dated, is still useful and is the most suitable as one of the theoretical underpinnings of analysing the systematic changes and consequences brought about by a new aesthetic and images explored through fashion shows. This is because Schumpeter (1939, p. 84) summarises innovation as a modification brought to an existing product and systematic changes to organisations, as mentioned above.

2.4.3 Unconventional Fashion Shows and Identified Aesthetic Innovations: From the Avant-Garde to Globalised Revolutions

As explained in section 2.2, the international legitimate fashion cultural system has been built in accordance with the establishment of the first three legitimate fashion weeks, which were NYFW in 1943, PFW in 1973 and MLFW in 1979 (Fogg, 2013; Porter, 2016). The cultural and organisational legitimation that has been formed is important for the analysis of production practices under the various organisational structures of fashion weeks that have different cultural characteristics in accordance with the corresponding host city as a world fashion capital. Therefore, the explicit imagery context and the existing studies on recognised aesthetic innovation in the prior 'designerscape era' that was created by IBC designers' predecessors, such as McQueen, Galliano, Chalayan, Issey Miyake, Rifat Ozbek, Dries van Noten and Jean Paul Gaultier, who are also their role models, should be explored. Before this, a brief theoretical review of legitimation as it is related to

this study is provided to support the analysis of various production behaviours under different fashion systems. This review is mainly divided into two perspectives, one of which is organisational legitimation and the other is 'role model authority' (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 93), as a part of legitimation discourse.

For organisational legitimation and its impact on industry practices, Ashforth and Gibbs (1990, p. 178) offer useful summarising terms to generalise legitimated organisational management. 'Substantive management' refers to material changes brought about by organisational goals and structures, as well as 'processes or socially institutionalised practices' (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990, p. 175). 'Symbolic management' refers to the advocacy and monitoring of socially accepted norms and values within organised communities, which is ambiguous and difficult for individuals to transform into actions (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990, p. 176). Divisions between substantive and symbolic management are not always clear due to symbolic practices' embeddedness in culture, which is generated by 'complementary structures and processes' (Riley, 1983). However, the purpose of the implementation of legitimation is 'to foster the belief among constituents that the organization's activities and ends are congruent with the expectations, values, and norms of constituents' (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990, p. 176). These theoretical emphases are important as all production activities analysed in this study occur under the monitoring of fashion week organisers. The corresponding symbolic value that the legitimate organisation can provide significantly influences designers' choices when choosing between art and commerce during production and presentation practices, having an impact on the production of aesthetic innovations, which is the core issue in this research.

As for the aesthetic and explicit behavioural connections between legitimacy and designers, the influences of role model designers on IBC designers are mainly seen in discourse and communication through 'role model authority'

(Leeuwen, 2007, p. 93) as a part of the emphasis on legitimisation, which is useful for this study. Role models tend to adopt 'a certain kind of behaviour, or believe certain things' (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 96) that legitimise the behaviours, beliefs, activities and practices of their followers. Although it is currently mainly being used in advertising and lifestyle media, it is still appropriate to use 'role model authority' (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 93) in this research due to its suitability in explaining the rationale of followers when choosing the same or similar techniques when experimenting with the same pursuits. It is apparent that the aesthetic innovation that has been handed down from the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) is being inherited by the following generation of designers, including the emerging IBC designers who are researched in this study. Therefore, it is necessary and important to review the imagery of aesthetic innovation presented during the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) as it is one of the contextual prerequisites of this research and it has not been emphasised and systematised in the existing studies.

English (2013, p. 92) mentions that from the 1960s onwards, fashion changes accelerated at 'a more rapid pace' than before. This phenomenon is embodied with the 'proliferation and diversity of styles promulgated until the end of the century' (English, 2013, p. 95). He also points out that:

'The 'unprecedented visual pluralism' shown during 'an age of experimentation' diversified thinking and represented dramatic technological change with the advent of the computer age, an ever-expanding communications system and growing trends in popular culture.' (English, 2013, p. 97)

This extensive application of the avant-garde as an aesthetic pursuit in fashion originated in British-educated fashion designers and can be recognised in Western fashion systems through the works of iconic internationally-renowned designers such as John Galliano, Alexander

McQueen, Henrik Vibskov, Hussein Chalayan and Martin Margiela since 1980s (McRobbie, 2003). Murphy (1999, p. 132) also demonstrates that avant-garde designers have engaged in conceptual designs, such as Issey Miyake, Rifat Özbek, Dries van Noten and Jean Paul Gaultier.

The majority of the emerging IBC designers who are researched and discussed in this project, not limited to the designers in the case studies who are elaborated on in more detail in the next chapter, have graduated from CSM and have established autonomous brands. Some of the designers aim to become the first generation of avant-garde Chinese designers who are following the examples of their predecessors and role models. These IBC's role model designers have brought modernity to the fashion stage since the 1980s and have ultimately changed the dominance of French aestheticism that was present throughout the post-World War II period until the 1980s' (Rocamora, 2009, Steele, 2017). Conceptual and proactive fashion expressions have been delivered by their shows featuring significant cultural identities and emotional conveyance. In general, the shows by these designers have expressed various avant-garde aesthetics with highly subjective, personal and spontaneous forms of self-expression (Knox, 2010; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; Watt, 2012; Steele et al., 2013).

In general, stylistic pluralism was seen in the interaction between fashion and ideologies, such as those related to gender and politics, within the 'designerscape era' rised in late 1970s and 1980s, and declined in 2000s (English, 2013, p. 156). Evans (2003, pp. 55-87) mentions that a 'strong feeling of decadence and psychological trauma pervaded fashion collection showings in the 1990s and early 2000s'. She argues that experimental design proliferated in this period. The cultural hybridisation and global cross-fertilisation between Western and Eastern culture have delivered challenges to the pre-existing politically correct attitudes in the merging of

fashion and the field of art (Hopkins, 2018, pp. 228-246). This tendency was reflected in fashion shows, forming a generation of emerging designers that challenged the dominant aestheticism in the legitimate fashion system.

Reviewing scholars' explicit discussions on works produced by the avant-garde designers identified as a part of the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156), these shows have been categorised by the different boundaries that they have challenged. These works have been discussed from the perspectives of their utilisation of different art forms, namely, performance art, installation art, conceptual art and radical art, as well as their connections with various genres, such as expressionism, deconstructivism, theatricalism and postmodernism (Gill, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Quinn, 2002a, 2002c; Seymour, 2008; Knox, 2010). These art forms and genres, being applied and experimented with in contemporary fashion shows by the iconic designers, tend to be closely connected with each other. Margiela's work renowned in 1980s has been selected mainly because of his pioneering contribution to creating deconstructivism (Gill, 1998; Loscialpo, 2011), which was not only applied to his garment design but also seen in his produced shows. Gaultier's catwalk in Paris made body piercing and tattoos acceptable on the Paris catwalk by using 'models' that he had chosen from the street, the mass audience. His 'subversive designs' had a 'considerable influence' (English, 2013, p. 121) on contemporary fashion in the late 20th century, which was followed by other designers who are renowned for their radicalness such as Vivienne Westwood and Thierry Mugler. McQueen was considered a representative of expressionism who turned his shows into mediums for conveying emotions rather than concepts, revisited the existing mainstream aestheticism where fashion was viewed as having to be perfect, comfortable, elegant and beautiful, culminating in the rise of new aesthetic forms in 1990s fashions (Knox, 2010; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; English, 2013). His collections have been viewed as postmodern, destructive and conceptual,

demonstrating the designer's imagination (Knox, 2010; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; Watt, 2012; Steele et al., 2013). Galliano's work in the 1990s is renowned for its theatrical reproduction of films and Parisian ballroom performances (Bugg, 2010) and his 2000s applications of ethnic symbols cater to the need to produce a globally-recognised image (Hopkins, 2000, p.240). Chalayan's shows have been chosen because of his use of technology, which is a main characteristic of the 2000s modernisations of fashion through digitalisation (Quinn, 2002a, 2002c).

Emotionality was McQueen's expression of identity in most of his shows and it was through this that he showed his pursuit of the radical or avant-garde in the fashion realm (Knox, 2010; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; Watt, 2012; Steele et al., 2013). Scholars have long discussed McQueen's shows in the sphere of sexuality via aesthetic vestimentary languages. His themes are traumata such as 'isolation and loneliness, as well as the dialectics of pleasure and pain, eroticism and death, man and machine, love and brutality, and victim and aggressor' (Loschek, 2009, p.68). Zhang and Di Benedetto (2010, p. 195) argue that fashion may be innovative in terms of form, function or style and can be 'radical (involving the breaking down of old ideas) or incremental (involving the evolution of new ideas from old ideas)'. McQueen was viewed as making a great contribution to Britain's 'unparalleled creative surge' from both the cultural and aesthetic perspectives (Bolton and McQueen, 2011, p. 20). His avant-garde shows spearheaded an iconoclastic movement in fashion, creating a new aesthetic standard in people's perceptions of fashion shows and new forms of emotional expression, such as in *VOSS*, *Highland Rape* and *Joan*, as well as being a paradigm montage-narrative in the show *What a Merry-Go-Round* in the Autumn/Winter season of 2001 (see Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10: A montage-narrative is seen in this show following four different chapters. Made from Clips from Alexander McQueen A/W 2001 What a Merry-Go-Round (Scroobily, 2017)

Galliano's shows featuring 'historical romanticism' (English, 2013, p. 158), exhibiting avant-garde characteristics through escapism, have reproduced exuberant cabarets in shows held at the Palais Garnier and the Cabaret Sauvage (Jung and Ko, 2009). These shows tend to reconstruct scenes from film, theatre, opera and ballrooms in theatrical performance spectacles, which were seen as symbols of elite Parisian fashion yet vanished during the Second World War, after which point the ready-to-wear industry grew around the world (Fogg, 2013). Galliano brought Parisian theatre and ballroom culture back to mainstream fashion via his couture shows and, more importantly, he merged different cultures from various geographic regions in a revolutionary way and explored avant-garde styles in symbolising these cultures (Jung and Ko, 2009; English, 2013). A collection of examples of his theatrical performance shows produced for Dior can be seen in Figure 2.11 (Wilcox et al., 2017).



Figure 2.11: From left to right - Galliano for Dior in: Spring/Summer 1998, Ready to Wear collection (first two columns); Spring/Summer 1998 Couture collection (the next two columns); Autumn/Winter 1998 Couture collection (the right column (source from Wilcox et al., 2017, edited by Wang, 2017)

As aforesummarised, if McQueen and Galliano are British representatives whose noticeable contributions are breaking the existing fashion cultural system by bringing new aesthetics, making British fashion well-known across

the world and accelerating London as the fourth recognised global fashion capital (Knox, 2010; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; English, 2013), then the Antwerp Six and Margiela are representative of Belgian designers who flourished in the Paris scene of fashion culture (Debo and Bruloot, 2007; Loscialpo, 2011; Skov.et al, 2013; Samson, 2018). The most recognisable show the Antwerp Six offered was presented in 1986 when they showed as a group, renting a truck and setting out for LFW with their collections (Debo and Bruloot, 2007). These Belgian designers are also major contributors in altering aesthetic images from couture being glamorous to couture being radical and avant-garde. Margiela's contribution, as identified by scholars (Gill, 1998; Evans, 2003a, p. 67; English, 2013, p. 156) mainly lies in establishing the social, sexual and 'aesthetic assault' in the globalised fashion industry. The show venues that Margiela has selected, such as empty car parks, warehouse corridors, a derelict Metro station and a disused hospital, all exhibit a deconstruction of the traditional notion of 'couture as glamorous' (English, 2013, p. 156). For instance, lighting has long been considered as one of the most basic and crucial components of a fashion show (Skov.et al, 2013). Margiela's experimentation fully expressed his 'le destroy' or 'minimalist' concept (Loscialpo, 2011, p. 13), which successfully attracted audiences' attention to specific garments rather than other elements in the show as audiences could only see the parts of the models that were illuminated (see Figure 2.12a, 2.12b and 2.13).

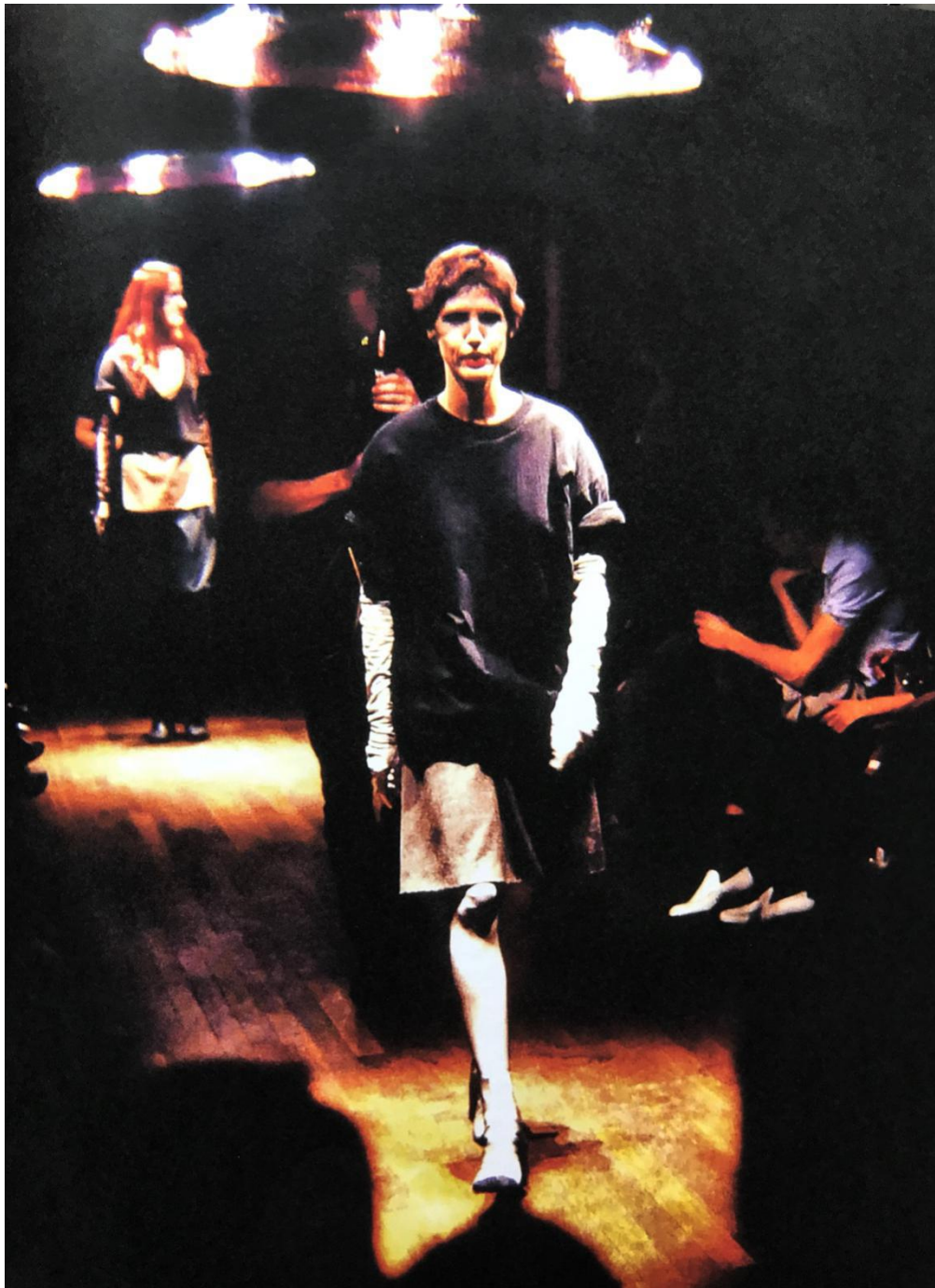


Figure 2.12a: Umbrellas equipped with spotlights while models' lips were painted scarlet and highlighted by exaggerated fake smiles, Martin Margiela's Autumn/Winter 1996-1997 (Samson, 2018, p. 78)

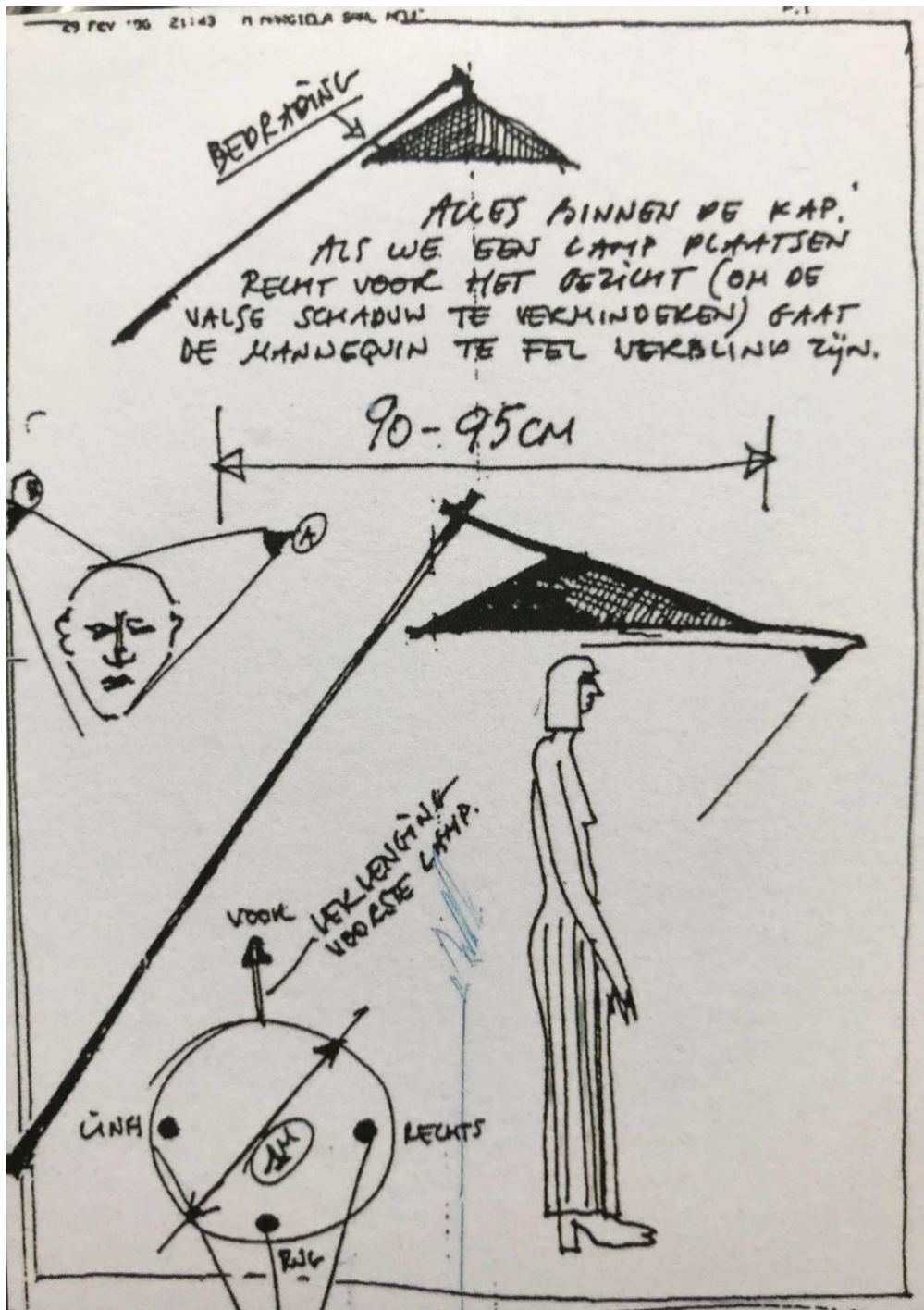


Figure 2.12b: Umbrellas equipped with spotlights while models' lips were painted scarlet and highlighted by exaggerated fake smiles, Martin Margiela's Autumn/Winter 1996-1997 (Samson, 2018, p. 78)



Figure 2.13: Each set of lights was switched on upon the model's arrival and off when they departed. Lights were illuminated around the room at irregular intervals. The room turned on its own lighting again once all the models had returned backstage. From the video clip from Maison Martin Margiela Autumn/Winter 2003 (Oscarfacts, 2012).

Another important type of revolution that has appeared in fashion shows since the 1980s is that fashion displays have become more akin to art installations;

from fashion shows to window displays, the industry has increasingly shown its affinities with installation and performance art (English, 2013, p. 3). The prevalence of the digital sphere enhanced the requirements of the new global audience of fashion shows. Increasing numbers of 'supershows' (Fury, 2017, p. 378) appeared in the late 1990s and Western designers became more globalised; through the expansion of the communication system, they and their works entered the public stage. During the decade of the 2000s, the spectacles staged by Galliano and McQueen grew more lavish (Bolton and McQueen, 2011, Hopkins, 2018). Lagerfeld and Chanel also staged shows on a larger scale than ever before. From 2006, the brand moved its main venue to the Grand Palais, which has enabled Chanel to construct anything as its epicentre. The following section introduces shows as evidence to demonstrate the growing need for brands to build up geographic images by utilising local heritage and architecture, installation spectacles and new technologies.

Compared with McQueen and Galliano, Chalayan is viewed as belonging to a younger generation of British radical designers (Quinn, 2002b, 2005; Zhang, and Di Benedetto al., 2010). He is another iconic British avant-garde designer who has brought technological innovations to garment design as well to shows. He has shown an obsession with technology since his childhood (Chalayan and Evans, 2005). His most notable contribution is arguably his investigation of technology's relationship with garments and shows.

Technological involvement in Chalayan's fashion shows arguably revolutionised fashion. He occasionally worked with programmers, technology artists (those who experiment with technology in artistic ways) and scientists in order to produce fashion shows filled with technological innovations (Quinn, 2002c, 2005). The iconic contribution Chalayan made to shaping

contemporary fashion show images was integrating new technologies with conceptual fashion. His experimentations with technology have mainly focused on remotely controlled fabrics, which he has displayed in his fashion shows several times. The first time was in his Spring/Summer 2007 collection, *One Hundred and Eleven*, where dresses were remotely controlled and opened up or shrank (see Figure 2.14).



Figure 2.14: The dress was remotely controlled electronically and opened like a flower. Chalayan Spring/Summer 2007 collection, *One Hundred and Eleven* (Quinn, 2005, p.121).

As mentioned above in section 2.4.2, Loscheck (2009) addresses the contemporary avant-garde in terms of innovation and specific designers' interpretations of the avant-garde via the utilisation of new technologies. He defines Chalayan as having the trait of 'lateral thinking in analogies and images' and discusses the contributions of the innovations brought about by Chalayan that incorporate technology into expressions of artistic fashion (Loscheck, 2009, p. 121). He has contributed to experimentation not only in his use of technology and the aforementioned show but also through the use of performance art, such as in his shows 'Before Minus Now' (Spring/Summer 2000 season), 'After Words' (Autumn/Winter 2000 season) and 'Ventriloquy' (Spring/Summer 2001 season), staged at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London, which proposed radical ideas about the function of clothing and, hence, about the fashion show as a whole.

In addition to his experimentation with new technologies and performances, garments and displays at fashion shows, he also actively participated in democratising fashion shows as a high-profile designer brand. Chalayan abandoned catwalk shows for his Spring/Summer 2008 collection, opting instead to show it via a film created with the fashion photographer Nick Knight, who is a pioneer in livestreaming fashion shows on the website he founded, SHOWstudio. This has been simultaneously seen in the mixture of fashion addressing underlying subjective expressions, revisiting vintage styles and embracing high technology. Loschek (2009, p. 121) predicts that the 21st century will be a period when fashion designers ignore rules and traditions, inventing a new future for themselves. Most contemporary artists who

emerged in the late 20th and early 21st century are working in a globally-influenced, culturally diverse and technologically-advancing world. Their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts and subjects that continue the challenging of boundaries that was already well underway in the 20th century (Hopkins, 2018, p.267). Furthermore, cyberspace holds the potential to be a landscape for designer collections that express new concepts and lead the fashion establishment in a fresh direction (Loschek,2009).

The 2000s saw a significant decline in the long-held dominance of the past century's 'designerscape' (English, 2013, p. 156) in Europe, signified with the death of McQueen, the retirement of Margiela, as well as the 'end-of-era retrospective shows featuring Sonia Rykiel, Vivienne Westwood, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo' (English, 2013, p. 157). The categorisation of styles has become elusive due to globalisation and it is widely argued that people are now living in an era of 'contemporary art' (Hopkins, 1999, p. 245). Bydler (2004) puts forward that contemporary art has benefitted from neoliberalism and globalised capital and that global diffusion of art works has become an issue that is constantly displayed in the art field. This is also seen in the fashion world; the identified and experimental aesthetic revolutions within fashion shows that are discussed in the following are not merely about challenging the norms and aesthetics but also a cross-cultural configuration and strategy to attract the target market and consumers. Merging the links between the high and low cultural spheres by fusing more diversified cultural interpretations, whether they are symbolic or geographic (Hopkins, 2018, p.230), has become a new feature of contemporary fashion shows.

In the globalised ecosystem, building a cross-cultural and recognisable identity for a brand has become more essential to fit into various markets. For Fendi's show produced at the Great Wall, its purpose was to attract attention

to the brand to create interest, like ‘attentional peaks’ between the seasonal fashion weeks (Stefania, 2017). Using the Great Wall as the venue was an example of emotional marketing as this kind of cultural, ethnic and symbolic architecture could satisfy the Chinese audience’s national sense of pride and identification, thereby building an emotional connection with the target market. The postmodern era is characterised by the significance of social orientations, so the importance of the emotional features of products or ‘exchange in contemporary exchange transforms into the object of emotional marketing and into the management of exchange to explain consumer behaviours and habits’ (Rytel, 2010, p. 33). With symbols becoming one of the basic objects that are exchanged in the postmodern era, the management of businesses is focused on satisfying not the functional or the rational, but rather the emotional needs of consumers (Rytel, 2010).

Apart from the touring of various emerging global fashion cities, fashion show revolutions have been shown by Lagerfeld in creating a number of installation art pieces that have acted as spectacles for Chanel’s shows after he became the creative director of the brand in 1984 (see examples in Figure 2.15). It is undeniable that Lagerfeld built up a strong image for Chanel among the mass consumers by adding recreational value to Chanel’s shows (Daskalaki, 2018). People have entered a postmodern era in which ‘the most significant feature is entertainment and the value of commodities is amplified’ (Bian, 2017).

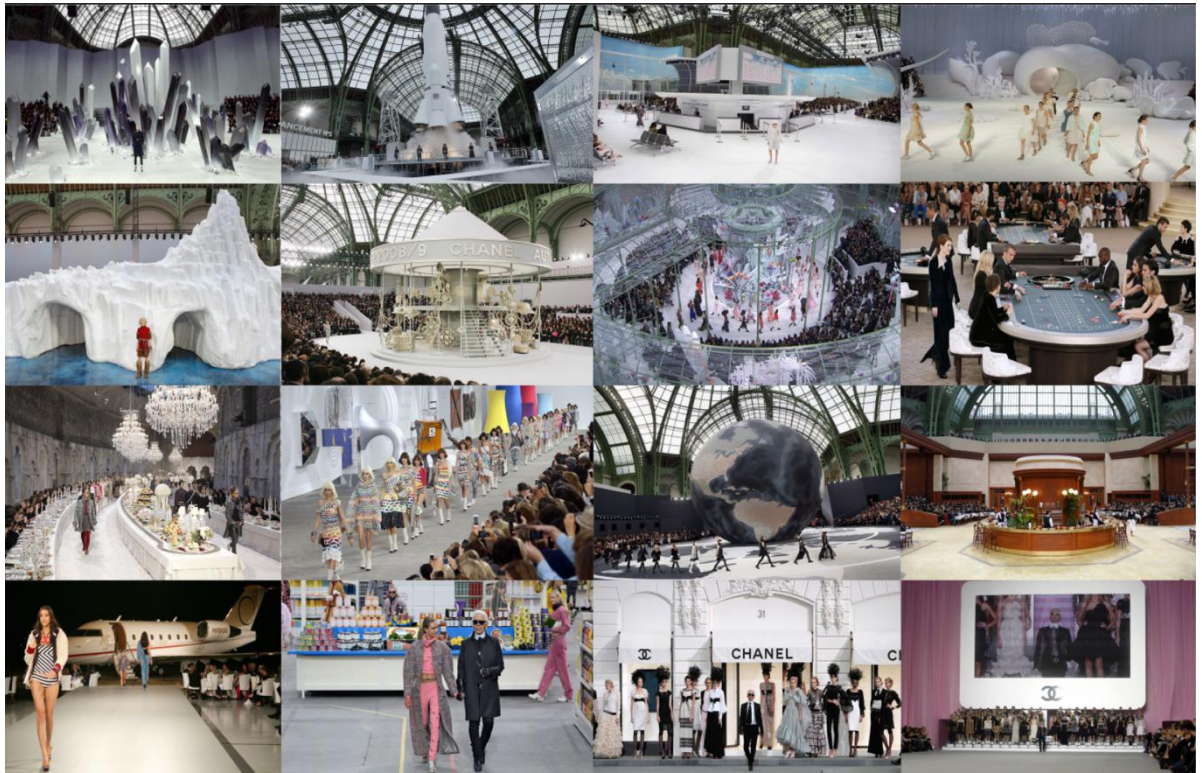


Figure 2.15: Examples of installations produced by Chanel (Mauriès, 2016, edited by Wang, 2018)

The images created by Chanel's shows reproduce the target consumers' daily lives and enable them to recognise their existence and the scenarios in society. In the postmodern culture, the phenomenon of illusion, as well as being recognised, is boldly practised in marketing when people's individuality is satisfied with the different meanings of products or services that are expressed through symbols. In the postmodern era, symbols that are separated from their original meanings are considered unique (Nooteboom 1992). The postmodern market is permeated with a simulated reality that is shaped by signs that serve to express personal identity. The term 'simulacra' (Saviolo, 2002, p.45) refers to the development of the contemporary exchange between the consumer and the companies offering products and services and their symbols, which prompt consumers to identify with the company and with the semantic meanings of its products or services. The

creation of surreal images offers companies the opportunity to satisfy individual consumers' expectations by creating 'the illusion (images affected by characteristics of psychosymbolic exchange or exchanged objects)' (Nooteboom, 1992, p. 55). Chanel's shows featuring installations are the mass consumers' most anticipated events in each season of PFW as they maintain the high-profile image of the brand's status, as well as feeding the public's expectations. As Hussein Chalayan's marketing director Daskalaki (2018) once noted:

'Basically...they need to maintain a level of connectivity and we, their consumers, don't necessarily have the means to be a part of Chanel. So, they have created an aspirational image for which they are well-known but they also need to maintain it and maintain the high-profile status of the brand. In order to do that, they need to have public events that reach out to the masses...so, this is the reason that they hold the shows, to feed the expectations of the consumer or the public, but not necessarily the clients. This is because it's part of maintaining an image of the lifestyle of the Chanel world'.

The innovation that Chanel has brought to fashion shows does not mainly lie at the aesthetic level. It contributes more to experimenting with recreation and entertainment in fashion. The splendid installations that reproduce real-life scenarios, incorporating the consumerist society, are aesthetically accessible to the mass audience, which has allowed Chanel, as a brand, to gain wider attention from the public, rather than merely from insiders (Daskalaki, 2018).

This semi-section provides a more explicit image of the identified revolutions in aesthetic that changed the global fashion cultural images, from the dominance of a 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) featuring at collectives of British and Belgium avant-garde designers since the beginning of 1990s, when fashion shows featured cultural, social and political analogies and implications, to the 2000s era when fashion started to be defined and

influenced by capital. This aesthetical innovation-friendly period in the 1990s cultivated and stimulated the emergence of a group of prestigious designers in the industry, including McQueen, Galliano, and Margiela, who explored revolutionary innovations that ultimately changed the image of contemporary fashion shows. The expressionism, deconstructivism and conceptualism exhibited by these archetypal designers have inspired numerous followers, including many emerging IBC designers, especially those graduating from CSM.

Different from the aesthetic changes that became apparent due to the occurrence of the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) from the 1980s to its proliferation in the late 1990s to its decline in the post-2000s, the changes in today's fashion industry are not merely the result of aesthetic revolutions. As discussed in the introductory chapter, led by China, it is an integrated change of economic power, as well as cultural and political discourse, with the decline of the traditional hierarchical cultural status and the reestablishment of a newly built one within the global system, rather than just in Western fashion capitals. It is not only the economic centre that has shifted from Western fashion to China but the cultural status and discourse power in fashion are gradually being reconstructed. There is a tendency for a new cultural system to be built on the basis of the old one and the old system to be reconstructed by the new system through new aesthetics in the fashion shows produced by IBC designers. Under these circumstances, it is appropriate to understand the following stories that elaborate on emerging IBC designers and their interrelationships with the broader fashion ecosystems through their stories of participating in international fashion weeks in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

2.5 Geographies and Globalisation of World Fashion Cities, Fashion Identities and Cultural Characteristics

2.5.1 Introduction

The main research themes in this project are innovations in fashion shows and the corresponding cultural production systems in global fashion capitals. This thesis only focuses on the cultural comparison of the legitimate European system of fashion capitals, which are Paris, Milan and London, with the emerging Eastern fashion capital of Shanghai through the lens of the fashion week systems and the emerging IBC designers' engagements with them. Therefore, it is crucial to review literature that discusses the cultural characteristics of four international fashion capitals, three that are conventional (Paris, Milan and London) and one that is emerging (Shanghai), as well as the fashion industry systems from a broader perspective.

This section will mainly review the existing literature covering relatively microcosmic views of the cultural characteristics of each global fashion city from a macro perspective of the geographies of the cities and their hierarchical systems.

2.5.2 The Formation of Urban Order of Dominant Fashion Capitals

When discussing global fashion cities, prior cultural studies primarily provide analysis from the following perspectives: the formation of global fashion cities, urban modernity and the geographies of the cities, the style and representations and their connections and influences on each other.

In general, existing studies of fashion cities mainly stress the historical evolution of the cities, the modernisations and cultural hierarchies related to the geographies of fashion culture in which consumption is embedded, and the space and value. However, few studies mention the functions of fashion weeks in formalising the cities as fashion capitals from the perspective of cultural characteristics. Scott (2002, cited by Gilbert, 2006, p. 27) has introduced the standard of recognition for 'world fashion center' status and lists all of the prerequisite characteristics of fashion cities.⁴ One of these characteristics is having 'a new infrastructure of regionally-based but internationally-recognized publicity and promotional vehicles', which includes the development of fashion media, major fashion shows and other fashion events (Gilbert, p. 27). Gilbert (2006) utilises this standard to demonstrate the nexus between the fashion world and cultural, social and economic disciplines, demonstrating the complexity of fashion in fusing together material and symbolic objects. The standard was also commented on Agins (1999) and Rantisi (2004), who argue that the standard of recognition for new global fashion cities is shifting away from having advanced manufacturing and towards the presence of enterprises related to the global branding industry.

Another critical topic that has been discussed in relation to the geographies of fashion cities pertains to the opening of flagship stores in terms of aestheticising images and commoditising styles. Architecture and fashion have converged to aestheticise urban spaces via dazzling displays, staged performances, impressive spectacles and dramatic city skylines. This topic closely relates to the discussion of fashion shows that are seen globally.

⁴ • 'A flexible manufacturing basis.
 • A core cluster of specialist and skill-intensive contractors capable of high-quality work with short turnaround times.
 • A dense groundwork of fashion training and research institutes in the city.
 • A new infrastructure of regionally-based but internationally-recognised publicity and promotional vehicles, including fashion media, major fashion shows and other fashion events.
 • An evolving fashion and design tradition with strong place-specific elements.
 • Formal and informal connections between the fashion industry and other industries of cultural products within the region.' (Scott, 2002, cited by Gilbert, 2006, p. 27)

Crewe (2017, p. 4) elaborates on the studies of the geographies of fashion cities from a global view on 'spaces', pointing out that fashion is conceptualised as a 'performative space' and is central to the creation of identity and a sense of self through its aestheticisation of urban spaces. In this context, she further discusses the mutuality between fashion and cities, clothing and socio-political statements. Crewe (2017) discusses the function of luxury fashion flagship stores in shaping a fashion city, which is a cultural phenomenon in fashion capitals that is enhanced by architectural design styles. Quinn (2003, p. 29) explores the cultural functions of architecture such as flagship stores in fashion's aesthetical reshaping of the urban space, which is mainly realised through fashion signs, symbols and logos.

Prior research underlines the importance of studying fashion cities within the field of modern cities as they have become 'a central focus of a new emphasis on cultural economies and creative industries of cities' (Gilbert, 2006, p. 7). However, the research focus varies among the scholars who have discussed this issue. For instance, Friedmann (1986, p. 69) emphasises the fact that increasing economic globalisation has shifted the original functions of global capitals from political centres to cultural states. Based on this, he raises the concept of 'primary core cities' according to a structured hierarchy that consists of London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Tokyo. Taylor (2004, p. 156) insists that studies on global cities should address not just this hierarchy but should also analyse 'the nature of connections between cities, and the institutions and processes that work to include, exclude and position cities in the hierarchy'.

In addition to summarising the macro-level research on the evolution, modernity, formation and hierarchies of different global fashion cities, a micro-level analysis of the interactions between cultural characteristics,

design identities and their shaping within a specific fashion city is also required.

2.5.3 Cultural Characteristics and Design Identities of European and Chinese Fashion Capitals

The cultural characteristics and design identities of each international fashion week can be used as an analytical basis for researching the emerging IBC designer brands and their engagement with these fashion weeks and their host fashion cities. Accordingly, the literature on cultural and fashion design identities and their shaping of cultural characteristics in various fashion systems and institutional ideologies of global fashion cities should also be reviewed to establish its scope and depth. However, due to the limited number of studies on this issue, specifically those featuring Shanghai as an emerging fashion city, the scope of the review is restricted to studies mentioning fashion culture and the specific cultural characteristics, as well as other recognised fashion cities in China, such Hong Kong, under the topic of global fashion cities.

In general, the previous studies on design identities include the following topics: the relationships between fashion design and identities; fashion identities in terms of social, cultural and political agendas; and the utilisation of brand identities and marketing discourse. Although studies on shaping specific fashion cities discuss design identities as an individual topic and expand it within the related social and business studies, few academics have been able to draw upon any systematic research into the nexus between cultural characteristics, design identities and institutional or systematic culture.

Two branches of study, cultural and business studies, can be found to investigate how design identities shape the design and cultural characteristics of global fashion cities. In cultural studies, this topic is usually considered alongside social and cultural identities. For instance, Crane (2012) demonstrates that specific categories of design identities, such as garments, tend to play a major role in constructing social identities, thus shaping the cultural characteristics of a fashion city. Other scholars focus on the business utilities of design identity by arguing that it is embedded within local brands' images, from a combined cultural-commercial perspective. The cities that are often mentioned are Paris, London, New York and Hong Kong (Ling, 2010).

Based on the above review on fashion cities and design identities, research on identifying cultural characteristics and fashion design identities, as well as their formation, remains limited and discursive. Few scholars have provided perspectives on the notable value of design identity from a specific city or national perspective under the mixed cultural context of Western and Asian cities although there has been a lot writing on interconnections between culture and fashion identities in the Western countries (Davis, 1994; Bugg, 2010; Evans, 2013b). Ling (2010) was the pioneer in correlating Western fashion culture with one of Asian city, Hong Kong. She has conducted ethnographic research on the design identities of Hong Kong fashion through a case study of a 'homegrown brand who had captured a commercially viable home market with a distinctively Hong Kong style' (Ling, 2010, p.106). She presents an empirical example to investigate the relationships between design identities and fashion cities' cultural characteristics by pointing out the difficulties in Hong Kong finding its local fashion design identity under a composite of Western and Oriental cultural contexts. This ethnographic research has paved the way for the analysis of subsequent valuable research on how Asian fashion cities could be globally recognised by cultivating their

own style as this is more difficult to achieve in Asian cities than in Western cities.

The three specific fashion cities that are researched in terms of the cultural-organisational systems of their fashion weeks and the interaction between the cities' cultural characteristics and their fashion weeks are Paris, London and Shanghai. The prior research has a diverse range of focuses but mostly tends to discuss the design identities and cultural characteristics of each specific city.

As a legitimate European global fashion city, London exhibits design characteristics that are mostly discussed in terms of commerce, education and the historical processes behind the formation of its specific radical style (Ferne et al, 1997; Moore et al., 2000; McRobbie, 2003; Crewe, 2017). The formation processes that have moulded London as a global fashion city largely originated from its prestigious in fashion education; a great number of innovative world-renowned designers have graduated in the city (McRobbie, 2003). McRobbie (2003, pp.25-46) researches the cultural production of British graduate designers 'remodeling enterprise culture' and their reconciling of the conflict between fashion as an art form and the requirements of a 'ruthlessly' commercial industry in their own careers through a series of field studies.

In order to appreciate cultural context as a foundation for discussing the formation of British design identities, an educational explanation is provided (McRobbie, 2003) as a way of understanding this topic. British design identity and fashion production. This research provides a basis for further investigation into the educational and commercial realities encountered by designers educated in Britain, which is a prerequisite for the further discussion and analysis in this thesis of the enterprises of international-based,

British-educated Chinese designers and the cultural conflicts in their participation at international fashion weeks.

As Tokyo was the first globally-recognised fashion city in Asia (Jansson and Power, 2010), research related to Japanese fashion production and cultural prosperity is useful when conducting the further cultural analysis of Chinese fashion designers within an international cultural context. Scholars suggest that Paris has had a profound influence on the modern Japanese design revolution since the 1980s (Kawamura, 2004). Kondo's (1992) research set the Japanese fashion identity within the Western fashion system in the 1990s. Although it seems beneficial to base research into other Asian cities on Tokyo given the similarities in their wider cultures, Japanese fashion culture is, to a considerable extent, influenced by the Parisian design system, which makes the research into Tokyo for this thesis not as useful as first supposed. Fashion cities formed in China tend to be 'self-legitimated', rather than incorporating existing cultural identities (Zhao, 2008, p. 156; Zhao, 2013, p. 212).

China's formation of its fashion capitals started with Hong Kong being established as the pioneer in gaining world recognition as a fashion capital. As aforementioned, Ling (2010) places emphasis on the interrelationship between domestic fashion identity and the style of the general materialisation of local fashion, as well as its role in upgrading cities' global recognition as fashion capitals. Studies covering the geographies of fashion cities explore both macro and micro perspectives and their functions in shaping a global fashion city, drawing on topics such as historical modernisation, cultural production, globalisation, the formation of style and aesthetics, specific design identities and cultural characteristics. In general, the system of studies in this field has gradually expanded but gaps still exist, such as research on the interactions between topics, covering both the macro and micro levels, which will be elaborated on when discussing the innovations that exist in today's

fashion shows in cross-cultural contexts. Under these circumstances, the previous research can be considered the first step towards a more profound understanding of fashion shows in the culture of various fashion weeks.

2.6. Designer Brands, Independent Designers and Diaspora

In addition to fashion shows, international-based independent designers are another core facet of this project as their behaviours are interconnected with the research topic. 'Independent designer', as an emerging term, has been used in many industry articles and reports (Zhu, 2015; Liu, 2017) for years, but few academic papers have delved into and interpret its definition. With the increasing hybridity of ethnic influences among fashion designers within a global context, their cultural identities are influencing their design identities, which has accelerated the discussion of diaspora design under a highly hybridised and globalised culture.

Western legitimacy in fashion discourse (Bruzzi and Gibson, 2013; English, 2013) has resulted in the designers and cultures from the rest of the world becoming minorities whose suitability in the Western fashion system needs to be emphasised with the discussion of diaspora designers. In existing fashion studies, diaspora as an anthropological term (Hansen, 2004) is often incorporated into the research topics of style (Tulloch, 2010), hybridity and identity (Lewis, 2003; Bhachu, 2005; Kaiser and McCullough, 2010; Ing, 2013; Hall, 2014), as well as commodity chains (Raghuram, 2004), alongside the cultural complexity of hybridity in Western and global design and culture.

Although, in this research, the subject designers cannot be rigorously identified as diaspora because most of them are not immigrants to the UK as they only received their higher education (undergraduate or postgraduate

degrees) in the UK and initially established their autonomous brands in the UK, they run their brands internationally and are not restricted to one specific region. The term 'diaspora' in design research is often incorporated in reflections on ethnic cultural identity, so to gather deep insight into the potential innovations brought forward by new aesthetics, it is reasonable to discuss these designers' relationships with their ethnic identities and how they run their businesses from a diaspora perspective.

Similar research discussing diaspora design identity incorporating UK fashion design and culture has appeared in Bhachu's study (2005), with the 'Punjabi suit' (a type of Asian garment) being used as a medium to explore new aesthetics brought about by innovative designs based on characteristically improvisational migrant cultural codes. Meanwhile, studies on China's fashion industry and Chinese fashion designers have begun to increase in recent decades, although most studies focus on brands' global development and Brands' styles shaping the Chinese fashion aesthetic (Moore et al., 2000; Ferrero-Regis et al., 2012; Zhu, 2015). Scholars find that the Chinese fashion market is varied due to the emergence of different designer brands, from couture to independent.

Most of the research discussing designers' work and survival as small independent businesses and entrepreneurs has been undertaken regionally and thematically. Although seen in a limited quantity, scholars (Creigh-Tyte, 2005; Malem, 2008) have still pointed out the imperativeness of undertaking further research on this topic within an international cultural context as fashion innovation and entrepreneurship, with its related issues, can be challenging for creative people. As Malem (2008, p. 401) states:

'Fashion innovation and creativity can be described as a process that reflects contemporary cultural phenomena, has a "seasonal rhythm", and engages with business enterprise. The process from

artistic endeavor to a business enterprise can be thought of as a scale where some designers engage higher up the scale and more fully with business enterprise, and the position on the scale may be significant in terms of business survival’.

The increasing diversification and rapid growth of the UK creative industry (Florida, 2004, p. 28) have made it essential to focus more academic attention on the particularity of artistic people who have set up their own creative brands. Artists’ autonomy, as reviewed in section 2.3 when discussing cultural productions and creative labour, shows the core ideology of designers who have demonstrated strong artistic traits when setting up their autonomous or independent brands. However, the existing literature still fails to offer a rigorous definition of independent designer labels, although Tsui (2009, p. 90) gives a rough definition by generalising the industry consensus:

‘Designers who design for their own brand have more autonomy. Investors can be designers themselves or co-founders. These brands tend to be operated in studios and the scale of the entire enterprise tends to be small or micro. The business model could be retail, wholesale, or agency, and they can also provide design services for other enterprises within or outside the fashion industry’ (2009, p.90).

This definition is valid as emerging designer brands tend to be set up on a small scale and many of them that are established and based outside of their home country tend to be more personalised in design pursuit. However, the definition has limitations in describing an accurate characterisation of independent designer brands. Choi’s study (2003) has made the identification or categorisation of designers who have set up their own brands clearer based on their own pursuits in terms of art and business. The identifications of ‘artisan designers’ and ‘business designers’ (Choi, 2001, p. 25) are put forward within the Australian fashion sector, describing the diversified business abilities of all designers who demonstrate strong artisan and artistic traits. Rambourg’s research (2014) improves on this on a commercial level,

creating a brand pyramid based on each brand's accessibility and the unit price of each product (see Figure 2.16). In his brand classification, designer brands, including eyewear brands, accessory brands and apparel brands, can be seen as both 'affordable luxury' and 'accessible core' brands (Rambourg, 2014, p. 10).

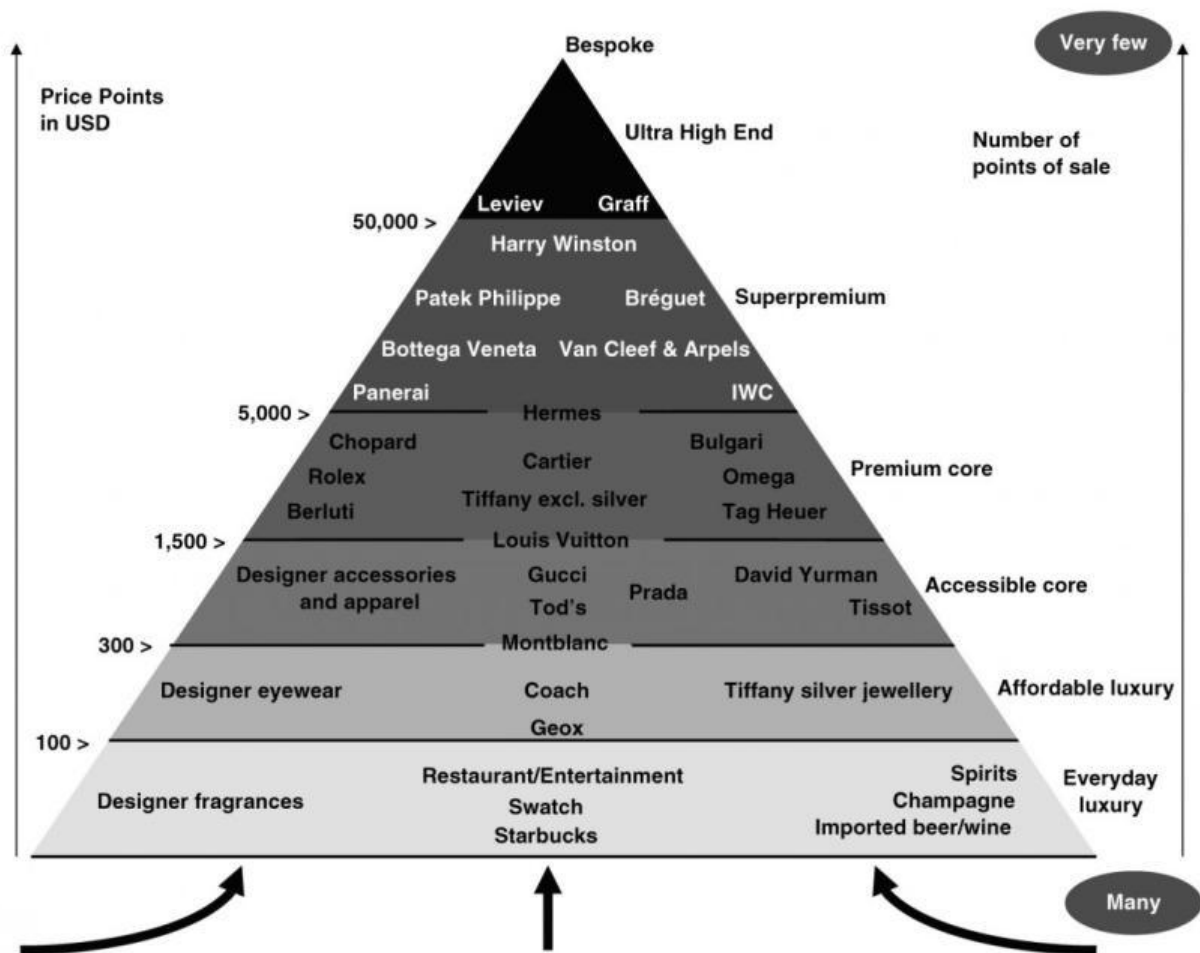


Figure 2.16: A brand pyramid illustrating how major brands range in accessibility from everyday luxuries like Starbucks to ultra-high-end luxury like Graff Diamonds (Rambourg, 2014, p. 10)

Williams' study (2015, pp. 5-11), which is also important for this research, has provided the academic identification of Chinese designers with more evidence as she offers a comprehensive picture of independent Chinese designers, including their different styles and levels and their inclusion in the Western

world of fashion. Her research and interviews with 40 Chinese fashion designers reflect, to some extent, a comprehensive status of the Chinese fashion industry, which is not only about the avant-garde but also about emerging brands 'operating in the mainstream who repeatedly internalize their style in an effort to foster a Chinese aesthetic' (Williams, 2015, pp. 5-11).

Few scholars explored this area thoroughly and most of them tended to analyze independent designer as an independent micro-retailing business (Fernie et al., 1998; Moore et al., 2000; Au et al., 2000; Ferrero-Regis, 2012; Lindgren, 2013; Leslie, 2014). Zhu (2015, p. 108) generalises the development status of independent Chinese designer brands, which are endeavouring to alter the global image of 'made in China' to 'designed in China'. The business model of these independent designer brands offers a picture of the Chinese fashion market from a general perspective (see Figure 2.17). However, these studies fail to provide a deep discussion from a cultural research perspective, which could indicate the essential identification of 'independent' as an academic term in relation to 'autonomy' within the discourse of designers' struggles between artistic pursuits and commercial operations. This study fills this gap in the existing theory and provides academic and cultural interpretations of the ubiquitously used term 'independent designers' by incorporating the classification of emerging IBC designers based on the identification of art autonomy within the global fashion ecosystem.

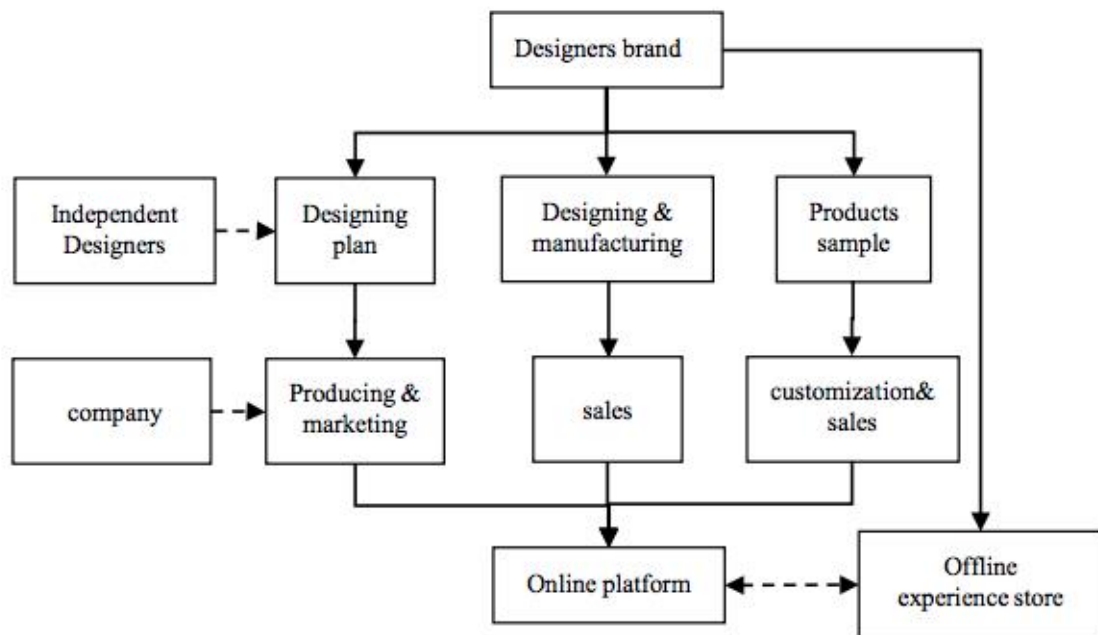


Figure 2.17: Business model of the brand managing company of an independent designer (Zhu, 2015, p. 108)

As introduced in chapter 1, Tsui's identification (2009, p. 55) of 'three generations' that can be found among Chinese fashion designers provides a specific characterisation and is utilised as one of the analysis bases and contextual frameworks when selecting the subject designers, as well as a cultural and characteristic context when discussing their cultural production behaviours. Although her research has limitations, such as only fully exploring the first two generations of designers and covering a limited number of designers from the third generation, it is still reasonable to apply her categorisation for the following reasons.

Firstly, according to her classification, the third generation of designers can also be treated as millennials, which has been widely recognised and discussed within academic fields in fashion business studies (Williams, 2016; Helal et.al., 2018) varying from consumer behaviours to entrepreneurship as the time categorisation for millennials aligns with Tsui's time categorisation of

the third generation of designer overlap mostly from the time categorisations. Tsui's identification (2009) of the third generation incorporates China's cultural characteristics and one-child policy when classifying Chinese designers, indicating its affiliations with cultural perspectives, rather than business perspectives. This research is elaborated on under the discourse of start-up and emerging designer brands built by designers born after 1985, which coincides with the definition of millennials, as well as Tsui's classification (2009). The application of Tsui's categorisation (2009) is due to this study's cultural affiliations, rather than its business orientation.

Secondly, Tsui (2009, p. 121) points out that the third generation of Chinese designers, operating in the 21st century, are considered to be 'diversified and creative' yet 'copy' Western design techniques. This, to some extent, demonstrates that Chinese fashion has been deeply affected by the increasingly globalised Western fashion culture and system for at least a decade. New situations should become apparent as the current cultural status of Chinese designers is witnessing a significant change, as elaborated on in Chapter 1.

To conclude, this chapter first emphasises and revisits the evolution of fashion shows from the modern period to the contemporary period in terms of the anatomy of show elements and the types of fashion shows (*prêt-à-porter* and *couture*), as well as their corresponding formations of *couture* culture and the proliferation of international ready-to-wear industries. It also discusses the establishment of the international fashion week system and the related globalised construction of the fashion cultural system. The literature in this section emphasises the formation of the global fashion system from macro and cultural perspectives, which has been constructed through dominant fashion capitals, as well as their corresponding fashion weeks. Originating from Paris *couture* culture, fashion shows initially featured theatricality as a

show category and a salon selling technique that served the aristocracy only. The modern scene of fashion shows since 1850s was intensely intertwined with theatre culture. Historians have comprehensively explored the modern proliferation of fashion shows and their interconnections with the formation of the globalised fashion industry, as well as with the social and cultural contexts, such as World War II's stimulation of the international ready-to-wear industries, which triggered the emergence of the culturally-recognised first international fashion week in New York since 1943. The maturation of the European fashion system has taken place over a hundred years and the evolution of fashion shows and the corresponding cultural system have been constructed on the basis of the maturation of the industry itself.

China started participating in fashion capital competitions in the 1980s and started to be taken seriously due to the establishment of CFW in 1997 before the industry was fully constructed. With its hosting of CFW in 1997, Beijing became the first city in China to have a fashion week targeting an international audience, SHFW was the next, starting in 2003, which few existing sources have investigated. Due to the significant changes to SHFW, one of the theoretical contributions of this thesis is to fill this gap in the literature, exploring the cultural system of an emerging fashion week and elaborating on both its embeddedness within the global system and its independent cultural characteristics.

As interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research, creative labour and cultural production in the creative and cultural industry as the core theoretical basis of this study are emphasised in section 2.3. This section points out the theoretical applications of creative labour in cultural productions and Bourdieu's theories on cultural production and cultural capital are utilised as one of the core analytical tools, which are rarely used in the production practices of fashion shows.

Section 2.4 reviews innovation theories as another core theoretical basis of this research and finds that their prior applications in fashion studies mainly investigate garments and their design techniques, industry management, and businesses and operational modes, and are mostly seen from a marketing perspective instead of a cultural perspective. Furthermore, This section provides an explicit image of the identified revolutions in aesthetics that have changed the cultural images of global fashion from the dominance of a 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156). This era featured art collectives of European avant-garde designers recognised by the legitimate 'Big Four' fashion weeks that proliferated in the late 1970s and 1980s when fashion shows featured cultural, social and political analogies and implications and declined in the 2000s when fashion started to be defined and influenced by capital. The existing literature proves that fashion shows, as the key medium for international fashion communication from the perspectives of both culture and business, play a central role in the networking of all participants in the industry, as well as in the cultural system. The changing of the scene, from the modern period to the contemporary period, is systematically discussed and reviewed alongside scholars' existing cultural identifications of the aesthetic revolutions brought about by the prior 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) discussed in section 2.4.3. This section provides contextualised images for the further discussions of IBC designers as the followers of the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156) and their endeavours in creating their own era of Chinese designers.

Section 2.5 finds that few sources cover the topic of fashion images and fashion shows alongside the innovations that are discussed in cultural studies. The research on the geographies of fashion mainly focuses on the shaping of design identity and the formation of style in certain fashion capitals. Few

scholars have used fashion weeks and designers as an entry point to elaborate on the cultural images of fashion capitals from a global perspective.

Section 2.6 reviews the literature on designer brands, diaspora and the identification of independent designers and finds that studies on designer brands mostly focus on the techniques or commercial perspectives of building and running a brand, instead of shaping a cultural image. The theoretical identification of independent designers, although used ubiquitously in the industry among designers for years, still lacks a rigorous cultural interpretation and definition, which is provided in the concluding chapter after the emerging IBC designers' show production practices that bring new aesthetics to design innovation in the globalised field of fashion are analysed. Before that, it is important to emphasise the specific methodological rationales and approaches used in the following chapter to provide a thorough illustration of how the empirical research of this study is designed and conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research and Ethnography: Context, Methods, Data Design and Approach

This research can be divided into three chronological phases. Considering the research topic and the rationale of the work related to achieving the research purpose, qualitative research methodologies (Davies and Dodd, 2002; Neuman, 2002; Patton, 2005) are used. More specifically, this is an ethnographic cultural study in which diverse categories of production activities in the field of creative labour operated by IBC designers within the global fashion ecosystem are traced and observed. Before expanding on each explicit method, the reasons that ethnography is applied rather than merely using qualitative research as the main research method should be clarified.

The purpose of this research is to identify how the cultural image of fashion shows is re-shaped by the emerging generation of IBC designers and how it develops and dynamically engages with the broader fashion ecosystem. This is aligned with the nature of qualitative research in terms of answering questions about the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of a phenomenon, rather than 'how many' or 'how much'. With the aim of understanding the experiences and attitudes of a specific social group or a specific experience in a focused industry or community (Patton, 1990, p. 35), a qualitative research method, such as case studies, is applied to this study. However, to reveal how global fashion shows are influenced by the systematic production of creative labour, an immersive or participant observation of the 'people, places and institutions' (Coleman and Simpson, 1998, p. 2) in the fashion industry is needed. Furthermore, 'rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the

collection of detailed observations and interviews' (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 1020) within the global fashion ecosystem should be introduced to test the existence of new aesthetics and how they are created by the new generation of IBC designers through their production activities. Scholars have demonstrated that ethnographic research shares some traits with qualitative research but ethnographers more specifically seek an understanding of what the participants do to create the culture in which they live and how the culture develops over time as 'the task of ethnographers is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 120). Therefore, to identify how a potential systematic change is accumulated within a certain system, the fashion ecosystem in this case, over years, it is reasonable to use ethnography as the main research method to investigate a detailed phenomenon, incorporating qualitative methods that can provide a macro analysis of the fashion ecosystem as a whole.

Another research method that is also applied to this study that needs to be explained is multi-sited ethnography, which is the core foundation and the theoretical orientation that has guided this research in deciding each specific method to use to investigate different fashion weeks, helping to investigate various cultural characteristics through different types of data during the ethnographic study. As Marcus (1995, pp. 95-96) argues, a study that is contextualised by 'macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut the "local" and the "global", the "lifeworld" and the "system"', should be complemented by multi-site ethnography as traditional single-site ethnography lacks subalterns in the fieldwork, which restricts the researcher in understanding the 'circulation of cultural meanings' and identities in 'diffuse time-space'.

As for the explicit implementation plan, the broader global fashion ecosystem is investigated through the fashion week systems associated with these designers' show productions and presentations. The fashion weeks that are investigated, namely Paris, London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks, are selected based on the three designers' participatory experiences between January 2017 and October 2018. Therefore, this qualitative research is undertaken within a multi-cultural context with the simultaneous application of multi-sited ethnography and visual ethnography, which is elaborated on more specifically as a research method later in this section. The methods and tools that are utilised to design and implement this research are participant and covert observation, formal and informal interviews, and case studies. On most occasions, producing a show usually takes up to six months yet the presentation varies from ten minutes to two hours. As all of the shows investigated in this research were staged during prominent fashion weeks, they followed rigorously structured schedules (see Table 3.1). The ethnographic research lasted for 18 discontinuous months within two years from September 2016 to September 2018, with the productions and presentations in three seasons being covered, which were the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at PFW and SHFW, as well as the Spring/Summer 2018 season and the Spring/Summer 2019 season at LFW. The corresponding designers and specific shows that are examined are elaborated on in the data locating section 3.2.

January	London Fashion Week (men's)
	Pitti Uomo (Florence, menswear collections)
	Milan Fashion Week (menswear)
	Haute Couture (Paris)
February/March	New York Fashion Week (men's)

	New York Fashion Week
	London Fashion Week
	Milan Fashion Week
	Paris Fashion Week
	Shanghai Fashion Week
June	London Fashion Week (men's)
	Pitti Uomo (Florence, menswear collections)
	Milan Fashion Week (menswear)
	Paris Fashion Week (men's)
July	Haute Couture (Paris)
	New York Fashion Week (men's)
September/October	New York Fashion Week
	London Fashion Week
	Milan Fashion Week
	Paris Fashion Week
	Shanghai Fashion Week

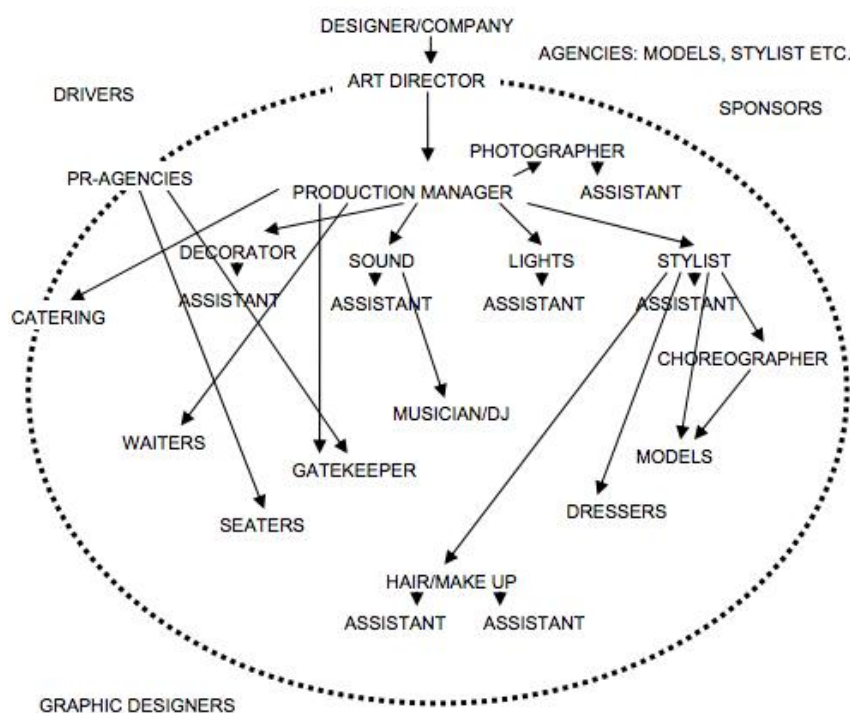
Table 3.1: The most prominent fashion weeks and schedules

This chapter is expanded to include the narrative content of the research design, how the methods are organised and the approaching and collecting procedures for the data, as well as the analytical processes and comprehensive and detailed data structures that are used in the following core chapters.

3.1.1 Organisation of Research Methods, Data Design and Research Approach

Before elaborating on each explicit method and the corresponding data design and approach, mapping out production practices participants in a fashion show is necessary as production activities are the entry point of this

research and all of the data is collected from or around these participants. This activity map is created based on the prior research of fashion shows (Skov et al., 2009; Stark, 2018), assembled using the findings from a pilot study that was undertaken for this research for the May 2015 Graduation Fashion Week (hereafter referred to as GFW) and the September 2015 London Fashion Weekend (hereafter referred to as LFWK) (Wang, 2015).



Through the pilot study undertaken at GFW and the Spring/Summer 2016 LFWK through a structured interview⁵ with 20 participant designers at GFW and ten participant designers at LFWK, it can be found from the collected data that to successfully construct a professional fashion show, personnel from production teams, PR and consulting companies, rehearsal teams and design teams, as well as press and diffusion teams are needed for the show preparation work (see Figure 3.2).

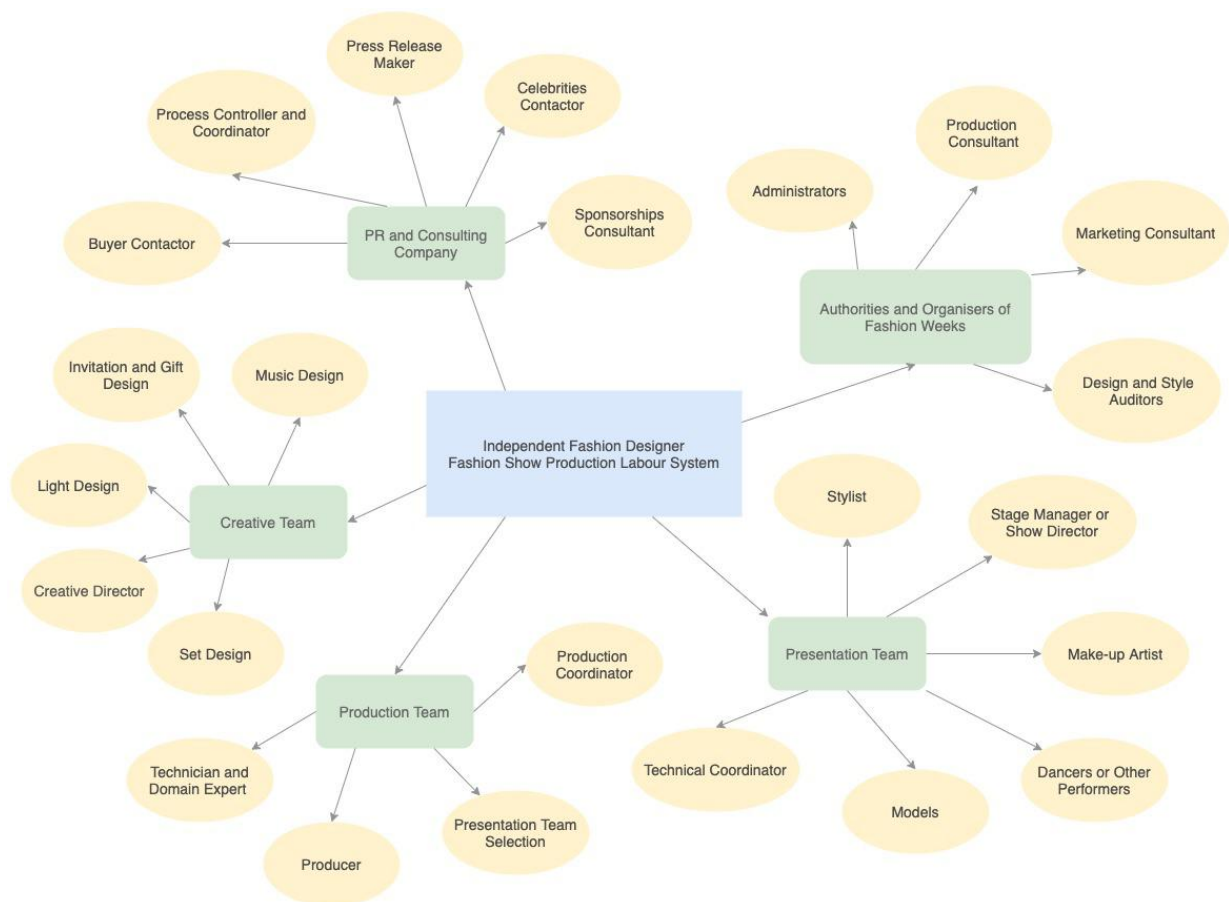


Figure 3.2: Fashion show professionals in designers' show production processes (Wang, 2018)

These illustrated personnel roles are the data collection model to which all methods are applied. Above all, case studies should be applied and explicit

⁵ The question asked in the structured interview was: Could you please explicitly describe what personnel were involved in your show preparation activities for this event? Please elaborate on them all.

research subjects should be located to provide a systematic structural basis for the data collection.

- **Case Studies and Selecting the Subjects**

Case studies are useful, descriptive methodological tools in qualitative and ethnographic research, especially when they are utilised to investigate a phenomenon related to 'individuals, a group of participants, an individual event, or a group as a whole' (Yin, 2013, p. 32). Researchers mainly collect data about participants through methods such as 'observations, interviews, the investigation of protocols, tests, examinations of records and collections of writing samples' (Yin, 2013, p. 35). Researchers (Stake, 1978; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013) have revealed the importance of case studies as a qualitative method in social and cultural research, as well as their high necessity in ethnographic research, especially when developing an in-depth appreciation of 'a certain issue, event or phenomenon of interest in its natural, real-life context' (Stake, 1978, p. 6). According to Soy (1997, p. 1), case study research 'excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research'. This means that it offers the detailed contextual analysis of certain events, revealing the complex conditions and relationships between different participants and institutions, which is appropriate in applying to the study of designers and their complex interconnections with the global fashion ecosystem through fashion shows and fashion weeks as global fashion events. To gain a thorough understanding of today's rapidly changing global fashion ecosystem through its microcosm, the fashion week, as well as IBC designers' efforts in re-shaping innovation, inspired by their role models, especially in different cultural contexts, the multi-sited ethnographic case studies of legitimate fashion cities in Europe, Paris and London, and the

noticeable emerging Asian fashion city of Shanghai, are imperative. Another reason that case studies are used is that producing a fashion show itself is a case project that has its own operational circle, the same as fashion weeks, so the application of case studies is aligned with the operating principles of fashion shows and fashion weeks.

Some critics of case studies as a research method mainly argue that the limited study of a small number of cases is not capable of offering a basis for establishing reliability or the 'generality of findings' (Merriam, 1998, pp. 56-78). Other critics feel that this method often directly leads to biases in the findings. They emphasise that a case study is useful only as an 'exploratory tool' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). Even so, many researchers still continue to use this research method successfully in 'carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems' (Merriam, 1988; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Irrespective of the merits and criticisms of case studies, many reports on case studies conducted in various disciplines are widely available in the existing literature (Merriam, 1988, p. 110). If the process of designers exploring new aesthetics is viewed as an experimental activity that contains potential struggles between the arts and commerce (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40) in the real and complex fashion ecosystem, then the merits of using case studies as a structural research method outweigh its drawbacks in terms of reliability. This is discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

Meanwhile, this method provides the foundation for the application of concepts and the extension of other research methods (Stake, 1978; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013). This could pave the way for the following discussions on using observations, interviews, visual ethnography and photo-documentation as other explicit methods for collecting data related to the detailed sub-questions in this research.

As for the explicit data approaches, one issue that should be noted is that the professional fashion industry is difficult for outsiders to access, even for fashion researchers. A number of scholars' research experiences have proved that it is difficult to gain access to and be a participant in the industry; on most occasions, the observation has to be overt (Entwistle, 2006; Wu, 2007; Tsui, 2009). This research not only needs to collect data on the designers' activities and perceptions of cross-cultural innovative show productions but also on the dynamic fashion ecosystem. For this reason, only accessing fashion shows as an audience member, like Wu (2006) did in his research through his social connections, and collecting the visual data of a fashion show would not support the analysis of this research. Therefore, in order to gain access to the subjects and acquire their consent to participate in ethnographic case studies, it would be more efficient to find a way to enter the industry as a participant. However, I still started using the traditional method of trying to gain access and approaching the subject designers officially because I did not have social connections in the fashion industry in the UK at the beginning of this research.

This project includes three designers as case subjects to investigate their fashion show productions in the corresponding international fashion weeks, with the fashion weeks themselves functioning as another three case studies. Chinese diaspora designers are the core theme of this thesis and the three designers were first located and then their participatory experiences from 2016 to 2018 were followed, with the fashion weeks they attended being used as case studies. The implementation process of the case study method is specified in the following paragraphs.

- **Selection Criteria of Designers as Case Studies and Approaching the UK Fashion Industry**

in order to understand the situation that emerging Chinese designers are experiencing when attending global fashion weeks, as well as the broader fashion system, finding and locating these emerging designers was the first step. To gain access to the UK fashion industry, as well as the social circles of Chinese diaspora designers, an application was made for a six-month internship after the first round of failures in approaching the appropriate designers as case subjects.

The criteria for selecting the designers as case subjects can be explained as follows. Firstly, as mentioned above in the introductory chapter, it is reasonable to separate Chinese designers into three generations chronologically, as presented by Tsui (2009). This project only explores the third-generation designers or those born in the 1980s during the one-child policy that are 'commonly considered the hope of Chinese fashion designers'.

Secondly, the process of locating the designers started with emerging Chinese diaspora designers who have a studio base and an educational background in London. For the reason that this project started by locating Chinese designers in London, this is because as introduced in Chapter 1, approximately 48% of Chinese designers have international education backgrounds, with 17%, taking up the highest proportion of Chinese designers graduating from Central Saint Martin (Liu, 2017). This phenomenon manifested importance of London in cultivating the emerging designers. In particular, the elder generation of radical designers who graduated from CSM (like McQueen, Galliano, Margiela and Chalayan), which is, indisputably, one of the world's top fashion colleges that has mentored many prestigious designers specialising in producing innovation. London is seen as the world's incubator for fashion innovation. Therefore, in order to locate the designers that met the requirements of the subjects of this study, which are emerging

Chinese designers with the enthusiasm to challenge the existing image of fashion innovation and the willingness to experiment with new mediums, concepts and methods in showing their collections, it was efficient to first search for the targeted Chinese designers among CSM graduates.

Thirdly, the case subject designers needed to be those who had established their autonomous brands within the previous ten years and who had staged unconventional fashion shows in at least one of the 'Big Four' fashion weeks. In identifying the emerging UK-based Chinese designer brands, the year the designers were born was not a vital standard. Defining 'emerging' brands was difficult as there is no rigorous academic definition of 'emerging' fashion brands. Amade (2019) has mentioned that in the field of fashion, 'emerging' means 'newly created or noticed and growing in strength or popularity: becoming widely known or established' or 'being born, blooming, or they're reaching an adult or advanced state'. The critical decisive criteria were that they were developing and growing. Tsui (2009) has discussed how long it takes for a designer brand to mature, offering the opinion that a brand should be examined by the market for at least ten years to prove its commercial maturity, as well as the brand's stability of its identity. As 'emerging' means 'developing or growing', which suggests an unstable status, Tsui's (2009, p.105) opinion could be used as the first standard to narrow down the selection pool to those who had established brands within the previous ten years. Furthermore, 'becoming widely known or established' in this research could be represented by the production of shows at recognised international fashion weeks, such as LFW, MLFW, PFW and NYFW. Locating these designers through their press exposure to find those who had showcased their designs at the dominant 'Big Four' fashion weeks and had been reported on in the fashion press in the previous ten years was a reasonable approach to meeting this criterion.

The selection pool started with CSM graduates that had just attended a fashion week. As these graduates tend to start their participatory journey in fashion weeks with LFW, then the designers on LFW's official calendars from 2015 were located, namely, Haizhen Wang, Huishan Zhang and Renli Su. As locating these designers was undertaken before the case study of LFW was conducted, only the official calendar that was operated by the BFC was consulted because my knowledge of LFW was limited at that time. However, after browsing their collections and shows delivered since the year 2015, most of the shows have been standard and traditional, only consisting of the basic elements of a fashion show. Furthermore, although Haizhen Wang's collections are recognised by the mainstream press as innovative, he was born in the 1970s and established his brand more than five years ago, so he does not belong to the third or the emerging generation (born in 1980s and 1990s) of Chinese designers (Tsui, 2009). For this reason, these three designers did not meet the requirements of the targeted subjects. Another reason for the difficulty in finding suitable designers is that emerging designers are new to the industry, so they have limited press exposure in the mainstream domestic fashion media.

After the initial failure to locate designers, another opportunity presented itself: the new media department of the UK newspaper *Nouvelles d'Europe*, a Chinese mainstream media platform based in Europe, was recruiting intern editors and I was successful in getting this role as I have an educational background in digital media and related work experience in a fashion media group in China before undertaking this PhD. I had been a follower and reader of this publication since arriving in the UK in 2013. It has a fashion column with numerous articles and reports related to Chinese designers in London and their work at LFW. This indicated that this newspaper could have connections with Chinese fashion designers in both London and China, especially those who were developing but had not yet been reported on by the

domestic mainstream press in the UK. This fashion column would be a good resource for finding more emerging IBC designers. Then, I reviewed the articles it had published since it was established in 2013 and found three Chinese designers who had been reported on that met my requirements of graduating from CSM, staging collections at LFW but collaborating with an off-schedule calendar organiser, such as FS and Fashions Finest (hereafter referring to FF), and not being listed on the on-schedule calendar of LFW. These designers were Jin, Du and Wong.

Entering this company as a fixed-term (six months) intern was the main method used to gain closer access to the social circles of UK-based Chinese fashion professionals, especially designers. It provided access to the publication's social connections, thereby helping me meet and know Chinese designers based in the UK. This approach proved to be successful later in this research. Additionally, temporarily working for a mainstream Chinese media platform in the UK which had already gained social capital also provided access to international fashion weeks, which was highly difficult when I was only a researcher.

The final selection standard for locating the case subject designers was based on their pursuit of innovation in showing their collections. The case subject designers' pursuit of artistry in showing their collections is crucial in this research. Whether they are successful in actualising their artistic pursuits or not, their motivations for seeking innovation through radical and avant-garde shows following their predecessor designers elaborated on in Chapter 3 are vital. After reviewing their predecessors' avant-garde designs and the iconic, innovative work that emerging IBC designers tend to emulate, the artistic pursuit of innovation in showing collections could be identified through several types of shows, such as those that include performance art, installation art, theatrical performances and technological art. This could be

directly recognised in the emerging designers' previous works displayed at fashion weeks, as well as in their disclosures during press interviews and unofficial chats if there was an opportunity for this.

Jin was the first designer located as one of the case subject designers of this thesis. Before my internship started, I browsed and reviewed the fashion shows and collections of Youjia Jin, YangDu and Victor Wong online and found that Youjia Jin and YangDu may be suitable subjects as they had both shown their pursuit of innovation and radical fashion in their previous works and press reports. Jin's first collection involved collaborating with the off-schedule organiser FS in 2015 and featured a short dance and musical performance, while Du's collection is radical.

The process of gaining access to these two potential suitable designers was relatively smooth due to the effective and valid utilisation of social connections, also referred to as *guanxi* in Chinese society. According to Hwang (1987), Triandis (1989), Yang et al. (1994), Farh et al. (1997), Huang (2000), Pinquart and Sörensen (2000), Chen et al. (2004), and Farh et al. (1997), *guanxi* (which is a Chinese term for social connections) is one of the most important sociological and cultural contexts when building networks with other people in Chinese society. However, after meeting with these two designers, I decided to select Jin as my first case study subject as Du was born in the 1970s so she cannot be viewed as part of the youngest generation of IBC designers. Choosing Jin was mainly because she has significant enthusiasm for staging shows in non-traditional ways and was going to stage performative shows at the legitimate European fashion weeks.

Jin was born in the 1980s, established her brand Youjia Jin in 2014 and is a diaspora designer (who is mainly based in the UK), so she met the requirements for the selection of the designer brands in this project. She

arrived in London in 2009, received her BA degree at CSM, College of Art and Design, graduating in 2011, and then studied for an MA in Womenswear from the London College of Fashion in 2014. She believes that it is crucial in the creative world to remain open to different influences and to try as much as possible to be versatile and non-restrictive in her design practices.

She considered my project to be of interest and she agreed to participate in the case study. Due to her close friendship with and trust of Fan, she was willing to be my subject. Otherwise, as she explained in the later stages of this project when we became friends, she would likely have rejected me outright or politely agreed and then proceeded to answer my questions only superficially. She explained her short-term plan of staging a non-traditional show and attending both Paris and Shanghai Fashion Weeks (which was cancelled in the end and will be explained in details in Chapter 5 and 6). At the time, she was in the phase of finding sponsors. Then, we made an agreement that I could start the case study with an in-depth interview about her Alice-themed show staged in 2015 with FS, and then could follow her during the production and presentation processes of the next stage.

Another case study subject, Xuzhi Chen, was identified due to Jin's recommendation. Chen was born in the 1990s and is another emerging designer who is enthusiastic about seeking innovation in fashion shows. He founded his label XuZhi in 2014, one year before he graduated from CSM with a BA in Womenswear Design in June 2015. The first time that I met him was for his Spring/Summer 2017 thematic presentation 'Monet's Gardens' during LFW in September 2016, which was also his first show at an international fashion week. After reading press reports and recognising his interest in utilising installation art in fashion shows, I chose him as one of my case study designers. However, approaching him was difficult, which is elaborated on in detail in the following section on ethnographic observation protocols.

Victor Wong is an eyewear designer that was educated and is based in London. He was born in the 1980s, was educated in the UK and established his brand through LFW in 2014, which met the basic criteria of my selection. I became aware of him through a report in the fashion column of *Nouvelles d'Europe*. The content of the report was about his previous experience showing at LFW in collaboration with Fashions Finest and it was entitled 'The Asian Tom Ford, An Emerging Avant-garde Designer Victor Wong'. This report revealed his pursuit of innovation to challenge traditional eyewear design. Through an introduction from my boss Fan, Wong and I had an unofficial meeting through which I got to know his views and his plan for participating in fashion weeks and producing fashion shows.

Choosing Wong as the last case study subject was a complex decision because he was not educated at CSM, so he did not meet one of the criteria of graduating from CSM, one of the most legitimate European fashion colleges featuring the historically-rooted avant-garde as an educational genre (Breward, 2004). In fact, having two designers as case study subjects to represent innovative designers is sufficient for this project as both designers planned to produce more than one non-traditional fashion show after the time that I first met them in 2016. Wong has another identity as a fashion influencer on Instagram with over 100,000 followers. He showed a different personality compared to Chen and Jin as a more outgoing, flexible and laid-back person. It seems that Wong is more willing to conform to the heteronomous principles of the fashion system and views the commercial development of his autonomous brand Victor Wong as more important than his pursuit of innovation. His plan in 2017 to 2018 was still considering LFW to be the highest priority when staging shows. Sufficient sponsorship was the necessary condition for him to show at other fashion weeks.

Based on the discussions in the first unofficial meetings with Jin and Chen, I understood that they would probably stick to their innovative plans when producing shows although the designers were in different situations. Producing a non-traditional show is much more expensive than a traditional show as there are more associated costs, such as the settings, dancers and musicians (Stark, 2018). One potential risk for Jin in terms of realising her ideas could be a lack of sponsorship, but she would rather give up staging a show if she could not get the sponsorship. Chen's business situation is different from that of Jin and is more stable from an economic perspective as he has family that supports his business start-up financially (Chen, 2017). Although he will still need to secure commercial investment in the near future, this solid start-up capital has reduced the potential risk of accomplishing his show and has allowed for the construction of a stable business as a designer brand entrepreneur

- **Paris, London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks as Case Subjects:
Cross-Cultural Comparisons and the Locations of the Research**

In addition to using the three designers as case study subjects, this project also explores the international fashion weeks that the subjects participated in between September 2016 and September 2018, namely, PFW, LFW and SHFW. As these three fashion weeks and their host cities are located in the different regions of Europe and Asia, and in order to gain comprehensive and systematic insights into the global fashion weeks as well as the ecosystem that these emerging IBC designers interact with, cross-cultural comparisons are applied as another method together with case studies.

According to Ilesanmi (2009, p. 84), there are three types of cross-cultural research: regional comparative cross-cultural research, small-scale regional

research that is also called 'controlled comparisons', and large-scale within-region research. Collecting the information on fashion weeks generated in different cities and finding the inner laws and general principles of the global fashion ecosystem are the main purposes of applying cross-cultural research in this project (Ember et al., 1998). This research adopts a regional comparative cross-cultural approach, in which a mixture of methods is embedded, such as case studies, ethnographic interviews, observations and visual research. For instance, PFW, LFW and SHFW are investigated as cross-cultural case studies while following the subject designers' show productions in the three cities, representing two cultural and geographic regions in the global fashion ecosystem, which are the European legitimate fashion cities represented by London and Paris and China's emerging fashion cities represented by Shanghai.

Cross-cultural comparisons are applied because the global fashion ecosystem contains the different characteristics of each global fashion city. Simultaneously, fashion weeks develop similar systematic traits that they inherit from each other, as seen in New York Fashion Week having similar characteristics as PFW (Evans, 2013, a). For this reason, to investigate the traits of today's global fashion ecosystem and their dynamic correlations with emerging IBC designers, cross-cultural comparison is the most applicable and suitable method as it tests for a correlation to measure the 'variables involved in objective and systematic ways' (Ember et al., 1998, p.662).

Cross-cultural research is not usually the only research method applied in a project as it is combined with ethnography to measure the variables in question with a more focused and in-depth insight. As ethnography is 'a descriptive account of the life of a group of people at a particular time and in a particular place' (Ember et al., 1998, p. 648)., a combination of methods should be used to arrive at a picture of today's emerging Chinese designers,

as well as contemporary fashion shows and fashion weeks in the fashion ecosystem. Therefore, this research adopts diversified methods of data collection, which include observations and interviews, that are elaborated on in the following sections.

- **Ethnographic Observation and Approaches to Observations**

The nature of observation allows the researcher to undertake ‘prolonged engagement in a setting or social situation’ (Sheroz, 2013, p. 1) and is ‘being immersed in a research situation’ (Patrick, 2013, pp. 7-9). This means that it is reasonable to use observation in this ethnographic study (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Mack et al., 2005; Patrick, 2013; Sheroz, 2013) as another main method incorporated in ethnographic case studies and cross-cultural comparison. From the perspective of its rationale, there are different types of observation, summarised in the following table (see Table 3.2).

Participant	Non-participant
Taking part in the activity or joining the group; observing what is happening around them.	Simply observing the activities instead of joining them.
Direct	Indirect
Observing the behaviours as they occur naturally.	Focusing more on the effects and influences of behaviours.
Disguised	Undisguised
Subjects are unaware that they are being observed.	The respondent or subject is aware of being observed.
Structured	Unstructured

Researchers identify hypotheses beforehand and behaviours are recorded and observed.	No restrictions are made before the observations and all behaviour is monitored and recorded.
Human	Mechanical
The observer is a person who is either the researcher or is hired by the researcher.	The human observer is replaced by observation devices.

Table 3.2: Diversifications and typologies of observation methods (Aktinson, and Hammersley, 1994, pp.256-260)

During the ethnographic case studies, I immersed myself as much as possible in all of the case studies through deeply participating or engaging with the subjects' design and production activities in order to obtain more accurate, detailed and in-depth research data to decrease the potential 'generalisation' (Merriam, 1998, pp. 56-78) found in case studies. Diverse types of observation were applied and different combinations of the above types of observation shown in the table 3.2 were used according to the specific situation. In Jin's case, a combination of participant, direct, undisguised and unstructured observations was used. For both Chen and Wong's cases, the combination of observations was the same: non-participant, direct, undisguised and unstructured. Li (2008, p. 101) argues that ethnographic participant observation is the only effective method that can provide the researcher with the 'real life' context in investigating people's behaviours, rather than 'what they say what they do'. It gives researchers 'detailed and authentic data, which is usually inaccessible through other methods' (Li, 2008, p. 103). If ethnographic observation cannot be used, the data would be much less convincing.

During my work at *Nouvelles d'Europe* as an editor, the Spring/Summer 2017 season of LFW was followed and observed. I participated as a fashion editor and conducted ethnographic research on LFW in identifying its organisational structures and production systems via ethnographic and participant observations of the production of Wong's traditional show 'City Power' in collaboration with one of LFW's organisers, Fashions Finest. I received consent and access to Wong's show mainly because his show was one that *Nouvelles d'Europe* intended to report on for its LFW section. Wong is an old friend who has been reported on in *Nouvelles d'Europe* before and my boss, Fan, knew that I needed to collect data for my PhD research, so she gave me the opportunity to report on Wong's show. Wong was supportive of my PhD research and not only was he willing to allow me to report on his show production at LFW but he also agreed to participate in my following research and for me to observe his productions if there was a need.

As working for *Nouvelles d'Europe* was a temporary plan to gain access to and build connections with the targeted designers, after receiving Jin and Wong's consent to participate in this project, I completed the internship in November 2016 after the Spring/Summer 2017 season of LFW ended. After that, I started participating in Jin's show production for the Autumn/Winter 2017 season of PFW as a temporary staff member. This was because Jin's inexperience and the instability of her in-house team made her staff turnover high and she needed assistants. She asked me to help her with some of the production work and I agreed because this was a win-win collaboration that would give her a free temporary staff member, as well as equip me with a deeper understanding and direct connection when dealing with production works in different cultural contexts. She agreed to me following and observing all of her production work while working for her. This was helpful as, usually, few designers are willing to offer these experiences to a researcher as the production work tends to be extremely busy and intense, and it would be

distracting to have an unrelated person watching them, recording them and asking them questions (Jin, 2016a).

As the decision was made to follow Chen's case after I left *Nouvelles d'Europe*, my own efforts had to be made to obtain his consent. I met him while conducting ethnographic research of the Spring/Summer season of LFW in the showroom and got his contact information and asked his plan for the following fashion weeks. I learned that he was planning to attend SHFW with his Autumn/Winter 2017 collection if possible to showcase the collection using his own show design of non-traditional installations.

After finishing following the first case study of Jin at her Autumn/Winter 2017 fashion performance 'Recreation' at PFW, I focused on SHFW to apply my case study to SHFW itself, as well as to Chen's presentation in collaboration with one of SHFW's organisers, Labelhood. When I contacted him again in Shanghai and invited him to join my project, he hesitated, asking me a series of questions about how the data would be used and what I needed. I explained to him that I wanted to conduct ethnographic research on his show production at Shanghai in collaboration with Labelhood, during which time I hoped to follow him every day, observing all of his preparations for the show and asking questions on his behaviours and opinions regarding any useful information that became apparent during the research. Although he told me that he would think about this and come back to me later, I knew this was a polite refusal as it was likely that he meant that he did not want to accept my request but he wanted to spare my feelings.

A turning point in our communication occurred after that. A day later, he posted a message on 'friends circle'⁶ on WeChat, saying that he needed help

⁶ Also could be translated into "Moments", which serves new social-networking functions for Wechat users. "The Chinese translation of Moment is known as "Friends' circle", which

finding a local band made up of one cello, one piano, two guitars and one bass guitar to perform at his upcoming show at SHFW. I happened to have social connections with local musicians and was able to assist him. I contacted Chen, telling him that I could solve his problem and he was excited, telling me about his needs and plans for the performance. Luckily, one of my friends, the leader of a local band, had the time and the interest to perform at his show and offered him a discount. He then consented to my request of following his show production process in Shanghai.

Observations do not always rely on people's willingness to provide information as the researcher can sometimes directly see what people are doing without depending on the subjects' participation, which can often be very time-consuming and longitudinal, with observer bias and subjectivity being the main disadvantages. Furthermore, people usually perform differently when they know they are being observed. However, as a stand-alone method without complementary interviews, the understanding of observed actions is inevitably weakened, to an extent, as the subjects' rationales for undertaking certain actions are not fully shared (Mack et al., 2005; Sheroz, 2013). Therefore, in this research, in order to thoroughly understand the research data, there was a need to combine observations with interviews as the main research methods.

- **Interviews**

In this research, qualitative interviews are used as the main method of securing and build strong connections with the research subjects and key research participants and ethnographic interviews are used to collect the

means users can share and get access to accepted WeChat friends' information, creating an intimate and private communicating circle within the users' choice of close friends" (Lin, Fang, and Jin, 2016d)

main data, including all informal chats that occurred during the case studies, incorporating participant observation

The rationale for this decision is that qualitative interviews are the most frequently used research method in qualitative studies seen through different types of interviews varying from unstructured and semi-structured to structured interviews (Burnard, 1991; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014). Unstructured interviews are similar to conversations 'in which the researcher and participant have a topic but no set questions or responses' (Corbin and Morse, 2003, p. 336), following the direction and nature of the participant's responses. A structured interview has preset questions and the researcher does not deviate from the interview guide in which the questions have predetermined answers, to a certain extent. Semi-structured interviews (Mai, 2009) are best used when researchers will not get more than one chance to interview a participant and when the researcher is collecting data in the field. Semi-structured interviews are often conducted with 'observation, informal and unstructured interviewing by interviewers' to allow the researchers to develop an accurate perception of the research for developing relevant and depth semi-structured questions, during which the interviewer develops and uses an 'interview guide', or 'a list of questions and topics, that need to be covered during the conversation in a particular order' (Wengraf, 2001, p. 56).

In this research, the qualitative interview data is important but does not make up the main body of the data. Due to the complexity of this project, which is based on a multi-cultural context, various types of applicable research methods need to be designed under different cultural backgrounds, considering the multi-sited ethnographies of fashion weeks and fashion systems. More precisely, both semi-structured and unstructured in-depth

interviews, as well as unstructured and structured phenomenological short interviews, are applied in both formal and informal ways. Each research method is specified in the following table (see Table 3.3).

	Types of interviewees and scenes in multi-sited ethnographic research	Implements
Structured	The audience of fashion shows	Informal, short
Semi-structured and unstructured	Designers, show producers, PR agents, fashion editors and fashion week organisers	Formal and informal, in-depth

Table 3.3: Different types of interview methods (Qu and Dumay, 2011)

Ethnographic interviews are also a crucial research method used in this research. According to Bauman and Adair (1992, p. 45), ethnographic interviews are a type of qualitative research method that ‘combines immersive observation and directed one-on-one interviews’. They are often utilised alongside case studies and combined with observations, immersive research and communication with the core people of the study. As explained by Mai (2009, p. 2), ethnographic researchers in anthropology research usually spend years ‘living immersed in the cultures they study in order to understand the behaviours and social rituals of an entire culture’.

For this research, to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of designers’ thinking and the motivations behind their behaviours when producing shows at different international fashion weeks in different cultures, I lived with Jin, who is a female designer, in London and Paris and followed her every day to observe her behaviours and discuss her thoughts in various cultural contexts. Chen and Wong are both male designers, so I only followed

their show productions as it seemed inappropriate to live with them. However, as I did with Jin's case, I followed them every day during their productions in London and Shanghai, observing their behaviours, as well as discussing their behaviours and thoughts while following them. Furthermore, in addition to observing the case study designers, all of the participants within the field of show productions, ranging from art directors to photographers, were observed as well (see Figure 3.1). In order to ensure the credibility of the findings, both industry insiders and outsiders were selected as subjects in interviews during these immersive observations of the case subjects' productions. These interviews were often unofficial chats, rather than formal interviews. On most occasions, due to the rapid working speed and high workload during the productions, people tended to ignore me or did not care who I was when asking questions as in investigating show productions, there is little chance of touching on sensitive information, such as political or private information. However, due to ethical considerations, I always told the interviewee that I was undertaking ethnographic research on show productions and wanted to ask them a few questions if they asked. For instance, occasionally, when approaching construction workers at SHFW, they really did not care what I was doing as a researcher, so I revealed my background and talked with them in unofficial interviews.

In addition to the professionals working in show production that are mentioned above, other subjects that were impacted by the designers' shows and those who manipulate the development of fashion weeks, as well as influence the production of fashion shows at fashion weeks were also selected as subjects simultaneously. To be more specific, a list of the in-depth and formal interviewees, along with the lengths and the types of interviews conducted, is given in the following table (see Table 3.4).

Name of Interviewee	Profession	Length of Interview	Type
Youjia Jin	IBC fashion designer	2 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Yang Du	IBC fashion designer	1.5 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Xuzhi Chen	IBC fashion designer	1.5 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Victor Wong	IBC fashion designer	2 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Tong Zhao	Show producer, set designer, show director of Jin and Chen's performance, founder of UK-based art studio Hexagon Collective	2 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Martyn Roberts	Founder of Fashion Scout	1 hour	Semi-structured; face-to-face
XiangYang Bian	Sitting Secretary-General of the Chinese Fashion Association; participant in building up Shanghai Fashion Week	2.1 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Romy Luo	Founder of Indie Design London, a London-based fashion PR agency	2.5 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Yang Yang	Chinese fashion editor	2 hours	Semi-structured; face-to-face
Stefania	Marketing director of	2 hours	Semi-structured;

	Hussein Chalayan		face-to-face
Huang Hong	Chinese fashion opinion leader, influencer, editor and journalist	N/A	Email, textual, structured

Table 3.4: List of interviewees for the in-depth qualitative interviews, (Transcript see in Appendix I and Appendix II).

Another category of interviews that contributed to this project is short interviews, which can be either structured or unstructured and informal. These interviews were mostly collected during the empirical and participant observations relating to show productions and field research at PFW, LFW and SHFW. These interviews tended to be informal chats that were collected while I was working with the target designers to produce shows or merely observing them in designing and producing a show. These interviews happened spontaneously when different situations occurred during the show productions to allow the subject to interpret the situations.

Although in-depth interviews can produce focused and accurate data, they still have limitations. The high costs, amount of energy needed, transportation costs and the high risk of the interviewees being unavailable make this method uneconomical and, sometimes, inoperable (Kaar, 2009). An inappropriate question design may also lead to failure in collecting complete data and inaccurate information may be collected if the interviewer over-stimulates the respondent. More importantly, subjective bias is often seen if the researcher makes assumptions as the interview is personally controlled by the interviewer. Differences in the interviewees' professionalisms may lead to various personalised forms of interviews being designed by researchers for different interviewees, ranging from formal to informal, structured to unstructured, and face-to-face to those conducted

through the telephone, email and social apps, such as WeChat and WhatsApp. This will, inevitably, increase the risk of bias, which could lead to inaccurate data being collected.

- **Photo-documentation and Visual Ethnography**

Photo-documentation is a visual research method that uses 'a series of carefully planned and taken photographs to document and analyse a visual phenomenon' (Rose, 2016, p.267). Pictures can record and decode a phenomenon comprehensively and can also capture people's behaviours. This method requires the researcher to take photographs systematically through a shooting script and then analyse the data. Another method that can be used alongside photo-documentation is visual ethnography (Guindi, 2017; Baker, 2018; Mannay et al., 2019), which is another core visual method utilised in this study. This method, together with photo-documentation, guarantees the credibility of the collected data and decreases its subjectivity to a great extent because scholars have constructed effective methods, such as a 'scientific and realist' (Leon-Qujano, 2017, p. 11) framework that should be built using observational approaches relating to sociological inquiry in which visual materials are treated as data that reflects epistemology. Pink (2013, p. 35) proposes an effective way of implementing visual ethnography, emphasising that the 'phenomenological, sensory and non-representational approach' should be concerned with the production of knowledge and ways of knowing rather than with the collection of data. This is useful for this research when designing observational approaches and systematically collecting visual materials due to the importance of reflexivity in the data collected through collaborative practices during research.

In this research, photo-documentation and visual ethnography are applied mainly to collect visual materials using observational approaches, recording and decoding the case studies of shows in terms of their production processes and presentations before and at fashion weeks, as well as showrooms, audiences and all phenomena that can represent the cultural characteristics of the fashion weeks being investigated, PFW, LFW and SHFW. The specific shooting script and question-frame was semi-structured and designed based on the core questions, which allowed for flexibility in case of unexpected changes. It contained the following questions:

- What places did the designers visit to find a venue for their show?
- What did the venue they chose for their show look like, including the form, size and pattern of the built environment?
- Who were the key creative labour the designers negotiated with during the production?
- What incidents did they meet with that revealed the local cultural characteristics?
- What did the preparation work for a show look like in the different fashion cities of Paris, London and Shanghai, such as the model selection, rehearsals and final construction?
- What did the shows' final presentations look like through a camera from the perspectives of both the press and the audience?
- What were the differences in the visual displays of the paradigmatic showrooms at PFW, LFW and SHFW?
- What were the key events or phenomena that could represent the local culture apart from the fashion shows and showrooms at PFW, LFW and SHFW?

Based on the above shooting script, visual materials were systematically taken alongside empirical observation processes. Various methods of photography could be applied to this ethnographic research. One was during the show production and preparation processes when I shot photographs as an ethnographic observer. Another was designers hiring professional photographers to document the presentation via photographs and videos during the show presentation stage. For my three case subject designers and their shows, they all had professional photographers to record the presentations and they all agreed to provide the pictures for my research.

However, the most noticeable problem of this method was the high degree of subjectivity; the use of photographs to narrate an event cannot be completely natural and unbiased if it is based on empirical observation. Although the shooting script was made to guarantee that the photographs helped to interpret the research questions, it still could have contained different subjective perspectives in engaging with the investigated phenomena. For instance, the photographs taken by professional photographers and amateurs are visually different in terms of colour, content, quality and, most importantly, storytelling ability. A professional photographer tends to embellish their photographs before displaying them, which enhances the intensity of the content but decreases the authenticity.

