Visual Art as a Means of Presenting a Fashion Designer’s Creative Idea

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The aim of the article is to identify the types and functions of fashion graphics as a means of visualising the ideas and concepts of a fashion designer. Results. The role of visual art in expressing the idea of a fashion designer is characterised; based on the systematisation and analysis of examples of fashion graphics that visualise clothing models of such designers as K. Dior, Y. Saint Laurent, H. Mepen, V. Nesmiian, A. Tan, V. Anisimov, as well as the author’s graphics of K. Lagerfeld, the following types of using visual art in presenting designer’s ideas are identified 1) fashion illustration in suit presentation; 2) Illustrated fashion magazines; 3) fashion illustration as a design element of the designer’s publications and fashion publications; 4) sketch of the product; 5) generalised (conceptual) image of the collection; 6) narrative graphics. The research methods include analysis and synthesis, historical and chronological, comparative, figurative and stylistic analysis, selective method, and systematisation of visual information. Scientific novelty. For the first time, in the context of the history and contemporary development of the fashion system, examples of fashion illustrations, sketches, and drawings by foreign and Ukrainian artists and designers are considered in the context of the designer’s communication with the target audience; for the first time, models of Ukrainian designers from fashion magazines of the 1960s–1970s, as well as models from collections of contemporary Ukrainian designers, are introduced into scientific circulation. Conclusions. After analysing the goals of designers and the impact of visual works on promoting fashion and fixing the suit images in the imagination of the consumer audience, the following functions of fashion graphics are identified: communicative (by presenting a sketch or illustration, the designer establishes or reinforces a connection with the target audience); advertising (by placing a sketch, illustration or author’s narrative graphics in the information space — printed and online sources, the designer promotes a new product or creates cult features for an existing product); correspondence of the suit to a work of art (using visual means, the designer brings closer or equates the process of creating a suit with the creation of a work of visual art). The practical significance lies in identifying the functions of visual works that present the ideas of designers. The artistic work of artists and designers, which reveals the uniqueness of the created clothing examples, can still be used by designers today, both in the design process and as analogues of advertising and communication tools.

Keywords: visual arts; fashion illustration; sketch graphics; fashion graphics; narrative graphics; fashion design; communication

For citation
Introduction

Starting from the late 18th century, illustrations in fashion magazines were the most informative means of introducing fashion fans to the novelties of the seasons. By the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the presentation possibilities of fashion designs became more diverse. Numerous fashion houses aimed to shape the consumer’s comprehensive view, creating not only clothing but also perfumes, accessories, and cosmetics. The display of new products involved fashion models and the use of fashion illustrations published in prestigious fashion magazines. This required the involvement of illustrators to create artistic images that served as artistic advertising, capable of reaching a broader audience. It was the artistic techniques and solutions that allowed designers to create unique images, which are still an expression of style and a source of studying the history of fashion houses.

The visual aspect in fashion illustration and sketching is the display of a fashion example in the form of an artistic image on a plane that synthesises the artistic properties of graphics, painting, engraving, realist techniques, and stylization. The illustrator or designer visualises the objective properties of the suit, using such visual means as shape, volume, composition, colour, and spatiality. An important reference point for a visual language, a detailed illustration, or a quickly executed exploratory sketch is style; stylistic development encompasses not only the suit, but also the hairstyle, shoes, stylised facial features, the model’s manner or pose, as well as spatial additions.

Recent research and publications analysis. The issue of fashion illustration and sketch graphics has been explored in various publications. For instance, the work by I. Udris and N. Udris Fashion Illustration: From the Renaissance to Postmodernism (2013) examines the evolution of fashion illustration from the 15th century in the general cultural context of each specific era, in particular as a component of artistic styles and trends of its time up to the present day. This study focuses on the contemporary state of hand-drawn illustration, considering its role in design practice. The same authors studied the process of forming a fashionable female image in the plot “woman and car”, which became an indispensable component of the culture of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods by means of fashion illustration (Udris & Udris-Borodavko, 2018). After analysing the works of such artists as J. Stewart, J. Chéret, C. Gibson, H. Fisher, E. Penfield, J. Leyendecker, T. Łempicka, G. Lepape, the authors distinguish two groups of illustrations: in the first, the image of an attractive woman is used to promote a new vehicle, in the second, the model of lifestyle desired by the audience is visualised, characterised by luxury, self-confidence, activity in the midst of dynamic social changes. Therefore, fashion illustration is a powerful advertising tool.

