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Fragments of being: Marc Jacobs & postmodern ads

Caitlin Cristin White

FRAGMENTS OF BEING: MARC JACOBS & POSTMODERN ADS

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by

Caitlin Cristin White

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the way Marc Jacobs and Juergen Teller use principles of postmodern philosophy and aesthetic, namely through parody, in fashion advertising and photography to establish the Marc Jacobs brand and promote his products. The images, analyzed through the lens of visual rhetoric, seek to blur the line between art and advertising, and suggest the viewer who can understand the ambiguous visual argument is superior to consumers who are used to a more standard high fashion aesthetic and presentation.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The dust of advertising coats nearly every facet of contemporary American culture. It seeps into the before and after voiceovers during sporting events, slips into the pages of magazines and newspapers, and plasters the outdoors with symbols, phrases, and logos. Even films and TV shows are now laden with specific brands to pique the interest of viewers and potentially win over clientele. Magazines contain as many ads as they do actual content pages, newspapers are almost completely funded by advertisement revenue, and the pervasiveness of advertising as a business seems to grow exponentially (Kilbourne, 1999; Leiss, Klein, Jhally, & Botterill, 2005). As advertising's influence grows, though, consumers become more resistant to its pull, and people see advertising as "clutter" (Mallia, 2009). The composition process for ads has become so standardized, mainstream, and expected that it has grown dull, and the contemporary viewer is often uninterested in advertisements due to overexposure (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2002). In order to stand out, brands and products have begun to search for new and innovative ways to draw attention to themselves, and one of the most common ways they have been doing this is by using images in new ways (Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004, 2009). Just as the twentieth century and its technology led to the "linguistic turn" of words, scholars now point to the pictorial turn of twenty-first century culture (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007; Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2007). Technology has allowed photography, graphic design, and other artistic practices to be reproduced and used with great ease, and advertisers have

incorporated these styles into their work with increased frequency (Barthes, 1977/2010; Forceville, 1996; Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Scott, 1994)

The use of images and photography in advertising is by no means a new trend, but it is becoming more and more popular. Research has shown that using images to make claims is often more effective than spelling them out in headlines or body copy, and the process of interpreting the image ensures that viewers are more involved with ads (Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Schilperoord, Maes, & Ferdinandusse, 2009; Teng & Sun, 2002). Increased involvement with advertisements has been directly correlated to consumer purchase decisions and brand loyalty (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004, 2009). In particular, high-fashion brands favor advertising in order to maintain their designer status (Leiss et al., 2005), and tend to rely heavily on photography in their numerous advertisements (Arning, 2009; Leiss et al., 2005; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009; Pracejus, Olsen, & O'Guinn, 2006; Scott, 1994; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008). Over the past few decades, high fashion has been known for its "edgy" or "editorial" photography and design that focuses on the image while often foregoing body copy and headlines (Leiss et al., 2005). Luxury consumers perceive themselves as buying a lifestyle, not a product, and it therefore follows that the use of photography to capture a snapshot of this life would be effective (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010). Luxury brands also offer one of the only ways to establish European hierarchy of class, which has now almost disappeared. Although photography was deemed to be vulgar in comparison to painting when first developed (Barthes, 1981/2006; Sontag, 1977), it has now obtained an artistic status that lends it credibility and

sophistication, particularly in fashion advertising (Arning, 2009; Barthes, 1981/2006; Sontag, 1977).

Nowhere has this image-forward trend been more pronounced than within luxury brands. Although there are many clothes- and accessory-centered luxury brands, the majority of them have slowly been consolidated into approximately three major conglomerates: Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy (LVMH), Richemont, and Gucci (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010), which all stem from European heritage. The most powerful and moneyed conglomerate is LVMH, which is known specifically for its French affiliation (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010). However, American designers have recently begun to establish themselves as equally successful marketers of leisure elegance, competing effectively with the European tradition of luxury. American consumers responded to the American luxury concept with gusto, and LVMH hired young designer Marc Jacobs in 1997 to spearhead their ready-to-wear line in order to gain a foothold in this market (Foley, 2004; Widmayer, 2010). In addition, this boost allowed Jacobs to successfully start his own clothing line after many failed attempts. The advertising for his line has been almost solely produced in conjunction with well-known avant-garde fashion photographer Juergen Teller (Lineberry, 2009; Silva, 2009). Marc Jacobs' eponymous brand falls under the LVMH umbrella but maintains a number of key characteristic differences. According to an interview with Teller, the advertisements that the two created have caused a stir within the fashion industry at different points in time, but he thinks that no real analysis or explanation of the messages they portray has been undertaken (Silva, 2009). Overall, the advertisements have been met with confusion and

surprise from fashion writers but have been extremely effective at selling product and contributing to the exponential growth of the Marc Jacobs brand (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessey, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009).

As advertising and the image assume progressively central places in American culture, scholars have begun to study the rhetorical dimensions of images. Although words have long been privileged over images (Rice, 2004), recently the implications of images have come under scrutiny by scholars in a number of different disciplines (Olson, 2007). Most importantly, the field of visual rhetoric has developed to examine the persuasive powers of images in all forms (Benson, 2007; Hariman & Lucaites, 2007; Hope, 2006; Olson, 2007; Olson et al., 2007; Scott, 1994). Traditionally, rhetoric was concerned only with oratorical texts, but over time its application has expanded to encompass a variety of artifacts, including visual texts. Because advertising is a powerful ideological force within a culture that presents "shoulds" and reflects cultural values, the messages inherent in the images that ads use have important implications and shape cultural expectations and values (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999; Pollay, 1986; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008). Visual rhetoric offers the tools to unpack and exploit some of the hegemonic power structures that images in advertising implicitly reinforce.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how Marc Jacobs' print advertisements reflect elements of postmodern philosophy and appropriate features of highbrow art. The postmodern aesthetic Jacobs harnesses in these images emphasize a fragmented worldview that subverts dominant narratives of the past. This is done to send a specific message to the postmodern consumer through the advertisements that Marc Jacobs' ads

are smarter than more traditional ads, are unafraid to subvert long-held ideas around luxury culture, and that the consumer is really purchasing these characteristics through their interaction with both the ads and the products themselves. Herein, I offer historical background and theoretical grounding, followed by an exploration of the persuasive strategies at work in these images and their function. I begin by providing background on Marc Jacobs himself as an artist and a discussion of luxury markets and fashion advertising. I then look at the uses of visual rhetoric across a wide variety of visual elements, particularly in photography and advertisements. The literature concludes with a discussion of postmodern concepts and their intersection with consumer culture and art.

CHAPTER 2

Marc Jacobs and Art in Advertising: A Historical Perspective

Born in New York in 1963, Jacobs had a rocky childhood due to the early death of his father and his mother's subsequent remarriages (Widmayer, 2010). Eventually, his paternal grandmother raised him, and he cites her as one of his greatest influences (Schick, 1998; Widmayer, 2010). Jacobs has been described as the "the most talented and influential American designer of his generation" and has developed a cult-like following (Widmayer, 2010, p. 10). All of his schooling focused around fashion and design; he attended the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan and went on to attend Parsons School of Design. During high school, he worked as a stock boy in a high-end boutique and met designer Perry Ellis, a meeting that influenced him to pursue a career in fashion (Widmayer, 2010). During his last year at Parsons, Jacobs received three prestigious awards and was offered a contract in Tokyo for a collection of sweaters he designed (Widmayer, 2010). After several stints designing for other labels, Jacobs made little money but gained an enormous amount of attention from the press for his unique designs and antifashion conceptions. Finally, Jacobs began working on his brand again, which was floundering until he was hired as the designer for LVMH's first ready-to-wear women's collection. Winning five more awards over this time period, Jacobs soon hit his stride both as a designer for Louis Vuitton and his own line. Markedly, it was when the brand Marc Jacobs became part of LVMH and a print advertising campaign began in 1998 that Marc Jacobs grew to become a household name (Lineberry, 2009; Silva, 2009).

Overall, Jacobs has won more than twelve fashion design awards, which span different areas of expertise including womenswear, menswear and even accessory designer of the year (Widmayer, 2010). In 2011, he was granted a lifetime achievement award, and he won womenswear designer of the year in 2016. While Jacobs' initial anti-fashion inclinations were not successful, he was able to bring those ideas to fruition at LVMH. At the same time, traditional modes of advertising were losing power, and postmodern conceptions were on the rise (Cortese, 2004). So much of Marc Jacobs' work reflects key postmodern underpinnings (Rice, 2004), including paradoxical juxtaposition of opposites, fragments of past styles reinvented, challenges of conventional conceptions of fashion and fashion advertisements, co-constructed elements, inclusion of queer, non-heteronormative, and overtly sexual perspectives.

As he first began designing for LVMH, Jacobs was skeptical that traditional advertising would work to sell his somewhat unique product. As a result, he began collaborating with fashion photographer Juergen Teller in 1998 to produce some highly provocative advertisements (Lineberry, 2009; Silva, 2009). After a decade of working together on the campaign, Jacobs and Teller commemorated it in a 2009 coffee table book published by Steidl, which included all of the advertisements that Jacobs and Teller created to market both Marc Jacobs and Marc by Marc Jacobs, his lower-priced alternative brand (Lineberry, 2009). By collecting these advertisements and presenting them in book form, Jacobs was framing his advertisements as works of art or images worthy of preserving. Almost a decade after its publication, the book is more relevant than ever as a landmark artifact that traces the direction of luxury fashion ads. Clearly,

Jacobs and Teller were trendsetters of the highest order. In order to understand the ways in which their images subvert the traditional notion of a luxury advertisement, this chapter unpacks the history of that genre of images and provides an overview of the rise of advertising and the luxury consumer.

The Rise of Advertising & the Luxury Consumer

Perhaps the most important underpinnings of the advertising age are not the concepts of advertising but instead the concepts of public relations. As newspapers, telegraphs, and geographical reach of information grew, negative information about conglomerates and unethical practices of the "Gilded Age" fell under the gaze of the public eye (Ewen, 1996). Dissatisfied with the practices of big businesses and informed about their wrongdoings by the thriving practices of investigative journalism, the public assumed a more central role in dictating how businesses could behave. In addition, companies and brands began to realize the power of public relations, recognizing that the view consumers held toward them influenced consumers' purchase habits (Ewen, 1996). In order to create a positive impression, businesses began to rely more and more on advertising and public relations techniques. After witnessing the effectiveness of propaganda in World War I, American industry leaders grasped the power of "spin" for the first time and began to employ it to help sell products. The use of images and persuasive messages to infiltrate the consciousness of the American public began to assume the role it holds today, a central part of culture that dictates values. As Ewen (1996) stated, "In a seductive mix of words and images, advertising had begun to

associate goods with the emotional lives—the needs, cravings, aspirations, and fears—of the consumers to whom it spoke" (p. 112).

This concept of associating emotions with ads and products is one that truly captures the practices of postmodern advertisements, which subvert linear narratives in favor of fragmented, ambiguous imagery that can be interpreted subjectively by consumers. Advertisements promise to create the feelings they represent such that the act of buying is conceptualized as consuming the emotion the ad evokes (Page, 2006). Ewen (1996) cited the psychological writings of Le Bon, Freud, and Lippman as formative groundwork for advertising's eventual ideological character and for its success. Per Ewen (1996), Lippman specifically argued for the conditioning of the mind's habits, believing that humans create common ways of seeing things, which he dubbed "the habits of our eyes" (p. 149). Le Bon and Freud also pointed to the power of the image, the "imagination of the crowd," and the often-paradoxical fantasies that most people hold (Ewen, 1996). All of these conceptions went into the practice and formation of advertising as an ideological force in the early twentieth century, a force that has now become more powerful and central than almost any other in American culture (Pollay, 1986).

More specifically, the "Age of Advertising" dawned in the 1920s (Martin, 1995) but has become an age that has extended far past its initial origins, and the field continues to expand in both significance and reach. Martin (1995) asserted that advertising dictated new cultural values and became linked to fashion. Prior to the 1920s, the rise of industrialization and modern culture itself created a society in which fashion became

increasingly relevant (Leiss et al., 2005). The idea of fashion as it applies to clothing styles was born out of a cyclical conception of goods, a conception that could only be realized in industrial society. In this vein, Leiss et al. (2005) explained:

> A fashion system that emphasizes style, novelty, and continuous change became an important dynamic not just in clothing but in all types of goods. Fashion became institutionalized and specialized workers—including advertisers, product designers, and marketers—work within production cycles to popularize goods. (p. 34)

This idea of production cycle and popularization of goods is even more compelling within the framework of a "luxury" or "high-fashion" brand. As a term, luxury draws from the Latin root "luxuria" meaning "extravagance" and "lust," placing it firmly within the realm of Christianity's original "Seven Deadly Sins" (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010). Negative connotations of hedonism and greed are associated with the concept of luxury, along with a sense of status and pride (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010). Luxury brands have been most broadly defined as products that emphasize exclusivity through rarity and scarcity in combination with an elevated price (Lim, 2009). Initially, advertisers sought to replicate the class distinctions borrowed from European hierarchies in order to imbue luxury products with the elegance and status that luxury consumers craved (Leiss et al., 2005).

That changed during the 1960s wherein fashionableness was not associated as much with old-world sensibilities as with countercultural ideals. Leiss et al. (2005) stressed that "harnessing cool became a preoccupation of many business during this

period" (p. 319). Luxury and high-fashion brands represented an incorporation of old-world hierarchical class notions along with an idea of cutting edge "cool" (Leiss et al., 2005). As mass society rose in popularity during the first half of the nineteenth century and quickly declined in coolness, advertisers had to move away from the idea of a "hard sell" and find new ways to reach disenchanted audiences (Cortese, 2004; Leiss et al., 2005). Self-aware designs and "novel or creative" formats began to permeate advertising. Audiences wanted products that helped differentiate them as individuals, and thus the search for authenticity manifested itself in consumption (Leiss et al., 2005).

Out of the uproar of the 1960s sprang a new culture elite or "culturati" (Leiss et al., 2005). Conducting an intensive case study of over 4,000 ads in the magazine Vanity Fair throughout the 1990s, Leiss et al. (2005) characterized the target of these advertisements. The target can be defined as the new individual who seeks to find value through his or her own form of consumer self-expression. Taste and discernment, plus an eye for otherworldly, exotic styles, became a core value of this group, and connoisseurship of unique, authentic products was deemed an imperative skill (Leiss et al., 2005). This "culturati" prefer the modern and sleek over Victorian ornateness. Alternately, these consumers appreciate a peasant or artisan aesthetic, which emphasizes the individual as unique. The new luxury consumer paradoxically rejects the very ornateness of luxury brands. Consequently, advertisers had to come up with a new strategy; they "rewrote the narrative of luxury, poking fun at it or adding quirkiness to the objects of affluence" (Leiss et al., 2005, p. 532). By mocking traditional symbols of luxury, advertisers removed the value from the symbol and instead reassigned it to the

consumer, whose ability to distinguish which objects are culturally superior exhibits their good taste. As such, the ability to discern what is luxurious has become the commodity, not necessarily the item itself.

Products become the props for the self-construction of consumers, appearing in their various scenes and lifescripts. Leiss et al. (2005) defined this stage of advertising within a "mise-en-scene" framework wherein the directors of the scenes are the consumers themselves, who can "use these props in the service of a virtually unlimited set of creations and re-creations of value and shared meanings" (p. 568). In order to convey this multiplicity of meanings, high fashion brands often develop ads that are deliberately ambiguous and rely on "visual spectacle" that allows for an infinite array of meanings (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004). This is referred to as advertising polysemy, the existence of at least two or more distinct interpretations for the same advertising message across audiences, or across time and situations (Puntoni, Schroeder, & Ritson, 2010). According to the recent research in advertising literacy, audiences are not passive receivers of messages but instead co-create meaning within these polysemic messages of advertisements (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004). The coexistence of conflicting images does not pose a problem because consumers do not understand the messages in advertising as rational arguments. As Leiss et al. (2005) noted, theorists like Boorstin assert that the realms of meaning and suggestions made by symbols are the essence of modern advertisements, which do not adhere to a standard of truth but instead a standard of "believability." And if that is the case for modernity, then the essence of

postmodern advertising is fragments of belief, fragments most easily reach the luxury consumer as images in the pages of a magazine.

The use of magazine advertising by the overwhelming majority of luxury brands was determined largely by their target demographic and content access (Leiss et al., 2005). Due to the ability of magazines to appeal directly to niche audiences, the medium contributed largely to the celebration of lifestyle and celebrity culture that grew to infiltrate popular culture in the 1990s and into recent years (Leiss et al., 2005). In fact, Nielsen findings have shown that magazines garnered more of the advertising market than television (Sumner, 2001). Magazines became the easiest way to reach the "prized female consumer" and the "top one hundred advertisers increase[d] their investment in women's weeklies by more than 25 percent and in women's monthlies by 18 percent" in 2001 (Cardona, Moore, & Worren, 2002). This explains why niche magazines remained a stable media vehicle in the late 1990s and early 2000s whereas many other forms of traditional print media were folding in the face of digitalization (Leiss et al., 2005).

Magazine content has grown to increasingly include more images than any other types of content (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005), and advertising relies increasingly on images to convey messages (Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2002, 2004). In most advertisements, relating two unrelated things is necessary for creating a brand identity, as a brand in of itself has no real identity (Leiss et al., 2005), and staged photographs like those in fashion advertisements allow for this process to occur with help from the consumer, who co-creates the brand identity by unraveling the complex visual arguments in the ad (Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick,

1999; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Schilperoord et al., 2009; Teng & Sun, 2002). Brand identity has to be built over time, and the primary way that happens is through repeated exposure to advertising images (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999; Leiss et al., 2005). But advertisements are not simply links to a brand name. Increasingly, advertisements pose as deep, meaningful cultural interactions that consumers pursue only to find them essentially meaningless since most of products they present–and certainly most luxury ones–serve almost no real function and alleviate none of the consumer's perceived desires. The messages they convey about happiness and fulfillment are often unethical or controversial, but the subtlety of using a visual argument allows advertisers to make claims that would be appalling if presented explicitly. In order to understand how these images pose as meaningful interactions, a better grasp on the rhetorical power of the visual text is needed.

CHAPTER 3

Understanding Visual Rhetoric: A Review of the Literature

In the opening decades of the twenty-first century, it is no longer necessary to lay out a justification process for the field and study of visual rhetoric. The contemporary realization that visual elements in society persuade viewers just as effectively, if not more so, than written and oral texts has been recognized and reinforced by a myriad of scholars and critics whose arguments are too strong and too variant to ignore (Barthes, 1977/2010; Benson, 2008; Gregg, 1970; Gronbeck, 2008; Hariman & Lucaites, 2007; Hills & Helmers, 2004; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Olson, 2007; Olson et al., 2008; Scott, 1994; Sontag, 1977). Visual rhetoric's rise to importance can be partially attributed to emerging technologies and the use of the internet to globalize images that were previously inaccessible (Olson, 2007). Even before the internet and digital age, America and the rest of the global West grew progressively visual due to increased accessibility to technology (Gronbeck, 2008). During the early twentieth century, the ease of production blossomed for both color posters and photography, contributing to the "pictorial turn" that many scholars cite as replacing the "linguistic turn" (Gronbeck, 2008; Hill & Helmers, 2004). This shift in understanding about the importance of visual rhetoric can be traced to a number of different sources, ranging from Kenneth Burke's definition of rhetoric as "symbolic action" in 1950, to a series of rhetoric conferences in the 1970s that urged the broadening of scope in rhetorical criticism. One of the landmark scholars in the field, Gregg (1970), illustrated the broadened scope when he made this assertion: "Rhetorical criticism may be applied to any human act, process, product or artifact which,

in the critic's view, may formulate, sustain, or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes or behavior" (p. 6). Thus, although traditional practices of rhetoric did not foresee visual elements as potential texts, modern scholars look at rhetorical practices inherent in a number of visual elements in culture.

Broad Applications of Visual Rhetoric

This appreciation of visual rhetoric has led scholars to explore the persuasive dimensions of numerous and varied cultural artifacts such as memorials and statuary. Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) scrutinized the postmodern rhetorical dimensions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, noting how it disrupts both normalized cultural memory and architectural expectations. Unlike traditional memorials such as the Lincoln or Jefferson memorials, the Vietnam Memorial "wall" features the inscription of the names of the dead in a way that highlights individuality of the soldiers being memorialized and invites a personal interaction with them that other memorials purposefully suppress (Blair et al., 1991). Lamp (2009) also commented on an architectural visual argument presented in the *Aria Pacis Augustae*, an intricately carved altar that Augustus had installed following his coronation as emperor. Unpacking the allusions made in the persuasive artistry of the altar, Lamp (2009) revealed how the political myths inscribed on the altar situated Augustus as the worthy heir to the throne. Drawn from an ancient context, this critique highlights the ubiquitous importance of visual instruments of persuasion throughout history, even if their rhetorical power is only now being expressly highlighted.

Other rhetoric scholars have focused on political cartoons as visual arguments. For example, Edwards and Winkler (1997) argued that the frequent appropriation of the Iwo Jima image in political cartoons marks it as a visual ideograph in American culture, along the lines suggested by McGee in his analysis of this rhetorical form. Ideographs, or specific forms that represent the "essence of cultural beliefs" are marked by their ability to convey ideals at "highly abstract levels" (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, p. 120). Edwards and Winkler argued that the application of the image, even in fragments, to a myriad of topics within political cartooning illustrate how it has superseded categories of metaphor and becomes a visual ideograph. Similarly, Bates, Lawrence, and Cervenka (2008) analyzed political cartoons promoting African American nationalistic sentiments as expressive practices of what they label the "visual nommo." As they defined it, "nommo" is the lifeforce of expression that African Americans turned into practices of music, dress, art, and dance while denied access to the written word and education. In this case, that force is captured visually through the political cartoons of George H. Ben Johnson, who used methods of indirection, repetition, mythication, and stylin' (subversion of white norms) to offer visual arguments for Africans' return to strength by embracing their cultural African roots while remembering the struggles that they faced in the past.

