

# Markets for modernity

## Salons, galleries and fashion in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century



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01 Pierre-Louis Pierson, *Untitled (Pensive)*, 1893, albumen print



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02 Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Comtesse Castiglione in profile*, 1921-1925, oil paint on canvas

There are essays that carry their approach on their sleeve; others seem to hide it in the lining of their argument. Some topics or discourses deny themselves an expressive methodology as it wouldn't be a natural fit for the creative ambition of the writing; other themes are tailor-made for the discussion of their methodological context as they represent a composite or comparison in which diverging positions have to be rendered distinctive and explained. The present essay attempts to apply fashion studies to the economic and cultural setting of Paris in the latter part of the nineteenth century in terms of established art-historical research. It seems appropriate therefore to take a brief look at the (comparative) methodology of the text and to recount first the developing positions of discourses on fashion that have expanded the field into the self-sufficient area of social and cultural investigation that it is today.

Discourses on fashion still have to deal critically with fashion's cultural relevance: not as to its function as an indicator of manners or mores – this has never been seriously in doubt – but as a material focus for historical study that complies with the established norms for research and yields a cachet of source material that can prove its discursive credentials. Notwithstanding the very extensive literature on fashion – here understood as an abstract structure of constant change and seasonal consumption within a culture industry as well as pertaining, more narrowly, to clothing and accessories – there remains a whiff of the marginal and esoteric about fashion that continues to permeate scholarly debates. Despite the many critical approaches to the subject from sociologists, economists, psychologists and cultural commentators, and the varied uses of fashion in literary texts, and even despite the growing field of Anglo-American *fashion studies* as a discrete 'discipline', the discussion of clothing and its context remains relegated to the relative margins of academia, compared with the fine arts, architecture, classical music, etc. This does not mean that fashion is not fashionable or that it is invisible. On the contrary, it has never been more *à la mode* to extemporize on clothing in a multitude of forms and formats.

However, the methodologies that could provide theoretical bases for this particular

expression of material culture remain absent. There does not appear to be a historical or philosophical tradition for fashion; no serious and sophisticated aesthetic theory of clothing has presented itself, no comprehensive economic or political study of its impact, either in the industrialized West or in other parts of the world, seems to exist and conversely to mark the critical debate as to how one 'writes' fashion. An exception, perhaps, is the tradition of costume history and the technical, practical writings on clothing and accessories, both of which have developed separate historiographies, albeit without furthering any meta-critical engagement with the topic of fashion. Costume history has focused on the iconographical and stylistic development of clothing – often expressed through linear timelines – that, similar to traditional and connoisseurial art history, lends the study of clothing a certain character but does not necessarily contribute to placing the field within wider analyses of fashion in cultural history. Costume history, like many other conservatively structured disciplines, is too much wedded to its own tradition to concern itself with conceptual innovation. Its position as a methodological descendant of art history and the history of literature, equipped with hackneyed gestures towards sociology or anthropologically coined material studies, does not contribute to exploring novel terrain, and the biographies of most of the contemporary researchers in the field of fashion studies show how much the objects are still informed by studied academic disciplines. It is understood that any necessary process of disengagement must take time, as could be observed for instance in the emancipation of sociology from political economy and philosophy during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. Such a logical process has to continue incorporating the combination of existing discourses and structures in order to arrive at the innovation of its own discipline and methodology, which in turn must lead to eventual self-critique and self-referentiality.

Technical literature on clothing, despite its necessarily descriptive character, can readily include a conceptual dimension, resulting from the description of production processes, distribution methods and patterns of consump-



tion. Technical information has a dimension that must set out the object character of a piece but is also constructed to point at the particularity in fashion's discourse through its insistence on materiality and production. This material dimension of fashion emancipates it from e.g. sculpture and architecture, and, through its proximity to the human body, points to the consumer herself, providing thus epistemological value for the design object. Whether it is dressing, millinery, tableware, furnishings, coaches or the composition of a menu, fashion always strives to give form to the subject through the very approximation to a formal object. This process of forming can be expressively physical, in confining the body to a restrictive set of garments, or it can be cognitive, in raising awareness of new manners and mores by prompting the subject to adopt a novel set of values. The scope of the present essay does not permit entering into the subject-object debate that has determined to a significant extent the philosophical discourses on idealism and materialism across the second half of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and has underscored thereby the formation of new material cultures. It seems pertinent here, however, to single out fashion's potential for discussing the conceptual meaning that such approximation and the referral of the object back to the acting subject possess, under the distinct economic and ideological conditions of the century between 1770 and 1870 in Europe.

