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Baronian, M.-A.

Published in:
NECSUS

DOI:
[10.25969/mediarep/3406](https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/3406)

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Baronian, M.-A. (2017). The Dress is the Screen: Dancing Fashion, Dancing Media. NECSUS, 6(2), 159-180.
<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/3406>

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The dress is the screen: Dancing fashion, dancing media

Marie-Aude Baronian

NECSUS 6 (2), Autumn 2017: 159–180

URL: <https://necsus-ejms.org/the-dress-is-the-screen-dancing-fashion-dancing-media/>

Keywords: dance, dress, fashion, Loïe Fuller, movement, Rabih Kayrouz

'I am nothing without my dress', says Loïe Fuller's character in the feature film *La Danseuse* (Stéphanie Di Gusto, 2016), a biopic that focuses on the American dancer's rise to fame with her Serpentine dances. The film, which can be seen as evidence of Fuller's everlasting, inspiring, and influential effects, can also be understood, more broadly speaking, as an echo of the intrinsic interrelation between fashion, dance, and cinema. Considering the increasingly 'fashionable' visibility of dance in various cultural and media contexts today – from designers showcasing their clothes through dance performances,[1] (fashion) films featuring dance, international television hits such as *Dancing with the Stars*, and art exhibitions[2] – it almost seems that dance has never quite *danced* so much. The year 2016 was an especially fruitful one for dance, as it was present within a wide variety of media practices, platforms, and genres. The French film *La Danseuse*, Kenzo's fashion film (for Kenzo World perfume) directed by filmmaker Spike Jonze, and Lebanese designer Rabih Kayrouz's summer collection fashion show featuring a performance by ballet dancer Marie-Agnès Gillot, are just some of the media-based 'dance' productions from 2016 that have dealt in one way or another with sartorial and fashion objects through the movement of dance. In this essay, I will be focusing specifically on Kayrouz's fashion-dance event in an attempt to elucidate why his clothes are not only designed to be circulated and consumed but also to *dance*, in a way. I will also be reflecting upon the close liaison between dress and screens through their intimate and inextricable relationship with dance.

Drawing freely from Loïe Fuller's notorious Serpentine dances (first introduced in 1891, and extensively adapted in early cinema and media), my aim is not only to substantiate, historically and ontologically, the socio-cultural fascination and interest for bodily movement from which both the film and fashion industries have emerged, but also to epitomise the inherent choreographic and kinetic features of *both* dress and screen. Fuller's dances will serve as poetic, imaginary, and inclusive vis-à-vis for closely-reading the (cinematic) 'dancing dresses' of the luxury fashion house Maison Rabih Kayrouz. In focusing on the sartorial elements in both case studies, it seems appropriate to refer to the analysis as a *clothes-reading*.

As Caroline Evans reminds us, there is a distinctive contemporaneity between fashion shows and film, and both can be seen as motivated by their common fascination for women in motion.[3] One could also easily add dance to the mix, since it fits as a common thread between fashion and film, sharing similar interests with both. Notably, Evans points out that even if fashion modeling is contemporaneous to both the fashion and film industries, it was actually the genre of the dance film that was mostly responsible for disseminating 'images of women in motion and of swirling fabric and seductive costume'.[4]

If the association between film and fashion can be understood on historical grounds (both fields boomed throughout modernity) or on techno-philosophical grounds (the attraction to movement), one can also consider it through dance. Indeed, while it seems intuitive to point to the affinities (and accordingly tensions) between dance and cinema,[5] dance and fashion, or fashion and cinema, we can also emphasise their triangular relationship. For instance, we can examine how film, dance, and fashion are connected in a way that potentially justifies the reason why today fashion has become a desirable and attractive multi-medial dynamic terrain. Of course, it would be wrong to state that the alignment between the three fields is a totally new concept, as there are many concrete examples from the early days of cinema that would support and even prove their kinship (think, for example, of the designs of Paul Poiret for Louise Brooks).

By proposing 'the dress is the screen' I do not solely mean it in a material sense wherein images are literally projected onto fabrics. I also intend to envision dress and sartorial matters as a way for us to more closely read and *feel* the possible ways we engage with and conceive of screens and media.

