

Department of Cultural Studies



Radboud Universiteit

A Colorful Crusade Against Climate Change

*Exploring the Visual Language of Vivienne Westwood's Manifesto and SS20 Look Book as
Catalysts for Environmental Awareness in Today's Fashion Industry*

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MA thesis Creative Industries

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1 - Introduction

A Colorful Crusade Against Climate Change

Exploring the Visual Language of Vivienne Westwood's Manifesto and SS20 Look Book as Catalysts for Environmental Awareness in Today's Fashion Industry

“She has no time, and nor, she believes, does the planet” (Westwood and Kelly 390).

Fresh in our minds is the death of British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, at the age of 81, on Dec. 29, 2022. Westwood became known as designer of clothing for the Punk and New Romanticism generations in the 1970s and 1980s (NOS). For Westwood, her designs were more than just fashion, they were a political statement of youth against the corruption of the ruling establishment (NOS). Vivienne Westwood was not only a fashion designer, she was also an activist and businesswoman who was known for her avant-garde designs and her involvement in environmental and political activism. “Activism as much as design has come to dominate Vivienne’s life” (Westwood and Kelly 378). She was a passionate and outspoken critic of consumerism, capitalism, and climate change (380) and believed that fashion could be a powerful tool for political and social change (Shin 131). According to Ian Kelly, writer of historical biographies, “She [was] inconvenient: people cannot handle the consistency and seriousness with which she [sticked] to her politics. They are made uncomfortable by the way she [injected] politics into everything” (396). Combining fashion with activism was a recurring phenomenon in her career.

In the historical (auto)biography written by Westwood and Kelly, Kelly writes that Westwood devoted her full personality and creativity to promoting her chosen causes, progressively aligning the House of Westwood with these same ideals (Westwood and Kelly 384). Part of this process included founding her blog *Climate Revolution*, which today has

grown into a full-fledged website (385). Westwood used this blog to inform people on her thoughts on the issues of culture and the environment (385). A recurring message in her blog concerns her critique of the current economic system, which she believed to be fundamentally flawed and the direct instigator of the climate crisis (385). Kelly states that “Vivienne [believed] that access to information is key to the proper functioning of democracy and indeed climate awareness” (396).

On her website, Westwood assembled her philosophies, campaigns, speeches, and activist endeavors. In 2020, she unveiled her *Save the World Manifesto*, also referred to by Westwood herself as the *NO MAN'S LAND Manifesto*. The manifesto is accompanied by Westwood's collection for the 2020 spring-summer season (House of Westwood, “Spring-Summer 2020 Lookbook Collection”). Westwood's *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book* serve as expressions of her ideologies and ideas. Given that manifestos arise as responses to social unrest and chaos (Hanna and Ashby), this research will not only examine the stand-alone artifacts but also carefully consider the contextual aspects of the works. The purpose of this research is to analyze how political and environmental messages are visually expressed in these specific manifestations by Westwood and how these messages should be interpreted within the contemporary fashion industry. Through this analysis, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the role of visual art as a platform for political and environmental awareness and how this relates to the broader context of the fashion industry.

Over the past three decades, the literature on the manifesto has grown significantly in Europe and North America, dispelling the doubts of the 1980s about its suitability as a semiotic object (Yanoshevsky 257). Nowadays the manifesto in academic literature is approached without raising doubts about the legitimacy of the genre as an object of academic study (257). Nevertheless, Yanoshevsky, Professor of French Literature, writes that researchers have repeatedly complained about the lack of attention to manifestos in literary

criticism (258) - and this also applies to manifestos related to fashion (Pecorari 92). Pecorari, Professor and Program Director of the MA in Fashion Studies at Parsons Paris, agrees with Yanoshevsky, stating “Little has been done to theorize on its scope for the fashion industry” (92). Given this perspective, I believe that conducting research on Vivienne Westwood's manifesto in conjunction with her fashion designs can make a valuable contribution to the academic realm of fashion and manifestos. Therefore the research question of my master thesis is:

RQ: “Which visual language does Vivienne Westwood use to express political and environmental messages in her *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book*, and how can these expressions be understood within the contemporary fashion industry?”.

To answer the research question, I will provide a theoretical framework (Chapter 2) based on various scientific studies and academic theories on media, materiality, manifestos, style activism, Posthumanism and studies related to Panofsky's (art historian) method of iconological interpretation. This theoretical foundation will then help me analyze the findings of my research. The research will be based on Panofsky's visual analysis method and will consist of a pre-iconographic description, an iconographic analysis, and an iconological interpretation. All stages of the visual analysis are qualitative methods, providing in-depth information about the artifacts to be studied, and therefore the research will help me gain a deeper understanding of the visual language Westwood used to communicate political and environmental messages, and how this should be interpreted within the contemporary fashion industry. A concise description of my working method for each part of the research follows.

Chapter 3 will consist of the pre-iconographic description, in which I provide a description of all the visual elements of the artefacts without preconceived ideology. In paragraph 3.1, I will describe all twelve pages of the manifesto, focusing on visual elements,

such as symbols and images, the materials used and several textual statements. In section 3.2, I will compile a comprehensive inventory of all visually observable elements within the artifact, including an analysis of the posture and features of the models, the backgrounds and the colors, patterns, textures, shapes and silhouettes of the garments. Chapter 4 will feature the iconographic analysis of both the *Save the World Manifesto* and the *SS20 Look Book*, uncovering clusters of meaning that are concealed within these artifacts. This analysis will not only identify the connections between different elements within each individual artifact, but also examine the connections between the manifesto and the look book, taking into account the production context and the Punk and New Romanticism ideology Westwood espoused. The objective is to delve into the underlying themes and messages communicated through these artifacts and gain insight into Vivienne Westwood's intended meaning. In Chapter 5, I will contextualize the findings from the pre-iconographic description and iconographic analysis within the framework of the fashion industry and relevant literature, with the main themes being sustainable couture and Posthumanism. This will enable us to comprehend how the political and environmental messages conveyed through Vivienne Westwood's *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book* can be interpreted within the context of the contemporary fashion landscape. Chapter 6 will encompass the conclusion of this study, where I will present my findings and provide a comprehensive discussion addressing the research question at hand.

2 – Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will introduce a theoretical framework required to carry out the iconological analysis of Vivienne Westwood's *Save the World Manifesto* and her *SS20 Look Book*. This chapter revolves around how materiality is exploited to expose the prevailing issues amid periods of social chaos. It delves into the realms of manifestos and style activism, highlighting the intentional exploitation of media's materiality for fostering social, political, and ecological transformations. For this purpose, I will discuss the concepts of iconology, media and materiality, manifestos and style activism. In addition, I will briefly introduce the concept of posthumanism, which will return in the final results chapter of this thesis, Chapter 5. Additional literature review will follow later in this thesis, depending on the results of the iconological analysis.

2.1 - Iconology

Note on methodology: in my master's thesis, Iconology plays a dual role as both a fundamental theoretical framework and the applied research methodology. As a result, Section 2.1 serves a dual function, not only providing the theoretical foundation but also substantiating the method for my visual analysis.

Iconology, a subdiscipline of semiotics, serves as both a method and an approach to examining the content and meaning of visual artefacts (Müller 2). Its origins trace back to the 16th century when it was initially employed for categorizing motifs in paintings (2). In the 20th century, art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg revitalized and modernized the method, which was further refined and popularized by art historian Erwin Panofsky (2). Art historian Georges Didi-Huberman refers to Warburg as the “ghostly father of iconology”, acknowledging him as the spiritual father of this discipline (Didi-Huberman). However,

Warburg's significance is soon eclipsed by Panofsky, who offers a clearer and more systematic approach to the study of iconology (Didi-Huberman).

Panofsky, a prominent art historian, conducted research across various disciplines such as medieval and Renaissance art, literature, and film (Kalkanis 10). Throughout his work, Panofsky consistently aimed to establish connections between artworks and their cultural context (10). His ideas have significantly influenced the study of visual culture, with his emphasis on the contextual aspect of artefacts making his theory particularly useful for addressing the research question at hand. Consequently, I will adopt Panofsky's method for the iconological analysis of Westwood's manifesto and look book.

During the emergence of modern iconology, wherein Warburg and Panofsky were key figures, interdisciplinary collaboration was prevalent, leading to the integration of ideas from various disciplines into iconology (Müller 4). While initially focused on the interpretation of paintings within the realm of art history, iconology has evolved into a broader method for analyzing visual content (3). This expansion encompasses all forms of visual artefacts, leaving their artistic quality irrelevant (Müller 8). Iconology, as a modern approach, allows for the examination and interpretation of visual content, specifically focusing on the symbols and images utilized within them (5). By analyzing these elements, we can gain insight into the culture and era in which the visual works were created (5). In essence, iconology involves a critical analysis of visual and textual sources in their original context. It entails gathering and connecting various clues with the aim of getting a picture that is as complete as possible (5). Ultimately, the objective is to understand how individuals or groups attribute meaning to cultural artefacts and how these images, in turn, contribute to the shaping of cultural belief systems within a specific historical context (6).

In 1932, Panofsky divided the iconological process into three steps: (1) pre-iconographic description, (2) iconographic analysis, and (3) iconological interpretation (7).

The pre-iconographic description involves describing the visual object as neutrally as possible, without assigning meaning. It entails creating an inventory of everything observable on the visual artifact, without making connections or interpretations (7). The iconographic analysis involves the synthesis of visual and verbal sources to attribute significance to discrete elements or their combinations within the artefact. Through this process, meanings and clusters of meaning are unveiled. Such analysis aids in deciphering the symbolism, themes, and conveyed messages embedded within the artefact (17). The final step, iconological interpretation, involves a contextualized interpretation, in which the findings of the iconographic analysis are placed in a larger socio-political and cultural context (17). From communication studies and their perspective on iconology, this last step should also entail the production context of an object (15). Understanding the context requires examining whether the artefact was produced in an artistic, journalistic, commercial, political, private or scientific context, who made the artefact, on whose behalf it was made and what the intended purpose of the production was (15). It is also important to recognize the limitations of this context, as these may affect the interpretation and meaning attributed to the artefact (15).

To sum up briefly, in the first two steps, iconography involves identifying visual patterns or symbols (1) and attributing specific meanings to them (2). During the third step, these visual elements are not only examined to gain further insights about the images, but they are also used as sources and evidence to conduct a wider social, political, and cultural analysis of the period in which the artefacts were made and used.

In order to conduct a proper pre-iconographic analysis, it is important to outline the characteristics of the artefacts under examination, namely the manifesto and fashion design. For this reason, the subsequent paragraphs will concentrate specifically on these media. Chapter 2, the Theoretical Framework will be followed by the pre-iconographic analysis of the *Save the World Manifesto* and Westwood's *SS20 Look Book* (Chapter 3).

2.2 – Media and Materiality

Before addressing the characteristics of the media relevant to this research, namely the manifesto and fashion design, I will first introduce the meaning of the concept of medium and the concept of materiality. Plate et al, Professors of Arts and Cultural Studies at Radboud University, argue in their book *Materials of Culture* for a material-centered perspective on culture, made more relevant not least by the need for sustainability in times of climate change (Plate et al. 15). Given that Westwood exploits the materiality of her artefacts to communicate her sustainable ideology, I will briefly elaborate on materiality in this paragraph.

