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FASHION AS THE OTHER OF ART. THE POSITION OF CLOTHING DESIGN IN THE AVANT-GARDE ART AND IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

Abstract: Analyzing the relationships between art and fashion, I will refer to the category the Other/identical. For several decades, it has been popular in the humanistic debate, subject to various interpretations (Derrida, Foucault, feminism, post-colonialism). In the meaning adopted here, just as the Other is a condition for the existence of the identical, so, I believe, fashion is a point of reference for art. It functions as an element allowing art to build its identity on being different from it. This situation was particularly evident in the first half of the 20th century. In the introductory part of my paper, I will present some examples of avant-garde artists' involvement in the design of clothing treated on an equal footing with artistic activity. For the Futurists and Constructivists, the Other and the identical were equal. The second part of the paper describes the situation that arose at the end of the 20th century, when equality between the Other and the identical took a different form. The identical started imitating the Other – art now resembles a fashion show, advertising photography or a luxury boutique. This reveals the anti-nomical character of art, its secret connection with fashion, anticipated by Theodor W. Adorno. Contemporary art no longer has the strength to resist it. They blend into the aesthetic visual sphere.

Keywords: The Other/identical, the avant-garde, Theodor W. Adorno, fashion, Futurism, Prada Marfa, Vanessa Beecroft

In this paper, I present the history of the dangerous relations between fashion and art. The relationship between these disciplines has been frequently explored and described. Most often, the discussion is limited to trying to determine whether fashion is an art. The answer has usually been negative. At best, clothing design is relegated to the domain of applied arts, and these are ranked lower in the hierarchy than fine arts. Practical application itself allegedly implies that we are dealing with something inferior and secondary. Analyzing the relations between art and fashion, I do not want to invoke these traditional categories, but I am going to address the "identical/other" relation. I believe that fashion is the Other of art, through which art has often built its own identity.

The category of Otherness has gained an important place in the humanistic debate in the last decades of the 20th century. It appears, for instance, in Jacques Derrida's philosophy of difference, as well as in the critical reflection of Michel Foucault, who notes that apart from the prevailing discourses, there are other ways of thinking, other discourses with subversive potential. Marginalized and excluded, they came to the fore in the postmodern era. The notion of otherness also plays an important role in feminist and post-colonial reflection. The notion of otherness entails the category of identity, and the question of relations between them. The Other, treated as incomprehensible and therefore incapable of being assimilated, is at the same time a condition for the existence of the identical.

In my reflections I am going to refer to the ideas of Otherness mentioned here, as well as to different takes on it. However, my intention is not only to constate the strangeness of fashion in relation to art. I will try to demonstrate that the identical/Other relationship entails the necessity of their coexistence. I consider this situation as analogous to the view of Sartre, who believed that we can learn who we are through our attitude towards the Other.

One of the most important factors distinguishing art from other types of skills was the attribution of aesthetic values, rather than functional or utilitarian ones, to artworks. Immanuel Kant defined fine arts as the sphere of selfless contemplation, not serving any external purpose. The English philosopher Robin George Collingwood believed that the artist, unlike the craftsman, had freedom in his creative decisions. His activity is not limited by a predefined function or purpose, apart from creating aesthetic experiences.

The reason for the exclusion of fashion from the realm of art was its usefulness. Clothing has always served some function, be it protective, defensive, ritual, representative or communicative, meaning that it has emphasized the importance and social position of the user, helped him/her to stand out or assimilate with a specific social group. Great tailors have been "dictators" in name only. In fact, they are dependent on the tastes and generosity of their customers. Meanwhile, the inherent feature of art is autonomy, i.e. freedom from external economic, religious and ideological influences. The most radical form of art is associated with the slogan "art for art's sake" – art that does not serve any purpose. Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, the great 20th century author of the theory of art's autonomy, claimed that art is characterized by duality – it is an autonomous and a social phenomenon at the same time. He pointed out that

art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself,

¹ Cf. G. Sztabiński, Estetyka "inności", in: Konteksty Sztuki. Konteksty estetyki, vol. I, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Wydawnictwo Officyna, Łódź 2011, p. 249.

rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful,' it criticizes society by merely existing...²

According to Adorno, the history of art is the history of its progressive autonomization. Artistic activity is being gradually freed from traditional cultural functions, such as religious or court ones. Fashion has never had such autonomy, nor has it had a tendency to rebel against the society. The concept of autonomy is normative, it is a tool for determining whether something can be accepted or if it should be excluded from the sphere of art. Based on this principle, fashion that does not meet certain rules has been excluded from the realm of art.

