

ENTRANCE

Trivial Pursuit

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Alessia Gunawan
Iris Luz
Sara Yukiko Mon
Erica Skye Ohmi
Hannah Taurins
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“After fashion – the group show”

Trivial Pursuit brings together a coterie of artists working in fashion and through fashion.

In 1949, a 21-year-old Andy Warhol was fresh out of art school and trying to drum up interest in his drawings when he landed his first job as a fashion illustrator for an article in *Glamour*, aptly titled “Success is a Job in New York.” The economic pressures of being a young artist led Franco Moschino down a similar trajectory. Moschino left art school as a painter, but soon transitioned into working as a fashion illustrator for Versace. “Making money in art was difficult... The easiest way to make money was to use art for some other reason. One of the easiest and most interesting from an economic point of view was fashion.” Why depart from the lofty pursuit of fine art for the market-friendly vulgarities of fashion? Moschino put it simply: “Fashion pays.” While Moschino’s stint in fashion led to the launch of his eponymous line, Warhol’s novel shoe illustrations soon found him considerable commercial recognition that enabled him to pursue a dedicated art practice.

In a 1987 interview, artist Sherie Levine opined that of her contemporaries privileged the influence of theory, a so-called “intellectual pursuit,” in their work, out of fear that they wouldn’t be taken seriously if they addressed the trivial– the fraught, inescapable pleasure of fashion. The trivial pursuit is denigrated, but why shy away from a girlish conceit? Contemporary art scoffs at the overt commercialization of fashion, yet this is what has propelled it to become a far more dominant cultural force. Its vast network reaches publics far outside the museum-going cohort, and the artists who participate in this system often achieve the highest mainstream relevance. Although both spheres trade in cultural commodities, for an artist to engage with fashion is often to become a commodity traitor.

Art historian TJ Clark has decried photographer Cecil Beaton’s 1951 series of fashion models posing in front of Pollock canvases for *Vogue*. Clark lampooned the photographs as “nightmarish” images that reduced Pollock to “glib, superficial form,” that “speak to the hold of capitalist culture.” The Pollock paintings had been recently on display at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York, but this salable exhibition was not mentioned in his critique of market forces. Clark argued that “fashions change, art endures,” as if both do not continually reinvent themselves. As fashion progresses through trend cycles, art develops through movements. Pollock serves as inspiration for legions of contemporary artists; likewise, mid-century fashions provide rich fodder for current designers. Fashion mines history as art alleges to investigate it, just as fashion looks forward as art claims to envision new futures.

In 1984, the creator of a trivia board game sued the game show *Trivial Pursuit*, alleging that the tv program had stolen his trivia. At the heart of the case was the question of whether facts were intellectual property. The judge ruled in favor of *Trivial Pursuit*, concluding that facts, like ideas, were not copyrightable. They can be bought and sold, as Andy Warhol bought the idea for his Campbell’s Soup paintings, or, like the influence that sprung from Warhol’s pop pioneering, they can be traded, appropriated, remixed, and continually reworked and revamped.

The idea of fashion, much like the image of fashion, is mutable and constantly evolving in mass reproduction and reinvention. In his seminal “Pictures” essay, curator Douglas Crimp, whose first job in New York was for couturier Charles James, argues that our experience is “governed” by images and representations in magazines, which he calls “the most debased of our cultural conventions.” Magazines, like Warhol’s *Glamour*, were to Roland Barthes the “machine that makes Fashion.” Fast forward to the present–Instagram has since displaced magazines as the primary dispersion agent for the idea and image of fashion.

What is in vogue no longer appears in *Vogue*; it is instead filtered through an algorithm and disseminated through streets and screens. The byproducts of this machine materialize in the well-dressed downtown waif, the Lucky Jewel or Café Forgot girl. The immaculately composed outfits of this vanguard are not a signifier of class as much as they are often a signifier of hyper-engagement with facets of fashion online and off– of dedicated research into the dregs of Poshmark, eBay, and Yahoo JP listings, or hunting escapades at James Voloria, Laura Koleji, and Beacon’s in search of SS ‘99 or FW xy&z, of fervently following independent designers in the Instagram to SSENSE clearance sale pipeline, of a phone timer calibrated to the Telfar drop, and/or of carefully crafted personal branding on social media rewarded by #ad gifted designer wares. Outfits are class bluffs–dressing down to skirt familial privilege or dressing up to flex the fruits of ceaseless hustle. Rent is high, wages are low, but you have to dress the part anyway.

The projection of success is a job in New York.

In a drawing from 2015, Julie Becker scrawled out: "I must create a masterpiece to pay the rent."

