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## DIALOGUES BETWEEN ARTISTS AND FASHION

**Abstract:** Fashion prompts a variety of reflections, and it is impossible to relate it only to presentations of clothes at world shows. It is a suitable material for many different artistic endeavors. Visionary artists like Elsa Schiaparelli, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Tadeusz Kantor, Marian Sępniański, Zuzanna Janin and Magdalena Moskwa reject the basic function of clothing and give it a new way of existence. Instead of a protective or aesthetic function, it serves a symbolic or metaphorical one. Each item of clothing can become a work of art or a pretext for a dialogue with history, philosophy, psychology, literature, art, or with the creator's own self. Fashion can sometimes be a tool for satisfying artistic needs and manifesting them through the presentation of clothes created by artists.

**Keywords:** artistic fashion, costume, clothing, metaphor, visual aesthetics, corporeality, philosophy of existence.

The intertwining relationship between fashion and artistic endeavors has long captivated the minds of not only art historians but also fashion designers. This complex bond gives rise to four distinct research perspectives. Firstly, we explore the images of clothing that transcend time and have played a significant role in the creation of artistic masterpieces throughout history. Secondly, we address the concepts of clothes portrayed by famous painters in various works of art. The third perspective delves into the very fabric of society, examining clothes worn by individuals as a reflection of their status and taste. Lastly, the reservoir of fashion trends serves as a wellspring of inspiration for artists seeking to create novel works of art using ready-made costumes that constitute a symbolic and metaphorical code of expression. When selecting costumes for their artistic endeavors, artists have created a space between their own artistic selves and the ever-evolving fashion world, and in this way very

personal expression is possible. The inner dialogue becomes a niche in which artists seek salvation. By selecting and manipulating garments from various epochs, artists reveal the infinite persistence of fashion, unbounded by time. Within this dialogue with clothing, they come to a profound understanding of themselves, delving into the depths of their own existence. As the artist and garment meld into one, profound silence emerges, concealing the enigmatic relationship between human creativity and the act of creation itself. The essence of these individual artistic endeavors lies in the belief that fashion transcends mere words, touching upon an extra-verbal reality that eludes precise and simplistic expression. Costumes become a vessel of confrontation between the real and the metaphysical.

In the present day, fashion reigns supreme, showcased in the media like never before. From the captivating allure of ready-to-wear garments to creations birthed by celebrated designers, and even fantastic masterpieces conceived by visionary artists. The very essence of fabric with its vivid hues, intricate patterns, texture, the way it is laid out, the cut and all embellishments, is an element of a plastic composition that serves as an element of visual artistry. The fabric can also be the representation of a character and can send symbolic, ceremonial, religious, cultural, sociological, psychological, erotic, professional, technological, political, and ecological messages. The word "fashion", which in many European languages also means "modernity", draws its origins from the Latin word "modus". It carries a sense of both transience and temporality.<sup>1</sup> Fashion trends pass with great speed, exemplify extreme impermanence, and value what is alluring and extremely striking. Through the centuries, profound kinship has thrived between fashion and art, and the creation of clothing and encouragement to make creative designs are subject to the same aesthetic criteria that govern the art of the time. Among the great contemporary designers, the realm of couture traverses the boundaries of visual arts and theater. These garments are independent models existing in the consciousness of the viewer and resonating with literature, music, painting, history, psychology, and cinema. Such accomplishments require original ways of presentation. An innovative approach to this problem was presented by Elsa Schiaparelli in the inter war period. Steeped in the surreal and the daring spirit of Dadaism, her eccentric costume designs embraced art not merely as a muse, but as a living canvas on which she painted her vision. Schiaparelli adorned her dresses with selected excerpts from Salvador Dali's works. Aiming to captivate the viewer with an air of surprise, Schiaparelli mirrored the avant-garde's yearning to break the confines of convention. Her fashion showroom was adorned with

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Fumaroli, *Państwo kulturalne, religia nowoczesności*, transl. H. Abramowicz, J. M. Kłoczowski, Kraków 2008, pp. 226-229.

window decorations crafted by visionary Surrealist artists. Mannequins and props emerged in a surreal and dreamlike splendor, akin to a whimsical puppet theater. For Elza Schiaparelli, a paramount figure of the interwar period, the philosophy of fashion rested in a profound belief: it was not the clothes that should conform to the body, but rather the body that should adapt to the garments it adorned.<sup>2</sup> Influenced by the Surrealist movement, her designs embraced the fanciful, ushering in a realm of captivating discomfort, a stark contrast to the simplicity and comfort advocated by the likes of Coco Chanel.