A thesis by N. Myrhorodska (2014), devoted to the evolution of forms in design and artistic suit presentation in fashion illustration, focuses on revealing the features of the stylistic interpretation of fashion suit images, particularly on formal and aesthetic, imaginative and stylistic, and compositional decisions. This allows the author to establish a certain typology of artistic and technical means of expressiveness used for visualising fashion suits in illustrations.

Various aspects of fashion illustration were considered in the selected works of O. Lahoda (2018), A. Dubrivna and K. Kruzhylina (2020), A. Seleznova (2020). Thus, in
the context of considering the practices of suit representation, O. Lahoda (2018) pays attention to visual and informational practices, particularly the artistic and graphic representation of suits, 20th-century fashion illustration, and the imaginative range of illustrations as information structures (pp. 155–201). The perspective of the analysis of fashion illustration by the author is formed around the advertising function, as well as particular means of expression, thanks to which this method of suit visualisation is singled out as a distinct form of creative activity, directly demonstrating the evolution of stylistic trends in fashionable images.

A. Dubrivna and K. Kruzhylina (2020) explore contemporary trends in fashion illustrations. The authors distinguish three types of creating illustrations: traditional, digital, and mixed. According to them, the traditional type is characterised by the use of artistic techniques that allow the illustrators to express the unique features of their graphic style. Digital techniques represent a modern type of illustration and optimise the creative work of illustrators and designers, offering a significant range of possibilities. These include raster graphics (where the image consists of a grid of pixels, and the colour differences form a graphic image perceived by the human eye as a single picture) and vector graphics (images are created from individual geometric shapes that can be transformed and scaled without losing quality, providing a great variety of forms). The mixed type involves the synthesis of digital and traditional methods of creating illustrations. Such a combination provides limitless space for ideas and allows the selection of a completely new direction in creating illustrations. The authors emphasise: “Despite the fact that the illustration is created as part of the process of designing new clothing, it also occupies a place in other areas of the fashion industry: in advertising campaigns, in ornamental compositions for textile design, and also acts as an independent form of visual art” (Dubrivna & Kruzhylina, 2020, p. 71).

Among the current development trends of fashion illustration in Ukraine, A. Seleznova highlights the use of techniques of watercolours, gouache, ink, and acrylic; the creation and processing of illustrations using such programmes as Adobe Photoshop, Digital illustration on iPad, and Adobe Illustrator; and using a wide variety of characters. These trends were identified by the author as a result of an analysis of the works of such Ukrainian illustrators as Polina Medvedieva, Svitlana Makarova, Maryna Murycheva, Lilit Sarkisian, Nataliia Volobuieva, Yuliia Slavinska, Anastasiia Arsenik, Mariana Marshe, Mariia Suslova (Seleznova, 2020).

The research step aimed at reconstructing the history of fashion illustration in Ukraine, systematising the functions of fashion illustration in the practice of domestic fashion in the 20th century, and analysing its technical and aesthetic possibilities was taken by H. Kokorina et al. (2021). It is important that the author, in addition to considering fashion illustration as a purely artistic visualisation of an image, pays attention to the sketch as the initial fixation of the designer’s idea. “The sketch, the outline of the suit model, is a unique form of crystallising an idea, the centre of tension of thin threads connecting fashion with various spheres: art, politics, physicality, mass culture”, notes H. Kokorina et al. (2021, p. 200). The researcher paid special attention to fashion graphics and suit design practice in Ukraine in the 1920s.

Based on the literature analysis, it can be argued that the authors mainly considered fashion illustration as an independent form of visual art, as an advertising tool, and as a source of studying the stylistics of fashion suits. The visual forms of expressing
the designer’s ideas (fashion illustration, sketch graphics) as means of presenting their creativity and communicating with the consumer audience have not been the subject of special study. Various manifestations of visualising the idea either by the designer himself or through the vision of the designer by the illustrator using visual art require comprehension, systematisation, and generalisation.