The sustaining art practice requires savvy financial maneuvering. The artists in *Trivial Pursuit* know how to fashionably accessorize in the marketplace. They all wear a variety of hats, working for and in collaboration with fashion brands, from independent designers to luxury behemoths, as well as within the sphere of contemporary art. In day jobs and freelance gigs—as collaborators, content creators, photographers, designers, and models—they have reaped the rewards and discontents of fashion.

From behind the scenes and in front of the camera, they caught an intimate glimpse into the elusive mechanisms of the system. Their entrenchment has made them collectively privy to the construction of allure that sells us identity and subculture that promise deliverance from alienation and disenchantment. These insights are honed in bodies of work that grapple with contested authenticity, aspiration and alienation, commerce and commodification, iconography, stylization and aesthetic ploys, to the feminine abject—all converging from on the indelible imprint left by fashion on visual culture at large.

Trivial Pursuit echoes Moschino's 1990 runway outburst—Stop the Fashion System!—yet concedes to Max Ernst's 1919 declaration: long live fashion—it just might help you pay the rent while you make your masterpiece.

Sara Yukiko Mon's *Powder Room* frames the birth, death, and rebirth of the commodity in a collage of laser printed newsprint affixed to laser-cut wood. The assembly components for toy furniture encase flippantly composed images culled from listings for a variety of outgrown or off-trend wares that circulate the secondhand digital marketplace. Mon's selection of images are arranged either to perfectly fit within the emptied shape, or enhance the oddity of the forms. A decoratively toothed resin comb is centered within one of these voids, but the comb itself is not of central importance. Rather, it is the random magic of the convergence and synchronicity of styling that is key to her practice. The photos Mon selects form a visualization of her shopping search history—from a Zucca shopping bag and a Roomba, to a bleary eyed Blythe doll situated beneath the interior of a luxe Barbie dream house. Mon's clusters of trinkets, tchotchkes, and personal effects make up the stuff of our lives that define us through our constant reinvention via commerce.

In Mon's *Vanity*, a miniature wooden vanity set assembled from modular parts from *Power Room* is encased within a clear plastic barrier. The vanity has been decorated with newsprint imagery of the same ilk, but in this iteration, they have been cut to size complementary size, all making the cut for the idealized assortment of decor for an absent young girl. The vitrine enforces a distance between the attainable and aspirational—this toy furniture can't be played with. Like a model IKEA interior, this styled set of paper cut accessories and form a lifestyle assembly pack. *Vanity* restages a site of childhood fantasy play and world building in miniature, of dreams of the bright domestic future we'll buy one day when we have real jobs.

The glossy, plasticine forms of Erica Skye Ohmi's digital renderings, which fall in between sculpture and photography, arise from an array of references ranging from fashion and e-commerce imagery to the cartoonish figuration of John Wesley. *Horny Assistants* witnesses the underling laborers of the libidinal economy fall into an embrace. These lithe young professionals dressed in uniform seemingly conform to demands of corporate culture until they collapse under the cumulative humiliation of one coffee run after the next, always fulfilling someone else's desire. They act out a perverse scene of lust and loss modeled after a mass circulated still from Haneke's *The Piano Teacher*, and evoke the dynamics of career seduction in Natasha Stagg's short fiction, 'Press Release'.

Ohmi's vanitas-like still life, *Amazon Prime Sculpture*, is composed of an empty heart-shaped nail polish bottle, a translucent amber vessel with no discernible use, and a pink flosser sans floss, all resting atop a spinning mirrored tray. This union of consumer beauty products of undecipherable origin and branding are all conveniently in reach within an increasingly short time span made possible by last mile logistics that crush the denizens of unionized workers who deliver such aesthetic 'necessities'. Perfect, seamless, and useless, without even a fingerprint from the hand that made them.

The subject matter of Alessia's Gunawan's two photographs was sourced from her aunt's workplace, a sprawling counterfeit designer marketplace in Jakarta. In *Luxury Steroids #1*, a flocked gift box, holding a cluster of shimmering gold and silver Chanel necklaces, opens to reveal its contents like a pearl bearing oyster. 'Costume', or 'fashion', jewelry and 'fine' jewelry may often closely resemble each other. What distinguishes the two categories is not the design, but the scarcity of the metals and stones from which they're crafted. In the absence of an especially discerning eye, the authenticity, and value, of such jewelry is only known to the buyer. A paper tag attached to the gaudy accessories reads 'Fashion Jewelry' in a fanciful script. The tag's obvious incongruity ruptures the viewers value calculation, and forms a flimsy divide between real and fake in a nod to the falsehood of photographic veracity.