'I am nothing without my dress'

In her day, Fuller was a popular figure who was widely represented across media and who was a stimulating artist for the press, as well as the print and film industries. At the time, she was renowned for bringing together technicians, dancers, entertainers, and (set) designers, and she is now also celebrated for having bridged previously divided audience types; mixing high and middle classes, and influencing various art movements. In a way, her multi-medial and hybrid performance is somehow reflected in the multiplicity of inspirations, receptions, and hypnotising outcomes she produced.[6]

As Isabelle Pruska-Oldenhof summarises:

[s]he was the first to introduce an hybrid-media approach to dance – combining colored electric light, costume, sound, movement, and stage design into a complexly choreographed whole – thus paving the way for twentieth-century dancers, who in the second half of the century began exploring the possibilities of hybrid-media performances through collaborations with artists in other disciplines, and even scientists and engineers. [7]

In her dance performances, Fuller converts her body into a myriad of colourful images, taking advantage of technologies of the time, such as electricity, to emphasise the effect. Rays of light were shone onto the voluminous swaths of fabric she wore, creating hypnotising impressions.[8] The technological originality became inseparable from the dress as medium. It is as though Fuller's loose dress (resembling a night shirt in its style) worked as a moving and 'animated dancing screen'[9] for the lanternist's projections.

Fuller's serpentine dance, which is a sub-genre of the skirt dance, consists of her wearing circle dresses made of flowing draperies, as she moves her arms – which are extended with canes – to make the dress swirl about her. Catherine Hindson writes that

the serpentine introduced a new kind of sinuous arm movement that animated increasingly voluminous costumes. It was these distinctive and highly sophisticated costumes that came to define the style. [10]

Jody Sperling, for her part, describes Fuller's distinctive costume in terms of

a unique concoction of silk, prosthetic wands, luminescence and stereopticon that, when taken together, formed a moving, multi-media garment [...] Fuller used costuming for the purpose of *transformation*. [11]

The motif of transformation does not solely mean modifying the way the body is perceived and is brought into a 'new' light, but it also implies a conversion in terms of its mediality. More specifically, in the performances, Fuller's body becomes pure movement and her clothed body becomes the medium that enables movement to be seen. Jacques Rancière formulates it as such: '[s]he is a self-sufficient apparition; she produces the stage of her transformations from her own transformations.'[12]

Fuller's costume design, at once (stylistically) very simple and (technologically) highly elaborate, was integral and central to the creative process; it is as if the dress invited other media and techniques to be part of that process. Dancer and scholar Ann Cooper Albright explains the complexity of the design process in terms of 'the challenge of finding the movements that worked with the costume'. After having tested the recreation of the costume herself (based on Fuller's own sketches and patents), Cooper Albright concluded that despite the technological and prosthetic dimension of the design (requiring at first a certain bodily aptitude), 'Fuller's theatrical mechanisms brought her closer to, rather than distancing herself, from, her sensate body.'[13] Or, as Rancière puts it, the dress 'also displays the potential of a body by hiding it'.[14]

Fuller's Serpentine dances are often viewed as close to a prefiguration of moving images: 'a way of placing lights on a moving screen (rather than moving images on a still screen)'.[15] The 'pre'-cinematic character of the performance coincides with the optical desire to apprehend movement (Edison, Muybridge), one of the most central aims and focuses of modernist (artistic) accomplishments. While there are undoubtedly fundamental differences between live(d) performance and filmed performance,[16] Fuller's artistic performances convey dynamic and potential meeting points between fabrics and movement, between costumes and spectacle, and between dress and screen.

Despite the apparent minimalism of her dress, it is somehow that very simplicity that condenses and concentrates what movement can mean. Indeed the line 'I am nothing without my dress' in *La Danseuse* is not just to portray Fuller questioning her dancing innovation and aptitude (in comparison to her rival Isadora Duncan as portrayed in this film), but it could also embody a sort of zero degree and 'all-inclusive' degree of movement itself. In the end, Fuller's costumes materialise alternate and astonishing ways of envisioning bodies in motion, and that motion is inseparable from the movement and mobility of the sartorial fabrics. In other words, Fuller's dance does

not produce representational images or narratives based on moving bodies, but showcases the pure (bodily) movements generated by her dress. The dress, as Rancière formulates it, is 'both figure and background'. [17] Similarly, Erin Brannigan writes:

the performer and the performed conflate into one entity brought into being through texture, movement, light, and color. Here, the dancer disappears into a play between recognition and abstraction where the only continuity is motion itself. [18]

Fuller's dancing dress enables us to see fabrics and sartorial elements beyond the scope of 'ornamentalism' or narrative prop, as being bodies and objects in motion. This can be further examined in a screen-based media context through the *clothes-reading* of certain contemporary fashion and dance practices.