During the visual ethnography research using observational approaches, especially during participatory observations, and to decrease the subjectivity created by photo-documentary, the visual data collected contains video documentation not merely to record the description of subjects being narrated or to explain the rationale of each production activity but also to record the understandings and phenomenological discussions between participatory researchers and subjects based on real experiences.

3.1.2 Subjectivity and Anticipated Ethical Problems

After elaborating on each method in detail with the corresponding data design and approaches, it is vital to address the subjectivity and anticipated ethical problems of this research as the structure of the data is complex and relies on the consent and collaboration of a considerable number of people. As most of the data was collected according to people's empirical experiences and the researcher's subjective observations, the issues of subjectivity and ethics should be treated particularly cautiously.

Research subjectivity needs to be minimised. Thus, the categorisation of interview subjects allows for the consideration of key variables. Among the first group of interviewees, the selection was based on how critical individuals' roles were to innovation, while among the second group, care was taken to ensure a representative sample of professions. This 'data triangulation' (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 3; Golafshani, 2003, p. 601) helps to produce a more comprehensive set of findings and the variation in the professions of the interviewees helps to enhance the credibility of the findings.

- **Subjectivity**

In general, to minimise the subjectivity of qualitative research, other researchers may offer their views and opinions on the study, even undertaking interviews together with the main researcher (Kimchi et al., 1991). Despite this, the research may still be subjective due to observer bias, even with the external participation of other researchers. However, during the whole process of this project, there was only one observer in the case studies and the ethnographic research. According to Golafshani (2003), experimenter or observer bias is mainly caused by educational background and personal

preference. The main subjectivity of this project is explained through the following perspectives.

First, from the researcher's perspective, participant observation as an assistant to the designer, as well as the show producer, in Jin's case may cause significant subjective bias, although it would also provide more in-depth insights into the designer's perceptions of innovation and the way that they interact with the global fashion ecosystem. It is easy to unconsciously become an advocate for the designer when acting as a member of her team. This did happen when I first participated in Jin's project. Due to my lack of professional working experience in the European fashion industry, it may have been easier for me to understand the industry based on the subject's perceptions as Jin was the first case study and my first chance to enter a designer's world at such a close distance. In order to decrease subjectivity, in general, investigator triangulation and data triangulation are both applied to ensure the validity of the findings. The views of the people who had disagreed with Jin and had experienced conflict with her both in and out of her team were also communicated. Additionally, other participants in the show production who had observed the conflicts were also interviewed informally to ensure relatively neutral and truthful findings.

Second, the subjective biases of the designers themselves should also be considered. As a project investigating cultural phenomena in the fashion industry related to a specific group of Chinese designers, all of the data is collected from the core research subjects, who are IBC designers. The three main case study subjects, Jin, Chen and Wong, have significant differences in terms of family background, social status, design ideology, personality and philosophy of life. Any of these factors could lead to a considerably different perspective on the same fashion industry and global ecosystem they work in, thereby resulting in various behaviours during their show productions around

the world. Under these circumstances, some cultural conflict could occur because of the designer's inappropriate behaviours, which cannot be considered their normal behaviour. Furthermore, designers who prioritise the realisation of innovation in a fashion show when deciding whether to attend a fashion week tend to be more emotional and have intense feelings. Jin is such a designer in this project. This causes high subjectivity as this group of designers tends to live in their own world (McDonagh et al., 2004).

Therefore, to minimise this subjectivity, Chen and Wong's cases were chosen after Jin's case due to the need to formulate a triangulation as designers with the same enthusiasm for pursuing innovation yet different priorities when deciding whether to stage a show and attend a fashion week. This creates a scale of designers who represent various extents in the pursuit of innovation and provides three case studies that are representative of different groups of designers. Different perspectives and statuses among the whole generation of emerging IBC designers are thus investigated comprehensively.

- **Ethics**

Ethical problems are especially critical when dealing with human subjects (Diener et al., 1978; Homan, 1991; Miller et al., 2012; Resnik, 2015). According to Resnik (2015, p. 2), some research contains considerable cooperation work and coordination among people in different disciplines and institutions; ethical standards promote the values that are essential to 'collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness'. For qualitative research methods, researchers have the obligation to take ethics into account when conducting interviews, which can be one-on-one and face-to-face, case studies, which can be of an individual, group or event, focus groups, historiography, which can include following a person's life

history, or observations, which can be ethnographic in nature. Researchers must use a systematic process to collect data without interfering with or harming the subjects (Miller et al., 2012; Federman et al., 2003; Shamoo and Resnik, 2015). Although qualitative research methods make it difficult to predict how the data will be collected through interviews or observations (Streubert and Carpenter, 1999), researchers have the obligation to anticipate the possible outcomes of an interview and to consider both the benefits and the potential harm.

As for the ethical considerations and regulations of the University of Edinburgh, the College of Art (ECA) has its own research ethics framework. According to the guidelines offered by the university, the framework for the ethical conduct of research is guided by the principles of dignity, respect, care for others, honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and leadership.⁷ Before the ethnographic qualitative research was conducted for this study, I went through the ECA ethics clearance processes, ensuring that this project would not cause significant ethical problems.

For this research, the ethical issues are listed in the following paragraphs.

First, cultural conflict is often associated with unpleasant arguments and, in this case, some subjects showing their aversion to certain design styles or designers, as well as the designers' behaviours. Although this data is valuable, researchers have to be very cautious when dealing with and analysing it because if these opinions are published alongside the identifying information of the interviewees, there could be potential harm to their reputations. Therefore, their valuable views that contribute to the analysis are still included

⁷ Ethics Regulations of the University of Edinburgh, 2009, <http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-ke/support-for-staff/policies/ethics>.

but their names are kept highly confidential to protect these participants' reputations.

Another anticipated ethical issue is the use of intellectual property, such as a designer's drawing papers of their designs, recorded videos of their production processes and presentations and pictures of the presented shows. When investigating the production processes, these design materials and digital data that are collected are not only the designers' intellectual property but are also their trade secrets, especially before the show and the collections are presented. Furthermore, as this data is recorded and stored through video and photographic tools, protecting and backing up the data, preventing it from going missing and not revealing the data to irrelevant people are also crucial.

Last, undisguised observations were used for this project, especially when participating in Jin's production processes, but except for Jin and her show producer Tong Zhao no other people knew that I was observing their behaviours for research purposes. This also happened in Chen and Wong's case studies, with the only difference being that I only observed the production, rather than participating in it, so the data collected was not as comprehensive as the data collected in Jin's case. Furthermore, during the 18 discontinuous months of ethnographic research that were undertaken within two years from September 2016 to September 2018 on the different fashion weeks that the case subjects participated in, I met a considerable number of people with different professions in the fashion industry. To access and investigate the real fashion industry, as well as the broader fashion ecosystem, without the gloss of the press and outsiders' research, it was necessary to conceal my identity, chatting and working with insiders informally.

For instance, I witnessed Wong's experience with finding sponsors and participated in Jin's unpleasant arguments with sponsors and photographers, as well as her in-house team. I also pretended to be a customer and tried to question a ticket scalper for SHFW on where he had got the tickets to sell them in this underground way. I even witnessed the unprofessionalism of the teams of some invited celebrities. Furthermore, some interviewees presented some aggressive views on the perceived irrational and unreasonable government ideologies on fashion weeks, as well as the fashion industry in China. All of this data is valuable to this research analysis but contains potential and unpredictable ethical risks in its use. Therefore, some of the sections of this thesis would have to be removed if it is published in the future.

3.2 The Data Collection Process

As the data design and approaches have been elaborated on in the above sections, this section only presents the issues that occurred during the data collection process, including the methods used to guarantee reliability, validity and external reliability, the limitations of systematic data and the unexpected changes and problems.

In general, the explicit data collection process for specific show production techniques and the corresponding fashion weeks could be divided into three phases, for which their reliability and validity should be clarified before elaborating on them.

3.2.1 Reliability, Validity and External Reliability

Scholars (Winter, 2000; Golafshan, 2003; Noble and Smith, 2015) have identified the homogeneity of the validity and credibility in qualitative research

as a way of establishing and guaranteeing the truthfulness of work, data and conclusions. Criticisms of the validity and credibility of qualitative research mainly lie in its applicability as qualitative research cannot be repeated and the extent to which the research matches the data cannot be measured (Winter, 2000). As a result, many researchers have developed their own concepts of validity, offering a number of 'more accurate' (Noble and Smith, 2015, p. 34) alternatives (see Table 3.5) and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as quality, rigour and trustworthiness (Maxwell, 1992; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001; Davies and Dodd, 2002).

Quantitative research terminology and application in qualitative research	Alternative terminology associated with the credibility of qualitative research
Validity The extent to which the findings accurately reflect the data	Truth value The recognition that multiple realities exist; the researcher's acknowledgement that personal experiences and viewpoints could have resulted in methodological bias; clearly and accurately presenting participants' perspectives.
Reliability The consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research method biases that may have influenced the findings.	Consistency Relates to the 'trustworthiness' of the methods that have been used and is dependent on the researcher maintaining a 'decision-trail', that is, the researcher's decisions are clear and transparent. Ultimately, an

	independent researcher should be able to arrive at similar or comparable findings. Neutrality (or confirmability) Achieved when truth value, consistency and applicability have been addressed. Centres on acknowledging the complexity of prolonged engagement with participants and that the methods used and the findings are intrinsically linked to the researcher's philosophical position, experiences and perspectives. These should be accounted for and separated from the participants' accounts.

Table 3.5: Terminology and criteria used to evaluate the credibility of research findings (Noble and Smith, 2015, p. 34)

When collecting qualitative and ethnographic data, it is crucial to take into consideration external reliability due to the potential uniqueness and complexities of phenomena and the subjective biases and individualistic nature of ethnographic processes (Hansen, 1979; Pelto and Pelto, 1978). According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 51), for ethnographic researchers, external reliability can be strengthened by clarifying and recognising the following five problems: 'researcher status position; informant choices; social situations and conditions; analytic constructs and premises; and methods of data collection and analysis'.

Identification of these problems is accompanied by both data design and data collection processes. Analytic constructs and premises in this research have been confirmed after the completion of the pilot study. The data structure has been constructed according to the categories of creative labour that influence and participate in show production and presentation work (see Figure 3.1). For the researcher's status, position, social situation and conditions, if data collection is dependent on the social relationship between the researcher and the subjects, the researcher's role and status' within the group being investigated must be clearly recognised and identified (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). In this research, the data is accessed through the continuous development and expansion of my social connections in the fashion industry, alongside the subjects' opinions. As explained above, for the first six months of my research preparation stage, I did an internship as a new media fashion editor to gain the qualifications to enter fashion shows. In essence, I was an insider of the field of fashion communication but an outsider to fashion show design and production. After that, I became a member of Jin's in-house production team, where I started to become an insider in show production. For Chen's case, I was a production assistant and observer simultaneously, assisting him in coordinating all issues with the domestic music band. With regard to Wong, I was in his PR team, in charge of organising and writing press releases and designing the content of the concept brochure.

Some researchers conduct ethnographic research as participants who develop personal connections or friendships with the subjects or group members (Janes, 1961; Wax, 1971; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Li, 2008). This helps them gain access to some private information that other people would have limited access to while to increase subjectivity as well. This happened during my research as all of my positions were within the constructed data system, so my experiences could be viewed as part of the participant observation data. I was a participant and a researcher

simultaneously. In this way, ethnographic researchers, tend to 'customarily label their investigative stance toward participants according to taxonomies', as explained by Gold (1958) and mentioned by LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p.56) and they 'describe the content and development of the social status and position accorded them by the group'. This is why the whole research is narrated chronologically as my investigation stances change constantly in different cases, so presenting the analysis chronologically adds rigour, as well as a more clarified and identifiable researcher position.

Another way to guarantee and protect the credibility and validity of the collected data is to hold a rigorous attitude towards the ethnographic data collected from designers and to cautiously deal with ethical engagement and trustworthiness as critical ethnographers should 'work under a promise' and 'protect' what the participants share with the researcher (Lester and Anders, 2018, p. 02). Trustworthiness, especially when discussing the trust that a researcher has in a participant, as well as the participant's trust in the researcher, is important as this has been demonstrated as a methodological issue and obstacle in existing studies in the fields of fashion and art that most qualitative researchers in the realm of design and creativity should tackle (Lester and Anders, 2018).

As shown in the above section, when approaching Jin, she mentioned that she agreed to be my case study subject because I was introduced by one of her trusted friends, Fan, and agreed to discuss her real situation and opinions without any embellishment, which is different from the material she has provided to the press in the past few years. This behaviour from Jin reveals the importance of trustworthiness in this ethnographic research, especially among creative people in a working context. As Jin (2016) has stated:

‘Trust is the pivotal thing that I consider when getting along with other people, not only in my personal life but also in a working context. At the same time, as far as I am concerned, most artists in this industry put trustworthiness as the top priority in the working environment. Artistic designers or artists tend not to behave according to logic but more responding to the feelings of other people.’

This trust that Jin had in this research could partially prove the credibility and validity of the collected data. It could be observed that during the data collection processes, she was more willing to discuss her inner feelings and personal perceptions towards her experiences in-depth that ‘would not be suitable to be published by the press if viewed from a PR perspective’ as I was initially introduced to her by one of her friends (Jin, 2016).

Although the trust given by the research participant could lead to an increase of subjectivity as most of the perceptions shared by the participants in this research were personal perceptions, these subjective perceptions can still shape the most up-to-date ontology on new aesthetics and culture within the global fashion ecosystem explored in this research and can provide valid data on one of the research focuses of this study, which is creative labour. The limitations of the data are underlined after the following section elaborates on the explicit data collection processes.

3.2.2 Explicit Data Collecting Phases and Collected Shows’ Data

The first phase of data collection, however, began before following Jin’s case, which was the first round of general field research of the Spring/Summer 2017 season at London and Paris Fashion Weeks in September and October 2016. The commercial and systematic structures of these two fashion weeks were examined and their further social connections with additional IBC designers

were explored to lay the foundation for later research to account for any unexpected changes in my original case subjects' plans due to the instability of emerging designer brands as startup companies. Simultaneously, the macrostructures of both LFW and PFW were investigated to gain a general overview of the dominant fashion weeks to support the thorough understanding of the designers' behaviours in the later research.

As mentioned above, the first case study data for Wong of the traditional show 'City Power', staged off-schedule in collaboration with Fashions Finest at LFW, was collected in September 2016 at LFW while first approaching him. At the time, I was a fashion editor and I collected the data as a participant observer. The potential issue with bias mainly lies in both the different reasons for collecting different types of data, as well as the different perspectives of being an editor and being a researcher. As an editor, one needs to have an explicit perspective and strong views on others' behaviours and various phenomena. However, as a researcher, one needs to always be neutral and have critical views towards all data. In Wong's case, I was lucky because my boss, Fan, agreed that I could choose the topic for his show productions and report on scenes happening behind the catwalk. The potential bias would only have occurred in using this data, rather than in collecting it. I solved this problem by collecting the data related to his show productions systematically as a researcher but used an editor's angle to analyse it when reporting for the magazine. When I started writing this thesis, I returned to a researcher's perspective in examining this data. It should be noted that the majority of the data collected from the show production for 'City Power' has not been used in this thesis; only the interview data has been kept. This decision was made after completing the second and third rounds of data collection when Wong had produced another commercial and traditional catwalk in collaboration with the official organiser BFC of LFW in September 2018, the season for

Spring/Summer 2019. The explicit reasons for the data not being used are explained in the following paragraphs.

The second phase began after accessing and confirming the consent of the research subject and designer Jin to follow her show production at PFW. From then on, the data collection was processed according to the broadening of personal social connections in the fashion industry, especially with the progress of knowing more suitable target designers. In general, this phase of data collection mainly focused on Jin and Chen's show productions and presentations, as well as the corresponding fashion weeks, PFW and SHFW, that they participated in for the Autumn/Winter 2017 season. Furthermore, other IBC designers' presentations were investigated as a collective when following Chen's show presentations at SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood within the same venue. The content and structures of the collected data are presented in the table placed at the end of this section (see Table 3.6).

The correspondent field research at SHFW was smooth due to my relatively strong social connections in China as I was a fashion editor before studying in the UK. However, few research bias was present during this phase of research as my identity as a fashion editor was only the method used to gain access to SHFW, rather than the perspective taken when collecting and analysing data. To completely avoid bias as an insider, I changed my perspective from an editor to that of a researcher to investigate all methods that the general public could use to gain access to SHFW. After that, I returned to London and followed Jin's show 'Way Out', staged at the Spring/Summer 2018 season at LFW in collaboration with another off-schedule organiser, the Fashion Scout, during which time I re-visited LFW and collected a second round of data on its organisational structure as it was through that show production that I had the chance to interview an organiser

of LFW and collect more comprehensive data on LFW. I found that at PFW and SHFW, the subject designers collaborated with the official organisers and were listed on the official calendars but the shows I followed at LFW at that stage were both listed on the unofficial calendar. Although the Fashion Scout shares similar characteristics to Labelhood, it is not the same as the organisers at PFW and SHFW as it is not an official organiser. This presented an issue when discussing the cultural connections between designers and organisers due to the different services these organisers provided.

The third phase of data collection, which was also the last phase, completed the data collection phase of this study by exploring all of the unexpected changes as the global fashion and cultural status of China was experiencing significant and rapid changes in late 2017 and 2018. Emerging Chinese designers had considerable influences that were recognised by the organiser of LFW, BFC, identifying this phenomenon as a 'new wave' of Chinese design power and establishing a project to support the future development of these Chinese designers. During this time, Jin's show production company, Hexagon Collective, which she had long-term collaboration experiences with, and her show producer Zhao had gained recognitions from the industry after pursuing innovation in designing fashion shows and theatre events for two years. The company then served increasing numbers of other CSM graduates, including emerging IBC designers such as Fengyi Tan and Wanbing Huang, in experimenting with diversified methods of producing shows at both LFW and SHFW. Although I did not follow all these designers and their show productions, who were also suitable for my project, I collected a mixture of primary data, such as Tan's fashion show presentation at the Spring/Summer 2019 season of LFW, and second-hand visual materials with Zhao's support, such as data on Huang's show presentation.

Furthermore, the issue regarding the lack of data on shows presented in collaboration with LFW's official organiser, the BFC, was fixed due to the changes happening with Wong's show production at LFW. A turning point occurred in 2018 when Wong found a new business partner, Romy Luo (hereafter referring as Luo), who was expanding her business in fashion consulting and as a fashion agency. She oversaw part of Wong's brand being in charge of his brand's international PR businesses and future development around the world. Luo then continued to process Wong's participation in LFW and managed to get Wong's brand successfully listed on the official calendar. I then followed his show 'Venus 2028' at the Spring/Summer 2019 season at LFW in September 2018. As the two other designers' shows that I followed were both listed on the official calendars of PFW and SHFW in the same season, it was reasonable to use Wong's show production data in the same systematic structure (all being listed on the official calendar), rather than the previous off-schedule data for 'City Power'. For this reason, I only selected the observation data for Wong's show 'Venus 2028' for the analysis and have not used most of the data for the show 'City Power'. After this phase, the data collection was complete and the explicit data related to the designers and their show productions, as well as their positions in this thesis, can be shown as follows (see Table 3.6):

Designers	Shows	Organisers		Data Categories	Production Company	Chapter Locations
Yujia Jin	A/W 2017, 'Recreation'	PFW	FCF	Production: Locating a Sponsor, Locating a Venue Rehearsal and Choreography, Construction and Installation Presentation	Hexagon Collective (London)	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
	S/S 2018, 'Way Out'	LFW	Fashion Scout	Production: Locating a Venue Rehearsal and Choreography, Construction and Installation Presentation	Hexagon Collective (London)	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
Victor Wong	S/S 2019, 'Venus 2028'	LFW	British Fashion Council	Production: Locating a Venue Presentation	Indie Design London	Chapters 4 and 6
Xuzhi Chen	A/W 2017, 'The Visitors'	SHFW	LabelHood	Production: Locating a Venue', Rehearsal, Music and Orchestra Construction and Installation Presentation	LabelHood and in-house team	Chapters 4, 5 and 6
Angel Chen	A/W 2017, 'Concert Performance'	SHFW	LabelHood	Presentation	LabelHood and in-house	Chapter 6

					team	
Fengyi Tan	S/S 2017	SHFW	LabelHood	Presentation	Hexagon Collective (London)	Chapter 6
	S/S 2018, 'My Life?'	SHFW	XCommons	Presentation	Hexagon Collective (London)	Chapter 6
	S/S 2019, 'Body in/e motion'	LFW	British Fashion Council	Presentation	Hexagon Collective (London)	Chapter 6
Wanbing Huang	A/W 2017, 'Dance Performance'	SHFW	LabelHood	Presentation	LabelHood and in-house team	Chapter 6

Table 3.6: Data structures of designers' show production and presentation processes and arrangements in the thesis.

During the data collection processes, a series of unexpected changes happened due to the aforementioned instability of emerging designers' careers and show plans. The following section discusses these problems and the explicit methods used to deal with them.

3.2.3 Unexpected Changes to Plans

The first challenge of this project that caused unexpected changes was the instability of the subjects' show production plans, some of which were cancelled or changed significantly due to the lack of stability and reliability of the subjects' business plans. These challenges included potential failures to obtain sufficient sponsorship, as well as the failure to produce shows even

when there were no budget problems because producing non-traditional shows is more difficult than producing traditional shows. This project focuses on emerging IBC designers whose careers are not yet as stable as mature designers. Most target designers had established their autonomous brands for approximately five years or less than five years when I began this research. To some extent, this project witnessed the brands of the target designers progress from unstable to stable throughout the four years of my Ph.D. studies, during which period the designers themselves also experienced significant changes.

Taking into account the potential failure of shows' actualisation, I needed to search for more suitable designers as potential back-up subjects in case the target designers changed their plans and proved to be inappropriate or declined my request to observe them. Through the assistance of my boss, Fan, who knew most of the Chinese designers based in London quite thoroughly, I made a list of all of Chinese designers we knew at that stage that met the standards of being based in the UK, born after 1980 and had established autonomous brands within the previous five years, which were Youjia Jin, Xuzhi Chen, Victor Wong, Angel Ma, Sihan Lei, Angel Chen, Wanbing Huang, Shushu Tong and Ejing Zhang. Then, I managed to meet these designers at fashion events, such as press-viewing, pop-up activities and LFW in September 2016, through my role as a temporal fashion editor. At these events, I talked with all of the designers listed above and finally narrowed down the potential subjects to five: Youjia Jin, Xuzhi Chen, Angel Chen, Wanbing Huang and Victor Wong.

Another unexpected change happened in Jin's case. When I first met her in the summer of 2016, she was planning to showcase her Autumn/Winter 2017 collection in Paris, London and Shanghai during the same season. At that time, she was negotiating with two potential sponsors who both expressed

interest in collaborating with her for her upcoming show performances. However, she only succeeded in securing one sponsor to support her show production at PFW. Furthermore, the sponsor was reluctant to support her for the fashion weeks in London and Shanghai. This is because it was their first time experimenting with sponsoring an IBC designer to upgrade the sponsor's status in the global ecosystem with exposure at international fashion weeks. Therefore, the sponsor only chose the fashion week they viewed as the most elite, which was PFW rather than the others. This did weaken the comprehensiveness of data in Jin's case but she then successfully acquired another sponsorship for the next season of Spring/Summer 2018 at LFW in September 2017 after showing at PFW in January 2017.

As a number of unexpected changes occurred during the ethnographic research, this project also contains a series of limitations in terms of the collected data. In general, the data structure in this project can be divided into two categories: designer subjects and fashion week subjects. Therefore, the limitations are presented in the following section.

3.2.4 Limitations of the Collected Data

As mentioned above, when following the designers' cross-cultural show productions, the data could be collected in two ways. The first way is to focus on designers showing the same collections in different cross-cultural fashion weeks using different methods, with one show being innovative and the other show being traditional. The other way is collecting several designers' experiences with producing innovative shows at different fashion weeks compared with the traditional show productions at these fashion weeks. I found it was very difficult to collect the first type of data due to the high

instability of the emerging designers' businesses. Therefore, I tried to collect the second type of data.

All of the UK-educated IBC designers that I met and talked with were reluctant to stage a traditional T-stage runway at SHFW. As for participating in PFW, most of the designers considered it too risky to stage a show at PFW if they were not listed on the official calendar as they had not achieved commercial maturity. This is because of PFW's competitive context and the fact that their investment could be wasted if the designers entered this fierce competition blindly. Therefore, the data that I collected did not cover traditional show productions in Paris or Shanghai which, to some extent, limits the analysis of the general show production systems in Paris and Shanghai.

Another obvious limitation of the data lies in the systematic field research on fashion weeks, with Milan Fashion Week, one of the three dominant European fashion weeks, not being covered in this project. Considering the research question, it would be more rigorous to cover all three legitimate and dominant European fashion weeks, seeing them as the systematic representatives of mature fashion weeks that make up the global ecosystem. Then, the investigation of SHFW could be completed and this emerging, relatively immature fashion week could be compared to the European legitimate fashion weeks. In this way, a more comprehensive analysis of the dynamic global fashion ecosystem would be conducted. However, as the priority of this project is examining the current situation of UK-based IBC designers and their dynamic impacts on the contemporary fashion show, as well as fashion weeks and the global ecosystem, the investigation into fashion weeks had to follow the target designers' experiences during the period of my study. As Chen was the only designer who planned to participate in Milan Fashion Week, but this clashed with Jin's production at PFW, Milan Fashion

Week was excluded from this project. This is another limitation of the collected data, if examined systematically.

The last limitation is also on the field research of PFW, where interviews on the perceptions and regulations of PFW's organisers were not conducted. To examine the institutional structures, services, regulations and organisational ideologies that have influenced designers' participatory behaviours, especially in terms of fashion show productions at fashion weeks, the intention was to interview the organisers of PFW, LFW and SHFW, especially the organisers that had collaborated with the target designers. The organisers of LFW and SHFW were both successfully accessed, with Martyn Roberts for LFW and Tasha, Xiaoyan Lv and Xiangyang Bian for SHFW, although not all interviews were in-depth. However, there was a failure to approach PFW's organisers. This is because, compared to London and Shanghai, where I have sufficient social connections that could help me access the organisers, I have limited social connections in the Paris fashion industry. Furthermore, PFW's organisers tend to be more elusive than those for LFW and SHFW and they tend not to participate in the designers' show productions and presentations, so there are few chances to access them. I have a limited knowledge of French and it would be difficult to broaden my social connections to assist in this research and to undertake in-depth interviews with Parisians without the ability to speak French fluently. For this reason, the crucial systematic data from PFW's organisers that could help in the analysis of fashion weeks is missing from this project, which is a limitation.

3.3 Approaches to Data Analysis

In this research, the ethnographic data covers three main categories: visual data, observation data and interview data.

The visual data contains both secondary and primary sources, with the primary data making up the majority of the research, which includes videos and pictures that were taken during the ethnographic case studies of designers and fashion weeks. These sources include pictures recording show productions and presentations, photographs taken of showrooms, venues and audiences and all data related to the cultural characteristics of the fashion weeks that were directly observed. The secondary visual data mainly includes shows staged by IBC designers' predecessors, the avant-garde designers that dominated the industry in the 1990s, which have been downloaded from YouTube. Other materials include the show presentations of other suitable IBC designers that were not used for my case studies, with the materials being provided by these designers, including Fengyi Tan, Angel Chen and the show production company Hexagon Collective.

The observation data mainly includes my voice notes and written notes, as well as the design concepts and proposals provided by the target designers. Notes were recorded on all actions that were difficult to verbalise but were easily observed. Content analysis has been applied to this category of data. For the interview data, audiotapes were used to record the ethnographic interviews in this project. From the transcribed conversations, patterns among the experiences can be identified. These patterns can be seen in direct quotes or in paraphrasing the common experiences the interviewees had.

In this section, the methods for analysing the qualitative data in this research are clarified and summarised according to the categories of data. In general, inductive and deductive reasoning are applied as the main analysis tools in decoding observation and interview data. Inductive reasoning as an analysis tool is applied in generalising and examining the target designers' cross-cultural show productions and presentations, as well as the show

production systems. Deductive reasoning is applied to analyse the broader fashion week system, cultural characteristics and the rapid changes in the global fashion ecosystem.

3.3.1 Contextual Data and Content Analysis

With regard to analysing qualitative contextual data, content analysis methods, including inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis, are the most frequently chosen methods by qualitative researchers (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Once a researcher decides to use the inductive content analysis approach, the next steps are coding the data, creating categories and extraction (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). According to Wilson and Chaddha (2009, p. 556), if the existing knowledge about a phenomenon is insufficient or if this knowledge is 'fragmented', the inductive approach is more appropriate. From a general perspective, inductive data 'moves from specific to the general', which means data from each precise case are collected and then features are extracted and then developed into general conclusions (Chinn and Kramer, 1999). Moreover, deductive analysis is often based on a relatively mature field of existing knowledge which, to some extent, is more akin to testing a theory. Therefore, deductive data usually uses theories or systematic knowledge to investigate a phenomenon, which moves from the general to the specific.

In this research, inductive reasoning is applied to decode the ethnographic case studies of the designers' actions and the associated observations and interview data. It follows the systematic show production processes from finding a sponsor, locating a venue, specific preparation procedures based on various innovations they experimented with, such as installations and the construction of props, performance rehearsals (including orchestras, immersive physical theatre and contemporary dance) and the final procedure

of presenting at fashion weeks. The data of each step is decoded inductively, from the three specific case subjects' experiences of each fashion week to generalising the common principles of innovative show productions, as well as each type of IBC designers' characteristics in interacting with international fashion weeks.

Deductive reasoning is applied to decode the ethnographic observations and interview data collected from the case studies on the Paris, London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks. It starts with the common structures of the fashion weeks and mainly focuses on the factors that can influence IBC designers' show production procedures. These factors are identified as constitutional structures, organisational ideologies, cultural characteristics, regulations and the service packages offered for the designers' show productions. Then, the specific cultural features of each fashion week, alongside the underlying operating systems and unspoken principles of show production, are explored. Additionally, the way that innovation in contemporary fashion shows is changing and being, to some extent, manipulated by these invisible powers is deductively examined with each specific fashion week and the corresponding cultural context that they are placed in. The processes of re-shaping innovation in contemporary fashion shows and the resulting techniques used in show production procedures are the starting points of the inductive data decoding path. In this way, a closed loop is formed for the data analysis of the whole thesis (see Figure 3.3).

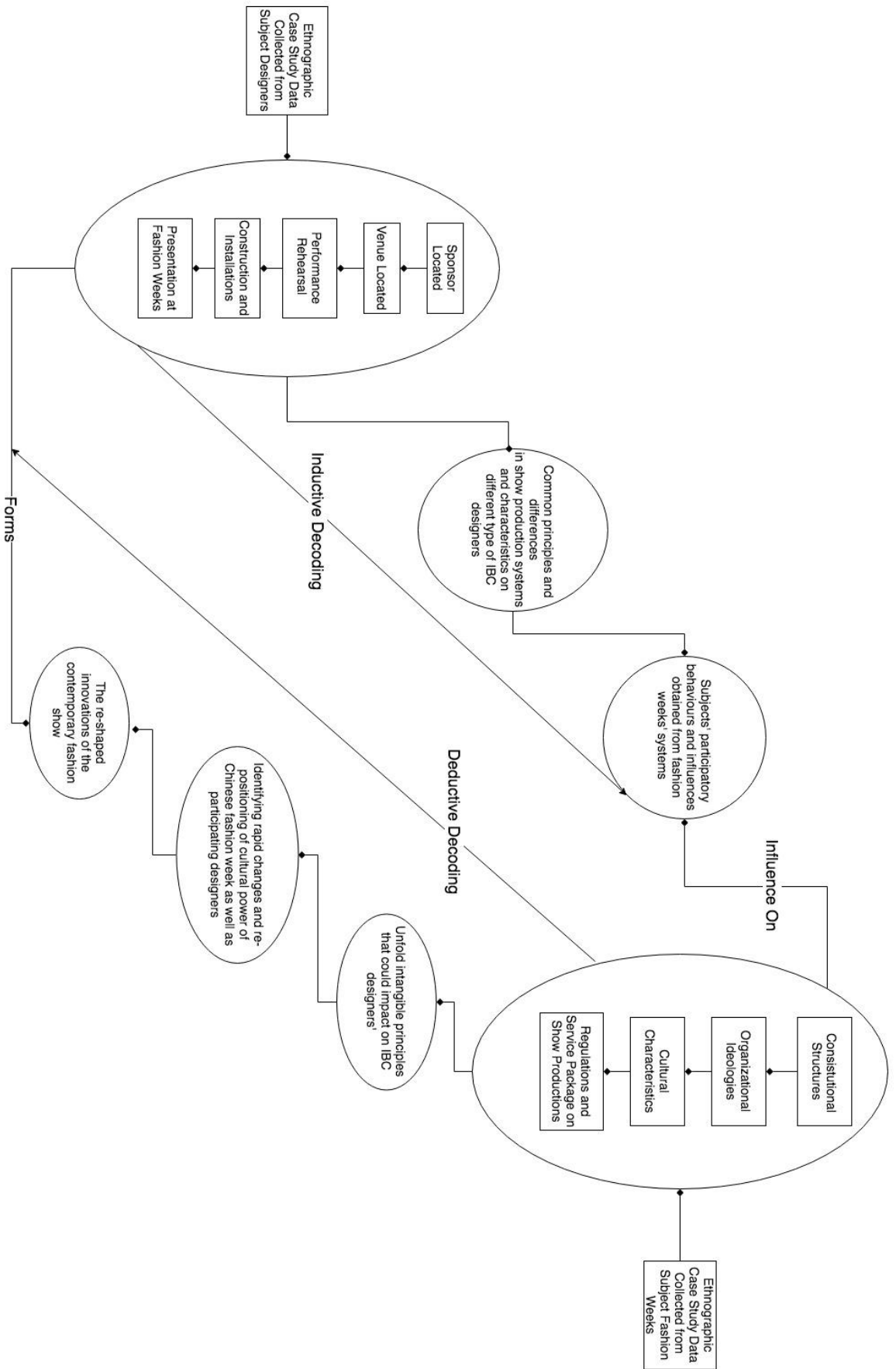


Figure 3.3: Analysis path and data decoding procedures that form a closed loop in this research

As can be seen in the above figure, the decoding procedures formed a closed-loop discussion of reshaped innovation in the contemporary fashion show, as well as the subjects' participatory behaviours and influences from 'the macro environments of the fashion week systems. This places emphasis on the dynamic interconnections between the case subject designers and the case subject fashion weeks, as well as the broader fashion system, through explicit show production procedures. The explicit analytical approach in this section is qualitative comparative analysis (referred to as QCA hereafter), which is 'case-oriented work alongside an extensive and growing body of cross-national research' (Ragin, 2018, p. 2). Although this analytical approach is often considered to be a bridge between qualitative and quantitative methods, its suitability in this research is apparent as both data collected from show productions and correspondent fashion weeks are all case-oriented. The cases all belong to the same system and should be comparatively and systematically analysed.

With regard to its utilisation in qualitative research, this analytical approach is commonly used in social and cultural research that includes case studies, especially cross-cultural research (Rihoux and Lobe, 2009; Ragin, 2018), which is functionally aligned with the needs of this research in terms of the main research methods utilised in this study of observations, case studies and cross-cultural studies. In-depth data and knowledge of the cases are needed when using this analytical approach. The cross-case patterns are investigated in systematic comparable cases, such as the fashion weeks themselves and the designers' participatory behaviours at various fashion weeks, regarding their similarities and differences in different contexts. For instance, one designer's show productions at different fashion weeks, such as Jin's show

productions at PFW and LFW, provide a comparable system to investigate the different cultural characteristics of two fashion weeks in a broader context.

After emphasising the method of constructing and decoding the data through both inductive and deductive reasoning and analysing the case study data through QCA, it is necessary to continue discussing other explicit analytical approaches through discourse analysis in the following section.

3.3.2 Discourse Analysis I and II: Visual Data and the Interpretation of Materials

As mentioned in the above section 3.1, the visual data in this research contains both primary and secondary data, with the primary data making up the majority. The first-hand visual data was mainly produced during the case studies on both the designers and fashion weeks and included visual images and videos illustrating fashion show productions, presentations and fashion weeks' cultural characteristics, as well as the material practices of fashion week organisers and operational institutions. The secondary visual data mainly included the role models of the target designers and these role models' iconic shows that have fundamentally changed the perceptions of innovation in contemporary fashion shows.

Visual data is the key to this project and contributes to the analysis throughout the research, so it is necessary to discuss the exact analysis methods used. Discourse analysis, as a visual research method considered by Foucault (1927, cited by Rose, 2016, p. 194), was the most applicable type of analysis to fit with the data structure of this project, especially with regard to the primary visual data. Rose's terminology (2016, p. 195) related to the general structure of Foucault's discourse methods is useful; it divides the methods

into two categories based on different targets and applied data (see Table 3.7).

	Analysis Focus	Data Categories
Discourse Analysis I	The notion of the discourse, discursive formations and their productivity.	Articulated through various kinds of visual images and verbal texts than it does to the practice entitled by specific discourses. It refers to all forms of talk and texts.
Discourse Analysis II	The material practices of institutions.	More explicitly concerned with issues of power, regimes of truth, institutions and technologies.

Table 3.7: Rose's terminology (2016, p. 195) related to the general structure of Foucault's discourse methods

Rose (2016, p. 195) also points out that the distinction is not 'clear-cut' and many studies examine visual images, verbal texts, institutions and social practices together. This project is one of these studies, investigating the material mentioned above simultaneously. As Gill (1996, p. 142) notes regarding all discourse occurring within certain social circumstances, discourse analysis is useful precisely because it brings materials together which had previously been seen as unrelated, such as informal, verbal material.

In this research, discourse analysis is applied to align with the narrative of the inductive and deductive decoding of all data materials. Two precise discourses are seen in this project. One is the way that the target designers

engaged with the fashion week system and the other is the broader fashion ecosystem's influences on the fashion week system which, to some extent, manipulate designers' participatory behaviours in different cultural contexts.

To be specific, discourse analysis I was applied to analyse the inductive decoded data, which involved the target designers' show production steps from locating sponsorships, finding venues, rehearsing the performances and constructing the installations to presenting at fashion weeks. This is because the show productions are formatted differently in various fashion weeks' systems. Although it seems that fashion weeks have formed a mature production system, show productions change significantly with developments in fashion weeks, as well as in the industry. To identify the notions of this type of cultural production and its connections with the general fashion ecosystem, discourse analysis I was suitable to apply here to decode and analyse all of the collected visual and verbal materials together in one analysis system. Discourse analysis II was used to investigate the deductive decoded data, which included the fashion weeks' institutional systems and ideologies from the case studies, the relationship between design power and political power, the existing issues of the emerging SHFW and the developments in the contemporary fashion week system. This part of the analysis relied more on material practices, such as observational data and photo-documentation, rather than verbal and textual data. Moreover, as this is not a historical project, it only reviews briefly and does not investigate in-depth the formation mechanism of the existing operating system and ideologies.

The potential issues of the above two analysis approaches are one-sidedness and subjectivity, caused by the researcher's personal view and affecting the comprehensiveness of the collected ethnographic data. The one-sidedness is impossible to avoid in this project as the fashion week system is prodigious and complex, constantly updating and developing. Within a restricted time, it

was nearly impossible to provide a complete picture of the systems of fashion weeks and show productions, only the information that could be gathered by September 2018. However, to ensure the comprehensiveness of the practical and empirical materials, it was important to apply discourse analysis II.

To conclude, this methodological chapter elaborates on this empirical study theoretically through data design and approaches, as well as analysis structures. All of the project data has been constructed based on the explicit creative labour system (see Figure 3.1), which is built based on all of the participants and influencers in fashion show production and presentation. The purpose of this is to systematically investigate whether new aesthetics exist and how they have been demonstrated progressively in order to further discuss whether IBC designers have brought innovations to current fashion shows, as well as to the broader global fashion ecosystem. The main research methods, namely case studies, interviews, observations, cross-cultural comparisons and photo-documentation, have all been applied with an explicitly designed rubric. The combination of these methods is useful and effective for exploring the interconnections between individuals (the emerging IBC designers) and organisations (the fashion weeks), as well as the interrelationships between the organisers and the fashion weeks in this research.

The case study approach was time-consuming and took a lot of effort due to the limited press exposure of these emerging IBC designers in the dominant media, especially the target designers who have remained as autonomous as possible to actualise their artistic pursuits. Their community is narrow and exclusive. Access to this cliquey community could be gained by working temporarily for a UK-based Chinese media company which has a fashion column that reports on emerging Chinese designers based in Europe. To thoroughly investigate the cultural characteristics, an extended ethnographic

study was conducted for this research that took more than 18 months in total spread across 24 months.

The complex data can mainly be categorised as contextual data, including interview transcriptions and observational notes, and audio data, including recorded group chats, discussions and any corresponding audio materials collected when working with the target designers, as well as visual data containing photographs of the target designers' productions and presentation processes while touring Paris, London and Shanghai fashion weeks.

Chapter 4: Background Preparations: Practicalities and Challenges for Independent Designers under Cross-Cultural Context

Interpreting the unconventionalities and various boundary-pushing methods of staging fashion shows could be theoretically seen as an analysis and generalisation of the changes that appeared in contemporary fashion shows from late 1970s and the 1980s, to the 2000s, which have been discussed in Chapter 2. These changes have altered the image-building system from aesthetic to the functions in the industry, which in turn has profoundly influenced the younger generation of designers in design thinking, their attitudes towards their career development, as well as the aesthetics on the show design and production.

For the emerging generation of IBC designers who tend to have small-scale businesses yet are trying to maintain a high standard in delivering creative and revolutionary approaches when showing their collections at international fashion weeks, long-term development is needed before their concepts are actualised in real shows as it tends to be more complex. Their endeavours to follow their role models' steps in making their shows spectacular, avant-garde or revolutionary are often filled with failure, controversy and obstacles (Jin, 2016d), especially when they try to stage shows cross-culturally at various fashion weeks in the same season.

The reasons for this failure are complex but can be generalised from both internal and external perspectives. From the internal perspective, the relatively small business scale leads to a lack of profits and low-level international market recognition, thereby resulting in a lack of external financial support from sponsorships and investments. High rates of staff

turnover and the constant changing of collaborators, such as PR agencies, causes instabilities and unprofessionalism in enterprise operations, which increases the cost and the risk of these enterprise operations and lowers the efficiency when producing shows in cross-cultural contexts. For the external challenges, distinctive fashion weeks' system and different cultural phenomenon will have significant influences on show productions in cross-cultural contexts, which are discussed in this chapter with regard to the sponsorship and production ecosystem, including forms of organisational support and venue selection.

These challenges, which are related to today's fashion ecosystem and the global position of Chinese designers, are elaborated on and exemplified in this chapter by following the specific processes of certain emerging IBC designers' early preparation work for show production before attending international fashion weeks, namely the London, Paris and Shanghai Fashion Weeks. To be more precise, the early preparation work includes finding a sponsor and selecting a venue by collaborating with different organisers. The following three designers and their four shows are discussed: Youjia Jin's (hereafter referred to as Jin) Spring/Summer 2017 performance show staged at PFW and her Spring/Summer 2018 performance show delivered at LFW, Victor Wong's (hereafter referred to as Wong) Spring/Summer 2019 standard show at LFW, as well as Xuzhi Chen's (hereafter referred to as Chen) Autumn/Winter 2017 surrealist presentation at SHFW.

Another significant practical issue that is emphasised in this chapter is the various international fashion week systems that have numerous political influences on designers' production practices in their design auditions and venue selections, with the different types of IBC designers choosing different collaboration modes to fit into the legitimate systems. These early-stage production practices show the differences in the designers' individualities,

personalities, modes and philosophies of design, and brand management thinking, as well as the various avant-garde and revolutionary approaches they apply when designing shows under cross-cultural global fashion systems.

As emphasised in the chapter on methodology (chapter 3), this chapter is written in a chronological narrative following Jin, Wong and Chen's experiences of preparing for PFW, LFW and SHFW, respectively, as systematic ethnographic approaches. Therefore, the analysis is based on the obstacles and difficulties they overcame, of which finding sponsors was the first barrier.

4.1 Economic Obstacles: Preparing the Budget and Finding Sponsors

As fashion shows can be viewed as a cultural phenomenon and a marketing and PR activity for brands simultaneously (Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Craik, 2003; Kaiser, 2012), they convey both commercial and cultural meaning within global fashion ecosystems. Conflicts between artistic pursuits and commercial achievements for brands in the fashion ecosystem have long-existed in the fashion realm.

From a cultural viewpoint, the 'artistic field' is constantly struggling between heteronomous and autonomous principles of hierarchisation (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40).

'The heteronomous principle, favorable to those who dominate the field economically and politically and the autonomous principle, whose advocates are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with a degree of independence from the economy, seeing

temporal failure as a sign of free-will and success as a sign of compromise' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40).

The case study designers were located based on their previous experimentations with innovation in showing their collections (Jin had experimented with performance art, Chen had explored installation art and Wong was seeking radical aesthetics in designing products and shows) and their pursuits of the avant-garde in designing their shows, as discussed in Chapter 3. However, when tracing their practices and behaviours in their show productions and presentations during this ethnographic study, these three case study designers revealed different extents in their pursuit of art revolution in fashion shows under the high pressures brought about by both internal and external obstacles, which are elaborated on in a later section 4.1.1. This is presented as designers, especially those seeking avant-garde aesthetics in fashion, trying to balance autonomous and heteronomous principles when actualising their concepts. The difference between the designers that was found in this project was the extent to which they were willing to make compromises by sacrificing their artistic and avant-garde pursuits for the sake of a wider distribution of their designs. To generalise the three case study designers' behaviours in this project, they can be divided into the three categories of extreme-autonomous, semi-autonomous and heteronomous if examined under Bourdieu's definitions. This can be specifically analysed in relation to the first obstacle that emerging IBC designers face when producing a show for a fashion week, which is finding sponsorships. During this process, the extent of their struggles between their inner desires and their outer compromises is key to understanding their different behaviours.

Principle-driven heteronomous designers tend to momentarily disregard the fulfilment of self-identification as they tend to choose the most commercially

cost-effective method to present their new collections which, on most occasions, is a traditional T-stage show. Autonomous designers are often more willing to push artistic boundaries to achieve their individuality, although this is a high-risk strategy as there are much higher costs than for traditional shows. For this reason, for autonomous designers, especially emerging independent designers, the most fundamental and significant challenge is securing ample funding and sufficient economic support for show production.

From a commercial perspective, fashion shows are one of the most pivotal events for the marketing and PR campaigns of most luxury brands and the costs for putting on shows are a vital part of the internal budget for the brand's in-house team. It is not unusual to see large fashion houses such as Chanel or Dior spending millions of euros to produce spectacular shows that have limited commercial return (Duggan, 2001, p. 252). On most occasions, the costs of a fashion show are too high for an emerging independent designer brand to afford in-house due to these brands having a much smaller business scale. Under these circumstances, most emerging designers need sponsorship when attending fashion weeks, especially for producing a fashion show. Another reason that small designer brands need sponsorship when staging a show is that they do not necessarily stage shows consecutively and tend to have a high mobility in terms of business operations. Therefore, they usually outsource part of their operations, such as PR, marketing and show production, to lower the operational costs; finding external sponsorship to support show production is a must.

This section starts by placing emphasis on the necessity of finding a sponsor, mainly by discussing the experiences of Jin's Spring/Summer 2017 performance show, staged at PFW, as it was the first time that Jin had sponsorship and produced stage shows at PFW. This presented obstacles and difficulties due to her lack of experience in both finding a sponsor and

staging a show in an unfamiliar fashion cultural system. Another case of show preparation work that involved sponsor negotiation was Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show, which was his first show and that launched the official calendar of LFW.

These case studies exemplify the issues caused by autonomous principles in a cross-cultural context in Paris, London and Shanghai. They present valuable principles so that other innovative show designers can be more aware of the difficulties and risks they must overcome if they want to deliver innovative shows and achieve individuality before becoming commercially powerful and valuable.

Based on these designers' experiences with overcoming obstacles and negotiating with Chinese and European sponsors, this chapter also explores the distinct sponsorship modes in the fashion systems in Europe and China, which are the resource-exchange mode versus the money-provided mode, respectively.

4.1.1 Internal and External Obstacles: Autonomous Designers versus Heteronomous Designers

For autonomous designers who see staging a successful conceptual show as a sign of free will and a strong expression of individuality and design identity, they tend to face a dilemma, which is that successful revolutionary shows tend to require much financial support. The only way of gaining sufficient financial support for smaller designer brands is to be successful in securing a commercial sponsor, which is a business activity that is primarily viewed as a compromise and a sacrifice of free will and artistic pursuits. As autonomous designers tend to be artistic in running their businesses, it is likely that they will have potential problems when negotiating with sponsors as they tend to

have more emotional behaviours which is problematic in running businesses (Bates, 1994). In contrast, it is easier for heteronomous designers to negotiate with sponsors as they tend to be more willing to compromise in order to secure the sponsorship.

In essence, the professional production of a fashion show is based on rigorous and thorough time management, a mature in-house team and professional external assistance, including the outsourcing of tasks to show production companies (Stark, 2018, p. 120). However, the corresponding costs of such productions are too high for start-up designer brands to afford. For autonomous designers who seek 'art for art's sake' in their show designing (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40) and place artistic pursuits as the top priority of their purpose for producing a show, they need to use their budget for creating innovative visual effects or paying dancers or actors for performances within a show. The impediments dramatically increase for them from both the internal and external perspectives.

The internal and external impediments for autonomous designers in realising their pursuit of staging an unconventional fashion show are mostly seen in the following issues:

- Internal Impactors:

- 1、The instability of the structure of in-house teams, the changing ideas of collaborators, the informality of business operating procedures, such as an incomplete in-house structure and the absence of legal and official procedures, and an overdependence on personal social networks, rather than professional third-party agencies, when locating potential commercial collaborators.

2、An over-estimation of the value of artistic pursuits in fashion shows and over-valuing insiders' opinions rather than the image of the brand among the press and the brand's audience.

- **External Impactors:**

Lack of professional assistance but still a high demand for the sponsors from the legitimate system to have 'fashion status', such as authorities from industry institutions, predominance PR companies and consulting companies with powerful discourse in the domestic fashion realm, which impedes the task.

The following arguments are used to prove the existence of the aforementioned internal and external impactors respectively.

- **Internal Obstacles: Instabilities and Impractical Expectations**

In this project, Jin is seen as a typical autonomous designer while Wong is a typical heteronomous designer. They demonstrate differences in their personalities, thinking modes, standards of recognising and defining success, and ideologies of self-identification. In general, Jin tends to be emotional rather than rational, while Wong shows opposing characteristics when making decisions which is discussed further later in this thesis. As an autonomous designer, Jin is an idealist who sees the revolutionary or artistic pursuits in her shows, as well as her design works, as the most critical goals that she must achieve each season, without caring about commercial success. She views fashion shows as the most vital medium for expressing a designer's perceptions of creativity and innovation and not merely public sales or PR events that are used to promote the brand and its products. This is due to her strong eagerness to express her individuality and to create a recognisable style for her autonomous brand. She has expressed that her goals are:

‘To stage a creative show and leave artistic memories and tell the industry that fashion is not merely about business, that it is about aesthetics. The public needs to be trained, and it is our designers’ task to cultivate them to know real standards of beauty and ugliness. And for the insiders, it is also our new designers’ mission to push boundaries as the affinity with art is the most beautiful part of fashion’ (Jin, 2018).

In contrast, being a classic heteronomous designer, Wong is a typical realist who sees his commercial achievements as the most crucial goal in each season when showing his collection. His ambitions mostly lie in gaining wider communication and interaction with the industry, getting more orders placed and becoming a well-known global designer by attending international fashion weeks. From his point of view, a fashion show is a sales and PR event in which creativity is the least important attribute that a designer should exhibit. As he has noted:

‘The ultimate purpose of brands attending fashion weeks’ is to sell and promote the brand. It is very crucial to place the commercial achievements the highest priority of all goals. The product needs to be sold and a clear brand image needs to be built up. As a founder of a brand, to keep it running in its early establishment period is important. I do want to show my creativity and my talent to the industry, but this is not the most important thing for my brand’ (Wong, 2016).

Chen sits in the middle of these two opposing attitudes and characteristics, endeavouring to strike a balance between being autonomous and heteronomous. He views the fashion show as an ideal medium for establishing his creativity and revolutionary thinking towards the arts and fashion, while the subsequent marketing and communication of the show are as crucial as his artistic pursuits during a show. A more dialectical attitude is seen as he notes:

‘I don’t see art and commercialism as an absolute contradiction when doing a fashion show. Sponsors tend to focus more on the

commercial value of your brand and the show, this is understandable. As the founder of my own brand, building a mature in-house team is very crucial as you don't have to negotiate with sponsors yourself. It is important to let the professionals do the professional things. My mission is to focus more on designing the show' (Chen, 2017).

Chen points out the necessity of building an accomplished in-house team to deal with the brand operations. However, when most designers are first setting up their brand, they tend to lack initial investments, leading to the common situation of them having to fund themselves; their business operations are relatively informal and there is a lack of professionalism.

These differences in perceptions on positioning priorities when conducting preparatory works for shows lead to various modes of behaviours among the emerging IBC designers, especially with regard to two issues. These issues are whether external assistance is required from sponsorship and, if it is required, how to negotiate with sponsors and the extent of control which is given to them in the production work.

Staging a revolutionary show might not always be prohibitively expensive for emerging IBC designers but designers finding sponsors themselves in an informal manner is a difficult task. Luxury brands, such as Burberry, have a mature inner operating system and fixed departments that are in charge of each season's show; as stated by Ye Li, a digital designer at Burberry London Headquarters, 'we have a fixed department that is specifically in charge of finding sponsors if there is a need' (Li, 2016). Emerging IBC designers tend to change their partner firms frequently because, as start-up companies, it takes time for them to find reliable companies to collaborate with in the long term. This was the case with Jin and Wong, who both changed their PR agencies during the period of ethnographic study, Jin changing three times and Wong changing two times.

Some designers may be more concerned about their businesses failing than show production, so they choose to use their own savings or profits to pay for show production in order to have absolute control over the production and preparations. Some designers who are in strong financial positions may not seek sponsors when intending to produce a fashion show or attend international fashion weeks because other key collaborating companies in show production processes, such as PR companies, may lack stability and are not willing to add unstable elements to the process. As both Jin and Wong testified, 'it is quite normal for independent designers to change collaborators such as PR or fabric suppliers from time to time even though we actually want to be stable, but it was just hard to achieve' (Jin, 2016d; Wong, 2017).

When Jin was first interviewed for this project, she had just terminated her cooperation with a UK PR company whose services were 'terrible', in her words. This is commonly seen by IBC designers when expanding their business internationally. For instance, Jin's main working studio is situated in London, her fabric manufacturers and suppliers in Milan and her consulting, sales and PR team in Paris. Wong's working studio is in London, his manufacturers are in China and he has sales and PR teams in both the UK and China. Chen's in-house team is the most comprehensive compared with the other two designers. He has working studios in both London and Shanghai, as well as worldwide PR and sales teams with one in charge of the Asia region and the other in charge of North American and European countries. However, these collaborations are sometimes changeable. Jin and Wong do not have stable in-house teams and they undertake all of their design and administration work independently, while Chen has an in-house design and executive team to deal with the brand's daily affairs. This can be seen in the following table:

	Manufacturing	Sales Department	PR Agency	Sponsor
<i>Youjia Jin</i>	Milan and London	Paris	Paris	China and the UK
<i>Xuzhi Chen</i>	Milan, London and China	Worldwide	Worldwide	China
<i>Victor Wong</i>	China	UK	London and China	China

Table 4.1: Locations for the case study designers Jin, Chen and Wong and their collaborations with manufacturing, sales and PR companies, as well as sponsors (Chen, 2017; Wong, 2017; Jin, 2018)

In order to avoid the harm caused by the instability of a changeable team, one designer being interviewed named Yang Du (hereafter referred to as Du) preferred to use part of her own savings than find sponsors when the funds offered by the organiser of Shanghai Fashion Week were not sufficient. Although Du has not been selected as a case study designer, her experiences are useful and are incorporated in the following analysis.

‘Finding sponsors is the most difficult part for independent designers in producing a show...Unless otherwise necessary, we tend to stay small and don’t find sponsors because it is safer for the business. Sometimes there will be companies or institutions who will proactively offer some budget for us as a way of invitation to attend the event. My last thematic show in Shanghai was such a case: most of the budget was covered by the institution...when the money was insufficient, I spent my own savings instead of finding sponsors because I didn’t want to add more potential trouble for myself...’ (Du, 2016).

Some IBC designers who need to proactively find sponsors typically turn to a third party for help because most designers lack a marketing team that can

assist them with this kind of work (Gartman, 1991; Fitzpatrick, 2005; English, 2006). However, due to the small scale of their business, this third party is usually not a fixed or long-term collaborator. Thus, third parties that add a layer of uncertainty to finding sponsors, which is the most fundamental component of the production system, will inevitably lead to greater instability. Sometimes, if there is no selection of this third party, the designer will have to do the work of finding sponsors by themselves.

The internal structure of a brand's operations team directly influences the efficiency of finding a sponsor. In this research, the autonomous designer Jin had the most severe difficulties of all the designers in negotiating with her sponsors when preparing for her show at PFW for Spring/Summer 2017. Her case can be considered relatively extreme but is still an example of a common situation as most of the cultural and economic obstacles she came across could be attributed to misunderstandings in the collaboration principles, such as the different emphases on economic returns and cultural characteristics in China and European countries.

Due to the lack of in-house or outsourced executive team members, Jin had to find and negotiate with sponsors herself. Additionally, the main methods that she used to locate her sponsor were through her personal social network and introductions through acquaintances. The sponsor company⁸ was introduced to her by her friends, who were two fashion editors⁹ for the HaiBao fashion website, which is one of the most well-known fashion publications in China (Jin, 2016d). The process of obtaining sponsorship, while ultimately successful, was fraught with emotional challenges and even deception between her, her sponsor and the two editors. As an autonomous designer, she tends to not prioritise the needs of her sponsors. This resulted in her

⁸ Agreed to keep their name confidential.

⁹ Agreed to keep their name confidential.

experiencing a turbulent process before she was eventually successful in making the final deal with the sponsor because of her sporadic and emotional thinking, rather than having rational commercial behaviours, and an unstable operating system within her business. All of these factors can lead to high-risk error-prone decision-making.

Driven by the emotional connections she perceived to exist between herself and the two editors, she chose to trust her friends and believe what they said to her, even when they expressed that there was no need for Jin to sign an official contract when introducing the sponsor to her; she agreed with no hesitation.

‘I thought it was not a problem, after all, I didn’t expect them to be successful in finding sponsors for me. I considered it as a trial because I have never looked-for sponsors in this way before. When they told me that they had found a sponsor, I was so excited that I nearly forgot everything...’ (Jin, 2016d).

Although these early phases of starting the sponsorship process took place before Jin was contacted for this project, some indications could still be gleaned from later observations that she had argued with the sponsors because of commission. As mentioned in the above section, fashion editors in China now sometimes act as part-time PR representatives for emerging designers due to the lack of a professional fashion PR system in China’s fashion industry. Driven by the potential commission to be gained from introducing potential sponsor companies to designers, and adding the fact that this collaboration tends to be informal with little legal protection, some fashion editors have developed a tendency to undertake actions that are favourable to themselves but have harmful consequences to the designer without their knowledge or approval.

According to Adam Smith (2012), self-interest is one critical characteristic of the economic man in business activities. Examples of these actions include selling show invitations at a high price without the designer's consent while falsely claiming a need for more free press invitations for fabricated reasons. For instance, in Jin case, in the absence of universal industry standards, the commission that the two editors took from the sponsors was up to 20%, which was much higher than the commission in European fashion systems, which averages 10% to 15%. After Youjia had been contacted for this project, they raised this commission from 10%, due to the uncertainty of finding suitable sponsors, to 20% after they confirmed that they had found an appropriate one. This is one of the problems that is caused by the absence of a contractual agreement.

'I had no choice but to agree with them because I had little time left at that point. I was too honest and told them they had the only ones who could help me and I relied on them. We only made the agreement through WeChat because I didn't have time to return to China and sign the contract with them. I thought it was fine under that situation, after all, they were introduced by my good friends. I thought I could trust them' (Jin, 2016d).

Such informal collaboration without the signing of official contracts can be taken advantage of by some editors who can purposely prevent communication between designers and sponsor companies in the first stages of negotiation due to commercial considerations, which can cause misunderstandings in the subsequent stages. In Jin's case, the two editors also sold invitations to her show without informing her in advance.

'I found out about everything only when I failed to stage this show in October of PFW when these two editors who sold my invitations were not able to deal with their client because I was forced to cancel the original plan due to unforeseen circumstances. They eventually told me about everything they did behind my back' (Jin, 2016d).

These two editors made full use of the sponsor's initial interest in Jin and allowed the sponsor company to buy a full-page advertisement to the value of £180,000 as a prerequisite for getting in touch with and sponsoring Jin, without her consent. Eventually, although these two editors helped Jin by obtaining £50,000 from the sponsor, excluding commission, to the sponsor company, it had spent £180,000 plus £50,000, which was £230,000 in total. Therefore, the sponsor company had the expectation that it would gain £230,000 from Jin. However, Jin did not know about this expectation until the end of their collaboration.

Other internal issues of autonomous designers over-valuing artistic pursuits in a show and having negative attitudes towards mainstream press are related to influences from the social status of the designer's family and their educational background. The fashion industry has proved that the higher the social status of the family a designer is born into, the easier and smoother career path they have when establishing an independent fashion brand, shown through designers such as Stella McCartney. This shows that the social status of the family and a designer's educational background are two main factors that have a profound influence on IBC designers' values and views when running a brand. Additionally, autonomous designers tend to behave and think illogically in conducting their business and have an incorrect estimation about themselves and their expectations for their sponsors (Jin, 2016d; Du, 2016). All of these factors can lead to a higher probability of autonomous designers failing to find sponsors.

Jin is a Chinese designer born to a middle-class family; her father is a businessman and her mother is a housewife. She can only acquire limited financial and social aid from her family, which means that she mostly has to rely on herself in setting up her own brand. She has an older sister who works

in the film industry and has connections with a number of celebrities, who could help her in developing her career. Moreover, she has studied and worked in the UK for over six years and she is much more familiar with operating her business and obeying the rules in the European market than in the Chinese market. A long period of absence from China and a lack of communication experience with Chinese people have led to Jin's lack of awareness when dealing with companies in China because the commercial and cultural principles of Europe and China are significantly distinct.

Jin considers the artistic pursuit of staging a show the highest priority among all other purposes, thinking that she must deliver revolutionary or innovative shows or not do stage shows at all. She sees a traditional T-stage fashion show as a waste of time, money and energy. As she has noted:

‘...my first purpose of doing a fashion show is to challenge conventions and people's ideologies on today's shows. I want to experiment with some avant-garde ideas. If I wasn't restricted by the lack of funding, I would have staged many spectacular ones. I have got tons of amazing ideas that will definitely surprise and shock people, yet a pity is that I don't have enough money to afford these. So, I am really eager to find sponsors who support and understand me’ (Jin, 2017a).

Her words prove her strong need to find an ideal sponsor as she cannot self-fund her revolutionary shows. Compared with Chen and Wong, Jin shows an obvious desire to bring revolution to contemporary show design and production. If the purposes of staging a fashion show can be seen as challenging conventional aesthetics and pursuing art, as well as marketing the brand, then a typical autonomous designer like Jin will always place artistic pursuits as the highest priority, sometimes even viewing recognition from the mainstream press as a failure in the pursuit of free will. As Jin has said, ‘art should be indirect and normal to be only understood by minorities’ (Jin, 2017a).

As a designer who has characteristics that make him both autonomous and heteronomous, Chen shows a more neutral attitude towards the relationship between the requirements of sponsors and artistic pursuits. This rationality could be due to the sufficient financial support he receives from his wealthy family. With his parents' financial support, he was able to set up his own brand and hire a worldwide PR team when he was a student. His parents set aside funds for his business immigration and acted as the angel investors of his brand, Chen, to set it up. Under these circumstances, he had few worries about sponsorship and could choose to use his own show design and production plan.

'I really appreciate and feel lucky to have such great parents to support my career, and I should and must be responsible for their investment. So, if there are suitable sponsors, I can compromise when negotiating with them because of their commercial benefits, but I know that as a start-up brand, it is difficult to find a suitable sponsor. At the same time, if I still want to do a show or presentation and stick to my own design and thinking, it may leave me with no choice but to spend money offered by my angel investors. But what I will guarantee is to use the money as efficiently as it can be, broaden my brand's influence around the world as much as I can through a creative or artistic show' (Chen, 2017).

The heteronomous designer Wong tends to be practical, even freeing himself from all commercial and executive preparation work for shows, only focusing on the design work for shows and new season collections. He has hired a professional agent to help him deal with all show production work, including the early preparation in finding and negotiating with sponsors. However, he does not have a wealthy family to offer financial support and has no budget for hiring assistants. Therefore, he uses 15% of his profits from new collections and 10% of the money from sponsorship to pay for the services of authorities on brand marketing and propagation after the show. This is

because he views himself as lacking in his ability to communicate with sponsors after protracted efforts to negotiate with potential investors when he first started the brand ultimately failed. He has noted that:

‘My goal is to make sure that everything about the show goes on smooth, and this is the basic and most crucial aim of me staging a show in a fashion week, which is to make people know about me and recognize my brand. As a designer, of course, if the condition permits and I have sufficient sponsorship or I was born in a very wealthy family, I would and could show more of my creativities via a show. Otherwise, I will only stick to the most basic design and spend money on the most urgent parts, like communication and propagation after the show. As you know, PR costs are really expensive throughout the world’ (Wong, 2017).

As mentioned in the above introduction to this section, the case study designers can be separated into three categories according to their different attitudes towards balancing commercial and creative needs when actualising their artistic pursuits. The explicit attitudes of these three representative designers of each type of designer towards the relationship between artistic pursuits and commercial needs, as influenced by sponsorships, can be summarised and clarified in the following figure (see Figure 4.1):

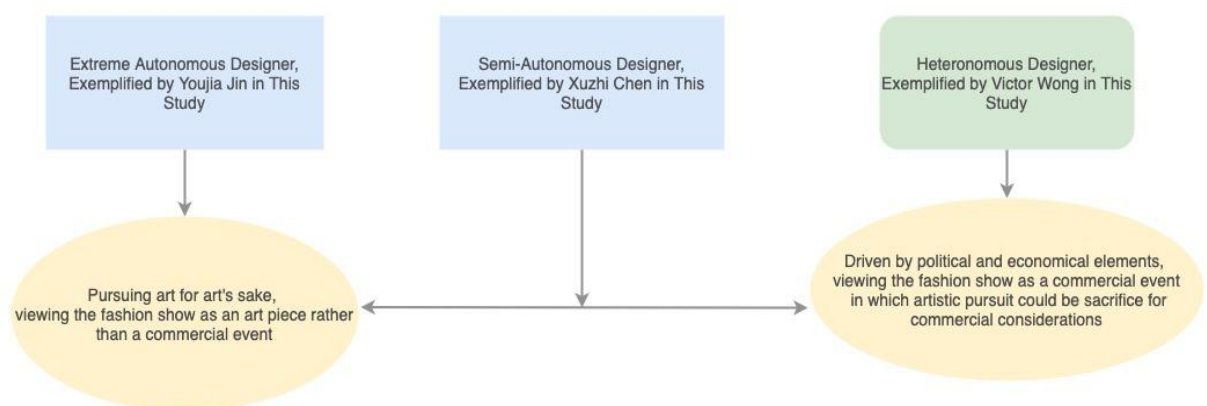


Figure 4.1 The various degrees of dependence on sponsorships among the different types of designers when presenting a show

These three designers (see above Figure 4.1), although they all pursue art and innovation in their fashion shows, vary in the extent of their pursuit, which results in their attitudes and flexibilities being different in terms of the compromises they are willing to make during productions. Jin and Wong can represent two extreme situations in terms of the designers' characteristics. Jin considers aesthetic and artistic pursuits as the top priorities when staging a fashion show, rather than merely showing her new collections, viewing commercial compromise as detrimental to her show that she sees as an artwork, rather than a commercial show. Wong tends to spend most of the sponsorship money on the marketing of a show and considers commercial success to be the top priority when staging a fashion show. Chen represents those designers in the middle of this situation, having the artistic pursuit of being an artist in the fashion realm but still being realistic. He is willing to compromise in commercial negotiations with sponsors.

- **External Obstacles: Underdeveloped Chinese Perceptions of the European PR and Fashion Ecosystem**

As mentioned above, the lack of external assistance alongside the high demand for the sponsors to have 'fashion status' (Jin, 2016a) from the perspectives of European fashion PR and consulting companies are the main external impediments that all IBC designers could face when finding a sponsor. These issues are further explored in the following section.

Firstly, most of the IBC designers that were contacted for this project, including the designers included in the three case studies, gave poor reviews of the services offered by PR companies in both London and Paris. In Jin case, a lack of support from her Paris PR and consulting company added

more difficulty in negotiating with sponsors. The company should have been in charge of finding and negotiating with sponsors for her as it was not just a PR company but also a consulting company, which had responsibilities to upgrade the brand's standing around the world. Her Paris PR and consulting company, which should have been in charge of helping her to negotiate with her potential sponsors, did not offer any practical help throughout the whole process. In Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show at LFW, his agent Luo used a domestic PR company to market the show in addition to her in-house Chinese PR team. However, she spent approximately £20,000 pounds but only received the basic services of contacting local celebrities, arranging seats and sending a team to maintain orders during the show (Luo, 2018).

Jin's sponsor company, a vendor of eyewear, asked her to design a collection of sunglasses as an added condition of sponsoring her. Jin felt compelled to agree because of her reliance on this sponsor company. However, when the payment date arrived, the sponsor company found various excuses to delay payment, insisting that Jin must hand over the design sketches before payment. However, with little protection of intellectual property in China (Wu, 2009; Tsui, 2009), many designers cannot obtain their money after they hand over designs. These companies tend not to be concerned about being sued by the designers because they know that they have the capability to go to court and spend money and time, which the typical independent designer cannot do, and thus have no qualms about taking advantage of independent newcomers to fashion design. Due to the lengthy delay in payment, Jin could not pay the show production company and the consulting companies' fees for her show on time, leading to the eventual failure of her show, which was initially planned to be staged for Autumn/Winter 2016 at PFW in October 2016; she had to postpone this show to the next season in January 2017.

Secondly, the Paris fashion system tends to have a stereotype of many Chinese enterprises that they do not know about true fashion culture, have no aesthetic value and have a low status in the global fashion industry but they are very wealthy. This was the case with Jin's Paris consultant Kukie,¹⁰ who is an authoritative fashion consultant in the European fashion system as he has successfully made Damir Doma and his autonomous brand well-known around the world and assisted Jin in getting onto the official calendar of PFW. As he noted when discussing Chinese fashion enterprises:

'China has the most brilliant manufacturing system and they have many many successful apparel enterprises gaining an amazing amount of profits every year. However, most of these enterprises don't have the capability to design, they just copy everything. Although they have many domestic independent fashion designers and designer brands, they still have limited creativity and it is nearly impossible to find new talents in the Chinese domestic market...but since many enterprises have an abundance of money and they all want to invest much money to get recognition and respect from our fashion system, we can make full use of this opportunity' (Kukie, 2017).

Under these circumstances, Kukie not only did not assist Jin in locating appropriate sponsors in China but he also set many restrictions on her selection on sponsors and high requirements for the cultural status of potential sponsor brands. Specifically, Alibaba Group, which runs Taobao and has over 800 million active online users, has been viewed as low priority and 'bad money' (Jin, 2016a) as a sponsor in the legitimate Paris fashion system and in general cultural recognition because of its counterfeiting of products. However, this situation changed two years after Jin was finding her sponsors in 2016. Alibaba has now raised its industry recognition within Paris as a legitimate brand for fashion, seen through the evidence of an increasing number of commercial collaborations with LVMH brands selling on its luxury platform in the years since 2018 (Bonayon, 2018). Even under these

¹⁰ Agreed to keep confidential, here uses anonym.

circumstances, it can be seen that design innovation and originality are highly protected and valued in Paris's fashion ecosystem and commercial scale is not the top priority when industry professionals in Paris are evaluating potential commercial collaborations. Businesses with a smaller scale but more respect and strong capabilities in terms of original design are often seen as having a high status by Paris PR agencies and consultants.

An emerging brand like *Youjia Jin* that had not gained sufficient commercial recognitions in the international market does not usually have the discourse power to choose sponsors. From a commercial perspective, an emerging IBC designer brand is lucky to have sponsors who are interested in collaborating with it. The rigorous restrictions of Jin's Paris PR agency and consultant regarding the cultural status of sponsors narrowed down her options, leaving her with little choice but to not pursue companies that were 'unsuitable' or had a 'low fashion status'. The most difficult aspect of this situation for Jin was that her Paris consultant did not provide any resources or connections to assist her in finding a sponsor, which increased the difficulty for Jin in actualising her show. As for the reason that Kukie did not assist Jin in finding Chinese sponsors, it was partially because he disagreed with Jin's plan for the show as it was too expensive for her as a new talent appearing on the official calendar of PFW. He suggested that Jin should stage a traditional, safe, T-stage fashion show as her work was already respected enough for her to gain recognition from the Paris fashion authorities. Another reason was that the mode of Chinese sponsorship is distinctively different from that in European fashion capitals, which is elaborated on in the following section.

4.1.2 Modes of Fashion Sponsorship in the European and Chinese Fashion Systems

Scholars have proved that culture has a significant impact on an organisation's business performance (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983; Denison, 1990; Lim, 1995). As finding sponsors is a business activity, as well as the first step in the show production process, cross-cultural collaborations usually exist during the show production process between various fashion culture systems. Sponsors, although not academically viewed as part of creative labour, and their culture and differentiation when collaborating with small designer brands are still important to this study as they reveal the financial problem that most IBC designers have to tackle before starting show production activities. Furthermore, different collaboration modes lead to different cultural phenomena for IBC designers to adapt to. With the rising embeddedness of capital in the creative industry since 2000 (Hopkins, 2013), the tensions between capital and culture have become more extensive and complex. This has increased the difficulties that the core participants in the creative industry, with designers in the fashion industry seen as a paradigm, have to tackle during industry practices. Summarising and comparing the different cultural characteristics and modes of sponsorship between the fashion ecosystems in Europe and China could provide generalised cultural norms that IBC designers could follow in their future practices.

The European fashion sponsorship mode and culture involve providing free services and products or supporting the production teams of brands that are sponsored and, on most occasions, institutions and sponsors do not usually provide money to the productions. The most common mode of sponsorship in Paris is through offering resources, such as makeup teams, models and venues, for free instead of sponsorship money. This was shown in the case study of Jin and her Paris PR Kuki. 'Our sponsors are more like our free suppliers', Kuki explained in a short meeting with Jin. In this mode of cooperation, sponsors tend to be participants instead of 'demanders' who just offer money. This situation is the same in London, demonstrated by the show

productions of both Jin and Wong at LFW. These supportive or sponsorship connections sometimes arise from long-term collaborations with designers' PR companies or the in-house production team of fashion week organisers.

Cultural value is given the top priority when a European sponsor considers whether to support designers. From a sponsor company's perspective, the purpose of sponsoring is more than promotion and marketing. Sponsorship is a purely commercial activity for most companies. However, in the legitimate European fashion systems where a mature fashion eco-system has formed and where cultural value sometimes outweighs the economic returns (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 135), there is another motivation behind the sponsorship of independent designers, in which case support is provided free of charge and without conditions for short-term commercial returns. Such sponsorship can be considered more of an exchange of cultural and artistic value, which can be seen through the free provision of venues, makeup teams or production teams. One common underlying motivation has been discussed by Jin:

'Finding sponsors in Milan, London and Paris, especially in Paris, is quite different from that in China. In Paris, people will consider it a point of pride for them to have helped cultivate a brand with enormous potential when it first emerged... Some of them will not even consider the economic return or how much fame they can gain.

My fabric supplier is a good example of this. His family has run the business for tens of years and his father supported Raf Simons and Damir Doma when they first started their businesses and had no fame at all. He is now supporting me for free. I once joked to him saying 'can you support me forever?' He replied: 'I think you have the potential to become a good and well-known designer and when the day arrives, you won't need my support anymore but if years have passed and you still cannot make it, I will believe that I have made a wrong decision and won't support you anymore. If you make it as I expected, I will be very proud of both you and

myself and say to everyone I meet “do you know that famous designer? It was me who had the wisdom to support her when she had nothing. Hahahaha...” (Jin,2016).

Jin’s fabric supplier gives a clear reason for his motivation that does not consider the short-term commercial returns, which is also the motivation that some Paris sponsors in the fashion industry have when supporting or sponsoring a rising designer.

‘The Paris fashion system is considered as the most professional and the extent of professionalism can be perfectly seen in how sponsors consider the purpose of sponsorship; that they think it is a point of pride to cultivate a new brand...’ (Jin, 2017a).

These sponsors view themselves as cultivators rather than claimants, especially when sponsoring a new brand. According to the hierarchy of needs theory, proposed by Maslow¹¹ (1943, p. 370), it is obvious that the motivation underlying such little consideration for short-term returns indicates ‘esteem needs’, which represent the highest level of needs and are related to ‘prestige and feeling of accomplishment and self-actualization which refers to achieving one’s full potential including creative and activities’. These fashion sponsors with ‘esteem needs’ in sponsorship value their own capabilities and the accomplishment of recognising the potential of a new brand, cultivating it from the beginning and seeing it develop and flourish, seeing it as a form of self-fulfilment rather than simple profit gain.

¹¹ Maslow (1943, p.370) stated that “people are motivated to achieve certain needs, and that some needs take precedence over others. The most fundamental need is for physical survival, and this will be the first thing that motivates our behaviour. Then the upper level is safety needs which is safety and security, then belongingness and love needs which refers to imitate relationships. Then the higher needs goes to “esteem needs” which refers to prestige and feeling of accomplishment and self-actualization which refers to achieving one’s full potential including creative and activities.”

Some sponsors offer young independent designers a good opportunity to better run their businesses, including producing a show that is beyond the ordinary seeking of economic return. In contrast to European cities such as Paris, Chinese sponsor companies tend to show a relatively financial drive in their motivation for sponsoring fashion designers, which makes it more difficult for young independent designers to attract sponsorship, especially those who have gained a reputation in the European fashion system yet lack sufficient recognition and profile in China. The majority of these potential sponsors seek commercial gain through press attention and related marketing campaigns. If they believe that they cannot boost advertising effectiveness through sponsoring a show, they will probably deny the sponsorship. This is the result of the underdeveloped fashion and show production system in China, which will be discussed in the following section.

The most significant difference between the European mode of sponsorship and China's mode of sponsorship is that sponsors offer money in a direct manner, thereby securing a higher level in the intangible hierarchy in relation to event organisers. Sponsors can consider themselves to be the 'boss' of events who can control everything if they wish as a claimant. This is reasonable as sponsorship is a 'serious form of promotion' in companies' branding strategies that needs to be designed with care in order to deliver the 'subtle effects' of marketing successfully (McDonald, 1991, p. 31). In order to achieve the best promotional impact, the sponsors in the Chinese sponsorship system who offer money tend to be cautious, which is reasonable considering their uncertainty of the promotion's effectiveness.

In contrast, in the European resource-exchange sponsorship system, sponsors tend not to be concerned about the appearance of their products during the show process because the institution and the organisers they sponsor are obligated to use their products. The sponsor company in China

tends to control more branding details, which might appear to be 'possessive'. This is partially due to the characteristics of the general fashion industry and system in China, which are relatively underdeveloped compared to Western fashion systems.

'...the way they support you is typically not through offering money. Instead, they prefer to offer you practical help such as providing make-up teams, production teams, or venues for you without charge' (Jin, 2017a).

In European countries, a mature 'economic fashion eco-system' has already formed in which designers can be formally and professionally assisted by a number of professional companies, institutions and mature operations of multi-label brand boutiques from PR to manufacturing and suppliers, and from sales to branding (Kawamura, 2001, pp. 120-145). Additionally, three of the 'top four' international fashion weeks¹² are located in Europe, which offers the best opportunities for independent designers to promote themselves. All of these elements mean that designers do not need to be concerned about any business-related affairs of their business. This mature economic eco-system provides an environment in which designers with heteronomous principles and designers with autonomous principles can both exist comfortably and run their businesses successfully.

The Chinese fashion industry is changing rapidly since it has emerged from 'the post-1978 reform period' (Zhao, 2013, p. 89). Using Tsui's (2009, p. 121) definition of the 'three generations' of Chinese fashion designers,¹³ the third generation (operating in the 21st century) of Chinese designers are considered to be more 'diversified and creative', yet they 'copy' Western

¹² London Fashion Week, Milan Fashion Week and Paris Fashion Week

¹³ Tsui raised that the First-generation that emerged in the 1980s tended to be artistically driven, more concerned about their Chinese identity yet less successful commercially; the second generation of the 1990s was more "pragmatic and professional" and emphasized business success; the third (the 21st century) generation is a more "contemporary, diversified, and creative" yet still "copies" Western design techniques. (Tsui, 2009, p.121).

design techniques. This is reasonable because the Chinese fashion industry imitates and is affected by the Western fashion system and structures under the globalisation of Western fashion.

There are a number of fashion PR firms in the European fashion systems that specifically cater for fashion businesses. Normally, the formal and legitimate means for independent brands or designers to find sponsors in the relatively mature European fashion system is to let these companies assist them. However, the number of fashion PR firms in the Chinese fashion system for independent designers to seek assistance from is limited. There are only some general PR companies that provide One-stop PR services such as Ink-Pak, APNC and Beijing Ogilvy. As for professional fashion PR companies, only three are worth mentioning: Proximity Live, APAX, and LinJie (Introduction to Fashion Public Relations, 2012). However, their services do not include assisting designers in finding sponsorship.

Under these circumstances, besides this small number of professional fashion PR companies, other third parties, namely fashion editors and stylists, make full use of their strong social networks and work part-time as fashion PR agents, similar to those in the European fashion system. This was both highlighted in several in-depth interviews with independent designers, such as Jin and Du:

‘To our small emerging designers whose base is in the UK but have business trading in China, we don’t have any resources or networks with any potential sponsor companies. The most frequent professions that we designers with bases in European countries can access are fashion editors and stylists because many of them will attend fashion weeks here [in Europe]. Some of them become our friends who will help us to deal with some business affairs such as introducing sponsorship, small commercial projects co-operating with local brands and companies etc.’ (Du, 2016; Jin, 2016a).

This is reasonable for emerging diaspora designers because they devote their full energy to professionalising their business in Europe. Not all of them are interested in spreading their fame and expanding their business in China. However, when they need sponsorship to produce an innovative show, the resource-exchange sponsorship mode in European countries is not enough. For instance, if a designer wants to produce a theatrical show, it is almost impossible for them to get a theatre owner to offer the venue for free. Under these circumstances, these designers need sponsors who can offer money instead of resources.

As mentioned in chapter 1, recent five years have seen increasing numbers of Chinese companies and conglomerates seeking opportunities to attend dominant cultural events in the European fashion system to upgrade their hierarchical cultural status in the global fashion ecosystem. In addition to directly collaborating with or sponsoring a fashion week, such as the *VIPS* sponsorship of LFW, sponsoring the emerging IBC designers who are showing at dominant European fashion weeks is another cost-effective measure to enter the European fashion system for relatively small enterprises compared with *VIPS*. As Jin (2017) has noted:

‘Sponsors coming from China care about two things. One is whether they can gain access to fashion weeks and the related authorities, such as the chief editor of *Vogue* or people in charge of the official organisers of fashion weeks through your show, thereby collaborating with these people in the near future to organise a bigger event. The other is that they see participating in the “Big Four” fashion weeks as representative of entering the dominant cultural circle. This is very useful for them in getting more capital investment and wider recognition when they return to China’ (Jin, 2017).

Bourdieu's (1990, p. 78) identification of 'capital' in terms of cultural phenomena refers to 'the skills, knowledge and connections exchanged within the field to establish and reproduce one's position', which is useful in explaining this phenomenon. Chinese sponsors, who provide money, or economic capital, aim to transfer this economic capital into social or cultural capital within the European fashion system, developing social connections in dominant fashion capitals by collaborating with IBC designers, as well as upgrading their cultural status when they return to China.

For the designers, gaining help from and establishing relationships with sponsors through these editors as third parties, who are not specialists in commercial negotiations, usually involves a high risk in terms of the reliability of communication because designers tend not to sign official contracts with these editors. This situation reveals the emotional characteristics of the designers because they consider these editors to be their friends who are doing them a favour in helping them by introducing sponsor companies and small collaboration projects. As Jin (2016c) has mentioned:

'I think we are friends and this is not a formal collaboration. It is more like one of your friends introducing other friends to you who are helpful to your business. Therefore, you give the "red-envelope" as a thanks to them sometimes. When it comes to sponsorship introduction specifically, we take it for granted that these editors can get some commission because they helped us'.

These informal methods of collaboration highlight the existing problems for middle-level designers who have just started their business within the previous three to four years (Zhao, 2013, p. 85), and are, to some extent, unprofessional and emotional. In such an underdeveloped fashion system, designers sometimes have to rely too much on their own private social network instead of gaining formal and professional assistance from professional companies, such as fashion PR firms.

In recent years, an increasing number of overseas independent Chinese designers are returning to China to develop their businesses because of the rapidly flourishing Chinese fashion industry (Tsui, 2009; Zhao, 2013). This has become more evident since Shanghai Fashion Week started in 2003 (Shanghai Fashion Week, n.d.) and has attracted attention from the global fashion industry. According to statistics related to the brands listed on the official website of SHFW, up until 2017, the number of brands attending SHFW exceeded 400, which is more than seven times higher than the number of brands attending in 2003 (Tsui, 2016b). However, the industry system of China's fashion is not mature enough to meet and satisfy all these requirements. The rapidly expanding needs of overseas designers and the underdeveloped domestic fashion system have resulted in an evident gap in the market where professional fashion companies, such as fashion PR and consulting companies, should be set up.

As discussed in section 2.4.3, today's global fashion system is increasingly driven by capital and the discourse power is starting to transfer from the previously dominant cultural centre to the economically dominant centre. This is presented in the sponsorship culture discussed above in both Europe and China. With the decline of economic support from European fashion capitals, emerging IBC designers need adequate support from Chinese sponsors and, in turn, these designers have now become the medium through which these sponsors can upgrade their cultural status as domestic commercial brands through transforming their 'economic capitals' into 'social capitals' (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 55-67). This is because European fashion capitals such as Paris, although losing their economic dominance in fashion, are still dominant cultural centres in the global fashion cultural system, providing an elite status that attracts designers wanting to gain recognition within the cultural system through showing their collections at PFW. This has resulted in the number of

brands participating in PFW being the highest of all the fashion weeks and the competition at PFW being the fiercest. Therefore, with such a large number of participating brands and a lack of supervision from the official organiser, a decentralised or self-running operating system has been formed. There are obvious differences between this system and the incubational system at LFW and SHFW in which the organisers take care of the majority of participants and even train them in how to show their collections at an international fashion week. This is particularly apparent in the venue selection processes, which are fully elaborated on in the next section.

4.2 Political Interferences: Venue Selection and the Organisational Structures of the Paris, London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks

Venue selection is a primary stage in show production, which usually takes at least half a year before a show starts being produced (Stark, 2018). This is a vital step as once a show is featured on the official calendar listed on the official calendar, this means that the brand has gained recognition from legitimate authorities and the venue must fit into the corresponding institutional structures, requirements, cultural legitimacy and discourse power, as well as help to achieve the brand's promotional objectives. Specific locations with history, heritage or creative design can better help designers fulfil their individuality by conveying their concepts vividly and accurately. In most situations, especially for artistic designers, the venue selection comes before the whole design scheme of the show is decided due to the need to match the interior structure of the selected venue. As Jin explains, 'finding a perfect venue is already half the success in show production since it will directly influence the ultimate success of the show presentation and disseminations' (Jin, 2016c).

In this section, how the subject designers are forming and beginning to introduce new aesthetics through production practices is elaborated on starting with the venue selection. This is also intertwined with diverse modes and cultural characteristics under the production systems of fashion weeks in different host cities and different organisers' institutional cultures and regulations. More explicitly, Paris Fashion Week has formed a decentralised production system due to the high number of participating brands, which meant that Jin had to mostly rely on her social connections and in-house team to find a venue. London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks have an incubation production mode for emerging designer brands, which provides assistance for designers yet also sets constraints for designers in fully expressing their creativity. By analysing the same designers and their production experiences regarding venue selection, namely Jin for both PFW and LFW, Wong for LFW and Chen for SHFW, the differences in the fashion weeks' production cultures, as well as the degrees of maturation of the three fashion capitals, are compared to create a broader image of global fashion show production culture and how these designers interact with different production and institutional systems to achieve their goals of bringing new aesthetics to their shows.

Based on the chronological order in which this ethnographic research was conducted, with Jin's fashion performance at the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at PFW being investigated first, PFW and Jin's experiences there are the first to be elaborated on of the three designers in the following section.

4.2.1 Paris Fashion Week: Unspoken Rules in Fierce Attention-Attracting and Spectator Competitions in a Decentralised Show Production System

As discussed in Chapter 2, prior research has suggested that aesthetic innovation is often created in a 'highly interactive context known as creative clusters which involve a wide range of actors, processes and settings' (Chapain et al., 2010, p. 31). These creative clusters, consisting of a highly diverse group of organisations engaging in innovation, create a complex ecology of innovation mechanisms through inter-organisational relationships that facilitate knowledge acquisition and exchange (Ibrahim et al., 2006; Chapain et al., 2010).

Although fashion weeks are not known or identified as creative clusters due to their scale, they are still microcosms of the domestic fashion industry (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Lindgren, 2013; Zhao, 2013), as well as a crucial part of the creative industry. In each host city, which are Paris, London and Shanghai in this research, the long-formed fashion cultural characteristics interact with and are incorporated by the authorities and organisers of fashion weeks with different institutional systems. These cultural characteristics are elitism and legitimacy in the global fashion system in Paris (Beward and Gilbert, 2006; English, 2013; Steele, 2017), support of avant-garde and radical fashion in London (Beward, 2004; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2011) and the mixture of Western and Eastern fashion that has formed the Haipai culture in Shanghai (Beward and MacDonald, 2019). The authorities and organisers that incorporate these cultural characteristics are *Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers and Créateurs de Mode*, also known as the French Couture Federation (FCF) (Sterlacci and Arbuckle, 2008) for PFW, British Fashion Council (BFC) for LFW, and Shanghai Fashion Designers Association (SFDA) for SHFW. Their inter-organisational knowledge, their domestic industry connections and production resources, as well as their high demands in the selection of brands that are listed on their official calendars all form a system of recognition in terms of both the inner mechanisms and outer participants. This means that

the newly selected brands listed on the official calendars must produce work that represents the institutional culture, as well as the host cities' recognisable culture.

Under these circumstances, the new designer brands listed on the FCF's calendar should be elitist, as well as innovative in bringing new aesthetics to both their garments and show designs. This is partially related to the history of PFW's construction in which the FCF was set up not merely to promote the international PFW which only opened to the press after taking form in 1973, but to support the comprehensive development of the domestic fashion industry, more than a century after the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* was first established in 1868. Originating from the *Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode* and setting the global haute couture standard (Sterlacci and Arbuckle, 2008), being elitist in aesthetics and design is the inner need of the institution, which also requires a formed recognition among all emerging brands who apply for the opportunity of being listed on the official calendar. Being the most competitive official calendar for emerging brands to be listed on in the global fashion week system, the organisers will only 'save one or two seats' for the most prestigious emerging brands 'within thousands of applications sent from all corners of the world' (Kukie, 2017). The rest of the seats remain for the most emblematic brands on the global stage that are also members of the FCF.

Each designer should not only submit the design of their new collections but should also propose their show design to the FCF to be evaluated in terms of whether the brands meet the aesthetic standard of being 'innovative, elitist, and classicist simultaneously' (Zhao, 2016; Jin 2016). Jin was successfully selected to be listed on the official calendar as her garment design showed a classic and elitist aesthetic that fit into the Paris fashion appetite and the show design of her creative director, Zhao, provided innovative explorations that

combined multidisciplinary art forms with the show in a new presentation form, which was immersive theatre. These designs could 'give new promising possibilities of Paris fashion, revolutionising the fashion show with new aesthetics', as paraphrased from the FCF by Jin's domestic PR contact at Paris, Kukie (2016). Additionally, this was the first time that the FCF described the show as a 'fashion performance' (see Figure 4.2) on its official calendar (Jin, 2016; Kukie, 2016), which is further evidence of it recognising the potential aesthetic innovation Jin's show could bring to PFW.

Fashion Weeks / Paris / Men's / Fall-winter 17 / 18 / Jan. 18 - Jan. 22

2017

Fashion Week

shows & presentations | press | multi-label showrooms | collective | designer showrooms | tradeshow | events

January 2017	Fashion Shows / January 22 2017	Presentations / January 22 2017
M T W T F S S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 Definitive schedule ← Sunday 22 Jan. alphabetical order print your calendar global map	10.00am Officine Générale See invitation NOWFASHION Live 11.00am Lanvin Palais de Tokyo 13 avenue du Président Wilson 75116 NOWFASHION Live 12.00pm Agnès B. See invitation NOWFASHION Live 1.00pm Sankuanz ★ 48 rue Saint Sabin 75011 NOWFASHION Live 2.00pm Rynshu ★ See invitation NOWFASHION Live	> The White Briefs 72 rue de Mirosmesnil 75008 Autumn/Winter 2017/2018 collection curing a one-to-one discussion with Peter Simonsson. by appointment only 12.00pm Youjia Jin >2.00pm Eléphant Pananame Centre d'Art et de Danse 10 rue Volney 75002 Fashion Performance 3.00pm Hugo Costa >6.00pm Gymnase Trévis 14 rue de Trévis 75009

Figure 4.2: Screenshot of the Paris 2017 Fall/Winter Men's Fashion Week official calendar which shows Jin show and its name given by the organiser (provided by Jin, 2017)

The FCF's major task for PFW is to safeguard its leading aesthetic status and provide virtual guidance in show design (Jin, 2016; Zhao, 2016; Wang, 2016). With regard to the explicit production practices, although the FCF is set up to

help emerging brands in its official written policy (FCF official website, n.d.), based on the experiences of the IBC designers followed and observed for this project, it is nearly impossible for emerging brands, especially international ones, to realistically obtain support from the FCF for the production of shows due to the high number of participating brands each season. It would be nearly impossible for the FCF to take care of all emerging brands in their production practices, even the ones it has put on the official list of PFW, such as Jin (see Figure 4.2). No service fees would be charged under these circumstances and a decentralised show production system is formed without any political or organisational interferences, which makes the Paris show production market infinitely approaching a perfectly competitive one where competition is at its greatest level (Hawkins, 2000). Within this field, nearly all commercial companies could organise shows and events to participate in the PFW. This can widen and stimulate interaction between the different players in the industry, such as production companies and PR and consulting companies, as well as venue renting companies, to form a systematic segment of diversified creative labour.

Although the topic of decentralisation originated from and has been widely discussed within the political field, it can still be applied to cultural and social areas (Prud'Homme, 1995; Dewatripont and Maskin, 1995; Besley and Coate, 2003;). The key measure and standard when discussing decentralisation is related to identifying the centre (this could be institutions in the industry and companies besides governmental organisations) of the phenomenon. It involves the transfer of powers to a local institution or association that has broad autonomy. Within the context of this project, the decentralisation of the Paris show production system should be considered dialectically. From one perspective, Paris has long been considered the centre and the most elite city of the legitimate fashion culture system. However, with a surge of multi-level brands entering its market, showing collections during PFW and being listed

on official calendars, the market itself has become more autonomous to meet a wide variety of needs from brands of multiple levels. In terms of production practices, it can be said that compared with London and Shanghai, the Paris production culture has the least restrictions from authorities, the most cultural complexity and highest number of service providers, which leads to a challenging production environment for new designers listed on the official calendar like Jin.

Brands listed the official calendar does not consist all of those involved in and staged fashion shows at PFW, especially with regard to emerging Chinese designer brands. Those brands that are not selected for the official calendar also stage fashion shows outside of the official system.

All brands, whether couture brands, luxury commercial brands, mature designer brands and emerging designer brands, need to take full responsibility for their shows without commercial or systematic assistance or political interference from the official organisers, the FCF. This has created a well-developed production market in Paris. The macro relationship between the brands and PFW in terms of show production can be seen in the following figure (see Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: PFW's show production system and its relationships with small designers summarised on the basis of ethnographic observations and investigations related to Jin's performance at PFW (Wang, 2018)

As discussed in section 2.3.2, decentralisation and informality are crucial features of the creative labour within a post-Fordist society (Curran, 2000). With decentralised networks with a high degree of art autonomy and highly skilled and professional fashion production companies in Paris, it is predictable that production practices, especially for new players or emerging designers in this case, would have diverse methodological options with different companies offering potential collaboration to apply the potential aesthetic innovation to the greatest extent. Moreover, with little political and authoritative constraints, the market has naturally formed a hierarchy, with several oligopolistic production companies that have developed long-term collaborative relationships with the majority of luxury brands showing at PFW.

Among them, the most famous are La mode en images with the producer Olivier Massart and Villa Eugénie with the producer Etienne Russo. Massart is the founder of the show production company La Mode en Image, which lists a number of household names as its clients, such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Givenchy, Celine, Saint Laurent, Lanvin, Balmain, Valentino, Kenzo, Giambattista Valli, Cartier, Moët & Chandon and Paul Smith (see Table 4.2).

	Villa Eugénie	Bureau Betak	YO Fashion & Luxury Events	La Mode en Images	Gainsbury & Whiting	Eyesight	AMO
Founder	Etienne Russo	Alexandre de Betak		Olivier Massart			Koolhaas
Base	Brussels	Paris	Paris	Paris	London	London and Paris	Holland
Main Clients	Dries Van Noten, Maison Martin Margiela, Hermes	Dior, Viktor&Rolf, Diane von Furstenberg, Jason Wu	Fendi, Celine, Karl Lagerfeld, Jean Paul Gaultier, Lanvin, Louis Vuitton	John Galliano, Louis Vuitton, Valentino, Givenchy, Christian Dior, Balenciaga	Alexander McQueen	Yves Saint Laurent, Helmut Lang, Rick Owens, Chloé, Dior Homme, Viktor&Rolf	Prada

Table 4.2: Most well-known show production companies that have produced shows at PFW (collected and summarised from Poletti and McDowell, 2016)

These companies represent the highest level of show design and production, tending to provide services for luxury brands and famous designer brands rather than emerging independent brands. However, their services are expensive and too hypercritical in terms of client selection for smaller designers with relatively low budgets to hire them. Aesthetic innovation tend to occur within ‘a higher risk of knowledge leakage’ (Lin, 2018, p.625) than technological innovation, and this is partially related to the insufficient protection of ‘aesthetic features’ (Lin, 2018, p.625). In this way, aesthetic innovation, as Lin demonstrates, ‘can be either facilitated or inhibited within

an open innovation setting where limited protection and dynamic knowledge flows occur between organisations' (Lin, 2018, p. 627). In Jin's case, a limited budget made her unable to hire high-profile professional companies to conduct production work, but the completely open Paris fashion market, which has formed an open innovation system with limited protection from legitimate institutions, facilitated her by providing opportunities to produce aesthetic innovations. She had a different production experience at LFW for which the organisers systematically provided incubational production services, which constrained the designers' realisation of creativity.

Fierce marketing competition is usually seen during show production regardless of which fashion week designers participate in, which leaves the emerging IBC designers with no choice but to give up using the services and be independent when producing a show if the designer has complex requirements in terms of show production, like Jin, Wong and Chen did. Under these circumstances, unlike domestic luxury brands in Paris that are deeply rooted in the local fashion system, emerging designer brands such as *Youjia Jin* have to obey more unspoken rules regarding venue selection, especially in terms of location, when they are producing a show at PFW. From a marketing perspective, a suitable venue with the right location is most effective in attracting as much attention as possible to the show.

● Unspoken Rules

As mentioned in section 2.3.3, arts autonomy in cultural production practices is usually expressed by artists or practitioners rejecting the legitimate principles and following the rules handed down from their predecessors (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 112). This was fully reflected in Jin's case of finding venues in Paris by herself using her in-house team. With the long evolution of

production practices, venues that can be selected to be used for PFW are restrained to certain areas following the rules and the standard of the 'golden area'. Together with the standard of the 'golden time', these two rules have been progressively formed throughout PFW's history and have become pivotal, handed down from generation to generation and obeyed by each emerging designer who wants to be recognised at PFW.

The 'golden area' rules explicitly refer to the designer selecting a venue within the commonly-recognised yet unofficial 'golden area', which is most convenient for the press and celebrities to attend. A certain area has been identified after a long period of exploration among the fashion predecessors, which is seen as an area between the westernmost point of the Grand Palais, the eastern border of the Centre Georges Pompidou, the northernmost margin of the Opéra de Paris and the southernmost point formed by the Seine (see Figure 4.4).

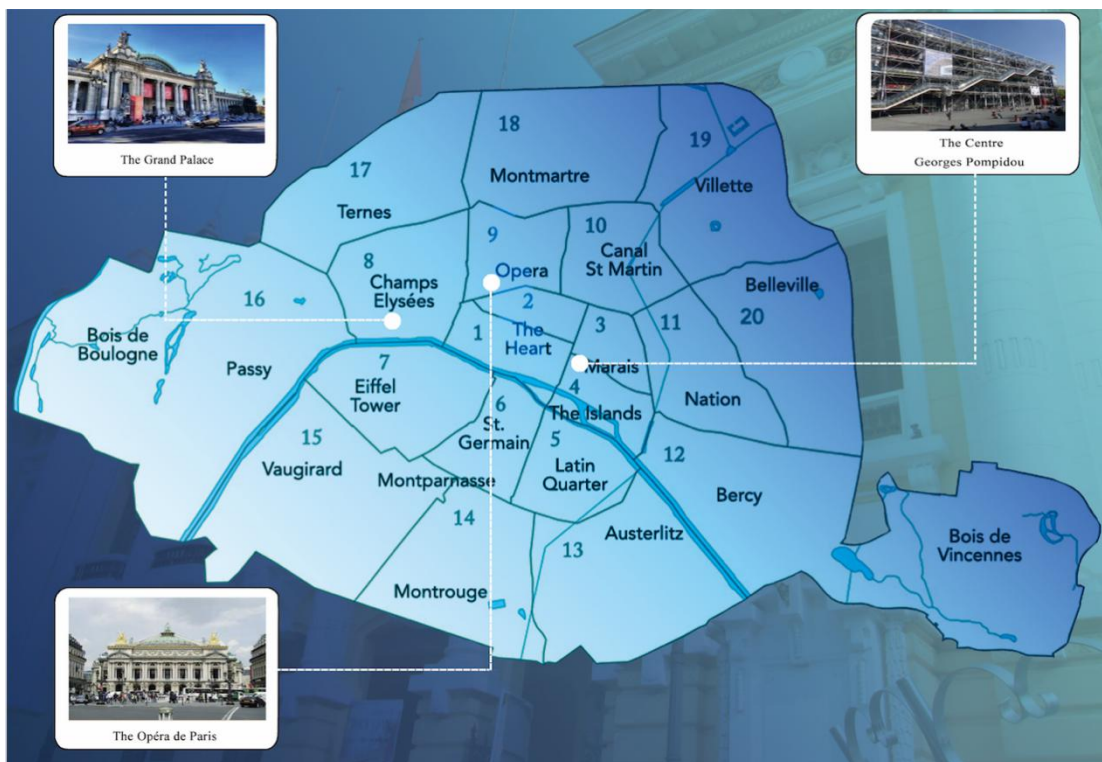


Figure 4.4: The 'golden area' locations: the Grand Palais, the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Opéra de Paris (Wang, 2018)

The circle between these four Paris landmarks mainly lies north of the Seine and forms the 'golden area' from which emerging designers can select venues. As Jin (2016) has noted:

'You must find venues within the city center of Paris if you are new to PFW's runway system. You should be clearly aware that except for the invited media that will probably attend your show, you should also attract some passing-by press on their way to other shows. If you want to achieve this, you have to find venues strictly within the city center'.