A significant advantage that clothing fashion shares with other fields of design history and material culture is the close relation with design practice. In this respect it moves away from art history and also, to a certain extent, from literary studies, in that theoretical work on fashion now often emerges from art colleges or from the curatorial departments of museums. This allows, in certain felicitous circumstances, for a demonstration of practical and professional approaches that provide the extended discourse on fashion studies with its own structural currency.

Referring back briefly to the above-mentioned areas of research, the suggested conclusion is to attempt an innovation of fashion's discourse by combining various theoretical approaches. And, indeed, some of the most innovative

methodologies for fashion derive from a *fusion* – for example, combining anthropology with political economy against the background of popular literary sources. Obviously, such combinations require not only a high degree of factual knowledge but also a keen awareness of separate contextual and discursive traditions in the respective fields, which would hardly be expected of, say, a connoisseur of Empire furniture. The fashion theoretician thus becomes a researcher with a very wide but not very deep field of study.

The best work on fashion results from a comprehension of its very own character and being. One can cite here authors like Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes or Jean Baudrillard, whose communality lies in the manner in which their original approach and methodology has been determined by the particular dynamic and structure of fashion within modern society and culture. They did not write about fashion as a topic but constituted it first as a discursive subject with its own values, articulations and imagery. The growing interest in fashion from academia and museum practice obviously points to its heightened cultural presence, where structures that are inherent in fashion – seasonal changes, trend predictions, etc. – have now been transposed onto other parts of culture and industry, or better, onto its amalgamation as *culture industry*. For some considerable time fashion has had a big impact on the way in which the music or automotive industries promote their products. Increasingly, fashion is now influencing the structures of the theatre, opera and the contemporary art market. The latter in particular manifests the way in which traditional cultural hierarchies have been reversed. It is no longer fashion that looks unilaterally at the production and distribution of fine arts for visual references or institutional acceptance; rather, the market for (contemporary) art has turned much more to employing fashionable marketing and branding structures as well as to the established cultural role of fashion in order to peddle the latest commodities of the culture industry.

Some historians tend to regard such contemporary operations with the resigned smile of the initiated. Often they detect such apparently new manifestations in their own historic field

of research. It is perhaps understandable that somebody who occupies himself intensively with a past object or period of study might want to detect its repercussions or anticipations in the present in order to rationalise the engagement. In the field of fashion, however, such operations become very significant indeed when its contemporary character, which insists on constantly new revolutions and seemingly radical innovations, is re-assessed if proof is furnished that what was thought to be the very latest in terms of contents or design had actually been formed a long time ago.

The present essay looks at the structural relationship between the formation of a fashion industry (the erstwhile *couture-cr ation*, later *haute couture*) and the developing market for art in Paris around the middle of the nineteenth century, in which both are seen as mirror images of the economic and social conditions of the time. Here we find again the problem as to where one locates the origin of such closely related structures. Does fashion provide a model for art, or rather for its promotion; or, as traditional art history has postulated, did the art market emerge all by itself due to the progressive formation of a bourgeois society after the Industrial and French revolutions, while fashion, in order to gain cultural currency and status, attached itself to the rising significance of art in modernity? To anticipate its conclusion, this essay argues for fashion having been constituent in forming the market for art. The word fashion, however, must not be reduced here to clothing and accessories, whether in *couture-cr ation* or in mass-manufactured garments. Fashion in this historical and conceptual context means the constant renewing of consumption. The notion of commodity fetishism, which always has to establish itself anew in the consciousness of the bourgeois market in order to generate novel products, and thereby approximates new economic and social relations, is directly and closely tied to the origin of fashion (as a mercantile institution). One of the principal concepts of modernity is that culture is based on the latest, ephemeral manifestations rather than on eternal and implicitly humanitarian values. This is an obvious consequence of an economic system based on competition between owners of capital and on

the retention of the means of production, and which propagates consumption as the principal social and cultural occupation, notwithstanding the fact that part of the consumption is directed towards material products, another towards societal roles and yet another towards cultural learning.