Rabih Kayrouz's dancing fashion show

At the Paris Fashion Week in October 2016, luxury fashion house Maison Rabih Kayrouz (under the leadership of Lebanese designer Rabih Kayrouz) presented its spring-summer 2017 ready-to-wear collection as a dance performance which was choreographed by French prima ballerina Marie-Agnès Gillot. She is also accompanied by ten other ballerinas from the Paris Opera Ballet; together and in solo, they dance to Velvet Underground's *Sunday Morning*. The fashion show took place at the historic Théâtre de Babylone, which has been Kayrouz's atelier-boutique in Paris since he established his fashion house in 2008. The impressive, bright, and quasi-open space is perhaps best known for having hosted the premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (on 5 January 1953). As a nod to this theatrical moment, the Maison Rabih Kayrouz spring-summer 2017 collection was actually entitled *Godot ss 17*. Also, the fashion dance show's stage featured a large, bare tree which bore a likeness to the prop tree used in the original *Waiting for Godot* performance – the set-piece was also used as a barre for dancer Gillot.

Moreover, the setting for the fashion show was almost identical to the original theatre space, as its stage consisted of a staircase linked to a platform (Kayrouz's défilés are often held in this location). The space's mobility – an atelier, an office, a boutique, a theatre, a show room, and even perhaps a dance studio – adds another layer to the unfolding of motion that characterises the spring-summer show. Shortly after the fashion défilé, a video of the

show, commissioned by Maison Rabih Kayrouz, was posted on Vimeo.[19] The video is not, as I insist, a simple recording of the show (documenting and archiving the collection), as it extends the impression of motion that the show originally created.[20]

Tracing the coalition between fashion and cinematic media, Caroline Evans writes that ‘the desire to frame fashion in motion was part of a wider imperative to materialize movement’,[21] and, as Uhlírova explains, ‘while early cinema mobilized costume (through dance or tricks, for example) in order to show what the moving image can do, the fashion industry has utilized movement (including that of the camera, editing, or effects) in order to show what clothing can do’.[22] With Kayrouz’s show, however, it is the clothing itself that materialises movement, and the dancing movements enhance the garments rather than only actuating and activating them. Following Evans’ argument, one might say that before the show was put into video format it was already inhabited and touched by cinematic motifs: ‘the mannequin’s motion is, in this sense, inherently “filmic”’. Such an affirmation could be even more appropriate when, in the case of the Maison Rabih Kayrouz show, the mannequins are professional dancers.



Fig. 1: ©Maison Rabih Kayrouz.

The three-minute video starts with a shot of Gillot dressed in a black two-piece outfit consisting of a top and a skirt with large raffia fringes. As her solo begins, the footage is quickly superimposed by other shots. The video, which combines different camera angles and medium and long shots, also mixes various bits of footage taken from the rehearsal (with an empty-seated audience) as well as taken directly from the fashion show (with a packed standing audience). The first two minutes are also supplemented with a jazzy drum

score notable for its repetitive and rather minimalistic nature (Velvet Underground's *Sunday Morning* plays towards the end of the video). The video clearly captures how the live performance makes use of the stage, playing with appearance and disappearance, and creating a sense of surprise and theatricality. Crucially, the performance relies on minimal theatrical aesthetics, therefore enabling the clothed body of the dancers to remain central, while the video, through fast cuts and montages, stresses the constructed nature of the medium.

The dance movements themselves involve a wide range of grand acrobatic gestures and postures that are fuelled by the mobile and voluminous drapes and folds of the clothing. For instance, as Gillot[23] moves around the space, lunging, arching her arms, circling her legs in complex arabesques and extensions, the fabric and movement of the long sleeveless purple dress she wears (her second outfit in the video) is entrancing. In other words, the sophisticated but always organic choreography is mirrored in the sophisticated but free moving design of the dress and its fabric. It is, as Giuliana Bruno writes (inspired by Deleuze): 'the very simplicity of the fold that entails its remarkable complexity'.[24] The affinity for movement inherent to both dance and dress is perfectly epitomised which, in turn, reveals a *posteriori* in the filmic version of the show wherein the folding and unfolding of bodies, fabrics, and images come together.

The video does indeed do more than register the performance and, despite its apparent minimal means, makes a subtle use of editing that mirrors the choreographic disposition of the show. Notwithstanding the fundamental difference between the live show and its filmed version,[25] I would suggest that the video offers additional entry points into our understanding of the alliance between motion and emotion within the context of a fashion show. Borrowing Bruno's words, 'sensorially speaking, clothes come alive in (e)motion'.[26] In other words, the show crystallises a productive inherent tension; the dress possesses its own mobility and it is the dance, as well as the video, that bring that mobility into view. Thus, the filmed version of the performance does not merely act as a (re-)presentation but as an extension of the show in terms of movement. The original choreography of the *défilé* is, in the film, re-choreographed through rhythmic and cadenced editing.