Despite those facts, and all its weaknesses and flaws, fashion has aroused interest in the artistic circles. Cally Blackman, British writer and lecturer in art history notes observes that

Artists of every kind tend to be in the vanguard of fashion, or choose to dress differently from the majority – a by-product of the self-belief, required to pursue their profession, of the avant-garde milieu they inhabit and its disregard for convention and of a certain indulgence, if not expectation, on the part of the public to be shocked by them. Since the early nineteenth century, a cult of the artist-as-genius flourished, leading to the self-conscious promotion of an 'artistic' image.³

An inseparable element of the nineteenth-century artistic bohemians was a black cloak and hat with a wide rim. Among the Dadaists, monocles were fashionable. Taken from the dandy dress, they suggested that the user was of aristocratic descent. Thus, they were a kind of perverse provocation.⁴ Andy Warhol was recognizable thanks to his silver wig, without which he never showed himself in public. He refused to undergo a necessary surgical procedure because it required the removal of the wig. The "uniform" of the German artist Joseph Beuys consisted of a felt hat, a fishing vest, a white shirt and jeans trousers. Beuys' felt hat, Viola Michely writes, was a "trademark of the modern revolutionary. It is the cry of a citizen who makes use of democracy and wants to use it and seize it with the audience..." Thus, a specific outfit had a function to serve for the artists, it was a mask that

C. Blackman, One Hundred Years of Manswear, Laurence King Publishing, London, 2015, p. 66.
 Por. E. Roditi, Interview with Hanah Höch, in: Dadas on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others, ed. L.R. Lippard, Courier Corporation, New York 1971, p. 77.

T. Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, transl. R. Hullot-Kentor, Continuum, London-New York, p. 226.

V. Michely, Letters as Works of Art Beuys and James Lee Byars, in: Joseph Beuys: The Reader, ed. C. Mesch, V. Michely London: Tauris, pp. 88-106. https://books.google.pl/books?id=YfFeBA-AAQBAJ&pg=PT70&dq=josef+beuys+hat&hl=pl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiWyr_Gn6_JAhWEknIKHQQ4CukQ6AEIIjAB#v=onepage&q=josef%20beuys%20hat&f=false [4.07.2016]

helped to build their artistic *emploi*. Moreover, they did not limit their interest in clothing to themselves only.

Despite the inclusion of these characteristic elements in their outfits, the avant-garde artists rejected fashion as a cultural phenomenon, just like other conventions of the world against which they rebelled. However, they were indeed preoccupied with clothing, believing that the revolution would change people's way of thinking in this matter as well, and lay the foundations for a new reality. The Italian Futurists wanted to replace fashion with wearable artworks. In 1913, recognizing fashion as a tool for the propaganda of modernity, Giacomo Balla, the protagonist of the movement, announced a manifesto concerning men's clothing (Manifesto futurista del vestito da uomo). He promoted asymmetrical suits in bright colors, "bi-colored shoes, polychrome neckties made of plastic, cardboard or wood, sometimes equipped with colorful lightbulbs that would go off and on at will." These clothes were "an expression of modernity and praised the dynamics of urban life." Thus, they performed the same task as all futuristic art. Balla's colorful suits and vests were not mass-produced; single pieces were made by local Roman tailors and by the artist's daughters. In their private lives, the Futurists dressed conservatively. Balla sometimes were vests adorned with patterns of his own design, but only on occasion, such as openings of exhibitions.