This is an empirical rule generalized by the experienced local consultant Kukie who have assisted a number of emerging designers to stage shows at PFW and knows exactly which region should be chosen as 'the venue area' (Kukie, 2017). As he has emphasised:

'For new designers who want to attract as much attention as he or she could, there definitely is a 'golden area' for them which is better on the northern part of the Seine and to be as central as possible...People are too busy to attend your show as there are too many, too many shows at PFW. If you are a new designer, and if you want to be noticed, then stage a show in the 'best area' if you could' (Kukie, 2017).

Based on the above views, the most apparent benefit and the main purpose of new designers choosing a venue in the 'golden area' is to attract more potential passing members of the press and celebrities to attend their shows. However, these rules are only important for emerging designer brands as high-profile luxury brands have a wider choice from all regions due to their constantly over-occupied in each season, freeing them from the impact of the external context and the rules. As mentioned above, the global well-known brands have a wide variety of choices regarding venues in Paris. These

venues could be but are not limited to the Musée de l'Homme and the Palais de Tokyo in the 16th arrondissement, Le Carrousel du Louvre and the Jardin des Tuileries in the 1st arrondissement, Les Beaux-Arts de Paris in the 6th arrondissement and the Halle Freyssinet in the 13th arrondissement (see Figure 4.5)

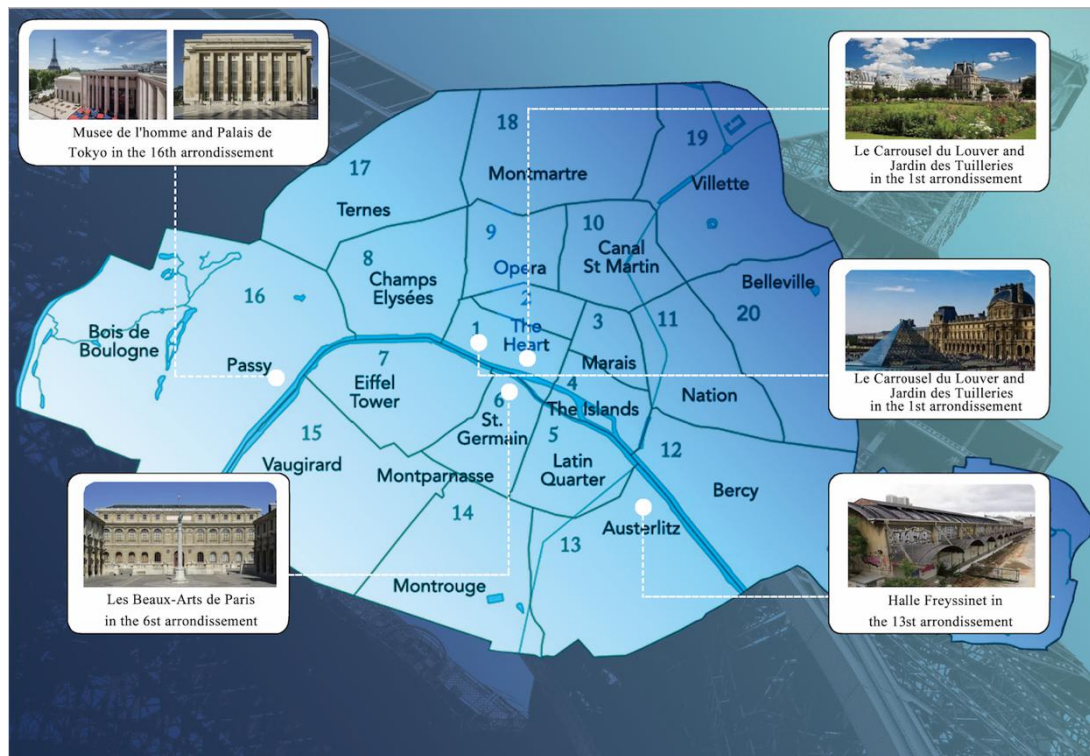


Figure 4.5: Main venues that luxury or mature designer brands have favoured at PFW (Wang, 2018)

Designers also need to invite potential passers-by to attend before the show. The method used to locate and contact these people is in relation to the 'golden time' rule, which means that the show's time is crucial for the venue selection as well. For emerging IBC designers, they should never stage a show at the same time as the most well-known brands as all of the press, buyers and celebrities are likely to decline their invitation.

To identify the 'golden time' in order to locate the right venue, designers should consider their own pre- and after-shows during fashion week. Within the 'golden area', a designer may choose from several suitable venues with the appropriate capacities and facilities. After determining the time availability of these different venues, the designer needs to make a decision by comparing the venues' time availabilities and the locations of their own pre- and after-shows.

For instance, if one of the venue's available time slots is between 2pm and 4pm on the 21st of January, it is vital for the designer to find out the shows that are being staged at this time, as well as before and after this time, on the same day. Therefore, when negotiating and deciding the show's time slot with the owner of a venue, it is desirable to choose a location that is between its own pre and after-shows on the calendar so that better along the way from the pre-show to the after-show that people can attend the show who are moving from one show to another. In this way, more press will be attracted to attend this show because it is convenient for them. Taking the Grand Palais and the Musée du Louvre as two examples of locations, if the pre-show of a new designer is in the Grand Palais and the after-show is in the Musée du Louvre, the best venue for them to choose for their show might be in the Jardin des Tuileries or the Musée d'Orsay if they intend to attract more attention.

This task seems impossible as the official calendar for fashion weeks tends to be revealed only two to three months before the shows, which is long after the designers have decided the venues. Technically, it is difficult for a designer to know the time arrangement of any show on the calendar before the official calendar is revealed. However, a designer could hire a reliable, experienced domestic PR and consultant company to predict the calendar. For most emerging designers, the preparation work for shows does not usually start as

early as luxury brands, which ‘start preparing six to twelve months before the shows’ (Stark, 2018, p.94). Under these circumstances, there are two ways that a new designer can make a wiser decision about venue location. One way is a designer having a social network that contains friends who work with the mainstream fashion press, even better if they work with the ‘big five’: *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Marie Claire*. This makes it easy to know the locations of the shows of luxury or well-known designer brands long before the official calendar is revealed. This method allows new designers to have access to accurate locations and time arrangements of nearly all of the well-known brands as nearly all of these brands send invitations to the ‘big five’ fashion magazines for each season.

In this way, another option is to collaborate with a reliable domestic PR and consultant company that has gathered the most up-to-date and first-hand information about a number of luxury brands’ time arrangements once these brands have chosen their venues. Some of this information comes from the brands they are operating or collaborating with, while other information comes from the PR or consultant’s personal connections. For instance, this method was applied in Jin’s case. The long-term working experiences in the Paris fashion industry of her Paris PR and consultant Kuki have given him a strong local and industry connection. These social resources are highly useful when he wants to boost a new talent’s career with his strong social power. As he has noted, ‘...I have my own ways to get this information to assist Jin to know the best time and location that she should arrange for her show...’ (Kukie, 2016).

In addition to the ‘golden area’ and ‘golden time’ rules, designers also need to consider a number of elements comprehensively due to the high standard required of the visual effects in the shows. These elements are floor space, interior design and structure, ambient lighting, audience capacity, rental fees

and the flexibility to add decorations and installations. Among these considerations, the most critical is region as brands need to focus on the marketing function of the show to attract as many important audience members as possible (such as editors working for the mainstream fashion press and international buyers) to watch the show (Jin, 2017a). Delanne (2016), Jin's friend and local assistant in Paris and a show producer who has worked at the Musée du Louvre, has noted that:

'We have to gain as much comprehensive knowledge about the targeted venue as we can since we are planning to stage a very complex show performance with special settings, dancers, special lightings etc.... We must get to know every little detail of the venue in order to know its potential because we have to consider everything in staging such special shows including where we can put our audience and what facilities they can offer and what we need to create by ourselves'.

These requirements for a venue, including the required flexibility, are difficult and possibly contain issues with cultural stereotypes and unexpected conflicts based on different cases. As mentioned above, although Kukie assisted Jin in locating venues using his powerful domestic social connections, the venues recommended by him still had limitations due to his considerations of his personal benefits. For instance, without knowing which venues to choose from, Jin turned to Kukie and asked him to recommend some alternatives. However, Jin was not pleased with any of these venues although some were selected based on the 'golden time and area' principles. This is because, under Kukie's direction, he recommended venues that had long-term collaborations with his company without considering Jin's need to bring innovation to her show. As Jin (2016c) has stated:

'The region of the venue is the most critical thing and they taught me many principles that I had never heard of before. Kuki did offer lots of help in directing me in show producing and venue locating

yet they don't care which kind of show I want to stage. It was I who initially approached them with a proposal of staging a theatrical performance and I, therefore, needed a special venue, aesthetically. But he wanted me to be cautious and conservative as this was the first time I was staging a show at PFW. We had a very heated argument yet still could not reach a consensus. Then he agreed to let me find the venue on my own yet still offered his help to make sure that the venue aligned with the golden area and time principles'.

Kukie's concern, although it benefited himself, was still reasonable. In the highly competitive and elite environment of PFW, staging a commercially successful show is a difficult task. In this context, commercial success means successful communication, recognition from the authorities and the enrichment of elite social connections within the industry. From this perspective, a young designer like Jin, who was listed on the official calendar of PFW for the first time, should put commercial success at the top of her priorities.

This was not Jin's view as she is rebellious and ambitious, insisting on bringing innovation to her debut at PFW. This meant that she had to find a different venue in the 'golden area', starting again by considering the suitable elements simultaneously, namely, a flexible floor space for adding decorations and installations, a unique or creative inner structure, ambient lighting or rooms for adding lighting design, an appropriate audience capacity, affordable rental fees and a suitable time slot. Kukie refused to assist her in starting this task again. For this reason, she sought assistance from Delanne, one of her former classmates at UK who has experience with show production and exhibition curation in Paris. She is French and is familiar with the local show production system. Jin was lucky that she had a professional Parisian show producer to help her within requisites to find a suitable venue. The two core benefits of receiving help from a Parisian can be generalised in the following paragraphs. The first benefit is that Delanne could accurately locate

the most suitable venues within the 'golden area'. The second benefit is that Delanne could assist in negotiating with the owners of the venues to get the lowest price.

Firstly, Delanne was experienced in the industry and knew many suitable venues that were small and attractive but not well-known as Paris landmarks. Through her recommendations, re-locating the venue was a smooth process. I followed this process and we visited and evaluated over ten venues within the Paris city centre in two days. During this process, Jin, together with her show producer and set designer Tong Zhao (hereafter referring to Zhao) and her domestic helper Delanne, mainly evaluated the potential venues in terms of audience capacity, the flexibility to add installations and the 'golden area and time' principles.

Taking two of the eliminated venues as examples, the two small theatres shown in the below figures were not ideal mainly because of the small audience capacities and the lack of flexibility in terms of adding installations. In the following images is a very traditional and small theatre with a basic design (see Figure 4.6). Jin and Zhao, standing in the audience area in the image on the right, are discussing the audience capacity of this small venue while some actors are rehearsing on the stage. They thought that the venue was too small and simple with little flexibility to add complex installations. Furthermore, it was not suitable due to both its location being on the fringes of the city centre and the lack of space for photographers to shoot videos and pictures.



Figure 4.6: A venue that was too small and not suitable for Jin (photographed by Wang, 2016)

Another venue that was eliminated, shown in the following images, was the fifth location that we visited (see Figure 4.7). The location was favourable being just behind the Centre Georges Pompidou in the region of Le Marais, where most of the private showrooms in Paris are situated; nearly all of the bloggers and buyers would visit this area during PFW. Zhao, Jin, Delanne and the manager of the venue tested the light effects and facilities of this venue and it seemed suitable for Jin but the only available time for rehearsal was not appropriate and Jin had to eliminate this option. As a participant observer accompanying them during this whole process, I could clearly observe their excitement when they thought that the venue possessed all of the necessary attributes and saw their clear disappointment after finding out that the time slot was not suitable. This violated the 'golden time' principle, so they had to eliminate the venue.



Figure 4.7: An ideal venue with an unsuitable time slot for the show
(photographed by Wang, 2016)

Even if a venue meets all of the conditions, it still might have to be eliminated due to high rental fees. Another important potential challenge is negotiating on prices with the owners of suitable potential venues. The second benefit of bringing a Parisian with them is that it is more convenience for them to get a more reasonable renting price.

An ideal venue was found, the Théâtre Daunou, a Parisian theatre inaugurated in 1921, located in the 2nd arrondissement of Paris, with a favourable location (see Figure 4.8), a suitable audience capacity of approximately 350-400 and attractive decorations inside (see Figure 4.9). This was still not the venue that was chosen as the rental fee was too high for them to afford.

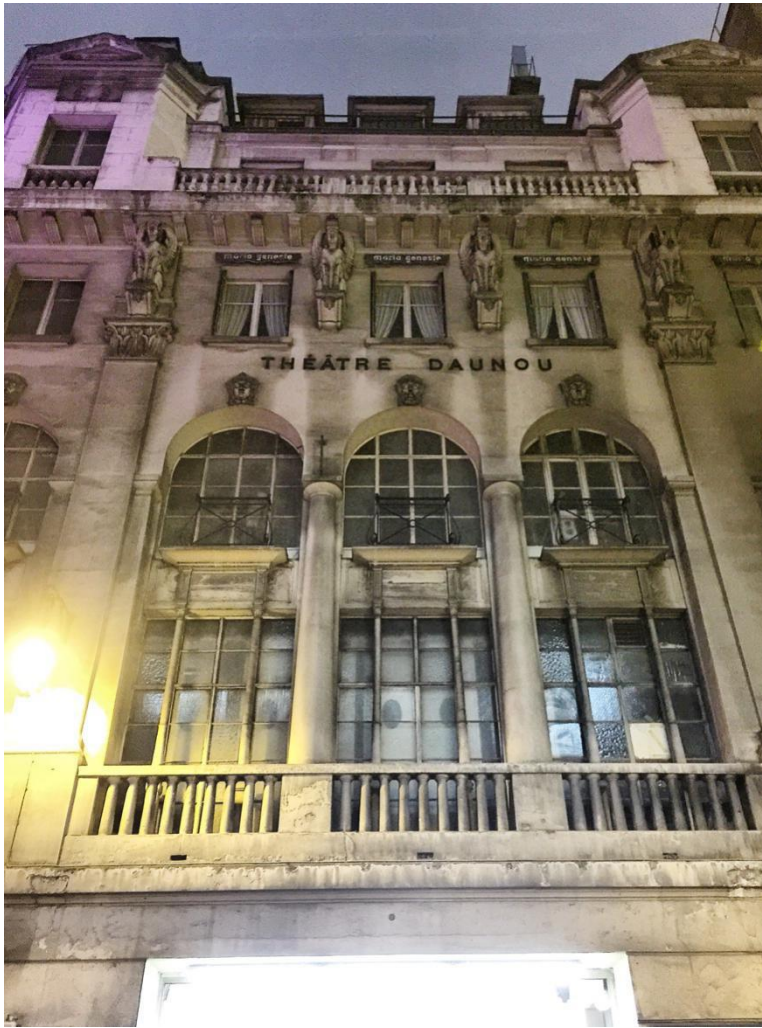


Figure 4.8: Facade (left) and entrance (right) of the Théâtre Daunou
(photographed by Wang, 2016)

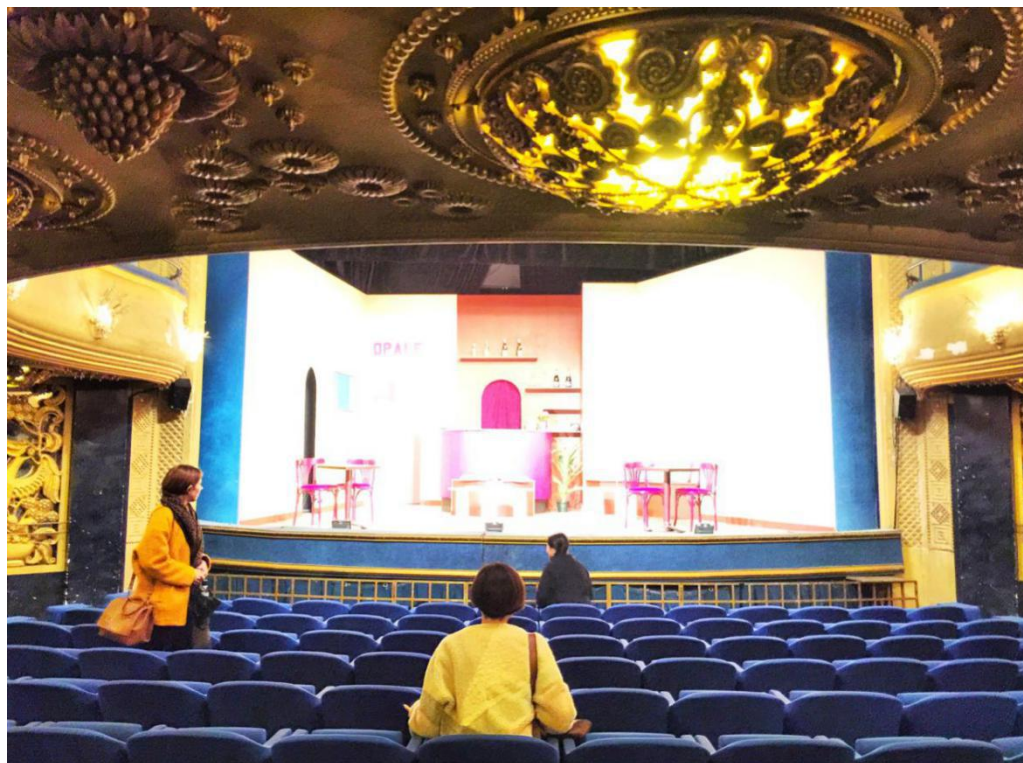


Figure 4.9: An ideal venue that could hold approximately 300-400 audience members for Jin (photographed by Wang, 2016)

The prices of renting a theatre in Paris are always negotiable as the owners of theatres in Paris tend to be highly choosy about their clients in order to protect the professional reputation and cultural status of the theatre. This means that Parisian theatre owners tend to have a cultural pride and a concern about the reputation of the venue far beyond the concern about how much rent they can get. This is partially because, for Parisians, fashion is considered more a traditional art form than a business (Delanne, 2017). This has also been confirmed by Kukie (2016):

‘Parisians are proud of our fashion and art culture because we are the origins of most artistic fields. Fashion is not merely a business, it is an elite and high-level art and every designer should treasure and be proud of what they do because they are innovators who create miracles’.

The owner of the Théâtre Daunou is a conventional Parisian woman dubbed ‘the crazy lady’ by Zhao who considers her theatre the best in Paris and is notoriously choosy about her clients. Whether an event held in the theatre can improve her theatre’s reputation is her most fundamental and, sometimes, sole consideration. If she thinks that an event can enhance the theatre’s prestige, she will offer a considerable discount or even provide the venue free of charge.

‘...the owner of this theatre is very hard to deal with, she held a really bad attitude when I first called her on the phone. She said that she wouldn’t consider renting the theatre to us unless our show had high cultural value with an audience of high social status and hierarchy’ (Zhao, 2017).

As a participant observer who went to Paris with Zhao and Jin and was present during the whole negotiating processes with the owner, I witnessed them having obvious difficulties communicating with a professional from a different cultural background.

‘I know that the owner and I once had a project collaborating with her. She was a fashion designer with an unstable mood, a typical weird artist and quite hard to deal with. Whether she agrees to rent the venue to us or not is greatly dependent on her mood which we can hardly control’ (Delanne, 2016).

According to Delanne, this is not an unusual situation when renting theatres and negotiating with owners. Furthermore, it is quite common in Paris, not only in the field of fashion but in all other art-related fields as well.

‘...nearly all Parisians have high degrees of self-esteem of our culture, especially for fashion, fine art and theatres. As fashion culture, especially couture, is deeply embedded within the theatre culture in Paris, we Parisians view this as our ethical pride. We think that no other countries in the world value their cultural reputation as we do. We don’t want to sacrifice and make a concession on things not beautiful or prestigious. This means, sometimes, we would rather not make any money to hold an event that can raise the reputation’ (Delanne, 2016).

Considering the values demonstrated above, Delanne has offered a useful tip for emerging IBC designers when negotiating with a tough venue owner, which is to show a deep understanding of and to pay compliments to the aesthetic and cultural value of a venue, showing high esteem for the location. As she has explained:

‘...always start your negotiation with compliments for the venue’s historical and cultural status and values instead of negotiating the rental price directly, which is the safest way, especially when dealing with the owner of a theatre or a gallery in Paris. You’d better compliment her venue as well as herself as much as you can, following her own belief that her venue is the best one in Paris with

the highest aesthetic sense of design and fruitful historical stories. Even discussing the rental fee is not important because some arrogant artistic Parisians cherish cultural and aesthetic value way over economic returns. They even think it is vulgar and rude to say: hey, I have loads of money, any price you offer is affordable for me. They will think you are insulting their venue' (Delanne 2016).

Elitism among Paris fashion culture is undeniable as it has become a cultural characteristic. Couture culture has a relationship with theatre culture and some Parisian theatre owners, especially those whose theatres have long histories, are proud of this elitism and it seems reasonable and natural to them. In the conventional legitimate European fashion ecosystem, cultural reproduction is not entirely associated with capital. Cultural value is sometimes prioritised much higher than economic profits. In this field, some fashion professionals are very cautious and would rather earn no money than take the risk of any potential harm to their reputations.

Another unique cultural obstacle an emerging diaspora designer tends to face in Paris is a significant increase in the rental prices because of Parisians' stereotypes of Chinese designers. This means that if a Chinese designer and a Parisian designer approached an owner to negotiate on prices at the same time, the owner would often quote a much higher price to the Chinese designer compared to the Parisian designer as in most Parisians' stereotypical view, Chinese people are easily taken advantage of as they are often wealthy and are more willing to spend a large amount of money to produce a show at PFW to upgrade their brand's status, as well as to gain wider cultural recognition, especially when the designer returns to the Chinese market. This is because being able to show at PFW, especially in a prestigious venue such as Musée du Louvre, is a high-profile validation from the legitimate fashion week system. For this reason, as long as they can afford, they will often pay a much higher price to rent a venue without hesitation.

This stereotype has originated not only from the fact that the global economic power is shifting from the Western to the Eastern world but also because of a series of behaviours that several Chinese designers have shown at previous PFWs. For instance, eager to flaunt their prosperity, several Chinese designers¹⁴ broke the record in 2015 of the amount spent to produce a fashion show in Paris, which was reportedly over £2,000,000. This shocked most Parisians; according to Kukie's recollection (2016): 'I have a clear memory of this because I remember news everywhere reporting this; it is ironic from us Parisians' perspective because the final show wasn't spectacular at all...'. Although it cannot be confirmed whether this is true due to the inaccessibility of these information's original source, if it is true, then this cost was even higher than Chanel's show production cost.

Under these circumstances, negotiating with an owner after confirming a venue is appropriate is another vital challenge that emerging diaspora designers need to overcome due to the obstacle of Parisians' stereotypical images of Chinese designers as 'Beverly Hillbillies'¹⁵. This stereotypical image is particularly evident in businesses that involve both economic value and artistic meaning in their operations, such as art and fashion. In Jin's case, having a Parisian to assist her in negotiations made the process smooth. With a local show producer's assistance, Jin received accurate instructions in dealing with artistic venue owners in Paris, which increased the working efficiency enormously. In fact, the rental cost that the owner of the Théâtre Daunou offered to Delanne was totally different to the price she offered to Jin, who was quoted twice the rate.

¹⁴ Agreed to keep their names confidential.

¹⁵ Beverly Hillbillies: “土豪” (“TuHao”) in Chinese, which means these newly rich who are rural rich in money yet have little artistically accomplishment and aesthetics in China.

‘...They will quote you a much higher price if you are a Chinese designer because, in their mind, Chinese designers are very rich and tend not to care much about money. They feel that the Chinese are willing to bear a higher cost in order to stage fashion shows in the most famous venues to flaunt their prosperity when they return to China...’ (Delanne, 2016).

Whether listed on the official calendar or not, staging a show at PFW is proof of a brand’s hierarchy, professionalism and strong operational capability as an emerging designer brand for most designers. As China is engaging with changing the image of ‘manufactured in China’ to ‘designed in China’ within the global fashion system, staging shows at PFW is viewed as a recognition of design capability for most Chinese designers, whether international-based or domestic-based. However, most Chinese people believe that money is a solution to all problems because they have an old saying that can be translated into English as ‘money talks’. For this reason, Chinese designers are accustomed to viewing fashion show production as a purely commercial behaviour while neglecting its cultural meaning to Parisians.

In Jin’s case, after thoroughly explaining her innovative show performance plan to the owner of the Théâtre Daunou, together with the fact that a number of influential celebrities and fashion professionals were attending the show, the owner was initially happy to rent the venue to Jin at a reasonable price within her budget. However, after seeing the show’s design sketches from Zhao and seeing the invitation list from Jin’s PR company, the owner changed her mind and turned down Jin’s request to rent the venue for the following two reasons.

First, she thought that the setting of the show may ruin her stage because her theatre had never been used to stage this kind of fashion show before. She was not willing to take this risk. Second, she was concerned about the uncertainty of how the show would be received; many famous people were attending and if the show was a failure, her venue’s fame and reputation

would also be damaged by association, which was a concern for her. She treasured the reputation of her theatre far more than other factors. Under such circumstances, she thought that it would be safer to turn down Jin's request of renting her theatre as the show's venue.

The two reasons mentioned above are both practical issues related to the running of this venue. This, to some extent, reflects the Parisian conservativeness mentioned by Delanne (2017) from a commercial perspective. Eventually, with the suggestions of Jin's PR company, they found a suitable venue, the Éléphant Paname Centre d'Art et de Danse (see Figures 4.10 and 4.11), which is a centre dedicated to the arts and dance in the 2nd arrondissement of Paris.



Figure 4.10: Facade of Éléphant Paname (photographed by Wang, 2016)



Figure 4.11: Inside of Éléphant Paname (photographed by Wang, 2016)

When attending PFW, based on personal observations, the first obvious difference between the situation at LFW and at SHFW one can see is that there are no fixed venues for fashion shows. Additionally, according to Jin and

her PR agency, many unspoken rules exist if designers intend to stage a successful show with a sufficient audience and attention while simultaneously expressing their individuality and that designers should be cautious in their venue selection. In general, opportunities tend to coexist with challenges and risks. Theatres and museums with history and heritage can offer flexibility, providing more opportunities for designers to realise their individual styles by using runways that move beyond the traditional T-stage and rooms that are not merely rectangular with no historical meaning or decoration. However, there are over 3000 museums and theatres in Paris so the unspoken selection rules are critical, especially for new brands and designers that want to attract attention at PFW.

Differing from a decentralized production system for PFW in which no organisation is in charge of assisting the designers in show production and designers need to acquire sufficient information in locating a suitable venue, especially regarding unspoken principles, when selecting venues, LFW and SHFW both exhibits incubating show production systems in which designers can rely on the organisers when producing a show and the venues are provided for designers. Therefore, before presenting Chen and Wong's production experiences at LFW, the incubating system and the complex organisational system of LFW and SHFW should be clarified thoroughly.

4.2.2 London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks: On-Schedule and Off-Schedule Organisers and Incubation Show Production Systems

Official institutions' incubational production modes, consisting of a comprehensive service package, although having irreplaceable instructional functions for emerging designers, to some extent, can also constrain and interfere with designers who require autonomy in their production practices. This could, in turn, restrict aesthetic innovation to appearing and produced

under a ready-formed and systematic production system. Designers seeking art and design autonomy tend not to use the provided service package or they make compromises within the provided services. In this way, practical struggles between individuals and organisers are presented more intensively at LFW and SHFW, exemplified by the production stories of Jin's Spring/Summer 2018 show 'Way Out' and Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show 'Venus 2028' at LFW, as well as Chen's Autumn/Winter 2017 show 'The Visitors' at SHFW.

One noticeable phenomenon that should be addressed is the institutional similarities between LFW and SHFW, especially in terms of the incubational production system. By elaborating on this similar system in terms of venue selection, the corresponding institutional structures of LFW and SHFW can be fully addressed while emphasising the production practices of the case study designers.

- **LFW: Organisational Structures and Provided Venues**

Interconnections between the individual participants and organisers at LFW are more intense than at PFW due to the overall incubational system in London. With the cultural position of being located in the European fashion education centre when London began developing its fashion industry (Porter, 2016), LFW was created to incubate and support British designers by its official organiser, the BFC, in 1984 (Fogg, 2013; Porter, 2016). Forming the cultural characteristic of being radical and rebellious in terms of aesthetics (Breward, 2004), London, as a legitimate fashion capital, has the same style and aesthetic preferences as its corresponding fashion week. The authorities, namely, one official calendar runner, the BFC, and three commercial (off-schedule) calendar operators, Fashion Scout (FS), Fashions Finest (FF)

and Fashion East (FE), all endeavour to showcase the most innovative and cutting-edge design, incubating brands by providing thorough commercial 'pillars',¹⁶ as well as assisting promising emerging designer brands in displaying proper fashion shows at LFW.

As for the institutional regulations related to production practices, the BFC mainly caters for brands that are relatively mature, requiring applicants to have more than three years' business experience, consisting of women's ready-to-wear clothes or accessories, rather than bridalwear or childrenswear, a minimum of six stockists in both the UK and internationally, and companies that have been in business between one and three years. Only brands that meet the application standards can apply for funding scheme support from the BFC, such as NEWGEN¹⁷ (British Fashion Council, 2016), which can provide brands that do not have external sponsorships with sufficient production budgets. These prerequisites for applicants to apply for catwalk shows, presentations and events give opportunities for the other three off-schedule organisers to provide support for the emerging designer brands that may have no experience in running a business and participating in a fashion week. Furthermore, an interior institutional hierarchy has been formed among LFW's

¹⁶ As a semi-governmental and non-profit industry association, the BFC's support of the UK fashion industry can be identified in five parts: 'reputation, innovation and digital, business, investment and education' (British Fashion Council, 2017). The supporting plans designed for new designers, which are called 'pillars' by the BFC, refer to a package of strategies that are used to promote the development of all aspects of the UK fashion industry.

'We identified five pillars (reputation, innovation and digital, business, investment, and education) through which we have focused our energy and the support so generously provided by organisation individuals and global influencers from other sectors. Creativity is at the heart of everything we do and is the hallmark of success for every British fashion business' (BFC Annual Report 2015-2016).

¹⁷ 'Assigning emerging talent from the NEWGEN scheme is a unique challenge for the students as these designers often don't have many collections or existing branded content. As a result, students need to work extra hard to find out about the designer and what motivates their aesthetic. On the other hand, they are often the designers doing more interesting things in the fashion industry due to the emerging nature of the brands, which is a great creative opportunity for students. Students research into the brand to understand their influences and references.' (Crook, 2018)

organisers due to their different standards required of the brands they cooperate with.

Fashion authorities and organisers tend to use quantifiable methods to transfer symbolic creativity and innovation into a standardised production system to meet the participating designers' production needs. This can be seen through its production and operational 'pillar' for supervising and nurturing the development of independent designer brands, which is useful for incubating and creating industry innovations through systematic evaluation and assistance. Among these systematic standards, the most relevant to show production practices is the 'innovation and digital promotion' pillar, which endeavours to assist designers in commercialising their creativity through systematic mentoring. Under these circumstances, it has a ready-made system ranging from the venue, models, make-up teams, stylist teams and photography to the videography and PR teams. New participating designers merely have to pay the service fee and all professional teams will assist them in the production practices. For instance, as a participant designer who was selected for the official schedule of LFW in 2018, Wong and his team have revealed that the participants chosen by the BFC who want to present their new collections through the official calendar need to pay operational fees between £5,000 and £10,000 based on the status of the brand or the designer in the industry (Luo, 2018).

The venues chosen by the BFC for LFW were Somerset House from 2009 to February 2015 (see Figure 4.14), the Brewer Street Car Park from February 2015 to September 2016 (see Figure 4.15) and 180 The Strand from September 2016 to present (see Figure 4.16). All of these venues are located in the centre of London near Covent Garden, guaranteeing sufficient exposure for the brands and convenience for the participants to attend the events as well.



Figure 4.14: Venue for LFW from 2009 to 2015 - Somerset House
(Gregory, 2011)



Figure 4.15: Venue for LFW from February 2015 to September 2016 -
Brewer Street Car Park (photographed by Wang, 2016)



Figure 4.16: Venue for LFW from September 2016 to present - 180 The Strand (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Brands exhibiting on the official calendar were all instructed and serviced by the BFC, which mixed emerging designers, such as Wong, Jin and Chen, with global well-known mature designer brands, such as Hussein Chalayan. The difference between mature designer brands and emerging designer brands in terms of show production mode is that mature designer brands tend to produce their shows independently without using the BFC's service packages. Moreover, some innovative new designers, if they have a sufficient budget, prefer to produce their shows by themselves.

In general, the venue for LFW for most new designers is fixed from the beginning of their show production work. Offering a fixed venue lowers the difficulty of new brands and designers producing a show but it also limits the designers' creativity as the fixed venues are simple and basic with a low tolerance of innovation. Taking the venue that has been used the longest by

the BFC, Somerset House (see Figure 4.17), as an example, the inner structure sketch shows that the catwalk has a fixed region, which is a traditional T-stage. Except for adding set design and performers, there is limited flexibility for designers to realise their individuality through the venue itself. Therefore, little variation in terms of venue can be observed among the shows produced and operated by the official organisers.

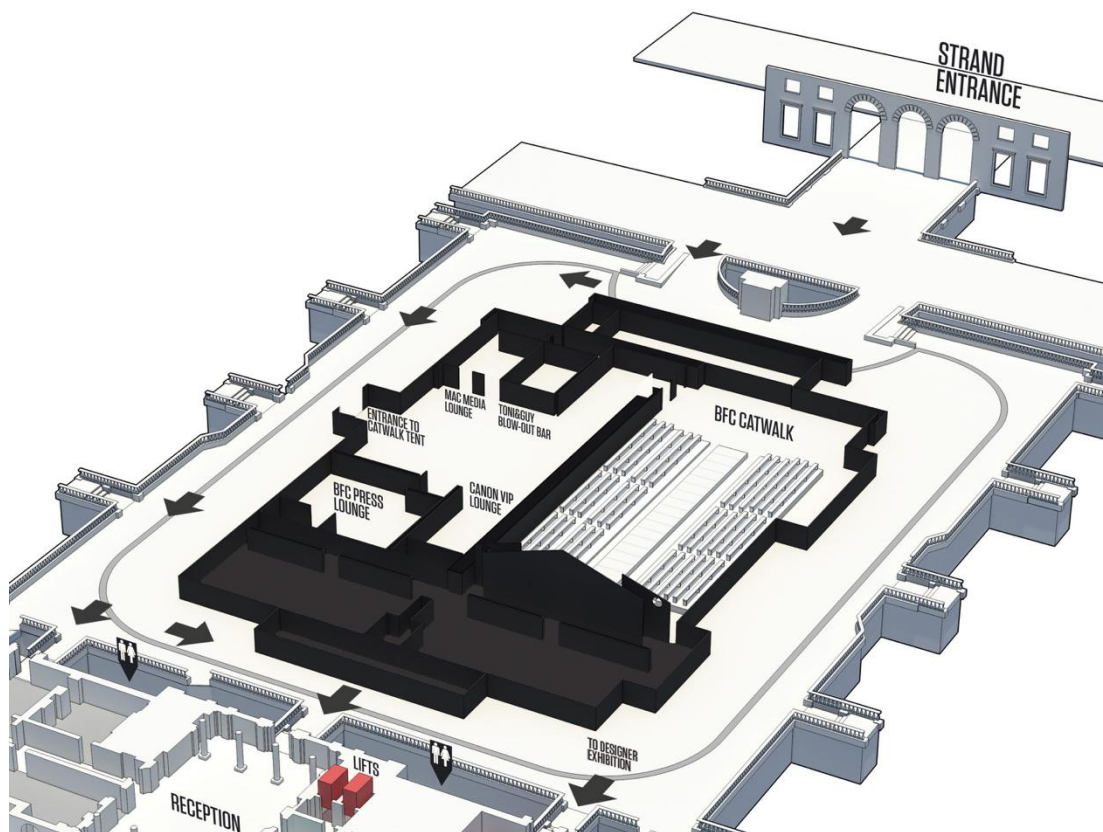


Figure 4.17: Inner structure of the Somerset House (provided by Jin, 2017)

This standard service package for a certain venue, in essence, offers standardised and technical training for new brands and designers, which, although setting constraints on designers in fully elaborating on their creativity, is still necessary in providing the basic training and prerequisites for all emerging designers, especially those seeking extreme art autonomy in their

future production practices. This is because artistic show production is a complex procedure that requires designers to have strong capabilities in combining their collection design skillfully with the theme being conveyed via multiple methods that can challenge the audience's traditional understanding of fashion shows as the simple presentation and promotion of new collections. For this reason, the rigorous production system at LFW, while affording only limited flexibility for designers to elaborate on their concept, is nevertheless a suitable incubator for emerging designers to first learn basic techniques by observing and learning from professional production teams. As Jin (2016c) has explained:

'LFW is the best starting point for new designers and brands because the organizers, especially the British Fashion Council, is functioning as a "baby sitter" in assisting new designers in becoming familiar with all the production work and industry standards. You can learn everything about operations during a fashion week and methods of show production here'.

As Jin mentions, becoming comfortable with the basic and professional industry standards for all traditional production work is critical for new designers. Familiarity with the fundamental techniques and professional knowledge related to traditional show production provides designers with a firm grounding. Thus, there is a greater possibility of designers achieving what they set out to with innovative shows if they understand the basic techniques and knowledge. After all, a fashion show is a presentation of collections and the quality design of collections and professional basic show production knowledge are the prerequisites for the higher fulfilment of individuality.

Among the other three off-schedule organisers, FS is one of the main commercial institutions that is dedicated to nurturing and promoting emerging international fashion designers who want to thrive in the UK fashion industry (Roberts, 2017), as well as the most influential compared to the other two

organisers among new designers, especially those who have graduated from CSM (Jin, 2016a, 2017b; Wong, 2016; Du, 2016; Chen, 2017). FF is another company set up to assist designers in producing fashion shows during LFW and is another core organisation that runs the off-schedule calendars. FE is a non-profit initiative established in 2000 to ‘nurture emerging young designers through the difficult early stages of their career’ (Fashion East, n.d.) (see Figure 4.18).

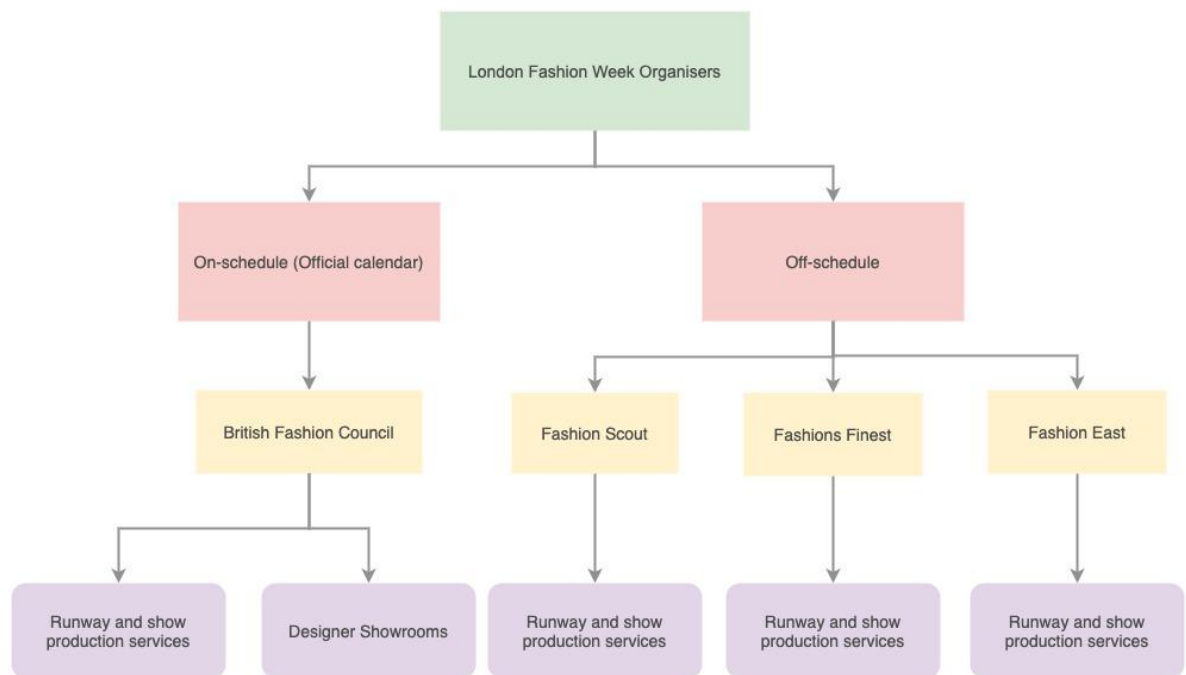


Figure 4.18: Operational structure of LFW in 2017 (Wang, 2019a)

In contrast to the BFC, which was excessively protective of domestic UK designers in the early years of its establishment, FS tends to be more welcoming of international fashion designers (Roberts, 2017). Its rules, which stipulate that designers must have produced ‘at least three seasons of works’ (Roberts, 2017), can attract a great number of young but talented designers who lack experience in the fashion field. FS also picks impressive designers from the graduation fashion shows presented by CSM, the London College of

Fashion and the Royal College of Art, inviting designers to participate in and collaborate with FS in showing their collections during LFW. Jin and Angel Chen (who is another autonomous IBC designer that is discussed in Chapter 6) were selected in this way. This method aims to cultivate potential emerging talents and benefit the institution when these designers become well-known.

This could be seen in FS when it was first established. As the director and founder of FS, Martyn Roberts, has mentioned, it would provide graduate designers with comprehensive assistance in their participation in LFW and would showcase their collections once they graduated.

‘We focus more on the avant-garde designers rather than commercial ones and are engaged in commercialising these brands and helping them to show their collections according to their own wishes, whether commercially or artistically (Roberts, 2017).

Unlike the BFC’s offer of overall commercial development support, the assistance provided by FS mainly lies in its approach to showing and promoting their clients’ collections during fashion weeks. It has a more fixed and stable venue, which is Freemasons’ Hall located in central London (see Figure 4.19).



Figure 4.19: The FS venue for LFW - Freemasons' Hall (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Under these circumstances, similar to the BFC's production services, emerging designers do not necessarily have to be concerned about venue selection unless they intend to conduct the production work by themselves. Technically, all of the designers listed on the official calendar of LFW are automatically allocated service packages whether they choose to use them or not. This means that if a designer wants to produce a show in a different venue, they must make this known to the BFC and decline the offer of a service package without their fees being returned to them. This is not commercially cost-effective. Therefore, emerging designers in the LFW show production system that have a limited budget tend to be very cautious when considering whether to abandon the rigorous operation system and stage an innovative show. Evidence of this has been provided by Wong (2016):

‘New designers and rising brands tend to start from following the organizers’ (BFC or Fashion Scout for example) instructions to do the production work. These are valuable opportunities for new emerging brands and independent designers to learn about the most professional industry standards. When they have sufficiently matured, they may choose to find a venue and conduct all the production work by themselves, but before that, I think it is a good chance for new designers to learn how to produce a show as no one will teach you related technical knowledge at college’ (Wong, 2016).

Wong is a typical heteronomous designer, as demonstrated above. His thinking mode is commercial and the efficient use of budget is one of the highest priorities when he stages a fashion show. Jin shows a different attitude to this; she thinks it is necessary for a designer to collaborate with these professional institutions but they only need to do this once to learn from them. After that, for designers with a desire to subvert the traditions in fashion, these services are restraining and should be eliminated, at least from the show production processes. The only services that designers like her can use are the PR services offered by the organiser if she is listed on the official calendar.

‘Staging a basic T-stage show is boring and easy, you don’t have to think too much about the narrative, the inner logic, the expressions of your concept, and most importantly, the beauty of it. All you need to do is select models from the model pool on offer and prepare yourself for the show. The organizer tends to have too many restrictions on controlling the ultimate effect of the show as there are complicated factors to be concerned about, such as safety. I completely understand this and, therefore, tend to stage a show independently if there is sufficient sponsorship’ (Jin, 2016c).

Although Jin is an autonomous designer who is eager to maintain a distance from mainstream culture and fashion aesthetics and endeavours to explore innovations in the industry through her shows, her career development still follows a legitimate and conventional path in the same way as other

graduates like Huishan Zhang, Yang Du, Chen, and Angel Chen from CSM. This path is being invited to collaborate with FS in staging her first fashion show through the off-schedule system of LFW in the Freemasons' Hall. FS selects impressive new designers from CSM's graduation fashion shows and invites them to attend LFW under its production instructions and operational assistance.

For LFW, most emerging CSM graduates, including the designers that have been mentioned and will be mentioned in this thesis in Chapter 6, Jin, Angel Chen, Fengyi Tan and Wanbing Huang, staged their first fashion shows with the assistance of FS in the Freemasons' Hall. This venue has incubated a number of young designers in the UK. Although the BFC also provides extensive services for participating designers, it still requires the brands to have established at least three continuous collections. FS offers a platform for new graduates who have not yet established their brands, incubating CSM graduates who have become prestigious talents in fashion design.

As mentioned above, the heteronomous principle refers to those 'who dominate the field economically and politically' and LFW's high degree of institutional interference with participating designers can be attributed to a heteronomous incubating system (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) demonstrates that LFW is a materialisation of fashion and a field of cultural production. Within this field, if LFW is an incubator for international-based designers and the world's fashion week system, then FS can be seen as an incubator for LFW.

For many CSM graduates, it is expected and commercially cost-effective that they use this incubating system to set up their careers and to gain experiences of promoting their brands at fashion weeks. It seems that the young generation of IBC designers, especially CSM graduates, are not as

rebellious and autonomous as their role models and predecessors in the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156). They tend to more rationally recognise the paradoxicality between art and commerce within a more complex, competitive and capitalised era compared with the period their role models experienced. Extreme autonomy's hostility to legitimacy is no longer viewed as necessary to demonstrate an avant-garde or innovative individuality in designer brand running philosophy. Concept actualisation and gaining symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Haynes and Martens, 2011; Lin and Tain-Dow, 2014; Hauge, 2015) from official authorities have become the pivotal considerations when designers attend a high-profile international fashion week. In this context, symbolic capital from official authorities refers to legitimate recognition by being listed on the official calendar and transferring this recognition to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Throsby, 1999), which is industry connections and social assets in this context, to assist the future development of brands or individuals.

The merits of this incubating production system are apparent as it guarantees that the attendees' basic needs are fulfilled by providing a mature ready-made team to instruct these young designers who rarely have experience of producing and staging shows. This may, however, lead to a severe mismatch between the original design and the final visual effects, especially for autonomous designers like Jin. In order to save costs on renting venues and show production teams, she has to compromise in relation to visual realisation, adapting to the limitations of the venue. FS's concerns regarding realisation are reasonable from a production perspective. This is partially because the venues themselves have limitations that restrain the realisation of designers' concepts. As the organiser and founder of FS, Roberts (2017), has noted:

‘Sometimes, we are limited by what the venue would allow and the outfit venue always has a say for safety. Sometimes, they have particular rules and regulations. For example, the venue we use at Freemasons Hall does not allow any animals on site. So we've had designers wanting to bring on various animals and such and it's just one of their rules. So, sometimes, if they feel that smoke and all of that dry ice is going to cause concern from the audience then that's just what the rules are that we are having to follow. We've worked very hard with our venue over years and these days we have more of a mutual understanding of how things are and they're now more open to working with us and accepting different things. Back then was still quite new for us to be at Freemasons Hall there was [were] a lot more regulations and rules. And unfortunately for us, you know for the designers, the health and safety officer said that they couldn't allow a large number of people in a room because if there was an evacuation, there was a fire or something, it could cause you know, people to slip over ...’

A fixed venue and a ready-made, uniform and instructional production system result in external institutional interferences and constraints for extreme autonomous designers who have mastered basic production techniques if viewed from the perspective of the need for them to sacrifice creative and visual designs and effects. To achieve aesthetic innovation under these circumstances, extreme autonomous designers have to learn to seek common ground while reserving their differences with the organisers in order to keep gaining symbolic capital from the authorities, as well as to achieve artistic autonomy. Jin did this in her Spring/Summer 2018 show ‘Way Out’ in collaboration with FS, as did Wong in his Spring/Summer 2019 show ‘Venus 2028’ in collaboration with the BFC.

- **LFW: Youjia Jin’s S/S18 show ‘Way Out’ and the Fashion Scout’s Venue versus Victor Wong’s S/S19 ‘Venus 2028’ in a Self-Found Venue**

Jin's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' was her first fashion show after graduating from CSM. She had 'a pleasant production experience' with the show although some effects could not be realised due to the venue and institutional restrictions (Jin, 2017a). However, after finishing her Autumn/Winter 2017's show 'Recreation' at PFW, she felt extremely exhausted as it was a significant challenge for her and her inexperienced in-house team. In the following season, she accepted the invitation of FS's founder Roberts and chose to return to London and show her new season together with FS. As Paris's decentralised production system exposed her inexperience in terms of management and her in-house team, she thought that London would be more appropriate for her current situation and status. As she noted:

'It was so difficult for me to show in Paris at that moment even though we achieved success in our last Paris show. I thought that London's mode, where all administrative and production processes are fully taken care of, was more suitable for me then. And London is much cheaper to produce a show, from the venue to the models. Martyn and I are good friends and we had a very pleasant collaboration last time. However, the only issue with the Freemasons' Hall may have been that the venue was just too boring and due to their restrictions, I could not show in my way' (Jin, 2017a).

Jin still tried to find a place within the venue Jin still tried to find a place within the same venue although it was not the same hall as she used for her first show (the 'Alice Show') in 2015. Her new season's theme was 'Way Out', where she planned to express her philosophical thinking on people's daily struggles between the id, the ego and the super-ego based on Freud's structural model of the psyche (Freud, 2010; McLeod, 2016). Zhao was still her show and set designer. The theme and design for the show originated from a discussion between Zhao and Jin. In order to perfectly express this theme, they needed a venue that could deliver tense emotions for the

audience and make them feel that the performers were confined and imprisoned within the space, thereby realising the concept. Jin was planning on rejecting the use of the Freemasons' Hall if they could not find a suitable place within the venue. However, Jin came up with the idea of using the cloakroom of the venue, which was big enough and had over 100 years of history, which was effective in creating a theatrical and immersive experience for the audience (see Figure 4.20).



Figure 4.20: The cloakroom of the Freemasons' Hall (photographed by Wang, 2017)

This was a perfect venue for Jin as a cloakroom is used for people to store their coats temporarily. Jin thought that this could deliver the concept of human beings who are tired of pretence in their social lives removing their 'fake faces' in the cloakroom temporarily. As she noted:

‘This was a perfect venue. At first, I didn’t have a hope of finding a good venue for my show within the Freemasons’ Hall. But fate gave me a huge surprise as I found this historical cloakroom. I could stage another performance embedded with physical theatre and dance the same as we did in Paris’ (Jin, 2017a).

Roberts approved her proposal and was excited that Jin had helped him discover more possibilities in utilising this historical venue. Roberts claimed that Jin would set a new standard for the subsequent designers incubated by FS and would encourage them to be innovative (Roberts, 2017). In order to reward Jin’s innovation, Roberts offered her a significant discount on the service fee, decreasing from the original £3,000 to less than £2,000.

The reason that Jin chose not to collaborate with the BFC although she has been invited by the BFC to show on the official calendar for several seasons was due to her limited budget as the BFC’s service fee is much higher than that of FS. Throughout research on creative industries, it is mentioned that economic constraints may sometimes enhance creativity (Davis and Scase, 2000), which, although rejected by Eikhof (2007), still partially demonstrates its relevance in Jin’s case. Furthermore, the BFC’s constantly changing venue with a simple T-stage design did not aesthetically meet Jin’s design and production needs, which meant that the whole service package would need to be abandoned, raising the production costs significantly. For extreme autonomous designers like Jin, they tend to give the realisation of innovative concepts and the breaking of self-confines the highest priority among all of their needs in producing a show, and they are willing to sacrifice symbolic capital to pursue higher aesthetic innovations. Whichever fashion week Jin plans to participate in, her show cannot be interfered with by the local production system as she will endeavour to find an autonomous way to accomplish her plan in realising innovative concepts and rejecting the mainstream fashion system.

A similar situation of abandoning the ready-made production service of the organisers was seen in Wong's case when the Spring/Summer 2019 show was being planned. However, the reason that the BFC's service package was rejected was different from Jin as Wong still collaborated with the BFC to be listed on the official calendar as the BFC's calendar represents the highest symbolic value among all of LFW's organisers. This is the reason that Wong gained sufficient sponsorship, which enabled him to produce his show in a more expensive venue. In Wong's hierarchical goals pyramid, commercial success and recognition from authorities are at the top of the pyramid, rather than aesthetic and design pursuits. For this reason, outsourcing the running of his brand's business to a fashion consulting company called Indie Design London was reasonable, which included applying and producing shows at LFW. His agent Romy Luo (hereafter referring to Luo) helped him find a suitable sponsor and managed to receive approximately £150,000 in sponsorship to assist him in attending LFW.

'They didn't care whether we used the venue they offered or not at all. So, we found another one by ourselves, which always holds activities and events during fashion week. I also contacted my English PR colleague to ask the price and check details etc. This was the biggest issue I've ever met with as if I didn't manage it, we wouldn't have been able to do anything that followed. Because the remaining time was very limited when we started to do this work because of the delay in confirming the sponsor, people from potential venues we contacted all demanded a super high price. But we had to do this' (Luo, 2018).

As mentioned above, rejecting the service packages means total autonomy in terms of production practices. This happened in Wong's case, as noted by Luo (2018):

'...they don't offer models for the ones producing shows outside [of their venue]. And we have to cast models and find make-up teams

and construction teams all by ourselves. It was our first time doing a show outside the BFC's organisation, which did cost us more money and time... the experience of using the BFC's venue would save you time and money, but it's not going to be proof of your creativity and hard work. Experience will provide you with a bigger saving of money because you know where to buy the cheapest things, including how to bargain with the venue to get a better deal'.

Wong's first show for LFW's official calendar seemed more autonomous than heteronomously within the mainstream system and the production of shows under the BFC's assistance. However, his motivations for being autonomous within the existing system were quite different from Jin as it was not for the sake of being innovative and realising concepts. While choosing to leave the BFC's incubating production system is challenging for an emerging IBC designer, the UK's production system is not as complicated as that in Paris, which gives the designer opportunities to still succeed in staging at least a commercial and influential traditional T-stage fashion show.

The BFC's venue was 'too simple and crude' (Luo, 2018) and could not meet the sponsor's demand for a high-end venue as it was sponsoring a designer listed on the official calendar to upgrade its brand image as a sponsor for a legitimate fashion week. This is, in essence, an activity of using economic capital to purchase symbolic capital, gaining social assets to achieve the sponsor's goal of upgrading its hierarchical status through social mobility. The final venue they decided on was 8 Northumberland Avenue in central London. Its mixture of classic Victorian architecture and cutting-edge technology compliments a variety of special occasions and events from 'large awards dinners to high tech conferences and luxurious receptions to successful exhibitions, for up to 1,000 guests' (8 Northumberland, n.d.) (see Figure 4.21).

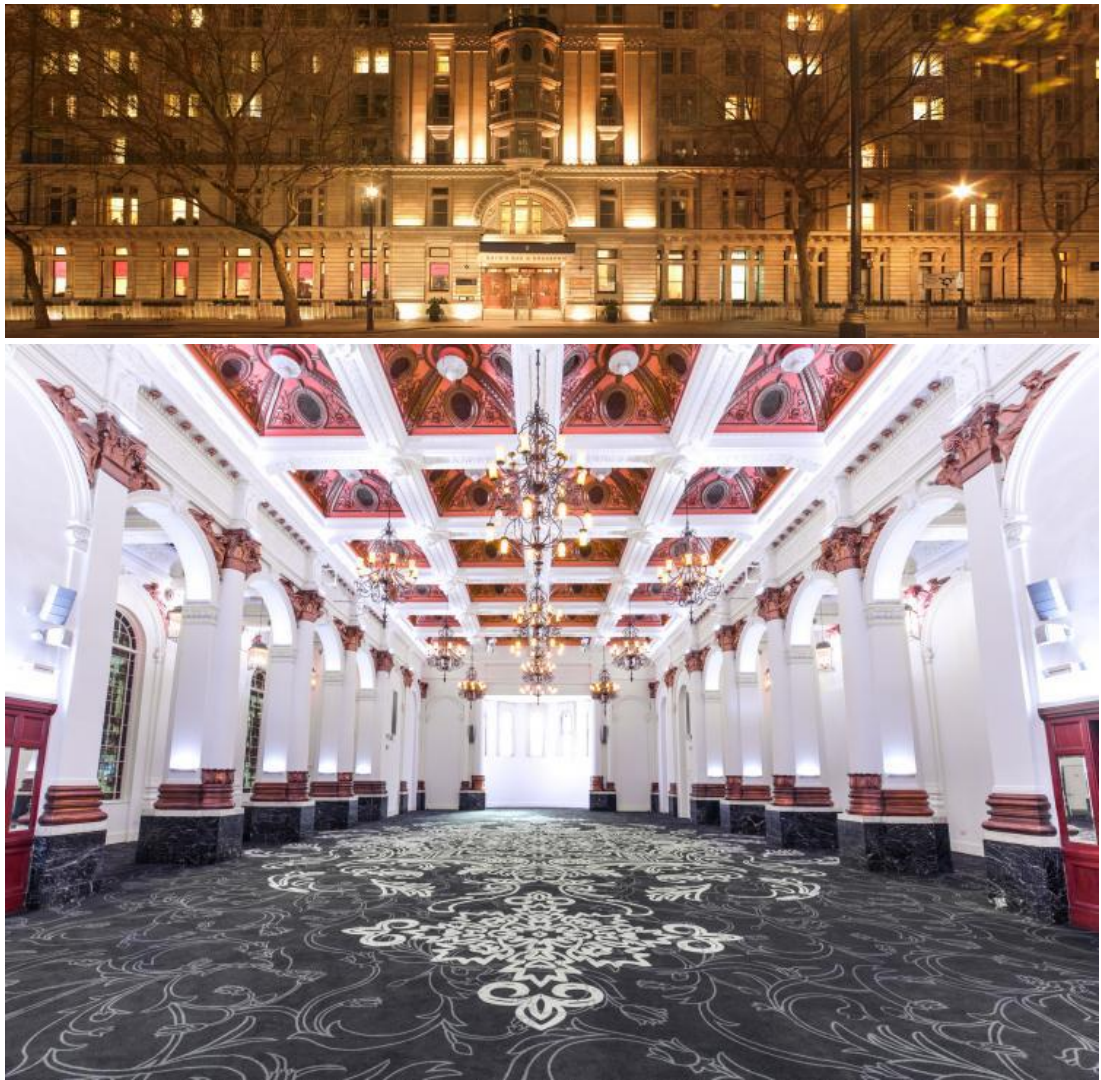


Figure 4.21: The outside and the interior space of 8 Northumberland Avenue (8 Northumberland, n.d.)

The rental price of this venue was high at around £10,000 but this fell within the budget. It can be seen from the above image that this is a venue with a high cultural and hierarchical status with a historical and grand interior design located in central London, which is near to the main venue of the BFC. Producing a show at this venue could bring in VIP audiences, as well as create an ‘aristocratic phenomenon’ (Luo, 2018) favoured by sponsors that is usually only experienced in European fashion capitals. In essence, Luo was using economic capital to purchase the symbolic capital provided by this

venue to possibly broaden the social assets of Wong's brand within the industry, as well as for her newly established fashion consulting company. This was a bilateral commercial collaboration that benefited both parties that was not related to any pursuit of aesthetic innovations.

- **SHFW: Organisational Structure and Provided Venues**

For SHFW, the SFDA, as the official organiser, started to run SHFW in 2003. For participating designers and commercial brands, it runs a similar incubating system as LFW. The designer needs to pay the organiser for the show and for hiring showrooms, and the total cost was between 60,000 and 120,000 RMB (£7,000 to £13,000) in 2015 (Jin, 2017a). This fee includes the venue, lighting, make-up and styling. If photography is required, a small additional fee is charged. Additionally, the brand also needs to bear the costs of sample clothes, models, show guides and public relations by itself.

The organisers emphasise that the fee is not entirely non-negotiable. As one administrator from the SFDA, Kate,¹⁸ noted:

‘Designer brands need to report their studio location, number of stores, collection of works and other indicators that can explain the degree of brand commercialization and the maturity of their works, to a certain extent. However, if the organizer thinks that the designer is very good, to some extent, they will offer a discount for the venue fee or help them to find sponsors. Furthermore, the brands that have already settled in the XintianDi Style Shopping Center in Shanghai can get certain discounts’ (Kate, 2017).

Labelhood, as the other organiser of SHFW, is devoted to importing new and small independent designer brands to the domestic market via SHFW. As a platform for SHFW, it aims to deliver pioneering fashion art and to explore and

¹⁸ Name agreed to be kept confidential.

promote young Chinese designers, fostering pioneering talent for the international fashion culture. It was founded in 2016 and it provides a platform for emerging Chinese designers, especially IBC designers.

Two main organisers operate SHFW: the SFDA and Labelhood. In essence, the function of the SFDA is analogous to that of the BFC, while Labelhood plays the role of FS. As Roberts (2017) notes:

‘Labelhood was actually founded and inspired by the Fashion Scout, which is engaged in assisting new talents in fashion and promoting young designers to the domestic market. Tasha, the founder of Labelhood...we met once and communicated and I have recommended many young European-based Chinese independent designers to them that have been operated by us, such as Angel Chen’.

‘Tasha [the founder of Labelhood] met me in London when she brought several young Chinese designers to attend LFW in 2015. We had a pleasant discussion on the future of Chinese fashion and how the young generation of Chinese designers can change the global fashion ecosystem. I reminded her that she could set up an institution that caters for SHFW, functioning similarly to Fashion Scout for LFW. She could circle these young Chinese designers and incubate them, boosting them in the domestic market. We could make a perfect collaboration as I can introduce excellent Chinese designers that have been established with Fashion Scout at LFW’.

Compared with LFW and PFW, the show production system for SHFW is still relatively immature. Few companies are specialising in set design and event and fashion show production in Shanghai. As designers Du and Jin have noted:

‘There are few professional fashion show production companies and consulting companies, with few fashion PR companies in the city of Shanghai as well as within China as a whole’ (Du, 2016).

‘Shanghai Fashion Week is totally copying the mode of LFW, but they still have a long way to go regarding show production professionalism. In this way, independent designers who want to stage runways have to handle everything by themselves, including finding venues’ (Jin, 2017a).

As mentioned in the first section 4.1, although Du has not been included as a case study in this research, her previous experiences collected from her interview data are useful here to provide a more comprehensive image of SHFW’s production system and culture. However, a limitation here could be subjectivity as all of these experiences are narrated by Du herself and it is nearly impossible to trace and prove the validity of this data, although it is indispensable as it presents a different production system at SHFW, shown by Du participating in SHFW independently without being listed on any official calendars. Her experiences are useful in partially revealing what an IBC designer would face without assistance from the organisers, which proves the immaturity of the show production system in Shanghai in 2015.

In her experiences of showing her collection at SHFW, Du met with this problem when producing her ‘Jungle and Garden’ show in 2015, considering the production team to be far below a basic professional standard:

‘They simply did not know how to produce a show. Even though we said we needed this or that, [the manager] still did not know what I meant. It was clear that we were not on the same page... When I arrived there a week before the show, I had to do everything myself, from casting to final production. Nothing had been set up. The location was literally a world away from being ready. I was not ready. There was construction and people working everywhere. I was pissed off. Also, we needed a space to do the rehearsals. Otherwise, there was not going to be a show. Please just stop, I told them. You know, they were just making everything a mess’ (Du, 2016).

The general operating mode of SHFW is, overall, similar to that of LFW in which the show production system is a smaller copy of LFW. However, a lack

of professional fashion PR agencies and show production companies sometimes pushes innovative designers to utilise their own social networks and to work using informal methods to successfully deliver an innovative show.

Regarding the venue selection and the show production system, SHFW shares a number of similarities in terms of the operational functions of each venue with that of LFW. The most significant similarity is that they share a similar operational structure and incubating mode with fixed venues and ready-made production teams for participating brands. In general, the official organiser of SHFW, the SFDA, runs two fixed venues, XintianDi and 800Show, which are both relatively stable, while the venue for the other organiser, Labelhood, changes according to its business partners. Similar to LFW, these venues' functions and statuses in SHFW diversify to serve different categories of brands (see Figure 4.22).

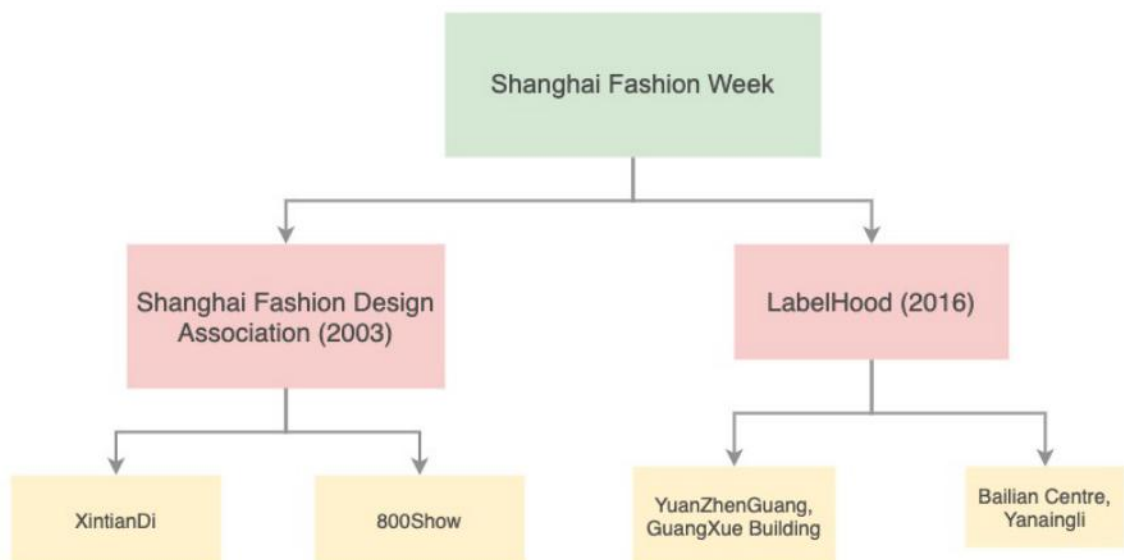


Figure 4.22: Organisational structure and ready-made venues of SHFW, 2017
(Wang, 2018)

SHFW has a more complex show production mode compared to LFW. When selecting venues, in general, the official organiser of SHFW, the Shanghai Fashion Designers Association (referred to as SFDA hereafter) runs two fixed venues, XintianDi and 800Show, which are both relatively stable. The venue of another organiser, Labelhood, changes every season.

XintianDi (see Figure 4.23 and 4.24) has mainly served mature commercial brands or designer brands since 2012, before which Fuxing Park was the main venue for SHFW. Compared with Fuxing Park, XintianDi is more commercial and experiences a higher visitor count. Brands exhibiting at XintianDi tend to stage shows featuring traditional forms of runways. Large domestic manufacturers and apparel groups, such as CHIVCHILD, and commercial fashion brands MUKZIN and WOO, as well as a few mature independent designer brands such as C.J. Yao exhibited at the Autumn/Winter SHFW in 2017.



Figure 4.23: XintianDi as the new main venue for SHFW (SHFW official website, 2016)

These commercial apparel groups and brands are often founded to grow and expand their apparel manufacturing, rather than fashion designing, and they generally lack a professional design team when the brands are founded. These brands, which have qualified for SHFW attendance, can be separated into two broad groups: the second generation of brand founders returning from studying in European fashion capitals and manufacturing brands that are scouting for emerging talent. The former makes little to no effort transforming their apparel manufacturing businesses into real fashion brands that possess a core design competence in the domestic market. In contrast, the latter implements strategic transformation by recruiting and rebuilding a creative design team from promising young returning designers.

These brands are relatively robust financially and can afford to attend a fashion week without the assistance of sponsors. They also tend to have a

rigorous and stable structure in their enterprises with few opportunities to outsource their core business to other companies.



Figure 4.24: Main entrance of the SHFW primary venue - Shanghai XintianDi (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Another official venue that is run by the SFDA is 800Show, which was built in 2009 and mainly caters for well-known international brands exhibiting at SHFW (see Figure 4.25). Its brand classification system, which refers to the specific categories of the participating brands and varies from international well-known brands to luxury brands, commercial manufacturing brands and young designer brands, has become increasingly delineated and comprehensive since 2015. Since the Autumn/Winter 2016 season, SHFW has invited major international labels to attend such as Diesel and Dirk Bikkembergs.



Figure 4.25: The newly-opened 800Show event hall caters for international brands and international cultural communication (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The venue of another official organiser of SHFW, Labelhood, has changed constantly in the past seasons since the Autumn/Winter 2016 season. The first season was officially launched in the Shanghai Rockbund YuanzhenGuang GuangXue building (or the Shanghai Rockbund Art Museum) (see Figure 4.26).



Figure 4.26: YuanzhenGuang GuangXue Building (The Shanghai Rockbund Art Museum), the venue for the first season of Labelhood's establishment (Shanghai Fashion Week, accessed in 2017)

The venue moved to a historical British warehouse built in 1929, belonging to the Bailian Group Company, which became a partner of Labelhood in October 2016, for the Spring/Summer 2017 season. In this British warehouse located in Yanqingli (see Figure 4.27), Labelhood has gathered together the majority of the avant-garde emerging designer brands at SHFW, some of which are not commercially mature enough to support themselves. Creativity and innovation are the most crucial elements for Labelhood when selecting designers to stage presentations and performances.



Figure 4.27: The 1929 British warehouse repurposed as the main venue for Labelhood since the Spring/Summer 2017 season (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Differing from XintianDi and 800Show, which largely cater for commercial runways, Labelhood's space is exclusively for international and domestic-based emerging independent designer brands for displaying their fashion shows and presentations in which innovation is highly encouraged and is thoroughly supported by a ready-made incubating system. The building naturally forms a postmodernist space with an unfinished, rustic and industrialised style and decomposed construction elements. Intended to provide an avant-garde surrounding for overseas designers to produce shows and presentations based on their individualities, Labelhood refurnished the interior space to have a rebellious and anti-fashion theme (see Figure 4.28 and Figure 4.29). During SHFW, this space becomes a fashion utopia where postmodernism appears via presentations and performances.

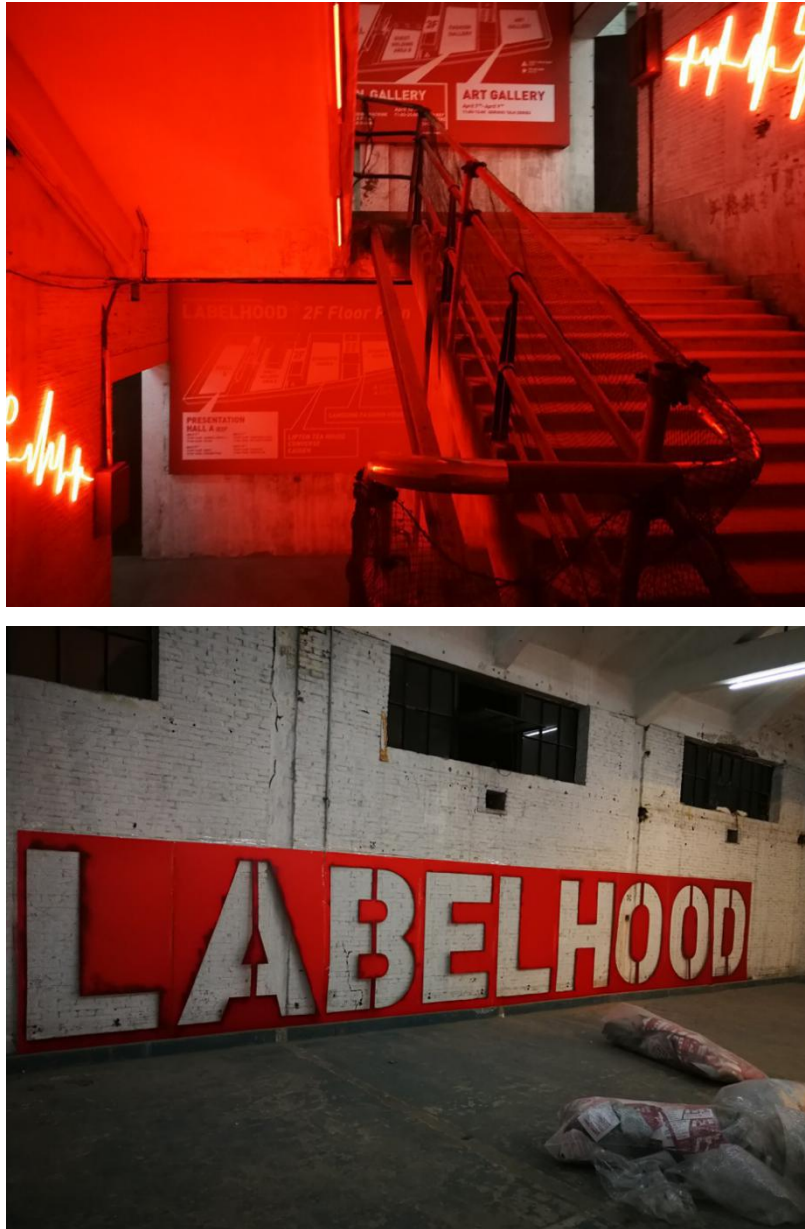


Figure 4.28: Labelhood's interior space with a rebellious anti-fashion theme, 2017 (photographed by Wang, 2017)

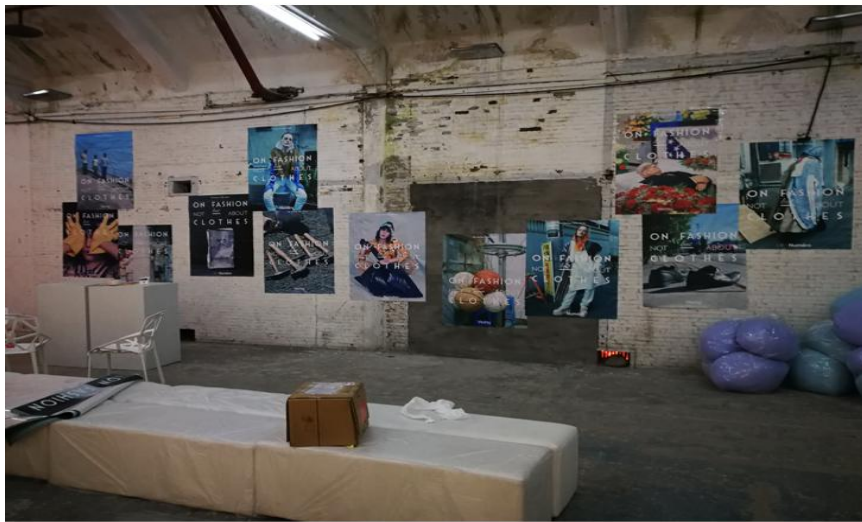


Figure 4.29: The interior's unfinished style after refurnishing (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Emerging IBC designers are mostly seen in collaboration with Labelhood when they are first invited to SHFW. The founder of Labelhood, Tasha, invited Jin to attend when Labelhood was preparing for its first season after being established in Autumn/Winter 2016 at SHFW after she saw Jin's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' show at LFW, incubated by FS. However, Jin turned her down and chose to stay in the European fashion week system. Although established internationally, Jin chose to locate her key markets in European countries for the first five years after her autonomous brand Youjia Jin was set up in 2014.

- **User of Ready-Made Venues Xuzhi Chen Versus User of Self-Located Venues Yang Du**

Chen chose to collaborate with Labelhood and to stage his first show at SHFW in 2017. The reason that he collaborated with Labelhood is partially that he was invited by Tasha after they had a pleasant meeting after Chen's first presentation 'Monet's Garden' at LFW in 2016. Chen thought that Tasha could understand his obsession with bringing conceptual installation art to his show. As he has noted:

'She could understand my artistic pursuit very well and was very supportive of my ideas. I saw pictures of their venue. Although it was un-constructed, it still contained many possibilities, which meant that I could fully use it and change it to whatever I needed to. This was exciting for me. However, the drawback could have been that the cost would have increased accordingly. That's why I needed a sponsor. Tasha helped a lot in introducing suitable local Chinese sponsors to me. I was very lucky to have Converse as a sponsor for my first journey at SHFW' (Chen, 2017).

The most apparent drawback of a fully-constructed venue provided by organisers is that it is unitary, lacks creativity for designers and it restricts their concept realisation, which is the case with the venues of the BFC, FS and the

main venue for SHFW. Labelhood is wise in selecting venues. Tasha knows that Chinese construction speed is much faster and the cost is lower than in London. She makes full use of these merits and offers an un-constructed venue for designers which can be fully decorated to meet each designer's needs in terms of show design. As she has noted:

‘...international-based designers tend to be more self-centralized and require more in their innovative concept realization than designers who stage a standard show. They are all afraid of being unitary and being viewed the same as the others. They all want to be unique. Therefore, I noticed the limitation of the venues at LFW. That's why I chose this kind of un-constructed building with an un-constructed interior space, which could be divided into several small halls, giving designers more possibilities to present their different creative shows’ (Tasha, 2017).

This is effective in attracting internationally-educated and international-based Chinese designers to return to China to stage a show, especially for those who have been away from China for a long time and are no longer familiar with the Chinese rapidly-changing fashion system, especially for the young SHFW. The emerging generation of Western-educated Chinese designers tend to set up autonomy brands rather than work for a large fashion conglomerate or a luxury brand after they graduate. When attending a fashion week and producing a show, they need more external assistance from organizers and less restrictions in terms of concept realisation. In this way, Labelhood's service package is highly attractive for IBC designers as it not only frees them from complicated and onerous preparation work but, most importantly, it also gives them the flexibility to show their collections in their own way without political and institutional interference. Labelhood creates an incubating system with comprehensive assistance and almost no restrictions for designers to fulfil their pursuit of ‘art for art's sake’ (Bourdieu, 1993,, p.40), which is the core reason that IBC designers, such as Chen, have chosen Labelhood to collaborate with to produce their first shows at SHFW.

To conclude, this chapter fully explores how aesthetic innovation is constructed and produced in the early stages of production practices, from the most significant challenge for young Chinese designers of securing funding and finding a sponsor to ensuring that the appropriate facilities are provided. This is related to the confirmation of the venue and the diverse collaboration modes with different organisers, from the legitimate European systems (in Paris and London) to the emerging system in Shanghai that have different cultural characteristics in terms of their production services.

For designers pursuing 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40), they will experience difficulties when finding appropriate sponsors. From the sponsors' perspectives, conflicts arise because they demand commercial exposure in the show presentation, as well as in press releases. More importantly, most potential sponsors in China consider themselves to have absolute discourse power in the whole event from the design to the presentation, so they could sometimes interfere with the design and production. This could lead to disagreements regarding the cost allocation in production practices, presentation and dissemination, having different priorities when facing conflict between the pursuit of aesthetic innovation and the symbolic and economic benefits that can be obtained through legitimate recognition, an example of which is Jin's sacrifices in obtaining symbolic benefits at LFW in order to find a more suitable venue. Artistic-driven or extreme autonomous designers such as Jin like to use more budget on visual effects and aesthetic fulfilment, instead of on strengthening the communicational effect of a show. Semi-autonomous and heteronomous designers, like Chen, tend to work more harmoniously with sponsors and are willing to be adaptable in balancing their artistic pursuits and commercial success when producing a show. Wong's primary needs when producing a show are highly aligned with sponsors' needs, so there is little chance of conflict occurring.

From the designers' perspectives, difficulties discussed in this chapter are also seen in the internal immaturity of their in-house teams as start-up companies. In order to cover their costs, they have to make full use of their social connections to give them free assistance instead of hiring professionals, especially for those designers who are lacking in initial capital, like Jin and Wong. Differing from McQueen, their role model designer, who chose to work for the well-known international luxury brand Givenchy to obtain sufficient funds to support his own business, emerging Chinese designers like Jin and Chen, although being able to, are reluctant to work for any mature luxury conglomerates. They tend to spend most of their energies on their own autonomous brands. Moreover, the fact that Jin was trying to be extremely autonomous and purely aesthetically-driven when designing and producing her fashion shows made finding a sponsor more difficult than for the other two designers.

Another critical process elaborated on in this chapter is organisers' political interferences and the corresponding influences on designers' production practices when finding a venue, which are related to the general operational systems and design preferences of different fashion weeks. Paris, as a conventional fashion centre, exhibits the most fierce competition in terms of attracting attention due to it having the highest number of participating brands among all international fashion weeks, which has gradually resulted in decentralised competition between all of the participants as there are too many designers for the official organiser to support. In this context, designers have to be familiar with or be instructed of the unspoken rules of the fashion week, following the 'golden area' and 'golden time' principles to carefully select their venues and show times. London, as the most well-known incubational fashion city for young designers, provides the whole package of participating services for the registered designers of LFW so that they do not

have to find venues themselves. This operational mode has been borrowed in Shanghai, which is especially seen in Labelhood, as the main organiser of SHFW, encouraging IBC designers to return to their home country to produce shows. Under the incubational production system, the designers Jin, Chen and Wong behave differently. Jin has chosen to be as autonomous as she can in show production, even registering and collaborating with the off-schedule organizer of LFW, the FS. Chen and Wong have chosen to follow the rules of the official organizer of LFW, the BFC, and have collaborated with it during the whole process of producing shows.

To summarise, the three case study designers, Jin, Chen and Wong, although all demonstrate inner pursuits of radical and avant-garde art in showing their collections, can still be divided into three different categories according to their persistence in pursuing art in shows when actualising their concepts in reality. Extreme autonomous designers such as Jin challenge aesthetic boundaries, while heteronomous designers such as Wong compromise to follow the existing rules and semi-autonomous designers such as Chen adapt their shows to either be autonomous or heteronomous depending on the precise cultural rules in different contexts. This inevitably leads to different strategic plans in building their images, resulting in different behaviours when negotiating with sponsors and different extents of difficulties in confirming venues. Different from their predecessor designers who tended to be aesthetic-oriented, the emerging IBC designers tend to be more diversified and adaptable to the capitalised system when seeking autonomy and artistic freedom in showing fashion. The next chapter emphasises how new aesthetics are explicitly produced and how Jin and Chen have utilised diversified experimentations with new aesthetics in showing fashion, incorporating the actualisation of producing innovation with diversified cultural embeddedness under the cultural systems of PFW, LFW and SHFW.

Chapter 5: Show Preparations: Producing Innovations and Cultural Embeddedness

After the venue is confirmed, production practices enter a preparation stage that incorporates more artistic creative labour, especially when the show is designed to include multiple types of art, such as performances, theatre, installations and music. During these production procedures, concept actualisation is often dynamically influenced by the different domestic production culture and embedded system of each fashion week, as well as the different degree of inner aesthetic autonomy presented by the three types of designers.

The previous chapter fully addresses the political interference of fashion week organisers in terms of their production services and systems, which is reflected in designers' venue selections during production practices. Another aspect that is intensely embedded within and influences designers' actualisation of their concepts is the aesthetic and cultural interferences of organisational systems and the cultural characteristics formed within the host fashion cities.

Fashion authorities, which are the institutions that have founded fashion weeks in European fashion capitals in this context, have formed and manipulated the existing cultural characteristics of fashion, which are related to a combination of elements recognised as the 'style' of a fashion week. This has already been mentioned in Chapter 4 and will be expanded on following the production procedures. This 'style' can include the relationships between the designers and the authorities and the visible limitations when designing and producing a show, which are usually seen in authorities' aesthetic preferences in their selection of designers, the regulations and the different

extents of their involvement in show design and production. This can be expanded to the interconnections between the cultural characteristics of each fashion week and the constructed elements of shows, which, in essence, form a cultural recognition among the designers and other participants. Hence, the method by which designers show their new collections is customised and designed under the influence of various operational contexts and the cultural identity of different fashion weeks.

In this chapter, the various production behaviours of Jin and Chen and their engagement with the creative labour in various fashion cities are fully elaborated on. More importantly, the way that the potential aesthetic innovation is constructed, actualised and produced progressively is addressed stage by stage, alongside the dynamic interactions under the different systematic cultural characteristics of the fashion cities of Paris, London and Shanghai. It should be noted that following their role models' examples of intertwining other forms of art into a show, the transformation of traditional shows that IBC designers Jin and Chen have experimented with includes immersive thematic concept actualisation through performance and installations with different styles, multi-dimensional avant-garde and theatrical expressions via physical theatre and divided visual spaces. This transformation is discussed in this section. Wong's show at LFW is not discussed in this chapter as it was a basic T-stage commercial show.

5.1 Youjia Jin: Creating Immersive Physical Theatre at Paris Fashion Week

A decentralised show production system in Paris and for PFW results in the least political interference in production practices out of the global fashion capitals. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the most important aspect of the control

from the authorities at PFW is to guard the elitist aesthetic status of Paris and the innovation within the classic style, which is shown in the designer selection panel. As explained in Chapter 2, theatre can be viewed as an iconic form of culture in Paris as a world-leading fashion city (Steele, 2017). It has been favoured and advocated through the aestheticism shown at PFW for decades. Although art and aesthetic autonomy are pivotal for designers like Jin, in her case, what made her experience no contradictions with the FCF as a new designer listed on the official calendar when proposing her design for her show to the authority was that she and her creative director Zhao shared similar aesthetic preferences with the organiser, which involved advocating theatre culture. For this reason, the FCF's aesthetic preferences did not interfere with her plans, which gave her the autonomy to experiment with new aesthetics at PFW.

As seen since the 1970s, innovations that incorporate theatre tend to mix old and new forms with a general tendency to draw together disparate elements, such as film, dance, music, painting and sculpture (Brown, 2001, pp. 499-535). The intercultural multi-competence of theatre is also seen in its affinity with fashion shows, which is mentioned in Chapter 2. As Jin and her show director Zhao are both extreme aesthetic innovators, they viewed each show that they produced as an opportunity to experiment with new hybridised forms of presenting fashion. In their first show at PFW, they experimented with incorporating two avant-garde theatre forms, physical theatre and immersive theatre, as well as fine art surrealism and performance art. The specific concept actualisation of the show, which was named 'Recreation', is discussed in detail in the following section (see Figure 5.1).



My first menswear collection for S/S 2017 has been inspired by school uniforms; the shorts and the jackets, the look and the style of our formative years.

Many of us had a love/hate relationship with our school uniforms and I want to reclaim the styles and memories of our school days for older generations. Childhood fears such as monsters under the bed are important in making us who we are as adults and I have tried to revisit these feelings of fear and joy that we experience as we find our way in the world. Boys look like little gentlemen in their school uniforms and being a gentleman is something we hope they continue to aspire to be.

This collection is a continuation of the themes from my womenswear collection for A/W 2016. I have used elements which are traditionally seen as female in my boys uniforms, elements such as pleats to create an androgynous feeling. School uniforms are famously uncomfortable to wear, all man-made fibres and static electricity, so by using more luxurious materials, primarily wool and silk, I hope to inspire you to revisit the happiest days of your lives.

YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance
Set and Performance design by Emilie Delanne and Tong Zhao

Collection story

Figure 5.1: Jin's Spring/Summer 2017 PFW performance show design illustration (provided by Zhao and Delanne, 2016)

As can be seen in the design illustration in figure 5.1,¹⁹ Jin (2016c) wanted to express the contradiction between school boys' innocent outward appearances and a darker personality inside, stating:

'Childhood fears such as monsters under the bed are important in making us who we are as adults and I have tried to revisit these feelings of fear and joy that we experience as we find our way in the world. Boys look like little gentlemen in their school uniforms and being a gentleman is something we hope they continue to aspire to be'.

¹⁹ "My first menswear collection for S/S 2017 has been inspired by school uniforms; the shorts and the jackets, the look and the style of our formative years. Many of us had a love/hate relationship with our school uniforms and I want to reclaim the styles and memories of our school days for older generations." Stated by Jin in the figure

Jin wanted to address the emotions and storytelling conveyed through her show. For this reason, physical theatre was suitable with the genre of theatrical performance as it can encompass storytelling primarily through physical movement. This show used storytelling to help create an immersive experience for the viewers.

Although several performance theatre disciplines are often described as 'physical theatre', the genre's characteristic feature is a reliance on the performers' physical motions rather than text to convey storytelling. The extravagant movement created by the dancers in the physical theatre of this show, combined with the innocent look yet exaggerated villainous facial expressions of the dancers, could express the contradiction between pure appearances and a dark inner character. The show's theatrical elements were also seen in the dialogue between the in-role facilitators (the dancers in this show), the installations (the set designs designed and created by the production team for the show) and the physical interior (the dance hall in this show). This engaged the spectators and participants and created an ambiguous situation in which it was unclear whether the work was happening around, to or within the audience.

During the show, Zhao's design plan was to let the performers communicate through various body gestures, including using the body to portray emotions. The audience could also join the performers and interact with them in body movements. To accomplish the goal of combining physical theatre and the interior surroundings with a series of surrealistic set designs to create an immersive experience, Jin and Zhao first had a discussion about how to make use of the interior space of the venue.



Figure 5.2: Original inspirations for the set design (provided by Zhao, 2016)

The set design in this show was inspired by the well-known surrealist artist, René Magritte, who is also Jin's favourite artist (see Figure 5.2). The Éléphant Paname is a dance hall with two floors that provided an ideal performance venue for the show. As Jin intended to transport the audience back to their school days, the venue's interior construction on the first floor (see Figure 5.3 and 5.4), as seen in the following picture, naturally formed an infinite aisle in the centre of the room with the large arch and the mirrors set on both sides of it.



Figure 5.3: Inside of the Éléphant Paname (photographed by Wang, 2016)

The visual effect created by the existing interior structure and décor within the venue itself made it match the theme and the concept that the designer intended to deliver. When the audience stood in this 'time transportation aisle', they would feel like they were being transported back to their childhood.



YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance
Set and Performance design by Emilie Delanne and Tong Zhao

Scene 3

Figure 5.4: Design for scene 3 of the show (provided by Zhao, 2016)

As the venue had two floors, in Zhao's design, each floor served a different function. The ground floor with the 'infinite aisle' was used to represent a tunnel through which people could enter a surreal dream, while the upper floor was used to represent the dream, with objects that may be present in people's childhoods, such as balloons, a basketball court and a flying kite. These semiotic elements that are associated with childhood could easily evoke strong emotional connections among the spectators, awakening their childhood memories and enabling them to feel that they were in a dream. Zhao also designed a scenario that connected the two floors, which was a model standing at a window with a school bag in hand for a series of homework papers to 'fly' out of the window and to the upper floor (see Figure 5.5).



Handwriting papers would travel between 2nd floor and 3rd floor manipulated by 2 models/performers

Floor 3 "Le Foyer"

Floor 2 "Les galeries"



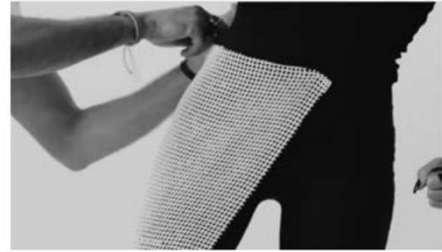
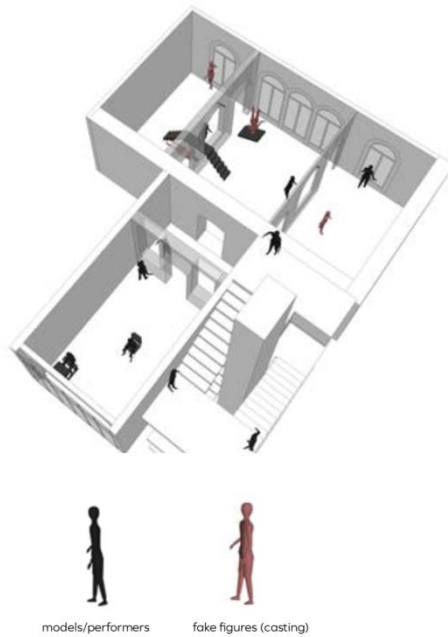
YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance
Set and Performance design by Emilie Delanne and Tong Zhao

Scene 4

Figure 5.5: Scene 4 of the show, showing the scenario connecting the two floors with homework papers flying out of the school bag (provided by Zhao, 2016)

Another noticeable set design that was pivotal in this show was fake mannequins (see Figure 5.6). Zhao intended to make six fake figures and place them on the ground floor, expressing a dialectical understanding and description of the id and the ego theory (Freud, 2010). The six fake figures represented the ego in people that sometimes has to be restricted by social rules, such as being punctual for school and work and obeying social norms in daily life. The live models and dancers, based on Zhao's design, were used to express the id in people. Physical theatre was applied to the dancing because physical theatre can deliver strong emotions alongside body movements, therefore, to some extent, expressing the id. From Jin and Zhao's perspectives, the id is wild, rebellious and anti-conventional.

The performance mixes 6 fake figures (casting) and 16 models/performers



YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance
Set and Performance design by Emile Delanne and Tong Zhao

Casting technique

Figure 5.6: The design effect and plan illustration for the fake figures in the show (provided by Zhao, 2016)

Jin is passionate about surrealism while Zhao has her enthusiasm for physical theatre as it is an art form that uses bodies to deliver strong emotions and tell a story without relying on literal expressions. In Zhao's view, fashion itself is too shallow to show the depth of art, and even if the season's designs have an artistic theme, the collections take up the most focus in shows.

'Fashion is too shallow and doesn't deserve much time spent on it. It is a shame that some avant-garde designers only care about garments and collections. The show in each season seems to be the only medium for designers who want to do something different, offering some insight to others. Me and Youjia make a great team, we share similar artistic pursuits and our minds are in sync. We want to show people that fashion could be thoughtful, could be

in-depth, could be artistic, not just a short spectacular, commercial live advertisement' (Zhao, 2016a).

In Zhao's mind, physical theatre can be seen as avant-garde in terms of theatre art and is applicable in a fashion performance, compensating for fashion's demerit of being 'too shallow' (Zhao, 2016a). Incorporating diversified art forms could help a show create a story and stimulate the audience's imagination. Although it has been applied in the theatre field, on a theoretical level, the definition of physical theatre needs clarification as it is still a disputed area (Callery, 2015). It is a relatively new type of theatre art for which few solid definitions have been given, with the specific definition of 'physical' in 'physical theatre' being difficult to trace as it seems to have much flexibility and multiple origins. This is also partly due to the fact that very few in physical theatre themselves recognise the definition. Critics claim that the phrase originated more as a marketing term to describe performances that do not fit within the genre of commercial literary theatre with limited stylistic characteristics that a type of theatre should have (Kaplan and Stowell, 1995). Although it is problematic in its definition, some common characteristics of this genre are still present, which can be generalised or viewed as industry explanations of physical theatre (Callery, 2015).

According to Callery (2015, p. 15), the definition of physical theatre is theatre where 'the primary means of creation occurs through the body rather than through the mind'. In other words, the somatic impulse is prioritised over the cerebral impulse in the creation process. As for the characteristics, they may include the following:

- 'Often devised, rather than originated from, a pre-existing script.
- Interdisciplinary origins; it crosses between music, dance and visual art, as well as theatre.
- Challenges the traditional proscenium arch and the performer/audience relationship.

- Celebrates the non-passive audience.
- Utilises the imagination of the audience in conjunction with the imagination of the performers'. (Callery, 2015, pp.16-22)

The fact that there are few legitimate or theoretical recognitions of this genre has given opportunities for theatre practitioners like Zhao to explore the concept using innovations, viewing the experimental practices with an attitude towards expressing the avant-garde and autonomy within a legitimate system as a symbol of liberalisation. Therefore, tracing the liberalisation in the expressions and displays of the theatrical arts makes physical theatre and the avant-garde appear to overlap as they share a reliance on aesthetic autonomy. Murphy (1999, p.145-156) proposes a theoretical term to describe the avant-garde's dependency on aesthetic autonomy, 'de-aestheticized autonomous art', referring to those movements such as surrealism and expressionism which have 'simultaneously negated the aura of affirmation, characteristic of art for art's sake, while remaining consistent with the 'modern requirement of aesthetic autonomy'. This also highlights the essence of avant-garde art as it:

'...self-consciously divests itself of beautiful illusion, the aura of reconciliation, projected by art for art's sake, while at the same time refusing to overstep the boundaries of aesthetic autonomy, beyond which art degenerates to the status of merely a 'thing among things'".

As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) demonstrate, fashion weeks and fashion shows are a materialisation of fashion and a cultural production within the field created by the fashion weeks. Bourdieu (1993, p. 156) suggests that the autonomy of intellectual and artistic production is:

'...correlative with the constitution of a socially distinguishable category of professional artists or intellectuals who are less

inclined to recognize rules other than the specifically intellectual or artistic traditions handed down by their predecessors, which serve as a point of departure of rupture’.

Zhao’s utilisation of immersive and physical theatre in a contemporary fashion show was unprecedented. Transforming a fashion show into performance arts a technique used often in the modern period and the rupturing of boundaries is continuing with emerging designers.

Another experimentation on aesthetic innovation in this show design is creating an immersive experience for audiences, enabling them to be non-passive spectators with a series of devised or improvised movements. Callery (2015, p. 5) suggests that from the spectators’ perspectives, physical theatre ‘accentuates the audience’s imaginative involvement and engagement with what is taking place on stage’. The dancers in a show can interact with the audience and strengthen the involvement and engagement between the performers and the spectators. In Jin and Zhao’s design, the surreal installations were used to stimulate the imaginations of the spectators; together with the dancers’ live interactions with the audience, the show became a surreal dream.

In Zhao’s design, the audience was arranged in the space in different areas but they were not aware of this as they naturally gathered in the designed areas across the two floors when the performance started (see Figure 5.7).

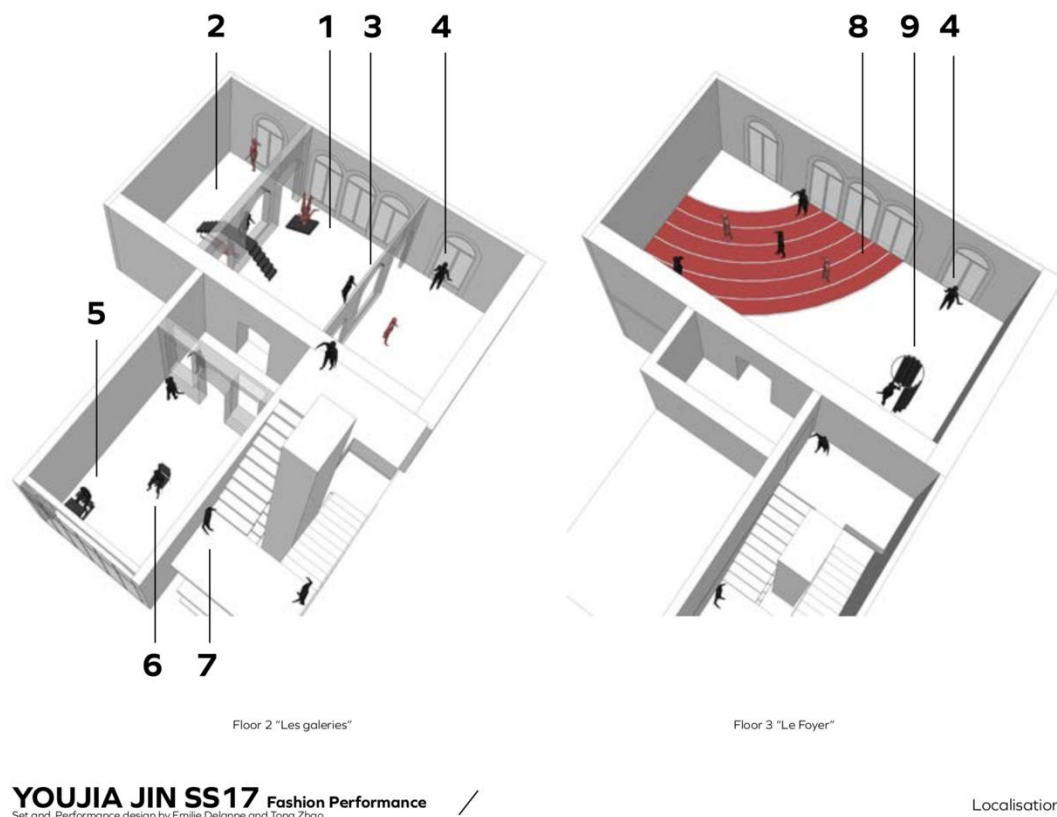


Figure 5.7: Audience arrangement in nine areas (design sketch with the aerial view of Jin's Spring/Summer 2017 show for PFW) (provided by Zhao, 2016)

This was a completely autonomous arrangement for the audience without any specification of hierarchy or social status. Although a traditional fashion presentation may also have no hierarchical seat arrangements, it still has the separation of different sessions to highlight the audience's social status. The audience of modern shows is usually restricted to a select fashion crowd composed of fashion editors, photographers, journalists, celebrities (including other designers), retail buyers, fashion industry representatives, business associates (such as sponsors and partners), guests of the designers and other key performers (such as models and stylists) (Skov et al., 2013). As a presentation usually lasts for one to two hours with 15 to 30 minutes a session, each session caters for different groups of insiders within which celebrities and VIPs tend to be invited for the first session. In a conventional presentation,

the audience composition tends to be stable. The first row at the catwalk (or the first session in a presentation) is always filled with representative people from the mainstream fashion system, such as chief editors from the most influential magazines and celebrities (Evans, 2013a, p. 121-134).

The admission and seating arrangements are always highly symbolic and political (Skov et al., 2013; Evans, 2013a). Both the designers' and the guests' reputations are at stake. The 'caliber' of the guests, as mentioned by Skov et al. (2013, p. 22), means that the size and the mood of the audience reflect the status of the designer. Top fashion editors and A-list celebrities naturally confer status to the designer by merely attending. Moreover, representatives from magazines and celebrities who match the brand in terms of values, expression and following might also reflect well upon the designer (Skov et al., 2013).

In a systematic international fashion week, the fashion show, to some extent, has become the symbiotic platform for these elite groups to confer their social status. According to Ye Lee (2016), who works for the digital department of Burberry and has participated in most of Burberry's shows that contain high technology, including 3D projections and holograms:

'...when invitations are sent, celebrities and editors will definitely ask the PR which row they will be arranged in the show, some celebrities will decide whether to attend according to whether they can sit in the first row or not...'

Jin chose to ignore these social conventions for her show in order to better create an immersive atmosphere, in which a temporary autonomous space was created to free people from the restrictions of social hierarchies. This was partially because the theme reminded the audience of their school times, whether these were dark or bright, and there tends to be fewer hierarchies

among children; as described by Jin (2016c): ‘...we didn’t consider hierarchy or status in our childhood although we may have experienced childhood fears...’.

They struggled when discussing the practical considerations of the show as each audience member cared about the seating arrangements. However, if there was a dedicated seating arrangement, the comparison of status would be inevitable. Therefore, the show producer Delanne and the set designer Zhao decided to abandon the use of seats altogether, instead creating an ‘audience path’ and walking areas, presenting the show across two floors, which forced the audience to move while watching the show.

As stated by Delanne and Zhao (2017), ‘we would like to follow Jin’s wishes and try to make sure that everyone’s attention is totally on the show instead of caring too much about which row they are sitting in’, who both thought that people tend to care too much about the seating in a show. They felt this weakened the attention and the understanding of the show and its collections.