**Aim of the article**

The aim of the article is to identify the types and functions of fashion graphics as a means of visualising the ideas and concepts of a fashion designer.

**Main research material**

Since the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century — a period of the emergence of fashion houses and publishing — fashion illustration was used to attract the attention of customers, advertise clothing models, a shop, or the designer’s name. Fashion illustration had another function — promoting a way of life and shaping ideals of beauty. Even after modelling became a profession, and photography took a prominent place in advertising, fashion houses still actively employed fashion illustration. Let’s consider the types of using visual art in presenting a designer’s ideas.

1) **Fashion-illustration in the suit presentation.**

Such French fashion designers as P. Poiret, J. Lanvin, G. Chanel, E. Schiaparelli, and C. Dior collaborated with illustrator-artists who synthesised various artistic techniques in their work. What factors contributed to such an active appeal of fashion designers to fashion illustration? Paul Poiret created women’s dresses, manteaus, suits, and tunics with flounces, drawing inspiration from theatre, painting, and decorative arts of Asia and the East. He declared: “I am an artist, not a tailor!” The designer initiated a series of creative collaborations with illustrators and artists, comparing the creative act of tailoring to the process of creating art, stating, “Am I a fool to dream of depicting art in my dresses? Am I a fool to say that tailoring is an art? After all, I always loved artists and felt equal to them” (Lesso, 2019).

One of his early collaborations was with the artist Paul Iribe in 1908, whom Poiret entrusted to present the clothing designs on the characters with intricate and small details; the resulting works of art were published in the edition *Les Robes de Paul Poiret, Racontes par Paul Iribe*. A similar publication followed in the joint work of P. Poiret with the artist Georges Lepape under the title *Les Choses de Paul Poiret vues Par Georges Lepape*. The collaboration between the designer and the artists was mutually beneficial; the artists gained commercial popularity, and exquisite illustrations added authority to P. Poiret’s projects. This combination of art and design increased public interest in fashion illustration, leading to the spread of illustrated fashion publications. Paul Poiret, working with artists and feeling a close kinship with their methods, wrote: “It seems to me that we are engaged in the same craft, and that they are my work colleagues” (Lesso, 2019). Therefore, one of the factors that prompted designers to turn to artistic illustration was the identification with artists.
Similar motives prompted C. Dior to present his work not only through printed advertising and shows in his salon but also with the help of fashion illustrations, in particular, made by C. Bérard (Fig. 1). The artist did not focus on facial features, his attention was directed towards the silhouette and the detailed elements of the suit; the image of a woman is presented against the background of an architectural landscape. The model in Fig. 2 also poses in the urban street space. Both versions of the image presentation, in their own way, reveal the essence of the designer’s idea — to bring back refinement to women’s fashion in the post-war era. Without a doubt, the illustration contributed to cementing in the minds of several generations the characteristic silhouette of the main style of the 1950s — the New Look.

2) Illustrated fashion magazines. Despite the diversity of fashion shows and photography techniques, such publications as illustrated magazines, continued to function in the 1960s not only in foreign periodicals but also in Ukraine. The images featured in such magazines didn’t necessarily represent ready-made clothes; they were designed for the distribution of fashion standards. Fig. 3 shows the cover of the magazine Fashion — 1962, Kyiv, and in Fig. 4, there is a model of a summer coat made of light brocade fabric, extended to the bottom, authored by one of the most famous Ukrainian fashion designers, V. Nesmiian.