In the golden age of the interwar era, the visionary painter Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz left an indelible mark on the world of art when he opened his own fashion gallery with the help of paintings and literary images sometimes capturing the essence of costumes that defined the decade. Yet, Witkiewicz did not seek mere realism, nor did he yearn to recreate the texture of lace or the pattern of shirt pins. Instead, he sought to beckon the imagination of his audience, hinting at forms and shapes that would captivate their souls. The costumes were left deliberately incomplete and shrouded in ambiguity to help the artist to reproduce the individual image and personal traits of the characters. Any painterly or literary understatement shows that individuals are complex and cannot be easily confined within the rigid limitations of fashion trends of the decade.

Various portraits of women and men, girls and boys, made by the artist according to the rules of the "S. I. Witkiewicz Portrait Company", allow the audience to look at various canons of fashion subject to intense psychological, social, economic, military and industrial changes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In one of his most famous essays, *The Painter of Modern Life*, Charles Baudelaire warned his readers against looking at fashions "as if they were dead things" because "one might as well admire the garments suspended, slack and lifeless as the skin of Saint Bartholomew, in a clothes-dealer's wardrobe" (...).<sup>3</sup>

For Witkacy, fashion is also not just a collection of "dead" clothes. In one passage from his novel *Insatiability*, he wrote:

"Genezyp [...] entered a huge hall [...]. Tengier's overcoats and fur coats on the hangers filled him with something like superstitious awe. For some reason, they seemed to be something immensely powerful and ominous, mightier in their number and stillness than their very owner.

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<sup>2</sup> L. Svendsen, *Fashion. A philosophy*, London 2006, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. Baudelaire, *Rozmaitości estetyczne*, transl. J. Guze, słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2000, p. 339; translation after Charles Baudelaire *The Painter of Modern Life (Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne)*, transl. A. S. Kline: <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/French/BaudelaireThePainterOfModernLife.php>

The mysterious immobility of these clothes expressed, as it were, countless possibilities of actionable deeds, while Tengier himself seemed to be just a moment of flowing personality, faint, devoid of all strength and continuity".<sup>4</sup>

A fashionable wardrobe consisting of "coats and furs" is a carrier of meanings and an expression of the life condition of Particular Beings. As we delve into the world of fashion psychology, we find that clothing is not merely a direct and clear display of emotions, various feelings and internal tensions, but a canvas that conceals as much as it reveals. It is also a clear signal of who I am or who I want to become at a given moment. In its essence, fashion is a collection of costumes, ornaments and accessories, designed to enhance the allure of the human form. However, beyond the surface charm, fashion becomes a spectacle of self expression, exposing oneself and marking one's position in the world. Witkacy attributed a special role to women's fashion, which he believed was a special element of seduction strategy. The allure of velvet dresses, ornate hats, silk stockings, and embroidered gloves unveiled an enchanting mystery, a world hidden behind the façade of feminine grace. For Witkacy, the ever-shifting images of femininity and changes in behavior became a playground of aesthetic delight. In his novel *Farewell to Autumn*, he stated:

"Erotomania spread like a sticky fog in the city's early night life. [...] "They" walked without masks, triumphantly displaying their sole insolent value, accentuating the impropriety of obsessive thought with furs, hats, stockings, pumps, "merezhkak", "gussets", "plaits", all these womanly "what nots", the apparel, the "chiffonerie" - stop: the boredom of the fashion journal and this at the other end. And Zosia was one of them... And yet?"<sup>5</sup>

Dresses and costumes, suits and tailcoats transcend their mere physical forms to become a mystical language for Witkacy - an artist who used images to depict the era, point to spectacular events, express ideological discourse and the sphere of emotional involvement, and who strived for phantasmagorical or