Jin did not realise that autonomy in the seating arrangements for the sake of providing an immersive experience may cause problems when inviting celebrities from China, who care greatly about whether they have been allocated front row seats. As a friend, Hu (2016), who is now working at a PR agency in China and has undertaken projects with celebrities, has said:

‘...these celebrities don’t even care what the show is like, they would value hierarchy and status of this designer or brand, which row they are arranged in, which other important people they can meet and no more because some Chinese celebrities invited to the show by brands do not even care and know about fashion. They just consider attending fashion show as a job or as a way of showing off their social status’.

In order to overcome the potential issues related to seating Chinese celebrities and due to my previous work experience and social networks with Chinese media and PR agencies, Jin put me in charge of some media contact work in China. As a participant observer, I became a member of her PR team catering for the Chinese market, working together with another journalist, Liu (2016), who has over ten years' work experience as an anchorwoman and has established strong social connections with many Chinese celebrities.

It is obvious that audiences from European cities value a show's content rather than simply caring about conferring their own status by attending a show and sitting in the first row, while audiences from China show a totally different attitude towards this issue. According to Jin's Paris PR manager Kukie, all 'core' audience members invited to the show from European fashion cities, including top editors from *Vogue Italia* and *Vogue Paris*, the CEO of FFC, Lanvin's previous creative director and various celebrities, expressed a strong interest in her elimination of all seats and considered her show performance to be a 'new style' of staging a fashion show.

'...You had better invite as little Chinese audience members as possible, always remember that you are now in the official calendar, you should increase your status in the dominant and legitimate fashion circle, which is in Paris, not in China. You should always bear in mind that Paris fashion is the legitimate fashion and Chinese fashion is not. This is most urgent for you right now...' (Kukie, 2016).

The problem with Jin and her show production team eliminating the seating was apparent when dealing with Chinese celebrities and the media. When I contacted Chinese fashion editors according to a media list that contained over 25 dominant fashion media sources in China, as offered by Jin,²⁰ they all asked which row they would be sitting in and one of the chief editors even

²⁰ These editors were not willing to be revealed their names and the magazines' name here.

said that they would not attend if they could not sit in the front row. Only a few of them showed interest in this new style of fashion show and performance. Some of the editors turned down the invitation because Jin was not popular enough in Chinese fashion circles and they could not sit in the front row. One of them told me that:

‘If this is an invitation from Dior, then I won’t care which row I will sit in because the invitation from brands like Dior are at the top of the fashion world hierarchy and it is quite difficult to get their invitation. However, this is an invitation from a non-famous Chinese designer’.

According to Liu (2016), she also encountered this problem when inviting celebrities to the show. All of the agents she contacted enquired about the seating arrangement and the row the celebrities would be put in. Furthermore, based on her previous experience, ‘all Chinese celebrities need to be seated in the front row if they can because this is proof of ‘fashion status’ and also a form of invisible competition among them’ (Liu, 2016).

It is clear that, in this case, when explaining the show performance style, the Chinese media and celebrities tended to prioritise their status, which is considered when attending a show. This does not mean that the audience from the European system does not care about this issue. It is rather that they now no longer put such an emphasis on such concerns. What they value the most is the content of the show and whether it can bring innovation to the fashion world.

In addition to the autonomy in the audience arrangement for this show, another completely autonomous production process of this show was thorough design, rehearsal and experimentation with the dancers’ body movements to make them in harmony with the surreal installations. This was

a crucial production process, which can also be seen as a process of connecting physical theatre and surrealism.

Among all of the production processes of an innovative fashion show, this production process is completely autonomous and gives the innovative shows produced by autonomous designers distance from the official fashion system and the political restrictions of international fashion weeks. The only potential barrier for its application in various cultural contexts is financial; there should be a sufficient budget for designers to transport dancers to another city. Therefore, Jin considered this form of fashion performance to be applicable in any fashion week as the ultimate visual effect mainly relies on the performers and installations, rather than on the venue or the technical measures put in place.

With regard to the choreography and dance rehearsals related to the production practices, it is useful to address the specific procedures of how Jin and Zhao actualised their show design step by step as this shows how these aesthetic innovations were produced under an entirely autonomous production mode. The reason that Jin and Zhao viewed dancing as important in the production processes was that body gestures are essentially symbolic in their ability to express strong emotions and to dynamically stimulate the audience's imaginations. To achieve professional visual expressions, a professional choreographer and dancers were used in the production practices because although models have been asked to express movements and act as dancers in some fashion shows (see Figure 5.8), their use of body language can still be limited and rigid compared to professional dancers. Zhao (2016b) has explained the limitations of models in conveying and strengthening the concepts of fashion shows: '... models are not very clever. It's hard to get them to carry things and make alternative movements...Their

movements are quite stiff. A model is like a blank object, with the main focus on the clothes, like mannequins’.



Figure 5.8: Kenzo Primavera-Estate 1976 (Vogue It., n.d.)

In order to build surreal and immersive scenes that embodied physical theatre, the dancers were required to create extravagant, strange, twisted movements, rather than classic dancing, which needed time to choreograph. Therefore, Jin, Zhao and the choreography team arrived in Paris three weeks before PFW to rehearse. Simultaneously, Zhao was required to make mannequins with Delanne. As this process was taking place at the same time that the dancers were rehearsing and experimenting with body movements, as well as the fact that Zhao wanted to keep the process of making the mannequins confidential, this process is not shown in this thesis. However, based on the final presented mannequins (see Figure 5.9), it can be speculated that these mannequins were copies of real models’ bodies.



Figure 5.9: One of the presented mannequins for the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Jin found a studio for the dancers and choreographer to rehearse and design the body movements before the show. The whole rehearsal process lasted for over a week. As Zhao sent the design sketches and explained the concept to the choreographer before they went to Paris, the choreographer Eve (the woman squatting in the middle of the figure 5.10) could design most of the movements and communicate with all of the dancers about the effects they needed to achieve before the rehearsals started.



Figure 5.10: Jin, the choreographer Eve and all of the dancers are discussing the body movements and the dancers are listening carefully to Jin's further explanations of the effects she wants and the emotions she wants them to express while dancing during the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)

These dancers experimented with the body movements rigorously based on Zhao's design concepts. For instance, the man experimenting with chairs in the following picture was designing his movements based on Scene Six of Zhao's design (see the comparison Figure 5.11), which was to express a little boy's childhood fears and feelings of escape from the real world. Another dancer used a closet as a substitute for a table that is designed to grow and be filled with flowers (see Figure 5.12).



YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance /
Set and Performance design by Emilie Delanne and Tong Zhao

Scene 6

Figure 5.11: Designed body movements in illustrations (the lower image) versus the realistic dance rehearsals (the upper images) (upper picture was

photographed by Wang in 2017 and the lower was provided by Delanne and Zhao in 2016)



Image reference

YOUJIA JIN SS17 Fashion Performance
Set and Performance design by Emilie Delanne and Tong Zhao

Scene 5



Figure 5.12: Designed body movements and interaction with installations in illustrations (the upper image) versus the realistic dance rehearsals (the lower

image) (the upper image is provided by Delanne and Zhao in 2016 and the lower image is photographed by Wang in 2017)

Before the final presentation, the interior construction process is the last challenge faced by designers and production teams. As the rental time and the fees are rigorously restricting, few designers have a sufficient budget to rent a venue for a very long time to account for the installation construction. Therefore, designers and their teams should plan the construction carefully and make full use of the limited rental time to increase the efficiency to the greatest extent. However, in the decentralised PFW production system, as mentioned above, Jin's budget meant that she was only able to hire a small construction team to complete the construction work together with some domestic student helpers. For this reason, her set designer Zhao, who was also the show producer, needed to take care of the whole construction work and ensure that it would be finished on time.

The venue's rental fee was 1500 euros per day and Jin's team were only able to afford three days' worth of fees, so Zhao chose to produce the complex installations which needed a longer time to be spent on them, such as the fake figures, the melted mirrors and the cracked eggs (see Figure 5.13), outside in a studio with much lower rental fees. After being completed, they were moved into the venue and set in the right places.



Figure 5.13: Fake figures, melted mirrors and cracked eggs (photographed by Wang, 2017)

During this process, one of the most noticeable characteristics, which was unexpected for Zhao, was the speed of construction, which, in Paris, was much slower than she expected. Five fake figures should have been created

based on their original plan but, in the end, they only created two. As Zhao has mentioned, the Parisian workers refused to work overtime despite being told they would be paid double.

‘They were really difficult to communicate with, and thanks to Delanne for helping me with this otherwise I really wouldn’t have known what to do. They were all very lazy, at least in my opinion. I have produced in the UK, China and France, and Paris is the most difficult city from my point of view. In the UK, the construction teams are mostly offered by the organiser and they are all well managed and easy to communicate with; if any conflicts existed, they would be solved by the organisers. In China, money can solve everything, and I know how to communicate with Chinese people so that they are willing to work harder and quicker. But, in Paris, as it was our first time producing a show here without professional assistance from institutions, we had to compromise’ (Zhao, 2017).

Zhao’s quote reflects a common difficulty experienced during the show production process, which is that construction teams are difficult to control but designers must rely on them to complete the preparation work. Dealing with workers is a vital capability that a show producer must have, especially when working in various cultural contexts. In Jin’s case, the construction team still refused to work during the night after several negotiations. In the end, Delanne helped Zhao by calling her friends in Paris to help with the construction (see Figure 5.14).



Figure 5.14: Delanne's friends and student helpers in the venue to help with the final construction and styling (photographed by Wang, 2017)

On the last night before the final show, all of the construction work was finished and the installations were mostly ready (see Figure 5.15). The whole process was entirely completed by Jin's in-house team and her consultant, Kukie, did not provide any production assistance as Jin refused to take on board his suggestion of staging a 'safe show' as this was the first recognition of her label from the Paris fashion authorities; under these circumstances, aesthetic innovation is not usually the first priority. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Kukie did persuade Jin to accept his conservative production plan and use the venue he arranged for her, which was 'boring and too simple' (Jin, 2016a) and

did not meet the needs of Jin and Zhao in their avant-garde concept actualisation.



Figure 5.15: Installations were mostly ready for the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)

With the production interference from the domestic consultant, following the original production plan of being aesthetically revolutionary was not easy for Jin and Zhao and it resulted in them needing to complete all of the work on their own. However, Jin still achieved her goal in the end, partially due to the FCF having a more open attitude towards embracing aesthetic innovations

today. From this perspective, Jin was luckier than her predecessor and role model McQueen, who was criticised by the Paris authorities after establishing his first show for Givenchy in 1997 (Bolton and McQueen, 2011). Jin and Zhao made wise decisions in incorporating the elitist genre through the application of theatre culture, adding Jin's striking garment design with an elegant, classic and minimalistic style, which met the authorities' aesthetic preferences, while using avant-garde theatre forms to present the concept. This achieved her and Zhao's goals of pursuing aesthetic innovation, which Kukie (2017) has explained: 'she will bring new life and passions to today's boring fashion industry as she successfully arouses people's curiosity about her design and creativity'. Viewed objectively, the show 'Recreation' was the first fashion show she staged that was entirely aligned with her original plan and that fully presented her brand's identity. However, when she planned to stage a show with a different theme yet a similar hybridisation of art forms at LFW, the production practices were constrained by the organisers and the domestic production culture, which is elaborated on in the following section.

5.2 Youjia Jin: Theatrical Performance at London Fashion Week

As mentioned in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, the BFC, as the official association that runs LFW, has a comprehensive influence on the fashion industry and aims to 'reposition British fashion within global fashion systems' (Roberts, 2017). Historically, it has assisted British fashion in improving its reputation within the legitimate global fashion system by founding LFW. LFW is renowned for its radical style and its preference and support of pioneering designers. Perpetually seeking out new possibilities in terms of designers' ideas, the organisers typically ask their selected designers to endeavour to innovate each season. In general, seeking radical genres and being

innovative have become cultural characteristics and part of LFW's pivotal aesthetic requirements for participating designers. As both Jin and Du have mentioned, '...they always request that you give them something stirring to present, you cannot always stick to your own style or identities...' (Jin, 2016b; Du, 2016).

The reason for this is complex. Firstly, London is recognised as the third core fashion capital after Paris and Milan. The capital's 'radical' fashion identity originated from the establishment of CSM (Fogg, 2013; Porter, 2016). Since then, the omnipresence of radical design within CSM has been one of the most crucial elements that has enabled London to emerge as a worldwide fashion capital. Hence, from the time of its founding in 1984, LFW's position in terms of design style has been associated with the cultural characteristics of London itself. This is because, in order to become well-known and build up its own global reputation, London has had to find a unique way to illustrate fashion. As one of the leading associations of fashion in UK, it is critical for the BFC to support the existing radical style that has been recognised as 'London fashion', thereby maximising the influence of LFW on a global scale. In this way, London has, for years, been considered the most important city for cultivating new fashion designers in Europe (McRobbie, 2003). This status is appropriate because many new designers emerge in London every year and, thus, LFW should offer a platform for them to flourish.

The insistence on radical design and innovation in collection design styles, however, may lead to the exodus of mature designers. Most designers, once sufficiently experienced, tend to leave LFW and move on to MLFW and PFW. Examples of this can be found in Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan, who have presented their collections at MLFW and PFW every season for the past five years while this was not the case for LFW. Jin also acknowledges

this tendency for the changing priorities of fashion week attendance once brands mature:

‘...nearly every designer around me will take Paris and Milan as their first priority in terms of attendance once they become commercially stable. They will still attend LFW if they have enough money and time. However, if they have to choose only one to attend, I bet that all of them will definitely choose PFW because it is the most valuable and mature fashion week to attend...’ (Jin, 2016b).

Regarding the principles of selecting the designers to attend LFW, Jin and Wong recall the BFC’s requirement of designers to have produced and presented at least three consecutive years of collections (or six seasons) prior to application. This standard was set to guarantee that all brands selected for display during LFW are relatively mature in commercial terms and have the capability to operate their brands for the long term.

One historical peculiarity of the BFC is that it held an excessively protectionist attitude towards local UK designers when it was first established. Roberts (2017), the director of FS, has mentioned that the BFC once even refused requests from Damir Doma and Yohji Yamamoto, who were already well-known in the fashion industry, to present their collections at LFW, stating ‘...they were very cautious when welcoming designers and brands coming from overseas...’.

FS, as the off-schedule operating institution at LFW that is most favoured by CSM graduates, was set up to promote international-based young talent in the fashion industry. In contrast to the BFC, which was excessively protective of domestic UK designers in the early years of its establishment, FS has been more welcoming of international fashion designers from the beginning. Its rules, which stipulate that designers must have produced ‘at least three

seasons of works' (Roberts, 2017), can attract a great number of young but talented designers who lack experience in the fashion field. FS also picks impressive designers from the graduation fashion shows presented by CSM, the LCF and the RCA, inviting designers to participate in and collaborate with FS in showing their collections during LFW. Jin and Chen were selected in this way. This method aims to cultivate potential emerging talents and benefit the institution in the near future when these designers become well-known.

The show production mode of LFW may relieve the pressure on designers in terms of show production work as emerging designer brands can rely on the mature production teams offered by these organisers. This protection creates an ideal incubator for emerging independent designer brands with a relatively small scale and unstable marketing status. As Roberts (2017) has noted:

'Institutions in London such as Fashion Scout are aiming to discover new talent for the industry, which is one of the core characteristics of the London fashion industry, and our responsibility is to send new, promising designer brands to the industry. Paris is a mature fashion environment with all mature fashion facilities and a competitive environment that is too thriving for these new talents. That's why we exist'.

In Jin's show 'Way Out', produced at LFW, the production practices were undertaken in collaboration with FS but were constrained by the systematically provided services. As analysed in Chapter 5, Jin chose to use the cloakroom in the Freemasons' Hall merely due to its aesthetic suitability for the concept in comparison to the venue provided by the BFC. In this semi-enclosed space, it was a little difficult to stage an immersive performance with dynamic interaction with the audience while also eliminating the hierarchical arrangement of the audience.

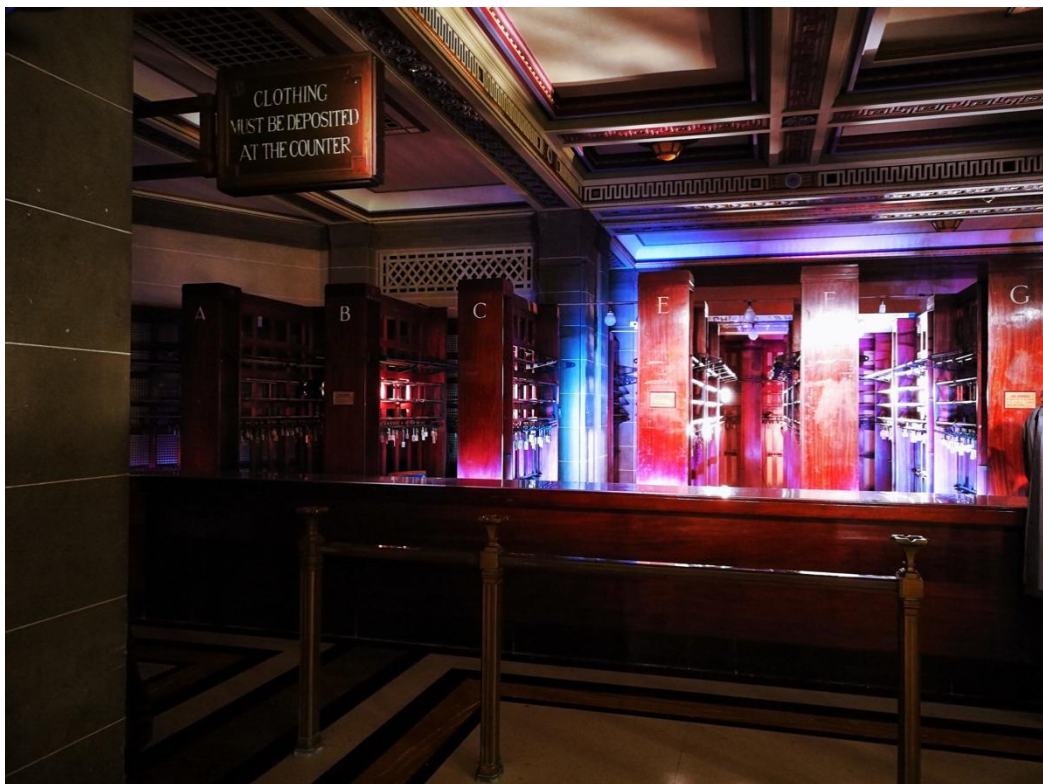
After Jin and Zhao succeeded in their first exploration of creating an immersive physical theatre performance through a fashion show, Jin confirmed the identity of her autonomous brand, at least in terms of staging shows that are theatrically avant-garde in their aesthetics. Therefore, she was eager to maintain the same theme in all of her following shows. Zhao remained her show designer and producer and, after their Paris show, Zhao set up her own show production company named Hexagon Collective. She also signed long-term collaboration contracts with the dancers they used in Paris to maintain the identity of their shows, which is to propagate innovation by showing fashion collections through physical theatre. This is an important point to raise here as, after four years of producing and designing fashion shows for a number of emerging IBC designers, this company will gradually become a community for IBC designers with similar aesthetic preferences and the same eagerness in pursuing aesthetic innovations, for which the systematic influences are fully addressed and analysed in the following chapter.

With regard to the specific concept actualisation in production practices within a constrained venue, according to Zhao's original design for the show 'Way Out', to create an immersive space, she planned to ask the dancers to first dance within the cloakroom and then to come out of it and enter the audience situated outside the cloakroom in the hall space (see Figure 5.16). However, Roberts rejected this and required them to locate the dancers and the performance within the cloakroom for safety reasons. Therefore, creating an immersive theatre performance at LFW was impossible.



Figure 5.16: The space featuring white bricks where the audience would stand (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Despite the problems with the venue, after showing autonomously at PFW, Jin and Zhao found it more relaxing and much easier to stage a show at LFW as FS still provided them with an incubational service package from the show production to make-up and photography teams. Furthermore, Zhao and Jin were more familiar with the UK fashion system and had gained sufficient social connections within the system to help them. For instance, the light designer of this show was Zhao's friend based in the UK who accurately created lighting effects based on Zhao's design (see Figure 5.17).



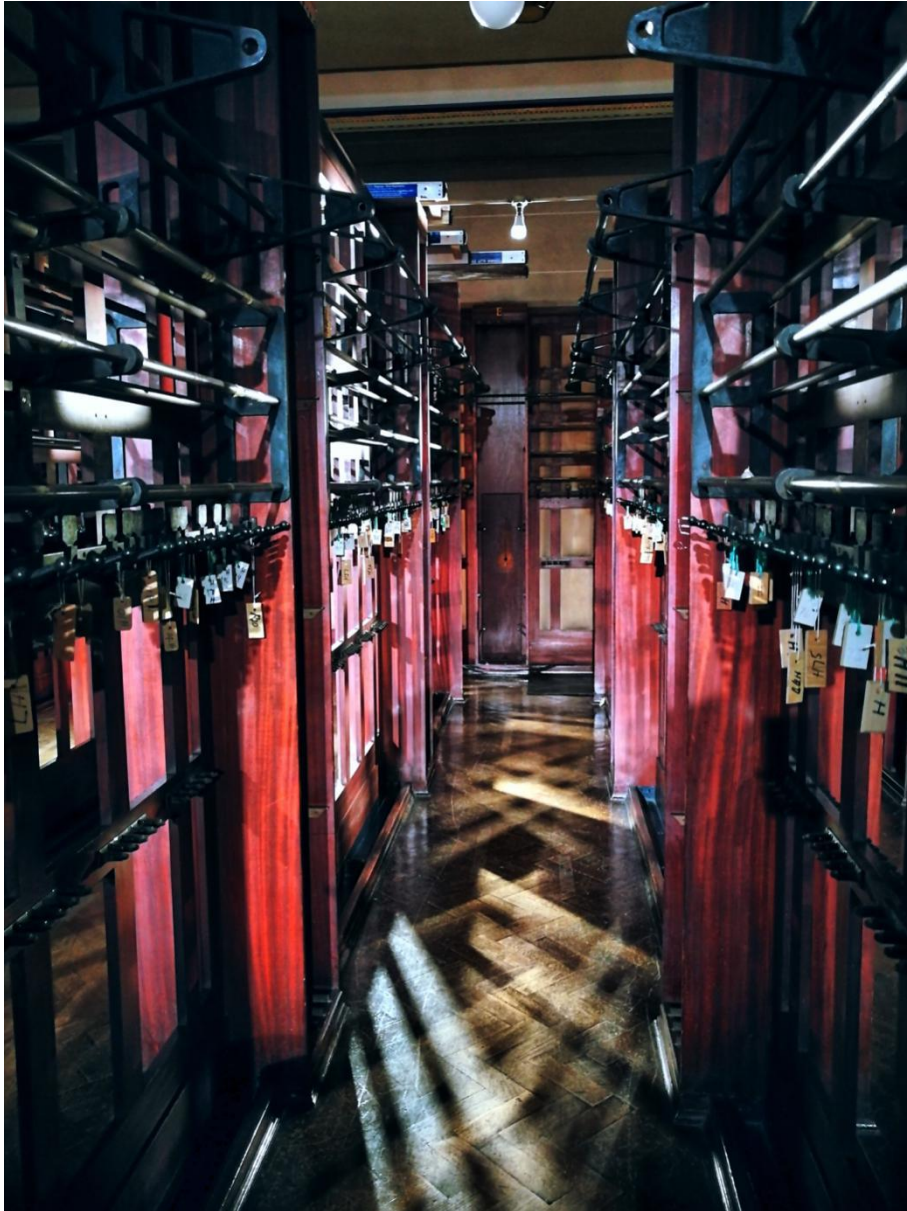


Figure 5.17: Lighting effects for the 'Way Out' show at LFW in the Freemasons' Hall (photographed by Wang, 2017)

As mentioned above, the concept of the show was to express the struggle of human beings in their state of being 'human and half-human' (Zhao, 2017). The 'locked space' (the cloakroom) would enable human beings (the dancers in this show) to return to their id-based primitive state, as represented by animal shapes such as the wolf and the rabbit (Zhao, 2017). Therefore, Zhao designed some half-humans in the form of animal shapes with human faces

(see Figure 5.18). As the cloakroom already had a complex structure and an effect with strong thematic conveyance, Zhao decided to make the installations simple, with only a few 'half-human' installations.

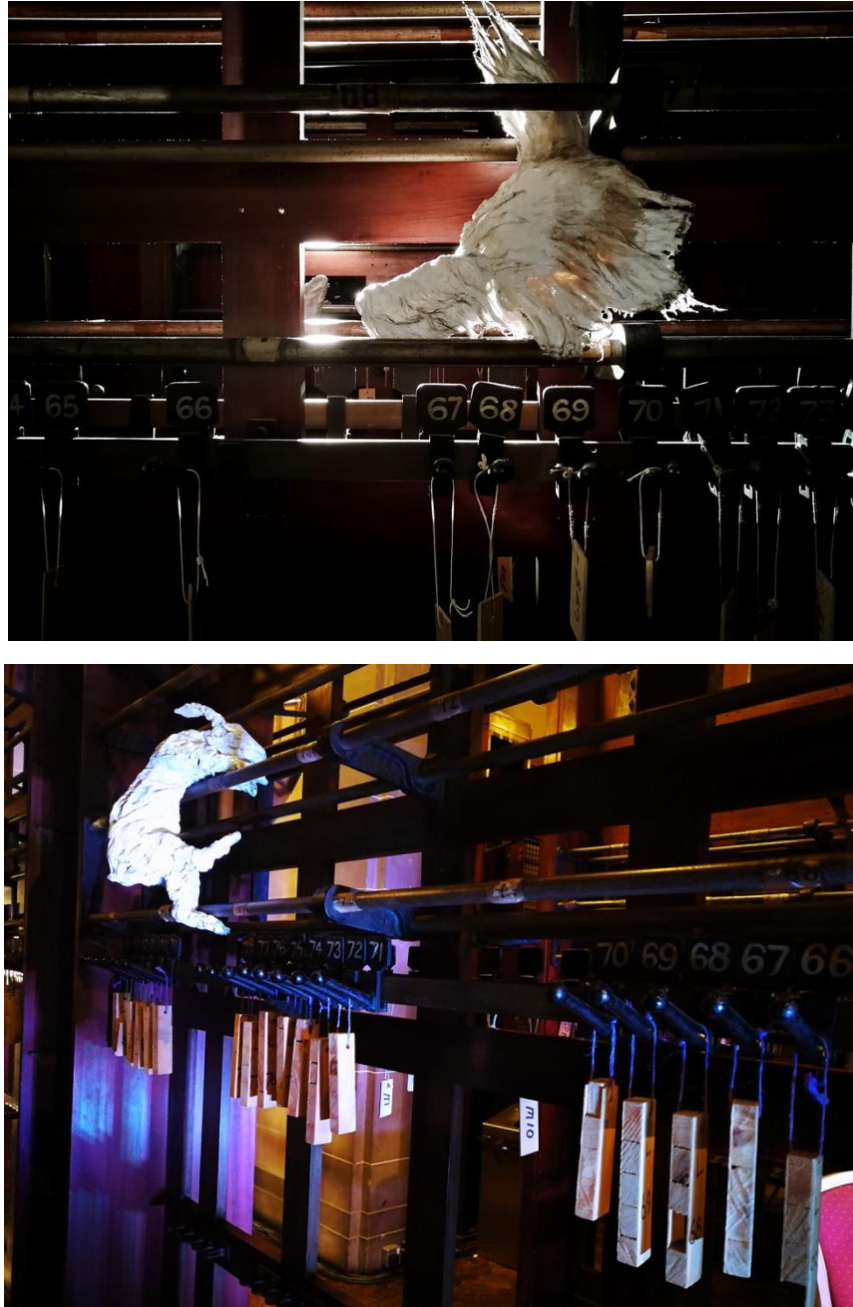


Figure 5.18: The wolf and the rabbit with human faces (photographed by Wang, 2017)

As Roberts had already viewed the Paris show 'Recreation', it was unnecessary for Zhao to illustrate their whole design and purpose to FS because Roberts trusted in their capabilities to bring innovation and supported them in using physical theatre in the 'Way Out' performance.

Zhao and Jin successfully developed an in-house autonomous production system after their show in Paris and set up their own industry connections and resources that enabled them to free themselves from the restrictions of organisers, to the greatest extent. In the show 'Way Out', although their original idea was rejected by Roberts and they failed to fully utilise immersive theatre, Jin and Zhao still stuck to their identity of turning fashion shows into physical theatre through a dance performance.

To conclude, Jin's production practices at PFW and LFW demonstrated the actualisation of the extreme notion of 'art for art's sake', which made her reject most external interferences, even the production assistance from the consultant company at PFW, which may have restricted the actualisation of her original design, leading to her experiencing significant production obstacles only to achieve aesthetic autonomy. Furthermore, she sacrificed the symbolic value that would have been provided by the BFC by being listed on the official calendar, which may have provided her with higher potential profit, merely to transferring these with the aesthetic suitability offered by FS. For Jin herself, creating new aesthetics and exploring aesthetic innovation were more of a priority than building up her brand's operational systems commercially. As immersive performances embedded with physical theatre in contemporary fashion shows have not been experimented with by her predecessors or by other brands within the same generation, she and her creative director Zhao endeavoured to create a new aesthetic for visual expressions in fashion.

LFW and PFW, whether decentralized or centralized and incubated, they both were constructed under a mature industrial context and were relatively independent from the state, controlled and driven by needs and markets. For the last generation of designers, the off-schedule events in most cases could address an ever-growing need for young designers to present their work via conventional means and instead of attracting the mainstream fashion media, they tend to publish their show in avant-garde press outlets such as *Dazed & Confused*, *Purple*, *Tank*, *Merge*, *Flaunt* and *Surface* (Quinn, 2002c, p.22). They consider publishing their work in these innovative niche magazines to be a better way of expressing their attitude and defining themselves against mass culture since, these designers, in most circumstances, are not producing a show merely as a market ploy (Quinn, 2002c, p.25). However, this is no longer the case among the new generation of fashion designers, especially among IBC ones. Extreme autonomous designers like Jin and her show director Zhao, who though view their work as a piece of art rather than a commodity, tend to view themselves as representatives of 'high art' that 'comes to define itself against its mass' (Frow, 1995, p. 17). However, according to Frow (1995, p. 16), who mentions an argument brought forward by Sandor Radnoti, the key feature of art evolving into an 'autonomous system' is 'high culture and an industrialized low culture aiming at mass production confront each other as spilt obverse fragments of a conceptual unity; two independent, self-contained, yet interrelated complexes'. Although this confrontation between high and low culture is clearly seen not only in Jin's practices but also among the current generation of young Chinese designers, they have shown a sophisticated attitude towards legitimation, whether this is from the press or the authorities. These designers are both practical and ambitious and most aim to be 'hybrid' designers, being both niche and artistic in their style and show presentation while having mass appeal when promoting themselves and their brands. This could be found in the production practices of semi-autonomous designer Xuzhi Chen at SHFW.

5.3 Xuzhi Chen: Spatial Re-productions through High Production Mobility at Shanghai Fashion Week

The high political engagement of fashion weeks in China, such as China Fashion Week (CFW), has been demonstrated by previous field research undertaken by Zhao (2008, p.186), arguing that CFW is an objectification of the Chinese field of fashion and, as such, it reveals both similarities and differences from LFW, as well as from the British field of fashion (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). As its spatiotemporal hierarchy and positional structures enable LFW to act as a microcosm of the British field of fashion, CFW, as a microcosm of the Chinese field of fashion 'reflects and/or refracts the hegemonic power of the state that often permeates Chinese society' (Zhao, 2008, p. 125).

SHFW, being the most noticeable emerging fashion week in the global fashion ecosystem with an unparalleled development speed, has absorbed some comprehensive elements of the culture of Western fashion weeks, from the organisational systems mentioned above to the design ideologies. In addition to its rapid development speed, the most significant differences between SHFW and LFW and PFW are its high mobility in terms of productions, its fashion shows at SHFW and its high degree of political engagement. Compared with both LFW and CFW, SHFW has a more complex spatiotemporal hierarchy and positional structures in the different venues operated by the SFDA and Labelhood. This gives SHFW multiple cultural layers with distinctive atmospheres.

These distinctive atmospheres can be divided according to venues: the main sites of XintianDi and 800Show exhibit a conventional hierarchical production

of fashion while the Bailian Center (Labelhood's venue) is seen as having a more radical atmosphere created for emerging designers. SHFW has seen different cultural phenomena materialise based on these three different venues, which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. This section focuses on the venue and the related system that was specifically used by case study designer Chen for his Autumn/Winter 2017 fashion presentation in which he utilised installation art.

In this section, the high mobility within show production and the radical Utopia (the atmosphere created by the venues and the political encourage for radical and innovation in presenting fashion) is underlined as it is directly related to the designers' show production activities within the field of fashion weeks. As explained in the above section on SHFW's organisational system and the corresponding venue systems, the two main organisers, the SFDA and Labelhood, have both set up independent production systems that comprehensively deliver artistic expressions through fashion shows. SHFW, as mentioned in the above section on its institutional and operational structure, is organised by two independent institutions, the SFDA and Labelhood. The SFDA and the Shanghai government outsource parts of the management of SHFW to two companies, one runs the platform and the other runs the Shanghai Fashion Weekend. The SFDA is the leading the XCommons, which provides stratified options for brands at SHFW, utilising commercial and artistic cooperation in different areas to promote the new designer brands, aiming to explore the possibilities of the 'artistry of products' (Zhao, 2017) and the 'commercialization of art' (Zhao, 2017) with the brands showing at the fashion week. Labelhood started as a platform to showcase pioneering and avant-garde Asian design power.

With a surge in the number of emerging designers showing through Labelhood, its production system is operating at a high capacity and it has

accelerated its construction speed as one room often provides a space for three to four presentations in a single day. This high construction mobility, referring to the rapid construction speed in terms of show production is commonly seen at traditional venues catering for standard T-stage shows without any installations and unique lighting. It is unusual to have such a high mobility with complex sets and lighting designs as, on most occasions, production teams need at least one day before a show to set up all of the installations, with the complex shows needing even more time. The high mobility can lead to a lack of preparation time for the production. This is challenging for designers as they have to arrange the setting up of installations with the construction teams provided by the organiser and this would be nearly impossible at PFW and LFW.

For Chen's presentation 'The Visitors' at the Autumn/Winter 2017 SHFW, produced by Labelhood, the production work was highly intense in terms of time arrangement. As the room within the venue was being shared with another designer and Chen was showing second, the production team only had two hours to set everything up in place and test the lighting and the performance team only had one hour to rehearse.

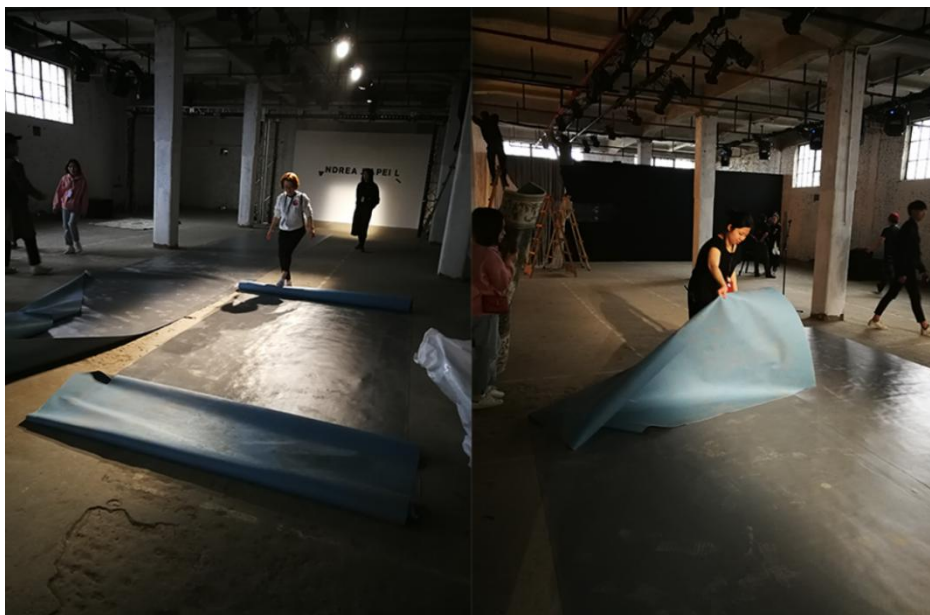


Figure 5.19: Labelhood's construction team is taking down the constructions of the previous designer who presented at the venue to allow Chen to begin building his show. This was on the day of Chen's show at around 11am and Chen's show was starting in the afternoon at 4pm. Chen had less than six hours to set everything up. The time limits were very intense (Wang, 2017)



Figure 5.20: The rug on the floor is for Chen's presentation while one of Chen's team members is still ripping off the designer's name for the previous presentation from the wall (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The construction team, or the technical support, consisted of workers to build the installations and set up the lighting as per the designers' needs. Their high efficiency and well-regulated management guaranteed that all of the presentations were staged punctually. Each designer needed to fully explain their plan for setting up all of the installations to one of the team leaders and the leader (see Figure 5.21) would arrange the workers to put everything in place. Labelhood informed the designer of which construction team was allocated to them as there is more than one team. Many workers were helping to set up before the show; due to the relatively low labour expenditures in China, Labelhood can hire numbers of barilgachins to do this job to accelerate the construction speed to increase the operational capacity.



Figure 5.21: Chen explaining his set design, visual effects and the right positions for all of the installations. The woman was from Labelhood and was in charge of all of the construction organisation for this room. This was on the day of the show presentation (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The whole construction process was completed in a very short time as dozens of workers were setting up installations and testing the light effects simultaneously. In Chen's case, the installations were not complex so it was possible to complete all of the construction work within a limited time. Chen went to the venue one day before his show to survey the site, confirm the

arrangements for the positions of the installations with his in-house team and discuss the final styling plan with his stylist (see Figures 5.22 and 5.23).

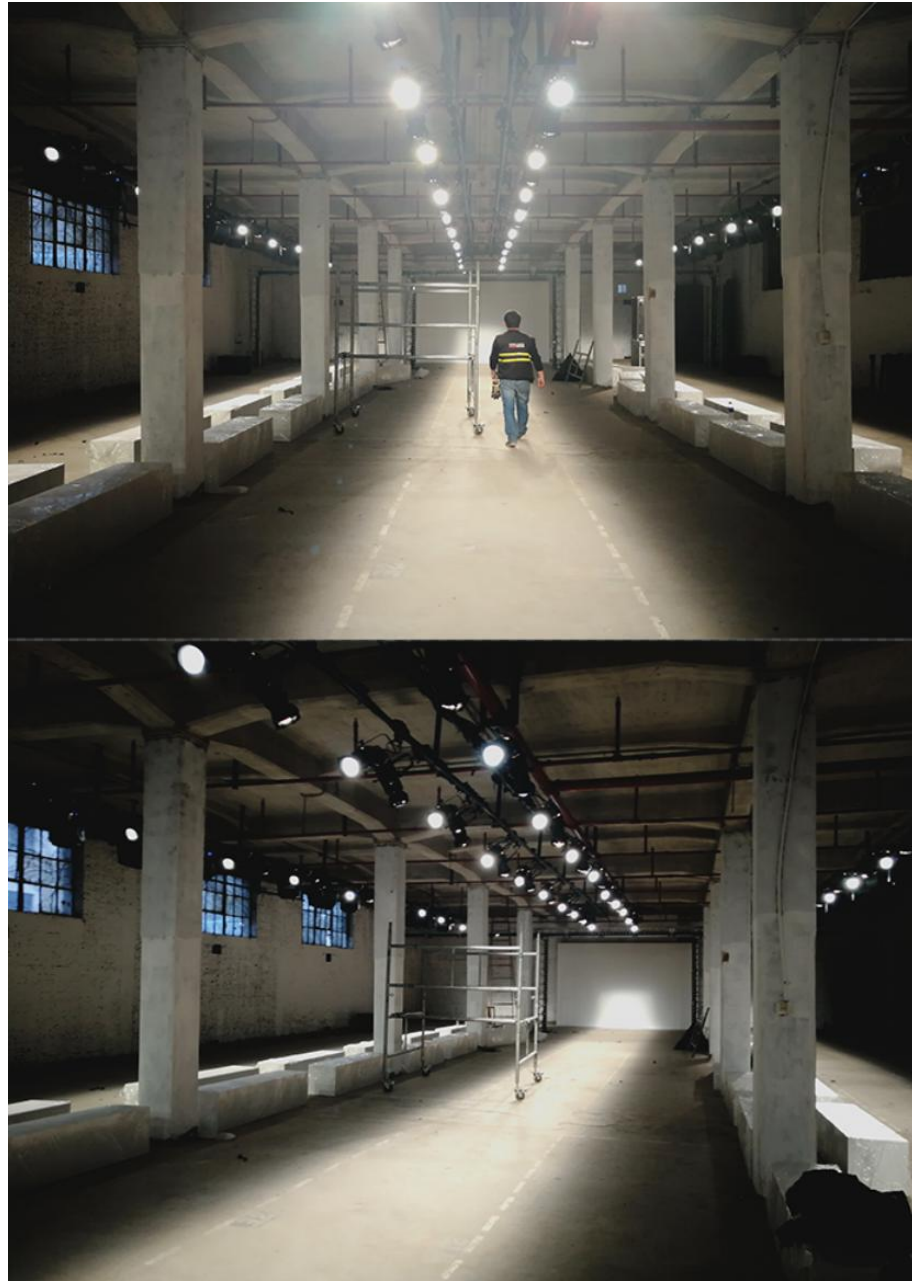


Figure 5.22: This was one day before Chen's show at 7pm in Shanghai; barilgachins were still working to build the first show for the morning of the next day. I went to the site with Chen to follow his work before the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)

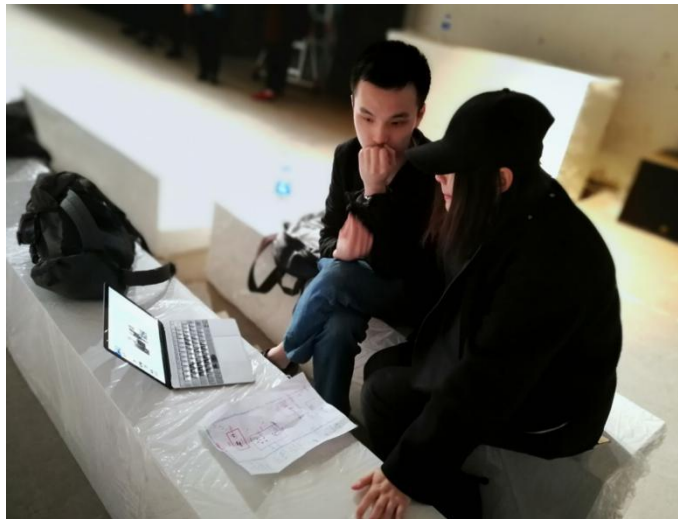


Figure 5.23: One day before the show at nearly 9pm, Chen was at the site to conduct the final research. As he could not start the construction work at that moment, he could only decide and confirm all of the positions for his

installations and discuss the styling plan with his stylist (the woman with the black hat and coat) (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The installations in this show were inspired by the conceptual installation art piece 'Pénétrable BBL Bleu' (meaning 'the transparent blue') created in 1999 and designed by Jesus Rafael Soto (see Figure 5.24).



Figure 5.24: The original art piece 'Pénétrable BBL Bleu', created in 1999 and designed by Jesus Rafael Soto (provided by Chen, 2017)

As for the whole concept and the core performance for Chen's presentation, this was inspired by an installation and video art piece created in 2012 by Ragnar Kjartansson named 'The Visitors' (see Figure 5.25). The designer demonstrated the concept that life resembles a lonely 'chorus' (Chen, 2017). The piece was displayed across nine different screens, each featuring musicians or artists either by themselves or in groups in different locations performing simultaneously but separately. They were physically isolated but played the music at the same time when the scenes were fused. The original work aimed to deliver the concept that human emotions can be expressed through a variety of mediums and that they are logically connected to each other, even if they appear to be physically isolated. Using this concept, Chen integrated the artist's comparison of fragility and strength into fashion creation.



Figure 5.25: The installation and video art piece created in 2012 by Ragnar Kjartansson named 'The Visitors' (provided by Chen, 2017)

Taking inspiration from 'The Visitors', Chen's Autumn/Winter 2017 series reproduced this artwork and tried to show that individuals can express themselves and connect with each other through their own artistic communication, even when they are dispersed and independent in the physical space. The temporal spatial elements within this show were broken down into multiple dimensions.

Chen used musicians, like in 'The Visitors', but put them in a 3D space rather than a 2D world, finding a band in Shanghai to perform during his show. Chen arrived in Shanghai two weeks before the show and the band was confirmed approximately one week before the show. As the music for the show was simple for the band to perform, they arranged the first rehearsal two days before the show. Chen went to their rehearsal room and confirmed the final performance with the band (see Figure 5.26). He was concerned that they had arranged the rehearsal so close to the show as the music performance was not only the background for the show. It was the core medium to express Chen's perceptions of creativity. Music was the element linking the three isolated rooms, separated by the white tassels, linking them in the auditory dimension.



Figure 5.26: Chen visited the band's rehearsal, ensuring that they could produce the right music with the accurate effects. He talked to the band members, explaining the concept of his show to confirm that they fully understood the emotions he was trying to deliver through the music (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Despite the time limits being intense and the production team needing to complete all of the construction work in less than two hours, Chen managed to complete the show production work successfully although this was difficult. The room was roughcast, so the lighting was designed and applied to create a relaxing atmosphere, as well as to focus the audience's attention, helping them to ignore the crude surroundings (see Figures 5.27 and 5.28).



Figure 5.27: Workers constructed the main installations, creating spatially separate 'rooms' in this venue. This was at 1pm on the day of the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)



Figure 5.28: Chen was not satisfied with the previous lighting effects and negotiated with the gaffers several times to change the lighting, asking his assistant to sit on the blanket where the model and the musicians would be during the show to test the lighting effects. The time was 2pm on the day of the show (photographed by Wang, 2017)

In general, the production of Chen's show was smooth and harmonious, with few external and internal confrontations occurring between the designer and organisers. This was partially because he held an attitude towards the actualisation of aesthetic innovation that allowed for negotiation, seeking a balance between artistry and commercialisation. Chen viewed this show presentation as a success and a smooth project and thought himself very

lucky to work with people who understood his ideas from the producer to the workers provided by Labelhood. The intensity was 'acceptable' for him as 'the ultimate effect is pleasant' (Chen, 2017). He did not experience any organisational regulations or restrictions that confined his production and the reason that he chose to collaborate with Labelhood was that the company allowed him to have autonomy and flexibility in presenting a creative production.

Labelhood has created a social alliance for emerging Chinese fashion innovators within the global system. It has attracted many emerging IBC designers to return to their home country and to cooperate with the Chinese fashion system after establishing their brands at other dominant European fashion weeks in Paris, Milan and London. In this peculiar universe, its established orders are the basis of production strategies which new attendees such as Chen should be accustomed to. The support of innovation and the political-free atmosphere the Labelhood created within the venue refracts its protections for the emerging designers against to the legitimate aesthetic power of SHFW and becomes a defender of autonomy and 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.40). It occupies a position in the SHFW system, transforming forces and political power into the freedom of expression in terms of aesthetic innovations, creating a field of aesthetic autonomy in which most avant-garde and rebellious ideas can be actualised through the professional and systematic production assistance provided by Labelhood. No matter how great the autonomy of the field of Labelhood created, the struggles with external factors cannot be completely eliminated. As an institution with commercial considerations, it has to remain professional in establishing fashion shows and systematically fit into SHFW's cultural characteristics and ideological needs, which include a high degree of hybridisation between high and low cultures and Western and Eastern cultures, incorporating the industry and the mass audience to the greatest

extent.²¹ To cater to these heteronomous needs, which are the needs of the external market and the industry, all shows and presentations are separated into two sessions, one catering for professionals and industry insiders, including editors, celebrities, journalists, buyers and designers, and the other being open to the mass audience who obtain their tickets through promotional activities held on Labelhood's social media platforms.

To conclude, actualising aesthetic innovation in the production practices for avant-garde shows is associated with a more complex process than in conventional show productions. In addition to the basic production work of selecting models, arranging the lights and music, preparing and styling the garments, inviting the press and arranging the PR work, innovative show production could also include the construction of installations, technological productions and performance productions. In this chapter, physical and avant-garde performance productions are shown through Jin's production work and the construction of installations is seen in the productions of both Jin and Chen. The innovative design actualisation can be challenging when collaborating with the fashion week organisers, as well as when incorporating the domestic show production system and culture. It is the obligation and responsibility of the organisers to ensure that the shows are high quality both aesthetically and commercially because any registered designer represents the high-profile aesthetics within the industry. For this reason, it is natural that designers consult the fashion week organisers in actualising their show designs. However, these diverse practices, although embedded within different fashion weeks that have various aesthetic preferences and requirements, are all decided by the designers' choices in their production modes. Jin's practices demonstrated that the pursuit of aesthetic autonomy may lead to a conflict between innovation and 'being safe' for most emerging

²¹ [The cultural characteristics of SHFW are fully elaborated on and addressed in the next chapter.](#)

brands when they first show at the most elite and legitimate fashion week, PFW.

The FCF, the official organiser of PFW, tends to encourage emerging designers to maintain their design identity to create a consistent brand image, thus developing the commercial maturity of the brand, and encourages designers, especially those that are showing on PFW's official calendar for the first time, to try not to be too ambitious in pursuing aesthetic innovation or the avant-garde to guarantee that the emerging brands selected by the FCF match the system of historically-rooted elitism at PFW and complement the host city's aesthetic genre. For LFW, with historically-rooted avant-garde design preferences and pursuits, the organisers always encourage the young participating designers to be as innovative and radical as they can in their show presentations because London, as a fashion capital, is renowned for its radical characteristics within the global fashion ecosystem. These different organisational ideologies seem to have little effect on the extreme autonomous designer Jin as her work has gained high acknowledgement from the organisers of both PFW and LFW. Under the various production systems at Paris and London, the production work that Jin has had to accomplish has been similar in Paris and London as she has aimed to maintain her show identity by applying physical theatre embedded with contemporary dance to her shows without relying on the assistance of a Paris consultant company or the production team provided by the FS at LFW. Jin tends to completely rely on herself and her in-house team in Paris, while she at least has a systematic backup construction team (although she does not completely rely on it) to assist her with all construction work. The production work includes training the dancers, scheduling rehearsals and constructing the installations within the venue, which shows a significant difference when compared to the experiences of the semi-autonomous designer Chen at SHFW.

As another representative of IBC designers that can be compared with Jin's presentations in Paris and London, Chen's first participation in SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood was smoother as he chose to adapt his initial design to the existing operational system to fully use the production services provided due to his lack of experience in showing at SHFW. Chen's experiences also reveal the most unique cultural characteristic of the show productions at SHFW, which is the high construction mobility due to the limited space and the high number of IBC designers participating. This is rarely seen in Paris and London and is difficult to achieve as the installations have to be changed significantly several times within one hall because Labelhood endeavours to satisfy each designer's needs in their show design. The high construction mobility will inevitably make it difficult to achieve a striking visual effect but unconsciously creates a post-modern space. This has given Labelhood the reputation of supporting aesthetic-focused designers by creating a utopia within which to actualise and showcase their design power through fashion shows at SHFW.

In the next chapter, the three target designers' show presentations are fully elaborated on to demonstrate the ultimate visual effects resulting from various show production modes and pursuits within innovative shows compared to conventional shows. Furthermore, the innovations and aesthetic values of the immersive theatre that has been incorporated into the fashion performances created by Jin are thoroughly discussed. The reshaping of innovation is demonstrated by the emerging generation of IBC designers, especially exhibited by those gathering at SHFW, which is considered the ultimate terminal of all the international fashion weeks for IBC designers. More IBC designers and their works within the same categories as Jin and Chen are elaborated on to demonstrate the 'wave' of new design power created by IBC designers within the global fashion ecosystem. The designers' systematic

positions and their interconnections with SHFW from cultural perspectives are thoroughly analysed.

Chapter 6: Final Presentations and A Forming Chinese Designer Innovation Collective

The final presentations of the three subject designers' shows after all the production procedures were completed are discussed in this chapter. Different visual characteristics and various extents of aesthetic innovation were displayed by the designers Jin, Chen and Wong in their final presentations, which can be analysed under the backgrounds of different fashion weeks with various cultural atmospheres. More importantly, this chapter explores how systematic aesthetic changes are accumulated within the global fashion ecosystem through an increasing amount of innovative work shared within a similar artistic genre by incorporating further IBC designers' work (see the content navigation in Table 3.6). This work has been produced by the same generation of designers with a similar educational background (master's degrees in womenswear from CSM) as both Jin and Chen, such as another extreme autonomous designer Fengyi Tan, whose work shows different aesthetic innovations. Simultaneously, how a cultural dialogical engagement between the emerging generation of IBC designers and the prior aesthetic and cultural innovations brought about by the era of the 'designerscape' (English, 2013, p. 156) is created is elaborated on in this chapter. This is done by analysing extreme autonomous designers' endeavours in modifying the forms of fashion shows and adding new aesthetics to the existing visual system in order to create a new era of Chinese designerscape.

The interconnections between designers' final presentation designs and forms, as well as the cultural atmospheres of different fashion weeks, are addressed by reference to the semi-autonomous designers Xuzhi Chen and Angel Chen (who will always be referred to by her full name in this thesis) in

terms of their adaptability in switching between traditional and innovative shows for different fashion weeks. Their flexibility in providing different extents of aesthetic innovation is also viewed as a critical contribution to the creation of systematic visual innovations as a whole, demonstrating emerging IBC designers' strong capabilities in collaborating with legitimate systems. As a reference subject in this study, the heteronomous designer Wong's final presentation is emphasised to demonstrate that the work of emerging groups of IBC designers that is the least innovative in terms of aesthetics follows the most traditional arrangement for a show, obtaining hierarchical symbolic value. This is reflected in the traditional T-stage style of show with a hierarchical divided seat arrangement based on the audience's 'social and symbolic capitals' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, p. 745).

6.1 Re-Shaping Innovation: Bringing New Aesthetics

6.1.1 Heteronomous Designer Victor Wong: Marketing Aimed at the Traditional T-Stage Show

Scholars have investigated the social implications of hierarchical and exclusive 'inner sanctums' in fashion shows and it has become an old cliché in fashion studies (Entwistle, 2006). Although it is an old cliché, it still exists in today's conventional and mainstream T-stage shows, like Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show at LFW (see Figure 6.1).

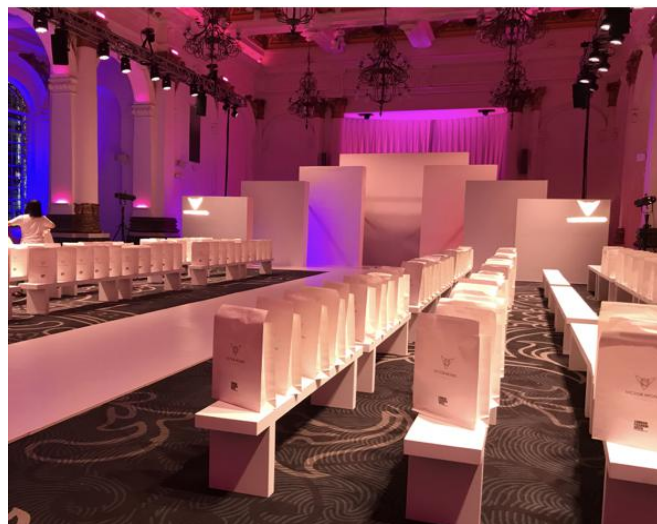


Figure 6.1: Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show 'Venus 2028' at LFW, runway photograph (on the left) and the overall view of the venue (on the

right) (the left image was provided by Wong and the right is a photograph taken by Wang, 2018)

This was a conventional T-stage show with a clear hierarchy, especially in the audience arrangements. Listed on the official calendar of the Spring/Summer 2019 season at LFW, Wong's in-house team spent over 20% of the whole production budget (£20,000 to £30,000 of the total £150,000) on PR arrangements, hiring two PR teams, one specifically for the UK and Western guests and communication, and another specifically for Chinese guests and the Chinese marketing campaign related to this show (Romy, 2018). As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, p. 736) mentions, an invitation to a show conveys a sense of exclusivity and indicates insider status, which is 'the material evidence of one's presence in the field of fashion'. Furthermore, the differences in the seat status, which varies from the front row to the second row to all of the other seats, form within a show itself a microcosm of the field of a fashion week (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, 2011). The seating arrangements for 'Venus 2028' exemplified Entwistle's arguments. As shown in the following image, the company K&H oversaw all of the Western guests' arrangements and the table lists all of the core audience members who have been invited and Western VIPs, labelling and highlighting their professions and social statuses by making clear the ones that have been invited to sit in the front row, such as Chloe Wates, the event producer listed in the following table (see Figure 6.2).

connections with key people in the industry through doing a show is efficient in expanding my business scale' (Wong, 2017).

Traditional static presentations, which is another main category of fashion shows apart from catwalk shows displayed in fashion weeks, weaken this demonstration of elitism as, on most occasions, no seats are arranged for the audience. However, the rationale for inviting the audience is still based on the audience's hierarchical positions.

Shows and presentations produced by extreme autonomous or semi-autonomous designers are gradually eliminating the traditional elitism within fashion shows by changing the relationships between the models, performers and audiences. For instance, Jin's immersive fashion performance 'Recreation', as well as all of the shows and presentations that are mentioned in the following three sections, was, to some extent, groundbreaking. This is because it converted traditional hierarchical social structures into pure aestheticisation, which means that it simplified and even eliminated the show's social implications and re-centralised its aesthetic functions.

6.1.2 Extreme Autonomous Designers Youjia Jin and Fengyi Tan: Innovations through Physical Theatre and the Application of Contemporary Dance

Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) and Zhao (2009) have demonstrated that the fashion shows and presentations produced and staged at fashion weeks constitute the core component of cultural production within the field and are a microcosm and materialisation of the hierarchical fashion industry. However, the emerging generation of IBC designers, the extreme autonomous designers in particular, have changed fashion shows into artworks and addressed shows' sentimental, historic and aesthetic autonomy and values,

rather than focusing on their recreational and economic values. Artists' hostility to commerce in their artistic productions is one of the legacies of art (Beech, 2019, p. 42). Within the current post-capitalist era (Beech, 2019, p. 45) when artistic production needs to embrace economic capital in a hybridised cultural context, artists' hostility to commerce is becoming ambiguous and contradictory. In Jin's case, although she did not show a rebellious hostility towards the opportunities offered by symbolic economic capital, such as being listed on the official calendar of LFW and, thereby, being able to gain more sponsorships in her production practices, she still chose to reject economic and political assistance to guarantee her high standard of visual aesthetics, even investing her own money to pursue aesthetic innovation in her shows.

The application of physical theatre has been discussed theoretically alongside production practices in Chapter 6 as it is embedded in the design of the performers' extravagant body gestures and expressions that can be explained through the choreography and the dramaturgy of the show. However, the incorporation of immersive theatre in shows is analysed in this section as immersive theatre can only be produced during presentation stages because it requires the cooperation of participants (Machon, 2013; White, 2013; Alston, 2016). This section theoretically interprets Jin's shows that have included immersive theatre in terms of productive participation and art neoliberalism, for which the politics or governance of aesthetic production tend not to appear (Jackson, 2011; Alston, 2016). Starting with the 'Recreation' show in 2017, which was the beginning of Zhao and Jin's experimental show production practices intending to create new aesthetics, more shows with the same identity have become apparent since then through the collaboration between Zhao's art studio Hexagon Collective and more IBC designers, such as Fengyi Tan, as well as the semi-autonomous designer Xuzhi Chen.

Theoretical discussions of immersive theatre often incorporate the topics of new individualism, productive participation, art neoliberalism and the experience economy (Pine et al., 1999; Santone, 2014). It is an 'aesthetic experience' (Alston, 2016, p. 7), in which theatre performances present audiences with aesthetic objects via theatrical and creative interpreters. The audience's relationship with a set of theatrical components in artwork tends to be framed as the primary aesthetically meaningful element in immersive theatre, alongside a series of other meanings attached to constructions and bodies in an immersive space. Scholars (Machon, 2013; White, 2013; Alston, 2016) have vividly described audience participation, which is to enter 'experience machines' (Alston, 2016, p. 2), that are 'enclosed spaces' (Alston, 2016, p. 3) in which different types of performance are incorporated, such as scenography, choreography and dramaturgy. These performances are aimed at 'placing audience members in a thematically cohesive environment that resources their sensuous, imaginative and explorative capabilities as productive and involving aspects of a theatre aesthetic' (Alston, 2016, p. 2).

Scholars use 'autopoiesis', 'heteropoiesis' and 'allopoiesis' (Alston, 2016, p. 7) to describe the different types of productive participation among the audience, referring to the 'event-fulness' of performance (Luhmann, 2000, p. 49; Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 150; Carlson, 2008, p. 7; Shaughnessy, 2012, p. 36). These different types of participation produce new content, respectively, based on the self-contained environment of the performer, the audience's outside experiences and the memories that the audience 'take away with them' (White, 2013), which may affect them for long after the event. During the show 'Recreation', only autopoiesis and allopoiesis were seen in the audience's productive participation. The live interaction between the audience and the performers took place during the show, which ran for two hours in total and one round consisted of 20 minutes in which a new group of audience was brought into the space every 20 minutes. Due to the free roaming of the

audience and the performers, each round of this show performance featured different content.

- **Youjia Jin: Immersive Theatre Created at PFW and LFW**

As mentioned above, the audience's 'productive participation' (Alston, 2016, p. 4) is essential in identifying immersive theatre, in which audiences co-produce the artwork rather than merely watch the performance. Audiences can roam freely around the venue and interact with performers and other audience members, who are expected to use their 'psychological and physiological' (Alston, 2016, p. 4) faculties to fully involve themselves in the performance (Machon, 2013; White, 2013). In Jin's show 'Recreation' for the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at PFW, the changing relationships between the performers, the models and the audience, especially regarding the audience's productive contribution, enabled this fashion performance to incorporate immersive theatre. The performance pictures without the audience present are shown below (see Figure 6.4); these images were shot before the show started and the audience entered. As an immersive performance where the audience was not restricted to watching the show in a confined region, it was difficult to take pictures without the audience interaction. In order to provide pictures for the press release and to be featured in mainstream publications, it was still necessary to take photographs without the audience before the show started as this was necessary for the marketing of the show (see Figure 6.4).





Figure 6.4: Jin's fashion performance 'Recreation' for the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at PFW; images taken for the press release (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The live performance was completely different from the pictures taken for the press. Being an immersive performance where the audience could interact with the performers, the images of the live show are filled with the audience taking photographs and discussing the performance (see Figure 6.5).



Figure 6.5: The live performance in which the audience is taking photographs of and with the models and performers with little distance between them (photographs by Wang, 2017)

The audience could be invited to co-create the show at any time by the performing dancers and models, such as making and throwing paper aeroplanes with the performers, dancing with the models and dancers, and playing with the installations, such as the fake mannequins, with the performers to co-create and co-produce the performance through 'autopoiesis' (Alston, 2016, p. 7) (see Figure 6.6). In this contemporary space under the theme of a 'schoolboy's dream', the surreal installations provided the audience with the chance to create their own 'aesthetic experience' (Alston, 2016, p. 7), which was 'a special and magic experience that had never been existed or appeared in the previous experiences of attending a fashion show' (this or words to this effect were mentioned by 15 audience members out of

20 who were randomly selected and interviewed before they left the show). In immersive art, when audiences experience 'autopoiesis' during a fashion performance, they do not only view, touch and discuss the garments but are also able to participate in adding significance to the original meaning of the performance based on the timely and dynamically changing situations within the performance.



Figure 6.6: Interaction between a dancer and a spectator (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The 'allopoiesis' (Alston, 2016, p. 7) in this show was experienced through the childhood memories that were evoked by the scenography and the understanding of the pursuit of freedom. The sound designers for this show created music that combined after-school bells that are commonly used in French primary schools with the cacophony of a school scene at the end of class, as well as a symphony of classical melodious flutes. This soundtrack worked alongside the surreal school-themed installations, such as school bags, paper aeroplanes flying out of the window, a basketball hoop, flying kites and balloons (see Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.7: Surreal school-themed installations created for the show and audience interactions with performers (photographs by Wang, 2017)

The evoked memories combined with the memories created during the show helped the audience experience 'allopoiesis' (Alston, 2016, p. 7), a

long-lasting memory, through the immersive theatrical fashion performance. Instead of merely observing the garments in a regular presentation, the audience could use their 'psychological and physiological' (Alston, 2016, p. 4) experiences within their childhood memories to fully engage with the performance (Machon, 2013; White, 2013), gaining aesthetic experiences through different art forms, thereby deeply understanding the design concept of the show. In this way, they could create a sensory empathy with the designers and the brand. As Jin (2017a) noted, 'anyone who wears my design, they are not merely wearing a simple garment. What they wear is the road I've travelled, the things I've experienced, and the depth of my emotions'. A deeper sensory experience and involvement of the audience in the show itself can strengthen their recognition of an emerging brand and those who have developed a strong empathy may transfer these experiences into purchasing behaviours through the value of the 'experience economy' (Pine et al., 1999, p.35) that is offered by immersive theatre. Followers within the fashion community could accumulate if Jin offers the same forms of art when showing her collections for several seasons and audiences may purchase her collections to better immerse themselves in the theatre each time when participating in her shows. For example, audiences may be able to prepare the appropriate garments to wear to participate in an immersive theatre performance entitled 'Sleep no more'. In this way, a new commercial form of incubating an artistic brand can be created with the formation of a new aesthetic.

As for the dynamic information communication between this immersive fashion theatre and expressions of individuality, immersive theatre is a suitable form for artistic designers to fully elaborate on the neoliberalism in art. The emphasis of scholars (Harvey, 2003, 2005; Alston, 2016) on art neoliberalism addresses the political freedom of immersive theatre aesthetics as one of the core articulations of its characteristics. It is conceptually similar

to the achievements of art autonomy when producing a show and the relationships between creative directors and show designers with all external participants creative labours. Art neoliberalism is present in the immersive theatre that is discussed here due to it offering freedom in creating content, especially when presenting a show, that can fully represent the individualities of the designers, as well as the audiences, with no external political or institutional constraints. In fact, autonomous designers like Jin and Tan, as well as their show director Zhao, favour the inclusion of philosophical meanings in their design concepts and express a strong sense of individuality, always pursuing immersive theatre in their performances although this does not always succeed due to the political and institutional constraints.

As mentioned above in Chapters 4 and 5, in another performance staged at LFW called 'Way Out', Jin and Zhao had to discard their original plan of making this show another immersive performance due to the venue and institutional constraints. The audience was confined in a prepared area in the hall in front of the cloakroom. However, they maintained the identity of using physical theatre combined with contemporary dance and managed to perform as close as they could to the audiences, such as the dancers jumping onto the table in front of the cloakroom (see Figure 6.8).



Figure 6.8: The performance pictures of the show 'Way Out' at LFW. In order to enable the audience to see more clearly and decrease the distance from them, the dancers sometimes stood on the front table of the cloakroom to dance (photograph by Wang, 2017)

Jin and Zhao made full use of the venue not only in terms of the design but also in terms of the concept of 'cloakroom' as an enclosed space, making the space rhetorically fit the concepts of 'id' and 'ego', the physiological limitations that performers wanted to escape, and the region in which the audience stood, which was the rhetorical destination in this performance. Although the audience was not able to co-produce or productively participate in this theatrical show, they could still unconsciously become co-creators of the

performance and they could obtain a strong sense of the avant-garde aesthetics and emotions it provided and conveyed when seeing all of the performers managing to 'escape' or 'climb out' (Jin, 2017b) of the cloakroom. This, in turn, made this performance an example of immersive theatre due to the unconscious productive participation of the audience.

- **Fengyi Tan: Advocate of Physical Theatre Produced by Zhao**

Another noticeable autonomous designer who used physical and immersive theatre performances in their shows at SHFW between 2016 and 2018 is Fengyi Tan. Tan hired Zhao as a show director, as did Jin, Zhao's style and identity in directing a show is to apply contemporary performance and physical theatre to convey strong sentiments through the human body linked with various concepts. The reason that Tan's work is discussed here is to collectively present the IBC designers' advocating of physical theatre in fashion performances with reference to the design identity produced by the show director Zhao. This demonstrates that this type of art form has now become more prevalent among the IBC designers showing on the global stage.

As the schedule of Tan's performances in Shanghai conflicted with Jin's shows in Paris and London, I did not follow them. All of the information was provided by her show director Tong. She designed and directed the fashion performance for Tan with same applications of physical theatre and contemporary dance at SHFW and LFW and the organisers she collaborated with were XCommons in Shanghai and FS in London. With a relatively regular production mobility (Zhao, 2018),²² in which designers do not have to share the same venues, and a reasonable designer capacity as the number of

²² The production mobility is mentioned and explained in the last section of Chapter 6 when elaborating on Chen's production at SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood, which, as an organiser, has too many designers to show in one venue in a single day.

designers XCommons supports is aligned with its capabilities and designers are provided with more space and time to prepare for a show, Zhao views XCommons as a well-organised company that can serve designers who want to show innovation in Shanghai, where each designer has at least 'a few days to prepare for the show, including rehearsals and constructing the installations in the provided venue' (Zhao, 2018). Like Jin, Tan chose to collaborate with Zhao and presented the same type of fashion performance at both LFW and SHFW.

Take Tan's show 'Time' in the Spring/Summer 2018 season at SHFW as an example of showing innovation. It was designed based on a conceptual script that was narrated and divided into three chapters. The concept of the season's work was about time and Zhao used the same type of physical and theatrical dancing that she applied in Jin's show. Different from Jin's show 'Recreation', which was spatially separated across two floors to create narrative layers, Tan's performance was separated into three chapters chronologically, based on the flow of time. The two dancers intertwining with each other were twins who semiotically represented the conflicting interior and exterior worlds of designers' as time flows (see Figure 6.9). The blue sand that fell between dances and the digital display of the time on the wall (see Figure 6.9) were all symbols expressing the conceptual flow of the performance and creating progressively emotional layers for the show (Zhao, 2018).

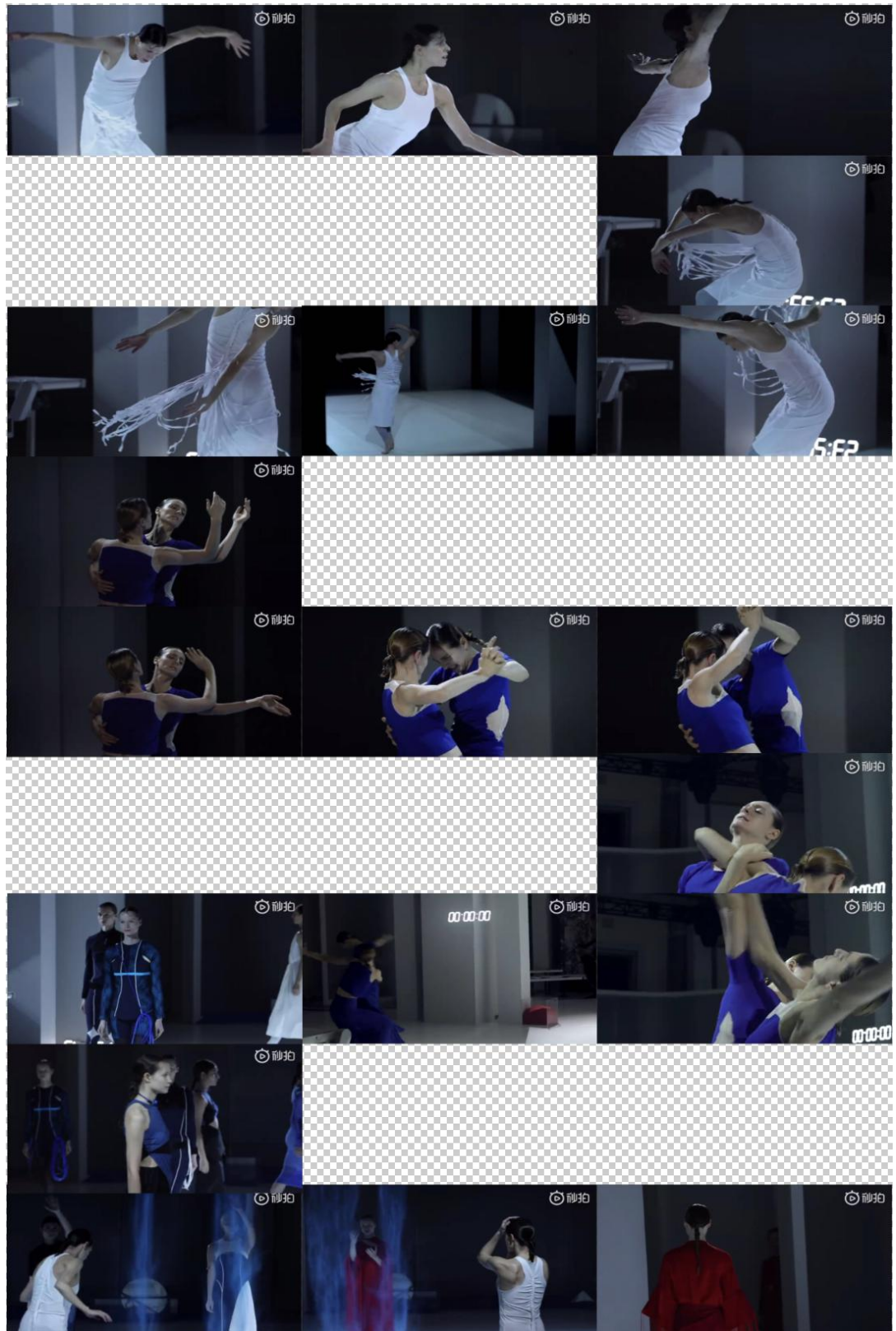


Figure 6.9: The flow and the narratives of Tan's 'Time' performance at SHFW.

(provided by Zhao, 2018)

The performance 'Body in/E motion' (see Figure 6.10), which displayed Tan's Spring/Summer 2019 collection at LFW, had a similar identity to Tan's performance at SHFW, as well as to Jin's shows. As Jin and Zhao are very close friends and Jin was interested in collaborating with Zhao to explore her own career as a show director, she participated in Tan's performance in London, assisting Zhao in designing and directing the show.



Figure 6.10: Tan's performance 'Body in/E emotion' at the Spring/Summer 2019 season at LFW (provided by Zhao, 2018)

This performance was a typical relational art piece that conveyed certain concepts, showing a virtually manipulated human world in which the social bonds have become standardised artefacts. It portrayed a future in which the real and the virtual worlds are combined and the human interaction with the social context is entirely virtualised. Relational art or relational aesthetics is a trend that occurred in 2000 and was expanded afterwards that is often thought to be synonymous with social activism, responding to the old avant-garde practices between 1970-1990s as a 'rapprochement between art and life' (Hopkins, 2000, p. 260). It addresses 'the coexistence, rather than the tensions, between art and life' (Hopkins, 2000, p. 260). Furthermore, it changes the conventional binary relationship with audiences, eluding the categorisation of the style and tending to fuse multiple implications into one artwork.

These fashion performances, 'Recreation', 'Way Out', 'Time' and 'Body in/E motion', that were staged by the autonomous designers Jin and Tan set up an auto-generative system, in which few social and political factors have an impact on the designers' expressions of innovation. As is apparent, whether in Paris, London or Shanghai and regardless of which designer collaborated with or which organiser of fashion weeks worked with, all performances designed and produced by Zhao and her studio Hexagon Collective have maintained the same aesthetic and design identity, involving the application of immersive and physical theatre, as well as avant-garde contemporary dance, to deliver a conceptual performance throughout all of the fashion weeks that Zhao participated in. Maintaining the same identity is more difficult than being adaptable in different fashion week systems and could result in losing the

chance to be listed on the official calendar to get wider exposure, as seen with Jin and Tan at LFW, when they ought to have had the opportunity to collaborate with the BFC as they had already received invitations from the authority. Due to their pursuit of aesthetic innovation as the highest priority when they are staging shows, they chose a platform which could give them more autonomy, rather than unifying their presentation styles. From this perspective, Zhao is trying to build up an auto-generative system that could have a considerable cultural influence on entirely free designers from the legitimate operational system, making them entirely autonomous and transforming fashion shows from promotional events into chances to actualise designers' pursuit of 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40).

The work of these designers challenges the authority of legitimating some forms of excellence over others. It also helps important new aesthetic forms when staging a show be seen in the fields of fashion and cultural production, with designers taking the risk of their brands being commercially excluded and marginalised in the existing global fashion ecosystem. In a context that separates a particular demographic from 'proper' (Alston, 2016, p. 135) cultural production, whether this group of artistic and extreme autonomous designers can gain a respected status and form a new designerscape is still being observed and debated.

The next section mainly addresses another mode that semi-autonomous designers can use when staging aesthetic innovations in their presentations, which are more adaptable to various institutional and organisational systems at different fashion weeks. This mode decreases the extent of the aesthetic innovations these shows can bring to the images of fashion shows.

6.1.3 Semi-Autonomous Designers Xuzhi Chen and Angel Chen: Globalised Aesthetics Adapted to Show Multiple Identities in Milan and Shanghai Fashion Weeks

Chen and Angel Chen are both designers that deliver innovation through conceptual installations and their fashion shows are adaptable based on the design atmospheres and cultural identities of different fashion weeks. The global dispersal system of fashion shows within a multicultural production system requires these diaspora designers to gain a high awareness of the different forms of shows that should be staged at certain fashion weeks to guarantee the effective distribution of their brand image, which is their priority. Xuzhi Chen and Angel Chen's shows staged at Milan and Shanghai Fashion Weeks differ in form, with both of them choosing a standard runway show in Milan and a more artistic style in Shanghai. The organisers that they collaborated with were the same: *Vogue Italia* and Armani in Milan and Labelhood in Shanghai.

- **Xuzhi Chen: Developing Multi-Dimensional Sensations**

As mentioned above in Chapters 5 and 6, Chen's show 'The Visitors' was based on Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's installation art of the same name, creating a multi-dimensional space for conveying his philosophical concept of people's physical and psychological connections with other elements in the world, such as music and nature. In Chen's show at SHFW, he created three 'rooms' using fringe lace for the 'walls' of each room, representing his three new-season series, also adding musicians as part of the performance in each room, trying to build connections between these rooms through music. The models were not static and could move in any way that they felt comfortable, even sleeping on a couch or singing along with the music (see Figure 6.11).



Figure 6.11: Chen's fashion performance at SHFW and the structure within the venue (photograph by Wang, 2017)

Chen was trying to convey that life seems to be a 'solo ensemble'. In the same exhibition room, projected on different screens was a scene in which various individuals played a musical instrument in their own rooms. They looked isolated but, together, they created a single piece of music (see Figure 6.12).



Figure 6.12: Scenes, models and musicians of Chen's A/W 2017 show at SHFW (photograph by Wang, 2017)

His adaptability was proved by him showed the same collection in the same season in Milan before he showed in Shanghai. The same collection was presented in Milan in a standard, commercial runway show sponsored by *Vogue Italia* (see figure 6.13). The macro atmospheres of the fashion weeks, as well as budget considerations, were the two main reasons that Chen chose to display the same collection in two different forms. As he has noted:

‘...the atmosphere in Milan is more suitable for catwalk shows because I think that people come to the shows that have a bit faster pace and they want to see a flow. Meanwhile, I think that Shanghai is a very new fashion city that is also very fast. As you have observed, it’s growing rapidly. SHFW is growing very fast each season. It is very new. So, I think that a relatively innovative form of presentation, a combination of show and presentation, will be interesting to experiment with’ (Chen, 2017, p. 1)



Figure 6.13: A standard commercial runway show staged by Chen at MLFW in the Autumn/Winter 2017, the same season before showing at SHFW (provided by Chen, 2017)

Chen and Angel Chen showed in the same season (Autumn/Winter 2017) and were sponsored by the same project run by *Vogue Italia* and CNMI (Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana) and supported by Armani, then showing at SHFW. They both staged standard runway shows in Milan and then chose an entirely different method to show the same collections at SHFW. Chen chose a combination of a presentation and a live show for SHFW, while Angel Chen chose a live concert performance (see Figure 6.15).



Figure 6.14: Angel Chen's standard runway show at MLFW in the Autumn/Winter 2017 season before showing at SHFW (photograph from Angel Chen, 2017)



Figure 6.15: A small live concert was staged at SHFW to show the same collection that Angel Chen staged in Milan in the Autumn/Winter 2017 season
(photo from Angel Chen, 2017)

Another important reason that Chen displayed a presentation in Shanghai was that the conveyance of sentiments is stronger than offered by a catwalk show, and

‘...professional audiences would accept the atmosphere better through discussing details of the show with designers while watching the performance; it is a better way to communicate and for the collection, the brand and the designer’s personality and individuality to be understood. This offers not only a macro view of the collection and the brand, but also the micro view, including each piece and every detail of the garments’ (Chen, 2017, p. 6).

It was essential for Chen to discuss his collection in detail with insiders at SHFW as, chronologically, SHFW is the last of the dominant fashion weeks after PFW closes every year (Chen, 2017, p. 10). It is a valuable opportunity for an emerging designer to meet a number of chief editors returning from the ‘Big Four’ fashion weeks, bringing their cutting-edge and fresh views on the season’s collections. From Chen’s perspective, a presentation is efficient in gathering these people who can share and communicate their professional views on that season’s experiences obtained in the global fashion week system.

‘Every time I stayed in Shanghai, I had more time to interact with different people, from whom I could get better insights. It is a different knowledge from that which you can get from European fashion weeks. It provides a conclusion in which everyone can share their feelings as an end to all of the fashion weeks’ (Chen, 2017, p. 5).

Angel Chen was in a slightly different situation compared to Chen as before showing in Shanghai, she also staged a standard runway show in Beijing at

CFW where she showed her comprehensive collection. This gave her more flexibility in choosing the show form in Shanghai as SHFW embraces multiple forms of show that the designers can use to show their collections.

The work they produced at Shanghai has multiple cultural and aesthetic layers, combining different temporal and thematic strands in one single performance. Hopkins (2000, p. 241) mentions that the 'professional global artistic designer' appeared in the period of the globalised and identity-based practices of the 2000 years. This means that in a globalised period when fashion and art cannot merely be examined within certain parameters but need to be interpreted within the globalised system, and designers tend to emphasise their own identities and individualities when producing works within this system. As discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3, the changing of innovation from the 1990s to the 2000s is seen through the high degree of socio-political connections and concepts in terms of expression forms moving to the wider disseminated and globally-recognised ethnic cultural identity engaging with Western fashions in show productions around the world. Under these circumstances, the focus of show design seems to have returned to the designers' personal pursuits, rather than looking at social or political issues. Among the emerging generation of IBC designers, the innovations they have produced are mostly seen as identity-based practices, which is aligned with the features of a 'professional global artistic designer' (Hopkins, 2000, p. 241).

6.2 IBC Designers at SHFW: A Forming Chinese Collective

As discussed in section 2.4, creative innovation and its adoption often embedded with the organisational and systematic changes (Jin et al., 2004), seen with emergence of new products from the niche market (Geels, 2002, p.135). The emerging generation of IBC designers, initiating with Jin and

Zhao's art production studio Hexagon Collective with their innovatively discover 'new relationships' between fashion and theatre, fashion and art, and 'new perspectives' to consist 'new combinations' from existing art and theatre forms (Evans, 1991), and is followed by Tan (images have been shown in above), Huang (see Figure 6.16) and Chen (see Figure 6.17) who all collaborated with Zhao in producing immersive physical theatre shows with similar aesthetic genre in London and Shanghai Fashion Weeks in between the year 2017 to 2019. Their work have bubbled up as a niche aesthetic product emerged in the global fashion ecosystem, forming a new designer community who advocate similar aesthetic genre.

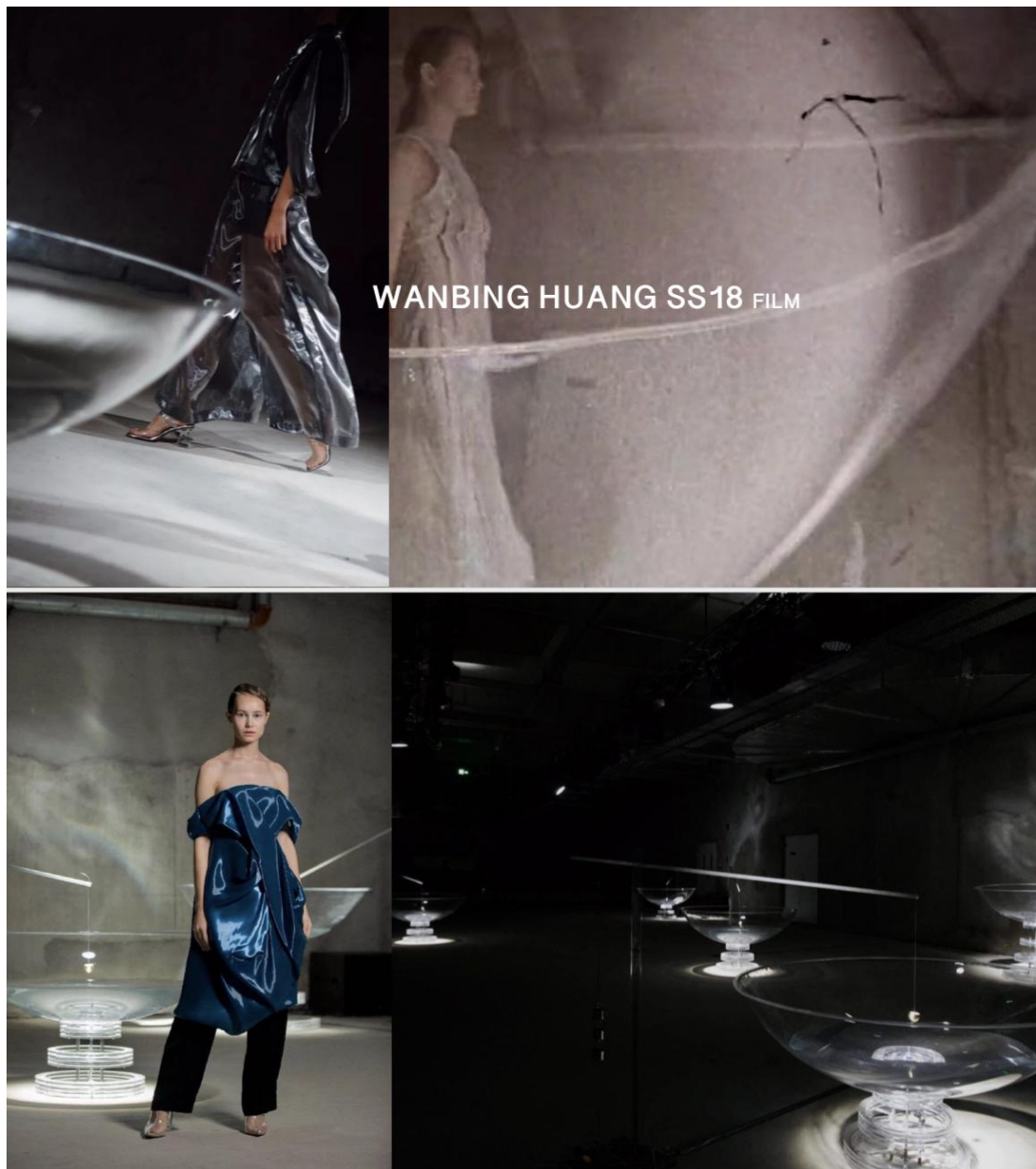


Figure 6.16, Wanbing Huang in Collaboration with Zhao of Producing her Show at SHFW (image provided by Zhao, 2018)



Figure 6.17, Xuzhi Chen in Collaboration with Zhao in Producing his Immersive Physical Theatre Show at LFW (image provided by Zhao, 2018)

Some of above mentioned performances were displayed at SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood and XCommons, and as aforementioned, these two institutions, founded in 2016 and 2018 respectively, are both catering for gathering and incubating Chinese emerging design innovations. Under these circumstances, IBC designers are gradually viewing SHFW as the final terminal and willing to gather together and showcasing their international-touring collections in a more aesthetical innovative way with the encouragement and supports from these two institutions. Such as Angel Chen in above mentioned, tend to choose a more artistic or recreational form to showcase her collections at SHFW after standardly presenting her whole collections at MLFW and CFW in the same season. With the increasing numbers of International-based designers returning to SHFW after 2017, they are gradually forming a collective, especially those gathered by Labelhood. This section will showcase some representative works of other IBC designers gathered by Labelhood in the Autumn/Winter season 2017 and place this gathered Chinese creative collective in the broader cultural context of SHFW. Through elaborating on the inner driver behind SHFW becoming a carnivalesque mass entertainment event due to its openness to the public, the reasons of why SHFW could gather and actualise diversified types of designers' art autonomy in presenting their works is emphasised in its multi-culturalism characteristics that has enabled its capability of meeting audiences from different segments.

6.2.1: Broader Elaboration on IBC Designers at SHFW

In addition to Tan, Chen and Angel Chen's presentations at SHFW, many other Chinese designers, most of whom are internationally based, have

exhibited innovative shows and presentations in collaboration with both Labelhood and XCommons. Various forms of innovation have been exhibited through performance art, including contemporary theatrical performances, dance performances and concert performances. Conceptual presentations and exhibitions have also been seen at Labelhood's venue. I followed the 2017 Autumn/Winter season at SHFW, which featured Shushu Tong's contemporary theatrical performance 'Girl's Generation', Dan Shan's thematic reproduction of men's real life, Wanbing Huang's contemporary dance performance and Angel Chen's live concert, which has been discussed above.

Inspired by the 1980s' black comedy *Heathers*, Shushu Tong aimed to reshape the iconic image of the Heather Girls, a gang of cool girls on a high school campus, with a more contemporary and relevant aesthetic and approach. She used a theatrical performance to reproduce the 1980s sitcom, combining it with the classic style of a 1990s classroom in China (see Figure 6.18).



Figure 6.18: Shushu Tong's presentation at the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at SHFW at Labelhood's venue (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Dan Shan reproduced the career scenes of men in real life. The exploration of practicality and the sense of identity shaped this modern menswear collection (see Figure 6.19).



Figure 6.19: Dan Shan's reproduction of real-life scenes in his first presentation at SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood (photographed by Wang, 2017)

Wanbing Huang's performance was conceptual, investigating the relationships between the different parts of the human body. All of the garments were displayed like a small exhibition and she invited a dancer to perform within the space that was painted all white like the dancer's body (see Figure 6.20).



Figure 6.20: Wanbing Huang used a live exhibition to showcase her collection at the Autumn/Winter 2017 season at SHFW in collaboration with Labelhood (provided by Labelhood, 2017).

It could be generalised from the abovementioned fashion shows and performance that, with the high degree of production mobility with providing high art autonomisation for participate designers, which have been analysed in chapter 5, Labelhood managed to conduct the largest number of IBC designers to come back to SHFW in each season. Distinguished from the extreme-commercialised requirements from SFDA for brands showcasing at XintianDi, what Labelhood and XCommons did at SHFW since 2017, is in essence to materialise and articulate the emerging creativity and niche culture neglect the cultural and aesthetic legitimation constructed by authorities at

SHFW, which is 'Haipai' genre, homogeneous to Shanghai as an emerging fashion city, featuring at a mixture of modern western and eastern cultural identities (Wang and Lau, 2009). In fact, the initiation and construction of the XCommons, which could be considered as an outsourced commercially running company partially owned by SFDA, is founded due to the noticing of rising capacity of IBC designers and needs of art autonomisation among emerging IBC designers touring back from legitimate fashion weeks (Zhao, 2018; Luo, 2018). This could be viewed as a systematic change to SHFW, enlarging the numbers of innovation advocating and adopting organisations due to the accumulated numbers of new creative products, in this context, are new aesthetics materialised in the innovative fashion shows.

The cultural phenomenons created in both the Bailian Center (Labelhood's venue) and HKRI Taikoo Hui (XCommons's venue) formed two avant-garde and radical-centred atmospheres that differed from other commercialised venues at SHFW. Most of the designers who collaborated with these two organisers were encouraged to showcase their collections in non-conventional forms with the aim to explore a harmonious fusion between art and commercialism in the field of fashion production. In most of the shows staged in these two venues, hierarchical structures were abandoned as they featured tickets for both professionals and for the public, which is elaborated on in the following section. Starting with Labelhood and followed by XCommons, the two organisers, although not related to each other, have encouraged groups of emerging International-based Chinese designers to return to China and they have gradually formed an alliance, which has improved SHFW by offering different perceptions on fashion innovation. Together with XintianDi and 800Show, the four main sites of SHFW have presented diverse temporal systems and cultural atmospheres within the field.

As emphasised in Chapter 2, through the field theory put forward by Bourdieu, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, p. 739) proposes the notion that fashion weeks can be viewed as a materialised field of fashion with 'the visible boundaries, relational positions and capital at play in the wider range of fashion'. In Entwistle and Rocamoras' (2006) arguments, the materialised field of fashion is seen as a combination of multiple cultural elements, the variation of which can lead to unique cultural characteristics, and the subsequent variety in the styles of each fashion week resulting from long-term evolution. They demonstrate that LFW is a microcosm of the local fashion industry that creates a temporal spatial social structure within the field of show production. Zhao (2008) has applied the study on CFW and emphasises that CFW in Beijing is the materialisation of the Chinese field of fashion and it is also a microcosm of the Chinese fashion industry. The theoretical conclusions and analysis structure are used to investigate the macro-structures in terms of show productions and the corresponding organisational structures of PFW, LFW and SHFW in Chapters 5 and 6. However, these views and analytical frameworks are not all applicable when discussing the cultural characteristics of SHFW as it has gained both systematic complexity and a high degree of cultural diversification within the one fashion week. Based on the historical 'Haipai' culture in Shanghai and following the guidance of the operational systems of the modern Western legitimate fashion weeks, SHFW has gradually formed a multicultural identity that fuses hierarchical positions and democratised interpretations in the show presentations through the deep engagement with the public audience and consumers. Its openness to the public has been created due to the demands from the public to be offered access to a professional fashion show. However, this thesis focuses on emerging IBC designers and the elaboration on SHFW in this chapter provides a comprehensive cultural image of the systematic relationships between the newly-formed collective of innovative IBC designers and SHFW

itself. Therefore, the following section only covers the cultural characteristics that are related to the IBC designers and their works.

6.2.2: Carnivalisation of SHFW: Deeper Engagement with the Public

The purpose of providing an in-depth analysis of SHFW's cultural characteristics and its carnivalesque atmosphere in this section is to provide a cultural context to better interpret and elaborate on the status and positions these IBC designers have in the domestic cultural system. As emphasised in Chapter 4 when discussing SHFW's venue and the corresponding organisational structures and as shown in the above section, the group of IBC designers are gathered at the venues provided by Labelhood and XCommons for SHFW. One of the most noticeable cultural phenomena relating to the innovation of the collective's status at SHFW is that a sharp contrast has been formed between these IBC designers' cultural recognition in Western legitimate fashion systems and their status at SHFW as 'they are just a group of subcultural representatives in SHFW', as stated by Bian (2017). Officials of SHFW tend to attach less importance to these IBC designers as most of these brands are not 'commercially mature' (Bian, 2017). This is evidently demonstrated at XintianDi, which is always the main venue that is promoted by the SFDA for each season, with few IBC designers showing at this venue as it caters for commercial conglomerates and commercial brands in China. Another reason is that SHFW's diversification of its multicultural phenomena created by the diversified materialised venues discussed in Chapter 4 and, more importantly, the carnivalesque cultural phenomena both dismiss the cultural influences of the innovation collectives created by IBC designers.

Although SHFW is still a professional event commercially, it is viewed more as a cultural event that draws the attention of many fashion enthusiasts and amateurs alike. This has triggered demand among the public to gain access

to fashion shows, leading to the emergence of these scalpers. In addition to the above methods of gaining access to the shows at SHFW, such as the organisers deliberately making the shows open to the public and the official methods to obtain show tickets, the emergence of ticket scalpers has become a major contributor to the democratisation of SHFW. They can be found at the three main venues for SHFW (XintianDi, Bailian Centre and 800Show), with each venue obtaining a certain group of scalpers who sell show tickets outside. This unique phenomenon has become a cultural characteristic of SHFW that enables it to have a deep engagement with the general public.

Unique to SHFW, are unofficial groups of individuals who scalp tickets for all of the catwalk shows, purchasing tickets from ticket holders who do not plan to attend the shows and selling these at a higher price to the members of the public who are eager to gain access to SHFW. Scalpers can be categorised as the relatives of the authorities, large apparel companies and people in charge of the big fashion brands in China. This was explained by one of these scalpers found outside the XintianDi venue: “whoever wants to establish an activity in China needs to ensure good relations with the relevant authorities” (anonym, see Figure 6.21). The predecessor of SHFW was the Shanghai International Fashion Festival organised by the General Office of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government (SMPGGO). Technically, members of the SMPGGO are still invited by most brands and designers to attend SHFW. One of the scalpers interviewed outside one of the catwalk show venues, XintianDi, revealed that some scalpers obtain tickets from ‘fashion editors and the relatives of government employees who receive the show tickets but are too busy to attend themselves’ (anonym, see Figure 6.21). The prices of the tickets are affordable for most members of the public who want to enter a fashion show. For instance, for a scalper covering the region outside the XintianDi venue, ticket prices are greatly affected by the daily

demand, ranging from approximately 50 RMB to 300 RMB (£5 to £30), which is equivalent to the cost of two to three meals in a restaurant.



Figure 6.21: A member of the public asking two scalpers (middle and right) about the fashion shows' ticket prices outside of the XintianDi venue (photographed by Wang, 2017)

This phenomenon is not prohibited because no official regulations exist that forbid it and no one attempts to prevent such a trading of catwalk show tickets. Not even the official organisers have introduced any effective and appropriate measures to deal with this issue. In fact, some organisers even see this as a positive chance to strengthen the interactions between the industry and the public. From a positive perspective, the organiser, Lv (2017) has described being inspired by these ticket scalpers; due to the significant participation of the public, the organisers found that the public were enthusiastic about SHFW and established Shanghai Fashion Weekend one week after SHFW to cater to the public's needs, thereby promoting SHFW as a form of immersive

carnival entertainment. However, SHFW was not the first fashion week that held a fashion weekend to stimulate mass consumption and convey fashion culture to a mass audience. Rather, it was London that created the fashion weekend concept.

From a positive perspective, the ticket scalpers for SHFW unconsciously function as a medium facilitating mass audience familiarity with a professional industry event, thus deciphering the mysteries of the fashion industry. In the European fashion systems, the democratising of fashion has originated from the emergence of fashion bloggers (Barnard, 2002), restructuring fashion systems and changing the hierarchies of fashion from a general perspective. It was the bloggers attending and live-streaming catwalk shows from around the year 2000 that marked the beginning of the de-mystification of the fashion industry (Bartlett et al. eds., 2013). For SHFW, these ticket scalpers, although disrupting the order of fashion shows, help the public to enter otherwise exclusive professional fashion shows, unconsciously reconfiguring the social structure within the temporal field of fashion created in the show venues like XintianDi. If the tickets being sold by ticket scalpers come from those who were invited to the shows, including those who were asked to sit in the front row but do not want to attend the events, then the conventional social hierarchy and status created by fashion shows seem to be entirely subverted at SHFW. From a positive perspective, the existence of scalpers, to some extent, broadens the number of mass consumers at fashion events, thus enhancing the interactions between brands and consumers and narrowing the distance between them both physically and emotionally. As one ordinary attendee who had bought a ticket from a scalper argued: 'It is too difficult to get hold of tickets officially. Scalpers are great helpers for people like us. They make my wish of watching a fashion show come true' (Meng, 2017).

If the characteristics of traditional fashion weeks are embodied through the formation of a social hierarchy system, especially within the fashion shows that demonstrate the embeddedness of social capital within the social system through the seating arrangements (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, p. 739), then the members of the public who obtain tickets from scalpers break the previous hierarchical system. Shows held in XintianDi do not have a public entrance system like Labelhood offers, in which the tickets can be awarded to people through activities. To gain access to the shows held in XintianDi, the most convenient way is for the public to purchase tickets from scalpers. Wu (2017, pseudonym, see Figure 6.33) reveals that on most occasions, there are not enough tickets available to meet the demands of the public:

'The prices vary according to the fame of designers, time of the show, as well as the needs. But, normally, we have a standard price and all of the sellers obey this standard and do not set their prices too high or too low.'

In this way, the 'social capitals' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, p. 739) within the fashion field are no longer necessary in order to gain access to a show at SHFW. With a wide engagement with the general public, the shows presented at SHFW have more recreational functions than professional functions.

For IBC designers, knowing about this phenomenon encourages them to make their shows more attractive by adding entertainment elements, such as Angel Chen's concert mentioned in the above section, and ignoring the hierarchical divisions between the audience. During entertaining presentations and shows, designers can communicate with the professional audience to obtain insiders' viewpoints and can gain deeper perceptions through discussions with the mass audience simultaneously. For them, SHFW is like a final terminal that concludes the works of the season, as well

as an opportunity to connect with other Chinese designers and professionals within the field. As Chen (2017) has noted:

‘I feel like I got more insight in Shanghai than in London, Milan, and Paris. I believe it depends on what kind of people one communicates with. For example, in Shanghai, you can chat with a lot of chief editors who are really experienced. Only in Shanghai can we keep in touch frequently. Since Shanghai is our last stop, you can get more insight or feedback through them. So, my impression is that I can get a lot of chances in Shanghai. From my point of view, its entertaining characteristic also represents a feature of SHFW for opening to the public’.

Considering the fact that legitimate fashion institutions in Europe were founded on social stratification and originated from Parisian aristocratic culture, the openness to all classes of the public in SHFW has given rise to a socially-engaging and entertaining characteristic that is redefining the concepts of fashion and the fashion week in China. Bian (2017) has stated that:

‘We are now entering an era of postmodernism and the biggest feature of a postmodern society is entertainment. The so-called ‘artistry’ in fashion is reduced, or the ‘commodity’ is increased, becoming vulgar. Well, it doesn’t matter. Elegant art will merge with street culture in modern society anyway. This is understandable. This is the inevitable result of social stratification. The key is which consumer group we are focusing on and what idea we are observing. This is rather important’.

Unlike for PFW, in which most events are prepared solely for professional insiders, and LFW, in which the public events are relatively small scale, SHFW offers a new system in which insiders and the public can interact with one other. This has given rise to a massive fashion cultural atmosphere that is open and that people of all professions and social classes can join. The public can be involved and interact with this industry event and no aspects are

invisible or mysterious, or entirely closed off to the general public. For instance, during SHFW, one can easily find signs on each main street in the city centre, informing the public of where the main sites for SHFW are located (see Figure 6.22). This is rarely seen during PFW as most events exclude the public.



Figure 6.22: Within the city centre, marketing materials can be seen (the left picture) everywhere and near to the main venues for SHFW, like XintianDi, the public is able to see eye-catching instruction boards telling them how to get to the main venues (photographed by Wang, 2017)

The core value of a socialist country is collectivism, a cultural value 'that is characterised by emphasis on cohesiveness among individuals and prioritisation of the group over self' (Triandis, 2018, p.25). With public ownership playing a dominant role in China, emphasising the elimination of stratification and the sharing of products with the public (Barnett, 1967), the openness of SHFW is reasonable as the organisers have the responsibilities

of upgrading the global status of Shanghai as a world fashion city, increasing the public's interest in fashion and cultivating aesthetical capabilities of domestic designers. As SHFW was established as a government initiative rather than driven by industry needs, it is embedded with more social functions for the benefit of the public because the ideology of collectivism directs all government activities; all events should benefit the people instead of catering for certain groups of insiders or elitists. As Bian (2017) has stated:

'Shanghai Fashion Week, from the aspect of its organisational structure, is different from the European fashion weeks. For example, the European fashion weeks are held by associations, while SHFW was started by the government. Actually, all fashion weeks seem to be held by the government while in the back, they may rely on some industry organisations at the same time. Shanghai is even more special than those in western countries. Its organiser, Shanghai Textile Holding Group, sounds like a company but it is owned by the Chinese government. On the one hand, they'll consider their own development; on the other hand, as a state-owned company, they have social responsibilities...it aims to increase the whole industry's sensibility towards and quality of fashion, to cultivate our own designers, to benefit Shanghai citizens and to promote the public's awareness of fashion' (Bian, 2017).