It is important for my deliberations that the Futurists extended their artistic activities to include the design of clothing, which they combined with their creative ideology. In their utopian vision, fashion was to become art, that is, the Other was to become identical. The Russian Constructivists had a similar outlook on the role of the clothing. They wanted to integrate art with the mass production of functional clothing. Designing fabrics and clothes, Varvara Stepanova and Lubov Popova tried to give the principles of Constructivism a more practical dimension. They "successfully applied the dynamics of modern visual language to a utilitarian art form: clothing (...) they pioneered the practical application of abstraction to everyday objects, and thus consolidated the link between the art and design movements of the post-war era," writes Bonnie English, professor of history and art theory. In this case, both clothes/the Other and art/identical had to follow the ideology of Communism, especially with the advent of Productivism.

The avant-garde identity seemed unambiguous and well-defined, while at the same time an inner contradiction was seen in fashion. It was corrupt in spite of the appearance of freedom, and was prone to making concessions to the bourgeois worldview. Nowadays, when the boundaries between the two domains are no longer defined as clearly, and modern fashion fares even better in the commercial world,

G. Lista, Futuryzm, Polish transl. E. Grządek, Wydawnictwo Arkady, Warszawa 2002, p. 150.

C. Blackman, op. cit., p. 66.

⁸ B. English, A Cultural History of Fashion in the 20th and 21st Centuries: From Catwalk to Sidewalk, Bloomsbury, London-New York 2013, p. 44.

art seems to envy it that position. Until now, fashion designers had been inspired by the works of the artists, and now the order is reversed. Distant sources of this upheaval may perhaps be traced back to 1964, when Andy Warhol presented his *Brillo Boxes* – copies of soap-flakes carton boxes that were no different from shop goods – at the Stable Gallery exhibition in New York. Perhaps the change had occurred earlier, with Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*. In any case, since the 1980s, the opposition between utility objects (including fashion) and art conceived as the category of identical/Other has been gradually dissolving. As noted by Grzegorz Dziamski, "Today's art can look like advertising, fashion, or entertainment, it can resemble consumer goods, toys, sports equipment, kitchen appliances, social or political activities - in one word, it may look like anything, but unlike other products and activities it must be free."

How the identical imitates the Other can be traced by analyzing the effects of collaboration between the famous fashion houses and the stars of the art scene. Vanessa Beecroft, an Italian artist living in the United States, uses live models in her installations, just as it is done during fashion shows. Models, naked or partially dressed in underwear, wearing stilettoes and sometimes wigs, stand for hours without making any sudden movements. The actions consist in confronting the semi-naked girls with the clothed spectators. Beecroft's works are sometimes interpreted as criticism of the mechanisms governing fashion, the treatment of the models, and the imposition of beauty standards by the media. However, the artist does not treat her models any differently than they are treated during the process of preparing the presentation of clothes for the catwalk. They are subjected to many hours of preparation: the depilation of their whole body, a unifying make--up; the models are exposed to the public view, and the photos constituting the documentation of the action are retouched in the same way as the photographs in fashion magazines. The visual pleasure offered to the viewers by Beecroft is of a luxurious character. The clothes in which her models appear are rented or specially designed by famous fashion designers such as Miuccia Prada, Helmut Lang, Tom Ford (Gucci), Valentino. In 2005, Beecroft staged a performance to celebrate the opening of Louis Vuitton's store in Champs Elysée in Paris. The models were positioned on the shelves next to the leather goods for sale. Thus, the artist placed her activity on the borderline between art and marketing. A similar ambiguity was evident when Beecroft staged an action with models at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in April 1998. The models stood for two and a half hours, wearing a bikini and high-heeled shoes designed by the Gucci fashion house. The guests invited to the performance could buy both commemorative photographs of the artist's works and Gucci underwear in the museum shop. This blurred the difference between a museum object and a commodity.

⁹ G. Dziamski Sztuka po końcu sztuki. Sztuka początku XXI wieku Galeria Miejska "Arsenał", Poznań 2009, p. 12.

Art and fashion became fused with each other. The Other and the identical were made equal, although based on a different principle than in the work of the artists of the early 20th century avant-garde. For the representatives of the avant-garde, clothing was to become art. Otherness was to be weakened and even to become the basis for artistic nobilitation by discovering new ways of modernizing life. In the case of contemporary art and the activities of such artists as Beecroft, fashion also intertwines with art, but this is not related to the need for a revolution in the social life.

