

Copying and/or Creating? Fashion Design Practices in London, Berlin and Milan

Goldsmiths College, University of London

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PI Prof Angela McRobbie. CI Dr Dan Strutt, Tania Phipps-Rufus (London)

Dr Bettina Springer Dr Ares Kalandides (Berlin) Carolina Bandinelli (Milan)

PROJECT SUMMARY

The idea of copying has a seemingly unique place in fashion design practice. On the one hand young designers are trained to learn from the past and to revive or 'quote' from key moments in fashion history, on the other hand there is, of course, an emphasis on originality and vision.

Young designers are also aware of the dangers of having their ideas copied, and they express a need to know about IP law and how it can protect them. Meanwhile well-established designers understand that the recent trend for 'fast fashion' led by high street retailers means that versions of their work can be on the rails at cheap prices within 2 or 3 weeks of the runway shows. Alongside this is the world of 'counterfeiting'.

This current project investigates the daily working practices of fashion designers (small, medium and large) in London, Berlin and Milan with the aim of understanding how concerns about IP impact on their design practice.

EUROPE QUOTES

'Personally I'm not worried about being copied or theft of my IP, that's not a problem because I have new ideas all the time.' Berlin fashion designer

'Our top sellers were copied by a marketing company we worked with. We went to court but the judge was not on our side. He said "the label looks completely different". It is hard to secure basic classics, the violating company has to show proof of their profits for copying the item which they never do'. Berlin designer and shop owner

'I saw someone wear the exact same knitwear I had designed. I found out it was produced and sold by the same person who had once knitted it for me'. Berlin knitwear designer

'We have little or no concern about copying, but we are of course aware of our competitors, such as Celine, who are working in a similar milieu and are often influenced by what we do'. Major Italian label.

'We are short-staffed, with no spare cash, so we could not afford to have someone follow up on IP in Berlin issues, we know it happens but it is not top of the agenda.' Berlin fashion designer

UK QUOTES

'Fashion is a moving thing - if it's being copied its already over....although of course I don't think it's right.' London fashion designer

'Copying is the basis of our training, we are taught to do historical research and then work from that, add something new. We are constantly re-inventing the past.' London fashion designer

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