

Source analysis in fashion reconstruction in Zagreb of the late 19th and the early 20th Century

Doc. **Katarina Nina Simončić**, PhD
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Textile Technology
Department of Textile and Clothing Design
Zagreb, Croatia
e-mail: nina.simoncic@tff.hr
Received July 5, 2013

UDK 687.01
Original scientific paper

The theme of this paper is the artefacts used for reconstruction of late 19th and early 20th century fashion in Zagreb. It will point out new views, methods of analysis and inevitable comparison to reach the goal of supplementing existing knowledge. Although the sources for understanding fashion history do give many information, they are limited in presenting the greater picture. This paper will try to emphasize the source method analysis and the problems that have to be avoided. In that respect clothing artefacts, historical photographs, fashion magazines, paintings, witty art anecdotes, letters and designs will be analyzed. The necessity of interdisciplinary approach of research will be pointed out to ensure the understanding of fashion as a result of historical, social and art influences.

Key words: Croatian fashion, peripheral expression, clothing items, late 19th century, early 20th century, fashion sources

1. Introduction

The theme of this paper is methods of historical fashion styles research. Thusly we will begin with their development throughout history. Until the 1930s there were three fashion research methods that marked approaches of studying that social phenomena for the next fifty years. Those were: descriptive method, which involved social and historical fashion aspects, object focused research, which was based on preserved clothing artefacts – mainly conducted by female authors, and theoretical approaches – mainly conducted by male authors. The 1980s witnessed the appearance of a series of new approaches based on

the significance of the body in fashion, developed from cultural and anthropological studies [1]. The fashion was researched from different aspects: economy, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy but the most prominent contribution was given by art historians. Art history and history of clothing have many common references especially if we consider clothing as a physical object. Whether we are considering a picture of clothing or the actual clothing item, it will be documented (its origin will be determined, authenticity, attribution) and analysed using the visual analysis. The social context, method of production and perception, tradition and visual context that set the background for

the clothing or the picture will be studied.

Today the most important examinations of the Western civilisation clothing history are based on interdisciplinary approach and can be found in the work of Aileen Ribeiro and Lou Taylor. Aileen Ribeiro singles out art history as the most important branch in analysing history of fashion. It's her opinion that clothing culture, just as art, uses non-verbal communication (visual) while their *products* are subjected to sociological and visual experience and reach into both private and public sphere of social interaction. They interpret various aspects of human life and give valuable insight into culture and customs of their time [2,

3]. In that way Ribeiro warns that a fashion historian may never observe clothing through one aspect (eg. as an artefact that survived through time, or a document or a theoretical source), isolated from other possible sources especially those that describe *zeitgeist*. There must be an interdisciplinary and wide approach. Limiting the approach to only one aspect gives an incomplete picture. Literary sources most often reveal a subjective description and are colored with emotions. Documentation on cuts, usage of fabrics and shapes often doesn't exist for clothing items that have been preserved. Because of that researchers are forced to use second hand documentation, literary sources and artworks to obtain information for clothing items. Lou Taylor, also describes the need for interdisciplinary approach in clothing research based on culture, art history, and ethnology. She divided methods of clothing culture research by the type of the artefacts. Using Ribeiro and Taylor as a reference, advantages and faults of sources used in reconstruction of Zagreb fashion at the turn of the 19th century will be displayed.

2. Source analysis

Scientific research of fashion history in Croatia is in its beginnings. A college degree of that type doesn't exist in Croatia. Fashion has only been scientifically studied marginally, as a part of a larger frame of scientists from humanistic and social field. My doctorate thesis from 2010 named "The Culture of Fashion in Zagreb at the end of the 19th and early 20th Century" was the first research paper on fashion in Croatia. In my research I used above-mentioned methods. Time frame for my research was chosen as a starting point for a future research of fashion in the 20th century of this geographical region, but it also opens a possibility for more research of fashion through earlier periods. The geographical area of research is also important, as it was under the

fashion and art influence of major European centres. Through the centuries the area of today's Croatia was on the borderline between the Eastern and Western cultures and they both contributed in shaping Croatian national culture. At the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century Zagreb was a part of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867-1918), artists were educated in Vienna, Budapest or Paris, and at the same time Zagreb fashion was inspired by those cities (Fig.1). These influences along with Croatian tradition shaped a specific autochthonous fashion expression which Ljubo Karaman, a distinguished art historian, called the *peripheral expression* [4]. It is found in art and fashion and described as an expression of Western culture through Croatian tradition. The methods for analysis of Zagreb fashion in that period used written sources, analysis of preserved clothing items, historical photographs, art sources (graphics, illustrations, anecdotes and caricatures). The following short review of these methods will try to systematize sources, point out their importance and the kind of information they give, and on the other hand to point out the problems encountered during research.