<sup>4</sup> S. I. Witkiewicz, *Nienasycenie*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1992, p. 61. Translation after *WITKACY. Sejsmograf epoki przyspieszenia / Seismograph of the Acceleration Age*, exhibition catalog, edited by Zofia Machnicka, Paweł Polit, transl. Marcin Wawrzyńczak et al., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 2022, p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> S. I. Witkiewicz, *Pożegnanie jesieni*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1992, p. 49; translation after *WITKACY. Sejsmograf epoki przyspieszenia / Seismograph of the Acceleration Age*, exhibition catalog, edited by Zofia Machnicka, Paweł Polit, transl. Marcin Wawrzyńczak et al., Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa 2022, p. 293.

realistic depiction of Particular Beings in the context of aesthetic metamorphoses. Witkacy's portraits and portrayals of characters in his novels and dramas prompt reflection from the visible human *soma* and hidden *psyche* to the art of creating psychedelic figures placed in phantasmagoric spaces or theatrical performances. Witkacy, who lived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emerges as a perceptive seismographer of the artistic transformations of his time, leaving indelible footprints upon the canvas of his work. Witkacy moulds the appearance of his characters, attending to every detail with care – from the choice of costumes to the very essence of hairstyles, facial profiles, or body poses. His portraits reveal a kaleidoscope of individuality, making it difficult to confine the phenomenon of fashion of Particular Beings within conventional boundaries. Yet, individual fashion styles become a "form in itself", an "embodiment of the Mystery of Being!"<sup>6</sup>

Each outfit bears witness to the very existence of the body. Like a "package", it conceals the secrets of our personality or like "armor", it shields and hides our identity. For what was once a functional garment now transforms into a fragment of reality, a canvas for artistic expression. Clothing could gain multidimensional meanings when it lost its primary function of covering the body. Many contemporary artists exploit this meaningful potential and the inner contradiction hidden in clothing in various ways. Thus, through diverse artistic strategies, the multidimensional meanings of clothing unfold. Each outfit is a kind of a visible metaphor and an extension of ourselves. Clothes are the *pars pro toto* of a person. Yet, let us not forget that it is the human body itself that breathes life into the garment. Unworn clothes lie flat and empty, waiting for the touch of flesh to awaken them. In the face of such a result, a reversal effect can be applied, which is skillfully used by designers and great tailors aware that it is clothes that can transform the body. Only seemingly high boots, shoulder pads, crinolines, South African neck hoops and nudes from various historical periods evoke the silhouette of the garments they once adorned. Clothes redefine the body and give it a different shape or expression.

Many well-known artists use clothing and its selected elements in their artistic tactics. Each of these visionaries, in their unique way, discovers an indispensable component of their artistic expression within the folds of fabric. The meanings they infuse into these garments transform a costume into a tool of tantalizing intrigue within the realm of art. For Tadeusz Kantor and Marian Sępnik, it is clothing stripped of its utilitarian purpose that stirs their artistic curiosity. They find fascination in unnecessary and forgotten garments, drawn from the depths of old wardrobes or long-forgotten trunks. A similar theme resonates within the works of Magdalena Moskwa and Zuzanna Janin, as they

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<sup>6</sup> S. I. Witkiewicz, *Nienasycecie*, op. cit., p. 81.

also embrace worn-out fabric as a powerful vessel for artistic exploration. In these garments, they discover the painful truths of human corporeality, the ephemeral nature of existence and the march of oblivion.

