

Appropriation of Historical Details in the Contemporary Fashion

현대패션에 나타난 역사적 디테일의 차용

Hyun-shin Na

Seoul Women's University

나현신

서울여자대학교 의류학과 전임강사

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Abstract

In the contemporary fashion, historical fusion merging the historical styles with new technology and uniqueness became one of the major trends. Many contemporary fashion designers have referred to the costume history and mixed historical styles with the contemporary fashion. In this study, the designs showing historical references in the contemporary fashion were analyzed by details to provide the fresh ideas for designing creative fashions and to propose the desirable approach toward studying the costume history.

First of all, historicism in the post-modern architecture and fashion were examined to find out the background of appropriation of historical details in the contemporary fashion. Since the history has come closer in everyday life especially in fashion and architecture in the post-modern culture. And the fashion and the architecture are akin to the human as a micro and macro environment surrounding us. And the examples of the appropriation of historical details in the contemporary fashion were analyzed by constructive details. In the contemporary fashion, historical details have been reworked with advanced technology and materials, exaggerated, and reconstructed in the mix & match with the contemporary

outfits. In other words, the ways of appropriation of historical details could be explained as transformation, exaggeration, and reconstruction.

In conclusion, historical details are the greatest inferences to invent the creative fashion designs. And studying costume history should not be overlooked since this can offer great inspirations to the contemporary designers interested in historical styles and trying to develop them into more creative fashion designs.

Key words

historicism, contemporary fashion, appropriation, transformation, exaggeration, reconstruction

현대인들이 느끼는 미래에 대한 불안과 과거에 대한 향수, 새로움에 대한 끊임없는 열망은 복식사를 참고하는 다양한 패션의 탄생을 야기시켰다. 이는 20세기말 중요하게 대두된 테마로서, 포스트모던 건축과 패션을 통해 다양하게 펼쳐졌다.

본 연구는 현대 패션에 나타난 역사적 디테일의 차용에 대한 고찰을 통해 복식사의 다양한 스타일이 창조적인 패션 디자인 개발을 위한 무궁무진한 영감의 보고로서 활용될 수 있음을 재확인하고자 하였다. 우선, 문헌적 자료를 바탕으로 건축과 패션에 등장한 역사주의를 살펴보았다. 또한 제3의 밀레니엄을 전후한 1990년대에서 현재에 이르기까지의 디자이너 콜렉션에서, 과거 복식을 참고로 한 패션 디자인의 실례를 수집하여 디테일에 따라 분석하였으며 이를 통해 현대 패션에서 과거 복식에 등장한 디테일의 차용 방법을 규명하였다.

역사는 포스트모더니즘 문화 가운데 건축과 패션 등에서 모든 사람들의 생활에 근접하게 다가왔으며, 동시대의 많은 디자이너들은 역사적 디테일을 다양한 소재와 기술, 형태로 끊임없이 재구성하였다. 이러한 예들은 과거 복식에서 등장하는 콜셋, 칼라와 슬리브, 크리놀린과 벗슬 등의 퓨전에서 찾아볼 수 있었으며, 이러한 복식사적 디테일은 의외의 재질과 기술로 변형되고 과장되며, 현대적 아이템과 함께 재구성됨을 알 수 있었다.

이상과 같이, 복식사적 디테일의 차용은 현대 패션의 중요한 테마로서 오늘날의 많은 디자이너들 작품에서 빈번히 등장하였다. 따라서 복식사에서 등장하는 수많은 디테일이 현대의 독창적인 패션 디자인 창조를 위한 무한한

참고자료로서 의의가 있음을 재확인하였으며, 이를 통해 복식사 연구에 대한 시각이 단순한 사적 연구에 국한되지 않고 창조적 패션 디자인 개발을 위한 영감의 보고로서 확장되어야 함을 제안하였다.