The show does not follow an obvious classical fashion *défilé* format, and if its reception was highly enthusiastic (as per reviews by major fashion magazines and blogs[27]), the spectacle itself relies on a sense of emotion re-

fracted in the designs themselves. Indeed, a *clothes-reading* of the show reveals that the garments are the focus of attention, but without being presented in a robotic, static manner or in a highly aestheticised and ‘showy’ manner. The collection comprises a casual but *chic* wardrobe offering multiple sartorial options (trench coats, shirt dresses, double-breasted jackets, wide pants, all in either black, white, purple, or yellow) made from flowing fabrics such as silk, cotton, and raffia,[28] which emphasise the mobility and fluidity of the clothes.

Kayrouz’s dancing collection does not necessarily aim to elevate the clothes, rather, it exposes the possibilities of a body that *simply* moves with *simple* clothes. The dance performance does not ‘steal the show’ away from the clothes. On the contrary, the show (and its filmed version) engage closely with the clothes, a feat made possible *through* dance. Thus, the minimalistic view on dance weaves perfectly together with the minimalistic designs of Kayrouz’s garments; without a loaded visual codification and ostentation, the clothes acquire their own movement on stage.[29] Of course this does not imply that the promotional aim of the show and of the video should be ignored, as dance has become a sort of trope for the elaboration of the fashion show. In that regard, referring to what Sophie Fontanel[30] has observed on this tendency to include dance in fashion shows, it is not, in Kayrouz’s case, to simply re-invent the traditional catwalk, but to accentuate the vocation of clothes.



Fig. 2: ©Maison Rabih Kayrouz.

The choreographic autonomy of the dance (which also relies on improvisation) is energised by the choreographic autonomy of the designs themselves. As Kayrouz has explained, he made the collection before even conceiving of how he would like to present the clothes, and thus before actually collaborating with Gillot.[31] Kayrouz's decision to not use models matches his view of having women on stage who could immediately react to the emotion of the clothes and feel, in dancing, the liberty and lightness of the forms and fabrics of his designs.[32] In that sense, the choreography is in line with the aim to

recapture the emotion and attention he infused in the clothes when he designed and made them.

Dance is usually, and generically, defined in terms of harmonious and rhythmic movements having their own artistic ends. That being said, dance is not *any* kind of movement, since it does not have an immediate purpose,[33] rather it is meant *as* movement and not for achieving something in particular. As Prudhommeau emphasises, what distinguishes dance from any other movements is not to be found in its form, but in its *raison d'être*. Poet and philosopher Paul Valéry has also famously written on the subject, saying that dance is characterised by the expression of non-functional movements:

[i]t moves in a self-contained realm of its own and implies no reason, no tendency toward completion. A formula of pure dance should include nothing to suggest that it has an end. It is terminated by outside events; its limits in time are not intrinsic to it; the duration of the dance is limited by the conventional length of the program, by fatigue or loss of interest. But the dance itself has nothing to make it end. [34]

Valéry adds that dance is 'an action that *derives* from ordinary, useful action, but *breaks away* from it, and finally *opposes* it'. [35]

If dance on its own is characterised by non-utilitarian bodily motions, there *is* a very utilitarian dimension to dance in the context of a fashion show. Yet – and aside from the evident commercial value of a fashion show – it is precisely dance that reveals the functional *raison d'être* of the dress. What is more, fashion is about designing clothes for the body; dance choreography is about designing movements for the body; and so, designing a dancing dress actually combines the functionality and the non-functionality of the moving body. Drawing from Valéry, I would contend that the dress and other textile elements are inherently dancing as the screen is dancing, and therefore allow for a dynamic to take place wherein the animated fabric is reverberated in the animated fabric of the screen. Therefore, and as paradoxical as it may seem, it is precisely the functionality of clothing that serves the non-functionality of dance.