Still other scholars have focused on visual arguments as they are embedded directly into cultural practices and subgroup affiliations, highlighting the ways in which these marginalized groups use visual practices in subversive ways. Brouwer (1998) studied how those who are HIV positive used tattoos to visually confront hegemonic thought about HIV and AIDS patients by embracing self-stigmatization. Brouwer found

that these men and women turned body art into a powerful social and political commentary by choosing to visually display an otherwise indiscernible part of their life. Extensively examining the performative action of this type of tattoo, Brouwer found that it disrupted expectations about information sharing boundaries and that visually textualizing the body's surface was a powerful form of protest against intolerance. LaWare (1998) also explored how cultural groups and outgroups visually reclaim cultural power and resist classification by examining Chicano "people's art" and mural painting. The texts analyzed argued visually for communities to come together and witness their historical legacy by arousing emotional interest in the current situation and drawing on their collective historical past. By placing the paintings in public, communal areas where even those outside the culture would see the art, the Chicano people made their visual claim unavoidable in a way that written or oral texts could not accomplish (LaWare, 1998).

Visual arguments made through films or photographs are often harder to distinguish because of the "proof" that images on film have always furnished (Barthes, 1981/2006; Sontag, 1977). If the argument is presented in a photograph or through film, audiences identify the material with a more realist perspective, assuming it to be true rather than a carefully constructed message that seeks to persuade. Stormer (1997) addressed concealed bias in visual messages through his analysis of the distinctly prolife film, "The Miracle of Life." Informed by a feminist perspective, he critiqued its dualistic, normative view of gender and heterosexual intercourse, which is performed through the underlying gendered narrative of magnified and aesthetically pleasing cinematography.

This example expressly addressed the guise of neutrality that photographs, films, and other visual forms purport. A closer look at any visual text, however, usually reveals the embedded prejudices and perspectives they contain.

Although these studies focused on very different artifacts, they share a common understanding of the persuasive power that visual arguments can have. Visual rhetoric draws its persuasive power precisely from its distinctiveness from written or oral practices. The unavoidability of visual elements adds to their power as an encounter with them does not require precise attention and is often not intentional at all. In addition, visual arguments can represent complex and varied claims that linguistic-based texts would need immense amounts of time and space to present.

Visual Rhetoric of Photography

Although scholars certainly find practices of visual rhetoric in any number of cultural elements, one of the most studied and celebrated form of visuality in contemporary culture is that of the photograph. There is a sense of certainty and objectivity that is associated with photographs. As Sontag (1977) explained: "Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we are shown a photograph of it" (p. 5). Messaris (1997) also pointed to the indexicality that photographs contain that other visual signs lack, leveraging C.S Peirce's categorization of signs lists three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons are easily distinguished as representational pictures, and symbols are signs associated by arbitrarily ordained conventions, such as words. Indexes, however, are signs that contain a physical trace of the object they represent or are actually caused by the object. Peirce usually used

a bullet hole to exemplify an index, but as Messaris noted, photographs qualify as this type of sign, which imbues them with a certain rhetorical power. Messaris explained, "The indexicality of photographic images (i.e., the fact that they are, in certain respects, direct physical imprints of the reality recorded in them) plays an important role in some forms of visual persuasion" (p. x). As both Messaris and Sontag (1977) went on to note that there is a compromise of reality that a photograph often conceals. As Sontag described it, "Despite the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness, the work that photographers do is no generic exception to the usually shady commerce between art and truth" (p. 6). By casting light on the "shady commerce" that photographs often employ, critics of photography's visual rhetorical practices illuminate culturally learned ways of viewing and seeing that otherwise go unnoticed.

Recognizing the way that photographs can be associated with objectivity and neutrality, a number of scholars have explored their persuasive dimensions within a photojournalistic context, focusing largely on their power to construct or support specific ideologies. One of the foremost ways that these ideologies are reinforced is through photographs that achieve an "iconic" status within a particular culture (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007). In their work, Hariman and Lucaites defined iconic photographs thusly:

> [I]mages appearing in print, electronic, or digital media that are widely recognized and remembered, are understood to be representations of historically significant events, activate strong emotional identification or response, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres or topics. (p. 27)

Performing an in-depth analysis of the iconic photograph entitled "Accidental Napalm," which portrays a naked Vietnamese girl running and screaming in pain from Napalm burns, Hariman and Lucaites (2003) offered background on why images and photographs are such a powerful form of expression. Hariman and Lucaites presented an alternative to Habermas' assertion that ideal public culture is built on deliberative rationality and argued that a televisual society's public sphere *depends* on visual rhetorics that "maintain not only its play of deliberative 'voices,' but also its more fundamental constitution of public identity" (p. 176).

Visuality lends itself readily to the public sphere, which is constituted by strangers who are only ever united when addressed. As the process of viewing a picture unites its audience by displaying the same image, it also fractures the group through their individual interpretations, none of which fully unveil the photograph's meaning (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003). Hariman and Lucaites unpacked how the photograph of "Accidental Napalm" functions to alert the American public to the overall immorality of the war by highlighting the pain of one individual. Iconic images function in a number of paradoxical ways: they create space for dissonance and interpretive readings of images and also represent concepts so culturally salient that the majority of citizens feel a connectedness to the image. The duality of these images occurs on a number of different levels, the first of which is the ability of iconic images to provide representations that motivate public action and democratic values while still being used by media elites for their own persuasive purposes (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003). This photograph forces the viewer to pause and inhabit a fragment of reality, a moment of uncompleted time. The

photo disrupts moral and aesthetic norms in a way that is linked to the multiplicity of perspectives and emotions surrounding the historical situation of the Vietnam war. Hariman and Lucaites (2003) asserted that the photograph's ability to reproduce both diverse and similar readings provide the foundation for its persuasive power and iconic status in American culture and memory.

Edwards (2004) continued the investigation of iconic photographs by examining the reification and appropriation of seminal images such as the photograph of JFK Jr.'s salute at his father's funeral procession. He asserted that iconic images are powerful because they frame a particular event in a way that implies universal contexts. Edwards also pointed to public knowledge as the means that imbues the photograph with its "special poignancy" (p. 181). In a way, the photograph came to stand for the public outrage and sorrow at JFK's untimely death, as exemplified in the tragic performance of grief captured in his son's salute. Edwards illustrated how iconic photographs help frame larger historical and cultural narratives through the use of particulars to evoke universal ideas and support cultural myths. In this particular photo, the prominence, cultural resonance, and celebrity of the subject matter function rhetorically to reiterate the already mythical status of the Kennedy family.

Even photographs that do not attain iconic status are powerful rhetorical statements about situations or individuals, and many scholars have addressed the implications that the wide circulation of images has on public understandings. The archetypes and identities that photographs project are almost never unbiased, as Cloud (2004) revealed in her analysis of the photographs of Afghanistan that were printed

during the War on Terrorism. She argued that the photography chosen by major media outlets functioned ideographically to promote a "clash of civilizations" mindset. The images constructed a paternalistic gaze and depicted Afghanistan as backwards and pre-modern to help justify the imperialistic intervention of US foreign policy at that time. Setting up paradigmatic differences between American "self" and the Afghani "other," the photos established binary oppositions and reduced the complex situation into a simpler visual metonymy. In a similar way, Caudle (2008) scrutinized the ways that Jackie Kennedy's identity as first lady was visually constructed through the images of her that were circulated during JFK's inauguration and presidency. Media outlets presented her enacting traditional feminine roles and creating a space for celebrity and style within the socially constructed role of first lady (Caudle, 2008). Caudle found that Jackie was portrayed in these binary roles through her positioning with JFK in photographs, she was condensed visually into an archetype of femininity but also presented a connection to the Kennedy family through her accessibility as a "celebrity heroine" (p. 16). Finnegan (2005) also worked with historical photographs but in the context of their reintroduction in a modern environment. When a series of articles on Lincoln published an earlier image of him than the public had previously been exposed to, image vernaculars and enthymemes circulated designating the newly released photo of Lincoln as a picture of "the man in the making" and "proof" of his moral character (Finnegan, 2005, p. 63). Finnegan examined the ways in which early photographs of Lincoln served as an "a metaphor, an image, an idea" (p. 63) of the public's fixed identity of Lincoln as a hero.

The introduction of the new image of Lincoln within a later historical context allowed audiences a space to recreate his early self as already heroic.

Other scholars have focused on the historical impact of photographs, highlighting that the entire process of remembering and recording history was altered by the invention of photography. Erickson examined how the rise of visual cultures allowed presidents to perform the role of the president, using a dramatized form of the spectacle to symbolically assemble fragments that illuminated their political influence. Presidential images use prudent performance to signal consubstantiality with mythic presidency, ideological authority, and active leadership (Erickson, 2000). In a similar vein, by exploring the relationship between films and photographs, Lancioni (1996) discussed how filmmakers tend to oversimplify and distort history through their use of visual artifacts. Video techniques allow specific parts of photos to be highlighted and expanded through the use of narrators and contextual information, further revealing the ease of promoting specific frameworks through media use. Photographic images also changed historical understandings by providing "proof" of what was really happening in other parts of the world and introduced scattered audiences to regionally specific concerns.

Scholars have also studied how photography developed in a journalistic context in America and how its use was especially important to movements like the Civil Rights movement (Harold & DeLuca, 2005). When young Emmett Till was brutally murdered during a visit to Mississippi in the 1950s, it was the dramatic photographs of his devastated body that brought home the realities of racial violence to the far reaches of the American public (Harold & DeLuca, 2005). Harold and DeLuca contended that "the

image of his body mutilated served as 'graphic testimony' that no written text could ever convey" (p. 265). The rhetorical power of the photographs of Emmett Till's body served as a call to action for the Civil Rights movement. The collective identification that audiences had with his body "speaking the truth" about racial violence effectively helped to "lynch lynching" as a practice (Harold & DeLuca, 2005, p. 269). Photographic proof of American racism in practice conveyed the seriousness of racial injustice to the public conscience in a way that verbal or literary accounts could not convey.

Photography changed historical practices and often facilitated confrontations with prejudice in American culture, but many scholars also highlight how practices of visuality continued attitudes of discrimination and intolerance. The advent of photography opened the door for people to view realities that they previously would not have been exposed to, but more significantly, it offered the invitation to survey the realities of others. Barthes (1981/2006) asserted photography's superiority to painting in this regard: "Contrary to these imitations, I can never deny that *the thing has been there*" (p. 76). An analysis of photographic prejudice is exemplified by Malin's (2007) work, which explored the rise of the stereoscope as entertainment in the early twentieth century. The device used photographs positioned at a particular perspective to create a three-dimensional image, which quickly grew popular as a new form of visual entertainment (Malin, 2007). Stereoscopes allowed the American public to visually interact with environments and scenery they normally would not have been able to experience (Malin, 2007). The images selected for use by the stereoscope producers, however, reflect an intention to reaffirm white, middle-class ideals and often assume an imperialistic view of

the foreign cultures they presented (Malin, 2007). Malin highlighted how the stereoscopic images assumed the possessor of such high-tech apparatus to be a white, middle-class spectator and further unveiled how the device affirmed their role as consumers of both privileged, previously inaccessible high-cultured scenes and scenes of low-cultured or uncivilized views of others.

This consumptive perspective was not simply confined to the stereoscopy but was instead pervasive in almost all visual material of the early twentieth century. Twigg (1992) explored the photojournalism of Jacob Riis' "How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York" and analyzed how Riis' voyeuristic photography and moralizing captions objectified the working class and early immigrants. The "otherness" of the lower classes was carefully preserved through Riis' close attention to socially constructed images that present strictly defined categories of race, gender and class (Twigg, 1992). Twigg revealed how the photographs of these people are presented as an objectified novelty, a text made for consumption by the removed, Victorian-imbued bourgeois American upper class. She also noted how surveillance was invited and performed through the visual structure of these photographs and their accompanying text. During this historical period, photography quickly began to assume the air of a product that was to be consumed, a form of visual pleasure presented to distract and entertain. Finnegan (2004) addressed this issue in her analysis of the FSA photographs that the U.S. government commissioned to reveal the impoverished conditions of many Americans during the Great Depression. By focusing on modes of production, reproduction, and circulation, Finnegan (2004) analyzed how photography functions to serve up the realities

of one group as entertainment or distraction for other groups. Portrayed through a specific lens, the context of the photographs presents a "hermeneutically sealed" representation of the poor and presents them as "curiosities" (Finnegan, 2004, p. 208). In Finnegan's (2006) view, photographs often reduce the idea they portray into an image, so that an "image of *poverty*" becomes an "*image* of poverty" (p. 63), and she concluded that the constant reduction of concepts into images can be a potential drawback of photography's ubiquity because relegates the viewer to a position that is only watching and never interacting or experiencing.

What these studies share is an understanding of the numerous ways that photographs are intricately entwined with American culture. The different areas of influence are varied though, ranging from iconic and mythic memory of historical figures, historical practices of memory, and the confrontation of prejudice and injustice, to the reinforcement of the imperialistic attitudes of American consciousness. As the field of the visual is very large, specific analyses can often be unwieldy without an organizing framework, even when focusing on a specific type of visual artifacts like photographs (Hill & Helmers, 2004; Olson et al., 2008). In order to categorize the rhetorical study of the visual, Olson et al. (2008) offered a division of visual analysis into five categories based on function. The categories are: remembering and memorializing, governing and authorizing, performing and seeing, confronting and resisting, and commodifying and consuming (Olson et al., 2008). These pairs of terms develop the interlocking form of presenter and viewer that visual rhetoric necessitates and easily break what has become an extremely diverse field into accessible units (Olson et al., 2008). Olson et al. also

defined visuality as "not just images or visual media but the totality of practices, performances and configurations of the visual" (p. 17), stressing the fact that visuality itself is not relegated to the pictorial form but includes all the implications that precede or follow that form. These five categories reflect the ways in which visual rhetoric is applied and revealed as specifically understood in Western traditions and American culture. However, for purposes of this thesis, the photograph and its use to commodify and promote consumption is the primary artifact investigated. Advertising in the twenty-first century has extended into a myriad of fields beyond print. Thus, after a brief overview of this literature, the rest of this paper will focus specifically on photography within print advertising.

Commodifying & Consuming in American Culture

The use of images to promote commodification and consumption within American culture has received a great deal of attention from scholars, especially considering advertisements as a whole have become increasingly reliant on visual elements (Jeong, 2008; McQuarrie & Mick 1999; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2002; Scott, 1994). Because advertisements always contain a "should" element that links the viewer to the need to consume, specific products are presented as linchpins, elements that ensure the consumer will fit into the standardized and desirable structure the ad purports (Kilbourne, 1999; Messaris, 1997; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). However, these arguments often contain a number of unethical elements that scholars have raised concerns about. For instance, Campelo, Aitkin, & Gnoth (2010) focused on commercials that commodify New Zealand as a

destination, reducing the country to landscape and myth by using visuals of creation myths taken from the culture of the native Maori people and imaging of physical landscape itself.

For those who remain skeptical of the pervasive power of the image or its ability to persuade, Siber (2005) conducted a study that specifically addressed the dichotomy between text and image in advertisements. In an attempt to unveil the power structures of American culture's ubiquitous marketing practices, Siber analyzed how visual advertising has become by removing the text from photos he took of advertisements in public spaces, such as walls, the sides of buildings, and billboards. Siber initially thought that this would remove the marketing messages. However, after examining the text-free images, it was still apparent that the arguments made by the advertisements were overwhelmingly present through visual elements alone (Siber, 2005).

Aside from using images solely to commodify, scholars have also raised concerns about the flawed or distorted perspectives of power that advertisements often present. Brand marketing teams often unethically utilize societal constructions of identity or national sentiments and ideas to sell products (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999). An example of this is revealed in Shields' (2001) deconstructive analysis of Apple's 1997 "Think Different" TV commercial. Using Foucault's notions of mirrored heterotopian sites, or unrealistic portrayals that popular culture often promotes, Shields revealed how the montages of historical images in the commercial reflect a nebulous, flawed view of American history. The collision of images forces the viewer to resolve the conflict and rhetorically construct a narrative argument of their own (Shields, 2001). Apple's

rhetorical use of the visual in this advertisement reconstructed history as a succession of individuals who fought against dominant power structures and aligned Apple in this success, effectively creating a heterotopia that both ignores reality and parodies historical facts.

Even as visual symbols gain cultural significance, the increased clutter of advertising has led scholars to focus on an increase of controversial advertisements. One example of this is through use of religious imagery in ads. Mallia (2009) found that advertisers have recently latched onto religious imagery as yet another way to sell products and gain audiences' attention. Even more interesting is that most of the advertisements examined by Mallia used photography instead of hand-drawn or graphically-designed images. This increased the negative impact of the ads due to the previously mentioned indexicality of photography (Mallia, 2009; Sontag, 1977).

In short, advertising can and does reduces objects, settings, and figures to sellable ideas that invoke desire in the consumer, often without regard for the ethical implications of the arguments being presented in the ads and images. Within a capitalistic framework, using persuasive images to monetize ideas and aesthetics is justified, as the need to sell products and make a profit is frequently placed above any ethical implications. Visual arguments used in this context are stand-ins for the ideas they sell, which function within the commodifying framework, and arguably, are most persuasive when presented in the format of photography.

Photography in Advertisements

Photography became the perfect vehicle for advertisers to use as the foundation for their promotions, allowing an immense amount of manipulation while maintaining the semblance of objectivity. It is also successful in conveying an emotional experience, which is what advertisements have really begun to sell (Page, 2006). Photography as a practice in itself soon became a step in the realization of the American dream, a process of "conquering the world as a picture" (Azoulay, 2005, p. 39). The conception of conquering the world as a picture rests in the myth of the "American Dream," which has become increasingly linked with consumption. Advertisements began to use photographs to present a cohesive and normalized view of what American cultural practices should look like, and these practices began to center around consumption. Hope (2006) brought to light an example of advertising's use of photographic normative power, conducting an analysis of Kodak's Colorama advertisement in Grand Central Station, which was in place for over forty years. The display frequently rotated gigantic photographs in an advertisement that hundreds of people saw every day, conveying images that became imprinted on American memory. The categorization of the family and construction of consumerism as a domestic value through these images permeated the multicultural space of Grand Central station. Hope found that by visually instructing their American audience, the photographs in the ads portrayed 1950s values of strict gender and family roles while emphasizing material consumption.

In order to create a need for a product, advertisers often present skewed views of the world, creating a place for their product and essentially changing the nature of reality (Cortese, 2004). Sontag (1977) expanded on this idea in relation to the photograph,

saying, "Instead of just recording reality, photographs have become the norm for the way things appear to us, thereby changing the very idea of reality, and of realism" (p. 87). It is no accident that photography and advertising have been used in conjunction so frequently and for so long. Advertising borrows from the association with reality, a privilege built into photography, and the indexicality of that visual form often works in an anticipatory way for images that have the potential to approach iconic status. Although artistic directors claim the assumption that readers understand the illusions that advertisements portray, research has shown that consumers regard pictures, and specifically those in women's magazine ads, as reflections of objective reality rather than rhetorical creations (Scott, 1994). The idea that images reflect reality has pervaded the Western tradition for thousands of years, gaining even more momentum with the advent of photography. Photography, by virtue of its indexicality presented what Barthes (1981/2006) called the "intractable or *interfuit*: what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject" (p. 77). It is at this junction that visual rhetoricians seek to step in. As Hariman and Lucaites (2003) asserted:

> The belief that the photograph is a clear window on reality is itself an example of the natural attitude of ideology; by contrast, it becomes important to show how a photographic image fails to achieve a transparent representation of its perceptual object. (p. 176)

These ideologies are sometimes so ingrained in culture that they are hard to discern. Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008) asserted that advertising is so pervasively integrated that its social messages often remain unquestioned.

The type of advertisement that uses photography the most frequently, and some argue, the most unethically, is that of the fashion advertisement (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999). The messages presented in fashion photography have been under fire for years and yet they have not improved, with some arguing that conditions have even worsened (Kilbourne 1999). Fashion photography in advertising has received condemnation from critics for perpetuating stereotypes of beauty that are not realistic or attainable for most women (Cortese, 2004; Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Hope, 2006; Kilbourne, 1999; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008). Specific issues include the use of extremely thin models (Hitchon-Bush, Reaves, Park, & Yun, 2003), beauty types or typing (Englis et al., 1994; Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992), and portrayals of women as sex objects or in stereotyped roles (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008). Visual rhetoricians with a critical ideological stance analyze and deconstruct these photographs with the goal of educating viewers on the subversive and potentially unnoticed hegemonic mindsets that advertisements using these images purport. Merskin (2004) is one of a number of scholars who has done extensive work in analyzing advertisements that deal with all of these issues, and the potential effects they have on young girls. Merskin described how "sociological" processes and "cultural context" have normalized the ideas about adolescent girls' bodies and their use in advertising. Further, Merskin (2004) invoked the concepts of voyeuristic gaze and "pleasurable transgression" as realized through the angle, pose, and lighting that fashion advertisement images embrace (p. 120). Pose, voyeurism, and pleasurable transgression are all cultural constructs that have become entrenched in American imaging practices,

indicated not only through fashion advertisements but in other forms of imaging exploitation such as Sports Illustrated calendars and the myriad of magazines in the vein of Playboy.