The online Cambridge dictionary defines the concept of medium as “a method or way of expressing something” (Cambridge University Press). According to Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirmmacher, professors in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Linnaeus University, a medium is a mediator that enables communication across time and space (9). They describe media as the material aspects of human communication (9). Bruhn and Schirmmacher believe that communication depends on material objects: on physical phenomena that can be perceived with senses (10). The medium can hence be seen as the carrier and materiality as the substance of which this carrier is made. Bruhn and Schirmmacher argue that an endless array of material objects can act as medium (9) and that the choice of medium determines what and how we communicate (10). Martin Brückner, Professor of Material Culture Studies, points to the recognition of the role of objects in representational processes, arguing that objects are not only physical entities but also have cultural meaning and are part of broader systems of signification (496). This approach argues that objects and people mutually influence and interact within social and cultural structures. As an example, Bruhn and Schirmmacher cite fashion as a medium that communicates ideas about the human body and about social norms (Bruhn and Schirmmacher 9). Kristina Shin, Professor in Fashion and

Design, likewise writes that both consumers and designers employ fashion as a nonverbal means of communication (Shin 131).

According to Bruhn and Schirmacher, our understanding of media is shaped by its material, sensory, spatio-temporal and semiotic aspects (8). This theory emphasizes the significant role of the materiality of media in conveying messages. Artefacts, i.e. tactile objects as for example art and clothing, are according to Agnès Rocamora, Professor in Social and Cultural Studies, and Anneke Smelik, Professor Emerita of Visual Culture, not only constructed and mediated through signs, but also through their materiality (Rocamora and Smelik 27). They state that the relationship between people and objects is socially and culturally dependent (27). Within a material culture, humans mediate social relations with objects, giving meaning to matter (27). In other words, material has value through social interaction (28). Rocamora and Smelik argue that an “emphasis on materiality does not preclude an understanding of matter as symbolic; rather, it shows that there is a constant negotiation between the material and the symbolic” (28). This theory is relevant to this MA thesis, as Westwood carefully selects and crafts materials that are important to her as an artist to effectively convey her message. For this reason, I will pay attention to both material use, social context, and the symbols within the artefacts of my study.

2.3 - Manifestos

Remarkably, Westwood is widely discussed in manifesto literature, but academic analysis of the *Save the World Manifesto* has not been forthcoming. In order to conduct a thorough analysis of this manifesto, it is necessary to first examine the medium of the manifesto itself, and its role in relation to the fashion industry. In this paragraph I will therefore be outlining the defining features of this medium. As became clear in the paragraph on materiality, not only the materiality and symbolism of the medium itself, but also the

context in which it is located is important (Bruhn and Schirrmacher 8). For this reason, I will not just set out the medium manifesto based on material characteristics, but will place it in a broader historical and socio-cultural context. Most important to bear in mind when reading this theory is the following quote: “Where there is a need for dramatic change, there is a need for manifestos” (Hanna and Ashby).

Julian Hanna, Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, and Simone Ashby, Assistant Professor in New Media Design, establish a basic definition for the manifesto, describing the medium as “a public declaration issued by a group or individual that declares certain aims or principles” (Hanna and Ashby, “Reflections” 24). They consider the manifesto a “tool for change” (24) and a “clear and decisive way” to convey a signal message, which makes it an attractive tool in today’s noise-filled world (27). Hence, the social aspect plays a crucial role in the emergence and existence of the manifesto.

The manifesto has its origins in Futurism. The publication of *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* in 1909 marked the beginning of the rise of the manifesto, which started in Europe but slowly spread worldwide, as an indispensable tool for communicating ideas for avant-garde movements, such as dadaism and surrealism (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”). Futurism taught people how manifestos worked and by mid-century it was a global genre and “calling card for all kinds of ‘isms’” (Hanna and Ashby). As a result of this background the manifesto is strongly associated with a violent attitude familiar from Futurist manifestos (Hanna and Ashby). Although the manifesto has been misused as a war cry in the past, Hanna and Ashby believe it is in the medium’s power to serve as a warning in the future (Hanna and Ashby). For them, the manifesto is a communication tool suited to the challenges of the future as it is able to outline new visions and raise important issues (Hanna and Ashby).

It can be affirmed that several actors in the fashion industry agree on this potential. Take for example one of the world's most famous trend forecasters Lidewij Edelkoort, who in

2015 published the *Anti-Fashion Manifesto*, calling for a rejection of fast fashion and consumerism in favor of environmentally conscious design (De Perthuis 664). The association between fashion and the manifesto is certainly not new. In fact, fashion and manifestos have been in close relationship since the early 20th century, when futuristic artists produced proclamations about clothing (664). Contemporary fashion manifestos, such as those by Lidewij Edelkoort and by Vivienne Westwood, differ from the fashion manifestos of Futurism in terms of the context and ideology that shaped their creation. Fashion manifestos of the early 20th century viewed mass production and modern consumerism, then in its infancy, from an entirely different light. Fast fashion is characterized by its rapid pace of change (Maynard 542; Wilson 3), and Futurists saw potential in this built-in change, as it demanded constant creativity from the artist, provided novelty to the consumer and served as a driver of the national economy (664). Today, the same topics are the ones that are frequently featured in the fashion manifesto, although illuminated from their problematic aspects. Nevertheless, the fashion manifesto once served and still serves as a medium for resistance (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”).

With the aim of bringing about social change, the manifesto has a number of specific material characteristics. The design of manifestos makes them attractive and accessible to both their readers and their creators alike (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”). Since manifestos desire to change the future, they are infused with utopian hopes and desires, making them “seductive and charming” (Hanna and Ashby). A manifesto is a multimodal medium, mixing text and images (Hanna and Ashby). Manifestos often have clear language with an enthusiastic tone, use irony, reprimands, promises, calls to action, aggressive verbs, repetitions, and varying sentence structures (Hanna and Ashby). Hanna explains that manifestos borrow characteristics from advertising, causing manifestos to be short, visual and full of slogans (Hanna, “Manifesto Form” 52). He posits the Italian Futurists and the Russian

Constructivists to be among the first to experiment with typography to create a form that suited their explosive message, with other artistic movements such as Dada and Fluxus following this trend (59). Moreover, words and sentences were frequently written entirely in capital letters to intensify the emotional impact of the text (59). Later movements such as the Situationists also started using visual support in the form of, for example, comic strips and photo collages to get their message across and win over potential converts (60). Still today visual features of the manifesto range from “bright colors to oversized fonts to bold illustrations or elements of collage” (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”). Hanna states that the average number of pages of a manifesto is about one to two (Hanna, “Manifesto Form” 56): one introductory page and a page with the (numbered) principles (56-57).

However, Hanna does stress that a manifesto is often far from reasonable or mediocre (Hanna, “Manifesto Form” 55). He refers here to the fact that a manifesto has certain medium-specific characteristics, but just as often deviates from these, as a manifesto is usually deliberately provocative or exceptional. He claims that the most important medium-specific feature is that a manifesto should be presented in an impressive and powerful way: “With a bang, as it were, not a whimper” (55). By this he means that the purpose of a manifesto is to convey the message quickly and forcefully, without relying on reasoned arguments (55). Hanna argues that the manifesto is a performative genre in which the creator's physical activity and expressiveness play an important role (61). Hanna and Ashby believe that writing a manifesto therefore requires an adventurous spirit (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”). Similarly, De Perthuis, Lecturer in Design and Visual Communications, writes that a manifesto is “a short, striking gesture that mixes creative posturing and artistic vision” (De Perthuis 663).

Since a manifesto can serve as a mask for its creator, the medium offers liberation from “cautious speech”, allowing the maker to dare to express things that would normally be

excluded by conventions (Hanna and Ashby, “With All Caveats”). Hanna and Ashby quote the work of Hertz (Professor of Design), who states that manifestos “make progressive arguments and facts more legible and engaging to a wide and diverse audience” (Hanna and Ashby). The accessibility of the medium has increased even further with the rise of the internet: the manifesto has become a global and popular phenomenon that has now found its way into mainstream culture, where it is used in advertising, activism, and social media (Hanna and Ashby). In these environments, manifestos flourish and constantly mutate (Hanna and Ashby). The manifesto as a medium has gained renewed relevance over the past decade, as Hanna and Ashby argue “there has been a rise in manifesto writing online as well as on the streets” (Hanna and Ashby). They posit that the fluctuations in the popularity of manifesto writing are associated with societal occurrences: the more uncertainty, chaos or fear prevails in society, the more manifestos will be written (Hanna and Ashby). Manifestos represent the presence of active concern for the future and help resist dominant narratives and propose new ones (Hanna and Ashby). They are written both to understand the present and past, and to influence the future (Hanna and Ashby).

2.4 – Style Activism: Communication through Fashion

In this MA thesis, I examine not only the *Save the World Manifesto* but also give consideration to Westwood's *SS20 Look Book*, which requires an exploration of fashion as a medium. In this paragraph, I discuss how fashion is used to communicate an activist message. Similar to the analysis of the manifesto, for fashion as a means of communication, I will provide an introduction on the material characteristics as well as the broader historical and socio-cultural context.

Jessica Bugg, Professor of Fashion, argues that there are top designers who are going against the commercial nature of today's fashion industry, taking an approach to fashion that

is more in line with their personal philosophies (16). Consequently, their designs are increasingly created to express concepts rather than garments with functionality (12).

Designers are taking a more conceptual and process-oriented approach (12), which seems to be moving fashion towards art as a medium. Medium here refers to fashion being used as a creative and expressive tool, moving beyond functional clothing to become an art form.

Designers now approach fashion with a conceptual and process-oriented mindset, treating it as an artistic material. They are embracing an interdisciplinary approach to fashion that is also evident on the catwalk, transforming fashion shows from a traditional, commercial and private event into a public spectacle with elements of theater and performance art (12). For the modern catwalk, stories, visualizations of characters and scenarios are created that relate to the ideas behind the collections (12). The realm of fashion is progressively assuming the role of a platform for conveying messages and ideas. The fashion industry has showcased heightened inclusivity by establishing an environment that enables designers to communicate radical messages through clothing. The materiality of fashion is exploited to communicate ideologies.

As already briefly touched upon, fashion can serve as a medium for social phenomena (Bruhn and Schirmacher 9). Likewise, Benda (Head of Costume Design in the School of Theatre at California Institute of The Arts) suggests that design can serve as a guiding tool to comprehend turbulent times (Benda 15). By representing the world and conveying deeper meanings through visual artifacts, designers provide insight into ideas in a specific spatio-temporal context (15). An example of such a social phenomenon in a spatio-temporal context is the dissatisfaction within society towards the established order, as Benda writes that throughout history, fashion has played a crucial role in protest movements (12).