주제어

역사주의, 현대 패션, 차용, 변형, 과장, 재조합

1. Introduction

One of the fashion trends in the 20th century was the **creation of works** merging the historical styles, while conveying the original meanings and contents. In the contemporary fashion, boundaries of history has been demolished or re-defined by breaking the walls of the past and embracing both innovation and tradition. Some believe that uncertainty about the future causes people to yearn for the past to experience nostalgia. Thus, the endless references to history in each season are representative of a historical fusion that pursues newness while referring to the past. Interpretations of clothing traditions take many forms in fashion. Especially, the current fashion designers have been presenting works combining various styles from the past with the advance of technology. These designers found the inspirations from the historical elements, reworked with new technology and uniqueness, and presented trans-historical styles.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways to appropriate the historical details in the contemporary fashion to suggest ideas to develop fashion designs inferred from various historical styles and to propose the desirable approach toward the costume history. We attempted 1) to investigate the background of historicism especially in the architecture and the fashion, 2) to analyze historical details, 3) to clarify the appropriation ways of historical details in the contemporary fashion.

For this, literature reviews about historicism in architecture and fashion were examined. As

a micro and macro environment surrounding human, the fashion and the architecture in the post-modern culture expressed historical modes based on each aesthetic point of view. Besides, the history has come closer in everyday life especially in fashion and architecture in the post-modern culture and the term historicism is one of the key words explaining post-modern architecture and the late 20th fashion. Next, the research for the fashion designs showing historical fusion has been done through the designer's collections. Examples of fashion designs showing historical details were collected from the 1990s, the decades before mankind greeted the 3rd millennium, up to now. This can offer great inspirations to the contemporary designers interested in historical styles and trying to develop these into the creative fashion designs.

2. Background of Historical Appropriation

In this chapter, historicism in the post-modern architecture and the fashion of the late 20th century were examined to find out the background of historical appropriation among the contemporary fashion.

2.1. Historicism in Post-modern Architecture

In the late of 20th century, fusion phenomena with historical compromises leading the overall culture of the times. People long for the past since they tried to find newness, richness and nostalgia among the history.

The term historicism—a style characterized by the use of traditional forms and elements—is one that can be used as an effective method for overcoming transience through revival. It has been described by the humanists since the middle of the 19th century as the cultural pessimistic stepping back from the present into the past¹⁾. This could be explained as historical eclecticism which is

1) <http://library.thinkquest.org>

used to describe the combination in a single work of elements from different historical styles chiefly in architecture and, by implication, in the fine and decorative arts²⁾.

In the post-modern culture appeared amid the confusing period, history has come closer in everyday life due to the information era and the high-tech age which supplies new materials and technology to access history. Post-modernism in architecture is marked by the re-emergence of surface ornament, reference to surrounding buildings in urban architecture, historical reference in decorative forms, and non-orthogonal angles.

Historical revivals in the architecture occurred throughout history beginning with the Italian Renaissance revival of ancient Roman buildings to Neoclassicism and the revivals of 19th century gothic architecture such as historical revival buildings by Alberti, Palladio, Jefferson, Mengoni, and Barry & Pugin³⁾. Post-modern historicism seeks a reconnection with the human and historical character of architecture before modernism. Historical style characterized by the use of traditional forms and elements was distinguished in the post-modern architect. Charles Jencks explained the post-modern architecture with 'Radical Eclecticism', 'Adhocism', and 'Free style classicism'⁴⁾. The post-modern architecture called modern eclecticism studied and emulated history based on Egyptianism, Classicism, Art Deco, and Bauhaus⁵⁾, and preferred the Roman, Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque periods. Lots of architects rooted on the post-modernism emphasized the historical allusion using compromising historical motifs. Phillip Johnson who contributed in opening the gateway to eclecticism came to historicism through an academic approach to

history. Robert Stern called radical eclecticism allusion, and tried to edit and apply it according to the situation by referring to various traditional elements⁶⁾.

2.2. Historicism of Fashion in the late 20th Century

Fashion is the most visible symbol of historical interchange by reworking costume history. Fashion designers show self-conscious manner that draw on references from fashion history, isolating their original meanings and context in stylistic terms.

Historicism can be compared with retro which is shortened form of the word 'retrogressive' which means looking backward to distinctive styles of former eras. It is a term used to derive aspects of modern culture which are consciously derivative or imitative of those trends, modes, fashions, or attitudes of the recent past which have or had come to be seen as unfashionable. In other words, retro fashion is a clothing style which consists in wearing clothes commonly used in the past, mainly in the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's⁷⁾. On the other hand, many contemporary designers produced both experimental and conventional works akin to historical fancy dress, drawing on a range of sources from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Over the past 30 years, British fashion has been defined by a knowing and self-conscious historicism. **Beginning with Vivien Westwood, a number of British designers such as John Galiano and Alexander McQueen look to history for powerful design ideas and combine them in ironic post-modern constructions.**(**뒷문단에서 앞으로 이동하였음**) The exhibition, 'Tradition and Transgression' in British Fashion, was set in the Metropolitan Museum from May 3, 2006-September 4, 2006⁸⁾.

2) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

3) <http://library.thinkquest.org>

4) Kim, Wook D. (1992), *Theory of Post-modernism in Literature/art/culture*, Seoul; Mineumsa, pp.175-176

5) Hellman, L., Lim, Chong Y. (1989, Translated), *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*, Seoul; Taerim Pub. Co., p.121

6) Kim, Myoung C. (1985), *A Study on the Constructional Method of Post-modern Architecture*, Kyounghee Univ., Master's Degree Thesis, p.11

7) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

8) <http://www.metmuseum.org>

Galliano is obsessed with fashion history, creating designs that Richard Marin, one-time curator of Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, once described as a 'fantastic pastiche'. His first collection from Central St. Martin's in 1984, *Les Incroyables*, was inspired by the French Revolution⁹⁾. The historicism and romanticism of John Galliano's designs are revealed only by the spectacular theatrical nature of his fashion shows. Stylistically promiscuous, his designs bring together Colonial and Belle Epoque references and impressionistically fuse cultures and people¹⁰⁾. Christian Lacroix has in the past attested to the self-referential nature of much design work, stating in the March 1988 edition of *Vogue* 'every one of my dresses possesses a detail that can be connected with something historic, something from a past culture. We don't invent anything¹¹⁾.'

3. Appropriation of Historical Details in the Contemporary Fashion

In the visual arts, the term appropriation often refers to the use of borrowed elements in the creation of new work. The borrowed elements may include images, forms or styles from art history or from popular culture, or materials and techniques from non-art contexts¹²⁾. Many contemporary designers have been tried to find the inspirations from the historical styles and produced trans-historical styles. They were acclaimed for the appropriation of historical details with extraordinary technical skills and progressive aesthetics. In this chapter, the examples of recurring historical styles in the contemporary fashion were collected, historical details were

classified, and appropriation ways of historical details were clarified.

3.1. Classification of Historical Details

In this study, historical details were classified based on the constructive details such as bodice, collar, sleeve, and skirts that form the construction of clothes.

3.1.1. Bodice-Corset

Reinterpretations of the historical corset evoked a range of ideas in bodice. It first appeared in the designs of Vivienne Westwood and Jean-Paul Gaultier in the mid-1980s. In the 1990s the corset became ubiquitous as a almost every major European designer incorporated it into their collections, ranging from Christian Lacroix's opulent conservatism, through Hussein Chalayan's experimental 'flower press' corset with its connotations of the nineteenth-century asylum and madhouse¹³⁾.

Vivien Westwood had revived the corset, introduced underwear as outerwear and increasingly referenced history and high culture rather than street style. She decorated leather corset with the slashing detail with refashioning the male codpiece. Hussein Chalayan has played with the notion of clothing as both repressive and expressive. His wooden bustier [Fig.1] with its eighteenth-century corset-like rigidity and body suppression, has the polished beauty of a coffin. McQueen was even more explicit in his reference to archaic forms of corsetry in his 1997 collection. The line of buckle closures down the center front alludes to the metal strap and pin fasteners of metal corsets and also to the mechanisms for securing classical breast plates. Corset has been transformed into an unusual shape by exaggeration of the original shape. [Fig. 2] shows the exaggerated dimension of corset top with hook and eye closure in the center front. [Fig.3] is a leather corset which is worn over the mannish pantsuit showing the unexpected

9) Claire Wilcox. (2001), *Radical Fashion*, London; V & A Publications, p.49

10) Gerda Buxbaum. (1999), *Icons of Fashion*, Munich; Prestel, p.166

11) Christopher Breward. (1995), *The Culture of Fashion*, NY; Manchester University Press, p.232

12) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

13) Caroline Evans. (2003), *Fashion at the Edge*, New Heaven & London; Yale University Press, p.22

mix and match with contemporary white ensemble.

