

# Recognition of Fashion in Photography with Semiotics Approach

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**Abstract** – Semiotics is the review and recognition of signs and shows signs' compositions. By reading artworks, we can interpret artistic texts and conceptualize their hidden layers. This research is on to recognize fashion in photography with semiotics approach. One of the most important things in fashion photography mechanism is transferring the semiotics of conceptual object to the extensive audience. Fashion photography is a branch of photography in which fashion and cloth are shot along with the model. In the final and main part of this research, signs related to the fashion photography, according to the theoretical foundations of semiotics, were analyzed in 11 works. This research is qualitative and has been done with the method of descriptive-analytic, and the method of the analysis was content-comparative. This research according to the purpose is fundamental-practical, and data collection method is library-archival. The results indicate these elements in reviewed works: semiotics according to the social contracts, type of semantic signs, transfer the concept via behavioral-physical sign, Bart's visual semiotics function, the mechanism of locative semiotics in fashion phenomenological recreation, the mechanism of time semiotics in fashion photography, Pierce's semiotics system and its symbolic and indicative types.

**Keywords** – Fashion, Photography, Semiotics and Fashion Photography.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, interdisciplinary studies play an important part in academic studies in the world. This feature can develop knowledge boundaries; especially, in Iran as a developing country. A writer should focus on the comparative issue, art. Because art is an important legacy in this country, and it should be respected. It's a pleasure to say that Iran is along with modern art and it always has contemplative creations; one of them is photography. This art entered the country almost simultaneously with its emersion in Europe, and we have seen some great flourishing in this regard. Today, photography, like other arts, has different types. One of the most important types is fashion photography; because fashion is art and craft, economic and social, constructor and anomaly. So fashion photography should be recognized more. This art-craft underwent ups and downs in Iran in recent years. From one side, we have capable artists and from the other side, we face challenges inhibiting fashion development, because of our culture.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Fashion is a multifaceted and comparative problem; it involves cultural parameters, social mechanisms, political issues, media elements, series of individual needs,

collective works, theories of arts and aesthetics, philosophical, sociological and psychological viewpoints. Accordingly, the phenomenology of fashion and related issues has special significance. By reading photographic practice toward fashion, we can perceive it deeply. To achieve this perception, we need some things, and according to this research, the most important thing is the knowledge of semiotic. So it is essential to study about this recognition to develop the social mentality of the comparative studies of art and society, along with the phenomenology of fashion and production related knowledge. Therefore, the significance of this research is clear, and we hope that cultural management of the country use it in plans and policies related to fashion in order to improve the level of vision and perception in photography studies and fashion design, and also increase quality of increase of scientific data in social-cultural phenomenological and practical semiotics research.

## III. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This research according to the type is qualitative and descriptive-analytic, and according to the analysis method is content-comparative. This research according to the purpose is fundamental-practical. Method of this research based on the data collection method is library-archival. The tools of data collection in this research are taking notes from written sources, copying from archival sources, preparing reports, and making discussion with related people.

## IV. INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMIOTICS IN VISUAL ARTS

Photography and fashion, and generally art have a special position in critical issues that shows its role in our life. Art review helps the thoughtful person and combine imaginations with thoughts. It thinks instead of an artist with reviewer's help, and experience creation. "Each visual frame shows the instant of time in its possible world, and elements in the frame have spatial coordinates in that moment; it seems that without the coordinates of space and time, we cannot imagine the moment inside the frame." (Sojudi, 2009: 182) "We should not forget that the passage of time picture is not a feature of single painting frame. In this case, painting frame and its semiotics features cannot explain the concept of time passage because of the incoherence of the frames, but it can explain a moment of moments in a possible world." (Sojudi, 2009: 184).

It seems that elements in the single-framed painting are not coherent, and they cannot be a narrator for the

semiotics and expressive features of painting but by passing through the frame and painting. The name of the painting, the special statement of the gallery, the gallery's title work as a language for passing through the painting and effect on the audiences' mind. In this mode, this is not expressive features that show time passage, but elements' connectivity through the time is the cause of time streaming out of the frame. It also seems that time expression is possible just by something's move in a way. Move and time cannot be expressed in the frame, they can have this possibility by passing through out of frame, using another layer, using other coding semiotics features, like language and associations expressed by language and in a coherent way. Bart says: "talking about visual civilization is not right, we are still in writing civilization, even more than before. It is necessary to mention that we almost always use writing under the image or on the video in advertisements. Maybe writings don't have their primitive role, but they guide and help, and have an overtone role in image and video. In fact, new technology represents images with the real thing in the humans' world. Concepts move us away from the real world." (Harland, 2009: 85).