Thorough engagement with the public, which fundamentally breaks the social stratification of traditional Western fashion weeks, can be seen as a unique characteristic of SHFW. This does not mean that its openness to the public is a sign of immaturity in the system. As Bian (2017) has stated from the point of view of fashion authorities:

'It is not fair to say that the engagement with the public means SHFW is immature. It has its own style. It is difficult to judge which stage they're in according to an international standard. It mainly depends on their audience. It was true in the past and is still true now. What we expected at that time was to encourage more people to accept the concept of the foreign fashion system and the way that foreign designers, especially the mature ones, express

their cognition. Domestic Chinese designers were learning from others and understanding how they could do better from an economic perspective; the cross-over of designers and enterprises in particular was an overall trend at that time in China. We want to discover how we can fully utilise the value of the art of design, change it into a product and fulfil the goal' (Bian, 2017).

In essence, this is aligned with the Chinese philosophy and political ideology. As Bian (2017) has also noted:

'Eastern philosophy is totally different from Western philosophy. Western philosophy is based on personal property. Here, all our property belongs to the country, the empire, the world. We have a special concept of the 'world', which means that Chinese philosophy serves the public. This is totally different to the Western philosophy that serves the individual. That's why we talk about the social significance in everything. Sometimes, not all things have social significance, and this needs to be stressed in all events held in China because the core value of our government is to serve the public'.

The above views explain the drivers of SHFW's deep social engagement'? Or 'reasons for SHFW's deep social engagement. Social significance is vital for a cultural event in China like SHFW. It is attempting to create its own fashion system alongside the Chinese government's systematic efforts to build up a global fashion centre with socialist cultural characteristics that to underlined its social significances, as well as to produce world-famous fashion designers and popular domestic fashion brands. The city has invested heavily in reviving its reputation as a site of 'fashionability' and has formed a 'Haipai' culture, which has been mentioned and discussed by scholars in recent years (Lindgren, 2013, pp. 73-89; Wu, 2004; Wang et al., 2009; Cui and Liu, 2000). With its 'Haipai' culture being discussed in recent years (Tsui, 2009; Lindgren, 2013), Shanghai is also seen as favouring innovative and creative designs that imitate and incorporate Western aesthetics. However, it is too simplistic to identify 'Haipai' as representing the culture of either SHFW or the city of

Shanghai as a rising fashion capital. Although Shanghai has endeavoured to become the 'world's sixth fashion centre, alongside London, Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo' (Xu, 2003), it has yet to form its own fashion and cultural identity.

'...From an ideological point of view, from the authorities' perspectives, the culture of a city is simple to understand. We have always said that Shanghai has its own culture - Haipai culture. Shanghai's culture is actually contradictory and complex. In the process of constructing Shanghai's own culture, what role does the fashion week play? Is it demonstrating a mature system of constructing an iconic event in the city? Or disseminating an elegant fashion sense? Or stressing the unique lifestyle in Shanghai? Or presenting the sustainable development of Shanghai in the future? Can you accurately clarify the function and purpose of SHFW? If you cannot, it means that there are still improvements that can be made...From a cultural point of view, Shanghai is a cultural integration after the opening based on Jiangnan District²³, including Suzhou, and uses Suzhou cultural circle²⁴ as a cultural background. Even if the SHFW looks Western in form, basically, the feature of the pursuit of Chinese culture still exist' (Bian, 2017).

²³ Jiangnan or Jiang Nan (Chinese: 江南; pinyin: Jiāngnán) is a geographic area in China referring to lands immediately to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of its delta. The region encompasses the city of Shanghai, the southern part of Jiangsu Province, the southeastern part of Anhui Province, the northern part of Jiangxi Province and the northern part of Zhejiang Province. The most important cities in the area are Shanghai, Anqing, Changzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Ningbo, Shaoxing, Suzhou, Wuxi, Wenzhou and Zhenjiang.

²⁴ Suzhou 'is the birthplace of the flourishing Wu Culture which has had immense influence in the regions embracing Taihu Lake, west of Shanghai, southeast of Nanjing, northwest of Zhejiang and south of Yangzhou and Huaiyin. As one vital part of the Chinese traditional civilization, the Wu Culture has a long history which may be traced back to 10,000 years ago. However, just about 2,000 years ago, this culture had a surge of development. At first, the Wu Culture mainly adopted the essence of the central Chinese civilization. Until the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), more and more overseas civilizations were absorbed by the Wu Culture, and then introduced into central China. Coming after the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Suzhou City was one of the most prosperous Chinese cities, both in agricultural production and domestic and foreign trade. Therefore, it is no wonder that Suzhou is one of the cities where the earliest bud of capitalism in China appeared. The historic Wu Culture has left Suzhou City with a series of attractive heritages, including the classical gardens and water townships, the melodic rhythm of Kun Opera and Ping Tan (Suzhou ballad), the Wumen Fine Arts School, the Suzhou handcrafts and the Jiangsu Cuisine. Each of them can reflect the locals' essential character-exquisite, mild and smart.' (Travel China Guide, 2018)

This is also seen in the formation of SHFW's cultural identity for two reasons. One is that forming a design or cultural identity typically requires a long-term development of at least ten to twenty years (Crane, 2012; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009), which the SHFW is too young to achieve. The other reason is that the Chinese fashion industry system is immature, resulting in a shortage of industry professionals who are able to underpin any form of stable cultural identity. The diversified cultural characteristics of Shanghai could be one explanation as it is within the experimental process of the old system dying and the new system being constructed:

'This is different from Europe as the citizens are different. In the era of the planned economy before the 1980s, the fashion industry was planned and developed better. But the whole country has always been in short supply. It has the duty to boost production for the whole country. In the period of planned economy, you can find that even simplicity, practicality and appearance were emphasised; even when the economy struggled, it still retained some of its features. In later period, we need revolution and innovation, which are certainly destructive. When an old system is broken down and the new one hasn't been built yet, it is messy for sure' (Bian, 2017).

From the perspective of the system, according to Lindgren (2013, p. 234), Shanghai is building a 'self-legitimization that has become central to the practice of experienced Chinese fashion designers'. More importantly, Shanghai is forming its own fashion style that combines Western fashion with traditional Chinese culture. This unique cultural characteristic will inevitably influence the style of SHFW as a whole in the near future.

Although the emerging IBC designers showing with Labelhood are not viewed as the core commercial participants of SHFW, which tend to be viewed as those commercial brands displaying traditional shows at the XintianDi venue, they are still the most recognisable evidence of SHFW being the most supportive fashion week for the niche market and emerging talents within the global

fashion week system. Gathering at SHFW, targeting the niche market and demonstrating various types of innovations via multiple shows and performances, gives these young IBC designers the power to attract the international leading press, forming a subculture and a Chinese wave of design power. The hierarchical and cultural status of SHFW within the global fashion ecosystem has been raised and enhanced by the emerging Chinese International-based designers, rather than by the commercial conglomerate brands.

For the young IBC designers themselves, SHFW is the 'final terminal' of all of the international fashion weeks, which gathers a number of emerging International-based designers returning from different fashion capitals, such as Paris, London, New York and Milan. It has become a seasonal conclusion for emerging IBC designers to showcase their new collections and the most effective platform to demonstrate their design capability, as well as to build their international images. Their inner connections with the whole system of SHFW are, at this stage, mainly revealed through fashion shows, rather than through commercial activities. This is due to the lack of commercial maturity of these emerging IBC designer brands as start-up businesses. However, SHFW, though obtaining a cosmopolitan entertainment characteristics with multi-cultural layers targeting diversified audiences, still becoming an ideal incubator for IBC designers as it not merely provides aesthetic-friendly production services and cultural phenomenon, but also offering opportunities for commercially immature designer brands to cultivate its market adaptabilities with both cultural and commercial complexity. From this point of view, it could say that SHFW has obtained cultural characteristics of both incubational-friendly environment for emerging-brands like LFW does, but a complex and multi-diversified commercially maturing market like PFW does. In this way, art autonomisation and commercial heteronomisation simultaneously exist in cultural field of SHFW, which could implement the

avant-garde aesthetic changes and expand these changes to broader interconnections with the creative organisational system of SHFW, as well as influencing the global fashion ecosystem ultimately.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Re-Shaping Aesthetic Innovations: Bringing New Aesthetics Through Interactive and Immersive Fashion Performances Featuring Physical Theatre

As elaborated on in the literature and contextual review chapters, the role models of IBC designers are those designers identified as conceptual and avant-garde in terms of design and show collections who have become well-known since the late 1970s and 1980s but declined post-2000 (English, 2013) when the industry became deeply connected to capital (Hopkins, 2018). This is shown in the fashion shows of IBC designers, which no longer function as the presentation of garments and aesthetics but instead embody social and cultural implications, as well as fashion globalisation processes. Their aesthetic innovations created in fashion shows have been identified by scholars (Duggan, 2001; English, 2007; Margiela, 2009; Knox, 2010, 2011; Bolton and McQueen, 2011; Kondo, 2014) as connecting with conceptual art, performance art and expressionism in terms of narrative style. These designers, represented by McQueen, Galliano, Margiela and Chalayan, whose work is discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3, have led to an era of super designers in contemporary fashion. The reasons that these role model designers could achieve such high-profile success in terms of aesthetic innovation are not only because of their talents but also due to the aesthetical, cultural and innovation-friendly context of the industry when the UK was shaping its fashion cultural status and European fashion cultural legitimisation had not yet been formed. This is different from the situation in the most recent five years when the industry has become fully globalised, showing more capitalistic characteristics with the shifting of economic power to China (Hopkins, 2018). The main body of the fashion industry during the era of the

'designerscape' (English, 2013, p. 156) was shaped by designers, so their talents were valued and they were supported by both the industry and the government. More importantly, the 1990s, which were within the 'designerscape era', were viewed as a transitional period when fashion globalisation was related to cultural-hybridisation and cross-fertilisation in both the art and fashion worlds (Hopkins, 2017, p. 237). This has laid the foundation for a culturally friendly environment within the fashion industry for designers to experiment with diverse types of art interpretations in design and fashion shows.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3, the innovations occurring after the 2000s should be discussed from a vertical perspective, instead of focusing on the shows themselves. The IBC designers in this thesis are now facing a more complex and fast-changing global fashion ecosystem, which has resulted in them demonstrating diversified extents to which they persist with artistic pursuits. Their careers started during a capital-centred era when art became deeply influenced or even controlled by capital after the year 2000 when the art and fashion industries have become embedded with and reliant on capital, rather than artists and designers (Hopkins, 2017, pp. 241-249). During this period, the innovation that occurs in fashion shows is not merely about challenging the norms and aesthetics as it has become a cross-cultural configuration and a strategy to cultivate the target market and consumers.

From the perspective of IBC designers, it seems that their predecessors have investigated and experimented with most types of connections between artistic fashion and performance art. Surpassing their role models on an aesthetic level seems to be an impossible task. This is especially true in the context of the needs of capitalism being prioritised on most occasions. Furthermore, sponsors, such as those of Jin and Wong, who provide capital tend to interfere and are deeply engaged with events as they are concerned

about the commercial and communicational effect of a young artistic-oriented designer spending too much on actualising the innovative visual effects of their shows, rather than on PR communication, which has already accounted for the highest proportion of a fashion show's production budget at an international fashion week (Jin, 2017a; Chen, 2017; Yang, 2017).

Even in a context that does not provide sufficient organisational support for exploring aesthetic innovation, the work of Jin and her show director Zhao, as well as the later shows produced by Zhao's studio Hexagon Collective for IBC designers demonstrating their aesthetic genres, should still be noted as they have brought new aesthetics to fashion shows. Introducing both immersive theatre and physical theatre, which are both considered new theatre forms, to a show and inviting audiences to co-produce the performance to strengthen their understanding of the collection and the design identity of the brand enables new aesthetics to be brought to fashion shows. These shows have been neither runways nor static presentations and have been identified as 'fashion performances' by the FCF and announced on PFW's official calendar. Young IBC designers, seen as extreme-autonomous, semi-autonomous or heteronomous and represented by Jin, Chen and Wong, respectively, are different in the extents to which they pursue art autonomy in their production practices. However, they all have to follow the existing cultural and aesthetic legitimation formed within the various fashion cities and insisted upon by organisations like the FCF and the elitism at PFW, or the BFC and avant-garde designs at LFW, to gain cultural recognition. Their pursuit of art autonomy tends to be less rebellious and hostile to the mainstream system and legitimation compared with their predecessors in the 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156).

A conservative attitude seems to be effective in balancing artistic pursuits in production practices with the need to run a business under increasingly fierce

marketing competition, as shown in the adaptability of the shows of Xuzhi Chen and Angel Chen at different fashion weeks, as well as Wong's willingness to sacrifice artistic pursuits for the sake of the commercial success of a show. In fact, Chen and Wong's autonomous brands were both becoming more commercially mature than Jin's brand from 2016 to 2019. Although the temporary compromise in terms of aesthetic pursuits directly led to fewer aesthetic innovations being explored, they still have the long-term goal of being aesthetically innovative when their brands become commercially mature and stable within the industry. This is exemplified by Chen becoming another advocate of the new aesthetics successfully explored by Jin and Zhao and choosing to collaborate with Zhao for his Autumn/Winter 2019 show at LFW (see Figure 6.16) after gaining symbolic recognition from legitimate institutions by being successfully listed on the official calendar and obtaining sufficient financial sponsorships. This demonstrates his attitude towards exploring art in fashion but has also been achieved based on commercial maturity and legitimate recognition. Of these three case study designers, from the perspective of their brand operation, Chen's semi-autonomous brand XuZhi was the most commercially successful from 2016 to 2019 during my ethnographic research.

Although Jin is a pioneer in exploring new aesthetics in showing fashion and has succeeded in bringing immersive physical theatre to a contemporary fashion show following by other IBC designers from the same generation, she has struggled with the commercial running of her autonomous brand Youjia Jin and has received little commercial support from the industry because she has chosen to reject most opportunities that could potentially give her commercial success and recognition at PFW and LFW. As analysed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, she and Zhao used all of the budget for the actualisation of aesthetic innovation, rather than PR promotions in China, and Jin gave up the opportunity of being listed on the official calendar at LFW for

FS's venue so that she could better actualise her concept within a limited production budget. She has given up most of the opportunities to upgrade the symbolic value of her brand through marketing promotions that could have been obtained by transferring the symbolic recognition from official authorities to economic capital, like the heteronomous designer Wong did for his Spring/Summer 2019 show at LFW.

Theoretical explanations of innovation (Schumpeter, 1935, 1939, 2020; Druker, 1984; Evans, 1991; Fagerberg, 2004; Jin et al., 2004; Popa et al., 2010; Greenacre et al., 2012) that are reviewed in Chapter 2, section 2.4, can be revisited here. These explanations demonstrate the new aesthetic of creating new products as a type of 'creative innovation' (Jin et al., 2004, p. 260), with reference to immersive physical theatre in showing fashion at international fashion weeks and the use of the same design identity as shows provided by Zhao's art studio Hexagon Collective. This studio has started to influence and gather a group of designers as advocates of innovation, which can be viewed as a type of 'adoptive innovation' (Jin et al., 2004, p. 260). Whether this formation of a collective could result in another subculture community within the emerging generation of IBC designers still requires longer observation and more evidence. It is undeniable that the tendency of forming an innovation or artistic designer alliance among these generation of IBC designers, which is gradually attracting more IBC designers to join and recognising this new form of showcasing their new collections. The emerging IBC designers, who have already been recognised as main contributors to refreshing the image of Chinese design power, are continuing to influence the global fashion ecosystem by modifying the ways in which fashion is shown with diverse aesthetic interpretations, forming a group of innovation advocates. They have brought systematic changes to the global fashion ecosystem with followers who are not merely designers but are also broader creative labour, such as institutions like Labelhood and XCommons, within

the fashion ecosystem. This demonstrates that innovations are not merely about challenging norms but are cross-cultural configurations and strategies to cultivate target audiences (Schumpeter, 1935, 1939, 2020).

7.2 'Independent' Designers among the Emerging Generation: A Cultural Interpretation of Autonomy in the Global Fashion Ecosystem

As reviewed in Chapter 2, section 2.5, the existing academic interpretations of independent designers tend to underline their operational independence from a commercial perspective (Zhu, 2015). Moreover, the classification of designers according to the conflict between art and commerce is applicable, accompanied by wide academic discussions of 'art for art's sake' initiated by Bourdieu (1993, p. 40) in the field of cultural production (Haskins, 1990; Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005; Fillis, 2006; Beech, 2019). However, this study finds that the ubiquitous use of 'independent designers' among 'the third generation' (Tsui, 2009, p. 41) of IBC designers has become an emphasis on their pursuit of art autonomy through the actualisation of individualism within a post-capitalist era (Beech, 2019, p. 112). This has become a new recognized achievement within their community, being held in higher regard than working for a luxury brand if the designer can gain dominant hierarchical recognition by themselves. This study has found that among the emerging IBC designers, the emphasis on 'independence' is not merely a commercial identity in terms of their autonomous business models or micro enterprise scales. This has also become a cultural norm and a collective identity that designers use to demonstrate their hostility towards designer brands that belong to luxury conglomerates and the traditional brands' operating systems.

Previous chapters have demonstrated the hybridisation of Western legitimisation and Chinese cultural norms among emerging IBC designers in terms of their designs, productions and commercial practices within the global fashion ecosystem. They have developed collective norms in their behaviours to express both their cultural and market recognition as independent designer brands.

These designers are familiar with Chinese commercial rules and culture in the processes of finding investments and sponsorships, gaining in-depth insights into the differences in the needs between the Chinese and Western markets. This is exemplified by semi-autonomous designers Chen and Angel Chen, who tend to be open to commercialisation while not losing their artistic identities, thereby being more adaptable in showing the different extents of their aesthetic innovation according to the context of different fashion weeks. SHFW has become a platform for them to experiment, gather and collectively investigate Western aesthetic and design cultural norms in the Chinese market, crafting their designs to better fit into the Chinese market, becoming both commercially and aesthetically adaptable in the near future. From this point of view, their independence as a brand category is associated with eliminating their dependence on professional marketing agencies and investigating market diversification themselves through various practices, with one of the most cost-effective ways of doing so being showing their collections using different methods at different international fashion weeks.

These China-born, hybrid-educated (UK-educated in higher education and China-educated in school education), international-based, emerging Chinese designers have experienced deep cultural influences through their role model designers' perceptions and interpretations of fashion in the Western 'designerscape era' (as discussed in section 2.4.3) in their design identities and methods in experimenting with fashion's parallel art forms, such as fine

arts, theatre and performances. They are handing down 'the specifically intellectual or artistic traditions handed down by their predecessors' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 112) and these cultural norms have become a legitimate implementation or 'a point of departure or rupture' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 112) in their investigations of interdisciplinary art forms in showing their fashion and innovations.

From this point of view, the work of Chen and Angel Chen, although not identified as aesthetic innovations in this study, contributes to the systematic changes and strengthens the influences of the disciplinary incorporation of diversified arts that their role model designers who created the Western 'designerscape' have handed down to the youngest generation of designers that Chen and Angel Chen are part of. Their production practices can be interpreted alongside the image that has been formed of Chinese designers' interactions with Western aesthetic innovations in fashion, installation art and pop art.

Extreme autonomous designers like Jin and Tan are the typical appliers and advocates of these cultural disciplines handed down from role model designers, whose work they have become familiar with through their higher education received at CSM. What makes them different from Chen and Angel Chen is their willingness to sacrifice some of the symbolic benefits gained from Western legitimation that could be transferred into larger commercial benefits, as fully discussed in Chapter 4, in order to push aesthetic boundaries further in showing fashion, rather than merely handing down the innovation given to them by their role model designers. From this point of view, creating new aesthetics is another cultural norm that demonstrates their independence in aesthetics as independent designer brands. These brands, after years of development, tend not to be merely viewed as fashion designer brands but more integrated designer brands, such as Wanbing Huang, whose

installation art exhibited at SHFW has been purchased by an art mall in Shanghai²⁵ and her brand has gradually become a more diversified high-end interdisciplinary label, rather than a fashion designer label.

To conclude, the independence discussed in this thesis could add new theoretical interpretations to the academic identification of 'independent designer brands'. It is more of a cultural concept and identity than a commercial concept among the emerging generation of designers. It could be interpreted from designers' practical perspectives, seen as designers partially eliminating their dependence on outer professional agencies and investigating market diversification themselves through various practices, or could be viewed as a self-declaration of a focus on high arts and eventually becoming an interdisciplinary arts label, rather than merely a fashion label.

For the empirical contribution of this perspective, in today's global fashion system, the small independent firms, such as those of the emerging IBC designers researched, are highly integrated into the global fashion community in terms of aesthetic standards, professional knowledge, skills and business trade. When these designers apply the knowledge, they have learnt in the Western fashion ecosystem to the fashion field in Shanghai, the employed strategies are always caught between the local mass market and the globally-recognised luxury production standards for both garments and delivered shows. This is mainly due to the field of fashion in Shanghai being highly socially engaged and diversified where market segmentation is not as applicable as in the Western fashion system when promoting an emerging designer brand. It is much more difficult to gain both cultural and commercial success simultaneously in today's Chinese fashion market than it is to merely target the niche market and stay small in business scale in the Western

²⁵ As the art piece has not been shown to the public yet, the name is kept confidential at this stage.

fashion ecosystem. Whether actualising independence in their cultural or commercial practices themselves or addressing their capability of creating new aesthetics, it is crucial for emerging international-based designers to establish a clear aim and development path when starting brands as different types of independent designers would experience significant differences in today's multicultural global fashion ecosystem and different types of brands and pursuits would have their own development strategies. The classification presented in this research could provide these designers with a clear framework when setting up their development directions and corresponding strategies, thereby saving energy in exploring a number of development strategies.

7.3 A Platform for Gathering Innovation Collectives: Socialist Fashion Weeks with Chinese Characteristics

Providing an in-depth analysis of SHFW's cultural characteristics and explicit structures is also providing a cultural context to better interpret and elaborate on the status and positions these IBC designers have in the domestic cultural system, showing the interactions between the local and the global from a cultural perspective. This is especially exemplified by the explicit elaboration on SHFW's carnivalesque cultural phenomena, which provides a more liberalised cultural context in cultivating and generating the Western fashion innovations introduced by IBC designers from their own perspectives.

As emphasised in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, the collective of emerging IBC designers has presented aesthetic innovations with a Western fashion design identity and cultural norms, with their practices mainly shown through Labelhood and XCommons. Although all of these shows are listed on the official calendar of SHFW, they are viewed as a collective that is

representative of a subculture, rather than mainstream brands at SHFW. This domestic cultural status has formed a stark contrast to these designers' global cultural status of being the main contributor in building the 'soft infrastructure' (Gu, 2018, p. 99) of China's fashion, as well as being part of a major group that has attracted international recognition and has assisted SHFW in becoming the most remarkable emerging fashion week within the global fashion ecosystem.

From a general perspective, in the field of fashion weeks, the 'materialisation' of the cultural product, seen through fashion shows, is critical in revealing the industry's production processes and interconnections with the fashion field of the host city on both the cultural and industrial levels. One of the examples in both Chapter 4 is the 800Show at SHFW, which has not only facilitated the show's venue to contribute to establishing SHFW's cultural characteristics but has also functioned as one of the creative clusters in Shanghai, providing platforms for foreign designer brands to present their shows. Connecting with the local creative clusters is important for SHFW in building up an interactive and dynamic infrastructure or ecosystem within the domestic fashion culture. Being linked with creative industry facilities is effective and efficient for SHFW in raising its domestic awareness and promoting Western-featured mature designer brands in the Chinese mass market which, in turn, use SHFW's global influence to stimulate the prosperity of the creative cluster itself. This is more beneficial for SHFW in enhancing its interconnections with other parts of the local industry than merely being independent as a fashion and cultural event that seeks global recognition only.

One of the cultural characteristics of the 'creative field' (Scott, 2010, p. 115) is the emphasis on the social communities in which people with certain professional backgrounds work with others who 'share the same values and identities, especially the importance of social and cultural values in doing

business as central to the creative character of their work' (Gu, 2018, pp. 99-110). This is embodied in the IBC designers' community formed by Labelhood at SHFW. Emphasised in Chapter 6, functioning as the 'final terminal' (Chen, 2017) for emerging IBC designer labels, Labelhood at SHFW acts as the key community in the upgrading of the Chinese cultural status within the global fashion ecosystem. This is due to its support of aesthetic experiments with various types of innovation in fashion shows, demonstrating that there is a cluster of Chinese designers who have proven high-profile design capabilities. This forming of a Chinese designers' community within the global fashion ecosystem is also addressed through the increasing aesthetic innovations brought forward by Jin and Zhao by adding immersive physical theatre to fashion shows, which is a concept that is being followed by a group of designers, such as Tan, Huang and Chen, with more innovative performances being shown at SHFW and LFW.

In today's global fashion ecosystem, especially in the fashion week system in and after the 2000s, the fashion realm was no longer an autonomous, artist-friendly environment. The self-legitimated artistic designers, or extreme autonomous designers, are not as valued now as their predecessors who flourished in the late 1980s. Instead, the global fashion ecosystem has become a market manipulated by capital and driven by commercialism since the significant rise of 'Internet Art', which is an expression of the widespread marketisation that fundamentally transformed art-world structures after the year 2000 (Hopkins, 2018, p. 288). The global context of the fashion industry is changing from a designer and creativity-friendly one that is majorly driven by aesthetics to a capital-driven one that is more commercialised and legitimised. The era of the prestigious designer has ended and the industry is now relying more on symbolic management from the inner organisational legitimised system within the production ecosystem of fashion weeks, as well

as capital operations based on external commercial needs. It is not a period in which discourse legitimacy in global fashion is being constructed, which could lead to the occurrence of a 'designerscape era' (English, 2013, p. 156). The whole ecosystem has become more complex and fashion weeks no longer require 'role model authority' (Leeuwen, 2007, p. 93) to stimulate emerging creativity. In contrast, large numbers of new designers are emerging each season and the legitimate organisations and institutions, such as the BFC, FCF and SFDA, have to be more stringent in their selection standards to guarantee that high standard aesthetic innovations are constantly being created within the industry.

The reason that SHFW is seen as such a multi-cultural phenomenon and having more complex cultural characteristics compared with PFW and LFW is partially due to the broader context of the development path and features of Shanghai's CCI, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This is shown in its 'practice coming before policy' (White and Xu, 2012, p. 253) within 'experimentation under hierarchy' (Heilmann, 2007, p. 3) procedures. As one of the core parts of the Shanghai CCI's development plan, the fashion industry fully expresses the cultural characteristic of 'practice coming before policy' through its institutional practices. For instance, SHFW and XCommons are both commercially-run companies but they also both belong to the SFDA, which is an industry institution that is directed by the government (Luo, 2018). This complex organisational structure has not occurred in European legitimate fashion weeks; it is a Chinese cultural characteristic that emerged due to the fact that a number of public institutions built for the CCI's development could not obtain government funding, so had to find their own sources of funding, such as collaborating with commercially-run companies, to maintain their operations (White and Xu, 2012, pp. 251-254). This has cultivated a high degree of autonomy within SHFW's inner operations, which provides an ideal context in which to actualise designers' aesthetic autonomy as no aesthetic

restrictions have been set up or formed at this stage for all of the brands participating in SHFW. The SFDA is more of a legitimised 'substantive' manager (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990, p. 175) of SHFW than a 'symbolic' manager (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990, p. 175).

Although the shows are deeply embedded with business operations and the running of emerging designer brands, this research proves that they are an effective medium for emphasising both business and cultural connections and setting an effective example for the broader discussion on the contradictions between cultural and economic development in China's fashion industry, which involves 'the lack of distinct aesthetic or cultural values outside the market logic' (Gu, 2018, pp. 100-105). This has resulted in the emerging fashion designers being dependent on market success only. Although this is not supportive of aesthetic innovations for extreme autonomous designers who demonstrate strong artistic pursuits in fashion, it is still undeniable that it will accelerate the development speed from the industry level if viewed from the perspectives of Fordism or post-Fordism, which the whole fashion industry, at least the Western fashion ecosystem, has never conformed to (Gu, 2018, p.102). However, with the increase in the number of Chinese designers that are domestic and international-based and the expansion of the social engagement of SHFW, without emphasis being placed on innovation and the encouragement of aesthetic creativities, it is possible that a post-Fordism fashion industry can emerge in the future in China.

In addition to unconsciously facilitating autonomy that allows for aesthetic innovation, as discussed in Chapter 6, SHFW has become a practitioner of collectivism, which is a core socialist ideology, seen through its carnivalesque atmosphere and the increasing degree of public accessibility. This ideology means that SHFW's engagement with both the general public and professional insiders is a unique cultural characteristic that distinguishes

SHFW from PFW and LFW. A carnivalesque atmosphere has gradually formed with the expansion of SHFW in terms of both its scale and the number of participants. The traditional temporal and spatial hierarchies created in fashion weeks have been reconfigured, transforming from highly disordered at the beginning of SHFW's existence to gradually becoming clarified. Compared to PFW and LFW, maturing in its operational system and having significantly different organisational and cultural characteristics to PFW and LFW, the multi-culturalism of SHFW enriches and adds more cultural layers to the fashion week. However, it also weakens its uniqueness and recognisable features in the global fashion ecosystem as it does not have a central focus, whether this is culture or commerce. Adding this to the fact that it is not exclusive to industry professionals, SHFW is becoming a cosmopolitan entertainment event, rather than a professional fashion week, which may add more difficulty in it gaining a high-profile status among the professionals within the industry.

Therefore, it is the key to boosting the innovation of China's fashion weeks in line with the needs of industrial development and the actual situation of China's design power, which is in urgent need of an upgrade. Centring on niche market and seeking for innovations from the new generation of diaspora designers, the SHFW gathers different designers and expounds fashion concepts together with different design languages, innovative measures and expressions. Fashion shows have real commercial value in addition to artistic value. Only by conveying Chinese cultural characteristics, enabling the fashion week as a cultural mechanism to gather the strength of Chinese fashion and creating a mechanism for leading the aesthetic standards of Chinese fashion culture can China obtain and upgrade its global recognition.

7.4 Limitations

As this research aims to investigate the changing images of contemporary fashion shows from a global perspective, the first limitation of this study is that it looks at only three case subject designers, which is a small number. Although these three designers can represent three types of IBC designers who have different attitudes towards fashion shows, as well as different fashion businesses in terms of balancing art and commercial pursuits, the investigation of designers still lacks breadth. This is a common drawback of ethnographic research as, due to the limitations of time and human resources, it is impossible to ensure the depth and breadth of a study simultaneously within Ph.D. research. Although some other IBC designers' works have been mentioned from the same generation who have contributed to upgrading Chinese fashion and design power through exhibiting innovative shows internationally, it is not possible to investigate them all in depth. However, their participatory experiences are also important to this research as each designer tends to be different in terms of personality, perception of art and commercialism, economic background and motivation to create their fashion business, which are all deeply connected with their participatory behaviours and exhibited shows at international fashion weeks.

Another major limitation of this research is that it lacks the comprehensive analysis of the image of fashion weeks, especially in terms of the analysis of the accurate relational positions of IBC designers in the dominant Western fashion ecosystem. These designers have experienced a significant rise in design power and have broadened their influences in the past five years. As explained in the introductory chapter and the contextual review chapter, IBC designers, viewed from the perspective of the global fashion ecosystem, are still the minority participants of dominant European fashion weeks. Their

stories of participating in cross-cultural fashion weeks, although presenting the image of today's fashion ecosystem in terms of the relationship between themselves and other professionals and insiders within the fashion industry, still cannot provide a comprehensive image of Paris and London fashion weeks.

The last limitation is related to the research at SHFW, being the main body that demonstrates the rise of Chinese design power apart from the IBC designers themselves. Although the IBC designers are the main actors demonstrating the rise of Chinese fashion and cultural status in terms of design capabilities, they are still part of a niche market within China's fashion industry. As another microcosm of China's fashion industry apart from CFW, the major brands participating in SHFW are still commercial brands and manufacturing brands. Although not as globally-recognised as young diaspora designers, they constitute the main body of SHFW and their domestic influences cannot be ignored. The commercial conglomerates and fashion houses contribute significantly to the formation of the cultural characteristics of SHFW due to the diversified brand categorisation in multiplicities of brand categorisations. This diversity enhances the combination of Western and Chinese fashion at SHFW, which is both culturally and commercially critical for demonstrating the rise of China's fashion power. If IBC designers are the image builders for Chinese fashion in the global fashion ecosystem, then the domestic commercial fashion conglomerates are the economic foundation that supports the upgraded Chinese fashion status.

7.5 Future Research

Future research can be designed to account for the limitations discussed above. Firstly, to provide a more explicit and comprehensive image of China's fashion culture and the industry, it is important to look at a broader scene of fashion houses and different scales of Chinese designer brands. From commercial fashion conglomerates, such as Ruyi Garment Group, to domestic-based designer brands, such as YE'S by YESIR, both play critical roles in accelerating the development of China's fashion industry, also contributing to the rise of international Chinese design power.

Secondly, another main direction of this research in the future would be to investigate the fashion weeks that have not been explored in detail in this thesis to account for its limitations, which would include the ethnographic research of IBC designers showing at MLFW and NYFW. In fact, the target designers Xuzhi Chen and Angel Chen have both showcased at MLFW. Although the conventional runways at MLFW are mentioned in chapter 6 in comparison with the innovative shows they have staged at SHFW, MLFW itself has not been covered in this research due to the difficulties of following the designers' show productions around the world. Among the designers followed, Angel Chen has continuously shown at NYFW. NYFW has become another main platform that is seeing a significant rise in the number of Chinese designers showing there, as well as commercial sports brands aimed at the middle market in China like LiNing and Anta. It is interesting to see the mass and middle-market brands establishing fashion shows at prestigious international fashion weeks and this phenomenon is becoming even more prevalent in China. If this research were to continue, it would investigate the fashion weeks in Milan and New York, especially NYFW because of its deep engagement with the Chinese fashion industry in recent decades.

The last valuable future study direction for this research could be a more in-depth discussion of the industries parallel to fashion within the field of the

creative and cultural industry and creative labour. As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the academic contributions of this study is incorporating fashion as a new branch into the field of creative labour within creative cultural studies. Moreover, based on the fact that this research incorporates performance and theatre studies when analysing the new aesthetics and innovative forms of fashion shows produced by IBC designers, future studies could extend this research, focusing on pioneering theatre works and performances as two parallel academic fields within the research system of the creative cultural industry. Furthermore, the innovation shown in the filming and documenting of fashion is another interesting research topic that could be investigated from the perspective of aesthetics in the film industry as another important field parallel to the fashion industry. This could extend the current study and give it a broader perspective, adding more interdisciplinary connections to fashion studies within the academic system of creative cultural studies.

To conclude, by introducing the emerging generation of IBC designers and their different show production experiences within the international fashion week system in terms of seeking new explorations of innovation in contemporary fashion shows, this thesis presents today's complicated and reconstructed fashion ecosystem. This is particularly shown through the reconfiguration of the cultural discourse powers, with China's demonstration of improving its design capabilities, especially with regard to building innovative images through fashion shows. The young generation of diaspora Chinese designers, especially those educated in the UK, although most have ambitions to create a new designerscape that is led by the Chinese designer collective, differ in their willingness to pursue avant-garde presentations when facing the reality of today's capital and commercial-driven cultural atmosphere. The fashion weeks that they have participated in are reconstructing their cultural images by seeing a new wave of Chinese design power, as well as helping Chinese designers to become both culturally and commercially

mature. However, it is interesting to see that these diaspora designers, although being noticeable on the global stage and contributing to the reshaping of Chinese design images, are still viewed as a niche group instead of the dominant design power. The interrelationships between these groups of Chinese designers and the inner cultural system of their home country would be an interesting topic to discuss in the near future.

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Appendix I: In-depth Interviewing Transcript Collected in Year 2016

1. Jin, Y. J. (2016b) 'First show production and presentation experience at LFW in 2015'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 19 June.

Original Language: Chinese

A: Zhe Wang

B: Youjia Jin

A: OK, this is the first piece of ethnographic interview with case study with Youjia Jin, taking place in a café in a buyer shop in London, 29th June, 3.30pm.

Hello, Youjia, it's really nice to meet you.

B: My pleasure, let's start quickly.

A: Of course, first of all, I need to get your approval and signing this consent agreement, is that Ok for you?

B: Sure, let me see... en...Ok...I see...(sign) perfect, done~

A: Perfect, thanks for collaborating and joining this project, I will let you know the usage of data in the following research and get your approval every time I use it.

B: Oh, that's fine, thanks for your respect, you are a professional researcher, I have met many other ones to interview me, you're the first one to let me sign a consent agreement.

A: Thanks for praise. Let's talk about the "Alice" show and the way of your design thinking, what was the reason that evoked you that made you want to present your collection in such a different way, what was your motivations?

B: The common practice is we present different collections in different seasons, the collections is basically a reflection of our recent focus, and among these collections Alice is my favorite figure of all times, we saw the prototype of Alice who is a character in a book when I went to a show with my parents before, and I was in shock to see the prototype picture of her. In my opinion, Alice should be a tomboy, a boyish girl, and the Alice in so many movies and illustrations that I saw was in princess dresses. It is entirely amazing, although she is depicted in books I read with illustration, those

images there were entirely different from those in my mind. And I was so happy seeing the prototype because it proved I was right. Alice should not be a cute princess who wouldn't dare take adventures. I thought that the real Alice who was a boyish girl, which was my idea since always. The other "Alices" embodiments are all in princess dresses and big yarn skirt with long hair, and therefore, I didn't know where, to begin with this show with her as the theme, because I couldn't fabricate an image and told everyone that this was what Alice should really look like because in no way you could convince people when it is not convincing enough. So I got the idea of taking some element from her. I found she has silk ribbon on her hair, bow knot on her dress. Bow knots are used by many people in fashion industry. But I didn't want to use it on my show because bow ties were ubiquitous, everyone had a general and fixed idea of the way on how it could be used in clothes. So I couldn't come up with a creative idea on how to use it, and later decided to take textile element from her, making it with real silk, but I won't turn it into knot bow. I made some subtle changes when using it, but I didn't make it into bow knots. And I brought in some other elements to match it. I wanted to make some surreal and dreamlike effect with sprayers, so I chose blue sky as the background environment which looks really like an entrance of a garden. You know, Alice lives in a cave of a garden, so I initially designed a hollow to represent the cave, but I couldn't use this idea in my design because the organizer forbid using giant equipment. They had different kinds of rules, some for safety reasons. I wanted to use a sprayer to make those dreamlike effect in smoke when Alice came out. As I was not allowed to do that and that design was scrapped by the sponsor, I had to look for another place and finally chose the garden-like place to stage the show.

A: That place looked like a palace, I had that kind of feeling.

B: That was actually a museum.

A: Right, a museum, it gave me a feeling of a palace. Was it John Galliano, I think he had also staged a similar show with the theme of Alice

B: I don't know about that, but I know he staged a show in an anniversary event with a garden-like environment.

A: he worked on a clothes with a different brand, and the place he chose also looked like a palace and he staged show before you. But the clothes he designed was quite glittering, it's like another version of your show and had different concept about it.

A: we talked about various restrictions, is it the general standard in this industry or it is just because London is special, can you share some details?

B: I think the main reason is that we are independent designers, I needed to use their place so I had to follow the rules. I wanted to use “ganbing” in my collection, but I was not allowed, there were so many restrictions and so many things you were not allowed to do. So I had to figure out another way to do it.

A: You said because you are an independent designer, what do you mean by that?

B: let me think how should I explain this to you. Because we were cooperating with the British Fashion Council, we didn't rent the place by ourselves. If you want to use any place, you need to follow their rules and you couldn't just do whatever you want. I think I should have had more fun if I had done it independently. Working with a fashion council is not necessarily a good thing. A friend once asked me before whether or not I did it on my own schedule, and I think that it is a good thing. Some times working with a counsel company is really getting in your way of making the show about clothes and catwalk on the stage. Instead I have run into more than a few people who did it very well on their own schedule. Because nobody will have authority over you, you can do whatever you want.

A: please describe it more specifically, can you raise an example?

B: let me tell you an example about using models, there are rules about how to use those models in fashion shows raised by BFC. Those models are chosen for certain categories of designers, which means you were only allowed to use some certain models, and you can't just bring in your own ones. My favorite fashion show should be, if I can decide on my own, I won't choose models from professional model company. I want to pick a model according to my own standard, she is not necessarily to be very tall, and could be a friend of my own who maybe very suitable to wear my clothes. However, you are not allowed to use her in those show, because in those events you must follow the rules. You have to choose models of a certain level. But it is likely none of them would satisfy me, since I am very picky in terms of choosing models. However, you won't have the right to choose because you are not allowed to do that. There are so many rules I think that are unreasonable. They should eliminate some of the restrictions on independent designers, let them have more leeway to choose what they want to do. Therefore, you should perform better if you have your own fashion show, You don't have to ask for their

permission that way. When you reach a certain level, you will find there are many restrictions. I met a few designers who had twelve collections, all of which were perfect, But fashion show has limits on the number of this, which means that you cannot have less than that number. So the designers had to inflate their number to be allowed into the fashion show, I don't know what others would think of this regulation, but I think it is pointless. If I only have ten collections that I think are important, why do you want me to bring in some collections that are less qualified? It's nonsense, right? Designers are paying the same amount of money, why are they not allowed to decide whether it's worth or not to cut down the number of collections?

A: so you think doing things on you own would be better and have more freedom.

B: yes, you would have more freedom, why am I not allowed to present in the show with just six collections? I think many people have the talent to come up with six collections, but why are they turned away with those rules? it is unreasonable.

A: ..en..on you own schedule, do means you won't be working with those council company or...

B: in fact, you can still do it well if you do it on your own schedule, I think that some rules are really pointless. Of course, it is a good thing if you can get a stage to present and show your collection for free, and I think if it is a free stage, those designer should be allowed to have the power to design the number of collections on their own. When I took part in the fashion show for the first several times, I didn't even have the right to choose my own model, only those senior designers have the right. Those models they (BFC) provided were not suitable for my collections, but you would not have models if you don't choose theirs. Of course you could choose to cut down the number of items of your collection. No way they would change models for you. But those models were really suitable in wearing my clothes, my clothes looked ridiculous on them. Because every designer has their own preference when designing clothes. My clothes are designed for a certain groups of people, and it would be a disaster if they are not put on the right people.

A: Last time we talked that you mentioned you were picky on models.

B: Yes, indeed, I am very picky. Because we have our own preference on selecting models. In fact, I am not just picky on models. I am picky on a lot of things. I design my clothes for a certain groups of people. You can't just put

them on someone randomly, and we know who is suitable for those clothes the moment we drew it out.

A: You said that you tend to add different themes in each of your show. Can you tell me the design procedures? Did designers first come up with the collections, then base on items of the collection to shape a theme of the show?

B: I have a different opinion about that. I think it is more likely that the collection is copied from others if a collection comes up before the theme.

A: oh, I see, I got the idea wrong.

A: in our interview, you can talk freely here, any way you want. If the final content of the interview is about to go public or any form in which other would possibly read it, I will show the the content to you, and I will delete those part that you are not satisfied with.

B: so I can talk about anything in anyway I want.

A: yes, you can talk freely, that is what I want you to do, and you can go anonymous. The more truthful it is, the better.

B: Except for the potential financial obstacles, literally, I think every fashion show should contain a them. If the money is enough to support all the cost, then the designer should and ought to at least contain a theme in his or her shows, otherwise, there will be a high suspicious on the originality of the collection design.

A: why do you consider that?

B: Let me give you an example. I know that because I have these kind of experiences with my students. If you don't come up with a theme first, it is likely you piece your work together by copying them from works of others, because you don't know what you are doing. But if you have a clear object, you would know where to begin, how to draw it up, right? You should know how it works. How could you get your clothes designed if you don't have a theme first? My theme for the first season was "Muscles". I got the idea from an exhibition show of "The Da Vinci Code", which was quite a populous event in London. I was inspired by that, really beautiful. Then I decided to use the elements in my clothes. People burst out "oh,I got the idea" when I told them where I got my inspiration. At the same time, there were some other people using this element in their works. It is not a lie that those clothes were really beautiful.

Then when it comes to choosing themes for a fashion show, we need to write down something explaining briefly where you get your inspiration. Somebody would just ask for my opinion where he should say he get his inspiration, whether or not he should say it is coming from the ocean. I am amused every time when I run into a situation like this and I would just ask rhetoric question where he actually get it.

Sometimes my students have drawn clothes before they know what they are doing. In answering my question, a student sometimes would say that he racked his brain to come up with the idea. A previous student, opposed me by saying “couldn’t I just come up with the idea on my own after having a dream?” I would say: “all of your clothes should come from your inspiration. Otherwise, you must have seen it before from an occasion which impressed you unconsciously, and then you draw it up without knowledge of it. Or you could be influenced by works of another designer, and think it is pretty good to draw it this way.” I did my collection “Muscles” because I have a reason, and I wouldn’t delve into any work without a reason.

A: So let’s conclude that, theme always comes first, then the drawings and designing of the collections

B: Yes. once a student argued with me he really got it from a dream. Then I went ballistic. OK, since you said so, and then laid him bare by telling him where he probably got the Celine’s collar, the Loewe’s hem and so on. Then he admitted that he might have seen it before, and drew it out unknowingly, but he wouldn’t say he plagiarized it. This kind of things happened from time to time.

A: Yes, I understand this, which means, a theme is the must in all fashion shows, let alone those innovative shows. Then can you talk about your inspiration of this season?

B: Yes of course, that’s what I mean, I think you should have a concept first, especially when you want to stage something different for your audience.

This season’s theme is Vintage School Girls, the last time I was designing for schoolgirls I watched a lot of movies involving school girls. I was inspired by my sisters. You know, I have two sisters who are in high school and they always wearing scary clothes. I always told them that you were just high school girls, couldn’t you just be like a school girl? What they wore were really terrible.

“What should a high school girl looks like?” they asked, so I browsed through some pictures for high school girls together and showed them, then they realized some school clothes were really beautiful with a vintage style. Because I lived in the UK, and I was used to these kind of classic and traditional clothes for school girls, but they wanted to wear those trendy and showy clothes in China. So I was just curious, what happened to those schoolgirls? How could this happen? Those clothes they wore made them look like a dawdling punk, which I wouldn’t deny is also a school culture. I also adore those dawdling punk style of a school girl, but nothing in those tacky cheesy way. Then my sisters asked me to design clothes for them, I said I only designed for white collar women who went to work for several years as you may know that my clothes are very expensive. I like those people with both have a career and confident. I have designed for school girls before. It looked like that my brand culture was not suitable for school students, but then I realized later maybe there was something that could be done to make it work, taking some elements from school students and blending it in those clothes to sale to working women, because my clothes were more suitable for working women. So I immediately thought I needed to find a model that gave people a feeling of a school girl or a woman from a library for my catwalk show. So I need a bag and I went to a bag designer who heard me out what I wanted from this bag. I wanted this bag to look like a book, no matter it is a handbag or a backpack. So all those details related to the dress showed up continually. As you can see, it was impossible to come up with all these ideas without a reason.

A: you mentioned it before that there were some shows you planned to stage, but for some opportunity and timing reasons you didn’t do it, can you give me those videos related to their drawings?

B: you can have it if I have it.

A: regarding using those content, we will sign another consent agreement first, then many such deals may follow suit every time we have new investigations to continue.

B: Oh...can you bring it all to me altogether? I think this will be more convenient.

A: Alright, let’s continue this conversation, I just need to tell you this for sake of the potential ethic problems, but we can do this another time. About the coming school themed show and fashion week, can you tell us more about it?

B: I do want to stage a Showroom to present my collections and exhibitions, it is also a show of my work. For one reason, there aren't a lot of buyers showing up in a catwalk show in today's fashion week, they would just attend the Showroom to see the new collections. There are two things that are more important to our independent designers. On one hand you need to let people know you have launched a new collection, on the other hand, you need to make good sales of your products in order to make it into a real business and be able to continue.

You won't be able to continue if you can't make profit from your products. I can't figure out why we do it separately. I just told a showroom organizer a few days ago, asking him whether or not I can combine the runway and showroom together by staging my runway in my own showroom. He was amazed by my idea, "Do you really think that can work?" I said why not, and I thought somebody must explore on the possibilities, I just wanted to make the runway more interesting. The buyer come to buy your clothes during the day, and we could invite those media friends to come over at night. My clothes are there, why do you have to bother transporting from one place to another? And I can have models to put those clothes on to show them to people. Every designer has his own workshop. In fact I told a friend from China about this idea, and he immediately use this idea and carried it out right away, but what he did was just a static show. He invited me to go back to work with them, but I needed time to think about it. And I still didn't go back to Shanghai the second time he invited me. I promised him I will work with them as long as I decide to go back to Shanghai, because they agreed with every thing I raised. They even told others before I agreed to cooperate with them. Anyway I will cooperate with them to see how things will develop if I choose to go back to china.

In terms of combining sales and shows we just talked about, other people would against it when I told them, saying that one should just concentrate on only one thing at a time, choose between cat walk and sale, and you can't have them both. But this man from Shanghai accepted my idea right away, which I think is right.

A: Indeed, mainland China is quite open to innovative ideas, maybe fashion shows in China are not as professional as those in Europe. I haven't got the chance to see my own, I just got the information from the interview with DuYang, who have just staged a forest-theme-base show in Shanghai fashion week. She told me that the Shanghai fashion week is very unprofessional.

B: I asked friends regarding on whether it is a good idea to go back to China. He advised me don't rush into this. I also asked a few other designers, they also gave me a similar answer. I want to sale my products instead of just chasing for a show. Otherwise I could have gone back a long time ago, since I could easily get more attention in China. And I also discussed it with an editor, who is also my good friend, from the Italian Vogue. She gave me the exact the same answer that the fashion weeks in China were not mature enough.

A: The immature here you talked about is more about commercial function a fashion week should contain, right?

B: Not just this, they're not organized well enough, Kind of chaotic, people are confused and can't tell good products from poor products. They don't know what they are doing and what they should do in a fashion week. There are no enough professional people who can help them.

A: You mean, they are just running the show because they just want to jump on the bandwagon, without a serious long-term plan or the true purposes of organizing an international fashion week.

B: That is not exactly what I meant. They do want to stage good shows, but no professionals are helping them, guiding them in the right direction, so they don't know how to put on a good show. In another words, they don't have a professional team, I don't know where they're heading to.

A: Do you men the organizer must be someone who is highly professional?

B: I think that is necessary. I once talked to two senior designers from British before, because they are employed to teach and live in shanghai now, they have gained a deep perceptions on this matter. When I asked them about shanghai fashion week. They said those shows are like that of London fashion week at early stage. There are so many brands from so many companies, and everyone think their own products are the best, so they don't know what is good and what is bad. Those fashion show in Shanghai still need time to improve and grow. So they advised me to wait for a longer time. A good fashion show won't happen overnight. Because they experienced similar situations in London when they were young, maybe those fashion shows in London back then were more eye-catching and sensational, but after a short period, they taped off eventually.

They thought fashion shows between those in the current Shanghai and the old ones in London are similar. They also think Shanghai is a good place and will have a bright future. The business just needs more time to grow. They

have done everything they can with the show, but they are limited by their professional level. There's nothing new can be seen there. I adore the salon show in the modern period when you had a show in selling place so buyers could have an opportunity to take photos with audience, touching and having a feeling of the material, engaging in closer interaction with the models and lit up the atmosphere. I think that is pretty cool.

A: Yes, I like salon shows too, but when the first fashion week were staged by the American fashion industry, after then, the fashion shows have become increasingly commercial, do you agree with this kind of opinion?

B: In fact, to tell you the truth, I think fashion are ruined by Americans and there are many things which have been ruined by Americans. Fashion show was part of a couture culture but American people industrialized it and destroyed it among many things.

A: so that's why you are reluctant to attend the New York Fashion Week?

B: Yes indeed, I am not interested in taking part in fashion week in America, they're too commercial. And I really enjoy the atmosphere in Europe. They are really determined and persistent, and they stick to high qualified products. They refuse to jump on the bandwagon of fast selling of products. Some time I think the stubborn of the French people is cute, but on the other hand you can feel that they may be overreacted. But after giving it a deep thought, you would agree that they are right. Their insistence makes sense. When we talk about discount, I would like to mention one thing that I have some friends who are now living in Paris and work there.

In responding to my question raised above, they explained on how the fashion world should conduct its business, why should they make a discount for their products? And I agreed with them. You can't inflate the price of your products first, and then deflate them too much and what a chaotic, messy world that would lead to? Personally, I hate those on sale activities, because I barely buy those discounted products, so it is not that hard to image I am so pissed. I simple things instead of complicate ones.

A: You see fast fashion, discounted goods and black Friday as a way of American people destroy another good thing?

B: It is now the Spanish people who are picking up the momentum and leading the trend, such as H&M or Zara.

A: Let's move on to our next question, you know, the development of fashion show have come through the salon and couture from the modern period to the

commercialized international fashion week, and in recent years, there are increasing numbers of designer who engaged on staging fashion show in quite different way such as theatrically or technologically while there are still quite lots of people who still think fashion show should be more commercial, what do you think about this?

B: some people would rack their brains in order to keep their product competitive, sticking on earning profits or making fashion a “rag trade”. This is a kind of people. However, others are doing things in a different way with different understandings. There are still considerable designers and people from this industry wanting to make fashion a high-qualified, art business, not just rag trade.

A: Do you mean that there is a polarization in the industry from this perspective?

B: Yes, and I think a person shouldn't try to wish and make things that you don't like vanished, such as I don't like fast fashion, but I wouldn't try everything I can to battle with them. People just need to get their own stuff done. I have talked about fast fashion with my friends, and I expressed my dislike of it. Then they came up with all sort of reasons trying to convince me. I didn't try to dictate them, but I told them I won't try to convince them and they should stop trying to convince me either.

I know fast fashion is quite contaminative to the environment, very badly. You would be discussed if I tell you in great details. They're not only harmful to the environment, but also bad for the people's health. They came up with the reason that they just wanted to wear it for a few days, trying new style and having fresh feelings of a trending activity, and then would just throw it away. I told them they were leaving this planet another garbage, a polluting garbage when throwing it away. They said, so what? everyone was throwing garbage to this planet every day, we just wanted to try some new products. They said so many petroleum products were polluted.

I would tell them they were right but I was just trying to let them know my point, to make it clear that I didn't like fast fashion and I didn't want to manufacture those products even I had the money. I would never run a business like that. You know what, the boss from Zara once wanted me to join them or recommended somebody to them. I refused because him because I think my participant wouldn't be a good thing for them because I would have to do things my way instead of following their instruction completely, and would try

to get rid of those dyeing material that was heavily polluting, and change to natural dyeing materials. One of my favorite thing is to help the companies to deal with the piled up unsalable clothes, reproducing and then selling them. The clothes I produce must be pure natural, especially the layer on the inside, touching the skin directly. I would want to produce some safe clothes of good quality. Many dyeing materials will make people sick. It is really horrible. Of course some people may not agree with me, like the one I just talked about.

A: Did you mean that the differentiation is getting more and more fierce?

B: Yes, It is very fierce. And each side have is advocates and opposes, I don't want to judge others. I will just follow my heart and do what I want to.

A: Among these two group, I know your attitude, but how will you categorize or identify your business or your brand, is it a luxury, semi-luxury or just an ordinary fashion brands which have its own style? And what do you think the independent designer and their business should be identified or categorized from this perspective?

B: Independent designers are taking different sides too. I think many of them want to run fast selling business. I was told by a classmate that he just wanted to run fast selling business because he wanted to make money quickly. And another girl also told me the similar idea. What should I say? everyone needs money, that's the truth. I would also like to make more money, but I don't want to do something I don't want to do, or to make that kind of money. I am a person sticking to the true self, and I keep telling me this is the right thing to do. I can make more money, but not this way or through my fashion business. In terms of independent designers, everyone may have his own opinions.

A: Since you mentioned that you stick to your insistence on both aesthetic and quality perspectives. You also talked about other independent designers, how do you identify your brands? And can you tell me your understanding between art and fashion?

B: There is diagram of product development that is illustrated by a scholar ...en.. I can't remember his name, in which there are some products that may have climbed to the top of the line very quickly, but they also fell from the top and disappeared and vanished in the industry very quickly as well. When time passed, few people would know there was such a brand existed in the past. There are many products that might just stay in a lukewarm situation in the market and never have the chance to climb to the top, but they are

always there and people know about them. I would prefer the latter ones. I am a very obstinate person.

The other day when I talked to my sample designer about the trench coat I designed, obviously he was seriously bothered by my obstinate. "Why are you so stubborn?" This kind of scenario goes on and on again. We argue, we fight, then we stop, and then we pick up where we leave in the last time, and argue again. He even said "why don't you just finish the job yourself?" You can't imagine the tensions between us at work. Many other sample designers don't even want to work with me. He said, "why aren't you just be like the other designers? be more easygoing to yourself and to everyone around you". I said, this feature of the trench coat was functional, and I told you and show you how it worked, which was exactly the reason why it was called a trench coat. This feature should not be changed because it was a functional feature. I wouldn't have such a strong reaction could be Ok with it if it was just decorative and you changed a little. He was so pissed that he couldn't stand with me anymore. He said the other products that don't have these features were also in good sales and nobody cared about it. I told him that I can't agree. My product may not climb to the top, but I want them to stay in this business for a long time and I want people to remember it. It is not a certain thing that I will go along during my life, but I will hang in there as long as I can. I don't want nobody remembers what kind of business I am running or just remember a few clothes that are unbearable to watch when I am old.

I have once met a senior designer. of course, I have met a lot of designers. One of my student next to me told him "I like that clothes you designed in last season very much." But can you imagine what that designer replied? He said that "oh my god I think that design was ugly, I don't know what's wrong with me at that time." Actually, many designers will consider their previous designing ugly or terrible. However, I'm not that kind of designer, what I design, when it will be brought out several years late, I would still like them.

It's quite normal when sometimes we look back at our own works, you may disagree with the past self, "why did I make such an ugly thing back then?" And every one has this experience that when we look at the hair we just cut, and we feel it is ugly. Some people today still have some good words about my first collection, I like that feeling. Some time we just don't need those things that are eye-catching and sensational, but they could be gone suddenly without a trace.

A: You want to build your brand through time and your efforts that can stand the test of time, that have something to do with the time and the environment we are living in. Are you expecting to make your brand a luxury brand in the future? Maybe after several decades? And what are the differences do you think between luxury brands and your brand?

B: ok, I really like this question, let's take Burberry as an example. Why are their trench coat products always selling well? Because they have been designing and revising it for so many years, and they keep improving it continually. They are so persistent on it. Although they introduce unexpected type of product, some of them are ugly and strange every year. I really admire them for their insistent. A professional designer can be and should be professional, because of their insistent. I rarely buy luxurious product, but I would buy it if I really adore the design and I can't help myself. These things may not that eye-caught but you would still feel comfortable when you put it on years later, that is called classic.

A: Then could you please be more specific about your expectations and directions on your own brand?

B: I am still searching and exploring to find a direction. People tell me to stick to what I do, and people can tell it is my drawing at sight. My work can be differentiated by people immediately, but I don't think I have reached the level where I can impress many people so I am still working hard to improve myself. I need more explorations.

A: I understand that insistence is always difficult. Let's move on to our next question, you have taken part in a lot of fashion show except for Shanghai, right?

B: I have never joined the New York fashion week either.

A: Yes, let's exclude New York for the moment and we will just discuss this under a comparison between Europe and China. tell me about the different feelings you get from the fashion weeks you have attended.

B: I think the difference mainly lies on the numbers of media, buyers and other aspects. With that kind of information on hand, I prefer to go to Paris Fashion Week. Fewer of media and buyers would choose to go to London, I told others regarding my understanding of London fashion week, London is more suitable for designers with less experience. It provides an opportunity for everyone to go to the fashion week. It may be not exactly right to put it this way but London is not positioning itself for cultivating a new brand toward a

classic brand because it is always looking for something new, pursuing the fresh feeling. You can feel its urge for something new from everyone. This philosophy is not very suitable for a brand with desire to become a time-honored brand. The London fashion show wants to include various product with different style, but once you settle down and start looking for a long time goal, they would become impatient because they don't want to spend much time helping cultivating a new brand with a long time goal. I think London is not suitable for me anymore although it was a good start for me, that is how I feel and understand it.

A: The culture of London fashion is quite radical, I think that's the reason for what you just mentioned.

B: I have talked to official organizers from all three fashion shows and London fashion shows is the only one running this way. Every time when I think of Milan and London, I think of a big difference between them. Italians pay more attention to build a time-honored or a long-lasting brand. They told me that I should stick on my own style, don't change anything. London cares more about the short term goal, and how to lift you up as soon as possible.

So London doesn't fit me well, although there are professionals here, which may have something to do with the so many world-class universities and institution are located here. Maybe it is a vicious circle that once you have those fresh feelings, you would eager for more those fresh feelings in the future.

To tell you the true, I don't know why, many designers I know in London have left and started their own business. But it is not the same scenario in Italy and Paris. Most of my friends and people I know would want to have experience in big company first, and will only leave to start their own business when they feel they have the skill and knowledge to do so.

But there is also one shortcoming, especially for girls who could lost their momentum to build their own career after they have babies when working for big companies. No matter how talented they are. Of course this kind of momentum may vary from people to people, because I have witnessed friends or people I know who still want to continue their career after having babies.

And I also know designers in Paris who worked for big companies were also complaining about they were not allowed to leave and envy those who were in London where designers had more opportunities to set their own businesses.

I told them this kind of opportunities are not necessarily a good thing. Just like I once told a younger designer who envied that I had so many opportunities of shows that might not be a good thing and he shouldn't worried about it because not having show opportunities is also not necessarily a bad thing. He didn't understand it back then. You can only understand it if you have the experience.

A: London have many so called design competitions that couldn't last very long right?

B: but I think there is another reason. He can do it if he wants to carry on. I don't use money from my family, so basically I'm not able to stage a show if I don't have a sponsor. But even I don't have a show, I can still carry on with my own collection. But those media want you to continue your show once you start one in a fashion show, and retail business men also want you to improve your reputation and become more competitive. If I don't have the money, those outsiders would naturally think my business are going down, which is not the case for me. But my funding sources are different from many other designers.

To tell you the true, many designers I know are quite capable of continuing to take part in a show, but I also know one person, only one person, who is in the exact condition like me yet spent his own money to stage a show. My way of taking part in a show is quite problematic after you are given the opportunity. Because if your funding stops, you stop. The last time I had a problem with my show also was because there was a problem with the material provided by its sponsor. And you need to do what they told you to do because you take money from them, so you can really feel yours hands are tied if you don't have the money.

I am not telling you that how fantasy it is to have a show, and you can carry on with your work continually, step by step even you don't have a show, and I personally think that is a better way to become success. Of course I am so lucky to be chosen to get on the fashion show stage and to be pushed to where I am today. Many people didn't agree with me when I stopped taking part in the runway. Many people proposed to provide the money for me to continue to stage runways. But last season I turned it down because I needed to take care of my mom, so it was definitely stopped at that time.

The media just told me directly “you know what, we have left our space with you, somebody will replace you immediately if you stop going to stage runways and it won’t be easy for you to comeback again.” When a media told you that so directly, you would have some kind of remorse about why I decided so hastily to leave. But I had a family reason behind my decision, and I can give all this up if I need to take care of my mother. And I think I can get my resources back if I decide to come back one day. But I won’t give it up if it is just about the issues on money and I would seek funding from others.

A: You mentioned that the whole fashion industry is difficult to earn profits in recent years, however, under this circumstance, there are still many luxury brands, which were reported making a loss in the past years, are stilling spending tons of money on their every season’s runways. What do you think of the reason for this?

B: It’s easy to understand, it’s the pressure from your peers and industry, how can you survive by staging an ordinary show if the industry and other shows are becoming even more spectacular? You will definitely lose attentions from people and then from the whole industry, then you may probably disappear from the industry soon.

A: Do you mean that they don’t have a choice but to do that?

B: There are many rich guys in this field who are not engaged in building brand images. Instead, their aim is to draw attentions from others instead of designing high-qualified products. They are not aiming to build a brand and are short-sighted people who just focus on the present. As a result, everyone loses. So the true designers are left with less and less space to survive. I want to tell you a true story.

A: I am listening.

B: In this buyer shop where we sit now, many people including me wanted to get their product selling in here and its business model was purchase-and-sale. You know what, I really “admire” Chinese people that they are so amazing. They can change the rules where ever they go, so impressive. You know the business model of 99% percent of retail stores run by Chinese are consigning-for-sales on commission. They are audacious enough to tell designers to buy clothes from them and put those clothes in stores to sell in the model of consigning-on-sales for commission. They try to convince designers that they would be advertising and marketing for their products. Under this business model, the unsalable clothes or clothes that

become dirty would be returned to you. Those Chinese business men share the profit generated from clothes sold. But most of the clothes are unsalable, so the designers can feel the huge pressure, the more stores you get your products in, the more pressure you can feel. I thought nobody would do business this way before, but what can you say, they are Chinese, super rich Chinese. And now this store is also doing business in this way, what a pity.

A: Therefore, you mean those super rich Chinese people can change the way how fashion business operates.

B: Yes indeed, and everyone is struggling for survival. I hope my brand to have its own brand image, and those brands that can catch people's eye for a moment, and then disappear would not interest me.

A: what is the difference between an independent designer's brand and the brand that has a history and is time-honored? Would you think it is just a matter of time?

B: I think it is more about the product quality, that is the main difference.

A: Then, can I put it this way that a long-lasting cultural brand has direct connection with its lasting time?

B: they have direct connection, because they need time to grow and improve.

A: Then what do you think of the fashion industry in China? We had talked about it a lot above here.

B: I don't know what and how to comment, it's a chaotic industry in China.

A: You can talk about it from design, production and fashion show perspectives. Let's start with the fashion show first.

B: I can only talk about it based on what I heard from people around me. Those people who took part in the Shanghai fashion week and those who went to check out the situation there were not happy about their experience. I don't know who would satisfy with it. Designers coming back from there were not satisfied.

A: Then can you tell me it is which part that made them feel unsatisfied? what they are annoying about?

B: I was very happy to see those reports about Shanghai Fashion Week that gave me the impression that it was a very successful fashion week yet I was told by my friends who are also designers that they were happy over nothing. Then I asked DuYuang for the reason, and I was told that people who attend fashion weeks are not professionals, very few buyers would come and it's more like a big party instead of a fashion week, designers don't receive any

orders during the fashion week. I asked designers going to the fashion weeks from Italy and Paris and I was given the exact same answer that it was still in a developing stage and very immature and messy.

But I also heard from a few people who told me it was OK. But those people were educated and running business in China before they came to Europe for further educations. And after they finish their further educations they went back to China immediately. Therefore, I think they didn't know about the real industry deep and well enough.

A: Do you mean that they were used to the atmosphere in China?

B: I wasn't there, so I am not in the position to talk too much about it.

A: I understand that you didn't experience it in person so you can't judge.

B: Will you go with me if I will go back to China to stage runways?

A: of course, if you approve, then I will go back with you together if there is a need. You need to tell me all those fashion shows you will take part in and whether you have decided to go to Paris, because I need to apply for Visa in advance.

B: It is a sure that I will go to Paris, I have a contract for three years, I don't want to lose money.

Are you going to stay with me for a long time? Then maybe we should make reservation now that we can stay in the same hotel together. I will stage runway in Paris, but just showroom in Milan, however, I want to make my showroom looks different from others. And I am also invited by the Shanghai fashion week through a show production company named Dong Liang, yes, the one who turned you down when you send application for the investigation. I'm thinking of accept it because the Italian Vogue advised me to do so.

A: That would be great.

B: I am so happy that I will have a companion. Yeah~~

A: that would be nice... BTW, I get the feeling that DuYuan is quite busy because she rarely reply my message...

B: I am very busy too, but I like you very much, plus you were introduced by my best friends, therefore I know I can trust you and then I would like to tell you more.

A: Thank you, I'm flattered. What I mean by DuYang is a totally different feeling. I feel you are a fast-pace person, just like me.

B: It would bother me and drives me crazy if I don't reply the message after I see it

A: I totally understand that, it is feel like you are haunted by something. You have to get it done to get it out of your mind.

A: let's wrap it up here for today.

2. Zhao, T. (2016a) 'Show's design and actualisation of concept for Jin's fashion performance at LFW and PFW and show production experiences at SHFW'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 25 October.

Original Language: Chinese

Wang Zhe: W

Zhao Tong: Z

Context: Core Set Designer of Youjia's case, main theme: concept and idea of Youjia's A/W 2017 fashion show in Paris Fashion Week.

Material Type: Semi-structured Interview, First one-to-one in-depth interview

Place: London, Euro-star station, Café.

Time: 25th Sept.

Original Language: Chinese

Lasting: One hour and forty minutes

W: Please continue on the part about your ideas.

Z: Yes, ok. Before when thinking about Paris, we wanted to do something related to dance, a 'dance piece'. She then said she wanted the concept to lean towards 'school', I think she created it well.

W: I think there's conflict here, she wanted something that combined 'school', 'surrealist', and 'performance'. These three combined is very difficult to...

Z: 'School' can very easily become old fashioned.

W: Yes, exactly.

Z: There's a lack of new ideas there. On that day, we brainstormed on many ideas, there was one point that we conflicted over. Since I am from a scenography background, I like to use weird materials or lighting since my partner is a lighting designer. In this situation there's a lot that can be controlled.

Before, we entered a couple of public art installations. One was in Tower Bridge and we entered into the final stage. The other one was a competition for the lead singer of Pink Floyd's remembrance event. Anyway, we wanted to create installations that include some sound and light etc. Other factors that we had to think about was the price and press' reporting issues, for example if you use sounds or lights...

W: You may need to reduce the visionary aspects.

Z: It's hard to sell the visual image because only the people present at the place can experience it but on photos it won't look like much. It would be hard to photograph. Also, if lights are involved, the event would need to take place at night. It's quite a challenge.

At the time, we also wanted to create a more vintage feel.

W: A 'vintage school' concept, it's her idea.

Z: Yes, that's right. Youjia's aesthetics is more vintage, decadent and weird. So we then thought about creating an art studio, a vintage art studio. Models can walk around the space and sit down on easels that are placed around the space, and there will be two dancers in the middle who are like sculptures, completely still. Then maybe the dancers can trigger some sort of movement: they might go from a, say naked stage to some changes in the body and walk to an easel to interact with it. The dancer might use a paintbrush to draw on their own bodies, they can lie on the easel maybe and draw like that. The lines they draw are actually very abstract and look really nice.

There was a project that I worked with Youjia on before at London Fashion Week that was based on the concept of 'Mum', I developed a dance piece for it as well as an interactive projection. A dance opened the show, then a fashion show took place, another dance piece after that, then there was a violinist performance, an improvisation performance after that, and another fashion show to finish. At the time, we thought it was an ok procedure but we discussed it afterwards to realise that the whole thing wasn't merged together very well. It felt forced. Essentially, it was pretty much just like finding a singer and inviting them to performance with only a slight link to the concept. It wasn't a 'complete' work. Putting those ideas together seemed too far-fetched so I don't think it was very successful.

W: The logic didn't merge.

Z: So this time, we want to tie the performance with the fashion together seamlessly. The whole thing will actually be a performance. We haven't finalised this concept yet but thought of it before she left, and before the Paris show fell through.

W: I really love the concept!

Z: I showed you some images before... I really like the concept of using easels as the easel itself can be designed in a specific way.

W: Yeah, the easel can add to the surrealistic effect, there's a lot you can play with. Some scenes immediately came into my mind when you mentioned an

art studio. It can be very radical or surrealistic. The visuals can be really strong.

Z: The models can carry the easels while walking, and if the easel is heavy the models can walk slower. There is a lot that can be developed.

We wanted the models to be able to sit, with their backs to the audience perhaps, because the clothes from the back all look quite similar with grey tones and similar shapes. You can't tell exactly what the clothes look like immediately.

I wanted the performers to draw, with the models walking around once and when they get to an easel they can generate some movements that will release the easel from its position such as carrying it around.

I've seen some rehearsed movements before, sometimes the top half of the figure can be drawn, sometimes the bottom half. Or some displayed drawings can be a collaboration with a certain artist who illustrates Youjia's newest collection. These can then be turned into invitations or postcards etc.

We could also use lighting like in photographer's studios, small local lights which are quite retro and gloomy. So in the end, there might just be one light source.

W: I can visualise it. It will look fantastic.

Z: It was the idea we had at the time. For us, it wouldn't be very expensive or tough to achieve.

W: The materials, it seems, won't be too costly.

Z: Also, this concept would be suitable to create in all sorts of locations and either day or night. It's pretty flexible. The time for the event wasn't set yet but I hoped it would be night since it's not dark enough during the day.

After I heard the Paris show had failed, we changed it to next year. Youjia told me that she wanted to create a label that was Surrealistic. She really liked her first ever show and I agreed to make the whole show a dance performance that was very contemporary. Let me show you the photos...

W: Can you bring your partner, the light designer next time?

Z: Yeah, if they are free. We are both doing a new project at the moment, which we got funding for from the British Art Council. It will start in the middle of October till November so will be busy.

There was an idea about painting figures, which looked beautiful. I wanted to turn it more theatrical later on.

We talked about another idea of combining opera and the figure, but the concept's not confirmed yet. She sent me some ideas for her future three collections and I gave her a rough direction. The direction is fine but I'm not certain whether she wants something that is more shocking.

W: She was asking me about whether I have previous examples of innovative shows since I am doing research. So I mentioned a few to her but it didn't match with what she wanted. Later she sent me example of what she was thinking ok.

Z: Which ones did she sent you?

W: A performance, not important, and McQueen's psychiatric hospital one. Her collections are actually not super surrealistic so there's quite a large difference. I was quite surprised and didn't know what direction to go in. If the show is too dramatic, the clothes won't be able to stand out and the audience will only focus on the show. Her collection might easily be overshadowed as the items aren't overly surreal, there needs to be a good balance.

Z: She wants to put a certain focus on the theatrical concept so I thought maybe we could create just a single performance. If we go in an extreme direction, we can even leave out the use of models. There's another concern that I found when working with her on a previous project, is that models are not very clever. It's hard to get them to carry things and make alternative movements. Their movement become unnatural and lowers the quality of the effect.

W: Their movements are quite stiff.

Z: A model's like an object to be blank, the main focus are the clothes.

W: Like mannequins.

Z: Their face and personality aren't important, but good performers make sure the focus will be on them and catch the eyes of the audience. It's a totally different quality. It's hard to get models to recreate this. I have tried working with models on performance before but the effect just looked a bit weird. Each model/performer/dancer should just concentrate on their own tasks.

I talked to Youjia on a direction for the next season's collection, if she wants to go extreme we can move the show to a theatre and run it for 20 minutes or so, it can even be ticketed.

W: She likes 'Salon Shows' as well right? The vintage type that happened around the early 1920s.

Z: We can find an old theatre for that. I want to create something that's on the strange-side because recently I helped her look at scripts and found one that would suit a 'school' concept. I think Youjia would like to include a storyline in the show so the script I looked at was 'The Turn of the Screw', have you heard of it?

W: No I haven't.

Z: It's a psychological, suspense and horror story. It's about a governess in the 1800s who goes to teach two small children in an old mansion. The children, a boy and a girl, are very innocent. The boy is charming and liked by everyone but he is also odd, lots of strange incidents happen to him such as the appearance of ghosts. There's an element of pedophilia: the man or the ghost rather, could either be real or fake. He may have been imagined, since the story is psychological so maybe he was made up in the characters' imaginations due to insanity. In the end, the ghost kills the boy. There's some sexuality in there. Overall, the story is about these two innocent children who are also very mature and these complicated things happen to them.

W: The contrasting theme.

Z: There are 'layers' to the story. I think Youjia wants her style image to be very pure and clean, but I think it's too simple; there wouldn't be enough theatrical elements to support the performance. Theatre and drama needs conflicting themes so I was thinking we can create a show, this is another idea for next season, one being the art studio, the other being testing the limits of theatre. I have an idea to create a revolving stage that's split into 3 parts with 3 different scenes. 'The Turn of the Screw' is a contemporary British opera and these scene called 'The Lesson', 'Piano' so there can be sounds, 'Bedroom' or 'Window' all contain suitable materials. The revolving stage is slowly turning with doors separating each scene. If this is a flat surface, you will only be able to see one frame.

W: You can only see through one door.

Z: If this is like this, you might only be able to see this level and after the stage turns, you can see two areas so there will always be one area that's hidden. This area can be for transpositions or for models to stand in. I thought about finding a few good-looking dancers who can fit well into the clothes and mix in well with the models. There would be more dancers than models. The show starts innocently but as the stage turns, some things aren't quite right. Or once the stage turns to show the dancers who are wearing her clothes,

making some weird movements. When it's the models who are seen, they can perhaps freeze and act the same, with only dancers moving among them. The effect will be something that starts normal but gets weirder and weirder. The speed of the stage turning can be adjusted as well, sometimes it'll be very slow and sometimes it'll zoom by. This would require quite a lot of rehearsals, but it would look great if done well.

W: It would be brilliant.

Z: I think the Paris audience would enjoy this. People in Europe seem to be interested in performances that include a bit of psychological analysis and investigation. There's a depth to it with multiple 'layers' and we can play around with many ideas.

The music needs to include a live opera piece, pre-recorded sounds, and a piano. The music can be 'revolved' as well: the opera will be in the back with a certain scene in the front; the piano will be coming from another direction.

W: The scenes will be incredible rich.

Z: It could be created in a delicate way. We can focus on working with 4 models and rehearse with them, we can save money, as there's no need to book 10/20 models. There's no need to hire the absolute best models, as the performance will capture good attention.

Recently, I've been casting dancers and met some who are very skilled, and found some musicians.

W: You've already started to work on this for the next season?

Z: Yes, I'm also doing another project for another designer.

W: Who is the designer?

Z: Well, not exactly a show. It's more of a presentation.

W: Presentation, ok.

Z: It's a girl from Shanghai, called Teng Fengyi.

W: Are they an independent designer as well?

Z: Yes but it's not been confirmed yet so I won't say too much about it. I'm doing her project at the same time as Youjia's so we're casting dancers simultaneously. When I was talking to Youjia about opera, since she really likes that concept, we don't need absolutely amazing models, the performers will be able to maintain a strong performance. If we are well-prepared for this one, it'll be a lot easier later on. I want to go look for a venue around Paris at the end of September, a theatre that's relatively cheap and can be booked in advance. I need to ask Youjia about whether she wants to spend this money.

W: I think she's already received initial funds from an sponsor.

Z: Yeah, she told me.

W: That one's 28.

Z: So we can definitely proceed right?

W: Ummm... she has an attitude where she wants to give up right now, after she went back to China. Have you worked in China before?

Z: No, I haven't. I've completed 2 Masters over here. Just after I graduated from fashion, I went back to China and worked on making suits for a play in Beijing, it was with a Swedish director so it doesn't count as a Chinese environment.

W: Well, fashion for Chinese people is a complete business. Do you know what I mean? No one will care about your artistic character or ideas or personality. The environment in China disregards the value and protection of intellectual property.

Z: That's the same with theatre.

W: The way that some Chinese people cooperate with you will be 'tricky'. Youjia's not used to things happening like that and she doesn't like it, she's come across some difficulties. She's pretty stubborn as well.

Z: Which point is she most stubborn on?

W: It's hard to point it out exactly. Though, for example if you have to work with Chinese on creating a successful business, your thinking has to change. If you are still thinking like an artist or designer then you will be bullied. She's not had a huge amount of experience in dealing with Chinese people. For example, Chinese people with one billion doing a business will say they have 10 billion and then will only give you 0.5.

Z: So Youjia hearing 10 will know it's not 10 but won't expect it to be 0.5 either. She maybe will think 5.

W: She will trust others quite easily. She's complained quite a lot to me since she went back to China. It has a lot to do with her personality and environment, maybe it's not suitable for her. There's a lot of competition between independent designers in China as well.

Z: She needs a lot of connections.

W: Things have gone quite smoothly for her since she graduated and came to the UK. It's so difficult for fashion designers and she's done very well in the 3/4 years since she's been here. Loads of people won't even get to this stage after 7/8 years.

Z: So I think if she has money to do a Paris show then it would be a great opportunity. Me and Youjia have the same goals, that's why I've worked with her for this long without asking her for costs.

W: You're helping her for free?

Z: That's right, I am at the moment. There have been no outcomes previously so it was all without charge. There's been 2 seasons before this one that also fell through, do you know the one I'm talking about?

W: Which one?

Z: Let me think... it was the one in February. In the end it was the lack of funding...

W: She said it was because of her mum being ill as well the funding.

Z: I think it was actually the funding, it wasn't in place yet or something.

W: The reason was funding again?

Z: I think so. Yes, at the time she said she wanted to delay it because of quite a number of reasons so it got cancelled. Initially, she said she wanted to do the show in Paris in February but it didn't happen.

W: I don't think she managed to get funding at that time yet...

Z: Around Chinese New year.

W: I didn't know her yet then, but she mentioned to me later on it was because of her mum.

Z: So her mum was ill at that time?

W: Yes, and she hadn't managed to find a suitable sponsor yet.

Z: These things do seem pretty uncertain. It's not been very easy to get funding for this time actually.

So I do really want create a performance show, I'm in contact with some designers who may want to proceed in this kind of direction. I'm only working with Youjia and Teng Fengyi currently. There are 2 directions that I would like to achieve: one is fashions show; the other one is theatre production which is another project I'm working on. I like 'fun' things! I'm a Gemini, you are too?

W: Yeah.

Z: I would feel sick if I always do the same tasks. I have a friend who does one project for 2 years and I thought there's no way I can do that!

W: I totally understand, I would go crazy.

Z: I may really like the idea at the time but there was no outcome, if I come back to it after a year I wouldn't have an interest to continue with it. I need change or I feel uncomfortable.

W: I understand completely.

Z: There's no way I can repeat what I've already do and experience new things. I hope to create very different shows for each designer.

W: To have new breakthroughs.

Z: I want to collaborate with different artists so I'm connecting with different people.

W: To explore

Z: I think fashion colliding with performance can create lot of new concepts.

W: Let's discuss this, and about how you connect fashion with performance.

Z: Ok. Since there's so much possibilities in performance...

W: Let me narrow this topic down a bit, you can talk about fashion shows, how it relates to performance art, and your understanding of it. How do you think performance art can be used to help shows become more radical, functional, create clearer styles, and how it's more beneficial?

Z: Ok... To be honest, fashion and performance aren't closely related. Lots of performance artists don't care about fashion very much, they think fashion's quite shallow. Where I think there's a common area is that fashion is something that needs lots of new feelings, innovations, visuals and forms. Performance is the same, it continually changes but maybe performance is more innovative than fashion. There are some pieces that are nauseating! There are lots of concepts, which have been developed but don't work.

W: It exists just for existing.

Z: Fashion show is a 'market' that's been created, it creates attention.

W: So you think fashion shows are used to make money?

Z: Yes, absolutely. The essence of shows is for trade, it needs to work for the brand. The image created...

W: It needs to have a clear purpose and goal.

Z: Yes, it's very difficult to use every season as a study for a particular subject. Unless you're a very talented designer perhaps. If the show is an experiment or whatever then it's not commercial, it'll be for personal use or research. So I think for a brand, the essence is for trade, just like other commercial purposes. The quality for fashion shows is incredibly high, because of 'high fashion', you know. I have previously studied fashion so I will have high expectations for it, including how well it's been made. But if you see performance costumes, the quality is pretty low so it was one of the reasons why I wasn't able to become a costume designer! I would go crazy because there's no way clothes can be

made from that budget. Anyway, I think they care about the concept or question more.

W: Overall feel and something that will get the audience thinking.

Z: That creates a good performance. In fashion shows there's no time for anybody to understand what it's about, they came to watch it for 10 minutes and don't have time to understand its deep meanings! People need to see many shows in a single day.

Firstly, I think the visuals need to be strong because it's something that we watch,

W: It's visionary or visual art.

Z: That's right, the point has to be...

W: Clear?

Z: Yes, clear. It needs to create 'Wow' I think, there's no need to meet that point. Whether it's the clothes or show, they need to wow people I think. It needs to be innovative and eye-catching etc. The essence is for attention. This is my own understanding.

W: So you think making the show innovative is also the essence? Firstly, it's for trade and secondly to wow people in a short amount of time to leave a deep impression.

Z: Yeah, I think the whole fashion industry's like that. People get bored easily which is normal, I get bored easily too. There needs to be a balance, I think there's a decent amount of time between fashion shows, which is about every half a year. Then the next story can be created. It's a good length of time between the shows.

W: So can I interpret what you're saying like this: you think that fashion shows allow designers to show off their artistic side? If they only have the clothing collection then there would be certain limitations in the presentation.

Z: Yes, I think it's storytelling, it's describing an event using different methods. When elements are merged together well, then...

W: it's a successful, innovative show?

Z: Yeah, what I mean it doesn't matter whether you want to use performance, or a fashion show without performance, you just want a 'show'. Like John Galliano, no Alexander McQueen's one. So I think many designers have brilliant ideas, like Chalayan, and produce nice shows. The action is a performance art, with clothing as the focus.

W: So the final analysis, it is performance art?

Z: No no, I mean it's hard to definitely say what proportion is what. My analysis is that it is a commercial act, the performance art has to be linked to the collection extremely well in order for it to make sense. Otherwise, it won't work. There's a thin line between the show working and not working.

There's a lot that can be developed on the performance side, based on my own research there's not many designers who will create exceptional shows. Most shows are done on a shallow level, but performance is developing well. I enjoy watching all sorts of performances. Fashion appears 'cold-blooded' but there is actually emotion in it, humans are only visual animals but are emotional animals.

Performance contains a narrative, an emotion which makes it deeper.

W: There's more depths and 'layers', which makes the show less shallow and not purely for business.

Z: It's about communication. For example in performance, there's more physical theatre emerging, which relies on using body parts to communicate with each other. I saw a performance before that only used sign language, in the end I felt like I learned some sign language. Conventional language is not necessarily what humans need for communicating, if we are acting the same we will naturally understand one another. If there's another 'layer' on top of the clothing line, the show makes more sense as the clothes are made for humans. If the show can create an identity.

W: So as to develop a closer communication with the consumer, from a commercial point of view and also for aesthetics.

Z: Yeah, it makes more sense to have these 'layers', and creates more fun too. It's much better than models just standing there and posing, there's a better communication with humans.

W: More in touch with emotions, do you think it's really important?

Z: Yes, initially it needs to look good though. It's not possible for the show to be only performance, it won't look good. Many performers don't understand the point of fashion so the vibe given off isn't fashionable, it still looks like a performance and that's not quite right. It's been quite difficult to do the casting.

W: It's hard to find the right balance.

Z: Initially, they need... let me show you a photo of what I'm looking for. This was taken a few days ago for another designer, this dancer is great and I think

Youjia can use her too. She's beautiful but also androgynous which is interesting.

W: She suits Youjia's collection.

Z: Yeah, her clothes are androgynous, men can wear it and it looks like menswear, women can wear it and it looks like womenswear.

W: It's really interesting.

Z: Hang on let me find another... There are quite a lot of things that I haven't clearly thought about yet to be honest, I'm just talking to you about what I have thought about.

W: That's fine. Can you tell me about what is your understanding of innovation? Just anything you can think of.

Z: Ok.

W: On how it's connected to fashion shows or whatever.

Oh I understand what you mean! This person's features are beautiful.

Z: Yeah, she's really good.

W: Especially this photo, she would really suit Youjia's clothes.

Z: Her movements are really great too. She's beautiful and her head is really small, I really like the shape of her head. I told her I think she's beautiful and I was casting other beautiful girls earlier but she is prettier. She said thank you.

W: So back to topic.

Z: I think innovation is just to challenge what you already have. People need to change and it's in our nature to be curious. We need new concepts, thoughts, ideas and understandings. You can go question and challenge new things visually, that's what I think innovation is.

In performance, the nature of the subject is to create innovation. Performance takes on this form to... let me think about it. What's your understanding of it?

W: I want to hear your answer first. I don't want to confine what you say.

It's hard to put a definition on innovation, I've gathered on what some designers have said, and also what more commercialised business people have said in Beijing. The understanding is different for each person. The main difference between creativity and innovation is that creativity didn't always exist; whereas innovation, in some sense, has always existed but has had its dimensions changed or new elements became involved to change innovation into something else.

Z: So creativity is like physics, and innovation is like chemistry.

W: Exactly, that's an interesting point. This is the explanation from a pure theoretical side. You can just tell me any thought you have on the topic at all.

Z: I've actually never thought about the differences between innovation and creativity. I thought it was the same!

W: I used to think that too. I thought innovation was creativity.

Z: Yeah, or at least very similar like avant-garde. Maybe creativity is more... tolerant. Everything can be creativity.

W: You're right.

Z: Innovation is sharper, you need to suggest something and give others an idea to reflect on.

W: Let me give you a narrower question: what do you understand about shows that use real life scenes like Chanel? Do you remember the other day when Youjia phoned you?

Z: Were you there?

W: Yes I was beside her. Is your attitude the same as Youjia's? Is it too minimised and a waste of money?

Z: About the same, I think it's boring.

W: Why?

Z: I'm not quite sure how to critique, you know.

W: Whatever you think of.

Z: I think it's very boring.

W: From your point of view, firstly maybe they didn't build a strong emotional connection? This is from what you previously said. Secondly, it's not triggered thoughts in the audience towards a particular current issue?

Z: I think fashion's fascinating, it should give others new ideas and stimulations.

W: You think fashion's an exciting subject?

Z: Very exciting, after you watch it, you should feel thrilled. Only this kind of quality can be called fashion or it's too old fashioned.

W: So this is your own perspective on fashion? Your own philosophy?

Z: Yeah I think that's what's cool. I don't particular understand or have a demand for the commercial side, that's why it looks boring to me. When I used to study fashion there was a few certain designer's shows that I had to watch, I used to watch style.com in China too. I felt excited knowing that Martin Margiela's show was coming up cause I knew it would be crazy, I would happily wait to watch it. I don't think there's this high anticipation for

Chanel or the clothes, it's just there's a new collection again. Why are they still designing? I think Karl Lagerfeld is pretty amazing actually. He designs well and is good at the business side too.

W: He knows how to please the audience's appetite.

Z: He has clients, he's grabbed onto certain customers' minds. That's the image they want and they keep fulfilling this image. They will invite high-profile celebrities to sit in the middle of their shows, their direction is good. People are pretty happy as they get to see celebrities, actresses including a few French ones who are hard to invite. It's like a family party with the front row. It's another type, perhaps not so exciting. It really depends on the designer. It's just I don't think it's very innovative.

W: So about the type of show that you and Youjia would like to create, do you think that the show itself would completely overshadow the clothing?

Z: That's quite hard to predict, if I turn the ideas I was telling you about earlier into theatrical piece, it needs to totally make sense. I think all forms of creativity involved will need to make sense when combined with the clothes but there might be weird movements if we create a physical theatre concept. I think the essence of fashion is to fulfill some attention seeker's personality.

W: To create their dream.

Z: Yeah, it's a normal attitude. I think the most important thing that needs to be remembered is the image and moment that's been created, other points are not important. That's pretty successful already. It's worse if it's not memorable because making an impression is hard. I think there's been many shows where the show overshadowed the clothes. Youjia's mentioned to me this menswear brand at London Fashion Week before, Aitor Throup. The designer used a basic performance element: puppetry. He made body casts as models and used puppeteers to walk them. I don't think people remembered the clothes. It was pretty white with lines, similar to other menswear. People are more likely to remember the image of the puppets walking and that status, or remember the clothes together with the puppets. I don't think the appearance of the clothes are important, if you want to see the clothes you can go to the showroom. He's created a new image that's combined with the collection.

W: Do you think this is the best fusion? And regarding the overall image, are you talking about it from an aesthetic point?

Z: Aesthetic?

W: Youjia, for example, if she continues in the same direction with the same theme through the next few seasons for her show, would it be possible for her target consumer to understand the point she is trying to make? They will say: 'the designer's style feels exactly like this'

Z: Yeah, I think that should be the case. She wants theatre to be part of her label, I think her clothes need to be more dramatic though. She told me a few days ago she's done designing on the structure, if the clothes aren't moving at all then it's hard to work with, it'll be like a normal suit. So if she wants more performance elements then I think there should be more elements in the clothing that can be played around with. It can be more dramatic and makes more sense. It won't be like wearing a costume.

W: To be honest, her clothes aren't surrealistic. They're more commercial.

Z: More commercial? So I hope she will have a few pieces that...

W: Is more of an artistic line?

Z: No, I don't suggest that actually. I'm working with a couple of designers at the moment whose showroom clothes are commercial and wearable. I actually support this because I think there's no way the clothes can be sold if they can't be worn, and if it's not sellable then how will you be able to put on a fashion show?

W: Yeah true.

Z: It's a never-ending circle!

W: The economic base determines the superstructure.

Z: I think fashion is definitely different from art, it's for selling, it's a business. If you are creating whatever you want, no one will pay for it.

W: There's no business left.

Z: What I want to do is to use performance to soften the commercial aspect and put better emphasis on the concept, and maybe an identity will be created.

W: Do you think types of performance, performative or theatrical shows will be able to weaken the business element that exist in the fashion industry with their aesthetics? Do you think fashion overall can be enriched like this to create different deeper 'levels' to the industry?

Z: I think the 2 issues should be separated. The label should give the audience a certain image but it might differ from what is actually being sold which I think is fine to do. Maybe I decide to not sell what was shown in the

fashion show, I'm just showing the audience what my concept is, what my overall thoughts are. The item bought may not reflect this.

W: You think it's not important to make them consistent?

Z: Yeah I think if the clothes are too theatrical, it'll be too much. It'll become a play!

W: It'll become pure theatre.

Z: It'll be like creating costumes for a play, which I think won't be interesting. I think more interest is created with that small conflict.

W: So you think that an innovative show combined with a commercial collection creates this interesting point?

Z: Also, to be honest if the clothes are incredibly amazing then there's no need to do a show. Just put the clothes on walking models. Like Martin Margiela's older shows where the models were white, yellow, red, and got wrapped in jersey with lights beside them, he's not selling the clothes as they already look like that. He's selling the concept, what the thinking is behind his brand. Although his clothes look like that, he's not a superficial artist, but rather there is a whole thinking process. So perhaps because I need to sell clothes I need to make them wearable, but you can't stop me from researching and experimenting. This is an experimental project while also being for trade purpose as well. You can't completely say that this has no commercial purposes. So I think the 2 issues are the same.

W: I understand what you're saying. Let me think what to ask about next.

What do you think about the new technologies that have emerged in the last few years, like 4D holographics?

Z: 4D?

W: Holographics, in shows. Have you previously seen Ralph Lauren's show? Or an old fashioned one, Burberry's?

Z: Yeah,

W: They really like to use 3D projections and holographics.

Z: Use of interactive design?

W: And digital design.

Z: Use of high-technology?

W: There was one previous Chalayan show where they were showing textiles, there was a spinning wheel type thing. There was a remote control that controlled changes in an outfit, so the textile was folding and unfolding etc.

Z: This is from Chalayan in 2006 right?

W: It was radical for that time.

Z: It's not so much now, there's 3D printing now

W: With holographics.

Z: Projections, 3D mapping are seen quite a lot in performance.

W: New technologies have spread across stage shows, in fashion people are using it but not hugely frequent.

Z: I don't think it matches properly with fashion shows.

W: Where do you think it's not proper?

Z: It's because it needs rehearsals! For example if you want to do 3D mapping you need to map the whole person along with characteristics.

My supervisor did an installation before, that used sensors to detect your body movements, and if you moved this side light will appear there while the remaining sections are dark. The concept was to use movements to create light, it was quite poetic but needed dancers to complete the whole effect. It was performed with a Japanese dancer in Barbican and later sold the technology to some rich person and made money.

However if you want to put this in public art... he entered in the Kinetic Fair in London at that time. If it was a model or a normal person using it, it would feel like a 'textbook' technology, it's just 'Oh it can move when I move'. It doesn't make sense and seems like it's just simply an amazing technology and that's it.

In fashion shows, the clothing need to be looked at least a little bit so the room can't be too dark right? Light needs to alter in performance sometimes. I previously helped Youjia with projection in a show before, but it was in a fashion show space so there was lots of light. It wasn't done properly since it wasn't a theatrical space, the lighting and sounds weren't done very well either. I think there are points of conflict between the two issues. I think what Youjia likes, we've know each other for ages, are emotional things. Humane, but not very high-tech. Rather something that can relate to humans. So I think we may not create something with high-tech.

W: Do you think high-technologies will create a sense of distance with people?

Z: It's easy to look at technology and be wowed but looking at it now, it seems a bit boring because it's lacking in emotions.

W: Why do think there is a definite need for emotions for it to be interesting? There will be a lot of people who will be amazed by the technology itself and won't think it's boring.

Z: I think high-technology is distant from humans. After I was in contact with some technologies, I did think it was brilliant but I think the tech needs to be on a level that's related to humans. If...

W: It's purely to show this tech exists?

Z: Yeah, It's related to mathematics. This is probably my own preference, I'm not interested in things related to mathematics. So I don't think there's an interaction there, interaction with a machine is quite... But there are some high technologies that do relate to people. There's quite a lot of lighting artists or architects who wants to create innovative technologies. Some research into people's behaviours and create some responses to it, so they include interactions with people.

There was someone who studied the behaviour of birds, it involved attaching a small LED onto a bird at night. He likes birds and has done research on pigeons and swans' group formations. You know how many types of birds will have these special flight formations when they are in groups, like when they are changing direction. So he attaches these LEDs to the birds and let them fly around at night-time. They look like stars, I think this type of thing will evoke some emotion in humans. Whereas in technologies that move when a person touches it on this point or that point, or that type of high-tech thing then I think... It's been over used as well, so I think it's not high-tech anymore. The entry-level is much higher. If you can't create something that's absolutely brilliant then it's best that you shouldn't touch it. Also, it would be more expensive.

W: The high cost of technology influences the entry-level.

Z: If you had a concept, you won't use a technology you already have, you would be build upon an existing technology to create a new one right?

W: Yeah.

Z: The time for this to happen is long with a high probability for failure.

W: High level of risk?

Z: Yes, also depends on the designer's taste. Some designers don't like high-tech like Youjia. The other designer I'm working with like it a bit more. My partner really likes high-tech.

W: He works with lights so it makes sense.

Z: He's a geek. He like all sorts of high-tech stuff, so I have to remind him: 'These things are fun but they don't make sense!'

W: To make sense is the first priority? It's very important?

Z: Yes, because some things don't feel right. Although I think it's very cool and showy, it's not quite right.

W: The logic isn't right, so it doesn't work.

Z: It's like a painting: this part is light coloured; that part is dark coloured; there is a dot here, and if the dot's in a wrong position then you can feel the it looks messy and random. It'll attract bad focus.

W: Whether It's from an aesthetic viewpoint or a logical viewpoint, there needs to be the question of why. A reason for it.

Z: Yes, I think my executive is that if I can do one thing properly then I don't want to do something else.

W: You can Youjia really share similar logic and philosophical thoughts.

Z: Really? We haven't talked about this issue yet.

W: That's fine.

Z: I think Youjia's clothes convey emotions so I want to add mood in to it. Depends on how you understand it. When she was creating a show before, since we graduated in the same year, I had a friend who went to go see that show and cried when they saw the clothes. I think Youjia's clothes then involved the use of gathered pleats, there were folds in the clothes and they were wrapped up with other stuff. The model wearing the clothes was beautiful, we managed to get the best group of models who appeared ethereal and the clothes had a sad mood about them. You need to carefully grasp that type of mood, I think it can be sensitive.

W: Do you think if it's carefully grasped, an innovative show can help convey a strong feeling to the audience? The clothes have a strong feeling about them too, so it will be as strong as a performance like dance etc. They can illuminate each other.

Z: It should both make sense. For example there's some silk scarf designs in the collection, so this can add many elements and possibilities to the show. There can be a lot of possibilities here, we need to rehearse.

W: Let's talk about the rehearsal, you've mentioned it so many times! Who would you be collaborating with, being the set designer, throughout the whole process of putting on the show?

Z: If it's this current concept that I want to do. So many people.

W: What are their roles, light designer?

Z: To put on a show, you would be needing to book a venue about 3 months to half a year beforehand. I'll talk about the rough direction... So before rehearsal, all the artists need to be found. Actors need to be cast, musician need to be cast.

W: Can you list them in order? From what would come first.

Z: So the venue needs to be booked, then you can look for actors. Before all this, the storyline needs confirmed and plan on how to do it. Next you can start to create the set, but the set can be also be created with the actors and other designers. You can tell them roughly about what you want to create and get them to share their ideas. Some contemporary techniques, Devised Theatre, basically involve everyone in the process. This is a more proper way of doing it, for example someone brainstorms an idea, then a new thing can be designed from that. There would be an immediate response that's accurate. It wouldn't be like designing one thing and then getting that adapted.

W: So the process is highly interactive and alters accordingly.

Z: Yeah, at the beginning you need to tell everyone the concept and they will ask about it too. They will ask what it's about etc. After casting actors, the schedule needs to be planned for the people involved. There's types of plans we can follow: either intensive where rehearsals take place in a short time like 2 full weeks; or rehearsals take place once a week within a month with developments in the middle.

W: Accordingly to your current estimate: How many times does Youjia's show need to be rehearsed?

Z: I think 2 weeks.

W: Everyday?

Z: Pretty much, but not full days. Maybe 10 half days. It also needs in-space rehearsal, in the theatre. If the funds for that is too high then we need to do that here. Lighting needs to be done at the same time, a lighting plan needs to be completed first like how to install the lights.

W: Like a diagram etc.

Z: Diagram along with how to create the lighting and how to arrange them, how many there are. This is what they need to do. So the next task, if the set has been completed, we can get in. If Youjia books it for an entire day, we need to go there early in the morning. The lights, stage need to be installed.

The first run through isn't a dress rehearsal, it's just for actors to get into positions. This may only take 20 minutes but needs to be repeated, this technically requires a director but I think I can do it.

W: You can take on the director's role.

Z: We need a choreographer, so I can talk with the choreographer on how to stage this. They can be in charge of choreographing movements and the dance. I can plan the rhythm and make decisions on the clothing.

W: Does this mean you still need a performance artist?

Z: No I just need a choreographer. It's a bit like a choreography of physical theatre, there needs to be narrative. So the actors will include... I think the show will have both womenswear and menswear which fits the script as it has a boy and girl. I feel like this makes sense. Then we can bring in the models for everyone to rehearse together a couple of times, after that we rehearse with lights, props, clothes. It'll be ready then. After the show, we take the stage apart and get out. This is the process. Firstly, we need to find a theatre to rehearse in, it needs to be rehearsed a few times at least. It'll take time to make the show as refined as possible, it won't happen very fast. The task's schedule is...

W: It's hard to control?

Z: The only way to solve the problem is to cut the number of models and find dancers who are the same quality as models. They can act as the role of a model but they will also have the ability to dance or create movements.

W: Accordingly to your experience, what's the budget for 'The Turn of the Screw' show concept?

Z: Oh God, because I don't know what the budget for the theatre is. If it's a space for rehearsals, it'll be £700 for a week at least. For the actor, if the actor is good their daily rate is £200 but we negotiate with them on the price. I've not calculate the entire price, but the minimum is £700 is for a...

W: Price for a space?

Z: It'll be a small dance studio to rent for a week. Half days each week. It's a very very cheap one. If you want to rehearse in a theatre for an entire day, it'll be £1000 at least. It won't take a day though. Half a day is fine. It's expensive because it's a theatre space. There'll be prices for choreographer and dancer, these are a must, there's various equipment as well as the set.

W: How much is the set?