Benda seems to draw on the theory of clothing historian Carol Tulloch, who calls the use of fashion to promote social change “style activism” (Benda 198). For as long as protest

movements and activists have been active, they have used art and design to get their message across (Benda 12). Clothing, for Benda, is an integral part of protest (8), as design has the capacity to symbolize discontent (12). Fashion design, according to Benda, can provide dissenters with a strong and nonverbal means to get their message across (16). Accordingly, she states that “Activists have used the whole spectrum of fashion, whether everyday dress and accessories, haute couture, or avant-garde dress, to further their causes” (16). Fashion is very often used “as a catalyst in the struggle for social change” (16). Fashion's ability to visually disrupt conventions and norms makes it a useful tool for rebellion (62). In addition, fashion can be easily disseminated and copied, both in the form of the item itself and through imagery, to keep rebellion alive and spread further (12). Benda writes that the twentieth century consisted of endless social and cultural changes (72), supported by the creations of designers (72), who she argues enjoy breaking rules (62). She specifically cites Westwood as an example of a fashion designer who uses her designs to speak out against the establishment, calling her a master of confrontational dressing. Starting with her design vision for the Punk movement and continuing into her very last years of life, in which she publicly championed social justice and opposed climate change (51). To summarize, fashion can be seen as an ally during major cultural, social and political protests and changes (80).

To achieve these goals of change, designers exploit the materiality of the medium of fashion, as material objects have the ability to fuse social, cultural and individual meaning into something tangible (Benda 162). Fabric, for example, has always been a means of conveying a message in the form of printed, embroidered, or dyed slogans, images or symbols (96). When this message is in the service of political protest and propaganda, it is called propaganda fabric - and can offer an insight into the historical context and its dreams and beliefs (96). Color, besides fabric, is also an important material aspect of fashion through which messages are conveyed. In 1914, Wassily Kandinsky (artist and art theoretician)

declared, “Color is a force that directly affects the soul” (101). Benda writes that humans have an emotional relationship with color and that many cultures have an ancient connection with color symbolism, making it employable for rebellion and protest (Benda 102). Benda places color between science and creativity as it evokes emotions and inspires the mind, but has been developed by chemistry and industry (102). Technology and innovations have made color available to anyone who wants to use it for a greater purpose: communicating an (activist) message (102).

Altogether, non-verbal symbols and short slogans can provide a crucial toolbox for activists when starting a new movement (Benda 198). Haynes, graduate art student at New York University, explains that “In understanding fashion as means of communication and articles of clothing encrypted with powerful messages shaped by social and historical value systems, scholars define fashion activism as the visual representation of social political beliefs and ideology to achieve change” (Haynes). Thus, in Westwood’s work, I will also pay attention to the prints, embroideries, and colors of her designs in order to expose her beliefs and philosophies.

Concluding from the above paragraphs, I would argue that both manifesto and fashion design are media deployed to proclaim a message advocating social change. Iconology offers me as a researcher a method to analyze these media and thereby extract the message while taking into account the materiality and the context (environment and zeitgeist) of the artefacts.

2.5 – Posthumanism

In this paragraph, which builds in part on the concept of materiality discussed in paragraph 2.2, I will briefly introduce the concept of Posthumanism, which will be relevant for Chapter 5, the iconological interpretation of this thesis.

Professor Emerita of Visual Culture, Anneke Smelik, places Posthumanism within the theoretical framework of New Materialism, which holds to the notion that things, objects, art, fashion and even people are made of matter, and that these matters are intertwined with both the human and nonhuman (Smelik 60). Smelik's approach offers a means of placing all matter on equal footing. Posthumanism, and related concepts such as the non-human and the Anthropocene, broaden the understanding of the multiple agencies and relationships that exist within our world (Forlano 17). Recognizing humanity's negative impact on the planet creates the need to decentralize the human perspective (Smelik 58). New Materialism seeks to transcend and blur dualisms, such as those between the biological and the technological, the human and the nonhuman, and the material and the immaterial (Smelik 60). By decentralizing the human and blurring traditional boundaries, Western thinking, dominant since the Enlightenment, is being challenged (Forlano 17).

Posthumanism has a clear link to Actor Network Theory, which advocates a symmetrical relationship between humans and objects that obliterates the common notion of animate human actors and inanimate passive things (Dankert). Posthumanism, challenges us to think about the environment as an animate actor in our world, rather than merely as an external force acting on us. The posthuman lens critiques the prioritization of economic growth over sustainability: that is, the interests of humans over the interests of nature. In its essence, a posthuman perspective proposes a non-anthropocentric view in which the human subject is no longer the center of attention (Smelik 58), and it places all matter, including nature, art, fashion, and people, within a complex network of interconnected human and nonhuman actors (58). It is interesting to relate this thinking to Westwood's premise, in which she argues that all problems on earth are interconnected, and that climate change is being treated as an isolated problem, when in reality all problems - ranging from propaganda and capitalism to climate change - are interconnected (Westwood, Sept. 23, 2022).

3 - Pre-iconographic Description

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive pre-iconographic analysis of Vivienne Westwood's manifesto *Save the World* (3.1) and her *SS20 Look Book* (3.2). The pre-iconographic description involves neutrally describing the visual object without attributing any predetermined meaning to it. By offering an objective description devoid of initial interpretations, it enables a meticulous understanding of the visual elements and their potential significances in subsequent stages of the analysis.

3.1 - Pre-iconographic Description of the *Save the World Manifesto*

The *Save the World Manifesto* is a digital booklet consisting of twelve pages, accessible via Westwood's website called *Climate Revolution*. Eight of the twelve pages are designed to resemble playing cards. These eight pages have a black rectangular frame with rounded corners and have card symbols in the top left and bottom right corners, ranging from clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades and often with a number attached. The remaining four pages contain handwritten and typed text, supported by various symbols.

In the pre-iconographic description, I will include all visual elements that appear on the playing card pages or on the textual pages. By the visual elements, I refer to symbolic elements, pictures, shapes, and composition. In addition, I will shortly identify the textual elements to be discovered, without elaborating on them in terms of content. I will mostly focus on the fonts in which the texts were written. Nevertheless, the texts will be used during the iconographic analysis and subsequent iconological interpretation to decipher the meaning behind the images and symbols in the manifesto. In order to better understand the text that pertains to the pages of the manifesto, Figures 1 to 5 can be consulted as a visual aid.

The first page of the manifesto is a playing card page with a black outline. The colors green, black, and red play an important role in this composition. There is a red diamond

symbol in the top left corner and a red heart outlined in black in the bottom right corner. A dollar sign written in black emerges through the red wax crayon-drawn diamond symbol. The composition - consisting of symbols, written text and a photograph - partially overlaps, making certain elements more difficult to read. The symbols appear to have been drawn with wax crayons and the written text with a marker or paintbrush. In the center is a black-and-white oval-shaped picture of a child. On the forehead of the girl in the picture is an ✱ symbol drawn in pencil. The girl in the picture seems to be Vivienne Westwood in her younger years and has a stern look. The sheet has a page-filling spiral shape drawn with a green wax crayon. The direction of the spiral is indicated by arrows drawn with a black wax crayon. Furthermore, a phallic symbol has been drawn in the top right corner with a black wax crayon. The page also includes textual elements. Written in black marker, at the top of the page is the word “Hope” followed by “One World”, and at the bottom, upside down, are the words “Terror” and “Rent”. The text at the top of the page is overwritten with the word “BUY” in red block letters and a red arrow pointing diagonally down through it. Similarly, the text at the bottom of the page is overwritten with the word “LESS”.



Figure 1 - Pages 1 to 3 Save the World

Page two is also a playing cards page, in which the colors green and red stand out the most. The page has a heart symbol in both, the top left and bottom right corners, along with the number 7, drawn in red marker or crayon. The playing card has a page-filling ♠ symbol written on it in red marker, which is centered on the page. The background of the page is filled with a green typed text, faded along the edges, that reads: “What's good for the planet, is good for the economy”.

The third page of the manifesto is again a playing card-like page. This time with a diamond symbol and the letter K of king typed in red in the top left and bottom right corners. The most prominent colors in the composition are yellow and red. A black wax crayon was used to draw a dollar sign with extra curves through the diamond symbols. The composition has handwritten elements that read: “The trick is what they don't report” and “1984 Orwell propaganda is mini true”. Furthermore, the page contains a drawing of a red cassette recorder with the text “IGNORAN—” in the screen. In the upper right corner is a yellow & red explosion cloud with a text typed in dark blue over it: “The best way to pacify the General Public and keep them complaisant is to limit information & then to encourage ‘free & impartial’ discussion within that box”.

Page four is again a playing card. The predominant color on the page is green, joined by black and lilac. The card has the club symbol along with the number 4 in the upper left and lower right corners, written with black fountain pen. At the top of the page is written “Cool Earth” in the same pen, at the bottom is

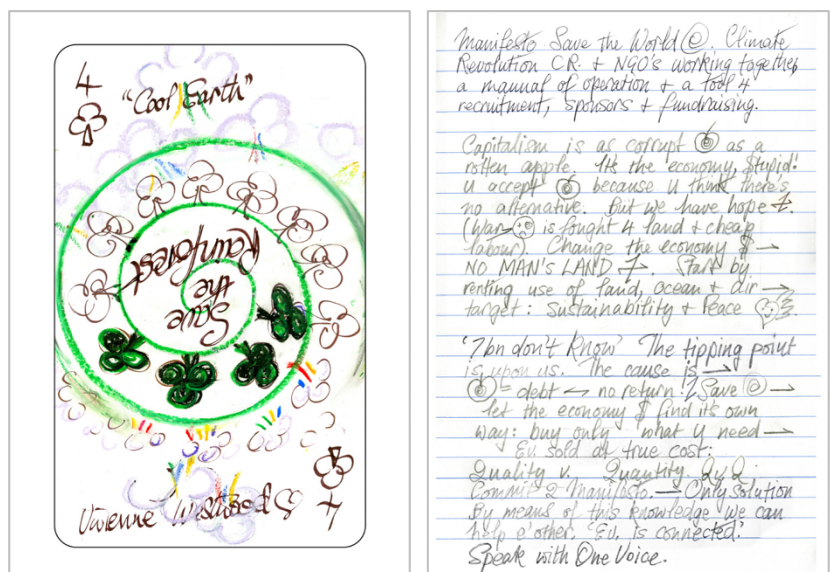


Figure 2 - Pages 4 and 5 Save the World

“Vivienne Westwood” with a heart drawn behind it, and in the center of the playing card is written upside down the text “Save the Rainforest”. The page is filled with a spiral shape drawn in green wax crayon. About seventeen black clovers are drawn on this spiral shape, with the four clovers closest to the center of the spiral colored green. The clovers placed further to the end of the spiral shape have blue-, green-, red- and yellow-colored stems. Around the spiral are more clovers drawn with a wax crayon in the color lilac, which also have colored stems.

The fifth page is one of textual pages and is filled with text written on ruled paper, partly in pen and partly in pencil. No colors other than black and white are used for this page. The symbols shown on this page are the spiral symbol; both inside an apple and stand-alone, the ✱ symbol, a 7 symbol, a sad emoticon with one spiral-symbol eye, and a heart with a happy face and a wing. As I see it, the main message of the text on this page is that the economy must be changed to a more sustainable approach in order to save the world.