Some remain skeptical of advertising's power to change and mold consumer mindsets, arguing that consumers are not given enough credit and can discern the motives inherent in advertising, but research continues to indicate that this is simply not the case (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008) In reality, the role of advertising in contemporary culture continues to intensify. A study done by Pollay (1986) concerned with the "distorted mirror" of advertising cited Berman's claim that advertising has replaced a variety of other institutions as the central authority in American culture:

> The institutions of family, religion, and education have grown noticeably weaker over each of the past three generations. The world itself seems to have grown more complex. In the absence of traditional authority, advertising has become a kind of social guide. It depicts us in all the myriad situations possible to a life of free choice. It provides ideas about style, morality, behavior. (as cited in Pollay, 1986, p. 24)

Potter noted as early as 1954 that advertising had an influence as wide as religion or learning, but no real social goals or social responsibility for the power of influence it wielded, marking it as cause for concern (as cited in Pollay, 1986, p. 25). Barthes (1981/2006) classified photography as a "disturbance to civilization" (p. 12), which indeed is the very close to the term of "disruption" that some of the most prominent

advertising firms (TBWA/Chiat Day, for example) have begun using to describe their most effective forms of advertisements.

In other words, unique fashion photography that disrupts the norm has become the clearest and most consistent way for brands to create their identities. Within the cluttered, postmodern consumer society that Western civilization has become, advertising is the central tenet of symbolic organization and dictates meaning to the majority of the population. There simply is not a more compelling reason to study visual rhetoric in advertising than this. Our society's values are clearly centered around the financial gain of advertising with little concern shown for the negative effect that advertisements have on daily lives. Whether it is through exposure to ads themselves or the degree to which advertising dollars affect what happens in society, advertising is an integral part of America (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999; Leiss et al., 2005). The consumerist society of the twenty-first century and beyond is at times a bleak place as consumers seek to reveal and realize their values through their purchases and are constantly left desiring more (Leiss et al., 2005). This consumer-based perception of the self and sense of unfulfillment is rooted in the philosophical turn from twentieth century modernist notions to the implications of the twenty-first century postmodernism. Fashion is explicitly tied to postmodern conceptions as it is related to aesthetic and economic concerns, both of which have been transformed drastically in postmodern culture.

The Fashioning of Postmodernity

An abundance of research has explored postmodern themes in fashion advertisements (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004; Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999;

Puntoni et al., 2010; Rice, 2004), and even more specifically in luxury fashion brands (Arning, 2008; Page, 2006; Phillips & McQuarrie; 2010 Pracejus et al., 2006). A number of scholars also see this shift toward postmodern advertisements as a reflection of a larger shift within culture, specifically American culture, as society transitions into the postmodern era and beyond. A synthesis of postmodern philosophical implications is presented in a critique by Jameson (1991) in his book, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Because of his consideration of the philosophical, aesthetic, and economic implications of postmodernism, Jameson's perspective is particularly useful for exploring the repercussions that postmodern advertisements have upon cultural awareness. Aside from Jameson, though, a variety of communications scholars have also turned their attention to the increased presence of postmodern conceptualizations in advertisements.

Scholars draw a distinction between the alienation felt during the modernist period and how it has transitioned into a feeling of fragmentation in postmodernism. In contrasting the modern experience with that of the postmodern, Jameson (1991) explained that "the shift in dynamics of cultural pathology can be characterized as one in which the alienation of the subject is replaced by the fragmentation of the subject" (p. 63). Postmodern society trends toward this concept of "decentrization" or literal break down of the monad of the self, and this fragmentation appears clearly in advertising and marketing practices. One scholar, Cortese (2004) concentrated on fragmentation as a defining piece of the postmodern consumer, who experiences the world in fragments and is constantly confronted with the fragmented options of a specific display. This unsettling

feeling is further amplified by the products that postmodern consumers buy as their purchases are no longer situated in real needs but rather emerges from concrete cultural values (Cortese, 2004; Jameson, 1991). In fact, the advertisements themselves are no longer tied to the original scenarios but often hearken back to a codified understanding of what a fashion advertisement "should" look like. Baudrillard (1981/2010) defined this concept as "a copy of a copy" with no relationship to reality, a "simulacrum." It follows then that product purchases never lead to a truly satisfied state but merely lead to a realization of what else could possibly be consumed (Leiss et al., 2005).

This is a phenomenon that Debord (1967/2012) described in his work *The Society of The Spectacle* wherein he reasoned that what is presented as the ideal consumer conception of complete happiness is tied into potential consumption of all possible goods. Since this is impossible, the perpetual disappointment of the consumer is unavoidable. As Debord (1967/2012) noted:

> The already dubious satisfaction alleged to be obtained from the consumption of the whole is thus constantly being disappointed because the actual consumer can directly access only a succession of fragments of this commodity heaven, fragments which invariably lack the quality attributed to the whole. (p. 9)

Nothing helps propel this false idea of "commodity heaven" forward in more force than advertising–indeed that is advertising's one goal. Further, no perspective masks the despair that consumption inadvertently produces in consumers more than that of postmodern visual argumentation. Images and visual argumentation help mask this endless variety of options and subsequent dissatisfaction through their fragmentation.

Scholars have found that highly visual and ambiguous advertisements are effective because they invite the viewer to interact with the ad, interpreting it and co-constructing the messages it contains (Arning, 2008; Brown, Stevens, & Maclaran, 1999; Domzal & Kernan, 1993; Elliot, 2007; Morris, 2005; Rigley, 2007; Scott, 1994; Scott & Vargas, 2007). Postmodern advertisements assert less and apply more through confusing and superficial imagery and vague illusions that stimulate questioning (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004; Proctor, Proctor, & Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2002). By remaining ambiguous, advertisements can appeal to a wide variety of consumers who will individually construct unique messages and shirk any responsibility for the potential ethical implications of their messages. Experiencing the world in fragments is disorienting for the individual who constantly searches for meaning in the "heap of fragments" that they encounter (Jameson, 1991). In a study of television ads that were indirect and used imagistic advertisements with no specific call to action, Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver (2004) found that viewers still defined the ads as highly meaningful instead of meaningless. Puntoni et al. (2010) and Proctor et al. (2002) found similar results within print advertisements, where ambiguity and the use of images without explanatory text were regarded as positive by consumers–precisely the format Jacobs and Teller adopted for their series of print advertisements. In addition, studies revealed that consumers acknowledge their role in co-constructing meaning within these ads and are more than willing to partake in this process (Scott, 1994; Scott & Vargas, 2007; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Consumers also respond well to images, and create explanations or supply meaning for confusing or seemingly incoherent images (Boutlis,

2000; Pollay, 1986; Proctor et al., 2002; Scott, 1994; Scott & Vargas, 2007; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008).

This follows Jameson's (1991) assertion that "the rise of the media and advertising indicate the new penetration and colonization of the unconscious" (p. 78). Consumers now tap into their own conscious or unconscious minds to decode the fragments of images that are sequenced together in ambiguous but meaningful arguments in advertisements. By doing this, the viewer also co-constructs his or her place as a self by willingly embracing the role of consumer when simply seeing an ad, even when not actively purchasing. Current culture reflects value centered in products and things, not in the consumer. As such, the consumer derives their meaning from purchasing the product, cementing the process of consuming as central to creating meaningful identity (Cortese, 2004; Debord, 1967/2012; Jameson, 1991; Kilbourne, 1999; Pollay, 1986).

Cultural critics agree that fashion is one of the primary areas in which this occurs, and even that fashion has become one of the primary influences and processes through which people construct their identities. Indeed, Jameson (1991) referred to this as the consumption of sheer commodification. He pointed out that individuals are more equipped than ever before to "fashion" their own identities but are somehow incapable of creating lasting meaning (Jameson, 1991). This follows the previously mentioned principles of Baudrillard's (1981/2010) simulacrum because whatever meaning the consumer created in order to interact with an advertisement was never based in reality as what the images in fashion advertisements represent never really existed (Baudrillard, 1981/2010).

Debord's (1967/2012) work takes this a bit further by asserting that commodities of dress have assumed a value in themselves rather than contributing to meaning for individuals forming their identities. Creating an identity through fashion still relies on the idea that clothing is a primary expression of identity, an idea that has taken a deep-seated hold in American consciousness (Domzal & Kernan, 1993; Elliot, 1997; Morris, 2005). The current presence of postmodern philosophies in advertisements present their products (e.g. clothes) as the only possible source of meaning, and the only achievable way for the consumer to individuate from the horrifying and inescapable mass audience that globalization has produced (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004; Elliot, 1997; Morris, 2005). One way to further emphasize clothes as identity product is to align them with musicians, artists, and cutting-edge cultural figures and tastemakers as Jacobs and Teller did.

A number of scholars have also addressed the ways in which postmodern advertisements work to obscure their true goal, that of selling products, by distracting or trying to create a sense of association between product and consumer. Boutlis (2000) pointed to the irony that pervades postmodern advertising, viewing it as an attempt to break through media clutter and an increasingly consumer-oriented world full of jaded consumers. As Boutlis (2000) noted, "Paradoxically, the best way to achieve cut-through is to be deliberately contrary to the point of undermining and making fun of the product you are hawking, the angle you are taking, to be understood to the point of being oblique" (p. 16). The rise of self-aware advertisements undermines the idea of "selling something"

in order to connect with the cynical consumer (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004; Cortese, 2004).

Elements of absurdity, irony, kitsch, pastiche, paradox, self-parody and self-reference, and transgressive themes like overt sexuality or drug use, along with floating signifiers and ambiguous imagery are all common and effective practices of postmodern advertising. These elements work together either to mock the process of marketing itself or distract consumers from the process as it happens (Arning, 2009; Boutlis, 2000; Page, 2006; Rice, 2004). Several recent studies have been conducted analyzing postmodern elements and photographic imagery specifically in clothing advertising campaigns. Cortese (2004) analyzed the Benneton clothing's use of paradoxical and unrelated images such as deathrow inmates, white babies nursing at black breasts, and HIV positive models, and Arning (2008) reviewed Diesel clothing's campaigns that centered on irony and kitsch, conducting a semiotic analysis that read multiple meanings in the ads polysemic, ambiguous images, which could be read as either insightful counterculture plays, or nihilistic and mischievous. Another analysis by Page (2006) examined the same types of postmodern imagery employed by the plumbing and furniture company Kohler, who used surrealist, feminized images of their products to imbue them with sexual, erotic implications, while simultaneously mocking how advertisements in general sexualize products.

As most of these studies show, the majority of advertisers who employ such postmodern practices, and certainly those who do so most frequently, are products marketed as high end or "luxury" products, especially clothing related and fashion-

centered items like perfume, handbags and shoes (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 1999; Soloaga & Muriel, 2008). Further scrutiny revealed that aside from using irony, kitsch, or paradox to distract the viewer, the images also attempted to mimic properties of art in their design in order to correlate the genteel sensibilities of art appreciation with the products advertised. This, of course, leads to the ongoing debate of whether or not an ad could ever actually be "art." Indeed, the tenuous relationship between the two fields, which is at play in Jacobs' book, is nothing new.

Art & Advertising

A strict delineation between art and advertising has long existed, one assuming that because its underlying motive is to sell a product, advertising simply cannot be art (Scott, 2005). Advertising has a long history that is checkered with conceptions that are largely negative. Yet, Scott made some very strong arguments about the arbitrariness of the distinction between art and advertising based on perceived motive. Artists need to make a living off of their work, and art was used during the Renaissance and other classical periods to "sell" ideas. As Scott stated, "Art serves somebody, whether its government, church, ancestral power systems, or corporations" (p. 7). Another argument against advertising as art is the ubiquity of the advertising image. Works of art are generally "rare" and valuable because of their limited nature (Scott, 2005). But, the fetishization of art was culturally constructed through a limiting process that made works of art rare; with the invention of photography and other forms of image reproduction, ideas of a work of art in singular form are dissipating.

Definitions of art have been tossed about like a ship on stormy seas. Carney (1975) delineated several arguments made about the definition based on the inclusion of specific features, but those making counterarguments warn that by specifying conditions, new categories of art may be closed off. Carney (1975) cited other critics who claim that art contains features of "unity, grace and balance" (p. 194), but these features are quickly dismissed by postmodern critics who embrace paradoxical, fragmented and even "ugly" elements in art (McCarthy, 2001; Rigley, 2007). Danto (1993) pointed to the fact that before the modernist movement works of art did not require definition, but it was "obvious" what art was (p. 130). He cited the photograph as the beginning of this problem, as photography presented a threat to painting. Danto (1993) considered many photographers to be artists but not all of them, and even he cannot provide a concrete difference between the two though he is sure it exists. Along these same lines, Gombrich somewhat paradoxically stated, "There is really no such thing as Art. There are only artists" (as cited in Carrier, 1996, p. 279). Despite the simplicity of this statement, the question still remains: what distinguishes art and artists from those who are merely using art to further their own ideological concerns? Or can a line even be drawn between art and ideological concerns? Postmodernism purposefully blurs the boundaries between clear categories like art, advertising, and aesthetic, and shirks definitions concerning what each of these categories should look like. Although I doubt this thesis will solve or answer a debate that has been continuously pondered for centuries, there does seem to be two major camps. Either art is only art when perfectly reflecting the "soul" of the artist

with no other purpose–if those conditions are indeed possible–or, art depends upon specific characteristics that cannot quite be defined but are recognizable when seen.

Either way, Marc Jacobs' advertisements contain many of the same characteristics that conceptions of "high art" have traditionally included and also seem to genuinely reflect his unique worldview. By placing his advertisements into the form of a coffee table book, a form generally used to display art, Marc Jacobs adds another dimension of postmodernism to his work, and further blurs that line. Another part of this equation is certainly Teller's status as a celebrated photographer, and the book serves as a collection for his pieces in a fairly standard way for the art world. It is worth noting that appropriation of artistic forms or elements and styles of traditional art are common techniques of luxury brands in advertising to establish themselves as cultured (Arning, 2008; Page, 2006; Pracejus et al., 2006). Research into these techniques also revealed that they are extremely effective in selling products (Page, 2006).

Method

My analysis of Marc Jacobs' advertisements is through the lens of visual rhetoric, as illustrated in the above literature review, falling into Olson et al.'s (2008) primary category of commodifying and consuming. It was informed by a postmodern perspective that critiqued the advertisements primarily as images that invoked elements of postmodern thought to mimic art objects. These images are closer to replicas of what consumers think a high-fashion advertisement should look like and then bend the idea or break the mold in subtle or dramatic ways. In my analysis, I examined how the ambiguous, unusual images functioned persuasively within Marc Jacobs' campaigns to

transform LVMH's first flagship luxury American brand while blurring the line between art and advertising and presenting these images as artifacts that possibly break down that barrier.

Issues of time and space necessarily limited this paper, as well as availability of copyrighted materials. In light of this, my analysis did not examine the advertisements in their original publications or draw into consideration the specific media vehicles used to deliver the advertisements. Instead, it is confined to the images presented in the book published by Steidl in 2009, *Marc Jacobs Advertising: 1998-2009*. As I have noted throughout my literature review, Juergen Teller is a major player in the conceptualization of this advertising campaign as the executor and photographer of the images. However, both interviews with Teller and other outside reporting indicate that Marc Jacobs was still the primary creative force behind the campaigns (Lineberry, 2009; Silva, 2009), and it is his vision that propelled them forward. Still, I included both men as the working artistic forces behind these images. Their resulting coffee table book is organized by year and split into collections, containing advertisements for the line Marc Jacobs and a lower-end line with lower prices targeted at the younger consumer, Marc by Marc Jacobs (Foley, 2004). The analysis proceeded in the following steps: Selection of visual images, micro-level analysis, macro-level analysis, analysis of white space, and my conclusion.

Selection of Visual Images

For purposes of this analysis, the Marc by Marc Jacobs ad campaigns were not analyzed, resulting in a much narrower focus on the brand identity and visual arguments that Marc Jacobs makes for his brand. Rather, my selection focused on those images that most clearly exhibited postmodern themes. Although most if not all of Marc Jacobs' advertisements contain postmodern elements, I chose those images that most aptly indicated his distinct ideas and style and appeared to be the most unique and separate from other forms of fashion print advertising. Particularly when it comes to the structure of the book, I selected elements that echoed a "high art" aesthetic and that attempted to mimic artistic technique the most clearly. For instance, the use of white space and lack of text, the consistent use of negative space in framing the images, and also the decision to work with the book's publisher, Steidl. I examined several individual images that stand alone as well as images that appear in sequence or series; some of the images are so arresting that they stand alone whereas others play upon similar elements through syntactical arrangement. I believe both of these approaches to visual argument are distinct, require different examinations, and render different consequences upon the viewer.

Micro-level Analysis

Similar to many of the rhetorical analyses cited in my literature review, I broke the facets of the advertising book into separate chunks that could be analyzed separately, and then later taken together as a whole in context. This practice is based off techniques used by scholars like Arning (2009), Blair and Pucci (1991), Brouwer (1998), and Hope (2006), who broke the different elements of a visual structure into pieces in order to

better analyze both the parts and the rhetorical whole. After selecting the particular images that would be the focus of the study, the four primary ones of Kim Gordon, Meg White, Sofia Coppola, and Victoria Beckham, my next step was subjecting the initial four images to a close, analysis through the trope of fragmented female bodies and how the use of this feature parodied the historical use of beautiful female celebrities in advertising. The use of parody as an overarching touchstone within the images was be examined and analyzed for how it plays into the previously established visual grammar of a high-fashion luxury ad.

Macro-level Analysis

Next, I selected seven collections of images featuring the same model and/or celebrity for a total of forty images examined within a macro analysis which included elements of facial expression, pose, and setting. Repeated postmodern motifs such as binary disruption and paradoxical juxtapositions were discussed, along with intimate, behind-the-scenes portrayals. Visual tropes like obscenity, manic facial expressions, nudity, feminism, and humanity's relationship to nature were discussed in specific images as well as image sequences. Appendix A features an example from each collection of images for reference, for a total of 11 images.

Analysis of White Space

Focusing on their presentation within the book as a whole, I looked at the use of white space as an overarching aesthetic and how that layout hearkens back to museum presentation and has historical significance within advertising. The use of specific celebrities and artists as models in the advertisements and their own personal connections

to postmodern concepts was discussed, along with thematic coherence within campaigns, and the self-referential nature of the images.

Conclusion

Finally, my analysis examined whether or not these advertisements succeeded in their attempt to be seen as works of art by analyzing whether or not they added some comment or value to the visual world aside from just the argument that a product should be bought, and what the implications of blurring this line have on future advertisements and the use of artists like Juergen Teller within the realm of fashion photography.

CHAPTER 4

The Fragmented Body

In 1998, Marc Jacobs began releasing advertisements for the debut of his namesake Spring collection. This series of images helped establish his brand as the flagship American brand in the storied LVMH luxury European conglomerate, and all of the ads for his initial decade of collections were shot in conjunction with the German fashion photographer Juergen Teller.

One of the initial ads in that expansive series is a photograph of Kim Gordon (see Figure 1) from the band Sonic Youth fiercely playing bass in a purple, sleeveless gown designed by Jacobs. Gordon's face is hidden by her swinging hair, her mouth slightly open, eyes averted, and one of her arms is cut out of the frame. A blurry mic stand is the unexpected foreground image, and a dimly lit drum set appears in the background. All around the ad is a frame of white space, and the opposing page is simple text with the Marc Jacobs brand name, and a note that this is Kim Gordon as photographed by Juergen Teller.

Though she appears in context, this is certainly not the most appealing or flattering image of Gordon in existence. Rather, the image is disconcerting because of how her body is cut off and her face is hidden. For those unfamiliar with her band, she could be anyone. While advertisements that draw on celebrity appearances tend to center the celebrity their faces in the frame, this image strangely cuts Gordon's arm off and hides her face almost completely. It is the first of many in this ten-year collaboration

between Jacobs and Teller to obscure the face and fragment the body of a female celebrity subject.

Just a few years later, in a 2000 campaign for handbags, Sofia Coppola (see Figure 2) is presented as a single arm holding out the bag in question while a nearby squirrel dominates the center of the frame. Coppola is a renowned beauty, but only a single limb of hers is featured. In similar ad from 2008, possibly the most famous image from Jacobs and Teller's initial run of ads, Victoria Beckham's legs sprawl out of either side of a white, human-sized Marc Jacobs shopping bag (see Figure 3). Yes, the image figuratively turns Beckham herself into the product, but it also reduces her to a pair of awkward limbs in the process. Beckham is one of the most glamorous women in the world, but there is not a hint of glamor in her positioning here, with both legs flopping out along the sides of a shopping bag.

In each of these ads and many others in the campaign, the positioning of a celebrity's body and face, which are most often used to help indicate a desirable life and sell the products attached to it, are presented in uncomfortable, fragmented ways. Gordon, with her hidden face and cut-off torso, is the first image in the enormous Steidl art book that collects that first decade's worth of the collaborative ads between Jacobs and Teller. Her photograph sets the scene for a body of work that routinely features fragments of famous female bodies, notably presented without their faces in the frame or, as will be discussed in depth in the next chapter, with twisted and contorted facial expressions.

These images become visual synecdoches, or visual metaphors, with parts of the women standing in for the whole of their celebrity and with bodily fragments functioning as rhetorical devices that help drive home the image's status as pieces of postmodern art that critique the visual practices of advertising, thus catapulting themselves out of the category of mere advertisements themselves. Further than that, the images challenge an accepted standard of how and why celebrity bodies and faces are used in luxury fashion ads. By portraying distasteful or awkward situations in the service of selling a product, Jacobs' images seemed to make fun of the elevated, elegant fantasy worlds discussed in the literature review that luxury advertisements historically used to incite desire in potential customers.

Traditionally, luxury advertisements work with a two-fold approach. They incite desire for the environment around the product, indicating that the product will recreate that space or feeling for the consumer, and they often incite a desire for completion or revelation of the ad itself. Images depicting thin, beautiful, glamorous models against stunning backdrops are common, and some sort of wordplay, storyline, or framing is usually built into the ad, helping craft the argument for why the viewer should buy the product. Versions of typical luxury fashion ads featured models artfully described by New York Times fashion critic Cathy Horyn, who was delineating Jacobs' competition and peers, as "chalk-striped vamps at Dior, discoing Amazons at D&G, hipsters at Burberry and cloud-borne nymphs at Lanvin," (Horyn, 2008). But even over the course of an entire decade, Jacobs' models are nothing like these.