Z: I'm thinking if we create nice movements then the set can be more contemporary so it's not that expensive. If the whole effect feels right, then I don't want to spend too much money. The show is already in a theatre which is pretty cool.

W: The theatre is already creating an effect.

Z: Yeah, it just needs to be polished. I'm thinking of going in this direction. If we work with a musician too, that's another fee. The positive side is we are saving money from not using as many models. Models are extremely expensive.

W: Yeah I know, I heard Youjia mention it before. One of the biggest spends will be on models probably.

Z: So I hope she can spend a good amount on inviting VIPs to come see the show, I think it's more important to polish the show. The money we save on models can be spent on making the show better. That's my thoughts. The show needs to be very special for others to remember it, it needs to be extreme or no one will remember you. The fashion industry is pretty cruel.

W: Replacement happens quickly, people get bored quickly.

Z: Have someone said before that fashion gets ugly so it needs changed every half a year.

W: True, it is like that. Let me think...

Z: So that's the rough idea right now, I think for rehearsals at the beginning can take place once a week. Everyone can get together to talk about ideas. I'm thinking about how to do this from a scenographer's point of view. It depends on the designer. The show doesn't need to be entirely silent, I want to find a performer who is good at speaking, an actor. There may be a sample script spoken out for example. I really like this Belgian physical theatre group called Peeping Tom, the way they use the body as a narrative is perfect and I think they're brilliant. When they are telling a story, you will want to ask what are they doing, but at the same time you will understand everything. They create a lot of possibilities. They're not actually telling any story but are constantly expressing a narrative, using only the body with no speech at all. So I think we can add speech, we can find actors to make the show more fun. But this does take time, it won't happen quickly. If everything was done really fast like the previous times, then we can't perfect all of it. Time is important, time and skills are limited. It might depend on luck.

W: Fate.

Z: Yeah, actors and artists to collaborate with, and musicians which is pretty important as they can create the atmosphere at the location.

W: Can you talk about how you felt about this season being cancelled? Since it's already been cancelled quite a few times. Can you talk about you feeling and thoughts towards this kind of failure?

Z: I don't think everything's been a failure, it's hard to define 'failure', depends on how you view it. Some of it couldn't be helped, so I don't think it's been a failure.

W: Are you Christian?

Z: Yes I am, but in a traditional sense and not that devoted. I am the type who is too lazy to go to church. I am definitely not a materialist so my intentions aren't super strong, I think...

W: If it's fated then you can proceed with it?

Z: No no, I think if you have very strong intentions you will think of it as a failure because it's not been completed to your wishes. Humans have strong ambitions, and it's hard to tell whether it'll be an even bigger failure if it was completed. Do you understand?

W: Yes, I understand.

Z: Also depends on what it's hailed as, if you think it's a failure then it's likely to be one because you acknowledge it as so. I feel that it's a learning process, I can say 'ok just let it be' but I do feel a bit puzzled.

W: A bit depressed?

Z: Yeah, a bit depressed because I've confirmed everything, made connections with some people.

W: Progress is being made.

Z: I can stop working but what about the others who already started working? And it's all been for free up to that point, it makes me a bit...

W: I understand what you mean.

Z: I also care about how my team feels. So at the time I told her we should sign a contract. In the long run, I think if she is better at doing menswear then it'll be a better opportunity. And I also have enough time to create a more polished show.

W: Which roles make up your team at the moment?

Z: My team changes all the time: there's dancers; lighting designer.

W: What about musicians?

Z: Not the musician because he's not working with music anymore but I have a list of other ones. It's more like I'm creating a team for this project.

W: Oh yeah.

Z: And another team for another one. I have certain artists who I prefer to work with. I have a friend who makes fashion films who's brilliant. I would like to work with him for a long time, maybe we can make a film for Youjia. If we film on the day then it can be used as a trailer or something, I think recording is pretty important.

W: Yeah, that'll be brilliant.

Z: So, like these kind of artists and the dancer that I just showed you, are good at what they do and understand fashion. I think I can work with them in the long term. Their identity can change directions, but it's not hugely important. Unless they're very limited. They are able to adapt to different projects. The main team is me and my partner.

W: You and the lighting designer?

Z: That's right, he has a lot of supporters. He's based in a theatre so he has a lot of connections. He's been in the industry for a long time and he's almost 50 years old, more than 40.

W: He probably can come up with lots of interesting ideas.

Z: Yeah, he's does more technical work, more technological stuff.

W: Yeah I know, I'll include him in the technology part. I did a Masters in Edinburgh University in Design and Digital Media so it covered digital design, I understand some of the technologies in digital design. So when you told me he was a lighting designer I immediately knew what kind of character he is. He's very crazy about it?

Z: I actually like high-tech a lot too, but it's been overused with many not fitting the concept.

W: Lots of people want to show off that they have the technology. But what is the point of it?

Z: Exactly, It's like they want to show off how high-tech they are. There's so many people creating this now and each person is smarter than the next. Like Random International's Rainroom for example. And laser light type of things are already very well developed. They have been created by geeks with artists. Random International made these small mirrors that will look at you in a cute way when you walk by it, it's like these small animals. The point of them makes you feel a sense of fun, this point needs to exist. If you don't

have that point then it feels like you're just a person who works with tech and is researching into new tech. You're telling the audience to touch it to change the colour, then you say emotions are produced but I don't think so! I feel like it's...

W: For nothing?

Z: I think if it's not properly done then it's just showing off the tech, but it's still interesting though. Like Chalayan's designs before.

Z: Chalayan's stuff is pretty interesting, like the exhibitions pieces which are linked to performance. I think it's pretty fun. He properly incorporated the use of models, if you've seen the gallery show, He uses a cup, a goblet, with a camera placed inside it. A white screen will display what the camera is filming on a wall, so shows inside the mouth. I thought that was pretty beautiful. The model made it looks good too. I don't know why Chalayan's always seemed quite poor.

W: Really?

Z: I think he's always been a bit presumptuous; he's his own person and does what he want.

W: Capricious?

Z: Yes, he's began to do performance now. He did a show in Sadler Wells Theatre last year, I went to see it and thought it was really good. But my director friend thought the show was rubbish, like there's no structure. It was lots of stunning visuals. The transitions were quite awkward. Basically there were 2 scenes, A and B, when B was transitioning, A was used to cover it, after scene A was finished, the next scene was shown and so on. There weren't any directing thinking that's gone into the piece. This is why I told you about the importance of rehearsal, there shouldn't be so much visuals appearing that aren't related to each other. It feels...

W: Too weird?

Z: That's pretty much it.

W: Are you going to Paris to see locations?

Z: I will confirm later. I'm not sure yet.

W: Let's keep in contact, I'll ask you before you go to Paris.

Z: I'm leaving around the 30th or 1st, those few days. I want to visit my schoolmates in Paris.

W: If you're going to have fun, you can just do that then. If you are planning to see locations, we can confirm a time in Paris to do that.

Z: I want to my friend from my MA, she's an architect. I'll be staying with her, they've received an artist residency in Paris. I'll go see her and perhaps she can help.

W: Youjia's mentioned your friend to me before, to help with the location.

Z: Yeah, because she's very experienced, she's not that young, she's done a scenography project in the Louvre before. She then quit her job and has been doing architecture projects. All her projects have been pretty big-scale. But she thinks it's quite boring and rather enjoys scenography. She is actually a dancer, but not totally professionally, a skilled armature. So I was thinking if she would like to be involved then I can ask her to help and act as a connection in the city. If there are tasks that would be difficult for us to do, we can ask her. She speaks French too.

W: Are they Chinese?

Z: No, she is French.

W: Local French citizen?

Z: Yes. I think it's a positive connection, convenient too. We don't need to learn French! I will also have a place to stay in Paris.

W: Yeah, this is good.

Z: Ok, I will contact you nearer the time.

W: Don't worry about it. I will contact you. I will need to continuously think about it. I will annoy you after I know what the plan is. Can you check when your partner is free?

Z: Ok.

W: No rush though.

Z: After you guys come back then. I will start to look for dancers, after Youjia comes back I will talk to her about the plan. Then we can start as it'll take quite a while, it shouldn't be rushed.

W: Let me ask you a 'what if' question. What would happen if the show falls through again?

Z: Is there a possibility? Why?

W: I can say there is definitely a possibility. If she doesn't get the funding there's no way it can be completed. The money she has right now isn't enough. She only has 280,000RMB. Can't do much with it. Rehearsals for two weeks: 200,000 will be spent. I roughly calculated when you were talking about it just now.

Z: Really? You calculated it really fast.

W: Yeah, the venue for rehearsals for a couple of weeks will probably cost 200,000. That's without some extras.

Z: She only managed to get funding for 280,000 before right?

W: Previously... this is a long story, I'm not sure whether she remembered to tell you. You can ask her about it later on.

Z: I've not met up with her that many times yet.

W: There were a couple of editors in China who helped her find sponsors. There are many editors at Chinese fashion magazines who have taken on sort of agent roles for designers. The work in a 'kill chicken for the eggs' type of way, so kind of tricking both parties. They take advantage of information that they get hold of in the middle.

Z: She did mention a little bit of this to me.

W: The editors completely tricked her.

Z: Really?

W: The amount of show tickets were sold for 2,000,000, she didn't know about this at all.

Z: What happens if she doesn't have a show?

W: Yeah, that's why it fell through this time. And the editors wanted Youjia to personally explain to the VIPs. It's all bit of a joke.

Z: So is Youjia busy with this right now?

W: It's already happened. It happened when she first went back to China last month.

Z: Oh right yeah.

W: She was pretty stressed at that time and decided not to do a show. It happened at that time. And then, she and the two editors, I'm not completely sure exactly what happened, but I think they managed to get more than 1,000,000 but told Youjia it was only 500,000. Out of the 500,000, they will take 100,000, so actually leaving 400,000 for Youjia.

Z: So it's 400,000? Why is it 280,000?

W: There's more. Doing business in China has these rules: the first payment, they will never give the full amount.

Z: So did they transfer already transfer the 280,000?

W: 70%. 70% of 400,000. 4×7 is 28 so 280,000. So if she received the full amount, there'll only be 400,000.

Z: If she doesn't manage to get other sponsors, is 400,000 enough?

W: Not enough. Because last time she reported 500,000, changed to Euros, to give to the Paris show production company. They then told her 'it's not enough, you won't be able to do what you want'.

Z: So the only way is to create a performance to save some money.

W: About your plan, with the location, models, VIPs. And the one I don't know exactly how much it would cost is the set.

Z: We can come with some ideas for the set.

W: On a rough calculation, I say it's about 500,000.

Z: Pretty much.

W: Even by being frugal. There's no way it'd be less than 500,000. If we reduce any more, the effects will probably be sacrificed. The lights are expensive right?

Z: Yeah, and we're doing it in Paris.

W: True. The lights are also expensive. There are many people in Paris who are strict.

Z: Normally, if it's a good theatre, they won't let a stranger come in to be the technician, they're scared you'll break things. So you need to hire their staff, who have quite a high rate.

W: Yes that's right. So with the extra small things added together...

I don't know whether she's been finding sponsors for the next season yet. Her mental condition is not great. She was not sleeping well a while ago.

Z: How come? Because of struggling with these issues?

W: Honestly speaking, I think the major problem is she's not acclimatised well to China. She's not adjusted her thought process properly, not flexible enough. Because in every environment, the way you act needs to be adjusted. There are also unspoken rules. If you want to achieve things in this environment then you need to follow the rules. You need to slowly adapt even if you aren't used to it at the beginning. She's not like that though. If she's gotten used to a set of rules, she won't change herself.

Z: She's more suited to the Western world then. Western people are pretty straight-forward. This is why I like being abroad, if I want to collaborate with some interesting artists, you probably don't need to spend so much money. They want to collaborate with you because they like your project.

W: Yeah they'll think you have things in common.

Z: But in China, it's impossible.

W: That's right.

Z: They'll think they're superior. But over here, it may be superior or whatever but you don't care, if you don't like it you don't like it. Or 'the time is mine, I'll do something that I enjoy'. The thinking is different.

W: Totally different. It's like I said, in China it's a business. There's a set of rules for trade.

Z: So Youjia needs a businessman? To act as a manager?

W: She's put some of her thinking and expectations...

Z: Too high?

W: Not too high. It's too Westernised. For example when she's looking for a pattern cutter or artist or fashion editors. She'll naturally think they will find her work very interesting and hope that these people will lower their standards, press' standards for example, for her. It won't happen. It's not dependable.

In China, only those amazing artist will, people we will next meet, act based on emotions. They will think, 'we had fun talking today so I will help you', even for free perhaps.

Z: That won't happen with the editors and businessmen.

W: They are more focused on economics. They won't care about...

Z: Feelings, and artistic spirit.

W: Yeah.

**3. Du, Y. (2016) 'First Show production experience at SHFW in 2015'.
Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 17 August.**

Original Language: Chinese

- Wang: Color Blue
- Du: Color Black
- Please talk about the difference between Europe and Shanghai Fashion Week. Tell me the obstacles that you've ever met first, such as economical issues, people and so on. Just tell me whatever that comes to your mind.
- There are many designers during Shanghai Fashion Week.....
- You can focus on the Jungle Fashion Show, the forest-theme based show.
- Including the new generation of China - these young designers just graduated, many return Shanghai, China long before. There are lots of thriving scenes going on. It is a good timing for sure. I have been very hesitating to go to shanghai doing (fashion show). In fact, they have already done a lot of seasons. For me, I feel like a new comer, although my brand is not young any more. These seven years, to me, all products have different customer orientation. Chinese market demand is gradually growing, it requires me to take care of it, which is the reason why I do my diffusion brand completely focusing on the young consumers. The production bases in Hangzhou. I did some work to face this market, but I do not know when I am ready. Because I have received a lot of different feedbacks, including protection system, good way to take in order and so on.
- Yesterday evening, I was reading contract from UKFT (United Kingdom Fashion and Textile organization), no, it was an email. UKFT is one of the biggest sponsor for independent designer in the UK. It provides funding to us every year. I cooperated with them for many seasons. They ask for my confine each time and then mark it on their map. I paid a little attention and

reviewed the email yesterday, finding the last clause was about Chinese market, then I know they are quite not sure about Chinese market.

- There is a lot new possibility and new opportunity in the market but for English is I know they are not strongly recommending if you know my mean. It is quite sad really, read that, because I am Chinese. So, it has come to the point I always thinking when is the time for me when is the right time for me to go to Shanghai eventually. Last season just after the terrorist attack in Paris, pal show (3:55) is dead basically. It is really bad. That has actually made me aware I cannot focus on the Europe anymore and also cause when the good time I do have many Italian stock. But Italian is not very good with payment, lots of them do sale return. That is just scary me, that is very wrong timing. Waterstone, One of the stores in China, they came to me was happen just be that time they said we are moving our office from Beijing to Shanghai. We want to have you as one of the designer we are promoting and we have this amazing menu, we'd love to do some interesting things with you. I used to work with them. I know although they had quite bad reputation in the UK for payment, but he really go for it, really count of try. I know he has passion, that's for sure. There is no doubt. But then again lots of issues later around were happening with payment, you know, that were coming through. But the thing is, in China, it is perfect for me the right timing for me but lots of payment issues I did not expected happening. It was putting me in a very bad situation.
- You are not sure about whether you would take this adventure or not.
- I mean, the thing is it is such amazing location, I have to say. I have seen it from my vision to picture it. if people know my brand, I do not do a lot of show. It has proven in history I had few shows, all of them are special. I have choreographer involved, I have musician involved. I had everything which I saw I would do with no shame no pity and to make the most story basically. I do not want to do just ordinary show which does do anything to me. I am kind of storyteller designer. So, I actually have this opportunity in amazing Chinese garden which eventually find out just really serial they all be kept in a situation where you go locals living in a block, really just surround. It was quite interesting. It is very Shanghai. I actually loved the whole garden in the whole scene. The pity is, really, they have no sense of

how this should work. Maybe he does not want to do well, it is just he does not know what is actually going on.

- They just did not know how to produce a show.
- Yes, exactly. Even we said we need this blabla. He still does not know what I mean we know we are not in the same pace. So basically, I met lots of the amazing people down there, I met a ballet tutor from the college which I recommend, she is so passion about what she does. I was just so glad meeting them. Eventually I became feel like they encouraged me and I have to make movement. So, it is so many opportunities but there is no rule, there is no group work, it is no people going to look after music people going to look after it, you have to sourcing everybody put in together last minute, which is really difficult.
- Maybe they have conflicts between each other
- Lots of things to do is money I suppose, always unpaid issues, but when everything becomes last minute, it is trouble, it is problem. Not everybody can do everything for a favor or nobody can do everything in such a short time. But with passion, that is the light of creativity. So, we were not even having a camera in the back of the stage. We can't see where the models are. It is completely a Chinese garden. We have Jiashan, Liangting, all that. It was raining season. The model just fell over. Three women stylists one is Qingqing who is the senior editor of L China, three of them were engaged from different places. One is at the back stage; I was winging all my sight. She was there with music, just trying to control the situation where easily you have her camera have a microphone, you can let people know. So that there is one-hour delay for the show. People went really frustrated. They all fashion people and lots of people who sitting there waiting. I did enjoy this experience I have to say. Because everybody was so nice. It is just trouble you have to be in such a long way distance. When I reach there less in a week I have to do from casting to final product, everything haven't not even been set up. The location was literally a world before everything is ready. I am not ready. You got constructed people work everywhere. I was like pissed off. We need a space to do the rehearsal. Otherwise it is not goanna be a show. Please just stop. You

know they just going everywhere make dirty and everything we do is never gonna be the same time. Then to actually thinking about fashion show is a point of doing it is getting resource. In the showroom there is another disappointment. Because they said they took the order. They do not even have people there taking orders. It was just crazy. It feels like just what am I doing here? I am not playing. I am not a student. I am not coming here to have a good time. I come here to survive. It is as seriously as that. That's why so many people are not sure... I mean I have so many friends, even last time I took few brand to China for the popup, they are England friends, they do not speak the language. They are quite afraid what is gonna happen if they do go there. I am sure it is not only the language issue. I am sure lots of basically foreign people working and living in Shanghai speak amazing Chinese. So, communication was not a problem anymore. It is the way of doing things. You never getting the same level as you never speak the same language in that case. People just out there enjoy themselves for nothing, for a party basically, rather than actually doing business.

- Just like you said, your original intention is to sell products.
- Well, yes, focus on.
- What is your purpose of staging such a show?
- Show is for press. That is for sure. While you do it, you want a professional feedback as well. The reason of show is to make them want to take the order. Eventually you have your product in the store where people can buy.
- You mean the show can make your product seem more attractive?
- More attractive, at the same time it is more advertising also. More real.
- You would like to promote yourself in the Chinese Industry. It looks like promising. It is a positive and a prosperity chance for fashion industry. You wish you could have a place in China, and you see the future of Chinese market as well. Several reasons: one is the worries about the European market, it is not well recently; another is the Chinese market grows fast

now. Just at this moment, you meet Waterstone. What kind of company is Waterstone?

- It is a concept store, an independent boutique.
- OK, Waterstone just found you. It was also the Shanghai Fashion Week, said we want to do a different show, it can promote you as well.
- Promote their relocation in Beijing and Shanghai
- It is win-win to do it under such circumstances.
- yes, mutual benefit
- It was done under win-win situation equivalent.
- Many unprofessional and communication problems were found during the process. Could you talk about other communication issues beside they have no idea what your need? Do you think they need to improve the standard, such as the level of stylist? Let us put the ballet aside first. Their performers should be better, right? After all, you just said shooting issues were completely relied on them. Do you feel that the standard of the staff is still worse compared with that of Europe?
- In my opinion, they put things together in the last minute. People may not be right, on the other hand, the ability is limited. The thing I can recall most clearly is make up, hair dresser. The guys, Waterstone wanted to use, normally serve actors or we say kind of performing people. So, a lot stylists of stars, such as Huang Bo's hair stylist, were there, but these styles are drama stuff, they are totally different from fashion, sometimes too wired, not modern. They can do things, and I do not mean they are not good. But things are quite different.
- In fact, there is a distance.
- Yes, honestly, the weather was hot in Shanghai. I felt something went wrong with myself. I had their staff, but I still had to bring my own team there. The result was quite different. The problem was, you have spent so many efforts on it. But they do not even have a good photographer. The final pictures have lots of pitifulities. But this is a team work, you cannot blame

anybody. If it is just a temporary combination of some people who did not shoot the fashion videos or tried model makeup before, what can they create eventually? You just made a show. I think this kind of group is better to do some student activities or a party.

- in fact, they are dabbler, right?
- Yes, unprofessional. That is very Chinese, ignore details, not bad is enough.
- My next question is that do you feel any different on inviting people? You staged shows in London before, right? How did you handle the invitation issues? What was different between Shanghai and London on this issue?
- Normally there is a PR company to handle these issues in London. Chinese people do not understand what is professional PR. There was a PR who might have a lot of experience in Europe. Talking about details, but the cost is very high.
- About the specific amount?
- There is no fix number.
- How about yours?
- We have sponsorship generally, so it is different. The big part of sponsorship is the venue. So, it covers a lot. The biggest cost in our part is the model. So, if a PR company is involved in the project, the most expensive part is inviting people, including 3d mutation. The problems are that they do not know professional agency is running those, and they do not spare no efforts to advertise the show. This is quite a damage, there is no need to produce the show without publishing it. Another thing is the operation of celebrity is totally different in Chinese Market. They get involved in the fashion show not for fun but for invitation fee.
- Focus more on benefits such as income, exposure and so on. In Europe, it should be the same. Celebrities will not attend a show without getting any benefits.
- But they will not mark the price, will not be 30 thousand for publishing or

retweet one Weibo, and 300 million for attending one show. Free products will be asked in Europe, but it will be frankly asked. In China, it will be taken away directly after the show. It is better telling me at the very beginning. I met such a situation this time. I think is the mediating people did not make it clear in the first place.

- The star feels that it is beautiful then I can take it away, because you invited me.
- The key point is Waterstone said that we have your bags, we can provide. Finally, there is nothing in the site. There is neither shoes nor clothes, I even have to provide a pair of shoes. But the star has been there already, I can only go forward. I think that the middleman did that on purpose.
- How much extra money did you spend later?
- I was very angry to give celebrity gifts without being noticed. The most terrible people is domestic editor. A lot of people asked things for the shooting of somebody. It was incredible. I cost up to 200 thousand RMB by giving gifts. I calculated after I came back, I was appalled. Some words of the editors are nasty. They said how can you stay here if you do not have money. They asked for products, but I saw few pictures.
- Did not achieve the publicity effect that you wanted, right?
- Not at all. Some celebrities give you a photo, but she did not post on Weibo, this means nothing. First at all, her status and your status are different. Some people have many followers but the followers just like the person, they will not follow the things what the person buys, it cannot drive the consumption. I understood a lot of things during Shanghai Fashion Week. I got nothing but just wasted things. Many people like asking things and then ran away.
- You spent 200 thousand only on celebrities, how much did you spend totally?
- My cost was over my budget. They said everything was ready, so I came, I did not consider to spend that much. Many things are not necessary. you will offend people if you do not pay. At the end of the show, somebody

came and asked for money because they did things for this show.

- Many Chinese commercial system is very unruly.
- In Europe, we will help if we can, money is not the only thing to focus on. If it is meaningful, we will pay all efforts on it. The purpose is to do things well rather than to make money. There are many photographers and stylists, who are very hard practicing and cooperating with designer. This is the necessary possibility of development. The show will be very commercial if there is no idea and wish. The ways of thinking are different.
- Domestic market is too profit-driven.
- I feel the same way.
- The fashion industry here chases profits too, but rules come first.
- Such things happened as well, but people here will do job well generally, will not make you feel very risky. Maybe it happened few times, I heard that some PR made such unbelievable mess, it did not do any work.
- You just said you want to do interesting show instead of traditional one. Why do you think in this way?
- Because I have never been in a normal state as a designer or such kind designer. Because for me, there are many kinds of designers, many people focus on pattern cutting. They express themselves through pattern or color. Every designer has a point to focus on, that becomes a style. As for me, in many cases, the style is the stories that I want to tell and my recent experience. I feel more postmodern, more artistry.
- I found the designers from Saint Martin all have this thought, most feel like surrealistic. The style of Saint Martin is surrealistic which comes from those previous masters. London acts as a fashion capital, the style of this city is very radical as. It is famous for interracial. After I have interviewed around, I find you all pay much attention on artistry. Surrealistic always focus on a topic, it is storytelling.
- In my opinion, we study in Europe and the style of each University is different. I think artistic is not the answer to the whole question in the case

of Saint-Martin. The curriculum consists of culture study and culture study includes many research on post modern art. I think it is very important for design. Research requires you to learn history which includes some key elements such as philosophy under certain culture background. After mastering this, you will never be ordinary and you will always be imaginative. Vision art is basically about vision, that is, you can see something which others may never see. Your individuality and individual take on different cultures or things will result in dissimilar tastes and styles, and that's the most important reason of design. Just like once my culture study teacher asked us on the class: why are there artists and designers and why we want to be one of them? I was pretty good that time, and I reacted very fast, because I like his course. My answer was: because you have something different to tell, that is the whole reason cause you have your voice, you want to say something differently, that is the whole reason you want to be artist, that is the way of you making things, you sending messages of your individual opinions of the messages you try to send to other people or the world, basically. So, I think it is very important of having an artistic story background, and it's a very important part of modern art.

- So how do you describe your own design philosophy? You just said a lot of designers rely on pattern or color to describe. How do you position yourself? I mean a philosophical level of positioning rather than the industrial one.
- Some may call me post pop fashion. I feel there is a little romantic in it, and at the same time emotional elements are primary. In fact, if you look through the history of English design over the past two decades, you can see, including the Galliano, McQueen and Hussein Chalayan, that everyone has their own way to show collections. It is the show of the whole story instead of only the clothes themselves. Many designers may be great, especially when they study in Saint-Martin, but only few lucky ones can make it and reach the final state. And I think the guy, who can use his own Method and have sufficient economic capacity to show his vision, is actually very lucky. As for me, I can only do this under certain limitation. I can never release all my potentials due to these limitations. To

me, art or design is just a carrier of life. I can use other ways to show it even it's not fashion. So I would say this might be a proper definition of my role as a designer: I am neither a typical nor traditional designer who gets stuck in the studio all the time wondering how clothes look good. I may concern more about experience of life or experience of traveling people, that is, I convey what touches me more. It may be more personal, consequently becomes artistic in sense.

- How do you think about London Fashion Week, you could talk about the differences between the Fashion Week in London, Paris and Milan?

I have staged shows in Paris. I also have been in Milan and New York. Although Europe is small, but the differences are huge. Milan used to be a handicraft base, it includes manuscript, craftsmanship, these are the best. However, such a place is lucky for design creativity, so ready to wear is relatively good. Many previous stores, they have their own manufactures just behind their stores. For economic issue, they stopped to do so. Then they become buyer. The buyers of stores are honor. They come out to buy good-looking clothing that they like and bring back to their store for sale. I met a lot of Italian buyers, to order goods in fact is to satisfy their own designer addiction, they will change all your design again.

So, I will feel what do you want me to do, I am not your processor or what. They love fashion, because they have the best staff, like buying things. Payment is a real headache in Italy. So, this is Italy. Italy has supports from Italian vogue. They are very supportive of young fashion including International Talent Support which I went there before, it is ITS, they treat supporting young designers as a lifelong career. But I feel all markets including these environments have very hard follow up problem, the problem is that it is easy to push a designer, there are many designers graduated, but should they do after? Because market cannot be dealt by a designer, it is too hard to continue. Is that really worths it

I think the marketing in Paris, after all, Paris is the capital of fashion. There are thousands of showrooms during fashion week. There are many international famous brands. So, the schedule is very full. All designers around the world want to have a corner to display their products. If you are in Marais area, you will find everyone in the street is very cool, they are designers coming to attend the Fashion Week. But I think many designers

especially foreign designers including my classmates from Saint-Martin, they will come to Paris for every season even they were already back to Japan. Most people actually do not want to give up the European market. They keep on fighting in this market for pressing reasons and sense of existence. There are many Shanghai designers treating this showroom as a good business but they have no willing to work on it. Showroom is a very headache issue because the price is very high. If you do not sell in one season, your brand will collapse. One season, two seasons, after collapse, you will never recover. So really, the investment and income...like you said, sometimes stay small so that you will not fail too badly. Then you can give yourself another opportunity to continue doing something fun, something you fancy.

- Let us talk back to Shanghai.
- Shanghai is a place full of potential, that is for sure.
- The *Goodness's New Dress (A TV Show)* invited you for this season, right?
- Yes, we need to talk about this.
- Because it is related to dissemination, I watched the show. They are all staged in a very non-traditional way. Tell me which kind of show can be called innovative? Some elements, such as being storytelling, surrealistic or inserting installation art, or performance, up to your understanding.
- Nothing to do with that, innovation is not about something that a show must have. It is what do you use to express the concept, which medium you want to use to deliver. The simplest one is you must use music, light or silence. That is, the factor which is conveyed by any visual or auditory need an element in it, including traditional or not traditional, all the same, it is just the feeling supplied to audience. What is your way, what is your feeling?
- You think this innovation is more about feeling and everything should exist for a reason.
- No, I think it is story. When you have a story, you know how to make story

visible. That is the way.

- Okay, in fact it is still storytelling.
- It is story instead of storytelling. That is, you know how to enrich your story so that other people can see this is the story. For example, if it is a Galliano show which inspired by the 1930s film, the hair style of the model including light will be Hollywood style, very soft kind. That is called storytelling. People can know where the inspiration comes from when they are watching it. All the elements need to match the story.
- Then I want to ask, for example, let us suppose that someone has a story and show it up, but the show does not make any difference with the ordinary show. Can you still identify this kind of show as innovative?
- Maybe he does not have vision.
- The vision is not strong enough to make people to get it immediately.
- In fact, many designers do not need to have so many fussy things, because they did not consider or use it before, he would not have these troubles. Designers are very simple, just design and sell clothes.
- You mean that many designers did not realize this.
- The designer can no or cannot think about it. This is normal. Some people just like plain clothes, they do not think the color of clothes are pretty on the body, they never want that.
- They just want to let some models to display the clothes.
- Yeah, this is the range of this culture. It is not to say I want to trouble myself, spend a lot of money and then others cannot understand. The audiences are very important too, it is meaningless if they cannot understand. So, your target is very important.
- Let me ask you in this way, the kind of Chanel show every year, I asked Youjia, she mentioned an interesting opinion, she said Chanel spend so much money in the Grand Palace each season re-inventing scenes which we can see in real life, it is very pointless and a waste of money. What do

you think about this opinion? We are not to say those surrealistic installations made by Chanel before.

- There are a lot, those set design, that is post modernity, post modernism.
- So, I said that people have different knowledge levels, not only for understanding, but also for knowledge coverage or taste or tolerance. I think not every people should be tolerant other person. The so-called tolerance is, for example we met teachers in school, he has favor, but the real tolerant teacher will notice the potential bright spot of each student and help the student to discover the best thing of this student. I am so lucky to meet such teacher in Saint-Martin, such talent scout. Not only because he like this style, the most important is he saw my flash point. She tried her best to push me and made the most of me.
- Compare all those above to Chanel shows?
- Compare to Chanel show, it is post modernity, beauty of post modernity, that is, the view after you read post-modernist, all the art forms have been presented, under the post-modern circumstances is a visual display or visual re-show. In many places, it is collage, is a structure, is to create a different dream, different state or the reorganization of different states.
- It is a reorganization and innocents. Something in that period and combining with others, but it makes sense.
- But yes, there is an independent opinion. But the result based on different ability and different people. In fact, to tell the truth, I do not think the product really has design quality, but is what he called the supermarket, it is photo show as well, that is the reason why they are almost the same. Including why Davila Shampoo is so popular, the pop art the artist photographer, because the consumer controlled post production including the impact in the fashion industry from the mixed production. Lafayette wants to explain that the ordinary things can become art, that is a purpose of post modernity. It means any product if you change the visual, change the way you see it, it will become an art. Including the beginning of the toilet, Marcel Wanders started to use philosophical or thinking way to change the visual angle after people's visual fatigue. The understanding

will be different based on your different positions and different points of view. One great theory of post modernity is that if you can make sense, everyone can become an artist. So Post modernity is supplies a lot possibility, is beauty of post modernity. Lafayette is not the first one, this is not very new, but he has the ability to show this. I think it is very enviable, not pointless.

- I quite agree with your point of view. It was indeed can influence the philosophy of consumption, a leaving influence.
- I think it is a kind of dark humor. If you have a dark humor and present the fact in the Grand Palais, it is surrealism. To make it more clear, surrealism is different points in real society, it is setting a non-existed environment up in the real world, it is a spatial transform. It is an artistic style if you try to understand in this way. So, it is not pointless at all, it is simply an artistic style. He is just fancying that. If you think it is not tasteful or not good, that is your point of view, and post modernity allows you to have your opinion. Post modernity has a very good feature: it is not mandatory that others must exactly share the same opinion as what the artist tries to present. That is the beauty of post modernity, because everybody else, the audience can relate to their own experience. Right? He can find his own experience to connect with the product, then the product can become a meaningful artwork, that is it.
- So, could we say that you think La Fayette is using a kind of post modernism?
- Indeed. He is using dark humor to attack. He is tired of luxury. Everything can be luxury to him, as long as you have a high fashion way for make it, then everything becomes a symbol. I think he is using a very interesting dark humor to display the connection between the Chanel and young audience or customer in the modern society, such a post modernity. Really, you can decide but I do not care. I have fun. I have a good time. Do not take fashion seriously. It is quiet charm, and at the same time, I think it is innovative.
- In fact, you think carefully, the so-called innovative is that the concept

makes sense from beginning to end. He does not simply do it as a student's project, which kid does not even know what is being done. He has told his whole story, and really sold things to others. And people pay a very high price to buy these Lunar bags, right? All the stylist and bloggers are having a good time in a fashion way. This is involvement. I say that the art should make people feel involved. Because there is a new point, that is, the way we see things has changed. He actually used no new methods. He is also drawing on the Andy Warhol. Andy Warhol had a case of repeating product long ago, and a very ordinary thing became art and changed people 's view on not only craftsmanship but also vision philosophy itself, which is actually an idea. This is one of the most important things in modern art: it is up to your feelings rather than painting skills, or what is painted. There is a balance: the painting is good indeed, draw by the people with an artistic foundation, but the concept has completely changed.

- So, you think innovative is the unique presentation of a whole concept, but the premise is that it must make sense. If it truly makes sense, you can do it well.
- Let us back to Shanghai, do you think your show in Shanghai is innovative?
- I think so
- What concept do you convey? Jungle?
- Not a jungle... The place is an old Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe, which is a Chinese garden with a rockery in the middle, surrounded by some normal high residential houses. When we perform, residents are looking at us from above. It is very surreal, very postmodern. The show occurred in a place which it does not belong to. It got so many different opinions involved.
- Do you think it is very important to involve these random and unrelated audiences?
- It is very Chinese, very interesting. While, I think this is my first show in

China, so I want to make a new breakthrough with my team, that is to say, the so called my collection. We arrived in a place which we are not belong to but it is home. So, I said I wished to express the feeling of returning, it is like ice night befall. We do not belong to it here, but we use a special way to root. The environment includes the choice of music in a large space. It feels particularly strange but interesting. Because it is a summer night, we can hear the voice from insects and model walking. The feeling is intangible but real. I referred to the story of Noah's Ark. It is rather impossible to create a new story, then I want to borrow stories. Noah's Ark is a story that people are saved at last. I would like to use dance to express. The boy is very excellent.

- Contemporary dance?
- Yes, I tell him to use four words to express four feeling.
- What are the four words?
- Persistence, struggle, helpless, braveness, these are the experience or information I want to tell myself.
Maybe because of my age, as a female artist or role, we express an emotional character. It is the expression of the persistence that I keep on fighting in unfair experience and facing it bravely. So, I chose the music 'Moon Light' and used the real moon light. The emotions were intertwined. I would like to use more deep-seated emotional expression instead of just clothing. More different layers.
- You choose jungle environment...
- It is not jungle, maybe because the post so you consider it is jungle. It is just natural environment.
- There is little information of your show on the Internet.
- Because there were not a PR company.
- There was no media reporting?
- They ask for money in China, so there are few reports.

- Our *Novelle de Europe* have a topic on the Chinese designers in London Fashion Week. We can report you without charge. But the entry point is decided by us. We will respect your willing but you cannot interfere. If you want everything follow your idea, advertising fee should be charged. It is a clear rule in press.
- This is normal. It is good to say it out.
- PR is in this way in China, if you want to have a good report, you need to give money to media after the show.
Many people may consider designers to be very rich...
- Please talk about the distance between Shanghai Fashion Week and Paris Fashion Week.
- I think it is difficult for the designers to find a showroom, there are so many fussy about. It seems more people are making money rather than doing things professionally. In fact, buyers, media and designers should operate together in the same system, which we cannot make even in Paris or London, but they have this awareness. In Chinese market, no one educates these people. The basic quality and standards of buyers are very important. Especially if you want to do international business, it is difficult to communicate or trade.
- Do you think this situation has something to do with the lack of related education resource in China?
- I think it is more than this. I think it is spirit. They do not have desires on this. The so called famous stores come out and communicate with designers. Designers tell them things and what happens. I have met many domestic stores, and they are just not motivated. So, they ask others to buy or pirate from Europe. The people is only bold without knowledge. Then the stores were cheated by those people. I think it is lazy. They do not have desires to learn.
- On one side, they want quick success to make money; on the other hand, they do not want to learn.

- Yes, economy comes first.
- The whole fashion industry in China, including investors, gives people an acquisitive impression.
- We cannot demand them, because they do not have this energy or quality. They never did this before. Everything is new to them. They have this idea, but do not want to pay or do not understand some parts.
- To businessmen, lower cost is always better.
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4. Wong, V. (2017) 'Show production experiences at LFW in 2015 and 2016'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 16 April.

Original Language: Chinese

Zhe Wang: W

Victor Wong: V

Context: Fashion Designer, Traditional Fashion Show Case Study, London Fashion Week, culture, preparation and production

Material Type: First one-to-one Semi-Structured In-depth Interview

Place: London, Baker Street, Café.

Lasting: one hour and fifteen minutes

Time: 5th Sept 2016

W: Let's talk about London Fashion Week

V: Well, my situation is a little bit special. Because I worked as a judge of Miss Great Britain South East in last June. Another judge is a producer of TV programs here. He has a good relationship with the sponsor of Fashion Finest to whom he recommended me saying that my works were pretty good. So I applied for it, paid for it and then was asked to finish my work followed by interviewing models.

W: Pardon, who did you apply to?

V: Fashion Finest. It's one of fashion institutions in London.

W: An industrial association?

V: Yes, one of fashion organizations. Fashion Finest is the second largest one which holds off-schedule shows. Someone told me that I could also apply to British Fashion Council but the process of application is much more complex and may charge more money. However, Fashion Finest is an independent fashion organization in UK, it has the biggest fashion schedule during London Fashion Week apart from British Fashion Council.

W: How many industry associations are there serving for London Fashion Week?

V: There should be three. Fashion Finest, Fashion Scout, the other is Pure.

W: Is British Fashion Council on top of them or are these three the branches of this council?

V: Not on top of them, separately independent. British Fashion Council is the official organization which originally launched London Fashion Week. However, London Fashion Week has been held for many years, the concept of it now is more than the initiative launched by British Fashion Council. It's more like a festival. Many new, aggressive designers and brands will display their works during the week. Luxury brands such as Burberry and Alexander McQueen have already been independent out of British Fashion Council and therefore don't have to follow it to do things. British Fashion Council is like a big organization helping you arrange things like the site, PR and makeup stylists.

W: So how about Fashion's Finest?

V: It's an organization that you can apply to. If your work is thought to be OK, Fashion's Finest will accept your application and then ask you to interview models together with them. In addition, they have a professional make-up team which is a third-party company collaborating with them. Make-up team, hairstyle team, show-guide team and things including the lighting and tools you need in the show according to the form of your show could be communicated with them in detail.

W: So British Fashion Council, Fashion's Finest, Fashion Scout and Pure are independent from each other?

V: Yes, and they compete with each other.

W: Competitors right? And the things they are obligated to do are almost the same such as PR and production, aren't they?

V: Yes, they are.

W: Then how about the hierarchy of them?

V: Fashion's Finest, Fashion Scout are better, are the best two of them.

W: Why are they better than others?

V: First their PR teams are powerful. Why? Like me, it was my first time to conduct a show, they could.....

W: Inviting many celebrities?

V: Yes, that's the first thing. Second, they have a better relationship with TVs in the fashion industry. For example, they invited Fashion TV, Sky TV and other fashion TVs in London for my first show. The power of dissemination is overwhelming. Third, they could also invite magazines. Several mainstream

magazines, such as Vogue and Elle, will all attend British Fashion Council, collaboration with it. But Fashion Finest、Fashion Scout have their own PR teams that could also invite them. Last but not least, they are open to allow the designers to bring their own PR teams apart from helping you invite a PR team.

W:You mean that if you apply to British Fashion Council, your autonomy right will be weaker?

V:Yes,it will take over of everything.

W:Shut up! Let me do it! Is that the meaning?

V:Yes.

W:In terms of Fashion Finest、Fashion Scout, you mean, you can work together with your own PR, dressers and stylists.

V:You can choose to bring dressers and stylists or not since its team has already prepared these for you. I have no idea about British Fashion Council, but its own PR team is too powerful to allow a new designer to...

W:It's difficult for new-hands to attend

V:Not this point. As for new designers, it's much better for them to start their careers from Fashion Finest and Fashion Scout. Because you will obtain experience. If in British Fashion Council, everybody is so capable and rich in experience that you can hardly catch the eyesight from others as a new man. If you turn to other two, everything will be much easier, meaning that you will get more attention from people.

W:So it's better for the new start of fashion designers, right?

V:I think is much better.

W:Then they will introduce you PR and Consulting, right? Are PR company and Consulting company separate or the one?

V:Only one PR company, there is no Consulting company. But Fashion Finest、Fashion Scout will help you invite buyers, fashion bloggers, celebrities, and magazines. I've attended thrice, this was my third time to join this activity. One point is that the sponsor will see every show and will also invite his friends to see shows. If you are one of the designers who behave better and remarkable, he will introduce you to several great.....

W:You mean 'social networking'?

V:Yes, this is great! After party would always be held afterwards. If you could join in, I mean, as in fashion industry, you have to make others notice you, that will be better.

W: In terms of production, will they help you organize it?

V:Of course. They'll organize all things including models. All you have to do is to interview models. You can decide which model you will use or not.

W:What if you are not satisfied with those models?

V:There are plenty of models, numerous.

W:So it is not possible that you cannot find suitable models, right?

V:Yes,you've really found out that the models in London are very hardworking as the competition among them are intense.

W:There are so many models.

V:Very very difficult here

W:As a new designer, or for any designers, is there any thresholds existing for applying to these organizations? Can designers apply with graduation projects?

V:Two of thresholds are that firstly you must have mature work, then a team will verify the maturity and originality of your work. They have their own criteria. If you pass the evaluation then you can join. On the other side, I reckon that everyone are permitted to apply if you have suitable works. One threshold of British Fashion Council is that you'd better base in London for two years or something like that. But they have several projects for new designers as well. Some graduation designers could attend such projects but you know chances only favor a group of people. In addition, I think it's better for the students studying in London art schools such as London College of Arts and Royal College of Art to apply. Because as for them, their teacher may be the people working in this industry. Referees are of great importance.

W:Their teacher may be working in the institution.

V:That's right. I think referees do value a lot for newcomers in fashion industry. However, I didn't study in London, so I have to do it all over again.

W:As you know, is there any differences in the preferences of selecting works among Fashion Finest、 British Fashion Council、 Fashion Scout?

V:I've applied to Fashion Scout this year, but the lighting was not what I wanted, because the it was a cooler color tone. I wanted warm one.

W: So you mean that there is difference in production and promotion among them.

V: Yes, these are different, styles are different, either. They use various lightings and runways to present distinct effects. It depends on what you want.

W: How about British Fashion Council?

V: With regards to British Fashion Council, I think that if your show is not a big show, just a new one, the venue may be located in the corridor of a factory building.

W: You mean the allocation of runway sites depends on hierarchy, right? If you are not a famous designer, the venue which you are allocated will be less well.

V: Yes, because there is a direct relation between your fame and the money you can afford.

W: The higher status, the more money.

V: Absolutely. But as far as I know, big brands with higher status prefer not to cooperate with British Fashion Council. Fast-fashion brands like Topshop may follow it. However, as big ones.....

W: Always arranging shows themselves.

V: That's true. How beautiful their runway and decoration are!

W: They thought that I can manage it if the money is sufficient, right?

V: Sure. What they want is just topicality. Because the topicality of big four fashion weeks like London Fashion Week lasts for a week. If they can hold good shows in a week, that will be good. If I have sufficient PR resources and a better site, I'll hold a good show during the topical week.

W: So you mean that designers could disaffiliate from the four organizations?

V: Of course, you can do it yourselves. Because the time is equally shared by everyone as well as the topicality of the fashion week.

W: So as you said, luxury brands could take no notice of the four guilds.

V: Yes, of course, there is no need, they've disaffiliated from them.

W: The site you're allocated by British Fashion Council depends on hierarchy, right? How about other institutions?

V:One difference of Fashion Finest and Fashion Scout compared with British Fashion Council is that their sites are comparatively smaller, and the larger ones are fixed. They are generally located in a big hotel which may have four or five halls. Each of them is as large as a big swimming pool, the main runway site may be much larger. Designer are assigned to the same sites, just at different time. So the resources you will obtain are the same including lighting and decoration unless you have special demands that you have to arrange by yourself. But the price is very high. However, it's the best choice for new designers in a word.

W: So what's the difference between Fashion Finest and Fashion Scout? You haven't mentioned yet.

V: Well. First, it's production. Styles are different. Production involves lighting, music and indoor decoration.

W:OK,so what's the difference in lighting? Like what you've said, the lighting of Scout is a cooler tone?

V:Not always. It offers such lighting depending on the topic of shows since lighting is very expensive here while setting up the stage.

W:What percentage of the overall budget that lighting accounts for?

V:I guess it should be 35% or 40%

W:How expensive it is!

V:Yes.Because you need professionals to implement lighting while setting up the stage. The hotel just offers you a large space. You have to handle the rest of things.

V:Another difference is that the models they'd like to invite are different. I reckon that Fashion Finest prefers to invite black models because the sponsor is a black man. I think it's good since some of their bodies are hotter than whites'

W:Curvier?

V:Yes.And the effects they present are different. Wilder, more.....

W:Outgoing?

V:Absolutely. However, the models Fashion Scout favors turn to be more classic, high fashion, you know, a feeling of elegance.

W:I got your point. That's why you didn't choose Scout. As for Fashion Finest.....

V: You can see that some of their designers' projects are exaggerate. Some of them even use 3D printing, presenting distinct feelings. So I preferred to cooperate with them other than Scout. In terms of Pure.....

W: Sounds like not as famous as other three.

V: Yes. Actually it's a little bit low-end. Many of brands in China, like JNBY, prefer to cooperate with Pure. But I'm not sure about that, one of my friends told me.

W:They would join?

V:I think so. Because I know Pure has sold its copyright to someone in Shanghai and it attended Shanghai Fashion Week this year as well with good public praise.

W:You mean that Pure is low-end here but can show off over there?

V:Exactl y. Famous in China。

W: Let's talk about money. Do they arrange everything that what you need to do is just to pay?

V:There is a difference between Fashion Finest and Fashion Scout in terms of the fee. I know it because I've applied to both this time. As for Fashion Finest, you just pay for the whole thing at one time, the rest of issues will be managed by them, which will simplify matters a lot. However, with regard to Fashion Scout, you first will pay for the site, then.....

W:Paying separately on the basis of projects, right?

V:Exactly.Their arrangement is more detailed. I inherently think that they do better than Fashion Finest.

W:Things are allocated more reasonably?

V:Yes, that's why they can display elegant and noble products. What's more, they require you to pay for models, separately, but they would bear the cost of makeup and hairstyle. Another fee is for lighting. If you want to add special lighting effect like cool tone lighting or shining lighting, you have to pay the extra fee. In addition, there is a fee for PR. Them have their own PR team, but if you want to seek for assistance you must pay them, but the sum of money is not much. However, if you want to invite, they would advise you to invite your PR team because your team can invite targeted buyers, fashion bloggers depending on your products. The rest of things are nearly the same.

W: Could you please reveal the amount of money?

V: In terms of Fashion Scout, as for me, the fee is not much, almost 5,000 to 8000 pounds.

W: Sounds reasonable, not expensive. So what about Fashion Finest?

V: Comparatively cheaper. Roughly 3,000 pounds.

W: It's really cheap.

V: Probably 3,000 to 5,000 pounds. But there is one point that what the sponsors will bring to you depends on the attraction of your work. Because they invite buyers, magazines and bloggers uniformly so that their interests on your projects are the most important. That's why you have to arrange a lot.

W: Do you know how much would cost when holding a show through British Fashion Council?

V: I have no idea because I didn't apply to it. I guess it's not cheap, should be more than 10,000 pounds, but it depends on the amount of models, which is an important factor.

W: Lighting would occupy 30% of the whole fee, then what about the site?

V: No requirements of Fashion Finest, because the fee is paid at one time uniformly. However, as for Fashion Scout, I was asked to pay 2,000 pounds, not much, because my models don't need to change suits. All they have to do is displaying sunglasses, which is much more convenient. But as for costume designers, they would be charged near 5,000 pounds, I think.

W: So the fee of the site accounts for the most of the whole fee?

V: Exactly. Renting sites would be more expensive since the show is being held during London Fashion Week.

W: As you said, the site accounts for the most, then the lighting, the third is model.

V: The fee for models could be bargained. First, you can invite models who you are familiar with, but this invitation must be permitted by them.

W: You can use only if they allow to do so.

V: Yes. Second, the price of inviting models. If you negotiate with model companies, the fee would be less. The fee for individual model is cheap, but.....

W: How much would the fee of models occupy the budget?

V: Nearly 70 pounds per person.

W:It depends on how many you would invite?

V:Absolutely.

W: Site、lighting、model, then we should talk about.....

V: Music

W:Yes, so how much.....

V:You don't need to pay for the music. I invited one of my friends who is a musician to help me last time and he\she didn't charge me. Music doesn't charge much.

W:That's good. So the rest of money is for.....

V: Styling

W: Don't you have to pay for celebrities?

V:No

W:PR team will get the job done, right?

V:Celebrities also need topics. When they appear during Fashion Week, they need exposure.

W:Win-win

V:Exactly.

W: Now please tell me your timeframe of production.

V:Well,I had to get up early at 6:00 am.....

W: No, not the day. I mean the schedule starting from applying. Since London Fashion Week will be held on 16th,sept.When did you start applying?

V:First,you must apply three months in advance if you don't participate frequently. As for me, I can apply later. You must show your products to them, if you haven't, they would reply to you nothing. So you must prepare well in advance. Then, if they think that you may pass, they would contact you two weeks later and confirm whether you have products or not. If you pass, they would tell you the general cost of the show. There's different packages,10 models,20 models,30 models, different level of fees. What's more, they've invited photographers, videographers, you can use them by paying. If you do not choose, then you can bring your own. And a third case is that he will send the list of models to you, then you could choose some other models you are interested in, then you go to the scene to see the site, the models. The

designers are sitting together in an area, then the models, when you say "next", they would parade down the catwalk.

W: Model casting

V: Sure it is. Then you have to talk with hairstylist team, makeup team in advance about what makeup you want, you should find reference and then give it to them, and then they will give you some suggestions about whether it is suitable or not. Then you should offer your clothes, which is very important. You let them see what your clothes are like, what kind of shoes to wear, whether the models should do nails, some details like these, whether wearing earrings is suitable or not.

W: These are all.....

V: Arranged before show.

W: Almost all of these will be set down in June, about three months in advance, after your application is over.

V: Right.

W: Then the venue will be selected.

V: Yes.

W: When did you start to see the venue, and then make the whole preparation ?

V: It should be the first two weeks or so, to see the venue

W: That means you're now doing this, right?

V: Yes I'm doing it.

W: What are you doing now? Casting models?

V: Exactly. I just finished selecting models. However, I didn't know the height of models, so the costume designer who now works with me prepared clothes of size 10 uniformly, and I can now send the details to him/her, so he/she can modify the clothes according to the size of the models.

W: When model issue is finished, are you going to the site to see the venue next?

V: Yes, site, and lighting, when finishing you have to wait for the show guide.

W: Any rehearsals?

V: There it is. The rehearsal is in the morning of the day, starting from 6:00 am, models begin to make up, the make-up processes are batches. My show will be held at 3 pm on 17th, I'll go there in the morning, and then go around in the dressing room, in the backstage, and finally they start ...

W: Designer is obligated to supervise the field?

V: Yes. And then those designers will also come over, costume designer will dress models. When it's my turn they will call me to go to the catwalk, he will tell you how long you will walk along the catwalk, generally is ten to fifteen minutes or so, which should be enough. Then you will discuss with them about how model strut the catwalk, like when to remove sunglasses and what to do in different steps, or either let him go a little faster or go a little slower, something like these.

W: Rehearsal does not have to be ahead of time, just be held earlier on that day, right?

V: Yes, because it is relatively simple. For me it's much simpler, my models don't need to change clothes, they don't need to rush, they just wear sunglasses to strut down the catwalk.

W: That's much easier. It would be troublesome if changing clothes.

V: They will be in a hurry if changing clothes. Because models here we are using are nearly the same, no one can ignore the models who look good, right? So you use the same models.

W: When you cooperate with these industry associations like Fashion Finest and Fashion Scout, if the show is traditional, they would organize everything of course. However, if I don't want to hold a traditional show, I want to hold a theme one, can I do this if I pay more?

V: Of course, he will help arrange another single day for you. If so you do have to apply in advance.

W: Should I tell them what I want to do in the application?

V: You'd better not as a new designer. First he doesn't know you, and you're also not familiar with their behavioral style. But I think I can if I tell them three months ahead of time that I want to do one, they will help you arrange a day alone, and layout. However, they have only one venue which is fixed so that they could not help you change.

W: venue can not be changed, but I can add things

V: Right, decoration could be added according to your own ideas.

W: As long as your funding is sufficient

V: Definitely.

W: Then have you ever thought about, for example, looking for some sponsors to insist you to hold a story telling show of a theme show? Because I think that you join every time and could change a little bit in the future apart from the traditional way.

V: Maybe I'll do it in the future. But I am now considering that you have to measure your own ability. First, as for the style of my products, every season I designed five different styles from first season to second season. This season I've designed 18 styles, and each style is produced into different materials, different colors. There are sufficient products in my third season compared with the past seasons. I think I have to wait until my own work to achieve good sales, only if your products reach that number then you can do other things. Second, an innovation show is a very money-burning thing, so you have to look for a sponsor. How do you find ? What I've have done recent years is a kind of accumulation. I've just done it for one year so I'm in no hurry.

What's more, if I have enough designs, there would be more people interested in my products, which may increase the possibility of success. I also reckon that after my launch, there will be more people interested in my stuff including investors, PR, fashion bloggers and stars. One point that I am very confident in my products is that the platform, a store which is selling my things, once promoted a brand in Malaysia, and now the brand is very popular, and is being sold in more than 280 shops around the world. In fact, someone in China has already copied their works.

W: You are a fashion designer and you've seen a variety of shows. What elements should be contained that you think can make a show called innovative? For example, performance art, installation art, or

V: These are not important. The important thing is your concept. How do you give scope to your concepts. For example, if I do according to the concept of 'city power', I may invite you to a sky garden, to see the show. The bottom is made of transparent glass and you can see the whole city. When my models strut the catwalk, the landscape of city will naturally become the background of my photos.

W: Ok, so if you obtain sufficient fund this season, what kind of show you want to hold?

V: You're testing me.

W: Actually, what you just said reminds me of a place. A brand in China named DONGLIANG once held a production show---a jewelry launch in London Fashion Week. I do not know who they cooperate with, but they successfully applied to do the show in London eye. The place you just referred to make me feel

V: This is in canary wharf. There is a sky garden which is a glass room. I think that'll be fine. People sit there watching models roaming the runway, VJ will play some music, or there should be some performances. Although site is different, I think it's still a traditional show. I think a nontraditional show can be extended to emotional expression including your vision, your sense of smell and your touch. Actually when thinking about the future, you show your work, may not only show your concept. The ultimate goal is to make the public accept, and understand your work. The result of understanding and acceptance is to buy. Then how do people understand your work? Probably, if I use the 3D printer, I might bring a real 3D printer to the avenue and print my sunglasses directly. If you want to buy my sunglasses, you can buy it in my after party. I'll print the product you want in your desired shape, or some souvenirs. Your show can relate to all aspects including touch or material. Take the sense of smell for example, your sunglasses could be agreeable or smelly. If you want them to be smelly, you can put something stinky inside. These aspects can be changed including the form of catwalk. Once in London Fashion Week, a brand made their pairs of models walk in a 69-style, but I forgot the name

W: Rick Owen

V: Yes. You can imagine like this, whatever. Innovative.

W: That was scolded badly

V: It doesn't matter. It had a topic. At least people remember it.

W: The impact is crazy

V: You are in this circle, as same as stardom, you'll be famous if you are either scolded by others, or praised by others.

W: So the most scaring thing is that you don't have a topic, right?

V: Definitely. Nobody's talking about you, you're gone. But returning to nature, all of the shows are for purpose of your reputation, are to make your audience understand your work better. The ultimate orientation is to sell your work to feed your work. When you feed your company, you'll have the energy to devote yourself into new creations. Just like people do, metabolism. So I think my ultimate direction is that I need a team, consisting of a marketing team, a PR team, and a design team. I can lead the design team when the marketing and PR teams can be handed over to others. Then I need a CEO, because only such people, the real businessman, can make your things alive in the market..I don't like to be CEO, since I think grasping the design is enough.

W: There are some differences between designers and businessmen.

V: Distinct differences. A lot of designers like to master, but I think for me, this is unnecessary.

W: You just said, to judge a show that whether it is innovative, vision is not the most important

V: All are important, vision is very important as well. If vision is not essential, then how do people report or shoot? The smell can not be shot. That's important. I just think that a revolutionary thing is actually something new, is the new inspiration that you can bring to your audience. For example, Chanel shows held every year are pretty good. Chanel has so much money that it could do the shows at the airport, or in Champs Elysees Avenue. They want to make audience see their products with engagement of the specific environment which is designed according to seasonal works.

W: To establish an emotional connection with goods.

V: That's true, that's important, so you must notice these things.

W: You mean that the effect is far more.....

V: No. The definition of innovative show is that you can find new elements inside your show. For example, you didn't use the smell before, but this time you use the smell, it's innovative. If somebody has used the smell before, however, you use it in a different way, then you are innovative, too. Just a new thing.

W: There is no limitation that I must have something.....

V: Do not define, I think it's unnecessary. You just make things according to your own feelings and there should be a point that can make people remember you. Then I think you are innovative.

W: Can I understand it as memory, or connection? Connection with the audience? Or the memory of what they've received ?

V: Yes, whether what they've seen is a new thing or not. Whether it is a duplicate thing or not. In fact, it is difficult not to repeat now, but it's indeed not that difficult, because you can express the same thing in various ways.

W: Whether can it stimulate their senses?

V: Yes, let them have a new understanding of this. For example, I design sunglasses. With different types of sunglasses I've designed, I actually offer a different view for you. To send a new view of products, I think I'm also innovative.

W: What if I make you identify 'innovation'? You can talk about elements, concepts, whatever.

V: I think that is something new, a new show.

W: What is the definition of 'new'? This "new" is too broad, what are the specific aspects? I have helped you sum up a little, memory and connection.

V: I think you have summed up the whole. Maybe vision, touch, and your emotional expression could be added, like inviting a very good singer on that day.

W: Performance. Expressing through the performance.

V: Or acrobats. You can even blow the fire inside if you like. You can do many things.

W: Once I talked with Youjia Jin, she gave a critical assessment of Chanel shows which make avenues restore the reality scenes. She thought it's a kind of wasting money that constructing an airport in Grand Palace. Why don't you simply hold the show at the real airport?

V: Well, they are luxury brands. They must express their ideas. OK, they can do better, they can do more to save money, but when they have no idea of doing better, they must maintain the high level of the brand. I think there's nothing wrong. There must be reasons for each one to do things. I think I can try to understand, and only say that whether I like it or not.

W: You will not express your personal point of view, you remain neutral, right?

V: Yes, I will not say good or bad. As I said before, I like their show held on Champs Elysees, I think is a better one. Why? First, because I think it's a place where everyone would walk along.

W: So you think such show might give the audience more emotional resonance. The road they usually go.

V: Exactly, and when they did the show, the road was not sealed. There were some cars driving, and some pedestrians walking, which made the connection more closely. Second, they did not spend a lot of money. I think the biggest sum of money should be renting the place from the government. But I think it was a kind of publicity for France promoted by Chanel.

W: Then apart from some designs of postmodernism and surrealism that Chanel has done a lot, what's your opinion of the fact that they've spent a lot to restore a café, a casino, or an airport, scenes that can be seen everywhere in real life, in Grand Palace and then ask a bunch of people to see the show? Youjia Jin feels that this is a waste of money and resources. She held a very

critical point of view toward this. Then I've asked Yang Du and other designers, some say it is a way of postmodernism. Anyway, there are a variety of different views. What do you think?

V: I think, first, the scene they build is consistent with the range of the collection

W: Then it can be held at the airport directly, why dose it have to be held inside the Grand Palace?

V: Airports have their own operations. I think it's reasonable, and I don't think it is necessary to criticize Chanel. Second, whether they spent a lot of money or not, you have no idea, this is not always. Because when a brand has achieved a certain height, a lot of things will match up to it, you know what I mean. It wants to express itself as the big boss, it is standing on the top of the food chain in this industry.

W: You mean that to some extent, burning money is also a manifestation of the status?

V: I think so. Absolutely. Because if you have enough resources, you can create more. There are many designers who have plenty of crazy ideas. Realizing the ideas will charge lots of money. But when you have those resources, you do not mind, you can do whatever you want. It may be meaningless for some other designers, but for me, this is meaningful. Why? I think they may provide a new method, or offer a different perspective. To show you the combination of the airport and its fashion show. Because there must be distinctive difference between the scene and the real avenue, performance may be conducted in the show. The expression of the whole atmosphere of the large scene is not the same. If they build such a venue, it is more conducive to play what it wants. Performance, lighting, sound effect, these are restricted in real scenes. For example, you can not be too noisy on the ground if they want to use punk.

W: You came up with an idea of using 3D printing to present your products, in a radical way, if fund is enough in the future. Have you ever thought of using some new technologies to present like Burberry? When you are powerful in the future.

V: I didn't think so much, I think in the future

W: Or you can talk about what you've seen, such as Ralph Lauren, and then.....

V: A new form to present my show?

W: A new form. They are big fans of technology, like using holographic machine, phonographic machine, 3D projection and visuality, do you think does such a presentation have the future? For example, Burberry show. Although technology is just a method, but people feel that Burberry is too obsessed with it. Once I interviewed an employee, he said Burberry is the leader of technological aspect in fashion and luxury industry. Because first, their e-commerce is relatively successful. Then, when they hold a show in a boutique or a flag store in Shanghai and Beijing, the effect is extremely cool, there is a variety of technological things. In fact if you have to express those products you have many ways to try. Burberry chooses technology, which is an accurate orientation. Have you ever thought of using technology in the future? First talk about your view of the usage of technology in the show.

V: I think it is very good, because first, it will help you achieve different effect for the presentation of products, such as modeling , and new textures produced in new ways. I think it should be encouraged to use, because with these things, you can continue creating more products. Although classic things sell well, a brand can't exist for a long time if there are few new things to generate. I think it is a way for them to seek a recognition for the future market, or expectations from temporary market. Because brands like Burberry certainly want to be evergreen, hoping that my son and my grandson will also like it.

W: What you mean is that if the luxury brands have this kind of eternal future plans, they must keep up with the trend firstly.

V: They do not keep up with the trend, they are the trends. You know what fashion is, fashion is them. Fashion is a new thing, the new things they make is Fashion.

W: Yes, so this is a kind of pressure, which is a necessary.....

V: Just like the emperor of China, if I want to unify you, I have to brainwash you that I am the son of God. What I do is reasonable. Methods are the same.

W: But it does not necessarily need to be presented in a scientific way.

V: I think it is a good entry point, not every brand using it. But if they do this to the extreme, that is their signature. If you make new things that people can't see from other brands, then you'll make customers of yours remain expectations of your brand. Then if you continue to maintain this custom, it will help set up an image for the future potential customers and younger generations.

W: To put it simply, it's a method to built the brand image.

V: Yes. Because I think that the technological part must not be the most profitable, maybe even losing money. The product which is making money the most must be classic one. So each designer should has unique signature, in order to establish themselves in this industry.. If one piece of my work sells well now, I may plan to produce it for decades to make it be my classic product. Then I will not design other products? I won't, I will certainly sustain innovations although new products may not sell well as classic ones.

W: In other words, the signature and identity of a designer used to be his collection, for example, a very classic collection. But with the whole fashion weeks and fashion shows being widely accepted by the public as well as their forms becoming more changeable, the fashion show may probably become the signature of a brand?

V: No

W: Why?

V: Fashion show used to belong to British Fashion Council. Since it has been evolving, now it is London Fashion Week. It can be more than this that it may turn out to be a holiday in the future, like Mother's Day, it is just a day. During this period, all designers will display works. Then this fashion show will become a platform which is very good. When such a good platform is offered, what do you want to do is up to you. When all the competitors participate, they would not do the same thing, then they will make their products more subdivided. As you said before, you may be famous because of one of your designs preciously in the fashion show, you've designed a detail, or a type of style. Now your design is booming, other designers have to look for more details such as technology and material.

W: Details may be the methods and characteristics of conducting a show. Because Chanel shows held every year are eye-catching and long-awaited, are already becoming its brand image, even though the collection is ugly to burst.

V: Because it is the fashion. There is a saying, a lot of new designers will change this situation with the reform of consumers' ideas. In fact a part of consumers don't buy things depending on how big the brand is, they are big fans of new, interesting designs. They would like to spend more to buy your works rather than big brands.

W:Are these consumers plenty?

V: They will be cultured, we are in cultivation. Just like one of my cooperators, the London Studio Collection, it is determined to replace LV, and Chanel to become the leader in the fashion industry. Fashion is not decided by luxury brands, they have no absolute right to decide.

W: Do you think this is the vision of new designers?

V: Absolutely. Because the selection of our products is based on public taste, when the public has different tastes, the same reason, isn't it? For example, if Chanel can produce something newer, or design something better, then people will select it. Some consumers don't care about the logo of brands, then when they see interesting things from other independent designers, they would buy. But you have to think that in the future, the independent designers is relatively of a small minority while big brands are public. Chanel is very popular, one design of it can be produced to thousand products. Inevitably, the design of independent designers is newer than that of big brands. So in the future people's tastes can be probably subverted. Thinking in this way, if these big brands do not follow the change to do so

W: What do you know about fashion industry in China?

V: Understanding a little, but according to my current contact, I know, for example, DONGLIANG, as you said before, and Fresh Design ,which is in contact with me, they are both new brands. I also know an old company called XIU.COM, and VIP.COM, which is selling low-cost luxury goods online. I'm not sure weather they are platforms of selling fashion goods in the eyes of Chinese or not.

W: Sales terminals.

V: I see. I know one staff of XIU.COM, and he said they have 700 million page views a day. Very numerous, right? As for these large platforms, their pages views, and the products they sell, basically relate to luxury brands. There is few products of independent designers. They told me it is difficult to sell things of independent designers. First, independent designers have no stock, second, the brands of independent designers are not famous. The consumption concept of Chinese is to buy things depending on brands, the vast majority of consumers are thinking in this way. So they can not develop well. But I think there is a subtle change in Chinese consumption concept, not a big change. The things of the independent designers will compose definitely a trend, why? Several independent designers platforms including the one I am in contact with are running these things. Since you are doing, there are

certainly needs in this area. You can survive only when people buy your things. Things are changing. So I think some big fashion brands will emerge in the next five years in China, along with the development of economy. I'm sure about it.

W: Actually, the development of fashion industry in China is presented by the emergence of the independent designers. There should not be big fashion brands.

V: I don't think so. There should be Fast-fashion brands, Siberian tiger? A name just emerged in my mind. One famous brand, I forget her name, she is doing high set, who makes Rihanna wear imperial robe.....

W: Pei Guo?

V: Exactly. she is famous in the international fashion circle, but you know, her work is not the kind of normal way, it can not be popular because each person couldn't buy one, so the influence will not be extended to the hearts of the people. I think Burberry can make everyone wear its products of normal way, then it is a real luxury brand in the hearts of the public.

W: You think it must form a great influence.

V: That's the market volume, and the recognition towards your brand. Recognition is the acceptance among people, not in a specific circle. I think that is the most important. Maybe I'm more commercial. Some designers don't mind whether people like or dislike their goods. But if people do not buy your stuff, how can you survive? Just like McQueen, he lived badly before death. When his brand was sold to Kering, which changed something in his previous series, it has gradually become a global brand. For me, why are we so.....

W: One-track minded?

V: Do not torture yourself.

W: You've mentioned some of your production preparation work, materials were purchased in China, right? What else should be carried out, in addition to purchasing materials?

V: Not buying materials, my whole production were done in China.

W: Production company is not UK company?

V: I use Chinese company this time. I used a Italian company for my second season, but it did badly. Maybe I didn't communicate with them well.

W: Italy did worse than China?

V: Yes, my second season works were very bad, I was going to be crazy, really. Reasons may lie in communication. However in China, communication is good, just speaking Chinese. In terms of the goods of my first season, lens are imported from Japan, plates are imported from Italy, and then they could be assembled well in China. They told me that the international big brands, like Chanel, they are also finally made in China because of the low-paid labor. Some of the materials that China doesn't have are shipped from abroad.

W: So the new season of your collection is produced in China.

V: Yes

W: What about show production, is it made in China?

V: Right, in China.

W: Your show products are mainly sunglasses and clothes, right?

V: Only sunglasses, I will design sunglasses in the first three to five years. Please call me Mr. Sunglasses.

W: Money is one reason, another is that you think it's convenient to communicate.

V: I felt communication was good. And if you communicate with them well, they can certainly make great works. Italy, Japan both have learnt from China before.

W: Really?

V: Really. If you communicate with them well, they will do better than any other countries in the world. I made my first season work in China as well, and they did very badly, they didn't focus on the details. Then I told them, don't do like this, it will ruin your own reputation, you must have a spirit of artisans. Although you can't earn money from my work, I only made some pairs of samples. But I'll display them in London Fashion Week, what you've done represents the production level of China. So these details, such as a screw needing parallel nailing, and golden logo being embedded vertically into the specific spot, would be finished well if you let them understand.

W: So you think you must supervise in place.

V: Yes, I made samples for three times, and finally saw the desired effect at the third time. I told them, you've done a very good thing. He said, I can't do it, your work is too time-consuming. I said never mind, just help me do it. I even cheated and coaxed them to do things. If you can negotiate with them well and make them understand and accept, they can do much better than Italy.

W: So your show production company is also in China?

V: No

W: In UK ?

V: Right. All things of my show are done in UK including PR apart from the products made in China.

W: What about your lighting?

V: Nothing special, I just use their uniform lighting.

W: In other words, you'll have a rehearsal early in the morning ahead of the show on 17th, right? And you won't conduct any rehearsals before the day.

V: I think for me, the significance of first three seasons shows is that my things have been exhibited in London Fashion Week. This is most important. Then this accumulation will gradually enforce my sales. My product launch held in November will be the main event on which I have to spend much energy. What's more, because of the topicality of the London Fashion Week, I am now cooperating with Fresh Design, which is a domestic platform selling products of independent designers in China. They want to sell my work.

W: Buyer boutique?

V: Right, and they're a PR company, too. But I think my things are not mature enough to be sold, in other words, I think I should do more successfully here and then would go back to China, I think it will be better. But they are very interested in me and I also told them my own ideas, I want to become the icon of designers because in the future 'fan economy' will be certainly more mature. In foreign countries such as the United States and UK, you can see how powerful 'fan economy' is. Making a designer star is definitely of great benefit without any drawbacks. So I told them and they were very interested in my idea and then offered me three plans. First, they'll make a short film named "A designer's day", recording whatever I've done during a day. Of course it's not a really working day, they will write a script. And then they want to take one day to video my show, early from the rehearsal to the after party in the evening. Third, they will invite a Chinese star, or a web celebrity, I do not know who, they'll confirm with me on Wednesday. And he/she will come to see my show, and I'll arrange a photography of stills for him/her together with a British fashion blogger. And then they'll report this activity on platform. The fourth step is that they'll invite me to do a live web casting on the platform, I'll be their guest.

W: How are the model now?

V: I've selected 10, and just finished negotiation with costume design about modifying clothes according to the height of the models. In fact, I am not nervous, maybe because I've done twice. Just doing things step by step.

W: What were you nervous about in your first show?

V: Poor knowledge of what to do. I've never seen it. And you should prepare a lot for your first show.

W: Youjia Jin once mentioned a reason why she did not do this year in London

V: Buyers are very few?

W: On the one hand buyers are less, on the other hand, the institution always pushed her to do things that differentiate from previous work including the collection. They asked her not to adhere to her own style and to keep designing new things. But Italy and Paris told her not to change, and to stick to her own brand image, which is very important for her entire brand.

V: I think so, I do not think it should be changed too much.

W: Do you have the same feeling? Has the institution of London Fashion Week ever required you to give something new? Things should not be the same this season.

V: It's necessary. You have something new. As for me.....

W: I mean a particularly big change in style.

V: There wasn't such requirement, but they asked me to give something different. If you can't give me a very commercial thing, then why should I let you exhibit? I think London Fashion Week is more commercial compared with Paris and Milan. Strong in commerce. This advantage lies in the fact that it can provide you with a lot of platforms to negotiate since you've established in fashion week. Take my glasses for example, I can sell my products directly in liberty as long as I have new designs.

W: But buyers are still much less compared with Milan or Paris.

V: It is possible that the future situation will be better. why? I think for me, it's more commercial here, since I base in London, I have buyers, and I know which stores and platforms that can sell my things, and group of people who will be interested in my products. What's more things can be sold very well because there are a lot of visitors and customers. Many people, especially rich people like to travel in London. Certainly there is no doubt that commercial operations in London are much better than that of Milan and Paris. Buyer may be plenty there, everybody says deals will be clinched in Paris.

However, you can ask buyers how much you can buy in Paris, and how strong the sustainability of deals are. If I have a shop here selling my things, I can continue to sell products in this shop if the sales are good. Then if the store has branches all around the world, I can sell them in all branches.

W: You mean, there is no need to pin hopes on buyers. Selling things in boutiques is good enough.

V: I think this platform is good for my own stage now. How much can buyers book? I have no idea of clothing aspect.

W: Different budgets in different seasons. September and October are off-seasons.

V: Yeah, if the buyer does not buy your stuff, then what can you do? And I think the economic situation of Paris and Milan is less good.

W: Do you think London is much better than them?

V: I think at least there are a lot of people buying things in London, very much.

W: And you think London is more suitable for you to survive

V: If I sell things here, I am confident that I can sell well

W: Have you ever thought about joining Milan or Paris Fashion Week in the future?

V: Yes. Just try new things including New York Fashion Week. In fact, some fashion organizations have already invited me to participate. But I think I should do much better here and then join them. Just like Youjia Jin, if she stick to her own style, I think it's right. If I encounter such situation, I also don't want to change. I can change it on the basis of it, but don't change too much. Because this circle is not familiar with you, how can they remember you if you change a lot? Especially you don't make very identified things. For example, McQueen always used a skull as identity, but he used it for years and made a lot of new types.

W: Where will you rehearse that day?

V: I'll send the information to you.

W: Ok, we can talk about the details later. I will take the GoPro to record, but you'd better not control what I'll video. I'll sign a consent agreement with you.

V: You can video whatever you want.

W: This is the procedure, anyway, I will tell you what I'll use after signing. For the sake of research, I will only record some research-related, valuable things. As for UKZONE, they don't need video, some photos will be fine. Then they may give you a script for the their documentary. The best way on that day is,

early meeting you in the rehearsal venue, and then I may sometimes follow you, sometimes do not follow you, going somewhere to record.

V: They also have exhibition. You can go to have a look.

W: I'll focus on the process of production and rehearsal

V: OK.

W: What do you know about Shanghai Fashion Week?

V: I think it should be very expensive. I think fashion shows would be charged highly in China. Anyway, it will be cheaper in London, Paris, Milan, and New York. I think what I've spent is very little. But if you do a show in Shanghai, you may spend at least 100,000 to 200,000 rmb.

W: Not really. Because a lot designers come back from abroad, and many of them have sponsors.

V: ok, I'll find a sponsor prudently.

W: If you want to make a big show, then sponsor is needed. Because the production scale of independent designers' products is very limited. If you hold the show relying on your own profits, then you mustn't handle it even though you've invested a season of profits. Then how can you survive? Certainly looking for more businesses to cooperate with is a wise idea.

V: How about Youjia Jin's sponsor? She told me last time the deal didn't work finally.

W: She encountered several difficulties, being swindled by both sides of domestic companies. Anyway, her show is now postponed. She planned to hold a show in Paris this year, but because of sponsor, the Novelle de Europe also suggested she to make it on next January, because it's her first show which is of great importance.

V: Hoping that she will arrange this well, then she can introduce me.

W: OK, I'll follow her this time.

**Li, Y. (2016), 'Burberry's show production and marketing strategies'.
Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 19 Sept.**

Original Language: Chinese

Wang: Burberry was keen on making high-tech catwalks. What's your opinion on this?

Li: In fact, Burberry only made regular fashion shows, did not have...

Wang: You can start from the commercial perspective, then the cultural perspective.

Li: Commercial, I think the whole industry wants to connect with the technology because the technology is a trend now. When the former CEO Angela joined Burberry, she would like to develop digital things for Burberry. Burberry could be considered as a second-line luxury at that time, but Angela kept on finding solutions to pull Burberry back to the first-line luxury after she joined.

Wang: Sorry to interrupt, which year?

Li: Maybe 2010 or 2011. She felt that the Internet was developing very fast that time, so she thought about building an e-commerce platform for Burberry. Burberry's e-commerce platform was the first one among all luxury brands. Then she started Burberry's online shopping platform. She made the luxury very close to the public so that people could buy the luxury online. She found that technology brought a lot of benefits for the brand. For example, we provided an iPad to each salesclerk so that they could check the inventory very conveniently. It could also directly show products and sizes demanded by consumers in a professional way. It slowly evolved to a mirror which could be used to interact in Burberry's stores. We called it the magic mirror. Consumers could explore a bunch of information and see the picture of clothes through the mirror. Angela was aware of those benefits of digitalization. It was an efficient way because the human resource would be no more mandatory. Finally, Angela became the digitalization leader of the luxury industry.

Wang: She first opened this market.

Li: Yes, she did. Afterwards, she considered that how to make the show more appealing. It was about not only making clothes better, but also making the

brand more popular using the technology. She did not want to make all kind of shows. She just wanted to do a marvelous show when a flagship store is opening in a new city. For example, she made a boxing projecting show in Shanghai. In fact, the boxing projection was already popular before that one. It was not new. But the show was fenced up and combined with the British culture, the stage effect, the celebrity charm and so on. All these elements made people feel as if they were right in that situation. The boxing projection made people feel that the rain drop was dropping around them. We made an interaction with DreamWorks. It was for our new product named as Monogramming - your initials could be added on the scarf. DreamWorks helped us to produce all 3D effects. Consumers could use a smartphone to directly interact with the big screen. Consumers could type the name and the big screen would display. If consumers shook the smartphone, the big screen would show the scarf with customized information. I think she did so much to let people know that the technology could be combined with the luxury very well and make people feel the luxury as a part of life. Before long, we invited a VR (Virtual reality) technician to give a lecture in our company. In fact, many shows have already used the VR glasses to make the feeling truer. We wanted to do the same thing. The seat number of a show was limited. However, if you used the APP or the glasses, you could virtually walk around to follow or even touch the model. This technology allowed more people experiencing the show. The gimmick is the most important thing. Angela just wanted to make luxury more popular.

Wang: What do you think is the commercial value?

Li: The media exposure is the commercial value. The PR needs a story so the gimmick is important. For example, everyone can watch the private show via a smart phone if I use the VR technology. This could be a story to increase the intensity of propaganda. Another example, a celebrity recorded things during the show with its smart phone, then, posted those on WeChat. In this way, the celebrity's wardrobe is displayed on WeChat. If some lady likes a posted Prada product, she will share it with her friends or recommend it on some WeChat official account. If Li Sun (a Chinese TV star) likes a brand, she will go to back stage discussing the inspiration of this season with models or the creative director. We may then use interactive platforms, such as WeChat or Facebook, to promote to her followers.

Wang: You are saying that the promotion of this live stream relies on not only a luxurious show field but also many other luxurious aspects linked to the show field.

Li: Yes, you can use the backstage story or the inspiration of this season.

Wang: To sum up, you mean the commercial value mainly depends on the PR.

Li: The PR is the first part and accounts for the majority. The second part, for example, we were the first to develop the Apple TV APP among all fashion brands, which means, you can see the Burberry APP on Apple TV now. You can use live stream on the Apple TV to see what we have done. The slow-motion function is provided, that is, you can watch the model walking very slowly so that all details of the product can be seen. Then you are able to directly buy products on the Apple TV: there is a pin telling you what this product is and whether it is available online. When you watch TV, you can click the bottom of screen to add items into the shopping cart and then it will be synced to your payment tools. We are now cooperating with Apple Pay, so you can purchase within one-click. Using Apple Pay, the one-click purchase is available when you are watching a fashion show. I think the PR story is a major part, but it uses these latest technologies only to make money. Our digital investment has been growing year by year. For example, 10% of the company's input was on digital last year while the budget was 30% this year. In the future, perhaps 50%! I think Burberry want to slowly transit from a fashion company to a technology company.

Wang: We may define it as a high-tech luxury brand.

Li: Exactly.

Wang: Please talk about your understanding of “innovative”. For example, which kind of show is considered innovative? You have already seen thousand forms of fashion shows: some had the element of installation, some emphasized the theme, some (like Chanel, on which Jia You and you complained) reconstructed the real life scene in the show, some was postmodern, and some (like Burberry) tried to change the after-show broadcasting and its peripheral products. So, which element do you think can make a show innovative?

Li: I think innovative is a broad concept. If nobody had tried it before, we could say an installation was innovative. Or, we could ask models to spray paint on

a big equipment, just like the McQueen's robot. I think this was innovative as well. In my opinion, innovative is a broad concept.

Wang: Yes, innovative is broad, but that is why we are discussing. Let me specify the question. I interviewed many designers before. Most of them agreed that it was important to see whether a show transmitted the expected concept and whether the concept was innovative. But there was no limitations on how we realized it. Then I asked all of them a common question, and now I am going to ask you the same one: My concept is very imaginative. I still use traditional T-stage but my models wear a novelty. It can be a silent show without background music. But the visionary form is the same as a conventional show. The show is exactly the same as conventional show except its silence. However, its transmitted concept can be justified by itself. It is very postmodern and very radical. Do you think this is an innovative show?

Li: I think it is a conceptual innovation. But it is up to how you define the innovation. The word Innovation, to me, is more technology-oriented. You say you make a silent show, that is, everyone stays quiet and the rest parts remain the same. I can only say this concept is good. But as for me, a show must take advantages of some technology if it is considered innovative.

Wang: Do you think the high-tech show is about the installation or the big scene?

Li: Those installations or sculptures were innovative. We might have reflected the idea of some people. When you talk about fashion innovation, we will ask 3 questions: first, whether a high-tech fabric is used; second, whether a high-tech method is used to help exhibition; last, whether you cooperate with a high-tech company and use other kinds of high-tech product.

Wang: Is it related to the nature of your work?

Li: I think, even before I work on digital stuff, I have been following the same idea.

Wang: More technology-oriented?

Li: Yes.

Wang: You said that the first direct link was the technology, why?

Li: For example, Nike has been working on Flyknit, a 3D knitting technique. As for me, the innovation is to keep pushing the boundary and the development of your product. Surprise people at their first glance. They have never seen a similar product before and can feel it in different ways. However, if you talk

about an installation or an artistic expression, I will say it is interesting or your concept is good but it is not innovative in the context of my definition.

Wang: What you think is closer to creative in the academic definition. Creative is from scratch, while innovative is to add some new stuff on an existed thing. Both are on the Wayne figure. They share some characteristics but there are still differences.

Li: Anyway, I get an example. Burberry made a live show on Snapchat. After the live was finished, say 20 minutes or 2 hours later, the video would disappear, then you could never see it any more. This was a very innovative point. None of other brands did it before. On the platform, it hoped that people went to see the show, but the show would be deleted less than 2 hours after the live. First, it caught the eye. Second, no one did it before. Then I believe that it is very innovative. Another example is Apple TV. People make a phone call to do TV shopping, but have you thought of buying something with a remote controller? You want to buy the jacket on the screen when you watch the Apple TV. Then you can directly use Apple Pay. This is innovative and creative at the same time. I think innovative is about the invention while creative is about the idea.

Wang: I see. You prefer a form of show or transmission which can push the boundaries of human being and challenge the people's knowledge of traditional forms.

Li: Plus, how your life will benefit and you will feel convenient.

Wang: Make your life more efficient.

Li: Yes. Say you can make use of a device to watch the show, those who had no access to the show before can enjoy watching the show now. Say you can do shopping with remote controller, it is convenient such that you can purchase during watching a show, and telephone call is not necessary any more.

Wang: We just talked that Burberry positioned itself as a leading high-tech fashion brand.

Li: Did Burberry or the whole industry position it that way?

Wang: No one in the industry has positioned Burberry like that so far. The industry has studied its business mode, but as for technology part, only the equality has been investigated. No one has worked on branding and catwalk show. That is why I am doing it. We may have an academic discussion here and let me introduce the related knowledge. In the industry, the common

sense is that a luxury brand must be scarcity and have perceived value. Burberry is so close to people. It is even trying to allow people conveniently purchasing via technology. Why do you believe that it can still be called luxury? What is the luxury characteristic? It is becoming a high-tech fashion brand. A high-tech fashion brand just means that the scarcity disappears. If you are too close to people, the scarcity will decrease. The greatest value of the luxury brand is perceived value, which is an economic word from sociology. A brand can hardly be called luxury when its perceived value decreases to some degree. What is your opinion on this question?

Li: In fact, I have thought over this question. I do not know whether you share my feeling that more and more top brands and light luxury brands are making their mystery less and less. Even LV, Gucci or Prada is willing to set their boutiques together with HM and Top Shop in the shopping mall. I feel that the luxury is more and more hard to sell. After all, the luxury industry is aiming at maximizing profits.

Wang: Profits, of course. But do you think the luxury brand should have some insistences.

Li: Why is the luxury called luxury? First, scarcity, few people can have it. Second, brand history, I tell the story with my brand, that is, my brand has a long history of precipitation. People's living level is higher and higher than the past. They do not have to save two or three months to buy a bag any more. Maybe just one month salary is sufficient for a bag now. Then luxury is no more an unattainable thing like before. Thus, luxury brands should keep their price level and touch more people. First, we sell the work, the culture and the history. Second, we hope to involve more people. That is why flagship stores are opened in such a place and why so many brands are doing digital business. We hope that more people can be involved and purchase through the platform.

Wang: To sum up, you probably mean that the perceived value of the luxury is due to the culture rather than the economic value after several years.

Li: Yes, brand culture. For example, the reasons why you buy the BMW product are the good performance, the reliable engine and the German brand. Similarly, the reasons you buy Burberry are the brand of England and the kerseymere purely hand-made in Scotland. Not everyone buys the Burberry scarf but the company does want to see more sales. Our company makes 50% profit by the scarf. Therefore, it certainly wants a higher sale number.

Wang: 50% by the scarf?

Li: Yes, and 30% by windbreaker. So, I think the company does want to involve more people. In that case, why do people keep purchasing? First, brand; Second, culture; Last, workmanship.

Wang: Do you think the high-tech added in the fashion show can create cultural and aesthetic values besides its commercial value? Or even create other values? Cultural and aesthetic values mean the sense stimulation.

Li: I think everyone's senses need to be stimulated. You feel boring if you see normal stuff, like my feelings on the fact that Burberry repeatedly invite singers to its show every year. I do not want to listen to the song every year. I do not wish to only see the catwalk year after year neither. They did not even change the location (EF or garden park, every year remains the same). People get bored so we try to stimulate their senses. It is important to make a selling point by making people feel interested. In fact, it is curious talking about the technology.

Wang: You feel the sense stimulation is finally a cultural value contribution to the business? Maybe both of them, what is the proportion?

Li: Brand first.

Wang: What is the percentage? You did such a spectacular tech show to attract people deeply understanding the culture or to make the selling point more favorable? Of course, both were the purpose, but which one was the major contribution of the show?

Li: I think we should discuss them separately. First, the thing we discussed at very begging, knowing the show via smart phone or VR was a gimmick to expand the media exposure rate. Then the PR would have a nice story to do campaign. It was just trying to catch the eye. Second, what is its technology value? For example, we make photos during the show, then the information will be contained in the photo: the kind of fiber, the percentage, the price, the delivery time and so on. After checking, you can simply press the button to get things paid via Apple Pay and then to have it directly delivered to the door by linking Uber. I consider that this innovation can increase the business value more directly. In fact, we did some work on brain storming: you can tell Siri to buy the Burberry product such as coat. Siri will then run the Burberry app or jump to the official website. Siri asks you the preferred size and color and then confirm with you. If you click yes, Siri will link Uber to arrange delivery. Then

Uber asks you the location and tells you the delivery time. You may say that you were on the way to the Heathrow airport and want to have it delivered there at a specific boarding gate. Afterwards, Uber succeed delivering and you can be on board with the coat. I think these technique intensive things are meaningful to a businessman which is too busy to either surf the internet browsing everything or try clothes on in the real store. In our way, you can even ask Siri for a refund if you do not like the product. Uber will return clothes and Apple Pay will refund. The sense stimulation or the real business value? It is up to your digital products. I think Burberry is parallel doing both. You may not see the achievement in one or two years, but it is nice to be willing to try this direction. We have lots of internal professional projects. You will never know which one can be successful until you try. A project may succeed five years after launching. Like the Siri-Uber-Apple Pay project had succeeded five years after it started. But I believe that was a good because your starting point was to create more business value.

Wang: You mean this kind of mix field aims at attracting people to pay attention to the technology prospect of Burberry. People then pay more attention to the technology and maybe try to know more about Burberry's other businesses. Thus, it will directly link to your entire business layout. You are saying that the main value of technology is still commercial.

Li: You do all those things for making money. No brand does things just for fun. The commercial value is the final goal. For example, we have specifically developed a Chinese website in Shanghai. The website has added all payment methods (such as AliPay and UnionPay). The goal is, in fact, to allow more people to purchase. So, I think all the things you do on the show are to pursue the business value.

Wang: OK, it is not hard to understand the technology you discussed, because Burberry functions like a chain. What is your comments on the effort of other brands? For instance, Gucci or Versace moves the show into the church, or the life thing Chanel has created such as supermarket.

Li: First, it is up to your inspiration of this season. For example, Gucci moved to Westminster Cathedral last year. The style of that show was a bit (not finished) ... For example, Dolce & Gabbana had a season with very sophisticated Sicilian style. The show was located in a garden or similar place. I think it is first up to your theme. Like we had a maker 's house in the SOHO this season: everything was hundred percent handmade. We had a lot of

sculptures and invited a lot of makers (the artist of handcraft). First, we choose the location and style based on the theme. Second we use some technology or other forms of expression to make it even more appealing. I think that's it.

Wang: May I understand it in such way: in the next few years, if powerful enough, all top brands will use various ways to present cat walk show? The way may consist of the theme, the stage, the venue, the installation, the performance art and so on. Everybody is doing it, and yours is not shocking any more.

Li: Even everybody is doing it, your point can be different, your combination is unlike others and your presentation is not similar.

Wang: Let me ask you like this: Assume that there are 20 core luxury brands and we will trace all the next 6 seasons of the 3 coming years. In each show, they will use different show themes, menus, installation arts and presentation styles. Are you saying that all these shows can be presented in very innovative ways, or that they are just repeating few normal styles all those year around? That assumes, after 5 to 10 years, most (e.g. more than 80%) shows will have become thematic shows since all brands are getting richer and richer. The thematic show is not so easy now and you can still say it is innovative, but could you say so after it is getting very popular?

Li: But you should know: First, different combinations show distinct effects. It is true that the trend is the same: Everyone will use the LED screen, the holographic projection and the Google Glasses to present after 5 years. Nevertheless, it is just the media. The content that you present in the Google Glasses is not the same and the information that you convey is not the same. Just like, everyone is using the smartphone and everyone is buying things on the smartphone, but the concrete way can be different. The information that you transmit is different if you use the same media in various ways.

Wang: I see. Even the innovation is under the same time frame, new things will appear, just like wave.

Li: Yes. Something new, something you may never think about before, will come out when the old stuff is very popular and everyone is using. I think it is the case. Nowadays, wearable devices have a chip to detect your body information. For example, there is an e-cuff, it has different chips to monitor your joints. When you play basketball, it can measure the frequency and height of your shooting. Data can be collected if luxury brands add measuring

features like wearable devices. For example, if you buy such a bag, we will know: The bag often appears in which occasion; You love to take it in which gesture; You always put what weight of things inside. I collect the information and do the analysis of big data. Then I know in which way the bag should be designed: you will carry it as a backpack if the strap is long or a you will carry it as a handbag if the strap is short. In fact, you will see this kind of data collection later in the show. To be honest, the innovative thing is the collection of the big data after all. For example, we are doing a confidential app: every senior salesman in our company has 1-2 VIP customers. They regularly recommend products to VIP customers so that you can collect preference data of VIP customers to generate a database. We used WeChat before. We now want to develop an app to import the data collected into our database and then to analyze. To tell the truth, I think the reason why the luxury brand is becoming more and more like a technology company can be summarized: You want to better understand your customers to design their favored products. How? Collect the data to analyze the future trend.

Wang: Can I understand it in this way: What the size of the room of imagination is, how we make it huge and how we stimulate the sense of the audiences to an ultimate level in the show, these are all based on the knowledge of customers. For example, my big data illustrate what clients like, then display these to clients, right?

Li: No, no, what we see on a show is sense stimulation.

Wang: Or I ask in this way: Products in the show is leading or catering clients?

Li: More leading on the show. But the technologies inside the products or used by the clients are catering.

Wang: That means, as for the commercial and cultural value, these innovative shows should have more advanced leading effect to clients or audiences on the brand perception, the consume concept and the elegance of the entire luxury brands.

Li: I think brands are no longer to make a show using the sense stimulation. But they make more direct uses of that inside products. It may not stimulate senses but let consumers experience it directly.

Wang: Do you mean that the fashion show is getting more and more fragmented rather than centralized.

Li: Yes, the fashion show may not be needed any longer. Why should I sit around to watch the models walking? I would not know what the clothes are

like after the show. Could we get a touch screen in front of the face which allows us to feel the fabric during the show? There are several group studying the LED screen which allows you to feel the fabric on it. For example, the product is made of linen, then the device can simulate the linen texture on the LED screen and you can touch to feel it. Showing products on the LED screen when audiences are watching the show, this is a sense stimulation.

Wang: That is cool! It is a high-tech presentation in an innovative way. You held a very critical attitude to your own show last time?

Li: I felt very boring. Every season was the same. The style was the same and we invited a singer each season. Sometimes even the singer had been repeated. I was quite looking forward to some special things just like the show in Shanghai. But, to be honest, this is a routine. We did not spend too much energy in conventional show because we had to prepare four seasons: two seasons for men and two seasons for women. We did not have so much time. But, men and women shows are merged now. There are only two seasons per year so that we have much more spared energy. We invited many makers and checked 800 buildings in the UK. We have finally chosen the SOHO. I think the merging helps a lot on the brand publicity or the presentation.

!!! Wang: You think it helps the operation and cultural guide of the brand by concentrating on something new. Let us talk about the Chanel show which Jia You has complained a lot before. Can you accept the real scene reconstruct show? Jia You thought such a show was a waste of resources. The restored real scene was a café, an airport, a restaurant or a supermarket. What do you think about this?

Li: It depends on the brand's creative director. He personally likes such things. Chanel has been restoring the scene every season. Last season it was an airport and this season it is a supermarket.

Wang: No, only last few seasons. There were many amazing solutions before. But I have no idea what happened these years. The supermarket was a case years ago. Recent years their shows were filled by with the casino, the airport or the café.

Li: I was wondering whether the muse of these designers left them from time to time. But, your seasonal show must be concrete, just like Chanel should maintain its style. If you suddenly change in some season, people may not accept it. So, you have to pay efforts doing changes on the scene to keep your style.

Wang: You mean that they have nothing new to do. So, they can only work more on something else besides the collection in order to keep its dominated position.

Li: Just because of nothing new to do, people have been keeping playing retro. It is just taking something popular in previous years back to make them popular once more.

Wang: In fact, fashion show is also in this way. At the very beginning, the fashion show was held in a theater. Later it became the fashion week. It had been very commercial for a long time. But it was innovative by doing crazy shows in about 50s or 60s. John Galliano did some very crazy shows. Since Lafayette was in charge of Chanel after 1983, he had changed all shows into the very artistic style in Paris.

Li: McQueen still has her own style.

Wang: McQueen is a bit radical. She is following the surrealism. The surrealism is an important school while postmodernism is another. Someone believes that the Chanel's realism show is a postmodern expression. Do you know postmodernism?

Li: In fact, I think all these are the gimmick. The fashion industry does rely on gimmicks to survive. I do not know if you share the feeling. In the commercial opinion, gimmicks lead consumers to pay attention and buy. First, it is a gimmick that your brand has link with stars or your product is popular. For example, the Burberry's 02.3i backpack rucksack was out of stock immediately after it released. Consumers could not get it. But, it was just the hunger marketing. It was so popular that all European and American stars were using it. People said the bag was nice and the you could see it everywhere. I think that was a gimmick. Whether a restore scene or high-tech, it is a good opportunity to give publicity to a brand. But, sometimes the case, that D&G used Sicily style for many seasons, gave me impression that their creative director was out of inspiration?

Wang: If it is only about commercial value, what do you think is the commercial value of couture? Such innovative shows appear more on the haute couture collections of top luxury brands, especially those premium brands in Paris. The haute couture is French, which means the private customized things. These shows cost a lot of money. In fact, there is usually no economic return for these shows. The haute couture is very expensive so

that its topical issue is limited. What do you think is the meaning of these shows?

Li: The meaning of such shows is to position itself as a premium brand. It proves that the brand is making the haute couture and the seat is limited. It tells people where our brand value is. For example, Chanel and Valentine has been keeping on doing it.

Wang: You think it has consolidated its position.

Li: Only these several brands are still making the haute couture. Many haute couture makers went broke. They finally announced to stop doing the haute couture because they could not afford and nobody bought it. There are only several top brands keeping on making the couture. First, they are rich enough. Second, they need the couture to consolidate its position. It shows that they are the only several brands who can make the couture. The couture is for real wealthy people. Those guests of the haute couture show are the people who want to buy it. It is not like the Burberry's ready to wear show which only invites the media to gain its exposure rate. The haute couture demands no exposure rate. The haute couture is private. It does not need the gimmick to increase the exposure rate, because nobody else can afford it.

Wang: Why is it so huge? What about private shows?

Li: After all, it still needs a little exposure rate to make people know that these brands are still doing the haute couture.

Wang: You mean that even public do not buy it, these brands want people know they can afford the haute couture.

Li: Yes, let people know Chanel is still making the haute couture. It can identify the brand value.

Wang: So, you think the only purpose is to sustain the brand value.

Li: I will be impressed if one day Burberry starts making the haute couture. In that case, Burberry is on the same level as Chanel from time to time. But I think it is reasonless for Burberry to do the haute couture now, because Burberry is not on the same level as Chanel.

Wang: The haute couture is a pure cash burning business. Burberry is still between luxury brand and high fashion brand. It can be defined as semi-luxury brand, This is its positioning.

Li: But, in fact, Burberry is in a very embarrassing situation: no hot cake. Burberry has never designed a hot cake. So, there is never a chance to make

itself popular. Our company always earns money from scarfs and coats (laugh).

Wang: I know the main profit points of Burberry today.

Li: We sell 1 million scarfs every year. Burberry makes money with scarfs. Burberry kept on thinking how we change the design of scarfs. We have changed different colors, changed different patterns and added snakeskin on it, but all styles are based on the basic style. Other brands, such as Celine, are different. That year came out a Luggage bag and the next year came out another bag. In each of the past years, there was always a “must-have” item so they could sell off every year. But Burberry could not, so I think the situation of Burberry is very difficult.

Wang: Burberry did not have its icon. The icon was left from hundreds of years ago, but there came out nothing new. The innovation space was limited.

Li: So, I hope we can have a new creative director. Won't this be published (laughing)?

Wang: No. This is about my thesis. I will send you all these views. If you feel uncomfortable, I will make you anonymous.

Li: I think Burberry is in an embarrassing situation now. I hope it has some spaces to improve the innovation.

Wang : Let us be off-topic for a while. How did the Celebrates London in Shanghai show operate? The show production team is from Burberry or Shanghai.

Li: The team was from Burberry. We did proposals and activities. The headquarter is always in charge of all proposals. The local side was dealing with marketing issues but it was still mandatory for their proposal to be approved by the headquarter. All the digital innovation, events and campaigns were made by the headquarter in London.

Wang: How about the cooperation with the local company?

Li: We associated with the local agency. We told the company our ideas. We finished designing all things and demanded the company to realize it. The company only produced, while we oversaw all ideas, working processes and proposals. We even had supervised a virtual 360-degree virtual show.

Wang: Ideas was from the headquarter while the production was by Shanghai. How many production companies did Burberry cooperate with? Only one or a few?

Li: The cooperated companies were different for each project.

Wang: How about the Celebrates London in Shanghai show?

Li: I am not sure with which agency we cooperated. But I know the headquarter directly authorized the domestic agency.

Wang: You meant there was an agency in the UK?

Li: No, we contacted Shanghai directly.

Wang: Please tell me the timeframe of that big show in Shanghai. How long in total did Burberry take to do the design, the plan, and the proposal?

Li: In fact, I do not know how long did the marketing team take. But the digital team took at least half a year. I do not know if the marketing team and mine were working synchronously or we had been coordinated in advance. Anyway, when we started cooperating with the third agency, we had already got our whole plan prepared. We then directly submitted the plan to them. The production took around three months. To tell the truth, I think it was bad that Burberry did not have a domestic digital agency to lead all these issues. All things needed to be discussed with the headquarter, but the headquarter spoke English only. The English level of Many domestic agencies was not good enough, so there were many back false. It took a lot of time to coordinate.

Wang: This can be called as culture conflicts. Please tell me a most impressive thing about culture conflicts.

Li: Local agencies always felt that they could met all our demands. For example, we proposed an idea to ask if they could realize it and they said no problem. But two or three weeks later, they told us that they were not able to produce. We had already told them our idea and plan, but the agency could not realize it, then we had to change all the plan. Our modified plan should get the approval of the senior director, and then could be sent to them. The agency confirmed the second version at beginning and told us the plan could not be realized again after two weeks. There were many pushbacks during communicating. We had to repeatedly modify our plan. The local companies would promise 2 when you asked for 1, but finally gave you only 0.5. In the UK, the companies would promise 0.5 when you asked for 1, then they could give you 1. I felt that there were many hustles during the cooperation.

Wang: Does this have anything to do with the mianzi saving (out of a false sense of pride) character of Chinese?

Li: First, they wanted to save mianzi; Second, they were eager to take the project but did not care what happened next.

Wang: Yes, for taking the project.

Wang: Do you think the automatic purpose of a brand is to make profits?

Li: Yes. As for us, in this financial year, the overall profit decreased by 10% while the profit of our office decreased by 1%. In fact, a brand mainly cares the commercial value and the revenue. I believe any brand cares whether it makes profits and the how much is the commercial value.

