



Abstract Accessories – press release
from self_passage
by Wronsov a.k.a. Otto von Busch

The Abstract Accessories are a series of toolkits for stitching fashion and theory together and are a first release of three kits from self_passage, autumn 2007. The abstract accessories are small toolboxes, with essays and hands-on methods with which we try to find a new understanding of how fashion operates, and how we can engage with this powerful myth system in both a hands-on and an abstract way. They are DIY-kits of applied theory, fighting interpassivity with empowerment and experimenting with the forces at play on the second skin, exposing discontinuities and bending the powers and gravity that flow through the fashion system.

The first three abstract accessories are approaching fashion from different angles. The method cookbook, “Disneyland can wait”, is the autumn/winter 2007 collection of eight reform recipes guiding the reader through easy step-by-step transformations of the old skins dying in the back of the wardrobe into fashionable attire. The second kit, the “R/W-jewelry”, is an updated jewelry version of the punk safety-pin, adding another layer of expression to it and commenting on the contemporary shift of design doctrines. The last accessory is the “Textile Punctum” essay and toolkit, reflecting on how personal memories can be manifested and developed through marking them onto our clothes, thus disconnecting them partly from the forces of gravity within fashion.

The abstract accessories from self_passage will be continuously released in new collections during the upcoming seasons, forming a library and archive of methods and viewpoints with which we can engage with fashion in other ways.

self_passage is a brand and research project by Swedish designer Wronsov a.k.a. Otto von Busch. He is a haute couture heretic and fashion renegade, hacking the operating system of fashion. As a subconstructive semionaut he is exploring low-level interventions at the interface between the second skin and the modes of production in fashion industry.

Represented by The Grocery, a fashion agency based in Stockholm
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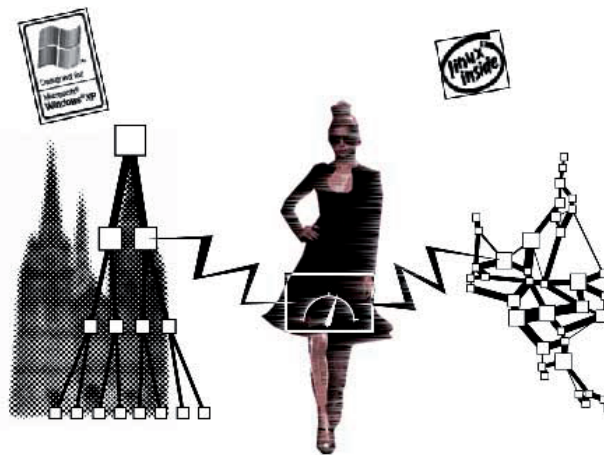
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Abstract Accessories orbiting the virtual machine of fashion.

Over the last decade it has become commonplace to describe society through the metaphor of a “network”. This transition not only effects economy and politics but can also be highly visible in the fashion world where a Paris-centred mode of operation has shifted into a decentralized and even distributed system. From being a highly mechanical and linear system (as described by theorists like Roland Barthes and Pierre Bourdieu) we can today experience fashion as a many-layered complex multitude of parallel systems. Where the system once transmitted a distinction of “in” and “out” it is today mixing not only high and low, center and periphery, but also surface and depth, shallowness and density. Instead of one major linear and mechanic hierarchical system broadcasting its “dictates” to the “masses” we now have a number of forces influenced by several fashion capitals, street scenes, narrowcast media, and blogs, but also by a more interested and informed audience.

This shift from a mechanical and hierarchical system to a distributed and networked one corresponds well to how theorists like Manuel Castells, Gilles Deleuze and Manuel DeLanda have described the transition of society from a industrial mode to a network. The system has migrated from a motor organization to a computer one. These analogies of “motor” and “network” are not only metaphors, but also geometric models and abstract representations of how we operate with society and between ourselves. These machines are “virtual” models, describing the logics and qualities of the real as well as what is considered as the possible. Following this, it can be argued that the networked fashion system acts as a computer and that fashion actually is a set of codes that run several layers of programs. *High fashion run on the catwalk, street fashion runs on the sidewalk.*



This understanding of fashion can shift our approach on how to operate with fashion. Instead of regarding fashion as broadcasted dictations in a top-down mode we can embrace the possibility of talking back, tuning, or hacking the code. Even the kernel or operating system itself is open for modulation, as long as we keep the power on. The diversified networked system includes the option of rewriting the messages and sending them back into the system, of writing between the lines and twist messages and expressions. Or as creative commons founder Lawrence Lessig argues, to go from a RO to a R/W mode, that is in computer terms, from Read Only to Read/Write.

A move like this into co-authorship means a radical break in position of what was before considered as the “passive consumer” within society. It can be argued that fashion always has been inspired by the street and underground, but even within this struggle fashion itself has certain gravity. It is a gravity of imitation. We imitate behaviours or dress like the people we want to connect to, to resemble, and it is rarely the opposite (after the teenage rebellion, but even this is influenced by others). This means that fashion traditionally is a very interactive ritual. Most of us do not engage with the fashion dictations on a critical or hands-on level. We are not interactive but instead “interpassive”. We let the glossy fashion magazines decide for us our approach to fashion, not unlike how the TV set laughs instead of us with its canned laughter in the comedy shows.

But by getting inspired from the hackers we can engage with the system in other forms. We can construct new thing, add patches, and tune the flows of the system. Not by becoming ascetic or boycotting fashion, but instead be involved with critical eyes. We can find tools and interfaces with which we can enter into fashion to bend its codes, tune it into more desirable forms, but still love its passion and shimmering magic.

The Abstract Accessories can be seen as hacking applications, instructables and executables into the codes and functions of fashion. They are reflective tools with which we can start to frame fashion from other viewpoints and action fields. None of them are ready-to-wear, but instead all require some thoughts and reflective practice from its wearer, who actually becomes its operator. The Abstract Accessories navigate within the abstract levels of the fashion logic and its functions. The kernel or core of fashion is explored through these methods and the kits hopefully engage the participants in rethinking their relation to fashion, with an impetus towards the positive. They are essays and small kits probing the plasticity of what fashion is from different angles. During the coming seasons new kits will be released in a constant orbiting move around the fashion phenomenon.