3. Written material

Written material is divided into archival build and newer published research of social and humanistic scientific disciplines. Archival build includes historical texts of historians, politicians, businessman, and merchants. They give quality insight into political relations which either helped or didn't help the production, into importance of lobbying on foreign and domestic markets through political ties, and also the reasons why for example quality manufactory didn't survive. Merchant records on fabrics, clothing forms, and fashion appendices are very important in archival build. They give insight into merchant representatives, their assortment, value, and merchant traffic. Reports from world exhibitions and promotions, and witness their market presence, while diplomas of fashion tailors, shoemakers, and milliner indicate developed fashion manufactory. It is often a case that a quality information is found on the place where it is least expected to be found. An example is the 1895 phonebook, which had categorized people by their profession instead of their first and last name. That was the most thoroughly source of information



Fig.1 Fashion in Zagreb of the late 19th and the early 20th Century: Influences from Vienna and Paris, Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb

about fashion tailors that had worked in Zagreb area. Significant number of fashion related workers have advertised themselves in fashion print. Sometimes they only used the name of fashion tailor or street number, and sometimes they used detailed description of fashion style assortment resembling *Parisian, London's, and Vienna's*. According to publishing classification fashion magazines from 19th century and from the beginning of the 20th century can be divided into expert magazines, intended for manufacturers of clothing items, technical magazines, intended for women who sew by themselves, and mixed magazines, which not only gave information about fashion but also had articles from cultural and social life. A very helpful point singled out by Lou Taylor was importance of political orientation (nationalism; Hungarian, Austrian, French or English influences) of magazine editor which manifested through his or her fashion style selection in articles. Therefore, all magazines available on Zagreb market of that time, about 15 publications, had to be examined to get an accurate research frame [5, 6]. Fashion magazine of the first half of the 19th century were taken from German language domain, and by the end of the 19th century French language domain magazines took over. The first Croatian expert fashion magazine published 1895 was symbolically named "*Parizka moda*" ("Parisian Fashion"). It contained detailed descriptions of models, pattern sheets, advertisements, black and white drawings, and color drawings. It reflected a fashion style preferred in the market of that time. In it, along with descriptions of *Parisian fashion*, one could find an enclosure from German fashion magazines - *Mode und Haus, Wäsche Zeitung*. Special attention was given to reportages by fashion reporters from Paris (Milka Pogačić, Marija Jambrišak, and Jagoda Truhelka) whose descriptions had a great influence on Zagreb society. The

magazines and publications contained a lot of articles which intended to influence patriots to accept traditional elements to preserve their own patriotism. But one has to keep in mind that they are a continuance of a trend started in the time of Croatian National Revival that marked the middle of the 19th century. Nevertheless, they contained certain amount of articles on Parisian and Viennese fashion. These nationally inclined publications became a source of autochthonous Zagreb fashion style at the turn of the century. The reason for preserving a traditional style wasn't only cultivating national identity, but also resistance to *Orientalism* that started appearing in Paris. Magazines of that time were the source of general information about fashion (mainly women's fashion), but also introduced fashion terminology [7]. Croatian fashion terminology uses French and German words for clothing items and textiles, or it used foreign words with Croatian description, and sometimes along side the foreign words there were brackets with question marks. In time all the foreign words have been adapted to Croatian language. Fashion magazines of that time help in determining the roots of current fashion terminology and the ones that

were used only then. For example, French term *tournure* becomes Croatian *tornur*, German term from big sleeves: *balon + ärmel* becomes Croatian *balonermlj*, German term for shorter skirts that revealed feet: *füsse + frei* becomes Croatian *fussfreiske suknje*, fabric terms: English *tweed* - Croatian *tvid*, French terms *lame* and *zibelin* - Croatian *lamea* and *zibelina*, Hungarian *fityfirty* (dandy) - Croatian *fićfirić* - this Croatian term has first appeared at the end of the 19th century as a proof of strong Hungarization, and is in use even today.

There were two different approaches to fashion, depending on the magazine orientation. One group of magazines recognizes the fashion as an expression of culture and civility. The other group describes the fashion as a tyrannical, negative, amoral and alien phenomenon. The latter group was supported by right wing editors and even doctors who warned of damaging consequences of wearing corsets (Fig.2). The first group has cultivated Parisian style while the second group cultivated the national style.