Dick Tomasovic explains that filmmakers usually record dance to benefit from movement (*in* the image), visual motifs, and spectacular upshots. Further, Tomasovic insists on the fact that dance enables filmic images to move, attract, and even touch the spectator – pirouettes and other dancing movements are an effective way of bringing movement and motion into a frame when nothing in the image seems to move.[36] Similarly, when the clothes are not moving their liveness is not tangible. The imaginary legacy of Fuller, broadly put, could be one of a dancing dress as a multi-sensory experience

which seems to be now, more than ever, recuperated by many fashion shows in various aesthetic and programmatic ways.[37] Fuller's serpentine dances played with the body by transmuting or concealing it (because of the great volume of fabric), only disclosing the body's form for brief moments. In Kayrouz's show, the body stands for what it is: the moving pillar of both the dancer and the wearer. In the dancing fashion show, the woman is not an apparition, but a woman who is moving, dancing. Notably, the choreography does not disqualify the functionality of the fashion designs, but actually reinforces it, as I have argued. Also, if Fuller's show was about abstract movements devoid of specific narrative references, then Kayrouz's show is about stressing movement in non-abstract bodies. If Fuller's dancing body was mostly hidden from view and subjected to technical constraints, Kayrouz's bodies are brought into view, but as clothed bodies wherein clothes and the human form are organically espousing each other's surfaces.

Furthermore, Bruno argues that in the early filmic representation of the Serpentine dances (e.g. Lumière brothers),

we can see how fashion activated film. The translucent folds of a woman's dress, dancing across the frame, tangibly animated the surface of the film screen and gave it moving texture. [...] As Loïe Fuller's Serpentine Dance thus was translated into cinema at the very inception of the medium, fashion was charged with becoming the living fabric of film. [38]

Oscillating between a fashion show and a dance performance, nothing in Kayrouz's défilé seems to obscure the very fact that we are, first and foremost, watching clothes that are meant to be worn. Models, who would normally walk down a runway wearing the pieces, are here replaced by professional dancers who are wearing dancing clothes. Additionally, as fashion historian Valerie Steele writes, 'whether wearing clothes ourselves or seeing them on the bodies of professional dancers, we are inspired to think about what clothing says about who we are'.[39]

Moving dresses

Evidently, the posting of Kayrouz's video on Vimeo confirms the new media regime into which fashion has entered. It is, as Uhlirova explains, the 'fashion film effect' that is the added and polymorphous value of the filmic medium for promoting fashion in the digital age.[40] What is more, the video version

of the show is already questioning its own genre and format: is it a fashion film,[41] a screendance,[42] or does it just assume its elastic and hybrid nature? More importantly, the 2017 summer collection video pursues the primary aim of the dancing défilé: showcasing rhythmic bodies together with rhythmic fabrics, and giving the viewer the possibility not just to view them again and again, but to envision their (e)motion.[43]

In the show, the act of weaving – that is, of putting together the dancing body and fabrics – is taken over by the filmic act of weaving images. And we can *clothes-read* the weaving more literally in a few pieces (dresses and shirts) that were not just hand-made, but hand-embroidered.



Fig. 3: ©Maison Rabih Kayrouz.

As Steele observes, ‘in recent years, it seems that everyone in the fashion world, from Azzedine Alaïa to Vivienne Westwood, has designed dance costumes’.[44] Couturiers and fashion designers are mutually soliciting each other and, in doing so, fulfill several purposes: the creation of distinctive design styles for distinctive dance styles, the signposting of aesthetic influences between the two, and, perhaps most significantly, the bringing of a sense of freedom, astonishment, and ‘lightness’ into the often linear and rigid fashion show structure.

Dance and fashion, since the turn of the nineteenth century, have had a long history of collaboration. From Chanel to numerous designers in contemporary fashion (and the list is quite impressive[45]), dance is a productive art form for exploring fashion and for presenting its designs in an appealing and dynamic way. For others, such as Kayrouz, dance also works to emphasise the *moving* quality of clothing and fashion. Here, 'moving' is thus to be understood in the double sense of the word: in its kinetic and emotional sense. Even if dance is manifestly a powerful vehicle for spectacular and visual enchantment, choreography and movement are thus also inscribed in dress itself (including its texture and surface), which in turn recalls the poetic and technological motifs of cinematic screens. In other words, moving beyond the mere symptomatic observation of the attractiveness of dance in/for fashion (and thus moving beyond a marketing strategy paradigm) enables us to foster a reflection on the choreographic being of both fashion and cinematic media, and its return or persistence in the digital age. In Kayrouz's case, it is not the designer who has drawn inspiration from dance, but the dress itself that is traversed by kinetic and rhythmic motifs.