Tadeusz Kantor, a Polish artist based in Cracow, stated that "there is no work of art (...) There is only an object ripped from life and reality".<sup>7</sup> Such a notion gripped him, reshaping the very fabric of his artistic theory and practice. Guided by this profound reflection, Kantor's gaze turned to mundane objects stripped of their customary representative function – old clothes, damaged shoes, broken umbrellas. It was within the realm of their uselessness that he saw the potential to unveil a different perspective of their existence in the world. In the early 1960s, as both a painter and director, Kantor was convinced that this revelation demanded delicate maneuvers and meticulous artistry in concealing them. In this way, an *emballage* was created that hid the affairs of human existence and the proper substance of life under the rags.<sup>8</sup> The forms of packaging enshrouded their contents, but aroused curiosity and the desire to know something inaccessible. Various parts of clothing emerged as ready-made matter for Kantor's artistic alchemy, as they allowed the presentation of ontological contradiction. *Emballage* was ready-made matter for Kantor's strategies that the artist reached for – the desire to know the unknown encouraged the penetration of what was covered.<sup>9</sup> However, in the happening *Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt*,<sup>10</sup> Kantor embarked on a daring reversal of conventional principles. Hand in hand with a group of hippies, they journeyed into the realm of Dr. Tulp and Amsterdam surgeons, and together performed a "clothing dissection." The artist delved into the layers of fabric with his brush, peeling away the veneer of the "shameful waste" of reality and extracting the "forgotten remnants" hidden within the pockets. Two painterly objects emerged from the scenic matter – vivid embodiments of the "unadulterated side of individuality". One was a tapestry of clothing fragments and the other one – an eclectic assemblage of objects that once lay concealed in the pockets. Kantor performed the operation on clothing, which is the "packaging" for the body. However, as a result of the vivisection, he exposed the anatomy of the human being. Kantor makes the viewer realize that no costume, even the most elegant or tattered one, could ever cover a body that is sick and full of pain. Each fabric is destroyed layer by layer like human tissues and cells.

<sup>7</sup> T. Kantor, *Lekcje mediolańskie*, Cricoteka, Biuro Kongresowe Urzędu Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 1992, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> L. Stangret, *Tadeusz Kantor. Malarski ambalaż totalnego dzieła*, Art+Edition Adam K. Dominik, Kraków 2006, p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> K. Czerni, *Tadeusz Kantor. Malarstwo i teatr. Przewodnik po twórczości artysty*, BWA w Bydgoszczy, Cricoteka: Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> The happening was first held in Nuremberg in 1968; a year later, on January 24, 1969, it was repeated at the Foksal Gallery.

Marian Stępniaak, a visionary artist from Toruń, embraces clothing as a profound medium. Like Kantor before him, he also finds fascination in the discarded and damaged, breathing life into old dresses, blouses, shirts and scarves. Within these discarded fragments of fabric, he discovers the new potential to create paintings and reveal their "(...) new purpose, give them a new quality".<sup>11</sup> Marian Stępniaak embarked on a poetic excavation, unearthing tangible traces of human use – clothes that bore the weight of private or family history. Within the walls of his studio, these discarded garments found a new purpose, becoming vessels of time's testimony and bearers of personal emotions. Stępniaak sought to unveil the delicate fragility of matter and the irreversible dance of destruction that time conducts. Thus, it was rightly pointed out by Grzegorz Borkowski that "in the reflection on the ephemeral" that Stępniaak proposes, "the wear and tear of clothes that he puts before our eyes is not a completely expressive, screaming, dramatic wear and tear, nor is destruction the subject of this art, as we easily recognize that dresses, shirts and tablecloths are presented".<sup>12</sup> His works represent a clear intention to capture the elusive essence of past time. In his works, we find echoes of Kantor's artistic endeavors, yet a crucial distinction sets them apart. Unlike Kantor's compositions of typical collages and emballage crafted from clothing fragments, Stępniaak's gaze fell upon garments as a whole. He did not seek to name or classify these old costumes and they did not pretend to be *ready-made*. They make us reflect on permanence and impermanence. Everything passes away, for such is the natural rhythm ingrained in the very fabric of the world. Impermanence does not mean complete disappearance, for an object can still last "but in a different way".<sup>13</sup> Worn clothes subjected to the gentle touch of artistic alchemy take on a new existence – stretched upon frames, adorned with vibrant hues, arranged in columns, or suspended in the embrace of public space on branches, fences or benches. Some costumes mounted on wooden frames silently "tell" us about it themselves. Fashionable outfits gracefully intertwine with the course of everyday existence, surrendering to the relentless cadence of time. And time is a story journeying towards the inevitable conclusion. As the succession of time unfolds, the once vibrant shapes of garments begin to fade, colors grow muted, and the threads that once captivated the beholder's gaze are gently interrupted. Just as the garments "wear away" bit by bit, so too does the human soul lose the property of place, disperses over the earth and the universe.