In the historical archival build category, a significant place is taken by private letters, a correspondence of prominent social persons, espe-



Fig.2 Corsets in anecdotes, title of anecdote: Dangerous bread, source: Zvekan, *Humoristički list*, 1890, pp

cially women. They contained precious, emotionally colored data about popular stores, cities, social gatherings, and fashion forms. As an important example of that build I can point out letters from Paris by, significant Croatian painter, Miroslav Kraljević to his aunt Lujka in Croatia, which are enriched by drawings of Parisian street fashion. It is known that Miroslav Kraljević has been active in the fashion illustrator circles (Paul Iribe, George Barbier, George Lepape, George Martin, and Pierre Brissaud) of *haute couture* designer Paul Poiret [8]. A historical and art analysis of his drawings indicated an analogy between his drawings and drawings published in *La Gazette du Bon Ton*.

4. Preserved clothing items

In Zagreb there are several historical fashion collections that are marked with three basic problems. First problem is that there isn't a specialised museum or institution for fashion artefacts in the area of Zagreb. It is scattered around in few different museums. Given the fact that collections are scattered around, data about the collections is unknown. Parts of some collections are kept in

the depot of Croatian National Theatre as it was used as costumes in theatrical plays. Second problem is that the clothing items in museums weren't researched properly instead just labelled as an applied art thusly marginalizing the whole collection. Therefore we have parts of collections that aren't documented, inventory books are incomplete, and origin of larger parts of artefacts remains unknown. Conditions in which the build is stored is inadequate. People do not have proper education and skills to handle that kind of build and are often unaware of the materials that they have in their possession or can they give more than basic information about it. Fashion as a segment is represented through bigger exhibitions dedicated to art by the museums. It is an imperative that museum staff needs to be educated properly and that it needs to be specialised in the certain area. Often the significant information such as current placement of clothing items, fabric type, cut type, and origin of the fabric I have gathered, came from the restorers.

The third problem that is attached to dislocation of historical fashion build of Zagreb is the partial placement of

the collection in the Ethnographical Museum. For example the Berger's collection. It is actually high quality contribution of Zagreb fashion industry from the end of the 19th century that has successfully placed itself on the foreign market but because the collection is located in Ethnographical Museum the focus of presentation is on traditional art and their national influence. Salamon Berger, a merchantman that ran the production recognized the need of the fashion market for Oriental and Japanese influence. He recognised the *Orientalism* in Croatian traditional air tight fabrics that were made using techniques called *na zijevo* and *vutlak* as interesting for the global market. His manufactures (Actually that manufacture had all predispositions for the a designer workshop and industry, it even employed over 2200 people, women from villages, fashion tailors, illustrators, and sales representatives. There were warehouses containing Berger Industries products in major cities of Europe, America, and Australia. This is how Croatian fashion culture made a small mark on fashion market in Zagreb but also in the rest of the world) also produced fashion supplements – decorations with Croatian ethno-ornaments (Fig.3). Berger's products found themselves in the Parisian fashion ateliers, at Madam Paquin's and at Paul Poiret's. Even though it was produced in Zagreb, Parisian magazines describe them as Hungarian products, mainly because Croatian was the part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. While Parisian fashion found Croatian motifs interesting, different and thusly *oriental*, dames from Zagreb did not find them to be exotic or oriental (Fig.4). Only later when news from Paris came that Parisian dames were astonished by the fabrics and that big fashion creators were using them did the dames from Zagreb accept them as well. When I first encountered that collection I was told that it contained products which were sold in Paris but had traditional



Fig.3 Salamon Berger products: Textile production: tehnique „na zijevo“ and Fashion Illustration, Ethnographical Museum, Zagreb



Fig.4 Dress that was produced by Industry of Salomon Berger, Ethnographical Museum, Zagreb

Croatian motifs and therefore they weren't that significant for the fashion.

I have encountered a similar problem in another museum where a certain clothing item didn't get attention it deserved and was poorly researched and superficially determined. At the end of the 19th century many Croatian artists were attending art schools in Vienna where they were influenced by the work of Gustav Klimt. Clothing-wise Gustav Klimt supported the idea of returning to Medieval principles of both genders wearing tunics without clear gender distinction by the shape of the clothing item. He was fascinated by Slavic ornaments that he puts on simple tunics-ropes [9]. Croatian artist Bela Čikoš Sesija, educated in Vienna, followed a very similar path. He is the author preserved clothing item in question which is displayed in Zagreb museum (Fig.5). He used the same form and applied a Croatian traditional red ornament from Podravina. But in the museum catalogue this item is classified as a *cape for model* without any further explanation. This way we get the impression that this was not so significant clothing item and that is not interesting because was made using local traditional elements,

rather than being a product fashioned according to the Klimt's work by a domestic artist using an autochthonous *peripheral expression* [10]. Among the preserved clothing items there are those that are the work of domestic tailors. They reflect a strong Parisian influence. There are also a lot of artefacts that were bought in Paris, London, Vienna or Budapest. Some of them do have labels, but for many of them the origin is unknown. The items are not numerous and are divided into daily wear, evening wear, wedding gowns, and accessories. They are only one segment of fashion and therefore supplement this source alongside fashion publications and historical photographs.