In his ads, the scenarios the products appear in are not at all desirable. In fact, they are often downright off-putting. The nature of the advertisement invites an increased sense of urgency because the imagery is so unfamiliar, and viewers encountering the photograph may want to know why they are being shown this image, prompting them to want to "solve" the ad by engaging it more deeply. Since the images in the ads appear sans any persuasive text, the photographs invite an analysis from the perspective of visual rhetoric, and their use of postmodern elements like bodily fragmentation and lifeless abjection invites analysis from aesthetic theorists working in that area. By breaking down the ugliness, lifelessness, and fragmentation in the images, my analysis of that trope in this chapter will reveal the ads' greater purpose, which is to parody the luxury ads that came before them, disrupting the status quo while also establishing a new one.

To accomplish that, this chapter offers a close rhetorical analysis of these photographs used across various campaigns, carefully examining key elements that best represent how Jacob's use of fragmented bodies subverts expectations of beauty and disrupt traditional visual standards for luxury clothing advertisement. My next chapters will analyze how larger, overarching elements of facial expression, pose, and setting also play into the visual arguments being made, and the final chapter will focus on how the use of white space and presentation within a glossy photography book further align these images with the art world, not the realm of advertising. Through this process of subversion, I argue that these ads convey a subtle message that they represent art in service of mocking advertisements, not ads themselves.

"But Is She Beautiful?"

One of the most arresting ads in the book is a photograph of Meg White (see Figure 4), a female musician formerly of the band, The White Stripes, as the face of the 2006 Spring campaign. This image is eye catching because it looks exactly like a photo of a dead body in a crime scene. It is much smaller than the picture of Kim Gordon that the book starts off with, which was close to the size of a full page. Small and dark, White's photo takes up only 5 x 7 inches on a standard magazine page; it is a color photograph, but all the tones in the setting are muted browns and greens, portraying a close-up shot of the bottom half of a woman's body lying abject on sandy ground with some brush nearby. The toes are carefully painted red, and the feet are ensconced in patent leather grey heels, the legs are half covered by a greenish gray, satiny skirt, and the bottom edge of a patent leather tan coat is visible. The patent leather and satin textures in combination are easily comparable to a tarp or body bag, and positioning of the body, especially as it is face down, evokes death or a dead body: it is completely lifeless and inert.

The body is presented as only a fragment–solely the lower torso and legs–as it lies face down, further contributing to the idea that we are looking at the image of a corpse. The natural setting of sand, old leaves, and yellowing bushes are other key details that add to the idea of isolation. By presenting only the lower half of White's body, Teller's image further taps into the idea of death. As Kristeva (1982/2010), a leading scholar on the postmodern aesthetic of abjection, noted, seeing only part of a human body already evokes loss of life in a viewer's mind, as fragmentation of a corporeal form almost

always leads to death itself. Of course, White's body is not actually cut off, but the way it appears in the image insinuates this to the point that it potentially stimulates the same unease in the viewer. Although the image ostensibly depicts White, there are no overt markings to indicate that she is the model. Rather, the viewer must rely exclusively on the accompanying text on the other side of the page to discern her identity.

The photograph is located on a single page of white space, placed in the middle of the page, another choice that is in direct conflict with traditional full-page ads. A full-page ad is more expensive and prestigious, and thus modern print ads tend to include enormous images that often take up two whole pages in what is called a "spread" (Scott & Vargas, 2007). Space is considered so precious that publications even specify a "bleed" rate that allows brands to take their advertising images to the very edge of the page. To say that print space is considered valuable is an understatement. Instead, this spread is mostly white space with only a small image in the center, which functions as another disruption of visual expectation that could also be interpreted as a mockery of the money that brands spend on enormous full-page ads. Furthermore, the white space makes it feel like looking at the photo is like looking at a painting hung in a museum gallery. As noted before, this positioning against white space will be further unpacked in the final chapter.

In summary, this image is a small, darkly unsettling photograph that evokes death, portraying only the bottom half of a well-known female musician's body lying face down in a muted, isolated and ugly wilderness setting. The stark juxtaposition between the extremely desirable life of a rock star like White, then at the height of her fame, and how

she is presented in the ad is hard to overstate. There are a hundred ways Teller and Jacobs could have presented White that would have fit into the usual elegant, beautiful world of luxury ads, whether she was performing onstage, dolled up in a glamorous apartment, or even just by including her face and capitalizing on her considerable beauty. At first glance, this image appears to be an unwise strategy for attempting to market a luxury fashion brand.

Another of the most discussed ads in the series is one featuring director and actor Sofia Coppola in an early 2000s bag campaign. It is approximately the same size as the photo of Meg White's legs, 5 x 7 inches, and depicts a dreary bland image of a park in winter, with the image set in the middle of the same stark white double page spread used for White's ad. A squirrel is foremost object in the photograph. Right at the edge of the image, about half of a human arm swings into the frame, holding an off-white Marc Jacobs bag that almost blends into the snow in the scene. Across from the small photograph is the Marc Jacobs brand name, and below that is a caption that tells us the arm in question belongs to Coppola. The squirrel is foregrounded more vividly than Coppola herself, a surprising turn of events that gives the photo an amateurish feel, a purposeful hallmark for those familiar with Teller's photography.

Coppola, who is generally recognized as one of the most beautiful women in the world, is not really present in the photo. Instead, we get a random human arm that is assigned to her via text, a squirrel, and a bland park. Coppola is a director and actress with an expressive face and an impressive resume that would make her ripe for portrayal in a cinema setting, even behind a camera or somehow tied to the incredible work she

does on screen and as a filmmaker in an elevated setting that befits her accomplishments. Instead, she barely appears, and she does so in a place where absolutely anyone could be—a public park. So little of her body appears that it is impossible to even determine if the arm belongs to her or not. The viewer must trust the text and conclude that Marc Jacobs would have access to Coppola. As later images of her in the campaign reveal, Jacobs certainly had plenty of access, and since she so rarely appears in fashion ads, the choice to employ her in such a banal way is even more striking.

Although both of these advertisements are marked departures from the work of Jacob's peers, a series of ads from one of his 2008 campaigns caused an even greater stir when they ran. When Teller photographed former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham as a pair of legs emerging from a human-sized Marc Jacobs bag, fashion magazines ran news articles on the ad. The photo is the same size as those used in the White and Coppola ads in previous examples, 5 x 7 inches against a white spread, but it is even more stark. Two legs wearing a pair of Marc Jacobs heels poke out of a bag set against a plain white backdrop in the photo itself, not just the surrounding page. Nothing else appears in the frame. Beckham's face and the rest of her torso are absent, presumably inside the bag themselves, and her legs are spread wide at either side of the bag's corners.

The reception to this image was immediately frenzied. The image disrupted advertising's established system of exchange values so severely that it goaded experts into questioning whether or not it even fulfilled its function. "When Is A Fashion Ad Not A Fashion Ad?" asked The New York Times fashion critic Horyn (2008), noting in her piece that "what they have attempted to do with Ms. Beckham…forces a different

question than the banality of 'Is she beautiful?'" (p. 26). Sidestepping that "banal" question was such a step forward in the form that it prompted Horyn's query about whether an image of this force was still an ad. Of the images described above, all three depict women who are widely accepted to be some of the most beautiful in the world, but illustrating their attractiveness is not the goal at all. As Horyn so aptly points out, fulfilling that task is what has become banal, and to go beyond the banal and toward the bizarre is what was revolutionary enough to inspire her to write an op-ed.

In the past, fashion photographers sought to portray their subjects, who were most often women, in ways that pushed the bounds of the visual field. Most often, these images focused on beauty, luxury, idyllic scenes, and sexuality as they gestured toward art. Anna Wintour, infamous Vogue editor, once said:

> Our needs are simple. We want a photographer to take a dress, make the girl look pretty, give us lots of images to choose from, and not give us any attitude. Photographers—if they are any good—want to create art." (O'Rourke, 1997, p. 21)

Wintour voiced editorial concerns, and a photographer is looking out for their own portfolio, but Jacobs had a different goal in mind: make his products stand out. A new method was not just appealing; it was almost necessary. Gatekeepers had developed ideas about what fashion photography should look like, and as previous successes dictated future possibilities, a cookie-cutter approach developed.

Advertising critic, Landey (1997) noted the ensuing effect of modern fashion photography was highly formulaic advertising that consisted of "photographs of great

models, wearing great clothes, from world-class fashion photographers, and a logo. This is in no way meant to demean this effort" (p. 11). Further, Landey (1997) noted that even the most talented photographers used supermodels like Christy Turlington and Kate Moss to "create images that maximize the perceived value of their fashion clients" (p. 13). In his view, even if they made a beautiful photograph, it was not art. Landey goes on to quote Michael E. Porter, a business professor at Harvard University, an expert on competitive business practices, who defines competitive strategy as "differences that can be preserved over time. Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value" (Landey, 1997, p. 12). Jacobs' rhetorical decisions could certainly be characterized as such.

For instance, the Beckham ad gains a sense of authenticity and originality by overtly incorporating a critique of consumer culture into its own text, a technique that a bulk of studies in the literature review revealed as persuasive for consumers. Self-aware advertisements offer another level of perceived "eliteness" for the luxury consumer. Not only is the product itself built on a scarcity model, but the ability to understand the critique of the fashion system presented in an ad is even more rare, even if it is ostensibly in service of the that same system. Jacobs' use of "anti-ad" advertisements that subvert typical features of luxury ads sets up a level above the consumer who blindly buys other luxury products without the increased understanding that consumers of Jacobs' products have attained. Buying his products is an easy way to access to this exclusive tier; the

commodity becomes the ability to discern what is luxurious, an in group cemented by possession of the item itself.

Although this final ad is the most obvious, all of the ads share the rhetorical function of critiquing the historical structure of a fashion ads. By omitting faces, directing the goal of the image away from portraying beauty, and connecting Jacobs' clothes to death, isolated and ugly settings, and fragmented bodies, all three build an aesthetic that is worlds away from that of other luxury designers. Out of the hundreds of advertisements contained in the coffee table book, Meg White's presentation as a fragmented corpse, Sofia Coppola's single, tiny arm swinging a purse into the frame, and Victoria Beckham's legs poking out of a Marc Jacobs shopping bag all indicate how the photographs function adjacent to the category of ad, gesturing toward the art world by parodying old standards and diving into the aesthetic of abjection.

Rhetorical Function

The presentation of these four ads is not consistent with the patterns of glossy, beautiful images of thin, female models in beautiful settings discussed in the literature review that consumers and scholars routinely associate with high fashion advertisements. Instead, ads with visuals like Meg White portrayed as a corpse disrupt what Baudrillard (1981/2010) called the "sign exchange values" (p. 21)—the substitutable symbols of White's fame, beauty, and musical talent, which were traditionally used to build desire to purchase the object, are refracted and presented in unfamiliar ways that do not fit into the established fashion system. Yet, the longer the viewer interacts with the image, the more compelling it becomes.

One of the first ways the image functions rhetorically has to do with the fact that White's face is not included in the image. Excluding the model's face decenters the viewer and disrupts the looking process, because the viewer is used to looking at the model's expression for cues on how to interpret the image (Porter, England, Juodis, Brinke, & Wilson, 2008). Without White's expression to help decode the image, viewers are left with questions they must resolve on their own. Though her face and other identifying signs are not present, all of the cultural cachet from White's role as an independent, transgressive female drummer in a punk band is still transferred to the photo and the brand, further imbuing the image with its own sense of cultural cachet. Inert or not, this is a famous musician wearing Marc Jacobs clothing. In his clothes, she can be a dead body and still exude cool; all the other trappings of her fame are not even necessary.

By parodying and subverting the visual grammar of a high-fashion ad featuring a famous female musician, the photograph invites consumers to view themselves as part of a sophisticated elite who are above the reach of a typical advertisement. Since luxury items by definition fulfill no actual need in the consumers' lives, the advertisements must attempt to incite a lack of meaningful fulfillment and offer purchasing the clothing or a product as the only possible resolution (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010). In this ad, the synecdoche of White's body, a part of it standing in for the whole, allows the image to function effectively as a parody of a fashion ad that pokes fun at the mere presence of female celebrity, even as it is presented in the most unappealing way. The grotesque position of her body furthers the ad's position as a potential art object that

subverts and parodies a cultural force like advertising, giving the consumer more reason to literally and figuratively buy into the process.

In that case, buying Marc Jacobs becomes an act of supporting a visionary artist in the fashion world, not just tapping into more endless consumerism. By presenting White as a corpse, Jacobs is willfully transgressing norms and the expectations or "shoulds" of other luxury brands. This allows his ads to present themselves as simulations of those traditional ad, playing off of expectation and establishing their own set of visual norms within newly established visual boundaries. If the ad is effective, straying from the traditional can achieve a deeper resonance with the consumer who works to make the ambiguous image form a meaningful narrative. Enlightened, this viewer can "see through" fashion advertising's ubiquitous visual claims of Westernized beauty and ever-present youth.

A similar rhetorical strategy is at play in the Coppola ad. The denial of her body enforces a sense of loss for the viewer, who again notices a disruption of Baudrillard's (1981/2010) established sign exchange values. Instead of Coppola, beautiful director, the viewer gets an arm against a park, and the focus is on the plain and barren setting. Coppola is represented only through her connection to the Marc Jacobs bag. In the world of this ad, she is the bag. Her fragmentation is a subconscious precursor of death for the viewer, and ownership of the bag staves off the inevitable as it now represents the last fragment of Coppola. Buying or possessing the bag reconnects the viewer to Coppola, who is arguably an even more powerful force in the photo through her absence. She is so at odds with her setting that only the thinnest slice of her body appears, a visual

synecdoche that lends her celebrity to the photo in the most minimal way possible, pushing further at how Jacobs subverts the intersection of celebrity and brands in advertising.

Although the next chapter focuses more on setting, it is important here, too, for the way it establishes the aesthetic of abjection. In Kristeva's (1982/2010) writing, she defined abjection as "a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness…a radically separate loathsome[ness]" (p. 2), noting that a major part of abjection's power comes through in banality of setting. It is an especially relevant commentary here as the setting takes up the majority of that photo. Further, aside from the models they portray, the physical spaces in Jacobs' ads routinely lean into this aesthetic of abjection. Teller and Jacobs purposefully chose liminal spaces that are indiscernible as to when and where they are located, or even what they might be, but they reek of the uncanny separation that Kristeva cites above.

In her writing, Sontag (1977) discerned the shift away from picturesque and ideal to plain has been steadily taking place in photographic history, explaining, "Since the 1920s, ambitious professionals, those whose work gets into museums, have steadily drifted away from lyrical subjects, conscientiously exploring plain, tawdry, or even vapid material" (p. 28). It is the very "plainness" of these scenes that marks them as acceptable sites for postmodern individuals to inhabit, tethering them to the art world instead of the commercial one. There is a deliberate subversion of the marketing that luxury goods ought to do, since none of the spaces portrayed are exclusive or hard to gain access to. This photograph, after all, was taken in a public park.

But there is another element to the settings in these advertisements that goes beyond banality, and that is their potential to create discomfort through ambiguity. Either in nature or in urbanity, the models in the settings are at odds with their element. For example, the sharp angle of Coppola's arm against the background of the park suggests imminent disappearance. Her fragmentation is a signal of danger or disturbance, another element that lives below the surface of the image and must be decoded for understanding. Kristeva (1982/2010) explained, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4). The ambiguity of the setting further enhances the instability present in the unusual body language: a slice of an arm and a lack of facial expression for reference. This coy representation of Coppola functions without actually using her image, and it is the cornerstone of how Jacobs' ads influence behavior. They hint at the old modes of persuasion while playfully destabilizing them, further disarming whatever defenses the viewer may have built up against the techniques of old ads by invoking a celebrity's power then not actually displaying it. Whereas an old sell is tired and even boring at this stage of late capitalism, Jacobs' twist on the subject is amusing and even enjoyable to encounter. Instead of feeling shocking or disgusting, this fragment of Coppola is presented as a joke between friends or those with enough cleverness to see it in that light.

As for Beckham, though she is not necessarily presented as a corpse, there is a sense of abjection in the image through what Kristeva (1982/2010) called "death infecting life" (p. 4). The image of her in the bag anticipates death by presenting body parts as quite literally available for sale in sections. This photograph is not just an

indication of the fragmented body, but it also casts Beckham herself as avatar of consumption. Like Coppola's collapse into the bag above, Jacobs turns Beckham into a product that can be bought and taken home, but she seems quite willing to be part of the consumption cycle. The consumer is not buying Beckham, they are buying the idea that Beckham buys Marc Jacobs and is herself consumed, swallowed whole by the brand. Complex though it may be, that whole circuit is occurring within the ad itself, and Beckham, Jacobs, and the consumer who can parse the subversion are all in on the joke and are consequently above it all.

What makes this rhetorical function significant is this: at the end of the day, this workaround is still being used to sell Marc Jacobs products. These images are immediately engrossing simply because they break the rules of effortless beauty and luxurious tranquility and thereby invite the viewer stop and analyze them, which automatically translates to more time spent with the ad and a proven path to increased probability of purchase (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2004; Puntoni et al., 2010). The examination process is where the persuasion sets in. If the viewer chooses to understand the photograph as avant garde, cutting edge, and willfully subversive, and they want to fit in with the group who grasps the exclusive, hard-to-parse argument being made, they will be primed to purchase the product.

In many ways, Jacobs is not selling his clothing as much as he selling a gateway for the consumer to see themselves as someone who understands the postmodern, artistic elements present in these photographs. In advertisements like the ones analyzed above, the viewer finds meaning in the image, joining an exalted group who can perceive Meg

White's presentation as a dead body in terms of a logical signifier subverting visual norms. In that photo, death is quite literally commodified as a skirt, a coat, and a shoe, and the sign system presents a chance to decode the image and reconcile the undesirable as a solvable puzzle; buying Marc Jacobs products then offers the chance to resolve an unconscious conflict with death itself. Freud would be proud.

In 2018, consumers are well aware of the goal of a fashion photograph to "present an idealized, illusionistic vision that the viewer, literally, wishes to buy into" (Whitley, 1999, p. 72), and after decades of encountering these same idealistic, simulated visions, consumers are tired and bored, especially at the luxury level. Fashion advertisements are not just empty, callow images that sell clothing and lifestyles. They also sell ideas about what beauty should look like in a culture, and they contain the power to visually display an argument for how beauty is defined within a culture. In his advertisements, however, Jacobs explodes those norms, and by disrupting the very norms that give fashion photography its cultural power, he sets himself up to dictate those norms himself in the future.

By setting up his own norms, Jacobs elevated his brand as more powerful and authoritative than competitors, subverting the idea of traditional beauty and elevating the fragmented and bizarre as an equally meaningful aesthetic. In this way, Jacobs exalted his ads in the viewer's mind from the base position, merely seeking to sell something, to a higher artifact that approaches creativity and willfully opposes advertising norms, a purpose closer to the world of art than commerce.

Conclusion

These examples illustrate how Marc Jacobs advertisements exploit a subversion of the aesthetic of traditional luxury advertisements through twisted simulation. In each case, the image relies on the viewer's previous readings and understandings of high-fashion advertisements featuring famous celebrity women, and then purposefully subverts these expectations with sly copies, offering up fragments of a female body already understood by the public to represent beauty, celebrity, and fame. If the viewer had no previous knowledge of the "shoulds" of advertising as discussed in the literature review (Kilbourne, 1999), or in Lippman's phrase the "habits of our eyes" (Ewen, 1996, p. 149), then the elements of parody and subversion in the images would not be as effective.

For the increasingly bored postmodern consumer seeking to cut through the advertising clutter and express themselves in their purchases, Marc Jacobs' strange, transgressive advertisements not only parody the primary features of normative fashion advertisements, they parody the idea of fashion advertisement as a genre and a practice itself. At the simplest level, their purpose is to cut through media clutter and sell more clothes; at the most complex, it is to shift the concept of what an advertisement itself is and what the defining characteristics of beauty in American culture are. These higher purposes elevate the images as close to art form as possible. As noted above, the paradox inherent in Marc Jacobs advertisements is that even while they mock the trend of beautiful, luxurious images of people using expensive, luxury products, they are still performing the same process.

In summary, Marc Jacobs used imagery in his advertisements to parody the traditional concept of high-fashion advertising. The images further create tension through abjection and invocation of death, evoking a discomfort the viewer must resolve. Lifeless and fragmented postures subvert modern tenets of beauty like harmony or grace and exchange them for fragmentation and banality. By parodying expectations, the advertisements communicate their authenticity, and position Marc Jacobs as an artist and the consumer's ally against the greater world of capitalism.

CHAPTER 5

Facial Expression, Pose, and Setting

Over the course of the decade-long advertising campaign collaboration between Marc Jacobs and Juergen Teller, fragmented female bodies were not the only thing that separated these images from the traditional visual templates for high-fashion ads. The photographs differed in several other key ways from your typical ad, leaning more toward Teller's postmodern and avant garde photographic style than what is typically seen on the pages of Vogue. In addition to fragmented bodies, a macro analysis of the primary elements that Teller and Jacobs subverted in their images includes facial expression, pose, and setting. By twisting and challenging the expected norms for these tropes, they created their own visual aesthetic that was at odds with the aesthetic of the luxury market that the brand was situated in. Combine this with the celebrities they featured, and the results were often visually stunning. The longer the campaign went on, the more attention it received and the more Jacobs' ads succeeded in separating themselves out from the pack and into their own category of image.