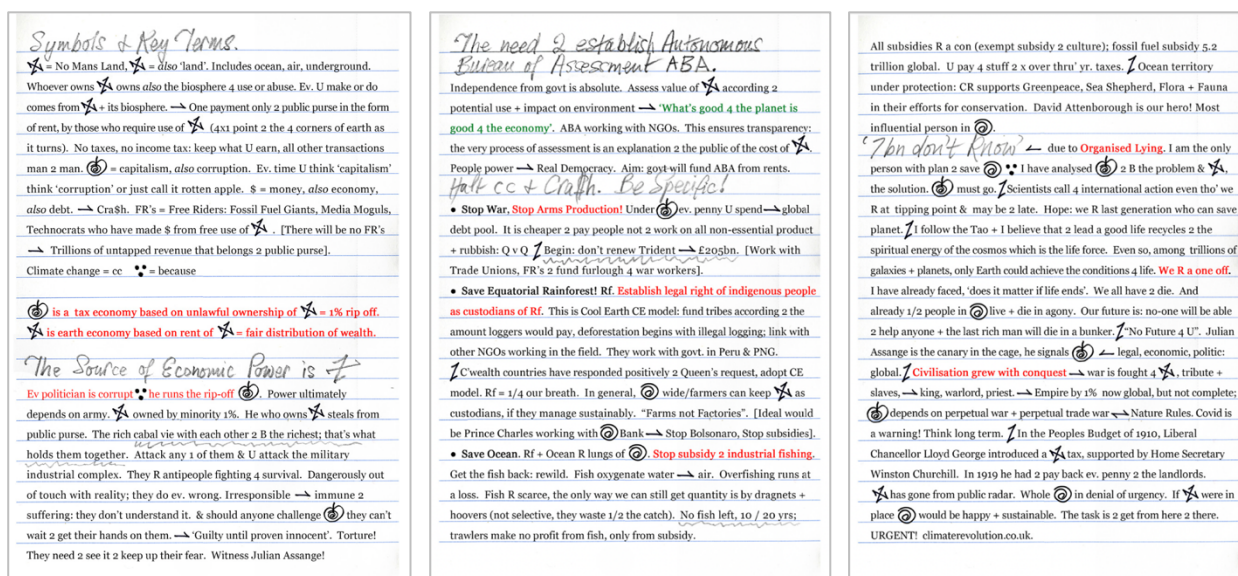


Figure 3 - Pages 6 to 8 Save the World

Since pages six, seven and eight seem to form a running text, I will discuss these pages together. Like page five, pages six to eight are textual pages, the difference being that most of the text on these pages is typed. Only the headings above the texts are written in handwriting.

A red or a green font has been used to highlight important phrases. The background of the pages is ruled paper. Furthermore, Westwood discusses a number of symbols from the manifesto and their meaning, such as the ✦ symbol, the spiral, the apple with the spiral symbol inside, the 7 symbol, and three dots forming a triangle.



Figure 4 - Pages 9 and 10 Save the World

Page nine is again a playing card page. The dominant colors on the page are red, black, and dark blue/purple. In both the top left and bottom right corners is an uncolored diamond symbol drawn with a black marker or crayon, with a four written next to it. The page contains a full-page spiral symbol drawn with a dark blue/purple wax crayon. Next to the diamond symbol in the top left corner is an additional diamond symbol drawn with a red wax crayon. This symbol is drawn repeatedly in different sizes on top of the spiral symbol. At the bottom of the page is “Subsidies to industrial fishing” and “or/no fish -->” written with a black marker. Through “subsidies” a cross is drawn. Next to these writings is a skull with a hook and a trident underneath, forming a cross. The trident depicts an aquatic animal.

Page ten is also a playing card, but unlike the previous playing cards, it does not have a white background. The card is filled with a black-and-white photograph of Vivienne

Westwood in her younger days. In the picture, Westwood has relatively short hair standing upright on her head, and she is darkly made-up. Her outfit is printed with the text “Destroy”, a swastika and a cross with Jesus depicted upside down. In the top left corner and bottom right corner are clover-like figures accompanied by a Roman ten drawn with a white wax crayon. Centered in the middle of the page is written “ME PUNK” with the same crayon. At the top of the page is written in white typed block letters “Save the World - - Save th...” and at the bottom in the same font “Only Person with a Plan”. The main shades of this page are black and white.



Figure 5 - Pages 11 and 12 Save the World

Page eleven, a playing card page, has a dark grey/black background with red typed text on it, faded along the edges, that reads: “What’s bad for the planet is bad for the economy”. The message of the text therefore matches the text on the second page of the manifesto. However, the most striking colors on this page differ from the green-red colors of page two and are black, red and white. In the upper-left and lower-right corners are non-filled diamond symbols drawn with a white crayon, with a seven next to it. In the center, the same white wax crayon is used to draw an apple with a spiral symbol inside.

On page twelve, which serves as the final page of the manifesto, the design resembles a playing card once again. Unlike the previous pages, there is no immediately recognizable playing card symbol in the top left and bottom right corners. Instead, in both corners is a triangle drawn with black wax crayon. However, because of the arcs attached to this triangle, the symbol does resemble the clubs or spades known from a deck of playing cards. A typed and bold five is placed on top of the triangles. The world map is printed on the background of the playing card, with a division of different regions by giving them red and green colors. Printed on top of this world map is a black skull surrounded by the text: “Too fast to live, too young to die”. In the top right corner of the playing card, +5° is typed in red. At the top of the playing card is written in black pencil “7bn people don't know?”, and at the bottom of the playing card is written “1 billion people alive end C21st, after that [drawn skull] by methane bombs”. At the very bottom of the page is written in red marker “Uninhabitable Land”, which is underlined. The most prominent colors on this page are black, red and green.

Based on the pre-iconographic description given, there are a number of recurring visual elements in the *Save the World Manifesto* that I will explore in more detail in the iconographic analysis. First, I will look for the significance of the use of playing cards. I will also further explore the symbolic meaning of the most prominent colors: green and red. Furthermore, there are several symbols present in the manifesto that are used repeatedly and require further explanation. I will also seek an explanation for the photographs of Westwood herself. Finally, I am curious about the reason for the handwritten and hand-drawn parts of the manifesto applied in a digital document.

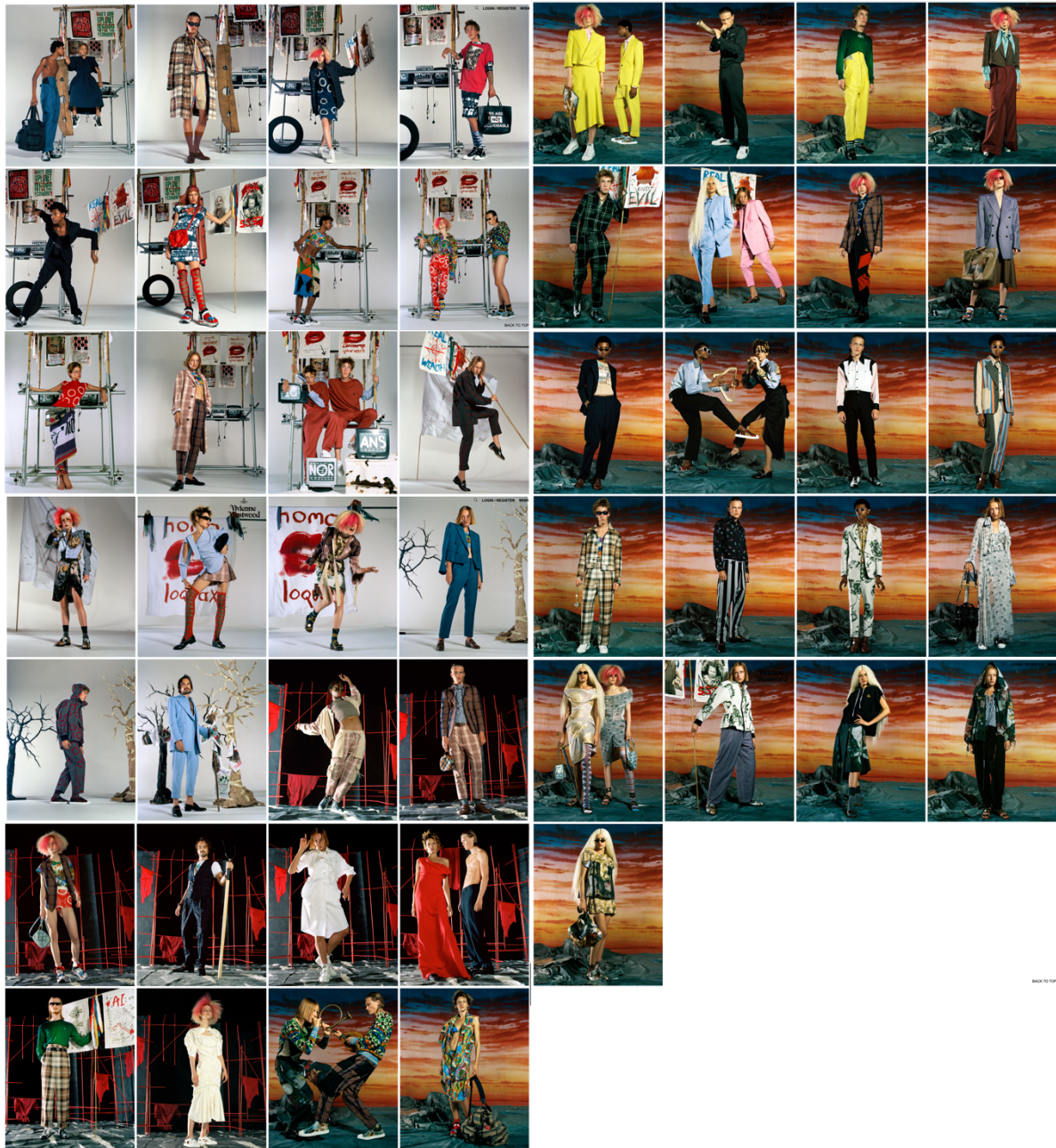


Figure 6 - SS20 Look Book Vivienne Westwood

3.2 - Pre-iconographic Description of Westwood's SS20 Look Book

For the pre-iconographic description of the look book, I compile a comprehensive inventory of all visually observable elements in the artifact, including an analysis of the backgrounds and models. I will then pay particular attention to the colors, prints, patterns, and textures used, as well as the shapes and silhouettes of the garments, and analyze how these details enhance the general look and message of the collection. By thoroughly examining the collection, I will attempt to identify its recurring visual elements. During the next stage, the

iconographic analysis, I will then explore whether there is any particular meaning to be derived from these findings. In order to better understand the text that discusses the *SS20 Look Book*, Figure 6 can be consulted as a visual aid.

3.2.1 - Shoot backgrounds and models

I believe that the *SS20 Look Book* background has a definite impact on the evoked atmosphere. The photos for the look book were shot with three different backgrounds. The link between the manifesto and the *SS20* collection is immediately apparent as pages from the manifesto were used in the photo shoot's background of a number of the images.