5. Historical photography

At the turn of the century changes in fashion are photographically documented. The women's fashion focus in a span of only a few years changed from lower part of clothing composition – crinoline, and then *Cul de Paris* – to upper part by changing the shape of the sleeves. In the Secession period head gear became the fashion



Fig.5 Cape for model, author: Croatian artist Bela Čikoš Sesija, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb

focus. That period was marked by *freeing* the women's body of constraints of corsets. Thanks to advances in technology, the changes were continually recorded on photographs that present one of the more important sources. Aby Warburg, art historian, considered photographs a picturesque representation of history. Roland Barthes refers to photographs in women's fashion magazines as *pictorial clothing item*. Peter Burke, states that photographs are a considerable form of historical evidence. He continues that photograph can have a subjective story and an objective or documentary meaning [11].

In reconstructing fashion of that period photographs taken in ateliers are analysed as well as the ones taken on the streets. The photographs taken on the streets are more important for reconstruction of fashion because they show more realistic and practical side while the photographs taken in ateliers depict formal side of fashion. Though the models photographed in ateliers are interesting because of the pose of the body which was subordinated to the fashion silhouette. In the 1860s the pose was frontal, in the 1870s the pose was sideways, in the 1880s the photos taken were from the back, and at the end of the 19th century the pose was buckled (Fig.6). There are many photographs that confirm historical conditions that led to forming new fashion expressions. In the book *Mode aus Wien* (1986), Gerde Buxbaum notes popularity oriental Bosnian ornament in Vienna after Bosnia was annexed by Austria in 1908 [12]. Bosnian refugees arrive to Vienna via Zagreb, which was captured on photograph. At the same time Zagreb press, like the Viennese, publishes patterns for dress ornaments based on Bosnian ornaments.

6. Art sources: graphics, illustrations, paintings

Lou Taylor warns that in order to use fashion graphics as a historical source



Fig.6 Fashion silhouette, 1860, 1870 and the end of the 19th century, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb

of fashion data their authenticity has to be verified. They were usually an idealised depiction of upcoming season's fashion and weren't an identifier of the real condition [2]. Fashion illustrators had a goal to present fashion in a way that was easily acceptable by readers. Fashion magazines started to more and more reflect readers' tastes, so fashion drawings depicted women in stores, salons, during sport and other social activities, just as in *Parižkoj modi*. It is important to keep in mind to which social status do the people that the magazine is intended for belong. Many of both black-and-white and colour illustrations were taken from foreign fashion magazines (From *La Figaro*, *Der Bazar*). Illustrations were often retouched to be more suited for Zagreb fashion taste. Fashion illustration by domestic authors isn't of the same quality as the foreign one but it is present because of the need for representation of domestic fashion expression. Besides the illustrations a very interesting group that expanded literal information are paintings of Croatian artists where one can see hairstyles, makeup, headgear (with peacock feather), and specific forms of women's dresses that reflected historical styles.

7. Caricatures and anecdotes

Caricatures are political, cultural and social commentary of a certain hi-

storical period. They are an excellent indicator of new, unusual and surprising occurrences in society. According to Taylor they are a visual critique of society and time [2]. Three things should be considered in the research of the caricatures: the political and social orientation of the caricatures author, the political orientation of the magazine it was published in, and the political orientation of the readers. Caricatures can be used as a chronological record of fashion novelties because they surfaced almost at the same time as new fashion fads. The themes vary from position of women in society to changeability of fashion. Anecdotes are mainly taken over from foreign magazines with Croatian subtitles, domestic work is rare.

8. Conclusion

If the sources are superficially analysed one gets an impression that Zagreb fashion was a copy of Parisian or Viennese fashion. Especially so because the magazines published instructions for Parisian way of dressing, domestic reporters write reportages from Paris, graphical enclosures and anecdotes are taken over from foreign magazines. More detailed analysis shows a more developed fashion expression which is a result of cultural, social, historical and political circumstances. During research it is important to view fashion through social and historical

context [13]. In the process of this research I learned to be cautious about already published data. It is important to confirm one's findings with multiple sources which gives a more complete reconstruction of a fashion period.

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