The comparative approach of the present essay is also signalled by a pairing of two quotations. Composed by one and the same person, these quotes are bound up further in their shared socio-cultural setting, the *salon*. The first quote comes from a novel of 1871:

His greatest treat was to accompany Ren e to the illustrious Worms, the couturier of genius to whom the great ladies of the Second Empire bowed down. Maxime entered the salon of the great man with religious emotion. This salon was huge, square and furnished with enormous divans; it had a distinct female scent [...] It was often necessary for Ren e and Maxime to attend in the antechamber for hours; a queue of at least twenty women sat there, waiting their turn, dipping biscuits into glasses of Madeira, helping themselves from the great table in the middle that was covered with bottles and plates of *petits fours*. The ladies had made themselves at home, talking freely, and when they ensconced themselves around the room, it was as if a flight of white lesbian doves had alighted on the sofas of a Parisian salon [...] Then, when the great Worms finally received Ren e, Maxime followed her into the consulting room. He had ventured to speak on two or three occasions while the master remained lost in contemplating his client, as the high priests of the beautiful hold that Leonardo da Vinci did in the presence of La Gioconda. The master had deigned to smile at the accuracy of his observations. He made Ren e stand in front of a mirror that rose from the floor to the ceiling, and pondered with knit brows while Ren e, overcome with emotions, held her breath, so as not to move. After a few minutes the master, as if gripped by inspiration, sketched in broad, rapid strokes the work of art he had just conceived, exclaiming in short phrases:





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'A Montespan dress in pale-grey faille..., the skirt describing a rounded basque in front..., large grey satin bows to bring up on the hips..., and a puffed apron of pearl-grey tulle, the puffs separated by strips of grey satin.'

He pondered once again, seeming to plumb to the depths of his genius, and, with the triumphant facial contortion of a pytho-ness on her tripod, concluded:

'We'll have in the hair, on this delightful head, Psyche's dreamy butterfly, with iridescent wings in azure.'

But at other times, the inspiration was slow to come. The illustrious Worms summoned it in vain, and concentrated his faculties to no purpose. He puckered his eyebrows, turned livid, took his head in his hands and shook it in despair, and, beaten, throwing himself into an armchair, would mutter in a pitiful voice:

'No, no, not today... It's impossible... You ladies expect too much. My inspiration has completely dried up.'

And he would show Renée out, repeating: 'Impossible, impossible, dear lady, you must come back another day... I do not sense you today.'<sup>1</sup>

The second quote was published a couple of years earlier and opens an essay that is entitled 'L'Ouverture' (The Opening):

In terms of art we enter here the realm of the true specialist; I know of certain gentlemen who have gained an enormous reputation for themselves by doing nothing but to scratch into their paint the same good lady sitting on the same haystack.

We can see small-scale high reliefs that could serve confectionary and assorted sweets to beautiful ladies. Such small reliefs are a smashing success. The figurines on them are sculpted in wood or ivory with a delicacy that renders the masses excited and awestruck. One wonders why a free man would amuse himself by imitating



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03 *Going to the Drawing Room*, exhibition by Worth fashion house during the Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900

04 Charles Frederick Worth during a fitting session with a customer in 1880  
05 Edgar Degas, *At the Milliner's*, ca. 1883

the work of prisoners who are made to carve coconuts?

[...]

But I am forgetting the portraits. The flood of portraits mounts every year and threatens to drown the entire Salon. The explanation for this is very simple: there are many people who want to have their portrait painted but then do not buy the painting.<sup>2</sup>

A few weeks later the author intensified his merciless critique in judging 'Les actualistes':

Our artists are like coquettish women. They flirt with the masses. As soon as they perceive classical painting to become a bit of a bore for the audience, they quickly abandon classical painting. Some risk putting on the austere black suit,<sup>3</sup> most, however, prefer to dress themselves in the rich dresses of bourgeois and aristocratic women. There is not the slightest wish to appear truthful, not the merest endeavour to renew art and



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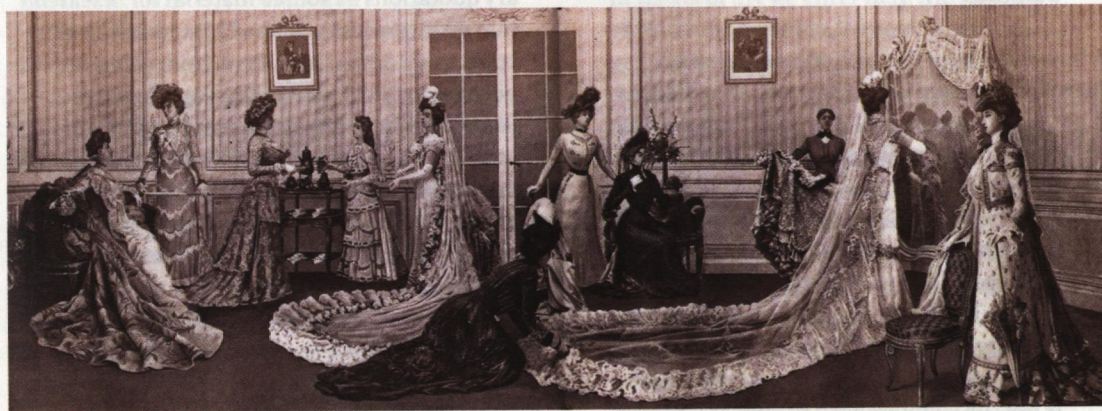
to elevate it by studying our present times. One senses that these painters would all paint stoppers for carafes if it were a fashion to paint stoppers for carafes. They cut their canvases to the modern, that's all. They are tailors whose only concern is to satisfy their clientele.<sup>4</sup>