The first eighteen images have a white-gray background, reminiscent of a standard photo studio setting. In image 1 to 11, there is a scaffold in front of this background that changes slightly for each photo. The scaffolding consists of a metal frame with pages of the manifesto hung from it. Some images show a pillory, a car tire or old television screens, with "ignorans" written on them, attached to the scaffold. Image twelve to fifteen have the same white-gray studio background, but instead of the scaffolding, the background is filled with flags that have protest-style designs. Image sixteen to eighteen again have the white-gray background, but in front of this background are crafted dead trees, with placards of manifesto pages on some of them.

The second series has eight images and features a black background with an uneven grid of red branches and canvases in front of it. Of which a single image (the second last) shows two canvases, suspended from the grid, that have similarities to the playing card pages from the manifesto. The third and last sequence, consisting of 23 images, has a background resembling a sky during a thunderstorm. The color of the sky transitions from top to bottom, from dark gray to orange-red. On the ground, a rocky landscape was created with cloths.

The models mostly have short and straight bob-length hair or short-spiked hairstyles. One of the models has pink strands in her hair and one of the models has exceptionally long blonde hair, which is styled with a waffle iron. Initially, the models in all three sequences seem to have a stoic, emotionless look on their faces. But on second viewing, I also see a determined expression, through the focused, somewhat squeezed, and piercing gaze. As for their posture, they stand in active, slightly menacing poses and come across as confident. From these physical expressions, it is to be expected that they have something to say and that the message will be serious and impactful. Judging from the backgrounds and the models, I would call the atmosphere of the photo shoot stark. It feels like something is off and like there could be a dispute at any moment.

3.2.2 – Garments

There are a number of textile patterns in the collection that have been used repeatedly, such as checkered prints, striped fabrics, floral patterns, traditional ethnic-looking prints and tie dye-like fabrics. In a number of looks, the fabrics are torn or layered. The colors blue and red seem to dominate, but black, white, green, yellow, pink and beige are also frequently used. There are a few specific garments that are prevalent in the collection, such as the suit for both men and women, as well as the waistcoat, shirts and (peg) trousers, some with a high waist. The dresses in the collection are mostly layered or ripped. Additionally, the collection includes several looks with knee-length socks with checked patterns or stripes on them. Furthermore, I see some references to streetwear, such as the trainers, hoodies and long-sleeves.

4 - Iconographic Analysis

This chapter concerns the iconographic analysis of the *Save the World Manifesto* and the *SS20 Look Book*, revealing (clusters of) meaning hidden in the artefacts. Since both artefacts are so rich in visual information, I am well aware of the fact that this richness makes it unfeasible to uncover all meanings and references. Therefore, that is not the aim of my study; instead, I am mainly trying to analyze the clusters of meanings. In so doing, I denote not only the connections between elements of the stand-alone artefacts, but also the connections between the two artefacts. My aim while exploring the underlying themes and messages conveyed through the artifacts is to shed light on Vivienne Westwood's intended meaning.

4.1 - Fashion as Cultural Resistance

Vivienne Westwood's Journey from Punk to New Romanticism

The theoretical framework of my research revealed the relevance of the production context of a work, as the production context provides insight into the intentions and ideas of the artist. For instance, a politically turbulent period or social situation at a particular time may influence an artist's choices. Artists are influenced by the world around them, as well as by other artists, styles and movements of the past. By analyzing the production context, we can understand the value and impact of the work within that specific time and place and understand it. First, since Creative Industries is the name of the program for which I am writing this MA thesis, it is relevant to mention that Westwood operated in the field of creative industries and therefore the production of her works took place in this production context. I would define the creative industries as an environment or sector that includes all areas involving activities based on cultural values or other artistic individual or collective creative expressions (European Commission). Furthermore, both the manifesto and the look

book contain numerous references to Westwood's earlier involvement and designs for the Punk and New Romanticism movements. To substantiate this, I will provide a concise description of the period of her career from which these designs and ideologies emerged. Hence, the analysis mainly concerns the artistic and political production context of Westwood's works. I will then use this information to assign meaning to the manifesto and the look book.

Punk, as often seen in the emergence of subcultures, surfaced in the late 1970s as a response to the prevailing historical context (Guerra and Figueredo 118). During this decade, a substantial portion of the Western world experienced economic stagnation, marking the conclusion of the post-Second World War economic expansion. The Punk movement arose in reaction to a prevailing sense of powerlessness stemming from this period of profound crisis (118). Furthermore, Punk was fueled by the Hippie movement's inability to achieve radical change (119). Their new form of resistance focused on reevaluating the existing social structure and inciting social change (120). To break through established structures, the youth had to discover new cultural patterns (119). Punk emphasized musical experimentation, challenging the status quo, and creating unrest as a means to express youth dissatisfaction (118). Punks deployed style for subversion, characteristic of Postmodernism that aimed to replace an unified idiom with a diverse range of competing ideas and styles (Atkinson 94). Resistance was a significant aspect of the Punk movement, particularly evident in the way its members dressed (Guerra and Figueredo 115). Just as the Hippies had created their own clothing style, so did the Punks (Steele 287). However, they removed the peaceful and loving approach of Hippie culture and created an aggressive and confrontational style (287). Clothing served as a medium for youth to convey their ideology (Guerra and Figueredo 115). Paula Guerra, Professor of Sociology, and Henrique Grimaldi Figueredo, PhD student in Sociology, argue that through the process of styling, which involves a deliberate

recontextualization of objects, subcultures communicate their messages (117). In other words, the Punk style was a visual response to the socio-economic turmoil experienced by the lower classes (123).

Westwood gained recognition as designer during the Punk era, as she was a prominent figure in the development of Punk style and fashion (120). Westwood was inspired by the libertarian ideology of the 1960s and influenced by the Situationist International movement, that sought to create a state of continuous social revolution through art (124, 125). The Situationists utilized manifestos and flyers to express their uprisings and ideals (124). They advocated that art should not be limited to aesthetic features and technical skills, but believed that art should be a means of constant creation and constant reconstruction (124-125). However, the Situationists were not Westwood's only source of inspiration. The Dada movement, which used disruption and tumult as a promotional tool, also served as an inspiration for the fashion designer (126). The Dadaists transformed ordinary objects into works of art (127), a visual characteristic also found in Punk art. In addition, Dadaist John Heartfield pioneered the collage technique, in which different visuals were merged into a newly composed whole, a graphic style also associated with Punk (127). With the revolting idealism stemming from the Situationist and Dada movements, Westwood and her romantic and business partner Malcolm McLaren opened a shop called *Let it Rock* in the back room of *Paradise Garage* on London's King's Road, in 1971 (True Story Documentary Channel 04:16-37). The Teddy boy style served as the biggest fashion inspiration for Westwood and McLaren, a theme that reappeared throughout Westwood's entire career in her designs (04:02-14). The aim of the store was to recreate the 1950s Britishness, with the Zoot suit as a prominent clothing item (04:38-58). As the inspiration behind McLaren and Westwood's work and the proposed aesthetics changed, the shop was also transformed, renamed, and redecorated (05:03-16). In 1972, the store's name changed to *Too Fast to Live, Too Young to*

Die, and the fashion aesthetic shifted towards biker jackets and leather garments (04:45-05:02). In 1974, the shop underwent another restyling and was named *Sex*, marking a shift towards bondage wear in fashion (05:18-27). In 1976, it was renamed *Seditionaries*, named after a play on words between seduction, revolution and possibly also sedition, inspired by McLaren and Westwood's desire to entice people into revolt (05:28-44). For the clothing during the *Seditionaries* period Westwood and McLaren drew inspiration from American artist Richard Hell, whom McLaren admired, known for his DIY aesthetic and ripped t-shirts (05:58-06:14). *Seditionaries* became the Mecca for Punks and created the iconic archetype of Punk fashion, featuring shirts adorned with obscenities, mohair jumpers, bondage pants, and extreme spiked and brightly colored hair (06:22-50). Ultimately, McLaren and Westwood's store, particularly in its *Seditionaries* period, defined the Punk style by breaking taboos and presenting clothing that challenged conventional perspectives (Guerra and Figueredo 128). As clothing served as a medium for youth to convey their ideology, Westwood and McLaren created a scene in which young people could free themselves from the weight of authorities (130). They provided a space for alternative voices and expression. Change was brought about by giving youth the opportunity to criticize established power structures and social conventions (136). However, Guerra and Figueredo argue that this created space is not continuous but needs to be continuously created and recreated (137).

During the years she and McLaren ran the shop, Westwood developed herself as a fashion designer, redesigning and creating garments in which merging elements featured prominently (True Story Documentary Channel 06:51-07:10). Her designs emerged from a process of unpicking and studying garments and their patterns, then replicating them into new garments of composite styles (Almila and Inglis 391). Westwood claimed to be doing something that nobody had ever done before by examining the cuts of historical clothing, such as Janet Arnold's (clothing historian and costume designer) pattern books, and reinterpreting

and twisting them into something relevant for the 20th century (True Story Documentary Channel 07:42-08:04). As Westwood herself stated, “I made clothes that looked like ruins. I created something new by destroying the old one” (Westwood and Kelly 160). Westwood was a creative scavenger, skillfully integrating past designs and styles into the present, as she combined reproductions of historical garments with the contemporary (Almila and Inglis 391). In her designs, Westwood materialized the spirit of the era through deconstruction and chaos, resisting the stability of social and cultural structures (Guerra and Figueredo 130). For her, clothing was a medium in which fashion, art, and politics could converge (Westwood and Kelly 173).

The final transformation of Westwood and McLaren's store occurred when the shop became *World's End* in 1981, with a focus on looking back, nostalgia, and drawing inspiration from Romantic-era fashion with a strong emphasis on the 17th and 18th centuries (True Story Documentary Channel 07:21-40). The early 1980s witnessed a shift from the Punk movement to New Romanticism, and similar to during the rise of Punk, Westwood was “really attuned and part of the Zeitgeist” and “moving with the tides” (08:45-09:01). New Romanticism emerged as a distinct movement within New Wave culture, and among the subcultures that originated from the Punk movement (Rimmer). The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 was followed by a period of rising unemployment and bleak prospects for the future (Welsford). New Romanticism, however, offered people a way to channel their frustrations, sought beauty in everything, and thrived on extravagance (Welford). New Romanticism was characterized by an aesthetic that stemmed, as described by music magazine writer Dave Rimmer, from the fact that “After Punk, pop culture wanted to dazzle again” (Rimmer). Flamboyant and eccentric fashion took center stage and New Romantics drew inspiration from various historical eras such as English Romanticism and Russian Constructivism (Welsford). The movement promoted an androgynous aesthetic and encouraged embracing

the unconventional and bizarre (Welsford). In Westwood's designs during this period, you can see elements such as overt frilly cuffs (09:02-06), and Westwood experimented with clothing, exploring notions of tailoring, and again combining garments (09:42-58). For Westwood and McLaren's 1981 Pirate collection, the pair looked "at plundering history and the Third World" (House of Westwood, "The Early Years"). Westwood drew inspiration from traditional ethnic dress, while also incorporating stone and acid washing techniques (True Story Documentary Channel 09:58-10:46). The Pirate trousers, for example, were inspired by Native American patterns (House of Westwood, "The Early Years"). After this heavily exploratory phase, Westwood underwent a drastic change in her artistic direction, with street style and youth culture becoming less prominent in her work (House of Westwood). Instead, Westwood found inspiration in the traditional tailoring techniques of Savile Row, British fabrics and art from the 17th and 18th centuries (House of Westwood). Westwood became enamored of old England, which is reflected in her Harris tweed designs, consisting of checkered and tartan pattern fabrics (True Story Documentary Channel 12:18-25). The love for these patterns came from a sense of nostalgia they evoked in the designer (12:26-39). Through the Harris tweed collection, Westwood experimented with English tailoring and Englishness with references to English country life and the Royals (12:40-13:12).