Wang: Of course, the commercial value is mandatory. It is the company's foothold. The economic base determines the superstructure. This is true in any opinion. But the biggest difference between luxury and other brands is the artistic and cultural value, what do you say?

Li: Each industry has the possibility of owning its artistic value, such as Apple.

Wang: What is the possible artistic value in the motor industry?

Li: The artistic value of the motor industry? It is the concept of design, the product design and the streamline body. Why do you buy products of BMW, Mercedes-Benz or several other brands?

Wang: For the appearance.

Li: Yes, that may be the artistic value. BMW I8 is the car which I have been fancying for a long time. It is electrical and streamlined. The color is a combination of white, blue and black. Its artistic value is more important than its functional value to me. Because the function is standard. You know the car must function very well if the brand BMW. How can we improve its artistic value based on its function? That is the innovative point.

Wang: Yes. The luxury brand is the same. People buy luxury products for its perceived value. In fact, it has few functions.

Li: But have you considered that the reasons could be its greater quality.

Wang: But how many clients will buy luxury products for its durability?

Li: But, it is indeed durable. That is also a part of its quality.

Wang: This is beyond reproach.

Li: Yes. Let's say, why must I buy the Burberry windbreaker? First, Burberry started with the windbreaker, got profits by the windbreaker and built its reputation by the quality of its windbreaker. Second, the fabric of Burberry windbreaker was verified by the first and second world war. Burberry was for military use that time. For example, in the Antarctic pole with minus degrees, the windbreaker can isolate your body from the external and internal air

exchange. It is a combination of the fashion and the function. How fashionable is a Burberry windbreaker? In fact, it is not that fashionable. Its brand value is the combination of the function and the fashion.

Wang: What do you think is the fashion?

Li: I think there are two points about the fashion: First is the trend. For example, if there is a new released product which you may not personally fancy. However, everyone else is following. Then you will change your mind and think it as fashionable. Second is being yourself. You like the style of yourself. That is the fashion as well. These are two important points about the fashion. But the trend weights much more.

Wang: In your opinion, the fashion industry or the fashion brand, its artistic value is over estimated, is it? In fact, every brand has the potential artistic value. There are many points to link if you wish. The discussion on the relationship between the fashion and the art has been risen to the philosophical level by the public, why? Is the fashion a kind of art? What is the relationship between the fashion and the art? What is the link between the fashion art and the fine art?

Li: As for me, the fashion is the pursuit of beauty after the basic demands of food are met. It is the pursuit of the life quality. People do not think of the fashion before having enough to eat and wear. I think people do care about the viewpoint of others. People always dress up for showing off. People hope others to praise their pretty clothes. People do want to show off deep inside.

Wang: The group identification in the cognitive level.

Li: You hope that people admire you and appreciate your taste.

Wang: Your “taste” means “sophisticate” in English?

Li: Just “taste”.

Wang: The internal part is the self-identification while the external part is the identification from all others.

Li: I think so.

Wang: So, in fact, you think the relationship between the fashion and the art is quite weak.

Li: No, the relation is strong.

Wang: In fact, many designers have the art background. Many inspirations came from the art. Those styles are artistic.

Li: There are two directions for me. First, a designer has the art background. He/She has the certain aesthetic ability so that he/she can create the trend-setting clothes.

Wang: You think the art background is the basis of creating such a trend.

Li: A designer should have a much better taste than the ordinary people. It is called the aesthetic. Then the designer can create things while other people cannot. Many inspirations from the art have been used to design clothes. Givenchy made many seasons of Maria and Jesus figures. This is also the surrealistic way for clothes. It is a way of expression and to get inspirations from the artwork. I think these are two different directions.

Wang: You think the art is the basis of the trend, while the fashion is a specific expression of the trend. Back to the cultural conflict, in your opinion, the reason of communication problems was the language and the understanding on the control level of the work. The latter weighted much more. Here you may criticize the thought of we Chinese a little bit?

Li: I think it is because of the macro environment. People are very impetuous in China. People only want to finish jobs and get the money soon, then go ahead for the next mission. Most of companies seeks the quantity rather than the quality. They want to maximize the efficiency so that the quality control is sacrificed. In many cases, it is a credibility problem. Some company exaggerates its ability. It takes projects which are far beyond its capacity. For example, we will never contact the company which we have cooperated before. First, their English was very poor so there were communication barriers during cooperation. I translated for them. Half of our meeting was wasted because of the translation. Second, the issue of the credibility: They always exaggerate their ability. We had to repeatedly change the plan. Our company wasted a lot of recourses. We would not cooperate with them anymore. The company efficiency in the UK is very low. They always ask for four months to finish a three-month task. They will never finish it in two months but they may finish it in three months, which means no exaggeration at all. Oppositely, Chinese companies will say that they can finish the three-month task within one month. But the task is still finished in three months.

Wang: How did you explain this Chinese way of working to your British colleague?

Li: We caught up and held meeting every day. Finally, I did not want to translate for them anymore. I told my project manager that I'm not obliged to

be such a free translator. My colleagues all found that the cooperation with such a company was a waste of time. The China side could not meet our demands so that we had to change our plan overall. They wasted our time every day. I thought it was a credibility issue. But, in fact, it was because of the macro environment. If I worked in China, I had to do this as well. There is no choice because the company would force you to do so.

Wang: Just like I told you: If you negotiate with others for business, they will normally underestimate your ability by default, no matter you exaggerate or not. Because, in their perception, you must have exaggerated.

Li: The domestic competition is so fierce. Your price is 200 thousand but others may accept 150 thousand or even lower. If you ask for more than others, no one will cooperate with you. So, I think it is a kind of malign competition. I feel like that this is an impetuous industry in China.

Wang: The culture conflict is very interesting. Where there is the cooperation with domestic companies, there will be a lot of cases like this for the production and the communication. Burberry will never make shows in China anymore, right? Burberry has already made shows in both Shanghai and Beijing.

Li: To be honest, the sale in Asia is not very good. The business in Hong Kong is declining year by year. The China Market contributed 30% of our profit. If we loss China market, our company will bankrupt. The 30% profit was generated only in the Mainland. Oversea Chinese tourists also contributed a dozen percent.

Wang: As an aside, the Burberry design level is very unstable.

Appendix II: In-depth Interviewing Transcript

Collected in Year 2017 and 2018

1. Chen, X.Z. (2017) 'Show production experiences at MLFW and SHFW in season of Autumn/Winter 2017'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 16 April.

Original Language: Chinese

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Chen

	Let's start from the first question. You held a relatively traditional catwalk in Milan, right? While in London and Shanghai you did presentations. Can you talk about different reasons you chose different ways to present?
	I think this has something to do with chances, such as the catwalk in Milan, because as we all know, catwalk needs a lot of money support. Not only the site and the whole production of the show will be big, but also lighting, setting, show director and model will increase. The team will be much bigger, so do the risk. This will make the whole production really expensive. Considering the early stage our brand is in, we surely need sponsorship to provide us a chance like this. So we were so honored this year to have CNMI (Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana) and Armani's supports, without whom we wouldn't have the show. In Shanghai, we were in Labelhood and in London we did a small-scale presentation by our own. I think for a brand in an early stage, a small presentation will be better controlled and give us an ideal effect. Since the smaller the better, and better controlled, a catwalk need a bigger budget to reach our expectation.
	OK, so it was mainly about economic reasons right?

	No, not really, not only. For example, now, the market is also related to doing a presentation. For example the atmosphere in Milan is suitable for catwalk. Because I think people come to the show with the a bit faster pace and they want to see a flop. Meanwhile I think Shanghai is a very new fashion city, and also very fast. Like what you have observed, it's growing rapidly. SFW (Shanghai Fashion Week) is growing very fast each season. After it grows up it is very new. So I think such a relatively new way of presentation: a combination of show and presentation, it will be more interesting and make more interesting things.
	What about London? You planned to make a difference from the very beginning?
	Yes, London was the first time I did a presentation. I had a very simple mind at that time that I needed my garments' details to be seen clearly, could be in close contact with an audience could stop there to see all my garments' details. So I chose a presentation to show the details of techniques and fabrics.
	Can we say that, the cost could be better controlled from both the effect and the market, so the first time you chose what you think was safer?
	Not the most secured but the most suitable at that time.
	We talked about budget reasons. How is this sponsorship of Milan obtained?
	We got sponsorship from Sarah Minor, editor of Vogue in Italy, who recommended us to CNMI after which we got their sponsor.
	It sounds quite smoothly. What happened in between?
	In fact, I hardly participated in the communication because they have all been very supportive including her vogue talent, something like that. Because in the previous season, CNMI had already sponsored us once to do a showroom in Milan. They have been always supportive to us. Afterwards they recommended us because they knew our work well. We weren't involved much in the

	process.
	Did they see you at London Fashion Week?
	You mean Sarah Minor?
	Yes.
	Yes.
	Did she see you in London Fashion Week and think you're a good designer, thus recommended you?
	They met me in the first season. The co-operation with Sarah Minor may be just her vogue talent in the beginning, and then there will be more and more (opportunities / partnerships).
	There is quite a lot forms to cooperate in Vogue Italia.
	Yes they're very supportive to young designers.
	Can you tell how much it cost to do a show in Milan Fashion Week?
	I didn't spend a penny. I did spend some money on, for example, my team's flight, our food and accommodation, but all the models' hair, show production are 100% sponsored by Armani.
	That's the part I meant. Do you know the amount?
5'56	I think at least 5 or 6 hundred thousand. 500,000 RMB.
	About five or six hundred thousand yuan?
	Well, I think this is the bottom line, it might be higher.
	I saw that show. It was actually a rather traditional and very professional catwalk with a simple venue. The entire production went down like this. The show was in the official calendar of Milan Fashion Week, right?
	Yep.

	Then can you talk about whether you had encountered any difficulties in the entire production process? You can break it down into small sections like: what difficulties have you encountered in the whole process of show production? If you don't mind, can you compare the differences between difficulties in London, Milan, Shanghai, focusing on the cultural differences? You can choose not to contrast. Only description can be okay. You can tell whatever you recall.
	I think I'm quite lucky. For example in London I had only myself here , the whole team is here. It was very easy to work on and it worked very well for the entire project because we were all here. However a bigger challenge was that it was earlier, the earliest of all Fashion Weeks. Because we were preparing for SFW, after that was London Fashion Week. For example, after we finish in Shanghai this season we arrive in London for the next season. We have less time in between than others. This may cause some challenges in design process and time shortage for producing. We did only once in Milan. We could feel their team was really very professional while we worked with them, we were even spoiled. They charred everything well. My Chinese PR and sales also added them later. Their stylists and Claire, former stylist and fashion director of China Pictorial, also came to help us. Because of their help we did successfully in Milan. In Milan, the difference is that we don't have any presenting experience in Milan, so if there no help from them (e.g. Prada was doing the PR part, the team doing show production was also professional), I mean if we did it by our own, I don't think it would come true. We could do it ourselves in London, but Milan, nope. This time with their help, I felt quite smoothly. But without them, I did not have any resources, and it would be hard to hold a show in Milan. Of course, once we have established a cooperative relationship, we can continue to cooperate in the future. But then the first time, it was more important. I think Shanghai was a bit like starting from a ...Shanghai was the last one, but it felt a bit like home because

	Shanghai was the last and longest stop. I think Shanghai compared to other cities was that this fashion week was relatively young, so the opportunity was less, yet it had more space. Everyone could be curious and try new things. I think that kind of atmosphere is better. For example, like using new forms: some wanted to use show, some wanted to use presentation, and others chose a combination of show and presentation. Young brands could invite a lot of VIPs who shopped his brand, which I think is quite interesting. So my challenge was that few people in my team speaks Chinese because we were in London when we first started. I had no colleague who spoke Chinese except myself. So when I first returned to Shanghai to do a show, I had to rely entirely on one or two interns and me to finish all the show or showroom arrangements that once I had a whole team to do. There was such a big and professional team in Milan and also a professional team in London, but in Shanghai, there was only me. That was the biggest task at the time. But this time I was back in Shanghai, I also set up a team there, so I think it would get better and better.
11'34	OK, you mean you had a stable team in London when your brand first established?
	Yeah, we will not start doing this without a team. At that time there was a friend who started to do it before we started.
	How many parts does the entire London team include? Design team, PR team, marketing team, something like that?
	Yes, and then production team. You have named it all. Some department is outsourced, such as sales and PR. For example we have a team at home to do our sales and public relations while in the UK we have another sales team, another agent to represent our sales.
	Are sales and PR generally outsourced?
	Yes, it's the agent that's acting on our behalf.

	At that time, you had a stable team in London. Milan was like sponsor handling the whole professional production team, right? Then your own PR in China got there, and the stylist called Claire. The girl went to be your stylist. Did they give you another stylist after you had her? Was she doing a favor or handling all the stylist job?
	She came to handle the whole work of styling. Of course there were people like dressers, but not hmm...
	Did their entire production team belong to the CNMI or some local production company in Milan?
	Production company, a very professional production company, actually very famous, called From Studio, maybe can't be found online, but they are very famous in the industry. The shows you've seen, like Angel Chen's,., are all done by them.
	You were one of them, right?
	Yep.
	The first time in Shanghai you only had a few interns and yourself.
	Yep.
	Damn, that's crazy.
	Indeed. In the second season, I had an assistant who could speak Chinese. At that time, I took the assistant there, but I still could not do it. Fortunately, now I have a team.
	Did you use to have a presentation in Labelhood in Shanghai?
	Yes.
	I did not follow Labelhood in the previous seasons. Did they have their own completely set up team and helpers at the scene?
	Yes, they are the same, they are also outsourced to some very professional team.
	So even if you are alone, ...

	That is not the same. You need to hire a team, at least a dressing team at backstage. When you set up you have to think about how to build this structure, and then follow up. In fact the coordination of the work is huge, and you had to cast models yet don't have a casting director, so you have to cast by yourself. The workload was terrifying.
16'02	At first, when you're doing a show in Shanghai, did you face any impressive obstacles there?
	You mean the first season in Shanghai?
	Yes.
	I think this was the biggest trouble. It is horrible that you have to do all those things all by your own. There was so much work.
	All by your own, without anyone's help?
	Of course there was interns, but what the interns can do (was limit). And I had only 2 interns. We three finished not only the show but also the showroom. It was horrible.
	Yes I understand how much work that was. You were so good to get over it.
	You remember when you first met me, I've already have 2 assistants and a few interns. Plenty of people were following different affairs.
	Yes I know that.
	Yep, that situation was different. And we've already cooperated with the show director Fei, so we were familiar. When we were doing it the first time, we hadn't work together before so we had to set up a relationship and develop together. Since both relationship and cooperation had been built, everybody knew the process and knew how to work together, like what I can do for them and what to prepare more.
17'33	When you were in Shanghai in the opening ceremony, I felt like

	was doing social all night and couldn't spare any time to have a glance at the garment,
	Which day? The tube one?
	Exactly, the tube one, the opening cocktail party. After it was finished that night, I followed you to the site. Did social all night and had no time for garments. It feels like you were not in the same place as the audience do, right? It was crowded, so there was guardians who kept the rules. It created an atmosphere that it was a hit than a design presentation.
	Was it? When it was at tube?
	Yes. Can you share your feelings about this? Because this was my personal thoughts at the scene that the whole trend in Shanghai was focusing on the hits than appreciating the designs, which was different than what I felt from the atmospheres in Paris and London.
	Audience from Paris and London focus more on design?
	When you were staying in the audience and you can immediately realizing their conversations were different. The feeling was so strong when I was doing street interviews. Those people (in Paris and London) would care things like who the designer was, when the brand came out, what the designer's style was, whether it suited me, etc. And the audience at home would've say things like "wow this show is amusing", "where are the bands from".
	And the comments stopped there?
	Yes, mostly. What do you think of this?

19'48	Actually, ...It's relatively a exclusive thing to visit a show together at abroad. For example, you can visit Labelhood even if you are a student since there're ones open to the public. But this rarely happens abroad where you have to rely all the things on those in the industry. Usually, I do not have access to the audience out of this industry, so every time I visit a show with my friends who, to say, may be an editor or a buyer, they will comment it with a rather professional aspect as well. Such as how the collection looks, what the brand's development will be, how SFW's and international fashion week's landscapes are, etc. On contrary, I feel like I got more insight in Shanghai than in London, Milan, and Paris. I believe it depends on what kind of people one communicate with. For example, in Shanghai you can chat with a lot of chief editors who are really experienced. Only in Shanghai can we keep in touch frequently. Since Shanghai is our last stop, you can get more insight or conclusion through them. So what my impression is I can get a lot chance in Shanghai. Well, I understand what you've just said—"hit than design" , but from my point of view, it's also a feature of SFW for opening to public.
	You mean it has become like a cultural carnival?
	Yes, after it's open to public, it became...
	Diverse? With more layers?
	Exactly.
	I got it. You can get more (chances) in China.
	Yeah, every time I stay in china, I can have more time to interact with different people, from where I can get better insights.
	Can we say that SFW gives you more nutrition in design?
	Yes, a different nutrition. It is like a conclusion that everyone can share their feelings as an end of the fashion weeks.
	I got it, Shagnhai happens to be the terminal of the whole fashion week season.

	Yes, last one.
	I've heard from some editor that some designers will show their whole collection in London and Milan while just one or two in Shanghai.
	This is about their strategy then. Like my brand, we tend to show more in Shanghai, especially those target asian market.
	So this is about market? Because this is quite obvious. For example, what Angel Chen put on her models in the small concert was so different from what they wore in Milan.
	I believe that is because she already held one in Beijing that season.
25'03	Which form do you think can express your collection better, the traditional catwalk or the combination of both presentation and catwalk? By saying "express your work" I mean presentation of the concept and the performance. Do they have difference? Catwalk has a flow and leaves people an impression of commercial, while presentation is more artistic and may have more "fine art" element. Do they show different priorities of your collection? And what different arrangements would you have while preparing them and where do the differences lie in?
26'18	I think everything can reach its extreme. Like catwalk is all about the flow, presentation is more about garments and a stronger interaction between the audience and the models. The differences rely on what you do. Usually presentation cost less, but it's not always the case. So the form depends on how the collection is and how the season plan will be. Only all the factors are considered can the decision be made.
	Take Milan and Shanghai for example, can you explain in detail?

27'11	In Milan, as you can see, the style is completed and had an artist of the flop and its own rhyme. The modeling was fully finished, changing slightly from a contemporary look to a relatively modern look. But in SFW, what you thought was how to create space and how to let the audience feel more space, thus it had 3 rooms with 3 different looks in each of them. Only this was a huge difference. But it doesn't mean which can explain the collection better, even I prefer the one in Shanghai. Well I like the one in Milan, too. I will take Shanghai and Milan into consideration for my next season. But I think the way they were created was different, what you wanted to express and who the audience were are also different. I assume, probably, the normal audience could absorb a catwalk better, while the professional ones could accept the atmosphere better through a presentation. Cause catwalk is quicker and audience control their own pace in a presentation.
28.45	Did you ever discuss about designers' individuality? To make it easier: I could feel your emotional preference in Shanghai (it has more layers in presenting your collection and creating an atmosphere), but which way could better represent your own design or identity?
	You mean catwalk or presentation?
	Yeah, just like what you've done in Milan.
29.47	I would say both. Because your identity is not always the same, so both form will do. The only difference may be, for example you're doing a catwalk, not only you have to think about music and style to create the exact feeling you want, but also space of the site while at presentation you've already have the settings, like appliances and curtains, on site which makes it a full. So the standard of the catwalk would definitely be higher than the presentation and the models would've been doubled, which could double the budget. Hence, I think it's about budget eventually. In a catwalk, if one want to create the same perfect effect, the budget would be much much

	more higher than to hold a presentation. Besides, the two forms have different rhythms. "Why does it have to be a flow/flop?"—that's a question every designer will think in every season. Maybe there's no need to have a flop in that collection, so there won't be a catwalk. From my aspect, my garments need movements which bring a lot more beauty than when they are stable. This makes a catwalk necessary for me. But when the catwalk cannot create what you want, this will be a time you think about a presentation.
31'18	In one word, one have to find a better...
	A better form to communicate, to make the collection, the brand and the designer's personality and individuality been understood. Not only a macro view of the collection and the brand, but also the micro, like every one piece and every detail of the garments.
31'36	One of the Chinese editors, I don't remember who, wrote an article discussing about "pioneer art" that was a part of "Anti-elitism".
	What is "pioneer art in Anti-elitism"?
31'57	She/He calls the designers with those features representatives of 'Anti-elitism': they design purely just for art, make garments that have more artistic expression and value than wearability and they choose a rather artistic way when they present a show. She/He calls these representatives and spirits of Anti-elitism.
	What is 'Elitism'?
	Elitism is a proper noun in western sociology which advocates practicality, superiority and simplicity. You can simply imagine it as British gentleman culture, that is a typical representative of Elitism. So she/he thinks that a group of designers have appeared in fashion industry. Talking about 'Anti-Elitism', Rick Owens is also one of the designers, too. They like to use destructive elements to challenge traditions and the public's understanding of garments, fabrics and designs. When Labelhood was doing their promotion,

	they gave themselves a title of ‘pioneer art festival’ while gave you titles of ‘pioneer fashion designers’. Do you agree with the title they gave you? Do you think you belong to this group? Like, design for art more than, you know, for practicality?
34’34	Is the theory talking more about traditional Chinese commercial brand? Because I believe in the real fashion industry, every one should put their feet on the ground. Rare designer that you know can keep going on without putting their feet back on the ground, without thinking about “practicality” and how to wear the clothes. Or what does ‘no descending’ means? Of course we should consider the garments’ wearability. By saying ‘wearability’ do you mean our clothes could be washed 100 times or 200 times in the washing machines, like those in Uniqlo, or just that it could express the identity and people could wear them on instead of only watching it? If you mean the former, I don’t think most designer brand can reach that standard. Because designer works and fashion have differences in value appreciation, including added value and emotional value, which will make the garment more dedicated.
	That is called “perceived value”.
35’50	For example if we’re making a garment that has a lot of inlaid crystals or handmade embroideries, are you really gonna wash this piece? And then it became ‘unwearable’? So this leads to the question: what is ‘wearable’? Does an ‘unwearable’ clothes equal ‘anti-elitism’? I don’t think so, I don’t quite...
	Don’t quite agree, thinking this concept is too partial?

It's not about agreement, what I think is that they can live together, practicality and the pursuit of expressing or finding identity. If the definition of 'wearability' is like Uniqlo, then it is not. It is about what the contrary is and how you do it. If 'wearable' just means you can wear them out, I do believe every fashion is 'wearable'. Every designer, if they want to stay on the ground or start a brand, the initial thing they should do is to let their customers wear their product. The clothes are absolutely wearable, but maybe not in the way they can be washed a thousand times. But what is sure is that they make designs for women or men, they create for human. First you have to think about in which occasions the garment could be worn, with what emotion, what accessories could be worn to match it. Every one of the designers would think these, if not, I would not say they're not practical, but maybe their design thinking and skill are different. For example, us, me, I think these are also what I lack of. I think I need more practical experience to improve my knowledge in these areas. These are the questions every designer should think about, not only the 'Anti-Elitism' ones. As long as you are in fashion industry, you have to think about when your customers would wear them. For example Uniqlo, their customers would wear their product every night, even every day, so their clothes may be worn a thousand times. But if you are doing (other) garment, your customers may not wear your product in the same occasion. Then what is the occasion? You're not possibly doing fashion for art. Well...you could, but I don't think there're a lot of people doing so in the fashion industry nowadays. I think Alexander McQueen is the type, Hussein Chalayan may also be one, but others, I don't think so. I cannot think of others at present. Martin Margiela is making designs for womenswear. I can think of a few but not many. Let's imagine, if you are not doing design for womenswear, you are not probably getting much commercial success because you are not doing designs for your customers. I'm not saying this is not good, it's good, it's just everybody has different goals. If the clothes aren't made for people to wear from the very beginning, will there be someone who wants to wear that?

	Well, they don't need anybody to wear them. Their meaning of making garment is not this anymore.
39'05	Do you think probably there's a type of fragmented designer who can reach the standard of "humanity" like you've just said when doing garments, thinking of his customers: what do they like and how should the garments be designed, and when presenting them he changes his style to pure art?
39'35	I don't think so.
	Exist in the same mangle at the same time right?
39'39	I think there's difference between art and design.
	What's the difference then?
39'44	One serves for yourself and the other serves for your customers. If you serve for your customer you cannot serve yourself as well, yet if you don't serve yourself I don't think that is art. There's nothing to be ashamed of. It is the entire space and entire universe you're designing for. This is noble. It is creative and valuable, I don't think it came after art. They are nothing comparable. They have different audience. If you are doing art, you are an artist. You also have to

	consider what identity or message you want to communicate with your audience. This communication has nothing to do with who your audience is. If it has, then your art is invalid and mad. If you want to do art and meanwhile you also wanna ... I don't think there's a chance for you to stay in the middle. It would've end up neither a good design nor a good art. I think a good design serves surely for customers.
41'22	The former cases I interviewed was rather artistic. Their starting point usually is to express their individuality and to convey a message to audience.
	We do the same as a fashion designer. Yet I think ...
	Starting point is not the same.
	Pardon?
	I feel like your starting points are not the same.
	I think starting point has to be the same. By saying 'starting point' do you mean considering customers?
	Yes. Before I did this interview, I thought you were like, garments were garments and sell products were sell products while show was an export to show your individuality and your own style, considering your artistic show performance.
	Expressing your own identity and practicing in marketing is not a contradictory point, instead we should find balance in them. You have a lot of sides to express your identity. For example you are starting a brand, you have a female image as your muse and you want to correspond. This happens because you have resonance from deep of your heart, not because she influenced you. What kind of brand it will become depends on what kind of female the designer is attracted by. Phoebe Philo has to think about her muse all the time, so does Victoria Beckham. It's just they happen to be the same as what their muses are. This doesn't equal the practicality. They have to think about what garment they want to put on themselves as well as their customers. There must be a

	such kind of character in a fashion brand who could be yourself but not only yourself. In most occasions, she has to be you but not just you. Every piece will become a product. You can't imagine an exaggerated dress as a sleeping robe, right? This is where I think the difference between an artist and a designer lies. I think there maybe someone doing design work for art purpose. But as long as you are doing a merchandise, there is a fitting occasion. It's about how you gonna show the universe and do the creation. No matter it's a collection, single piece or a detail, no matter it'll be a presentation or a catwalk, everything should come from your heart. Only through this can you express the designer's whole identity and creative value. It doesn't have to link to somebody since it's a fashion brand.
44'48	So that's why I said 'big difference'. From your respond today I can feel that this image is your customer, your muse or some one who you want to put your designs on. So when you are designing and creating your three-roomed show, did you expect your audience to understand your (muse)?
	Of course. I was thinking about three status types of women that time.
	So the audience can get in which scenes they can wear the garments?
	Yes.
	So you are offering different options?
	Yes. You are doing the same while preparing a show.
	Yeah, you offer possibilities and dreamy imagination like 'see, my garments look fantastic in such condition'. But there's some designers think differently cause they want to combine their show with inspiration of this season instead of their buyers. This point is really different and very subtle, but you can tell the difference. I feel like you are a realistic thinker and keep finding the balance between art and practicality.

47'00	I think those designers you interviewed are lying to you or hiding something from you. If they don't really think about the affair, how can they start a fashion brand? What's the brand's point then?
	I mean just when they're doing a fashion show, not when they're designing. Designing needs all of what you just said, of course. One apparently can't design with out a plan. You actually talked about this issue just now: what advantage does SFW have comparing with Milan and London? and improvement?
	The first advantage must be it's young and new, so there're so much you can try while you may not do such things in a mature fashion week, no matter with models or presentation forms. It is tolerant and gives you space to try new things. It is young, changeable and hard to find a regulation. However, comparing with those mature fashion weeks like Paris, London and Milan, good things are more difficult to settle down in SFW and tend to be more impulsive. This may be a risk for a more stable development.
49'15	Which mode do you think is in Milan?
	By saying 'mode' I mean a lot of things like process chain maturity, retail maturity, customer maturity, media maturity, etc. 'Maturity' means the whole operating mode, such the regulations in retail and media are set after decades of precipitation and haven't change for years. Although the fashion industry is changing and release things like 'see now buy now', regulations haven't change for a long time. But even this change cannot compare with Shanghai's. SFW changes greatly every season. For example, retail price is different every year, new brands emerge every year and new medias are everywhere. New things come and go. The change of authority is rapid. This is different with the western industry where 10 new shops appears within a season won't happen.
	The feelings you felt in Milan was...

50'52	It was relatively mature. Well it also changes, for instance this season's trend is like this and next season it'll be totally different. Hence it's a process for SFW since it's so new and it's growing rapidly to a specific and sophisticated one. A good thing in this process is that people in this industry right now are making regulations for it through discovering and deep digging into the market. It'll be a brand new situation which makes it really exiting.
51'32	Do you view this as a new rule?
	Every one is.
	When I was in Shanghai, I talked to a group of people from Shanghai Promotion Centre for city of Fashion. The leaders, who are quite aged now, left me an impression that they are the top-down leader and maker of SFW's regulation, which create a contradicting point. They may think that almost the whole manufacture industry in China is changing into fashion business. The future market, even including future fashion in China, lies in these brands. The group of designers who come back from London, from abroad, I don't mean you, are too new and need time to prove how long themselves or their brand can stay in this industry. They also thinks that designers like you have multiple styles and not yet become an identity. What do you think about this opinion?
54'37	I quite agree with them. I started my business only 2 years ago, yet I'm not the youngest in this market. I believe I'm the youngest group of people in this industry but some one who's younger and has less collection is also active in this industry now.
	Have you thought about your own identity? Your brand's identity?
	Of course I'm thinking about it everyday. How can I forget thinking about it?
	So what's your idea now? What do you think will your brand's identity be?

55'22	A fashion brand must be a female character or a male one because you are doing designs for human beings and have to serve for men. Maybe you're studying techniques like Issey Miyake, but I think era is different now. In a commercial and business environment like this, people may want to know more about who I am, who I will be or who I want to be. This is also what a brand stands for.
	Then what kind of brand do you think your own brand wants to become? Any positioning for the future?
	The women character is there since the first season and has never changed during those seasons. So the next step will be how we gonna communicate this. At the beginning, maybe you're right, people remember me because the technique like tassels, so following task will be how to erase our impressions, or not to erase it, just let the public remember our image instead of our technique.
	Design identity is not just about design element. For example, you'll know it's Alexander McQueen's work the second it's shown, and Comme Des Garçons, and Yohji Yomamoto. Time is needed for design identity.
	Absolutely, and also abundant of design works.
	So can you tell more about your future expectations? Like on which direction do you expect your brand will be going?
56'57	I think it'll follow our step. Cause you will also grow up, your customers will also grow up with our brand. We'll first explain clearly about our brand identity in the next few years. I believe people can remember us and know us in two years, no matter through tassel or braid. Next step will be how to convert their impression of techniques to our brand's identity which has been existed from the very beginning, how to explain our identity more clearly so that it can cover their original impressions on our techniques and how to attract customers with the same identity as ours.

	Next question will not be related to my research. It's for media use. You can say whatever you want in research section because no matter how extreme your words are you can check the text in the end. I've sent you a content agreement right? Can you talk about your bitterness during your brand's setting-up process?
	Every second is bitter, actually.
	Then can you pick out one or two moments that was, like, 'Imma gonna fuckin' quit this'.
	I think about that every day, hehe. Just kidding~ I think the most important part is that I started this brand as a designer. I grew up in a business environment because my family are all businessmen, so this might gave me a sense of business.
	Yeah you are really mature in business. I can feel it.
	Thanks.
	I have the same situation in my family so I can sense it.
	However, from the aspect of identity, I've been looking for the balance between for a long time. I think I was a designer when I started my brand after graduated from college, a pure designer, but now I'm managing my team and finance, and I'm even building up a system to run the company. I want to make it more routinized and scaled. What I'm doing now is fun, yet I miss the days when I just have to think about designs. You've asked me about identity, I think a person has many identities that change with the time. So after you started a brand, you cannot be reckless anymore. You need to think about your customers and your partners. For examples the retail partners, they bought so many clothes in so many seasons, what they expect is to get a stable output, or maybe some changes, but regular ones. These are the differences between artists and designers. Even if I'm having an great emotional fluctuation today or I have to design something out, but I'm not allowed...It's just the growing paces are not the same.
1'01'0	Design and commercial are so divided! And you're doing both...

3	Are you a Gemini?
	Nope, I'm a Leo.
	Wow! A Leo! I think this is such a mentally split.
	For me it's quite satisfying yet torturing. The torture comes from lack of time and energy.
	I know you have to think about your work almost every minute when you're doing design. Commercial needs the same thing.
	But this will also push you to... I do think my team is really young, so this push may do good to a college graduate with little experience. Our duty pushes us to rapidly build up a suitable link, for me, with the universe, company and team. How the team work depends on my 'battery'. They divide their work according to my preference. I started all this from an early stage, so I have plenty time to solve them out. I can see they changes during seasons to seasons. These are the changes and growth in the commercial frame. I think this is helpful to the future growth because when your system is ready, you can put more focus back to your designs in the coming year. And you can adjust it back and forth. It goes up in a loop like the planes arrive and land.
1'02'57	I got it. I heard there's a rumor says you have a rich family.
	A rich family?
	Yeah. As we all know PR is a big cost. I've heard you had a PR team when you were at the starting point. You set up a complete team when you started your brand. Did your family provided you support?
	Of course they did. But it's about comparison. What is 'good' and what is 'numerous'? I did use fund from my family when I started my work, but when we were doing our first season, our earnings already equaled our costs.
	You're good~

	Afterwards, because I got an immigrant visa, so I'm still using the amount of money, but it is for expanding the company. We want our company bigger, want it to set up the framework more quickly. There's probably only one person in some brands with the same scale as mine, or maybe two, but there's seven in ours. There're also companies with a dozen or thirty. This is not the same. I think seven is enough for me, twenty is surprising. For a company like us, 2 or 3 is enough but maybe really tiring. What I want to see is it grows fast as a brand, from an individual design workshop to a brand. So what this needs is team. Everyone in our fundamental team has different work and duty. We have designer, producer, marketer and salesman. Everyone has his own duty. We're not big but we're complete.
	You've actually set up the whole system.
	An essential part changing from a designer's studio to an brand is to scale and an essential part of scale is an excellent team. This is a question of 'which comes first, chicken or egg ? ' You cannot make up a team after your orders explode. There has to be a process of running-in. The team will expand the brand with me and expand the market share of our brand.
1'05'58	I think this is good. I think it's a good thing to have support from family. Like what you've said, people get inspired by business family. I can feel the difference on how people think. I don't know if it gets from the family, but I know you have a really mature business acumen. This is so obvious in you.
	I don't think my acumen is mature but at least I think affairs like team's shortage for source, etc.
	Comparing to those in your age or even elder ones.
	I'm curious which people did you interviewed?
	A lot. Designer cases are few but designers involved is numerous. We can talk about this next time we met in London.
	Okay. I have to go at 12. If you have more questions you can tell

	me in Wechat and I'll respond.
	Have you talked to Mumu before?
	Who's that?
	You Mu, who's in charge of the British Circle.
	Do you mean the jewelry brand Yvmin?
	Nope nope, I mean the one who sometimes 'Like' you in Moments.
	Momo Wang?
	Nope nope, I mean Mumu in media, British in-charge.
	Whom?
	You Mu, the 'Mu' for wood.
	What's the magazine?
	UKZONE.
	I always thought you know each other. I'm in a close relationship with Mumu. Actually you're playing a role of both businessman and designer at the same time, right? These two roles are often separated in a mature brand, right? Have you thought about later when your brand was bigger, you could only be a designer and let others be responsible for commercial?
1'09'56	Yes, I'm expecting that. I don't think I can totally be separated. It is my brand after all. But a lot of people are doing so. People started in modern times are responsible for both, like J.W.Anderson or Diane Von Furstenburg, even Alexander Wang, he himself is his brand's CEO. It's about your own identity. I'm in a growing process, I'll follow the side I get more nutrition. It's not something I can decide, it's chosen by chances. What you should do in a specific time depends on your own fate. I'm not gonna do only the CEO job, never. I'll neither focus more on design or do both.

	It's an inevitable process, right?
	Then the percentage depends on things like whether you can find a business co-worker, etc.
	It's so hard to find the balance.
	Yes, you're going to discover this through your entire life. This journey never ends.
	You may live in struggle if you choose to do both.
	But it'll never stop because the brand has my name, so I have to be responsible. Even if somebody else is doing the strategy, you'll still worry it everyday.
	I find you are strong in all aspect.
	Well..I'm also lazy.
	You're tough in tolerance. You can accept a wide range of things. Do you think you are influenced by your family?
	I can't deny I'm affected cause I grew up there.
	Do you mind telling us your parents' jobs?
	They're doing electronic business.

2. Roberts, M. (2017) 'Organisational ideologies on show productions at LFW'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 15 May.

Original Language: English

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Chen

	Cool...And today is the 17th of August, 2017 and the time is 11:30 a.m. and the participant of the interview is Mr. Martin Robert and the director of the fashion scout and this is the forms of it this interview is a semi-structured semi-structured in research in-depth interview.
	I'm losing you a little bit.
	Oh sorry, I'm just doing some routines for the voice call. Let's just start our questions and do you need me to speak a little bit louder?
	No, just sometimes the signal cuts up a little bit.
	Ok, let's start with the list of questions. The first question is from your point of view: what are the differences between the fashion scout and the British Fashion Council? And you can describe from the function structures especially from the preferences of choosing designers and the contributions in building London a core fashion capital.
	So, the British Fashion Council and fashion Scout so we set up fashion scout because we recognized there was a gap in the market for supporting emerging designers so designers that have just graduated or to set up their business but weren't big enough to go on schedule at London Fashion week now they don't have the experience, they didn't have the infrastructure, you know, and so we were looking at what was missing. London Fashion Week when we started it was no

	window as big as it is now nor was it as well-known and what they wanted was designers to have done few seasons what, you know, showing before they were accepting them. So we... I mean this was the same for all designers like, at that time there was a thing called 'off skin' that was very strong and that meant designers that were not part of the BFC schedule, and it was very big, I mean, it was a good 50 or 60 to design, included by people who work there, Ellen and Cher and Otto, I mean Peter, but all of that. So we see the demolition process was quite different. we were looking at kinda of what is fashion all about and what area do fashion designers should work in, you know, and what is the market wanting. And that was very successful and we showed a lot of designers for the very first time, for the very first thing. the other thing that we started doing was working with international designers and one of the first ones we worked with was Iris van Herpen. now iris had applied to the British Fashion Council but they had to turn her down because she wasn't a British designer. this is not new in the past. Yohji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake, all of these guys tried to show at London Fashion Week and they were turned down by the British Fashion Council because they were not British. so they went to Paris. and the same for the 'Antwerp Six' they had also applied to show at London Fashion Week. I believe it did one presentation or one event over here but they were not welcoming open up by the British Fashion Council. so we still working with more international designers and it is now believed talent knows no blah... and the efficient with most young creator or creatives that actually now what of them is less but...then this moves on to and the second question which is...what's the thing you want to know about question one because they question to British....designers...
	hi Mr. Marty, sorry to interrupt but I don't think... I think the signature can sometimes cut your voice into pieces. is that okay for me to call it again and... just hang up and call it

	again. ok, thank you!
	Do you wanna do just a normal phone call? Would that or be better?
	Okay you can give me your phone number and that I can call
	07730426777
MARTYN	A quiz...they're also very very cautious when it comes to welcoming newcomers from overseas. it's not their brief to promote the best talents they prefer the best to showcase the British industry, the British fashion industry and so it's very much being that they've not been a welcomed arm to international designers. We worked with, you know, Shenzhen district in China and we were showcasing companies and designers from that region and it was called "Fashioned Shenzhen". And I know they went to meet with the British Fashion Council to discuss the potential of becoming an integrated part of London Fashion Week, which the council didn't seem interested in the type of thing, so...in the end "fashions Shenzhen" worked with... I mean working with for the number of seasons, fashion scouts or the number of years. They ended up doing some things in New York. That was the time when the first Chinese designers were coming through and one of the first we worked was Masha Ma. So we started working with her and Jay Qiang as well. and we started working with this, particularly with Masha and she was the first kind of designer that recognize herself as Chinese, that was proud of there Chinese heritage. That was kinda of the first step of the move that China being considered manufacturing only, or manufacturing and copying only to actually having its own designers. Over the next few years, we and Fashion Scout had people like Yifeng Wang and Angel

	Chen and Moma Wang and what Wu and all of these guys came through fashion scout because there were so many Chinese students going to London College of Fashion, St. Martins and such. Then they were looking for somewhere to show and we were very much believed in the international vision of them. At the same time, the Chinese retailers were growing and growing and there were more coming and more interested. So we ended up at one stage with quite a large number of Chinese designers, showcasing with us far more than were showing this part of London Fashion Week or Paris Fashion Week.
GINNIE	It seems you have already answered part of my second question.
	Because all kinds of that lead to the same signals: what is the difference. Alfa remains the same: it's Chinese or Ukrainian? We're now working with more Indian designers in this moment. We're very much about discovering what's new, what's exciting and showcasing that to the world and nurturing that.
	Do you consider the fashion scout has a kind of exploring the new possibilities and adding some new lives to the whole fashion cities of London and to..it's kinda of the British Fashion Council is engaged in protecting their...protecting the London's own designers and the fashion scout is engaged in exploring the new possibilities overseas that craft that I can understand.
	It's interesting now the British Fashion Council has working with younger and younger designers and so they're now also taking and often through PR agencies that have

	multi-designer stands. They're more interested in Chinese designers, they're more interested in international designers, young designers. what's been happening with Fashion Scouters we're now getting some of our best designers are coming from Parsons, New York. I said the Chinese. This is like Han Wen, Leaf Xia, and a new one who is just kept showing with us. Her name is...So what's been interesting is that it's obvious in New York as the exact same signals happening is that there isn't the price for young, emerging Chinese designers to show over there and so they're coming to Fashion Scout to show. So she is called Jiwon Choi. So she's bit of now in our fashion website and you will see this Leaf Xia. She is showing with us and there is Han Wen. All of these three Chinese-born designers who have all graduated from Parsons New York. I mean this is so excited So the London Schools have always showing a lot of and had a lot of giant graduates coming through and has been very exciting, St. Martins and London College of Fashion especially. and to a smaller degree Westminster and Royal College they've all been looking and attracting you know very talented Chinese students.
	do you see this phenomenon is because of the increasing large and the huge market that now lies in Chinese fashion?
	Yes.
	Or it's because...do you see this is the most important reason or both...what's the differences?
	The three reasons: No. 1 is China...well four reasons: China is a large country with a large population. so that's first. so there's a large pool of talent to choose from. No.2 has become more prosperous and so people there have more money so they are also able to pay for their children to come to London I

mean to come to London and study is not cheap. so, for example, the other country I mentioned India. India has a similar size population, but not as wealthy or not as prosperous as China is at the moment so we're not seeing such a large number of Indian graduates, students coming through at this moment. then the next thing is that there's obviously a lot of talent in China and the talent also translates into you know the Western fashion industry model as well. so if we go back to India the students who are wanting to be successful financially in India typically doing wedding outfits because it's a big market for them, this big local market for doing locally orientated clothing while China there's not such a thing. there's no not as big a thing you know so it's much more international and its approach to fashion. and then the third reason is because of the first two. China's large population that's also got great infrastructure and has become more prosperous so then fashion has become more important. and it's always the case that when a population becomes more prosperous, one of the ways that people like to differentiate themselves is by showing through clothing that they are different. and they show that. so people are more interested in fashion and there's a large number of retailers. at first, it was all the big brands and now it's becoming more independent boutiques and department stores that are taking younger designers and a showcasing that what we've seen. I've seen this happened that when I first started in the fashion industry 15, 18 years ago, China was not even mentioned. then China became the cheap manufacturing place, then China became the better you know the higher-end manufacturing, then Chinese graduates from European or from British fashion schools started becoming designers in the next stage will be at Chinese graduates who have studied at Chinese universities will become international stars. See it will, is a whole program. It's so exciting to see.

	so speaking of these kinds of phenomenon, what your opinions of Shanghai's engaging itself as the fifth, core fashion capitals? One of the international fashion capitals in the world. so what's your opinion on this phenomenon? You know, Shanghai's doing lots and lots of things to squeezing... because this is highly competitive, so squeezing to the status of being one of the most important fashion capitals.
	It's working well. It's working, it's growing. I mean the first challenge that Shanghai Fashion Week has is to become the regionally most important fashion week, you know, the regionally dominant fashion week. so it has Beijing, it has Tokyo, there's been vary things in Singapore, you know kind of thing and obviously Korea. Seoul Fashion Week is quite big I think. so there's been a lot of competition. it's definitely working well. it's raising this profile people know and talk about it. it attracts great designers but of course, its core strength will become when it's the launchpad for designers where people want to go to Shanghai because there are designers there that they want to see and they want to see it first. you know and this is where what's been happening as Seoul has been quite exciting for a lot of retailers and fashion observers is because the Korean market supports a lot of young designers. and so people have been going there to discover new talent. the next big step for Shanghai is that people go there because it's great, new talents that they've not seen. and that will grow over the next few seasons and next a few years. that's interesting as well because in the fashion scout we're working with an organization called "Green Code" which is about sustainable fashion. and when you look at where the Chinese marketplaces versus the European marketplace it's quite different. and so it's quite an exciting thing in the fact that

	is even happening shows an openness to change and openness to recognize one what the future trends are.
	okay so let's move on. okay as you know and Youjia is so obsessed in staging her shows through some non-traditional forms such as adding things from performance or completely making her show overall performance and just to ask what she did in the Paris Fashion Week and there are lots of famous designers were selected to make their shows a spectacle performance art and for example McQueen and Jean Paul Gautier and Hussein Chalayan etc. What do see these forms of shows and what influence do think these kinds of shows can have in the whole industry?
	Performance or presentations as we know them has become very important so once again if you go back to when we first started at Fashion Scout there was no such thing as presentations. you either had exhibitions or you had catwalk show. and designers were also very limited if they were doing a catwalk show and then they didn't do it anyone season for any reason then they were thought of as being failures and people you know basically were not interested in them anymore, buyers wouldn't buy etc. what started happening was that designers started wanting to showcase in a different way because catwalk is interesting but unless you've got a very big budget, it's quite hard to be creative because on the catwalk photographers want the lighting to be at a certain level the audience wants it to last a certain amount of time etc. So it's quite challenging to make a catwalk incredibly interesting without spending a large amount of money on the news, on lighting, on production and such. and presentations offered a way to do that. so way back in the early days of a fashion scout, we started doing presentations and this is before London Fashion Week was doing them. and we had designers that I mean we didn't even know what it

really meant by doing a presentation. I remember we did one in a foyer or Val(3'00) venue at that time which was paid in Powhouse. we had so many people turned up that they couldn't see the models. We also had Suzy Menkes was there and Hilary Alexander. everybody was standing but these two we offered them a seat, so they had a seat at the front and then the only way we could get the audience to see the model was that we had a ladder and they basically the models had to climb up the ladder, about four roams of the ladders for everybody to see them. but there was kind of once again we just didn't know that it was gonna be so popular. there wasn't that kind of idea of thought of how does it work. the other one we did was with a designer and she wanted to show a short video. it wasn't even back then we didn't call a fashion film it wasn't even a concept or say such. and this was a video and she had worked with the director and they had created their own little mini-movie. literally, have we had people coming up to us see "why would a designer do that how can you see the clothing?" like that is so she had some of her pieces on mannequins there and we showed it and we showed it and showed it and it was really popular. off the back of that. We started to see designers wanting to present. Now the advantages of doing that presentation are that you can really control the image, the message, the atmosphere of what it is. And it's less a way ...it is more relaxed in one way cause it's over a longer period of time. Also, it's more creative in its expression of what the design is when you know vision is. so it can incorporate models, it can incorporate mannequins and can be filmed, it could be installation, it can be dancers, it can be people from the street, street casting, it can involve you know whole sets and props, it can be in a small room. The idea is very broad. And most this is happening was happening that the designers started wanting to change so sometimes they wanted to do presentations and sometimes they want to do

	catwalk shows and this enabled people to do variations of that and still be seen as successful.
	okay so as Youjia in the 2015 show cooperated with the Fashion Scout and do you still remember her Alice-themed show? In my interview, she once mentioned that there were so many regulations restrictions in doing catwalk shows if she wanted to add some performances or maybe many effects, settings and to the stage. For instance, she mentioned one special detail that she wants to use some carbon dioxide to make her smoky effect or something to makes it like a fairy in a very different way but she was rejected because for the sake of the safety consideration or something. Can you specify because I cannot find any you know these kinds of regulations online? So can you specify some of them for me?
	Sometimes we are limited by what the venue would allow and the outfit venue always has a say for safety. Sometimes they have particular rules and regulations. For example, the venue we use at Freemasons Hall does not allow any animals on sight. so we've had designers wanted to bring on various animals and such and it's just one of their rules. So sometimes if they feel that good smoke and all of that dry ice is going to cause concern from the audience then that's just what the rules are, that we are having to follow. We've worked very hard with our venue over years and these days we have more a mutual understanding of how things are and they're now more open to working with us and accepting different things. Back then was still quite new for us to be at Freemasons Hall there was a lot more regulations and rules. I'll use one simple one that was that we had somebody who wanted to use and it was like a like a fake snow. But what it meant was it was actually it was kind of like basically kind of a form of bubbles or a foam type of thing. But what the problem was then became was that on our final

	catwalk that that would break down and actually become slippery. And unfortunately for us, you know for the designers, health and safety officer said that they couldn't allow that with a large number of people in a room because if there was an evacuation, there was a fire or something it could cause you to know people to slip over. For models walking in an audience walking normally absolutely fine but such...
	So do you think these non-traditional forms of shows can better convey the designers' individuality?
	Definitely.
	What do you think the relationship between fashion shows and designers expressions of individualities?
	It's interesting because we would like our designers to be more creative in their present, how they present their collections. But for a lot of designers the idea of holding a catwalk show it's just so powerful that that's all they will consider if, you know, for them that's how they consider showcasing. Catwalk is interesting because it's being around for so long and you know there was a big moment a few years ago when fashion film became very popular everybody was talking about how with the increase in digital that there was the death of the catwalk, the catwalk was gonna disappear and all of that. But it didn't happen. Because the most effective and efficient way to showcase a collection of clothes is the catwalk. The movements, the music, the hair, the makeup, it all comes together and people really see everything really quickly, really efficiently. Now presentations enable designers to do the same thing in a more creative way. And it also has its limitations because it tends to be on for a longer period of time. But one of the

	bigger advantages as well because often you can adjust the lighting, you can adjust the whole feel of the room, you can very much in control of the rhythm, of how long if models are coming out, you know, the changeover, or like we did in a presentation one time with Maria Francesca Pepe. It was to do with they had a mixture of mannequins and live models, and over the room was really darkly lit so you weren't actually as you walk towards the one you weren't sure whether it's gonna be a mannequin or model until you got quite close. The other advantage of presentations is that the designers themselves can be out front with the media and buyers and audience and that works really well because often then they can be standing next to one of their buyers and talking them through the collection as it's being seen
	The communication will be more straightforward.
	Yes, and it's directly from the designer. it's not from a PR or sales agent you know. So I've seen that be hugely successful when an important journalist or important buyers have been standing talking to the designer while a presentation is going on like that.
	So what do you think the concept of innovation in a fashion show is? And how to understand the word and to what extent you see a fashion show can be built innovative, such as what kind of element?
	So... the whole...what is 'innovation'? innovation is something new, something that's exciting, new that represents change now it doesn't need to be... an innovation can be a reinterpretation of something and it can also be the combinational things that just have never been brought together. I mean fundamentally, you know, clothing has strict limitations towards it. It needs to have a hole for your head, it

	needs to have spaces for your arms etc. But with or without such limitations you can change things quite a lot. When it comes to shows I really think that as we move forward the idea our presentations of catwalk shows will blur more and more. These days audiences do not mind with a wicker whether they go to see a presentation or a catwalk show. What they going is that they're going to discover a new collection a new talent, how the talents would like to present themselves. And so I can involve film, I can involve models, it can involve audience participation even. It can be a whole range of different things and that's what is exciting.
	Let me make a conclusion: it's a dissolving of boundaries, is that right, for all the forms of shows no matter what is the what the form is and no matter whether it is a catwalk or runway or just a presentation. So, gradually, there are no differences between...
	There's really no difference between them and also the big question, of course, the big area of innovation is how to use, involve the digital element, how to reach an even wider audience? So when we first started with Fashion Scout, if you were in London Fashion Week in South Kensington, if you ask people on the street what is London Fashion Week people would not know, even though they were right next to it they did not know what it was. When now everybody knows well what fashion week is. And so the knowledge of fashion and Fashion Week and the ability to see it has greatly increased now that's going to continue and one of these things is how to use designers and events like ourselves, utilize digital to help that trend, help people interact with the designers so that they really understand what the designer is about. It's a tool of communication so then they're more interested in buying those collections.

	I think you have kind of answered my sixth question: how to position these non-traditional traditional show obsessing designers in the London Fashion Week? and do you think they can to some extent change the future of the fashion shows? you can specify focus on the Chinese independent designers. (repeat)how do you position these innovate fashion show designers who are obsessed in showing their connections in a non-traditional way in the London Fashion Week? how to position these kinds of designers in LFW?
	It's interesting because on our schedule we don't differentiate whether somebody's doing a presentation on catwalk shows. As there people can see because of the amount of time it has. Cuz walk show has a one-set time while presentation has a period of time so, you know, whatever 4 to 6 p.m. while fashion show is at 4:30. But other than that we don't differentiate because once again it's almost catwalk has been the dominant force and what we're saying is their presentations' innovative ways to presenting is equal to the catwalk show. and for us, they're the same. if a designer wants to do a catwalk show, other ones want to do a presentation, the designer wants to showcase a fashion film, it's all the same to us. and it's very similar to the audience. I don't think the audience really differentiates between them. Sometimes it fits better with different brands. so you could imagine certain brands that they could have quite a very slow relaxed presentation or they might have something that is quite high impact. And that really depends on the designer.
	so you think it is not necessary for maybe for the institution to specify on which forms these designers are doing whether it's a catwalk or presentation? But lots of other institutions, such as the British Fashion Council or the Paris Fashion Council do separate these two things so what's your opinion

	on this?
	To me, that's more traditional. you know it's like differentiating between an online retailer and a brick-and-mortar retailer. To be honest, for a modern customer, whether going into a store or buying online, the boundaries of that are blurry. The best boutique, the best department stores are providing an experience when you go into this store but they're also providing something similar online. This is the same for presentations and catwalk is that the audience doesn't mind one way or the other what it is as long as it fits with the brand and everything. there's no point of, you know, one of the big French brands doing a little intimate presentation kind of thing unless it was, you know, it's got to actually work with what the brand is about. For us, that's what's exciting.
	In the last season, Paris Fashion Week that Youjia attended it. She did a performance and she has successfully learned the official calendar of the Paris Fashion Week which was exciting. and the Paris Fashion Council also specified her show you know in the presentation list but using a various a specific word to add a "performance" to demonstrate or to describe her show. This is quite you know groundbreaking which the that the Paris Fashion Council haven't done before. So what do you see these kinds of changes? That means and these kinda of you mentioned traditional attitude is starting to change due to these kinds of innovative designers.
	Hopefully, there's all changing. Well, they're all definitely changing. People are seeing things in a different way. It's taken, you know, to list everybody on one list to say this is what is happening is the most exciting. And it's interesting if you go on to London Fashion Week website now and you go to this schedule, and now list's shows and presentations and

	even receptions and everything on one big long list. And this is new. This is not something that they have been doing for years and years.
	So what style did they choose in the previous time?
	Previous times they used to have a presentation list and they used to have a catwalk list and they used to have a digital list schedule.
	This is quite yeah quite exciting.
	So it's now saying, basically, if I am a media, buyer, and influencer, I will look and I'll go, actually what I'd like to do is I want to go and see the Pam Hawk show but also I would like to go and see new gen pop-up showroom, what time is that on? I can do that and then I can go there and then later on and go to that presentation and later on I can go to that event. And so it's me enabling people to make a decision based on us. It's also saying that whether a designer is showing us a digital format or presentation or as a catwalk show it's all equally valid.
	It is a trend, isn't it? seems like a trend!
	Yes. And it's because, when I go to other fashion weeks, I organized a schedule of what I want to do that day. and it may be I'll go to certain showrooms, that maybe they'll go to certain shows. and so you know I will work out a whole schedule for the day. and this enables people to make a better decision. this is almost a reflection of what's happening in this digital age. People have a lot more choice and want to plan things more themselves.
	Let's discuss about the show production. In show production

	process, can you please tell me what kind of cooperating mode do you use with the show production companies? Does the fashion scout choose to outsource these works or do you have an in-house show production?
	We have our own team of show producers, choreographers and such. They do the vast majority of our shows. The reason we do that is because some of our designers are quite new and that they need experienced professionals. But we're also very happy to work with choreographers, with other people, artistic directors and such, to work on what it is. Because not everybody, you know, different designers want different things. Typically when somebody's doing a presentation they will have a choreographer, an artistic director, somebody they're working with, because it involves a set, and it involves props and involves a whole range of different things you know the choreography of the models is gonna be longer and different and you have to plan it through in a different way.
	What do you think is the most difficult part when producing a show for designers?
	The number one thing is budgets and reality. so designers because they're creative people, they have dreams of what they would like to do and what they would like this show to look like, whether it's a show or presentation, and how they want it all to be seen, and what models they want, and everything and then one of the hardest things is working with individual designers just on what is the reality of the budget that they have. Obviously, the most creative designers and the people they work with will come up with incredibly innovative ways of showing on restricted budgets because it's very expensive. It's a very expensive business model to show or present every six months. There's

	a lot of costs involved in it. So designers need to be aware of that. So often we have designers come in and they have these very big aspirations and very big dreams. We kind of go 'okay this is approximately how much it will be' and they're like 'oh, wow, can we do it a little bit cheaper'. So what do you want to change? and sometimes it is that they literally will change, you know, they not even ever thought about how it would've taken them money-wise. What designer spent twenty, thirty thousands on props, for the set, for the show like that. and then the next season they'll be like 'I've got no money'. So it's also just about working with that. So basically how to do the most exciting and innovative things on what is an actual budget. That's the hardest thing.
	They had the reality.
	Yeah, unfortunately. I wish it was something else, but...
	It should be compromised.
	sometimes it is... but that's also...trying to find a way of doing it in a creative way that is just cost-effective.
	Of course. May I ask some new questions that came into my mind that just now we mentioned that the London Fashion Week and I would like to specify on the design identity of each International Fashion Week, such as, for example the Paris Fashion Week is famous for its elegant and the traditional hierarchy and the London Fashion Week, it's labeled for and famous for its radical and always seeking for new things and new exciting designers and bring them to the world stage. When I attended the Shanghai Fashion Week I found that there are several different kind of institutions who are undertaking the Shanghai Fashion Week, and all the designers that conducted by these institutions are on the

	official calendars. So, for example, the Labelhood, I don't know whether you know this yet, engaged in delivering some pioneering designers who have some overseas and educational background and however when it comes to the XintianDi Hall, the catwalks, there will be some traditional, the locals...they focus on the local manufacturing brand who would like to change their direction to a designer brand. So this would cost a problem which is that you cannot get a main, cool style of the Shanghai Fashion Week. And each institution and designers that are conducted by each institutions are quite different, in a different kind of directions. And even though in London Fashion Week there are several institutions and conducting designers as well, but one thing in common is that all the institutions are seeking for new possibilities and it has a radical style has formed for a long time. So what do you think of this phenomenon? In Shanghai, it's quite a mess in style.
	You need a diversity of platforms for showcasing, or otherwise, you know, if everyone is the same then there's only gonna be one voice. I will use the example of London, of Fashion East which is a very good, very successful platform, but you know what the type of designer that they choose, it's generally a very particular type and it's evolved over time, but there is a particular style and a particular thing. So for example for designers such as Shell Lee, or Li Xiaoyang, she would not be part of Fashion East, she's not their style and such, and she is a part of fashion scout she now shows at London Fashion Week as well as doing different things around the world. So you need a diversity of voice, of what people are doing in a Labelhood, it's a model very similar to fashion scout. I know Tasha who set about and Tasha had come and we've had a number of conversations about fashion scout and that's a similar sort of model where it's about supporting young talent rather than kind of commercial

	brands and such. But you want it to be, you wanting variety...I mean I'm thinking in the early days of ... not early days, when Fashion Scout was set up, there were other organizations that also did different things in London and not all of them are successful, and we are now the only one that are still running, that is independent in London Fashion Week. For us that independence is very important because it means that we are the ones who have our own destiny, we are the ones who choose. If we decide to show a designer, there's nobody we have to answer to, there's nobody, you know...
	Do you have a special appetite in selecting designers and style?
	We have a selection process, you know, we built this up over ten years, of how we choose the designers. We enable everybody to enter and apply. But the simple process is often ensures that the designers are not suitable, or not ready, the show doesn't actually apply, even so, we will have 120 to 200 designers every season applying to us, and we go through and we carefully select and then I host or had a judging panel, and we then choosing who wins awards, who is right, who is exciting.
	You have your special appetite. Can you revile this special appetite in style, darkness or radical?
	Innovation. So what we call it is "fashion pioneers". What that means to us is that because it's not emerging because we're young, because that's kind of restricts to all the young people or people who have only just beginning to break through. What we're looking for is people who are pushing boundaries, people who really ... it could be that they're pushing boundaries in their own countries, or they're pushing things out. Sometimes it's a discovery sometimes, you know

	because often we're working with international designers, we discover on the journey, certain designers work, certain designers don't. But we give people the opportunity to show, and we give people the opportunity to prove that they are a pioneer.
	I think we can finish it so much for today and thanks very much
	I hope that's useful.
	(yeah yeah that's quite lots of the information's quite in yeah it's quite fruitful yeah I think many of the useful information that I can use to analyze. yeah thank you very much for openness and so about today consent agreement and maybe you might need to sign it and just sent back to me and me saw it and then send back to you so we can have it okay for you okay so okay maybe a soon in London and yeah of course I know your dad was doing his horse show yeah in the coming yeah so okay so thank you much thank you so much for today.

3. **Bian X.Y. (2017) 'Fashion culture, system in China, and history of SHFW'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 18 April.**

Original Language: Chinese

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Bian

	What you've said that day was a macro view. Last time we talked about the background of setting up Shanghai Fashion Week, then why was this happening and what was the core purpose?
	The reason was really simple: Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival is held once a year. It contains a lot of contents. So we planned to hold a 'Shanghai Fashion Week' in the second half of the year, where garments mainly shown as the form of catwalk. Thus it matches our requirement in this industry of seasoning : twice a year. Also it matches the international regulation of fashion week. Sometimes the reason is really simple, not that complicated.
	Can I understand like it was originally for trade?
	No, never for trades. It was then called 'Shanghai Costume Culture Festival'. Trade was just a part of the purpose. Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival was the earliest art festival. Besides trade, it aims to level up the whole industry's sensibility and quality towards fashion, to cultivate our own designers, to benefit Shanghai citizens and to promote public's fashion quality. So 'Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival' is a little bit different from what most people think. There's a saying, 'history without memory cannot be culture'. Some histories are not remembered by people, thus create deviation.
	It seems there're a lot of differences between here and west.

2'35	It's not the same basically. It's not a government activity, instead, it's a comprehensive and synthesized activity. The earliest slogan for Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival was 'Beautiful world, beautiful person'. It had a series of comprehensive functions. It was called 'International Costume Culture Festival', not 'fashion week,' so it was both economical and cultural, and focused on international. In the earliest period, even though it was in the second half of the year, even though it had only the function of enable professional designers to show their collection through catwalk, its initial definition was to follow Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival. In the early two years, we invited some foreign designers. You can find the information somewhere, we invited a lot of designers around 2003 and 2004. Of course there were chinese designers, but the situation was so different from now.
3'59	It was to level up the whole industry's sensibility and quality towards fashion and secondly was to let fashion culture became worldwide and step into the international market. Is this true?
4'16	It's about becoming worldwide and stepping into the international market, the earliest shanghai fashion week should match the time arrangement with international fashion weeks and follow their rules. Secondly, it inherits the features of International Costume Culture Festival. So we tend to import more foreign things we prefer since it was so young.
4'41	You've mentioned the work you did for establishing it in the first two years. Can you introduce the part you are responsible for and your overall feeling of establishing it?
4'56	It was under the framework of Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival Committee. Comparing with the first half of the year, the second half was much easier. We, or only me, just have to control the direction and the power we put on propaganda.
5'23	So you were in charge of the propaganda?

	Not only. There were two main works, the other one was to choose designers, home and abroad. There's so many designers, who to invite was a problem.
5'36	What was the standard for choosing designers?
	For foreign designers, we expect them to be successful both in art and economy. For Chinese designers, we expect the same. In the earliest period, we measure them in the angle of reputation.
5'58	Okay, so it's about international influence. That was around 1990s and the early 20th century, right? Around 2002, 2003. So in what level do you think our designers were in the international stage?
6'23	They were in the stage of learning abroad.
	Comparatively immature?
6'33	Not immature, they have their own style. It is difficult to judge which stage they're in from an international standard. It mainly depends on their audience. It was true in the past, and is still true now. What we expected at that time was to let more people accept the concept in foreign fashion system and the way foreign designers, especially the mature ones, use to express their cognition. Home designers were learning from others, meanwhile, developing how they could do better in economy, especially cross-over of designer and enterprise was a overall trend at that time in China. We want to discover how we can fully use the value of design art, change it into merchandise and fulfill it.
7'43	Can I understand it as Chinese individual designers are refining themselves mainly in business? What about design style or design philosophy? A scholar called Yunyun Leng, maybe you know her, said...
8'23	I've read one of her leaflet. She was in Parsons for a PhD. Course. Her tutor was my study co-partner. So I know a bit

	about her but not much.
8'50	Back in the early stage of establishing Shanghai Fashion Week, did Chinese designers got the chance to fully express themselves and show their personal style and ability?
9'08	When do you think independent designers appear in China?
	It depends.
	That's it. You should give me a definition.
9'24	When one has his own studio and a complete business mode, and should not be attached to any brand. He has his own unique mode of operation and team.
9'47	According to your definition, how many independent designers are there in China? I don't mean the past, just for now.
	I mainly focus on the new generation who has the background of learning abroad and born after 1985.
	So you should first know what's the definition in your heart. Actually those who have their own brands and sell their own designs are all independent designers. The additional conditions are all fake.
	The definition depends on the business: a complete branding system, the ability to handle the industrial chain and an independent studio.
	Is there any designer who can control the chain completely? Even abroad?
10'56	Overall, the industrial chain abroad is rather completed. For example, a designer may have a team to do things starting from design to production, to processing, to display, to publicity, and to cooperates short-term or long-term with other teams. That's their business mode. For example, he may have a specific team for PR production in Europe while another team in another place.

	Does Chanel have a separated team in China?
11'40	From the aspect of history, luxury brands are also independent designers. But afterward, the design job is done by a team, so it's not really of the same design style. It's a group work now.
12'28	When the brand grows bigger and bigger, design part is always done by a group of people.
	So what's your understanding?
12'38	As long as brand grows big, it'll all become one with a big design team. Only small designers do the design work by themselves. Neither Valentino nor John Galliano would make garment by themselves. This will be another topic. From a scholar's aspect, the definition should be logical and the boundary should be clear, otherwise we cannot classify. Another thing is if you think there is independent designer, what do you call the others ones that isn't?
15'53	Since SFW has both business function and culture influence, do you think they two have links between them? Meanwhile, in the early stage, you said it was mainly about catwalk. What I understand was that it was a communicative activity for public fashion cultural.
	It was surely not for civil fashion communication, it was set up more for those in the industry, so that they could learn more from foreign designers. Yet it can give everybody access to the foreign designers through TV broadcast. Sometimes, business and culture cannot be separate totally. Firstly, you have to be clear that Shanghai Fashion Week is a professional activity, so it serves for this industry. By different means of broadcasting, it then has the function of cultural communication. There has to be a team behind any activity.

17'01	Fashion week in western country has the business function in this industry from the very beginning, but as the development grows, it became an activity like cultural carnival around 1980s from Karl Lagerfeld because he is good at business. Well, scholars may have argument about the time. But anyway from approximately this time, a small group of designers in big brands who liked to show individuality and their mind change fashion week into an experiment lab for new things. They explore new things and change fashion week into something recreative. Even though the core of business always exist, but its others functions extend to different borders. Back to Shanghai, can you talk about the trail Shanghai has changed through? Cause it's different from the West, of course.
18'36	You have to be clear why fashion week abroad had turned to be a recreation activity and what kind of elements had changed. For example, is it Haute Couture? Or ready-to-wear? Or something else? I assume ready-to-wear has never changed recreative.
	Not much. Most are Haute Couture, the laboratory ones.
	So how much percentage is Haute Couture in the whole western industry? It's totally two things in Paris. In someone who did not know the truth, he may think they are the same, but they're not. It's totally separated. So you have to analyze from which aspect it is recreative? Since 1980s or 1990s, the whole industry became recreative. Even more, the whole society had the same trend.
	Last time we talked about 'democratism' in Fashion. It started from the early 20th century when bloggers appeared and broke the original hierarchical system. Thus the recreative extend became diverse. If there has to be a boundary,...., the initial goal for setting up Shanghai Fashion Week was so different from those in the West. It is comparatively more open to public. It is mainly for the professional, but the public has access as well.

20'48	Not from the beginning.
	At first, public cannot take part in it?
	Yes, its influence on the public was through secondary broadcast, through media.
21'07	Okay, that's a detail I missed. What do you think are the changes of Shanghai Fashion Week in the past decade?
21'21	We started with the aim of learning from others. After they move from Fuxing Park to XintianDi, because Shanghai fashion industry changed itself, its industrial background made it similar to London Fashion Week that it pays more attention to young talents. The reason why they do so is that the older generation in the mid 1990s relied on the nation enterprises who quit the whole market with the reform. These group of people then started their own business, got retired, went to different places, or even got mad. Hence, those came from abroad took their place and create their own business brand. For example those appeared so frequently in early Fashion Weeks like Yifei, not the group of Wang Yang, Wang Wei, I mean the later group. Some designers left before Chen Yifei passed away. There has always been fierce competition in Shanghai, so the designers has always been difficult. People who can stand the sufferings gain their reputation afterwards, like blah... But even if they're big now, they're still an independent brand.
24'00	Those you called 'difficulty', what are they?
24'03	Business was tough. Setting up a store was not that easy. At that time, stationing into different department stores was the trend, which was not that easy.
24'13	Yes, buyer's boutique system was not mature enough. The mode was still classical. I assume the industrial chain unfinished was one of the reasons?
	Our business system was always like this.

	Yeah, uncompleted.
24'39	There were some independent designers in Shanghai Fashion Week in the early period cause the function of the fashion week was single. After around 2003-2004, International Costume Culture Festival went down, Shanghai Textile Holding Group set up Mode Shanghai. It wasn't a buyer's shop at the beginning, more like a traditional thing. It has been only 4 or 5 years since it changed to buyer's shop. It's definitely after 2015.
25'27	Yes, Mode is quite young.
	Mode show's appearance was actually linked with the emergency of a buyer's shop which was quite weird and had chinese characteristic. The earliest chinese buyer's shop didn't have an actual 'buyer', only some who were interested in fashion. Even the owner of the shop went to buy clothes which were retails. But you know it's not a buyer's shop as long as the clothes inside are retailed. From this aspect, this concept matches our idea of adding a new element in this industry. However, even till now, it is out of shape.
26'13	They may not be a professional buyer, but they're quite good, changing the whole rule the western made for the buyer's market. Nowadays most buyer's shop in the west in using the same retailing mode.
	Yeah, they do learn from Chinese. There's always a process of affecting each other.
	This made the independent designers more difficult.
	I have no idea how much effect the western buyer shop will make. At least I didn't see any in New York.
	Maybe it's because New York is similar to the situation at home, focusing more on economic development. In Europe, buyer's shop is the main stream. Independent designer first sales channel is actually these buyers shop who can order for them.

29'09	Can you tell us the structure change of SFW from the beginning till now?
	What kind of structure?
29'17	Content structure. For example, there was only runway in the beginning.
	Yes, it has no sales function then. Afterwards, we add regulations with Shanghai Mode cause both of them are in the control of Shanghai Textile Holding Group. Mode Shanghai set up cooperations with foreign buyers shop after they appeared. Their cooperations increase in recent years. Besides the earliest form of presentation, showroom become multiple. Even showroom now is not a pure presentation. It's just a sign and changes its name.
30'21	It's selling things only, just like chic.
	The only difference will be all they have small designers. People who attend is not the same. There isn't an accurate definition about 'buyer' cause it cannot be defined. Traditional buyers are someone who buys from department stores and sell merchants out afterward, which is different from what we are saying now. It's not possible that we only have buyer now. Where do they sell them after they bought them? Luckily we have Ma Yun. And JD.com has also started the same business. More online special store would appear, where people can get choosing advice from.
	What I learnt from the designers is that few professional buyers come to Shanghai. Meanwhile, Mode changes its site frequently, every year, or every season. In London, they don't change site of the showrooms so frequently as long as the sponsorship is the same. So buyers may be more familiar with the condition. I think this is a part of the reasons. According to my survey in Mode, which I did by asking the designers one by one this year, buyers came this year was extremely little and

	most of whom is not professional, even fewer than the past years.
32'04	Well, they do so to cut costs. Because there's not many place in Shanghai to merge Mode in. For example, Shanghai Exhibition Centre is too expensive. So they prefer newly-finished buildings that haven't started investment, thus cut the cost. Otherwise the spared cost will be transfered to the designers.
32'27	In the west, some people are lazy that they may not come if you change the site.
	Shanghai develops quicker and has a lot of spare buildings.
	Yeah, China alters from day to day.
	So there's place to let them go, since small designers do not have much money. If you ask them to book a booth in Chic, they may not afford it. From this aspect, it is using all kinds of method to create chances for independent designers where they can show themselves. Of course, the committee has to evolve too. Buyers have organizations. Secondly, we have to pay attention to where the merchants has gone. Now the visitors have to register, but the result you have to ask him. I've never seen it so I don't know where the the visitors come from.
33'44	Indeed, the developing path of SFW is just the opposite as the western ones where they all have showroom and designer's collections first, and then the mature runway system. They may seem appeared at the same time, but there was a sequence. However, Shanghai started from runway and imported the form of showroom later on.
34'28	Department stores had their own system. Our International Fashion Fair introduced a trade fair form, similar to Chic. Shanghai is a special place and has a lot of independent designers. In order to match them, we change our exhibit form.

	A point you've mentioned is quite interesting: 'small designers'. European luxury industry has a pyramid system: light luxury, top luxury and semi luxury. Independent designers are 'small designers' according to definition. Has SFW become a platform for 'small designers' to survive this market?
35'57	Mode Shanghai is a platform for small designers to show their talents. SFW mainly focuses on those designer brands that aren't so famous or old. While among them, there're also elder people. For example, Gao Ye, who is not very aged.
36'18	Not only Mode Shanghai, it's just it's the biggest one. Another one is Green Coat that focuses on fabric. I heard that Shi Tang also made a showroom. View from type, SFW showed an explosion, or to say, large-scaled one with huge quantity.
36'46	It has grown since the year before last year, since the Bund Origin was added. After that, its showroom features will be more and more evident. Showroom basically is a room to show one's collection. It trickily uses some of the vacant real estate in Shanghai and continues his work. The only difference is that the presenting period is concentrated so that others can know how many similar showrooms, or collective showrooms, are there in Shanghai. The real concept of showroom is not about presenting temporarily, but in long-term. In the future, I'm not sure what the organizers think cause I'm not one of them, this may be a clue. So SFW can be a regular activity. Otherwise why it is held?
37'57	That's right. Like in Paris, the whole 'le Marais' district is for showroom and what they call 'fashion consulting company'.
	America will also be like this soon.
	Those companies are specialised in management for brand running and are classified by independent designer's styles. For example, if this company only take charge in the diablo collections, they'll find 3 or 5 brands of this type throughout the

	world, put their work in the showroom and permanent exhibit there.
38'36	Their buyers shop is of the same style.
	Yes, while I think chinese ones are a bit messy.
	This is understandable. The economic developing rate was so fast in the past that we have to admit that we don't need to think new things, we can take in. We can refine it in the process.
	Do you think this is china's cultural features?
39'09	Not cultural features, this happens because china's economy develops greatly.
	Okay, they did not have enough time to think thoroughly under the circumstance. I know you've been to a lot of international fashion weeks, can you talk about in which place SFW's chinese cultural features lie in and compared to others, the difference, base on your observation?
39'50	Shanghai Fashion Week, from the aspect of organizing structure, is different from European ones. For example, european fashion weeks are held by associations while SFW is held by the government. Actually all the fashion weeks seems to be held by the government while in the back, they may rely on some industrial organizations. Shanghai is even more special. Shanghai Textile Holding Group sounds like a company, a nation-owned enterprise. On one side, they'll consider their own development, on the other side, as a nation-owned company, they have social duty. From these two angles, they do such things. Another thing is that, besides SFW who held a exhibition as a fashion week organization in the beginning, which is also rarely seen abroad, organizations for the show and the Fashion Week should start separately. Fashion weeks are more held by designer organizations, while other exhibitions are more held by economic groups or business organizations, thus the exhibitions became attached product of fashion weeks.

41'26	You mentioned several times 'Shanghai Textile Holding Group', is it a government...
	It's a nation-owned company, nation-owned group.
	Is it the same now?
41'43	Yes, it's still a nation-owned company.
	It feels like this company is in charge of the fashion week, exhibitions in Shanghai. And it seems like they are the authority.
	Those activities related to fashion week is their responsibility. There are two big exhibitions in Shanghai every year, which held by China Textile Industry Federation.
	Shanghai has so many kinds of, so many organizations and federations.
42'15	Shanghai is fine. Compared to others, shanghai has a stricter management. Shenzhen is far worse than Shanghai. Shenzhen has more associations.
	In your opinion, what are the associations for? What's the aim?
42'40	Traditionally, they want some organizations to rely on. This is one reason. Next, enterprise do not communicate enough with government under recent social structure, cause they have no access. That's why organizations are needed. If they feel they cannot play a role in this organization, or if they feel unfairness, they'll set up their own. Just at that time, mass civil organizations are allowed.
	When's the critical point?
	The government has regulations. You can check it afterward when the new regulations came out. I remember it was around recent years. Thus they have more organization options. Among these organizations, some unique ones with good ideas stand out. For example I am uncomfortable in industrial committees and believe I can do better, so I quit and start my

	own one. This is also Chinese's habit of doing things.
43'52	Interesting. Cause this kind of thought won't exist in western organizations.
	Different organizations hold different activities. But this appears only in big cities and is rarely seen in small cities.
	What are they chasing after? Social position or economical benefits?
44'16	Both. Maybe they believe in fashion, as long as you have the right to speak, you have everything.
	Grab the right to speak first, then economical benefits follow.
44'30	This is one thing that differs with the western fashion weeks. The next is China Fashion Weeks' definitions are probably different too. In the very beginning, it aims only to serve the industry. Different fashion weeks may have different functions, it may even be a link with the government in some places. Some are because the entire industrial cluster in China is too large and then the characteristics of each place are different. By the nineties till now, our production and processing, industrial cluster processing is characterized by the region. It naturally gathered such a group of people. They have to show their achievements and features to survive. That's why they gather together. The government itself needs to create a business card for the city, or to let other feel "there are many bright spots in this city". So they'll create a lot of chances like fashion week.
45'57	It feels like the Chinese traditional "face culture" leads to this result, including the collectivism mentality of getting together.
	That's why it has so many. But it is normal.
	I set it up first, regardless of the profession.
	This is because the industry is increasing in scales since

	there're so many enterprises.
46'29	It's also due to the large, huge scale China's industry has.
	Our base is big, the textile industry base. So it is normal that we have 20 or 30. Maybe a cluster here equals a cluster in another small country. However, in the background of globalization, their definition will soon change. They'll soon find their own one, because it's an issue about how to survive. They have to survive since they've started. I believe any fashion week that last more than 5 years has their reason to exist. Reason leads to existence.
47'12	Do you think "5 years" is a node to evaluate?
	Yes, to see how they survive. For example, Changshu Fashion Week, who changes its name. Why should it still be on stage?
	What's their profit mode?
47'28	It has no profit mode. It gets money from the government where tax goes. Most tax are supported by local enterprises. So eventually it's about the enterprises' needs. If not, why they do that? A really big wholesale market is in Changshu who sells wool sweater first in China. A lot of fabrics are provided there. If this market want to survive, it has to become popular and show its speciality. So they held a fashion week. There are also so many companies who want to survive, too.
48'07	What you've mentioned is that SFW is similar to London Fashion Week?
48'12	I mean their focus on new talents is the same. You can understand when you turn backward. Why is it similar to London Fashion Week? Can it copy Paris Fashion Week? We can ask ourselves if we can move Paris Commune here. Or if we can move the mode in Milan here? We may find that neither of them works. They can only do this. This is normal.
48'43	The feeling now is that it's starting from London's mode.

	It's still different.
	And is changing to Paris Mode, learning the mode. After the vision is broadened, ...
	You are imagining the object. Maybe they are copying nobody, they just want to have a better life. Inner needs leads to outer form. What they say about copying London Fashion Week is just an excuse.
49'20	Before SFW, London Fashion Week is the only one among four major fashion weeks that focuses on young talents.
	That's also normal. Traditionally, there is not a really big fashion brand in London Fashion Week. Even popular stars like John Galliano and Alexander McQueen, their own brands did not have a equal reputation in Britain. This includes Vivienne Westwood. It seems she's a hit in Britain, but her brand is in France.
49'58	Normally, when people feel they're mature in business, they move to Paris Fashion Week from London since its fashion week organizing committee asks them to have innovation every year. This troubles the designers that want to make progress in business. From an aspect of business, brand culture and brand image are easier to build up if the style is unified. But London Committee requires new innovations, new radical ones every season. The innovative the better. You have to bring me new things that stimulate my vision. Hence, those who are rather mature head to Paris after 3 or 4 seasons. Because Paris and Milan encourage people to maintain their style, the more unified the better. That's their requirement. In design style, does Shanghai have any requirement? Not at all? So is that why SFW doesn't have a system of its own in design style
	That's because the system is not needed. What's the system for?
	You believe it's unnecessary at all?

51'50	Designing' itself asks for innovation. It depends on what kind of innovation you are creating. If you ask for innovation in style, that is impossible. At least it's against the growth path of a company.
	So designers in London Fashion Week is changeable.
	For example, you're asking Burberry to change its style?
	Despite the classical line, it seems Burberry is changing every year. It changes into a mess.
	Basically, its signal elements are unchangeable. If they change it, people don't recognize them. If people don't recognize them, people won't buy them. So SFW don't have a exact requirement on style like you have to have something different from last year. We tend to focus more on strong styles and designs that remind people more to the designers. That's our emphasis. SFW also focus on how much the brand is commercialized. Do they sell? Since Shanghai is a commercial city itself. Its features are defined. It doesn't need any big brands sometimes. They'll drive them away to another city even if they came. They don't want to arrange them with the small designers. There's no need to disturb the atmosphere. So you can see that there's always a PR company to organize everything when a big brand comes to China who arrange their activity into another city. They don't want to destroy the style. Nowadays they put foreign designers' work to another city. It had long been like this. Recent years, they arrange foreign designers in Shanghai Exhibition Center. Others like kids-wear or students' work, they put them in 800Show ? ? Having children's wear involved is also one of the features of SFW, both Shanghai and Beijing. Actually this is harmful to children's growth.
54'32	Why we have...?
	Because we have requirement.

	Children's wear have a large market?
	Yes.
	What do you mean by "harmful to children's health"?
	That's easy. If a young girl wear like this, what happens if she grows up?
54'58	That make sense.
	People have different education emphasis in different stage. Maybe we Chinese have not yet realize this. That's the second difference.
55'25	What's more?
55'28	The third will be why on earth should we held a fashion week? To make it easier: what role is fashion week in the fashion system or fashion industry? Currently, the aim of fashion week is not the same between home and abroad.
	It gives me the feeling that the goal is not clear.
	They're different. Fashion weeks held in the west, in simple terms, is to promote the designer brands to the society. But in China, we're more like ordering parties. Or some just made it to a pure designer's fashion creation which has no link with the trend. That's why many of our designers' works can have tour exhibition within years. However, that is also a way of them to think about the society. But their goal of setting the garments in stores is not that obvious. That means in a fashion system, fashion week itself,... During this fashion week I heard some people have thoughts about fashion week. Do you think they're still those of scholars?
	Shallow.
	Its impact is little.
	What definition do you think SFW should have?

	SFW's definition now is set from an angel that's run. What to do relies on how to run it better. It may have their own plan on how to make it bigger. Initially, I think it depends. First, how much does it affect fashion? From an aspect the industrial chain are set, fashion weeks should have impacts. Secondly, what are the designers' standard in fashion week? The joke I made at the scene was that if all of you wore the garment in this fashion week, then it's a successful one. But how many people are wearing it?
58'50	Is it possible for ready-to-wear to be commercialized?
	ready-to wear fashion week and haute couture fashion weeks are the same. Because China do not have a standard for custom culture. Thirdly, it depends on its contribution to the whole society and the public. In fact, it's a complex and unreal indicators. On one side you should know how influential it is on fashion: as long as you are popular in fashion weeks, you are popular in daily life; the other is what style are your garments shown in fashion weeks or what kind of trend it is in the aesthetic taste, this will of course influence the public's aesthetic. Of course it at least has to be some kind of influential.
0'15	Personally, I feel like no matter in Beijing International Fashion or SFW, they all have garments that look understandably ugly.
	Understandable? Not understandable! This is a very important...
0'38	There's still difference from design level.
	You have to see it also from macro economy: how we can change the imbalance between the requirements and needs in the industry. By 'imbalance' I don't meant quantity, I mean give and take don't match, like what I want don't sell in the market. So foreign brands and designs are my only choice. What we provide? To produce a lot of product but cannot sell them out? This is a feature of our postmodern society. As for saying he is

	entertaining, this is quite normal. First of all, the biggest feature of a postmodern society is entertainment. The so-called 'artistry' is reduced, or 'commodity' is increased, or it has become vulgar. Well, it doesn't matter. Elegant art will merge with street culture in modern society anyway. This is also understandable. This is the inevitable result of social breakdown. The key is that which consumer group we are focusing on and what idea we are observing. This is rather important.
2'03	How do you think fashion week corresponds to a consumer group? Like I set up this fashion week for which kind of people to be my aim group? Hipsters? Or those focus on fashion? Or those in this industry and around this industry, related to industry?
	Recently, fashion weeks are only for fashion followers. Fashion week creators won't care about ready-to-wear. They don't care about fashion weeks.
	Yes they don't.
2'55	The question is do we have fashion week creators? Does this group of people exist? And another one is that does the group you called 'noble fashion' have any relationship with fashion? This becomes important.
3'31	Have you put an eye on the interactive presentation of new designers in Labelhood these years which mix presentation and catwalk? This is a rather innovative way.
3'55	I saw their works last year, but not this year because I'm too busy. Linking pioneer art and fashion together is an inevitable result of popularization of art. This is an inevitable feature of an entertaining society.
4'18	You believe it's a result of art popularization? From a macro development view, it is a certain trend?

	Yes, it's just a trend. So it uses all kinds of method to match fashion which is quite normal. Because fashion itself is 什么 and looks for innovation which itself is harmful. But fashion doesn't care. So this phenomenon is quite simple to me. It's just mixing pioneer art with fashion is not fashion any more, it's an installation uses garment as a carrier, or a new art.
5'06	Can I say that you think the garments of new designers are... do you know a word 'anti-elitism'? 'Anti-elitism' is setting unwearable as my goal and an installation is all I want. What influence will those people bring to the whole fashion industry from your aspect? Can you tell us your opinion from a cultural aspect?
5'46	This is an interesting byproduct of our fashion industry development. It's okay it exists but it is not a necessity. So we are not surprise that it exists. Everything could happen in fashion field. There has been a long history in cooperating with pioneer art in fashion field. There has been a lot of cases. It is an interesting idea considering eye-catching effect. Sometimes we don't have to link to much with culture.
6'41	You don't think it's necessary?
	Nope. There's no need to over-read it to an artistic or cultural level.
6'55	Why? Do you mean less people focusing on this means no need to level it up?
7'05	Yes. Because when designers are doing this, they may not notice it as a cultural carrier themselves. All the comprehensions are added later. They have cultural meanings, but they make such installations not to promote pioneer culture. They do so because they think it is interesting. They want to create something that catches others eyes as an artist.
7'52	They want to express their individuality and mood. They want people, no matter who is wearing or watching, understand its

	meaning, thus using different methods to express to the audience. However, I did a random survey at the scene one by one. It feels like people who know it is rare. Actually people are just following the hit.
	What is pioneer art? Pioneer art means few people understands. Otherwise does it still represent pioneer?
8'33	It's a normal phenomenon?
	Of course. No worries. Only when it is influential enough can it be a subcultural guide. See from now, it is not there yet. We should allow there're different kinds of explorations. So it doesn't matter it works good or bad.
	What do you think of these kinds of innovative ways of presentation, including those in Paris Haute Couture Fashion Week, those installations Dior like to use, those technology Burberry like to use and thematic expression Chanel like to use? Do you think these create subcultural influence?
9'32	First of all, whether it can be effective, it depends on the work itself and how much people focus on the one who creates it. For example, if it's done by Karl Lagerfeld, it must be influential. If it's my work, it's relatively small. It's that simple. So, it depends on what circumstance this pioneer art is under.
10'00	You mean it is important on what cultural background pioneer art is in?
	Yes. On what situation. All the 'cultural background' you said is too big.
	Commercial? In one word: who to do?
10'23	Yeah. Who to do and How much audience can he attract. It may not be so important about who to do it nowadays. In an Internet era, who will follow him is more important.
10'37	Follower is a main factor. Fashion week indeed is a good opportunity for designers to show themselves because he can

	only show himself through selling clothes beside that. Fashion week gives them a chance to do a cultural communication with the industry and the public. View from design philosophy and individuality, is fashion week's function more important in this area?
11'36	Fashion weeks now is more like a stage for designers to show themselves instead of communicating. It's not for communication because communication is two-way while our presentation is more like single-way, if we see from Communication Studies. It's not the same at all. It differs essentially. Of course it can accept and respond messages from outside through different accesses, but it is minority now. The majority is still single-way, sending out messages. Because it is one-way, we get so many plug-ins where a lot of people comment on it. Through the comments, it spread out. This is one thing that's especially weird in self-media era. It means you force the designers to do a lot more which they did not thought about it. And a lot of people would believe it. So nobody knows what the designers think personally. Spread, relatively speaking, is messy, but is normal because the group is different and the value is also different.
13'14	You think the addition of new media is upsetting the whole fashion week spread?
	And changing it diversely. It has both advantages and disadvantages. It depends on the communicator own literacy and social responsibility. Otherwise you can't guarantee that every person tells the truth. This is a serious issue. After all, cultural development is a subtle matter. As for designer's individuality, fashion week can do things to emphasis the features that are created or to show design awareness and ideas through a communication platform. This is what fashion week can do now.
14'29	From my survey, new designers, who studied abroad and hold

	shows throughout the world, their need of using the platform to express themselves is eager. They want to show every little bit and use almost every method to let everybody know what they are doing is not only a simple clothes.
15'17	But designers should explain their style clearly first. In the process of dissemination, this designer you are spreading, can his own discourse system really understood by consumers? This is a serious issue. From a global perspective, the basic logic of apparel education is the same. Some country focuses more on some part, but there's little difference. For example, we are cooperating with Japanese schools, we are also inheriting our own art education. We also have connection with ECA (Edinburg College of Art) and UAL (University of the Arts London). Affected by Aalto University in Finland, we have exchange students from Parsons and FIT (Fashion Institution of Technology). A variety of links and various ideas can be reflected in China's education system. This is not a big problem without studying abroad education. Maybe it's better to pay attention to the place he finish the whole study.
17'01	This education, the local text is more of a kind of entry...
	This is a very important stage in the process of adapting to society. It is very important that what he sees. It will have a subtle influence on him, especially on how he think and express. Thus this will be more important. In SFW, can you recognize how many designers come from Britain? Or Italy?
	It's hard.
	Basically he is still a Chinese. He is just expressing western ideas and understandings through his work or collection and name the collection with his name. In fashion field, you don't have to compare them too much with art history. If you compare with fashion history, there could be only one or two successful designers among ten thousands. It is a repetitive thing in itself. He creates not for art, more for commodity, for changing it into

	commodity and sell it out, even if name it differently. He never thought of getting into the museum. He never thought of changing it into an art piece. No matter idea or style, they get crowns from fashion so that more people are paying attention and thus sells better.
18'57	And use a story-telling way and...
	He has one more story. So you cannot work too long in fashion. Because if you do, you'll find it is plain behind all this fantasy. Designers we have now in China is different from the foreign ones. Foreign designers start the business because they like it. Chinese is different. Chinese likes to dress themselves up. They get into the field because of a really subject and self-centered reason.
20'50	Then we can see why some designers were, for example, fashion editor or stylist. They have relationships and access.
	This is one group, the other group is just for money.
21'12	Probably talk about the future development of SFW from the cultural influence and commercial latitude?
	SFW still need progress in commercial mode. Patterns are oriented. Where is your mode orientation?
21'35	What's the definition?
21'40	We do a pattern in fact it is a pointing arrow. So what's the direction it is pointing to? It could have a lot of place to start. So where's the terminal? To make it simple, where's our destination? This is a clearer idea we should have that may be comprehensive, for instance, because of business or culture, or some reason. Such thing should be better defined now.
22'36	What is the blurred point in business you think? Except those you've already mentioned.
	Let's say, at its simplest, we can start from the economic base and the superstructure. On an economic basis he wants to

	make money, then there must be a profitable model. The profit model is just one of the business models we talk about. How is he going to make a profit?
	What's SFW's profitable mode?
	I don't know. Everyone thinks they earn money but actually they don't. Why?
	I don't see their point of earning.
	At the very least, its own profit model needs improvement. This is one point. Secondly, it acts as a part of the industrial chain, so what's it for? Thirdly, from the industry's value chain, what position it is in? What kind of values should he play in the future? The fourth, from social aspect, how much can it contribute to our economic development? All we talked about is economy. From the ideological point of view, the simplest is culture. We have always said that Shanghai has its own culture - Haipai culture. Shanghai's culture is actually a contradictory complex. In Shanghai's cultural construction process, the so-called Fashion Week, what role does it play? Is it spreading a mature model for everyone? Or an elegant dress taste? Or stressed the unique way of life in Shanghai? Or met with the basic style of sustainable development in Shanghai in the future? What exactly can you tell? As long as you cannot tell, it means that there still should be improvements.
25'15	As far as I observed, he points you mentioned are not clear enough.
	Maybe we consider it as a scholar. As an actual operator, he may not think that much. If the boss asks to focus on profits, then he only cares profits.
25'42	From these dimensions, how is London Fashion Week now?

London Fashion Week can only popularize its young talents base on its current situation. It doesn't have elder designers remaining. On the other hand, it proposed slogans 'support young designers'. In its so-called creative industry system, since it emphasizes creative industries, it emphasizes creativity. It is my assume. So it expects something new from you every year through which will leave a better impression of British designers. Its social function is to enable more designers to have a better future and their ideas spread out wider. In Paris and Milan, their industries are mature enough. Their bases are excellent. So it is more to play its industry roles and finish its social value through this platform to the industry's radiation. It doesn't need too many contents. New York Fashion Week is always changeable because it has been a private activity since its establishment. It has nothing to do with industry associations and this has remained the same for a long period. Now it's still a private organization. We don't know yet for what purpose did the private organization hold such activity, at least I don't since I never talk to them. You can find that it is a mutated ordering party. Only few people remains the tradition of catwalk and influences fashion. The level is clear. It also has things like Haute Couture. They maximized it one year to Holiday Inn in Times Square. The scale was not big. It has a main venue where the designers may have relatively large reputation and social influence. But the tickets there are not sold. New York Fashion Week sells tickets, but not the main venue ones. They have moved it to the old postal building now. The young talents' part is arranged in a business park near China Town. Some ordering parties were in a pier of west Manhattan, also like a small business park. I've been to 3 sites, 4 if include Holiday Inn. Probably they just want to satisfy designers from different level or of different needs from a business perspective. Some can draw lots, like Macy's. Their organization is relatively tight that it divides the different areas according to the different requirements of the designers, and provides different service.

	Service is something we chinese fashion weeks are all weak at.
29'58	Service means designers just need to pay some fees to them and they will be responsible for everything including photoshoots and producing, like Labelhood?
	I mean those participate in can tell fashion week their requirements , “what do you want to get?” and people can realize what you want. But our service is...since foreign fashion weeks have started a lot of years ago, thus they have a mature service system and regulation, people can give advice to them. It's different here.
	The epicenter for me this time was Labelhood because it was relevant to my project. I followed them for a long time, seeing them changing from an empty site to a painted site. I found that show production is done by their producing team which is a group of workers hired by Labelhood. The leader communicated to designers and arranged work to the workers. It is totally a different status in Europe. It has different sorts for exhibition and production.
31'33	Their exhibition service is even better.
	They have a whole team, a site designer.
	And also a lot of options.

	They will give designers a few plans to choose. They further refine in your ideas.
	It's normal that we earn money in a economic activity. But I don't know where the money come from except site fee. This is not a new problem. It has been there long before. The organizers do not have full awareness or the system is not completed cause this.
32'19	Yes, it's also about the industrial chain is immature.
	I remember we went to the earliest Shanghai International Costume Culture Festival who cooperate with Milan Fashion Week in the early 2000s. International Exhibition Company is the world's first listed exhibition company. This company can tell you what service you are provided. For example if you come, it can help you solve the basic necessities of life; if you want to visit some where, it will give you advice and arrange the exhibition route for you. These all can be used as a source of income. If you want to know the overall Milan fashion industry, they have their arrangement as well. This is service. Fashion industry in Shanghai was one that had advantage in service. But some old serving traditions fade away, including department store. We cannot abandon these good things created by our seniors which need our deeper dig. For example, in the past there was already service competitions and regulations in our business system during the 1950s or 1960s. But we cannot reach that level now. Shanghai's so-called fashion culture has gone backwards from some aspect.
34'08	Indeed, from industrial chain and service.
	And the whole humanities.
34'20	Can you talk about humanity?

	What we say about 'humanity' is something more in culture field. Not saying that his knowledge is not enough. Shanghai's population increased greatly from millions of people to twenty millions of people. If a migrant population comes from a city with a lower level of urban culture than Shanghai, he can simply offset quality of the aboriginal people by adding quantity. Shanghainese is not aggressive. They are more easily assimilated by foreign cultures. Although they created their own cultures after those years, they are not expansive. I don't remember who said this: 'township beats the citizens'. Hence, those who dress well and look fashionable get less and less. Of course the township are jealous about these people and learn from them, but it will become a downward trend for a time.
35'57	It feels like the peak of Shanghai costume culture is in the Republic of China period.
	However, that time is our imagination. There may not be any imagination later on because Shanghai develops so quickly. The traces of the Republic of China get less and less. History has been forgotten and disappears.
36'23	Talking about cultural gene, London Fashion Week created a radical cultural...
	This is two sides for Britain. Its disadvantage is that the so-called avant-garde of contemporary designers can impact the reserved, serious and rigorous system maintained by British culture.
37'11	France has shaped an elegant, noble...
	They stick to their culture more.
	Very stubborn and protects it well.
	They are always wary of foreign cultures.
	Italy is famous for handicraft. Their style is simple and comfortable.

	Their lifestyle has not change much even though they have developed for a lot of years.
	The best fabrics designers use today are mostly made in Italy. Through the fabric and handicraft, they managed to build their own clothing culture on the one hand. When its clothing culture was very characteristic, Shanghai had actually a group identity. It's just the identity has been forgotten afterwards with the development of economy. After Shanghai Fashion Week is established, the style now has diverse possibilities and is more frequently be discovered. From an aspect of fashion trend, will their be a new cultural identity built up in Shanghai in the future?
	From a cultural point of view, Shanghai is a cultural integration after the opening based on Jiangnan District, including Suzhou, and uses Suzhou cultural circle as a cultural background. Even if it looks western in form, basically The feature of pursuing exquisite and elegance still exist.
39'37	But this feature in fashion weeks is not obvious.
	It is still there, but not that evident. In Shanghai, the average literacy of the general public is above the level of the industry. The cultural feature of this city is actually people-oriented instead if profession-oriented.
	This is an essential difference from Europe.
	This is different from Europe since citizens are different. Secondly, in an era of planned economy, fashion industry is relatively planned and develops better. It has always been in short supply. It has the duty to make production for the whole country. In that period you can find that even simplicity, practicality and appearance are emphasized, under the condition of shortage of economy, it can still remain some of its features. In the late period, we need revolution and innovation which are certainly destructive. When an old system is broken down and the new one hasn't finished, it is messy for sure.

	What is this new system like? Everything is in the stage of discovery. Recently, consumption is more powerful and local supply is relatively weak. There should be a process. Both Italian and American have experienced a lot years. Culture needs time, not money. It needs one or more generation's hard work. In this process, fashion week may play a more important role based on providing more requirements and service to designers. They should ask designers to influence more on the industry. Those elements appear in fashion week could actually reflect in shanghai citizens. This needs process.
	Any possibilities?
	I believe there is. 'Haipai' was not a good word originally, but it changed into a neutral one then a good one. This needs process.
	You've mentioned selecting...
	There's certainly choosing, but not base on style. At least it is not directly defined 'on style'.
43'22	Do you know a phenomenon that...I use a designer I know as an example: when he did a show in Milan, he was very professional doing a serious runway with relatively commercial garments made with top fabrics that are easier to get into the market. When he came back to Shanghai to create a presentation, because he knew nobody will look at his work carefully, people came just for fun, so he invited a singer to the show and made it a concert. Who can tell what you are wearing in such a dark environment?
	He made it recreative.
	Like he said, 'nobody cares'. So why should I do it professional is there's no one cares. Nobody will look at it even if I did it, so why not make them laugh and I can have some influence in media? What's your point on this attitude?

44'36	From the utilitarian point of view, he did not do wrong. But he will have trouble from the long run. The trouble will be leaving an impression of making entertainments instead of good designs in public. Another one will be, do you think chinese fans are loyal? We have to understand why he do that. It is because we cannot provide him good service. Things in the industry is something you should do with heart and good attitude. Only by that can you do it well. Temporary utility is acceptable, but in the long run it will cause problem in marketing.
45'30	Short-term utility is a wrong way that cannot solve the fundamental problem. Do you think at least designers should focus on design work?
	It depends on what definition he put on himself. One sells product or...?
	An artist.
	Then just do creation, not to expect economic success. He can put cross-over into consideration, but the core of cross-over is also sell designs out as commercial products.
	An art piece that can be sold. Next I want to ask a question that I'm curious about. What's the future of Chinese independent designers and Chinese brands led by young designers?
	Generally speaking, one is big enterprises, another is small designers. There is no third possibility.
	It's definitely like this. From your aspect, where do you think the future lies? In large group of garment factories or small designers?
	Large enterprises are still more powerful since there're about 120 enterprises throughout the country. Their investment funds add up to at least 10 billion.
	So you think China's future fashion discourse, including leading styles are hard works all these big groups need to do.