I believe that in the context of Vanessa Beecroft's work with semi-naked girls, Adorno's words are particularly meaningful:

The disdain of fashion ... is provoked by its erotic element, in which fashion reminds art of what it never fully succeeded in sublimating. Through fashion, art sleeps with what it must renounce and from this draws the strength that otherwise must atrophy under the renunciation on which art is predicated.¹⁰

Adorno represented a position close to the avant-garde and saw fashion as an element that could revive art by discovering ways of socializing artistic activities that had hitherto not been taken into account. However, he also recognized the dangers of this perspective. In fashion lies an element of treacherous temptation for art, which it must resist it in order to remain self. Adorno believes that fashion exposes the position of art. He writes, "Fashion is art's permanent confession that it is not what it claims to be. For its indiscreet betrayals fashion is as hated as it is a powerful force in the system; its double character is a blatant symptom of its antinomy." In the construction of the Other/fashion, the philosopher sees a mask concealing the alter ego of art. It is obvious that fashion designers are fascinated by the artistic world, but Adorno seems to suggest a hidden, commonly anticipated dark side of art, its dependence on fashion, weakness, inner conflict: "art must resist fashion, but it must also innervate fashion in order not to make itself blind to the world, to its own substance." 12

Writing about fashion, Adorno has in mind a broader meaning of this concept: the changing lifestyle and customs associated with the era and the standards of a given society. In my article I refer to a narrower understanding of this concept, namely clothing subject to seasonal changes, but I also demonstrate more general directions of changes, tendencies, and transformations taking place between pure art and fashion. For example, art museums are increasingly eager to organize exhibitions of famous fashion designers. They break records of attendance, generating profits for museums. Designers in turn treat artistic institutions as

¹⁰ T.W. Adorno, op. cit., p. 316.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 316.

¹² Ibid., p. 316.

places to promote their own collections. The benefits are therefore mutual. The curators of such exhibitions had to deal with the problem of how to present clothes so that they would not be associated with the commercial activity and the space of a shop. Fashion objects and works of art were thus readily arranged together. For example, at the exhibition *Madame Grès - La couture à l' oeuvre* in the Parisian Musée Bourdelle in 2011, the designer's draped dresses were juxtaposed with antique sculptures. The pedestals for the outfits were sculptural cavalts. As pointed out by Piotr Szaradowski, lecturer at the School of Form in Poznań, "Apart from its unique aesthetic qualities, this exhibition offered a different look at the clothes as a kind of sculpture." Such events put the Other in the place of the identical.

A special type of experiment that eliminates the boundaries between art and fashion are exhibitions presenting the works of fashion designers and artists side by side. The first exhibition of this kind was the Firenze Biennale in Florence in 1996. The exhibition was moved to the Guggenheim Museum the following year. During these events, apart from historical works documenting the fashion/art relations since the beginning of the twentieth century, the results of collaboration between leading contemporary artists and fashion designers were presented. These included Damien Hirst and Miuccia Prada, Jenny Holzer and Helmut Lang, Roy Lichtenstein and Gianni Versace, Julian Schnabel and Azzedine Alaia, Tony Cragg and Karl Lagerfeld, Oliver Herring and Rei Kawakubo. This way, the paths of pure and applied art were deliberately crossed in the space reserved for artists.

A testimony to the contemporary expansion of fashion associated with the names of famous clothing designers can be found in initiatives integrating various cultural phenomena. Miuccia Prada and her husband founded a foundation supporting contemporary art in 1993. Its director is a well-known curator and historian, Germanano Celant. The foundation has exhibition spaces in Milan and Venice, where works by renowned artists such as Anish Kapoor, Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, Louise Bourgeois, Bruce Nauman, or Maurizio Cattelan are presented. Located near the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Prada shop has an area reserved for presenting contemporary art next to the commercial section. For example, photographs by Andreas Gursky were displayed there. The fact that in his works he criticizes consumer culture adds irony to the event. If In this case, art is located in the consumption area, so the identical shares space with the Other.