In Iris Luz's *Infinity Pool (1)*, an ungainly blond model poses against a green screen tropical backdrop, blinking slowly as her hair is blown by an artificial wind. Makeup-less and plain looking, the only glamor is the illusion afforded by external devices. A girlish computerized voiceover reads out a brief script recounting a childhood fascination with glamorous girls set against green screen beaches, without lamenting deception when the mesmerizing visions are revealed to be a trick of the camera. The model almost smiles as the camera lingers on her for a few seconds after the final line, "it's like a dream come true," before looping back to the beginning. Luz's *Goblin* is a ghoulish girl with sharpened, bloody teeth and lengthy braided tendrils that pool at her feet that couches ominously in a corner. Her figure is nearly alluring enough to distract from her repulsive composure. The image of this young vamp is transfixed onto a sheet of clear acrylic cut to her silhouette. When approached from the side, she disappears like the mirage of a succubus, the horror of a fantasy turned hyperreal.

Inez Valentine's inkjet print *Music, Dance, Nicole*, siphons archetypes of aspirational women whose variable images are plastered in the public sphere online and on the streets into degraded digital collage. A study in the endurance of the mundane and the sexily salacious, *Music, Dance, Nicole*, couples rubbings from buildings around her home in South London with mottled, low resolution pictures taken on her Samsung of upbeat feminine figures from High Street advertisements that remain stagnant fixtures in the urban landscape, and Nicole Kidman's silhouette from Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* whose image has continually maintained intrigue. Valentine's print *Pushkin* depicts a graffiti tag etched in pavement by pseudonymously named Pushkin accompanied by caricature of a Plusheen cat, a gesture that serves as an extension of personal branding embedded within the build environment. *Pushkin's* scale and halftone printing technique recall the commercial banners that ubiquitously dot the urban landscape. The content of such advertising formats often peddle articulations of identity to appeal to consumers eager to define themselves, like those asserting their place through acts of petty vandalism. Neither writing in concrete nor the paper plastered to walls elude 'development'—new streets and new shops will soon arise, and with them, new tags and new ads.

Hannah Taurins's drawing, *Marilyn*, bears a striking resemblance to Marilyn Monroe that verges on recognition, but something is eerily awry. Her gaze is deadened and her face cast in a foreboding lurid neon green glow. *Marilyn* is modeled from the 'original', a life-size animatron invented in 1982 by Shunichi Mizuno, a Japanese engineer who uncannily resurrected Marilyn Monroe's likeness 20 years after her death. Mizuno likened himself to an artist, and intended his cybernetic robot creations, or 'cybots' as he called them, for display and marvel. Taurins pictures her *Marilyn* wrapped in an opulent feather boa that collapses into negative space—a loosely sketched out site of fantastical projection.

Taurins's *Marilyn (Back)* pictures the cybot from behind, exposing her gaping back. Her mechanics are revealed like the splayed innards of an anatomical Venus, but the opacity of the entangled tech offers only veiled insight into a body on the cusp of personhood. Taurins's *Marilyns* are not portraits of Norma Jeane the woman, but of Marilyn the multi-hyphenate icon. Perennially reproduced, in high culture and low, from Warhol to Dries van Noten to countless renditions in Americana imagery, with each rendition she loses personhood and becomes an imaginary figure, more invented than real.

Ana Viktoria Dzinic's *Propaganda and Decoration #1* pictures a Saint Laurent billboard a classic sunny Hollywood vista complete with palm trees that has been distorted from a scene rife with glamor to a somber lament. The doubled model's despondent posture echos the warping through which she is rendered. The fluid, painterly filter and printing technique yields an affective image whose subject is more the contrived aesthetic as much as the landscape—the mediation is the message. Dzinic plays with the visual tropes of emotive digital photographs edited with high contrast, black and white filters to mimic 'vintage' film that were disseminated en masse on Flickr, VSCO, and a more nascent Instagram. The purported timelessness of black and white photography is imbued with a nostalgic quality akin to what Kembra Pfahler has termed "yesterbating." Images of this ilk convey a self-seriousness and 'cringe' intellectualism, and are positioned with a cool distance from the present, yet the digital tools used to construct these pictures firmly situates them in their moment of capture.

In Dzinic's *Worldwideweb.iNews 00 A, so smart*, she delegates an internal investigation to the Rhizome software Conifer that probes her social media activities. Dzinic's meticulously constructed Instagram presence from 2017-2020 is dissected and later elaborated upon in an 'anonymized' interview. A candidly deadpan Dzinic relays an intimate account embraces and contests the rewards of the fashion system, and details its ascendant opportunities and punishing consequences. Dzinic traces her strategies for branding and codified aesthetics that propelled her from working class nobody to an elite private art school and billboards worldwide. The monetary and social gains formed only a facade of success. The barrier between the real and performed self dissolved as the distinction between work and life became increasingly hazy—"I know longer know what came first, or the contempt for capitalist demands." The promise of an escape revealed itself to be a trap, as the reducing oneself to become consumable to perpetually impress the elite network and delay a guaranteed disposability. The response to alienation and exploitation engendered by a system which purports to deliver individual agency that amounts to little more than pocket change? "Be nothing, lol"