Therefore, image and writing are depended on each other. The reference that writing gives to the text cause to discover more hidden layers. "Watching a painting is listening, perceiving it. Painting is not just a music, but it is a language. The language's idea includes translation's idea. Painting is a person who translates the words into visual images, and a reviewer is a poet who brings the lines and colors back to the words. An artist is a world inclusion translator. This translation is a kind of transmutation that interpret non-linguistic to linguistic signs or vice versa. Every conversion is a new work, and is not a copy of original work, but is its metaphor" (Paz, 1997: 7). Indeed, translation the image to the language, create a new work that can be continued to the extreme, and it can create several signs in different audiences' minds.

## V. FASHION AND FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

Fashion and fashion photography have been liked by each other for years, and the unstable nature of fashion had an effect on fashion photography. "Despite the dogmatic thoughts about its frivolity, fashion is a special phenomenon that includes political, cultural, artistic, psychological, social, and many other indications. As Walter Benjamin said, we cannot deny the aesthetic aspect of fashion. (Wollen, 2008: 62).

Fashion is a common issue in today's life: type of clothing, automobile, color, home appliances, decoration, architecture, cell phones, and even social communication, like speaking, commingle, etc. we can examine the fashion in two-faceted: "1. Fashion in terms of people's taste, 2. Fashion as an imposing and dominating industry, fashion photography is related to both faceted. The fashion industry does not question the people's taste, and this is the main difference between fashion and fashion industry. In the nineteenth century, Charles Fredrik Worth started

fashion design by sewing his name to the clothes he designed. "Fashion comes from the privileged classes' tendency to identify themselves. They want to differentiate themselves from people who follow them" (Braudel: 1994: 313). After World War II, the general changes caused that the monopoly of using fashion became exclude from the privileged classes. Because of the new opportunities that fashion phenomenon gave to a widespread part of society, fashion magazines had a marvelous growth. Most photographers of these magazines sought charming concepts. By using creative subjects of photographing, editors competed to make their magazines more attractive. This led some photographers to focus on this subject.

In Iran, the first person who extremely wanted to be modern was Tajossaltane, daughter of Nasereddin Shah. She went a way that Reza Shah chose it in order to modernization many years later (Kurd, 2009: 103). Fashion photography is an obsolete attitude of photography in Iran, which has been forgotten for 30 years. This is not for its photographic nature, or it is not a reflection of the Islamic government to the word of fashion; this is just because of the one-dimensional look of Iranian photographers at fashion photography. "Photography was the best way to record, definition, and presentation of fashion to the fashion global culture, and this led to the creation of fashion because of photography" (Shinkle, 2006: 1).

## VI. ANALYSIS OF SIGNS IN FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY IN TERMS OF IMAGE

In this section, we want to analyze the signs related to the fashion in some works (as a case study), according to the theoretical foundations of semiotics.

In picture 1, we see sign up according to social contracts. Indeed, traveling by train had a special clothing fashion. As Umberto says: "Sign is a thing that introduces something instead of something else according to the social and predetermined contracts" (Ahmadi, 2011: 32).



No.1. Toni Frissell, 1951. (Niven, 1997: 352).

In this picture that is one of the best fashion photography (Solomon, 1993: 266), we see the conceptual sign. According to Nercissians' saying, semiotics seeks to

find and build a meaning, and can reach that by studying the signs, “and we cannot study the meaning apart from the subject - the person who defines it and uses it in their usual life, and also the cultural system which created it (Nercissians, 2008).



No. 2. Pier Luis Pierson, 1863. (Solomon, 1993: 266).

In the picture below, the photographer tried to transfer a significant concept to the behavioral-physical sign. In fact, one of the most important fashion photography mechanism is transferring the semiotics of concept object to the audience. Charles Sanders Peirce emphasizes the significance of signs: “we can think in the beam of signs. We cannot think without signs. Signs might show verbal, visual, phonetic, alphanumeric and other similar manners. This is clear that they don’t have to mean alone, rather the meaning is something that we add it” (Zeimaran, 2003: 41).



No. 3. American model, Rene Gunter. (Hall, 1979: 24).