It is an ambiguous undertaking to employ literary quotations as source material for research into art-historical structures, especially when comparing fiction with feuilleton. Although not an empirical method by any means, the use of the above quotations seems pertinent as they originate in the artistic approach to realism that takes temporality and the rhythm of contemporary time as a measuring device for both its form and content – thus performing an approximation of fashion and literature in modernity. Émile Zola's novels of the Rougon-Macquart-cycle were very thoroughly researched and embedded in the quasi-scientific structures of the day, which means that the passage on Worms, i.e. the couturier Charles Frederick



Worth, does not constitute a simple satire but a well-documented written genre painting. Similar to Zola's novel on the art and artists of Paris, *L'Œuvre*, the quote above has been firmly tied to the social and cultural reality immediately present in newspaper clippings, reports and direct studies by the author of the relevant *milieu*. Like the contemporary painters whom Zola assessed in *Mon Salon*, namely the *actualistes*, whom art history would come to re-label later as Impressionists, the novelist is concerned with a veritable presentation of modernity, and the fashionable *salon*, or indeed *couture-salon*, offers the superior setting.

If Worms – beg your pardon, Worth – here purports to be an artist, and his clients engage in the same form of consumption that drew visitors in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century to the annual *Salon* in the Musée du Louvre, the parallel between fashion and art is raised from its spatial and factual environment to a structural level. In *La Curée* (Eng. *The Kill*), the reader thus learns of the technique commonly employed by the fashion designer to present himself as an independent artist and thereby remove himself from the vagaries of the market. This is seen as imperative to lending his design the subjective autonomy that fashion in clothing as a social phenomenon (even in its rarified form as *couture-crédation*) simply cannot possess, unless it were to exist in an eccentric, esoteric guise. The connection of sartorial fashion to the subjectivity in fine art



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was not only a historical one for a couturier like Worth but continued via Poiret, Schiaparelli and Yves Saint Laurent to the early work of the Maison Martin Margiela in present times. So the reverse appears worthy of inquiry: what has art taken from fashion – not in formal terms, but structurally?

The *salon* is the site for a particular form of cultural production and consumption. Baudelaire, researcher into the significance of the black suit as epitome of the proper meaning of fashion for his contemporary culture, and the first writer to link etymologically and conceptually the words *mode* and *modernité*, exclaimed back in the early 1860s: 'To create a *poncif* is genius. I must create a *poncif*.'<sup>5</sup> The *poncif*, logo, or trademark creates the status of the artist, forms him as a creative subject, elevates him culturally, and renders him competitive in the marketplace. Baudelaire, like Zola after him, combines here the epistemological design of the artist's subjectivity with the economic reality of the Second Empire. He gathers this concept by placing it within the newly defined connection between fashion and modernity. It is clothing fashion in particular which appears to Baudelaire as programmatic, and partly also metaphorical, for its constant desire to renew the aesthetic and stylistic approaches to the production of objects in material culture.

How can one thus define the economic context from which the *salon* emerges as a site, and how does it contain the markets for both

art and fashion? To continue with the chosen examples from literary production: another of Zola's novels from the Rougon-Macquart-cycle, *L'Œuvre* (1886), presents the reader with two types of merchant, one the traditional lover and connoisseur of the art he is representing, the other the exponent of capitalism's speculative accumulation of commodities. Both characters were based on real life models whom Zola knew and whose business tactics he had analysed – as can be gleaned from his sketches, compiled as *Notes de Guillemet*. The traditional *marchand de tableaux* in Paris before 1848 combined the sale of art with that of e.g. paper, colours and frames. After the February Revolution he was succeeded by a new type of entrepreneur who promoted at least a couple of significant innovations. These constituted fundamental changes in marketing strategies, for art had not grown organically but had appeared as a radical break with the past, generated through the political and economic framework that Louis Napoléon would implement after 1852. There was no model on which to base the market for art; there was no progressively evolving structure yet for consuming culture, since there had not been a sufficiently expansive bourgeois class, nor had the mechanisms for a contemporary culture industry been created in which the latest and most transitory could exist in dialectical relation with the immutability of the classical canon. Zola wrote with undisguised irony in his essay on 'Le Moment artistique': 'Such is our time. We are civilised, we have boudoirs and salons; whitewash is fine for the bourgeois, we need paintings for the walls of the rich'.<sup>6</sup>