The images were so distinct they often made the news. Well-known actors like Dakota Fanning (see Figure 5) and Winona Ryder (see Figure 6) made headlines for their respective campaigns with the brand. Ryder modeled for the line in 2003 right after her stint in court for a shoplifting incident at Saks in 2001, and Fanning modeled for the Spring/Summer 2007 collection when she was only 13 years old. After wearing Jacobs clothing repeatedly for her high-profile court appointments, Jacobs's choice of Ryder as a model after such a scandalous period of her own was considered controversial. In

Fanning's case, Jacobs created custom made pieces from his womenswear line to fit the preteen's slight frame. Though not as scandalous as the banned 2011 ad that the two would collaborate on later for his Lola perfume (an image that falls outside this study's purview but further indicates the continued, transgressive nature of his campaigns), the fact that Fanning modeled clothes for adult women at such a young age did stir conversation in fashion media. For both campaigns, the celebrities were shot with strange, intriguing facial expressions that were situated somewhere between scared, manic, and gruesome. For high-profile celebrities like Fanning and Ryder, the context of their personal lives was a subconscious, ever-present component of a viewer's interpretation of their expression in the ads.

As for poses, the fragmentation of the body discussed in detail in the previous chapter is just one form of the strangeness in physical presentation that dominates the positioning of a model in these images. If the model's whole body is present, then their spirit or energy is missing. Often, the clothes look more alive, vivid, and bold than the human figures, and they are even more lifelike than the environment and setting. Frequently, the models themselves look dead or ill, exhibiting characteristic of abjection (e.g., proximity to death and death-like aesthetics). In other cases, the models expose themselves obscenely, breaking through the sheen of sexualization and objectification and moving straight to vulgarity in a way that disrupts the interplay of sensuality, desire, and marketability.

For an example of obscenity, in one particularly shocking photo for a 2005 campaign, the well-known, androgynous model, Kristen McMenamy, is photographed in

formal dress, complete with long black silk gloves, but she is lifting the middle front hem of dress just enough to expose her genitals to the camera (see Figure 7). In another similarly bizarre image from this series that illustrates the Jacobs and Teller's strange use of pose, McMenamy is bent completely over at the waist, facing away from the camera with her hair covering her face. In a similar campaign, actress Michele Hicks appears naked save a pair of boots for a shoe advertisement with her face smashed into a corner next to a curtain while another perspective in a different photograph shows her turned completely against the wall, exposing her naked backside to the camera. These examples will be discussed more in detail below, but at the very least, they reflect a jarring use of nudity that diverges from the typical objectification and highly-sexualized portrayal of female bodies in advertisements. Rather, this portrayal seems to parody the historical usage of the naked female form.

Setting is yet another way the ads appear to subvert traditional notions of luxury. As noted in the previous chapter, strange settings show up repeatedly in Jacobs' ads. Specific scenery is repeated over time in the succession of ads, like a frequently used scene of a nondescript, dirty concrete floor and white, painted walls. If models are in the natural world, they are routinely presented as estranged from their environment or in conflict with it—consider how both Meg White and Sofia Coppola were in nature but at odds with it in their respective scenarios. In other cases, models are placed in either completely synthetic settings that contain no sign of natural life or light or that are dirty and disrupted by clutter or litter. Conversely, if they are pictured in natural settings, the plant life is usually decaying and dead.

In the previous chapter, I noted these features of Jacobs's art as part of my examination of the way he fragments the body in order to subvert expectations of beauty and to disrupt traditional visual standards for luxury clothing advertisements. I noted that these ads challenge expectations and even startle the viewer with photographs that evoke anxiety in their suggestion of emptiness or a lack of agency. However, I also raised the possibility that in doing so, Jacobs may actually be promoting luxury products by inviting consumers to see themselves as "insiders" to an understanding of postmodern art not accessible to the "average" consumer. In this chapter, I continue that examination by focusing more specifically on the elements of facial expression, pose, and setting, highlighting how their evocation of anxiety, discomfort, and ugliness functions to disguise advertising as art.

Facial Expression

The literature surrounding persuasion and advertising images places a huge emphasis on facial expression as a means of communicating any arguments the image is making. Messaris (1997) asserted that "it is probably the nature of a spokesperson's gaze, together with his or her general facial expression, that plays the most important role among the various attentional cues that are directly modeled in real world behavior" (p. 23). Therefore, equal to the positioning of the body—which is certainly an attentional cue—can impact a viewer in an ad, the model's face and gaze are extremely important elements contributing to an image's impact. This is part of what makes fragmented bodies so intriguing and so much harder for a viewer to decode. The lack of a face makes it more difficult for the viewer to parse. The facial expressions of Winona Ryder and

Dakota Fanning are also unusual enough to come under scrutiny as part of how Jacobs and Teller set their ads apart as images that presented themselves as art.

Winona Ryder appears in a 2003 collection of six Marc Jacobs ads that are marked by her disheveled appearance and a strangely earnest cheerful expression that devolves into near grimace toward the end of the series. All the ads appear to be shot in the same room. This room is a brightly lit, colorful hotel room or a sparsely decorated apartment, and Ryder is in various stages of undress and repose throughout the images of the campaign. Her hair is mussed and carelessly pulled back. In the initial image, she wears an outfit of Jacobs' designed clothes in cream and white that is later replaced with a white bathrobe that is always half on, half off. In the scenes where she wears a bathrobe, a beige Marc Jacobs bag and a pair of white heels are always included in the photo, haphazardly strewn about the room. In one scene, she wears the robe with a pair of white heels. In another, she is depicted clutching the heels in her arms with a vacant, unfocused gaze. In yet another image, she clutches one white pump and faces the camera head on while the heel of another shoe is portrayed in a mirror behind her.

Although her poses, clothing, and the setting are all interesting factors in these images, what is most attention grabbing are Ryder's facial expressions, particularly in the last two images in the series. In the first of these, Ryder is sitting in a chair positioned in the corner of the room, her cream-colored outfit from the first image is strewn about on the ground around the chair, and she now wears the white bathrobe haphazardly, half off of one shoulder and exposing her legs. One shoe from the previously seen white pair is half on her foot and a beige Marc Jacobs bag is next to her foot. She is sitting on the edge

of the chair and leaning out with her eyes bugged out wide and her mouth closed in a performative smile that looks forced and out of place.

In the second image, Ryder's expression is one of surprise, and there is a slight hint of fear in her gaze. She faces the photographer dead on in the traditional pose for a normative portrait, and she is holding one of the white heels in her hand. The other heel is reflected in a mirror behind her, just off to the side. Sontag (1977) wrote that this style of pose fulfills the "normal rhetoric of photographic portrait: facing the camera signifies solemnity, frankness, the disclosure of the subject's essence" (pp. 37-38). In this photograph, Ryder appears surprised by the camera's portrait, as if it accidentally encountered her frankness and solemnity or perhaps like an actress caught shoplifting. She is portrayed in the robe again, which is generally an item worn when someone is undressed for bed or bathing—or otherwise exposed—further suggesting that she was caught by surprise. Both photographs invoke a feeling that the viewer is invading an intimate moment and depict facial expressions that are surprising and appear to be candid.

As for the campaigns of Marc Jacobs ads featuring Dakota Fanning, they come much later in the series in Spring 2007. Across fifteen different shots, Fanning looks at times scared, literally backed into a corner, and sad, sitting dejectedly near tears with her eyes red. As noted before, though shot when she was 13, several of the images portray Fanning aping the sexy, smoldering gaze of an adult woman. In another, she laughs like the child she is, with her head thrown back while holding a purse that is visibly too big for her and heels that fit like a little girl wearing her mother's clothing. Fanning's

appearance in the campaign was toward the end of Jacobs' collaboration with Teller, and because of the young star's success as an actress, these images drew a great deal of attention at the time.

Out of the many shots of Fanning, two that stand out in terms of unusual facial expression are both shot from above, giving the camera an angle of looking down on the young actress, who is already small in stature. In one closeup shot that only includes her face and upper torso, she poses with her mouth agape and eyes wide, backed against a blank white wall, looking off into the distance. Fanning looked scared, and the use of a scared child in an ad feels disturbing. Meanwhile, her expression is totally at odds with her carefully parted hair that features a chic, white flower clip and an elegant, puffy white coat with a thick collar and a black tie down the front. Her grooming and clothing are the portrait of perfection in contrast to her terrified expression, creating a strange sense of dissonance.

In a similarly styled shot, Fanning is once again backed up against a white wall. This time, her hands are visibly pressed up against it behind her in a pose of fear. The camera angle is again coming from above such that the viewer looks down on Fanning, whose wide eyes and mouth closed in a firm, straight line both indicate fear. She wears a shiny brown patent leather jacket, a big oversized blue scarf tied in a bow on a blue silk blouse, and pleated khaki pants with a shiny brown belt that matches the jacket. Her hair is down in this image, but it is brushed and shiny, parted down the middle, and a single strand falls across her eyes. In her poses, Fanning looks vulnerable and small, a feature that is enhanced by the camera angle and her expressions.

By working with two women who were heavily scrutinized by the media and were both in vulnerable states, Jacobs and Teller were able to lean into the real-life attributes of their models and portray these ads as windows into the life of celebrity. Instead of feeling like advertisements, both of these campaigns felt like an inside look at what was really going on with Ryder and Fanning, and thus they played into the media scrutiny surrounding them. In Ryder's case, her manic and forced expression and the image where she appears caught unaware with product in hand tell a story about her relationship with the media that is intriguing to viewers. Namely, her expressions and haphazard, careless poses mimic the idea of being caught in the compromising position of shoplifting, inviting the viewer into the intimate, terrifying state of being exposed in that way. Cameras "caught" Ryder shoplifting in the first place. In the ads, the camera parodies the idea of catching someone in an intimate, candid moment, humanizing Ryder and evoking empathy in the viewer who can correctly read the strangeness of the image for the social commentary that it provides.

The ads also helped rehabilitate Ryder and model her as someone who is vulnerable struggling, not at all like the "supercilious expressions" that Messaris (1997) cited as common for high-fashion models. While those models appear to be looking down on the viewers and consumers, Ryder appears to be below them and even struggling with her position of fame. By critiquing the inner workings of fame and the media and assuming an allied status with a woman who was ostracized and mocked, Jacobs and Teller made a powerful statement with their Ryder campaign. Now, someone who is purchasing a Marc Jacobs product is also supporting Winona Ryder in her recovery from

a public humiliation and aligning themselves with a brand that seeks to portray the human side of an actress who struggled with the trappings her industry includes. This gives the images a sense of authenticity that elevates them above most ads and adds another purpose to the image than simply the hard sell of the clothes involved. While a typical ad may have posed Ryder as glamorous and powerful, Jacobs and Teller are savvy enough to know that portraying her in an intimate light as a vulnerable, real person allows their viewer an increased sense of familiarity, which is yet another strategy for evoking the feeling that the Marc Jacobs shopper is part of an inner circle the rest of the world does not quite understand or have access to.

As for Fanning's presentation, Teller and Jacobs are able to make a savvy commentary on the way that the media and fashion force young women to grow up so fast, particularly when they are in the spotlight. By alternating between looks where Fanning is playing at sultry and coy with these two alarming images that make the camera seem like an imposing, looming force, the campaign offers a blatant commentary on what an impact being on the world stage as a child might have on a teen like Fanning. Like most of the ads presented here, these images manage to offer a critique of that practice and while carrying out the practice at the same time, a strange mirroring process that give the images plenty of dimension. The ads encourage the viewer to see themselves as more savvy than the average consumer who thinks fame is a glamorous, wonderful thing, giving them cause to dig deeper to understand the possible drawbacks and struggles Fanning may face. By supporting a brand that incorporates this kind of social

commentary into their advertisements, consumers self-identify as more educated and informed than their peers.

By using a child who quite literally looks scared in their advertisements, Jacobs and Teller are able to evoke a feeling of superiority in their customers, who read the image cue as a warning about the effects of mass media and advertising and assign that cultural literacy to the Marc Jacobs brand even as the brand profits off of exposure and positive impression from an ad that is using the very process they are critiquing. Again, the consumers who are able to read into these social cues and read the critiques included in the ad are invited to feel superior to the average consumer who blindly follow the arguments of traditional images but view these as unreadable or strange. Furthermore, the parodic elements of the ad continue to poke fun at the cookie-cutter staging of this kind of ad, and the viewer who can pick up on that is in on the joke that Jacobs and Teller are making. For someone who values their position as part of an inner circle, these ads offer an easy entry into a product that can easily signal that prestige and cultural capital to those around them.

Pose

Aside from facial expression, the positioning of the model's body in an ad is one of the most powerful components of the image. Domzal and Kernan (1993), who focus on postmodern practices of advertising, posited:

> The principal thing we all possess is our body, the "ultimate artifact," and they go on to assert that "each of us is costumed to convey a 'look'—a persona—replete with meaning for anyone who understands the lexical code of appearance. (p. 4)

Given this framework, the positioning of the body becomes not just a biological one but a "semiotic reality" that is constrained by cultural standards of beauty. My analysis builds upon that semiotic reality, particularly by looking at how Jacobs and Teller's positioning of the body in their images disrupts a historical set of beauty standards used in advertising. Whether it is through unexpected nudity or physical positioning, these ads examine the particulars of the human form through a lens that questions the role of a model's body in an advertisement.

In one particularly compelling series from a Winter 2002 campaign, the actress and model Michele Hicks models for Marc Jacobs shoes (see Figure 8). In this black and white pair of images, she appears completely naked except for the pair of white button up heeled boots she is wearing. In the first one, Hicks is pressed into a corner, shot with a long angle from the right. She is sandwiched between a full-length curtained window that dominates the frame, and she is fenced in from behind by a large, dark table or desk. The front of her body is pressed into the corner. As such, despite not wearing any clothes, she is covered save for her naked behind, which is half visible.

In the second image, Hicks is standing upon the previously shown formidable black desk or table with her face and hands completely pressed into the wall behind her, and her naked behind is completely exposed. In each image, Hicks looks small, scared, and vulnerable. Her nudity is not presented in a sexual or sensual way but instead as a form of vulnerability. In the initial image where her face is visible, her expression is serious and sad. The setting is banal and ambiguous enough to be a room almost anywhere in the world, and there is nothing at all glamorous or remarkable about it.

For a similar campaign that Teller shot for Jacobs' Winter 2005 collection, the supermodel, Kristen McMenamy, is portrayed several times. Well known and coveted as a model for her androgynous appearance, McMenamy poses in a series of ads that portray her topless with the front half of her dress off in one photo, bent over with her hair streaming over her head in two others, one where she is sitting in a black, thin chair against a plain white wall and a dirty concrete floor with a contorted facial expression, and finally, lifting up her dress to completely expose her genitals. Aside from the positioning of her body in these five images, the images also clearly illustrate the use of unusual facial expression and liminal settings that feel like they exist in between or at odds with traditional backdrops for a luxury consumer, like a parking lot, a landfill, or a field in the middle of nowhere, and serve as a good reminder that these specific tropes are often used in conjunction with one another throughout the many images presented for analysis.

Focusing back in one pose in the first of these five images, McMenamy sits with her back against a plain white brick wall, eyes covered with dark sunglasses and her shoulders slumped down. She is wearing a massive, elegant gown with a lilac silk skirt that billows around her and black leather gloves on her hands. The bodice of the dress is blue velvet with a black flower affixed at the waistband, but the straps of the dress are falling off of McMenamy and down her arms, exposing her right breast completely to the camera whereas her left breast is covered by her long, permed blonde hair. In the second image, the camera captures McMenamy from the side, and she is bent completely over with her head facing the left side of the frame. She wears another elegant black, purple,

and blue silk dress in a floral pattern, and her hair is flowing over her head but leaves her stoic facial expression visible. She wears tall black socks with low red and black heels. She is bent so far over that her hair is almost touching the ground, and her face is close to knee level. The setting around her is the plain white brick wall and dirty concrete floor. The third image closely approximates the second, but McMenamy is wearing a black silk gown in this image, and the camera is facing her at an angle. In this one, she is not bent over quite as much. Instead, she slumps more, her arms hanging down to her knees with her hair completely obscuring her face, which is close to belly button level. The setting is the same as in the second image, featuring a concrete floor and a white brick wall.

For the fourth image, McMenamy is seated in the same setting in a plain black plastic and metal chair. She wears a short black dress and black high heels with a bow fastened on the top of her foot. Her legs are splayed out in front of her with knees together, and her hands grip seat of the chair. This image is compelling because of her facial expression. Her mouth is slightly agape, and she stares vacantly off into the distance past the camera. Save for the high-end dress that she is wearing, her pose mirrors that of an inmate in a psychiatric facility as her clenched body language and vacant stare suggest someone who is suffering from mental illness.

The final and most explicit image depicts McMenamy in the same white wall and concrete floor setting. In this ad, she wears a golden yellow silk dress and elbow-length black silk gloves. She faces the camera dead on, and her face is expressionless. With her hands, she is lifting the front part of her dress just enough to expose the entirety of her bare genitalia. The juxtaposition of her formal dress and gloves with her blatant exposure

gives the image a sheen of the obscene. Once again, there is nothing sensual or desirable in her exposure, and there is no hint of the way female bodies are historically objectified for the pleasure of the male gaze.

Within the nudity presented by Hicks and McMenamy, there is a sense of subversion and disruption as neither are presented as sexualized bodies but instead as bodies that are making a statement about their own use as "ultimate artifacts" in a society that ranks and assigns more value to some bodies than others. While both of these women possess thin, white, celebrity bodies, the way they are portrayed here as exceedingly vulnerable or defiantly exposed makes a statement by presenting a different kind of nudity than the viewer expects. Encountering Hicks' naked behind as she stands pressed against a wall in the corner of a bland room with expensive, tall boots on or seeing McMenamy's genitals proudly exposed while she wears an elegant ball gown creates a sense of dissonance that is consistent through Jacobs' ads. The viewer encounters a visual puzzle that asks them to assign meaning and to craft their own narrative that makes these images make sense.

By specifically subverting any sense of beauty or elegance in these images even when the clothing and models involved are quite elegant, Jacobs is able to draw into question what the value we assign to beauty and female bodies means in our society. These two powerful women who are literally paid for their expressions of beauty are both presented in unattractive and unusual postures, and the savvy consumer will read a critique of the "semiotic reality" of beauty and bodies that has historically been written into fashion advertising. Intrigued by the cutting-edge use of nudity, genitals, and

obscenity, these ads convey the sense of being rebellious and artistic, a welcome antidote to the cloying, photoshopped facade present in most advertising that displays impossibly perfect, overly sexualized women.

The positioning of their bodies illustrates abjection through McMenamy's deathlike, bent-over posture and Hick's listless, sad stare, and the exposure of their bodies hints at human vulnerability and our constant proximity to death and sex, which is generally covered up or hidden by our clothes. Instead, these ads revel in the liminality of the human form wherein nudity becomes a reminder of our own vulgar, uncivilized past, while at the same time quietly making an argument for the viewer to buy the clothing depicted. The models' portrayal further invites the viewer to adopt an empathetic, insider position toward these two famous women by revealing them in such a vulnerable state. The viewer is again invited to perceived themselves as possessed of the sophistication that would allow them to read these images as critiques of the very system of which they are a part and which they support.

Furthermore, the use of McMenamy bent over with her face covered or her expression blank also toys with the role of the body in presenting a product as meaningful. In those images, McMenamy as a model seems completely detached from the product she is presenting while her body is being used to display them, and her posture depicts her as completely uninterested from what she is wearing. While most models strive to create a connection with the viewer via the camera or make the product seem like a desirable thing, McMenamy's indifference pokes fun at the visual tropes of the past. The expressions of her body are completely divorced from the visual language

that viewers associate with persuasion, a subversion that in itself becomes a persuasive act for the viewer who is eager to read into the "anti-advertisement" semiotics that Jacobs and Teller have been slowly but surely assembling.

Setting

Setting has now been referenced several times throughout this analysis, but it is enough of a force in these images that it deserves a detailed examination of its own. The third major component in these images aside from the facial expressions and bodies of the human they portray is the physical spaces that the models occupy. Setting in these advertisements contributes to the aesthetic of abjection in that Teller and Jacobs seem to purposefully choose liminal spaces that are indiscernible as far as when and where they are located or what they might be. Postmodernism emphasizes banality as just as valuable as that which is outwardly beautiful if not more so because of its unexplored and ignored dimension.

In her seminal analysis, *On Photography,* Sontag (1977) pointed to the shift away from picturesque and ideal to plain in photographic history, noting that "since the 1920s, ambitious professionals, those whose work gets into museums, have steadily drifted away from lyrical subjects, conscientiously exploring plain, tawdry, or even vapid material" (p. 28). It is the very "plainness" of these scenes that marks them as acceptable sites for postmodern individuals to inhabit and aligns them with the realm of art, not advertising.

However, there is another element to the settings in these advertisements that goes beyond banality—it is the discomfort they reveal through ambiguity. As Kristeva (1982/2010) wrote, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but

what disturbs identity, system, order. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4). The ambiguity of the setting further enhances the instability present in the unusual facial expressions and unexpected body language of the models. Whether they are positioned in nature or in urban landscapes, the models in the settings are at odds with the elements. Specifically, the figures in Marc Jacobs advertisements are almost always completely alone. Further, setting often functions almost as a character itself that the models interact with as the scenes are so often unexpectedly cluttered, dirty, broken down, and/or unusually located for ads that seek to depict luxury or high fashion.

Sontag (1977) also wrote, "True modernism is not austerity but a garbage-strewn plenitude—the willful travesty of Whitman's magnanimous dream" (p. 68-69). Perusing this collection can feel like Jacobs and Teller took her words to heart, combining both modernism's austerity and the "garbage-strewn plentitude" to position their ads as actively subversive images, bringing down the hierarchy of luxury from within. In three different ads featuring musician, Rufus Wainwright (see Figure 9), sculptor, Rachel Feinstein (see Figure 10), and model, Raquel Zimmermann (see Figure 11) respectively, Jacobs and Teller play with the way setting can influence the viewer to read this image as a piece of art, not merely an advertisement.

A prime example of this is the campaign for Jacobs' men's collection from 2005 featuring Wainwright. Across four images, Wainwright appears first in a filthy apartment with flaking paint and a dead plant. He then appears out on the street with graffiti and dirty concrete and brick, playing his shiny grand piano, standing on top of it, and laying on the ground with his feet up on the keys.