Prada collaborates with artists on various levels. Prada Marfa is an example of this kind of activity. It is a building that resembles a boutique of this famous Italian fashion house. It was created in October 2005 just off the U.S. Highway 90 in West Texas. Two exhibition windows occupying the whole wall of the building

¹³ P. Szaradowski, *Sposoby na modę*, p. 26. ttp://muzealnictworocznik.com/api/files/view/19986. pdf [5 Aug 2017]

¹⁴ R. Arnold, Fashion: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2009, p. 45.

allow visitors a glimpse at a collection of Prada handbags and shoes. Above the awnings the brand's authentic logo is displayed, the color scheme reflects the typical Prada colour scheme, goods on display also come from Prada. However, the building is not a commercial object - the doors do not open, nor is there any staff inside. The "boutique" is located in the Chihuahua desert, in the middle of nowhere. Luxury goods that are the object of desire of many consumers landed like a UFO in a space far from the consumer world. The status of this object is unclear. The Texan Department of Transportation classified the building as illegal outdoor advertising. However, this is not quite correct, as it was not commissioned by the fashion house. It was financed by the local non-profit local art organization Ballroom Marfa and Art Production Fund of New York, and the authors of the installation are Scandinavian artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset. This allows the object to be classified as a work of art. The more so because in 2014 the investor of Prada Marfa reached a compromise with the Texas Department of Transportation and the building was reclassified as a museum facility. It is a site specific installation. Maria Slowinska draws attention to the minimalist character of the building, its symmetry and the form of presentation of goods, evoking the standards of displaying artistic objects in galleries. She compares it to the white cube, a canonical place of art perception, considered neutral, deprived of the context of time and social conditions. She also draws attention to the surroundings of the building. It is located 40 miles from the town of Marfa - a place where Donald Judd, one of the leading representatives of American minimal art, lived and worked. His enormous installation, consisting of fifteen open concrete blocks, is located in Marfa and provides a context for the object. Although Prada Marfa is not an open concrete form, but, as Maria Slowinska observes, it makes a similar visual impression thanks to the glass windows filling the front of the building.¹⁵

How shall we interpret the relationship between art and fashion, between the identical and the Other in this case? The artistic installation resembles a shop with fashionable accessories, meaning that art imitates a commercial object. The identical imitates the Other. Unlike in the past, when designers attempted to catch up with art, inspired by the works of artists. It is worth mentioning that the goods inside the building are not of full value – there are only the right boots from each pair and the bags have their bottom sections removed. Thus they can be called original mockups. The mockup of the Other became a work of art.

Undoubtedly, the Prada fashion house benefits from the fact that this building exists. Although located outside the city center, it is an effective marketing tool. It is a destination for tourist pilgrimages, it attracts media attention, it is an object of analyses and comments. Can we hope that there is a feedback responsible.

M.A. Slowinska, Art/Commerce: The Convergence of Art and Marketing In Contemporary Culture, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag 2014, p. 64.

se? Is the brand a vehicle that propels art? Many people claim that thanks to such artistic activities those who do not normally visit museums have a chance to experience art. Built in the desert with biodegradable materials, Prada Marfa is, as Erika Doss, professor of the American University of Notre Dame writes, "an ironic comment on the vagaries of fashion and the unchecked growth of western materialism." ¹⁶ According to the fashion journalist Mitchell Oakley Smith, "it functions as a contemporary memento mori, a meditation on morality and the futility of existence."¹⁷ Art therefore appears to benefit from the collaboration with fashion, but it has to meet certain conditions, as evidenced by the incident associated with this building. Prada Marfa has repeatedly been the victim of vandalism. One of such acts is worthy of attention because its author was an artist who wanted to test whether it was possible to have a dialogue in contemporary art. To what extent an object described as an example of art that evokes reflection on the subject of contemporary times corresponds to these assumptions. In March 2014, Joseph Magnano, former student of the Art Institute in San Francisco, painted the walls of the building in blue and covered the windows with posters bearing the inscription "TOMS". Toms is a footwear company selling espadrilles. It is known for its philanthropic activities based on the "One for One" model, which means that for every item sold, a poor child is given a new pair of shoes by the company. Magnano's action was not directed against Prada. In his manifesto, he questioned the pro-social image of Toms, a company that in fact exploits its employees and its manufacturing operations have a negative impact on the environment.