The new market for contemporary art defined itself through capital speculation, an economic method that is marked by striving to create artificial (not artistic) surplus value, which in turn can be exponentiated further through relevant strategies. On the other hand, the art market in the second half on the nineteenth century was preoccupied with incessantly renewing the Baudelairean *poncif*, which allowed for presenting the old in the guise of the new or for showing programmatically its very modernity, i.e. attaching itself expressively to the modern material object in terms of both contents and form. The *actualistes* or Impressionists with their narratives of a hedonistic bourgeoisie



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- 06 The fitting rooms of Worth fashion house were copied in the fashion pavilion at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900
- 07 The original label of Worth fashion house, with the imperial arms that it was allowed to bear between 1860 and 1870
- 08 First advertisement for Worth fashion house, designed for the *Paris Trade Journal*, 1868



in the Second Empire, their style of painting which expressively emphasized the transitory and ephemeral, and their new gallerists and art dealers, here represent an absolute seasonal and contemporary phenomenon.

Zola's *L'Œuvre* thus presents the art dealer of the Impressionists as a new type; references for the novelist were gallerists like Georges Petit, Hector Brame and, most poignantly, Paul Durand-Ruel, all united in the fictional character of Naudet: 'A very chic appearance, English jacket, coach waiting by the door, box at the opera, who sells the paintings to the imbecilic amateur, and who does not know anything about art but acquires a canvas like a stock market option'.<sup>7</sup> Naudet (like Durand-Ruel in real life) breaks decisively with the tradition of selling art that had been prevalent in the previous generation:

The ambition grabs hold of him, he wants to sink the Goupils, to beat Brame, to be the first, and to centralise his operations. He builds a townhouse in the rue de Sèze, a veritable palace... A department store [*les magasins du Louvre*] for painting... He stocks his gallery and waits for the Americans who come in May [to the annual *Salon*]. He stages exhibitions. He buys for 10,000 francs in order to sell for 50,000... A stock market for paintings, a syndicate to show paintings.<sup>8</sup>

Such speculation requires the *poncif*, needs the woman on the haystack that Zola ridicules in his critique. It needs fashion. In order to furnish the walls of the rich with paintings a mere fulfilment of demand did not suffice, since such a demand did not exist in the art market. It had to be created first, had to be artificially and artfully generated. This was done either by causing a scarcity of existing art – thus Durand-Ruel bought up the entire estate of artists like Théodore Rousseau, including unfinished and abandoned works, preliminary drawings, and sketchbooks, in order to control its release onto the market; or, after 1848, by promoting single artists through the genesis of the solo exhibition in private galleries, which supported the progressive subjectification of the autonomous artist and the promotion of stylistic movements.



09 The first survey exhibition of French painting in a commercial gallery on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle in Paris, 1846, from *L'illustration*, February 1846

Such premises were based structurally on fashion, especially on the fashion for clothing. The *couturier* or *couturière* was first of all identified by his or her *poncif*; each style was the fashion designer's very own, and despite the early formation of the *Chambre syndicale de la haute couture* in 1868 under the auspices of Worth, it was not the fixed seasonal succession of collections but rather the single character of the *couturier/couturière* that drew the clientele: the artistic composition of Worth, the material transparency of Jacques Doucet, the decorative opulence of Émile Pingat, etc.

The emphasis on subjectivity and individual trademarks was a perfect fit for ideological as well as social development in France after 1860. Yet the present essay must eschew the philosophical discourse on individualism, despite its obvious application to contemporary artistic creation, for its material circumstances. As the sociology of this time had already analysed, social individualism is extremely scarce in modernity. Not because of any prevalent socially collective structures but, on the contrary, because the apparent liberty of the individual only existed under the *octroi* of the object. Industrial capitalism in France in the second half of the nineteenth century generated the dominance of objectified structures in which the individual was only perceived as an effigy of the total of his society. He stood within, and only very rarely outside, a social and cultural

form that was determined by political economy and ideology. Thus Baudelaire's call for the *poncif* was a desperate and perhaps also cynical realization that the subject could no longer define or distinguish himself epistemologically but merely in terms of the market. When the artist admitted to himself that he existed only via the *poncif*, and when the market through *feuilleton*, gallery or *salon* structured his existence for him, he had to succumb to fashion and had to work alongside it in order to avoid falling behind or in disrepute. In the *salons* of the (haute) bourgeoisie, the haystacks of 1868, Worth's satin gown of 1871, and even the instalments of Zola's novel in 1874 quickly became old-fashioned, and for the continuous existence of his commodities the artist had to embrace the very latest in form and content.