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<sup>11</sup> M. Stępniaak, *Koniec i początek*, [in:] *Marian Stępniaak: koniec i początek = end & beginning*, Exhibition catalog, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2008, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> G. Borkowski, *Dwie powszedniości w Galerii Działań*, <https://archiwum-obieg.ujazdowski.pl/recenzje/10470> [accessed: 09.06.2023]

<sup>13</sup> J. Rochowiak, *Przemija postać świata*, [in:] *Marian Stępniaak: koniec i początek = end & beginning*, exhibition catalog, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2008, pp. 4-5.

In the realm of artistic expression, Zuzanna Janin is another artist who breathes new life into discarded, fragmented and damaged clothing. For the artist, "Clothing becomes a testimony to the very existence of our being and, in addition, a pasigraphic evidence of who we are and have been – a collection of signs, patterns, colors, and textures that evoke memories and associations with the personality, functions, position, age, interests and gender of the individual who once donned it".<sup>14</sup> Zuzanna Janin crafted her unique alphabet composed of two fundamental signs. One sign is always a piece of clothing, while the other is an element of public space, often a paving stone. Each garment becomes a composite sign – a potent fusion of the individual and the collective. It expresses individuality and belonging to a particular group, time and history. The artist chooses specific pieces of clothing: old pantyhose, torn stockings and decomposed socks, sometimes underwear, worn undershirts and torn dresses. These chosen garments stand juxtaposed with gray paving stones, creating sculptural objects. Each "sculpture", e.g., paving stones with pantyhose or socks, even so structurally similar, holds its own story, revealing a myriad of contexts and narratives. Janin's abstract constructions come together in a mesmerizing series she calls *Pasigraphy*.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the works in the *Pasigraphy* series were titled *Solaris* and are a reference to Stanislaw Lem's novel. The ocean is an intelligent organism that materializes the memories of the explorers – inhabitants of a space station – extracted from the subconscious. These phantom creations are people from their memories, but not as they really were, but as they were remembered by them. The artist's works are the realization of the novel's vision, for she has created objects resembling morbid projections reproduced from memory. Sometimes quite complicated constructions made of socks and pantyhose stretched over risers made of paving stones resemble space bases from science fiction novels.

*Pasigraphy* primarily uses pantyhose, stockings and socks. Their mode of presentation evokes associations with the clothing revolution, when it became possible to create flexible outfits that fit the body, but also with slave production of clothes in Asia for global retail chains. Janin's work activates a broad social, cultural, historical and political context. The clothes and gray paving stones indicated earlier allow associations with the idea of rebellion: the protests of workers (Poznań, 1956), students (Warsaw, 1968), or the Polish

<sup>14</sup> Z. Janin, *Solaris. Nie minął czas okrutnych cudów. O nienarracyjności języka sztuki (fragment of doctoral dissertation)*, <https://archiwum-obięg.u-jazdowski.pl/artmix/32998> [accessed: 18.06.2023]

<sup>15</sup> The word *Pasigraphy* means an artificially created language of symbols and codes, meant to represent not so much words, but rather concepts that are understood in many cultures.



Marches of Independence since 2011, while the issue of the feeling of entrapment was addressed by the artist in *Democratic Sculpture* and *Security Service*. This time, instead of pantyhose and paving stones, Janin used armchairs and soft pouffes trimmed with costumes and uniforms. In this way, the choice of the place to sit and the corresponding costume defines the position, tasks, rights and duties in the social structure. The selected works of the Warsaw based artist allow us to look at the ambiguity of the fashion phenomenon, entangled in the sign system, through various contexts, up to the social aspects of public space.