From the idealized and romantic to the malign and troubling, these reinterpretations of the historical corset evoked a range of ideas about women, spectacle, image and history. Nowadays' corset became an outerwear item in ways, invented with various materials such as leather, wood, and metal etc., revised with extraordinary techniques, transformed into exaggerated shape, and often matched with contemporary fashion in an unexpected ways.

[Fig. 1] Hussein Chalayan, 1999



[Fig. 2] Oliver Theyskens, 2000



[Fig. 3] Givenchy by McQueen, 1997



3.1.2. Collar

Various styles of collars in the costume history are great references to develop the creative fashion designs and often adopted by the contemporary fashion. [Fig.4] expresses the Jabot collars with unusual materials and techniques. Three rows of identically constructed bands adumbrate the romantic neck piece. Victor & Rolf's blouse [Fig. 5] exaggerated the effect of the open ruff from shoulder to knee with huge layers of fabrics. Vivienne Westwood provides a model to understand the historical relay between past and present by mixing contemporary suit with romantic ruff around the neck in 1995/6 collection [Fig. 6]. In 1998 Givenchy collection by Alexander McQueen, Van Dyke collar showing his allusion to the 1790s Directoire period was revised and matched with contemporary items.

As shown the above, various styles of collars shown in the costume history were often adopted in the contemporary fashion made of unusual materials, exaggerated forms, and unexpected match of old and new.

[Fig. 4] Victor & Rolf, 2002



[Fig. 5] Victor & Rolf, 2005



[Fig. 6] Vivienne Westwood, 1995/6



3.1.3. Sleeve

There are lots of different sleeves showing historical references. In the past, for making puff sleeve, a variety of supports were either worn as underpinnings or incorporated into the structure of the sleeves themselves to sustain such mass. But nowadays designer, John Galiano created the Empire-style gown resembling 19th century with the updated techniques. He attached sleeve pillows of explicit artifice and structure to a historical fashion reputed to have been so lightly made that it revealed much of the natural body. The design team of **victor & rolf** has created collections with an extraordinarily strong imprint. Their highly sculptural designs are often historically referential, with the couture merrier. In [Fig. 7] the rich dimension of leg of mutton sleeve in romantic period was reproduced with lots of bows. In the example [Fig. 8] from their 'Black Hole' collections, exaggeration of leg of mutton sleeve was clearly shown. In [Fig. 9] modern jacket with the engageantes sleeves with several layers of flounces were well harmonized with the contemporary dress.

To sum up, historical styles of sleeves were often revived in the contemporary fashion

reworked with advanced techniques and materials, exaggerated into a huge dimension, and combined with the contemporary fashions.

[Fig. 7] Victor & Rolf, 2001



[Fig. 8] Victor & Rolf, 2001



[Fig. 9] Junya Watanabe 2005/6



3.1.4. Skirt - Crinoline, Bustle

Crinoline was originally a stiff fabric, but by 1850 the word had come to mean a stiffened petticoat or rigid skirt-shaped structure of steel designed to support the skirts of a woman's dress into the required shape¹⁴).

In 1985 Vivienne Westwood brought out 'mini-crini' that combined the tutu with an abbreviated form of the Victorian crinoline. Like Westwood, John Galliano combined the parts of a robe a la francaise with the crinolined silhouette of the mid-nineteenth-century. The result is a skirt nine feet wide, with a train that extends it even farther. Galliano's gown is wider than the broadest panniered dress from the **eighteenth-century**, and its train is longer than the crinoline hoped skirts of the 1860s. In 1998, the skirt design [Fig. 10] of Junya Watanabe also references the engineered constructions of late nineteenth-century bustles and the abstractions of early twentieth-century Constructivism¹⁵). Often described as a purist, Yamamoto is also a humorist, who gently mocks the fashion system. For the finale of his March 1998

show, he presented a giant crinoline bridal gown and muslin hat so large four attendants bearing poles were required to support it [Fig. 11]. His deconstructivist design of 1995 shown in [Fig. 12] cites eighteenth-century panniers. Those hip extenders were named for straw baskets, but in Yamamoto's design, where they are silhouetted against a crimson lining, they are more like iron cages, reminiscent of the grills used by iron workers to hear coals and suggestive of devices worthy of the Spanish Inquisition¹⁶).