At what point is fashion to be recognized as such, and how did it present itself in the culture industry in Paris after 1860? Clothing fashion, in the guise of the above-mentioned *couture-crédation* and the subsequent *haute couture*, appears dialectically as both a structural constant and a constantly changing genre picture. The gowns, boots, interior decorations and gestures are changing all the time in order to be understood as material avant-garde that the masses want to adopt and emulate. As a result, as the German sociologist Georg Simmel stated at the end of the nineteenth century, fashion constantly dies and is reborn as a new, seemingly radical innovation, only to repeat the process shortly afterwards.<sup>9</sup> The same avant-garde is celebrated in the art market. The gallerist deliberately provides insider information and intimate advance knowledge to permit the subject to remove himself from the societal form and to elevate him to the realm of cultural consciousness that appears inaccessible to the masses. The dealer speculates on what is to come in art, the cultural capital that is in the process of being formed. The client trusts him to be able to apply this advance knowledge materially, either in the form of direct financial investment – this artist, this movement will be popular and successful – or to establish social status – 'I am buying something that no one else in my caste has yet'. For both types of speculation, for both areas of fashion and of art, the general public performs a vital role which also



10 Paul Helleu, *Devant les Watteau du Louvre*, ca. 1895

has to be comprehended dialectically. Fashion is preoccupied simultaneously with its desired acceptance and with its rejection by the public. As long as a gown, a painting, a theatre piece or a moral position is able to shock and disgust the public – ironically, most often the bourgeoisie itself – then the avant-garde is able to exist. If it is too obviously braced within the consumption of the culture industry, it must be replaced by a new avant-garde that rallies against the 'old', and the cyclical process, the unlocking of new investments, can continue.

However, as detailed above, these 'innovations' or 'revolutions' cannot consist of esoteric or marginal styles. If a fashion remains contained within itself, if it is not brought to the public by means of a self-supporting system of promotion, criticism and reception, it cannot partake in the capitalist economic process. The nineteenth-century gallerists in Paris therefore developed a number of structural devices that would mark the modern market for art. I would like to present two of these briefly here. Firstly, through the example of the gallery, or better, the *enterprise* of Adolphe Goupil et Cie., whom the fictional Naudet wants to trump in Zola's *L'Œuvre*. From 1867 onwards Goupil developed, in adaptation of the Woodbury process, the *photogravure*, that is the direct, economical photographic copy of a painting, avoiding the then necessary transposition of the image through lithography or etching. The



gallery of the Goupils, which had existed since 1860, exhibited art, acquired works (including their rights of reproduction), distributed these reproductions and subsequently released the painting – often with a significantly enhanced reputation due to its increased public impact – back into the market. Speculating on the work of art could prove profitable through the re-sale (although this was a high risk strategy), but was more assured through the marketing of its reproductions. Zola wrote in one of his art criticisms of 1867: ‘Obviously, M. Gérôme [the history painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, son-in-law to Adolphe Goupil] works for the company of Goupil. He creates a painting for this painting to be reproduced through photography and engraving and to be sold in thousands of copies’.<sup>10</sup>

The reproduction lent continuity to art, ensuring that the painting would continue to have an impact long after it had vanished into the hands of a private collector or had been locked into (the vaults of) a museum, where only a social, educational and geographical elite could access it. Goupil graded the reproductions in terms of exclusivity and price. The biggest and cheapest editions, issued in form of small-scale *cartes de visites* or larger *cartes album*, became available to a broad segment of the bourgeoisie after 1867, whereas the high-quality photographic reproductions in the series ‘Musée Goupil’ retained an air of exclusivity – and commanded a much higher premium – through their grand format and portfolio-presentation.<sup>11</sup> During the Second Empire a comparable process was introduced for sculpture as well. The renowned photographer Nadar took a picture of the figure of Phryne, which itself is based on the famous painting by Gérôme; this image was subsequently reproduced in three sizes through *photosculpture* and widely distributed in France and abroad. Zola commented as late as 1877 on this very work by Gérôme, *Phryné devant l'Aréopage* (1861): ‘a tiny naked caramel-coloured figure devoured by the eyes of old men; the caramel saves the appearance... He [Gérôme] is infamous for painting his works just for them to be photographed: these reproductions serve to decorate thousands of bourgeois salons.’<sup>12</sup> Gérôme was thus fashionable; his works sold through a myriad of reproductions, yet he was