To put it differently, the dress itself becomes the screen onto which movement comes to be visually inscribed, revealing its materiality, and not just for disclosing its representative and mimetic function. Similarly, and borrowing Bruno's words again, 'the surface of the screen becomes a stretched-out canvas, elastic and tensile and thus, in the end, appears really "worn"'. [46] To reiterate, the screen is not just the surface that brings moving images to life but, just like a dress, is *always already* moving. This also reminds us that the screen is a textile-surface and that fabrics and media (screens) are intimately related. [47] Consequently, the clothed body becomes a reflective animated 'space' moving into the space and the *scène* of the fashion atelier. Kayrouz's show both signals and surpasses the codes of the fashion show; it participates in the 'Fashion Week' structure (to catch the prospective buyers' eyes) while simultaneously playing its own game by setting up a moment where Kayrouz's design practice is true to its vocation. Simply said, the designer does not just try out different strategies of displaying his clothes, but underlines the dynamic and poetic liaison between dress, dance, and screen.

For instance, the large purple dress (consisting of folds) visually extends Gillot's body and becomes, so to speak, the screen onto and around which mobility is perceived and experienced. That is, it is only as the dance is performed on stage (and especially the way it has been filmed) that gives the dress its full material existence. Again, dance, following Valéry, is in itself not

functional, but in this case it enables the dress to obtain its very functionality: a cloth that moves on the moving body.

The show is already comparable to what is inherent to moving images, in the sense that instead of following a defined narrative it occurs out of rhythmic movements and sequences, as if each fold of the dress becomes a sequence in itself. In some ways, it recalls Fuller's proto-cinematic performance of uncovering movement generated by the dress. The video format does not only confirm the differences in terms of apparatuses, space, and time between the fashion show and its filmic version, but comes to encompass what it is that intimately ties together dress, dance, and the screen. If movement is a linking motif, so too is the body – fashion is an embodied practice as much as cinema and dance. Actors, dancers, wearers, viewers, and designers are joined in a woven 'textured space' where images are brought together through various media and materialities. In dance, the body disappears for the clothes to move *as* dancing fabrics. This, I should note, contributes to the ongoing discussions on the formatted (dis-embodied) bodies of the fashion models that here are replaced by the dancing (embodied) figures of the dancers.

From the fashion catwalk to the dance floor, the passage is not only for animating the non-animated object of dress, but also acknowledging that dance, fashion, and film are not only actively partaking in the logic of show business but are intrinsically meant to show and wear movement. Watching the performance and the edited video of Kayrouz's show creates a sense of a 'kinesthetic empathy' as defined by Karen Wood, meaning 'the sensation of moving while watching movement'.^[48] This idea also resonates with Valéry's words: 'a part of our pleasure as spectators consists in feeling ourselves possessed by the rhythms so that we ourselves are virtually dancing'.^[49] I would suggest that watching a dancing dress produces a sort of moving sensation for the viewer (and not solely from the moving body). The dress is an animated texture that is further enhanced by the animated body on stage and on screen. One might thus question (similar to the way Wood regards 'how emotions facilitate kinesthetic empathy'^[50]) how clothes can turn that same empathy into a desire to wear and a desire to dance.

The video is, I shall insist, more than just a documentation of the défilé, since it makes use of a quite rhythmic montage or 'choreographic editing' that, according to Priscilla Guy, is 'a permeable artistic approach that deals with several techniques and media, with movement research at its

core'.[51] Moreover, some filmic devices used for this video mirror traditional theatrical ones, such as the black screen closing as a curtain on stage would do at the end of the performance. In the same way that Guy insists on the fact that editing offers new ways to envision the dancing body through mediation,[52] it could be implied that the editing used for the video allows for new ways of envisioning the fashioned body (and also the catwalk) and, more significantly, ways of acknowledging the *emotion* of the *couture* objects. To repeat, the video does not only record the show nor does it produce specific images (of spectacle); it unifies, as it were, the kinetic being of dress, dance, and screen.

Even if a consonance between Fuller's performance and Kayrouz's show might be overly associative or far-fetched, I would venture that elements and motifs of the Serpentine dance resonate with the 2016 fashion show. I am not arguing that contemporary fashion shows (where dance, media, and technology perform a significant role) are conscious revivals of Fuller's work, but that somehow Fuller's synaesthetic materiality and accessibility have left marks on the way fashion and clothes perform and manifest themselves in a screen-based world. With the sophisticated and minimalistic *couture* designs of Kayrouz, the dress as a dancing being enables the dancers to dance with the garment and thus to become the reflexive surface onto which our 'textured imaginary' can come to live and *move* us.