At the stages of the establishment of various forms of clothing presentation, fashion illustration was often created after the completion of the outfit, undoubtedly contributing to the promotion of a new trend. An example of this can be seen in the Ukrainian publication — the fashion album of the Kyiv House of Clothing Models Fashion 77. The sets made of coat fabric — a straight skirt with soft darts and a scarf decorated with fringes — are shown in Fig. 5. An outdoor ensemble made from striped coat
fabric with a four-seam skirt and a scarf with a fringe is depicted in Fig. 6. These models were created by the famous fashion designer H. Mepen, and depicted by the famous fashion artist L. Avdieieva. Having the unique opportunity to compare the artistic illustrations with the finished products, as shown on the models in the photos (Fig. 7), one can observe the similarity of the figures and hairstyles between the drawn images and the real-life versions. This confirms the conscious approach of the management of the Kyiv House of Clothing Models in presenting fashion products both by fashion models in the real space of the city, and with the help of visual means. On the back cover, instructions are provided for the construction of pattern drawings, and it is noted that the models featured in the album were designed by the artist-designers of the Kyiv House of Clothing Models and recommended for publication by the artistic council (Kavunenko, 1977). The pattern for the model (size 48, height III) can be found in the publication’s appendix.

3. Fashion illustration as a design element of the designer’s publications and fashion publications. A separate type of application of fashion illustration is the artistic design of the pages of fashion publications. Fig. 8 shows an illustration supplement to the “Style in Details” column by Ukrainian designer L. Poustovit in the 2005 issue of ELLE magazine. “When it comes to matters of style, she is a recognised authority. Designer Lilia Poustovit answers your questions about fashion and the art of presenting yourself. Write to her at the address...” (“Stil’ v detalyakh”, 2005, p. 149).

The illustration reflects the fashion trends of 2005, but its overall function is to reinforce the association of the textual page with fashion and evoke a positive emotional state in readers.

Another example is the combination of photo images with fashion illustrations in the 2008 Italian VOGUE magazine (Fig. 9). Arranged as collages, the images are supple-
mented with handwritten text fragments. This synthesis ensures that the magazine’s pages do not look monotonous, and the viewer’s perception focuses on the creative nature of the fashion sphere.

**Figure 5.** Coat fabric set: a straight skirt with soft darts and a scarf. Decoration — tassels (Mepen, 1977b)

**Figure 6.** Outdoor ensemble made from striped coat fabric. The skirt is four-seamed. The scarf is adorned with tassels (Mepen, 1977a)

**Figure 7.** Models of the Kyiv House of Clothing Models demonstrating outdoor ensembles. Author H. Mepen, 1977 (kyivpastfuture, 2020)

**Figure 8.** Fashion illustration from L. Poustovit’s column “Style in Details” (questions and answers). ELLE Ukraine magazine, September 2005 (“Stil’ v detalyakh”, 2005, p. 149)

**Figure 9.** The use of fashion illustrations in the design of a fashion magazine. VOGUE, № 693 (“Cerimonia con twist”, 2008, p. 136)
4. Sketch of the product.

One of the functions of fashion graphics is a sketch visualisation that captures the designer’s idea, a preliminary or final image of the future clothing model. Unlike fashion illustration, which represents the product figuratively, conceptually, with the help of visual artistic means such as colour, texture, stylistic features, shadows, lines of movement, background, sketch graphics is the first stage of the design process. The purpose of sketching is to depict the form, structural elements, details, articulation lines, and decoration. The sketch should convey information to other professionals collaborating with the designer. To find the final version, designers often have to create a series of exploratory sketches; in some cases, the solution is visualised right away.

One of the most perfect examples of sketch graphics as a component of the design process is the sketches of the French fashion designer Y. Saint Laurent. Thanks to the archives of the fashion house, we can observe the designer in the process of depicting the suit, a fragment of the sketch series, supplemented with selected fabrics in the intended colour scheme for each model, and the finished product on the model (Fig. 10–12). In accordance with the designer’s visualised concept, the models have standard parameters, with a clearly thought-out range of geometric elements in corresponding colours, inspired by the works of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian. Did the project process with routine work remain on the designer’s desktop? No, this process was actively presented by the designer in the late 1960s and accompanied the stunning success of one of the cult collections of the 20th century, thus becoming a significant presentation component of Y. Saint Laurent’s legacy today. This is confirmed by the huge display boards presented by the fashion house at many exhibitions and on the designer’s museum website in Paris (Homage to Piet Mondrian, n.d.).