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11 Félix Thorigny, *La Galerie Goupil in 1860*, 1860

12 H. Dutheil, *Reading rooms at the department store Grand magasins du Louvre*, ca. 1880

not *à la mode* in terms of the culture industry, since he, at least at the time of Zola’s critique, had become unable to create any innovative works or to maintain a coveted *poncif*. He produced, if not for the masses, certainly for a wider public, and it was the Manets, Renoirs and Degas’ of gallerists like Durant-Ruel, Petit and Brame who monopolised the contemporary artistic discourse and thus attained speculative value. However, the reverse is also true, in that Gérôme, by openly exploiting the latest marketing strategies and techniques, can be said to have been ultra-modern, while the Impressionists could be seen as following an inherited pattern in their artistic production of exclusive oils on single canvases.

Secondly, from 1850 onwards the department store became the temple of consumption that inscribed fashion in the mind of the general public. It was structurally opposed by the *salon* of the *couturier* or the *couturière* in which the subjectivism of individualised commodities was promoted. It is ironic but entirely logical that the founders of the first, large Parisian

department stores consumed recent fashions of the art market and acquired the latest movements and schools as promoted by Durand-Ruel or Petit. Aristide Bouçicaut, founder of the *Bon Marché* store (1852), bought Realist art (Courbet, etc.); the couple of Ernest Cognacq and Louise Jay, owners of *La Samaritaine*, quickly began to collect the first generation of Impressionist painters; Théophile Bader, the director of the *Galerie Lafayette*, moved from the École de Barbizon painters to the Impressionists; and Ernest Hoschedé, the owner of department stores in the rue de Poissonnière, not only published the journal *L'Art de la mode* but also secured for himself principal Impressionist works even before the first group exhibition at Durand-Ruel had opened its doors.<sup>13</sup> Why did these capitalists, who made their money in fashion (in both the narrow and wider sense of the word), feel compelled to support an artistic avant-garde by acquiring relatively unknown painters? Apart from any narrative congeniality between fashion producers and the topics of ‘Actualist’/Impressionist paintings, the merchant and gallerist became instrumental in stimulating tastes and interests. The owners and directors of the large department stores did not buy from just anybody. In 1862 they sought out Durand-Ruel in the rue de la Paix, the street of luxury where art galleries nestled next to the showrooms of Worth and other couturiers. From 1867 on they visited him in the rue Lafitte, the new street for the arts, where besides the townhouse of the gallerist Petit and the mansion of the collector Hoschedé, one found the *salons* of the royal dressmaker Laurent-Richard, of the *modiste* Guichard and of the *couturière* Palmyre. This neighbourhood in the first arrondissement constituted nothing less than the spatial and, significantly, structural proximity between the material character of fashion and that of art. Pierre Assouline, in his populist biography of Durand-Ruel, writes:

For art dealers like Durand-Ruel the moment arrives in the middle of the nineteenth century when they can interest art lovers in the entire work of a *créateur*, and not merely in his annual party piece [for the *Salon*]. The price for paintings is now determined, too, by criteria like originality and



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novelty. The price that is, not the value.<sup>14</sup> Creations in art and fashion define themselves, particularly within modernity, by means of an originality that resides within the novelty itself. New forms of production like the Impressionist painting style, novel distribution methods like Goupil’s *photogravure* or the *photosculpture*, and contemporary types of consumption now generated an originality that moved away, already at its historical point of origin, from the subjectivity or professed autonomy of modern art. The value which was equated with its price – and not only within the context of the industrial capitalism in France after 1852 – was not inherent in the work but was set externally through the very reaction of art to economic and ideological conditions. Impressionism may have brought about an oppositional tendency – and artists like Édouard Manet or Camille Pissarro did indeed have strong political convictions – but it derived its originality from the visualization of fashion that surrounded it: in colours, forms, narratives and material application. The fashion in sumptuous (artistic)



clothing itself, the emerging *Haute Couture*, succumbed to the contemporary market in a much more obvious and direct mode. Despite the creative work of *couturier* and *couturière*, the fashion for clothes cannot be directed teleologically towards absolute autonomy or a complete, that is esoteric, subjectivity. In order to exist, fashion has to agree to consumption within the culture industry. Thus it mirrors modernity more directly and is not compelled to lose itself in aesthetic transpositions, justify its existence in the market and critically question itself.