Westwood has evolved in public perception from a cultural provocateur and fashion disruptor focused on overthrowing authority to a respected pillar of the contemporary fashion canon (Almila and Inglis 388). In order to summarize the way in which Westwood operated, I like to refer to the writing of Jennifer Craik, Professor of Fashion and Textiles, and Sharon Peoples, Lecturer in Museum Education and Heritage Interpretation, who quote Cardella's (fashion journalist and author) 1996 statement: "According to critics, [Westwood] possesses the uncanny ability to sense social and cultural changes in the air and to morph these

messages into fashion collections, which are more than mere pieces of clothing, but rather symbols of the moods of the time” (392).

I believe that Westwood has maintained this approach down to her very last designs, and that her intuition for social and cultural shifts and translating these messages into fashion designs is noticeable in her *SS20 Look Book*. To substantiate this claim, I will discuss and give meaning to various visual features of the manifesto and look book in the following paragraphs.

4.2 - The 2020 Punk protest

Punk Against Climate Change

4.2.1 - Symbols of Critique



In the *Save the World Manifesto*, Westwood uses a series of powerful symbols to convey her message. This section explores the meaning of these symbols used in the manifesto, including the spiral, the spiral in an apple, the swastika and the "rotten dollar". By examining Westwood's interpretations and explanations, we gain insight into her critique of capitalism, corruption and her vision of an alternative economic system.

Westwood considers the spiral a powerful symbol representing planet Earth in the context of the *Save the World Manifesto* and her *Climate Revolution* campaign. For Westwood, the spiral symbol refers to “the turning earth”, and she argues that the spiral shape shows what the earth would look like from the South Pole (Westwood, 9 July 2021). Building upon the symbolism of the spiral, Westwood incorporates this powerful imagery into another significant element of her manifesto, namely, a spiral within an apple, which carries double symbolism. On page six of the manifesto, Westwood explains the meaning of the symbol, which represents both, capitalism, and corruption. The activist also pays attention to the

symbol on her *Climate Revolution* website. She states, “Capitalism is as corrupt as a rotten apple” (Westwood, 2 November 2020). In other words, the spiral in the apple suggests how capitalism has corrupted and eroded the core values of society, leading to social inequality and environmental degradation.

Westwood describes the swastika in the manifesto on page six, explaining that it stands for NO MAN'S LAND and a fair distribution of wealth. She states that the manifesto describes the urgent need to leave behind the current economic system of capitalism, and move to NO MAN'S LAND, an economic system based on the principle that no one has the right to own land (Westwood, 21 February 2021). Westwood writes on her *Climate Revolution* website that no nation or individual should have the right to own LAND, as LAND is the origin of all wealth (Westwood, 4 November 2022). Our creations and actions come from the Earth's biosphere, ocean, underground resources, and the electromagnetic spectrum. Capitalism, according to Westwood, revolves around the mistreatment of land and the exploitation of its inhabitants. She therefore advocates the introduction of taxes on the use of land, in order to generate substantial income for the public and thus an equitable distribution of wealth (Westwood, 4 November 2022).

As for fashion, Westwood argues that the economy in NO MAN'S LAND is based on buying less, choosing well, and longevity of products (Westwood, 21 February 2021). If we want to achieve NO MAN'S LAND, she believes the only route to a sustainable fashion economy would be couture fashion, in which fashion is a highly skilled and labor-intensive job and in which clothes are only sold at true cost (Westwood, 21 February 2021). Couture fashion would then become accessible to all, by ensuring a fair distribution of wealth (Westwood, 21 February 2021). She further states that couture fashion should be practical and wearable to appeal to consumers, and suggests the possibility of renting couture for special events (Westwood, 21 February 2021).

In another context, Westwood explains the historical significance of the swastika within the Punk movement and its continued relevance in her *Save the World Manifesto*. She states, “We wore a swastika because the same devils that caused the war in Vietnam were still in power” (Westwood, 18 June 2020). To explain this, I quote Professor of Sociology Stephen Kent from his book on slogans and mantras for social protest in the late period of the Vietnam War: “Spelling America with a K was popular among radicals in that period. It played with the word “swastika” and reflected their feelings that the country was a fascist state” (Kent 31). Westwood’s text shows that the Punk movement advocated anarchy, the challenging of social norms, and that the movement carried the swastika as a symbol of criticism of those in power. The use of the swastika in Westwood’s current work similarly symbolizes criticism of the current authorities and their capitalist system.

Representing her dissatisfaction with the current financial system, Vivienne Westwood employs the imagery of the “rotten dollar” in her artwork. She writes, “\$ = economy, also money, also debt” (Westwood, 7 November 2020; *Save the World Manifesto* page six). In other words, the 'rotten dollar' for Westwood represents the rotten financial system. She believes that the climate crisis is the product of this rotten economic system (Westwood and Kelly 385). On page six of the manifesto, Westwood argues that the control and fair use of natural resources are crucial to preventing economic exploitation and achieving a fair distribution of wealth. In NO MAN’S LAND, she argues, there will be no free riders (FR’s), fossil fuel giants, media moguls or technocrats who can make money from the free use of NO MAN’S LAND. These revenues, Westwood writes on page six of the manifesto, are revenues that belong to the public purse.

The dollar symbol on page four of the manifesto comes with an extra tail, reminding me of snakes. Westwood describes today’s economic system as “snakes that eat each other's tail” (Westwood and Kelly 386). Not only is the economic system the cause of climate

change, but the fact that the earth is being exploited to the point of decay, is also the cause of the financial crisis (386). She is therefore convinced that what is good for the earth, is good for the economy and that what is bad for the earth, is bad for the economy (386).

Westwood employs a series of powerful symbols in her *Save the World Manifesto* to critique capitalism, corruption, and advocate for an alternative economic system. Through the use of the spiral, the spiral in an apple, the swastika, and the "rotten dollar," Westwood conveys her vision of NO MAN'S LAND—an economic system based on fair distribution of wealth, sustainable fashion, and responsible use of natural resources. Her message emphasizes the interconnectedness of the environment, economy, and social justice, urging a shift away from the current financial system toward a more equitable and sustainable future.

4.2.2 - What do the cards say?



As emerged from the pre-iconographic description, Westwood makes extensive use of the layout of playing cards in her manifesto. On the *Climate Revolution* website, Westwood explains that the manifesto in the form of a deck of cards is meant as a tool for NGOs to collaborate (Westwood, 2 February 2021). Each playing card symbol has a specific meaning for Westwood, linked to her message she wants to convey. Diamonds represent money, clubs (as well as the phallic symbol) represent war, spades represent the earth, and hearts represent humanity (Westwood, 2 February 2021). The question of why exactly Westwood chose to create a protest or instruction manual in the form of a set of playing cards remains somewhat vague. Westwood herself claims “As an activist, I designed so many graphics, I put them in a pack of playing cards”, and she claims that hidden in the pack of playing cards (twelve of which make up the *Save the World Manifesto*) is a strategy to save the world (Westwood, 2 February 2021). The reason behind Westwood’s choice to create a manifesto on climate

change in the form of a set of playing cards could have several motives. One possible reason is that Westwood considered playing cards as a universally recognizable and accessible medium that can convey the message in a playful and interactive way. In addition, the symbolism and structure of a deck of cards can help present complex ideas and strategies in an orderly manner. Moreover, the portability and ease of sharing a deck of cards can help spread and use the manifesto.

4.2.3 - Reviving Rebellion

In order to better understand the text on pages ten and twelve of the manifesto, Figure 7 can be consulted as a visual aid. Within the *Save the World Manifesto*, page ten features a striking image of Vivienne Westwood herself, adorned with heavy makeup and sporting a spiked Punk hairstyle. She is depicted wearing a do-it-yourself-inspired ensemble, consisting of a torn shirt



adorned with prints of a swastika, an inverted Jesus figure, *Figure 7 - Save the World, Page 10 and 12* and the text 'destroy'. The accompanying text on this page also makes explicit references to the Punk movement, with phrases such as “Save the world”, “only person with a plan”, and “me Punk”.

Furthermore, page twelve of the manifesto displays the phrase “Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die”, which aligns with the name of Westwood and McLaren's store established in 1972. The meaning of this statement probably has to do with the fleeting nature of youth and their desire to live life to the fullest. The slogan reflects a response to the economic and social conditions of the 1970s, perceived as oppressive to the youth. During that era, young people encountered economic challenges due to global economic turbulence, high unemployment

rates, and scarce job prospects (Guerra and Figueredo 122). Punk culture emerged as a radical departure from the established social order, featuring distinct visual aesthetics (118). The Punk movement was known for its provocative and anti-establishment attitude, and the slogan can be understood as an expression of that rebellious spirit.

Westwood's decision to incorporate the same slogan in the *Save the World Manifesto* can be attributed to the recognition that today's youth, in the 21st century, is once again grappling with the consequences of prevailing societal conditions. As noted by Hans Nijenhuis, journalist at Het Parool, young people bear the weight of the climate crisis, underscoring the crucial significance of the Paris climate agreement in safeguarding future generations worldwide (Nijenhuis). The detrimental impact of contemporary social structures, which contribute to the climate crisis, has become a pressing concern for the younger generations. In a manner reminiscent of her actions during the Punk era, Westwood positions herself at the forefront of instigating societal change, thereby asserting herself as “the only person with a plan [to save the world]”.

By incorporating these Punk references and asserting herself as a visionary with a plan, Westwood aims to highlight the urgent need for transformative action and inspire others to challenge the prevailing societal paradigms. This strategic employment of Punk symbolism serves as a rallying cry for rebellion and disruption, encouraging individuals to critically examine and reshape the world in pursuit of a sustainable and equitable future.

4.2.4 - Colored Crayons

Westwood's artistic choice for the repeated use of crayons, paints and markers in the *Save the World Manifesto* sparks curiosity regarding the motivations behind her material selection. One possible explanation is that these materials serve to underscore the importance of artistic expression in conveying her message and inspiring action. In addition, these

materials could refer to the DIY aesthetic of the Punk era, through which the movement sought to communicate anti-establishment sentiments and the belief that everyone had the ability to make his or her own voice heard regardless of constraints of money, skills, or formal structures (Guerra). Another interpretation is that Westwood, in advocating for the younger generations, employs materials associated with children, to emphasize their perspective and urgency (as exemplified by the inclusion of a childhood photo of Westwood on the manifesto's cover).