In appropriation of historical details, crinoline was transformed into an unexpected shape or exaggerated expanse invented with updated materials and techniques and often became an outerwear and matched with contemporary fashion.

[Fig. 10] Junya Watanabe, 1998



[Fig. 11] Yohji Yamamoto, 1998



[Fig. 12] Yohji Yamamoto, 1995



A bustle is a type of framework used to expand the fullness or support the drapery of the back of a woman's dress, occurring predominantly between the mid to late 1800s¹⁷).

Several contemporary designers recreated the bustle in their designs. In white bustle suit in 1994, Chalayan articulated his molded forms like the flaps of a jet plane's cargo hold. Advances in technology increasingly drive the look of clothes. When open, they take on a pannier-like width and bustle-form extension [Fig. 13]¹⁸). **Victor & Rolf** expressed

14) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

15) Harold Koda. (2001), *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed*, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, p.120

16) Ibid., p.119.

17) <http://en.wikipedia.org>

18) Harold Koda. (2001), Op. Cit., p.134

bustle in an exaggerated dimension [Fig. 14]. They conflate the robe à la française, eighteenth-century made dress, and the 1870s for period effect in their suit shown in. In a very short time, these designs have established a reputation for conceptually driven, technically sophisticated, historically informed creations¹⁹. In 2005, the influence of Edwardian put the bustle back into skirts with softly convoluted waterfall frills adding movement to the back of a skirt [Fig. 15].

To sum up, nowadays' designers refashioned historical item, bustle with extraordinary technical facility, exaggeration of shape, and the mixture of contemporary items.

[Fig. 13] Hussein Chalayan, 2000



[Fig. 14] Victor and Rolf, 1994



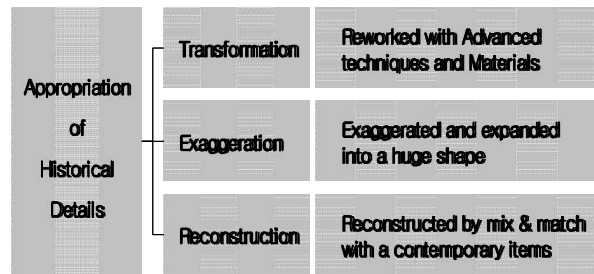
[Fig. 15] Christian Lacroix, 2005



3. 2. Appropriation Ways of Historical Details

Contemporary fashion designers inspired from historical costumes reworked with updated technology and materials. They incorporated historical references in a distinctive and inspiring way. Historical details were also renewed into the exaggerated forms showing uniqueness. Newly developed designs from the past were also mixed with contemporary outfits showing the harmony of the past and present.