Joseph Magnano treated the Marfa building as a canvas, a place of artistic expression presented to the public. He changed Prada Marfa to Marfa Toms. However, his work was interpreted by the Ballroom Marfa and the authors of Prada Marfa as an act of vandalism and devastation. His intentions were not analyzed. The discussion in the artistic space, which Elmgreen and Dragset had assumed, proved impossible. The artist was arrested, sentenced to a fine of \$1000 and ordered to cover the cost of refurbishing the building, which was estimated at \$10,700.18

Fashion is now such a powerful cultural phenomenon that it does not need to be defended. In this respect, it can be said that the Other has obtained an advantage over the identical. The avant-garde concepts in the art of the first half

¹⁶ E. Doss, The Process Frame: Vandalism, Removal, Re-siting, Destruction in Companion of Public Art, in: A Companion to Public Art, ed. Ch. Knight, H. Senie, John Wiley & Sons, Oxford 2016, 2, 412

M. Oakley Smith, A. Kubler, Art/Fashion in the 21st Century, Thames&Hudson, New York 2013, p. 196.

The artist no longer carries out such interventions. He makes his living painting images of cows. http://www.7qinterviews.com/interviews/joseph-magnano

of the twentieth century were developed on the basis of the belief that in the face of the prevailing cultural crisis artistic activity is the very area that retains its value. That is why the avant-garde representatives believed that by reforming art, they would create the foundations for the modernization of the whole culture.¹⁹ Adorno's concept preserves the basic components of this positive assessment of art. Although the German philosopher took into account many factors that undermine the power of this conviction, he did not contemplate the problem of saving art. However, he was concerned with the need to save fashion. He wrote, "What makes it worth salvaging, however, is that though it hardly denies its complicity with the profit system, it is itself disdained by that system. By suspending aesthetic values such as those of inwardness, timelessness, and profundity, fashion makes it possible to recognize the degree to which the relation of art to these qualities, which are by no means above suspicion, has become a pretext."²⁰ The position of fashion is thus characterized by reference to art and in contrast to art. Taking into account the contemporary cultural situation, one can ponder whether these relations have not been reversed.

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¹⁹ The only avant-garde trend that emerged from this was Dadaism.

²⁰ T.W. Adorno, op. cit., p. 316.

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MODA JAKO INNY SZTUKI. MIEJSCE PROJEKTOWANIA UBIORU W TWÓRCZOŚCI AWANGAR-DOWEJ A WSPÓŁCZESNOŚĆ (streszczenie)

Analizując związki miedzy sztuką a modą odwołuję się do kategorii Inny/tożsamy. Od kilku dziesięcioleci jest ona popularna w debacie humanistycznej podlegając różnym interpretacjom (Derrida, Foucault, feminizm, postkolonializm). W przyjętym tu sensie, podobnie jak Inny stanowi warunek istnienia tożsamego, tak, moim zdaniem, moda jest punktem odniesienia dla sztuki. Funkcjonuje jako element pozwalający sztuce budować tożsamość na zasadzie odróżnienia się od niej. Sytuacja ta ze szczególną wyrazistością ujawniła się w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. W początkowej części tekstu przedstawiam przykłady zaangażowania artystów awangardowych w problematykę projektowania ubioru traktowanego na równi z działalnością artystyczną. Dla futurystów i konstruktywistów Inny i tożsamy były sobie równe. Druga część tekstu pokazuje sytuację rodzącą się pod koniec minionego stulecia, gdy równość między Innym i tożsamym przyjęła odmienną formę. Tożsamy zaczął imitować Innego – sztuka przypomina obecnie prezentację mody, fotografię reklamową lub luksusowy butik. Wyszła na jaw przeczuwana przez Theodora W. Adorna antynomiczność sztuki, jej sekretny związek z modą. Współczesna sztuka nie ma już sił opierać się jej. Roztapia się wraz z nią w estetycznej sferze wizualnej.

Słowa kluczowe: Inny/tożsamy, awangarda, Theodor W. Adorno, moda, futuryzm, Marfa Prada, Vanessa Beecroft.