In the first photograph, Wainwright is lying on the floor of a dirty apartment. In the upper edge of the photograph is a grimy windowsill with paint peeling, a stone and other dirt present on both the sill and the window panes. Wainwright lies half on a dirty, scratched, and dusty wood floor, and a faded maroon carpet. To his left is a wall with a crooked socket and a dying, potted tree. To the right near his head is an old-fashioned rotary phone that is not plugged in. He lies with his right arm clenching his scarf over his torso and his right hand hiding his mouth and partially covering his face, his eyes looking into the camera. Like so many of the other subjects, Wainwright is fragmented from the waist down, and only his upper torso appears in the photograph. As for facial expression, his eyes are very wide and look concernedly into the camera.

Though Wainwright is a well-known musician, the more compelling elements in this photograph are the setting. The old-fashioned phone, the grimy brick windowsill, the dying plant, and the faded carpet create a scene that asks the viewer to imagine why Wainwright might be there. It is unclear if this is an apartment, a green room he is waiting in before a show, a motel, or somewhere else, but even his positioning on the floor of the room draws the setting into focus.

In the three other images, Wainwright sits in turns perched as far as possible away from his piano on the bench with his arms outstretched to touch the instrument, standing on top of the grand piano with his hand on his hip, or lying on the observably filthy cement, with one heel up on the piano keys and the other crossed over at the knee with his hands clasped below him. In all three images, his gaze is directly centered on the camera, and his entire body is included in the shot. Even when he is positioned

awkwardly in context with the instrument, it is the sharp white graffiti, dirty cement, and black metal and brick background that demands attention and dominates the photo.

This location looks to be a street in a major city that has been worn down over time and is not located in the best area, but it is liminal enough that it could be a street in any city. To portray Wainwright, a musician used to elegant concert halls and formal settings, in such a garish and dirty street location with his piano draws the context of his music into question. The setting is at odds both with his role as a musician and the place he occupies in the upper echelons of society, and the formal dress clothes he wears in the photographs further emphasize the disconnect.

In another telling example of the importance of setting, a campaign from 2004 features sculptor Rachel Feinstein in what appears to be an upscale, immaculate apartment. The advertisement features the same elements of irregular poses and alarming facial expression. Her smile is stretched too tightly and too wide to look real and therefore looks fake to viewers (Porter et al., 2008). Her poses are hackneyed replicas of often-used stances. In one, she clutches a bag to her chest. In another, she places her hand over her heart and smiles, but it is a strained, too-wide smile. It is her relationship to the apartment and the kitchen in particular that marks the setting as an integral part of this image. In one image, Feinstein is dressed in an extremely elaborate evening gown, complete with velvet and tulle trim, and a fur shawl. In this photograph, she stands next to her oven with a hand on her hip and jewelry dripping from her hands and arms. In another, she is still next to the oven but sits in an office-styled roller chair dressed in business casual clothing with a skirt, buttoned down shirt, and high heels.

In a final image, Feinstein stands with her neck pressed against one of her kitchen cabinets with a hand resting on the stainless steel counter, sporting another glamorous outfit complete with jewels and sequins. The contrast between her glamorous appearance and the setting of the kitchen manages to ironically imply that this Manhattan socialite and artist is completely out of place in the stereotypical place for a woman. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the image in which Feinstein is literally pressed up against her cabinet, stymied from movement by the kitchen setting, a sly critique of the way sexist assumptions hold back even the most powerful and prominent female artists.

Besides portraying artists as out of place in filthy urban areas or a female artist in contrast with stereotypical feminine spaces, the Marc Jacobs advertisements also depict a disconnect from the natural world. In a series of three images from the Spring and Summer 2009 collection that feature Brazilian-born model Raquel Zimmermann, the entire campaign is shot in an orchard. Bizarrely enough, the fruit on the trees is all decaying and rotting, a far cry from the perfect, glowing background that would typically be used to convey luxury, wealth, and success. Zimmermann is often posed such that the branches are encroaching on her face and body, or the glamour of her dress is contrasted with the decaying branches. In the juxtaposition, what looks desirable is the product, not the natural world. The natural world appears as a terrifying place. For instance, Zimmermann is framed on all sides in one image by rotting apples, presenting the setting itself and the natural world as something dangerous and transient whereas the clothing remains shiny, new, and safe.

By juxtaposing the Marc Jacobs product with images of ugliness in the natural world, Teller creates an aesthetic that inverts the typical portrayal of the nature as beautiful and instead draws the focus to the clothing. Zimmermann poses on a simple wooden chair, a high metal platform on wheels, and with her back to the audience, further creating an aesthetic of discomfort in the natural environment. Teller also seems to be mocking the impossibly beautiful natural environments where models often pose in couture and high-end dresses–environments that are completely unrealistic settings for the products portrayed.

Rhetorical Function

In each of these examples, Jacobs and Teller use an ugly, liminal setting to draw attention to the contrast between a high-brow artist and the spaces they typically occupy and what the rest of the world is subjected to. Wainwright is used to playing in beautiful concert halls, not on the street, but by placing him in this context, Jacobs and Teller invite the viewer to note the disconnect and draw their own conclusions about the way art is reserved for the wealthy. By taking a musician like him and putting him literally out on the street or in the messy Brooklyn apartment that he may have started out in as a young performer, the images subtly critique the structures of money, power, and fame that inhabit so much of the art world. A consumer well versed in these intersections of power will read the images as a reflection on that and will once again be invited to feel a sophistication in being able to understand of the advertisement's commentary.

In the case of Feinstein, though she is probably only known to a consumer with an understanding of the art world, the feminist implications invoked by her formal dress and

relegation to an apartment's kitchen are abundantly clear. The idea that no matter what level of success a woman reaches, some part of her will still be forced into this rough, strained relationship with traditional womanhood is an extremely savvy one, and it is a concept that modern consumers who style themselves as liberal and progressive will embrace wholeheartedly. For a fashion brand to align itself with this social commentary is exactly what a sophisticated consumer will see and want to invest in, thereby aligning themselves with forward-thinking principles.

Finally, Zimmermann's positioning in a rotting orchard can also double as a commentary on the way we overlook and use up the natural world when it is not specifically suiting us and how the unruliness of the earth is not going away no matter how hard we try to ignore it. Instead of tending the branches, Zimmermann is obscured and overtaken by them, a not-so-subtle reading on the way nature is still a force that the human race loves to assume it can manage but is instead constantly overwhelmed by. The viewer is invited to see these images as a critique of the way that humanity tries to exert its agenda on the natural world and so often fails. Instead of reading Zimmermann's interactions with the orchard as confusing or the trees as ugly, a consumer may read this image as a statement on ecology and nature's amoral, unrelenting cycles that will consistently rise above humanity's attempts to control them.

All of these examples reveal how Jacobs and Teller's art direction uses setting to further critique and disrupt the expectations of a viewer encountering a high-fashion advertisement. They present a parody of the perfect places and flawless, exquisite settings that many high-fashion ads seek to depict by instead focusing on how settings for artists

are sanitized and removed from what the masses experience, by critiquing the way women are pigeonholed via place and station in life, and by revealing how the natural world is ultimately untamable and not meant to just be another product we consume. The viewer who is already primed to expect subversive, banal, and grotesque messages from a Marc Jacobs ad will read these unusual and bizarre settings as more proof of his satirical commentary on the fashion world and savvy, progressive worldview. The ugly, upsetting nature of the setting in these images also pushes them toward the postmodern, contemporary art world where, as Sontag (1977) noted, the lyrical has gone out of style and is replaced by the tawdry.

Conclusion

As this broader analysis of facial expression, pose, and setting reveals, the satirical elements of self-awareness in these advertisements coupled with the aesthetic of abjection allow viewers to position themselves as savvy, sophisticated group who can parse complex messages about the world, and in turn, want to support a brand that is positioning itself in alignment with forward-thinking, progressive ideals while the rest of the fashion world is sadly backwards and predictable. Whether it be through the unusual, strangely forced facial expressions of a 13-year-old girl, the obscenely exposed genitals of a supermodel, or the filthy apartment floor that a musician was photographed on, Jacobs and Teller subvert the historical visual tropes of high-fashion advertising again and again throughout this campaign and then push their rebellion further by aligning it with socially progressive concepts.

It is also important to note that the ugliness, banality, and bizarre images that are presented here are constantly juxtaposed with a backdrop of stark white and a limited, barely-there text description. This setup both mimics the aesthetic of a museum and invites the viewer to see them as carefully curated snapshots that are designed to make a statement about aesthetics, not that they represent the aesthetic of Marc Jacobs clothing itself. The white space around these transgressive images is a safety net, a buffer between what the images are portraying and the expectations of how the viewer interacts with them. The framing gives the viewer a feeling of a once-removed perspective that allows them to imbue the images with their own meaning and to work out the argument according to their own desires, much in the same way as a movie or a painting invites this involvement. The context of this white space is one of the most powerful components of the advertisement's layout and will be explored at length in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Inside the White Cube

In September 2010, one year after Juergen Teller and Marc Jacobs finished their collaboration on advertisements for Jacobs' eponymous fashion line, the German-based publishing company, Steidl Photography International published a 576-page art book collecting a number of the ads used in the campaigns. The white hardcover book is 13.2 x 10.7 inches and weighs nearly ten pounds. Priced at 250 Euros, the book is about $300 American dollars, a price point that registers as expensive but not prohibitively so (Mead, 2017).

As the folklore surrounding Steidl goes, the company was formed in the early 1970s when its founder, Gerhard Steidl, suggested to a local printing press that printing a page twice over would improve overall quality. He was correct and, inspired by this insight, eventually started his own company to print books on social political philosophy, literature, and art. In 1994, Steidl launched its international photobook program to print art photography books and slowly gained critical acclaim as one of the finest publishers of photo art books in the world.

The 2017 New Yorker essay on his company is indeed a definitive account of Steidl and its founder, titled "Gerhard Steidl Is Making Books an Art Form," and the essay explained that Steidl is "widely regarded as the best printer in the world," particularly when it comes to photographers and photography aficionados (Mead, 2017 p. 3). Perhaps most famously, Steidl frequently works with high-fashion guru Karl Lagerfeld in his capacity as head creative director for Chanel. This partnership is a

lucrative collaboration that gives Steidl the creative freedom to select the other photographers and artists he wants to publish without profit or the bottom line in mind. In short, his cosign of Teller's work with Jacobs is no small feat and publishing their book with Steidl was an immediately effective way for Jacobs and Teller to further position these advertisements as not just relevant to the art world but already part of it.

The endorsement of Steidl certainly is not the only element that helped elevate the book's status and the ads inside it as art objects. In this chapter, I focus on the historic use of white space to signify and define luxury and high-art spaces (Pracejus et al., 2006) and illustrate how Jacobs and Teller use it to convey those characteristics in the layout of the advertisements themselves, a feature that is reinforced in the layout of the coffee table book they published. I also analyze the use of pre-established celebrity artists in the images in lieu of nameless models, a move that adds another cultural element to the photographs that gestures toward the art world.

Even more than the photographs themselves or their placement in ad layouts against white space, the status of the advertisements shift when they are collected and bound in an elegant white coffee table book as the book's physicality and function as something to be displayed in homes further ties into the argument that the ads themselves are works of art. My analysis examines how the format of an art book that presents the ads in chronological order changes the function of the images by removing them from the marketplace and/or the pages of a fashion magazines littered with ads, placing them in a similar context to other artworks collected in books. In summary, if these ads are not art,

then absolutely everything about their presentation in the Steidl book makes it seem like they are.

White Space in Ads

Across 576 pages of color photographs used in the Marc Jacobs ad campaigns for the Steidl book, all of the images put together still account for less than half of the content. The rest is all the white space used for framing the images. In fact, white space is arguably the most comprehensive, cohesive aesthetic device in the entire campaign. It bridges the gap between the traditional Marc Jacobs ads and the Marc By Marc Jacobs spinoffs, and it remains consistent across a decade's worth of subjects, settings, and styles. It is also the defining feature in the coffee table book as the entire cover and binding are white on both sides with just the same minimal black text that appeared in the campaigns over the years. There is no foreword, editor's letter, or no note from Jacobs or Teller. Just like the ads themselves, the book offers its arguments only visually, using text to name the artists and celebrities involved and nothing further. For now, I focus on the images themselves. A closer look at the book's overall layout will come later in the chapter.

Regardless of how surreal, abject, or bizarre the photographs themselves may be, each one is presented against the smug, sterile white space traditionally associated with luxury and art galleries. Of course, those associations were built up over decades before Teller and Jacobs tapped into them. Though a white backdrop as the visual trope in art museums may seem like a given, it was O'Doherty (1976) who best synthesized and described why galleries all conformed to this aesthetic principle. One main reason is that

white space suggests eternity, and an introduction to O'Doherty's (1976) piece by art critic Thomas McEville argues that "the white cube promotes the myth that we are there essentially as spiritual beings" (p. 10), thus elevating the museum itself to a hushed and sacred space that feeds the soul. A contemporary art gallery in London is literally named White Cube, taking the ideology to its fullest expression.

If white space was helping to designate museums as sacred, refined spaces, then advertisers were not far behind. Long after it was established in the art world as a backdrop, white space gained prominence in ads in the late 20th century due to the work of two of modern advertising's forebearers, Paul Rand and William Bernbach (Pracejus et al., 2006). The new visual associations created for white space were decidedly American. The aesthetic was established in New York during the expansion of corporate art and in response to a need for flourishing corporate imagery as companies faced increased scrutiny from public criticism and needed to signify dignity and respect.

Subsequently, white space also came to signify cleanliness and order as opposed to clutter, alleviating social anxieties about the diseases of poverty that had stricken the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, its association with the minimalist movement naturally led to an implication that white space was "modern" insofar as it was simultaneously a symbol of upward mobility and forward thinking (Pracejus et al., 2006). It is also important to point out that white space is not "nothing." Rather, it has come to be seen as a canvas against which something important can be best shown: the proper framework for an item of significance, as well as a rejection of cloying and cluttered or "garish" aesthetics popularized in the mid-century.

Into this American-conceived, Puritanical conception of white space stepped Jacobs and Teller, eager to set apart Jacobs' already subversive designs with persuasive, memorable campaigns. As the only American brand in the LVMH portfolio at the time, Jacobs and Teller wisely played into the trope of white space that had been fermenting in the American subconscious for the last fifty years. As Pracejus et al. (2006) noted:

> White space, sometimes referred to as negative space, is the conspicuously open space found between other design elements or objects within the borders of an ad. It is typically used to convey elegance, power, leadership, honesty, trustworthiness, a modem nature, and a refined taste associated with the upper social strata. (p. 84)

Aligned with art and elegance through the minimalist movement, white space was seen as a tool in an artistic school of thought determined to position itself against "deceptive" art (Pracejus et al., 2006). That last bit feels especially ironic given that its usage in these ads helps blur the boundaries between art and advertisement, a move that could potentially be considered deceptive.

However, it is also worth noting that the images presented in Marc Jacobs advertisements are essentially the artwork of Juergen Teller. While their appearance in the context of a marketing setting changes the impact they carry, Teller was already an established fashion and grunge photographer prior to his collaboration with Jacobs. When the brand was ready to take off in 1998, it needed to establish a visual identity quickly. Studies have shown that association of artistic qualities with a product immediately results in a higher value attribution to the product. For Jacobs, pairing his independent

and anti-fashion clothing line with a well-known but eccentric art photographer was a quick way to add value to the brand (Scott, 2005; Twitchell, 1996).

Despite the book's inclusion of multiple campaigns over the course of a decade or so, the advertisements share an astonishing number of design elements in common. They all feature a photograph against a white background or with a white frame. Somewhere on every single ad is the name Marc Jacobs, as well as either the website or a physical address for one of the Marc Jacobs boutiques. These text elements always appear in white, grey, or black text only, and they appear in the same font over a period of ten years. In this way, Marc Jacobs established a timeless look for his brand, creating an identity befitting a luxury brand in the line of Dior or Louis Vuitton, brands that maintain nearly iconic status with their font choices.

None of the images in the book offer any information other than the name of the model or models photographed and citing Juergen Teller as the photographer. Additionally, it is unique that every single photograph features the name of the model portrayed because the advertisement is directly playing on the cultural cachet of each celebrity name. Every model is linked to the cultural connotations and role they fulfil in society as an artist or celebrity, none of them are just models. But, by purposefully leaving every photo in his campaigns captionless, Marc Jacobs avoids clutter, refocusing the attention of the viewer solely on the bizarre image where lack of additional accompanying text places it in a heightened state of play and instability.

Celebrity Artists as Models

The advertisements present a world of authentic and gritty characters who are simultaneously surreal and lost. They appear in fragments, in ugly, puzzling, uncomfortable and bizarre situations, and the tension is enhanced by the fact that, for the most part, we know who they are. These photographs rip away the cloying perfection that advertising generally seeks to portray, rejecting the normalized notion of luxury as glamorous or elegant and, instead, highlight individuals who have attained status through artistic pursuit portrayed in uniquely emotional situations. Every model used in one of these images is already well known in the world for their own work as an artist, whether it be photography, acting, writing, filmmaking gaining fame as a model, or as a musician. Most of them are on the cutting edge of culture.

In this way, their appearance aligns Marc Jacobs products with the bohemian, wild, and subversive elements of the artists they portray. With appearances from the legendary, subversive filmmaker Harmony Korine, the iconic conceptual portrait artist Cindy Sherman, indie rock royalty Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth, and wunderkind photographer Ryan McGinley, the brand positions itself as of one accord with the celebrities who are appearing in the photographs. Additionally, most of the artists in question are tied to the artistic cult of New York City, the place where Jacobs was born and raised, further building into the brand's own mythology.

Finally, the artists, actresses, filmmakers, and musicians that Jacobs and Teller tapped for their ads are not the kind to appear as spokespersons for other brands or products. There is a sense of rarity to Winona Ryder appearing in a high fashion ad or

then teen actress Dakota Fanning doing a fashion campaign. The exclusivity of the celebrities involved also points back to positioning the ads as art by subtly arguing these artists would not be involved with a more basic, less transgressive campaign. The tacit approval of each celebrity artist further separates Jacobs from the rest of the negative implications of an advertisement or the assumptions a potential consumer might have about the fashion world at large. By combining images of these artists portrayed against white space into a bound art book, they are one more step removed from questionable world of advertising.

Advertisement as "Art Book"

Preserving the images in an art book aligns Marc Jacobs with the tradition of art books created to disseminate the work of highly praised artists, exhibit portraits of natural beauty, or honor other historical figures and celebrities. The use of Steidl as the printing house increases the book's "foreign" luxury appeal, aligning it with the Marc Jacobs tradition. Additionally, by publishing the book in English and releasing it in America, Jacobs established a continuance of his brand's position as a flagship American brand for the European LVMH conglomerate.

The proportions of the book, its glossy pages, and the use of full color simulate the original format of the advertisements, which initially appeared in fashion magazines like Vogue. Presented entirely text free with no introduction, dedication, book jacket information, or description, the book further designates its owner as a connoisseur or one with inside knowledge by withholding any information about the book or its intended purpose. The book contains campaigns from womenswear, bags, shoes, men's, and Marc

by Marc Jacobs. Though they originally appeared as advertisements over the course of ten years in a variety of print outlets, the Steidl publication preserves the ads and presents them all in the same place and time. This allows the advertisements to be viewed within their syntactical arrangements, similar to a series of paintings or photographs presented in an exhibit by an artist or the collected works of a writer.

By presenting the ads as something to preserved, collected, and re-viewed by consumers, Jacobs sets himself up as an artist, not only in his clothing and accessories but through his work advertising these products. As we enter an increasingly digital age, books like this have become rarities, art objects, and extensions of consumer self-expression. Magazines and art books are yet another way for consumers to establish their identity and possess images that indicate their status.

The historical background of luxury consumers, as explained in the literature review, notes how the modality of the magazine worked perfectly to target the high-end market, which craved the exclusivity and materiality of an image. There is a marked difference between how a billboard advertisement and a magazine advertisement are perceived: the billboard is available en masse, accessible to any mere passerby whereas the magazine ad is kept between exclusive pages, available only to the connoisseur who subscribes to the magazine or purchases the item. Magazines developed niche markets and established an "insider" appeal that perfectly dovetails with the desires and needs of luxury consumers (Husic-Mehmedovic & Ostapenko, 2010; Leiss et al., 2005).

As the magazine became a prop within the commodity cycle, its popularity sparked the idea to market pure images for consumption in book-sized portions. The art

book as a prop within the commodity cycle fulfills the same function as magazines by presenting images to be consumed in the daily life of consumers. It is an answer to boredom, a way to pass the time, and an instruction manual on what society considers valuable, worthwhile, and enviable. Taken together, the white space, celebrity artist models, and art book format all work to portray these advertisements as works of art in their own right.

Rhetorical Function

White space ushers away from the commercial and suggests the elegant. By setting all their subversive, postmodern photos against this elevated backdrop, Jacobs and Teller ensured the viewer would not mistake the lowbrow, unusual slant of their photos for the actual aura and perception of their product. The juxtaposition of each photograph against a white, sanitized false front brings the image's perpetrated "truth" into focus. The surreal elements are aesthetic choices being made, and the viewer's ability to understand them, partially via the cues of the white framing, is what sets them apart and gives them access to the artistic nature of the high-end, luxury world the images perpetuate despite their own ugliness.

Years of portraying white as clean and opposed to the unrefined spaces of the poor and middle class give the setup an increased sense of power in Marc Jacobs ads, which routinely depict dirty and common settings. The white space framing these images allows them to transcend even their own banality, shimmering with the facade of a museum's curation and the art world's highbrow taste for fetishizing exotic others no matter their station or portrayal.