![Figure 10. Y. Saint Laurent is in the process of creating a suit sketch. Paris, 1954 ("Yves Saint Laurent", n.d.)](image1)

![Figure 11. Y. Saint Laurent. Fragment of a board with sketches from the haute couture collection, autumn-winter 1965. Paris (Homage to Piet Mondrian, n.d.)](image2)

![Figure 12. Cocktail dress “Mondrian” from the haute couture autumn-winter 1965 collection. Paris (Homage to Piet Mondrian, n.d.)](image3)
Contemporary Ukrainian designers, unlike the masters of the previous generation, unfortunately, place less emphasis on the importance of the practice of accompanying the promotion of a product on the market with a demonstration of sketches or fashion illustrations. On official resources and social media, there is no relationship between the exploratory sketch stage and the final result — the finished product. Among the few presentations of sketch graphics, an example can be given of the spring-summer 2015 collection by A. Tan (Fig. 13). The collection’s sketch without changes is embodied in the finished product presented during the show at Ukrainian Fashion Week (Fig. 14). As the leitmotif of the collection called FLOWERS MARKET, the designer chose rainbow colours transitioning softly into pastel shades, with elements of floristry (‘Andre TAN’, 2022).

In contrast to the limited cases of presenting sketch graphics by Ukrainian designers, it should be noted the increasing interest of a wide audience in fashion illustration as an independent form of creative work. The corresponding courses are popular among fashion fans and beginning designers; in the design service market, the role of the artist-illustrator is offered as a service; holding special competitions, such as the All-Ukrainian Online Competition of Fashion Illustrations “Motley Stripe” (KNUKiM), the IMAGO fashion illustration biennial (within the framework of Ukrainian Fashion Week), etc. are of great importance. Attraction to this type of creative work will undoubtedly contribute to the development of artistic taste.

5. Generalised (conceptual) image of the collection.

The author's creative vision distinguishes the conceptual presentation of the generalised image of the spring-summer 2015 collection by the Ukrainian designer
V. Anisimov (Fig. 15). The collection was created for the Ukrainian brand TAGO. With the designer’s characteristic irony, he created a mood board for the collection and named it “a collage of associations, hints, and semi-shadows” (“Mudbord k kolleksii”, 2014). The characteristic image of the collection is achieved through the use of computer graphics. Looking at the collection’s models (UFW Den 3, 2014), we can observe that the elaborate head decoration is reflected in the form of a fantasy headdress with bright accents on many models (Fig. 16), a piece of clothing with a zipper and shoes are transformed into clothing sets with bright accents and elements of sports style. The sources of inspiration for the collection were paintings by modernist artists, as well as the designer’s personal life impressions.


Narrative graphics hold a special place in a designer’s communication with the target audience. This variety is not a widely used method of communication in the field of fashion, but the creative director of Chanel, K. Lagerfeld. His author’s drawings decorate the pages of the book of the British writer and journalist J. Picardie (2010). As can be seen in Fig. 17, the designer, portraying his outstanding predecessor, presents his own hand in the iconic leather glove with scissors as an element of the composition. Fig. 18 shows a hypothetical conversation between G. Chanel and K. Lagerfeld. Is this drawing a way for K. Lagerfeld to creatively spend the time? No, this is a conscious communication technique of the designer, a clear reminder for the thousands of consumers — whose line of style and design he continues. Many European designers
continue the work of outstanding fashion houses, but few of them demonstrate the continuity of connection with the founders.

![Image](image1)

**Figure 17.** K. Lagerfeld. Chanel (Picardie, 2010, p. 514)

![Image](image2)

**Figure 18.** K. Lagerfeld. Hypothetical conversation between G. Chanel and K. Lagerfeld: C.C.: What else will you do on my behalf? Aren’t you tired of Chanel? K. L.: No, just this question is boring... (Picardie, 2010, p. 330)

**Conclusions**

The conducted research is based on the definition of visual art as an important tool in the designer’s visualisation of an idea for a new fashion model or in creating an image from a developed product. In depicting the suit and stylised appearance of the model, designers or artists synthesise distinct features of graphics, painting, engraving, realism, and stylisation techniques, employing such visual means as form, volume, composition, colour, and spatiality. Based on the analysis of works illustrating clothing models of such designers as K. Dior, Y. Saint Laurent, H. Mepen, V. Nesmian, A. Tan, V. Anisimov, as well as the author’s graphics of K. Lagerfeld, the following types of using visual art in presenting designer’s ideas are identified: 1) fashion illustration in suit presentation; 2) Illustrated fashion magazines; 3) fashion illustration as a design element of the designer’s publications and fashion publications; 4) sketch of the product; 5) generalised (conceptual) image of the collection; 6) narrative graphics.