The dress/screen dynamic considers an alliance between the two that is further strengthened *through* dance. The dress is thus a screen[53] in the sense of a textured and *moving* surface, but also through the fact that today clothes and fashion cannot exist without screen-based culture and exposure. Ultimately, it is as dance, in the way it is articulated in the fashion *défilé* and in its filmic arrangement, that enables Kayrouz to embody his conception of clothes. Wearing clothes might simply mean dancing with them and watching the infinite scenarios and *mise en scènes* they are able to project and animate. In the end, fashion and screen are dance partners that generate dynamic – *dancing* – thought processes.

Author

Marie-Aude Baronian is Associate Professor in Film and Visual Culture at the University of Amsterdam. She writes on media and memory, ethics and aesthetics, film-philosophy, and on textile and fashion. Her latest monographs

include *Screening Memory: The Prosthetic Images of Atom Egoyan* (Académie Royale Belgique, 2017) and *Mémoire et Image: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne* (L'Âge d'Homme, 2013).

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Rabih Kayrouz for providing me with images of the fashion show. My heartfelt thanks to Tess Boissonneault and Sylvia Jorif.

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Notes

- [1] See, for example, Fontanel 2016, Abriat 2017, or Emptaz 2017.
- [2] Such as the Musée du Louvre's exhibition *Corps en mouvement: la danse au musée*, curated by French dancer and choreographer Benjamin Millepied and Jean-Luc Martinez (6 October 2016 to 3 July 2017). Around the same time, there were also other exhibitions on dance in Europe: one in Paris on Léon Baskt (Palais Garnier), one in Lyon titled *Corps rebelles* at the Musée des Confluences, one on the work of Pina Bausch in Berlin (Lichtburg), and another called *Rodin and Dance* in London at the Courtauld Institute.
- [3] Evans 2011, p. 110. Interestingly, if we look at cinema and dance from the perspective of the history of fashion, it becomes clear that dance as an art has contributed substantially to the liberation of body movements. More in Seeling 2014.
- [4] Evans specifies that 'it is, however, not only dance films but also in another French genre, féeries and trick films, known at the time as "transformation scenes", that further affinities with the fashion show can be traced'. Evans 2011, p. 115.
- [5] On this particular topic, see Guido 2014 and 2005.
- [6] An impressive body of work on Fuller exists and includes numerous documents, critiques, and testimonials from the time (including ones written by well-known authors such as the poet Mallarmé), but also filmmakers (e.g. Germaine Dulac), dancers (e.g. Martha Graham), and philosophers (Jacques Rancière and Georges Didi-Huberman). Recent academic studies include Cooper Albright 2007, Garelick 2007, and Gunning 2003.
- [7] Pruska-Oldenhof 2016, p. 49.
- [8] The technological innovation of Fuller's dances mainly has to do with her creative use of electricity. Also, as Gunning explicates: 'after getting to know Marie and Pierre Curie, Fuller introduced a "radium dance", applying fluorescent chemicals to her costumes that glowed like the

newly discovered, energy-releasing element', *Ibid.*, p. 82. Also, as Pruska–Oldenhof puts it, 'what makes her Serpentine Dance and its variations revolutionary and still pertinent today is that she was able to connect the past (the previous traditions of skirt and veil dancing by women) with the present (then recent inventions in the electromagnetic technology) into an elaborately choreographed whole'. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