Since all of the characters in the ads are artists themselves, their appearance reinforces the implicit claim that art is in, around, and contained within these images. Given the way in which advertising images visually argue that the consumer will have access to the world portrayed if they purchase the product and that purchasing it connects and aligns the consumer to these artists, the role of the celebrities in these photos is an integral part of the persuasive process. A fan of Sonic Youth is purchasing a brand that the band is now perceived to be part of, at least in a small way. The fact that the image is a parody of a traditional high-fashion ad, which would otherwise include a supermodel instead of Kim Gordon, only feeds into the punk rock ethos of an artist like Gordon or Sonic Youth. There is alignment between the values of the artists and the perceived value of the advertisement.

As discussed in the literature review, a primary feature of the postmodern world is the emphasis upon consumption as a means to help build identity (Elliot, 1997). Purchase decisions are now taken as serious markers of personality and individuality, and this is especially true for the luxury market, where the stakes are higher for postmodern consumers who face media clutter and increased boredom (Morris, 2005). With this increased need to consume in order to identify themselves and individuate, commodification has entered into corners of life where it was previously unknown. As such, an art book becomes a viable form of personal expression for a fan of these artists, a fan of the photography of Juergen Teller, or a consumer who is impressed with Jacobs' clothing designs.

In order to establish identity, possession of appropriate images ensures that the consumer is seen in a certain light. Images become something to possess and show off in a way that mirrors the spike in art or even "print" collecting that the modern age saw. As every facet of life is filled with products that project a certain idea, the image of a thing eventually replaces the thing itself. Even if you do not have a Marc Jacobs bag, owning this book grants you access into the elegant, high-fashion art world he is selling. By becoming an item that the consumer can own, the ads align themselves completely as an art object, divorced from their original intent to sell products and turning into a product themselves, which is one of the facets of postmodern products when they have been removed from their original context and imbued with new consumer-oriented but arbitrary values (Cortese, 2006). By displaying their comprehension of the disruptive purpose of Jacobs' advertisements, a purchaser of this book can attain an understanding of themselves as a purveyor of art and not just mindless consumers, fulfilling some of Baudrillard's (2010) prophecies about America's commodification of advertisements themselves.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified how the use of white space in both the ads themselves and in the book that binds them together reaffirms the principles that define these images as art objects above the category of mere advertisements. Between the historical implications of the white space aesthetic in museum spaces and the positioning of white space in the history of advertising itself, framing the images in this way reiterates their position as works of art, not just photographic images used to sell clothes.

By using fragmented bodies, depicting unusual facial expressions, poses, and settings in the photographs themselves, and by portraying these images against white space in a high-end art book, Jacobs and Teller have tapped into three distinct elements that help align their images as art, not advertisements. Though the initial, base purpose of these images is to sell product, my rhetorical analysis reveals the ways they continually supersede the category of ad and gesture toward the art world. By combining them together as a set in a book published by one of the most prestigious publishers in the world, Jacobs and Teller have superseded the commodity cycle of ad presenting product, and transformed the ad itself into a stand-alone product. This kind of detached, subversive use of the images fully embodies the postmodern elements of fragmented processes and new hierarchies of meaning. In book form, the ads assume a new context as art objects, arguing for their inclusion in the world of fashion photography simply by existing within book form, which, once again, is also a sellable item. But, in order to determine if the images have succeeded in superseding the category of ad and becoming art, it is necessary to define what specific characteristics an object must possess to be considered art, and if those can be established, whether or not these advertisements fit into that category.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The surrealist artist Salvador Dali, who worked for *Vogue* designing covers, once rather infamously declared that the modern artist should "participate in every kind of extracurricular activity. . .it is all part of the propaganda of your imagination, no?" (Crawforth, 2004, p. 212). After the in-depth examination of the images presented in Marc Jacobs ads in conjunction with the photographer Juergen Teller, it seems clear that despite their overt goal of selling products, these images are also functioning in a number of other ways, and these functions are often more powerful or even working against their intention to sell Marc Jacobs products. These functions elevate them to the realm of art and certainly cast them into the canon of Dali's "propaganda of imagination."

The propaganda of imagination that has become part of America's visual consciousness has grown in scope and power since the rise of advertising and cycles of consumption that began around the mid-19th century. Beginning with a look at the historical implications of those cycles and examining the history of advertising itself, my research also covered the intersection of photography and art with the fashion system and an analysis of the use and scope of visual rhetoric as a practice. Situating my own research within these historical interactions, this thesis further explored the background of Marc Jacobs as a designer and contextualized his line within the overarching scope of LVMH, the luxury conglomerate that owns his designs. After establishing these baseline areas of interest, we moved into an analysis of the way luxury consumers are targeted and more specifically the way postmodern art and philosophy are being incorporated into the

advertising world.

Armed with this extensive background, my work in this piece moved into a close examination of a decade's worth of Marc Jacobs advertisements that were shot by Juergen Teller and collected into an art photography book published by Steidl. Examining the collection through a micro-analysis of their use of fragmented female bodies, a macro-analysis of the use of facial expression, pose, and setting, and an overarching look at the historical implications of white space in advertisements, my work argued that Jacobs and Teller created a series of advertising images that sought to elevate themselves beyond the world of the ad, posing and exploring their capability to function as art.

By incorporating a series of postmodern aesthetic concepts like abjection, parody, and subversion, this analysis argued that Jacobs and Teller were able to create a world of images that invites the viewer to see themselves as part of a sophisticated elite who could understand these often confusing, unexpected, and tumultuous images, decoding them as signifiers that gave the viewer increased status over their peers, and other less savvy consumers. In terms of selling products and profit for the company, the ads were successful, and they also built a positive reputation for Marc Jacobs as an innovative, fresh designer with his own distinct, somewhat rebellious style. Over the course of this initial decade-long campaign, the Marc Jacobs brand rose from an unknown American upstart to one of the most affluent lines in the LVMH conglomerate.

Not only were these advertisements extremely effective at selling product and increasing the Marc Jacobs brand but they also helped the brand increase its cultural

capital. Directly in line with the production of these advertisements, the Marc Jacobs brand grew in popularity and indicated success according to the LVMH annual reports. In the 1999 report, the Marc Jacobs brand stock was owned in majority by LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy, 1999), but there was no other mention of Marc Jacobs in the rest of the forty-one page document other than a mention of the stock acquisition. From 2000 on, however, the annual reports feature highlights, photographs, and increasing coverage of Marc Jacobs. The annual report of 2000 also specifically mentions the investment made to heavily advertise the Marc Jacobs brand and reported success for the first year (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy, 2002).

In 2003 Jacobs was singled out as a "rising star" within a conglomerate that houses Dior, Fendi, and Givenchy (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy, 2003). The reports from 2004 to 2009 all indicate growth for the Marc Jacobs brand, citing his increased growth through the Marc by Marc Jacobs brand, collaborations with artists, and opening of new stores. The report for 2004 describes the LVMH conglomerate approach as "the most successful marriage of cultures grounded in tradition and elegances with the most advanced marketing" (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy, 2004, p. 3). Even in 2009, amidst a recession in the worldwide luxury goods industry, the Marc Jacobs brand still reported growth. At the time, the Marc Jacobs brand was the sole American designer in the Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy portfolio.

America, according to Baudrillard (1986), is a paradoxical society because it is a "realized utopia" (p. 79). But leaves a dilemma: "What do you do when everything is available—sex, flowers, the stereotypes of life and death? This is America's problem" (p.

30). For Marc Jacobs, the answer to this problem was to take these stereotypes of life and death, the entire genre of fashion photography and turn it on its head to reveal the dark underbelly of utopia, especially generally held meanings of high end fashion as representative of luxury class brands and products. The images Jacobs and Teller conceived are by no means pretty, and few are even appealing in the general sense of the word. It is arguably also this quality that lends them a greater claim to "art" than the past has afforded fashion photography.

Is it a prerequisite for modern art that it be ugly? This is not a new question. In fact, Sontag (1977) addressed this very idea:

> Much of modern art is devoted to lowering the threshold of what is terrible. By getting us used to what, formerly, we could not bear to see or hear, because it was too shocking, painful or embarrassing, art changes morals—that body of psychic customs and public sanctions that draws a vague boundary between what is emotionally and spontaneously intolerable and what is not. (pp. 40-41)

By using these images that bring the borders of the disturbing and abjection into the realm of high-fashion, Jacobs and Teller were able to reshape what the American consciousness associated with glamor and fashion. In some ways, they were able to change morals and psychic customs through the way they portrayed the ugly and bizarre as worthy of elevation. Though it is not a prerequisite that modern art be ugly, antiquity's emphasis on beauty dictates that modern art necessarily subvert those norms.

Baudrillard (1986) further asserted that America and third world countries can never quite capture the elegance and "haute couture" of European sensibilities, which is

what the luxury brands are attempting to reconfigure. Absent an hierarchy based on aristocracy or blood, money and symbols of wealth remain the only status symbols left with which humans can assert their place. Clothing and accessories are an easy semiotic reality to use in order to establish hierarchy, but Jacobs was careful to create an aesthetic where these symbols also represented a new world order.

With the concepts of beauty, luxury, and class cut off from the past through postmodern aesthetics, the result is a subverted image of class that sheds old world glamour in order to fully adopt self-expression outside of the long shadow of European wealth. By establishing the means through which he created the Marc Jacobs brand through images of postmodern art, Jacobs helped reframe the way that institutional knowledge in the realm of high-fashion is presented, consumed, and carried out. Given the success of his campaigns, the shifts they brought about in the high-fashion world, and the way they changed the historical paradigms of advertising, it is safe to assert that his "propaganda of the imagination" should be honored and preserved as the art it makes claim to be.

The images explored here are continually calling into question the norms of the advertising world and the high-fashion in general. They interrogate the placement and usage of female bodies in the media, they prod at the way celebrity can impact the psyche of those we elevate to positions of constant surveillance, and they satirize the perfect places that luxury consumers are fed as examples of what the world looks like. Finally, the photographs are ambiguous and enigmatic enough to demand and allow for multiple readings and interpretations, they let the viewer draw their own conclusions about the

tropes that are being employed and parodied, and they leave room for multiple readings about what the subversion of these rules and expectations might mean.

For these reasons, I think it is reasonable to assert that this series of images supersedes the bounds of a purely capitalistic nature of a traditional ad and catapults itself into the realm of the art world. As one media critic, Twitchell (1996) wrote:

> If we can forget for a moment what we have been taught since grade school—namely, art = good and advertising = bad—and concentrate instead on the degree of cultural use and saturation, we may be able to see how organized speech, whether in the employ of an ecclesiastical market or a commercial one, responds with exquisite sensitivity to the concerns of its audience. (p. 179)

And yet, stripped of the binary between art and advertising, looking specifically at the impact and influence of these images, it is clear that they are speaking to the concerns of their audience with a confidence and an authority that has not been replicated elsewhere. My study helps to expand the idea that art and advertising exist on a binary and further emphasizes how the world of imaging is more of a spectrum than ever before. Within this campaign, Marc Jacobs has established himself as the quintessential promoter and exploiter of the postmodern turn. He built his own brand off blurring the line between art and advertising and continues to do so in even more inventive and unusual ways past his collaboration with Teller. Within the postmodern milieu, what could be more artistic than creating an image so persuasive that it persuades the viewer out of seeing it as an advertisement at all? Within Dali's "propaganda of the imagination," this might be the finest tool devised yet. It may not make Jacobs into an artist, but it does make him a

master of his craft, which may be something that doesn't quite have a name yet but is certainly having an impact on visual culture.

Although this thesis employed rhetorical criticism as its method of analysis, my research suggests trajectory for future studies that might employ any number of different methodological approaches. An ideological framework might be used to examine the ways in which the advertising world's capitalistic underpinnings interact with or inform creative works, particularly as we move farther into the digital age. Similar research in the field of journalism has explored the impact of branded content that is directly funded by a company sponsor in order to discover ways that this partnership influences the nature of the journalistic enterprise. In a different direction, traditional categories of quantitative research advertising (e.g., brand recall, brand attitude, etc.) might be employed to explore viewers' response to these ads versus traditional fashion advertising. Finally, this study has suggested that the Marc Jacobs ads employ parody in order to evoke a sense of "insider" or elite self-identification among the ad consumers. Further studies could employ some combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods on order to explore this possibility. Another future research direction would be an ethical critique of the use of these images to sell products, which would be ripe for argument given their use of parody and the nature of satirical arguments throughout the history of ethics.

Additionally, there are numerous other realms of the fashion world that could benefit from similar approaches to rhetorical analysis, such as the layout of high-end luxury boutiques, video advertisements, and the use of billboards, as well that focuses on

the publications these images appear in, incorporating the context of the media vehicle into the equation. Furthermore, an analysis of the actual clothing that Marc Jacobs, and/or other designers create, and how those shapes, textures and designs further play into the visual arguments being made, could present another fascinating entry point for the application of visual rhetoric to the fashion world. Regardless of the avenues scholars may pursue in the future, when it comes to the intersection of art and advertising, furthering such critical analysis would help explain and examine the ways that the lines between them continue to blur, and what the potential impact this ongoing process will have on our lived experience.