This picture includes semiotics’ mechanism of Barthes. He says: “Everything is a sign because a revealer reveals it as something’s sign. So semiotics doesn’t involve with a special object. It faces usual objects \_objects that are in the range of signs” (Barthes, 2010: 10).



No. 4. Design of women’s clothing.

As we saw in the previous picture, fashion photography does not seek for transferring a definite and stable meaning to the audience. It can sign up itself. Justine Luis believes that: “sign does not have a physical existence. Signs do not show the meaning, rather they get it. In other words, the meaning is not included in a word or a thing that sign should be used instead” (Nercissians, 2008: 18). You can see the proof of this context in his fashion photography.



No. 5. The modern design of clothing and innovation in photography. (Alexander, 2008: 66).

The picture below shows the most important aspect of visual signs from Barthes perspective (that is related to the copying and imitating in photography): “a picture is an imitation, it means that it is comparative” (Ahmadi, 2010: 19).



No. 6. Designing clothes according to the different colors.

In picture 7, we see the use of the mechanism of locative semiotics (gallery) in fashion phenomenological recreation. Ferdinand de Saussure claimed: “while the language is single-faceted, painting and picture are based on an order of several dimensions in semiotics [...] locative dimensions have a special importance in visual signs; this means that the reflection of 3-D content to the 2-D scope, is a one locative feature of image” (Zeimaran, 2003: 188).



No. 7. Islamic designs in fashion.

The picture below is related to the timing mechanism of semiotics. Farzan Sojudi writes: “Each visual frame shows the instant of time in its possible world, and elements in the frame have spatial coordinates in that moment; it seems that without the coordinates of space and time, we cannot imagine the moment inside the frame. But we should not forget that the passage of time picture is not a feature of single painting frame. In this case, painting frame and its semiotics features cannot explain the concept of time passage because of the incoherence of the frames, but it can explain a moment of moments in a possible world.” (Sojudi, 2009: 182).



No. 8. Photographic creativity in fashion design.

“The external aspect of the sign in Piers’ theory refers to something, and that is the domain of external features in an extensive artwork. This aspect includes these elements: style; the technique of color use; the social, political, and economic fields of work, the audience’s reaction, the documents related to the work, and the artist’s signature” (Adams, 2011: 167).

## VII. CONCLUSION

Findings of this research are the result of 11 works’ analysis as the case study. We will continue the analysis of signs related to the fashion photography according to the theoretical foundation of semiotics and visual narratives:

Signing up according to the social contracts is an important point in data analysis. In fact, traveling by train had a special clothing fashion. We can say that sign is a thing that introduces something instead of something else according to the social and predetermined contracts. Besides signs with the social approach, there is a kind of conceptual sign seeking for find and create a meaning that can reach it by studying the signs. We cannot study the meaning apart from the subject the person who defines it and uses it in their usual life.

One of the most important fashion photography mechanism is transferring the semiotics of concept object to the audience. In fact, it happens through behavioral sign, and conceptualization will be formed. It can be said that we can think in the beam of signs. We cannot think without signs. Signs might show verbal, visual, phonetic, alphanumeric and other similar manners. And also it was seen in the analysis of case study, semiotics mechanism of Barthes. Everything is a sign because a revealer reveals it as something’s sign. So semiotics doesn’t involve with a special object. It faces usual objects \_objects that are in the range of signs. In contrast to the Barthes’ semiotics concepts, there is Piers’s semiotics order. Piers divided the signs into three groups: imagery, external and symbolic. In imagery sign, there is a similarity relation between sign and subject; in symbolic signs, there is a contractual relation between sign and subject; and in external signs, there is a conceptual or rational relation between sign and its subject.

The other approach that was indicated, reaches to the concept of signing up in fashion photography. In another word, this art is not going to transfer the identified meaning. Signs do not show the meaning, rather they get it. In other words, the meaning is not included in a word or a thing that sign should be used instead.

We can see the mechanism of locative semiotics in fashion phenomenological recreation in the pictures. The image is based on an order of several dimensions in semiotics. Locative dimensions have a special importance in visual signs; this means that the reflection of 3-D content to the 2-D scope, is one locative feature of the image. In contrast to the locative semiotics mechanism, there is the timing mechanism of semiotics in fashion photography. Visual frame shows the instant of time in its possible world, and elements in the frame have spatial coordinates in that moment; it seems that without the coordinates of space and time, we cannot imagine the moment inside the frame.

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