A slightly different use for costumes was proposed by Magdalena Moskwa. She presents a thought-provoking perspective on the human body, conceiving it as a "can for the spirit" that embodies the layers of the mind and emotional realm.<sup>16</sup> For the artist, old clothing becomes a catalyst for imagination, inviting profound reflections on the essence of the human condition. She crafted works of art from old coats, which she could not discard, but also did not want to keep. A dress was made from cut-out lining, while a two-piece garment was made from the top turned inside out. Later, the artist also began using new fabrics. Many of them were hemmed on her body, so that they literally gained her shape and became something like a mental suit. In this sense, the clothes can be seen as another form of portrait or, more precisely, self-portrait (*Sukienka* 2010, *Nomana XIII* 2013). The dresses and stiff kaftans, with their sleeves cut off, take on a life of their own – they become "skins off the body", capable of conveying emotions and feelings. Anyone who wanted to try on Moskwa's outfits would have to "sew oneself into" the costume imposed by the shape of her body, and to embrace a skin-to-skin embodiment of the artist's vision. The resulting forms are both unnaturally bent and upright, with heads pressed into hooded garments. In the early period of her work, Moskwa dared to explore the "underside of the underside," revealing the hidden layers of clothing – lining, interlinings and seams, that remain concealed according to traditional fashion canons. This artistic approach is reminiscent of Kantor's *The Anatomy Lesson According to Rembrandt*. Inspired by this happening, the artist introduces "operating tables" to her exhibitions, showcasing tools for intervention and a section on the image-body. This display is different from the literalness of images of bodily decay and allows one to think about the transience of one's condition. The stiff kaftans, with their sleeves severed, become metaphorical armor that restrains the human body; they are an indispensable element of many of her works. At the same time, the clothing has become a plaster corset that is very difficult to remove from one's body. In Moskwa's own words,

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<sup>16</sup> L. Wicherkiewicz, *Skórność. O twórczości Magdaleny Moskwy*, <http://magdamoskwa.pl/pdf/tekst11.pdf> [accessed: 18.06.2023]

"It is the armor we fashion for ourselves over the years, forming a unique shape in which we can survive. It is a kind of deformation, but also individuality, our unique shape".<sup>17</sup> The selected examples show that fashion has become a tool to satisfy artistic needs and a kind of literary or visual commentary on reality.

The exhibition in Collegium Maius,<sup>18</sup> prepared by young artists of the Magdalena Abakanowicz University of Arts in Poznań, draws inspiration from the profound musings of Mieczysław Porębski *Can a metaphor be seen?* Of course, the idea is not to visualize the metaphor, but to give it a costuming outline for the creation of further meanings. In the pursuit of their artistic endeavors, the artists are guided by the insights of Andrzej Falkiewicz's book *Existence and Metaphor*. Here, metaphor becomes a tool that allows them to "harness the very essence of existence",<sup>19</sup> since "To exist is to transcend the boundaries of their own physicality, and thus to exist meta-physically, metaphorically. Only the intersection, the borderland, is certain. I consider myself sometimes a metaphysical creature, inhabiting two worlds at once, but in fact I am a metaphorical creature".<sup>20</sup> The body becomes a costume subjected to various metamorphoses. On the other hand, the costume itself can be treated as "the desire for being." And being "is becoming - of which metaphor is the tool. By going beyond myself, by metaphorically existing and expanding my boundaries, I strengthen my own continuance".<sup>21</sup>

The world of costume metaphor unfolds both a realm of optimism and fatalism before us, reflecting the myriad facets of human fate. Each crafted costume is to some extent a trace of a specific human existence, a testament to its creator's life, while also standing as an independent creation of art. Costumes are complicated because their intrinsic fabric appeals to many dimensions: psychological echoes of Narcissus, historical reverberations of the Duchess, the medical veil of masks and protective gloves, the ecological

<sup>17</sup> L. Wicherkiewicz, *Moje malarstwo jest próbą zaklania ciała... Rozmowa z Magdaleną Moskwą*, <http://magdamoskwa.pl/pdf/tekst12.pdf> [accessed: 18.06.2023]

<sup>18</sup> The exhibition *Can you dress a metaphor?* was presented in the lobby of the Collegium Maius in Poznań, from 14.11.2022 to 28.11.2022. The works of the following students and graduates of the Studio of Unique Clothing were presented: Karolina Chełminiak, Mateusz Domasik, Patrycja Dramińska, Nina Grajewska, Valeria Kihiliuk, Beata Kowalczyk, Miłosz Krajewski, Ida Łowżył, Jagoda Matecka, Maria Próchnicka, Zbigniew Sobala, Aleksandra Sornek, Oktawia Watras, Małgorzata Wierzbicka and Magdalena Wolak.