Appendix

Figure 1

Kim Gordon, Spring/Summer 1998

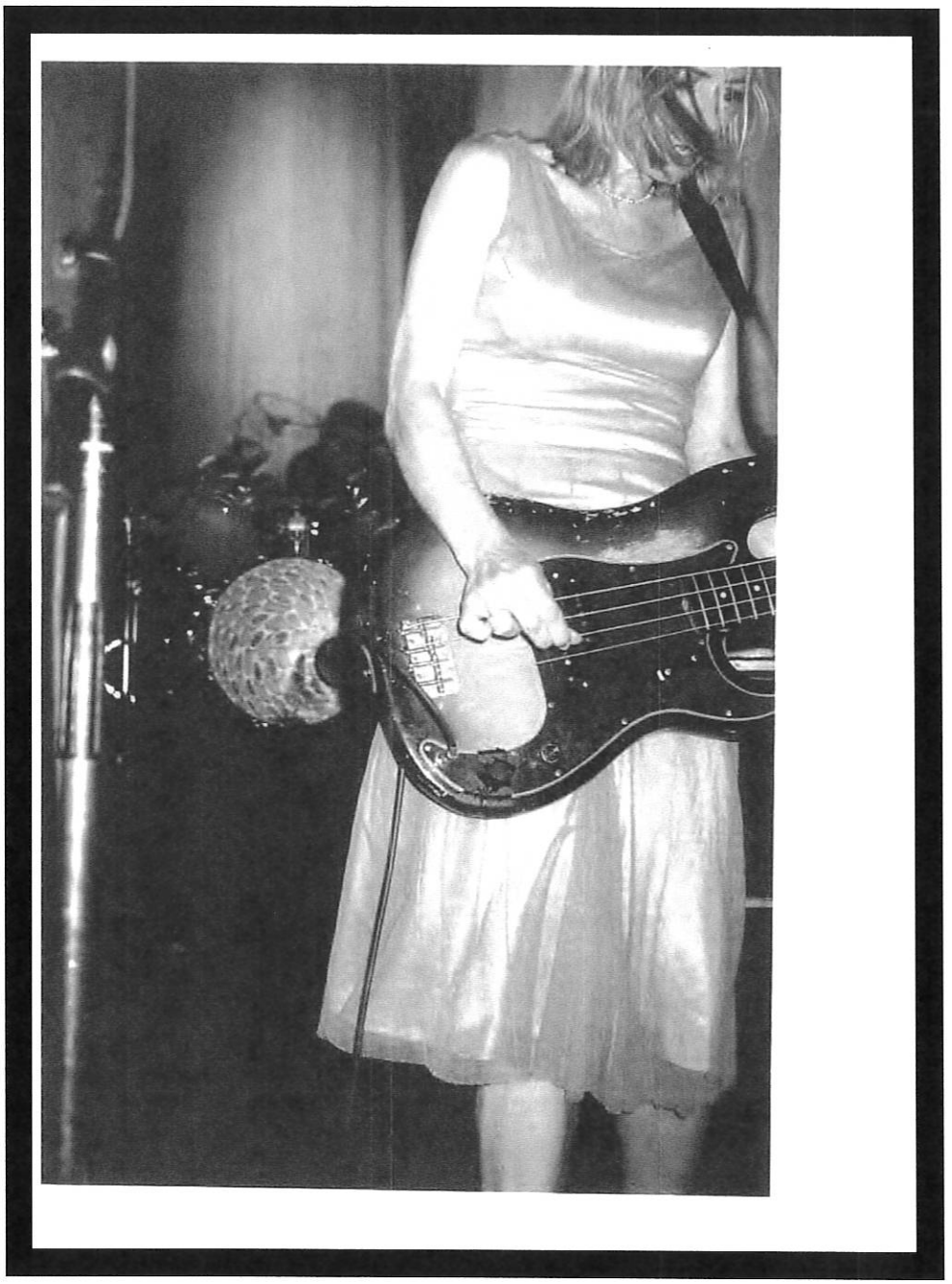


Figure 2

Sofia Coppola, Autumn/Winter 2000

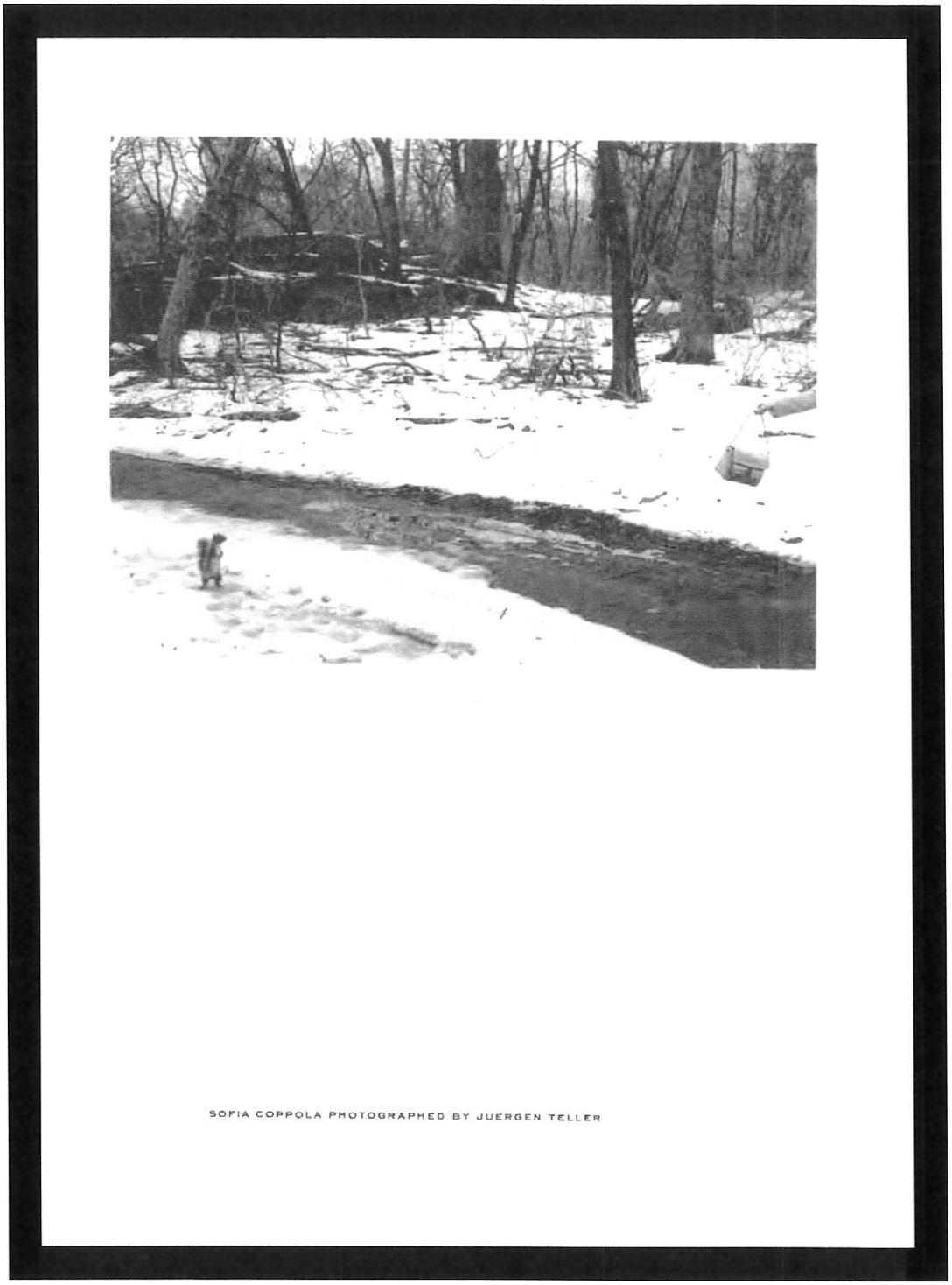


Figure 3

Victoria Beckham, Spring/Summer 2008

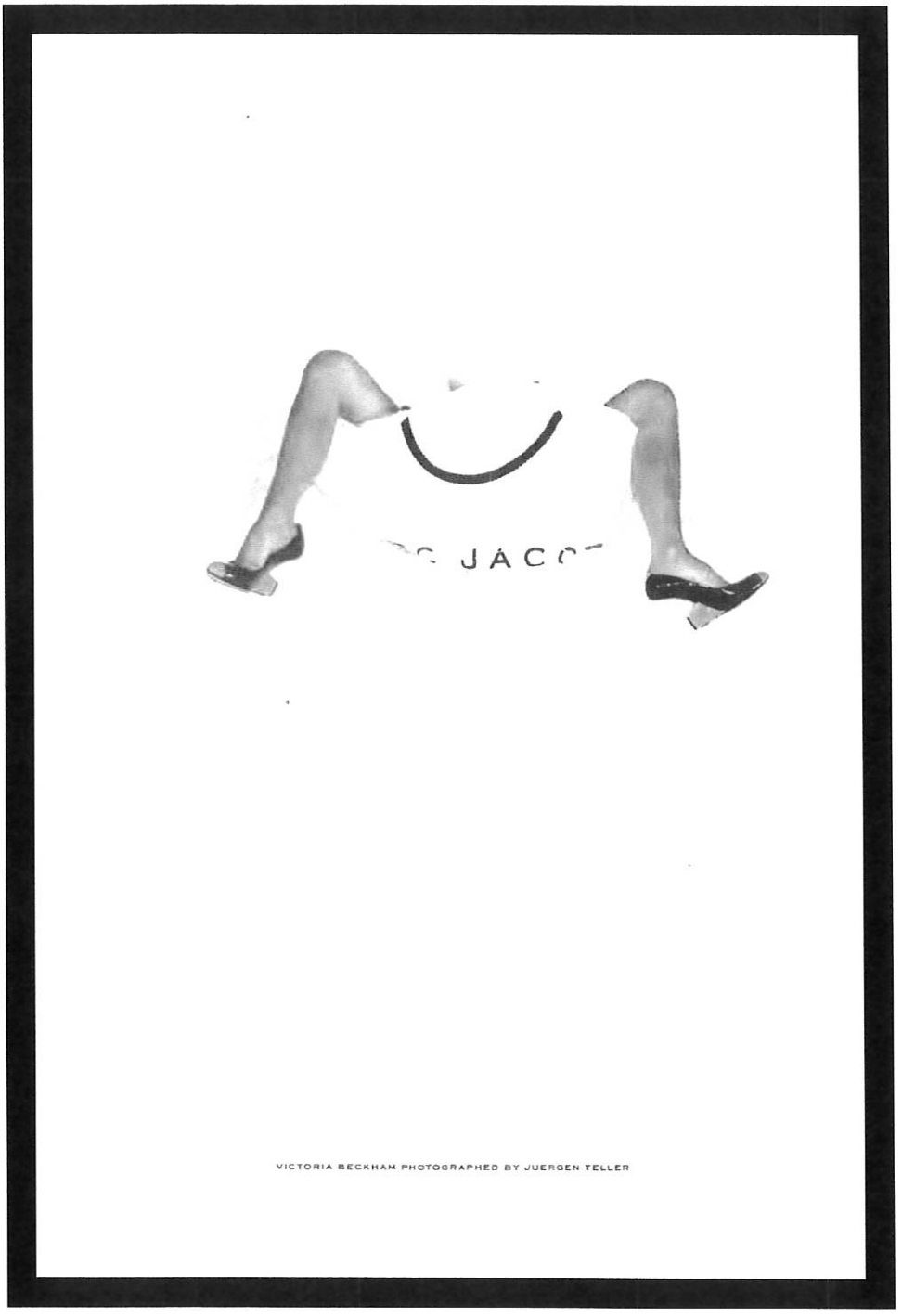


Figure 4

Meg White, Spring/Summer 2006

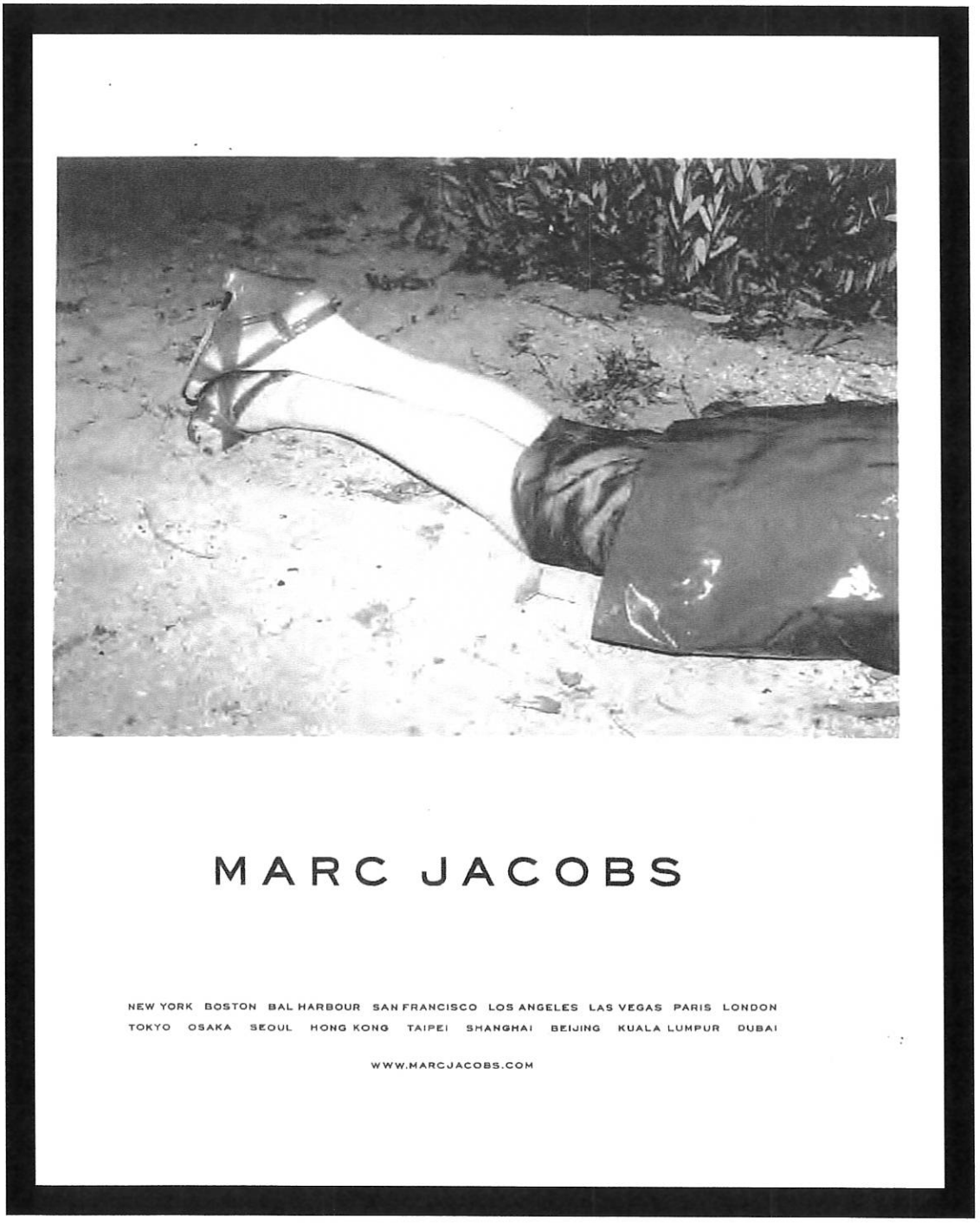


Figure 5

Dakota Fanning, Spring/Summer 2007

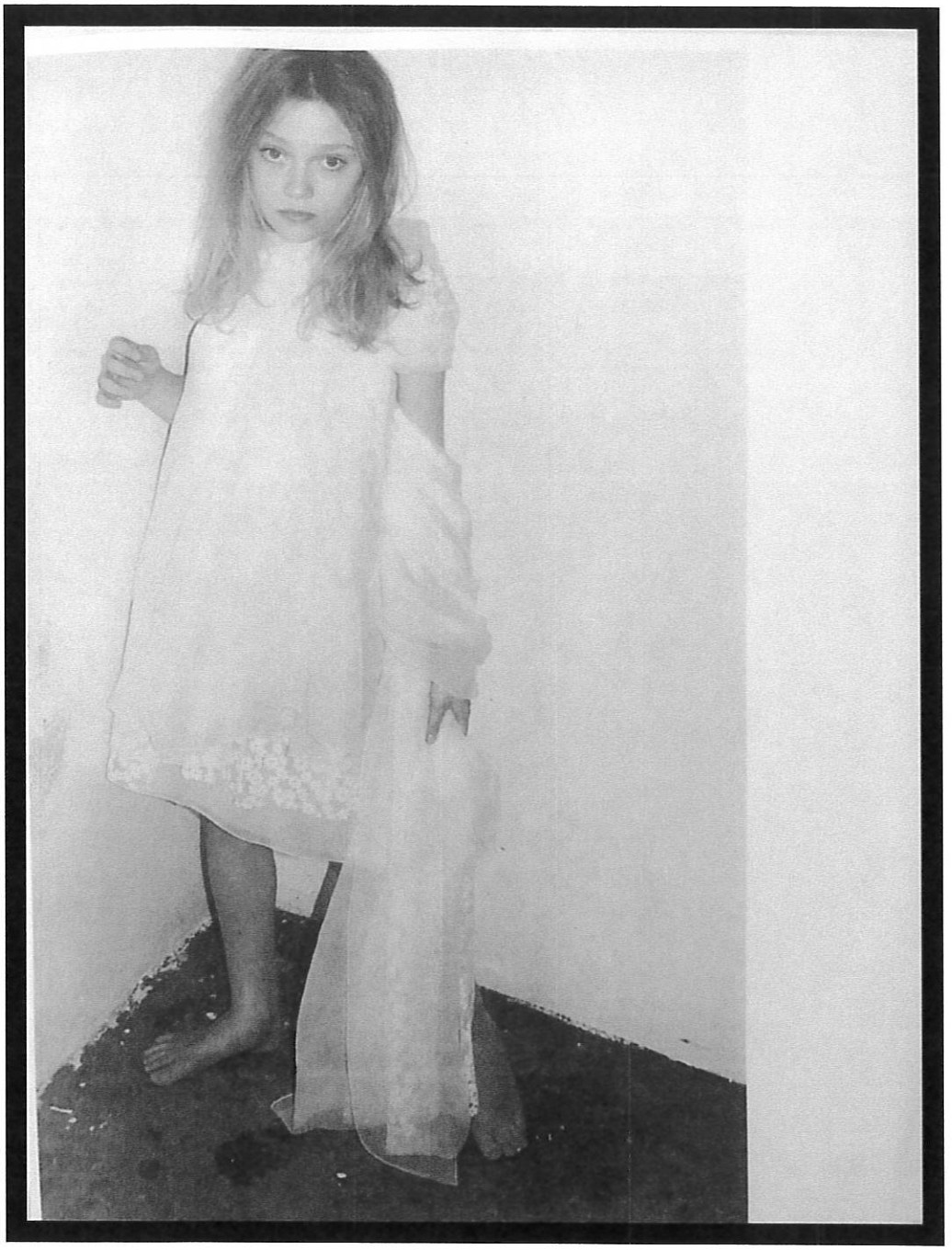


Figure 6

Winona Ryder, Spring/Summer 2003

Figure 7

Kristen McMenamy, Autmn/Winter 2005

Figure 8

Michelle Hicks, Autumn/Winter 2002

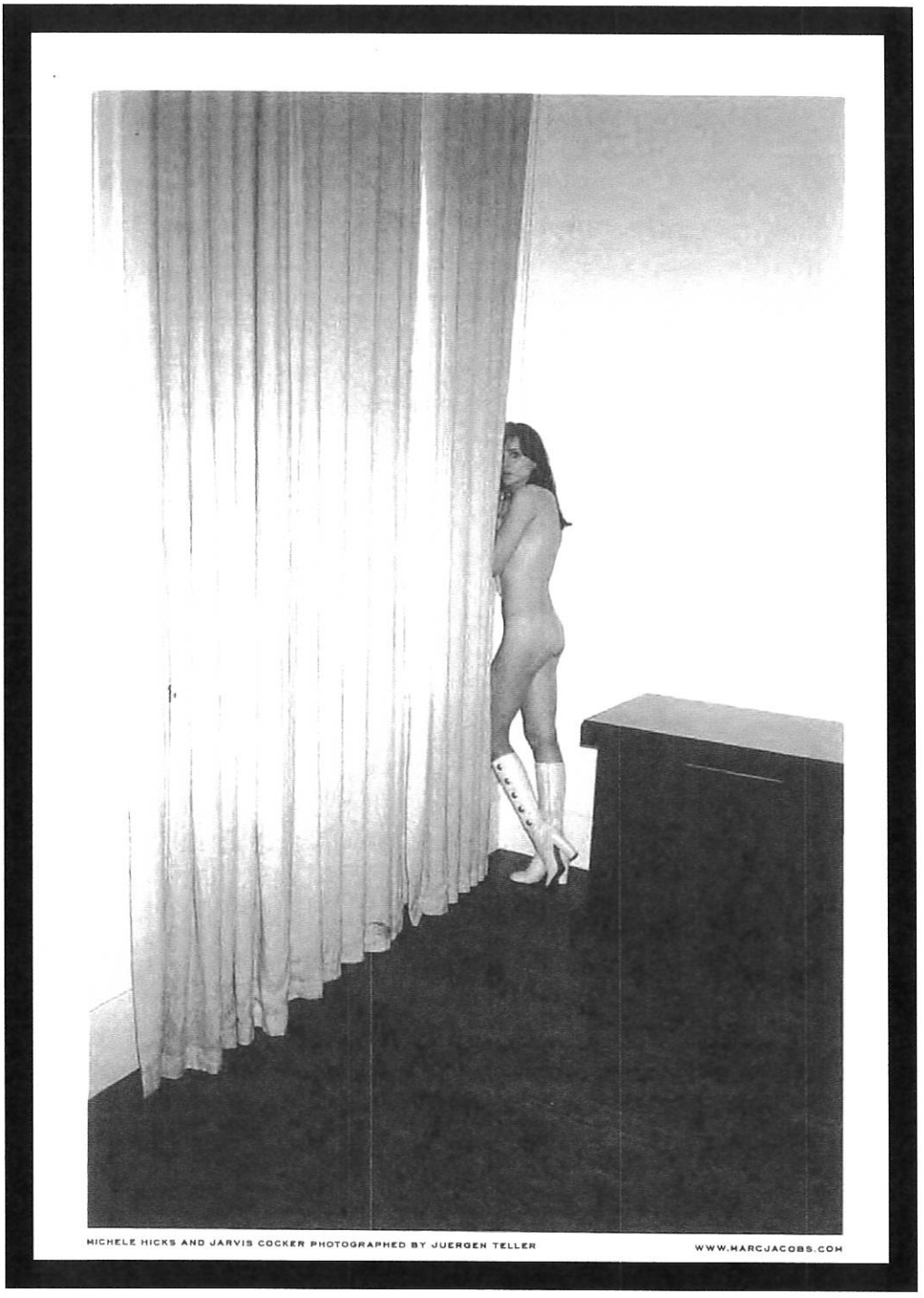


Figure 9

Rufus Wainwright, Autumn/Winter 2005

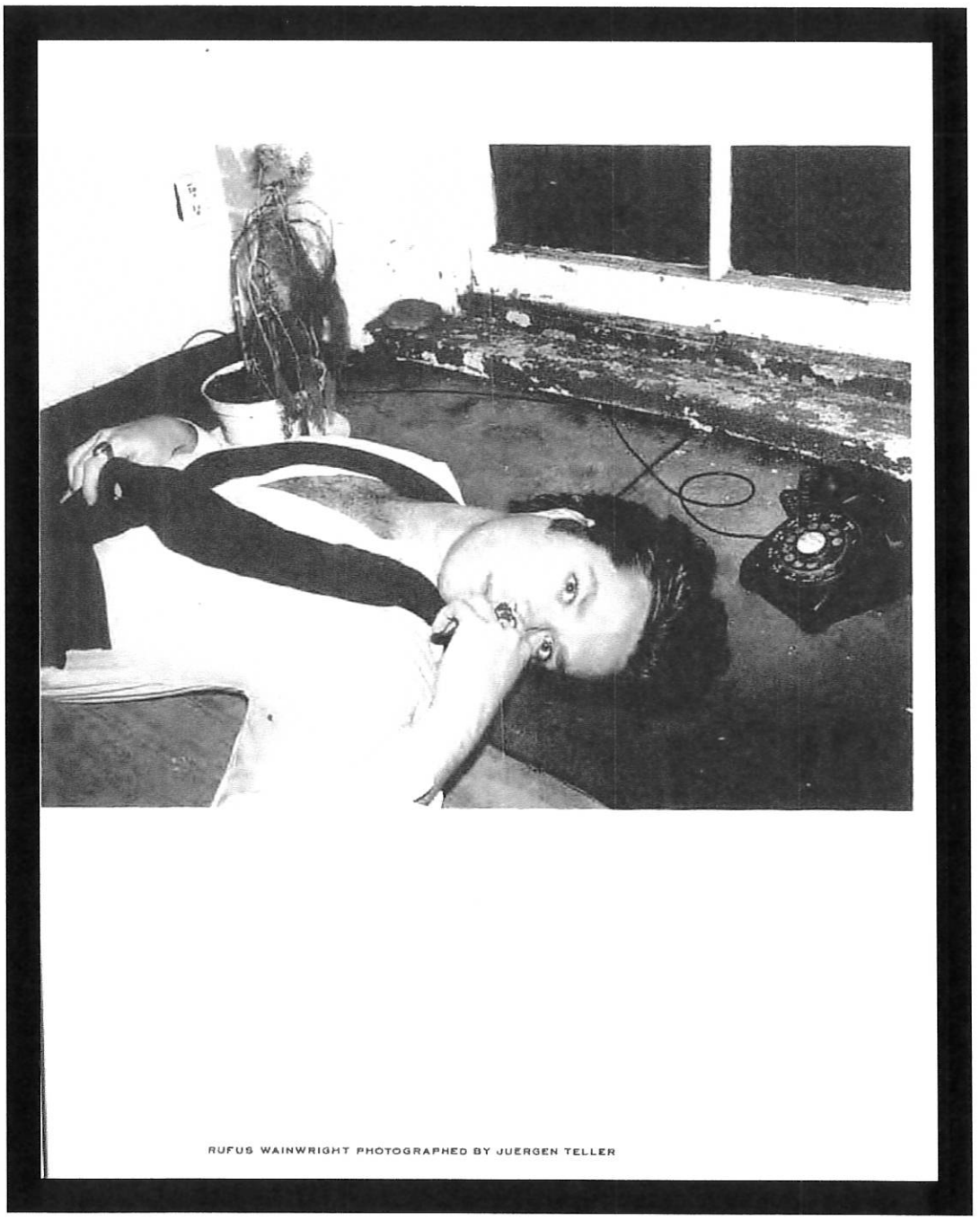
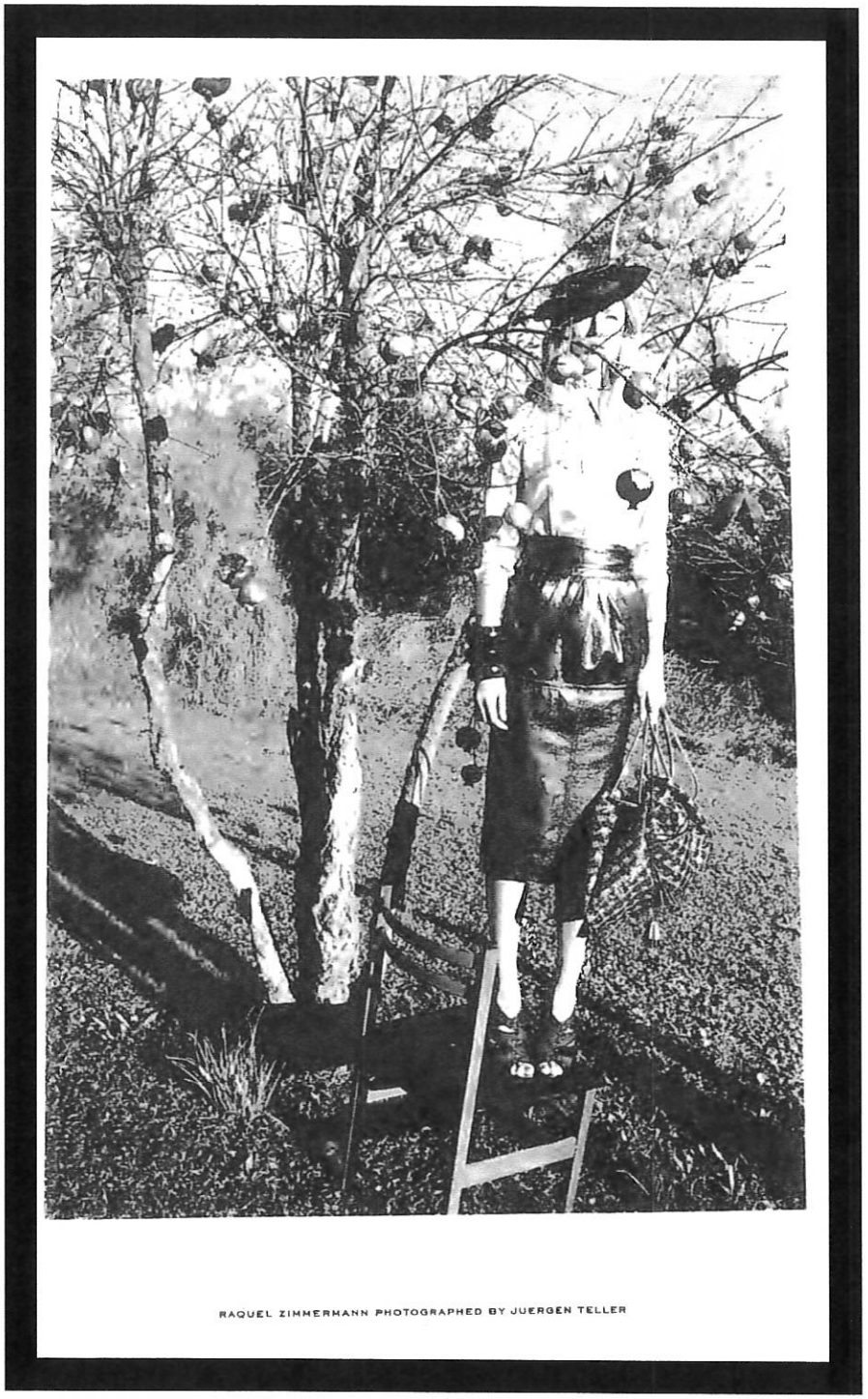


Figure 10

Rachel Feinstein, Autumn/Winter 2004

Figure 11

Raquel Zimmermann, Spring/Summer 2009



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