	They have more duty. Small designers are targeting smaller groups, which may be high end or low end. But without support from big enterprises, small designers will live a hard life, or moreover, they cannot live. They need social resource to support them.
	Being a small designer should learn everything.
	Originally, designers should know everything.
	But in a mature industrial chain, somebody will do these things for you.
	It's the same. It depends on what kind of designer you want to become. I once met a small designer in New York. He has good ideas and a good life, but his garments are with bad quality.
	Polarization is particularly obvious and this will last for a long time. So that's why you think they won't have the right to speak. Basically, it's hard to realize.
	The right to speak will definitely lies in classification, a detailed classification. This is originally without authority. Fashion brands do not have authority as well.
	Yeah, fashion industry has less and less industry, different from decades ago.
	We still had capital and capital decades ago.
	Nowadays it's a public...
49'30	I set up a Shanghai Brand Development Fund, we will do a Fashion Industry Fund later. We will use the government's credibility to influence and to guide the investment of social funds. Otherwise these small designers will all die.
	This is the duty government and our industry should bear.
	Otherwise they cannot live.
	When I was chatting with people in foreign industry, I seldom hear they saying 'we are the leaders and we should lead the

	professional field from an aspect of the whole society.
50'26	So there is still advantage of socialism.
	They will adjust it as a whole. They'll tidy up your mess.
50'38	China's urban governance structure, or social governance structure and the West ones are not the same. China's social governance structure is more concerned with the overall development of the country. Westerners mayors are elected. No matter what the country is, he just cares about the city. He did more to maintain the city's operation, that is, he is equivalent to a general manager. He just needs to keep the city going.
	Professional people manage professional things only.
	This is a result decided by western governance structure. For chinese, since chinese traditional culture is to let some people become rich and then the others? This is to promote the overall social structure.
	Multi-dimensional.
51'42	Chinese government's duty is also multi-dimensional. They bear duties that are shared by enterprises and organizations in the west. Hence they have more things to consider. Situations are more complicated here since we don't have regulation, no boundary in the industry. They focus on how the society develops while in the west, there may not be so many people care about politics. They care more about whether they live happy or not.
52'23	The progress of civilization is a clearer and clearer boundary.
	Eastern philosophy is totally different from western philosophy. Western philosophy is based on personal property. Here, all our property belongs to the country, the empire, the world. We have a special concept of 'world' which means Chinese philosophy faces the public. This is totally different. That's why we talk about social significance in everything. Sometimes not all things

	have social significance or not while people were doing this.
53'16	Yes, so when you talk about social significance and fashion, I don't feel like they have much relevance.
	See backwards, fashion of course have social significance.
53'48	Just we don't think about it most of the time. In the western society, it has professional definition in brand establishing, independent designer and brand classification, even if it's controversial, but it is still a clear one now. The questions you've asked me are also the ones I'm developing in China and need to think of: the definition and classification of Chinese fashion designers and independent brands. Since Leng Yun did such things, but he just classified them according to the era, designer's growing up background and his expanded business layout, mostly relied on era. For example born in 1950s-1960s, became famous in 2000s; born in the late 1960s, became famous in the early 2000s. Do you think the classification is reasonable? Do you think there is any problem? And how to define it better, chinese fashion brands, big group brands and independent designers' brands?
55'26	First of all, why should you classify them? If you sort something you should have goals. You must have a goal and then look for a standard. There's no right or wrong. There's only reasonable or not reasonable in standardizing. This depends on on what purpose you sort them. Its about what you want to do and then what you should do.
55'52	If the angle is from fashion week culture and fashion designers' screening? Because western definition in this area is also clear. You can see yourself that you will know if it is a big brand from the scale and it has a clear definition of whether relying on fashion consulting company, fashion production company other PR company apart from their company. If it is a big company, it

	has a refined department system itself. It doesn't have to use power from outside. But if it is an independent designer, it cannot finish itself. It needs professional fashion consulting company to help them finish brand operation and sales, PR company to do the whole propaganda and guest invitation and show production company to do the setting and site designing. These are clear definitions. Do you think this standard suit shanghai?
57'25	So your standard is mainly about making a show.
	Yes, from fashion week.
	We could also use this form. But is you use it you will find that all brands in SFW needs these departments. They all cannot finish this. That's why I define it as a small designer. They don't have a complete system itself.
	Yes, most of them are small designers, but even some big brands don't do these things either.
	什么. The second is that most shanghai fashion enterprises have PR departments and professional propaganda department, but they still have to use social strength. It's only that they have a special department so that they can solve daily public relations. When it comes to big events, they still have to cooperate with companies outside.
	Take Burberry as an example. Their digital department has over 100 people. Their creative department is also large. If they are doing a local event in Britain, they don't actually have to rely on others. Unless they do it in Shanghai, they need local help.
	Foreign big companies can do that, but they are few. They may have such department, yet the department has to rely on professional companies.
	But it feels like there's few professional companies.
	It needs a growing process since china is developing so fast. So

	does media form. Even if they want to start a department, they cannot find suitable person. E-commerce thinking and brand business thinking is not the same. So as the society develops, a lot problem emerges.
	Basically it's the fast speed.
	Others have developed 300 years while we did it in 30 years, so we of course will meet the same problems they had.

4. Yang Y. (2017) 'China's fashion cultural system and communication system'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 5 May.

Original Language: Chinese

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Chen

	Could you talk about the job you are doing, except being an editor? What's your business scope?
0'18	We are editors of new media, now doing two main parts of jobs: one is refreshing the platform every day, including showing our audience new fashion match, new trends and current hotspots like Oscar and Met Ball; the other is photo shooting celebrities, which is 70% to 80% of my job, including communicating with the celebrities, deciding the themes, making the schedule, finding the photographer or the director then producing and promoting it. Shooting for the celebrities has become the major job for almost all the editors in new media platform, except those basic ones, because this is the most profitable part as a fashion new media platform.
1'44	I realize that you've also had an e-commerce in your platform, right?
1'54	Yes, but that's not my part. We have editors specified for this part.
2'00	That means you are not only a website with contents but also with links to e-commerce?
	Yep.
2'12	Do all of the new media editors do jobs like yours, for example, 70 to 80% was shooting celebrities?

	Let me think, oh well, now there's two main of media: some new media like us with media function, which means that they have to do things with the celebrities, for example, fashion week photo shoots and celebrity themes; another kind of new media is like a IF fashion Tencent fashion and IFeng fashion, they tend to make content production which means they don't output celebrities photo shoots but instead they produce or write articles about matching, trend analysis and things like that. In this case what editors have to do is to control this theme decision and contact with the writers or they can choose to write on their own. Well, there are two choices, one is to collect all the second-hand information and sort them out; the other type is to do it like us, like what we do with the celebrities.
3'35	So while choosing the topic does that means you follow the celebrity? Like you'll choose what's the hottest topic of this star?
	Yes.
	Completely decided by the market and the celebrity?
3'54	Yes. Actually, there's an ideal status in new media is that we follow the hotspots. Recently in our country, what my colleagues and I are facing is that on most occasions we cannot book the hottest star in the hot spot. Hence, we'll try a similar one.
4'27	Yesterday you mentioned that some celebrity will change the question you prepared. I've also heard the other editors from different new media said about this issue before as well. It seems they have different opinions while they are discussing with the celebrities' agent team. Did you ever have any impressive moment that was really tough?
4'55	I think the toughest would be that we have no right to speak towards the stars public relations team as new media editors.
	Yeah, I remember you saying similar things in your moment tour we chat or something.

	After all, we only have a few steps in the photo shooting process. The first one will be deciding what topic we are going to shoot, then what style our garments will be and the third we have to decide how many of our photos should be chosen. For example, if we have to pick out six photos now and our opinions are different, in most cases we eventually listen to their ideas. Even if they are not professional, they're not OK with aesthetic but we have no other choices.
6'07	Yeah, you can do nothing with it. By the way, can you talk about hair rocket from your own experience there? Like its level and size order? Or for example, they adore Harper's Bazaar sincerely?
6'42	Paper media is the one that's easier to communicate with, especially in the Chinese fashion market. As long as you are a paper media that means you're way better than a new media for all the celebrities. No matter media like Tencent, IFeng, or the edge paper magazines like <Zhiyin>, <Xinwei> and <Women Friends>, as long as you are issued, published and with special topics, they will treat you better. Paper media has more ride to speak because they have more resources. For example <Harper's Bazaar> is publishing several covers in a month but there still celebrities lining up waiting to be on the cover. That makes their editors' life much easier. The cooperation with celebrities is going better as well. But the situation was totally different for our new media editors. If the platform behind the editor is powerful, for example, if editors work for Tencent or IFeng, they'll be fine. But new media like us who just created our own platform and all the employers don't have their paper magazine background or filming background, agents will be tough at you. On top of this business chain are magazines like <Harpers Bazaar>, <Vogue> and <Mr. Figaro>, famous new media like double snap who can invite a lot of celebrities others cannot lie in the middle, followed by big platforms with a huge flow like Tencent and IFeng. At last, us, who stays in the bottom.

	We are the completely new ones that have only new media as our only business. We don't have any flow or any other business as a support, the only path we can invite a celebrity is through our relationships, our boss's relationships or a brand's invitation.
8'48	What do you think is the reason that they treat new media and paper media differently? Is the market's need the only cause?
9'14	I think no matter new media or paper media, the final outcome is linked with the celebrity's image and commercial value. Because we are now cooperating with brands, if the brands want to find someone, for example, Chanel held an activity in Chengdu yesterday, whom to invite and why they invite became quite important. Soon after they entered Chanel's activity, Xin Zhilei and Chen Yao quickly received invitations from other fashion brands. That's the effect of paper media. A photo shoot in Harpers Bazaar may equal to a dozen new media photo shooting. The brands may think that if you were in Bazaar before then you must have some commercial value. That's why paper media have privilege and celebrities care them more. They are so beneficial to their public image, especially luxury brands. Those classic luxury brands don't even trust new media because fashion development is lagging behind. While a PR is adding up KPI, counting how many implants they did within a year from the celebrities, those they wear in new media doesn't count. For example, two pages in paper media count for two pages, but maybe three topics in new media only count for half a page. Basically, I think it's due to the luxury brands. Celebrities who want to be in the fashion field knows that the brands want them to

	show more in the paper magazines instead of new media.
10'56	Then what's the difference between new media editor and paper media editor in article contents and operation?
11'17	Paper media manage all the things in a classical way which we learnt in school, from choosing the topic, planning along to executing. This will also make them more professional. For example, they might put 7-8 people in a topic group and if they need a stylist or a setting designer they would hire a professional one with experience and resource. Meanwhile, in new media, one position might have various a dozen jobs. Take me as an example, I work as an assistant and art director who is responsible for scheduling, making PPT and borrowing clothes in the early period of shooting, then I change into a stylist during shooting, pairing up clothes and at last, I go back to an editor in the third stage. New media cannot afford a professional stylist now, not to mention settings. Cases are that usually, we finish a setting designer's work ourselves, moving the couches, buying flowers, etc. We don't have enough time, energy or resource to leave it to a professional team.
	May I ask what's the salary of a traditional editor in a paper magazine?
13'10	Approximately about 7,000-8,000 per month in Beijing for an editor like me. No more than 10,000.
	Then some of them might get less paid than new media.

13'32	Salaries for this position is no high, but commission and rebate are. What celebrities wears defines the income. For example, I'm preparing for 6 looks, one Chanel, one Gucci, the other 4 would usually be brands that are not so familiar. Then that means they'll come up to me and pay me maybe 10,000 for one garment. This part is where editors get their major income from. Like me, my boss actually shared an agreement about commission with me, if we can implant one garment then I can get some percentage. However, this commission won't exist in traditional media, so they won't tell you and make all the transaction secretly. So if they do such business, it won't be hard for a traditional editor to earn 20,000-30,000 a month, or maybe even 40,000-50,000.
	I've heard a story from my designer friend who sent her clothes to a stylist. I wonder if you know independent designers like Xu Zhi and Angel Chen, how much do they have to pay if they send clothes to a stylist? For example for 2 looks in one layout?
15'17	This depends on the magazine and the celebrity. Take Mi Yang, who's a hit right now, as an example, she asks for different return for different activities. Actually, there's no such stiff price sheet, it relies more on the relationship between the designer and the stylist. Some designers can bargain one garment to 20,000 while some of them cannot get the offer even if they pay twice or more. One garment won't be higher than 50,000, it might be somewhere between 20,000 to 50,000. This is only for photo shooting, not a business endorsement. Like second-tier or third-tier stars we usually shoot, they are on average 20,000 to 30,000. But for superstars like Bingbing Fan and Ziyi Zhang, it might be 50,000-60,000 or more. Basically no less than 50,000, especially stars like Mi Yang.
16'33	I'm curious about sending garments to TFboy's stylist personally. How much should they prepare?
16'40	I'm not really sure about this actually. Well, the most unclear part of this trading is that we don't know how they communicate, the

	stylist and the celebrity's agent. Some stylists are honest, telling you that those clothes are implanted and give you commission, but some stylists don't and pretend they're just right for the celebrity.
17'04	In most cases they don't tell the truth, do they?
17'06	Yeah, cuz if they do, stars will ask for more. Actually, it is the price gap that creates this gray zone. The brand has to pay only 20,000 to me if they want this star to wear the garment, but if they communicate directly with the celebrity, they will ask for much more, like 50,000 or 80,000 because of image authorization, even if it's not for business use. The most unbelievable quoted price we experienced was recently from a celebrity called Li Dong. He asked for 3,000,000 just an hour in some activity held in France.
17'42	Terrifying! Now it seems that dozens of thousands I usually heard is quite normal then.
17'54	That was insane. Normally, image authorization would cost at least 1,000,000 for three months.
18'27	What's the relationship between the media editor and brand PR in your view?
18'45	Normally, PR treats editors well, especially those in paper magazines because editors can control brand distribution. Implants I said was just about domestic designer brands, international luxury ones don't do that. Editors won't get paid from luxury brands unless their garments are on Vogue cover. Chanel won't give us money for our daily shooting. The brands our PR communicate with is usually international brands like Jimmy Choo, Gucci, Fendi, etc. They are always kind to editors because they also have the business assessment. How 'kind' they treat you depends on whom you work for. For example, if you are an editor from Vogue, then you'll receive the best treatment, but if you are from new media, they won't notice you at

	first because they don't believe you have resource, but when you can provide something, they'll be polite to you and fully support you as well. They're also fighting for themselves, hoping their product can be on your models. So that's why many PR now do similar things. For example, she's a PR from Jimmy Choo with some resources of some other small brands, when I go to her to borrow, she'll give me money and ask if I could shoot them as well. A lot of PRs are doing this right now. Salary is not enough, the 'gray zone' is supporting their lives. If the brand gives us ¥12,000, actually this has already been transferred several times. Maybe it was ¥50,000 in the first transaction. So a brand doesn't actually know how much a media take from them. New media like us use personal account instead of contracts and company account, that provides us more space, otherwise, we cannot do so much.
21'30	Did you ever meet with unpleasant things while you are communicating with brands?
21'41	Brands are being nice since they're party A to us. Since we're doing business with celebrities, we're much easier. If I was an editor writing articles, the brand may ask to modify it again and again to reach a specific writing style. For those who are dealing with stars, all a brand ask for is to eventually put it on the stars. Compared to them, our lives are much easier.
	Did they ever pick on you because of a content?
22'37	It's happening every day. I'm also helping some bloggers with commercial writings. One thing just happened a few days ago: I received all the information from the brand and stayed up late to finish writing the brief. And when the next day came, they came to me and said they were going to change all the resource pictures and the article is going to be useless. They won't explain the reasons and they don't think it is unreasonable. They were just asking you to do the work. Even quarrel doesn't help. This happens every day. Actually, being honest, domestic brands

	aren't professional now since the Chinese fashion industry is quite young. So what I've said, no matter editor, PR, stylist or photographer, most of them aren't that professional. Some of them even started halfway, from journalism, law, etc. They are not educated with full information about how fashion industry works or how stylists work. We Chinese are doing everything in a different way, a way so different from abroad.
24'13	From our experience, where do you think we should improve in the fashion industry?
	First of all, like what I've just said, every employee has to improve their professional level. This is the most serious problem I realize. Secondly, it's a bit messy now. There's no clear regulation about the gray zone, celebrity cooperation, and quoted price. This means nobody's in charge of this part so you can do whatever you want.
25'11	Do whatever you want according to market needs.
	If any dispute happened, there's no law to rule you because there's no contract between you. We'll have no access to right protection for our brands and editors if we do nothing. They'll all end up in negotiation in private. Because there is no regulation now. Another thing is that I don't think we have a fashion industry now, it's not yet at an 'industry', especially for new media. This new media is more like entertainment new media because it serves for celebrities. It does not serve fashion.
25'56	Then what is a healthy industry ecology like in your expectation?

	First of all, all employees should be well educated. A system is needed to regulate everything. Actually, fashion media can learn from others from for example the traditional journalism, who doesn't take money from everything. They are still critical and have systems for critique and feedback. They don't always compare beauty between celebrities and only report the advantage of a designers show. So I think a critical system is necessary. And then level up all the employees' quality. Actually, this is so hard to realize because fashion industry is now making quick money. If a brand comes to you and gives you some money to prevent you saying bad things about them why not take that money? A mission for all editors now is that we have to explain clearly why the public should understand the value of Chanel or the value of an innovative silhouette or inspiration, what they can get more from here than reading an article about Mi Yang. Helping the audience to understand the importance of fashion is the editors' task. Cases are that for example, I've got a lot of stylists and makeup artists in my WeChat list, but I dare not to criticize them even they're doing such bad job because if I do so then when one day I have to cooperate with them, it will be so awkward. We used to have fashion bloggers but now...for example if SK-II promises to give you 3 million a year asking you to promote them, how could you refuse that? I don't know how to explain to that situation. If I'm a blogger and SK-II comes to me with 3 million I would definitely do the same thing. If I am friends with Chris Lee, I won't say bad words with them either. Collaboration and profit bond everyone together, then there won't be critiques and become a mess. You actually cannot find a valuable domestic fashion week goods. All shows and celebrity photo shoots are praised by the public. No one says 'no' or tells you that you're doing in a wrong direction or your designs are degenerating. Not even one.
	Can you talk about your understanding of fashion and fashion culture? You can go deep.

29'55	From a micro aspect, it means what a person wears every day, how he wears them and why they wear them. Then, from a macro aspect, as an editor, it is the reflection of economy and culture within the whole society on garments. Many people think they should follow the icons, for example, Mi Yang, and wear oversized and go street style, otherwise, they'll be out of fashion. This is only a phenomenon fashion brings. Actually, deep inside, what matters is the reasons behind why leader designers from international brands all chose these elements. So, fashion is like a mirror, reflecting on the world's biggest changes. For example, gorgeous ball gowns in the 90s won't be a trend for 2018 because we're in an era called 'web age 2.0' when everybody gets a phone and ball gown no longer means wealth. What we chase for is so-called 'equality' among fashion which means a ¥2 garment may look similar to a ¥1,000 one. I think fashion culture studies how design interact with the whole world, is it stimulating the others or influenced by them? Of course, other interesting topics are worth study as well. However, those two words are commonly used in our daily media too, but it somehow changed their meanings to 'how to be fashionable' and 'what is the trend'. The former replaced 'fashion' and the latter represented 'fashion culture'. Even big magazines like <Vogue> and <Harper's Bazaar> aren't thinking profoundly. The reason I'm speaking ill of paper media is that those abroad are doing differently. One of the importance of <Vogue> is that it can tell the public the value of fashion garment while other new media are focusing on which celebrity wears it. But now, <Vogue China> and <Harper's Bazaar> had become 'published new media'. If you have interest you can follow the official account of these two magazines, they're so hilarious. They're making mistakes that make you doubt them.
	Domestic paper magazine editors are weak now. They only care about money. Apparently, the whole industry ecology is making money.

33'55	Honestly, editors should generally learn journalism or communication. While I was learning journalism in China, I didn't have any contact with fashion. We used to think fashion is a low-level major because it is so superficial. If I didn't study abroad I won't choose to join in this industry definitely. I'm dissatisfied with it, thinking it has no contribution to society. What I know is that most editors didn't even learn journalism, they might study fashion design abroad and come back to buyer major for further study. I have to point out that they're not qualified in literacy in the first place. What's worse is that we don't have a clear position for fashion editors, so they don't know how to analyze. If they're only educated in our own country and haven't gone abroad, of course, celebrity is all they know. They don't follow the top trends and are exposed under second-hand resources, so they lost their independent thinking.
35'47	It happened to me several times that I heard this from my friends who are independent designers in London and Paris. They said that if the designer is not so close to the editor in person, he'll receive an invoice asking for extra payment after the editor has interviewed them, otherwise his interview won't be published. Have you ever heard about similar things?
	You mean extra requirement?
	Yeah, is it a rare situation or a common one?
37'00	It is normal. This is not only an issue in the fashion industry, it happens in almost every industry, every brand. If you want to use any area in the media, you have to pay. For example, in Sina Weibo, if anyone wants to congratulate their idol's birthday and want Weibo to send an official greeting, they have to pay for that. Yesterday a really interesting thing happened to me that an employee in a domestic skincare product brand sent me ¥200 red packet asking me only to re-post an article in WeChat moment. Another thing that happens a lot is that in large WeChat groups, someone will give big red packets asking all the

	members to repost nine photos of his celebrity, and when they did so and screenshot their results they can get maybe ¥2 each even if they set the repost to private.
	There what's the meaning of collecting those screenshots?
	The staff can photoshop the private sign later and then use it as a promotion to say their celebrity's work has attracted a lot of attention in this industry. Nowadays we know a lot of KOLs have fake data, but actually, it doesn't matter. I've talked to an editor who knows the KOL she hired uses fake reading volume, but she says it's OK because when she showed this fake data to her boss, her boss will think it is a fair trade because she only used, for example, ¥50,000. PRs all know it's fake. There is a domestic blogger identifying those fake data, but he's living a tough life because he steals living from mass people.
39'37	If a show comment on <Vogue> sells for ¥100,000, is it too much or is it fair?
	If it's in vogue, it is quite fair. This is the average price for the publication because this will be like an advertisement. <Vogue> has huge big customers like cars suppliers and watch suppliers, so ¥100,000 won't be a big number for them.
	Can I say it's already a great honor for the person who wants to publish an article on <Vogue> to pay ¥100,000?
40'18	Yes, indeed. The great difference between Vogue China and Vogue US is that their editors, for example, Anna Wintour would really discover new talents like Alexander Wang and write articles about them, about their value. But in China, no. We're already crowded with ads. Writing articles about you for free? Don't you even think about it! Our editors are now not satisfied with their ¥20,000 salary, how would they do that? Originally, it is about whether this editor has feelings and passion for her job.

	Maybe some big editors have these qualities and power, they totally can choose one of the new brands in Shanghai Fashion Week they like and report them, but this needs passion. We have to understand that they have no duty to abandon the high salary they've got and do such things.
41'36	Yeah. <Vogue Italia> has been doing such things as supporting new talents in years. Their vice editor has been seeking new talents worldwide. Some of my friends who are independent fashion designers benefited from this magazine. In this situation, they don't have to pay for publishing on <Vogue>, no matter paper magazine or website.
42'06	What I meant was, you can close them, But at least you should maintain your taste and profession and select valuable topics for your audience and for this industry. This is a duty of being in the media industry. That's why I said a lot of bad things about them because they are a group of people only cares about money. As long as you've got money, I won't ask for anything else.
	By the way, their stylists are hard to communicate with, too.
	Paper magazine editors are so arrogant, especially in <Vogue> and <Bazaar>. They think that they are the queen. It's such a tough thing dealing with them. So that's why 'profession' is the first point I said when you ask me. For example you received ¥100,000 today, it is a good thing but meanwhile, you have to think what should you do to make this money a fair trade and you have the duty to find talents that worthy of ¥100,000.
43'15	Labelhood of Shanghai Fashion Week, found by Tasha, is a good platform aiming at supporting new talents every year, just like Fashion Scott by Martin in London. In the early years, they import designers from London and now from worldwide. They hold a venue during Shanghai Fashion Week, creating an atmosphere of Utopia with various visual fashion forms. Their goal is to encourage the new designers to show themselves. It is

	a good try. However, their PR fee for only one season is at least ¥380,000, and this prize is not for a whole package. As far as I know, if a designer wants a good service in Shanghai Fashion Week, the average price for hiring a PR team is ¥800,000 for one season. In Europe, this is different. ¥800,000 is a price that even the top top PR teams can't reach. They have a really professional average price. This is partially due to, like what you said, our market is an on-demand supply. Can you say something about your opinion on this part? Or is it similar to what you've said?
45'29	Characteristic socialist road' appears in almost every domestic industry. This is also the same with price and operation. Even though luxury brands aren't earning much in the Chinese market, brands seem to be still motivated, believing there's always someone buying their products so they always need celebrities to endorse them. This encourages the whole capital market causing people willing to pay big money as an exchange. There is no appropriate price, only affordable one and unaffordable one. There is no rule asking you to list all your details in how you use the money. Eventually, this is due to the needs in our market and the feedback brands can get from this. Brands would love to spend this amount of money because they know they can get good return payback. So this depends on the revenue ratio. If China's revenue ratio comes out high, then the huge amount they spent does make sense. But how this is exactly working, I think nobody knows because the brand is not going to tell you the data. Another thing hard to predict is that... We know a brand is building an image for itself, especially luxury brands, they're building a completed one. For example, the brand hire Chris Lee as their endorsement, the influence might not be selling out 100 garments, it's more in the long term. This effect is hard to evaluate. Thus, now brands have developed into a situation that... since there's also someone paying the bills, since the star has so many fans (just think about the population China got, a Chinese star can easily own a number a foreign superstar can get), since Chinese like to shop anyway, the brands would think

	why not take a try. And to be honest, Chinese is the main force for luxury brands.
48'28	Lately, I was interviewing a senior who was the chief editor of the <Bride> magazine in China Fashion Collective. She had been in this position for decades. During the interview, I noticed that she was witnessed the 'golden 10 years' in China paper magazines. We talked about the situations at that time, realizing there wasn't any gray zone like we have now. If all of the information she gave me was real, then the editors at that time do had the critical thinking and the passion for fashion we talked about. Do you think the situation we have now is linked with time? Why we developed into a highly marketable environment and why our young editors work like that? If you say this is connected with fashion culture, I think partly not because Reform and Opening just started in the 1980s. That was the first time we import the concept of 'fashion culture'.

49'58	I think this is due to the big environment we have. The problems we talked about not only happen in the fashion industry, just they're more exaggerated here. Nowadays paper magazines do the same things as well, everybody is playing tricks to earn money. I think the most serious reason is that consumerism in China had developed quickly from around 2002. Kids now are wearing Gucci and Louis Vuitton since a very young age. Even the fashion dramas promoting mainstream culture, for example <Ode to Joy> and <Women in Beijing>, is Telling the audience that the evidence to prove your own value in a big city is buying LV bag. This reminds me of a drama I used to watch when we were young. It tells a story of a girl applying for a newspaper company but got refused. She didn't give up easily and finally became the chief editor. So recently, Chanel and LV, or bags and perfumes became essential things to prove you're living a good life. Of course, this is a reflection of the big environment, but this will cause the panic among people about not having enough money, or a good house, or delicate cars, or oversea travels as the market economy grows. Chinese suddenly turns all of its attention to this area. I quite agree with Han Han. Nowadays even the young generation doesn't have incredible expectations or passion. They are now having a really stable life and know clearly what their plans are. They are pursuing a materialized life which makes money even more important. That's why it's so hard to find a setting group when I was in Milan or London. The time I said I have to work 10 hours every day, they hesitated no matter how much I pay. They think it's not proper to work overtime. The situation is different in China. Chinese think since the boss pays you then it's OK to work every minute. My boss often has meetings with me at 3 o'clock without noticing. In short words: Chinese love money too much. They're so panic about not having money. Every industry is looking to the future, so does fashion. But to be honest, most employees are 'peacocks' who need money desperately. I know an editor in whose salary is about ¥5000 per month. She went to Milan Fashion Week one

	year when Gucci provide all the invited editors a 30% off discount. We thought she'd buy a lot but she actually didn't have any money to buy that. Under that circumstances, why would she refuse the grey income later when she works? Yeah, everybody is panicking, ¥10,000 is not enough, ¥20,000 is also not enough. If money comes first, then the other things, like profession, won't be as important. For example, the foreign magazines and editors we talked about believe the public should know the talents, they think it's important. However, Chinese don't. Chinese don't think they're influencing the whole industry, or they don't care. Their attitude is if I can earn ¥100,000 now, then do it first now.
54'27	We don't even put enough interest in our own traditional culture, how can we care so much about those foreign imported goods?
	This, again, comes to the profession. If every single editor has her pride in being a media influencer and having her own taste, she wouldn't do a lot of things. Problem is that the pride is abandoned or it hasn't existed ever. Nobody tells them they should at least have their pride and principal.

55'19	May I share an opinion with you that I noticed a phenomenon during my talk with the representative for SFW while I was doing research about culture comparison between fashion weeks. European social context and its backgrounds are social stratifications and stratum differentiation. Hierarchy is obviously the core value. However, after introduced to China, since it's against the mainstream value and is different from what our Party wants the public to be, it leads to awkward cases like political awards during fashion weeks in the 1990s, and amateurs ruling experts. Luckily, we have SFW later with more professional, well, relatively more professional experts. Since governments have close relationships to promote mainstream value, they're now declassifying. They tried every effort to make fashion week a public carnival without limits. Everyone can participate in it. It belongs to the public and our people. There are a huge amount of activities open to the public. Hence, the core value of fashion week it should have has already changed. Basically, fashion weeks don't have the original economic and cultural functions in our country. What's your opinion about this problem? The organizer told me if you don't match with the mainstream values of socialism, it's hard for both you and them to get you involved. The government won't give you a permission. Sometimes, you are rejected because of the government's suppression of individuality. For example, the design sketches you hand in was not the same style, which is an ordinary, commercial and non-unique one governments prefer, you may not pass. The organizer said at first they asked somebody to design the fashion week site that has links with our own culture. I've seen those drafts, they were so well-drawn. I can tell we really do have great designs. But they were all failed after handed in to the government because it's too creative. The stream of consciousness and behavior in the Chinese government are very contradictory. This made Chinese fashion weeks a freak.

59'11	The situation has been worse since president Xi was voted. Even if we skip his words about national values and socialist road, I don't feel like our government care about people's happiness. The reason is quite simple: they fear everything they have not seen and different from the past. If the sketch makes them feel 'this is different from what I saw' or 'I rarely see things like this' or 'this is new', it probably won't work because nobody wants to be blamed for the risk. In London, there're hundreds of styles of garments, of sites and even forms to present. This is so hard to be seen in China because we don't promote diversity. We never encourage people to be themselves, instead, we are in a group, with our people. Then how can you wear abnormal clothes on the street? The government hasn't restricted it, but the core value is the same: please don't be different, be the same as the others. Just do things as normal. The government doesn't care about things like fashion culture, what they care is being safe and avoiding controversy.
1'00'50	Yeah, the smaller the better.
	Just don't get me into trouble.
1'00'54	What's your view?
	I can do nothing. What else can I do? In China, if anything was related to the government, then we can do nothing. We don't even have a chance to try. Whom could you talk to? You say that creativity is important. Everybody agrees with you, the designers, the editors, everybody. But as long as the government says no, then NO, you can't do it. This is the fact in our country. Fashion week is not the only case. For example, recently Sina Weibo banned LGBT and rainbow on its app. Where could you complain and fight for your right for this? Nowhere. Just be silent. I'm quite passive about this. If somebody asks me what can he do I'll tell him to bear it. We have some greater issues to solve. We still have problems like this because we don't have any choices. As long as it's related to government, we don't have any solution.

	We don't have space to communicate or complain.
	We can see that China has now made some 'freaks', but the Chinese market is so huge that it began to influence the classic and professional European system. Take Sarah, deputy editor of <Vogue> Italia, as an example, she was an editor full of passion and profession, but after attending SFW for some years, treated good enough with first classes and banquets, she became arrogant. You can see that human beings are a very interesting species. Europeans media and designers are talking about Chinese changing the world. We used to have our system, and this is now changing the rules and regulations in Europe. I think you've heard that Taobao wanted to cooperate with LVMH since 8 or 10 years ago. And now, in recent years, LVMH began to do so. Can you predict whether the whole industry will damage by us?
1'04'18	I can't say no. Or, it probably will, most likely. Actually, they're already damaged. Think about Milan Fashion Week. Isn't it an extended version of Chinese fashion weeks? Even the fashion week sites are crowded with Chinese, a celebrity with 20 media...It's already not as good as before. Actually, China is a rich, strong power. I happen to have a friend who sponsored New York Fashion Week with Alibaba, so I asked her about how they succeeded it. She said this was so simple. Her boss, Yun Ma, just straightly asked how much they've got to pay. At first, representatives from NYFW wanted to test how much could he tolerate, but finally, they found Ma didn't care. So I wonder, who will reject you if you work with the others like that? JD.com also sponsored Milan Fashion Week on one day, right? Taobao follows. They bought themselves a fashion week.

1'05'49	They work with the same attitude, not caring about money, with LVMH as well.
	Luxury brands used to reject e-commerce because it may damage their brand image. But you can see there're tons of luxury brands now joined T-mall. Have u ever imagined seeing Loewe, Valentino and the others on T-mall?
1'06'13	The reason I am shocked is because eight or nine years ago, no, maybe five years ago, Ma already contacted LVMH, saying he wanted to buy 50% of their stock and become their major shareholder. But at that time, he was kicked out for saying he didn't care about money. This became a joke in the industry that everyone knew. But now, he shocked everybody, including people only hear of this rumor. In recent years, people from NYFW begin to send emails to my friends who are individual designers, saying they could free their registration free if they agree to join and invite 7-8 other European designer's brands to join together, no matter Chinese designers or foreign ones. They'll give them 80% off and totally free for you. My friends were so confused about this, so they hardly go there now.
1'07'44	I think this will rot to some degree, I mean this industry, and then rebound may appear. I think there eventually will be an explosion of everything. It will eventually be a disaster and rebound. This industry will never die, we just have to wait, wait for a 'carcinogenesis'. After that, we can manage it from the very beginning. Now we are in the stage of satisfying about everything, just like taking drugs. We're now a few steps away from finding out the 'drug' is harmful to our health. But when we lose everything, I believe we will manage the chaos then. Now, we are at the peak of the chaos.
	Indeed.
	We are even 'developing' the chaos.
1'08'50	Stylists and editors came from our country in recent years 'wow'

	me every time, well, in a bad way.
	So every time I see people feel desperate about another paper magazine closing down, I feel confused. Excellent editors and stylists can survive anyway, a bad magazine is just a sin. Why feel pity? After all, it's themselves that kills the magazine, whom to blame? They don't have the ability.
1'09'23	Have you ever get in touch with production companies in our country? Anything related to production, no matter producing events or shows.
	Nope, since we have so little now, the only ones I've been in touched with are photography and video studios.
1'09'54	The 'profession' you talked about, except critical thinking, verification, passion, professional knowledgeable, analysis ability, etc., is the lack of above values a result of an incomplete industry? Since we can hardly call our industry an 'industry' with so many parts missing.
	The key thing missing is the verification system, the critique system, and the review system. This makes lives still look good even though a lot of things are missing. For example, why paper magazines are still ahead is because it remained the verification system. There's an institution, a group of people verifying your work, whether their directions are proper. Fashion industry lost this because the leaders think fashion is about clothes and being pretty, how could it make big mistakes? Nobody cares. Nobody cares about how <Vogue> writes about Bingbing Fan because he doesn't think you can make a big difference. This creates an empty area where they can do whatever they want. Or maybe they're not doing whatever they want, they're working hard on dumb articles.
1'11'27	You use the word 'empty'. Do you feel like the chaos in the domestic market, the drug metaphor you used... people think as long as they can benefit, they won't care about the whole

	industry.
	Everybody is finding their way out: earning money, buying a house then maybe become a blogger. Life is good enough like this. Nobody aims at being a good editor.
	This ideal sounds dreamy. I realize that most new designers setting up brands in recent years weren't designers in the past, they were stylists. Do you know the same?
	Yes. And I also tell you that stylists for domestic superstars like Bingbing Fan and Mi Yang have never learnt to style before. They were editors like me, never learnt styling.
	I've heard an optical path for an editor is to transform into a stylist after collecting enough resource while being an editor. Being a stylist can feed her well. Another path is to transform into a PR. This, as well, makes good money. Basically, nobody stays in the editor position for a long time. It's a rare occasion now.
	Honestly, editors don't make a lot of money. For example, our photographer, he used to be an editor, then a stylist.

5. Daskalaki S. (2018) 'Re-shaping brand images of Chalayan through showing innovations at SHFW'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 10 October.

Original Language: English

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Daskalaki

Ginnie	Stephanie Alaska Lackey is the commercial director for Chalayan.
Stephanie	so we had a fresh review in Shanghai last winter, February. It was a the first presentation for Chalayan in mainland China. however we hed in the past pop-up shops in Japan, and also we had a second line collaboration in China for online retailer. so additionally we have our online shop that we sell in China, and we have some partners in China that we've been raising in order to get some feedback from the market on how to approach. so generally the feedback from the showroom was mainly that also to say that it was not a show so we didn't have a fashion show. we're in discussion to see what's gonna happen in the future for the next season, but it was just a showroom. the showroom is mainly focused on the second and third tier cities it wasn't focused on the first tier. so that differentiates the clients there, the perception of the clients they were showing up there. and these clients, they were more focused on middle and lower products and how they can bring the international appeal, the international designers into their business system. there's definitely been a high increase of interest towards international designers that they are not ready for the upper higher-end. because the clients are not educated. and not necessarily the shop owners back they the clients who buy the retail customers and they're not educated to the level to spend that amount of money for international designers. so that was one very big point. the other is that culturally, you see the way they buy it again, is completely different versus the way that the European, international buyers make their orders. so for them is mainly to

	fit into their culture in terms of like, they don't see the novelties in the designer they see more of how the Chinese traditions fit into the products. so for example you know a very simple will be like, obviously and obvious, is the color red. it's quite packful. they don't understand the palette for avant-garde designers will say black, white, very minimalistic. so there's a lot to be said about this kind of feedback. so that level and then obviously you have again, they are going for more fitted, the more classical feminine way versus the oversized, masculinity combined with the femininity, or the deconstruction. they don't understand these concepts at least not yet. and so this was the main kind of feedback so far.
	so the orders were so doesn't mean orders from last season...
	we had orders but it wasn't to the expected ... but on the other hand, its expectable because our presence in China at the moment is not to the level to reach these kind of people, so they don't have any marketing feedback and any kind of like windows into the brand you own the showroom we had there. so it's pretty understandable at this stage. however it's very interesting that as a branding deep in the Asian market we have seen I would say like a massive increase of interest in Japan. We've double our locations in Tokyo and other cities in Japan for wholesale clients and also our Japanese direct clients have massively increased for the last season. this was assisted by the shows and the menswear collections that they were more focused to become more Asian orientated. a bit more design focused so the menswear collection should feed more to with the women's wear collection that it brings novelties and he brings kind of like the unexpected elements of design. so you will see in the past before we start showing the fashion shows, the collection were a lot more toned down for the menswear. it was more about simplicity with a small element of design. It was more clean. so then the last

two years we redirected the collection to be a little bit more designed and focus on the cut and focus on stronger details. so yes the Asian market has been extremely positive and extremely receptive of that, but then you see the difference between the Japanese and the Chinese market, the Japanese market is quite fashion-forward and the Chinese they don't have it still understanding of these elements. I think you can see how the fashion show presentation fits into that profile. they don't have the exposure of the fashion show in China so there are a lot less critical on how to understand. versus the Japanese are a lot more open and a lot more critical. in terms of the Chinese market I would say there is a in the first higher cities there is a lot of interest for new international designers and we are discussing to create a series of pop-up shops in big department stores. and a very interesting project for example it's towards department stores and malls that their design focused. about departments they're focused a lot in the design aspect. and you can see there is a need right now for the Chinese to be introduced to new brands, but it's not happening on this second and third tier is happening on the first tier. we're talking about more Chinese that they are traveling abroad and Chinese that they're not traveling necessarily abroad, but they're open they educated, they've seen we've seen coming in to China and they're more receptive into new elements, new design ideas. I think the best way to do it is through their own means so being China but do creative pop-ups. they're very interested in like a short fashion show so this is really important right now in China and this is where Chalayan is heading right now. In order to be introduced to the Chinese market. I don't think it's necessarily the fashion show that matters so much. so as it's the the experience. so you as a person you walk into a pop-up shop and you will experience the brand yourself rather than seeing the fashion show. what do you think on that aspect? do you see that as well as a Chinese person?

	actually one thing you're really accurate about is that Chinese customers, they just don't care about novelties and cultures behind a brand. I don't think they have the patient to understand the concept behind that. they haven't reached under that level. but one thing you're right is only from the top level of the clients, they have seen many and many of them have been living in London for a lot of time and so they are more acceptable in avant-garde styles, they are searching for that to be unique and to be outstanding, not only luxury brands, but there are only small groups of people. One thing, Chinese customer needs to be educated but it needs a long time. I think now the Chinese is quite similar to what was happening to America after World War II.
	I think I mean still Americans they have their own completely style and they're open. with Prussian fashion and how they brought it into the country.
	after World War II there were many French designers that set up their Studios in America so they are core influencers and was influencing all the industry and created stuff but the whole country we're still focusing on their manufacturing rather than... so this is what is happening now in China and the organizers and designers and customers. Because China it has a very large community and tons of people, so I think that they care about the manufacturing more than receiving the fashion culture.
	I think generally the Chinese are more focused on the commerce aspects rather than they creative aspects.
	you cannot see any creativity...
	practicality. they'll say okay I don't care about what your conceptual aspirations or whatever you're doing, I want to see how that translates into numbers to sales into money into

	items into products.
	that's the official government's attitude. And in China the core value that will have big influence in economy context or the environment, the governments are playing core roles, so it will create a phenomena.
	because I've been talking with other people as well and they were telling me that factories now in China which is quite interesting, they start to understand generally, the government's perception that they try to bring Chinese back into the country to be their own fashion and to be independent and to create their own half sustainable that they will have the production they will also have the designers.and then they were telling me that there are a lot of factories now obviously because they have this space and because and the production has slowed down in a way. so while they're doing they're offering their space to designers in order to create unique pieces that they can also produce and help them with the production in order to build up that fashion world in China from concept to product.
	It happened in Shanghai. The culture and creativity is now becoming increasingly important. This is from a positive perspective.
	This is what I'm saying. Considering that, I think it's quite interesting that the grounds are having designers like Chalayan into the country and you can see that there that people are a lot more inquisitive and then they start looking for the uniqueness and more minimalistic aspect of product instead of just the logos.
	what's your next season's plan? Are you still going to have show?

	So we still have our showroom there. so we are going to bring back technology into our shows because you know Chalayan has been very big and innovative in terms of like combining all these art performances and in the last three years we had slowed down a little bit on the extravaganza of the shows. it's partially as well because of money because the budgets are when you get...when you have money you can always go crazy and you know you can always experimenting new things. but budgets and timing, we were focusing on like building a presence by our own retail stores in which we have very happy and we have succeeded in one yard an idea and we start to have our own clientele. so now this is the next step is to bring back these elements of like technology into the clothing. We've been working on a new project that will do that. It is gonna be with MIT so I can't say yeah... but there are things coming up that it will bring the ...yeah yeah. at the moment we're still seeing that the Fashion Show is an important part of the Chalayan DNA because even though it's not necessarily what brings is not like the marketing methods anymore because it's you know there are other ways. to be honest for us the China is not about the show. building, communicating and we're working on a different plan, we're launching accessories. so the accessories line the handbags will be focused in reaching to new market penetration. so China will be part of that strategy because it's also easier rather than the clothing and also you can educate first it's easier to to be a first point of contact in accessory and then enhance the experience of the client with the product, the fashion show, the your website, the in-store experience, the online experience. but it's a first point of contact so the fashion shows will maintain it because Chalayan has always been a pioneer in terms of the fashion shows and has been very consistent in his presentation in creating this unique performing art and the element of surprise at the same

	time but without losing the values and the design and the quality so yeah at the moment what we're exploring is refreshing the essence of the fashion show in different locations around the world but also in a different format.
	so a different format? I am a little bit surprised.
	for example the pop-ups are a different format.
	You mean maybe transfer from an formal performance to a small pop up shows like that?
	It can being in terms of, as pop-up experience of the brand. the experience can be through the archives places of Chalayan or a type of trend show or a type of events in a new city. so it's going to be in this type of way.
	so I'm gonna show the next section. Have you received any official invitation from Shanghai fashion week?
	Usually we talks with Oscar. and they were saying that it's very easy to get into that. I think for us it's more about you know the difficulties between organizing that from our side is because we don't have...we've never done it before. when you don't know the logistics you don't know how much this will be, and at the moment for us in order to do the fashion show it needs to be part of a bigger strategy. so for us what we're focusing now it's more to establish the brand internationally not necessarily in Asia, sorry in China, but International to revive the brand because you know what it's quite interesting is Chalayan, because it's an old brand, sometimes you need to refresh the image in terms of like, because everybody understands the Chalayan is about art and extreme performances, and so our focus now is to make the consumer

	understand that Chalayan is not only about innovation design and art is about functionality wearability and you know clothes that you can actually wear and enjoy every day and also bring that level of perception of what the brand stands for to a wider audience. find the balance. that's why the shows, the culture elements of the show that they were the extreme elements of the show, the surprise, I was lucky it was also part of, making this consumer understand that it's not necessarily pieces that they're always gonna be an art piece and a table skirt or a dissolved jacket. I don't know like confetti shirt. we want to show the consumer that it's also pieces that can really wear.
	That's quite important in China.
	It's quite important everywhere for Chalayan. Because a lot of people that... the moment you think Chalayan, you think of museums and art pieces and exhibition. so for us is a very big focus right now to balance these two very different elements. to the sides innovation and then art, avant-garde but it's also practicality. but I think once as an element stabled, the other thing that we're focus on is through more targeted focused members club and to bring that into their perception, into their focus, for the more targeted like the high net-worth individuals or individuals that are international travelers in China, through type of the members clubs to bring to their attention the brand. because these kind of people they're interested in art and they're interested in fashion, so it's a perfect target group for us to elevate the brand awareness.
	I heard from Youjia that the order from Shanghai. That present, does that make you a little bit afraid of heading for Shanghai markets?
	Because you can't expect from one time that you show up in a

	showroom that you have to have sat in massive orders especially with buyers that they've never seen the brand. even if it was you know, in a different, it's just business. you're not gonna buy something that you haven't heard. I think the difference of the culture is that the Chinese they're very focused on the marketing aspects so is the rest of the world, but when I say marketing is more you know that influenced culture, the TV culture, so popular culture, the Korean culture...you know, and that is very very evident when you meeting with buyers. they need to feel that where do I see this, who's wearing it, so that's the difference.
	so you mean in western capitals, the buyers might focus a little bit more on novelties and concept?
	I will be honest with you, even in Western cultures they're also business driven, what's different is that they will always require you to show how many money are you spending on marketing in order to support my business to buy your product. It's always like that. It's quite normal but why you see the Western business is that they acknowledge a brand and they take risks and they're more open to take risks and they know the elements. so they will pull a category let's say, they will pull a selection and they will create their collection for their stores easier than the Chinese because they understand the design, they understand the history of the brand. so you will see that for western but you won't see that necessarily in Chinese. but that is very expected because Chinese they don't have the experience with an brand. Rather than a show room, that's not enough.
	More fashion culture are originated from the western world.consumers are not educated, they don't understand the culture and background of everything, of the brand.a brand from their persepective is just, okay, a label.

	I think it's quite interesting actually how the Asians they study in England or in Western societies, how much they appreciate the history and the visual elements of the brand so I think that is another element, another point that it's very positive because you see they are thirsty, there is a need to learn more. To learn more about you know different elements outside of China and to understand the cultures outside of China. How is Youjia by the way?
	Built up a store and making for her next garments.
	actually I heard there was we had a client and she went to Eugene's store. and she bought something from Eugia and then she came Chalayan but I went to a her store and was like 'yeah' and she love the store. she was telling us her one day yeah I mean it's a small store but it's interesting how she put it everything her clothes up. they're really beautiful.
	you have seen Chalayan's collection, that's why. I heard next season you want to get more flexibility around the world and maybe to show in different cities, maybe not only in China or Japan, maybe around the world. instead of a rather extravagant big show - maybe to cut the big show into small pieces, and so for different cultural backgrounds.
	So for next season, we'll definitely have our fashion show in London. and when I say next season I mean ss-19 Womenswear. that's happening in London but then after that we are in discussions. I cannot say more because it's still in discussion.
	you haven't decided yet whether coming to for China?
	For China, we have not well... it's in discussions to have a

	fashion show. we are talking about doing the pop ups to support all these strategy that we're looking at. but because it hasn't been defined so I can not say. and also yes we are thinking for after September, our next show more intriguing to be different. you know the fashion industry you have the fashion shows but this is kind of like season is every six months. this seasonal thing it's kind of like old school at the moment, you're trying to do as a brand is to create Peaks in between. the interest of the consumer is not just on September and January, but it's also in November and October. exactly so instead of like oh we're having a fashion show and everybody's looking at us, we have the fashion show but then we have a pop-up in New York or pop-up in Shanghai or you know a trunk show in Dubai. so the both of these to create these peaks and the direct.
	this is a very constrictively...to do a separate to fit in different cultural backgrounds and community with the whole brand image. that's a brilliant strategy.
	it's important to keep the interest and also to feed into the different cultures without disrupting your own values and your own DNA.
	so what you say that is Chalayan's own DNA? Is that everything you have just talked about? about today art extravagant, avant-garde and also practicality, functionality's d wearability?
	where do I see?
	Where do you see Chalayan's brand image?
	at the moment and I think a lot of the general public's concept about chalayan is has faded out in the last few years so in the

	past where we had like the very forward fashion shows there was a lot more buzz around the brand. he was also creating a lot of exhibitions and which we still do. but you know collaborations with let's say Swarovski has always bringing a lot more attention to the brand. I think nowadays people feel that they lost they don't hear about Chalayan. they don't know where what he's doing, they don't know what this brand is, they don't see the clothes in retailers. so I think they kind of like lost touch and then the younger generation obviously they're not necessarily aware of the heritage, unless they are studying fashion or art. so I think this is a generally kind of like an average ideal of what Chalayan done at the moment. remind me your question I've got lost.
	how do you understand or how do you see or what kind of brand image?
	so I think that he's very ...this is the brand image what they have. it's a brilliant brand but we don't know where it is. we don't know what's happening. That's the idea. and also the the brand value in terms of that, he has brilliant design, unique cut, amazing tailoring but we don't know where he sends. we want to see more of what he does we want to see more of his product we want to see more... on his Instagram social media, more details, how he does things and this is the understanding of the people.
	One thing very interesting is that he let it faded out from the mass consumers. Only people who studies fashion and art know all he's about. Iconic. He's among the top ranking and top hierarchy of all designers, but when I talk to another designer who learn fine art related to fashion but not too far away....
	you're absolutely right. It's sad for me.

	A bit pity. He deserves more.
	I think because for designers like Chalayan, it's quite... because they're artists, so artists are very difficult to persuade. They kind of live in their own role. so they're not necessarily business driven. for example now Hussein is ready to go into the next step and actually feel that he went through his creative period to establish himself as an artist and now he's ready to the next stage that to see his garments in real people walking down the street. It's a different mentality for an artist you have to be ready because it's your creation. When a business person wants to change and interrupt your design process, you know it's not always easy to open up and ...
	It's a tough work. Have you experienced any conflicts when you are discussing those commercialising creativities with Chalayan ?
	I have to say it has been. But I understand his point, but I think at the same time he's open to see and to bring. But I think what is important is that he sees results. for example the moment you show him the impact of the change, he appreciates and also the impact not necessarily by using his own language. so for example an element that you can see for example Chinese they're like more fitted clothes. not only Chinese but Russians. more feminine more fitted or sexy. Chalayan as a brand is feminine he's sexy but it's not the obvious sexy. and then he has pictures and he has design language that are quite sexy and feminine but if you use it with the Chalayan styling technique and then that becomes not obvious. it becomes Chalayan. so I think for example a transitional point for the brand and be commercial is how you combine these two elements to fit different cultures. so I think that is by using different styling

	techniques in your different outputs. so the visuals are using, for example for International, for Asian or Chinese and for Russian they're not necessarily the same. you know there are the same products but then you mix them up differently, and you create a different image a different visual.
	I've heard from Youjia that she is trying to , but I'm not sure which stage she is in, obviously it's quite easy for Chalayan to enter the official calendar of Shanghai Fashion Week show but to what I sensed, according to your plan at the stage, it seems that it's not that necessarily for Chalayan to show the brand in the official calendar of Shanghai Fashion Week
	I think it not necessarily to fit the calendar in the rest of the world, I think the Chinese market, it's a an important element of being part of the calendar but it's not necessarily an assertive to fit in that. because I think there are other ways to pursue that nowadays and it might be also you know... a fashion show has only expenses and not necessarily instant return. an immersive pop up experience has so... you can actually sell products as well.
	According to my knowledge is what Chinese people already do is that maybe the organizers invite you like this: we cover all the expenditures and you just have to bring your performance and collections. All the expenditures, we will cover everything. Are you interested in this?
	as long as we have a point of contact in terms of like organization and we're able to transfer our show to Shanghai, yes definitely we are very interesting in that.
	Do you know another event? Shanghai fashion festival? Shanghai fashion weekend? Similar with that in london.

	It's a sales event.
	Yes , it's a business event. It's a quite large event, much bigger than that in London. They have at least tens of thousands customers, Not designers, join and attend the event. they will purchase the products maybe like wandering around and see all the events. If they invite... you as far as I have investigated, Shanghai Fashion Weekend and Shanghai Fashion Week, they all belongs to the Shanghai Design Association. and which is a semi-governmental institution. they just outsourcing SH fashion week and SH fashion weekend to two different companies, so if they send invitation to Chalayan saying 'okay why don't you bring your event we will cover all expenditures to the fashion week',
	in that sense we will do it. I think for a brand like Chalayan, an independent brand without a corporate background company to like support us financially we have to be very strategic in order to how you spend your budget. so for us the fashion show in London has an X budget. So if we do a fashion show in Japan and Shanghai, it will be not triple but maybe ten times. of course because you know how many people you have to bring. you have the product to shape, the Human Resources to move, spend time there. it's gonna be a large production. we're not talking about a small difference
	Could you reveal approximately amount of money how much money Chalayan usually spend for London Fashion Week?
	the show can be from a very cheap so... not cheap but a very basic show. It can be hundreds of thousands pounds. so that show was made in Paris but anywhere, when we're talking about technology, because you need to bring experts to London before the show, that's included for the show. It needs a lot of tests, a lot of failures, all of that

	is production. we're talking about a lot of money.
	How long would it take to prepare such, for example spring and summer 2016 in Paris?
	That was actually six months. that was an easy, it wasn't that difficult.
	It's not that difficult for Chalayan.
	I mean he's done a lot more properly dated project, kind of like years of fulfill and work, he took a lot of hours and expertise to kind of like complete.
	Do you know the longest time he has spent on a show?
	I think that's been for a few years developing the technologies for.
	You mean preparing the technology for next season? for example he have the idea but then it won't be able to implement straightaway, so we've had to wait like a few years until ...because when he did for example the illuminating dress and the LED dresses we're talking about in two thousand something. so that we're talking about like more than 10 years ago.
	for example he have the idea but then it won't be able to implement straightaway, so we've had to wait like a few years until ...because when he did for example the illuminating dress and the LED dresses we're talking about in two thousand something. so that we're talking about like more than 10 years ago.
	It's a long time for Chalayan.

	Also he had the 3-D printed dresses and idea of the exhibition so then he created that was part of the fashion show they were projection on a 3D printing, blah was talking. that was before. now we have 3d printing and you can print at home. we're talking about industrial 3d printer that you couldn't have access.
	Do you know why he is so obsessed in high technology?
	generally because I think he's very interested in how technology and it can process in fashion. how different elements can be part of your life. It can progress you can differentiate, can change you. but also it's how you keep part of yourself even through technology and that's why for example he's always bringing technology into his shows, he's always making a point of how as humans we are so addicted to technology when we need to preserve our own individuality. there's a contradiction of how much technology can differentiate you can elevation you can progress though, the other hand how humans can be used by technology and use their own identity. and you can completely distant yourself from other humans and reality.
	A lot of people thinking issues they propose perspective I'm a social ladies.
	It is completely... cultural references and the values of human interaction... you know I'm actually talking to you and I'm not talking to a phone or I'm not texting you. it's about valuing your personal time and then fact that a human can have versus the technology that's very personal and very distant and very unsafe sometimes.
	And rather than interacting with commercial...he's a thinker

	of course he is. that's why we saying he's an artist. you say he's an artist because he challenged himself and he challenged other people as well. do you combine your thesis? are you doing it inclusive of many different designers and brands?
	yes. Actually Chalayan is iconic, a and-garde, so what I mainly researching is the emerging new generation of Chinese designers, artistic designers. Hope they convey their concept and challenge the boundary of people's understanding fashion perceptions. and how they fit in themselves and their brands in different cultural background. so Chalayan is one of the important iconic samples.
	you feel like there's a lot of Asian designers, new designers that they are bringing this type of artistic creativity?
	Yes of course. Not too many but those who graduated from CSM. There's a lot of them.
	and you feel that they're here in Europe or do you feel that they're going back to China? are they trying here?
	actually what is interesting is those who commercially more successful were setting their bases mainly in China rather than in Europe.
	yeah because it is easier to make production, it's easier to... you have a Chinese name, you are accepted in China.
	Do you know Labelhood? another organizer institution. It's similar with Fashion Scout for LFW. What's interesting is that Shanghai Fashion Week has a very similar structure. but I don't suggest you collaborate with them because Labelhood

	tend to obtained the authorized recognition from the mainstream fashion industry in China. it is more like an institution whose experimenting on new ways of presenting fashion and conveying the different concepts. they're real open and have staged...it was set up in 2015, or early 2016, so only around 2 years, 4seasons. They rent an old venue, an old factory and turned it to a venue for all the designers to have some small presentations, some avant-garde experimenting show in fashion.
	and they're choosing local?
	Not too limited to local. They are all small designers, new emerging internationally labels, mainly comes from UK or graduated from CSM. Which is nice to be give a platform. However if they only stay in the level of experimenting, rather than turning into a commercial... you know
	It feels this is more of just experimenting than like commercial outlet there.
	so they cannot get any recognition from the main stream organizers and the institutions.
	you say that the designers are they going there they can not get acknowledged by the official organization? Is that what you mean?
	yeah. Even though they will still listed in the official calendar, however, culturally, i don't think...i think they deserve more in China.
	You mean Labelhood? Or the designers Labelhood brings in?
	Labelhood. Because I've interviewed some of their official

	organizers of Shanghai Fashion Design Association. When I mention the label, they just say 'just more group of people', which is celebrating themselves. They treat them like that. But I think it's a very good thing to see that this is happening in China, even though they haven't done so much, haven't obtained enough powerful...
	When they organize, Do they have... obviously they are organizing event. what is the crowd that goes to that event? is it the same? do they actually have the following?
	yes actually, but the crowd, the audiences, they're not professional buyers. Many of them are art students, some media and press.
	So it's more of an inspirational space.
	It didn't turn into a commercial platform that designers can really have...
	Is Labelhood their intention to create a commercial space?
	yeah they are trying their best to...
	But is that what they're trying to do? because sometimes you have, you know, not necessarily make profit. something like charities is not for making profit for example, it's for helping the cause. so bringing in money to help give that money somewhere else. Maybe Labelhood could be a platform that educates the Chinese, like start thinking broadly and that's not necessarily bringing money.
	That's really cool and applicable capable definitely in London or in Western fashion capitals, but is quite tough in China to let.. maybe in the charity to sponsors some money

	to organizing such an event in creating experimental space for designers and wait for them to grow and educate to the customers. In China, even the official institutions they don't think these are necessary.
	because we're talking about numbers and you'll be talking about ...yeah I completely understand about why they're thinking. It's struggle but... I think if we are a few years back, you wouldn't even have think about that and now, they succeed. I think there is a lot of potential and as you said there's a lot of potential
	it started to coming up
	It's definitely very good.
	Chalayan is a very prestigious friend. I think he deserves more attention.
	In your opinion, do you think a fashion show it's better in Shanghai? after all your research and your insight and experience with different brands and emerging talents? Do you think a fashion show is more, valuable versus pop up experience that could also return value into the company?
	At least... few people knows about Chalayan. Is that doing pop ups in shopping malls because there are lots of new shopping malls in China, so SFW at least it is a place where can gather enough attention from the industry and buyers, press and customers will come to SFW. Let's put the creativity aside because you cannot see in the main venues of SFW in XintianDi, that very commercial straightforward and there are lots of manufacturers stay tuned as audiences. so if you have the opportunity to show up in the main venue or the official calendar, there will be manufactures at least come

	to the show. At least to see the creativity and the novelty. But they do focus on the practicality.
	Why are they coming?
	They're invited. You know a lot of Chinese fashion labels, actually they were previous manufacture production rather than fashion labels.
	I think this is another... for a brand like Chalayan, it's quite critical because a lot of people copy the brand. For us,...
	It needs more protect than bring it into production?
	Not necessarily Chinese, but the overexposure is another element...we're fearful of how much we should get in the details. We actually went on a court case against a very well known brand, which I cannot say. We won the case but haven't signed the final things. it's a very difficult to protect, especially in the fashion field where the copyrights are very loose. so China is very known in.. you know there are experts in manufacturing. so I think this is another element.
	I know that so we should... so you think the brand should seek a way to simultaneously show or refresh their brand image in the high efficient way and at the same time protect the design to be over exposure
	exactly. because the moment you synchronize all your outlets, all your brand visuals across the world, you raise the brand's awareness, and people realize 'this is Chalayan'. so they will identify, They're already educated to understand 'this is chalayan', when somebody started to copying him. this is a very big focus for us as well. and this is why we're focusing an overall strategy internationally and not only in China.

	I understand that. You should build up the brand image first and then expose to the mass.
	are you collaborating with any other students or r u doing it on your own lately?
	Actually this is my own PhD project. Technically we don't collaborate with anyone, all by ourselves, independently, to improve that you are an independent researcher.
	I suppose in different stages you might say like surveys or they collaborate with other college
	Yeah, sometimes. maybe some small papers. oh sorry I didn't answer the question you raised just now about today's different values about fashion shows and....Of course I think the Europeans obtains... you know what's interesting is that in China, I quite agree with you that the audience sit in the main venue of XintianDi, a constitute of government officer's relatives manufacture instead of professional buyers and press, so there's a lot of amateurs sitting in the audience. There are professional buyers and media but the percentage is quite different from that in Europe. at Least in what I saw in Paris and London, then the audience that I went to a fashion show because it is protective for the insiders. So it has created very professional...
	Not anymore necessarily. Because now you see... the essence of the fashion show has lost the initial... reasoning, basically. and if you see historically the fashion show started as a truck show. trunk show that started that the designer was hosting for their clients. Not for buyers, but for actual clients. Because the clients became more and more and more, the press started to get more and more and more. There's a need

	like 'how do I serve my clients through the middleman?', who are the middleman? The shop. so this is the progression. So now it's quite interesting to see how that is going back to history because it has exploded in a way. So now what's exploded is the press. you don't actually have press anymore. because who is the press? the influencers? Celebrities? So I don't really care if Vogue come to my show. Yes they will write an article, but I don't really care. Who is actually gonna read the article? Nobody. or maybe the people like a very small niche that they still interested in that kind of like technicalities. nowadays it's all about okay, how the images, how strong is your visual and that's how you relates to the audience world. Not the actual writing, it's your visuals and your cultural references. so this is completely different so which influencer or which celebrity has gone to the show, who's posting pictures, who's like you know streamline, who's actually wearing the clothes, it doesn't really matter. if a buyer comes or if a press person comes, the buyers again, I think, yes they come to the shows but again he's not necessarily the important power. the important power is the buyers to have strong presence, strong marketing and then for different buyers, different aspects, for example, you know the type clothing if they fit their image, the product once again it's about deliveries, your strength as a company, how can you support their business. but then, so at the end of the day the fashion show is just a fashion show which doesn't really add a lot of value. in the terms of it started. so this is why you see a lot of brands trying to describe fashion calendar. Because there is no point actually.
	so you see fashion shows nowadays as the meaning and the values has decreased.
	Yeah. and there's no really a point. because now you're trying to. What does the research tell us? The research tell

	us there's so much commercial, so much mass production, they have lower the luxury element, so much to reach a wider audience that there is not that unique exclusivity of the fashion show that used to be. before you you needed an invite to get in, now you can see it on a phone, you can see it on a live streaming, you don't care if you're there or not. you will see and judging. you see that's the difference. so now the exclusivity is lost, so how do you maintain creating a unique experience for those who are interested?
	so you mean that ...
	so this is the reason of the fashion show. how do you connect with the people that actually have the power? so who are the people who actually have the power? you going back to basics, so the actual clients have the power. So the end consumer actually has the power, so you need to think how you will service this end consumer because the media doesn't necessarily have the power anymore so why you spend your money in the media and not at your end consumer.
	so I kind of understand what's your point on fashion shows function is gradually coming back to the history.
	that's why you have.... you know the pop up is another way of...
	A small salon shows have the exclusivity.
	like the pop ups which is the modern way of trunk shows, let's say. a kind of like, get into a specific hub that you feel your own client will live and it become part of that hub.
	so how do you see there're still so many brands for trying to stage extravagant shows? For example, ...

	Victoria's Secret?
	Not Victoria's Secret. They're not a fashion show.. for example may be Chanel, Dior, how do you see that the meanings of aesthetic...does it have any aesthetic values or commercial values? sometimes some people hold the opinion that each season of the Chanel show is for the saving of its next year's PR...
	Basically it's not about ...when we talk about this kind of magnitude brands, you need to understand that they need to maintain a level of connectivity and we their consumer doesn't necessarily have the means to be part of the Chanel. So they have already created an aspirational image they're well known but they need to maintain them. Maintain the high for the brand. so in order to do that you need to have a public event that will reach out to the masses. so we're talking about different certain because then it's not that you don't do, because Chanel for example there are have their private events in the private trunk shows and that they're very exclusive event, we don't actually see, so the general public won't see those type of events. but then they have the people that they already know Chanel, they already want to know what's happening with Chanel, so this is the reason why they hold the show, to feed expectation of the consumer or the public. but not necessarily the clients. because it's part of to maintain an image of the lifestyle of the Chanel world. For independent designers, it's not necessarily because it will bring money. It like an advertising. It's spread in... it's a TV commercial. That's why you have all the celebrities attending, that's why they have brand ambassadors and they have you know the actors and the actresses and they have a catwalk only with actresses let's say. because it's an ad. it's ad instead of paying and double page during the world cup.

	They would do a fashion show.
	from this perspective it's quite efficient.
	it's like producing ten minutes advert.that's it and that's it's so extravagant. it's not about the clothes, it is about how crazy it could be trapped on the attention.
	attract all the attentions and let the mass audience to talk about it.
	And share their moments.
	So it's not necessary for designer labels.
	It is necessary that you have to understand the budget. in order to create a show like that, a younger designer will never be able to do. So how do you do it? what you focusing as a younger designer because you don't wanna, you wanna focus on your actual clientele. so you want to spend your money on your actual clientele. not on the clientele that doesn't necessarily know you, you can start educating them through different four months but a fashion show like that is not gonna sustain your business.
	Why the exclusivity is because I can sense the ticket scalper in China. Some people who can get a lot of catwalk tickets. maybe from their relatives who are their are from government officers. so they have got lots of tickets in hand but they don't want to attended a catwalk show because it has no value. so lots of these kind of people will wander around streets outside the venue in Shanghai XintianDi, and anyone can buy a ticket at a price only....
	So you see what I'm saying, it's not about the garments, it's

	not about the clothes, it's about entertainment.
	Shanghai fashion week has lost its commercial profunction from some extend, and became more entertainment...
	So for example, earlier when you told me about Shanghai Fashion Weekend sale, do they actually buy?
	Yeah. another big difference is that in Shanghai Fashion Week or Shanghai Fashion Weekend, and any event they hold, if they have products to sell, they won't sell it only in whole sale. They will also like in retail. anyone can buy products and you know Chinese people have more flexibility to... if it is a wholesale customer, they will sell their products in whole sale ways. if they feel you are only just a mass consumer, they will also sell the product to you in the retailing ways. In both showrooms in official calendar and Shanghai fashion week festival, so technically, the showroom of Shanghai Fashion Week....
	what kind of designers do they have in their weekend?
	It has some fashion labels but usually they invite avant-garde designers. they always prefer to stage brands that have a wider mass consumers background, which is...will have some new brands but mostly manufacturing labels, also some fashion labels. If you want to know, I can send you...you can think about whether yeah...but I agree with you what your concern. you're concerning about today over exposure to the mass consumer so it should be cautious. I think we should be cautious about if they send invitations. And also about the official calendar, because there're a lot of amateurs sitting in the audience.
	very interesting you talk about...

	what I was talking about about the exclusivity is about in European, at least the European fashion Fashion Week, it is still need application you know. so how some exclusivity rather than open to the au....
	I think it's not about exclusivity as to keep it intimate,
	it's about it's about keep it professional I think yeah
	I mean why the path was exclusive was because the people who were actually fight it made an impact and also they were invited and they were having a purpose. They would write about your collection but also it was the case it's like maintaining... now you can get copied from everywh, but in the past it was like they will see the garment. they would be able to touch the actual garment and now technology you know you can send images you can order. most of the buyers, they don't even see the garments. They had an order through computers and systems. so this has changed, so why not the fashion show? and that's why Now you have visual showrooms. so I think the fashion show is just a platform for designers to experiment and create a buzz, but that depends again what your brand is about. that's why I said Hussein we're still making in fashion shows because as a brand as always the fashion show is a important complain(1'35'28). and these fashion shows they were challenging your cultural, your social, your artistic concept and perception of the world. for the same, it's a brand that will challenge you and it's a creative outlet for the designer himself to express his defuse(1'35'55) of the world and not necessarily only on the clothes. So it's like creating a theatrical performance rather than necessarily showing your dresses. So asking me what the difference with Chanel and Hussein, who that is a difference? but then how do we see that with

	younger designers? a younger designer if the designer himself feels that this is part of who he is and he needs an outlet of experimenting and you know showing his vision, then yes a fashion show can be the right choice. but then if you actually want to make it commercially then a fashion show might not be necessary. and you know what, now buyers, I mean I speak with buyers from big department stores or you know smaller boutiques, I would say who is actually defining the industry, like the new designers, who was actually bringing them? it's mainly the big department stores and the online stores. this is actually the people who are creating new designers nowadays. the online, the e-com is another part. so how do you actually make it through is no through fashion shows. what the buyers do? They research social media Instagram they constantly... so instead of going to fashion shows, you can search for new designers throughout the year. so there's not need for the Fashion Show.
	so what do you see the aesthetic value, for example Chalayan bring such an theatrical performance.
	in which way to understand?
	from visual perspective?
	Oh I think it's art. It's how you go to museum exhibitions. I think they're building their own worlds. is that what you asking me?
	Like connection between fine arts and fashion? so what do you think of the relationship between...
	so you know they're designer for example like Hussein or like McQueen, the way they create their collection,
	because I have heard a lot of opinions from designers

	perspective of how they consider art in relation to profession design.
	they're very related. you cannot distinguish. I think it's it's more about how a designer works, is more about the creative process. you have designers that they are designing based on necessity, so okay we need five tops and six skirts and three trousers and it needs to be like that...it'll be all merchandise plan. but then their designers that their process starts from cultural references, from the world, from... it can be from music, from anything in the museum and artpiece, it can be from anything. so I think it called a specific element from your cultural references or from lifestyle references and how you turn that conceptually abstract. so that's how art is created. how is a specific element resonates within you, and the urge to express that element in a very abstract way in a very creative way and then formulate a new object yeah.
	this is what artists do.
	so I think this as you said the aesthetic value of these designers is immersive because they are actually expressing the the Society of today from a different completely point of view and I think through their products, and when I say products I mean their creations, you can analyze society at the time, their challenges and their fears. and you know the latest collection from Hussein was about migration, the Auto for example, about the Parisian periphery, the bungalier separates the French ladies of the good society with the immigrants, they're coming into the city and then how is that depicted through our clothes? but obviously you know he's a challenger for the world and he is increasing nature and how he perceives immigration problems at the moment how they're challenging our society. it's not necessarily translated literally into a project, into the actual garment, but

	they're elements there that you know a person that is more intellectually interested they will be able to see and discover. just by that, you can see the value of these type of designers. and also I think it's the visual that they created, you know like McQueen has created beautiful dark, very dark fashion shows, very challenging that they have a you know... unique aesthetic but at the same time you can see how a designer struggles and...
	Personal experiences and individuality, and his lifelong experiences, connected to the quite strong emotional moments.
	and then you know when does an object becomes from...how does an object becomes from an art piece into a commercial object and how does a commercial object like a fashion garment becomes an art object? because we've seen that happens with this type of designers and why is that because there is these struggle for designers of their own struggles of the role of how they perceive the world. because they're putting these elements into their work, and their own challenges they're showcasing it to object. so these objects become a medium. exactly it's the medium. and that's why you have the art world for the people who want to invest more because it's showcasing these struggles
	because there are lots of people who don't really care about art
Stephanie	see when a designer comes from a specific region, I think now is a little bit easier in a way to connect
Wang	To the cosmopolitan?

	yes because in the past everything was a lot more isolated and a lot more differentiated. so the fact that you see you know.... Russia let's saying, China the lifestyle was a lot different to the European or to the American or to the Japanese, so then there were a lot more difference but also you didn't actually have the access and yes some things are quite human basic and I think you know what is interesting is that designers that touch these cultural elements of society and they are touching into elements that they resonate into every human. so actually these elements there are points that you can exploit in order to bring awareness to different cultures because everybody is living ... so for example you know the notion of migration or let's say the personal space you can understand it as well even though you're Chinese in your own different... yes you need to to visually see it in a different way maybe, but you have that as an experience as a human being. so I think art can be more relatable to different cultures that than fashion itself.
	I think just working with Hussein Chalayan you know because I I can sense that we are quite similar in thinking different kinds of questions, logic oriented and we always set very clear target and try to achieve that. Chalayan as an artist and maybe there will be more, to say less logic oriented
	no not necessarily.no he's right quite...he works with targets in a way or tasks and
	the biggest difference between you and Chalayan?
	I think it's just in a different...I think you know they work with logic but then it's the more abstract way that they break in. but I think the structure, you know each person has a structure in terms of how you set a business up. I think there's a difference on how you work on a collection or how you work as

	an artist there's always a focal point, an initiator the trigger that will bring initial point of like a focus and then you will start exploring in that focus. so there is again a structure and a logic behind it it's just in a different way. but there is still a structure and a logic. but then you just there's more fluidity between the elements and the structure.
	so Have you ever experienced some toughness for working with him in communication?
	I wouldn't say toughness, I would say...I think creative people they tend to be, because their mind works quite fast. they're not as focused as the business minded people. they will... how you have a kid, ...
	A creative kid who always jump from his ideas from...
	exactly. they cannot focus on doing one thing, they have the disorder that they are all over the place. you know creative people are like that they cannot focus on... if you talking to me on one thing, because their mind is like thinking thousand other ideas, so it's difficult to capture their attention in a way, but there is a logic in them and they there's this structure in the minds, just it's different with ours and different on expressing it.
	so you need to find out his structure first?
	I think first you need to understand the way they process things, and once you understand how they process it, there is a structure, it's just that sometimes they you know they focus very much on details for example, so a detail which can destruct them from the whole thing. so you need to understand that once you sort out the details some specific details that they will perceive then you can jump into

	the next subject for example over and pay to the attention they're more important than for business aspect.
	so why do processor continue showing your last collection in Paris, is there because of the budget?
	no we're showing in London now. we're showing in London and it's mainly for budgets. yes
	so you mean...
	because it was easier and ...
	you don't have to travel with...
	It's a lot cheaper.
	so if there is enough budget, London or Paris? if you can choose.
	you know London is been always the reason we were... it's not necessarily only for the budget, the initial concept was 'yes let's do it to cut costs' but also you know for Chalayan London is also where we started. I think is also an opportunity to get back to his roots, you know the boutique being big part of his next step and his next vision to actually not open the store that he never had in the past. I think it's he feels more connected to London. you know the initial process of taking the show to Paris was because Paris had more attention about you know creative and breaking designers in front of like...
	too competitive?
	No, it wasn't too competitive, it was like you know, he was

actually the people the critical mindset towards the designers that they were showcasing in Paris, it was that they were more creative, they were more avant-garde, they had also no more of avant-garde In the sense of avant-garde, they had commercial appeal. so London was more focused about like bringing the street, the next generation designers and then Paris was more about you know taking it to the next level and commercializing and receiving the acceptance that it was you know part of that fashion French fashion culture. so you were actually part of the fashion industry. you know the acceptance of the fashion world. So at the time you made sense to go to Paris when you be part of that and then you know a lot of the buyers you know the fashion week in London, the buyers are not actually ... they don't actually buy. The buys usually happens mainly in Paris. this is the reason for example we can open a showroom in Paris.

6. Luo R. (2018) 'Sponsorship culture in China and production experience of Wong's Spring/Summer 2019 show at LFW'. Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 11 November.

Original Language: Chinese

White colour background: Wang

Grey colour background: Luo

	What problem did you meet up with when you communicate with sponsors? I think I may know some of the areas, but could you give me some examples in detail?
0'25	Do you mean the process of finding sponsors? Or communicating with them about the cooperation plan?
	Both. Please focus on the communication process and tell us one specific example that reflects the gap in thinking.
0'53	It is a hard task from the very beginning, from finding a sponsor. The chance cannot be controlled by us. Like, if you are not a famous designer... or, you can offer some kind of things when you are already a famous designer.
	Then how did you manage to find it? Recommended by friends or sending archives and mails one by one?
1'31	Some relied on the network I owned. If I am planning to do such a thing about a designer, I would send out this message and search for the chance of cooperation, seeing if there any approach linked to fashion. If somebody replied, I'll first check what his job is, whether he also has a market promoting scheme and is also in the same stage as us. If the timing is right, I think that the two companies do match. This is the situation when you're not famous. However, when you are famous, these don't count as a problem anymore because a lot of people will provide it proactively. Then, the work is to communicate with them. So it is best to have some resource accumulation from the beginning. Otherwise, it's hard for me to imagine how to get sponsorship.

2'37	Did Zaful offer you a chance first like our way of doing business? Like, they contact you after seeing your post and say they happen to have a promotion plan.
	Not exactly. When they first came to me, they wanted to find some designers that worked for Victoria's Secret because they are swimsuit brand. But actually, Victoria's Secret doesn't have any designers because they are an in-house company. They only design wings. I knew this already, so I asked them if they want to increase the value for their brand. They happen to have this need but how to promote with fashion week is a problem. So I told them my plan and suggested them sponsoring Victor's fashion show since both our sunglasses and their swimsuits match. So I did a business plan and a promoting scheme for them. That was a perfect match with Victor. There a company agreed with my opinion and also thinks that it is a good opportunity to expose themselves to London Fashion Week. Then they had an impression on us.
	It also means that we guide it.
3'57	Yes. They may only know the fact that they should improve their service and promote their brand, but not knowing how. The rest is my part. So it is me that made all the plans and tell them what to do. Things like the marketing plans are decided by us instead of their market department.
	Zaful is Hong Kong company right?
4'27	Yes, it is registered in Hong Kong.
4'36	it's all the same. Zafu has only registered it in Hong Kong while all its factories are based in Shenzhen.
4'48	Next, could you talk about some stories happened during your communicating requirements?

	After settling down the impression, The next step would be detailing this business plan. Mainly it's like a brief introduction about Victor and introduces their theme. Since they're doing a promotion About their swimsuits every year, there's definitely be a profit for cooperation. There's also a chance for them to get more potential customers before fashion week. Actually, there are not a brand new company, they have fame in this market, the swimsuit industry. They're already providing a huge amount of products into the North America market. So they're not targeting in increasing customer, but to upgrade their business from low fashion to mainstream fashion. They want to expand their area in high fashion. So what I do is that I guide them in this direction, helping them with their plans and such. I am convincing to them because Gradually they find that my advice or effective for them. Recently the program with so far was not so tough. At the very beginning when I was approaching them, I've already made make clear what the customer wants means at the very beginning when I was approaching them, I've already made clear myself what the customers need. I knew where their needs lie in through their talk. So in the plans, I made for them I could answer all their questions and confirmed some of their hypothesis because I've understood them. Thus the following stages are much easier.
	Then did they give many opinions in the producing process?
	We did not involve them in the arrangement of the fashion show because this is not allowed in the contact or the Agreement we signed. They are only the sponsor. This is Victor's show, not theirs. If it is their show, I'll report them every movement I made. This is Victor's show. They are using this fashion show to promote their brand. So they're not allowed to make any comments on the show production. We just had to inform them of the latest stage we are in to them.
8'00	Yes, they should know where their bonus is.

	After all, they are not a young mainstream as Victor or Youjia whose demand will be higher, for example, the media and guests who are invited are of higher standards like Vogue. But this brand, they are a fast fashion brand originally get their products from the factory. They are not even a fashion brand. The request of inviting the mainstream media or the first level media was not so strong for them. They are happy enough being in the fashion week. Of course, will be happier if you can invite these people. As the organizers of the company's projects, they also have performance assessment, so this level makes them feel good, and that's it. So when I level up his request a little bit and offer him more than he had expected, he would not judge you that much. He has expectation spending so much money in a project. If you complete your work with extra things done, he undoubtedly would say nothing. And he'll trust you afterward. In previous projects, I've always had the habit of telling him my process and the content what I'm doing. I've even arranged extra things after fashion week. For example, I found him 3 models for street-snap after fashion week. That was for the new spring summer campaign which is not swimwear. If he asked someone else to do this he has to pay extra money right? So I offered some bonus packed in my service. That's why it makes him feel earned.
10'12	May I ask how much money?
	What money?
	How much did he sponsor?
10'16	This is rather sensitive. Because as for the brand, I bet they would not want me to expose this figure. As for Victor Wong, actually we've discussed this before, they said they could open a lot of information to the public but not these data.
	Then could you give me a range?

	Basically, I spent all the money they gave me on the show. Because you know when unexpected things happened in the last stage, you have to continue putting in money. You know, we're struggling over that time. We even have to pay for some articles to the media. That's why I could only provide a range for you. I think you've already seen our show's site, scale, model quantity, and our guests. If changing into RMB, it's approximately... I guess you don't only mean the show but also his initial cost in producing the garments right? I'll include all the cost from handicrafts to factory manipulation. I remember asked Youjia earlier about this and she said we should contain this content as well. So if it means all of the materials, handicrafts, factories, etc. everything, I guess it at least cost more than a million. If you want to write, I think the range you record should be around 1.2 million to 1.8 million.
	Similar to what I've expected.
	At least one million, I'm positive. 1.2 million to 1.8 million is a rather reasonable amount. You can predict this number actually.
	Is the site itself already dear?
	By the way, I booked an after party for him as well. Does that count?
	Sure.
	The number I gave you includes this part. If it's only the show it'll be cheaper.
	Could you tell me how much comes from the sponsor? Did we pay ourselves through this process? I guess it'll be a 'yes'.

	Not much. I managed to control it well. I canceled a lot of things, for example, a live DJ. Also, lighting and setting were fancier, however, I communicated with the producing company to reduce some of them. And the celebrity part, we used to plan to hire two famous stars that are of a bigger fame, one of them ask for 20,000 pounds for the other ask for 40,000 pounds. I ended up canceling those two because we really don't have money. So that means we spent all the money our sponsors gave and paid the rest ourselves. But that's not much because Victor doesn't have enough money. So it was me who paid first....Imma gonna cry. It's like having a third baby. They have no money. I'm not judging him. First of all, I have to say I'm not complaining about Victor. He is not as wealthy as you expected. But being poor is not his fault. Just that when you realized he is also suffering from money, you became the only person who can pay the bill. That's why we're saving every penny because you cannot get it back.
	So could you give me a range?
	Did you just ask how many we got from the sponsorship?
	Yes, yes.
	They gave us the money in three times according to the contact. It's not fair asking them to give us all a one time. Another tricky thing is, you don't have to mention that in your paper, the sponsor asks for a commission. So in total, the range is around 1,000,000 to 1.5 million.
	Pretty much the same as I've expected. Let's move onto the next question: we are in the official fashion show list but we didn't use their package service. So how did you communicate with BFC about this? Did you meet obstacles?
	They are easier than I expected. I haven't dealt with them before, just heard about them from Youjia. Actually, it seems that we all heard it from Youjia. What he said is that it is so

	difficult that he failed to apply it for years. Talented as he is, I don't know how this comes.
	He stuck because of money, not other things.
	He didn't say anything about money. He said he failed every year in New Gen.
	NewGen is a free project.
	New Gen has even to pay you money. So their selection is more strict.
	So he said it was because of this. I don't know really. But it turned out, it is not like this. I don't know things behind it, but it seems not so hard as he said. We just followed the applying steps and showed them the previous three seasons' work of Victor. I think he's being smart because others are all RTW and haute couture while he is doing sunglasses. So I think he is smart because there are not so many sunglasses designers at that time.
	It fits LFW. It is innovative.
19'50	Exactly. So the time when we uploaded his beautifully-made portfolio and I wrote business introductions for it and mention things like 'we're sunglasses brand but we're doing catwalk', I believe they became curious about us. They also wanted to know how sunglasses can do catwalk show. This has never happened before. Actually, we thought about this point already because you know catwalk needs money. Without sponsorship, we don't even dare to think about it. Victor was saying we have to make a fashion show this year. If we failed in fashion week, we try it in Fashion Scout since it is cheaper. That was our old plan. Luckily, we passed BFC. So I think it is fate.
21'15	Did you successfully talk to them about giving up their venue and use your own?
	They didn't care at all. I have no comment on whether using

	their site or using your own.
	So you rarely use their package service they provide right?
	Yeah, actually there is not a big package service.
	They're just providing a site, right?
21'47	Somebody will contact us outright asking which make-up company we plan to use and whether we need their service. We received their e-mail so quick that I believe they are liable in this area every year. As long as they see your name on the list they'll come and ask. At that time I didn't reply immediately considering of the money. I was planning to hire a make-up brand, giving them money for their products and so. I insisted because this would also bring them exposure. I kept finding a long time till the last minute when Victor decided to use this plan next year because of the lack of money. I even found a brand called Blue Tones in Shanghai , but ended up contacting those e-mail people again for support.
	And the show production team you found was the one responsible for splendid concert?
	I first talk to a friend about this but they didn't join at first because what they did was concerts and I want someone specializes in fashion shows. I don't want to talk much because this is the biggest bug I met since joined Victor.
	When was it?
	Late enough. So went to the venue producer, since the venue has always holding activities. I also contacted my English PR colleague. That means I'm doing it from the very beginning, from the producer's work, including asking price, checking details, etc. This was the biggest issue I've ever met since if I don't manage it, we won't do anything that follows. Because time left so short, they all asked for a super dear price. But we have to do this. Their sketches are all different, you know,

	especially Victor wanted to hang a cloth.
	Yeah, that's my next question: why you abandoned the cloth idea and make it a standard instead?
30'57	I convinced him. Hanging cloth in the fashion show is impossible, but we'll have an extremely hard work in producing it. Secondly, the outcome may not be as the same as you expected. If it's the board, it's not gonna be a huge difference. But if it's fabric, its texture and weight might change a lot.
	And this he didn't know.
	Yeah, you have to also think about the lights whether it's gonna go through the fabric or not. So when the producer and lighter went into all the details, I stunned because I'm not into this area, so did Victor. You know it actually cost a lot. Fabrics are not cheap, you know. And the biggest thing I was concerned about is that it would make it look like an assembly hall.
	If it was white it would surely do!
32'11	So I kept convincing him. Eventually, he gave up because we cannot do it anymore. Everything was left to the last minute and we quit and abandoned the ideas because we don't have any time. Just think whom you can get in the last minutes. So I went to ask my old friends. He was companying his wife at the time, but I asked him to do me a favor because this is my first show ever. So I told him all the works he has to do and he was about to cry. Luckily he's being nice saying although he hasn't done any fashion shows before, he'd like to try to cooperate with us, using light to create that atmosphere we expected. And the result, as you've seen, lighting was the biggest highlight during the show. Eventually, we chose a smart way to achieve a luxury atmosphere. For example, we didn't use the standard three boards. Instead, we chose to use five so that it has a feeling of

	overlapping. The final outcome seems quite satisfying because it's a life-saving plan. So the cooperation afterward was so successful then. It's really nice talking to them and we worked hard together. I've told you that we even composed a setting in the warehouse on the 15th, one day before the real show. Only by that can we make sure everything is going on well and we can adjust it if anything wrong happened. We were so hardworking. I believe nobody would make a real view one day before the show right?
	Nope, absolutely not.
	Since it's our very first time, we are also afraid to disparage by people so we worked very hard. Actually, I do believe our attitude decides. Whether a fashion show is successful doesn't have an absolute link with your experience. Of course, the experience would save you time and money, but it's not going to be proof of your creativity and hard work. Experience will provide you with a bigger saving of money because you know where to buy the cheapest thing. But I think it's important to have a spirit of hard working and responsibility because this would lead you to a satisfying effect, not perfect, but satisfying.
35'37	Let me give you a hypothesis: if you didn't give Victor all the show production work at the first place, would you go to your friend for help? Which one is your first choice, your friend British local show production company?
35'54	I'll go ask the price first. Whichever I choose, I would go to ask price myself first. Now that I know my friend is reliable, I'll have a safe choice at least. I know he wants to earn money, everybody wants to earn money, but I would like to give him this chance because I know he's not gonna disappoint me. However, I still need to keep on researching different prices because we have 12 shows which definitely would contain different elements and settings and aiming for different effects.

	Some would not be his expertise or maybe is available for only one company, that's why I'm always doing research first according to our show schemes and then decide. And I tell you, that you don't have to rely on only one company to do that, you can separate it to different companies during some steps. This means more work for me because I have to deal with more companies, but that is also a plan.
37'02	Is the PR company this time liable?
	Nope. Somebody recommended to me but still, nope. A lot of people, including Youjia complained to me about them. After hearing their complains I feel like the one I'm working with now is rather acceptable because at least they're doing something. Some people even don't work. They only did the inviting jobs but didn't finish committing them afterward. However, this company is quite effective because at least they replied to my email in time, answer my calls and feedback on your process regularly. But I tell you what, I would not use them if I could next time. It just feels like the fees British PR companies require does not equal to the work they did. They earn you money because they know you are not in this industry.
	How much did they require?
	About twenty thousand something, less than 30,000pounds. There's still a balance we are not clear yet because they still owe me a summary of media publication actually. They said they are sorting them so they haven't given me even one script.
	20,000 to 30,000 pounds is already a high price in Britain.
39'02	Yes. But I found that I even invited more KOLs and the celebrities than they did. The ones they invited were those who asked for extra money. Like I've already given them 20,000, but I have to pay another 20,000 to the one they invite. So I tell them to invite some free ones, but it seems that the free ones they invited were not as popular as the ones Victor and I

	invited. So that's why I think they do not worth it. Even Victor was not pleased with the ones they invited because they have fewer followers than Victor did, even less than Victor's friends did. So I consoled Victor that since it's our first time it's OK to make some mistakes. And now that we know they are not worthy of it we will not use them next time.
	How about the press part?
40'17	They haven't replied since, so I'm not sure which ones they released and which ones they didn't. So there's still money that has not been settled yet, just make it 30,000. That was only the service fee, excluding the extra fees like printing, transportation fees for celebrities etc. The model casting should be their work but the models they found for me were all supermodels that none of them I could afford.
41'00	Shouldn't BFC be in charge of the models?
	Nope, they don't apply models for the ones holding shows outside. So actually the last minute I have to do all the work PR company couldn't handle, the ones Victor left me and the ones stylist didn't finish. The transparent garment outside was found by me. That is fact was so good that a lot of people believe it's the project we made but actually I found it a week before the fashion show. I took the only storage from the female designer. All of the people he found quitted halfway and didn't answer the phone call even. Those people are not reliable because, from the very beginning, they exaggerated themselves. You cannot tell whether they're telling the truth or lying to you until you actually cooperate with them. But that's too late already.
	Now I feel like I couldn't understand designers now. Why on earth do they trust people so easily?

	Yeah, they even doubt you for that. They believe that these liars are professional and nice people, and wonder why you treat them bad. But a good thing about Victor is that when people didn't reply his phone calls he began to realize that something is going wrong. After that, he came to me for help. I guess he went to another few brands for help during that period. Because he was also feeling anxious. There was a trench coat brand called Influencer that we want to borrow from, but they only provide us with one collection whose fabric was so hard and style out of fashion. This collection does not match us from color to texture so we had to find another one.
44'20	Let me tell you something I learned from Xuzhi and Angel Chen, both of whom come from a business family, especially Xuzhi comes from a political business family. You can see that their brands are running extremely well in their generation. They're super smart, logical and calm, giving you feeling that...because I know Xuzhi better, I even joined his production process in Shanghai. And you'll find that he is being so logical in his jobs like we do. I've seen his timetable, though his assistant didn't allow me taking photos. He accurate his schedule to every hour through the whole week of production.
	I tell you what, I did this in the same way. I listed out all the time, meeting with sponsors and talking to you etc. But Victor didn't. Not only did he skip scheduling, but he also got cheated. So this leads to a mess when you can't make any schedule because all the plans are insured. So I put all the plans in my head instead. You know that morning, a model even told me she can't come. You know, I couldn't blame for that because this happens often. So you see me in a chaos that day was because I'm not experienced. Now that I'm not a green hand anymore, I'll learn from it. I'll plan it perfectly next year because the chaos happened not because of my habit but because of all the certain things happened at that time.

46'35	Du Yang, I also know her well, but I've never followed Angel that much. But, we talked once. Du Yang comes from a super rich family and her German boyfriend is also rich. But what's clever about her is that she doesn't have a big ambition. She defines herself as an artist so she stays in her area. Her goal is to 'stay small' as she mentioned. She'll do secular things when she has money, but if it's only for running a business, she'll just stay where she is, staying away from all the fashion show things and such. So do you think that this has something to do with family education?
48'13	I think it's of course linked with the family background because children get their ambition from their family.
	You can see that Jin Youjia got a strong ambition and pessimism from his family. Because his dad is a super negative person.
	Poor kid. His family is of average. Victor is a loving person because although he's not super rich, his parents worked very hard in his childhood doing all kinds of small business. I think that gives him the spirit of diligent. They came from Hunan where I'm also from, so I know how diligent and nice they are. He gets his warm heart from his mum. Like he was FaceTiming with his parents that day and asked if I wanna say hi. So I believe family and education absolutely influences their personality.
	I feel like designers tend to be more emotional and
	Yes, he is emotional. Because Victor comes from a small village so he tried hard to make progress so that his parents would be proud of him. He does wish he could have his own brand and approved by the public.
50'18	Now in our industry, those who run business well are the ones either wealthy or wealthy and capable, you rarely seem people from the bottom and settle well right?

	Few, so few. Because the resource is so important. So you are either rich or attractive. This happens abroad as well. I find that it's easier for one to get resource quicker if he's rich or somebody pays the bill for him. All you have to do is focusing on your design and somebody else promotes for you. It's even quicker if a celebrity hangs out with you. It's the reality. I know it's cruel, but it's real. So if you start from nothing, even if you try so hard, it's gonna be tough. It's a sad conclusion, but it's really gonna be hard.
51'54	The limit does not lie in money. Because if you are not rich enough you can find sponsorship or you can solve it by your team. The bigger restriction is that he destroys his own work some time.
51'58	Also, if the designer could not well communicate with his tréma, like Youjia, it's still not going to work. Like Victor, he's been nice talking to so far. He has suggestions, but he'll listen to your voice. That's why I wanna help him, he has a soft attitude. As long as he thinks that you're helping his brand, he'll listen to your opinion. However, this kind of cooperation could bring him somewhere because it's a pretty good team. But if he became arrogant and refuse all your ideas, because there will be people following him after he's famous, I'm not sure then. In this situation, things will go out of control. Like if he hires a better team, maybe he'll improve, but if it's a worse team, it's gonna be terrible. That I cannot predict. That really rely on the designer's personality, hon cognition for future and his trust to his team. This is a mode similar to a celebrity and his agent company. So I think it depends. I think what I've done for Victor, I did it with my whole heart. You can see that and he can sense it himself. So he's trying to be more cooperative than before.

**7. Hong H. (2018) 'China's fashion culture and communication system'.
Interviewed by Zhe Wang, 15 November.**

Type of Interview: semi-structured in-depth interview

Interview Form: WeChat message

Interviewee: Huang Hong, representative of Chinese authoritative fashion media, founder of Chinese original design concept store 'Brand New China', CEO of Hudong Media Group

Content:

1. You are a respected senior in the fashion industry. Which is your favorite identity, fashion media publisher, editor, designer shop founder, etc.? Why editor?

Because all the business I did was not so successful.

2. Can you talk in detail about your view of “the entertainment of Chinese fashion media and Chinese fashion industry under the guidance of consumerism”?

I think that consumerism is an obstacle lying in the progress of human society and is also the worst thing that capitalism brings to mankind. In order for the company to continuously grow and expand, capitalism requires consumerism to constantly create unnecessary demand. This demand leads to rapid consumption, shortening the consumption cycle of all substances in order to create another round. The fashion industry is a typical case. Fast fashion provides us with cabinets of clothes that we can't wear for a lifetime, but we still want to buy new ones every season, which is popular for now. This creates a huge waste and also destroys our natural environment.

Entertainment itself is a neutral event. 'Big cheese' and scholars always tell a few jokes when they are doing reports, and amuse the audience. This is quite normal. I don't really know what you mean by saying 'entertainment in the fashion industry'. Do you mean stars charge to wear a brand's clothes? Or Red app and KOLs selling clothes?

3. Can you talk about your understanding of the concept—“fashion”—from the perspective of a senior practitioner in fashion media?

Fashion is a cultural phenomenon that people express themselves through garments.

4. What do you think is the value of International Fashion Week? You can start from two dimensions: business value and cultural value.

The value is being repositioned in the Internet age. The biggest customers of fashion weeks were buyers from department stores. Fashion week was originally open for them, basically an order meeting. Now, everyone knows that the department stores are no longer a hit and haven't been doing the orderings for a long time. They just rent the counters now. Therefore, Fashion Week has gradually changed into one of the promotion pathways for clothing brands. Also because it is a place where stars, models and media gather together, Fashion Week has become the soil for marketing. The real show in recent years might happen outside the sites rather than inside.

5. During your attendance in International Fashion Weeks, what do you think is the most important thing for fashion media to focus on, regardless of the market influence? After adding the market and business factors, how do you think professional fashion media should balance the relationship between business and considered content? Or, to say, what's your opinion on the general trend and environment of "business kidnapping content"?

I feel that business and content are not contradictory. Writing soft propaganda does not equal to the content being kidnapped. It's consumer media's duty to recommend their audience good products. As long as soft propaganda manage to do these things: 1) to mark the article as a soft propaganda; 2) to ensure the product they recommend is recommended sincerely, their honesty and carefully written articles will then not be rejected by their readers.

Professional fashion magazines need to have their own views and attitudes towards fashion. Soft propaganda should not occupy every single page from the front cover to the back cover.

6. In your eyes, what are the “Chinese features” in Chinese Fashion Week that are different from those in International Fashion Weeks?

1) There is very little continuity between the designers and design brands in each season. It seems that every brand sees the fashion week as a marketing promotion instead of a must-have that they have to participate every season. Do it this year and quit next year, do it in spring and quit in autumn—this is a complete marketing campaign.

2) Western fashion media will hardly shoot ‘the big wheels’ in China, such as editor-in-chief, while participating in Chinese Fashion Week. Since these Western media have the right to fashion discourse, their ‘not included’ attitude might be a comment.

3) The organizers of Fashion Week are absolutely business-oriented, their first aim is not to promote the Chinese fashion industry. The two major Chinese fashion weeks are Shanghai Fashion Week and Beijing Fashion Week, both of which are government actions and the most commercial fashion weeks. First of all, the government supports these fashion weeks. Secondly, they have to look for sponsors outside, such as KFC, Mercedes-Benz, etc. Thirdly, they ask for money from brands and designers. I don't know how much for one show, but it is definitely not free. In addition, they also organize a series of awards, which assumed also for selling.

This kind of madness to earn money may be the biggest business feature.

7. In your point of view, what other changes have the new media fashion platform brought to the industry except changing the way of fashion cultural communication and the structure of communication?

I thought that the new media would've brought some new ideas and special attention to Chinese designers, but later I found out that most of the new media appeared for business. Especially those who seem more successful, they have no fresh fashion opinions. It is a pity.

8. I noticed an interesting phenomenon from designer friends: domestic editors of some top traditional fashion magazines tell the designer they'll report as long as they got back after attending the designer's show and interviewed the designer. Then, the designer will receive an invoice in his or her e-mail saying only after the "public relations fee" was paid can his or her interview be published in the magazine. This is not a small amount of the money. According to my friends in fashion media, the money is on the bright side in some magazines, which chief editors and editors will divide with the proportion. But most of the money goes into the editors' pockets as a hidden income. What is your opinion on the phenomenon? Do you think that the "public relations fee" in this form is a normal commercial action? Is this phenomenon 'Chinese characterized'?

I've also heard about this phenomenon. This was the reason my editor left our editorial department because I did not allow this behavior. It seems that the management of the so-called 'international magazine' is still very unruly. And there is no principle. This is the "Chinese characteristics" their big bosses definitely don't know about their Chinese companies.

What do you think is the reason for this? Is this a random phenomenon, or is it the 'unspoken rules' of the fashion media while producing contents? Or, to say, it didn't exist before, but with the rapid growth of fashion industry in recent years as a new emerging industry, this phenomenon shows up as the result of a chaotic market environment? Please talk about your idea (I know this question is a bit sharp, you can speak freely, I will only write about this part of the content in my Ph.D. thesis, I will confirm it to you, and then if you feel that you need an anonymous or confidential part, my paper can be partially sealed.)

Anything I told you can be written publicly. I feel that this phenomenon is caused by the corruption of China's overall society and recognition of corruption. We really live in an era of 'prostitution better than poverty', and people make money by all means. This performance of the

editors fully reflects the traces of this era and the moral standard of this society.

Or, if you could, can you talk about the industry chaos that we are experiencing? Or to say, what do you think is the urgent problem of improving the fashion media system in China?

9. Can you talk about how the role of fashion editor has changed in the industry compared to the past, to the 'golden decade' of traditional fashion magazines?

Today, fashion editors have started up their own social media accounts. In addition to working in magazines, they are also actively shaping their image of independent fashionistas. So you can imagine their seriousness towards their work is way worse than before.

10. Domestic media have classified the works from a series of independent designers in Labelhood, a Pioneer Festival during Shanghai Fashion Week, as the representative of the "anti-elitism" in the fashion industry. 'Anti-elitism' designers refer to those designers who consider art expression and artistic effects much more than the actual wearability of clothing. In short, they design for art. Do you agree with this statement? What's your opinion on the relationship between artistic and commercial in designs?

Sorry, I didn't pay attention to this before.

11. Can you briefly talk about your expectation for China's fashion media system? In your eyes, what should a professional and healthy fashion media system look like?

I am a writer. I feel that China needs freedom for the press. Only through this can journalists can be proud of their work. If we lose pride in our work, then we will be slaves for money.

Appendix III: Consent Agreement Signed Documents

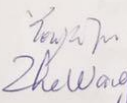
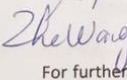
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[Re-shaping Innovations in the Contemporary Fashion Show: Emerging Chinese Designers in the Global Fashion Ecosystem]

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8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the researcher.

 Participant's Signature, 18/09/2016 Date
 Researcher's Signature, 18/09/2016 Date

For further information, please contact: Zhe Wang, s1324529@sms.ed.ac.uk

CONSENT AGREEMENT ZHE WANG



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Participant's Signature

Date

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Participant's Signature,

Date

2017. 5. 10.

Researcher's Signature,

Date

14/10/17

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<u>Victor Wong</u>	<u>2016.8.15</u>	Participant's	Signature	Date
<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	Researcher's	Signature	Date

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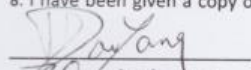
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	<u>2016. 8. 8.</u>	Participant's	Signature	Date
	<u>8th August 2016</u>	Researcher's	Signature	Date

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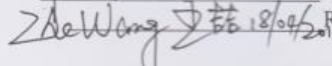
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 2017.4.18 Participant's Signature / Date
 18/04/2017 Researcher's Signature / Date

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Participant's Signature, *M. Liu* Date 25/08/2018

Researcher's Signature, *Zhe Wang* Date 25/08/2018

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