

Living dresses: about systems, synergies and seamstress bacteria.

Helena Fernández-Nóvoa

Vigo University, Spain

helena.fnovoa@gmail.com

Abstract

The history of clothing is also the history of the relationship between humanity and the natural world. Nowadays, this relationship has come full circle. The global Fashion system seems quite clearly divorced from nature, since its functioning relies on the depletion of natural resources. The human determination to subjugate the natural world could have something to do with this dire predicament. This short research paper discusses the “Fashion and learning from nature” proposal theme through the analysis of some new approaches that take into account rather cooperative alliances with our surroundings.

We examine a new engagement with the environment that conceives of Nature as a synergetic system. This approach is based on the insights of the Gaia Hypothesis (which contends that the interactions of living organisms with their inorganic surroundings on Earth form a synergistic system), Santiago’s Theory of Cognition (which understands living systems as cognition systems and describes cognition as the very process of life itself), and Symbiogenesis Theory (which highlights the importance of bacteria on the evolution of living systems). This new scientific paradigm, that has been developing for the past twenty-five years, is now being translated into fashion through the dissemination of different biotechnological practices. Projects such as *9/4/1615* (Maison Martin Margiela, 1997), *Textured Self* (Sonja Bäümel, 2011), and *Vivorium* (Ali Schachtschneider, 2105) explore all these new perceptions of the human and the world around us through dress, bacteria and biotechnology. This paper aims to examine this paradigm shift by exploring these three creative projects, correlating the new concepts to the practices of fashion design.

Keywords: Biotechnological fashion; science & design; living dresses; Santiago’s Theory of Cognition; bacteria.

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