Ana Viktoria Dzinic (b. 1994, Schwelm, DE) lives and works in London, UK. Dzinic received a BA in Media from Central Saint Martins College, London and an MFA from Goldsmiths University, London. She is a digital concepts consultant for Balenciaga, and founded and co-runs the digital project space dieinternet.org. Recent exhibitions include Cute Core Kinder Whore on dieinternet.org (2022), London Grads Now at Saatchi Gallery, London (2021), Access 2, Wells Project, London (2021), Access Art Trail, London (2021), and Dio in the face of god, dieinternet.org (2021).

Alessia Gunawan (b. 1995, Jakarta, ID) lives and works between London, Milan, and Jakarta. Gunawan received a BA in Photographic Arts from the University of Westminster, London and an MA in Photography from Écal, Lausanne. Gunawan has exhibited in Almusibli Panorama at Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève (2020), Cherish Gallery, Geneva (2020), and THE GNOSIS SHOW, curated by Tosia Leniarska, at Daisy's Room, London (2021). Her work has been published in Novembre Magazine, THE FADER, COEVAL, Gruppe Magazine, Dune Journal, and It's Nice That.

Iris Luz (b. 1995, London, UK) lives and works in London, UK. Luz received a BA in Fashion Branding from the Amsterdam Fashion Institute. She is the founder and editor of PC Erotic magazine, published by Ditto, London. Luz is a radio host for Know Wave, panelist for Show Studio, and former social media editor for Dazed Beauty. She has photographed for and undertaken artistic collaborations with brands such as Ashley Williams, Balenciaga, Praying, Mimi Wade, Bimba Y Lola, and for The Face, i-D, and Interview magazines. Trivial Pursuit is her first gallery exhibition.

Sara Yukiko Mon (b. 1996, San Francisco, CA) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Mon received a BA in Design | Media Arts from UCLA. She has exhibited in a two-person exhibition with Chris Lloyd at Gern en Regalia, New York (2020), and as part of a group exhibition at A.D., New York (2022). Her work has been reviewed in various publications including Artforum, Editorial Magazine, and Elephant Magazine. She collaborated with Celine for their Men's Spring/Summer 2022 Collection, and is a graphic designer for Calvin Klein.

Erica Skye Ohmi (b. 1996, New York, NY) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Ohmi received a BFA from Pratt College, Brooklyn. She has executed artistic collaborations with Alexander Wang, the Grotesque Archive, and Stefan Cooke. She has worked as a fabricator for Darren Bader and a graphic designer for Tom Sachs. Trivial Pursuit is her first gallery exhibition.

Hannah Taurins (b. 1997, Houston, TX) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Taurins received a BFA in Fine Art from The Cooper Union. Prior to her debut solo exhibition Cover Girl at Theta, New York (2022), Taurins worked as a vintage dealer selling rare designer pieces, as well as modeling for brands such as Batsheva and Nicole Saldana. Her upcoming exhibitions include Standard, Oslo (2023) and In Lieu, Los Angeles (2022).

Inez Valentine (b. 1998, London, UK) lives and works in London. Valentine received a BA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins College, London. Valentine has exhibited in The End (solo), at Daisy's Room, London (2021), and participated in group exhibitions such as The Grotto, co-curated by Chloée Maugile and Laurie Barron, at Ridley Road Project Space, London (2022), Objects (lost), Treasure (found) at Underground Flower, London (2021), and Paperweight, curated by Joe Bradley Hill, at 18 Malden Rd, London (2019). Valentine has done artistic collaborations with Marine Serre for LN-CC, Max Peurmain for Re-edition magazine, Harry Freeguard for The Face magazine, and LGBT venue Vogue Fabrics Dalston, as well as designing her own line of clothing under the moniker Aircrush.

Daisy Sanchez (b. 1998, Salzburg, AT) lives and works in New York, NY. Sanchez received a BA in from the Visual Cultures department of Central Saint Martins College, London, and flunked out of the Courtauld, London. Her previous curatorial exploits include The Void (2021) for White Columns, online, and Rawr means I love you in dinosaur (2019) for Lubov, NY. Sanchez founded Daisy's Room, a project space that ran out of a bedroom in London from 2020-2021, and staged five exhibitions, including THE GNOSIS SHOW, guest curated by Tosia Leniarska. Sanchez's writing, interviews, and reviews of her work have been featured in F Magazine, Civilization, Know Wave, NYLON Japan, and Art in America.