Based on the analysis of the designers’ objectives and the impact of visual works on promoting fashion products and fixing the suit images in the imagination of the consumer audience, the following functions of fashion graphics are identified:
− communicative (by presenting a sketch or illustration, the designer establishes or reinforces a connection with the target audience);
− advertising (by placing a sketch, illustration, or author’s narrative graphics in the information space — printed and online sources, the designer promotes a new product or creates cult features for an existing product);
− correspondence of the suit to a work of art (using visual means, the designer brings closer or equates the process of creating a suit with the creation of a work of visual art).

It is also necessary to indicate the factors that have influenced the decrease in the attention of many contemporary designers regarding the effectiveness of using fashion graphics in promoting their own products: the significant development of digital technologies, allowing the creation of sketches through computer graphics; advancements in photo technologies; accelerated production and sales, which also affects the need to produce advertising within a limited time frame. In further publications, attention will be focused on the stylistic characteristics of fashion graphic works that influence the effectiveness of the designer’s communication with the target audience.

References


Образотворчість як засіб презентації творчого задуму дизайнера одягу

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Мета статті — виявити різновиди та функції fashion-графіки як засобу візуалізації ідеї, задуму дизайнера. Результати дослідження: схарактеризовано роль образотворчості у вираженні задуму дизайнера одягу; на основі систематизації та аналізу зразків fashion-графіки, що візуалізують моделі одягу таких дизайнерів, як К. Діор, І. Сен-Лоран, Г. Мепен, В. Несміянь, А. Тан, В. Анісімов, а також авторської графіки К. Лагерфельда, виявлено такі різновиди використання образотворчості в презентації ідей дизайнера: 1) fashion-ілюстрація в презентації костюма; 2) ілюстровані журнали моди; 3) fashion-ілюстрація як елемент оформлення публікацій дизайнера та модних видань; 4) ескіз виробу; 5) узагальнений (концептуальний) образ колекції; 6) сюжетна графіка. В роботі використано методи аналізу та синтезу, історико-хронологічного, порівняльного, образно-стилістичного аналізу, вибірковий метод і систематизацію візуальної інформації. Наукова новизна: вперше в історії та сучасному розвитку системи моди зразки fashion-ілюстрації, ескізів, рисунків зарубіжних та українських художників і дизайнерів розглянуто в контексті комунікації дизайнера зі споживачькою аудиторією; в науковий обіг введено моделі українських дизайнерів із періодичних модних видань 1960–1970-х рр., а також моделі з колекцій сучасних українських дизайнерів. Висновки. Проаналізувавши цілі дизайнерів і результати впливу зображувальних творів на просування модних виробів і закріплення образів костюмів в уяві споживачької аудиторії, виявлено такі функції fashion-графіки: комунікативна (демонструючи ескіз або ілюстрацію, дизайнер встановлює або закріплює зв’язок із цільовою аудиторією); рекламна (розміщуючи ескіз, ілюстрацію або сюжетну авторську графіку в інформаційному просторі, зокрема в друкованих та інтернет-джерелах, дизайнер рекламує новий виріб або формує ознаки культовості щодо вже наявного виробу); відповідності костюма твору мистецтва (використовуючи образотворчі засоби, дизайнер наближає або прирівнює процес зі створення костюма до створення твору образотворчого мистецтва). Практичне значення полягає у виявленні функцій зображувальних творів, що презентують ідеї дизайнерів. Образотворчий доробок художників і дизайнерів, що розкриває унікальність створених зразків одягу, нині може бути використаний дизайнерами як у проектному процесі, так і як аналог рекламно-комунікаційних засобів.

Ключові слова: образотворчість; fashion-ілюстрація; ескізна графіка; fashion-графіка; сюжетна графіка; дизайн одягу; комунікація