Curators: Prof. Sławomira Chorążyczewska - Studio of Unique Clothing in the Department of Clothing, Faculty of Interior Design and Scenography, Magdalena Abakanowicz University of Arts, Prof. Ewa Szkudlarek - Department of Literary Aesthetics, Institute of Polish Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University.

<sup>19</sup> A. Falkiewicz, *Istnienie i metafora*, Wydawnictwo A, Wrocław 1996, p. 390.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 390.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 447.

embrace of a linen dress. A body or a mannequin, adorned with these garments, becomes a bearer of nonverbal messages, which include impressions transmitted and evoked, based on the mutual influence of individuals on each other.<sup>22</sup> Mannequins are not just showcases for clothing, they teeter on the boundary of life, mirroring the stillness and movement of the inanimate (a still show) and animate (movement on stage), much like human emotions that slumber within the recesses of our minds, awakening and transforming with the shifting tides of history (war), society (pandemic) and our innermost fears. Nestled within the cloisters of Collegium Maius, the clothes-clad figures stand illuminated with minimalist grace. As viewers gaze upon them, a world of imagination unfolds – the body beneath the fabrics becomes palpable, and traces of human existence linger in the interplay of thread stitches and folds of draped fabrics.

Each costume woven by the hands of Schiaparelli and Witkacy weaves a unique narrative that transcends its tangible form and morphs into a metaphor, adding another layer of depth to the story it tells. The first reality is rooted in the tactile world, while the second reality is one of boundless imagination, and one must guess how to dress human existence in order to leave at least the most insignificant trace in reality. On the other hand, old clothes, a cherished medium for T. Kantor, M. Stępnia, Z. Janin, and M. Moskwa, play a double role – they either cover and at other times reveal the "lining of the world". Just as we, like mannequins in an exhibition, vanish irrevocably with time's passage, life ceaselessly moves forward, and therefore, as we are reminded by the poet Stanisław Czerniak, we must:

" (...)

live as if NEVER  
NOTHING.

In case you paint something on a rock,  
but that's not how it's done anymore,

this is also where fashion arrives, at the junction of being and non-being".<sup>23</sup>

The very act of donning clothes bestows profound existence upon human beings. These garments, though they may seem mundane, are far from ordinary; they bear the imprint of individuality. Each attire is meticulously designed, measured, fastened and sewn to embrace one's unique journey through the world.

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<sup>22</sup> E. Goffman, *Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego*, transl. H. Datner-Śpiewak, P. Śpiewak, Wydawnictwo KR, Warszawa 2000, pp. 56-57.

<sup>23</sup> S. Czerniak, *Moda* [in:] idem, *Iskra buntu*, Wydawnictwo Rolewski, Nowa Wieś nad Drwęcą 2016, p. 15.

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## DIALOGI ARTYSTÓW Z MODĄ (streszczenie)

Moda skłania do różnorodnych refleksji, nie sposób jej odnieść tylko do prezentacji ubiorów na światowych pokazach. Jest wdzięcznym materiałem dla różnorodnych działań artystycznych. Niektórzy artyści jak Elsa Schiaparelli, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Tadeusz Kantor, Marian Stępiak, Zuzanna Janin, Magdalena Moskwa odrzucając podstawową funkcję stroju, nadają mu nowy sposób istnienia. Zamiast funkcji ochronnej czy też estetycznej pełni symboliczną lub metaforyczną. Każdy element garderoby może stać się dziełem sztuki lub pretekstem do dialogu z historią, filozofią, psychologią, literaturą, sztuką lub z własnym „ja” twórcy. Moda bywa narzędziem do zaspokajania potrzeb artystycznych i manifestowania ich poprzez prezentacje ubiorów tworzonych przez artystów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** moda artystyczna, kostium, ubiór, metafora, estetyka wizualna, cielesność, filozofia istnienia

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