- [9] Gunning 2003, p. 82.
- [10] Hindson 2013, p. 72. Hindson's essay offers a historical overview of the skirt dance and serpentine dance (and their differences) (pp. 65-77). The serpentine dances originally came from vaudeville and, as Gunning specifies, 'forges a link between the mechanical popular entertainment of early cinema and the rarefied ideas of Symbolist aesthetics'. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- [11] Sperling 2013, p. 80.
- [12] Ranci re 2013, p. 98.
- [13] Cooper Albright 2016, p. 717.
- [14] Ranci re 2013, p. 96.
- [15] Cooper Albright 2016, p. 722.
- [16] Bear in mind that all filmic records are re-enactments of Fuller's dances. Fuller herself did not want her shows to be captured on camera because she feared the magic outcome would be reduced.
- [17] Ranci re 2013, p. 98.
- [18] Brannigan 2011, p. 36.
- [19] Under the artistic direction of Sylvain Oger and Constance Rebolz for Persona Editions.
- [20] Notably, I did not attend the fashion show in person. My reading of the performance is based on reviews, testimonials, images and, most significantly, the video. My aim is to stress the 'added value' of this filmed version of the performance for the articulation of fashion, film, and dance, and thus not just considering the video as a source for the lack of experiencing the show live.
- [21] Evans 2011, p. 112.
- [22] Uhlirova 2013, p. 125.
- [23] As my student Karen Fleck pointed out in discussing this show: 'Gillot's various spreading movements would remind of the action of a customer undergoing a fitting.' I would like to thank her for the subtle observations she made during my class *Dressing the Screen* (Goethe University Frankfurt, Summer 2017), which have been insightful.
- [24] Bruno 2016, p. 24.
- [25] For further exploration on this aspect, see Schneider 2011. I would like to thank my student Bianka-Isabell Scharmann (Goethe University Frankfurt, Summer 2017) for having brought this book to my attention during my class *Dressing the Screen*. Much more could be said about the distinction between live(d) performance and recorded performance, including several questions regarding not just editing but also viewing experience. We could also draw a comparison between Fuller's performances and Kayrouz's. While there are no filmic records of Fuller's own performances, Kayrouz not only records Gillot's dance performance but re-edits it for the benefit of another film. Ironically, as Sophie Fontanel has noted (*Ibid.*) after attending the live performance, the show was so mesmerising and moving that it was a challenge to film or to photograph it. Of course, this does not change the fact that some people at the show did record it on their smartphones. It is as though Kayrouz's show is recalling proto-cinematic performances (such as Fuller's) which aim to create audiovisual experiences and also 'post-cinematic' performances, since the show, in the context of the contemporary digital age, is recorded and viewed through phones and platforms such as Vimeo.
- [26] Bruno 2016, p. 28.

- [27] The success of the fashion show was instantaneous. Many fashion journalists and bloggers confessed to have been moved and totally mesmerised by what they saw. Kayrouz somehow reiterated such an approach when, for the 2018 spring collection (in July 2017), he asked French singer Christophe to accompany some dancers from the Paris Opera Ballet while singing with his piano on stage. This show also took place in his Parisian boutique-atelier and show room. Interestingly this time, some mirror panels covered the stage, creating various viewpoints that would function, as it were, as early projection screens.
- [28] Some of the pieces are even adorned with hand-stitched embroideries (with figurative clouds and childlike houses).
- [29] For a discussion on minimalism and what I have termed 'sophisticated archaism' see Baronian 2017.
- [30] Fontanel 2016.
- [31] From an interview I conducted with the designer in his Parisian atelier in summer 2017.
- [32] Piégay 2016, p. 148.
- [33] Prudhommeau 1990, p. 540.
- [34] Valéry 1976, pp. 71-72.
- [35] Ibid.
- [36] Tomasovic 2009, pp. 12, 19.
- [37] Contemporary fashion designers such as Hussein Chalayan and McQueen have created multi-medial fashion shows and included different sorts of advanced optical technologies.
- [38] Bruno 2011, p. 85.
- [39] Steele 2013, p. 9.
- [40] Uhlirova 2013, pp. 118-129.
- [41] As Gary Needham puts it, 'the screen has become a key point of contact for the experience of fashion culture'. Needham 2013, p. 103. Or, for further discussion see Uhlirova 2013, pp. 118-129.
- [42] This term, following David Rosenberg and Erin Brannigan, encompasses several genres and formats (dance film, cinedance, video dance). It can also be used for describing the use of dance in media-based installations. Screendance, in Rosenberg's sense, is not just a subcategory of cinema and dance, but an art and media form of its own that welcomes hybrid specificities.
- [43] This is also a question of the viewing modes as explained by Nathalie Khan, who insists that in the digital age the viewer of fashion is not just a consumer but a spectator. Khan 2012, pp. 235-250.
- [44] Steele 2013, p. 9.
- [45] Think of Rei Kawabuko/Comme des Garçons for Cunningham, Calvin Klein for Martha Graham, Issey Miyake for William Forsythe, Yoji Yamamoto for Pina Baush, etc. (see Steele 2013, pp. 67-68)
- [46] Bruno 2011, p. 103.
- [47] Bruno 2016, p. 13.
- [48] Wood 2016, p. 245.
- [49] Valéry 1976, p. 72.
- [50] Wood 2016, p. 247.
- [51] Guy 2016, p. 592.
- [52] Ibid., p. 595.

- [53] Obviously, screens deserve to be much more carefully and rigorously defined. In film and media studies, for instance, there is a wide range of perspectives and approaches (e.g. media archeology) that discuss the complexity of the screen in the digital age (see work by Wanda Strauven, Miriam De Rosa, Erkki Huhtamo, Nana Verhoeff, Gertrud Koch, to name but a few).