Turning to the colors employed in the manifesto, green and red stand out prominently. Green, as Benda notes, is often associated with hope, nature, peace, and health, but it can also evoke feelings of jealousy, disease, and envy (Benda 114). Notably, the color green was utilized by the Green Movement in Iran in 2007 to rally for social change (114). Given Westwood's aim to initiate transformative action in favor of nature, it is unsurprising that green features prominently throughout her manifesto. Benda explains red as a symbol of blood, love, and emotion (106-108). Red is furthermore the color of protest, due to its strong ability to convey emotion or urgency, as well as fear and anger (Themlow 95).

4.2.5 - Revolting with Style

The *SS20 Look Book* also contains several references to the Punk movement. First of all, this can be recognized in the models' hairstyles, which are reminiscent of the iconic spiked and colored hair often associated with the Punk era. In addition, the collection contains a clear homage to the Punk era through the Teddy boy-style suits. The Teddy boys were known for their Edwardian suits, also known as Zoot suits, characterized by long jackets, Guardsmen's fall trousers that revealed socks, high-waisted peg pants and brocade waistcoats (Ferris and Lord). In cases where tailored jackets were unaffordable, sports jackets were a popular alternative (Ferris and Lord).

Moreover, the use of tie-dye fabric and the presence of ripped garments in the *SS20* collection indicate a conscious embrace of the Punk DIY aesthetic. The rise of the Punk DIY aesthetic meant that youth protest was expressed through active production of material culture, with Punks using elements of British culture, such as tartan plaid, to customize their clothing and accessories with other symbols (European Fashion Heritage Association). Besides decorating, fabrics were also crafted. Westwood designed through cuts, tears, and violations of fabric (Guerra and Figueredo 131). Instead of focusing on designing new items, early Punk fashion emphasized styling and adapting existing garments (European Fashion Heritage Association). This approach aligned with Vivienne Westwood's advocacy for experimentation and the DIY aesthetic (Clarke and Holt 206). DIY production techniques were used by the Punk movement to give a specific visual immediacy to their message, and DIY aesthetics became the graphic language of “resistance” (Triggs 74). Vivienne Westwood’s inclusion of tie-dye fabrics and her use of ripped and teared garments in the *SS20* collection can be seen as a deliberate nod to the DIY aesthetic embraced by the Punk culture.

In addition to the Punk-inspired elements, the *SS20 Look Book* also incorporates references to Vivienne Westwood’s designs from the 1980s. Traditional ethnic prints, the squiggle pattern, and checkered/tartan prints are evident in the collection, reflecting the stylistic influences of the New Romanticism period and the fashion trends of the 1980s.

4.2.6 - The Look Book Decor

First of all, it is worth noting that manifesto pages are included in the background of some of the shoot photos. Vivienne Westwood herself acknowledges using pages from her manifesto as both content and backdrop in fashion shoots (Westwood, 7 May 2021). In the look book, these pages are displayed on scaffolding and utilized in a manner reminiscent of

prayer flags. By using these pages, Westwood establishes a clear direct link to the message of her *Save the World Manifesto*.

Furthermore, the craft elements incorporated into the background of the photo shoot for the *SS20 Look Book* stand out and seem to carry significant meaning, pointing once again to the DIY aesthetic of the Punk movement and symbolizing resistance against the prevailing norms. By craft elements, I refer to the use of, for example, fabrics, paper, scaffolding and tape to represent a background. These craft elements also suggest a connection to the role of artists in protest. Vivienne Westwood, who identifies herself as both a fashion designer and an activist, aims to present her fashion as art (Westwood, 7 May 2021).

The inclusion of television screens and the pillory carries a specific message. On her Climate Revolution website, Westwood expresses her concern about the global abuse of the law (Westwood, 4 September 2020). She is referring specifically to the case of Julian Assange, whom she describes as a noble freedom fighter (Westwood, 4 September 2020). She states, “If Julian goes, then responsible journalism goes with him” (Westwood, 4 September 2020). Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, faces extradition from England to the United States on charges related to unauthorized access to computer systems and the publication of classified government documents. Westwood advocates for independent journalism that is not subjected to governmental control and perceives the pillory as a symbol of the suffering endured by Assange (Westwood, 3 April 2020). Who according to her is stuck “with his head in a pillory, forced to watch the shit the media has dumped on him” (Westwood, 3 April 2020). These elements seem linked to Westwood's message on page four of the manifesto, in which she argues that in order to appease the general public, access to information must be restricted and the illusion of free and unbiased discussion must be created. In addition, the scaffold used in the photo shoot is also part of Westwood's revolt against propaganda (Westwood, May 7, 2021).

4.3 - Wrapping up the Iconographic Analysis

Both in her manifesto and look book, as well as in the connection between the two artefacts, Westwood combines the visual characteristics of protest, in the form of Punk-referenced statements and styles, with her critique of the capitalist system and climate change. Westwood strategically incorporates Punk references into the manifesto and look book to revive rebellion and inspire transformative action. As during the Punk movement, Westwood stands up to the establishment that she believes is taking the world to the end. The only resort Westwood sees is to follow her deck of cards to save the world in this way. Through the use of powerful symbols, Westwood criticizes capitalism and corruption and advocates an alternative economic system called NO MAN'S LAND, based on a fair distribution of wealth, sustainable fashion and responsible use of natural resources.

Westwood's crucial message visually emphasizes the interconnectedness of social, political, economic, and environmental issues, advocating that the fight against climate change should begin with the fight to free Julian Assange because of this interconnectedness (Westwood, 3 April 2021). She argues that governments' control over the press has led to climate change being treated as a standalone problem, while in reality, all problems are interconnected (Westwood, 23 September 2022). Westwood firmly believes that governments, which withhold information to protect the existing system, are the root of the problem and understanding the political forces driving climate change will inspire people to join the revolution (Westwood, 23 September 2022; 18 December 2013).

Furthermore, Westwood perceives her role as a creator to be that of raising awareness about these pressing issues. She states, "From people who have lived before us, we can rediscover different visions of the world through art - this is the true meaning of culture - and by comparison, we form our own ideas of a world better than the one we are in, the one that

we've made a mess of" (Westwood, 2014). She believes that through art and culture, we can learn from the past and shape a better future.

Overall, both the manifesto and look book serve as a platform for Westwood to express her activist ideas, to critique the status quo and to inspire others to challenge prevailing societal norms in pursuit of a sustainable and just future.

5 - Iconological Interpretation

Through her manifesto and look book, Westwood responds to current political and environmental debates and seeks to raise public awareness. She uses the visual language of protest, namely Punk features, to visualize her discontent. In this chapter, I will place the findings of the pre-iconographic description and iconographic analysis in the context of the fashion industry and fashion literature, in order to understand how the visual political and environmental messages in Vivienne Westwood's *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book* can be interpreted within the contemporary fashion scene.

5.1 - From Concept to Sustainable Couture

Anno 2020, the year both the look book and the manifesto were released, the world is running into a structural problem: climate change. Fashion literature tends to focus on how to achieve a more sustainable industry, covering concepts such as closed loop supply chains, cradle-to-cradle design, and emotional durability (Thomas 717). Sustainability has become a key word in the fashion scene (716) and the literature seeks to reflect on the dominant culture prevailing in the industry. All elements of the fashion landscape seem to agree on the need to work towards a new system in which fashion no longer contributes to the disruption of the earth.

The current system employed in the fashion industry is the fast fashion system. According to dress historians and Professor Margaret Maynard, the concept of fast fashion emerged towards the end of the 1990s, characterized by rapid changes and stylishness (Maynard 542). Likewise, Elizabeth Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies, argues that the main characteristic of fashion is its tendency towards rapid and continuous alterations in styles, essentially equating fashion with change (Wilson 3). According to Niinimäki, Professor in Design, the industry operates on a rapid cycle characterized by quick design and

production, swift consumption, and effortless disposal (Niinimäki 15). Moon et al., from the Department of Fashion Design at Seoul National University, further highlight that the objective of the fast fashion business model is to minimize the lifespan of fashion items in order to maximize profits, resulting in adverse effects on the environment and society (Moon et al. 939). As an aspect of the capitalist system, fast fashion aims to generate profit through the continuous consumption of new products (Maynard, 542). Maynard reflects on the impact of these rapid changes in the fashion industry, noting that they adversely affect sustainability (Maynard, 542). Also Moon et al. write that fast fashion is the perpetrator of serious environmental problems as the fashion industry is a major drain on both natural and industrial resources (Moon et al. 939). The fashion industry has long been associated with allure, innovation and constant change, but its production practices and consumption habits contribute significantly to climate change, with the fashion industry playing a central role in perpetuating these patterns (Moon et al. 939). However, Lisa McNeill, Professor of Marketing, and Moore, academic researcher in Marketing, highlight a positive trend in the industry, where producers are displaying a growing inclination to overhaul the current system and actively seek out sustainable solutions (McNeill and Moore 212). As of late, there has been a heightened recognition of environmental concerns, prompting the fashion industry to embrace a shift towards more sustainable practices and values (Moon et al. 939-940).

As became clear from previous chapters, Westwood has also recognized the need for a new fashion system and has proposed a system to save the earth. Within this system, called NO MAN'S LAND, several meanings are implied for the fashion industry. One of those meanings is related to the consumption of fashion items, as Westwood argues that the economy in NO MAN'S LAND is based on buying less, choosing well and the longevity of products (Westwood, 21 February 2021). With this statement, Westwood seems to be tapping into the notions of emotional durability and longevity, which play an increasingly prominent

role in the fashion industry and its literature. Cooper et al., *Academics in Sustainable Design and Consumption*, distinguish between the durability of a product and the longevity of a product (Cooper et al. 74). The term durability is widely known in the fashion industry and refers to the physical strength and resilience of a fashion item (74). It represents the ability of a garment or accessory to withstand wear and tear, resist damage and retain its original condition over time (74). It could be posited that a durable fashion item is well-made, with high-quality materials and craftsmanship, and is designed to withstand repeated use without significant deterioration or damage. On the other hand, longevity refers to the overall life or extended existence of a fashion item, taking into account not only its physical durability, but also its relevance, appeal and continued use over time (74). Longevity considers factors beyond the physical state of the item, such as evolving fashion trends, changes in personal style and shifting cultural contexts (75). According to Chapman, Professor of Design, the sustainability crisis is strongly related to behavior as the longevity of products is determined not only by their quality but also by how long consumers value and cherish them (Chapman 29, 35).

The solution to extending the lifetime of products, according to Westwood, lies in a world where fast fashion no longer has a place and where couture is the only form of fashion. As revealed in the iconographic analysis, the designer states “Couture is the only sustainable economy: highly skilled, labor intensive and sold at true cost” (Westwood, 21 February 2021). In the mid-nineteenth century, haute couture revolutionized the fashion industry by establishing a unique system that recognized fashion designers as artists, making them international authorities on good-quality and authentic designs (Palmer). In haut couture, garments were meticulously tailored to meet high quality standards (Palmer). Back then, the production of clothes was largely a participatory process between the wearer and designer (Cramer 1). The custom-made nature of couture clothing sets it apart from ready-to-wear

fashion, where the consumer has no involvement in its creation and solely decides whether to purchase the mass-produced garment or not (Cramer 1). The Cambridge dictionary describes Haut Couture as “(the business of making) expensive clothes of original design and high quality” (Cambridge University Press & Assessment). To summarize, couture refers to the highest form of fashion craftsmanship and skill: it is an exclusive and tailored style of clothing made by fashion houses with attention to detail, and artistic creativity.

