



*The Lure of Beauty exhibition will highlight changes in the fashion industry for over a hundred years. If you were to pick three of the biggest changes, what would these be? (Perhaps in terms of concept or impact)*

1. The First World War (1914-1918) led to a fundamental turning point in society, crucially contributing to the greater independence of women. It was about simplifying the clothes and the haircuts, which were similar to children's pageboy cuts. The post-war years were generally dominated by the desire to compensate for the horrors and privations so recently suffered. The industrial momentum that had been set in motion generated countless new materials, a rapidly increasing mechanisation of daily life and an increasing availability of automobiles. Dresses became shorter. Coco Chanel was extremely important for this.

2. The economic boom of the fifties took hold, and increases in the production of goods awoke enthusiasm in general amongst consumers. After the drab grey of the war years, colour and new shapes became popular again. The ample curves of Dior's dress designs struck a chord at the time, reappearing in both architecture and contemporary design. A new life was born.

3. The political conservatism of the 80s, at a cost to the social achievements of previous years, led to a new economic upswing. Within haute couture Vivienne Westwood (born 1941) and Jean-Paul Gaultier (born 1952) proclaimed an anti-statement. They featured corsets and suspenders in their designs. The use of lingerie as external clothing had first appeared in the mid seventies in Britain amongst adherents of the punk movement, of whom Vivienne Westwood was also one.

## **GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK**

*How did you select the illustrations that were included in this exhibit? What can people look forward to in this exhibit?*

After viewing Riyadh-based artist Abdunasser Gharem's *The Safe* several visitors could be heard whispering: "Will the artist go back to Saudi Arabia?" They were concerned for his safety after staging such a fearless work with references to the controversial Khashoggi murder. At 40-second intervals, visitors are ushered by guards into a sound-proof cell with rubberized walls (rubber is a signature of the artist) like those found in psychiatric wards for violent inmates. There, they can write on the wall or leave their own "imprint" with rubber stamps bearing phrases by Shakespeare and other writers (stamps with hidden messages are a frequent feature of Ghare's work). The installation's power lies in its ability to evoke empathy. Yet even the strains of Beethoven that are heard in the cell do not quell the feelings of powerlessness, distress, and oppression experienced by the viewer here. Staged jointly by Galerie Nagel Draxler Galerie Brigitte Schenk, the work, which is priced at €600,000, already has the interest of several institutions.

*Fashion's influence on society - is it real and has it been for good or bad? Your thoughts?*

It is both: for good and bad. Everybody, every single person is thinking about what to wear every day. It is a language everybody has to speak, no matter if you want it or not, no matter if you have taste, money or status. It is of course a way how to express who you are and how you want to be seen. "Fashion makes people" is a famous saying. This is true and can be "bad" of course if you only want to compensate what you ARE NOT through fashion. The good thing is that fashion allows you to emphasize as well WHO YOU ARE. You don't necessarily need money in order to do this. There are cheap labels that give you a variety as well. "Haute Couture" or the fashion circus referring to fashion shows, foto shoots etc is a different thing of course. It is not for "everybody" but also not for everybody who could afford it. It has to do with profession and obsession and not ONLY with money and status.

## **GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK**

*Concept of beauty has obviously changed throughout the years. What do you consider beautiful now and how is this reflected in fashion?*

I wrote a text for the catalogue called "Beauty makes you a better person". This is referring to the fact that "Beauty itself" is an eternal principle (like the truth or the good) and only the concept through time changes.

The definition of fashion depends on the era, but that of beauty, like that of truth and morality upon which beauty founds, is eternal. The good, the true and the beautiful reside in every human being as universal, eternal laws and are unchangeable. Our notions of what is found to be beautiful is variable, but the "universal principle" is not. Therefore, aesthetic judgments, unlike pure "judgments of taste" (something pleases or not, tastes good, or does not), while they are subjective in origin, can claim universality. A person who makes judgments on beauty expects and in a sense demands everyone's concurrence. So beauty lays claim to a 'subjective universality'. "The piece is beautiful" - not "To me, the piece is beautiful". That is what constitutes the thrill, the polemical/non-polemical and at the same time most fundamentally existential element in all aesthetic discourse. This claimed universal validity, as well as the longing for it, is rooted in the morally-informed notion of beauty. The contemplation of beauty affects the moral code innate to all of us and has a transforming effect, regardless of how beautiful or not something might be painted by social legitimation. That circumstance lends a fuller, more understandable sense, too, to the expression "beauty comes from within".

*What do you hope people will take from away from the exhibition after their visit?*

I would like that people see the historical and documentary part of the exhibition and see how fashion is an indicator of the time and its changes but at the same time an indicator for things that will never change and always be the same like expressing beauty whereas beauty is a very wide term. In the 80ies for example the whole "punk" movement wanted to show exactly the opposite but was dependent in this reaction to the established form of "beauty", so was also part of it in it's anti-being. Fashion is more than fashion. This is what we wanted to show here.

## GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK



Abdunasser Gharem's *The Safe* (2019) at Art Basel Unlimited 2019, Courtesy the artist, Galerie Brigitte Schenk and Galerie Nagel Draxer. Photo: Simon Vogel

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