[Fig. 16] Appropriation Ways of Historical Details

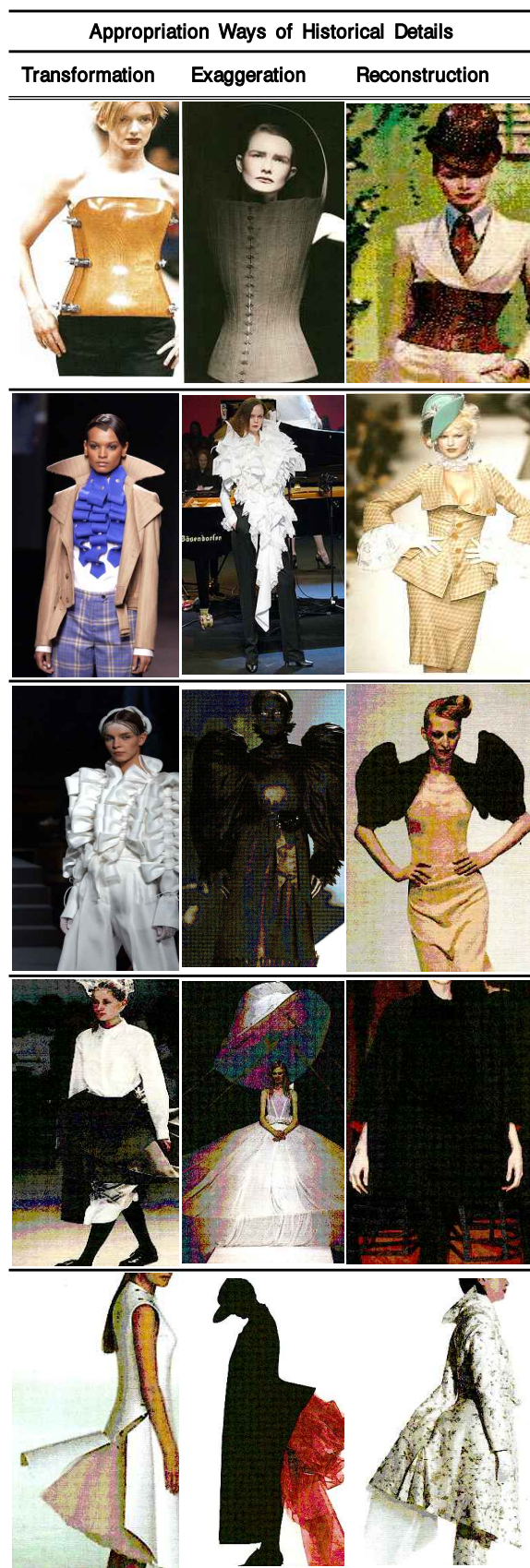


Based on the analysis of fashion showing historical references, the ways of appropriation to historical details are defined as follows [Fig.16]. First, historical details were reworked with advanced materials and techniques. Corsets are made of unexpected materials such as leather, wood, and metal etc. Various kind collars and sleeves shown in the costume history have been transformed with the various techniques. Crinoline and bustle were also constructed by combining updated techniques and materials. Second, historical details were also exaggerated showing uniqueness. Corset has been transformed into an unusual shape by exaggeration the original shape. Sleeve, crinoline, bustle in the costume history were made in exaggerated dimension. Third, details from the costume history were deconstructed and reconstructed with the contemporary outfits. Newly developed designs from the past were also mixed with contemporary outfits showing the fusion of the old and new.

In conclusion, contemporary fashion designers can create innovative designs by the continuous experimentation and efforts based on the historical details through the ways of appropriations of historical details such as transformation, exaggeration, and reconstruction [Fig. 17].

19) Ibid., p.134.

[Fig. 17] Historical Details in Contemporary Fashion



4. Conclusion

In the contemporary fashion, historical styles have been reworked with new technology and uniqueness by breaking the walls of the past and embracing both innovation and tradition.

To provide the design inference to the contemporary designers and to propose the desirable approach toward studying the costume history, 1) the background of historicism in the architecture and the fashion were investigated, 2) historical details in nowadays fashion expressing historicism were analyzed, 3) the appropriation ways of historical details were clarified.

In the post-modern culture, history has come closer in everyday life such as fashion and architecture since people pursue newness amid a confusion of values and a climate of tediousness and long for the past due to the yearning for mental richness and nostalgia. Many contemporary designers referenced the costume history and reworked with extraordinary technical skills and progressive aesthetics. This could be explained as 'historicism' which was followed by the historical items mixed with various materials, techniques, and forms in modern collections.

Nowadays' corset became an outerwear item in ways, invented with various materials such as leather, wood, and metal etc., revised with extraordinary techniques, transformed into exaggerated shape, and often matched with contemporary fashion in an unexpected ways. Various styles of collar shown in the costume history were often revived in the contemporary fashion made of unusual materials, exaggerated forms, and unexpected match of old and new. Historical styles of sleeves were often revived in contemporary fashion reworked with advanced techniques and materials, showing exaggerated dimensions combining updated techniques and structure. Crinoline was transformed to an unexpected shape or exaggerated expanse invented with updated materials and techniques and often became an outerwear and matched with contemporary

fashion. Bustle was also refashioned with extraordinary technical facility and exaggeration of shape, and the mixture of contemporary items.

In other words, historical details were reworked with advanced materials and techniques, renewed into the exaggerated forms showing uniqueness, and were reconstructed by mix and match with the contemporary outfits. Contemporary fashion designers inspired from historical costumes incorporated historical references in a distinctive and inspiring way. In conclusion, studying costume history should not be overlooked since the historical styles of the past are the endless references to create a new fashion. The historical styles will be the greatest inferences to invent the new styles in nowadays fashion.

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