Westwood believes in the potential of couture to make the fashion system more sustainable, as it can contribute to durability and longevity in several ways. The materials and construction of couture clothes are of high quality, making the garments last longer than mass-produced items, which are often even made to fall apart after a number of wears and washes (Niinimäki 15). By investing in high-quality couture clothing, consumers can wear their clothes for longer and reduce the demand for fast fashion and frequent replacement. Additionally, Haines-Gadd et al., *Researchers in Design and Innovation*, argue that the emotional durability of a product can be enhanced by the product being of high quality, creating a sense of stability and reliability in the consumer (Haines-Gadd et al. 16). These products deliver the same functional experience with every use, giving consumers confidence in the product, which never wavers in quality or usability (16). Another way in which emotional durability can be increased according to Haines-Gadd et al. is by allowing for self-expression in a design (Haines-Gadd et al. 12). They suggest that facilitating customization and personalization in design can serve as a means to enhance emotional durability, thereby increasing the longevity of products (12). Also Jo Cramer, Professor in Art and Design, writes that sustainability theorists suggest that participatory design and co-design can help extend the longevity of products (Cramer 1). Couture fashion is often custom-made for individual customers, resulting in a better fit and a more personal connection with the garments. Tailor-made clothes encourage consumers to cherish and keep their garments because they are made

specifically for them. This can lead to less waste and greater appreciation for the clothes they own.

Another aspect of couture that Westwood uses for the benefit of sustainability is awareness and education. Couture fashion can serve as a platform to raise awareness about sustainable practices and ethical issues within the fashion industry. As already highlighted in the theoretical framework of this thesis, fashion is a tool for social change (Benda 162). Designers can integrate sustainability principles into their work and communicate, for example, the impact of the fashion industry on the environment. In this way, artistic choices can help to raise awareness for sustainable fashion and climate change.

Since Westwood wants to move toward a fashion industry in which couture is the only form of fashion, there must be a rethinking of wearability of designer fashion for a wide audience. Although “wearable couture fashion” is not directly in line with the movement I touched upon in the theoretical framework of this thesis - namely, that designers are taking a more conceptual and process-oriented approach (Bugg 12), which seems to be moving fashion towards art as a medium – Westwood’s idea does align with the motivations of designers to become more conceptual. Top designers are going against the commercial nature of the contemporary fashion industry and are taking an approach to fashion that is more in line with their personal philosophies (Bugg 16). Hence, according to Westwood, couture fashion must return to a wearable form of fashion and transform its conceptual nature into clothes that are indeed for everyday life.

5.2 – Gaia’s Agency

Complementing the theory of emotional durability, Westwood’s ideas can be placed within the framework of posthuman theory, which focuses on the shift from an anthropocentric worldview to a perspective that blurs the boundaries between the human and

the nonhuman (Cohen 416). I already briefly discussed Posthuman theory in the theoretical framework of my thesis, but will briefly discuss it again to refresh memory and highlight its relevance to Westwood's work. Posthumanism is a cutting-edge theory at a time of technological development, climate change and capitalism (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore). Within the posthuman approach, subjectivity, agency and ethics are no longer attributed exclusively to human beings, but are extended to other entities, such as animals, natural environments and even objects (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore). As Professor Smelik writes "In the context of fashion, my provisional definition of the posthuman is a hybrid figure who decenters human subjectivity, celebrating in-between-ness, by making alliances with all kinds of non-humans" (Smelik, "A Posthuman Turn in Fashion" 58).

Westwood's work can be analyzed in light of posthumanist ideas, as it challenges traditional hierarchies between humans and natural matter. Westwood writes that land belongs to no one, and that we are merely the custodians of land, the sea, the air, and the underground (page six of *Save the World*). By claiming that no one has the right to own land, Westwood suggests that the earth possesses its own autonomy and therefore has agency. Drawing attention to environmental issues and sustainability within the fashion industry, Westwood advocates a more holistic approach that considers the interests of the natural world and non-human beings. She recognizes the interdependence of human and nonhuman entities and emphasizes the need for an integrated approach to promote sustainability. "To live sustainably requires a symbiotic relation with Gaia [earth] and her eco-system" (Westwood, 18 December 2014). This statement holds significant relevance for the fashion industry, as Smelik conveyed in her farewell speech that in every garment, such as a simple white cotton t-shirt, the interconnectedness between the garment and the Earth is intricately woven (Smelik, "Meditatie Over Mode"). The production of the shirt involves substantial water consumption, the labor of textile workers, and the cultivation of cotton that relies on the sun, earth, and air

for its growth (Smelik). Westwood proclaims, “It is time for all of us to see humanity for what it is: as a single species, interdependent on other species and the one, finite and beautiful planet we live on” (Westwood, 2 May 2015).

6 - Conclusion

In this master's thesis I posed the Research Question "Which visual language does Vivienne Westwood use to express political and environmental messages in her *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book*, and how can these expressions be understood within the contemporary fashion industry?". I did so because I am fascinated by the role of art, in this case a fashion collection and manifesto, as a medium for social change and political awareness.

In order to answer my question, I introduced the most important and relevant concepts and theories in the theoretical framework. I addressed the visual research method to be used, namely Panofsky's iconological analysis, which consists of the pre-iconographic description, the iconographic analysis, and the iconological interpretation, and then provided a detailed description of the concepts of media, materiality, manifestos, style activism and Posthumanism. I found that both manifestos and fashion can be used as public statements to communicate certain goals or principles, and have been used as a vehicle for change and resistance.

Manifestos embody a tangible expression of concern about the future, serving to challenge prevailing narratives and present alternative frameworks for consideration. This assertion explains that manifestos are written in times of societal upheaval. Manifestos are a genre in which the artist's physical activity and expressiveness play an important role in conveying their message. To challenge the dominant narratives and make the associated progressive arguments attractive to a wide audience, the medium uses both text and visual elements, such as bright colors, oversized fonts, bold illustrations, or elements of collage. In the case of the *Save the World Manifesto*, the design of the playing cards, the colors red and green, the use of symbols, and the incorporation of photographic and textual references to the Punk movement, along with the deliberate use of crayons, paints, and markers, all contribute

to the visual and textual composition of the manifesto. The visuals create a distinct aesthetic and offer potential clues for further analysis and interpretation of the content and message of the medium, as they were deployed by Westwood to convey her progressive ideology. By sharing the manifesto online, Westwood effectively makes her work accessible to a vast audience.

With her chosen visual elements, Westwood makes it clear that her manifesto serves as a warning for climate change. In her *Save the World Manifesto*, Vivienne Westwood uses powerful symbols, such as the spiral, the spiral in an apple, the swastika, and the rotten dollar, to criticize capitalism and corruption while advocating an alternative economic system. Collectively, these symbols reflect Westwood's call for a shift to NO MAN'S LAND, which includes fair distribution of wealth, sustainable fashion, responsible use of resources and the interconnectedness of environment, economy, and social justice. Westwood incorporated these symbols and messages into the design of playing cards to provide - as manifestos are supposed to do - structure to her complex critiques and ideas. Using references to the Punk movement, Vivienne Westwood articulates her dissatisfaction with the established order and criticizes the harmful impact of modern social structures on younger generations and the planet. She presents herself as a visionary with a plan for transformative action, aiming to inspire others to challenge existing social paradigms.

As the theoretical framework revealed, writing a manifesto requires creative and adventurous posturing. The deliberate use of colored pencils, paints and markers in the *Save the World Manifesto* seems to refer to the DIY aesthetic of the Punk era, thus emphasizing the importance of artistic expression in conveying its message and inspiring action. The DIY aesthetic proclaims the belief in individual voices regardless of authoritarian constraints. In addition, the use of materials associated with children can highlight the perspective and urgency of younger generations. The prominent colors in the manifesto, green and red,

represent hope, nature, peace, health and protest, evoking emotions of change, urgency, and rebellion.

It further became clear that not only the manifesto but also fashion can serve as a means to convey an activist message. Like the manifesto, the materiality of fashion can be exploited to expose the prevailing issues amid periods of social chaos. From the literature, it emerged that fashion is capable of visually disrupting conventions. Clothing is an integral part of protest and rebellion, and a catalyst in the struggle for social change. Designers leverage the nonverbal and inherent material qualities of fashion - such as the fabric and color - recognizing that material objects possess the capacity to merge social, cultural, and personal significance into a tangible form. In Vivienne Westwood's career is combining her fashion with activism a recurring phenomenon, making her a master of confrontational dressing, i.e. style activism.

Like the manifesto, *The SS20 Look Book* contains several references to the Punk movement, evident, for example, in the models' hairstyles resembling the spiked and colored hair of the era, as well as the Teddy boy-style costumes, characterized by long coats, high-waisted peg pants and brocade vests. The crafted shoot backgrounds and use of tie-dye fabric and ripped garments in the collection embrace the Punk DIY aesthetic and reflect the active production of material culture and tailoring as seen in the Punk movement. In addition, the *SS20 Look Book* includes elements such as traditional ethnic prints, the squiggle pattern and tartan prints, reflecting the stylistic influences of New Romanticism and fashion trends of the 1980s, which like the Punk references symbolize resistance to prevailing norms. Specific elements in the shoot backgrounds, such as television screens and the pillory, carry meaningful messages related to Westwood's concerns about the Julian Assange case. Through these elements, Westwood advocates for independent journalism and emphasizes the

importance of information transparency, which she believes is crucial for a functioning democracy and raising awareness about climate change.

Westwood's manifesto and look book thus address the current political and environmental debates in the fashion industry, aiming to raise awareness. Within the context of the fashion industry, Westwood's messages in the *Save the World Manifesto* and *SS20 Look Book* can be interpreted as a response to the need for sustainability. The prevailing and capitalist fast fashion system is criticized for its negative impact on the environment and society. Westwood proposes a new fashion system called NO MAN'S LAND, which emphasizes buying less, choosing well and the longevity of products. She promotes couture as the only sustainable form of fashion and emphasizes high quality, emotional durability, and longevity of the items. Westwood believes that couture as the only fashion form can help extend the life of products. She emphasizes the importance of educating people about the fashion industry's impact on the environment and promoting sustainable alternatives. Her ideas align with those behind the current shift to conceptual fashion, while emphasizing the importance of wearability for everyday life. Moreover, Westwood's work can be viewed through a post humanist lens, challenging anthropocentric views and recognizing the agency and interconnectedness of the natural world. She advocates a holistic approach that considers the interests of non-human entities and promotes sustainability through symbiotic relationships with the earth.

Due to the richness of Westwood's works, it was not possible to acknowledge and analyze all references and meanings within the space and time frame of my master thesis. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the findings of this research are based on my personal interpretations of Westwood's work, and that these interpretations may differ from Westwood's own ideas and the perspectives of other academics. I think it can be valuable to place Westwood's contributions within the broader context of the contemporary fashion

industry and examine how her approach relates to other designers or movements that address political and environmental issues. Exploring these comparisons can provide a richer understanding of Westwood's unique contributions and the larger landscape of fashion activism.

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