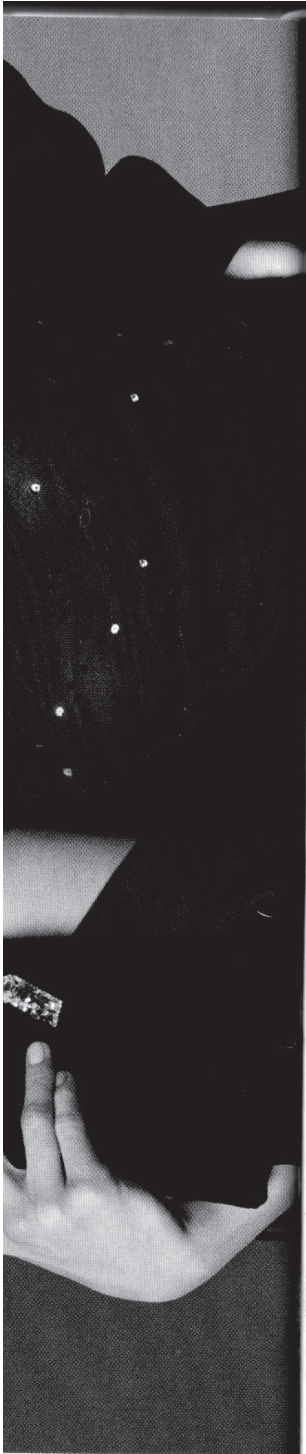


An introduction to A Magazine Reader 03,
Harper's Bazaar UK, October 2019.
Onomatopée Z0018. 2019.

When Cutting is Reading
When Marking is Reading
When Erasing is Reading
When Highlighting is Reading
When Selecting is Reading
When Categorising is Reading

Femke de Vries



In *'The Assembled Self, Part II: Ruins in Reverse'*, Camiel van Winkel describes how the glossy surface of the fashion photograph smooths out all the seams and joints in the construct of fashion which he describes as being a construct from body parts, garments, accessories, atmospheres and styles, and later on, moods and cultures are mentioned too. He explains this process as one of appropriation and homogenization.¹ We can extend this line of thought to the fashion magazine as a whole, which consists of more than just the fashion photograph. In the fashion magazine, fashion is depicted through and constructed of a broad range of elements which are combined together in such a way that they seem naturally connected. It is the place where fashion transcends the garment and takes the shape of gadgets on bodies, ocean views with watches, cars, perfumes, handbags and pets; all seamlessly connected into a slick and glossy surface. The well-composed smooth fashion photographs, editorials, shopping pages and advertisements do not only lead to homogenization and appropriation, as Van Winkel writes, but even more so lead to an image of fashion that seems to be self-evident, the natural truth: it is the creation of a myth.

In this version of *A Magazine Reader* we disconnect the elements, break the joints, cut the seams, unravel body parts and disconnect garments from bodies, from backgrounds, objects, animals and gadgets, with the aim to create space to critically explore the construct of fashion. Out of which elements is today's fashion made? What do these elements mean? What is left when you cut out the garment? When you have just arms, legs and a head of a model. There's some jewellery. A necklace, some small rings. What happens when we erase the garment and the model all-together: the background surfaces; there's a horse, a mountain and a small

house. And don't forget the text, the brand-names mentioned, the price. Paging through the magazine you bump into perfume, facial creams, rosemary water, travel suggestions, gadgets, books and so much more than just the garment.

It is through cutting the paper, highlighting, marking or erasing that we are able to lay bare these various elements that fashion is constructed of. By drawing them apart and seeing them as separates, we de-mystify. Although the cut has been described as a violent act it is also seen as one that is constructive. The same can be said about erasure which could be interpreted as a passive-aggressive act, but on the other hand, it also highlights the things that remain. In this workshop these acts can be seen as acts that question the violence and pervasiveness of mystification in fashion. In the fashion magazine, every possible element is used to create stories and myths of a future reality. These are commodified stories of hope, dreams and endless transformations into a better self. They are composed of so much more than garments alone, and in such a way that the joints and seams are smoothed out, turning these stories into a reality, a truth. By cutting through these dream worlds, drawing the various elements apart, erasing one and highlighting the other, we again become aware of the various elements in this system: we can see them as individual parts, rather than a homogenized bundle. We are able to recognize the various elements that the glossy smooth fashion dream is made of. In this workshop we will not only be cutting, erasing and highlighting, we will also select, collect, rearrange and reassemble, collage. In *'Surgeon, Seamster, Sorcerer'*², Tamar Shafrir writes how combining is even more essential to the creation of collage than cutting, as it is a process of rewriting. She states that the act of sewing together, of interlacing and collaging is a step that raises the

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notion of linking, invoking the logic of multiplicity and interconnectivity, altering a given narrative to fit a different retelling; one that is preferred by the author.

In *'Unconditional Love: The Repertoire of Poverty'* Joke Robaard describes that while working on her archive "the way the images are ordered makes them readable as repetitions, homologies, analogies, contaminations, drifts, shifts, genealogies. This divided attention, this focus on whole and part, enables the archivist to slowly discover hidden changes, not only in the photographic representation, but also in the social and economic context".³ In addition to this she describes that "working with an archive creates a specific perception and a sense of difference. This difference turns fashion models back into real people, who live their shadow lives on printed pages in magazines".⁴ Cutting, erasing, and highlighting are thus tools to deconstruct, to create separates and undress them from their context, their surroundings and the magazine as a whole. Subsequently re-arranging them in other genealogies enables a second step, one of a focussed approach towards the subject (the bag, the pet, the facial cream, the hotel). It therefore not only enables processes of re-writing but more interestingly, of analysis and de-mystification.

We would also like to approach the acts of firstly cutting and highlighting and secondly interlacing and sewing together as acts of reading instead of only writing. When reading with the aim to select and categorize in mind, reading becomes a productive act. And, with a pair of scissors or a marker in your hand, reading becomes more than just scanning over surfacing words and images with your eyes. The option to change the surface changes the role of the reader: it gives him/her agency. Reading becomes cutting deeply through

the texts and images, touching the surface with your hands, hearing the paper split or rip and the marker squeeze. Looking through the holes in the paper into the next page, the next layer, right into the face of a new model, a new handbag, a new facial cream. This is how reading becomes an analytical act that helps you create separates and organize new categories, discovering hidden layers, changes and meaning that places fashion in a broader social and cultural context.

By cutting, erasing and rearranging the *whole* glossy image, we are re-reading the contemporary luxury fashion magazine; a product that is constructed of commodified hopes and dreams, and to consequently rewrite it for it to be read again.

1

Winkel van, C. (2018). 'The Assembled Self, Part II: Ruins in Reverse' in: Robaard, J. and Winkel van C., *Archive Species: Bodies, Habits, Practices*, Amsterdam: Valiz, p. 398-399.

2

Shafir, T. (2018). 'Surgeon, Seamster, Sorcerer', *Radical Cut-Up Lodown*, Fall 2018.

3

Robaard, J. (2018). 'Unconditional Love: The Repertoire of Poverty' in: Robaard, J. and Winkel van C., *Archive Species: Bodies, Habits, Practices*, Amsterdam: Valiz, p. 429.

4

Ibid.