This applies equally to the concrete financial structures in the culture of the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century Durand-Ruel borrowed substantial amounts of money from the banker Charles Edwards – his neighbour in the rue Lafitte – in order to finance the rapid rise of his art dealership, in the same way that Naudet conducts his enterprise in Zola's *L'Œuvre*. As security for these loans, Durand-Ruel established the 'collection Edwards', which he filled with the estate of Rousseau and also with works by Delacroix, Dupré, etc. This entirely fictional collection was then auctioned off in the Parisian Hôtel Drouot over three days in February 1870, without any mention to press or audience as to the real owner of the paintings.<sup>45</sup> The rise in value of this 'collection', fuelled by the focus on the *œuvre* of a few select artists and the critical discourse by the contemporary art press, benefited both the banker whose investment now reaped dividends and the gallerist who could update his stock in hand with sustained financial muscle.

It is not cynical but historically appropriate to define art in this context as an absolute form of surplus value. After 1848 this appeared as a new development that went hand in hand with the establishing of industrial capitalism in France and became a logical consequence of the economic conditions and practices. Surplus value replaced equivalent value that art and fashion cannot have, since they satisfy ideal and not material needs – which must seem ironic in the context of a society marked by consumption.

Speculation in fashion has a dimension that resides not simply in direct financial transactions. Fashion is speculation in itself, as it has to create an object that the subject regards as self-determining. The gown, the dinner service,

the chaise lounge, the new way of showing oneself in the box at the races, must appeal to individuals in order to be comprehended as fashion. The *créateur*, the applied or fine artist cannot simply plan how taste will develop, no more than the consumer can know if and when his investments will rise on the stock market. But the designer, as much as the gallerist of the avant-garde, might be able to create a fashion through particular marketing strategies if he has situated himself first as taste-maker for his clientele and perhaps also in the public eye. Such making of taste in modernity means not the developing of a cognitive subject but the emergence of a material object, a process which is lent its essential rhythm and form by fashion.

1. Émile Zola, *La Curée*, in: *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 1 (Paris: Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., 1871), pp. 123-25.
2. Émile Zola, 'L'Ouverture', [dated 2 May 1868] in: *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 191-95, here p. 192.
3. See Charles Baudelaire's eulogy on the *l'habit noir* below, as exemplary of the connection between *mode et modernité* in his feuillets on 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', [1863] in: *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 683-724.
4. Émile Zola, 'Les actualistes', [dated 24 May 1868] in: *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 206-11, here p. 207.
5. Charles Baudelaire, 'Journaux intimes XIII: fusées no. 20', in: *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 662.
6. Émile Zola, 'Le Moment artistique' [dated 4 May 1866] in: *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 107-11, here p. 110.
7. Folio 350 of the *Notes de Guilletmet*, cited after Patrick Brady, *'L'Œuvre' de Émile Zola, roman sur les arts: Manifeste, autobiographie, roman à clef* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), p. 164. See the published version of this passage on Naudet, which begins by describing him as 'holding himself like a gentleman, embroidered jacket, gleaming white cravat, hair streaked back, polished, varnished', and ends with the lines: 'For the rest, a speculator, a stock marketer, who mocks good art absolutely'. Émile Zola, *L'Œuvre* (Paris: Charpentier, 1886), p. 243.
8. Folios 354-55 of the *Notes de Guilletmet*, cited after Brady, *'L'Œuvre' de Émile Zola, roman sur les arts: Manifeste, autobiographie, roman à clef* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), p. 164. For the published version of the novel, cf. Zola, *L'Œuvre* (Paris: Charpentier, 1886), p. 390.
9. See Georg Simmel, 'Zur Psychologie der Mode', *Die Zeit* [Vienna] (12th October 1895), pp. 20-24, here p. 24.
10. Émile Zola, 'Nos peintres au Champ-de-Mars' [dated 1 July 1867], in: *Écrits sur l'art*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 177-87, here p. 184.
11. See Hélène Lafont-Couturier, 'M. Gérôme travaille pour la maison Goupil', in: Hélène Lafont-Couturier and Pierre-Lin Renié (eds.), *Gérôme et Goupil: art et entreprise* (Paris: Éditions de la réunion des musées nationaux, 2000), pp. 13-29.
12. Émile Zola, 'L'école française de peinture en 1878' [dated July 1878], in: *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 363-94, here p. 374.
13. See Albert Boime, 'Les hommes d'affaires et les arts en France au 19e siècle', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 28 (June 1979): 65-68.
14. The episode is recounted in Pierre Assouline, *Grâces lui soient rendues: Paul Durand-Ruel, le marchand des impressionnistes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p. 104.
15. See Nicolas Green, 'Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, 10, 1 (March 1987), pp. 59-78; and Pierre Assouline, *Grâces lui soient rendues: Paul Durand-Ruel, le marchand des impressionnistes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), pp. 122-125 and 202-203.